SEX AND THE GSS: Nonresponse Differences - An Update

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This updates and should be used in conjunction with Tom W. Smith, "Sex and the GSS – Nonresponse Differences," GSS Methodological Report No. 9. Chicago: NORC, 1979.

Addendum: 1972-2018

There have been only minor changes in the gender representation on the GSS through 2018 from what was described in this report written 40 years earlier. Table A1 shows the weighted and unweighted distributions of men and women on full-probability (FP) GSSs from 1975 through 2018. In all years the FP surveys underrepresent men. While the precise distribution of men and women has varied slightly over these years, it has remained close to adults in the United States being 48% men and 52% women for a true gender gap of about -4 percentage points. All gender difference levels show that men are being underrepresented in all FP GSSs well above the -4.0 points difference that should be found. The weighted figures are notably better than the unweighted figures. The weighting adjusts for design weights to give all adults living in households an equal probability of representation. In all years the weight adjusts for the number of eligible respondents in the household and in 2006-2018 it also adjusts for a second component, the sub-sampling of Nonrespondents (Smith, 2006; Smith et al., 2019). In 1970s-1990s the grouped weighed figures at the bottom of table A1 show reductions of the underrepresentation of men compared to the unweighted figures by 3.4 to 4.2 points and in 2000s and 2010s the gains are 1.8 to 2.4 points. The unweighted figures show a decline in the underrepresentation on men from -13.4 to -14.4 in the first three time periods to -10.6 to -10.8 in the two most recent periods. The weighted figures however show much less change over time from -10.8 in the 1970s, -10.4 in the 1980s, -9.2 in the 1990s, -8.2 in

the 2000s, and -9.0 in the 2010s. Thus, even when properly weighted and taking the slightly improved levels in the last two decades, men are still underrepresented by about a gender gap of about 4-5 points.

In 1972-1974 and on half of the 1975-1976 samples, the GSS used probability sampling with quotas (PSQ) rather than FP sampling. The block level quotas were based on a combination of gender, age, and employment status (Stephenson, 1979). Given the quota on gender, it is not surprising that the gender distributions using PSQ come closer to the true gender distribution than the FP surveys do (Table A2). But they still have problems. It appears that in 1972 the quota was set to yield equal numbers of men and women which overrepresents men, and in 1973, 1974, and 1976 the unweighted figures show men are still slightly underrepresented despite the quotas being better set. When design weights are applied, the overrepresentation of men in 1972 climbs to + 5.2. In 1973-1976, the weighted gender distributions are close to the target, but with slight overrepresentation of men.

In 1982 and 1987, there were oversamples of blacks in the GSS (Tourangeau and Smith, 1985; Smith, 1989). As Table A3 shows, black men are heavily underrepresented in both oversamples. Proper weighting only slightly reduces the underrepresentation. Even though the male proportion in the adult black population is lower than the overall male share of the adult household population, the underrepresentation of males in the black oversamples is greater than the male underrepresentation for the total population.

Overall, the underrepresentation of males in the GSS and other FP household samples in the United States remains a continuing nonresponse bias

affecting the representativeness of surveys.

Table A1

Gender Distributions on the GSS's Full Probability Samples

	Weighted			Unweighted		
	Men	Women	Men – Women	Men	Women	Men - Women
1975	44.2	55.8	-11.6	41.8	58.2	-16.4
1976	43.2	56.8	-13.6	42.2	57.8	-15.6
1977	46.6	53.4	-10.0	45.3	54.7	- 9.4
1978	43.3	56.7	-13.4	42.0	58.0	-16.0
1980	41.1	55.9	-14.8	43.7	56.3	-12.6
1982	44.8	55.2	-10.4	42.4	57.6	-15.2
1983	45.1	54.9	- 9.8	43.2	56.8	-13.6
1984	42.6	57.4	-14.8	40.6	59.4	-18.8
1985	47.2	52.8	- 5.6	44.9	55.1	-10.2
1986	44.1	55.9	-11.8	42.2	57.8	-15.6
1987	44.5	54.5	-10.0	43.7	56.3	-12.6
1988	45.1	54.9	- 9.8	43.1	56.9	-13.8
1989	45.2	54.8	- 9.6	42.9	57.1	-14.2
1990	45.2	54.8	- 9.6	44.0	56.0	-12.0
1991	44.2	55.8	-11.6	41.9	58.1	-16.2
1993	44.4	55.6	-11.2	42.7	57.3	-14.6
1994	45.5	54.5	- 9.0	43.1	56.9	-13.8
1996	46.8	53.2	- 6.4	44.2	55.8	-11.6
1998	45.0	55.0	-10.0	43.5	56.5	-13.0
2000	45.2	54.8	- 9.6	43.6	56.4	-12.8
2002	45.8	54.2	- 8.4	44.4	55.6	-11.2
2004	46.3	53.7	- 7.4	45.5	54.5	- 9.0
2006	45.6	54.4	- 8.8	44.4	55.6	-11.2
2008	47.0	53.0	- 6.0	46.0	54.0	- 8.0
2010	45.2	54.8	- 9.6	43.6	56.4	-12.8
2012	46.1	53.9	- 7.8	44.8	55.2	-10.4
2014	45.5	54.5	- 9.0	45.0	55.0	-10.0
2016	45.2	54.8	- 9.6	44.5	55.5	-11.0
2018	45.5	54.5	- 9.0	49.8	55.2	-10.4
1975-79	44.6	55.2	-10.8	43.1	56.9	-13.8
1980-89	44.8	55.2	-10.4	47.8	57.2	-14.4
1990-99	45.4	54.6	- 9.2	43.3	56.7	-13.4
2000-09	45.9	54.1	- 8.2	44.7	55.3	-10.6
2010-18	45.5	54.5	- 9.0	44.6	55.4	-10.8

Table A2

Gender Distributions on the GSS's Probability Sampling with Quotas Surveys

	Weighted			Unweighted		
	Men	Women	Men – Women	Men	Women	Men - Women
1972	52.6	47.4	+ 5.2	50.5	50.0	0.0
1973	47.9	52.1	- 4.2	46.6	53.4	- 6.8
1974	48.4	51.6	- 3.2	46.6	53.4	- 6.8
1975	48.9	51.1	- 2.2	48.1	51.9	- 3.8
1976	49.2	50.8	- 1.6	47.0	53.0	- 6.0

Table A3

Gender Distributions on the GSS's Black Oversamples

	Weighted			Unweighted		
	Men	Women	Men – Women	Men	Women	Men - Women
1982	40.5	59.5	-19.0	39.5	60.5	-21.0
1987	40.0	60.0	-20.0	38.8	61.2	-22.4

Appendix References

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