



RESEARCH PAPER 98/104  
15 DECEMBER 1998

# Lords Reform: Background statistics

A Bill affecting the composition of the House of Lords was announced in the Queen's Speech on 24 November.

This Paper sets out some background statistics on the House of Lords. It includes: data on the composition of the present House, by age, sex, party and peerage type; details of peers' attendance; government defeats in the Lords; peerage creations; and expenditure.

This paper is a companion volume to two other Research Papers, RP 98/103 *Lords Reform: The Legislative Role of the House of Lords* and RP 98/105 *Lords Reform: Recent Developments*

Richard Cracknell

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## **Summary of main points**

- 59% of potential members of the House of Lords are hereditary Peers.
- 8% of potential members of the House of Lords are women.
- Around two-thirds of Conservative strength in the House of Lords is from hereditary Peers; compared to 10% for Labour and 35% for the Liberal Democrats.
- The age profile of the House of Lords is significantly older than the Commons. Life peers are 7 years older than hereditary on average. Over half of Peers eligible to sit are aged 65 or over.
- The attendance of hereditary peers is lower than that of created peers.
- Since 1970 the rate of defeats in the Lords has been higher for Labour than Conservative Governments.
- The rate of peerage creations by the present Labour Government has so far been higher than the average for any previous administration since 1958.

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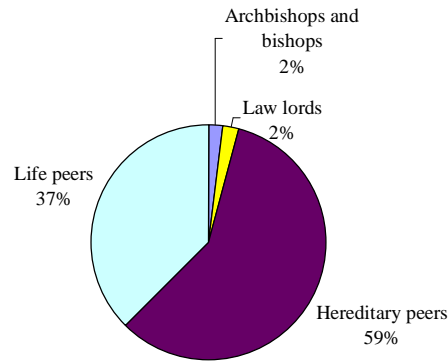
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# I Composition of the House of Lords

## A. Peerage type

There are 1,297 potential members of the House of Lords. The majority, 759<sup>1</sup> (59%), is hereditary peers.

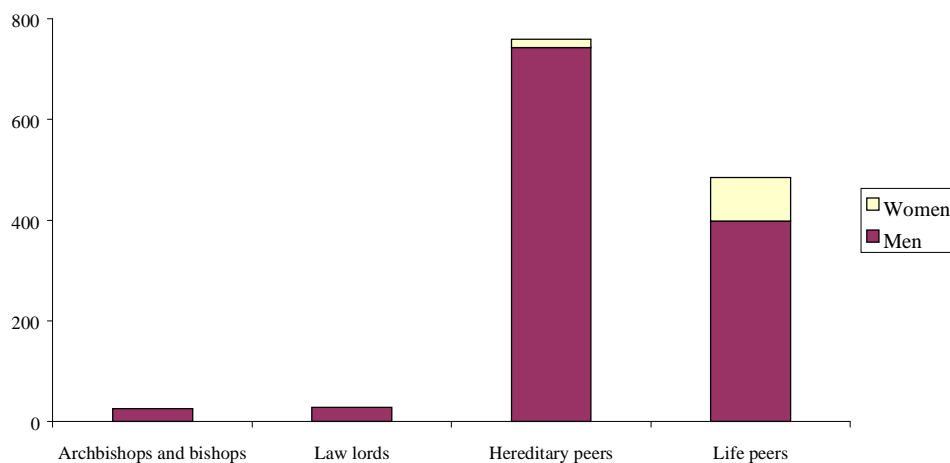
**Chart 1: Composition of House of Lords by peerage type  
1 December 1998**



## B. Gender

Of the potential members there are 103 women, around 8% of the total. Most of these are life peers.

**Chart 2: Composition by gender and peerage type  
1 December 1998**

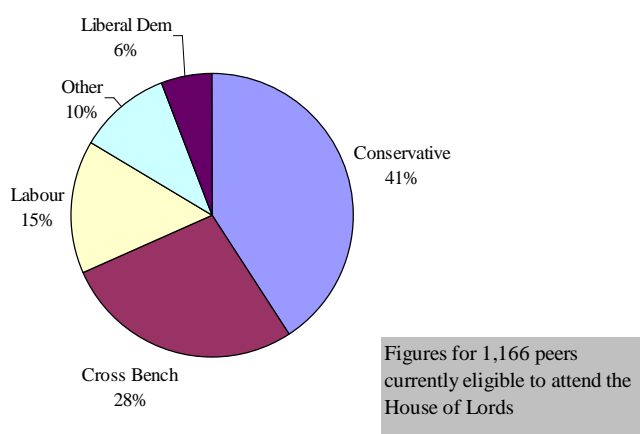


<sup>1</sup> 9 of these are hereditary peers of first creation – that is they have not succeeded to the title by which they sit in the House.

### C. Party

Of the 1,297 potential members, 131 peers are not eligible to attend. (63 of them have applied for leave of absence from the House and 68 have not applied for and received Writs of Summons enabling them to attend). There are therefore 1,166 peers currently eligible to sit in the House of Lords. In terms of political allegiance the largest political party in the Lords is the Conservative Party.

**Chart 3: Party Strengths in House of Lords  
1 December 1998**



Much of the Conservative dominance in the Lords is derived from hereditary peers. Around two-thirds of Conservatives eligible to attend are hereditary peers. This is similar to the proportion of cross-benchers but compares with 10% for Labour and 35% for the Liberal Democrats.

**Chart 4: Party strengths by hereditary/life status  
1 December 1998**

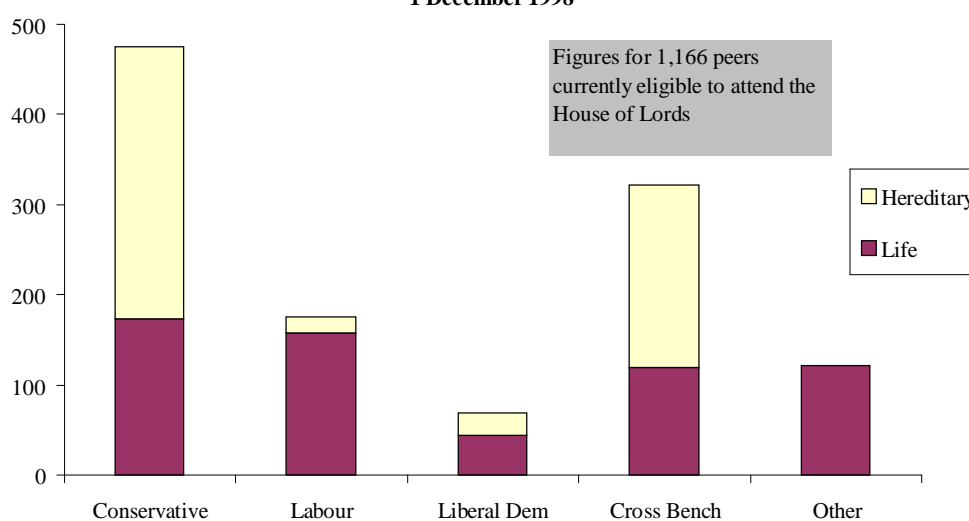


Table 1  
**Composition of the House of Lords**  
 1 December 1998

<b>Peerage type</b> <sup>(a)</sup>	All	of which: Women
	Hereditary peers	759
Life peers	484	87
Archbishops and bishops	26	0
Law lords	28	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,297</b>	<b>103</b>

	<b>Party strength and peerage type</b> <sup>(b)</sup>				Lords Spiritual	Total
	Life peers	Hereditary peers				
		Of first creation	By succession			
Conservative	173	4	298	0	475	
Labour	158	1	17	0	176	
Liberal Dem	45	0	24	0	69	
Cross Bench	120	4	198	0	322	
Other	9	0	89	26	124	
<b>Total</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>626</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>1,166</b>	

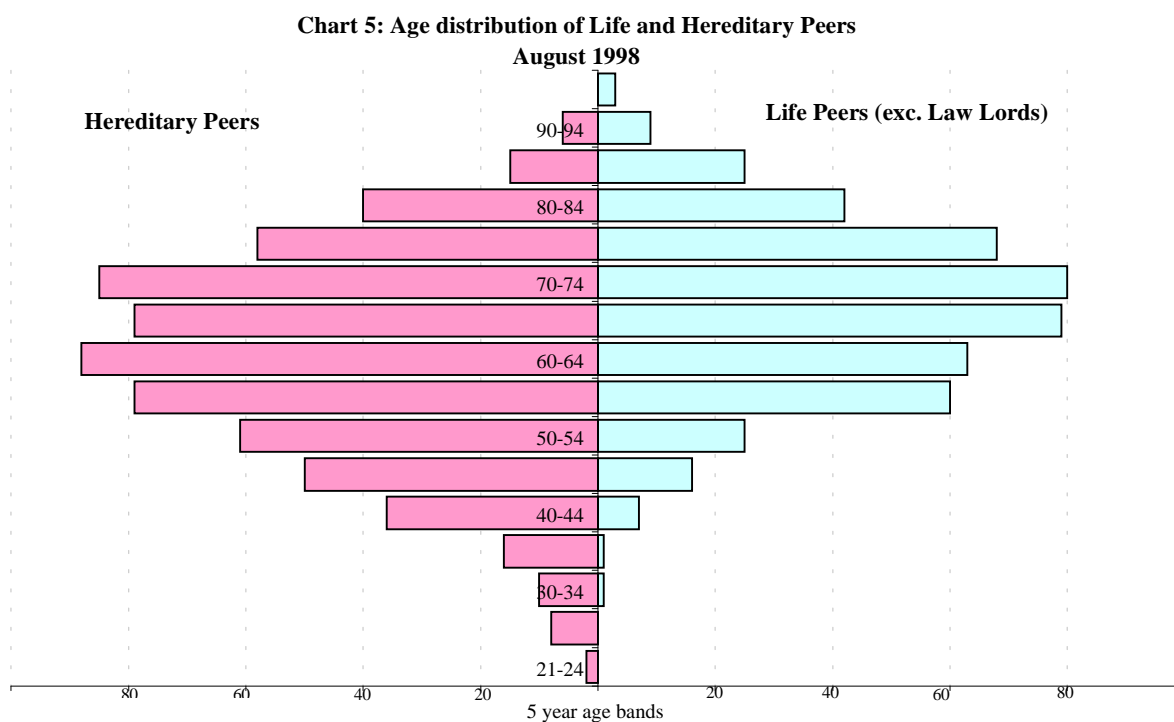
(a) All potential members of the House of Lords. Includes peers without Writs of Summons (68) or on leave of absence (63)

(b) All currently eligible to attend the House of Lords (excludes those without Writs of Summons or on leave of absence)

Source: House of Lords Information Office - <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/ld/ldinfo.htm>

## D. Age

54% of peers are aged 65 or over and 24% are aged 75 or over. These compare with Members of the House of Commons where currently 6% of Members are aged 65 or over and less than ½%<sup>2</sup> is 75 or over.<sup>3</sup> The average age of those peers eligible to sit is 65 years. Life peers are on average 7 years older than hereditary peers (their average age being 69 years whilst hereditary peers average 62 years).<sup>4</sup>



Source: Table 2

<sup>2</sup> 2 of 659

<sup>3</sup> Source: House of Commons Library MP database

<sup>4</sup> House of Lords Information Office – Information Sheet 14 (position at February 1998)



Table 2  
**Age distribution of Peers**  
 August 1998

	Life Peers		Hereditary Peers		Total
	Life Peerages Act 1958	Law Lords	Of first creation	By succession	
21-24				2	2
25-29				8	8
30-34	1			10	11
35-39	1		1	15	17
40-44	7			36	43
45-49	16		1	49	66
50-54	25			61	86
55-59	60			79	139
60-64	63	2		88	153
65-69	79	10	1	78	168
70-74	80	3		85	168
75-79	68	5	1	57	131
80-84	42	2	3	37	84
85-89	25	2		15	42
90-94	9	1	2	4	16
95-99	3	1			4
All	479	26	9	624	1,138

Note: Excludes peers without writs of summons (including 2 minors: aged 9 and 18) and those on Leave of Absence

Source: House of Lords' Information Office; Debretts *People of Today* (for Lord Norton of Louth)

## II Attendance by peers

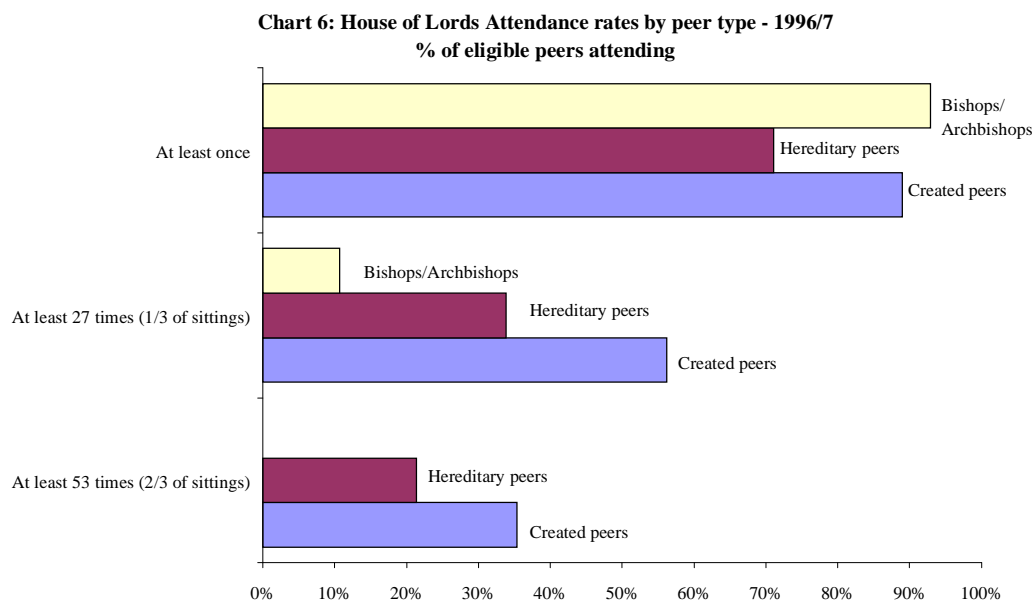
Members of the House of Lords do not receive a salary, merely reimbursement of expenses (see note below) which they can claim for days when they attend the House. The level of attendance for Session 1996-97 is shown in **Table 3**.

Table 3  
House of Lords attendance by peer type 1996-97

	Peers eligible to attend	Peers attending in 1996-97		
		At least once	At least 27 times (1/3 of sittings)	At least 53 times (2/3 of sittings)
Created peers	427	380	240	151
Hereditary peers	632	449	214	135
Bishops/Archbishops	28	26	3	0
All eligible peers	1,087	855	457	286

Note: For each day's attendance they may claim expenses of up to a maximum of £78.00 overnight subsistence; £34.50 daily subsistence; £33.50 secretarial assistance and, depending where they live, certain travelling expenses.

Source: House of Lords Information Office *Information Sheet 14*



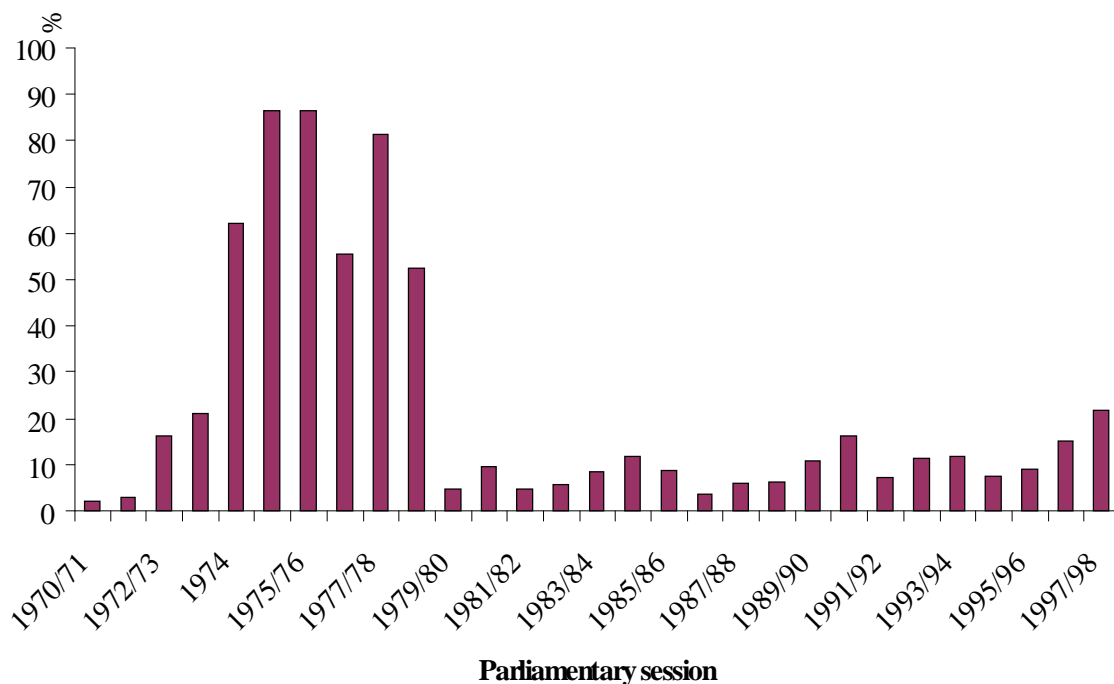
### III Government Defeats in the House of Lords<sup>5</sup>

#### A. Defeats since 1970-71

The average number of defeats in the Lords is 23 per session since 1970-71. 1997-98 had more Government defeats than any session since 1979-80. Previously, relatively high numbers of Government defeats occurred during the 1974-79 Labour Government, particularly in the first two sessions when over 85% of divisions that took place in the Lords were defeats for the Government.<sup>6</sup> From 1970-71 to 1997-98, the average number of Government defeats per session under Labour Governments is 63 compared with 8 for Conservative Governments. **Table 4** shows the number of Government defeats in each session since 1970-71

In 1997-98 22% of divisions in the Lords resulted in a Government defeat. **Chart 7** shows the proportion of divisions in the Lords where the Government was defeated.

**Chart 7: Government Defeats in the Lords by Session  
1970/71 to 1997/8 - % of all divisions**



<sup>5</sup> Note: throughout this paper a government defeat is defined as one where the tellers on the losing side are government whips.

<sup>6</sup> For further details see Donald Shell *The House of Lords* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1992

**1. Government defeats since 1970-71 by session**

Table 4

<u>Session</u>			
1970/71	4	1983/84	20
1971/72	5	1984/85	17
1972/73	13	1985/86	22
1973/74	4	1986/87	3
1974	13	1987/88	17
1974/75	103	1988/89	12
1975/76	126	1989/90	20
1976/77	25	1990/91	17
1977/78	78	1991/92	6
1978/79	11	1992/93	19
1979/80	15	1993/94	16
1980/81	18	1994/95	8
1981/82	7	1995/96	10
1982/83	5	1996/97	10
		1997/98	39

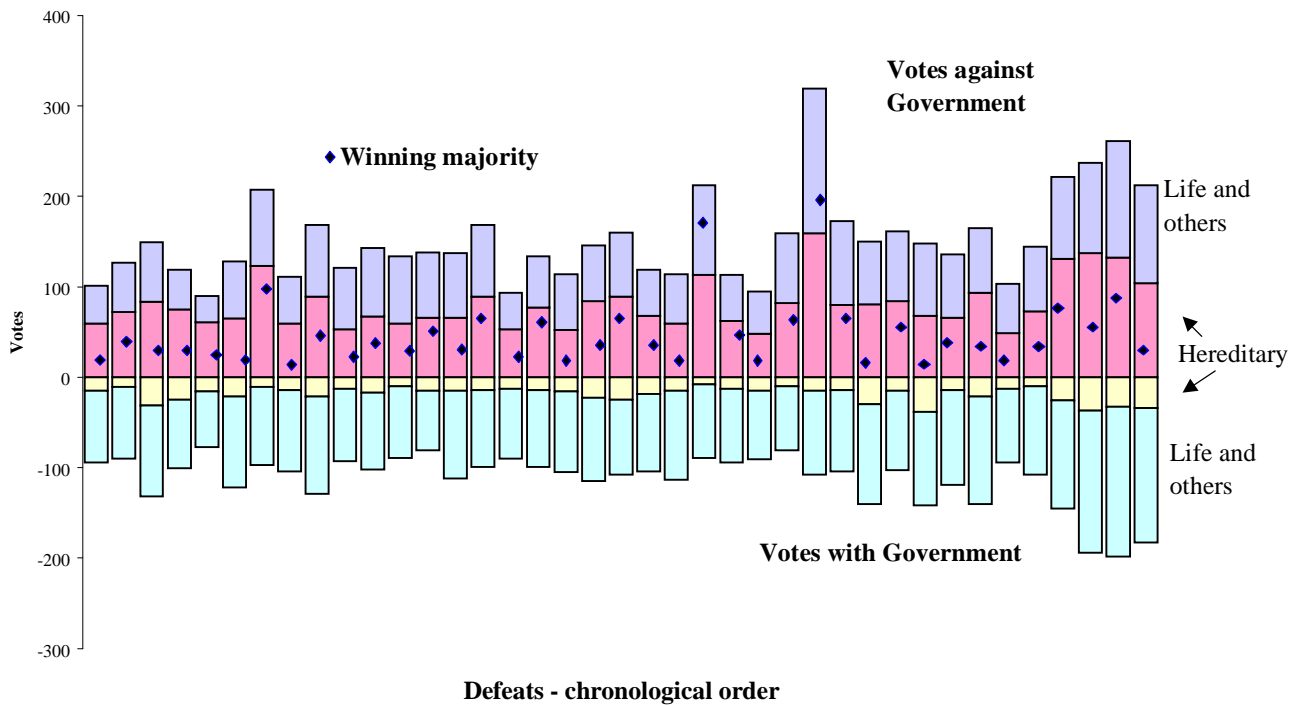
Source: House of Lords Information Office; HL Deb 16 Oct 1995 WA 90; House of Lords Sessional Statistics

## B. Defeats in 1997-98

An analysis of Government defeats in the first session of the current Labour Government shows that in 37 of the 39 defeats the number of hereditary peers voting against the Government was greater than the majority in that division. This is illustrated in **Chart 8**.

A full list of the 39 Government defeats appears at the end of this section.

**Chart 8: Government defeats in the Lords by peer type  
Session 1997/8**



**1. Government defeats 1997-98**

Date	Legislation/subject matter	Votes
3 Jul 97	Referendums (Scotland & Wales) Bill – to hold both referendums on the same day.	101-94
17 July 97	Education (Schools Bill – transitional arrangements for existing assisted pupils at prep schools.	127-90
21 July 97	Referendums (Scotland & Wales) Bill – to limit revenue-varying powers of Scottish Parliament to income tax	149-132
16 Oct 97	Firearms (Amendment) Bill – to allow disabled shooters to keep their weapons	120-101
16 Oct 97	Firearms (Amendment) Bill – to allow international competition shooting to continue at approved centres	90-77
13 Jan 98	Greater London Authority (Referendum) Bill – to insist on the publication of a bill to establish an authority and election of a mayor before the referendum takes place.	128-122
27 Jan 98	Beef Bone Regulations 1997 – to revoke the SI	207-97
29 Jan 98	Greater London Authority (Referendum) Bill – to change the referendum to 2 separate questions for an elected mayor and assembly.	111-104
5 Feb 98	Human Rights Bill – to protect religious beliefs	168-130
9 Feb 98	Competition Bill – to prevent abuse of market domination by predatory pricing of newspapers	121-93
2 Mar 98	Teaching & Higher Education Bill – new arrangements for giving financial support to students: loans to be no more than half the cost of maintenance.	143-102
2 Mar 98	Teaching & Higher Education Bill – new arrangements for giving financial support to students: no discrepancy between students on 3 and 4 year courses	134-89
5 Mar 98	Competition Bill – transitional arrangements for retail price maintenance of OTC medicines.	138-81

Date	Legislation/subject matter	Votes
10 Mar 98	Teaching & Higher Education Bill – to establish the functions of the General Teaching Council.	137-112
10 Mar 98	Teaching & Higher Education Bill – SO 30 (Asperity of speech to be avoided)	168-99
23 Mar 98	Bank of England Bill – to provide that one of the members of the Monetary Policy Committee should be on the advice of the First Minister of the Scottish Executive.	93-90
24 Mar 98	Data Protection Bill – to remove order-making powers permitting exemptions for the police and Inland Revenue	134-99
31 Mar 98	Crime & Disorder Bill – to seek creation of a Standing Advisory Council on Criminal Justice and the Penal System.	114-105
7 May 98	Social Security Bill – to introduce the topic of the LEL into the Bill.	146-115
14 May 98	European Communities (Amendment) Bill – quota hopping	160-108
4 Jun 98	School Standards and Framework Bill - to provide an opportunity to discuss the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aims and values which the school intends to foster.	119-104
16 Jun 98	School Standards and Framework Bill – (Clause 120)	114-113
23 Jun 98	Teaching and Higher Education Bill – to abolish tuition fees for students from England & Wales studying a 4-year course in Scotland)	212-89
1 July 98	Government of Wales Bill – Clause 12	113-94
2 July 98	School Standards and Framework Bill – (Clause 35)	95-91
2 July 98	School Standards and Framework Bill – (Sch 9)	159-81
7 July 98	Teaching and Higher Education Bill – to abolish tuition fees for non-Scottish students for a first degree course	319-108
13 July 98	School Standards and Framework Bill – (Omit Clause 9)	173-104
15 July 98	Government of Wales Bill – constituency voting to the Welsh Assembly	150-140

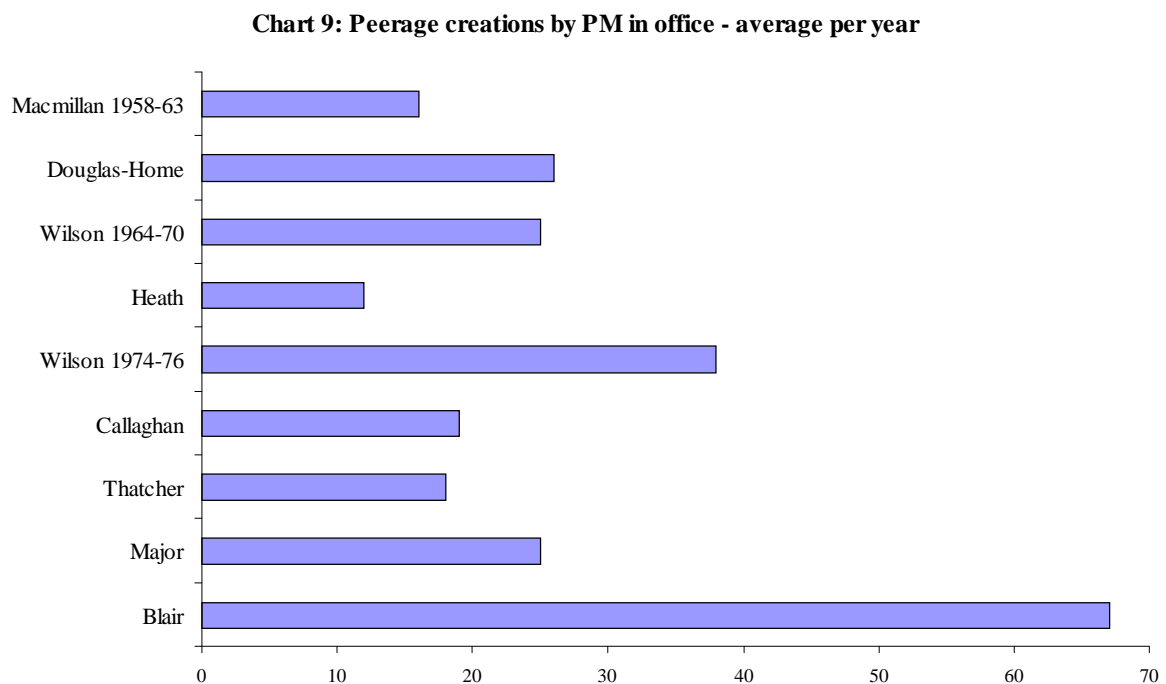
Date	Legislation/subject matter	Votes
20 July 98	National Minimum Wage Bill – power of SoS to exempt certain parties from provisions of the Act	161-103
22 July 98	HL Offices Committee – 6 <sup>th</sup> Report 1997/8 – to refer refurbishment of Old Palace Yard back to Committee	148-142
28 July 98	Scotland Bill – ability of Parliament to overturn Presiding Officer’s decision that a bill is legislatively incompetent.	136-119
20 Oct 98	European Parliamentary Elections Bill – type of list system to be used in elections.	165-140
22 Oct 98	Scotland Bill – size of Scottish Parliament after the reduction in number of Scottish MPs	103-94
2 Nov 98	Scotland Bill – removal of most senior judges in Scotland.	144-108
4 Nov 98	European Parliamentary Elections Bill – Lords insistence on their amendments on type of list system to be used in elections	221-145
12 Nov 98	European Parliamentary Elections Bill – Lords insistence on their amendments on type of list system to be used in elections	237-194
17 Nov 98	European Parliamentary Elections Bill – Lords insistence on their amendments on type of list system to be used in elections	261-198
18 Nov 98	European Parliamentary Elections Bill – Lords insistence on their amendments on type of list system to be used in elections	212-183



## IV Peerage creations

843 life peers have been created since the first list of life peers was published in July 1958 under the Life Peerages Act 1958. Over the same period, 45 Lords of Appeal in Ordinary (Law Lords) have been created, and 57 individuals have been created hereditary peers.

**Chart 9** shows the average number of peerage creations at the time of each Prime Minister in office since 1958. The average for the current Prime Minister is more than twice that of his three predecessors, although it may fall if the numbers created later in the Parliament are lower. The underlying data, including a breakdown by type of peer and gender is in **table 5**.



Note: The period covered is only since the Life Peerages Act 1958. It does not include the whole of Macmillan's term as Prime Minister, which began in 1957.

Source: House of Lords Library Note *Peerage creations, 1958-1998* LLN98/005

**A. Peerage creations by Prime Minister**

Table 5  
**Peerage creations by Prime Minister in office at time of announcement,  
 July 1958 - November 1998**

	Hereditary		Life		Law <sup>1</sup>		Total			Annual annual creations <sup>2</sup>
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	All	
Macmillan 1958-63	37	-	40	7	6	-	83	7	90	16
Douglas-Home	10	-	14	2	3	-	27	2	29	26
Wilson 1964-70	6	-	121	14	2	-	129	14	143	25
Heath	-	-	37	8	3	-	40	8	48	12
Wilson 1974-76	-	-	69	11	3	-	72	11	83	38
Callaghan	-	-	53	5	2	-	55	5	60	19
Thatcher	4	-	174	27	11	-	189	27	216	18
Major	-	-	131	29	11	-	142	29	171	25
Blair	-	-	81	20	4	-	85	20	105	67
1958-1998	57	0	720	123	45	0	822	123	945	22

Notes:

- 1 Peers created under the Appellate Jurisdiction Act 1876.
- 2 Excluding peers created under the Appellate Jurisdiction Act 1876.

Source: Peerage Creations, 1958 – 1998, House of Lords Library

## V Expenditure

Total spending on the House of Lords in financial year 1998-99 is planned to be £42 million. Around £28 million of this covers the reimbursement of Peers' expenses and the administrative costs of the House of Lords' Offices and Refreshment Department. It also includes the House of Lords' share of the security costs of the Palace of Westminster, and financial assistance to Opposition parties.

Expenditure on works and maintenance is planned to be around £14 million. This covers the costs of works services for the House of Lords and 40% of the costs of projects shared with the House of Commons.

Control over this spending, which is not cash limited, is vested in the House of Lords' Offices Committee, appointed each session.

Table 6  
House of Lords Expenditure 1994/95 to 1998/9

	<i>£ Thousands</i>				
	Financial years				
	1994/5	1995/6	1996/7	1997/8	1998/9
<b>Vote 5</b>					
Expenses of Peers	6,496	6,659	7,021	6,625	7,568
House of Lords Offices					
salaries	5,761	6,005	6,458	6,600	6,800
other running costs#	5,326	6,014	4,789	5,500	6,692
Retired allowances etc#	851	1,032	1,091	1,075	1,204
Security#	4,821	4,796	4,884	5,100	5,448
Refreshment Dept#	586	520	637	600	574
<b>Total</b>	<b>23,841</b>	<b>25,026</b>	<b>24,880</b>	<b>25,500</b>	<b>28,286</b>
<b>Vote 6</b>					
Major acquisitions and new works over £150,000	5,294	6,494	4,689	3,442	3,538
Minor new works	529	911	830	898	689
Maintenance	4,276	3,981	4,130	5,372	4,645
Rent, property taxes, & other operating costs	2,023	2,055	2,380	2,753	2,681
Administration costs	1,921	2,057	2,109	2,184	2,349
<b>Gross total</b>	<b>14,043</b>	<b>15,498</b>	<b>14,138</b>	<b>14,649</b>	<b>13,902</b>
Less: appropriations in aid	503	678	499	650	100
<b>Net total</b>	<b>13,540</b>	<b>14,820</b>	<b>13,639</b>	<b>13,999</b>	<b>13,802</b>
<b>Grand total Votes 5 and 6</b>	<b>37,381</b>	<b>39,846</b>	<b>38,519</b>	<b>39,499</b>	<b>42,088</b>

# net spending

Source: Cm 3920 *The Government's Expenditure Plans 1998/9*

Further details of House of Lords' expenditure and other information can be found in the House of Lords Annual Report and Accounts.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> HL Paper 26, published 14 October 1997

**Research Paper 98/104**

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