

gesis

Leibniz Institute
for the Social Sciences



Of Pride and prejudice

An exploration of atheists' attitudes towards their countries, and other people's attitudes towards atheists.

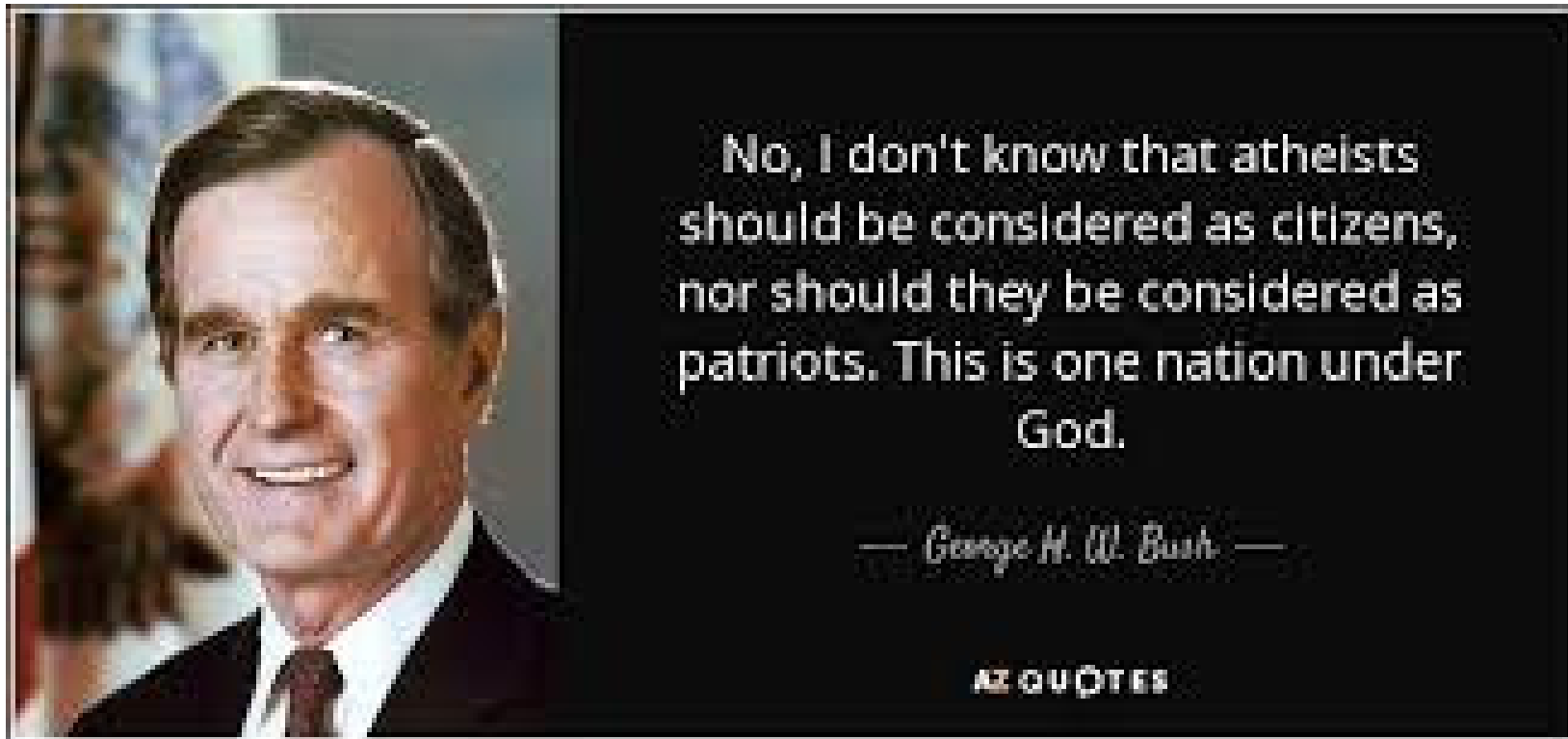
ONBound Workshop

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**Paper written with
ONBound data**

Can atheists be patriots?



Anti-atheist prejudice?

- Deeply rooted distrust against people, who do not feel their actions to be morally judged by any God and, thus, do not fear to face any consequences for amoral actions (Gervais, 2013).
- “Atheists are among the least liked, least desired, and most excluded individuals in America” (Mudd et al.2015).
- Nearly half of Americans would not vote for an atheist candidate in a presidential election (Green, 2007).
- Americans are reluctant to let their children marry an atheist (Edgell et al., 2006).
- They view atheists as the group that least agrees with their vision of American society (Edgell et al., 2006).

Is the assumed causal relationship between religiosity and national pride U.S. specific?

Who are the atheists?

Definition (Oxford Dictionary of Atheism):

Greek: 'a' = not or without; 'theos' = God

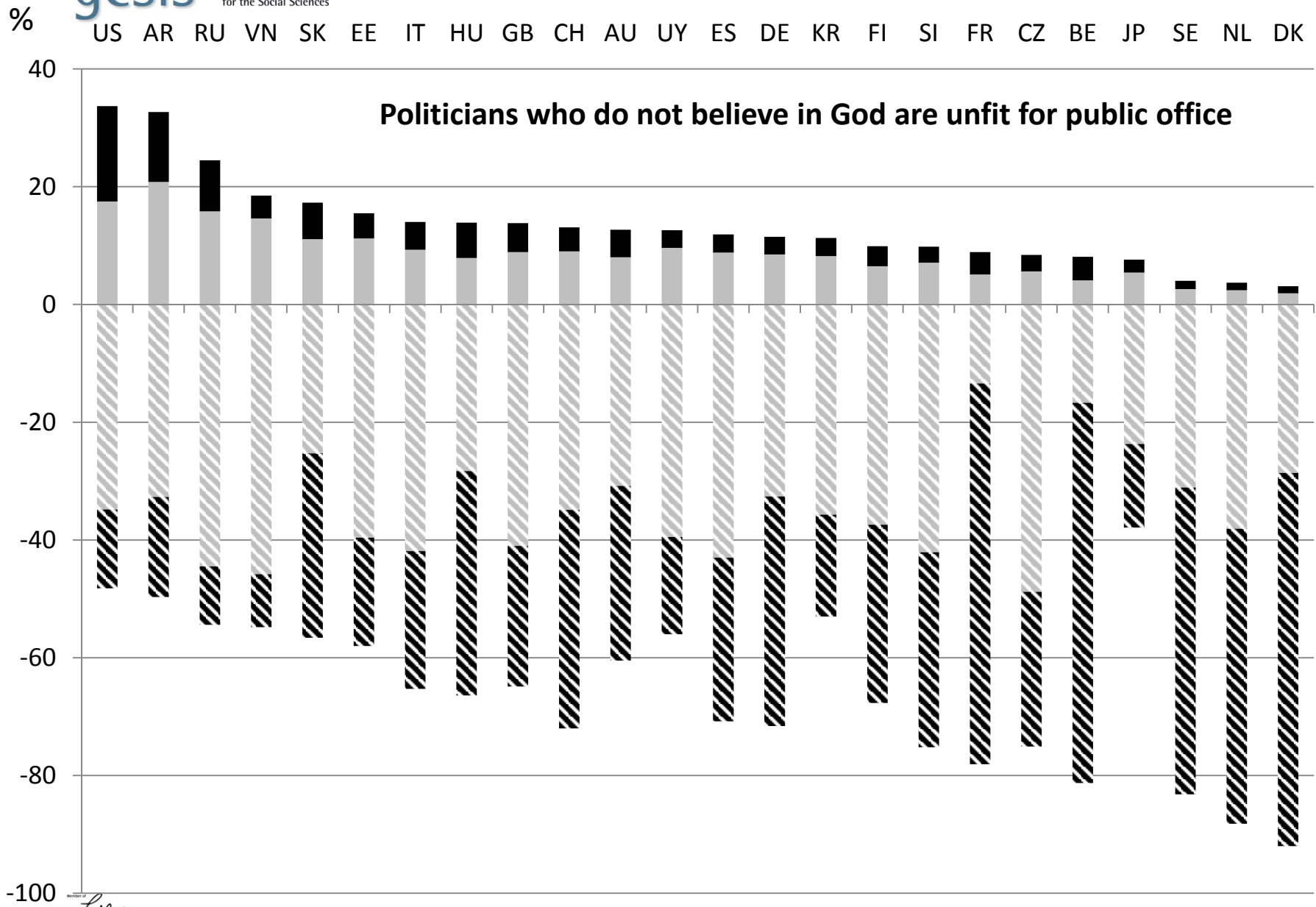
➤ A belief in the non-existence of a God or Gods.

➤ ***Passive atheists***

Habitat: secular countries, no religious socialization, no social pressure to be religious, no anger, no fight, no reason to crusade others, possibly a problem with self-definition

➤ ***Active atheists***

Habitat: religious countries, religious socialization, social pressure to be religious creates counter-reaction, painful process of apostacy, are forced to deal with their secularity, label themselves atheists



Are the prejudices justified?

My Atheists

- 21,517 define themselves as atheists

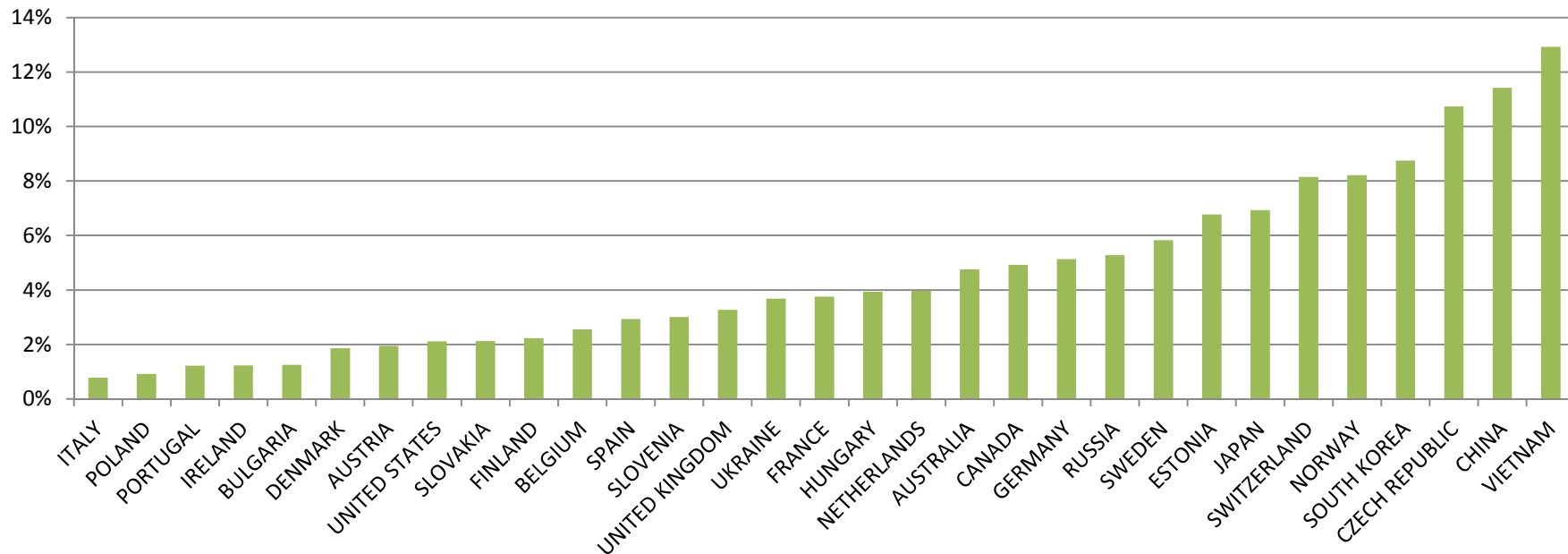
 - 593,179 cases without denomination
 - +
 - ▶ **I don't believe in God**
 - ▶ **God is not important at all in my life**
 - ▶ **I'm not religious at all**
- **139,170 atheists**

Where are the Atheists?

Atheists in 122 out of 162 countries

- across all measurement points!
- In the majority of countries very low case numbers

ONBound Atheists in %



National pride

How proud are you being ... ?

Harmonized measure:

➤ 0 not proud at all – 3 very proud

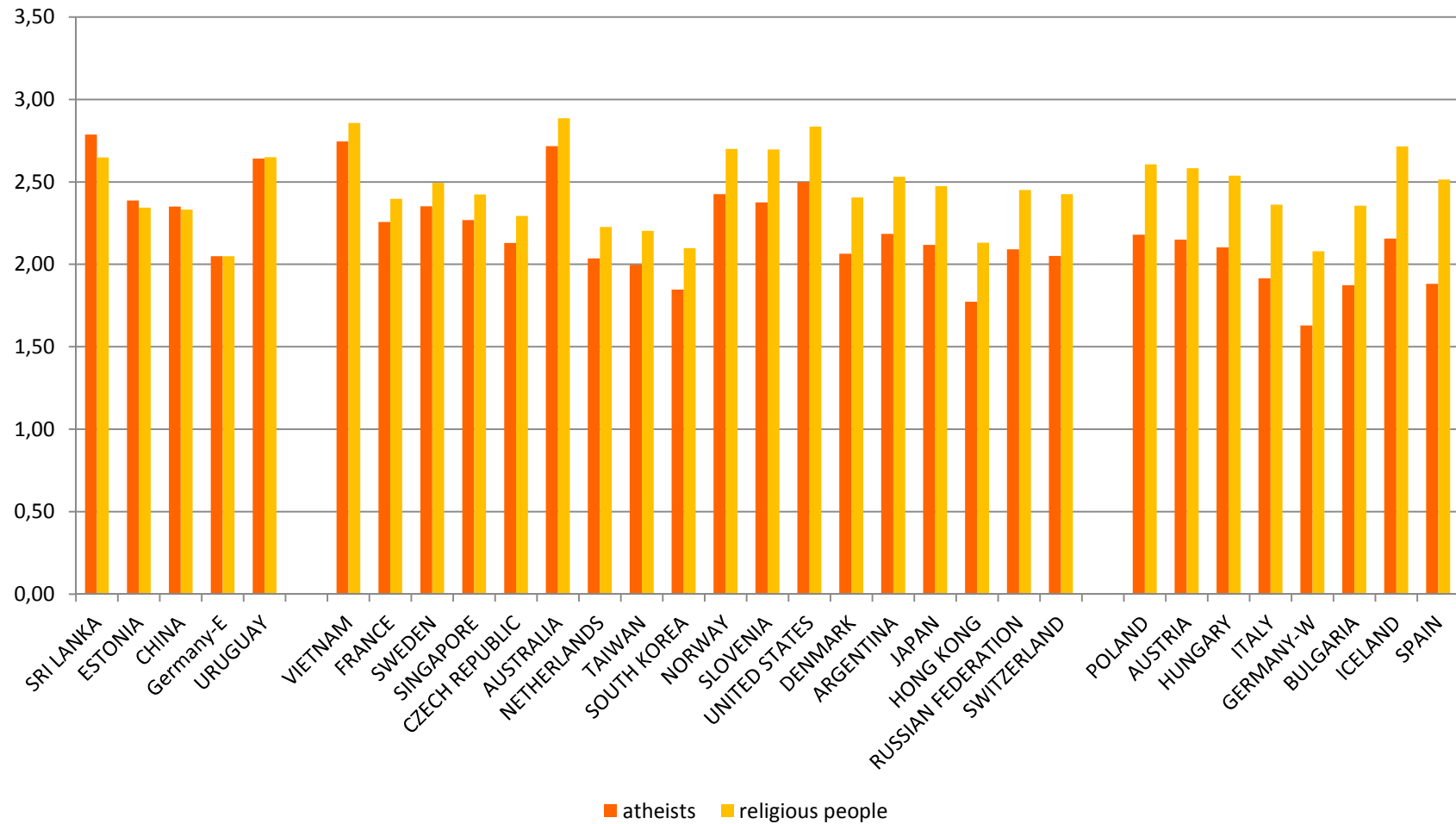
Mean values

Religious people: 2.60

Less religious + fuzzy people: 2.55

Atheists: 2.20

Mean values for national pride across 30 countries



What are the predictors for national pride among atheists and non-atheists?

Projection of religious values on the nation encourages patriotism for religious people

- easier when the church and state relationship is close
- easier in religiously homogeneous societies
- Atheists don't need to distance themselves from national ideas, only because they want distance from religion.

Hypothesis:

In **religious countries**, where the **church and state relationship** is close and religious **pluralization** is low, **atheists** tend to be less proud than **religious people**.

What are the predictors for national pride among atheists and non-atheists?

Individual level:

- *Sex*
- *Age*
- *Education*
- *Atheism*
- *Being religious*

Country level:

- *General level of religiosity*
- *Church and State relationship*
- *Religious pluralization*

Individual level regression results

b-values; dv: national pride

	Sex	Age	Education	Atheism	Religiousness
Poland	-.016	.005	-.031	-.058	.309
Italy	-.066	.007	.056	-.273	.164
Spain	.073	-.004	-.119	-.413	.168
China	-.023	.005	.051	-.045	-.054
Russia	.032	.004	-.014	-.249	.196
Estonia	.166	.002	.090	.394	.262
Germany-East	-.123	.007	-.072	.148	.136
Germany-West	-.113	.003	-.160	-.242	.198
Netherlands	.091	.001	-.023	-.033	.141
Norway	.119	.002	-.074	-.012	.209
France	.016	.007	-.049	.124	.275

First conclusions

- In highly religious countries, religiousness tends to have a strong significant positive impact on national pride and atheism tends to have a negative impact.
- However, in secular countries, where religion is/was opposed by the state, atheism has a positive effect on national pride.

Future tasks

Task 1: Multilevel analysis (+ invariance test), including indicator for the decade

Task 2: Paying more attention towards the different dominant religions. What does it mean to be non-religious in e.g. a predominantly Buddhist country?

Literature

Edgell, P., Gerteis, J. and Hartmann, D. (2006). Atheists as “other”: Moral boundaries and cultural membership in American society. *American Sociological Review* 71: 211–234, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240607100203>

Gervais, W. M. (2013). In Godlessness We Distrust: Using Social Psychology to Solve the Puzzle of Anti-atheist Prejudice. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 7: 366–377, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12035>

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Mudd, T.L., Najle, M.B., Ng, B.K.L. and Gervais, W., 2015. The Roots of Right and Wrong: Do Concepts of Innate Morality Reduce Intuitive Associations of Immorality With Atheism?. *Secularism and Nonreligion*, 4(1), p.Art. 10. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5334/snr.bc>