



HOUSE OF LORDS



Work of the
House of Lords
2015–16



The House of Lords is the second chamber of the UK Parliament and one of the busiest legislative chambers in the world. Its members work on behalf of the UK public, using their professional experience and specialist knowledge to ensure workable laws, often persuading the government to make policy changes on a diverse range of issues.

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Work of the House of Lords

The 2015-16 parliamentary session ran from 27 May 2015 to 12 May 2016.

During this period, the House of Lords spent 149 days working to check the details in draft laws (bills), question government action and debate policy.

Members examined 78 bills, considered 3,678 changes and made 1,254 of them. In total, 29 bills were made law. Extensive scrutiny work was carried out, with members asking the government 8,847 questions and holding 203 debates.

Lords investigative committees produced 27 reports. One-off, or 'ad-hoc', committees were set up to look into the built environment, sexual violence in conflict, and social mobility and the impact on people with disabilities of the Equality Act 2010.

Making effective laws

Parliament's main role is to examine bills and approve new laws. The Lords plays a crucial role in the process, debating the main principles, checking content line by line and suggesting changes. Members also help to ensure that all new laws are well drafted, effective and workable.

Creating law

The House of Lords shares responsibility for lawmaking with the House of Commons. Prior to becoming Acts of Parliament, bills are debated and checked by both Houses. Bills go through set stages in both Houses, where their purpose and detail can be examined, before they receive royal assent (formal agreement from the Queen) and become Acts of Parliament (law).

The House of Lords checks the detail of a bill, working to address potential problems and close any loopholes to make more effective laws. Its amendments may or may not be agreed by the House of Commons, but the House of Lords has a crucial role to play in asking the government and the Commons to think again and, in some cases, putting forward alternative amendments in response.

2015-16 session

During the session, 29 bills received royal assent, passing into law. See the tables on pages 8 to 11 for more information on the bills in the session.

78 bills introduced

3,678 changes considered

1,254 changes made

29 bills became law

Examining and amending bills

In the 2015-16 session, Parliament considered and approved bills (proposals for new laws) on subjects including welfare reform, childcare, the EU referendum, Northern Ireland, Scotland, energy, and psychoactive substances. The House of Lords played its part by scrutinising the bills in detail, proposing amendments to them and persuading the Commons and government to agree to a large number of changes, and ultimately agreeing to the bills. Three examples from the session's work are given below.

Immigration Act 2016

The government introduced this bill to make several changes to immigration, asylum and related legislation, including the establishment of a Director of Labour Market Enforcement, the creation of a new offence of illegal working, restrictions on access to services and changes to enforcement powers.

Unaccompanied refugee children

The Lords examined the bill in detail, and proposed various changes which were considered by the Commons. One amendment was to require the secretary of state to relocate to the UK, and support, 3,000 unaccompanied refugee children from other countries in Europe. After further exchanges between the two Houses, the government and the Commons accepted a compromise proposed by the Lords, that the precise number of additional children to be admitted to the UK should be decided by the government following consultation with local authorities to determine their capacity.

Further amendments were agreed, following debate and discussion in the Lords, including:

- enhanced safeguards for the immigration-related detention of vulnerable persons, particularly pregnant women
- the introduction of automatic bail hearings every four months for people detained for immigration reasons.



Trade Union Act 2016

This bill set out to make various changes to trade union legislation, including requiring a 50% threshold in all ballots for industrial action and, for industrial action in certain public services, the support of at least 40% of all union members entitled to vote in the ballot; providing that any mandate for industrial action expires after four months; introducing 'opting-in' for contributions to a union's political fund so that specific consent is required for any contributions to the fund; creating a 'reserve power' to limit the paid time spent by trade union representatives working for public sector employers on union duties and activities ('facility time'); prohibiting public sector employers from offering a 'check-off' service whereby union subscriptions can be deducted from wages; and creating new investigatory powers and sanctions available to the Certification Officer for trade unions.



Extra checks set up in the Lords

Some members of the Lords expressed considerable concern about the bill, and partly as a result of this the House set up a committee to spend a month examining the 'opting-in' clauses, in addition to its usual legislative checks. The committee heard evidence in February 2016 and published its conclusions on 2 March. Its recommendations formed the basis of the agreement which was eventually reached on the 'opting-in' clauses. The bill's scrutiny by the Lords resulted in the agreement of a wide range of amendments, including:

- narrowing the application of the threshold requirement for important public services
- reviewing whether electronic voting could be used for industrial action ballots
- increasing the length of the mandate for industrial action from four to six months (or nine months with the agreement of the employer)
- applying the 'opting-in' requirements for political funds only to new union members, and making other changes to those provisions
- permitting the continuation of check-off by public sector employers, with conditions including the payment by the union of a reasonable payment for the service
- clarifying that the Certification Officer is not subject to ministerial direction in the performance of their functions.

Housing and Planning Act 2016

Extensive changes in the Lords

The bill was extensively debated in the Lords over 18 days. Members proposed nearly 900 amendments and agreed 292 of them. Most were tabled by the government – several in response to concerns raised by members.

Protection for landlord and tenant money

Other changes put forward by non-government members, and accepted by the government, included amendments to:

- require property agents to be a member of a client money protection scheme, to protect landlord and tenant money should they go into administration
- simplify the process for establishing New Town Development Corporations and Areas in England



- exclude fracking from grant of planning permission in principle and specifying that the bill's planning permission in principle provisions apply only to housing-led developments.

Starter home buyers

The House also agreed several amendments which the government did not support in the Lords. Some resulted in compromise agreements being reached during exchanges on the bill between the Lords and the Commons, including:

- that someone benefiting from a starter home discount must repay some of the discount if they sell it within a specified period, on a sliding scale based on how long they had lived in the house before selling
- a review of minimum energy performance requirements for houses in England.

Public legislation 2015–16

More public bill sessional statistics, including a breakdown of amendments by stage, grand committee proceedings and details of all bills receiving royal assent, can be found at www.parliament.uk/lords.

Bills introduced in the House of Lords	Amendments tabled	Amendments made	Government defeats
Government bills			
Bank of England and Financial Services	83	44	–
Charities (Protection and Social Investment)	81	25	1
Childcare	75	13	3
Cities and Local Government Devolution	185	54	6
Energy	211	110	3
Enterprise	228	59	2
European Union (Approvals)	–	–	–
Psychoactive Substances	199	90	1
Total	1,062	395	16

	Amendments tabled	Amendments made
Private members' bills		
<i>Access to Palliative Care</i>	–	–
<i>Accessible Sports Grounds</i>	–	–
<i>Advertising of Prostitution (Prohibition)</i>	–	–
<i>Age of Criminal Responsibility</i>	–	–
<i>Airports Act 1986 (Amendment)</i>	–	–
<i>Arbitration and Mediation Services (Equality)</i>	–	–
<i>Armed Forces Deployment (Royal Prerogative)</i>	–	–
<i>Assisted Dying</i>	–	–
<i>Automatic Electoral Registration</i>	–	–
<i>Bat Habitats Regulation</i>	–	–
<i>Bread and Flour Regulations (Folic Acid)</i>	–	–
<i>Carers (Leave Entitlement)</i>	–	–
<i>Chancel Repairs</i>	–	–
<i>Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment (Amendment)</i>	–	–
<i>Cohabitation Rights</i>	–	–
<i>Conscientious Objection (Medical Activities)</i>	–	–
<i>Constitutional Convention</i>	1	–
<i>Council Tax Valuation Bands</i>	12	1
<i>Direct Planning (Pilot)</i>	–	–
<i>Divorce (Financial Provision)</i>	–	–
<i>Duchy of Cornwall</i>	–	–
<i>Easter Trading</i>	–	–
<i>Equality Act 2010 (Amendment)</i>	–	–
<i>European Union Citizens (Electoral Rights)</i>	–	–
<i>European Union (Information, etc.)</i>	–	–

* Privilege amendments are not included.
Bills in italics did not become law.

	Amendments tabled	Amendments made
Private members' bills (continued)		
<i>Gambling (Categorisation and Use of B2 Gaming Machines)</i>	–	–
<i>International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) (Amendment)</i>	–	–
<i>International Development (Population Dynamics)</i>	–	–
<i>Medical Innovation</i>	–	–
<i>Mesothelioma (Amendment)</i>	–	–
<i>Natural Environment</i>	–	–
<i>Online Safety</i>	16	3
<i>Planning (Subterranean Development)</i>	–	–
<i>Polling Day (Saturday)</i>	–	–
<i>Property Boundaries (Resolution of Disputes)</i>	–	–
<i>Public Advocate</i>	–	–
<i>Referendums (Franchise)</i>	–	–
<i>Referendums (Local Authority Governance)</i>	–	–
<i>Regulation of Health and Social Care Professions Etc.</i>	–	–
<i>Regulation of Political Opinion Polling</i>	–	–
<i>Rehabilitation of Offenders (Amendment)</i>	–	–
<i>Right to Die at Home</i>	–	–
<i>Road Traffic Act 1988 (Alcohol Limits) (Amendment)</i>	4	4
<i>Student Fees (Qualifying Persons) (England)</i>	–	–
<i>Succession to Peerages</i>	–	–
<i>Veterinary Nurses (Protection of Title)</i>	–	–
<i>Welfare of Cats (Breeding and Sale)</i>	–	–
<i>Welfare of Women (Fertility Treatments)</i>	–	–
Total	33	8

* Privilege amendments are not included.
Bills in italics did not become law.

Bills brought from the House of Commons	Amendments tabled	Amendments made	Government defeats
Government bills			
Armed Forces	39	2	–
Education and Adoption	88	10	–
European Union (Finance)	–	–	–
European Union Referendum	128	46	1
Finance	–	–	–
High Speed Rail (London – West Midlands)	–	–	–
Housing and Planning	880	286	13
Immigration	597	292	5
National Insurance Contributions (Rate Ceilings)	–	–	–
Northern Ireland (Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan)	6	–	–
Northern Ireland (Welfare Reform)	–	–	–
Scotland	270	64	–
Supply and Appropriation (Anticipation and Adjustments)	–	–	–
Supply and Appropriation (Main Estimates)	–	–	–
Trade Union	203	31	3
Welfare Reform and Work	251	57	2
Total	2,462	788	24
Private members' bills			
Access to Medical Treatments (Innovation)	–	–	–
Criminal Cases Review Commission (Information)	1	–	–
Driving Instructors (Registration)	–	–	–
House of Commons Members' Fund	–	–	–
NHS (Charitable Trusts Etc)	–	–	–
Riot Compensation	–	–	–
Total	1	–	–

Looking at the small print

Acts of Parliament (or primary legislation) set out the key aims of legislation.

Delegated legislation (also known as secondary legislation) fills in the practical details needed for a law to operate in the way the Act intended. Details, such as levels of fees or the safety standards for a product, are set out in regulations, usually in the form of a statutory instrument (SI).

Quality control

Although the power to make SIs is delegated to ministers, about a third require some form of parliamentary scrutiny. The scrutiny processes applicable to SIs are simpler than those used for primary legislation. They are nonetheless important, particularly where an instrument brings about a significant change. For example, in 2015-16, SIs were laid that:

- set out the procedure for the EU Referendum
- amended the rules around electricity supply
- altered rules about the welfare of animals in the food chain
- affected the running of public houses.

The House of Lords has two committees dedicated to this area of legislation.

Before an Act is made

The [Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee](#) considers all bills introduced into the Lords – before they go forward for detailed consideration by the House to ensure that any power they give to ministers to make SIs is subject to the appropriate level of parliamentary scrutiny. During 2015-16, the committee, which has earned a formidable reputation as a ‘watchdog’, was particularly critical of the Childcare Bill and the Housing and Planning Bills for their lack of detail about how the government intended to use the powers they conferred.

After an Act is made

The [Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee](#) considers all SIs which have been laid before the House and which are subject to parliamentary scrutiny. Through its weekly reports, the committee draws particularly interesting, potentially defective or poorly explained SIs to the attention of the House, so that members can ask a question or request a debate on the matter.

During 2015-16, it made influential reports on:

- proposed administration charges for those convicted in a criminal court
- poorly explained changes to Universal Credit
- changes to benefits, particularly tax credits.

Tax credits

Following defeats in the Lords relating to certain tax credits regulations, the government asked Lord Strathclyde to review the way SIs are scrutinised by Parliament. Both the above committees published responses to Lord Strathclyde’s report, opposing the recommendation that there should be a new statutory procedure which would remove the power of the Lords to reject an instrument (see also the Constitution Committee briefing paper for its response to the review). Both however endorsed the view that the government should do more to ensure that bills contain the principal elements of a policy and that too much is not left for implementation by secondary legislation.

43 bills reported

712 SIs examined

35 reports to the House on SIs

70 SIs drawn to the attention of the House



Holding the government to account

Around 40 per cent of time in the chamber is spent holding the government to account for its decisions and actions. This is done through questions and debates to which ministers and government spokespeople must respond.

Questions

A 30-minute question time takes place at the start of business in the chamber from Monday to Thursday. A maximum of four questions are posed by members. They can be on any subject – local, national or international – for which the government is responsible.

Once the government spokesperson has answered, there is then a chance for a short exchange of related, or ‘supplementary’, questions. The government spokesperson must answer each one. Questions may also be asked in writing and the government must respond within 10 working days.

Debates

Debates allow members to put their experience to good use by drawing the government’s attention to particular concerns and issues. At the end of every debate, a government minister or spokesperson responds to the questions and issues that have been raised.

The diversity of the membership of the House of Lords is reflected in the range of subjects covered, and debates in the Lords can play an important role in shaping future policy initiatives and legislation. By way of example, two debates are described on pages 16-19. A full list of topics is on pages 20-23.

548 oral questions

8,294 written questions

203 debates

797 oral and written statements

Statements

The government makes statements in the chamber to announce important policy initiatives and report on national and international issues. Statements are usually made in both Houses and are followed in the Lords by the opportunity for members to ask questions and make observations. Ministers may also make written statements.

Debates

The UK and the EU

Former secretaries of state, party leaders, military chiefs and diplomats debated the UK's status in a reformed European Union.

'Best of both worlds'

The debate was proposed by the Foreign Office minister in the Lords and it took place as the government announced the 23 June referendum following its negotiations with the EU on the UK's status in it.

The government argued, as the name of its pamphlet suggested, that with a new deal in place the UK could have the 'best of both worlds': EU membership, with the benefits of the world's biggest single market, but with a 'special status' excluding it from the eurozone, exempting it from an 'ever closer union' and giving it power to limit some benefits for EU migrants.

Competitiveness

Some members argued that the UK could trade with other countries on World Trade Organisation (WTO) terms, making new alliances without the 'burden' of EU bureaucracy, and criticism of the big business lobbying power in the EU was raised.

Other members said that the terms the UK currently trades on, secured by the EU, are much better terms because they were secured using a market of 500 million people. They quoted the many governments of countries outside the EU that had stated the UK's best interests are to remain an EU member state. They also argued that it was optimistic for Leave campaigners to suggest that if the UK left the EU it could join the European Economic Area without the free movement of people – they considered that being outside the EU may actually mean more red tape for UK businesses trading with it.

Britain's role in the world

Members who have served as UK ambassadors argued that the UK should stay in the EU so that it had a 'seat at the table' to play a constructive role in international talks and negotiations. They cautioned against standing aside and not being involved.

Other members thought that the UK's voice within the EU is too weak and that the UK should be able to make its own domestic policy decisions without referral to or permission from the EU, including immigration control.



Immigration

Members addressed part of the prime minister's renegotiation introducing limits on benefits for EU migrants – they were concerned that it would not be effective in reducing the numbers of EU migrants and were sceptical that the deal was legally binding.

Democracy and accountability

Many members made the case for spending the money the UK gives to the EU on UK priorities.

Some Remain campaigners said that ministers from across political parties had too often used the EU as an 'alibi' when actually most action and decision-making lies with the UK government.

The government reasserted its case that the UK is stronger and safer in the EU and that its deal would make Europe work for the UK, putting it in the driving seat of the world's biggest single market but out of the eurozone and Schengen area.

Treatment of LGBTI citizens worldwide

Members of the Lords, including a founder of Stonewall and the UK's first openly gay MP and member of the Cabinet, debated the treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) citizens worldwide.

Criminalisation of homosexuality

Members highlighted that around the world people continue to be discriminated against and face violence simply because of who they love. They raised concern that millions of LGBTI people are persecuted and prosecuted as criminals and in some countries face the death penalty.

Commonwealth nations

Members pressed the government on the criminalisation of homosexuality in many Commonwealth nations. Some argued that the election of a new Commonwealth secretary-general could be an opportunity for change and pushing forward a commitment to human rights.

Human rights

Members expressed concern about the human rights violations LGBTI people are subjected to. They argued that although the UK itself has more work to do to tackle prejudice it is in a much better position,

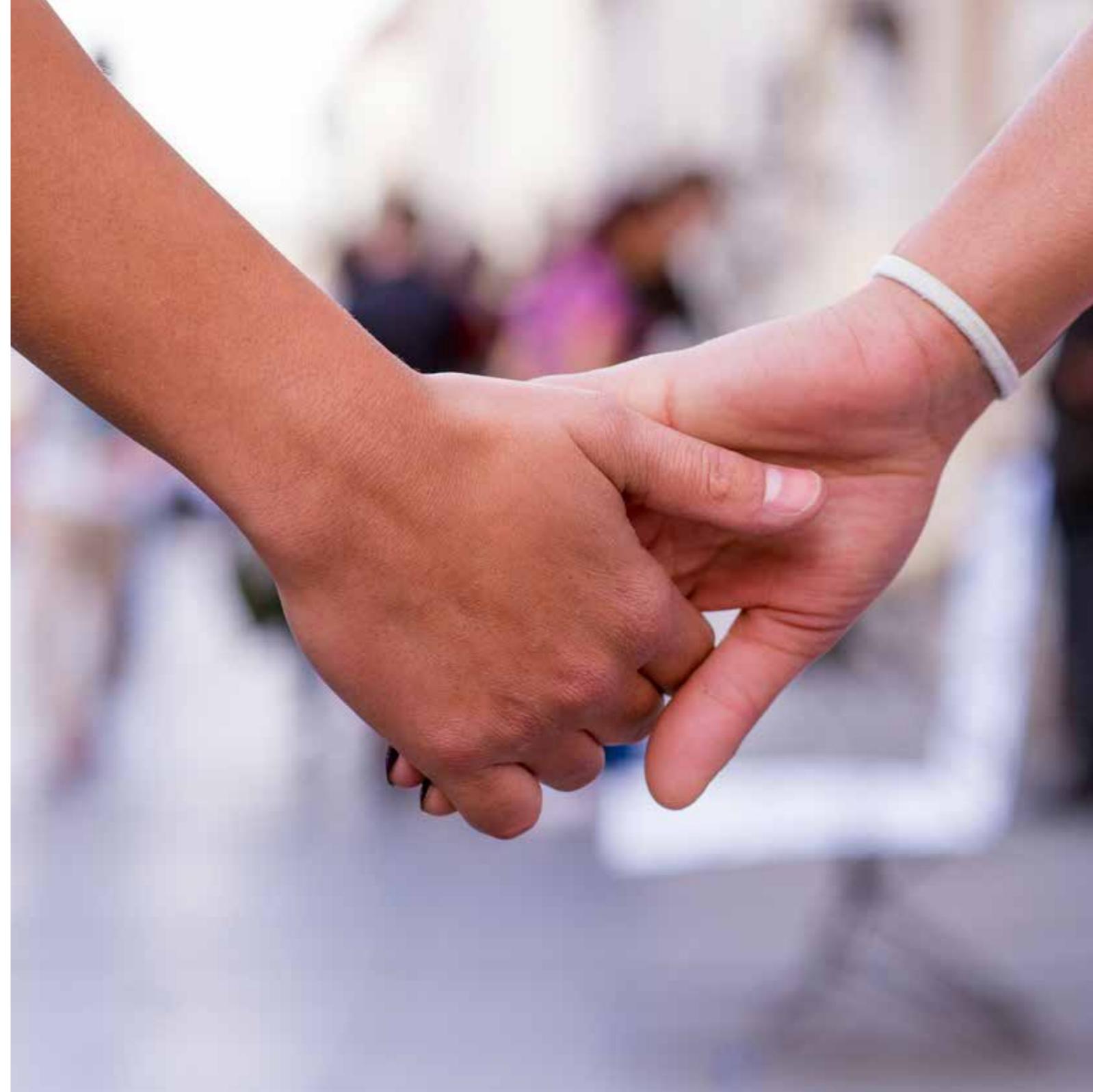
in particular with the equal marriage legislation in place, to try to change opinion overseas and tackle one of the 'greatest human rights issues of our time'. In addition to condemning outrages, members urged practical action.

Joined up work

Members called on the government to do more joined up work to strengthen its work overseas, saying it needs to improve co-ordination across its departments and to work better across areas like business and asylum applications in the UK.

UK influence

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office minister responding said the government is pushing its human rights agenda at the highest levels and supporting LGBTI rights is at the core of its international work. She said UK embassies and high commissions are challenging discriminatory laws through direct lobbying and funding local projects and groups to help LGBTI people. She also highlighted particular campaigns around the world, the organisations the government works with, and said staff from UK embassies and high commissions regularly take part in Pride marches.



General debates 2015–16

June 2015

- Civil society
- Developing world: women
- Trade and investment
- North of England: transport
- Pensions: reform
- Economy: creative industries
- Constitutional changes
- Affordable housing

July 2015

- Human rights and civil liberties
- Global challenges
- Office of Lord Chancellor*
- EU: financial regulation*
- Investigatory powers
- NHS sustainability
- Refugees and migrants from Asia and Africa
- EU: UK opt-in protocol*
- European Union Committee work 2014–15*
- UK and UN 'Responsibility to Protect'
- Freedom of religion and belief
- Budget statement
- UK opt-in to the proposed Council decision on the relocation of migrants within the EU*

September 2015

- UK productivity
- Women in news and current affairs broadcasting*
- Civilian use of drones*
- UK economy
- BBC: finance and independence
- UK Armed Forces
- House of Lords reform
- Middle East and North Africa
- The economic case for HS2*
- Extradition: UK law and practice*
- Sustainable development goals
- LGBTI citizens worldwide

October 2015

- Apprenticeships
- Sport
- English Votes for English Laws
- Private ownership
- Education and employment opportunities
- Global climate change
- Prisons: young people

November 2015

- EU referendum*
- Arctic
- Electricity system resilience*
- Impact of pornography on society
- Olympics 2012: regeneration legacy
- Sale of UK assets: corporate governance
- Trade unions
- Universities: freedom of speech
- Health
- The North Sea under pressure*

December 2015

- Syria: UK military action
- Autumn statement
- Strategic Defence and Security Review
- Prüm: UK participation*
- Legal aid
- Residential care: cost cap
- Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting
- National Lottery

January 2016

- Strathclyde Review
- Identity documentation
- NHS
- Prison reform

- Contribution of women to business and economy
- UK local democracy
- Adult education and lifelong learning

February 2016

- EU subsidiarity assessment: electoral law of the EU*
- Capital Markets Union: a welcome start*
- Transport for London Bill
- Alcohol strategy*

March 2016

- EU: UK membership
- Women: representation and empowerment
- Trade Union political funds and political party funding
- UK convergence programme
- UK economy: Budget statement

April 2016

- BBC Charter Review*
- UK economy

May 2016

- Black and minority ethnic people: workplace issues
- Personal Independent Payment: mobility criterion

* Debate on committee report

Short debates 2015–16

June 2015

- Gurkhas: anniversary
- NHS innovation
- UK election law
- UN Sustainable Development Goals
- Defence budget
- Devolution
- EU: asylum seekers
- Environment: gardens
- Opinion polling
- Corruption
- Commonwealth War Graves Commission
- Welsh Assembly elections 2016
- Syria
- Housing: leaseholders
- Mental health services
- Sierra Leone
- Mental health: young people

July 2015

- Litter
- Diabetes

- Ethnic minorities
- Gaza
- Health: children and young people
- Mental health services in schools and colleges
- Future of the BBC
- Sub-Saharan Africa: healthcare
- UK population
- English votes for English laws
- Rural communities
- Public life: values
- Biodiversity

September 2015

- Health: lymphoedema
- UN: senior appointments
- Dairy industry

October 2015

- Shared spaces
- Affordable rural housing
- Taxi and private car hire market
- Nuclear technology

- Palliative care
- Iraq Inquiry
- Armed forces: reserves
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Article 18
- Lyme disease
- Advertising Standards Authority
- Syrian refugees

November 2015

- Disabled Students' Allowance
- Health: atrial fibrillation
- House of Lords questions
- Bilateral trade: UK and Africa
- National stroke strategy
- International development
- Sport: doping
- Police: Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life
- World biodiversity
- Counter-terrorism: community cohesion

December 2015

- State pension: women
- NATO and the EU
- Vulnerable children: kinship care
- Financial stability
- Business community
- Energy security
- Music venues
- Conflicts and violence: religion
- Railways: Trans Pennine rail line
- Official histories
- Paris climate change conference
- Banks: vulnerable customers

January 2016

- Cultural property: Hague convention
- Flood management
- HIV and AIDS
- Prisons: education
- Cancer survival rates
- ISIL in Syria
- North Korea: nuclear test
- House of Lords Press Office
- English language classes for women

February 2016

- Neglected Tropical Diseases
- Further education
- Drugs
- Education: English Baccalaureate
- Homelessness
- Food waste
- Adjustable-focus eyewear
- Foreign Office funding
- Cycling
- Affordable housing
- Middle East
- Immigration: students

March 2016

- EU: refugees
- Circular economy
- Syria
- BBC Charter
- Battle of the Somme: centenary
- India: freedom of religion
- Occupied Palestinian Territories: development
- Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital redevelopment
- Children: maternal care

- GP appointments
- Sendai framework for disaster risk reduction
- Autism

April 2016

- Technology and people: Deloitte report
- Horserace betting right
- Rural economy

May 2016

- Polytechnics
- Diversity in the media
- Bus services
- School admissions code
- Life chances strategy

Influencing public policy

The House of Lords examines public policy through its select committees. Members use their professional experience to carry out investigative, subject-focused work. Committees are a valuable way to provoke discussion inside and outside Parliament and make recommendations to government.

Committee work

Committees are groups of members, appointed by the House to conduct certain tasks on its behalf, that meet outside the chamber. They consider specific policy areas or issues – ranging from short, narrowly focused investigations to broad, long-term inquiries – and usually produce reports on their findings. Once published, committee reports are normally debated in the House and the government must respond.

Experience of the membership

House of Lords committees benefit from the professional experience and knowledge of their members. It is that knowledge which ensures their work carries authority within Parliament and beyond.

Five permanent committees

There are five main select committees. They develop expertise in particular subject areas – outlined in pages 26 to 33 – and may revisit subjects covered in previous inquiries to assess the impact of their recommendations.

During the 2015–16 session, these committees published 27 reports on subjects ranging from economic affairs to the powers of the EU and advances in science and technology.

Reports

Reports drew the government's attention to Lords committees' views on:

- genetically modified insects
- the BBC charter review
- the process of the UK's exit from the EU
- the implications of the Scotland Bill.

One-off and joint committees

The House of Lords also regularly appoints short-term ('ad hoc') committees to examine particular subjects. In 2015–16, it set up ad hoc committees on the Equality Act 2010 and disability, national policy for the built environment, sexual violence in conflict, and social mobility. In addition, some committees are appointed jointly with the House of Commons, for example, to conduct pre-legislative scrutiny.

Science and Technology Committee

The committee investigates:

- public policy areas which are, or ought to be, informed by scientific research
- technological challenges and opportunities
- public policy towards science itself.

Genetically modified insects

The committee's report called on the government to launch a field trial of genetically modified insects, and make the most of the UK's status as world leader in this area of research. It argued that the science, EU regulatory environment and policies on GM insects need to be tested because of the enormous potential to save lives worldwide and generate economic benefits for the UK.

Control disease

The committee concluded GM insects have considerable potential to control insect-borne disease and agricultural pests and the UK government has a moral duty to test the potential of the technology, for the long-term benefit of people in countries where diseases like dengue and malaria are indiscriminate killers.

The report acknowledged that the science may not be a silver bullet in the fight against fatal disease and threats to food security, but argued it could prove to be an invaluable addition to ways to tackle them.

Economic benefits for UK

The committee called on the government, through Innovate UK in partnership with the Research Councils, to support the commercialisation of UK-based GM insect research and highlighted that the UK, as a world leader in this area of research, could reap potentially significant economic benefits.

Regulation

The committee expressed concern that the development of GM insect technologies has come to a halt because of an inadequate EU regulatory system. The committee called on the government to act to make the current regulatory system work properly, and work with the EU to address how it could be improved.



Communications Committee

The committee investigates public policy areas related to the media and the creative industries. Its membership includes media professionals and people from other backgrounds with relevant experience in industry, politics and law.

BBC charter review

The Communications Committee published its February 2016 report as the government carried out its BBC charter review consultation. It argued that no big changes to the BBC's core mission – to 'inform, educate and entertain' – were needed and made recommendations about the arrangements for the next BBC charter.

Set the licence fee openly

The committee argued that the licence fee agreement should be negotiated openly and the new independent regulator should publicly set out the level, with the secretary of state taking a final decision.

Decouple charter review and general election

The report highlighted the coinciding of the charter review and general election cycles, bringing debate on the BBC into the political frame. It proposed that the next charter be set for 11 years (rather than 10) to protect the BBC's impartiality and independence and allow for long-term planning.

BBC's unique position for the nation

The committee underlined the BBC's special position amongst UK public broadcasters in its capacity and duty to reflect diverse communities and bring together the regions and nations of the UK.



European Union Committee

The committee considers key EU policies and examines draft EU laws before they are agreed. It also keeps a check on government action at EU level. In the wake of the EU referendum in June 2016, the committee's focus has moved towards scrutiny of the UK's EU withdrawal.

The committee appoints six sub-committees, providing expertise across relevant policy areas.

UK withdrawal from the EU

In May 2016, ahead of the EU referendum, the committee published a report assessing how withdrawal from the EU would be achieved in reality.

International law

The committee concluded that Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union provided the only method of withdrawal consistent with EU and international law.

Negotiations

The committee identified the remaining EU member states as the key players throughout the negotiations. The committee suggested that negotiations would need to cover not only how the UK leaves the EU, but also the terms of the UK's new relationship with the EU. With 27 member states plus the UK involved, reaching agreement could be a long drawn out process.

UK citizens living in the EU

The committee's report highlighted the 'acquired rights' of millions of UK citizens resident in the EU, and of EU citizens in the UK, as a key issue in any negotiations.

Upcoming UK presidency

The committee concluded that the UK's credibility within the EU would be reduced in the event of a vote to leave, and therefore urged the government to consider alternatives to the UK presidency of the EU in 2017. In July 2016 the government announced that it had in fact relinquished the UK presidency.



Two committees investigated the constitutional and economic implications of Scottish devolution

Constitution Committee

The committee examines the constitutional implications of all public bills brought before the House of Lords, and reviews the operation of the constitution. Its members include leading lawyers, former senior judges and former secretaries of state.

Scotland Bill

The committee published its report in November 2015, shortly before the first debate on the Scotland Bill in the House of Lords. The committee expressed deep concern at the process leading up to the introduction of the Scotland Bill into Parliament, stating that a prior agreement between the leaders of the main UK political parties meant that Parliament had been 'excluded from the decision-making process'.

A lack of crucial information

The committee's report echoed the Economic Affairs Committee's recommendation (see page 32) that the House of Lords should consider delaying

the committee stage of the Scotland Bill (during which the bill is examined line by line) because of a lack of crucial information. It argued that Parliament needed to see a revised fiscal framework (setting out the financial arrangement between the UK and Scottish governments) and a new Memorandum of Understanding (setting out how the relationship between the UK government and the devolved administrations is managed), in order to properly scrutinise the bill.

The committee also:

- stated that the bill seemed to undermine Parliament's sovereign right to make law—a fundamental principle of the UK's constitution
- noted a risk that the courts would be drawn into adjudicating on the way Parliament passed laws
- highlighted a potential problem should the Scottish government seek to lower the voting age in Scotland to 16 without also seeking to give at least some prisoners the vote (to comply with a judgment of the European Court on Human Rights).

Economic Affairs Committee

The committee's purpose is to consider economic affairs. To do this the committee investigates current economic issues and scrutinises the government's economic policy. Its members include business leaders, former senior civil servants, economists and two former Chancellors of the Exchequer.

Implications of financial devolution to Scotland

The committee held an inquiry into proposals to give Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland further financial powers. The committee heard evidence from academics, business representatives and politicians in Edinburgh and London. Shortly before the main debate in the Lords on the key areas of the Scotland Bill in November 2015, the committee recommended that the bill did not go on to the next stage for its detailed, line by line, check (committee stage) until the underlying financial arrangement between the UK and Scottish governments – the fiscal framework – was agreed and published.

Full details given to Parliament

The committee's report stated that the fiscal framework was central to future financial devolution arrangements and the Scotland Bill had the potential to fundamentally change the financial structure of the UK. It argued that Parliament should not be expected to check the bill without the financial details that would underpin financial devolution. The committee set out its regret that MPs did not have the chance to check the bill with all the information to hand when it passed through its stages in the House of Commons.

Set out borrowing powers

The committee's report identified key issues the fiscal framework should clarify: it said markets wouldn't believe the 'no bail out' rule, so simple and clear borrowing rules including an agreement on a maximum ceiling on Scottish government debt would be needed.

“The committee claimed that secrecy about the details of the deal made it impossible for the Lords to take an informed view of the Scotland bill's implications; unless its flaws were dealt with, it risked destabilising the UK.”

The Guardian

Impact of income tax arrangements

The committee also argued that a proper look at the impact of proposals to devolve income tax revenue to Scotland was needed. It said this arrangement was being put in place too quickly, was unprecedented internationally, and risked undermining the relationship between Scottish tax payers and the UK government and Parliament.

Modernising the funding formula

The committee said the current funding system for devolved grants – the Barnett Formula – was not a sustainable way to calculate funding, particularly with the devolution of tax powers. It called for a needs-based funding formula for distributing funds, reflecting the additional needs of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Check on funding arrangements

The committee called for increased and joined-up scrutiny of the funding of devolved governments by the Office of Budget Responsibility, and the Westminster and devolved parliaments.

The government re-arranged the timetable for the Scotland Bill to be considered, and published the fiscal framework before the House of Lords completed its scrutiny of the Scotland Bill.



Building international relationships

The House of Lords has an important role to play in fostering and maintaining relationships with other countries, their parliaments and political leaders.

Members of the Lords act as ambassadors for the House, for Parliament and for the UK. Participation in parliamentary visits and cooperation with overseas parliaments and multilateral parliamentary organisations enables members to contribute to discussions on global issues. By engaging with their international counterparts, members promote understanding of the House and are able to share, apply and extend their experience and knowledge.



Lord Speaker Baroness D'Souza meets King Abdullah II of Jordan

2015-16 highlights

- The House was represented by the Chairman of Committees at the annual Conference of EU Speakers in April 2015 in Rome and the 23rd Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC) in January 2016 in Malaysia.
- The Lord Speaker participated at the 16th Meeting of the Association of European Senates in The Hague in the spring of 2015 and the 10th Women Speakers and 4th World Conference of Speakers held consecutively in August/September under the auspices of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in New York.
- The Lord Speaker received visits from Speakers from Montserrat, Côte D'Ivoire, Pakistan, Ghana, Iceland, Italy, Israel and Morocco, and received King Abdullah II of Jordan, the presidents of Italy and Mauritius and the prime ministers of Bangladesh and Slovenia.
- Visits to the Upper Houses of Canada and Morocco were made by the Lord Speaker in autumn 2015 and to the parliament of Slovenia in February 2016.
- Members attended several international meetings of parliamentarians, for example, the Global Parliamentary Conference (The Parliamentary Network on the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) in Washington DC, the 'Reform for Growth in Europe' Seminar in Rome.

Reaching out

The House of Lords works on behalf of the people of the UK and it's vital there is a strong relationship with the public. Members explain the work of the House through a range of formal and informal outreach activities.

Peers in Schools

The Lord Speaker's Peers in Schools programme, where secondary schools can apply for a visit from a member of the House to hear first hand explanations of the work and the role of the Lords, continues to grow.

Members, including academics, scientists, lawyers, former teachers, cabinet ministers and civil servants, have visited more than 1,600 schools since the programme began in 2007, reaching over 80,000 students and around 2,000 teachers across the UK.

To arrange a Peers in Schools visit, contact the Lord Speaker's office:

📞 020 7219 6444

@ lordspeaker@parliament.uk

Lords chamber event 2015

Every year the House of Lords chamber is opened up for a public debating event.

In December 2015 more than 200 people came to the House of Lords chamber for an intergenerational debate on how to increase diversity in Parliament.

Participants were drawn from partnerships with a number of organisations including The English-Speaking Union, the British Humanist Association, Girlguiding, Humanist Society Scotland and Three Faiths Forum, as well as students from schools across the UK.



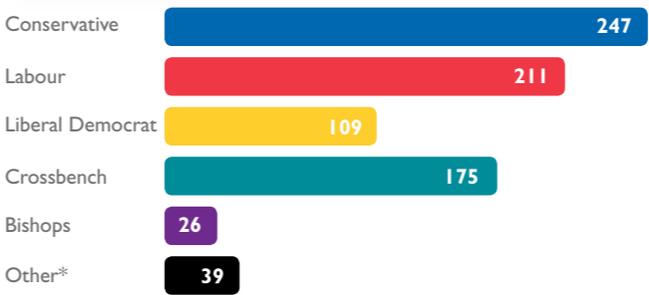
Participants in the 2015 chamber event

Facts and figures

Take a closer look at the membership and work of the House of Lords in numbers.

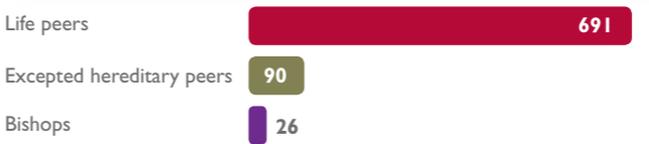
Members

Party strengths



* Members from other political parties and non-affiliated members

By type



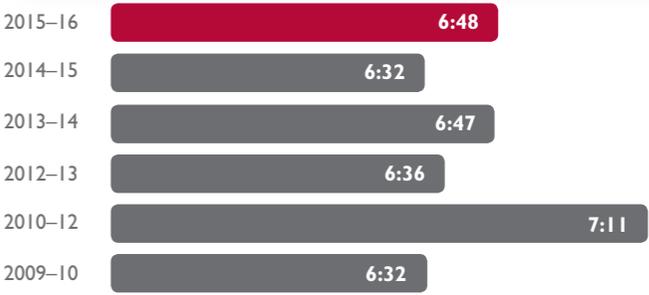
Figures as at end of 2015-16 session and exclude members not eligible to sit (28 on leave of absence, 8 disqualified as senior members of the judiciary and one suspended).

Working patterns

Average daily attendance



Average length of chamber sittings (hours:minutes)



How time was spent



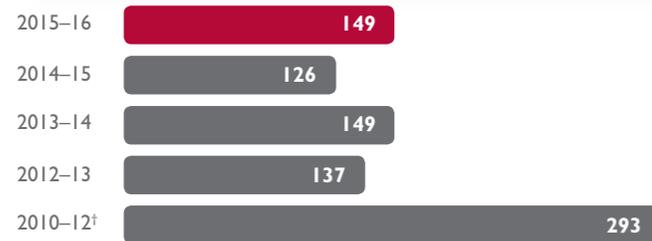
Source: House of Lords sessional statistics 2015-16
 * Includes member introductions, daily prayers, adjournments and other formal business



Sitting days

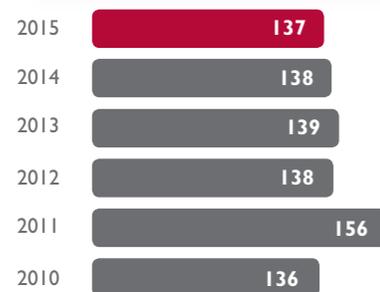
The unit that defines Parliament's work is a session. Whether calculated by session, calendar or financial year, the working year averages around 150 sitting days for both Houses.

By session

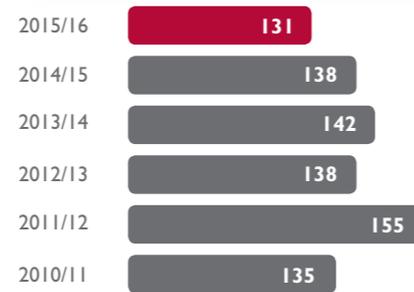


† Two-year session

By calendar year



By financial year (April - March)



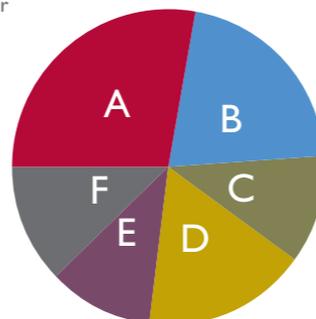
Costs

Expenditure in the 2015/16 financial year

Total costs in the year to March 2016 amounted to £95.99 million. This includes works expenditure (which covers the House of Lords' share of all accommodation, maintenance and building costs including the Grade I listed Palace of Westminster).

A Staff costs	28%
B Members' expenses and financial support	21%
C Security	11%
D Estates and works	17%
E Other expenditure	11%
F Non-cash costs (building depreciation etc.)	12%

Total costs (millions)	£95.99
Cost per taxpayer	£3.18†



† 'Other' includes any offsetting income i.e. rental and catering and retail income.

† Based on an estimated 30.2 million income tax payers in 2015-16 (source: HM Revenue & Customs)

Lords online

The 2015-16 parliamentary session saw the continued development of multimedia and digital resources to complement the Lords website at www.parliament.uk/lords

@ukhouseoflords

Follow the House of Lords on Twitter to keep up to date with news from the chamber and committees, use #LordsQs and #HouseofLords.

Other social media channels

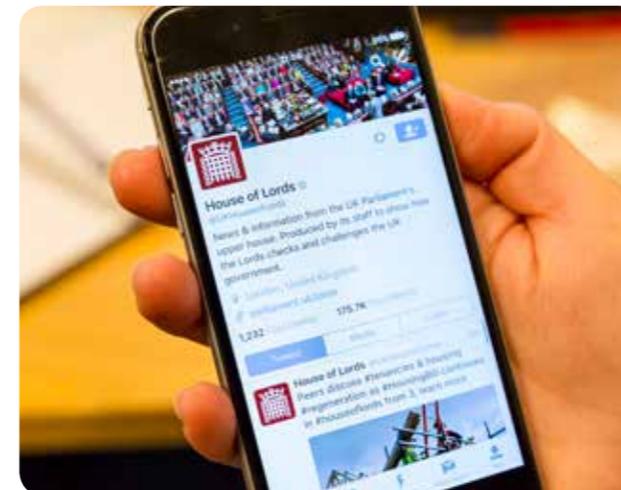
Other Lords social media channels include Facebook, Flickr and YouTube. Video, images and news content to promote the core work of the House, including committee work and outreach events, is made available for an online audience to share and engage with.

-  www.facebook.com/ukhouseoflords
-  www.youtube.com/ukhouseoflords
-  www.flickr.com/ukhouseoflords

Lords Digital Chamber

The Lords Digital Chamber features the social media activity of members of the House of Lords, political parties and groups in the Lords and related feeds on a single website. Users can interact with posts directly from the website, creating new ways to communicate with members of the Lords and see their conversations in real time.

www.lordsdigitalchamber.co.uk



Find out more

Contact us or go online for information about business, membership and outreach activities.

Contact us if you require this publication in an alternative format.

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