



Membership of UK political parties

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The UK's political party system is at a time of considerable change. Membership of the three main political parties is at a historic low: less than 1% of the UK electorate is now a member of the Conservative, Labour or Liberal Democrat Party, compared to 3.8% in 1983. Latest estimates suggest that the Conservative Party claimed 134,000 members, the Labour party 190,000 and the Liberal Democrat Party 44,000.

Yet membership of smaller, often nationalist parties has risen markedly since the new millennium. In June 2014 membership of the UK Independence Party was around 39,000; in November 2014 membership of the Scottish National Party was around 92,000; in December 2014 membership of the Green Party was around 29,000. Though none of these parties can claim to equal either the Conservatives or Labour in size, their rise nonetheless represents a notable change in the make-up of the UK's political landscape.

This note provides, in section 2, data on membership of the three main political parties from 1928 and for the UK's smaller parties from 2002. Accompanying commentary is provided on the difficulty of measuring and comparing party memberships.

The social characteristics of political party members and supporters are analysed in section 3. By bringing together a range of sources, this section offers an overview of the data available to measure support for and engagement with political parties.

Data from other European countries is examined in section 4 by way of comparison. A similar decline in party membership has occurred in multiple established democracies.

Non party political activity is analysed in section 5 in order to contextualise the fluctuating popularity of political parties. Activist, trade union and charitable bodies have featured prominently in the UK's post-war political history and, the information presented here suggests, continue to do so.

The new millennium has witnessed a devolution of powers to national assemblies, a referendum on the alternative vote and the UK's first post-war coalition government. Referenda on Scottish independence will be held in September 2014 and, potentially, on the UK's membership of the European Union within the next Parliament. Political parties define and are themselves continually redefined by such events. By providing an overview of data available on their membership, this note aims to aid readers in considering the role of parties within our ever evolving political landscape.

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Contents

- 1 Introduction 2**
- 2 Trends in UK party membership 3**
 - 2.1 Main parties: Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrats 4
 - 2.2 Smaller parties: BNP, Green Party, Plaid Cymru, Respect Party, SNP, UKIP 6
 - 2.3 Comparison: growth and decline in political party memberships since 2002 8
 - 2.4 Broader membership of the Labour Party 9
 - 2.5 Membership revenues 10
 - 2.6 Parties of Northern Ireland (membership revenues) 11
- 3 Social characteristics: party support, membership and polling 11**
 - 3.1 Historic identification and affiliation with political parties 11
 - 3.2 Social composition of party memberships and support bases 13
 - 3.3 Historic voting intentions 17
- 4 Other European countries 20**
- 5 Non party political activity and engagement 22**
 - 5.1 Interest in politics 22
 - 5.2 A democratic deficit? 22
 - 5.3 Trade union membership 23
 - 5.4 Non party political campaigns 24
- 6 Reference tables 25**

1 Introduction

Membership of the three main parties has been in steep decline over recent decades. Less than one per cent of the electorate is currently a member of one of the three main parties, compared with an estimated 3.8% in 1983. In 1970, approximately 4.8% of the electorate was a member of either the Conservatives or Labour alone. The UK now has one of the lowest rates of party membership in Europe, though most Western European countries have seen large falls in party membership over the past fifty years.

At the end of 2013, Labour had approximately 190,000 members compared to reported Conservative Party membership of 134,000. The Conservatives, however, have historically had the largest individual membership base. Reported Conservative Party membership peaked at almost 3 million in the early 1950s, when Labour membership reached a peak of 1 million.

The decline in membership numbers has not been uniform, with occasional increases temporarily offsetting the general downward trends. Furthermore, in the past decade membership of several of the UK's smaller parties has grown rapidly.

Social surveys suggest members of the three main political parties are more likely to be male than the electorate in general, more likely to be retired, to hold either professional or managerial occupational status and to earn over £40,000. Wider support of the Labour Party is approximately balanced between people holding middle and working class occupations. The Conservatives, Liberal Democrats and Green Party all show a weighting towards supporters holding a middle class occupation while support for UKIP and the BNP is majority working class occupations.

Support for parties other than the Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrats is, opinion polls suggest, at an unprecedented high. Ipsos Mori polling data shows that only within the last five to eight years has support for 'other' parties held either at or above 10% of the electorate in Great Britain.

Charities, trade unions and activist groups continue to make an important contribution to the UK's socio-political landscape. Though party memberships have declined, the 2013 British Social Attitudes Survey suggests that both interest in politics and individual political activity has risen since the 1980s.

2 Trends in UK party membership

Political parties are not required to make membership figures publicly available. This, and continually changing membership structures, means that the quality of available data varies considerably between parties. Following the *Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000*, all registered political parties have been required to submit annual financial statements to the Electoral Commission since 2002. Statements often include membership figures or indicators but some parties, including the Conservatives and Plaid Cymru, do not provide this information.

In many cases the historical data are only rough estimates and are likely to overstate membership. Conservative membership prior to 1993 appears to have been significantly exaggerated, as does Labour membership up to the 1980s. Now that political parties are required to publish their accounts, the figures (where given) are likely to be more reliable.

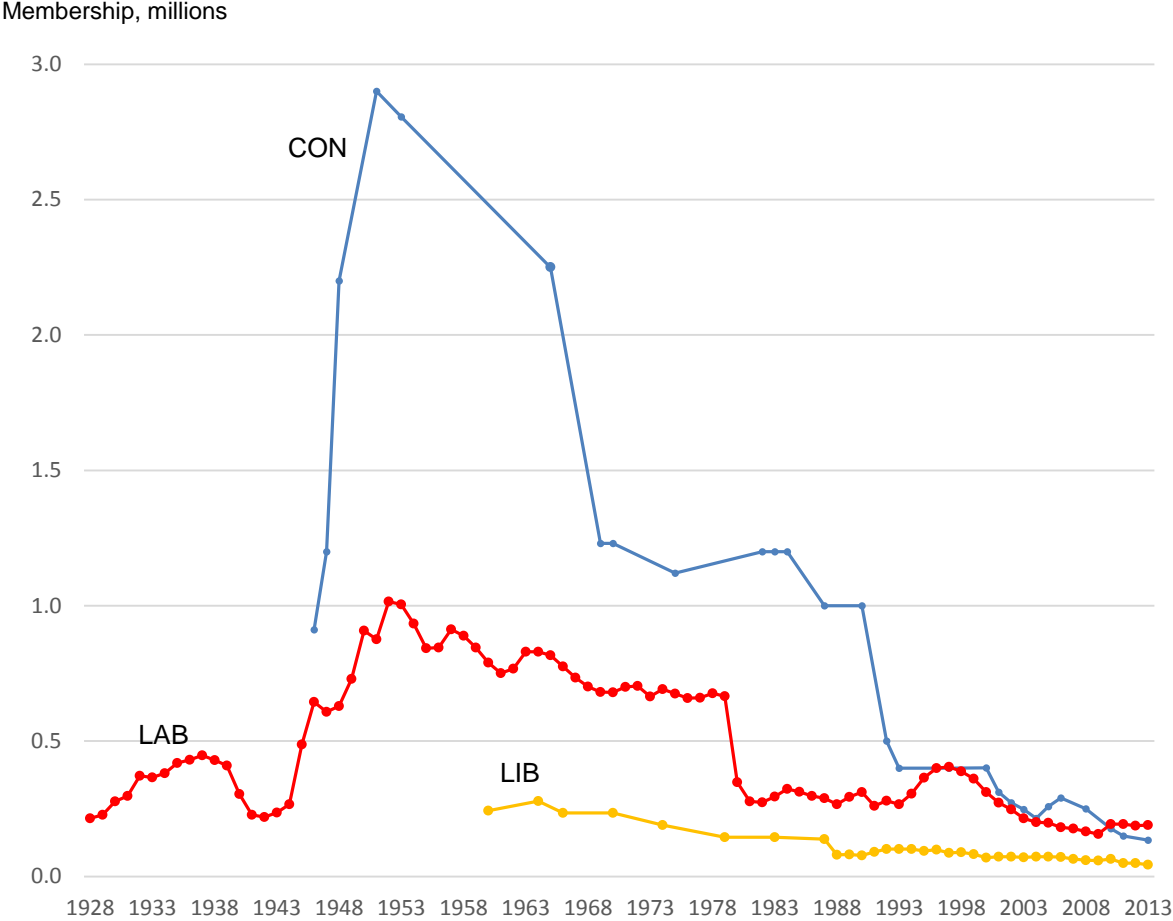
Labour has published figures for individual membership since 1928. Until 2004 figures were provided in the annual Conference Report published by the party's National Executive Committee, and total membership is now recorded in Labour's financial statements. Since the creation of the Liberal Democrats in 1988, membership data have been available from the party's internal leadership and presidential elections and more recently from its annual financial statements. The Conservative Party has never produced any systematic publication detailing its membership.

Readers should be aware that, due to the efforts of several parties to bring flexibility to their terms of membership, what is meant by 'membership' is under constant flux. Some parties restrict the voting rights of certain members, for example, while others offer gradations in membership costs to suit a member's desired level of engagement with the party. Historic estimates have also, as discussed, been subject to exaggeration. As a consequence it is often difficult to compare like for like between party membership levels. To mitigate this issue further information has been given below where appropriate; to provide firm grounds for comparison, data regarding a party's income derived from membership subscriptions has been included in section 2.4.

2.1 Main parties: Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrats

A large fall in party membership occurred between the early 1950s and the present day. In 2013 only 0.8% of the UK electorate was a member of either the Conservative, Labour or Liberal Democrat party. This is down from 3.8% in 1983, although this fall in membership has not been uniform either over time or between parties.

Figure 1: Membership of the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat* party 1928-2013



* Including predecessor parties.
 Full data on membership levels 1928-2013 and on data sources available within Appendix Table 1.

Membership of the three main political parties is shown by figure 1. The figure demonstrates that on only two occasions, in the years either side of the 1997 General Election and at the 2010 General Election, has membership of the Labour Party surpassed that to the Conservatives. Official 2014 estimates are not yet available, though media analysis suggests that membership of these parties holds approximately level at just below 200,000 members each.¹ The Liberal Democrats, in comparison, claimed 100,000 members in the early 1990s, 70,000 in the early 2000s and below 50,000 since the 2010 General Election.

¹ Eaton, George (New Statesman); [Tories to announce ‘tens of thousands’ increase in membership at party conference](#) (29 July 2014)

Conservative Party

Conservative Party membership climbed steeply after the Second World War, from about 910,000 in 1946 to a reported record high of 2.8 million in 1953. Andrew Thorpe suggests that the Conservative's heavy defeat by Labour in the 1945 General Election "produced a huge fillip to Conservative membership recruitment. Faced with the reality of a 'socialist' government, many lapsed members returned and new ones came in for the first time."²

The Conservatives had more individual members than any other party up to the mid-1990s, when there were about 400,000 Conservative Party members. Membership fell by more than half between 2000 and 2013, although the decline was temporarily reversed in the mid 2000s; in September 2013 Conservative Campaign headquarters released a membership estimate of 134,000 to Conservative Home³.

Responding to debate regarding the changing nature of party membership in the UK, Conservative Party Chairman Grant Shapps announced the creation of Conservative Party Friends in September 2013.⁴ Friends are commonly included within the estimate of members but, paying a reduced membership fee, do not hold full voting rights within the party.

Labour Party

The Labour Party doubled its membership between 1928 (when membership figures were first reported) and 1937. Membership was down significantly during the Second World War but rose sharply in the immediate post-war period. In 1952 and 1953 the party claimed over a million members.

Reported membership in 1980 was 348,000 compared with 666,000 in 1979, but the large decrease was probably due to a change in reporting standards and suggests Labour's actual membership before 1980 was exaggerated. Andrew Thorpe comments that Labour's figures for individual party membership "have always been regarded as somewhat suspect, especially from 1956 when constituency Labour parties (CLPs) were forced to affiliate on a membership of at least 800, and still more from 1963 when that figure was raised to 1,000, at which point, in theory, an actual membership of zero would have been recorded as 618,000."⁵

Membership remained fairly constant throughout the 1980s before climbing in the mid-1990s as Tony Blair led a drive to recruit new members. There was a fall in membership during Labour's time in office between 1997 and 2009, but it increased again in 2010. In each year between 2010 and 2013 the party's membership has held level at approximately 190,000 members.

In March 2014 Labour Party leader Ed Miliband announced plans to reform the terms of membership of party supporters and a change in the party's relationship to its trade union affiliates. Details of these reforms are provided below in section 2.4.

² Andrew Thorpe (2009), "Reconstructing Conservative Party Membership in World War II Britain", *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol 62 No 2, p236

³ Goodman, Paul (Conservative Home); [CCHQ declares Conservative Party membership to be 134,000](#) (17 September 2013)

⁴ Shapps, Grant (Conservative Home); Grant Shapps: [Yes, Party Membership will survive-but it will change](#) (18 September 2013)

⁵ Thorpe; Op. Cit.; p227

Liberal Democrat Party and predecessors

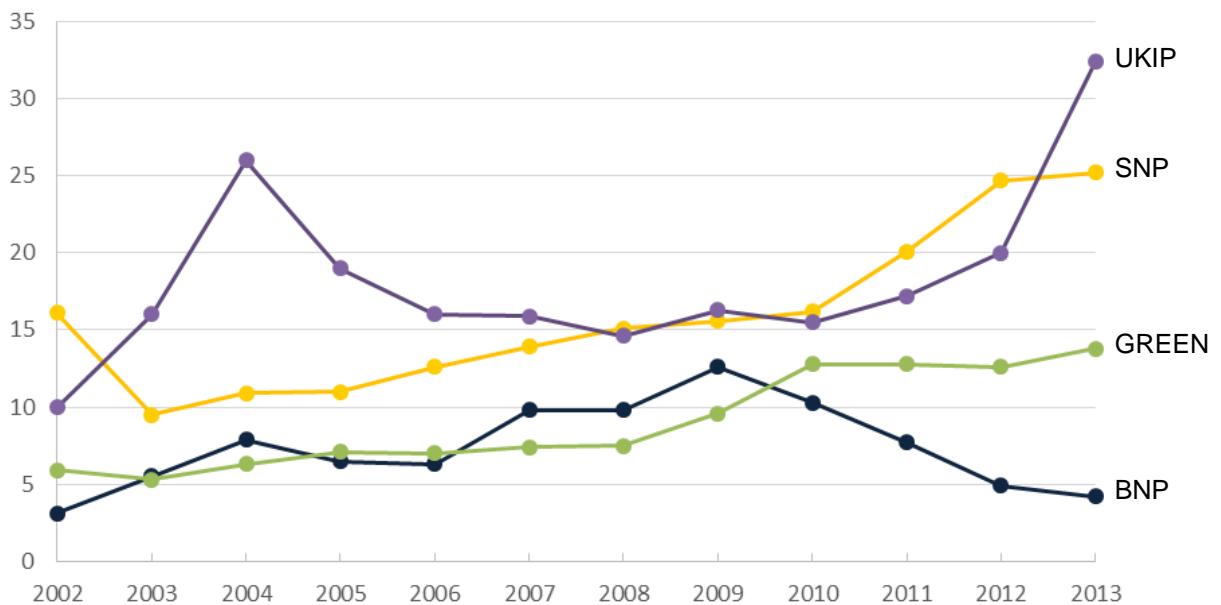
Patrick Seyd and Paul Whiteley have estimated that the Liberal Party had over 243,000 members in 1960.⁶ They estimate the combined membership of the Liberal Party and the Social Democratic Party to have been approximately 145,000 in 1983 and 138,000 in 1987,⁷ although in 1988 the newly created Liberal Democrat party reported its membership of be much lower at about 80,000.

The Liberal Democrats claimed about 100,000 members in the early 1990s, falling to around 70,000 in the early 2000s. Membership showed a sharp fall after to the 2010 General Election, from 65,000 in 2010 to about 49,000 in 2011. As of April 2014 the party claimed around 44,000 members.⁸

2.2 Smaller parties: BNP, Green Party, Plaid Cymru, Respect Party, SNP, UKIP

Figure 2: Membership of the BNP, Green Party, SNP and UKIP 2002-2013

Membership, 000s



Note that figure 2 uses a different scale (in thousands) to that of figure 1 (in millions).

British National Party

Membership of the British National Party peaked at approximately 12,600 members in 2009, the year of elections to the European Parliament in which the party won two seats. Membership fell by approximately 3,000 members per year in 2010-2012. In 2013 the party claimed 4,200 members, just below its membership of a decade previous of 5,500.

Green Party

Membership of the Green Party (England and Wales) appears, according to submissions to the Electoral Commission, to have held level at approximately 5,000 members between 1998 and 2002. Rising slightly in 2004 and 2005, it again held steady at just over 7000 members 2005-2008. In 2009 membership jumped to 9,600, then again in 2010 to 12,800 members - the year in which the party won its first MP. Membership held level just below 13,000 in

⁶ Paul Whiteley and Patrick Seyd (2002), *High-Intensity Participation: The Dynamics of Party Activism in Britain*, p10

⁷ Patrick Seyd and Paul Whiteley (2004), "British Party Members: An Overview", *Party Politics*, Vol 10 No 4, p357

⁸ (Liberal Democrat Press Releases), *Lib Dem membership surge continues* (2 April 2014)

2010-2012, before rising slightly to 13,800 members as of 31 December 2013. In a party press release of 11 December 2014 the party announced membership had passed 29,000.⁹

Membership to the Scottish Green Party stated in accounts ending 31 December 2013 was around 1,200; a Green Party (England and Wales) press release issued 11 December 2014 reported membership was approximately 7,500. Please note, however, that the 'Scottish Green Party' is registered with the Electoral Commission as an organisation separate from the 'Green Party' (England and Wales); consequently throughout this note figures for 'the Green Party' refer to the Green Party of England and Wales only.

Plaid Cymru

Plaid Cymru does not include information on its number of members in its submissions to the Electoral Commission. On 27 January 2012 Steven Morris of the Guardian reported the party's membership as 7,863 members. Also that month, Plaid Cymru also published plans for a renewed membership drive¹⁰.

Respect Party

Founded in 2004 by a coalition of campaigners, the Respect Party won its first Parliamentary seat at the 2005 General Election.¹¹ Membership numbers are only available from the Electoral Commission following the party's split from the Socialist Workers Party in 2007. In 2008, the first year in which Respect's submissions to the Electoral Commission included membership data, the party claimed 500 members. Peaking at 1,900 members in 2012, in 2013 Respect disclosed that its membership had fallen to 200 members.

Scottish National Party

Having recorded 16,000 members in 2002, membership of the Scottish National Party fell to 9,500 members in 2003. It has risen in every year since this time. Membership rose by approximately 1000 new members each year to reach around 16,000 members in 2010. In 2011 membership jumped to 20,000, then to 24,000 in 2012. As of 31st December 2013 membership was reported as 25,000.

Following the Scottish Independence Referendum (18 September 2014) the SNP experienced a rapid rise in membership. A party press release dated 22 November 2014 stated the party had around 90,000 members.¹²

United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)

Increases in membership of the United Kingdom Independence Party have coincided with elections to the European Parliament. Membership levels initially jumped from 10,000 members in 2002 to peak at 26,000 members in 2004 –when the party won 12 seats in elections to the European Parliament, up from two previously- only to fall again to 16,000 in 2006. Membership has since 2010. Starting from 15,000, the party claimed 20,000 in 2012 and 32,000 as of the party's submission to the Electoral Commission on 31 December 2013. On 16 June 2014 a party press release claimed around 39,000 members.¹³

⁹ (Green Party press releases); [Green surge: Green Party polling in fourth again](#) (11 December 2014)

¹⁰ (Plaid Cymru press releases); [Plaid publishes report to move the Party of Wales forward](#) (17 January 2012)

¹¹ (BBC Election 2010); [Profile: Respect Party](#)

¹² (Scottish National Party press release); [SNP membership now exceeds extraordinary 90,000](#) (22 November 2014)

¹³ (UKIP press releases); [UKIP is delighted to announce yet another record membership figure](#) (16 June 2014)

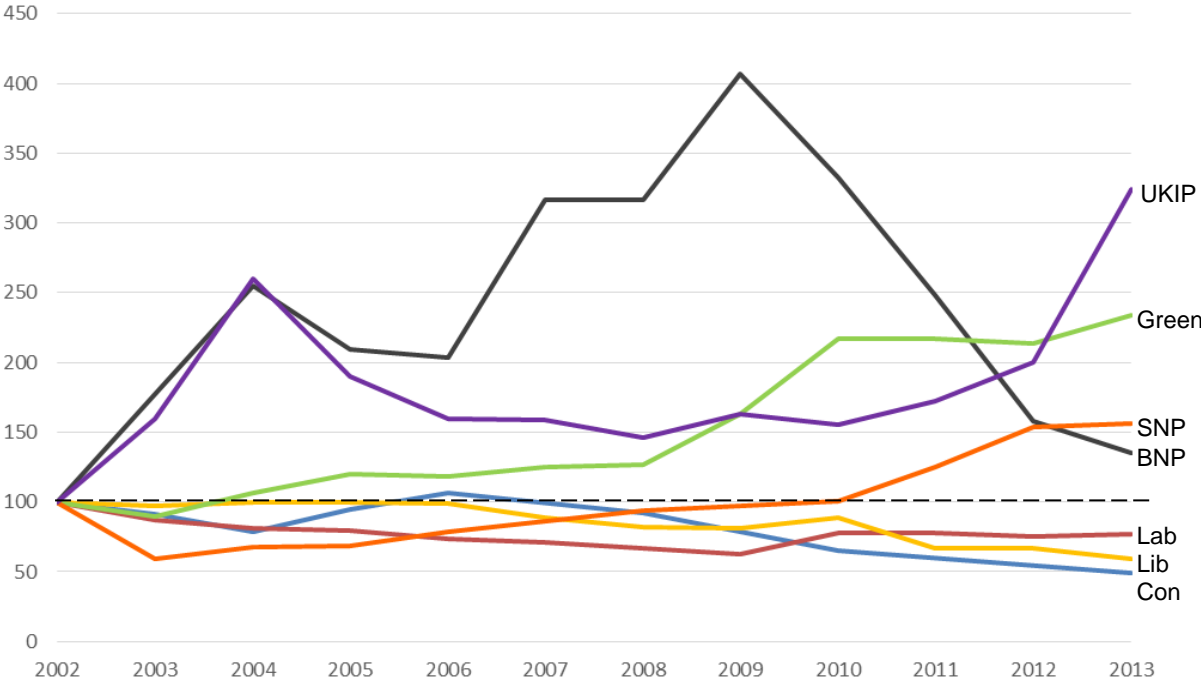
Smaller political parties have, in terms of percentage change to their levels of membership, fared considerably better than the Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrats in the new millennium. Great Britain appears to be experiencing an unprecedented level of diversity in terms of the number of political parties being heard on the centre stage.

2.3 Comparison: growth and decline in political party memberships since 2002

Figure 3 shows the percentage change in party membership for the Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrats, BNP, Green Party, SNP and UKIP. Data for Plaid Cymru is unavailable. Setting 2002 –the first year for which membership data for all these parties is available- as a base point for comparison, the chart displays membership levels for each year following as a percentage of 2002 levels. Readers should remain aware that, while the chart offers a useful means of analysing percentage change in party membership, it does not represent absolute levels: for example, in 2013 Labour Party membership was 2.5 times that of membership of the BNP, UKIP, SNP and Green Party combined despite this not being immediately apparent from the chart.

Figure 3: Trends in membership of political parties 2002-2013

Index 2002=100



Membership of the Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrats has declined in percentage terms over 2002-2013. This decline was not uniform: in 2006 membership of the Conservative Party was estimated to be slightly above its 2002 level and, since 2010, membership of the Labour Party has held steady at approximately 22% below its 2002 level.

Most striking, however, is the percentage rise in support for other political parties. Membership of the BNP rose rapidly to peak at over 300% of its 2002 level in 2009 (the year of European Elections) only to subsequently decline at an even faster rate. Since 2010, furthermore, membership of UKIP, the SNP, the BNP and the Green Party has held above 2002 levels. The rapid rise in membership of UKIP was well documented by the British press

in 2013, when in December 2013 membership of the party was 220% above its 2002 level. It remains to be seen if support for UKIP will establish itself as a constant within British politics or, alternatively, suffer a similar fate as that for the BNP. Worthy of note is that, in absolute terms, in 2013/2014 the membership of UKIP was approximately three times that of the BNP at its peak in 2009.

2.4 Broader membership of the Labour Party

The relationship of trade unions to the Labour Party has been the focus of considerable political activity in recent years, with reforms announced by party leader Ed Miliband at a March 2014 special conference purported to complete a process of renewal covering two decades.

The broader Labour movement comprises members of affiliated trade unions (ATUs) and the Socialist and Cooperative societies alongside official party members (members of constituency Labour parties). Previous to the reforms of 2014, ATUs held a 50% share of the vote at the Labour Party Conference and contribute affiliation fees. In 2011, the party received £8.0 million from affiliated groups compared with membership income of £5.2 million.

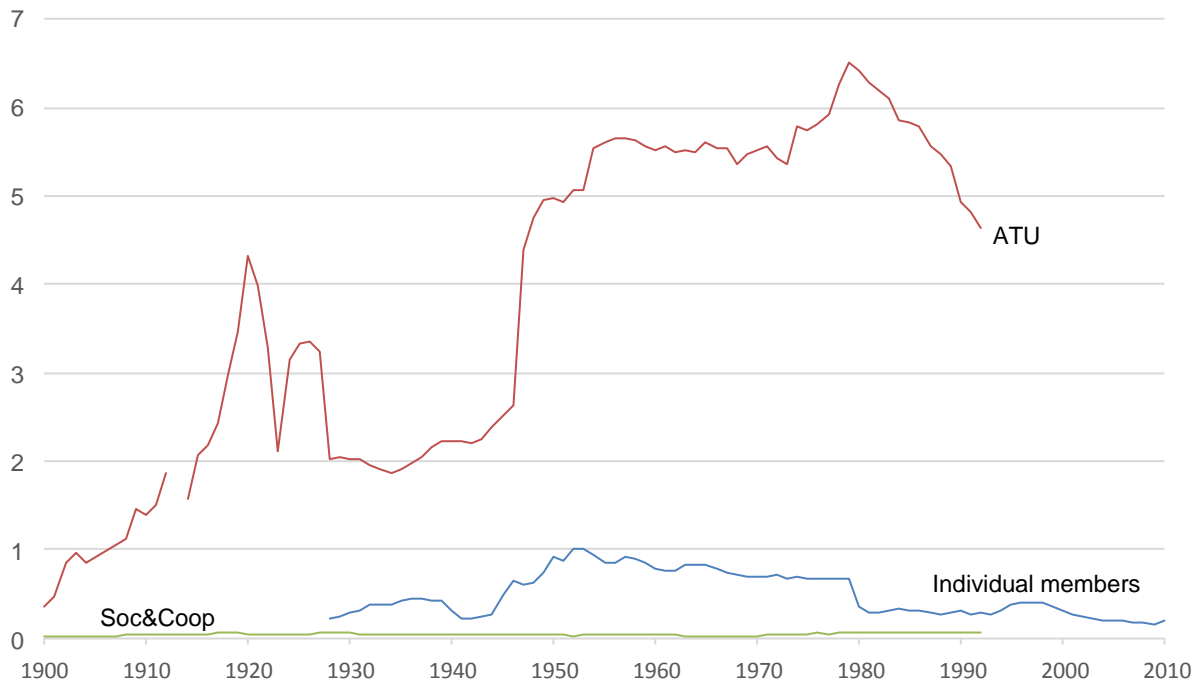
The Labour Party Conference Report included membership figures for the ATUs and the Socialist and Cooperative (Soc&Coop) societies up to 1992. The figures are set out in Table 4 at the end of this note. ATU membership rose rapidly in the years immediately following the Second World War. It peaked at 6.5 million in 1979 but then fell steadily over the 1980s. In 1992 ATU membership was 4.6 million.

Individual party membership also increased in the immediate post-war period. In 1952, there were 1.0 million individual party members, representing about one sixth of broad Labour membership. The sudden decline in individual members as a proportion of broad membership after 1979 is attributable to the likely exaggeration of membership figures before 1980.

Reforms approved by special conference of the Labour Party on 1st March 2014, following the Collins Review into Labour Party reform, were announced with the stated aim of ensuring Labour 'becomes a genuinely mass membership party'. Provisions made include the adoption of a one member one vote system for leadership elections (already used by the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats) and a transition, over a five year period, to a system in which affiliation fees are only accepted on behalf of individual levy payers who have consented to their payment. Any attempt to fully analyse the impact of these reforms would be premature. Nonetheless, they are of interest here in so far as they highlight an attempt by a major party to address declining membership levels and reassert the role of the party organisation within the political landscape.

Figure 4: Broader membership of the Labour movement

Membership, millions



2.5 Membership revenues

The *Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000* requires that all registered political parties submit their annual financial statements to the Electoral Commission. Figure 5 shows revenues obtained from membership and subscription fees since 2002. These figures do not include donations or party affiliation fees.

Labour membership income has been substantially larger than that received by other parties over most of this period. Labour received £5.1 million in 2013, compared with less than £1 million for the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats.

Figure 5: Membership and subscription fee revenues, 2001-2013

£ '000s

	LAB	CON	LD	Green	UKIP	SNP	BNP
2001	3,399		590				36
2002	3,093	665	680	78	119 ^a	136	60
2003	3,452	814	680	87	210	126	92
2004	3,492	814	710	100	199	169	129
2005	3,685	843	769	114	181	195	115
2006	4,376	1,191	832	118	148	244	145
2007	4,447	1,214	804	142	167	311	201
2008	3,930	1,229	808	140	194	367	166
2009	4,497	1,085	890	133	177	387	626
2010	4,927	1,031	1,028	170	170	408	305
2011	5,205	863	930	206	254	449	228
2012	5,508	747	890	225	438	555	147
2013	5,146	749	850	237	714	586	142

Notes: (a) UKIP revenues for 2002 refer to the sixteen month period 1 September 2001 to 31 December 2002.

Source: Electoral Commission

2.6 Parties of Northern Ireland (membership revenues)

Very limited information is available regarding the membership levels of any of the Northern Ireland parties. As a rule parties do not include their membership levels within submissions to the electoral commission and several do not include their income specifically derived from membership subscriptions either. Consequently, figure 6 shows the total income of a range of parties existing in Northern Ireland.

Figure 6: Total income of political parties in Northern Ireland, 2013

Party	Total income (£)
Alliance Party of Northern Ireland	92,118
Democratic Unionist Party	474,147
Ulster Unionist Party	318,815
Sinn Fein	1,161,163
Social Democratic & Labour Party	360,483

Source: party submissions to the Electoral Commission year ending 31st December 2013

3 Social characteristics: party support, membership and polling

This section examines the membership of political parties within a social context. It shall do this by: first, examining historic information on the popular appeal of political parties; second, investigating the social characteristics of party members and supporters as compared to the wider electorate; third, providing historic polling data on support for political parties over the past 35 years.

Numerous academic works exist for readers who wish to learn more of the social make-up of party membership and support bases. Summary explanations for decreasing party memberships can be found in the 2004 publication *British Party Members: An Overview* by Seyd and Whiteley.¹⁴ Whiteley's own work *Where have all the members gone* will be examined in detail below. The 2011 journal article *Going, going...gone?* examines the decline of party membership across contemporary Europe.¹⁵ Recently, Robert Ford and Matthew Goodwin's book *Revolt on the Right* (2014) has examined the social basis for the growing popularity of the BNP and UKIP over the past decade.¹⁶

3.1 Historic identification and affiliation with political parties

Identification with a political party has, the 2013 *British Social Attitudes Survey* found, declined over the past 30 years.¹⁷ In 2012, 76% of people said they identified with a political party; this is a fall of 11 percentage points from its 1983 level. Figure 7 shows this data in full.

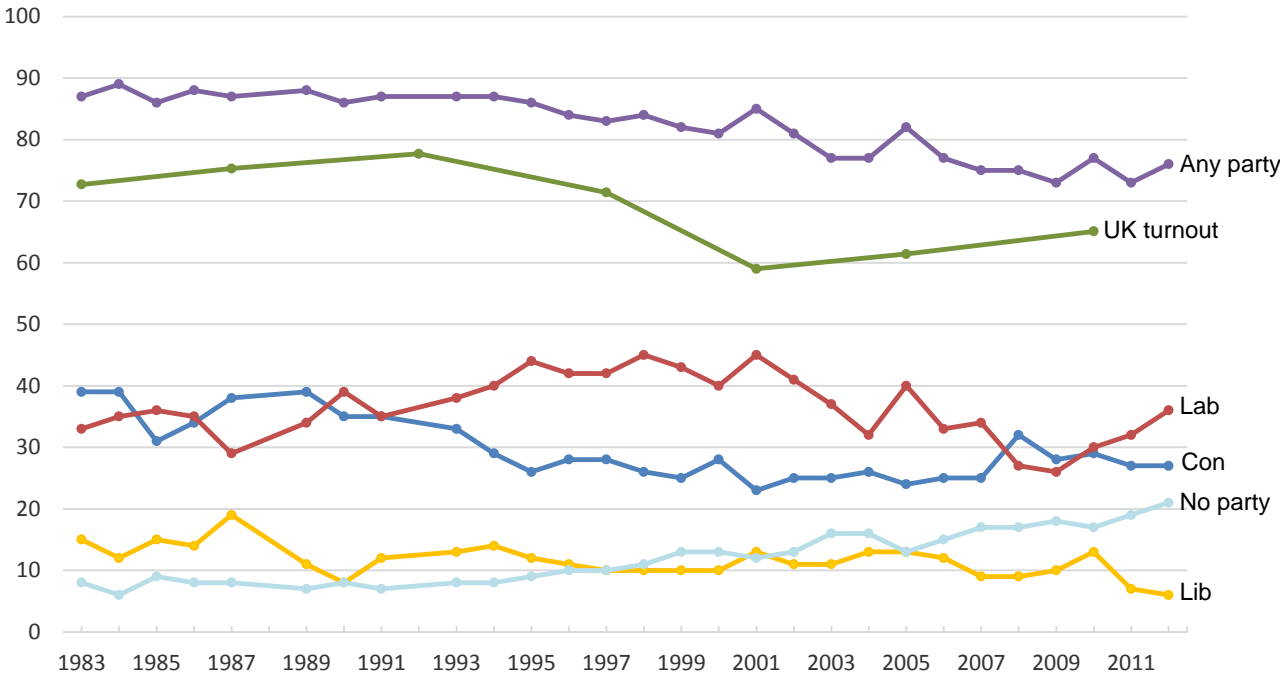
¹⁴ Patrick Seyd and Paul Whiteley (2004), "British Party Members: An Overview", *Party Politics* Vol 10 No 4, pp355-366

¹⁵ Ingrid Van Biezen; Peter Mair; Thomas Poguntke; "Going, going...gone? The decline of party membership in contemporary Europe"; *European Journal of Political Research* (2011)

¹⁶ Robert Ford & Matthew Goodwin; *Revolt on the Right: explaining support for the radical right in Britain* (London, 2014)

¹⁷ Park, A., Bryson, C., Clery, E., Curtice, J. and Phillips, M. (eds.), *British Social Attitudes: the 30th Report (2013)* (London, NatCen Social Research)

Figure 7: Voting in general elections and party identification, 1983-2012 (%)



Data source: *British Social Attitudes Survey Politics report, 2013*

The implications of this fall should not be overstated: over three quarters of people continue to identify with a political party. Nonetheless, in 2012 one in five people (21%) said they did not identify with a political party, the first time this number has surpassed 20% in the history of the British Social Attitudes Survey. Furthermore, evidence suggests that among those who do identify with a political party the strength of this affiliation has fallen. Figure 8 shows the strength of party identification in election years. In 1987 46% of people who identified with a political party did so either very strongly or fairly strongly; this level fell, by 15 percentage points, to 31% in 2012.

Figure 8: Trends in the strength of party identification, election years (%)

	1987	1997	2001	2005	2010	2012	Change % pt 1987-2012
Very strong	11	9	7	7	7	6	-6
Fairly strong	35	28	29	28	29	25	-10
Not very strong	40	47	49	46	41	47	7
None	8	10	12	13	17	22	14

Data source: *British Social Attitudes Survey Politics report, 2013*

Young people seem to have become particularly disassociated from political parties, though all age ranges surveyed demonstrate a loss of allegiance. Figure 9 presents political identification by cohort in the years 1983, 1991, 2002 and 2012.

Figure 9: Identifying with a political party by age

Cohort	Age in 1983	Age in 1991	Age in 2002	Age in 2012	1983	1991	2002	2012
1980s				23-32				66
1970s			25-34	33-42			75	69
1960s		22-31	35-44	43-52		84	79	69
1950s	24-33	32-41	45-54	53-62	85	86	84	75
1940s	34-43	42-51	55-64	63-72	88	88	87	83
1930s	44-53	52-61	65-74	73-82	90	86	89	84
1920s	54-63	62-71	75-84		92	89	87	
1910s	64-73	72-81			89	89		
1900s	74-83				83			
All					87	87	81	72

Source: *British Social Attitudes Survey, 2013*

Guidance reading this table

This table may be read in three ways:

1. To compare data on a particular cohort as they age, read across the columns from left to right within a single row.
2. To compare data of all cohorts within a particular year, read up and down rows within a single column.
3. To compare data on a particular age group in each successive year for which data is recorded, read diagonally across rows and columns from bottom left to top right. Note that the precise ages captured within each cohort fluctuate for each year within which data has been provided.

Three conclusions can be drawn from Figure 9’s findings. First, identification with political parties has fallen across all age ranges: between 1983 and 2012 identification fell among the 1950s cohort by 11 percentage points, while between 1991 and 2012 identification among the 1960s cohort has fallen by 15 percentage points. Second, disaffiliation is particularly prevalent among the young: in 2012, 84% of people aged 73-82 said they identified with a political party compared with only 66% of people aged 23-32. Third, there is ‘generational’ change. Each successive cohort of young voters has, since 1983, been less likely to identify with a political party than its previous cohort; 85% of people aged 24-33 in 1983 identified with a political party, compared to only 66% if 23-32 year olds in 2012.

3.2 Social composition of party memberships and support bases

Party membership

Surveying the social background of party members is difficult as they comprise such a small percentage of the UK’s population. This renders traditional means of surveying ineffective. An alternative method is to survey a vast number of electors via the internet and filter out those electors surveyed who also belong to a political party.

Data presented in this sub-section uses just such a method, derived from the work of Paul Whiteley in the publication *Where have all the members gone*. In 2008 Paul Whiteley used an internet based panel survey linked to the British Election Study and the University of Essex to survey the social composition of membership of the Conservatives Party, Labour Party and Liberal Democrat Party. Some controversy surrounds the use of internet based surveys due to potential discrepancies between the findings of traditional and internet based analysis. Nonetheless, studies have shown that while the answers respondents provide to internet surveys can to some extent differ from those of traditional surveys, the relationship

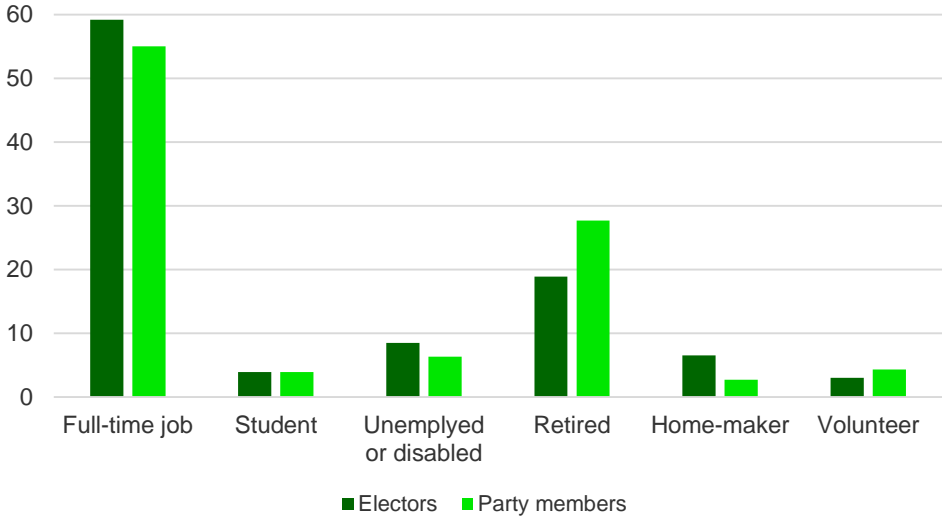
between individual variables within each survey (that is, for example, the percentage of respondents who answered positively to question Y as well as question Z) remains the same between both survey types. Though this data should not be understood as offering a flawless picture of party membership it can offer an informed estimate.¹⁸

Paul Whiteley’s January 2008 survey of around 18,700 electors found around 1,230 (6.6%) electors to be members of the three main parties and a further 2,288 (13.1%) former party members. Figures 10-12 present the survey’s findings; a full table of data can be found in the appendix.

Members of the three main political parties were more likely to be male than electors in general, more likely to be retired, to hold either professional or managerial occupational status and to earn over £40,000.

The employment status of electors as compared to party members is shown by figure 10. 27.7% of party members identified themselves as retired, compared to 18.9% of electors. As may subsequently be expected, members of a political party were less likely to be in full time work than the wider electorate (55% of party members were in full time work, compared to 59.2% of the electorate). Members of a political party were, however, also less likely to be unemployed or disabled.

Figure 10: Employment status of electors and party members Con, Lab, Lib (%)

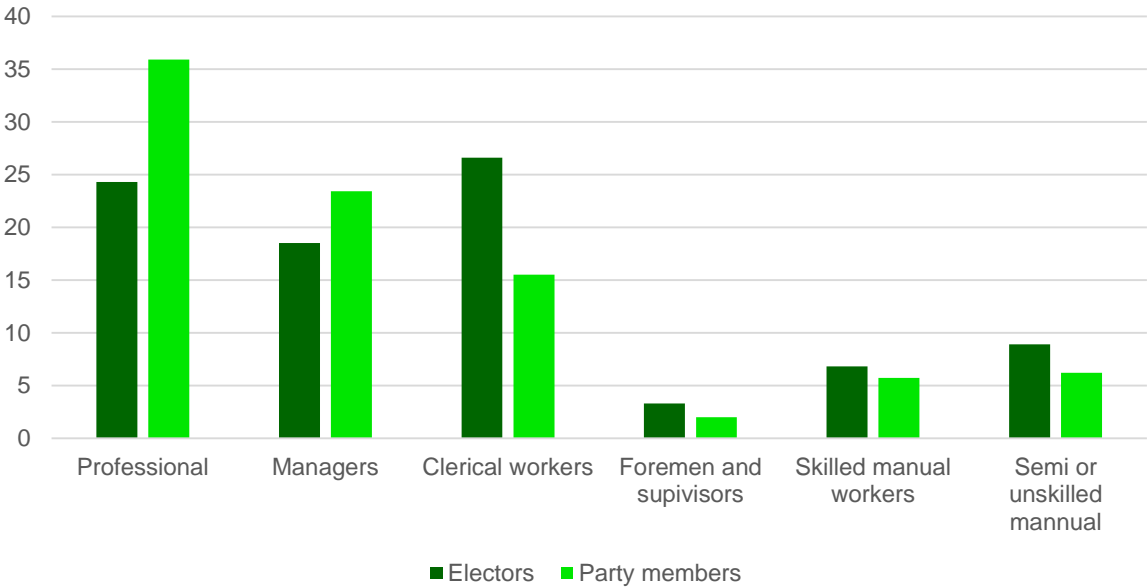


Source: Whiteley, Paul; *Where have all the members gone* (2008 internet survey)

Occupational status is examined by figure 11. Members of a political party were considerably more likely to hold either professional or managerial status than the wider electorate. While over half (59.3%) of party members held either professional or managerial status, under half (42.8%) of electors were found to do so. The percentage contribution of clerical workers to party membership and electors differed by 11 percentage points. The survey’s investigation of income levels reflected these findings: 36.3% of party members earn over £40,000, compared to 28.4% of electors.

¹⁸ Whiteley, Paul; “Where have all the members gone”; *Parliamentary Affairs* Vol. 62 No. 2 (2009), p242–257

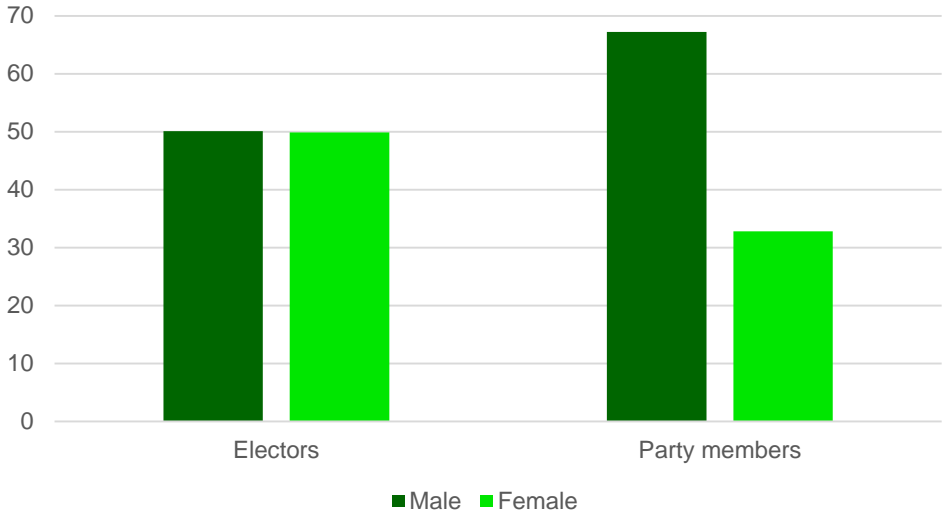
Figure 11: Occupational status of electors and party members Con, Lab, Lib (%)



Source: Whiteley, Paul; *Where have all the members gone* (2008 internet survey)

The most considerable disparity between the social make up of party members and electors is one of gender. Figure 12 shows that while 50.1% of electors are, according to the survey, male, 67.2% of party members are so. This is a difference of 17.1 percentage points.

Figure 12: Gender of electors and party members Con, Lab, Lib (%)



Source: Whiteley, Paul; *Where have all the members gone* (2008 internet survey)

Party supporters

As noted above, accurately surveying the social characteristics of political party members is fraught with difficulties. The same difficulty applies to surveying any group the members of which make up a very small proportion of the total cohort sampled. Providing a detailed picture of the social characteristics of supporters of political parties, particularly of small political parties, is therefore challenging.

Robert Ford’s and Matthew Goodwin’s 2014 book *Revolt on the Right: explaining support for the radical right in Britain* set out to survey the social characteristics of support for UKIP and the BNP as compared to the UK’s other political parties. Their analysis draws upon an impressive body of data derived from almost a decade of surveys by the *British Election Study*. The *Continuous Monitoring Survey*, connected to the Study, has since April 2004 gathered detailed information on approximately 1000 British voters once a month, asking a wide variety of questions. With a sample of around 124,000 British voters between April 2004 and April 2013, Ford and Goodwin were able to build a detailed picture of those people who stated support for a political party.¹⁹ Their results are detailed in figure 13. Further information and analysis is offered in Ford and Goodwin’s work.

Figure 13: Social characteristics of those stating support for a given political party (%)

	Con	Lab	Lib	Greens	UKIP	BNP**
Social class						
Professional/managerial middle class	44	36	43	44	30	22
Routine non-manual*	28	29	29	27	27	23
Working class/other/never worked	28	35	27	28	42	55
Education/age left school						
16 or younger	36	40	31	21	55	62
17 or 18	24	20	19	18	21	19
19 or older	40	40	50	60	24	19
Gender						
Male	49	49	47	46	57	64
Female	51	51	53	54	43	36
Age						
Under 35	24	28	32	37	12	20
35-54	32	38	33	35	31	41
55 plus	44	34	35	28	57	39
Ethnicity						
White	99	96	98	98	100	100
Non-white	1	4	2	2	0	1

*(clerical, sales, services)

**For years 2007-2013

Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding

Source: (Ford & Goodwin; *Revolt on the Right*) *British Elections Study Continuous Monitoring Survey 2004-2013*

Clear divides exist in the social background of party supporters. The professional/managerial middle class dominate within the Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Green parties, in which around 44% of supporters hold middle class occupations while around 28% hold working class occupations. The proportion of supporters holding middle and working class occupations is approximately balanced within the Labour Party at 36% and 35% respectively. People holding a working class occupation are in the majority in both UKIP (42%) and the BNP (55%).

The age at which a voter left education is also divisive. 60% of Green Party supporters left education at 19 or older, as did 50% of Liberal Democrat and 40% of Conservative supporters. An equal proportion of Labour supporters had either left education at 16 or

¹⁹ Ford & Goodwin; Op.Cit; pp. 149-151

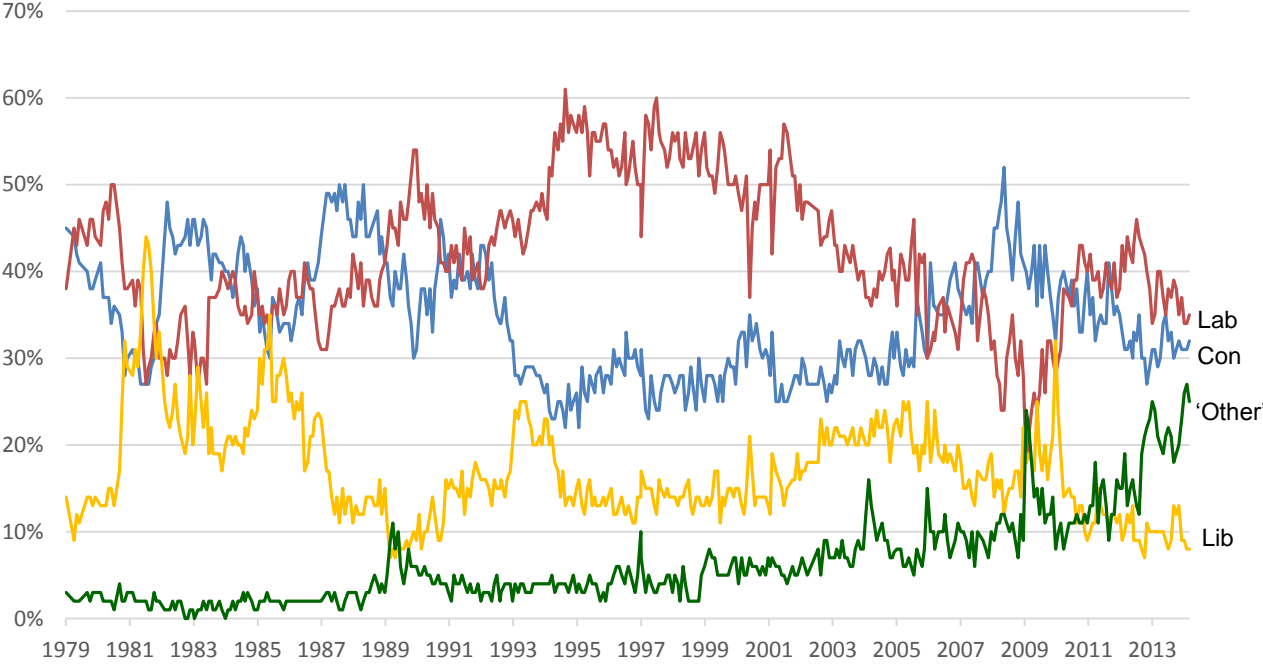
younger as had at 19 or older. UKIP and BNP supporters are, in contrast, more likely to have left school at 16 or younger.

Supporters aged 55 plus are disproportionately represented among UKIP (57%) and the Conservatives (44%). Under 35s are disproportionately represented within the Green Party (37%) and the Liberal Democrat Party (32%).

3.3 Historic voting intentions

Great Britain is experiencing an unprecedented level of diversity in terms of the number of political parties contesting for voter’s backing at general elections. Polling data from Ipsos Mori, recorded on an approximately monthly basis, for voting intention at general elections is displayed in figure 14. Similar data is, of course, available from other polling organisations; Ipsos Mori’s data has been used here first as its survey extends further back than others immediately available to the Library and, second, as of relevance here are the general trends the data reveals not the specific findings of individual polls.

Figure 14: Ipsos Mori general election voter intention polls, 1979-2014 (%)



Note that from October 2002 Ipsos Mori changed its headline polling figures to reflect only those ‘absolutely certain to vote’. Polling data collected on an approximately monthly basis; where multiple polls are available for a single month an average of all available polls has been plotted in the chart below.

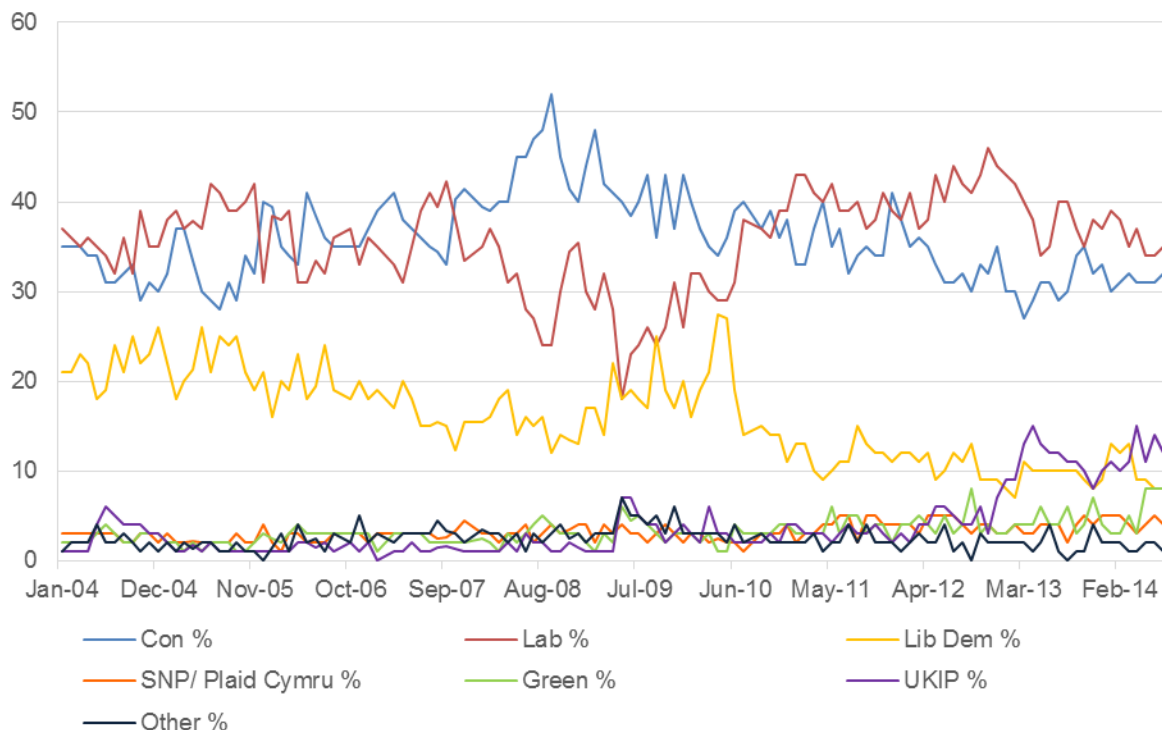
Support for ‘other’ parties (those excluding the Conservative Party, Labour Party and Liberal Democrat Party) is, figure 14 shows, at an unprecedented high. Only within approximately the last five to eight years has support for ‘other’ parties held either at or above 10% of the electorate in Great Britain.

Two observations can be made. First, between May 2004 and May 2010 spikes in support for ‘other’ parties commonly coincide with elections. A General Election was held in May 1997; European Elections were held in May 2004; local elections in May 2006; European Elections in May 2009. A spike in support for ‘other’ parties also occurred in May 1989, likely due to the formation of the Liberal Democrat Party. Second, following many past elections

support for 'other' parties has fallen away again. For example, while support for 'other' reached a high of 24% in May 2009, one year later in May 2010 it had fallen back to 10%. However, it is unclear as to whether this trend has continued to apply in most recent years.

Figure 15, likewise based on Ipsos Mori polling data, provides a more detailed breakdown of support for 'other' parties since January 2004. As well as for the Conservatives, Labour and Liberal Democrats, support for Plaid Cymru/SNP, UKIP and the Green Party is shown.

Figure 15: Ipsos Mori voting intention in Great Britain polls 2004-2014 (%)



Data based on voters identified as 'absolutely certain to vote'
Polling data collected on an approximately monthly basis; where multiple polls are available for a single month an average of all available polls has been plotted in the chart below

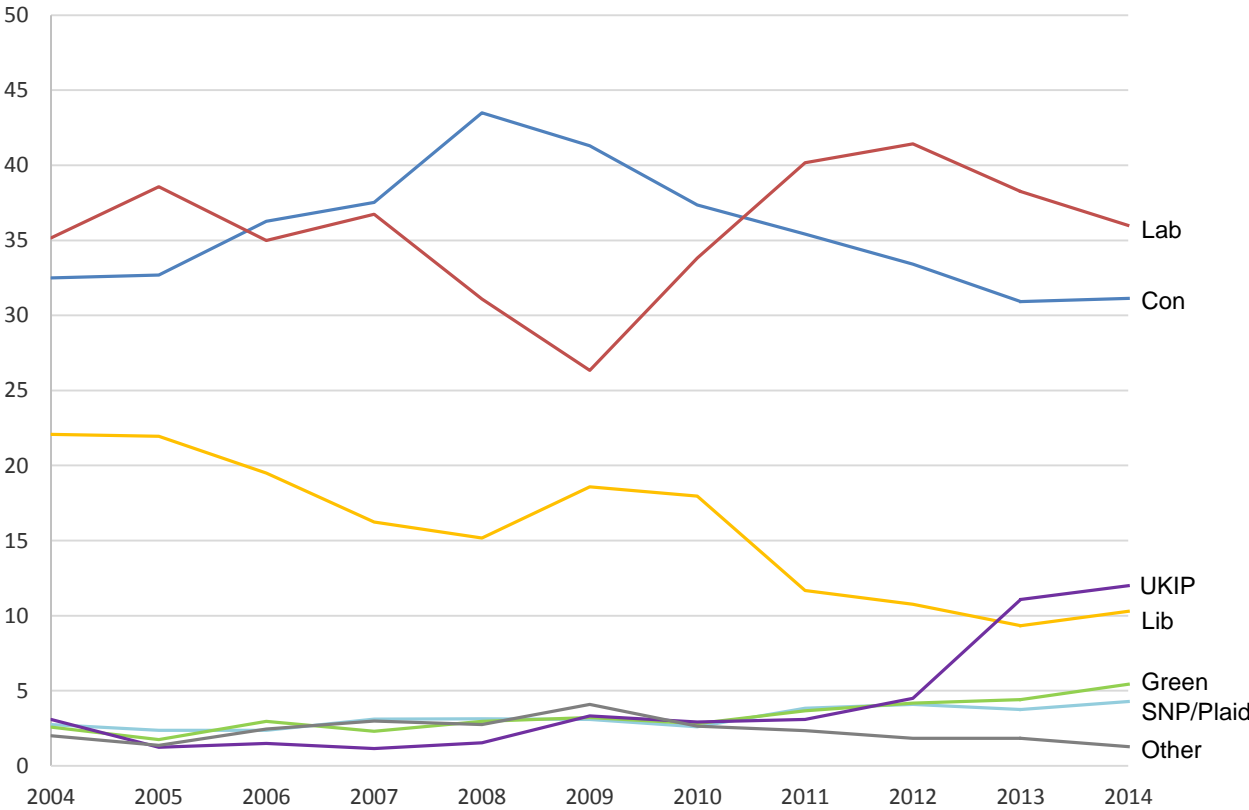
The chart suggests that the previously noted rise in support for 'other' parties is largely due to the rise of UKIP and, to a lesser extent, a rise in support for the Green Party. Support for Plaid Cymru/SNP has also risen slightly across the decade, though this rise has not been uniform.

Voting intention for UKIP at a general election has peaked at 15% on two separate occasions, in April 2013 and April 2014. UKIP voter intention did not hold level between these two highs: in November 2013 it fell to 8%.

Green Party voter intention has peaked at 8% in four separate months, first in September 2012 and then in consecutive months May-July 2014.

Figure 16 shows the average voter intention on a yearly basis, calculated by finding the average of the polls used to construct chart ITRY above; this allows for an analysis of the general trends emerging from changes in support for political parties.

Figure 16: Ipsos Mori voting intention in Great Britain polls 2004-2014, yearly averages (%)



Data based on voters identified as 'absolutely certain to vote'
 Yearly averages are calculated from the sum of polls taken on an approximately monthly basis
 Data for 2014 derived from polls January-July

The rise in support for UKIP again stands out; while voter intention to vote for UKIP at a general election averaged at 3% in 2004, 2009, 2010 and 2011, in 2012 it averaged 5% and in 11% 2013. So far in 2014, for which only seven months of data are available at time of writing, voting intentions for the party have averaged 12%.

A steady rise has also occurred in voting intentions for SNP/Plaid Cymru and the Green Party, again since approximately 2011. Between 2004-2010 the yearly average of voting intention polls for both the Green Party and SNP/Plaid Cymru have fluctuated between either 2% or 3%. Between 2011-2013 voting intentions for both the Green Party and SNP/Plaid Cymru rose slightly, averaging at 4%. This rise appears to be continuing into 2014 for the Green Party, which so far this year has averaged at 5%.

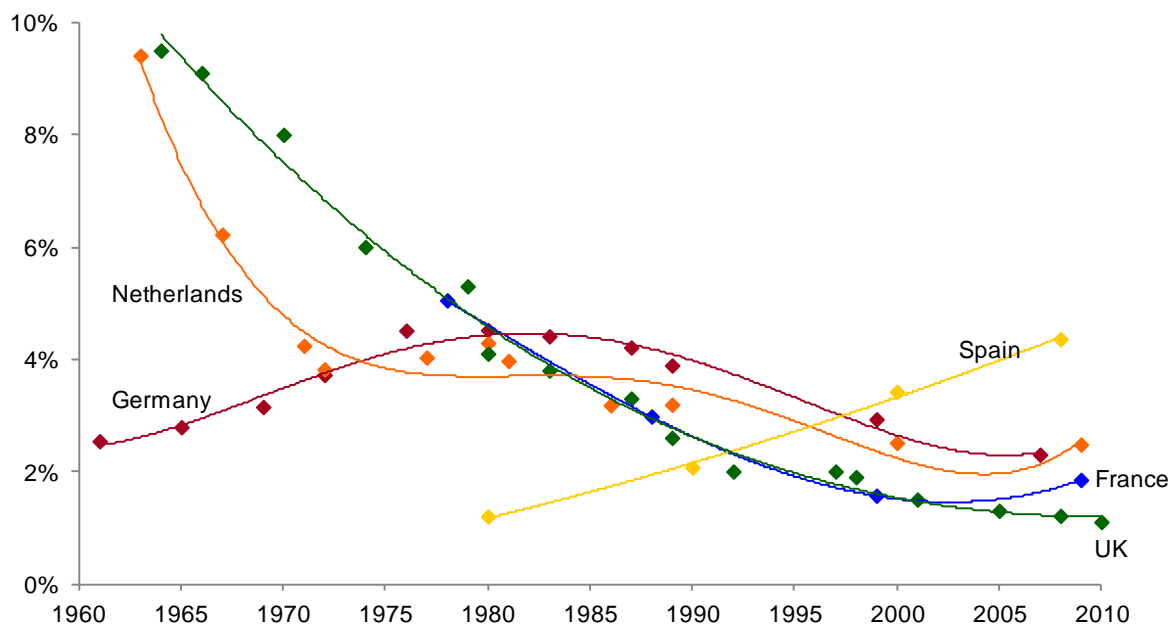
Note also the fall away of support for 'other' parties within figure 16. Though 'other' does not here represent the BNP alone, the peak in support for 'other' parties in 2009 matches the peak in BNP membership as observed above.

Overall, this data confirms a notable shift in the number and identify of political parties attracting the support of the British electorate.

4 Other European countries

The decline in party membership levels is not just a UK phenomenon. Data gathered by Richard Katz, Peter Mair, Ingrid Van Biezen and other researchers show that there has been a marked decline in party membership since the 1980s in countries across Europe.²⁰ Figure 17 shows the trend in countries where membership has generally been low.²¹

Figure 17: Trends in party membership in Europe – low membership countries 1960-2010



About 1.1% of the UK electorate were party members in 2010, making membership levels in the UK among the lowest of Europe. Party membership as a percentage of the electorate is lower only in Poland and Latvia, where less than one percent of electors are party members.²² It is only slightly higher in France (1.9% in 2009) and Germany (2.3% in 2007).

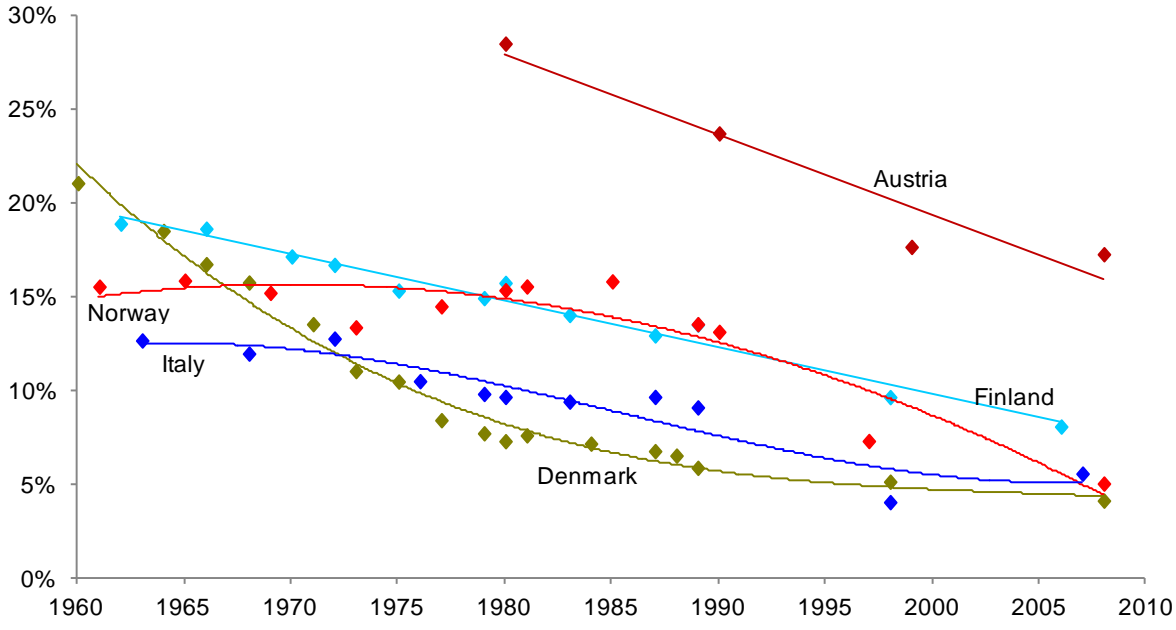
Membership as a percentage of the electorate is highest in Austria (17.3% in 2008) and Cyprus (16.3% in 2009) but these are outliers – the next highest country is Finland, where party members comprised 8.1% of the electorate in 2006. The raw number of members is highest in Italy at about 2.6 million, about 5.6% of the electorate. Figure 18 shows the change in party membership in countries that have historically had high levels of membership.

²⁰ Data presented in this section, as well as data for other European countries, are taken from: Richard Katz, Peter Mair et al (1992), *The membership of political parties in European democracies, 1960-1990*, European Journal of Political Research Vol 22 pp329-345
Ingrid Van Biezen, Peter Mair and Thomas Poguntke (2012), *Going, going, ... gone? The decline of party membership in contemporary Europe*, European Journal of Political Research Vol 51 pp24-56

²¹ Chart data are from Katz and Mair (1992) and Van Biezen, Mair and Poguntke (2012).

²² In Poland, an estimated 0.99% of the electorate were party members in 2009. In Latvia, an estimated 0.74% of the electorate were party members in 2004.

Figure 18: Trends in party membership in Europe – high membership countries 1960-2010



Almost all European countries have seen a fall in party membership since the 1980s. The UK has seen one of the largest decreases in membership. There has also been a steep decline in membership in Scandinavian countries, which had some of the highest levels of membership in the 1960s and 1970s. Greece and Spain are exceptional in that membership (as a proportion of the electorate) has actually increased since 1980.

5 Non party political activity and engagement

This section summarises data available on public interest in politics and faith in Britain's democracy; it then analyses information on trade union membership and membership of non party political organisations in order to contextualise political party memberships.

5.1 Interest in politics

Public interest in politics increased between 1986 and 2012, the 2013 *British Social Attitudes Survey* reports.²³ In 1986 29% of people said they were interested in politics either a 'great deal' or 'quite a lot'. In 2012 36% of people did so. The percentage of people to describe themselves as having 'not much' interest in politics or 'none at all' had also fallen between these years by 7 percentage points, to 32% in 2012.

Young people are particularly disinterested in politics. The *Office for National Statistics Measuring National Wellbeing Program (2014)* found in 2011-12 that 42% of adults aged 16-24 expressed no interest compared to 21% of those aged 65 and over. Overall 28% of adults surveyed were 'not at all interested' by politics.²⁴

Today's teenagers, however, may be more interested by broader social issues than previous generations. A 2013 study by *Demos*, a cross-party think tank with an interest in citizenship and political participation, claimed that 66% of teachers surveyed thought today's 16 and 17 year olds were more engaged with social issues than past generations. Just over 20% of teachers thought 16-17 year olds to be more interested in party politics than previous generations.²⁵

5.2 A democratic deficit?

Using data from the 2012/13 *European Social Attitudes Survey*, the 2014 *British Social Attitudes Survey* found a sizeable minority believe there to be a democratic deficit in Britain.

Participants were asked, first, 'how important is it for you to live in a country that is governed democratically' and, second, 'how democratic do you think Britain is overall'; participants were required to give their answer on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being strongly agree). While 84% of people gave an answer of 6 or above to the first question, only 66% did so in answer to the second. This dissatisfaction is not necessarily a direct reflection of people's attitudes towards political parties: when addressing 'democracy' the survey also encompassed attitudes towards the media and the judicial system.²⁶

25% of people questioned disagreed with the statement 'government parties are punished in elections when they have done a bad job' (that is, 25% of respondents gave a score less than 5); the mean score was 6.1. 23% of respondents gave a score less than 5 disagreed with the statement 'different political parties offer clear alternatives to one another'; the mean score was 5.9.

²³ Park, A., Bryson, C., Clery, E., Curtice, J. and Phillips, M. (eds.), *British Social Attitudes: the 30th Report (2013)* (London, NatCen Social Research)

²⁴ Randall, Chris (ONS); *Measuring National Well-being- Governance, 2014*

²⁵ Birdwell, Jonathan & Bani, Mona; *Introducing Generation Citizen* (Demos, 2014)

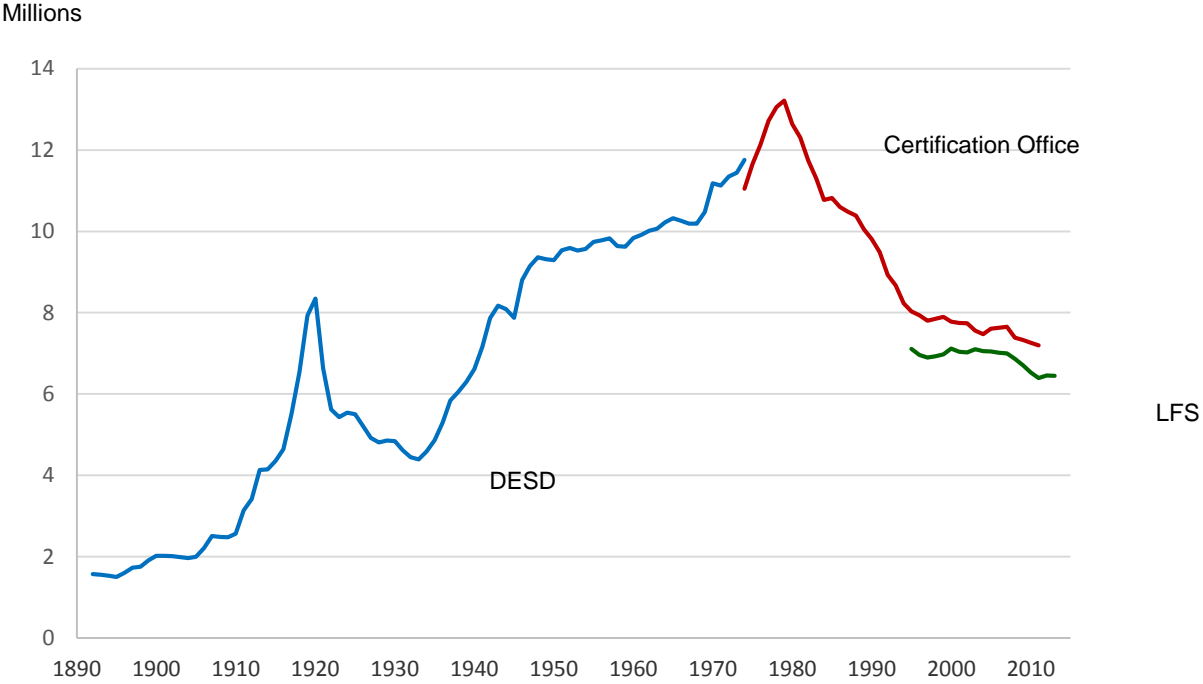
²⁶ *British Social Attitudes: the 31st Report (2014)* (London, NatCen Social Research)

5.3 Trade union membership

In 2011 trade union membership was lower than at any other time in the UK's post-war history at 6.40 million employees. Nonetheless, it remains considerably larger –by an order of magnitude- than party membership levels.

Trade union membership declined sharply from a peak of over 13 million employees in 1979 and then held steady from 1995 to 2007 at around 7 million members. Membership levels have subsequently fallen slightly from this plateau. The 2013 UK wide *Labour Force Survey* found 6.45 million employees (25.6% of UK employees) to be trade union members, the second lowest number recorded since the survey began monitoring UK wide membership in 1995.

Figure 19: Membership of trade unions in the UK, 1892-2013



Sour

ces:
 (1892-1974) Department of Employment Statistics Division
 (1974-2012) Certification Office (data from 1999 onwards is in financial years)
 (1995-2013) Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics

Female employees are now more likely to be trade union members than their male counterparts. In 2013 around 28% of female employees were trade union members, compared with 23% of male employees. This is a reversal of the situation in 1995, when 29.7% of female and 35.0% of male employees were trade union members.

Older individuals are more likely to be trade union members. As the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills observes, over the eighteen years preceding 2013 the proportion of employees who belonged to a trade union fell in all age groups except those aged over 65. About 37% of trade union member employees were aged over 50 in 2013, but only 27% of employees are in this age group.²⁷

²⁷ Department for Business, Innovation & Skills; *Trade union statistics 2013* (28th May 2014)

5.4 Non party political campaigns

This sub-section provides information on a range of organisations active in today's political landscape in order to contextualise the size and appeal of political parties. It is not intended as a comprehensive overview of all non party political bodies.

CND

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament was founded in January 1958. CND membership is thought to have peaked in the early-mid 1980s: in 1984 CND local membership was approximately 250,000 while in 1985 CND national membership was approximately 110,000. By 1988 this had fallen to around 130,000 local members and 70,000 national members.²⁸ The Independent estimated that CND held 32,000 members in 2005.²⁹ CND's 2012 accounts reported a total income of around £700,000, of which subscriptions and regular giving accounted for around £290,000.³⁰

Campaign to Protect Rural England

The 'council for the preservation of rural England', later the Campaign to Protect Rural England, was formed in 1926 by Sir Patrick Abercrombie. The Campaign claims to have a presence in every English county and over 200 local groups. The charity's 2013/14 Annual Review claimed approximately 62,000 members. In the 2013/14 financial year 34%, or around £1,590,000, of income was from membership and committed giving revenues.³¹

Countryside Alliance

The Countryside Alliance was formed in 1997 in reaction to the newly elected Labour Government's pledge to ban hunting with dogs and to promote the rural economy. The Alliance's 2013 Annual Report states an income of around £3,160,000 from subscriptions (67% of total income).³² The Alliance currently claims around 100,000 members.³³

The People's Assembly Against Austerity

The People's Assembly Against Austerity was launched on 5th February 2013 with a letter to the Guardian newspaper, signed by numerous trade union officials, journalists and activists.³⁴ As of July 2014 it had approximately 80 local groups operating across Great Britain.³⁵ Around 40,000 people are signed up to its national mailing list. On 21st June 2014 an estimated 50,000 people joined a protest organised by the People's Assembly and affiliated groups through central London, though this estimate cannot be independently verified.³⁶

Stop the War coalition

The coalition was founded in September 2001 to oppose the "war on terror". 53 local groups are listed in Stop the War's main website, a list last updated in May 2013.³⁷ The coalition claims to have organised around 40 national demonstrations. On 15th February 2003 it held what the BBC described as "one of the biggest days of public protest ever seen in the UK" against possible war in Iraq; the BBC estimated that around 1 million people joined the march, while police estimates placed the number at over 750,000.³⁸

²⁸ Ibid.; pp.132, 161

²⁹ Herbert, Ian (The Independent); [CND membership booms after nuclear U-turn](#) (17 July 2006)

³⁰ Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament; [Report and Financial Statements](#) (year ended 31st December 2012)

³¹ Campaign for Rural England; [Annual Report 2013/14](#)

³² Countryside Alliance; [Annual Report 2013](#)

³³ (Countryside Alliance); [About the Countryside Alliance](#)

³⁴ The Guardian (Letters); [People's Assembly Against Austerity](#) (5 February 2013)

³⁵ (The People's Assembly Against Austerity); [Local People's Assembly Groups](#)

³⁶ Rawlinson, Kevin (The Guardian); [Tens of thousands march in London against coalition's austerity measures](#) (21 June 2014)

³⁷ (Stop the War coalition); [Local Groups](#)

³⁸ (BBC News); [Anti-war rally makes its mark](#) (19 February 2003)

6 Reference tables

Table 1

Individual party membership: Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat

000s

	Con	Lab	Lib		Con	Lab	Lib
1928		215		1972		703	
1929		228		1973		665	
1930		277		1974		692	190
1931		297		1975	1,120	675	
1932		372		1976		659	
1933		366		1977		660	
1934		381		1978		676	
1935		419		1979		666	145
1936		431		1980		348	
1937		447		1981		277	
1938		429		1982	1,200 ²	274	
1939		409		1983	1,200 ¹	295	145 ⁵
1940		304		1984	1,200 ²	323	
1941		227		1985		313	
1942		219		1986		297	
1943		236		1987	1,000 ¹	289	138 ⁶
1944		266		1988		266	80
1945		487		1989		294	81
1946	911	645		1990	1,000 ¹	311	77
1947	1,200	608		1991		261	91
1948	2,200	629		1992	500 ¹	280	101
1949		730		1993	400 ¹	266	101
1950		908		1994		305	101
1951	2,900 ¹	876		1995		365	94
1952		1,015		1996		400	99
1953	2,806	1,005		1997	400 ¹	405	87
1954		934		1998		388	89
1955		843		1999		361	83
1956		845		2000	401	311	69
1957		913		2001	311	272	73
1958		889		2002	272	248	73
1959		845		2003	248	215	71
1960		790	243	2004	215	201	73
1961		751		2005	258	198	73
1962		767		2006	290 ³	182	72
1963		830		2007		177	65
1964		830	279	2008	250 ⁴	166	60
1965	2,250 ¹	817		2009		156	59
1966		776	234	2010	177	193	65
1967		734		2011	150 ⁵	193	49
1968		701		2012		187	49
1969	1,230 1a	681		2013	134 <	190	43
1970	1,230 1a	680	234				
1971		700					

Notes

(1) Rough estimate; (2) Upper bound on membership figure; (3) Daily Telegraph estimate; (4) News of the World estimate; (5) Mid 2012 estimates reported in Independent and Daily Mail (estimated 130 and 170 respectively) (6) Includes Social Democratic Party; dotted line indicates when the Liberal Party and the Social Democratic Party merged. (1a) Estimates, between 1120-1340

Sources

David Butler and Gareth Butler (2010), *British Political Facts*; Paul Webb, David Farrell and Ian Holliday (2002), *Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies*; Paul Whiteley and Patrick Seyd (2002), *High-intensity participation: the dynamics of party activism in Britain*; Patrick Seyd and Paul Whiteley (2004), "British Party Members: An Overview", *Party Politics*, Vol 10 No 4, pp355-366; Andrew Thorpe (2009), "Reconstructing Conservative Party Membership in World War II Britain", *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol 62 No 2, pp227-241; The Independent; Daily Telegraph; News of the World; Daily Mail; Electoral Commission; Liberal Democrat HQ; press reports from leadership contests; 2013 Conservative Party estimate from Conservative Home.

Table 2
Individual party membership: BNP, Greens, SNP, Respect, UKIP

Year	BNP	Green	SNP	Respect	UKIP
1997					
1998		5.0			
1999					
2000					
2001	2.2				
2002	3.1	5.9	16.1		10.0
2003	5.5	5.3	9.5		16.0
2004	7.9	6.3	10.9		26.0
2005	6.5	7.1	11.0		19.0
2006	6.3	7.0	12.6		16.0
2007	9.8	7.4	13.9		15.9
2008	9.8	7.5	15.1	0.5	14.6
2009	12.6	9.6	15.6	1	16.3
2010	10.3	12.8	16.2	1	15.5
2011	7.7	12.8	20.1	0.6	17.2
2012	4.9	12.6	24.7	1.9	20.0
2013	4.2	13.8	25.2	0.2	32.4

Notes

(1) The SNP introduced a centralised membership system in 2004. Membership as reported by the party's local branches was 16,100 in 2002 and 13,400 in 2003. However sale of membership cards to branches by party headquarters totalled 9,500 in 2003, which suggests the figures from local branches over-estimated total membership.

(2) UKIP figures are approximate for years up to 2007.

Sources: Electoral Commission

Table 3
Party membership as a proportion of the electorate

	Party membership, % of UK electorate				Electorate (a)
	Conservative	Labour	Liberal	Main parties	000s
1964		2.3%	0.8%		35,894
1966		2.2%			35,957
1970	3.1% (b)	1.7%			39,615
1974		1.7%	0.5%		40,256
1979		1.6%			41,573
1983	2.8%	0.7%	0.3%	3.8%	42,704
1987	2.3%	0.7%	0.3%	3.3%	43,666
1992	1.1%	0.6%	0.2%	2.0%	43,719
1997	0.9%	0.9%	0.2%	2.0%	43,846
2001	0.7%	0.6%	0.2%	1.5%	44,403
2005	0.7%	0.4%	0.2%	1.3%	44,246
2010	0.4%	0.4%	0.1%	1.0%	45,610
2013	0.3%	0.4%	0.1%	0.8%	46,140

Notes: (a) Electorate at general election; (b) Takes the centre of the range specified in Table 2

Sources: Party membership figures from Table 1; electorate figures from Rallings and Thrasher, *British Electoral Facts 1832-2006*, House of Commons Library RP10/36 *General Election 2010 and ONS UK electoral statistics 2013*

Table 4**Membership of Labour Party movement
000s**

	Individual members		ATU		Soc&Coop		Total
	Members	% of total	Members	% of total	Members	% of total	Members
1900-01	-	-	353	93.9%	23	6.1%	376
1901-02	-	-	455	97.0%	14	3.0%	469
1902-03	-	-	847	98.4%	14	1.6%	861
1903-04	-	-	956	98.6%	14	1.4%	970
1904-05	-	-	855	98.3%	15	1.7%	870
1905-06	-	-	904	98.2%	17	1.8%	921
1906-07	-	-	975	97.9%	21	2.1%	996
1907	-	-	1,050	97.9%	22	2.1%	1,072
1908	-	-	1,127	97.7%	27	2.3%	1,154
1909	-	-	1,451	97.9%	31	2.1%	1,482
1910	-	-	1,394	97.8%	31	2.2%	1,425
1911	-	-	1,502	98.0%	31	2.0%	1,533
1912	-	-	1,858	98.4%	31	1.6%	1,889
1913	-	-			33		
1914	-	-	1,572	97.9%	33	2.1%	1,605
1915	-	-	2,054	98.4%	33	1.6%	2,087
1916	-	-	2,171	98.1%	42	1.9%	2,213
1917	-	-	2,415	98.1%	47	1.9%	2,462
1918	-	-	2,960	98.2%	53	1.8%	3,013
1919	-	-	3,464	98.7%	47	1.3%	3,511
1920	-	-	4,318	99.0%	42	1.0%	4,360
1921	-	-	3,974	99.1%	37	0.9%	4,011
1922	-	-	3,279	99.0%	32	1.0%	3,311
1923	-	-	2,120	98.3%	36	1.7%	2,156
1924	-	-	3,158	98.9%	36	1.1%	3,194
1925	-	-	3,338	98.9%	36	1.1%	3,374
1926	-	-	3,352	98.9%	36	1.1%	3,388
1927	-	-	3,239	98.3%	55	1.7%	3,294
1928	215	9.4%	2,025	88.4%	52	2.3%	2,292
1929	228	9.8%	2,044	87.7%	59	2.5%	2,331
1930	277	11.8%	2,011	85.7%	58	2.5%	2,346
1931	297	12.6%	2,024	85.8%	37	1.6%	2,358
1932	372	15.7%	1,960	82.6%	40	1.7%	2,372
1933	366	15.9%	1,899	82.4%	40	1.7%	2,305
1934	381	16.7%	1,858	81.5%	40	1.8%	2,279
1935	419	17.6%	1,913	80.5%	45	1.9%	2,377
1936	431	17.6%	1,969	80.5%	45	1.8%	2,445
1937	447	17.7%	2,037	80.6%	43	1.7%	2,527
1938	429	16.3%	2,158	82.1%	43	1.6%	2,630
1939	409	15.4%	2,214	83.1%	40	1.5%	2,663
1940	304	11.8%	2,227	86.6%	40	1.6%	2,571
1941	227	9.1%	2,231	89.7%	28	1.1%	2,486
1942	219	8.9%	2,206	89.9%	29	1.2%	2,454
1943	236	9.4%	2,237	89.4%	30	1.2%	2,503
1944	266	10.0%	2,375	88.9%	32	1.2%	2,673
1945	487	16.0%	2,510	82.6%	41	1.3%	3,038
1946	645	19.4%	2,635	79.3%	42	1.3%	3,322
1947	608	12.1%	4,386	87.0%	46	0.9%	5,040
1948	629	11.6%	4,751	87.6%	42	0.8%	5,422
1949	730	12.8%	4,946	86.5%	41	0.7%	5,717
1950	908	15.3%	4,972	84.0%	40	0.7%	5,920
1951	876	15.0%	4,937	84.4%	35	0.6%	5,848
1952	1,015	16.6%	5,072	83.0%	21	0.3%	6,108
1953	1,005	16.5%	5,057	83.0%	34	0.6%	6,096

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	Individual members		ATU		Soc&Coop		Total Members
	Members	% of total	Members	% of total	Members	% of total	
1954	934	14.4%	5,530	85.1%	35	0.5%	6,499
1955	843	13.0%	5,606	86.5%	35	0.5%	6,484
1956	845	12.9%	5,658	86.6%	34	0.5%	6,537
1957	913	13.9%	5,644	85.7%	26	0.4%	6,583
1958	889	13.6%	5,628	86.0%	26	0.4%	6,543
1959	845	13.1%	5,564	86.5%	25	0.4%	6,434
1960	790	12.5%	5,513	87.1%	25	0.4%	6,328
1961	751	11.9%	5,550	87.7%	25	0.4%	6,326
1962	767	12.2%	5,503	87.4%	25	0.4%	6,295
1963	830	13.1%	5,507	86.6%	21	0.3%	6,358
1964	830	13.1%	5,502	86.6%	21	0.3%	6,353
1965	817	12.7%	5,602	87.0%	21	0.3%	6,440
1966	776	12.2%	5,539	87.4%	21	0.3%	6,336
1967	734	11.7%	5,540	88.0%	21	0.3%	6,295
1968	701	11.5%	5,364	88.1%	21	0.3%	6,086
1969	681	11.0%	5,462	88.6%	22	0.4%	6,165
1970	680	10.9%	5,519	88.7%	24	0.4%	6,223
1971	700	11.1%	5,559	88.5%	25	0.4%	6,284
1972	703	11.4%	5,425	88.0%	40	0.6%	6,168
1973	665	11.0%	5,365	88.4%	42	0.7%	6,072
1974	692	10.6%	5,787	88.8%	39	0.6%	6,518
1975	675	10.4%	5,750	88.9%	44	0.7%	6,469
1976	659	10.1%	5,800	89.1%	48	0.7%	6,507
1977	660	10.0%	5,913	89.4%	43	0.6%	6,616
1978	676	9.7%	6,260	89.5%	55	0.8%	6,991
1979	666	9.2%	6,511	90.0%	58	0.8%	7,235
1980	348	5.1%	6,407	94.1%	56	0.8%	6,811
1981	277	4.2%	6,273	94.9%	58	0.9%	6,608
1982	274	4.2%	6,185	94.9%	57	0.9%	6,516
1983	295	4.6%	6,101	94.5%	59	0.9%	6,455
1984	323	5.2%	5,844	93.8%	60	1.0%	6,227
1985	313	5.0%	5,827	94.0%	60	1.0%	6,200
1986	297	4.8%	5,778	94.2%	58	0.9%	6,133
1987	289	4.9%	5,564	94.2%	55	0.9%	5,908
1988	266	4.6%	5,481	94.5%	56	1.0%	5,803
1989	294	5.2%	5,335	93.9%	53	0.9%	5,682
1990	311	5.9%	4,922	93.1%	54	1.0%	5,287
1991	261	5.1%	4,811	93.9%	54	1.1%	5,126
1992	280	5.6%	4,634	93.3%	51	1.0%	4,965
1993	266						-
1994	305						-
1995	365						-
1996	400						-
1997	405						-
1998	388						-
1999	361						-
2000	311						-
2001	272						-
2002	248						-
2003	215						-
2004	201						-
2005	198						-
2006	182						-
2007	177						-
2008	166						-
2009	156						-
2010	193						-
2011	193						-
2012	187						-
2013	190						-

Note: From 1993, party conference reports no longer included membership figures for affiliated groups.

Sources: Butler and Butler, *Twentieth-Century British Political Facts*, 2000; Electoral Commission.

Table 5**The social backgrounds of members by party, 2008**Source: Whiteley, Paul; *Where have all the members gone?*

Demographics	Electors	Party members	Labour	Conservative	Liberal Democrats
Employment status					
Full-time job	59.2	55.0	61.8	45.3	60.9
Student	3.9	3.9	4.9	4.5	2.4
Unemployed or disabled	8.5	6.3	5.5	4.3	7.1
Retired	18.9	27.7	23.6	36.0	23.7
Home-maker	6.5	2.7	1.5	3.5	2.4
Volunteer	3.0	4.3	2.8	6.4	3.6
Occupational status					
Professional	24.3	35.9	35.2	32.7	49.7
Managers	18.5	23.4	24.2	28.7	17.2
Clerical workers	26.6	15.5	12.5	18.1	14.2
Foremen and supervisors	3.3	2.0	1.9	1.3	2.4
Skilled manual workers	6.8	5.7	5.7	4.8	4.1
Semi or unskilled manual	8.9	6.2	7.6	3.7	3.6
Income					
Under £10,000	9.8	7.7	4.7	8.1	5.7
£10,000 to £20,000	22.6	19.0	19.1	14.6	19.7
£20,000 to £30,000	23.1	20.7	20.5	20.7	21.7
£30,000 to £40,000	16.2	16.3	16.3	16.2	17.8
£40,000 to £50,000	11.3	12.7	13.8	14.2	12.7
£50,000 plus	17.1	23.6	25.6	26.2	22.3
Gender					
Male	50.1	67.2	69.0	60.5	71.0
Female	49.9	32.8	31.0	39.5	29.0
Ethnicity					
White	95.1	94.0	94.3	93.9	98.8
None-white	4.9	6.0	5.7	6.1	1.2
Age leaving education					
Under 16	13.9	11.4	11.9	9.3	8.9
16	22.4	14.8	15.9	16.3	5.3
17 or 18	21.3	17.4	12.1	25.1	14.2
19 or 20	7.6	6.7	4.5	10.1	6.5
21 plus	34.7	49.6	55.6	39.2	65.1
Average age	44.6	49.4	47.4	51.9	48.5