

Data collection plan for GSS 2020

March 15, 2021

This note briefly provides the final plan for the General Social Survey in 2020. The plan was reviewed and approved by the Board of Overseers. It was made after a careful consideration of all available strategies and feasible modes for data collection, given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and the unknowns associated with the epidemiology of the virus for both respondents and interviewers. The plan also takes into consideration the timeliness of scientific research and data collection at this critical period of time in the US and global history.

The GSS will not be fielded as a traditional face-to-face GSS survey in 2020 given the current health concerns with COVID-19 and conducting surveys in a respondent's home. The 2020 GSS will be conducted through two separate studies that will both employ a mixed-mode web and telephone survey: (1) the first study will be a panel study which will follow up with 2018 and 2016 cross-section GSS respondents and (2) the second will be a nationwide cross-section survey of the US adult population. The combination of these two studies provides the best opportunity to understand the changing nature of the population and honor the tradition of the GSS as a historical cross-sectional study.

Nationwide panel survey. The first study will be a reduced GSS survey which will be a panel re-contact of 2018 GSS and 2016 GSS respondents. This study will enable researchers to measure potential change at the individual person level as it offers a unique opportunity to try to separate out age, period and cohort effects during the critical period of American history. The focus of the panel will be on a collaboration with the American National Election Studies and intends to collect data from August through October 2020.

Nationwide cross-section survey. The second study will be a cross-section address-based sample (ABS) nationally representative of the general US household population based on a "push to web" methodology with some telephone interviews being conducted as well. This survey will provide the core 2020 cross-section data for the GSS cumulative time series. The cross-section study is expected to launch in November. This cross-section will also include the majority of the GSS supplemental modules, including topical modules on Social Inequality, Environmentalism, Religion, and High Risk Behaviors. This study will be used to create the 2020 public use cumulative GSS file. Along with the data, NORC will provide data user documentation that explains potential methodological impacts that are due to the change in the primary survey mode (versus change in the actual estimates themselves over time).

The GSS is aiming to release panel data in mid-spring and the cross-section data in mid- to late summer of 2021.