

GSS on the Web

Data and documentation on the GSS exist several places on the Internet. For a guide to these sites go to:

www.gss.norc.org

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2008 Data

The GSS is in transition from a replicating, cross-sectional design to a design using rolling panels. In 2008 the new 2008 panel had 2,023 cases and the reinterview of the 2,000 2006 GSS respondents yielded 1,536 cases for a total of 3,559.

The 2008 topical modules are on 1) self-employment 2) preparedness for terrorism, 3) global economics, 4) sexual orientation, 5) Jewish identity, 6) firearms, 7) clergy/congregant contacts, 8) knowledge about and attitudes towards science, 9) religious trends, repeating a number of items from earlier GSSs, 10) social inequality, and 11) sexual behavior (continuing the series started in 1988).

The International Social Survey Program (ISSP) modules are on religion and sports/leisure. The religion module builds on the ISSP studies on the same topic in 1991 and 1998. As is usual, about two-thirds of the items are replications and one-third new content. Topics include items on social issues such as sexual morality, abortion, institutional confidence, and interpersonal trust; questions on religion and science, politics, and tolerance; and extensive batteries of religious upbringing, behaviors, and beliefs. The sports/leisure module is a new topic for the ISSP. It contains measures on leisure time activities, self-actualization, preferred leisure activity, time pressures, favorite sport/physical activity to take part in, favorite non-sports game, evaluation of the value of sports, TV viewing of sports, and group memberships.

In addition to the continued support of the National Science Foundation (NSF) the 2008 GSS received funds from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, Brandeis University, Baylor University, the University of California – Los Angeles, the Templeton Foundation, the Sloan Foundation, and the Joyce Foundation.

The latest GSS data, 1972-2008, are available from 1) the Roper Center, Box 440, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT, 06268. Phone (860) 486-4882 Fax: (860) 486-4882, EMAIL: lois@ropercenter.uconn.edu; 2) the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), Box 1248, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, 48106. Phone (313) 763-5010. EMAIL: netmail@icpsr.umich.edu; 3) the Survey Documentation Archive at the University of California, Berkeley at <http://sda.berkeley.edu/archive.htm>; and 4) at GSS's own site at www.gss.norc.org.

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ISSP Data Available

The Zentralarchiv fuer Empirische Sozialforschung at the University of Cologne has released a merged file for the 2005/06 Work Orientation III module. The next ISSP study to be released will be the Role of Government IV module. It should be available in the second half of 2008. See <http://www.gesis.org/issp> ■

At the annual meeting of the ISSP held in Vienna on April 25-28, 2009, the group finalized the content of the 2010 module on the Environment which replicates earlier environmental studies in 1993 and 2000. It also settled on the major themes for a new topic, Health Policy, for 2011. For 2012 the topic will be the fourth replication on Family, Work, and Gender. The Environment drafting group was chaired by the UK. Israel is chairing the Health Policy drafting group.

Sweden and Germany will co-chair the Family, Work, and Gender drafting group. Norway finished serving as the ISSP Secretariat and Israel was selected as the new Secretariat. The 2010 ISSP meeting will be in Lisbon.

For the 2008 module on Religion, support from the Templeton Foundation allowed the study to be carried out in five non-ISSP countries: India, Indonesia, Kenya, Sri Lanka, and Tanzania.

The ISSP now has 46 countries as members:

Argentina	Croatia	France	Japan	Poland	Switzerland
Australia	Cyprus	Germany	Korea (South)	Portugal	Taiwan
Austria	Czech Republic	Great Britain	Latvia	Russia	Turkey
Belgium	Denmark	Hungary	Mexico	Slovakia	The United States
Bulgaria	Dominican Republic	Iceland	The Netherlands	Slovenia	Ukraine
Canada	Estonia	Ireland	New Zealand	South Africa	Uruguay
Chile	Finland	Israel	Norway	Spain	Venezuela
China		Italy	The Philippines	Sweden	

Over 3600 research uses have been documented using ISSP data. A copy of the bibliography is available by contacting the ISSP secretariat or from the ISSP Web site (see below). Among the latest publications is an edited volume celebrating the 25th anniversary of the founding of the ISSP: Max Haller, Roger Jowell, and Tom W. Smith, eds., The International Social Survey Programme, 1984-2009: Charting the Globe. London: Routledge, 2009

ISSP documentation and information can be obtained at the following Web sites:

<http://www.gesis.org/issp/>

<http://www.issp.org/>

Computer Audio Recorded Interviewing (CARI)

For the first time the 2008 GSS had segments of the interview captured using an internal audio recorder in the laptops. This is being used to a) help validate interviews, b) check and improve the quality of open-end information being collected (e.g. contact data and reports on occupation and industry), and c) study the details of discourse. General information on CARI can

be found in Tom W. Smith and John Sokolowski, "Using Audio-Visuals in Surveys," in The Handbook of Emergent Technologies in Social Research, edited by Sharlene Hesse-Biber. Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming. Analysis of specific results from the 2008 GSS will follow.

Governmental Spending Priorities

The GSS asks about support for spending in 20 areas. Since 1990 education and health have topped the list each time with education first seven times and health in the top position twice. For a full analysis see Tom W. Smith, “Trends in National Spending Priorities, 1973-2008,” Unpublished NORC report, February, 2009.

Free Speech in the United States

Americans in general are in favor of free speech, even for unpopular groups. Majorities would allow a public speech in their community by someone advocating homosexuality, against churches and religion, for Communism, for “doing away with elections and letting the military run the country,” and by a White supremacist who claimed “Blacks are inferior”. But only 41% supported allowing a speech by a “Muslim cleric who preaches hatred of the United States.”

There are always people whose ideas are considered bad or dangerous by other people, for instance someone who is against all churches and religion. If such a person wanted to make a speech in your community against churches and religion should he be allowed or not?

% for Allowing Public Speech by the Following People:

Homosexual	81.7
Someone Against All Religions.....	76.0
Communist	65.9
Someone for Military Running Country.....	65.3
White Supremacist	58.3
Muslim Cleric Preaching Hatred	40.9



Confidence in Institutions

The GSS tracks confidence in 13 institutions. Over the last four decades most have shown drops in confidence. Analysis indicates that much of the decline is event driven and institution specific. But there appears to be some pan-institutional forces at work as well. For example, institutional confidence fell across cohorts from those born each in 20th century to a low point in 1942-1952 cohort. Then confidence rebounded across later cohorts and in general reached a level equal to or exceeding that shown by the earliest cohorts. For more on this and related matters, see Tom W. Smith, “Trends in Confidence in Institutions, 1973-2006” in Social Trends in the United States, 1972-2006: Evidence from the General Social Survey, edited by Peter V. Marsden. Princeton: Princeton University Press, forthcoming.

Panel Component

The GSS is switching from a repeating, cross-section design to a combined repeating cross-section and panel-component design. The 2006 GSS is the base year for the first panel. A sub-sample of 2000 GSS cases from 2006 was selected for reinterview in 2008 and again in 2010 as part of the GSSs in those years. The 2008 GSS consists of a new cross-section of 2,023 plus the 1,536 reinterviews from 2006. The 2010 GSS will consist of another new cross-section of about 2000, the second reinterview wave of the 1,536 2006 panel cases and the first reinterview wave of the 2,023 2008 panel cases. The 2010 GSS will be the first one to fully implement the new, combined design. In 2012 and later GSSs, there will likewise be a fresh cross-section, wave two panel cases from the immediately preceding GSS and wave three panel cases from the next earlier GSS. ■

General Social Survey

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Spanish

The 2006 GSS was the first having a Spanish version and using bilingual interviewers. For 2006 only the core content funded by the basic NSF grant was fielded in Spanish. Starting in 2008, all sections are translated and administrable in Spanish. For a discussion of the impact of adding Spanish language to the GSS see, Tom W. Smith, "An Evaluation of Spanish Questions on the 2006 General Social Survey," GSS Methodological Report No. 109. Chicago: NORC, 2007.

Also, this analysis identified several questions where the translations may not have achieved optimal, functional equivalence. For these questions, experiments were carried out on the 2008 GSS with the original Spanish translations and the revised translations being administered to random sub-samples. Both versions were then compared to each other and to the results among Hispanics doing the survey in English. ■