

# [Trends in contemporary trade union membership](https://assignbuster.com/trends-in-contemporary-trade-union-membership/)

[](https://assignbuster.com/)[History](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/history/)

Trade union can broadly be described as collective outfit of workers that looks after their welfare. The concept of ‘ unions’ has given a great stimulus to the employees to fight for their rights. Through large scale membership, the unions are able to generate collective bargaining system against the monopoly of the big corporate houses. In the current times, the new human resource strategy encourages membership to the unions as it helps the management to resolve contentious issues with them on collective basis. TUC or Trade Union Congress of UK represents nearly 58 unions across the nation (TUC, 2011). They are major organizations that understand the needs and requirements of the working people and help provide them with safe working environment and help negotiate better pay and compensation.   
Trade unions play major role in the labor market in UK. The statistics of union membership is clear indication of its success as independent bodies that can negotiate successfully for the rights of the working population. BIS, a leading government department, regularly analyses government policies and publishes range of information and data of various public and private organizations to promote transparency. The major aim is to reveal as to how taxpayers’ money is spent and whether resources are better used to deliver value for money. BIS’ statistics on trade union membership is an important aspect that demonstrates its proactive participation in the welfare of the workers (BIS, 2011).   
But the recent fall in membership has emerged as major concern (Table 1; BIS, 2011) for TUC and government. The membership to unions has fallen from 2008 till 2011 showing its inability in negotiating welfare policies for workers in economic slowdown. The trend also highlights the fact that women have shown greater trust on the unions but membership has declined for workers for 60 years and above for the above period. The Table 2 (BIS, 2011) is hugely significant and shows that public sector has nearly double the union members (60. 9%) as against the private sector employees (39. 1%). Nearly 78. 6% of members are full time workers, whereas only 21. 4% of part time workers are union members. Most distressing is the fact that disabled membership of union is only about 17. 5%. Moreover, the table gives credence to the fact that workforce with higher qualifications has more awareness and trust in union whereas non-qualified constitute only 3. 7% of union members.   
The recent trend in union membership is distressing for the working population because they increasingly describe the reducing power of the unions. The private sector has maintained its exploitive tendencies. Moreover, the dismally low percentage of under privileged segment of society like people with disability illustrate that they are discriminated and not given opportunity to be part of social action groups like unions. The statistics demonstrate the failure of unions to maintain the trust of the people at large. The declining membership is testament to its ineffective mechanisms that are not able to fight for the causes of people who have been retrenched or have not been given their due rights. Thus, the examination of membership statistics is hugely revealing and indicates the falling popularity and effectiveness of unions which needs to be addressed urgently.   
(words: 528)   
Reference   
BIS or Department of Business Innovation and Skills. (2011). Analysis. Retrieved from: http://www. bis. gov. uk/assets/biscore/employment-matters/docs/t/12-p77-trade-union-membership-2011. pdf   
Trade Union Congress. (2011). Retrieved from: http://www. tuc. org. uk/the\_tuc/tuc-8681-f0. cfm   
Appendix 1   
Table 1   
Trade union density by gender and age group, 2002 to 2011   
Per cent, not seasonally adjusted   
  
2002   
2003   
2004   
2005   
2006   
2007   
2008   
2009   
2010   
2011   
All   
  
16-19   
4. 9   
5. 2   
3. 9   
3. 3   
5. 2   
3. 8   
4. 4   
4. 1   
4. 0   
3. 1   
20-24   
13. 5   
14. 0   
13. 5   
13. 1   
13. 1   
13. 0   
12. 2   
11. 8   
12. 1   
11. 4   
25-29   
22. 0   
22. 4   
22. 7   
21. 8   
21. 9   
19. 5   
20. 2   
21. 0   
19. 5   
18. 2   
30 to 34   
26. 7   
28. 5   
26. 8   
26. 9   
24. 7   
25. 1   
24. 9   
24. 0   
22. 5   
24. 0   
35 to 39   
32. 3   
32. 5   
31. 0   
29. 4   
29. 0   
30. 0   
27. 4   
27. 5   
26. 9   
26. 7   
40 to 44   
35. 9   
36. 1   
34. 6   
35. 0   
35. 2   
33. 4   
33. 2   
30. 5   
31. 1   
29. 4   
45 to 49   
39. 7   
38. 8   
39. 9   
37. 7   
37. 7   
37. 0   
35. 4   
36. 1   
34. 1   
33. 6   
50 to 54   
39. 0   
39. 8   
39. 3   
40. 6   
39. 9   
39. 1   
38. 4   
37. 5   
37. 6   
36. 2   
55 to 59   
34. 8   
35. 4   
36. 3   
37. 5   
36. 5   
38. 5   
38. 2   
38. 9   
37. 0   
35. 3   
60 to 64   
28. 7   
30. 5   
28. 4   
27. 5   
28. 4   
30. 1   
28. 9   
30. 2   
28. 1   
29. 1   
65-69   
14. 6   
13. 3   
8. 8   
15. 6   
15. 3   
12. 9   
19. 1   
16. 4   
13. 6   
14. 1   
Over 70   
\*   
\*   
\*   
\*   
\*   
9. 3   
8. 0   
12. 7   
7. 2   
13. 5   
Male   
16 to 19   
6. 1   
6. 4   
5. 3   
4. 0   
7. 0   
4. 7   
5. 4   
5. 3   
4. 7   
4. 7   
20 to 24   
13. 4   
13. 1   
13. 4   
13. 0   
13. 2   
11. 8   
13. 0   
12. 3   
11. 0   
11. 4   
25 to 29   
20. 6   
20. 8   
20. 5   
18. 8   
20. 1   
17. 0   
17. 1   
17. 7   
16. 9   
15. 0   
30 to 34   
24. 8   
26. 1   
25. 0   
23. 3   
21. 1   
21. 6   
21. 8   
19. 9   
18. 2   
20. 3   
35 to 39   
30. 7   
32. 2   
29. 7   
28. 2   
27. 4   
28. 5   
24. 2   
24. 2   
24. 0   
21. 5   
40 to 44   
37. 8   
35. 8   
34. 5   
33. 8   
33. 8   
31. 1   
31. 2   
28. 0   
27. 0   
26. 4   
45 to 49   
40. 3   
38. 5   
41. 4   
37. 7   
36. 1   
35. 8   
33. 1   
34. 2   
31. 1   
31. 8   
50 to 54   
40. 2   
41. 5   
38. 4   
41. 7   
39. 1   
37. 9   
36. 4   
35. 8   
34. 9   
33. 6   
55 to 59   
36. 2   
37. 7   
38. 2   
38. 4   
36. 1   
39. 4   
38. 5   
37. 2   
35. 6   
32. 6   
60 to 64   
29. 5   
33. 7   
30. 4   
27. 8   
29. 0   
31. 0   
30. 7   
30. 6   
28. 1   
28. 1   
65 to 69   
13. 2   
10. 9   
10. 2   
14. 5   
15. 2   
9. 5   
16. 9   
12. 8   
10. 6   
13. 4   
Over 70   
\*   
\*   
\*   
\*   
\*   
9. 4   
7. 4   
13. 6   
8. 1   
17. 9   
Female   
16 to 19   
3. 7   
4. 1   
2. 7   
2. 7   
3. 5   
3. 1   
3. 3   
3. 1   
3. 3   
1. 7   
20 to 24   
13. 7   
15. 0   
13. 5   
13. 3   
13. 0   
14. 2   
11. 4   
11. 3   
13. 3   
11. 4   
25 to 29   
23. 5   
24. 3   
25. 1   
25. 1   
23. 9   
22. 5   
23. 7   
24. 5   
22. 4   
21. 9   
30 to 34   
28. 7   
31. 0   
28. 8   
31. 0   
28. 6   
29. 0   
28. 1   
28. 4   
27. 4   
28. 0   
35 to 39   
34. 0   
32. 7   
32. 5   
30. 5   
30. 6   
31. 6   
30. 7   
31. 1   
30. 0   
32. 2   
40 to 44   
34. 1   
36. 4   
34. 7   
36. 2   
36. 6   
35. 7   
35. 3   
33. 0   
35. 1   
32. 4   
45 to 49   
39. 1   
39. 0   
38. 4   
37. 7   
39. 2   
38. 0   
37. 5   
37. 8   
36. 9   
35. 3   
50 to 54   
37. 7   
38. 3   
40. 2   
39. 7   
40. 7   
40. 2   
40. 2   
39. 1   
39. 9   
38. 4   
55 to 59   
33. 4   
33. 0   
34. 3   
36. 7   
36. 8   
37. 7   
37. 9   
40. 5   
38. 3   
37. 9   
60 to 64   
27. 6   
26. 3   
25. 5   
27. 2   
27. 5   
28. 8   
26. 6   
29. 6   
28. 2   
30. 4   
65 to 69   
16. 1   
15. 8   
7. 0   
16. 8   
15. 5   
16. 9   
21. 8   
20. 0   
16. 7   
14. 9   
Over 70   
\*   
\*   
\*   
\*   
\*   
9. 0   
8. 9   
11. 6   
5. 8   
8. 7   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics. Excludes members of armed forces.   
Appendix 2   
Table 2   
Characteristics of union members and non-members, 2011   
Per cent, not seasonally adjusted   
  
Union members   
Non-members   
All employees   
Gender   
  
  
  
Male   
45. 3   
52. 2   
50. 7   
Female   
54. 7   
47. 8   
49. 3   
Sector   
Private   
39. 1   
83. 5   
72. 4   
Public   
60. 9   
16. 5   
27. 6   
Full-time/part-time   
Full-time   
78. 6   
70. 5   
73. 2   
Part-time   
21. 4   
29. 5   
26. 8   
Age bands   
16 to 24   
4. 6   
16. 4   
13. 8   
25 to 34   
18. 2   
24. 1   
23. 4   
35 to 49   
42. 6   
34. 7   
36. 6   
50 plus   
34. 5   
24. 9   
26. 3   
Ethnicity   
White   
92. 0   
90. 0   
90. 1   
Mixed   
0. 6   
0. 9   
0. 8   
Asian or Asian British   
4. 1   
5. 2   
5. 1   
Black or Black British   
2. 4   
2. 2   
2. 4   
Chinese and other ethnic groups   
0. 8   
1. 4   
1. 4   
Nationality   
UK   
95. 6   
90. 0   
91. 2   
Other   
4. 4   
10. 0   
8. 8   
Disability   
Disabled   
17. 5   
13. 8   
14. 4   
Not disabled   
82. 5   
86. 2   
85. 6   
Highest qualification   
Degree or equivalent   
36. 3   
27. 0   
29. 1   
Other higher education   
13. 7   
9. 0   
10. 1   
A-level or equivalent   
21. 3   
24. 7   
23. 9   
GCSE grades A-C or equivalent   
17. 8   
23. 4   
22. 1   
Other qualifications   
7. 2   
9. 3   
8. 9   
No qualification   
3. 7   
6. 7   
5. 9   
Length of service   
Less than one year   
5. 5   
18. 5   
15. 0   
One to two years   
4. 9   
11. 7   
10. 2   
Two to five years   
16. 8   
24. 5   
23. 2   
Five to ten years   
23. 6   
21. 2   
21. 7   
Ten to twenty years   
26. 6   
16. 3   
18. 7   
Twenty years or more   
22. 7   
7. 7   
11. 2   
Workplace size   
Less than 50   
29. 8   
53. 8   
47. 4   
50 or more   
70. 2   
46. 2   
52. 6   
Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics.