

The 1992 General Social Survey Reinterview

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In 1992 NORC reinterviewed respondents from the 1991 General Social Survey (GSS). The 1991 GSS was an in-person, full-probability sample of adults living in households in the United States. There were 1,517 cases and a response rate of 78%. The survey was conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC), University of Chicago under the direction of James A. Davis, Harvard University, and Tom W. Smith, NORC. Full technical details are given in Davis and Smith, 1991.

Basic support for the GSS comes from the National Science Foundation. Also, in 1991 United Way of America, Andrew Greeley, and the Rockefeller Foundation provided additional support.

In 1992 NORC attempted to locate and reinterview all 1,517 respondents to the 1991 GSS. Support for the reinterview came from the National Science Foundation. Interviews were completed with 84% or 1,273 of the 1991 GSS respondents. 1,041 were reinterviewed by mail and 232 by telephone.

Of the 244 nonrespondents 115 could not be located, 100 refused, 20 were unable to respond for other reasons (e.g. physically or mentally incapable of answering questions), 8 were deceased, and 1 was unavailable.

Table 1 compares the attributes of those who were reinterviewed (1,273) to the original 1991 GSS respondents (1,517). The Probability column tests whether the reinterviews significantly differed from all 1991 GSS respondents. On most demographics (sex, marital status, household type, community type, employment status, age, and religion) there are no statistically significant differences between respondents and non-respondents. That is, the reinterviews are representative of the initial respondents.

However, on three dimensions respondents and non-respondents do differ. First, respondents are more up-scale. Fewer reinterviewees have less than a high school education or a family income below \$12,500. Also, Blacks are underrepresented. However, a multivariate analysis of non-response indicates that race is not independently related to non-response (Table 2). Blacks are less represented only because they tend to be less educated and poorer than non-Blacks.

Second, non-response is higher among those rated as less cooperative at the time of the initial interview. Those rated by the interviewers as low in cooperation at the 1991 interview and who refused their family income in 1991 were less likely to do the reinterview in 1992. The multivariate analysis indicates that SES and cooperation are independently related to response (Table 2).

Third, non-response is higher among non-voters. While non-voters tend to have lower SES, non-voting is independently related to non-responding.

For a related analysis of supplement nonresponse to earlier GSSs see Smith, 1986.

To adjust for the differential response, a weighting variable (PANELWT) was created based on education and family income. This weight compensates for the underrepresentation of the less educated and lower income respondents in the 1992 reinterview. While this weight does not seem to change results very much, researchers

should consider using it to help make the 1992 reinterview a representative sample of the US adult population.

Analysts may also wish to use a weight based on number of adults in the household in 1991 (ADULTS). This weighting factor is explained in Appendix A of Davis and Smith (1991) and in Stephenson (1978).

The 1992 GSS reinterview is available from the Roper Center and the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research as a stand alone file. Data from the 1992 GSS reinterview is not contained in the 1972-1991 cumulative file. The 1992 GSS reinterview file contains all 1,517 respondents interviewed in 1991. This includes the 1,273 successfully reinterviewed in 1992 and the 244 nonrespondents.

In addition, data from the International Social Survey Program questions on social inequality which formed the majority of the 1992 reinterview questions will also be available in the cross-national file prepared by the Central Archive for Empirical Social Research in Cologne, Germany. This file should be ready in 1994.

Table 1

Comparison of 1991 GSS Respondents
to 1992 GSS Reinterview Respondents

| Attributes | 1991 GSS | Reinterviews | Prob. ^a |
|----------------------------|----------|--------------|--------------------|
| % Female | 55.8 | 55.6 | .639 |
| % Big Central City | 20.8 | 20.4 | .456 |
| % Age, 18-29 | 20.1 | 19.1 | .163 |
| % Employed | 58.3 | 58.9 | .329 |
| % Protestant | 63.0 | 63.3 | .481 |
| % Never Married | 21.4 | 21.0 | .210 |
| % Couple with Kids | 25.3 | 25.8 | .180 |
| % Less than High School | 20.1 | 17.8 | .000 |
| % Income below \$12,500 | 21.2 | 19.4 | .000 |
| % Black | 13.4 | 12.3 | .003 |
| % Cooperative | 75.1 | 78.1 | .000 |
| % Not Voting, 1988 | 34.0 | 31.3 | .000 |
| | (1,517) | (1,273) | |

^aThe probability tests whether the reinterviews differ significantly from the 1991 GSS respondents. The test compares how respondents and nonrespondents differed in the whole distributions (e.g. all age groups and educational levels). Only one category for each variable (e.g. those 18-29 and those with less than a high school education) is displayed above.

Table 2

Multiple Regression Analysis of Nonresponding to 1992 GSS

| Variables (High Category) | Coefficient/Prob. |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Cooperation (Good) | .143/.000 |
| Years of School (20+) | .093/.002 |
| Voted in 1988 (Did) | .084/.003 |
| Family Income (\$75,000+) | .063/.034 |
| Race (Non-Black) | .036/.187 |
| | $r^2=.06$ |
| | (1333) |

References

- Davis, James A. and Smith, Tom W., General Social Surveys, 1992-1991: Cumulative Codebook. Chicago: NORC, 1991.
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- Stephenson, C. Bruce, "Weighting the General Social Surveys for Bias Relating to Household Size," GSS Methodological Report No. 3. Chicago: NORC, 1978.