

31st August 2017, The Telegraph: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/08/31/labour-generated-10-times-party-membership-fees-tories-2016/>

Labour rakes in the party fees as Tory membership tumbles

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LABOUR received 10 times more than the Tories in membership fees in 2016 as the scale of the difference between the number of rank and file supporters for each party was laid bare.

While the Conservatives generated £1.5million in membership fees, Labour coffers were boosted to the tune of £14.4million, according to figures published by the Electoral Commission.

In 2015, the Tories brought in £800,000 through membership, while the Labour figure was £9.5 million.

The size of the gap between the two parties is likely to reignite speculation about the current size of Tory party membership after previous claims that it may have dipped below 100,000.

Membership figures for the Conservatives have not been made available since 2013, when the party had about 150,000 paid-up supporters.

That figure represented a considerable reduction in membership during the 2005 leadership contest when it stood at a reported 253,000.

In stark contrast the most recent estimate of Labour Party membership from March of this year was 517,000. The cost of standard membership of the Conservative Party is £25 and £48 for Labour, but both parties offer less costly membership packages for certain groups like young people and the armed forces.

The Conservative Party declined to comment on the current size of its membership. A Labour Party spokesman said: "Labour is a mass membership party, proud to be funded by our members and working people. It is this broad funding base that makes us the party of ordinary working people, while the Tories increasingly rely on a small pool of super-rich donors."

While Labour enjoys a huge financial advantage on the issue of membership income, it is the Conservatives who are ahead when it comes to donations.

The Tories received almost £19million in 2016 while Labour received £14.7 million. In 2015, a general election year, the Tories received about £32million in donations compared to about £19million for Labour.

Both Labour and the Tories spent less than what they generated in income in 2016.

Labour's total income was just shy of £50 million with the party spending about £43 million while the Tories' total income was just over £28 million with expenditure totalling just under £28 million.

The Liberal Democrats ranked third on the list of party expenditure, spending £7.7 million, followed by the SNP on about £6 million and Ukip with just shy of £3 million.

The SNP spent more than it brought in, recording income of just under £5 million.