

**Table 2: Categories of Belief and Disbelief in God**

		FACTOR 1: BELIEF (OR INCLINATION)*	
		<b>ATHEISM</b> Informal usage: no deity exists**	<b>THEISM</b> A deity exists, usually personal, interventionist
FACTOR 2: KNOWLEDGE	<b>GNOSTIC</b> Claim to have knowledge	Gnostic-Atheist Coder A = 53.4% Coder B = 53.4%	Gnostic-Theist Belief represents fact
	<b>AGNOSTIC</b> No claim of knowledge; it's unknown or unknowable	Agnostic-Atheist Coder A = 40.6% Coder B = 36.1%	Agnostic-Theist Belief represents faith, intuition, or interpretation of natural phenomena

n = 219

\*If there is no belief, no inclination and no claim of knowledge, then the category is Agnostic, as defined by T. H. Huxley:  
"a man shall not say he knows or believes that which he has no scientific grounds for professing to know or believe." (T. H. Huxley, *The Agnostic Annual*, 1884)

\*\*Formal usage: absence of belief in a deity (either nonbelief or opposite belief).

identification with the religion's moral values, or the absence of a deity in the religion's ideology, such as Buddhism. *Defining nonbelief: agnosticism + formal atheism.* The lightest shade of atheism in our model is nonbelief without taking a position on whether a deity exists. Respondents who identified as agnostic rather than as atheist would meet this requirement *provided that* they also responded "No" to all belief-in-God questions.

As noted above, there were 74 such respondents. However, there were 34 additional agnostics who could not be classified as nonbelievers because they did not answer No to all the belief-in-God questions.<sup>6</sup> One could not simply go with the agnostic label. Combining it with the belief questions was essential.

In contrast, if a respondent self-identified as atheist, in virtually every case she or he answered "No" to all the belief questions. Beyond the 232 validated atheists, one additional respondent was classified as a deist.

### Survey Results II:

#### Nonbelievers Who Reject a Deity

*Distribution of agnostic- and gnostic-atheists.* The

majority of self-identified atheists were gnostic-atheists, an orientation that we have characterized as dogmatic rather than skeptical. Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents across these two categories.

Most of the respondents were classified as either gnostic- or as agnostic-atheists (206 or 196 depending upon the coder). Both coders classified 117 respondents as gnostic-atheists (53.4%; confidence interval: 47% to 60%) and classified an average of 84 respondents as agnostic-atheists (38.4% of respondents; confidence interval: 32% to 45%).

#### The Majority of Atheists are Skeptical, Not Dogmatic

The survey data indicate that most atheists in the sample maintained a skeptical orientation toward their own position and were open to considering evidence and arguments favoring a theistic position. The numbers of respondents in each belief category were as follows:

Gnostic-Atheist, 117; Agnostic-Atheist, 84; Nonbeliever (uncommitted), 74.