

What drives belief in conspiracy theories, a lack of religion or too much? | The Economist

By The Economist

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Americans who believe in the conspiracy theories collectively packaged as “QAnon” have grown quiet in recent months. They gained international notoriety after a large group of believers were among those who stormed the US Capitol building during a violent riot on January 6th. But the precise cause of the movement’s appeal has yet to be pinned down.

One prominent theory is that Americans who have no religious affiliation find themselves attracted to other causes, such as the Q craze. Another, posited by Ben Sasse, a Republican senator from Nebraska, is that modern strains of Christian evangelicalism which “run on dopey apocalypse-mongering” do not entirely satisfy all worshippers—and so they go on to find community and salvation in other groups, such as QAnon.

Using The Economist’s polling with YouGov, an online pollster, we can test both of these theories. From July 10th to July 13th 2021, YouGov asked Americans their racial and religious affiliations, whether they thought of QAnon favourably or unfavourably and whether they believed in a variety of popular conspiracy theories. Those theories included old stand-bys, such as whether the Moon landing in 1969 was faked.

[...]

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