



HOUSE OF LORDS

# Library Note

## **Public Attitudes Towards the House of Lords and House of Lords Reform**

This Library Note provides information on public attitudes towards the House of Lords, and reform of the House, using the findings of various opinion polls. These have been conducted at intervals using different questions and samples, and therefore can offer only a partial account of what people think about the House of Lords. Nevertheless, taken together, they do suggest that Lords reform and constitutional questions generally are not as salient as other political issues, such as managing the economy, crime, and so on. There is also perhaps some contradictory evidence in how people view reform of the House, with some value placed on the independence offered by a House composed of appointed members, with value also placed on the democratic legitimacy conferred by elections if the House were to be reformed in this way.

Ian Cruse  
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Any comments on Library Notes should be sent to the Head of Research Services, House of Lords Library, London SW1A 0PW or emailed to [brocklehursta@parliament.uk](mailto:brocklehursta@parliament.uk).

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## **1. Introduction**

The purpose of this Library Note is to set out the results of some of the key surveys of public opinion regarding the House of Lords and its reform, including responses to questions on specific issues, such as its composition, role, functions and powers. The Note first places these surveys on the House of Lords within the context of wider research which has sought to understand how the public views political institutions and political issues, in terms of their salience and levels of understanding of them. It also notes how interested the public are generally in politics. This provides a backdrop to the later sections. The Note then briefly considers polling data on the Lords before the House of Lords Act 1999, when the House was largely composed of hereditary Peers, before moving to cover in greater detail polls after that reform. As far as possible, the tables containing polling data are reproduced as published, showing the exact wording of questions asked, although in a number of tables emphasis has been added to highlight those questions specifically addressing the House of Lords rather than other constitutional and political issues.

## **2. Salience of House of Lords Reform and Constitutional Issues**

Opinion polls have often sought to find the importance that respondents assign to issues. The *Audit of Political Engagement*, which has been published by the Hansard Society every year since 2004, included such a question in its Fourth Audit (2007). It gave respondents a list of local, national and international issues and asked whether they had discussed them with friends or family over the past year or so. Out of a list of 17 issues, reform of the House of Lords was the least mentioned issue, with only nine percent of respondents having talked about it. Respondents highlighted other issues such as crime or anti-social behaviour (69 percent of respondents), Iraq (69 percent), terrorism in the UK (66 percent), the quality of health services (65 percent), immigration/asylum (64 percent), council tax (59 percent), climate change/environmental issues (57 percent) and educational issues (54 percent).<sup>i</sup>

Ipsos MORI has collected time series data which draws on questions that have asked respondents which issues they think will be “very important” in helping them to decide which party to vote for.<sup>ii</sup> Though reform of the House of Lords has not been specifically mentioned in these surveys, respondents have been asked to think about the importance of “constitution/devolution” issues amongst a range of others, such as education, immigration, health, managing the economy, taxation and unemployment. Between 1995 and 2007, these surveys found that between 5 percent and 10 percent of respondents identified “constitution/devolution” issues as “very important”, while between 2008 and 2010, such surveys indicated that on average only 1 percent of respondents thought them “very important”. Other issues ranked much higher. For instance, education and health issues tended to be highlighted by more than half of respondents, while law and order and managing the economy were seen by between a third and a half of respondents as being “very important”. Constitution/devolution issues also rated relatively poorly with around 1 percent of respondents when Ipsos MORI asked what they saw as the most important issues facing the country.<sup>iii</sup>

## **3. Public Knowledge about the House of Lords, Parliament and Politics**

Public knowledge about the House of Lords and other political institutions has largely been measured in two ways: either through self-reported knowledge or by way of a simple test. In terms of self-reported knowledge about the House of Lords, this has been gauged on several occasions. For example, in 1991, 1995 and 1998 Ipsos MORI asked a question which seemed to suggest that self-reported knowledge had declined over the 1990s. In 1995, 22 percent of respondents claimed to know a lot or a fair bit about the

House of Lords, while 76 percent claimed to know not much or nothing at all; by 1998 16 percent claimed to know a lot or a fair bit about the Lords, while 81 percent claimed to know not much or nothing at all.<sup>iv</sup> More recently, in a poll commissioned by UCL's Constitution Unit in 2007, a question was asked about knowledge of both Houses of Parliament:<sup>v</sup>

<b>As you probably know, Parliament consists of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. How well do you feel you know how they work?</b>		
	House of Commons	House of Lords
Very well	9%	5%
Fairly well	47%	33%
Not very well	23%	34%
Not at all well	15%	22%
Don't know	6%	7%

The *Audit of Political Engagement* has also asked a number of questions over the last ten years that have sought to track public understanding of political institutions and politics. The Fifth Audit (2008), for instance, asked 1,073 respondents what they thought they knew about a number of political issues including Lords reform.<sup>vi</sup>

<b>And how well, if at all, do you feel you understand each of the following issues?</b>						
	Understand this issue very well	Understand this issue fairly well	Do not understand this issue very well	Do not understand this issue at all	Never heard of this issue	Don't know
How votes cast in a General Election translate into seats in the House of Commons	15%	34%	19%	22%	7%	2%
Whether Britain needs a new Bill of Rights	5%	23%	30%	23%	15%	5%
<b>Proposed reforms of the membership of the House of Lords</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>2%</b>
Whether only English MPs should vote on English issues in the House of Commons	14%	34%	22%	17%	10%	4%
How the Human Rights Act works in practice	5%	29%	33%	24%	6%	3%
The powers that Government can currently exercise without Parliament's approval	3%	19%	33%	31%	11%	3%
Lowering the age at which people are eligible to vote in a UK General Election from 18 to 16	12%	36%	19%	15%	15%	3%
How political parties are funded	7%	32%	30%	23%	5%	3%
How the date of a General Election is chosen	9%	29%	24%	28%	8%	3%

Arguably, this data illustrates that knowledge about the House of Lords and political issues more generally is fairly low, as perceived by respondents themselves. This polling evidence accords with a number of other surveys. For example, in 2007, Ipsos MORI asked respondents what they thought they knew about the “constitutional arrangements governing Britain”.<sup>vii</sup> In reply: 2 percent said they knew “a great deal”; 18 percent “a fair amount”; 29 percent “just a little”; 35 percent “hardly anything at all”; 13 percent “had never heard of it”; and 2 percent “did not know”. This poll was broadly in-line with similar questions asked in 1991 and 1995 about what respondents knew about the British constitution.<sup>viii</sup> Ipsos MORI has also asked a number of questions between 1991 and 2010 which have sought to capture what respondents think they know about Parliament, the role of MPs and politics more generally.<sup>ix</sup>

<b>How much, if anything, do you feel you know about the way Parliament works?</b>						
	A great deal	A fair amount	Not very much	Hardly anything at all	Never heard of it	Don't know
March 1991	3%	34%	36%	25%	1%	1%
April/May 1995	4%	28%	37%	28%	1%	2%
July 1998	7%	29%	33%	31%	*	*
May 2001	8%	36%	30%	23%	3%	0%

<b>How much, if anything, do you feel you know about the Westminster Parliament?</b>					
	A great deal	A fair amount	Not very much	Nothing at all	Don't Know
December 2003	3%	30%	50%	17%	1%
November 2006	4%	34%	46%	14%	1%
October 2007	4%	31%	42%	20%	2%
November 2009	5%	33%	47%	15%	1%
December 2010	5%	39%	43%	13%	*

<b>How much, if anything, do you feel you know about the role of MPs?</b>					
	A great deal	A fair amount	Not very much	Nothing at all	Don't Know
December 2003	4%	41%	42%	13%	1%
November 2006	5%	42%	41%	11%	1%
November 2009	6%	44%	40%	9%	1%

<b>How much, if anything, do you feel you know about politics?</b>					
	A great deal	A fair amount	Not very much	Nothing at all	Don't Know
December 2003	3%	39%	45%	12%	1%
December 2004	4%	41%	44%	10%	*
December 2005	4%	35%	51%	9%	*
November 2006	6%	43%	40%	11%	*
Nov/Dec 2007	4%	40%	43%	12%	*
December 2008	5%	43%	42%	9%	1%
November 2009	6%	45%	40%	9%	*
December 2010	7%	46%	36%	11%	*

As mentioned above, another method of assessing political knowledge has been the use of simple tests. Several of the *Audits of Political Engagement* have contained tests on political knowledge, including questions on the House of Lords.

The First Audit (2004) found:<sup>x</sup>

Please tell me if you think the following statements are true or false. If you don't know just say so and we will move onto the next question.			
	True	False	Don't know
Members of the European Parliament are directly elected by voters like you and me [True]	49%	32%	19%
Not all members of the Cabinet are MPs [True]	39%	39%	22%
The European Union consists of 12 member states [False]	38%	30%	33%
<b>The House of Commons has more power than the House of Lords</b> [True]	49%	30%	22%
There has to be a general election every 4 years [False]	65%	27%	8%
You can only vote in a local election if you pay council tax [False]	19%	67%	14%
Local councils have the power to set the school leaving age in their own area [False]	8%	74%	17%

The Fourth Audit (2007) found:<sup>xi</sup>

Please tell me if you think the following statements are true or false. If you don't know just say so and we will move onto the next question.			
	True	False	Don't know
The Cabinet is usually made up of around five government ministers [False]	15%	51%	33%
Members of the European Parliament are directly elected by voters like you and me [True]	50%	27%	23%
The Prime Minister is not an MP [False]	13%	75%	12%
<b>The House of Commons has more power than the House of Lords</b> [True]	44%	32%	24%
Every problem a constituent takes to an MP will be debated in the House of Commons [False]	8%	77%	15%
The minimum age for voting at a general election is 16 [False]	14%	79%	7%
Local councils have the power to set the school leaving age in their own area [False]	7%	76%	17%
You are automatically registered to vote if you pay council tax [False]	21%	64%	15%

The Seventh Audit (2010) found:<sup>xii</sup>

Please tell me if you think the following statements are true or false. If you don't know just say so and we will move onto the next question.			
	True	False	Don't know
Cabinet ministers stop being MPs when they become a minister [False]	12%	60%	29%
British members of the European Parliament are directly elected by British voters every five years [True]	56%	19%	25%
<b>Members of the House of Lords are elected by the British public</b> [False]	12%	74%	14%
MPs can raise problems their constituents are having in the House of Commons [True]	80%	8%	11%
Most of the money that local councils spend is raised locally, through council tax [False]	48%	36%	16%
Government and Parliament are the same thing [False]	28%	63%	9%
Political parties have to declare publicly where they receive their money and donations from [True]	73%	16%	12%
You are automatically registered to vote if you pay council tax [False]	25%	62%	13%
The minimum age for voting at a general election is 16 [False]	13%	83%	4%



#### 4. The Public's Interest in Politics

Ipsos MORI has regularly tracked the public's interest in politics since the 1970s:<sup>xiii</sup>

How interested would you say you are in politics?					
	Very interested	Fairly interested	Not very interested	Not at all interested	Don't Know
1973	14	46	27	13	1
7–25 March 1991	13	47	26	13	*
21 April–8 May 1995	13	40	30	17	*
2–3 April 1997	15	44	29	11	*
9–15 May 2001	14	45	29	11	1
6–17 December 2003	11	39	32	18	0
2–21 December 2004	13	40	28	19	*
7–11 April 2005	16	45	28	11	*
1–5 December 2005	13	43	30	14	*
23–28 November 2006	13	41	27	19	*
29 November–7 December 2007	13	38	28	19	1
11–17 December 2008	12	40	30	17	*
13–19 November 2009	14	39	29	18	1
3–9 December 2010	16	42	26	17	*

Similar responses were also found by the British Social Attitudes Survey (BSAS), an annual survey started in 1983 to gauge the British public's changing attitudes towards social, economic, political and moral issues. It asked respondents between 1986 and 2009 how much interest they generally had in what was going on in politics; on average 30 percent answered not much or none at all, with roughly another 30 percent indicating they had some interest and 30 percent either quite a lot or a great deal.<sup>xiv</sup>

#### 5. Polling Data before the House of Lords Act 1999

Before the passing of the House of Lords Act 1999, when the House of Lords was composed largely of hereditary Peers, a number of surveys had taken place concerning the House of Lords and its reform. Gallup, for instance, asked respondents in 1968 and 1976 whether it was a "good idea" or a "bad idea" to abolish the House of Lords. In 1968, 35 percent thought it a good idea and 41 percent a bad idea (24 percent did not know); in 1976, 31 percent thought it a good idea and 47 percent a bad idea (22 percent did not know).<sup>xv</sup> Ipsos MORI had also asked several questions.<sup>xvi</sup> In 1977 it asked whether the House should be abolished; 27 percent agreed and 54 percent disagreed. In 1991, 1995 and 1997 it asked whether the then House should be elected, which saw respective net support for this proposition fluctuate between +11 percent, +19 percent and +15 percent. In 1998, Ipsos MORI asked whether the then House should be replaced with a series of options: 20 percent wanted to "keep things as they are"; 23 percent wanted to "replace the House of Lords with a new second chamber partly elected by the public and partly nominated by the Government"; 24 percent wanted to "replace the House of Lords with a new second chamber entirely elected by the public"; 13 percent wanted "to remove all hereditary Peers with all new Peers nominated by the Government"; 12 percent wanted to "abolish the House of Lords altogether" and 8 percent did "not know".<sup>xvii</sup> The BSAS also asked questions over the 1980s and 1990s. For example, in 1983, 1994, 1996 and

1998 it had asked whether the Lords should be replaced “by a different body, abolished and replaced by nothing, or should there be some other kind of change”:

	1983	1994	1996	1998
Different body	28.47%	18.02%	21.77%	20.91%
Abolish	23.09%	16.23%	15.07%	16.98%
Other change	47.57%	41.40%	39.59%	44.11%
Don't know	0.00%	2.61%	2.87%	2.92%
Not answered	0.87%	21.73%	20.69%	15.08%
Sample size	576	727	836	789

Extracted from the British Social Attitudes Survey Database (<http://www.britsocat.com/Home>)

Similarly, in 1983, 1994, 1996 and 1998 it asked respondents whether they thought that “the House of Lords should remain as it is or is some change needed?”:

	1983	1994	1996	1998	1999
Remain as is	57.42%	36.23%	28.69%	23.12%	27.20%
Change needed	33.57%	49.91%	56.62%	65.27%	64.17%
Don't know	8.32%	13.86%	14.26%	11.12%	8.44%
Not answered	0.70%	0.00%	0.43%	0.49%	0.19%
Sample size	1,719	1,140	1,171	1,025	1,066

Extracted from the British Social Attitudes Survey Database (<http://www.britsocat.com/Home>)

## 6. Polling Data after the House of Lords Act 1999

Public opinion polls regarding the House of Lords have continued since the House of Lords Act 1999, when all but 92 of the hereditary Peers were removed. Polling data, with a few exceptions (see below), has tended to be gathered on an ad hoc basis and often as the result of research commissioned for particular reasons, often connected to the ongoing debates surrounding Lords reform or specific developments affecting the House. The following section contains a selection of polls conducted over the past ten years. Please note that for reasons of brevity only the topline findings are included and that breakdowns in terms of gender, social class, geographical region etc. are omitted. More detailed analysis can be found by following the links at the end of this Note.

### 6.1 Time Series Data

One of the difficulties of tracking the public's view of the House of Lords and its possible reform has been the relative lack of data based on the same questions being asked over time. There are a few exceptions to this. For instance, the British Social Attitudes Survey, following its work in the 1980s and 1990s (see above), has asked the same question about Lords reform several times since 2000.<sup>xviii</sup>

<b>About the House of Lords. Which of these statements comes closest to your view about what should happen to the House of Lords</b>				
	2000	2002	2005	2007
All or most of its members should be appointed	5.41%	4.82%	7.01%	7.16%
All or most elected	28.87%	30.87%	26.23%	27.82%
Appoint and elect equally	32.49%	35.03%	35.32%	40.12%
It should be abolished	20.93%	18.30%	17.90%	13.21%
Don't know	11.99%	10.77%	13.45%	11.59%
Not answered	0.31%	0.22%	0.09%	0.10%
Sample size	2,293	2,284	1,056	992

Extracted from the British Social Attitudes Survey Database (<http://www.britsocat.com/Home>)

## 6.2 Ad Hoc Surveys

### 6.2.1 December 2001: ICM Survey on Lords Reform

In December 2001, ICM Research surveyed 1,000 people and asked a series of questions about House of Lords reform.<sup>xix</sup> The tabulated results are set out below:

<b>In your view, which of these proposals, if any, is the best course for the future of a new second chamber?</b>	
Replace the existing House of Lords with a second chamber with a majority of elected members and a minority of appointed members	27%
Replace the existing House of Lords with an elected second chamber	27%
Replace the existing House of Lords with a second chamber with a majority of appointed members and a minority of elected members	14%
Replace the existing House of Lords with an appointed second chamber	9%
Don't know	24%

<b>Out of the following situations, which do you think would give a reformed House of Lords most right to block government legislation?</b>	
If the reformed House of Lords were wholly elected	27%
If it were mostly elected with a minority of appointed members	22%
If it were wholly appointed	18%
If it were mostly appointed with a minority of elected members	11%
Don't know	23%

<b>In helping to make and improve new laws, what powers do you think the second chamber should have to make the government think again when it objects to a new law?</b>	
The power to delay a new law for a few months	21%
The power to delay a new law for a year	14%
The power to delay a new law for two years	5%
The power to hold up a new law indefinitely until the two Houses of Parliament can reach agreement	52%
Don't know	9%

<b>Some people say the new second chamber should have extra powers of delay where it feels that a proposed law would endanger human rights. Do you agree or disagree?</b>	
Agree	63%
Disagree	27%
Don't know	10%

<b>When it comes to making new laws in the second chamber, whose views do you think should be considered more important?</b>	
<b>The views of eminent people who have a special knowledge or expertise, or the views of elected representatives of ordinary people?</b>	
Eminent people	43%
Elected representatives	49%
Neither of them	1%
Don't know	5%

<b>If there are to be appointed members, who do you think should have the final say on who is appointed or not?</b>	
The Prime Minister of the day	12%
An Appointments Commission entirely independent of the government and political parties	83%
Don't know	5%

<b>One proposal that the government is actively considering is that the PM should decide on the great majority of appointments to a reformed second house and an independent commission should appoint a minority. Are you in favour or against this proposal?</b>	
In favour	26%
Against	59%
Don't know	15%

### 6.2.2 January 2003: YouGov

In January 2003, YouGov published research that had been commissioned by Charter 88, which asked 2,018 respondents a number of questions about possible Lords reform:<sup>xx</sup>

<b>Whatever system is used to choose members of the House of Lords in future, which of these would you most like...?</b>	
The reformed House of Lords should consist mostly of representatives of the main political parties	10%
The reformed House of Lords should consist of roughly equal numbers of representatives of the main political parties and non-party-political people	48%
The reformed House of Lords should consist mostly of non-party-political people	32%
Don't know	10%

<b>Which of the following options do you favour MOST for a reformed House of Lords (Second Chamber)? It should be ...</b>	
Fully elected	33%
Majority elected	22%
50/50	28%
Majority appointed	5%
Don't know	10%

<b>If it is decided that at least some members of the House of Lords should be elected, do you think they should be elected by the same "first-past-the-post" system that is used to elect MPs to the House of Commons, or by "proportional representation", so that the number of members that each party has in the House of Lords is proportional to the number of votes it secures in the election?</b>	
First-past-the-post	23%
Proportional Representation	65%
Don't Know	11%

<b>If it is decided that at least some members of the House of Lords should continue to be appointed, would you support or oppose the appointed members including... (please tick ALL those you would like to see included):</b>	
Senior bishops from the Church of England	37%
Senior representatives of other Christian groups	36%
Senior representatives of other religions	34%
Senior judges ("Law lords")	56%
Senior business leaders	60%
Senior trade union leaders	51%
Senior writers, composers, artists, theatre and film directors etc	38%
Senior academics	63%

### 6.2.3 April 2006: Populus

In April 2006, Populus published the results of polling conducted for *The Times*, which included several questions on the House of Lords:<sup>.xxi</sup>

<b>The main political parties are currently debating further reform of the House of Lords. Please say whether you agree or disagree with ...</b>				
	Agree	Disagree	Refused	Don't Know
It is important to have a strong House of Lords to serve as a check on the House of Commons and the Government	78%	17%	3%	5%
It is right that the House of Commons can ultimately overrule the House of Lords because the Commons is elected and the Lords is not	62%	28%	3%	9%
The House of Lords should remain a mainly appointed house because this gives it a degree of independence from electoral politics and allows people with a broad range of experience and expertise to be involved in the law-making process	75%	19%	1%	6%
At least half of the members of the House of Lords should be elected so that the upper chamber of Parliament has democratic legitimacy	72%	21%	1%	7%
If both Houses of Parliament were elected it would become much harder for governments to get things done since both Houses could claim democratic legitimacy and neither would be willing to back down, bringing the risk of frequent stalemate	56%	33%	<1%	10%
Base = 1,503				

### 6.2.4 January 2007: YouGov

In January 2007, YouGov published the results of an omnibus survey which included a question on the House of Lords in the wake of the 'cash-for-honours scandal'.<sup>.xxii</sup>

<b>In the wake of what some people have described as the 'cash-for-honours scandal', should the House of Lords be ...</b>	
Abolished altogether—all Parliamentary decisions should be made by the House of Commons alone	13%
Reformed completely, so that it is largely or wholly elected by the general public	56%
Left broadly as it is, with its members largely appointed rather than elected	16%
Don't know	15%

### 6.2.5 January 2007: ICM for the Power Inquiry

ICM was commissioned in January 2007 by the Power Inquiry to include a question in one of its omnibus surveys about who was best placed to decide on the future of the House of Lords.<sup>.xxiii</sup>

<b>When it comes to deciding on the future of the House of Lords (how members should be elected or selected etc) some have suggested that politicians should decide, others that civil servants should decide, while others think that a group of ordinary voters should decide, selected as a jury to hear the evidence and come to a decision. Which do you think would take the right decisions in the long term interests of the country?</b>	
A jury of the general public	68%
Elected politicians	17%
Civil servants	9%
None of these	1%
Don't know	4%
Base = 1,007	

### 6.2.6 February 2007: YouGov

In February 2007, YouGov published survey data concerning the views of 2,437 respondents on a range of issues connected with the Church of England, including a question on the Bishops' presence in the House of Lords.<sup>.xxiv</sup>

<b>The Church of England is the Established Church with the Queen as its head and some of its Bishops sit in the House of Lords. Is this...</b>	
A good thing	28%
A bad thing	17%
A matter of indifference to me	46%
Don't Know	9%

### 6.2.7 February 2007: YouGov/Hansard Society

In February 2007, YouGov published the results of a survey of 1,980 people it carried out on behalf of the Hansard Society and which asked a raft of questions associated with the House of Lords.<sup>.xxv</sup> The survey began by establishing how well respondents thought they knew the House of Lords and House of Commons worked:

<b>As you probably know, Parliament consists of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. How well do you feel you know how they work?</b>		
	House of Commons	House of Lords
Very well	9%	5%
Fairly well	47%	33%
Not very well	23%	34%
Not at all well	15%	22%
Don't know	6%	7%

The survey then asked a series of questions about the Lords. The analysis of the data included a number of variables such as gender, age, social class, region and party identification. However, it also examined the relationship between knowledge and attitudes by including a variable linked to those who claimed that they knew "very" or

“fairly” well how the House of Lords worked:

<b>Leaving aside the issue of how members of the House of Lords are chosen, how important do you think it is in principle to have a second chamber, in addition to the House of Commons?</b>		
	All Respondents	Those who said that they know “very” or “fairly” well how the House of Lords works
It is vital to have a second Chamber	30%	53%
It is on balance a good idea	37%	35%
It is on balance not a good idea	4%	3%
It is completely unnecessary	9%	5%
Don't Know	20%	3%

<b>At present, members of the House of Lords are either appointed, or have inherited their title. All parties at Westminster agree that the membership of the House of Lords should be reformed. Which of these options would you prefer for the House of Lords in future?</b>		
	All Respondents	Those who said that they know “very” or “fairly” well how the House of Lords works
All members of the House of Lords should be appointed	6%	6%
All members of the House of Lords should be elected	42%	43%
The House of Lords should comprise a mixture of elected and appointed members	40%	49%
Don't know	12%	3%

<b>Which of these do you think should be the TWO most important functions of the House of Lords? [Please tick up to TWO]</b>		
	All Respondents	Those who said that they know “very” or “fairly” well how the House of Lords works
Hold the government to account for its policies and expenditure	65%	75%
Revise legislation (laws)	44%	52%
Hold debates on key issues and areas of public concern	37%	34%
Undertake expert inquiries	22%	25%
Ceremonial role	3%	4%
Don't know	11%	1%

<b>Thinking about the powers of the House of Lords, which ONE of these options would you most favour...</b>		
<b>If a reformed House of Lords had a mixture of elected and unelected members</b>		
	All Respondents	Those who said that they know “very” or “fairly” well how the House of Lords works
Block Laws Proposed by the Commons	21%	32%
Delay Laws Proposed by the Commons for a Fixed Period	26%	33%
Only be able to advise on or discuss Laws Proposed by the Commons	29%	27%
Don't know	24%	9%

<b>If a reformed House of Lords consisted entirely of elected members</b>		
	All Respondents	Those who said that they know "very" or "fairly" well how the House of Lords works
Block Laws Proposed by the Commons	33%	43%
Delay Laws Proposed by the Commons for a Fixed Period	25%	30%
Only be able to advise on or discuss Laws Proposed by the Commons	18%	18%
Don't know	23%	8%

<b>Which TWO of these qualities do you think it most important for future members of the House of Lords to have? [Please tick up to TWO]</b>		
	All Respondents	Those who said that they know "very" or "fairly" well how the House of Lords works
More independent of party politics than the House of Commons	57%	70%
Bringing expertise and experience (e.g. from science, business, law etc)	54%	67%
Representing the different regions and nations of the UK	26%	25%
Diverse and reflecting UK society (e.g. gender, ethnicity, age etc)	24%	21%
Representing a single constituency	5%	6%
Don't know	12%	1%

### 6.2.8 July 2007: YouGov

In July 2007, YouGov asked two questions on House of Lords reform in an omnibus survey:<sup>xxvi</sup>

<b>At present, members of the House of Lords are either appointed, or have inherited their title. Do you think this state of affairs...?</b>	
Is undemocratic, and has a harmful effect on the quality of parliamentary decisions that affect everyday life in Britain	27%
Is undemocratic, but does not make much practical difference to the quality of decisions that affect everyday life	22%
Allows people from outside politics to play a role in Parliament, and often improves the quality of decisions that affect everyday life	30%
Don't Know	22%

<b>All parties at Westminster agree that the membership of the House of Lords should be reformed. Which of the following would you prefer for the House of Lords in the future?</b>	
All members of the House of Lords should be appointed	6%
All members of the House of Lords should be elected	37%
The House of Lords should comprise a mixture of elected and appointed members	40%
Don't Know	17%



### 6.2.9 July 2007: BBC/Communicate Research—Bishops and the House of Lords

In July 2007, the BBC released details of a poll of 1,001 respondents which asked a question about the Bishops and the House of Lords:<sup>xxvii</sup>

<b>Twenty-six Church of England bishops have an automatic right to sit in the House of Lords. In light of this, do you agree or disagree with each of these statements?</b>		
	Agree	Disagree
Church of England bishops should retain the right to sit in the House of Lords	48%	43%
If Church of England bishops are allowed to sit in the House of Lords then religious leaders from other faiths should also be given that automatic right	65%	29%
The prime minister, rather than the Church of England, should have the power of final approval over the appointment of bishops	25%	65%
The government should move towards full separation of Church and State, for example removing all rights from the Church of England for its bishops to sit in the House of Lords and all rights of the prime minister to approve Church appointments	43%	45%

### 6.2.10 December 2007: Ipsos MORI—House of Lords Survey

In December 2007, Ipsos MORI published the results of a survey commissioned by UCL's Constitution Unit, as part of its ongoing work on the House of Lords.<sup>xxviii</sup> The survey began by asking a contextual question about how much respondents thought they knew about the Westminster Parliament. In response: 4 percent thought that they knew "a great deal"; 31 percent "a fair amount"; 42 percent "not very much"; and 20 percent "nothing at all". The survey then moved on to ask questions about what respondents viewed as important in terms of the legitimacy of the House of Lords:

<b>For each statement I am going to read out about the House of Lords, some of which are true at the moment, and some of which are not, please tell me how important it is to you in determining how legitimate the House of Lords is as a Chamber of Parliament?</b>					
	Very important %	Fairly important %	Not very important %	Not at all important %	Don't know %
that there is a fair balance of seats between the political parties in the House	41	37	8	3	11
that there are numerous independent members who do not represent political parties	36	37	11	4	12
that the House makes political decisions in accordance with public opinion	48	29	10	4	10
that when members are appointed to the House the appointments process is trustworthy	69	18	3	2	9
that some members are elected by the public	45	31	11	4	10
that many members are expert in their field	49	33	7	2	9
that the House considers legislation carefully and in detail	66	21	3	1	9

**And which one of these is most important to you in determining how legitimate the House of Lords is as a Chamber of Parliament?**

**Which one of these is second most important?**

	(a) Most important %	(b) Second most important %	(a) and (b) Combined %
that the House makes political decisions in accordance with public opinion	23	14	37
that the House considers legislation carefully and in detail	17	12	29
that when members are appointed to the House the appointments process is trustworthy	14	14	28
that there are numerous independent members who do not represent political parties	11	13	24
that there is a fair balance of seats between the political parties in the House	10	11	21
that some members are elected by the public	9	12	21
that many members are expert in their field	6	13	19

The survey then asked a final batch of questions, which compared views on the House of Commons and the House of Lords:

**To what extent do you agree or disagree that... ?**

	Strongly agree %	Tend to agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Tend to disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Don't know %
the House of Commons generally carries out its policy role well	7	39	22	15	4	12
<b>the House of Lords generally carries out its policy role well</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>15</b>
the process for choosing members of the House of Commons is a good one	15	40	19	10	4	13
<b>the process for choosing members of the House of Lords is a good one</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>18</b>

## 6.2.11 March 2008: Fifth Audit of Political Engagement

In March 2008, the *Fifth Audit of Political Engagement* asked a number of questions concerning the British constitution, including questions about Lords reform:<sup>xxix</sup>

<b>Thinking generally, to what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with each of the following in Britain at the moment?</b>								
	Very satisfied %	Fairly satisfied %	Neither /nor %	Fairly dissatisfied %	Very dissatisfied %	Don't know %	Satisfied %	Dissatisfied %
Britain's unwritten constitution	4	15	40	12	6	25	19	18
How votes cast in a general election translate into seats in the House of Commons	5	30	31	14	7	14	35	21
Britain not having a Bill of Rights	2	10	42	18	7	21	12	25
<b>The way members of the House of Lords are chosen</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>36</b>
Scottish MPs being able to vote on English issues in the House of Commons	3	17	23	23	23	10	20	46
How the Human Rights Act works in practice	2	22	32	21	10	13	24	31
The powers that government can currently exercise without Parliament's approval	1	18	32	19	13	16	19	32
Having a minimum voting age of 18 in a general election	26	41	14	8	4	7	67	12

<b>Thinking generally, to what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with each of the following in Britain at the moment?</b>								
	Very satisfied %	Fairly satisfied %	Neither /nor %	Fairly dissatisfied %	Very dissatisfied %	Don't know %	Satisfied %	Dissatisfied %
The effect of Britain's membership of the European Union	3	26	27	19	14	10	29	33
How political parties are funded	1	17	32	23	14	13	18	37
Letting the government decide the date for a general election	6	33	30	16	7	8	39	23

<b>Looking through this list of constitutional issues which two or three, if any, of these would you say are the most urgently in need of change?</b>	
How the Human Rights Act works in practice	26%
How political parties are funded	24%
The powers that the government can exercise without the approval of Parliament	23%
Britain's membership of the European Union	23%
Scottish MPs being allowed to vote on English issues in the House of Commons	22%
<b>The way members of the House of Lords are chosen</b>	<b>16%</b>
How votes cast in a general election translate into seats in the House of Commons	14%
Not having a new Bill of Rights	14%
Not having a fixed date for general elections	12%
People aged between 16 and 18 not being able to vote at general elections	9%
Britain's unwritten Constitution	9%
None of these	4%
Don't know	16%

## 6.2.12 June 2009: Ipsos MORI

In June 2009, Ipsos MORI included questions in one of its omnibus surveys on how well respondents felt political institutions were carrying out their job:<sup>xxx</sup>

<b>To what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way each is doing its job these days? Are you...?</b>									
		Very Satisfied (%)	Fairly Satisfied (%)	Neither /Nor (%)	Fairly dis-satisfied (%)	Very dis-satisfied (%)	DK (%)	Total: Satisfied (%)	Total: dis-satisfied (%)
Q1	Westminster Parliament								
	2001	4	41	16	19	11	9	45	30
	2009	2	18	11	30	33	6	20	63
Q2	House of Commons								
	2009	1	14	10	30	41	4	15	71
Q3	House of Lords								
	2009	3	20	15	22	28	12	23	50
Q4	Scottish Parliament/ Holyrood*								
	2001	7	47	17	11	10	8	54	21
	2009	14	34	14	25	10	3	49	35
Q5	National Assembly for Wales**								
	2001	7	32	16	16	13	16	39	29
	2009	8	62	4	14	13	0	70	26
* All in Scotland (139 in 2001; 92 in 2009)									
** All in Wales (82 in 2001; 60 in 2009)									

## 6.2.13 July 2009: YouGov/Fabian Society

In July 2009, YouGov released results of a survey of 2,001 people commissioned by the Fabian Society, which asked a series of questions about the British constitution and its possible reform.<sup>xxxi</sup> This included a question about the reform of the House of Lords which sought to rank its importance amongst other possible changes to the constitution:

<b>Which two or three if any of the following reforms do you MOST agree with? [Please tick up to three options]</b>	
Rather than the prime minister choosing the date of the next general election we need regular fixed dates	59%
We need an electoral system that is more representative of the actual votes cast	50%
Constituents should be able to sack their MP by holding a new election to choose an MP between elections if 10 percent of them want it	36%
<b>We should make parliament more democratic by replacing the House of Lords with an elected second chamber</b>	<b>33%</b>
We should clean up our messy and informal constitution and draw up a single written constitution like that of the United States	24%
We should replace the monarchy with an elected President as head of state	11%
None of these	4%
Don't know	5%

### 6.2.14 March 2010: ICM on the Importance of Institutional Religion in Public Life

In March 2010, ICM published the results of a question from one of its omnibus surveys, which had been commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Trust, concerning the importance of institutional religion in public life.<sup>xxxii</sup> This included questions on the role of the Bishops within the Lords:

How important or unimportant do you think it is that ...					
	Anyone who sits in the House of Commons or the House of Lords and votes on laws is elected	Cabinet Ministers are directly answerable to MPs in the House of Commons	Bishops of the Church of England have a role in the House of Lords	There is scope for able and experienced people to be given seats in the House of Lords without them being elected	Organised religion should play a role in public life
Very important	37%	56%	11%	16%	16%
Fairly important	28%	22%	21%	27%	27%
Neither important nor unimportant	14%	10%	17%	18%	15%
Not very important	11%	5%	22%	18%	18%
Not at all important	6%	4%	25%	18%	23%
Don't know	3%	3%	3%	3%	2%
Sample = 1007					

### 6.2.15 October 2010: Angus Reid—House of Lords Reform

In October 2010 Angus Reid published the results of a survey of 2,004 individuals on House of Lords reform, in which it tested a number of different propositions.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Now, we'd like to ask you some questions about the House of Lords. Which of these statements comes closest to your own point of view?	
The UK does not need a House of Lords, all legislation should be reviewed and authorized by the House of Commons	30%
The UK needs a House of Lords, but the people should be allowed to take part in the process to choose Lords	40%
The UK needs a House of Lords, and the current guidelines that call for appointed Lords should not be modified	9%
Not sure	21%

Would you support or oppose holding a nationwide referendum to decide the future of the House of Lords?	
Support	66%
Oppose	11%
Not Sure	23%

<b>As you may know, several proposals have been made to reform the House of Lords. Do you support or oppose each of these ideas? Allowing the people to directly elect their Lords</b>	
Support	58%
Oppose	15%
Not Sure	28%

<b>As you may know, several proposals have been made to reform the House of Lords. Do you support or oppose each of these ideas? Abolishing the House of Lords altogether</b>	
Support	30%
Oppose	39%
Not Sure	31%

<b>When do you expect the people will be able to directly elect the members of the House of Lords?</b>	
In the next two years	10%
Three to five years from now	29%
Six to ten years from now	21%
More than ten years from now	14%
Never	26%

### **6.2.16 September/October 2011: Unlock Democracy**

As part of its submission to the Joint Committee on the Draft House of Lords Reform Bill, Unlock Democracy included the results of an online survey it had carried out between 14 September and 5 October 2011, in which online respondents were asked a series of questions about House of Lords reform.<sup>xxxiv</sup> The survey was not carried out by a polling company and it is not clear whether sampling was used.

<b>1. The government has proposed that the reformed second chamber should be either fully or 80% elected. Do you think it should be...</b>		
Fully elected	2300	57.69%
80% elected, 20% appointed	1192	29.90%
Other	495	12.42%
Total number of responses	3987	

<b>2. If some members of the second chamber are to be appointed, what types of people would be acceptable?</b>		
Anglican Bishops	385	10.64%
Representatives of all faiths	1263	34.89%
Specially appointed government ministers	401	11.08%
People appointed by political parties	425	11.74%
People appointed by an independent body for their professional/academic expertise	2970	82.04%
Representatives of professional bodies (eg British Medical Association, Royal College of Nursing)	3190	88.12%
Representatives of trade unions	1745	48.20%
Members of the public randomly selected from the electoral roll	1269	35.06%
Other	361	9.97%
Total number of responses	3620	

<b>3. MPs are currently elected for up to 5 years at a time. This is usually longer for elected second chambers and the government has proposed they should be elected for 15 year terms. How long do you think members of the second chamber should be elected for?</b>		
15 years	356	9.21%
10 years	1529	39.55%
Less than 10 years	1981	51.24%
Total number of responses	3866	

<b>4. Should elected members of the second chamber be able to stand for re-election?</b>		
Yes	2998	76.46%
No	923	23.54%
Total number of responses	3921	

<b>5. The government is considering using two voting systems to elect the second chamber: the single transferable vote (STV), in which voters can rank any or all candidates in order of preference; or open lists, in which voters put an "X" beside the candidate they most prefer. Both systems are broadly proportional, STV offers more choice and ensures that more votes will count. It is also better for independent candidates. However, the open list system is significantly simpler to vote in. Which system would you prefer?</b>		
Single Transferable Vote	3169	86.33%
Open lists	502	13.67%
Total number of responses	3671	

<b>6. The current House of Lords can delay government legislation by up to a year. However, the House of Lords rarely exercises this right, and has only used it four times in the past 60 years. Most experts agree that a wholly or mainly elected second chamber is likely to want to use this power more frequently. Should the powers of the second chamber be changed to reflect this?</b>		
No, the current rules should stay	1734	44.61%
Yes, the current rules should change	2153	55.39%
Total number of responses	3887	

<b>7. Which of the following proposals to alter the second chamber's existing powers to delay legislation would you find acceptable (tick all that apply)?</b>		
Reduce the amount of time the second chamber can delay legislation by	781	21.34%
Allow the House of Commons to overrule the second chamber if two-thirds of MPs vote to do so	2085	56.98%
Only allow the House of Lords to block legislation on more than one occasion if two-thirds of its members vote to do so	1388	37.93%
Require both chambers to set up a joint committee to work out a compromise if the second chamber rejects the legislation a second time	2690	73.52%
Total number of responses	3659	



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- <sup>i</sup> <http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/files/folders/613/download.aspx>.
- <sup>ii</sup> <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/54/Importance-Of-Key-Issues-To-Voting.aspx?view=wide>.
- <sup>iii</sup> <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/poll.aspx?oltemID=56&view=wide>.
- <sup>iv</sup> <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/poll.aspx?oltemId=2759&view=wide>.
- <sup>v</sup> [http://cdn.yougov.com/today\\_uk\\_import/YG-Archives-pol-hansard-HouseofLords-070206.pdf](http://cdn.yougov.com/today_uk_import/YG-Archives-pol-hansard-HouseofLords-070206.pdf).
- <sup>vi</sup> <http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/files/folders/1142/download.aspx>.
- <sup>vii</sup> <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/2770/Reported-knowledge-of-the-British-constitution.aspx?view=wide>.
- <sup>viii</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>ix</sup> <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/2758/Knowledge-of-Parliament-19912010.aspx?view=wide>; <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/2757/Knowledge-of-Politics-20032010.aspx?view=wide>.
- <sup>x</sup> <http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/files/folders/610/download.aspx>.
- <sup>xi</sup> <http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/files/folders/613/download.aspx>.
- <sup>xii</sup> [http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/blogs/parliament\\_and\\_government/archive/2010/03/02/audit-of-political-engagement-7.aspx](http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/blogs/parliament_and_government/archive/2010/03/02/audit-of-political-engagement-7.aspx).
- <sup>xiii</sup> <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/poll.aspx?oltemId=2427&view=wide>.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Extracted from the BSAS database at: <http://www.britsocat.com/Home>.
- <sup>xv</sup> Anthony King (ed), *British Political Opinion 1937–2000: The Gallup Polls*, 2001, p 284 and p 288.
- <sup>xvi</sup> <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/2751/Support-for-House-of-Lords-Reform-19771998.aspx?view=wide>.
- <sup>xvii</sup> <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/2033/Public-Agrees-with-Common-Sense-Approach-to-Lords-Reform.aspx>
- <sup>xviii</sup> Tables extracted from the BSAS database at: <http://www.britsocat.com/Home>.
- <sup>xix</sup> [http://www.icmresearch.com/pdfs/2002\\_january\\_house\\_of\\_lords\\_reform.pdf](http://www.icmresearch.com/pdfs/2002_january_house_of_lords_reform.pdf).
- <sup>xx</sup> [http://cdn.yougov.com/today\\_uk\\_import/YG-Archives-pol-charter88-HouseLords-030122.pdf](http://cdn.yougov.com/today_uk_import/YG-Archives-pol-charter88-HouseLords-030122.pdf).
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- <sup>xxvi</sup> <http://www.yougov.co.uk/extranets/ygarchives/content/pdf/results%2007%2007%2020%20topline.pdf>.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> [http://www.angus-reid.com/polls/1104/church\\_of\\_england\\_privileges\\_unfair\\_say\\_britons/](http://www.angus-reid.com/polls/1104/church_of_england_privileges_unfair_say_britons/)
- <sup>xxviii</sup> <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/250/House-of-Lords-Survey.aspx>.
- <sup>xxix</sup> <http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/files/folders/1142/download.aspx>.
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- <sup>xxxi</sup> [http://www.yougov.co.uk/archives/pdf/Fabian\\_03-Jul-2009.pdf](http://www.yougov.co.uk/archives/pdf/Fabian_03-Jul-2009.pdf).
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