

Dataset Title: General Social Survey (GSS)

Overview: General Social Survey (GSS) asks questions about demographics, behavior, and attitudes. The survey questions participants about their opinions on a variety of issues, including government spending, race relations, and religion. The combination of demographic and attitude-related questions allows researchers to determine correlations between demographic factors like age, race, and gender and beliefs. For example, researchers have used GSS to evaluate whether a middle-aged black male would be more or less likely to move for financial reasons than a middle-aged Caucasian male would be.

The survey also includes a cross-national component called the International Social Survey Program (ISSP). It has been conducted in 57 nations since 1984. It allows researchers to identify cross-national social trends.

Date:

Between 1972 and 1994, the survey was conducted every year except 1979, 1981, and 1992. Since 1994, the survey has been conducted every other year instead of annually.

Time dimension: Repeated Cross-Section

Sample: Adult (18 and over) households are randomly selected. The GSS is administered to two samples of 1,500 people in even-number years.

Before 1994, the target sample size was 1,500 but the survey was conducted annually.

Data Source: The survey is conducted by the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center (NORC). Interviewers ask adults (18 and over) questions in face-to-face interviews. If an in-person interview is not possible, the interview may be conducted over telephone.

***A Note about Race Measures in the GSS:**

Questions for the race of the respondent have changed over time. In particular, the GSS has switched from using an Observed Race measure (1972-2000) to using a Self-Identified Race measure (2000 on). The variable RACE is available for all years of the GSS, but its meaning cannot be consistently interpreted as either Self-Identified Race or Observed Race. See details below.

Self-Identified Race and Hispanic Origin Measures:

The first Self-Identified Race measure in the GSS, RACESELF, was asked in 1993-96 and 2000 only.

VAR: RACESELF

Respondent's Own Racial ID (3 category measure)

Question from Interview:

C. What race do you consider yourself? RECORD VERBATIM AND CODE.

Responses

White

Black

Other [Specify]

Starting in 2002 RACESELF was replaced by [RACECEN1](#), [RACECEN2](#), [RACECEN3](#) and HISPANIC to make the questions compatible with the new US Census question formats. See GSS Methodological Reports 85 and 89.

VAR: RACECEN1 – What is Respondent’s Race, 1st Mention

Question from Interview::

What is your race? Indicate one or more races that you consider yourself to be.

Response

1 – White

2 – Black or African American

3 – American Indian or Alaska Native

4 – Asian Indian

5 – Chinese

6 – Filipino

7 – Japanese

8 – Korean

9 – Vietnamese

10 – Other Asian

11 – Native Hawaiian

12 – Guamanian or Chamorro

13 – Samoan

14 – Other Pacific Islander

15 – Some other race

16 – Hispanic

Remarks: Respondents were given Hand Card IV containing response options 1-15 and prompts for options 3, 10, 14, and 15.

VAR: HISPANIC

IF R IS FEMALE, READ LATINA; IF MALE, READ LATINO.

Are you Spanish, Hispanic or Latino/Latina?

Yes (Ask A)

No (Go to next question)

A. IF YES

Which group are you from?
HAND CARD IU

Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano/Chicana
Puerto Rican
Cuban
Other

Other response options are coded as:

Salvadoran
Guatemalan
Panamanian
Nicaraguan
Costa Rican
Central American
Honduran
Dominican
West Indian
Peruvian
Ecuadorian
Colombian
Venezuelan
Argentinian
Spanish
Basque
Filipino/a
Latin American
South American
Latin
Latino/a
Hispanic
Other, not specified

Descriptive Text: The two questions above were asked sequentially of the respondent. Hand Card IU was given to Latino respondents and had response options 2-4 plus “Other Hispanic, specify.”

VAR:

HISP1: Categorical (Single)

Are you Spanish, Hispanic, or (response to hispfill)?

Categories:

YES

NO

DON'T KNOW
REFUSED

If HISP1= yes then

HISP2: Categorical (Single)

Which group are you from?

Categories:

1. Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano/Chicana
2. Puerto Rican
3. Cuban
4. Other
5. DON'T KNOW
6. REFUSED

If HISP2=4 (other) then

HIS2SPEC: Text

Please specify other Hispanic group

RACECEN1: Categorical (Single)

What is your race? Indicate one or more races that you consider yourself to be.

FIRST MENTION:

1. White
2. Black or African American
3. American Indian or Alaska Native
4. Asian Indian
5. Chinese
6. Filipino
7. Japanese
8. Korean
9. Vietnamese
10. Other Asian
11. Native Hawaiian
12. Guamanian or Chamorro
13. Samoan
14. Other Pacific Islander
15. Some Other Race

NO MORE MENTIONED

DON'T KNOW

REFUSED

If RACECEN1= 3 (American Indian or Alaska Native) then

AMINSPC1: Text

Please name enrolled or principled tribe.

End If
If RACECEN1= 10 Then

ASIASPC1: Text

Please name

RACECEN2 is coded for the second race mentioned, and uses the same format as above.

VAR: RACECEN3 is coded for the third race mentioned, and uses the same format as above.

Observed Race Measures:

From 1973-2000, the GSS included the variable RACE. This was intended to be an Observed Race variable, coded by the interviewer. However, when interviewers were not certain of the respondent's race, they were instructed to ask respondents what race they considered themselves. There is no information on when interviewers asked the respondents for this information and when they coded this information based only on their observation.

VAR: RACE

Literal Question:

24. CODE WITHOUT ASKING ONLY IF THERE IS NO DOUBT IN YOUR MIND.

What race do you consider yourself? RECORD VERBATIM AND CODE.

Response

White

Black

Other (Specify)

Descriptive Text: Interviewer coded except in cases where question suggested was asked. [Other SPECIFY] codes include Aleut, American Indian, Arab, Asian, Chamorro, Chinese, Chinese/Japanese, Creole, Cuban, Dominican, Egyptian Filipino, Guyanese, Hawaiian, Hindu, Hispanic, Hmong, Human, Indian (Asian), Indonesian, Israelite, Iranian, Jamaican, Japanese, Korean, Laos, Latin, Latino, Lebanese, Malaysian, Mestizo, Mexican Mulatto, Native American, Oriental, Pacific Islander, Polynesian, Puerto Rican, Spanish, Thai, Vietnamese, West Indies, "Mixed", "mixed bag", "person of color", "1/2 American Indian, 1/2 Hispanic", "halfbreed", "Brown," "Yellow," "Amerasian," "Biracial," "Black and Asian," "Black and White," "Black, American Indian, and Spanish," "Asian Pacific Islander," "White Indian American," "American Indian/White," "Euro-Asian," "don't have one, just me," "White+Mexican," "1/2 Caucasian, 1/2 Philippines," "African Cherokee," "Mexican and Indian," "American/Bangdi" and "wheat color." If planning to perform trend analysis with this variable, please consult GSS Methodological Report No. 56.

In 2000 RACE was imputed based on RACESEE, RACEDBTF (see below), and RACESELF (see above).

RACESEE and RACEDBTF were asked in 1993-96 and 2000 only.

VAR: RACESEE – Observed Race

Literal Question: INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTION:

A. CODE WITHOUT ASKING FOR ALL RESPONDENTS EVEN IF UNCERTAIN

Response

White

Black

Other (Specify)

Descriptive Text: In 1996, RACESEE contained only 3 response options: white, black and other (specify). Those not fitting into the first two categories were recorded verbatim and included in alphanumeric format.

Response

1 - No doubt in my mind

2 – Some doubt, but pretty sure

3 – A lot of doubt, pretty unsure

4 – Completely unsure

VAR: RACEDBTF

Literal Question: INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTION:

FOR THE RACIAL CLASSIFICATION YOU JUST ASSIGNED IN “A” INDICATE HOW SURE YOU WERE OF RESPONDENT’S RACE.

Variable racesee: OBSERVED RACE

Literal Question

1349. A. Code without asking for all respondents even if uncertain

Descriptive text

In 1996, RACESEE contained only three response options: white, black, and other (specify). Those not fitting into the first two categories were recorded verbatim and included in alphanumeric format. Don’t Know was punch code 8, and No Answer was punch code 9. In 2000, verbatim responses were included as codes, Don’t Know was recorded to 98, and No Answer was recoded to 99.

Response

1 - No doubt in my mind

2 – Some doubt, but pretty sure

3 – A lot of doubt, pretty unsure

4 – Completely unsure

Values Categories

1. White

2. Black

3. Other
4. Hispanic
5. Black and White
6. Spanish
7. Filipino
8. American Indian
9. Asian
10. Yellow
11. Mexican
12. Brown
13. Latino
14. Middle Eastern
15. Puerto Rican
16. Indian
17. Alaska Native
18. Pacific Islander
19. Cuban

Variable racedbtf: CERTAINTY OF OBSERVED RACE

Literal Question

- B. FOR THE RACIAL CLASSIFICATION YOU JUST ASSIGNED IN “A” INDICATE HOW SURE YOU WERE OF RESPONDENT’S RACE.

Values Categories

- 1 NO DOUBT
- 2 SOME DOUBT, PRETTY SURE
- 3 A LOT OF DOUBT, PRETTY UNSURE
- 4 COMPLETELY UNSURE
- 0 NAP
- 8 DH
- 9 NA

Reflected Race Measures: N/A

Phenotype Measures:

RATETONE was asked in 2012 only

VAR: RATETONE

Literal Question:

INTERVIEWER: PLEASE RECORD THE COLOR FROM THE COLOR CARD THAT MOST CLOSELY CORRESPONDS TO THE RESPONDENT’S FACIAL COLORING.

Response

1 – Lightest

2

3

- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10 – Darkest

The variable COLOR was coded by interviewers only in 1982. It was coded only for respondents that the interviewer identified as Black in the variable RACE.

VAR: COLOR

Literal Question
IF BLACK:

RESPONDENT’S SKIN COLOR IS...

Response

- 1 – Very dark brown
- 2 – Dark brown
- 3 – Medium brown
- 4 – Light brown
- 5 – Very light brown

Descriptive Text: Interviewer coded

Race or Ethnic origin of Respondent’s Parents: N/A

Interviewer Characteristics: N/A

Other Race Measures:

BORNSP: Categorical (Single)
In what country were you born?

Categories:

- 1-United States
- 2- Foreign Country
- (dontknow) DON’T KNOW
- (refused) REFUSED

If BORNSP=2 Then ballot1 XSEC English

BORN OTH: Text

Specify:

AGECEMUS: Categorical (single)

If you were born outside US, what age were you when you permanently moved to the US?

Categories:

1 Code Age

2 Have not permanently moved to U.S.

(dontknow) DON'T KNOW

(refused) REFUSED

The variable RACE could be considered an “Other” race measure since it is not consistently a measure of Self-Identified Race or Observed Race. See description above.

In 1993-96 only, when the GSS introduced new race measures RACESEE and RACESELF, it also asked the interviewer to code the question below if the responses to those two questions did not match.

VAR: DIFRACE1

Literal Question: INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTION

WHY DO YOU THINK YOUR RACIAL CLASSIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENT IN “A” DIFFERED FROM THE RESPONDENT’S SELF-CLASSIFICATION IN “C”?

Response:

R being frivolous

R mentions ethnicity, Hispanic, rather than white

R mentioned ethnicity, Hispanic, rather than black

Chosen race doesn’t match physical characteristics

Mixed race (e.g. “half Indian/half White”)

Respondent rejects racial categories; human race

R rejects Black because “I consider I’m Negro which is Brown”

Inter-marriage (current, not parents)

Coded as Hispanic by Interviewer, White or Black picked by R.

“Doesn’t matter what is on the outside – what is inside is important”

R. identifies with race, not biologically a member of that race

Other Hispanic complications

DIFRACE2 for second response

DIFRACE3 for third response

Collected by: University of Chicago’s National Opinion Research Center (NORC)

Weblinks:

<http://www3.norc.org/gss+website/>

Questionnaires listed by year can be found at:

<http://www3.norc.org/GSS+Website/Publications/GSS+Questionnaires/>

Variables can be searched at:

<http://www3.norc.org/GSS+Website/Browse+GSS+Variables/Subject+Index/>

Citation of dataset:

Smith, Tom W., Peter V. Marsden, and Michael Hout. General Social Survey, 1972-2010 [Cumulative File]. ICPSR31521-v1. Storrs, CT: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut/Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributors], 2011-08-05. <http://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR31521.v1>