



The General Social Survey



2026 Media Coverage Highlights

America's Research Project Since 1972

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.



*Why are humans religious?
Scientists are studying miracles to find out.*

OCTOBER 16, 2025

“The **General Social Survey** from The University of Chicago, which has been monitoring social change since the 1970s, asked if respondents “believe in religious miracles” in 1991, 1998, 2008, and in 2018. In people who align with religious traditions, belief in miracles increased to 62 percent in 2018, a jump of fourteen points from 1991.”



*Despite what you may hear,
young women are still
interested in men*

MAY 2, 2025

“According to the University of Chicago’s **General Social Survey**, married women with children are by far the happiest women in America. Married women without children are the next happiest, followed by unmarried women with and without children, who are the unhappiest.”



CNA | Catholic News Agency

*Survey: Fewer Americans
confident about God’s existence,
but many still pray*

MAY 23, 2023

“According to the **GSS**, 28% of respondents said they pray several times a day, down slightly from a 2004 peak at 31%. Another 20% said they pray once a day, an increase from 16% in 2021 but down from 28% in 2018, where the figure had held steady for decades. Another 13% said they prayed several times a week, while 6% prayed once a week. The numbers of those who rarely or never pray are near a historic high: 34% said they prayed “less than once a week or never,” a decline from the 2021 peak at 38%.”

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 Dallas Morning News

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.”



Chappell Roan and comparing parenting to hell

MAY 6, 2025

“In the University of Chicago’s **General Social Survey** for 2022, almost 40% of married women with children described themselves as “very happy,” which was significantly higher than any other group of women. Less than 22% of unmarried women without children felt the same, and unmarried women with children were the least likely to say they were “very happy,” at just over 16%.”

The Washington Post

The irreducible problem for gun-control activists: The number of guns

MARCH 28, 2023

“From the early 1970s until the early 1990s, the rate of gun ownership in the United States was falling. That was true among both Democrats and Republicans, according to data from the national **General Social Survey (GSS)**... But since the early 2000s, the overall decline has stalled, with Republicans being slightly more likely to report owning guns and Democrats slightly less likely to.”



**Harvard
Business
School**

The True Costs of Gig Work

MAY 9, 2025

“Finally, [the authors] analyzed information from the University of Chicago’s **General Social Survey** to gauge how job structure, happiness, and financial satisfaction relate. The GSS collects information biannually to keep a historical picture of how people live their day-to-day lives in America.”

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Grand Old Party: How Aging Makes You More Conservative

OCTOBER 23, 2023

“If you became politically cognizant during a moment of successful government intervention, you may tend to lean left. If you started paying attention to the news in the age of a dynamic Republican president, you might lean right.

This theory, which political scientists call the impressionable years hypothesis, helps explain why the electorate has remained closely split even though the aging of the population has exerted rightward pressure on the voting pool. Data from the **General Social Survey**, conducted since the 1970s by NORC at the University of Chicago, shows how each generation has a different partisan origin story.”



Health care workers report increase in burnout, harassment since the COVID pandemic

OCTOBER 24TH, 2023

“The CDC analyzed data from the **General Social Survey** Quality of Worklife Module — conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago — to compare self-reported mental health symptoms from 2018 to 2022. Over the course of four years, health care workers saw an increase in poor mental health during the past 30 days from 3.3 days to 4.5 days. This increase was higher than among workers in other professions.”



Why Zoomers are getting more religious in the post-pandemic era.

APRIL 25, 2025

“Recently, The Economist analyzed findings from the **General Social Survey** conducted by the National Opinion Research Center, and found that Zoomers are the only generation not losing their religious affiliation. Why?”



THE ART NEWSPAPER

Pandemic-fueled shift from in-person to virtual art activities may be permanent, two US surveys suggest

OCTOBER 18, 2023

“The **GSS** results suggest that, even as the world started to return to in-person activities, digital engagement remained high, with 30% of respondents reporting engaging in one or more digital arts activities more often than in the first year of the pandemic.”



Americans less likely to have sex, partner up and get married than ever

FEBRUARY 14, 2022

“The **General Social Survey** has, on and off since 1986, asked participants whether they had a steady partner. This past year, 30% of adults ages 25 to 54 (the same age bracket as the Pew study) indicated that they did not have a steady partner. In 1986, it was 20%. In fact, the percentage of 25- to 54-year-olds who said they didn’t have a steady partner never topped 23% prior to the 2010s. It’s been 25% or above in every survey since.”



The Atlantic

America’s ‘Marriage Material’ Shortage

FEBRUARY 3, 2025

“According to **General Social Survey** data, Americans’ self-described life satisfaction has been decreasing for decades. ... In a 2023 analysis of the **GSS** data, the University of Chicago economist Sam Peltzman concluded that marriage was more correlated with this measure of happiness than any other variable he considered, including income.”

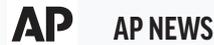


Americans Have Not Been Able to Have the Number of Children They Want

MARCH 4, 2025

“For most of the past century, a gap has existed between the total fertility rate and ideal family size. Since 1933, Gallup has polled Americans on the question “What do you think is the ideal number of children for a family to have?” **The General Social Survey (GSS)**, administered by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago, has asked the same question since 1972.

The results from the Gallup and **GSS** surveys have generally agreed with one another [It illustrates how close Americans’ ideal fertility preferences are to the number of children they are currently on track to have].”



Confidence in science fell in 2022 while political divides persisted, poll shows

JUNE 15, 2023

“Overall, 39% of U.S. adults said they had “a great deal of confidence” in the scientific community, down from 48% in 2018 and 2021. That’s according to the **General Social Survey**, a long-running poll conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago that has monitored Americans’ opinions on key topics since 1972.”

Opinion | From Defenders to Skeptics: Young Americans' Support for Free Speech Has Sharply Declined

MAY 21, 2025

“Sociologist Jean Twenge has tracked changes in attitudes using data from the **General Social Survey**, a biennial survey conducted by the University of Chicago’s National Opinion Research Center.

Since the 1970s, this survey has asked Americans whether controversial figures – racists, communists and anti-religionists – should be allowed to speak. Support for such rights generally increased from the Greatest Generation, born between 1900-1924, to Gen X, born between 1965-1979.

But Gen Z, those born between 1995-2004, has reversed that trend. Despite the fact that the Cold War, which pitted the communist Soviet Union and its allies against the democratic West, ended more than three decades ago, even support for the free speech rights of communists has declined.”

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.”



Dog owners are ‘happier’ than cat owners

APRIL 8, 2019

“The **General Social Survey (GSS)** which is run by social research organization NORC at the University of Chicago, found that 36 per cent of dog owners report being “very happy” compared to just 18 per cent of cat owners.”

Americans face growing loneliness and social disconnection

DECEMBER 27, 2025

“Americans are less likely to join civic groups, unions and churches than in recent generations. They have fewer friends, are less trusting of each other, and less likely to hang out in a local bar or coffee shop, recent polling indicates... About one-quarter of Americans say most people can be trusted- down from about half in 1972, according to the **General Social Survey**.”

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.

GSSweb.NORC.org

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