

LGBT 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 lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender workers. Please see the full report for more detailed commentary and examples of good practice from unions.

LGBT representation in unions

There are no reliable official statistics on the size of the LGBT workforce. A question about sexual orientation was included for the first time in the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) General Household Survey in 2010. Just 1.5 per cent of the population were willing to identify as LGB. In large parts of the country and among older age groups, very small proportions of people answered the question positively, which suggests LGB people over 60 or living in the countryside were less comfortable about being open about their sexual orientation.

There has been a significant increase in the number of unions that are monitoring the LGBT status of their members, lay reps and officers. However, only 8 unions (22 per cent of unions responding) were able and willing to provide data in their audit response. The unions that did provide data were: FDA, Napo, NASUWT, NGSU, NUJ, PCS, UCU and Unite.

Among these unions, the proportion of the membership identifying as LGBT varied from 0.2 per cent to 2 per cent. It is likely that as unions repeat this kind of

monitoring and do more to promote awareness and understanding of LGBT issues, those identifying as LGBT will increase.¹

Also, as with disability, the data suggests that in a majority of these unions LGBT members were over-represented at all the various levels of the union; but what is more likely to be the case is that those who are active in union structures are more willing to be open about their LGBT status to the union.

TUC monitoring data for Congress 2013 showed that 6.2 per cent of delegates identified as LGBT.

¹ See the TUC's *LGBT Equality at Work* guide for advice on sexual orientation and gender identity monitoring.

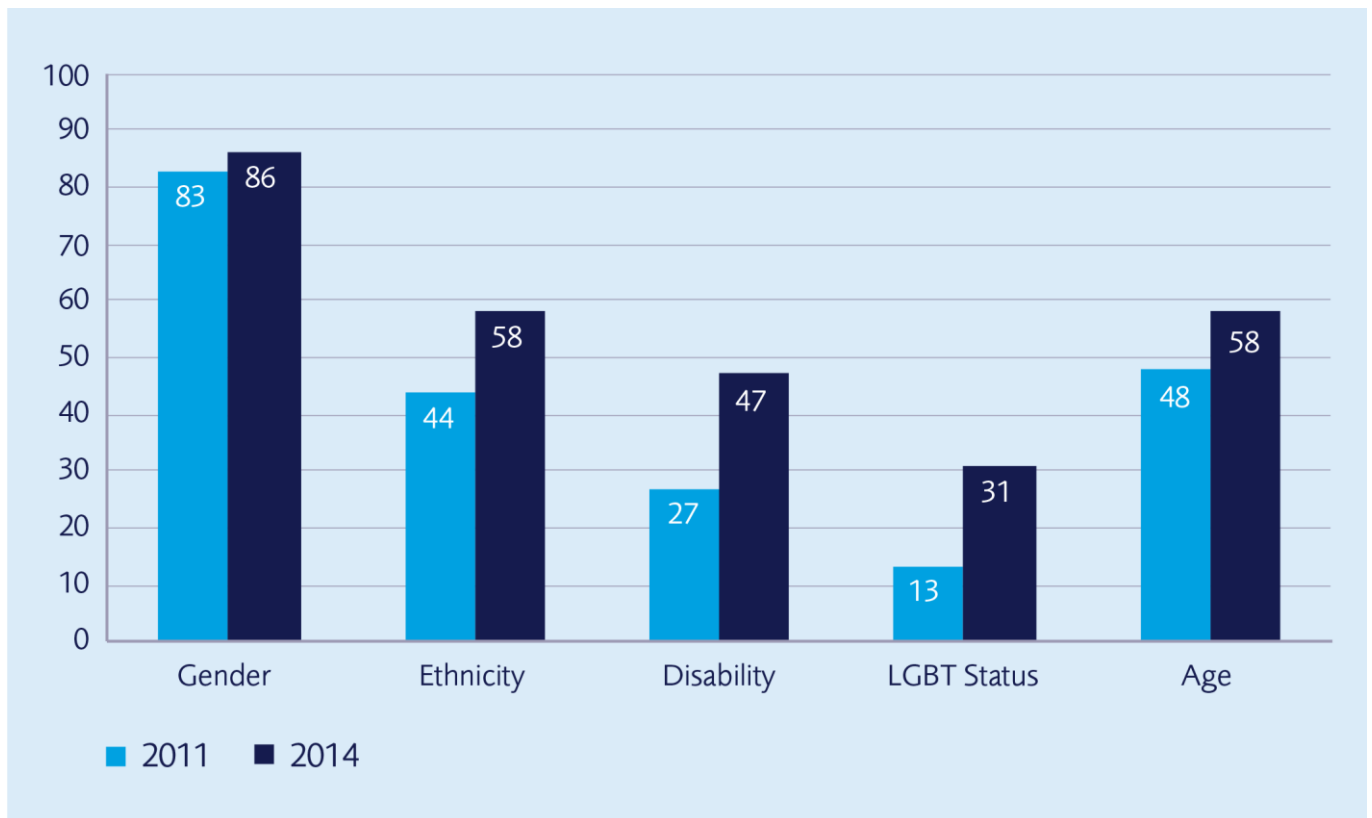
Improving representation in membership and participation

Monitoring

There has been a substantial rise in the proportion of unions monitoring the LGBT status of their membership – 31 per cent of unions now do so compared to 13 per cent in 2011. This is significant progress as many unions would have considered such monitoring not possible a few years ago. However, not all the large unions carry out such monitoring, so despite the improvements, still fewer than half of union members are asked about their LGBT status for union membership records, whereas 99 per cent are asked about their gender, 83 per cent are asked about their age and 77 per cent are asked about their ethnicity.

Fewer unions monitor the proportion of workplace reps, conference delegates and national executive committee members who are LGB or T, but there has been progress here too since 2011. Whereas this was a rare phenomenon three years ago it is now something carried out by around one in five unions.

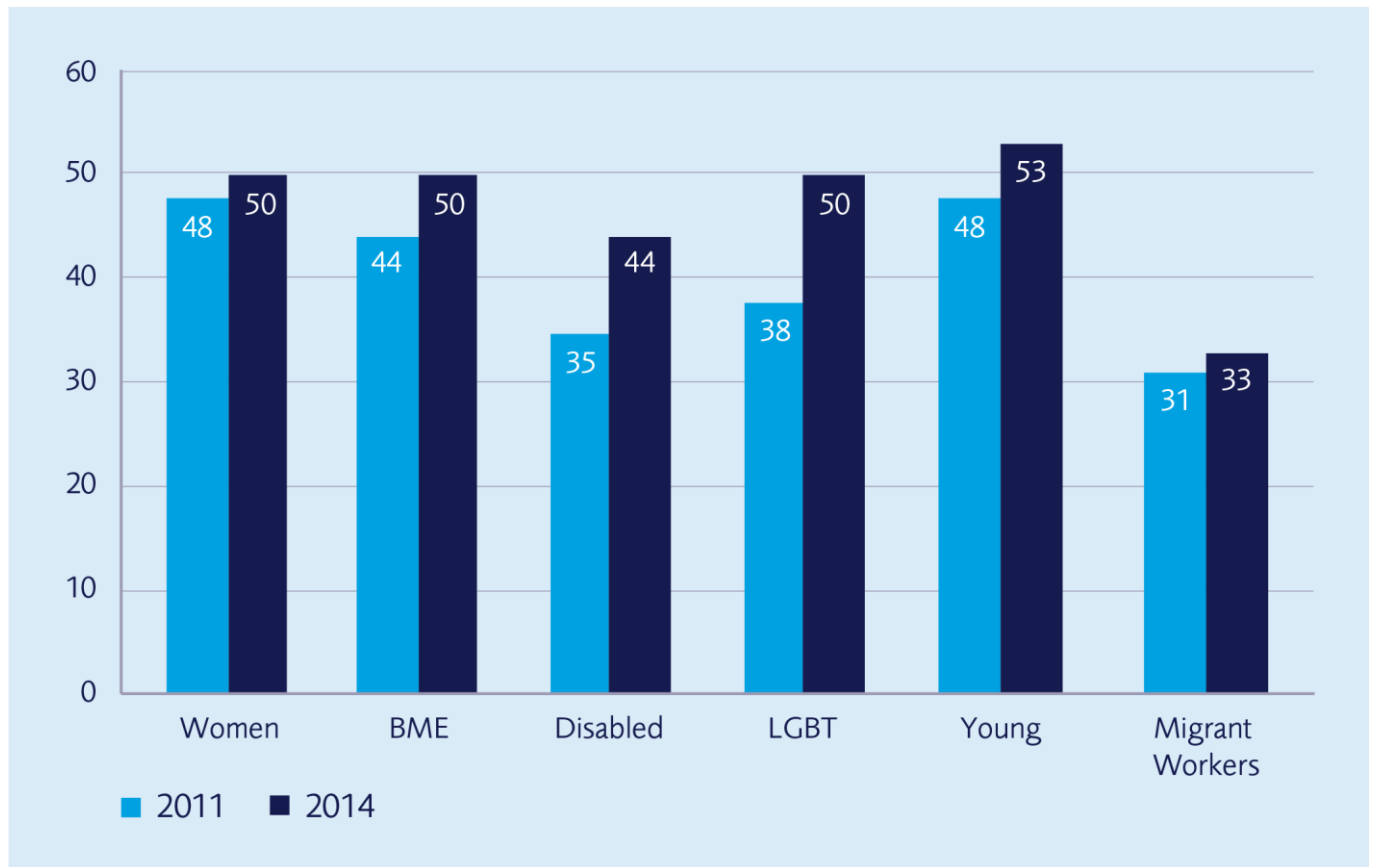
Unions monitoring membership by protected characteristic (%)



Targeted recruitment

The audit shows that half of unions are reaching out to LGBT workers, with specific events or campaigns to encourage them into membership, up from 38 per cent in 2011. This was the sharpest increase in recruitment activity targeting an under-represented group. Unions are now as likely to have campaigns and events to appeal to LGBT workers as they are for women and BME workers.

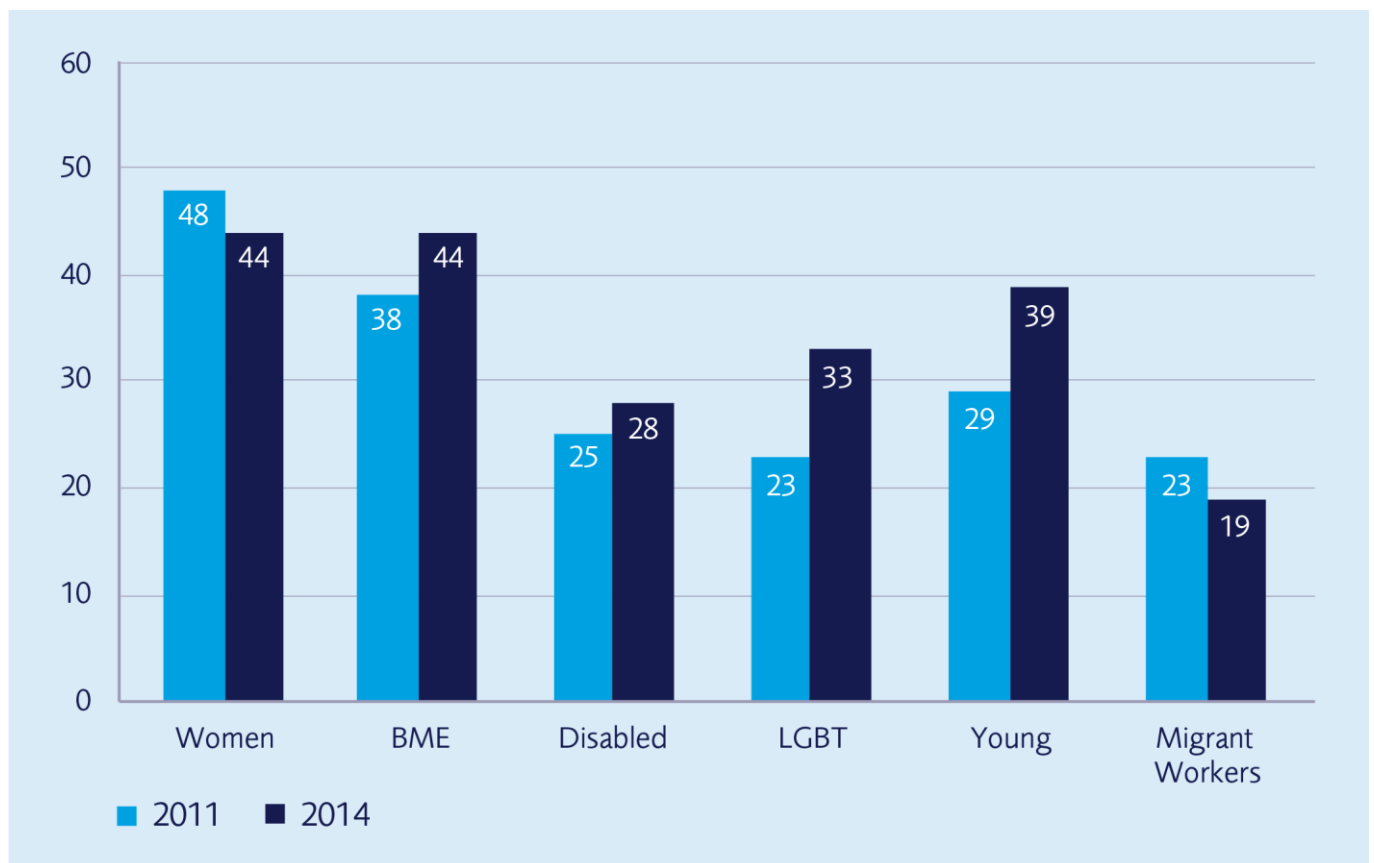
Unions taking action to recruit from different groups (%)



Encouraging participation

The proportion of unions that have taken specific action to encourage LGBT members into shop steward or branch officer roles has risen significantly since 2011 – 33 per cent, up from 23 per cent. Along with the increase in targeted recruitment activity and monitoring, this suggests a new confidence among some unions around LGBT issues.

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

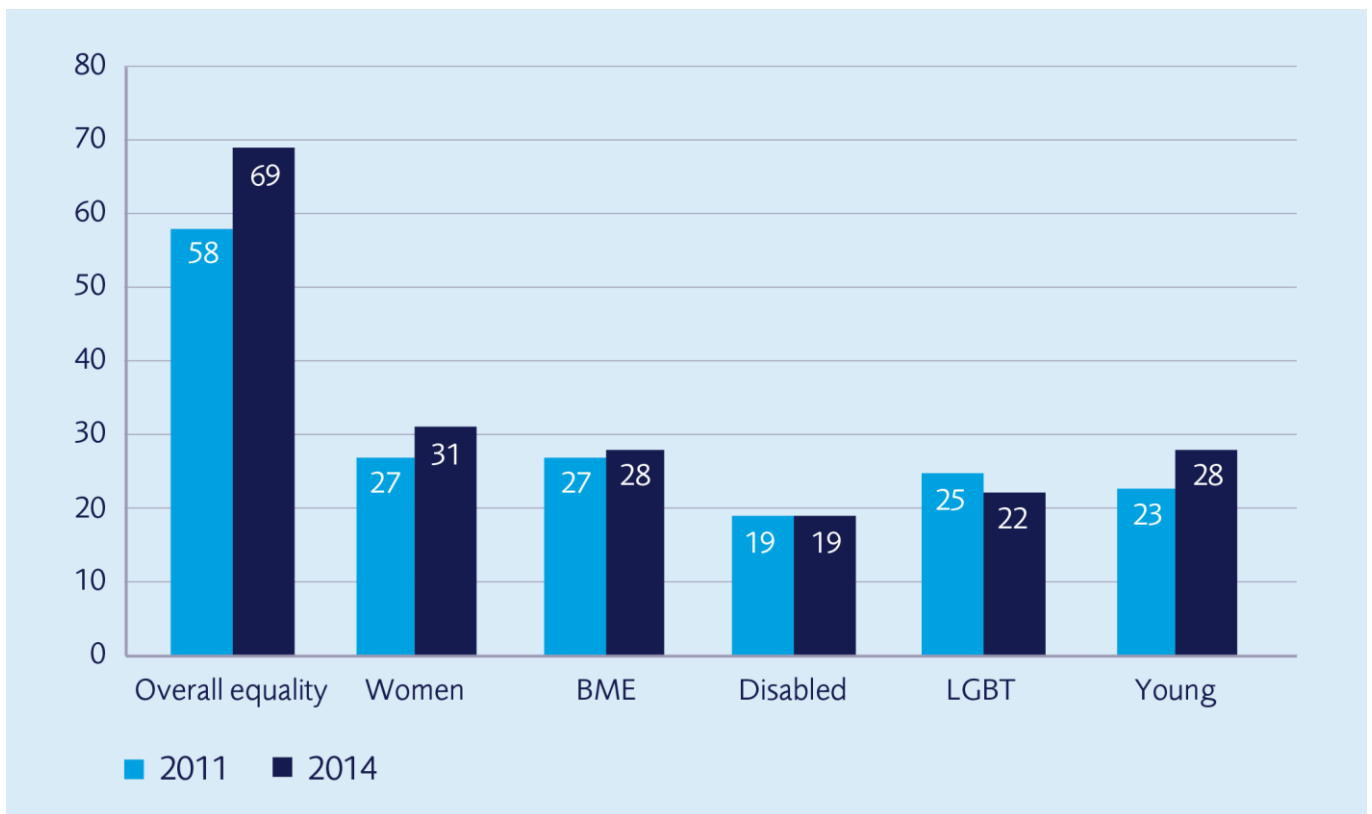


LGBT equality officers

A quarter of unions employ staff at national level with specific responsibility for LGBT equality, up from 22 per cent in 2011. However, there has been a substantial rise in the proportion of national LGBT officers who have other responsibilities besides LGBT equality. This is the case in 88 per cent of the unions with such officers, compared to 33 per cent in 2011.

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

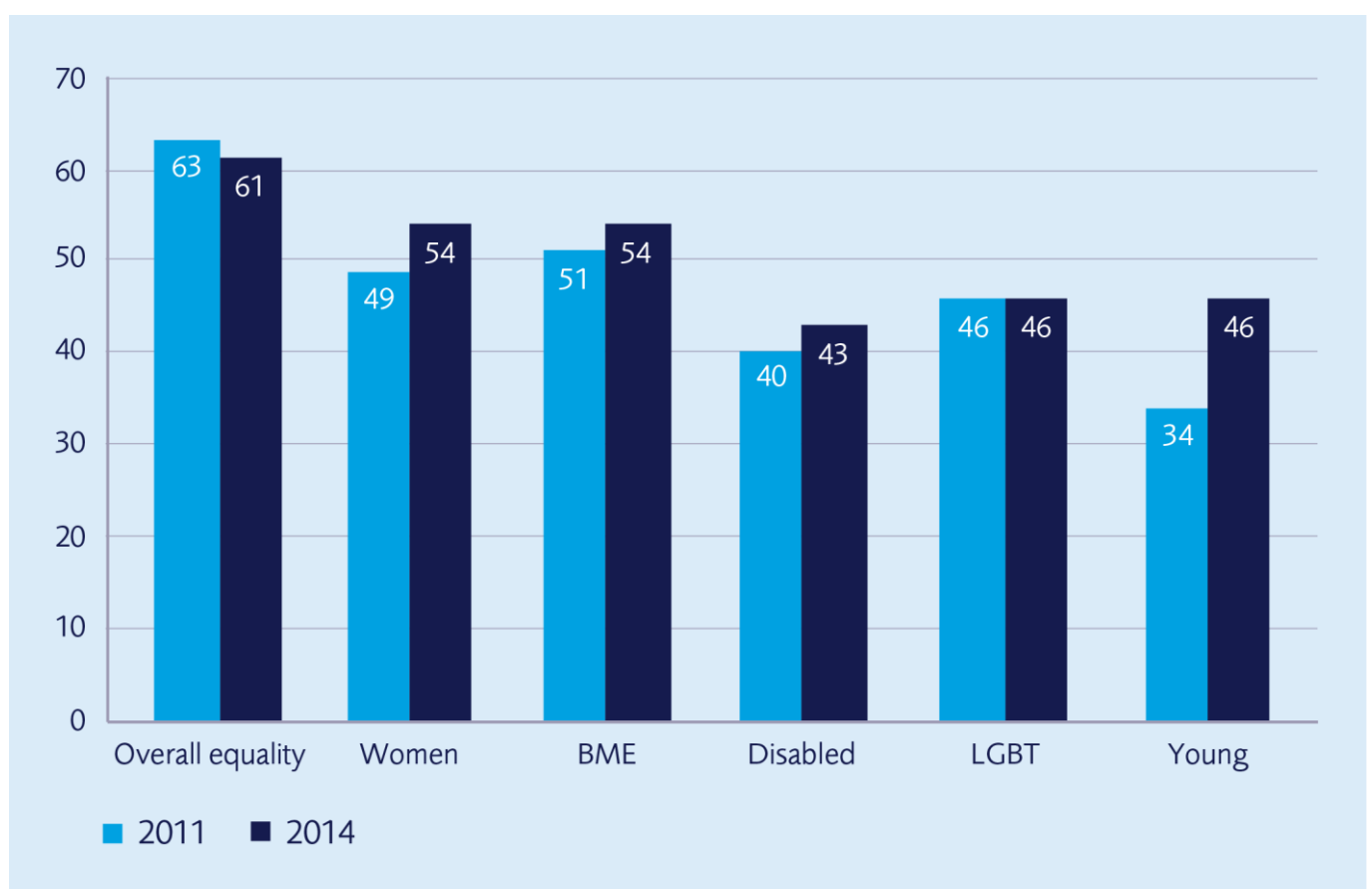
Unions employing equality officers at national level (%)



Committees

The larger unions were asked whether they have an LGBT committee or similar body at national level. Forty six per cent do so, unchanged since 2011. Four-fifths of union members are in a union with such a committee.

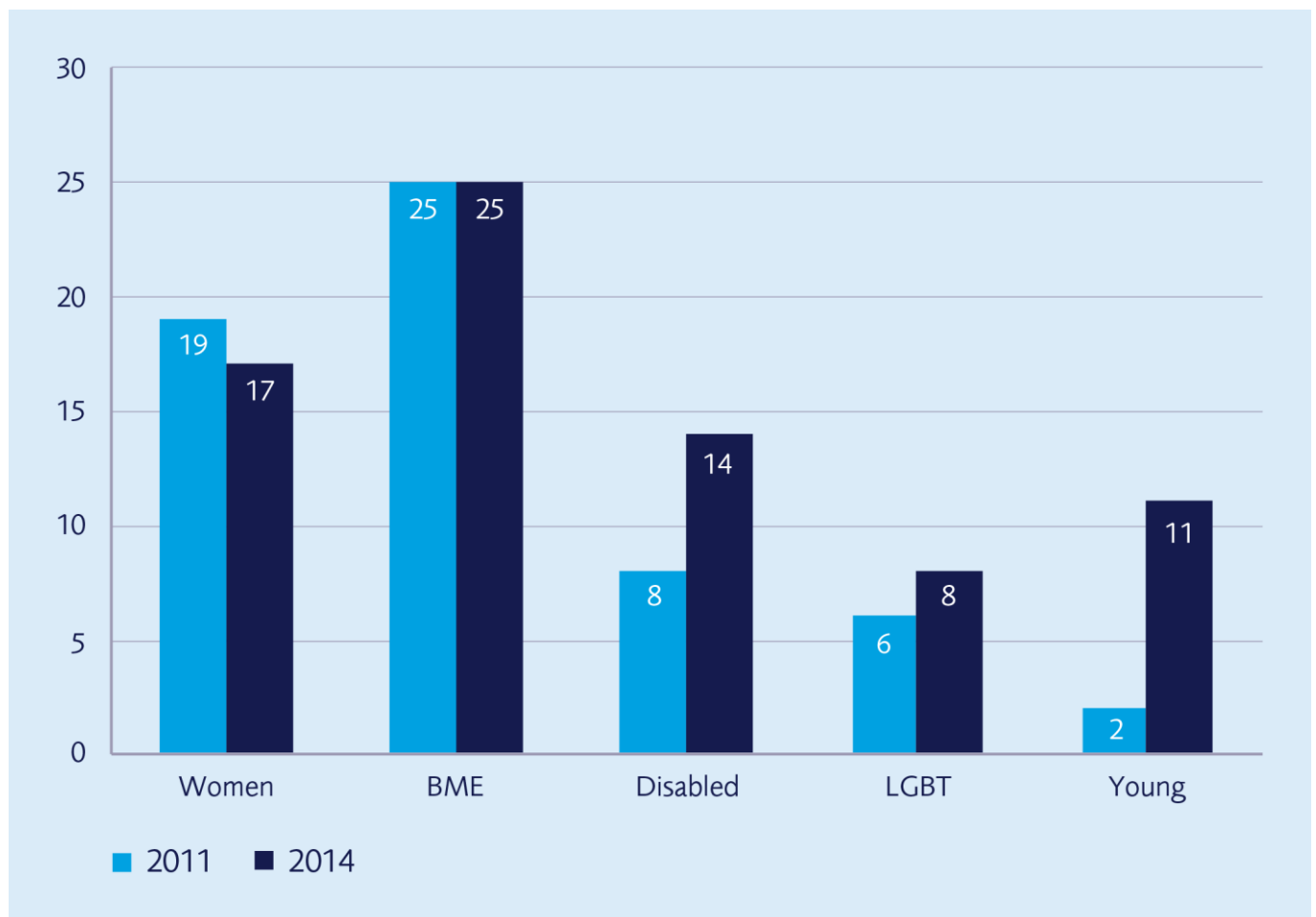
Unions with equality committees or similar bodies at national level (%)



Reserved seats

Only three unions have reserved seats for LGBT members on their national executive. They are: NUT, UCU and Unite. They account for a third of union members.

Unions with reserved seats on national executive (%)

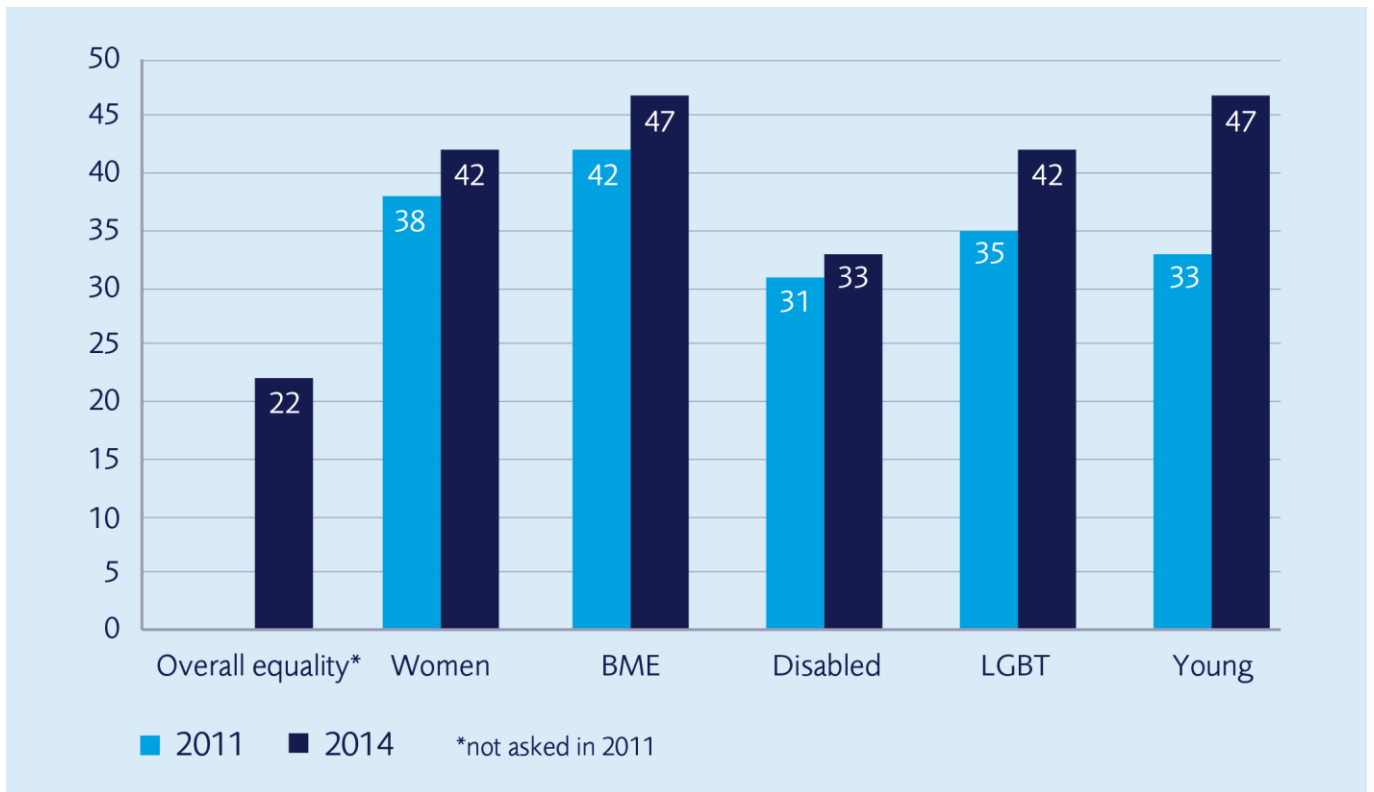


Conferences

There has been a significant rise in the proportion of unions holding a delegate conference or similar event at national level for LGBT members – 42 per cent now do so, up from 35 per cent in 2011. Over 80 per cent of union members are in a union that holds such an event.

However, there has been little change in the proportion of unions holding conferences or events for LGBT members at regional or local level – 36 per cent now do so, compared to 37 per cent in 2011.

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 LGBT members fell slightly to 29 per cent from 31 per cent in 2011.

However, more unions are taking action to encourage LGBT members to participate in their general education and training – 42 per cent, up from 31 per cent in 2011. A lot more unions are monitoring the take up of their training and education services among LGBT members too – 54 per cent compared to 20 per cent in 2011.

Larger unions providing targeted training and education (%)

