

Are atheists smarter than religious people?

Of course, there are examples of extremely intelligent individuals with strong religious convictions. But various studies have found that, on average, belief in God is associated with [lower scores on IQ tests](#). “It is well established that religiosity correlates inversely with intelligence,” note Richard Daws and Adam Hampshire at Imperial College London, in a [new paper](#) published in Frontiers in Psychology, which seeks to explore why.

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One suggestion is that perhaps religious people tend to rely more on intuition. So, rather than having impaired general intelligence, they might be comparatively poor only on tasks in which intuition and logic come into conflict – and this might explain the lower overall IQ test results.

To investigate, Daws and Hampshire surveyed more than 63,000 people online, and had them complete a 30-minute set of 12 cognitive tasks that measured planning, reasoning, attention and working memory. The participants also indicated whether they were religious, agnostic or atheist.

As predicted, the atheists performed better overall than the religious participants, even after controlling for demographic factors like age and education. Agnostics tended to place between atheists and believers on all tasks. In fact, strength of religious conviction correlated with poorer cognitive performance.

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[I]n theory, perhaps cognitive training could allow religious people to maintain their beliefs without over-relying on intuition when it conflicts with logic in day to day decision-making.

Read full, original post: [Are religious people really less smart, on average, than atheists?](#)