

## Using General Social Survey (GSS) Investigating Social Relationships

### Learning Objectives

In this project, you will learn:

#### *Skill*

- Learning about survey methodology and sampling methods
- Using software to access and analyze census data
- Identifying independent and dependent variables
- Quantitative writing
- Learning how to construct, read, and interpret bivariate tables displaying frequencies and percentages

#### *Substance*

- How to examine relationships between social constructs empirically.

### Specific Requirements

This research project is based the General Social Survey (GSS). Your paper is expected to be typed with 1 inch margins and 12-point type font, double spaced. The paper does not need to be longer than **six** pages.

#### 1. *Introduction*

Write a paragraph to introduce what you are planning to study (the dependent variable). Explain why it is important to study this topic. What is the sociological importance of this research? Is there any practical or policy implication?

#### 2. *Hypotheses*

- a. Identify the independent variables you want to include. You should have at least **four** independent variables.
- b. Develop hypotheses regarding the effect of each independent variable (what effect do you expect each independent variable has on the dependent variable). State explicitly why you think each independent variable should work that way. You need to give some reasons about why an independent variable may affect the dependent variable.
- c. You need to find some literature that supports your hypotheses. Cite at least **four** sources for the whole paper.
- d. The literature may be from sociological or other related academic Journals or Books. Sociological journals, such as *American Sociological Review*, *American Journal of Sociology*, *Annual Review of Sociology*, *Contemporary Sociology*, *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *Sociology of*

*Education, Population and Development Review* might be good resources you can find in your library. Many of them can also be found on-line in JSTOR.

- e. Try to search databases, such as *Sociological Abstracts*, *Sociological Collection Title List*, *Social Sciences Full Text Title List*, on the web page of your university library. Reference librarians should also be able to help you.

### 3. *Data and Measurement*

- a. Give the name of the data set and the year of which the data of the survey is used.
- b. How are the dependent and independent variables defined and measured?  
**Please quote the text of each question from GSS in your paper.**
- c. What are the original attributes of each variable?
- d. Specify how you recoded some of the variables.

### 4. *Results*

- a. Univariate analysis
  - Report the frequency distribution of each variable.
- b. Bivariate analysis
  - Based on the bivariate tables, analyze the relationship between each of the independent variables and the dependent variable. Compare percentages first, and then summarize it.
- c. **Attach all the tables to the end of the paper.**

### 5. *Conclusions*

Summarize the major findings of your analysis. Are the results consistent with your hypotheses? Do you think your results have any policy implications? Are there limitations in your study? How would you like to improve your study in the future? (such as what other independent variables you would like to add, what other relevant topics you would like to explore)

## GSS Handout

The General Social Survey (GSS) has been conducted annually since 1972. It is conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago. GSS follows a trend-study design. A national representative sample of more than 1,000 individuals is interviewed each year. The questions range from demographic characteristics and socioeconomic status to socially relevant behaviors and attitudes.

### 1. Finding Variables

- GSS data sets can be found on the web at <http://sda.berkeley.edu/archive.htm>
- Click on [GSS Cumulative Datafile 1972-2006 - Full Analysis](#).
- Click on [Codebook by Year of Interview](#).
- Click on [Headings for Sequential List](#) under "INDEXES" on the left margin.
- The questions ever asked are organized in categories. Here are the examples:
  - Personal and family information
  - attitudinal measures - national problems
  - personal concerns
  - societal concerns
  - workplace and economic concerns
  - controversial social issues
  - respondent background variables

### 2. Data Analysis

- On the web. <http://sda.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/hsda?setupfile=harcsda&datasetname=gss06&ui=1>
- Click on [GSS Cumulative Datafile 1972-2006 - Full Analysis](#).

Example:

Dependent variable: people's attitudes toward doctor assisted suicide (letdie1)

Independent variable: gender (sex), age (age).

- Browse the distributions of all the variables considered
  - Check the year availability of each variable, pick the most recent year that has all the variables.
- Check the range of the valid values of each variable:]
  - valid values for letdie1: 1, 2
  - valid values for sex: 1, 2
  - valid values for age: 1 – 97
- Univariate analysis
  - Check [Frequencies or crosstabulation](#).
  - Click on the ["Start" button](#).
  - Enter letdie1, sex, age after ["Row:"](#)
  - Enter year(2002) age(1-97) sex(1, 2) letdie1(1, 2) after ["Selection Filter\(s\)"](#)
  - **Only keep the cases with valid values on all the variables.**
  - Leave ["Column"](#) checked after ["Percentaging:"](#).
  - Click on the ["Run the Table" button](#).

- To recode age:
  - Add (r: 18-40; 41-60; 61-89) after age.
  - The name of the variable ('age') is followed by parentheses, then the instruction 'r' followed by a colon (':'), and then the groupings of codes. Each group is separated from the other by a semicolon (;).
- Bivariate analysis
 

Example: attitudes toward doctor assisted suicide and gender

  - Enter letdie1 (dependent variable) after "Row:"
  - Enter sex (independent variable) after "Column:"
  - Leave "Column" checked after "Percentaging:".
  - Check "Statistics".
  - Click on the "Run the Table" button.
  - Compare the column percentages.
  - Under "Summary Statistics", pay attention to "(p= x.xx)" after "Chisq(P) = yyy". The P-value has to be **less than** or **equal to .05** to make the differences significant.
- Bivariate analysis with recoding
 

Example: attitudes toward doctor assisted suicide and age

  - Enter letdie1 after "Row:"
  - Enter age(r: 18-40; 41-60; 61-89) after "Column:"
  - Leave "Column" checked after "Percentaging:".
  - Click on the "Run the Table" button.