

The General Social Survey



2022 GSS  
(Cross-section  
Study)

What's New in 2022  
– The Latest on GSS  
Methodology  
Release 1



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## INTRODUCTION

### Introduction to the General Social Survey (GSS)

The General Social Survey (GSS) has been tracking trends in public opinion since 1972. To keep every aspect of the survey as comparable as possible, the GSS generally minimizes changes to its design over time. This includes maintaining the same sampling approach over long periods of time and not altering question wording for questions that have been previously asked on the GSS. The goal is always the same: enabling the cleanest comparison to show changes in public opinion in the United States.

The GSS introduced methodological changes in the 2022 Cross-section survey, compared with previous GSS Cross-section studies. The changes relate to shifts in the mode of data collection, experiments related to mode of data collection, oversamples of Hispanic, Black, and Asian respondents, and a new design which allowed for follow-on studies. Most notably, the 2022 GSS Cross-section is a multi-mode study, with respondents able to complete via a face-to-face interview, a web self-administered questionnaire, or, if necessary, a phone interview.



We recommend our users include one of the following statements when reporting on the GSS 2021 and 2022 Cross-section data:

#### **Total Survey Error Summary Perspective for the GSS Cross-section:**

Changes in opinions, attitudes, and behaviors observed in 2021 and 2022 relative to historical trends may be due to actual change in concept over time and/or may have resulted from methodological changes made to the survey methodology during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

#### **Suggested Statement to Include in Articles and Reports That Use GSS Data**

Changes in opinions, attitudes, and behaviors observed in 2021 and 2022 relative to historical trends may be due to actual change in concept over time and/or may have resulted from methodological changes made to the survey methodology during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Research and interpretation done using the 2021 and 2022 GSS data should take extra care to ensure the analysis reflects actual changes in public opinion and is not unduly influenced by the change in data collection methods. For more information on the 2021 and 2022 GSS methodology and its implications, please visit <https://gss.norc.oregonstate.edu/Get-The-Data>.



# What is New About the 2022 GSS: Frequently Asked Questions

## What are the new elements of the 2022 GSS Cross-Section?

- The 2022 GSS adds four new elements which all users should be aware of:
  - Experimental assignment of multi-mode design;
  - Oversample of minorities (based on AmeriSpeak® Panel);
  - Follow-on studies (based on web-based instruments); and
  - New weights (post-stratification weights).

These are all in addition to changes which were first implemented in the 2021 GSS Cross-section (For a full rundown of these changes, please see the [2021 GSS Cross-section codebook](#)).

## What is the new multi-mode design?

- The 2022 GSS was conducted via face-to-face interview, web self-administered questionnaire, and computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI). Depending on the experimental condition that participants were assigned to, respondents could complete the study in any of the available modes (face to face, web or phone). There were also a few experiments implemented in the web mode only.

## What are the effects of the new multi-mode design?

- The new design accomplishes several goals:
  - Multiple modes bring in more participants by allowing respondents to choose their comfort level and mode of response.
  - Multi-mode designs are more cost effective allowing for more completed interviews than face-to-face only surveys.
  - The 2022 GSS can help bridge the traditional face-to-face design (from 1972-2018) and the web self-administered design necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic (2021).
  - The GSS can support now research to study mode sensitivity based on face-to-face or web administration, as single-mode rounds cannot be used to examine mode effects.
  - The multi-mode design allows for the inclusion of follow-on studies (more on that below), which add additional content without lengthening the baseline interview.
- The 2022 design has two initial advisories:
  - Some variables are sensitive to mode of administration and show different distributions by mode. As the GSS is intended to be used as a whole sample, it does not yet include mode-specific weights (although we expect them in the future).
  - Any mode-specific experiments (such as the volunteered-not volunteered experiment on the web only) are necessarily sensitive to mode of administration.



### What is the multi-mode assignment experiment?

- Cases in the 2022 GSS were initially assigned to be fielded in either the web self-administered or face-to-face mode. After mail, mode-specific follow-up, and telephone outreach, cases that did not complete in their initial mode were offered the other mode (e.g., a face-to-face case was offered the web self-administered questionnaire as a final option).

### What is the oversample of minorities using the AmeriSpeak Panel?

- The 2022 GSS Cross-Section includes an oversample of Hispanic, Black, and Asian people, drawn from NORC's AmeriSpeak Panel. AmeriSpeak is an online probability panel of households drawn from the same sample frame as the General Social Survey. Households with known demographics of interest were invited to take the baseline GSS. These cases are not available in the preliminary release, and are expected to be released later in the year.
- This is an innovation for the GSS, typically, researchers have to pool multiple years of the GSS to analyze subgroups. The AmeriSpeak Panel oversample allows researchers to perform this kind of analysis using only the 2022 data or using fewer years of pooled data. Working with comparable timely data is preferable to pooling cases over longer periods of time. This change provides more accurate results in times of intense social change like the COVID-19 pandemic. To illustrate, an analysis of Hispanic respondents can use only the 2021 and 2022 rounds GSS, instead of pooling cases from 2016-2022 (as 2016-2022 includes pre-COVID-19 pandemic cases and mid-COVID-19 pandemic cases, while 2021 and 2022 are both mid-COVID-19 pandemic)

### What are the follow-on studies?

- The 2022 GSS included two different follow-on studies: a module on arts participation before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts, and GSS Next, a multi-subject module put together by various sponsors including the GSS Scientific Advisory Board.
- Respondents who completed the baseline interview were eligible to participate in one or both of the follow-on studies, depending on when the respondent completed that baseline interview. The follow-on studies are both included in the 2022 GSS Cross-section data like any other variables. Respondent participation can be tracked by the variables NEASTATUS and NEXTSTATUS respectively.

### What are the new weights available in the 2022 GSS?

- In general, the standard weighting for the 2022 GSS assumes that users want to include every case in their analyses. We have not yet created weights that allow to analyze just face-to-face or just web cases. Mode-specific weights may be available in future data releases.
- We are introducing two new weights for overall inferences: WTSSPS and WTSSNRPS
  - These weights combine both survey design (e.g., number of adults in the household, as only one adult can respond) and post-stratification benchmarks (e.g., age, sex, region of the country), as well as nonresponse (for WTSSNRPS). Previously only available from the years 2002-2021, WTSSPS and WTSSNRPS now cover 1988-2022.
- We are also introducing two new weights for the follow-on studies
  - WTSSPS\_NEA and WTSSPS\_NEXT are specific weights for the follow-on studies, which add an additional correction for retention from the baseline interview into the follow-on and ensure that any work with the follow-on data is as nationally representative as other GSS data. There are additional weights (WTSSNRPS\_NEA and WTSSNRPS\_NEXT) that add a nonresponse correction.





### What changes were made to the GSS in 2021?

- The 2021 GSS Cross-section was conducted primarily on the web, with minimal phone interviewing. As a result, many aspects of the GSS had to be redesigned, as they relied upon interviewers who could no longer participate in the interview. This includes how questions were worded, how the GSS handles “Don’t Know” and “No Answer” responses, and how respondents were selected. For a full rundown of these changes, please see the [2021 GSS Cross-section codebook](#).

### What do users need to understand about mode effects in the GSS?

- The GSS has traditionally been conducted face to face, and face to face interviews have been shown to have mode effects (e.g., when survey questions asked by an interviewer may elicit socially desirable responses). These mode effects were consistent year-to-year because the mode of the GSS was consistent year to year (i.e., face to face). Due to necessity during the pandemic, in 2021, the GSS was fielded as a web self-administered questionnaire. This new mode came with its own mode effects (e.g., higher rates of satisficing or skipping items, higher breakoffs). We would expect these web mode effects to be constant year to year if the GSS had remained a web-only study, as well. However, the 2022 GSS is multi-mode, which means that each mode can be used as a tool to understand the other modes, and, by extension, help clarify previous mode effects, in both 2021 and prior years.

### Why is NORC proposing researchers exercise caution in interpreting mode sensitive variables?

- There are several potential reasons for caution with mode sensitive variables:
  - We expected several variables to be sensitive to mode of administration; however, we could not know which variables would be sensitive without first collecting and analyzing the data. The GSS contains nearly a thousand variables in any given year, and while we have identified some mode-sensitive variables, others may appear with further analysis.
  - The degree of mode sensitivity changes by variable, as does the direction of the effect. In other words, the web is not always more extreme than face-to-face, nor is face-to-face always more neutral than the web. Neither mode is correct and neither mode is incorrect; they merely yield some differences.

### Why did NORC not leave the methodology as it had been so trends could be more easily calculated?

- The GSS curated trends are only one part of the General Social Survey. Another part is the cumulative dataset, which supports a vibrant scientific community. The various consequences of the multi-mode design are scientifically interesting, and we want to make sure that the scientific community can work with the data as quickly as possible. We will determine the best ways to harmonize the variables that make up the GSS’s many trends in concert with the scientific community, and release fully harmonized trends after more researchers have had the chance to weigh in on the process.
- The GSS has always been at the forefront of innovation for large-scale, nationally representative surveys. The design of the GSS shifts with scientific innovations in survey research, but always in responsible ways which allow the study to bridge between existing and new designs and paradigms. The changes implemented in 2022 and the ones planned for 2024 allow the GSS to bridge the previous design, based on face to face data collection, with new designs that allow both more respondent flexibility, lower costs for the research and higher sample sizes. In this way, the GSS ensures that it remains the gold standard of scientific survey data for the future.