

Local Politics: A Case for Treatment?

A Survey of Local Constituency Parties across Great Britain

Summary

- 3% of Constituency Labour Parties, 20% of Conservative Associations and 40% of Lib Dem Local Parties have fewer than 100 members per constituency. Conservative Associations in the North of England typically have fewer than 50 members per constituency.
- 34% of Conservative Associations, 50% of Constituency Labour Parties and 73% of Liberal Democrat Local Parties reSummary
- 3% of Constituency Labour Parties, 20% of Conservative Associations and 40% of Lib Dem Local Parties have fewer than 100 members per constituency. Conservative Associations in the North of England typically have fewer than 50 members per constituency.
- 34% of Conservative Associations, 50% of Constituency Labour Parties and 73% of Liberal Democrat Local Parties received less than £5,000 in income in 2005 meaning they had less than 7 pence to spend per elector in that year. By contrast, Conservative Associations in Conservative-held constituencies typically received more than £50,000 in 2005.
- 32% of Conservative Associations, 44% of Liberal Democrat Local Parties and 50% of Constituency Labour Parties distributed less than 1 leaflet per household in the 2005 General Election.
- At least 67% of the population received no personal contact from any of the three main parties in the 2005 General Election. In solid Labour seats, this figure increased to 82%.
- Constituency Labour Parties typically hold just 2-3 social and fundraising events per year. This contrasts with at least 12 such events per year held by Conservative Associations in their held seats, at least 4 per year by all other Conservative Associations and at least 4 per year by Liberal Democrat Local Parties where the party either holds the seat or is in contention for it.
- Constituency Labour Parties report a big drop in membership and activism levels compared to 5 years ago, and a slight dip in income levels. Conservative Associations report a slight improvement in membership and income. Liberal Democrat Local Parties report a slight dip in membership, but an improvement in activism and income.
- Activity levels during the last General Election was extremely low in the majority of constituencies in Great Britain. In a typical solid Labour-held constituency, no political party delivered more than 1 leaflet per elector.

Introduction

This project is in many ways the follow up to the New Politics Network and Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust Ltd's 2003 Report "An Analysis of the Health of Local Political Parties in 2003" (*Life Support for Local Parties*, New Politics Network, 2004). It is an attempt to take a 'snap shot' of the health of local constituency parties during the 2005 general election year. This survey however is much broader and helps us to draw up a picture of the state of political parties across Great Britain.



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Methodology

The local constituency parties of the Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National Party were sent a survey asking them on their views on party funding as well as their local party activity. Members of all political parties were also free to fill in the survey online. The results of the first part of this survey, on opinions about party funding, was published in August 2006.

We received useable data about local activity from 286 local constituency parties (70 Conservative, 76 Labour, 129 Lib Dem, 5 Plaid Cymru, 6 SNP). We have subdivided the results of each party into 4 categories, depending on marginality:

- **Solid** - the party won this seat by more than 15% ahead of their nearest rival in both the 2001 and 2005 general elections.
- **Held** - the party won this seat in the 2001 and/or 2005 general elections but it is not considered Solid.
- **Close** - the party came within 15% of the winning party of this seat in the 2001 and/or 2005 general elections but did not win in either.
- **Other** - all other constituencies.

See figures 10a-d for a breakdown of constituencies by region for each party.

This categorisation enables us to compare like with like. Where a constituency changed hands in 2005, both the party that lost the seat and the winner are listed as a 'held' seat because it is assumed that they both contested the seat strongly.

Because of the different performances of political parties, each party has a different share of seats in these categories. For example, more than a third of Labour seats are classified as "solid," while 80% of Lib Dem count as "other".

In combination, there are numerous different types of constituencies, but almost two-thirds fit into three main types: solid Labour-held constituencies, solid Conservative-held constituencies and Labour held constituencies where the Conservative Party are "close" (figure 10e).

Because the number of responses we received from the Plaid Cymru and Scottish National Party were so low, we have not attempted to draw any clear conclusions about them. However, we have included what date we received in the results tables.

Some of the sample sizes we have for the other parties are also quite low. However, in all cases we have had responses from more than 10% of the total number of constituency local parties. Overall, we regard these figures to be reflective of the

current state of local politics; if anything we would expect respondents to over-estimating their local constituency party's activity levels.

The results

Membership

It is clear from this data that while there is a clear correlation between membership and vote share, it is most pronounced in the Conservative Party and least pronounced in the Labour Party (Figure 2). While the typical Conservative Association in a 'solid' constituency reports having a membership in excess of 500, the median result for Associations in 'other' constituencies was between 100 and 199 members, while the mode result (i.e. the most common single response) was less than 50. This contrasts with Constituency Labour Parties where 'safe' constituencies typically reported having 300-399 members while 'other' constituencies reported having 200-299 members.

These figures suggest that in the seats where the Conservative Party is out of contention, the Party has literally died off and there is little sign of any new blood. This will severely restrict the party's ability to expand. Labour, at least, have a broader base from which to build in their moribund areas.

The results of our survey suggest that while just 3% of constituencies nationwide have fewer than 100 Labour members, 20% have fewer than 100 Conservative members and 40% have fewer than 100 Liberal Democrat members.

However, a clear majority of all Constituency Labour Parties reported membership going down compared to 5 years ago while reports from the other parties were more mixed, with a majority of Conservative Associations in 'held' and 'other' seats reporting an improvement (Figure 10a).

Income

As with membership, there is a wider variation of income levels amongst Conservative Associations than there is amongst Constituency Labour Parties (Figure 3). Indeed, the range is even more pronounced, with Conservative Associations typically reporting income levels in excess of £50,000 and even £100,000.

It is striking to note the difference in income levels between Constituency Labour Parties and Conservative Associations. In a contested Labour-Conservative marginal constituency, the local Conservatives have, on average, 5 times the spending power of their Labour opponents.

As we will see with some of the other results,

Constituency Labour Parties are very dependent on the central party for funding and campaigning. This model served Labour very well in both the 1997 and 2001 general elections but they proved themselves vulnerable to the Conservative's strict targeting approach in the last general election and this looks set to continue.

These figures suggest that 73% of Lib Dem Local Parties, 50% of Constituency Labour Parties and 34% of Conservative Associations have an annual income of less than £5,000 a year, which itself would only give a political party around 7 pence to spend on each constituent in a typically-sized constituency (around 70,000).

A majority of Conservative Associations in 'held' seats report an improvement in income over the past 5 years, while a majority of their 'close' seats report that things have got worse (Figure 10c). This suggests that income has been targeted more in recent years, as we have seen with Lord Ashcroft's decision to fund target seats of his choice directly through his company Bearwood Corporate Services Ltd.

Staff

Given the low levels of income, it is unsurprising therefore that most local constituency parties cannot afford to employ staff (Figure 4a). Once again, it is notable that even in 'held' and 'solid' Labour seats, CLPs employ very few members of staff. However, they also report relatively little support from other paid staff - just 47% of 'held' seats reported being supported in this way (Figure 4b).

The Conservative Party tends to employ staff in their target and held seats, and subsequently supports them less with staff from elsewhere. However, Conservative Associations in areas with relatively low voter support do report significantly more support than their Labour counterparts.

The Liberal Democrats tend to both employ staff locally in target and held seats, and provide such seats with more help from elsewhere. Only 25% of 'other' constituencies report receiving help from other paid staff.

Leaflets Delivered

Our results from the local party survey (Figure 5a) corresponds fairly well with our results from the general election Monitoring Survey that we undertook last year (Figure 5b). Both surveys suggest that in their target and held constituencies, the Liberal Democrats produce the most election leaflets, followed by the Conservatives. However, as the Liberal Democrats have fewer seats in which they have a realistic chance of winning, overall the number of leaflets they

distribute nationwide is much lower than this would imply.

As implied by our results on income levels however, a very large number of constituency local parties in non-target areas produced minimal quantities of election literature. According to our survey, 50% of Constituency Labour Parties, 44% of Lib Dem Local Parties and 32% of Conservative Associations distributed fewer than 40,000 leaflets. A typical constituency has around 40,000 households. Given that the Royal Mail is legally obliged to deliver at least one leaflet to every household, this suggests that in these areas the local parties themselves did not deliver a single leaflet.

Canvassing

Local constituency parties across all categories report very little personal contact with voters (Figure 6a), and this is borne out from our survey of voters themselves (Figure 6b). The results of the latter suggest that Labour personally contacted just 16% of the population, the Conservatives contacted 13% and the Lib Dems contacted 7%. Combined, this suggests that approximately 67% of the population had no personal contact with a politician from the main parties during the general election campaign at all. This is almost certainly an underestimation as parties will undoubtedly have concentrated in the same marginal areas meaning that a high proportion of people contacted will have been contacted by 2 or more parties.

Activism

The proportion of members actively engaged in the party seems to be consistent across all categories at between 10% and 24% (Figure 7). Only Constituency Labour Parties in 'other' constituencies reported less than this and Lib Dem Local Parties in 'close' constituencies reported more than this, at around 25% to 49%.

We also asked local constituency parties to estimate whether activism levels have improved or got worse over the past 5 years and here there is more significant difference (Figure 10b). A clear majority of Constituency Labour Parties in all categories report a worsening of activism levels. Only Conservative Associations in 'close' constituencies report a falling off of activism, while in 'held' seats a majority report things improving. A majority of Lib Dem Local Parties in both 'close' and 'held' seats report an improvement in activism levels.

Newsletters

As we saw with election leaflets, the Liberal Democrats are the most keen on local newsletters in their target seats, while Labour deliver the fewest of this kind of campaigning literature (Figure 8). It must again be borne in mind however that with comparatively few seats in contention, overall

Extremely roughly, we can estimate that according to these figures around 40% of the UK population receives at least 2 newsletters from the Conservatives, around 36% receive at least 2 per year from Labour and around 35% receive at least 2 a year from the Lib Dems. Even more roughly, this would suggest that around 25% of the population never receive anything at all (as with the canvass estimation above, this is likely to be an underestimate due to the tendency of parties to target the same areas). Furthermore, 2 per year is not that high and if we had asked about more frequent deliveries, the results would have almost certainly been significantly lower.

Meetings

Constituency Labour Parties tend to hold the most executive and organisational meetings, followed by the Lib Dems and then the Conservatives (Figures 9a & 9b).

As implied by the relative levels of income, Conservative Associations are much better at holding frequent social and fundraising events (Figure 9c). Conservative Associations in 'solid' and 'held' seats typically reported holding monthly events of this type, compared to their Labour equivalents who tended to hold just two social or fundraising events per year. Even Conservative Associations in non-target areas typically reported holding twice as many meetings of this kind compared to their Labour equivalents.

Both Labour and Conservative local constituency parties typically hold policy discussion meetings at least quarterly in their target and held seats (Figure 9d). This contrasts starkly with Liberal Democrat Local Parties who typically hold half as many. This may be of surprise when you consider that Liberal Democrat Local Parties have more direct say into their party's policymaking process than their main rivals.

North-South Divide?

All three parties tend to have fewer members in the North of England (North West, North East and Yorkshire and Humber), than they do in the rest of England (Figure 10). The contrast is most stark in the Conservative Party, with a typical Conservative 'other' constituency in the North reporting fewer than 50

members. The Conservatives also have the biggest difference in terms of income levels and number of leaflets delivered: Conservative 'other' constituencies have roughly a quarter of the spending power of their counterparts in the rest of England.

Conclusions

Political parties perform important roles without which representative democracy could not exist. They offer alternative policies from which voters choose at elections, organise campaigns to mobilise voters and perhaps most importantly they field candidates for public office. Political parties may be unpopular but there is simply no better alternative model for organising democracy. They are still the only effective mechanism by which normal people can have any personal contact with the body politic, but as this research shows they are now nearing critical condition in terms of their ability to perform the set of tasks we need them to perform.

Activity in typical constituencies

Under our classification, of solid, held, close and other seats there are three most common types of constituency: solid Labour (223), Labour-held seats where the Conservatives are close but the Liberal Democrats aren't (110) and solid Conservative (79) seats. Combined, these types make up just under two thirds of all British constituencies.

In a typical solid Labour-held constituency, all three of the main political parties struggle to distribute just 1 leaflet per elector; the Conservatives tended to distribute just one leaflet per household. In this type of constituency the 3 local parties have a combined income of less than £20,000, no staff between them and at least 82% of the electorate received no personal contact at all from the main political parties. 59% of constituencies in the North of England count as solid Labour seats. The Conservatives are at their least active in these areas, typically having fewer than 50 members in this type of constituency.

In Labour held seats where the Conservatives are in contention but did not win in 2005, the two main political parties are more active, but not by that much. In this type of constituency, Labour and the Conservatives typically distributed 1-2 leaflets per elector. Membership and income levels are higher, but the Constituency Labour Party typically still lacks the resources to employ staff and even the Conservatives will only typically have someone working part time. At least 57% of the electorate receives no personal contact during the election in this type of constituency.

In the third most common type of constituency

- solid Conservative constituencies - Conservative Associations are much better off, with incomes of more than £50,000 and more than 500 members. They typically have more than 1 full time member of staff working for them. But while the Conservative Association in this sort of constituency is actively engaged in holding social events for their members and supporters, they appear to be doing very little to actively engage with the wider electorate. Their political rivals, not surprisingly, are even less active in this area. At least 80% of the electorate in this type of constituency received no personal contact from one of the three main parties in the last general election.

According to the respondents to our survey in these three types of constituency, the level of political campaigning was so low that many people will have barely noticed the general election. There certainly are constituencies where the level of political campaigning was high - indeed the seats that changed hands between the Lib Dems and Conservatives in 2005 were very hotly contested. However, this makes up just 8 constituencies in total and they are very much the exception not the rule.

Trends within the main parties

The high income and membership levels of Conservative Associations in Conservative-held constituencies clearly show that under certain circumstances, political parties can be self-sufficient at a local level, but this model is difficult to sustain in areas where the party lacks an MP. Indeed, our survey results suggest that at a time when the party nationally appears to be enjoying a bit of a renaissance, local parties in 'close' constituencies are continuing to decline. These are constituencies where the party continues to enjoy a high share of the vote but has not had electoral success for some time. In these constituencies, a majority of Conservative Associations reported that membership, activism and income levels have all got worse in the last five years, in stark contrast to Associations in held seats.

Conservative Associations in seats where they have even less of a share of the vote seem more optimistic, but membership levels in this category of Association is extremely low, especially in the North. Overall it is clear that at a grassroots level, the Conservatives have not only failed to recover from the knock they took in the mid-90s, but they have continued to slide.

Labour are in many ways the exact opposite. Their membership is much more evenly spread across the country, but paradoxically their local parties are much less independent. There is far less of a culture of fundraising and holding social events in Labour and significantly less local campaigning. In theory

this would suggest that Labour constituencies are extremely vulnerable, but in practice they have very little competition in most of their strongholds.

Liberal Democrat Local Parties tend to be more independent than Constituency Labour Parties, but their strongholds are much less self-sufficient than the Conservative Party's strongholds. However, in the vast majority of constituencies, their activism levels are quite low, although not typically to same extent as Conservative Associations in constituencies where they have a low share of the vote.

National Wealth, Local Squalor

For all the talk of the last general election setting a record in terms of national campaign expenditure, it is clear that very little of this money ended up in most constituencies. To misquote J. K. Galbraith's famous phrase, our party political system exists in a state of national wealth and local squalor. Money raised nationally is spent nationally, on direct mail, billboard and print advertising, market research and on rallies.

Direct mail played a key role in the 2005 General election campaign. The Conservative Party spent £4.5 million on direct mail which, according to them, was spent on targeting just 800,000 individuals nationwide. Sophisticated targeting techniques such as the Conservative's Voter Vault database work by only targeting floating voters in marginal constituencies. Rather than working on the principle of convincing as many voters as possible of your argument through time consuming personal contact, it targets people who on the basis of statistical data are likely to support the party. The Conservatives were by no means alone in using direct mail or targeting particular voters. The Labour targeted specific groups of the population such as 'schoolgate mums'. However the other parties did not use this tactic to the same extent as the Conservatives.

It cannot be over-emphasised that targeting itself is a major contributing factor to increasing voter alienation and disengagement. Research in the US suggests that face-to-face contact can raise turnout by 9.8 percent, as opposed to a 0.6 percent increase for direct mail ('The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment' by AS Gerber and DP Green, *American Political Science Review*, 94:3 pp 653-663[2000]). While local parties across the country struggle to spend 7 pence per elector, 80 times that amount was spent on these targets in direct mail by the Conservative Party alone.

That parties will vary the amount of attention they give any particular seat depending on its relevant importance to them is an obvious and natural element

of political campaigning strategy. What we need to question is whether the minimum level of campaigning in lesser target seats is providing a sufficient level of communication to the electorate to sustain good, informative, participatory democracy itself.

For democracy to work we need healthy competitive political parties at a local level offering different policy platform and fielding candidates. In order to campaign local parties need both people and money. We are caught in a vicious circle: the more political parties centralise their campaign operations, the more local activism dwindles, meaning that parties have to centralise and target resources even more. Elections are being determined by an ever decreasing group of people.

Policy Solutions

If this slide is to be stopped, or even reversed, we need to do three things: provide incentives for parties to campaign locally, disincentives for campaigning nationally and measures that will act as a safety net to ensure that a basic level of campaigning goes on at a local level. These include:

Incentives

- **Tax relief** on political donations up to, for example, £200, to encourage parties to pursue small donations.
- **Matched funding** - similar to tax relief, but pound-for-pound matched funding would provide even more of an incentive.
- **Money-per-supporter** - either through a voter voucher system as proposed by the POWER Inquiry, or through the voter registration system to encourage parties to sign up supporters locally.
- **Money-per-member** to encourage recruitment.
- **Increase constituency spending limits** to encourage local campaigning (matched with a reduction in national spending limits).

- **Rebates on constituency campaigning** to encourage parties to spend money locally.
- **Recognise political activity as voluntary work** as part of existing return-to-work and education schemes to reduce the official stigma of this kind of community-focused, skills-acquisitive activity.
- **Involve political parties in voter registration drives** - use parties to maximise registration and, in the process, engage with the electorate (this could only be done if the UK adopted a secure system of individual voter registration to minimise fraud).
- **Consider engagement in planning issues** - the design of buildings can obstruct engagement (e.g. gated communities, lack of external letter boxes, etc). The planning system should require developers to take these issues into consideration.

Disincentives

- **Caps on donations** to prevent political parties from relying on major donors.
- **Reduce national election spending limits and introduce annual national spending limits** to discourage national campaigning.
- **End loopholes** that enable spending in individual constituencies to count as national spending, thereby bypassing local spending limits.

Safety nets

- **Extend the 'freepost' system** - allow parties to send out more than one election address per elector via the Royal Mail during Parliamentary and Assembly elections. Extend this system to local elections.
- **Voter information packs** - more extensive information about the election should be included with polling cards.
- **Election websites** - a one-stop shop where voters can learn more about the election, the candidates standing and their policies.

Appendix: Summary of Survey Results

Note: When compiling the results, for most questions we have calculated the median response (i.e. the “middle” response if you lined them all up ascending order) and the mode (i.e. the single most common response - where the sample size is small, this is often not relevant). Where the median response is split across two categories (e.g. 100-199 and 200-299) we combined the range (e.g 100-299).

In all tables, “S” stands for Sample Size.

Breakdown of Parties

Figure 1a

Categories of Conservative Associations in constituencies across the UK

Nation/ Region	Scot	Wal	SW	SE	Lon	WMid	EMid	East	NW	York	NE	Tot	S
Solid	0	0	7	30	5	6	7	15	6	3	0	79	11
Held	1	3	16	28	16	12	11	25	4	6	1	123	16
Close	11	7	22	20	14	15	13	13	17	15	2	149	17
Other	47	30	6	5	39	26	13	3	49	32	27	277	26
Total	59	40	51	83	74	59	44	56	76	56	30	628	70

Figure 1b

Categories of Constituency Labour Parties in constituencies across the UK

Nation/ Region	Scot	Wal	SW	SE	Lon	WMid	EMid	East	NW	York	NE	Tot	S
Solid	32	22	4	3	31	25	10	1	43	29	23	223	30
Held	14	12	12	19	24	18	18	19	21	18	5	180	17
Close	6	2	2	12	8	6	8	17	2	2	1	66	9
Other	7	4	33	49	11	10	8	19	10	7	1	159	20
Total	59	40	51	83	74	59	44	56	76	56	30	628	76

Figure 1c

Categories of Liberal Democrat Local Parties in constituencies across the UK

Nation/ Region	Scot	Wal	SW	SE	Lon	WMid	EMid	East	NW	York	NE	Tot	S
Solid	4	1	2	1	2	0	0	0	1	2	1	14	4
Held	7	3	16	7	6	4	1	3	5	1	0	53	12
Close	5	1	12	14	4	2	3	5	4	4	3	57	13
Other	43	35	21	61	62	53	40	48	66	49	26	504	100
Total	59	40	51	83	74	59	44	56	76	56	30	628	129

Figure 1d

Categories of Plaid Cymru and Scottish National Party Local Parties in Welsh and Scottish constituencies

Party	SNP/Scotland	S	PC/Wales	S
Solid	1	0	1	0
Held	5	2	2	0
Close	5	0	1	0
Other	48	4	36	5
Total	59	6	40	5

Figure 1e

12 most common types of constituency

Conservative	Labour	Lib Dem	SNP/ PC/ Other	Number of Seats with this combination
Other	Solid	Other	Other/none	223
Close	Held	Other	Other/none	110
Solid	Other	Other	Other/none	79
Held	Close	Other	Other/none	42
Held	Held	Other	Other/none	28
Close	Other	Held	Other/none	27
Held	Other	Close	Other/none	27
Other	Held	Close	Other/none	17
Other	Other	Solid	Other/none	14
Held	Other	Held	Other/none	8
Other	Held	Held	Other/none	8
Close	Held	Close	Other/none	5
All other constituencies				40
Total (excl. Northern Ireland)				628

Membership

Figure 2

Q: Roughly how many people are currently members of your local constituency party?

Party	Solid			Held			Close			Other		
	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S
Con	500+	500+	10	500+	500+	15	300-399	300-399	16	100-199	<50	26
Lab	300-399	300-399	28	300-499	300-399	14	100-299	100-199	8	200-299	100-199	20
LD	400-499	400-499	4	300-399	300-399	11	200-299	200-299	12	100-199	100-199	94
SNP				100-399	n/a	2				200-299	200-299	4
PC										100-199	n/a	5

Income

Figure 3

Q: Roughly how much annual income did your local constituency party receive in 2005 (all figures in £000s)?

Party	Solid			Held			Close			Other		
	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S
Con	50-100	100+	9	50-100	50-100	13	10-20	n/a	13	2-5	<1	23
Lab	5-10	2-5	23	10-20	20-30	10	2-5	n/a	7	1-2	1-2	19
LD	20-30	n/a	2	20-50	30-50	6	10-30	n/a	6	2-5	2-5	79
SNP				2-30	n/a	2				2-5	2-5	4
PC										2-5	5-10	5

Staff Support

Figure 4a

Q: How many full time equivalent members of paid staff does your local constituency party employ, if any?

Party	Solid			Held			Close			Other		
	Med	Mean	S	Med	Mean	S	Med	Mean	S	Med	Mean	S
Con	1.5	1.4	11	1.2	1.2	15	0.5	0.4	15	0	0.1	26
Lab	0	0.2	29	0	0.1	16	0	0	8	0	0.0	19
LD	0.5	0.8	4	0.5	0.7	11	0	0.4	5	0	0.0	96
SNP				0	0	2				0	0	4
PC										0	0	5

Figure 4b

Q: Does your local constituency party have access to other paid staff?

Party	Solid		Held		Close		Other	
		S		S		S		S
Con	18%	11	20%	15	56%	16	58%	24
Lab	40%	30	47%	17	22%	9	40%	20
LD	75%	4	64%	11	42%	12	25%	99
SNP			50%	2			25%	4
PC							40%	5

Leaflets Delivered

Figure 5a

Q: During the four months in the run up to the 2005 general election, roughly how many copies of leaflets produced by your party were distributed in your constituency (all figures in 000s)?

Party	Solid			Held			Close			Other		
	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S
Con	80-160	80-160	9	160-320	160-320	14	40-80	160-320	13	20-40	<20	25
Lab	40-80	20-40	23	80-160	80-160	10	40-80	n/a	8	40-80	n/a	19
LD	160-320	160-320	3	80-160	n/a	7	80-160	n/a	11	20-80	40-80	92
SNP				0-160	2					20-80	20-40	4
PC										40-80	40-80	5

Figure 5b

General Election Monitoring Survey (2005) - leaflets received per household

Party	Solid			Held			Close			Other		
	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S
Con	3	3	26	3	3	53	4	3	53	2	1	90
Lab	2	2	69	3	2	70	2	1	22	1	1	61
LD	5	n/a	5	7	n/a	22	6	3	29	2	1	166

For more information see *general election 2005: What the Voters Saw* (New Politics Network, 2005).

Canvassing

Figure 6a

Q: Roughly what proportion of the electorate in your constituency did you canvass in the run up to the 2005 general election? Only include people you actually contacted.

Party	Solid			Held			Close			Other		
	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S
Con	10-49%	10-24%	10	25-49%	25-49%	14	25-49%	25-49%	13	10-24%	<10%	24
Lab	10-24%	24-49%	26	25-49%	25-49%	14	0-24%	<10%	8	<10%	<10%	20
LD	0-24%	<10%	4	10-24%	<10%	8	10-49%	N/A	10	<10%	<10%	93
SNP				20-74%	n/a	2				10-24%	10-24%	4
PC										10-24%	10-24%	5

Figure 6b

General Election Monitoring Survey (2005) - personal contact by phone and on doorstep

Party	Solid		Held		Close		Other	
	% Contact	S	% Contact	S	% Contact	S	% Contact	S
Con	8.3%	24	26%	50	22%	50	4.7%	86
Lab	11.3%	62	25%	64	22.7%	22	10.7%	56
LD	25%	4	28.6%	21	21.4%	28	2.6%	156

For more information see *general election 2005: What the Voters Saw* (New Politics Network, 2005).

Activism

Figure 7

Q: Approximately what proportion of your local party's membership was actively involved in the 2005 general election campaign?

Party	Solid			Held			Close			Other		
	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S
Con	10- 24%	10- 24%	10	10- 24%	10- 24%	15	10- 24%	10- 24%	15	10- 24%	10- 24%	25
Lab	10- 24%	10- 24%	26	10- 24%	10- 24%	15	10- 24%	10- 24%	8	<10%	<10%	19
LD	10- 24%	10- 24%	3	10- 24%	10- 24%	10	25- 49%	25- 49%	10	10- 24%	10- 24%	95
SNP				10- 49%	n/a	2				0-24%	n/a	4
PC										10- 24%	n/a	5

Newsletters

Figure 8

Q: Roughly to what proportion of your constituency does your local constituency party distribute non-election newsletters/leaflets regularly (i.e. at least twice a year)?

Party	Solid			Held			Close			Other		
	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S
Con	50- 74%	n/a	9	75%+	75%+	15	10- 24%	10- 24%	15	10- 49%	<10%	24
Lab	50- 74%	75%+	26	25- 49%	25- 49%	15	0-24%	<10%	8	<10%	<10%	19
LD	75%+	75%+	4	50%+	75%+	10	25- 74%	25- 49%	12	10- 24%	10- 24%	96
SNP				0- 100%	n/a	2				0-24%	<10%	4
PC										24- 49%	25- 49%	4

Meetings

Q: How frequently does your local party hold the following types of meeting (number per year)?

Figure 9a

Local party executive meetings

Party	Solid			Held			Close			Other		
	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S
Con	2+	2+	10	4+	4+	15	4+	4+	15	4+	4+	25
Lab	12+	12+	30	12+	12+	16	4+	n/a	9	4+	12+	20
LD	4+	n/a	4	12+	12+	11	4+	n/a	12	4+	4+	99
SNP				12+	12+	2				12+	12+	4
PC										12+	12+	5

Figure 9b

Other planning / organisational meetings

Party	Solid			Held			Close			Other		
	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S
Con	4+	4+	10	4+	4+	15	4+	4+	14	4+	4+	24
Lab	4+	4+	29	12+	12+	12	4+	4+	9	2+	1	17
LD	4+	4+	4	12+	12+	11	4+	4+	11	4+	4+	93
SNP				12+	12+	2				4+	n/a	3
PC										2+	2+	5

Figure 9c

Social / fundraising events

Party	Solid			Held			Close			Other		
	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S
Con	12+	12+	10	12+	12+	15	4+	4+	15	4+	n/a	23
Lab	2+	2+	30	2+	2+	9	2+	2+	9	2+	2+	19
LD	4+	4+	4	4+	4+	10	4+	4+	10	2+	4+	97
SNP				4+	4+					4+	4+	4
PC										4+	n/a	5

Figure 9d

Policy discussion events (open to all members)

Party	Solid			Held			Close			Other		
	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S	Med	Mode	S
Con	4+	4+	10	4+	4+	15	4+	4+	15	2+	2+	22
Lab	4+	4+	29	4+	4+	8	4+	4+	9	2+	2+	20
LD	1+	n/a	4	1+	n/a	10	1+	1+	13	1+	1+	97
SNP				12+	n/a	2				4+	4+	4
PC										1+	1+	5

Perception

Q: Compared to 5 years ago, assess how you feel the following factors affecting your party have changed at a local level:

Figure 10a

Membership

Party		Sample	A bit / a lot better (%)	About the same (%)	A bit / a lot worse (%)
Conservatives	Solid	10	40%	20%	40%
	Held	15	67%	20%	13%
	Close	16	25%	19%	56%
	Other	25	56%	24%	20%
	Overall		49%	22%	30%
Labour	Solid	29	3%	14%	83%
	Held	14	0%	7%	93%
	Close	9	22%	22%	56%
	Other	19	0%	11%	89%
	Overall		3%	12%	85%
Lib Dems	Solid	4	0%	75%	25%
	Held	9	44%	22%	33%
	Close	12	33%	50%	17%
	Other	99	26%	39%	34%
	Overall		28%	39%	33%
Scottish National Party	Held	2	50%	50%	0%
	Other	3	0%	100%	0%
Plaid Cymru	Other	5	60%	40%	0%

Figure 10b

Activism

Party		Sample	A bit / a lot better (%)	About the same (%)	A bit / a lot worse (%)
Conservatives	Solid	10	40%	20%	40%
	Held	15	56%	22%	22%
	Close	16	6%	38%	56%
	Other	25	36%	40%	24%
	Overall		33%	33%	33%
Labour	Solid	30	7%	20%	73%
	Held	15	7%	20%	73%
	Close	9	11%	22%	67%
	Other	19	0%	21%	79%
	Overall		6%	20%	74%
Lib Dems	Solid	4	25%	25%	50%
	Held	9	56%	22%	22%
	Close	12	58%	25%	17%
	Other	99	40%	29%	30%
	Overall		43%	28%	29%
Scottish National Party	Held	2	50%	50%	0%
	Other	3	0%	67%	33%
Plaid Cymru	Other	5	60%	20%	20%

Figure 10c

Income

Party		Sample	A bit / a lot better (%)	About the same (%)	A bit / a lot worse (%)
Conservatives	Solid	10	50%	20%	30%
	Held	15	73%	7%	20%
	Close	15	20%	27%	53%
	Other	25	28%	48%	24%
	Overall		38%	31%	31%
Labour	Solid	28	29%	43%	29%
	Held	13	15%	46%	39%
	Close	9	22%	44%	33%
	Other	19	11%	26%	63%
	Overall		20%	40%	41%
Lib Dems	Solid	3	33%	33%	33%
	Held	8	75%	13%	13%
	Close	12	58%	17%	25%
	Other	95	32%	38%	31%
	Overall		38%	34%	29%
Scottish National Party	Held	2	50%	50%	0%
	Other	3	33%	33%	33%
Plaid Cymru	Other	5	60%	40%	0%

Figure 10d

Public Perception

Party		Sample	A bit / a lot better (%)	About the same (%)	A bit / a lot worse (%)
Conservatives	Solid	10	50%	20%	30%
	Held	15	87%	13%	0%
	Close	15	53%	20%	27%
	Other	25	64%	24%	12%
	Overall		64%	20%	15%
Labour	Solid	30	17%	27%	57%
	Held	14	0%	14%	86%
	Close	9	11%	33%	56%
	Other	19	0%	32%	68%
	Overall		7%	25%	68%
Lib Dems	Solid	4	25%	50%	25%
	Held	9	100%	0%	0%
	Close	12	67%	25%	8%
	Other	96	49%	38%	14%
	Overall		54%	34%	12%
Scottish National Party	Held	2	100%	0%	0%
	Other	3	100%	0%	0%
Plaid Cymru	Other	5	60%	20%	20%

North-South Divide?

Figure 11

Comparing membership, income and leaflets delivered between the North East, North West and Yorkshire and Humber, and the rest of England

Party	Membership		Income (£000s)		Leaflets (000s)	
	North	Rest of England	North	Rest of England	North	Rest of England
Con 'other'	<50 (13)	100-199 (7)	2-5 (13)	10-20 (5)	<20 (13)	40-80 (6)
LD 'other'	50-99 (19)	100-199 (61)	2-5 (17)	2-5 (50)	40-80 (19)	40-80 (60)
Lab 'solid'	300-399 (12)	400-499 (10)	5-10 (8)	5-20 (10)	20-40 (8)	40-80 (11)



Unlock Democracy is Charter 88 and the New Politics Network's joint campaign for democratic renewal. We campaign for institutional reform and democratic engagement. We want to champion pragmatic forms of direct democracy, a renaissance of party politics and a written constitution.

The Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust Ltd is a limited company, paying tax on its income. It is therefore free to give grants for political, campaigning or lobbying purposes. It does so to promote political reform and constitutional change as well as the interests of social justice. Its principal concern is the continuity of reform within the democratic system.

