



Work of the House of Lords

Summary and Trends

This House of Lords Library Briefing presents historical statistics on the membership, attendance and activities of the House of Lords up until the end of the 2016–17 session (the latest complete session available). The figures presented have been collected by the House of Lords.

- There has been a consistent increase in the actual (the number of Members eligible to attend) and absolute membership (the total number of Members). This has risen from 690 and 693 respectively at the end of the 1999–2000 session, to 802 and 835 at the end of the 2016–17 session. As at 14 February 2019, the actual size of the House was 785 and the absolute size of the House was 807.
- The proportion of women in the House of Lords has increased over time, with women making up 26 percent of the absolute size of the House at the end of the 2016–17 session.
- There has been a general increase in average daily attendance over time. In 1999–2000 average daily attendance was 352, and in 2016–17 it was 484.
- The average number of Members participating in divisions has also increased markedly from 209 in 1999–2000 to 396 in 2016–17.
- There has been an increase in the number of questions for written answer over time. In 2016–17 there were 6,872.
- There has been an increase in the number of private members' bills passing through the House of Lords over time, attributable to an increase in the number of bills introduced in the House of Lords, rather than an increase in those coming from the House of Commons.
- In the 2016–17 session the House of Lords made a total of 2,234 amendments to government bills, an average of 89 per bill. Between 1997–98 and 2016–17, the House of Lords made an average of 68 amendments to each government bill considered.

Many of the changes and variations in the data may be linked by common factors, especially the size of the House in a given session. Where possible this briefing seeks to aid understanding of the data by plotting data on a per Member or per sitting day basis.

Table of Contents

1. Trends in Membership of the House
2. Sittings and Business of the House
3. Legislation
4. Committee Activity

Table of Contents

1. Trends in Membership of the House	1
1.1 Average Daily Attendance	8
2. Sittings and Business of the House	9
2.1 Sitting Days	10
2.2 Oral Questions.....	12
2.3 Questions for Short Debate.....	14
2.4 Oral Ministerial Statements	15
2.5 Questions for Written Answer	15
2.6 Divisions	17
3. Legislation	20
3.1 Government Bills.....	20
3.2 Private Member's Bills.....	25
3.3 Delegated Legislation	28
4. Committee Activity	31

Data in this Lords Library briefing was partly compiled with the assistance of Claire Mawditt, an ESRC Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) fellow on placement with the Library.

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I. Trends in Membership of the House

This section outlines statistics on membership of the House of Lords. Membership figures are broken down into ‘actual’ and ‘absolute’ membership:

- Actual membership includes all Members, at that point, eligible to sit in the House. The actual membership excludes Members who are on leave of absence or otherwise disqualified from sitting. In most cases, Members are disqualified from sitting due to holding a particular judicial post or being a member of the European Parliament.¹
- The absolute membership of the House includes all Members that could exercise their right to sit in the House, and additionally includes those on leave of absence or disqualified from sitting at that point in time.

Statistics on membership are as at the end of the session unless otherwise stated.

Size of the House

This section discusses trends in the actual and absolute membership of the House of Lords over time. The membership of the House of Lords has changed considerably over the last 100 years, particularly as a result of legislation such as:

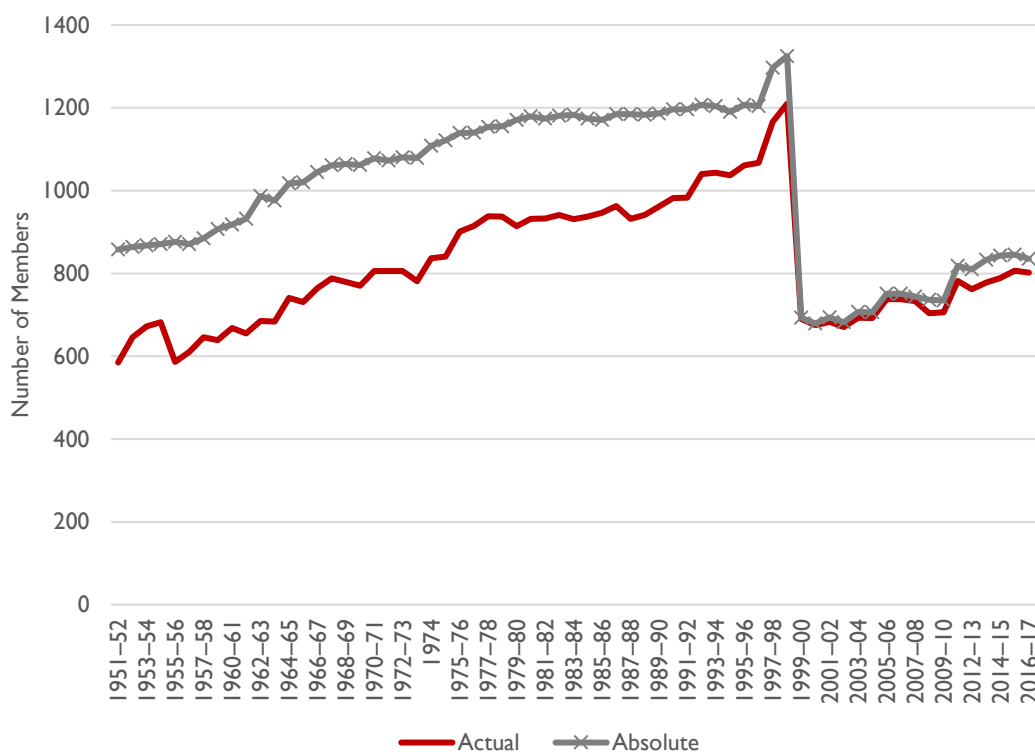
- The Life Peerages Act 1958, which enabled life peerages to be created and for holders to sit in the House of Lords;
- The Peerage Act 1963, which enabled female hereditary peers to sit in the House, and;
- The House of Lords Act 1999, which removed all but 92 of the hereditary peers.

Further information on these reforms can be found in the House of Lords Library Briefing, [History of the House of Lords: A Short Introduction](#) (27 April 2017).

¹ House of Lords, [Companion to the Standing Orders and Guide to the Proceedings of the House of Lords](#), 2015, para 1.02.

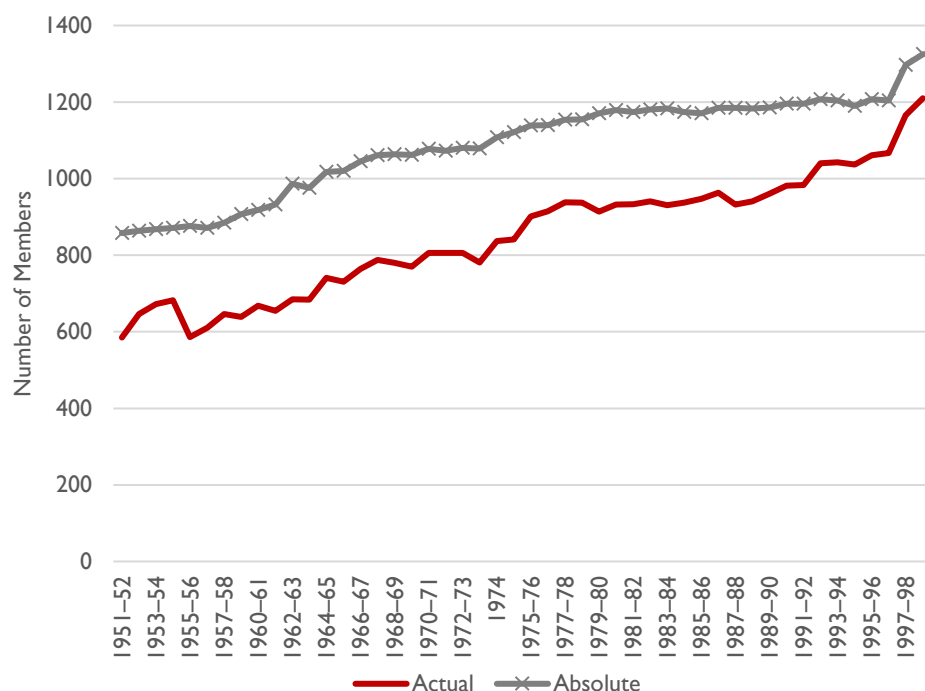
Graph 1 shows the actual and absolute membership of the House of Lords between the 1951–52 session and the end of the 2016–17 session. It demonstrates the impact that the creation of life peerages had upon the membership of the House, as well as the reduction in membership brought about by the House of Lords Act 1999, which led to the removal of all but 92 of the hereditary peers (the ‘excepted hereditaries’). At its height, absolute membership reached 1,325 Members in the 1998–99 session. There was then a sharp fall in both actual and absolute membership, to 690 and 693 respectively, as a result of the House of Lords Act 1999.

Graph 1: Actual and Absolute Membership, 1951–52 to 2016–17



(Source: House of Lords Journal Office, *Statistics on Business and Membership, 1951–52 to 2016–17*)

In addition to the significant fall in membership in 1999, other changes have occurred over time. Such changes are more easily seen by separating membership for all sessions up until 1998–99, from sessions post 1998–99. Graph 2 illustrates how the gap between the actual and absolute membership began to decrease between the 1951–52 and 1998–99 sessions.

Graph 2: Actual and Absolute Membership, 1951–52 to 1998–99²

(Source: House of Lords Journal Office, *Statistics on Business and Membership, 1951–52 to 1998–99*)

In the 1951–52 session actual membership was 68 percent of absolute membership; by the 1998–99 session actual membership had risen to 91 percent of absolute membership. This demonstrated an increased proportion of potentially active Members. The facility for Peers to go on leave of absence was introduced in 1958 following the recommendation of a Lords committee.³ Prior to this the gap between the absolute and actual membership was in part explained by the number of Peers who did not take the oath and were therefore ineligible to sit. For example, in the 1951–52 session 273 Members of the House had not taken the oath.⁴

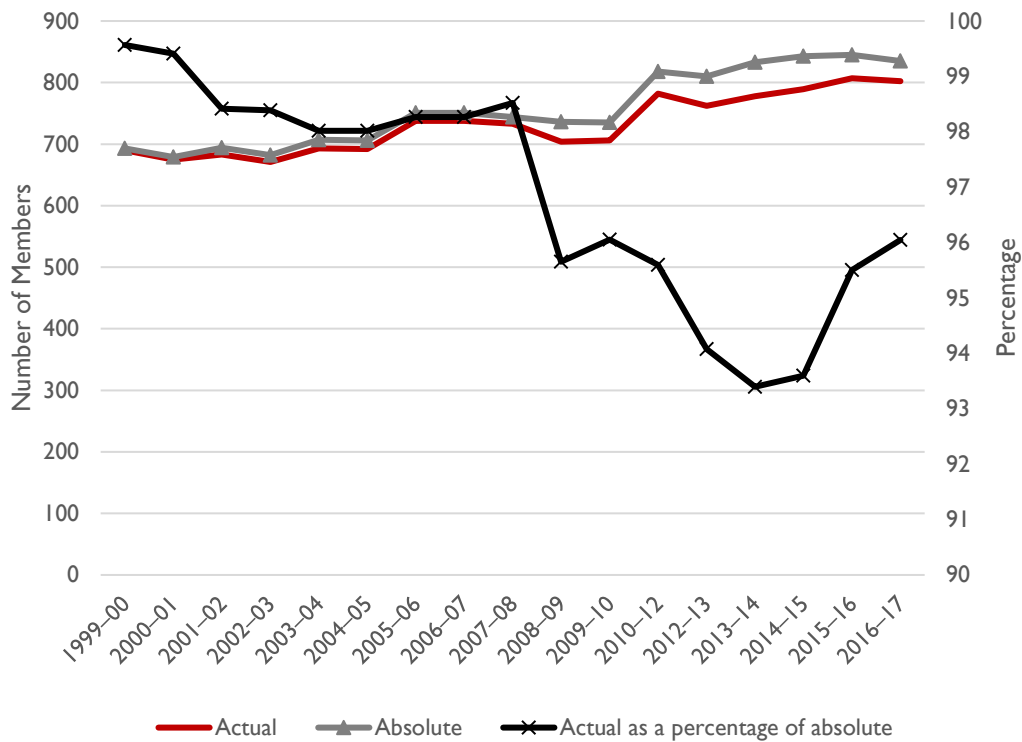
Graph 3 illustrates the gap between the actual and absolute membership between the 1999–2000 and 2016–17 sessions.

² Data unavailable for the 1958–59 session.

³ House of Lords Select Committee, HL Paper 60, 1957–58. Discussed in: Donald Shell, *The House of Lords*, 1988, pp 14–15.

⁴ This included one member of the Lords Spiritual.

Graph 3: Actual and Absolute Membership, 1999–2000 to 2016–17



(Source: House of Lords Journal Office, *Statistics on Business and Membership, 1999–2000 to 2016–17*)

Following the reduction in hereditary Members brought about by the House of Lords Act 1999, there were initially very few Members ineligible to attend the House. At the end of the 1998–99 session 48 hereditary peers were on leave of absence and 66 were without writs of summons. Only three Peers were on leave of absence as at the end of the 1999–2000 session. Over the following sessions, the proportion of ineligible Members began to grow again.

Graph 3 demonstrates that actual membership was between 98 and 100 percent of absolute membership between the 1999–2000 and 2007–08 sessions. However, after the 2007–08 session the gap began to widen, with the largest difference being seen at the end of the 2013–14 session. At the end of the 2016–17 session, actual membership was 96 percent of absolute membership. This was the narrowest gap between the absolute and actual membership (as a percentage) since the 2009–10 session.

Graphs 2 and 3 also indicate a general increase in both actual and absolute membership over these periods. For example:

- Actual and absolute membership increased from 585 and 858 respectively in the 1951–52 session, to 1210 and 1325 in the 1998–99 session.

- Actual and absolute membership then rose from 690 and 693 at the end of the 1999–2000 session, to 802 and 835 by the end of the 2016–17 session. The 2016–17 session saw the first decrease in the size of the actual membership from one session to another since 2012–13. As at 14 February 2019, the actual size of the House was 785 and the absolute size of was 807.

The size of the gap between the actual and absolute membership could be influenced by retirements from the House. Voluntary retirement from the House of Lords was placed on a statutory basis by the House of Lords Reform Act 2014. In effect, this replaced the non-statutory voluntary retirement scheme in place since 2011. Members can retire under the 2014 Act by giving written notice to the Clerk of the Parliaments specifying a date on which they want to retire. From that date onward, Members are no longer able to participate in House of Lords proceedings. Such retirement is permanent and cannot be rescinded.

On 5 December 2016, the House of Lords debated a motion on the subject of the size of the House.⁵ The motion sought agreement that the size of the House, “should be reduced, and methods should be explored by which this could be achieved”.⁶ The motion was carried unanimously. As a result, on 20 December 2016, the Lord Speaker announced the establishment of the Lord Speaker’s Committee on the Size of the House, to examine the possible methods by which the House could be reduced in size.⁷ The report of the committee was published on 31 October 2017.⁸ A debate on the report took place in the House of Lords on 19 December 2017.⁹

The report recommended reducing the size of the House of Lords to 600 Members and capping the size at that number.¹⁰ New Members would be appointed on 15 year terms with political appointments shared between the parties in line with the result of the previous general election, to create a House with no party allowed an absolute majority.¹¹ Under the proposals, the House would reach the target size of 600 Members in just over a decade.¹² For recent developments on the size of the House please see the Library’s briefing [Size of the House of Lords: Recent Developments](#) (29 January 2019).

⁵ [HL Hansard, 5 December 2016, cols 500–92.](#)

⁶ *ibid.*, col 500.

⁷ [HL Hansard, 20 December 2016, col 1541.](#)

⁸ Lord Speaker’s Committee on the Size of the House, [Report of the Lord Speaker’s Committee on the Size of the House](#), 31 October 2017.

⁹ [HL Hansard, 19 December 2017, cols 1965–2001, cols 2011–58, and cols 2070–108.](#)

¹⁰ Lord Speaker’s Committee on the Size of the House, [Report of the Lord Speaker’s Committee on the Size of the House](#), 31 October 2017, p 2.

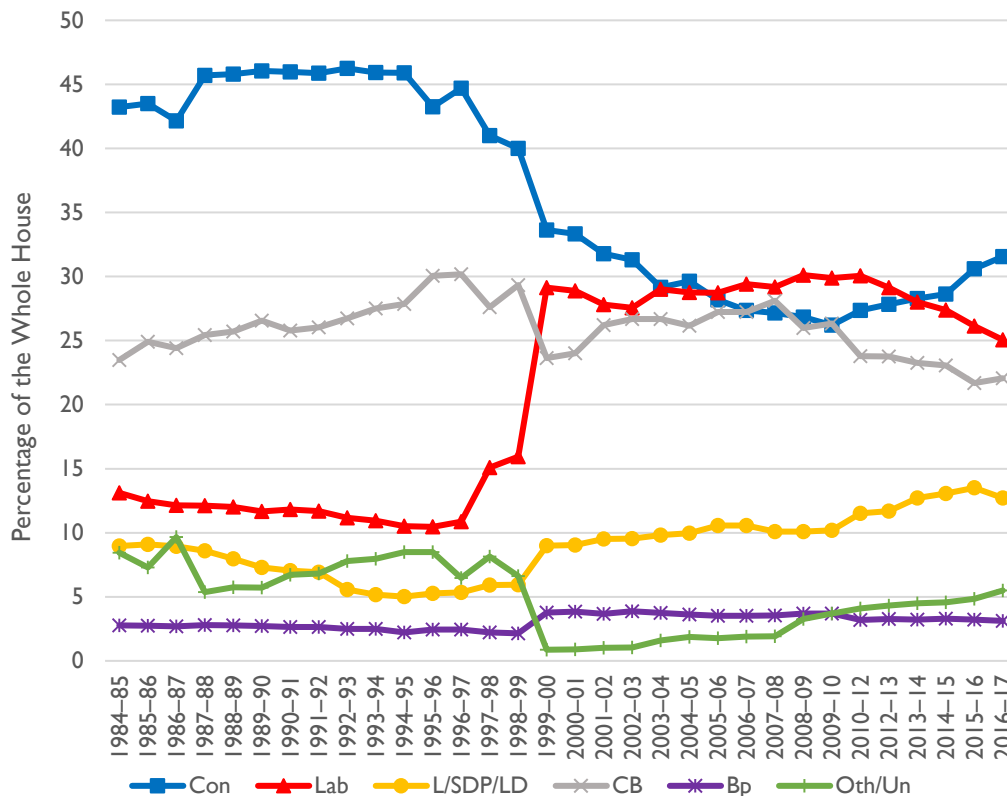
¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *ibid.*, p 3.

Party and Group Strengths

Graph 4 presents the proportion of the actual membership (ie those eligible to sit) belonging to each party or group, as at the end of each session since 1984–85.¹³

Graph 4: Proportion of Members Belonging to Each Party or Group, 1984–85 to 2016–17¹⁴



(Source: House of Lords Journal Office, *Statistics on Business and Membership, 1984–85 to 2016–17*)

The Conservatives were consistently the largest party in the House of Lords between 1984 and 1999. Following the House of Lords Act 1999, the size of the Labour group grew and at times had more Members than the Conservatives. During the Coalition Government of 2010–15 the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats were in government together, increasing the number of Members belonging to a governing party in the

¹³ The group labelled ‘other’ includes all political parties and unaffiliated Members other than those presented in graph 4.

¹⁴ The figures for the Liberals, SDP and Liberal Democrats are a combined figure. Until their merger in 1988 the Liberal Party and the SDP were separate. Following the merger in 1988 a number of Peers continued to sit as SDP members. These figures are not provided separately for consistency. Figures for the Liberal Democrat Party were collected from the 1988–89 session onwards. Figures for the Social Democratic Party (SDP) were collected between the 1984–85 and 1991–92 sessions.

House of Lords. At the end of the 2014–15 session the Conservative and Labour parties were similar in size, although with the Conservatives as the slightly larger group. The size of the Crossbench group has remained between 23 percent and 30 percent of the whole House throughout this period. At the end of the 2016–17 session the Crossbenchers had fallen to 22 percent of the whole House. The Conservative Party stood at 32 percent, its highest percentage of the whole House since 2001–02. The Labour Party had fallen to 25 percent, its lowest since the 1998–99 session. The Liberal Democrats stood at 13 percent, a slight decrease from their peak of 14 percent in the previous session.

Gender

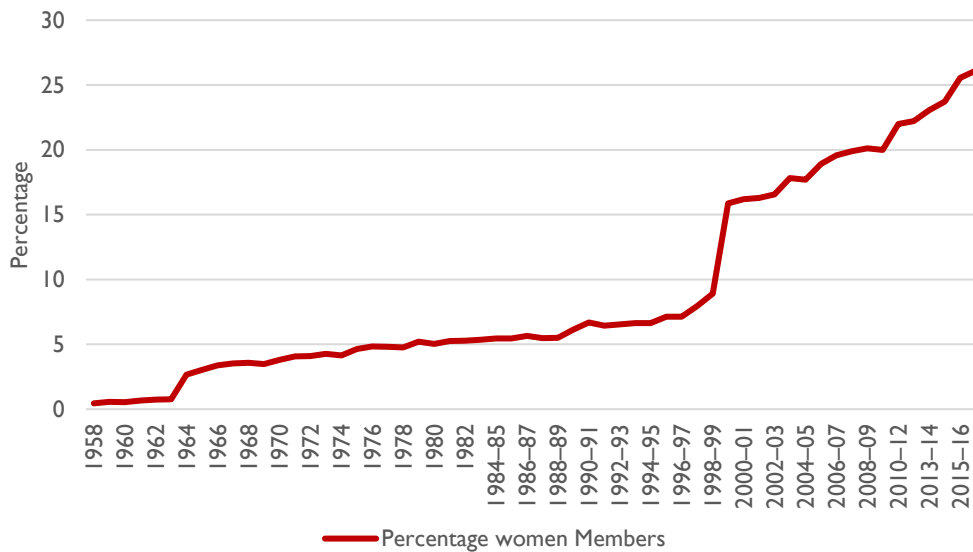
The Life Peerages Act 1958 and the Peerage Act 1963—respectively—enabled female life peers to be created and female hereditary peers to sit in the House of Lords.¹⁵ Graph 5 shows the proportion of female Members in the House of Lords as a percentage of the absolute membership (men and women), as at the end of each session, since the 1957–58 session.¹⁶ The sharp increase evident in the proportion of women in the House in 1999 was a result of the House of Lords Act 1999 removing the majority of hereditary peers, who were mostly male.¹⁷ In the 1998–99 session the proportion of women in the House of Lords was 9 percent. This then rose to 16 percent in session 1999–2000 following the reduction in hereditary peers brought about by the Act. The proportion of women in the House has since risen steeply, and stood at 26 percent by the end of the 2016–17 session. The axis on the left side of the graph refers to the proportion of women in the House of Lords, the axis on the right refers to absolute membership.

¹⁵ See also: House of Lords Library, [Representation of Women in Parliament](#), 31 January 2018.

¹⁶ Data on the actual number of women Members in the House of Lords was not available.

¹⁷ Christina Eason, '[Women Peers and Political Appointment: Has the House of Lords been feminised since 1999?](#)', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 27 January 2009, vol 32 no 3, pp 399–417.

Graph 5: Proportion of female Members for Sessions 1958 to 2016–17

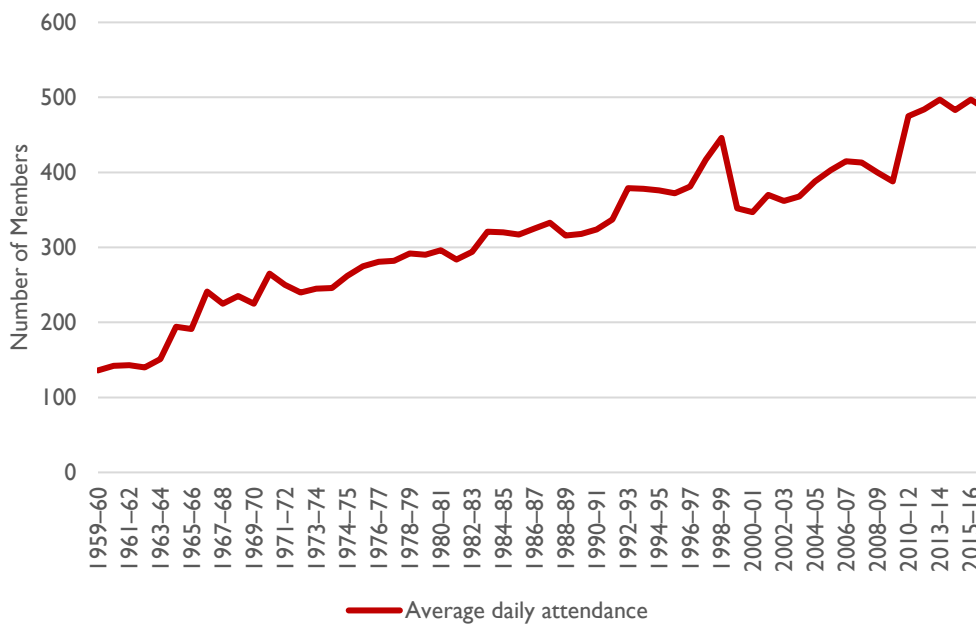


(Source: *Vacher’s Parliamentary Companion*, 1958 to 1983 and House of Lords Journal Office, *Statistics on Business and Membership*, 1957–58 to 2016–17)

1.1 Average Daily Attendance

Graph 6 presents the average number of Members attending the House of Lords daily, calculated at the end of each session, since 1959–60.

Graph 6: Average Daily Attendance, 1959–60 to 2016–17

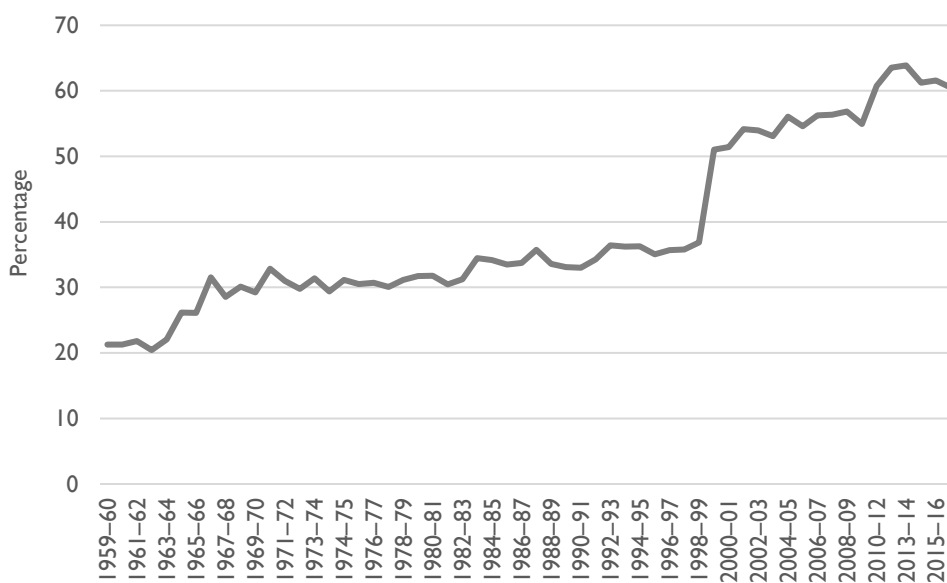


(Source: House of Lords Journal Office, *Statistics on Business and Membership*, 1959–60 to 2016–17)

Graph 6 demonstrates a general increase in average daily attendance over time, rising from 136 in the 1959–60 session to 484 in the 2016–17 session. The exception is the period between sessions 1998–99 and 1999–2000, where there was a decrease in the average daily attendance. The 2010–12 session saw a steep increase in average daily attendance. Since then average daily attendance has remained between 475 and 497. The average for the whole time period is 321.

However, over this time period the size of the House has changed. Plotting the average daily attendance as a percentage of the actual membership shows that between 1959–60 and 1998–99 there was a general increase in the proportion of Members attending the House. However, after reform this increased markedly and continued to show a similar trend until 2013–14 where it reached a high of 64 percent. Graph 7 shows that whilst the average daily attendance dropped between 1998–99 and 1999–2000, as a percentage of the actual Membership it increased from 37 percent to 51 percent.

Graph 7: Average Daily Attendance as a Percentage of the Actual Membership, 1959–60 to 2016–17



(Source: House of Lords Journal Office, *Statistics on Business and Membership*, 1959–60 to 2016–17, and Lords Library calculations)

2. Sittings and Business of the House

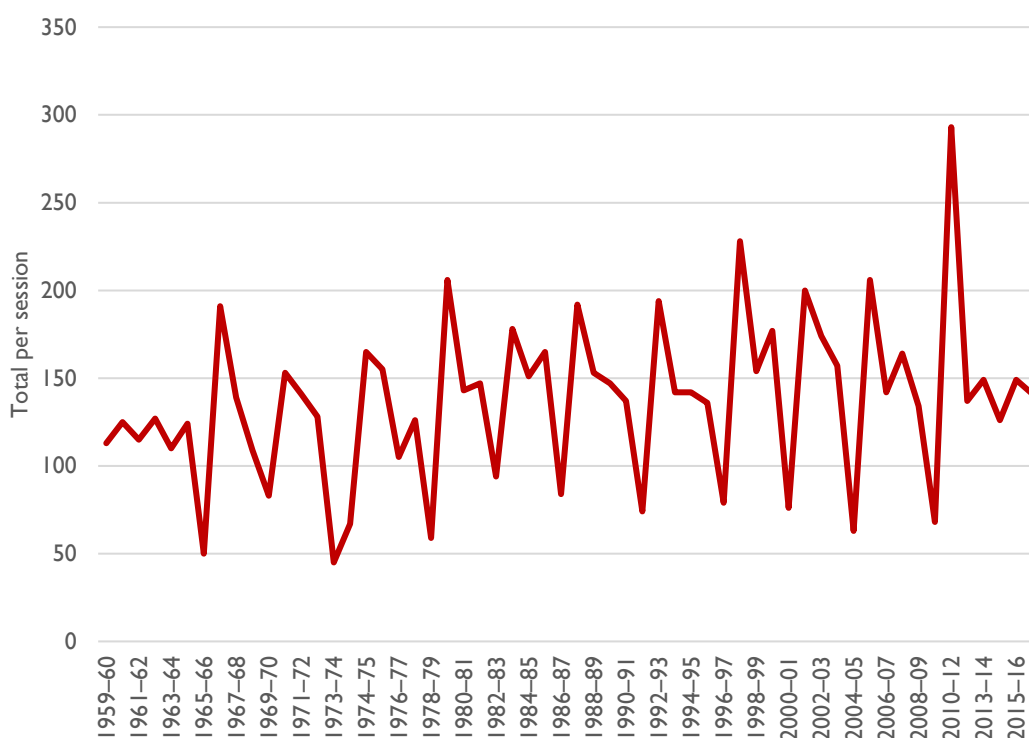
This section outlines some of the non-legislative activities undertaken by Members of the House of Lords. Data referring to activities of the House of Lords according to parliamentary session are characterised by sharp peaks and troughs, mostly attributable to the short sessions that have tended to precede a general election and the longer sessions that have followed a

general election.¹⁸ The following non-legislative activity is included in this briefing: oral questions; debates; questions for short debate; oral ministerial statements; and questions for written answer.

2.1 Sitting Days

The number of days the House of Lords sits during a session changes according to the length of a session, but has also varied over the years due to changes in the number of days the House regularly sits during a week. For example, the House currently sits Monday to Thursday, and on a number of Fridays. However, until the 1980s Monday sittings were not part of the regular business pattern of the House of Lords.¹⁹

Graph 8: Number of Sitting Days by Session, 1959–60 to 2016–17



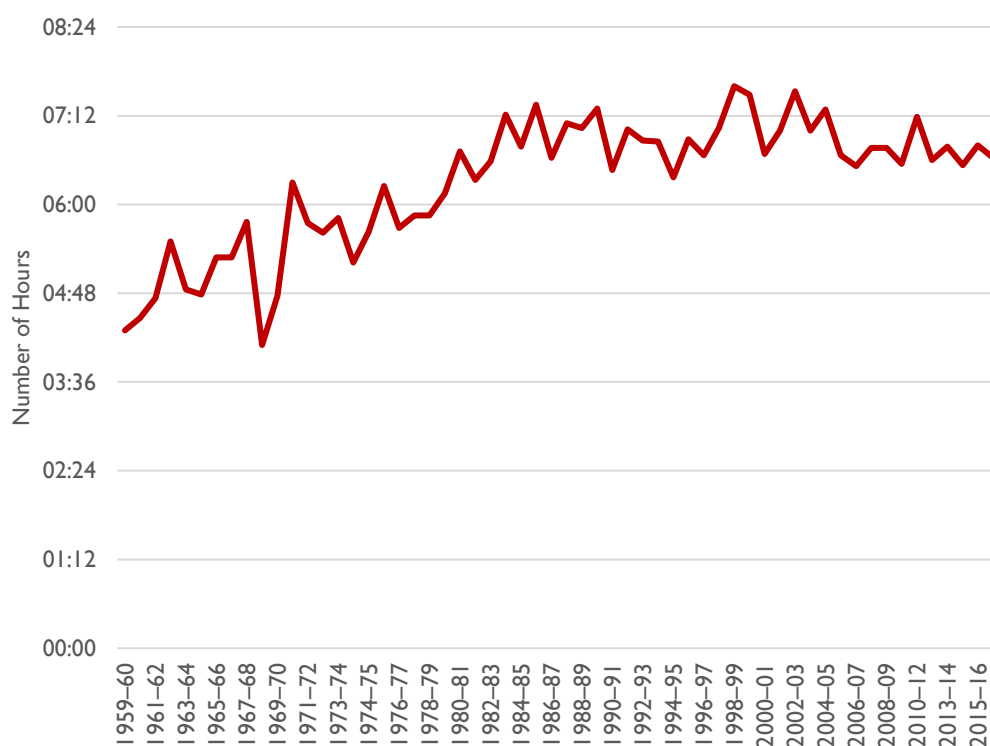
(Source: House of Lords Journal Office, *Statistics on Business and Membership, 1959–60 to 2016–17*)

Graph 8 shows a pattern of sharp drops and large increases in the number of sitting days. These drops coincide with sessions before and after elections, which—respectively—tend to be shorter or longer.

¹⁸ The 2010–12 session was a double length session running from the May 2010 general election to May 2012 to facilitate changes brought in by the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011. This act sets the date for general elections at a fixed term of five years and polling day as the first Thursday of May, and removes the power of the Prime Minister to call general elections.

¹⁹ Michael Rush, *Parliament Today*, 2005, p 160.

Graph 9: Average Length of Sitting Day by Session, 1959–60 to 2016–17



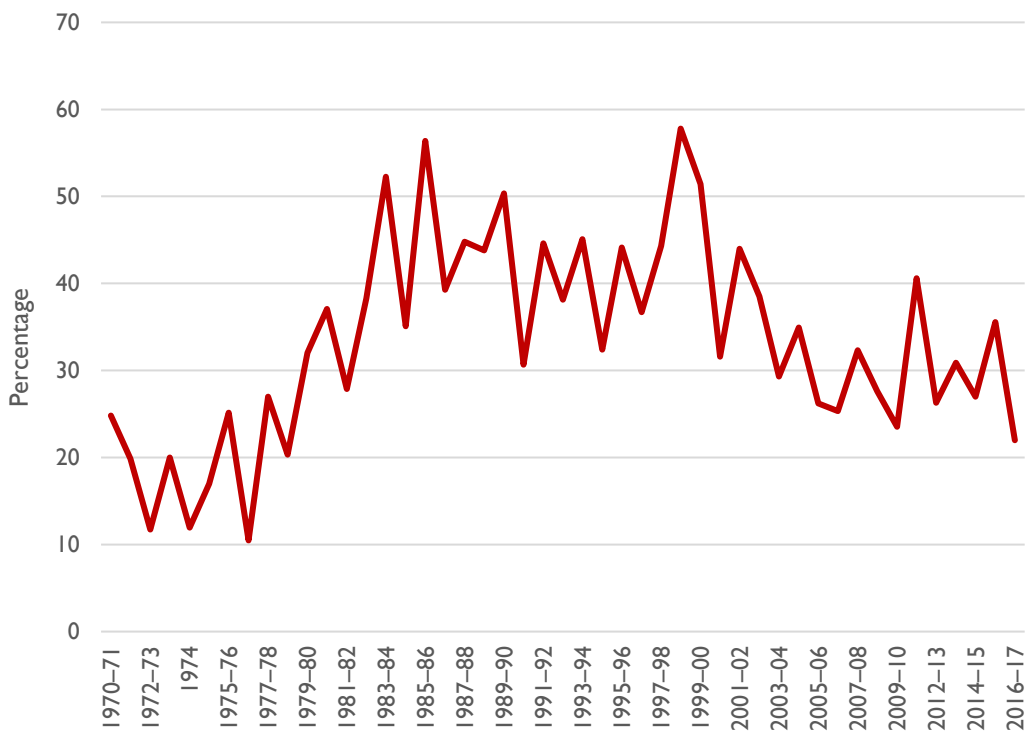
(Source: House of Lords Journal Office, *Statistics on Business and Membership, 1959–60 to 2016–17*)

As with Graph 8, Graph 9 shows clear fluctuations in the average length of sitting days. However, between 1959–60 and 1980–81 the average length of a sitting day increased. Since this time the length of a sitting day has remained relatively consistent but with little discernible pattern.

Graph 10 presents the proportion of sitting days per session that finished after 10pm between 1970–71 and 2016–17. In 2002, the House adopted a “firm convention” to finish sittings by 10pm, where this was possible.²⁰

²⁰ House of Lords, [Companion to the Standing Orders and Guide to the Proceedings of the House of Lords](#), 2017, para 3.01. See also: House of Lords Library, [House of Lords: Reform of Working Practices, 2000–2012](#), 11 October 2012.

Graph 10: Proportion of Sittings Days Beyond 10pm by Session, 1970–71 to 2016–17



(Source: House of Lords Journal Office, *Statistics on Business and Membership, 1970–71 to 2016–17*)

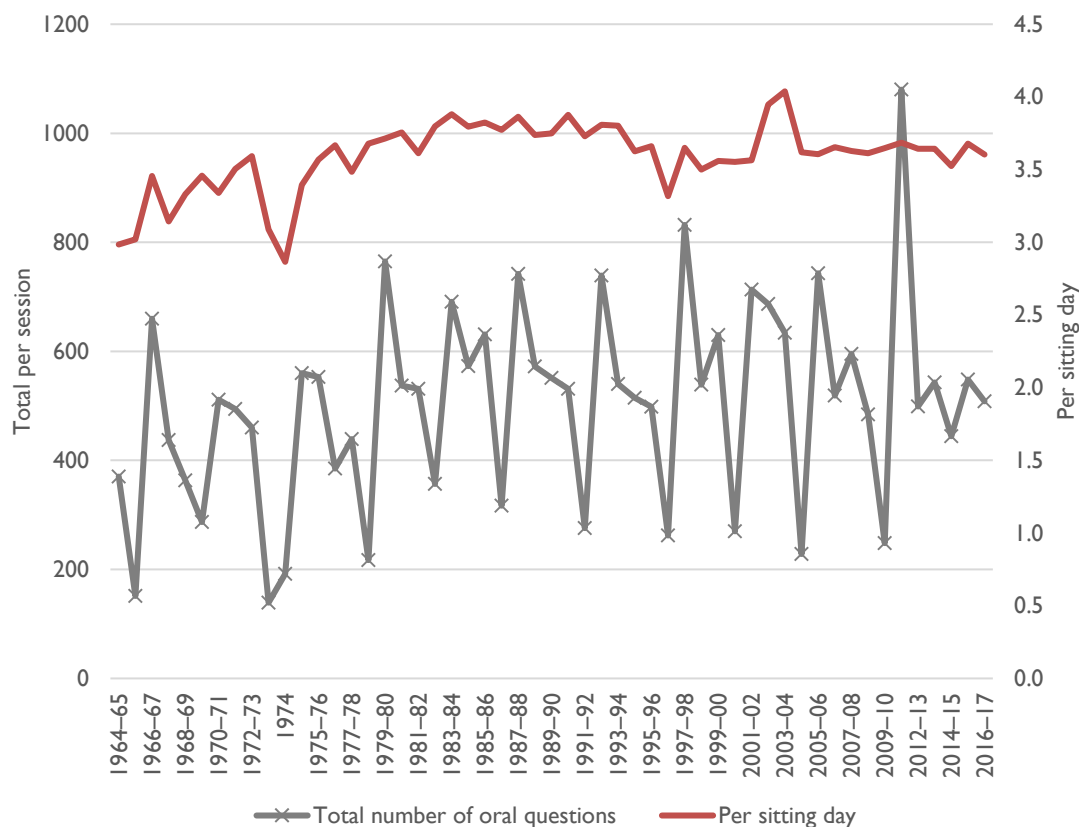
Graph 10 demonstrates a general increase in the proportion of sitting days going beyond 10pm between sessions 1970–71 and the mid-1980s. However, the number has varied significantly between sessions. It is also noticeable that, although the proportion of sittings beyond 10pm has reduced since 2002, it has not dropped considerably. Indeed, only two of the sessions since 2002 (the 2009–10 and 2016–17 sessions) have seen fewer than 25 percent of sittings go beyond 10pm.

2.2 Oral Questions

Graph 11 presents the number of oral questions asked per session between 1964–65 and 2016–17. Parliamentary sessions in which a general election is held tend to have fewer sitting days, and therefore show a decrease in the number of oral questions. This is usually then followed by an increase in the number of oral questions in the longer session immediately following the election. The fluctuation in oral questions is likely due to a number of factors, not least the changes in the arrangement of oral questions over time. Currently, four oral questions are answered by the Government at the start of business on Monday to Thursday. However, this has not always been the case. For example, the House has not always sat on Mondays or taken oral questions on Thursdays. In addition, the number and format of oral

questions asked during a week has also changed over time.²¹ Graph 11 also displays the number of oral questions as an average per sitting day. This evens out the variation caused by the differing lengths of parliamentary sessions. This demonstrates that whilst there has been a slight rise since the 1960s and mid-1970s the number per sitting day has remained relatively constant over time.

Graph 11: Number of Oral Questions by Session, 1964–65 to 2016–17

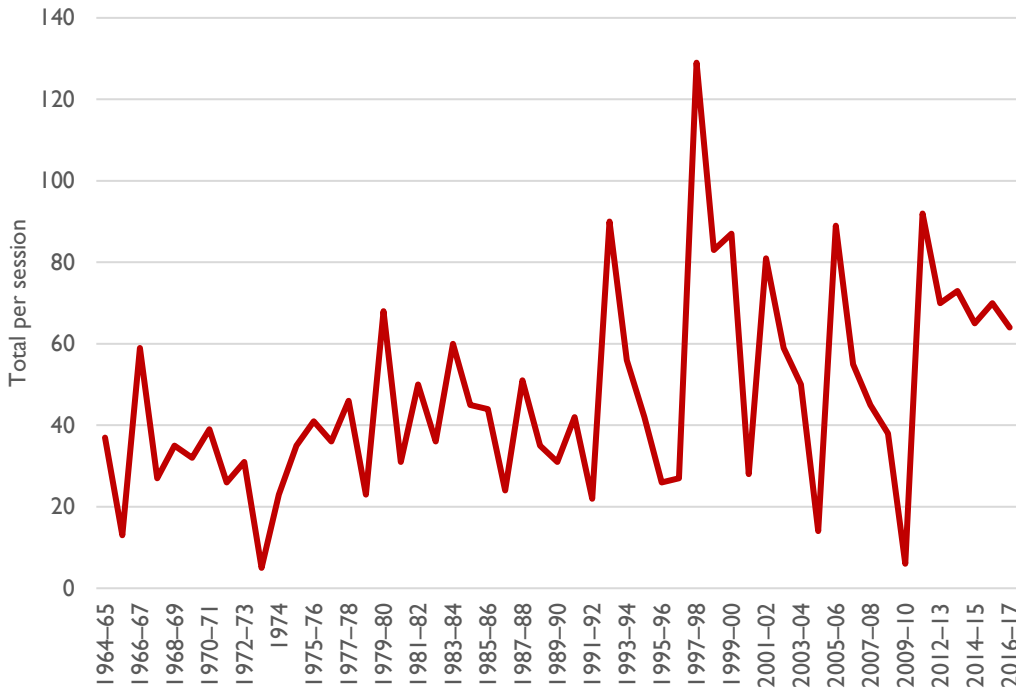


(Source: House of Lords Journal Office, *Statistics on Business and Membership, 1964–65 to 2016–17*, and Lords Library calculations)

²¹ For examples of some of these changes, see the House of Lords Library Note, [House of Lords: Reform of Working Practices, 2000–2012](#) (11 October 2012). See also: House of Lords Library, [Tabling of Lords Parliamentary Questions](#), 5 November 2015.

2.3 Questions for Short Debate

Graph 12: Number of Questions for Short Debate by Session, 1964–65 to 2016–17

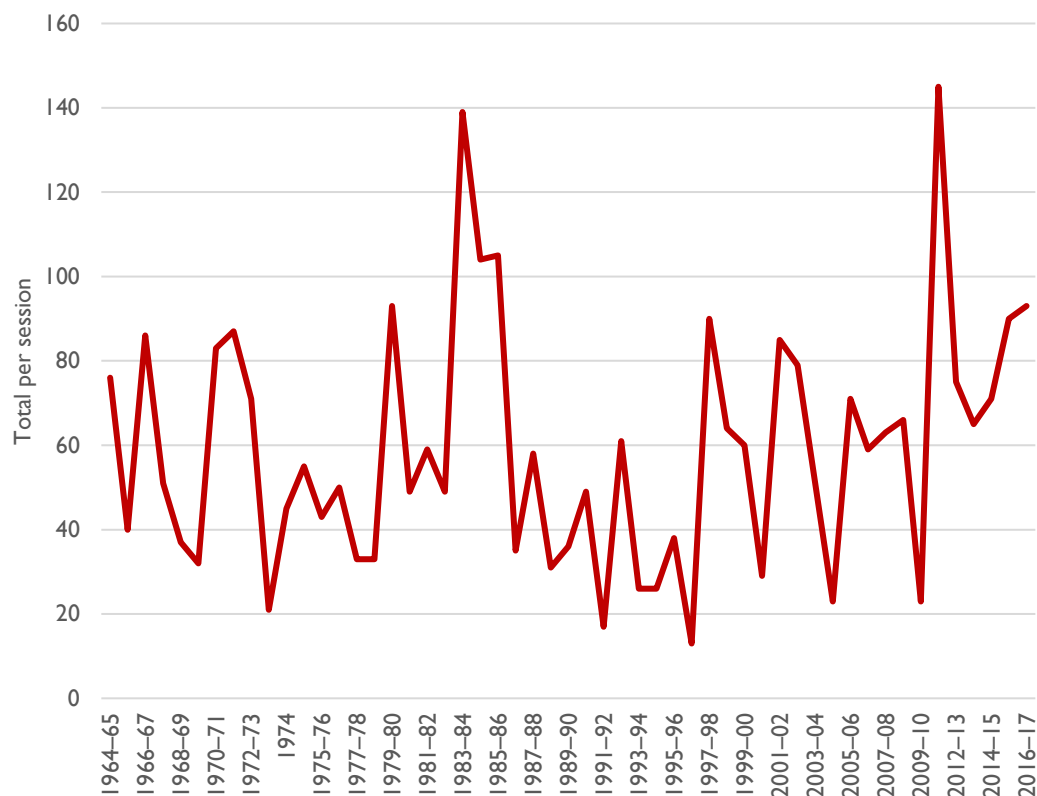


(Source: House of Lords Journal Office, *Statistics on Business and Membership, 1964–65 to 2016–17*)

Generally, the sharp drops in the number of questions for short debate coincide with pre-election sessions that have tended to be shorter. However, whilst the number of questions for short debate has tended to increase over time, there has been greater variation between individual sessions since the 1991–92 session.

2.4 Oral Ministerial Statements

Graph 13: Number of Oral Ministerial Statements by Session, 1964–65 to 2016–17



(Source: House of Lords Journal Office, *Statistics on Business and Membership, 1964–65 to 2016–17*)

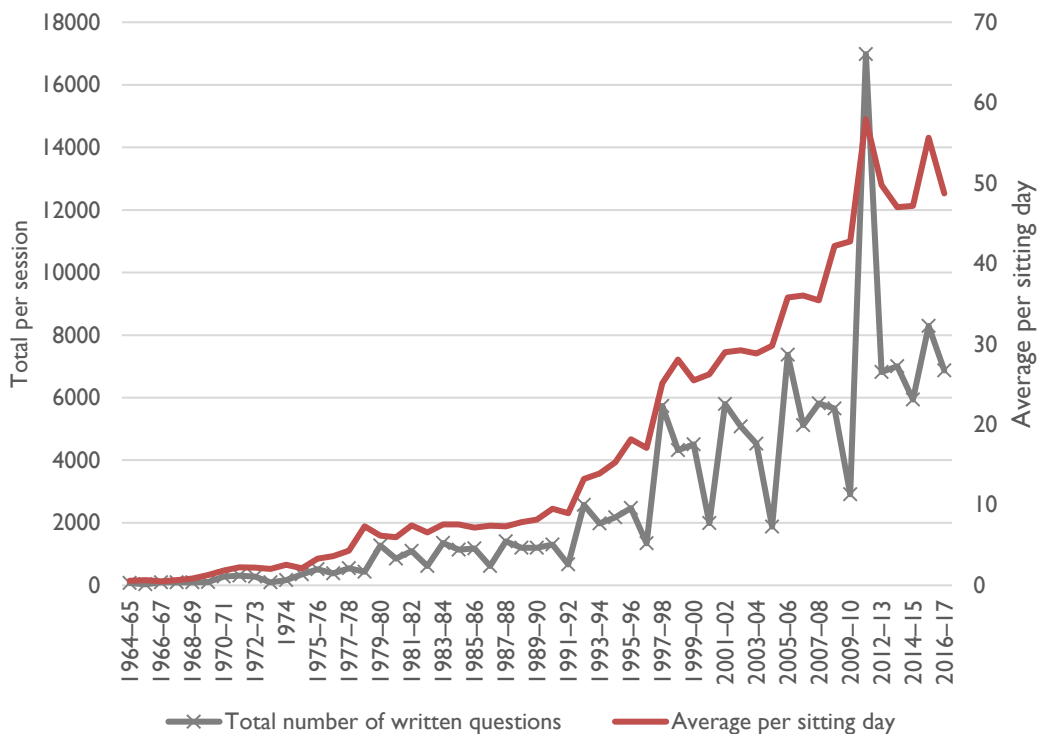
The number of oral ministerial statements per session has fluctuated over time, with little or no discernible pattern. The variation in sessional totals likely reflects the changing activities of the government and the role of public events.

2.5 Questions for Written Answer

Graph 14 presents the number of questions for written answer (QWA) either answered or tabled per session, between 1964–65 and 2014–15.²²

²² Data on the numbers of questions for written answer (QWA) asked each session are available in the sessional statistics published from 1964–65 to 2016–17. QWA statistics from sessions 1964–65 to 2009–10 are assumed to refer to QWA that have been answered, although it should be noted that only statistics from sessions 2005–06 to 2009–10 explicitly state this. Statistics for sessions 2010–12 onwards refer to the number of QWA that have been tabled.

Graph 14: Number of Questions for Written Answer by Session, 1964–65 to 2016–17



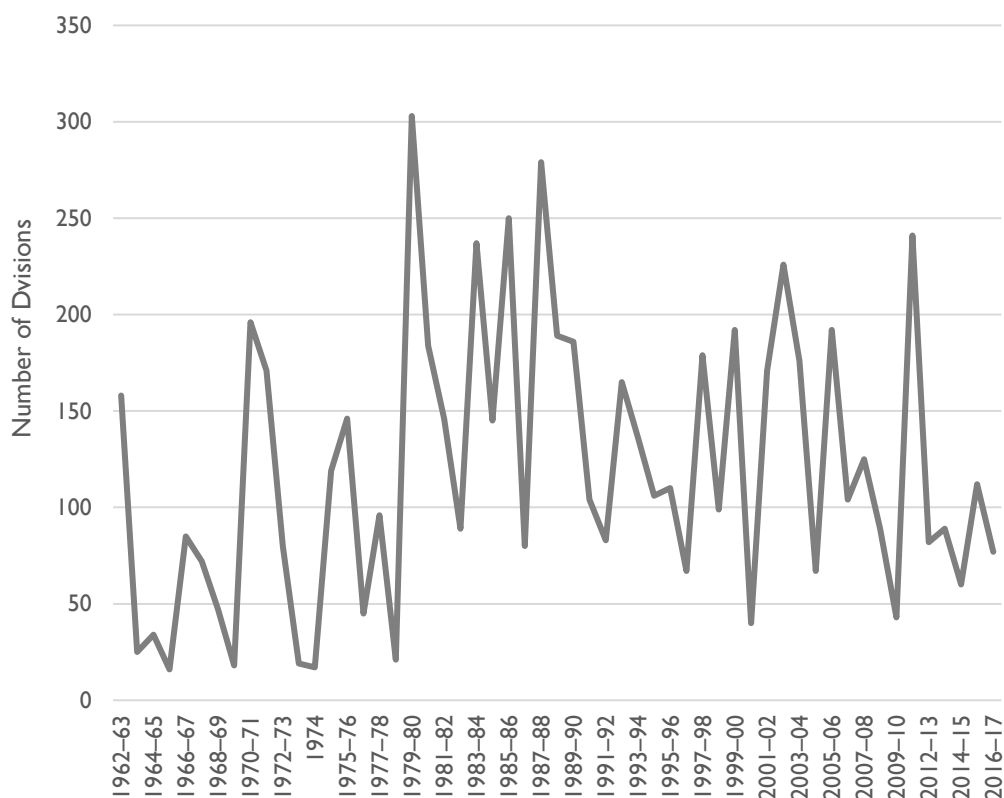
(Source: House of Lords Journal Office, *Statistics on Business and Membership, 1964–65 to 2016–17*, and Lords Library calculations)

Graph 14 demonstrates the rise in the number of QWA since the 1991–92 session. Regarding the sharp rise in QWA in the 2010–12 session (which stood at 16,980), it is worth noting that this was most likely caused by a combination of factors: it was a particularly long session (running from May 2010 to May 2012); it was the first session following the formation of the Coalition Government; and the recording of QWA had been changed from those ‘answered’ to those ‘tabled’ (this may also have caused higher numbers in the subsequent sessions). When plotted per sitting day, the rise in the number of QWA becomes more evident.

2.6 Divisions

Graph 15 presents the number of divisions in the House of Lords since the 1962–63 session.

Graph 15: Number of Divisions by Session, 1962–63 to 2016–17



(Source: House of Lords Journal Office, *Statistics on Business and Membership, 1962–63 to 2016–17*)

Graph 15 shows significant variation in the number of divisions, with many of the sharp reductions coinciding with short sessions preceding general elections. Variations between sessions will also be strongly affected by the amount, and nature, of legislation put before the House.

Graph 16 shows the average number of Members voting in divisions between the 2000–01 and 2016–17 sessions.²³ Also plotted on the graph is this data as a percentage of the actual membership. This shows that whilst the average participation in divisions since 2010–12 has increased, the participation as a proportion of the size of the actual membership has been decreasing slightly since 2010–12.

²³ Data on the average number of Members voting per division is available from the 2000–01 session.

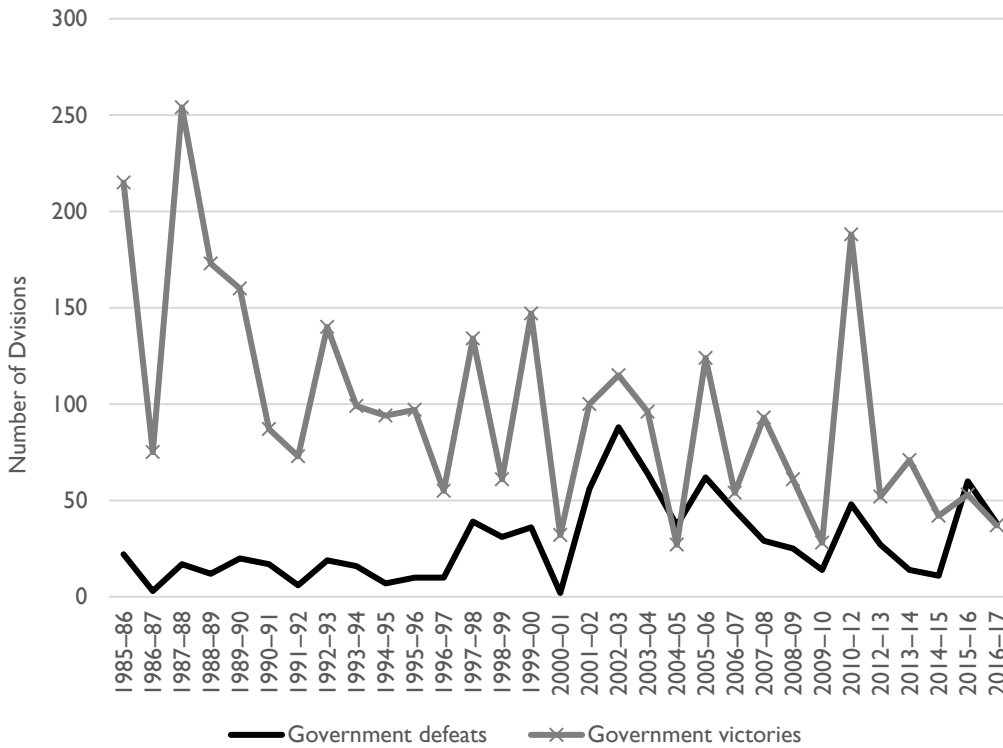
Graph 16: Average Number of Members per Division and as a Percentage of the Whole House, 2000–01 to 2016–17



(Source: House of Lords Journal Office, *Statistics on Business and Membership*, 2000–01 to 2016–17, and Library calculations)

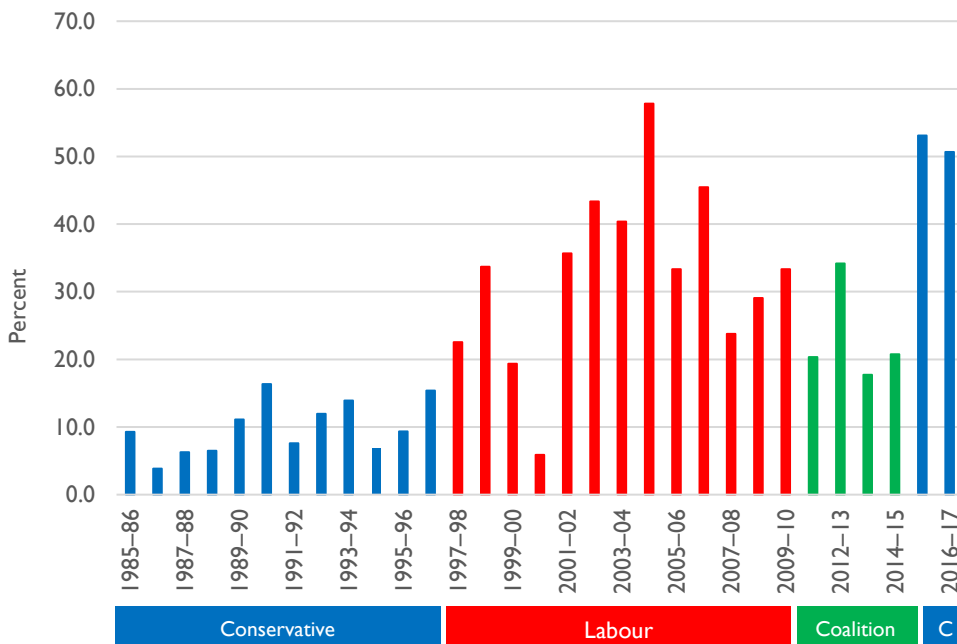
The majority of divisions in the House of Lords are classed as ‘whipped divisions’. For these divisions, at least one of the tellers would be a government whip, and the result of the division can be classed as a government victory or a government defeat. Graph 17 provides a breakdown of these division outcomes since the 1985–86 session.

Graph 17: Government Division Victories and Defeats by Session, 1985–86 to 2016–17



(Source: House of Lords Journal Office, *Statistics on Business and Membership*, 1985–86 to 2016–17)

Graph 18: Government Defeats as a Percentage of Whipped Divisions, 1985–86 to 2016–17



(Source: House of Lords Journal Office, *Statistics on Business and Membership*, 1985–86 to 2016–17, and Lords Library calculations)

Labour suffered more defeats in government (from 1997 to 2010) than Conservative governments (from 1979 to 1997), both in absolute terms and as a percentage of whipped divisions. However, the composition of the House of Lords before and after the House of Lords Act 1999 was notably different, and this should be considered when comparing these figures. Between 1997 and 2010 the Labour governments were defeated on average in 33 percent of whipped divisions. The Coalition Government suffered fewer defeats, with an average of 22 percent of whipped divisions ending in defeat. In 2016–17, the Conservative Government suffered defeats in 51 percent of whipped divisions. This is the third highest percentage of defeats since the 1985–86 session, after the 2004–05 session when the Labour Government lost 58 percent of whipped divisions.

3. Legislation

This section considers legislative activities undertaken by the House of Lords, with a focus on public bills. Public bills fall into two main categories: government bills and private member's bills (PMBs). Public bills can either start in the House of Commons and then be passed to the House of Lords, or start in the House of Lords and then be passed to the House of Commons. The figures presented below consider the total number of public bills that have passed through the House of Lords, and also differentiate between those starting in the Lords and those starting in the Commons.

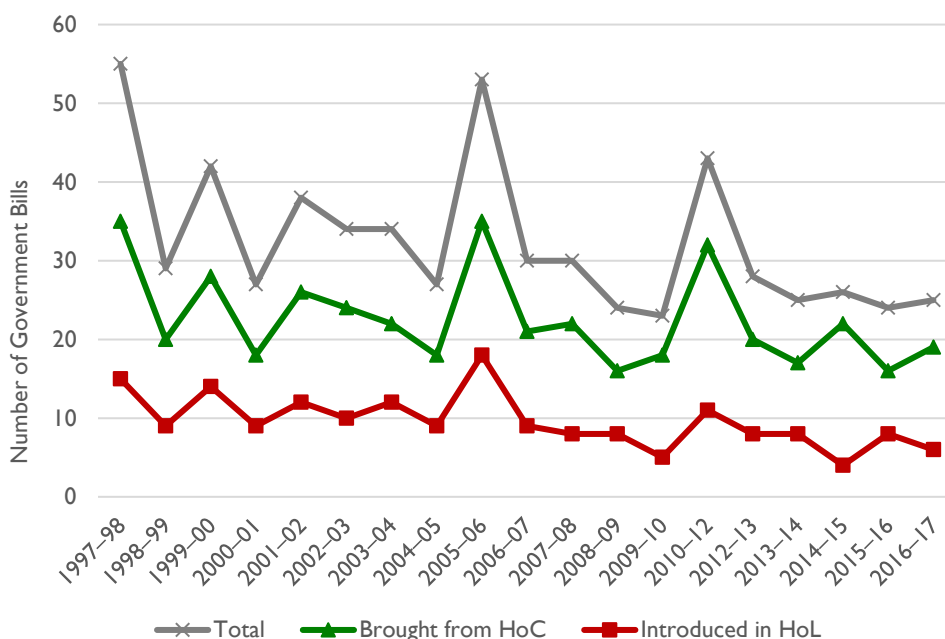
Information on House of Lords legislative activities has been collated from the House of Lords *Public Bill Sessional Statistics* for the 1997–98 to 2016–17 sessions.

3.1 Government Bills

Number of Government Bills

Graph 19 presents the total number of government bills passing through the House of Lords since the 1997–98 session. The figure also breaks this total down into the number of government bills brought from the House of Commons, and those that started in the House of Lords. Note that bills that started in the Commons but did not make it to the Lords are therefore excluded.

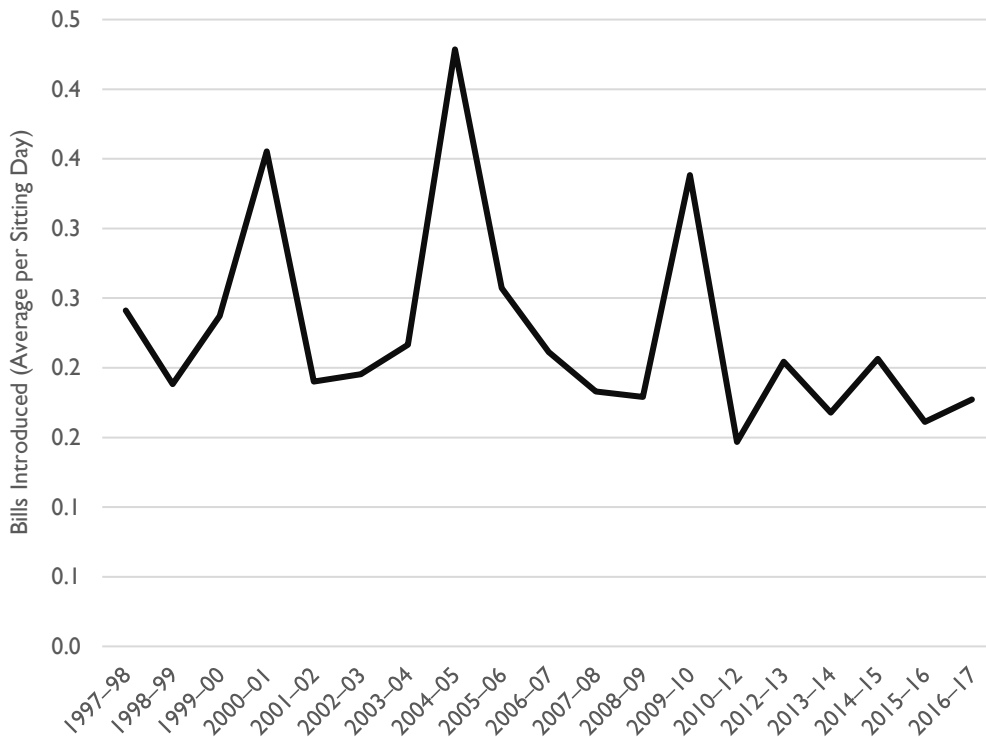
Graph 19: Number of Government Bills by Session, 1997–98 to 2016–17



(Source: House of Lords Journal Office, *Public Bill Statistics, 1997–98 to 2016–17*)

Graph 19 shows the peaks and troughs in the number of government bills each session, which is affected by the shorter and longer sessions on either side of general elections. However, graph 19 does indicate a slight decrease in the total number of government bills passing through the House of Lords since the 1997–98 session. The graph also consistently shows that the majority of government bills have started in the House of Commons. When the variable length of a session is controlled by plotting the data as an average ‘per sitting day’ the apparent decrease in government bills is less clear. This can be seen in graph 20.

Graph 20: Total Number of Government Bills Averaged per Sitting Day by Session, 1997–98 to 2016–17

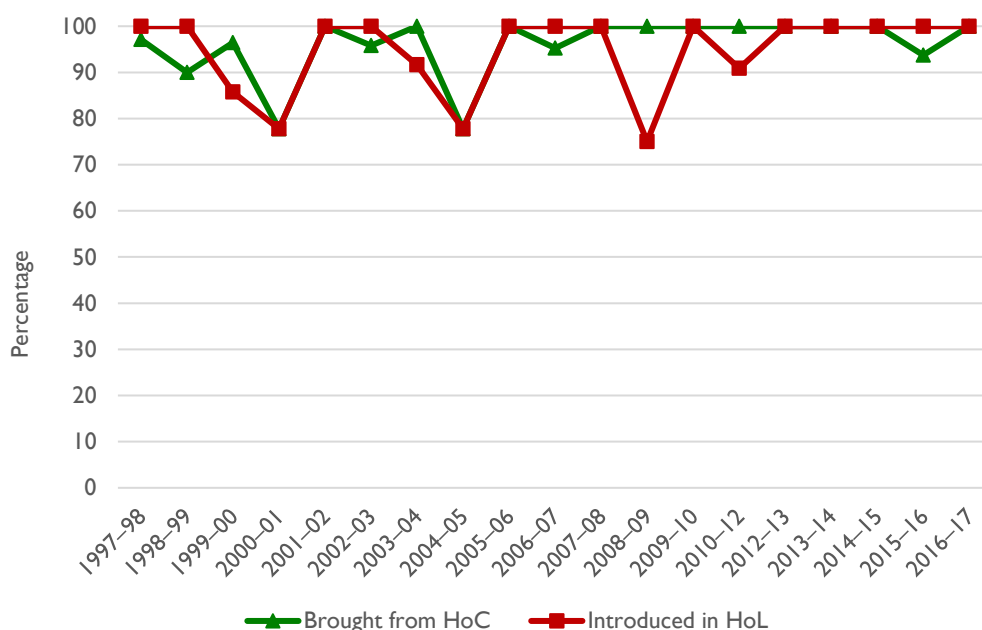


(Source: Legislation Office, *House of Lords Public Bill Sessional Statistics*, 1997–98 to 2016–17, and Lords Library calculations)

Proportion of Government Bills receiving Royal Assent

Graph 21 presents the proportion of government bills receiving royal assent, by House of first introduction, since the 1997–98 session, broken down into those starting in the House of Commons and those starting in the House of Lords. It should be noted that this data says nothing about those government bills introduced in the Commons which then did not continue to the Lords (for whatever reason).

Graph 21: Proportion of Government Bills Receiving Royal Assent by House of Introduction by Session, 1997–98 to 2016–17



(Source: House of Lords Journal Office, *Public Bill Statistics, 1997–98 to 2016–17*)

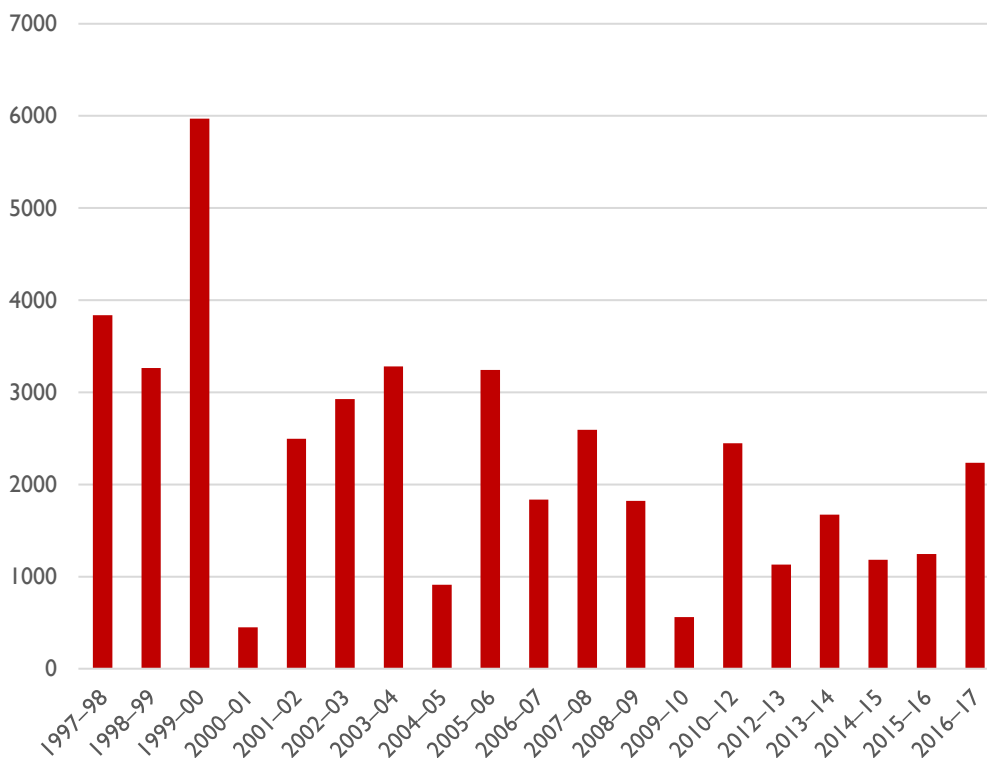
Graph 21 shows that the pattern in the proportion of government bills receiving royal assent, by House of introduction, has remained relatively stable over time, although variation does exist across some sessions. This variation ranges from 78 percent in sessions 2000–01 and 2004–05, to 100 percent in sessions 2001–02, 2005–06, 2007–08, 2009–10 and 2012–13. The figure also illustrates that, since the 2005–06 session, a larger proportion of the government bills that have started in the House of Commons received royal assent, compared to those that started in the House of Lords. This was most notable in the 2008–09 session, where 75 percent of the government bills that started in the House of Lords received royal assent, compared to 100 percent of those that started in the House of Commons.²⁴

Graph 22 displays the number of amendments made to government bills in the House of Lords (including consideration of Commons amendments). The number made has fluctuated over time, reflecting the nature and volume of legislation considered. These data include both government and

²⁴ Regarding those that did not receive royal assent, the House of Lords public bill statistics publication records four of these bills (out of 25) as being ‘defeated’ in the House of Lords. In addition: two bills were reported as being carried over into a new session; twelve bills were withdrawn due to apparent time constraints in sessions before a general election; one bill “fell in the Commons”; and the remaining six were “withdrawn” at some stage. However, regarding those bills withdrawn, it is worth bearing in mind that there could be many reasons for that approach being taken, including the possibility of government defeats on key provisions.

non-government amendments. Additionally, amendments to legislation made in the House of Lords may subsequently be overturned in the House of Commons. Between 1997–98 and 2016–17, the House of Lords made an average of 68 amendments to each government bill considered. Over the same period an average of 34 percent of amendments tabled on government bills were subsequently agreed.

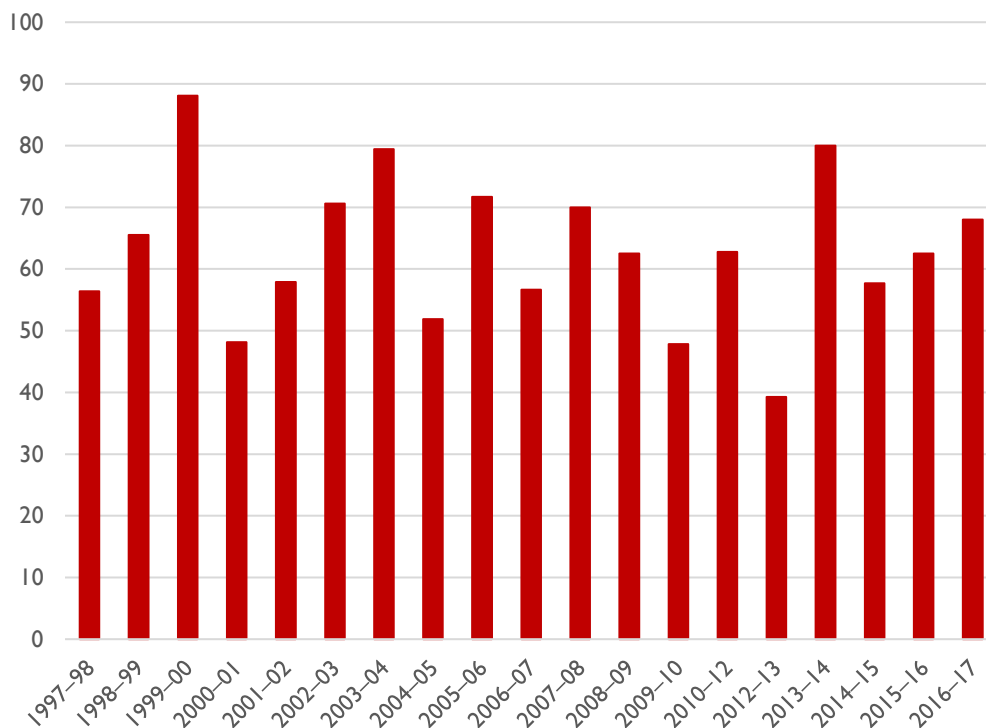
Graph 22: Number of Amendments Made to Government Bills by Session, 1997–98 to 2016–17



(Source: House of Lords Journal Office, *Public Bill Statistics, 1997–98 to 2016–17*)

Graph 23 shows the percentage of government bills amended in the House of Lords. This number has varied but has remained above 50 percent in all but three sessions since 1997–98.

Graph 23: Percentage of Government Bills Amended in the House of Lords by Session, 1997–98 to 2016–17



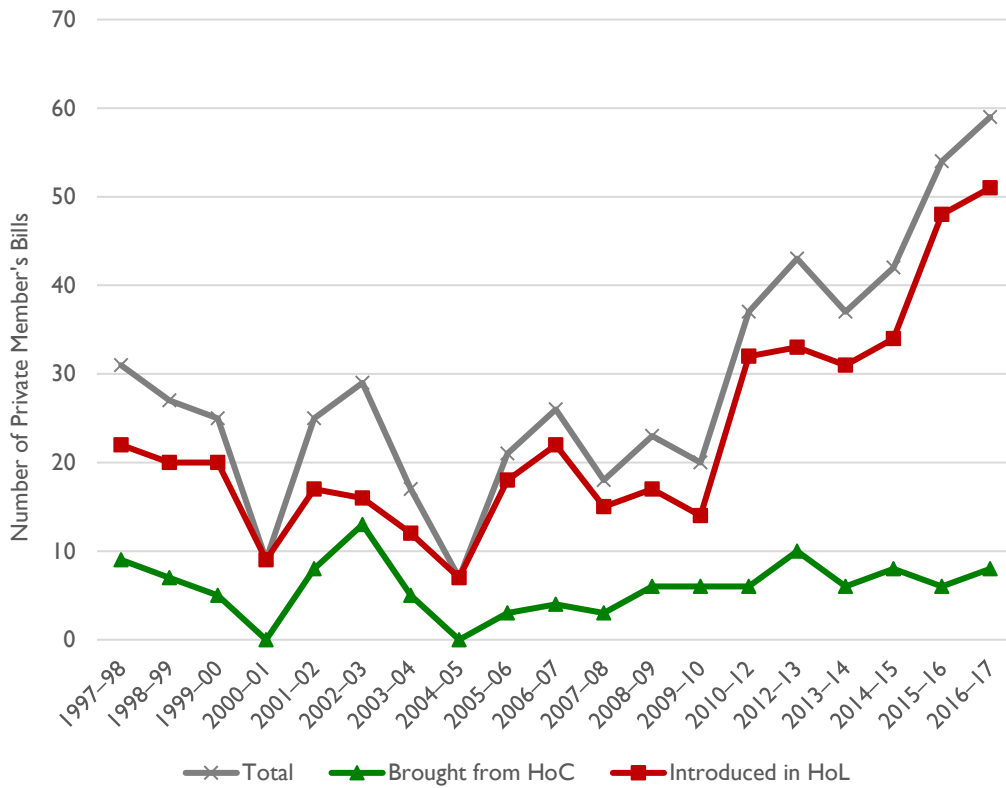
(Source: House of Lords Journal Office, *Public Bill Statistics*, 1997–98 to 2016–17 and Lords Library calculations)

3.2 Private Member’s Bills

Number of Private Member’s Bills

Graph 24 presents the total number of private member’s bills (PMBs) passing through the House of Lords between sessions 1997–98 and 2016–17. The graph also breaks this total down into the number of PMBs that started in the House of Commons, and those that started in the House of Lords.

Graph 24: Number of Private Member’s Bills by Session, 1997–98 to 2016–17



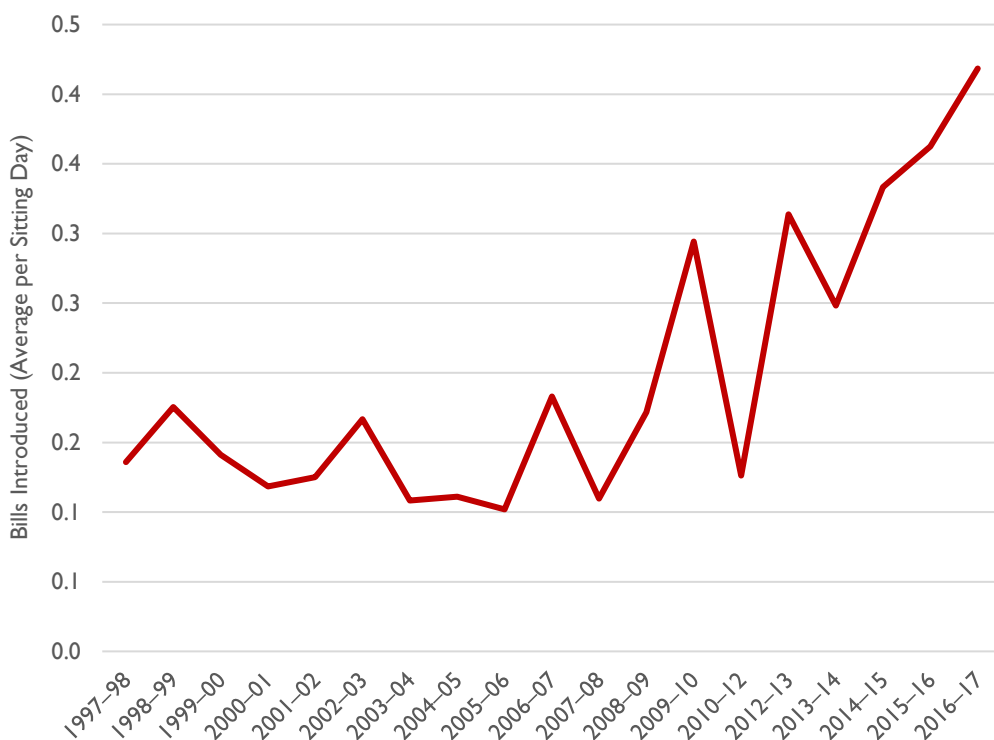
(Source: House of Lords Journal Office, *Public Bill Statistics, 1997–98 to 2016–17*)

Graph 24 shows a general increase in the total number of PMBs over time. This increase is largely explained by an increase in PMBs that started in the House of Lords. In the 1997–98 session, 22 Lords PMBs were introduced in the House of Lords, whereas in the 2016–17 session this number had risen to 51. In contrast, the number of PMBs brought to the House of Lords which had originally started in the House of Commons appears to have remained relatively stable over time, ranging from 3 in sessions 2005–06 and 2007–08, to 13 in the 2002–03 session. The exceptions were sessions 2000–01 and 2004–05, where no PMBs were introduced in the House of Lords that had originally started in the House of Commons.

Graph 25 plots the total number of PMBs averaged per sitting day.²⁵ This shows that numbers of PMBs averaged per sitting day remained relatively static between 1997–98 and 2007–08. However, since 2007–08 there has been a general increase.

²⁵ This figure is an average per sitting day but it should be noted that that PMBs are normally only considered on sitting Fridays.

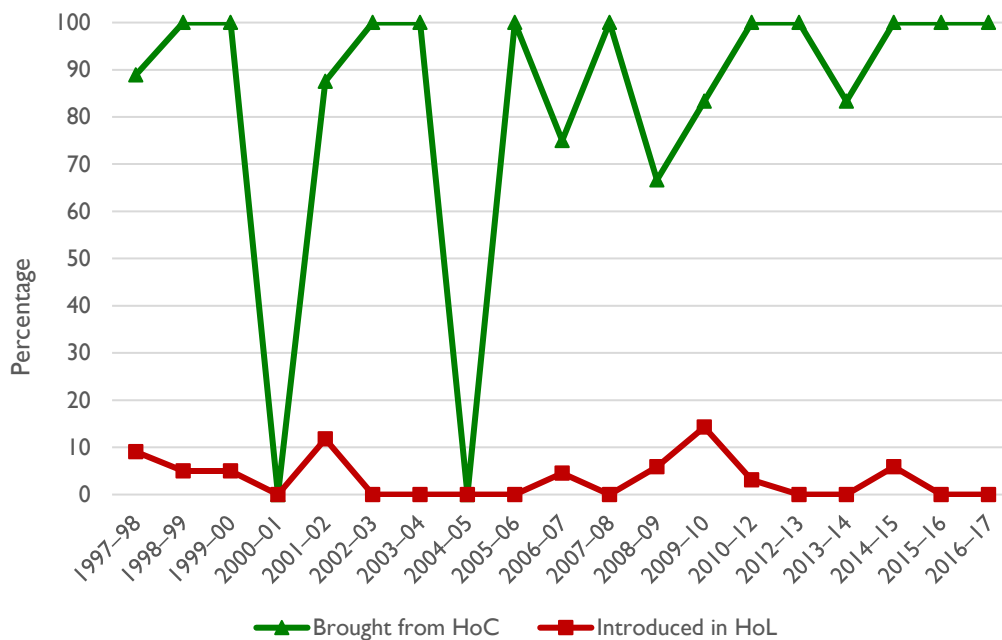
Graph 25: Total Number of Private Member’s Bills Averaged per Sitting Day by Session, 1997–98 to 2016–17



(Source: House of Lords Journal Office, *Public Bill Statistics, 1997–98 to 2016–17*)

Graph 26 presents the proportion of PMBs receiving royal assent, by House of introduction, since session 1997–98. The figure also shows the proportion of PMBs receiving royal assent broken down by those starting in the House of Commons, and by those starting in the Lords.

Graph 26: Proportion of Private Member's Bills Receiving Royal Assent by House of Introduction for Sessions 1997–98 to 2016–17



(Source: House of Lords Journal Office, *Public Bill Statistics*, 1997–98 to 2016–17)

The graph shows that a larger proportion of PMBs that received royal assent were started in the House of Commons, compared to those starting in the House of Lords. This could be explained by several factors, for example PMBs brought from the Commons have already completed half of their parliamentary scrutiny, which could indicate government support for the bill. Regarding sessions 2000–01 and 2004–05, it should be noted that none of the PMBs starting in the House of Commons were brought to the House of Lords (hence the 0 percent receiving royal assent).

3.3 Delegated Legislation

As well as primary legislation, the House of Lords also considers delegated legislation. In their book *How Parliament Works*, Robert Rogers (now Lord Lisvane and a former Clerk of the House of Commons) and Rhodri Walters (a former Reading Clerk in the House of Lords) provide the following overview of delegated legislation:

Delegated legislation is law made by ministers or certain public bodies under powers given to them by Act of Parliament but it is just as much part of the law of the land as are those Acts. The volume of delegated legislation is huge, and this presents particular challenges for parliamentary scrutiny.

Individual pieces of delegated legislation, often called secondary legislation to distinguish them from primary legislation contained in Acts of Parliament, or subordinate legislation, are found under many different names. They can be orders, regulations, Orders in Council, schemes, rules, codes of practice and statutes (of certain colleges rather than in the sense of Acts). Even the Highway Code is a form of secondary legislation.²⁶

There are a number of different ways in which delegated legislation can be scrutinised by Parliament. The parent Act, the Act of Parliament to which the secondary legislation relates, will determine whether it is subject to parliamentary scrutiny and the form which that scrutiny will take; some secondary legislation is not laid before Parliament and is not subject to any parliamentary procedure, whilst some secondary legislation is subject to Commons-only procedure and is not considered in the House of Lords.²⁷

The House of Lords has several committees which are charged with examining delegated legislation.²⁸ The Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee (DPRRC) examines primary legislation, a bill, before it becomes an Act to check “whether the provisions of any bill inappropriately delegate legislative power, or whether they subject the exercise of legislative power to an inappropriate degree of parliamentary scrutiny”.²⁹ The Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee (SLSC) is the successor to the Merits of Statutory Instruments Committee, which was established in 2003 and existed until the end of the 2010–12 session. The SLSC considers the policy merits of regulations and other types of secondary legislation subject to parliamentary procedure; the Committee will consider all statutory instruments which are subject to parliamentary procedure (negative and affirmative). The Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments has members drawn from both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Its role is to assess the technical qualities of each instrument that falls within its remit and to decide whether to draw the special attention of each House to any instrument.³⁰

The SLSC reports on an SI within 12 to 16 days of it being laid before Parliament, to allow time for any Member of the House to pursue the issues raised by asking a question or tabling a motion for debate within the 40 day

²⁶ Robert Rogers and Rhodri Walters, *How Parliament Works*, March 2015, p 223.

²⁷ In the case of instruments dealing with financial matters the instrument will be laid only before the Commons (House of Commons Library, [House of Commons Background Paper: Statutory Instruments](#), 15 December 2016, p 13).

²⁸ For more information on scrutiny processes in the House of Commons please see: House of Commons Library, [House of Commons Background Paper: Statutory Instruments](#), 15 December 2016.

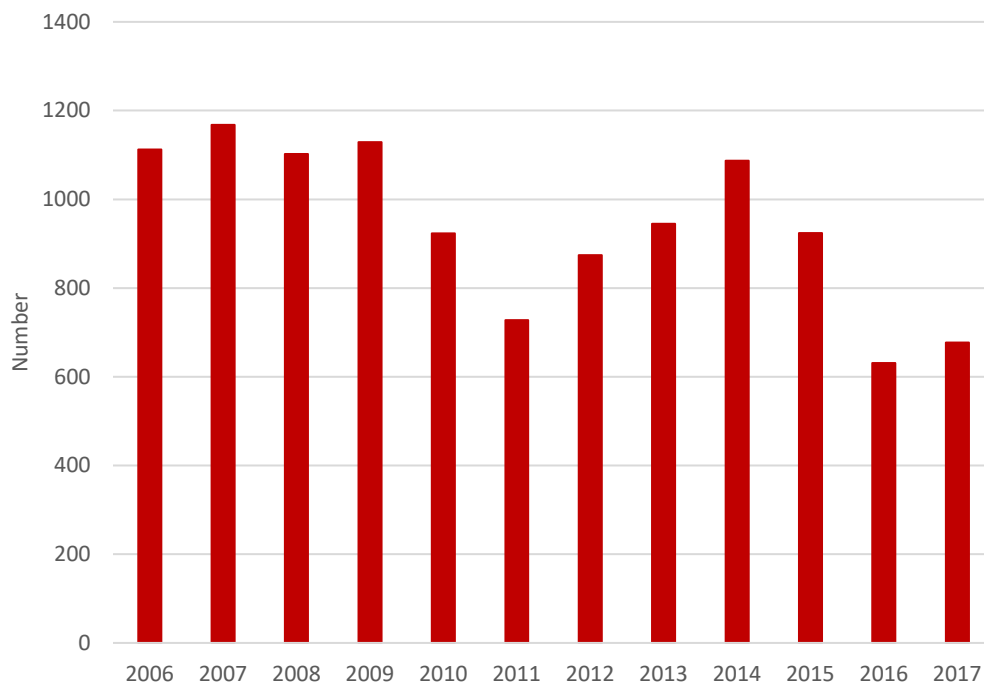
²⁹ The committee’s Terms of Reference are summarised on the UK Parliament website, ([‘Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee: Role of the Committee’](#), accessed 12 March 2018).

³⁰ UK Parliament website, [‘Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments’](#), accessed 11 February 2019.

‘prayer’ period for negative instruments. Affirmative instruments have to be considered by the SLSC before they can be debated in the House of Lords. The committee meets weekly when the House is in session and aims to publish reports of its activities by the following week.³¹ Reports indicate statutory instruments that the committee has determined should be drawn to the attention of the House, including the reasons for that decision—examples may be instruments are poorly drafted or inadequately explained; statutory instruments which the committee considers may be of special interest to the House, and instruments which the committee has considered and has determined that the special attention of the House need not be drawn.

Graph 27 shows the number of statutory instruments considered by the SLSC by calendar year.

Graph 27: Number of Statutory Instruments Considered by the Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee, 2006 to 2017, Calendar Year

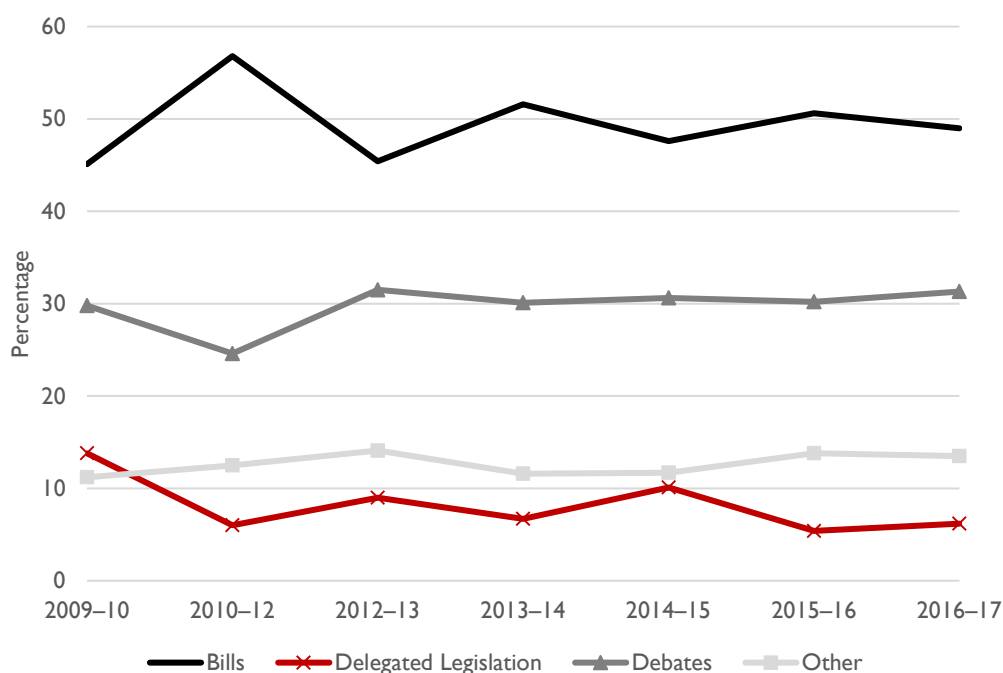


(Source: House of Lords Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee)

Graph 28 shows the percentage of time spent in the Chamber or in Grand Committee on different types of business since 2009–10. This shows that the time spent on delegated legislation has varied between 6 percent and 14 percent of time spent.

³¹ UK Parliament website, [‘Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee’](#), accessed 12 March 2018.

Graph 28: Percentage of Time Spent in the Chamber or in Grand Committee by Business Type, 2009–10 to 2016–17



(Source: House of Lords Journal Office, *Statistics on Business and Membership*, 2013–14 to 2016–17, and Lords Library calculations)

4. Committee Activity

Data on the activity of the House of Lords' investigative committees is published by the Liaison Committee on a financial year basis.³² The committee's report *Investigative Select Committees in the 2010–15 Parliament*, (15 June 2015, HL Paper 5 of session 2015–16) provides a summary of recent changes made to the structure of investigative committees in the Lords. This included changes in the European Union Committees sub-committees and an increase in the number of 'ad hoc' committees:

The 2010–15 Parliament saw significant changes in the structure of House of Lords Investigative Select Committee activity. The Communications Committee, which had previously been appointed on a session-by-session basis, became a sessional select committee. A sub-committee of the EU Committee and of the Science and Technology Committee were exchanged for additional ad hoc Committees, and the overall number of units of Committee activity increased by two. The increased ad hoc Committee activity included post-legislative scrutiny—a new function for the House of Lords.³³

³² House of Lords, '[Liaison Committee \(Lords\)](#)', accessed 6 November 2017.

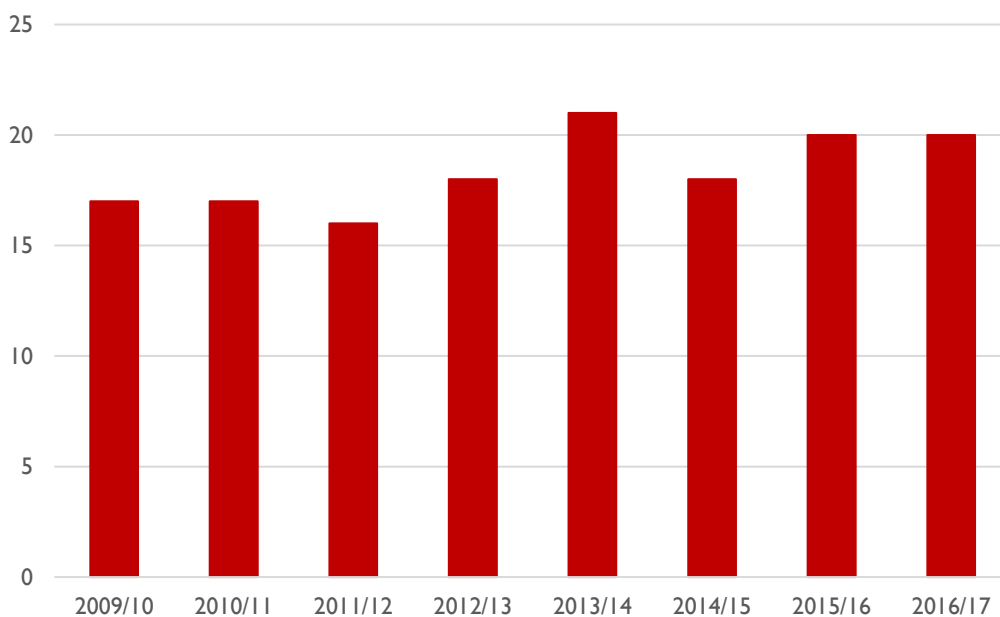
³³ House of Lords Liaison Committee, [Investigative Select Committees in the 2010–15 Parliament](#), 15 June 2015, HL Paper 5 of session 2015–16, p 5.

The House of Lords also forms joint committees with the House of Commons. Such committee activity therefore also reflects the work of the House of Lords and is included in the statistics in this section.³⁴

Statistics on the activity of the House of Lords' investigative select committees (ISCs) are available from the financial year 2009/10 and are published for each year by the Liaison Committee. Although these data are by financial year the pattern of long and short sessions caused by general elections will still affect their interpretation and the longer 2010–12 session spanned more than one financial year.

The number of investigative committees and sub-committees has remained relatively consistent since 2009/10, however there have been more since 2012/13 than there were between 2009/10 and 2010/12.

Graph 29: Number of Investigative Committees and Sub-Committees by Financial Year, 2009/10 to 2016/17

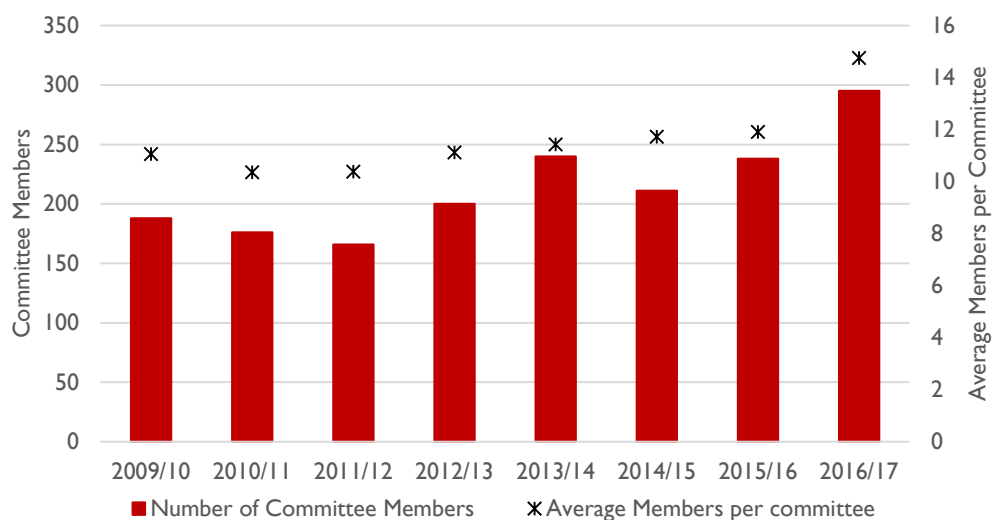


(Source: House of Lords Liaison Committee, [Review of Investigative Select Committee Activity in Session 2016–17](#), 20 July 2017, HL Paper 13 of session 2016–17 and [Investigative Select Committee Activity in Session 2013–14](#), 29 July 2014, HL Paper 25 of session 2014–15)

The number of committee members has tended to increase since 2011/12. The number of committee members divided by the number of committees and sub-committees gives an average that has remained at between 11 and 15 Members.

³⁴ Ad hoc joint committees are only included when the Lords has led on them.

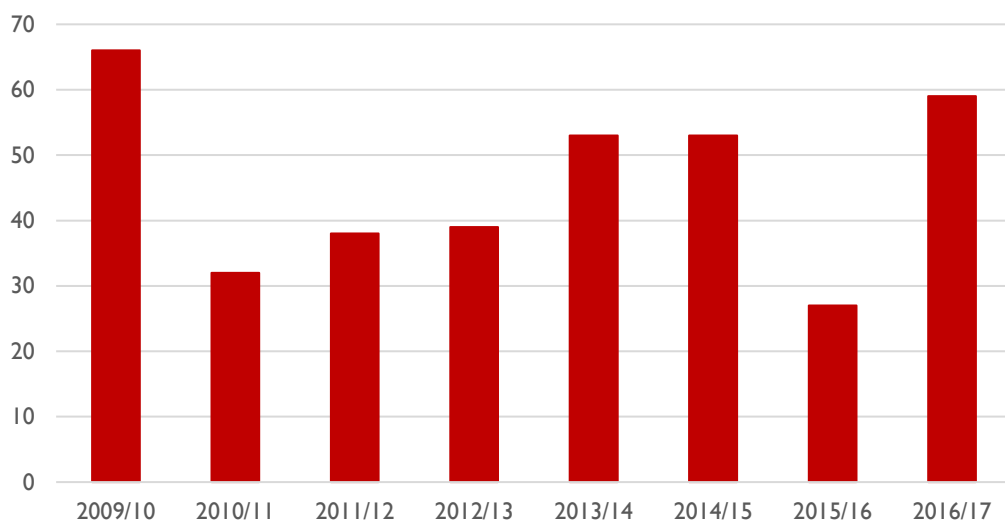
Graph 30: Number of Committee Members and Averaged Members per Committee by Financial Year, 2009/10 to 2016/17



(Source: House of Lords Liaison Committee, [Review of Investigative Select Committee Activity in Session 2016–17](#), 20 July 2017, HL Paper 13 of session 2016–17 and [Investigative Select Committee Activity in Session 2013–14](#), 29 July 2014, HL Paper 25 of session 2014–15)

Graph 31 shows that the number of reports published by ISCs has fluctuated over the past eight years, from a high of 66 in 2009/10 to a low of 27 in 2015/16. In 2016/17, 59 reports were published, which is the second highest number in the data series.

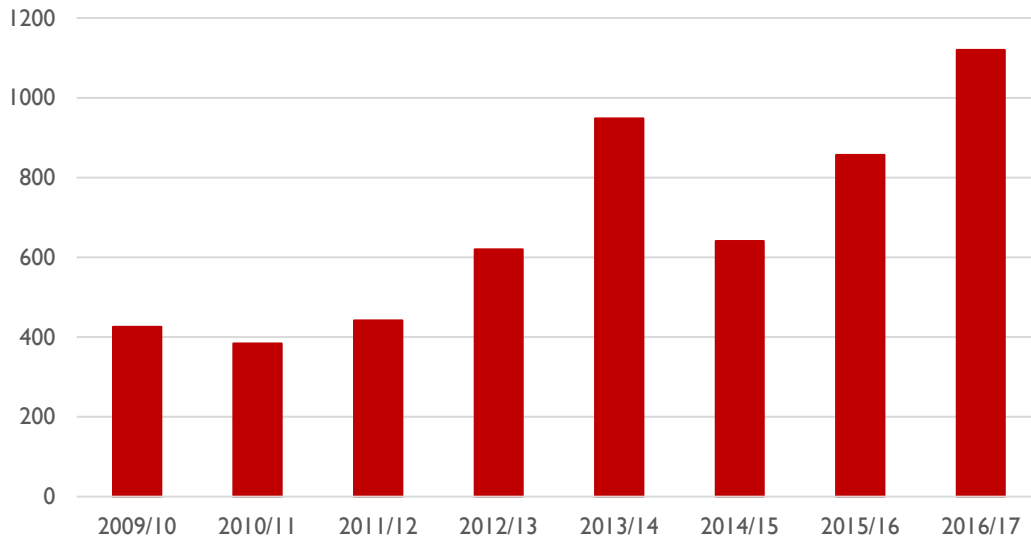
Graph 31: Number of Investigative Select Committee Reports Published by Financial Year, 2009/10 to 2016/17



(Source: *ibid*)

The number of witnesses giving oral evidence to ISCs in the House of Lords has increased year on year since 2014/15. ISCs sometimes hold one-off evidence sessions which may not lead to the publication of a committee report.

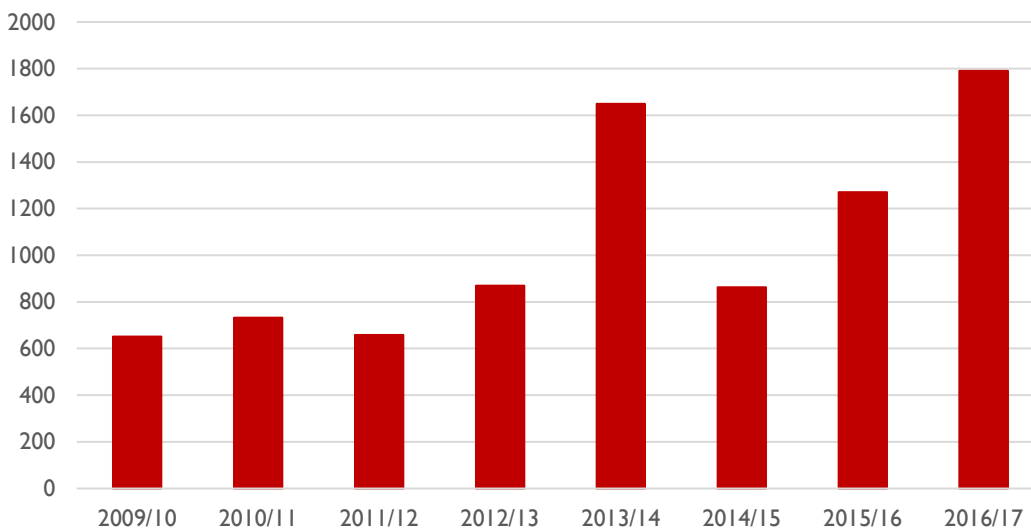
Graph 32: Number of Witnesses Giving Oral Evidence by Financial Year, 2009/10 to 2016/17



(Source: House of Lords Liaison Committee, [Review of Investigative Select Committee Activity in Session 2016–17](#), 20 July 2017, HL Paper 13 of session 2016–17 and [Investigative Select Committee Activity in Session 2013–14](#), 29 July 2014, HL Paper 25 of session 2014–15)

The number of written submissions to ISCs shows a similar recent pattern to that of the number of witnesses.

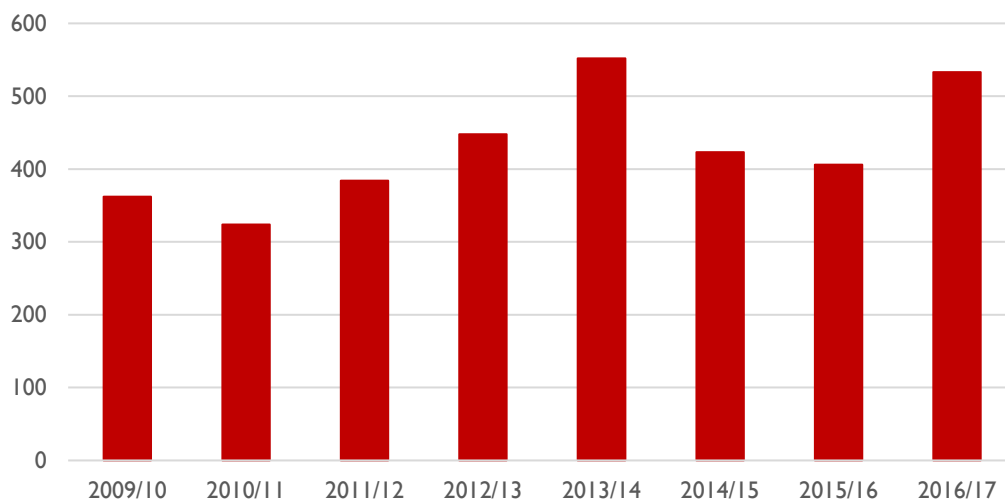
Graph 33: Number of Written Submissions Received by Financial Year, 2009/10 to 2016/17



(Source: *ibid*)

The number of committee meetings has varied since 2009/10. Whilst the number increased year on year between 2010/11 and 2013/14 it decreased year on year between 2013/14 and 2015/16.

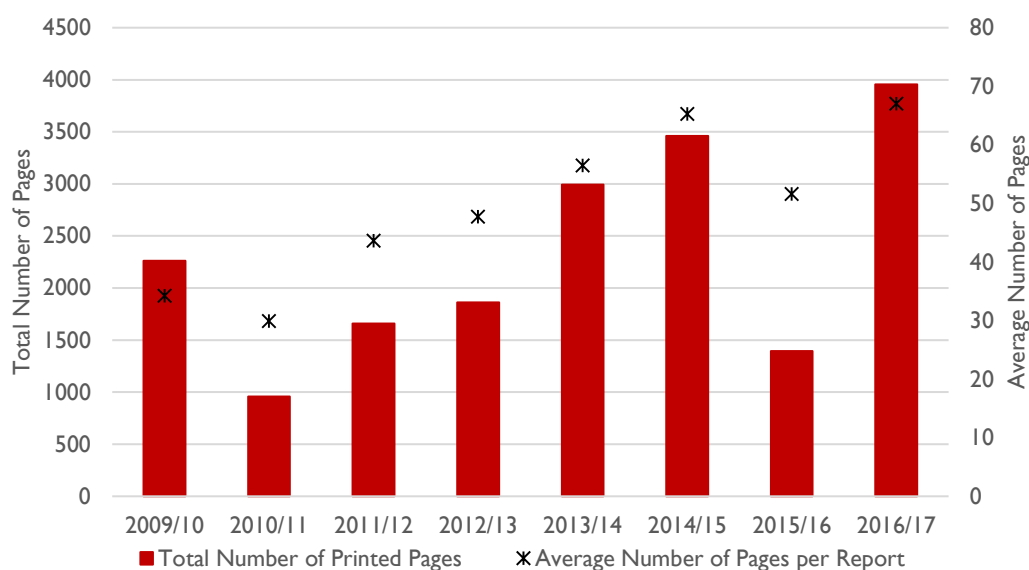
Graph 34: Number of Committee Meetings by Financial Year, 2009/10 to 2016/17



(Source: House of Lords Liaison Committee, [Review of Investigative Select Committee Activity in Session 2016–17](#), 20 July 2017, HL Paper 13 of session 2016–17 and [Investigative Select Committee Activity in Session 2013–14](#), 29 July 2014, HL Paper 25 of session 2014–15)

Graph 35 demonstrates that whilst the total number of printed pages of ISC reports has fluctuated since 2009/10, the average number of pages per report has tended to increase.

Graph 35: Total Number of Printed Pages of Reports and Average Number of Pages per Report by Financial Year, 2009/10 to 2016/17



(Source: *ibid*)