

Black workers and unions

The TUC Equality Audit 2014 looks at the steps trade unions are taking to ensure they reflect the diversity of the workforce. It provides examples of how unions are encouraging groups that tend to be under-represented into membership and activism (women, BME, disabled, LGBT and young workers) and how they are giving them a voice in their internal democracy. The full report is available here: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/about-tuc/equality-issues/equality-audit/equality-audit-2014-improving-representation-and>

It is based on responses to questionnaires that were sent to all 54 TUC affiliated unions in November 2013 for completion by the end of January 2014. Completed questionnaires were received from 36 unions, representing 67 per cent of affiliates. But as the response rate was better among larger unions, the 2014 audit covers over 5.6 million members or 95 per cent of all TUC-affiliated union members.

This briefing summarises the audit's key findings in relation to black and minority ethnic workers. Please see the full report for more detailed commentary and examples of good practice from unions.

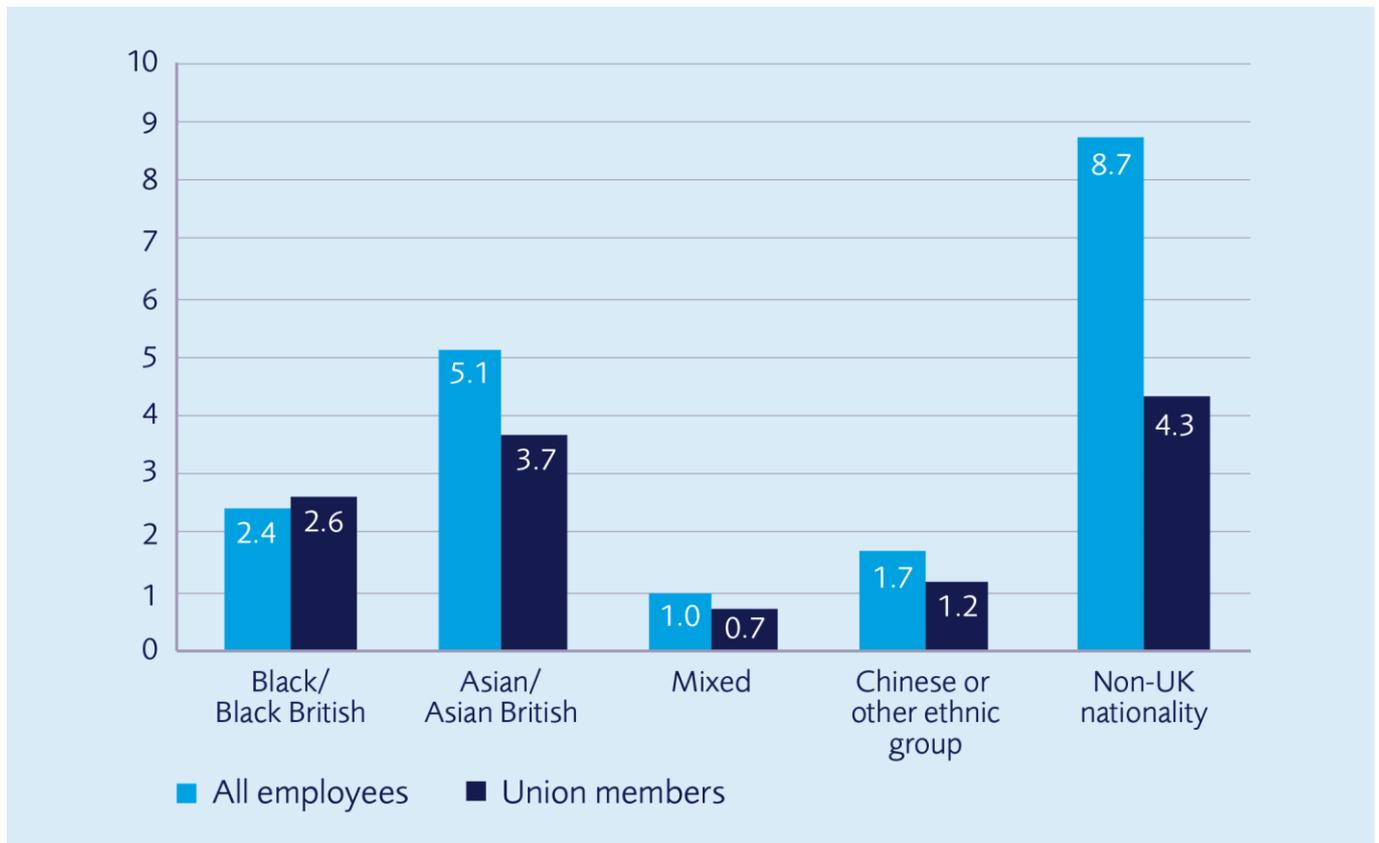
BME representation in unions

Union density is highest for the Black/Black British ethnic group – 2.4 per cent of all employees are from this group whereas 2.6 per cent of union members are. Those identifying as Asian/Asian British and Chinese or other ethnic group are under-represented in union membership – 5.1 per cent of all employees are Asian/Asian British compared to 3.7 per cent of union members and 1.7 per cent are Chinese or other ethnic group compared to 1.2 per cent of union members.

Migrant workers are also under-represented in union membership – 8.7 per cent of employees have a non-British/non-UK nationality whereas 4.3 per cent of union members do.

Across all the BME groups, women are more likely to be trade union members than men. The biggest difference is between Asian women and men. In 2013, 26 per cent of Asian women were in a trade union compared to 15 per cent of Asian men.

Representation of BME groups and migrant workers in union membership (%)



Sixteen out of the 36 unions responding to the Audit (44 per cent) were able to provide data on the proportion of people from a BME background in their membership and in different union positions, although only a few could provide data for all the positions. The unions who were able to do so were: ASLEF, BECTU, CSP, CWU, FDA, Napo, NASUWT, Nautilus, NGSU, NUJ, PCS, Prospect, RMT, UCU, UNISON and Unite.

Among these unions, the BME population made up between 2 per cent and 16 per cent of their membership. This largely reflects the variation in workforce composition in the different sectors and occupations that the unions organise in.

In a majority of the unions, BME groups were under-represented relative to the proportion in membership among shop stewards, health and safety reps and conference delegates and on union executives. In most unions, they were well-represented or over-represented among union learning reps and equality reps. In addition, in four out of the seven unions that provided the relevant data, BME members were well-represented or over-represented on TUC Congress

delegations. According to TUC monitoring data for Congress 2013, 12.4 per cent of delegates were from a BME group.

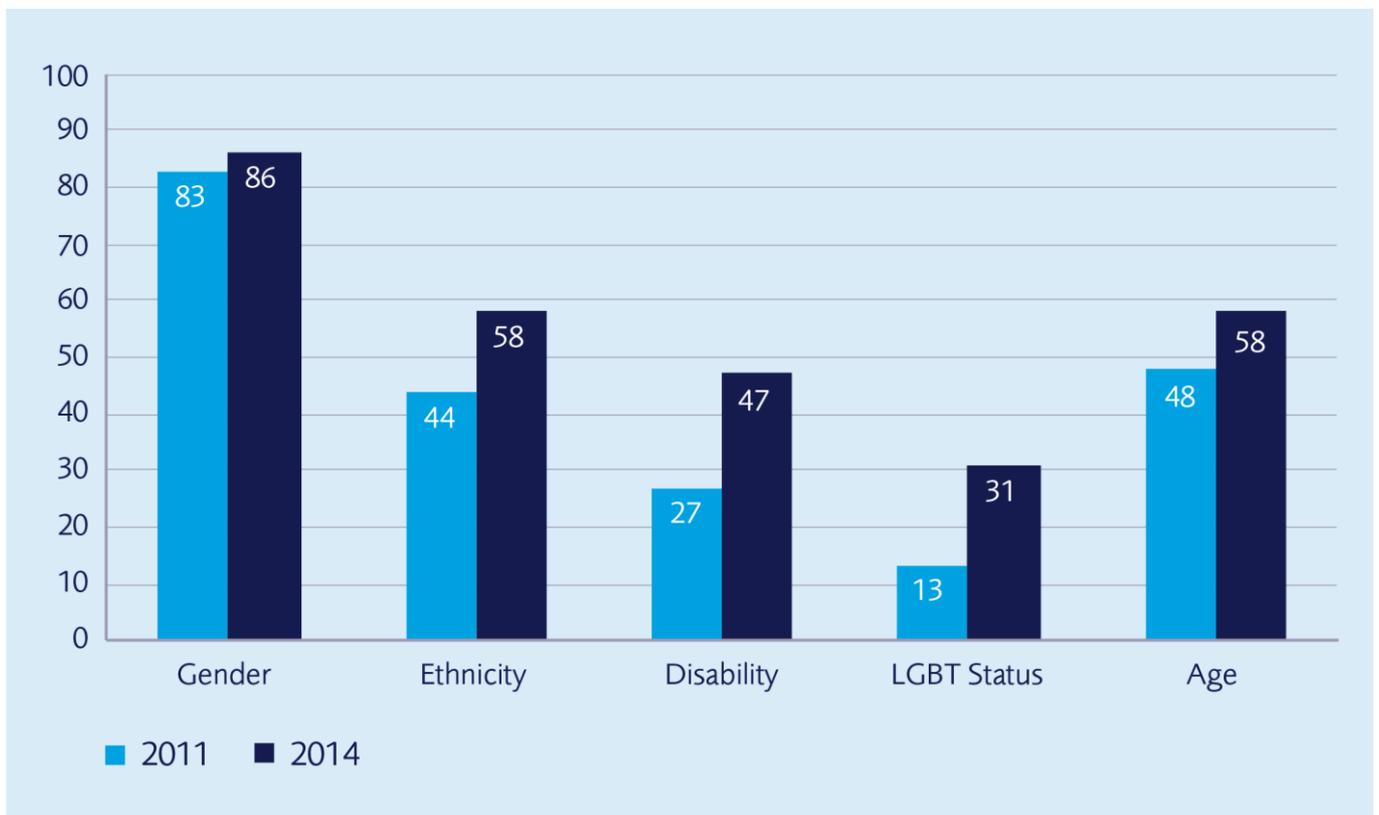
Improving representation in membership and participation

Monitoring

There has been a significant rise in the proportion of unions monitoring their membership by ethnicity. This monitoring is most common among the large and medium-sized unions. Over three-quarters (77 per cent) of union members are asked for about their ethnicity for trade union membership records.

Fewer unions monitor the proportion of workplace reps, conference delegates and national executive committee members who are from a BME background, but there has been progress since 2011. Around two in five unions monitors the ethnicity of their shop stewards, health and safety reps, learning reps and branch officers. Half monitor the ethnicity of their conference delegates and over half (56 per cent) their TUC Congress delegates. Two thirds monitor the ethnicity of their national executive committee members.

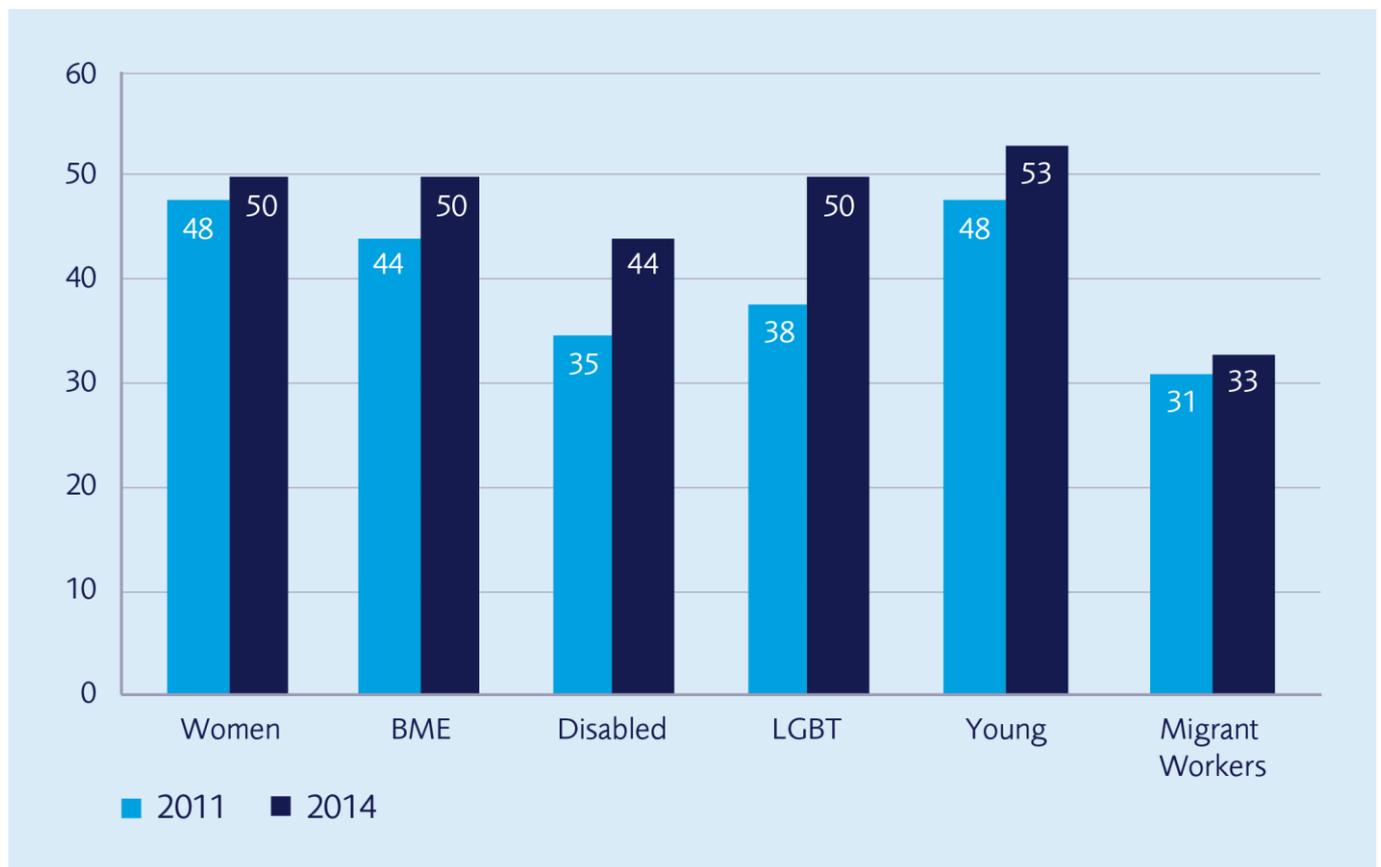
Unions monitoring membership by protected characteristic (%)



Targeted recruitment

The audit shows that half of unions are undertaking specific activities to encourage BME workers to join. However, migrant workers are still the least likely group to be targeted for membership and there has only been a very small increase in the proportion of unions that are reaching out to them.

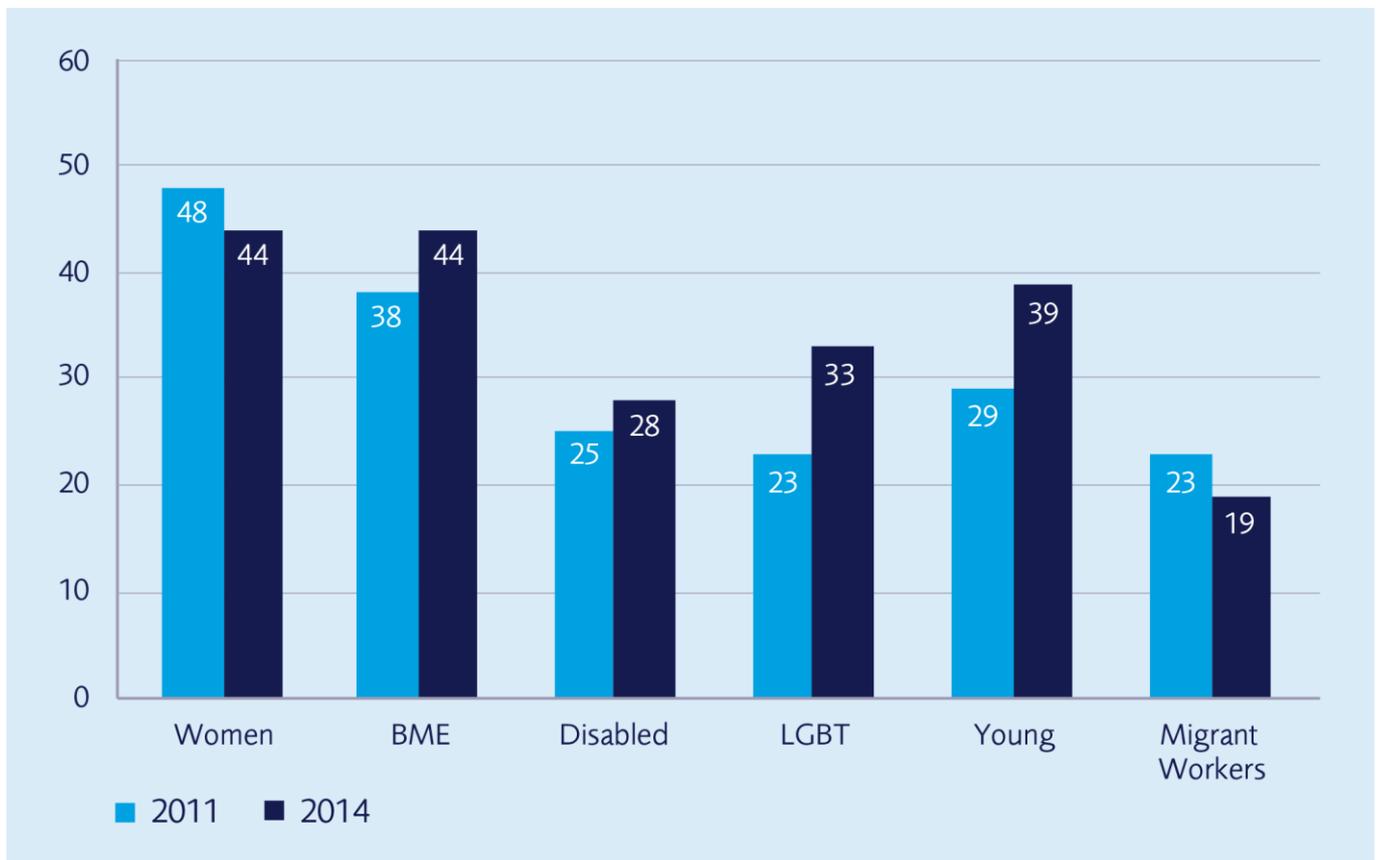
Unions taking action to recruit from different groups (%)



Encouraging participation

The proportion of unions that have undertaken specific activities to encourage BME members to become lay reps or branch officers has risen significantly since the last audit in 2011. Along with women, BME members are now the most likely of the under-represented groups to be given specific encouragement or support to become active within the union.

Unions encouraging members from different groups to become shop stewards/branch officials (%)

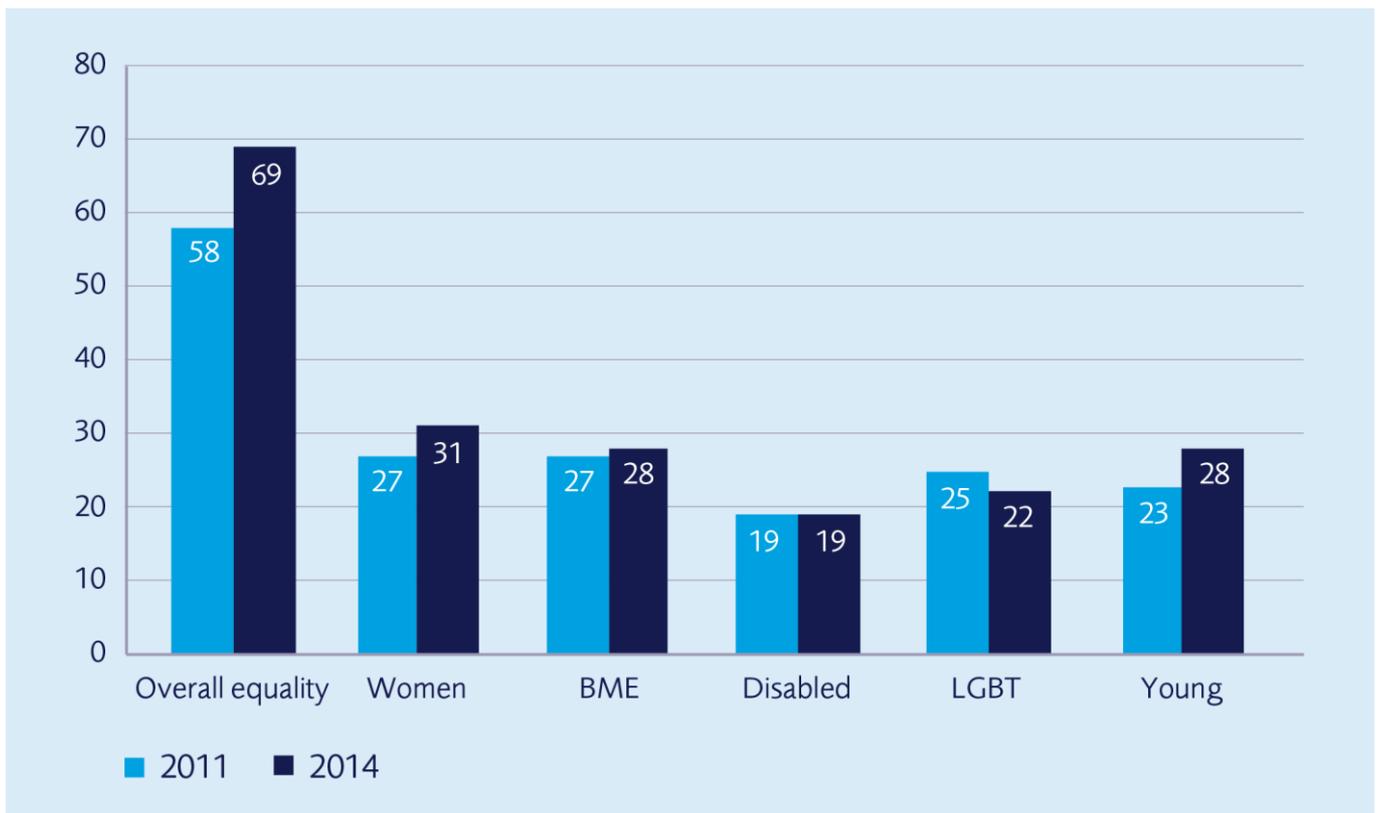


Race equality officers

Twenty eight per cent of unions employ staff at national level with specific responsibility for race equality – almost the same as in 2011. However, there has been a substantial rise in the proportion of such officers who have other responsibilities besides race equality. This is the case in nearly four-fifths of the unions with race equality officers at national level.

Larger unions were asked if they employ any equality staff at regional, group or sectoral level. The proportion of unions with race equality officers at this level has fallen from 20 per cent to 14 per cent in the last three years. As with national staff, the vast majority have other responsibilities besides race equality.

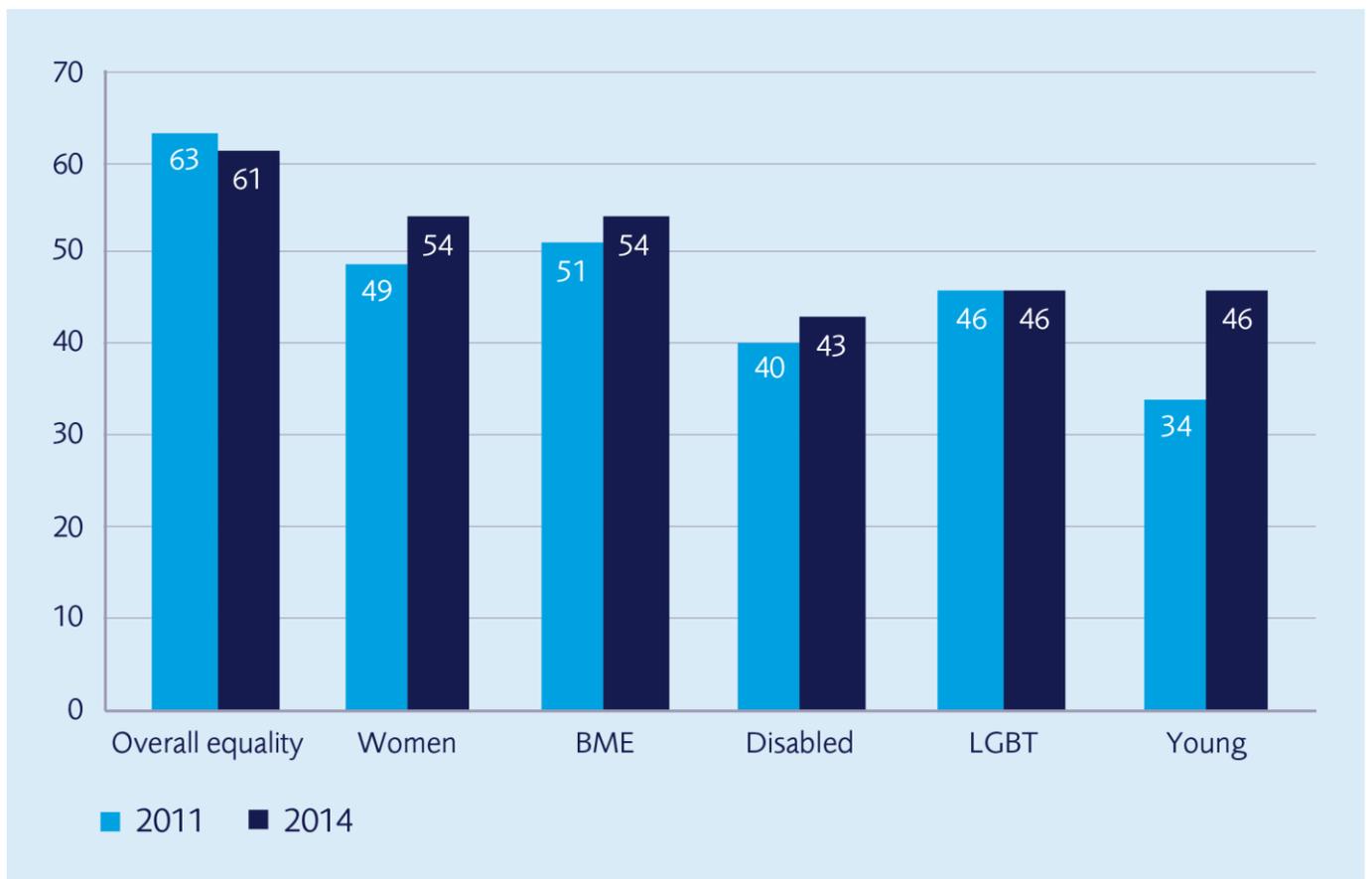
Unions employing equality officers at national level (%)



Committees

The larger unions were asked whether they have a race relations committee or similar body at national level. Over half of them said they have one. Four-fifths of union members are in a union with such a committee.

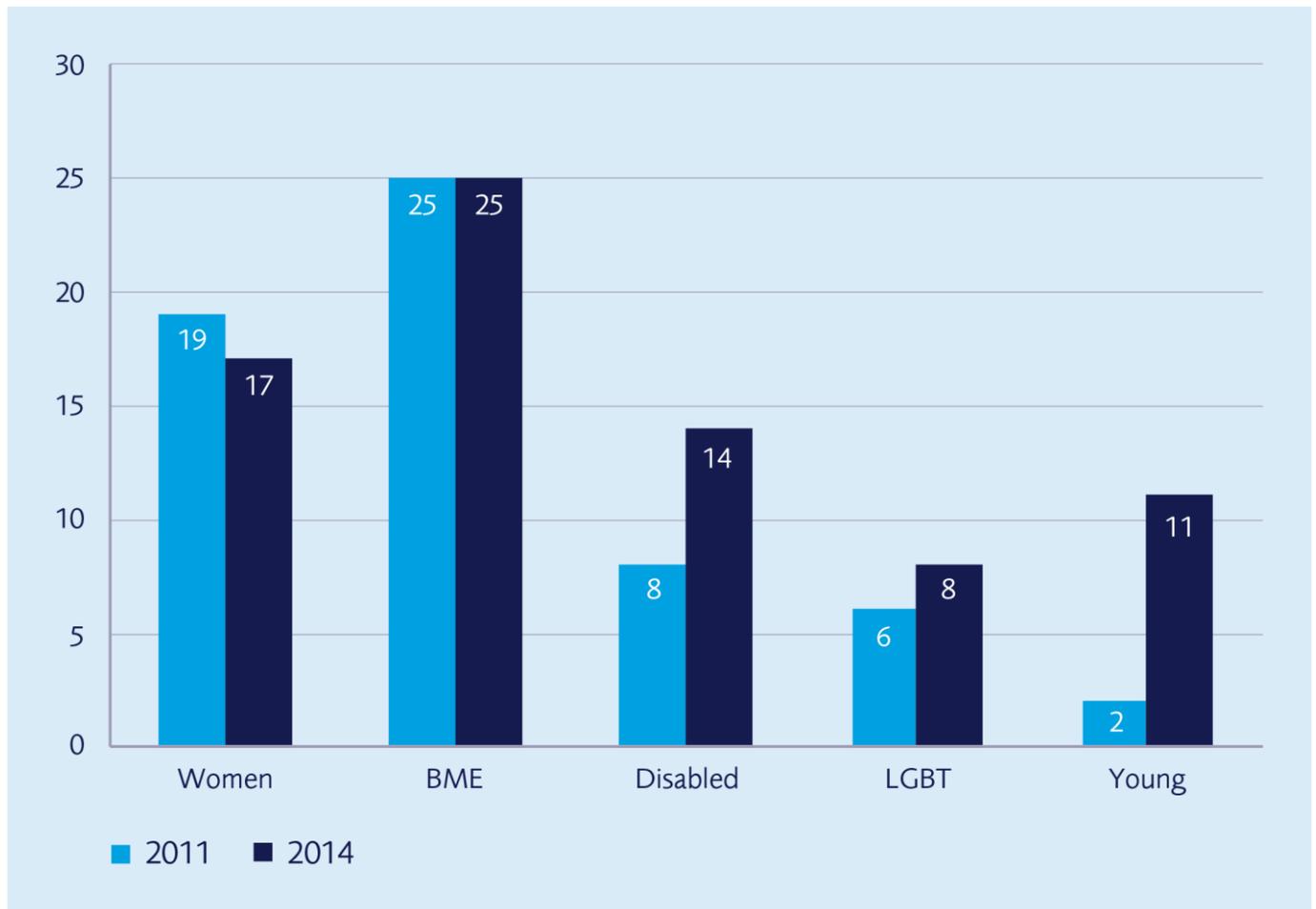
Unions with equality committees or similar bodies at national level (%)



Reserved seats

A quarter of unions have reserved seats for BME members on their national executive – the same as in 2011. More unions use reserved seats to address the under-representation of BME members at senior level than for any other group. The unions with such seats are: BDA, Equity, NAPO, NASS, NUJ, PCS, UCU, UNISON and Unite. They account for 57 per cent of union members.

Unions with reserved seats on national executive (%)

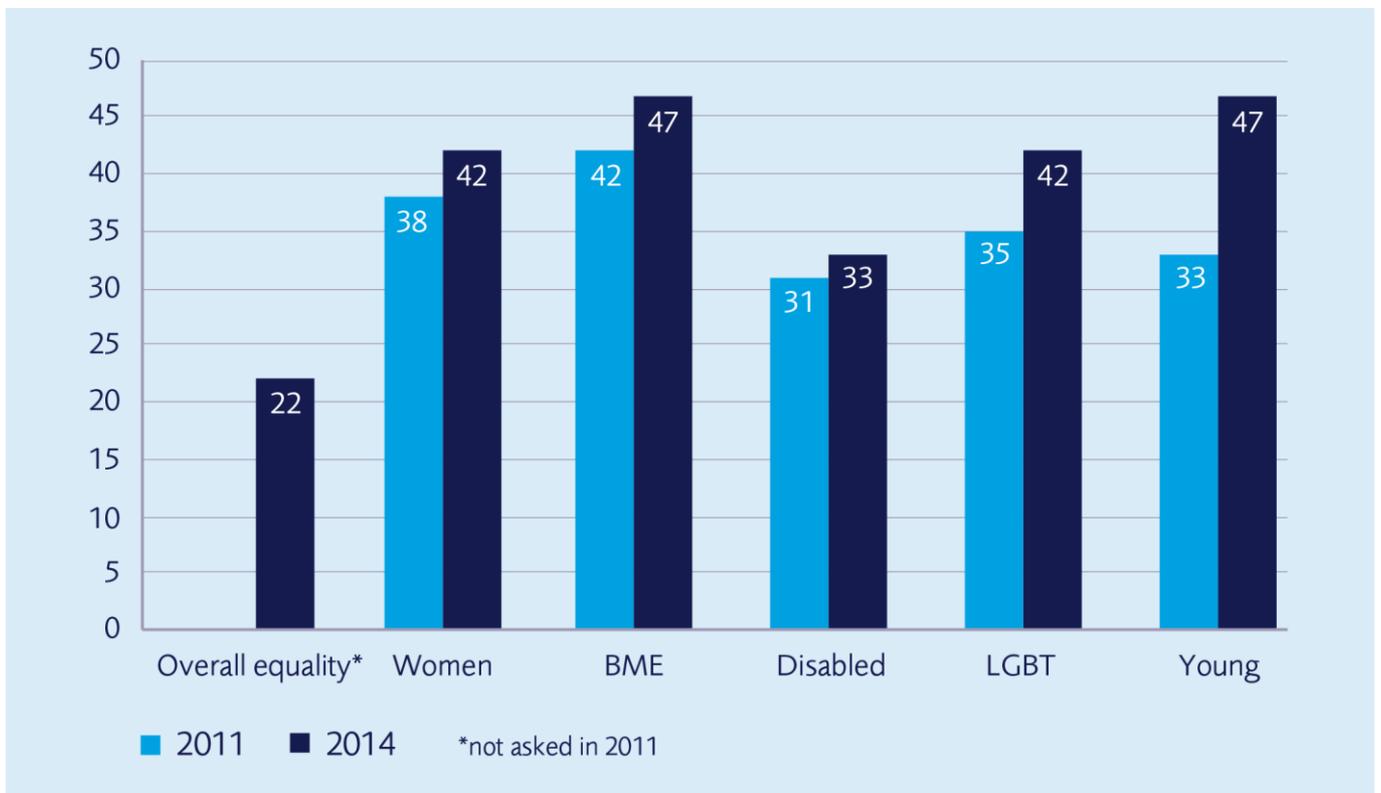


Conferences

Nearly half of unions (47 per cent) hold a delegate conference or similar event at national level for BME members. This is up slightly from 42 per cent in 2011. Four fifths of union members are in a union that holds such an event.

There has been no change in the proportion of unions holding conferences or events for BME members at regional or local level – 43 per cent do so.

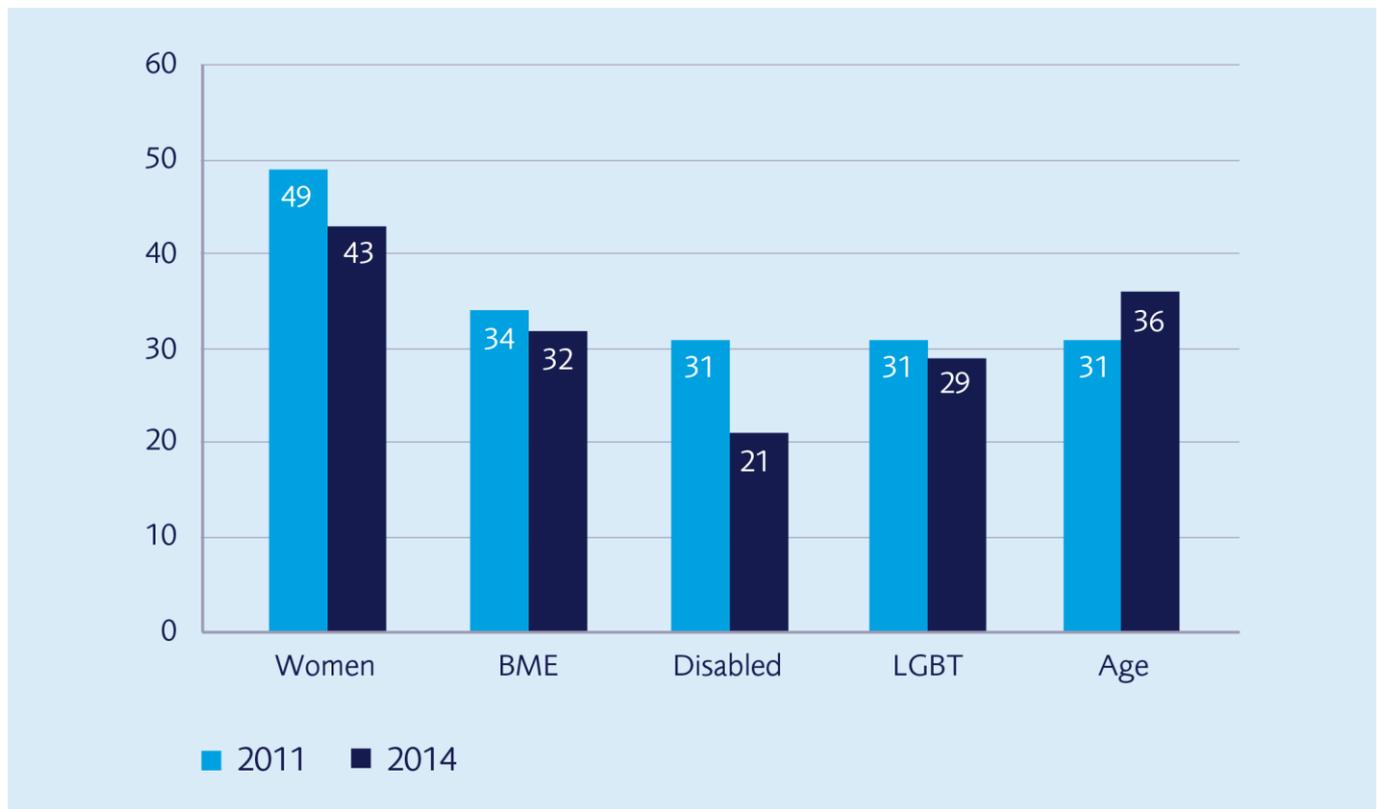
Unions holding equality conferences or seminars at national level (%)



Trade union training

There has been a general decline in training targeted at particular groups. The proportion that provides specific courses for BME members has fallen slightly since 2011. However, significantly more unions are taking action to encourage BME members to participate in their general education and training – 47 per cent, up from 38 per cent in 2011. More unions are monitoring the take up of their training and education services among BME members too – 64 per cent compared to 43 per cent in 2011.

Larger unions providing targeted training and education (%)



Rules on far-right or racist political parties

Fourteen unions (39 per cent) have a rule related to membership of far right or racist political parties. This compares with 21 (44 per cent) in 2011, but the earlier number included eight unions who did not respond to the audit in 2014.

The 14 unions are: Advance, ASLEF, BECTU, CWU, FBU, GMB, NASUWT, Nautilus, PCS, RMT, TSSA, UCU, UNISON and Unite. They account for 78 per cent of union members.

Union members covered by rule related to far-right or racist political parties (%)

