

The General Social Survey



2022 Media Coverage Highlights

GSS CELEBRATING **50** YEARS | 1972-2022

About the General Social Survey

Established in 1972, the General Social Survey (GSS) is NORC's longest-running project and one of its most influential. Except for U.S. Census data, the GSS is the most frequently analyzed source of information in the social sciences. GSS data are used in an enormous number of newspaper, magazine, and journal articles, by legislators, policymakers, and educators. The New York Times has described it as "the scholarly gold standard for understanding social phenomena."

The GSS gathers data on contemporary American society in order to monitor and explain trends and constants in attitudes, behaviors, and attributes; to examine the structure and functioning of society in general, as well as the role played by relevant subgroups; to compare the United States to other societies in order to place American society in comparative perspective and develop cross-national models of human society; and to make high-quality data easily accessible to scholars, students, policymakers, and others.

The GSS has contributed to articles on a vast array of topics, including health, happiness, politics, family, sexuality, gun control, the environment, wealth, and much more.

Here are some of the GSS's more notable news mentions from the last few years.

DECEMBER 27, 2021

"The **General Social Survey**, a reputable national survey of American adults, has been asking workers questions about how they feel about the quality of their working life since 2002. Statistics on job satisfaction and turnover reveal an interesting paradox: A greater share of people say they are contemplating quitting than express dissatisfaction with their current job."

THE CONVERSATION

Academic rigor, journalistic flair

Many scientists are atheists,
but that doesn't mean they are
anti-religious

NOVEMBER 2, 2021

"Distrust of atheists is strong in the United States. The **General Social Survey** consistently demonstrates that as a group, Americans dislike atheists more than any other religious group. According to various studies, nearly half of the country would disapprove of their child marrying an atheist, some 40% of the public does not believe atheists share their view of American society, and only 60% of Americans would be willing to vote for an atheist in a presidential election."



Cardinal Dolan: Bring
religion into politics

APRIL 19, 2019

"It is no surprise that there is very little consensus on how religion should be integrated with politics. A new survey suggests Americans are rejecting religion in their own lives at a record pace. For the first time ever, "No Religion" hit the top of the annual **General Social Survey** of America's religious identity, beating out Catholics and evangelicals."

The New York Times

Some Voters Are at Odds With
Their Party on Abortion

DECEMBER 11, 2021

"Less engaged and moderate voters are especially likely to hold abortion views at odds with their party. According to the 2018 **General Social Survey**, 92 percent of college-educated liberal Democrats believe it should be possible for women to obtain a legal abortion if she wanted for any reason, compared with just 55 percent of more moderate Democrats."

The Washington Post

More Americans than usual
have been changing parties.
Why?

DECEMBER 16, 2021

"To better understand this, we took advantage of new **General Social Survey** panel data, which tracks the same people over time. The **General Social Survey** is a nationally representative survey of American adults, conducted since 1972 out of the National Opinions Research Center at the University of Chicago. The survey monitors trends in attitudes, opinions and behaviors and is often considered the gold standard in the social sciences. In a new study, we considered whether the particular individuals that the **GSS** interviewed in 2016 had different party identities in 2020."

Millennium predictions from 2000: How does 2022 compare to our ‘Tomorrow’s Lifestyles’ guesses?

JANUARY 2, 2022

“Many people still get married, but marriage rates are in decline. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2021, 34% of adults age 15 and older had never been married. Lastly, there are fewer households containing married couples and their kids. The number of households with married couples and their children is 18.8%, according to the 2019 American Community Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau. *The News* originally predicted 26%, using data from the **General Social Survey** from National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. The U.S. Census Bureau also recorded that the number of U.S. births has declined every year since 2008, except for a brief uptick in 2014.”

Psychology Today

The Puzzling Relationship Between Pet-Keepering and Happiness

DECEMBER 22, 2021

“The results of research on the impact of owning a pet on general happiness are even starker—none of the studies found that getting a pet will make the average owner happier. A 2020 analysis of data gathered as part of the **General Social Survey** in the United States reported that exactly 31% of pet owners and non-owners reported they were “very happy,” and about 15% of both groups indicated they were “not too happy.”



The Secret to Happiness at Work

SEPTEMBER 2, 2021

“Unemployment is one of the biggest sources of unhappiness people can face. Using data from the **General Social Survey**, I found that American adults who reported that they were “very” or “fairly” likely to lose their job in 2018 were more than three times more likely to say they were “not too happy” with their life than people who felt they were “not likely” to be let go. Several studies have linked a country’s unemployment level with suicide-rate increases.”

AP

AP NEWS

Poll: Millions in US struggle through life with few to trust

JUNE 10, 2021

“The **General Social Survey**, a national representative survey conducted by NORC since 1972, suggests that the number of people Americans feel they can trust had declined by the early 2000s, compared with two decades earlier, although there is little consensus about the extent of this isolation or its causes. The rise of social media has added another layer of debate, as experts explore whether it broadens networks or lures people in isolating echo chambers.

The Impact Genome/AP-NORC poll sought to measure how much social capital Americans can count as they try to pick up the pieces of lives fractured by the pandemic. The findings suggest that for many Americans, the pandemic has chipped away at whatever social capital they had going into it.”

VOGUE

On the Unexpected Joys of Being a Third Wheel

DECEMBER 10, 2021

“A 2019 study by the **General Social Survey** found that just over half of Americans between the ages of 18 and 34 don’t have a steady romantic partner. More broadly, it feels as if the very notion of being single is less stigmatized, whether thanks to the nuanced depictions of singledom on shows like *Broad City* and *Insecure*, or the new terminology defining this specific type of contentment.”

 **DeseretNews.**

Why people who are anti-sexist aren’t necessarily anti-racist

SEPTEMBER 12, 2021

“The belief that women are as capable and should have the same opportunities as men grew between 1977 and 2018, a period the researchers analyzed using the **General Social Survey**. But “a very large proportion of people discarded their old prejudices about gender without shedding their prejudices about race,” the study found.

Attitudes about racial inequality and its roots didn’t start to change significantly until around 2012, the change accelerating as time went on. It seemed to coincide with larger social movements like Black Lives Matter, Pepin and Scarborough told the Deseret News.

Shifting Notions

The researchers inferred attitudes toward gender by examining opinions expressed in the **General Social Survey** on “whether women were as suited as men for politics and whether they thought women should primarily focus on raising families while men focused on their careers.”

While the **General Social Survey** had data on both gender and race dating back to 1977, it didn’t identify Asian or Hispanic respondents until the late 1990s, so the researchers focused on inequality between Blacks and whites.”

The Salt Lake Tribune

How income, health, religion and lifestyle impact our happiness — and how that’s changed over the years

MAY 6, 2021

“I pulled data from the **General Social Survey**. This is an ongoing project from an independent research organization called NORC at the University of Chicago. Since 1972, the GSS has asked a representative slice of America how happy they are. Those respondents can pick from three choices: They are “very happy,” “pretty happy,” or “not very happy.” For our purposes I combined their answers into a “Happiness Index.” Those saying they were “not very happy” got a 0, “pretty happy” were scored at a 50 and “very happy” got 100. Then I averaged the scores to help us look for trends.”

Health

Kids Are Coming Out Earlier Than Ever—Here’s How to Give Them the Support They Need

MAY 18, 2021

“...Bisexual people, in fact, now make up the highest percentage of the LGBTQ+ population, and their numbers are on the rise, according to data from Gallup and the 2018 **General Social Survey**.”

**NATIONAL
REVIEW**

MAY 29, 2021

The Stranger Problem

In 1987, the GSS [**General Social Survey**] asked members of 15 different kinds of groups if that group “tries to solve individual or community problems.” For fraternal groups, 84 percent of members said yes. For professional societies, 69 percent. For labor unions, 66 percent. Only 36 percent of members of sports clubs said their clubs tried to do anything to solve individual or community problems, the lowest response of any group category besides “hobby clubs.”

*Premarital Sex Is More
Taboo for Today’s Devout
Christians*

NOVEMBER 16, 2021

“Increasingly delayed marriage has a large and well-understood effect on sexual frequency among American adults. But the rise in sexlessness among unmarried adults is not as well understood. If the data from the **General Social Survey** is to be believed, a key part of this story of changing sexual behavior in America is a change among religious people, or others, who believe premarital sex is wrong. Increasingly, religious young adults are “practicing what they preach,” adopting a distinctive set of sexual behaviors. As a result, the growing diversity and polarization that typifies so much of American life is reaching even further—even into bedrooms.”

*It’s Not Just Young
White Liberals Who Are
Leaving Religion*

APRIL 16, 2021

“By nearly all measures, the nones now represent at least a fifth of all American adults, rivaling Catholics and evangelical Christians as the nation’s largest cohort in terms of religious faith (or lack thereof). They are the fastest-growing religious/nonreligious cohort — the nones went from 12 percent of American adults in 1998 to 16 percent in 2008, to 24 percent in 2018, according to data from the **General Social Survey**. Gallup puts this group at about 21 percent. Pew Research Center says 26 percent. The Cooperative Election Study suggests their ranks are even larger, at about 32 percent.”

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

There’s Another Gender Pay Gap: Stock Options

SEPTEMBER 26, 2021

“Simply “not knowing” is one of many factors that could be contributing to a gap in equity compensation and holdings between men and women in the corporate world, according to researchers. An analysis of **General Social Survey** data, a personal-interview survey designed to monitor sociological and attitudinal trends, conducted for The Wall Street Journal by researchers at the Rutgers Institute for the Study of Employee Ownership and Profit Sharing showed a substantial gap in the percentage of men and women who own their employer’s stock, as well as the overall value of those shares.”

“Glass ceiling tends to apply to promotions, but it’s a similar dynamic in that it perpetuates these inequities at the top and then helps increase the gender pay gap,” says Douglas Kruse, an economist and professor of human-resource management at Rutgers who worked on the **General Social Survey** analysis. “One of the implications, of course, is that women just aren’t going to build up the wealth that men do.”

nature

The effects of ideological value framing and symbolic racism on pro-environmental behavior

NOVEMBER 12, 2021

“As of yet, the majority of research related to environmental justice has focused on health and economic challenges as outcomes of racist and unequal systems, however a small set of studies have also examined racism as a potential suppressor of environmental concern. Benegal found that racial resentment correlated with reduced concern over climate change, particularly after Obama was elected president, indicating a “spillover of racialization” suggesting racial resentment as a cause of environmental indifference. Chanin found that racial resentment or symbolic racism predicted lower indices of self reported environmental concern based on data from the **General Social Survey**, and Dietz and colleagues found that racial resentment also predicted lower donation rates to a water quality organization following the severe water contamination in Flint, Michigan. This paper seeks to further explore the link between racial resentment and environmental indifference, while also utilizing value framing to appeal to audiences across the political spectrum.”

Forbes

New Evidence For The Broad Benefits of Higher Education

JUNE 27, 2019

“Americans with a college education report they are happier, healthier and enjoying a higher quality of life than respondents with a high school education or less. That’s one of the main takeaways from the recently released results of the 2018 **General Social Survey** (GSS).

Begun by NORC at the University of Chicago in 1972, the GSS is now conducted biennially, based on lengthy personal interviews with a nationally representative sample of thousands of adults. The GSS is highly regarded and heavily used by social scientists as a measure of what Americans think about a host of contemporary economic, social and personal issues such as quality of life, race relations, the environment, gender, marriage, politics and civil liberties.

Because the results can be stratified by personal characteristics of the respondents, it’s possible to examine how age, race, social class, education and respondents’ beliefs about themselves and their families relate to their views on various social and economic topics.

Included in the hundreds of questions are several that tap individuals’ feelings about their personal lives and well-being, with responses broken out by highest level of education completed (less than high school; high school; and college, which included a two-year degree or higher).”

HOUSTON★CHRONICLE

DECEMBER 14, 2021

Vast majority of American workers like their jobs – even as a record number quit them

“The General Social Survey, a reputable national survey of American adults, has been asking workers questions about how they feel about the quality of their working life since 2002.

There are actually three key types of questions it asks that help us get at this idea: the level of dissatisfaction with current work, turnover intention and confidence in finding a new job.”

The General Social Survey



About NORC

NORC at the University of Chicago (NORC) serves the public interest and improves lives through objective social science research that supports informed decision-making.

NORC at the University of Chicago is an objective, non-partisan research institution that delivers reliable data and rigorous analysis to guide critical decisions on some of the most important issues society faces. Since its founding in 1941, the organization's talented staff has conducted groundbreaking studies, created and applied innovative methods and tools, and advanced principles of scientific integrity and collaboration. Looking forward, NORC will continue to partner with government, corporate, and nonprofit clients around the world to transform increasingly complex information into useful knowledge.

To learn more, visit NORC.org.

www.MyGSS.norc.org

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