

Over 70% Brits don't think it's important for PM to be Christian

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The National Secular Society has called for separation of church and state as figures show Britons don't think the prime minister must be Christian.

Seventy-one per cent of British people said it was "not at all important" (49%) or "not very important" (22%) for a British prime minister to be a Christian, according to [figures](#) collected by Deltapoll last month.

Only 23% thought being a Christian was "quite important" (14%) or "very important" (9%) for a prime minister.

There is no religious qualification for a prime minister, but the UK's head of state, the monarch, [holds the title](#) "Defender of the Faith and Supreme Governor of the Church of England". Under current laws, the monarch is required to "join in communion" with the Church of England and promote Anglicanism in Britain.

Catholics are specifically excluded from becoming the monarch.

The UK is also the only democracy to have an explicitly Christian ceremony for its head of state's accession, with the monarch pledging to maintain the "laws of God" during the coronation.

The entanglement of church and state, resulting from the [established status](#) of the Church of England, has also caused problems for prime ministers. Last year, Boris Johnson was forced to [relinquish his prime ministerial role](#) of advising on the appointment of CofE bishops after apparently converting to Catholicism.

National Secular Society comment

NSS chief executive Stephen Evans said: "These latest figures showing the British public overwhelmingly don't care whether or not the prime minister is Christian should prompt a serious rethink of the privileged place of the Church in our constitution. An individual's personal religious or nonreligious beliefs shouldn't be a barrier to becoming PM or head of state.

"Laws dictating that our head of state must be a confirmed member of the Church of England are clearly discriminatory and ridiculous in one of the least religious and most religiously diverse countries in the world.

"More broadly, maintaining an established church makes little sense in modern Britain and causes unnecessary tension, complexity and unfairness. Disestablishment is long overdue."

Hat tip to Clive Field's [Counting Religion in Britain blog](#) for the statistics.

[Image: Sergeant Tom Robinson RLC, OGL v1.0OGL v1.0, via Wikimedia Commons](#)

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