

# Westminster Faith Debates

## #FaithDebate



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# **Stem Cell Research, Abortion and the ‘Soul of the Embryo’?**

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# **DofH Abortion Statistics, England and Wales: 2011**

**There were 189,931 abortions to residents of England and Wales in 2011**

**= abortion rate of 17.5 per 1,000 resident women aged 15-44 (12 per 1,000 in Scotland)**

**This is 6% lower than the rate of 18.6 in 2007, but 2% higher than in 2001 and more than double the rate of 8.0 recorded in 1970**

**91% of abortions were carried out at under 13 weeks gestation**

**78% were at under 10 weeks compared to 77% in 2010 and 58% in 2001**

**Medical abortions accounted for 47% of the total**

**2,307 abortions (1%) were carried out under ground E (risk that the child would be born handicapped)**

# YouGov Westminster Faith Debates Poll 2013

Total sample size 4,437 adults.

Fieldwork undertaken between 25th - 30th  
January 2013.

The survey was carried out online.

The figures have been weighted and are  
representative of all GB adults (aged  
18+).

# Most religious people are not anti abortion

	Religious people	General population
Retain or raise 24 week limit	43%	46%
Lower the 24 week limit	30%	28%
Ban abortion	9%	7%

# Amongst the population as a whole, anti-abortion sentiment is declining and support for the current abortion law is growing

<u>YouGov</u>	2005	2011	2012	2013
<i>Those in favour of:</i>				
<b>Raising or retaining 24 week limit</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Reducing the 24 week limit</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Banning abortions altogether</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Don't know</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>19</b>

# **Catholics, Muslims and Baptists are the most hostile to abortion, but only about half would like to see the law changed**

- 14% of Catholics surveyed support a ban on abortion and 33% would like to see the 24 week limit lowered.
- 30% of Muslims surveyed support a ban on abortion and 16% would like to see the 24 week limit lowered.



## The people most likely to be hostile to abortion are:

- who believe in God with most certainty
- rely most strongly on scripture or religious teachings for guidance
- whose religion has a strong anti-abortion message

Only 8% of the population fits this profile, and of this 8% one third support a ban on abortion.

- **44% of people believe that human life begins at conception**
- 30% at some time during pregnancy
- 17% when the baby is born
- 8% don't know

**Even amongst those who believe that human life begins at conception, over 3/4 believe that abortion is acceptable in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, and a half believe that abortion should be allowed at least up to 20 weeks.**

<b>World Values Survey 2005-06</b>	<b>GB</b>	<b>US</b>	<b>Italy</b>
<b>Abortion</b>			
<b>1. Never justifiable</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>10. Always justifiable</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Don't know/no answer</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Mean</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>3.5</b>

*Stem cell research involves taking cells from human embryos that are less than two weeks old. They will never be transplanted into a woman's body but are used to grow new cells which then can be used to treat diseases in any part of the body. Would you say that ...*

<b>TNS UK/Eurobarometer</b>	<b>2010</b>
<b>You fully approve and do not think that special laws are necessary</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>You approve as long as this is regulated by strict laws</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>You do not approve except under very special circumstances</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>You do not approve under any circumstances</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Don't know</b>	<b>5</b>

<b><u>YouGov</u></b>	<b>2005</b>
<b><i>Do you agree or disagree that the rights of patients with diseases such as cancer are more important than the rights of early embryos?</i></b>	
<b>Agree – the rights of patients are more important than the rights of early embryos</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Disagree – the rights of patients are not more important than the rights of early embryos</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Don't know</b>	<b>19</b>

<b>ComRes</b>	May 2006
<i>Every year around 200,000 abortions are performed in Britain. Would you agree or disagree with those who believe <b>this number is too high and should be reduced?</b></i>	Agree 53%
<i>If you were forced to choose between the following outcomes, which one would you select?</i>	Easier access to abortion 10% More support for women who wish to keep their baby 84%
<i>Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about abortion? <b>Abortion law hasn't kept up with our knowledge of early development in the womb.</b></i>	Agree 61%
<i>Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about abortion? <b>Aborting a baby at six months' pregnancy is cruel.</b></i>	Agree 76%
<i>Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about abortion? <b>A woman's right to choose always outweighs the rights of the unborn.</b></i>	Agree 65%

- **Pro-life anti-abortionists**
  - *Bare life*
- **Pro-life pro-abortionists**
  - *Fulfilled life*

**Not a religious/secular issue, but between two competing understandings of ‘life’**



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