



Navigation

- Main page
- Recent changes
- Random page
- Help
- Best of RationalWiki
- All logs

Community

- Saloon bar
- Forum
- To do list
- New pages
- Technical support
- Intercom
- Blog

Tools

- What links here
- Related changes
- Special pages
- Printable version
- Permanent link



Polls are now open for the RationalMedia board elections. Go [here](#) to vote. Per policy of board elections your vote will not be counted if you have not [registered](#). The elections close Tuesday, February 25th.

[Next](#)
[Previous](#)

from [Tmtoulouse](#) ([Talk](#)), group Site wide (urgent) at 19:39, 18 February 2014

Atheist

“ I find your lack of faith disturbing... ”

—[Darth Vader](#) choking a [skeptical](#) atheist

What this means is covered in much more depth and with significantly less [snark](#) in our [atheism](#) article.

An **atheist** is a [person](#) who does not believe in any [gods](#).

Contents [hide]
1 The term "atheist"
2 Dogma
3 Atheists in society
3.1 In Jesusland
3.2 Europe
3.3 Australia
3.4 New Zealand
4 See also
5 External links
6 Footnotes

The Atheist's Guide To Atheism

Key concepts

- [Atheism](#)
- [Agnosticism](#)
- [Antitheism](#)
- [Secular humanism](#)
- [FAQ for new atheists](#)

More about atheism

- [Far Left Side](#)
- [Rationalism vs. Religious Instruction in the Public Schools](#)
- [The Atheist Afterlife](#)
- [What proof or evidence do you have that atheism is true and correct?](#)
- [William Brevard Hand](#)

Notable atheists

- [Alan Sokal](#)
- [David Miliband](#)
- [H. P. Lovecraft](#)
- [Rebecca Watson](#)
- [Stephen Fry](#)

v - t - e

The term "atheist" [\[edit\]](#)

As an atheist doesn't believe in god(s) they have no religion. The term is a word for a negative, and this leads to a few semantic issues.

This confuses the [religious](#) because they are used to terms of religious identity being a declaration of allegiance *to* a view, rather than of separation *from*. This confusion then leads them to assert that a denial of their religion must be an avowal of another. They then do things like declare the so-called [New Atheists](#) as [hypocrites](#) for denigrating religion while sticking to an unstated one of their own, or declare that because [science](#) has an [epistemology](#) and religion has an epistemology, therefore science is just another faith (when religion's problem is that science's epistemology provably works much better than religion's).


A standard response is to note that if atheism is a religion, then "bald" is a hair color, and not collecting stamps is a hobby, not kicking a kitten is a form of animal abuse and so on. Another is to note that if the definition of religion was expanded enough to legitimately include atheism - say, by defining a religion as "any [philosophy](#) on life" - then practically *everything in the world* would be a religion, such as socio-economic policies or views on [equality](#). ([British law](#) has come close to finding this in employment discrimination cases.)

As [Sam Harris](#) noted in a speech to the Atheist Alliance in 2007:^[1]

“ I think that “atheist” is a term that we do not need, in the same way that we don’t need a word for someone who rejects astrology. We simply do not call people “non-astrologers.” All we need are words like “reason” and “evidence” and “common sense” and “bullshit” to put astrologers in their place, and so it could be with religion. ”

Dogma [\[edit\]](#)

There are many facets to atheistic [dogma](#)! Here are a few choice high water marks:

- Stealing (and eating) [crackers](#).
- Eating grilled cheese sandwiches, even if an image of [Richard Dawkins](#) or a [goat](#) appears on them. Hunger trumps piety.
- [Oppressing and suppressing Christians](#).
- Not getting hit by someone's [karma](#).
- Nightmares about [bananas](#)  and [peanut butter](#).
- *Not giving a shit* about which gods are being argued about. Sounds silly to atheists, but usually confuses the [hell](#) out of anyone religious, who immediately thinks that an atheist has something against them personally.^[2]

Atheists in society [\[edit\]](#)

In Jesusland

[[edit](#)]

In the US, atheists are the [least trusted and liked people out of all social groups](#), possibly because of their cracker-stealing banana fetishes and their superior [knowledge](#)^[3] of actual religious content. They top the charts when people are asked "who would you least trust to be elected [President](#)" or "who would you least want to marry your beautiful, sweet, innocent Christian daughter."^[4]^[5]

Many have lost jobs and been harassed out of their homes for what is essentially a *lack* of any belief that could act as motivation to cause harm. [Chuck Norris](#) infamously claimed that he would like to tattoo "[In God We Trust](#)" on to atheist foreheads before booting them out of [Jesusland](#), possibly to work as [slaves](#) in the Mines of Moria (he claims this is a joke, but few people actually laughed). More extreme [fundamentalists](#) seem want them outright banned from existence, blogger [Andrew Schlafly](#) seriously considered banning them from his website and [George H. W. Bush](#) declared "*I don't know that atheists should be considered as citizens, nor should they be considered patriots. This is one nation under God,*" questioning whether anyone who disbelieves in [God](#) should [even be allowed to vote](#) (or at least be allowed to vote themselves out of persecution).^[6] A [creationist](#) group has refined this way of thinking, stating that atheists and other "[evolutionists](#)" should be disenfranchised, as anyone who believes the [theory of evolution](#) is clearly [mentally incompetent](#).^[7]

Six US states have laws on the books that prohibit atheists from holding public office.^[8] This despite a U.S. [Supreme Court](#) ruling – *Torcaso v. Watkins (1961)*^[9] – that prohibits [discrimination](#) against atheist officeholders.^[10] These states are:

- [Arkansas](#)
- [Maryland](#)
- [North Carolina](#)
- [South Carolina](#)
- [Tennessee](#)
- [Texas](#)

If atheism isn't a hanging offence in these places, they probably wish it were. (Ok, maybe not Maryland, but you get the point).

Europe

[[edit](#)]

In [Europe](#), atheists don't really receive much negative attention. [France](#) has an entirely [secular](#) culture, with a suitably large proportion of the population declaring "no religion." In [Scandinavia](#), the majority of the population are openly atheist and - [black metal](#) church burnings aside - nothing bad happens there much. In the [UK](#), [Tony Blair](#)'s spin-doctor Alistar Campbell was led to declare that "we don't do god"^[11] and Tony himself said that he kept quiet about religion because people would think he was "a nutter." The current [deputy Prime Minister](#) is an atheist, while the [Prime Minister himself](#) has said that his [Church of England](#) faith "comes and goes." Overall, atheists in Europe aren't demonised as they are in America and other countries led by fundamentalists.

Australia

[[edit](#)]

From 2010 to 2013, Australia had a prime minister, [Julia Gillard](#), who defined herself as an atheist. A lot of Australians despised her for a whole bunch of (potentially legitimate) reasons, but being an atheist wasn't one of them.

New Zealand

[[edit](#)]

[New Zealand](#) hasn't had a religious Prime Minister for over 10 years (and possibly for far longer than that). Politics and religion in [New Zealand](#) are mutually exclusive and the religious beliefs of [New Zealand](#) leaders is never seriously scrutinized...apart from that [Graham Capill](#) one guy].

See also

[[edit](#)]

- [Antitheism](#)
- [Apatheism](#)
- [Atheism](#)
- [Atheophobia](#)
- [Ignosticism](#)
- [List of second-generation atheists](#)
- [New Atheist](#)

External links

[[edit](#)]

- [An Atheist Meets God](#)^[↗]
- [Celebrity Atheist List](#)^[↗] – A [wiki](#) of contemporary and historical non-believers, with entries categorized as "The Atheist and the [Materialist](#)," "The [Agnostic](#)" and "The [Ambiguous](#)"
- [God Loves Atheists](#)^[↗]
- [Mom, Dad, I'm an Atheist... OH SNAP!](#)^[↗]
- [Hundreds of Proofs of God's Non-existence](#)^[↗] - in the spirit of the [Gish Gallop](#), all intentionally terrible.

Footnotes

[[edit](#)]

- ↑ "[The Problem with Atheism](#)"^[↗]
- ↑ As a serious point, this is related to the perception that atheists "Hate God," which can't possibly be the case because atheists *disbelieve* all gods equally, so what makes you think theyd hate one thing that they don't think exists over another thing that they don't think exists?
- ↑ [Pew Forum - U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey](#)^[↗]
- ↑ [Scientific American - In Atheists We Distrust](#)^[↗]

5. ↑ [USA Today: Atheists distrusted as much as rapists.](#)
6. ↑ [Postiveatheism.org - Can George Bush, with impunity, state that atheists should not be considered either citizens or patriots?](#)
7. ↑ [Should Evolutionists Be Allowed to Vote?](#)
8. ↑ [Erbe, Bonnie. "Arkansas, 5 Other States, Ban Atheists from Public Service. Seriously!"](#) *U.S. News & World Report* website, 17 February 2009, accessed 5 December 2009.
9. ↑ [Text of ruling](#) at FindLaw.com.
10. ↑ [Waters, David. "Atheist Revival in Arkansas"](#), *Washington Post* website, 13 February 2009, accessed 5 December 2009.
11. ↑ [BBC News - Blending politics and religion](#)

Category: Atheism

This page was last modified on 31 January 2014, at 00:25.

Unless explicitly noted otherwise, all content licensed as indicated by [RationalWiki:Copyrights](#).
For concerns on copyright infringement please see: [RationalWiki:Copyright violations](#)

[Privacy policy](#) [About RationalWiki](#) [Disclaimers](#)

