

# Wide majorities of most U.K. faiths support assisted suicide

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May 2, 2013

CANTERBURY, England (RNS) A new poll finds overwhelming support for assisted suicide for the terminally ill among Anglicans, Catholics, Hindus, Sikhs and Jews in Britain, with Baptists and Muslims the only groups that oppose changes to British law, which currently prohibits assisted suicide.



*Holding hands photo courtesy Shutterstock (<http://shutr.bz/YpHuU5>)*

But Britons are debating the topic intensely.

More than seven in 10 (72 percent) members of the established Church of England and 56 percent of Roman Catholics support assisted suicide for the terminally ill, the survey shows.

The [online survey](#) of 4,437 people, released Wednesday (May 1), was commissioned by the group Westminster Faith Debates (WFD) to coincide with a Thursday (May 2) [debate](#) on euthanasia in London.

The poll asked respondents whether “people with incurable diseases have the right to ask close friends or relatives to help them commit suicide, without those friends or relatives risking prosecution.”

Just 16 percent of the country’s 1.8 million Muslims opposed changes to current law, with 67 percent of Muslim opponents citing the belief that death should take its natural course. Eighty percent of Baptist opponents said assisted suicide “places too much of a burden on the person or people who help someone to die.”

At 82 percent, the overwhelming reason given by supporters was that individuals should have a right to choose when they die.

Catholics and Anglicans expressed concern about whether an opinion poll involving 4,437 people truly reflects opinion on the controversial issue, though polling experts say much smaller sample sizes can produce valid results.

“It shows how little exposed even practicing religious people are to the teachings of their church,” said Austen Ivereigh of the group Catholic Voices.

An unnamed spokesman for the Church of England told the Guardian: “This study demonstrates that complex discussions on topics such as assisted suicide and euthanasia cannot be effectively conducted through the medium of online surveys.”

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