



14.3 Why Are Some People More Religious than Others?

RELIGIOSITY BY GENDER AND AGE

The appeal of new religious movements to women raises an important larger question in the sociology of religion: Who practices religion? In the rest of this section, we will explore some of the ways in which religion of all types has appealed more to women and older people than men and younger people.

Women as Generally More Religious

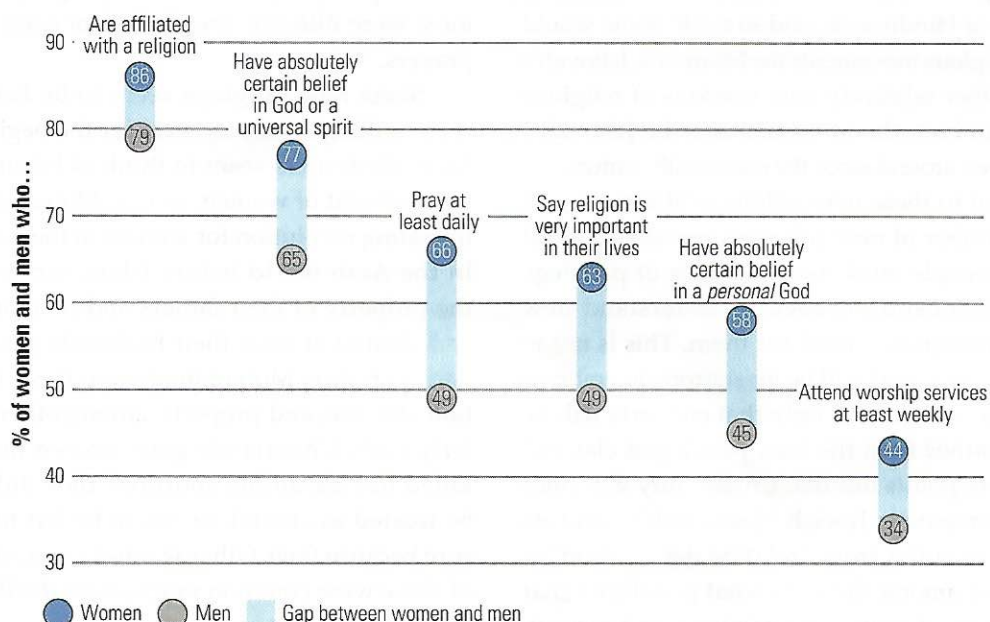
14.3.1 Discuss the relationship between gender and religiosity in various major religions.

Despite many advances for women in American society and elsewhere, new religions today still develop in

an environment in which women are disadvantaged, in general, and second-class citizens within most of the established religions of the world, in particular. One would think such treatment would lead women to reject traditional religion to a greater extent than men. Yet most research finds just the opposite, as Figure 14.4 illustrates. One literature review argues strongly that despite their poor treatment, “[t]he greater religiosity of women must be one of the oldest and clearest findings in the psychology of religion” (Beit-Hallahmi and Argyle 1997:142).

But wait a minute. One of the great things about science is that we keep reevaluating what we think we know. This is what D. Paul Sullins did in 2006, and his reanalysis of the available data across the world challenged the received wisdom in a couple of ways. Sullins concluded

Figure 14.4 The Gender Gap in Religion: Are Women More Religious than Men?



SOURCE: Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life.