

# Research Paper

## Trade Union Officers and Collective Conciliation A Secondary Analysis

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**Edmund Heery and David Nash**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The starting point for this report is a seeming decline in the use of collective conciliation provided by Acas to resolve industrial disputes. While the incidence of the latter has been broadly stable over the past decade, referral of disputes to Acas has declined.

The evidence-base for the inquiry is a large survey of paid union negotiating officers, commissioned by Acas from the Labour Research Department. This survey was conducted in 2010 and yielded an extremely rich set of information – more than 900 usable responses were collected from union negotiators employed by a total of 53 trade unions.

The survey allowed the question of union use of Acas to be explored in two main ways. In the first place, it identified those union officers who were low or non-users of Acas collective conciliation over the previous ten years and those who were multiple users. Through statistical analysis it was possible to identify the characteristics of union officers falling into each category and, in so doing to test a number of broad hypotheses: that use of Acas was a function of the personal characteristics and histories of union officers, of the bargaining units for which they are responsible, of the unions for which they work and of the types of dispute that they have encountered. In the second place, the survey asked union officers directly why they had not made use of Acas collective conciliation either for their most recent industrial dispute or over the previous ten years.

The principal findings along the first avenue of inquiry were as follows:

- Women officers, relatively recent entrants to union work and graduates of the TUC's Organizing Academy were *less* likely to make use of collective conciliation.
- Union officers with responsibility for multiple bargaining units, located in London and with members in local government, retail and distribution and passenger transport were *more* likely to make use of Acas.
- Union character influences the likelihood of using Acas, such that officers from unions with a militant reputation are more likely to be users while officers from non-TUC affiliates, what might be regarded as more moderate unions, are less likely to do so.

A main finding from the second line of inquiry was that non-use of Acas often arose from factors beyond the union officer's control, in particular from resistance to the involvement of a third party from the employer. Nevertheless, there was evidence that the orientation of union officers to their own job and their perceptions and prior experience also shaped the decision not to use Acas. Officers with a professional orientation that emphasised their own capacity to resolve disputes were less likely to have resorted to collective conciliation, as were officers who did not have confidence in Acas or who had had a poor previous experience of involving the organization.

In addition to providing information on the use and non-use of Acas by paid union officers, the survey furnished evidence on other issues. One of these concerned the characteristics of paid union negotiators themselves, a relatively small but critical occupation in the unionised system of industrial relations in Britain. The results of the survey echoed other, earlier research on union officers. It indicated that most enter the job relatively late in their career, are prepared through a lay apprenticeship in union activism and tend to acquire extensive job tenure, before exiting union employment in their late fifties. The research also revealed processes of change amongst the union workforce, however. There is a slow but steady process of feminization, albeit that women remain a minority of union officers, and it is also apparent that the proportion of graduates within union officialdom is rising. This is part of a broader trend towards professionalization of the union officer role that has encompassed developments such

as the launch of the TUC's Organizing Academy. These processes of change may not be favourable to Acas: as has already been pointed out women officers and those with a strong professional orientation were less likely to make use of collective conciliation.

The survey also provided valuable information on union officers' experience of disputes. A key finding is that virtually all union officers report one or more instance of collective conflict in the past decade though in the majority of cases these would not have led to an actual stoppage of work. On this evidence, collective conflict remains an institutionalized feature of unionised industrial relations. Its incidence is variable, however, and the research identified industries that are more or less dispute-prone and unions that are more or less prone to become involved in disputes. This last finding is important because it suggests that union 'character' or 'identity' is an important causal factor within industrial relations. Union officers working for unions which are reputedly militant are more likely to experience conflict (and make use of Acas), while officers working for less 'unionate' organizations that are not affiliated to the TUC are less likely to do so.

Two other key findings emerged from the analysis of officers' experience of disputes. The first concerned the issues that give rise to dispute. Pay emerged as the most common subject of conflict but, contrary to other evidence, several other issues emerged as significant as well. Particularly in public services, disputes over organizational change, management style and questions of equality and diversity emerged as prominent. The survey also highlighted the level of conflict over pensions, in advance of the large national strikes over this issue in 2011. The second concerned methods of dispute resolution. Again, the evidence told a story of complexity. Union officers reported using a range of methods to try and resolve disputes. Recourse to Acas was one of these but others included holding industrial action ballots or other tests of member opinion, appealing to higher levels of management or union, threatening legal action and use of the media. It was hypothesised that one of the reasons for reduced use of Acas might be the availability of industrial action ballots and other legal mechanisms for resolving disputes. This did not seem to be the case, however. Union officers who reported using balloting to solve a dispute also tended to report use of Acas. These methods appeared to reinforce, not contradict, one another.

The final issue that was explored in the survey was union officers' perceptions and use of Acas beyond the specific question of collective conciliation. Many of the findings here were positive from an Acas point of view. There is widespread knowledge of and support for Acas, which is seen as impartial and independent of government, employers and unions themselves. Acas emerges from the study as a trusted 'brand' amongst a large segment of the union workforce. There is also evidence of extensive use of Acas services, including help with resolving individual disputes and information and advisory services. The pattern of use amongst union officers was largely cumulative: those who made use of collective conciliation also made use of other services. This is another important finding because it emphasises the importance for Acas of developing an ongoing relationship with union-based users of the service package it offers. There is also variation in the use of Acas by union officers, however, and here the findings were not so positive. As we have noted, there is less use of Acas amongst some of the expanding categories within the union workforce, such as women and those trained in organizing, and to a degree, Acas emerges as an instrument of more 'traditional' officers (older, with higher seniority who have served a lay apprenticeship), employed in more traditional contexts (resolving pay disputes).



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Shortly after the creation of Acas in 1974 the Trades Union Congress (TUC) advised its affiliates to make full use of the new body and the Transport and General Workers' Union, then Britain's largest union, instructed its officers that they must attempt collective conciliation through Acas before taking industrial action (Goodman 2000). In recent years, however, resort to Acas has reduced. While the incidence of industrial action has remained broadly stable over the past decade, requests to use Acas' collective conciliation service have declined. In 2008/09, there were 960 requests to conciliate compared with 1500 in 1999/2000 (Ruhemann 2010).<sup>1</sup>

The primary purpose of this report is to explore this empirical puzzle and shed light on the seeming reluctance of some paid union officers to involve Acas in situations of collective dispute. In doing so, we make use of a survey of paid trade union officers involved in collective bargaining, commissioned by Acas from the Labour Research Department (LRD) in 2010. This survey covered 1719 union negotiating officers, estimated by LRD to comprise more than 80 per cent of union officers in Britain who are involved in negotiations with employers. Of these, 1024 returned questionnaires, a response rate of 60 per cent. This figure was then further reduced to 950 valid responses through the use of screening questions that eliminated responses from officers who were not in fact involved in negotiations (see Ruhemann 2010). This response rate helps to minimise the potential for non-response bias that besets survey data (Mangione 1995). Furthermore, Ruhemann (2010: 53) concludes that the sample is representative of the population of union negotiating officers and, therefore, there is no reason to suspect systematic non-response bias. The survey gathered information on the characteristics of officers and the bargaining units for which they are responsible, their experience of disputes and their use of Acas. It proved to be a well-designed and an extremely rich source of information.

Initial findings from the survey were presented in a report to Acas from LRD, *Trade Union Negotiating Officials' Use and Non-use of Acas Conciliation in Industrial Disputes* (Ruhemann 2010), which contains a full account of the methodology employed in the research. The present report builds upon this initial work and presents a secondary analysis of the dataset, distinguished principally by a fuller statistical examination of patterns of variation in officers' use of Acas. In addition, the report makes use of the Workplace Employment Relations Survey 2004 to provide supplementary material on the incidence of collective conciliation involving Acas in British workplaces.

Although the primary purpose of the report is to examine patterns of use and non-use of Acas by union officers, the richness of the LRD dataset enabled other issues to be explored. Accordingly, in what follows we use the 2010 survey to examine the characteristics of union officers themselves – who they are and how they are prepared for their role. Although a relatively small occupational group, numbering fewer than 5000, union officers play a pivotal role in the British system of unionised industrial relations and the survey provided an opportunity to profile officers and consider how they are changing as a group through comparison with findings from earlier research (e.g. Heery 2006b).

Another question that is explored concerns the incidence and characteristics of industrial disputes. Strikes and other forms of industrial action were once a staple of industrial relations research but the decline of unions and the diminishing frequency of strike action has led to relative neglect in recent years (for exceptions see Dix *et al* 2008; Lyddon 2009). The LRD survey yielded unique and highly valuable information on union officers' experience of industrial disputes, including the sectoral and industrial incidence of conflict, issues that provide the basis of disputes and the methods used by union officers to seek the resolution of conflict, including but not confined to Acas collective conciliation. In the report below we present a full analysis of this material and

seek to relate it to other evidence on patterns of collective conflict in the United Kingdom (e.g. Hale 2010).

The central purpose of the report remains, however, to examine the use of Acas by union officers to resolve collective disputes. This critical question, the empirical puzzle outlined above, is explored by testing a series of broad research propositions. These overlapping propositions are as follows:

- Use of Acas is a function of the characteristics of union officers themselves, their backgrounds, socialization, development and orientation to collective bargaining;
- Use of Acas is a function of the unions that employ union officers, their membership, structure and character or identity, including their degree of militancy or orientation to compromise;
- Use of Acas reflects the number and characteristics of the bargaining units for which officers are responsible, including the geographical, sectoral and industrial location of those bargaining units;
- Use of Acas derives from officers' experience of collective conflict and disputes, including the frequency of disputes, their severity and their cause;
- Use of Acas reflects the availability of alternative means of dispute settlement, such as reliance on legal industrial action ballots, that may reduce the need of union officers to have recourse to Acas;
- Use of Acas is a function of the officers' prior knowledge, experience and evaluation of Acas, such that prior users or those with a positive appreciation of Acas' role are more likely to involve the organization in dispute resolution.

While there is limited information fully to test all of these propositions, the LRD data do contain information relevant to all and we have used both bivariate and multivariate statistical tests to examine their validity.

A final objective of the report is to relate the findings of the study to a number of broad developments in British industrial relations that have become the subject of intense debate and research activity. One of these is the question of union 'revitalization' or 'renewal'; the attempts by trade unions to reverse their long decline in membership through a variety of strategies (Heery 2011a; Simms and Charlwood 2010). The latter include increased investment in organizing, developing new partnership relations with employers, improving union responsiveness to the preferences of member-consumers, attempting to represent a more diverse workforce, union mergers, and internal renewal through the development of management systems and training and development for union activists and officers. At several points the analysis below connects with elements in this broad theme. Its closest connection though is with the question of the internal renewal of unions and the degree to which the changing composition of the officer workforce and the ongoing professionalization of their role promotes or inhibits a relationship with Acas.

Another broad theme underpinning the report is that of the juridification of employment relations in Britain, the presence of an expanding volume of individual and collective employment law (Dickens and Hall 2010; Heery 2011b). Acas has been described by Goodman as 'both a product of, and essentially an embodiment of, voluntarism' (2000: 35); that is, the traditional mode of voluntary joint regulation of the employment relationship by unions and employers with limited recourse to law. Given this voluntarist tradition, and the integral place within it of collective conciliation, it may be that juridification provides a hostile context for this traditional Acas function. Again, at several points in the report we connect with this theme of juridification and examine how it is shaping disputes and dispute resolution. The central question with which we are concerned, however, is the impact on the dispute behaviour of union officers and whether the increased availability of legal instruments, such as industrial action ballots, is reducing their demand for collective conciliation.

A final broad theme concerns the changing role of Acas itself (Sisson and Taylor 2006; Towers and Brown 2000). Since its creation in the 1970s the mission of Acas has changed, most notably by removing the statutory requirement to promote collective bargaining in 1993. In addition, the mix of Acas services has changed. The growth in both individual rights and volume of Employment Tribunal claims means that Acas has been required to devote an increasing volume of its resources to the resolution of individual employment disputes. What might be thought of as its own response to the process of juridification. It has also had to adapt to the era of human resource management, developing services for non-union employers and workers and acting as a consultant to promote high performance work systems and employee engagement (Acas 2010; Purcell 2000). It may be that these changes are affecting union perceptions of Acas and their propensity to use collective conciliation. Accordingly, we use the LRD survey to examine union officers' views and assessments of Acas and the degree to which they influence recourse to the organization in situations of dispute.

The report is structured as follows. In Section 2 we profile union officers and examine both their changing characteristics and the characteristics of the bargaining units for which they are responsible. In Section 3, the focus switches to industrial disputes and we use the LRD evidence to examine the incidence, character, causes and modes of resolution of collective disputes within unionised industrial relations. In Section 4, we review the evidence on officers' knowledge and experience of Acas, together with their perceptions of the organization. Section 5 is the central section and contains two separate analyses. The first reviews the available evidence from WERS on the use of Acas in dispute resolution, while the second returns to the LRD dataset and uses bivariate and multivariate analysis to examine the characteristics of non-users of collective conciliation and the contexts in which they operate. Section 6, the conclusion, summarises findings and returns to the broad themes set out above.

## **2. UNION OFFICERS IN PROFILE**

We begin by examining union officers themselves as their personal characteristics and other attributes may affect their propensity to refer disputes to Acas. Accordingly, in this section we review the characteristics of the union officers participating in the survey; their personal profiles and demography, where they are located both in geographical and industrial terms, the unions they work for and the length and features of their union experience to date. Our primary motivation in examining these characteristics stems from the finding of earlier research that indicates that union officers enjoy considerable autonomy at work and have scope actively to interpret their role as worker representatives (Kelly and Heery 1994). The mix of work activities in which they engage, such as the balance between organizing and bargaining, choice of priorities, such as a decision to promote equality within negotiations, and the methods used, including resort to disputes and dispute resolution, might all reflect the characteristics of union officers, who they are.

We also have other motivations in examining officer characteristics. One relates to the representativeness of union officers, relative both to their members and to the wider working population. The representativeness of union officers can be conceived of in a number of ways (Morris and Fosh 2000) and in the past was expressed in many unions through the use of formal democratic election of officers. The election and periodic re-election of union officers was particularly a feature of craft unions, such as those of engineers and boilermakers. As the structure of the union movement has changed, however, and as craft unions have largely disappeared through occupational decline and union merger, the institution of formal election has largely disappeared as well.

In its stead, new conceptions of representativeness have come to the fore. A prominent theme in the analysis of unions in recent years has been the degree to which decision-makers, whether elected lay officials or paid union officers, embody the characteristics of those they represent. The beliefs that union representatives should proportionately reflect the gender or ethnic composition of union members and that there should be specialist representatives drawn from specific identity groups have become widespread. They have been incorporated formally within many union constitutions through arrangements for reserved seats on executives and conference delegations, formal commitments to proportionate representation and the creation of self-organized groups (McBride 2001). With regard to paid union officers, the central principle that underpins developments of this kind is that of 'representative bureaucracy', the notion that the characteristics of bureaucratic officials should reflect those of a client population (Pitts and Wise 2010).

Our final motivation arises from the notion of professionalization. This principle has often been counterposed to that of representativeness, particularly when the latter is understood to require the election of union officers. The qualified, dispassionate and expert union professional has been deemed a more effective representative of union members than the elected amateur in a current of writing that stretches back to Sidney and Beatrice Webb (Webb and Webb 1920). An equally long current has argued the reverse; that unelected union bureaucrats are prone to 'sell out' the membership and promote their own interests or the institutional interests of their employing unions over those of union members (e.g. Bramble 2001).

There is evidence of continuing professionalization amongst union officers in Britain, with increasing use of formal development programmes provided by unions themselves and by the TUC (Dempsey and Brewster 2009; Heery 2006b). There are some twists to this old story, however. One is that professionalization does not clash so obviously with current notions of representativeness within unions. The appointment of greater numbers of women or minority candidates to officer positions arguably reflects the correction of imbalances that arose from barriers to entry to union work for these

categories. Moreover, the goals of professionalizing the workforce and of avoiding discrimination are likely to be advanced through the same set of management processes within unions, involving the formalization of officer recruitment, selection, training and development. In addition, there is a plausible union 'business case' for diversity; representative bureaucracy may generate a more empathic but also more effective union workforce, better equipped to organize and represent growing segments of the labour force (Dickens 2007). It is axiomatic for many commentators on representative bureaucracy that it raises effectiveness (Pitts and Wise 2010).

Another twist is that notions of professional competence have changed within unions. The pressure to halt the decline in union membership has led to the creation of specialist organizer roles, equipped through dedicated training and development programmes, such as the TUC's Organizing Academy (Simms and Holgate 2010). Generalist union officers have also been encouraged to commit more to organizing and have been trained in organizing skills (Heery *et al.* 2003). These skills typically emphasise union-building through the identification and development of activists, mobilizing and campaigning; that is a very different skill set to that associated with the traditional bargainer, or 'manager of discontent'. The possession of this new skill set, moreover, may not predispose union officers to the use of collective conciliation provided by Acas. Professionalization, that is, may now work against what was once seen as a central attribute of the professional union representative – the regulation of conflict to achieve settlements to disputes that balance worker and employer interests.

## **2.1 Personal characteristics**

The LRD survey collected a range of data on the personal characteristics of paid union officers involved in negotiations. Information was collected on two equality strands, age and gender, and on various aspects of the careers of officers; in particular whether they had occupied significant lay representative roles prior to their appointment and whether they had received various forms of education and training. In addition, data were collected on the location of officers in the trade union movement in both a geographical sense – the region in which they were based – and in the sense of the industries and sector or sectors in which they worked. The survey also obtained the name of the officer's union.

In what follows this evidence is examined with several objectives in mind. The latter embrace describing the pattern of officer characteristics, identifying trends over time using earlier pieces of research as a benchmark, considering the issue of representativeness (where appropriate) by comparing profiles of officers to those of union members and workforce more generally and examining relationships between characteristics. Examples of the latter include establishing whether women or younger officers display a particular profile or have reached union work through different routes or whether different forms of officer training reinforce one another or act as alternatives that are inversely related.

The finding that leaps out from Table 1 is that the union officer workforce is still predominantly male. Fewer than one in three union officers are female, notwithstanding the progressive feminization of both the workforce and union membership in recent years. There is now majority female membership within trade union ranks but women officers remain a minority. On this critical indicator, trade union bureaucracy is representative neither of union membership nor of the workforce at large. However, there has seemingly been change and comparison with the gender breakdown of union officers surveyed by Heery (2006b) in 2002 indicates steady feminization. The characteristics of the union workforce are converging with those of union membership albeit at a rather stately pace.

**Table 1: Officer characteristics and preparation for union work**

<b>Officer characteristics</b>	<b>LRD survey N=944</b>	<b>Cardiff survey N=430-4</b>	<b>UK Union members N=6.54M</b>	<b>UK employees N=24.57M</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Sex				
Female	29	20	54	49
Male	71	80	46	51
Age				
Under 26	0.2		5	14
26-35	5.7		18	23
36-45	22.1		43	37
46-55	46.7			
56-65	25.1		35	26
Over 65	0.2			
Years as union officer				
Less than 5	15	16		
5-10	29	21		
10 plus - 20	34	38		
More than 20	22	25		
Previously a lay union negotiator	78	75		
Previously a lay activist of another sort	80	90		
Training & education				
TUC Academy	13			
Officer training	81			
IR qualification	22			
University degree	51	33	35	28

**Note:** Items in italics indicate that comparative data are not directly equivalent to those collected for union officers through the 2010 survey.

**Bases:** Union negotiating officers, 2010; Union negotiating officers, 2002; United Kingdom union membership among employees, 2010; United Kingdom employees, 2010

**Sources:** Labour Research Department Survey of Union Officers, 2010; Cardiff Survey of Union Officers 2002 (see Heery 2006b); Labour Force Survey, 2010 (see Achur 2010).

Table 1 also contains information on the age of union officers. It indicates, firstly, that compared both with union members and with the workforce at large, there are relatively few paid officers under the age of 35. This is unsurprising. Paid work for a union is often a second career, developed on the basis of union activism in a primary job, and is a form of work that makes use of skills developed through experience as a union activist and lay representative. There is also evidence that there are proportionately relatively few older union officers, aged 56 or over, when compared with union members. The latter tend to be older than the workforce at large and on this criterion of representativeness the union workforce is more like the generality of the working population than union members.

Hence the outstanding fact about the age profile of union officers, according to the survey, is that they are middle-aged, concentrated in the 36-56 age group. Age was recorded differently in Heery's earlier study but this found a broadly similar pattern: 45 per cent of those surveyed in 2002 were aged between 41 and 50 (2006b: 456). In addition to intrinsic features of the job and the paths of recruitment into it, this feature may reflect the progressive shrinking of the union workforce and the failure to draw in new recruits as older officers have retired. The under-representation amongst the oldest age group may reflect the demands of the job (Kelly and Heery 1994) and the

propensity of union officers to experience burn-out leading to a relatively early exit from the profession.

Table 1 shows that not only are union officers relatively mature but also that most have considerable seniority. Having entered the occupation, their tenure tends to be prolonged. Thus, more than half have ten or more years work experience as an officer, while only 15 per cent are relatively new entrants. Earlier research (Kelly and Heery 1994) has suggested that unions are relatively good employers in the traditional sense of offering secure, extended employment and the pattern of seniority conforms to this finding. One explanation might be that there are relatively few openings for union officers in other forms of work once they have committed to a union career; that occupational skills and attributes, such as commitment to the labour movement, effectively constrain their labour market options. This pattern, moreover, appears to be stable over time. Comparison with the 2002 survey shows common findings for officer tenure, though with some reduction in the proportion of officers with long tenure in the 2010 data.

## **2.2 Officer training and development**

The final rows in Table 1 present information on how union officers are prepared for the role. In accordance with other research, the first and most striking finding is that most union officers serve a 'lay apprenticeship' prior to entering union work (Kelly and Heery 1994; Watson 1988). Thus, more than three-quarters had worked as a lay negotiator prior to being appointed and a similar percentage had occupied other activist roles. The questions asked in the 2002 survey were different but indicate a broadly similar pattern, with 90 per cent reporting at least a year's service as a workplace representative and 75 per cent reporting a year's service as a lay branch officer.

In addition to preparation through activist experience, however, the table points to sizeable proportions of union officers receiving formal training. Just over one in ten had attended the TUC's Organizing Academy, a dedicated programme to train organizing specialists but which clearly has served to channel some into generalist and negotiating positions (Simms and Holgate 2010). A much higher percentage had received other union training, including programmes offered by the TUC and individual unions. There is strong evidence here of the professionalization of the union officer role.

This development seemingly is reinforced through formal education. About a fifth of officers report that they have an educational qualification in Industrial Relations, while more than half report that they have a university degree. Comparison with the 2002 evidence suggests a sharp increase in the proportion of officers who are university-educated and, while union work is not yet a graduate occupation, clearly there is a pronounced movement in this direction. Moreover, union officers are more highly qualified in terms of formal education than both their members and the working population at large. Clearly trade union officers are becoming more formally accredited both through general educational qualifications and through the receipt of dedicated training.

Further analysis of the information on officer training and education uncovered some interesting patterns. For example, there is a slight inverse relationship between possession of a university degree and lay experience, suggesting that higher education serves as an alternative to undergoing a lay apprenticeship for at least some officers. Graduates are also less likely to undergo union training, while those with lay experience are slightly more likely to do so. This suggests that union training may correct a skills deficit in officers who have not received higher education (see also Watson 1988).

The different methods of preparation for union work are also associated with officers' personal characteristics. Perhaps unsurprisingly, older officers were more likely to report lay experience and less likely to report graduate qualifications or entry to union work through the Organizing Academy. Rather more intriguing was the fact that women officers appeared to have a distinctive route into union work. Women were less likely to report lay experience, especially as a negotiator, and were more likely to be degree-qualified. Women officers were younger on average than men but these patterns of association remained even when one controls for age. Earlier research has commented on the importance of formal, external recruitment in redressing gender imbalance amongst union officers (Kelly and Heery 1994) and the findings from the 2010 survey point broadly in the same direction.

### **2.3 Location of officers**

Table 2 shows the location of union officers in three senses; in terms of the nation and region in which they work, the sector of the economy in which the members they represent are located and the industry in which these members work. As in the previous table, comparative data are presented for union members and UK employees in order to gauge the representativeness of the officer workforce.



**Table 2: Geographical, sectoral and industrial location of union officers**

Officer location	LRD survey N=933-43	UK union members 2010	UK employees 2010
	%	%	%
English Region			
North East	5	6*	5*
North West	11	16*	13*
Yorks & Humber	10	11*	10*
East Midlands	4	9*	9*
West Midlands	5	11*	10*
East of England	4	10*	11*
London	25	13*	15*
South East	10	14*	17*
South West	7	9*	10*
England	81	83**	86**
Scotland	12	11**	9**
Wales	6	6**	5**
Sector			
Private/privatised	34	38	71
Public	45	62	29
Mixed	21		
Industry			
Manufacturing	11	8	11
Central & local government	18	14	7
Education	12	24	12
Health	15	22	14
Voluntary sector	10		
Retail & distribution	9	7	15
Finance & business services	3	3	4
Construction	4	3	6
Transport & communications	9	8	5
Energy & water	5	2	2
Media & entertainment	3		
Other		10	25

\* Percentages for England only; \*\* percentages for Great Britain only

**Note:** The data on industrial sector takes account of the fact that many officers conduct negotiations in more than one sector.

**Bases:** Union negotiating officers, 2010; UK/GB union members who are employees, 2010; UK/GB employees, 2010.

**Sources:** Labour Research Department Survey of Union Officers, 2010; Labour Force Survey (see Achur 2011).

The evidence on geographical location indicates that union officers are distributed around the UK to reflect the distribution of union membership. Thus, the percentages of officers based in England, Wales and Scotland almost exactly reflect the percentages of union members in these countries. The pattern only departs from the principle of representativeness when one examines the English regions. Here, there is an over-representation of union officers in London, while the North West and East and West Midlands are comparatively poorly served. The explanation is that many trade unions

are head-quartered in London and concentrate their senior national officers in the capital, where they can most readily interact with representatives of business and government, including the leadership of Acas. London exerts a dominating pull on many UK institutions and the distribution of union officers both conforms to and reflects this effect.

With regard to sector, Table 2 shows unequivocally the domination of the trade union movement by public services. About one third of union officers work exclusively in the private and privatized segment of the economy, whereas nearly four in ten union members work in this sector and more than 70 per cent of employees do so. Almost half of union officers serve an exclusively public sector membership while a further 21 per cent service a mixed membership. One suspects that within this mix, public sector workers predominate as a total of 62 per cent of UK union members work in public services. The distribution of officers therefore reflects the fact that the union movement in Britain has become a largely public sector phenomenon, with most union resources being invested in servicing and consolidating this primary membership pool.

Further analysis of these data indicated that officers with different characteristics tend to operate in different sectors of the economy. The most striking feature was a gender difference. Male officers are much more likely to report a solely private sector membership: 40 per cent of male officers report that they work in the private sector with a further 21 per cent reporting a mixed membership; only 39 per cent report a solely public sector membership. For women the pattern is reversed: 59 per cent of women report a solely public sector membership with only 20 per cent reporting a solely private sector membership and 22 per cent reporting a mixed membership. These patterns largely reflect the sectoral distribution of male and female employment amongst the working population at large.

The evidence on the industries in which officers negotiate presents a more nuanced picture. Public sector preponderance is demonstrated again in the fact that the largest concentration of officers are those working in central and local government. There is an over-representation of officers in these industries compared both to their share of union membership and, particularly, their share of total employment. This over-representation may become more pronounced as a result of workforce reductions in central and local government stemming from the Government's austerity programme. Other industries that are dominated by the public sector, such as health and education, however, do not show this pattern. Here, the allocation of officers is low relative to union membership and broadly equivalent to the share of these industries in total employment. One possible explanation is that education and health are industries in which bargaining is centralized at national level thereby reducing the need for large numbers of paid negotiators.

In other industries the typical pattern is for the distribution of union officers to reflect the distribution of union members; this is the case for retail and distribution, construction and finance and business services. In all of these areas there is a low allocation of officers proportionate to share of total employment, a factor that reflects the low level of union membership in much of these industries. The one outlier is the energy and utilities sector, which is served by 5 per cent of officers but which has only 2 per cent of union employment and 2 per cent of total employment. The allocation of union resources to this sector may reflect high union density and the fact that it has developed a more fragmented pattern of industrial relations in recent years, requiring a higher level of servicing from paid officers.<sup>2</sup>

The question of the structure of industrial relations was approached directly in the survey by asking officers for the number of bargaining units for which they were responsible. Table 3 shows the results. These attest to the relatively fragmented structure of bargaining in the British economy (Brown *et al.* 2009) with virtually all

officers reporting responsibility for multiple bargaining units and about one third claiming they are responsible for more than 20 sets of negotiations.

**Table 3: Number of bargaining units for which officers are responsible**

<b>Bargaining units</b>	<b>Number of officers</b>	<b>Percentage of officers</b>
One	52	5.6
2-10	403	43.3
11-20	166	17.8
More than 20	309	33.2

**Base:** Union negotiating officers, 2010

**Source:** Labour Research Department Survey of Union Officers, 2010

Analysis of these data indicated that there were significant sectoral differences. Officers with sole responsibility for public sector workers were less likely to report multiple bargaining units though the contrast with those responsible solely for the private sector was not especially great. The most striking finding was that multiple bargaining units were a feature of a mixed-sector membership. More than 60 per cent with this type of membership reported 11 or more bargaining units (the equivalent figures for solely private and solely public sector memberships were 51 and 47 per cent respectively). Where union structure is complex then seemingly the complexity, and perhaps the scale, of officers' jobs increases. It is also likely that this pattern of multiple bargaining units reaching across sectors is a product of privatization, with erstwhile public sector officers acquiring responsibility for a growing number of private sector bargaining units as work has been outsourced.

## **2.4 Employing union**

The officers surveyed in 2010 were employed by a total of 53 unions. The distribution of officers across unions is highly uneven, however. Many unions are small organizations, employing only a handful of officers: there were five or fewer respondents from nearly half of the unions (45 per cent) from which responses were forthcoming (see also Kelly and Heery 1994). At the other extreme, there are a small number of unions employing hundreds of officers. The ten unions with the largest number of respondents to the survey are shown in Table 4 and in combination these unions employed three-quarters of all officers in the survey.

**Table 4: Officers' employing unions**

Trade union	Number of officers – LRD Survey	Percentage of officers – LRD Survey	Percentage of membership – Certification Office
Individual unions			
UNISON	173	18.6	18.4
UNITE	168	18.1	22.1
GMB	89	9.3	8.1
RCN	82	8.8	5.4
USDAW	54	5.8	5.0
PCS	36	3.9	4.1
BMA	30	3.2	1.9
Prospect	26	2.8	1.4
NUT	24	2.6	5.0
UCU	16	1.7	1.6
Other	232	24.9	27.0
Types of union			
General unions*	460	49.5	49.2
Industry & enterprise unions**	202	21.4	
Occupational unions***	269	28.8	
Militant unions****	259	27.1	32.2
Non-TUC unions*****	133	13.9	

\* Community, GMB, Prospect, UNISON, UNITE

\*\* Accord, BACM-TEAM, BECTU, BFAWU, CWU, FBU, FDA, Lloyds TSB, NACO, Nautilus, NGSU, NUM, PCS, POA, RMT, TSSA, UCATT, Unity, URTU, USDAW

\*\*\* ACM, AEP, ASLEF, Aspect, ATL, BALPA, BDA, BMA, CDNA, CSP, EIS, EQUITY, HCSA, MU, NAHT, NAPO, NASUWT, NUJ, NUT, PFA, RCM, RCN, SCOP SoR, UCAC, UCU. Voice, WGGB

\*\*\*\* ASLEF, CWU, FBU, NUJ, PCS, RMT, UCU, UNITE

\*\*\*\*\* BMA, LTU, NAHT, RCM, RCN, Voice

**Bases:** Union negotiating officers, 2010; Union membership, UK Certification Office

**Sources:** Labour Research Department Survey of Union Officers, 2010; *Annual Report of the Certification Officer, 2009-2010.*

Table 4 demonstrates that number of officers employed is correlated with union membership. The percentage of officers distributed across the top ten unions reflects the distribution of membership across these unions. It is apparent that the correlation is not perfect, however, with some unions appearing to be relatively well and others relatively poorly endowed with officers. Among the latter is the National Union of Teachers, which may be able to operate with a relatively modest corps of negotiating officers because of the centralization of collective bargaining within the school system. Among the former are both the BMA and RCN, unions with a strong professional orientation that possibly has inhibited the development of workplace trade unionism and so may foster dependence on paid representatives.

Table 4 also presents the distribution of officers across different types of union. In classic literature, unions have been grouped in terms both of their structure and their behaviour or character and indicators of both are presented in Table 4 (Turner 1962; Undy *et al.* 1981; Winchester 1989). The analysis indicates that many officers work for general unions that organize workers across sectoral, industry and occupational boundaries. This is now the dominant form of unionism in Britain, and has become a prominent feature of trade union movements in other countries in recent years, including the USA, Germany and the Netherlands (Streeck and Visser 1997). Half of all

officers surveyed were employed by unions of this type. Indeed, the three main general unions in Britain, UNISON, UNITE and GMB, employ 46 per cent of union officers.

Although general unionism may be dominant, Table 4 shows that it does not monopolise union resources. Industry-unions, which organize across occupational categories within a particular industry or cluster of industries are also significant and for the purpose of the table have been grouped with the small number of enterprise-specific unions. In combination, these two types of union employ just over a fifth of officers. The other category listed are occupational unions, typically unions of professional or semi-professional workers, such as journalists, probation officers, performers, nurses, teachers, doctors, dentists and other health specialists. Unions of this type employ nearly a third of officers.

Given the focus on disputes and dispute resolution, unions have also been categorised in terms of their character or behaviour. There are two categorizations of this type. A small number of unions have been identified as having a 'militant' leadership. These unions are ASLEF, CWU, FBU, NUJ, PCS, RMT, UCU and UNITE. The leaders of this group were critical of government policy in the mid to late-2000s and favoured using industrial action to advance members' interests (McIlroy and Daniels 2009; see also Waddington 2003)<sup>3</sup>. The second category consists of the relatively small number of unions included in the survey that remained independent of the TUC. These unions are BMA, LTU, NAHT, RCM, RCN, and Voice. Affiliation to the TUC has long been accepted as an indication of 'unionateness', of an organization classifying itself unambiguously as part of the trade union movement (Prandy *et al.* 1974). Less unionate organizations may be less dispute-prone but also less well connected to established industrial relations institutions, including Acas. They may be more inward-looking and distinctive in their handling of industrial disputes.

Both groups employed a minority of union officers. The reputedly militant unions collectively employed just over a quarter of officers in the survey, though a very large proportion of these belonged to UNITE. Several of the other members of this group are relatively small occupational or industrial unions, such as NUJ and RMT, which employ relatively few officers. The non-TUC affiliates employed a smaller percentage of officers – 14 per cent. Once again these were concentrated in particular unions; in this case BMA and RCN, which in combination had more than 100 respondents to the survey, while the other non-TUC unions recorded just over 20 officers between them.

### **3. EXPERIENCE OF DISPUTES**

The 2010 survey provided a wealth of information, not just on third party intervention in industrial disputes and the involvement of Acas, but on the pattern of disputes themselves. In this regard, it offers a useful supplement to and check upon other statistical series presenting information on industrial disputes in Britain, such as the Workplace Employment Relations Survey (WERS) and data on the number of stoppages and numbers of workers involved collected by the Office for National Statistics. In this section we review this material on union officers' experience of disputes. Specifically, we examine the incidence of collective conflict, seeking to establish which industries and which unions are dispute prone, the issues that lie at the centre of disputes, officers' own orientations to the resolution of conflict and the manner in which disputes are brought to an end. Throughout this review we also seek to relate officers' experience of disputes to the information on their personal and job characteristics examined above.

#### **3.1 Incidence and patterns of dispute**

The single primary feature of the recent history of collective industrial conflict in the Britain is the decline in the frequency of strikes and other forms of industrial action (Dix *et al.* 2008; Lyddon 2009). National statistics indicate a continuing decline in the number of stoppages through the 1980s and 1990s before the figures stabilized at an historically low level in the 2000s (Hale 2010). In 2009, there was a total of only 98 stoppages of work due to labour disputes. This represented a sharp drop on the figures in the three immediately preceding years when in each case there were more than 140 stoppages. The evidence from WERS shows a similar pattern: the incidence of industrial action at British workplaces in 2004 was less than a third of what it had been in 1980 (Dix *et al.* 2009).

The evidence in Table 5 of union officers' experience of industrial disputes in the previous ten years does not contradict this evidence but it does indicate that dealing with disputes remains an aspect of the work activity of most officers. Nearly nine in ten had experience of an industrial dispute in the previous ten years though it must be emphasised that on many occasions this dispute would not have led to strike or other forms of industrial action. It should also be noted that the LRD survey did not define 'dispute', leaving this issue to the interpretation of officers completing the return. Nevertheless, it is clear from the table that collective conflict is an infrequent but nevertheless institutionalized feature of industrial relations in the unionised segment of the economy.

**Table 5: Union negotiating officers' experience of disputes over previous 10 years**

Experience of disputes in the past 10 years	Number	Percentage
Experience of dispute	830	88.6
Disputes spread across industries	255	27.2
Disputes concentrated in one industry	554	59.1
Not sure of distribution	21	2.2
Industrial sectors generating largest number of disputes		
Manufacturing	54	9.6
Central government	49	8.8
Local government excluding education	98	17.5
Education	75	13.4
Health	125	22.3
Voluntary sector	5	0.9
Retail and distribution	34	6.1
Finance and business services	10	1.8
Construction	14	2.5
Passenger transport	46	8.2
Communications	11	2.0
Energy and water	7	1.3
Media and entertainment	32	5.7

**Base:** Union negotiating officers, 2010

**Source:** Labour Research Department Survey of Union Officers, 2010.

Table 5 also indicates that experience of disputes is skewed by industrial sector. About a third of officers reporting experience of disputes also reported that they were spread evenly across the different industries in which they negotiated but a much higher percentage (67 per cent) claimed that disputes were concentrated in a specific industrial sector. For this latter group, the table lists the industries that were reported as dispute-prone. In descending order, health, local government, education, manufacturing and central government emerge as the most dispute-prone industries. These figures attest to what Lyddon refers to as the 'tertiarization' of industrial conflict, with disputes becoming concentrated in service industries and the public services in particular (see also Dix *et al.* 2009; Hale 2010).

Further information on the relative dispute-proneness of industries is shown in Table 6. This shows the percentages of officers in a single industry who report experience of industrial disputes. The numbers of officers from which the percentages are derived are low for some industries and so caution must be exercised in interpreting the findings but arguably this is the best evidence from the 2010 survey on industry patterns of dispute activity. The table shows that for all industries (with one exception) large majorities of officers report dispute experience, underlining the fact that disputes are an institutional feature of unionised industrial relations. Nevertheless, there is variable experience and some industries appear relatively more or less dispute prone. Among the former, construction, communications and passenger transport are to the fore with some of the main public service industries, education, central and local government, coming close behind. Among the latter, it is private sector service industries that stand out: finance and business services, retail and distribution, and media and entertainment. Health and the voluntary sector also emerge as less prone to disputes. It is common in reviews of industrial conflict to draw a distinction between a relatively dispute prone public sector and a relatively quiescent private sector workforce (Dix *et al.* 2008). While valid at an aggregate level, the data in Table 6 point to variations in dispute proneness within public and private sectors.

**Table 6: Experience of disputes amongst 'single industry' officers and by union**

<b>Industry</b>	<b>Numbers experiencing a dispute</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Construction	5	100
Communications	12	100
Passenger transport	30	93
Education	75	92
Central government	49	90
Local government excluding education	10	90
Manufacturing	26	89
Energy and water	8	88
Media and entertainment	33	82
Voluntary sector	5	80
Health	128	75
Retail and distribution	29	69
Finance and business services	18	44
<b>Trade union (with at least 10 officer respondents)</b>		
NUJ	10	100
NUT	24	100
TSSA	14	100
GMB	86	99
PCS	35	97
UNITE	168	95
UCU	16	94
UNISON	173	94
CWU	14	93
EIS	10	90
Prospect/Connect	25	88
RCN	82	87
MU	12	83
UCATT	11	82
Equity	10	80
RCM	10	80
USDAW	53	72
BMA	30	56
<b>Types of union</b>		
General unions	456	95
Industry unions	200	81
Education unions	69	91
Health unions	140	78
Occupational unions	268	83
Militant unions	258	96
Non-TUC unions	133	78

**Bases:** Union negotiating officers with responsibility for a single industry; Union negotiating officers

**Source:** Labour Research Department Survey of Union Officers, 2010.

Table 6 also presents information on disputes by trade union for all unions with at least ten officers responding to the survey. The results reinforce the view that collective conflict is an infrequent but enduring feature of unionised industrial relations: a majority of officers from all unions shown report experience of conflict and in more than half virtually all officers report experience of this kind. There are differences in the table



and it is notable that the civil service and education unions appear at the top of the list, while health and private service unions, such as USDAW, appear towards the bottom. This pattern reflects the findings for industry discussed above.

Several of the unions in the bottom half of the table can be labelled 'professional unions', in that they have a role in developing and maintaining professional standards and discharge a broader set of functions than do most unions. Examples include the BMA, RCN and RCM. Professional bodies of this kind have tended to be less militant, historically disavowing strike action, and less 'unionate', remaining aloof from general labour movement institutions, such as the TUC. Their position towards the bottom of the table arguably demonstrates the continuing distinctive character of these unions. Perhaps more significant, however, is the fact that a majority of officers of professional unions now have experience of industrial disputes and that the differences between them and other public service unions is not great. Notwithstanding the continued independence of these unions from the TUC, the results point to a higher level of 'unionateness'; these are unions that now engage in collective disputes, regardless of their distinctive history of eschewing militancy. They behave much like other unions.

The final rows in the table show the findings for different types of union and largely reinforce those for individual unions and for industry. Thus, general unions, unions with so-called militant leaders and educational unions stand out as the most dispute prone categories, each with more than 90 per cent of officers reporting experience of disputes. In contrast, officers working for health unions and non-TUC unions report a lower experience of disputes though it should be noted that the differences are not vast. Even for officers working in avowedly moderate unions beyond the compass of the TUC, experience of 'conflict' emerges as common.<sup>4</sup>

### **3.2 Causes of disputes**

In addition to incidence and pattern, the 2010 survey contained information on officers' perspectives on the causes of industrial disputes. The latter are presented in Table 7, which shows the numbers and percentages of officers who reported that a particular issue had been subject to dispute and the proportionate contribution of each issue to the total volume. Also shown are analogous data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), which give the principal cause of the 98 stoppages of work recorded in 2009.

**Table 7: Causes of collective disputes**

<b>Issues subject to collective disputes</b>	<b>Number of union officers</b>	<b>Per cent of union officers N=830</b>	<b>Per cent of issues identified by union officers N=3744</b>	<b>Main cause of stoppage – ONS</b>	<b>Per cent of stoppages N=98</b>
Pay	749	90.2	20.0	Wages	52
Job loss & redundancy	547	65.9	14.6	Redundancy	17
Working hours & holidays	429	51.7	11.5	Staffing & work allocation	9
Pensions	406	48.9	10.8	Duration & pattern of hours worked	7
Organizational change/relocation	387	46.6	10.3	Working conds & supervision	7
Privatization & contracting out	320	33.5	8.5	Dismissal & discipline	4
Health & safety, bullying & harassment	270	32.5	7.2	Trade union matters	2
Trade union recognition	224	27.0	6.0	Other wages & fringe benefits	1
Attendance & sickness absence	222	26.7	5.9		
Equality & discrimination	190	22.9	5.1		

**Bases:** Union negotiating officers, 2010; Issues identified by officers as causing disputes; Industrial stoppages recorded by Office for National Statistics (see Hale 2010).

**Sources:** Labour Research Department Survey of Union Officers, 2010; Office for National Statistics.

The main conclusion that can be drawn from Table 7 is that there are multiple issues helping to generate collective industrial conflict in contemporary Britain. All of the issues listed in the survey are reported to have been the subject of dispute by at least one fifth of union officers. This pattern of complexity revealed by the 2010 survey stands in stark contrast to the picture of dominance by wage disputes presented in the ONS data, not just in 2009 but for preceding years as well (Hale 2010). The ONS data focus on the single, main cause of major stoppages and so neglect the fact that disputes may be multi-stranded, embracing several issues. The value of the 2010 survey is that it captures this feature of disputes and indicates that the subject matter of industrial conflict is quite broad ranging. It encompasses pay and hours of work – the instrumental exchange at the heart of the employment relationship – but also covers the impact on employees of business strategy and restructuring, the management of workers, issues of equality and discrimination and the institutional interest of trade unions themselves in securing recognition. The table attests, moreover, to the fact that occupational pensions have become a major frictional issue within industrial relations over the past decade, a development that is largely absent from the ONS statistics.

Nevertheless the evidence in Table 7 confirms the continuing centrality of pay disputes. Nearly all union officers report involvement in pay disputes and they account for 20 per cent of all issues recorded through the 2010 survey. In the ten years covered by the survey there was a series of major disputes over pay. These included the largest ever strike by women workers, when more than half a million local government staff struck over pay in July 2002. Other major pay disputes in the period included strikes by firefighters in 2002-2003, by CWU members in Royal Mail in 2007 and the first ever national strike in the prison service in the same year. There was also a succession of pay disputes in rail, bus transport and airlines that occurred against a background of tight labour markets before the onset of the global financial crisis (Lyddon 2009). The evidence collected through the survey points to the complexity of industrial conflict but wage levels remain the frictional issue *non pareil* within the employment relationship.

Table 8 shows patterns of difference in the types of issue leading to disputes by officer, sector, industry and union. This was generated by correlating officer characteristics with the issues they said had caused disputes. Only positive, statistically significant associations (at the 5 per cent level) are shown in the table. The statistical associations are bivariate and do not include controls so must be treated with some caution but what is immediately noticeable is that there is quite striking variation in the issues that underpin disputes. The table once more attests to a complex pattern of industrial conflict in Britain.

**Table 8: Influences on issues in dispute: patterns of bivariate association**

<b>Officer characteristics</b>	<b>Issues in dispute (statistically significant bivariate relationships)</b>
<i>Personal characteristics</i>	
Younger officers	Recognition
Women officers*	Attendance/sickness absence; health and safety/bullying/harassment; organizational change/relocation; equality/discrimination
<i>Development</i>	
Lay negotiator	Pay; privatization/contracting out
Union training	Pensions
<i>Sector</i>	
Private sector	Pay
Public sector	Pensions; job losses/redundancy; attendance/sickness absence; privatization/contracting out; health and safety/bullying/harassment; organizational change/relocation; equality/discrimination
<i>Industry</i>	
Manufacturing	Pay
Central government	Pay; pensions
Local government	Pay; pensions; privatization/contracting out; equality/discrimination
Education	Pensions; job losses/redundancy; privatization/contracting out; equality/discrimination
Health	Pensions; working hours or holidays; job losses/redundancy; attendance/sickness absence; privatization/contracting out; health and safety/bullying/harassment; organizational change/relocation; equality/discrimination
Voluntary sector	Pensions; privatization/contracting out; equality/discrimination

Retail & distribution	Pay
Finance and business services	Pensions
Construction	Pay
Passenger transport	Pay
Communications	Pay
Energy and water	Pay
Media and entertainment	Pay
<i>Trade union</i>	
UNITE	Pay
UNISON	Pensions; privatization/contracting out
GMB	Pay; trade union recognition
RCN	Working hours or holidays; job losses/redundancy; attendance/sickness absence; privatization/contracting out; health and safety/bullying/harassment; trade union recognition; organizational change/relocation; equality/discrimination
General unions	Pay; pensions; privatization/contracting out
Occupational unions	Working hours or holidays; job losses/redundancy; attendance/sickness absence; health and safety/bullying/harassment; organizational change/relocation; equality/discrimination
Educational unions	job losses/redundancy; health and safety/bullying/harassment
Health unions	Working hours or holidays; job losses/redundancy; attendance/sickness absence; privatization/contracting out; health and safety/bullying/harassment; trade union recognition; organizational change/relocation; equality/discrimination
Militant unions	Pay
Non-TUC unions	Job losses/redundancy; attendance/sickness absence; privatization/contracting out; health and safety/bullying/harassment; trade union recognition; organizational change/relocation; equality/discrimination

\* Relationship remains if one controls for industry or union

**Source:** Labour Research Department Survey of Union Officers, 2010.

With regard to the characteristics of officers, the primary finding is that women officers tend to report particular causes of industrial disputes that differ from those reported by men. These differences remain, moreover, if one controls for sector or industry. Perhaps unsurprisingly, women officers are more likely to report equality and discrimination as a source of dispute but they are also more likely to report disputes based on organizational change and management style or treatment of workers. One way of interpreting this pattern is that women officers are sensitised to particular issues within the employment relationship and respond to or initiate disputes that reflect these priorities. This is precisely what is implied in the notion of 'representative bureaucracy'; that officials with particular characteristics will perform their role in a distinctive way with positive consequences for the constituency whose attributes they share. It also conforms to earlier research on unions that points to gender and other characteristics of representatives 'making a difference' to the performance of representative roles (Bradley and Healy 2009; Heery and Kelly 1989).

Although gender displays the strongest pattern of association with dispute issue, other characteristics of officers also emerge as potential influences. Younger officers (though not those with experience of the Organizing Academy) are more likely to report involvement in recognition disputes, possibly reflecting a generational shift in unions (Kelly and Heery 1994) and the emergence of organizing as a cardinal theme in union policy in the past decade. There is also an indication that patterns of entry into trade union work and officer training may shape dispute activity: those with lay negotiating experience are more likely to report disputes over pay and privatization while those who have undergone training report disputes over pensions.

Turning to sector and industry, the main pattern is one of a relatively restricted dispute agenda, largely focused on pay, in some parts of the economy, while elsewhere the agenda of conflict is much more elaborate. A tendency to report pay as the issue underlying disputes is a feature of union officers working in the private sector, in manufacturing, retail, transport, communications, construction, utilities and the media industries. Conflict may be intense in some of these industries and in several there have been major disputes in the decade covered by the survey (Lyddon 2009). But conflict in these parts of the economy is narrowly based around what might be regarded a relatively traditional agenda.

A very different dispute picture emerges from the public sector. Here there is an extended dispute agenda and the number of dispute issues reported by each officer is positively correlated with a public sector location. The findings appear to reflect the continuing restructuring of the public sector under the New Labour government through organizational change, privatization and the implementation of a style of management that, on this evidence, seems to conform to the notion of 'hard HRM' (Storey 1989; see also Gill-McLure and Seifert 2008). It is in the public sector that disputes seemingly arise over discipline and attendance, over harassment and bullying.

It is also noticeable that disputes over equality and discrimination are more likely in the public sector. Examples include major disputes in health and local government over equal pay (Bach 2010; Dean and Liff 2010). This particular feature probably reflects the much stronger development of equality and diversity initiatives in the public sector in recent years, perhaps ironically a manifestation of a continuing model employer commitment, and the relatively broad scope of collective bargaining (Bewley 2006). In health, local government, universities and other public services there have been major changes to systems of grading designed to secure equal pay and public service employers have become subject to a series of legal equality duties (Dickens and Hall 2010). This developing agenda has partly been prompted by unions themselves as well as by government and employers. The evidence in the table attests to this seemingly integrative agenda, generating conflict. The development of an elaborate equality and diversity policy in public services in recent years has afforded unions with an opportunity for 'equality bargaining' (Heery 2006a). It has also provided an agenda for industrial conflict.

While Table 8 demonstrates a clear sector difference in patterns of dispute, it also demonstrates some differences within the public sector. Officers working in central government report disputes over pay and pensions, while in local government and education, redundancy, privatization and equality and discrimination are added to this list. It is amongst officers working in healthcare that the most elaborate conflict agenda is reported. This picture is reinforced if one considers the causes of disputes reported by officers from particular unions. Amongst the larger unions, it is RCN officers that report an extended set of dispute issues, a pattern that is repeated for the overlapping clusters of health, occupational and non-TUC unions.



































































- *Factor 1 - 'professional pride of union officers'.* This factor expresses officers' view that it is their job to settle disputes themselves and without the need to involve a third party. Strongly related to this is the belief that union members share this view of the role of negotiating officers.
- *Factor 2 - 'employer unwillingness to use Acas'.* This second factor articulates two related views that were expressed by officers. The first relates to employer unwillingness to involve a third party of any type, and Acas in particular, in collective disputes. The second notion encapsulated by this factor is officers' belief that there were insufficient procedures to involve Acas.
- *Factor 3 - 'no scope for Acas to find a solution'.* This factor casts doubt on Acas' efficacy on both procedural and substantive grounds. On the one hand officers claim that if disputes cannot be settled in-house then they are put to a vote of the membership. On the other hand the ability of Acas to find a superior solution is questioned on the grounds that there is no more money to extract from employers.
- *Factor 4 - 'personal experience/dislike of Acas'.* This fourth factor captures officers' previous negative experiences of Acas, combined with a more general dislike of using third party intervention. This factor has a degree of overlap with factor 1.
- *Factor 5 - 'union unwillingness to use Acas'.* In addition to articulating union reluctance to refer disputes to an external third party including Acas, this factor is also associated with officers' unwillingness to get involved in more bureaucracy or delays.
- *Factor 6 - 'ignorance of Acas'.* This factor combines officers reporting to have not thought of using Acas but also to being unsure of how referring a collective dispute to Acas actually works.
- *Factor 7 - 'concerns for union autonomy'.* The final factor amalgamates two related concerns expressed by officers. The first is that using Acas will reduce members' control over the outcome of negotiations, whilst the second is related to the financial cost to the union of involving Acas.

The seven factors listed above present a conceptually coherent picture of why negotiating officers are choosing not to use Acas. Taken together, the factors account for 57 per cent of the variance in the sample.

The LRD dataset contains additional information about the reasons for not using Acas in collective disputes. The survey contained a question asking officers to specify which single factor was the most important reason for them choosing to not use Acas over the preceding decade. If cases where negotiating officers report no disputes, or no situation where such disputes reached an impasse are ignored we are left with 240 responses where there is a substantive reason for not using Acas. Analysis of these data reveal that the most important factors behind non-use relate to the perception that Acas has no role in settling disputes. The highest single response was for the statement that 'I didn't see what solutions Acas could find that we couldn't have found ourselves' which was selected by 28 per cent of officers. A further 12 per cent answered that the single most important reason for not using Acas was that the responsibility for settling disputes was theirs or their unions. The other reason that was offered by a significant number was employer resistance to using a third party, with 13 per cent of negotiating officers claiming this as the most important factor in not using Acas. Taken together these three variables account for over half of the responses.

The preceding analysis confirms many of the relationships that have been elucidated in the earlier sections of this report. The pattern of Acas usage highlighted by this research is both complex and multi-dimensional. A combination of factors has been found to influence negotiating officers' choice of whether to use Acas in resolving collective disputes. These include characteristics that relate to the bargaining unit, the officers themselves or the union they represent. The factor analysis in the second part of this section revealed the underlying motives that account for officers' non-use of Acas. In addition to factors that are related to either the employer or union involved in the dispute, the results show that the personal preferences of the officers themselves, together with their sense of professional pride are important in fully understanding the observed pattern of Acas use and non-use.<sup>15</sup>

## 6. CONCLUSION

In this Conclusion we first summarise the main results of our research, considering in turn the findings on the characteristics of union officers, their experience of disputes, knowledge of and experience of Acas and the factors associated with low or non-use of Acas collective conciliation. We then return to and reflect upon the three broad themes outlined in the Introduction: union revitalization, the juridification of employment relations and the changing nature of Acas itself. In more speculative vein, we draw out the significance of our findings for each.

The primary conclusions of the research are as follows:

- *Union officers:* The profile of the union workforce generated from the LRD data echoed that from earlier research. Union work is a second career, often entered after serving a lay apprenticeship, at a relatively late age. From the point of entry, however, union work offers an internal labour market with a further consequence that many officers have high seniority. Despite these enduring features there is evidence of change in the union workforce. Professionalization is ongoing and increasingly union officers are formally qualified to degree level. A significant minority have been developed through the Organizing Academy and this and associated initiatives may be an indicator of changing definitions of professional competence within union work, with a greater emphasis on organizing, mobilizing and campaigning skills. The other main change that is discernible is a slow but steady process of feminization. Notwithstanding this, however, there remains a striking discrepancy between the gender breakdown of union members and their paid representatives: on this dimension union officialdom is yet to become a 'representative bureaucracy'.
- *Bargaining responsibilities:* The number of bargaining units for which union officers are responsible varies substantially across the UK but many officers deal with multiple bargaining units. The ensuing complexity of their roles is a cost borne by the trade union movement for the relatively devolved pattern of bargaining in Britain. The distribution of officers across nations, regions, sectors and industries is broadly reflective of the distribution members with occasional anomalies, such as the over-concentration of the union workforce in London. The distribution also reflects the preponderance of the public sector within the contemporary union movement. There is some notable interaction between the sectoral distribution of union officers and their personal characteristics, particularly the fact that male officers tend to be concentrated in the private sector while the reverse is true of women.
- *Employing unions:* The number of unions has declined progressively in the UK but it was still the case that respondents to the LRD survey were employed by more than 50 organizations. Nevertheless, officer employment is concentrated in a relatively small number of large unions and the survey attests to the contemporary dominance of general unionism. There are also significant concentrations of officers in industry-specific and occupational unions but the primary structural principle is general or open-unionism. Unions can also be classified in terms of their character or identity. There are significant numbers of union officers employed by non-TUC unions, which have often been regarded as less 'unionate' and more moderate in their bargaining behaviour. The research demonstrated the continuing relevance of this characterization though it should be noted that differences between TUC and non-TUC unions were not vast and it is likely that union character across this divide has converged in recent years. There are also a significant proportion of officers employed by unions with reputedly militant leadership. Despite the crudity of this label and the method used to identify these unions, the research evidence indicated that differentiating unions on the criterion of militancy is a valid exercise.

- *Experience of disputes:* While stoppages of work have declined markedly over the past three decades, the research pointed to the ubiquity of collective conflict within unionized industrial relations. Virtually all officers have experience of disputes though on many occasions these will not have led to strike or other forms of industrial action. The research also indicated that most union officers have experienced a breakdown or stalling of negotiations and disputes of fact or interpretation. What might be regarded as interest disputes are most common but disputes over rights are also experienced by large numbers of officers and may be increasing owing to the greater volume of legal regulation of employment relations. Although collective conflict appears institutionalized on this evidence, its incidence is variable. There are dispute-prone industries in the public and private sectors and unions that engage in conflict more readily.
- *Issues in dispute:* Much like official statistics on stoppages of work, the LRD survey pointed to the predominance of disputes over pay. However, it also revealed a much broader dispute agenda with pensions, privatization, job loss and redundancy, organizational change and other matters featuring as the causes of industrial conflict. Since the survey was conducted major disputes over pensions have erupted across much of the UK public sector. What was perhaps most striking about the evidence gathered on issues in dispute was that there was a much broader dispute agenda in the public sector and in healthcare in particular. Issues of management treatment workers – attendance, discipline, safety, bullying, harassment and discrimination – were more likely to feature in the dispute record of public services. This pattern probably reflects the ongoing restructuring of public services and the implementation of new management regimes throughout the period covered by the research. It probably also reflects a more extended agenda for collective bargaining within these industries. The broader compass of unionised industrial relations in the public sector appears to provide more wide-ranging opportunities for conflict to arise.
- *Dispute resolution:* The research also pointed to a broad range of methods being used to resolve disputes. Union officers reported extensive help from Acas and reliance on other procedural mechanisms to deal with conflict, such as reference to higher levels of the employer or union. In addition, there was extensive use of tests of opinion and legal industrial action ballots emerged as the most frequently employed dispute resolution mechanism. Finally, officers reported use of external pressure to resolve disputes, such as the threat of legal action and use of the media. A major finding from this section of the research was that these different methods of dispute resolution did not serve as alternatives to one another. Rather, they tended to be used in combination. It was particularly notable that use of Acas was positively, not negatively, associated with reliance on industrial action balloting. There is a tendency for more militant officers to use what we have described as ‘mobilising’ tactics: tests of member opinion other than legal ballots, protest action and use of the media but these methods were also commonly found alongside other tactics as well. Union officers were generally positive in their assessment of dispute resolution methods and, on this measure the institutions of conflict resolution appear to ‘work’. Balloting, the threat of legal action and help from Acas were the three methods rated as most effective.
- *Knowledge and experience of Acas:* Nearly all union officers are aware of Acas but more detailed knowledge and experience of the organization is variable. Union officers are a core constituency for Acas but the survey indicated some worrying lack of understanding of the Acas role and some suspicion of its degree of independence from employers and government. Those who had made use of Acas to resolve collective disputes or who had used other Acas services tended to have a better understanding of its role and to value Acas’ independence but these were not

pronounced findings. The questions on officer use of Acas services other than collective conciliation revealed an interesting pattern in that there were distinct clusters amongst the union workforce. One group of officers tended to use Acas to help resolve individual disputes between workers and their employers and between workers themselves. Another group, in contrast, tended to make more use of Acas' information, training and advisory services. To a degree, officer use of Acas services is cumulative: those using a particular service are more receptive to using an additional service. But there is also evidence of differentiation amongst the union constituency for Acas services, with officers from particular types of union, particular industries and with particular backgrounds drawing on a particular mix of services.

- *Low or non-use of collective conciliation:* The final stage of the empirical analysis used statistical techniques to identify the characteristics of officers who are least likely to make use of Acas collective conciliation. The findings are complex and point to a variety of factors that are associated with diminished use of Acas. These include structural features of the officer's job, personal characteristics and history and the unions they work for. Among the most significant findings to emerge from the analysis were the following:
  - Officers with responsibility for multiple bargaining units, located in London and with members in local government, retail and distribution and passenger transport were *more* likely to make use of Acas.
  - Women officers, relatively recent entrants to the occupation and graduates of the Organizing Academy were *less* likely to make use of collective conciliation.
  - Union character or identity influences the propensity to use Acas, such that officers from unions with a reputedly militant leadership are more likely to be users while officers from non-TUC affiliates are less likely.
- *Accounting for non-use:* The reasons given by union officers for not using Acas also displayed a complex pattern. A total of seven types of explanation were identified through the analysis. Some of these explanations related to factors beyond the officers' control, including resistance to the involvement of a third party on the part of the employer. Nevertheless, there was evidence that the orientation of union officers to their own job and their perceptions and prior experience shaped the decision not to use Acas. Officers with a professional orientation that emphasised their own capacity to resolve disputes were less likely to have resort to collective conciliation, as were officers who did not have confidence in Acas or who had had a poor previous experience.

What are the implications of these findings for the broader themes that were identified in our Introduction? With regard to union revitalization, perhaps the major finding is that the union workforce does not display evidence of radical change or discontinuity. The characteristics of officers and the work they perform are broadly the same as those identified in earlier research studies (Kelly and Heery 1994). Nevertheless, there is evidence of gradual change, including the presence of more women officers, increasing professionalization and the inclusion in the bargaining workforce of officers who have been formally trained in organizing methods through the TUC's Organizing Academy.

Another major finding is that officers with these characteristics appear to perform their jobs in distinctive ways. Thus, women officers appear, less dispute-prone but report a distinctive dispute agenda that includes conflict over issues of equality and discrimination. Organizing Academy graduates appear more likely to use campaigning methods when disputes arise, while the rising numbers of graduates are distinctive in their use of Acas, being particularly likely to use web and other sources of advice and information. A third finding is that some of these groups appear to have less contact

with or knowledge of Acas and are less likely to make use of collective conciliation. This is the case for both women officers and Academy graduates. There is evidence of gradual change in unions therefore, which is altering the composition of the union workforce. At least some of these changes currently are not favourable to Acas.

The research also produced findings that relate to the question of juridification. There is evidence that increasing legal regulation of industrial relations is shaping the dispute behaviour of union officers, particularly in resort to legal industrial action ballots and the threat of legal action to resolve disputes. Union officers appear to have adapted to a more juridified context and to have developed 'hybrid' forms of representation, in which use of statutory levers is combined with the traditional union method of collective bargaining. The other main finding in this regard is that recourse to Acas is also found in combination with use of these levers. Resort to legal provisions does not appear as an alternative to collective conciliation. On the contrary there is a positive association between the use of legal industrial action ballots and seeking help from Acas.

The final theme that we identified was that of the changing role of Acas itself. Much of the evidence collected through the survey points to stability in union use of Acas. Thus, after balloting, help from Acas is the most widely used method for resolving disputes, most officers have knowledge of Acas and deem it to be effective and there is evident trust in Acas and widespread acceptance that it is both independent and impartial. Acas emerges from the study as an accepted and widely used component of the institutional matrix in which unions operate; it is a stable, trusted brand.

Nevertheless, not all findings are reassuring. As we have noted, there is less use of Acas amongst some of the expanding categories within the union workforce and to a degree, Acas emerges as an instrument of more 'traditional' officers (older, with higher seniority who have served a lay apprenticeship), perhaps employed in more traditional contexts (resolving pay disputes). There is also some evidence that professionalization of the officer workforce may be working against Acas, with many officers seeking to resolve disputes in a self-reliant fashion without resort to third parties. Moreover, changing conceptions of professionalization, seen in the creation of the Organizing Academy, may also work against Acas. The final significant finding is that relating to differential use of Acas amongst union officers. In the past resolving collective conflict through conciliation was central to the Acas-union relationship. This activity continues to be important but for some groups of officers, Acas' advisory and information services may now be more significant.



## **TECHNICAL APPENDIX**

In this appendix we present more details of the multivariate models which explore the nature of the relationship between the characteristics of union officers and their use of Acas in disputes. The technique used to analyse this relationship was logistic regression as the variables in the analysis are categorical in nature. The dependent variable in the analysis that follows is those officers who are low or never-users of Acas. This means they have used Acas a maximum of once in the last ten years. By running logistic regression analysis it will be possible to determine which factors are associated with an increased likelihood of falling into this category. A number of models will be presented, concentrating on different subsets of dependent variables.

Table 28 shows the results of logistic regression analysis where the independent variables are all dummy variables which represent the characteristics of the bargaining units in which the union officers negotiate. The independent variables are the number of bargaining units, geographic region, the sector of ownership and the industry in which the bargaining unit is located. The analysis shows that the model is significant and explains approximately 20 per cent of the variation in the independent variable.<sup>16</sup>

**Table 28: Logistic regression analysis of Acas usage by bargaining unit characteristics**

<b>Predictor</b>	<b><math>\beta</math></b>	<b>SE <math>\beta</math></b>	<b>Wald's <math>\chi^2</math></b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>p</b>	<b><math>e^\beta</math></b>
<b>Constant</b>	0.36	0.416	0.747	1	0.388	1.433
<b>Bargaining Units</b>						
2-10	0.384	0.381	1.011	1	0.315	1.468
11-20	-0.2	0.415	0.232	1	0.63	0.819
more than 20	-1.024	0.398	6.627	1	0.01	0.359
<b>Region</b>						
North East	0.807	0.418	3.733	1	0.053	2.241
North West	0.297	0.324	0.839	1	0.36	1.345
Yorkshire and Humber	0.019	0.339	0.003	1	0.954	1.02
East Midlands	1.18	0.514	5.265	1	0.022	3.256
West Midlands	0.847	0.478	3.145	1	0.076	2.333
East of England	0.028	0.433	0.004	1	0.949	1.028
South East	0.89	0.354	6.313	1	0.012	2.436
South West	0.9	0.415	4.712	1	0.03	2.46
Scotland	0.542	0.324	2.803	1	0.094	1.72
Wales	0.41	0.391	1.099	1	0.295	1.506
<b>Sector</b>						
predominantly private	-0.301	0.295	1.041	1	0.308	0.74
<b>Industry</b>						
manufacturing	0.34	0.281	1.471	1	0.225	1.405
central government	0.364	0.278	1.717	1	0.19	1.439
local government	-0.624	0.262	5.653	1	0.017	0.536
education	-0.025	0.253	0.01	1	0.921	0.975
health	0.16	0.247	0.42	1	0.517	1.174
voluntary sector	0.136	0.265	0.263	1	0.608	1.146
retail and distribution	-0.692	0.276	6.278	1	0.012	0.5
finance and business services	0.08	0.422	0.036	1	0.849	1.084
construction	0.254	0.385	0.434	1	0.51	1.289
passenger transport	-0.696	0.282	6.1	1	0.014	0.499
communications	0.332	0.365	0.831	1	0.362	1.394
energy and water	-0.255	0.304	0.702	1	0.402	0.775
media and entertainment	-0.05	0.359	0.019	1	0.889	0.951

Cox and Snell  $R^2 = .144$ , Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .193$ .

The table shows that only a number of the independent variables are significant at the 5 per cent level. In terms of bargaining units, those officers who are responsible for more than twenty units are less likely to be low or non-users of Acas compared to their colleagues who have just one unit to deal with. The final column in the table refers to the odds ratio of the independent variable affecting the dependent variable. Therefore, officers with more than twenty bargaining units are 0.359 times as likely to be non-users of Acas compared to their single-unit counterparts.

The variables associated with region are analysed with London as a reference point, therefore the odds ratios are expressed in relation to officers in the capital. Unlike the bivariate analysis, the regression results show that there are some significant regional effects at work. Officers in the North East are more than twice as likely to be non-users of Acas compared to those in the capital. Acas use is even less common in the East Midlands with officers being over three times more likely to be non-users than in London. The South of England exhibits a similar pattern with officers two and a half times more likely not to use Acas than their counterparts in the capital. Overall, the analysis shows that there is a significant regional influence on usage of Acas and that negotiating officers in London are comparatively likely to make use of its dispute resolution services.

The final significant independent variables relate to the industry in which bargaining takes place. Table 28 shows that officers negotiating in local government, retail and distribution and passenger transport are all about as half as likely to be low or non-users of Acas than those in the rest of the economy. This confirms the bivariate analysis. Some care should be taken with these variables as they are not mutually exclusive and officers can be negotiating across multiple sectors. Overall, this regression model suggests that the characteristics of the bargaining units can have a significant impact on the likelihood of whether a negotiating officer chooses to use Acas.

We now turn our attention to the characteristics of the negotiating officers themselves and the impact these have on Acas use. Table 29 shows the results of another logistic regression model where the independent variables relate to the tenure of officers, their previous experience, their education or training, age and gender. In addition, a number of variables examining the impact of union characteristics were included. The first looks at whether being in a union which has a reputation for militancy affects Acas use and the second examines the impact of not being affiliated to the TUC. The final variables examine the negotiating approach favoured by the respondents. Again, the model is significant and the goodness of fit has increased to approximately 26 per cent.

**Table 29: Logistic regression results of Acas usage by officer characteristics**

Predictor	$\beta$	SE $\beta$	Wald's $\chi^2$	df	p	$e^\beta$
<b>Constant</b>	1.075	1.505	0.51	1	0.475	2.931
<b>Tenure as negotiating officer</b>						
5 to 10 years	-0.662	0.441	2.251	1	0.134	0.516
10-plus to 20 years	-1.075	0.456	5.562	1	0.018	0.341
more than 20 years	-1.496	0.506	8.749	1	0.003	0.224
<b>Previous experience</b>						
lay union negotiator	0.564	0.381	2.195	1	0.138	1.758
lay activist	-0.439	0.383	1.314	1	0.252	0.645
<b>Education/training</b>						
TUC Organising Academy	0.222	0.352	0.399	1	0.528	1.249
TUC/union training	-0.056	0.344	0.026	1	0.871	0.946
professional IR qualification	-0.435	0.3	2.106	1	0.147	0.647
degree (any subject)	0.273	0.26	1.104	1	0.293	1.314
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	-0.547	0.282	3.752	1	0.053	0.579
<b>Age</b>						
36-45	0.476	0.562	0.718	1	0.397	1.61
46-55	0.712	0.553	1.656	1	0.198	2.037
over 56	-0.002	0.595	0	1	0.997	0.998
<b>Union type</b>						
Reputedly militant	-0.54	0.281	3.705	1	0.054	0.583
non-TUC affiliate	1.023	0.505	4.114	1	0.043	2.783
<b>Negotiating approach</b>						
Compromisers	-0.246	1.212	0.041	1	0.839	0.782
Pressers	-1.263	1.246	1.027	1	0.311	0.283

Cox and Snell  $R^2 = .193$ , Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .258$ .

The results of the logistic regression show that the characteristics of union negotiating officers can have a significant impact on the use of Acas. Table 31 suggests that tenure as a union officer is negatively associated with the non-use of Acas. This confirms the bivariate analysis, which showed that officers with more experience are more likely to report having used Acas. There are some interesting results with regard to the education and experience of union officers; for example, graduates of the TUC's Organising Academy are less likely to use Acas than those who have not been through this scheme. Unfortunately, none of the variables in this category are significant at the 5 per cent level. The analysis of gender, again confirms our earlier bivariate analysis. Men are just over half as likely to be low or non-users of Acas, than their female colleagues. The age of union officers is not found to be a statistically significant factor; however, this may be due to the correlation between this variable and that measuring tenure. Overall, when looking at the personal characteristics of negotiating officers, the analysis shows that tenure and age are significantly associated with the use of Acas.



**Table 30: Factor analysis of reasons for non-use of Acas during last 10 years\***

Component	Factor						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have not thought of using Acas	-.112	-.104		.103		.707	
My experience of Acas has put me off			.151	.724			.122
I didn't see what solutions Acas could find that we couldn't have found ourselves			.653	.271			
Acas couldn't get us more money as there was no more to be had	.108	.200	.558				
We end disputes by members voting either for or against industrial action			.598			-.115	
I was concerned that Acas would take away the members' control over the outcome			.285	.171	.248	-.152	.696
I see as my job/my union's job as to find solutions without using outsiders	.828					-.117	.122
My members see my job/my union's job as to find solutions without using outsiders	.817				.228		
I personally do not like to involve a third party	.490		.164	.497	-.213		-.127
I do not like to involve Acas in particular			-.168	.688	.250		
The employers did not like to involve a third party		.781					
The employers did not like to involve Acas in particular	-.149	.730	-.145			-.147	
The union does not like using a third party	.128	.141	.137		.674	-.115	







## END NOTES

1. The number of requests has increased again more recently, with 1050 being received in the year 2010-2011.
2. Analysis also identified further gender differences. Women officers are disproportionately found negotiating on behalf of health workers, while men are disproportionately found in manufacturing, construction, utilities and passenger transport; perhaps surprisingly men predominate as representatives in retail and distribution.
3. The classification of UCU is based on the leadership of Natfhe prior to its merger with AUT to join UCU; classification of UNITE arises from the fact that both TGWU and AEU were led by general secretaries that were critical of government prior to their merger.
4. The table does not report individual differences. These were examined, however, and the primary findings were that women were less likely to report experience of disputes and those with lay negotiating experience more likely to.
5. Other research commissioned by Acas points in a broadly similar direction. A study by Meadows (2007) of the economic impact of the employment relations services delivered by Acas suggested that they delivered a substantial financial benefit to the UK economy. The collective conciliation service alone was estimated to yield savings of £159M per annum.
6. The disadvantage of this procedure was that the number of cases dropped substantially to 280 owing to missing values. Nevertheless, the pattern of intercorrelation using the combined scale was very similar to that obtained for each type of dispute analysed on its own.
7. Further analysis supported this view. For impasse disputes and disputes that have stalled, public sector officers are more likely to score highly on the combined scales measuring the use of mobilising tactics; i.e. use of methods that test member opinion, use protest and seek media coverage.
8. The same is true of disputes over redundancy and privatization.
9. It should be noted, however, that Bond's (2011) qualitative research on union officers' understanding of Acas suggested that while there was semantic confusion most had a clear, working understanding of its role in dispute resolution.
10. The composite measure of officers' estimates of Acas independence was positively correlated with the two other measures of officer knowledge and understanding but at a modest level. The correlation with the self-report of knowledge of Acas' role in dispute resolution was .123 (sig.0.000) and that with the combined measure of understanding of conciliation was .078 (sig.017).
11. The results of this analysis are not depicted in order to save space. The method used was bivariate correlation. In this review, only the most pertinent patterns of association are reported.
12. It should be noted that there was no statistically significant relationship with responsibility for negotiations in central government. Earlier research has argued that participants in industrial disputes within the civil service are unwilling to involve Acas because it is itself a civil service organization (Corby 2003). This may be the case but officers located in this sector appeared no less knowledgeable and no less confident in Acas' independence.
13. This figure applies to workplaces of at least 10 employees.
14. In both cases, officers who answered that they were unsure if Acas had been used were counted as negative responses.
15. This finding is consistent with Bond (2011) who conducted interviews with union officers and found that self-image drives their reluctance to use Acas and that they see themselves as quasi-conciliators in their own right.
16. Nagelkerke's  $R^2$  is the preferred measure of model fit as it is scaled from 0-1 and can, therefore, be interpreted in the same way as a linear regression model.

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