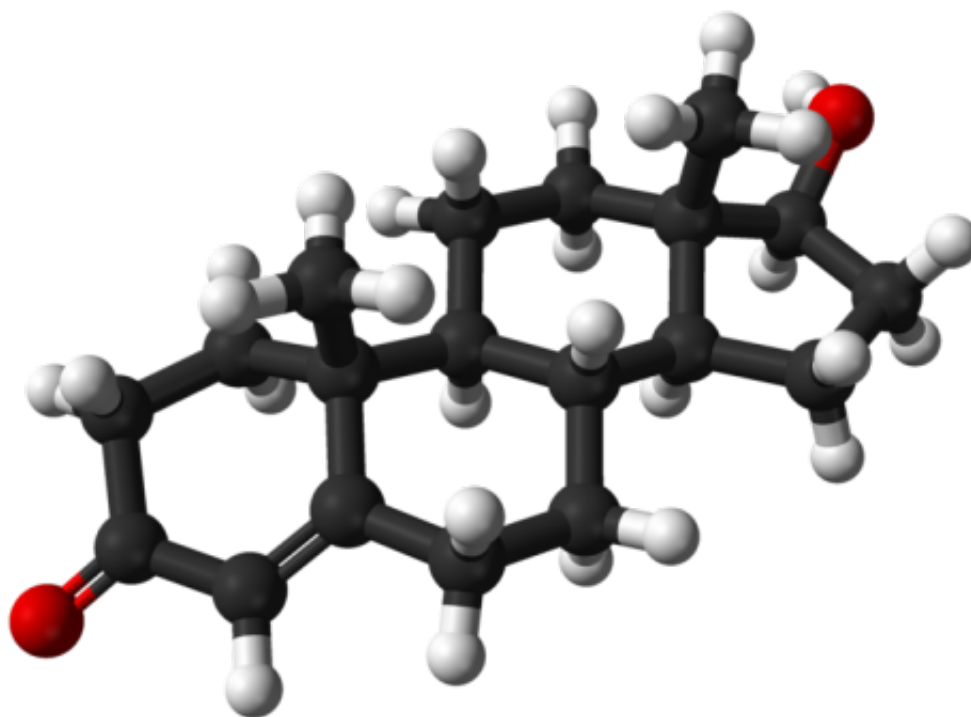


Older men with higher levels of sex hormones could be less religious

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Ball-and-stick model of the testosterone molecule, C₁₉H₂₈O₂, as found in the crystal structure of testosterone monohydrate. Credit: Ben Mills/Wikipedia

The level of sex hormones such as testosterone in a man's body could influence his religiosity. A new study by Aniruddha Das of McGill University in Canada in Springer's journal *Adaptive Human Behavior and Physiology* now adds to the growing body of evidence that religiosity

is not only influenced by upbringing or psychological makeup, but physiological factors could also play a role.

Das analysed data extracted from the 2005-2006 and 2010-2011 waves of the National Social Life, Health and Aging Project (NSHAP). This national study was set up to collect information from older American adults (aged 57-85 at baseline). Participants completed questionnaires in their homes in which they were asked about how often they attended [religious services](#), and whether they had a clergy member in their core social network. Information was also gathered about participants' weight and health, while saliva and blood samples were collected and later examined.

From the analysis of over 1000 men, Das found that men with higher levels of the [sex hormones](#) testosterone and dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA) in their bodies had weaker religious ties.

"Religion influences a range of cultural and political patterns at the population level. Results from the current study indicate the latter may also have hormonal roots," says Das. "There is therefore a need for conceptual models that can accommodate the dynamic interplay of psychosocial and neuroendocrine factors in shaping a person's life cycle."

He believes that more studies should be done to better understand how hormones, in particular, shape a person's religious patterns in later life. This is of importance, as religion has been shown to have a positive influence on how people age and ultimately experience their later years. According to Das, the findings further point to biological reasons behind the particular personal networks and social affiliations that people form during the course of their lives.

"Without systematic exploration of these linkages, life course theory

remains incomplete and potentially inaccurate," adds Das. "More research is therefore needed on the reasons why androgen levels influence a person's religious connections, and on the role that hormones play in structuring the life trajectories of older people."

More information: Aniruddha Das, Are Men's Religious Ties Hormonally Regulated?, *Adaptive Human Behavior and Physiology* (2018). [DOI: 10.1007/s40750-018-0094-3](https://doi.org/10.1007/s40750-018-0094-3)

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