**Survey findings based on age, gender,** **race and disability**

The survey’s aims in 2022 were to explore experience and demand for learning and training by demographic factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, region, level of prior learning.

**Participant data**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Total number of participants in survey | 18329 |

|  |
| --- |
| Gender |
| Male | Female | Other | Prefer not to say |
| 4569 (25%) | 13524 (74%) | 54 | 182 (1%) |

|  |
| --- |
| Age |
| 16 - 26 | 27 - 39 | 40 - 49 | 50 – 59 | 60 - 64 | 65 plus |
| 106 (1%) | 1863 (10%) | 4141 (23%) | 8283 (45%) | 2911 (16%) | 835 (5%) |

|  |
| --- |
| Ethnicity |
| White | Mixed | Black African / Caribbean or Black British | Asian / Asian British | Other ethnic background |
| 16481 (90%) | 280 (2%) | 586(3%) | 608(3%) | 58 |

|  |
| --- |
| Disability |
| Yes | No  |
| 3078 (17%) | 14556 (79%) |

|  |
| --- |
| Income |
| £11,000 and under | £11,001 - £20,000 | £20,001 - £35,000 | Over £35,000 |
| 1561 (9%) | 4811 (26%) | 7850 (43%) | 2715 (15%) |

|  |
| --- |
| Working status |
| Full time | Part time | No guaranteed hours |
| 13802 (75%) | 4265 (23%) | 207 (1%) |

**Age**

Two thirds (66%) of survey participants were 50+ and just over a tenth (11%) under 40 years old. The younger age groups are more active learners, but the awareness and experience of UNISON learning offer was particularly low amongst those under 40 (37% were aware compared with 47% of those aged 50+).

Younger members’ interest in learning is high over the next three years and they are potentially more likely to take up a learning offer. The majority of those under 40 were extremely interested in learning (58% of 16-26 and 52% of 27-39) compared to a quarter of those aged 50+ (27%). However, most of the over 50s group had at least some interest: women over the age of 50 were slightly more likely than men (81% vs 78%) to be at least fairly interested in training in the future.

When asked about demand for learning one of the most consistent areas of interest in the survey was digital skills in various forms. Just over two thirds (68%) of members were interested in improving their digital skills within the next three years, which was in tune across most age groups. An exception of this were those aged 16-26 who were less likely to be interested in developing their digital skills (53%). Computer and internet skills are particularly of interest to 50+ cohort (54%).

Perhaps unsurprisingly younger members – those under 40 – were more likely than older members to be interested in learning for work (82%), job specific skills (81%) and general personal development (81%). They were also more likely to be interested in developing general personal skills in confidence and assertiveness (64%), and supervisory or management skills (71%).

Members under 40 were also keener on gaining qualifications in the next three years and this interest rose from Level 4[[1]](#footnote-2) upwards. Of all the responses showing interest in qualifications on Level 4, 5, 6 and higher, 39% of 16-39 age group said they were interested. Conversely, 4 % of those who responded that they were not interested in qualifications were under 40. Overall, those most interested in qualifications at Level 4 or above include people aged under 40, Black members, activists and those earning over £20,000.

The main barrier for all age groups to learning was lack of time and balancing time needed for training with work and personal commitments. This was especially felt by the 27-39 age group where over half of members (51% compared to 37% overall) reported that personal commitments make it difficult to undertake learning. 66% of this age group said work commitments make it challenging to find time compared to 56% overall. Almost half (46% vs 33% overall) found training unaffordable.

A demand for flexibility in delivery of learning featured heavily in the survey. Three in ten (30%) of those under 40 said they would choose delivery entirely online. These younger members were particularly likely to favour online learning with a tutor (15% compared to 11% of over 50). A quarter (25%) of older members aged 60 or above would prefer in person learning (such as classroom), as would a similar proportion (23%) of those aged 26 and under. The older age groups were more likely not report lack of IT/digital skills necessary for learning as a barrier.

On overcoming barriers to learning, employer support in form of time off featured heavily in the younger cohorts: 60% of the 16-26 group; 58% of the 27-39 group and 52% of the 40-49 group reported this against 43% among all survey participants. Likewise, these younger members were more likely to need financial support with course fees.

**Gender**

The response rate for women (74%) was largely representative of the proportion of women in UNISON membership. Also, 76% of Black members responding were women. The proportion was roughly the same over all age groups except for over 65s where the female response rate was significantly lower (64%). Amongst the service groups, 90% of survey participants in schools were women and 41% in environment sector. 62% of activists who took part in the survey were female. 88% of those who earn £11,000 and under were women and 58% of those earning over £35,000 a year. 89% of members working part time were female.

A vast majority (94%) of members had undertaken training over the last three years and this was consistent for all genders. Likewise, the most recent learning and training had overwhelmingly been taken for work and career reasons (89% average; 89% of women; 88% of men and 81% of other genders). Men were slightly more likely to undertake training while doing their normal job (46%) and at work but away from their normal workstation (27%) compared to the average (43% and 27% respectively; 42% and 22% for women). Men were significantly more likely to have been learning and training on their employer’s time (51%) compared to women (39%). 69% of men said that their recent training was arranged or organised by their employer while the corresponding ratio for women was 65%. For other genders the recent training organised by the employer was significantly lower in 48%.

Interest in taking on learning and training in near future was high overall (85%) with women showing more interest (86%) than men (83%) and other genders surpassing the interest in 98%. Women over 50 were slightly more likely than men (81% compared to 78%) to be at least fairly interested in training in the future. The main reasons for taking part in learning and training in the future were:

* To improve how to do their job: 83% of men, 83% of women and 77% of other genders.
* To develop computer/IT skills: 61% of men, 62% of women and 39% of other genders.
* The skills to do their job is changing: 61% of men, 56% women and 49% of other genders.

Also, men were more likely (22%) to want to take part in training to become a union activist than the other genders (20%) or women (13%).

Over the next three years, men were more likely than women to be interested in developing job specific skills (70% compared to 64%). Women were more likely than men to be interested in developing confidence and assertiveness (52% compared to 43%), and learning around leisure, hobbies or wellbeing (68% compared to 60%). Women over 50 have a more immediate interest than men of the same age, a third (33%) are interested in undertaking training in computer or internet skills in the next year compared to three in ten (29%) of men.

When asked about preference on how to access learning opportunities, men were more likely to choose in-person/face-to/face than women (24% vs 19%) or members identifying as other genders (13%). Overall, a blended approach with a mix of online and tutor-led was popular with all genders (men 41%, women 46% and other 47%).

The survey results overall showed how work and personal commitments make it hard to find time for learning with women being more likely to have caring commitments. The barriers members faced were:

* Work commitments: men 58%, women 55% and other 70%
* Personal commitments: men 38%, women 37% and other 46%
* Caring commitments: men 14%, women 19% and other 13%
* Unaffordability: men 27%, women 34% and other 50%
* Lack of employer support: men 12%, women 10% and other 13%.

To help overcome the challenges financial support with course fees was on top of the list (men 41%, women 48% and other 63%). Likewise, the need for support from the employer in terms of time off to study was high (men 45%, women 42% and other 67%). Men were more likely to want help with finding the right course for them (46% compared to women 42% and other genders 38%).

The proportion of those who stated their gender as other was fairly small in the survey, but they had higher interest in accessing learning through UNISON (57%, compared to 36% of men and 35% of women). From UNISON College the members’ top wish list was for:

* General personal development: men 45%, women 50% and other 67%
* Learning for work (CPD): men 40%, women 46% and other 55%
* Leisure/hobbies/well-being: men 35%, women 42% and other 43%
* Job specific specialist, technical or practical skills: men 42%, women 38% and other 47%
* Supervisory or management skills: men 35%, women 33% and other 47%.

**Race/ethnic origin**

Out of all survey participants 8% were Black. A slightly higher proportion (76%) of Black responders were women compared to the survey overall (74%). Black members were also somewhat younger: 13% of the Black members were under 40 years old (vs 11% for white) and 57% were over 50 (vs 67% for white). The largest percentile of Black members in the survey worked in health care (11%) and lowest in transport (1%). One in ten (10%) of UNISON activists in the survey were Black. 78% of this cohort worked full time compared to 75% their white counterparts; 20% part time (vs 23% for white members) and 1.8% had no guaranteed hours (vs. 1% for white).

Black members were more likely to have undertaken recent training on their own time (30%) compared to white (26%). Especially African/Caribbean or Black British and Asian/Asian British members responded higher proportions of learning on their own time (30% and 31% respectively). Moreover, Black members were less likely to have done their training in their employer’s time (36% vs 42% for white members) with African/Caribbean or Black British members with least learning during employer’s time (34%). The main reasons for taking part in learning and training in the future were:

* To improve how to do their job: Black 86%, white 82%
* To develop their computer/IT skills: Black 71%, white 61%
* To help get promotion/progress at work: Black 71%, white 48%.

Interest in updating English and maths (Functional Skills) over the next year was high especially amongst Black African/Caribbean or Black British members (28% compared to white 9%) and Asian/Asian British members (27%). Likewise, the same groups are more likely to have interest in developing their digital skills (48% and 49% respectively compared to white 27%). Confidence and assertiveness skills also get high proportions of interest (50% and 50% compared to white 24%). Supervisory and management skills are in high demand as well (47% and 45% respectively compared to white 23%).

Learning for work (CPD) had high scores overall (46%) and this was reflected in Black African/Caribbean or Black British and Asian/Asian British members near future learning needs (59% for both groups). The interest in gaining qualifications hovered much in similar levels across the survey overall except for the Level 6[[2]](#footnote-3) and above where the Black African/Caribbean or Black British and Asian/Asian British members showed much higher level of interest (29% and 26% compared to white 15% and 16% overall).

Being a future UNSION activist interested Black African/Caribbean or Black British and Asian/Asian British members (31% and 21% respectively compared to white 10%). Correspondingly, those who held a UNISON activist role were keen to train further (25% and 17% respectively compared to white 9%).

The interest in learning was in membership with 85% of participants in the survey saying they were interested in learning over the next three years. The interest was highest amongst African/Caribbean or Black British members (94%), mixed ethnicity (91%) and Asian/Asian British members (91%).

While overall 35% of respondents in the online survey were interested in accessing learning or training with UNISON College, this was higher among Black members and particularly Black African/Caribbean or Black British (66%). The figure was over half among members with mixed ethnic backgrounds (53%), Asian/Asian British ethnicity (52%) or of other ethnicities (55%). In comparison a third (33%) of those of white ethnicity were interested.

Black members were especially interested in UNISON’s potential offer of information, advice and guidance (IAG) on training and development opportunities. Black members were particularly likely to prefer telephone access to IAG (33% compared to 21% of white members), their UNISON union learning rep (25% compared to 15%) and/or a local workplace rep (19% compared to 13%).

**Disability**

Those with a disability were more likely to be extremely interested in future learning (41% compared to 32% of non-disabled members). The same level of higher interest was featured in all areas of learning from digital skills to career progression and career change. The [overall survey report](https://learning.unison.org.uk/2022/06/16/a-bright-future-with-the-unison-college/) saw this potentially being a reflection on those who are more likely to encounter discrimination in employment seeing learning and training as a tool to further their careers.

While 35% of respondents overall were interested in with what UNISON College has to offer, the figure was higher among disabled members (43%). They were also more likely to select UNISON as the organisation they would be most confident about for providing them with learning and training opportunities (27% compared to 22% of non-disabled).

Disabled members were interested in better understanding of being active in UNISON (19%) and in learning to develop their skills and knowledge for their UNISON activist role (17%). These are higher proportions than in the survey responses overall where 12% showed interest in learning about activism and development of skills in existing activist role (11%).

**Recommendations:**

* Raise awareness and visibility of UNISON learning offer and UNISON College
* Target overcoming barriers especially with members who traditionally take on less learning eg older members who might need more targeted promotion
* Recruit more union learning reps (ULRs) to support and advocate for learning in the workplace and develop more diversity in all activist roles
* Explore further what general personal development would entail for the sector and Self Organised Groups and how it overlaps with CPD
* Continue building digital skills offer
* Promote positive impact of having qualifications and how UNISON College can help with this especially with regards to Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)
* Develop more flexible and blended delivery models
* Grow the number of learning agreements with employers to support access to learning opportunities.

**More information:**

Read all the survey reports in UNISON <https://learning.unison.org.uk/college-survey>

Or contact learningandorganisingservices@unison.co.uk.

1. Level 4 and 5 eg HNC, HND, BTEC Higher Level and Level 6 and above eg First or Higher degree. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Level 4 and 5 eg HNC, HND, BTEC Higher Level and Level 6 and above eg First or Higher degree. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)