

# Executive summary

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 under-represented groups into membership and activism and how they are giving them a voice in their internal democracy.

Questionnaires 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 – two-thirds of affiliates (lists of respondents and non-respondents can be found in Appendix 1). The last time a similar audit was carried out was 2011.

The response rate was not as good as previous years. However, this audit covers over 5.6 million members or 95 per cent of TUC-affiliated union members. The difference in response rates means some caution needs to be exercised when making comparisons with previous years.

The audit was carried out by the Labour Research Department on behalf of the TUC.

## A. Labour market diversity and representation in unions

### Women

- ❖ In 2013, 49 per cent of UK employees and 55 per cent of union members were women.
- ❖ In the majority of unions providing data in their audit response, women were under-represented relative to the proportion in membership among shop stewards, health and safety reps, branch officers and union conference delegates and on TUC Congress delegations and union executives.
- ❖ In most unions, women were well represented – often over-represented – in union learning rep and equality rep roles.
- ❖ In 2013, 42 per cent of TUC Congress delegates were women and 45 per cent of TUC General Council members were women.

### BME workers

- ❖ Union density is highest for the Black/Black British ethnic group.
- ❖ Those identifying as Asian/Asian British or as Chinese or other ethnic group are under-represented in union membership, as are migrant workers.
- ❖ In the majority of unions providing data in their audit response, people from a BME background were under-represented relative to the proportion in membership among shop stewards, health and safety reps and union conference delegates and on union executives.
- ❖ In most unions, they were well represented or over-represented among union learning reps and equality reps. In just over half of unions, they were well represented among TUC Congress delegates.

### Disabled workers

- ❖ Disabled workers are more likely to be union members than those who are not disabled.
- ❖ Monitoring data from trade unions suggests an under-reporting of disability among members, whereas activists are more likely to be open about a disability or consider themselves disabled.

### LGBT workers

- ❖ Monitoring data from trade unions suggests that many members are still reluctant to reveal their LGBT status for membership records, but those who are active within the union are more likely to be open about it.

### Young workers

- ❖ Young workers are under-represented in union membership – 38 per cent of employees are under 35 compared to 23 per cent of union members.
- ❖ In all the unions that provided data, young workers were under-represented relative to the proportion in membership among union learning reps, health and safety reps and on union executives. In most unions they were under-represented among branch officers and equality reps and on TUC Congress delegations.

## B. Improving representation in membership and participation

### Equality monitoring

- ❖ There has been a significant increase in the proportion of unions carrying out equality monitoring since 2011. The progress is particularly evident in the number of unions monitoring the make-up of their membership.
- ❖ The biggest changes in monitoring have been in the more sensitive areas of disability (47 per cent of unions now monitor for membership records, up from 27 per cent in 2011) and LGBT status (31 per cent now monitor, up from 13 per cent in 2011). This suggests a growing confidence among unions in discussing these issues and encouraging a more open and inclusive culture for disabled and LGBT people.
- ❖ Not all of the large unions carry out comprehensive monitoring. As a result, despite improvements, only 51 per cent of union members are asked about their disability and 44 per cent are asked about their LGBT status for union membership records. By contrast, 99 per cent are asked about their gender, 83 per cent about their age and 77 per cent about their ethnicity.

### Targeted recruitment

- ❖ More unions were taking specific action to encourage under-represented groups into membership.
- ❖ Young workers are the group most likely to be targeted (53 per cent of unions target them).
- ❖ But the biggest change is the rise in the proportion of unions actively reaching out to LGBT workers – half of unions now do so compared to 38 per cent in 2011.

### Encouraging participation

- ❖ The proportion of unions that are taking steps to break down the barriers to participation and progression in union structures for BME, disabled, LGBT and young members has expanded considerably since 2011.

- ❖ The number undertaking similar activities for women and migrant workers has contracted slightly.

### Equality staff

- ❖ More unions employ equality officers at national level – 69 per cent of unions have an officer covering overall equality compared to 58 per cent in 2011. However, in three-quarters of these unions the officers have other responsibilities besides equality (up from 61 per cent in 2011).
- ❖ It is mainly the smallest unions who do not employ equality staff so 99 per cent of union members are in a union that has a national equality officer.
- ❖ More of the larger unions are employing staff with responsibility for equality at regional or sector level but there has been a decline in the number of unions employing staff with specific responsibility for women and BME and LGBT issues at this level. In almost all the unions with regional or sector-based equality staff the officers have other responsibilities besides equality.

### Equality reps

- ❖ Half of unions have provision in their rulebook or a practice of appointing or electing equality reps at branch or workplace level. This includes many of the larger unions, so 87 per cent of union members are now in a union that has equality reps.
- ❖ However, this does not mean all these members have access to an equality rep in their branch or workplace as it is still a relatively new development and not all positions are filled.
- ❖ Some unions reported that they were struggling to meet their ambitions to increase the number of equality reps because lack of statutory rights, cuts to facilities time and increasing workload pressures were discouraging members from volunteering for the role.

### Equality committees

- ❖ The biggest change is in the number of unions with a committee or similar body at national level for young members – 46 per cent now have one, up from 34 per cent in 2011.

- ❖ The proportion of union members who are in a union with an overall equality committee or similar body is 92 per cent and around 80 per cent of members are in a union with a women's, BME, disabled workers', LGBT or young workers' committee at national level.

### Reserved seats

- ❖ Only a small minority of unions use reserved seats to improve representation on their senior decision-making bodies, branch committees and delegations.
- ❖ However, as a number of the large unions use reserved seats the proportion of union members covered by this practice is considerably higher. For example, only 17 per cent of unions have reserved seats for women on their national executive but 61 per cent of union members are in a union with such seats.
- ❖ The biggest change since 2011 has been in the number of unions using reserved seats to boost the representation of young members. For example, 11 per cent now have a reserved seat for young members on their executive compared to just 2 per cent three years ago. The unions with such seats account for nearly half of union members.
- ❖ Another significant change is in the number of unions with reserved seats for women on branch committees. Five of the largest unions now have such seats (UNISON, Unite, PCS, GMB and CWU), accounting for 67 per cent of union members.

### Equality conferences and seminars

- ❖ More unions are running national equality conferences or seminars for all the groups, with the biggest increase being for young members – 47 per cent up as opposed to 33 per cent in 2011.
- ❖ Over 90 per cent of union members are in a union that holds a conference or seminar at national level for LGBT and young workers, over 80 per cent are in a union that holds such an event for BME and disabled members, and 67 per cent are in a union that holds such an event for women.

## C. Inclusive campaigns and communications

- ❖ Around three-fifths of unions have taken steps to ensure their campaign materials and communications are accessible to people with visual or hearing impairments and a similar proportion provide material in languages other than English (most commonly Welsh or East European languages).
- ❖ Most of the larger unions (86 per cent) took action to ensure materials reflected a diverse membership and did not cause offence and half of these unions also took steps to encourage their branches to do the same.
- ❖ Half of all unions considered or monitored the impact on equality of any campaigns they were planning to run – in some cases, differentiated materials were provided to target the concerns of different groups.

## D. Reflecting diversity in services and training

- ❖ A declining proportion of unions are providing differentiated services or training for particular groups of members.
- ❖ Against this general trend, there has been a rise in the number of unions providing website areas or web-based services for women members and for particular age groups.
- ❖ Fewer unions are providing training courses for particular groups but a growing proportion are taking steps to make their general education and training courses more inclusive and the majority of unions are monitoring who attends their training and education.

## E. Rules on equality

- ❖ Three-quarters of unions have adopted the TUC model equality clause, covering just over three-quarters of union members.
- ❖ In addition, 39 per cent of unions (covering 78 per cent of union members) have a rule enabling them to expel or refuse membership to individuals who are members or activists of far right or racist political parties.