**CONSPEND1CS: Exercise Using SPSS to Explore Confidence in Institutions**

Author:   Ed Nelson  
Department of Sociology M/S SS97  
California State University, Fresno  
Fresno, CA 93740  
Email:  [**ednelson@csufresno.edu**](mailto:ednelson@csufresno.edu)

**Note to the Instructor:** The data set used in this exercise is gss14\_subset\_for\_classes\_CONFIDENCE\_SPENDING.sav which is a subset of the 2014 General Social Survey. Some of the variables in the GSS have been recoded to make them easier to use and some new variables have been created.  The data have been weighted according to the instructions from the National Opinion Research Center.  This exercise uses FREQUENCIES in SPSS to rank order societal institutions in terms of the amount of confidence that respondents have in them.  A good reference on using SPSS is *SPSS for Windows Version 23.0 A Basic Tutorial* by Linda Fiddler, John Korey, Edward Nelson (Editor), and Elizabeth Nelson.  The online version of the book is on the[**Social Science Research and Instructional Center's Website.**](http://ssric.org/node/582) You have permission to use this exercise and to revise it to fit your needs.  Please send a copy of any revision to the author. Included with this exercise (as separate files) are more detailed notes to the instructors, the SPSS syntax necessary to carry out the exercise (SPSS syntax file), and the SPSS output for the exercise (SPSS output file). Pleas contact the author for additional information.

I’m attaching the following files.

* [**Data subset**](http://ssric.org/files/gss14_subset_for_classes_CONFIDENCE_SPENDING.sav) (.sav format).
* [**Extended notes for instructors**](http://ssric.org/files/Extended_Notes_for_Instructors_for_CONSPEND1CS.docx) (MS Word;.docx format).
* [**SPSS syntax file**](http://ssric.org/files/SPSS_Syntax_for_CONSPEND1CS.sps) (.sps format).
* [**SPSS output file**](http://ssric.org/files/SPSS_Output_for_CONSPEND1CS.spv) (.spv format).
* [**This page**](http://ssric.org/files/CONSPEND1CS.docx) (MS Word;.docx format).

**Goals of Exercise**

The goal of this exercise is to rank order societal institutions in terms of the amount of confidence that respondents have in them.  The exercise also gives you practice in using FREQUENCIES in SPSS.

**Part I—Getting the Frequency Distributions**

We’re going to use the General Social Survey (GSS) for this exercise.  The GSS is a national probability sample of adults in the United States conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC).  The GSS started in 1972 and has been an annual or biannual survey ever since. For this exercise we’re going to use a subset of the 2014 GSS. Your instructor will tell you how to access this data set which is called gss14\_subset\_for\_classes\_CONFIDENCE\_SPENDING.sav.

The GSS is an example of a social survey.  The investigators selected a sample from the population of all adults in the United States.  This particular survey was conducted in 2014 and is a relatively large sample of approximately 2,500 adults.  In a survey we ask respondents questions and use their answers as data for our analysis.  The answers to these questions are used as measures of various concepts.  In the language of survey research these measures are typically referred to as variables.  Often we want to describe respondents in terms of social characteristics such as marital status, education, and age.  Other times we want to describe respondents in terms of opinions about social issues such as abortion and gun control.  In this exercise we want to look at the confidence that respondents have in societal institutions.  These are all variables in the GSS.

The GSS uses the following question to measure confidence in institutions – “I am going to name some institutions in this country. As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?”  This exercise focuses on the following nine societal institutions.  Respondents are asked whether they have a great deal, only some, or hardly any confidence in these institutions.  The name in all caps following the institutions are the variable names.

* military (CI1\_CONARMY),
* major companies (CI2\_CONBUS),
* organized religion (CI3\_CONCLERG),
* education (CI4\_CONEDUC),
* executive branch of the federal government (CI5\_CONFED),
* banks and financial institutions (CI6\_CONFINAN),
* U.S. Supreme Court (CI7\_CONJUDGE),
* organized labor(CI8\_CONLABOR), and
* congress (CI9\_CONLEGIS).

Run FREQUENCIES in SPSS for all nine variables.  (See Frequencies in Chapter 4 of the SPSS online book mentioned on page 1.) There should be four columns of numbers.  Just to the right of the value label you should see the “frequency” column.  This tells you the number of respondents that said a great deal, only some, and hardly any.  To the right of that column there will be the “percent” column.  This converts the frequencies to percents using all cases (2,538) as the denominator.  Notice that this includes those respondents who gave a valid response and those who have missing information (i.e., said they didn’t know (DK), refused to answer the question (NA), or were not asked the question (IAP)).  To the right of the percent column there is the “valid percent” column.  This converts the frequencies to percents using only those cases with valid information (i.e., replied great deal, only some, or hardly any) in the denominator (i.e., 1,668 for CI1\_CONARMY).  Finally the far right column is the “cumulative percent” column.  This cumulates the valid percents.  Look at the table for CI1\_CONARMY.  The first entry in the cumulative percents column is 50.9 because 50.9% of the cases responded a great deal.  The second entry is 90.4 because 90.4% said either a great deal or hardly any.  The third entry is 100.0 because all 100% of the cases gave one of these three responses.

It’s important to understand the difference between the percent column and the valid percent column.  Write out the arithmetic for computing both the percent and the valid percent for those who said they had a great deal of confidence in the military (i.e., CI1\_CONARMY).

**Part II – Rank Ordering the Institutions in Terms of the Percent who had a Great Deal of Confidence**

In the chart below write the name of the institution and the percent of respondents who had a great deal of confidence in each institution.  Arrange the institutions from rank 1 to rank 9 where 1 is the institution in which respondents had the most confidence and 9 is the institution in which respondents had the least confidence.

| Percent of Respondents who had a Great Deal of Confidence in Each Institution | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Rank | Institution | Percent Great Deal of Confidence |
| 1 |  |  |
| 2 |  |  |
| 3 |  |  |
| 4 |  |  |
| 5 |  |  |
| 6 |  |  |
| 7 |  |  |
| 8 |  |  |
| 9 |  |  |

**Part III – Rank Ordering the Institutions in Terms of the Percent who had at Least Some or a Great Deal of Confidence**

In the chart below write the name of the institution and the percent of respondents who had at least some **or** a great deal of confidence in each institution.  Arrange the institutions from rank 1 to rank 9 where 1 is the institution in which respondents had the most confidence and 9 is the institution in which respondents had the least confidence.

| Percent of Respondents who had at Least Some or a Great Deal of Confidence in Each Institution | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Rank | Institution | Percent at Least Some or a Great Deal of Confidence |
| 1 |  |  |
| 2 |  |  |
| 3 |  |  |
| 4 |  |  |
| 5 |  |  |
| 6 |  |  |
| 7 |  |  |
| 8 |  |  |
| 9 |  |  |

**Part IV – Conclusions**

Did each method of ranking produce the same rank order of institutions?  What does that tell you about the use of statistics in analyzing data?

What conclusions can you draw about the level of confidence that adults in the U.S. have in our societal institutions?