YOUnion

Union for Youth

COUNTRY REPORT

UNITED KINGDOM

University of Greenwich
London, United Kingdom

Lefteris Kretsos

YOUnion - Union for Youth is a project co-funded by the European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, budget heading VS/2013/0401, Industrial Relations and Social Dialogue

Further information is available at **http://www.adapt.it/younion/**

COORDINATOR

ADAPT – Association for International and Comparative Studies in Labour Law and Industrial Relations
Modena, Italy

CO-APPLICANTS

Universiteit of Amsterdam/Amsterdam Instituut voor Arbeids Studies - UVA/AIAS
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven – KU Leuven
Leuven, Belgium

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona - Institut d'Estudis del Treball - UAB – IET
Barcelona, Spain

Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena - FSU Jena
Jena, Germany

Szakszervezetek Gazdaság és Társadalomkutatási Intézete Alapítvány – Economic and Social Research – Institute of Trade Unions Foundation – SZGTI
Budapest, Hungary

University of Greenwich – UoG
London, United Kingdom

SCIENTIFIC COORDINATOR

Prof. Dr. Maarten Keune – Director of AIAS & Professor of Social Security and Labour Relations at the University of Amsterdam

October 2014

With support from the European Union.
The sole responsibility of this report lies with the author and the European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

INDEX

1. Introduction: Young People in the 'Gig Economy'

Losing a generation due to excessive and persistent levels of youth unemployment and problematic transitions into the labour market of young people is not just an unfortunate development located in the UK context. It is also part of a global problem. Although the problem of youth worklessness is structural in nature and it dates before the financial crisis, it has been dramatically worsened by the recent years of recession, weak growth and austerity. Among others, Bell and Blanchflower (2010, 2011a, 2011b) analyze this new rise in youth unemployment after the crisis with a particular focus on the United Kingdom and the United States. Young workers were affected more than other social groups by the ongoing crisis not (European Commission, 2013).

In addition, during the crisis unemployment levels among young workers remained significantly higher than the rest of the working population and they have risen faster than for other age groups in most EU countries. This development reinforced pre-existing labour market inequalities at the expense of youth, especially in some countries like Greece and Spain (Kretsos, 2014) or the UK (Simms, 2012).

In fact, while in some countries youth unemployment was hardly affected during these times of trouble, it dramatically increased elsewhere and reached new record highs. This demonstrates the crucial role that institutional settings and public policies can play in influencing school-to-work transitions. To some extent this development has emerged as a consequence of certain employers' behaviours in response to economic difficulties. Quite worrying is the fact that the prospect for the jobs future of many young people looks bleak. On September 2012 the forecast of the UN International Labour Organization (ILO) indicated a gradual decline in the youth unemployment rate in developed countries from the actual 17.5 percent to 15.6 percent in 2017. This is well above the pre-crisis level of 12.5 percent (ILO, 2012).

So far and with the exception of Austria, Germany and Switzerland, no other EU member state has managed to return to the youth unemployment rates prior to the crisis. Further, official statistics indicate that there is a negative correlation between GDP growth and change in youth unemployment levels during the recession. Youth unemployment is worse in those countries that have experienced

deeper and more prolonged recessions (Greece and Spain are outstanding examples of this trend), while the youth unemployment rate in the EU-28 sharply declined between 2005 and 2007, reaching its minimum value (15.1 %) in the first quarter 2008. The economic crisis, however, severely hit the young. In addition, youth unemployment ratios in the EU have also risen since 2008 due to the effects of the crisis on the labour market.

	Youth unemployment rate				Youth unemployment ratio		
	2011	2012	2013	2013Q4*	2011	2012	2013
EU-28	21.4	23.0	23.4	23.1	9.1	9.7	9.8
Euro area	20.8	23.1	24.0	23.8	8.7	9.5	9.8
Belgium	18.7	19.8	23.7	23.9	6.0	6.2	7.3
Bulgaria	25.0	28.1	28.4	28.1	7.4	8.5	8.4
Czech Republic	18.1	19.5	18.9	18.9	5.4	6.1	6.0
Denmark	14.3	14.0	13.0	12.8	9.6	9.1	8.1
Germany	8.6	8.1	7.9	7.9	4.5	4.1	4.0
Estonia	22.4	20.9	18.7	19.1	9.1	8.7	7.4
Ireland	29.1	30.4	26.8	25.5	12.1	12.3	10.6
Greece	44.4	55.3	58.3	57.3	13.0	16.1	16.6
Spain	46.2	52.9	55.5	54.9	19.0	20.6	20.8
France	22.6	24.4	24.8	23.7	8.4	8.9	9.0
Croatia	36.1	43.0	49.7	48.6	11.3	12.7	14.4
Italy	29.1	35.3	40.0	41.8	8.0	10.1	10.9
Cyprus	22.4	27.8	38.9	40.8	8.7	10.8	15.0
Latvia	31.0	28.5	23.2	23.9	11.6	11.5	9.1
Lithuania	32.6	26.7	21.9	20.6	9.2	7.8	6.9
Luxembourg	16.4	18.0	17.4	17.2	4.2	5.0	4.0
Hungary	26.1	28.1	27.2	24.8	6.4	7.3	7.4
Malta	13.8	14.2	13.5	13.5	7.1	7.2	7.0
Netherlands	7.6	9.5	11.0	11.4	5.3	6.6	7.7
Austria	8.3	8.7	9.2	9.9	5.0	5.2	5.4
Poland	25.8	26.5	27.3	27.2	8.6	8.9	9.1
Portugal	30.1	37.7	37.7	34.8	11.7	14.3	13.5
Romania	23.7	22.7	23.6	:	7.4	7.0	7.3
Slovenia	15.7	20.6	21.6	19.9	5.9	7.1	7.3
Slovakia	33.7	34.0	33.7	33.5	10.1	10.4	10.4
Finland	20.1	19.0	19.9	20.0	10.1	9.8	10.3
Sweden	22.8	23.7	23.4	22.6	12.1	12.4	12.8
United Kingdom	21.1	21.0	20.5	19.7	12.4	12.4	12.0

: data not available

* The quarterly youth unemployment rate is seasonally adjusted.

Source: Eurostat

Only two European countries saw youth unemployment fall (Germany and Luxembourg) since the global crisis of 2008. The successful performance of youth labour markets in those countries is partly or to a significant extent related to certain factors and stylized facts. According to Sisson and Jones (2012) those factors could be grouped into four distinct categories:

a) Better economic performance than others.
b) Strong VET and well-designed Work placement schemes.
c) Economic growth that is export-led.
d) Expansion of flexible working time structures and arrangements.

Nevertheless the connection between increasing rates of participation in education and VET and youth unemployment levels is ambiguous (Crowley, 2013; Heyes, 2014). At the same time restrictive budget policies under current debt resolution mechanisms and tighter control of State's operational costs imposed by national governments or supranational institutions, such as Troika, may affect the orientation and capacity of employment and social policy.

The EU has set ambitious goals to foster job creation for youth since the Amsterdam Treaty and especially after the Lisbon Treaty, where employment rate increase has been regarded as a priority policy. Directives for employment creation and the European Employment Strategy are also centred on youth unemployment and they were designed for a further coordination of labour market and employment policies amongst member states. The EU also provides funds for pertinent public policy through the European Structural Funds, and in particular the European Social Fund, as well as promoting the resources provided by the European Investment Bank. New instruments -such as the Open Method of Coordination- have also been promoted with the objective of developing a structured approach that is sufficiently flexible to allow for diverse responses to the problem of unemployment in different countries. These strategies seek the participation of all public and private actors in integrated common social policies, including the consultation with non-governmental organizations.

Further, the economic crisis starting in 2008 resulted in a reformulation of labour policies (partly within the Europe 2020 strategy) in different aspects. For example the issue of youth unemployment has been in the forefront: "Youth on the move" is one of the flagship projects in the Agenda 2020 in order to "facilitate the entry of young people to the labour market".

The Youth Guarantee is also a key structural reform at a time of a protracted economic crisis that severely impacts young people's career prospects for both the short and the long term. At least €6 billion will be set aside in the EU budget to help finance trainings, hiring subsidies, job-search support and other elements of the Youth Guarantee in regions where more than 25% of young jobseekers cannot find work. Such employment orientations and policy initiatives do not come out of a theoretical or political vacuum.

Academic literature has shown great interest in discussing and validating the results of supposedly innovative public policies in this field, as well as in the governmental responses to the problems of youth with the design and implementation of measures such as activation policies (Greer *et al*. 2014). In parallel to the question of unemployment the quality of employment and the precarious conditions of the employment contracts in Europe has stimulated new debates on youth precarious employment (Standing, 2011).

Precarious employment can be defined as employment characterized by the absence of security elements associated with the typical full-time, permanent employment. Precarious employment is also closely associated with the absence of other features of good work and is associated with similar concepts such as “insecure work” (Heery and Salmon, 2000) and “vulnerability at work” (Pollert and Charlwood, 2008). The increase in the number of temporary contracts along with high unemployment rates has facilitated the expansion of "atypical" contractual conditions.

Castells (2000) moves the discussion one step further, as he viewed precarity not just as a material deprivation, but also as a condition of social disaffiliation. As he notes most examples of social misfortune have originated in a double disconnection — in relation to work and in relation to common forms of social networks. According to his analysis here is something radically new in what these disconnections relate to. Present-day insecurity, for example, largely results from the growing fragility of protective regulations which were implemented from the nineteenth century onwards in order to create a stable situation for workers: the right to work, extended social protection, coverage of social risks set up by the welfare state.

Not surprisingly, a significant part of the policy debate has focused on labour market institutions (LMIs) as an important area of reform to deal with unemployment. Labour market institutions (LMIs) are widely considered to be the key determinants of unemployment in the OECD countries. In an opposite vein, a

large body of literature from Behavioural Economics and Psychology analyse unemployment evidence at the micro level by focusing on people's "inconsistent" choices and "incorrect rationalities" on economic and employment opportunities.

Youth and postmodern studies also highlight that young people and individuals make their own decisions and manage their own lives beyond structural determinants, such as social class, institutional context, gender or ethnicity that used to define the standard biographies (choices biographies, auto-trade biographies, self-negotiate biographies. The way to become an adult has changed. Lack of smooth labour market transitions in the traditional terms has resulted in flexible transitions to adulthood and to emancipation patterns of young people.

Another line of research that is important for our proposal concerns Transition Theories and Economic Sociology considerations that unemployment should be analyzed in the context of profound social transformations that also affect family structures (such as increasing divorce rates and single parent households), education systems and labour markets, which contribute to growing insecurities in individual life cycles and impact on the process of construction of established identities.

Looking at the major economies across Europe, the UK, Germany, France, Italy and Spain, the situation for young people varies. This is illustrated by comparing the youth unemployment ratio (proportion) with the share of young people who combine education with being active in the labour market. For example Eurostat (the European Commission's Statistical Agency) has created five groups based on respective comparisons:

- The UK is within group 4 which has a high involvement of students in the labour market, an average level of unemployment and a long-standing tradition of students doing part-time or summer jobs.

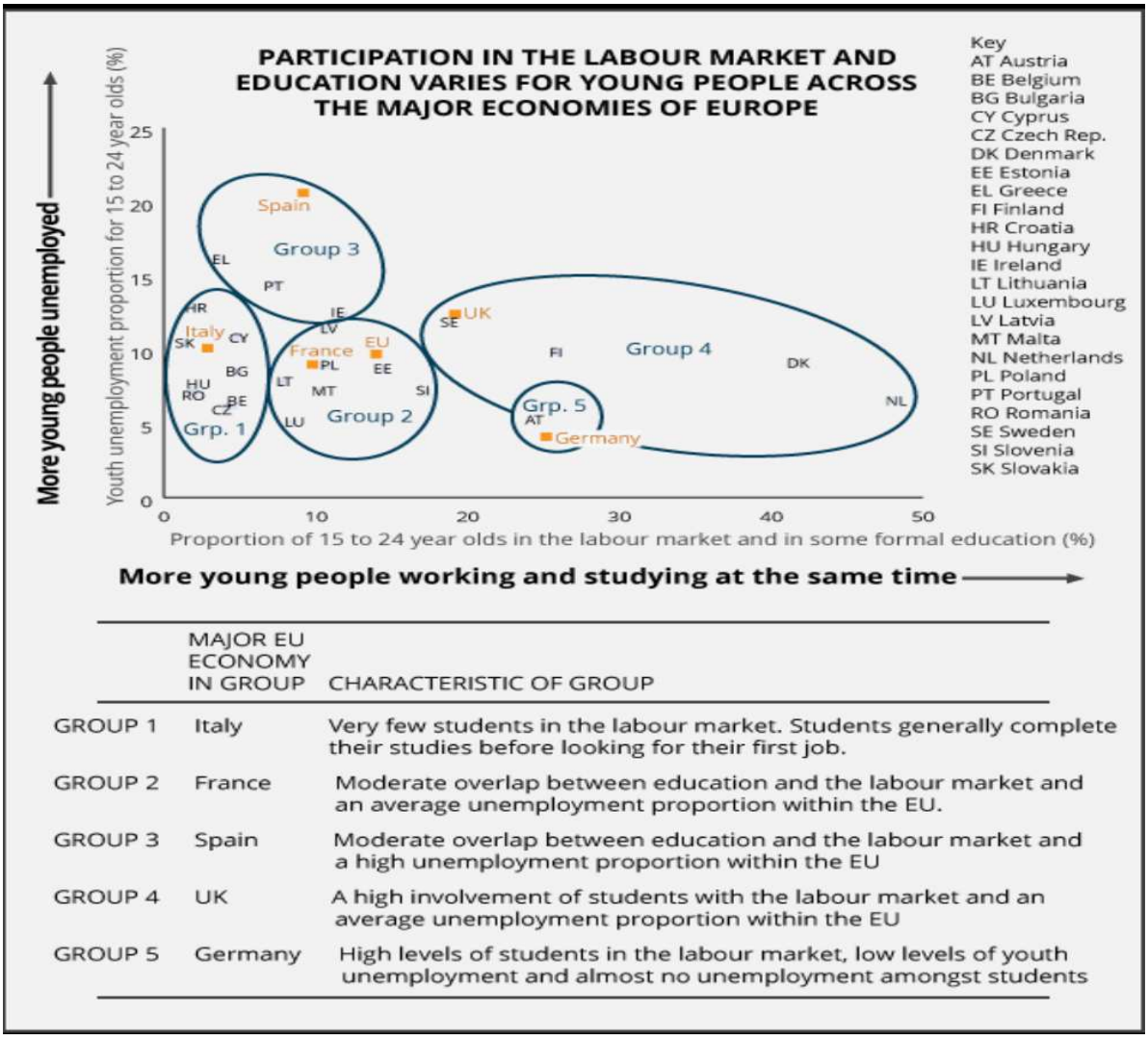
- Germany, which has low youth unemployment is within group 5, it has high levels of employment and almost no unemployment among those in education. They have established apprenticeships systems or vocational training in secondary education.

- France is within group 2 in which there is a moderate overlap between education and being active in the labour market, with youth unemployment levels around the EU average.

- Spain is within group 3 which has a moderate overlap between education and being active in the labour market and a very high level of youth unemployment. This group contains some of the countries worst hit by the recent economic crisis.

- Italy is within group 1 which has very few students employed or unemployed. The overlap between the labour market and education is very small and many young people complete their studies before looking for their first job.

Figure 1 – Percentage of people aged 15 to 24 who are simultaneously in education and the labour market plotted against the unemployment proportion for 15 to 24 year olds by country, 2012



	MAJOR EU ECONOMY IN GROUP	CHARACTERISTIC OF GROUP
GROUP 1	Italy	Very few students in the labour market. Students generally complete their studies before looking for their first job.
GROUP 2	France	Moderate overlap between education and the labour market and an average unemployment proportion within the EU.
GROUP 3	Spain	Moderate overlap between education and the labour market and a high unemployment proportion within the EU
GROUP 4	UK	A high involvement of students with the labour market and an average unemployment proportion within the EU
GROUP 5	Germany	High levels of students in the labour market, low levels of youth unemployment and almost no unemployment amongst students

Source: Office for National Statistics (2014)

In general, young workers enjoy less favourable conditions of employment protection than other age groups of the workforce across Europe. Youth unemployment and youth precarious employment remains a nightmare for many young workers, as well as a widely discussed issue for academics and a hot potato for policy makers and labour market institutions. Nevertheless, young people experience change and worsening conditions in quite different ways such that creating national counter-narratives is actually very difficult, but necessary step to deal with the employment problem of youth.

To summarize, young workers constitute a special group of reference in the studies of labour markets and industrial relations. They have traditionally been considered as secondary wage earners, outsiders and more vulnerable groups to the risk of unemployment and precarious work. The statistical evidence indicates that this situation applies to a global scale irrespective of national institutional peculiarities and economic contextual factors. The transition of young people into employment is fraught with considerable difficulties in finding stable and well-paid employment when compared to older workers. Further, young workers have been particularly affected by the wider changes in global economic conditions; as such changes have seen an increase in employee insecurity and instability.

Not surprisingly, as young workers' position in the labour market is increasingly becoming precarious, one may expect them to join unions to get more protection. Nevertheless most young workers remain disengaged from trade union activity and trade unions are suffering with loss of members and an increasing ageing effect (Blanchflower, 2007; Visser, 2006). In this context the future existence of trade unionism depends on how far trade unions can grasp the complex work reality and the needs of young people (Kretsos, 2011).

Massive youth unemployment and problematic transitions into the youth labour markets pose significant challenges for organising and recruiting young workers (Simms *et al.* 2014). Nevertheless, low youth union density is also driven by trade union inefficiencies (lack of trade union democracy, gerontocracy in union leadership, inappropriate communication channels with youth) (Heery et al. 2004; Heery, 2009; Kretsos, 2011; Waddington and Kerr, 2002). Nevertheless as Ness (2014) and Connoly *et. al.* (2014) suggest there is a rise in radical unionism across Europe and other parts of the world. Those unions engage in direct struggle and resistance against the dictates of the shop floor or in the enterprise through a variety of tactics and strategies.

Further they develop class-consciousness and they reinforce democratic practices that challenge union bureaucracies, corporate domination and the liberal

and left wing approach of seeking compromise through legal remedies. In a similar vein and in the aftermath of the global economic crisis a new cycle of contention in industrial relations has emerged. In many cases and across various parts of the globe alternative youth movements, such as the Indignados and the Occupy Movement have seriously challenged the attractiveness of traditional trade union organisations and the legality of existing political status quo. For example the emergence of young unemployed graduates living in parallel to working class suburbs of global metropolis seems to be a new condition of revitalising the sociology of resistance and mobilisation outside the frames of typical trade unionism (Mason, 2012).

This report seeks to explore the under-researched representation of young workers in trade unions using the national example of Britain. Previous research has highlighted the inability or inefficiency of trade unions to attract and organize young workers and especially those on precarious contracts (Hodder, 2014; Kretsos and Mrozowicki, 2012; Simms, 2012). Further, the aim of this report is to examine low rates of unionisation and engagement with union activities mainly as a condition related to young workers' views of precarity and individualism. Issues of negative attitudes towards union activity, as well as ineffective union recruitment and organising strategies or limited union availability are also taken into consideration.

The report is organised as follows. The first section provides the main theoretical and empirically tested views on why young workers are not usually members of trade union organisations. The next section presents the situation of the youth labour market in Britain. The third part focuses on membership of young people and the institutional position of youth in trade unions across Britain. The fourth part aims to analyse and discuss the interviews taken with top rank officers from various trade union organisations. The last part of the paper provides conclusions about what trade unions do to attract and recruit more young people into their ranks.

2. What explains Low Youth Trade Union Density in the UK and elsewhere

A three-fold set of explanations has been proposed to explain the under-researched representation of young workers in unions across Europe and other parts of the world. The first suggests that the attitudes of young workers towards trade unionism are usually negative. Such a rationale proposes the existence of an inter-generational shift in attitudes with young people supposedly being more antipathetic to trade unions and more individualistic than previous generations.

For example Polavieja (1999, 2001a, 2001b) has argued that union 'outsiders' (including many young workers) in Spain show significantly lower levels of pro-union attitudes in comparison to 'insiders'. The second explanation emphasises the structural characteristics of youth employment and focuses on the opportunities of young people to unionise (Charlswood, 2002; Haynes et al. 2005; Waddington and Kerr, 2002; Pascual and Waddington, 2000; Waddington and Whitston, 1997).

As young people are usually employed in the less-regulated private services sector they are more likely to be found in smaller workplaces with no union representation. Thus, it is difficult for young workers to join unions, especially when many are employed under flexible and insecure contracts or move from one job to another (Sanchez, 2007). Finally, a third set of explanations focuses on unions themselves. This approach highlights the crucial role of union strategies in organising and attracting young workers. Ineffective union recruitment strategies, as well as deficits in internal union democracy, such as gerontocracy of leadership and highly centralised decision-making processes, are responsible for the low levels of youth membership.

Nevertheless, observed dynamics in the respective debates indicate a gradual abandonment of the idea that the rejection of unions by young people is caused by hostile attitudes to unionism. Instead, structural and organisational factors are discussed. There is considerable evidence that structural labour market factors and conditions in the labour market are particularly influential regarding the unionization levels of young workers (Tailby and Pollert, 2009).

Examples of such evidence include the research of Haynes et al. (2005), as well as the research of Freeman and Diamond (2003) and Gomez et al. (2002). As Vandaele (2012) suggests even if unionization of younger workers is today declining faster than among older workers there is no serious evidence that young workers have negative attitudes towards trade unionism and there is indeed good reason to believe that there is an unsatisfied demand for unionism among young workers.

The focus on a number of structural factors and conditions that prevail in the labour markets as the main determinants of low youth union density rates was already recognized by the earlier studies of Pascual and Waddington (2000) and Waddington and Kerr (2002). In both cases the authors concluded that there is no wide-ranging shift in young people's attitudes, neither because young people are more likely to exhibit a greater individualism than in the past, nor because younger generations of workers are characterized by political apathy.

In essence, the low levels of trade union membership should be seen as the outcome of employers' resistance and hostility to unionisation, as well as the concentration of employment of young people in non-unionised private-sector services and small workplaces. There is no doubt that apart from an attitudinal shift, greater labour market segmentation can increase the costs of union organizing efforts and make a union presence in individual workplaces less likely (Visser, 2006).

Many institutionalist and insider-outsider theorists have also concluded that trade union membership is concentrated among workers in the core of the labour market (Ramon Alos et al. 2009). According to this perspective, the polarisation of union representation and support can also be explained through the view that trade unions are there to protect mainly the interests of labour market 'insiders' and particularly those with open-ended contracts (Friedman and Friedman, 1980). It is therefore reasonable to anticipate that the attitudes of the labour market 'outsiders', such as young precarious workers, may not be favourable towards unionism.

Nevertheless, there is an unsatisfied demand for unions by young people in Southern Europe and a large potential for unions' growth and renewal according to European Social Survey evidence (D'Art and Turner, 2008). In a similar vein, the analysis of Macias (2003) about Spain demonstrated that insecure workers had more positive attitudes towards unionism than those of stable employees. Earlier

also findings by Altieri and Carrieri (2000) from Italy also found a high demand for unionization among atypical workers.

The lack of union availability at the workplace, as well as the performance of local representatives have also been highlighted in earlier studies as a main reason for the unions' failure to fill the 'representation gap' (Bryson et al. 2005:18; Charlwood, 2002; Freeman and Rogers, 1999; Lipset and Meltz, 1997; Sanchez, 2007; Waddington and Whitston, 1997). Finally, recent research of the youth representation at the confederal union level across Europe by Vandaele (2012) revealed that the considered the youth trade union structures' resources are considered as inadequate, even if such structures enjoy a dedicated budget and some administrative support.

In summary, the incapacity of unions to recruit more young workers should be linked not only with the growing trends of labour market segmentation but also with internal union organizational inefficiencies, regulatory anomalies and restrictions to unionisation, lack of union availability at the workplace, adoption of inappropriate ways by unions to support and value their members, sometimes limited performance of local union representatives, and unions' inability to establish daily contact with young contingent workers due to limited available resources for attracting and recruiting young workers. These inefficiencies reduce the propensity and the availability of opportunities for young people and especially those on precarious work arrangements to unionize.

3. Labour Market Position of Young People in the UK

3.1. The UK economic and labour market context

The UK economy has traditionally been considered as an open economy characterized by high labour force participation rates and widespread flexible work arrangements. In terms of the socio-economic context, the UK can be seen to be an exemplary proponent of the liberal market economy model (Hall and Soskice, 2001). The tendency to place the United Kingdom within the category of a liberal market economy mirrors a range of research and pre-conceptions of the nation which emphasize its marketised industrial relations, strong 'outsider roles' in terms of shareholder interest in relation to the decision making processes of the firm, strong external capital markets with a short-term economic perspective, and the use of contracts and coercion through market mechanisms. The Anglo-Saxon model is therefore one which places labour management in a secondary position, being conditional on economic and market facing approaches.

In terms of labour market outcomes the issue of unemployment in Britain was long before the crisis not as important in comparison to the main employment policy debates in other parts of Europe. Nevertheless other issues, such as job quality have been more concerning. As Kretsos and Martinez Lucio (2013) have argued Britain has been synonymous with some of the most complex and substantive changes in terms of the organization and structure of employment. It is held, along with the case of the United States of America, as an example of a market leaning and more individualized approach to labour market regulation. The case is important because unlike other national examples it is fair to say that key exponents in the UK see de-standardization as a positive virtue leading to greater levels of job creation.

In general, non-standard forms of employment or precarious employment in the UK are commonly associated with the lack of features of "good work" and related to negative concepts, such as "insecure work" (Heery and Salmon, 2000) and "vulnerability at work" (Pollert and Charlwood, 2008). The conceptualization of non-standard employment has been affected by policy initiatives to increase labour market flexibility that drove the public debate over 1980s and 1990s. Flexibility was sometimes touted as a major source of national advantage, much

greater management prerogative and a much more quiescent workforce (Chapman and Temple, 1998).

Nevertheless, a serious change of collective perceptions and analytical frames used in the British public debate is observed since mid of 2000s (Bambier, 2011). For O'Reilly et al. (2009) there are three different stages on the debates for precarious employment. At first, during the 1980s and in the context of high unemployment, homelessness and industrial restructuring, the debate focused on the growth of numerical flexibility (part-time work, temporary work and subcontracting) (Atkinson and Meager 1986; Pollert 1991).

At the end of 1980s government and company initiatives to reduce the impact of regulatory anomalies and to encourage work-life balance influenced the debate. Finally the influx of migrant workers after 2004 has moved the debate to the concept of vulnerable workers. The increasing academic and policy interest on vulnerable workers (e.g. McGovern, 2007; Pollert and Charlwood, 2008 and 2009; Pollert and Tailby, 2009), NGOs and the trade unions (e.g. TUC Commission on Vulnerable Employment) facilitated to some extent this outcome.

Nevertheless the above-mentioned change in the perceptions and the analytical frames of de-standardised employment in the UK is also associated with the massive application of flexible working practices. Such practices have become deeply embedded in the British context, thus representing a social norm.

For example according to the results of a CIPD survey, part-time work was found to be the most commonly available practice (cited by 86% of respondents), corresponding with the UK's high ranking among European countries in terms of its proportion of part-time workers (CIPD, 2005). Further, the study concludes that in many organizations, part-time working is now so ingrained that it no longer appears to represent an example of flexible working.

Table 1 – Flexible working: Availability and formality (%)

	Total availability	**Available to all staff**	**Formal policy**	**Informal arrangements**
Part-time work	86	43	41	24
Term-time work	38	15	18	22
Job-sharing	63	29	32	23
Flexitime	55	21	32	19

Compressed hours (e.g. 4-day week)	47	15	17	23
Annual hours	28	8	14	15
Working from home on a regular basis	55	7	19	30
Mobile working	27	3	9	16
Career breaks/sabbaticals	42	25	26	16
Secondment to another organisation	37	18	18	18
Time off for community work	22	15	12	17

Source: CIPD (February 2005), Tables 1a and 1b, p. 6.

In a similar vein, the study of Tinsley and Monastiriotis (2010), covering the period 1992-2005, indicates that the UK labour market in 2005 was substantially more flexible that before 1997. According to the study, the incoming in 1997 Labour government imposed certain regulations that brought only some stabilization in the level of labour market flexibility. Instead there were no clear signs of reversing the trends of flexible employment. Such findings explain, in turn, the inherent sensitiveness of the de-standardization of employment to political changes. Regulatory changes in the labour market and the employment landscape affect a complex set of economic parties. Such parties and actors are transformed by the time and the changing economic and social conditions in a way that new regimes of political hegemony are established. Certain groups and actors are excluded from these regimes of hegemony, while others participate more actively (Dorre, 2006).

In this context, the expansion of flexible forms of work and the de-standardization of employment is not a zero-sum game. A range of processes, spaces and actors interact in the institutionalization and standardization of the rules and conditions of the way labour markets operate (MacKenzie and Martinez Lucio, 2005). According to OECD (1996) Britain is characterized by increased flexibility and one of the lowest strictness in employment legislation across the OECD countries. Such measurements ignore political and socio-economic dynamics embedded in the national regulatory modes.

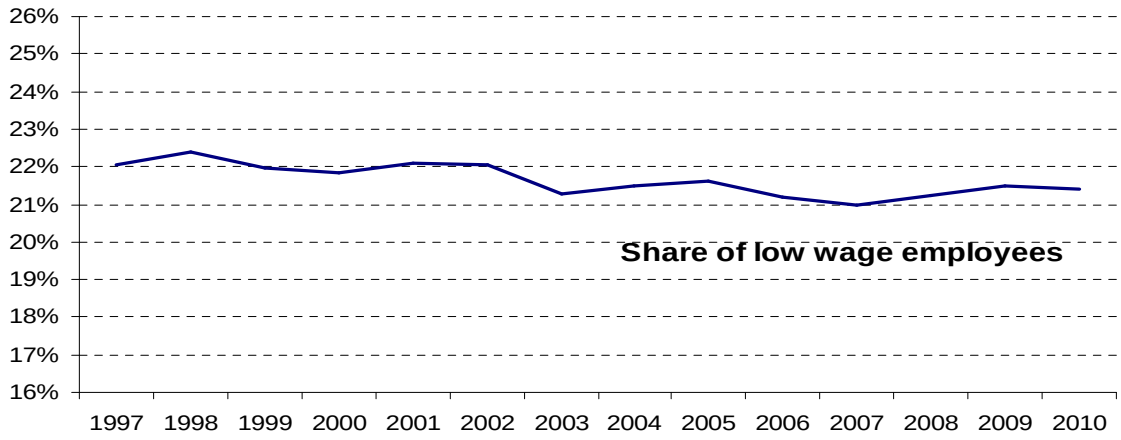
A characteristic example of that is the comparison of working time regimes across Europe. UK and Denmark stand out as national cases with limited regulatory rules on working hours in comparison to the rest countries of the EU-15 area. Nevertheless, both countries share a drastically different experience in the

allocation and distribution of working hours among the workforce. This contrasting experience is to a great extent related to the collective representations structures and levels of union influence at the workplace found in both countries.

In general, the role of trade unions in the economy and the decision making at the workplace plays a significant role in explaining labour market and industrial relations outcomes . According to the TUC the number of workers covered by a collective agreement has fallen by more than half over the past 25 years (TUC, 2011). Further, around 70% of all workers had their pay and conditions covered by collective agreements in 1984, but this has fallen to 33%, and 18% in the private sector. National-level bargaining still exists among some large private firms, but multi-employer collective agreements in the private sector have all but disappeared.

A large and growing proportion of workers have their pay and conditions determined by management at the workplace, with little if any input from unions. Taking into account the above developments it is not surprising to understand the strong dynamics of non-standard employment and low pay in the UK over the years.

Figure 2 – Persistence of low wage work in the UK



Source: Grimshaw (2012)

Nevertheless, the absolute statistics are not enough to provide a contextual and interpretational framework of the structural characteristics and the peculiar elements of the pattern of de-standardised employment in the UK. De-standardised employment has established such a strong foothold and autonomous

and growing space in the labour market that has makes Britain much more distant to the traditional European standard (less Europeanised and increasingly Americanised) than 30 years ago.

In that sense individual rights are more strongly linked with responsibilities, welfare entitlements are more contingent upon labour market activism, increases in minimum wages have been associated with reduced social contributions to increase work incentives, while more tangible penalties for the unemployed and vulnerable workers who are not searching actively for new jobs have been introduced.

The political implications of such a condition is that de-standardised employment now in associated with unemployment function as disciplinary devices on their own raising the cost to the individual worker of being not so employable in the sense of not being willing to 'accept' the new labour market reality and to improve his/ her work ethos according to employers rules . In certain cases a large proportion of low paid, unrepresented workers are at risk of being denied their employment rights (Pollert, 2009).

The most obvious consequence of the Americanization of economic and social policy in Britain under Thatcher administration was the dramatic polarization of income allocation among the working population, which is partly related to an unequal distribution of working hours among the workforce. Besides, wide income inequalities are a typical characteristic of all liberal welfare regimes in the world with USA to stand out as an exemplar of wage inequalities and long hours culture country case. Rising wage inequality was the pride that workers had to pay after the persistent policy reforms to reduce the impact of government in the economy and to allow market forces to shape individual incentives more powerfully.

In general, wider social and economic factors have interacted with the policy reforms promoted by Conservative governments after 1979 in such a way to create an economy marked by considerably greater inequality, higher rates of precarious workers and diminished union presence and influence. The objective was to reduce trade union power and to make labour market outcomes mimic more precisely those that would prevail in free market. This triptych of unfortunate political and social conditions (growing inequality, precarisation of employment and reduced redistributive impact of public policy, loss of union power) has become the basis of the observed labour market segmentations in Britain.

As Chapman and Temple (1998) have noted the most striking change over the period 1979-1995 in the Family Expenditure Survey (FES) was the dramatic rise in the proportion of households where the head of the household was economically inactive from 30% to 39% of households. Significant rises were also observed in the 'no-earner households', thus expanding the tension between 'job-rich' and 'job-poor' households. The distribution of jobs across households was one only dimension of the unequal distribution of earning and income that took place during the administration of the countries by the Conservative governments of 1980s and 1990s.

Other significant features of this development included the increase in the gap between manual workers and other groups and an increase in inequality within nearly all-occupational groupings.

For example Machin and Manning (1994) have suggested that the rise in income dispersion in the low-pay sectors of the economy (especially catering, retailing and hairdressing) in the 1980s can be explained up to 20% by the abolition of the Wages Councils. In addition, Goos and Manning (2003) based on an analysis of New Earnings Survey between 1976 and 1995, and the Labour Force Survey from 1979 to 1999, have argued that here has been a large rise in the number of well paid jobs in the UK over the past 25 years but also a rise in the number of badly paid jobs (McJobs).

In essence, a clear trend that the authors observe is that 'middling' jobs have been disappearing. In a similar vein, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation concluded that by 1990 the degree of income inequality had reached its highest level since the Second World War, while OECD (1996) confirmed that Britain was exceptional in the degree to which inequality in the distribution of income has risen in the 1980s. Almost 20 years later OECD found that income inequality among working-age people has risen faster in Britain than in any other rich nation since the mid-1970s (http://www.oecd.org/unitedkingdom/49170234.pdf).

The re-regulation approach followed by the New Labour governments did not manage to challenge this norm to a great extent and the foundations of the liberal economy established before 1997 remained strong. Employment in low productivity, low wage, labour intensive service industries and the banking sector showed marked increases throughout 1990s and 2000s at the expense of jobs in manufacturing, while more flexible job contracts were introduced in the public sector.

As a consequence, the number of non-unionised workplaces was increased,

and the labour market and social inequalities continued to reflect their structural nature. In parallel to this, industrial action in Britain, measured in terms of days and hours lost due to a strike incidence, in 2005 approached its lowest levels since 1892 (Anagboso, 2007).

This long-term period of industrial peace was fed by high rates of economic growth, a public euphoria in terms of job creation and in general a macroeconomic situation that had nothing to do with the situation, which prevailed almost 20 years ago. The employment machine was kept extremely 'warm' and the employment rates continued to remain quite high at international level. A note of caution needs to be added to those descriptive statistics, as even if unemployment was not the big problem, as it was in previous decades, a significant proportion of the workforce, mainly women, young and ethnic minority groups of workers, seemed unable to escape the risks of poorly paid and low-quality jobs. Further, even today Britain is still associated with social problems that have stigmatized the Thatcher years.

The redistributive impact of the New Labour governments was not significant, as the inequality of income distribution between 1998-2009 remained at the same persistent high levels for the international accounts.

The tension between equity and efficiency forms the backbone of the overview in British labour market changes in the last 30 years. Except the above mentioned trend of income polarization a significant element of the overview of the changes in the British welfare and employment regime is the observed inelasticity of flexible forms of work to the fluctuations of the economic cycle.

This explains to some extent the symbiosis of older labour market segmentations with new less visible inequalities and broader transformations of the employee-employer relationship and the employment institutional framework. As Grimshaw and Rubery (1998) have argued current debates on labour market segmentation are characterized by multidimensionality and complexity, as under the pressures of globalization internal labour markets are split and firms' employment strategies are more diverse than in the past. Such complexity of productive organizations and diversity of management modes result in a plethora of flexible working practices raising issues of jobs quality, insecurity and inequality.

For example, McGovern, Smeaton and Hill (2004) found that between one quarter and half of the working population in Britain in 2000 had jobs with at least one bad characteristic. Approximately one quarter of all employees (28.9%) were

low paid, just over one third (36.7%) had no pension, a similar proportion (36.1%) had no sick pay, and half (51.5%) were in jobs that do not have a recognized promotion ladder. When these individual characteristics were added together to form an overall measure of 'badness', less than one in 10 (9.4%) employees are in positions that are bad on all four dimensions but only one in four (27.9%) of the British labour force are in jobs that are not bad in any respect.

The interesting issue is the continuity of such conditions beyond the fluctuations of the economic system and the policy reactions to these fluctuations. For example, since 1984 the number of people in part-time work has risen steadily by over half (53 per cent) to reach 7.7 million in 2009. Though there has been a steady increase in part-time work since 1984, the increase over the period of the recession (second quarter 2008 to fourth quarter 2009) has been greater. In contrast to part-time work, the number of temporary workers fell steadily between the fourth quarter of 1997 (peak level at 7.5%) and the third quarter of 2008 by 23 per cent.

However, since the third quarter of 2008, a rise of 5 per cent has seen this trend reversed, mirroring the increase in involuntary temporary workers (IPPR, 2011). Those trends are reflected to the shares of part-timers and temporary workers across different age groups. Young people have much greater rates of part-time and temporary contracts than any other age group (see next table, data for 2012).

Unemployment			**Temporary**		**Part-Time**
	ALL	15-24	ALL	15-24	
DK	8	14	9	21	25
SE	8	24	16	57	25
AT	4	9	9	36	25
BE	8	20	8	31	25
DE	6	8	14	53	26
BE	8	20	8	31	25
NL	5	10	20	51	49
FR	10	24	15	57	18
IT	11	35	14	53	17
IE	15	30	10	35	24
UK	**8**	**21**	**6**	**15**	**26**

Source: Eurostat

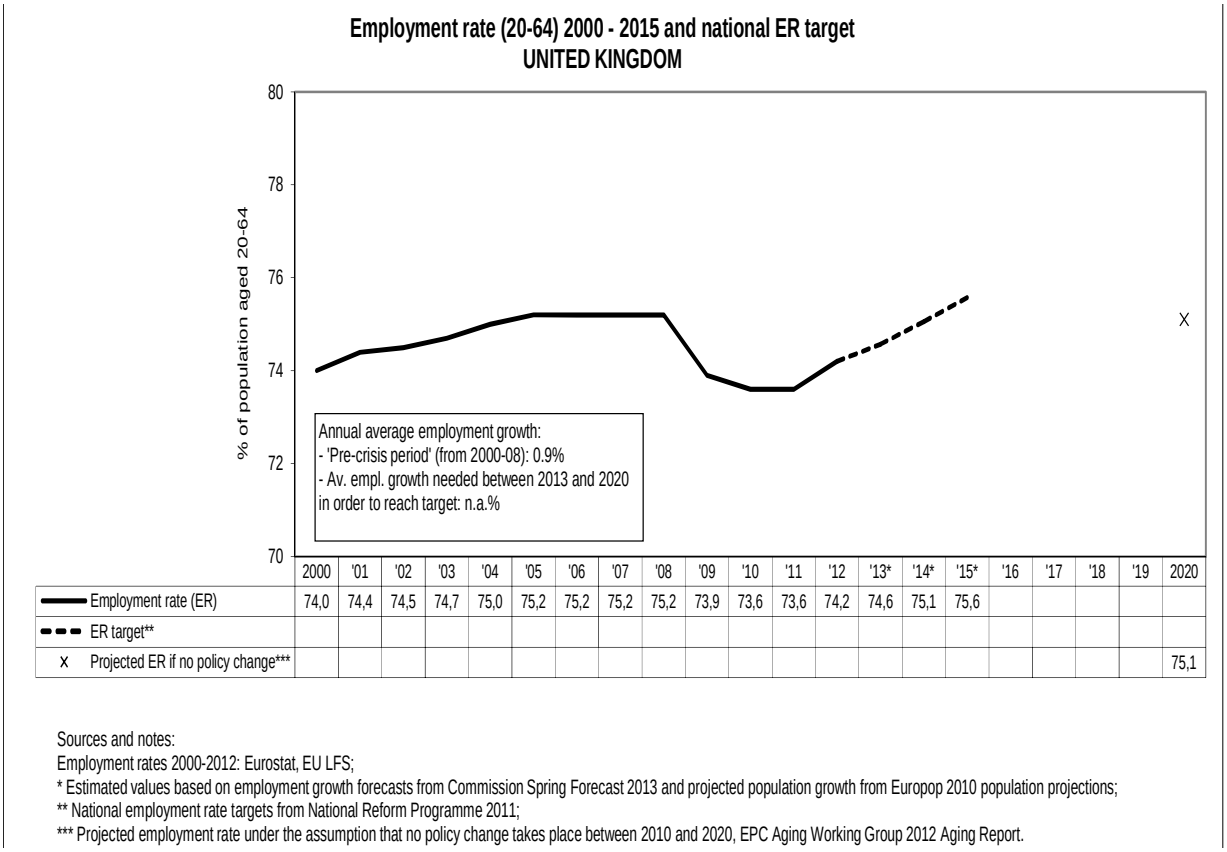
In this context, the current economic recession and what follows in terms of policy making make the issue of de-standardized employment much more evident in the British labour market, as it has helped to a reformulation of labour market segmentations. Not surprisingly inequalities may play a greater role in labour market processes and outcomes.

For example, according to a recent TUC survey, the recession has promoted a culture where working unpaid overtime has become the norm, as millions of workers in the Britain are working unpaid overtime. The study showed that 5.07 million employees regularly worked unpaid overtime in 2009, and that nearly 900,000 people regularly worked more than 10 hours a week without payment. In a similar vein, the rates of involuntary temporary and part-time employment have sharply increased (IPPR, 2011).

3.2. The UK labour market performance during the crisis

The above analysis of the UK economic and labour market context indicates the continuity of policies that aim to combat unemployment through the expansion of labour market flexibility practices. This has an obvious effect on the levels of income inequality initiating a gradual deepening polarization of incomes and working hours across the workforce. Since 2013 Britain returned back to economic growth even if the respective growth of GDP is marginal. To some extent this development has certain positive effects on total employment rate (see next table).

Figure 3 – Employment Rate, 2000-2015



	2000	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13*	'14*	'15*	'16	'17	'18	'19	2020
Employment rate (ER)	74,0	74,4	74,5	74,7	75,0	75,2	75,2	75,2	75,2	73,9	73,6	73,6	74,2	74,6	75,1	75,6					
ER target**																					
x Projected ER if no policy change***																					75,1

Sources and notes:
Employment rates 2000-2012: Eurostat, EU LFS;
* Estimated values based on employment growth forecasts from Commission Spring Forecast 2013 and projected population growth from Europop 2010 population projections;
** National employment rate targets from National Reform Programme 2011;
*** Projected employment rate under the assumption that no policy change takes place between 2010 and 2020, EPC Aging Working Group 2012 Aging Report.

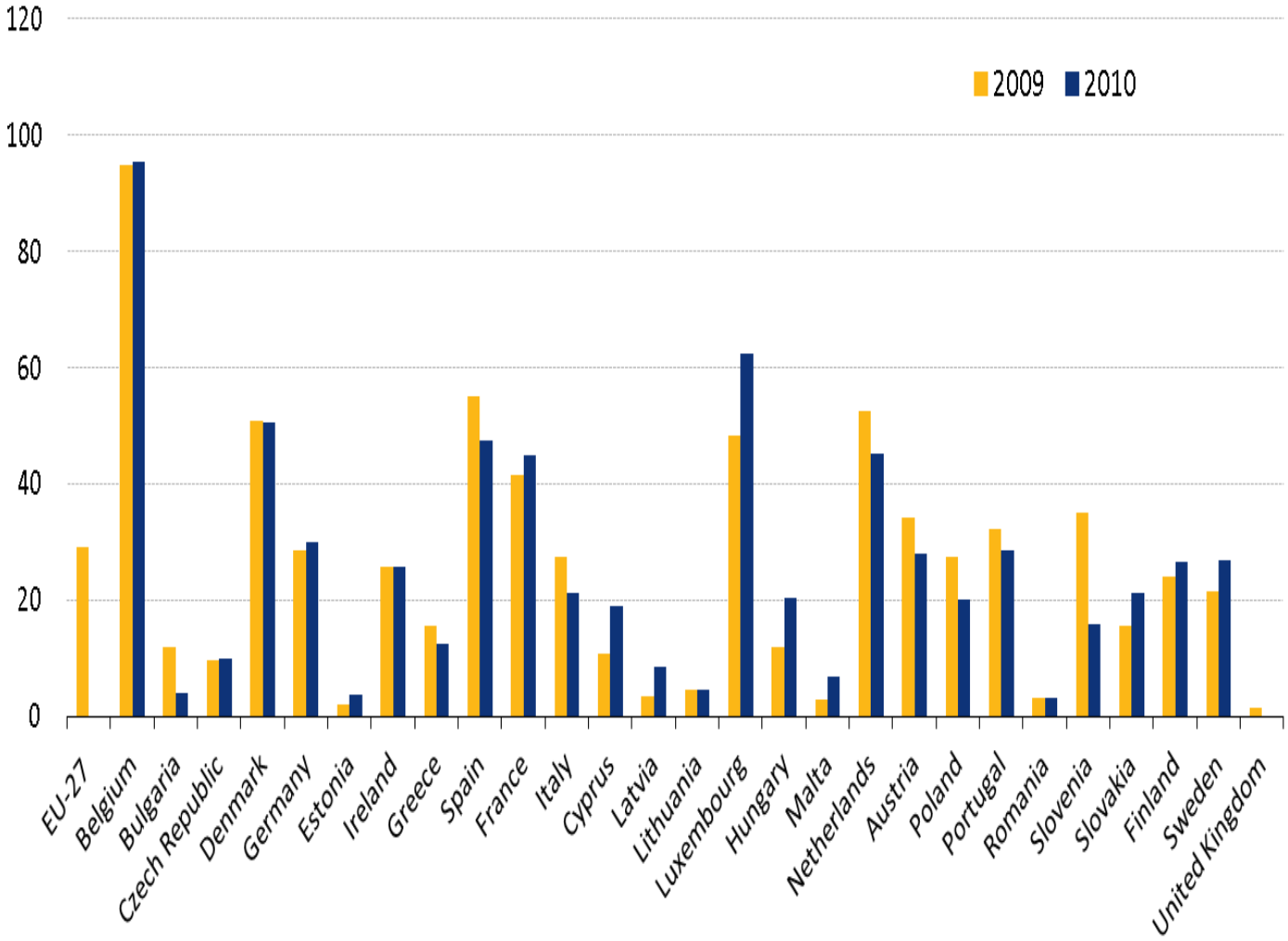
Source: EPSCO Council on 9 December 2013

Further, the general picture of labour market performance in Britain is satisfactory in comparison to many other member states of the EU. The rates of youth unemployment and the rates of young people not in employment, education and training (NEET) are the exemptions that confirm the rule. Young people in Britain suffer more than other age groups in finding employment especially a stable one. Other key employment challenges include the following:

- challenges to access affordable childcare,
- High numbers of early school leavers,
- Gender pay gap, which is worse than the EU average levels.
-

Finally, significant concerns emerge out of the seemingly extremely low number of participants in regular activation measures in relation to the number of persons wanting to work (see next diagram).

Figure 4 – Activation measures in relation to the number of person wanting to work



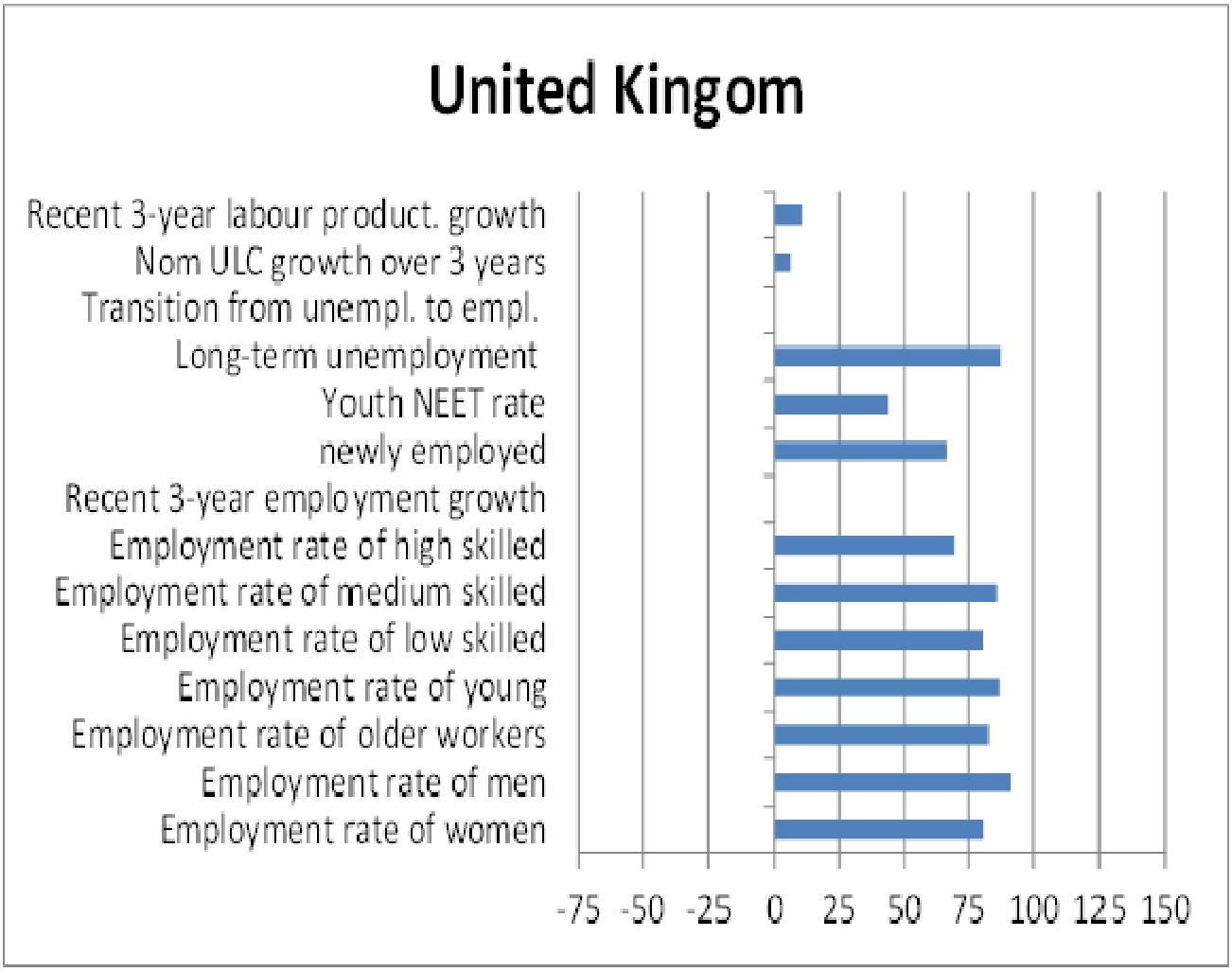
Indicator	Unit	2000	2009	2010	2011	2012	Benchmark	2020 national target	2010	2011 **EU28-total**	2012	2020 EU target
Overall employment rate	% of population aged 20 - 64	74,0	73,9	73,6	73,6	74,2		n.a.	68,5	68,5	68,4	75,0
Early leavers from education and training	% of pop. 18-24 with at most lower sec. educ. and not in further education or training	18,2	15,7	14,9	15,0	13,5		n.a	13,9	13,4	12,7 p	less than 10
Tertiary educational attainment	Completion of tertiary or equivalent education (30-34)	29,0	41,5	43,0	45,8	47,1		n.a.	33,5	34,5	35,7	40,0
Overall employment growth	% change from previous year	-6,4	-1,6	0,2	0,5	1,2			-0,5	0,3		
Employment rate of women	% of female population aged 20 - 64	66,8	68,2	67,9	67,9	68,4	80,6		62,0	62,2	62,3	
Employment rate of men	% of male population aged 20 - 64	81,4	79,6	79,3	79,4	80,0	91,2		75,0	74,9	74,5	
Employment rate of older workers	% of population aged 55 - 64	50,7	57,5	57,1	56,7	58,1	82,6		46,2	47,3	48,8	
Employment gender gap	difference in the employment rate between men and women in percentage points	14,6	11,4	11,4	11,5	11,6			13,0	12,7	12,2	
Employment rate of young persons	% of population aged 20 - 29	75,1	70,9	71,1	70,1	70,1	86,8		61,5	61,1	60,1	
Employment rate of low skilled persons	% of population with at most lower secondary education aged 20 - 64	64,5	57,3	55,6	55,7 b	56,5	80,4		53,3	52,9	52,1	
Employment rate of non-EU nationals	% of population with non-EU citizenship aged 20 - 64	:	63,0	63,6	62,3	61,5			58,5	58,0	56,9	
Part-time employment	% of total employment	25,1	26,0	26,7	26,7	27,0			19,1	19,4		
Fixed term contracts	% of total employees	6,6	5,5	6,0	6,0	6,2			13,9	14,0	13,7	
Overall unemployment rate	% of labour force	5,4	7,6	7,8	8,0	7,9			9,7	9,7	10,5	
Long-term unemployment	% of labour force	1,4	1,9	2,5	2,7	2,7	87,2		3,9	4,2	4,7	
Youth unemployment rate	% of youth labour force (15-24)	12,0	19,1	19,6	21,1	21,0			20,9	21,4		
Youth NEET rate	% of population aged 15-24	10,9	13,3	13,7	14,3	14,0	43,8		12,8	12,9	13,2 p	
Labour productivity per person employed	EU-27 = 100 (based on PPS per employed person)	112,3	106,9	107,2	105,4	105,0			99,8	99,9		
Labour productivity per hour worked	EU-27 = 100 (based on PPS per hour worked)	113,5	107,3	107,7	106,0	103,9			:	:		
Nominal unit labour cost growth	% change from previous year	2,3	6,2	1,7	1,4	3,0			0,9	0,7		
Real unit labour cost growth	% change from previous year	1,5	3,9	-1,4	-0,9	1,3			-1,4	-0,7		
Gender pay gap		:	20,6	19,5	20,1	:			:	:	:	
Involuntary temporary employment	as % of total employees	3,0 u	2,8 u	3,4 u	3,6 u	3,6 u			8,6 u	8,5 u	8,4 u	
newly employed	share of people in current job 12 months or less in total employment	20,5	15,5	15,0	15,4	15,7			13,7	14,2	13,9	
At-risk-of-poverty rate of unemployed		:	50,9	47,4	47,2	:			45,0	45,9	:	
unemployment trap - tax rate on low wage earners		:	65,0	64,0	65,0	:			:	:	:	
inactivity and part-time work due to personal and family responisibilities		:	7,6	7,5	10,6	10,7			4,8	5,1	5,1	
job vacancy rate	% change over the recent 3 years	:	1,6	1,7	1,7	1,7			1,4	1,5	1,4	
Share of adult population with upper secondary or tertiary education	age 25-64	64,4	74,6	76,1	76,4	77,9			72,7	73,4	74,2	
percentage of adult population participating in education and training	age 25-64	20,5 b	20,1	19,4	15,8	15,8			9,1	8,8	9,0	

Source: Eurostat database (labour market statistics, national accounts), National Reform Programmes

Notes: b - break in series, p - provisional, c - confidental, e - estimated, n - not siginifcant, f - forecast, s - Eurostat estimate, z - not applicable, u - unreliable, ":" - not available

Additional note: the benchmark is normalised in the following way: average of highest 5=100, average of lowest 5=0. The interpretation of the benchmark is that it gives the relative distance to the highest 5 performers by subtracting that benchmark for a given country and indicator from the benchmark of the highest 5 performers, thus a 100. Nmbers in bold: the country is among the 5 highest performers for this indicator. The numbers in italic: the country is among the lowest 5 performers

Figure 5 – Basic macroeconomic and labour market performance indicators, 2013

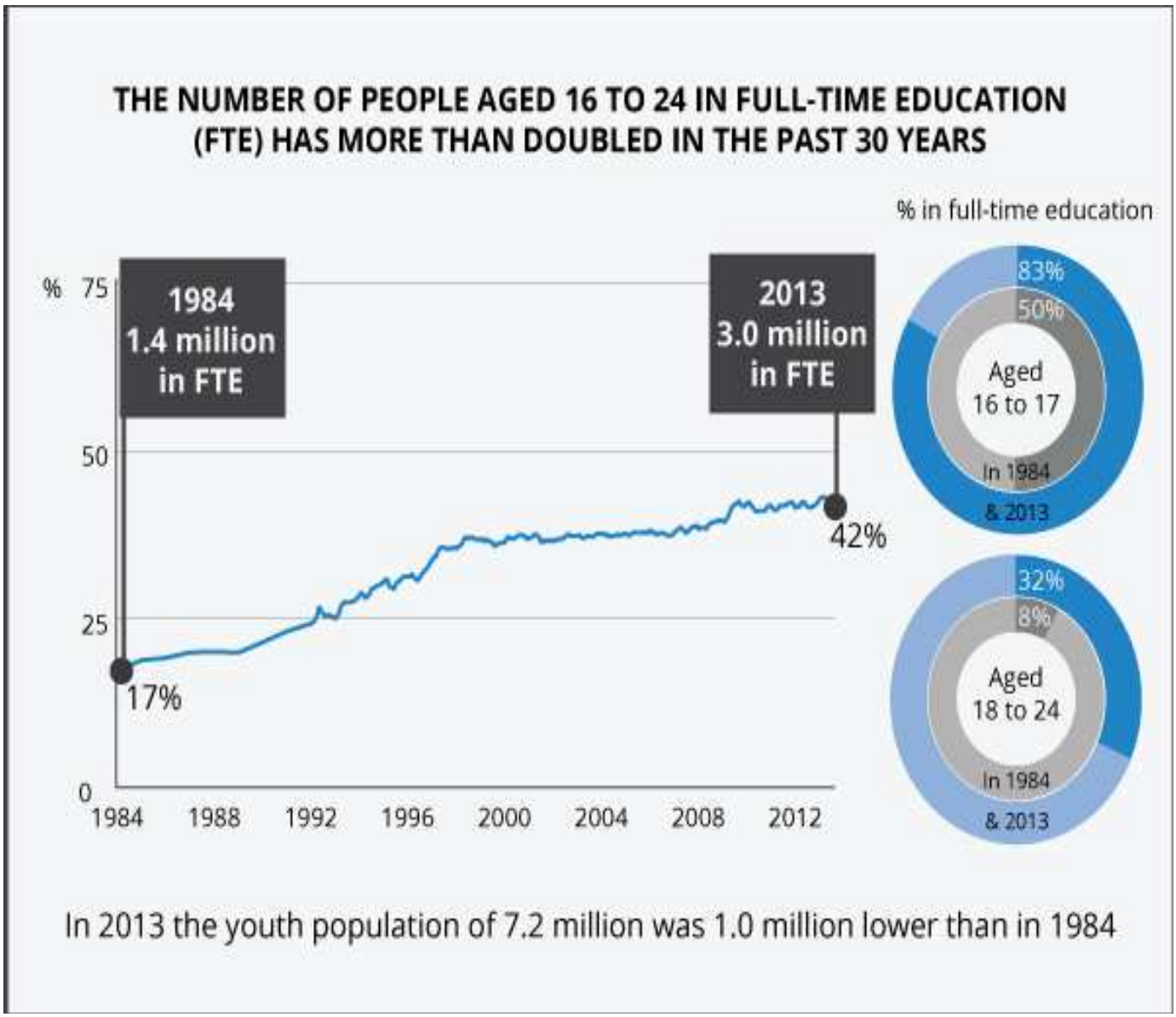


Source: Office for National Statistics

3.3. The position of young workers in the labour market

At the end of 2013, 3.03 million (42%) people aged 16 to 24 were in full-time education, up from 1.42 million (17%) in 1984. This increase has happened against a backdrop of a falling youth population, which at 7.20 million is one million lower than in 1984, when it was 8.20 million. The overall population of the UK has increased over the same period.

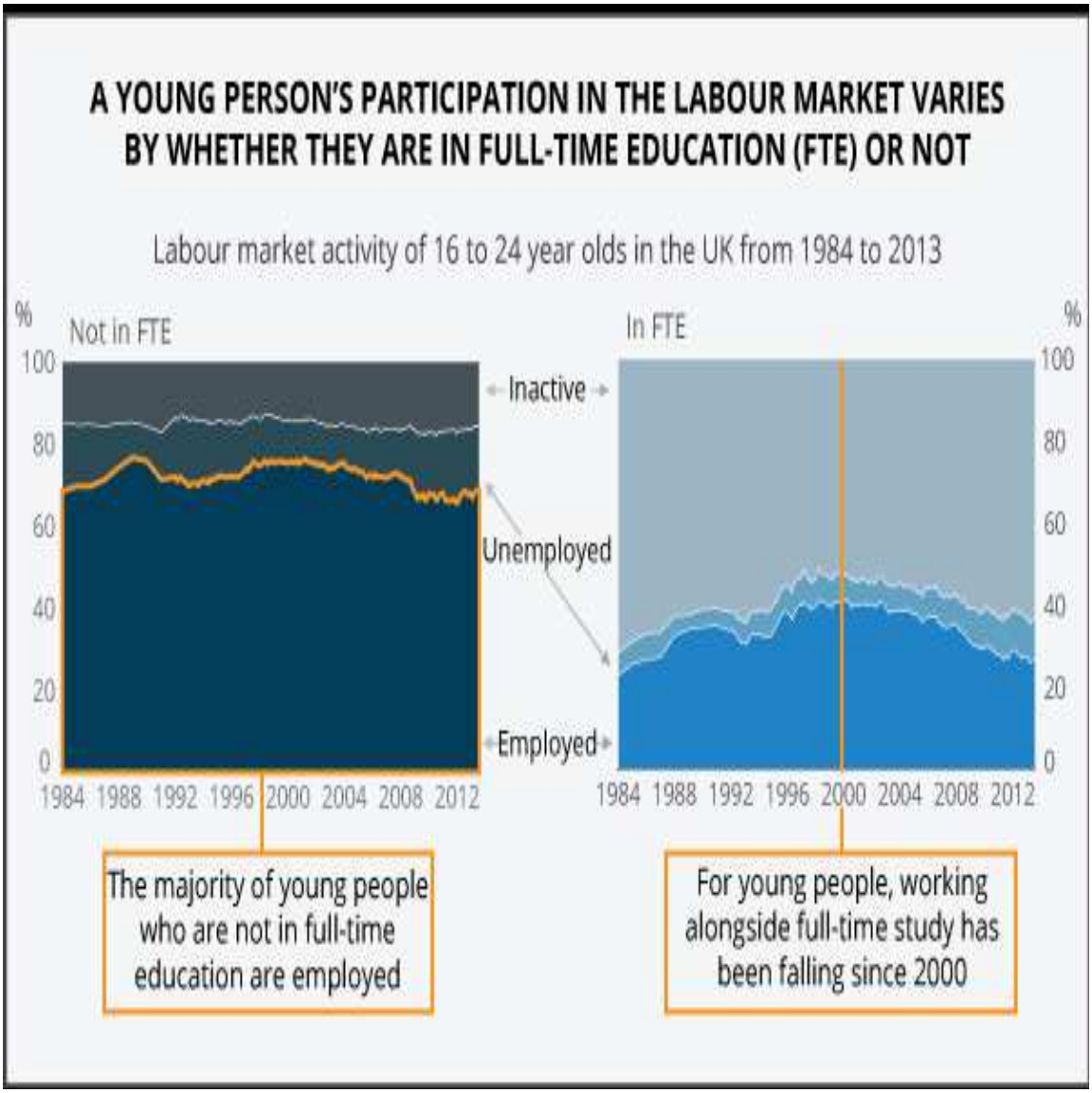
Figure 6 – The percentage of people aged 16 to 24 in full-time education, 1984 to 2013



Source: Office for National Statistics, 2014

Another interesting finding from the official statistics of the Labour Force Survey is that **most young people not in full-time education were employed at the end of 2013**. We need to mention that government labour market policies are principally aimed at those who have left full-time education and are not in work.

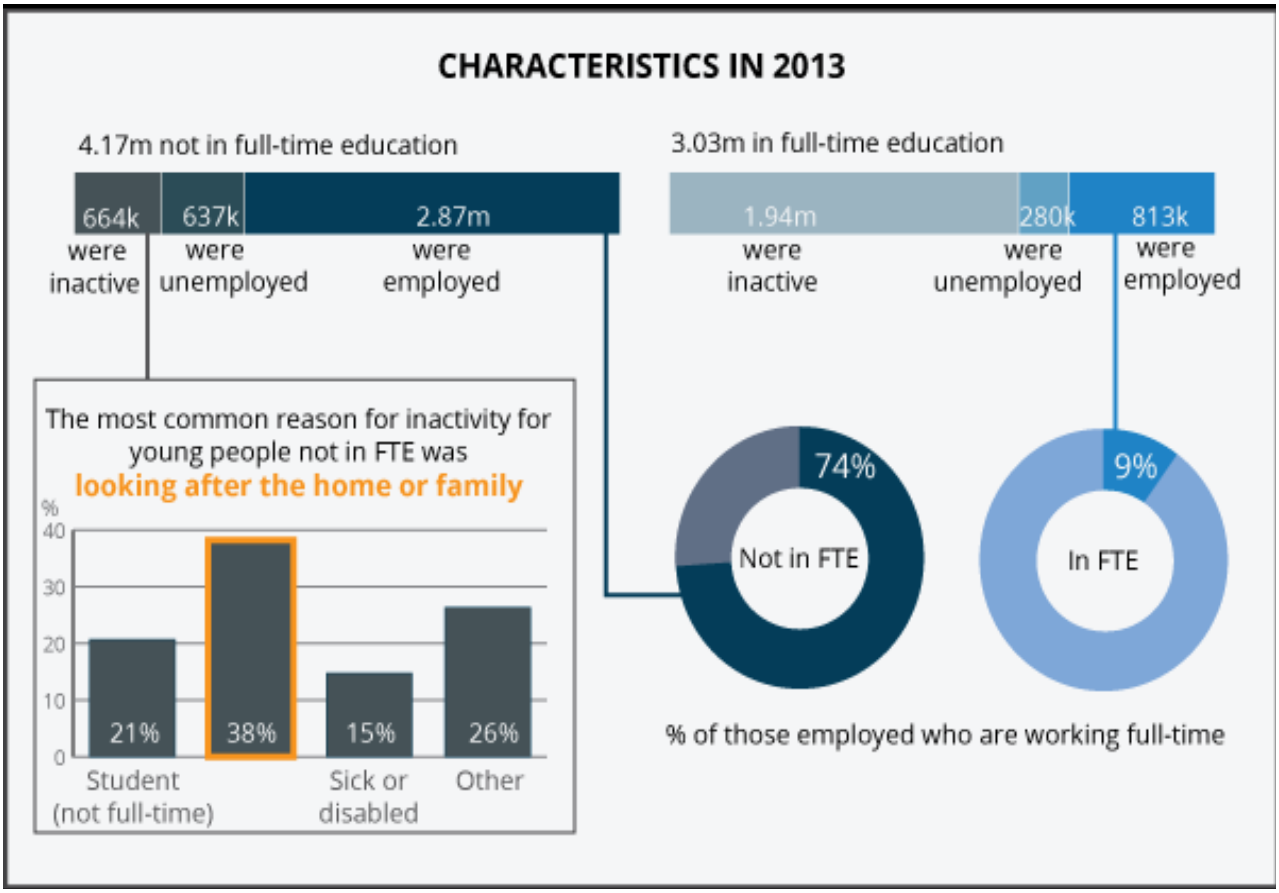
Figure 7 – Labour Market Activity of 16 to 24 years old in the UK, 1984-2013



Source: Office for National Statistics, 2014

More specifically of the 4.17 million young people not in full-time education in the final quarter of 2013, 2.87 million (69%) were in employment. Of the remaining, 637,000 (15%) were unemployed, which means they were actively seeking and available to work, and 664,000 (16%) were inactive. Of those who were inactive, the most common reason given for not seeking or being available to work was looking after the home or family (38%).

Figure 8 – Reasons and characteristics of young people for not being or for being in FT Education, 2013



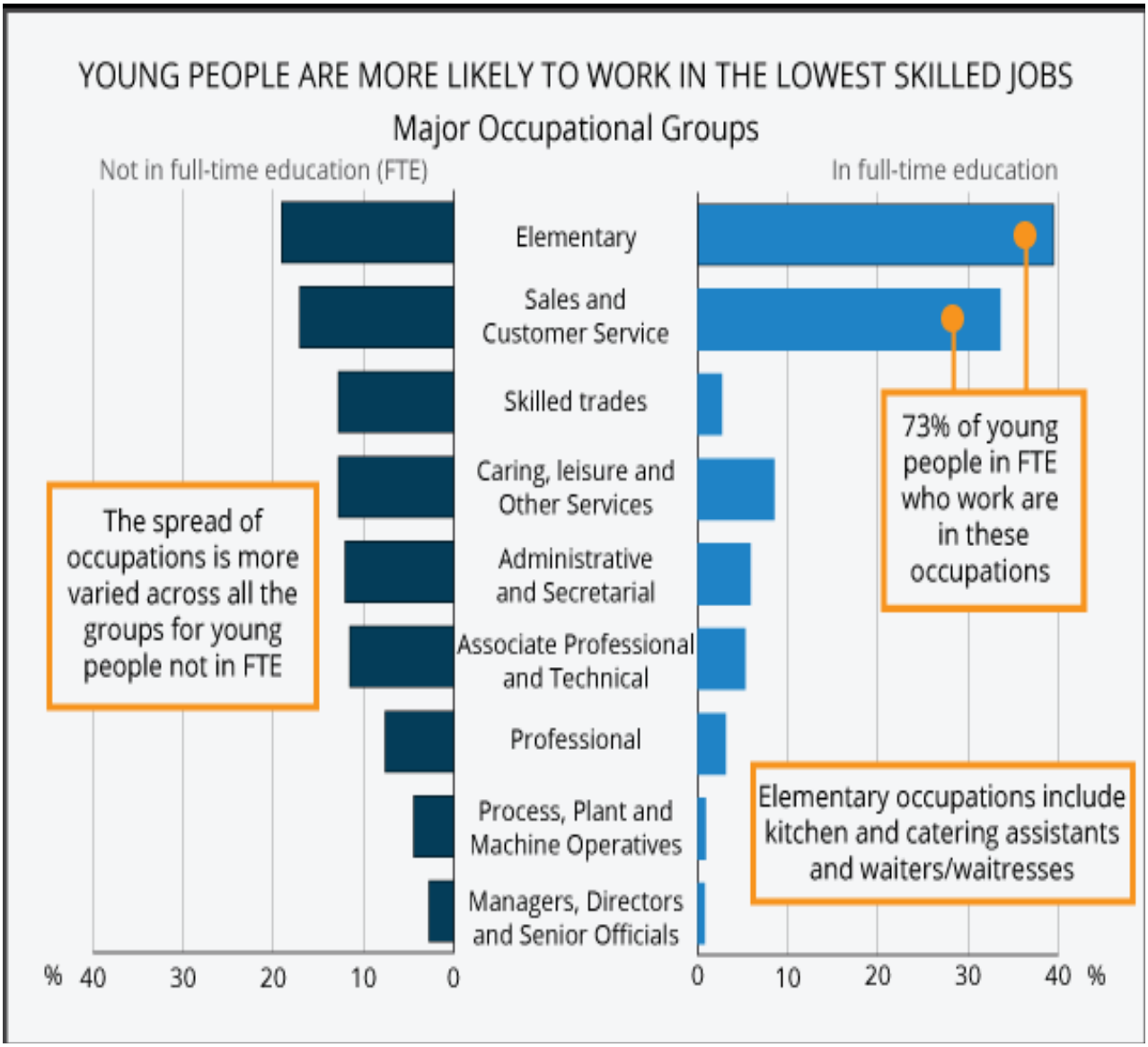
Source: Office for National Statistics, 2014

Another important point we need to raise is that young people, as entrants to the labour market, were most likely to work in the lower skilled jobs. Young people who are in work, regardless of if they are in full-time education or not, are most likely to be working in the lowest skilled occupation group known as elementary occupations. This group contains jobs such as kitchen/catering assistants and waiters/waitresses. The second most common occupational group that young people work in is sales and customer service occupations. In 2013, using a four quarter average across the year, for those who worked alongside full-time study these two occupational groups accounted for almost three-quarters (73%) of all those in employment.

For those not in full-time education the equivalent figure is 36% with 19% working in elementary occupations and a further 17% working in sales and customer service occupations. The spread across all the occupation groups was

more varied for those working and not in full-time education compared with those working alongside studying. By comparison, for people aged 25 to 64 the largest occupational group was professional occupations, in which 22% work, followed by associate professional and technical occupations at 15%. Overall young people in full-time education work in part-time lesser skilled jobs, however they may still develop some valuable work experience for future careers.

Figure 9 – Low skills jobs and Young people, 2013



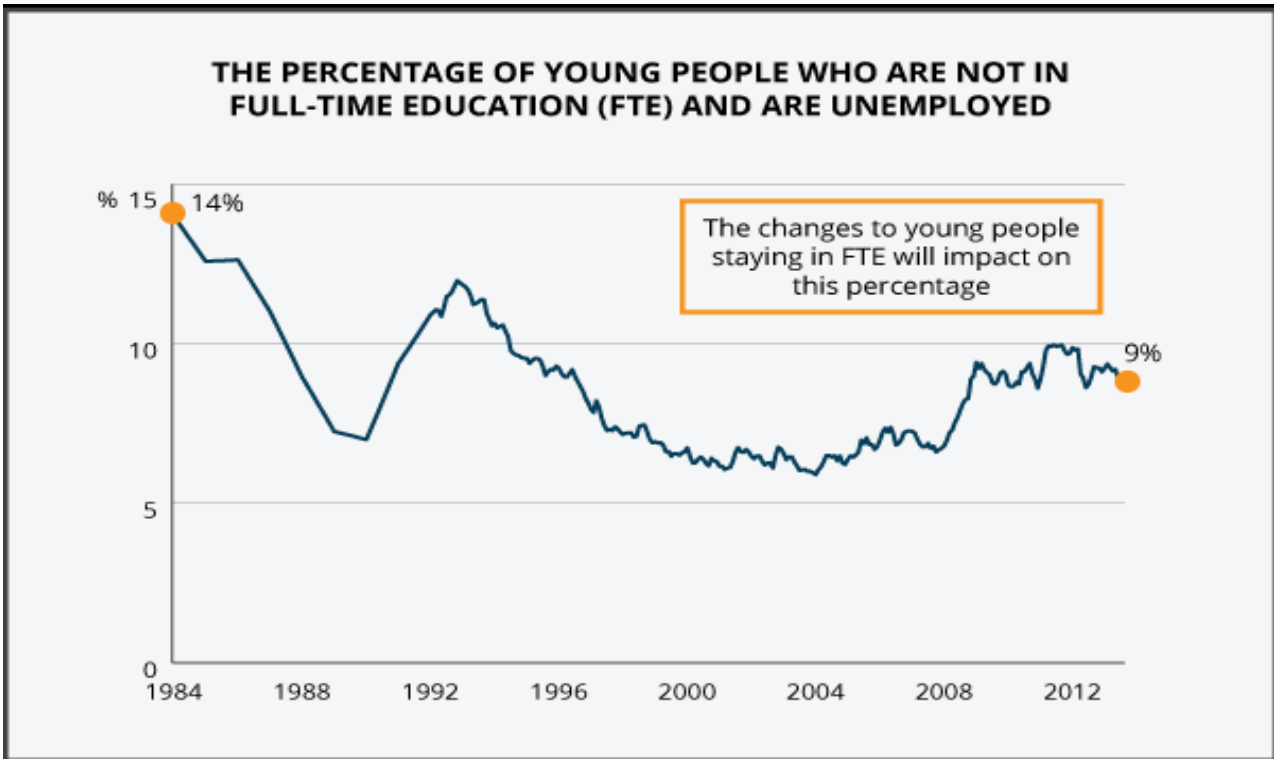
Source: Office for National Statistics, 2014

Regarding youth unemployment rates it is alarming that **in the final quarter of 2013 the youth unemployment rate was similar to that in 1984.** For young people at the end of 2013 the unemployment rate, measured as a proportion of the labour force rather than the total population, was 20%. This was similar to the position in 1984, following the 1980s recession and was higher than the peak of 18% in 1993 following the 1990s recession. The youth unemployment rate peaked at 22% towards the end of 2011, following the UK economic downturn in 2008. It is important to take in to account the changes to participation in full-time education has had on these figures. The majority of full-time students are inactive which means that within the youth population overall more full-time students means less young people in the labour market (those employed and unemployed). This can impact on the unemployment rate which shows the proportion of young people who are unemployed in relation to those active in the labour market. Further, **in the final quarter of 2013 around 13 in every 100 young people were unemployed.**

Source: Office for National Statistics, 2014

The unemployment proportion in the final quarter of 2013 stood at 13%, lower than in 1984 (15%). The gap between the unemployment rate and the proportion increased most during the early 1990s and the recession of 2008/09, when there were sharp rises in the number of people in full-time education. The youth unemployment proportion of 13% was three times as large as the proportion of those aged 25 to 64 which stood at 4%. The youth unemployment rate (20%) was four times larger than the rate for those aged 25 to 64 (5%). However, the unemployment proportion still includes unemployed full-time students in the total number of unemployed. A further disaggregation is to look at young people who are not in full-time education and are unemployed as a proportion of the total youth population.

Figure 11 – Percentage of 16 to 24 year olds who are not in full-time education and are unemployed, 1984 to 2013



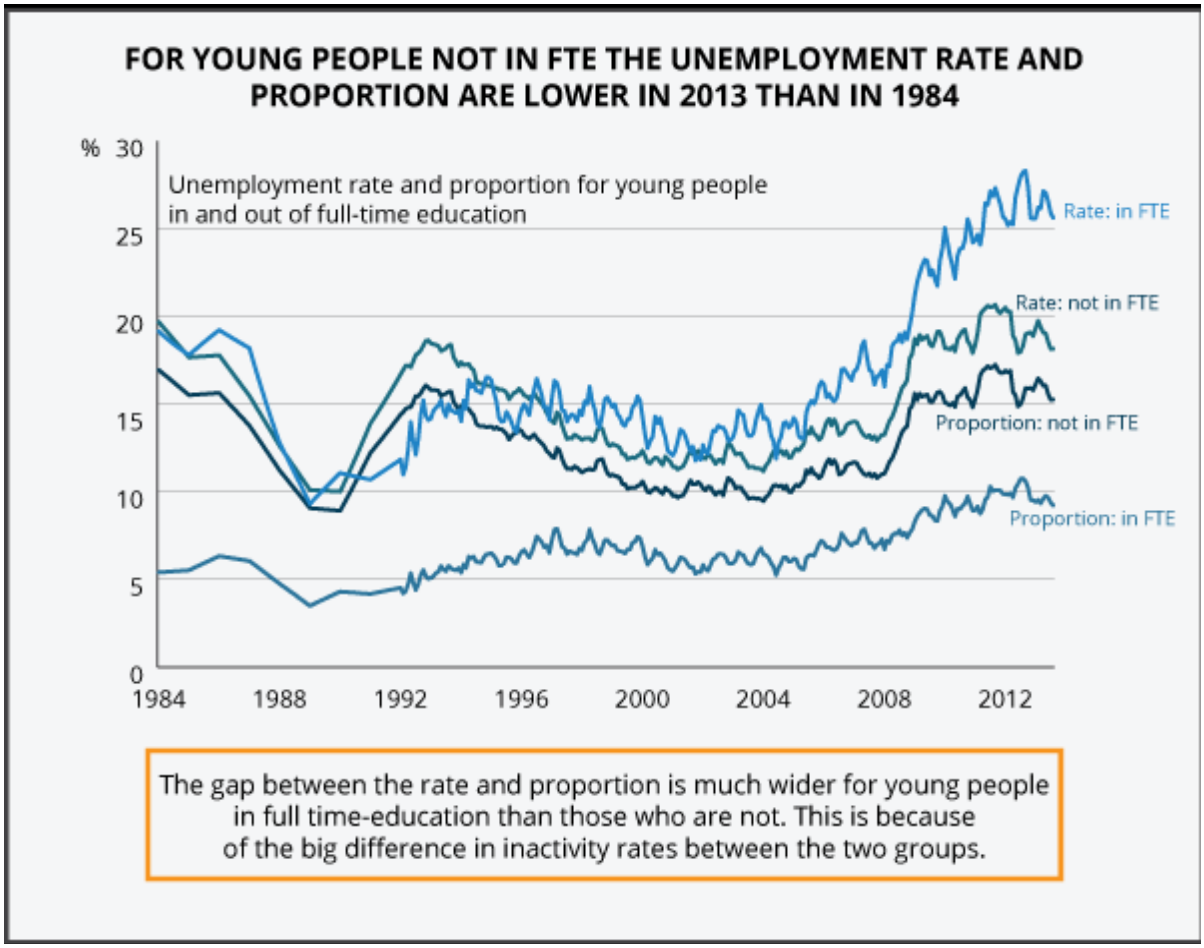
Source: Office for National Statistics, 2014

In 1984, 14% of all young people were not in full-time education and were unemployed. This percentage fell to 7% by 1990 and rose again to 12% in 1993, after the recession in the early 1990s. The percentage fell steadily until 2001 and rose slightly in the years following. Around 2008 there was a sharper rise than in

previous years and at the end of 2013, the percentage unemployed and not in full-time education stood at 9%. So the percentage of young people who are not in full-time education and unemployed was lower in the most recent downturn compared to the recession of the 1980s and 1990s.

This in part is explained by the fact that more young people are remaining in fulltime education. The impact of education on the unemployment rate and proportion is highlighted when looking at young people in and out of full-time education. For those in full-time education the rate stood at 26% in the final quarter of 2013, much higher than the rate for those not in full-time educations, which stood at 18%. However, the unemployment proportion for those in full-time education was much lower (at 9%) than for those not in full-time education (at 15%).

Figure 12 – Unemployment rate and proportion of 16 to 24 year olds by whether in full-time education or not, 1984 to 2013

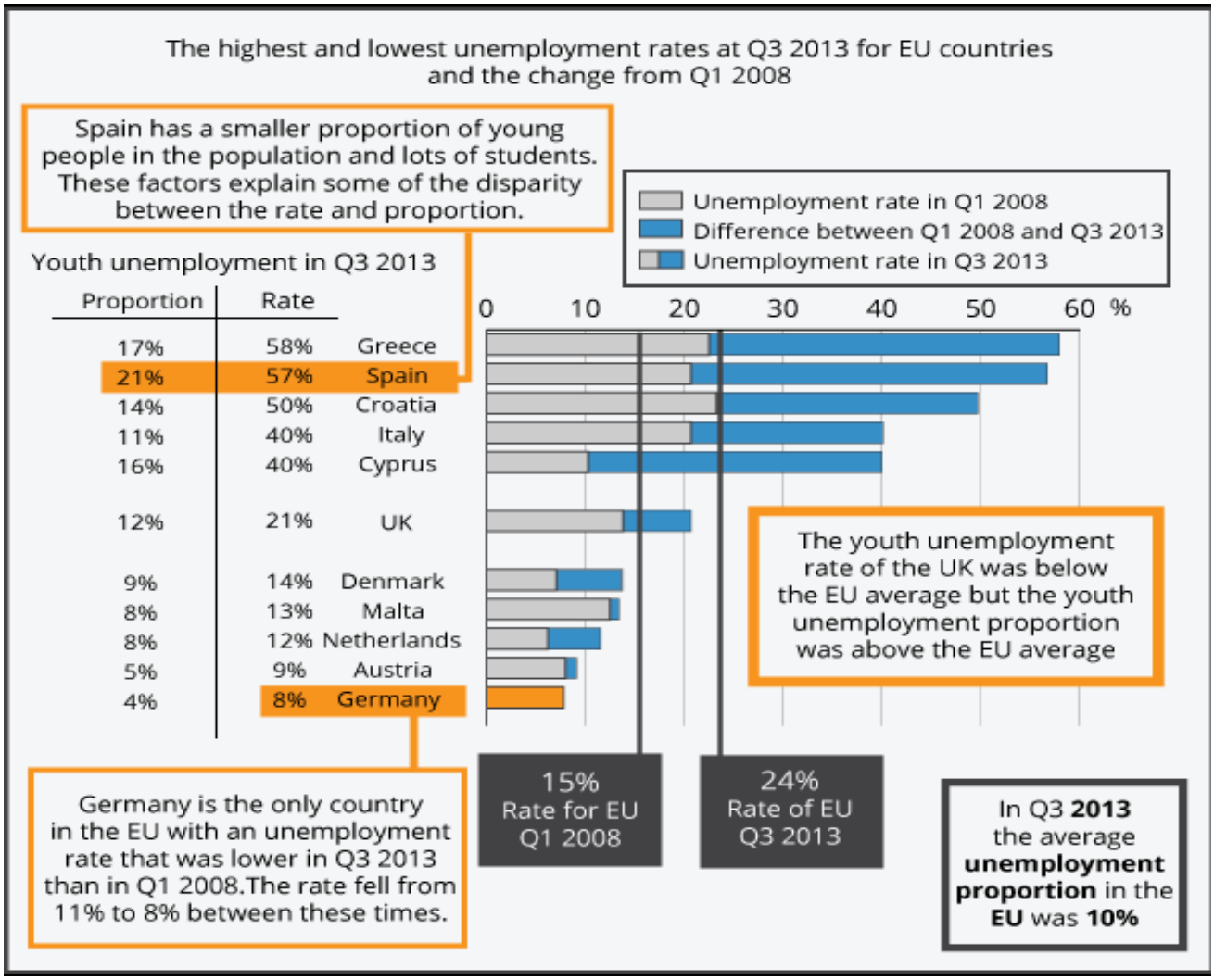


Source: Office for National Statistics, 2014

How does the UK compare with Europe?

Comparing the UK with other countries across the European Union (EU), the UK unemployment rate (21%) was lower than the EU average (23.5%), in the third quarter of 2013. However, the UK unemployment proportion (12%) was higher than the EU average (10%), in the third quarter of 2013. The highest youth unemployment rate was 58% in Greece and the lowest at 8% in Germany. Compared with the first quarter of 2008, when the major worldwide crash happened, Germany is the only country across the EU to have seen a fall in the youth unemployment rate.

Figure 13 – The youth unemployment rates of countries in the European Union for the third quarter of 2013 and the first quarter of 2008

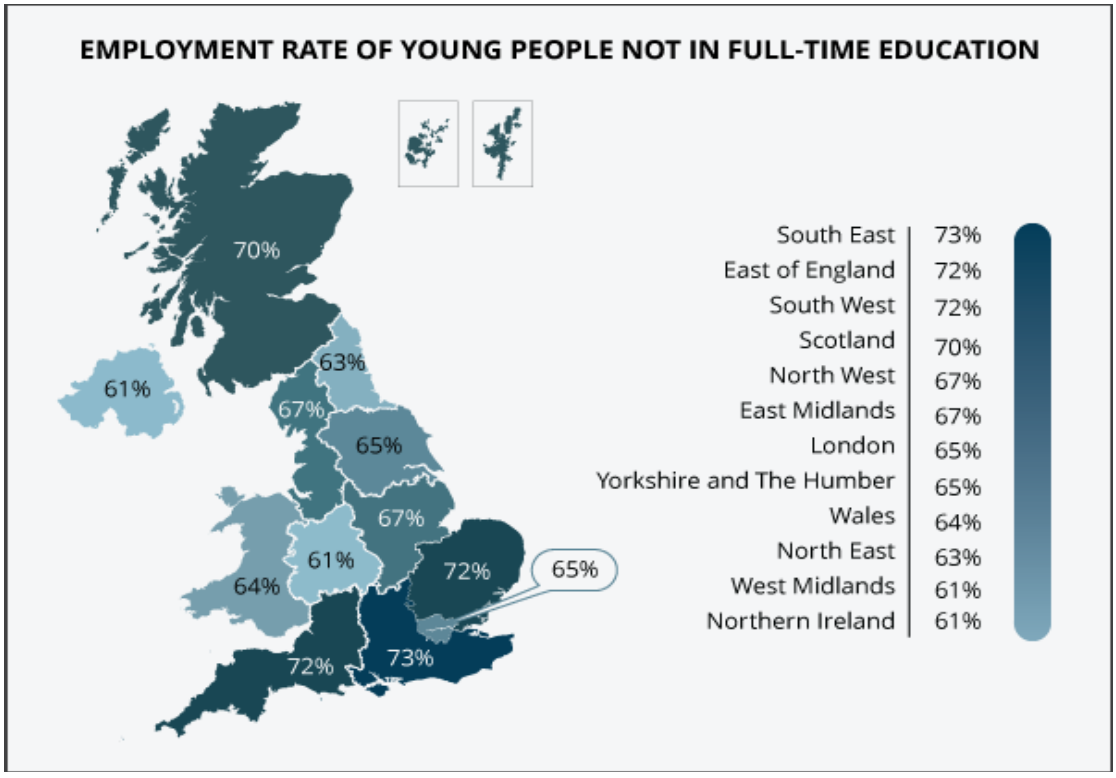


Source: Office for National Statistics, 2014

The countries across the EU have different proportions of the population who are young people, and also the participation in education varies, which should be considered when comparing the unemployment rate. For example the unemployment rate in Spain stood at 57% of the labour force in the third quarter of 2013 but the proportion was much lower at 21%. So over half of young people in the Spanish labour force (employed or unemployed) are looking for work but out of the whole youth population, one in five young people in Spain are unemployed.

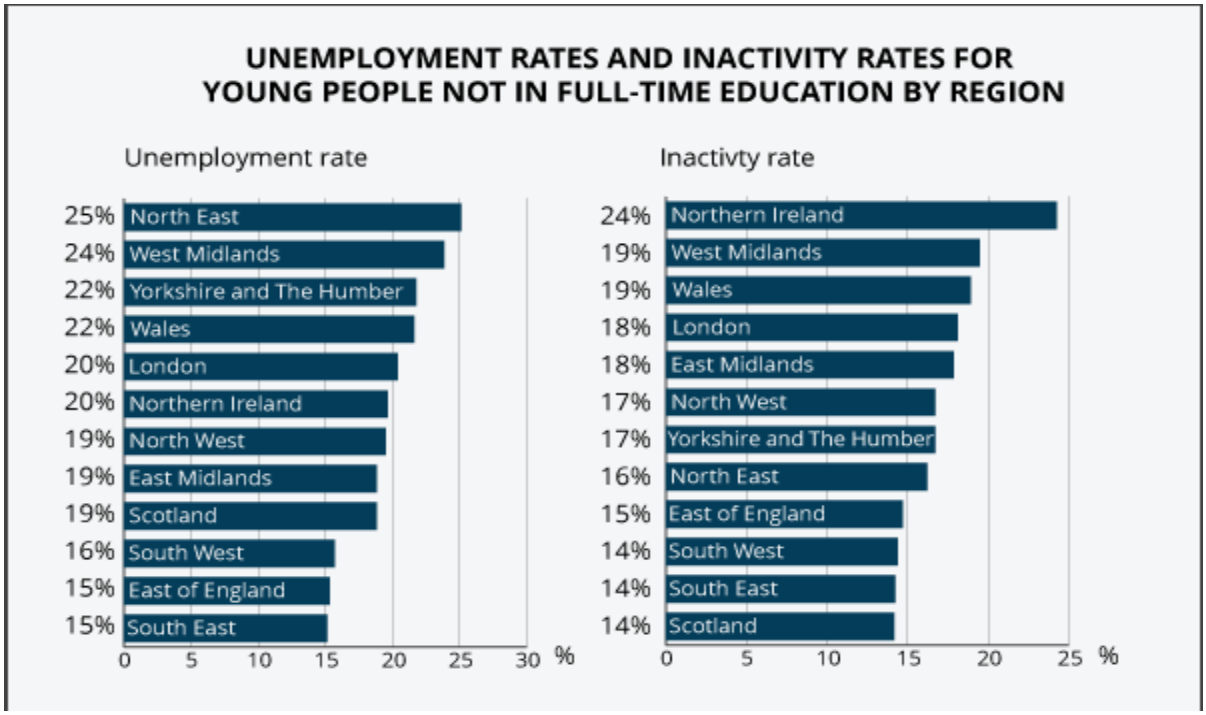
The different demographics, government policies and social attitudes within each country all impact on unemployment for young people. To illustrate the policy impact, Germany, which was the only country to experience a fall in youth unemployment over the past five years, has well-established routes into employment for young people who do not enter higher education including apprenticeships. Differences in the national systems of education and training also play a major role in how people make the transition from education into the labour market. Finally, there are serious regional differences on employment, youth unemployment and NEET rates across the UK.

Figure 14 – Regional differences of young people in employment, but not in FT Education, 2013



Source: Annual Population Survey (APS) - Office for National Statistics

Figure 15 – Unemployment and inactivity rates of 16 to 24 year olds not in full-time education by region, October 2012 to September 2013



Source: Office for National Statistics, 2014

4. Membership of young people and institutional position of youth in trade unions in the UK

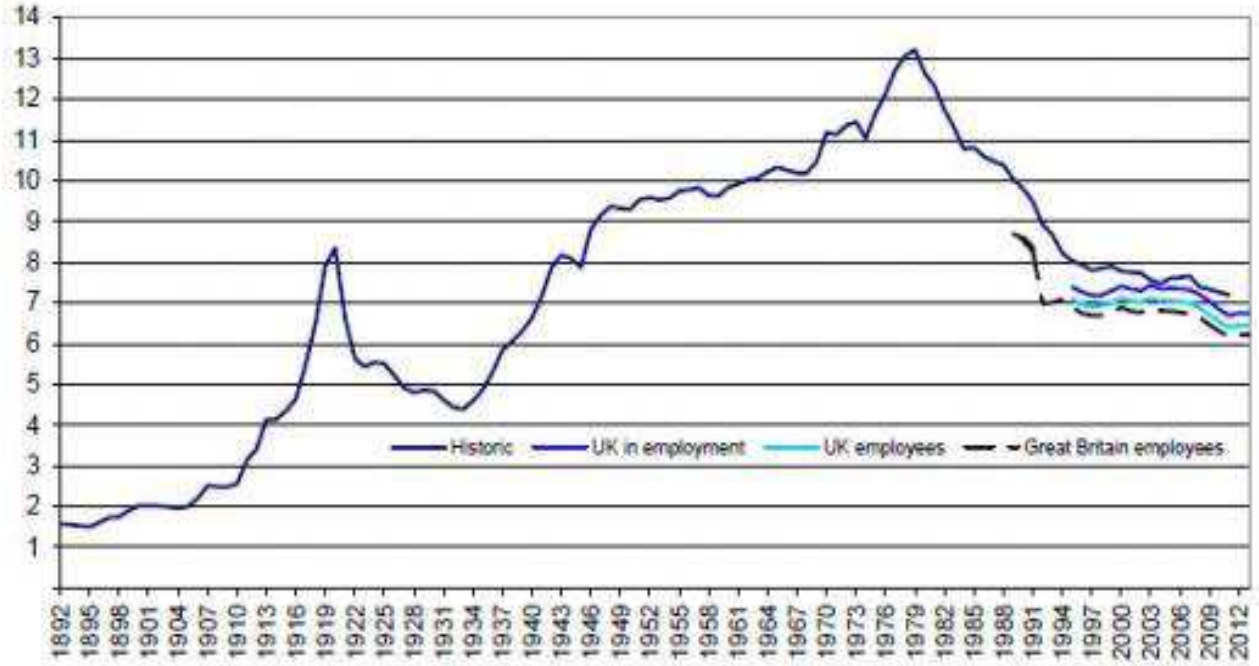
Trade union membership, both in aggregate numbers and in density, has declined in the majority of advanced economies globally over recent decades. Further, trade unions in Britain, as elsewhere, suffer from an ageing effect (Bailey et. al., 2010: 45; Blanchflower 2007; Bryson et al 2005: 156).

According to UK Trade Union Members Statistical Bulletin 2013, older workers account for a larger proportion of union members than younger workers. Over the eighteen years to 2013, the proportion of employees who belonged to a trade union has fallen in all age groups except those aged over 65. About 37 per cent of trade union member employees were aged over 50 in 2013, but 27 per cent of employees are in this age group. Those employees with ten or more years of service make up about 52 per cent of all union members but only 31 per cent of all employees.

In general trade union membership hold steady as private sector growth makes up for the big job cuts in local government, the civil service and the NHS. Around 6.5 million employees in the UK were trade union members in 2013. The level of overall union members was broadly unchanged from 2012, with a reduction of only 6,000 over the year (a 0.1 per cent decline), but well below the peak of over 13 million in 1979. The numbers of UK employees increased between 2012 and 2013. As a result, the membership rate fell slightly to 25.6 per cent in 2013, from 26 per cent in 2012. This is the lowest rate of trade union membership recorded between 1995 and 2013. Over this period, the proportion of employees who were trade union members in the UK has decreased around 7 percentage points, from 32.4 per cent in 1995.

Chart 1.1: Trade union membership levels in UK from 1892 to 2013

Membership, Millions



Source: Trade Union Members Statistical Bulletin 2013

Nevertheless, trade union membership levels in the private sector fell from 3.4 million in 1995 to 2.5 million in 2010. 2013 data continued to show a reversal of this trend, with union membership levels in the private sector rising for the third consecutive year, an increase of 61 thousand in 2013 to 2.6 million. The proportion of employees who were trade union members in the private sector was 14.4 per cent in 2013, unchanged from 2012, because the increase in union memberships kept pace with the rise in the number of private sector employees. In the public sector, union membership levels fell to 3.8 million in 2013 from 3.9 million in 2012. Trade union density decreased from 56.3 per cent to 55.4 per cent, reflective of the faster decline in unionised employment in the public sector over the year.

Female employees are more likely to be a trade union member. The proportion of female employees who were in a trade union was around 28 per cent in 2013, compared with 23 per cent for male employees. This marks a significant gender shift. Employees in professional occupations are more likely to be trade union members than employees in other occupations. Employees in the

professional occupations account for 37 per cent of all union members, but only 21 per cent of all employees in the UK worked in this sector. In an opposite vein, a long-term decline in private sector membership had been blamed on the loss of jobs and union members in the UK manufacturing industry, where membership is now around one third of the level in the mid 1990s.

A higher proportion of UK born employees are in trade union compared with non-UK born employees. About 27 per cent of UK born employees were in a trade union in 2013, compared with 18 per cent for non-UK born employees.

In general, an examination of the long-terms of trade union density in Britain indicates that membership levels reached their peak in 1979 and declined sharply through the 1980s and early 1990s before stabilising from the mid 1990s onward. Despite the broad stability in membership levels between 1995 and 2007, the proportion of UK employees who were in the trade union declined because union membership levels did not keep pace with the increase in the total number of UK employees.

Source: Economist, 6th April 2013

During the upsurge of the economic crisis trade union membership levels were broadly stable, but divergent trends between public and privates sector are observed. Between 2012 and 2013 the number of trade union members was around 6.5 million, only 6 thousand fewer than in 2012 (a 0.1 per cent fall). The number of employees has grown, albeit only marginally, meaning that the membership rate has fallen slightly to 25.6 per cent in 2013 (26 per cent in 2012). Nevertheless, Private sector memberships increased for a second successive year, while the falling trend in trade union numbers in the public sector started in 2009 continued.

In terms of union impact on wages the latest data indicate that every £10,000 earned by a non-union member in the public sector, on average a union member earned around £1,690 more in 2012 and an additional £430 in the private sector. The wage premium was 38 per cent for those aged 16-24, compared with 13 per cent for those aged 25 to 34. It should be noted, however, that these raw estimates do not adjust for all differences in characteristics between union members and non-union members, which will partly account for these differences in earnings. By industry, the premium was greater in the 'health and social work' and 'education' sectors.

Table 3 – Trade union density and membership levels. Employees, 2013

	Union density (%)		
	Population estimate	**Lower bound**	**Upper bound**
All Employees - United Kingdom	**25.6**	**25.0**	**26.2**
Sex			
Male	22.9	22.2	23.6
Female	28.3	27.6	29.1
Private Sector	**14.4**	**13.9**	**14.9**
Male, private sector	16.0	15.3	16.7
Female, private sector	12.2	11.6	12.9
Public Sector	**55.4**	**54.3**	**56.6**

Male, public sector	54.6	52.7	56.5
Female, public sector	55.8	54.5	57.1
Country			
England	24.1	23.5	24.7
Wales	35.4	33.0	37.9
Scotland	32.0	30.2	33.8
Northern Ireland	35.4	32.2	38.6
Regions			
North East	30.8	28.4	33.3
North West	30.0	28.2	32.0
Yorkshire and the Humber	27.4	25.9	29.0
East Midlands	26.2	24.5	27.9
West Midlands	24.4	22.8	26.2
East of England	21.8	20.6	23.2
London	20.6	19.0	22.4
South East	20.3	19.1	21.5
South West	21.9	20.3	23.6
Age bands			
16 to 24	7.7	6.8	8.7
25 to 34	21.0	20.0	22.0
35 to 49	29.3	28.4	30.3
50 plus	32.8	31.8	33.9
Ethnicity			
White	26.1	25.5	26.7
Mixed	17.1	13.2	21.9
Asian or Asian British	19.6	17.5	22.0
Black or Black British	29.3	25.6	33.2
Chinese or other ethnic group	17.6	14.2	21.6
Nationality			

UK, British	26.7	26.1	27.3
Other	13.1	11.7	14.6
Country of Birth			
UK	26.9	26.2	27.5
Other	17.8	16.6	19.1
Disability			
Disabled	30.0	28.5	31.5
Not disabled	24.9	24.4	25.5
Highest qualification			
Degree or equivalent	32.0	30.9	33.1
Other higher education	34.5	32.9	36.2
A-level or equivalent	22.1	21.1	23.1
GCSE grades A-C or equivalent	20.2	19.1	21.2
Other qualifications	19.4	18.0	21.0
No qualification	17.4	15.6	19.3
Dependent children			
No dependent children	25.4	24.7	26.1
Dependent child under six	23.7	22.1	25.3
Dependent child six or over	26.7	25.7	27.8
Workplace size			
Less than 50	16.4	15.8	17.1
50 or more	33.8	33.0	34.6
Occupation			
Managers, Directors And Senior Officials	14.2	12.9	15.7
Professional Occupations	44.8	43.4	46.1
Associate Professional And Technical Occupations	24.4	23.0	25.8
Administrative And Secretarial Occupations	20.3	19.0	21.7

Skilled Trades Occupations	21.2	19.5	22.9
Caring, Leisure And Other Service Occupations	26.0	24.5	27.7
Sales And Customer Service Occupations	14.5	13.3	15.9
Process, Plant And Machine Operatives	27.9	25.9	30.0
Elementary Occupations	16.5	15.3	17.7
Industry			
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	*	*	*
Mining and quarrying	20.7	15.1	27.6
Manufacturing	18.3	16.9	19.8
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	48.8	42.1	55.5
Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	33.0	27.0	39.6
Construction	14.2	12.5	16.0
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	12.3	11.3	13.3
Transportation and storage	40.0	37.5	42.6
Accommodation and food service activities	4.2	3.3	5.4
Information and communication	11.2	9.4	13.2
Financial and insurance activities	16.9	14.9	19.1
Real estate activities	9.4	6.8	12.9
Professional, scientific and technical activities	8.0	6.7	9.6
Administrative and support service activities	11.6	9.9	13.4
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	50.2	47.9	52.4
Education	51.7	50.0	53.4
Human health and social work activities	39.8	38.4	41.2
Arts, entertainment and recreation	17.7	15.0	20.7
Other service activities	13.6	11.0	16.6
Managerial status			

Manager	26.3	25.3	27.4
Foreman or supervisor	34.8	33.1	36.5
Not manager or supervisor	23.7	23.0	24.3
Flexible working hours			
Flexible working hours	34.2	32.5	35.9
Not flexible working hours	38.5	37.0	40.1
Length of service			
Less than 1 year	10.9	10.1	11.9
Between 1 and 2 years	12.8	11.6	14.0
Between 2 and 5 years	17.3	16.3	18.3
Between 5 and 10 years	26.6	25.5	27.7
Between 10 and 20 years	36.5	35.3	37.7
20 years or more	51.2	49.4	53.0
Permanent or temporary status			
Permanent	26.4	25.8	27.0
Temporary	14.3	12.8	16.0
Weekly earnings in main job			
Less than £250	14.7	13.4	16.1
£250 to £499	27.7	26.2	29.2
£500 to £999	38.1	36.2	40.0
£1000 and above	20.8	18.1	23.7

1. Membership levels are based on the methodology described in the technical note

2. Based on Standard Industrial Classification 2007

3. Based on Standard Occupational Classification 2010

4. Confidence intervals are based on the methodology described in "Sampling variance in the Trade Union Membership Statistics"

Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics

Table 4 – Trade Union presence. Employees, 2013

	Trade unions present in workplace (%)		
	Population estimate	**Lower bound**	**Upper bound**
All Employees - United Kingdom	**44.2**	**43.5**	**44.9**
Sector			
Private Sector	28.7	28.0	29.4
Public Sector	85.4	84.6	86.2
Country			
England	42.9	42.1	43.6
Wales	54.6	52.1	57.1
Scotland	50.5	48.4	52.6
Northern Ireland	46.6	43.2	49.9
Regions			
North East	51.9	49.2	54.5
North West	48.3	46.5	50.0
Yorkshire and the Humber	48.9	47.1	50.7
East Midlands	45.9	43.7	48.0
West Midlands	44.3	42.5	46.0
East of England	39.0	37.2	40.8
London	37.2	35.1	39.3
South East	39.2	37.4	41.0
South West	41.3	39.1	43.6
Workplace size			
Less than 50	26.2	25.4	26.9
50 or more	60.3	59.3	61.2
Industry			

Agriculture, forestry and fishing	8.8	4.8	15.5
Mining and quarrying	43.1	35.4	51.2
Manufacturing	36.7	34.9	38.6
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	71.1	64.1	77.2
Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	58.3	51.5	64.7
Construction	27.0	24.7	29.4
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	27.3	26.0	28.7
Transportation and storage	60.0	57.5	62.6
Accommodation and food service activities	8.9	7.5	10.4
Information and communication	24.3	21.8	26.9
Financial and insurance activities	39.5	36.7	42.4
Real estate activities	28.7	24.1	33.8
Professional, scientific and technical activities	18.5	16.6	20.5
Administrative and support service activities	23.9	21.6	26.4
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	79.5	77.6	81.2
Education	81.5	80.0	83.0
Human health and social work activities	61.6	60.1	63.1
Arts, entertainment and recreation	34.5	30.8	38.4
Other service activities	23.3	20.0	26.9

1. The proportion of employees whose workplace has a union present

2. Based on Standard Industrial Classification 2007

3. Confidence intervals are based on the methodology described in *Sampling variance in the Trade Union Membership Statistics*

Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics

Table 5 – Collective agreement coverage. Employees, 2013

	Employee's pay affected by collective agreement (%)		
	Population estimate	**Lower bound**	**Upper bound**
All Employees - United Kingdom	**29.5**	**28.9**	**30.2**
Sex			
Male	27.6	26.8	28.5
Female	31.4	30.6	32.2
Sector			
Private Sector	16.6	16.0	17.2
Public Sector	63.8	62.6	64.9
Country			
England	27.7	27.0	28.4
Wales	37.8	35.3	40.4
Scotland	37.2	35.2	39.1
Northern Ireland	44.9	41.5	48.3
Regions			
North East	33.3	30.0	36.7
North West	32.1	30.2	34.1
Yorkshire and the Humber	30.5	28.5	32.7
East Midlands	30.3	28.2	32.6
West Midlands	29.1	27.5	30.8
East of England	24.6	23.2	26.1
London	23.6	21.7	25.7
South East	25.0	23.6	26.4
South West	27.1	24.9	29.4
Union Membership			

Member	70.2	69.1	71.3
Non-Member	14.6	14.1	15.2
Workplace size			
Less than 50	16.3	15.7	17.0
50 or more	41.4	40.4	42.4
Industry			
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	*	*	*
Mining and quarrying	25.5	19.0	33.3
Manufacturing	22.9	21.2	24.7
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	57.3	49.5	64.9
Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	37.9	31.8	44.4
Construction	15.8	13.9	18.1
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	16.3	15.1	17.6
Transportation and storage	47.3	44.6	50.1
Accommodation and food service activities	4.1	3.2	5.2
Information and communication	13.6	11.6	15.9
Financial and insurance activities	24.0	21.5	26.7
Real estate activities	14.3	10.8	18.7
Professional, scientific and technical activities	9.9	8.5	11.3
Administrative and support service activities	13.2	11.3	15.4
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	64.5	62.2	66.7
Education	54.8	53.0	56.6
Human health and social work activities	40.4	38.9	41.9
Arts, entertainment and recreation	22.6	19.3	26.2
Other service activities	15.1	12.4	18.2

1. The proportion of employees whose pay and conditions are agreed in negotiations

between the employer and a trade union.

2. Based on Standard Industrial Classification 2007

3. Confidence intervals are based on the methodology described in "Sampling variance in the Trade Union Membership Statistics"

Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics

5. Views of young people about trade unions in the UK

There is not much evidence on the issue of young workers and trade unions. In general it remains an underexplored area of research despite the ongoing popularity of the issue of trade unions ageing effect and the simultaneous emergence of precarious work arrangements for young people. Nevertheless an earlier (2004) research project by the Scottish TUC found that 63% of employees under 30 years old believe that trade unions are needed to protect the working conditions and wages of employees, compared with 47% of workers aged 30 and over. The good news was that only 9% of young people had unfavourable attitudes towards trade unions. In the same survey, 42% of young respondents said that they knew nothing at all about trade unions and a further 44% said they didn't know much. This is a sign of limited exposure of young peoples' to trade unions and an alarming finding of limited union availability for young workers.

This situation is partly a reflection of what mentioned constantly in the interviews with the union officers. Young workers tend to be disproportionally represented in those sectors of the economy that are not well unionised. Employers' hostility to unionism and difficulties in union recognition across various workplaces make young workers a typical case of hard-to-organise social group. At the same time self-sustaining organising strategies is a very demanding project, as trade union organisations are struggling to find resources, organisers and opportunities to get access to many workplaces.

Nevertheless, there are some sunny spells in terms of increasing density especially in certain public services and especially those provided by voluntary and private organisations (usually people providing direct services to the public or front desk services). For example more members recruited in UNISON in the last two years are workers in private organizations, while significant losses may be observed in some traditional welfare and healthcare state services.

This development implies a shift in the nature of union and it also is a reflection to on-going outsourcing and fragmentation of public sector services that set strategic questions to the trade union leadership. As an interviewee mentioned the question is how do you bargain, when there is so much fragmentation? How do you bargain across that sort of fragmentation and how do you bargain even with larger companies, like ISS, which is perhaps the fifth larger employer of the

world? How do you bargain if the employer does not negotiate? Every single workplace becomes a bargaining space provided you have members and people that work for unions.

Not surprisingly and in relation to this other union officers interviewed stated how tough us to ensure universal union availability and in general how hard it is to expand the opportunities of interaction with young workers. Most organisers work round the clock doing multiple tasks from pay negotiation to training and admin duties. A characteristic response was that in terms of time there is not enough. I have nine areas to look after and each of those areas you have to do everything, so our job is to make sure that union strategies are sustaining and I have to go there to see what needs to be done all the time.

Nevertheless, the current contradiction (greater propensity of young workers to join unions in some areas, but still lower membership levels than any other age or workforce group) means that to some extent the limited workplace union availability or the existence of inappropriate union structures are to blame for the low level inclusion of young workers into trade unions. Relevant to this a 31 year old union officer interviewed considered young workers as a very different and hard to organise group. *Many left-wing young members are pro-strike, radical and militant. However, even if I hate saying the whole Thatcher generation thing, but it is true that there was talk of unionism at school, there was no politics at school, there was nothing of this. I learned about trade unions when I was 21 and in my first job at the University and I thought this is brilliant. Why I haven't I heard anything about this before?*

Those words echoes the interest and perhaps the post-Thatcher traumatic stress of British trade unions in getting positive views of young people towards unions and unionism. According to mainstream views young people at work have more individualistic orientations at work, something that in practical terms implies that union representation has little or no appeal to their work reality and lifestyle. Young people may be more instrumental and more likely to exhibit a greater individualism and political apathy than in the past.

According to Waddington and Kerr (2002) there is no wide-ranging shift in young people's attitudes towards unionism. In a similar vein previous research projects carried out by the TUC and some individual unions that explored perceptions of unions amongst non-members did not find significant differences between age groups. Nevertheless, in those studies two distinct common reactions have been highlighted, when the words "trade union" are mentioned, amongst

people who are not union members. Many research participants simply have no knowledge and no concept of what a trade union is, or what a trade union does. The second prominent reaction is one relying on historical stereotypes and images of strikes and picket lines and to talk about Arthur Scargill and Margaret Thatcher (Research carried out by Opinion Leader Research on behalf of TUC Wales, November 2006).

More recently (2011), the TUC and Unions 21 wished to better understand the views of young people with regard to trade unions and with regard to their recruitment approaches. The respective research project sought the views of young people about how union membership could be made more appealing to them. The study indicated alarming findings regarding barriers and difficulties of recruiting young people into trade unions. These can be categorised into four main themes:

- Lack of awareness, visibility and/ or understanding.
- Lack of 'push factors' - many young people stated that they were happy with their workplace and did not feel they had come across any issues which might lead them to need a union's support.
- Lack of 'pull factors' - young people found it difficult to articulate anything that would attract them to join a union. Unions were widely seen as being impotent to affect change or improve working conditions.
- Repellent factors - cost of membership is off-putting for some, particularly for those young people who find it difficult to perceive of any tangible benefits of joining a union. Some young people find it difficult to identify with union members. Unions being seen as militant, old fashioned, bureaucratic and aggressive, turns young people off. Furthermore, there is a fear of isolation in being the only person in the workplace who might join a union.

According to the conclusions of this research *'there is a need to have an increase in union education and awareness rising about unions and about what unions do. Whilst clearly unions cannot artificially create workplace dissatisfaction, young people did feel that unions might need to highlight potential 'push' factors by publicising stories about how young people are unfairly treated by employers. Union communications need to clearly explain the personal benefits that members will gain. Spin-off benefits of union membership were consistently highlighted by young people as a strong potential lever towards joining. Young people also considered it extremely important for unions to consider how they might create peer pressure amongst young people to join a union'*. Other significant findings are the following:

– Young people in permanent employment tended to raise few workplace issues or concerns. Many stated that they felt well looked after and well-managed.

– Particularly those young people working in the private sector, found it difficult to imagine having problems at work that they could not constructively raise with their own line manager or their internal HR Department.

The following quotes are indicative of young peoples' embrace of precarity level: "*I haven't bothered to ask for a pay rise just because I know that they're struggling so it isn't really going to happen. There's not much point asking for me, so I guess you just accept the situation because it's better than being jobless.*" "*When you're on a temporary contract you've got pretty much no rights. If you look at your contract they can do whatever they want to and pretty much every job you get when you're our age, it's like they'll put you on a temporary contract and they can just sack you whenever they want. So there's very little you can do really in that situation*".

Finally, according to Carl Roper more than 50% of the workers in the UK have never been in a union. This is important in the sense that transmission methods to unionisation are missing in many cases. Many young people do not have fathers, uncles and other close relatives that are members of trade unions that could make young people more responsive to available union membership opportunities.

6. Analysis of what do trade unions do to help young workers

British trade unions have either participated in mechanisms of social partnership, or have successfully negotiated collective agreements on issues specifically affecting young workers (Simms et. al. 2012), but not to the same extent as other countries, such as France, where there are examples of innovative bargaining in this area including the motor manufacturer PSA Peugeot Citroen, the publisher Bayard and the postal service La Poste. Collective bargaining machinery in Britain focuses on young workers mainly in issues of pay (mainly national minimum wage).

In an opposite vein, weak bargaining structures and restrictive labour laws and perhaps a lack of political optimism force British trade unions to be more proactive and more strategically oriented to the organising approach than bearing membership fruits from collective bargaining and strike activity.

Nevertheless, there are successful examples of trade unions negotiating with employers the transition of young people into work (Nautilus and Bectu to name a few). Trade unions in Britain have started engaging with employers around how young workers move from workplace-based training schemes into employment, typically by focusing on ensuring the provision of stable employment after training (Simms, et al. 2012).

In a similar vein, BECTU has established a new entrance membership that is heavily subsidised, and offers young people not yet in work advice on interview techniques and access to forums to discuss transitions into work, while CWU and Usdaw have also been involved in negotiating to ensure high-quality work experience schemes with employers, such as Tesco supermarkets (see for example, the campaigns of Usdaw in negotiating adult wage rates for all workers in supermarkets, Bakers Union campaigns in fast-foods etc.).

Further, special subscription rates are also used to expand youth union membership. Student union memberships are also established in a number of unions in order to attract more young students to union organisations and in general to the union praxis. As an interviewed union officer told me this is necessary because *for many young people there is a feeling that I am a young person and it is normal to be a precarious worker*.

Nevertheless defining youth is not an easy task both for academic scholars and policy makers or trade union officers. Most analyses use for reasons of simplicity the traditional Eurostat definition of people aged between 16 to 24 years old. According to Hodder (forthcoming) there is some disagreement about what constitutes a young worker amongst the academic literature and the trade unions themselves. Hodder (2012: 6) also observed that young workers ranged from 26 and under (for Equity and UNISON) to 35 and under (for the British Dental Association and the University and College Union). He also calculated the average upper age limit of a young trade unionist to be 29.7, which, at the time of writing was higher than the TUC Young Workers Forum limit of 27 but lower than the ETUC Youth Committee of 35. The TUC Young Workers Forum is an advisory committee to the TUC General Council and meets every two months in different locations across the UK.

At the latest Young Workers Conference, it was made clear that TUC policy moved to a direction of making TUC more inclusive for young workers, while providing more space for initiative for its affiliated member union organisations. In this context the union from which the delegate is a member now determines the upper age limit for the TUC Young Workers Forum. Organising Academy of TUC does not a specific programme for organising young workers, but there are a lot of connotations and interrelated teaching material that may meet the demands of a trade union organiser for young workers.

As a TUC interviewed union officer suggested *you have to convince young people that unions is a agency that can bring about change, organising young workers is any different to organising ordinary workers, the issues are different, the tactics may be different*. Another interview mentioned that *when you start talking about unions to young people you should not forget that you talk to people that simply know nothing and they have no experience of what you are talking about. So the best is to start talking about the issues they care about and they are concerned with*.

In a similar vein UNISON has established Youth Forums across regional branch officers and there are ideas for providing the opportunity and the necessary skills to young people to become shop stewards and to win small victories that can boost their confidence in representing. The idea is also to support young shop stewards' activism including greater engagement of them with the community and specific community vulnerable groups, such as young, migrants and female workers.

The TUC has increased the emphasis placed on young workers. Quite substantially important is the fact that British trade unions usually provide a seat position for the Secretary or Leader of the Youth Committee of the union organisation in its Executive Board. In March 2014 TUC held the first National Young Workers month. As an interviewed union officer mentioned the problem is that the union density level for those 16-24 is extremely low due to the fact that many young people of that age work in non-unionised sectors and work environments. This explains what an interviewed union officer said that most concerns raised by young people to unions were related to pay issues (or delay of payment arrears). In parallel to this the union premium wage for young workers indicated in the latest Labour Force Survey is 2.7%.

As an interviewee mentioned *many young people actually get on with that because they consider that it is not worth to do anything. This is a very pragmatic generation with very pragmatic decisions; it is shocking to have young people thinking first is it really worth to address my work problem? It may get worst if I do and I am not going to stay long in this job*. In that sense perhaps precarity can not act as the spark that will lit the fire in terms of social explosion or massive inclusion of young workers to trade unions and other social or political movement organisations. As an interviewee suggested *the fight to precarity is asymmetrical, it is logistical and strategic impossible to organise precarious workers, because essentially there are too many of them*.

TUC launched a number of activities in the last few months including the first ever TUC Youth Campaign Award, and the organisation of several events around the country. Typical cases included the GMB's first ever National Young Members' Network, the Equity's Young Creatives event, some joint events between Unite and Young Labour, young worker weeks by the Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematograph and Theatre Union (BECTU), and video and online campaigning by other unions including the National Union of Journalists and UNISON (Hodder, forthcoming).

Nevertheless, as a union officer interviewed commented: *you get to see more active young workers into trade union in workplaces where unions are already organised*. In a similar vein another union officer mentioned that*: I would struggle to be enthusiastic about trade union campaigning and recruitment activity for young people If you say could you tell me any innovative organising campaigns that are specifically directed to organising young workers and in*

workplaces and sectors that not unionized. There is not a significantly effort that is properly resourced on strategic campaigns for young workers.

The TUC also coordinates the 'Unions into Schools' project, which has been considered as one way to improve education about trade unionism amongst young people since it became TUC policy in 2006. The TUC has a dedicated website designed to promote the 'Unions into Schools' programme, developed with the support of Unionlearn, the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT), the National Union of Teachers (NUJ), UNISON, Unite and the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL). At the centre of the programme, the website is 'designed to help schools incorporate education about trade unions into a range of curriculum-linked work at a secondary level' (Unions into Schools, 2014). The Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) runs a similar programme and has held events such as the Unions into Schools Song Festival at which school students were encouraged to write and perform songs relating to themes of equality and justice.

To summarize, the most common approach in attracting, recruiting and organising young workers in Britain is related to either establishing semi-autonomous Youth Forums or organising and implementing campaigning activities. Nevertheless, according to TUC National Organiser *there is not even one specific campaign targeting at young people despite the strong interest of unions' leadership about the issue, the allocation of significant resources to strategic organising and to the education of young workers and other vulnerable social groups.*

In this context there is still long way to go, as according to Carl Roper at TUC most young workers still ask for advice and get solutions through three channels, none of which is related to trade unions. According to a recent research by UNION21 in all range of sectors those channels for seeking advice and support were found to be the follow (*what happens if you have a problem at work*):

- Employer/ Line managers
- Parents, Friends, relatives
- The Internet (Google)
-

("*My best friend works in the HR Department so I'd probably speak to her directly.*" "*I'd Google it.*" London, Private Sector Workers).

According to the same survey most young people will follow a more pragmatic approach and they will not raise a problem at work to the union representative. As an interview supported: *Actually some young workers either feel that unionisation may create more problems at work or they are not aware of what unions can do for them*. TUC has created and it is working harder to establish an effective Gateway access to information about employee rights and representation support or campaigning and networking with other young workers. In essence, a wide array of workplace concerns among younger worker does not result in stronger engagement with trade union representatives at the workplace..

The example of Bectu:

Bectu is the trade union representing people working in media and entertainment industries such as broadcasting, entertainment, film and theatre. With the exception of the BBC, these industries are characterised by a high proportion of small employers. These industries are also characterised by project work, for example working on the production of a film, or the theatre run of a play. As a result, many people work on short-term contracts or on a freelance basis.

The structure of these industries presents a considerable risk of potential exploitation, particularly for young people. Experience and professional networks are crucially important for young people entering the creative industries and internships and work experience are therefore vital. As a result, many young people take unpaid roles, working long hours sometimes in unsafe conditions, and are concerned that if they complain they will damage their career prospects. To help provide advice to young people entering these roles, Bectu launched the Creative Toolkit website which provides information on rights to young people related to pay, health and safety, and training. The website also offers advice on getting experience and finding work placements. The union also provides reduced rates of membership for those who do get jobs. Given the number of small enterprises in media and entertainment, and also the short-term project nature of much of the work, this may seem one of the most difficult areas in which to develop Apprenticeships. However, in response to these challenges, Bectu has helped in the development of the Advanced Apprenticeship in Creative and Digital Media. This recognises that both freelancers and the smaller companies found in creative industries can find it difficult to invest in skills development. In addition, Bectu has been a long-term provider of skills training, particularly where individuals may not be able to access alternative training because of the size of their employer, or because of the project based nature of the work.

7. Discussion and conclusion

Across the world, patterns of unionization differ significantly by age, race, minority status and gender. In Britain, amongst youth (defined as those 16 to 24 years of age [Trade Union Members Statistical Bulletin 2013]) is around one third that of older workers or even more. The picture is similar elsewhere in the world; in 2000, for those aged over 25 years in the United States and Canada, union density was three times higher than for those aged 15-24 and, in Australia, older workers were twice as likely to be union members as younger workers (Bailey et. al. 2010: 45). In New Zealand, union density of those under 29 is around half that of workers over 30 (Haynes, Vowles and Boxall 2005). Union membership in those Anglophone countries appears to peak during an individual's mid to late 40s (Blanchflower 2007).

It seems that both youth's opportunity and propensity to join a union are lower than that of older workers. Opportunity relates to exposure to a union, or exposure to an unionised workplace. Young people are less likely, by virtue of their age and limited experience in the workforce, to have had an opportunity to join.

Propensity relates to a desire to join, for instrumental or other reasons. Subsequent research has provided strong empirical support for the opportunity argument. Supply side factors are key, such as the jobs that young people hold, the industries they work in, and the availability of a union in the workplace (Blanden and Machin 2003; Bryson et al. 2005: 164; Haynes, Vowles and Boxall 2005; Payne 1989:125; Waddington and Kerr 2002), as well as the decline in the number of large workplaces and in public sector employment (Arulampalam and Booth 2000). To this, we could add union's 'neglectful or indifferent' approach to youth and other factors, such as young people's limited knowledge of what unions do (Bailey et al. 2010; Price et al. 2010).

Young people's propensity to unionise has received much research attention and many trade unions in Britain have established Youth Committees/ Youth Forums, TUC is organising many events and in general British unions have recruited organizers, while UNISON, UNITE and GMB are also active in community level unionism.

Nevertheless, research examining whether young people would join if they had the opportunity, found higher levels of unmet demand for union membership amongst young people than older people. This is true of the UK, US and Canada (Bryson et al. 2005: 166), and New Zealand (Haynes, Vowles and Boxall 2005).

Similar findings emerged from an Australian study of workers in non-union workplaces (Pyman et al. 2009), where younger workers expressed a much higher (50%) likelihood of joining if asked, than those aged 45 and over (30%). In general, young people therefore are not actively opposed to, but are ignorant of, unions' role and this is what said to me by all trade union officers interviewed.

In addition, opportunity and propensity to join also relate to life-cycle factors, which cross-sectional studies cannot test. For example a recent US study using National Longitudinal Survey of Youth data (Booth et al. 2010b: 64) conclude that if 'a worker has not been represented by a union by age 40, it is very unlikely the worker will ever be unionized'.

This supports an earlier assertion by Visser (2002: 416) that if unions do not attract young people early in their working life, they will struggle to attract them later, and is consistent with findings by Arulampalam and Booth (2000) that 80 per cent of young men who were not union members in 1981, remained non-union a decade later. In particular, while young workers may encounter unionization at a young age, primarily in wholesale and retail trade, for various reasons they do not remain unionised when they transition to permanent career based jobs (Booth et al. 2010a; 2010b).

The implications of both cross-sectional and longitudinal research on union membership and age are clear. Since both opportunity and propensity to unionise decline with age (Booth et al. 2010a), unions need to focus their efforts on youth recruitment. However, as Budd (2010) argues, the job-centric membership approach and policies that favour older workers make unions unattractive to younger workers.

With these issues in mind, a number of national union movements have attempted to create a 'portable' or 'open source' form of union membership for workers, cheaper than full union membership, and moving with them between transitory jobs (Goodman and Gonzalez 2013). British trade unions have already moved in this direction along with ad hoc, but systematic campaigning and organizing activity at community and workplace level. Organising has become the

dominant approach to renewal taken by British unions 'because of the lack of other credible strategies for renewal and revitalisation' (Gall, 2009: 2).

Nevertheless, the statistics on youth union membership indicate that there is still long way to go, even if there are many sunny spells of improvements in youth union density levels. In 2013, union membership in the UK stood at around 6.5 million, with a density level of 25.6 per cent (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2014). Only 3.9 per cent of workers aged 16-24 were union members although this figure rose to 19 per cent for those aged 25-34 (ibid). The average age of a trade unionist has been increasing for some time and data from the 2011 Workplace Employment Relations Survey notes the average age to be 48 (Van Wanrooy et al, 2013: 16).

To summarize, the relationship between trade unions and young workers in Britain remains problematic. The efficacy of organizing and campaigning strategies already implemented in Britain, and the determination of what other kinds of union action might be useful to increase youth membership, requires further research that unpacks how unionization and age are related. At the same time the union praxis needs to enlarge the playing field in order to capture the new needs and interest of a more diverse and educated youth workforce. This becomes a much demanding project in the current hostile to unionism environment that brings about more austerity, welfare cuts and a pandemic of precariousness that younger generation of workers are not better off than their parents.

References

Altieri G and Carrieri M (2000) *Il popolo del 10%*. Rome: Donzelli.

Anagboso, M. and Flowers, A. and Tily, G. and Wallis, G. (2007) Official statistical publications and economic statistics, Economic & Labour Market Review, Vol 1, No 1, January 2007, Office for National Statistics.

Annesley, C., 2003: Americanised and Europeanised: UK social policy since 1997 *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 5, No. 2, May 2003, pp. 143–165.

Arulampalam, W. and Booth, A. (2000) 'Union status of young men in Britain: a decade of change', *Journal of Applied Econometrics*, 15 (3): 289-310.

Atkinson, J; Meager, N., (1986) Changing Work Patterns: How Firms Achieve Flexibility to Meet New Needs, National Economic Development Office, London.

Bailey, J., Price, R., Esders, L. and McDonald, P. (2010) 'Daggy Shirts, Daggy Slogans? Marketing Unions to Young People', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 52 (1): 43-60.

Bambier, J.-C. (2011) 'Employment precariousness" in a European cross--national perspective, a sociological view over thirty years of research' paper presented at the seminar "Destandardisation of employment", Köln University, May 2011.

Blanchflower, D. (2007) 'International Patterns of Union Membership', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 45 (1): 1-28.

Booth, J., Budd, J. and Munday, K. (2010) 'Never say never? Uncovering the never-unionized in the United States', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 48 (1): 26-52.

Bryson, A. and Gomez, R. (2005) 'Why Have Workers Stopped Joining Unions? Accounting for the Rise in Never-Membership in Britain', British Journal of Industrial Relations, 43 (1): 67-92.

Budd, J. (2010) 'When do US workers first experience unionization? Implications for revitalizing the labor movement'. *Industrial Relations*, 49(2): 209–225.

Chapman and Temple `Overview: the performance of the UK Labour market' in Buxton, Chapman and Temple (eds), *Britain's Economic Performance*, 2nd edition, 1998CIPD, 2005

CIPD (2005) 'Flexible Working: Impact and Implementation, an Employer Survey', Survey Report February 2005: *http://www.cipd.co.uk/NR/rdonlyres/257CE4EE-356B-43F5-89275C86203D7AA1/0/flexworksurv0205.pdf*

Charlwood, A. (2002), 'Why Do Non-union Employees Want to Unionize? Evidence from Britain', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 40, 3, 463-91.

Connolly, H., Marino, S. and Martinez Lucio, M. (2014) 'Trade union renewal and the challenges of representation: Strategies towards migrant and ethnic minority workers in the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom', *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, 20 (1): 5–20.

D' Art, D. and T. Turner (2008), 'Workers and the Demand for Trade Unions in Europe: Still a Relevant Social Force?', *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 29, 2, 165-191.

Dorre, K. (2006) The increasing precariousness of the employment society – driving force for new right- wing populism? Paper prepared for presentation at the 15th Conference of Europeanists Chicago, March 30 – April 2, 2006

European Commission. (2013). European Commission Employment and social developments in Europe 2012 (ESDE) review. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Freeman, R. and Diamond W. (2003) 'Young workers and trade unions' in H. Gospel and S. Wood (eds.) *Representing Workers: Union recognition and membership in Britain*, London: Routledge.

Freeman, R. B. and J. Rogers (1999), *What workers Want?* (Ithaca New York, ILR Press).

Friedman, M. and Friedman, R. (1980), *Free to Choose: A Personal Statement* (Harmond-sworth: Penguin Books).

Gall, G. (2009) (ed.) *Union Revitalisation in Advanced Economies: Assessing the Contribution of Union Organising*, Palgrave Macmillan.

Goos, M. and Manning, A. (2003) 'McJobs and MacJobs: the growing polarisation of jobs in the UK', Chapter 5 of Dickens, R., et al (eds.) The Labour Market Under New Labour: The State of Working Britain, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2003, pp. 70-85

Grimshaw, D. and J. Rubery (1998) 'Integrating the Internal and External Labour Markets', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 22, 2, 199-220.

Goodman, A. and Gonzalez, J. (2013) 'In Historic Move, AFL-CIO Expands Ranks with Vote to Include Non-Union, Immigrant, Low-Wage Workers'. 12 September 2013, accessed at: *http://www.democracynow.org/2013/9/12/in_historic_move_afl_cio_expands.*

Gomez, R., M. Gunderson and Meltz N. (2002), "'Comparing youth and adult desire for unionisation in Canada', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 40, 3, 521-542.

Greer, I. and Doellgast, V. (2011) "Marketization and Institutional Change: From an Idea to Its Social Effects" *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the SASE Annual Conference*, Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain, Madrid.

Gumbrell-McCormick, R. (2011) 'European Trade Unions and Atypical Workers', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 42: 3, 293-310.

Gumbrell-McCormick, R. and Hyman, R. (2013) *Trade Unions in Western Europe: Hard Times, Hard Choices*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hall and Soskice (2001)

Haynes, P., J. Vowles and P. Boxall (2005), 'Explaining the Younger-Older Worker Union Density Gap: Evidence from New Zealand', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 43 (1): 93–116.

Healy, G., Heery, E., Taylor, P. and Brown, W. (2004) (eds.) *The Future of Worker Representation*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Heery, E. and Abbott, B. (2000) 'Trade unions and the insecure workforce' in E. Heery and J. Salmon (eds.) The Insecure Workforce, London: Routledge.

Heery, E., H. Conley, R. Delbridge, M. Simms and P. Stewart (2004), 'Trade Union Responses to Non-Standard Work', in G. Healy, E. Heery, P. Taylor and W. Brown (eds), *The Future of Worker Representation*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Heery, E. (2009), 'Trade Unions and Contingent Labour: Scale and Method', *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 2: 429–442.

Hodder, A. (2012) 'Organising young workers in the Public and Commercial Services union', Paper published in the *Proceedings of the 16th World Congress of the International Labour & Employment Relations Association*, Philadelphia, 2nd - 5th July 2012.

Hodder, A. (2014) 'Organising young workers in the Public and Commercial Services union', Industrial Relations Journal, 45 (2): 153-168.

Holgate, J. (2013) 'Community organising in the UK: a 'new' approach for trade unions?' *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, Online First, Doi: 10.1177/0143831X13511275.

International Labour Office. (2012). Global employment trends for youth. August 2012. Geneva.

Institute for Public Policy Research, (2011) Trends in part-time and temporary work, IPPR: *http://www.ippr.org.uk/uploadedFiles/pressreleases/Part-time%20and%20temporary%20work%20technical%20briefing.pdf*

Kretsos, L. (2011): Grassroots Unionism in the context of economic crisis in Greece. Labor History (52: 3). Pp. 265 – 286.

Kretsos, L. (2011) 'Union Responses to the Rise of Precarious Youth Employment in Greece', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 42 (5): 453-472.

Kretsos, L. and Martinez Lucio M. (2013), 'De-standardization of Employment in the UK: Issues and Policy', in Koch, M. and Fritz, M. (eds.) *The Destandardization of Employment in the* EU, 103-116, London: Routledge.

Kretsos, L. (2014), Youth policy in Austerity Europe: the case of Greece, *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 19, 2014, Supplement 1, pp.35-47.

Kretsos, L. and Mrozowicki, A. (2012) Grassroots unionism and trade union organizing in *Retail*: A comparison between Greece and Poland, paper presented at the ESRC Seminar, Young Workers and Precarious Employment, University of Manchester, UK (16.03.2012).

Levesque, C. and Murray, G. (2010) Understanding union power: resources and capabilities for renewing union capacity, *Transfer*, August 6, 2010 vol. 16 no. 3 333-350.

Lipset, S. M. and N. Meltz, (1997), 'Canadian and American Attitudes toward Work and Institutions', *Perspectives on Work*, 1, 3, 14-20.

Loughlin, C. and J. Barling (2001), 'Young workers' work values, attitudes and behaviours', *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 74, 543-558.

Lowe, G. S. and S. Rastin (2000) 'Organizing the Next Generation: Influences on Young Workers; Willingness to Join Unions in Canada', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 38, 2, 203-222.

Macias FE (2003) Job instability and political attitudes towards work: Some lessons from the Spanish Case. *European Journal of Industrial Relations* 9(2): 205-22.

Machin, S. and Manning, A. (1994) ' The effects of minimum wages on wage dispersion and employment: Evidence from the UK's Wages Councils' *Industrial and Labour Relations Review*, vol.47, pp. 319-29.

McGovern, Patrick (2007) Immigration, labour markets and employment relations: problems and prospects**.** *British journal of industrial relations*, 45 (2). pp. 217-235.

McGovern, Patrick and Smeaton, Deborah and Hill, Stephen (2004) Bad jobs in Britain: non-standard employment and job quality**.** *Work & occupations*, 31 (2). pp. 225-249. ISSN 0730-8884

MacKenzie, R. and M. Martinez Lucio (2005) 'The Realities of Regulatory Change: Beyond the Fetish of Deregulation', *Sociology*, 39, 3, 499-517.

Mason, P. (2012). Why it's kicking off everywhere: The new global revolutions. London: Verso.

Ness, I. (2014) (ed.) *New Forms of Worker Organization: The Syndicalist and Autonomist Restoration of Class-Struggle Unionism*, Michigan: PM Press.

OECD (1996) *Employment Outlook*, Paris: OECD.

O'Reilly, J., MacInnes, J., Nazio T. and Jose Roche (2009) The United Kingdom : from flexible employment to vulnerable workers in Gender and the contours of precarious employment / edited by Leah F. Vosko, Martha MacDonald and Iain Campbell, London: Routledge, pp. 108-119.

Pascual, S. A., & Waddington, J. (2000). Young people: The labour market and trade unions. Report prepared for the youth committee of the European Trade Union Confederation Report prepared for the youth committee of the European Trade Union Confederation. Brussels: ETUC.

Polavieja, J. G. (2005). Flexibility or polarization? Temporary employment and job tasks in Spain. Socio-Economic Review, 3, 233–258.

Pollert, A. (ed.) (1991) *Farewell to Flexibility?*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Pollert, A., & Charlwood, A. (2008). Vulnerable workers and problems at work: Who experiences problems at work, what problems do they experience, what do they do about them and what happens as a result. UWE working paper, 11. Retrieved from *http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/ grants/R000239679-A/outputs/read/3f4fc1ca-7e38-401b-af5d-c9805f1f2471*

Pollert, A. and S. Tailby (2009), "Young Workers, Vulnerability at Work and Union Organising", paper presented at 7th International Conference in Memory of Professor Marco Biagi, Modena, Italy, 19-21 March 2009.

Pollert, A. (2009) Varieties of collectivism among Britain's low-paid unorganised workers with problems at work. Working Paper 13. University of the West of England, Bristol: *http://www.uwe.ac.uk/bbs/research/cesr/workingpapers.shtml*

Ramon Alos, P. Jodar, J. Marti, A. Martin Artiles and L. Ortiz (2009), "Diversity in trade union membership: a typology based on the study of a Spanish trade union", *Industrial Relations Journal*, 40, 2, 100-121.

Rubery, J., (1989) "Precarious forms of work in the UK", in Rodgers, G. Rodgers, J., eds. *Precarious Jobs in Labour Market Regulation, The Growth of Atypical Employment in Western Europe*, ILO (International Institute of Labour Studies) Free University of Brussels, Brussels. Labour Studies,

Geneva.

Sabbatini, F. (2008). Social capital as social networks: A new framework for measurement and an empirical analysis of its determinants and consequences. Journal of Socio-Economics, 38, 429 – 442.

Ranci, C., Brandsen, T. and Sabatinelli, S. (2014) *Social Vulnerability in European Cities: The Role of Local Welfare in Times of Crisis*, London: Palgrave.

Sanchez L. D. (2007), 'Explaining union membership of temporary workers in Spain: the role of local representatives and workers' participative potential', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 38,1, 51-69.

Serrano Pascual, A. and Waddington, J. (2000) Young People: The Labour Market and Trade Unions, Report Prepared for the Youth Committee of the European Trade Union Confederation, Brussels: ETUC.

Simms, M. (2011). Helping young workers during the crisis: Contributions by social partners and public authorities. Retrieved from EIROnline website: *http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/studies/tn1101019s/uk1101019q.htm*

Simms, M. (2012) Young Workers During the Crisis: Hit Hardest and Scarred Longest, London: Unions 21.

Simms, M. Holgate, J. and Heery, E. (2013) *Union Voices. Developing Organizing in the UK*. Ithaca: ILR Press.

Standing, G. (2011) *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*, London: Bloomsbury.

Tinsley and Monastiriotis, (2010) Developing an Index for Labour Market Adaptability in the UK, Employment Relations Research Series no 85, Department for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform (BERR), November.

TUC, (2008) *Hard Work, Hidden Lives*, TUC Commission on Vulnerable Employment: *http://www.vulnerableworkers.org.uk/cove-report/full-report/*

TUC, (2011) Unions, Collective Bargaining and Employment Relations Project**,** Research Bulletin Number 1, March 2011.

TUC (2013) *An effective campaigning voice for young workers – proposals to develop the TUC Young Members Forum*, London: TUC.

TUC (2014) *TUC Directory 2014*, London: TUC.

Turner, L. (2004) 'Why Revitalize? Labor's Urgent Mission in a Contested Global Economy' in C. Frege and J. Kelly (eds.) *Varieties of Unionism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Upchurch, M., Taylor, G. and Mathers, A. (2009) *The Crisis of Social Democratic Unionism in Western Europe. The Search for Alternatives.* London: Ashgate.

Upchurch, M., Mathers, A. and Taylor, G. (2014) 'Towards Radical Political Unionism?' in H. Connolly, L. Kretsos and G. Phelan (eds.) *Radical Unions in Europe and the Future of Collective Interest Representation*, Oxford: Peter Lang.

Vandaele, K. (2012) Youth representatives' opinions on recruiting and representing young workers. A twofold unsatisfied demand? *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, 18 (3): 203-218.

Van Wanrooy, B., Bewley, H., Bryson, A., Forth, J., Freeth, S., Stokes L. and Wood, S. (2013) *The 2011 Workplace Employment Relations Study First Findings*, London: Department for Business, Skills and Innovation.

Visser, J. (2006) 'Union membership statistics in 24 countries', *Monthly Labour Review*, January: 38-49.

Waddington, J. and Kerr, A. (2002), 'Unions Fit for Young Workers?', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 33 (4): 298–315.

Waddington, J. and C. Whitston (1997), 'Why Do People Join Unions in a Period of Membership Decline?', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 35, 4, 515-546.