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The functioning of Dutch party youth wings: a comparison of the 1980s and 2010s

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5. Party Youth Wings as Mobilizing Vehicles⁸⁹

5.1 Introduction

It is generally considered a challenge to mobilize young people into political activity, especially when it concerns activities in the sphere of conventional politics. Party youth wings may function as an attractive entry point into politics because of their exclusive youth-specific character. They are therefore often portrayed as important mobilizing vehicles for young people. However, this claim has not yet been systematically investigated. This chapter focuses on the performance of party youth wings regarding the mobilization function. As described in Chapter 2, the mobilization function is concerned with the promotion of the participation of young people in politics. In order to fulfil this function, youth wings must attract a considerable and representative membership, facilitate internal participation and encourage their members to participate in politics in other forms beyond youth wing membership. These three sub-functions are examined in the current chapter. To what extent do Dutch party youth wings succeed in attracting and mobilizing members? Has their ability to do so changed compared to the late 1980s? As described in Chapter 2, I expect that party youth wings have become less successful in attracting and mobilizing members because of the increasing societal disconnection of political parties and the decreasing interest of young people in conventional politics.

Table 5.1 presents the performance indicators that are identified for each of the sub-functions of the mobilization function, for which the methodological choices for measurement are described in Chapter 3. The present chapter is divided into three parts, each covering one of the three sub-functions. The first part contains a description of the findings on the first sub-function, ‘attract a representative membership’, showing how membership figures and socio-demographics of members have developed over time. The second part focuses on the sub-function ‘facilitate internal participation’ by presenting the activity levels of members within youth wings in the two periods under scrutiny. The results regarding the sub-function ‘mobilize beyond membership’ are presented in the third part of this chapter, in which the broader political participation of members is explored. In the final section, I will summarize and draw conclusions about the functioning of party youth wings as mobilizing vehicles.

Table 5.1 The mobilization function

<i>Key function</i>	<i>Sub-function</i>	<i>Indicator</i>
Mobilization	Attract a representative membership	Number of individual members Socio-demographics of members
	Facilitate internal participation	Levels of intra-youth wing activism
	Mobilize beyond membership	Political participation of members

⁸⁹ Portions of this chapter were presented as a paper at the *Politologenetmaal* 2017 in Leiden and published in *Acta Politica*: de Roon, C. (2019). Party youth wing membership in the Netherlands: the role of organization-level characteristics. *Acta Politica*, 1-19.

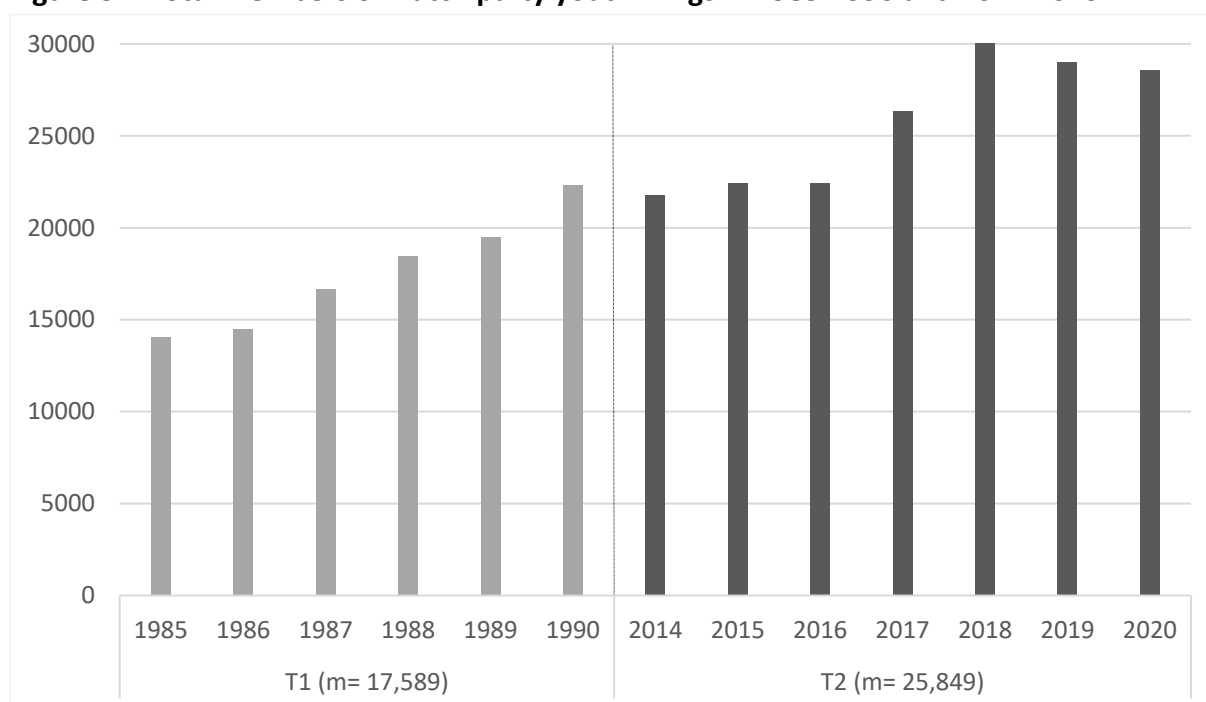
5.2 The ability to attract a representative membership

This first part of the chapter presents an overview of the membership levels and members' socio-demographic attributes of Dutch party youth wings in both periods under scrutiny. This allows us to determine to what extent youth wings attract a considerable and representative membership and whether their ability to do so has changed since the late 1980s.

Membership figures in 1985-1990 and 2014-2020

Figure 5.1 presents the aggregated membership of party youth wings of Dutch parliamentary parties in absolute numbers in the two periods in this investigation. On average, there were just over 17,500 members in the mid-late 1980s and just over 25,800 members in the mid-late 2010s, implying an increase in youth wing membership of 47%. Against our expectations, party youth wings nowadays are more successful in attracting members than was the case three decades ago.

Figure 5.1 Total members of Dutch party youth wings in 1985-1990 and 2014-2020



Note. T = time period, m = mean. Except for the year 1987, the total figures in T1 include a limited number of estimates based on linear interpolation (see Table 5.2). Sources are listed in Appendix 5.1b.

This presentation of absolute numbers does not take into account (changes in) the number of potential party youth wing members within Dutch society. The membership data therefore needs to be corrected for the size of the target group: the youth population. The total number of young citizens who meet the age criteria of the youth wings (see Appendix 5.2) was obtained from the Statline database of Statistics Netherlands (CBS, 2020b). Using this information, I calculated the proportion of youth wing members to the total eligible

population for each period.⁹⁰ In the period of 1985-90, the average percentage of young people being members of one of the party youth wings⁹¹ included in this study was 0.48%. In the period of 2014-20, this share rose to 0.74%. This represents an increase of 56%. In relative terms, therefore, the rise in the membership of party youth wings is somewhat higher than in absolute terms. At the same time, the proportion of the youth population that is affiliated with a party youth wing can be labelled as extremely low. It is much lower than the member/electorate ratio of Dutch political parties, which lies around 2.5% (see for example Den Ridder et al., 2015). This seems to confirm that young people have an even lower inclination to join a political party organization than their older counterparts do, although it should be noted that the two groups overlap.⁹²

We know from the party literature that aggregated data can conceal variations in membership size between organizations (Kölln, 2014b; Van Haute et al., 2017). In order to look beyond the aggregated picture, Table 5.2 displays the absolute membership figures of the individual party youth wings and the mean membership levels for both time periods. It should be remembered that eleven party youth wings existed in the most recent period, while the mid-late 1980s counted nine. The overall mean of the second time period might therefore be pushed higher by the emergence of new party youth wings. However, even when we only consider the five youth wings that occurred in both periods, the increase in membership is 34%. The table shows that the notable increase in Figure 5.1 since 2017 can largely be attributed to the formation of a new party youth wing, JFVD. Like its mother party, Forum for Democracy (FVD), the JFVD has seen a rapid membership increase since the party was first elected into parliament in 2017. The youth wing of this right-wing populist party reported a membership of no less than 4,000 in 2018.

The table also illustrates that the party youth wings show considerable variation. That is, they vary not only in membership size, but also in the way the size of their membership base develops. In the late 1980s, the JOVD of the conservative liberal party (VVD), the JS of the social democratic party (PvdA) and the LVSGS/SGPJ of the conservative Christian party (SGP) could be counted among the largest party youth wings in the Netherlands, with an average of just below or above 3,000 members. DWARS of the green party (GL), JD of the progressive liberal party (D66), JFVD and SGPJ were the largest party youth wings in the late 2010s, with around 4,500 members in 2020. The JD and SGPJ experienced a large increase in their membership base between the two periods. The increase in the number of members of

⁹⁰ Available from <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/cijfers/detail/7461bev>. Party youth wings differ in the age range they use for membership admittance. In order to calculate the members / eligible population ratio, I related the average number of total members of a youth wing to the average number of total youths in the population that fell within the age range of that specific youth wing membership. I then added these scores to a total average. Whenever a party youth wing did not adopt a minimum age for membership, the age of 12 is applied. An overview of the membership criteria per party youth wing can be found in Appendix 5.2.

⁹¹ The assumption here is that an individual is a member of only one party youth wing. In reality, a young person can become a member of more than one youth wing, although I expect this to be rare.

⁹² The two groups partially overlap since party youth wing members can also be members of the mother party at the same time. In our 2020 survey among youth wing members, 85% of the respondents indicated being members of both organizations. Moreover, young people can also decide to become members of a political party without becoming a member of the youth wing. One must therefore be careful with this conclusion.

Table 5.2 Disaggregated membership figures of party youth wings in 1985-1990 and 2014-2020

<i>PYW</i>	<i>1985</i>	<i>1986</i>	<i>1987</i>	<i>1988</i>	<i>1989</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>Mean 1985-90</i>	<i>Mean 2014-20</i>	<i>% change</i>
CDJA	1500	1606	1984	1960	2119	2500	1679	1648	1539	1588	1643	1871	1997	1945	1709	-12%
PPRjo	869	818	844	1200	(1108)	(1171)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1002	-	
PSJG	(1150)	(1150)	1150	(1150)	(1150)	(1150)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1150	-	
DWARS	-	-	-	-	-	-	761	760	854	1120	2946	3349	4480	-	2039	-5%
JD	1256	1600	1600	1400	1500	(1656)	5160	5678	5720	6000	6000	5270	4598	1502	5489	265%
JFVD	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2500	4000	4139	4498	-	3784	-
JOVD	3846	3342	3150	(3547)	(3381)	3200	2756	2647	2589	2476	2696	2638	2513	3411	2616	-23%
JS	3000	3000	4420	4323	4101	(2679)	1555	2200	2020	1965	1533	1753	1681	3594	1815	-49%
LVSJS/SGPJ	1207	1324	1343	2734	3312	7318*	6479	6094	6233	7346	7216	6036	4279	2873	6240	117%
OPP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	135	129	101	103	-	117	-
PINK!	-	-	-	-	-	-	524	651	778	701	1261	1062	2134	-	1016	-
GPJC	1136	(1486)	1950	1899	2500	2217	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1865	-	
RPJO	105	150	235	275	285	440	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	248	-	
PpF	-	-	-	-	-	-	1399	1234	1235	1188	1494	1579	1423	-	1365	-35%
ROOD	-	-	-	-	-	-	1472	1544	1484	1355	1349	1219	886	-	1330	-
<i>Total</i>	<i>14069</i>	<i>14476</i>	<i>16676</i>	<i>18488</i>	<i>19495</i>	<i>22331</i>	<i>21718</i>	<i>22456</i>	<i>22452</i>	<i>26374</i>	<i>30267</i>	<i>29017</i>	<i>28592</i>	<i>17589**</i>	<i>25849**</i>	<i>47%</i>

Note. Self-reported and subsidized (in grey) figures from various sources (Appendix 5.1b). Linear interpolated values are reported between brackets, which are calculated by using the available membership figures of the years 1980-1995 (Appendix 5.1a). *The 3,100 subscribers to the newly introduced magazine KLIK for 12- to 16-year-olds in 1989 are included in the SGPJ's membership figures. **Mean of sum of totals of individual years.

the SGPJ already started in 1990, which explains the rise in that year in Figure 5.1. It seems that they have been able to hold this level of members. The remaining party youth wings exhibit a negative trajectory of growth. The JS has lost almost 50% of its membership base. The CDJA, the youth wing of the Christian democratic CDA, and the JOVD suffer a decrease of about 12% and 23% respectively when comparing the two periods. The membership base of the two youth wings that originate from a merger, DWARS and PpF (Christian social party CU), was on average lower in the late 2010s than in the late 1980s before the mergers. These results confirm that the success of party youth wings to attract members differs across time and organization. This implies that party youth wing membership is not only affected by general external factors, such as an alleged decline in the political engagement of young people, but possibly also by party-level or organizational level characteristics.

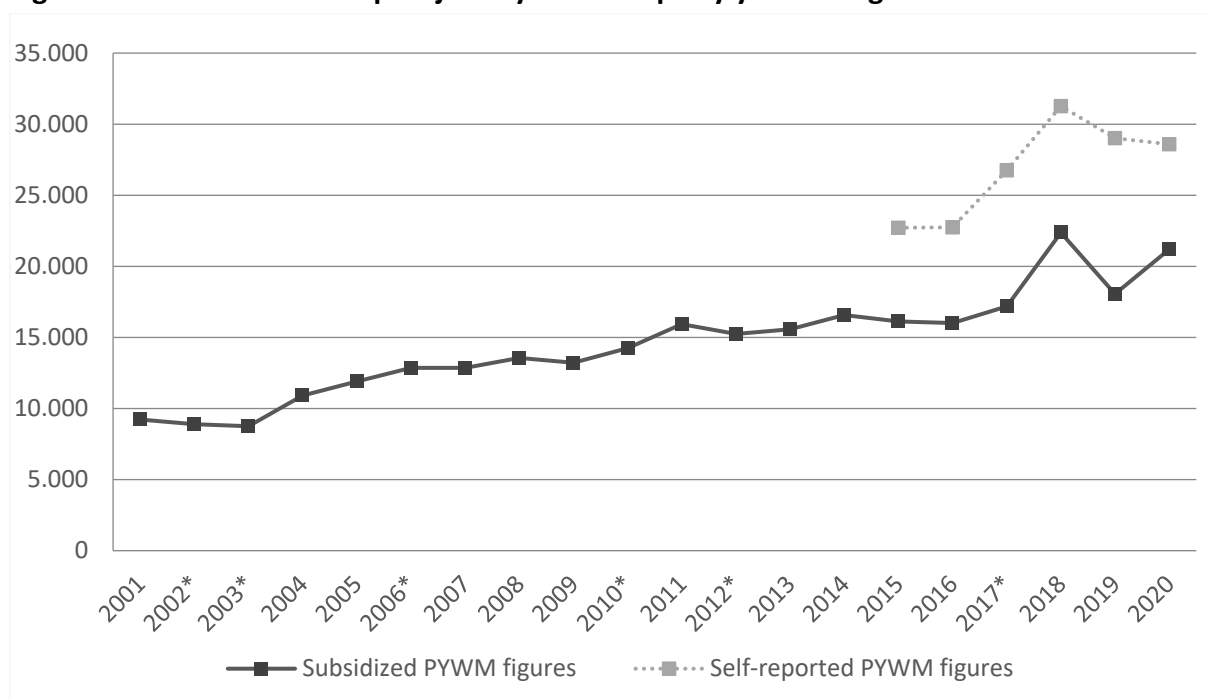
Overall, the results show that party youth wings have been more successful in attracting members in the mid-late 2010s than in the mid-late 1980s, even after controlling for the size of the youth population. This is a surprising finding because the literature speaks a lot about a decline of both political youth participation (e.g. Norris, 2002; Sloam, 2013) and political parties in civil society (Mair, 2005; Van Biezen et al., 2012). In the Netherlands, the total number of individual party members has been declining since the 1960s and more or less stabilized over the last two decades (Den Ridder et al., 2015). Two other findings further clarify the positive trend in youth wing membership: 1) despite the increase only a very small proportion of the youth population chooses to join a youth wing and 2) the overall increase in membership can be attributed to only a few youth wings, such as the SGPJ, the JD and the JFVD. It is mainly the youth wings of the oldest mainstream parties – PvdA, CDA, and VVD – that suffer from a decline in their membership base between the two periods. In that sense, the findings are more in line with the extant literature on party membership (Voerman, 2016; Voerman & Van Schuur, 2011, pp. 205-206). However, the results also show that there is considerable variation in the youth wing membership trends. The differences between and within the two periods under scrutiny invite further exploration of the stability of the general membership trend. As membership is one of the few indicators for which a longer time frame is available, the focus is therefore broadened by including intermediate years in the analysis.

Including intermediate years

By adding more data points, more can be concluded about the stability of the ascendant membership trend found in the previous paragraph. What does the development of party youth wing membership look like when intermediate years are included? Changes in the state subvention system for political parties allow us to present membership figures since 2001.⁹³ Since then, party youth wings are obliged to report their exact eligible membership figures to

⁹³ I use the subsidized (ministerial) data because years with available self-reported membership data for all party youth wings are relatively scarce. Appendix 5.1a contains an overview of the available membership figures between 1960 and 2020.

Figure 5.2 Total membership trajectory of Dutch party youth wings 2001-2020



Note. PYWM = party youth wing membership. Total numbers of self-reported membership are only available for the years 2015-2020.⁹⁴ Sources are listed in Appendix 5.1b. *Election year.

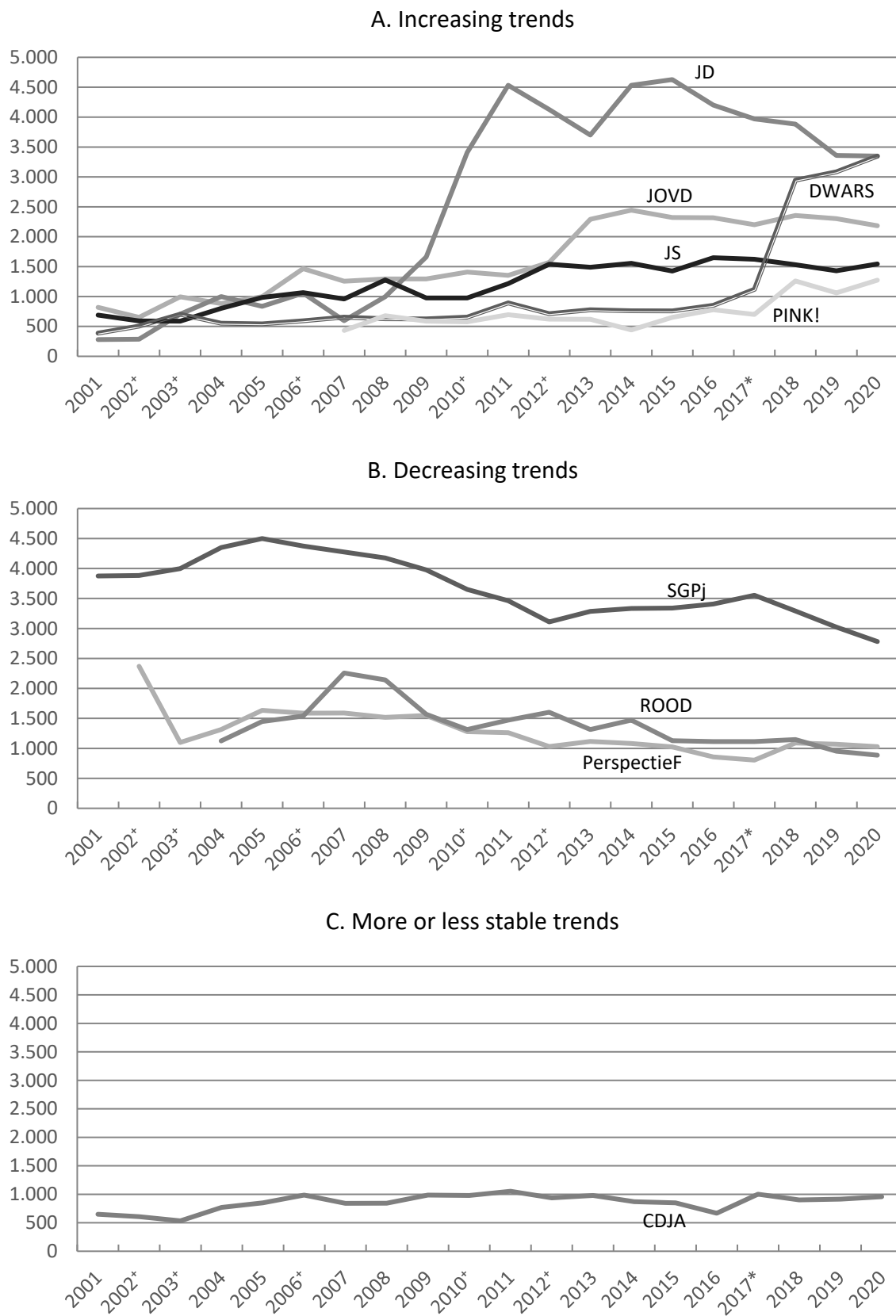
the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. Figure 5.2 presents the longitudinal trend of the absolute subsidized membership figures of party youth wings between 2001 and 2020. It also includes self-reported membership figures for the years 2015 to 2020. Although there is a gap between the subsidized and self-reported levels,⁹⁵ what matters here is that the subsidized and the self-reported numbers do seem to follow the same trend.⁹⁶ Once again, a picture emerges of increasing membership: the total level of subsidized youth wing membership has more than doubled in the last eighteen years, showing a total increase of almost 130%. In order to relate this trend to the period of 1985-90, we must examine the starting point of this graph in more detail. In 2001, the total number of subsidized members of the youth organizations was 9,228. We may assume that self-reported numbers on average

⁹⁴ In other years there were too many missing values (see Appendix 5.1a). For DWARS, self-reported figures are missing for the years 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018. Overall, the subsidized number of members of DWARS is 34% lower than the self-reported numbers. Therefore, the subsidized (ministry-reported) membership figures of DWARS of these four years are multiplied by 1.34 in order to estimate the self-reported numbers.

⁹⁵ As described in Chapter 3, this can be explained by a difference between the definitions of membership in the funding Act and the definitions as adopted by parties and their youth wings. For instance, most party youth wings accept members that are younger or older than the required age as defined in the funding Act (see Appendix 5.2). The organizations might also include members who are registered but failed to pay the annual fee.

⁹⁶ The sudden decline in the subsidized membership in 2019 can be explained by a significant drop in the numbers of JFVD used by the responsible Ministry for determining the height of the yearly grant, due to identified shortcomings in the party's annual audit. The youth wing itself claimed to have a subsidized membership of 3,502 in the annual report, but I used the official ministerial figures in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.3 Disaggregated membership trajectories of Dutch party youth wings 2001-2020



Note. Subsidized (ministerial) figures. Sources are listed in Appendix 5.1b. JFVD and OPPOSITIE are omitted because they were not founded until 2017. *Election year.

lie around 45% higher than the number of subsidized members.⁹⁷ Based on this, I can estimate the total level of self-reported youth wing membership in 2001: around 13,380. This figure is lower than the total level of party youth wing memberships in the period of 1985-1990 (see Table 5.2), which averaged at 17,500. This suggests that the earlier impression of membership increase should be qualified; the total membership base of the youth wings has not linearly increased since the 1980s. Rather, membership numbers seem to have decreased in the 1990s, before recovering in the 2000s and 2010s. The available self-reported membership numbers over 1960-2020 in Appendix 5.1a tend to confirm this pattern. The right conclusion therefore is that the total membership of party youth wings fluctuates over time.

Figure 5.3 presents membership trajectories for each Dutch party youth wing over the period of 2001-2020. For the purpose of presentation, I distinguish three groups of organizations, depending on whether they witnessed increasing, decreasing or stable trends in membership numbers. Several party youth wings qualify the common trend as identified in Figure 5.2, while others counter the common trend. The increasing trend is predominantly a reflection of rises in membership numbers of the JD, DWARS and the JOVD. The membership levels of the JS show a more moderate increase, and PINK!, the youth wing of the Party for the Animals, did not experience an increase until 2014. The SGPJ, PpF and ROOD (Socialist Party) suffered from decreases in their membership base. The CDJA has had a relatively stable membership base. It once again becomes clear that there is great variation in the way in which the membership base of the various youth wings is developing over time. In conclusion, the success of party youth wings to attract members has changed compared to the 1980s, although not linearly and not equally for all party youth wings. Membership growth is very much not a universal phenomenon for party youth wings in the Netherlands.

Socio-demographics of members

We have seen that only a very small part of the Dutch youth population becomes a member of a party youth wing. The question is whether this small group mirrors the youth population or whether it concerns a select group of participants. This is not only relevant in terms of participation inequality, but also in light of the declining number of party members in the Netherlands. Assuming that a considerable part of the youth wing members will move on to the party, it is, in the words of Mair and Van Biezen (2001, p. 14), “crucial that we learn more about precisely who is remaining within the parties, since it is this now much reduced constituency that will do much to define party identities in the future”. In what follows, a descriptive analysis of Dutch party youth wing members’ socio-demographic attributes in both periods under scrutiny is presented, allowing for an assessment of the success of party youth wings in attracting a representative membership.

In Table 5.3, the data on the gender, age and geography of youth wing members in both time periods is contrasted with data on the youth population at large. The average Dutch party youth wing member is a male in the stage of young adulthood who is somewhat more

⁹⁷ This percentage is calculated by dividing the total self-reported membership figures by the total subsidized membership figures for the years 2015- 2020 (see Figure 5.2).

likely to live in the urban agglomerations in the west of the country (in Dutch: *Randstad*). However, we can observe differences over time. Starting with gender, men constituted 72% of the membership base of party youth wings in 1989, while in 2020 this proportion had declined to 58%. This represents a decline of 14 percentage points; just over four in ten youth wing members were female in 2020. The deviation between the respective gender proportions of party youth wing members and the youth population has thus become smaller over time.

Table 5.3 Gender, age and region of party youth wing members and the youth population in 1989 and 2020 (in %)

	Party youth wing members		Youth population ^c	
	1989 ^a	2020 ^b	1989	2020
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	71.8	58.2	51.1	50.9
Female	27.3	39.5	49.0	49.1
Unknown/other	0.9	2.3	-	-
<i>Age</i>				
Mean	22.2	24.0	21.3	21.2
<=21	45.5	28.2	50.8	52.0
>21	54.6	71.8	49.2	48.0
<i>Region</i>				
Conurbation (<i>Randstad</i>)*	48.0	54.9	44.3	46.5
<i>Total N/population</i>	<i>531</i>	<i>20592</i>	<i>3.65M</i>	<i>3.24M</i>

Sources. ^a Youth wing membership survey of Bakhuis et al. (1989). Included youth wings: CDJA, JD, JOVD, JS, PPRjo, PSJG. ^b Membership administration via personal contact in 2020 with the boards of the participating youth wings: CDJA, DWARS, JD, JS, PINK!, PpF, SGPJ.⁹⁸ DWARS does not register gender. ^c Statistics Netherlands (CBS, 2020b). Included age range is 14-28. CBS only offers binary gender options. *Concerns aggregated data for the provinces Noord-Holland, Zuid-Holland and Utrecht.

The figures on age show that members nowadays are on average two years older than in 1989. While the mean age of members in 1989 was fairly similar to the population mean, the distribution has become more disproportional over time. In 2020, members were on average 24 years old, while the mean age of the youth population was 21. The proportion of members over the age of 21 amounted to around 70% in that year. This difference may be partly explained by the fact that most party youth wings nowadays accept members up to the age of 30.⁹⁹ However, the results do show that youth wings can better be characterized as organizations for young adults than for youth.

Considering the geographic location of members, the results in Table 5.3 show that the proportion of members living in the central-western conurbation (in Dutch: *Randstad*) was

⁹⁸ There is no reason to believe that the youth wings have provided incorrect information as the data on the background characteristics of the total membership database does not differ much from that of the survey sample. I therefore decided to display the population data as much as possible.

⁹⁹ The CBS population data covers the age range 14 to 28. Some party youth wings accept members that are younger or older. Appendix 5.2 includes an overview of the youth wings' membership criteria.

higher in 2020 (55%) than in 1989 (48%). The proportion of young people in the Randstad has also increased in the general youth population over time, but less rapidly. In 1989, the share of respondents living in the Randstad was 4 percentage points higher than that of the general youth population; in 2020, this concerned 8 percentage points, thus pointing to an increase in the overrepresentation of Randstad residents in party youth wings.

The membership surveys from 1989 and 2020 enable for a closer look on geography in terms of degree of urbanization and provide information on the main weekly activity of Dutch party youth wing members (Table 5.4). A comparison with the general youth population is often not possible due to missing data or nonmatching categories and demarcations, but reference is made whenever possible. In both years under scrutiny, the majority of survey respondents lived in a city with more than 100,000 inhabitants. However, this proportion has increased from 45% in 1989 to 60% in 2020, representing an increase of 15 percentage points. A comparison with the youth population in 2020 points to an overrepresentation of this group in party youth wings, as young people living in large cities constituted 43% of the Dutch population in that year.¹⁰⁰ Exact numbers on the youth population in 1989 are not available. It is thus unclear whether this overrepresentation has increased or decreased since the late

Table 5.4 Degree of urbanization and main weekly activity of party youth wing members in 1989 and 2020 (in %)

	<i>Party youth wing members</i>	
	1989	2020*
<i>Degree of urbanization**</i>		
Rural / not urbanized	5	5
Urbanized rural / hardly urbanized	18	14
Urban / moderately to strongly urbanized	24	21
Cities > 100,000 inhabitants	45	60
<i>Total N</i>	531	829
<i>Main weekly activity***</i>		
Education	70	57
Employed	24	36
Unemployed	4	3
Conscripted	2	-
<i>Total N</i>	531	893

Note. Based on membership surveys 1989 (Bakhuis et al., 1989) and 2020. *Weighted by party youth wing size. Unweighted *N* = 795 and 858 respectively. **Figures for 1989 do not add up to 100% due to nonresponse. The report from 1989 uses a now outdated classification of municipalities (before slash). For 2020, a similar scale is designed based on respondents' postal code and data of Statistics Netherlands (after slash, CBS, 2020c).¹⁰¹

***Figures for 2020 do not add up to 100% due to the exclusion of 'other' and 'don't know/ no answer'.

¹⁰⁰ I calculated this share by combining two datasets (CBS, 2020b; CBS, 2020c). Included age range is 14 to 28. Although this gap may also be due to a bias in the survey response, the nonresponse analysis gives no indication for this (see Appendix 3.3).

¹⁰¹ For the survey respondents in 2020, I identified the municipality, the accompanying city size and urbanization classification by matching the first four numbers of their postal code with the Statline database *Gebieden in*

1980s, although there is indication that the proportion of young adults in larger cities has increased since then (Groenemeijer, 2014, pp. 30-31).

Table 5.4 also presents the distribution of the respondents over the variable 'main weekly activity' in 1989 and 2020. In both years, the majority of respondents indicated that their main activity of the week is education, although this share has declined from 70% in 1989 to 57% in 2020. The proportion of respondents with a job increased with 12 percentage points to 36% in 2020. Compared to the total population, the employed were underrepresented among youth wings in 1989, but this was no longer the case in 2020.¹⁰² A small proportion answered to be unemployed in both years. The unemployed were underrepresented when compared to the youth population, although this deviation has become smaller over time due to lower unemployment rates in the beginning of 2020 compared to 1989.¹⁰³

Although the exact data on the education level of the respondents is not available for 1989, it can be concluded from the 1989 report and 2020 survey that young people in higher educational levels are significantly overrepresented in party youth wings. In 2020, 95%¹⁰⁴ of the respondents who indicated being in education, participated in pre-university education (in Dutch: *VWO/Gymnasium*), higher professional education (in Dutch: *HBO*) or university studies (in Dutch: *WO*). Similarly, it can be derived from the survey report that the respondents in 1989 also hardly participated in education levels lower than that (Bakhuis et al., 1989, p. 16). Naturally, this is very different from the population statistics. For instance, although the number of people in higher education has increased over time, a considerable proportion was still participating in secondary vocational education (in Dutch: *MBO*) in 2020 (CBS, 2020d).¹⁰⁵

So far, this paragraph has shown that party youth wing members are not always an accurate mirror of the young population. If we compare young society with the much smaller group of citizens who are youth wing members, we see that the latter group is more likely to be reported as being male than female, aged above 21, living in urban areas and participating in higher education. These findings are not surprising; they are consistent with the literature

Nederland 2020 (CBS, 2020c). This way I designed an urbanization scale that is similar to the one used in the survey report from 1989:

-1989 category 'rural' is compared to postal codes classified as 'not urbanized';

-1989 category 'urbanized rural' is compared to postal codes classified as 'hardly urbanized';

-1989 category 'urban character' is compared to the total number of respondents minus respondents falling in the aforementioned two categories and minus respondents living in cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants;

-1989 category 'cities > 100,000 inhabitants' is compared to postal codes that are classified as '100,000 to 150,000 inhabitants', '150,000 to 250,000 inhabitants', or '> 250,000 inhabitants'.

¹⁰² The employment rate for young people aged 15 to 25 was 41.7% in 1989 (CBS, 2018) and 36.4% in the first quarter of 2020 (CBS, 2020a). Both figures concern the net employment rate of those working ≥ 12 hours per week.

¹⁰³ The unemployment rate for young people aged 15 to 25 was 11.3% in 1989 (CBS, 2018). This was 6.8% in the first quarter of 2020 (CBS, 2020a).

¹⁰⁴ The unweighted percentage is 92.

¹⁰⁵ In the school year 2019-2020, just below a quarter of those in tertiary education participated in university education (WO), slightly over 36% took part in higher professional education (HBO), and almost 40% was in secondary vocational education (MBO). In 1989-1990, more than half of the total number of Dutch students took part in secondary vocational education (MBO), around a quarter participated in higher professional education (HBO) and just over 20% in university education (WO) (CBS, 2020d).

that certain groups are more likely to be politically active than others, such as men and the highly-educated (e.g. Parry et al., 1992b; Verba et al., 1995). More specifically, the socio-cultural profile of the average youth wing member seems to correspond to the average profile of party members in the Netherlands (Den Ridder et al., 2019). Insofar as the data allows a comparison between 1989 and 2020, the degree of representativeness has increased for some demographic characteristics, such as gender and (un)employment, and decreased for others, such as age and probably geographic location. A lacking representativeness might influence the representation and legitimacy of party youth wings, as their members may act as the ‘eyes and ears’ of the organization (e.g. Den Ridder, 2014), and their background characteristics to a large part determine their grievances and who they encounter and communicate with in daily life. Moreover, this might also have consequences for the future composition of the membership base of the mother party. There is little chance that the youth wing will contribute to a diversification of party membership in the near future.

The interviews with the youth wing chairs confirm a certain lack of representativeness in membership. Moreover, they show that memberships seem to have become more homogenous in terms of geography, level of education and weekly activity since the mid-late 1980s. The former chairs of the youth wings from that period more often emphasized a certain degree of diversity among their members. For instance, the former chair of the JOVD mentioned high school students, university students and full-time employed members: “So it [the youth wing] was diverse. (...) It was certainly not a student association”. The former chair of the PSJG also emphasized the variety of occupations among the members, of which some were students but most were not. Only the former chair of the JD explicitly stated that students made up the largest part of the membership base: “It [the youth wing] was actually rolled out from the university cities”. A majority of youth wing chairs of the late 2010s emphasized the overrepresentation of higher educated young adults in university cities. The chair of PINK! elaborated: “The vast majority of members are between 20 and 30 [years old], they are mainly students. (...) We did attempt to focus more on high school students. (...) But we notice that it is difficult”.¹⁰⁶ The chairs of DWARS and the JD also claimed that their youth wing is most successful in university cities. The chair of the JOVD shortly summarized: “They [the party youth wings] have all actually become student organizations”.¹⁰⁷ It must be noted, however, that the chairs of the religious party youth wings indicated a strong presence of their organization in villages and the countryside. This is similar to the 1980s.

The survey results allow us to move beyond the common trends and observe some noteworthy differences between the party youth wings. Due to missing disaggregated data, this is only possible to a limited extent for 1989. It can be derived from the report of Bakhuis et al. (1989, pp. 13, 17, 43) that one in four members of the JD and the CDJA was female, while

¹⁰⁶ In Dutch: “Het overgrote deel van de leden is tussen de 20 en 30, het zijn voornamelijk studenten. (...) we hebben pogingen gedaan om ons meer te richten op middelbare scholieren. (...) We merken dat dat lastig is”.

¹⁰⁷ In Dutch: “Allemaal zijn het eigenlijk studentenorganisaties geworden”.

Table 5.5 Profile of members broken down by party youth wing based on population and survey data (2020, in %)

	<i>Total</i>	<i>CDJA</i>	<i>DWARS</i>	<i>JD</i>	<i>JS</i>	<i>PINK!</i>	<i>PpF</i>	<i>SGPJ</i>
<i>Gender</i>								
Male	58.2	70.4	n/a	64.8	67.4	27.8	59.1	50.4
Female	39.5	29.3	n/a	28.8	32.0	69.8	40.7	49.1
Unknown/other	2.3	0.3	n/a	6.4	0.5	2.4	0.2	0.5
<i>Age</i>								
Mean	24.0	24.7	24.0	25.1	24.2	26.4	24.9	18.6
<=21	28.2	20.0	25.1	15.1	20.0	4.5	15.3	68.4
>21	71.8	80.0	74.9	84.9	80.0	95.6	84.7	31.6
<i>Region***</i>								
North	6.7	11.4	9.4	6.9	12.4	11.9	9.6	1.2
South	10.0	20.6	11.2*	11.2	13.7	13.9	4.4	3.1
East	23.2	20.6	15.4	14.2	18.1	15.5	28.8	44.8
West	58.0	47.4	64.0*	67.7	55.9	58.8**	57.2	58.8
<i>Total population</i>	<i>20592</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>4480</i>	<i>4598</i>	<i>1681</i>	<i>2134</i>	<i>1423</i>	<i>4291</i>
<i>Degree of urbanization****</i>								
Not urbanized	5.1	7.3	1.7	0.5	3.5	(0)	(0)	19.1
Hardly urbanized	13.9	21.8	1.7	6.8	15.3	(8.7)	(23.1)	33.7
Moderately urbanized	8.2	13.3	8.6	6.3	7.1	(0)	(7.7)	13.0
Strongly urbanized	30.2	21.2	32.8	22.9	27.1	(52.2)	(26.9)	28.0
Very strongly urbanized	42.6	36.3	55.2	63.5	47.1	(39.1)	(42.4)	6.1
<i>City size</i>								
Cities >100,000 inhabitants	58.8	44.2	81.0	78.6	62.4	(65.2)	(50.0)	12.2
<i>Main activity</i>								
Education	57.3	52.0	65.1	59.9	69.8	(45.8)	(46.4)	52.1
Employed (>12 hrs p/week)	36.3	46.4	25.4	37.2	21.9	(45.8)	(46.4)	41.4
Unemployed	3.0	0.6	6.3	1.4	2.1	(4.2)	(0)	2.3
Other / don't know	3.4	1.1	3.2	1.4	6.3	(4.2)	(7.1)	4.2
<i>Currently in education</i>								
Other level	13.8	15.1	7.3	8.9	16.5	(9.1)	(0)	35.4
<i>Of which pre-univ. educ.</i>	<i>8.7</i>	<i>4.3</i>	<i>7.3</i>	<i>6.5</i>	<i>6.5</i>	<i>(9.1)</i>	<i>(0)</i>	<i>18.4</i>
Higher prof. educ. (HBO)	18.7	21.5	12.2	9.7	20.9	(36.4)	(23.1)	27.9
University (WO)	67.5	63.4	80.5	81.5	62.7	(54.5)	(76.9)	36.8
<i>Country of birth</i>								
Born in NL	97.7	97.8	98.4	98.6	92.7	(95.8)	(96.4)	99.2
Father born in NL	92.8	93.3	93.7	93.7	86.5	(79.2)	(100.0)	99.2
Mother born in NL	89.8	94.4	82.5	91.3	85.4	(83.3)	(96.4)	99.2
<i>Total N</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>252</i>	<i>77</i>	<i>288</i>	<i>133</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>397</i>

Note. Gender, age and geography were drawn from the membership administration via the youth wings boards. The rest concerns data from the 2020 membership survey, of which the totals are weighted by party youth wing size. Values are reported in brackets when $N < 50$. *DWARS' population data could not be totally disaggregated by province: South includes Zeeland, West includes Flevoland. **Also includes Flevoland. ***North: Groningen, Friesland, Drenthe; East: Overijssel, Gelderland, Flevoland; West: Utrecht, Noord-Holland, Zuid-Holland, Zeeland; South: Noord-Brabant, Limburg. ****Based on the classification of Statistics Netherlands (CBS, 2020c).

this was about a third for the PPRjo and JOVD, and 40% for the JS and PSJG.¹⁰⁸ The mean age of the respondents was not far apart for the various youth wings: from 21,6 for the JOVD to 23,3 for the CDJA. The proportion of respondents living in a large or small city was largest for all youth wings, but this share was the highest in the case of the JD and the PSJG. The JOVD and CDJA both had a relatively larger proportion of respondents living in rural areas and the scores of the JS and PPRjo corresponded to the total mean.

For 2020 (Table 5.5), the first thing that stands out is that the CDJA, JD and JS were characterized by larger proportions of male members compared to the total average gender distribution in 2020. In contrast, PINK! had a surprisingly high proportion of female members. The SGPJ was the only youth wing that exhibited an almost equal number of male and female members, which is a surprising finding because the youth wing started admitting female members not that long ago.¹⁰⁹ The members of the SGPJ were predominantly aged 21 or below, while PINK! had almost no members aged below 21. The SGPJ also stands out when it comes to the geographic location of its members. Its members were located in less strongly urbanized areas of the East and West of the country. This strongly indicates that the SGPJ constituency, just like that of the mother party, is located in the so-called Bible belt region of the Netherlands. DWARS and the JD, on the other hand, are characterized by a stronger overrepresentation of young people living in urbanized areas and cities with over 100,000 inhabitants. Overall, the SGPJ mainly has a moderating effect on the total average overrepresentation of party youth wing members on many of the characteristics under scrutiny.

In addition to the aforementioned characteristics, the 2020 survey asked about the country of birth of the respondents and their parents as a proxy for migration background. The results show that the large majority of respondents in 2020 was born in the Netherlands and had parents who were born there. Only the respondents from DWARS, JS and PINK! show some diversity in this regard. As the number of young people with a migration background was much higher among the general youth population,¹¹⁰ it can be concluded that this group is markedly underrepresented among party youth wing members. As previous findings in the field of political party membership point to the underrepresentation of ethnic minorities, this is not surprising (Heidar & Wauters, 2019).

5.3 The ability to facilitate internal participation

The previous section tells us something about the general support for party youth wings and the representativeness of their membership base, but it gives no indication of the activity levels of these young members. The next question to be answered is whether party youth wings are successful in mobilizing those who join into youth wing activity, and whether their

¹⁰⁸ In contrast to the other results from 1989, these gender percentages concern population data; they are reported by the party youth wings themselves.

¹⁰⁹ In 1987, the LVSGS/SGPJ allowed girls to become a member, but it was not until 2006 that the youth wing allowed girls to participate fully in the organization (De Groot & Kok, 2009).

¹¹⁰ The proportion of young citizens aged 15 to 25 with a migration background is approximately 28% (CBS, 2020b).

ability to do so has changed compared to the late 1980s.¹¹¹ This section focuses on three survey measures of youth wing activism: time devoted to the youth wing, holding a position and participation in various types of youth wing activities. When interpreting the results it must be kept in mind that a positive bias cannot be ruled out here because active members are more likely to participate in a study like this (e.g. Faas & Schoen, 2006). As described in Chapter 3, this means that, particularly in the case of party youth wings with a lower sample size, there is a smaller likelihood that the findings reflect a true, generalizable result.

Time spent on the party youth wing

The most direct measure of party youth wing activism is the number of hours spent on youth wing activities by members in an average week. As illustrated in Table 5.6, the survey data shows that almost 31%¹¹² of the respondents was completely inactive in 2020, while almost four in ten respondents spent between zero and two hours per week on youth wing activity. The same question was asked to youth wing members in 1989 (Bakhuis et al., 1989, p. 30). It can be derived from the survey report that 36.4% of the respondents answered that they spent no time on youth wing activity.¹¹³ This percentage corresponds to another question posed in 1989, which asked respondents to estimate how active they were relative to other members and to which 39% indicated being 'barely active'. This already tells us that the proportion of inactive members seems to have remained fairly stable in 2020 compared to 1989. Between 30-40% of the respondents devoted no time at all to the party youth wing in both years.

The majority of surveyed members thus devoted some time to the youth organization, although this can vary from a few minutes a month to several hours a week. Has the amount of time spent by the members on the youth wing changed over time? Unfortunately, a lack of reported data in the 1989 survey report complicates answering this question. The limited available data, presented in Table 5.7, allows a cautious comparison over time in two different ways. Firstly, it is possible to compare the total share of respondents who indicated spending more than four hours per week on the party youth wing. There is little difference between 1989 (15%) and 2020 (17%). Although data is not available for the young democrats (JD) in 1989, the image arises from the description in the report that their members were somewhat more active than the average youth wing member. The actual total average for 1989 will therefore probably be slightly higher. Secondly, the researchers in 1989 calculated the average time spent by active members on the party youth wing based on the midpoint values of each

¹¹¹ Chapter 3 already described that, since the raw data is not available for the 1989 survey, differences over time and between youth wings cannot be statistically tested and are thus interpreted in a qualitative manner.

¹¹² The unweighted percentage is 36. As reported in Chapter 3, party youth wings with high weight factors are DWARS and PINK!. However, the respondents of these two party youth wings are more active than average (Table 5.6), which is most likely caused by an overrepresentation of active (board) members in the sample (also see Table 5.8). A positive bias can thus not be ruled out. Weighting makes this distortion even greater.

¹¹³ I calculated this percentage by combining the reported share of male and female respondents indicating that they do not spend time on youth wing activities with the information on the number of male and female respondents (page 14 and 31 of the report).

of the response ranges. Although this can only give a rough estimate of the average amount of time spent by youth wing members, it can be useful as a measure for comparison. I therefore also calculated these averages for 2020 (see Table 5.7). On average, respondents devoted 2.2 hours per week on the party youth wing in 1989 and 2 hours¹¹⁴ per week in 2020. Again, no substantial differences are found. It can thus be concluded that the proportion of (in)active members and their time commitment to the party youth wing appears to be fairly stable compared to the late 1980s.

Table 5.6 Time devoted to the party youth wing in the average week (2020, in %)

	<i>Total*</i>	<i>CDJA</i>	<i>DWARS</i>	<i>JD</i>	<i>JS</i>	<i>PINK!</i>	<i>PpF</i>	<i>SGPJ</i>
None	31	31	18	38	28	(12)	(38)	45
0-2 hours	37	39	31	35	43	(36)	(54)	41
2-4 hours	13	16	15	11	13	(28)	(3)	7
4-6 hours	9	8	18	7	7	(8)	(3)	3
More than 6 hours	9	4	17	8	8	(16)	(3)	1
Don't know/NA	2	1	1	2	2	(0)	(0)	3
<i>Total N</i>	<i>1071</i>	<i>207</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>254</i>	<i>119</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>340</i>

Note. Survey question: "How much time do you devote to [PYW] in an average week?" Values are reported in brackets when $N < 50$. Aggregated data for these answer categories in 1989 is not available.
*Weighted by party youth wing size. Unweighted $N = 1054$.

Table 5.7 Youth wing members' time commitment in 1989 and 2020

<i>Party youth wing</i>	<i>>4 hours (in %)</i>		<i>Mean (in hours)*</i>	
	<i>1989</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>1989</i>	<i>2020</i>
CDJA	8	12	1.5	1.6
PPRjo	11	-	1.5	-
PSJG	8	-	1.3	-
DWARS	-	35	-	3.2
JD	n/a	15	2.4	1.7
JOVD	35	-	3.4	-
JS	34	14	3.2	1.9
LVSGS/SGPJ	-	4	-	0.9
PINK!	-	(24)	-	(3.0)
PpF	-	(5)	-	(1.0)
<i>Total average**</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>2.2</i>	<i>2.0</i>

Note. Survey question: "How much time do you devote to [PYW] in an average week?" In 2020, unweighted $N = 1054$ and weighted $N = 1071$, in 1989 $N = 531$. Values are reported in brackets when $N < 50$. *Based on the midpoints of each answer category. For the category >6 hours, this value was set at 9. **Totals for 2020 are weighted by party youth wing size. Unweighted figures are 12% and 1.6 respectively.

The tables allow for an exploration of certain differences in levels and trends of youth wing activism across party youth wings. Again, caution should be exercised because of possible sampling issues. In 1989, the young liberal conservatives (JOVD) and the young socialists (JS) stood out as youth wings with active members, with an average of over 3 hours per week

¹¹⁴ The unweighted average is 1.6. See footnote 112.

spent on the activities of the youth wing and 35% and 34%, respectively, of the respondents spending more than four hours per week on party youth wing activity. In 2020, it seems that the members of green youth wings DWARS and PINK! were more active than the members of the other party youth wings, but the total number of respondents is too low for meaningful interpretations. Of the other party youth wings, the conservative Calvinist SGPJ stands out as having the least active respondents in 2020: 45% devoted no time on the party youth wing, and only 4.4% spent more than four hours a week. Considering the between-groups variation in the developments in youth wing activism over time, there are some declining and some increasing trends (Table 5.7). For instance, the time commitment of members of the JS seems to have declined over time. In 2020, respondents spent on average 1.3 hours less per week on party youth wing activity, and fewer respondents spent more than four hours per week than in 1989. However, it also must be noted that the JS had a small proportion of inactive respondents in 2020 (28%¹¹⁵). While the time commitment has decreased, the number of active members may not have. An opposite example is DWARS, although again sampling may contribute to this outcome. Respondents from DWARS devoted on average 1.8 hours more to the youth wing in 2020. Moreover, around half of the respondents from the pacifist-socialist PSJG and the radical PPRjo indicated spending no time at all on youth wing activities, while only 18% of the DWARS respondents indicated being totally inactive. Only the intra-youth wing activism of the members of the Christian democratic youth wing (CDJA) remained more or less at the same level. In 1989, 8% of the respondents indicated spending more than four hours per week on the youth wing. This was 11.8% in 2020. Both in 1989 and in 2020, a large group of CDJA respondents indicated devoting zero to two hours per week to the youth wing (46% and 39%). There is unfortunately not enough data available for the JD to make such comparisons over time.

Holding a position within the party youth wing

Levels of party youth wing activism can also be assessed based on the proportion of members active in certain positions within the organization. Examples are a board or committee membership. The party youth wing membership surveys of 1989 and 2020 both provide insight into the extent to which respondents hold office within the youth wing. Such a measure can help verify the finding in the previous paragraph, while also providing an indication of the quality of member participation. Respondents were asked in 1989 whether they were either a non-paying supporter of the youth wing,¹¹⁶ a paying member without being active in a board, or a paying member that is active in a board or another organizational manner (Bakhuis et al., 1989, p. 19). In total, 41% opted for the latter option, while 49% indicated being a paying member without holding a certain position and 9% considered themselves to be a non-paying member. In 2020, when asked about holding a position within the party youth wing, on average 63% of the respondents answered that they did not fulfil a position at the time of

¹¹⁵ See Table 5.6. This percentage is unknown for 1989.

¹¹⁶ In Dutch: *steunlid*.

responding to the survey.¹¹⁷ In other words, 37% of the respondents held a position in a board, committee or working group in 2020; a proportion that is not much different from the 41% in 1989. This relatively stable trend in the share of volunteering members is consistent with the previous finding that the time commitment of members has remained constant over time.

The differences across party youth wings on this measure are also similar to the previous measure of youth wing activism. The JS and JOVD again stand out as having active respondents in 1989, now in terms of the proportion of respondents who opted for the answer 'I am a paying member and active in a board or organizational manner' (around 50%). Respondents from the PSJG and the PPRjo opted less than average for holding a position in 1989 (19% and 29% respectively). In 2020, the respondents from DWARS and PINK! were more inclined to hold office within the youth wing, while the respondents from the SGPJ seemed least active in terms of holding a certain position within the organization. In addition, we can perceive similar developments over time. The proportion of respondents from the JS that indicated fulfilling some type of position within the party youth wing declined to 27.6% in 2020 (see Table 5.8). DWARS shows an increase of around 20-30% in this regard. Moreover, the 1989 report states that the CDJA did not deviate from the total average of 41% active in a board or another organizational manner, which corresponds more or less to the share of respondents who fulfilled a function in 2020 (36%).

The above findings demonstrate that the members of party youth wings vary in their levels of participation: some are passive and spend no time at all on youth wing activities, some are fulltime activists, and others are somewhere in between. Moreover, the overall extent of member activism of party youth wings in the Netherlands has remained stable in 2020 compared to 1989. The degree to which party youth wings function as a channel of participation thus seems consistent over time. This is comparable to a previous study conducted among party members in the Netherlands, the Leiden Party Member Survey (LPMS), which finds no clear developments in the levels of party activism (Den Ridder, 2014, p. 83). What is surprising is that the general share of inactive youth wing members (less than 40%) appears to be much smaller than that of political parties. The LPMS shows that around 70% of the party members that participated in the study is inactive (Den Ridder, 2014; Den Ridder et al., 2015). Members of D66 and the VVD appear somewhat more active, but still more than 55% considers itself inactive. Although it is likely that this difference between youth wing members and party members has something to do with an overrepresentation of active party youth wing members in the 1989 and 2020 survey (see Chapter 3), the age of youth wing members might also play a role. There are indeed scholars who suggest that younger members are generally more likely to be active within political parties than older members, especially when they belong to a party wing dedicated to young members (Cross & Young, 2008). Even if we consider a positive bias, this finding implies that although party youth wings attract a smaller proportion of their target audience than their mother parties, their membership base is relatively more involved within the organization.

¹¹⁷ The unweighted average percentage is 68. See footnote 112.

The stable trend in intra-youth wing activism deviates from the positive trend in membership figures between the 1980s and the 2010s. On a societal level, the combination of a stable share of intra-party youth wing activists and an increasing membership base thus points to an increase in the gross member activity. Please note, however, that the degree of member activism is not known for all Dutch party youth wings of which membership figures were presented in the previous section. At the level of the individual organizations, the trends in the degree of activism and the number of members also seem to diverge. For instance, the CDJA has experienced a decline in membership between the two time periods, but members' activism has remained stable. Another example is the JD, of which the membership base has grown, but the degree of member activism has not. Enrolment trends do not seem to transform member activity within party youth wings, at least not in an unambiguous way.

Types of youth wing activities in 2020

While the amount of time spent on activities and volunteering in certain positions tells us something about the quality of participation, it remains unclear what type of positions and other activities members engage in. In estimating the number of hours spent on the youth wing per week, members will vary in what activities they think of. Some activities are relatively non-time-consuming, such as paying a membership fee or reading the member magazine, while campaigning and being a national board member are examples of high-intensity activities (e.g. Whiteley & Seyd, 2002). The previous findings are therefore complemented with an analysis of the involvement of members in the different types of party youth wing positions and activities. The survey of 2020 allows us to get more detailed information on this. Unfortunately, the 1989 survey did not ask respondents about their involvement in various activities, making it impossible to compare these measurements over time.

Firstly, the 2020 survey asked about the type of positions respondents could fulfil within the party youth wing either at the time of responding or in the past (Table 5.8). Of the respondents in 2020, 59% indicated that they did not hold a prior position within the party youth wing.¹¹⁸ Slightly more than 45% did not hold a position in the past nor the present.¹¹⁹ This number decreases to 39% when we exclude those who had been a member for less than a year.¹²⁰ This means that the majority at some point during their membership fill a position within their youth wing on either the national, regional or local level. These respondents most often opted for a national committee or working group. Respondents also mentioned regional or local board positions regularly, especially as positions that were held in the past. Within CDJA and JS, filling positions in local committees or working groups seems less common. The SGPJ also stands out as a youth wing where members are less active in certain organizational positions.

¹¹⁸ The unweighted average percentage is 65.6. See footnote 112.

¹¹⁹ The unweighted average percentage is 52.9. See footnote 112.

¹²⁰ The unweighted average percentage is 47.7. See footnote 112.

Table 5.8 Share of members holding office within the party youth wing (2020, in %)

	<i>Total*</i>	<i>CDJA</i>	<i>DWARS</i>	<i>JD</i>	<i>JS</i>	<i>PINK!</i>	<i>PpF</i>	<i>SGPJ</i>
<i>No position</i>								
• At present	63	64	47	69	72	(52)	(73)	74
• In the past	59	64	42	58	58	(48)	(56)	83
<i>National board</i>								
• At present	3	5	3	1	3	(12)	(0)	1
• In the past	6	8	11	6	7	(8)	(0)	1
<i>Regional/local board</i>								
• At present	13	21	14	8	10	(24)	(6)	13
• In the past	24	24	27	25	34	(48)	(13)	5
<i>National committee or working group</i>								
• At present	18	13	29	18	15	(12)	(24)	8
• In the past	21	17	41	18	11	(22)	(22)	6
<i>Local committee or working group</i>								
• At present	18	6	13	15	3	(0)	(3)	12
• In the past	17	5	24	30	8	(9)	(13)	7
<i>Total N**</i>	<i>1047/1020</i>	<i>204/196</i>	<i>72/71</i>	<i>248/247</i>	<i>116/115</i>	<i>24/23</i>	<i>33/32</i>	<i>328/317</i>

Note. Survey questions: “Are you currently holding any of the following positions within [PYW]?” and “Have you held any of the following positions within [PYW] in the past?”. Multiple answers possible. Values are reported in brackets when $N < 50$. *Weighted by party youth wing size. Unweighted $N = 1026/1001$. **Displayed $N =$ current/in the past.

The 2020 survey also allows us to get more information about the engagement of members in 13 different types of youth wing activities.¹²¹ Six of these items focused on the frequency of attendance to various party youth wing gatherings in the past year, such as a social activity, conference or training. Table 5.9 presents the results. It becomes clear that some types of activities are more popular than others. Between 40% (SGPJ) and 70% (DWARS) of respondents indicated having attended a social activity on an occasional or (very) regular basis. Meetings and conferences were attended occasionally or (very) regularly by around one-half to three-quarters of the membership, as were other gatherings, such as discussions, theme events or excursions. These three types of gatherings are found to be more popular than trainings, political activities or campaign activities. However, the attendance varies between party youth wings. Highest levels of attendance are found in DWARS, the JS and PINK!, although the low sample size of the latter youth wing hampers a meaningful interpretation. Respondents from the SPGJ opted the least for participation in the various gatherings. This especially concerns training and campaign activities: 82% and 72% of the SPGJ respondents respectively indicated rarely or never visiting these two types of gatherings. Respondents from the three party youth wings located on the left spectrum of the political playing field, DWARS, JS and PINK!, seem more protest-minded: they reported having

¹²¹ See Chapter 3. A factor analysis did not identify any subscales.

participated in political and campaigning activities more often than the respondents from the other party youth wings.

Table 5.9 Participation in various youth wing gatherings in the past year (2020, in %)

		<i>Total**</i>	<i>CDJA</i>	<i>DWARS</i>	<i>JD</i>	<i>JS</i>	<i>PINK!</i>	<i>PpF</i>	<i>SGPJ</i>
Attend a social activity	• Rarely or never	41	34	31	47	35	(20)	(54)	60
	• Every now & then	24	28	24	21	25	(28)	(27)	24
	• (Very) often	34	37	44	31	40	(52)	(19)	16
Attend a meeting or conference	• Rarely or never	41	39	28	47	42	(20)	(51)	55
	• Every now & then	22	24	22	18	20	(24)	(22)	23
	• (Very) often	37	36	49	34	38	(56)	(27)	22
Attend a training or course	• Rarely or never	56	57	46	53	50	(32)	(65)	82
	• Every now & then	22	25	25	24	28	(20)	(22)	14
	• (Very) often	21	16	28	21	19	(48)	(14)	4
Participate in a political act	• Rarely or never	45	62	26	58	37	(20)	(54)	55
	• Every now & then	29	22	26	26	33	(36)	(43)	31
	• (Very) often	25	15	46	15	29	(44)	(3)	14
Participate in a campaign activity	• Rarely or never	56	54	47	63	46	(28)	(70)	72
	• Every now & then	23	24	21	23	25	(48)	(11)	17
	• (Very) often	20	20	31	12	28	(24)	(16)	11
Attend another type of gathering	• Rarely or never	36	39	28	45	32	(16)	(46)	44
	• Every now & then	30	28	28	25	33	(28)	(32)	38
	• (Very) often	33	32	43	29	35	(56)	(22)	18
<i>Total N</i>		<i>1071*</i>	<i>209*</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>254*</i>	<i>119</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>339*</i>

Note. Does not always add up to 100% due to the omission of the 'don't know' category. Survey question: "As a member of [PYW] you can be active in different ways. Can you indicate how many times you have participated in the activities below in the past year?" Values are reported in brackets when $N < 50$. *The exact N may slightly differ per item due to item-nonresponse. **Weighted by party youth wing size. Unweighted $N = 1055$.

Aside from participation in various youth wing gatherings, the 2020 survey included seven other items on intra-youth wing activism. Table 5.10 provides an overview. Participation varies between the different types of activities. Of these seven items, the two most popular activities were visiting the website of the party youth wing and reading the member magazine. This may not be surprising since these two activities require relatively little effort. Respondents reported less often that they participated in canvassing for the mother party, a form of participation that is much more time-demanding. While the website is visited relatively often, it is noteworthy that member participation in online discussions or on social media was lower in most party youth wings. Again, participation also varies between the party youth wings. Most notable is the SGPJ, which stands out as an organization whose respondents did not participate much in high-intensity activities, but did want to stay informed about the youth wing through the website and the member magazine.

Besides determining which activities are more popular or less popular among the respondents, it is possible to deduce the number of different types of activities that

Table 5.10 Participation in various youth wing activities in the past year (2020, in %)

		<i>Total**</i>	<i>CDJA</i>	<i>DWARS</i>	<i>JD</i>	<i>JS</i>	<i>PINK!</i>	<i>PpF</i>	<i>SGPJ</i>
Help organize activities	• Rarely or never	54	54	43	62	59	(24)	(57)	68
	• Every now & then	15	16	11	16	11	(24)	(22)	13
	• (Very) often	31	29	44	21	30	(52)	(22)	19
Go door to door for the mother party	• Rarely or never	73	66	49	78	61	(92)	(87)	91
	• Every now & then	16	21	31	10	19	(8)	(8)	6
	• (Very) often	10	12	19	11	19	(0)	(5)	2
Join an informal political discussion in PYW	• Rarely or never	43	38	32	45	38	(24)	(57)	65
	• Every now & then	24	25	25	22	29	(32)	(19)	21
	• (Very) often	31	36	42	31	33	(44)	(24)	14
Visit the website	• Rarely or never	27	29	14	36	24	(20)	(14)	37
	• Every now & then	41	46	34	39	36	(44)	(60)	43
	• (Very) often	32	24	51	24	40	(36)	(27)	20
Be active on social media about PYW	• Rarely or never	56	53	54	66	56	(28)	(60)	61
	• Every now & then	25	27	19	20	24	(48)	(22)	25
	• (Very) often	18	19	25	13	20	(20)	(19)	13
Attend an online discussion of PYW	• Rarely or never	59	67	50	60	56	(24)	(78)	78
	• Every now & then	23	22	26	22	23	(40)	(19)	15
	• (Very) often	17	10	22	17	20	(36)	(3)	7
Read the member magazine	• Rarely or never	24	18	28	35	24	(36)	(14)	7
	• Every now & then	30	34	33	38	35	(20)	(27)	21
	• (Very) often	45	47	36	26	40	(44)	(60)	72
<i>Total N</i>		1070*	209*	72	254*	119	25	37	339*

Note. Does not always add up to 100% due to the omission of the ‘don’t know’ category. Survey question: “As a member of [PYW] you can be active in different ways. Can you indicate how many times you have participated in the activities below in the past year?” Values are reported in brackets when $N < 50$. *The exact N may slightly differ per item due to item-nonresponse. **Weighted by party youth wing size. Unweighted $N = 1054$.

Table 5.11 Number of different types of activities respondents participated in ‘every now and then’, ‘often’, or ‘very often’ in the past year (2020 survey, in %)

	<i>Total*</i>	<i>CDJA</i>	<i>DWARS</i>	<i>JD</i>	<i>JS</i>	<i>PINK!</i>	<i>PpF</i>	<i>SGPJ</i>
One or two types	18	19	14	20	14	(8)	(16)	27
Three to five types	20	17	15	17	19	(8)	(38)	29
Six to eight types	16	18	17	18	16	(4)	(11)	19
More than eight types	41	41	50	33	46	(76)	(32)	22
<i>Mean</i>	7	7	8	6	7	(9)	(6)	5
<i>Total N</i>	1073	210	72	255	119	25	37	340

Note. Survey question: “As a member of [PYW] you can be active in different ways. Can you indicate how often you have participated in the activities below in the past year?” Thirteen types are included (see Table 5.9 and 5.10). Columns do not add up to 100% because of the omission of respondents answering solely ‘rarely to never’ or ‘don’t know’. Values are reported in brackets when $N < 50$. *Weighted by party youth wing size. Unweighted $N = 1058$.

respondents participated in as a measure of how diversified youth wing membership is. This can be examined by looking at the distribution of the respondents over the number of different types of activities in which they participated in the past year. Table 5.11 presents the total amount of times respondents answered ‘every now and then’, ‘often’, or ‘very often’ to the thirteen items of Table 5.9 and 5.10. The figures show that a large part of the respondents indicated that they were active in three or more ways, meaning that their involvement was broader than participation in a single activity, such as attending only social activities or solely participating online. Surprisingly, for most party youth wings, the highest proportion of respondents even indicated that they participated in more than eight different activities either on an occasional or (very) regular basis in the past year (on average 40.7%¹²²). There is thus a large group of ‘usual suspects’ that can be found at most of the activities of the party youth wing.

In conclusion, the members of the party youth wings vary in the types and number of activities they participate in. A relatively large proportion of the youth wing’s membership base seems to be active in some way, either by holding a certain position or by participating in different types of gatherings and other activities, although the aforementioned potential sampling bias might play a role here. The most popular activities nowadays are reading the member magazine and visiting the website, but social activities, meetings or conferences, and other gatherings such as discussions, theme events or excursions are also well-attended.

5.4 The ability to mobilize beyond membership

The third sub-function of the mobilization function is the promotion of political activism of members outside of the party youth wing. A lack of data unfortunately hampers a valid comparison of the current time period to the late 1980s. This part of the chapter will therefore consider the individual political participation levels of Dutch party youth wing members in 2020 only. If these turn out to be higher than those of the general youth population, the question remains whether this is due to a mobilizing effect emanating from the youth wing membership or due to certain predispositional or self-selection mechanisms that ensure that youth wing members are more susceptible to politics anyway. Although the current research design does not allow for a definitive answer, this ‘mobilization versus self-selection issue’ will be addressed here indirectly.

Voting behaviour

The most obvious form of political participation to be analysed is voting participation. Not only is voter turnout considered the most common and direct form of political participation, it can also be seen as an important responsibility of political parties to encourage citizens to vote. As described in Chapter 3, voting behaviour is measured by asking youth wing members about their intention to vote in national elections. Unfortunately, this question was only included in the 2020 survey, making it impossible to compare the present-day electoral participation of

¹²² The unweighted average proportion is 34.4%. See footnote 112.

youth wing members with that in 1989.¹²³

In 2020, no less than 94.4% of the respondents answered that they would vote if elections for the House of Representatives would take place at that point in time. None of the remaining respondents chose the answer option 'no', 5.1% opted for non-eligibility to vote.¹²⁴ That these scores can be labelled as high is evident when we compare the results to the findings of the Dutch Parliamentary Election Study (DPES) on the electoral participation of young people in general. The DPES consists of a series of national surveys that, among others, measures the reported turnout in parliamentary elections. Although it needs to be acknowledged that there might be a small difference between the reported intention to vote and the reported turnout after an election, the two are generally found to be strongly correlated (e.g. Bassili, 1995). Despite being a point of constraint, the intended vote is therefore considered here as a proxy for reported voting behaviour. Van der Meer et al. (2018, p. 49) estimated for 2017 that 76.1% of the young people aged 18 to 24 participated in the elections for the House of Representatives, which is the highest measured turnout among young people since 1981.¹²⁵ The difference with the share of youth wing respondents of the 2020 survey who indicated having the intention to vote is 18.3%. Even if we would take into account a discrepancy between turnout intention and reported voting behaviour, there is thus indication that youth wing members are more likely to turn out on election day than the average young person in both time periods. In this context, it should be emphasized that this is not just any group of voters. Scholars have more than often expressed their concerns about a lagging electoral participation of young people (e.g. Blais et al., 2004; Fieldhouse et al., 2007; Norris, 2003). Particular importance is attached to the emergence of first-time voters, so that the habit of voting is acquired in an early stage while establishing a lasting propensity to vote throughout one's life (Franklin et al., 2004). What the exact mobilizing effect is of the party youth wings on the voting behaviour of their members remains unclear. Besides, youth wings may not only stimulate turnout among their own members, but also among young people in general as they undertake campaign activities and have a certain outreach through the members. A different research model is needed to investigate such effects.

Broader political participation

Other forms of political participation can be considered in order to get a more complete picture of the relationship of youth wing members towards the political system. Conceptualizing participation more broadly, the survey of 2020 asked respondents to state whether they had participated in various political activities over the last five years. This question is almost identical to the one used in the DPES of 2017 (Van der Meer et al., 2017)

¹²³ In 1989, respondents were asked whether they would vote for the mother party in a future election. This is a fundamentally different question than the intention to vote on Election Day. Bakhuis et al (1989) report that 80% of the respondents would do so. The remaining respondents answered not knowing (15%) or not wanting to vote for the mother party (5%). The only possible over-time comparison is that 12% more respondents opted for a vote on the mother party of the youth wing in 2020 (92%) than in 1989 (80%).

¹²⁴ The unweighted average percentages are: 92.9 would vote, 0.1 would not vote, 6.3 ineligible to vote.

¹²⁵ Of the 25-34 year olds, an estimated percentage of around 79 took part in the ballot.

and the Social Cohesion and Well-being surveys (S&W) of Statistics Netherlands (Schmeets, 2017). It therefore allows for direct comparison between the political participation of youth wing members and that of young people in general. Table 5.12 presents the results.

Table 5.12 Political participation of youth wing members versus the youth population (in %)

	<i>PYW survey</i> 2020 ^a	<i>DPES</i> 2017 ^b	<i>S&W</i> 2012/2016 ^c
Involved radio, TV or newspaper	39	9	26
Involved political party or organization	52	1	2
Joined public hearing, government discussion meeting	41	5	4
Contacted politician or civil servant	48	4	5
Joined action group	33	1	3
Joined protest or demonstration	54	7	7
Signed a petition	78	-	26
Joined political discussion/action via internet, e-mail, text message	65	12	14
Other	45	6	4
<i>Total N</i>	<i>888</i>	<i>447</i>	<i>n/a</i>

Note. Survey question: “There are various ways to try to bring something to the attention within politics or to exercise influence on politicians or the government. Would you indicate for each of the following possibilities which you have utilized during the past 5 years?”

^a Party youth wing (PYW) survey conducted in 2020. Total scores are weighted by party youth wing size. Unweighted *N* = 860. The exact *N* per item may slightly differ due to item-nonresponse.

^b Dutch Parliamentary Election Study (Van der Meer et al., 2017). Respondents aged 18-30. Unweighted *N* = 586.

^c Social Cohesion and Well-being survey conducted annually by Statistics Netherlands (CBS). Averages for young people aged 15-25 in the period of 2012-2016 (Schmeets, 2017, p. 8). Total *N* for all ages is 7,500 per year.

Dutch party youth wing members appear to be very active politically. No less than 94.6% of the respondents reported that they had undertaken one or more political activities in the last five years. Half of the members participated in five or more of the activities listed in Table 5.12.¹²⁶ Signing a petition and joining a political discussion or action by e-mail or text message were the most practiced activities. These activities can be classified under the label ‘new forms of political participation’, which are found to be more popular among young people than the conventional forms of political participation (Norris, 2003; Quintelier, 2007). Less popular were joining an action group or involving media, although still more than one third of the respondents answered that they used these forms of political action to bring something to the attention of politicians or to exercise influence on the government.

The difference with the general youth population is substantial. The results of both the DPES and S&W survey show that the average young person participates much less than the average party youth wing member. Most of the political activities were mentioned by less than 7% of the respondents of these two studies. Some higher scoring activities were involving the media, signing a petition and joining a discussion via e-mail or text message, although the difference with youth wing members is still considerable. Just over half of the young

¹²⁶ Unweighted figures are 92.9% and 41.3% respectively.

respondents of the DPES indicated not being active in any of the presented forms of political participation. In the party youth wing survey, that share was 5.4%.¹²⁷ This represents a difference of 46 percentage points.

A breakdown of the data reveals a few notable differences between the party youth wings (see Appendix 5.3). Respondents from the conservative Calvinist youth wing (SGPJ) scored lower on all forms of political participation than the respondents from other youth wings, except for the item 'signed a petition'. The image that the members of the left-wing youth wings DWARS, the JS and PINK! are more protest-minded on average than those of other youth wings is reaffirmed. These respondents indicated participating more in action groups, protests and demonstrations and petitions, while the respondents from the CDJA, JD, PpF and SGPJ generally scored relatively low on these items. In contrast, respondents from the CDJA scored relatively high on the items that can be labelled as conventional forms of political action: 'involved political party or organization', 'joined public hearing or government discussion meeting' and 'contacted political or civil servant'.

In conclusion, while studies show that young people are generally less politically active, these results show that the youth wings of political parties consist of politically active young people. This is consistent with the empirical finding that politically active individuals can be found in voluntary associations (e.g. Quintelier, 2008; Verba & Nie, 1972; Verba et al., 1995). At the least, party youth wings function as a valuable meeting place for the politically active young. It remains unclear to what extent youth wing dynamics actually play a role in catalysing the external political participation of their members. The next paragraph will discuss this issue.

Self-selection or mobilization?

The question is to what extent the high level of political activity among youth wing members is actually a result of the membership or whether there was already a certain predisposition to participate in politics (e.g. Leighley, 1996; Quintelier, 2008; Verba et al., 1995). In the latter scenario, these individuals with a higher "participation proneness" (Verba & Nie, 1972, p. 194) are argued to be more likely to join political associations (self-selection). One could indeed argue that the choice to become a member of an overtly political group such as a party youth wing is already an indication of a propensity toward political activity. Party youth wings then solely represent a participation channel for those young people who are or would be politically active anyway. However, next to self-selection mechanisms, mobilizing efforts of associational leaders and socializing structures of associations may play a role (e.g. Leighley, 1996; Quintelier, 2008). Party youth wings can thus also be argued to play an enhancing role in the political participation of their members. Voluntary association affiliations, especially those with a political character, are generally thought to have advancing effects on the political participation of young people (Quintelier, 2008). Young people in particular are less likely to have political connections, knowledge and prior experience with participation (e.g. Plutzer, 2003). The membership of a party youth wing can be perceived as an important resource that

¹²⁷ Unweighted percentage is 7.1.

helps overcome these costs. The question is: is it because of the (un)intentional socialization and mobilization of the party youth wing that the members are more politically active or are these young people more susceptible to political participation anyway?

In order to correct for this endogeneity problem, one ideally designs a study in which both party youth wing members and young people in general are part of the same (longitudinal) survey so that the impact of youth wing involvement on political participation can be modelled, while correcting for self-selection, socioeconomic, attitudinal and parental factors. Unfortunately, this is not available. As an alternative approach, it is chosen to assess members' perception of the mobilization efforts of their youth wing. Although this is an indirect and suboptimal measure that only includes perceived mobilization efforts, it provides some indication regarding the functioning of party youth wings as mobilizing agents. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following statement: "My party youth wing encourages members to be politically active outside the youth wing as well" (Table 5.13). In total, almost half of the respondents indicated that this statement is applicable or totally applicable, while only 12% opted for (totally) not applicable.¹²⁸ There are differences across party youth wings, but the answer category (totally) applicable scored highest in all youth wings. A considerable group of members thus perceives the party youth wing as a mobilizing agent, although there is also a large part of the membership that either indicates not knowing the answer or that chooses the middle category.

Table 5.13. Member perception of party youth wing mobilization efforts (2020, in %)

	<i>Total*</i>	<i>CDJA</i>	<i>DWARS</i>	<i>JD</i>	<i>JS</i>	<i>PINK!</i>	<i>PpF</i>	<i>SGPJ</i>
(Totally) not applicable	12	16	9	15	11	(8)	(10)	15
Neither/nor	16	21	11	17	20	(21)	(7)	19
(Totally) applicable	48	44	60	36	48	(63)	(48)	41
Don't know	24	19	20	32	22	(8)	(36)	26
<i>Total N</i>	<i>985</i>	<i>193</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>232</i>	<i>105</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>300</i>

Note. Survey item: "My party youth wing encourages members to be politically active outside the youth wing as well". Values are reported in brackets when $N < 50$. *Weighting by party youth wing size. Unweighted $N = 955$.

In sum, members of a party youth wing are more politically active than young people in general. A large part of the members believes that their youth wing plays an encouraging role in this regard. Unfortunately, it is not possible in the current study to disentangle the mechanisms that play a role in the causal relationship between youth wing membership and higher levels of political participation. It is possible to delve deeper into the political socializing activities of these organizations. This will be discussed in Chapter 7.

5.5 Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to determine the performance of party youth wings on the mobilization function. This function, defined as the promotion of political participatory acts of young individuals, consists of three sub-functions: attract a representative membership,

¹²⁸ Unweighted percentages are 43.2 and 13.8 respectively.

facilitate internal participation and encourage members to participate in politics in other forms than youth wing membership. Although it was expected that party youth wings would nowadays be less successful in fulfilling these sub-functions, the results of this investigation show that there is no reason to believe that the performance of youth wings has worsened compared to thirty years ago.

Considering the first sub-function, the overall number of party youth wing members has increased since the second half of the 1980s, although this trend has not been constantly upward and differs across party youth wings. The noticeably low membership rate leads to the conclusion that party youth wings have not been mass-based organizations in the last decades, but rather small-scale party sub-organizations. Moreover, during both time periods under scrutiny, the memberships of Dutch party youth wings did not accurately mirror the population of young people. The average party youth wing member is more likely to be reported as male than as other genders, aged above 21, living in urban areas and participating in higher education. The gender gap has been closing over time, although the descriptive congruence seems to have worsened for age and residence. In addition, young people with a migration background are found to be underrepresented in the investigated party youth wings in the late 2010s. Findings on the second sub-function show that, although members vary in the extent to which they actively participate in youth wing activities, the overall activist density within party youth wings has remained relatively constant compared to the late 1980s. The empirical analysis of the third sub-function has shown that members of a party youth wing in the late 2010s are more politically active than young people in general. Unfortunately, this could not be assessed for the time period of 1985-90. Although the exact mobilizing effect of membership could not be determined here, the perception of members is that a party youth wing plays an encouraging role in this regard. In conclusion, party youth wings provide a participatory linkage to the world of politics.

In addition to these general findings, the results of this chapter invite us to explore similarities and differences across party youth wings. This cannot be done systematically for each sub-function and period as data is sometimes missing, but several notable results can be highlighted. Against the general trend, the membership figures of the CDJA, JS, JOVD and PpF declined considerably between the mid-late 1980s and 2010s. The first three youth wings in particular stand out as they are affiliated to the traditionally major political parties CDA, PvdA and VVD. Chapter 3 already described that the dominance of these three parties in the Dutch political landscape has been eroding since the 1990s (Louwerse et al., 2019b). The underlying developments may thus also have affected the affiliated youth wings.

Furthermore, there are indications that the party youth wings have become more similar in terms of their membership composition. In 2020, more party youth wings had a strong presence in urban areas and characterized themselves as student organization than in the late 1980s. This applies to a lesser extent to youth wings with a religious character. The SGPJ in particular deviates from this picture due to its strong presence in the so-called Bible belt region of the Netherlands and its lower number of members in higher education.

On other indicators that were measured in 2020 only, party youth wings are also found

to function relatively similarly. The SGPJ is an exception; its members seem less engaged in both internal activities and external forms of political participation. In addition, it can be cautiously concluded that the members of the DWARS, JS and PINK! are more protest-minded than members of other party youth wings. In both the internal and external activity measures, they seemed to prefer the more unconventional types of political activity. This partly confirms the conclusion of Chapter 4 that there are different types of youth wings: some party youth wings lean more towards activism than others.

