



Over 60s and under 50s sharply divided on B&B gay discrimination, new survey shows

An appeal by bed and breakfast owners Peter and Hazelmary Bull is due to be heard by the Supreme Court this week. The Bulls refused on religious grounds to let a double room to a homosexual couple in a civil partnership in 2008, and were ordered by a County Court to pay damages to the couple concerned.

A majority think it is wrong to discriminate

A nationally representative poll carried out by YouGov for the Westminster Faith Debates finds that the majority of people in Britain (57%) don't think that B&B owners should be allowed to refuse accommodation to people based on their sexuality, whilst a third (33%) think they should and 11% 'don't know'. (See appendix for survey question.)

Opinion varies enormously by age

In response to the question of whether B&B owners should be allowed to refuse accommodation to people based on their sexuality, 81% of under 24s say they should not, but just 40% of those aged 60 or more agree. Half of those aged 60+ think that B&B owners should be allowed to discriminate against gay couples.

The graph below shows how much opinion differs by age. The younger you are, the more likely you are to be opposed to discrimination against people on the grounds of their sexuality. Even though gender and religion have an effect in shaping opinion, age is decisive. Thus even amongst those most likely to support discrimination – the strictest believers (who take their authority from God, scriptures, religious sources rather than their own judgement) – the current generation of young people is now opposed.

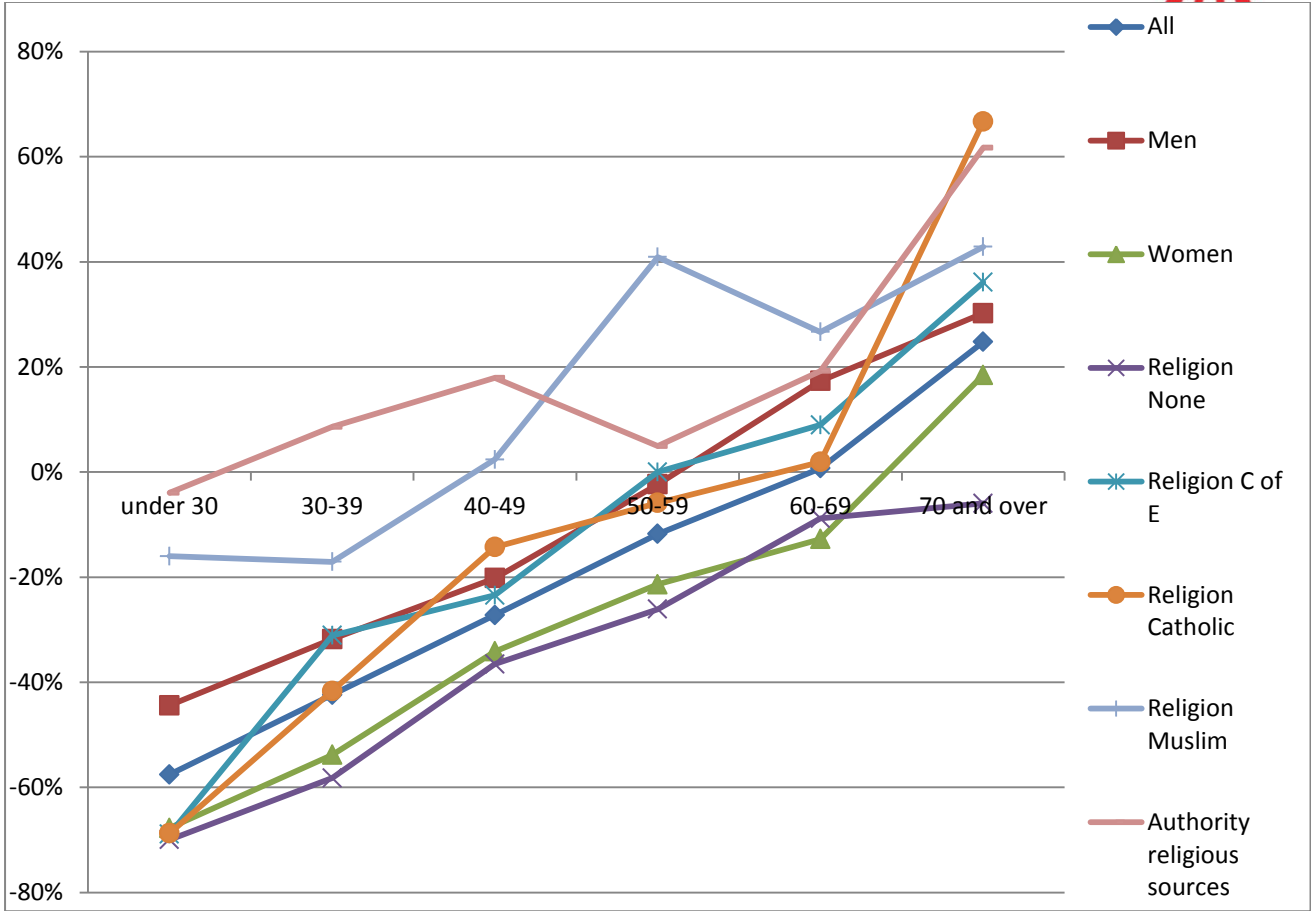


Fig 1: Margin in favour of allowing discrimination by B&B owners (percentage in favour minus percentage against)

A positive % = in favour of allowing discrimination
 A negative % = against allowing discrimination



Most religious people do not think discrimination should be allowed

People who say they belong to a religion also disapprove of discrimination. Asked the question whether B&B owners should be allowed to refuse accommodation to people based on their sexuality, the proportion of those in all the major religious groups who say they should not be allowed outweighs the proportion who say it should.

Do you think that bed-and-breakfast (B&B) owners should or should not be allowed to refuse accommodation to people based on their sexuality?

	No religion	Anglican	Roman Catholic	Jewish	Hindu	Muslim	Sikh	Buddhist
Should	23	41	35	23	20	34	30	6
Should not	67	52	51	65	49	43	51	79
Don't know	9	8	14	12	31	23	20	15

Looking at how opinion varies by strength of belief in God, even the most certain believers are against allowing discrimination (by 49% to 41%), and as you go down the belief scale from certain belief in God to certain atheism, the margin against discrimination increases to 40% (65% to 25%)

Looking at how opinion varies amongst those who regularly participate in a religious group, the more regularly attenders are more likely to be in favour of allowing discrimination. Those who attend at least once a week are in favour by 53% to 36%. The more rarely you attend a religious group the less you are in favour.

Amongst all religious people those most in favour of allowing discrimination are the small group who look to God (48% to 36%), scripture (50% to 37%), or traditions/teachings of religion (49% to 35%) for their main authority in life.



Paying damages

Our survey also asked whether it was right or wrong that the Bulls were ordered to pay damages of £3,600; 49% of people think it was wrong that they had to pay damages, while 40% say it was right, and 11% don't know. About a quarter of those who think the Bulls should not be allowed to discriminate nevertheless think they should not have to pay damages.

The Archbishop of Canterbury's dilemma

If Justin Welby is tempted to make a statement on the B&B cases going through the Supreme Court this week, he has to choose between offending a large number of Anglicans aged 60 and over – who are in favour of allowing owners to discriminate – or offending Anglicans under 50 who are very strongly against (by more than 2:1).

Linda Woodhead commented:

“Although our survey finds that, on balance, people don't think the Bulls should have had to pay £3,600 in damages, it also finds that this does not translate into approval for B&B owners discriminating against people on the basis of their sexuality. People under fifty, including religious people, are particularly clear about that, and the overall view is strongly against allowing discrimination in the future.”



Notes

The survey was designed by Linda Woodhead and carried out online by YouGov. It was completed by 4018 people. Fieldwork was undertaken between 5th – 13th June 2013. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+). Northern Ireland is not included.

The Westminster Faith debates are organised by Charles Clarke and Linda Woodhead and supported by Lancaster University, the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Economic and Social Research Council. They are designed to bring high-quality academic research on religion into public debate.

http://www.religionandsociety.org.uk/faith_debates-2013/

Martin Hall and Stephen Preddy issued proceedings against the Bulls under the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007, maintaining that they directly or indirectly discriminated against them on the ground of their sexual orientation. The County Court held that the Bulls had directly discriminated against them, awarding Mr Hall and Mr Preddy £1,800 each in damages. The Court of Appeal dismissed the Bulls' challenge to the ruling last year, but they subsequently won permission to take their case before the Supreme Court this week.

Full survey and results available from Linda Woodhead or YouGov website.



Appendix

Question 1

Do you think that bed-and-breakfast (B&B) owners should or should not be allowed to refuse accommodation to people based on their sexuality?

Should be allowed to refuse accommodation to people based on their sexuality	33
Should NOT be allowed to refuse accommodation to people based on their sexuality	57
Don't know	11

Question 2

In 2008, a gay couple were refused entry to a bed-and-breakfast on grounds of their sexuality based on the Christian beliefs of the owners. The bed-and-breakfast owners have since been ordered by the courts to pay damages of £3,600 to the couple. Do you think it was right or wrong that the bed-and-breakfast owners were ordered to pay damages to the couple?

Right to pay damages	40
Wrong to pay damages	49
Don't know	11