

NUS Elections Report 2014

Headline elections statistics from 2014 sabbatical elections

Introduction

In this 2014 edition of the NUS Elections Report we compare this years' sabbatical elections headline statistics with those from 2013, as well as using some data from previous years, including 2009 and 2010.

Some new data is also presented, particularly surrounding the number of women candidates standing and winning in students' unions elections. This report is concluded with some recommendations regarding rules and regulations for the 2014/15 elections season.

Having released initial findings in July 2014, we asked more students' unions to submit data to provide a more accurate sample, therefore the final data and averages may differ slightly.

Headline Statistics

Mission Group

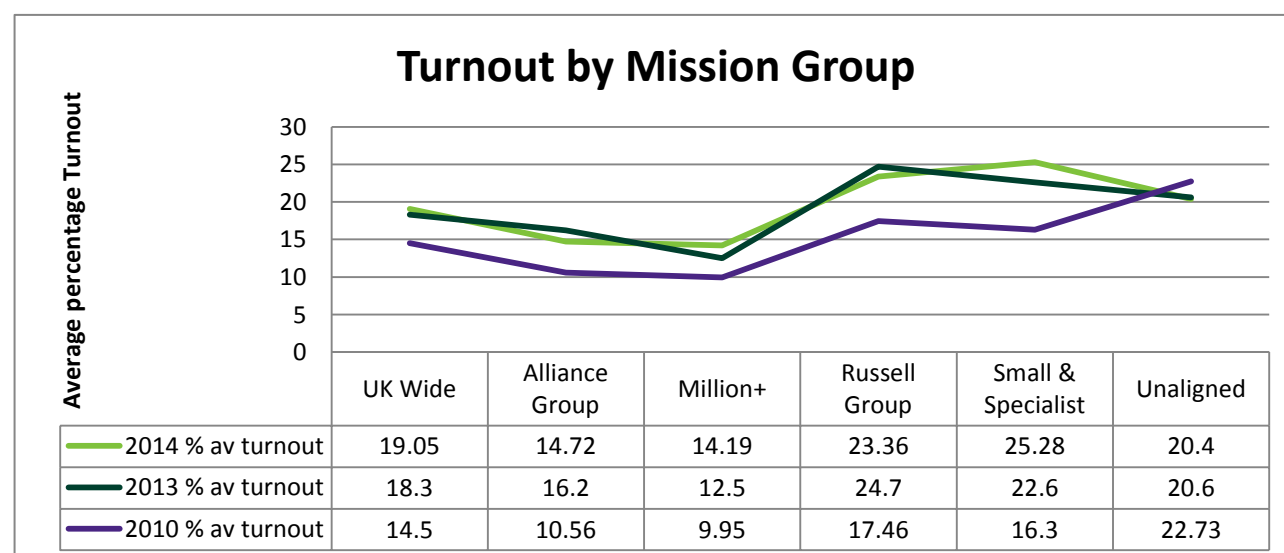


Figure 1. Students' Union turnout by Mission Group

As you can see from this graph, overall percentage turnout figures are broadly consistent with 2013 based on mission group averages.

Although within these figures there are notable exceptions in terms of individual unions with some increasing by up to 43% year on year. Whilst there are increases of 2% in the Million+ and Small & Specialist groups, the overall turnout percentage has continued to rise consistently by 1% each year.

Number of Candidates

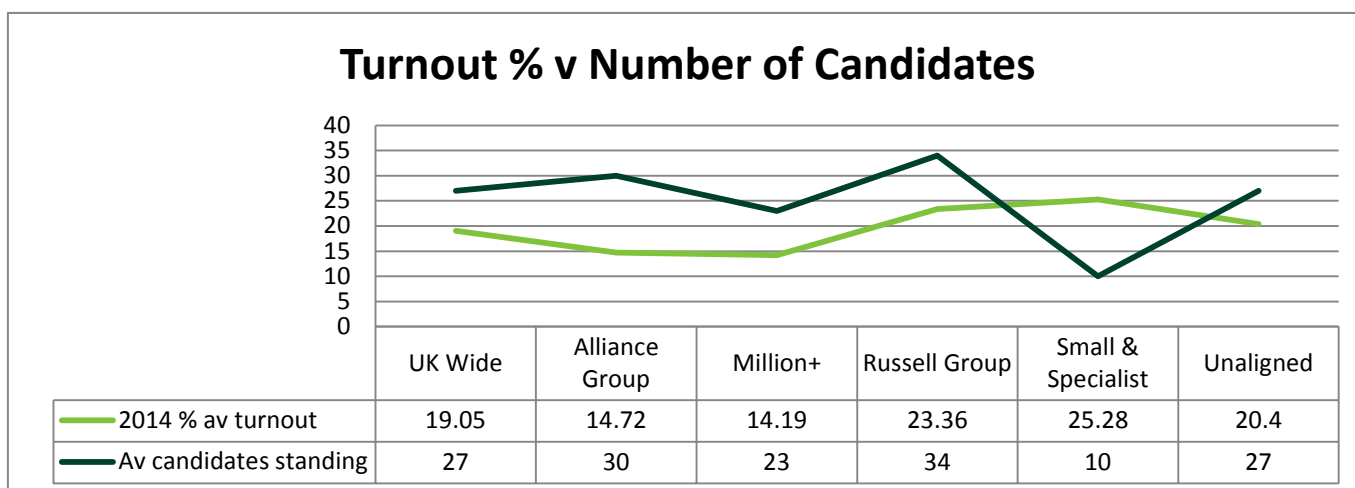


Figure 2. Students' Union turnout v number of candidates

As it did in 2013, the data consistently shows a strong trend between overall turnout percentage and the number of candidates standing in an election. We also know that whilst candidate volume is important in increasing engagement, so is candidate mix. Candidates from a broad range of constituencies, whether faculty based, demographic or otherwise, usually lead to increased engagement in elections.

Campaigning and Voting Time

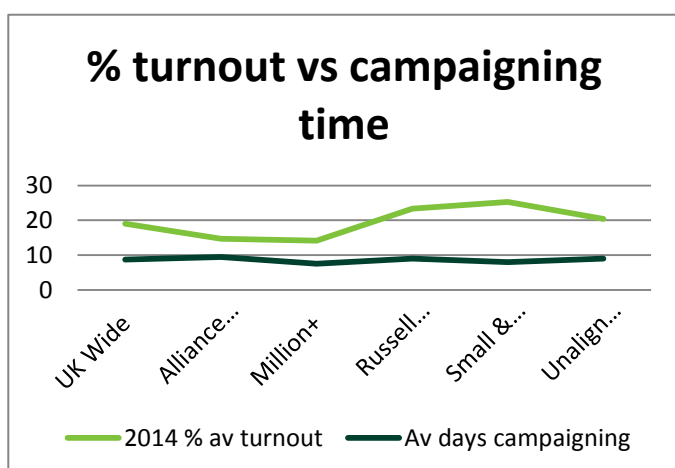


Figure 3. Percentage turnout vs campaigning time available

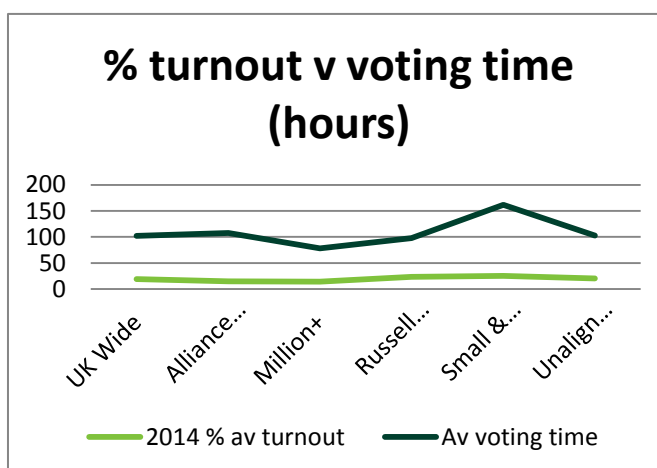


Figure 4. % turnout vs available voting time

The data presented in Figures 3 and 4 dispels the myth that a longer campaigning or voting period means increased engagement in elections, as there is little evidence for either. Both graphs show that there is very little correlation between them.

Recommendation When considering the length of voting period, consistency of messaging, academic calendar and candidate welfare should be placed as a higher priority than increasing voter turnout in this context.

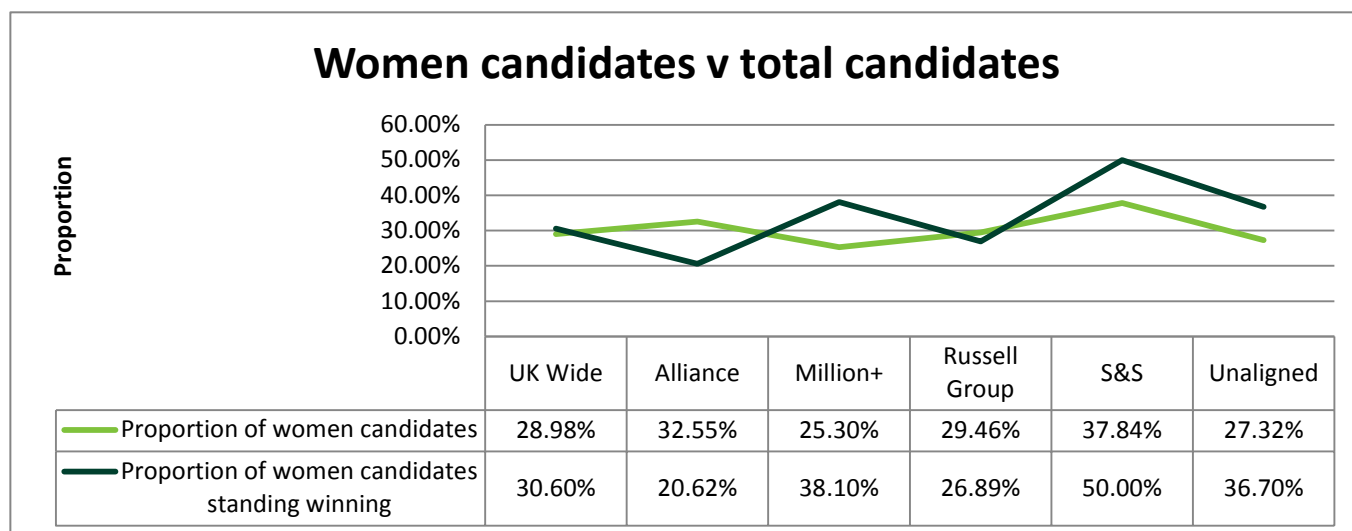


Figure 8. Number of women candidates standing, winning v total candidates

New data for this year gives us a picture of the number of women standing in and winning elections in 2014. This gives us valuable insight showing two things; women are far less likely to stand in elections, with 28.98% of candidates standing in elections being women; however when they do, they are more likely to win. With a 30.60% chance of victory, whereas the average chance of victory is 17.09% overall.

Recommendation Unions that put resource in targeted programmes to encourage women (and other under-represented groups), saw increases in candidate mix and overall turnout. Therefore we would recommend targeted programmes of training and development to encourage women to stand in elections. If you would like assistance in this, please get in touch with your NUS Contact or email nuscontact@nus.org.uk

Slates, Hustings and Voting Methods

- **96%** of student's unions held a candidates question time or hustings session
- **79%** of students' unions facilitated the use of video for candidates to use during the elections process and posted them online.
- **Only 1 union in the country** used a first past the post voting system, everyone else used an alternative voting method (ATV or STV)
- **87% student's unions** ran their elections using an online system only.

Do you allow slates?

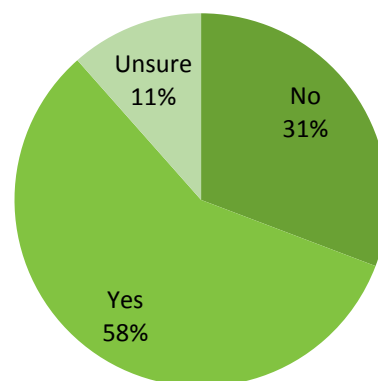


Figure 9. Proportion of students' unions allowing slates

Slates

A key question that was repeatedly raised last year was whether or not most unions allowed candidates to collaborate with each other in the form of a 'slate'. Figure 9 shows that most do allow them.

Recommendation We would encourage unions to allow them where possible, as even where they are not allowed, informal collaboration occurs in any case, so legislation becomes futile. A collaborative style in successful candidates is also helpful when it comes to taking up office.

Recommendations

Recommendations based on common queries from 2014 and recent history

- Do not legislate on things you cannot police.
- Ask for written confirmation from the institution that the union's trustee board has the delegated responsibility to appoint a returning officer (or at least written confirmation that they are happy with the current choice).
- Candidates should have equal access to resources and opportunities, meaning if someone seeks an endorsement of a local take away for example, they are free to do so.
- Voters must vote themselves, however putting in rules about distances from electronic devices are unhelpful, judge situations on whether or not the voter feels pressured/intimidated.
- Facilitate a daily meeting amongst candidates and DRO in the elections period to act as a clearing house for complaints and to maintain a healthy atmosphere.