

# Majority of public opposes places for bishops in Lords, poll finds

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A majority of the British public thinks the House of Lords should stop reserving places for Church of England bishops, a YouGov poll has found.

Fifty-three per cent of respondents to a poll published this week said the Lords [should not continue to have places for C of E bishops](#).

Just 16% said it should, with 31% saying they didn't know.

The poll also showed majorities of Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat voters, and majorities of Remain and Leave voters, [all agreed on the topic](#).

## 26 places reserved

Twenty-six places in the Lords are reserved for C of E bishops and archbishops as of right. The National Secular Society [argues for the end of this practice](#), as part of its campaigning to separate church and state.

Last year the NSS helped to draft [a bill to end C of E bishops' automatic right](#) to sit in the Lords, which was introduced by Liberal Democrat peer Dick Taverne.

In response to another YouGov poll for [The Times](#) in 2017, 62% said no religious clerics should have "an automatic right to seats". Only 8% said the bishops should retain their seats.

## NSS comment

NSS chief executive Stephen Evans said: "Giving Anglican clerics an automatic role in running the country is an unjustifiable privilege that undermines the principle of equal citizenship.

"Their proximity to political power also puts those who oppose the church's positions at a democratic disadvantage.

"Any plans to reform the House of Lords must include the abolition of the anachronistic bench of bishops. This poll suggests there would be substantial public support for that."

## Notes

- The C of E's two archbishops and 24 of its other diocesan bishops make up the 'lords spiritual' in parliament. Religious leaders have sat as the lords spiritual since the 14<sup>th</sup> century.
- Iran is the only legislature in the world other than the UK which gives unelected clerics automatic representation.

Read more: [The bishops' bench is an affront to democracy. Let's scrap it](#), by Stephen Evans

# What the NSS stands for

The Secular Charter outlines 10 principles that guide us as we campaign for a secular democracy which safeguards all citizens' rights to freedom of and from religion.

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