

Membership and co-operation

As a co-operative, we're owned by our millions of members who have a say on the work we do and how we're run.

We're founded on a [set of Values and Principles](#) describing a different, fairer and better way of doing business. We use these Values and Principles to guide us in fulfilling our Vision and Purpose.

Co-op membership is about much more than just deals and rewards. Membership is a share in the business. This means members can have a say in how it's run, from the products we sell to the causes we support.

Democratic member control

Democratic member control is achieved both in our governance structure and in other, less formal, ways. Our Board is made up of 12 directors, of which four are Member Nominated Directors (MNDs). All of our Board directors are members themselves and they must meet both membership and eligibility requirements.

Our MNDs are elected through a direct ballot of our members. Our Independent Non-Executive Directors are appointed by the Board and subsequently put forward for election by members at our AGM.

We have 100 members elected to our National Members' Council by individual and Independent Society members.

Our Council has an important role in holding our Board to account for our performance, championing our Values and Principles, representing members' interests, as well as influencing our policies and strategies.

Members are encouraged to have their say in our AGM and elections. This is done through our system of 'one member, one vote'. For more information on our democracy, [visit here](#).

National Members' Council

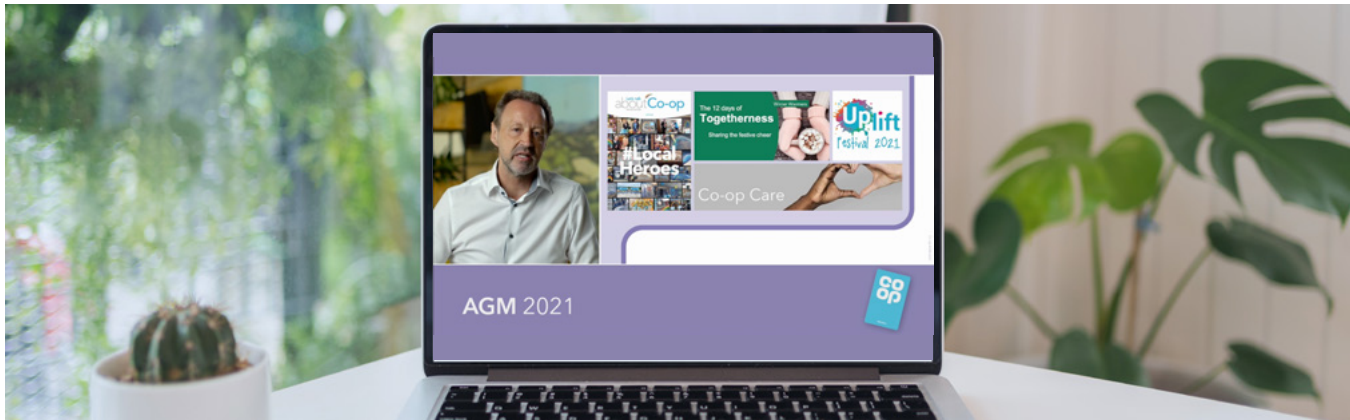
Our National Members' Council is made up of 100 Co-op Members from around the UK, including colleagues. In 2021, it welcomed a new Council President, Denise Scott-McDonald, and got together 17 times over Teams for Council Meetings and Directors' Forums. The Council fed into plans and discussed important issues for our Co-op, helping the business to meet the needs of our members and the diverse communities we serve and support.

A key role for our Council is holding the Co-op Board to account on the strategic and operational decisions it makes.

To do this effectively and in a way that takes into consideration our co-operative Values and Principles and the views of our members, the Council uses a framework called the Co-op Compass. Within the compass, there are four lenses: Member Value, Member Voice, Ethical & Sustainable Leadership, and Co-operative Leadership. To monitor these areas, each lens has key performance indicators and a committee, which meets with colleagues throughout the year to hear the latest updates.

To keep in touch with our members, the Council holds Join in Live events every autumn, bringing together co-operators, directors and colleagues to talk about what's happening around our businesses and shape plans around our campaigns, membership and community activity. For more information on the work of our National Members' Council in 2021, please read the Council Annual Statement in our 2021 [Annual Report and Accounts](#).





AGM

Our members vote on motions at our AGM, which are put forward by our Board, Council or members.

Due to the ongoing restrictions around hosting public events as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, for the second year in a row, members were unable to attend our 2021 AGM in person. We therefore held an online event. 831 members joined the AGM online and were able to hear about the Co-op's annual performance, put their questions to the Board and participate in a workshop which was held prior to the event.

To ensure the meeting was quorate, 20 members did attend in person.

Following the AGM, a further 1,100 members have viewed all, or parts of the meeting as a downloadable content from the Co-op's AGM website.

In 2021, members voted on the following sustainability-related motions - full motion wording can be found in the [notice booklet](#).

- Motion from Council**
 Sustainable Production and Consumption
Carried For: 59,927 (98.62%),
 Against: 839 (1.38%), Withheld: 3,401.
- Motion from Council**
 Inequality and Food Poverty
Carried For: 58,994 (98.26%),
 Against: 1,047 (1.74%), Withheld: 3,967.

53,863 members voted¹

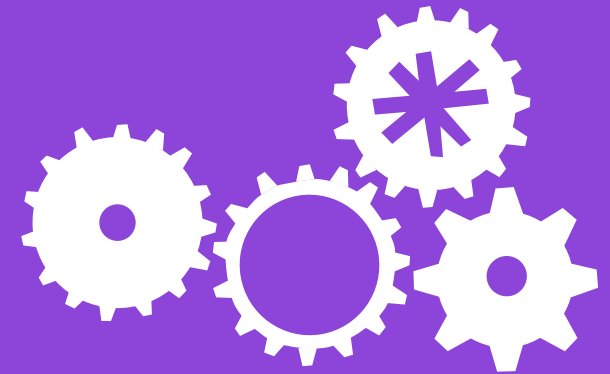
in our 2021 AGM and elections (2020: 47,862).

2.4% voter turnout

among eligible members (2020: 2%).

¹ Includes Independent Society Member "weighted" votes cast on AGM motions

How our governance works



Members: As a co-operative, we're owned by individual members and other co-operatives, not by shareholder investors. This means that as well as being rewarded for trading with us, our members have an opportunity to have their say on key issues including who represents them on our Council and Board.

Council: Responsible for holding the Board to account. Acts as a guardian of our Values and Principles, our purpose and our constitution.

Board: Responsible and accountable for determining strategy and holding the Executive to account.

Executive: Key members of management running the business on a day-to-day basis in accordance with the strategy determined by the Board.



Our membership

The funds raised by our members are split between:

- Supporting the [Local Community Fund](#), helping thousands of grassroots community causes.
- Supporting the [Community Partnerships Fund](#) working with partners, to create lasting change on big issues we care about.

Through Co-op Membership, members also get access to weekly personalised offers for money off the things they buy most in our food stores and exclusive deals and discounts across our family of businesses.

Member participation

Members own our Co-op, and can shape our business activity through formal, democratic channels – like the [Annual General Meeting](#) – and by getting involved in ‘everyday’ participation opportunities. We aim to increase the reach and reward of Member Participation, with a particular focus on its appeal to younger members, by working with members in four areas: supporting member communities, co-creating products and services, standing up for what we care about and supporting Co-op democracy.



During 2021, **members participated a total of 662,000 times** across a total of **83 separate opportunities**.

In 2021, we continued to learn more about the diversity of members, working with colleague members through our RISE network to deliver test and learn activities around celebrations such as Eid Ul Adha and Diwali. We’re continuing this work into 2022.

Supporting member communities

Members joined in throughout the year to [co-create programmes of activity to be delivered through the Community Partnership Fund](#). Members shared knowledge and experience and attended Join In workshops to shape how the Fund will respond to the [three community missions](#) and deliver real change in members’ communities.

Co-creating products and services

Members worked with us in 2021 to help design new products such as [ice cream](#), pizza, popcorn and Christmas sandwiches. September saw the launch of our [member-inspired Millionaire’s Bar](#), with members who participated at any stage of its creation being rewarded with a special coupon to purchase it.

Co-op member Andrew Coleman from Devon saw his chocolate bar idea become reality



Standing up for what we care about

Sustainability was a key focus of member engagement during the year, as members worked with us to share their priorities for the Co-op's approach to climate change, [champion summer's plastic recycling campaign](#), and pledge to take small steps to address their own climate impacts in the run up to COP26.

Supporting our National Members' Council

Hundreds of Co-op members attended our [Join In Live](#) events during October, which were held online for the second successive year. Hosted by our Co-op National Members' Council, the four online events, provided members with business performance updates and the chance to ask questions directly to members of Co-op Board and Executive.

Wellbeing

In 2021, we continued to deliver Join In opportunities to support members' wellbeing throughout the pandemic. We checked in with members early in the year, then delivered activities that helped them to stay connected and active. These included a continuation of the members' quiz and producer-led events, and the delivery of an ['80-days' step challenge](#).

Young Members

Ensuring young people are better represented in our Co-op remains a key focus. Our Co-op Young Members' Group (CYMG), an advisory panel of six members aged 16-25, continued to champion representation of young people in our business, and recruited four new members to its ranks this year.

CYMG actively supported Co-op's sustainability agenda throughout 2021, producing engagement opportunities around the launch of the [soft plastics recycling campaign](#) and hosting an [online climate event](#) during Great Big Green Week to bring members together with Co-op experts to talk about climate change.

The group played a key role in supporting the community mission to deliver [fair access to education and employment for young people](#); working with members and other young people throughout the year to explore how the Community Partnerships Fund can deliver against this ambition - the first output of which will be a library of digital resources, developed with members and connected to the Co-op's existing careers and skills activity, and wider virtual work experience programme.

In 2022, the Group's priorities will be centred around young people and wellbeing, education and co-operation.





Co-operation among co-operatives

We're working to build partnerships that push the principles of co-operation forward and work together to help co-operatives and social businesses survive and thrive.

It's our ambition to be at the forefront of this movement, using our scale and influence to help others. We continue to be by far the largest funder of the Co-operative Movement and its institutions, providing over £1.6m of funding to a diverse range of organisations.

In 2021, we took part in initiatives such as:

- The co-operative sector's national campaign Co-operatives Fortnight, promoting co-operation based on the theme #JoinACoop, through social media and local activities led by Member Pioneers.
- Social Enterprise Futures and 26 for COP26 - raising awareness of the difference that social enterprises are making in communities and on climate change.
- Partnering with the Co-operative College on Co-op AdVenture - a vocational learning programme based on co-operative enterprise for students from Co-op Academy Southfield, our special school in Bradford.
- We have continued to work closely with the Co-op Party in Parliament and in devolved assemblies to highlight the issue of violence against shopworkers.
- We share the economic advantages of size and scale by joining with other large UK retail co-operatives in the Federal Retail and Trading Services Limited (FRTS), a federal model of purchasing.

Giving members what they need to play a part through education and training

Co-operative Member Education, Training and Information is one of our co-operative principles. Members own our business and have a say in it, so it's important that they understand more about what makes us different and how they can use their membership to do good things.

In 2021, 21,021 members took part in opportunities on our Join In platform, including a celebration event for Black History Month with the Co-operative Heritage Trust and a Co-op Fortnight event with Co-operatives UK and the Co-operative College.

By working with other co-ops, our National Members' Council and colleagues have brought together the history of co-operation and what we're doing to make the world a fairer place.

🎯 2022 targets

We aim to recruit 550,000 new members by the end of 2022 with 4.28m active members.

The National Members' Council will take action to increase the number of ethnic minority candidates standing for election to the Council, in order to be reflective of our Co-op Communities.

Membership and co-operation data



Target Achieved



On Track



Close to Target



Behind Schedule



Target not Achieved





Restatement



In-depth assurance

Key Performance data icons

Issue	2021 Target	Performance against target	KPIs	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022 Target	SDGs
Membership numbers	Recruit 900,000 new members by the end of 2021.	 We reset our target to 769,000 in May, which is still stretching, but more in line with the new member trend we were seeing after the lasting effects of multiple lockdowns. We ended the year with 517,000 new members, which falls short of our target but is more than we recruited in both 2019 and 2020 and means we close the year at 4.23m active members.	Number of active members (million) (those who have traded with us in the last year in Co-op Food, Funeral and Life Planning, Insurance and Legal Services)	4.6	4.6	4.34	4.23	We aim to recruit 550,000 new members by the end of 2022 with 4.28m active members.	
			Number of new members (m)	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.5		
			Number of active (see definition above) young members, aged 25 and under	189,312	180,360	162,696	181,978		
Membership scheme			Amount earned by members for themselves through our membership scheme (£m) (amount redeemed in brackets)	60.4 (55.4)	54.4 (50.9)	50 (45.5)	20.7 (22.9)		
			See Community section for data on the amount earned by members for their communities						
			We reduced personal reward in September 2020 to give more back to the communities we serve when it was desperately needed. In the same year, we also gave £5.4m to colleague members in recognition of their support during the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2021, amount earned includes £1.1m for colleague members to help them celebrate the festive period.						
Member engagement	We will increase the total number of times members participate to 449,000 through our 'Join In' and 'Member Voice' activities, voting in our AGM & National Members' Council elections, and making donations to our Community funds.	 Members participated in Join In and Member Voice opportunities 662,000 times during 2021, meaning we surpassed our target by 47.5% thanks, in part, to a new strategic approach to member involvement in new food product development which has significantly outperformed expected engagement levels.	Number of members voting at our AGM and elections (number voting in person in brackets)	94,725 (730)	60,549 (620)	47,862	53,863		
			Due to Covid-19 restrictions - in person attendance was limited to 20 attendees. (831 members participated in the online event in 2020 and 2021).						
			AGM and election voter turnout among eligible members (%)	3.5	2.2	2	2.4		
			Members participating in Join In live events in communities across the UK	1,395	1,276	463	291		
			In 2020 and 2021, the Join In live event programme consisted of 4 online events.						
			Members participating in our Join In programme online (number of opportunities to join in brackets)	97,403 (69)	147,637 (75)	243,544 (88)	266,738 (83)		
				Young members participating in our Join In programme online	5,283	7,240	29,699	36,849	

Membership and co-operation data continued

Issue	2021 Target	Performance against target	KPIs	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022 Target	SDGs
Financial support for co-operatives			Financial support for representative and affiliated bodies of the co-operative movement (£m)						
Democracy	The National Members' Council will take action to increase the proportion of ethnic minority Candidates standing for election to the Council, in order to be reflective of our Co-op Communities.	Achieved - Proportion of ethnic minority candidates has increased from 7% in 2020 to 10% in 2021						The National Members' Council will take action to increase the number of ethnic minority candidates standing for election to the Council, in order to be reflective of our Co-op Communities.	10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

Breakdown of financial support for the co-operative movement (£)

Organisation	
Co-operatives UK	£743,389
Co-operative Party	£598,600
Co-operative Press	£106,000
International Co-operative Alliance	£68,634
Social Enterprise UK	£40,000
Woodcraft Folk	£25,000
Co-operative Heritage Trust	£24,600
Co-operative College	£9,940
People's History Museum	£8,000
Robert Owen Museum	£3,000
New Lanark Museum	£3,000
Plunkett Foundation	£2,500
Society for Co-op Studies	£2,000
Total	£1,634,663