



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on July 5, 2017

New Study Shows Religious Are More Open-minded Than Atheists

A new study from a European Catholic university appears to show that individuals with religious faith are more tolerant and open-minded than their atheist and skeptical counterparts.

The study, led by Dr. Filip Uzarevic of the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium, found that although individuals with no faith typically consider themselves more open-minded than people with religious faith, in actuality they tend to be less tolerant of opinions that differ from theirs.



Uzarevic told PsyPost.org that the study grew out of the observation that in public discourse, “despite both the conservative/religious groups and liberal/secular groups showing strong animosity towards the opposite ideological side, somehow it was mostly the former who were often labeled as ‘closed-minded.’”

Uzarevic explained that he and his team of researchers “started to discuss whether this is necessarily and always the case: Are the religious indeed generally more closed-minded, or would it perhaps be worthy of investigating the different aspects of closed-mindedness and their relationship with (non)religion?”

Based on a survey of 788 adults from the United Kingdom, Spain, and France (composed of 302 atheist, 143 agnostic, and the remainder Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish, or “other” religious practitioners), the study found, predictably, that self-identifying Christian participants tended to be more dogmatic than their non-religious participants. For example, Christian respondents were more likely to disagree with statements such as, “There are so many things we have not discovered yet, [so] nobody should be absolutely certain his beliefs are right.”

Surprisingly, however, the survey showed that atheists were by and large more intolerant toward contradiction, and also seemed less able to see the merits of arguments that contradicted their own.

Uzarevic explained that while “the nonreligious compared to the religious seemed to be less closed minded when it came to explicitly measured certainty in one’s beliefs ... when it came to subtly measured inclination to integrate views that were diverging and contrary to one’s own perspectives, it was the religious who showed more openness.”

What the study seems to demonstrate, concluded Uzarevic, is that “closed-mindedness ... may not be reserved only for the religious. Moreover, in some aspects, the nonreligious may even ‘outperform’ the religious.”

While such research is in its infancy and the present study reflects some variables that may need to be taken into account (such as the relatively small number of participants and that the results may change if participants were chosen from beyond Western Europe), Uzarevic said that his study nonetheless offered “relatively consistent results, and a good starting point for future research.”



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