

Atheism in the United States

According to the Pew Research Center in a 2014 survey, self-identified "atheists" make up 3.1% of the US population, even though 9% of Americans agreed with the statement "Do not believe in God" while 2% agreed with the statement "Do not know if they believe in God".^[3]

According to the 2014 General Sociological Survey, the number of atheists and agnostics in the U.S. grew over the previous 23 years. In 1991, only 2% identified as atheist, and 4% identified as agnostic; while in 2014, 3.1% identified as atheists, and 5% identified as agnostics.^[4]

In 2009, Pew stated that only 5% of the US population did not have a belief in a god and out of that small group only 24% self-identified as "atheist", while 15% self-identified as "agnostic" and 35% self-identified as "nothing in particular".^[5]

According to the 2008 ARIS, only 2% the US population was atheist, while 10% were agnostics.^[6]

In one 2018 research paper using indirect methods estimated that 26% of Americans are atheists, which is much higher than the 3%-11% rates that are consistently found in surveys.^[7] However, methodological problems have been identified with this particular study since people do not have binary relationships to questions on God and instead have more complex responses to such questions.^[8]

Accurate demographics of atheism are difficult to obtain since conceptions of atheism and self-identification are context dependent by culture.^[9]

American atheists

Total population

▲ **39,000,000 (12%)**

(answered "No" to the question "Do you believe in God?")

(2017)^[1]

9,571,112 (3.1%)

(self described atheists)

(2014)^{[2][3]}

Religions

Irreligion:

(including antitheism, agnostic atheism, apatheism, casualism, counter-apologeticism, debaptism evangelical atheism, freethought/freethinker, ignosticism, implicit and explicit atheism, Marxist–Leninist atheism, negative and positive atheism, nonbeliever, nontheism, post-theism, rationalism, new/scientific atheism, secular humanism, skepticism, etc.)

Secular religions:

Buddhism

(including secular Buddhism, etc.)

Christian atheism

(including Cultural Christian (Cultural Catholic, Cultural Mormon, Nontheist Quakers, etc.), Lapsed Catholic, Recovering Catholic etc.)

Ethical movement

Hinduism

(including Adevism, Charvaka, Hindu atheist, etc.)

Jainism

Jewish atheism

(including Cultural Judaism, etc.)

Modern Paganism

Muslim atheism

(including Cultural Muslim, etc.)

New religious movements

(including Creativity, Raëlism, etc.)

Parody religions

(including Church of Satan, Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster/Pastafarianism, Invisible Pink Unicorn, Jediism, LaVeyan Satanism, etc.)

Satanism

Unitarian Universalism

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Demographics











Age

Lack of belief in god/gods among age groups in the United States (2014)

Age group	% of lack of belief in god/gods	% of self described atheists	Source
18-29 year olds	16 	6 	[3]
30-49 year olds	9 	3 	[3]
All Americans	9 	3.1 	[3]
50-64 year olds	6 	2 	[3]
65+ year olds	6 	2 	[3]







Education

Lack of belief in god/gods among education in the United States (2014)

Highest degree earned	% of lack of belief in god/gods	% of self described atheists	Source
Post-graduate degree	14 	5 	[3]
College graduate	14 	5 	[3]
All Americans	9 	3.1 	[3]
Some college	9 	3 	[3]
High school or less	6 	2 	[3]















Gender

Lack of belief in god/gods among genders in the United States (2014)

Gender	% of lack of belief in god/gods	% of self described atheists	Source
Male American	12 	4 	[3]
Americans	9 	3.1 	[3]
Female American	6 	2 	[3]











Generation

Lack of belief in god/gods among generations in the United States (2014)

Generation	% of lack of belief in god/gods	% of self described atheists	Source
Younger Millennial Americans	17 	6 	[3]
Older Millennial Americans	13 	4 	[3]
Americans	9 	3.1 	[3]
Generation X Americans	9 	3 	[3]
Greatest Americans	7 	2 	[3]
Baby Boomer Americans	6 	2 	[3]
Silent Americans	6 	1 	[3]









Household income

Lack of belief in god/gods among household income in the United States (2014)

Cohort	% of lack of belief in god/gods	% of self described atheists	Source
\$100,000 or more, Americans	14 	5 	[3]
\$50,000-\$99,999, Americans	11 	3 	[3]
\$30,000-\$49,999, Americans	9 	3 	[3]
Americans	9 	3.1 	[3]
Less than \$30,000, Americans	7 	2 	[3]













Immigrant status

Lack of belief in god/gods among immigrant status in the United States (2014)

Generation	% of lack of belief in god/gods	% of self described atheists	Source
Second generation Americans	14 	4 	[3]
Americans	9 	3.1 	[3]
Third generation or higher Americans	9 	3 	[3]
Immigrants	8 	3 	[3]













































Marital status

Lack of belief in god/gods among marital status in the United States (2014)

Cohort	% of lack of belief in god/gods	% of self described atheists	Source
Never married Americans	15 	5 	[3]
Living with a partner Americans	14 	5 	[3]
Americans	9 	3.1 	[3]
Married Americans	7 	2 	[3]
Divorced/separated Americans	6 	2 	[3]
Widowed Americans	3 	1 	[3]

Metro area

Lack of belief in god/gods/self described atheists among metro areas in the United States (2014)

State/federal district	% of lack of belief in god/gods		% of self described atheists		Source
Greater San Francisco Bay Area	21		5		[3]
Seattle metropolitan area	20		10		[3]
Boston metropolitan area	17		4		[3]
Providence metropolitan area	15		4		[3]
Baltimore metropolitan area	14		3		[3]
Philadelphia metropolitan area	13		5		[3]
Tampa metropolitan area	13		4		[3]
San Diego metropolitan area	12		3		[3]
Washington metropolitan area	12		4		[3]
Greater Los Angeles Area	11		4		[3]
New York metropolitan area	11		4		[3]
Phoenix metropolitan area	11		3		[3]
Chicago metropolitan area	10		3		[3]
Americans	9		3.1		[3]
Detroit metropolitan area	9		3		[3]
Miami metropolitan area	9		3		[3]
Riverside metropolitan area	8		1		[3]
Dallas–Fort Worth metroplex	7		1		[3]
Atlanta metropolitan area	6		3		[3]
Houston metropolitan area	6		2		[3]
St. Louis metropolitan area	6		3		[3]
Pittsburgh metropolitan area	5		3		[3]







Political affiliation

Lack of belief in god/gods among political affiliation in the United States (2014)

Political affiliation	% of lack of belief in god/gods		% of self described atheists		Source
Democrat/Lean Democrat Americans	13		5		[3]
Americans	9		3.1		[3]
No lean, Americans	9		3		[3]
Republican/Lean Republican Americans	5		1		[3]










Parental status

Lack of belief in god/gods among parental status in the United States (2014)

Parental status	% of lack of belief in god/gods		% of self described atheists		Source
Non-parents of children under 18 year old Americans	10		3		[3]
Americans	9		3.1		[3]
Parents of children under 18 year old Americans	7		2		[3]













Political ideology

Lack of belief in god/gods among political ideology in the United States (2014)

Political ideology	% of lack of belief in god/gods		% of self described atheists		Source
<u>Liberal Americans</u>	19		7		[3]
<u>Americans</u>	9		3.1		[3]
<u>Moderate Americans</u>	9		3		[3]
<u>Don't know, Americans</u>	8				[3]
<u>Conservative Americans</u>	3		1		[3]











Race

Lack of belief in god/gods among racial groups in the United States (2014)

Racial group	% of lack of belief in god/gods		% of self described atheists		Source
<u>Asian Americans</u>	19		6		[3]
<u>White Americans</u>	11		4		[3]
<u>Americans</u>	9		3.1		[3]
<u>Other/Mixed Americans</u>	8		2		[3]
<u>Latino Americans</u>	6		2		[3]
<u>African Americans</u>	2		1		[3]
































Region

Lack of belief in god/gods/self described atheists among regions in the United States (2014)

State/federal district	% of lack of belief in god/gods		% of self described atheists		Source
<u>Northeastern United States</u>	12		4		[3]
<u>Western United States</u>	12		4		[3]
<u>Americans</u>	9		3.1		[3]
<u>Midwestern United States</u>	8		3		[3]
<u>Southern United States</u>	7		2		[3]

Religion




Lack of belief in god/gods among religious/belief groups in the United States (2014)

Religious group	% of lack of belief in god/gods	Source
Atheist Americans	92 	[3]
Agnostic Americans	41 	[3]
Nothing in particular (religion not important), Americans	33 	[3]
Unaffiliated Americans	33 	[3]
Buddhist Americans	27 	[3]
New Age movement, Americans	21 	[3]
Nothing in particular, Americans	20 	[3]
Unitarians and other liberal faiths in "other faiths", Americans	19 	[3]
Jewish Americans	17 	[3]
Hindu Americans	10 	[3]
Americans	9 	[3]
Episcopalian (Mainline Protestant) Americans	4 	[3]
Anglican Church, Americans	3 	[3]
Episcopal Church, Americans	3 	[3]
Nothing in particular (religion important), Americans	3 	[3]
Eastern Orthodox Americans	3 	[3]
Lutheran (Mainline Protestant) Americans	2 	[3]
Mainline Protestant Americans	2 	[3]
Nondenominational (Mainline Protestant) Americans	2 	[3]
Roman Catholic Americans	2 	[3]
Baptist (Mainline Protestant) Americans	1 	[3]
Christian Americans	1 	[3]
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Americans	1 	[3]
Muslim Americans	1 	[3]
Pentecostal (Evangelical Protestant) Americans	1 	[3]
Presbyterian (Evangelical Protestant) Americans	1 	[3]
Presbyterian (Mainline Protestant) Americans	1 	[3]
Presbyterian Church in America, Americans	1 	[3]
Presbyterian Church, Americans	1 	[3]
United Church of Christ, Americans	1 	[3]
United Methodist Church, Americans	1 	[3]
Adventist (Evangelical Protestant) Americans	<1	[3]
African Methodist Episcopal Church, Americans	<1	[3]
American Baptist Churches, Americans	<1	[3]
Assemblies of God, Americans	<1	[3]
Baptist (Evangelical Protestant) Americans	<1	[3]
Baptist (Historically Black Protestant) Americans	<1	[3]
Church of God, Americans	<1	[3]
Church of God in Christ, Americans	<1	[3]
Mormon, Americans	<1	[3]
Church of the Nazarene, Americans	<1	[3]
Churches of Christ, Americans	<1	[3]
Evangelical Protestant Americans	<1	[3]
Historically Black Protestant, Americans	<1	[3]
Holiness (Evangelical Protestant), Americans	<1	[3]

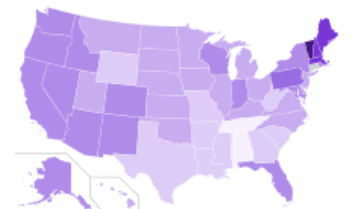
<u>Independent Baptist (Evangelical Protestant) Americans</u>	<1	[3]
<u>Interdenominational (Evangelical Protestant) Americans</u>	<1	[3]
<u>Interdenominational (Mainline Protestant) Americans</u>	<1	[3]
<u>Jehovah's Witness, Americans</u>	<1	[3]
<u>Lutheran (Evangelical Protestant) Americans</u>	<1	[3]
<u>Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, Americans</u>	<1	[3]
<u>Methodist (Historically Black Protestant) Americans</u>	<1	[3]
<u>Mormon Americans</u>	<1	[3]
<u>National Baptist Convention, Americans</u>	<1	[3]
<u>Nondenominational (Evangelical Protestant) Americans</u>	<1	[3]
<u>Nondenominational (Historically Black Protestant) Americans</u>	<1	[3]
<u>Nondenominational charismatic Americans</u>	<1	[3]
<u>Nondenominational evangelical Americans</u>	<1	[3]
<u>Nondenominational fundamentalist Americans</u>	<1	[3]
<u>Pentecostal (Historically Black Protestant) Americans</u>	<1	[3]
<u>Restorationist (Evangelical Protestant) Americans</u>	<1	[3]
<u>Seventh-day Adventist Americans</u>	<1	[3]
<u>Southern Baptist Convention, Americans</u>	<1	[3]

Sexual orientation

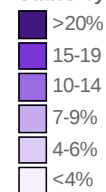
Self described atheists among sexual orientations in the United States (2014)

Sexual orientation	% of self described atheists	Source
<u>LGBT Americans</u>	8 	[3]
<u>Americans</u>	3.1 	[3]
<u>Straight Americans</u>	3 	[3]








State/federal district



























Disbelief in god/gods in the United States by state/territory in 2014



Lack of belief in god/gods/self described atheists among states/local district in the United States (2014)

State/federal district	% of lack of belief in god/gods			% of self described atheists			Source
	# of population			# of population			
 Vermont	131,406	21		43,802	7		[3][2]
 Massachusetts	1,178,573	18		327,381	5		[3][2]
 Maine	212,538	16		26,567	2		[3][2]
 New Hampshire	210,635	16		78,988	6		[3][2]
 District of Columbia	84,241	14		24,069	4		[3][2]
 Oregon	498,040	13		191,554	5		[3][2]
 Washington	874,190	13		336,227	5		[3][2]
 Alaska	85,228	12		35,512	5		[3][2]
 California	4,470,475	12		1,490,158	4		[3][2]
 Connecticut	427,834	12		178,264	5		[3][2]
 Nevada	324,066	12		135,028	5		[3][2]
 Wisconsin	682,438	12		170,610	3		[3][2]
 New York	2,131,591	11		968,905	5		[3][2]
 Idaho	172,434	11		31,352	2		[3][2]
 New Mexico	226,510	11		61,775	3		[3][2]
 Rhode Island	115,782	11		42,103	4		[3][2]
 Arizona	639,202	10		191,761	3		[3][2]
 Colorado	502,920	10		201,168	4		[3][2]
 Florida	1,880,131	10		564,039	3		[3][2]
 Indiana	648,380	10		194,514	3		[3][2]
 Maryland	577,355	10		173,207	3		[3][2]
 Pennsylvania	1,270,238	10		381,071	3		[3][2]
 Hawaii	122,427	9		27,206	2		[3][2]
 Illinois	1,154,757	9		384,919	3		[3][2]
 Iowa	274,172	9		121,854	4		[3][2]
 Michigan	889,528	9		296,509	3		[3][2]
 Minnesota	477,353	9		159,118	3		[3][2]
 Nebraska	164,371	9		18,263	1		[3][2]
 United States	27,787,098	9		9,571,112	3.1		[3][2]
 Montana	79,153	8		39,577	4		[3][2]
 New Jersey	703,352	8		175,838	2		[3][2]
 North Dakota	53,807	8		13,452	2		[3][2]
 Utah	221,111	8		82,917	3		[3][2]
 Virginia	640,082	8		160,020	2		[3][2]
 Kentucky	303,756	7		173,574	4		[3][2]
 Delaware	62,855	7		17,959	2		[3][2]
 Kansas	199,718	7		57,062	2		[3][2]
 North Carolina	667,484	7		190,710	2		[3][2]
 Ohio	807,555	7		230,730	2		[3][2]
 South Dakota	56,993	7		24,425	3		[3][2]
 Georgia	581,259	6		193,753	2		[3][2]
 Louisiana	272,002	6		90,667	2		[3][2]
 Missouri	359,336	6		119,779	2		[3][2]



 Texas	1,508,734	6		502,911	2		[3][2]
 Wyoming	33,818	6		16,909	3		[3][2]
 South Carolina	231,268	5		46,254	1		[3][2]
 West Virginia	92,650	5		18,530	1		[3][2]
 Arkansas	116,637	4		58,318	2		[3][2]
 Mississippi	118,692	4		29,673	1		[3][2]
 Tennessee	190,383	3		63,461	1		[3][2]
 Alabama	95,595	2		47,797	1		[3][2]

Public officials



United States Representatives

Photo	Name	State	Position	Party	Term	Source
	Pete Stark	California	United States Representative from California's 8th district, 9th district, 13th district	Democratic	1973–2013	[10]
	Jared Huffman	California	United States Representative from California's 2nd district	Democratic	2013–present	[11]
	Barney Frank	Massachusetts	United States Representative from Massachusetts's 4th district	Democratic	1981–2013	[12]

United States Senators

Photo	Name	State	Position	Party	Term	Source
	Thomas Gore	Oklahoma	United States Senator from Oklahoma	Democratic	1907–1921 1931, 1937	[13]
	Kyrsten Sinema	Arizona	United States Senator from Arizona	Democratic	2019–	[14]



Governors

Photo	Name	State	Position	Party		Term	Source
	<u>Culbert Olson</u>	<u>California</u>	<u>29th Governor of California</u>	<u>Democratic</u>		1939–1943	[15]
	<u>Jesse Ventura</u>	<u>Minnesota</u>	<u>38th Governor of Minnesota</u>	<u>Reform</u> (1998-2000)	<u>Independence</u> (2000-2003)	1999–2003	[16]



State legislators

Photo	Name	State	Position	Party	Term	Source
	<u>Timothy Smith</u>	<u>New Hampshire</u>	<u>New Hampshire State Representative</u>	<u>Democratic</u>	2012–Present	[17]
	<u>Culbert Olson</u>	<u>California</u>	<u>California State Senator</u>	<u>Democratic</u>	1934–1938	[15]
	<u>Jared Huffman</u>	<u>California</u>	<u>California State Assembly, 2nd district</u>	<u>Democratic</u>	2006–2012	[11]
	<u>Sean Faircloth</u>	<u>Maine</u>	<u>Maine Representative, 17th and 117th districts</u> <u>Maine State Senator</u>	<u>Democratic</u>	1992–1994 2002–2008 1994–1996	
 <small>Barney Frank of New York (D-NY) Democrat—1st term</small>	<u>Barney Frank</u>	<u>Massachusetts</u>	<u>Massachusetts State Representative, 5th and 8th Suffolk districts</u>	<u>Democratic</u>	1973–1981	[12]
	<u>Ernie Chambers</u>	<u>Nebraska</u>	<u>Nebraska State Senator, 11th district</u>	<u>Independent</u>	1971–2009 2013–2021	[18]
	<u>Megan Hunt</u>	<u>Nebraska</u>	<u>Nebraska State Senator, 8th district</u>	<u>Democratic</u>	2019–present	[19]
	<u>Lori Lipman Brown</u>	<u>Nevada</u>	<u>Nevada State Senator</u>	<u>Democratic</u>	1992–1994	[20]
	<u>Andrew Zwicker</u>	<u>New Jersey</u>	<u>New Jersey General Assembly, 16th District</u>	<u>Democratic</u>	2016–present	[21]
	<u>Culbert Olson</u>	<u>Utah</u>	<u>Utah State Senator</u>	<u>Democratic</u>	1916–1920	[15]

Mayors

Photo	Name	State	Position	Party	Term	Source
	<u>Jesse Ventura</u>	<u>Minnesota</u>	<u>Mayor of Brooklyn Park, Minnesota</u>	<u>Independent</u>	1991–1995	[16]
	<u>Rocky Anderson</u>	<u>Utah</u>	<u>33rd Mayor of Salt Lake City, Utah</u>	<u>Democratic</u>	2000–2008	[22]

City councils

Photo	Name	State	Position	Party	Term	Source
	Sean Faircloth	Maine	Chair of the City Council of Bangor	Democratic	2016–present	
	Cecil Bothwell	North Carolina	City councilor of Asheville	Democratic	2009–2017	

Political views



[Rocky Anderson](#), founder of the [Justice Party](#)



[Douglas Campbell](#), co-founder of the [Godless Americans Political Action Committee](#)



[Emma Goldman](#), founder of [anarcho-feminism](#)



[James P. Cannon](#), co-founder of the [Communist League of America](#)



[Abbie Hoffman](#), co-founder of the [Youth International Party](#)



[Richard B. Spencer](#), founder of the [alt-right](#)



[Murray Rothbard](#), founder of [anarcho-capitalism](#)



[Cenk Uygur](#), co-founder of the [Justice Democrats](#)

Views of atheists

A June–September 2014 Pew Research Center survey found that 69% of atheist Americans identify as [Democratic](#) or lean Democratic, 17% have [no lean](#), 15% identify as [Republican](#), 56% [liberal](#), 29% [moderate](#), 10% [conservative](#), and 5% don't know. Among Americans who don't believe in god/gods, 65% identify as Democratic or lean Democratic, 17% have no lean, 18% identify as Republican, 50% liberal, 31% moderate, 13% conservative, and 6% don't know. That makes atheist and nonbelievers in god/gods Americans as belief groups to be the most politically liberal belief group in America and the least politically aligned belief group with Republicans and conservatism in the United States.^[3]

Views about atheists

In 2014, a Pew survey found that 53% of Americans claimed they would be less likely to vote for a presidential candidate who was an atheist.^[23]

Groups that include atheists

A October 2013 Public Religion Research Institute American Values Survey found 58% of [American libertarians](#) report they believe in a personal god, 25% believe god is an impersonal force in the universe, and 16% report that they do not believe in a god. It also found 73% of [Americans who identify with the Tea Party](#) report they believe in a personal god, 19% believe god is an impersonal force in the universe, and 6% report that they do not believe in a god. It also found 90% of white evangelical Protestants report they believe in a personal god, 8% believe god is an impersonal force in the universe, and less than 1% report that they do not believe in a god.^[24]

List of atheist Americans

Organizations

- [American Atheists](#)
- [Atheist Alliance International](#)
- [Freedom From Religion Foundation](#)
- [Freethinking Atheist and Agnostic Kinship](#)

- [International League of non-religious and atheists](#)
- [Internet Infidels](#)
- [Military Association of Atheists & Freethinkers](#)
- [Rational Response Squad](#)
- [Recovering from Religion](#)
- [The Clergy Project](#)

See also

- [Discrimination against atheists in the United States](#)
- [Irreligion in the United States](#)
- [Religion in the United States](#)

References

1. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/1690/religion.aspx>
2. Bureau, U.S. Census. "U.S. Census website" (<https://www.census.gov>). *United States Census Bureau*. Retrieved 2017-03-22.
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20. ""You can be elected as an openly gay politician in this country, but you can't be elected as an openly atheistic one", said Lori Lipman Brown, who was hired last fall to be the Washington, D.C., lobbyist for an organization devoted to atheist causes, the Secular Coalition for America. She's believed to be the first paid lobbyist for the unbelievers in the nation's capital, the front lines of the culture wars. Now, all Brown is seeking is a constituency willing to go public. "Think of where the LGBT movement was 25 years ago", said Brown, who has worked on gay and lesbian rights issues as a legislator and attorney. "That's where atheists are today." [...] Brown, who is married and was raised a "humanistic Jew", talks about how she "came out" as an atheist several years ago, and how most atheists aren't "out yet" at work. She says atheist kids—like many gay children—are made to feel outcasts at school, and explains that she wants to erase the negative connotation to the word "atheist" just as homosexuals have reclaimed slurs like "queer" and "dyke."" Joe Garofoli, '[Atheists hoping to assert rights in religious era](http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2006/02/20/ATHEIST.TMP)' (<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2006/02/20/ATHEIST.TMP>), *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 20, 2006 (accessed June 16, 2008).
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Further reading

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- Schmidt, Leigh Eric, *Village Atheists: How America's Unbelievers Made Their Way in a Godly Nation*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2016.
- Michael Shermer, "Silent No More: The rise of the atheists", *Scientific American*, vol. 318, no. 4 (April 2018), p. 77.

External links

- *Reality Check: Being Nonreligious in America* (<https://www.secularsurvey.org/s/Reality-Check-Being-Nonreligious-in-America>) 2020 report from American Atheists
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