

Collectivists, Functionalists & Critics:

What do teachers
think of their unions?



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This report was written by the education and youth development organisation LKMco. LKMco believes that society has a duty to ensure children and young people receive the support they need in order to make a fulfilling transition to adulthood. We work towards this vision by providing teacher training and school improvement and by helping a range of organisations to develop projects for young people. We then carry out academic and policy research and advocacy that is grounded in our experience, across the education and youth sectors.

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Edapt was formed in 2011 to provide support, protection, information and development opportunities to teachers in England and Wales based on a belief that teachers, as professionals, should have greater choice over how they source the support and protection they need. Edapt commissioned this LKMco report in order to understand the types of support, protection and information that teachers most value and how teachers feel about the organisations that currently provide these services. For more information on edapt visit:

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Published by LKM Publishing, a trading name of LKMco Ltd.
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Cambridge, UK

ISBN- 978-0-9568094-1-4

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Part 1: Introduction

1.1 Foreword

Summer 2011: teachers strike over pension reform. Government ministers label the action ‘militant’ and ‘irresponsible.’ Trade unionists assert their right to strike and their position as the voice of the profession. Both declare that the 40% ballot turn-out rate proves their point. The day soon passes and whilst the debate rages on in Parliament and press, hundreds of thousands of teachers get back to teaching, as if little had happened.

The opinions of the silent majority who chose not to give a preference in the strike ballot were almost entirely missing from the general furore. Given the vast number of teachers who hold union membership it is surprising that the ‘ordinary voice’ was so absent. According to the Office of National Statistics, in 2010 only 27% of all employees in the UK were members of trade unions. In education the figure was almost double that and that figure includes all of education not just teachers (Archur, J., 2010). Indeed if you were to combine the Department for Education’s (DfE) figures for the total teaching workforce (DfE, 2010¹) and union membership numbers (Certification Office, 2010), it would appear that 130% of teachers are union members. This is partly explained by independent school teachers and partly by retired, unemployed and ex-teachers who remain in unions. Either way, it would seem fair to describe the profession as almost entirely unionised.

A first question is why, when union membership has declined in almost every other industry, it has remained so high amongst teachers. Secondly, if the unions are so popular, why is engagement in industrial action ballots so low?

In 1894, as unions rapidly gained prominence amongst English workers, Beatrice Webb argued that unions provided a way in which workers could work collectively to realise the individual benefits of improved conditions in their workplace (Webb & Webb, 1894). This could take the form of locally organised support, for example through insurance mutually paid for by all members of the union or petitioning employers for improved health, safety and pay. However, continuous improvement in health, safety and equality laws meant that by the end of the 20th century much of what was once fought for by unions was now commonplace. Meanwhile, whereas people once worked in one industry throughout their career, greater flexibility in employment, combined with greater access to education, meant that few people now remained in one profession continuously.

These reasons, combined with legal changes designed to weaken unions’ ability to compel worker membership, meant unionism rapidly declined. Yet in education the figure remained as high as ever despite widespread press vilification. The journalist Mike Baker describes how he overheard an editor demanding that photographers attending a national teacher union conference “Get the sort of photographs that give our readers nightmares” (Baker, 1994). On the other hand, left-wing papers such as The Guardian and The Independent give a much more positive view of union leaders. Such a polarised and opinionated press makes it difficult to know why teachers themselves chose to remain so unionised.

Academic studies are no clearer. Some focus on the impact of teacher unions on effectiveness and treat teaching unions as a barrier to innovation and reform (Eberts & Stone, 1987; Raham, 1999),

unnecessarily hiking up the cost of education (Machin & Wadhvani, 1991; Metcalf, 2003; Hoxby, 1996) and leading to a focus on the needs of adults over pupils (Bascia, 1997). Others have shown unions to have no discernible effect on productivity (Feldman, 2000), a potentially positive impact on standardised test results (Steelman, Powell & Carini, 2000) or to improve workplace stability by reducing teacher turnover (Pfeffer & Davis-Blake, 1990).

Much of the debate in the US is focused on so called “reform unionism”. On the one hand, advocates of “reform unionism” argue that a new age of unionism has dawned in which management and workers are no longer trapped in the zero-sum battles of old. They argue that unions are providing “possibility” (Moore Johnson, 2004, p.34) by engaging in reform and beginning to build “a more collaborative, less adversarial relationship with management” (Henderson, 2004, p.21). For Moore-Johnson, this shift is partly a consequence of changes in education which have made old-style “industrial unionism” with its tendency to standardise, outdated (Moore Johnson, p.40). In contrast, others see unions as a source of “paralysis” (ibid., p.34) and reform unionism as “among the most influential and seductive forces in American education (but)... also one of the most misleading” (Moe, 2011, p.271). According to Moe, teaching unions are rational actors and given that teachers join unions to defend their own rights, unions must inevitably prioritise these special interests. When teachers’ interests conflict with those of schools and pupils (which he argues they frequently do), unions act as “advocates for the best interests of teachers, not for the best interests of children” (ibid., p.203).

Whilst these studies raise plenty of important controversies and contradictions, they do not focus on giving a voice to teachers; the people who spend their days teaching rather than writing studies or giving quotes to national newspapers. Do they think being in a union makes a difference to their working life? Is their high rate of membership attributable to a belief in the value of a collective professional voice, or because of individual legal and financial benefits? Do they share founding leaders’ belief in the value of the ‘mutual benefit’ whereby the individual accrues benefits by being part of a wider community? Is their unionism ultimately about collectivism or functionalism?

So far these difficult questions have rarely been asked of teachers, perhaps because there is a scary potential for rebuke. At present it is easy for politicians to dismiss the views of unions as being those of a vocal minority unrepresentative of their members, but if the voice of the unions really is the voice of hundreds of thousands of teachers, policy makers may find themselves needing to sit up and take notice. When Terry Moe asked these difficult questions in the US he found that:

“union leaders are not bosses who have little regard for member preferences. Within union organizations, Democrats outnumber Republicans by two to one... And union leaders are right at the center of it, engaging in political activities that members regard as representative of their own views and beliefs.” (Moe, 2011, p.94)

On the other hand, what if teachers’ allegiance to unions is weak? Unions might then be left wondering “where does that leave pay bargaining?” or, “what if people dislike militancy? Should we stop striking?” Such findings might throw much into question, but if true then they should be confronted. Unions and politicians cannot live in a bubble, ignoring the elephant in the room because they are afraid to ask the important questions.

This report is an opportunity to bypass political distortions and to actually ask teachers what they think. What are the thoughts, feelings and values behind their decisions to join, stay or leave a trade union? Within that membership what are the things that they enjoy, value, dislike or even disregard? Asking people to speak honestly about their union experiences affords a middle ground in the debate, and is what we hoped to achieve in this research.



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April 2012

1.2 Executive summary

Teachers come to their unions from a range of perspectives and therefore experience them in a range of ways. We follow teachers' journeys from joining a union to interacting with it and finally, to forming a judgement on it. As we follow teachers on this journey we find that they fall into three broad camps, although we avoid reifying these as rigid groups (Fullan, 1982). The first is comprised of the 'collectivists' who feel strong affiliative ties to other teachers and think it is their duty to work together towards shared benefits and public goods. The second group are the 'functionalists' who have a defined set of benefits they are seeking and contentedly securing from their union, either individually or collectively. Thirdly there are the 'critics' who, even if they are often pleased with the benefits they receive, do not feel that unions have a positive impact on education.

Joining a union

- Teachers primarily join unions for protection against disputes and allegations. At least 80% of those in our sample consider these areas "very important".
- Whilst all teachers consider individual protection
- important, many also value a variety of other functions.
- Collective bargaining and a strong collective voice are very important to some teachers but not all. This suggests that some teachers see unions as a way of individually procuring protection whilst others feel that benefits need to be won collectively, even if in a lot of cases (although not all), their ultimate goal remains individualistic. Approximately half of the teachers we surveyed considered collective bargaining and voice "very important."
- Campaigning on wider education issues by unions is not a priority for teachers. Just under a quarter of our respondents considered it very important.
- The right to industrial action was one of teachers' lowest priorities when joining a union. Forty per cent of our respondents did not think it was important.
- When teachers initially join a union their choice is often fairly random or circumstantial but they frequently change later on in their career. This is often for political reasons or because they have changed role. Forty five per cent of our respondents had changed union.
- Teachers frequently have clear (although not

Feelings about unions

- Teachers' overall satisfaction with unions is very high. Satisfaction varies according to unions' different functions but the functions which teachers expressed the lowest levels of satisfaction with tend to be those which teachers consider least important (such as communicating information about teaching, pedagogy and policy). Approximately three quarters of teachers we surveyed were satisfied with their union.
- Whilst satisfaction amongst respondents was generally high with functions which relate to individual benefits, it was lower on collective or public goods such as campaigning on wider education issues (49% of respondents) and raising the professional status of teachers (57% of respondents).
- Teachers are split in their views as to whether education is better as a result of unions' work. Fifty one per cent of those surveyed believed that education in the UK is better as a result of the unions. Forty five per cent felt that joining a union is every teachers' duty.
- Those teachers who said the Conservative party most closely represented their views tended to be much less satisfied with unions' work in campaigning (only 40% were satisfied) and to feel that unions are not improving education (only 17% felt education was better as a result of the unions). However, over 60% of Conservative respondents were still satisfied with unions overall, suggesting that unions are successfully performing the functions that matter most to these teachers.
- Most teachers consider union membership "valuable and worthwhile" (almost three quarters of our respondents) but tend to see it as "necessary rather than desirable" (two thirds of respondents). A quarter of teachers surveyed would prefer not to be in a union if an alternative were available.
- The events of the last year or so have had a polarising impact on teachers' views of unions. A quarter of respondents felt more positive about unions and a quarter felt less positive.

necessarily accurate) conceptions of what different unions are like and can find their approaches attractive or repellent.

- A small number of teachers are not in unions. This can be for either circumstantial or political reasons.

Interacting with unions

- The support teachers' request from their union varies from light touch advice over the phone to support with dramatic, life-changing situations. As a result, unions frequently deal with highly emotionally charged situations and teachers express huge gratitude for union support which can have a profound impact.
- Satisfaction rates with support are extremely high. This is generally due to the support received being both personal and backed by a strong weight of experience. Almost 80% of respondents who had asked for support said they were satisfied and almost 60% very satisfied.
- Occasionally unions mishandle situations and this leaves teachers extremely angry. Reps play a crucial role in ensuring interactions are successful.
- The vast majority of Heads are satisfied with their interactions with unions. They frequently work with reps constructively and in mutually beneficial ways, even where this involves removing members of staff. Sometimes this is not the case and Heads can be seething about negative experiences at the hands of under-skilled reps. Almost three-quarters of the Heads in our survey were satisfied with their interactions.

Please join the conversation about this report using the hashtag #UnionBecause. You can also use it to find further videos and opinion pieces.

1.3 Methodology

Our key research questions were:

- Why do teachers join unions?
- How do they chose their union?
- How do they feel about unions?

Additionally, we wanted to speak to

- Teachers who had interacted with unions
- Head teachers
- People who were not in unions
- Independent school teachers

... in order to find out about their particular experiences and feelings.

We wanted to unpick teachers' feelings and to understand their causes. So, whilst we wanted to know how important "support" was, we felt it was equally important to explore what "support" meant to different teachers. We therefore aimed for depth in our findings rather than a large-scale survey of prevalence.

Our methodology was based on these aims and had two main elements. We sought to identify trends from a broad sample of teachers and school leaders through a medium-scale online survey and then to understand them in more detail through in-depth interviews. Since a broad range of teachers with contrasting experiences and views were represented in our sample we are confident that we gained an insight into the range of views teachers hold. In the event there was substantial agreement amongst respondents. Some variations in the views of different groups were so clear that even a small sample proved statistically significant.

Survey

The survey was conducted online for one month from the 22nd of January until the 22nd of February 2012. 384 people responded to the survey (29 were not teachers and the survey automatically ended for them). 325 reached the final question in the survey but the results were analysed on a question-by-question basis taking into account how many respondents answered that question (numbers are indicated.) Respondents came from all around the UK and taught in all phases from Primary to further education (see sample characteristics).

The survey was disseminated in a range of ways. Each method would have resulted in a selective sample if used on its own, but together ensured different

audiences were reached, as shown in the sample characteristics below. It was launched and promoted with:

1. A series of online videos in which teachers talked about their union membership. These were disseminated using social media and a blog (Menzies, 2012b). The videos presented teachers whose union affiliation ranged from union reps to union sceptics, as well as those occupying the middle ground.
2. Promotion by unions to their members (all unions were approached and the NAHT and ASCL both contacted members).
3. A mailing list of 1,569 teachers who have completed the Teach First program.
4. Discussion pieces on The Times Schoolgate blog, The Guardian Mortarboard blog and The Times Educational Supplement (Vasagar, 2012; Ebner, 2012; Menzies, 2012a).
5. Snowball sampling through contacts in schools, particularly targeted at groups which were initially under-represented (for example independent schools and schools outside of London).

The survey included 37 questions but some of these were targeted at specific groups (i.e. non-union members, teachers in independent schools, Heads, and teachers who had called on their union's support.) We asked a mixture of open and closed questions and gave teachers the opportunity to explain many of their views in open fields. The first part of the survey asked teachers for information about themselves. Non-union members and union members then went to different sections. We asked union members whether they had ever called on their union's support and if so explored this experience. Head teachers were also asked a separate set of questions, as were independent school teachers. Finally, respondents were asked to volunteer for an interview and we collected contact details from those who were willing. The full survey is available in Appendix 1.

Survey analysis

We used the process for qualitative data analysis described by Creswell (2009): we compiled results from closed questions and coded open answers using Nvivo. We initially coded answers descriptively and then grouped them into categories (e.g. "represent interests and rights of members", "strength through collective voice", "voice re. policy and govt.", "campaign on schools", "voice to public" ("Representation and Collective Voice"). Categories

emerged from the data, however, they frequently echoed the categories available in closed questions. We exported our nodes and then categorised and aggregated them further. We combined the most popular categories with data from closed questions. We highlighted data from coding to flag up its potentially lower degree of accuracy and greater subjectivity. Full data is available to download from www.lkmco.org.uk/library.

In our analysis of the quantitative data we began by summarising aggregate results for the whole survey. We then analysed each result according to respondents' subgroups:

- Role (NQT/Trainee, Teacher, Middle, Senior, Head, (other TF)
- Teach First (Yes, No)
- Years of service (0-5, 6-10, 10+),
- Feelings about unions (Strong, Not strong, Neither)
- Union status (Active, not active)
- Politics (Conservative, Labour, Green, Lib Dem, UKIP)
- School Type (Independent, Academy/Free, Community)
- Phase (Primary, Secondary)
- Faith (Yes, Blank)
- Region (NW, NE, Mid, SW, SE, LDN, Other)
- Area (Rural, Urban, Suburban)
- Union (NUT, NASUWT, ATL, NAHT, ASCL, Voice)

Given that some of these subgroups were very small we aggregated them where there appeared to be underlying differences (e.g. leadership unions cf. main unions, 0-10 years' experience cf. 10+) or focused comparisons on the largest most contrasting groups (e.g. Labour cf. Conservative). We generally reported in detail on differences that were significant to $\alpha=0.05$ but commented on smaller differences where they seemed worthy of further exploration. Some groups quickly revealed themselves to be very different (e.g. active cf. not active members) and we therefore reported these wherever they differed. In several sections where we found substantial inter-group variations we made an attempt to weight our findings by role and by union membership since these are the areas in which we had the best available benchmarks.

Interviews

We wrote the script for our semi-structured interviews based on initial findings in order to explore emerging

trends (see Appendix 2 - Semi structured interview framework). We chose this approach so that key topics were always covered but views could be followed up and probed. In some cases we explored individual respondents' comments in further detail.

We set a target minimum number of respondents in a series of groups and selected interviewees randomly from first category to last until all quotas were filled (see sample characteristics). We carried out 22 interviews. Our aim was not to achieve representation of the teaching population as a whole but to explore the reasons behind the views expressed by different groups. Interviews took place over the phone and lasted 10-20 minutes. They were recorded, transcribed and made non-attributable (these interviews can be found in full at www.lkmco.org.uk/library). We then coded them for the purposes of indexing rather than theory generation. This meant linking interviewees' comments to key themes that had emerged from the survey so that they could be used to explain them.

Research ethics

The biggest ethical issue we could have potentially faced was ensuring impartiality in a piece of commissioned research. To this end we chose to follow the Market Research Society's Code of Practice (Market Research Society, 2010) and to open up all our findings and methods to public scrutiny. This was particularly important given that the commissioner and researcher had previously worked together. We contacted all the unions before beginning the research to ask them to collaborate and in doing so were open about the project's funding. Two unions chose to collaborate with us by referring members to our survey. Our impartiality and independence was aided by the fact that accurate and valid findings were crucial to our funder and formed an important part of our contract.

Aside from this we faced few ethical issues. It was important that respondents knew what they were involving themselves in and the survey began with a summary of purpose which specified who was funding the research. This went beyond the expectations of the MRS Code of Practice (MRS 2010). Respondents were assured of anonymity.

Our choice of an internet survey may have been a reassuring factor for respondents given that questions about experiences of asking for union support had the potential to be sensitive and difficult to share face-

to-face. Respondents were reminded of anonymity before being asked for details of any support they received. We kept contact details for potential interviewees separately to any data that was shared outside of LKMco. It is possible that some respondents who knew us preferred not to volunteer for interview in order to avoid being linked to their responses. Consent forms were sent to interviewees. Some did not return these before the interview and in these cases it was read to them so they could agree verbally and return the consent form later. All data was made anonymous and non-attributable before being released publicly.

Sample characteristics

Survey respondents

Given that our sample was self-selecting it was important to gather information about our respondents so that we could assess how representative the sample was and explore variation between groups. In setting out our sample's characteristics below we note several categories in which our sample was skewed, but show that our sample included a broad spectrum of teachers with different characteristics. Whilst not representative for each characteristic, our sample was therefore well suited to our aims since it allowed us to explore a range of teachers' views rather than assessing precise prevalence.

Gender and geography

Seventy four per cent of teachers and Heads in the last School Workforce Survey (DfE 2010, Table 4) were female (although this excludes independent schools). At 51%, female teachers were therefore under-represented in our sample. However, we did not find that there were large differences between male and female teachers' views, suggesting that this did not have an important impact on our findings.

School type, role and experience

School workforce survey (DfE 2010)			Our sample
Secondary ²	237500	47%	57%
Primary and nursery	235400	47%	33%

Further education (FE) and middle schools made up small minorities of our respondents and the majority of our respondents were from secondary schools.

Figures from the workforce survey suggest they were over-represented; however, the workforce survey places primary and nursery schools together and does not include independent schools. In the report we have noted some areas in which there were significant differences between primary and secondary school teachers.

High rates of conversion in the last year make 2010 workforce figures on teachers working in academies outdated. According to latest data from the DfE, seven per cent of schools in the UK are academies (DfE 2012); however, this includes almost no primary schools and secondaries tend to be larger, with the result that, overall, far more than seven per cent of teachers work in academies. Twenty nine per cent of our secondary respondents worked in academies whilst 41% of secondary schools are academies (RM, 2012). This is unlikely to have a substantial impact on our findings since differences between academy and non-academy teachers would have to be large for a 12% skew towards non-academy teachers amongst secondary respondents (50% of the sample) to affect our findings significantly.

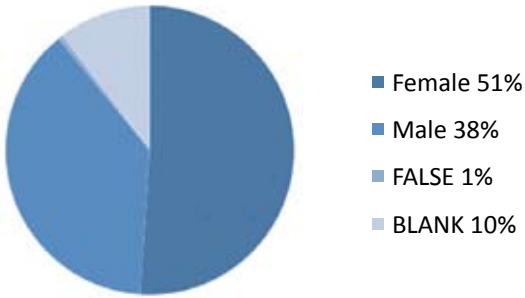
The latest figures we could find for the proportion of teachers working in independent schools came from Green et al's 2008 study for the Centre for the Economics of Education (Green et al., 2008). This suggested that in 2006 14% of teachers worked in independent schools. In recent years this number has only tended to fluctuate by around two per cent over a decade, so this figure is unlikely to be far out in 2012. Independent teachers are therefore slightly under-represented in our sample.

Teach First teachers were heavily over-represented. These teachers are more likely to be younger and have fewer years' experience (only one had 10+ years experience). However, any bias within this group would only have a minor impact on our overall findings given that they were a small proportion of our sample (35 teachers). In reporting our findings we have noted a few occasions where this group differed significantly from the rest of our sample.

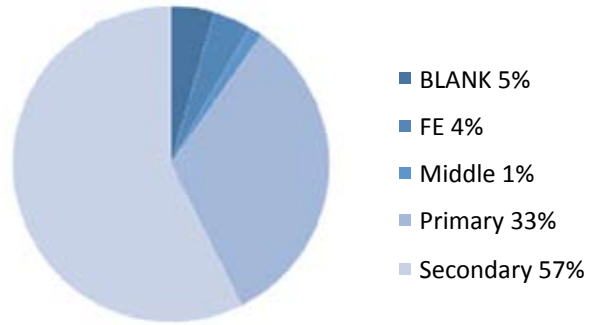
Union membership

According to Archur (2010, p.7) education is the sector with the highest union density at 52.3%, but this figure is unlikely to equate to an accurate figure for teachers specifically so we cannot estimate how representative our total of 6% non-members is.

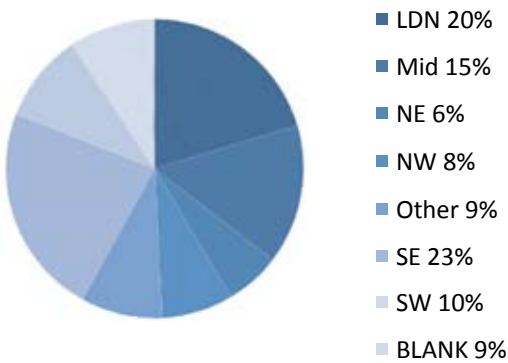
Gender



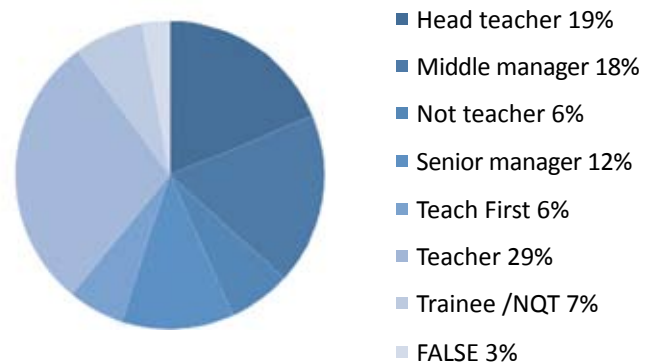
Phase



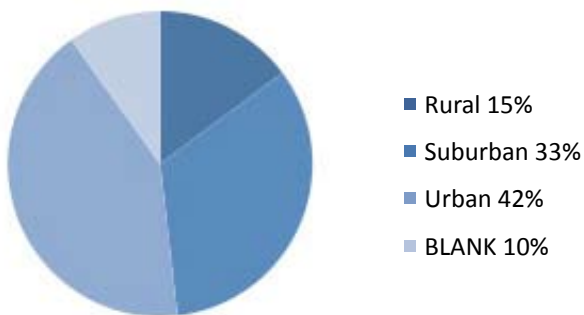
Region



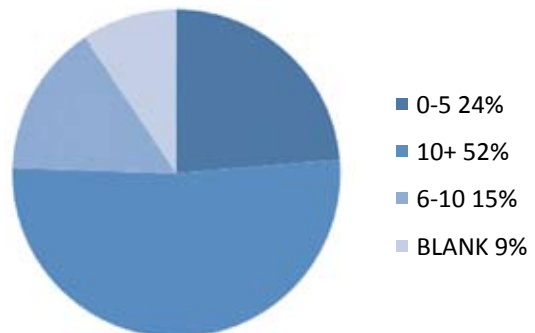
Role³



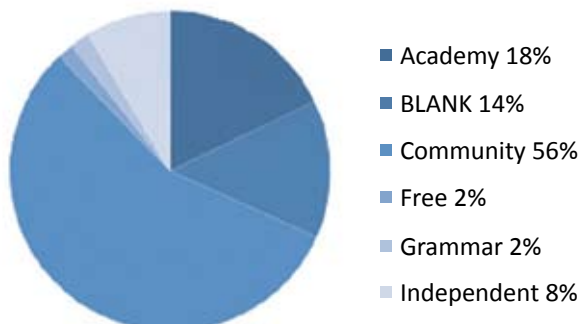
Area



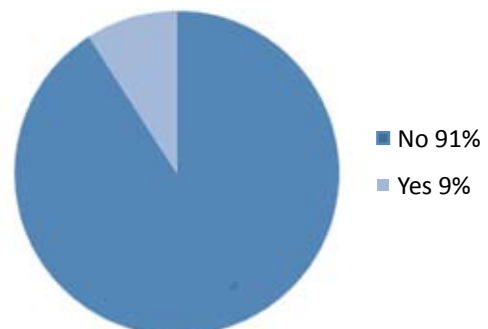
Years of service



School type



Teach First



The smaller unions were over-represented in our sample as a result of the NAHT and ASCL co-operating in our research. Given that they sent active members a link to the survey, more of their respondents were ‘active’ members than those from other unions. We have controlled for this in several places where differences between unions’ members were significant, but for the most part the effect on our findings was minimal.

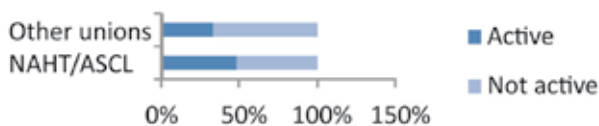
Politics

We asked respondents which party most closely reflected their political views. We can get an indication of the representativeness of our sample by comparing proportions of our sample who expressed a preference with Ipsos Mori data on 2010 voting intentions amongst teachers (Ipsos Mori, 2010). According to this estimate, Conservative voters were under-represented and Labour supporters over-represented in our sample. We have therefore separated out Labour and Conservative views where there were significant differences between them.

School workforce survey 2010 (DfE 2010, table 2)				
	Heads	SMT	Non SMT	All
Primary	16000	20800	198600	235400
Secondary	2900	15800	194900	213600
Special and central	1200	2700	28,900	32,800
Academies	3000	2000	18900	23900
All	23100	41300	441300	505700

Union	Membership number	% of total union population (776,039)	% of our sample
ASCL	15043	2	9
ATL	121425	16	16
NAHT	27988	4	17
NASUWT	282890	36	23
NUT	308569	40	29
Voice	20124	3	6%

That said, the degree of agreement between these two groups was frequently surprising.

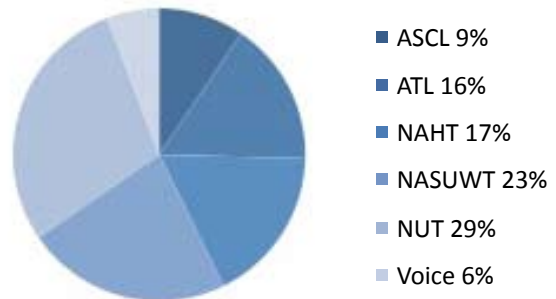


A large proportion of our respondents were active union members and many had strong views on unions. Most respondents with strong views on unions were politically Labour and throughout the research they had more positive views on unions. We have been unable to assess whether this group were over or under-represented but frequently separate out their views to expose inter-group variation.

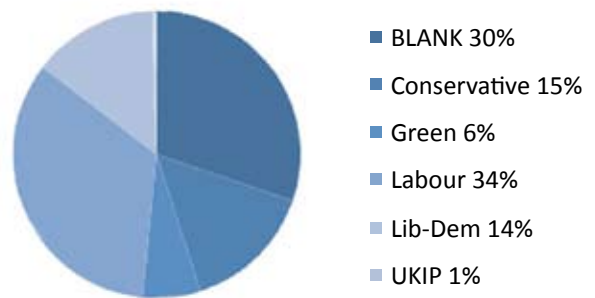
Interviewees

We interviewed a stratified sample of key subgroups. The aim was not to achieve a representative sample

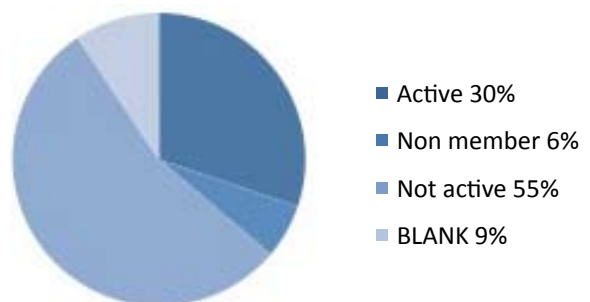
Union membership



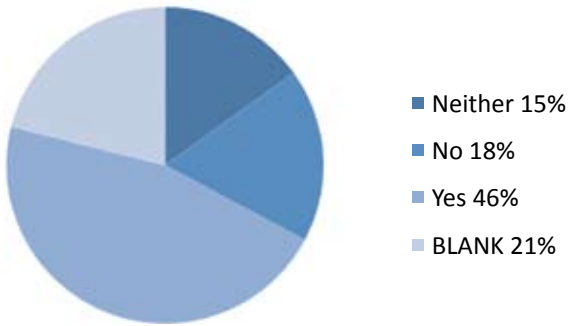
Politics



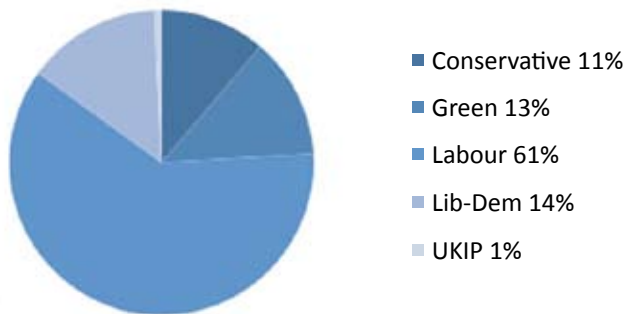
Active union member?



Strong feelings?



Political leanings of teachers with strong feelings about unions



but to have an opportunity to probe representatives of each group on the detail of their views. Full details of interviewees can be found in Appendix 2.

Party	(% of teachers who expressed a preference)	Teachers (Ipsos Mori, 2010- % of teachers who expressed a party preference)
Conservative	21	29
Green	9	5
Labour	49	40
Lib-Dem	20	23
UKIP	1	0.01

Interview participants

Union activity		
	Minimum	Achieved
Non member	3	3
Active	3	7
Non-active		12

School type		
	Minimum	Achieved
Independent school	3	4
Academy/Free school	3	5
Community	3	13

Role		
	Minimum	Achieved
Trainee/NQT	3	3
SMT/Middle	3	7
Head teacher	3	3

Experience (years)		
	Minimum	Achieved
0-5	3	5
5+	3	17

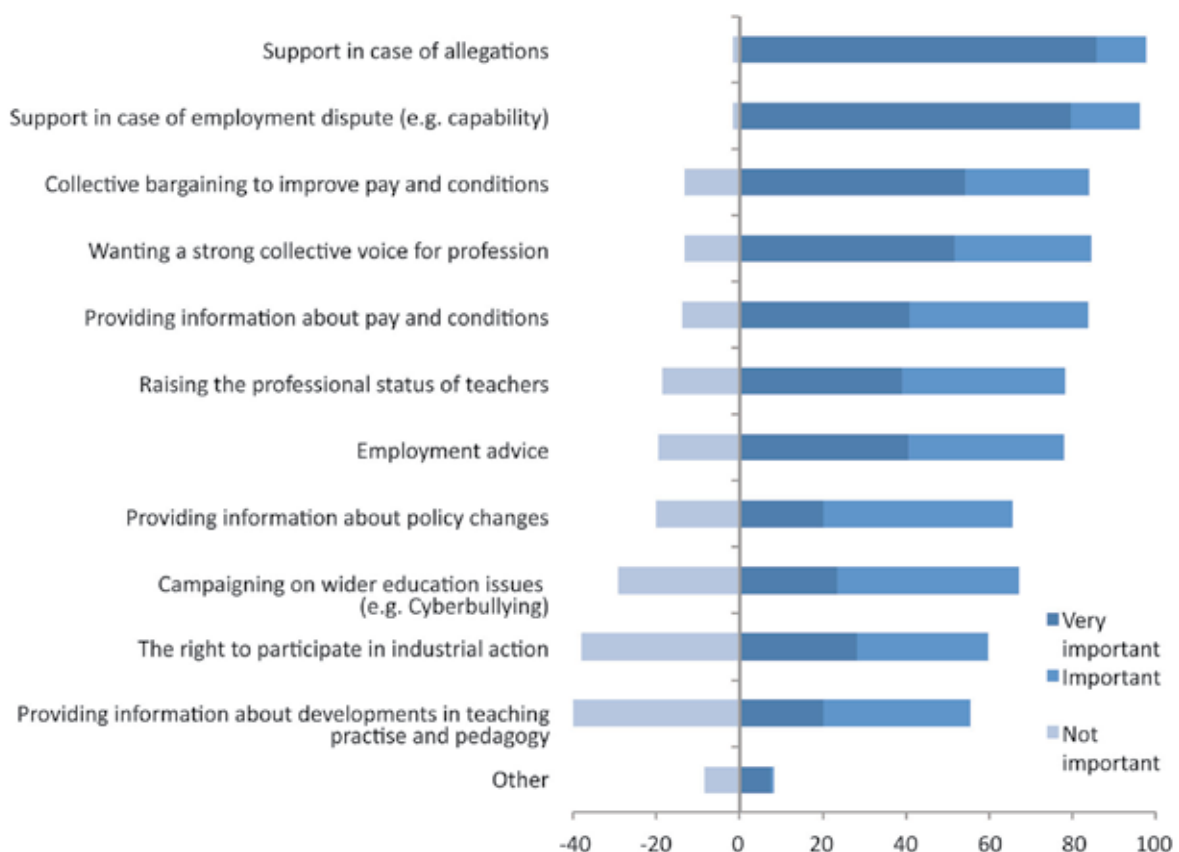
Phase		
	Minimum	Achieved
Primary	3	6
Secondary	3	15

Attitude		
	Minimum	Achieved
Strong views on unions	5	
(Of which Lab)	2	6
(Of which Con)	2	2
Not strong views/ neither	5	
(Of which Lab)	2	2
(Of which Con)	2	2

Part 2: Joining a union

2.1 Why do teachers join unions?

What were your main reasons for joining a union?
% (n=308)



Overview

Reasons for joining unions show that both individual concerns and collectivism are important to the vast majority of respondents. By far the most important reasons for joining unions were support in case of allegations or employment disputes. Only one person

who answered question 15 in our survey (equivalent to just 0.3% of respondents) did not consider one or the other of these 'individual protection' reasons important, showing that 'protection' is the most important aspect of union membership. Support in the case of allegations was so popular, in fact,

that more people rated it “very important” than the combined “important”/“very important” figure for every other union role except employment dispute revealing the paramount importance of individual protection.

Collective bargaining and collective voice were the next most important functions, valued by 84% of respondents and considered very important by around 50%. However, there was less unanimity here, with 13% considering them unimportant. Despite the clear desire for a strong collective voice, almost a third (29%) did not think campaigning on wider educational issues was important (although 23% considered this very important and there is a possibility that our choice of example- campaigning on cyber-bullying, though chosen because it was apolitical, could have skewed results.) Similarly, whilst collective bargaining was a key reason for joining a union, over a third of respondents (38%) did not consider the right to participate in industrial action important. One might speculate that this is either due to lack of understanding about what collective bargaining may entail or due to an appetite for alternative forms of negotiation. As we shall see below, our qualitative research and participants’ frequent and detailed discussion of industrial action show more evidence for the latter. On the other hand, over a quarter (28%) felt that the right to industrial action was very important. We therefore begin to see the emergence of significant variation in terms of what teachers want.

Information on pay and conditions was also valued by 84% of respondents, but slightly fewer considered it “very important”. “Information on developments in

teaching practice and pedagogy” was only important to 56% of teachers (and only very important to 10%). Forty per cent said explicitly that it was not important to them. However, our analysis by group shows that this varied according to role and length of service. Respondents who chose “other” tended to emphasise factors already mentioned such as: “Legal protection only, really.” (R:1705151771), “Safeguarding the teachers” (R:1702637216) and “Bargaining” (R:1710814471). In some cases they described reasons for joining a particular union which we shall come to in the next section.

What is the most important factor?

“Very important”, “important and “not important” classifications give us useful information about the prevalence of different priorities but there was nothing to stop a respondent saying that all of them were very important (indeed 13 respondents- 4%, did). To understand which were most important and what the categories which we had constructed and imposed meant to people, we needed to ask for more detail. Later in the survey we therefore asked “What is the most important thing unions should do?” We analysed responses by descriptively coding their responses and then putting them together to create broad categories for the most popular factors. Data in this area refers to respondents who made reference to the categories; not referencing therefore does not mean it was not important to them, simply that they did not mention it.

Responses back up our conclusions from the “important/not important” question, with references to “support”, “protection,” “pay and conditions”,

What is the most important thing unions should do? (most frequently referenced categories in 239 coded free-form responses to this questions)



“representation” and “voice” the most commonly referenced priorities. Unfortunately, many references were ambiguous such as: “offer support” (R:1727132928).

Support and protection

Support meant different things to respondents, varying from notions of representation (“supports your views nationally” R:1727167115 - Survey) and collectivism (“support the teaching profession” R: 1724668494 - Survey) to career progression (“support teachers in their career development and progression” R: 1724884278 - Survey) or more often, individual protection in cases of allegation. We therefore see that for some teachers support was a collective good, mutually secured whist, for others it was an individual benefit procured in return for their membership fee. Some teachers were clearly aware of these two interpretations and keen to highlight their interest in both. One said unions should “support teachers both on an individual basis and collectively” (R:1705452840 – Survey) and another that they should provide “collective and individual cover” (R:1724883509 – Interview).

We therefore attempted to separate out explicitly ‘individualistic’ views of support and protection (referenced specifically by 39% of respondents who answered this question), but found that the line was often blurred since individual benefits could be collectively secured. Where possible we identified where individual support related specifically to legal and employment support and protection (19%).

Allegations

Seven per cent of respondents to this question made specific reference to allegations. Some were very conscious of the gravity of this issue since “there is no other way currently that a teacher could afford the lawyer fees” (R:1697851321 - Survey). Concern in this area is not surprising given that research by the ATL (ATL, 2009) suggests that 28% of teachers have faced false allegations from a pupil and in 2009-10 2,827 allegations of abuse were made against teachers (York Consulting LLP, 2011). In many cases, respondents’ fear of allegation was very vivid due to personal or colleagues’ experience:

“...well touch wood, I’ve never had to call upon it (union’s support) but obviously one reads the newspapers and one is aware of things going on. I think the worst thing that could possibly happen would be one of

these occasions on which a child makes an unfounded allegation and that did actually happen to a friend of a friend of mine. The child can just come up, she’d been fantasising about this chap and I mean he’d lost his career and his marriage and everything because she’d been writing stuff in her diary that her mother had read and none of it was true. I mean you read about such things happening but that actually happened to somebody that I know and that’s just awful. I mean it does happen and so you need to have the might of a considerable lawyer behind you and therefore, you’d be extremely foolish not to have paid to have recourse to the union for support.” (R:1700422401- interview)

The ATL’s research showed that 50% of teachers were aware of another teacher in their school facing allegation by a pupil or their parent/guardian/family (ATL, 2009). For the above respondent this fear was sufficient for them to join a union despite the fact that they would prefer not to be a member and were highly critical of most aspects of unions’ work. Like this teacher, a desire for protection often motivated teachers to join unions ‘under duress’:

“I feel I have to be a member of a union for legal reasons, for the legal protection it offers against accusations of misconduct and I’d much rather not be a member of a union. So most doctors and lawyers don’t feel they need to belong to a union, they feel they’re rightly protected by a professional organisation such as the British Medical Council ... the GTC is a spectacular failure really to break the power of the unions, which is purely one of fear over me and many of my colleagues, we just don’t value union membership at all, but we feel that we can’t do that, and we don’t want to take the risk of not having that legal protection.” (R: 1700440053 – Interview)

Another respondent echoed this view, saying:

“Often teachers, when I talk to other teachers, the only reason they need a union or join a union is for an insurance policy in case anyone makes claims with them.” (R: 1711396318 – Interview)

However, in interviews several respondents criticised teachers like those above who treated unions like an insurance provider. One argued that they should be “more than just an insurance society” (1711448224 – Interview) whilst another feared that:

“if you were to have just like a personal insurance without a union attached to it you wouldn’t have the advice, whereas with the union you know you can speak to somebody that’s in the profession and they know what they are talking about.”
(R: 1716651394 - Interview)

Whilst the ATL’s research (ibid) focuses on allegations by pupils/parents/family, our respondents also made reference to allegations coming from other teachers and management.

Pay and conditions

Terms and conditions were described by one respondent as unions’ “defining role” (R: 1727544233 – Survey) and anger over recent changes was clear:

“Protecting our pay and conditions from the onslaught of the current government!!”
(R:1726558426 - Survey)

“fight for working rights - hours, pay, pensions etc to ensure we keep what we signed up for”
(R: 1711397183 - Survey)

Addressing issues around pay and conditions through collective action gave rise to mixed feelings, as we shall see in Part 4.3. Some argued that unions should “be more aggressive to government, one day strikes are ineffective” (R: 1710818526 - survey), whilst others contrasted strike action and professionalism:

“a unified professional face for the teaching profession which is above strike action and negotiates sensibly and reasonably”
(R: 1725567298 - survey)

Only about five per cent of teachers explicitly mentioned pensions.

A collective voice

Unions are widely seen as “the collective voice of the profession as well as the individuals within” (R: 1719515408 – Survey). They provide a channel for

teachers’ views and “are there for the professionalism of the teachers. They are constant and have at the heart of their values what education is all about” (R:1700365359 - Survey). One interviewee explained why this is important:

“Everyone thinks they know how to run a school, everyone thinks they know what the curriculum should look like, but actually it is a professional issue that we need to be debating with colleagues and political people as well.”
(R: 1726486468 – Interview)

Teachers had a range of views on what a collective voice meant (as we discuss in 4.1). They also disagreed about how it should manifest itself. Some wanted a collective voice that served to influence and shape government policy. They felt that unions should “lobby governments for change” (R:1724672203 –Survey). Others argued that unions should act as a counterbalance to government involvement, ensuring education is “secure from inappropriate political meddling” (R: 1727062805 – Survey). Some teachers wanted a more proactive approach with unions campaigning “to get Gove out of office before he destroys education in England for good” (R:1716676647- Survey). These teachers believed in protesting in order to “stop the privatisation of education” (R: 1697887218 – Survey) and to “oppose the destruction of state education (current Tory policy)” (R: 1711448224 – Survey). As we have seen, some felt this required an aggressive approach:

“Attack the Coalition on every front possible - pensions, conditions, academies, Gove being a complete idiot, student fees in FE.”
(R: 1706834432 –Survey)

Other teachers wanted unions to have an “apolitical” voice (R: 1712644600 – Survey). They argued that unions should “stop supporting one political ethos and ask members opinions instead” (R: 1716676647 – Survey). For these teachers, education needed to be less political:

“My feeling is that education would benefit from being less political (and therefore more stable) rather than more political and therefore more susceptible to vagrancies (sic) of each political party on taking office.”
(R: 1711484784 – Survey)

Further enquiry showed that for some teachers, unions were not just there to provide a voice to the government but also to the public, “selling the profession to the population” (1716651394 – Interview). They argued that unions should:

“Liaise with policy makers and educate the public about modern schooling.”

(R: 1709296177 – Survey, our emphasis)

“I think the most important thing is just supporting the rights of teachers and informing the general public about that as well. Because lots of people have got the wrong idea about what teachers are doing so that’s for them to explain what the teachers are doing.”

(R: 1700487854 – Interview, our emphasis)

How do groups vary?

We compared the percentage of teachers in different groups who considered factors “important” or “very important”. Teachers in all groups considered support on allegations and employment disputes extremely important (over 90% of teachers in every group), echoing the findings of Waddington & Whitsun (1997).

Differences between those with strong/not strong views unions, active/not active union members, Labour and Conservative teachers and members of different unions were frequently significant and we give a breakdown of these groups, as well as particular groups which showed significant variation in specific areas, in Appendix 5.

Aside from employment advice, Labour teachers considered each factor more important than Conservative voters but differences were often insignificant given the sample size. However, the wide variations in opinions should be clear from teachers’ comments above. Active union members and those with strong feelings about unions also placed more importance on each factor. Members of the NAHT valued many factors more highly than members of other unions, with the exception of industrial action (see below).

There were differences between teachers in community schools and independent schools, but they were not significant given the size of our independent school sample. The largest differences were over employment advice (59% cf. 85%), collective bargaining (74% cf. 90%), industrial action (44% cf. 69%), raising the professional

status of teachers (67% cf. 84%), campaigning on wider educational issues (52% cf. 76%), information about pay and conditions (78% cf. 98%) and information about developments in pedagogy (41% cf. 66%). We explore independent school teachers’ views in more detail in 4.1.

There were significant differences between teachers with “strong feelings about union membership” and “not strong feelings”/“neither.” The former were far more likely to consider collective bargaining and raising the professional status of teachers important. The same was the case with “active”/“not active” union members. This could be related to the fact that people with strong feelings about unions often have family members or friends strongly in favour of unions and tend to hold ‘collectivism’ as a personal value (Bacon & Storey, 1996). Upbringing certainly had an impact on several respondents. One active union member with very strong views on unions described their reason for joining as a “family tradition of union membership” (R: 1706834432 – Survey) whilst another described how:

“When I was a student I was a member of the Blast Furnacing Union in Cardiff, in the steelworks, but I think that had quite a profound effect upon me and I don’t think that certain English people have probably the same historical background.”

(R:1714086822 – Interview)

He then went on to explain his view of how unionism works and the fact that “you only get anything done if you have the strength of the members in your own workplace or school.”

For teachers with collectivist sentiments like these, membership is less likely to be premised on an individual “cost-benefit analysis” but on being able to make a difference across their social network (Moe 2011, p.29) and to their “other orientated values” (ibid).

Industrial action

Variations between groups in how important a factor the right to industrial action was in teachers’ decision to join a union were wide but predictable. Variations between supporters of different parties were significant ($p < 0.01$)

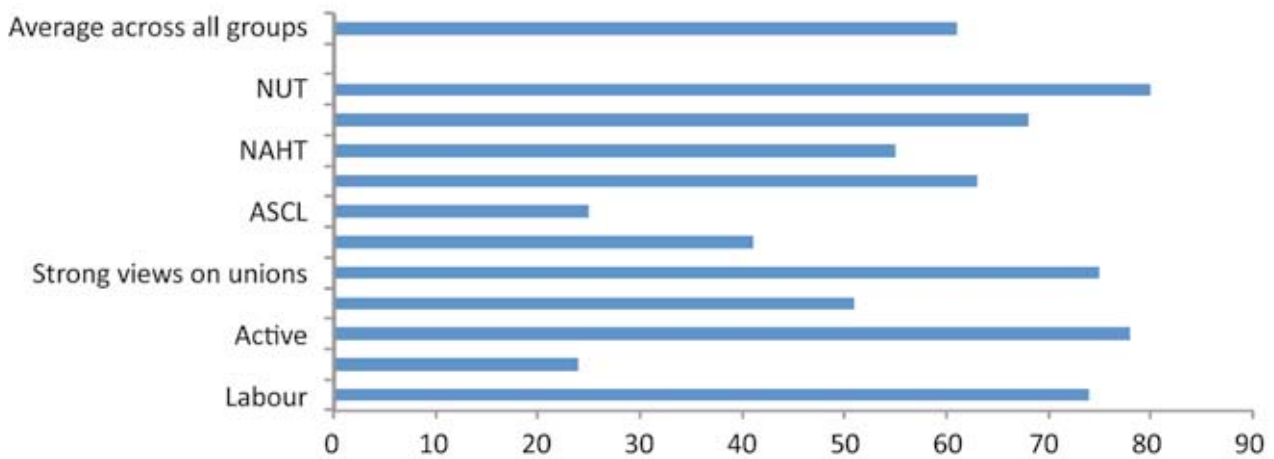
Labour voters were more likely to consider the right to industrial action a significant factor than Conservatives (24% compared to 74%, $p < 0.001$). Given

the under-representation of Conservative voters and the over-representation of Labour voters within our sample and the significant differences between their feelings about the right to industrial action we might speculate that the right to industrial action is in fact a less important factor in teachers' decision to join a union amongst the general teacher population than

initially appeared. This is suggested by a weighting calculation, but given the small sample sizes within each group it comes with a note of caution.

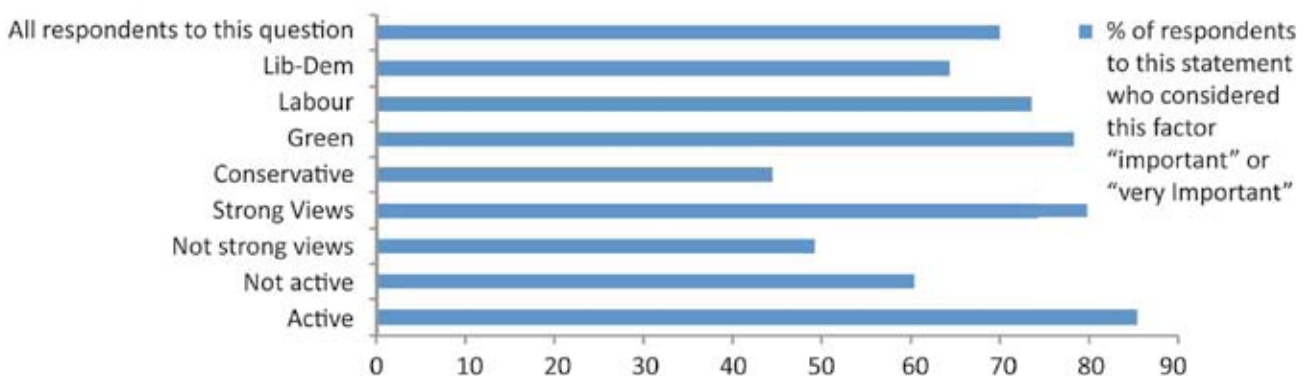
Which union a teacher was a member of also made a significant difference ($p < 0.001$). NUT members were most likely to consider the right to collective action

The right to participate in industrial action (e.g. strikes is important/very important)



Party	(Teacher population in this group (Ipsos Mori, 2010) (%)	Industrial action important (Sample %)	Industrial action important (Weighted %)	Industrial action not important (Sample %)	Industrial action not important (Weighted %)
Conservative	29	24	7	76	22.04
Green	5	74	4	26	1.3
Labour	40	74	29	26	10.4
Lib-Dem	23	56	13	44	10.12
Grand Total		60%	53%	38%	44%

Campaigning on wider education issues (e.g. cyberbullying)



important (80%) and members of Voice the least likely (0%- unsurprising given its 'no strike' policy). Active union members were more likely to value the right to industrial action compared to non-active members (78% compared to 51% $p < 0.01$) as were teachers with strong feelings about union membership compared to others (40% compared to 75%, $p < 0.001$).

There were similarities between this pattern and variations in how important groups considered "campaigning on wider education issues (e.g. cyberbullying)". Labour teachers were significantly more likely than Conservatives to consider campaigning important (74% compared to 44% $p = 0.05$.)

Information on policy changes and developments in teaching and pedagogy

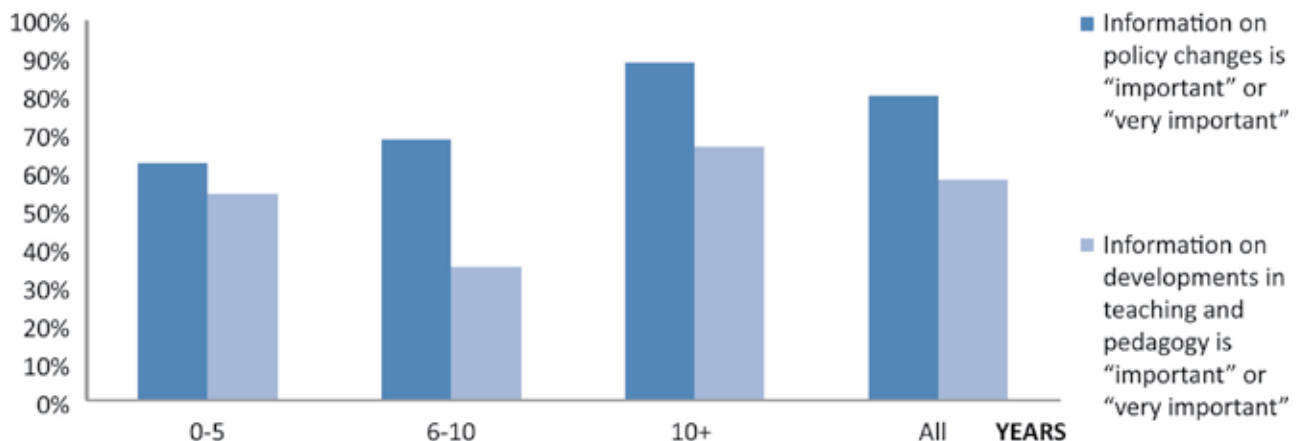
These two factors appeared to be valued more by teachers with more years of service. The value placed on policy information rose continuously with years of service in the case of "policy" whilst information on pedagogy was most valued by teachers with more than 10 years' experience.

One might speculate that this difference is more to do with teachers' roles or which union they are a member of (given that head teachers are over-represented amongst teachers with 10+ years of experience, as are members of ASCL and the NAHT). However, this does not appear to be the case (groups above average are highlighted in bold).

Years	Role/Union	Information on policy changes important	Information on developments in teaching and pedagogy important
	Head teacher (n=67)	92%	88%
	Senior manager (n=29)	96%	61%
	Middle manager (n=32)	79%	47%
	Teacher (n=53)	87%	51%
	ASCL (n=23)	100%	77%
	ATL (n=26)	80%	46%
	NAHT (n=48)	96%	94%
	NASUWT (n=31)	87%	42%
	NUT (n=32)	84%	59%
	Voice (n=6)	100%	67%
	Not changed union (n=74)	88%	67%
	Changed union (n=97)	90%	75%
10+	All 10+ (n=189)	89%	67%
All		80%	58%

Information on policy changes is important to a high proportion of teachers with 10+ years of experience regardless of role, union and whether they have

Length of service



changed union or not. This is less the case with teaching and pedagogy, where there is variation according to other factors. Given that the question asks which factors were important in joining a union this would seem to suggest that either teachers who join a union for information on pedagogy and policy stay in teaching longer, or that people are answering on the basis of what is important to them now rather than when they joined and that what matters to them has changed. Interviews and open answers certainly showed that teachers who had been in teaching for a long time frequently referred to the importance of the information they received. This was particularly noticeable when people explained why they changed union when they changed role. As one respondent put it:

“some of the publications that you get for free are more relevant to my role than the ones I was getting from the ATL.”
(R:1700440053 – Interview)

Teachers in primary schools considered several factors more important than teachers in secondary schools, but these differences were not significant with the exception of teaching practice and pedagogy which 61% of primary teachers considered important compared to 44% in secondary schools.

Top right: Wordcloud showing most frequent words used in describing the most important thing unions should do.



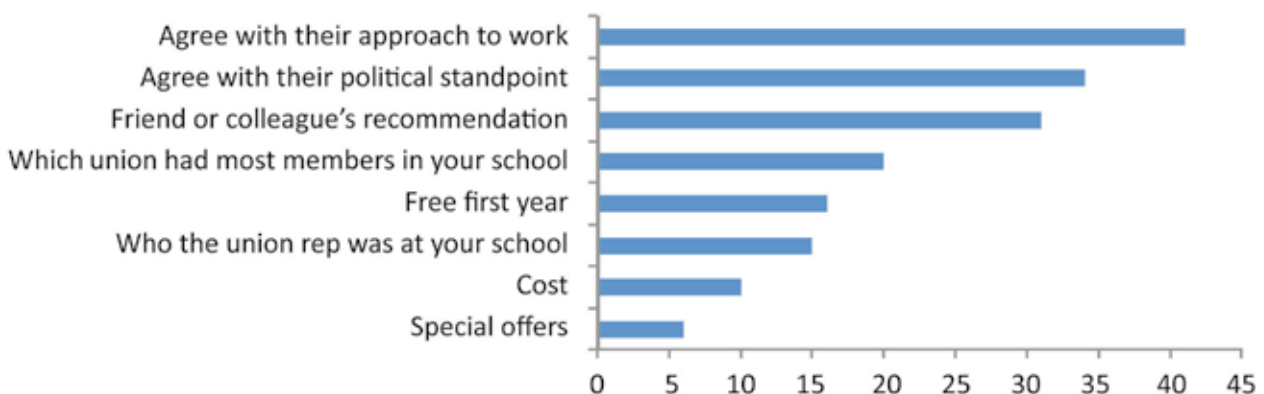
2.2 How do teachers choose their union?

Overview

Forty one per cent of teachers considered unions’ approach to their work when deciding which to join, and 35% considered their political standpoint. Cost and special offers were the least considered factors (10% and 6% respectively). This is unsurprising given that most unions make similar offers. Friends and colleagues were only important to a third of people, which is surprising given the findings of Gordon et al (1980) which suggest that these are crucial factors.

Since almost 45% of our respondents had changed union, it is useful to separate out the reasons stated by people who had changed union and those who

Factors considered in choosing union (n=308)



had not. Doing so reveals that teachers who have not changed union are much more likely than those who had changed to consider special offers, the union rep, a free first year and which union had most members. However, this approach to differentiating between them is very imprecise, as those who have changed may be referring either to their original choice or their later change. As we shall see in section 2.3, very different factors are considered when changing and the above graph is therefore likely to under-represent the difference. We can find out more about initial choices with reference to teachers' open answers and from interviews.

Initial choice

Which union had most members was much more important to people who had not changed union. One respondent explained in their interview that for them, this was linked to the potential for collective bargaining strength. It appears that they considered size at a school rather than national level and that this was influenced by colleague influence:

“The biggest factor for me was what the biggest union was in my school. And so I decided my union based on that. That is then made more complicated when you move schools and it no longer is the biggest union, but I have stuck with the one I joined in my first school. But it was the fact that it was the main one there and I was advised I think, by other staff that it made sense to be part of

that because obviously it meant there were more people using that and there was more bargaining power, so that was the main reason.” (R: 1700429363 – Interview)

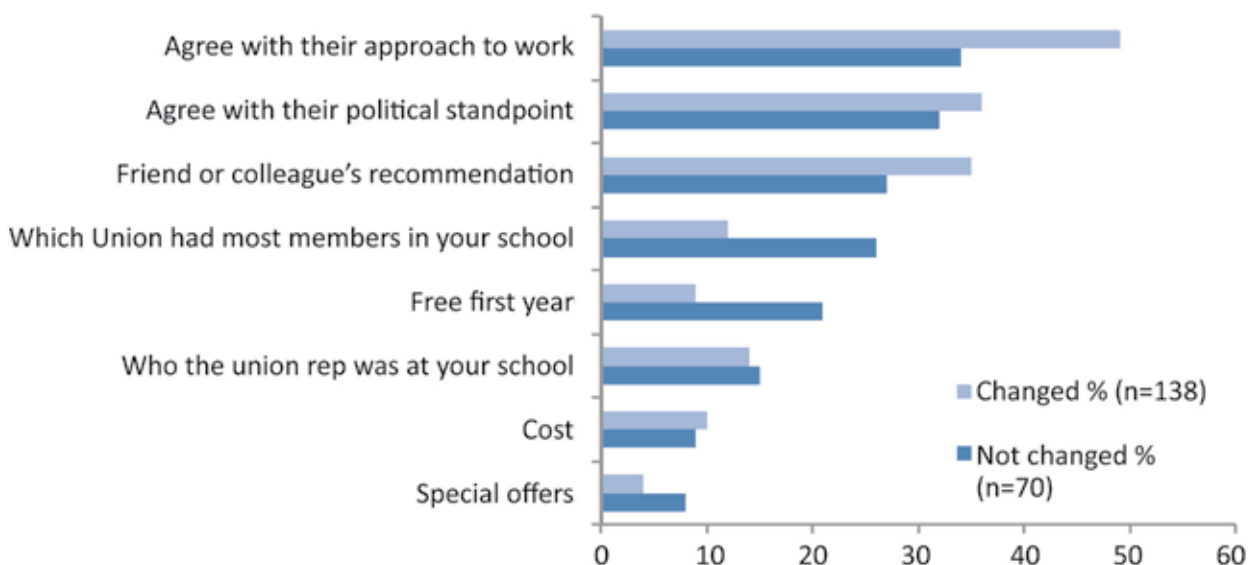
We can see that this choice was also informed by advice from colleagues. A combination of size and advice from the union rep helped another interviewee to choose. Like several respondents, this teacher had initially joined several unions:

“When I was a student, I had student membership of a number of the unions because it was all free. When I started teaching, the school I went to, the first person who begun his teaching was the NUT rep and they said look, we’re the biggest union in the school, we’re the biggest union in Newham. If you want a voice, if you want to make a difference, join us and I did.” (R: 1711448224 – Interview)

One interviewee researched different unions in detail:

“I looked into the unions which were applicable to my workplace when I started teaching and there were three or four of them at the time and I looked into their manifestos and I went on the websites and I also spoke to people who were deserting the unions at my workplace. And I made the decision to join the one that I joined based on what I read and

Choice factors and changing unions



what I was told.” (R: 1711091283 – Interview)

However this respondent was the exception; in the majority of cases, initial choice of unions appeared to be circumstantial or even random:

“When I joined the first union I joined up because it was easiest to spell. It was the NUT and also because it was the one, the union, that had approached me as a student.” (R: 1711396318 -Interview)

“They handed out free gifts.” (R:1700487854 – Interview)

“Only union who bothered to turn up at the Education Show when I was a GRTP.” (R: 1711397183, -Survey)

“It was the union that gave most freebies away when I was a student.” (R: 1724883509 – Interview)

“The only one who turned up with enough forms during my PGCE.” (R: 1710589424 -Survey)

“I wasn’t necessarily that bothered about joining one. I was slightly scare-mongered into it when I was doing my PGCE.” (R: 1718879704 – Interview)

Some teachers described a mixture of circumstantial and political reasons:

“I: You joined the ATL initially just because of a free first year? Was it purely that, because I think some of the other unions offer that as well, don’t they?”

1700440053: *I honestly don’t know, so we had some kind of, it was probably in Fresher’s Week, when I was 18 at Teacher Training College and I happen to be at their stand and they said “Join up and it’ll be free while you’re a student and free for your first year”. I probably didn’t look at the other offers if I’m honest. Also, I don’t really like the attitude of the NUT because of the militancy, so I was always going to steer clear of that, but I equally didn’t like the attitude of what was then the PAT, which was much too, they’ve gone too far the*

other way, they actually declared they’d never strike, which seemed a bit pointless really. So, the ATL seemed to be a nice middle of the road union.” (R: 1700440053 –Interview)

Approach

The above respondent raises the issue of approach and uses the word “militancy”. When teachers criticised unions’ approaches they used words like “militant”, “inflexible”, “antagonistic” and “intolerant”. The tendency to link particular unions with particular traits links to the work of Healey (1997) who found that teachers within those unions tended to exhibit similar levels of commitment and have equal levels of satisfaction with their unions. Recent survey data has also shown that unions considered more conciliatory tend to have members with higher levels of job satisfaction and with greater concern for individual protection rather than a desire for collective bargaining (Redman & Snape, 2006).

Words commonly used to describe perceived positive features of unions included “balanced”, “constructive” and “professional”. Perceiving a union as one of these could be very attractive to some teachers:

“Yeah they (ASCL) tend to, they’re more constructive, they tend to be more constructive. When they do disagree, they disagree but say, ‘But we’ll work with you to try and improve’ it’s not, ‘We’re just not going to engage in the conversations at all’ and I think the pensions are a very good example of that.” (R: 1703580962 – Interview)

“The NASUWT and the NUT have just stuck their heels in and they’ve done nothing, they just said, ‘We’re not going to accept it’ even though it’s quite clear the government is going to impose it in some way, shape or form, but ASCL have actually said, “Okay, it’s not the best, it’s not as good as it was, but it’s probably the best deal on the table and we recommend that we go forward with it, because we’re better off doing that than fighting the DfE all the time.” (R: 1703580962 – Interview)

However, that is not to suggest that all respondents wanted their union to take a conciliatory, negotiated approach:

“NASUWT as a union seem to, with the last government, want to jump into bed with them. ATL were basically something people joined if they didn’t want to be in a real union and like that was never my view on what a union should be. It’s not the way I thought people should organise and so I have a very low opinion of them.”

(R: 1711448224 – Interview)

The approach teachers wanted their union to take was sometimes linked to teachers’ own political standpoint:

“they are on the left hand side of a political debate, that is something that does appeal to me.” (R:1710864076 -Interview)

“I always would have joined a union, I’m quite left wing, so my political thought definitely would have made me look at joining a union.” (R: 1710547976 – Interview)

“I suppose if you look on the...The NUT would be described as being the most left wing of the teacher’s unions and that actually fits with my own political beliefs.”

(R: 1711448224 – Interview)

However, when unions later behaved in a way that was out of line with the approach for which they were chosen, members became frustrated:

“I was with ATL before, because I thought they were more moderate and not so in favour of striking, and of course they did go on strike and I was annoyed about that, so that’s why I left them.” (R: 17051771 – Interview)

“They sounded the most reasonable and the ones who were in it to serve the teacher rather than be against the management and against the government for everything. Needless to say, things have changed dramatically since.” (R:1711091283 – Interview)

Some respondents referred to specific political issues that affected their choice of union. Teachers referred specifically to the NUT’s perceived or actual stance on Israel and the military coming into schools.

‘Other’ factors

By far the most common reason given in the “other” category was role-specific support. Unsurprisingly this was generally important to people who had changed union.

	Not changed union	Changed union
Role-specific support	3	11

We shall therefore deal with this in section 2.3. Several respondents also picked their union based on striking policies. These were mainly members of “Voice” which largely defines itself by its no-striking policy.

	ATL	Voice	NASUWT
Striking policy	3	5	1

Members of the ATL referred to “freedom to strike or not” (R: 1710814471 – Survey), “they very rarely strike” (R:1700457082 – Survey), “I liked the fact that at the point at which I joined they had never been on strike” (R: 1700407117 – Survey). The member of the NASUWT was perhaps a little confused in describing their “no-strike history” (R: 1710649116 – Survey) but one interviewee echoed this perception:

“with striking and historically, you know, the NAS – which is ... because I’m a member of – have, you know, found other ways when possible to take action. So ... and whether that or not is founded on solid facts or not is probably questionable, but certainly that’s the way that these dealings are presented when you’re a student teacher and then you’re more likely to join the NAS.”

(R: 1710547976 – Interview)

Several other respondents talked about unions’ strike histories which seemed to represent unions’ political positions and approach and therefore allowed new teachers to choose their union based on perceived alignment.

How do groups vary?

Cost, special offers, a free first year and size of union membership were rated slightly higher by teachers with 0-5 years’ experience, trainees and NQTs, than by those with more experience. Similarly they rated

agreement with approach less highly than more experienced teachers. However, given the small size of our sample of NQT and trainee teachers, many of these differences were not significant.

	Considered: All (n=308)	Considered: NQTs and Trainees (n=19)	Considered: 0-5 years (n=71)
Free first year	16%	58%	37%
Size	20%	21%	25%
Rep	15%	11%	17%
Political standpoint	34%	42%	32%
Approach	41%	26%	31%
Colleague recommendation	31%	42%	41%
Special offers	6%	21%	18%
Cost	10%	11%	17%

There were some differences between unions in terms of the extent to which members considered the union’s approach.

Consider approach	(n)	Considered
ASCL	26	58%
ATL	47	43%
NAHT	51	59%
NASUWT	67	31%
NUT	84	30%
Voice	17	47%

Members of the leadership unions (ASCL and the NAHT) were more likely to consider the union’s approach compared to the main unions (p<0.001).

Consider approach	(n)	Approach not important	%
ATL/NASUWT/NUT	198	66	33
ASCL/NAHT	77	45	58

There was some variation in the importance accorded to size, which was considered more by members of the larger unions - suggesting people are generally

well matched to their union on this front.

Consider membership number	(n)	Consider	Not consider
ASCL	26	8%	92%
ATL	47	6%	94%
NAHT	51	2%	98%
NASUWT (second largest union)	67	24%	76%
NUT(largest union)	84	43%	57%
Voice	17	0%	100%

One independent school teacher referred to specific support for independent schools as a choice factor. He expanded on this in his interview saying:

“I think ATL have been very good on that, in that respect. They do take notice of the independent schools and they do focus on it.” (R:1714086822- Interview)

We explore the views of independent school teachers in more detail in section 4.1.

How do teachers form their views of unions?

Having gained an understanding of how teachers perceive their unions and which factors do and do not appeal to them, we were able to use our interviews to explore how their perceptions were shaped. The main ways teachers form their views of unions are through the media, colleagues, personal experience and the behaviour of general secretaries and reps.

Media

Media portrayals of the unions were described by one member as “something that you can’t really ignore” (R: 1700429363 – Interview). However, there was recognition that “you do need to take a lot of it (media portrayal) with a very large pinch of salt” (R: 1711448224 – Interview). Or, as another put it:

“You see things on the telly and read things and that, but the union are not actually not like that.” (R: 1710927423 – Interview)

As the work of Baker (1994) shows, the construction of this image by the media is not unconscious.

It was clear that there had been a change over time in which sources of information affected teachers. Longer serving teachers referred to how “there was no internet access or anything like that then, so it was all the documents they were publishing at the time” (R: 1724821668 – Interview). That said, newer teachers did not talk about searching for information about the unions on the internet, suggesting either that the internet is so much part of their lives that they take it for granted or that they are less likely to be carrying out research.

Colleagues and experience

“Hearsay from the staff you work with” (R: 1718879704 – Interview) frequently helped teachers, to find out about the unions and to form a view of what they were like (this was particularly important for new teachers):

“But mainly through talking to colleagues I think, and particularly within the school I am at, hearing what has happened previously, what the plans are to happen is definitely the main source of information.”
(R: 1700429363 – Interview)

In other cases, practicing teachers’ views were shaped by watching colleagues in other unions and associating the union with the characteristics of their member colleagues. This was certainly the case for one Scottish teacher:

“we do have colleagues at school who are in the EIS and they’re the ones that complain about oh, you’re going to have to work too hard or this is appalling and oh I can’t possibly do games tutoring on a Saturday and well, get over yourself. Why can’t you? Everybody else does in other, in competitor schools. So members of the EIS that have been members of our staff have not contributed to a favourable opinion of that union because all they ever did was complain about being worked too hard.” (R: 1700422401 – Interview)

General secretaries and reps

In several instances general secretaries were seen as symbols of their union’s approach.

“Mary Bousted for example comes across as

pretty smug and annoying at the moment – and I wouldn’t quite put her into a Bob Crow territory but she’s on her way.”
(R: 1700440053 – Interview)

“For me their activities outside and especially the General Secretary who is there now presently, becomes so extreme politically wise, and everything is political... It doesn’t do our profession any favours at all watching some of the rhetoric which comes out of some of the General Secretaries’ mouths, it just looks as if the whole profession is stuck in the past and doesn’t want to move on, it’s totally delusional really about what’s going on in the country.”
(R:1703580962 - Interview)

“1705151771: *“I didn’t like how their leaders went on either in the press on the last round of strikes, she just drove me nuts to be honest and I just thought, I can’t belong to them, so I’ll be totally honest about that. I saw her on Question Time or Jeremy Paxman and I just thought, I just didn’t like how she carried on.*

I: What was it about what she was saying?

1705151771: *As I said, she didn’t listen, she wouldn’t listen to the other side, she’s a one single minded, wouldn’t listen and just I thought a domineering personality. And, I know she has to be, she’s a leader of a union for heaven’s sake! I just thought, I’m not giving my money to that person, it was that attitude, I don’t know. She wasn’t listening, put it like that, from my perspective she wasn’t listening and I suppose the other side wasn’t listening to her either really, but there you go.”*
(R: 1705151771 - Interview)

Union reps also played a powerful role in symbolising their union’s approach, and this could be very positive:

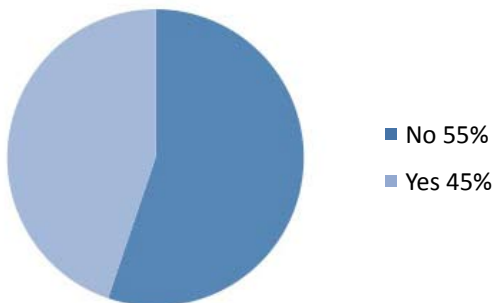
“My head of department is the union rep... in the school and he is very active. I suppose I liked him personally, I like his style, I like the way he thinks so I sort of assumed that because he was like that and he was the union rep, that maybe the union would have the same sort of values. He is unlikely to belong to something that doesn’t have the same sort of values that he

believes in". (R:1710927423 – Interview)

It is not unusual for the people who work for unions to be mythologised in ways that may be seen as positive or negative by teachers, Baker (ibid) has described the media's strength in choosing how to portray unions during their conference with a focus on labelling leaders as either 'militant' or the 'voice of the people'. For teachers who are looking for their unions to be strong in collective bargaining, the theatrics of conference as represented in the media can be seen as evidence that the union is living up to their desires (Wallace, 1997). On the other hand, for a person who has joined the union for more personal reasons – and who shies away from the confrontations of collective bargaining – these same representations can be an embarrassment, a word used several times by our respondents.

2.3 Do teachers change union?

Have you ever changed the union you are a member of (n=308 - excludes N/A)



A very high percentage of our respondents had changed union. This figure is inevitably skewed by the fact that people were more likely to complete our survey if they were interested in unions and were therefore more likely to actively think about which union they were part of. However, the figure is still striking, and by exploring who changes and why we can begin to understand the reasons and catalysts for doing so.

Why do teachers change union?

Change of role

Respondents frequently changed union when they moved into leadership. For some this almost seemed to be a 'rite of passage' that came with promotion:

"Snobbery probably, if I'm honest. It seems when I made the move into senior management, they said you could become a member of the NAHT, I thought, "Okay, why not" and it costs roughly the same and just, and to be fair some of the publications that you get for free are more relevant to my role than the ones I was getting from the ATL." (R:1700440053 – Interview)

Several other respondents referred to the quality of support from leadership unions being more appropriate to their role, for example arguing that ASCL provides "tailored advice and support towards my current role." (R: 1700351826 – Survey). As always, 'support' meant different things to different people; for this respondent, support was to do with information and training. For others it related more to protection:

"The people representing you need to know the position you're in, so the NASUWT is for mainly, consists of normal teaching staff, bog standard teachers, so if I was ever to get into trouble and I needed a union rep, representative, I needed that legal back fall, I'd rather have the legal back fall from a set of individuals who are more used to dealing with senior management type complaints and senior management issues than a normal classroom issue... If you took bullying for instance, a bullying instance for an NASUWT rep, if you'd ask most of them, would be regarding senior management bullying an individual. While it would be completely the opposite way round if you're a senior manager, it would be the senior manager being bullied by, being accused of bullying by somebody below, so that's why I then changed from the NASUWT to ASCL." (R: 1703580962 – Interview)

Sometimes, particular attitudes towards leadership on the part of the unions encouraged school leaders to change:

"The crunch came when they actually announced that head teachers were creaming off the budget to give themselves pay rises. So I felt that they didn't actually reflect the whole of the teaching profession." (R: 1724821668 – Interview)

There was some disagreement amongst Heads about whether it was a good idea to move into leadership unions. One NAHT branch secretary argued:

1724883509: *“I joined the NAHT when I became a head teacher, the National Association of Head Teachers it was a very straight forward decision. In the local authority that I was working at the time, all the other head teachers in that local authority (it was a small authority) were in the NAHT and the word union by definition means collective so it was the association which very closely reflected my collective and individual needs.*

I: *Okay, because I mean some head teachers decide to stay in their teaching union rather than change over, you mentioned there the fact that that was the general state of play in the local authority, was there anything else that factored into your decision or was it...*

1724883509: *I know some head teachers stay in the same union that they were in before but I have ... I don't understand why they would stay in a union that supports rank and file teachers as opposed to those in leadership posts, I just don't understand the logic in that.”*

In contrast another Head argued that:

“I think it's a mistake myself...the Heads' unions are too narrow in how they go about things and they are too small. There is a bit of solidarity

with the class of teachers that needs to be held on to.” (R: 1726486468 – Interview)

Worth noting both of these head teachers' responses make strong use of language around 'solidarity' and the 'collective', placing them firmly in the collectivist camp.

Role-specific reasons were not always about support, but also to do with representation:

“It was more the fact that they represented head teachers that made me want to join.” (R:1724883509 - Interview)

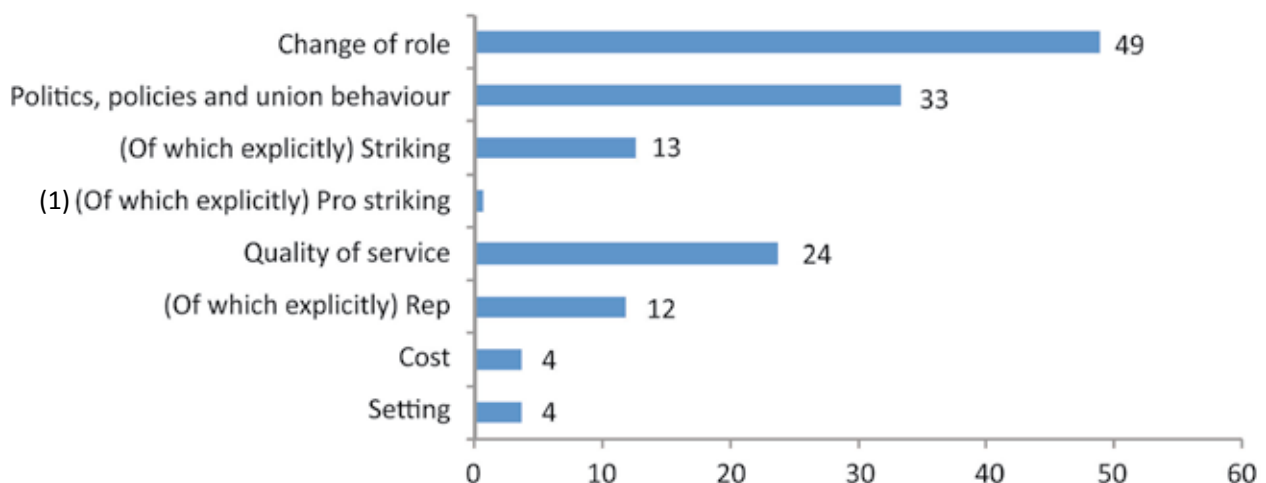
Role changes also affected teachers at other stages in their careers. Several had previously been members of other unions (often Unison whilst working as TAs) and changed when they qualified.

Politics, policies and behaviour

The ATL and NASUWT were the unions teachers most frequently transferred into for political reasons.

Reason (from coding)	Current union					
	ATL	NAHT	ASCL	NUT	Voice	NASUWT
Overall Political	11	5	5	2	7	10
Militant	2	0	1	0	0	4
Overall striking	5	1	2	1	5	2
Pro-striking	0	0	0	1	0	0

Why teachers change union
(% based on 135 coded free-form responses)



Teachers frequently described their search for a union which truly reflected their views. In some cases this led to multiple changes:

“When I was young I thought I was radical and I wasn’t, but I thought I was, and it seemed to me that the most aggressive union was the NUT and I joined the NUT for my first job... (then)...I went along to the Lewisham branch of the NUT meeting and I felt it was, they were unacceptably left wing and intolerant, so I thought they were for extreme socialists and I’m not an extreme socialist and never was, and I didn’t agree with their policy, so I resigned... I joined the NASUWT, and I was quite happy with them.... as far as I was concerned I had, it was either them or ATL and I thought ATL were just wussy and wet because when I had been in Dover Grammar School the ATL people didn’t come out, take any action and I just thought they were wet, so I went to NASUWT, and I went with them for a while... I think I rang up NASUWT and I got the impression that ...their policy was to close independent schools down, so I thought it was a bit silly for me to remain in them. Then I joined ATL, and I’ve been with ATL since.” (R: 1714086822 – Interview)

“Left ASCL to rejoin NUT after a year’s ASCL membership. I felt ASCL were never likely to represent my views.” (R: 1701772365 – Survey)

Seven teachers (5%) used the word “militant” in describing why they changed union. Four of these explicitly used it to describe the NUT, again echoing the findings of Redman and Snape (2006).

Specific events and issues could act as catalysts for politically motivated change:

“NUT was putting a lot of effort into anti-Zionist pro-Palestinian motions at their conference and being Jewish, I felt this was unacceptable. There was no emphasis on peace campaigns in Israel and movements in education to unite the groups. I felt unions should not take such a biased viewpoint.” (R: 1705025499 – Survey)

“Changed from NUT; found them overly negative and discouraging of advancements in the profession and their lack of support for Academies was a huge factor.” (R: 1698251172 – Survey)

Strikes

Strikes were a common reason for changing union. They were explicitly referenced by 10% of the teachers who told us why they had changed. References to strikes did not necessarily relate to strikes since 2010:

“I have changed every time the union I was a member of asked me to carry out industrial action. I am against industrial action within our profession.” (R: 1704447359 – Survey)

Indeed, one respondent described how their union membership had changed over time as their perspective on strikes altered:

“When I was a trainee teacher in the early 1970s I joined PAT (now called Voice) because I thought striking would harm pupils. However, when I started teaching I realised that the Government was abusing teacher professionalism so joined the NUT and went on strike. I felt that the couple of days I spent striking in my entire career (I am now retired so the answers I provided earlier referred to the school where I used to teach) would be less harmful to my pupils than a demoralised teacher.” (R:1724668494 – Survey)

We shall return to the issue of strikes in section 4.3 when we deal with the impact of recent events.

Quality of service

Four teachers said they chose to change because they believed they would get better training and resources. They were members of a range of unions including the NUT, NASUWT, ATL and ASCL. Eight teachers changed because of negative experiences, either due to an argument with a member or a poor support. Six of them changed to the NASUWT, one to Voice and one to the NUT. Three teachers changed because of inefficiency in collecting payments.

It was clear that where teachers had had negative experiences they were left feeling very disappointed and angry:

“Because after taking my subs for over 10 years the NUT were completely useless when I needed their support.” (R: 1711943036 - Survey)
“I was accused of being a Neo-Trotskyite by NUT.” (R: 1711426476 – Survey)

“I was assaulted in school, tearing tendons and ligaments, and the union did nothing to support me. It even allowed my headteacher to accuse me of provoking the assault without offering a challenge.” (R: 1711456785 – Survey)

Rep

Nine respondents (seven percent of those who answered this question) said they changed union because they were not happy with their union’s rep or because another seemed better.

Several NASUWT members explained their reasons for changing in detail. Their comments make the importance of local, efficient and easily contactable reps abundantly clear:

“Was in ATL but when needed help they would not take evening calls. A colleague was NASUWT rep and was most helpful so switched.”
 (R: 1711610320 - Survey)

“Was a member of NUT. Changed because the rep was ineffective, whereas the NASUWT rep was on the ball, good at communication etc.”
 (R: 1711396318 – Survey)

“I switched from NUT to NASUWT because the local NUT rep only worked part time and it was difficult to get hold of him.”
 (R: 1705207853 – Survey)

Setting

Some teachers changed union to and from the UCU when they moved into and out of teaching in FE. As we have already seen, at least one respondent changed to the ATL based on their support for teachers in independent schools.

Who changes?

Although people with strong feelings about union membership were almost twice as likely to change union as those without strong feelings, a large number of teachers in both groups changed.

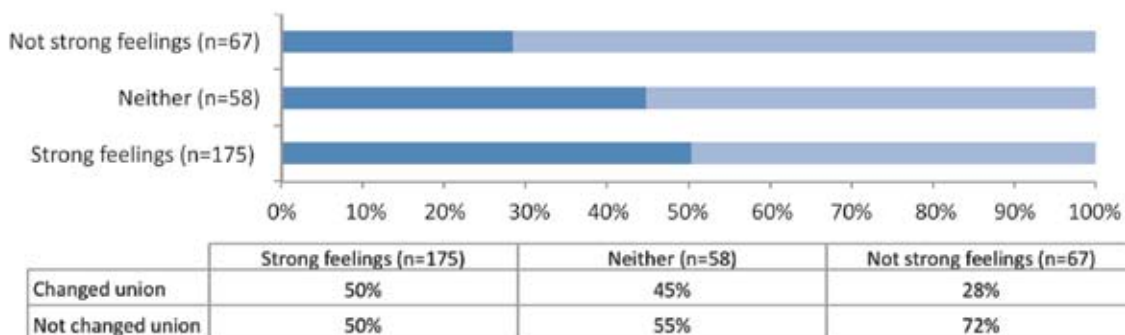
As we have seen above, many people changed union when they moved into leadership; we might therefore expect most of the people who changed union to be Heads and senior managers or teachers who have been in the profession longer. Whilst this was to some extent the case, teachers in all groups changed.

In most groups, at least 40% of teachers had changed union. The exceptions to this were trainees and NQTs, teachers with 0-5 years of experience, Teach First teachers, and middle managers. Apart from the latter group, this is not surprising given that as years of experience increase so do opportunities and catalysts for change.

The figure for Teach First teachers is particularly low, even taking into account the fact that they were more likely not to have many years’ experience.

TF by years of experience (excludes blanks)	TF Changed (%)
0-5 (n=15)	7%
6-10 (n=7)	14%
10+ (n=1)	0%

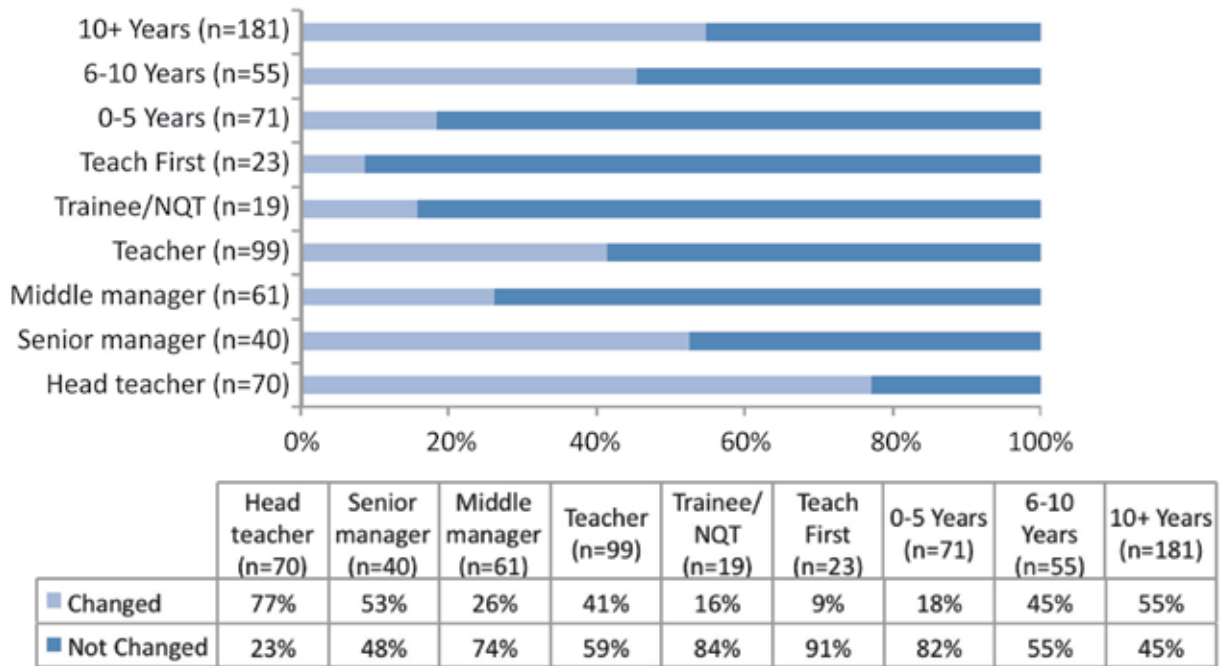
Who changes?



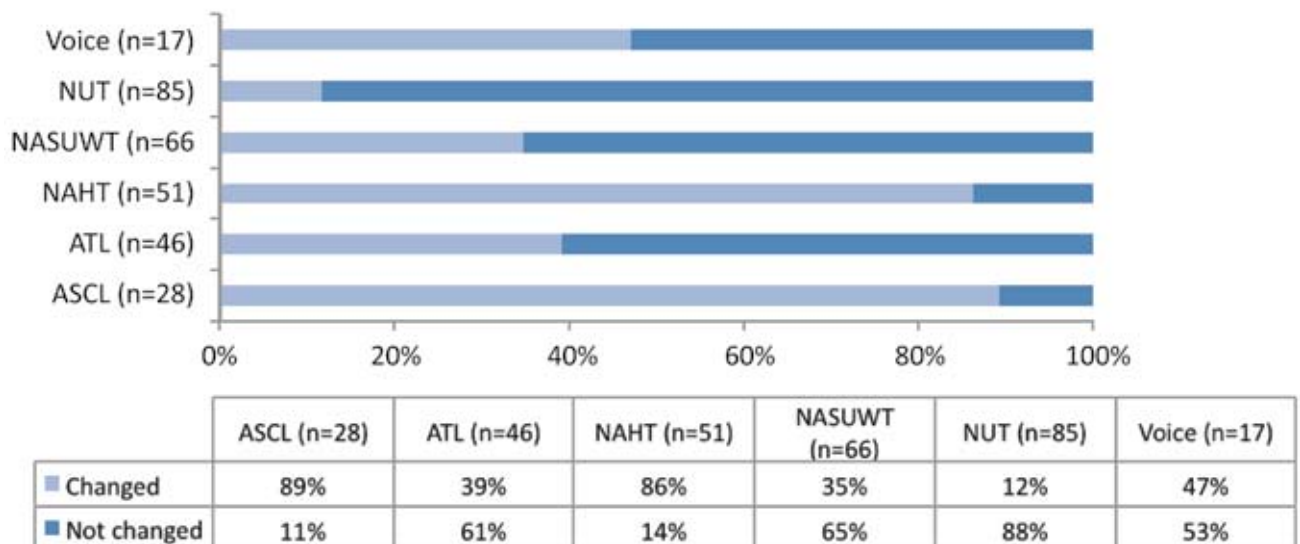
Some unions were particularly likely to have members who have transferred into them. We know that members of the NAHT for example were most likely to have changed union and are over-represented in our sample. However, it seems that apart from the NUT, over a third of members of each union have changed.

If we take the percentages within each union as representative of their union, we can use these figures combined with reported membership numbers from the certification office (Certification Office, 2010) to calculate an expected percentage of teachers who changed union in the general population of teachers.

How did role and experience affect likelihood of changing union?



Which union's members had changed?



Union	Strong feelings (n=175)	Neither (n=58)	Not strong feelings (n=67)
ASCL	89	2	2
ATL	39	16	6
NAHT	86	4	3
NASUWT	35	36	13
NUT	12	40	5
Voice	47	3	1
Standardised teacher population who changed union			30

It is worth bearing in mind firstly that numbers in the groups above are low and secondly that even within each union, active members and those with strong feelings were conceivably more likely to complete the survey. The figures per union may therefore also be higher than in reality, making a true figure of under 30% possible. However, any conclusion on this would be speculative given that strength of views on unions might affect teachers in different unions differently, making changing more likely in some and less likely in others.

Aside from these differences, Conservatives seemed less likely to change union (37%) compared to Labour (53%), but this difference was not significant. There was very little difference between the likelihood of active and non-active union members changing.

2.4 What about teachers who aren't in a union?

Why don't some people join a union?

As we noted in our foreword, it is hard to establish accurate figures for the prevalence of union membership but it is clear that teaching is one of (if not the) most unionised professions. Six per cent of our respondents were not members.

Circumstances

One of the most common reasons for not joining a union was that they were not considered appropriate or needed in particular teachers' circumstances. This was the case for two teachers who are on short, temporary contracts and a trainee who intended to join when they began their NQT year. Like this NQT,

four teachers referenced the potential benefits of union memberships, particularly in terms of legal and pay advice as well as protection:

"First I didn't consider it essential as a part time ACL tutor. I have since thought about it, if only for legal guidelines on pay entitlements. I found it all confusing and geared to working in a school environment and felt it did not apply to me." (R: 1710860135 – Survey)

One interviewee made it clear he had not made a particularly conscious choice not to join a union; his decision was therefore very much circumstantial rather than ideological:

"I don't understand the need for that pressure if what they are providing is a perfectly good service, why pressurise people to join up? I didn't like that. So I didn't join up at the time (whilst training) and then I just moved around to being able to do all that reading, obviously given the nature of what we do, there was never any time for it. And since I have never had the need for them, I have never ended up joining up. Which isn't probably the best attitude because obviously just because I haven't needed them in the past doesn't mean that something might not come up in the future that would require them." (R: 1700405703 – Interview)

Politics, ideology and strikes

Five teachers said they were not members for political or ideological reasons. These teachers were keen to distance themselves from union opinions with which they did not associate. Two of the three non-unionised teachers we interviewed used the term "embarrassed" to describe how they felt about unions:

"I did join, but left because I find that they do not represent my political views, and they are an embarrassment (sic). When they spout an opinion in the media, I cringe and quickly point out to everyone I know that they do not represent me." (R: 1711436670 – Survey)

Four respondents mentioned strikes specifically and these sometimes led teachers to leave:

"the reason why I joined the union, or that

particular union, was because they were always proud to say that they had never caused a strike and were not militant in that respect compared to other unions. And I didn't think that calling a strike in the middle of a term and creating a situation which was detrimental to the students would give the right message." (R:1711091283 – Interview)

Given that this interviewee had previously been a union rep this was a particularly difficult personal decision. Another interviewee explained that even though they were in a union which was not on strike they still found their friends "judgemental" when other unions went on strike because people did not recognise the differences between them. They therefore decided to leave, encouraged by the fact that their union began to say things they disagreed with. Another objected in principle to what they called the "groupthink" of collectivism (R: 1697862517 – Survey).

What is it like not to be in a union?

As we have seen, many people who are not in unions plan to join one. However, when asked what they would do in case of an employment dispute or allegation it was clear that some respondents were burying their heads in the sand:

"It doesn't really worry me very much. I am one of those people who can be quite compartmentalised about the things that I think about, so it wouldn't worry me until it became an issue." (R:1700405703 – Interview)

Several other respondents recognised that they had "No idea!" (R: 1697862517 – Survey) what they would do and one responded simply that they would "cry" (R: 1710509929 - Survey).

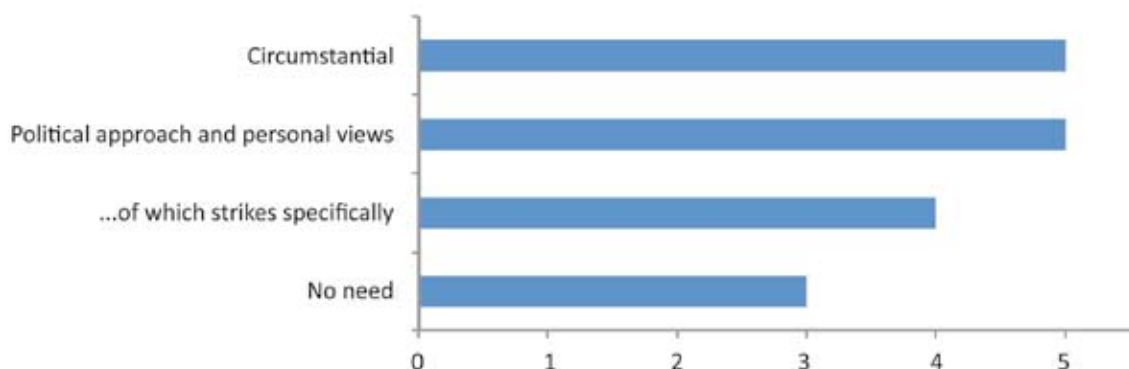
On the other hand, some teachers were confident about being able to manage situations without a union. One argued that "even if you're not in a union employment law still applies to you" (R: 1711436670 – Interview). They felt that given they were "still legally allowed in any allegation meeting, to have a representative with me ... I know people who can actually help me out in that situation". Meanwhile, the respondent who had previously been a union rep felt confident representing himself if need be.

Would they consider an alternative?

One respondent argued that "teachers should have access to the protection offered by unions but without having to sign up to their political agenda" (R: 1711458077 – Survey) and approximately half of non-union members said they would consider joining an alternative non-union organisation. However, this did not quite equate to the majority of non-union members and most were unsure. It seems that some non-unionised teachers are happy as they are or are more likely to join an existing union in the longer term.

In describing what sort of an organisation would appeal as an alternative, interviewees described a range of factors including protection, cost, advice and support on pay. Interviewees who are currently in a union but would prefer an alternative described similar factors, so we deal with both groups together below.

Why aren't you in a union?
Number of respondents referencing (n=19)



Several interviewees used the term “safety net” or “insurance” in describing what they would be looking for:

“I think the main thing is certainly the safety net of having an organisation and people who, if there were ever an accusation, would be there and would be available. That’s certainly why I initially joined the union and I think it is probably one of the biggest factors that keeps me in the union.” (R: 1700429363 – Interview)

“I do just genuinely believe that’s what most teachers, certainly what I’m in the union for, in the main, is actually the legal representation and the legal safety net that they provide.” (R:1703580962 – Interview)

Another described the ideal insurance scheme for them which would be funded through a salary levy:

“I think it would be nice if the Department for Education or your employer would provide the liability cover that the unions provide, as part of – or maybe even take the costs out of your salary as a contribution.” (R: 1716651394 – Interview)

The same respondent then gave a vivid description of the type of organisation they would like to be part of:

“I think there should be a single voice for the teaching profession rather than maybe putting the views of their individual members first, they should be putting forward the best interests of education and looking at cutting edge research and doing things in a positive light, selling the profession to the population as a general and raising the profile rather

than standing up for their political ideals... don’t feel the unions are really what’s needed for education any more, I really do think we should be taking the lead from the medical profession or the General Medical Council and using that as a model for a professional organisation.” (R: 1716651394 – Interview)

The explicit statement that unions should not be centred on members’ interests is a marked contrast to the standard view that unions are there for their members, whether or not one accepts the reform unionism argument that members’ interests are aligned to the interests of education and pupils.

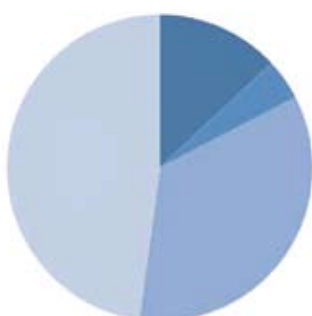
Another interviewee who described their preferred alternative to a union shared the view that an alternative should be less political but believed that instead, a teachers’ organisation should solely focus on representing their members’ interests.

Conclusion

Teachers recognise that unions offer a wide range of benefits and the majority of teachers value all the things that unions do to at least some extent. Nonetheless, factors relating to protection were by far the most important. Several factors were potentially open to free-rider problems in that teachers could benefit from collective bargaining and having a strong collective voice for the profession without themselves joining a union. Furthermore, the widespread availability of information about pay and conditions means that teachers are not dependent on union membership for this either. This highlights the important role of protection since unions’ ability to offer these benefits exclusively to members allows them to overcome free-rider problems and encourage more teachers to join (Moe, 2011 p.29.) This has serious implications since only 78% consider the next exclusive benefit (employment advice) important and only 41% consider it very important. Some teachers were individualistic in that they simply wanted to procure “insurance”; however, not all teachers who sought individual benefit were individualistic in pursuing their ends. Many wanted unions to act collectively in bargaining and in presenting a strong collective voice in order to secure individual benefits through collectivism.

These functionalist teachers, who were individually motivated even if not individualistic, stood in contrast

Consider an alternative? (n=23)



- BLANK 13%
- No 4%
- Not sure 35%
- Yes 48%

to teachers who seemed to see collectivism as an end in itself. Terry Moe argues that in these cases, “other-orientated values, their calculations of costs and benefits depart from pure self-interest, and they may well decide to contribute rather than free ride” (Moe, 2011 p.29). Many of these collectivists believed that by coming together, teachers could improve education through unions. Others desired this end but came from a critical angle, viewing this as something unions should do but did not.

What teachers considered important varied as they moved through their career and teachers became progressively more critical consumers of unions. They often began by making a random or poorly informed choice of union but frequently sought out different types of union support as they changed role or when they began to notice a divergence between what they wanted and what their union offered. This accounted for high rates of inter-union mobility.

Teachers who were not in unions were split between those for whom this was circumstantial and those who made conscious choices based on a perceived mismatch between what unions stood for and what they believed in.

Part 3: Interacting with a union

3.1 What support do teachers ask their unions for?

Fifty two per cent of respondents had called on their union’s support, and 138 told us what type of support they had requested. The type of support they asked for ranged from advice on pay scales over the phone to prolonged representation in legal cases. We asked for an open response answer about what support respondents had asked for and created broad categories from the answers.

Advice and information

When probed in interviews, several teachers who had said in the survey that they had not called on their union’s support said that in fact they had asked for very light touch support (for example ringing for a piece of information). Given that some teachers in the

survey classed this as calling for support, it is possible that there is some under-reporting in this category as a result of varying interpretations of ‘support’.

What is striking about teachers’ descriptions is the sheer range of issues that unions supported teachers with. These could range from straightforward queries about the “technical detail behind a data measure” (R: 1700510781 – Survey) to complex personal situations:

“Enquiries about my rights as a gay teacher who wants to adopt.”
(R: 1710547976 – Survey)

“A student sent a highly inappropriate email to me and I wanted some advice.”
(R: 1709296177 – Survey)

Why did you call on your union’s support?
Respondents referencing top categories (n=138)



“For advice regarding being exposed to rubella whilst pregnant.” (R: 1705137498 - Survey)

Unions also provided a lot of advice and information about capability, both to those facing proceedings and those involved in managing them:

“protecting myself against bullying during capability (not my own, I was the middle manager line managing the person under scrutiny).” (R: 1701633337 - Survey)

Bullying

Bullying was referenced by 16 (12%) of teachers who asked for support. Seven teachers explicitly said that the bullying was by the Head:

“My headteacher was (a) trying to change my job description for a second time in less than two years which would have resulted in further loss of status (but not pay) (b) my headteacher was making it difficult to do my job (eg by reducing technical support time, reducing my non-contact time which was essential because I organised work experience and needed to be able to contact employers and (c) behaving like a bully.” (R: 1724668494 – Survey)

“New headteacher who openly made it clear she wanted to replace all the members of her staff. Staff bullied and those who stayed, myself included had gt difficulties (sic).” (R: 1711610320 – Survey)

“Insidious and covert bullying by my new head, and his frivolous use of disciplinary procedures trying to drive out older staff. I was made very ill by this (sic).” (R: 1706028291 – Survey)

Others referred to colleagues:

“A middle managers’ attempt to undermine my authority in the classroom, by making inappropriate comments to parents and children about me.” (R: 1705264273 – Survey)

“Badly bullied by other team members inc the HOD in a redundancy situation with result I

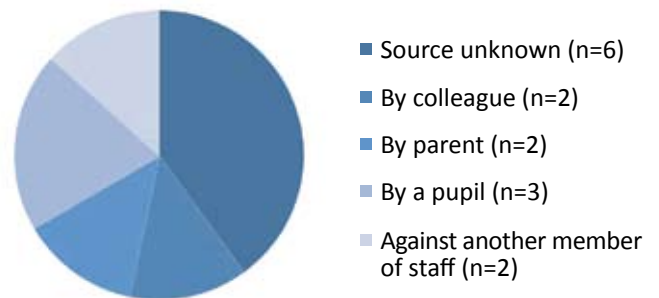
actually lost my job! My confidence was so low as a result I performed badly in selection process. School colleagues were very shocked at the outcome.” (R: 1711102141 – Survey)

“Colleague bullying another colleague.” (R: 1712644600 – Survey)

These responses make it clear how deeply affecting and serious the cases unions deal with can be as well as the importance of receiving quality support.

Allegations

Where did allegations come from? Respondents referencing allegation type (n=13 - some allegations had multiple sources)



Teachers referenced allegations made by pupils, colleagues and parents. Heads and union reps also referred to allegations against other members of staff.

Pay and working conditions

Three teachers referred to pensions and three to threshold. Other issues involved TLR (Teaching and Learning Responsibility), SEN and teaching assistant pay. In the latter case this was on the part of a Head seeking to counter pressure from the LA. Issues with conditions included contact time (four teachers) and concerns about the working environment (two teachers).

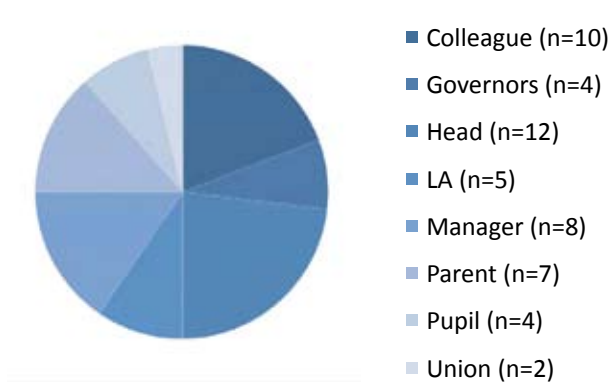
School structure

Structural changes led five teachers to call on their union’s support. In three cases this was due to a shift to academy status leading to questions about staffing and employment rights. In the others it related to a closure and a merger. Given this, we can speculate that the increased pace of academisation under the coalition government may lead to (or already be leading to) an increase in requests for this type of support.

What (or whom) was the source of teachers' issues?

We were able to identify where issues originated from for forty-nine respondents. This showed that unions provide support on issues that come from a range of quarters.

What (or whom) was the source of the issue? Respondents referencing source (n=49 respondents, some issues had more than one source)



Were there any differences between groups?

We compared the support requested by active and non-active union members for the most common types of support (advice/information, redundancy/dismissal/capability/tribunal, bullying, medical, allegation and pay) and found there were almost no differences apart from the fact that more “non-active” union members had asked for advice and information than active (35% compared to 20%) and that more “active” members had sought support on allegations (13% compared to 6%), but these differences were not significant.

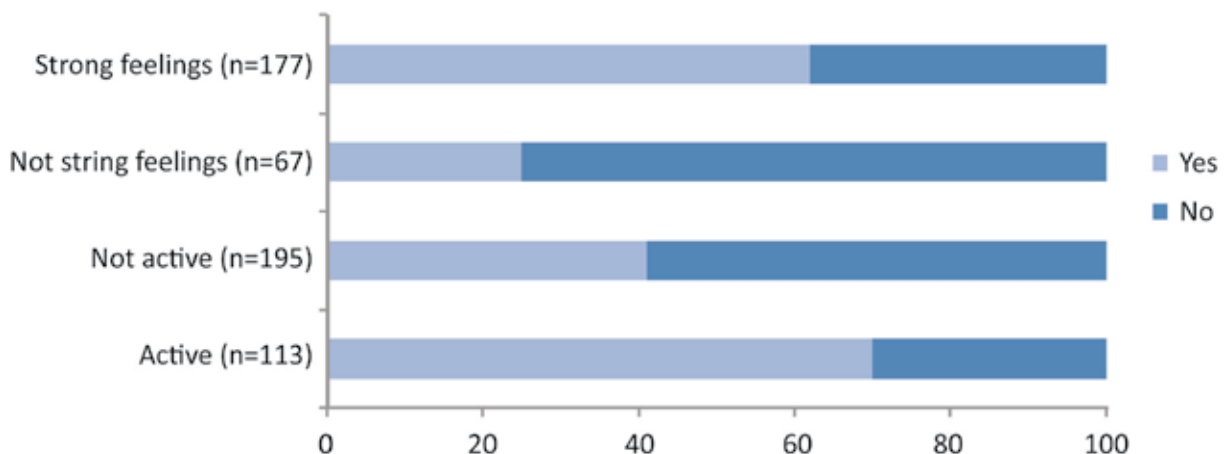
3.2 Who called on their union's support?

Active union members were more likely to call on their union's support than non-active members (70% cf. 41%, $p < 0.001$) as were people with strong feelings about unions compared to those without (62% cf. 25%, $p < 0.001$).

Members of the NAHT and ASCL seemed more likely to call on their union for support (67% and 60%) compared to NUT and NASUWT (44% and 53%); however, given that our survey was circulated by the NAHT and ASCL to members they were in touch with this is not surprising. We can partly compensate for this possible distortion by weighting our sample by union membership.

Union	Teachers in this union who called on support (%)	Population in this union (Certification Office 2010) (%)	Weighted teachers who called on support (%)
ASCL	61	2	1.2
ATL	34	16	5.4
NAHT	67	4	2.7
NASUWT	53	36	19.1
NUT	44	40	17.6
Voice	50	3	1.5
Standardised teacher population who called on support			48%

Called on union support?



3.3 How do unions support teachers?

One hundred and forty teachers told us how their union supported them. Again, we analysed responses and placed them into broad categories that emerged from teachers’ answers.

The most common type of support given was advice or information. This was in line with the most common type of support requested. We can see that many issues did not require heavy-handed or formal involvement; sometimes unions just provided a specific piece of information or referred a member on to a source of support. Only 13 (9%) required a formal legal process or appeal. However, we must bear in mind that this figure only captures responses from teachers who explicitly referenced such support, others gave ambiguous answers such as “supported” (R: 1727444552– Survey) which may or may not have involved legal proceedings.

3.4 How satisfied are teachers with unions’ support?

Overview

We asked teachers how satisfied they were with the outcome and with their unions’ support. Results for both were very similar. We therefore focus on satisfaction with the union’s support.

Satisfaction levels with the support received are clearly extremely high, with 79% either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” and only 13% “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied”.

One teacher argued that “teachers who disapprove of unions would soon change their tune if they personally needed the union’s help and support” (R: 1711457117 – Survey) but this is not necessarily true; it seems that teachers are able to hold anti-union views as well as be very pleased with the support

What did your union do?
(references to top categories from 140 respondents)



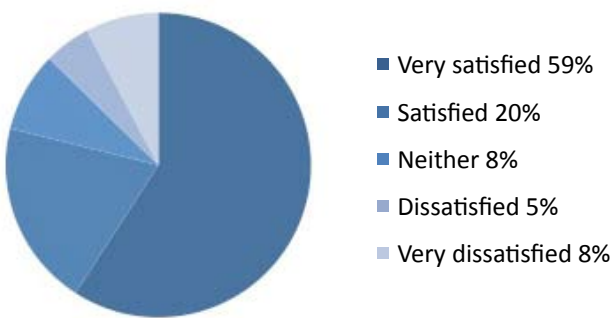
	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Satisfaction with outcome	49%	29%	8%	6%	8%
Satisfaction with union support	59%	20%	8%	5%	8%

they receive. For example, three teachers who were not satisfied with their union’s work overall and did not think their union provided value for money were pleased with the support they received. They can therefore be satisfied on a functional level but critical overall. This again demonstrates why our three categories are fluid archetypes rather than rigid.

Comparing satisfaction across unions

Initially there would appear to be some differences in levels of satisfaction between unions. However, taking into account the number of respondents within each category, these are far from statistically significant. Results do however suggest that contrary to some respondents’ expectations (discussed in 2.2), a larger union is not necessarily better able to provide support.

Satisfaction with union support (n=142)



Why are teachers so satisfied with the support they receive?

Experience and expertise

Teachers were satisfied with the support they received because it was founded on expert knowledge and grounded in experience:

“The NAHT have a very good team of professionals with a lot of expertise.” (R: 1727167115 – Survey)

“the bully was terrified of the union rep because she really ‘knew her stuff’.” (R: 1705207853 - Survey)

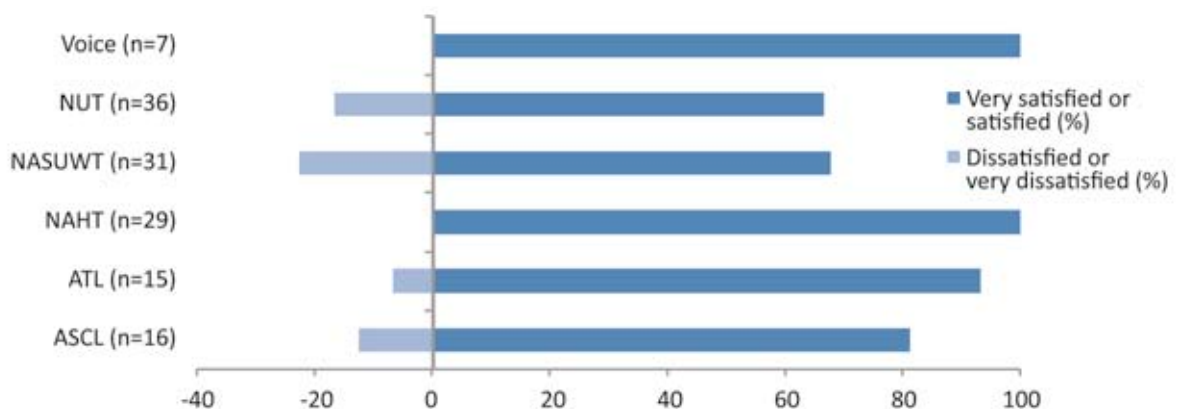
Unions’ specialist knowledge of education means that the support they provide is well tailored to schools’ needs:

“I use their (ASCL’s) hotline... (because they’ve got experience of actual school situations and most HR providers of course just give you general HR employment law advice, which has its own interpretations inside schools because of the way the unions have made the handbooks and the staff rules and regulations really... The support is very, very good because as for ASCL they’re ex-heads effectively, they’re newly retired heads the vast majority of them, so they’ve been there, done it and they do go through quite rigorous training... they’re also honest, so when you ask them a question they don’t know the answer to, they’ll just say, “We don’t know the answer to that, but we’ll find out for you and get back to you”, which is they’re not trying to blag around the issue at all, they’re just being open and honest with you about it ” (R: 1703580962 – Interview)

Local support from reps

Several respondents made reference to the support of local reps or the unions’ networks:

Satisfaction with support by union



“When I was initially with NUT, what I didn’t like was that the support wasn’t present in my school, the support was a complete stranger. What I like about NASUWT is that the support is there, that I can turn to somebody in the building and I can say look, I’ve got a problem and they know exactly who to turn to, whether it needs a caseworker, whether it needs regional office support.” (R: 1711396318 – Interview)

The quality of the support frequently hinged on the skill of the rep:

“The regional rep advised me well - in a way which didn’t aggravate management and allowed them to feel that they had given me support and helped me to improve - even though they hadn’t really. It was the only way that the situation could have been resolved without becoming formal proceedings.” (R: 1705018129 – Interview)

Teachers liked the fact that local support is married to a wider network of expertise (although one referred to the sense of being constantly passed up a chain until you reached someone with the requisite experience):

“Well it’s having people there to know what’s going on because they’re local and that can come up with answers, know the way to go round to get things done but also then has the back-up of the region offices and the full-time officials there and if necessary, using executive members to actually move things on further if that’s the way it needs to go” (R: 1711448224 – Interview)

The emotional importance of support

Teachers’ accounts of the support they received were sometimes poignantly emotional and their gratitude to their union was huge. These accounts speak for themselves:

“The NUT representative gave me moral as well as practical support. If it had not been for him I would probably have had a breakdown.” (R: 1724668494 – Survey)

“most importantly gave me support when I felt depressed.” (R: 1724668494 – Survey)

“Amazing support through Police interviews, guidance and emotional support, especially in face of uncaring LEA, hostile Headteacher and apathetic colleagues.” (R: 1711457117 – Survey)

“They were there whenever I needed to talk.” (R: 1710606226 – Survey)

“It was very important to feel that someone was on my side.” (R: 1704679638 – Survey)

“Life at school became more bearable.” (R: 1711487399 – Survey)

“Without the union support, I felt i was engaged in a solitary battle.” (R: 1711396318 – Survey)

What reservations do teachers have about the support they receive?

Inaction

The most common reason for dissatisfaction was a sense that the union had not done enough and “couldn’t really DO anything - even when the Head broke the Law.” (R: 1718349337 – Survey)

Inaction could leave some teachers bitterly disappointed:

“Now realise I would have had an excellent case against the school.” (R: 1711102141 – Survey)

“I still get pain. I am emotionally upset and angry and no one seemed to think it is the slightest bit significant.” (1711456785 – Survey)

“They were no help in my darkest hour. Barely interested.” (R: 1706028291 – Survey)

These levels of disappointment serve to underline the extent to which teachers rely on their unions and the crucial function they perform.

Reps

We saw earlier that effective and knowledgeable reps are an important factor in securing satisfactory outcomes; however, where they fail to do this it can be very problematic.

“I felt that the Rep was working with the Managers rather than providing me with the independent advice that I was asking for.” (R: 1710643041 – Survey)

“Headteachers have to lead schools through difficult phases and I expect other unions to work with me to secure the least worst outcome. If the rep adopts a bullying and slanderous stance then the process becomes impossible.” (R: 1700515954 – Interview)

Conclusion

Teachers report very high levels of satisfaction and it is clear that unions perform a very important function in helping teachers to feel secure and cared for. Unions do this by providing personal and expert support, often through local or in-school reps. This leads teachers who have called on their union for support to feel very grateful. In the small percentage of cases where unions do let their members down, teachers feel extremely disappointed and at times betrayed. The type of support teachers request varies, ranging from light-touch advice over the phone to extended involvement in life-changing and very sensitive situations.

more often than those who are not, but numbers are too small for us to reach any conclusions.

What issues did they interact about?

Industrial action was by far the most frequent issue about which Heads interacted with unions. Capability related issues were also frequent. Given the high number of teachers who reported interactions relating to bullying it is surprising that this was the least frequent issue.

Under “other”, two Heads mentioned school restructure and three of them local committees. Others described issues to do with staff leaving through retirement or dealing with phased return from sick leave.

How do Heads feel about their interactions?

A large majority (74%) of heads were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their interactions. Both Conservative and Labour heads were satisfied with their interactions (69% and 74%). Non-active union members were much more likely to be dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their union’s support ($p < 0.05$), but over two thirds were still “satisfied” or “very satisfied” and 16% were “very satisfied”.

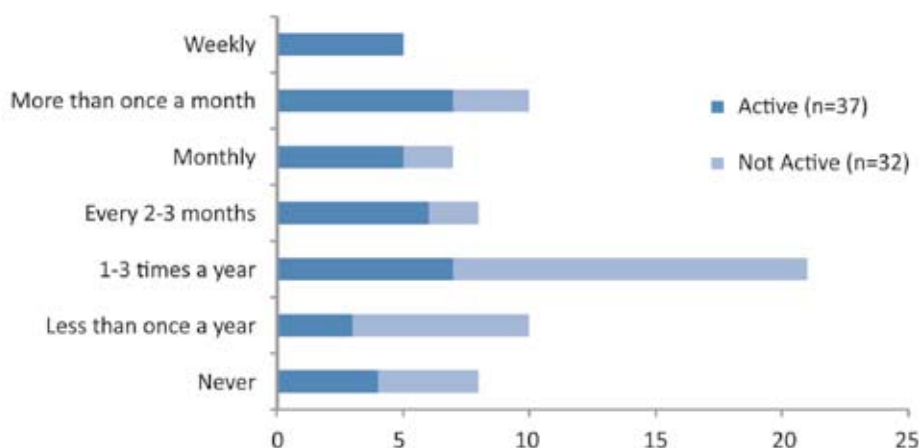
3.5 How do Heads interact with unions?

How often do they interact with unions?

There was huge variation in how frequently Heads interacted with unions, ranging from 18 Heads who interacted never or less than once a year to 22 who interacted once a month or more. Heads who are themselves active union reps seem to have interacted

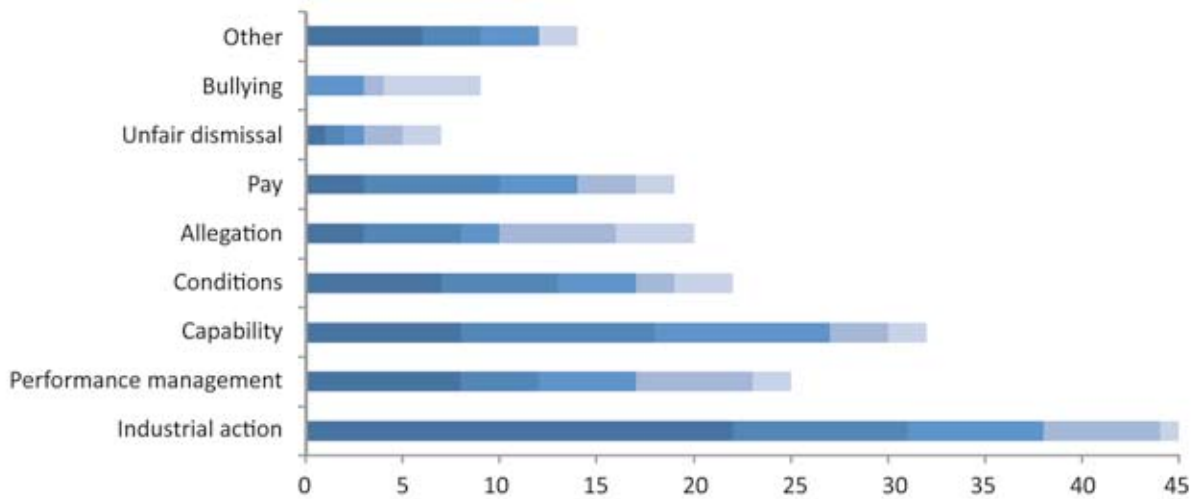
	% of active union members (n=37)	% of non-active union members (n=32)
Satisfied or very satisfied	78%	69%
Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	0%	13%

Frequency of heads’ interactions with union in the last year by active status

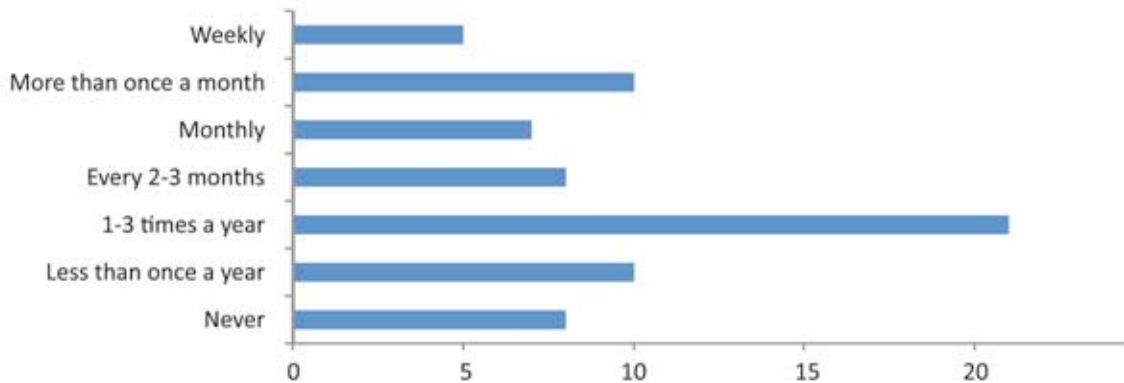


	Industrial action	Performance management	Capability	Conditions	Allegation	Pay	Unfair dismissal	Bullying	Other
■ Most	22	8	8	7	3	3	1	0	6
■ 2nd	9	4	10	6	5	7	1	0	3
■ 3rd	7	5	9	4	2	4	1	3	3
■ 4th	6	6	3	2	6	3	2	1	0
■ 5th	1	2	2	3	4	2	2	5	2

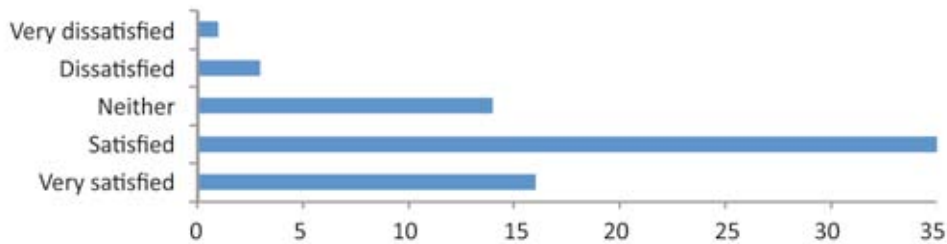
Frequency of heads' interactions with unions in the last year



Frequency of heads' interactions with unions in the last year



How satisfied were heads with their interactions with the unions?



Why were most Heads satisfied with their interactions?

The following word frequency diagram shows the words Heads most frequently used when describing the positive aspects of unions' approaches.

Four Heads referred to the strength of their established relationships with union reps. In several cases Heads' own involvement in unions strengthened their relationships:



“My active membership of my union allows me to interact more successfully with representatives of other unions and to manage industrial relations/staffing issues with confidence and success.”
(R: 1727139665 –Survey)

Heads who were satisfied with their interactions tended to refer to a mutually respectful, balanced and negotiated approach to resolving issues. As one Head put it, the union was “sympathetic to both sides” (R: 1726558426 – Survey). Several Heads explained that the unions recognise that the best outcome for everyone is most likely to be achieved by seeking the “right decision for their member and the school” (R:1724821668 – Interview). A Deputy Head echoed this view in his interview:

“Normally they’re very balanced, they accept reasoned arguments when there’s a case to be answered against a member of staff, and they’re working in the interest of the member of staff to come to a conclusion, which is probably the most humanly human possible in the situation, that someone’s most likely going to be losing their job, so they will represent the main members well, they will try genuinely to

work with the school to make sure it says... It is pleasant as that process can be really, and it has the best outcome for everybody.”
(R: 1703580962 – Interview)

These Heads' accounts display elements of reform unionism, including the “self-management” function described in “Organizing Around Quality” by Kerchner and Koppich. They argue that this function which originates in craft unions involves unions engaging in setting and enforcing standards (Kerchner and Koppich 2004, p.188).

The critical importance of the rep was repeatedly made clear. One Head argued that “A good rep is worth their weight in gold” (R:1700515954 – Interview) and several showed that good reps were able to avoid zero-sum games.

“From a head teacher’s perspective the more useful union representatives on the opposite side of the table in those circumstances are the ones that listen first rather than come straight at you with ‘we need to do this, that’s wrong, that’s wrong’ so on and so forth. The more reflective union representatives tend to get a better deal I think for their members.”
(R: 1724883509 - Interview)

Why are some Heads dissatisfied with their interactions?

As one Head put it, “it all depends on the rep” (R: 1725888000 – Survey), and amongst this “mixed bag” there is the occasional “bad egg” (R: 1703580962 – Interview). Such reps were said to “see the head as the enemy” (1723676812 – Survey) and to be “not really representative of the whole membership” (R: 1704679638 - Survey). Two Heads felt that the reps with whom they interacted were out of their depth and did not have the knowledge or expertise to deal with the situations that arose.

A few Heads resented their interactions because they were “More concerned about their members that (sic) the provision the students get” (R: 1704679638 – Survey). These views lend support to Moe’s (2011) contrasting view that ‘reform unionism’ is a fallacy:

“sick of people ignoring the wider needs of the school. It is all about the members, not about the kids.” (R: 1725888000 – Survey)

“Some Union representatives are better than others. Few have a sense of the importance of the child in the school. They do the profession such damage.” (R: 1704447359 – Survey)

Others made it clear they had faced a lot of difficulties whilst working with unions and their reps:

“The NASUWT are by far the most troublesome and unhelpful union to deal with. At a time when togetherness has rarely been more important in education, their abrasive approach is completely illiogical(sic).” (R: 1724883509 – Survey)

“NASUWT are VERY difficult to work with!” (R: 1724753484 –Survey)

Two Heads were extremely angry because of personal attacks or bullying by union reps:

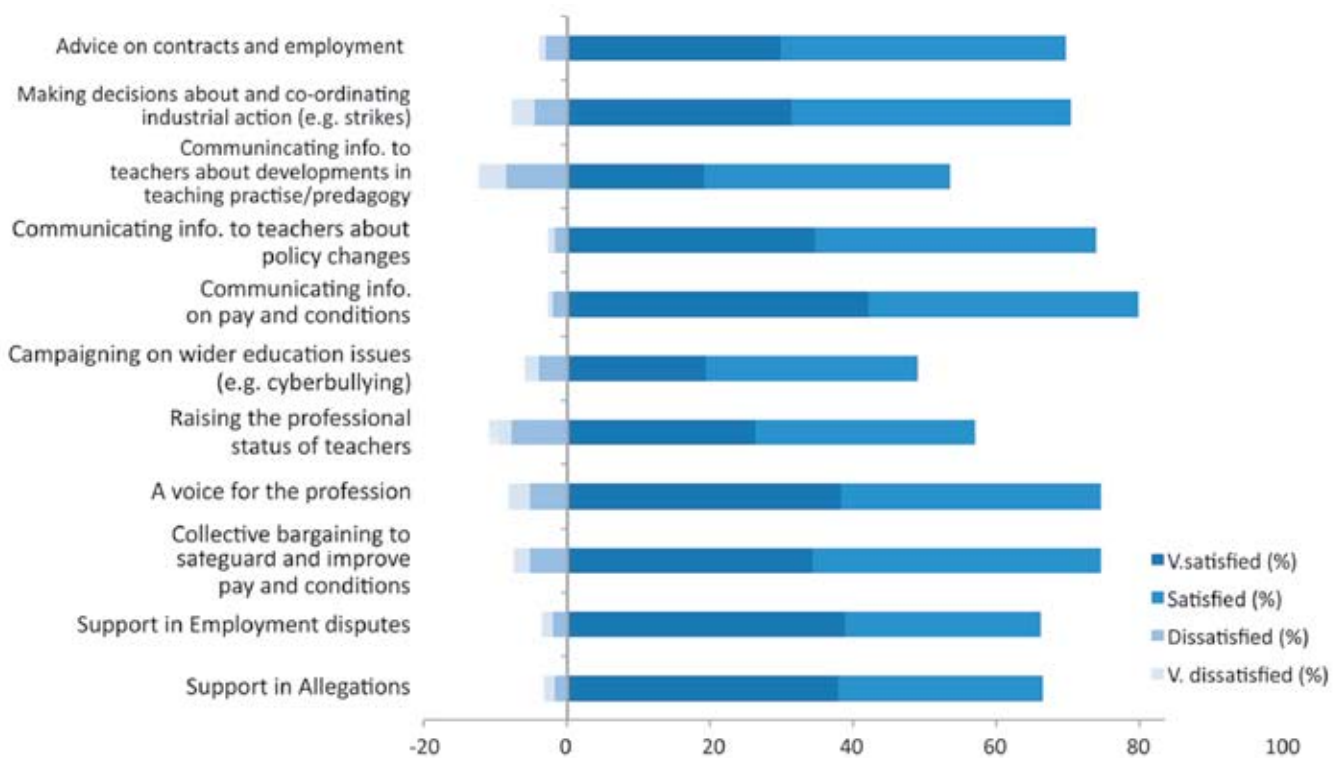
“The NAS regional reps NW feel they have licence to accuse, allege without evidence. They think they can bully governors and fabricate the truth. I have never encountered such unprofessional people. The NUT are not much better. They are completely unaccountable and serve their members poorly.” (R: 1703783267 – Survey)

Conclusion

Levels of satisfaction amongst Heads are high. Unions frequently interact with them in professional and balanced ways and engage in constructive dialogue. Levels of satisfaction are hugely dependent on the union rep whose approach can make or break the relationship, although conversely, reps might well say the same of Heads. What is notable is that there is evidence that where Heads work with skilled reps, interactions do not have to be zero sum games - lending support to the “reform unionism” argument according to which unions can work with management to improve schools and education (Moore Johnson, 2004). However, whilst this can be the case, that is not to say it always is. Where Heads were frustrated by interactions they frequently felt unions had acted in damaging and unprofessional ways. There was widespread evidence of ‘rogue’ reps.

Part 4: Feelings about unions

4.1 How satisfied are teachers with their unions?



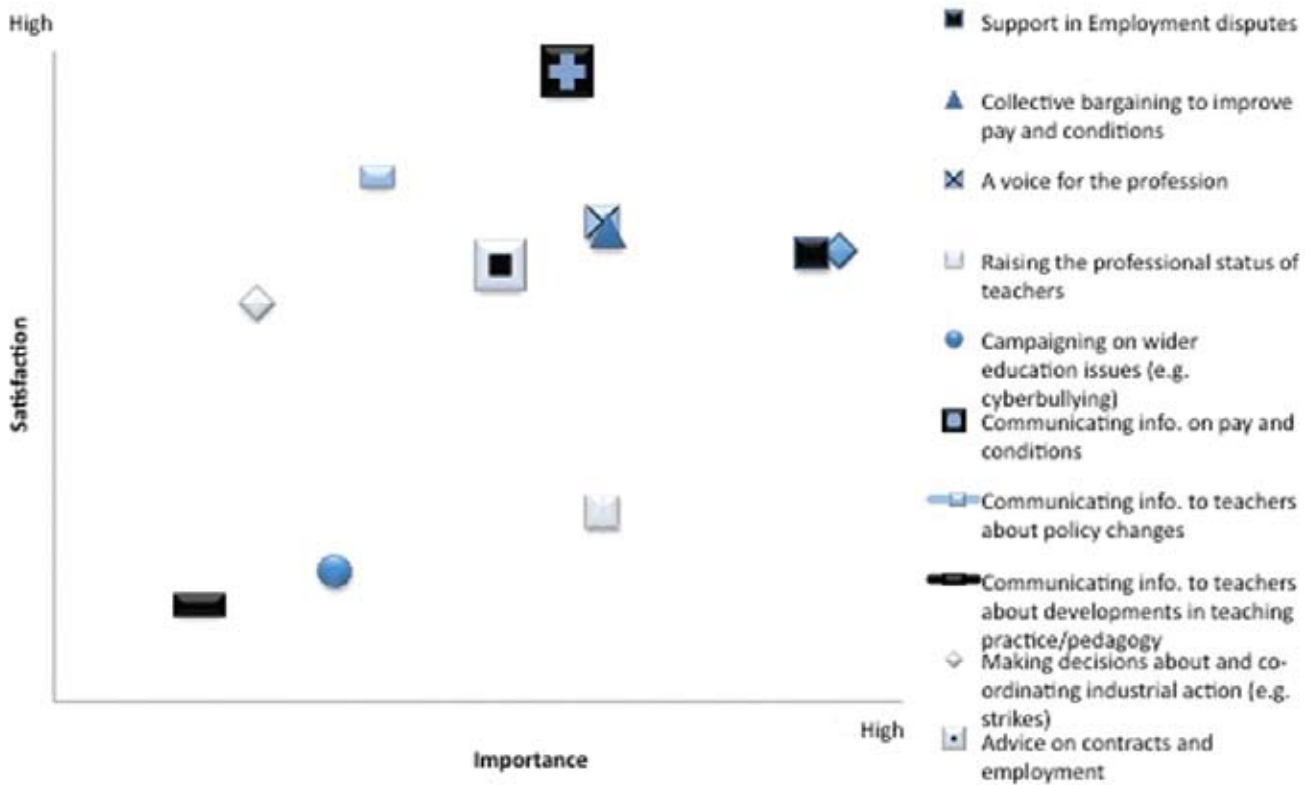
Satisfaction with unions is very high in all categories. Two thirds or more are satisfied or very satisfied with all functions apart from “campaigning on wider education issues”, “communicating information about developments in teaching practice and pedagogy” and “raising the professional status of teachers.” Of those who were not satisfied very few were actively dissatisfied apart from “communicating information about developments in teaching and pedagogy” and “raising the professional status of teachers”, where just over 10% of teachers were “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied”.

Across the different areas, on average 67% of teachers were “satisfied” or “very satisfied”. However this affords equal weighting to areas considered important. The following diagram represents this by showing both the satisfaction and importance scores (calculated as above).

This shows that the two aspects where satisfaction is lowest are also of low importance, suggesting unions are concentrating their efforts in the right areas. However, raising the professional status of teachers is one area where satisfaction is relatively low and importance fairly

	Very important (%)	Important (%)	Not important (%)	Very satisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Neither (%)	Not satisfied (%)	Very dissatisfied (%)	Importance score ^{5, 6}	Satisfaction score ⁷
Support in Allegations	86	12	2	38	29	28	2	2	139	81
Support in Employment disputes	80	17	2	39	27	29	2	2	134	81
Collective bargaining to safeguard and improve pay and conditions	54	30	13	34	40	18	5	2	98	83
A voice for the profession	52	33	13	38	36	16	5	3	97	84
Raising the professional status of teachers	39	39	19	26	31	29	8	3	79	58
Campaigning on wider education issues (e.g. cyberbullying)	23	44	29	19	30	42	4	2	50	52
Communicating info. on pay and conditions	41	43	14	42	38	17	2	1	91	98
Communicating info. to teachers about policy changes	20	45	20	35	39	22	2	1	56	88
Communicating info. to teachers about developments in teaching practice/ pedagogy	20	35	40	19	34	33	8	4	26	49
Making decisions about and co-ordinating industrial action (e.g. strikes)	28	31	38	31	39	21	5	3	36	77
Advice on contracts and employment	41	37	19	30	40	25	3	1	79	80
Average Satisfaction				32	35	25	4	2		

Satisfaction with and importance of aspects of union work



high. On the other hand, it is important to note that “professionalism” is itself a highly contested term and can be interpreted in varied ways (Troman, 1996, p.476). Further research would be needed to clarify exactly what our respondents meant by it. The low importance of some aspects of unions’ work explains why, when we asked teachers the extent to which they agreed with a series of statements, levels of satisfaction were much higher.

Whilst 77% were satisfied with their union’s support, 10% fewer felt that their unions provided value for money. This could partly be explained by a few teachers who were concerned about cost, but very few teachers explicitly mentioned this as a concern.

How does satisfaction vary between groups?

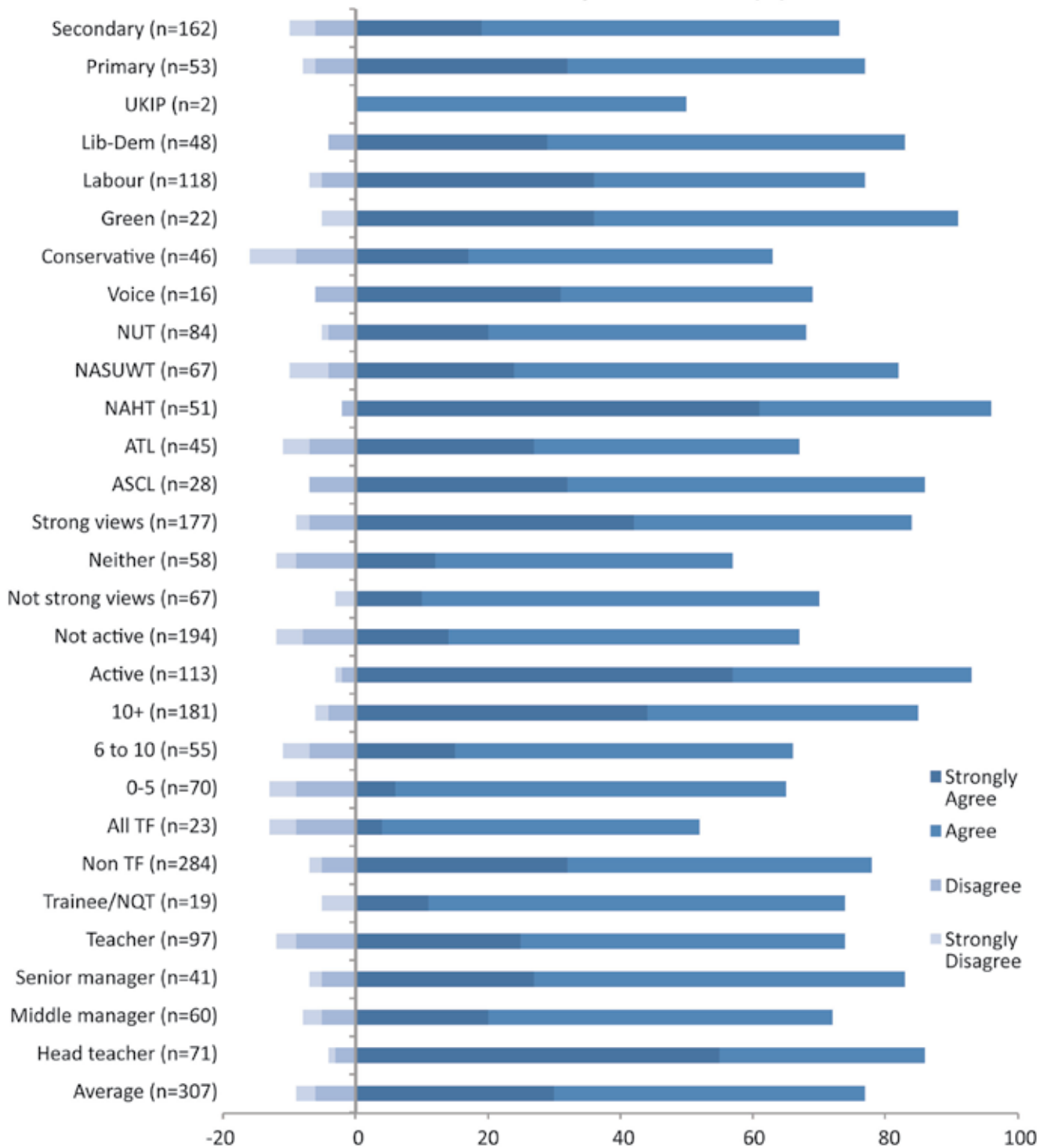
Sixty three per cent of Conservatives agreed that they were satisfied overall compared to 77% of Labour voters, but given our sample size (particularly of Conservatives) this difference was not significant.

Our calculation of satisfaction weighted by union and politics does not affect our findings greatly:

Satisfaction with union	(n)	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neither (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
“Joining a union is valuable and worthwhile”	306	35	37	20	5	3
“Overall I am satisfied with my union’s work”	307	30	47	15	6	3
“My union provides value for money”	307	26	41	22	7	4

“Overall I am satisfied with my union’s work”	Un-weighted	Weighted by union	Weighted by politics
Strongly agree	30	25	28
Agree	47	50	45
Disagree	6	5	6
Strongly disagree	3	3	3

“Overall I am satisfied with my union’s work” (%)



Satisfaction of teachers in independent schools

Our sample of independent schools was too small to identify significant differences between independent schools and state schools, but teachers in independent schools tended to be slightly less satisfied compared

to their counterparts in state schools. We were able to explore independent school teachers’ experiences in more detail during interviews as well as asking them a series of extra questions in the survey. In our survey, just over half said that unions had “some” or “significant influence” in their school, but almost half felt they had

none. One teacher described independent schools as “not very strongly unionised”. Despite the fact that so many did not think their union had influence in their school, 88% said they would receive support if they faced an employment dispute and only 6% (two respondents) did not think they would. Almost two thirds were satisfied with their union.

There was a sense that most support was not tailored to independent schools’ needs and that “they don’t seem to convey a great deal of knowledge about what we do” (R: 1718879704 – Interview).

Several described how, as independent school teachers, they felt marginalised by unions:

“1700422401: None of us received ballot papers despite the fact that we pay our union dues like everyone else.

I: Well that fits actually because my next question was going to be as an independent school teacher, do you feel included in the union movement as a whole?

1700422401: No, no. We feel looked down upon as some sort of pariahs really.

I: What do you think leads you to feel that way?

1700422401: Well because people are convinced that we’ve got an entirely cushy existence because that’s because the pupils who don’t maybe actively throw things in class but then we’ve got a huge amount more of parental pressure than perhaps pertains in some other schools. So the pressures are different and the suggestion that we’ve somehow got an easy life couldn’t actually be further from the truth because most of us go home and work ‘til 10 o’clock at night anyway.”

As we saw earlier, one teacher also explained that he left the NASUWT because he got the impression that “their policy was to close independent schools down” (R: 1714086822 – Interview). He then moved to the ATL.

Most respondents from the independent sector worked in schools which recognised unions and one teacher described the simple process through which

he had taken his school to gain recognition. This was something the ATL had helped him with. Indeed, several independent school teachers described the particular support the ATL provides for independent schools and the section in their magazine focusing on independent schools.

Satisfaction with support in particular areas

A look at satisfaction with particular aspects of unions’ work showed that Conservatives were generally less likely to describe themselves as “very satisfied”, but, given the small numbers within each category, differences were not usually significant. In order to achieve larger numbers within groups we tried combining “very satisfied” and “satisfied”, but, when we did this, differences diminished since many Conservatives simply described themselves as “satisfied” rather than “very satisfied”. Nonetheless we recognise that variation according to politics may be worthy of further research and so include some discussion of our findings in this area. We are also able to show some of the reasons for differences with reference to the qualitative element of our research.

Disputes and allegations

“The thing I best like is that you do get a sense that you are protected, especially if there’s any incidents in school, so those sorts of matters I feel are positive” (R: 1705025499 – Interview). This feeling was widespread with most interviewees referring to protection when asked to name the best things about unions and two thirds describing themselves as satisfied or very satisfied in these areas (40% were very satisfied). Less than 5% were dissatisfied.

One teacher explained that being able to turn to experienced people if needed was “comforting and something that is very necessary, when you are obviously working with so many different people, particularly teenagers” (R: 1700429363 – Interview). For another it was “reassuring to know that if at any point you have any issues within the profession, that you will have a legal team there of advisors for you at any moment in time” (R: 1710864076 – Interview). This sense of reassurance and comfort helps explain why approximately 43% of teachers who were satisfied or very satisfied with unions’ support on allegations and 41% who were satisfied or very satisfied with support on employment disputes had never called on their union’s support. For some, feeling confident that the union would support them

in case of need could be enough for the union to have successfully performed its primary function. This underlines the importance of the unions maintaining their reputation for providing good support.

Variation between groups

Satisfaction with support increased with years of service. The number of teachers dissatisfied increased as well and the number choosing “neither” dropped. This trend is unsurprising given that more years of service meant members were more likely to have had reason to call on support. Linked to this, head teachers and members of the NAHT were more likely to be “very satisfied”. However, higher figures for satisfaction among more experienced teachers were not purely due to the effect of Heads, since teachers with more than 10 years’ experience in all roles had above average satisfaction. Active union members were more likely to be satisfied with support on allegations (or people who had received support with allegations were more likely to become active union members). Teach First teachers were much less likely to be satisfied with their union; this was partly due to there being fewer Teach First teachers with extended periods of service. However, satisfaction was much lower even compared to teachers whose length of service was similar.

Collective bargaining

Archur (2011) suggests that unions in the public sector afford their members an 18% wage premium. It is therefore unsurprising that almost three quarters of teachers said they were satisfied or very satisfied with unions on collective bargaining. On the other hand, the term itself did not seem to be part of teachers’ common parlance. Only six teachers used the term in the whole research project - less than 2%. However, that is not to say that they did not talk about it in other terms. Furthermore, a small number of interviewees talked about collective bargaining as one of the best things about unions:

“The best things is, they do generally try to represent their members’ interests on a large level across the country, the collective bargaining really.”

(R: 1703580962 – Interview)

There was recognition of the importance of collective bargaining in its various permutations across the political spectrum. Even one otherwise highly critical

Conservative teacher in an independent school believed that elements of collective bargaining were valuable:

“There does require to be some sort of organised representation to negotiate with the management should they decide that they want to do something fairly unpopular.”
(R:1700422401 – Interview)

Some teachers recognised the value of the collective bargaining but felt that doing it effectively was a challenge:

“Unions are there to protect teachers’ positions, but not if they’re not doing their job...and that’s often quite easy for ... you know, in collective bargaining discussions for, you know, if unions are seen as protecting the rights of people without any thought for what they’ve been employed to do then there’s obviously a problem.”
(R: 1710547976 – Interview)

The same respondent went on to argue that whilst historically unions had been very successful in collective bargaining, now was a period of particular challenge and that “we seem to have ground to a halt,” however this was not necessarily considered the fault of the union.

Whilst the vast majority of teachers were happy with collective bargaining, it proved slightly more divisive than individual support in allegations and disputes. Seven per cent of teachers were actively dissatisfied. In some cases the challenge came from the left with unions criticised for “giving in too easily” such that unions “haven’t really represented their less well-off members as well as they might have done, particularly the younger teachers”(R:1726486468 – Interview.) Others, particularly Conservatives, argued that union demands were unrealistic and that for one, this made their “blood boil” because:

“It’s totally delusional really about what’s going on in the country. Everyone deserves a 10% pay rise, even though there’s pay cuts going on here, there, and people losing jobs, it’s quite depressing really”
(R: 1703580962 – Interview)

Another was angry that:

“the whole staff board is covered in literature saying, “Do you know about your pensions and dah, dah, dah”, there’s no balanced argument about why it’s being done or why it has to be done.” (R: 1705151771 – Interviews)

As we argued in our foreword, since shared hardship historically galvanised collectivism, gradual improvements in pay and conditions may partly explain the above dissent. One respondent explicitly made this argument:

“I don’t know if the usefulness of the unions have been, I’m not saying that they weren’t ever useful, but are they that useful anymore? Because if you go back 20 years, teaching what did seem to be a significantly worse jobs to be in. I think they’ve done a lot, and I’m grateful for that, but I don’t know if it’s still needed.” (R:1711436670 – Interview)

It might be argued that this explains why some teachers focus on unions purely as a means to procure individual support and protection as opposed to a collective activity. That said; this tendency is still largely confined to the margins given that most teachers remain conscious of the benefits to be derived from collective bargaining.

Variation between groups

Our survey revealed that Conservatives were less likely to be very satisfied with the unions on collective bargaining and industrial action compared to Labour teachers ($p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$). Here we find a huge discrepancy of over 25%, in contrast with the findings of Moe in the United States who found that 81% of

Republicans were satisfied with collective bargaining, and who argued that this was one of the main reasons for Republicans’ relatively high levels of overall satisfaction with unions. He argues that “Republicans like what they are getting from their local unions – valued services and collective bargaining” (Moe 2011, p.91).

Raising the professional status of teachers

This was one of the areas in which teachers were least satisfied with their unions. Just over 50% of teachers were satisfied or very satisfied and only a quarter were very satisfied. Over 10% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. This came as a surprise given that it is an area of significant interest for unions who frequently refer to the “professional integrity of teachers” and “threats to teachers’ professionalism”.

Ten teachers used the term ‘professional status’ or similar in their open answers. The challenge for unions is that the meaning of ‘raising the status’ varies between teachers. Some wanted unions to “raise the status of teaching as a valued profession by supporting their members and the education of our young people” (R: 1710606226 – Survey), others to “help us to be taken seriously” (R: 1692909516 – Survey) others to “raise the profile” (R: 1705484726 - Survey and R: 1705402836 – Survey) and others to “combat negative press” (R: 1711396318 – Survey). These need not be contradictory but nonetheless make satisfying teachers’ objectives complex.

Some teachers felt that if unions were to improve public perceptions of teachers then they needed to ensure that standards within teaching were high:

“So maybe the unions don’t help in that respect by defending teachers who are bad

Industrial action	(n)	Very satisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Neither (%)	Not satisfied (%)	Very dissatisfied (%)
Conservative	46	11	24	46	11	9
Green	22	41	50	9	0	0
Labour	117	39	38	15	3	3
Lib-Dem	49	27	53	12	4	4
Collective bargaining						
Conservative	46	17	37	35	7	4
Green	23	48	30	17	4	0
Labour	117	38	46	9	3	3
Lib-Dem	49	33	47	12	8	0

either and that probably hasn't helped the public perception."

(R: 1710547976 – Interview)

This view from a teacher who described themselves as “left wing” shows that concerns came from all quarters, which perhaps explains why raising professional status was such an area of challenge. It again links to Troman’s remarks on professionalism as “socially constructed, contextual and highly contested” (Troman, 1996, p.476.)

It was not unusual for teachers to feel that the approach taken by unions was damaging to teachers’ professional status. On the Conservative front, the teacher who earlier criticised unions’ actions in collective bargaining felt that:

“it doesn't do our profession any favours at all watching some of the rhetoric which comes out of some of the general secretaries' mouths, it just looks as if the whole profession is stuck in the past.”

(R: 1703580962 – Interview)

One head teacher argued that:

“We will never have a high status profession until the unions stop defending the indefensible! Bullying of colleagues by union members is all too common as is threatening industrial action.”

(R: 1704447359 – Survey)

These teachers echoed the views of Moe who argues that:

“unions do not promote professionalism in public education. They do the opposite-ensuring that, in the formal structure of schooling, teachers are treated like blue-collar workers and that the value of their professionalism cannot be realized.”

(Moe, 2011 p.205)

However, other teachers saw campaigns and strikes on pay and pensions as ways of defending status and in so doing, improving education:

“Continuing campaigning on preserving and enhancing the profession so that we are well

looked after so that the profession can do its very best for children and young people. Fail to look after us and you will fail children in the long run.”

(R:1723698818 – Survey)

Teachers like this one clearly have an approach to unionism that goes well beyond functionalism.

Collective voice, campaigning and improving education

About three quarters of teachers were satisfied with the collective voice provided by unions and less than 10% were dissatisfied.

Most teachers appeared to link “collective voice” to collective bargaining and representing the needs, interests and status of teachers. They tended to describe the importance of “standing up” for teachers and “teachers’ needs”. It is therefore no coincidence that on our diagram of importance and satisfaction, the points representing collective bargaining and collective voice overlap. As we saw above, for some, fighting for what benefits teachers was the same as improving education since, “what’s best for teachers”, equates to “what’s best for education”. This perception is a driving force in collectivist views, and is captured in the words of the NASUWT’s General Secretary Chris Keates. She describes the “inextricable link between teachers’ pay and working conditions and the provision of high quality education” (The Guardian, 2012). Eberts et al. also describe this view, stating that:

“more attractive employment compensation and working environments might attract more able teachers. The higher levels of student achievement that better, more skilled teachers make possible thus could offset, at least to some extent, the higher costs.”

(Eberts et al., 2004, p.54)

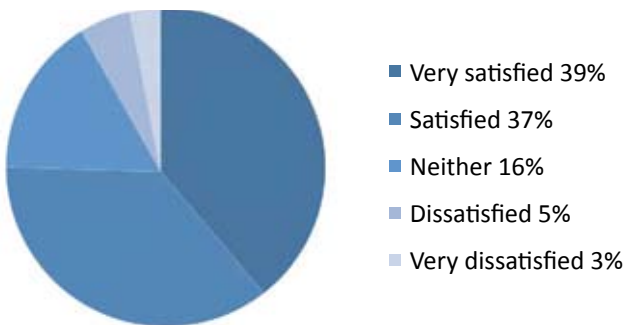
On the other hand, teachers themselves do not all think that this is case. Even though three quarters of teachers were satisfied with unions as a voice for the profession, only half thought that education in the UK was better as a result of their work.

One interpretation would be that whilst teachers are satisfied with the input (what unions are doing) they are unsatisfied with the outcome (how they are affecting education). However, less than half

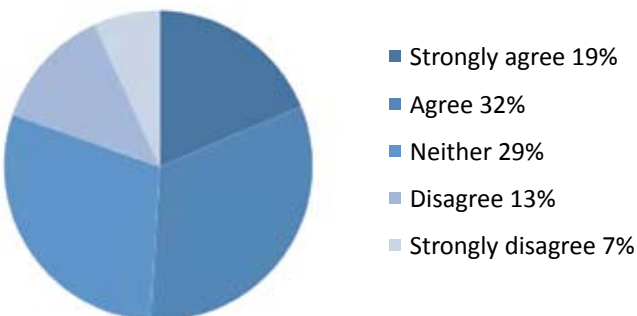
were satisfied or very satisfied with campaigning, suggesting low levels of satisfaction with the input too. That said, less than 10% were dissatisfied (and there is a possibility that our choice of example in “cyberbullying” distorted results, despite having been chosen for being apolitical and so less polarising). For the most part, dissatisfied teachers did not consider campaigning important and most of those who thought it was important were also satisfied.

Therefore for a significant number of teachers, unions could be successful in providing a collective voice without being good at campaigning or improving education, and yet they were still satisfied overall, suggesting that the latter two functions were not what most teachers expected from their union. It also seems that unlike Keates, these teachers do not think that by successfully providing a collective voice and bargaining unions necessarily improve education.

A voice for the profession (n=303)



“Education in the UK is better as a result of the unions’ work” (n=307)



Criticisms of how unions impact on education

When teachers talked about how unions campaigned and represented teachers their criticisms tended to relate to a lack of attention to broader policy issues, perceived intransigence, a sense that unions were not accurately reflecting their members’ views, that they were supporting teachers who would be better out of the profession and being overly party political.

Lack of attention to broader issues

Teachers’ comments on campaigning frequently referred to Ofsted, the curriculum and structural reform of schools such as “everyone being forced to become an academy” (R: 1712108075 – Survey). A lot of these teachers wanted unions to be more proactive or to broaden their focus:

“I think the unions should be playing a much bigger role than they are. I think if we lose ... if you lose the argument about teaching quality to the Department for Education or other bodies within education a massive opportunity is being lost in order to perhaps improve or to add to public perception of teachers.”

(R: 1710547976 – Interview)

“they should be striking more on philosophical grounds against some of the vandalism that’s taking place in the Department for Education, by the Secretary of State in terms of the curriculum and the examination system.”

(R: 1700440053 – Interview)

There was little or no praise for unions’ activity in these broader areas.

Being representative

Some teachers felt that unions were not always “fighting for the same things the teachers in the schools want” (R: 1714900550 – Survey):

“1700429363: In terms of the political voice, they have definitely got the ability and the capacity to be passing on messages and

Respondents who considered campaigning important (or very important)	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither	Not satisfied	Very dissatisfied
Campaigning on wider education issues	11	4	3	1	1

obviously at the moment that is something that is very relevant. I am not convinced how well that is always happening. ... I think partly because the main teachers who are voting and communicating through unions are perhaps those that have previously reacted to things quite early on, and so I am not sure they are always representative of the body. Although they technically are, because you can vote and be involved, I think the people who participate will sometimes be a bit more extreme and on the edges. So it isn't always the average voice or the voice of the whole organisation

I: Okay yes, so how does that sort of make you feel about them as a result?

1700429363: I guess in some ways frustrated because it seems like it is being devalued a little bit and I haven't come across an alternative to the unions, for having that voice and that ability to get a group of teachers together in a school where you can have a collective identity that is respected and listened to. So it seems a little bit at times like a wasted opportunity that it is very much a needed service, but I am not sure it is being used as well as it could be. And I think the potential is perhaps being lost and diluted a bit."

Many teachers were concerned that only "the most vocal" (R: 1704370746 – Survey) were being represented, and they therefore felt highly alienated. They described a feeling that "these people have absolutely nothing to do with me" (R: 1700422401 – Interview). Several teachers who wanted unions to "represent the majority opinion not just the small minority that choose to vote" grappled with "how you get the majority to put a cross in the box" (R: 1710642921 – Survey). They were concerned that "if 70% of members don't vote on an issue it really can't be that important to them and yet still the view of the 25% is stated as all our views" (R: 1700510781 – Survey). Some suggested that unions should overcome this issue by making greater use of technology to communicate with members for example through online surveys.

Intransigence

Intransigence was often thought to impede change. One teacher argued that "nobody ever reforms or nobody ever improves". They went on to describe the

fact that "there's no want to reform a system or to improve a system, it's actually everything is fine as it is and we shouldn't discuss anything at all" as "quite depressing" (R: 1703580962 – Interview). Teachers like this one argued that unions should be more open to reform and that education could not improve if unions acted as blockers. One felt that "there ought to be a voice for teachers who actually want to raise standards in teaching" (R: 1700422401 – Interview).

Protecting bad teachers

Unions were criticised for keeping bad teachers in the profession and therefore impacting "on the school's ability to drive forward standards for pupils" (R: 1701538913 – Survey). Three of the teachers we interviewed commented on this problem and argued that it was damaging to education, pupils and the public perception of teachers:

"They seem to significantly impede change and they seem to keep bad teachers in a job; that really winds me up. I would much rather have a very serious and professional working environment where frankly, if you are not good enough, you are fired quickly."
(R: 1700405703 – Interview)

"People who should not be in the profession being protected to the hilt by their union against the interests of the people they're trying to serve ie. the children."
(R: 1700440053 – Interview)

Variation between groups

Differences between Labour and Conservative voters on the potentially political sides of unions' work were large, but differences were not significant on collective voice and campaigning given our sample size: 58% of Conservatives were satisfied or very satisfied with collective voice and 40% on campaigning, compared to 77% and 50% respectively of Labour teachers. However, there was a huge difference in the extent to which teachers believed "education is better as a result of unions' work".

Seventeen per cent of Conservatives compared to 58% of Labour teachers agreed that education was better as a result of union's work ($p < 0.001$.) Given the strikingly low figure amongst Conservatives and the fact that 50% disagreed with the statement, it is surprising that overall satisfaction rates remained relatively high (63%).

This may suggest that for these teachers, the primary function of unions was not to improve education but to look after their needs. In other words, how the unions affected education was not the determining factor in their overall views on the unions. This may explain why they are also so much more satisfied with collective voice than campaigning on wider education issues. In the US, Moe describes satisfaction on political aspects of unions as the “mirror image” of satisfaction on collective bargaining (Moe, 2011, p.91). Whilst in our study Conservatives did not exhibit the very high rates of satisfaction with collective bargaining reported by Moe amongst Republicans, rates of satisfaction in this function remained higher than for improving education and campaigning, which may be comparable proxies for Moe’s political aspects (see right hand side).

Providing information

As we have seen, satisfaction on communication of policy and pedagogy was relatively low, whilst satisfaction on communicating information on pay and conditions was high. Little reference was made to the latter in open responses or interviews, and given that this information is generally freely available on the internet we shall not spend undue time on it.

Several teachers referred to useful continuing professional development (CPD) they had received through their union. One head teacher even referred to it as “the best quality training” (R: 1724821668 – Interview) and several mentioned the magazine they receive from their union, saying that they found it useful, although many said they did not “bother” reading it. Other teachers said they would like more information on pedagogy and more CPD opportunities. Several also felt that unions should be taking a greater role in research:

“I would say that the emphasis should be much more involved in research and distributing information to teachers about

*what they can do to be better at their job.”
(R: 1710547976 – Interview)*

In his article “Teacher Union Support of Education Research and Development”, Maris Vinovskis (2004, pp.167-185) explores some of the challenges inherent in research conducted by unions. He describes the tendency for it to be sidelined in favour of more pressing concerns as well as the challenge of maintaining impartiality. These concerns were not raised by our respondents but may explain the relatively low priority and satisfaction that they expressed.

4.2 What are teachers’ feelings about unions?

In our survey we asked teachers to respond to a series of statements about unions.

These questions give an idea of teachers’ attitudes to unionism. A breakdown of different groups’ feelings on these questions can be found in Appendix 6. For the most part they followed the inter-group patterns described in earlier sections. Over half of teachers had strong feelings about union membership (i.e. disagreed that they do not have strong feelings). These teachers could have either strongly positive or strongly negative views, so this does not on its own tell us about how positive teachers’ views on unions were, although as we saw in our sample characteristics, those with strong views tended to be Labour supporters (or Green/Lib Dem). As we have discussed, numbers within this group are likely to be high given that respondents were self-selecting. We therefore asked this question primarily to identify bias in the sample.

Almost 45% of teachers agreed that “it is every teacher’s duty to join a union”. Given that this statement could be interpreted as somewhat coercive, low rates of agreement are not surprising; indeed, it is perhaps more

	Overall I am satisfied with my union’s work (%)	Satisfied or very satisfied with collective bargaining (%)	Satisfied or very satisfied with collective voice (%)	Agree or strongly agree that education in the UK is better as a result of the unions (%)	Satisfied or very satisfied with campaigning on wider... (%)
Conservatives	63	54	58	17	40
Labour	76	84	77	58	50
Political gap	13	30	19	41	10

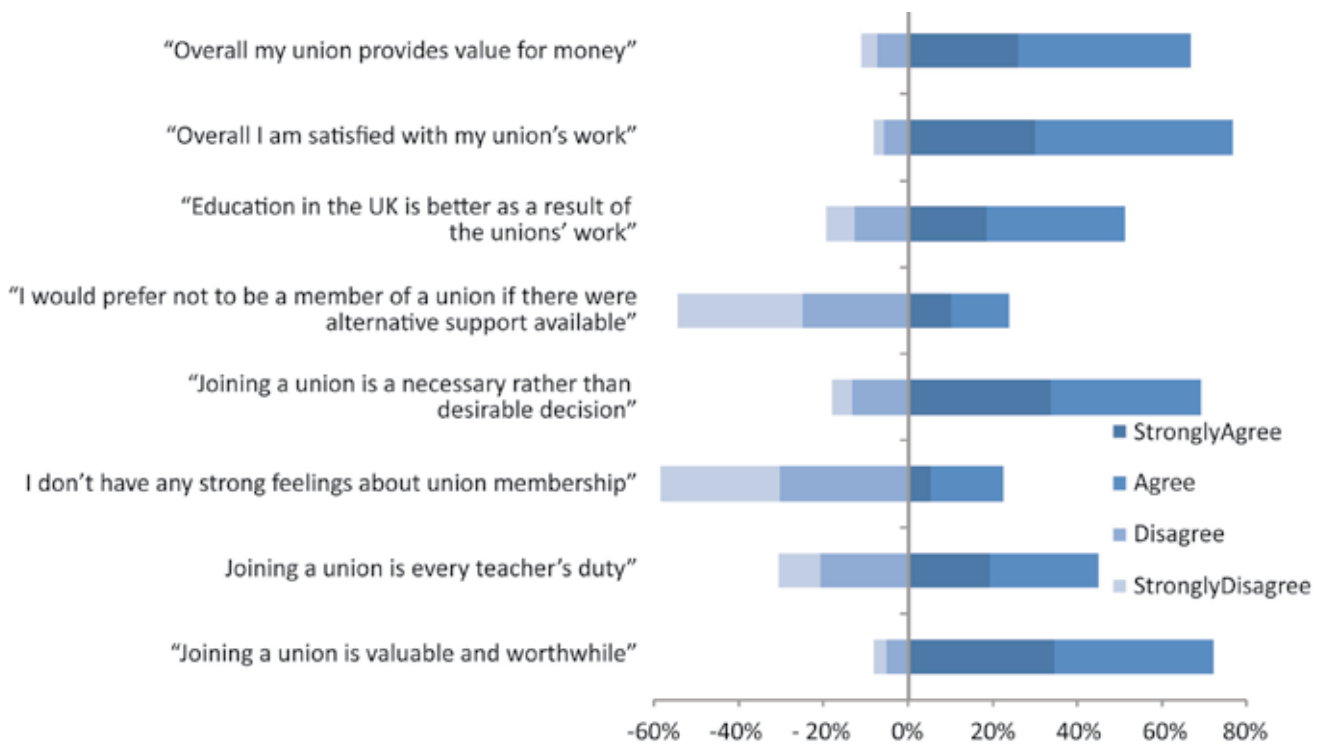
surprising that agreement was so high, particularly given that when Moe (2011) asked a similar question in the US, only 16% agreed. However, this statement may have captured the feeling we have described amongst some teachers that the purpose of unions is collective solidarity to pursue shared (or individual) interests.

Sixty nine per cent agreed or strongly agreed that “joining a union is necessary rather than desirable”. However, the meaning of this is unclear since union membership could be considered “necessary” for a

variety of reasons, thus requiring an end to different things to make it “unnecessary” (i.e. no more threat of allegations, no risk of unfair dismissal or no more ‘threat’ of academies).

Around a quarter of teachers thought an alternative to unions would be preferable. Almost another quarter were unsure. As we saw in 2.4, when we asked teachers who were not in unions why they would or would not join an alternative, those who were unsure tended to say that it would depend on what the alternative

What are teachers’ feelings about unions?

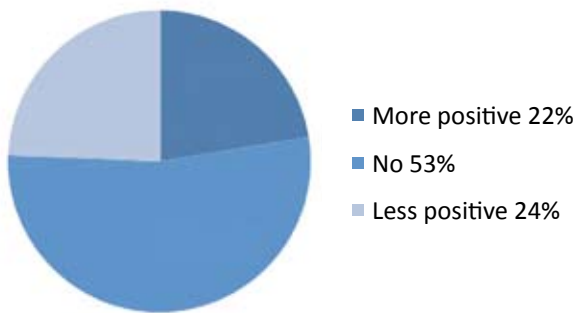


	(n)	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neither (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
“I don’t have any strong feelings about union membership”	303	5	17	19	30	28
“Joining a union is every teacher’s duty”	305	19	26	25	21	10
“Joining a union is a necessary rather than desirable decision”	306	34	35	13	13	5
“I would prefer not to be a member of a union if there were alternative support available”	305	10	14	22	25	30

was and that they would need more information. Union members who gave an “unsure” response may have had similar feelings. It is unsurprising, given that teachers are so satisfied with the way unions provide for their priorities, that they are not in a rush to leave unless absolutely certain that alternatives would do as good a job.

4.3 How have recent events affected teachers’ views?

Have there been any changes in your feelings towards the unions over the course of the last year?



After a busy year for unions, most teachers’ views remain unchanged. However, almost a quarter became either more or less positive. Active union members views were particularly likely to become more positive and vice versa. Conservatives’ views tended to become less positive.

	(n)	More positive	No change	Less positive
Active	113	36%	54%	10%
Not active	195	14%	53%	33%
Conservative	46	4%	54%	41%
Green	22	50%	36%	14%
Labour	119	24%	55%	21%
Lib-Dem	49	27%	53%	20%
UKIP	2	0%	50%	50%
ASCL	28	4%	57%	39%
ATL	47	19%	45%	36%
NAHT	51	33%	61%	6%
NASUWT	66	27%	52%	21%
NUT	84	24%	55%	21%
Voice	16	19%	56%	25%

More positive

For some teachers, pension cuts and the Coalition’s policy changes had led to the re-emergence of a sense

of shared interest and a greater feeling of ‘we’re in this together’. These teachers felt that unions’ “role has increased in importance due to Government decisions” (R: 1709953035 – Survey) and were therefore grateful to unions for “working hard to protect me against the work Gove is doing to destroy schools in England” (R: 1716676647 – Survey).

For many teachers, recent events had made them much more aware of the work done by unions and some had become more engaged in unions’ work, going out “...to blow my whistle and fly my flag” (R: 1710927423 – Interview).

These teachers’ feelings echoed those reported by Mac an Ghail who in 1992 described how:

“Over the last decade, the cumulative effect of industrial action, central State under-funding, rationalisation of institutional provision, contractual changes, decreased professional autonomy over curriculum policies and the intervention of outside agencies into schools has been to raise teachers’ awareness of work processes and conditions.”
(Mac an Ghail, 1992, p.194)

Our findings suggest that it may be taking rather less than a decade for teachers’ views to change under the current government.

Several welcomed unions’ proactive stance, stating that:

“I feel it’s positive that the union is being perceived as speaking out and sticking up for teachers and being proactive. I think that’s very positive. On the other hand to me it exposes the fact that we haven’t done that for other things and we’ve let massive changes in the curriculum go through.” (R: 1705025499 - Interview)

Teachers in different roles had become more engaged. One “key officer” had “become more involved in arguments and trying to persuade colleagues to take action” and one Head, who described himself as “not normally a militant person” decided to go “on strike for the first time in November over the pension’s issue”. He “welcomed solidarity across the unions over that thus far” (R: 1724883509 – Interview). This Head was also pleased with unions’ proactive stance on SATs (although he felt this victory was far from won).

The process of reaching a decision on, and escalating to, strike action was important in securing (or not securing) teachers' support. Several particularly liked the day of action in which different unions came together in the "March for the Alternative". Another explained that they liked how:

"they didn't dive straight into a strike. They took a bit more time about it. They tried other avenues which I think possibly, from people that I spoke to that aren't involved in teaching, it gave some of the public a different perception of it. It wasn't always just 'oh the teachers have gone on strike, how dare you, we've got to look after our own children for the day'. So because the union have tried other avenues, anyone who had any interest in it understood that they tried everything they could and that was the last resort."
(R: 1710927423 – Interview)

Several welcomed clear communication about industrial action. Whilst we saw earlier that many members of the ATL were frustrated by strike action, others were pleased they had had a chance to vote and that their vote had been acted upon.

Less positive

Whilst some teachers felt unions had kept the public on board by trying every avenue before going on strike, other teachers' positions were diametrically opposed. They felt strikes were "too soon, too aggressive" (R: 1701627242 – Survey) and that unions had behaved in a "militant way", alienating the public through "unnecessary strikes" (1726540013 – Survey). Many felt that although unions should stand up for teachers' rights, they should seek ways of doing this other than industrial action. This explains the large discrepancy between the importance accorded to "collective bargaining" and "the right to industrial action" noted in 2.1. Teachers were also divided in their feelings about the NASUWT's "work to rule" or "action short of a strike" policy. Some thought it was a creative and constructive way of campaigning, others that it was unrealistic or even "divisive and pointless" (R: 1725888000 – Survey). Teachers argued for a range of alternatives:

"I think certainly writing letters and raising points and being involved in negotiations is very positive and to be surveying the union

members to see what their opinions are, to gather data... And I think taking that forward and kind of proposing actions and explaining there will be consequences if they were not followed through, I have no objection to that but I think that going on strike really has to be the very, very last resort."
(R: 1700429363 interview)

"I think that unions in other countries are a lot more... Without calling strikes they are a lot more into the negotiation of things and they can get more out of negotiations instead of militant situations and strikes."
(R: 1711091283 interview)

"think professional dialogue would be the way forward; the strong single coherent voice for the teaching profession would be much better." (R:1716651394 interview)

"there are other courses that could be taken such as refusing to work outside of school hours, no after school clubs, giving up any unpaid responsibilities etc."
(R: 1723377472 – Survey)

For many teachers whose opinions had become more negative, the unions' approach had clearly played into their existing concerns:

"Unions are always negative, in bed with politicians, usually (sic) left wingers, are archaic, outdated models, full of sold-out advertising and unnecessary pound-store products, intolerable (sic) of different view points, closed minded, greedy, failing to see the bigger picture, hijacked by special interest or the Labour party and the NUT certainly hasn't achieved much in the past 15 years compared to other unions internationally"
(R: 1726045408 – Survey)

In some cases, the problem was that teachers wanted something different to that which their union aimed for, as with one teacher who criticised the NUT for behaving "like a trade union, not like a professional association" (R: 1725567298 – Survey).

Following in the vein of teachers who felt that unions were an unrepresentative voice for the

profession, several argued that the decision to strike was unrepresentative of what teachers wanted and criticised action based on a low turnout which they considered damaging to pupils.

Despite the fact that some teachers commended the way unions had communicated information about strikes, some felt the exact opposite, arguing that they were not “communicating adequately to the public about why they are on strike” (R: 1700407117- Survey) or that schools and head teachers had not received adequate information about what was happening. The latter was an unusual view given that we saw in 3.5 that industrial action was the issue about which Heads had most frequently interacted with their union and that they were largely satisfied.

Many teachers resented the fact that unions were pressuring them into voting one way or another in ballots and sending texts to tell them what to do:

“I don’t personally believe we should feel pressured to compromise the experience of students for our own specific and selfish gain... I don’t like feeling hoodwinked into action that I think is detrimental to the students that I teach.” (R: 1718879704 – Interview)

Teachers sometimes felt a real tension between the need to act collectively and their desire to do what they felt was right individually. In some cases teachers considered leaving (or did leave) their union as a result, whilst others broke the strike. As the possibility of further strike action in 2012 draws closer, such tensions will no doubt be exacerbated.

Part 5: Conclusions

Collectivists, Functionalists and Critics

Our findings reveal very high satisfaction amongst teachers but passion limited to a minority. We are left in no doubt as to the valuable work unions do: it is clear that unions often go about their work very skilfully and that teachers are overwhelmingly and often profoundly grateful for this. On the other hand, we also note the frustration that arises in cases where things are done badly, as well as a sense amongst a minority of teachers that unions are intransigent and obstructive. Whilst satisfaction was high with unions' actions at a teacher and school level, political and policy behaviour was more divisive and tended not to be as widely supported. However, this had only a limited impact on overall satisfaction since it was not most teachers' priority and most were mainly interested in "support" functions.

The categories of "collectivists", "functionalists" and "critics" allow us to summarise the attitudes we encountered. Unlike previous categorisations of teachers (Mac an Ghaill, 1992 and Troman, 1996) they are based exclusively on attitudes to unions. Members of each category are therefore heterogeneous in their ideology, their views on education and their attitudes to management. Whilst we recognise that categorisation risks "reifying what is a loose classification system" (Fullan, 1982), and that teachers did not necessarily fit neatly into one category, we hope that they will be helpful in describing the general positions occupied by our respondents. They may also serve as starting points for further research.

Collectivists tended to have strong feelings about unions. They believed unions were improving education and that being a member is every teacher's duty. For them, coming together in a union is

something that contributes to the greater good and/or is crucial to defending workers' rights. As one head teacher put it, "the word union by definition means collective" (R: 1724883509 - Interview). Around a quarter of the teachers we spoke to fell clearly into this category. Most collectivists were very satisfied but not all, perhaps because some would like their union to be more proactive¹¹.

Functionalists were satisfied with unions but did not think unions were improving education. They knew what they wanted from their unions and got it. As far as they were concerned, they wanted to be part of an organisation which would back them up, fight their corner and protect them. Unions could and did do this. As one teacher put it, "the only reason most teachers are actually in unions is because of legal protection and liability in terms of a class, or they're in any difficulty in terms of their employment contracts. It's not to do with the politics behind it" (R: 1703580962 – Interview). As was the case for this teacher, most functionalists did not think campaigning on education was "very important"; nonetheless, for the most part they thought joining a union was valuable and worthwhile. Around a quarter of the teachers in our sample were distinctly functionalist¹². For some, support and protection was secured individually, as with the procurement of insurance, whilst for others it was secured collectively, although this collectivism was a means rather than an end. Functionalists were split as to whether they would prefer an alternative. Approximately a third were so satisfied they would definitely stay put, whilst a third would prefer an alternative. The rest were undecided.

Critics did not think that education in the UK was better as a result of the unions. Most were in unions but would prefer not be if there were an alternative.

As one put it “They do the profession such damage” (R: 1704447359 – Survey). A few were not members of unions but would consider an alternative. Despite being critics these teachers were not all actively dissatisfied; like the functionalists, the main priority for many was to get support and they got it. They tended to be critical of aspects of unions’ work other than support and protection and events like strikes frequently displeased them. Critics made up approximately 15% of our sample. At their extreme were the 5-10% of our sample who were critics and were actively dissatisfied or who had already left (or never joined) unions. These teachers were concerned about the impact of unions on education, disliked their political stance and criticised them for defending teachers whom they felt would be better off leaving the profession.

These three characterisations provide archetypes and, as should be clear, teachers tended to float between them. We have therefore resisted the temptation to label individual respondents and be too specific in analysing the groups’ composition – the borders of the categories are far too fuzzy. However, we hope that these conceptualisations will provide a way of understanding the range of attitudes we encountered. The proportions indicated refer to their prevalence in our sample rather than the general population, and further research is needed to generalise from our findings. Our hope is that by providing and describing these categories we might facilitate further enquiry.

Moore Johnson has argued that (in the US) “Recently, some of the most pitched labour disagreements have centred not on labor-management differences but on the competing agendas of the progressive and conservative flanks of the union”. Our findings show that strikes and changing government policy since the 2010 general election have affected the views of around half of our respondents. As these events continue to unfold we might expect tensions to increase as unions attempt to accommodate the diversity of the profession and the often conflicting demands of teachers.

Notes

¹Figure excludes independent schools but includes nurseries. Many retired or ex-teachers remain in unions after leaving teaching.

²Includes all academies.

³a) In our question about role, respondents could select as many options as they wanted. We recorded the most senior role selected.

b) Teach First in this graph represents respondents who only selected Teach First and no other role, the next graph shows the total number who selected "Teach First"

c) Number of Head Teachers here is based on a question later on in the survey as six respondents initially selected Head Teacher but did not select it when they arrived at the section for Head Teachers.

d) A problem with the survey meant that the option "Teacher" was not available to the first 70 respondents. Thirty five per cent of respondents from then on were teachers.

⁴264 respondents considered support on allegations "very important". 260 considered "a strong collective voice" "important" or "very important."

⁵The sum of percentages for "very important" multiplied by 1.5, "important" by 1 and "not important" by -1.

⁶Importance scores are for the nearest comparable- there are minor differences in some categories e.g. "The right to industrial action (e.g. strikes)" cf. "making decisions about and co-ordinating industrial action (e.g. strikes)." See chapter 1.1.

⁷The sum of percentage for "very satisfied" multiplied by 1.5, "satisfied" by 1, "dissatisfied" by -1 and "very dissatisfied" by -1.5.

⁸Although unions are already beginning to do this to some extent; the ATL were keen to send out our survey to members but were concerned about flooding their members with online surveys since there had been several recently.

⁹"All teachers must belong to a union."

¹⁰Although 38% agreed that "all teachers must pay fees to a union" - but not necessarily join, an option we did not give people.

¹¹26% of respondents felt that joining a union was every teacher's duty, believed that they had improved education and had strong feelings about unions. 15% of them were also very satisfied.

¹²27% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their union but did not think education was better as a result of unions. 23% met this condition and did not think that campaigning on education was very important and 18% that joining a union was valuable and worthwhile. 10% of them would not prefer an alternative if available, 7% would.

¹³12% of respondents actively disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that education was better as a result of the unions and would rather not be in a union if an alternative were available. 5% met these conditions and were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. 3% of respondents were not in a union and would consider an alternative/are currently unsure.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey

Welcome

This survey is about perceptions of teaching and school leaders' unions. It should take less than 5 minutes to complete.

Our research aims to find out:

- Why teacher and school leaders join unions
- How teachers and school leaders chose which union to join
- How teachers and school leaders feel about their union membership
- How head teachers feel about their interactions with unions.

It is the first stage in a large study which will also include detailed interviews which you may be able to get involved in.

All the data we gather will be made public. By completing this survey you agree that LKMco can store and distribute the data you provide in anonymised form. LKMco agrees to abide by the MRS code of conduct throughout the research (www.mrs.org.uk/standards/codeconduct.htm). The research has been funded by edapt UK (www.edapt.org.uk) but is being carried out independently and impartially by LKMco (www.lkmco.org.uk).

Who are you?

1. Are you a... (you can pick more than one)

- Trainee teacher/NQT
- Teacher
- Teach First teacher (participant or ambassador)
- Middle manager
- Senior manager

- Head teacher
- I am not a teacher

2. How many years teaching experience do you have?

- 0-5
- 6-10
- 10+

3. What phase do you work in?

- Primary/junior/infant school
- Middle school
- Secondary school
- FE

4. Is your school a...

- Community/LA school
- Faith school
- Academy
- Free school
- Grammar school
- Independent school

5. Which region do you teach in?

- North East
- North West
- Midlands
- Greater London
- South West
- South East
- Wales
- Scotland
- Northern Ireland
- Other

6. How would you describe your school's local area?

- Rural

- Suburban
- Urban

7. Which of the following political parties do you think most closely reflects your political views at the moment?

- Liberal Democrat
- Green
- Conservative
- Other
- UKIP
- Labour

8. Are you...

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

9. Do you consider yourself...

- An active union member
- A non-active union member
- I am not a union member

Non-union members

10. Why have you not joined a union?

11. What would you do in case of an employment dispute or allegation?

12. Would you be interested in joining an organisation that provided some of the support offered by unions without it being a union?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Why?

You and unions...

10. Which union are you a member of?

- NUT
- NASUWT
- ATL
- ASCL
- NAHT
- Voice
- Other (please specify why)

11. Have you ever changed the union you were a member of?

- Have you ever changed the union you were a member of?
- No
- Yes. If so why?

12. What were your main reasons for joining a union?

	Very important	Important	Not important/ at all important
Providing information about policy changes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing information about pay and conditions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wanting a strong collective voice for the profession	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support in case of allegations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employment advice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Campaigning on wider education issues (e.g. cyberbullying)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The right to participate in industrial action (e.g. strikes)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Collective bargaining to improve pay and conditions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing information about developments in teaching practice and pedagogy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Raising the professional status of teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support in case of employment dispute (e.g. competency proceedings)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If other, please specify

13. What factors did you consider in choosing which union to join? (please select all that apply)

- Special offers
- Which union had most members in your school
- Free first year
- Agree with their approach to their work
- Cost
- Who the union rep was at your school
- Friend or colleague's recommendation
- Agreed with their political standpoint
- Other (please specify)

14. How satisfied are you with the way your union performs the following roles?

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Supporting teachers in cases where allegations are made against them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Supporting teachers in employment disputes (e.g. competency proceedings)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Collective bargaining to safeguarding and improve teachers' pay and conditions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communicating information to teachers about developments in teaching practice and pedagogy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communicating information to teachers about pay and conditions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communicating information to teachers about policy changes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing a voice for the profession	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advice on contracts and employment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Campaigning on wider education issues (e.g. cyberbullying)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Raising the professional status of teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Making decisions about and co-ordinating industrial action (e.g. strikes)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
"I would prefer not to be a member of a union if there were alternative support available"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"Joining a union is a necessary rather than desirable decision"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"I don't have any strong feelings about union membership"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
“Education in the UK is better as a result of the unions’ work”	○	○	○	○	○
“Joining a union is every teacher’s duty”	○	○	○	○	○
“Overall my union provides value for money”	○	○	○	○	○
“Overall I am satisfied with my union’s work”	○	○	○	○	○
“Joining a union is valuable and worthwhile”	○	○	○	○	○

16. Have there been any changes in your feelings towards the unions over the course of the last year?

- No
- Yes: They have become more positive
- Yes: They have become less positive

If yes, please explain...

17. What is the most important thing unions should do?

18. Have you ever called on the support of your union?

- Yes
- No

The support you received from your union

If you have called on the support of your union we would be very grateful if you could tell us a little bit more about the experience. We can assure you your responses will be kept anonymous.

19. Why did you call on your union’s support?

20. What did your union do?

21. What was the outcome?

22. How satisfied were you with... (see next page)

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
The outcome	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your union's support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Why?

13. Are you a head teacher?

Yes

No

Your experiences as a head teacher

These questions refer to your experiences as a head teacher working with union reps and unionised staff.

14. How frequently have you interacted with teaching unions and union reps in the last year (other than through your own union membership)?

Less than once a year

1-3 times a year

Every 2-3 months

Monthly

More than once a month

Weekly

15. Which issues did you interact with teaching unions/reps about most (rank up to 5 issues you have interacted about)

	1 (most frequent)	2	3	4	5 (least frequent)
Allegation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bullying	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Competency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unfair dismissal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Performance management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conditions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Industrial action	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pay	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If other, please describe:

16. How satisfied have you been with your interactions with unions?

- How satisfied have you been with your interactions with unions? Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

Why?

17. Any other comments about your interactions with unions?

18. Any other comments about your interactions with unions?

28. Are you a teacher in an independent school?

- Yes
- No

Independent school teachers

19. How much influence do you think unions have over pay and conditions in your school?

- Significant influence
- Some influence
- No influence

20. Does your school recognise unions?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

21. Would you expect to receive union support if you faced an employment issue in school?

- Would you expect to receive union support if you faced an employment issue in school?
- Yes
- No
- Not sure

22. Who would you go to if you faced an employment issue in school?

Interview?

***33. We would like to carry out some follow-up interviews.**

Please leave us your contact details if you would be willing to participate.

Your answers to this survey will still be kept anonymous

- Yes
- No

34. Contact details:

Name:

Email:

Phone-number:

Appendix 2: Interview consent form

What are the aims of the research?

The aim of this research is to provide rigorous, robust and impartial information about teachers' and Heads' perceptions of teaching unions.

The key questions are:

- Why do teachers and Heads join unions?
- How do they decide which union to join?
- What are the main things they want from their union?
- How satisfied are they with the way unions perform their roles?

Additionally, the study will explore:

- Heads' views on their interactions with unions
- The views and experiences of teachers who are not members of unions
- Whether there have been any recent changes in perceptions of unions

Who is carrying out the research?

The research is being carried out as an independent study by LKMco (www.lkmco.org.uk) and has been funded by edapt UK (www.edapt.org.uk.)

What will happen with the information?

Interviews will be recorded and transcribed and this information kept securely. Data from interviews will be used in anonymous and non-attributable form in a report to be produced by LKMco. It may also be used as the basis for media reports and academic publications.

edapt UK will use the findings (in anonymised and non-attributable form) for the purposes of market research and communications.

Anonymised and non-attributable transcripts will also be kept and made publicly available for other researchers who want to explore the findings further. LKMco will follow the Market Research Society's code of conduct and do its utmost to ensure that findings are gathered and presented impartially and communicated accurately.

Please tick

Consent

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information above and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.
3. I agree to the interview being recorded and transcripts being made
4. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications, reports and marketing materials.
5. I agree that my data can be stored and shared (after it has been anonymised) and may be used for future research.
6. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of participant: _____ Signed: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 3: Semi structured interview framework

General

- What do you think are the best and worst things about the unions?
- Is there anything additional or different you would like the unions to be doing?

If have said they would prefer not to be in union:

- “You said in the survey that you would prefer not to be in a union if there was an alternative. Why is that?”

Non-union members

- Were you always clear that you didn’t want to be in a union? What factors affected this?
- How much of a concern is lack of union representation to you?

Reasons for joining:

- Why was ... (factors selected) important?
- If you were referring to your reason for joining a union you changed to later, was your original choice based on the same or a different reason?
- What was it about the political standpoint/ approach that appealed? What was it you liked about the union rep?
- What do you think shaped your opinion of the unions? How did you form your opinion about the unions’ standpoint/approach (what were your sources of information)?

Changing union

- What was the catalyst for the change (e.g. moving into leadership might be the event but what contributed to that decision)?

Situation in independent schools

- Do you have union reps within your school?
- Do you feel that as an independent school teacher you are included in the union movement as a whole?
- How well do you think unions fulfil the needs of independent school teachers?

Experiences of heads

- What is it about unions’ approach/way of working that leads you to feel satisfied (or dissatisfied)?
- How has recent industrial action affected your satisfaction with the unions?

Experiences when calling on support

- What did you like/not like about the way you were supported?

Impact of recent events

- Why has your opinion changed/not changed? (probe as to why this was important to them)

Appendix 4: Interview respondent characteristics

Respondent	Active?	Years’ service	Role	Phase	School Type	Political views	Feelings about unions
1724821668	Yes	10+	Head	Primary	Community	Green	Strong
1711448224	Yes	10+	Middle	Secondary	Community	Labour	Strong
1711396318	Yes	10+	Teacher	Secondary	Academy	Labour	Strong
1711436670	Non member	6 to 10	Teacher	Secondary	Community	BLANK	BLANK
1711091283	Non member	0-5	Teacher	FE	Community	Conservative	BLANK
1700405703	Non member	0-5	TF	Secondary	Community	Labour	BLANK
1700487854	No	0-5	Trainee/NQT	Primary	Community	Labour	Not
1705025499	No	10+	Teacher	Secondary	Community	Labour	Neither
1726486468	No	10+	Head	Primary	Community	Labour	Strong
1714086822	Yes	10+	Middle	Secondary	Indep	Labour	Strong
1718879704	No	10+	Middle	Secondary	Indep	Lib Dem	Not
1700429363	No	0-5	Middle	Secondary	Academy	Lib Dem	Not

Respondent	Active?	Years' service	Role	Phase	School Type	Political views	Feelings about unions
1710547976	Yes	6 to 10	Teacher	Secondary	Academy	Labour	Not
1710864076	No	6 to 10	Trainee/NQT	Secondary	Community	BLANK	No
1710927423	No	0-5	Trainee/NQT	Secondary	Community	Labour	Neither
1703580962	Yes	10+	Senior Manager	Secondary	Academy	Conservative	Not
1705151771	No	10+	Teacher	Primary	Community	Conservative	Not
1716676647	No	10+	Teacher	Primary	Community	Conservative	Strong
1700440053	No	10+	Senior Manager	Secondary	Academy	Labour	Strong
1700422401	No	10+	Middle	Secondary	Indep	Conservative	Neither
1724883509	Yes	10+	Head	Primary	Community	Labour	Strong
1710994037	No	6 to 10	Teacher	Secondary	Indep	Conservative	Strong

Appendix 5: Importance of different factors in union membership by group

Excluding “support in allegations” and “employment disputes” which 90% or more of all groups considered important.

Collective bargaining			
Active?	n	% Important	% Not important
Active	111	96	4
Not active	189	80	20
All	300	86	14
Strong feelings?			
No	64	69	31
Neither	58	88	12
Yes	172	92	8
All	294	86	14
Politics			
Conservative	46	67	33
Green	23	91	9
Labour	116	91	9
Lib Dem	44	82	18
UKIP	2	50	50

All	231	84	16
Union			
ASCL	27	70	30
ATL	46	70	30
NAHT	51	96	4
NASUWT	64	91	9
NUT	81	94	6
Voice	15	67	33
All	284	86	14

Raising the professional status of teachers			
Active?	n	% Important	% Not important
Active	112	92	8
Not active	186	74	26
All	298	81	19
Strong feelings?			
No	64	61	39
Neither	57	74	26
Yes	171	90	10
All	292	80	20

Politics			
Conservative	46	61	39
Green	23	83	17
Labour	116	86	14
Lib Dem	44	80	20
UKIP	2	50	50
All	231	79	21
Union			
ASCL	28	89	11
ATL	46	63	37
BLANK	15	80	20
NAHT	51	92	8
NASUWT	63	79	21
NUT	80	85	15
Voice	15	67	33
All	298	81	19

Union			
ASCL	28	89	11
ATL	46	67	33
NAHT	51	96	4
NASUWT	64	86	14
NUT	80	93	8
Voice	15	60	40
All	284	86	14

Information on pay and conditions			
Active?	n	% Important	% Not important
Active	110	94	6
Not active	190	82	18
All	300	86	14
Strong views?			
No	58	88	12
Neither	65	69	31
Yes	171	91	9
All	294	86	14
Politics			
Conservative	46	74	26
Green	23	91	9
Labour	115	87	13
Lib Dem	45	82	18
UKIP	2	50	50
All	231	84	16

Advice on employment			
Active?	n	% Important	% Not important
Active	113	85	15
Not active	187	77	23
All	300	80	20
Strong views?			
Neither	57	75	25
No	64	69	31
Yes	173	86	14
All	294	80	20
Politics			
Conservative	46	67	33
Green	22	77	23
Labour	116	82	18
Lib Dem	44	73	27
UKIP	2	100	0
All	230	77	23
Union			
ASCL	28	89	11
ATL	43	67	33
NAHT	50	94	6
NASUWT	63	76	24
NUT	80	78	23
Voice	15	87	13
All	279	80	20

The Right to participate in industrial action (e.g. strikes)			
Strong feelings?	n	% Important	% Not important
No	63	41	59
Neither	57	40	60
Yes	175	75	25
All	295	61	39
Active?			
Active	113	78	22
Not Active	188	51	49
Politics			
Conservative	46	24	76
Green	23	74	26
Labour	117	74	26
Lib Dem	45	56	44
UKIP	2	50	50
All	233	60	40
Union			
ASCL	28	25	75
ATL	46	63	37
NAHT	51	55	45
NASUWT	63	68	32
NUT	81	80	20
Voice	16	0	100
All	285	60	40

Campaigning on wider education issues			
Active?	n	% Important	% Not important
Active	110	85	15
Not active	182	60	40
All	292	70	30
Strong feelings?			
No	61	49	51
Neither	56	59	41
Yes	169	80	20

All	286	69	31
Political party			
Conservative	45	44	56
Green	23	78	22
Labour	117	74	26
Lib Dem	42	64	36
UKIP	2	50	50
All	229	66	34
Union			
ASCL	28	68	32
ATL	45	56	44
NAHT	50	88	12
NASUWT	61	66	34
NUT	80	71	29
Voice	13	46	54
All	277	69	31

Providing a collective voice for the profession			
Active?	n	% Important	% Not important
Active	113	98	2
Not active	188	79	21
All	301	86	14
Strong views?			
No	57	82	18
Neither	64	72	28
Yes	174	93	7
All	295	86	14
Politics			
Conservative	46	67	33
Green	23	91	9
Labour	117	91	9
Lib Dem	44	84	16
UKIP	2	50	50
All	232	85	15

Union			
ASCL	28	79	21
ATL	46	67	33
NAHT	51	94	6
NASUWT	64	91	9
NUT	81	95	5
Voice	15	60	40
All	285	86	14

Years experience			
0-10	119	66	13
10+	171	89	11
All	290	80	11

Information on policy changes			
Active?	n	% Important	% Not important
Active	111	92	8
Not active	185	71	29
All	296	79	21
Strong feelings?			
No	58	74	26
Neither	62	66	34
Yes	170	85	15
All	290	79	21
Politics			
Conservative	45	58	42
Green	22	77	23
Labour	115	83	17
Lib Dem	43	81	19
UKIP	2	100	0
All	227	77	23
Union			
ASCL	28	100	0
ATL	46	65	35
NAHT	50	92	8
NASUWT	63	76	24
NUT	79	78	22
Voice	14	64	36
All	280	80	20

Information on developments in teaching and pedagogy			
Active?	n	% Important	% Not important
Active	111	75	25
Not active	183	48	52
All	294	58	42
Strong feelings?			
No	61	43	57
Neither	57	42	58
Yes	170	68	32
All	288	58	42
Politics			
Conservative	43	44	56
Green	23	52	48
Labour	113	66	34
Lib Dem	41	49	51
UKIP	2	50	50
All	222	57	43
Union			
ASCL	27	74	26
ATL	44	43	57
NAHT	50	92	8
NASUWT	61	41	59
NUT	79	57	43
Voice	13	38	62
All	274	58	42
Role			
Head teacher	71	85	15
Middle manager	59	37	63
Senior manager	37	54	46

Teacher	92	49	51
Trainee/NQT	18	78	22
All	277	58	42
Years of experience			

0-10	122	46	54
10+	171	67	33
All	288	58	42
Primary	117	61	39
Secondary	203	44	56

Appendix 6: Feelings about unions

Satisfaction by aspect of union's work and group

Allegations	(n)	Very satisfied (% ¹⁴)	Satisfied (%)	Neither (%)	Not satisfied (%)	Very dissatisfied (%)
All teachers	308	38	29	28	2	2
Head teacher	68	57	29	12	1	0
Senior manager	40	43	28	25	0	5
Middle manager	60	37	27	35	2	0
Teacher	95	33	31	31	3	3
Trainee/NQT	18	17	28	56	0	0
(Other TF ¹⁵)	14	14	43	43	0	0
All TF	23	13	35	52	0	0
Non TF	277	41	29	26	2	2
0-5	67	15	37	48	0	0
6 to 10	54	20	35	41	2	2
10+	178	54	25	17	2	2
Active	111	64	19	14	2	1
Not Active	189	24	35	37	2	2
Strong feelings	174	51	23	22	2	1
Neither	57	19	40	33	2	5
Not strong feelings	64	20	38	42	0	0
ASCL	25	40	44	4	4	8
ATL	46	30	26	41	2	0
NAHT	51	65	22	14	0	0
NASUWT	63	37	37	22	2	3
NUT	84	32	27	37	2	1
Voice	16	50	13	38	0	0
Primary	106	50	17	32	0	1
Secondary	182	32	38	26	2	2

Employment disputes	(n)	Very satisfied (% ¹⁴)	Satisfied (%)	Neither (%)	Not satisfied (%)	Very dissatisfied (%)
All teachers	308	39	27	29	2	2
Head teacher	70	63	24	11	1	0
Senior manager	41	37	29	32	0	2
Middle manager	60	40	23	35	2	0
Teacher	97	31	32	29	4	4
Trainee/NQT	18	17	22	61	0	0
(Other TF)	14	7	36	57	0	0
Non TF	282	42	27	27	2	2
All TF	23	9	30	61	0	0
0-5	68	16	34	49	1	0
6 to 10	54	20	33	43	2	2
10+	182	54	24	18	2	2
Active	114	65	20	12	2	1
Not Active	191	24	32	40	2	2
Strong feelings about union membership	177	51	23	23	3	1
Neither	57	21	35	37	2	5
Not strong feelings about union membership	65	20	35	45	0	0
ASCL	27	37	33	22	4	4
ATL	46	39	17	41	2	0
NAHT	51	67	22	12	0	0
NASUWT	64	36	31	27	2	5
NUT	85	31	31	35	2	1
Voice	16	38	25	38	0	0
Primary	106	72	27	0	0	1
Secondary	182	47	46	0	3	3

Collective bargaining to protect and improve pay and conditions	(n)	Very satisfied (% ¹⁴)	Satisfied (%)	Neither (%)	Not satisfied (%)	Very dissatisfied (%)
All teachers	308	34	40	18	5	2
Head teacher	70	56	36	6	1	1
Senior manager	41	37	37	20	5	2

Middle manager	61	23	48	23	3	3
Teacher	98	32	39	20	8	1
Trainee/NQT	18	17	50	28	0	6
(Other TF)	14	7	50	21	14	7
Non TF	284	37	40	17	5	2
All TF	23	9	48	22	13	9
0-5	68	12	49	25	10	4
6 to 10	55	18	49	24	7	2
10+	183	48	35	13	3	2
Active	114	58	36	5	1	0
Not Active	193	21	43	25	8	4
Strong feelings	177	44	40	8	7	2
Neither	58	22	41	29	5	2
Not strong feelings	66	15	45	35	2	3
ASCL	28	39	32	21	4	4
ATL	46	26	41	22	4	7
NAHT	51	61	39	0	0	0
NASUWT	65	32	43	17	5	3
NUT	85	29	47	15	8	0
Voice	16	19	19	56	6	0
Primary	106	46	34	16	4	0
Secondary	180	29	43	18	7	3

Providing a collective voice	(n)	Very satisfied (% ¹⁴)	Satisfied (%)	Neither (%)	Not satisfied (%)	Very dissatisfied (%)
All teachers	308	38	36	16	5	3
Head teacher	69	68	23	7	1	0
Middle manager	61	26	38	25	7	5
Senior manager	40	38	45	10	3	5
Teacher	98	35	41	16	5	3
Trainee/NQT	17	18	47	24	12	0
(Other TF)	14	7	36	29	21	7
NonTF	281	41	37	15	4	2
All TF	23	9	39	26	17	9
0-5	66	17	42	23	12	6
6 to 10	55	18	47	22	11	2

10+	182	53	32	12	1	2
Active	113	62	30	5	3	0
Not Active	191	25	41	23	7	5
Not strong feelings	65	20	38	34	6	2
Neither	57	26	39	23	5	7
Strong feelings	176	48	37	8	5	2
ASCL	28	57	29	11	0	4
ATL	45	29	29	27	11	4
NAHT	51	71	27	2	0	0
NASUWT	65	35	43	14	3	5
NUT	84	27	43	19	8	2
Voice	16	25	50	19	0	6
Primary	105	52	30	14	1	3
Secondary	181	32	40	18	7	3

Campaigning on wider education issues	(n)	Very satisfied (% ¹⁴)	Satisfied (%)	Neither (%)	Not satisfied (%)	Very dissatisfied (%)
All teachers	308	19	30	42	4	2
Head teacher	67	43	30	25	1	0
Senior manager	60	10	28	52	7	3
Middle manager	39	21	31	49	0	0
Teacher	96	15	34	44	4	3
Trainee/NQT	18	6	17	72	6	0
(Other TF)	14	0	29	50	14	7
All TF	275	21	31	43	3	1
Non TF	23	4	26	43	17	9
0-5	68	4	25	59	6	6
6 to 10	54	11	26	48	13	2
10+	175	29	34	35	1	1
Active	111	41	28	30	0	1
Not Active	187	7	32	51	6	3
Not strong feelings	63	8	29	56	6	2
Neither	57	9	33	53	4	2
Strong feelings	173	27	30	37	3	2
ASCL	26	27	38	35	0	0
ATL	46	13	28	50	7	2

NAHT	50	46	32	20	2	0
NASUWT	63	16	29	51	3	2
NUT	83	12	29	51	6	2
Voice	15	13	27	53	0	7
Primary	103	32	28	37	1	2
Secondary	177	13	33	46	6	2

Information on pay and conditions	(n)	Very satisfied (% ¹⁴)	Satisfied (%)	Neither (%)	Not satisfied (%)	Very dissatisfied (%)
All teachers	308	42	38	17	2	1
Head teacher	70	66	26	4	4	0
Middle manager	61	34	43	21	0	1
Senior manager	41	46	41	12	0	0
Teacher	98	35	41	21	2	1
Trainee/NQT	18	22	50	28	0	0
(Other TF)	14	7	43	0	14	36
All TF	284	45	36	17	2	1
Non TF	23	13	57	22	4	1
0-5	68	25	43	29	1	1
6 to 10	55	31	42	20	5	1
10+	183	52	35	11	1	0
Active	114	66	27	7	0	0
Not Active	193	28	44	23	3	3
Not strong feelings	66	24	42	32	2	0
Neither	58	29	47	24	0	0
Strong feelings	177	52	34	10	3	3
ASCL	28	61	36	4	0	0
ATL	46	33	35	33	0	0
NAHT	51	67	29	0	4	0
NASUWT	65	38	43	15	0	3
NUT	85	34	45	20	1	0
Voice	16	31	31	31	6	0
Primary	103	32	28	37	1	2
Secondary	177	13	33	46	6	2

Policy information	(n)	Very satisfied (% ¹⁴)	Satisfied (%)	Neither (%)	Not satisfied (%)	Very dissatisfied (%)
All teachers	308	35	39	22	2	1
Head teacher	69	64	29	4	3	0
Middle manager	61	20	48	31	0	2
Senior manager	41	46	32	22	0	0
Teacher	96	24	44	28	3	1
Trainee/NQT	18	17	56	28	0	0
(Other TF)	14	14	50	29	0	7
All TF	281	37	39	22	2	0
Non TF	23	13	52	26	0	9
0-5	68	19	47	28	1	4
6 to 10	55	18	44	31	7	0
10+	180	47	36	17	0	0
Active	112	53	35	13	0	0
Not Active	192	25	43	28	3	2
Not strong feelings	66	26	38	32	3	2
Neither	57	25	47	26	2	0
Strong feelings	176	41	38	18	1	1
ASCL	28	64	36	0	0	0
ATL	46	28	33	37	0	2
NAHT	50	64	30	4	2	0
NASUWT	64	27	47	23	2	2
NUT	84	24	48	26	2	0
Voice	16	19	38	31	6	6
Primary	106	48	29	21	2	1
Secondary	179	29	47	22	1	1

Teaching info	(n)	Very satisfied (% ¹⁴)	Satisfied (%)	Neither (%)	Not satisfied (%)	Very dissatisfied (%)
All teachers	308	19	34	33	8	4
Head teacher	70	34	50	9	7	0
Middle manager	61	5	31	48	11	5
Senior manager	40	30	25	38	5	3
Teacher	97	18	30	39	7	6
Trainee/NQT	18	11	44	39	6	0

(Other TF)	14	0	14	50	21	14
Non TF	282	21	36	33	7	3
All TF	23	4	17	39	22	17
0-5	67	7	33	45	6	9
6 to 10	55	13	24	33	22	9
10+	182	26	39	29	5	1
Active	114	28	40	24	7	1
Not Active	191	14	31	39	9	6
Not strong feelings	66	14	24	48	6	8
Neither	58	17	33	41	7	2
Strong feelings	175	21	39	26	10	3
ASCL	28	39	43	14	4	0
ATL	46	20	26	43	7	4
NAHT	51	39	49	8	4	0
NASUWT	63	8	32	49	8	3
NUT	85	11	33	35	15	6
Voice	16	13	25	50	6	6
Primary	106	30	35	27	5	3
Secondary	182	13	35	37	11	4

Industrial action	(n)	Very satisfied (% ¹⁴)	Satisfied (%)	Neither (%)	Not satisfied (%)	Very dissatisfied (%)
All teachers	308	31	39	21	5	3
Head teacher	70	50	31	11	6	1
Middle manager	61	23	43	25	3	7
Senior manager	41	32	39	27	0	2
Teacher	97	28	42	24	5	1
Trainee/NQT	19	21	42	26	5	5
(Other TF)	14	14	36	21	14	14
Non TF	284	33	39	22	4	2
All TF	23	17	43	17	9	13
0-5	69	19	42	26	7	6
6 to 10	55	18	44	25	7	5
10+	182	41	37	18	3	2
Active	113	54	38	8	0	0
Not Active	194	19	40	29	7	5

Not strong feelings	67	18	37	34	4	6
Neither	58	17	34	36	10	2
Strong feelings	177	41	41	12	3	3
ASCL	28	21	43	36	0	0
ATL	46	26	37	20	9	9
NAHT	51	57	29	8	4	2
NASUWT	66	30	42	21	2	5
NUT	84	30	45	19	5	1
Voice	16	19	19	56	0	6
Primary	101	47	30	17	5	1
Secondary	176	23	43	26	4	5

Advice on employment	(n)	Very satisfied (% ¹⁴)	Satisfied (%)	Neither (%)	Not satisfied (%)	Very dissatisfied (%)
All teachers	308	30	40	25	3	1
Head teacher	70	57	31	9	3	0
Senior manager	58	19	43	34	3	0
Middle manager	41	34	39	27	0	0
Teacher	98	23	46	24	4	2
Trainee/NQT	18	6	44	50	0	0
(Other TF)	14	7	36	43	7	7
Non TF	281	32	41	24	3	1
All TF	23	9	39	43	4	4
0-5	68	9	47	38	4	1
6 to 10	54	11	43	35	7	4
10+	181	44	38	17	1	0
Not strong feelings	64	8	48	42	0	2
Neither	58	17	43	36	3	0
Strong feelings	176	42	36	16	4	1
Active	113	54	34	12	1	0
Not active	191	16	45	34	4	2
ASCL	27	44	37	15	4	0
ATL	46	22	39	35	2	2
NAHT	51	63	27	8	2	0
NASUWT	65	20	46	31	2	2
NUT	83	20	46	30	4	0

Voice	16	25	50	25	0	0
Primary	106	43	32	23	2	0
Secondary	179	22	46	27	3	1

Raising the professional status of teachers	(n)	Very satisfied (% ¹⁴)	Satisfied (%)	Neither (%)	Not satisfied (%)	Very dissatisfied (%)
All teachers	308	26	31	29	8	3
Head teacher	68	56	29	13	1	0
Middle manager	61	11	28	43	13	5
Senior manager	40	25	43	23	3	8
Teacher	94	22	34	32	9	3
Trainee/NQT	18	11	28	56	6	0
(Other TF)	14	7	21	36	29	7
Non TF	277	29	33	29	6	3
All TF	23	4	13	43	30	9
0-5	68	10	29	44	12	4
6 to 10	55	11	29	42	15	4
10+	176	39	34	20	5	3
Active	111	41	39	16	4	0
Not Active	189	19	28	38	11	5
Not strong feelings	66	17	23	45	14	2
Neither	55	16	27	45	5	5
Strong feelings	175	34	36	20	7	3
ASCL	28	50	39	4	4	4
ATL	46	26	22	37	9	7
NAHT	49	61	31	8	0	0
NASUWT	63	13	35	41	6	5
NUT	83	12	33	40	14	1
Voice	15	20	47	27	7	0
Primary	106	43	29	24	3	2
Secondary	182	19	34	33	11	4

Agreement with Statements

“Overall I am satisfied with my union’s work”	(n)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree (%)
Average	307	30	47	15	6	3

Head teacher	71	55	31	10	3	1
Middle manager	60	20	52	20	5	3
Senior manager	41	27	56	10	5	2
Teacher	97	25	49	13	9	3
Trainee/NQT	19	11	63	21	0	5
(Other Teach First)	14	7	43	43	7	0
Non TF	284	32	46	14	5	2
All TF	23	4	48	35	9	4
0-5	70	6	59	23	9	4
6 to 10	55	15	51	24	7	4
10+	181	44	41	9	4	2
Active	113	57	36	4	2	1
Not Active	194	14	53	22	8	4
Not strong views	67	10	60	27	0	3
Neither	58	12	45	31	9	3
Strong feelings	177	42	42	6	7	2
ASCL	28	32	54	7	7	0
ATL	45	27	40	22	7	4
NAHT	51	61	35	2	2	0
NASUWT	67	24	58	7	4	6
NUT	84	20	48	27	4	1
Voice	16	31	38	25	6	0
Conservative	46	17	46	22	9	7
Green	22	36	55	5	0	5
Labour	118	36	41	17	5	2
Lib Dem	48	29	54	13	4	0
UKIP	2	0	50	50	0	0
Primary	53	32	45	15	6	2
Secondary	162	19	54	18	6	4

“Overall my union provides value for money”	(n)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree (%)
Average	307	26	41	22	7	4
Head teacher	71	45	42	10	3	0
Middle manager	61	18	36	34	7	5

Senior manager	41	27	44	17	10	2
Teacher	97	22	39	23	8	8
Trainee/NQT	18	6	61	28	6	0
Teach First	14	14	29	36	21	0
0-5	69	10	39	35	10	6
6 to 10	55	13	40	27	16	4
10+	182	36	42	16	3	3
Active	113	47	41	11	1	1
Not active	194	14	41	29	11	6
Not strong views	67	10	37	42	10	0
Neither	58	9	45	31	9	7
Strong views	177	37	41	12	6	5
ASCL	28	14	61	18	7	0
ATL	46	15	35	33	13	4
NAHT	51	55	43	0	2	0
NASUWT	66	21	48	18	5	8
NUT	84	24	37	30	6	4
Voice	16	31	19	31	13	6
Conservative	46	11	43	24	13	9
Green	22	36	45	9	5	5
Labour	118	31	42	19	6	3
Lib Dem	49	24	45	24	2	4
UKIP	2	0	50	50	0	0
Primary	53	26	32	25	11	6
Secondary	162	17	43	28	7	5

“Joining a union is valuable and worthwhile”	(n)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree (%)
Average	306	35	37	20	5	3
Head teacher	70	54	29	13	3	1
Middle manager	61	31	38	25	2	5
Senior manager	41	34	34	20	10	2
Teacher	97	30	37	23	6	4
Trainee/NQT	18	11	72	17	0	0
(Other Teach First)	14	14	43	21	21	0

Non TF	283	36	36	20	5	3
All TF	23	13	48	22	13	4
Active	113	65	30	4	1	0
Not Active	193	17	41	30	8	5
Not strong views	67	7	33	46	10	3
Neither	58	7	52	33	7	2
Strong feelings	176	54	34	6	3	3
Conservative	46	15	35	33	9	9
Green	22	50	32	14	0	5
Labour	117	44	38	14	3	2
Lib Dem	49	24	35	31	10	0
UKIP	2	0	50	50	0	0
ASCL	28	14	50	21	11	4
ATL	46	33	30	26	9	2
NAHT	51	63	25	8	2	2
NASUWT	66	35	35	23	2	6
NUT	83	29	49	18	4	0
Voice	16	31	19	38	6	6
Primary	105	48	29	19	2	3
Secondary	182	27	42	21	7	3

“Joining a union is every teacher’s duty”	(n)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree (%)
Average	305	19	26	25	21	10
Active	113	34	28	20	15	3
Not Active	192	11	24	27	24	14
Not strong views	67	10	13	24	36	16
Neither	57	2	25	32	33	9
Strong feelings	177	28	31	23	11	8
Conservative	45	7	9	20	33	31
Green	22	32	41	18	5	5
Labour	117	26	27	26	15	4
Lib Dem	49	14	29	18	27	12
UKIP	2	50	0	0	0	50
Primary	104	30	25	24	13	9
Secondary	182	14	24	26	25	11

“I don’t have any strong feelings about union membership”	(n)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree (%)
Average	303	5	17	19	30	28
Head teacher	68	4	10	18	29	38
Middle manager	60	3	17	20	32	28
Senior manager	41	7	22	22	27	22
Teacher	97	5	14	21	31	29
Trainee/NQT	19	11	37	16	26	11
(Other Teach First)	14	7	36	14	29	14
Active	111	3	4	10	32	51
Not Active	192	7	25	24	29	15
Conservative	43	12	19	35	26	9
Green	21	0	5	14	24	57
Labour	117	1	13	17	32	37
Lib Dem	49	12	37	12	20	18
UKIP	2	0	0	50	20	0
Non- faith school	271	6	17	18	28	31
Faith school?	32	3	22	25	47	3
ASCL	28	0	21	36	29	14
ATL	46	9	22	20	22	28
NAHT	47	4	6	13	34	43
NASUWT	66	6	20	14	30	30
NUT	84	4	20	19	31	26
Voice	16	6	13	38	25	19

“Joining a union is a necessary rather than desirable decision”	(n)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree (%)
Average	306	34	35	13	13	5
Conservative	46	37	50	7	4	2
Green	22	23	32	23	9	14
Labour	118	36	29	14	16	5
Lib Dem	47	40	32	11	17	0
UKIP	2	50	50	0	0	0

“I would prefer not to be in a union if there were alternative support available”	(n)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree (%)
Average	305	10	14	22	25	30
0-5	70	14	26	29	17	14
6 to 10	54	20	13	20	20	26
10+	180	5	9	19	29	37
Active	112	3	5	12	27	54
Not Active	193	15	19	27	24	16
Not strong views	67	19	25	34	18	3
Neither	58	12	24	33	24	7
Strong views	176	6	6	13	27	48
Conservative	45	18	31	24	20	7
Green	22	5	9	14	36	36
Labour	117	5	6	23	26	39
Lib Dem	48	19	17	17	27	21
UKIP	2	0	50	0	0	50
ASCL	28	7	29	25	21	18
ATL	46	17	22	15	30	15
NAHT	49	2	2	22	22	51
NASUWT	66	11	12	23	23	32
NUT	84	8	12	23	24	33
Voice	16	25	19	19	25	13
Primary	103	8	9	22	23	38
Secondary	183	11	17	21	26	24

“Education in the UK is better as a result of the unions’ work”	(n)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree (%)
Average	307	19	33	30	13	7
Head teacher	71	31	34	18	13	4
Middle manager	61	15	30	38	11	7
Senior manager	41	17	24	39	15	5
Teacher	97	15	38	25	12	9
Trainee/NQT	18	6	39	50	0	6
(Other TF)	14	14	14	36	29	7
0-5	69	6	29	45	13	7

6-10	55	15	24	27	20	15
10+	182	25	37	25	10	3
Active	113	39	38	16	5	2
Not Active	194	7	29	38	17	9
Not strong views	67	4	18	43	24	10
Neither	58	5	26	43	16	10
Strong views	177	28	40	21	8	4
Conservative	46	2	15	33	24	26
Green	22	27	45	14	14	0
Labour	118	23	36	31	7	3
Lib Dem	49	16	35	31	16	2
UKIP	2	50	0	0	50	0

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to everyone who has helped make this report possible by being generally helpful (whether writing about it, reading through and being critical or promoting the survey.) The report does not necessarily represent their or their organisations' views but we appreciate their support:

Laura McInerney, (LKMco Policy Development Partner)
Louise Baldwin, (LKMco Project Associate)
Garth Stahl, (LKMco Project Associate)
Imogen Parker, (IPPR)
Jeevan Vasagar (The Guardian)
Sarah Ebner (The Times)
Gerard Kelly and Stephen Exley (The Times Educational Supplement)
The National Association of Head Teachers
The Association of School and College Leaders
Geoff Whitty
Frank Roberts
Elli Woollard
Poached Creative

...and of course, to Edapt UK for funding it.

The views expressed by participants in this research are their own and are matters of opinion. They do not necessarily reflect those of the author(s).

While the Coalition government uses low strike ballot turnout to dismiss teaching unions as radical ideologues, the unions point to continuing high rates of membership to argue that they are genuine representatives of teachers and the final bulwark against the 'erosion of professionalism'. Against this background, education policy reforms gather pace with further industrial action following closely behind. But, where are the serving teachers' voices in the debate? What do current teachers think of their unions and why do they continue to pay their fees in such numbers when membership is shrinking in other sectors?

In *Collectivists, Functionalists and Critics*, Loic Menzies explores the reasons why teachers join and remain in unions, and how teachers feel about the unions that represent them. In so doing, he uncovers why satisfaction remains so high while also unearthing the looming challenge of increased polarisation between 'collectivists' and 'critics'. Most importantly, he focuses on giving teachers a voice and unpicking the complexities and ambiguities behind their views.

Please join the conversation about this report using the hashtag #UnionBecause. You can also use it to find further videos and opinion pieces.

ISBN- 978-0-9568094-1-4



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Published by LKM Publishing, a trading name of LKMco Ltd.
LKMco Ltd. is a registered company in the UK (no. 07003696)
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Cambridge, UK
www.lkmco.org.uk