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News Item

# The number of religious ‘nones’ has soared, but not the number of atheists – Why? | The Conversation

By Christopher P. Sheitle and Katie Corcoran

May 6, 2024

***[R]ejecting a belief in God is by no means a sufficient condition for identifying as an atheist. So why do some individuals who do not believe in God identify as an atheist while others do not?***



*Photo by Jack Krzysik via Pexels.*

In their study “[Adopting a Stigmatized Label: Social Determinants of Identifying as an Atheist beyond Disbelief](#),” sociologists Christopher P. Sheitle and Katie Corcoran, ask why the number of atheists is not matching the growth of religious “nones” in the United States. Their study focuses on two questions: “First, what makes an individual more or less likely to identify as an atheist? Second, what makes someone more or less likely to adopt an atheistic worldview over time?” They describe their findings in *The Conversation*:

***Our study found that there are a number of other social forces associated with the likelihood of an individual identifying as an atheist, above and beyond their disbelief in God - particularly stigma...Such findings are a powerful reminder that our beliefs, behaviors and identities are not entirely our own, but often shaped by situations and cultures in which we find ourselves.***

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