



The Relationship Between Religious Affiliation and Environmental Concern



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Introduction

- Based on a study conducted in 2010, people affiliated with Judeo-Christian religious traditions are observed to show less concern about environmental protection in comparison to those that do not observe a religion (Arbuckle & Konisky, 2015; Clements, McCright, & Xiao, 2014).
- In other studies, however, only a weak connection is drawn between the factors of religious affiliation and environmental concern (Yang & Wilson, 2023).
- Women are expected to show more pro-environmental views and greater levels of concern surrounding environmental problems (Xiao & McCright, 2015).

Research Questions

- Are Americans who are affiliated with the Protestant religion more likely to exhibit higher levels of environmental concern?
- Does this relationship differ between men and women?

Methods

Sample

- Respondents (n=4,032) were drawn from the General Social Survey (GSS) of 2021, a nationally representative sample of non-institutionalized adults in the U.S. who speak either English or Spanish. The GSS has been collecting data on American society since 1972, with the intention of monitoring changes in public opinion.

Measures

- Only survey responses that indicated “Protestant” and “None” religious affiliations were utilized in the study, resulting in a sample size of 1,263 respondents.
- Environmental concern was measured with the question “Generally speaking, how concerned are you about environmental issues?”. Possible responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 representing “not at all concerned” and 5 representing “very concerned.”

Results

Bivariate

- ANOVA F-test analysis showed that religion was significantly associated with level of environmental concern $F(1, 1261) = 49.43, p < .001$, allowing for a rejection of the null hypothesis.
- Figure 1 shows that the mean environmental concern exhibited among those without a religious affiliation is slightly higher than that of those that identify as Protestant, though both groups show above neutral degrees of concern.

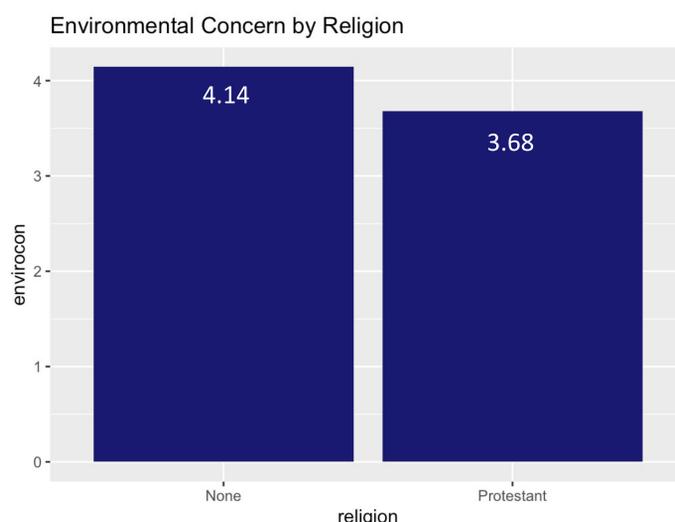


Figure 1: Mean Environmental Concern by Religious Affiliation

Multivariate

- Protestant religious affiliation (Beta= -0.49374, CI 0.54-0.69, $p < .001$) was significantly and negatively associated with degree of environmental concern when controlling for sex.
- Females were found to be more environmentally concerned than males, regardless of religious affiliation (Beta= 0.27, CI 1.15-, $p < .001$).

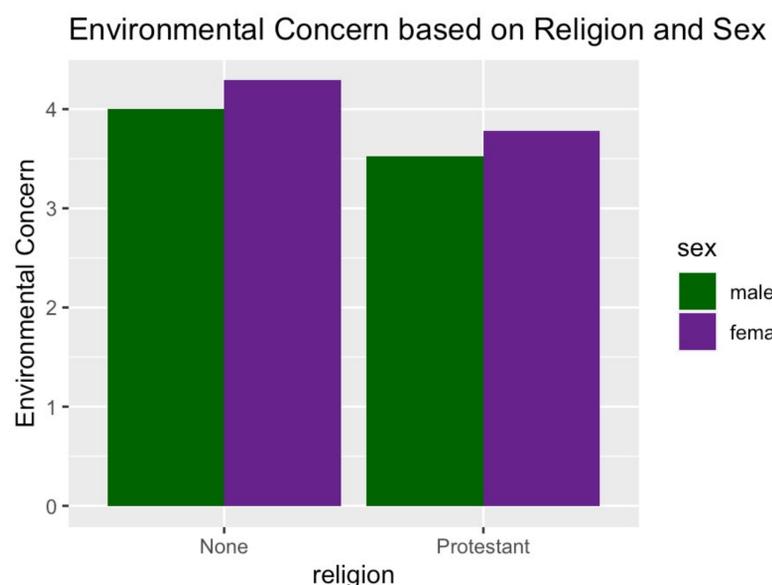


Figure 2: Environmental Concern by Religious Affiliation and Sex

Discussion

- While both Protestant religious affiliates and those with no religious affiliation show higher than neutral levels of environmental concern, Protestants show slightly less concern. Within both groups, females are expected to show greater concern.
- These findings may contribute to political science research regarding American public opinion surrounding climate policy. This research utilizes some of the most current data available.
- Future research is needed to determine the role of other religious affiliations on environmental attitudes, as well as the effect of other covariates that were not explored in this study.

References

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