

## **2013 Annual Survey of Trade Union use of the Net – Summary**

### **1 – Personal information**

This year saw 3,123 responses (2,746 in English, 377 in French), slightly more than last year's 2,954 (2,605 in English, 349 in French).

Of the respondents to the English survey, 822 (29.9%) were from the UK, 534 (19.4%) from Canada, 479 (17.4%) from the USA, 241 (8.8%) from Australia, 71 (2.6%) from Ireland, and 57 (2.1%) from New Zealand. The largest response from a non-English-speaking country was Belgium, accounting for 42 (1.5%).

The largest chunk of respondents to the French survey were 124 (32.9%) from France itself, followed by 106 (28.6%) from Canada, and 54 (14.3%) Belgium.

Last year, many more Canadian than French trade unionists responded, so we should bear that shift in mind when looking at any trends in the French results. Likewise, bear in mind that, the number of Australian respondents to the English survey fell where those from the other English-speaking countries rose.

Just under two-thirds of respondents identified as male, 65.3%, with 32.5% identifying as female.

39.5% said they hold a position in a union branch or local, with 12% holding regional positions, 14.8% national positions, and 4% positions in international union organisations.

### **2 – Personal use of the internet**

More than 95% of respondents access the internet at home, with 62.9% using it at work. Significantly, 19.4% now use the internet on the move, on public transport (the figure being considerably higher among English-language respondents). 21.7% access it in other locations.

#### Devices

Devices used to access the internet by English-speaking respondents are as follows (2012 results in parentheses):

Desktop 74.8% (77.7%)  
Laptop 69% (68.5%)  
Tablet 23.5% (14.3%)  
Smartphone 48.5% (41.3%)  
Other 2.1% (2.3%)

And among French-speaking respondents:

Desktop 74.2% (79%)  
Laptop 59.9% (64.6%)  
Tablet 14.6% (9.3%)  
Smartphone 29.1% (21%)  
Other 3.3% (3.1%)

#### Browsers

Internet Explorer remains – just – the most popular browser, but its usage continues to decline. Here are the browsers used by English-speakers:

Internet Explorer 57.2% (63.7%)  
Mozilla Firefox 45.1% (45.4%)  
Google Chrome 46% (36.5%)  
Safari 22.6% (23.4%)  
Opera 2.9% (3.4%)  
Konqueror 0.3% (0.4%)  
Other 4.1% (4.6%)

And French-speakers:

Internet Explorer 53.4% (59.5%)  
Mozilla Firefox 50.7% (47.6%)  
Google Chrome 36.7% (32.7%)  
Safari 15.1% (16%)  
Opera 1.4% (3.4%)  
Konqueror 0.3% (0.3%)  
Other 4.7% (4.4%)

### Social Networks

Facebook remains the most popular, remaining relatively stable with 86.7% of English-speakers (down from 88.1%) and 79.2% of French-speakers (up from 77.6%).

Twitter has 45.8% of English-speakers (up from 37.4%) and 23.7% of French-speakers (up from 15.4%).

YouTube retains 39.8% of English-speakers (up from 35.3%) but lost ground among French-speakers with 28.6% (down from 31.1%).

LinkedIn continues to grow among English-speakers, up to 42.1% (from 37.%), and shows a marked growth among French-speakers too, up to 12.1% (from 8.3%).

Google+ has also grown among French-speakers, up to 32.2% (from 27.6%). 26.6% of English-speakers are also members (no data from last year).

20.8% of English-speakers are members of LabourStart's UnionBook project (down from 24.1%).

Flickr has grown among French-speakers to 2.4% (up from 1.3%) and modestly among English-speakers to 11.4% (up from 10.9%).

Less popular social networks have continued to decline, with Myspace falling to 5.3% (from 6.3%) and Bebo to 0.6% (from 1.3%)

Others (Orkut, Skyrock, Vkontakte, etc) have small shares, but we know they are popular in other parts of the world where we didn't get many respondents.

**Interestingly, the percentages participating in union groups on social networks fell noticeably, to 54.2% (from 56.2%) for English-speakers, and 53.4% (from 58.3%) for French-speakers.**

## Other online activity

We added new questions about personal use of the internet, to try to find out what sort of activity union members are engaging in online. We found that 60.1% of English-speakers participate in email lists discussions about union activity, with 59.9% discussing union activity on social networking sites. The difference was much more marked among respondents to the French survey, with 77.2% using email lists, and only 42.5% using social networks for discussions. Forums were less popular, with 32.7% of English-speakers and 23.6% of French-speakers using them.

A relatively high number of respondents wrote for their own blogs (19.8% English, 13.5% French) and/or union blogs (23.9% English, 27.4% French). Many were site admins (21% English, 15.4% French), and/or LabourStart correspondents (9.2% English, 7.3% French).

We also tried to gauge whether union members were supporting online campaigns on various platforms. It seems that **most unionists sign up to Avaaz campaigns** (57.2% English, 67.7% French). Change.org petitions attract 63.8% of English-speaking respondents and 29.3% of French-speakers.

The French survey showed the numbers supporting campaigns on MesOpinions.com, petitionspubliques.fr, and petitionsenligne.fr, to be fairly even, between 21-26%. Support for English-language campaigning sites was more varied and perhaps reflects which countries the respondents are from more than anything else. 38Degrees and SumOfUs were popular, attracting 27.4% and 31.6% respectively.

**Interestingly, a high number of respondents said they supported campaigns on 'other' sites (27.8% English, 31% French), suggesting that there may be many more campaigning platforms with which we are not yet familiar.**

A minority of respondents reported they have experienced cyber-bullying when trying to organise online (11.1% English, 7.1% French).

## **3 – Union use of the net**

Much of this part of the survey was significantly restructured since last year, making direct comparisons difficult, but trends can still be seen.

### Social Networks

The number of respondents reporting that their union has a presence in social networks has risen to 62.6% of English-speakers (up from 58%), and 67.4% of French-speakers (up from 57.9%). However, a large minority still say they don't know whether or not their union has a presence (26.4% English, 20.6% French).

Respondents reported their union had a presence on the following social networks.

English-speakers (2012 results in parantheses):

Facebook 91.7% (90.2%)

Twitter 51.6% (42.1%)

YouTube 28.8% (24.6%)

LinkedIn 8.9% (7.7%)

UnionBook 8.4% (10.5%)

Flickr 7.8%  
Google+ 5.5%  
Myspace 0.8% (1.3%)  
Other 5.2% (7.8%)

French-speakers (2012 results in parentheses):

Facebook 88.5% (85.1%)  
Twitter 39.1% (28%)  
YouTube 23.6% (21.1%)  
Google+ 12.1% (9.1%)  
LinkedIn 4% (4.6%)  
Flickr 1.7%  
Other 13.8% (15.4%)

This suggests that union engagement with social networks is still increasing, particularly on Twitter. There are, however, **huge discrepancies in the number of unionists using LinkedIn and Google+, and the union presence there**, suggesting that they may be worth further engagement.

### Union Websites

According to respondents, the majority of unions now seem to have websites at every level.

English-speakers:

National union 90.9% (down from 91.7%)  
Regional union 65.4%  
Union local/branch 59.2% (up from 51.6%)  
National union centre 73.3%  
Local union centres/trades councils/etc 53.1%

French-speakers:

National Confederation 90.2% (down from 90.4%)  
National union 78%  
Regional federation 69.7%  
Union local/branch 72.9% (up from 53.5%)

The highest number of respondents said they visited all these websites “occasionally”, rather than daily, more than once a week, or never. The exception was that more English-speaking respondents said they “never” visited their trades council website.

**The number of respondents visiting their national union's website “daily” fell to 13.5%** (from 21.2%) for English-speaking respondents and to 24.7% (from 26.4%) among French-speakers.

We asked respondents to rate the union websites they visited on a scale of 1-5. Averages in the English survey showed that national union websites are rated better, but there's not much in it:

National union 3.37  
National union centre 3.31  
Regional/statewide union 3.21  
Union local/branch 3.11

Local union centres/trades councils/etc 3.10

French-speaking respondents tended to rate their unions' websites higher, with more giving 4 out of 5, except for locals/branches.

### Global Union Federations

Disappointingly for the Global Union Federations and the ITUC, most respondents said they never visited the websites of these organisations. The ITUC website, however, was the most popular, followed by IndustriALL for English-speakers, and UNI Global Union for French-speakers.

### Union Blogs

Union blogs seem much more popular among respondents to the English survey. The percentages who read union blogs of various kinds were as follows:

Union activists' blogs: 55.1%  
Union leaders' blogs: 43.9%  
Blogs of groupings within a union: 32.4%  
Other pro-union blogs: 37.6%

Compared to the French results:

Union activists' blogs: 18.1%  
Union leaders' blogs: 15.9%  
Blogs of groupings within a union: 21.7%  
Other pro-union blogs: 37%

37% of French-speaking respondents said they read no union blogs, compared to 31.7% of English-speakers.

### The purpose of union websites

We asked respondents what they thought the purposes of union websites should be. A large majority said “news for members,” especially at local level (88.8% English, 75.3% French), although French-speakers were almost as keen for websites to carry “news for the public.”

There were majorities in favour of using both local and national union websites for “discussion and debate” in both the English and French surveys.

Respondents were less keen on using any union websites for fundraising, with only minorities (21.3%-33% English, 12.2%-15.5% French) in favour of this.

**There was a large discrepancy between the English and French surveys on the question of using websites for recruitment.** Majorities in the English survey favoured local (59.9%) and national (61.5%) websites being used to recruit new members, compared to the French survey, which had minorities in favour of local (41.1%) and national (25.5%) sites being used for this.

### Apps

Asked if their union had developed an app for smartphones or tablets, respondents replied:

English (2012 results in parentheses):

Yes 11.9% (5.8%)

No 33.4% (38.1%)

Don't know 54.7% (56.1%)

French (2012 results in parentheses):

Yes 8.8% (4.6%)

No 38.2% (46.6%)

Don't know 53% (48.8%)

And only a minority of union members are using such apps if they exist: 22.8% of English-speakers (up from 18%), and 18.6% of French-speakers (up from 17%).

English-speakers reported that the quality of their union apps seems to have improved, with 18% rating them “excellent” (up from 12.9%) and 39.2% “good” (up from 25.8%). French-language apps still seem to polarise opinion, with 40.9% of users saying “excellent” or “good,” but 31.8% saying “poor.”

### Email newsletters

We asked respondents if they received regular emails from union organisations, with the following percentages saying yes:

English:

National union 75.5%

Local branch 54.6%

National union centre 39.6%

Global Union Federation 35.8%

French:

National Confederation 53.3%

National union 40.9%

Regional federation 33.5%

Local branch 65%

Global Union Federation 32.7%

Asked to rate the content of the emails on a scale of 1 to 5, French- and English-speaking respondents rated all the emails quite highly on average. In the English survey, the GUFs came out on top, but there wasn't much in it:

Global Union Federation 3.49

National union 3.44

Local union 3.42

National union centre 3.37

### Multimedia content

Respondents were asked if their union produces multimedia content (e.g. audio, video) for the

internet:

English (2012 results in parentheses):

Yes 54.8% (54.7%)

No 14.4% (17.7%)

Don't know 30.9% (27.6%)

French (2012 results in parentheses):

Yes 54.9% (54.7%)

No 24.5% (26.7%)

Don't know 20.5% (18.6%)

It appears therefore that more unions haven't pushed the use of video in the last year. However, members who do engage with multimedia content seem happy with its quality, with 70% of English-speaking respondents rating it "Good" or "Excellent," (72.7% last year), and 76% of French-speaking respondents rating it "Good" or "Excellent" (78.7% last year).

### Union priorities

Respondents were asked which of the following online activities unions should be prioritising, and an average rating out of 4 was calculated for each one.

Here's what came out on top in the English survey:

Online campaigning 3.33

Online recruitment 3.05

Email newsletters 2.98

Online learning 2.90

Social networks 2.72

Multimedia 2.64

SMS (text) updates 2.37

Apps for smartphones 2.35

Video conferencing 2.27

Internet radio broadcasts/podcasts 2.15

And the French:

Email newsletters 2.83

Online recruitment 2.53

Multimedia 2.46

Social networks 2.45

Online learning 2.44

Video conferencing 2.13

Internet radio broadcasts/podcasts 2.11

Apps for smartphones 2.00

SMS (text) updates 1.98

There appears to be a much greater appetite for email than text or radio updates, and support for the idea of recruiting new members over the internet.

Finally, we asked respondents what sort of information they would like to see unions publicising online, and ranked the results in the same way.

The English results:

Tips on workers rights 3.45  
Training for activists 3.32  
Describing working conditions in companies 3.19  
Local/regional news and events 3.10  
National news and events 3.09  
Interviews with union reps 2.93  
Working class history and culture 2.88  
International news and events 2.80  
Reports of unions in other countries 2.73

And the French:

Local/regional news and events 3.02  
National news and events 2.98  
Tips on workers rights 2.96  
Training for activists 2.91  
International news and events 2.89  
Describing working conditions in companies 2.82  
Working class history and culture 2.55  
Interviews with union reps 2.48  
Reports of unions in other countries 2.47

It seems there is a strong appetite for practical day-to-day advice and education/training materials to be available on union websites.