

# The General Social Survey



2022 GSS  
(Cross-section  
Study)

What's New in 2022  
– The Latest on GSS  
Methodology  
Release 3



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# INTRODUCTION

## Introduction to the General Social Survey (GSS)

The General Social Survey (GSS) has been tracking trends in public opinion since 1972. To keep every aspect of the survey as comparable as possible, the GSS generally minimizes changes to its design over time. This includes maintaining the same sampling approach over long periods of time and not altering question wording for questions that have been previously asked on the GSS. The goal is always the same: enabling the cleanest comparison to show changes in public opinion in the United States.

The GSS introduced methodological changes in the 2022 Cross-section survey, compared with previous GSS Cross-section studies. The changes relate to shifts in the mode of data collection, experiments related to mode of data collection, oversamples of Hispanic, Black, and Asian respondents, and a new design which allowed for follow-on studies. Most notably, the 2022 GSS Cross-section is a multi-mode study, with respondents able to complete via a face-to-face interview, a web self-administered questionnaire, or, if necessary, a phone interview.



We recommend our users include one of the following statements when reporting on the GSS 2021 and 2022 Cross-section data:

### **Total Survey Error Summary Perspective for the GSS Cross-section:**

Changes in opinions, attitudes, and behaviors observed in 2021 and 2022 relative to historical trends may be due to actual change in concept over time and/or may have resulted from methodological changes made to the survey methodology during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

### **Suggested Statement to Include in Articles and Reports That Use GSS Data**

Changes in opinions, attitudes, and behaviors observed in 2021 and 2022 relative to historical trends may be due to actual change in concept over time and/or may have resulted from methodological changes made to the survey methodology during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Research and interpretation done using the 2021 and 2022 GSS data should take extra care to ensure the analysis reflects actual changes in public opinion and is not unduly influenced by the change in data collection methods. For more information on the 2021 and 2022 GSS methodology and its implications, please visit <https://gss.norc.org/Get-The-Data>.



# What is New About the 2022 GSS Release 3: Frequently Asked Questions

## What are the new elements of the 2022 GSS Cross-Section in Release 3?

- The 2022 GSS R3 includes four new elements which users should be aware of:
  - Oversample of minorities (based on AmeriSpeak® Panel), available only in the single-year datafile for 2022;
  - Household composition and Respondent Selection data;
  - Post-stratified weights for all years of the GSS (both single-year and Cumulative datafile); and
  - Paradata for the 2022 GSS.

These are all in addition to changes previously released for the 1972-2022 GSS Cross-section, as well as the changes related to the shift in mode in 2021. For a full rundown of these changes, please see the [2022](#) and [2021](#) GSS Cross-section codebooks.

## What is the oversample of minorities using the AmeriSpeak® Panel?

- The 2022 GSS Cross-Section includes an oversample of Hispanic, Black, and Asian people, drawn from NORC's AmeriSpeak® Panel. AmeriSpeak® is an online probability panel of households drawn from the same sample frame as the General Social Survey. Households with known demographics of interest were invited to take the baseline GSS. AmeriSpeak® respondents did not participate in either the NEA or GSS Next follow-ons in 2022.
- AmeriSpeak® cases have been included in the 2022 single-year datafile only, not the Cumulative 1972-2022 datafile.
- In the 2022 single-year datafile, AmeriSpeak® cases are treated at parity with all other GSS cases. Post-stratification weights have been created to incorporate the additional 605 AmeriSpeak® cases allowing all 4,149 cases to be analyzed together: WTSSPS\_AS and WTSSNRPS\_AS.
- GSS Methodological Report 138 (expected April 2024) will analyze the impact of integrating the AmeriSpeak® cases into the single year 2022 GSS data.

## What are the new Household Composition and Respondent Selection data?

- Beginning with the 2022 GSS, the study has decoupled the Respondent Selection and Household Composition aspects of the Household Enumeration Form (used from 1975-2018).
- Respondent Selection occurs at the household doorstep, or online, depending on the mode of data collection. A household informant provides information on the adults who live in the household, and a respondent is selected at random using that adult roster.
- Household Composition is a module within the GSS interview, after the GSS Replicating Core. The GSS respondent completes a roster of all adults, children, and visitors in the household, and provides demographic information, as well as relationships between household members.
- An experimental Household Composition module was also included in 2022, which does not include a full household roster or relationships between all household members, only relationships centered around the respondent.
- Most historic GSS variables gathered from the Household Enumeration Form have been maintained, although some names have changed to reflect differing sources of information. See Table 3 in the [2022 GSS Codebook](#)



for a full breakdown of the correspondences between Respondent Selection, traditional Household Composition and experimental Household Composition.

### What are the new weights available in the 2022 GSS?

- The 1972-2022 GSS cumulative datafile now includes post-stratification weights for all years of the study, 1972-2022. These post-stratification weights are recommended above all other previous GSS weights.
  - WTSSPS combines both survey design (e.g., number of adults in the household, as only one adult can respond) and post-stratification benchmarks (e.g., age, sex, region of the country).
  - WTSSNRPS adds an additional nonresponse adjustment to the WTSSPS weight.
- Both of these weights have folded in previous GSS weights designed to correct for specific issues. FORMWT (used in the 1980s to correct for FORM imbalances), BALLOTFORMWT (used in the 2000s and 2010s to correct for BALLOT and FORM imbalances), and OVERSAMP (used to control the 1982 and 1987 black oversamples) have all been accounted for in WTSSPS and WTSSNRPS.
  - The Black oversamples in 1982 and 1987 are now included in analysis by default for those years. Users should expect to see 1,860 cases in 1982 and 1,819 cases in 1987.
- Post-stratification weights are tuned using all cases in any given year, and are not designed for single-mode analysis (Face-to-face, phone, or web), in any year of GSS data. At present, there are no single-mode weights in either the 1972-2022 Cumulative datafile or the 2022 single-year datafile.
- Post-stratification weights to analyze the 2022 GSS data including the AmeriSpeak® oversample are also available in the 2022 single-year datafile: WTSSPS\_AS and WTSSNRPS\_AS. These weights are parallel to WTSSPS and WTSSNRPS.
  - While the release includes both weights, **WTSSNRPS\_AS is the recommended weight for analyzing the combined baseline and AmeriSpeak® samples for the 2022 GSS, and WTSSPS\_AS is not recommended.**

### What are the new paradata for the 2022 GSS?

- As of 2021, the GSS now releases a separate paradata file associated with each single year GSS datafile. The datafile contains relevant ID and YEAR for the single year, but does not include any other variables found in the traditional single-year or Cumulative datafile.
- Several different types of paradata are made available in the 2022 paradata file
  - Timestamps between sections of the questionnaire
  - Mode flags associated with transitions between sections of the questionnaire
  - Device Type, OS, and Web Browser associated with each ID.
- Due to its nature, and the difficulty of working with the GSS's traditional timing formats, the paradata file is not cleaned in the same manner as the single-year or Cumulative datafile, and may contain inconsistent or contradictory information, particularly with regards to timestamps.
- Paradata is only available in SAS.



## Previous Frequently Asked Questions (Release 2 and Release 1)

### What are the new elements of the 2022 GSS Cross-Section?

- The 2022 GSS adds four new elements which all users should be aware of:
  - Experimental assignment of multi-mode design;
  - Oversample of minorities (based on AmeriSpeak® Panel);
  - Follow-on studies (based on web-based instruments); and
  - New weights (post-stratification weights).

These are all in addition to changes which were first implemented in the 2021 GSS Cross-section (For a full rundown of these changes, please see the [2021 GSS Cross-section codebook](#)).

### What is the new multi-mode design?

- The 2022 GSS was conducted via face-to-face interview, web self-administered questionnaire, and computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI). Depending on the experimental condition that participants were assigned to, respondents could complete the study in any of the available modes (face to face, web or phone). There were also a few experiments implemented in the web mode only.

### What are the effects of the new multi-mode design?

- The new design accomplishes several goals:
  - Multiple modes bring in more participants by allowing respondents to choose their comfort level and mode of response.
  - Multi-mode designs are more cost effective allowing for more completed interviews than face-to-face only surveys.
  - The 2022 GSS can help bridge the traditional face-to-face design (from 1972-2018) and the web self-administered design necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic (2021).
  - The GSS can support now research to study mode sensitivity based on face-to-face or web administration, as single-mode rounds cannot be used to examine mode effects.
  - The multi-mode design allows for the inclusion of follow-on studies (more on that below), which add additional content without lengthening the baseline interview.
- The 2022 design has two initial advisories:
  - Some variables are sensitive to mode of administration and show different distributions by mode. As the GSS is intended to be used as a whole sample, it does not yet include mode-specific weights (although we expect them in the future).
  - Any mode-specific experiments (such as the volunteered-not volunteered experiment on the web only) are necessarily sensitive to mode of administration.



### What is the multi-mode assignment experiment?

- Cases in the 2022 GSS were initially assigned to be fielded in either the web self-administered or face-to-face mode. After mail, mode-specific follow-up, and telephone outreach, cases that did not complete in their initial mode were offered the other mode (e.g., a face-to-face case was offered the web self-administered questionnaire as a final option).

### What are the follow-on studies?

- The 2022 GSS included two different follow-on studies: a module on arts participation before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts, and GSS Next, a multi-subject module put together by various sponsors including the GSS Scientific Advisory Board.
- Respondents who completed the baseline interview were eligible to participate in one or both of the follow-on studies, depending on when the respondent completed that baseline interview. The follow-on studies are both included in the 2022 GSS Cross-section data like any other variables. Respondent participation can be tracked by the variables NEASTATUS and NEXTSTATUS respectively.

### What changes were made to the GSS in 2021?

- The 2021 GSS Cross-section was conducted primarily on the web, with minimal phone interviewing. As a result, many aspects of the GSS had to be redesigned, as they relied upon interviewers who could no longer participate in the interview. This includes how questions were worded, how the GSS handles “Don’t Know” and “No Answer” responses, and how respondents were selected. For a full rundown of these changes, please see the [2021 GSS Cross-section codebook](#).

### What do users need to understand about mode effects in the GSS?

- The GSS has traditionally been conducted face to face, and face to face interviews have been shown to have mode effects (e.g., when survey questions asked by an interviewer may elicit socially desirable responses). These mode effects were consistent year-to-year because the mode of the GSS was consistent year to year (i.e., face to face). Due to necessity during the pandemic, in 2021, the GSS was fielded as a web self-administered questionnaire. This new mode came with its own mode effects (e.g., higher rates of satisficing or skipping items, higher breakoffs). We would expect these web mode effects to be constant year to year if the GSS had remained a web-only study, as well. However, the 2022 GSS is multi-mode, which means that each mode can be used as a tool to understand the other modes, and, by extension, help clarify previous mode effects, in both 2021 and prior years.

### Why is NORC proposing researchers exercise caution in interpreting mode sensitive variables?

- There are several potential reasons for caution with mode sensitive variables:
  - We expected several variables to be sensitive to mode of administration; however, we could not know which variables would be sensitive without first collecting and analyzing the data. The GSS contains nearly a thousand variables in any given year, and while we have identified some mode-sensitive variables, others may appear with further analysis.
  - The degree of mode sensitivity changes by variable, as does the direction of the effect. In other words, the web is not always more extreme than face-to-face, nor is face-to-face always more neutral than the web. Neither mode is correct and neither mode is incorrect; they merely yield some differences.



### Why did NORC not leave the methodology as it had been so trends could be more easily calculated?

- The GSS curated trends are only one part of the General Social Survey. Another part is the cumulative dataset, which supports a vibrant scientific community. The various consequences of the multi-mode design are scientifically interesting, and we want to make sure that the scientific community can work with the data as quickly as possible. We will determine the best ways to harmonize the variables that make up the GSS's many trends in concert with the scientific community, and release fully harmonized trends after more researchers have had the chance to weigh in on the process.
- The GSS has always been at the forefront of innovation for large-scale, nationally representative surveys. The design of the GSS shifts with scientific innovations in survey research, but always in responsible ways which allow the study to bridge between existing and new designs and paradigms. The changes implemented in 2022 and the ones planned for 2024 allow the GSS to bridge the previous design, based on face to face data collection, with new designs that allow both more respondent flexibility, lower costs for the research and higher sample sizes. In this way, the GSS ensures that it remains the gold standard of scientific survey data for the future.