

# UCU's National Structures

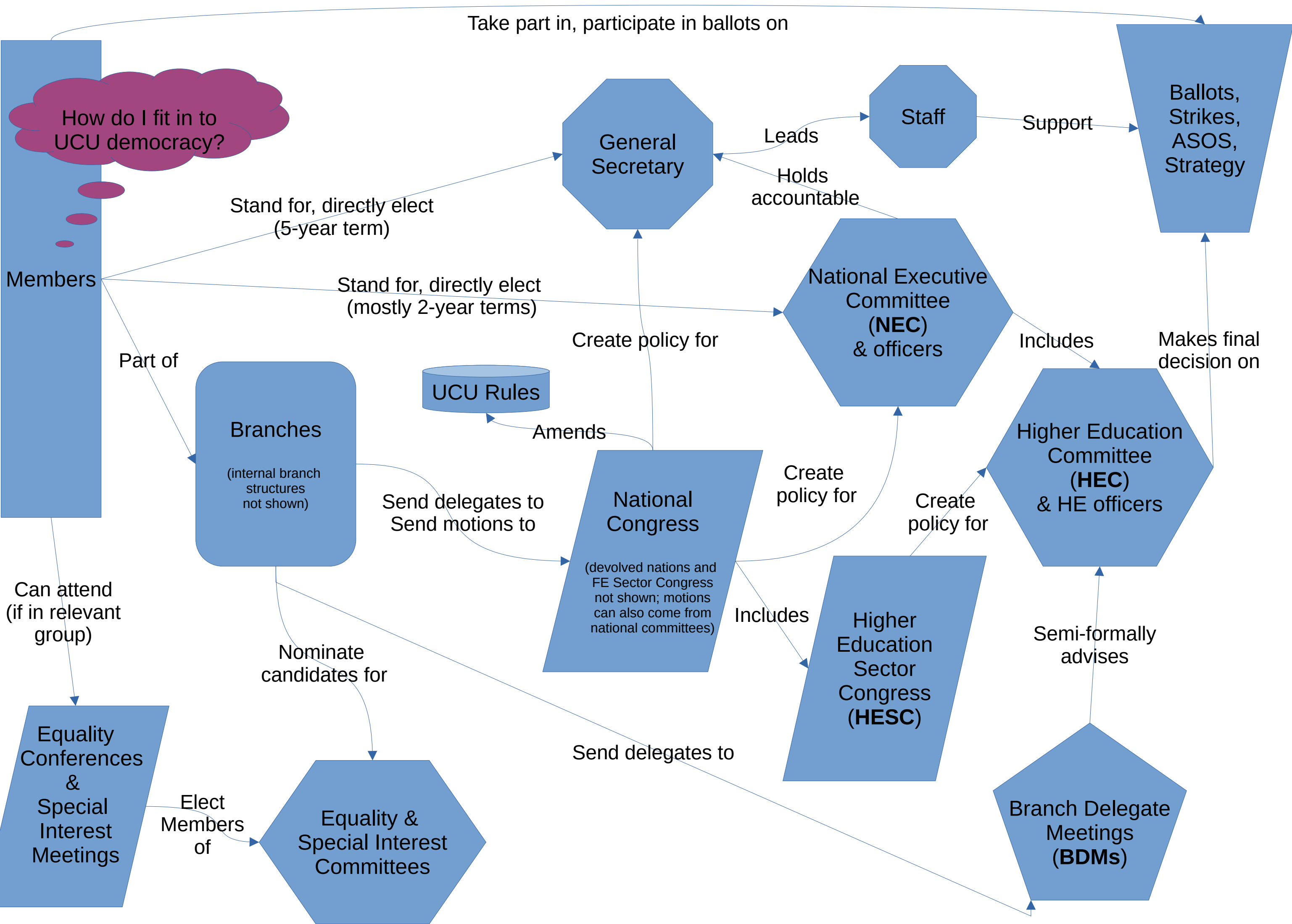
How are decisions on national strike  
action made?  
(in the Higher Education sector)

# The objective

- Go from the individual views of over 70,000 members ...
- ... across 141 branches ...
- ... to a meaningful collective industrial action strategy?
- (Figures for Four Fights HE dispute)

# The situation

- UCU's rules define various committees and processes.
- This has not necessarily been designed so much as accumulated.
- I can't guarantee this diagram will actually make it clearer...



# Executive: NEC / HEC

- Directly elected by members
- Various constituencies / types
  - ✓ Coherence
  - ✓ Sensitive information
  - ✓ Meets frequently
  - ✓ Bypasses branch discrepancies
  - × General purpose
  - × Accountability / Inertia
  - × Distance from members
  - × Usually poor election turnout

# (Sector) Congress: HESC

- Sovereign policy body – usually annual
- Delegates elected by branches, count roughly proportional to size of branch
- ✓ Connection to branches
- ✓ Possibility to mandate delegates
- ✓ Can focus on strike issues
- × Incoherence is not contradiction
- × Low frequency, expensive
- × Decisions must be interpreted
- × Selective attendance

# Branch Delegates: BDM

- Up to 2 reps per branch, voting power proportional to branch size.
  - Not formally defined
  - Consists of branches in dispute only
- ✓ Rapid feedback from branch level
  - ✓ Focus on immediate strike decisions
  - × Unclear scope between HEC and HESC
  - × Selective attendance
  - × Rapid turnaround makes delegate mandates trickier

# Membership: direct ballot

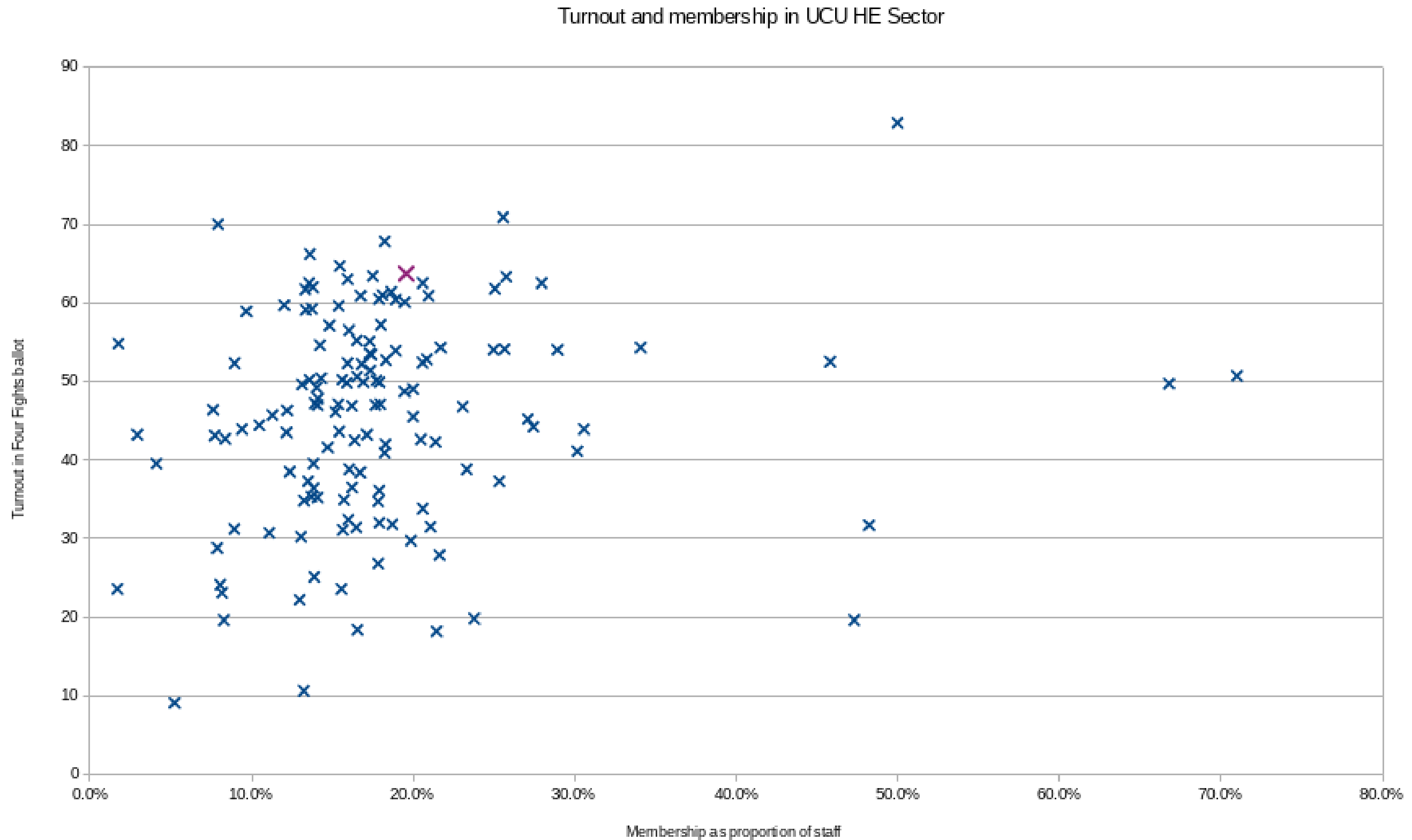
- Electronic or paper ballot of all members
- Generally reserved for top-level “accept offer?” and “take action?” questions
- ✓ Direct answer from membership
- ✓ Generally decent turnout
- × Limited to single Y/N questions
- × Slow, expensive



# The Problem(s)

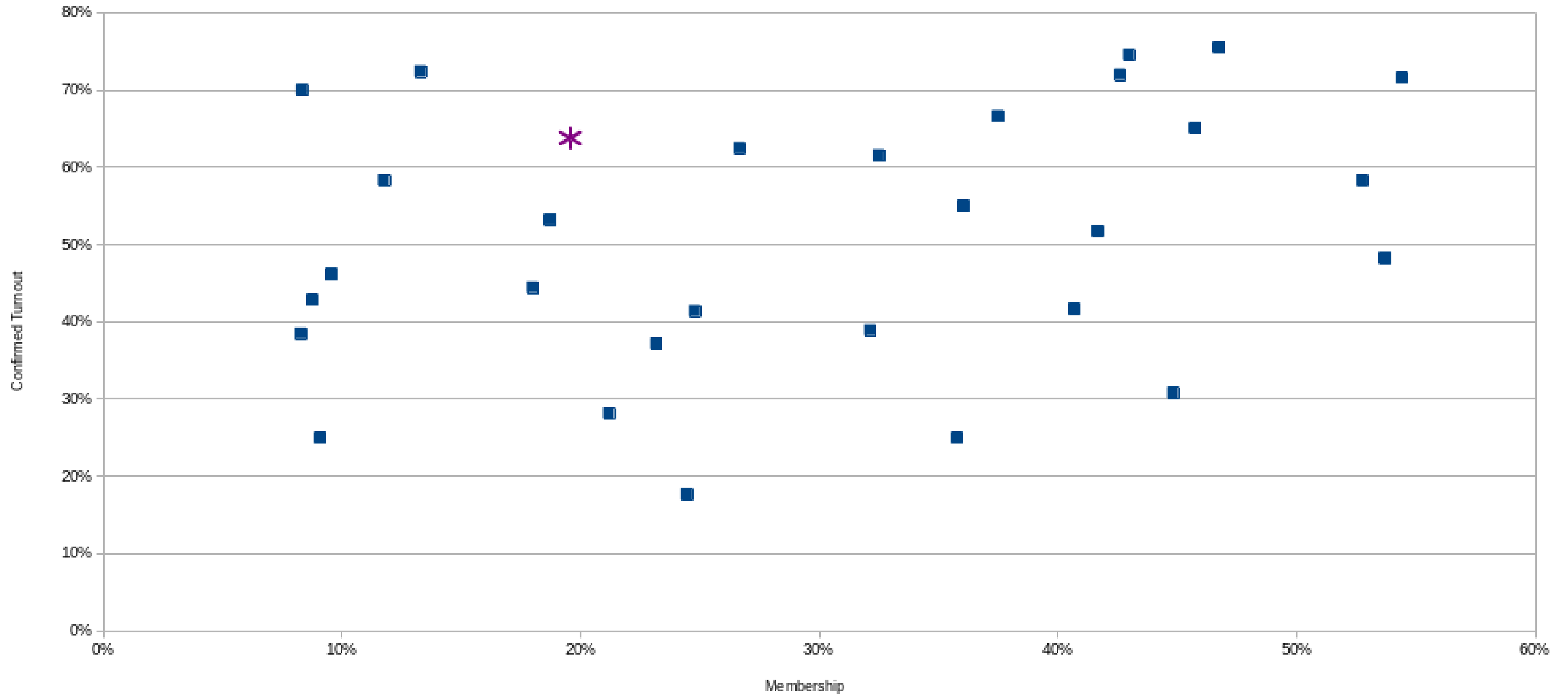
- Multiple methods with different sorts of democratic legitimacy and different trade-offs.
- So, how to handle the case where they give different answers?
- Or alternatively, how to ensure that such conflicts can't/rarely arise?
- Is this actually about democratic process and structure at all? Or is it actually about something else?

# Is this the actual problem?



# As nationally, so locally

Turnout and membership in selected DU departments



# What next?

- NEC elections on now! Vote!
- Could try to improve national structure – if we have a better idea.
- Local branch democracy and participation also really important.
- Not everything has to be formal.