

Enjoying a good and happy life without god, religion or superstition

Secular aims:

- To separate church and state. The Christian C of E is the official state religion.
- To remove C of E bishops from Parliament.
- To end religious worship in schools.
- To include the study of religion and belief as part of Philosophy and Ethics in schools.
- To end the apartheid of religiously segregated schools – “faith” schools.
- To remove all religious symbols from public institutions and buildings.
- To end all privileges enjoyed by religion and end all taxpayer funding of religion.
- To end religious privileges in places of work.
- To return religion to where it belongs – private activity between consenting adults.
- To treat religious and non-religious people and organisations in the same way.

As humanists:

- We are god-free atheists – we have no need of faith or religion.
- We enjoy happy and responsible lives.
- We have a strong sense of personal morality and ethics.
- We answer the big questions of life without gods, holy books, holy men or places of worship.
- We recognise that some people need gods and religions to answer the big questions and to provide them with emotional and social support through life.
- We support freedom of belief, thought and expression – as long as it causes no harm to anyone else.
- We are free thinkers, we promote rational thinking, we adopt a sceptical attitude to all questions and ideas, we look for evidence and proof in everything.



It's OK not
to believe



It can be hard to stand out from the crowd. People may make fun of you if you are the only one who supports a particular team or band.

In England we assume that everyone has the right to believe and say whatever they wish – as long as they do not cause harm to anyone.

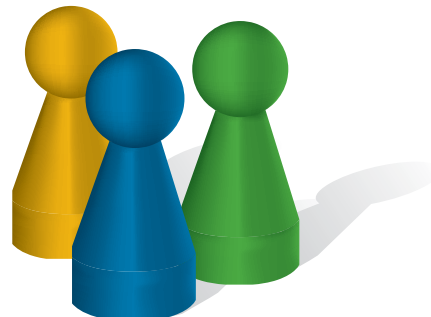
In the past some countries did not allow freedom of belief and expression. In Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany and Stalin's Russia you could be imprisoned or killed for not believing what the state wanted you to believe.

In some countries it is difficult to stand out from the crowd if you don't believe. In parts of America it is almost impossible for an atheist to have a social life - everyone's social life revolves around their church.

Some countries use their official religion to oppress people and to discriminate against groups in society who refuse to conform to rules laid down in holy books. Failure to follow religious rules can lead to imprisonment, torture, mutilation, stoning or even death.

We believe that people should be free to believe what they wish – but there should be limits.

- **Belief should be based on informed choice – believing the first thing that comes along without examining alternatives is intellectually dishonest.**
- **No-one should force anyone to believe anything.**
- **Parents and communities should not bring pressure on children to force them to believe certain things.**
- **No belief should justify discrimination based on race, colour, gender, sexuality, disability etc.**
- **No belief should call for harm to another person.**



A secular country, one **not** based on religion, guarantees freedom of religion and belief. England is **not** a secular country (the Christian Church of England is the state religion and we have Christian Bishops in Parliament making our laws) but everyone has freedom of religion and belief.

People sometimes forget that this also gives us the right **not** to believe in certain things. We do **not** have to believe in any religion if we don't want to – in fact, the largest ever survey of school pupils between the ages of 12 and 16 showed that over 66% of them did **not** believe in any god. In England, most people – over 92% – do **not** take part in any form of regular religious activity.

So, you would assume that **not** believing was fine – but for many young people it is far from fine.

Many young people find it impossible to say *"I don't believe in this"* – or even to question some of the beliefs in their community. Pressure is brought on them by parents, family and community to follow the "traditional" religion - and threats are made against them if they question what they are told.

In some religious communities a decision to give up or change religion ("apostasy") is threatened with death. Others may not be so extreme but non-believers can still find themselves without a social life because of their change of belief

If *"it's OK to believe"* it must also be OK **not** to believe.

Contact us through our web site if you feel that unfair pressure is brought on you to stick to the family or community religion. There is no gene for religion – you are an individual and you have a right to believe what you wish – religious or otherwise.

Derbyshire Humanists

Find out more about us by visiting our web site

www.SecularDerby.org