



Department
for Business
Innovation & Skills

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Trade Union Membership
Records

JULY 2013

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Introduction

This Equality Impact Assessment accompanies proposed legislative measures to give greater reassurance of trade unions' compliance with their existing obligation, to keep accurate and up to date membership records. A full impact assessment will be developed after, and informed by, a period of targeted consultation and engagement of a range of experts. This will assess the impacts of this policy on trade unions, members, employers and the exchequer.

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This assessment covers all of the nine protected groups which include: age, race, gender, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership. Our analysis suggests that there will be no significant equality or discriminatory impacts on these groups.

Scope of this Equality Impact Assessment

On 5 April 2011 the new public sector Equality Duty came into force. The Equality Duty replaces the three previous duties on race, disability and gender, bringing them together into a single duty, and extends it to cover age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment (as a whole these are called protected characteristics or protected groups). Based on a proportional analysis we will outline the impacts, both positive and negative, on these protected groups.

Equality Impact Assessments are an important framework for demonstrating due regard, through considering evidence and analysis, to help identify the likely positive and negative impacts that policy proposals may have on certain protected groups, and to estimate whether such impacts disproportionately affect these groups. This Equality Impact Assessment takes a summary view of the equality impacts of proposed legislative measures regarding the certification of trade union membership registers.

Description of the Policy

Background

The intention of **Part 3** of the **Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration** Bill is to amend the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (TULRCA) in order to require trade unions to keep fully audited and up-to-date lists of their members by:

- Enhancing the regulatory powers of the Certification Officer (CO), creating a power to enable the CO to investigate list discrepancies.
- Requiring unions to undertake an annual audit of union membership.
- Requiring unions to provide evidence of how they will store and monitor membership data effectively.

Policy Rationale

There is an existing duty on trade unions to maintain an accurate and up to date register, so far as is reasonably practicable. However, union members only have the right to check the accuracy of their own personal entry, and therefore cannot easily establish the state of the register as a whole. The member can apply to the Certification Officer if the union fails to comply, but the CO can only make enquiries about that member's record.

It is not unreasonable to expect that trade unions should keep up-to-date membership records, not only because of a duty of care to members and for efficient administration, but because those unions that intend to take industrial action must be able to ballot accurately those members who may be affected. This general principle is already enshrined in statute, and the Government is looking to ensure that the requirements on unions to fulfil this responsibility are adequate.

Outline of Proposal

The Government proposes to introduce an additional statutory obligation on trade unions to:

- Appoint auditors or an appropriate expert third party; and,
- Supply assurance to the Certification Officer (as part of the union's annual return) that the register is accurate and up-to-date.

The Government also intends to give powers to the Certification Officer (CO) to:

- Carry out an investigation where he/she believes there is reasonable cause;
- Appoint, at his/her discretion, an expert third party to carry out an investigation and provide a report to the CO;
- Require access to relevant records;

- Make a Declaration or Declaration and Enforcement Order

More detail is set out below

Annual assurance

The assurance supplied by each union will need to show that an expert third party has performed this duty.

Investigation

The power to investigate will allow the Certification Officer (CO) to take the decision to act on his/her own authority or in response to complaints from union members or third parties. If an annual assurance proves unsatisfactory that could also prompt the CO to investigate.

The Government expects that in the great majority of cases, it will be members of the CO's staff who will investigate (and who will develop the appropriate expertise and skill). However, there may be circumstances where the CO considers the investigation warrants external expertise – for example, where the scale of an investigation is significant. He/She would be able to appoint a third party for these purposes.

These changes would complement but not replace the current mechanism by which employers can approach the court to seek an injunction to stop industrial action going ahead for reasons including erroneous balloting of non-members.

The evidence base

Who does the proposal affect?

Trade Unions

Statistics from the Certification Officer in 2011-2012¹ show us that there are 172 unions, with 14 unions accounting for over 85 per cent of total trade union membership.

¹ [Annual Report of the Certification Officer 2011-2012](#). This is shortly to be updated but revised figures were not available in time for the publication of this document.

Table 1: Trade unions – Distribution by size

Number of Members	Number of Unions				Membership of all Unions		
	Number of Unions	Membership	Per cent	Cumulative per cent	Per cent	Cumulative Per cent	
Under 100	31	1,145	18.0	18.0	0.0	0.0	
100 – 499	32	8,682	18.6	36.6	0.1	0.1	
500 – 999	18	13,699	10.5	47.1	0.2	0.3	
1,000 – 2,499	21	39,945	12.2	59.3	0.5	0.8	
2,500 – 4,999	17	60,068	9.9	69.2	0.8	1.6	
5,000 – 9,999	11	82,078	6.4	75.6	1.1	2.7	
10,000 – 14,999	2	25,276	1.2	76.8	0.4	3.1	
15,000 – 24,999	10	199,736	5.8	82.6	2.8	5.9	
25,000 – 49,999	13	439,236	7.5	90.1	6.1	12.0	
50,000 – 99,999	3	184,745	1.7	91.8	2.5	14.5	
100,000 – 249,999	6	909,861	3.5	95.3	12.5	27.0	
250,000 and over	8	5,299,739	4.7	100	73.0	100.0	
Total	172	7,261,210	100	100	100	100	

Source: Annual report of the Certification Officer 2011-2012

We will actively engage a range of trade unions and other experts to understand how these provisions will work in practice, with a view to reducing any additional burden as far as possible. We will also consider the most appropriate implementation of the requirements to ensure that they don't impose an unreasonable burden.

Smaller unions will not be balloting significant numbers for industrial action and maintenance of records should be more straightforward. There is a risk that the requirement to appoint an expert to conduct an annual assurance could prevent the start up of new unions. New unions over the size threshold will also be exempt from this in the first year.

The Government intends, therefore, that the new regime should allow smaller unions to provide an annual *self*-assurance. The power for the CO to investigate would, though, be the same for these unions as for all others.

Trade Union Members

According to statistics from the Certification Officer in 2011-2012² (see table 1) there were 7,261,210 members. Table 2 below outlines the trade union statistics (via the Labour

² [Annual Report of the Certification Officer 2011-2012](#)

Force Survey) for 2012³, split by protected group characteristics. This is an estimate of the potential pool of individuals that may be impacted by this policy

<i>Table 2: Characteristics of union members and non-members, 2012</i>	<i>Union Members</i>	<i>Non-Members</i>	<i>All Employees</i>
<i>Gender</i>			
Male	45.3	52.2	50.7
Female	54.7	47.8	49.3
<i>Age</i>			
16 to 24	4.1	16.3	13.8
25 to 34	18.5	24.0	23.9
35 to 49	41.2	34.1	35.5
50 plus	36.2	25.6	26.8
<i>Ethnicity</i>			
White	92.1	89.6	89.7
Mixed	0.8	0.9	0.9
Asian or Asian British	3.5	5.2	5.0
Black or Black British	2.5	2.3	2.5
Chinese or other ethnic group	1.1	2.0	1.8
<i>Nationality</i>			
UK, British	95.4	90.3	91.2
Other	4.6	9.7	8.8
<i>Country of Birth</i>			
UK	90.0	85.0	85.9
Other	10.0	15.0	14.1
<i>Disability</i>			
Disabled	17.7	13.2	14.1
Not disabled	82.3	86.8	85.9
<i>Sector</i>			
Private	39.8	83.5	72.7
Public	60.2	16.5	27.3
<i>Full-time/ part-time</i>			
Full time	77.6	70.9	73.2
Part-time	22.4	29.1	26.8

³ [Trade Union Membership 2012](#), Statistical Bulletin, Department of Business Innovation & Skills

Unintended Consequences and Risks

Membership Affordability

There could potentially be some impact of this policy with regards to the affordability of trade union membership fees.

Under this policy, trade unions will need to undertake an annual audit of union membership. This may increase the costs faced by trade unions as they introduce new processes (including new IT systems) and staff in order to meet their compliance obligations. If these costs are passed on to members via increasing membership fees, there could be some impact on protected groups who are in the low income bracket.

Given the minimal changes in terms of regulatory burden placed on trade unions, we expect the additional regulatory cost to be low and hence the risk of increased membership fees to be small. Our final Impact Assessment will be estimating the costs and benefits of these proposals in more detail.

Trade Union Core Activity

Under this policy trade unions will need to undertake an annual audit of their membership. In the previous section we discussed how this additional regulatory burden could impact trade unions and thus protected groups via an increase in monetary costs. However increased regulatory burdens placed by this policy could also impact the time unions devote to some of their core activity. If unions are spending additional time on auditing their membership list (as a result of this policy), they may have less time to represent members (including those in protected groups).

However given the minimal changes in terms of regulatory burden placed on trade unions, early BIS thinking believes that additional regulatory costs in terms of time spent on audits will be small. Our final Impact Assessment will be estimating the costs and benefits of these proposals in more detail.

How does the proposal affect protected groups?

Although the effects of the proposals may impact different protected groups in different ways, our assessment suggests that there will be **no direct adverse equality impacts** on these groups from the implementation of the proposed legislative measures regarding certification of trade union membership registers.

Age

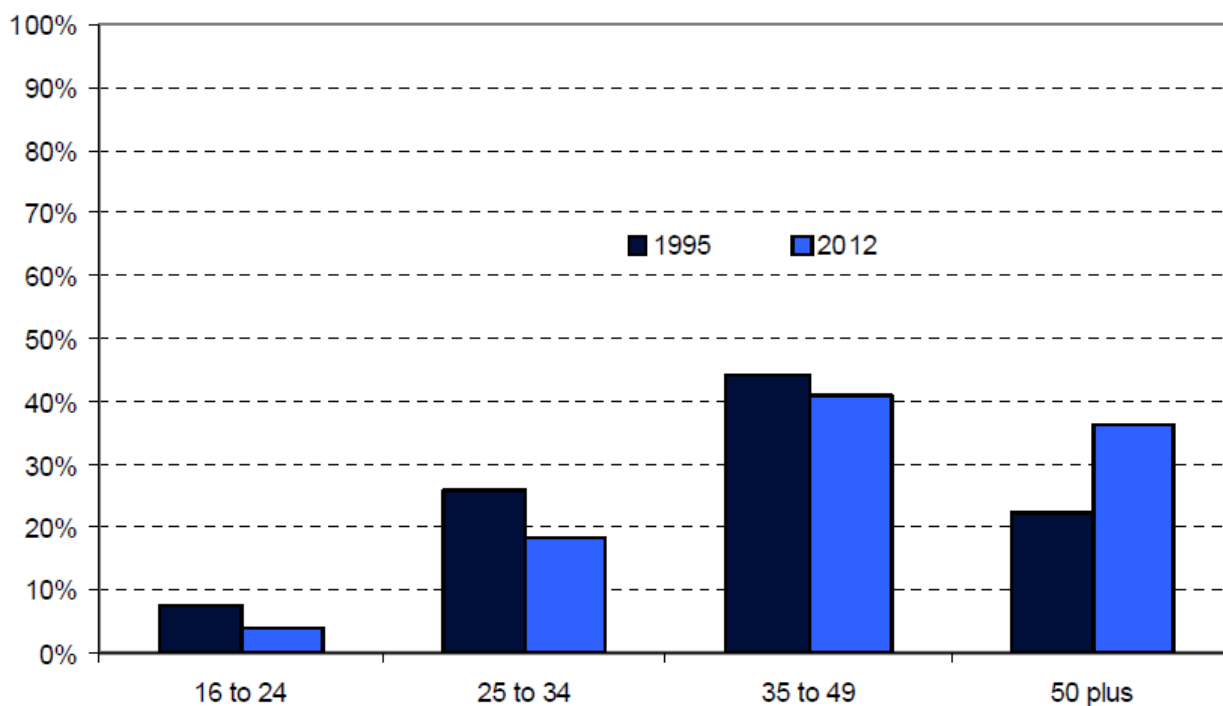
Chart 1⁴ below shows us that older workers account for a larger proportion of union members than younger workers. Over the 17 years to 2012, the proportion of employees who belonged to a trade union has fallen in all age groups except those aged over 65. About 36 per cent of trade union member employees were aged over 50 in 2012,

⁴ [Trade Union Membership 2012](#), Statistical Bulletin, Department of Business Innovation & Skills

compared with 22 per cent in 1995. This may be linked to the rising employment rate among people in this age group in recent years.

Those employees with ten or more years of service make up about 51 per cent of all union members but only 30 per cent of all employees.

Chart 1: Age of Trade Union members, 1995 and 2012



Source: Labour Force Survey 2012, Office for National Statistics

There may be unforeseen effects of this policy on different age groups, however our current assessment suggests that there will be **no direct issues in terms of equality**.

Gender

Female employees were more likely than male employees to be a trade union members. The proportion of female employees who were in a trade union was around 29 per cent in 2012, compared with 23 per cent for male employees.

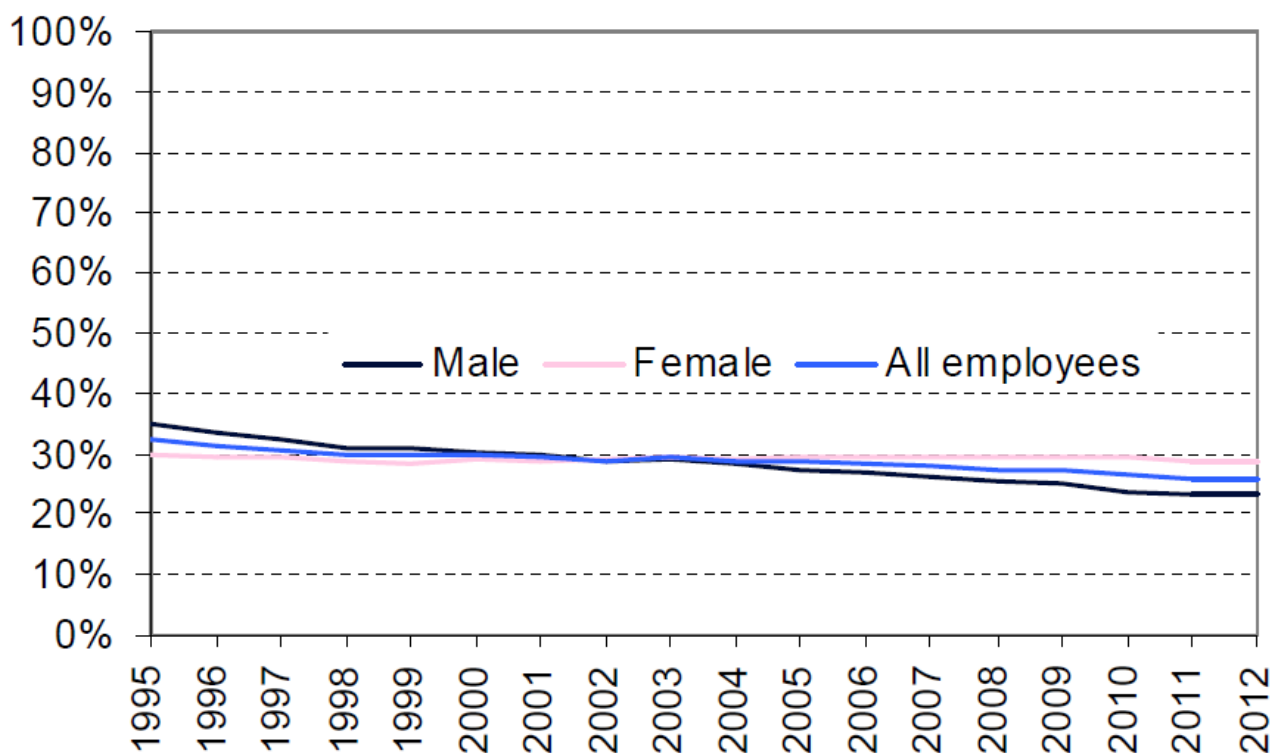
From chart 2⁵ below we can see that in 1995, the proportion of male employees who belonged to a trade union was around 35 per cent, compared with around 30 per cent for female employees. High falls in union membership among males steadily narrowed the gap between male and females. In 2002, the proportion of employees who belonged to a trade union was around 29 per cent for both genders.

The trend continued between 2002 and 2012, with union membership among male employees falling by 6 percentage points from 29 per cent in 2002 to 23 per cent in 2012, compared with relative stability in the rate for females with the exception of 2011 where the

⁵ [Trade Union Membership 2012](#), Statistical Bulletin, Department of Business Innovation & Skills

gap narrowed slightly. About 55 per cent of union member employees were female in 2012, up from 45 per cent in 1995.

Chart 2: Employee trade union density by gender, 1995 to 2012 (per cent of UK employees who were trade union members)



Source: Labour Force Survey 2012, Office for National Statistics

There may be unforeseen effects of this policy on different gender groups, however our current assessment suggests that there will be **no direct issues in terms of equality**.

Disability

The proportion of employees who were trade union members was higher for those classified as being disabled.

Employees who were disabled make up about 18 per cent of all trade union members in 2012, compared with 14 per cent of all employees in the UK⁶.

There may be unforeseen effects of this policy on different disability groups, however our current assessment suggests that there will be **no direct issues in terms of equality**.

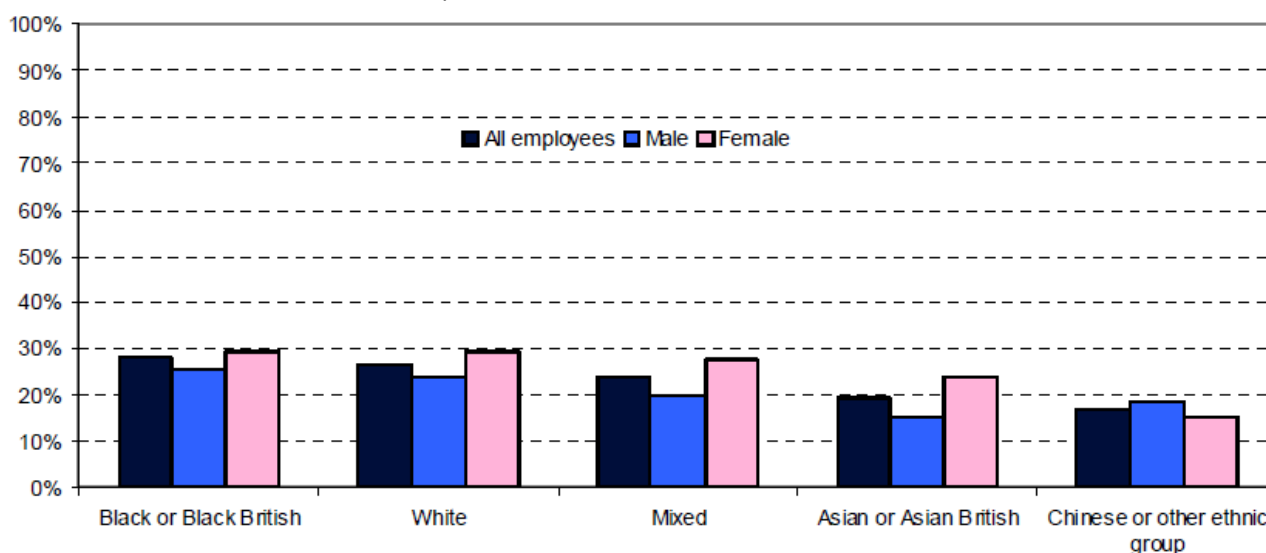
⁶ [Trade Union Membership 2012](#), Statistical Bulletin, Department of Business Innovation & Skills

Ethnicity

Chart 3⁷ below shows us that the proportion of employees who were trade union members was highest in Black or Black British ethnic group at around 28 per cent in 2012, compared with 26 per cent for all employees. The Chinese and Other Ethnic group had the lowest proportion of union members at just 17 per cent in 2012.

Higher proportions of female employees belonged to a trade union than males for all ethnic groups, with the exception of Chinese and Other. The largest difference was within the Asian or Asian British ethnic group. In 2012, the proportion of female Asian employees who belonged to a trade union was around 24 per cent, compared with around 15 per cent for male employees.

Chart 3: Trade Union density by gender and ethnicity, 2012 (per cent of UK employees who were trade union members)



Source: Labour Force Survey 2012, Office for National Statistics

There may be unforeseen effects of this policy on different ethnic groups, however our current assessment suggests that there will be **no direct issues in terms of equality**.

Other Protected Groups

Our assessment of the equality impacts of this policy suggests that there would be **no direct equality impact** on the other protected groups such as religion and belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity. However we welcome any comments and evidence that may develop or further inform our assessment.

⁷ [Trade Union Membership 2012](#), Statistical Bulletin, Department of Business Innovation & Skills

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