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Electoral Performance of the five Main Parties, 1998 – 2024

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This Research Paper is an update of previous papers, which reviewed the electoral performance of the five main parties in Northern Ireland during the period following the political settlement of 1998. The present paper extends the earlier papers to include the July 2024 Westminster election.

This information is provided to Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and Assembly staff in support of their duties, and is not intended to address the specific circumstances of any particular individual. It should not be relied upon as professional legal advice, or as a substitute for it.

Executive Summary

- There are five main political parties in Northern Ireland, namely: Sinn Féin (SF), the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), the Alliance Party, the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), and the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP).
- During the period 1969 – 1985, there were a number of key electoral milestones associated with the emergence, development and consolidation of the five-party system.
- The 1982 Assembly poll was the first occasion in which all five main parties contested an election.
- After the 1998 Assembly election, the rank order in terms of seats (and share of vote) was as follows: UUP, 28 seats (21.3% of first preference votes); SDLP, 24 seats (22%); DUP, 20 seats (18.1%); Sinn Féin, 18 seats (17.6%); and Alliance, 6 seats (6.5%).
- Between 2003 and 2022, a major political realignment took place in Northern Ireland. In broad terms, there was a significant shift away from the two parties most closely identified with the political settlement of 1998 (Belfast/Good Friday Agreement), namely the UUP and the SDLP. The chief beneficiaries were Sinn Féin and the DUP. After a slump between 2001 and 2010, Alliance consolidated its position as the party of the centre, and became the third largest party in the Assembly.
- Following the May 2022 Assembly poll, the rank order of the five main parties in terms of seats (and share of vote) is as follows: Sinn Féin, 27 seats (29.0%); DUP, 25 seats (21.3%); Alliance, 17 seats (13.5%); UUP, 9 seats (11.2%); and SDLP, 8 seats (9.1%).

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1 Introduction

This paper assesses how electoral support for the main political parties in Northern Ireland has changed since 1998, and shows how the fortunes of each party has varied over the past 27 years.

There are five main parties in Northern Ireland, namely: Sinn Féin (SF), the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), the Alliance Party, the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), and the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP). In order to gain an understanding of how the five-party system arose and became consolidated, it is necessary to step back in time and examine some key elections and formative events in the 50 years prior to this date.

2 Key Electoral Milestones, 1969 – 1985

1969 was a significant year in the history of Northern Ireland. In the midst of a rapidly deteriorating security situation triggered by civil rights marches and counter-demonstrations, the then Prime Minister, Captain Terence O'Neill, called a 'snap' election for 24 February. The result was a consolidation of the broad Unionist vote, the demise of the old Nationalist party, and the election of three Independents, one of whom (John Hume) later became a founder member and Leader of the SDLP, and an iconic figure in the peace process twenty five years later.

In 1973 there were regional (Assembly) and local council elections. The polls were noteworthy for two reasons: (i) both were held under the proportional representation (PR) system, which had last been used in 1925; and (ii) they provided an opportunity for the recently-formed DUP, SDLP and Alliance to engage in electoral politics for the first time.

The outcome was a triumph for the Official Unionists (later UUP) and the SDLP, with a credible performance by the Alliance Party, particularly in the local council elections, where they secured 13.7 per cent of the vote and 63 out of 526 seats. The UUP and SDLP were soon to become the dominant parties in the unionist and nationalist blocs, a situation which remained largely unchanged for the next thirty years.

In April 1981, a by-election in the Westminster constituency of Fermanagh – South Tyrone saw the surprise election of the IRA Hunger Striker, Bobby Sands. Along with

other factors, this proved to be a major catalyst for the entry of Provisional Sinn Féin into electoral politics. The party fought the Assembly election the following year (1982) – essentially marking the birth of the five-party system. Sinn Féin improved their vote in the 1985 local council elections, gaining 11.8 per cent of the vote and 59 seats.

Having outlined the background to the current five-party system, the remainder of this paper goes on to consider how the parties electoral support has changed since 1998.

3 Electoral Performance of Main Parties, 1998 – 2024

3.1 Sinn Féin

Sinn Féin, which was founded in 1905 (the same year as the Ulster Unionist Party), emerged as part of the opposition to Home Rule in Ireland. The party made its first major appearance in Irish electoral politics in the 1918 general election, when it achieved a substantial mandate, winning 73 out of 105 seats. However, after the Irish Civil War (1921 – 23), and the formation of Fianna Fáil in 1926, the party moved to the margins of Irish politics, largely vanishing as an electoral force [1].

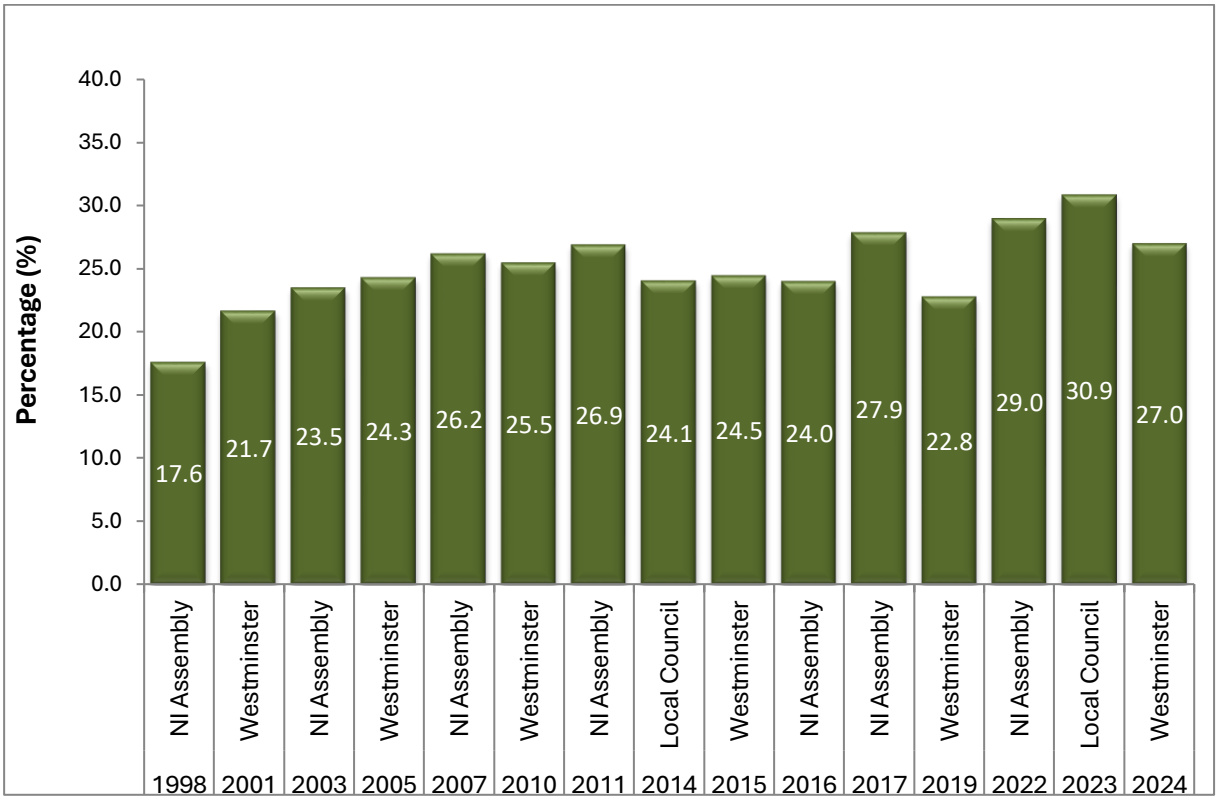
At the party's 1970 Ard Fheis (annual conference) a split occurred over a proposal to drop its policy of non-recognition of the Belfast and Dublin parliaments. Those against recognition called themselves the 'Provisionals' and walked out to set up their own organisation. Provisional Sinn Féin was to become the political voice of the Provisional IRA (PIRA) [2].

The election of Bobby Sands, an IRA Hunger Striker, in the Fermanagh – South Tyrone Westminster by-election of April 1981, and other successes in the Irish General Election that year, provided an opportunity for the party to enter politics in Northern Ireland (it already held 30 local council seats in the Republic of Ireland).

[1] McMahon, M (2008). **Government and Politics of Northern Ireland**,. 3rd edition. Newtownards: Colourpoint

[2] Elliot, S, and Flackes, WD (1998). **Northern Ireland: a political directory, 1968-1989**, 4th edition. Belfast: Blackstaff Press.

Chart 3.1 Electoral Performance (%) of Sinn Féin, 1998-2024



In the 1982 Assembly election the party achieved 10 per cent of the vote and won five seats, followed by 13.3 per cent in the 1984 European Parliament election. A significant breakthrough occurred in the 1985 local council election, when they secured fifty-nine seats and 11.8 per cent of the vote.

Chart 3.1 (above) presents the Sinn Féin share of the vote in all Assembly elections, plus selected Westminster and local council polls, during the period 1998 – 2024 [3]. The chart illustrates the growth and consolidation of the party's vote over this period.

The 1998 Assembly election saw the party with 17.6 per cent of the vote and 18 seats. By 2022, this had grown to 29.0 per cent and 27 seats. In the 2001 local council election, the party won 20.7 per cent of the popular vote and 74 seats. By 2023, the figures in the local council election had risen to 30.9 per cent and 144 seats .

[3] Appendices 1 and 2 contain a full list of election results for all elections in Northern Ireland since 1969.

The Sinn Féin share of the vote declined somewhat between 2011 and 2016. For example, in Assembly elections their share of first preference votes fell by 2.9 percentage points, from 26.9 per cent in 2011 to 24.0 in 2016, resulting in the net loss of one seat (to the People Before Profit Alliance). In local council elections, their vote share fell marginally, from 24.8 per cent in 2011 to 24.1 per cent in 2014, resulting in 103 seats, a loss of 33 seats from 138 in 2011.

Elections 2017 - 2024

Sinn Féin became the chief beneficiary of the Assembly Election in March 2017. Compared with 2016, the party received an additional 57,460 first preferences, an increase of 34.5 per cent, and a rise in vote share from 24% to 27.9%. Against the backdrop of a smaller Assembly (90 seats instead of 108), the party lost only one seat, compared with ten forfeited by the DUP.

In the June 2017 Westminster election, Sinn Féin consolidated their position with a further increase in vote share, from 24.5% in 2015 to 29.4% in 2017. They gained an additional three seats, one from the UUP and the other two from the SDLP. In the 2019 Westminster poll, the party retained its seven seats but with a smaller share of the vote (22.8% compared with 29.4% in 2017).

The 2022 Assembly poll and the 2023 local elections brought further gains for the party. In the 2022 election, Sinn Féin became the largest party in the Assembly, with 29 per cent of first preference votes and 27 seats – the first time a Nationalist party had held this position since the foundation of the State in 1922. In the May 2023 council elections, the party achieved 30.9% of the popular vote and 144 seats, an increase of 39 seats on the 2019 election. It is now the largest party in local government.

A Westminster General Election was held on 4 July 2024, and resulted in a resounding victory for the Labour Party. Sinn Féin retained its seven seats, with 27.0 percent of the vote, a 4.2 percentage point increase compared with 2019.

3.2 Democratic Unionist Party

The DUP evolved from the former Protestant Unionist Party, which was led by Dr Ian Paisley in the late 1960s. The party was founded in September 1971 by Dr Paisley and the then MP for Shankill, Desmond Boal. The new party, according to Boal, would be 'right wing in the sense of being strong on the Constitution, but to the left on social policies' (Elliot and Flackes, p. 225) [4].

The party's first electoral success occurred in the 1973 local council poll, when it gained 4.3 per cent of the vote (21 seats). Four weeks later, this rose to 10.8 per cent (8 seats) in the Assembly elections of that year.

Chart 3.2 Electoral Performance (%) of DUP, 1998-2024

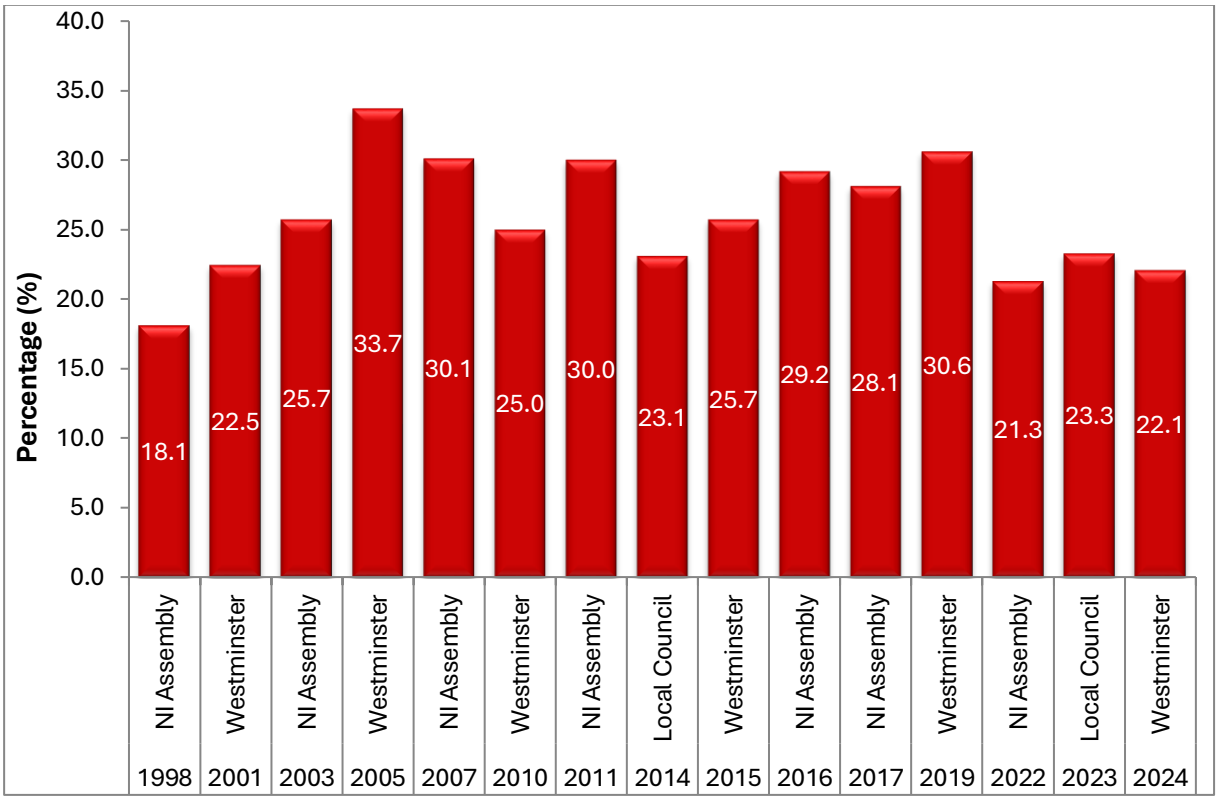


Chart 3.2 presents the DUP share of vote in all Assembly and most Westminster elections, plus selected local council elections, during the period 1998 – 2024. The

[4] Elliot, S, and Flackes, WD (1998). **Northern Ireland: a political directory, 1968-1989**, 4th edition. Belfast: Blackstaff Press.

chart illustrates the various peaks and troughs in the party's performance since the Assembly election of 1998, when it gained 18.1 per cent of first preference votes.

In Assembly elections, the party's share of first preference votes increased substantially, from 18.1 per cent (20 seats) in 1998 to 29.2 per cent (38 seats) in 2016. In local council elections, the DUP share of the vote grew from 21.4 per cent (131 seats) in 2001 to 23.1 per cent (130 seats) in 2014. Their share of the vote in Westminster elections moved from 22.5 per cent (8 seats) in 2001 to 25.7 per cent (7 seats) in 2015.

Elections 2017 - 2024

Following the resignation of the Deputy First Minister, and the subsequent dissolution of the Assembly on 26 January 2017, the sixth Assembly election took place on 2 March 2017. The election resulted in a significant change in the size and composition of the Assembly. The total number of seats was reduced from 108 to 90, with the unionist parties accounting for 16 of the 18 losses (DUP, 10; UUP 6). The number of seats held by the DUP fell from 38 to 28. The party lost seats in 10 of the 18 constituencies with a slightly reduced share of first preference votes (28.1% compared with 29.2% in 2016).

The 2022 Assembly election saw the DUP lose three seats against the backdrop of a fall in first preference votes, from 28.1% in 2017 to 21.3% in 2022. In the May 2023 local elections, the party retained all of its 122 seats.

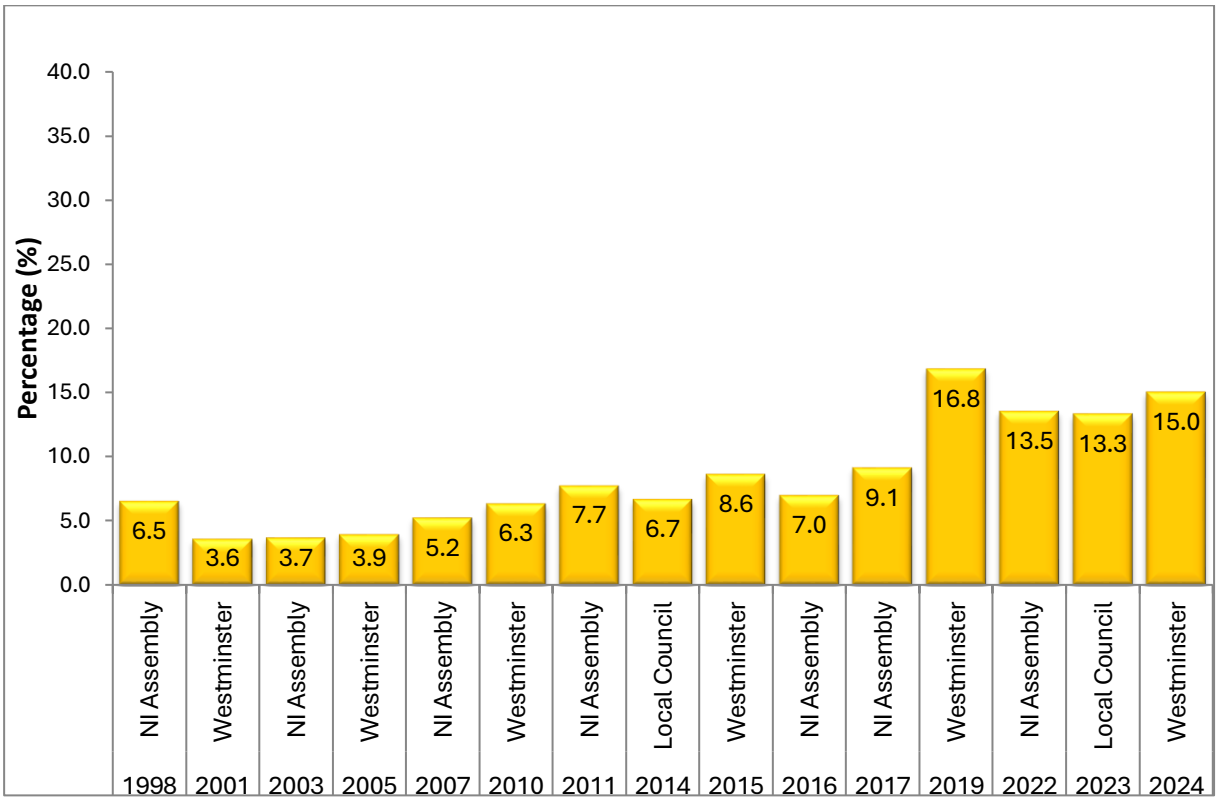
After the July 2024 Westminster election, the Democratic Unionist Party (5 seats) returned to Westminster with three fewer seats than before, having lost North Antrim to the TUV – No Sea Border, South Antrim to the UUP, and Lagan Valley to Alliance. The party held Belfast East with a reduced share of the vote. Overall, the party's vote share declined by 8.5 percentage points, from 30.6% in 2019 to 22.1% in 2024.

3.3 Alliance Party of Northern Ireland

The Alliance Party is now the third-largest of the five main political parties in Northern Ireland. Alliance, which was launched in April 1970, is a party of the centre and attracts support from across the community.

In its first electoral test (May 1973 local council elections), the party received 94,474 votes (13.7 per cent) – its highest share recorded until the May 2022 Assembly election almost fifty years later – and 63 seats. In the Assembly election four weeks later, Alliance secured 9.2 per cent of the vote and 8 seats. The party subsequently took part in the Sunningdale Conference that year, which paved the way for the 1974 power-sharing agreement. Two of its members – Oliver Napier, the party leader, and Bob Cooper, the deputy leader – were Ministers in the ill-fated Executive until its fall in May 1974.

Chart 3.3 Electoral Performance (%) of Alliance, 1998-2024



The party lost ground in the 1980s. For example, in the 1985 local council elections Alliance largely became a party of the Greater Belfast area. It won 34 seats, four fewer

than in the 1981 election, and only 7.1 per cent of the vote compared with 8.9 per cent in 1981 [5].

Chart 3.3 (above) presents the Alliance share of the vote in all Assembly and most Westminster elections, plus selected council elections, during the period 1998 – 2024. During this period, party support ranged from a peak of 15.0 per cent in the 2024 Westminster General election to a low of 3.6 per cent in the 2001 Westminster poll.

In Assembly elections, the party secured 6.5 per cent of the vote (6 seats) in the 1998 election, falling to 3.7 per cent (6 seats) in the 2003 poll (Table 3.1). In the 2007 and 2011 ballots, the Alliance vote recovered to 5.2 per cent and 7.7 per cent respectively, with an overall gain of two seats. In May 2016, the party maintained its position with 7 per cent of first preference votes and 8 seats.

Table 3.1: Electoral Performance of Alliance, 1998 - 2024

YEAR		Vote Share (%)	Votes	Seats
1998	Assembly	6.5	52,636	6
2003	Assembly	3.7	25,370	6
2007	Assembly	5.2	36,139	7
2011	Assembly	7.7	50,875	8
2016	Assembly	7.0	48,447	8
2017	Assembly	9.1	72,717	8
2022	Assembly	13.5	116,681	17
2023	Local Council	13.3	99,251	67
2024	Westminster	15.0	117,191	1

Source: BBC, CAIN, ARC

The performance of Alliance in local council elections followed a similar trajectory to that of the Assembly, with a dip in support in 2001 and 2005, followed by a slight recovery to 7.4 per cent (44 seats) in 2011. In the 2014 local council elections, Alliance received 6.7 per cent of first preferences and 32 seats – 12 less than in 2011.

[5] Elliot, S. and Flackes, WD (1998) p. 157, op. cit.

Elections 2017 - 2024

The Alliance Party share of the vote in the March 2017 poll rose from 7.0% in 2016 to 9.1%, an increase of 24,300 first preference votes (Table 2.1). In the context of a smaller Assembly, they also managed to retain all eight seats from 2016. The May 2022 Assembly election was particularly successful for the party: it was the only party with net gains, with the capture of nine additional seats, and an increase in their share of first preferences from 9.1% to 13.5% (116,681 first preferences). This made the party the third largest in the Assembly, in terms of both vote share (13.5%) and seats (17 seats).

In the May 2023 local council elections, Alliance consolidated their position as the third-largest party with a solid performance. They won 67 seats (up 14 since 2019) with a 13.3% vote share, finishing with 99,251 first preferences.

Following the July 2024 Westminster General Election, Alliance remained on one seat (with the loss of North Down compensated by the gain of Lagan Valley). The party received 15.0 per cent of the vote, a fall of 1.8 percentage points from 2019.

3.4 Ulster Unionist Party

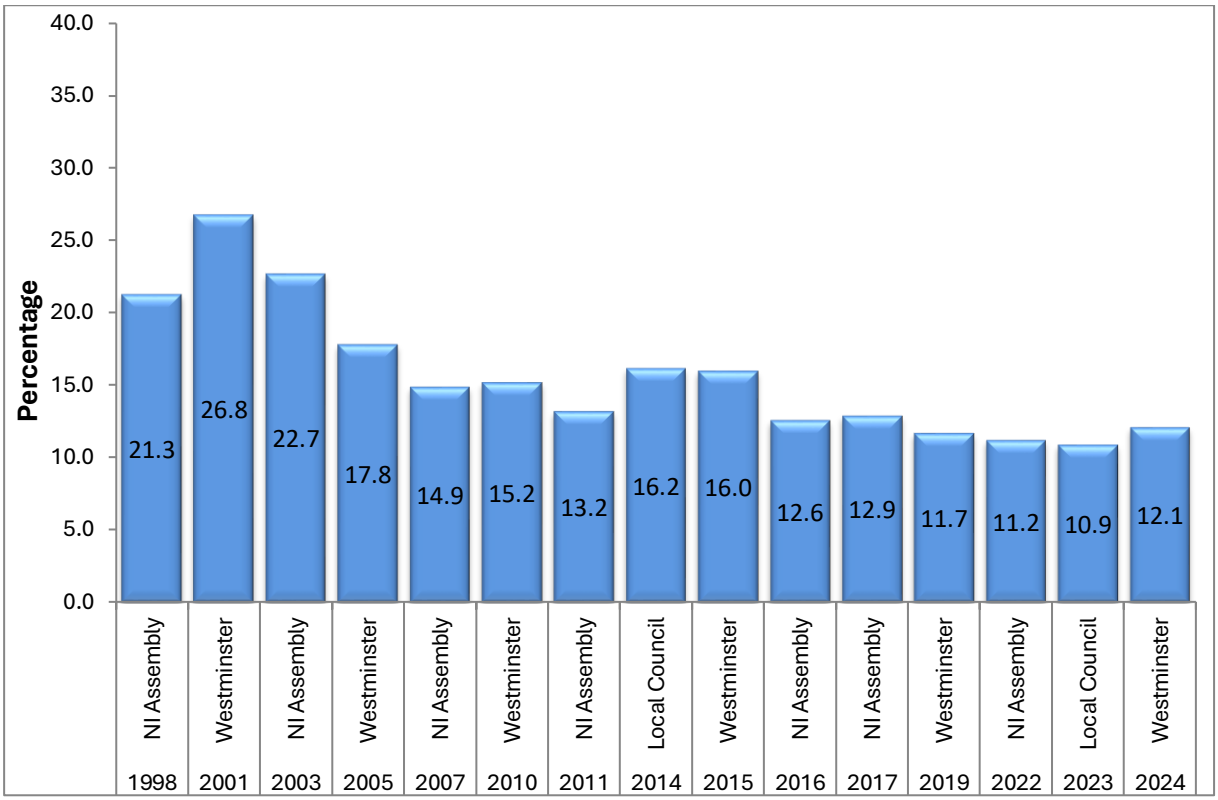
The UUP (also styled the *Unionist Party* or *Official Unionist Party*) was for many years the largest political entity in Northern Ireland and the traditional voice of constitutional unionism [6]. It provided the Government of Northern Ireland from 1921 until the imposition of direct rule in 1972. For most of this period, the party held around 40 of the 52 seats at Stormont (House of Commons) and at least ten of the 12 Westminster seats. Such was the unchallenged supremacy of the party, that some Unionist MPs never had to fight an election [7]. The origins of the party lie in the Home Rule crisis and the creation of the Ulster Unionist Council (UUC), which held its first meeting on 3 March 1905.

Chart 2.4 (below) presents the UUP share of the vote in all Assembly and most Westminster elections, plus selected council elections, during the period 1998 – 2024.

[6] McMahon, M (2008). **Government and Politics of Northern Ireland**, 3rd edition. Newtownards: Colourpoint
[7] Elliot, S and Flackes (1998) op. cit.

The chart reveals that the UUP gained its largest share of the vote between 1998 and 2001, reaching a peak of 26.8 per cent in the 2001 Westminster election. Party support steadily declined after 2003, reaching a low of 10.3 per cent (see Appendix 1) in the 2017 Westminster poll.

Chart 3.4 Electoral Performance (%) of UUP, 1998-2024



In the 1998 Assembly election, the UUP secured 21.3 per cent of first preference votes and 28 seats. The party slightly improved its share of the vote in 2003 (22.7 per cent) but lost one seat. In the 2007 election the UUP experienced a significant collapse in support, with the loss of nearly 54,000 first preference votes compared with 2003. Their share of the vote also dropped to 14.9 per cent with a tally of 18 seats. In the May 2016 Assembly election, the party's vote fell to 12.6 per cent, an historic low at the time.

In local council elections, UUP support fell after 2001, when it secured 22.9 per cent of the vote (154 seats). In 2011, the party received 15.2 per cent of first preferences and

99 seats, its worst performance since the re-organisation of local government in 1973 [8]. However, the 2014 council election saw a modest revival in UUP fortunes, with an increase in the popular vote (16.2%). This was not reflected, however, in the seat tally, which fell from 99 to 88.

Elections 2017 - 2024

The two elections in 2017 resulted in a further decline in the electoral fortunes of the UUP. The party lost six seats in the Assembly (12.9%) and three in Westminster with a vote share of only 10.3%, an historic low.

In the 2022 Assembly poll, the party lost one of its remaining 10 seats, with a first preference vote share of 11.2%, down from its 2017 figure of 12.9%. The May 2023 local elections saw the party lose 21 seats, with a vote share of 10.9%.

In the July 2024 Westminster poll, the Party gained one seat (South Antrim) from the DUP, and its vote share improved from 11.7 per cent to 12.2 per cent, a rise of 0.5 of a percentage point.

3.5 Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)

Founded on 21 August 1970, the SDLP largely absorbed the old Nationalist party, plus the National Democratic Party (NDP) and the Republican Labour Party (RLP). It was launched by seven Stormont MPs, including Gerry Fitt (RLP) and Paddy Devlin, Northern Ireland Labour Party (NILP); three Independent MPs (John Hume, Ivan Cooper and Paddy O'Hanlon); and Senator Paddy Wilson (RLP).

Its first foray into electoral politics took place in the 1973 local council elections, when it won 13.4 per cent of the vote and 83 seats. Some weeks later, in the Assembly election of June 1973, the party received 22.1 per cent of the vote and 19 of the 78 seats. It had four Ministers in the 1974 power-sharing Executive, including that of deputy Chief Executive, held by Gerry Fitt MP.

[8] The 1973 election provides a measure of how steep the decline in support for the UUP has been at local council elections. That year the UUP (labeled the Official Unionist Party) secured 286,112 first preference votes (41.4 per cent) and 233 seats. In May 2023, the party secured only 54 seats with a popular vote of 81,282 first preferences.

The collapse of the Executive in May 1974 was a serious blow to the party, and it was almost twenty-five years before the SDLP had the opportunity to exercise power again in the newly-formed Northern Ireland Executive.

Chart 3.5 Electoral Performance (%) of SDLP, 1998-2024

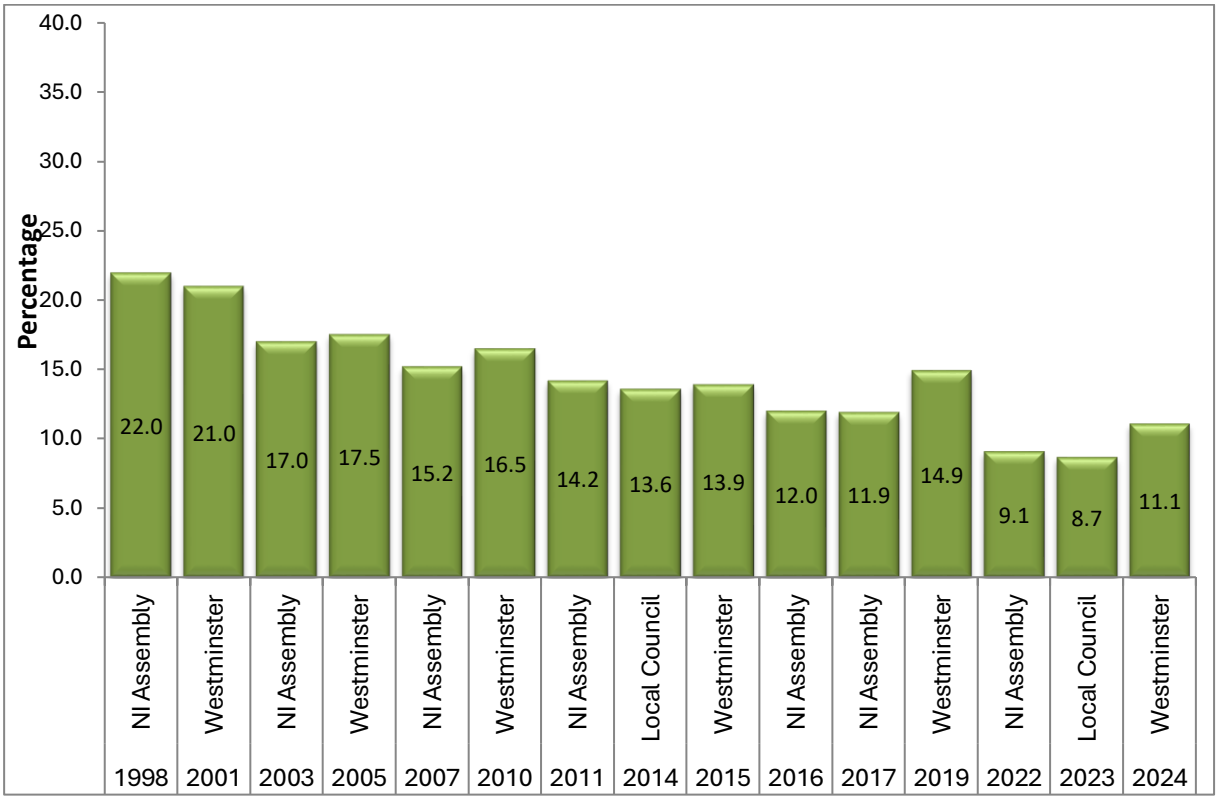


Chart 3.5 (above) presents the SDLP share of the vote in all Assembly and most Westminster elections, plus selected council elections, during the period 1998 – 2024. The chart tracks the relative decline of the party in recent years. In Assembly polls, party support peaked in 1998 with 22 per cent of first preference votes and 24 seats.

The SDLP position deteriorated at every subsequent Assembly election, falling to a low of 9.1 per cent (8 seats) in the 2022 ballot, a loss of four seats compared with 2017. With regard to local council elections, the party's share of the vote fell in each of the four elections during this period, from 19.4 per cent (117 seats) in 2001 to 13.6 per cent (66 seats) in 2014. Their performance in Westminster elections also declined, from 21 per cent in 2001 to 16.5 per cent in 2010, reaching a low of 13.9 per cent of the vote in 2015.

Elections 2017 - 2024

Turnout in the March 2017 Assembly election increased substantially compared with the 2016 election, and all five main parties benefited from this. The SDLP gained an additional 12,600 first preference votes, and returned to Stormont with the same number of seats (12) as before.

The Westminster poll in June 2017, however, saw the party lose its three seats in the House of Commons and marked the first parliament since 1964 without nationalist representation (Sinn Féin do not take up their seats at Westminster). In the December 2019 Westminster election, party support rebounded, with a net gain of two seats (Foyle and Belfast South), and an increase in vote share to 14.9% (up from 11.7% in 2017).

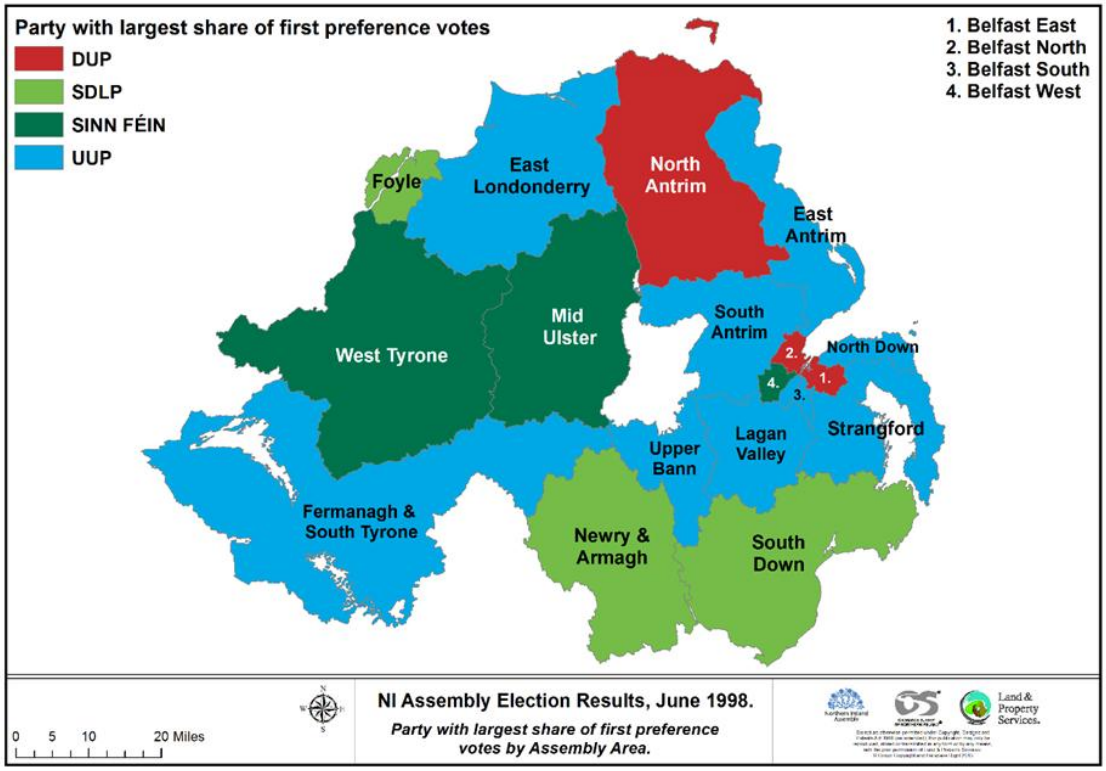
In the May 2022 Assembly election, however, the party lost four seats (down from 12 to 8) and saw their vote share drop by two percentage points to 9.1%, an historic low. This would mean that for the first time in the history of the Assembly, the SDLP would not be entitled to a minister under the D'Hondt process. The poor performance of the party was repeated in the 2023 local council elections, with the loss of 20 seats, and a vote share of 8.7%, a new low for the SDLP.

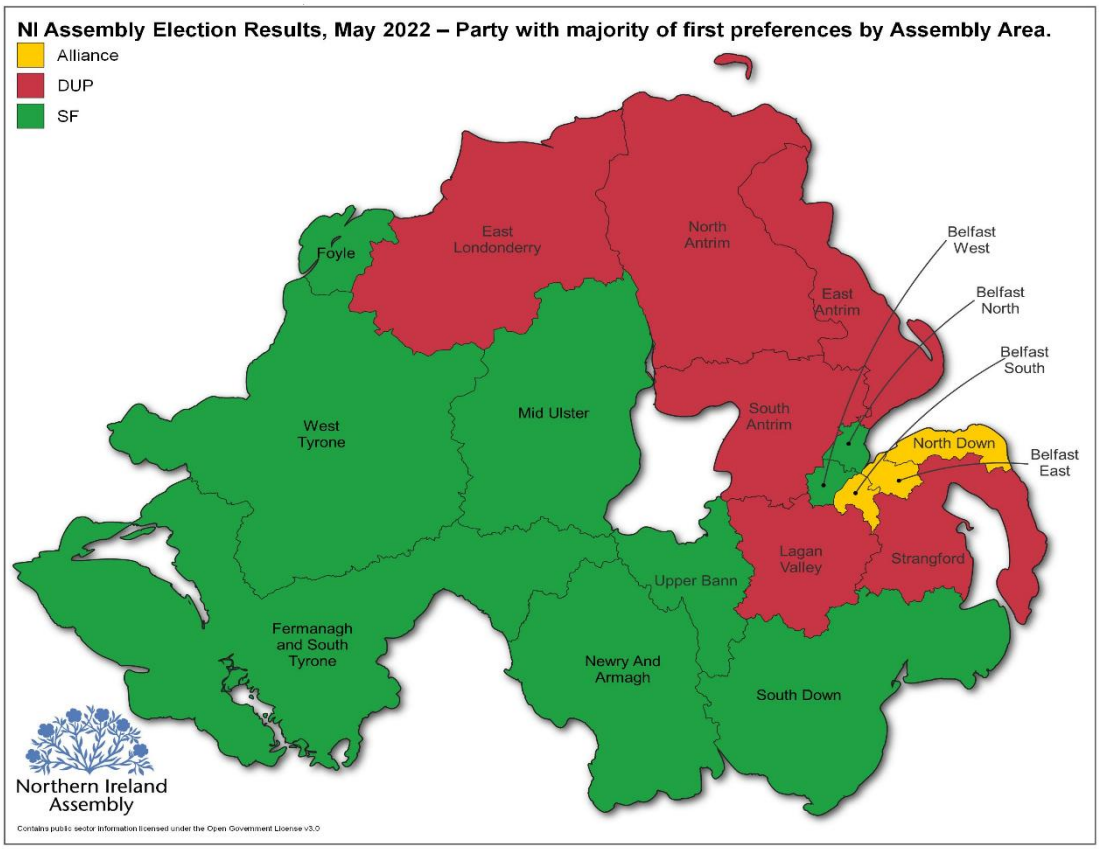
In the July 2024 Westminster General Election, the Party retained its two seats, with a vote share of 11.1 per cent.

4 Emergence of Three Main Parties

In terms of first preference votes, in 1998 the DUP (18.1%) and Sinn Féin (17.6%) were third and fourth respectively behind the SDLP (22.0%) and UUP (21.3%), with the Alliance (6.5%) a distant fifth. Twenty-seven years later, Sinn Féin (29.0%) is the largest party, followed by the DUP (21.3%) and Alliance (13.5%). The emergence of Alliance as the third party is now a well-established trend, with an increase in their share of the vote at three of the last four Assembly elections (see Table 2.1).

5 Electoral Map: Assembly Elections 1998 and 2022





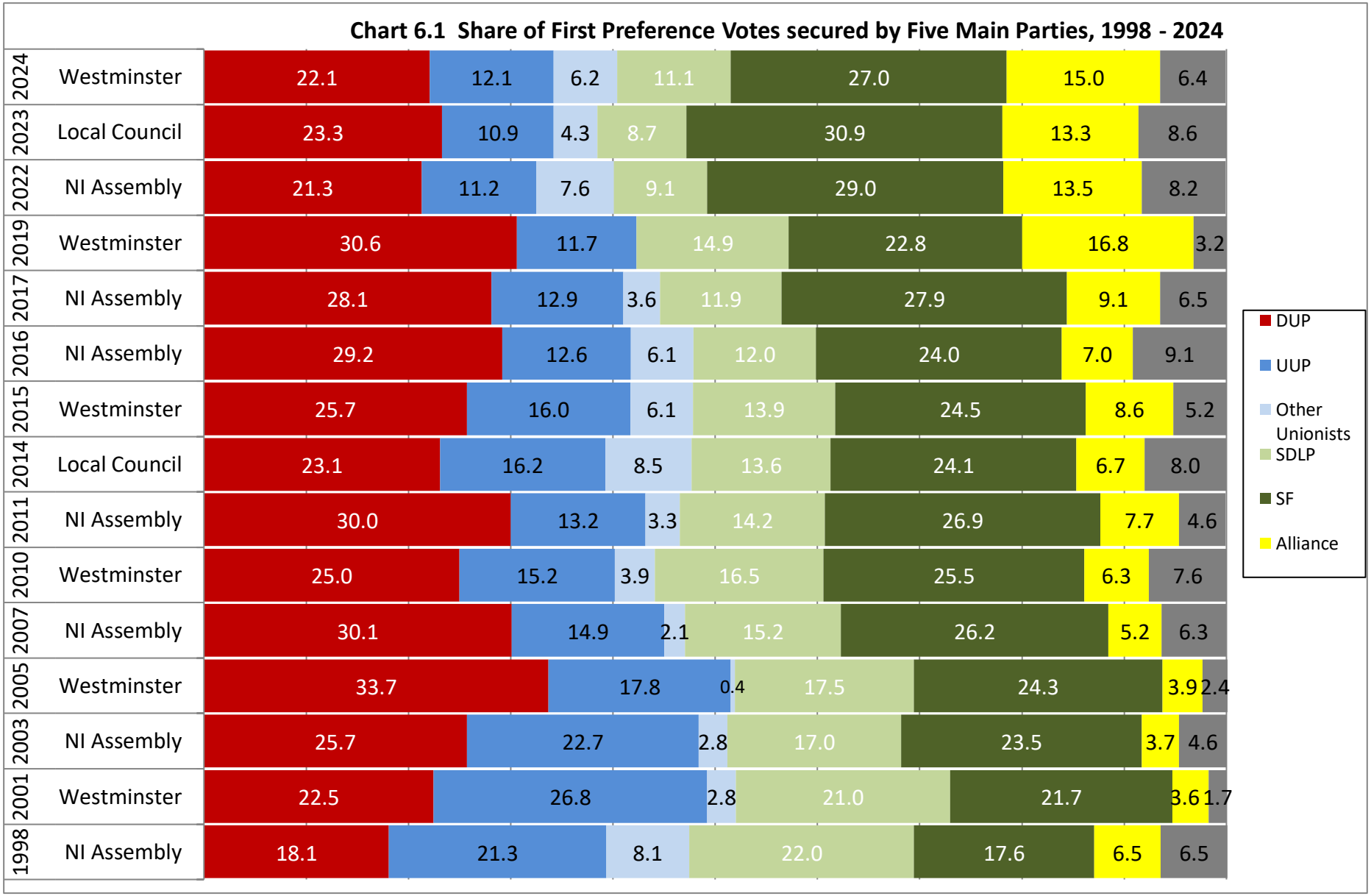
The two maps above show the party with the largest number of first preference votes in each of the 18 Assembly Areas in 1998 and 2022. They neatly illustrate the significant changes which have taken place in the electoral map of Northern Ireland during that twenty-four year period. In 1998 the UUP had the largest share of first preference votes in nine of the 18 constituencies, followed by the SDLP, Sinn Féin and the DUP with three constituencies each. By 2022, both the UUP and SDLP had disappeared from the map, with Sinn Féin now the dominant party in nine constituencies, the DUP in six, and Alliance in three.

6 Summary

The main points emerging from this review of the electoral performance of the five main political parties in Northern Ireland are as follows:

- In 2003, the DUP overtook the UUP to become the largest party in the unionist bloc.
- Sinn Féin replaced the SDLP as the largest nationalist party after the 2003 Assembly election.
- In Assembly elections, the UUP and SDLP share of the vote has fallen steadily since 1998.
- The Alliance Party recovered from a slump between 2000 – 2010, and has gone on to increase its share of the vote in Assembly, local council, and Westminster elections. It has now secured its place as the third-largest party in Northern Ireland

Chart 6.1 (below) illustrates the comparative performance, in terms of first preference votes, of each of the five main parties in local council, Assembly and Westminster elections between 1998 and 2023. Further, as an aid to readers, Appendices 1 and 2 contain details of selected elections between 1969 and 2024.


Chart 6.1 Share of First Preference Votes secured by Five Main Parties, 1998 - 2024
2024 Westminster 22.1 12.1 6.2 11.1 27.0 15.0 6.4
2023 Local Council 23.3 10.9 4.3 8.7 30.9 13.3 8.6
2022 NI Assembly 21.3 11.2 7.6 9.1 29.0 13.5 8.2
2019 Westminster 30.6 11.7 14.9 22.8 16.8 3.2
2017 NI Assembly 28.1 12.9 3.6 11.9 27.9 9.1 6.5
2016 NI Assembly 29.2 12.6 6.1 12.0 24.0 7.0 9.1
2015 Westminster 25.7 16.0 6.1 13.9 24.5 8.6 5.2
2014 Local Council 23.1 16.2 8.5 13.6 24.1 6.7 8.0
2011 NI Assembly 30.0 13.2 3.3 14.2 26.9 7.7 4.6
2010 Westminster 25.0 15.2 3.9 16.5 25.5 6.3 7.6
2007 NI Assembly 30.1 14.9 2.1 15.2 26.2 5.2 6.3
2005 Westminster 33.7 17.8 0.4 17.5 24.3 3.9 2.4
2003 NI Assembly 25.7 22.7 2.8 17.0 23.5 3.7 4.6
2001 Westminster 22.5 26.8 2.8 21.0 21.7 3.6 1.7
1998 NI Assembly 18.1 21.3 8.1 22.0 17.6 6.5 6.5
DUP
UUP
Other Unionists
SDLP
SF
Alliance

Appendix 1: Share of Votes (%) by Main Parties and Others, 1969 – 2024

Year	Election	DUP	SF	UUP	SDLP	Alliance	Other Unionists	Others
1969	Stormont			48.2			19.1	32.7
1973	Local Council	4.3		41.4	13.4	13.7	10.9	16.4
1973	NI Assembly	10.8		29.3	22.1	9.2	21.9	6.6
1974	Westminster	8.2		32.3	22.4	3.2	23.7	10.2
1974	Westminster	8.5		36.5	22.0	6.4	17.1	9.6
1982	NI Assembly	23.0	10.1	29.7	18.8	9.3	5.7	3.4
1985	Local Council	24.3	11.8	29.5	17.8	7.1	3.1	6.4
1989	EU	29.9	9.1	22.2	25.5	5.2	4.8	3.2
1992	Westminster	13.1	10.0	34.8	23.5	8.7	8.1	1.7
1997	Local Council	15.6	16.9	27.9	20.6	6.6	6.5	5.9
1997	Westminster	13.6	16.1	32.7	24.1	8.0	4.2	1.4
1998	NI Assembly	18.1	17.6	21.3	22.0	6.5	8.1	6.5
1999	EU	28.4	17.3	17.6	28.1	2.1	6.3	0.1
2001	Local Council	21.4	20.7	22.9	19.4	5.1	3.0	7.5
2001	Westminster	22.5	21.7	26.8	21.0	3.6	2.8	1.7
2003	NI Assembly	25.7	23.5	22.7	17.0	3.7	2.8	4.6
2004	EU	32.0	26.3	16.6	15.9			9.1
2005	Local Council	29.6	23.3	18.0	17.3	5.0	1.2	5.6
2005	Westminster	33.7	24.3	17.8	17.5	3.9	0.4	2.4
2007	NI Assembly	30.1	26.2	14.9	15.2	5.2	2.1	6.3
2009	EU	18.2	26.0	17.1	16.2	5.5	13.7	3.3
2010	Westminster	25.0	25.5	15.2	16.5	6.3	3.9	7.6
2011	Local Council	27.2	24.8	15.2	15.0	7.4	3.2	7.2
2011	NI Assembly	30.0	26.9	13.2	14.2	7.7	3.3	4.6
2014	Local Council	23.1	24.1	16.2	13.6	6.7	8.5	8.0
2015	Westminster	25.7	24.5	16.0	13.9	8.6	6.1	5.2
2016	NI Assembly	29.2	24.0	12.6	12.0	7.0	6.1	9.1
2017	NI Assembly	28.1	27.9	12.9	11.9	9.1	3.6	6.6
2017	Westminster	36.0	29.4	10.3	11.7	7.9	0.9	3.8
2019	Westminster	30.6	22.8	11.7	14.9	16.8		3.2
2022	Assembly	21.3	29.0	11.2	9.1	13.5	7.6	8.3
2023	Local Council	23.3	30.9	10.9	8.7	13.3	4.3	8.6
2024	Westminster	22.1	27.0	12.1	11.1	15.0	6.2	6.4 [1]

[1] Alex Easton (North Down) was elected as an Independent in July 2024.

Appendix 2: Number of Votes by Main Parties and Others, 1969 – 2024

Year	Election	DUP	SF	UUP	SDLP	Alliance	Other Unionists	Others	Total Valid Votes
1969	Stormont			269,501			107,043	182,543	559,087
1973	Local Council	29,610		286,112	92,600	94,474	75,160	113,023	690,979
1973	NI Assembly	78,228		211,362	159,773	66,541	158,356	47,981	722,241
1974	Westminster	58,656		232,103	160,437	22,660	170,245	73,525	717,626
1974	Westminster	59,451		256,065	154,193	44,644	120,388	67,353	702,094
1979	EU	170,688		125,169	140,622	39,026	41,910	54,824	572,239
1982	NI Assembly	145,528	64,191	188,277	118,891	58,851	36,033	21,349	633,120
1984	EU	230,251	91,476	147,169	151,399	34,046	20,092	10,884	685,317
1985	Local Council	155,297	75,686	188,497	113,967	45,394	19,712	41,069	639,622
1989	EU	160,110	48,914	118,785	136,335	27,905	25,789	16,973	534,811
1992	Westminster	103,039	78,291	273,335	184,445	68,665	63,913	13,435	785,123
1997	Local Council	98,686	106,938	176,239	130,417	41,421	40,907	37,589	632,197
1997	Westminster	107,348	126,921	258,349	190,814	62,972	33,603	10,755	790,762
1998	NI Assembly	145,917	142,858	172,225	177,963	52,636	65,826	52,892	810,317
1999	EU	192,762	117,643	119,507	190,731	14,391	42,777	998	678,809
2001	Local Council	169,477	163,269	181,336	153,424	40,443	23,475	59,033	790,457
2001	Westminster	181,999	175,933	216,839	169,865	28,999	22,622	14,117	810,374
2003	NI Assembly	177,944	162,758	156,931	117,547	25,372	19,391	32,085	692,028
2004	EU	175,761	144,541	91,164	87,559			50,252	549,277
2005	Local Council	208,278	163,650	126,353	121,991	35,149	8,553	39,181	703,155
2005	Westminster	241,856	174,530	127,414	125,626	28,291	2,718	17,167	717,602
2007	NI Assembly	207,721	180,573	103,145	105,164	36,139	14,274	43,297	690,313
2009	EU	88,346	126,184	82,893	78,489	26,699	66,197	15,764	484,572
2010	Westminster	168,216	171,942	102,361	110,970	42,762	26,300	51,320	673,871
2011	NI Assembly	198,436	178,224	87,531	94,286	50,875	22,125	30,259	661,734
2014	Local Council	144,928	151,137	101,385	85,237	41,769	53,075	50,246	627,777
2015	Westminster	184,260	176,232	114,935	99,809	61,556	43,917	37,394	718,103
2016	NI Assembly	202,567	166,785	87,302	83,368	48,447	42,394	63,451	694,314
2017	NI Assembly	225,413	224,245	103,314	95,958	72,717	28,512	53,156	803,315
2017	Westminster	292,316	238,915	83,280	95,419	64,553	7,177	30,523	812,183
2019	Westminster	244,128	181,853	93.123	118,737	134,115		27,079	799,035
2022	Assembly	184,002	250,385	96,390	78,237	116,681	65,788	71,217	862,700
2023	Local Council	173,033	230,793	81,282	64,996	99,251	31,743	64,417	745,515
2024	Westminster	172,058	210,891	94,779	86,861	117,191	48,685	49,375 [1]	779,840

[1] Alex Eason (North Down) was elected as an Independent in July 2024.