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Commuters walk along a corridor in the World Trade Center in New York on Nov. 18, 2019. Thirty percent of Americans don't identify with a religious group — but not all of them are atheists or agnostics. In fact, 43% of the group known as the "nones" say they believe in God, even if they largely dislike organized religion. (AP/Mark Lennihan, File)

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Thirty percent of Americans don't identify with a religious group — but not all of them are atheists or agnostics.

In fact, 43% of the group known as the "nones" say they believe in God, even if they largely dislike organized religion.

Those are among the findings of a new poll by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

The poll of 1,680 adults was conducted May 11-15 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 3.4 percentage points.

## **Religious or not**

Thirty percent of adults identified with no religion. That group, commonly called nones, includes those identifying as atheist (7%), agnostic (7%) and nothing in particular (16%).

Sixty-four percent in the poll identified with a Christian tradition, including Protestant (25%), Catholic (19%), "just Christian" (18%), Mormon (1%) and Orthodox (less than 1%).

Other groups included Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish and Muslim (1% each) and something else (2%).

## **Age gap**

Forty-three percent of those 18 to 29 are nones, while 52% identify as Christians and 4% are affiliated with other religions.

Adults over 60 are the most religious age group, but even among them, nearly 1 in 5 are nones.

## **God without religion**

Forty-three percent of all nones professed belief in God or a higher power — including 61% of nothings in particular, 40% of agnostics and 4% of atheists. Overall, 79% of U.S. adults professed faith in God.

### **Beliefs**

About half of nothings in particular said they believe in angels, the power of prayer and heaven. So did about a quarter of agnostics. Agnostics and nothing in particulars were less likely to believe in hell or Satan. Almost no atheists believed in any of that.

But most agnostics (67%) and nothings in particular (79%), and 44% of atheists, agreed "some things can't be explained by science or natural causes."

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### **Unconventional**

Nothings in particular were at least as likely as other Americans to accept various beliefs and practices outside of the Judeo-Christian tradition, including astrology, yoga as a spiritual practice, reincarnation, spiritual energies in physical things, the interaction of spirits of the dead with the living and karma.

### **Good or bad?**

More Americans overall say the trend of people moving away from identifying with a religious group is a bad thing (37%) than that it's a good thing, (23%), but 39% say it's neither.

Among the nones, most atheists say it's good (69%), compared with 52% of agnostics and only 36% of nothings in particular.

About half of those with a religious affiliation say it's a bad thing.

### **Spiritual but not religious**

In addition to having no religious affiliation, about 9 in 10 nones also don't consider themselves "religious."

But about half of agnostics and those nothings in particular consider themselves "spiritual but not religious." About two-thirds of nothings in particular consider themselves spiritual, religious or both. Eight in 10 atheists consider themselves neither.

## **Why not religious?**

Among the nones who say they are also not personally religious, 68% cited their dislike of organized religion as a very or extremely important reason. For 63%, a top reason is their dislike of the stances religious faiths take on social and political issues, while 54% say the same about reports of abuse or misconduct by religious leaders. Forty-six percent cite disbelieving in God as a top reason. That was true of 81% of atheists, but just 40% of agnostics and 32% of nothings in particular.

## **Gender**

Nearly two-thirds of atheists and 56% of agnostics are male, while 52% of nothings in particular are women.

## **Race**

Nones tend to be white, especially atheists. Nothings in particular are a somewhat more diverse subgroup, with a third of them identifying as Black, Hispanic, Asian, multiracial or with another racial or ethnic group other than white.

## **Politics**

About two-thirds of atheists and agnostics identify as Democrats or lean toward the Democratic Party, as do half of nothings in particular, while 13% of atheists, 17% of agnostics and 22% of nothings in particular identify with or lean toward the Republicans.

## **Education**

Forty-one percent of atheists have a college degree, compared with 34% of agnostics and 28% of nothings in particular (and 30% of U.S. adults overall).

## **Where to find fulfillment**

Close to three-quarters of religious adults say their faith provides them with at least some meaning and fulfillment, including 46% who say it provides a lot.

While widespread majorities of atheists and agnostics get no fulfillment from religious faith, only 62% of those nothings in particular say the same.

Large majorities of people with and without a religious affiliation said they get at least some fulfillment from spending time outdoors, physical exercise and spending time with family and friends.

**[Read this next: The nonreligious are a growing US phenomenon. They really don't like organized religion.](#)**

*AP journalists Linley Sanders and Emily Swanson contributed to this report.*