



**THINK FOR YOURSELF, ACT FOR EVERYONE**

ESTABLISHED 1896. REGISTERED CHARITY 275987.

**BRINGING  
PEOPLE  
TOGETHER**

## About Humanists UK

**Humanists UK, along with Humanist Society Scotland, represents over 120,000 members and supporters working for a world free from discrimination and oppression, where everyone has the power to shape their own lives.**

Founded in 1896, we have always been a trusted voice for ethical campaigns for a more equal society. We strive for a better society, working alongside others to build more just and equitable communities where human rights are respected and upheld. We bring non-religious people together to challenge injustice and fight for a better future for all, regardless of their beliefs.

In Westminster, we provide a secretariat to the All-Party Parliamentary Humanist Group, which was co-founded in the 1960s by Labour figures such as Leo Abse and Bessie Braddock. This group was instrumental in advancing bills and whipping support for the decriminalisation of abortion and homosexuality, and in repealing the death penalty. In the 1990s and 2000s, Humanists UK and the APPHG were prominent voices arguing in support of the Human Rights Act and Equality Act.

Through our ceremonies, pastoral support, education, and campaigning, we advance free thinking and freedom of choice so everyone can live in a fair and equal society.



PRESIDENT: DR ADAM RUTHERFORD. VICE PRESIDENTS:  
PROFESSOR ALICE ROBERTS, SHAPARAK KHORSANDI, PROFESSOR  
JIM AL-KHALILI, PROFESSOR AC GRAYLING, POLLY TOYNBEE.

This is a briefing from Humanists UK. For more information, clarification, or to arrange a meeting, please contact [kathy@humanists.uk](mailto:kathy@humanists.uk).

# In depth

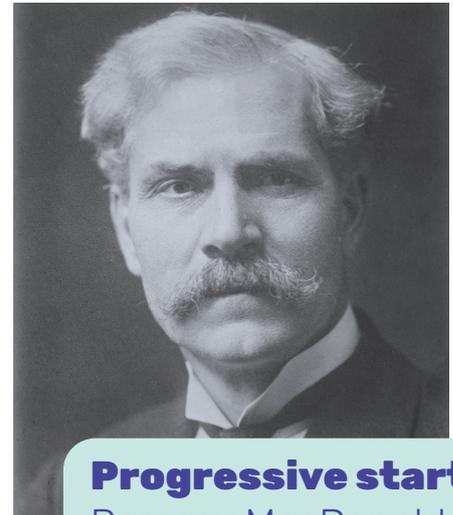
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## About our movement:

### A long history promoting social justice and equality

Originally founded in 1896 by social justice activists from all corners of the UK who advocated solidarity between all men and women based on our common humanity, we have always been a trusted voice for campaigns for a more equal society.

Our founders included many key players in the foundation of the Labour Party and the Fabians, including Ramsay MacDonald, who served as our President and Labour's first Prime Minister, and who edited our in-house magazine promoting humanist values for many years.



**Progressive start:**  
Ramsay MacDonald

In our earliest days, we were part of a wider social movement alongside groups like Toynbee Hall providing care and support to the inner-city poor. We set up soup kitchens, adoption agencies, housing associations, and more, focused on redressing racial, social, and religious inequalities. Many of these became redundant as the state progressively stepped in to tackle the legal inequalities that made them necessary. Still to this day, we continue to provide crucial services to the groups that need them most, such as in our work with asylum seekers and patients in distress.

In our 127 years, we have been proud of the involvement of Humanists UK members and supporters in shaping a fairer society.

Prominent humanists in the 1940s included Nye Bevan and Jennie Lee, who founded the NHS and the Open University. In the 1960s, working closely with politicians who were also our members, like Leo Abse and Bessie Braddock, we helped to secure major legal reforms for abortion rights and for gay people. And alongside public intellectuals like Dipak Nandy, we called for an open society and worked to champion legal reforms for gender, racial, and social equality. In the 1990s and 2000s, we were vocal champions of the Equality Act and Human Rights Act. In recent decades, we have continued to be prominent in campaigns for marriage equality, abortion access, children's rights, LGBT rights, and humane assisted dying laws.



**Humanists:**  
Nye Bevan and Jennie Lee

# Humanism:

## Reason, compassion, and justice

While diverse in many of our beliefs, humanists all champion reason, empathy, and a fierce commitment to social justice and progress:

- We trust the scientific method to understand the universe and urge that knowledge be used to **achieve progress for all**. We encourage critical thinking to challenge outmoded traditions.
- We recognise the inherent worth of every human being and support **universal rights and equal treatment**.
- In an indifferent universe, we believe human beings can act to give our own lives meaning by seeking happiness in this life and helping others to do the same in **a just society**.

Humanist ideas are as old as humanity. From the earliest writings of the first millennium BCE in ancient China, India, and Greece, through the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment; to modern secularisation and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, humanist ideas have helped to shape our world.

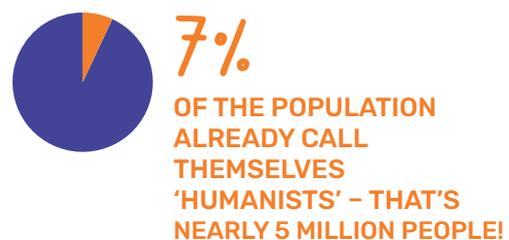
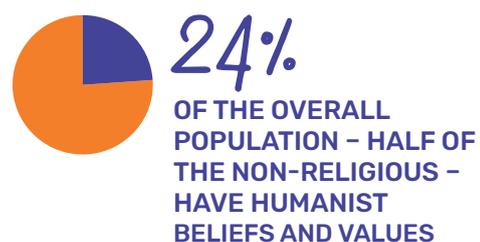
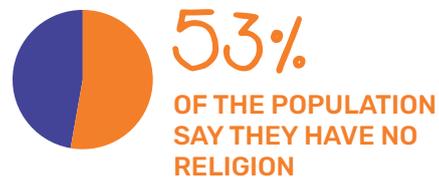
## Humanists in the UK:

### Shared values

Millions in the UK share the progressive humanist way of living and of looking at the world, but many of them have not heard the word 'humanist' and don't realise that it describes what they believe.

Humanists UK provides education material and support for millions of non-religious people in this country, providing a positive outlook on life which is coherent and widely-shared.

A 2021 YouGov poll of British adults found that while 7% (~5 million people) of the population explicitly identify as non-religious and 'humanist', a remarkable 24% of the population hold humanist beliefs. Beyond labels, humanist ideals represent the explicit or implicit worldview of a significant plurality of non-religious people in Britain.



Data drawn from YouGov and British Social Attitudes Survey (both 2021).

# Our programmes

## Humanist Ceremonies: Meaningful and authentic

Since 1896 we've conducted life-affirming funerals, weddings, and baby-namings tailored to the unique stories of each person. Over 20 million people in Britain have attended a humanist ceremony and one in seven today say they want a humanist funeral after they die, according to a recent survey by the Co-operative.

Humanist  
Ceremonies™  
by Humanists UK

## Non-religious pastoral care: Like-minded support

Just as religious people have access to chaplains, we believe non-religious people have a right to appropriate support.

Whether in hospitals, prisons, or (from this year) the armed forces, our Humanist Care network provides this support, including our 'Faith to Faithless' service for those leaving high-control religions, including asylum seekers fleeing persecution.

Humanist  
Care

Faith to Faithless

Non-Religious Pastoral  
Support Network

## Education: Inclusion and equality

Our trained school visitors engage students across the UK, teaching them about humanism and fostering critical thinking. Our Assemblies for All resource service provides access to high quality, inclusive assemblies for schools across the UK so that every child and young person can feel valued and respected.

Understanding  
Humanism

ASSEMBLIES } for all

Humanist  
Heritage

Humanist  
Dialogue

## Dialogue: Building bridges, not walls

Through our trained community dialogue network, we foster understanding between humanists and religious communities, working towards a peaceful and plural society.

## Events, groups, and networks

We have branches and local humanist groups up and down the country. We put on regular events to bring humanists together including our annual convention.

Our member and supporter networks bring together activists to lead on specific issues, from Humanist Climate Action to LGBT Humanists, which has been working with us since 1979.



## **Advocacy:** For freedom, equality, and evidence-based policy

We devote much of our time to campaigning and lobbying on behalf of the non-religious as well as for freedom of religion, belief, speech, thought, and expression more generally. We work for an open society and a secular state with no discrimination based on religion or belief. We work for a rational approach to public ethical issues in order to contribute to a public life where decisions are made on evidence rather than on the basis of irrational beliefs or dogmas.

Our policies are informed with the support of over 200 of the UK's most prominent philosophers, scientists, and other thinkers and experts and we seek to advance them with the help of over 115 parliamentarians in membership of the All-Party Parliamentary Humanist Group.



**Darwin Day  
Lecture**



## **All-Party Parliamentary Humanist Group**

Humanists UK is secretariat to the All-Party Parliamentary Humanist Group (APPHG), a cross-party group of over 115 members from both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. If you're interested in joining or learning more about the APPHG please contact us at [campaigns@humanists.uk](mailto:campaigns@humanists.uk)



**Since 1896, we have been a progressive force working for a tolerant society where rational thinking and kindness prevail.**

Powered by over 120,000 members and supporters, we advance free thinking and promote humanism to create a tolerant society where rational thinking and kindness prevail. We provide ceremonies, pastoral care, education, and support services benefitting over a million people every year and our campaigns advance humanist thinking on ethical issues, human rights, and equal treatment for all.

## HOW WE CREATE CHANGE



### Through the courts

We work with humanist claimants to champion human rights, challenging discriminatory laws and policies.



### Through politics

We engage elected representatives and public officials, encouraging leaders to act in the interests of fairness and on the basis of evidence.



### Through public opinion

We publish hard-hitting reports exploring our issues, and champion the humanist view of society through mainstream and social media.

**For more details, information, and evidence,  
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