

Conservative Backbench Rebels, 2001-03

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Conservative backbench rebellion has not attracted the same level of media interest that has been generated by the splits within the Government's ranks. Conservative MPs have not been rebelling as frequently as Labour MPs, nor in such large numbers. But there were still 74 occasions during the first two sessions of the 2001 Parliament (that is, up to November 2003) when Conservative MPs defied their party managers.

These rebellions involved a total of 60 Conservative MPs: 41 rebelled during the 2001-02 session, with a further 20 doing so at some point during the second session. Most of the Tory rebels have not rebelled frequently: 36 of the 60 (60 per cent) cast just one or two votes against their party line.

The table below lists the most Conservative backbench rebels – those who cast at least four votes against the party whip during the first two sessions of this Parliament. Douglas Hogg – who declared recently that 'every vote is a free vote' – would probably be even more clearly out in front of the rest of the pack were it not for his boycott of deferred divisions. The most rebellious include two husband-and-wife pairings (Mackay and Kirkbride, and the Wintertons) as well as two members of the 2001 intake, Andrew Turner and Andrew Rosindell (along with Bob Spink, who returned in 2001, having been first elected in 1992).

Most rebellious Conservative MPs, 2001-2003

Rank	Name	Number of votes cast against the party whip, 2001-03
1.	D. Hogg	25
2.	R. Shepherd	21
3.	B. Spink	19
4.	A. Mackay	12
5.	J. Kirkbride	10
6=	A. Turner	9
7=	N. Winterton	9
8.	P. Bottomley	8
9	K. Clarke	7
9=.	B. Mawhinney	7
9=	A. Rosindell	7
12=	J. Gummer	6
12=.	T. Taylor	6
14.	A. Winterton	4

Below these 14, come nine Conservative MPs who voted against their party line on three occasions. (These include Andrew Hunter, but counting only those occasions before her resigned the party whip on 2 October 2002). And below them are 20 Tory MPs who rebelled twice and 17 who did so once.

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