

# Reaching across the aisle – explaining the rise of All-Party Parliamentary Groups in the United Kingdom

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## Abstract

All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) are informal parliamentary bodies that are formed by backbench politicians from all parties who share a common interest in a particular policy field or relations with a given country. Examples include the APPGs on Aerospace, Autism, Afghanistan, Women in Parliament, Yorkshire and Northern Lincolnshire, and Zoroastrianism. While APPGs have existed at Westminster since the 1930s, their numbers have grown sharply in recent years, rising from fewer than 250 in 1996 to over 600 at present. The external support received by these groups from lobbyists and stakeholder organizations has also spiked to over £1.9M per year. This rise in external funding has led to concerns in the press and among parliamentarians that APPGs could be used as vehicles for inappropriate lobbying. However, despite this growth of APPGs, and the accompanying concerns, the groups have so far attracted little academic study. As part of a broader study of APPGs in Westminster legislatures, this paper reviews the external support declared by APPGs in 2001 and 2014 to examine changes in the overall level of external support, composition of external partner organizations, and the actual level of support enjoyed by individual groups. Ultimately it finds that external organizations do appear to have helped to facilitate the growth of APPGs. However, while corporations are the largest source of monetary contributions to APPGs, much of the funding they provide is in the form of smaller contributions to a relatively small number of groups. By contrast, charities are engaged with a much larger number of APPGs and appear to have played a greater role in driving APPG growth than their corporate counterparts.

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# 1 Introduction

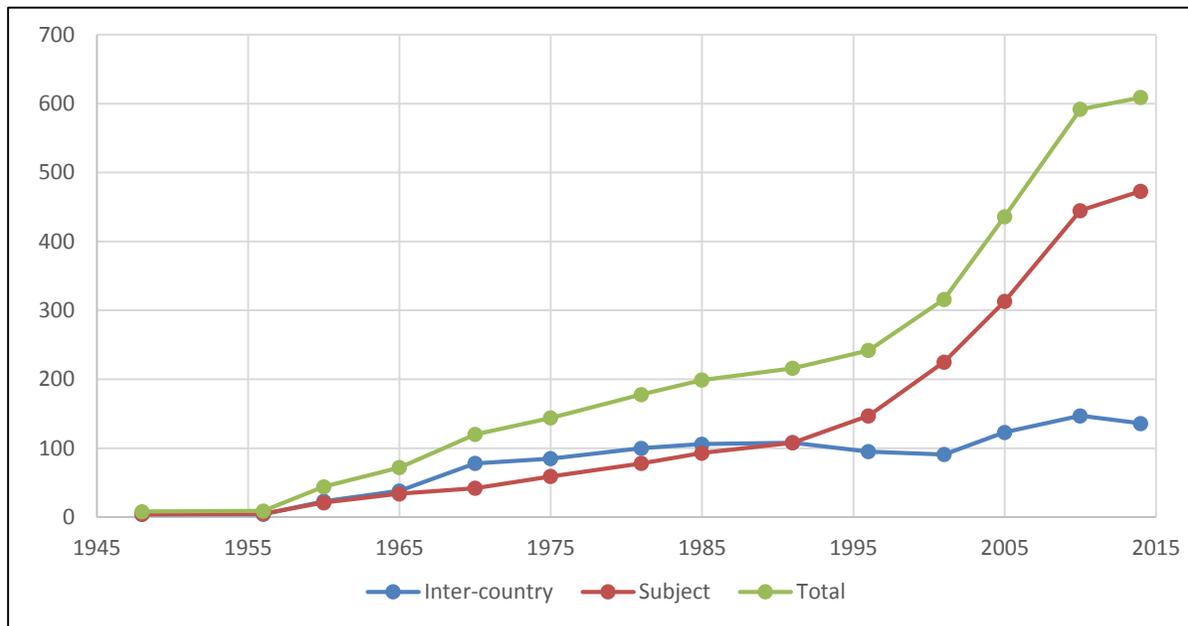
Are external actors, and particularly corporate lobbyists, behind the recent surge in the number of All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) at the British Parliament? APPGs are informal bodies that are created by parliamentarians from different parties who wish cooperate on a given issue, policy area, or relations with a given country. While most of APPGs at the British Parliament toil quietly in obscurity, the APPG system as a whole has come under increasing scrutiny, both due to the rapid growth in the number of groups, and also a series of media reports on the links between such APPGs and external lobbyists. As shown in Chart 1, their numbers grew steadily from the mid-1950s onward, with the total number in operation reaching 242 in 1996. However, following the Labour victory in 1997, the pace of group creation leapt dramatically, with the number more than doubling to 592 by the time of the 2010 election. By August 2014, the total stood at 609.

As is described further below, observers have long been concerned that pressure from lobbyists was the driving force behind the creation of many new APPGs. Yet, as the number of APPGs have grown, so too have worries over external pressure. In 2011, a study by *The Guardian* found that APPGs had declared over £1.6 million in external support over the previous year (Ball, 2011). When the research was repeated a year later, the figure had jumped to £1.8 million (Ball and Beleaga, 2012). Much more alarming though are allegations that parliamentarians have accepted personal payments in exchange for their work in APPGs. For instance, in 2013, journalists posing as lobbyists for the government of Fiji recorded MP Patrick Mercer agreeing to accept payment in return for establishing an APPG on the country (Hope, 2014). In a separate sting, two Peers were also recorded agreeing to create an APPG for a South Korean solar energy firm in return for cash (Brant, 2013). All three were eventually found guilty of breaching standards and suspended from Parliament. At the same time, other MPs have been accused of using the connections made through APPGs to advance their personal financial interests (Gallagher, 2014; Watt, 2013).

Perhaps not surprisingly, many parliamentarians themselves taken a dim view of APPGs. Indeed, a 2012 survey conducted by a special Speakers' Working Group on All-Party Groups found that 48 percent of the MPs and Peers who responded either "strongly" or "tended" to agree with the

statement that that “APPGs are prone to be manipulated by public affairs and lobby groups for their own purposes” (Straw et al., 2012). Just 25 percent strongly or tended to disagree. All told, one MP summed up the situation by saying that APPGs “are the next big scandal waiting to happen” (Graham Allen, quoted in Gallagher, 2014)

**Chart 1 - Number of All-Party Groups at the UK Parliament, 1948 – 2014<sup>2</sup>**



However, despite these concerns and warnings, very little is known about how the external support provided to APPGs has changed over time. For instance, while the Speaker’s Working Group noted that the number of groups declaring support had risen over time, the total value of such support was not examined, nor were changes in the balance between different types of actors, such as corporations, business associations, lobby firms, charities, or non-governmental organizations. Clearly a situation in which certain types organizations increasingly dominate the support provided to APPGs would be much more worrying than one where a broad range of external actors are involved.

Changes in the influence of external actors is also important from a theoretical perspective as well. Past efforts to explain the role of APPGs and the reasons for their growth have focused on

<sup>2</sup> Sources: For years 1948 to 1975, see Morgan (1979); for years 1981 to 2014 see United Kingdom, House of Commons (1981a, 1981b, 1985a, 1985b, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2005, 2010, 2014).

how they help politicians to respond to a political environment that features more complex policy issues and greater citizen expectations (Hammond, 1998). However, while such accounts note the presence of external actors in helping to facilitate APPG operations, the impact of such support is not systematically considered.

As part of a broader study into the growth of APPGs in Westminster legislatures, this paper explores to what extent the recent surge in the number of APPGs in the UK can be attributed to pressure from the public affairs industry. Specifically, the paper reviews the external support declared by APPGs in 2001 and in 2014 to examine changes in the overall level of external support, changes in the composition of external partner organizations, and the actual level of support enjoyed by individual groups. Notably, this research complements the previous findings from Thomas (2014) which examined the factors that shape APPG participation by MPs, such as seniority, electoral vulnerability, party, and gender.

The paper begins with a brief discussion of the characteristics of APPGs, and then explores why the main theories that have been developed to account for the growth of APPGs in other legislatures cannot be directly extended to Westminster, and also fail to account for the role of external actors. This discussion is followed by a review of the main characteristics of APPGs, including their at times concerning relationship with external partners. The data utilized are then discussed, followed by a presentation of the results. Ultimately the paper finds that external organizations do appear to have helped to facilitate the growth of APPGs. However, while corporations are the largest source of monetary contributions to APPGs, much of the funding they provide is in the form of smaller contributions to a relatively small number of groups. By contrast, charities are engaged with a much larger number of APPGs and appear to have played a greater role in driving APPG growth than their corporate counterparts.

## **2 Existing theories regarding APPG growth**

The recent surge in APPG activity at Westminster is surprising for two reasons. First, the growth of APPGs is inconsistent with existing theories about the behaviour of elected representatives. Rational choice theory holds that a politician's primary goal is to secure re-election (Mayhew, 1974). Given that parties and party leaders are seen to be increasingly important in shaping voters' choices (Stevens et al., 2011) rational politicians would appear better served by achieving

policy or legislative victories for their own party rather than collaborating with those from other political groupings.

Second, most scholarship on the Westminster parliamentary system argues that a sharp division between government and opposition parties must be maintained in order to ensure the smooth functioning of the conventions of responsible government on which the system is based. This clear divide is seen to maximize accountability by making the government fully responsible for all policy choices and also by giving the opposition a strong incentive to highlight instances of failure or mismanagement by the governing party (Aucoin et al., 2004). Yet the growing presence of APPGs suggests that parliamentary outcomes may actually be improved when inter-party conflict is at least partially replaced with non-partisan cooperation.

Thus far, no research has been produced to explain the rise of APPGs in a Westminster context. However, the APPGs at the US Congress have been the subject of considerable investigation. Such research has largely been conducted using a rational choice based approach which assumes that legislators will primarily engage in those activities that contribute to the achievement of their goals and particularly to the task of securing re-election. As such, these studies tend to provide largely functionalist accounts for APPG formation and activities. In this vein, researchers have found that APPGs provide legislators with the opportunity to exchange information (Ainsworth and Akins, 1997; Ringe and Victor, 2013) shape the legislative agenda (Hammond et al., 1985) and to serve as policy entrepreneurs (Burgin, 2003).

Hammond's 1998 book on congressional caucuses is the most comprehensive work that has yet been written on APPGs in a single jurisdiction. In it, she seeks to explain APPG formation and why their numbers increased so sharply during the 1980s and 1990s. She begins by examining why existing theories for explaining congressional organization – especially those regarding the role and influence of formal committees – cannot account for APPG formation given their informal nature and lack of direct connection to the legislative outcomes. Consequently, Hammond contends that any explanation must examine not only (1) the *objectives* of congressional representatives, but also (2) the *structure* of Congress itself and (3) the *external context*.

With regard to the *context*, Hammond stresses that the demands placed on congressmen and women have increased in recent decades as they deal with the growing complexity of policy issues, more contacts from constituents, higher rates of interest group mobilization, and a greater array of research studies. However, this rising pressure has not led to significant changes in the formal *structure* of Congress. Instead, Hammond argues that the inclusive and fluid structure of the institution has enabled informal adaptations. She describes Congress as “an organization of equals whose collegial decision making... is manifested in a general absence of hierarchy and integrative mechanisms” (1998: 16). What authority structure there is lacks strong inducements or sanctions to shape members’ behaviour. Furthermore, “Congressional norms favour inclusion in group processes” (1998: 16). All told, this collegiality and absence of hierarchy is seen to produce more “organizational fluidity” than is the norm in many other bodies. It also creates challenges for congressional leaders who must integrate actions within the legislature in order to produce coherent outcomes.

Lastly, Hammond sees involvement in caucuses as contributing to all three of the *goals* that Fenno identified for members of congress: re-election, policy change, and influence in the institution (1998: 15). For re-election, Hammond reports that just joining a caucus without being actively involved can benefit representatives since “it sends a message to constituents that the member shares their concerns” (1998: 79). She further found that those from more marginal electoral districts had slightly higher involvement in APPGs than members with a greater vote share. APPGs were also seen to be helpful for pursuing policy goals, with Hammond noting that: “Members formed caucuses... when deficiencies in the formal committee and party systems made achievement of individual goals difficult” (Hammond, 1998: 16). In terms of influence, Hammond stressed that involvement in APPGs allowed members of congress to have an impact on policy at an earlier point in their careers than would be possible through the formal system, where positions are allocated by seniority. In addition, APPG involvement provided representatives with opportunities to improve their chances for future promotion by developing leadership skills and building relationships with their colleagues. As could be expected, Hammond found that APPG involvement was higher among newer members who were excluded from formal leadership positions and were hoping achieve future advancement.

Several of the factors identified in Hammond's explanation of APPG growth in the United States can certainly apply elsewhere. British MPs have the same desire for re-election and promotion, and also face a similar external context of growing policy complexity and increasing demands from citizens. However, Hammond's account rests on characteristics of the US Congress, namely inclusiveness, the absence of hierarchy, and the need for bipartisan cooperation, that on the surface appear to be absent in Westminster systems. Ringe and Victor's observations regarding the limited scope of operation for APGs in the UK can help to illustrate this point:

there is much less need for political coordination in Westminster than in some other legislatures, given the primacy of single-party cabinets, the dominance of the legislative majority party, a pronounced government-opposition dynamic, and high levels of party discipline. In this system, political coordination in [APGs] – such as agenda setting, the establishment of policy consensus, and coalition building – will be less meaningful and consequential than in legislatures where cross-party cooperation is imperative and policy coalitions are fluid and must be continually renegotiated (2013: 21).

At the same time, Hammond's analysis is harmed by her failure to systematically consider the role that external actors and lobbyists play in group formation and maintenance. While noting that such stakeholders can be involved pushing for caucus formation, recruiting new members, and providing information, she does not consider how such activities have enabled the expansion of APPGs, or how differences in resources across sectors or policy actors may limit group formation and thereby alter the balance of information received by legislators.

### **3 Basic characteristics of British APPGs**

APPGs are distinct from other types of parliamentary organizations in that they are non-partisan and have no place in the formal system of parliamentary decision making. Instead, they are formed voluntarily by “members coming together on a basis of shared interests or backgrounds, independent of party” (Norton, 2008: 240). The vast number of APPGs operating in the UK makes it difficult to speak about them precisely: for every ten groups that conform to a given trend, there may well be one that does not. Nevertheless, they still share many characteristics, in no small part thanks to the common set of rules to which all British APPGs must conform.

The UK possesses perhaps the world's most comprehensive system for regulating APPGs. Although APPGs are informal in the sense of having no role in parliamentary decision making,

groups must meet a wide range of requirements regarding their structure, membership, and operations if they wish to have priority access to parliamentary facilities or to advertise in the weekly notice of APPG meetings, known as the All-Party Whip. At the most basic level, APPGs must define themselves according to two criteria: whether outside organizations can become full group members; and whether they deal with a country or a subject. They must also declare any support that they receive from outside groups.

### 3.1 All-party versus associate parliamentary groups

British APPGs must define themselves as being either All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) or Associate Parliamentary Groups. The distinguishing factor between the two is that the former limit membership solely to parliamentarians while the latter allow non-parliamentarians to participate as full members in group activities. Associate groups are almost exclusively subject focused, with just a handful falling into the inter-country category. While there always have been more APPGs than association groups in operation, the number of associate groups has been in steady decline in recent years, falling from over 25 per cent of all groups in 1996 to under three per cent by 2014. Most of this decline was initially due to the dramatic rise in the number of APPGs. However, the number of associate groups dropped dramatically after the 2010 election once it became clear that the category was being closely examined for ethics concerns (see below for further details).

**Table 1 – Number of Associate versus All-Party Parliamentary Groups at the British Parliament, 1996-2015**

<b>Type</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2014</b>
<i>Associate</i>					
Inter-country	3	0	2	5	1
Subject	46	43	46	37	15
<i>APPG</i>					
Inter-country	92	91	121	142	136
Subject	101	182	267	408	473

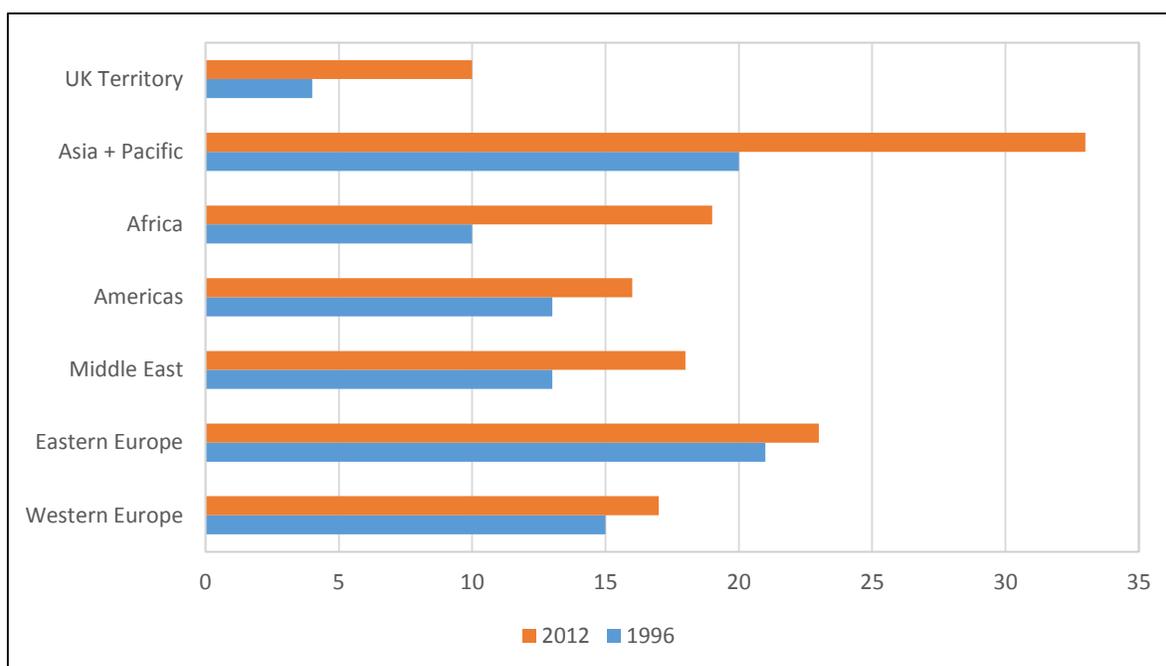
While their numbers may have been relatively small, associate parliamentary groups have typically been among the most active and influential at Westminster. Examples included the *Associate Parliamentary Group on Health*, the *Associate Parliamentary Manufacturing Group*,

the *Parliamentary Advisory Council on Transport Safety*, and the *Parliamentary and Scientific Committee*. Many of these associate groups facilitate dialogue between parliamentarians and representatives from a particular industry. Partly as a result, associate groups also tended to be disproportionately well resourced compared to APPGs. For instance, all but two of the 33 associate groups registered in September 2012 reported some form external assistance. While most reported only in-kind support, 10 groups received financial contributions worth a combined £458,669. By contrast, external support was reported by just two-thirds of the 551 APPGs operating at that time. Of these, 46 groups declared cash contributions for a combined total of £1,364,817. Therefore the average APPG received was less likely to receive external support than associate groups, and when they did it was typically less extensive. This combination of financing and a formal role for external participants in group operations are what recently led to the recommendation that the Associate category should be eliminated, as is described further below.

### 3.2 Inter-country versus subject APPGs

In addition to the all-party versus associate divide, APPGs are also required to distinguish themselves as being either inter-country or subject groups. Inter-country groups are those that focus on the relations between Britain and another country, region, or subnational unit. While there are inter-country groups for countries in all parts of the world, the coverage is more comprehensive for those continents that are of greater strategic interest to the United Kingdom. For instance, there is an inter-country group for nearly every state in Europe and the Middle East, with only a few of the smallest countries absent (e.g. Andorra, Montenegro, Yemen). In contrast, Africa does not fare nearly so well, with just 17 groups as well as the broader APPG for Africa. There are also “inter-country groups” that deal with the Overseas Territories that are technically part of the UK, such as *Gibraltar*, the *Falkland Islands*, and *Montserrat*. Similar groups also exist for the *Isle of Mann* and the *Channel Islands*. These APPGs serve to build better relations between the autonomous governments of these jurisdictions and legislators in Westminster. Chart I tracks the growth of inter-country APPGs since 1996. As can be seen, the fastest growth in recent years has been for APPGs dealing with Asia and the Pacific, Africa, and UK territories.

**Chart 1 – Growth of inter-country APPGs by area of focus, 1996 - 2012**

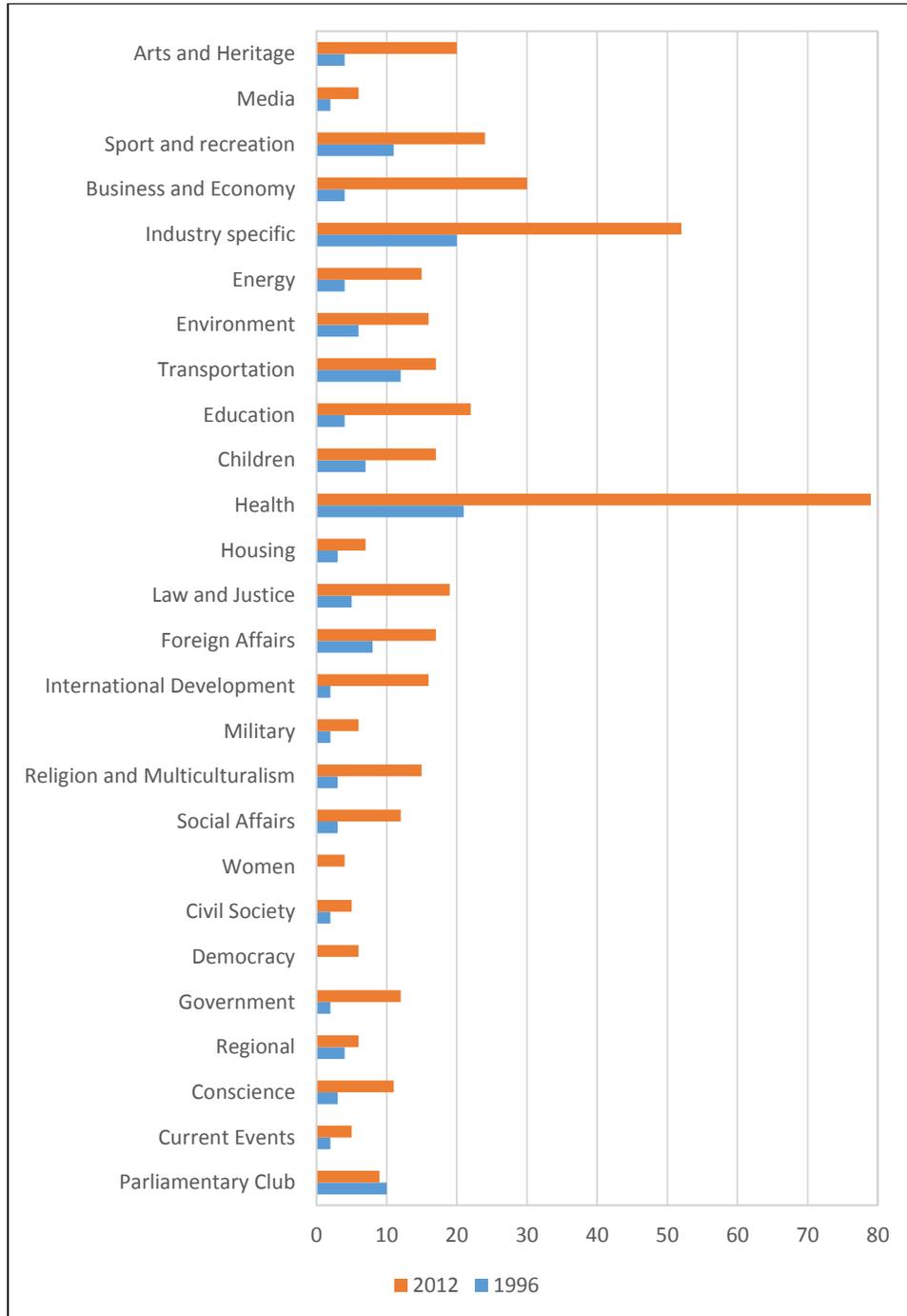


All UK APPGs that are not classified as inter-country groups fall within the “subject group” category. As a catch-all category, subject groups can address virtually any topic imaginable. Indeed some, such as the *APPG on East Asian Business* or the *APPG on Defence and Diplomacy in Middle East and North Africa*, actually overlap with inter-country groups by dealing with issues that pertain to a particular region of the world.

Chart II shows the growth of subject APPGs by area of focus since 1996.<sup>3</sup> While most of the categories employed in the Chart should hopefully be fairly straight forward, the final four require some explanation. Regional APPGs are those that focus only for a specific region of the UK. Such groups may focus solely on the region itself, such as the *APPG for Yorkshire and Northern Lincolnshire*, or may deal with specific policy issues within a given region, such as the *APPG Rail in Wales*. The “conscience” category is reserved for those APPGs that campaign on a particular subject based on an ethical belief. Examples include the APPGs on *Animal Welfare*, *Choice at the End of Life*, the *Death Penalty*, and the *Pro-Life Group*. APPGs for “current events” are those that help parliamentarians participate in the planning for major upcoming

<sup>3</sup> The categories employed were developed by the author as part of a broader project in multiple jurisdictions. Any feedback would be welcome.

**Chart 2 – Growth of subject APPGs by area of focus, 1996 - 2012**



events, such as the past *APPGs for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee*, or the *2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games*. APPGs for current events can also allow politicians to coordinate their response to a specific problem that is affecting a number of people across the country. Two such groups presently in operation are the *APPG for Justice for Equitable Life Policy Holders* and the

*APPG in Support of Visteon Pensioners*. Finally, “Parliamentary Clubs” are APPGs that exist solely for parliamentarians who share a common interest in a given hobby and wish to practice it together. Current examples include the APPG for *Tennis*, the *Parliament Choir*, and the *Lords and Commons Cricket Club*.

APPGs dealing with health issues have been by far the most growth with the number in operation nearly quadrupling from 21 to 79 over the period. Much of this increase has resulted from the proliferation of APPGs focusing on ever more specific health conditions. For instance, there is now a broad *APPG on Health*, a general *APPG on Cancer*, and also separate APPGs on *Brain Tumours*, *Breast Cancer*, *Pancreatic Cancer*, and *Ovarian Cancer*. A large number of groups have also been created to deal with different aspects of the health system, such as the APPGs on *Hospice and Palliative Care*, *Surgical Services*, *Primary and Public Care*, and *Telehealth*. This increased specialization can be found in other policy fields as well. While there are still bodies for broad industrial sectors like the *APPG for Manufacturing* or the *APPG for Communications*, specific groups have been created for a wide range of smaller activities, such as the APPG for *Aerospace*, *Bingo*, *Cleaning and Hygiene*, *Social Tourism*, and *Wood Panelling*. Likewise, within the area of arts and culture, the concerns of UK musicians are now represented not only by the long-established *APPG for Music*, but also the more recently formed APPGs for *Brass Bands*, *Classical Music*, *Folk Arts*, and *Jazz Appreciation*. The only group type not to have grown since 1996 are Parliamentary Clubs.

### 3.3 Relationships with external actors

The majority of British APPGs are also supported by outside actors, such as business associations, charities, non-governmental organizations, foreign embassies, or other stakeholders. These external bodies will often provide a group’s secretariat and may also cover expenses, such as refreshments at meetings, the cost of publishing of reports, or international travel. As is discussed further below, such relationships are not new. The UK’s various scientific associations were heavily involved in creating the country’s first APPG, the *Parliamentary and Scientific Committee*, and continued to supply the group with both information and financial support (Walkland, 1964).<sup>4</sup> Likewise, Finer (1958) highlighted the involvement of the Roads

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<sup>4</sup> The group was originally known as the *Parliamentary Science Committee*, but changed its name in 1939.

Campaign Council (an umbrella group associations with an interest in road transportation) in the founding of the *All-Party Roads Study Group*.

External support is often seen to be essential to make up for APPGs' lack of formal parliamentary funding. Writing over 50 years ago, Walkland (1964) noted that the informal nature of the *Parliamentary and Scientific Committee* meant that it lacked the resources to conduct independent studies, and hence was heavily reliant on information from its external partners. Little has changed in the intervening period. Given the intense pressure on MPs' resources, without these relationships APPGs would frequently lack both access to information and the capacity to manage group activities. As a recent report by the Commons' Standards Committee observed, "The fact that [APPGs] can draw on a variety of funding, including external support, brings significant benefits... It enables them to carry out proper research, to network and to conduct public information events" (2013: 17). The existence of APPGs can also help to expand the number of voices heard at Parliament by offering a neutral space. As Norton writes, "All-party groups are especially attractive to interest groups as they operate outside the context of party – the groups cannot be accused of siding with any particular party" (2013: 138).

However, many observers are concerned that such relationships go beyond support and information exchange towards co-optation. Writing in the mid-1980s, Jordan observed that "In practice [APPGs] are not always (or even usually) spontaneous signs of parliamentary interest and can be stimulated by lobbyists... Criticism has emerged that these committees exist not so much to inform legislators as to seduce" (1985: 178). He went on to describe how the members of several subject APPGs were treated to international travel as part of study tours organized by corporations and business associations. And he raised that lobbyists often served as APPG research staff, providing them full access to the parliament buildings.

Given these long-standing worries over the relationship between APPGs and lobbyists, a registry of APPGs was created in 1985. Groups are required to declare the support received from a given outside actor if the total value of the contributions it provides is £1,500 or more within a calendar year. Notably, this rule applies to donations made either directly or in-kind. APPGs must also indicate if they have a designated external secretariat. If the secretariat services are provided by a public affairs firm, the ultimate client who is paying the firm must be disclosed.

However, these requirements proved insufficient to prevent further allegations about inappropriate influence. In 2006, an investigation by *The Times* found that several of the APPGs that received direct financial or administrative support from lobbyists had failed to specify the ultimate source of the funds (Parvin, 2007). *The Times*' investigation prompted a Select Committee report into the operation of APPGs, which found that three groups that had received financial or administrative assistance from public relations firms had breached the requirement to disclose the client on whose behalf the support had been provided (United Kingdom. House of Commons. Committee on Standards and Privileges, 2006).

In addition to violations of the existing rules, concerns have also been raised about the strength of the rules themselves. For instance, while individual contributions of £1,500 or more had to be declared, there was no obligation for APPGs to declare the total value of the support they receive from all sources. As such, an APPG could theoretically receive £1,499 per year from 1,000 separate organizations and still not be obligated to disclose any external financing. A further problem is that no value is assigned to in-kind contributions. As a result, APPGs that receive only a few hours of secretariat support each year could make the same declaration of support as those that have two full-time dedicated staff provided by an outside organization.

In light of ongoing concerns about the activities of APPGs, in late 2011 the Speakers of the Commons and the Lords established a Joint Working Group to examine the funding and operation of APPGs, and how they relate to formal Parliamentary bodies like Select Committees (United Kingdom. Parliament, 2011b). The Working Group reported in June 2012 and suggested a range of substantial reforms (Straw et al., 2012). Many of the proposals were subsequently adopted by the House of Commons' Committee on Standards. These include the elimination of the associate parliamentary group category, and the requirement that any APPG reports must both disclose any external support received and include a disclaimer on the cover page indicating that the document is not an official parliamentary publication (United Kingdom. House of Commons. Committee on Standards, 2013). A new rule was also introduced requiring any APPG that receives more than £12,500 in a given year to prepare full financial statements. While some of these changes were introduced in late 2014, the remainder will take effect following the 2015 election.

## 4 Methodology

To explore how the external support provided to APPGs has changed over time, datasets were created that tracked support declared on the registry of APPGs for the current Parliament and for the oldest Parliament that could be located. Unfortunately, the parliamentary authorities only maintain copies of its APPG registry for the past five years. Thankfully, saved versions of the older registries were found on the Internet Archive making it possible to extend the study back to the end of the 1997-2001. Notably, the number of APPGs in operation rises during the time between elections as new groups are created, and also since existing groups may take some time to re-register. As such, last possible registry available for that Parliament was used, dated 6 April 2001. The registry used for the current Parliament was dated 18 August 2014. Notably, this registry predates the rule changes described above, which began being phased in as of August 2014. Webscraping software was used to extract the data from the registries into a format that could be analysed.

Unfortunately, this data is somewhat limited given that the study period begins after the rapid growth in APPGs had already begun. Nevertheless, if APPG creation was being driven by external actors, then the number of APPGs without any support should remain stagnant. Notably the study also draws on the information obtained through interviews that were conducted as part of the broader research project. Interviews were carried out from October to November of 2012, and April to May of 2013. All told, the respondents included twenty-one MPs, eight peers, twenty-four lobbyists and APPG staff, and nine others such as journalists and parliamentary officials.

## 5 Results

### 5.1 Major trends

Table 2 presents the number of groups registered in 2001 and 2014 and also the proportion of that declared external support at each point in time. As can be seen, there was an incredible surge in APPG creation during the period studied, with the overall number nearly doubling from 316 to 609. Indeed, the number of groups created was even higher than it appears given that there were over 50 APPGs from 2001 that were no longer in existence in 2014. The vast majority of the

group creation took place within the subject APPG category, which increased its share of the total from 71 percent in 2001 to 78 percent in 2014.

**Table 2 – Declarations of external support by British APPGs, 2001 and 2014<sup>5</sup>**

<b>Type</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2014</b>
Number of APPGs		
<i>Inter-country</i>	90 (29%)	135 (22%)
<i>Subject</i>	225 (71%)	473 (78%)
Total	315 (100%)	608 (100%)
Number reporting any form external support		
<i>Inter-country</i>	15 (18%)	34 (26%)
<i>Subject</i>	181 (80%)	380 (80%)
Total	196 (62%)	414 (68%)
Number reporting external support with monetary value		
<i>Inter-country</i>	7 (8%)	7 (6%)
<i>Subject</i>	37 (16%)	57 (12%)
Total	45 (14%)	65 (11%)
Total value of monetary support reported		
<i>Inter-country</i>	£117,170	£102,894
<i>Subject</i>	£709,648	£1,802,157
Total	£826,845	£1,905,051

Moving down the table, while the number of subject APPGs declaring outside contributions has risen, the proportion remained completely unchanged at 80 per cent. However, there was an increase in the percentage of inter-country groups registering assistance. This spike raised the overall proportion of APPGs listing external support from a bit below two-thirds to just over it. Nevertheless, subject groups still remained three times more likely to report external support than their inter-country counterparts. The interview data suggests this wide gap likely reflects the fact that the MPs who belong to inter-country APPGs are regularly invited to diplomatic functions sponsored by the embassies or high commissions of their target countries, even though the functions themselves are not APPG events. Parliamentarians may similarly be invited to

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<sup>5</sup> The Anglo-American Parliamentary Group (i.e. the UK-United States APPG) was excluded from all calculations in this and subsequent tables as it uniquely among British APGs receives a standing grant each year from Parliament to cover its costs. In 2014 the grant was £110,000, up from £84,600 in 2001.

travel to a particular country as a result of their membership in the corresponding APPG. As such, more external support is offered to these groups than may be registered, being a member of an inter-country APPG may carry greater benefits than it first appears.

The third set of figures in Table 2 identifies the number of APPGs that specified a monetary value for at least a portion of the external support they declared. The large gap between the total number of APPGs declaring outside support and the subset reporting monetary contributions reflects the fact that most APPGs that register with outside support only report in-kind assistance, such as the provision of secretariat services, administrative support, or hospitality. In fact, the data show that number of groups registering monetary support has failed to keep pace with the overall rate of APPG creation, and so has actually fallen in proportionate terms since 2001. As is discussed further below, this decline may reflect the surge in support provided by charities, which tend to offer in-kind contributions as opposed to cash.

While there was no change in the number of inter-country APPGs reporting financial assistance between 2001 and 2014, the value of the support declared actually fell over that time, with the decline becoming even greater if one accounts for inflation. In contrast, the total of the monetary contributions reported by subject groups was up by over two and a half times. Considering that the number of subject APPGs reporting financial support rose only from 37 to 57, the average financing declared by subject groups increased substantially from £19,180 to £31,617. Therefore while proportionally fewer subject APPGs reported monetary contributions, those that did received more support on average than was the case in 2001.

At the group level, in 2001 there was just one APPG, the *Parliamentary Advisory Council on Transport Safety*, which reported more £50,000 in income. By 2014 there were 16 such groups, ranging from the *Parliamentary Internet and Communications Technology Forum* with £137,000 declared to the *Football Club APPG*, which declared exactly £50,000. All of the 16 were subject groups except for the *APPG for China*, which listed financing of £54,634. Curiously the *Parliamentary Advisory Council on Transport Safety* saw its own income fall from £107,550 to just £52,755 over the period studied.

## 5.2 Composition of donors

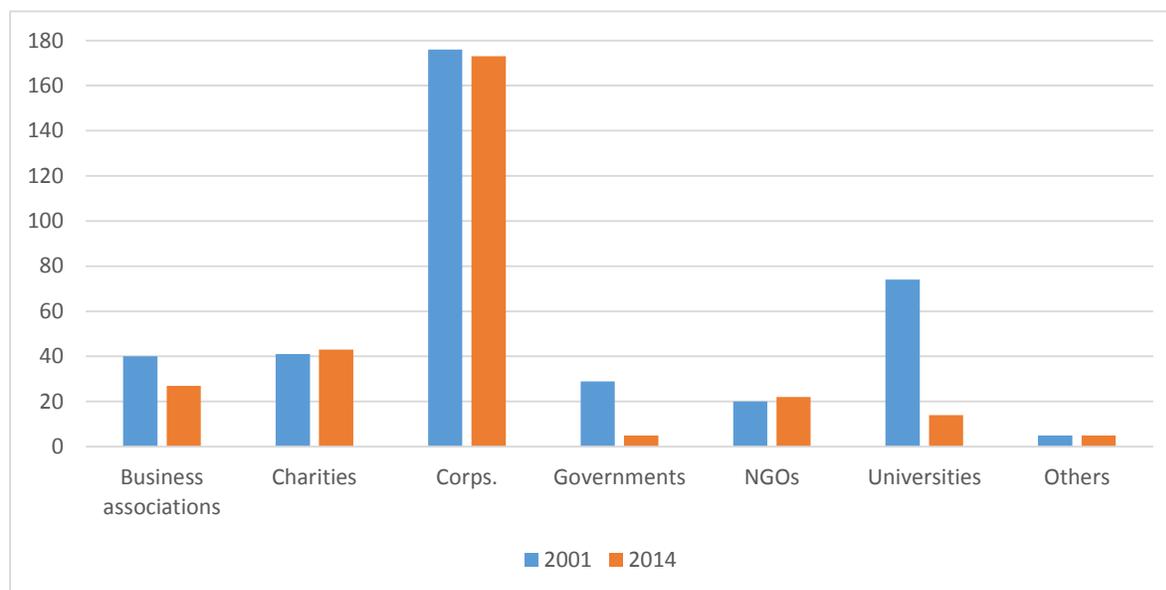
While the discussion above considers changes in the number of APPGs reporting external support and its total value, this section examines the makeup of the donors themselves. The total number of individual contributions from external actors registered by APPGs rose from 664 to 886 between 2001 and 2014. Given that some made contributions to more than one APPG, the actual number of external actors represented by these contributions was 569 and 798 respectively. These actors were incredibly diverse, ranging from some of the UK's largest companies to charities and even individuals. Moreover, different types of actors engaged with APPGs in different ways. As will be seen below, corporations made up the lion's share of financial contributors, while charities dominated the provision of secretariat services.

Although the financing received by APPGs grew substantially between 2001 and 2004, the number of external organizations providing such funding actually fell from 383 to 289. However, in both cases the number of financial contributors drastically exceeded the number of groups reporting financial contributions. This disconnect results from the fact that several APPGs operate as large stakeholder forums that charge a membership fee to each participating institution. A case in point is the *APPG on Unconventional Oil and Gas*, which in 2014 received financing from 42 separate organizations.

Chart 3 breaks down the external financing declared by APPGs by organization type of the donor. The "Others" category includes contributions by individuals, foreign governments, and dedicated foundations that have been created specifically to support a given APPG, such as the Parliamentary Christian Fellowship Trust. As can be seen, corporations made up the largest source of financial contributions in 2001 and continued to do so in 2014, dwarfing all other categories of actors. In contrast, there were sharp reductions in the number of government actors and universities that gave funds. These declines both result from changes in participation in two of the mass stakeholder APPGs. Specifically, in 2001, the *APPG on Universities* declared receiving £500 from 69 different universities. The same year, the *Parliamentary Advisory Council on Transport Safety* similarly contributed £550 from 19 separate local government councils. Both sets of contributions were missing in 2014. It is not known if the donations were made and simply not reported since they were under £1,500, or if the donations were given to another body which then engaged with the APPG on their behalf. For instance, in 2014 the sole

declaration of external support by the *APPG on Universities* was for secretariat services from Universities UK, which is an umbrella body for the sector. Notably these changes reflect the disappearance of small donations from the registry over time. In 2001, APPGs declared 298 contributions that were valued below £1,500. In 2014, just eight such declarations were made.

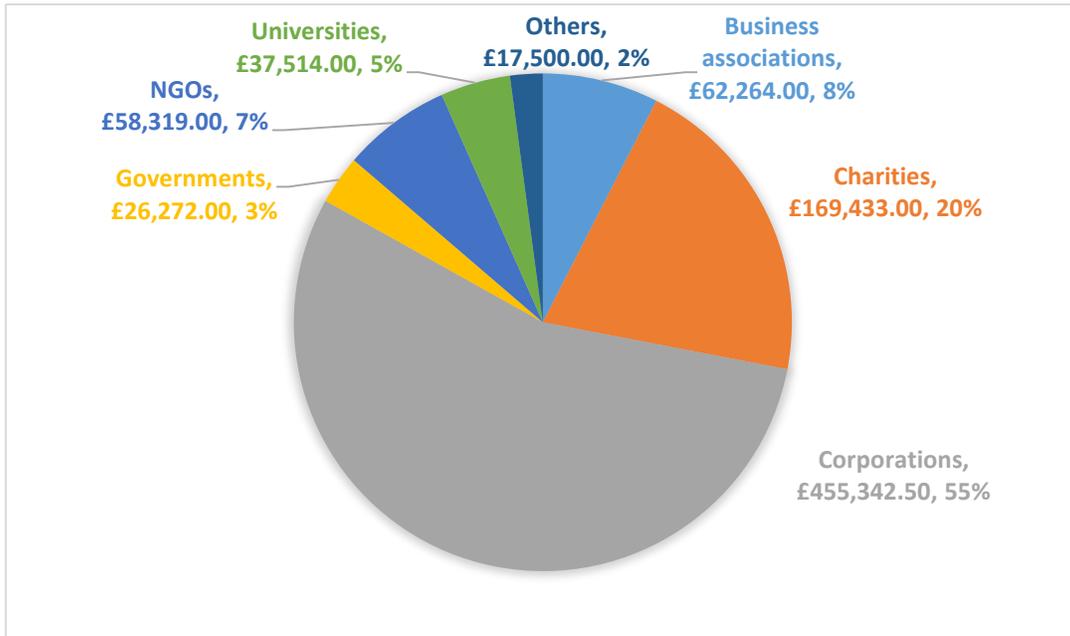
**Chart 3 – Number of financial contributors to APPGs by donor type, 2001 and 2014**



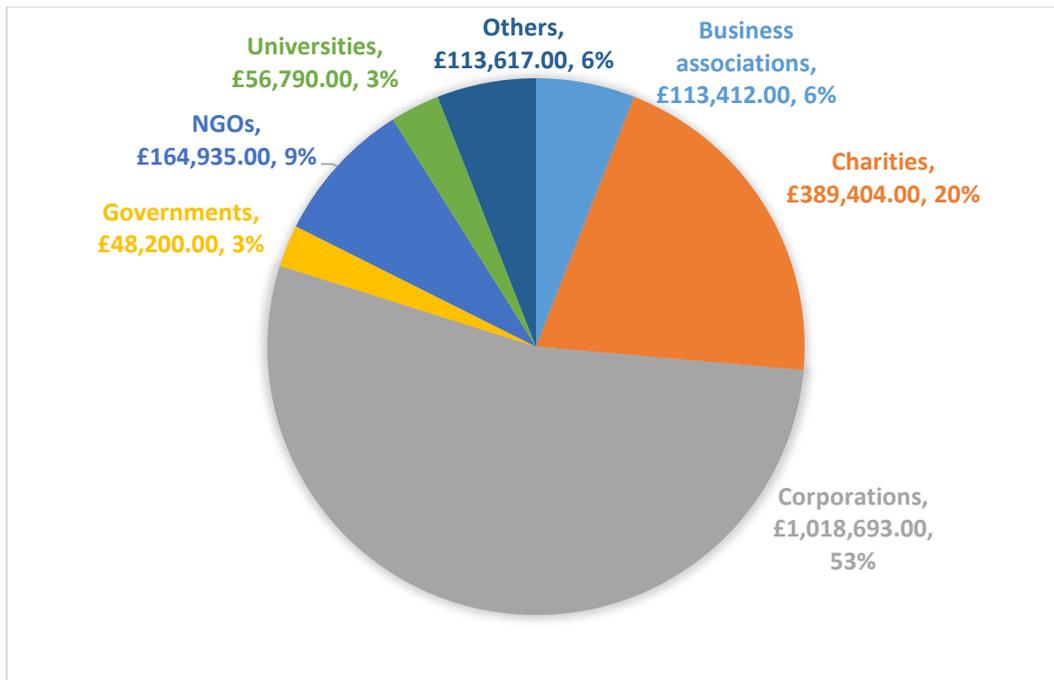
Charts 4 and 5 present changes in the value of the contributions made by different types of donor organizations. Together they demonstrate that while the value of the financial contributions given to APPGs has increased over time, there has been a remarkable stability in the proportion of the contributions provided by each type of actor. Indeed, with the exception of the “Others”, the proportion of support coming from each category did not change by more than two per cent between 2001 and 2014. Businesses clearly provided the majority of the financial support that was declared by APPGs, particularly if the support from corporations themselves is combined with that from business associations. Charities were the next most significant source, providing 20 per cent of the financing reported by APPGs in both time periods. All other sources combined accounted for roughly 20 per cent of the financing registered in both years.

However, while corporations furnished the most financial support overall, there were several large contributions made by individual charities. In 2001, the four largest individual monetary contributions were £40,000 from the Shirley Foundation for the *APPG on Autism*, £30,000 from

**Chart 4 – Total value of financial contributions registered by APPGs by actor type, 2001**



**Chart 5 – Total value of financial contributions registered by APPGs by actor type, 20014**

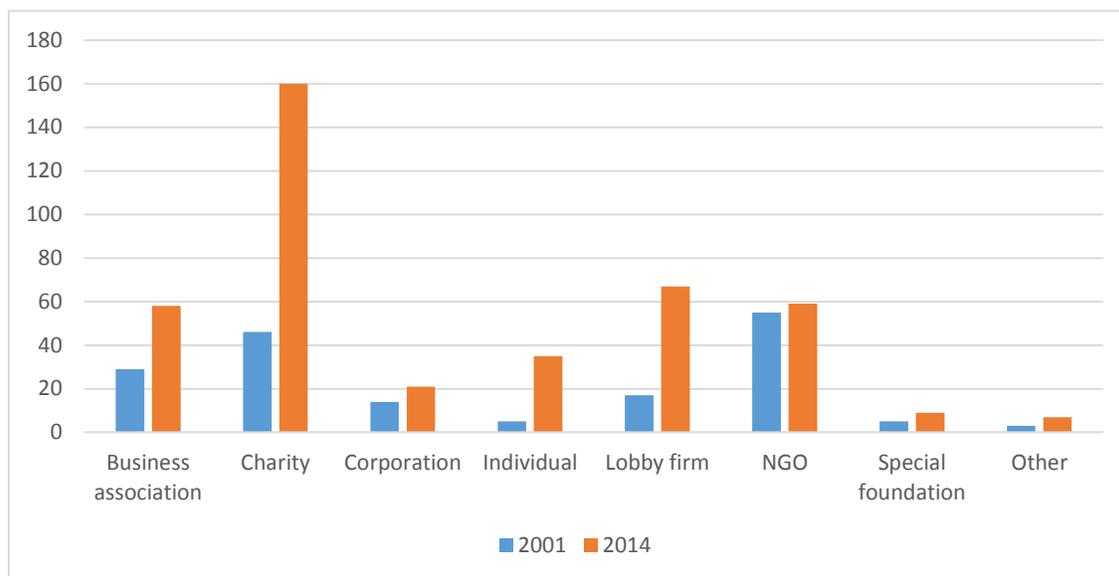


the National Wind Power Foundation for the *Associate Parliamentary Renewable and Sustainable Energy Group*, £24,212 from the United Nations Population Fund for the *APPG on Population, Development and Reproductive Health*, and £20,000 from Kodak for the *APPG on Breast Cancer*. Similarly, the estate of Mrs Cynthia Campbell-Savours was actually the largest donor in 2014, contributing £80,000 to the *APPG on Human Rights*. The next largest contributions were £65,000 from British Telecom for the *Parliament Choir APPG*, £50,000 from National Grid for the *Football Club APPG*, and a gift of £41,085 from the United Nations Population Fund for the *APPG on Population, Development and Reproductive Health*.

In addition, given that there were far more corporations than charities making monetary contributions to APPGs, the average financing provided per charity was actually higher in both years (£4,132 and £9,056 respectively) than was the case for corporations and (£2,587 and £5,888 respectively). Once again, this distribution reflects the fact that corporate contributions tended to be smaller donations made to purchase membership in mass stakeholder APPGs. Thus, while there were fewer charities providing financial support and the total value they gave was lower than for corporations, those APPGs that did receive charity funding tended to receive substantial amounts.

Lastly, Chart 6 breaks down the provision of secretariat support by donor type. In 2001, there were a total of 174 organizations that were registered as being either the secretariat or co-secretariat for a British APPG. By 2014, that figure had more than doubled to 417. However, while the composition of the organizations providing financial support for APPGs was relatively constant over time, there have been massive changes in distribution of organizations providing secretariat services. As can be seen in Chart 6, there have been very large spikes in the number of group secretariats that are provided by charities, lobby firms, and individuals. These increases have altered the proportion of secretariat services coming from each source, with the percentage of secretariats provided by charities increasing from 26 to 38 per cent, and that for lobby firms rising from 10 to 16 per cent. In contrast, the proportion of secretariats furnished by corporations fell from eight to five per cent.

**Chart 6 – Breakdown of the provision of APPG secretariats by organization type, 2001 and 2014**



Notably, while the number of secretariats provided by charities and lobby firms have both increased sharply, most charities serve as the secretariat to just a sole APPG. In fact there is just one charity, RESULTS UK, which operates the secretariat for three or more groups (the APPGs for *Global Education for All*, *Microfinance*, and *Tuberculosis*). In contrast, there are five consultancies that each provide the secretariat for at least three different APPGs, and one (the Whitehouse Consultancy) that provides the secretariat for four. This trend would appear to suggest that the creation of APPGs has become part of the standard package that lobby firms offer to their clients.

## 6 Conclusion and discussion

The results presented above clearly suggest that external organizations have at least facilitated if not directly encouraged the expansion of APPGs between 2001 and 2014. While there certainly are still some APPGs that operate without external assistance, many of these are inter-country groups that actually receive undeclared support from the embassies of their partner countries. Moreover, even the 20 per cent of subject APPGs that did not declare any external assistance may in fact have received support but did not declare it since it failed to meet the threshold required for registration.

However, while confirming such extensive engagement between APPGs and external organizations, the results cast some doubt on fears that the groups are being used for corporate lobbying, or that corporations in particular are driving APPG growth. Most notably, much of the corporate support offered is given through many smaller contributions that are used to gain access to those APPGs that serve as forums for stakeholder discussions. Reflecting this trend, all of the contributions to APPGs (financial or otherwise) made by corporations in 2014 were registered by just 78 groups. By comparison, charities made contributions to 191 different APPGs. Indeed, the large spike in secretariat support provided by charities would appear to indicate that, if anything, they are the ones that have made the greatest contribution towards fuelling APPG expansion. That said, the sharp rise in the secretariat services provided by lobby firms suggests that these consultancies have also aided APPG growth by suggesting the option to their clients.

This arrangement suggests that charities have found APPGs to be an effective way to engage with parliamentarians. The interview results indicated that demonstration effects were often at play, with charities in a given sector, and especially in the area of health, moving to create an APPG after seeing their counterparts first undertaking the initiative. There were also indications that the APPG format lending itself well to charitable campaigning, with the organizations being able to encourage their donors to write to the sympathetic parliamentarians who were part of the APPG in hopes of obtaining policy change. Focusing on secretariat services may also give charities greater influence than would be possible through monetary contributions. In particular, the secretariat organizations tend to provide parliamentarians advice on what issues they should address, and which external experts they should invite to present at Parliament. As such, a charity serving as the secretariat to an APPG could potentially have a greater impact on the information received by parliamentarians than a corporation that makes a financial contribution to a group that operates as a stakeholder forum.

A further implication of these findings is that differences in the resources available to charities and corporations do not appear to be hindering the former's participation in APPGs. Instead, charities appear to have somewhat of an advantage with regard to APPG involvement in that contributions by corporations tend to attract greater scrutiny. It is especially hard to imagine that so many corporations could serve as group secretariats and maintain the same practice whereby

most secretariat providers do not disclose the cost of the services they provide. Nevertheless, it is also possible that charities are engaged with APPGs simply because they cannot afford the other, more expensive avenues of lobbying pursued by corporations.

Going forward, the rule changes that will take effect after the 2015 election should help to further clarify the role of external actors in driving APPG creation. In particular, the requirement that any APPG receiving over £12,500 must prepare full financial statements will hopefully reveal the smaller financial contributions that are not currently being documented.

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