

Predicting the Consequences of Imperfect Religious Socialization

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Background

Secularization theory today

Mechanisms: theorized and tested

Pluralism makes it more difficult to believe only one religion is true

Science makes belief in the supernatural implausible

Higher education removes people from their established social support systems and exposes them to secular theories

Conclusion: mixed or contrary evidence for each

Cross-generational/cohort decline

Move away from change *within* individuals to change between one generation/cohort and the next

...as backlash against the political activities of the religious right

OR

..as a self-reinforcing, demographic process

Voas, David. 2009. "The Rise and Fall of Fuzzy Fidelity in Europe."

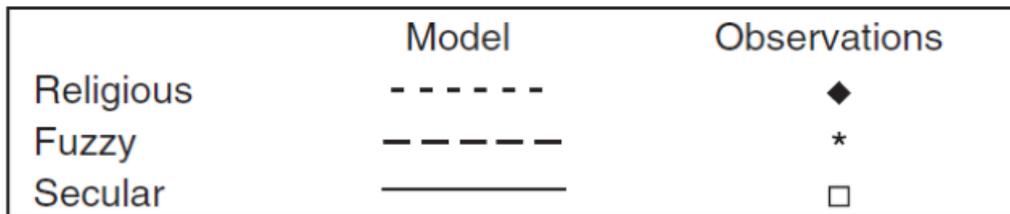
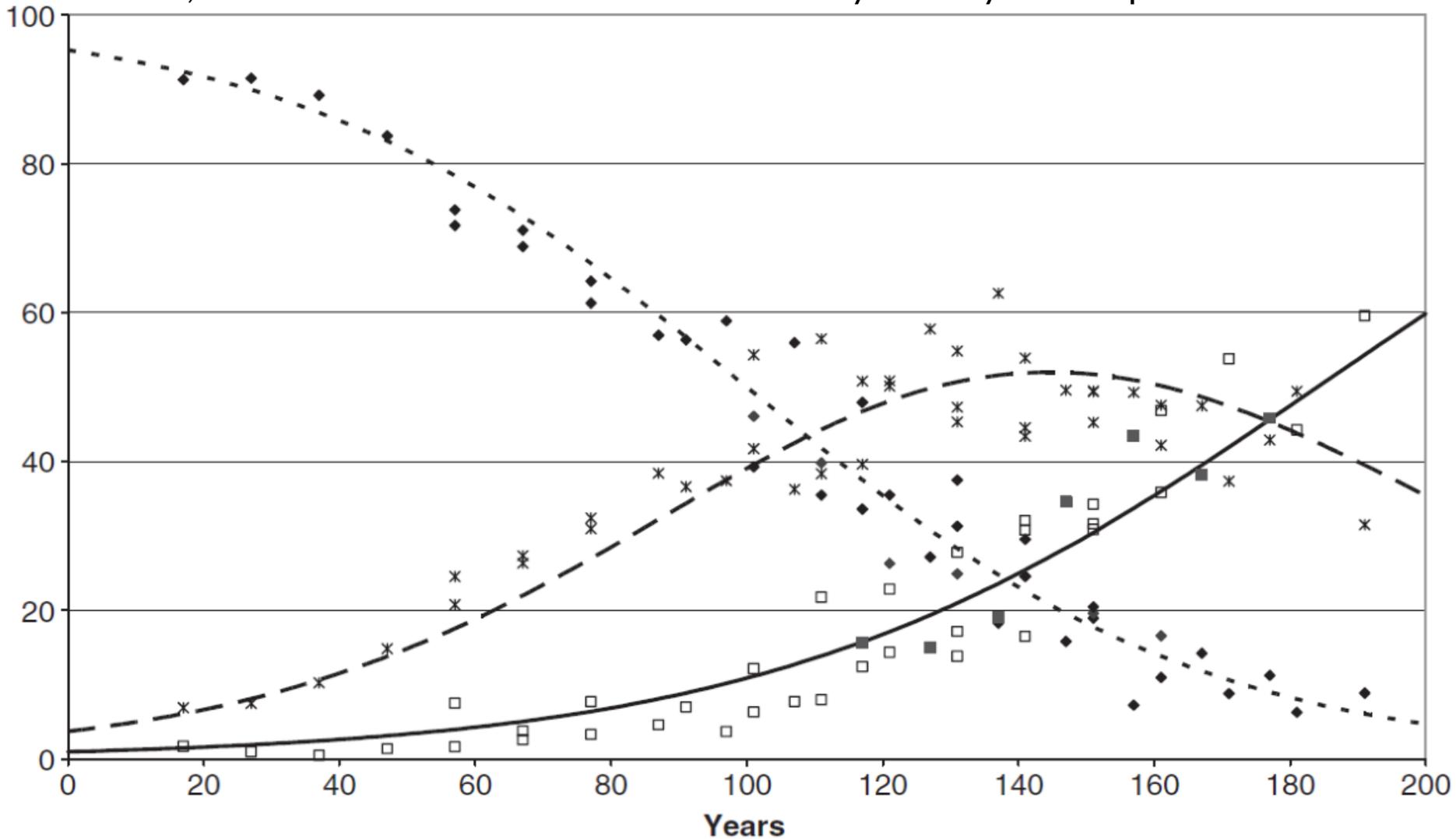
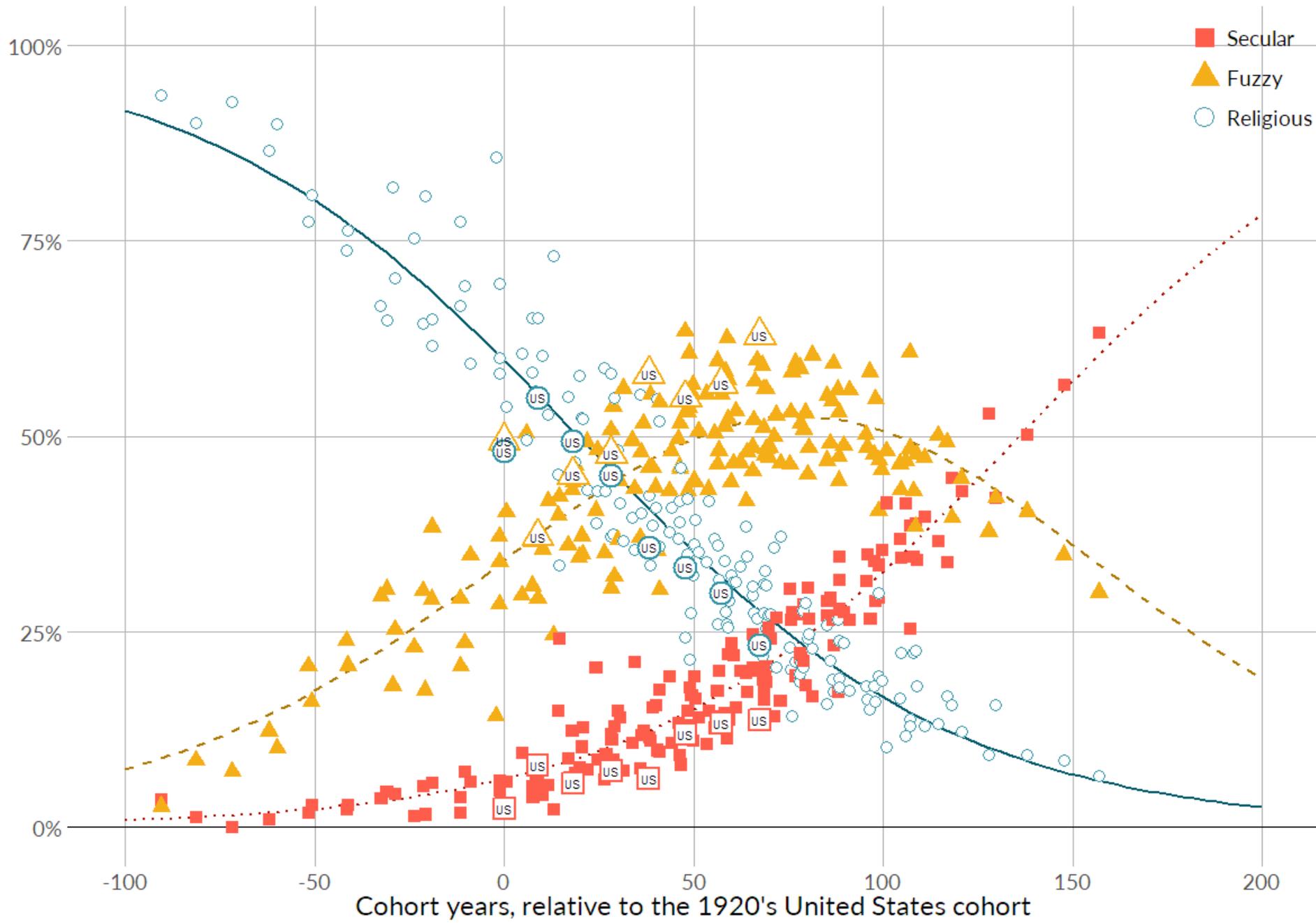


Figure 3: Religious makeup of Europe, the United States, and Israel by cohort



Cohort vs generational processes

Cohort processes

People have unique experiences, influenced by when they grow up

Generational processes

People have unique experiences, influenced by what their parents are like

Whose children are religiously most similar to them?

Sociologists

Married, biological parents

Parents who share the same religion

Working fathers and stay-at-home mothers

Psychologists

Parents with a *close* relationship with their child

Parents with a *warm* relationship with their child

Goal

Use Voas' three-category measure of religiosity to test whether generations slowly become less religious, even when taking into account parental and demographic characteristics

Methods

Data

Main difficulty

Data needs to be multi-generational with multidimensional measures of religiosity

Longitudinal Study of Generations (LSoG)

Panel study of California families, starting in 1971 (Wave 1) and continuing to 2005 (Wave 8)

Defining religious categories

The “Religious”

Self-reported religiosity: Moderately or very religious

AND

Service attendance: at least monthly

OR

Importance: ranked in top 3 values OR strongly agrees that religion is the most important part of respondent’s life

Defining religious categories

The “secular”

Self-reported religiosity: Not at all religious

AND

Service attendance: Never

AND

Importance: ranked in bottom 2 values AND
*strongly disagrees that religion is the most important part of respondent's life

**Excluded for waves 1 and 2*

Defining religious categories

The “fuzzy”

Everyone else who wasn't missing data

Matching parents and children

Children were matched with their “assigned” parent (that is, the participant believed to be their parent)

Some respondents gave information about someone other than the assigned parent

Parents' religiosity

Respondents are matched with their parents using *the closest wave to when the respondent was 12*

Fills in some missing data when parents drop out of the survey

Many 2nd and 3rd generation respondents are matched to their parents' religion much later than their adolescent years

Respondent variables

Year of birth (standardized)

Ethnicity (Ref = “White”)

Female

Has a college degree

Income (standardized)

Does not work

Parent variables

Parent-Respondent relationship variables

Closeness to mother/father (standardized)

Parent Variables

Mother's/Father's religiosity

Mother and father have same religion

Mother/Father has a college degree

Mother/Father does not work

Analyses

Multilevel ordinal regression models

Level 1: response at time X

Level 2: Respondent

Level 3: Family

Estimated in Stata using `meologit`

Results

Descriptives

Sample

3,681 in the complete LSoG sample

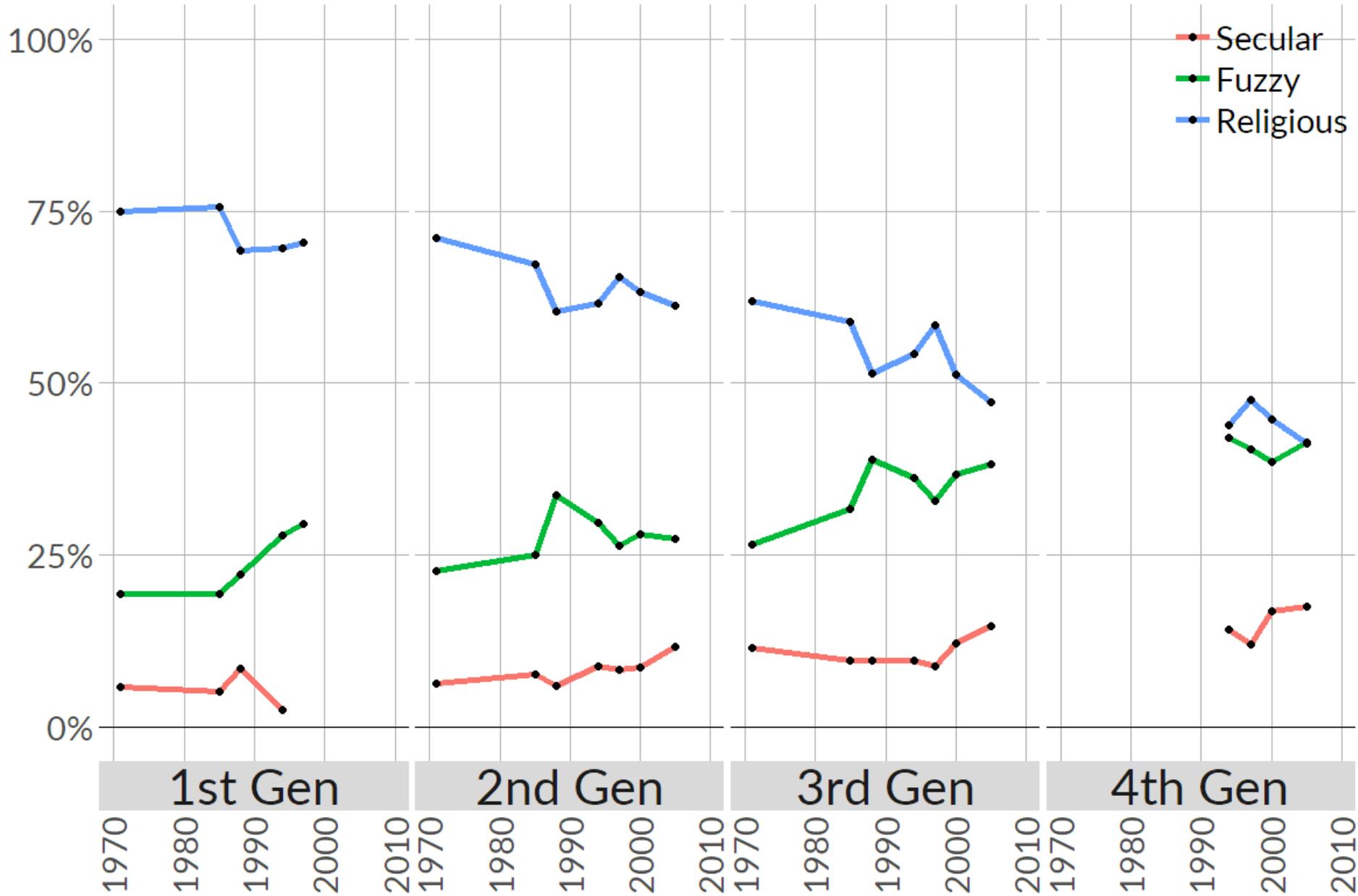
3,481 could be categorized (religious, fuzzy, secular) in at least one wave

3,642 had an identifiable and plausible age (though some with less certainty than others)

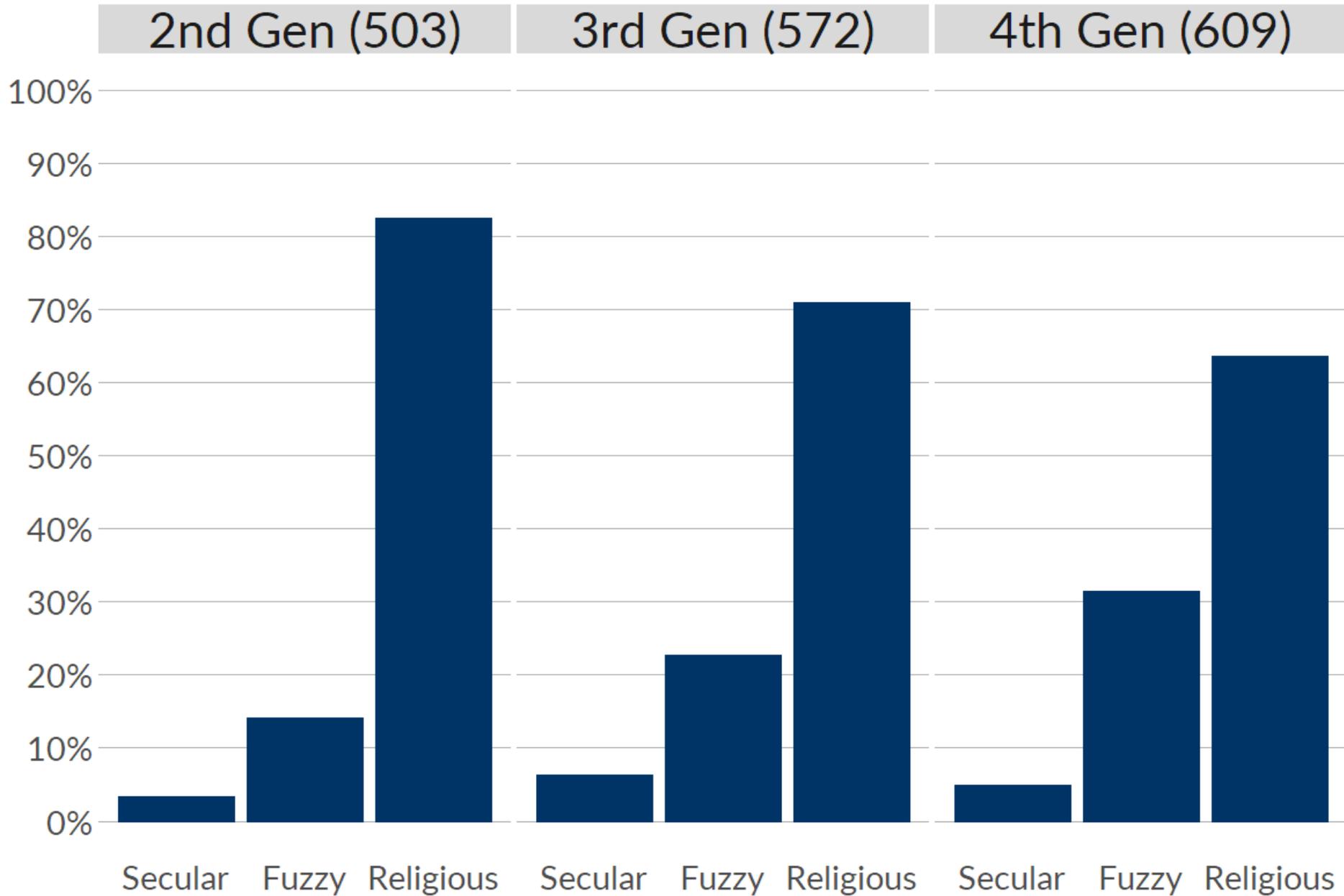
1,684 could be matched to their mother

1,399 could be matched to their father

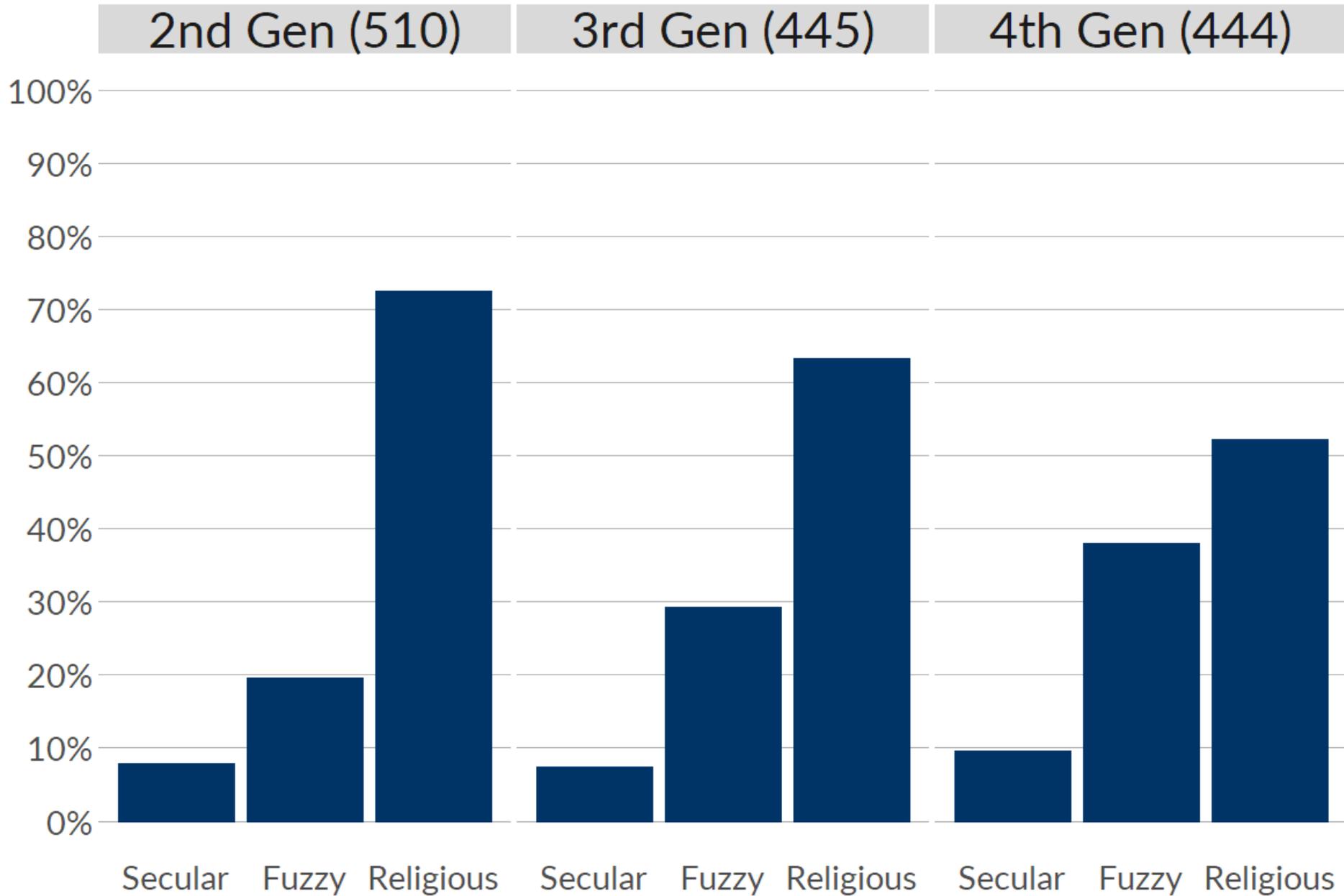
Percent religious, fuzzy, and secular in each generation



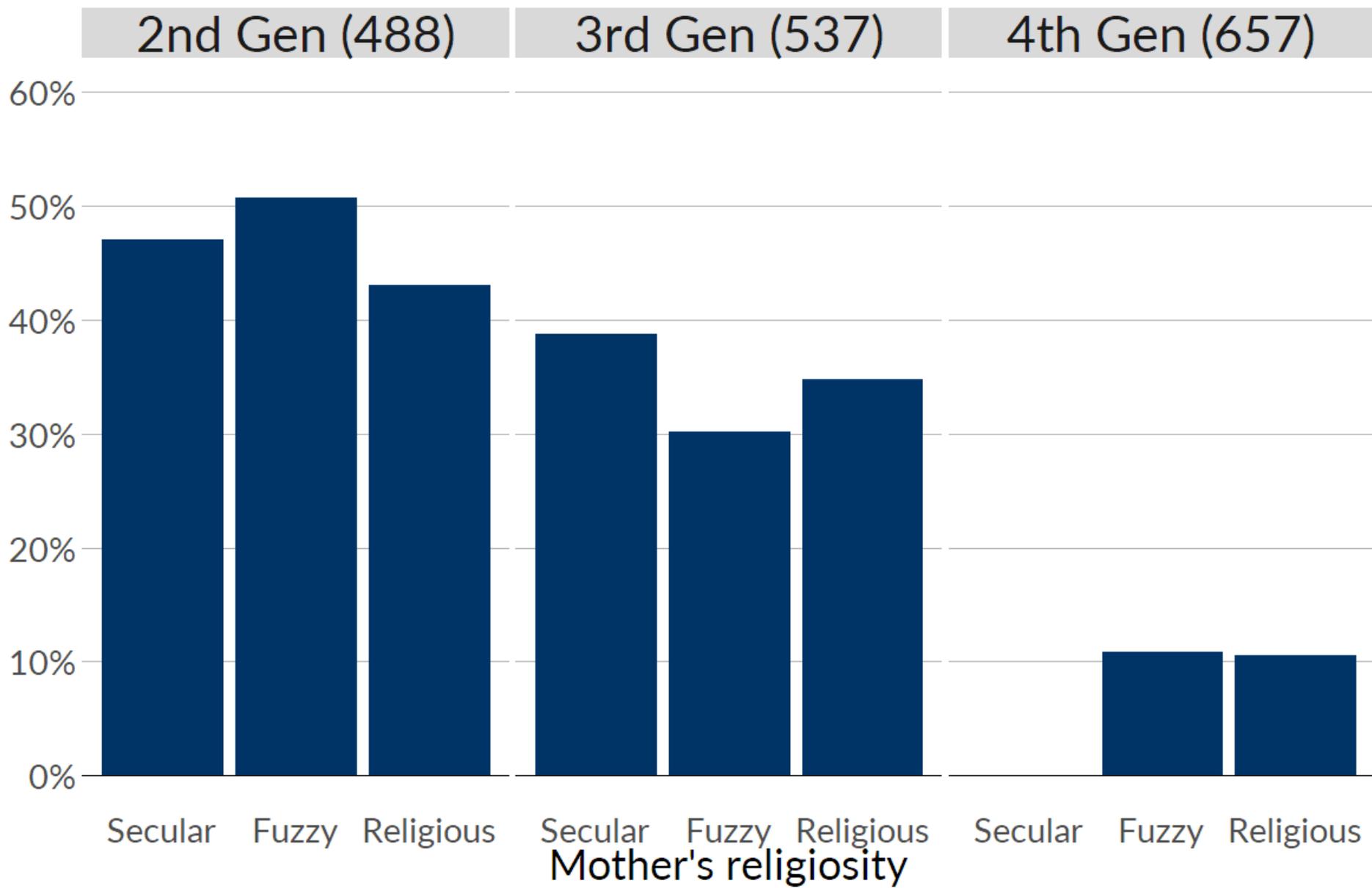
Mother's religiosity, by generation



Father's religiosity, by generation



Proportion of respondents whose mothers do not work, by generation



Average closeness to mother, by mother's religiosity and respondent generation

2nd Gen (420)

3rd Gen (571)

4th Gen (604)

Extremely close

Very close

Pretty close

Somewhat close

Not too close

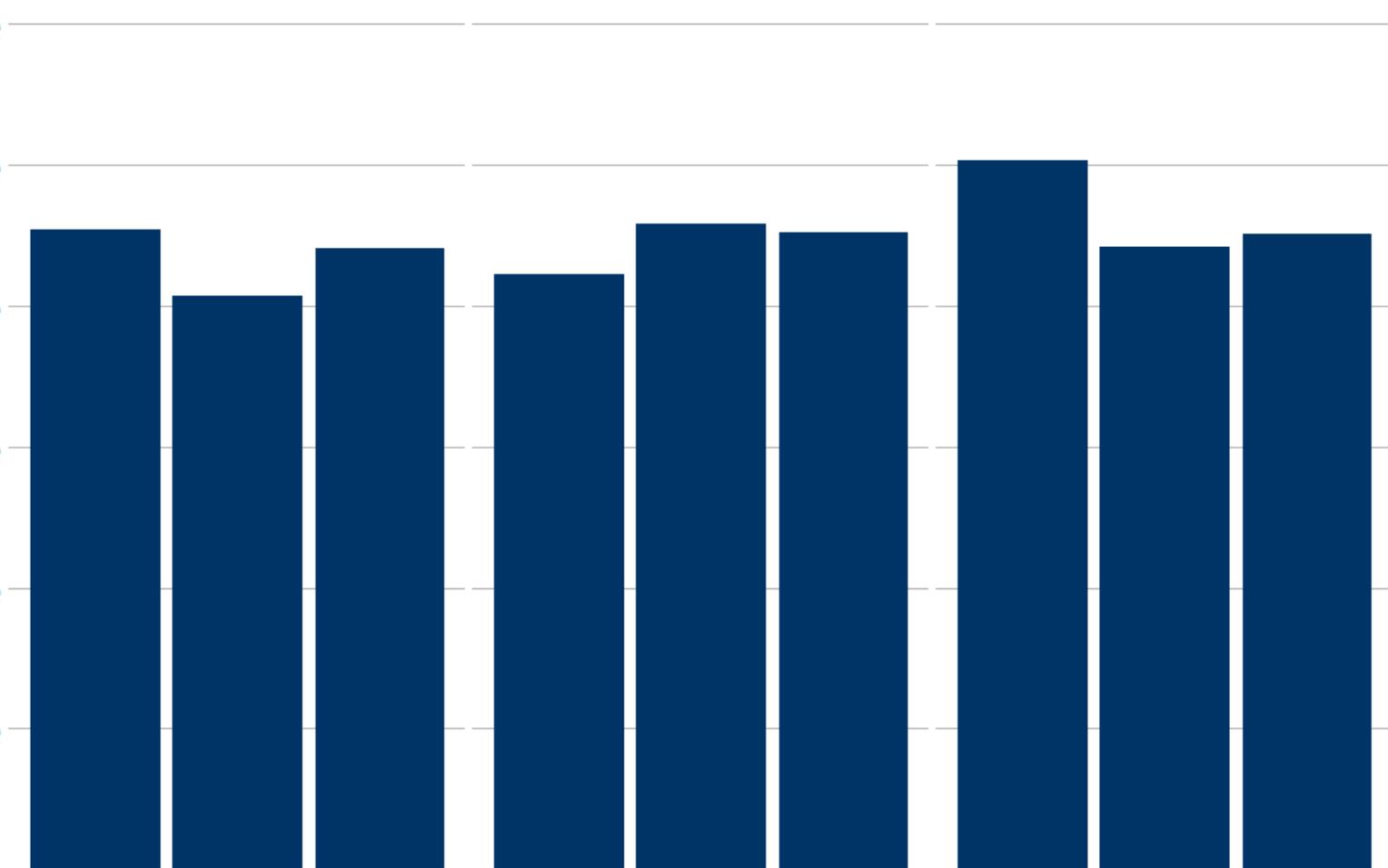
Not close

Secular Fuzzy Religious

Secular Fuzzy Religious

Secular Fuzzy Religious

Mother's religiosity



Average closeness to father, by father's religiosity and respondent generation

2nd Gen (373)

3rd Gen (444)

4th Gen (440)

Extremely close

Very close

Pretty close

Somewhat close

Not too close

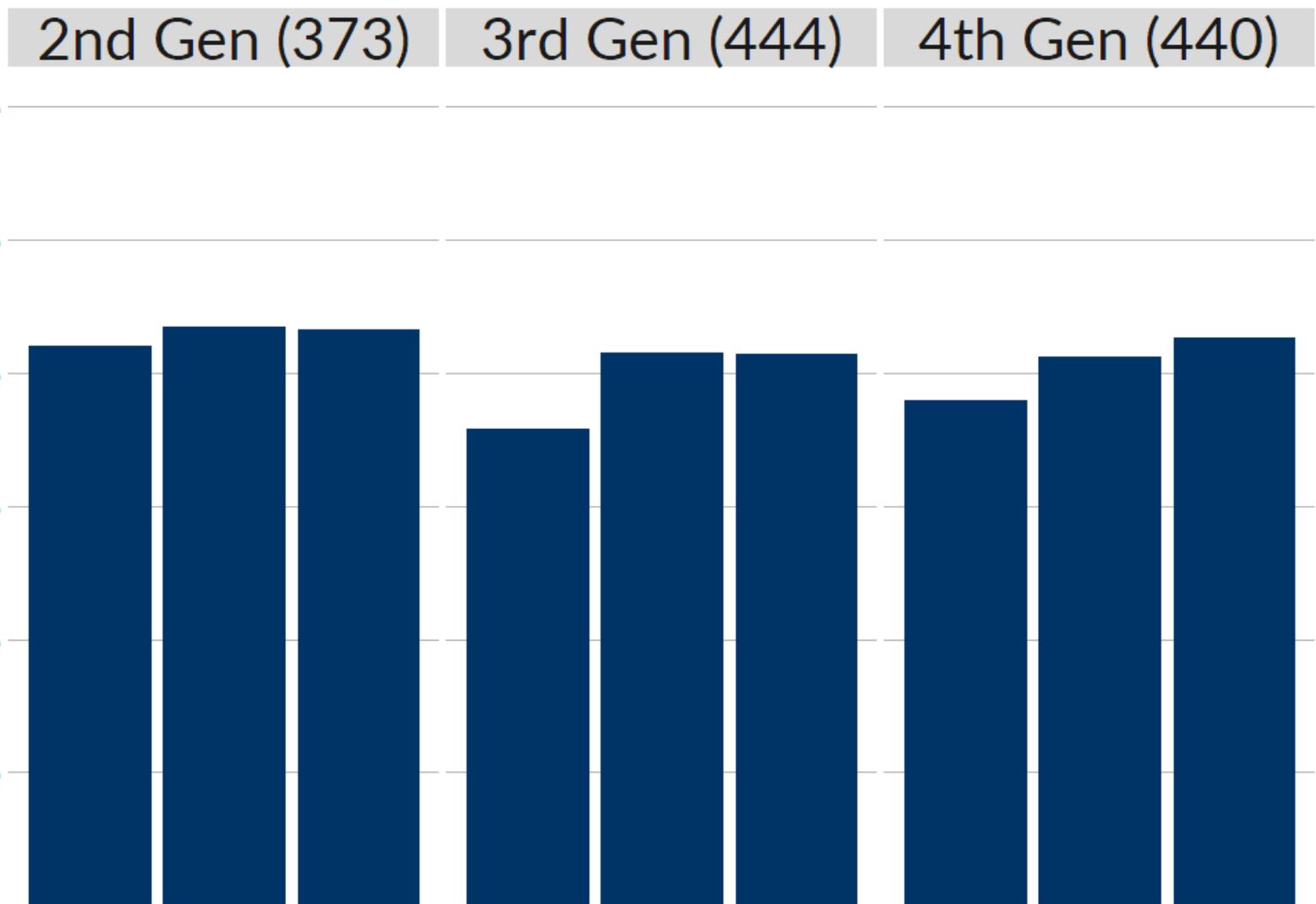
Not close

Secular Fuzzy Religious

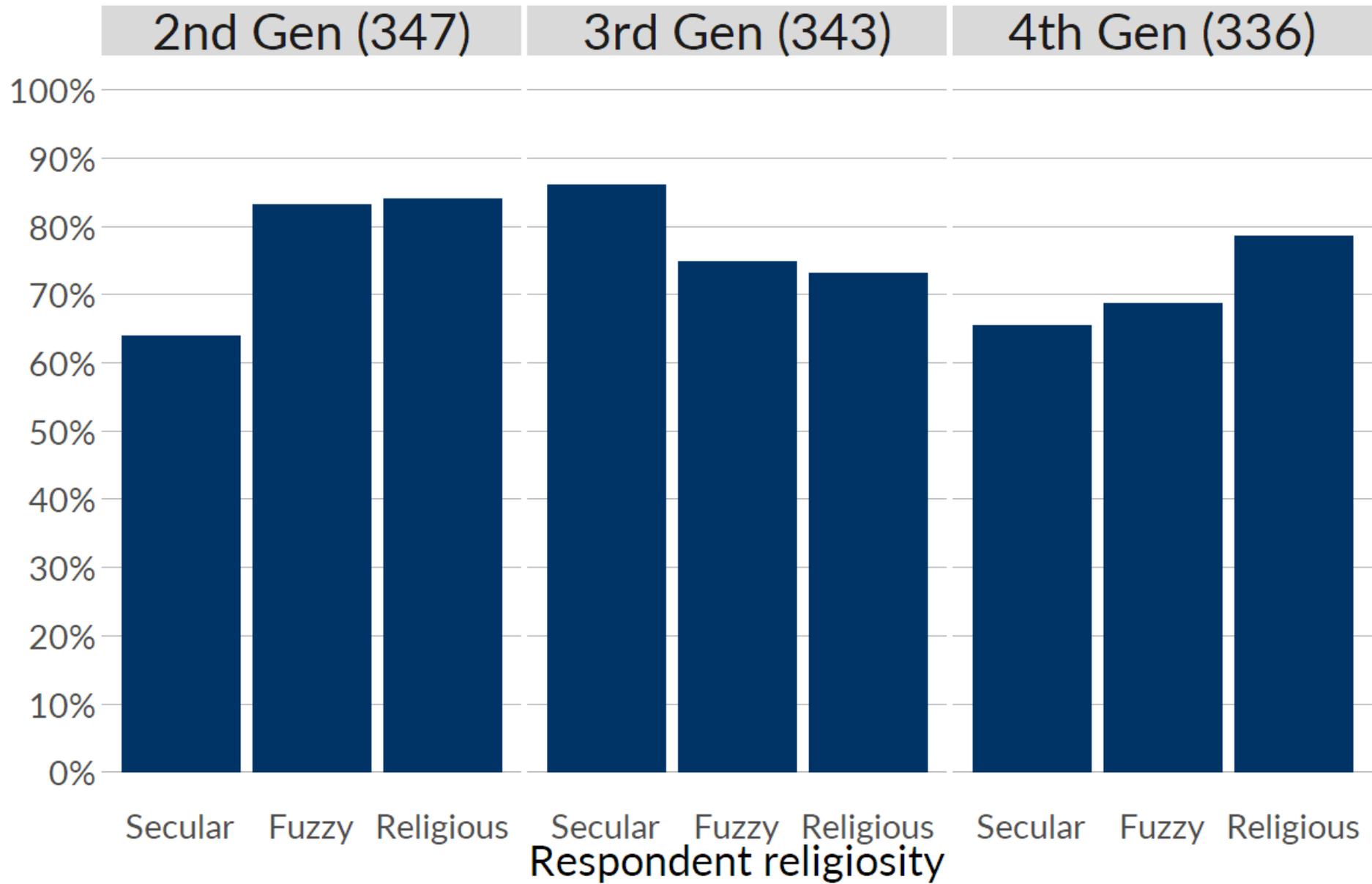
Secular Fuzzy Religious

Secular Fuzzy Religious

Father's religiosity



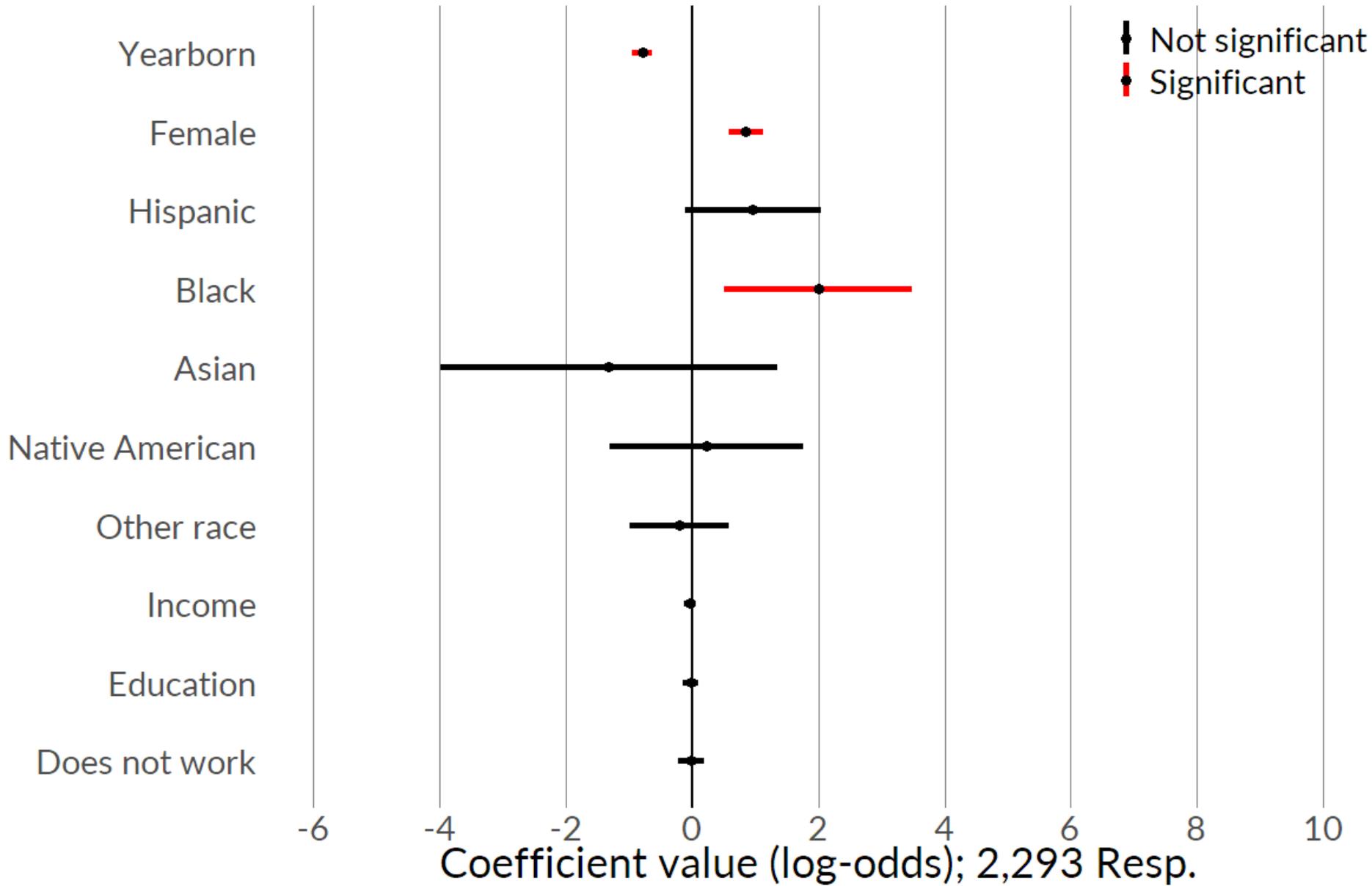
Proportion of respondents whose parents have the same religion, by generation and respondent religiosity



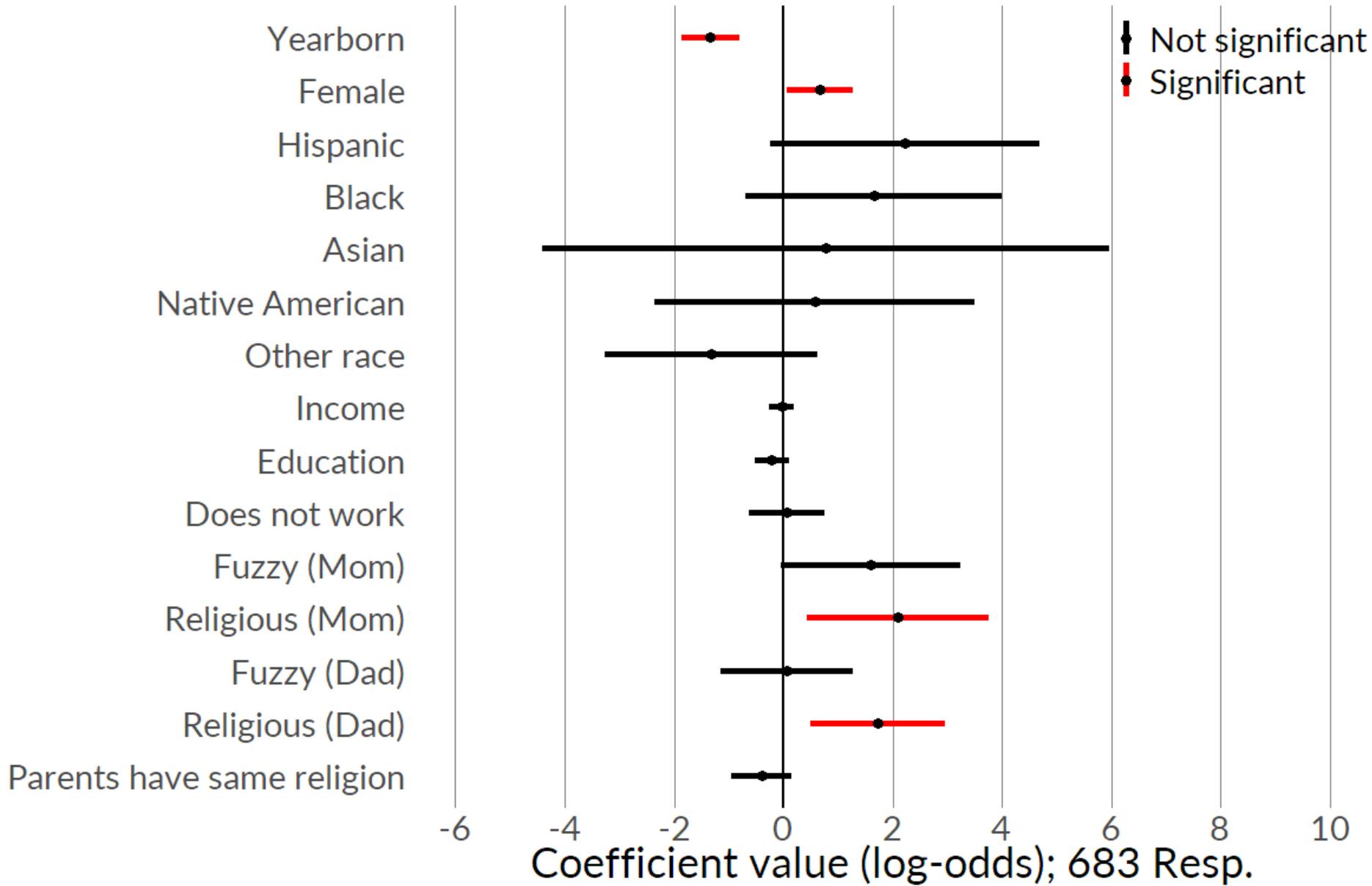
Results

Model coefficients

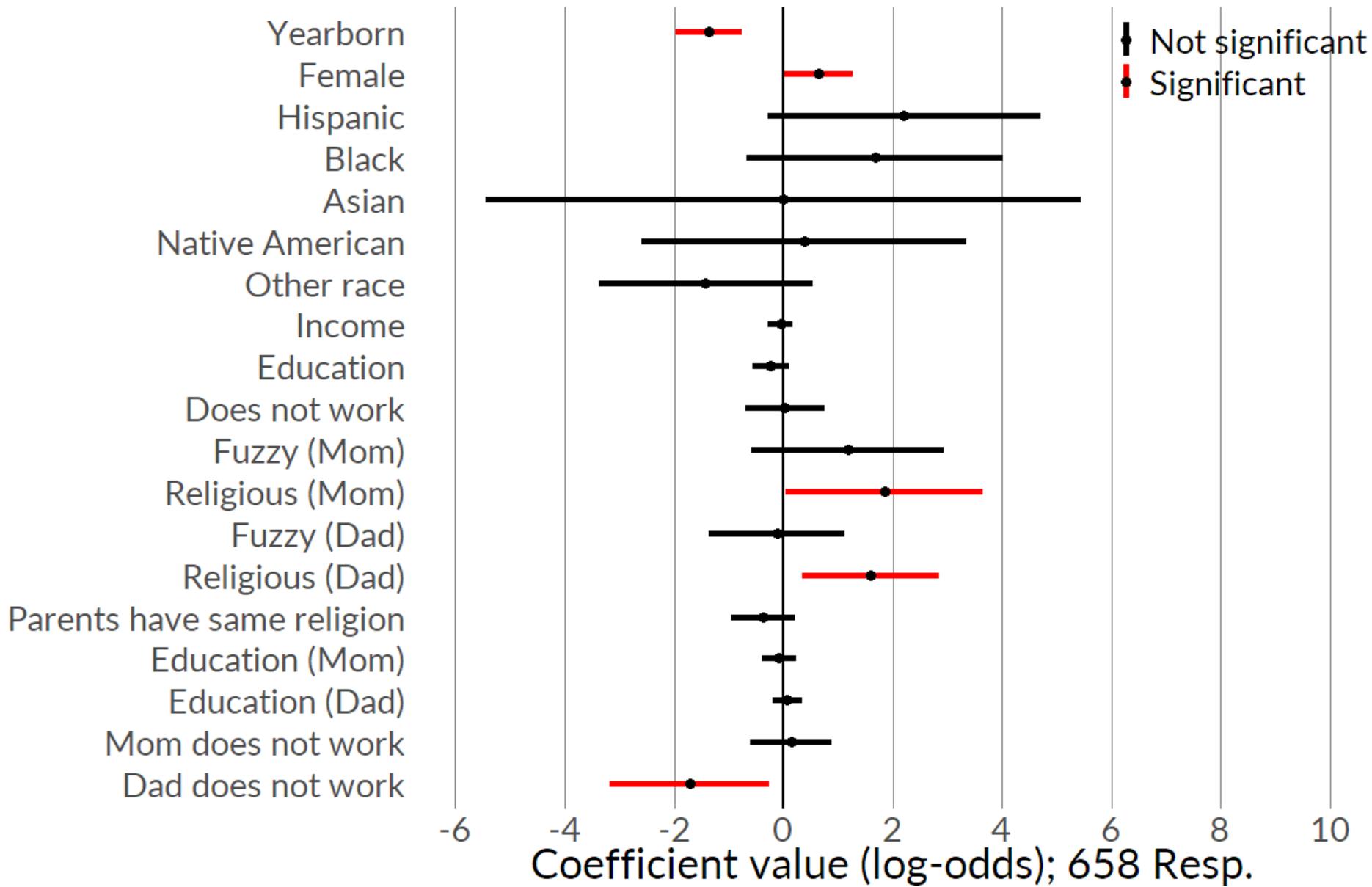
Religiosity predicted by year of birth with respondent-level controls



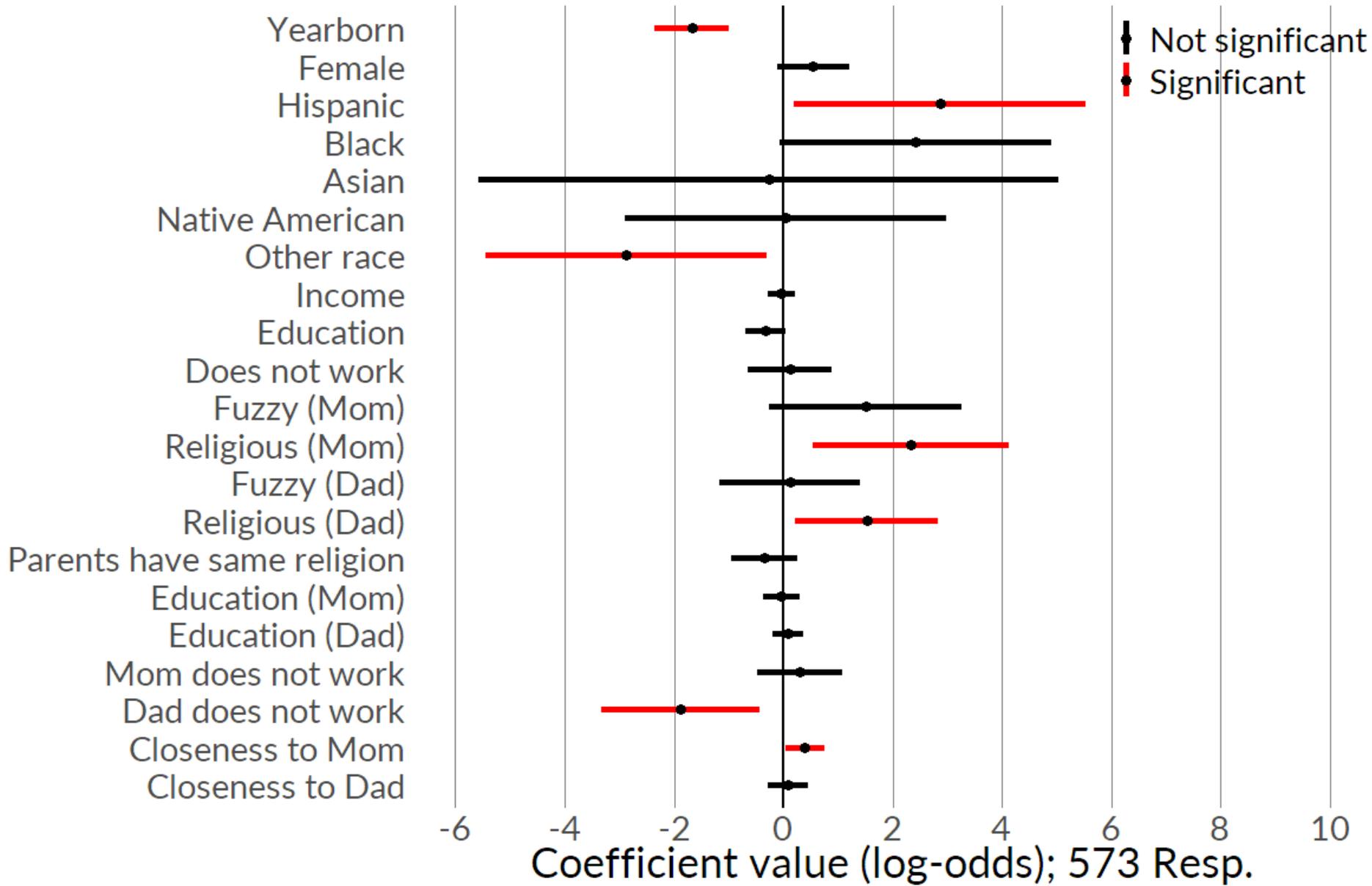
Religiosity predicted by year of birth with parent religiosity and alignment



Religiosity predicted by year of birth with parental-level controls



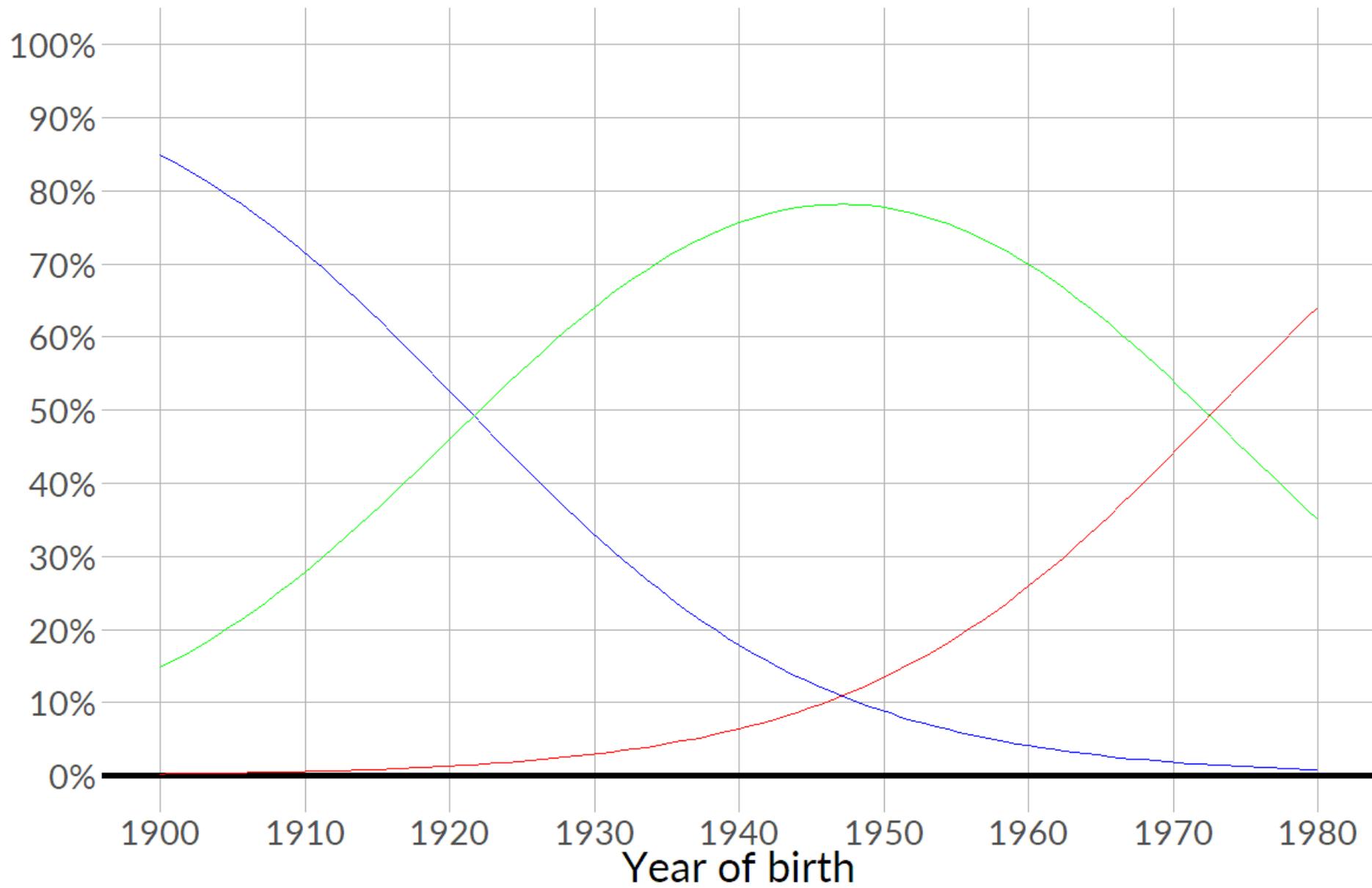
Religiosity predicted by year of birth with closeness to parents



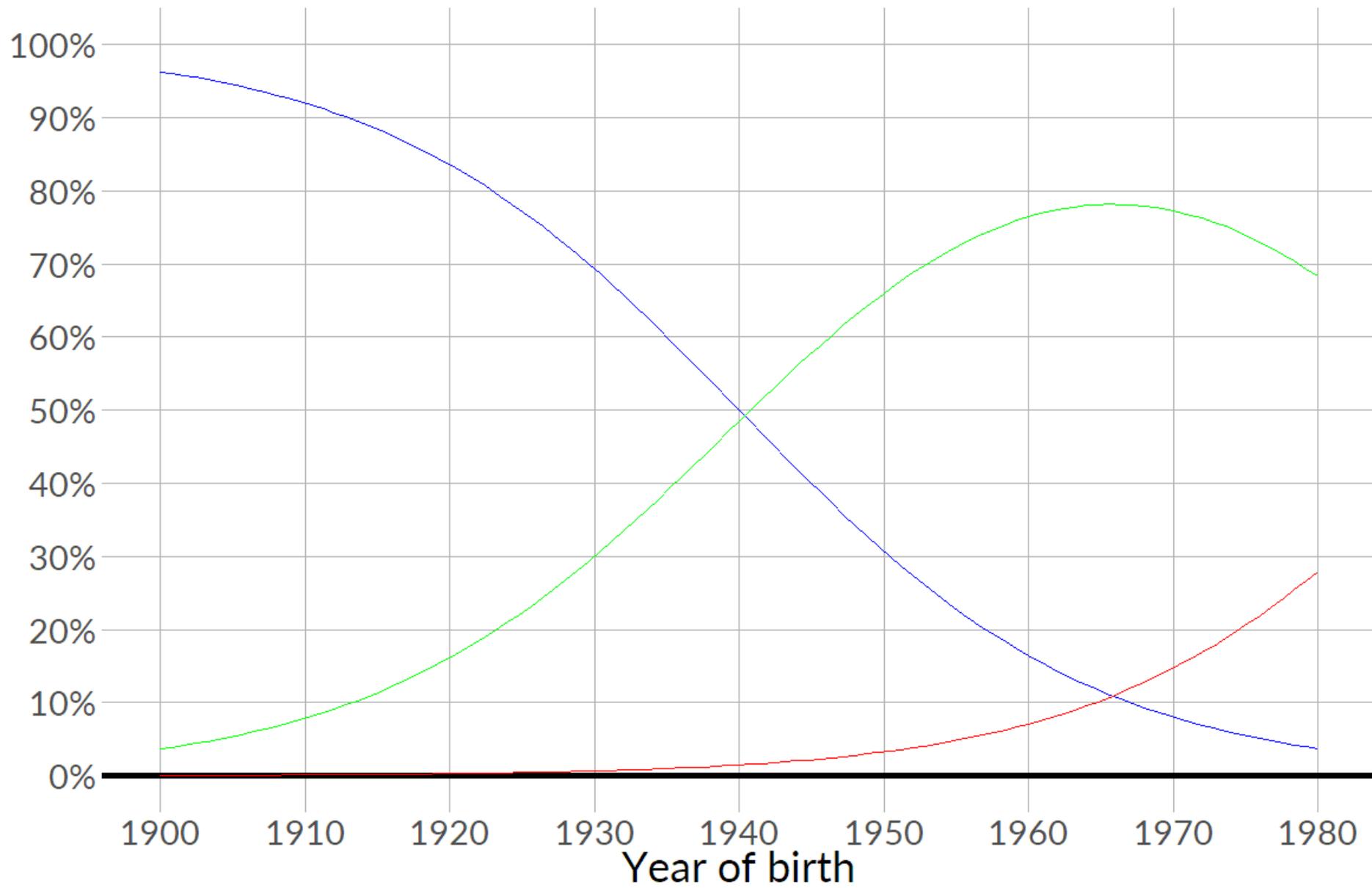
Results

Predicted probabilities

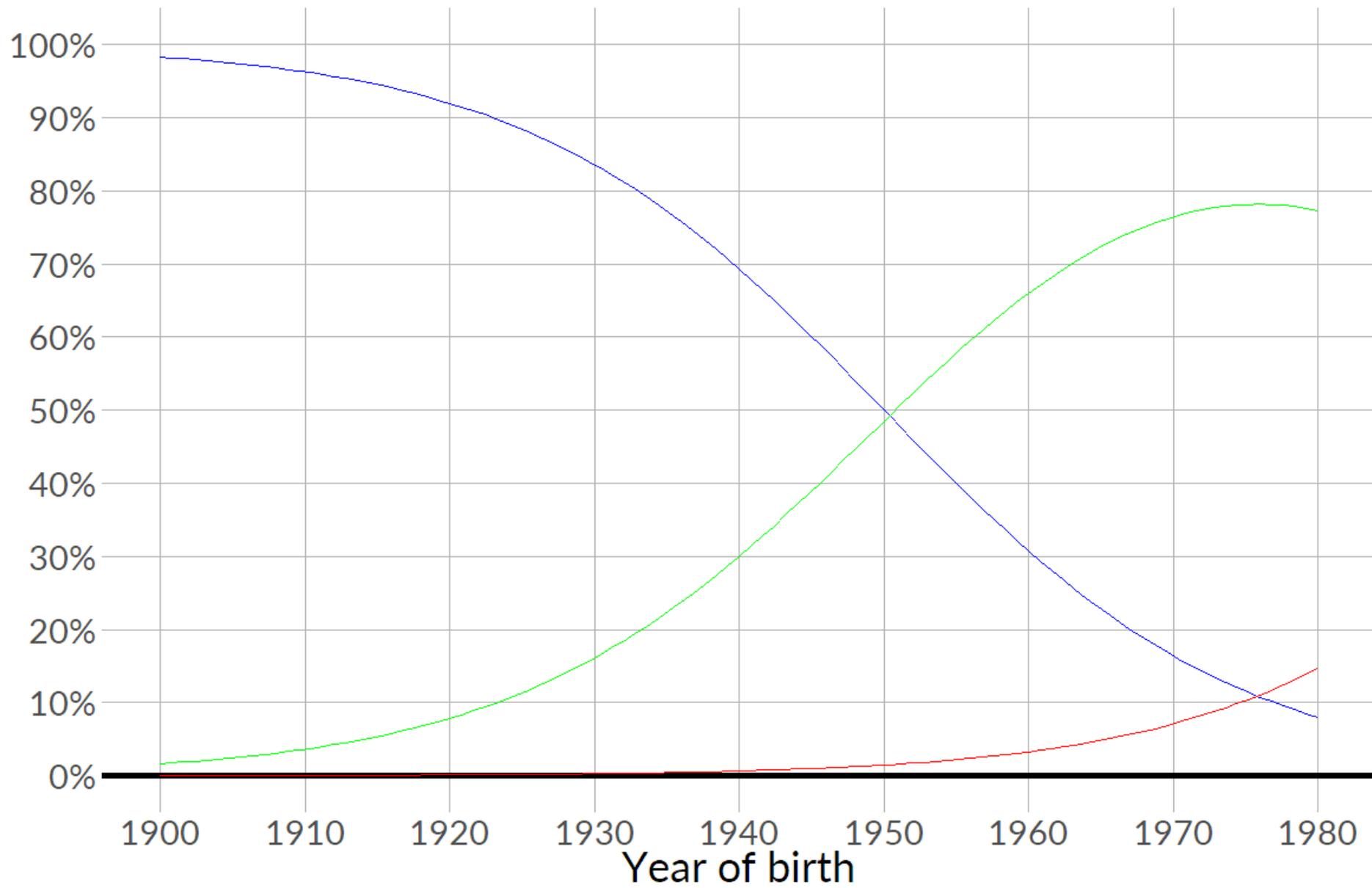
Predicted religious makeup of the population, by year of birth (Neither parent is Religious)



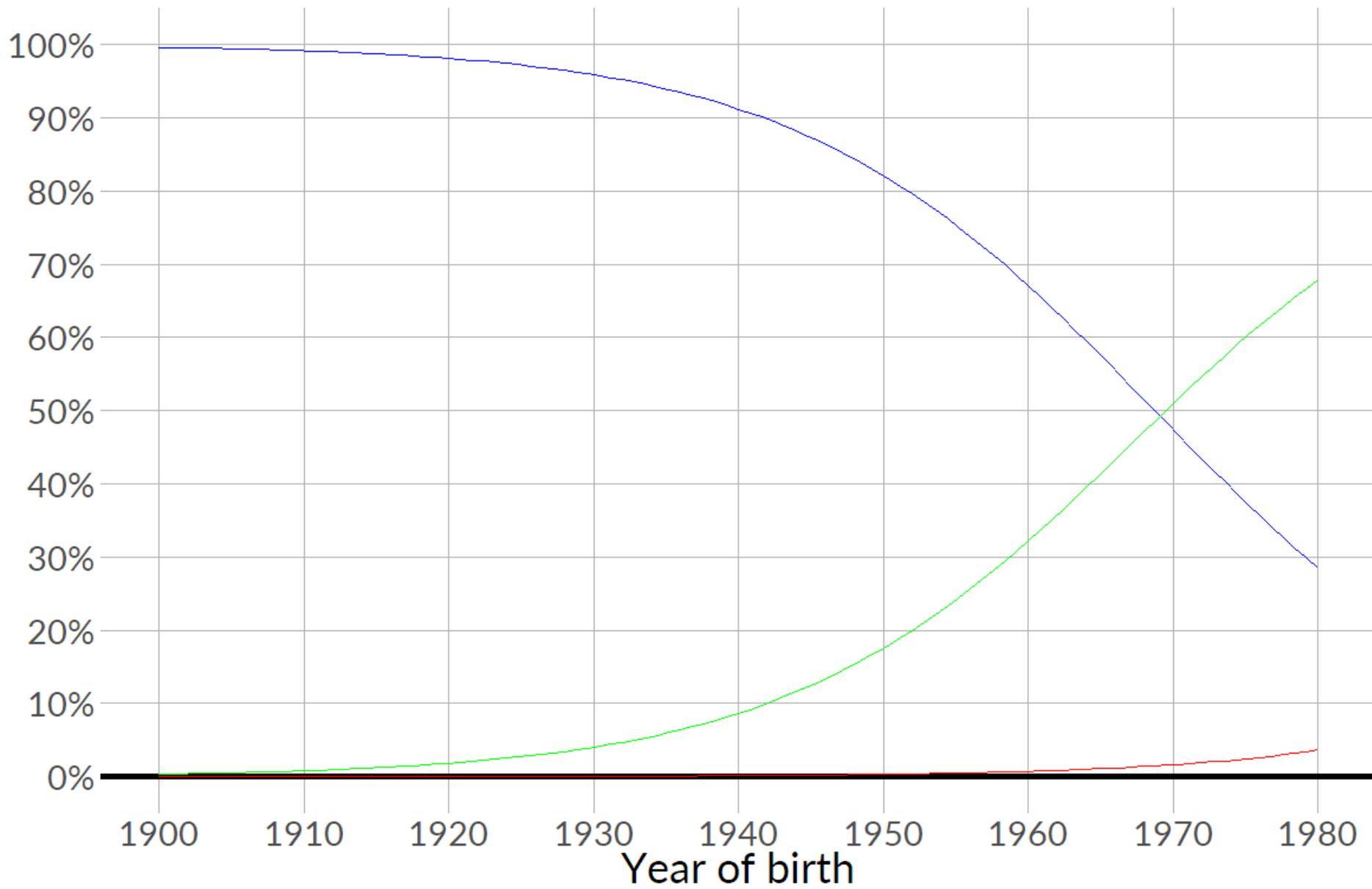
Predicted religious makeup of the population, by year of birth (Father is Religious)



Predicted religious makeup of the population, by year of birth (Mother is Religious)



Predicted religious makeup of the population, by year of birth (both parents are Religious)



**Take-aways,
theory, and next
steps**

Take-aways

Across-cohort decline is evident even when controlling for parental religiosity, closeness, and socio-economic status

Children of religious parents are increasingly likely to become less religious across cohorts, even if their trajectory is delayed relative to others

Theory

Secularization as the *removal* of supportive forces as opposed to the *introduction* of disruptive forces

Parents still are highly influential through socializing their children

However, society no longer reinforces a religious identity or religious involvement if and when specific individuals become less religious than their parents

Future analyses and limitations

Account for political values

Address missing data

Explore other data sources

National US data

International data

Thank you.

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simonbrauer.github.io (website)

Figure 3: Religious makeup of Europe, the United States, and Israel by cohort

