

4.3 FAIR REPRESENTATION AND PROPORTIONALITY

“Fair representation” and “proportionality” are key principles underpinning representation at all levels of UNISON’s structure. They are there to ensure that UNISON is an effective voice for all sections of membership.

The UNISON rulebook defines “fair representation” as:

“the broad balance of representation of members of the electorate, taking into account such factors as age and low pay, the balance between full time and part time workers, manual and non-manual workers, different occupations, skills, race, sexual orientation, disability and gender identity.”

This definition reflects an important principle about inclusion; it is not necessarily an exhaustive list. It is vital that branches ensure they are including all members and potential members, and that they understand who they are and where they work.

UNISON recognises the importance of taking positive measures to ensure the views of low-paid women workers are heard in the union. Rule Q sets out which members fall within the definition of low-paid. Branches should take this into account when determining their own representative structures and delegations.

Branch officers must:

- ensure the branch is inclusive and representative by knowing who their members are and where they work, by mapping the workplace
- take into account the principles of fair representation when electing officers, choosing delegations or setting up structures
- ensure the negotiating agenda reflects the priorities of all groups of workers covered by the branch.

The UNISON rulebook defines “proportionality” as:

“the representation of women and men in fair proportion to the relevant number of female and male members comprising the electorate”.

Over 70% of the union’s membership is women. UNISON is committed to ensuring that women are represented in all our activities, including at branch level.

Branches are required to meet the principles of proportionality when electing officers, choosing delegations or setting up structures.

If a branch is experiencing difficulties in getting women involved it is important that steps are taken to improve the situation. Much good practice in involving women is actually good practice for involving all members.