

# THE UNION ADVANTAGE

How unions make work  
better and society fairer





# UNIONS MAKE LIFE BETTER

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**E**very day, Britain's trade unions are working hard for their members. Even now, when times are hard, our negotiators are able to win pay rises to help people cope with the worst effects of the government's austerity programme.

But we don't just make life better for our nearly six million members: our 150,000 workplace representatives and activists help the organisations they work for. Our health and safety reps lower accident rates and reduce ill health at work, while our 30,000 union learning reps equip their colleagues with the skills that their organisations need to improve productivity or deliver better services.

And we make a great contribution beyond the workplace, too: we campaign

to defend the National Health Service, our schools and colleges and the welfare state from marketisation and cost-cutting.

This booklet sets out the scale of what we call the union advantage: the positive benefits that unions bring to workers, the organisations that employ them, and the community beyond the workplace.

**Frances O'Grady**  
**TUC General Secretary**

**THE UNION**   
**ADVANTAGE**

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# **JOBS, GROWTH AND A NEW ECONOMY**

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## **AGAINST AUSTERITY**

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The TUC and Britain's unions are fighting austerity, building mass support at public events around the country for an alternative economic strategy.

By co-ordinating industrial action to defend public sector pensions in 2011, we secured real concessions from the government and

a better retirement deal for public sector workers than was originally on offer.

Grassroots mobilisation and smart political campaigning defeated reactionary proposals for regional pay and the bulk of the attacks on workers' rights floated by the coalition government.

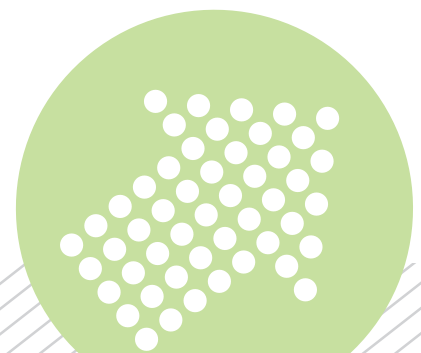
## **NEW SKILLS FOR A GREENER ECONOMY**

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To help broaden the UK skills base and help build a stronger economy, unionlearn (the skills arm of the TUC) supported more than 219,000 learners through the union route in the year to March 2014.



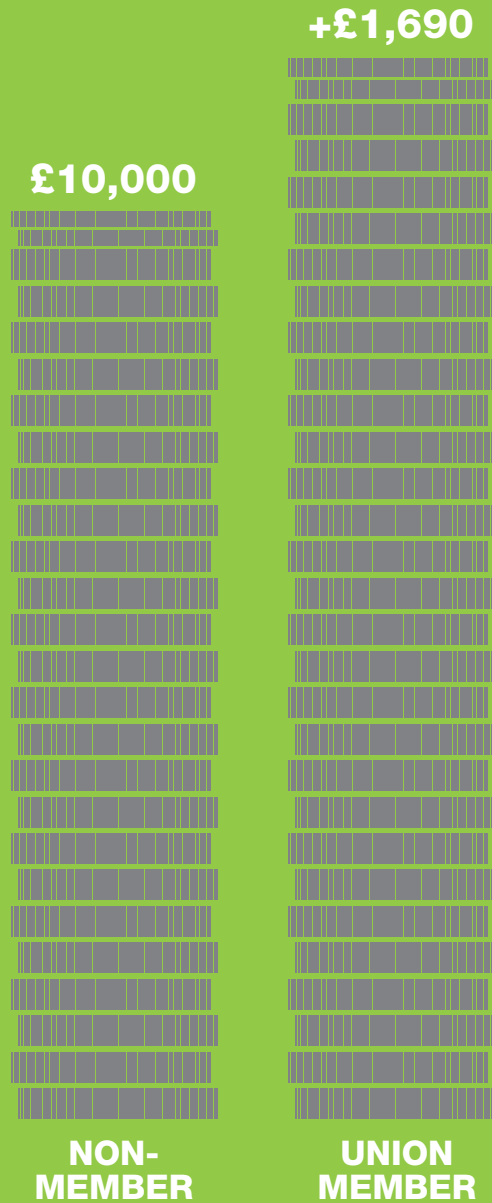
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“The TUC and Britain’s unions are fighting austerity, building mass support at public events”

Unions have impressive low-carbon credentials: as well as raising the union voice on key government environmental bodies, we run successful initiatives such as the Green Skills Partnership, which delivers green skills training in construction and other industries, through an alliance of unions, employers, local councils, environmental organisations, education providers, community groups and state agencies.

We continue to campaign for effective measures to reduce youth unemployment and under-employment, including implementation of the European Union Youth Guarantee.



In the public sector, for every **£10,000** that a non-member earns, a union member on average earns around **£1,690** more; in the private sector it’s around **£580** more.

Source: ONS Labour Force Survey, Autumn 2013

“Where union membership and collective bargaining is strong, people are far more likely to be paid above the national minimum wage”



**+33%**

**16- to 24-year-old** union members earn **33 per cent** more than their non-union counterparts.

Source: ONS Labour Force Survey, Autumn 2013

## HIGHER PAY

The collective strength of trade union negotiation means that (on average) union members:

- take home higher pay
- have better sickness and pension benefits
- have more holiday
- have more flexible working hours.

Union members are also more likely to be in permanent and full-time jobs.

Where union membership and collective bargaining is strong, people are far more likely to be paid above the national minimum wage, according to the latest flagship UK employment relations survey, Workplace Employment Relations Study (WERS 2011).

Unions won a rise in the average hourly earnings for their

# FAIR PAY AND A LIVING WAGE

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members in both the public and private sectors between 2012 and 2013, while on average, non-members in the private sector barely got a rise.

Collective bargaining pays off for union members: in the public sector, for every £10,000 that a non-member earns, a union member on average earns around £1,690 more; in the private sector it's around £580 more.

Union membership brings the greatest financial benefits for young workers: 16- to 24-year-old union members earn 33 per cent more than their non-union counterparts (ONS Labour Force Survey, Autumn 2013).

## MORE HOLIDAYS

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Union members also have more paid holidays, with 3.8

days more paid holiday than non-members (25.5 days compared with 21.7 days).

For part-time workers the advantage is even greater, as members have an average of 5.5 more days of paid leave (20.4 days compared with 14.9 days).

The TUC and trade unions also campaign for new wages councils, a higher national minimum wage and a living wage.



# GOOD SERVICES AND DECENT WELFARE

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## PROTECTING THE NHS

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After helping set up the National Health Service 65 years ago, unions have always campaigned against its break-up and privatisation: we are determined to preserve a health care system that is free at the point of need.

Health sector unions, in particular, have fought against the 'marketisation' of healthcare, whether through any form of privatisation or the creation of a US-style health insurance system. We want everyone to have access to the healthcare that is right for them, not what is best for a private company's shareholders.



## DECENT WELFARE

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The TUC's Saving Our Safety Net campaign promotes real alternatives to the government's attack on welfare. We want to stop the government from making people who have lost their jobs wait five weeks before they get any financial support from the government.

## EDUCATION

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Our education unions are campaigning to protect and improve the state education system at every level. The union-led Education Not For Sale campaign rejects the government's attempt to open up our schools, sixth-form colleges and universities to a for-profit model. There is no social justice in giving the best educational opportunities to those who can pay the most.



“We want everyone to have access to the healthcare that is right for them, not what is best for a private company’s shareholders”

## PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF THE RAILWAYS

The TUC stands with the popular majority for public ownership of the railways: even many of those who vote Conservative would bring their local rail operator back under public ownership at the next opportunity, according to Survation (July 2014).

The union-led Action for Rail campaign argues that re-uniting rail under public ownership would simplify the system for the passenger, reduce costs and ticket prices, increase accountability and transparency and give us a less complicated ticketing system.



Union members have **3.8 days** more paid holiday than non-members on average (**25.5 days** compared with **21.7 days**).

Source: ONS Labour Force Survey, Autumn 2013

“Unions promote equal opportunities for all. We believe in diversity at work and campaign to remove bias and discrimination in the workplace”



**76 per cent** of workplaces are now covered by a formal equal opportunities policy, up from two-thirds (**67 per cent**) 10 years ago.

Source: WERS 2011

## EQUALITY FOR ALL

Unions fight discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, sexuality and disability and promote equal opportunities for all at work. We believe in diversity at work and campaign to rid workplaces of bias and discrimination. We campaign against the far right in local elections and develop strong links with local communities.

Unions have led the way in persuading employers to adopt formal written policies to promote diversity and equal opportunities: three-quarters (76 per cent) of workplaces are now covered by a formal policy, up from two-thirds (67 per cent) 10 years ago (WERS 2011).

People in workplaces where there is a trade union are likely to have a better work/life balance and face less discrimination at work than individuals in non-

# RESPECT AND A VOICE AT WORK

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unionised workplaces (TUC Equality Audit 2012).

Equal pay remains the stand-out bargaining priority for most unions. Many unions have negotiated improvements on women's pay and employment in the last three years, including equal pay audits with employer support and improving the pay of the worst off (the majority of whom are women).

## VULNERABLE WORKERS

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Unions help protect vulnerable workers. We were instrumental in the introduction of the European Agency Workers Directive, which builds on existing protection of agency workers' rights already campaigned for by UK trade unions.

Unions also help migrant and domestic workers. In the past nine years, the union-run Justice for Cleaners campaign has won significant advances in pay, sick pay, pensions and holidays for the capital's cleaners (the vast majority of them migrant workers).

The TUC and trade unions want laws against abuses of zero-hours contracts and for worker representation on boards and remuneration committees.

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# STRONG UNIONS

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## THE BEST NEGOTIATORS!

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In 2011, in the public sector, unions won pay rises more than half the time (55%). But when unions weren't there to bargain only a third of deals got rises (35%). We also did better for people in the private sector.

## SAFER WORKPLACES

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Unionised workplaces are safer workplaces. We train 10,000 health and safety representatives every year to internationally recognised standards, so they can reduce injury rates and ill health: that's why workplaces with unions have far fewer accidents, according to a 2007 study by Nicholas, Walters and Tasiran.

Safer workplaces pay off for all of us. By reducing lost time from occupational injuries and work-related illnesses, union safety reps save taxpayers between **£181m and £578m** (2004 prices) every year, according to a 2007 report by the DTI (now BIS).



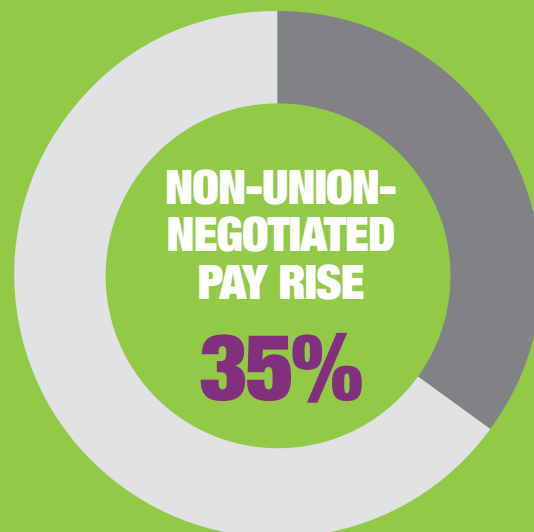
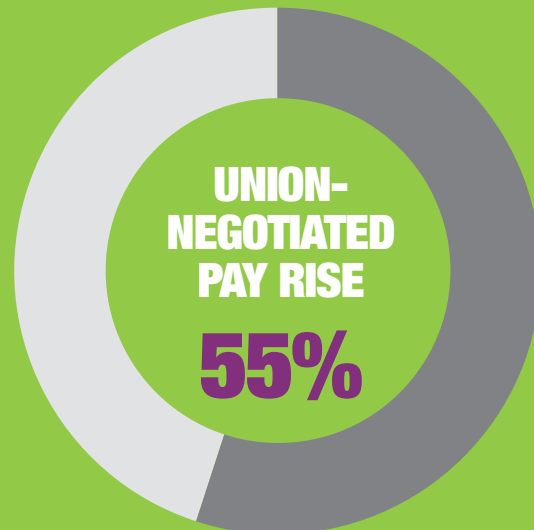
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“We train 10,000 health and safety representatives every year to internationally recognised standards, so they can reduce injury rates and ill health”

## LEGAL HELP

Individuals who run into problems at work can lose out if they don't have specialist knowledge of workplace issues or the money to afford legal support.

But union members can count on their legal department or the use of an expert solicitor to help them win cases relating to employment contracts, harassment, redundancy, pensions and equalities.



In 2011, in the public sector, unions won pay rises more than half the time (**55%**). But when unions weren't there to bargain only a third of deals got rises (**35%**). We also did better for people in the private sector.

Source: WERS 2011

# BETTER WORK, FAIRER SOCIETY

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By winning better pay and conditions, improving health and safety at work and developing workplace learning cultures, trade unions achieve a huge amount for members and their families.

By working with employers to maintain a stable and productive workforce that is involved, trained and committed, they can help organisations come through the bad times and help build a strong, sustainable economy for the future.

By speaking up for the communities they are part of, unions campaign to protect and improve the jewels in the crown of UK society such as our National Health Service, and public ownership of the rail system.

That is what we call the union advantage. It is why unions, through collective representation, pressure and action, continue to be a powerful force for workers and society as a whole.



“By winning better pay and conditions, improving health and safety at work and developing workplace learning cultures, trade unions achieve a huge amount for union members and their families”



For part-time workers the holidays advantage is even greater: members have an average of **5.5 more days** of paid leave (20.4 days compared with 14.9 days).

Source: Source: ONS Labour Force Survey, Autumn 2013



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