Trade union membership

The autumn quarter Labour Force Survey (LFS) provides data on trade union membership in the UK, and on employees whose pay was affected by collective agreements. Table 1 shows that the figures for 2002 changed little from 2001, and these changes are not statistically significant.

In autumn 2002, 7.3 million people in employment were trade union members in the UK.

Union members as a proportion of all in employment (union density) stood at 27 per cent. Among employees the figure was slightly higher at 29 per cent.

There were 8.7 million employees whose pay was affected by collective agreements, which is 36 per cent of all employees.

Table 2 shows the proportion of employees who were union members by sex, age and whether they worked full or part-time.

In 2002, trade union density for both men and women was 29 per cent.

Union density was higher among older employees. Over a third of those aged 50 and over were union members compared with a quarter of those aged 25 to 34.

The proportion of full-time employees belonging to a trade union stood at 32 per cent, compared with 21 per cent for those working part-time.

Table 3 shows the proportion of employees who are union members by government office region and country, and by whether they worked full or part-time.

Union density ranged from 21 per cent in the South East to 41 per cent in Northern Ireland.

For all regions full-time employees had a greater union density than those working part-time.

Trade union membership estimates

Trade Union estimates for 2002 are published as interim revised LFS estimates consistent with the 2001 Census (see http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/methodology_by_theme/downloads/interim_reweighting_methodology_article.pdf). These figures are in line with the latest interim population figures, and are subject to revision when final population estimates become available later this year. Interim estimates have been rounded to the nearest 10,000. Those who did not report their union status or were not contactable in the autumn quarter have been allocated on a pro-rata basis.

A full feature article will follow early in 2004. More detailed information, including administrative data from the Certification Officer for Trade Unions and Employers’ Association can be found at http://www.dti.gov.uk/er/emar/trade.htm.