

Green Party Members: A Profile

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1. Introduction

The sensational success of the British Green Party in the June 1989 elections to the European Parliament, in which they obtained 14.5% of the vote and moved into third place among British parties, catapulted the party into the limelight, a position which it had not enjoyed in its previous 16 year history.

For many commentators, the success of the Greens at the European elections was just a flash in the pan, a protest vote without an enduring commitment to green politics. The decline of the party's standing in the polls in the last two years appears to vindicate this view. With a General Election due to be held within the next twelve months, will the Green Party be able to recover some of its political standing, or is it irrevocably destined to fester on the fringe of British politics?

While the analysis of green voters is important,¹ the study of the Green Party membership is often neglected. Any small party trying to establish itself needs to attract new voters who will stick to the new party and give it a basis of support on which to build. But a small party is equally dependent on its members: it needs active, committed members but it is not able to offer them the prospect of political power and patronage. It particularly needs members in order to provide it with financial resources in the absence of any other form of income.

In this report, we will concentrate on Green Party members. Who joins the Green Party, and why? What is their age, occupation, political background? How active are these members? To what extent are Green Party members and activists making an enduring commitment to green politics which can survive the ups and downs of opinion polls and election results? Who is leaving the Green Party, and why?

In 1989 and 1990, the Green Party managed to double its membership. If the Green Party is to confound the image of a "flash party" which will disappear as quickly as it emerged, it has to face two potential problems: keeping the new members initially attracted by its sudden success and

¹ For an analysis of green voters in Britain in a comparative perspective, see Mark N. Franklin and Wolfgang Rüdig, *The Greening of Europe: Ecological Voting in the 1989 European Elections* (Strathclyde Papers in Government and Politics, No. 82)(Glasgow: Department of Government, University of Strathclyde 1991) and Wolfgang Rüdig and Mark N. Franklin, "Green prospects: The future of the Greens in Britain, France and Germany", in Wolfgang Rüdig (ed.), *Green Politics Two 1991* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 1991).

coping with any possible "subversion" by members of other small parties or groups who identify the party as a vehicle to pursue their own interests. The transformation of a "flash party" into a stable, enduring organisation more deeply entrenched in the political system thus depends to a significant degree on the party's ability to cope with the fruits of its sudden success.

It is with these types of question in mind that we started our research on the Green Party. This report presents the first results of the first part of our intensive study of the British Green Party membership. The support of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) is gratefully acknowledged. The work was funded by ESRC Award Number R 000 23 2404. The Green Party study joins survey work on party membership in Britain undertaken by other researchers: A survey of the Labour Party membership has already been completed, surveys of members of the Conservative Party and the Scottish National Party are currently under way.

The results presented in this report are based on a survey of members of the UK Green Party carried out in November 1990. A 24-page questionnaire was sent to a randomly selected sample of 8,604 members of the UK Green Party. 73 were returned because the respondent had moved away or for a similar reason. A total of 4,357 completed questionnaires were returned - a net response rate of 51.1%. This makes it by far the biggest survey of Green Party members ever conducted in Britain or elsewhere.

We also carried out a full survey of members of the Scottish Green Party. As it formally gained its independence in September 1990, it would not be appropriate to include the Scottish responses at this stage. Where preliminary analysis shows some major differences, they will be referred to in this report. We hope to prepare a full report on the Scottish Greens in the near future.

We would like to emphasize very strongly that the results presented in this report are of a **preliminary** nature. We only stand at the very beginning of our analysis, and, given the mass of data collected in this survey, it will take some time before they are fully analysed. But we compiled this report in order to make the main simple results of this survey available to the interested non-academic public.

After discussing in greater detail how we collected the data, we first look at the socio-economic background of Green Party members. How old are

they, what is their level of education? What type of occupation do they have? Where do they live?

Secondly, we look at the previous political activities of Green Party members. Are they new to party politics or have they been members of other political parties before? Are they engaged in other "green" activities, for example have they been active in environmental groups or the peace movement?

In the third chapter, we look at the level of party activity. How active are Green Party members? How often do they attend local branch meetings, area conferences or national meetings? How many members are involved in working groups? How active are Green Party members at conferences and during election campaigns?

Fourthly, we examine the internal structure of the Green Party. Where do the Greens believe power within the party really lies, and are they happy with this power structure? Do Green Party members favour the election of one party leader or do they prefer further decentralization?

In the fifth chapter, we look more specifically at the major new intake of members in 1989 and 1990. Who are these new members? Do they have a different background from the "old" members? This is followed by an analysis of those who are not renewing their subscriptions. Why do Greens choose to leave the party? What distinguishes "leavers" from those who stay on? What factors lead them to consider leaving: do they disagree with the aims of the party or with particular policies? Do they find membership in another party more attractive?

Finally, we look at the future of the Green Party. How do Green Party members see the future of their party, what are their expectations? And what do our results say about the future of the Greens? Are they a "flash party" destined to disappear, or is there evidence of a more enduring commitment likely to withstand the ups and down of opinion polls and election results?

2. The Data

The results we present in this report are based on 4,357 questionnaires which were returned to us by members of the UK Green Party. How did we go about carrying out this survey?

To ensure total anonymity, the selection of the sample and the mailing process were handled by the Green Party offices in London and Edinburgh. At no time were we given the names and addresses of party members. A random sample of 8,604 members, representing more than 50% of the entire membership², was selected and they were mailed with a questionnaire³ which also included covering letters from the Green Party and from the research group explaining the nature of this exercise. After about three weeks, all members included in the survey were sent a reminder postcard. We would like to thank all party officers, in particular John Bishop and Iain Morrice, for their kind co-operation, and we also thank Green Party members for having found the time to fill out our lengthy questionnaire.

We achieved a net response rate of 51.1%. This response rate is relatively high for a survey of this kind. The questionnaire we sent out was quite long (24 pages, 76 questions excluding sub-questions) and fairly complicated. We received a number of complaints about the length of the questionnaire. A trade-off had to be made between the range of research objectives and the adverse impact of a lengthy questionnaire on the response rate.

There are a number of other factors that could have pushed down the response rate. Some members may have been unwilling to participate because questionnaires are seen as somehow "un-green" or as something which the Greens' adversaries could derive more benefit from. In fact, we received only a very small number of comments of this nature. The survey received support from all parts of the party, and there is no indication that particular political attitudes are underrepresented.

More importantly, very passive members as well as members who have

² The sample was selected from a total about 15,000 mailing addresses representing the membership of the UK Green Party in September 1990.

³ The questionnaire was developed with the help of a pilot study carried out in February 1990. Most results of this pilot study are superseded by the main study, and therefore we will not make any further reference to the pilot study in this report.

lost interest in party affairs and have left or were about to leave the party are less likely to respond to a questionnaire survey of this type. As the survey was conducted at a time when membership levels were falling steeply, an adverse effect on the response rate was to be expected. In the context of the high drop-out rate experienced by the party at the time⁴, a response rate of 51.1% is, in fact, very satisfactory.

Nevertheless, we have to be mindful of possible sources of bias interpreting the results. Active members and members committed to remain within the party are probably overrepresented. We have no reason to believe that our sample is biased in any other way. In order to test the representativeness of our sample, we compared those indicators for which we have information available for all party members with our results. These comparisons revealed no significant bias⁵ and we are thus confident that our sample, with the provisos indicated above, is representative of the Green Party membership as a whole.

Our survey represents the first major survey of Green Party members in Britain, and, in fact, in the rest of the world. Previous surveys were either very small or, outside the UK, were limited to surveys of conference participants.⁶

⁴ The drop-out rate of members (i.e. the share of existing members not renewing their subscription) from March 1990 to March 1991 was 39.6%. Our sample still included those who joined at the time of the European Elections in June 1989 as all members are given three months grace before being removed from the list of paid-up members. There is reason to believe that a substantial proportion of this group failed to renew their membership (see Chapter 8) and was thus particularly demotivated to return our questionnaire.

Of those who responded, only 64.2% were certain that they would renew their subscription once it became due, 24.5% indicated that they would "probably" renew, and 11.5% of respondents had already left or were likely not to renew their subscription. If we assume that all those indicating that they will only "probably" renew will, in fact, drop out, then our figures come fairly close to the actual drop-out rate experienced. But this assumption is clearly not warranted. We would expect that the drop-out rate of this group is higher than those indicating certain renewal but there is no way to assess what the share of renewal is on the basis of the data currently available. It is thus reasonable to assume that those who have already left or were about to leave the Party are underrepresented in our sample.

⁵ The relative shares of the five types of membership subscription (individual waged and unwaged, joint waged and unwaged, life member) tally with our figures exactly. The distribution of members according to the area of residence is also fairly close to that of our sample (see footnote 16).

⁶ As far as we are aware, there has never been a major survey of ordinary Green Party members before. A recent major book on Belgian green activists is based on questionnaires returned by 256 activists attending national party conferences in

In Britain, there were a number of small surveys of Green Party members in the early 1980s. The only previous study which looked at the party membership as a whole was carried out by Christopher Studman. The results were written up as an undergraduate thesis at Hatfield Polytechnic,⁷ but never published. Studman conducted a survey of the national Ecology Party membership in 1984. A one-page questionnaire was sent to a randomly selected sample of 10 per cent of party members. 505 questionnaires were sent to Ecology Party members in February 1984 and 342 were returned, a response rate of 68.1%. Studman's results allow us to compare the socio-economic background of 1990 Green Party members with Ecology Party members of 1984. Furthermore, Studman provides valuable information on the previous political affiliation of party members and a number of other matters. Where possible, we will compare our results with those of the Studman survey, which should lead to some valuable insights on the development of the party in the 1980s.

Two further studies were carried out in the early 1980s by Stuart Kirk and Alistair McCulloch,⁸ but they are concerned with national and local party elites, and are thus less useful for a comparative analysis of the total membership of the party. Once we have progressed in our data analysis to the point of looking at specific sub-groups of party activists, comparisons with those earlier studies will undoubtedly be helpful⁹.

1985 (Response rate: about 60%): Herbert Kitschelt and Staf Hellemans, *Beyond the European Left: Ideology and Action of Belgian Ecology Parties* (Durham, NC.: Duke University Press 1990). In Germany, the only published studies of Green Party members consists of a survey of the members of one local branch (91 respondents, response rate 38.2%): Theodor Michael Greven, *Parteimitglieder* (Opladen: Leske + Budrich 1987). A survey of Green conference delegates was also carried out in 1985 (197 responses, response rate: 25%): Thomas Poguntke, "Party activists versus voters: Are the German Greens losing touch with the electorate?", in Wolfgang Rüdig (ed.), *Green Politics One 1990* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 1990), pp. 29-46. A number of small surveys of green activists were also carried out in France: the number of respondents was 102 or less, the response rates varied between 28.5 and 40.6%): Brendan Prendiville and Tony Chafer, "Activists and ideas in the Green Movement in France", in Wolfgang Rüdig (ed.), *Green Politics One 1990* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), pp. 177-209.

⁷ C. J. Studman, *The Ecology Party of Great Britain: A Survey of Members* (Division of Biological and Environmental Sciences, Hatfield Polytechnic, July 1984).

⁸ Stuart Kirk, *Ecology Party - Ideology and Characteristics* (Department of Political Science, Plymouth Polytechnic 1984); Alistair McCulloch, "The Ecology Party and constituency politics: anatomy of a grassroots party", Paper presented at the UK Political Studies Association Conference, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1983.

⁹ The Green Party has designed its own membership questionnaire of four pages which is sent to all members as soon as they join the Party. The main purpose is to

Where significant differences can be identified, the results will also be compared to those obtained in Scotland. A survey of Scottish Green Party members was carried out in December 1990: all 998 party members were sent a questionnaire identical to the one used for the UK Green Party study, seven were returned because the respondent had moved away or was not known at the address given. A total of 504 questionnaires were returned, a net response rate of 50.9%.

The third comparative reference we will employ concerns the general population. We will thus be able to show how usual or unusual certain characteristics of Green Party members are. The main sources of general population data used are the 1988 General Household Survey, other government statistics on employment and education, and a variety of national opinion polls, most importantly the British Social Attitudes Surveys. The source of the specific set of general population data used will be identified in each individual table where such a comparison is made.

In presenting the data, we have tried to restrict the technical information to the minimum. Where percentages are shown, they usually add up to 100% but may not do so exactly because of rounding. If multiple answers were possible, then this is indicated. All percentage figures usually refer only to those who answered the question. The total number of respondents represented is given at the bottom of each table and figure as N. This is particularly useful in identifying data referring to smaller sub-groups. If a table or figure is based on responses to more than one question, N will be given as an average figure. Where correlations between individual variables are stated, particularly in Chapters 7 and 8, they are all statistically significant at the $p \leq 0.05$ level or better.

collect data on the resources (for example, expertise) which members are willing to make available to the Party.

Individual Green Party members have over the years conducted a number of small-scale surveys on various issues, mainly relating to policy questions. The largest effort of this type is probably Tim Flynn's questionnaire published in *Econews*, No. 47, October/November 1989 where he asked members to state their opinion on 14 policy statements. 624 responses were received, see Tim Flinn, "What DID we think?", *Econews*, No. 48, December 1989/January 1990.

3. The Socio-economic Background

How representative is the Green Party membership of the population of Britain? Membership of a political party is a fairly uncommon occurrence in Britain, only about 5-6% of the British population above the age of 18 are members of political parties¹⁰. To what extent are women represented in the Green Party? Is it a predominantly young party? What is the occupational background of its members?

Let us first look at the influence of sex. In public opinion polls, women are usually found to be more concerned about the environment, nuclear energy and the threat of nuclear war. Over the years the British Social Attitudes Survey has charted this difference. On a wide range of environmental issues, the views of men and women seem to differ quite markedly. For example, on the issue of nuclear missiles on British soil, a comparison of the attitudes of men and women in 1983 and 1989 show a widening "gender gap", with women (especially young women) much more concerned about nuclear weapons than men.¹¹ On the basis of these attitudinal differences, it could be expected that women would have a particularly high predisposition to joining the Green Party. On the other hand, women generally appear to be less involved in political activity than men, at least as far as "conventional" political participation is concerned.

Have women made more of an impact on green politics in terms of their willingness to join the Green Party? Looking at the share of women amongst Green Party members, our results show that the Green Party appears to come reasonably close to achieving proportional representation of women in its membership. 44% of our respondents are women, 56% men.¹² Women's share of the general population stands at 52%¹³. However, in interpreting this result, we have to take account of the role of joint membership. For technical reasons, we were able to send only one questionnaire to mailing addresses of joint members, i.e. only

¹⁰ In the British General Election Study of 1987, 5.9% of respondents declared that they were members of a political party. The equivalent figure from the European Election Study of 1989 is 4.6%.

¹¹ Ken Young, "Living under threat", in Roger Jowell, Sharon Witherspoon, and Lindsay Brook (eds.), *British Social Attitudes: the 7th Report* (Aldershot: Gower 1990), pp. 77-108.

¹² In Scotland, the figures are 45% women, 55% men.

¹³ Kate Foster, Amanda Wilmot and Joy Dobbs, *General Household Survey 1988* (London: HMSO 1990), p. 14.

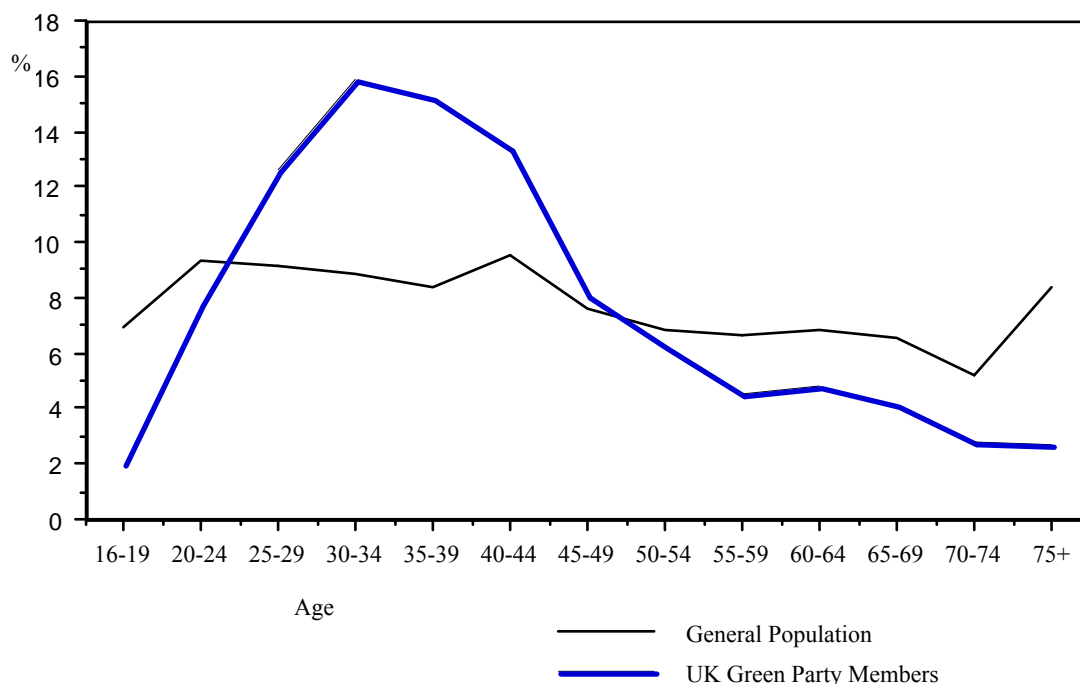
one of the joint members was able to fill out the questionnaire. As it turns out, in the majority of cases the respondent was male. Assuming that the vast majority of joint members consist of one male and one female member, we can recalculate the share of women in the Green Party: This calculation leaves us with 47% women and 53% men. Women are thus only slightly underrepresented. If we consider, furthermore, that women over 65 are overrepresented in the general population while Green Party members on average tend to be younger than the general population, the imbalance between male and female members becomes even more slight. We have to wait for the results of other party membership surveys to see whether the Green Party has a significantly higher participation rate of women than other political parties. There appears to have been little change in the ratio between men and women in the 1980s, though. Chris Studman in his 1984 sample of 372 Ecologists found 54% male and 46% female members.

How about age? Our findings confirm that the age structure of the Greens is somewhat younger than that of the general population. About two thirds (66.9%) are between the ages of 16 and 44. Scottish members are even younger: 75% of members are 44 or younger. Only 52.1%¹⁴ of the general population falls into this age category. However, compared with 1984, the party seems to have aged slightly, at least outside Scotland. Studman found three quarters (74.4%) of Ecology Party members to be in the 15 to 44 age category.

However, the age distribution of members is not quite as heavily weighted towards the young as one might expect. The average age of party members is actually 41 (Scotland: 39). A closer look at the age of members (Figure 1) reveals two findings. People below 25 are actually underrepresented in the party, it is those between 25 and 49 who form the core of the membership. And secondly, the share of older members is not that far behind national figures. The Green Party is thus by no means dominated by the very young. Instead, we find an age distribution which is reasonably balanced but in which the "middle-aged" are playing a disproportionately important role.

¹⁴ Foster et al., *General Household Survey 1988*, p. 16.

FIGURE 1: Age Distribution*



*General Population Data from *General Household Survey 1988*, p. 16, N=19,968; Green Party data N=4,242.

Where do Green Party members live? In the European elections, the party received the highest share of the vote in the South of England. If we look at the individual party areas and compare the share of UK Green Party members living there with the proportion of the population residing in these areas (according to published membership figures), we see that Green Party members are heavily overrepresented in the South of England (see Table 1).

The South West and South East of England turn out to be particular strongholds of the Green Party, matching the strong support they received in these areas in the 1989 European Elections.¹⁵ In effect, about 60% of Green Party members live in the South of England (including London) as opposed to 42% of the population at large.

¹⁵ See E. Gene Frankland, "Does green politics have a future in Britain?", in Wolfgang Rüdig (ed.), *Green Politics One 1990* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 1990).

TABLE 1: Geographical Distribution of Green Party Support
(Voters and Members¹⁶)

| | Voters | | Members Population | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------|--------|--------------------|------------|---------|
| | 1989 % | Diff.* | 1990 % | 1988. % | Diff.** |
| (a) South East..... | 20.2 | + 5.7 | 28.1 | 22.2 | +5.9 |
| (b) South West..... | 20.1 | + 5.6. | 13.1 | 8.1 | +5.0 |
| (c) London..... | 16.0 | + 1.5 | 18.6 | 11.8 | +6.8 |
| (d) Midlands..... | 15.0 | + 0.5 | 12.0 | 16.0 | -4.0 |
| (e) North West..... | 11.7 | - 2.8 | 8.7 | 12.1 | -3.4 |
| (f) North East and Yorkshire.. | 11.6 | - 2.9 | 9.7 | 13.2 | -3.5 |
| (g) Wales..... | 11.2 | - 3.3 | 3.6 | 5.0 | -1.4 |
| (h) Scotland..... | 7.2 | - 7.3 | 6.0 | 8.9 | -2.9 |
| (i) Northern Ireland..... | 1.2 | -13.3 | 0.2 | 2.7 | -2.5 |

* Share of the vote in the region minus the UK share of the vote (14.5%).

** Share of green membership minus of general population.

Sources: Regional voting figures calculated from European election results, *The Independent*, 20 June 1989; Regional party membership figures taken from John Bishop, *Office Manager's Report* (to Green Party AGM), 31 July 1990: regional population figures calculated on the basis of 1988 county residence statistics, Encyclopædia Britannica, *1991 Britannica Book of the Year* (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica Inc. 1991), p 723.

In what type of area do Greens live? Do they tend to live in villages, small towns, or inner-city areas? Within the general population 91.5% of people live in an urban area (suburban and inner-city) and only 8.5% live a rural area.¹⁷ In this respect Greens are very different: 34.2% of our

¹⁶ For this table, official party membership statistics were used rather than our survey results. A comparison of official statistics with our sample demonstrates again that the sample is fairly representative of the UK party membership. The figures from our sample are (share according to official 1990 membership statistics, **excluding** Scotland, in parentheses):

| | |
|---|-------------|
| South East (including the area parties East Anglia, North Thames, South Central and South East): | 33.9 (29.9) |
| South West (including Severnside) | 14.2 (14.0) |
| London | 17.0 (19.8) |
| Midlands (East Midlands and West Midlands) | 10.8 (12.8) |
| North West | 10.1 (9.2) |
| North East (North East and Yorkshire and Humberside) | 10.1 (10.3) |
| Wales | 3.8 (3.8) |
| Northern Ireland | 0.1 (0.2) |

The only major discrepancies, for the South East and London, are likely due to slight differences between official party membership statistics based on area party allocation and the self-allocation of members rather than to sample bias.

¹⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica, *1991 Britannica Book of the Year* (Chicago:

sample describe the area in which they live as rural, 45.5% live in a suburban area and only 20.3% in an inner-city. In Scotland, 40% of Greens live in rural areas, 33% in suburban and 27% in inner-city areas.

This more rural way of life is again demonstrated when we ask the Greens the population size of their village, town or city (see Table 2).

TABLE 2: Population Density of Area of Residence

Question : Approximately , what is the population size of the village, town or city in which you live?

| | % |
|--|------|
| (a) Under 500 people..... | 9.7 |
| (b) Between 500 and 5,000..... | 16.1 |
| (c) Between 5,000 and 50,000..... | 23.5 |
| (d) Between 50,000 and 200,000..... | 19.4 |
| (e) Between 200,000 and 500,000..... | 8.3 |
| (f) Between 500,000 and 3 Million..... | 6.8 |
| (g) Over 3 Million..... | 16.2 |

N=4,121

The table reveals that over one quarter of Greens live in an area with a population of less than 5,000 and nearly half do not live in a town with a population of more than 50,000. Either the population of small towns and rural areas is more susceptible to joining the Greens, or, perhaps more likely, Green Party members try to live their lives in a way that is close to nature, if only by choosing to live in villages and small towns, rather than in densely populated cities. In Scotland, far more Greens live in small communities with under 500 inhabitants (21%).

Green Party members are thus somewhat younger than average, tend to live in the South of England, and are more likely to be found in rural areas, villages and small towns. How about their education level?

The education level of the average Green is considerably higher than that of the average British citizen. Remarkably, 66.9% of respondents indicated that they had studied, or are now studying, for a degree at an institution of higher education. In Scotland, the share is even higher with 81% having studied or studying for a degree.

Encyclopædia Britannica Inc. 1991).(1985 figures).

Education is one variable where the difference from the general population is especially strong. In Great Britain, only 7% of the adult population have a degree. 71% of all adults (between 16 and 69) completed their full-time education by the age of 16.¹⁸ By contrast, only 22.9% of our Green respondents had completed their education by 16 (Scotland: 16%).

What type of educational institutions have Green Party members attended? 31.4% of respondents attended a fee-paying, independent school. In 1988, 7% of all pupils attended such a school¹⁹. Of those Greens who studied for a degree, 11.7% went to Oxford or Cambridge, 56% attended another university, and 16.5% went to a polytechnic. Since 1984, the educational qualifications of Green Party members have not significantly changed. C. J. Studman's survey found that 41.5% of his sample had attended university and 10.8% a polytechnic; in our study, the respective figures are 44.4% and 10.8%.

We asked those Greens who had studied, or are now studying, for a degree to tell us their main field of study. Table 3 presents the results and compares them to Studman's findings of 1984 as well as to the choice of degree subjects of all graduates aged 16-69.

The arts and social sciences are quite obviously the most popular areas of study for Green Party members. These two areas together account for 60.1% of those who studied for a degree. Greens are less likely than UK graduates to study engineering.

Studman's results of 1984, although they are not strictly comparable because many of his categories are different, resemble our own. For example, only 8.2% of Ecology Party members had studied engineering and technology, and over 40% had chosen an arts subject. However, about a quarter of Ecology Party members had studied a science subject - more than in our sample.

The figures in Table 3 hide, however, further important differences within the individual categories. If we compare our results with the more detailed data available on current student enrolment according to degree subject, we see the following discrepancies (see Figure 2).

First, amongst the social sciences in the broader sense, Greens are not

¹⁸ Kate Foster *et al.*, *General Household Survey 1988*, p. 150.

¹⁹ Central Statistical Office, *Social Trends 20* (London: HMSO 1990), p. 54.

very likely to have a background in business studies, management and law. While 20% of students are currently enrolled in such courses, only 7% of Green Party members (with a higher education background) have studied these subjects. Amongst the sciences, biology is somewhat more popular than in the student population as a whole, not surprising perhaps given that the ecological movement takes its name from a sub-discipline of biology.

TABLE 3: Choice of Degree Subject

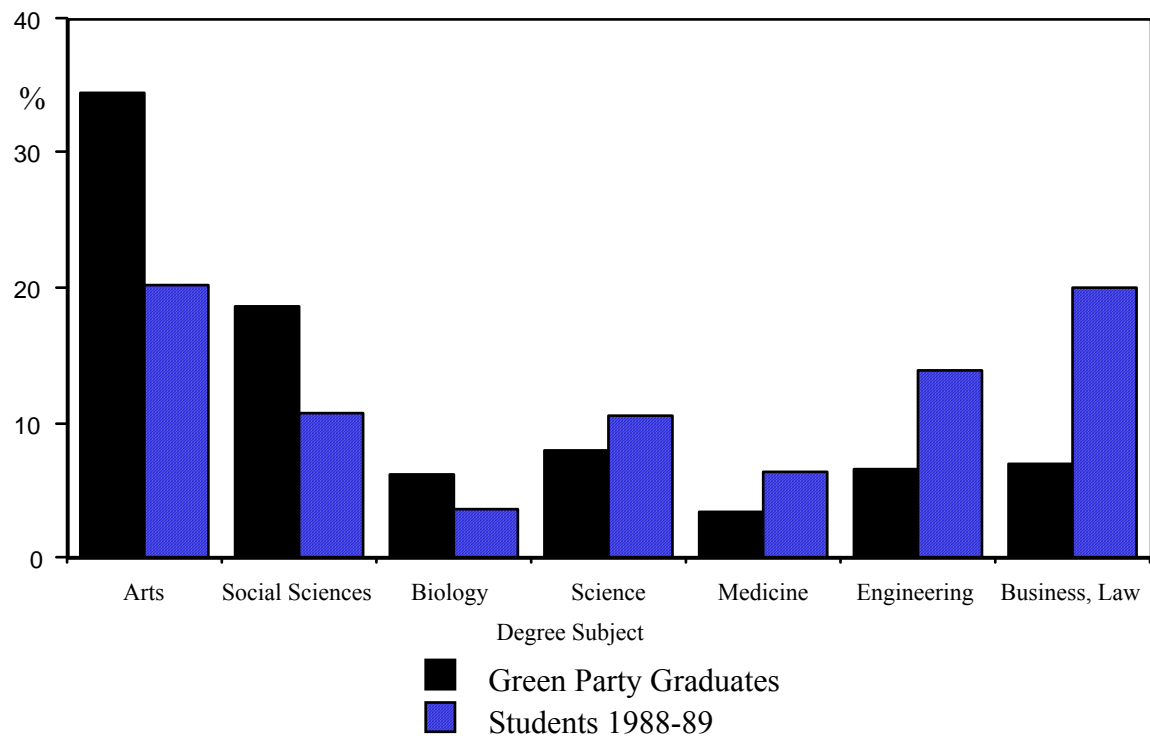
Question : What is or was your (main) field of study?

| | Green Party Members 1990 % | UK graduates (aged 16-69) 1988* % | Ecology Party Members 1984 % |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| (a) Arts and humanities (e.g. languages, philosophy, history, etc.)..... .. | 34.4 | 21.4 | 44.7 |
| (b) Social sciences (e.g. sociology, psychology, politics, economics, planning), law. | 25.7 | 26.2 | 21.8 |
| (c) Engineering | 6.5 | 16.5 | 8.2 |
| (d) Natural sciences (e.g. physics, chemistry, biology) and medicine | 17.6 | 18.4 | 25.3 |
| (e) Other | 15.8 | 17.6 | - |
| | N=2,827 | N=1,172 | N=170 |

*Kate Foster *et al.*, *General Household Survey 1988*, p.269.

Finally, in the area of education, we asked those Greens who studied for a degree to tell us the highest degree they were awarded. The results are summarized in Table 4. 18.2% of respondents hold a postgraduate qualification, and more than a third, 36.7% of respondents, have at least an Honours degree (Scotland: 25% have a postgraduate degree, 50% have at least an Honours degree).

FIGURE 2: Degree Subjects: Green Party Graduates vs. Current Student Enrolment*



Source: 1988-1989 student enrolment figures compiled from data in Department of Education and Science *et al.*, *Education Statistics for the United Kingdom, 1990 Edition* (London: HMSO 1991), p. 32.

* The category "other" degree subjects was excluded from the figure.

TABLE 4: Type of Degree Held

Question : What is the highest academic degree which you hold?

| | % |
|-------------------------------------|------|
| (a) Ph.D./D. Phil..... | 3.4 |
| (b) MA/MSc/MPhil..... | 9.8 |
| (c) Other Postgraduate Diploma..... | 5.0 |
| (d) BA/BSc (Honours)..... | 18.5 |
| (e) BA/BSc..... | 6.4 |
| (f) HND..... | 3.1 |
| (g) Other degree..... | 7.3 |
| (h) No degree/No answer..... | 46.5 |

N=4,357

The picture which emerges is one of a highly educated Green Party membership, with a large number of academic qualifications and a preference for arts subjects. Let us now turn from education to the more economic indicators.

In the survey we asked our respondents about a number of other features of their lives. For example, do Green Party members own their homes? 69.0% are owner-occupiers. The 1984 Ecology Party figure was just a little less (65.8%). In this respect the Greens are not very different from the general population; 63.3% of the UK population own their own homes, either outright or with a mortgage.²⁰

Turning to the occupational profile of Green Party members, we first looked at the share of those not in full-time employment. This is in part because some social scientists have suggested that green politics is mainly based on the activities of those outside main economic activities, those still in full-time education, or a new academic proletariat.²¹

Table 5 indicates that there is no evidence that this suggestion holds in Britain. In fact, the ratio of those in and outside of employment matches the national average relatively closely. The only differences again seem to be mainly age-related: there are fewer retired and more economically active people in the Party. Those in full-time education are quite a sizeable group, but as they represent less than 10% of members, they could hardly be described as dominant. The unemployed do not appear to be particularly strongly represented. (In Scotland, those in full-time education are slightly more prevalent with 10.6% and the unemployed account for 6.6% of the membership).

If we look at the areas of employment, we can notice more specific characteristics of Greens. Table 6 shows the types of occupations our respondents have; Table 7 looks at the type of employer Green Party members are working for.

²⁰ Kate Foster *et al*, *General Household Survey 1988*, p. 277.

²¹ See, for example, Jens Alber who states: "The typical supporter of the Greens...is young, highly trained, and unemployed or not economically active. This makes the Greens appear as a party of frustrated academic plebeians..."; Jens Alber, "Modernization, cleavage structures, and the rise of green parties and lists in Europe", in Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (ed.), *New Politics in Western Europe: The Rise and Success of Green Parties and Alternative Lists* (Boulder, CO.: Westview Press 1989), pp. 195-210 (here: p. 205).

TABLE 5: Employment Status

Question: Which of these statements best describes what you were doing last week (during the seven days ending last Saturday)? If you were on holiday, what were you doing in the way of work before you went away?

| | Green Party Members 1990 % | General Population (aged 16 or over) 1988* % |
|---|---|---|
| (a) In full-time work..... | 52.3 | 44.5 |
| (b) In full-time education..... | 8.4 | 1.9 |
| (c) On a government training/employment scheme (e.g. YTS)..... | 1.1 | 0.1 |
| (d) In part-time work..... | 12.3 | 13.2 |
| (e) Waiting to take up paid work in a definite job..... | 0.5 | 0.4 |
| (f) Unemployed..... | 5.7 | 4.0 |
| (g) Permanently sick or disabled, or wholly retired from work..... | 7.5 | 20.1 |
| (h) Looking after the home..... | 6.2 | 14.2 |
| (i) Other..... | 5.9 | 1.6 |
| | N=4,179 | N=19,716 |

* Kate Foster *et al.*, *General Household Survey 1988*, pp. 269-270.

The dominant characteristics are easily identified: virtually half of all respondents are engaged in "professional" occupations. The share of members working in agriculture, as unskilled or skilled manual workers, or in other more mundane jobs in industry and commerce is rather small. In comparison with the general population, professionals are heavily overrepresented within the Greens, while manual workers are heavily underrepresented. (In Scotland, the occupational profile of party members is broadly similar, although professionals are even more dominant with 53.3%).

TABLE 6: Occupation

Question: What is your occupation? If you are not presently employed, please think of your most recent employment.

| | Green Party Members 1990 % | General Population 1987* % |
|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| (a) Farmer or farm manager..... | 0.8 | 1.1 |
| (b) Farm worker..... | 0.5 | 1.1 |
| (c) Skilled manual worker (e.g. plumber, electrician, fitter, driver, cook, hairdresser) | 5.1 | 14.4 |
| (d) Semi-skilled or unskilled manual worker (e.g. postman, machine operator, assembler, waiter, cleaner, labourer)..... | 4.6 | 26.1 |
| (e) Clerical worker (e.g. clerk, secretary, telephone operator)..... | 8.0 | 15.2 |
| (f) Sales worker (e.g. shop assistant, commercial traveler)..... | 2.5 | 8.2 |
| (g) Professional or technical occupation (e.g. doctor, teacher, social worker, accountant, computer programmer)..... | 49.5 | 18.5 |
| (h) Manager or senior administrator (e.g. company director, executive officer, local authority officer)..... | 8.5 | 9.0 |
| (i) Other..... | 20.8 | 6.4 |
| | N=3,908 | N=1281 |

*Roger Jowell, Sharon Witherspoon and Lindsay Brook (eds.), *British Social Attitudes: the 5th Report* (Aldershot: Gower 1988), p. 252.

Table 7 gives us some idea about the importance of specific employment sectors. A substantial share of respondents is working in the public sector in what are generally described as "caring" occupations. 15% of respondents are employed in education, a further 7% in the health sector. All public sector occupations together form the biggest single group with a share of 44.2% (In Scotland, the figure is even higher with 49.1%).²² According to the 1989 British Social Attitudes Survey, the equivalent figure for the population as a whole is 27.4%.²³

Latest government statistics state that 22.1% of persons currently

²² This assumes that the respondents working in health and education services are working in the "public" sector. Government statistics treat universities and polytechnics in England as "private", non-profit making bodies and exclude them from public sector employment statistics.

²³ Roger Jowell, Sharon Witherspoon, and Lindsay Brook (eds.), *British Social Attitudes: the 7th Report* (Aldershot: Gower 1990), p. 257.

employed work in the public sector. As far as individual types of public sector employment are concerned, official statistics say that 5.2% of the population in employment work in public education and 4.5% in the National Health Service.²⁴ While exact comparisons with these figures are difficult and have to await further analysis, there can be no doubt that the "caring" professions are heavily overrepresented within the Green Party.

Again, we could interpret this result in two ways: individuals working in these professions may be more susceptible to becoming Green Party members, or Green Party members may consciously choose "caring" professions outside the mainstream of economic activity.

TABLE 7: Type of Employer

Question: What type of employer do you work for? If you are not working now, please think about the most recent job you held.

| | Green Party Membership 1990 % | General Population* 1989 % |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| (a) Private firm or company..... | 26.8 | 54.2 |
| (b) National industry / public corporation.. | 6.4 | 6.0 |
| (c) Local authority..... | 15.5 | 11.3 |
| (d) Health authority / hospital..... | 7.3 | 5.3 |
| (e) Primary or secondary education..... | 5.6 | ..** |
| (f) College, polytechnic or university education | 9.4 | ..** |
| (g) Never had a job..... | 0.8 | 4.8 |
| (h) Self-employed..... | 18.9 | 10.1 |
| (i) Other | 9.2 | 8.3 |
| | N=3,971 | N=3,029 |

* Source: Roger Jowell *et al.*, **British Social Attitudes, 7th Report**, p. 257.

** The British Social Attitudes Survey does not have these separate categories. As far as education is local authority funded, educational employment would have been registered in that category.

²⁴ Central Statistical Office, **Economic Trends**, No. 446, December 1990, pp. 92-93. It has to be noted that government figures on "public sector employment" exclude the universities and, from 1 April 1989, polytechnics in England.

While public sector employment is an important element of the occupation profile of party members, little more than a quarter, about 27%, work as employees in the private sector (In Scotland, it is only a fifth of the membership, 20.1%). However, the rather high share of self-employed people may be seen as surprising. About 19% are self-employed, compared with a share of just over 10% nationally.²⁵ Further analysis is required to establish whether this self-employment is in typically "green" areas (say, organic foods, gardening) or whether this is a sign that self-employed "yuppie" professionals of the 1980s have become involved in green politics.

Overall, these statistics demonstrate that Green Party members have a predominantly middle-class, professional background, with "caring" professions heavily overrepresented amongst the party membership.

Many Greens, however, reject the traditional class-based social classifications. This is highlighted by the fact that 39.5% of Greens say they never think of themselves in class terms (see Table 8). When asked to choose between two classes, 72.9% (of those who answered the question) place themselves in the middle class category, 27.1% in the working class category.

TABLE 8: Perceived Social Class

Question: Do you ever think of yourself as belonging to a particular social class? If so, which one is that?

| | % |
|--|------|
| (a) Working class..... | 10.1 |
| (b) Lower Middle Class | 10.7 |
| (c) Middle Class | 33.5 |
| (d) Upper Middle Class | 5.8 |
| (e) Upper Class | 0.4 |
| (f) Never think of myself in class terms | 39.5 |

N=4,152

According to the 1989 British Social Attitudes Survey, 29.4% of the general population describe themselves as middle or upper middle class, 21.4% as upper working class, and 44.1% as working class.²⁶ A direct comparison with our data is not possible because the categories were

²⁵ Data on the share of self-employed people vary. The 1988 General Household Survey found that 17% of economically active people were self-employed; Kate Fister *et al.*, *General Household Survey 1988*, p. 6.

²⁶ Roger Jowell *et al.* (eds.), *British Social Attitudes: the 7th Report*, p. 249.

different and respondents were not offered the choice to declare whether they thought of themselves in class terms or not. Nevertheless, in combination with the occupational and educational characteristics, the Green Party membership can clearly be described as predominantly "middle class". But it has to be emphasized again that a particular section of the middle class, i.e. professionals in "caring" occupations, is the dominant element.

TABLE 9: Religious Affiliation

Question: Do you belong to an organized religious group (e.g. a church or a religious movement)? If yes, which denomination or other group do you belong to?

| | UK Green Party Members 1990 % | Scottish Green Party Members 1990 % | General Population 1989* % |
|---|--|--|---|
| (a) Do not belong to any religious group..... | 71.6 | 72.3 | 34.4 |
| (b) Roman Catholic Church..... | 3.9 | 3.1 | 11.1 |
| (c) Church of England..... | 10.3 | 3.7 | 36.7 |
| (d) Church of Scotland..... | 0.1 | 8.8 | 4.5 |
| (e) Methodist..... | 1.7 | 1.0 | 4.0 |
| (f) Quaker..... | 5.2 | 4.7 | 0.1 |
| (g) Other Christian..... | 2.1 | 2.0 | 7.2 |
| (h) Jewish..... | 0.4 | 0.2 | 0.4 |
| (i) Buddhist..... | 1.8 | 2.4 | 0.1 |
| (j) Other non-Christian..... | 1.3 | 0.4 | 1.1 |
| (k) Religious Movement..... | 1.5 | 1.4 | - |
| | N=4,235 | N=504 | N=3,029 |

*Roger Jowell et al., *British Social Attitudes: the 7th Report*, p. 249.

The question wording was somewhat different: "Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion?"

Finally, are Greens particularly religious? Our data suggest that they are not. More than two thirds, 71%, do not consider themselves part of a church or a religious movement (Table 9). Looking at the various religions and denominations Greens do belong to, all the major churches are heavily underrepresented, with one exception: 5.2% of our sample are Quakers, a group which only makes up 0.1% of the general population. Another religion overrepresented among Greens is Buddhism. In

Scotland, the situation is exactly the same: the main denominations are underrepresented, only Quakers and Buddhists play a more prominent role.

What does the typical Green Party member thus look like? According to our results, he or she is 41 years old, lives in the South of England in a small town or rural area, is not religious, has a university degree in an arts or social science subject (but not in engineering, business management or law), is an owner-occupier, and works as a "professional" in the public sector, most likely in education. This picture suggests that Green Party members have a certain basic economic security, they are not drop-outs completely alienated from society. They enjoy the basic comforts of what are usually referred to as the "middle classes", they own a house and have a professional job. But it is also obvious from these first findings that the typical Green Party member has made some choices which set him or her apart, not just from the rest of the population but also from other "middle class" professionals.

It is important to note that the typical Green Party member is not working as a private sector employee, for example, and is more likely to work in a caring profession such as teaching, health, social work, and related areas. The choice of degree subjects in the arts and humanities, and the social sciences, with engineering, law and business management not prominently represented, are other indications of a certain detachment from a world in which economic growth and profits play a dominant role. Greens are fairly comfortably based in the society they are living in, but are placed at the margins rather than the core of the society they want to change.

Socio-economic background can only form part of the profile of Green Party members. Crucially important for green activities are probably the specific experiences of members which led them to become active in green politics.

4. Previous Political Experience

Are the members of the Green Party predominantly former activists of other parties who became disgruntled with their old party and joined the Greens? Or do Green Party members predominantly come from outside party politics, from environmental campaigning and voluntary work?

Less than a third - 28.9% - of our Green Party respondents have at one time been a member of another political party (Scotland: 28%). In 1984, the share of previous party members was 21.9%. Some small movement towards people with experience of party politics can thus be detected, although the difference is not very large.

Which parties did these Green Party members belong to? Table 10 shows the distribution of previous party memberships for 1990 and 1984. Remarkably, there is hardly any difference between the two distributions. Of the relatively small number of people with prior party membership, about half continue to come from the Labour Party and about 30% from the centre parties. In Scotland, about one fifth of those Scottish Green Party members with a previous party affiliation had been SNP members.

Table 10: Previous Membership of Other Political Parties

Question: Have you been a member of another political party? If yes, which one?*

| Party | UK Green | Scottish | Ecology |
|--------------------------------------|----------|----------|---------|
| | Party | Green | Party |
| | Members | Party | Members |
| | 1990 | 1990 | 1984 |
| | % | % | % |
| (a) Conservative Party..... | 12.3 | 7.8 | 10.6 |
| (b) Labour Party..... | 51.3 | 42.6 | 50.6 |
| (c) Liberal Party..... | 24.5 | 24.1 | 25.3 |
| (d) SDP..... | 7.3 | 2.1 | 5.3 |
| (e) SLD..... | 3.0 | 2.8 | - |
| (f) Scottish National Party (SNP)... | 0.6 | 20.6 | - |
| (g) Others..... | 12.5 | 15.6 | 8.0 |
| | N=1,225 | N=141 | N=75 |

*Percentages only refer to those who were members of other political parties. Green Party figures add up to more than 100% because some respondents were members of more than one party.

Why did respondents leave their previous parties? Table 11 provides us with some hints. Most respondents emphasize some change in policy or the party's aims as the most important reason for leaving. All other reasons are relatively marginal, including the internal structure of the party. This is an interesting point, particularly considering the major attention given to matters of internal democracy in the Green Party.

TABLE 11: Reasons for Leaving Previous Party

Question: Why did you leave your old party? (If you have been a member of more than one other party, then please answer in terms of the party you left most recently.)

| | Very important but not decisive | Decisive | Important | Not very important | Played no role whatsoever |
|---|---------------------------------|----------|-----------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| | : | : | : | : | : |
| | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| (a) I had come to disagree with the party's fundamental aims..... | 37.8 | 7.9 | 16.0 | 13.9 | 24.4 |
| (b) Most of my friends had left the party..... | 0.7 | 0.9 | 2.0 | 6.5 | 89.9 |
| (c) The party had no chance of winning an election or otherwise of influencing policy making..... | 6.5 | 3.4 | 7.7 | 12.4 | 70.1 |
| (d) I was not able to attain a position of influence within the party | 1.0 | 0.7 | 4.3 | 7.9 | 86.1 |
| (e) I thought there were better ways of achieving the party's aims | 7.8 | 7.3 | 15.1 | 13.4 | 56.5 |
| (f) Activities within the party were too boring..... | 3.7 | 5.1 | 11.0 | 15.8 | 64.3 |
| (g) Ordinary members had few opportunities to participate..... | 4.8 | 6.7 | 11.5 | 15.5 | 61.6 |
| (h) I found myself in disagreement with an important change in policy | 34.9 | 7.5 | 5.3 | 7.5 | 44.9 |

N=994 (Average)

We have established that most Green Party members have not been members of other parties before. But how about other forms of political activity? Is Green Party membership, for example, the outcome of years of frustrated campaigning in the environmental movement? Do Green Party members have any strong links with environmental and other social movements?

TABLE 12: Membership of Environmental Organisations and Other Groups

Question: Are you or have you ever been a member of any of the following environmental groups? If yes, please state the number of years you were or have been a member. If you are uncertain of the length of time, please just make a rough estimate.

| | I have never been a member | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|------|
| | Less than one year | One to two years | Three to ten years | More than ten years | |
| | : | : | : | : | : |
| | : | : | : | : | : |
| | : | : | : | : | : |
| | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| (a) Friends of the Earth | 4.4 | 22.5 | 19.2 | 5.8 | 48.2 |
| (b) Greenpeace | 2.2 | 26.8 | 17.9 | 4.5 | 48.6 |
| (c) Socialist Environment and Resource Association (SERA)..... | 0.1 | 0.6 | 0.9 | 0.5 | 97.9 |
| (d) Council for the Protection of Rural England/Wales | 0.6 | 1.7 | 2.3 | 1.4 | 94.0 |
| (e) National Trust | 5.9 | 10.5 | 8.2 | 3.6 | 71.9 |
| (f) Royal Society for the Protection of Birds | 4.0 | 8.4 | 6.1 | 2.6 | 85.2 |
| (g) Ramblers' Association | 1.4 | 3.4 | 3.2 | 1.7 | 90.2 |
| (h) Royal Society for Nature Conservation | 1.9 | 3.6 | 1.7 | 0.9 | 91.8 |
| (i) World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)..... | 2.2 | 8.4 | 7.3 | 2.9 | 79.2 |
| (j) Conservation Society (ConSoc)..... | 1.6 | 1.7 | 1.2 | 0.5 | 94.9 |
| (k) Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals..... | 1.3 | 2.6 | 3.1 | 1.6 | 91.5 |
| (l) Local amenity group or conservation society..... | 3.7 | 9.1 | 6.3 | 2.5 | 78.3 |
| (m) Other environmental groups | 3.6 | 13.5 | 8.2 | 3.4 | 71.2 |

And what about these other groups?

| | | | | | |
|--|-----|------|-----|-----|------|
| (n) Anti-nuclear Campaign.(ANC)..... | 1.1 | 2.3 | 2.1 | 0.6 | 93.8 |
| (o) Local protest group against nuclear energy(incl. nuclear waste)..... | 0.6 | 3.1 | 3.5 | 1.6 | 91.3 |
| (p) Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND)..... | 8.2 | 20.2 | 9.1 | 1.9 | 60.5 |
| (q) Other peace groups..... | 2.7 | 7.6 | 3.1 | 1.4 | 85.2 |
| (r) Amnesty International..... | 2.2 | 8.0 | 8.7 | 5.3 | 75.9 |
| (s) Anti-Apartheid Campaign..... | 1.4 | 4.9 | 4.8 | 2.2 | 86.6 |

N= 4,357

Not surprisingly, we find that about half of Green Party members have joined Britain's two major environmental campaigning organizations, Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace. CND (39.4%), other environmental groups (28.7%), and the National Trust (28.2%) also have quite high levels of membership support among Greens. Overall, the level of membership of environmental groups and a range of other organizations is not that impressive (see Table 12). Particularly at local level, there is little sign of extra-party political activity. Very few members are working within local environmental and peace groups. In Scotland, the membership figures are very similar, the only significant difference is the lower membership rate of Friends of the Earth (41.5%, compared with 51.8% in the rest of the UK).

Studman's 1984 study revealed a similar trend, but with some variations. In 1984, CND was the organisation that attracted the highest level of support from Ecology Party members (43% of total sample). Friends of the Earth (21.3%) and Greenpeace (12.3%) followed rather far behind. The National Trust had the support of only 6.1% of Ecology Party members.

Overall, the Green Party has thus become more "environmentalist" in the second half of the 1980s. In 1990, only 13.3% of our sample was not a member of any environmental group, and 69.3% belonged to more than one group. On average, Green Party members belonged to 2.8 environmental groups.²⁷

Membership in environmental and peace groups is just one indicator of political activity outside party politics. In many cases, membership of these groups involves little more than an annual financial contribution. In order to find out whether Green Party members were more substantially involved in various social movements, we asked members to rate their own activity levels for these movements as well as for the Green Party *over their entire period of involvement in political campaigning*. The results (Table 13) show that, overall, Green Party activity exceeds most other forms of campaigning in intensity. The two movements which show the highest activity levels are the environmental and peace movements. About 40% say that they have been extremely, very or fairly active in the environmental movement, while 37% score that well on the

²⁷ The real figure is probably even higher because membership of local amenity groups and other environmental groups not specified in our list of the main national environmental organisations just counts as one for the purpose of calculating the average. On the other hand, these figures also include past membership of environmental organisations.

activity scales for the Green Party. About 30% indicate that they have been fairly active at least in the peace movement.

The British Green Party, unlike some continental green parties, was always seen as having a rather tense relationship with the established environmental movement, and the peace movement was widely seen as being dominated by an orientation towards Labour. These results do show, however, that fairly sizeable numbers of individual activists of these movements have found their way into the Green Party (or vice versa).

TABLE 13: Level of Past Involvement in Social Movements outside Party Politics

Question: Looking back, over the entire period of your involvement in political campaigning, how would you generally describe your own level of activity within the following movements outside party politics? And how does it compare with your Green Party activity?

| | Extremely or Very active | Fairly active | Not very active | Not at all active |
|---|--------------------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| | : | : | : | : |
| | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | % | % | % | % |
| (a) Conservation Movement..... | 9.5 | 19.0 | 26.8 | 44.8 |
| (b) Environmental Movement | 13.2 | 26.4 | 26.9 | 27.3 |
| (c) Animal Rights Movement | 5.7 | 11.2 | 18.1 | 65.0 |
| (d) Anti-nuclear (energy) Movement | 6.0 | 14.7 | 24.1 | 55.2 |
| (e) Peace Movement | 11.6 | 18.2 | 21.0 | 49.2 |
| (f) Feminist Movement | 4.4 | 8.4 | 13.6 | 73.6 |
| (g) Tenants' (or other urban) Movement..... | 3.1 | 4.5 | 6.7 | 85.8 |
| (h) Trade Union Movement..... | 4.4 | 9.1 | 14.1 | 72.5 |
| (i) The Green Party..... | 13.7 | 22.9 | 36.7 | 26.6 |

N=3,872 (Average)

Also as far as other so-called "new" social movements are concerned, only fairly small minorities report any significant degree of activity. About 20% have been active in the anti-nuclear energy movement, 16.9% in the animal rights movement and 12.8% in the feminist movement.

Experience in urban social movements such as housing conflicts obviously plays practically no role for the political socialisation of Green Party members, but 13.5% say that they have been at least fairly active in the trade union movement. Overall, the influence of previous social movement activity is mainly limited to the environmental and peace movements; other movements play a very subordinate role. (In Scotland, the levels of past movement activities is slightly higher, particularly for the anti-nuclear energy and peace movements.)

Is there evidence that the experience of the 1960s has had any major influence on the British Green Party? Particularly the German Greens have often been portrayed as the political manifestation of the "New Left" movements of the 1960s, dominated by former student movement activists. In Britain, that influence appeared to be rather weaker. Our data confirm this: only about 11% of our sample describe themselves as activists of the student movement and 10% were involved in the anti-Vietnam protest movements of the 1960s.

Further data analysis is required to explore the exact nature of the relationship between social movement activity and involvement in the Green Party. But on the data we have available, we can state that only a minority of Green Party members have been involved in social movement activities of some kind to a significant degree. Previous activities in the environmental and peace movement were quite substantial, however, with more than a third of members being quite heavily involved. Consequently, the Green Party cannot be characterized as a party which has been totally untouched by the movements of the 1970s and 1980s, although the influence of these movements on the party may have been less than, for example, in Germany.

The past level of activity in social movement says nothing, of course, about on-going activities at the time of Green Party membership. Are social movement activity and Green Party activity mutually exclusive? For example, do individuals first become involved in environmental campaigning and then join the Green Party, pursuing their objectives purely within the party?

We asked members about their activities in various social movements during the last year, i.e. 1990, in terms of average hours per week spent on these activities. The results reveal that Green Party members devote some time to social movement activities outside party politics. About 38% have spent some time on environmental movement activities, 27% on conservation work (see Table 14). If we take all social movement

activities together, then we find that less than half, 47%, of respondents spent no time whatsoever on any movement activities in the last year, 43% spent between one and ten hours, and about 10% spent more than 10 hours per week. Of those who are involved in movement activities, 70% are active in more than one movement.

TABLE 14: Level of Present Social Movement Activity

Question: During the last year, how many hours did you devote to activism in these movements in the average week (excluding Green Party activities)? If you spent no time on these activities, please enter 0.

| | No time spent on these activities | One hour | More than one hour |
|---|-----------------------------------|----------|--------------------|
| | : | : | : |
| | --- | --- | -- |
| | % | % | % |
| (a) Conservation Movement..... | 73.6 | 14.9 | 11.5 |
| (b) Environmental Movement | 62.7 | 19.8 | 17.5 |
| (c) Animal Rights Movement | 85.7 | 8.4 | 5.9 |
| (d) Anti-nuclear (energy) Movement | 88.7 | 8.4 | 2.9 |
| (e) Peace Movement | 82.1 | 11.2 | 6.7 |
| (f) Feminist Movement | 91.5 | 4.8 | 3.7 |
| (g) Tenants' (or other urban) Movement..... | 93.8 | 3.2 | 3.0 |
| (h) Trade Union Movement..... | 89.9 | 5.6 | 4.5 |

N=4,357

Apart from time devoted to movement activities, financial contributions made by Green Party members to environmental pressure groups play a major role. A large majority of members, 71.5%, made financial contributions to such groups, significantly more than those spending any time on activities in the environmental and conservation movements (40.7%). This pattern is repeated for the other movements.

We thus find that the share of Green Party members who are also members of environmental groups has risen significantly in the 1980s, and that a large majority of members contributes financially to these groups. Their involvement measured in terms of time devoted to these activities is more limited, however. Here, we may see an indication of a more general trend of environmental action. In the 1970s and early 1980s, environmental and peace movements were engaged in conflicts

involving demonstrations, occupations, and other actions involving the mobilization of activists and direct confrontations with the authorities. In the later 1980s, participation in "direct action" has been reduced to elite groups, such as Greenpeace. Environmental action mainly takes the form of lobbying undertaken by professional staff. The role of "ordinary" environmentalists is reduced to supporting these actions by becoming a member of an environmental organisation. The involvement of the vast majority of members appears to be limited to financial contributions: environmental activism has largely given way to mass membership organizations whose members send in their annual subscription and follow the campaigns in the media but are not otherwise involved.

Nevertheless, our data indicate that participation in activities of the environmental and peace movement has played an important role for many Green Party members. Further analysis is necessary to explore the relative importance and influence of social movement activity for their involvement in the Green Party. Preliminary analyses indicates, however, that of those who have been members of Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and CND, a large group joined these groups before joining the Green Party: 37.6% in the case of FOE, 41.5% and 49% in the cases of Greenpeace and CND respectively. By comparison, relatively few joined these groups after joining the Green Party (between 16.4 and 21.2%).

Finally, let us turn to another indicator of Green Party members' previous political behaviour, namely their voting record in General elections. 87.1% of members have voted at least once in a national election since 1970. Amongst those, Labour comes top, as 53% of members have voted for Labour at least once. (In Scotland, 28.7% have voted for the SNP before. The figures for other parties are similar although Scottish Greens voted to a slightly lesser extent for the Liberals, the SPD/Liberal Alliance and the Conservatives.)

Table 15: Previous Voting Record

Question: Which of the following parties have you voted for in a General Election since 1970?

| | % |
|----------------------------------|------|
| (a) Green Party..... | 75.1 |
| (b) Conservative Party..... | 16.8 |
| (c) Labour Party..... | 53.4 |
| (d) Liberal Party..... | 30.7 |
| (e) SDP/Liberal Alliance..... | 23.5 |
| (f) Plaid Cymru..... | 1.2 |
| (g) Scottish National Party..... | 0.5 |
| (g) Other.party..... | 10.4 |

N=4,357

*Figures do not add up to 100% because some members voted for more than one party.

The Liberals and the SDP/Alliance are also quite important, but previous Conservative voters appear to be unlikely recruits to the ranks of the Green Party.

What is the picture which emerges from these data about the previous political experience of Green Party members? Clearly, Green Party members are not predominantly party political activists who switch from one party to another. For most, the Green Party is the first party they were ever a member of. Activities in social movements, particularly the environmental movement, the anti-nuclear movement and the peace movement, are far more common. Relatively few members continue to be active in these movements, but a very large majority of members supports environmental pressure groups financially.

5. Party Activity

How active are Green Party members? We devoted considerable attention to the proper measurement of different types of activism in the Green Party, and a series of questions about the activities of individual members was asked. As indicated in Chapter 2, we have to bear in mind that passive members are probably underrepresented in our sample.

Let us start by looking at the self-reported activity assessment of members. We asked Green Party members to look at their entire period of political campaigning and indicate how active, overall, they have been in the party. 4.4% describe themselves as "extremely active", 9.3% say they have been "very" active, and another 22.9% say they have been "fairly" active. However, the largest groups consist of those indicating that they have been "not very active" (36.7%) or "not at all active" (26.6%) (see also Table 12). In fact, we thus have a majority - 63.3% - who have to be classified as "passive" Green Party members.

Turning to current Green Party activity, we asked our respondents how many hours of party activity they undertook in the average week during the last year. The first important result is that 58.7% do not appear to spend any time on party activity. Of the remaining 41.3% who do spend any time at all on activity, most - 46.8%- spend an average of one hour per week and 21.4% spend two hours per week. Of the entire sample, only a small minority spends more than two hours per week: 5.8%. We will have to wait for the results of other party membership surveys to assess whether this level of activity is higher or lower than in the larger parties. The results tend to suggest that the Greens have a large body of passive members whose activity appears to be limited to the payment of the membership subscription. In order to find out about the activities of members at local, area and national levels, we asked a series of more specific questions about the type of involvement in party activities.

The Green Party emphasizes the importance of grass-roots democracy and local decision-making. Some members of the Green Party have argued that green politics can only be conducted at the local level, and that the emphasis of activity should be redirected from the national to the local level. We asked a series of questions to investigate the degree of local activity, and the results are shown in Table 16. For a few, such activity is an impossibility - 4.6% have no local branch in their area. (In Scotland, 12.2% of members have no local branch). 12.5% have no contact whatsoever with the local party and 41.5% receive the local party

newsletter only.

The data confirm the first impression that about 50% do not participate at all at the local level. There is an intermediate group of about 30% who attend local meetings and may undertake some other, more minor task. The activists appear to be drawn from the remaining 20% of the membership, and about 5 to 10% exercise what could be described as "leadership" at the local level.

TABLE 16: Local Party Activity

Question: How would you best describe your involvement with the local Green Party branch?

| | %* |
|--|------|
| (a) There is no local party branch in my area..... | 4.6 |
| (b) I have no contact whatsoever with the local party..... | 12.5 |
| (c) I receive the local party newsletter but have no other contact with the local party..... | 41.5 |
| (d) I occasionally go to local party meetings..... | 26.3 |
| (e) I regularly attend local meetings..... | 23.3 |
| (f) I help to organise coffee mornings, jumble sales etc..... | 15.4 |
| (g) I help with information stalls..... | 14.2 |
| (h) I help organise local campaigns..... | 18.1 |
| (i) I speak in public (outside party meetings) on behalf of the local party..... | 6.5 |
| (j) I convene and/or chair local branch meetings..... | 8.1 |
| (k) I hold the following offices in the local party..... | 10.3 |

*The percentage figures do not add up to 100% as multiple responses were possible.

Answers to other questions confirm this categorization. Asked whether the respondent had attended a local party meeting during the last year, 50.2% of members answered "yes". 17.8% have been a Green Party candidate in a local election. From these statistics, a 50-30-20 pattern of local party activity is emerging.

Turning to the higher levels of party activity, we find that, in the last year, 12.0% of respondents attended an area party meeting and 8.4% a national party conference (either the spring or the autumn conference, or both). Area meetings thus attract substantially fewer members than local branch meetings and attract only marginally more members than the national conferences.

Turning now to the national level, we asked respondents if they had ever attended any national UK Green Party conferences (including Spring policy conferences). 17.7% of respondents declared that they had attended at least one national conference. Most of these national conference-goers, 42.7%, had only attended one such conference, 21.3% two, and 10.1% three. The number of regular conference goers is thus rather small: only 4.3% of our sample had been to four or more national conferences. We have, however, to take into account that more than half of our sample only joined the party in 1989 and 1990. The figure of 4.3% thus refers to long-term national party activists only.

Every member of the Green Party can attend and vote at a national conference. The absence of a delegate system does not allow us to associate conference attendance with a "national party elite". To see how we could distinguish between different types of conference-goers, we asked a number of questions about the activities of individuals at national conferences. The results are summarised in Table 17.

TABLE 17: National Conference Activity

Question: Which of the following statements would best describe your activities at the MOST RECENT national party conference you attended?

| | Percentage of conference attendees ----- |
|--|---|
| (a) I attended most plenary sessions..... | 67.4 |
| (b) I attended one or more working group/fringe meeting..... | 84.1 |
| (c) I went to see the Green Review..... | 37.6 |
| (d) I participated in the discussions at working group meetings..... | 65.7 |
| (e) I intervened in plenary sessions from the floor..... | 16.0 |
| (f) I addressed the conference from podium..... | 5.7 |
| (g) I proposed one or more motion(s)/amendment(s). to conference..... | 8.8 |
| (h) I raised one or more points of order/points of information..... | 6.7 |
| (i) I facilitated one or more working groups..... | 10.7 |
| (j) I chaired one or more plenary sessions..... | 2.3 |
| (k) I gave a key-note speech in a plenary session or at a fringe meeting..... | 3.4 |

N=731

* The percentage figures do not add up to 100% as multiple responses were possible.

These results reveal some interesting features of conference activity. First, working groups and fringe meetings are extremely popular elements of national conferences. By far the largest number of conference-goers attend one or more of them. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the participation rate at these meetings is rather high: virtually two-thirds (66%) do not just attend but actively participate in working groups. The contrast to plenary sessions is stark: only 16% spoke in a plenary session, and even fewer proposed motions, raised points of order etc. Plenary sessions are obviously seen as rather forbidding occasions in which a large majority of conference-goers do not actively participate.

How about other forms of party activity at national level? Of all Greens, 5.3% have held an office at regional/national level, 2.5% have been a Green Party candidate in a General or European Election, the majority once or twice, and 2.2% are Prospective Parliamentary Candidates for the next General Election. The share of the membership involved in "senior" activities at national level is thus relatively small. Again, we would need data on other parties to see how green membership participation rates at that level compare to those of formally more "hierarchically" organised, established parties.

A high level of activity in a small party like the Greens has substantial costs for the individual but, while established parties can offer their active members some tangible incentives in terms of elected office, patronage, etc., the Greens do not have the resources to offer rewards of this kind for activism. On the contrary, the importance of "grassroots" democracy in green politics with its strong demands on consensus decision making, involvement of all levels of the party, comprehensive accountability of elected officials, restrictions on the continuity of holding office, and so on, puts an additional burden on the national activist.

Potentially, a major cost of high party activity is a loss in earnings. Asked whether "Green Party activity in the last year has cost you in the form of lost earnings, unpaid expenses, etc.", 17.1% of Green Party members answered in the affirmative. As to the amounts, about 10% of all who had experienced lost earnings said they had lost more than £600. About 30% had lost between £50 and £600, and the remaining 60% had lost £50 or less. Substantial lost earnings in excess of £600 are thus suffered by a relatively small group, 1.4% of the entire sample. Apart from financial sacrifices, serious loss of time is another major cost: the top 1.5% on average spend in excess of 20 hours on party business per week.

A major issue of internal debate has been the involvement of women in party life. While established parties are seen as dominated by men, there are some signs that women play a more major role in the Green Party. At the time of the 1987 General Election, all three co-chairs were women, for example. Do women thus play an equal or perhaps even a dominant part in the party at large? Our findings show that women certainly are not dominant. In fact, men on the whole tend to be more active and more heavily represented at all levels of party life.

In terms of self-reported activity levels, women only lag behind by a little: men spend an average of 1.8 hours per week on party activity, women 1.2. If we look at different types of party activity, the differences become more pronounced. Women attend local meetings and even national party conferences only slightly less frequently than men. At local level, women also are fairly well represented as candidates in local elections. Of the 739 respondents in our sample who have been local candidates, 267 (36.1%) were women. This compares with a share of 43.4% of women in the party membership as a whole. Women are thus still underrepresented but not by that much.

The situation is rather different when we look at regional or national party officers and candidates in European or General Elections. Here, we find that women fare less well: only 3.8% of female respondents, as opposed to 6.4% of men, held a party office at regional or national level. 1.6% of women (3.3% of men) have been Green Party candidates in European or General Elections. Let us look a little closer at the candidates for the coming General Election. In our sample, we had 82 respondents who had already been selected as Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs). Of those, 22 (26.8%) were women. While the representation of women among PPCs may well be higher in the Green Party than in established parties, it has to be noted that female Green Party members are still less likely than their male counterparts to become candidates in national elections. While we need further analysis to establish the reasons why this is so, the answers to another question give us some initial clues.

We asked respondents whether, if no PPC had yet been chosen in their constituency, they intended to put themselves forward. Of those who responded, 2.6% were definitely or probably putting themselves forward, and 6.1% were thinking about it. If we look at the share of women in these groups, we find that the proportion of women considering putting themselves forward for selection as PPCs is exactly the same as the share of female PPCs already selected, namely 26.8%. This very clearly

demonstrates that the lower share of women represented among parliamentary candidates is not due to the rejection of women candidates by local parties but that it reflects the number of female candidates putting themselves forward for these positions.

What have we learned from the data on party activism in the Green Party? Perhaps the most important single finding concerns the challenge of grassroots democracy. As about 50-60% of members are essentially "passive", taking practically no part in party activities, the party faces a problem in involving these members in democratic decision making. This problem is particularly acute above the local level: with only 12% of members attending an area party meeting and 8.4% a national conference, party policy at the regional and the national level is in the hands of a small group of activists.

The Green Party has gone to great lengths to try to involve ordinary party members in party affairs. For example, there is a national ballot for the election of four Green Party Council members - the participation rate in the 1990 ballot was about 20%²⁸. There is also the possibility of delegating proxy votes for a member to vote on behalf of other members at the national conference but, again, the number of people taking advantage of this are very small. Proxy votes, which are only counted when a card vote is called for, increase the number of votes cast by around 50%²⁹: obviously only a very small minority of members make use of this facility.

As most ordinary members apparently fail to take up the opportunities to become involved, how do they view the internal structure of the Party? Is it sufficiently democratic, or should efficiency in promoting the party's electoral interests take greater priority? These are questions addressed in the following chapter.

²⁸ Data supplied by Dillan Harris, Electoral Returning Officer, July 1991.

²⁹ Personal Observation, Wolverhampton AGM, September 1990.

6. Internal Structure

Of all the British political parties, the Green Party emphasizes most strongly the importance of local, decentralised decision-making. The principle "Nothing should be done at a higher level if it can be done at a lower one"³⁰ is not only prescribed for the (re-)organisation of government and public administration, but it is also intended to be reflected in the internal structure and decision making processes of the party. The Green Party Constitution stipulates, for example: "The general practice of the Party shall be to encourage the greatest possible autonomy of each Local Party in its pursuit of the Object of the Party."³¹

Decentralisation of decision making is thus a major priority, and, consequently, sub-national forms of party organisation play an important role. The party is organised at three different levels: there are local parties, area parties and the national party. The highest decision making body is the Annual Conference. In between conferences, the Green Party Council (GPC) represents the national party. The GPC elects three co-chairs, standing at the helm of the national party. There are also a number of official party speakers. The day-to-day running of the party organisation is in the hands of the London Party office.

Throughout its history, the Green Party has seen debates about its internal structure. Some members believe that the national party institutions are too weak and do not have sufficient resources to do their job properly. Others fear that decision making in the party is being usurped by the national level, and that further decentralization of the party organisation is required.

What do party members think about these questions? How do members perceive the role of various party institutions? Does a majority feel that national bodies such as the GPC have too much or too little power? Is too much attention given to co-chairs and speakers? We asked a number of questions which were designed to shed light on these matters.

First of all, let us look at the evaluation of party meetings and conferences at various levels, bearing in mind that participation rates are highest at the local and lowest at the national level. Figure 3 gives the

³⁰ *Manifesto for a Sustainable Society* (Updated August 1990) (London: Green Party U.K. 1990), p. 14 (DC 200).

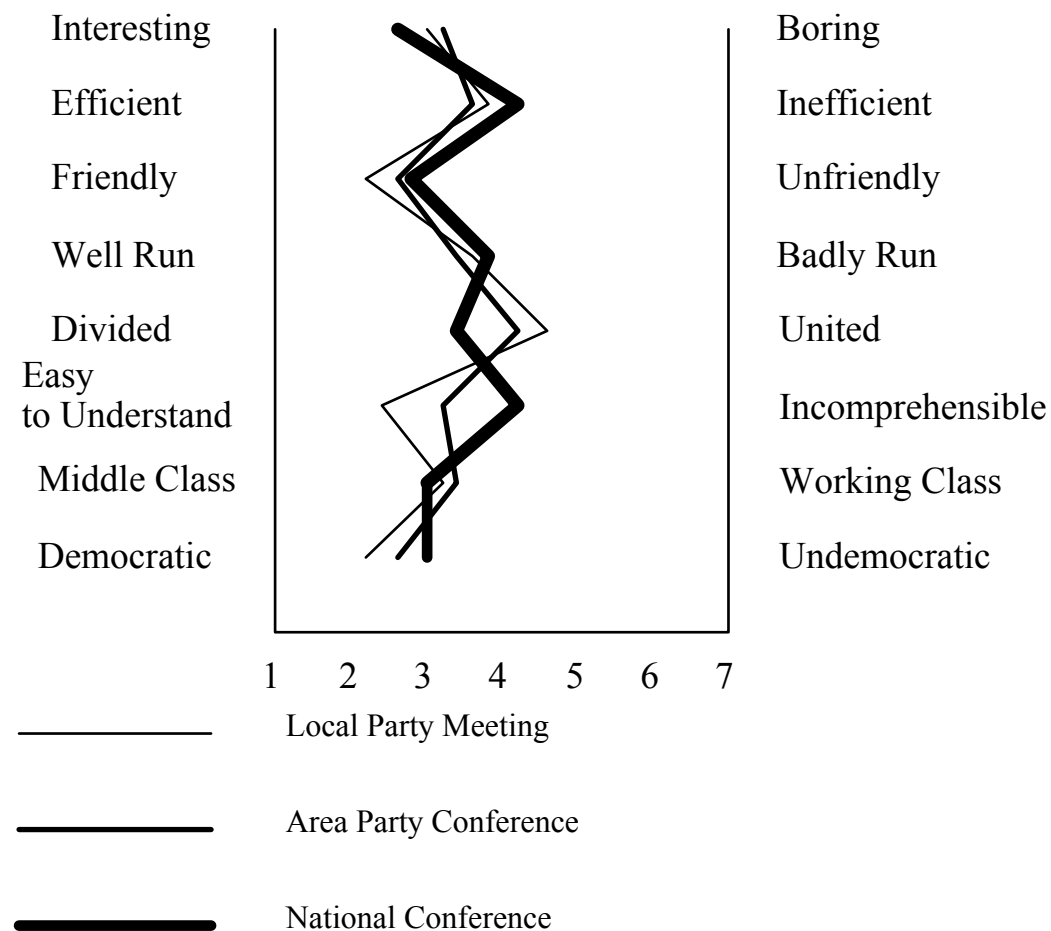
³¹ *Green Party Constitution*, in Green Party, Bridlington 3, Spring Conference 1991 (Standing Orders Committee, Green Party UK 1991), p. 63.

scores for local meetings, area and national conferences respectively.

FIGURE 3: Evaluation of Meetings/Conferences of the Local, Area and National Party

Question: How would you characterise the last local meeting/the last area conference/the last (national)conference you attended? Please circle one number on each line(1 to 7). For example, if the meeting was very interesting, circle a 1 in the first line, if it was very boring, circle a 7, and if it was a bit of both, circle a 4).

Mean scores



N (Average): Local meeting 2191, Area Conference 538, National Conference 719

There is relatively little difference in the overall evaluation of these meetings and conferences. There appears to be relatively broad agreement that meetings are interesting and friendly, fairly well run, democratic, middle class affairs. The major differences between the evaluation of local and national conferences occur mainly in two areas: national conferences are seen as fairly divided and incomprehensible, local meetings are more united and easy to understand by comparison.

National party conferences thus do not appear to be a great success even amongst the minority of party members who attend them.

As to the question of democracy, there is a slight difference between the three levels, with local meetings being seen as more democratic than area meetings, and national conferences being seen as least democratic. Nevertheless, the overall evaluation of national conferences on that score still remains positive with a mean of 3.0.

Given the powers of the national conference and the small share of members represented at those conferences, we asked some questions about preparation for the conference and also the way decisions are made at the conference.

Looking specifically at respondents in our sample who attended the last AGM in Wolverhampton in September 1990, there are two significant findings. First, we asked how much time conference-goers devoted to the study of the conference papers (individually and in local groups) before arriving at the party conference. We find that conference participants do spend a considerable time preparing for conference. Only 14.9% of those attending appear to have spent no time at all studying conference papers before the conference: 15.7% spent one hour, 20.5% two hours, 14.9% three hours and 34% spent four hours or more, with 3.6% spending 20 hours or more (N= 249). Conference-goers thus spent an average of 3.8 hours studying conference papers, evidence that most respondents attending the national conference take the matter very seriously.

A second question we asked concerned the way in which each individual delegate made up his/her mind on which way to vote on conference resolutions. We offered three possible responses: "I made up my mind individually", "I discussed the issue with other party members at my table", and "The issue had been discussed in my local group and I voted accordingly". The results demonstrate that by far most conference-goers vote according to their own preferences. 78.4% indicated that they made up their minds individually. 18.3% had discussed it with others at their table, and only 3.3% came to conference and voted according to a decision taken by their local group (N=241). This raises some interesting problems: while most decisions are supposed to be taken at local level, there seems to be little direct influence exercised by local parties on decisions taken by the highest national party organ. The system of internal democracy very much rests on individual members taking part, an opportunity which only a rather small minority of members is taking up.

The relatively poor evaluation of national conferences compared with local meetings raises the question whether the national conference and other national bodies are seen to have too much power. To evaluate the distribution of power within the party and the feeling amongst the party membership about changing this distribution, we asked members first where, in their view, the "real" power in the Green Party lies (see Table 18).

TABLE 18: Perceived Influence of Party Organs

Question : What is your view of the real influence of the following party organs on party policy and the internal functioning of the Green Party?

| | Very important but not decisive | Decisively important | Important | Not very important | Very unimportant |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|-----------|--------------------|------------------|
| | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| (a) Green Party Council | 23.4 | 30.8 | 32.8 | 9.7 | 3.3 |
| (b) Party Co-chairs | 9.5 | 29.1 | 40.4 | 16.7 | 4.2 |
| (c) National Party Speakers..... | 22.5 | 33.0 | 30.0 | 12.2 | 2.3 |
| (d) London Party Office..... | 11.8 | 25.0 | 39.2 | 19.7 | 4.2 |
| (e) National Party Conference..... | 33.3 | 32.9 | 25.6 | 6.6 | 1.6 |
| (f) Area Parties..... | 12.3 | 23.5 | 35.4 | 21.9 | 7.0 |
| (g) Local Parties..... | 20.3 | 21.8 | 30.5 | 21.3 | 6.1 |
| (h) Individual members..... | 22.6 | 17.1 | 28.5 | 22.1 | 9.7 |
| | N=2,723 | | | | |

In the view of Green Party members, when it comes to party policy and the internal functioning of the party, the most important organ is the national party conference. The Green Party Council and the national party speakers are also seen as extremely important, closely followed by the local parties and individual members. The party co-chairs, the national party office and the area parties play an important but not decisive role.

Some of these results are fairly surprising³². First, the three co-chairs,

³² In interpreting the results, we also have to take account of the relatively high number of respondents not answering this question: slightly more than a third of respondents did not register any answer. Analysis of non-respondents revealed that they are predominantly passive members. Non-response in this case thus has to be interpreted mainly as an indication of a perceived inability to assess the relative power of these party organs.

who could be seen as the nearest to traditional "leaders" the party can offer, do not appear to be seen as very powerful. Even the national party office is seen to have more decisive power than the co-chairs. One possible explanation might be that ordinary party members have little knowledge of who the "co-chairs" are and what they actually do. By contrast, national party speakers, of whom there are currently 32 and who have no particular standing in the party apart from being sent to speaking engagements and being interviewed by the media, have an extraordinary high standing in the view of party members, being seen as at least "important" by 85.5%, a score only exceeded by the GPC and the national conference. Below the national level, area parties, local parties and individual members are rather close together in terms of the influence ascribed to them. Overall, the national level is ascribed more power and influence, but the sub-national levels of party organisation, including individual members, are not that far behind.

Identifying the distribution of power in the party is one thing, changing it is another. Are party members happy with where the power lies? Employing the same categories as in the last question, we asked members whether each party institution had too much, the right amount, or too little influence (see Table 19).

TABLE 19: Evaluation of Party Power Structure

Question: Indicate for each of these organs whether, in your view, they have too much or too little influence on party policy and the internal functioning of the Green Party.

| | Far too little influence | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| | Too little influence | | : | | |
| | The right amount of influence | | : | | |
| | A little too much influence | | : | | |
| | Far too much influence | | : | | |
| | : | | : | | |
| | : | | : | | |
| | --- | | --- | | |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| (a) Green Party Council..... | 7.7 | 20.7 | 59.8 | 9.7 | 2.0 |
| (b) Party Co-chairs..... | 5.3 | 21.0 | 61.0 | 11.0 | 1.7 |
| (c) National Party Speakers..... | 5.3 | 18.7 | 57.7 | 15.9 | 2.4 |
| (d) London Party Office..... | 4.9 | 18.7 | 63.3 | 11.6 | 1.4 |
| (e) National Party Conference..... | 4.8 | 15.1 | 60.0 | 18.3 | 1.8 |
| (f) Area Parties..... | 1.1 | 4.8 | 48.2 | 41.7 | 4.2 |
| (g) Local Parties..... | 1.3 | 2.5 | 40.8 | 46.6 | 8.8 |
| (h) Individual members..... | 2.5 | 3.7 | 42.2 | 40.1 | 11.6 |
| | N= 2,365 (Average) | | | | |

The picture which emerges is fascinating: members overall believe that individual members, area parties and local parties do not have enough power and should be given more. But the criticism of the national level is remarkably muted. For all national institutions, a clear majority, ranging from 58% to 63%, say that they have just the right amount of influence. A relatively small minority, from 12% to 20%, want to increase the power of the national level, but equally, those effectively calling for a reduction of the power of various bodies of the national party are in just as clear a minority, ranging from about 20% to 28%. Most members thus seem to be happy with the powers currently exercised at national level, and the two factions asking for the power to be increased or reduced are relatively small, not approaching one third of the membership in either case.

There is a fairly broad consensus about an increase of power for the local parties, the area parties, and for individual members. Only tiny minorities believe they have too much power, and more than 50% of members are in favour of granting more influence to the sub-national level.

What do these results tell us about Green Party members views on changes in the internal structure of the party? Green Party members are not particularly concerned about the influence enjoyed by national party institutions. At the same time, however, they want more power for the area parties, local parties and individual members, the power of the local parties proving to be the biggest area of discontent. But how can this be achieved?

Before we look at more explicit statements on possible reforms of the internal structure of the party, let us consider our respondents' views on the problems of internal party democracy. We asked party members to register their reaction to various statements on internal party democracy. The battery of questions employed suggests three different types of reason why the attainment of grassroots democracy could be difficult. First, two statements suggest that grassroots democracy is not a realistic proposition because, essentially, members are not interested in it. Second, two statements focus on the practical difficulties, such as lack of time to consult members and a lack of resources. Finally, two further statements put the blame on party "leaders" who fail to make sufficient efforts to put grassroots democracy into practice.

TABLE 20: Practicality of "Grass-roots Democracy"

Question : Many people see the achievement of internal party democracy as an important aim for the Green Party. The realisation of grass-roots democracy within the Green Party may not always be easy. Several reasons of why are given below. Please indicate each time whether you agree or not.

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|--|------------------|-------|----------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| (a) As any other party, the Green Party often must make decisions very rapidly. Not enough time remains for consulting the members..... | 19.6 | 47.1 | 17.5 | 12.5 | 3.4 |
| (b) The people at the Green Party's helm do not make enough efforts to involve the members in decisions..... | 6.4 | 16.5 | 40.9 | 30.3 | 5.9 |
| (c) National level political problems are often very complicated. The grass-roots members do not know much about them. A broad consultation thus becomes very difficult..... | 13.6 | 37.8 | 13.7 | 24.2 | 10.8 |
| (d) The grass-roots members of the Green Party are not sufficiently interested in the political problems on the national level..... | 6.4 | 18.5 | 19.8 | 35.1 | 20.1 |
| (e) There are persons at the helm of the Green Party who do not wish to risk that some of their ideas and opinions are disapproved by the party's grass roots..... | 6.8 | 20.1 | 48.8 | 19.1 | 5.2 |
| (f) There are too few material resources (personnel, press coverage, money) for keeping everyone updated and for organising decisions..... | 31.9 | 44.2 | 15.7 | 6.3 | 1.9 |
| | N=3893 (average) | | | | |

As can be seen from the results presented in Table 20, our respondents strongly disagree that the grass-roots of the party are not interested in political problems at the national level. However, a majority of 51.4% does agree that national political problems are complicated and that the lack of knowledge of grass-roots members makes consultation very difficult.

As to the role of party "leaders", the largest groups of respondents (40.9% and 48.8%) opted for a "neutral" stance on their willingness to implement grass-roots democracy. Those who agree that "leaders" consciously fail to put grass-roots democracy into practice are in a clear minority, but the very large group of "neutral" responses seems to indicate a certain ambivalence: most members obviously feel that they cannot make a strong statement about what those "in charge" of the national party do or do not do.

The proposition most strongly agreed with is that there are too few resources to keep everyone informed - 76.1% of members agreed or strongly agreed with this. This is followed by approval of the statement that there often is not enough time to consult members, 66.7% agree.

What have we learned from this about the view of grass-roots democracy within the Greens? The favourite explanation of why it is not always easy to achieve is obviously a lack of resources, but the responses to other statements display a certain ambivalence. There appears to be some doubt whether members are actually knowledgeable enough to take part in national decisions, and only a minority is completely convinced that those at the helm of the party are doing everything they can to make grassroots democracy work.

Where does this leave the Green Party in terms of possible reforms of its internal structure? All in all, the results we reported so far give us potentially contradictory indications. On the one hand, there is a strong and widespread commitment in the party for a further strengthening of the power of the grass-roots. There is not much support for a further increase in the power of the national party. On the other hand, however, members realize that there are clear barriers to the achievement of true grass-roots democracy. There is overwhelming support for the view that time and other resources required for this task are simply not available. While a majority reaffirms that ordinary members are sufficiently interested to become involved in national decision making, there seems to be some doubt concerning the knowledgeability of members about national politics to take part in a broad consultation process.

Given Green Party members' commitment to a decentralised society, how do they want their own party to be organized? Do Green Party members want further decentralisation? From our results so far, it appears that they want more power to be given to the local level but, at the same time, want the national party and its institutions preserved.

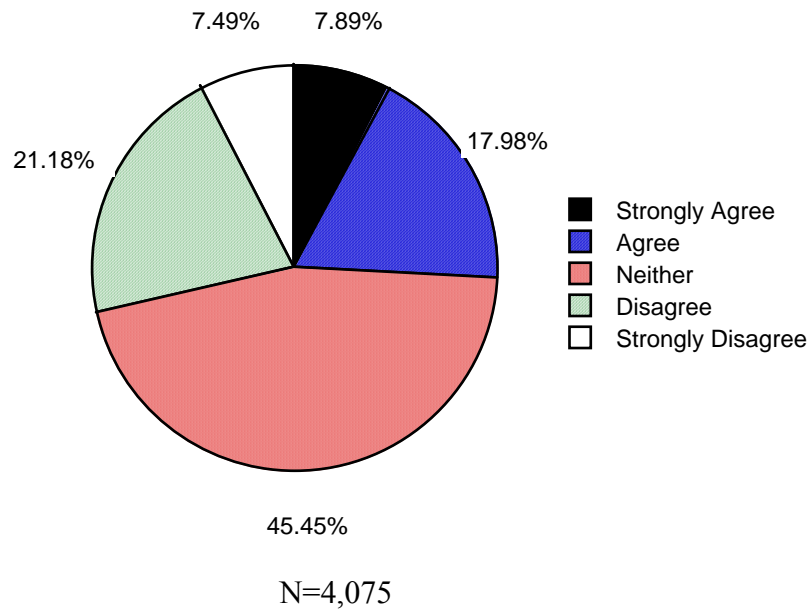
Our questionnaire included a number of other questions addressing issues of internal democracy which could shed further light on this. Only 9.7% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "one problem with the Green Party is that some prominent members are becoming too powerful", 52.1% disagreed. Together with evidence of the very positive view of Green Party speakers, this appears to suggest very strongly that there is not a lot of resentment or even criticism of the existing party elite.

Looking towards the future, we offered respondents a simple choice between electing one party leader and adopting a more de-centralized internal structure. As Figure 4 shows, members do not appear to see this as a clear-cut choice between a path of decentralisation and centralisation. Further decentralisation is explicitly favoured only by about a quarter of the party membership, and explicitly rejected by little more than a quarter. Almost half, 45.5%, appear to be uncertain about this question: they offer no opinion on it. As to the question of electing one party leader, most members do have an opinion: exactly half of our respondents wants the election of one party leader, but the other half either rejects it outright (about a third), or neither agrees or disagrees with the proposition. (In Scotland, only 41.6% are in favour of electing one party leader.)

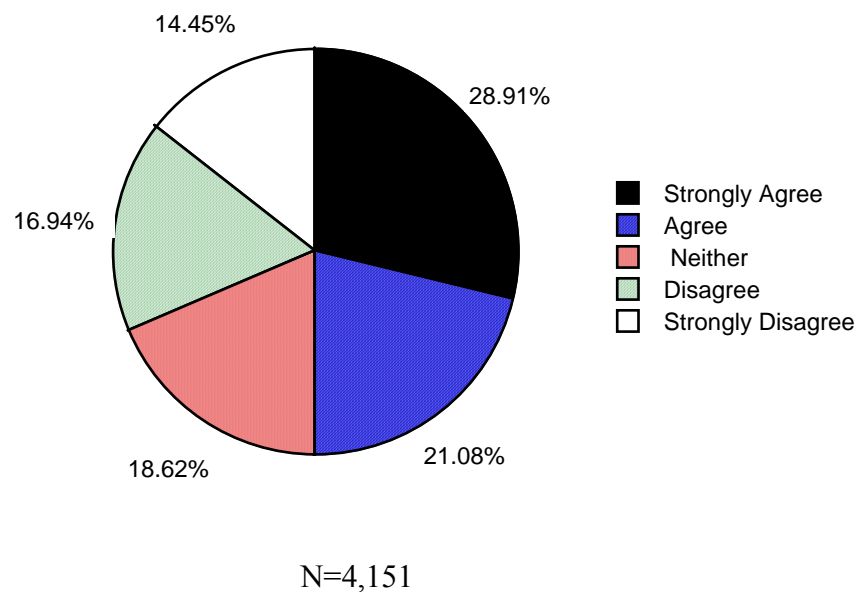
FIGURE 4: More Decentralization vs. One Party Leader

Question: In 1989, the Green Party polled 15% in the elections to the European Parliament. What measures do you think should be taken by the Party in the run-up to the next General Election to consolidate and build upon this success?

- Adopt a more de-centralised internal structure



- Elect one Party leader



What are we to make of these responses? Despite the strong support for increasing the power of area parties, local parties, and individual members, there is no strong endorsement of a policy of decentralization of the party organisation. The question of electing one leader, on the other hand, receives a lot of support with 50% of members agreeing with this proposal.

How can we explain this? Ordinary members may not see any contradiction between electing one party leader and giving more power to local parties and individual members. Within the context of the debate at national level, two camps are easily identifiable which could be identified with each statement. But the divisions in this ideologically charged debate about the Party's structure are not necessarily shared by ordinary party members. Looking at those who thought local parties have "too little" or "far too little" influence, 42.9% hold the view that the party should elect one leader, a smaller share than for the membership as a whole, but not that much smaller. There clearly are a substantial number of members who do not share the view that these two measures are somehow incompatible.

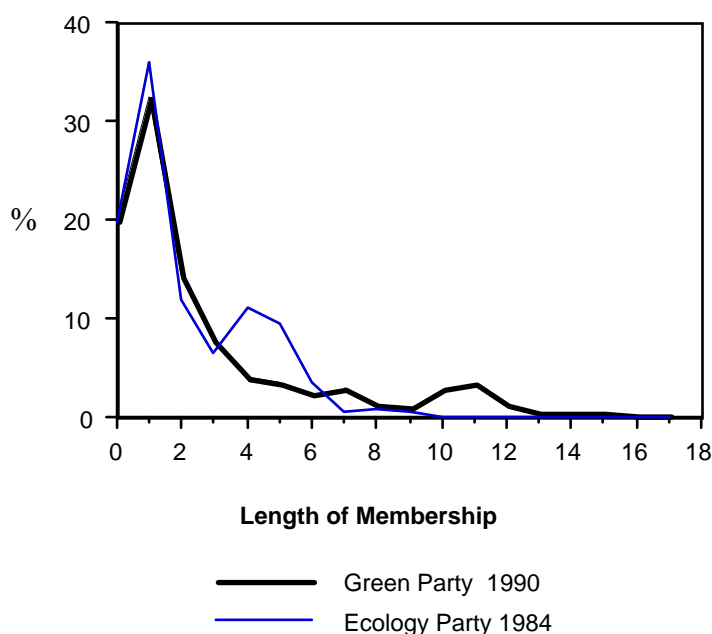
Alternatively, our data may reveal a genuine problem which is of major importance. Greens want to have a decentralised party structure with ordinary members playing a full part. But if we look at the statements about grassroots democracy, we find some scepticism about the capacities of individual members. With more resources, the capabilities of ordinary members could be substantially enhanced, but in the absence of further resources, what is to be done? Arguably, green parties face an intrinsic dilemma between the ideal of grassroots democracy and the demands of political expediency and survival within the present political system. Green Party members obviously share the ideal but they appear to harbour some doubts about whether it can be achieved here and now. While they approve of the ideal of grass-roots democracy, they seem to shy away from drawing the political consequences from their own evaluation of the internal power structure. Faced with specific decisions about what to do to consolidate the party's political standing³³, a substantial part of the membership is attracted to what many others would see as "un-green", namely the election of one party leader.

³³ Any interpretation has to consider the context of the question. Further decentralisation is largely rejected in the context of "consolidation" after the electoral success of 1989 in the run-up to the next General Election. Any proposal for decentralisation may receive more support in the context of enhancing internal party democracy.

7. Joining The Greens

Over 50% of our sample joined the Green Party within the last three years - 1988 to 1990. The biggest single wave of new members came in 1989, with 32.5% of the sample joining in that year. This must be seen as a reflection of the party's electoral success in the 1989 European elections, when it polled nearly 15% of the vote. By 1990 the joining rate had already dropped - 20% of our sample joined in the first ten months of the year.

FIGURE 5: Length of Membership in The Green Party



N=342 (1984) and 4,155 (1990)

These data on the year in which members joined give us some interesting insights into the dynamics of membership. In Chris Studman's 1984 study, 36% of members had joined the previous year. All members together had an average length of membership of 2.2 years (counting members joining in the year of the survey as members for half a year). Employing the same method, the average length of membership in 1990 is 3.7 years, but we have to be careful how we interpret this: the party has aged and a relatively small number of long-standing members who have been members for more than 10 years increases the average considerably. If we only consider the members who joined in the last 9 years (equivalent to Studman's data), the average length of membership is 2.0 years.

Figure 5 reveals a remarkable similarity between the distributions of length of membership in 1984 and 1990. The relatively high number of those who had been members for four to five years in 1984 is due to the major influx of members in 1979/80. We can still identify this group in our 1990 survey, and their presence shows in the graph for years 10 and 11. These data suggest a fairly rapid turnover of members. We consider the question of why members fail to renew their subscription in the next chapter.

How and why do people join the Green Party? As to the *how*, most respondents indicated that they had contacted the national Green Party office independently (27.0%) but other ways of joining were also quite important - 19.0% joined at a local meeting, 16.9% responded to a party advertisement in the press, 11.6% filled in a form they had received from a friend, and 10.6% contacted the party's local representative.

We asked members which factors were most important in their actual decision to join (Table 21). TV programmes/documentaries/films, Green Party political broadcasts, talking to party members, and specific environmental problems proved to have little influence on decisions to join. Those factors which emerged as the most influential were reading a newspaper/magazine article or book(s), reading the party manifesto or other literature, and catastrophic events highlighting major national and global environmental problems.

TABLE 21: Factors Influencing the Decision to Join The Greens

Question : When you made up your mind about joining the Green Party, was your decision influenced by any of the following factors? And if so, how important were they in your decision to join?

| | Decisive | Very important but not decisive | Important | Not very important | Played no role whatsoever |
|---|----------|---------------------------------|-----------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| (a) Watching a Green Party Political Broadcast..... | 3.7 | 5.9 | 10.2 | 14.8 | 65.4 |
| (b) Reading the Green Party manifesto/literature..... | 19.1 | 19.7 | 24.0 | 12.6 | 24.6 |
| (c) Talking to a Green Party member (Canvasser on the doorstep, relative, friend or work colleague)..... | 12.0 | 11.4 | 14.3 | 9.6 | 52.7 |
| (d) Reading a newspaper /magazine article or book(s)..... | 15.1 | 20.3 | 25.4 | 12.4 | 26.8 |
| (e) Watching a television programme/documentary/film..... | 8.0 | 14.9 | 20.0 | 14.7 | 42.3 |
| (f) Being confronted with a specific environmental problem locally..... | 9.1 | 10.8 | 14.9 | 17.1 | 48.2 |
| (g) Learning about a particular event highlighting national or global environmental problems (for example Chernobyl, Bhopal)..... | 17.8 | 22.5 | 23.1 | 12.8 | 23.8 |

N=3,769

To shed more light on the process of joining, members were confronted with a list of eight further reasons for joining the party (see Table 22). The distribution of answers in some cases is rather intriguing, and further analysis will be necessary before these can be interpreted properly. Overall, the most important reason for joining appears to be the belief that the Green Party offers the best opportunity to achieve the political aims of members. More than 77% of members also consider it at least as important that the Green Party does not compromise its principles. Members obviously have a strong commitment to certain aims which they want to pursue. It is clearly principles rather than short-term political successes which motivate them.

TABLE 22: Factors Relevant for Joining The Greens

Question: A number of reasons why people join the Green Party are listed below. Please indicate how important a role each reason played in your decision to join.

| | Very important but not decisive | Decisive | Important | Not very important | Played no role whatsoever |
|---|---------------------------------|----------|-----------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| | : | : | : | : | : |
| | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| (a) As a member I can join like-minded and interesting people in fighting for the environment..... | 19.8 | 20.4 | 34.2 | 17.1 | 8.4 |
| (b) There are many good people in the Party that I support | 4.9 | 14.0 | 28.0 | 28.7 | 24.3 |
| (c) The Green Party is the only party which does not compromise its principles..... | 26.6 | 24.1 | 26.7 | 11.8 | 10.8 |
| (d) I do not agree with everything in the Green Party programme but I want to make sure that its point of view is heard..... | 24.3 | 28.4 | 25.6 | 11.3 | 10.4 |
| (e) The Party provides the best opportunity to achieve the political aims I support..... | 44.8 | 22.1 | 19.3 | 8.9 | 4.9 |
| (f) Ultimately, the Green Party can probably do little to save the destruction of the planet, but one has to try to do everything possible to avert such a catastrophe..... | 32.4 | 19.3 | 19.3 | 12.6 | 16.4 |
| (g) Unlike other parties the Green Party allows its members to play a meaningful, active role within a democratic framework..... | 12.8 | 18.5 | 29.3 | 22.1 | 17.3 |
| (h) The Green Party helps to fulfil my spiritual needs..... | 10.7 | 10.0 | 16.1 | 19.1 | 44.1 |
| | N=4,079 (Average) | | | | |

Two other statements which also receive substantial support are less easy to understand. About 78% declare that they do not agree with everything in the Green Party programme but they want its political view heard. This seems to imply a rather weaker commitment to the party and its aims. Even more puzzling is the fairly strong statement that the Green Party will probably come too late to save the world but that we should try our best anyway. This is identified as a decisive reason for joining by about a

third of members, second in importance only to the statement on the Greens offering the best opportunity to achieve the aims members support.

These responses give us a very strong indication that political success in the traditional sense does not appear to be very important to many Greens. Instead, there is a deeply felt personal commitment, an obligation to "try to do everything possible ... to save the planet", which seems to motivate members. The statement on principles ties in with this nicely, and even the fact that most members do not seem to agree with everything in the Green Party programme in a sense reinforces this stance: despite some aspects of the Green Party which members dislike, the commitment to the basic principle of "saving the planet" overrides these reservations and makes it important to join.

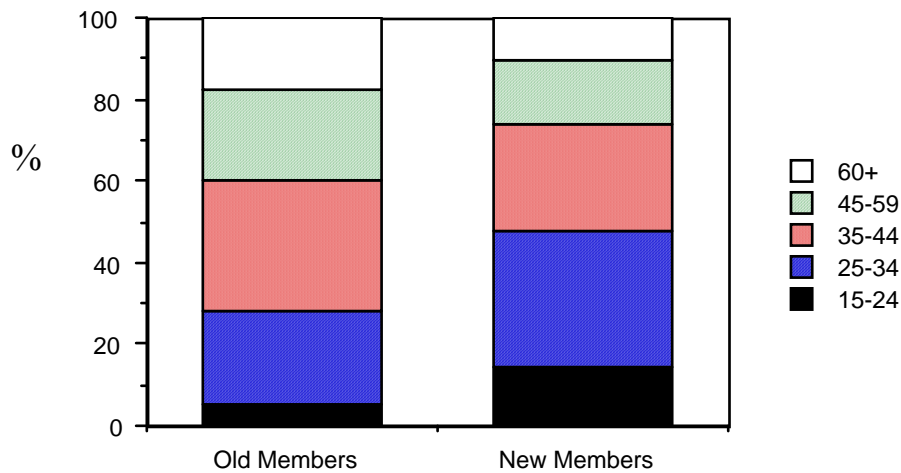
The dominance of "principles" is reinforced by the response to other statements. Support for "good people in the Party" is not a very important reason. Equally, the fulfilment of "spiritual needs" only motivates a minority. Interestingly, the internal structure of the party offering individual members the chance "to play a meaningful, active role" is quite important for attracting members but "aims" and "principles" are clearly more dominant.

In 1989, the Green Party experienced its most substantial membership rise. The influx of new members continued well into 1990, doubling its pre-election membership. Who were these new members? What was their political background? How did they differ from the existing Green Party membership?

The most fascinating result of our comparison between new and old members of the Green Party is that there are practically no major differences between these two groups: their profile is virtually identical in every respect. The only noticeable difference is in age: the average "old" member having joined in 1988 or earlier is 45, the average age of "new" members is 38. A substantial share of new members is 34 years old or younger (see Figure 6).

However, in interpreting this finding, we have to consider that members of longer standing have aged since they joined. When we checked how old "old" members were at the time when they joined the party, the average age was 38, just as it is for new members.

FIGURE 6: Age Distribution of "Old" and "New" Members



N=4,036

What does this similarity in the background of new members tell us? One important implication is that the Green Party has failed to go beyond its established recruiting grounds. The rapid influx of new members did not mean that completely new sections of the population, say manual workers, suddenly felt sufficiently attracted to the Green Party to join them. The Green Party captured the same type of people but probably mobilized a greater share than in previous years.

Apart from the similarities in socio-economic background, the virtually identical political experience of new and old members is remarkable. If we look at the previous membership of political parties, for example, we find that both groups have more or less exactly the same background: the large majority, 71%, did not belong to a political party before, and those who did predominantly came from Labour or the centre parties.

To some extent, this might be seen as disappointing for the Greens: in 1989, there was a lot of talk about disaffected Liberal and Labour activists unhappy about the toning down of their respective parties' policies on disarmament and the environment being attracted to the Greens. Quite clearly, this did not happen to any major degree. There was only a modest influx of Labour or Liberal Party members to the Greens in 1989 and 1990, at roughly the same rate as in previous years. If we look at the activity levels of those who did leave their old party to join the Greens, we see that most with a previous party membership were rather inactive in their previous party. In other words, the rise of the Greens in 1989 did not lead to an unusual influx of other party activists.

Equally, there is no evidence to suggest that the new intake consisted largely of activists from the conservation, environmental and peace movements: "new" members are slightly less likely to be members of Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and CND. The latter may be particularly surprising as Labour's move away from unilateral nuclear disarmament could have been seen as a reason for peace activists to turn their backs on Labour. While this may well have been a motivation for many individuals, it is clearly not valid as a general characterisation of the "new" members: only about 40% of them actually were members of CND as opposed to 60% of the "old" members. If we look at the reported activity levels in the peace movement, they are slightly higher for "old" party members: 50% of "new" members declare that they had not been active in the peace movement at all. The same pattern can be observed for the conservation and environmental movements: "old" members report slightly higher activity levels.

There are clearly very many possible motivations for joining the Green Party. Among the "new" members, there are previous activists of other political parties and CND members disappointed by Labour. But the bulk of the new membership was not motivated by these factors. Despite the doubling of membership, the Green Party experienced no change in the socio-economic and political characteristics of its members. Consequently, the style of green politics was not really challenged by any new group with radical new ideas. There are no signs that any outside group attempted a systematic "infiltration" of the Green Party, as some had feared in 1989. In response to a direct question about the danger of the party being infiltrated by "left-wing extremists", only 27.4% agreed that this was a "real danger".

8. Leaving The Party

The Green Party has always had to worry about the development of its membership. As a party with no access to public funds or private benefactors, the Green Party relies almost exclusively on financial contributions from its membership. The ups and downs of membership are thus watched anxiously, and as membership fluctuation has often been very high, the party finances remain on an unsure footing.

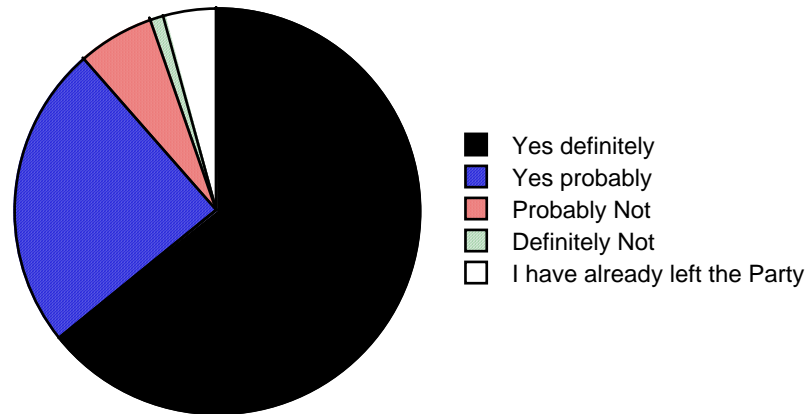
A downturn in membership usually occurs in between national elections. Following the remarkable European Election success, membership peaked in 1990 and started falling again in early 1991. A substantial number of members failed to renew their membership which was only partly made-up by new members coming in: the Greens had 18,563 members in July 1990, that figure had been reduced to 13,581 by the end of June 1991 (including Scotland).³⁴ The finances of the Greens were adversely affected, and the Spring 1991 conference had to make contingency plans for severe cost cutting in case that proved necessary.

Maintaining membership and keeping renewal rates up is thus of vital importance for the survival of the Greens. What does our survey say about likely renewal rates? When asked if they would renew their membership, 64.2% answered "yes definitely" and 24.5% were not so positive, answering "yes probably". 6.2% said that they probably would not renew their membership, 1.1% definitely not, and 4.2% had already left the party (see Figure 7).

³⁴ Data supplied by John Bishop, Green Party Office, London, July 1991.

FIGURE 7: Membership Renewal

Question: Do you intend to renew your membership subscription when it next becomes due?



N=4,260

In order to properly analyse the data from this question, we have to be aware of the technicalities of "staying" and "leaving". Most members "leave" simply by not renewing their membership. In other words, it is not necessary to make an explicit declaration that one is leaving. Membership renewal is due yearly but the exact date depends on the month in which individual members joined. Our sample consisted of people who were considered paid-up members in September 1990. This will include members who just joined or renewed their membership, members whose renewal is not due for months to come, and members who were due to renew before the end of the year. When the survey was sent out in November 1990 we thus could expect to have some people in the sample who had not renewed their membership and others who still had months to make up their mind whether they would rejoin or not. It is for that reason that it is best to put together into one category those who have already left the party, those who have already decided to leave the party, and those who think it unlikely that they will remain in the party. Let us call this group the "leavers". The "leavers" make up 11.5% of our sample.³⁵ The second largest group consists of members who are not certain whether they will rejoin, they make up 24.5% of the sample, let us call them "doubters". Now let us compare the characteristics of "leavers"

³⁵ As discussed in Chapter 2, we must expect that this group is underrepresented in our sample.

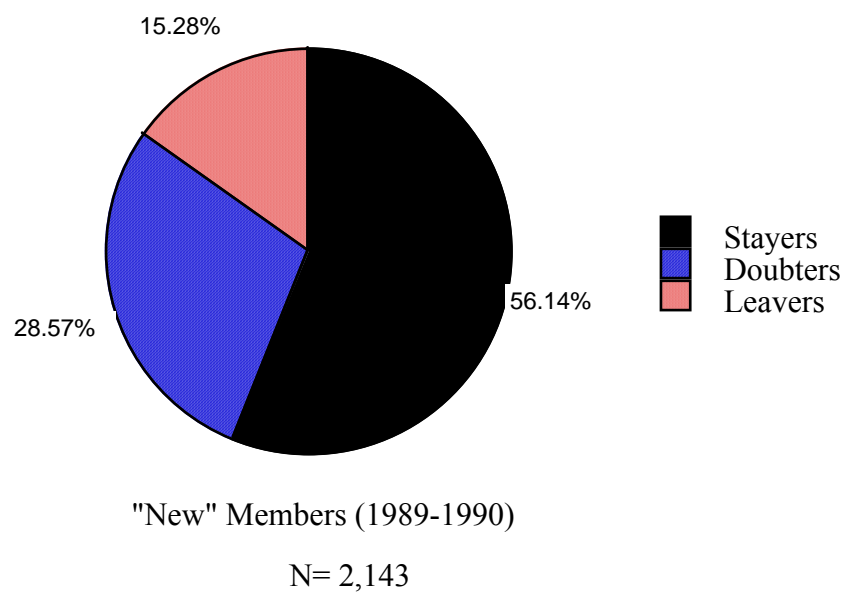
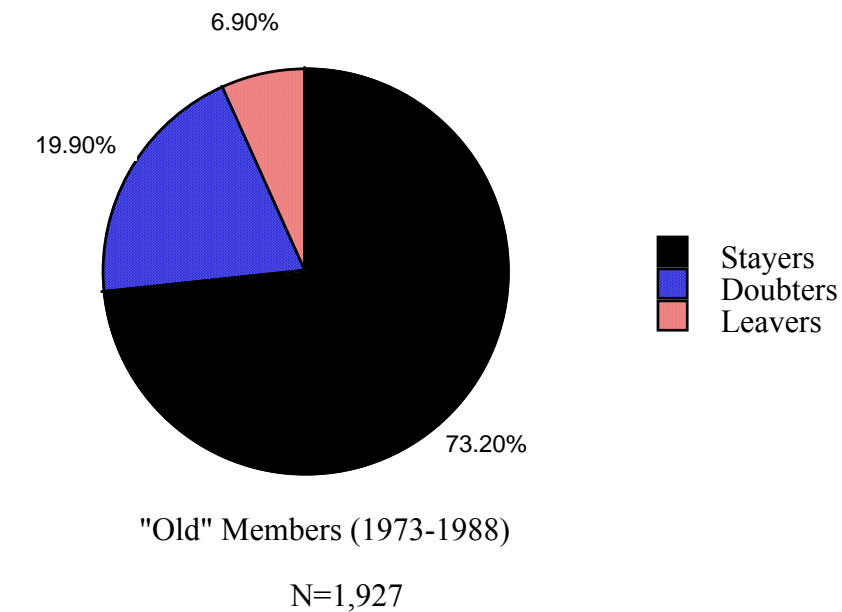
and "doubters" with the biggest group, the "stayers", who make up 64.2%.

Who is leaving the Green Party? Perhaps even more importantly, who is thinking about leaving and has doubts about staying in the party?

In the preliminary analysis we have carried out so far, one of the most important factors was the time of joining the Green Party. As Figure 8 demonstrates, "old", established members of the Green Party are much more likely to renew their membership than "new" members, people who joined in 1989 and 1990. Of all individual years, the highest share of leavers come from 1989: 18.1% of all respondents who joined in the European Election year of 1989 have left or intend to leave the Green Party. Even more precisely, those who joined in the election month of June 1989 and the three months immediately afterwards have the highest drop-out rates (between 20.4 and 23.3%) and the lowest rate of certain renewals (between 50.8 and 52.7%). For those joining in 1990, the share of "leavers" recedes to 10.7%

Quite clearly, keeping the newly won members is a key problem for the Green Party. On the positive side, there appears to be a "hard core" of established members whose commitment to the party is not in doubt. Even if the Greens should lose something like 50% of its 1989 intake in the next one or two years, they still would have increased rather than just maintained their "hard core" membership on whose continued contributions the survival of the party depends.

FIGURE 8: Membership Renewal of "Old" and "New" Members



What other characteristics of "leavers" can we identify? Our questions about how and why members joined the Green Party give us some indication. 26.7% of "leavers" had joined by replying to a party advertisement in the national press, as opposed to 15.1% of "stayers". Clearly, it is those new members who joined in the wave of green enthusiasm, without any close links to the Greens through local contacts, who are most difficult to retain.

Of all the reasons why respondents joined the Green Party, only one

shows a marked contrast between stayers and leavers. 53.8% of stayers declared that they primarily joined because "The Party provides the best opportunity to achieve the political aims I support" but only 21.1% of leavers give the achievement of their political aims through the party as a decisive reason to join. Two explanations come to mind: leavers either did not join primarily to achieve something politically or, perhaps more likely, they are now less confident that something can be achieved through membership in the Greens. We need to look at other questions to shed more light on this.

Looking at the responses to the question about the reasons for leaving the party, 30% of leavers said that a decisive reason for leaving was the existence of more effective ways of achieving their political aims, another 34% thought this to be very important or important. Disagreement with the party's aims is not a major reason for leaving: only about 23% of leavers declare that such a disagreement had any importance for them. It is thus a rather small minority of leavers who leave because of a fundamental disagreement with the party's aims. Even less important are disagreements with party policies: only 16% say that they left or are leaving because of an important change of party policy.

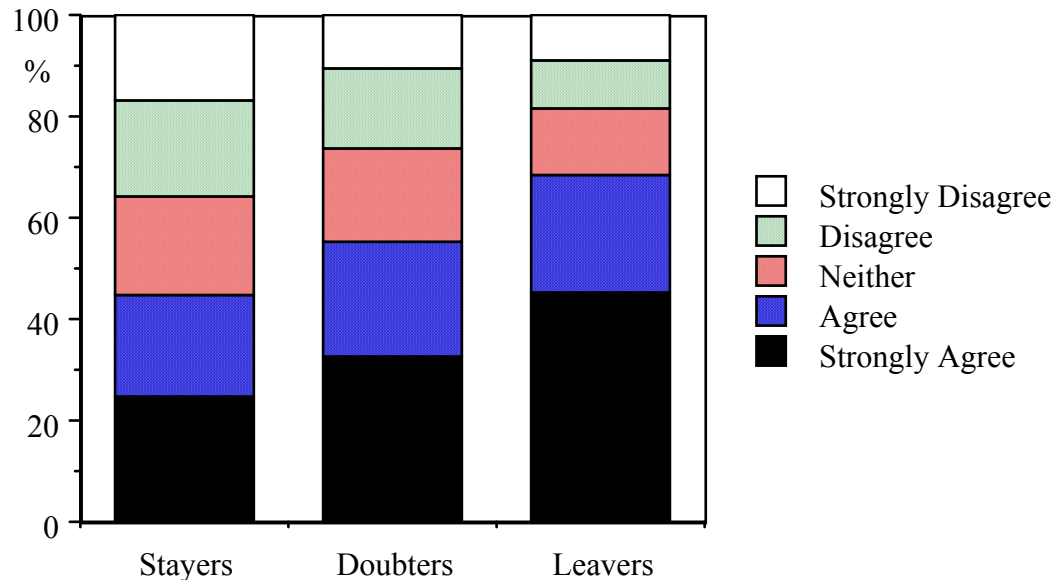
Quite clearly, it is not anything the party has done in policy terms since 1989 which has led to a loss of membership. Nor is there support for the thesis that new members did not really know enough about the party's policies. Predominantly, leavers appear to be people who joined at the time of green enthusiasm in the wave of the European election campaign who now appear disillusioned with the party's ability to achieve its political aims.

If policies are not particularly important for leavers, how about the internal organisation and structure of the party? Throughout its history, the organisation of the party has been the subject of hot debates, and one issue which has been of particular importance has been that of "leadership". As we saw in Chapter 6, the membership as a whole is divided over the question of whether one leader should be elected. How do doubters and leavers see this question?

FIGURE 9: Leavers' View of Election of One Party Leader

Question: In 1989, the Green Party polled 15% in the elections to the European Parliament. What measures do you think should be taken now by the Party to consolidate and build upon this success?

- Elect one Party leader



N=4,074

As Figure 9 reveals, doubters and even more so leavers are rather strongly in favour of electing one party leader. Among leavers, there is a clear majority of those who believe that one leader should be chosen while the doubters' majority in favour of such a reorganisation is rather more narrow.

It would be interesting to explore to what extent the decision not to renew the subscription is due to specific experiences of party life. Preliminary analysis suggests that this is an important factor but only for a minority of leavers: only about 39% of leavers actually attended a local party meeting last year, and leavers tended to be even less involved in other forms of party activity. There is a clear difference in the evaluation of local party meetings by stayers and leavers: the difference is particularly strong on the interesting—boring, efficient—inefficient, friendly—unfriendly and well run—badly run questions. Preliminary analysis suggest that it is particularly the experience of "unfriendly" local meetings which is associated with leavers. Leavers also dislike Green Party publications, regarding them as rather more "boring" than stayers.

The only other statement on the general policy orientation which produces a significant difference between leavers and stayers is concerned with the lack of practical orientation of the party. Leavers feel that there should be more emphasis on practical steps to improve the environment taken by the individual. 48.6% of leavers are in favour of such a sentiment, as opposed to 34.7% of stayers. While one may discuss the question whether a political party would be best placed to take such measures, this result adds new weight to the thesis that leavers did not really join the party to achieve something "politically". One of the distinguishing features of the "green wave" of 1989 was the strong focus on "green consumerism", the idea that individual consumers could make a major impact by choosing environmentally friendly products. More generally, the idea that individuals should take specific, practical steps towards a green world is an important part of a "green" lifestyle as well as green politics. As a hypothesis, one could conceive of individuals joining environmental groups and the Green Party as a "consumer" act, as an action predominantly motivated by the attempt to do something for the environment as an individual which has an immediate practical consequence. While some disillusionment seems to have set in about "green products", the "green consumer" will probably have experienced little feeling of actually having done something positive and practical to save the environment by having joined the Green Party. This type of leaver thus also leaves because he/she sees the party as unable to make a major impact, but this impact is defined not in electoral but in "practical" terms.

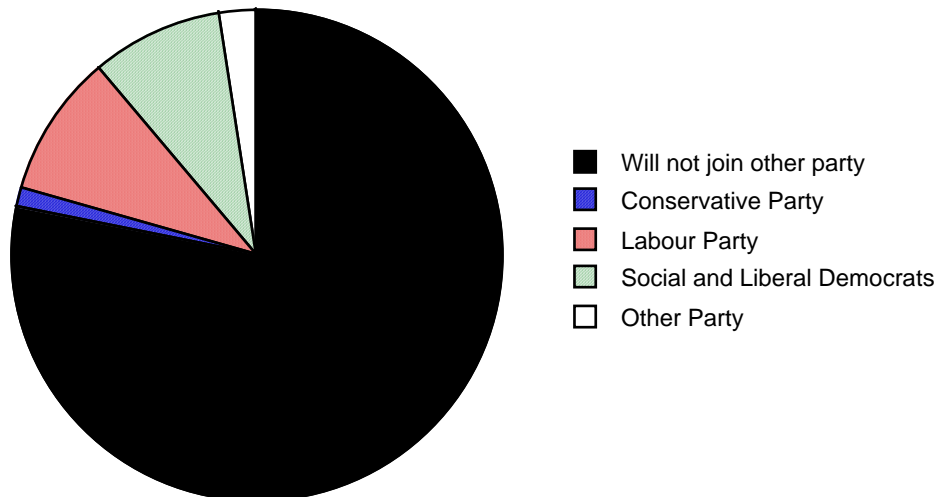
There are a number of further indicators that the party's perceived short term prospects, such as the vote in the next General Election, play no significant role for the explanation of members leaving the party. There is no significant difference between leavers, doubters and stayers in the assessment of the party's short-term prospects. The major difference comes in the long-term evaluation: while stayers on average expect the first Green Party MP to be elected in about 13 years, leavers do not on average expect this to happen in more than double that time.³⁶

If leavers are so concerned about the lack of impact of the Green Party, is there evidence of them pursuing "green" activities outside party politics? There is very little sign of that. In the assessment of life-time activity levels in the conservation and environmental movement, there is practically no difference. Looking at the membership in key

³⁶ In calculating these averages, responses indicating that there would never be a Green Party MP were classified as "99 years". 19% of leavers and 9% of doubters (as opposed to 5.7% of stayers) believe there will never be a Green Party MP.

organisations, leavers are slightly less likely to be a member of organizations such as Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace or CND.

FIGURE 10: Party Political Destination of "Leavers"



N=482

If leavers predominantly believe that there are more effective ways of achieving their aims, are they leaving to join other parties? Only a rather small minority of leavers, 22%, declare that they intend to join another party, Labour and the SLD coming out quite clearly as the preferred choices of those intending to join another party (as shown in Figure 10). These figures demonstrate quite clearly that Green Party members are not very promising targets for any recruitment campaigns by other parties: of the entire sample, only a miniscule 2.3% declare that they are leaving/have left to join a rival party.

There are thus *a number* of individual factors associated with doubters³⁷ and leavers. But what is their relative importance? This is obviously an important question with possible practical consequences. In order to assess the *relative* importance of these factors, we have to undertake a more complex, "multivariate" analysis.

³⁷ We have mainly contrasted stayers and leavers in this chapter. Doubters are usually placed in between stayers and leavers. The attributes of leavers usually also apply to doubters, but to a lesser degree.

A preliminary analysis of this type reveals that *not* joining the party because it offers the best opportunity to achieve one's political aims is the most important single variable for the explanation of "leaving". Negative experience of local meetings also plays a major role. For national conferences, it is mainly their "undemocratic" nature which is admonished by doubters and leavers, and leavers regard Green Party publications as boring. Also, the year of joining is an important independent predictor of leaving. In comparison with those variables, the preference for the election of one leader is a rather marginal influence, roughly on an equal footing in importance with the preference for less electioneering and more practical steps.³⁸ The preference for one leader is thus comparatively unimportant once we have accounted for the influence of these other factors. The implications are that although there is a (statistically significant) correlation between preference for one leader and leaving, it is not necessarily indicative of a significant causal relation. In other words, as there are many other factors associated with leaving which have no relation to the leadership question, it appears unlikely that a change in party policy on that front would have a major impact on the drop-out rate.

What the preliminary data analysis does suggest is that the party has to find a way to communicate to its members that it does have a *practical impact*. Potential leavers are not discouraged by unpromising electoral prospects. Indeed, they appear to have joined in the full knowledge that the party does not constitute the best opportunity to achieve political aims, for non-instrumental reasons. What has to be provided, though, is some rationale for continued membership, generating a feeling among ordinary members that their membership does make a difference. The key problem is one of communication between the party and the ordinary member who does not go to local meetings or national conferences. A closer look at the mailings going out to party members and which form

³⁸ A technical note: A multiple regression analysis was conducted to explain to what extent individual variables can predict doubters and leavers. Eight variables (Not joining because Party represents the most effective way of achieving one's political aims, evaluation of local party meetings as boring, inefficient and unfriendly, evaluation of Green Party publication as "boring", having joined in 1989 or 1990, a preference for more practical steps rather than more electioneering, and support for the election of one party leader) together produce a multiple regression coefficient of .466 and an $r^2=.217$, i.e. a variance explained of 21.7%. If one removes the preference for one party leader from the regression equation, the variance explained is reduced to 20.8%, a very minor reduction. Although the bivariate correlation between preference for one leader and doubters/leavers is reasonably high at $r=0.167$ ($p\leq 0.001$), the multiple regression analysis clearly establishes that its predictive qualities are rather limited.

the main bond between the large body of passive members and the party could thus be worthwhile. They may just convey the wrong type of message for ordinary, passive members to feel sufficiently motivated to renew their subscription.

9. The Future

How do Green Party members see the future of their party? Even after the success in the European Elections, the party faces major obstacles: the electoral conditions in which the party has to operate have not changed. The "first-past-the-post" majority voting system still makes it extremely difficult for the Greens to win a seat in a General Election. The necessity of finding substantial amounts of money to field a full slate of candidates in a General Election makes even the mounting of a proper electoral challenge difficult.

How do Greens see the electoral future of the party? First, we asked members how well they expect the Green Party to do at the next General Election.³⁹ The results are shown in Figure 11. The average percentage is 7.5%, quite a high figure considering that the Greens stood at 2% in the opinion polls at the time of the survey. 51% of respondents indicated that they expected the Greens to poll 5% or better. Not surprisingly, the expected share of the vote goes up substantially when we ask members to speculate on the share of the Green Party vote under a system of proportional representation, PR (no specific PR system was specified). On average, Green Party members expect the party to poll 16.5% in such a case.

Are Green Party members optimistic about their electoral chances? We asked them how long they thought it would be before the first Green MP was elected. 19.9% believe this will be achieved within the next four years. 59.5% estimate that it will take 5-10 years, 9.9% opt for between 11 and 20 years, 2.7% think that it will take over 20 years, and 8.0% are of the opinion that a Green MP will never be elected. In 1984, Studman's survey revealed that 53% of Ecology Party members believed their first MP would be elected within the next ten years, i.e. by 1994. The comparable figure for 1990 is 79.4%: in the wake of the electoral success of 1989, Greens have apparently become somewhat more optimistic.

While a majority of Greens believes that the Greens will gain parliamentary representation in the not too distant future, it is obvious from the figures that only a very small minority, less than 20%, expects that there will be a green MP within the next four years. Even if we exclude the 8% who do not believe there will ever be a single Green MP,

³⁹ The question did not distinguish between the total share of the vote and the average share of the vote in constituencies contested by Green Party candidates.

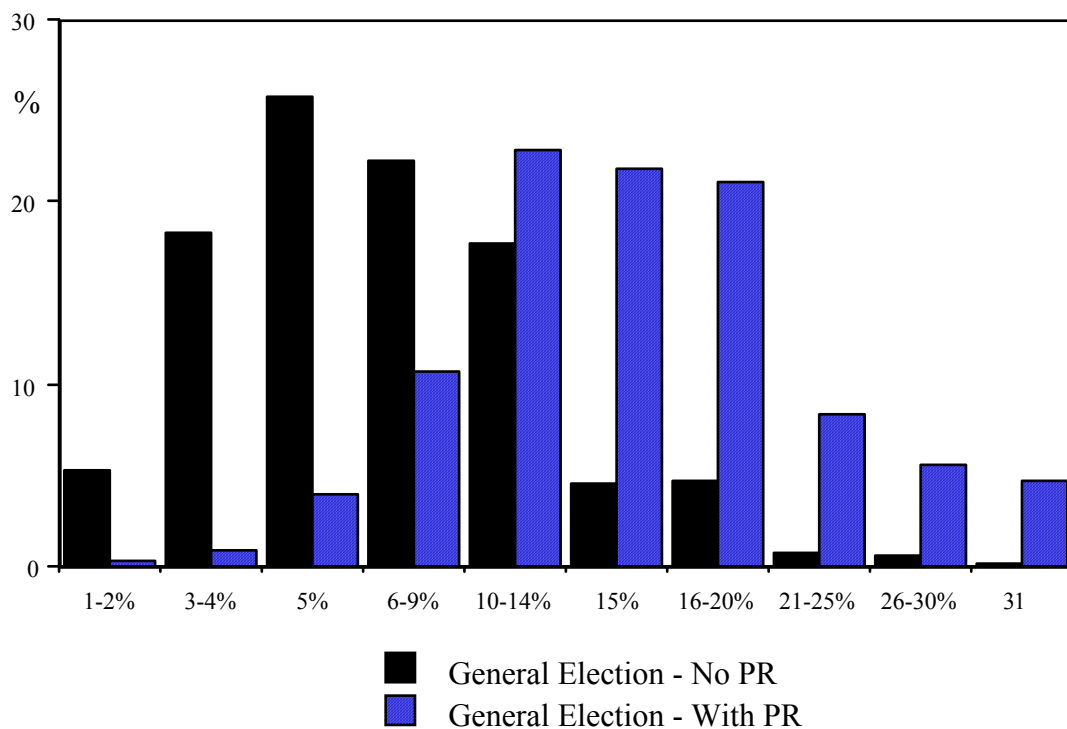
the average number of years to wait for the first Green MP is still 8 years; if we include them (as 99 years), the average shoots up to 16 years. A first seat is thus only expected to materialize in the medium term future at best, and it appears that many respondents picked one figure in the medium term almost at random. With the election of the first Green MP just being the first step of a successful campaign to establish oneself in British politics, Green Party members are really not that optimistic at all: most seem prepared for a very long haul.

FIGURE 11: Expected Share of the Vote in the Next General Election

Questions:

Realistically, what is the share of the vote you think the Green Party is likely to poll at the next General Election?

Imagine a system of proportional representation were introduced in Britain for the next General Election. What percentage of the vote would you expect the Green Party to poll?



N=3,974 (average)

Given such an underlying scepticism about the immediate electoral future, can the party really sustain itself in the face of a difficult General Election within the next year? Two questions arise: does scepticism about the electoral future affect the drop-out rate of existing members? And what effect will relatively low expectations of the immediate electoral future have on party activism?

Our preliminary analysis suggests that the effects of the evaluation of the electoral future of the party on the behaviour of party members are remarkably small. Those leaving the party are somewhat more sceptical about the time to elapse before the first green MP is elected (see Chapter 8), but their evaluation of the likely result of the next General Election is not significantly different from that of those who will stay in the party.

Even more pronounced is the absence of any affect on activism: active and passive members are not really distinguished by their optimism or pessimism about the electoral future of the party. In other words, Green Party activism is not the result of an over-optimistic evaluation of their immediate electoral future. In fact, activists are somewhat more pessimistic about the likely share of the vote at the next General Election. Activists are consciously pursuing a "long-haul" strategy. Consequently, a bad election result at the next General Election is not likely to have a major effect on the level of activism in the Green Party. There are those who are very optimistic and who might be disappointed, there are new members who joined in the euphoria of 1989 who may drop out. But there is a core of members and activists who are not expecting that much to happen in the short-term, and who appear to have insured themselves against disappointment by having relatively low expectations about the electoral fortunes of the Greens within the next few years.

But is it appropriate to define electoral success as the main aim of the Green Party? Do Greens perhaps have other aims which they want to achieve? How important is a high share of the vote in a General Election or a first green MP for the average Green Party member?

In the questionnaire, we offered respondents a number of opportunities to express their opinion on the relative importance of various aims. Table 23 summarises the findings.

TABLE 23: Definitions of Green Party "Success"

Question: Here are a number of statements about the Green Party? Do you agree or disagree with them?

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | : | : | : | : | : |
| | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| (a) Without the introduction of proportional representation, the Green Party will never make a major impact in Britain..... | 39.1 | 37.4 | 8.3 | 12.6 | 2.6 |
| (b) The Party will never gain political power on its own, but it will achieve its aims by pressurising the established parties to adopt a green programme..... | 14.4 | 34.9 | 22.5 | 21.4 | 6.8 |
| (c) The Party should always stand by its principles even if this loses votes..... | 38.1 | 44.4 | 10.3 | 5.5 | 1.6 |
| (d) The Party is becoming too embroiled in traditional politics and neglects the spiritual dimension..... | 4.2 | 15.8 | 34.4 | 32.4 | 13.2 |
| (e) Even if the Green Party had a majority in Parliament tomorrow, the environmental crisis has progressed so far that it is probably too late to avert a major catastrophe..... | 5.5 | 19.3 | 18.0 | 40.3 | 16.9 |
| (f) The Green Party should measure its success not in terms of electoral performance but in its achievement to convince individuals to adopt a "green" lifestyle..... | 24.6 | 39.1 | 18.5 | 13.5 | 4.4 |

N=4,161 (average)

The last statement, that Greens should not measure their success in terms of electoral performance, receives a very substantial endorsement: almost two thirds of respondents agree with it. If that is so, why do Greens bother about elections at all? In interpreting this result, we have to be careful not to judge the Green Party in terms developed for the analysis of established parties. Greens are taking part in elections, and most see elections as one among other means to achieve certain results. What Green Party members reject very strongly, though, is the use of elections

other than as means. In other words, elections are rejected as ends in themselves. Good electoral results in themselves do not mean anything to Greens.

This point is reinforced by the even more overwhelming endorsement (82.5%) of the "standings by its principles" statements. Green Party members do not want a party which changes its tune in response to public opinion in order to win votes. Members appear to believe very strongly in their principles, and reject any notion of tampering with them in the interest of electoral gains.

Greens also recognize that the present electoral system does them no favours, and an overwhelming majority (76.5%) believes proportional representation has to be introduced before the Greens can make an impact.

While Greens reject the view of a Green Party as an electoral machine to maximize votes and want to measure its success in terms of the adoption of "green lifestyles", the large majority of Greens reject the notion of the party as primarily a "spiritual" force and they are also confident that it is not too late for a Green government to turn things around and avert a major environmental catastrophe.

Nevertheless, few Greens expect that the party will ever attain governmental power itself. Very substantial support is given to the statement that the Green Party "will never gain political power on its own, but will achieve its aims by pressurizing the established parties to adopt a green programme." 49.3% agree or strongly agree with this; only 28.2% disagree. A substantial share of the membership thus sees the Green Party as a type of "electoral pressure group", taking or threatening to take away some votes from the established parties in order to make them turn greener in response. In this context, the winning of parliamentary seats is not really crucial. Indeed, a bad electoral performance could be interpreted as "success" if it coincides with the greening of established party politics. We thus have a rationale for continued Green Party activity which is effectively decoupled from what are seen as the traditional aims of political parties, winning votes and seats and participating in the formation of governments.

Despite the obvious rejection of electoral performance as the single measuring pole of green success, participation in elections is what sets the Green Party apart from other green groups. Nevertheless, within the party there has been a constant debate over the years about the relative

importance of elections.⁴⁰ Should Greens concentrate exclusively on elections, moulding all their activities to ensure maximum electoral impact? Or is electioneering just one form of political activity amongst many others that may well be more important?

In order to test the views of Green Party members on these and other issues, we constructed a battery of questions asking members about various future strategies of the party. The results are presented in Table 24. Some of the propositions receive very decisive rejections. The possibility of pre-election anti-Thatcher pacts receives the highest level of disagreement. The wording of the question was obviously overtaken by events, but it is fairly clear that any anti-Conservative "tactical voting" initiative before the next General Election does not have the support of a majority of Green Party members. As discussed previously, the adoption of a more de-centralised internal structure is also opposed by more people than support it.

Party members are evenly divided about putting "more emphasis on steps individuals can take rather than concentrating on electoral campaigning". Another issue on which opinion is evenly split is the employment of non-violent direct action and civil disobedience to campaign on Green issues.

⁴⁰ On the historical development of the debate between the so-called "electoralists" and "anarchists", see Wolfgang Rüdig and Philip Lowe, "The withered greening of British politics: A study of the Ecology Party", *Political Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 2, June 1986, pp. 262-284.

TABLE 24: Future Strategies

Question: Here are a number of statements about the Green Party. Do you agree or disagree with them?

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|----------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| (a) Concentrate on grass-roots campaigning on key environmental issues..... | 43.9 | 39.8 | 12.0 | 3.8 | 0.5 |
| (b) Elect <u>one</u> Party leader..... | 28.9 | 21.1 | 18.6 | 16.9 | 14.5 |
| (c) Explore the possibilities of anti-Thatcher pacts with other parties..... | 8.9 | 18.2 | 15.5 | 26.8 | 30.6 |
| (d) Improve its media image as a responsible party with sensible policies..... | 51.6 | 33.8 | 8.6 | 3.9 | 2.1 |
| (e) Put greater emphasis on social issues and representing the underprivileged in society..... | 26.5 | 38.9 | 22.2 | 9.5 | 2.9 |
| (f) Employ non-violent direct action and civil disobedience to campaign on green issues..... | 14.6 | 24.4 | 22.6 | 25.5 | 12.9 |
| (g) Adopt a more de-centralised internal structure..... | 7.9 | 18.0 | 45.5 | 21.2 | 7.5 |
| (h) Reverse its concentration on electoral campaigning and put more emphasis on practical steps individuals can take here and now to create a green society..... | 16.0 | 21.8 | 24.8 | 26.9 | 10.6 |
| (i) Devise a more detailed set of policies to cope with the environmental challenges of tomorrow..... | 32.2 | 41.7 | 16.6 | 7.5 | 2.1 |

N=4,137 (average)

What about those measures that Green Party members most fully agree with? 50% are of the view that the party should elect one party leader, while 31.4 % are against this measure; 65.4% feel that the party should put greater emphasis on social issues and representing the underprivileged in society; 73.9% agree that the Greens should devise a set of more detailed policies; and 83.7% feel that there should be a concentration on grass-roots campaigning on key environmental issues.

The most strongly approved measure was the importance of improving the Green Party's media image as a responsible party with sensible

policies - 51.6% strongly agree and 33.8% agree, a total of 85.4%! From this set of questions we can again detect amongst the members an appreciation that much emphasis should be placed on the grass-roots level. At the same time, however, they are quite content to accept that some types of power should be concentrated in the centre.

What conclusions can we draw from the available evidence on the future of the Green Party? First, it is important that "success" is not defined by most party members in terms of short-term electoral success. This would make it very difficult for the party to survive a General Election in which, also in the expectation of party members, the share of the Green vote is bound to fall below the 15% level attained in the European elections. Green Party members, including activists, tend to have a more medium to long-term vision of green politics, a framework which gives the party some security in the face of unfavourable public opinion polls.

As to future strategy, the findings about members' views suggest that any radical change will be difficult. The "leadership" question is a tricky one. A substantial part of the active membership has so far prevailed in its view that a Green Party leader is a contradiction in terms, that party "leaders" are somehow "ungreen". While a substantial body of opinion among ordinary members does not appear to share this sentiment, those wishing to reform the internal organisation of the party would be ill-advised to ignore the deeply held views of those opposing such a move.

Our preliminary analysis strongly suggests that the "decentralists" form an important backbone of local and national party activism. By contrast, adherents of "electoralist" views tend to be more passive. While there is no guarantee that electing one leader or similar "centralising" measures would reduce the drop-out rate or attract more members, a possible exodus of "decentralists" could be felt more deeply throughout the party, with detrimental consequences for the level of party activism at local and national level.

10. Conclusions

The Green Party in mid-1991 has managed to manoeuvre itself into a rather rough spot. Membership is dropping, the financial situation is bad, and the party stands at only 1-3% in the opinion polls. What does our survey say about the current and future state of Green Party politics?

Looking at the questions we started with, we can first state that the party at present does not seem to be faced with a threat of entryism. While a truly clandestine effort of this nature would not show up in our survey results, both the members' own views and our data reveal nothing which would give rise to concern that this is an important aspect of Green Party politics at present. Most new members do not have any previous party-political involvement.

With internal subversion not emerging as a problem, the high level of membership fluctuation, with its dire financial consequences, is probably the most important problem facing the party today. The historical evidence on membership development does provide some comfort, however. Membership usually dips or at least stagnates after a major national election. Membership usually picks up again during a General or European Election campaign and for some months afterwards. In that sense, the down-turn in membership experienced during the last year was rather predictable. A stabilisation of membership at the current level should see the party safely through the current "crisis".

It would obviously be in the interest of the party to smoothen the up-and-down of membership and reduce the drop-out rate as much as possible. There are many factors responsible for this which are simply beyond the control of the party and, whatever is done, some fluctuation of membership is probably inevitable. Our analysis suggests that certain factors which the party has some control over are important. Communication with ordinary members, for example, could be designed to enhance members' positive feelings about being a member of the party. Members tend to leave partly because Green Party membership seemed to have no practical consequences. Current party mailings and publications are all geared towards the interests of active members. Most Green Party members are, however, passive and take little, if any, part in party activities. As so much of the party's well-being rests on the behaviour of passive members, it seems surprising that a more specific "membership care" programme is not in operation, specifically designed to cater for the passive majority of members.

The results of this survey that are perhaps most encouraging for the Green Party concern the absence of a linkage between activity and short-term electoral expectations. Why should anybody become an active member of a political party which has no practical chance of attaining parliamentary representation in the foreseeable future? Our survey shows quite clearly that Green Party members and activists are not suffering from any grand delusions of electoral breakthroughs which are just around the corner. Green Party activists are not after short-term electoral gains, but they are committed to a medium-term political strategy. Furthermore, a large majority of members is not interested in doing well at elections as an aim in itself: quite a number of people are perfectly satisfied to seek influence for green views through pressure on other parties, and it is the change of the behaviour of individuals which is seen as the ultimate goal. These results bode well for the continued existence of the party. There is every sign that a bad election result is not likely to have a major effect on the level of membership or on the degree of activism in the party.

It would thus be misleading to characterize the Green Party as a "flash party" which will disappear as quickly as it arrived on the political scene. The Green Party's development clearly has a cyclical nature, and it is currently experiencing a major downturn. However, there are very strong indications from our survey that this downturn is not threatening the substance of the party's fabric. Overall, the position of the party in mid-1991, possibly reaching the end of this particular cycle, is still better than it was before the 1989 European Elections.

Where is the Green Party going? Can it do something itself to enhance its chances of survival? There is always a certain tendency among organizations to blame those factors which can actually be changed for the fortunes of the organisation. In the case of the Greens, it is the party programme and the internal structure which attract the most attention in debates within the party. Most of the activity of party activists is taken up by debating revisions of party programmes and changes to the party's organisation. Our survey reveals that there are fairly deep divisions, particularly on the organisational front. The party's "ethos" calls for a highly decentralised organisation, and the survey results show that a large majority of members believes that local parties and individual members have far too little power within the party. At the same time, half of our respondents are in favour of electing one party leader, and only a minority agrees to further decentralisation of the internal organisation of the party.

These results, we believe, are indicative of a fundamental problem which all green parties have had to face: how can a piece of "green society" be created within the present political system and at the same time survive and flourish as a political entity, having to compete with other parties on terms determined by a "non-green" political system? Green Party members appear to want to do both: they want an internal structure which fits a "green" model of political organisation, but they also want to improve the media image of the party and are not too averse to having one party leader elected.

Ordinary Green Party members are, however, not necessarily aware of such a "problem", and they appear to see no reason why the combination of a decentralisation of the party organisation and the election of a single party leader should be seen as contradictory. In fact, the survey results show that the views of a majority of party members do not conform closely to those of the two "camps" of "electoralists" and "decentralists". Ordinary members who do not attend national conferences regularly do not perceive questions about internal organisation in such a framework: an indication that, despite some heated discussions at national conferences, the membership at large is not riddled with ideological disputes.

Arguably, the internal structure and the party programme of the Green Party will have little influence on the political standing of the party as compared with exogenous factors such as environmental scandals, nuclear accidents, and the behaviour of governments and established parties. There is no evidence in our results that any radical change in the internal organisation of the party will have a beneficial effect on membership development. On the other hand, such a change may alienate parts of the core of long-established activists on whose continued contribution the future of the party depends.

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