The Impact of Socioeconomic Factors on Religious Importance by Generations in the United States

Charlotte Goldman, Applied Data Analysis, Wesleyan University

Introduction

- There is a strong positive relationship between socioeconomicomic status and an individual's religiosity in the United Kingdom (Major-Smith et al. 2023).
- In the U.S., Christianity has a particular strong positive association between lower socioeconomic status and religious importance among its followers (Schwadel 2023).
- Generation Z is becoming less religious, but it is unclear if this relationship is due to socio-economic factors as past research may suggest for the case of other generations (Burge 2023; PRRI 2024; *Generation Z* 2023).

Research Questions

- Do the same trends which show a positive relationship between previous generations socioeconomic status to level of religiosity apply to Generation Z?
- Do other socioeconomic factors influence younger generations religiosity more than previously?

Methods

Sample

- Response were gathered from the American Election Population Studies (ANES), a collection of randomly selected individuals (18-80yrs) who had an address in the United States Postal Service system.
- Following data management steps, the sample size contained 7,422 responses

Measures

- Generations were defined as GenZ (18-25), Millennials (26-38), GenX (39-54), Boomers (55-73), Silent generation (74-80).
- Religiosity was assessed by the response to the question, "How important is religion in your life?". Responses 1(extremely) – 2 (very) where represented as "1" while responses 3(moderately) - 5 (not at all) where represented as "0".
- Respondents' total household income was gathered two groups. "1" represented above income 0 represents less than average national income.
- Race, home state, political party identification and education where also included variables

Results

Bivariate

- Gen z is less likely to consider religion important compared to any other generation.
- The greatest difference is between the silent generation (OR=3.1, p=.42)
- Gen Z is the most similar to Millennium which also happen to be the closest age group by birth year

Multivariate

- There is no steady income indicator in generational trends to predict religious importance levels.
- There is not a significant relationship between income and religious importance
- When income is controlled, Respondents identifying as black are 35% and Hispanics are 22% more likely than white respondents to consider religion important.
- GenZ is the only generation where the average religious importance is lower for respondents below the national average income (figure 2).

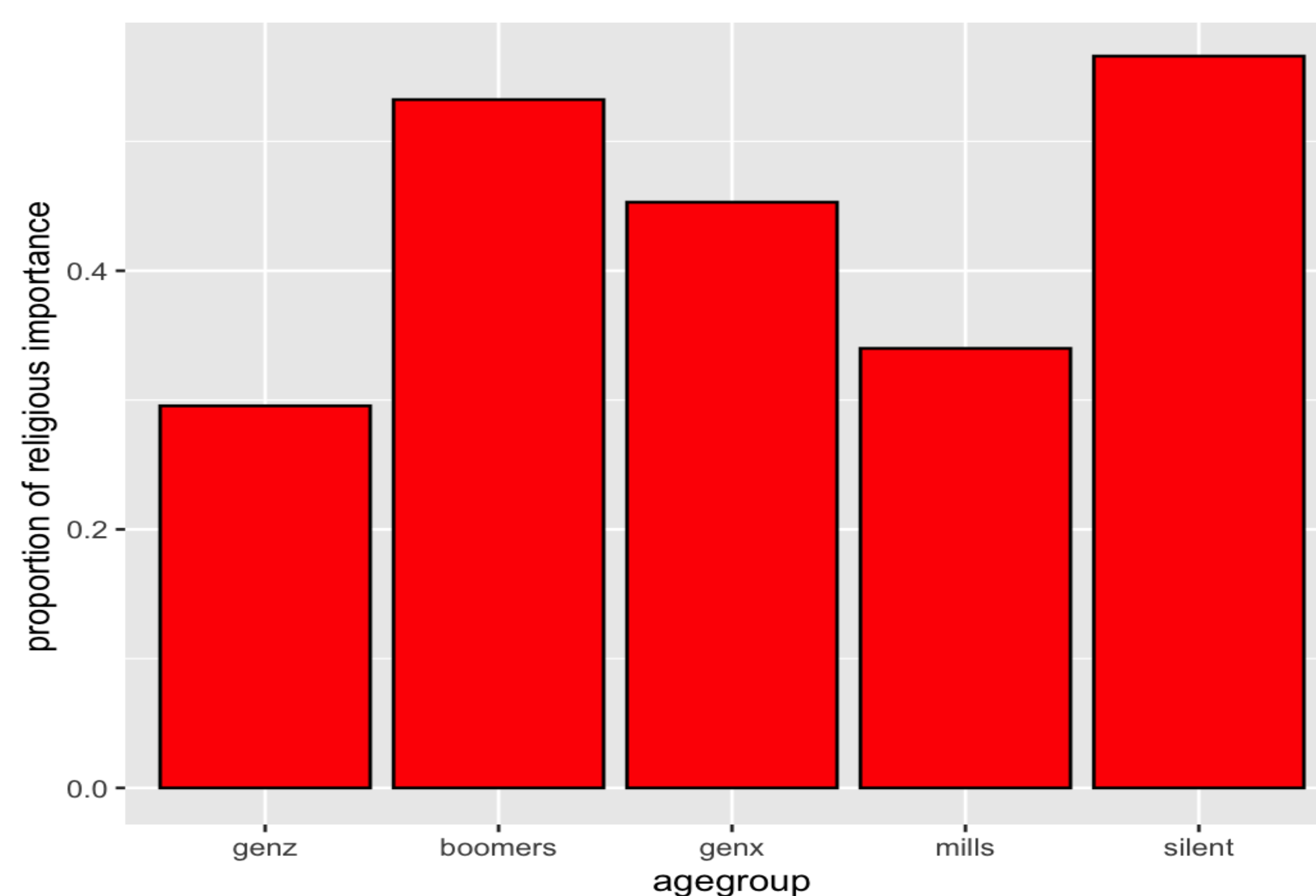Generation vs Proportion of Individuals who find Religion Important

Figure 1: The Proportion of Generations which find Religion Important
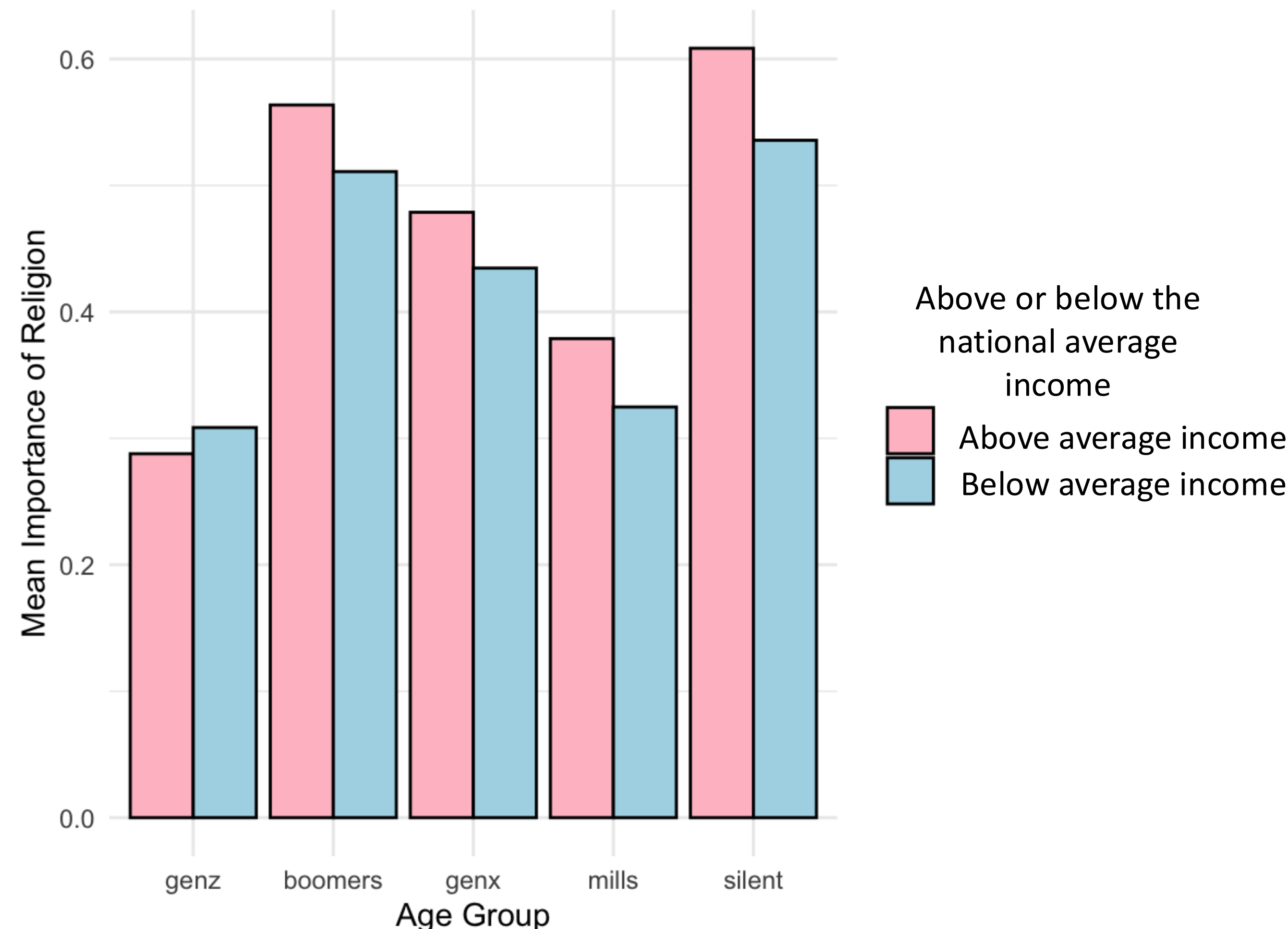
Average Income vs Average Religious Importance by Generation

Figure 2: Above Average Income vs Religious Importance by Generation

Discussion

- GenZ's religiosity has the greatest change from boomers and the silent generation which suggests a large socioeconomic difference between the groups.
- This difference is not strongly correlated with income.
- Future research focusing on the generational disparities in religion and how they correspond to socioeconomic status are should be conducted to predicting civic engagement spikes and additional trends.

References

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