

# Poll reveals majority of Christians support secular outlook

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Results of a poll carried out by Ipsos MORI for the [Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science \(UK\)](#) show that UK Christians are overwhelmingly secular in their attitudes on a wide range of issues.

The study also reveals that Christianity has become a minority activity and even those who define themselves in the Census as Christian have very little attachment to or desire to practise their claimed faith.

The research was carried out in the week after the 2011 Census and focused on the beliefs, attitudes and practices of UK adults who say they were recorded as Christian in the 2011 Census (or would have recorded themselves as Christian had they answered the question).

The poll contradicts claims that Britain is "a Christian country".

The Church of England point out whenever they have the opportunity that 72% of people ticked the "Christian" box in the 2001 census but this new research confirms that this figure is meaningless.

People are much more likely to consider themselves to be Christian because they were christened or baptised into the religion (72%) or because their parents were members of the religion (38%) than because of personal belief.

As many as half (50%) of do not think of themselves as religious and less than a third (30%) claim to have strong religious beliefs.

The poll revealed that, on balance, significantly more Christians:

- **agree** that the law should apply equally to everyone, regardless of their religion or belief (92% v 2%)
- **oppose** religion having special influence on public policy (74% v 12%)
- **oppose** the UK having an official state religion (46% v 32%)
- **oppose** seats being reserved for Church of England bishops in the House of Lords (32% v 25%)
- **support** the costs of hospital chaplains being met by the chaplain's religious organisation rather than from NHS budgets (39% v 32%)
- **want** state-funded schools to teach *knowledge* about the world's main faiths even-handedly, rather than inculcate beliefs (57% v 15% solely Christian inculcation or 8% inculcate other school faith)
- **approve** of sexual relations between two adults of the same sex than do not (46% v 29%)

- **approve** of an adult woman's right to have an abortion within the legal time limit (62% v 20%)
- **support** the legalisation of assisted suicide in the case of terminally ill adult patients with safeguards (59% v 21%)

While Christians are more likely to support than oppose state-funded 'faith schools', this support is reduced when non-Christian schools are included. Less than half (45%) support state-funded faith schools for any religion, whether Christian or non-Christian, while just over half (53%) are in favour of state-funded schools for Christian denominations.

The current law in England and Wales requiring state schools to hold a daily act of broadly Christian worship is not strongly supported either, with almost as many Christians opposing to it (36%) as in favour (39%).

Terry Sanderson, President of the National Secular Society, said:

"These findings show the complete fallacy of recent claims by both bishops and Secretary of State for Communities, Eric Pickles MP that "[we are a Christian country](#)" in anything but a constitutional sense.

"They also confirm that church leaders are significantly misrepresenting the views of their followers in the very areas where the leaders seek the hardest to influence Government policy.

"The more the Government heeds the bench of bishops and other religious leaders on key ethical issues, the more democracy is undermined. Politicians should also take careful note that "Eight out of ten (78%) say Christianity would have no, or not very much, influence on how they vote in General Elections".

Richard Dawkins, an Honorary Associate of the National Secular Society, said:

"Britain is a secular society, with secular, humane values. There is overwhelming support for these values, even among those who think of themselves as Christian. Just as importantly, there is also deep opposition to the state promoting religion in our society. When even Christians overwhelmingly oppose the intermingling of religion and state policy, it is clearly time for the government to stop 'doing God'."

We are grateful to the Foundation for commissioning this information that exposes myths which the establishment has been rather too keen to foster.

The full findings can be found on the Richard Dawkins Foundation website.

[RDFRS UK/Ipsos MORI Poll 1: How religious are UK Christians?](#)

[RDFRS UK/Ipsos MORI Poll 2: UK Christians oppose special influence for religion in public policy](#)

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