

CALL FOR PROPOSALS TO ADD QUESTIONS TO THE 2026 GSS

Summary. The General Social Survey invites proposals to add questions to its 2026 survey. Proposals will be accepted based on scientific quality and scholarly interest; outside funding is not necessary. The deadline for submissions is February 10, 2025.

The General Social Survey (GSS) is a biennial nationally representative survey of non-institutionalized adults in the United States. To promote continued innovation, the GSS project plans to include some items or very short topical modules designed by GSS users in its 2026 survey.

GSS has separate processes for additional content depending on whether outside funding is involved. Processes for items and modules with outside funding are discussed at the end of this call. The first part of this call focuses on the GSS Module Competition, which is funded directly by the core grant for the GSS from the National Science Foundation (NSF). Users whose items are selected via this competition do not need to provide any funding for them.

Module competition proposals are limited to no more than **5 survey items** and up to **5 pages** (single line spacing, Times New Roman 12, including key references), which must include the wording of the items being proposed. Although the limit is five items, successful proposals typically have included three or fewer items. A survey item is the equivalent of a single question that elicits a single response. Multipart questions represent multiple items.

It is likely that items selected through the Module Competition will be on the GSS Next, a web-based follow-up survey of approximately 1,000 GSS respondents. These respondents can be linked across the main and follow-up surveys, allowing users to include core items in their analyses of GSS Next questions. The sampling frame for the GSS Next is the same as for the main GSS, and weights will be provided.

Proposals for New Content

We solicit proposals on any substantive topic. Users are encouraged to think broadly, flexibly, and creatively when considering items to propose. They may, for example, propose to collect data from some subset of GSS respondents (e.g., employed persons, currently married persons, or persons who have attended religious services in the past year). Proposals for survey experiments that administer alternative question wordings to randomly designated subsets of respondents are also welcome; such experiments may address substantive social science questions, issues of survey methodology, or both. Statistical power considerations are relevant, since items can be measured for all GSS respondents or for some randomly drawn subsample of them. Proposals should consider how large a sample is required to draw conclusions.

Generally, questions on the GSS are fixed choice survey items. Other formats are also possible (e.g., open-ended items or limited stimulus materials provided via audio or video), but such variations often increase interview and development time, complexity and cost (coding costs are substantial for open-ended items, for example). Proposals for such items should explain why, on scientific grounds, the additional expense is justified.

Criteria for Choosing Content

The GSS provides innovative, high-quality data to a large, interdisciplinary social science user community. In evaluating proposals, the GSS Board and GSS principal investigators will keep this broad objective in mind.

The Board and PIs will use the following criteria in selecting and developing items submitted in response to this call:

1. Above all, new content must be of high scientific quality, appropriate to the GSS, and justified on substantive, theoretical, or methodological grounds.
2. New content must be useful to a wide range of users (e.g., researchers, teachers, policymakers, etc.) that extends beyond the investigator(s) making a proposal. New content ideally will enhance the understanding and/or usefulness of GSS items in the replicating core GSS data previously collected as part of a topical module, or data from other sources (e.g., to be used for comparisons). The variables available in the most recent round of the GSS can be found here: <https://gss.norc.org/content/dam/gss/get-documentation/pdf/other/2022%20Release%20Variables.pdf>, and more guidelines on the variables considered part of the replicating core, as well as ballot allocations for those variables can be found here: <https://gss.norc.org/content/dam/gss/get-documentation/pdf/other/2020%20GSS%20Replicating%20Core.pdf>. Because the items submitted in response to this call are unlikely to be administered on future GSSs, they should be expected to elicit enough variation across sampled respondents that they can support analysis by the GSS user community following the release of the 2026 GSS data.
3. A primary mission of the GSS is to study social change in the United States over time through replication of survey items. Items that contribute to this mission because they have previously been administered in nationally representative studies of US adults (including past GSSs) are often of interest for this reason.
4. Similarly, the GSS seeks to understand the US by comparison with other world societies. Proposals to compare the US with other societies by including items that have been administered in recent nationally representative studies conducted in other societies may be of interest for this reason.
5. New content must meet human subjects protections, in compliance with the GSS project's IRB approval, NSF and NORC policies. Investigators should determine whether they must also obtain IRB approval at their own institutions.
6. New content must fit within the overall time framework of the survey and must not interfere with respondent cooperation and/or the integrity of responses to questions later in the survey.

Timeline for Proposals and Development of Items

To be considered for inclusion in the 2026 GSS, investigators should submit proposals to Rene Bautista, co-Principal Investigator of the GSS at NORC, bautista-rene@norc.org; phone (312) 201-6847) no later than **February 10, 2025**. Please consider including as email subject line “GSS module competition 2026” and your last name; for instance, “GSS module competition 2026-Smith”.

Proposals submitted in response to this call will be first reviewed by the GSS Board at its Spring 2025 meeting. At that meeting, some proposals will be selected for subsequent development, which can entail the exchange of advice and ideas between the Board, the PIs, and the proposer(s), informed by both cognitive and conventional pretesting of items by NORC. The Board and PIs will then select some items for inclusion in a conventional pretest that would be conducted in the summer of 2025, which will establish (among many other things) the actual interview time requirements of the proposed items. At its Fall 2025 meeting, the Board will further evaluate proposed items and ultimately select those to include in the 2026 GSS.

It is important that investigators understand that inclusion of items in the GSS is not assured until the items have undergone the full cycle of development described above, and until the GSS Board has decided to include them in the GSS at its Fall 2025 meeting. Space on GSS interview schedules is always severely limited and always contingent on NSF funding. The Board may require changes in the wording of proposed survey items based on pretest evidence or other considerations, though such changes will be made in consultation with proposers. Likewise, due to the scarcity of interview time, the Board may elect to include only a subset of the items suggested in a proposal.

After data are collected, they will be made publicly available to all GSS users along with the rest of the 2026 GSS, roughly six months after 2026 data collection is complete. Proposers will **not** have exclusive access to data collected using their items for any period of time.

Proposal Length and Format

Proposals submitted in response to this call should be **no more than 5 pages (single space, Times New Roman 12, including key references)** and should propose **1 to 5 survey items**. Proposals should address the following points:

1. The background and the scientific, theoretical, or methodological motivation for inclusion of the topic in the GSS;
2. The specific survey items or questions that would be included in the GSS, together with available evidence of data quality;
3. Previous knowledge about the appearance of the items, or items on similar topics, in the GSS or other surveys, and their use in published research;
4. The appropriateness of the GSS for the proposed items, to include any synergies they may involve with GSS project objectives or existing GSS items;

5. Proposals to measure a given concept using multiple items should indicate priorities among the items.

Proposals from groups of investigators as well as individual investigators are welcomed.

For an example of a successful proposal, please contact Rene Bautista, co-Principal Investigator of the GSS at NORC (bautista-rene@norc.org; phone: (312) 201-6847).

The Board and PIs will review and discuss proposals submitted in response to this call, and investigators whose proposals have been selected for further development will be notified in the Spring 2025. At that point, the Board and PIs may request that investigators provide additional information and suggest that separate groups of proposers with interest in similar topics collaborate as part of working groups to develop a topical module. The Board usually provides investigators who submit unsuccessful proposals with brief summaries of reasons that their proposals were not selected, but the overall volume of proposals prevents the Board from providing detailed critiques.

Proposals with outside funding

While recent NSF grants that have provided principal support for the GSS have funded the GSS Module Competition, the GSS project must also raise additional support from other sources to cover the full costs of the survey. Outside-funded proposals for space on the GSS are considered as a separate process from the Module Competition. Investigators who have obtained, or might wish to seek, outside funding for their items should consult the document “Guidelines for Prospective GSS Module Proposals” available on the GSS website: see <https://gss.norc.org/content/dam/gss/get-documentation/pdf/other/GSS%202026%20Guidelines%20for%20Paid%20Supplements.pdf>, and they should contact Rene Bautista, co-Principal Investigator of the GSS at NORC (bautista-rene@norc.org; phone: (312) 201-6847).

Note that this GSS module competition is contingent upon NORC being awarded funding to conduct the 2026 by the National Science Foundation (NSF). The 2026 NSF GSS grant is still being reviewed by NSF. For additional information about the GSS and its study design, please consult the official NORC/GSS website at <http://gss.norc.org> or send an email to gss@norc.org.