

# The Association Between Generational Status and Well-Being

Chloe Basch, Quantitative Analysis Center, Wesleyan University

## Introduction

- On average, first-generation immigrants exhibit stronger health indicators upon arrival, but they diminish in the second generation. (Bostean, 2013; Hamilton, 2011; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [HHS], 2023)
- While this association has been established in existing scholarship, few studies have integrated a holistic view of wellbeing across generations. (Rumbaut & Portes, 2014)
- Limited nationally representative research explores how wellbeing varies across immigrant generations, or whether second-generation socioeconomic gains correspond to higher subjective wellbeing despite ongoing social stressors.

## Methods

### Sample

- Respondents (n=556) were drawn from the 2021 General Social Survey (GSS). The GSS is a nationally representative survey of the adult, non-institutionalized U.S. population conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago (2022)

### Measures

- Wellbeing was assessed using variables including questions on demographic, economic, health, and subjective wellbeing characteristics.
- A wellbeing score was aggregated based on physical, mental, or social health. These include self-reported variables such as level of life satisfaction, level of happiness, and mental health ratings. The data was reverse coded and scored from either 1-3 or 1-5 based on responses then added together to create a composite wellbeing score.
- Family income was categorized as “high”(>\$100,000), “mid-high”(\$70-100,000), “mid-low” (\$30-70,000) and “low”(\$0-30,000).
- Respondents were categorized as first-generation – U.S.-born, whose parents were not U.S.-born – or second-generation – U.S.-born whose grandparents were foreign born but parents were U.S.-born.

## Research Questions

- Does generational status (first or second generation) in the United States impact immigrant livelihood and wellbeing?
- To what degree does income affect immigrant livelihood?

## Results

### Univariate

- Second generation immigrants are shown to have a mean wellbeing score of 20.7, and first generation immigrants are shown to have a mean wellbeing score of 19.4 (See Figure 1)

### Bivariate

- An Analysis of Variance Analysis (ANOVA) test showed that there is a significant relationship between generation status and wellbeing ( $P=.003$ ). Second generation immigrants have a wellbeing score of 1.5 points higher than first generation immigrants (coefficient: 1.4999)
- Using ANOVA again, the analysis finds a significant relationship between generation status and income ( $P=0.04$ ), suggesting that second generation people make \$15,110 more on average (Coefficient = 1.511)

### Multivariate

- When accounting for generational status, race, sex, and family income, generational status and family income were statistically significant ( $P=0.031$ ,  $P=0.000$  respectively)
- Sex ( $P=.896$ ) and race ( $P=.352$ ) do not impact the relationship between generation status and wellbeing score after controlling for income

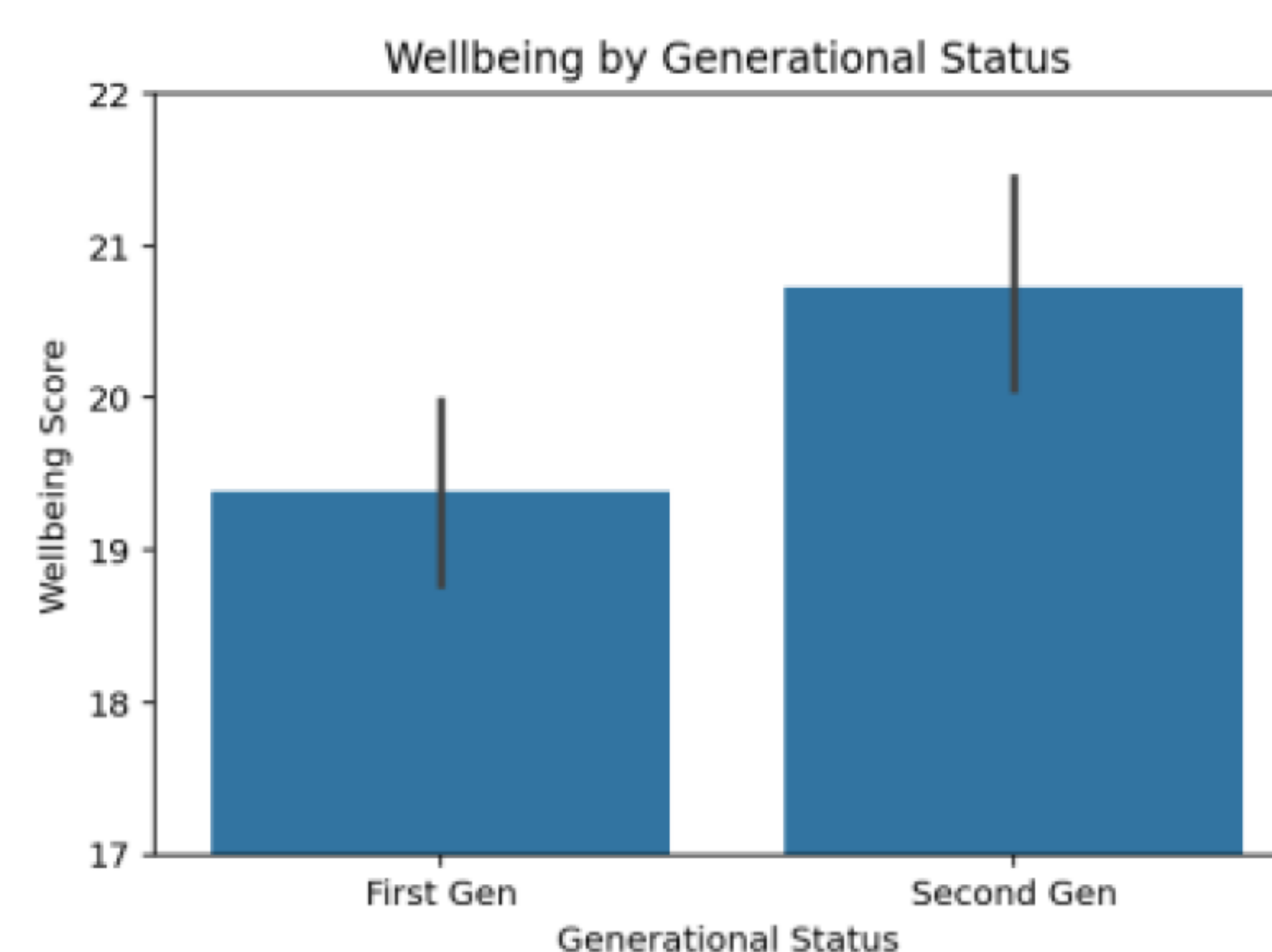


Figure 1. Wellbeing scores of first and second generation immigrants.

### Multivariate cont.

The study finds that the wellbeing score generally increases with income (See Figure 2)

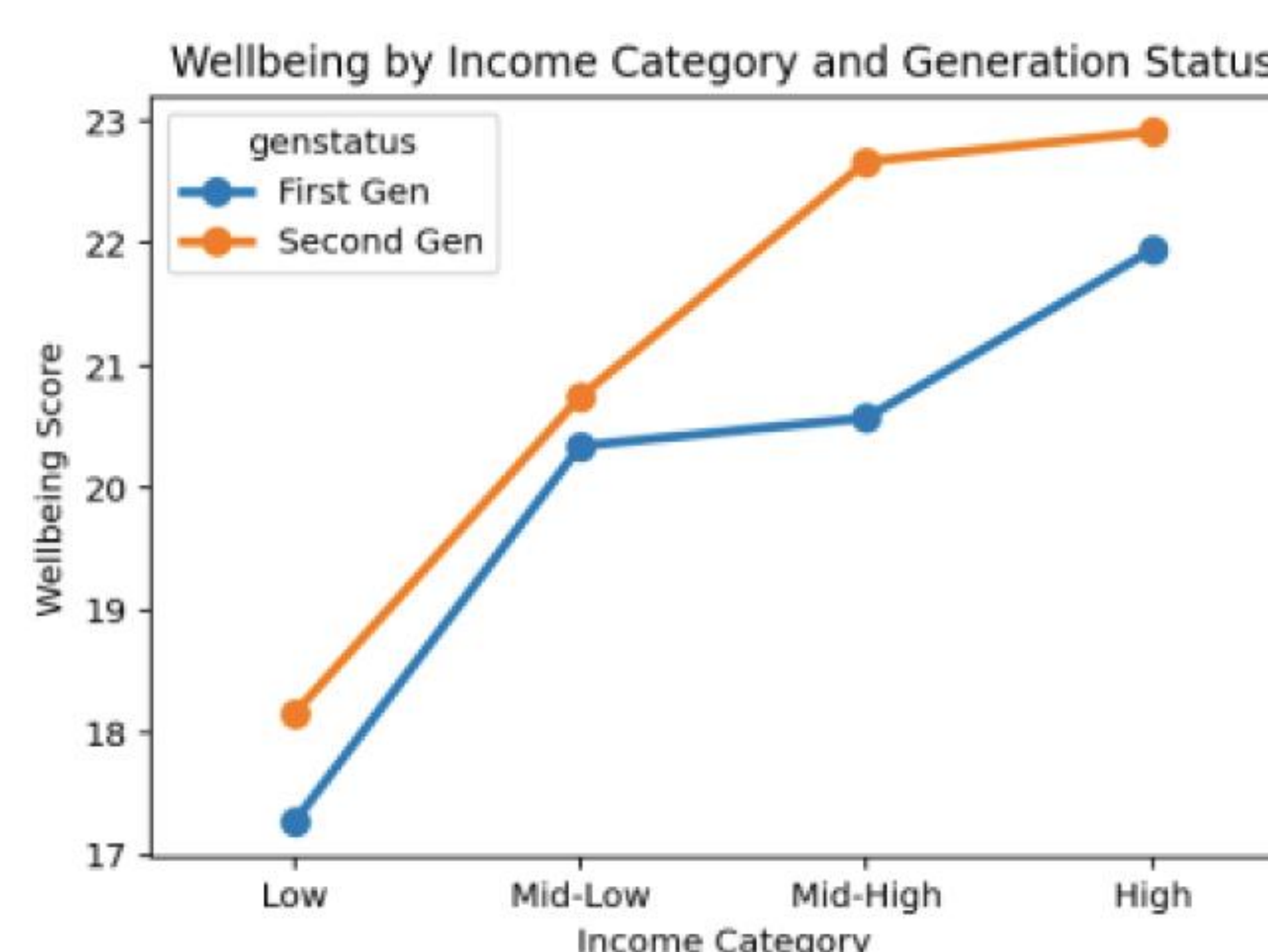


Figure 2. Wellbeing of immigrants as it corresponds with income level and generation status.

## Discussion

- The significant correlation between generation status and wellbeing disagrees with the findings of the literature that first generation immigrants exhibit higher health.
- Data from the GSS show that second generation immigrants have a higher wellbeing score than first generation.
- Data from the GSS show that second generation immigrants have a significantly higher family income, which is found to significantly correlate with wellbeing score.
- After controlling for income, sex and race had no significance with wellbeing score, suggesting that income and generation status are the primary variables associated with wellbeing in this analysis.
- Further research is needed and should include a larger sample size. This research should focus on physical health, marital status, and other potential health indicators that aren't factored into this analysis.

## References

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