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Coverage
United Kingdom
Theme
Labour Market

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Labour Market Trends

September 2001

Trade union membership rose by 46,000, to a total of 7.9 million in the year to March 2001, according to data from the Certification Officer. The figures, which were up for the second year in a row, appear in an article on union membership in the September *Labour Market Trends** out today.

As well as information from union annual returns to the Certification Officer, the article gives results from the Labour Force Survey in autumn 2000. These show that 7.3 million of those in employment in autumn 2000 were union members. This was an increase of 169,000 since 1998, although it still represents a fall in union membership of 1.5 million since 1990.

Despite a rise in union membership in 2000 the proportion of employees who were in a union (union density) decreased slightly – down from 29.5 per cent to 29.4. This is because the total number of employees rose faster than the number of union members. In the period 1990-2000 density fell faster for men than women – for male employees it went from 43.0 per cent to 29.9 per cent, whereas for women it went from 32.0 per cent to 28.9 per cent.

The decline in union density was faster in production industries than in services – it ended the period lower in production than in services, having been about ten percentage points higher in 1990. In 2000 union density was highest in public administration (59 per cent). Other industries with high density included education (54 per cent) and electricity, gas and water supply (53 per cent). It was lowest in hotels and restaurants (5 per cent) and next lowest in real estate and business services (10 per cent). Density among public sector employees was 60 per cent, compared with 19 per cent in the private sector.

Regionally, trade union membership was strongest in the North East and Wales – both with density of 40 per cent – and lowest in the East at 22 per cent.

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Other articles this month include:

Some labour market implications of employment legislation

This article, which is based on analysis by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, presents some possible implications of employment protection legislation on the levels, patterns and distribution of work in European labour markets. It concludes that legislation does not by itself appear to explain differences in employment and unemployment across Europe. However, there is some evidence that more protective employment legislation reduces diversity and dynamism in the labour market.

Features in 'Labour Market Spotlight' this month include:

- Reasons for working fewer hours
- Job-related training
- Ethnic groups by using the 2001 Census questions
- Disabled people and the labour market
- Skills shortages

'News and research' items include:

- Labour market statistics on the Web
- Injury at work

BACKGROUND NOTES

1. A downloadable version of the September *Labour Market Trends* will be available on the National Statistics website at <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/products/p550.asp>
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