

FUTURE WORKERS SHARE THEIR ELECTION VERDICT

A Unions21 survey of union members found that the NHS and rights at work were the two most important issues influencing how they voted in the 2015 general election

THE UNIONS21 steering committee commissioned a survey after the 2015 general election to understand better the issues that most influenced union members in deciding how to cast their vote.

Unions21 believes that parliamentarians, especially those in opposition parties, need to hear directly from a wide range of union voices, sooner rather than later – while they are still formulating policy priorities for the next five years.

The unions that support us represent a broad range of sectors, including education, health, the creative industries, transport, financial services and retail. This was reflected in those who participated in the survey, who were recruited online and via email.

They tended to come from high-value, growth sectors of the economy, from which Unions21 draws much of its union support, with the

creative industries, education, health care and the financial sector highly represented.

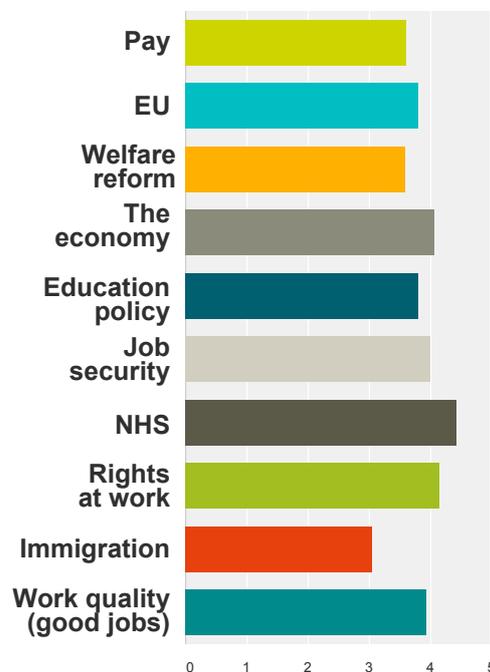
We describe our participant group of just over 600 people as “future workers” because they tend to work in growing high-skilled sectors that are likely to comprise a larger section of the electorate in future elections.

Voting behaviour

Our participants voted broadly to the left of the rest of Britain. There was higher support for the Greens (14.2% in our survey vs 3.8% actual result) and LibDems (11% vs 7.9%

When you were thinking about who to vote for, how important a factor were any of these issues? (Please rate from 1 = not at all important to 5 = very important)

Answered: 351 Skipped: 272



actual) and lower support for the Conservative Party (10.7% vs 36.9% actual) and UKIP (2.9% vs 12.6%).

Our self-selecting group was more progressive than an average group of voters. Labour received 32.4% of support from the voters in our survey, compared to 30.4% in the general election. Labour may have expected to do better among a high-skilled unionised group, but the advantage went to the Greens and LibDems.

Issues that matter most

The survey asked participants which issues they felt were most important when voting. The NHS topped the poll, with 59.3% saying it was “very important” – a clear margin of 10%+.

“ Inheritance tax policy was probably the deciding factor. In South East England houses are more expensive – why should we lose out when it’s supposed to be a rich man’s tax? ”

“ I toyed with voting Labour, but their campaign wasn’t credible ”

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**UNIONS21 WELCOMES NEW AFFILIATE
THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HEAD TEACHERS**



Benefits of joining the TUC

Jon Skewes explains how joining the TUC is already making a difference for the Royal College of Midwives

THE ROYAL College of Midwives affiliated to the TUC in July this year. We are a 45,000-member trade union and professional body that represents midwives and maternity support workers.

Having worked closely with other health unions and bodies, the RCM board was enthusiastic about the trade union and professional benefits of joining the TUC.

Just a few weeks in, I have already found:

- Real campaigning ability based on evidence about what might work. I like that, particularly



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Unity was set up more than 30 years ago as the UK's first trades union bank. We really understand the needs of trades unions and their members.

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bank for social organisations and through our lending into the social economy, we can work together to enable social change, social benefit, and improve the lives of workers and communities across the UK.

Unity can provide the following benefits to your union:

- ✓ Dedicated relationship manager
- ✓ Day-to-day banking services
- ✓ Internet banking with dual or triple authority and same day payments
- ✓ Online statements
- ✓ ALTO Prepaid Mastercard® for your office expenses
- ✓ Bacs facility for collecting subscriptions and to pay salaries/suppliers/expenses

as the RCM took industrial action recently for the first time in its 133-year history. Our approach was similar and successful.

- A wealth of expertise, publications and networks - these are vital for smaller unions and professional bodies.
- Innovation and co-ordination. For example, the TUC's plan to engage trade unions in rapidly developing arrangements for health and local authority devolution is excellent.
- A willingness to enhance and support our ability to organise via training for workplace



The Royal College of Midwives

representatives and best practice on equalities and diversity.

My view is that the time was right for the RCM to affiliate and the union hopes to gain great value from the decision.

My judgement so far is that I am pleased we made the commitment.

Jon Skewes is Unions21 vice-chair and director for policy, employment relations and communications at the Royal College of Midwives

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Rights at work came second – at 46.5%. This was almost 10% higher than the economy and job security (in joint third place with 37.5% each). Work quality was just behind these two, with 34.7%.

Views on pay

It is significant that rights at work were so important to those taking part, even more so than the general economy.

Pay was ranked eighth overall. Though clearly important to the participants, work quality, job security and rights at work had more of an influence on our group's voting intentions.

Many of these high-skilled unionised workers would have been in higher salary bands, rather than being workers on the minimum wage.

This might help explain why their priorities were for a future government to play a role in improving job security and workplace rights.

Party strengths and weaknesses

We asked the participants for their views on the strengths and weaknesses of the political parties in relation to particular issues:

- The strengths of the Conservative Party were seen as the economy and welfare reform.
- Labour's strength was seen as the NHS.
- The LibDems' strength was seen as the EU.
- UKIP's strengths were considered to be the EU and immigration.
- The Green Party strengths were seen as the NHS and rights at work.
- Plaid Cymru was perceived to be strong on the NHS.
- The SNP was rated as strong relative to the other parties across all categories.

The Greens were the party with the strengths that most closely matched the two most important election issues for our participants – the NHS and rights at work – hence their relatively good performance.

Our participants were much more likely to rate parties as “weak” on issues rather than “strong”, perhaps reflecting a lack of enthusiasm for the current offer of politicians overall.

For example, more than 15% rated the Conservative Party, Lib Dems, UKIP and Plaid Cymru “very weak” on all issues.

Labour only escaped in relation to the NHS, rights at work and education; the Greens in relation to the NHS; and the SNP in relation to the cost of living and the NHS.

Party leaders' performance

We repeated the question on policy strengths and weaknesses, but in relation to the performance of party leaders.

Though in general the ratings were broadly similar for the leader as for the party, it gave us the opportunity to gauge where a leader outperformed their own party.

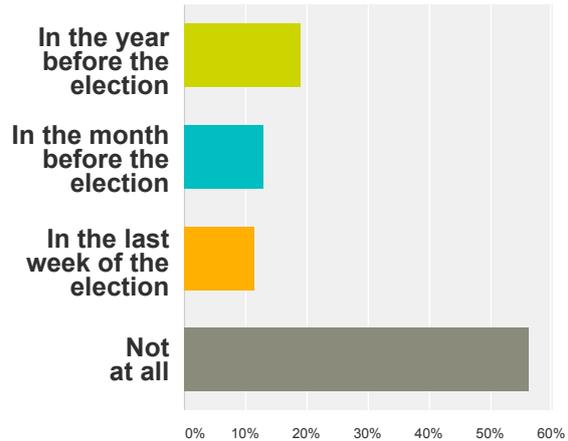
On the issues where the Conservative Party was strongest, David Cameron was perceived as weaker, and vice versa.

On pay, the EU, education, job security, the NHS, rights at work, immigration and work quality, David Cameron outperformed his party.

In contrast, Ed Miliband outperformed the Labour Party in as many areas of party strength as weakness. He outperformed his party on work quality, job security, welfare reform and immigration, but underperformed compared to his party on the other issues.

Did you change your mind about how you would vote at any point?

Answered: 330 Skipped: 293



The change between 2010 and 2015

Four in 10 (40%) of our survey participants changed their minds between the 2010 and 2015 elections. The huge shift in votes reflected a weakening of ties to the main two parties and the rise and fall of smaller parties such as the UKIP and the LibDems.

“I'm not saying that the Conservative Party had better policies on these issues – and definitely not on pay – they were just the better option from a poor choice

The survey also measured how late respondents decided to fix their support for a particular party. One in five participants (19.2%) changed their mind in the year before the election, one in eight (13.2%) in the month before and one in nine (11.4%) in the week before.

A factor in late switching was a rise in the profile and perceived popularity of the SNP and Plaid Cymru and commentary about their role in an expected hung parliament.

Key messages

● Our group of “future workers” are more progressive than the average voter, and were more likely to vote Labour, Green or LibDem and less likely to vote Conservative or UKIP than was reflected in the actual 2015 election results.

● Though our “future workers” see pay as important, work quality and job security are more important to them when voting, and rights at work are more important to them than the economy in general. The Green Party are seen as strong on the NHS and rights at work, which chimed with our participants.

● The Conservatives are seen as very weak on work issues, with Labour, the Green Party and SNP only slightly stronger.

● There is scope for all of the parties to perform better on the issues of pay, job security, and workplace rights, all of which are important to our “future workers” group.

● David Cameron outperformed his party on issues where it was seen as weak, potentially helping to broaden its appeal.

“I was concerned about the apparent rise in popular support for extreme left and right parties

Thank you to everyone who took part in the annual Unions21 survey this year. The feedback we received will be helpful in engaging with politicians as well as informing the work priorities of Unions21 in the coming period.

Unions21



July saw the parliamentary launch of a new Unions21 publication, *Rebalancing the Economy: New thinking on Britain's regional inequalities*. Labour leadership candidate Yvette Cooper (above) spoke to MPs and members of the Unions21 steering committee. Diana Johnson MP, who facilitated the launch, also spoke.

■ You can download the report from www.unions21.org.uk

What does fair work mean for leadership candidates?

UNIONS21 INVITED the Labour Party candidates for leader and deputy to outline their views on fair work in the run-up to the leadership election.

The steering committee, comprising the leaders of a range of trade unions, set the candidates the following challenge:

“Outline your views on fair work, particularly focusing on work quality, pay, training and productivity.”

They are revealing on a number of fronts. As well as responding to our question, the statements also touch on other fundamental questions union members might have, such as:

● How deep is your connection to the trade union movement?

● What ability do you have to remake the case for trade unions?

● What future do you see for Labour and the unions?

● What is your policy prescription and how will you persuade people?

● Are you an election winner?

Unions21's steering committee hoped the process would be a useful exercise for the candidates that would help them to organise and present their thoughts on fair work directly to a union audience.

■ The result is a rich resource for trade unions and those interested in the

future of the world of work – you can download the report from the Unions21 website at <http://t.co/poh1R6Ot9U>

The Fair Work Agenda



Statements from Labour's Leadership Candidates

Unions21

UNIONS21 — UPCOMING EVENTS

TUC Congress

BRIGHTON

**MONDAY 14 SEPTEMBER
12.30pm–13.45pm**

Bargaining for growth: Putting the economic case for trade unions

Syndicate 4, the Brighton Centre

This event will see the launch of research commissioned by Unions21 and the New Economics Foundation on the contribution of trade unions to wage-led growth.

It is time for a new narrative on the contribution of unions to the economy and to remake the case for collective bargaining and employee voice.

Tea, coffee and food will be available – hog roast bun or falafel with hummus and tahini, doughnuts.

SPEAKERS

Paul Moloney, Unions21 steering committee and industrial relations manager, Society of Radiographers

Professor Özlem Onaran, University of Greenwich

John Hannett, USDAW general secretary

Iain Wright MP, shadow business, innovation and skills minister and chair of the BIS select committee

Mike Clancy, Prospect general secretary

**TUESDAY 15 SEPTEMBER,
12.30pm–1.45pm**

The rebalancing act: How we create a fairer economy

Meeting Room 6, the Brighton Centre

Unions21 brings its influential publication, *Rebalancing the Economy*, to the TUC fringe with one core argument – that there is nothing inevitable about Britain's regional divisions in growth, investment, housing and education.

This meeting will focus on the divisions that beset Britain and the need for achievable approaches to address them.

Tea, coffee and refreshments – hot dogs or seasonal vegan soup and bread and brownies.

SPEAKERS INCLUDE

Tim Page, TUC senior policy officer – manufacturing, industrial, transport and economic policy

Alison McGovern MP, shadow treasury minister

Labour Party Conference

BRIGHTON

SUNDAY 27 SEPTEMBER, 6pm–8pm

Bargaining for growth: Putting the economic case for trade unions

Hall 7, Dee Room, Hilton Metropole

See first TUC listing, left, for details. Speakers: Roy Rickhuss, general secretary of Community, Professor Özlem Anaran, John Hannett, Mike Clancy. Refreshments provided.

TUESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER

Unions21 reception and live screening of the Labour Party leader's speech. Invitation only.

■ Please email dwhittle@atl.org.uk for details.