



# The relationship between piety and perception of voter duty in various religious groups

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## Introduction

- Individuals who perceive voting as a duty are more likely to cast their ballots.
- Differences in the perception of voter duty may explain the unequal engagement of working- and middle-class voters (Birnbaum et al., 2024).
- Multivariate studies have identified different relationships between church attendance and voter participation in several religious groups (Driskell et al., 2008).

## Methods

### Sample

- Data (n=8,174) was drawn from the American National Election Survey 2020 Time Series Study, consisting of U.S. residents 18 years or older selected at random from USPS C-DSF and surveyed via the web, phone, or video call.

## Results

### Figure 1:

- Significant groups are outlined, and “NDC” means “Neither a Duty nor Choice” and “AD” means “a Little a Duty”.
- Multiple linear regression showed that never attending religious services ( $\beta = -1.15, p = .005$ ) and attending a few times a year ( $\beta = -0.43, p = .008$ ) are significantly associated with perception of voter duty, controlling for race, social class, immigrant status, political party and sex.
- Individuals who do not or rarely attend religious services generally perceive voting more as a choice than a duty.

### Figure 2:

- Multiple linear regression showed that personal regard for religion as not important ( $\beta = -0.60, p = 0.029$ ), of little importance ( $\beta = -0.92, p = 0.0003$ ), and moderately importance ( $\beta = -0.57, p = 0.0006$ ) are significantly associated with perception of voter duty, controlling for race, social class, immigrant status, political party and sex.
- Individuals who feel religion is of no importance, little importance, and moderate importance generally perceive voting more as a choice than a duty.

### Measures

- Perception of voter duty was measured with the question “*how strongly do you feel that voting is a duty or a choice?*” Possible responses ranged from 1 (very strongly a duty) to 7 (very strongly a choice). The variable was treated as quantitative.
- Piety was measured with the question “*how often do you attend religious services?*” Possible responses ranged from 1 (every week) to 5 (never). The variable was treated as categorical.
- Piety was also measured with the question “*how important is religion in your life?*” Possible responses ranged from 1 (extremely important) to 5 (not important at all). The variable was treated at categorical.

## Question

- Are individuals’ personal sense of religious significance related to their perception of voting as a duty or choice?
- Are individuals’ frequency of attendance of religious services related to their perception of voting as a duty or choice?

Figure 1: Mean perception of voter duty by time attending religious services

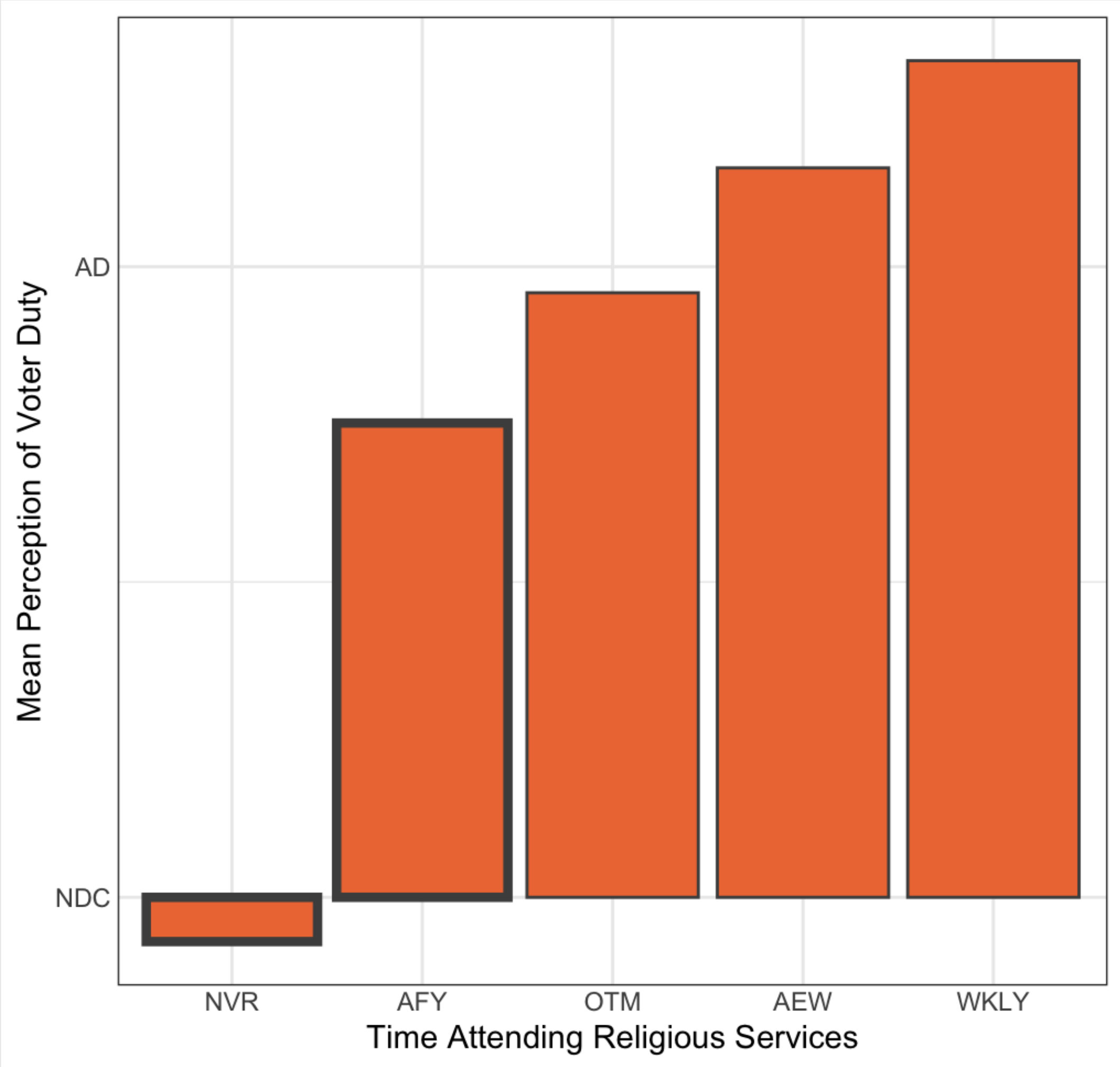
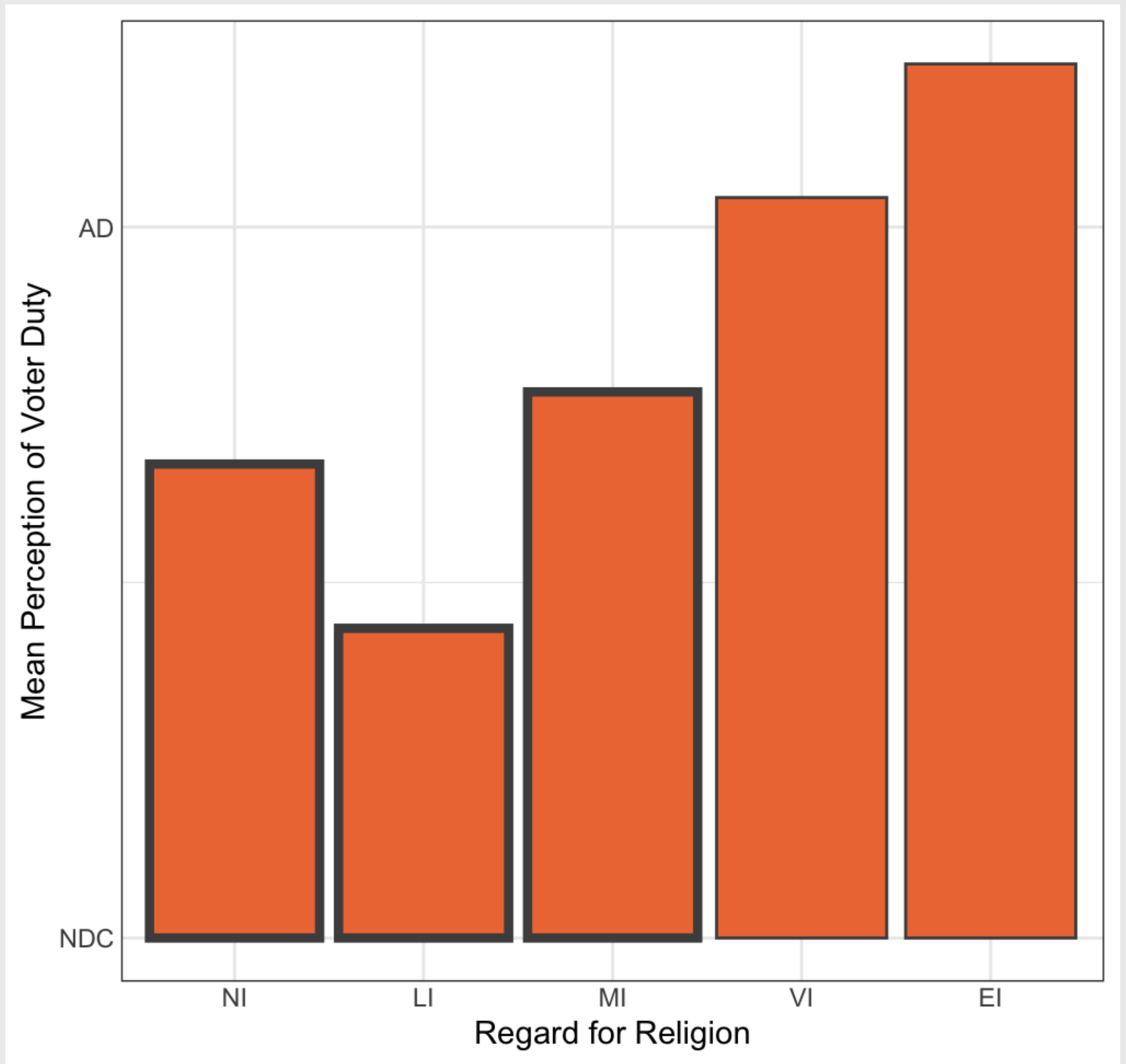


Figure 2: Mean perception of voter duty by personal sense of religious significance.



## Discussion

- Multiple linear regression controlling for race, social class, immigrant status, political party and sex showed that individuals who practice “no religion in particular” ( $\beta = -0.78, p = .050$ ) generally perceive voting more as a choice than a duty.
- The results indicate that individuals who rarely or never attend religious services (Fig. 1) and individuals who do not regard religion as very important (Fig. 2) perceive voting more as a choice than a duty, compared to the rest of the population.
- The outcome of our analysis suggests that perceptions of voting as a duty rather than a choice is a promising linkage between **religious affiliation and engagement** and **voter turnout**.
- Subsequent analyses should be performed to understand how the relationships determined above change across different religious groupings.

## References

Driskell, R., Embry, E., & Lyon, L. (2008). Faith and Politics: The Influence of Religious Beliefs on Political Participation. *Social Science Quarterly*, 89(2), 294–314.

Waldfoegel, H. B., Dittmann, A. G., & Birnbaum, H. J. (2024). A sociocultural approach to voting: Construing voting as a duty to others predicts political interest and engagement. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 121(22), e2215051121. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2215051121>

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