

The General Social Survey



# 2020 Media Coverage Highlights

America's Research Project Since 1972

## About the General Social Survey

Established in 1972, the General Social Survey (GSS) is NORC's longest-running project and one of its most influential. Except for U.S. Census data, the GSS is the most frequently analyzed source of information in the social sciences. GSS data are used in an enormous number of newspaper, magazine, and journal articles, by legislators, policymakers, and educators. The New York Times has described it as "the scholarly gold standard for understanding social phenomena."

The GSS gathers data on contemporary American society in order to monitor and explain trends and constants in attitudes, behaviors, and attributes; to examine the structure and functioning of society in general, as well as the role played by relevant subgroups; to compare the United States to other societies in order to place American society in comparative perspective and develop cross-national models of human society; and to make high-quality data easily accessible to scholars, students, policymakers, and others.

The GSS has contributed to articles on a vast array of topics, including health, happiness, politics, family, sexuality, gun control, the environment, wealth, and much more.

Here are some of the GSS's more notable news mentions from the last few years.



## *Spanking can lead to relationship violence, study says*

DECEMBER 6, 2017

“Since 1986, NORC at the University of Chicago has been asking Americans the following question in its **General Social Survey**: “Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree that it is sometimes necessary to discipline a child with a good, hard spanking?” The latest data, through 2016, show that 73.6% strongly agree or agree with that sentiment.

# Forbes

## Why Millennials Are Lonely

FEBRUARY 9, 2017

“The **General Social Survey** found that the number of Americans with no close friends has tripled since 1985. “Zero” is the most common number of confidants, reported by almost a quarter of those surveyed. Likewise, the average number of people Americans feel they can talk to about ‘important matters’ has fallen from three to two.”

# THE CHRISTIAN POST

## Americans and Infidelity: It’s Still Not OK

JUNE 2, 2017

“As a point of fact, according to the **General Social Survey**, which tracks Americans’ attitudes and practice on a range of subjects, there has been little, if any change in Americans’ attitudes towards infidelity since 1972. They still hate it. In contrast to the shift in beliefs on almost all the other issues concerning marriage and sexuality, Americans are steadfast in their condemnation of extramarital sexual relations. In fact, they’re slightly more likely today than in 1973 to say that a “married person having sexual relations with someone other than the marriage partner” is “always wrong.”



## *Cardinal Dolan: Bring religion into politics*

APRIL 19, 2019

“It is no surprise that there is very little consensus on how religion should be integrated with politics. A new survey suggests Americans are rejecting religion in their own lives at a record pace. For the first time ever, “No Religion” hit the top of the annual **General Social Survey** of America’s religious identity, beating out Catholics and evangelicals.”

# INVERSE

## *Survey Says Americans Happy to Dump Billions into Space Exploration*

JUNE 2, 2017

“Beginning in 1972, when the last astronauts returned home from the moon, the independent research organization NORC at the University of Chicago began surveying Americans in every state, asking them, “Do you think the nation is spending enough on space exploration?” This was one of hundreds of questions asked as part of the General Social Survey, an ambitious endeavor to track the nation’s attitudes and beliefs — which continues today.”

# The New York Times

## *Will You Follow in Your Parents' Footsteps?*

DECEMBER 1, 2017

“The estimates, drawn from **General Social Survey** data between 1994 and 2016, show that mothers, despite working in lower numbers, are still influential in inspiring their children’s career choices. And the passing down of occupation and other measures of socioeconomic status seems to affect boys more than girls.”

## Harvard Business Review

### *If You Multitask During Meetings, Your Team Will, Too*

JANUARY 25, 2018

“Intentionally or not, managers that frequently work late nights are signaling an expectation of similar behavior to their teams, and their teams are responding in kind. This may not be a good thing. According to the **General Social Survey**, 48% of employees say that work sometimes or often interferes with family life; this habit is likely a strong contributing factor. The negative impacts are further illustrated by recent Gallup research concluding that “U.S. workers who email for work and who spend more hours working remotely outside of normal working hours are more likely to experience a substantial amount of stress on any given day than workers who do not exhibit these behaviors.”

## Rome News-Tribune

### **GUEST COLUMN: Is trust the egg or the chicken?**

DECEMBER 26, 2017

“Dad served in the Army, which likely increased his trust factor, but I would wager that in the 1970s most people felt a sense of trust in a man dressed in a uniform carrying an army-issued duffle bag. But, it turns out, Americans were more likely to trust each other in general, back then. The **General Social Survey** is a collection of data related to social trends in the United States that began in 1972. That first survey showed that half of respondents believed that most people could be trusted. In 2016, only 1/3 of those asked could say the same.”



## *The Happiness Recession*

APRIL 4, 2019

“In 2018, happiness among young adults in America fell to a record low. The share of adults ages 18 to 34 reporting that they were “very happy” in life fell to 25 percent—the lowest level that the **General Social Survey**, a key barometer of American social life, has ever recorded for that population. Happiness fell most among young men—with only 22 percent of young men (and 28 percent of young women) reporting that they were “very happy” in 2018.”

# NATIONAL REVIEW

## *The Curse of Modern Loneliness*

JANUARY 16, 2018

“To be clear, it isn’t just young people substituting electronic devices for real social interactions; Americans of all ages are retreating to their screens. And there is evidence that this phenomenon is contributing to political polarization. The **General Social Survey** finds that only about a third of Americans today think people can be trusted. According to the Pew Research Center, only half say they trust most or all of their neighbors, and Millennials are significantly less trusting of others than older generations. Without the social scaffolding of meaningful, close interpersonal bonds, how are people supposed to have a broader faith in humanity? On social-media sites such as Twitter, many have no qualms about dehumanizing those who have a different perspective on life.”

## **FiveThirtyEight**

## *Americans Say They Would Vote For A Woman, But...*

JULY 15, 2019

“These days, it’s hard to find voters who openly admit that they’re reluctant to support a woman for president. Only 13 percent of Americans believe that men are better suited for politics than women, according to the 2018 **General Social Survey**. And a Gallup poll conducted in May found that 94 percent of Americans say they would vote for a woman for president.”



## **Is California horror house society’s fault?**

JANUARY 17, 2018

“Data from the most recent **General Social Survey**, an ongoing study that’s tracked changes in society since the 1970s, shows that Americans have never been less likely to be friends with their neighbors, and that residents of suburbs showed the lowest level of neighborliness of any group studied, which included those in urban and rural areas.”

## **The Washington Post**

## *Dog Owners are Much Happier than Cat Owners, Survey Finds*

APRIL 5, 2019

“In 2018, the **General Social Survey** for the first time included a battery of questions on pet ownership. The findings not only quantified the nation’s pet population — nearly 6 in 10 households have at least one —they made it possible to see how pet ownership overlaps with all sorts of factors of interest to social scientists...”

The **General Social Survey** also asked a number of questions about how people interact with their pets, and the answers may also explain some of the happiness gap. Dog owners, for instance, are more likely to seek comfort from their pet in times of stress, more likely to play with their pet, and more likely to consider their pet a member of their family. Those differences suggest a stronger social bond with their pets, which could create a greater sense of well-being.

# BROOKINGS

*Money alone doesn't buy happiness, work does*

NOVEMBER 5, 2019

"The lead-up to the midterms is gripping the nation, but so is the lottery. The Mega Millions jackpot was in record territory last month—reaching \$1.6 billion. Many Americans asked themselves, "what would I do with all that money?"

Such a large sum makes work unnecessary. So, it may be reasonable to assume that most would quit their jobs.

Survey data show otherwise. The **General Social Survey**, a nationally-representative survey from the University of Chicago, asks respondents, "if you were to get enough money to live as comfortably as you would like for the rest of your life, would you continue to work or would you stop working?" In other words, if you won the lottery would you quit your job?

Seventy percent of Americans reported that they would continue to work. This strong majority holds across Democrats, Independents, and Republicans. No matter one's political stripes, people value work beyond its direct economic benefits."



*People trust science. So why don't they believe it?*

APRIL 20, 2017

"The scientific community is alarmed by the Trump administration, and by what they see as the diminishing role of objective science in American life. But the **General Social Survey**, one of the oldest and most comprehensive recurring surveys of American attitudes, shows that although trust in public institutions has declined over the last half century, science is the one institution that has not suffered any erosion of public confidence. Americans who say they have a great deal of confidence in science has hovered around 40% since 1973.

Many scientists say there is no war on their profession at all.

According to the 2016 GSS data released this month, people trust scientists more than Congress (6%) and the executive branch (12%). They trust them more than the press (8%). They have more trust in scientists than in the people who run major companies (18%), more than in banks and financial institutions (14%), the Supreme Court (26%) or organized religion (20%)."

## THE NEW YORKER *Making a Killing*

JUNE 20, 2016

"But by the late eighties American gun manufacturers were facing two serious problems: popular European imports, such as Glock, were luring away police and military consumers; and hunting, once a reliable market, was in decline as rural America emptied out. In 1977, a third of all adults lived in a house with at least one hunter, according to the General Social Survey; by 2014, that statistic had been halved."

## Evangelicals Show No Decline, Despite Trump and Nones

MARCH 21, 2019

“Evangelicals in the United States are holding steady at just under a quarter of the population, according to the latest biennial figures from the **General Social Survey** (GSS), one of the longest-running measures of religion in America.

Despite the quick pace of news and week-to-week political polling, it’s longitudinal tools like the GSS that give social scientists the best big-picture views of how America’s religious landscape is shifting. The survey has asked about religious affiliation in the same way for more than 46 years, offering authoritative, reliable measures of trends in belief and behavior over time.

As Tobin Grant, editor of the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, pointed out: “Changes in religion are slow. No group gains or loses quickly.” (The “nones,” a popular term for the religiously unaffiliated, being an exception—gaining faster than other affiliations tend to because they pull from multiple faith groups.)

That’s mostly what the 2018 GSS results show us. Evangelicals—grouped in this survey by church affiliation—continue to make up around 22.5 percent of the population as they have for much of the past decade, while the nones, now up to 23.1 percent themselves, keep growing. (For comparison, the Pew Research Center’s 2014 Religious Landscape Survey put evangelicals at 25.4 percent and the religious nones at 22.8 percent.)”

# Forbes

## New Evidence For The Broad Benefits Of Higher Education

JUNE 27, 2019

“Americans with a college education report they are happier, healthier and enjoying a higher quality of life than respondents with a high school education or less. That’s one of the main takeaways from the recently released results of the 2018 **General Social Survey** (GSS).

Begun by NORC at the University of Chicago in 1972, the GSS is now conducted biennially, based on lengthy personal interviews with a nationally representative sample of thousands of adults. The GSS is highly regarded and heavily used by social scientists as a measure of what Americans think about a host of contemporary economic, social and personal issues such as quality of life, race relations, the environment, gender, marriage, politics and civil liberties.

Because the results can be stratified by personal characteristics of the respondents, it’s possible to examine how age, race, social class, education and respondents’ beliefs about themselves and their families relate to their views on various social and economic topics.

Included in the hundreds of questions are several that tap individuals’ feelings about their personal lives and well-being, with responses broken out by highest level of education completed (less than high school; high school; and college, which included a two-year degree or higher).”

The General Social Survey



## About NORC

NORC at the University of Chicago (NORC) serves the public interest and improves lives through objective social science research that supports informed decision-making.

NORC at the University of Chicago is an objective, non-partisan research institution that delivers reliable data and rigorous analysis to guide critical decisions on some of the most important issues society faces. Since its founding in 1941, the organization's talented staff has conducted groundbreaking studies, created and applied innovative methods and tools, and advanced principles of scientific integrity and collaboration. Looking forward, NORC will continue to partner with government, corporate, and nonprofit clients around the world to transform increasingly complex information into useful knowledge.

To learn more, visit [NORC.org](http://NORC.org).

[www.MyGSS.norc.org](http://www.MyGSS.norc.org)

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