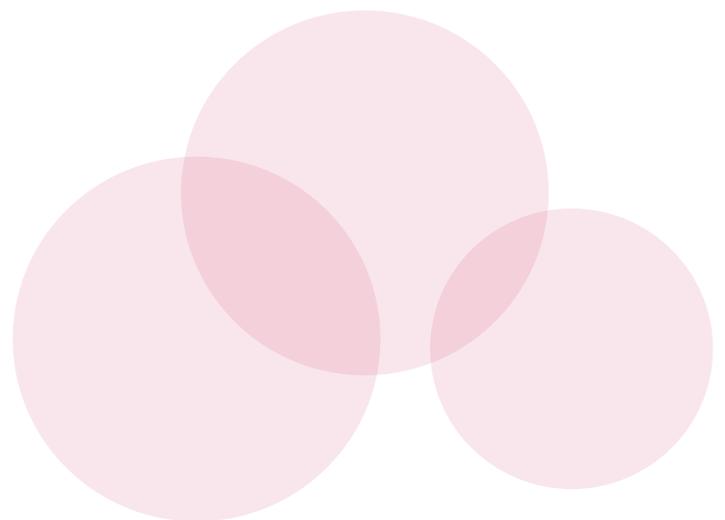
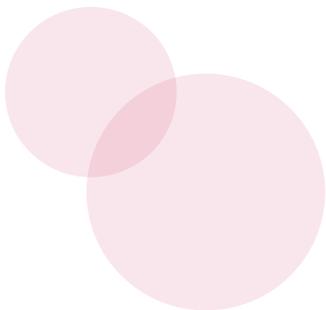


Research Paper



Worker representation in Great Britain
2004 - 2011: An analysis based on the
Workplace Employment Relations Study

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An analysis based on the Workplace Employment
Relations Study

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

- This report examines the incidence, role and impact of worker representatives (union and non-union) in British workplaces between 2004 and 2011 based on secondary data analysis from the Workplace Employment Relations Study (WERS). A nationally representative survey of managers, worker representatives and employees in British workplaces employing five or more people.
- Worker representatives are defined as employees who represent their fellow workers in dealings with management, and who do not deal exclusively with health and safety.
- The report investigates how the scope and influence of union workplace organisation has changed between 2004 and 2011 against the backdrop of recession.
- It also seeks to evaluate the impact of the Information and Consultation Employees Regulations (ICE) of 2005 on the practice of non-union representation at a workplace level (the ICE regulations introduced statutory rights for employees to be consulted and informed about key issues in the organisations they work for).

Patterns of workplace representation between 2004 and 2011

- Results suggest that in 2011 there were approximately 150,000 union representatives and 45,000 non-union representatives in British workplaces with 5 or more employees.
- There was broad stability in the incidence of onsite workplace union representation between 2004 and 2011. However, the manufacturing sector lost around 40 per cent of its union representatives. Decline within manufacturing was balanced by growth in representative numbers in the public sector.
- This suggests a significant change in the union activist base and the continuance of a long run shift in the workers unions represent, from the private sector and manufacturing to the public sector.
- Similarly, there was broad stability in non-union representation in the aggregate with around 7 per cent of workplaces having non-union representatives in 2011. However, within workplaces that operated in both 2004 and 2011, there has been considerable 'churn' in non-union representation, with 6 per cent of workplaces losing non-union representative and 8 per cent acquiring them. Non-union representation is most common in private services.

Characteristics of worker representatives

- Union representatives remained older and less diverse than the workforce as a whole. Union representatives tended to come from a more diverse range of occupational backgrounds than their non-union counterparts.
- There have been significant changes in the characteristics of non-union worker representatives, with representatives in 2011 more likely to be older and in professional occupations than in 2004.

Facilities and resources of worker representatives

- There was broad stability in the resources provided by management to worker representatives between 2004 and 2011, although non-union representatives were more likely to report that they were paid by their employer to undertake representative duties in 2011 than in 2004.
- Union representatives typically spent more time on their representative duties than their non-union counterparts, but the proportion of non-union representatives who undertook representative activity while being paid by their employer has increased since 2004.
- Non-union representatives generally enjoyed better access to employer provided facilities like office space, telephones and photo-copiers than their union counterparts. Provision of facilities for non-union representatives has increased since 2004.

Activities of worker representatives

- There is evidence that the long term decline in the scope of collective bargaining has been partially reversed, with union representatives reporting that they negotiate over a broader range of issues in 2004 than in 2011.
- There is also evidence that union representatives were paying greater attention to recruitment and organising in 2011 than in 2004.
- Non-union representatives reported meeting with managers more in 2011 than in 2004. They also reported receiving information on a greater number of issues.
- Non-union representatives tended to meet more frequently with management than their union counterparts, but union representatives had more scope to play an influential role within their workplaces, because while it was unusual for non-union representatives to negotiate with management, union representatives negotiated over an average of two issues.
- The number of issues non-union representatives were consulted on or receive information about had increased since 2004.

- The activities of worker representatives who participated in the survey were focused on collective issues rather than individual issues and casework.
- Union recruitment activity by union representatives had increased. In 2004 64 per cent of union representatives said that they had attempted to recruit new members in the previous 12 months, by 2011 this had risen to 80 per cent.
- Acas was a source of help and advice for 23 per cent of union representatives and 12 per cent of non-union representatives.

Assessing the impact of worker representatives

- There is evidence that voluntary labour turnover was lower in workplaces with union representatives, and that when workplaces gained a union representative between 2004 and 2011, voluntary labour turnover fell. However, there was no such relationship between non-union representatives and turnover.
- There was little evidence that different modes of workplace representation have any impact on outcomes like training provision, labour productivity or the subjective well-being of employees once other workplace characteristics are taken into account.

Conclusions

- Overall, results suggest that union workplace organisation has largely survived the recession unscathed, although union organisation within manufacturing has diminished.
- Although there has not been a large increase in non-union representation following the introduction of the ICE regulations, there were noticeable signs of a more extensive and formal role for non-union representatives following their introduction; more regular meetings between management and representatives, representatives spending more time on representative activities and being provided with more facilities by management to undertake their representative role.

1 INTRODUCTION: WORKPLACE REPRESENTATION IN GREAT BRITAIN IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1.1 A brief history of worker representation in Great Britain

Historically, the dominant form of worker representation at the workplace level in Britain has been union representation. Before 1945, union representation *in the workplace* was largely confined to parts of the engineering industry as employers sought to exclude union representatives from workplaces in exchange for multi-employer collective agreements that determined pay and hours over a defined geographical area. After 1945, the broadly social democratic political settlement combined with a sustained period of full employment provided the opportunity for an unofficial network of union representatives to spread through much of British manufacturing industry.

The spread of workplace union representatives (or shop stewards) was associated with a period of rising industrial unrest. Consequently, the role of union representatives was considered in some detail by the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers Associations (the Donovan Commission), established in 1965. The Donovan Commission concluded that union representatives performed a broadly positive role within the system of industrial relations. This benign view of union representatives was to be challenged by the rising industrial militancy of the 1970s, as strike activity increased in response to Government attempts to control inflation by containing the growth of pay settlements. This period saw the spread of workplace union representation to white-collar workers in public and private services.

By 1980 it is estimated that there were around 328,000 union representatives, with representatives present in half of all workplaces with 25 or more employees. The prolonged period of union decline which followed the election of Mrs Thatcher's Government in 1979 resulted in a dramatic drop in the coverage of union representation at the workplace. By 2004, it is estimated that union representatives were present in just 23 per cent of workplaces with 25 or more employees, and that the number of representatives had fallen dramatically to 128,000 (Charlwood and Forth 2009).

By contrast with union forms of workplace employee representation, non-union representation appears to have been on a significantly smaller scale, as they were valued neither by employees (who preferred unions) nor employers, who saw little utility in such arrangements. The extensive systems of joint consultation which developed during the World War One were swiftly abandoned at the War's end. Joint consultation survived in only a handful of large industrial firms with paternalistically orientated management (for example the confectionary manufacturer Cadbury Brothers). To the extent that non-union representation existed, it tended to co-exist alongside union representation, with union representation playing the more significant role in the governance of the workplace. However, as union representation has declined since 1980, the relative significance of non-union worker representatives has increased. In 1980, just 1 in 10 workplaces with 25 or more employees had non-union employee representation. By 2004 this had increased to 1 in 7, with similar numbers of union and non-union representatives (Charlwood and Forth 2009).

1.1 The introduction of ICE regulations

Since the period covered by Charlwood and Forth's analysis, the European Union Information and Consultation Directive have been transposed into UK law through the 2004 ICE regulations, which came into effect for organisations with 150 employees or more in April 2005, and were extended to cover all organisations with 50 or more employees by April 2008.

In the abstract, the ICE regulations represent a radical departure from Britain's history of voluntarism in the area of employee voice arrangements. However, the regulations were devised in a way that did not proscribe any particular form of employee representation, and gave considerable scope for the objectives of the Directive to be achieved through existing workplace consultation arrangements. New consultative arrangements are only mandated if at least 10 per cent of the workforce asks for them. Between 2005 and 2010 just 31 cases from 19 organisations were referred to the Central Arbitration Committee under the regulations. Therefore the impact of the regulations on the practice of worker representation may have been minor. The limited quantitative data available suggest the ICE regulations have prompted an increase in the incidence of information and consultation mechanisms and changes in the way that existing mechanisms operate. However these changes have been concentrated in the UK operations of multi-national companies, a relatively small proportion of the overall population of workplaces (Hall et al 2011).

Initial analysis of the 2011 WERS appears to confirm that the ICE regulations have not had a very large or significant effect on the practice of worker representation in Britain. While it is difficult to judge what would have happened to worker representation in the absence of the ICE regulations, WERS evidence shows that the regulations have not stimulated a growth in consultative committees or an increase in the frequency of consultative committee meetings (van Wanrooy et al 2013: 63).

1.2 The recession and worker representation

Evidence from previous WERS suggests that recessions act as a spur for management to re-evaluate and reorganise systems of employee representation in the workplace. For example, Millward et al (2000) found considerable evidence of what they termed a hollowing out form of union workplace representation in the period between the 1990 and 1998 WERS: declining numbers of union representatives, the abandonment of collective bargaining as a method for determining pay in workplaces with union recognition and a narrowing of the collective bargaining agenda. The qualitative case studies of Brown et al (1999) suggested that these changes could be directly linked to competitive pressures linked both to secular changes in product market conditions and a cyclical fall in demand.

Initial evidence from the WERS 2011 sourcebook (van Wanrooy et al 2013) suggests that the negative impact of the recession of 2008 and its aftermath on worker representation has been considerably less than the recessions of 1980 and 1990. While union membership, union recognition, collective bargaining coverage and worker representative numbers all fell in previous recessions, there has been broad stability in these indicators of employment relations institutions between

the 2004 and 2011 WERS, although the scope of collective bargaining has continued to decline in the private sector (van Wanrooy et al 2013: 191).

1.3 Research questions

With this context in mind, this discussion paper seeks to answer two broad research questions, building on and fleshing out the findings reported by van Wanrooy et al (2013). First, to try to assess the impact of the ICE regulations had on the incidence and practice of information sharing and consultation with non-union employee representative. We cannot directly attribute any observed changes to the regulations, because we do not have a counter-factual (i.e. what would have happened in the absence of the ICE regulations), but it is nevertheless interesting to observe changes to the practice of worker representation in the context of the regulations. Second, how have arrangements for workplace employee representation through trade unions changed since 2004?

1.4 Data: The Workplace Employment Relations Study

The focus of our analysis is workplace employee representation i.e. where there is one or more worker representatives present on site at a workplace. We analyse workplace representation in workplaces in Great Britain with 5 or more employees excluding the agriculture, forestry and fishing and mining and quarrying industries, reflecting the population from which our data source, the 2004 and 2011 Workplace Employment Relations Study (WERS) were drawn from. Specifically, WERS surveyed a stratified random sample of 2,295 workplaces in 2004, 989 of these workplaces participated in the 2011 survey, and further stratified random sample of 1,691 also participated in 2011 (giving a total 2011 sample size of 2,680). Ninety per cent of employees in Britain are employed in workplaces covered by WERS.

There are three elements to WERS. First, information provided by the most senior manager who deals with employment relations, human resources or personnel and staff at the workplace (which included a face-to-face interview, an employee profile questionnaire and a financial performance questionnaire). Second, interviews with employee representatives (the worker representative questionnaire or WRQ), who were usually the senior employee representatives in the workplace (unless they were unavailable – 95% of those surveyed were senior representatives). In workplaces where both union and non-union representatives were present, interviews were attempted with both. In 2004, 984 worker representatives were surveyed with a further 1,002 participating in 2011. Of the 2011 participants, 432 were from workplaces where a worker representative had participated in the 2004 survey too. Third, it comprises a self-completion questionnaire completed by a random sample of up to 25 employees per workplace. Overall response rates for the management component of survey were 64 per cent in 2004 and 46 per cent in 2011. Interviews were then secured with 77 per cent of eligible worker representatives in 2004 and 64 per cent of eligible representatives in 2011.

1.5 Outline of the rest of the paper

We approach the two questions we have set ourselves in three stages. First, we update the analysis of Charlwood and Forth (2009) to chart any changes in patterns of employee workplace representation between 2004 and 2011 (chapter 2). Second, we examine the characteristics, role and activities of worker representatives as reported by worker representatives themselves, again noting any changes since 2004 (chapters 3, 4 and 5). Third, we build on the analysis of Charlwood and Terry (2007) to examine what impact, if any, worker representatives might have on outcomes like absenteeism, labour turnover, investments in training and managerial perceptions of productivity (chapter 6). We conclude by bringing together key findings from this analysis to answer our two research questions (chapter 7).

2 PATTERNS OF WORKPLACE REPRESENTATION IN GREAT BRITAIN 2004 – 2011

This chapter investigates the changing incidence of union and non-union forms of workplace representation from 2004 to 2011, drawing primarily on information provided by managers, investigating the changing incidence of union and non-union workplace representation in turn. We are interested in answering the questions of whether there has been substantial change (increase) in representation associated with the introduction of the ICE regulations and whether there has been a change (decline) in the incidence of workplace union representation as a result of management restructuring prompted by the recession of 2008.

2.1 Union representation

Table 2.1.1 sets out the incidence and coverage of workplace union representation in 2004 and 2011. Note first that any changes will have happened against a background of stability in other indicators of union organisation. Union density among the WERS sample of workplaces in 2011 was broadly the same as it was in 2004, at 29 per cent of employees. Twenty-two per cent of workplaces recognised trade unions, and because larger workplaces are more likely to recognise unions, 47 per cent of employees worked in a workplace with union recognition arrangements (van Wanrooy et al 2013). This is in marked contrast to the period between the 1990 and 1998 WERS, where the recession appears to have acted as a trigger for management to restructure workplace union representation and diminish the role of unions (Millward et al 2000; Brown et al 1999).

It is therefore unsurprising that the proportion of workplaces with a workplace union representative is broadly the same in 2011 as it was in 2004, with 32 per cent of workplaces with a recognised trade union reporting a workplace union representative. The overall proportion of workplaces with a union representative was also unchanged at 7 per cent (van Wanrooy et al 2013: 58 - 59). As van Wanrooy and her colleagues noted, neither were there changes in the proportion of employees working in workplaces with a union representative in the public sector (72%) or the private sector (24%). However, if we break the private sector down into manufacturing and services, we observe a statistically significant decrease in the proportion of manufacturing workplaces with a workplace union representative, down from 7 per cent in 2004 to 4 per cent in 2011 (although the proportion of employees in a manufacturing workplaces with a union representative was broadly the same) and a statistically significant increase in the proportion of employees working in a workplace with a union representative in private services (up from 16 per cent of workers in 2004 to 20 per cent in 2011).

There were on average around three union representatives in workplaces that had workplace union representation in both 2004 and 2011. If we extrapolate from the WERS sample to the wider population of workplaces with 5 or more employees, these results suggest that there were approximately 150,000 union representatives in Britain in 2011, a similar number to 2004. The majority of these (around 94,000) are in the public sector, with around 15,000 in manufacturing and 42,000 in private services. Although there was stability in the

aggregate numbers of union representatives, there were considerable changes within sectors. There was a statistically significant decline in the number of union representatives in manufacturing, from around 24,000 in 2004 to around 15,000 in 2011, a drop of almost 40%. This was balanced by an increase of union representatives in the public sector, up from around 83,000 to around 94,000, an increase of approximately 13 per cent. This increase in public sector union representatives may reflect the union mobilisation against the public sector pay freeze, job cuts and public sector pension reform that was taking place at the time the 2011 survey took place, with a rising stock of grievances and increased union militancy leading to more workers being prepared to take on the representative role. This shift in the activist base is likely to have had an impact on internal politics of trade unions, and the interests that unions have been seeking to prioritise.

Table 2.1.1 The incidence and coverage of workplace union representatives in 2004 and 2011

	Percentage of workplaces in 2004	Percentage of workplaces 2011	Change	Percentage of workers in 2004	Percentage of workers in 2011	Change
All workplaces	8	7	1	35	36	1
All workplaces with union recognition	34	32	-2	75	75	-
Private manufacturing workplaces	7	4	-3	38	43	5
Private manufacturing with union recognition	58	56	-2	88	92	4
Private services workplaces	3	3	-	16	20	4
Private services with union recognition	32	36	4	71	80	9***
Public sector workplaces	32	34	2	72	71	-1
Public sector with union recognition	39	42	3	79	76	-3

Source: 2004 & 2011 WERS cross-section management questionnaire, weighted base 2,295 (2004) & 2,672 (2011). *** = $p < 0.01$.

Aggregate stability masks considerable change in representation arrangements within individual workplaces. Of those workplaces that were surveyed in both the 2004 and 2011 WERS (known as the panel), 12 per cent of workplaces with union recognition in both periods also had on-site union representatives in both periods, but 12 per cent lost their on-site representation, while 19 per cent gained it.

To investigate the factors associated with either gaining or losing a union representative between 2004 and 2011, we estimated a series of logit regression models (this is a form of statistical analysis that looks at the relationship between gaining or losing a union representative and factors like workplace size, age and sector, while holding the values of other factors included in the analysis constant, full results are included in the appendix). The results suggest that workplaces without a union representative in 2004 were more likely to gain one the larger the workplace was in 2004, if the workplace was part of a larger organisation, and if 2004 union density was higher. However, they were more likely to remain without a representative if in the transport and communications or health and social care industry groups. The only factor that made it more likely that a workplace would lose a representative between 2004 and 2011 was workplace size, with workplaces with fewer than 25 employees in 2004 being much more likely to lose their representative.

2.2 Non-union representation

Table 2.2.1 shows the incidence and coverage of non-union representatives in 2004 and 2011. Non-union representatives were deemed to be present when the management respondent answered positively to the question 'apart from union representatives and representatives concerned exclusively with health and safety matters, are there any employees here who acts as representatives of other employees in dealings with management?' Overall, 7 per cent of workplaces report on-site non-union employee representatives in the 2011 WERS, this is no different to the 2004 figure. Thirteen per cent of public sector employees worked in workplaces with non-union representatives in 2011. The equivalent figure for the private sector was 17 per cent. Similarly, there was no change in the percentage of workplaces with a joint consultative committee between 2004 and 2011, with 8 per cent of workplaces reporting a JCC in 2011. However, there is evidence that the incidence of JCCs increased among medium sized workplaces (100 – 249 employees), rising from nine per cent of workplaces to 18 per cent (van Wanrooy et al 2013: 60 – 61). Further analysis by broad sector (public, private manufacturing, private services) shows no other statistically significant changes.

As with union representation, there was an average of around three non-union representatives per workplace in workplaces that had workplace non-union representation. If we extrapolate from these results, we estimate that there were approximately 45,000 non-union representatives in 2011, a statistically significant drop of one fifth since 2004. The majority (around 36,000) were in private services, with around 3000 in the public sector and 6000 in manufacturing. The decline in representative numbers was most pronounced in manufacturing, where it had halved since 2004.

Table 2.2.1 The incidence and coverage of workplace non-union representatives in 2011

	Percentage of workplaces in 2004	Percentage of workplaces in 2011	Change	Percentage of workers in 2004	Percentage of workers in 2011	Change
All workplaces	7	7	-	18	17	-1
Private manufacturing workplaces	8	6	2	27	23	-4
Private services workplaces	7	7	-	18	17	-1
Public sector workplaces	6	5	-1	11	13	2

Source: 2004 & 2011 WERS cross-section management questionnaire, weighted base 2,295 (2004) & 2,672 (2011).

Despite the stability in the aggregate proportion of workplaces with non-union representatives, and the decline in non-union representative numbers, analysis of the panel (table 2.2.2) shows that there was considerable change in the incidence of non-union representatives within workplaces, with 6 per cent of panel workplaces losing non-union representation but a further 8 per cent gaining it, with 2 per cent of panel workplaces having non-union representation in both periods.

Table 2.2.2 The incidence of on-site non-union representation among panel workplaces

<i>On-site non-union representatives</i>	Percentage of workplaces
On-site non -union rep in both 2004 and 2011	2
No on-site non -union rep in both 2004 and 2011	83
On-site non - union rep in 2004 only	6
On-site non - union rep in 2011 only	8

Source: WERS 2011 panel, weighted base: 984.

Logit analysis (reported in full in the appendix) of the determinants of gaining or losing a non-union representative among panel workplaces suggested that workplaces were more likely to gain a non-union representative if they had 25 or more employees. Workplaces were also more likely to gain a representative if there was union recognition in 2004, and union density in 2004 was relatively low (suggesting that unions have been focusing on improving workplace organisation in workplaces where union organisation was weak in 2004). Workplaces were less likely to gain a representative where the largest occupational group within the workplace were skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled manual workers, or sales workers, or if the organisation was foreign owned. Why this might be is not clear. Workplaces were more likely to lose a representative between 2004 and 2011 if management reported a very good climate of employee relations in 2004 (perhaps because in this climate, workers did not feel the need for representation, although this interpretation is highly speculative), if the workplace had fewer than 25 workers (an unsurprising finding given that in smaller workplaces the potential pool of workers willing to take on a representative role will be smaller), or if the workplaces was in the wholesale and retail or hotels and restaurants industry groups (both industries characterised by high labour turnover, which may have made it harder to retain representatives). Overall though, it is difficult to judge whether loss of representation is the result of management abandoning systems of worker representation, or apathy on the part of workers themselves.

2.3 Dual channel representation

Dual channel representation is the term used to denote the presence of both union representatives and non-union representatives in the same workplace. Table 2.3.1 shows that just 8 per cent of workplaces, employing 16 per cent of employees had dual channel representation. These arrangements were most common in manufacturing workplaces – 13 per cent of such workplaces, employing 23 percent of employees in that sector had dual channel representation. There was no statistically significant change in the incidence of dual channel workplaces between 2004 and 2011.

Table 2.3.1 The incidence and coverage of dual channel workplace representation in 2004 and 2011

	Percentage of workplaces 2004	Percentages of workplaces 2011	Change	Percentage of workers 2004	Percentages of workers 2011	Change
All workplaces	6	8	2	13	16	3
All workplaces with union recognition	10	12	2	17	19	2
Private manufacturing workplaces	11	13	2	22	23	2
Private manufacturing with union recognition	18	24	6	30	28	-2
Private services workplaces	4	6	2	12	16	4
Private services with union recognition	10	15	5	21	24	3
Public sector workplaces	8	9	1	11	12	1
Public sector with union recognition	8	9	1	11	13	2

Source: 2004 & 2011 WERS cross-section management questionnaire, weighted base 2,295 (2004) & 2,672 (2011).

2.4 Chapter summary

Two key findings stand out from this analysis. First, against a backdrop of broad stability in union representation, there has been a significant drop in union representation within the manufacturing sector, with the result that our analysis suggests that unions may have lost as many as 40 per cent of their shop stewards in manufacturing. This suggests that the recession may have prompted management to restructure worker voice arrangements in those parts of the economy most exposed to international competition and therefore particularly affected by the global economic crisis. These findings also point to a significant change in the union activist base, and therefore a continuance of a long-run shift in the workers and interests that unions are seeking to represent, away from the private sector and manufacturing towards the public sector (where the number of representatives has risen by 13,000).

Second, although there has been broad stability in the aggregate coverage of on-site representation (with the exception of the change in manufacturing described above), there has been considerable change at workplace level, with for example 8.3 per cent of workplaces in the panel adopting non-union representation since 2004 and a similar proportion abandoning it. This finding helps to explain why previous analyses have found evidence that the ICE regulations led to an increase in non-union representation arrangements (Hall et al 2011) even though the analysis of van Wanrooy et al (2013) suggested that there has been no net increase.

3 CHARACTERISTICS OF WORKER REPRESENTATIVES

The age and demographic characteristics of union representatives are considered to be a key indicator of union success in bringing about renewal and regeneration. It is argued that younger and more diverse union representatives are needed if unions are to renew themselves. Analysis of previous WERS has shown that union representatives are typically older, more likely to be male and white in terms of ethnicity than either union members or the wider workforce (Charlwood and Forth 2009). It is for this reason that it is interesting to study whether the characteristics of union representatives have changed between 2004 and 2011. At the same time, we study the changes in the characteristics of non-union representatives, both as a point of comparison with union representatives, and to observe whether the introduction of the ICE regulations has been associated with any change in the characteristics of non-union representatives.

3.1 Demographic, workplace and occupational characteristics of worker representatives

Table 3.1.1 Characteristics of on-site union representatives who participated in the WRQ

	2004	2011	Change	Statistical significance
<i>Demographic Characteristics</i>				
Male	62%	57%	-5%	
White	97%	98%	1%	
Age(Mean years)	48	49	1	*
Age Under 30	5%	1%	-4%	**
Age 30-39	13%	9%	-4%	
Age 40-49	33%	37%	4%	
Age 50+	50%	55%	5%	*
<i>Occupation</i>				
Managers and Senior Officials	11%	13%	2%	
Professional	23%	32%	9%	***
Associate Professional/Technical	19%	10%	-9%	**
Administrative and Secretarial	13%	12%	-1%	
Skilled Trades	6%	5%	-1%	
Personal Service	3%	5%	2%	
Sales and Customer Service	8%	7%	-1%	
Process, Plant and Machine	11%	7%	-4%	*
Routine	7%	10%	3%	*
<i>Workplace Characteristics</i>				
Private Manufacturing	7%	3%	-4%	**
Private Services	31%	33%	3%	
Public Sector	62%	63%	1%	

Source: WERS 2004 and 2011 WRQs, weighted base: 705 (2004) & 776(2011) Statistical significance levels: **** = $p < 0.001$, *** = $p < 0.01$, ** = $p < 0.05$, * = $p < 0.1$. Significance tested using an Adjusted Wald Test to account for sample design.

Table 3.1.1 demonstrates that the rise in average age of union representatives identified by van Wanrooy et al (2013: 59) was driven by an increase in the proportion of representatives aged over 50, and a decline in those aged under 30. It also shows that representatives who participated in the WRQ in 2011 were less likely to be in the manufacturing industry than their 2004 equivalents, and more likely to have a professional occupation. Representatives in 2011 were also more likely to be in unskilled routine occupations, while representatives in semi-skilled occupations were less likely to participate. Overall, these results suggest that the issue of an activist cadre who are not representative of the wider workforce remains for trade unions.

Table 3.1.2 Characteristics of on-site non-union representatives who participated in the WRQ

	2004	2011	Change	Statistical significance
<i>Demographic Characteristics</i>				
Male	52%	43%	-9%	
White	93%	99%	5%	
Age(Mean years)	39	47	8	****
Age Under 30	27%	8%	-19%	***
Age 30-39	23%	23%		
Age 40-49	24%	31%	7%	
Age 50+	27%	50%	23%	***
<i>Occupation</i>				
Managers and Senior Officials	23%	21%	-2%	
Professional	10%	37%	27%	****
Associate Professional/Technical	6%	4%	-2%	
Administrative and Secretarial	11%	10%	-1%	
Skilled Trades	14%	5%	-9%	**
Personal Service	8%	8%	0.0	
Sales and Customer Service	12%	10%	-2%	
Process, Plant and Machine	6%	4%	-2%	
Routine	10%	2%	-8%	*
<i>Workplace Characteristics</i>				
Private Manufacturing	11%	9%	-2%	
Private Services	80%	81%	1%	
Public Sector	8.9	9.7	0.8	

Source: WERS 2004 and 2011 WRQs, weighted base: 224(2004) & 183(2011) Statistical significance levels: **** = $p < 0.001$, *** = $p < 0.01$, ** = $p < 0.05$, * = $p < 0.1$. Significance tested using an Adjusted Wald Test to account for sample design.

Table 3.1.2 shows the equivalent analysis for on-site non-union representatives who participated in the WRQ. It suggests that the trend towards older representatives drawn from professional occupations is even more pronounced among non-union representatives than it is among union representatives. If the ICE regulations have led to new opportunities to become representatives, it is overwhelmingly older, professional workers who have taken up these opportunities.

3.2 Were on-site representatives elected by workers?

WERS allows us to examine the mode of appointment for worker representatives. Were they elected by their fellow workers (as the term representative implies) or did they take on the role because no one else would do it, or because a manager put them forward? This is an important indicator of both the overall health of union organisation (elections require a functioning workplace branch), the level of interest and support for representatives on the part of those they represent (do they turn up to vote for them?) and of the independence on non-union reps from management. Overall, the union representative who participated in the WRQ was elected in 68 per cent of workplaces in 2011, there was no statistically significant difference between the 2004 and 2011 figures (although statistically significant increases in the proportion of union representative WRQ respondents who were elected was observed in manufacturing and private services). Turning to the panel (table 3.2.1 below), we see that 65 per cent of union representatives in panel workplaces were elected in both periods, while 7 per cent had no election in either period.

Table 3.2.1 Changes in mode of union representative selection 2004 – 2011 within panel workplaces

	Percentage of union representatives
Representatives elected in 2004 only	17
Representatives elected in 2011 only	11
Representatives elected in 2004 & 2011	65
Representatives were not elected in neither 2004 or 2011	7

Source: WERS 2004 and 2011 WRQ, weighted base: 326.

Table 3.2.2 Changes in mode of non-union representative selection 2004 – 2011 within panel workplaces

	Percentage of non - union representatives
Representatives elected in 2004 only	18
Representatives elected in 2011 only	11
Representatives elected in 2004 & 2011	42
Representatives were not elected in neither 2004 or 2011	28

Source: WERS 2004 and 2011 WRQ, weighted base: 147.

The proportion of non-union representative WRQ respondents who were elected was significantly lower, at 53 per cent in 2011, and there had been little change in this figure since 2004. Only two in five panel workplaces with non-union representatives in both 2004 and 2011 had elected representatives in both periods.

3.3 Chapter summary

Three points emerge from the analysis above. First, unions have not succeeded in developing a younger, more diverse cadre of senior lay activists, although the results on democracy in representative selection suggest that workplace union organisation is as healthy as it was in 2004 in this respect despite the challenges posed for union organisation by the recession. Second, in the context of the ICE regulations, there has been quite a dramatic increase in the proportion of non-union representatives who are older and in professional occupations. Union representatives tend to come from a more diverse range of occupational backgrounds than non-union representatives. Third, non-union representatives are less likely to be elected by their co-workers than their union equivalents.

4 FACILITIES AND RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO WORKER REPRESENTATIVES IN THEIR REPRESENTATIVE ROLE

This chapter summarises the facilities and resources available to worker representatives in their representative role. Two types of facilities and resources are investigated. First, the time worker representatives typically spend each week on in this role. Second, resources provided by management to support representatives, such as access to an office, telephone, computer and photocopier. This information is drawn from the WRQ, so provided by the representatives themselves.

4.1 Time spent on representative duties

Note first that as WRQ respondents are typically senior representatives, they are likely to spend more time on representative duties than other representatives in their workplace, so results discussed below cannot be seen as typical of the wider population of representatives.

4.1.1 Union representatives

The mean number of hours per week spent on representative duties by WRQ respondents was 13.34, a statistically significant increase of 1.68 hours per week since 2004. This increase in activity was also evident in the panel, with 61.2 per cent of representatives reporting that they spent longer on representative activities than their equivalents in 2004. However, there is considerable variation around this average, with 29 per cent of union representatives spending one hour or less per week on representative activities, 20 per cent spending 1 – 4 hours on representative activities, 11 per cent more than 5 hours a week, but were not full time in their representative role, and 30 per cent who were full-time lay union representatives. Although these figures differ somewhat compared to the equivalent figures for 2004, the differences were not statistically significant. Over 90 per cent of representatives who spend more than an hour a week on union activities are paid by their employer to do union work while at work (although the wording of this question leaves open the possibility that some of their union work is done voluntarily outside of working hours), while 20 per cent of representatives who work for an hour or less on their representative duties do this entirely voluntarily outside of working hours.

In the context of calls (which post-dated the collection of the 2011 WERS data) by Cabinet Office minister Francis Maude for reductions in the number full-time union representatives in the civil service (BBC 2012), it is interesting to examine the incidence of full-time union representatives in public administration. Looking first at the whole sample, management respondents to the survey reported that full-time union representatives were present in 9% of workplaces in 2011, a figure identical to 2004. When we examined industry group L (public administration), we observed a statistically significant decline in the percentage of workplaces with union representatives who spend all or most of their time on union activities, from 12 per cent in 2004 to 5 per cent in 2011. Given the small sample sizes when we analyse individual industries, we are wary of making claims about the numbers of public administration workplaces with full-time union representatives based on WERS data, but the broad trend is a move away from full-time union representatives in public administration workplaces, which predates Maude's recent calls for a reduction in union representatives of this type.

4.1.2 Non-union representatives

Non-union representatives who participated in the WRQ typically spent considerably less time each week on representative duties than their union equivalents, with a mean of 3.3 hours (this was less than the equivalent figure for 2004, although the difference was not statistically significant). This lower figure reflects the fact that more than half (54 per cent) of non-union representatives spent an hour or less a week on their duties, while only 13 per cent worked full-time on their representative role. A decline in representative hours was also evident in the panel data, as 85 per cent of non-union representatives reported spending fewer hours on representative activities than their equivalents in 2004. However, 90 per cent of non-union representatives who work an hour or a week or less in their representative role reported that their employer paid them to undertake representative duties during working hours. This was a statistically significant increase of 18 percentage points compared to 2004, but representatives who spent more time in their representative role (5 or more hours a week but less than full-time) were more likely to do so voluntarily, only 53 per cent were paid by employers to undertake representative work during working hours.

4.2 General resources provided by employers

4.2.1 Union representatives

Table 4.2.1 summarises facilities provided by employers to union representative respondents to the WRQ. Two of these results are significantly different to the equivalent results from 2004. There was an 11 percentage point drop in the percentage of representatives provided with telephones by their employer, perhaps reflecting that representatives now make greater use of their own mobile phones for union business. There was a 12 point increase in the percentage of representatives who had an office available to them. This was mainly the result of an increase in representatives who had an office available that was also used for other purposes.

Table 4.2.1 Employer provided facilities for union representatives

	Percentage of union representatives 2004	Percentage of union representatives 2011	Change	Statistical significance
Use of an office	62	74	12	*
Telephone	87	76	-11	**
Meeting rooms	75	78	3	
Photo-copier	82	77	-5	
Computer	66	69	3	

Source: WERS 2004 & 2011 WRQs, weighted base: 697 (2004) & 776 (2011). *= $p < 0.1$, **= $p < 0.05$.

4.2.2 Non-union representatives

Table 4.2.2 provides the equivalent results for non-union representatives. If we compare these results with equivalent analysis from 2004, it is interesting to note that there have been statistically significant increases in the provision of meeting rooms, office facilities, photo-copier access and computer access.

Table 4.2.2 Employer provided facilities for Non-union representatives

	Percentage of union representatives 2004	Percentage of union representatives 2011	Change	Statistical significance
Use of an office	64	84	20	*
Telephone	76	81	5	
Meeting rooms	48	84	36	****
Photo-copier	63	85	22	**
Computer	66	84	18	**

Source: WERS 2004 & 2011 WRQs, weighted base: 224 (2004) & 181 (2011).

4.3 Chapter summary

Overall, four key points stand out from these results. First, there has been broad stability in the facilities provided to union representatives since 2004, suggesting that the recession has not caused management to extensively renegotiate the support they provide for unions. Second, union representatives are generally better supported by management in terms of the time they are given to perform their representative role (or they are prepared to spend more of their own time on representative duties). Third, since 2004, there has been a large increase in the proportion of non-union representatives who, on average, spend an hour or less a week in their representative role, but who are paid to do this during working hours. Fourth, non-union representatives tend to enjoy greater provision of facilities like access to meeting rooms, office, phones, computers and photo-copiers. Furthermore, this greater access to ICT, meeting rooms and offices represents a change since 2004. Taken together, these last two points suggest that although the ICE regulations may have not brought about a significant increase in the incidence of non-union worker representatives, the regulations have been associated with a greater formalisation of non-union representatives' role, leading to greater management support. We shall explore this point further in the next chapter, when we look at the activities that worker representatives undertake.

5 ACTIVITIES OF WORKER REPRESENTATIVES

The aims of this chapter are fivefold. First, to examine representative/management interaction by investigating the frequency of meetings between respondents to the WRQ and management, contrasting patterns for union representatives and non-union representatives, and examining changes since 2004. Second, to investigate the issues that representatives deal with in their representative role and whether the issues they deal with are primarily collective or individual in character. Third, to look at the formal mechanisms through which representatives deal with these issues, are they negotiating with management, being consulted or simply receiving information from managers? Previous WERS have identified a decline of the number of issues that union representatives in particular have influence over through negotiation. Has this trend continued? Is there evidence that the role of non-union representatives has changed since 2004 when the ICE regulations were introduced? Fourth, we investigate the extent to which union representatives are engaged in recruitment activities on behalf of their unions. Finally we look at contacts that representatives may have with sources of advice external to the workplace.

5.1 How frequently do representatives meet with management?

Table 5.1.1 Frequency of meetings between worker representatives and management in 2011

	% of Union representatives	% of Non-union representatives
Never	44	17
Less than once a year	1	0
At least once a year	2	0
At least once every six months	8	18
At least once every three months	21	17
At least monthly	27	49

Source: WERS 2011 WRQ, weighted base: 957.

Table 5.1.1 shows the frequency of meetings with management reported by worker representative respondents to WERS. First note that between 2004 and 2011 there were no statistically significant changes for union representatives. At first glance, the high proportion of union representatives who report that they never meet with management is surprising, and a potential sign of a large number of workplaces where the union is a 'hollow shell'. However, many of these workplaces are in the public sector where the workplace is covered by a national collective agreement, so negotiations with management happen away from the workplace. For example, one of the authors is chair of the governing body of a

primary school. During the three and half years he has been chair, neither he nor the head teacher have had a formal meeting with the lay union representatives of the two unions with members in the school. However, during recent public sector strikes, support for the unions and the strike among staff has been strong. The absence of meetings with management does not necessarily indicate a weak or inactive union in this context.

In the case of non-union representatives, there has been a statistically significant decline in the proportion of representatives who report never meeting with management, down from 36.4 per cent in 2004 to 16.6 per cent in 2011, with an corresponding increase in the percentages meeting management at least twice a year and monthly or more. This could be taken as evidence of a somewhat increased role for non-union employee representatives following the introduction of the ICE regulations.

5.2 What issues do representatives deal with?

Table 5.2.1 summarises the issues that union representatives said they spent time dealing with. The most frequently cited issues in 2011 were disciplinary and grievance, health and safety, staffing levels and pay. The proportion of representatives spending time on staffing levels, pensions and equal opportunities/diversity had all increased since 2004. The increased focus on equal opportunities and diversity issues is interesting in the context of the findings (discussed in chapter 3) that the union representatives who participated in the WRQ are more likely to be male, white and aged over 40 than the body of members that they represent.

Table 5.2.1 Activities union representatives spend time on

	% in 2004	% in 2011	Change	Statistical significance
Disciplinary and grievance	72	78	6	
Health and Safety	66	69	3	
Staffing levels	49	62	13	**
Pay	58	61	3	
Pension entitlements	36	55	19	****
Hours of work	54	54	-	
Holiday Entitlements	41	48	7	
Equal Opportunities and Diversity	33	44	11	*
Performance Appraisal	30	39	9	
Training	41	36	-4	
Recruitment	28	31	2	
Other Issues	26	27	1	

Source: WERS 2004 and 2011 WRQs, weighted base: 705 (2004) & 776(2011). Statistical significance levels: **** = $p < 0.001$, *** = $p < 0.01$, ** = $p < 0.05$, * = $p < 0.1$. Significance tested using an Adjusted Wald Test to account for sample design.

Union representatives were then asked which activities were the most important (table 5.2.2). Issues of discipline and grievance, and pay were regarded as the most important by just under a fifth of respondents, followed by staffing levels and pensions. The increased importance of staffing and pensions may be effects of the recession. Staffing is likely to be more of an issue in periods of lay-offs and recruitment freezes. Cuts to public spending have also resulted in changes to pension entitlements in a number of public sector pension schemes.

Table 5.2.2 The most important activities union representatives spend time on

	% in 2004	% in 2011	Change	Statistical significance
Pay	25	18	-7	
Disciplinary and Grievance	7	18	11	****
Staffing Levels	12	16	4	
Pension Entitlements	3	13	10	****
Other Issues	11	9	-2	
Hours of Work	10	9	1	
Health and Safety	14	8	-6	*
Holiday Entitlements	1	2	1	
Performance Appraisal	4	2	-2	
Recruitment	2	1	-1	
Training	2	1	-1	
Equal Opportunities and Diversity	1	1		

Source: WERS 2004 and 2011 WRQs, weighted base: 705 (2004) & 776(2011). Statistical significance levels: **** = $p < 0.001$, *** = $p < 0.01$, ** = $p < 0.05$, * = $p < 0.1$. Significance tested using an Adjusted Wald Test to account for sample design.

Table 5.2.3 Activities non-union representatives spend time on

	% in 2004	% in 2011	Change	Statistical significance
Staffing Levels	39	57	19	**
Training	42	56	14	
Pay	45	50	5	
Health and Safety	43	48	5	
Performance Appraisal	24	45	21	**
Disciplinary and Grievance	31	44	13	
Hours of Work	34	39	5	
Holiday Entitlements	37	30	-7	
Pension Entitlements	17	29	11	
Recruitment	35	27	-8	
Equal Opportunities and Diversity	16	25	9	*
Other Issues	25	17	-8	*

Source: WERS 2004 and 2011 WRQs, weighted base: 224 (2004) & 183 (2011). Statistical significance levels: **** = $p < 0.001$, *** = $p < 0.01$, ** = $p < 0.05$, * = $p < 0.1$. Significance tested using an Adjusted Wald Test to account for sample design.

Tables 5.2.3 and 5.2.4 report equivalent analysis for non-union representatives. It is interesting to note that the importance of pay and recruitment has declined considerably among non-union representatives. At the same time, issues around pensions and disciplinary and grievance have increased in importance. This is suggestive of effects of the recession; at a time of low labour demand, low turnover and pay freezes, reps are not spending time on these issues. The literature on the relationship between the business cycle and labour management practices also suggests that management are more likely to use methods of direct control and tighter supervision in recessions (Friedman 1977), if this is the case, we might expect greater use of disciplinary mechanisms with the result that we observe representatives spend more time dealing with related issues.

It is also interesting to note the similarities and differences between the issues which union and non-union representatives think are most important. Pensions, staffing and discipline and grievance are important for both types of representative, as is the declining importance of pay, although all of these issues are more likely to be important for union representatives than for their non-union counterparts. Hours of work are more important for non-union representatives, and despite the decline in importance since 2004, pay remains relatively more important for union representatives. Recruitment, training and health and safety are all more likely to be of primary importance for non-union representatives. The primary concerns of non-union representatives are spread more evenly across a larger range of issues.

Table 5.2.3 The most important activities non-union representatives spend time on

	% in 2004	% in 2011	Change	Statistical significance
Hours of Work	7	16	9	*
Staffing Levels	10	14	4	
Pay	32	13	-19	***
Recruitment	17	5	-12	**
Disciplinary and Grievance	2	11	9	*
Health and Safety	11	11	0	
Training	5	10	4	
Other Issues	7	9	2	
Pension Entitlements	2	7	5	**
Performance Appraisal	3	3	0	
Holiday Entitlements	2	2	0	
Equal Opportunities and Diversity	1	0	-1	

Source: WERS 2004 and 2011 WRQs, weighted base: 224 (2004) & 183 (2011). Statistical significance levels: **** = $p < 0.001$, *** = $p < 0.01$, ** = $p < 0.05$, * = $p < 0.1$. Significance tested using an Adjusted Wald Test to account for sample design.

5.3 Collective or individual issues?

The WRQ also asked respondents whether the issues they dealt with were primarily collective or individual in character. Responses to that question are summarised in table 5.3.1.

Table 5.3.1 Are the issues that worker representatives individual or collective in nature?

	Percentage of union representatives	Percentage of non-union representatives
Individual employees	36	28
Groups of employees	43	65
Divided between both	21	8

Source: WERS 2011 WRQ, weighted base: 957.

Table 5.3.1 shows that, perhaps surprisingly, non-union representatives were more concerned with collective issues than their union equivalents, although this is likely to reflect the fact that most non-union representatives do not do casework on behalf of individual workers as union representatives do. In contrast to qualitative research (McKay and Moore 2007), which found that union representatives were mainly engaged in individual casework rather than collective issues, 43 per cent of union representatives reported that they mainly dealt with collective issues. This difference may reflect both the potentially unrepresentative nature of the focus groups on which the McKay and Moore's research was based, or the fact that the senior representatives who make up the majority of WRQ respondents may engage in different activities to other types of representative.

5.4 Negotiation, consultation and information sharing

The WRQ asks representatives about the mechanisms through which they engaged with the issues mentioned above, specifically, whether they were involved in negotiations, consultation or simply received information about an issue. Responses to questions about negotiation are summarised in table 5.4.1. Note that we focus on responses from 2011, because, with two exceptions, there were no statistically significant changes in the incidence of negotiation on each issue between 2004 and 2011. The exceptions were the incidence of negotiation over holidays and hours of work among non-union representatives, both of which had increased considerably since 2004. Also keep in mind that the results reported in table 5.4.1. do not necessarily represent the whole of the collective bargaining agenda, because where a workplace is part of a multi-employer collective agreement (as is typically the case in the public sector), additional negotiation may take place away from the workplace without the involvement of the worker representative. Similarly, company level works councils or JCC may discuss or negotiate issues that a workplace level non-union representative is not involved in discussing.

The key point that emerges from table 5.4.1 is that, perhaps unsurprisingly, union representatives are much more likely to be engaged in negotiations than their non-union counterparts, and that pay is the issue that union representatives are most likely to negotiate over. Perhaps more surprising given that non-union representative bodies rarely have negotiating rights is the finding that a significant minority of non-union representatives are involved in negotiations, with one quarter reporting that they negotiated over hours of work.

Table 5.4.1 Percentage of worker representatives negotiating over specific issues in 2011

	% of Union representatives	% of Non-union representatives
<i>Negotiation</i>		
Pay	46	5
Hours of work	36	25
Holiday entitlement	34	11
Pensions	22	1
Training	18	8
Disciplinary and grievance procedures	35	3
Health and safety	25	2

Source: WERS 2011 WRQ, weighted base: 957.

Table 5.4.2 and 5.4.3 show the equivalent results for questions about consultation and information sharing.

Table 5.4.2 Percentage of worker representatives who were consulted over specific issues in 2011

	% of Union representatives	% of Non-union representatives
<i>Consultation</i>		
Pay	15	31
Hours of work	28	28
Holiday entitlement	17	11
Pensions	17	20
Training	35	48
Disciplinary and grievance procedures	30	23
Health and safety	44	32

Source: WERS 2011 WRQ, weighted base: 957.

Table 5.4.3 Percentage of worker representatives who receive information on specific issues in 2011

	% of Union representatives	% of Non-union representatives
<i>Information sharing</i>		
Pay	16	34
Hours of work	20	33
Holiday entitlement	31	59
Pensions	41	55
Training	25	34
Disciplinary and grievance procedures	21	57
Health and safety	20	61

Source: WERS 2011 WRQ, weighted base: 957.

Overall, the results reported in these tables suggest that union representatives generally have more scope to play an influential role within their workplaces than their non-union counterparts, because they are more likely to negotiate over issues and less likely to only receive information on an issue. While non-union representatives are more likely to receive information on a larger number of

issues than their union counterparts, this comes at the expense of negotiation. These findings need to be placed in the context of declining union influence due to a narrowing bargaining agenda identified by previous WERS (Brown et al 2000; Brown and Nash 2008; Kersley et al 2006). Evidence from workplace managers in 2011 suggests that the number of issues that unions negotiate over continued to decline between 2004 and 2011 (van Wanrooy et al 2013: 81). However, evidence from union representatives themselves, suggests that in workplaces with union representatives at least, this waning of union influence has been partially reversed. Within panel workplaces, more than half (52.2 per cent) of union representatives reported that they negotiated over more issues than their equivalents in 2004 (compared to 24.3 per cent negotiating over the same number of issues and 23.7 per cent negotiating over fewer issues). While the cross-section surveys show that the percentage of union representatives reporting that they only negotiate over a single issue has fallen by almost half, from 65.3 per cent to 34.9 per cent.

On average, non-union representatives negotiated over half an issue each (another way of expressing this result is that on average, around half of non-union representatives were involved in negotiations over a single issue), while being consulted over two issues and informed about a further 3.6. There was a statistically significant increase in the number of issues that representatives were informed over between 2004 and 2011 (from 2.8 to 3.6), however there was also an increase in the average number of issues that representatives were neither consulted or informed about, nor given the opportunity to negotiate over (from 0.4 to 1). This suggests a slight broadening of the scope of information and consultation following the introduction of the ICE regulations.

Finally, table 5.4.4 examines the incidence of worker representatives who were not consulted, subject to information sharing or given the opportunity to negotiate over issues. This table shows that significant proportions of both union and non-union representatives have no opportunity for involvement in key employment relations issues.

Table 5.4.4 Percentage of worker representatives who did not negotiate, consult or receive information on specific issues in 2011

	% of Union representatives	% of Non-union representatives
Pay	24	30
Hours of work	16	14
Holiday entitlement	18	18
Pensions	20	25
Training	22	10
Disciplinary and grievance procedures	15	17
Health and safety	11	5

Source: WERS 2011 WRQ, weighted base: 957.

Again, the table focuses on results from 2011 because there were few statistically significant changes between 2004 and 2011. However, non-union representative influence over health and safety appeared to fall (60.7 per cent were not informed, consulted or given the opportunity to negotiate on this issue in 2011, compared to 26.6 per cent in 2004), as did influence over pensions (24.6 per cent not negotiating or being consulted/informed up from 9.5% in 2004) and holiday entitlement (18.4 per cent with no input on this issue, up from 6.8 per cent in 2004).

5.5 Recruitment activities by union representatives

Responses to the WRQ from union representatives suggest that unions were engaging in a greater level of organising and recruitment activity in 2011 compared to 2004. Responses to questions on union recruitment are summarised in table 5.5.1 (below). The key point that emerges from this table is a statistically significant increase in representatives' attempts to recruit non-union members in jobs covered by the representatives' unions, with 80 per cent of representatives undertaking such recruitment activity in 2011. Other forms of recruitment activity were stable. This suggests that a rising stock of grievances as a result of the recession and subsequent cuts in public spending may have been a spur for union recruitment activity.

Table 5.5.1 Recruitment activity by union representatives 2004 and 2011

	% in 2004	% in 2011	Change	Statistical significance
Has rep tried to recruit new representatives?	75	79	4	
Attempted to recruit staff covered by union's collective agreement?	64	80	17	****
Successful in recruiting these employees?	95	93	-2	
Attempted to recruit staff not covered by union's collective agreement?	33	40	7	
Successful in recruiting these employees?	83	82	-1	

*Source: WERS 2004 and 2011 WRQs, weighted base: 705 (2004) & 776(2011). Statistical significance levels: **** = $p < 0.001$, *** = $p < 0.01$, ** = $p < 0.05$, * = $p < 0.1$. Significance tested using an Adjusted Wald Test to account for sample design.*

5.6 Sources of advice and support

Finally, the WRQ asked representatives about what other forms of advice and support they had drawn on in their representative role over the previous 12 months. Two thirds of union representatives had sought outside help or advice compared to just one third of non-union representatives. Unsurprisingly union representatives most common source of support was their union (contacted by 54 per cent), followed by lawyers (27 per cent), Acas (23 per cent) and the TUC (22%). By contrast, 13 per cent of non-union representatives had sought advice from lawyers, while 12 per cent had drawn on Acas. The demographic and workplace characteristics of representatives who sought advice from Acas are reported in appendix 2 (below).

5.7 Chapter summary

Four key points stand out from this chapter. First, there is partial evidence that the long decline in the scope of collective bargaining identified in previous WERS has been reversed with union representatives reporting that they negotiate over a broader range of issues in 2011 than in 2004 (although note that information from managers covering workplaces without worker representatives suggests that the narrowing of the bargaining agenda has continued). Pensions have become an increasingly important issue. Contrary to previous research, (McKay and Moore 2007) a significant proportion of union representatives were also engaged in collective issues rather than simply dealing with individual casework. Second, there is evidence that union representatives are devoting greater attention to recruitment, with 80 per cent reporting that they had attempted to recruit workers covered by their union's collective agreement who were not members (up from 64 per cent in 2004). Third, there has been a reduction in the number of non-union representatives who never meet with management, and a small increase in the number of issues that non-union representatives receive information about. Once again, these results point to a modest but significant formalisation of the non-union representative role since 2004, which may possibly be attributable to the effects of the ICE regulations. Fourth, Acas was a source of advice for almost a quarter of union representatives and over a tenth of non-union representatives.

6 ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF WORKER REPRESENTATIVES

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter we return to using data provided by the management respondents to WERS to examine the relationship between different forms of worker representation and a variety of outcomes for workplaces and employees. Specifically we examine the relationship between the presence of union and non-union representatives in the workplace and labour turnover, absenteeism, the provision of training, indicators of procedural justice, employee well-being and workplace performance. We used different forms of regression analysis to undertake these investigations. In each set of analysis, we compare workplaces with union representation, non-union representation and both union and non-union forms of representation with workplaces that have no on-site worker representatives. Our regression models typically included controls workplace size, managerial reports of the industrial relations climate, the largest occupational group at the workplace, whether the workplace was part of a larger organisation and whether it was foreign owned, 1 digit SIC code, public or private sector, union recognition, union density, workplace age. Analysis of individual workers also contained controls for the workers' gender, age, whether they had dependent children, whether they were disabled and working hours. We supplement this analysis with change score analysis of panel workplaces to investigate changes in the outcome variables associated with changes in the presence of representatives at these workplaces. When reading the discussion of this analysis below, keep in mind the limitations of this approach; it can illuminate statistically significant associations between workplace representation and the outcome variables, but these results may be biased by our inability to control for other important characteristics of the workplace that we cannot observe or measure, and we are unable to establish whether worker representation cause any relationships that we observe.

6.2 Worker representation, voluntary labour turnover, investments in training and workplace performance

In their classic analysis of the effects of trade unions, Freeman and Medoff (1984) found evidence that unions reduce labour turnover by raising wages and ensuring procedural justice in the workplace. Further, Freeman and Lazear (1995) argued that non-union forms of worker representation were unlikely to have similar effects unless underpinned by a statutory framework that made them mandatory, as in Germany. In the British context then, we might expect to find that union voice reduces voluntary turnover, but that non-union representation has no such effects. However, evidence from the 2004 WERS suggested that there was a relationship between union recognition and lower voluntary turnover, but this was unrelated to on-site union representation (Bryson and Forth 2010: 39). To investigate this question, we estimated a series of regression models on the determinants of labour turnover. These analyses replicated the results of Bryson and Forth for 2004, but found that by 2011, union representation was associated with lower voluntary labour turnover, even after controlling for union recognition and membership density. However, whether or not this result was statistically significant depended on the type of regression model used. Tobit analysis (the

method used by Bryson and Forth) did not produce statistically significant results, but Poisson analysis did. We believe that given the distribution of the voluntary labour turnover variable, Poisson analysis is correct, but this is a matter of judgement¹. To further investigate the relationship between union representatives and quit rates, we performed a change score analysis on the panel workplaces. This method compares changes in mean voluntary labour turnover between 2004 and 2011 for workplaces that had no union representative in either period with workplaces that gained a union representative between 2004 and 2011. This analysis found that gaining a union representative was associated with falling voluntary labour turnover. We therefore think that the weight of evidence suggests that the presence of a union representative is associated with lower voluntary labour turnover. However, there were no such associations for non-union representation.

If labour turnover is lower, returns to investments in training are likely to be higher, so union representation may be associated with a higher incidence of training too. However, we found no evidence to support this in our analysis. Given that a more highly skilled workforce is a possible mechanism through which unions might raise productivity and we found no evidence of greater investments in training in workplaces with union representatives, it is unsurprising that in cross-sectional analysis, we could find no evidence, positive or negative, which suggested a relationship between union (or non-union) representation and managerial perceptions of labour productivity or financial performance. However, when we examined change in managerial perceptions of financial performance between 2004 and 2011, we found that in workplaces where a workplace gained workplace union representation, managerial perceptions of financial performance improved.

6.3 Does worker representation enhance fairness and employee well-being?

The greater attention to procedural justice in workplaces with union representation may also impact on other indicators, particularly dismissal rates (because fewer workers will be dismissed without good cause) and absenteeism (because workers are less likely to fear being disciplined unfairly for absence, although some may of course abuse this greater protection). Charlwood and Terry (2007) found evidence that dismissal rates were lower in workplaces with union recognition and dual channel workplaces in their analysis of 2004 WERS, while Dix et al (2009) found that absenteeism was also higher in union and dual channel workplaces. In our analysis of the 2011 WERS, we could find no evidence to suggest that absenteeism and dismissal rates were lower in workplaces with union representation (or non-union representation) once other workplace characteristics were taken into account. Neither was there evidence that among panel workplaces gaining a representative was associated with changes in absenteeism or dismissal rates.

¹ Briefly, Tobit estimators are used when the dependent variable is left censored, i.e. the values of observations at the bottom of the distribution are not observable. This method assumes that non-censored observations are distributed normally. In the case of quit rates, many workplace have zero quits. However having zero quits is not the same as the observation being censored (i.e. having a value that is not observable). Further the variable is not normally distributed. For this reason, we prefer the Poisson regression method because this method does not assume a normal distribution. See Kennedy (1998) for further discussion.

We also investigated whether worker reports of well-being and job satisfaction varied according to the mode of worker representation at the workplace. If systems of worker representation are effective in bringing worker concerns to management and getting them addressed, it is theoretically possible that they will result in higher job satisfaction and well-being. However, this prediction is complicated by the fact that union workers may have systematically different expectations to non-union counterparts, which affect the norms against which evaluations of satisfaction and feelings about work are made, so obscuring any positive effects (Freeman and Medoff 1984). It may also be the case that the issues and concerns that shape evaluation of well-being for individual workers are too far removed from the issues discussed through representative channels and that representatives lack the power to get management to address concerns adequately. It is therefore an empirical question as to whether different forms of representation are associated with improved satisfaction and well-being. Our empirical analysis found no associations between job satisfaction, well-being and modes of representation (although this does not preclude other union effects on job satisfaction, see for example Bryson et al 2013).

Finally, we found some evidence to suggest that injury rates were higher in workplaces with a union representative, but interpreting this finding is complicated by the fact that reporting and monitoring of injuries might be more thorough in workplaces with union recognition, and particularly with on-site union representation (Seth Litwin 2000). There was no relationship between change in injury rates and changes in the presence of union representatives in panel workplace. However, where non-union representatives were recruited between 2004 and 2011, injury rates fell.

6.4 Chapter summary

Overall then, these results suggest that different modes of worker representation have at most modest effects on workplace outcomes. On the one hand, this means that on the basis of these results, there is no overwhelmingly compelling case for employee representation based on the benefits to business, but neither is there a compelling case against. Although a degree of caution is needed about this conclusion – better measures of workplace performance and a more extensive set of control variables might change the results - perhaps arguments for and against worker representation need to be made against criteria other than the costs and benefits to business.

7 CONCLUSIONS

This report has charted changes in the incidence and activities of worker representatives in Britain between 2004 and 2011. It set out to answer two key questions. First, what has happened to workplace union organisation through the recession? Has the decline in union influence in the workplace identified in previous WERS continued? Second, has it been possible to discern any effects of the 2004 ICE regulations in terms of changing patterns of non-union representation?

7.1 What has happened to workplace union organisation through the recession?

In contrast to the two previous recessions, union organisation appears to have weathered the recession of 2008 and its aftermath relatively well. Union recognition and membership levels remained broadly stable. The incidence of union representatives in the workplace also remained relatively stable, with union representatives present in 32 per cent of workplaces with union recognition. There were approximately 150,000 union representatives in British workplaces in 2011, the same numbers as in 2004. However, there was a sharp decline in union representative numbers in manufacturing and an increase in representative numbers in the public sector. This suggests management restructuring of employee voice arrangements in the sector of the economy (manufacturing) most exposed to international competition.

The recession and its affects also appear to have resulted in changes in what union representatives do. Note that the 2011 WERS was in the field at a time of heightened union militancy in response to pay freezes, redundancies, and particularly changes to pension arrangements. In this context, union representatives reported that they were negotiating over a larger range of issues than their equivalents in 2004. They were more likely to be negotiating over pensions and staffing levels, and that issues of pension, disciplinary and grievance were more important while pay was less important than in 2004. Union representatives were also spending more time on their representative role on average than in 2004 and they were more likely to have engaged in (successful) attempts to recruit new members. While it is not possible to determine precisely the causes of these changes through our data, taken together these results are compatible with the idea that a rising stock of grievances caused by deteriorating terms and conditions of employment has acted as a spur to union activism, particularly in the public sector.

7.2 What has happened to non-union employee representation following the introduction of the ICE regulations?

There is no evidence of an aggregate increase in non-union employee representation following the introduction of ICE regulations. However, analysis of the panel of workplaces that participated in both the 2004 and 2011 surveys suggests that around 8 per cent developed a functioning system of non-union representation in 2011 having not had one in 2004. At the same time, 6 per cent of workplaces did not have non-union representatives in 2011 after having had them in 2004. It is not possible to say with certainty that workplaces adopted non-union representation because of the ICE regulations. However, other forms of

evidence (Hall et al 2011) suggest that the regulations did prompt some organisations to adopt such systems. If this is the case, it suggests that if the ICE regulations had not been introduced, non-union worker representation in Britain would have decline dramatically.

There is also evidence of a more formal and developed role for non-union representatives in 2011 than in 2004. Worker representatives themselves reported that they spent more time on their representative roles and received more support from employers, in the form of time to carry out representative duties and facilities like offices, meeting rooms, phones and photo-copiers. They also reported meeting more frequently with management and were consulted on and received information on a larger number of issues. Taken together, these results point to qualitative changes in the nature of non-union worker representation. Given research which suggests that systems of non-union worker representation tend to disintegrate over time (Terry 1999), and the evidence presented above of widespread abandonment of non-union worker representation systems among workplaces that had them in 2004, it will be interesting to see whether these new worker representatives have any impact on their workplaces and whether their role endures now that it has a statutory underpinning.

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Appendix 1: Table A1.1 – Regression analyses of gaining and losing a union representative

	Gaining A Union Rep	Losing A Union Rep
<i>Climate of Employment Relations (Ref: Very Poor)</i>		
Poor	4.3284	-----
	(13.3511)	-----
Neither Poor nor Good	1.1606	0.2551
	(3.0125)	(0.3842)
Good	2.5909	0.6015
	(1.7021)	(0.4262)
Very Good	3.9703	1.2003
	(0.0002)	0
<i>Workplace Size (Ref: <25)</i>		
25-100	19.4481***	0.3236
	(21.3414)	(0.3303)
100-500	102.2384****	0.0507**
	(130.6630)	(0.0619)
500+	70.2152**	0.0181***
	(131.3372)	(0.0223)
<i>Largest Occupational Group (Ref: Professional)</i>		
Associate Professional & Technical	3.1491	1.7854
	(3.7137)	(2.4947)
Administrative & Secretarial	3.7382	1.6869
	(3.9899)	(2.6523)
Skilled Trades	3.3940	0.9319
	(6.5547)	(2.0214)
Caring, Leisure & Other Service	1.1827	1.3037
	(1.1464)	(1.3488)
Sales & Customer Service	0.9907	0.1573
	(1.9412)	(0.2971)
Process, Plant & Machine	9.8407	1.1969
	(17.2181)	(2.5265)
Elementary	2.7628	0.4383
	(8.5765)	(0.8443)
<i>Part of a Larger Organisation (Ref: No)</i>		
Yes	41.8736***	2.0659
	(46.7481)	(2.5093)
<i>Sector (Ref: Private Manufacturing)</i>		
Private Services	626.6997***	0.0000****
	(1,301.4662)	(0.0000)
Public Sector	277.4946***	0.0000****
	(574.7157)	(0.0000)

<i>Are Unions Recognised by the Workplace (Ref: No)</i>		
Yes	1.0000	1.0000
	(0.0000)	(0.0000)
<i>Union Density</i>	1.0409****	0.9793
	(0.0121)	(0.0157)
<i>Industry (Ref: D: Manufacturing)</i>		
E: Electricity, gas & water	0.5064	0.4920*
	(0.8297)	(0.1807)
F: Construction	0.1222	1.1861
	(0.1995)	(0.3477)
G: Wholesale & retail	0.5655	0.7451
	(1.0315)	(0.3249)
H: Hotels & restaurants	1.6389	0.8362
	(1.3719)	(0.1799)
I: Transport & communication	0.0258***	0.4835***
	(0.0352)	(0.1268)
J: Financial services	0.0954	1.4489
	(0.2470)	(0.4839)
K: Other business services	1.3394	0.6576
	(1.0787)	(0.3278)
L: Public administration	0.3149	0.4880*
	(0.4471)	(0.1806)
M: Education	0.6145	0.4138**
	(0.7709)	(0.1526)
N: Health	0.1091***	0.0567
	(0.0923)	(0.1086)
O: Other community services	1.4714	0.1252
	(1.1950)	(0.1817)
<i>Is The Organisation is foreign Owned (Ref: No)</i>		
Yes	0.1193	0.4599
	(0.3118)	(0.4901)
<i>How Old is the Workplace?</i>	1.0079	1.0014
	(0.0081)	(0.0049)
Constant	0.0000****	8.2893
	(0.0000)	(22.7375)
Observations	131	284

Source: WERS 2004 and 2011 MQs, Results are weighted by establishment
Statistical significance levels: **** = $p < 0.001$, *** = $p < 0.01$, ** = $p < 0.05$,
* = $p < 0.1$.

Table A1.2 – Regression analyses of gaining and losing a non-union representative

	Losing A Non-Union Rep	Gaining A Non-Union Rep
<i>Climate of Employment Relations (Ref: Very Poor)</i>		
Poor	-----	-----
	-----	-----
Neither Poor nor Good	-----	1.3755
	-----	(2.0069)
Good	4.6179	0.4790
	(6.3985)	(0.5962)
Very Good	5.2937**	0.6700
	(4.1286)	(0.8307)
<i>Workplace Size (Ref: <25)</i>		
25-100	0.0314***	4.4783***
	(0.0392)	(2.4038)
100-500	0.0131***	8.9552****
	(0.0200)	(4.8261)
500+	0.0266**	1.4489
	(0.0458)	(1.0562)
<i>Largest Occupational Group (Ref: Professional)</i>		
Associate Professional & Technical	94.7612**	0.9460
	(191.8585)	(0.7205)
Administrative & Secretarial	16.7622	0.8452
	(29.8031)	(0.6283)
Skilled Trades	3.5398	0.1273*
	(9.5910)	(0.1338)
Caring, Leisure & Other Service	0.0664	1.0414
	(0.1444)	(0.8906)
Sales & Customer Service	0.7962	0.1000**
	(1.9056)	(0.1091)
Process, Plant & Machine	64.0607*	0.0798***
	(139.1014)	(0.0677)
Elementary	1.4894	0.2137*
	(3.0855)	(0.1731)
<i>Part of a Larger Organisation (Ref: No)</i>		
Yes	0.1498	1.8113
	(0.2088)	(0.9103)
<i>Sector (Ref: Private Manufacturing)</i>		
Private Services	2.9778	0.0001****
	(7.2756)	(0.0001)
Public Sector	8.3778	0.0000****
	(23.5612)	(0.0000)

<i>Are Unions Recognised by the Workplace (Ref: No)</i>		
Yes	1.4247	3.9685**
	(1.5474)	(2.5533)
<i>Union Density</i>	1.0153	0.9839*
	(0.0175)	(0.0088)
<i>Industry (Ref: D: Manufacturing)</i>		
E: Electricity, gas & water	0.2051	0.0423
	(0.5831)	(9.1593)
F: Construction	18.3679	-9.7581
	(49.7124)	(8.3730)
G: Wholesale & retail	23.7711*	-14.9227**
	(43.4078)	(6.2855)
H: Hotels & restaurants	30.3753*	2.4354
	(62.1323)	(7.8307)
I: Transport & communication	0.1105	-
	(0.2731)	19.8525***
		(6.2292)
J: Financial services	2.3545	-13.6677*
	(6.2155)	(8.1468)
K: Other business services	4.1030	-13.4522**
	(9.9323)	(6.5841)
L: Public administration	0.0496	-1.9984
	(0.1199)	(7.2517)
M: Education	2.7339	-6.4793
	(7.6410)	(6.1284)
N: Health	1.3740	-7.2869
	(0.1983)	(6.7628)
O: Other community services	0.1785	-7.8845
	(1.9735)	(6.5502)
<i>Is The Organisation is foreign Owned (Ref:No)</i>		
Yes	1.1465	0.2394**
	(1.3140)	(0.1590)
<i>How Old is the Workplace?</i>	0.9822***	0.9933
	(0.0061)	(0.0049)
Constant	4.5843	0.3189
	(10.4329)	(0.4964)
Weighted Observations	140	693

Source: WERS 2004 and 2011 MQs, Results are weighted by establishment
Statistical significance levels: **** = $p < 0.001$, *** = $p < 0.01$, ** = $p < 0.05$,
* = $p < 0.1$.

Appendix 2: Table A2.1 – The percentage of union representatives who approached Acas for advice by demographic and workplace characteristics.

	2004	2011	Change
Male	23	20	-3
Female	12	26	14***
Age Under 30	22	31	9
Age 30-39	15	18	3
Age 40-49	17	30	13
Age 50+	17	18	1
<i>Occupation</i>			
Managers and Senior Officials	34	26	-8
Professional	5	28	23***
Associate Professional/Technical	19	12	-7
Administrative and Secretarial	16	25	9
Skilled Trades	13	7	-6
Personal Service	3	19	16
Sales and Customer Service	3	17	14
Process, Plant and Machine	15	32	17
Routine	59	24	25**
<i>Sector</i>			
Private	14	20	6
Public	19	25	6
<i>Industry</i>			
D: Manufacturing	28	22	-6
E: Electricity, gas & water	13	13	-
F: Construction	4	15	11
G: Wholesale & retail	5	29	24
H: Hotels & restaurants	12	1	-11
I: Transport & communication	20	20	-
J: Financial services	23	8	-15
K: Other business services	4	15	11
L: Public administration	24	37	13*
M: Education	4	15	11**
N: Health	24	18	-6
O: Other community services	19	36	17

Source: WERS 2004 and 2011 WRQs, weighted base: 705 (2004), 776 (2011)
 Statistical significance levels: **** = $p < 0.001$, *** = $p < 0.01$, ** = $p < 0.05$, * = $p < 0.1$. Significance tested using an Adjusted Wald Test to account for sample design.

Table A2.2 – The percentage of non-union representatives who approached Acas for advice by demographic and workplace characteristics.

	2004	2011	Change
Male	6	14	8
Female	3	7	4
Age Under 30	1	4	3
Age 30-39	9	27	18*
Age 40-49	18	10	-8
Age 50+	10	10	-
<i>Occupation</i>			
Managers and Senior Officials	3	9	6
Professional	8	12	4
Associate Professional/Technical	2	2	-
Administrative and Secretarial	33	28	-5
Skilled Trades	10	17	7
Personal Service	1	3	2
Sales and Customer Service	1	10	9
Process, Plant and Machine	38	31	-7
Routine	1	1	-
<i>Sector</i>			
Private	10	13	3
Public	2	5	3
<i>Industry</i>			
D: Manufacturing	26	13	-13
E: Electricity, gas & water	15	3	-12
F: Construction	2	15	13
G: Wholesale & retail	3	5	2
H: Hotels & restaurants	1	3	2
I: Transport & communication	1	11	10
J: Financial services	63	11	-52*
K: Other business services	8	22	14
L: Public administration	7	1	-6
M: Education	2	1	-1
N: Health	1	12	11
O: Other community services	13	39	26*

Source: WERS 2004 and 2011 WRQs, weighted base: 224 (2004), 183 (2011)
 Statistical significance levels: **** = $p < 0.001$, *** = $p < 0.01$, ** = $p < 0.05$, * = $p < 0.1$. Significance tested using an Adjusted Wald Test to account for sample design.

