

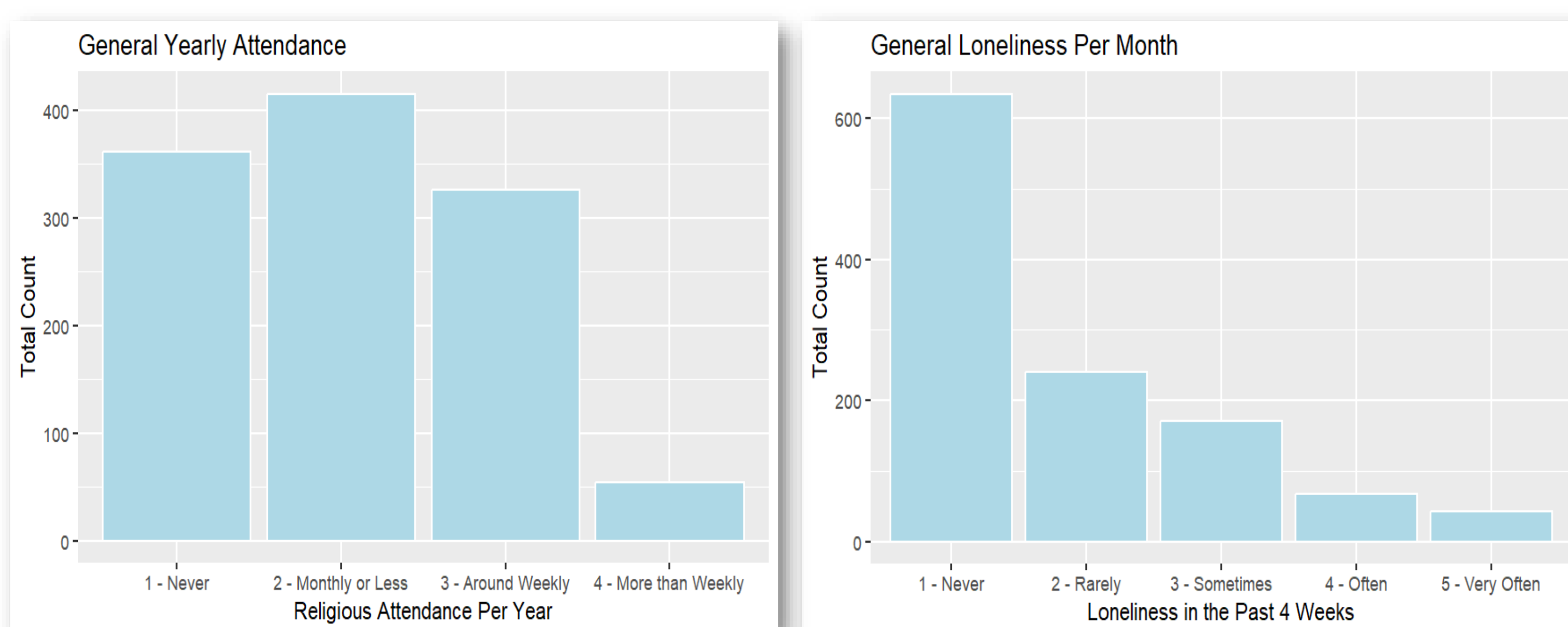
# The Association Between Religious Attendance and Loneliness



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## Introduction

- **Background:** In the 2010s, continued research showed that a majority of the world is more religious in the age range forty and up, and only two nations showed the opposite out of over 100 (Pew Research Center, 2018). At the same time, there is a worldwide loneliness epidemic, which affects those over 65 substantially more (Gerontechnology, 2019)
- While the correlation between these two facets of life have been studied, they are always in specific studies without a broader view
  - Studies on minority groups have shown that religious attendance does create a sense of community and decrease loneliness, yet on a smaller scale than the U.S. population (Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 2017).
  - Larger studies often factor in other societal causes that cloud whether religion is the true explanatory factor of loneliness reduction, or only focusing on one religious group (JEMS, 2017).



## Methods

### Sample

- Adult ages 18+ who reported on their yearly religious attendance and their loneliness in the month interviewed were drawn from the 2018 wave of the General Social Survey (GSS).
- The GSS is a U.S. based nationally representative interview survey of the United States adult population that collects data on a wide range of social topics

### Measures

- Two sample groups were created: those 18+ and those 40+
- The attend module includes questions on how often the participant attends religious services per year.
- Current loneliness was evaluated through monthly loneliness from the lonely2 module, which asked, "How often in the past 4 weeks have you felt isolated from others?"

## Research Questions

- Does the loneliness of a person affect their religious attendance?
- For people across the previous spectrum of loneliness, does age impact the chances of them attending religious services?

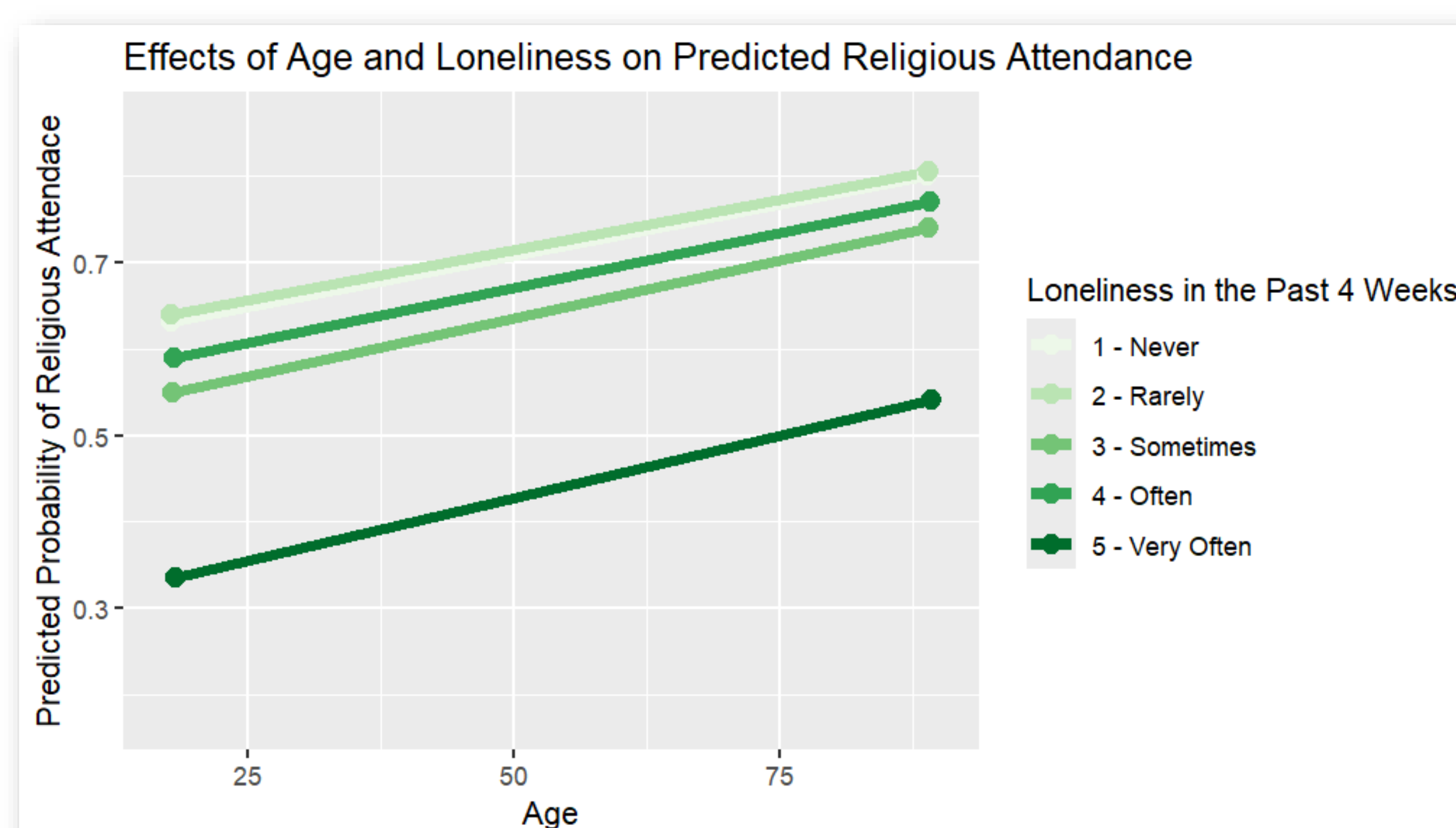
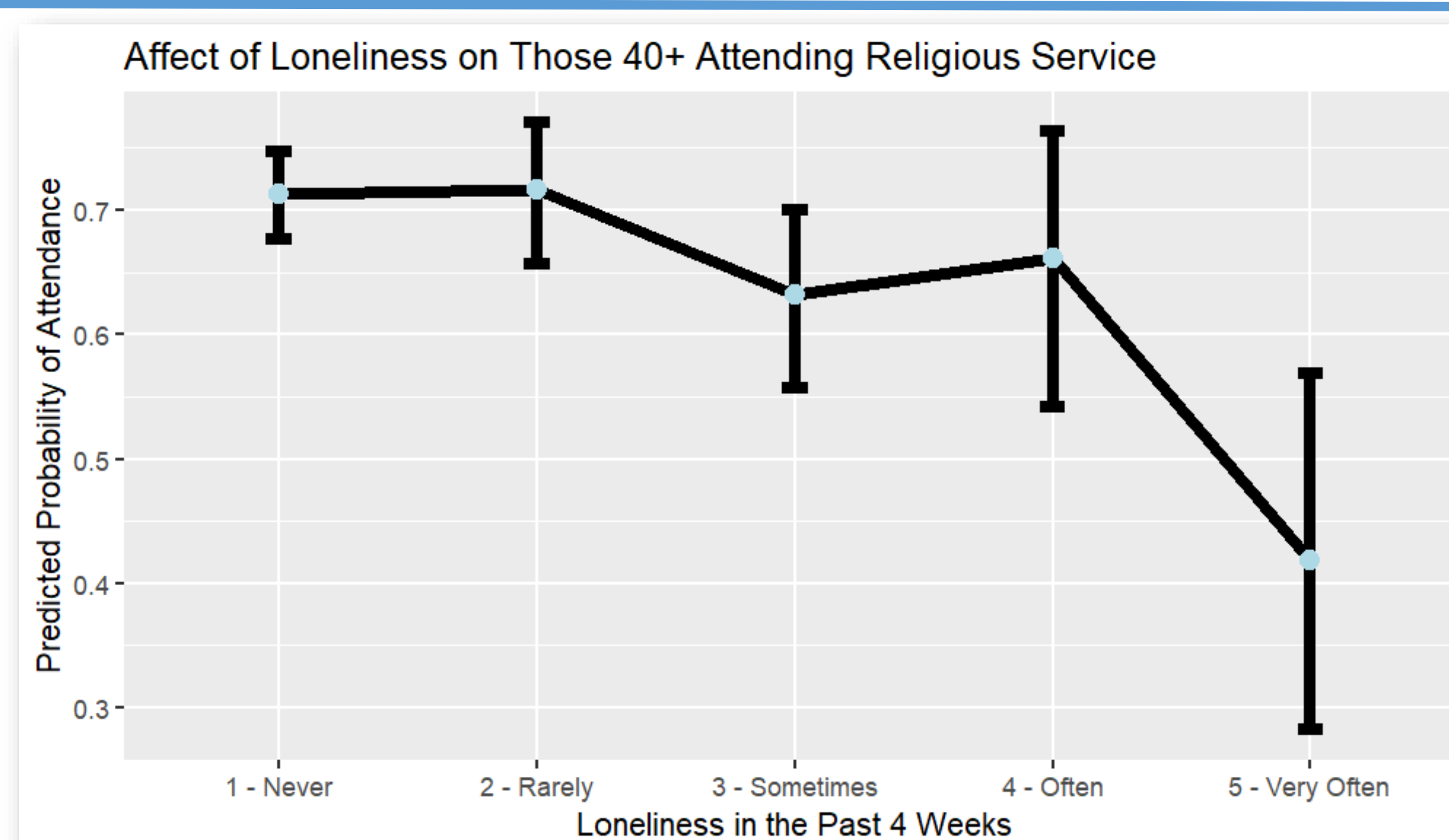
## Results

### Univariate

- 69% of individuals 18 and older attend religious services at least once a year. Of those 40+ years of age, 72% attended once a year.
- 55% of individuals say they never felt lonely in the month surveyed, 4% of individuals felt lonely very often in that time period. 57% of those 40+ never felt lonely, 4% felt lonely very often

### Bivariate

- Logistic Regression showed that adults 40+ were not more or less likely to attend religious services in the calendar year **unless they felt lonely very often in the past month (4%)**. Compared to those who reported never feeling lonely (57%), they had 0.29 odds to attend religious services, Est. = -1.25, Z value = -3, P = 0.002.
- Unexpectedly, **only those with loneliness reported at very often in the past month had any correlated change in their religious attendance**
- In terms of Chi-Squared analysis, the 18+ age group had an X-squared of 20 ( $p < 0.001$ ) while the 40+ had an X-squared of 10.8 ( $p = 0.028$ )



### Multivariate

- Due to ages impact in the previous Bivariate analyses, it was added as a third controlling variable.
- When age is controlled in age groups 40+, it does not have a significant effect on religious attendance ( $p = 0.3$ ).
- However, when taken in an age group 18+, age has a significant relationship with religious attendance, with a yearly odds ratio of 1.01 (Est. = 0.012,  $p = 0.001$ ).
- Age was found to be confounded by strength of religious faith (RELITE), however age also has a significant positive relationship with RELITE (Est. = -0.015 (in this case lower RELITE means more religious strength),  $P < 2e-16$ ).

## Discussion

- Individuals 18+ may have a higher chance to attend religious services as they age until reaching 40 years of age, where this relationship doesn't significantly continue
- Adults across all age groups may be significantly less likely to attend religious services **in the entire year** if they felt very lonely **in the current month**.
- This research shows that if an adult, especially one ages 18-40, has felt very isolated in the last month, attending religious services not just in that month but that year may help that issue
- This study's results help to fill in the gaps in the younger age groups, as usually similar research projects focus on the elderly who are lonely and religious, not those who aren't readily going to services.
- Further research is needed to find whether religious attendance has an inverse relationship with loneliness in adults 18-40

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