



DIALOGUE FOR SACRE REPS

curious

WHAT WE'RE GOING TO COVER

- Fit with Humanists UK strategy and dialogue
- What is dialogue?
- What is religion?
- A look at the landscape & Census data
- Why do we want to engage in dialogue?
- Basic dialogue skills
- What next?



HUMANISTS UK STRATEGY

WHAT IS DIALOGUE?



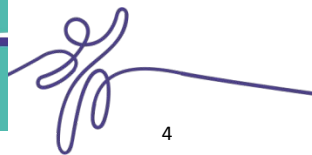
OUR VALUES

**IN ALL OUR WORK,
WE STRIVE TO
EMBODY OUR
VALUES BY:**



- engaging in dialogue and debate rationally, intelligently, and with evidence
- recognising the dignity of individuals and treating them with fairness and respect
- respecting and promoting freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law
- taking opportunities to combat all forms of prejudice and unfair discrimination
- cooperating with others for the common good, including those of different beliefs
- celebrating human achievement, progress, and potential
- accepting that human beings are part of a wider natural world which must be treated sustainably for the sake of current and future generations

Our values are not just a plank of our strategy, but form part of the code of conduct for all our personnel, including those providing services to the public.



WHAT IS DIALOGUE?



“Engagement between people with different approaches to life to build mutual understanding, identify common ground and, where it makes sense, engage in shared action.”



IT IS NOT...

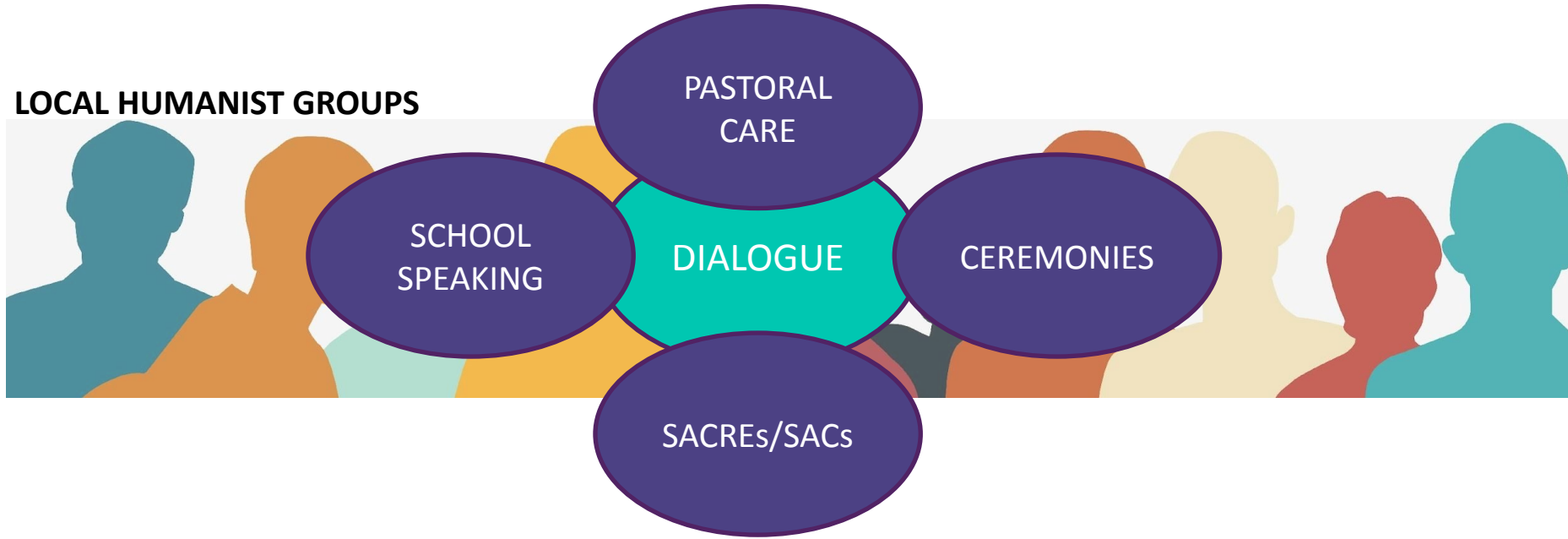


- Adversarial debate
- About trying to convert people
- Avoiding (good) disagreement



DIALOGUE AND OTHER COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

LOCAL HUMANIST GROUPS



MANY TYPES OF DIALOGUE

- “Interfaith dialogue” & participative action via established organisations
- Public events, incl ‘debates’
- Private bilateral dialogue series & actions
- “Death Cafés”
- Academic exploration
- Informal dialogue & personal conversation - “being there”
- Participation in local community events
- Dialogue of social action
- ‘Big Iftars’, ‘scriptural reasoning’ groups & other faith group outreach
- ‘Spiritual’ experience – meditation, retreat

See also *“Online Dialogue ideas”*

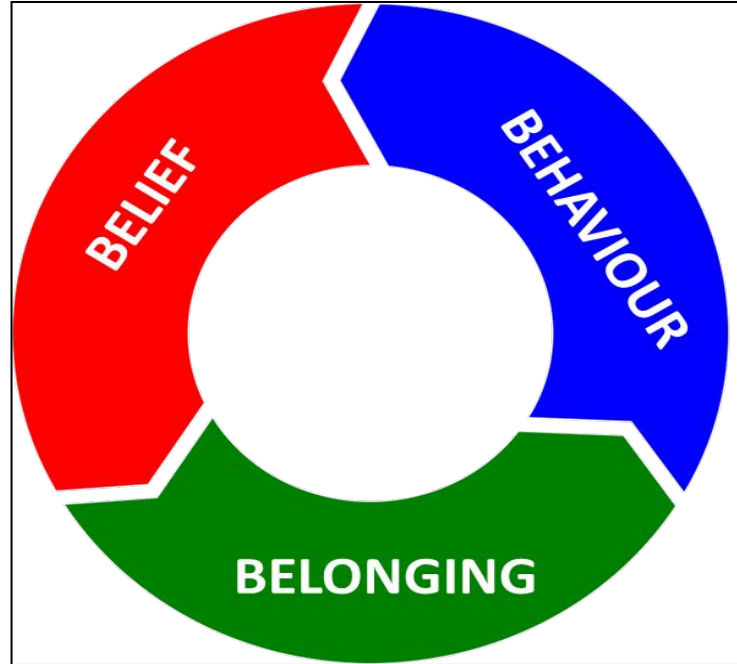


RELIGION & LANDSCAPE



WHAT IS “RELIGION”?

Don't assume it's all about belief.



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David Baddiel

David Baddiel was made a patron of Humanists UK for his exploration of the human condition through the arts.

Comedian, writer, and television presenter.

God made man in His own image. No. Man made God in his own image.

Born in May 1964, David Baddiel grew up in North London. His mother was a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany, but Baddiel has said that going to an orthodox Jewish school as a child put him off religion. After studying at Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School, he read English at King's College, Cambridge, where he was a member of the Cambridge Footlights. He graduated with a double first and began a doctorate at UCL, and though early success as a stand-up comedian put an end to his academic career, he remains interested in literature: he writes a regular books column for *The Times* and in 2007 he hosted BBC4's "The Book Quiz". He has also written three novels: *Time For Bed*, *Whatever Love Means* and *The Secret Purposes*. (If you buy his books at [Amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk) through [this link](#) a small commission will go to Humanists UK.)



David Baddiel ✓

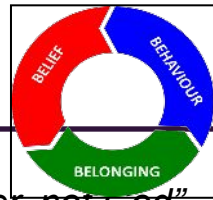
@Baddiel

Jew

📍 London 🌐 [davidbaddiel.com](https://www.davidbaddiel.com)



BEWARE ASSUMPTIONS...



What % of UK Christians believe “Jesus was God in human form who lived among people in the 1st Century”?

34%

A third think he was “a prophet or spiritual leader, not God”, 16% “a normal human being”, 15% “don’t know”.

What % of UK Christians “do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead”?

20%

27% believe it happened “word-for-word as described in the Bible”; 43% believe in it, but not all literally

What % of UK Catholics think it’s a sin to engage in homosexual behaviour?

28%

54% say it’s not a sin; 10% “it depends”, 9% don’t know.

What % of British Jews are atheists?

25%

41% believe in some sort of higher power of spiritual force; 34% in God as described in the Bible.

What % of the non-religious are atheists?

51%*

27% “don’t know & don’t think there’s any way to find out”; 14% don’t believe in a personal god but in some higher power; 5% believe in god some of the time, not others; 4% believe in god.

**and around 5% of the religious*

To Conscience First, and to the Pope (Long) Afterwards? (2021); Complex Catholicism (2018)

<https://savanta.com/knowledge-centre/poll/hope-together-talking-jesus-2022/>

<https://www.jpr.org.uk/reports/jews-uk-today-key-findings-jpr-national-jewish-identity-survey>

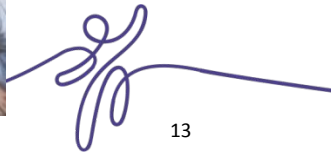
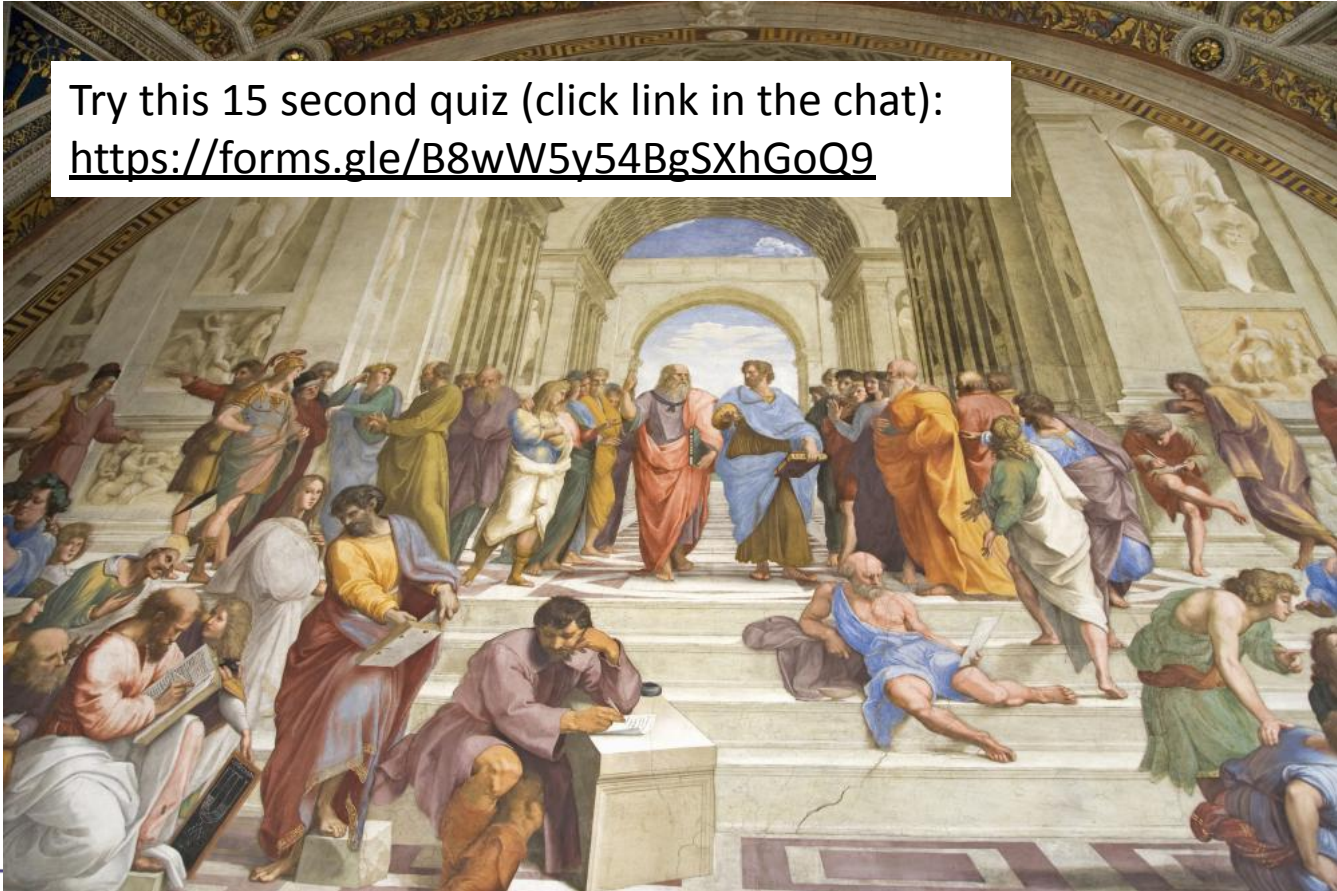
<https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/research/2022/10/31/the-nones-who-are-they-and-what-do-they-believe>

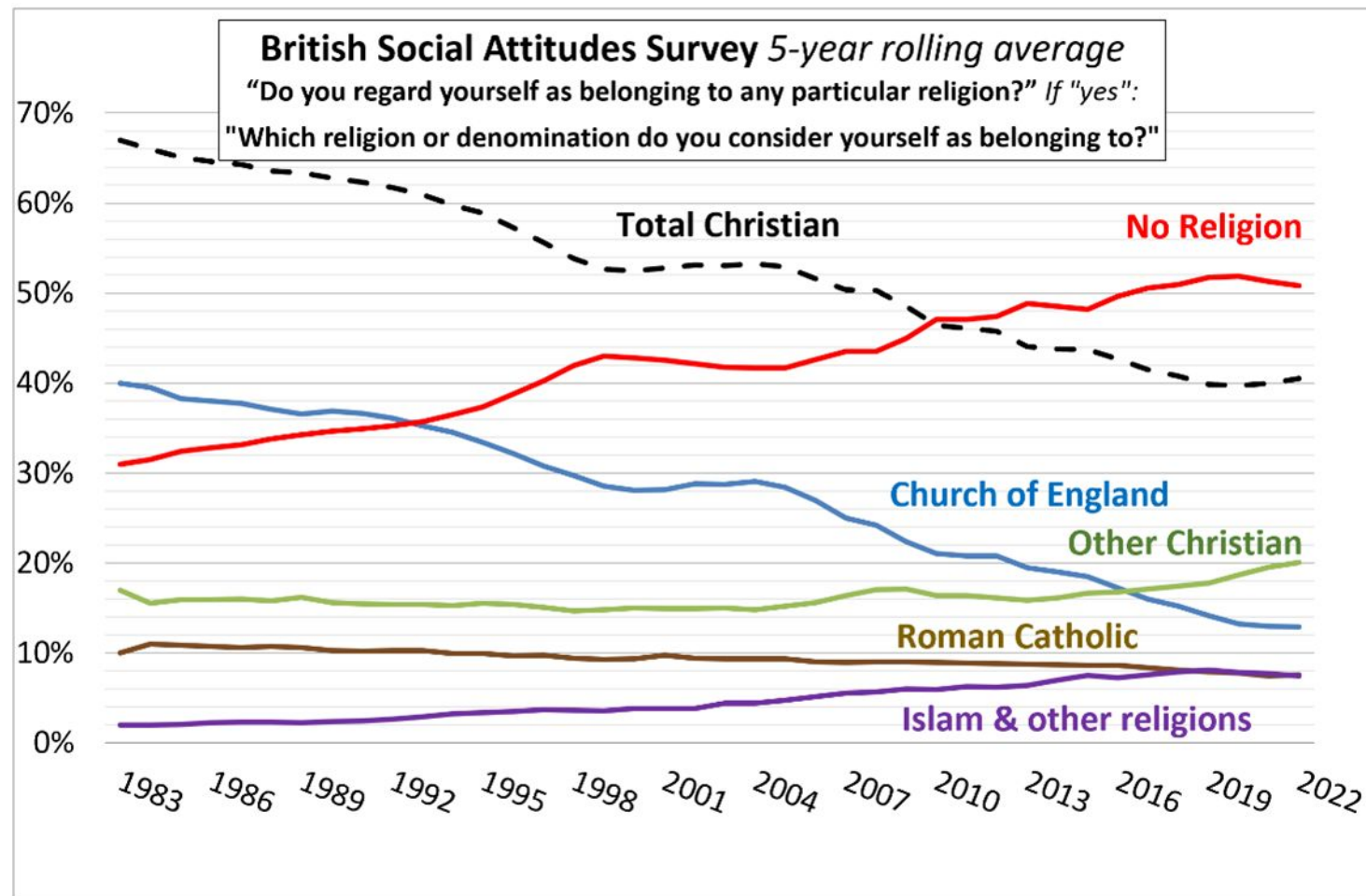
WHAT CAN YOU ASSUME?



WHAT ABOUT HUMANISTS?

Try this 15 second quiz (click link in the chat):
<https://forms.gle/B8wW5y54BgSXhGoQ9>





Map
Census 2021

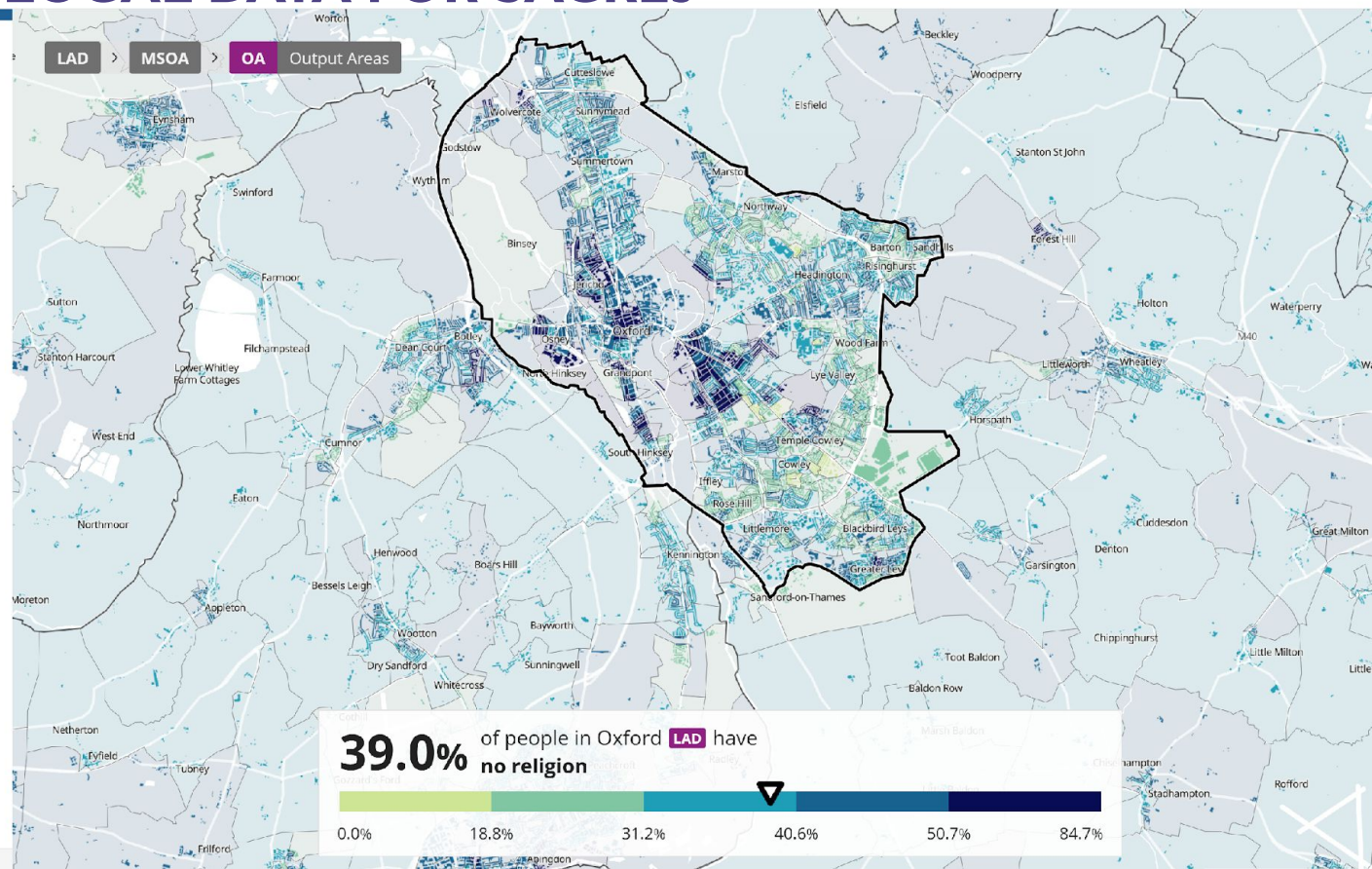
Area
Oxford **LAD**

Topic
[Home](#) > [Identity](#) > Religion

! There are quality considerations for the "not answered" category in university locations.
[Read more](#)

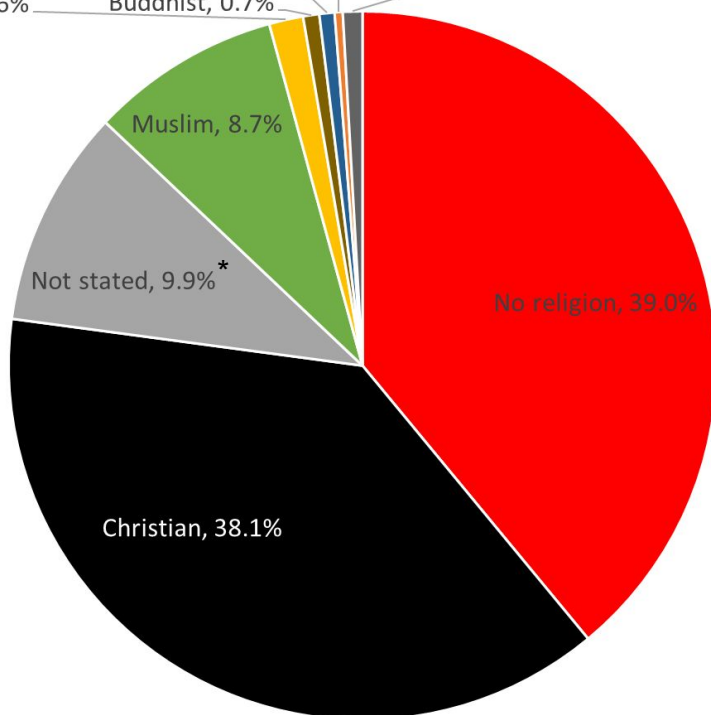
The religion people connect or identify with.

- ☒ No religion
- ☐ Christian
- ☐ Buddhist
- ☐ Hindu
- ☐ Jewish
- ☐ Muslim
- ☐ Sikh
- ☐ Other religion
- ☐ Not answered



CENSUS 2021 - OXFORD

Hindu, 1.6% Buddhist, 0.7% Jewish, 0.7% Sikh, 0.4% Other, 0.9%



“Other” (0.9%)

Pagan	246	0.2%
Shamanism	163	0.1%
Spiritual	159	0.1%
Spiritualist	76	0.0%
Baha'i	61	0.0%
Mixed Religion	55	0.0%
Valmiki	45	0.0%
Jain	33	0.0%
Zoroastrian	27	0.0%
Wicca	21	0.0%
Taoist	19	0.0%
Alevi	18	0.0%
Shintoism	18	0.0%
Believe in God	17	0.0%
Pantheism	16	0.0%
Rastafarian	14	0.0%
Satanism	14	0.0%
Heathen	10	0.0%
Ravidassia	10	0.0%
Other religions	361	0.2%
Other - less than 10	64	0.0%
Total	1447	0.9%

“No religion” includes write-ins: 221 “Agnostic”; 72 “Atheist”; 46 “Humanist”

* Adjusted to improve estimate for students at term time address on Census Day 21 March 2021.



CARE IN USING CENSUS DATA

- Leading “What is your religion?” question gives overstatement of “Christian”, understatement of “no religion”.
- No breakdown within “Christian”.
- Optional question, so some don’t answer.
- Write-ins useful for minor religions, but not for humanists/atheists (most just ticked “no religion”)

From ONS advice on data quality:

- Take care when analysing the data to avoid confusion between proportions of all people falling in a particular category and proportions of all people who stated a response falling in that category. It is recommended that percentages are calculated out of the total population, as opposed to those who have answered the question, to aid comparisons and interpretation.
- An adjustment made to improve the estimation of students living at their term-time address will have slightly increased the proportion of "Not stated" and decreased proportions of other categories. Take care when interpreting data for those aged 18 to 22 years or, specifically, full-time students.



DIALOGUE OBJECTIVES

1. To ensure that Humanism is well understood, and especially to inform and educate religious people about it.

2. To make a positive contribution to 'building a world where everyone lives cooperatively on the basis of shared human values, respect for human rights, and concern for future generations.'

3. To ensure that Humanists UK is recognised as the national voice for the humanist worldview, particularly in respect of dialogue.

4. To enrich the personal development of humanists engaged in dialogue



1. To ensure that **Humanism** is well understood, and especially to inform and educate religious people about it.



- Humanists UK **not ‘anti-religious’**, but **‘anti-harm’ and ‘anti-privilege’** - spectrum of views
- Humanism a **positive worldview** - atheism just one element.
- Empathy, reason, and humanity’s history of cooperative living provide a strong and coherent **basis for ethics**
- **Freedom of religion and belief** key element of **‘Secularism’** (along with state neutrality, and no state discrimination on basis of religion or belief)
- We support good quality **education about religion and worldviews**



2. To make a positive contribution to 'building a world where everyone lives cooperatively on the basis of shared human values, respect for human rights, and concern for future generations.'



- **Challenge ill-informed generalisations/**encourage understanding of university
- **Reflect humanist values** (+ Humanists UK objectives) in our approach to dialogue
- **Understand/support progressive individuals/groups sharing many of our values**
 - *Linda Woodhead: "Values are the new religion."*
 - *Julian Baggini: 'Coalition of the Reasonable'*
- **Help humanists in understanding** of how a peaceful, plural society can work.
- **Be prepared to work alongside religious people** on campaigns/activities aligned with humanist values/objectives

...while unapologetically supporting our campaigns



DOING DIALOGUE



BASIC DIALOGUE SKILLS

- Dialogue not debate – you’re not there to “win”
- Aim for better understanding, common ground & “good disagreement”
- Maximise trust, build relationships
- Beware generalisations
- Ask questions, be curious, actively listen, open it up...
- Think about language (“I” statements...)



HOW NOT TO DO IT...

QUESTION: 'What question might you ask each of a devout 1) Muslim, 2) Catholic or 3) Jew?'

'You're an idiot to believe in

him/her.'

ANSWER: Surely your god would want all humans to have the same tools for life as any other human. Why do you think your religion cannot talk about science without partitioning it off from religion. eg. why do we have two methods of 'knowing?'

'I know what you think without asking you.'

Topic is fine, but

- Best way to start relationship?*
- Do you really want to know, or to score a point?*

BETTER ANSWER: 'I would like to ask them what they think of or know of humanism - or ask them about the parts of their own religion that they feel contribute most to the world and those parts which mean the most to them and why.'



WHAT NEXT?

This introductory session

Apply for
Part Two?

Part Two – More depth

Successfully
completed
both parts?

Dialogue Network membership

[Click here if you'd like to apply for "Part Two" dialogue training](#)





**// WE ARE FAR MORE
UNITED AND HAVE FAR
MORE IN COMMON
WITH EACH
OTHER THAN
THINGS THAT
DIVIDE US. //**

Jo Cox (1974-2016),
MP and humanist

