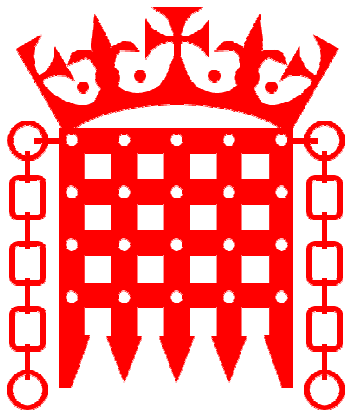




The Future of the Bishops in the House of Lords

Findings of the ComRes Peers Panel Survey



January 2009



Methodology

ComRes surveyed 101 Peers on the ComRes Peers Panel between 19th November and 8th December 2008 by self-completion postal questionnaire. Data were weighted to reflect the exact composition of the House of Lords in terms of party representation.

ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules (www.britishpollingcouncil.org). This commits us to the highest standards of transparency.

The BPC's rules state that all data and research findings made on the basis of surveys conducted by member organisations that enter the public domain, must include reference to the following:

- The company conducting the research (ComRes)
- The client commissioning the survey
- Dates of interviewing
- Method of obtaining the interviews (e.g. in-person, post, telephone, internet)
- The universe effectively represented (all adults, voters etc)
- The percentages upon which conclusions are based
- Size of the sample and geographic coverage.

Published references (such as a press release) should also show a web address where full data tables may be viewed, and they should also show the complete wording of questions upon which any data that has entered the public domain are based.

All press releases or other publications must be checked with ComRes before use. ComRes requires 48 hours to check a press release unless otherwise agreed.

Executive Summary

Most Peers (55%) are not satisfied with the status quo and think that there should be changes to the current membership.

Just over a third (34%) of Peers say that Bishops should only be sitting in the House of Lords if representatives of other denominations are allowed the same right.

Just under a quarter (22%) say that there should not be any representation in the House of Lords on the basis of faith and 18% say that Bishops should only be able to sit in the House of Lords if other faiths are represented as well.

45% say that there should not be any changes made to the current membership.

Turning to a breakdown of answers according to party affiliation it becomes apparent that

- Conservatives overwhelmingly are of the opinion that changes to the membership status are unnecessary, with almost three quarters (73%) saying so
- Labour Peers predominantly (49%) say that there should not be any faith based representation in the Upper House
- Liberal Democrat Peers agree with their Labour colleagues that there should not be any faith based representation in the Upper House; 52% answer in this way
- Turning to Crossbench Peers, more than half (57%) are in favour of retaining the current membership

1. Do you agree or disagree with each of these statements about the presence of Bishops in the House of Lords?

Agree/Disagree/No opinion

- There should be no change in the membership arrangements for the Lords Spiritual
- Anglican Bishops should be allowed to sit in the Lords but only if senior representatives of other faiths are admitted as well
- Anglican Bishops should be allowed to sit in the Lords but only if senior representatives of other Christian denominations are admitted as well
- There should not be any representation in the Lords on the basis of faith

Peers were asked about their preferences about the future of the Bishops in the House of Lords, which will be an important part of the impending reform of the Upper House.

1.1 Results for all Peers

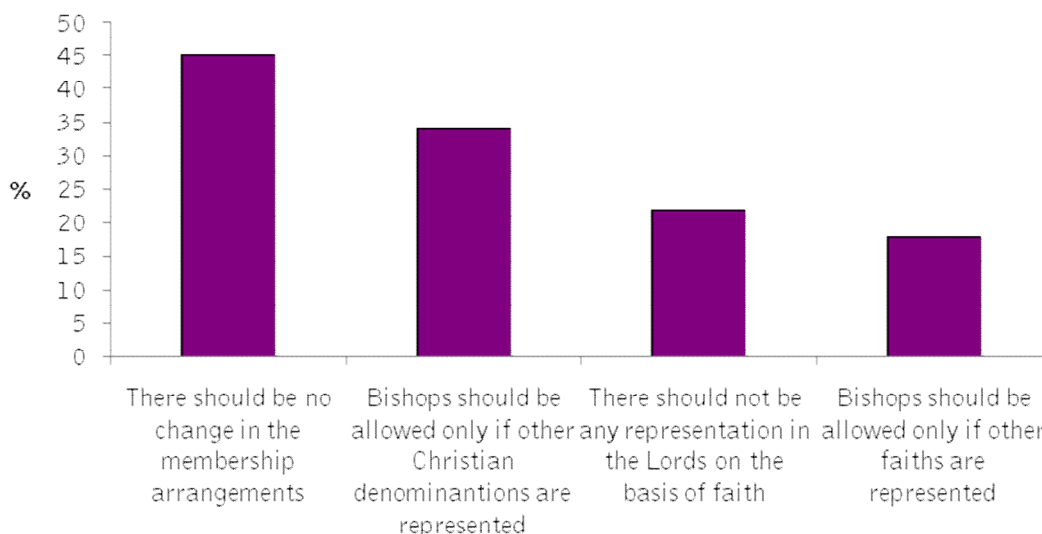


Fig. 1.1 Agreement with various statements about the future of the Bishops in the HoL
Base: all Peers

45% of all Peers are satisfied with the status quo and do not think that there should be any changes to the current membership. Just over a third (34%) of all Peers think that Bishops should only be sitting in the House of Lords if representatives of other denominations are allowed the same right. Just under a quarter (22%) say that there should not be any representation in the House of Lords on the basis of faith and 18% say that Bishops should only be able to sit in the House of Lords if other faiths are represented as well.

1.2 Results for Peers by Party Affiliation

The chart below shows the levels of agreements with the four statements about the position of the Bishops in the House of Lords split by party affiliation.

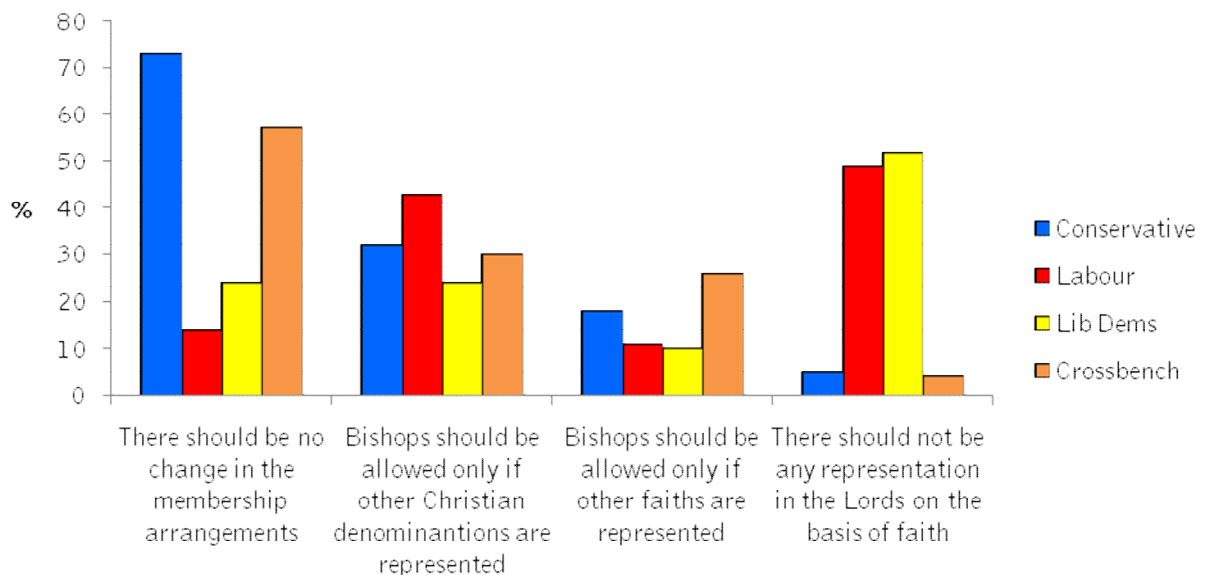


Fig. 1.1 Agreement with various statements about the future of the Bishops in the HoL
Base: Peers by party affiliation

From this research it becomes clear that Conservatives overwhelmingly are of the opinion that changes to the membership status are unnecessary, with almost three quarters (73%) saying so. Almost a third (32%) would only see the Church of England represented if other Christian denominations are and 18% if other faiths are. Just 5% of all Conservative Peers say that they would not like to see any faith based representation.

Labour Peers predominantly (49%) say that there should not be any faith based representation in the Upper House. 43% take the view that the Church of England should only be represented if other Christian denominations are granted the same right, and 11% say that Bishops should be allowed to sit only if representatives from other faith are. 14% are satisfied with the status quo.

Liberal Democrat Peers agree with their Labour colleagues that there should not be any faith based representation in the Upper House, 52% answer in this way. 24% say that Bishops should only be present if members of other Christian denominations are allowed to sit in the House of Lords. The same proportion (24%) are satisfied with the status quo and only 10% would only see Bishops represented if members of other faiths are.

Turning to Crossbench Peers, more than half (57%) are in favour of retaining the current membership. 30% say that they would like to see Bishops represented together with representatives from other Christian denominations. Slightly fewer (26%) would like to see Bishops and representatives of other faiths represented and just 4% say that they would opt



for no faith based representation in the House of Lords.

2. Further comments on the role of the Lords Spiritual

Peers were asked an open-ended question to allow them to state their individual views on the role of the Bishops in the House of Lords.

Topics cited by Peers range from the actual impact of the Lords Spiritual on legislation passing through the House of Lords, to the benefits and problems of representation of other faiths and denominations, to the numerical scale of representation of the Church of England in the House of Lords.

Here follows the list of verbatim comments split by party affiliation.

Comments made by Conservative Peers:

There can be no modern justification for so many Bishops in the House of Lords
Although sometimes individually talking awful nonsense, collectively make an important contribution
They make highly sensible contributions but should not be here at all
The number of Bishops should be reduced. I happen to know that Cardinal Hume was offered a life peerage but the Pope told him he could not accept. We already have Rabbis, Methodist ministers and Muslims in the Lords. To have Roman Catholic clerics in the house would require disestablishment of the Anglican Church

Comments made by Labour Peers:

There is nothing to prevent the PM appointing representatives of other faiths to sit in the Lords - they would not sit as of right - but would be present. We have had a former Chief Rabbi. If they sat as of right there would be difficulties in some instances in deciding who represented the particular faith
I am relaxed about the presence of Bishops in the present house. Provided that the house remains appointed, they should remain. This is another reason for not moving towards a wholly or partially elected house
There should be no reserved seats for Bishops
The Bishops do no harm and from time to time good. I speak as a lapsed Presbyterian. The others would be no better nor no worse
Roman Catholic Bishops would be a problem - history would be repeating itself! Their first loyalty would be to the Vatican state and not the United Kingdom!
The above comments do not detract from the very positive use the Bishops make of their existing rights to sit and speak

The current Bishops Bench is now intellectually much poorer than a decade ago. Also, there is no case for membership on religious grounds in parliament. I am an active communicant Anglican
It is time to disestablish the Church of England
I regret that they do not speak and vote more often. I would be happy to see leaders of other faiths in the house
In the event of no progress on the issue on which I agree then the last option would be my next best preference
I would wish the present membership arrangements for Anglican Bishops to continue with appointments made to the House of Lords from other denominations and faiths, in greater numbers than at present
Much depends over what time scale
Bishops sat in the medieval House of Lords as major feudal landlords, employers etc, not as "spiritual" representatives we all should be the conscience of the nation!
In practice they do not have much influence over legislation except on specialist issues

Comments made by Liberal Democrat Peers:

No single individual can represent an entire faith of whatever denomination. It would be preferable to have nominated representatives of the Catholic faith putting forward policies of the church whilst claiming to be independent
Continue Lords Spiritual with reduced numbers as of right
As an atheist I deplore some religious views but whilst there are faith communities in the UK they are entitled to have their views represented
My answers depend on the continuation of the Church of England as the established church
Status quo is the best option in a fraught field
If faiths are represented it should be a wide variety, including humanists
There should be fewer Anglican Bishops and all other major faiths should be represented



Comments made by Crossbench Peers:

Individual leaders of all faiths should be considered
The play a useful part, and should be selected on their personal capacity and abilities
But useful if modest number of appointments and beyond Anglican Bishops
I would prefer that appointments are based on knowledge about faith - and should not be restricted to representatives of faith
24 places are in the gift of the synod. Of justified at one time it is now out of date. I favour fewer than 26 (2) allocated amongst all faiths on an agreed basic proportion
Any change in the present arrangements would entail disestablishment of the Church of England. At present the Bishops provide a useful regional representation, a wide-ranging concern for their regions, an intimate knowledge of people at many different social levels, and a coherent moral framework rooted in history
They should refrain from commenting on overtly political matters
If the Church of England was disestablished my view would be different: then I would agree that faith(s) should not be represented
As I am a Bishop, I was reluctant to give any response to the above



3. Research through the ComRes Peers and MPs Panels

The ComRes Parliamentary Panels give organisations the opportunity to assess what policy makers across all parties think about a variety of issues. The results can inform an internal campaign strategy or serve as a useful benchmark in tracking policy makers' perceptions of organisations. They can also add considerable strength to media coverage when taken into the public domain.

3.1 The Panels

The survey is conducted using a self-completion questionnaire, which can be filled in on paper or online. We believe that this is the most accurate methodology which is capable of capturing legislators' opinions as truthfully as possible. It gives them the privacy to express their opinions, which for example a face-to-face approach cannot afford.

The next wave of the ComRes Peers Panel is scheduled for June 2009. The MP Panel runs in April, May, June, October and November 2009.

ComRes takes pride in offering a full question consultation and analysis service.



Full Data Tables

PEERS PANEL SURVEY - NOVEMBER 2008

Table 8/1

Question 4: Do you agree or disagree with each of these statements about the presence of Bishops in the House of Lords?

There should be no change in the membership arrangements for the Lords Spiritual

Base: All respondents

	PARTY				DATE OF BIRTH				LENGTH OF SERVICE					GENDER		
	Cons	Lab	Lib Dems	Other/ Cross- bench	Pre- 1940	1940- 1949	1950- 1959	1960+	1960 or before	1960- 1979	1980- 1994	1995- 2004	2005- 2007	Male	Female	
Unweighted Total	101	22	35	21	23	53	33	13	2	4	8	24	56	9	73	28
Weighted Total	101	29	30	10	31	54	34	12	1	5	9	27	50	9	74	27
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Agree	46	21	4	2	18	25	14	7	*	3	5	15	18	4	38	8
	45%	73%	14%	24%	57%	45%	41%	57%	50%	55%	60%	55%	37%	43%	51%	29%
Disagree	44	4	22	8	11	23	16	5	*	2	3	8	26	5	29	15
	44%	14%	71%	76%	35%	42%	46%	43%	50%	45%	30%	27%	53%	57%	39%	56%
No opinion	11	4	4	-	3	7	4	-	-	-	1	5	5	-	7	4
	11%	14%	14%	-	9%	12%	13%	-	-	-	10%	18%	11%	-	10%	15%

PEERS PANEL SURVEY - NOVEMBER 2008

Table 9/1

Question 4: Do you agree or disagree with each of these statements about the presence of Bishops in the House of Lords?

Anglican Bishops should be allowed to sit in the Lords but only if senior representatives of other Christian denominations are admitted as well

Base: All respondents

	Total	PARTY				DATE OF BIRTH				LENGTH OF SERVICE					GENDER	
		Cons	Lab	Lib Dems	Other/ Cross-bench	Pre-1940	1940-1949	1950-1959	1960+	1960 or before	1960-1979	1980-1994	1995-2004	2005-2007	Male	Female
Unweighted Total	101	22	35	21	23	53	33	13	2	4	8	24	56	9	73	28
Weighted Total	101	29	30	10	31	54	34	12	1	5	9	27	50	9	74	27
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Agree	34	9	13	2	10	20	9	5	-	1	2	9	18	4	23	11
	34%	32%	43%	24%	30%	37%	28%	42%	-	28%	25%	32%	36%	37%	31%	41%
Disagree	48	15	12	6	15	21	21	5	*	4	3	15	22	5	39	9
	48%	50%	40%	62%	48%	39%	62%	46%	50%	72%	36%	53%	44%	48%	52%	34%
No opinion	19	5	5	1	7	13	4	1	*	-	4	4	10	1	12	7
	19%	18%	17%	14%	22%	25%	11%	12%	50%	-	40%	15%	20%	14%	16%	25%

PEERS PANEL SURVEY - NOVEMBER 2008

Table 10/1

Question 4: Do you agree or disagree with each of these statements about the presence of Bishops in the House of Lords?

Anglican Bishops should be allowed to sit in the Lords but only if senior representatives of other faiths are admitted as well

Base: All respondents

	Total	PARTY				DATE OF BIRTH				LENGTH OF SERVICE					GENDER	
		Cons	Lab	Lib Dems	Other/ Cross-bench	Pre-1940	1940-1949	1950-1959	1960+	1960 or before	1960-1979	1980-1994	1995-2004	2005-2007	Male	Female
Unweighted Total	101	22	35	21	23	53	33	13	2	4	8	24	56	9	73	28
Weighted Total	101	29	30	10	31	54	34	12	1	5	9	27	50	9	74	27
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Agree	18	5	3	1	8	11	5	2	-	1	-	5	9	3	13	5
	18%	18%	11%	10%	26%	20%	16%	15%	-	28%	-	19%	17%	28%	18%	18%
Disagree	52	15	15	7	16	24	22	5	*	4	4	13	27	5	39	13
	52%	50%	49%	67%	52%	44%	66%	46%	50%	72%	45%	47%	54%	48%	53%	49%
No opinion	31	9	12	2	7	19	6	5	*	-	5	9	14	2	22	9
	30%	32%	40%	24%	22%	36%	18%	38%	50%	-	55%	34%	28%	23%	29%	33%

PEERS PANEL SURVEY - NOVEMBER 2008

Table 11/1

Question 4: Do you agree or disagree with each of these statements about the presence of Bishops in the House of Lords?

There should not be any representation in the Lords on the basis of faith

Base: All respondents

	PARTY				DATE OF BIRTH				LENGTH OF SERVICE					GENDER		
	Cons	Lab	Lib Dems	Other/ Cross- bench	Pre- 1940	1940- 1949	1950- 1959	1960+	1960 or before	1960- 1979	1980- 1994	1995- 2004	2005- 2007	Male	Female	
Unweighted Total	101	22	35	21	23	53	33	13	2	4	8	24	56	9	73	28
Weighted Total	101	29	30	10	31	54	34	12	1	5	9	27	50	9	74	27
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Agree	23	1	15	5	1	14	7	2	*	1	2	4	14	2	16	7
	22%	5%	49%	52%	4%	25%	20%	16%	50%	18%	21%	16%	27%	19%	21%	26%
Disagree	54	20	10	4	20	25	20	9	*	4	5	12	27	5	42	12
	53%	68%	31%	38%	65%	45%	58%	76%	50%	82%	55%	45%	55%	52%	57%	43%
No opinion	25	8	6	1	10	16	8	1	-	-	2	11	9	3	16	9
	24%	27%	20%	10%	30%	30%	23%	7%	-	-	25%	39%	18%	29%	22%	31%