

# Unions, social media and young workers - evidence from the UK

Hodder, Andy; Houghton, David

DOI:

[10.1111/ntwe.12154](https://doi.org/10.1111/ntwe.12154)

License:

Other (please specify with Rights Statement)

*Document Version*

Peer reviewed version

*Citation for published version (Harvard):*

Hodder, A & Houghton, D 2019, 'Unions, social media and young workers - evidence from the UK', *New Technology, Work and Employment*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ntwe.12154>

[Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal](#)

## **Publisher Rights Statement:**

This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Hodder, A. and Houghton, D. J. (2019), Unions, social media and young workers—evidence from the UK. *New Technology, Work and Employment*. doi:10.1111/ntwe.12154, which has been published in final form at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/ntwe.12154>. This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving

## **General rights**

Unless a licence is specified above, all rights (including copyright and moral rights) in this document are retained by the authors and/or the copyright holders. The express permission of the copyright holder must be obtained for any use of this material other than for purposes permitted by law.

- Users may freely distribute the URL that is used to identify this publication.
- Users may download and/or print one copy of the publication from the University of Birmingham research portal for the purpose of private study or non-commercial research.
- User may use extracts from the document in line with the concept of 'fair dealing' under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (?)
- Users may not further distribute the material nor use it for the purposes of commercial gain.

Where a licence is displayed above, please note the terms and conditions of the licence govern your use of this document.

When citing, please reference the published version.

## **Take down policy**

While the University of Birmingham exercises care and attention in making items available there are rare occasions when an item has been uploaded in error or has been deemed to be commercially or otherwise sensitive.

If you believe that this is the case for this document, please contact [UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk](mailto:UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk) providing details and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate.

Table 1: Twitter account details for the period 2014-16.

Union	Twitter Handle	Joined Twitter	Followers (June)			Following (June)			Tweets 2014-15	Mean Tweets per month 2014-15 (a)	Tweets 2015-16	Mean Tweets per month 2015-16 (b)	Difference in mean tweets per month (b-a)	Total Tweets 2014-2016	Total account tweets - June 2016	Sample (of all Tweets from the account) %
			2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016								
<b>GMB</b>	@GMBYoungMembers	Jan-11	1,580	2,256	2,807	1,470	1,992	2,094	<b>236</b>	19.67	<b>701</b>	58.42	38.75	<b>937</b>	1,430	65.52
<b>PCS</b>	@PCSYMN	Jan-11	1,051	1,250	1,385	453	450	503	<b>177</b>	14.75	<b>194</b>	16.17	1.42	<b>371</b>	1,423	26.07
<b>Unite</b>	@Young_Unite	Jan-14	448	880	1217	271	452	502	<b>246</b>	20.50	<b>250</b>	20.83	0.33	<b>496</b>	596	83.22
									<b>659</b>		<b>1,145</b>			<b>1,804</b>	3,449	

Table 2: *Original* tweets and *retweets* for each union, per year

Tweet Type	GMB (2014-15)		GMB (2015-16)		PCS (2014-15)		PCS (2015-16)		Unite (2014-15)		Unite (2015-16)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Original	68	28.81	244	34.81	128	72.32	57	29.38	98	39.84	47	18.80
Retweet	168	71.19	457	65.19	49	27.68	137	70.62	148	60.16	203	81.20
<b>Total</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>701</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 3: Coded tweet categories for each union, per year

	<i>GMB</i>				<i>PCS</i>				<i>Unite</i>			
	<i>2014-15</i>		<i>2015-16</i>		<i>2014-15</i>		<i>2015-16</i>		<i>2014-15</i>		<i>2015-16</i>	
<i>Category</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>Recruitment</b>	3	1.27	8	1.14	0	0.00	7	3.61	3	1.22	3	1.20
<b>Campaigning</b>	13	5.51	164	23.40	43	24.29	34	17.53	26	10.57	102	40.80
<b>External Campaigning</b>	57	24.15	131	18.69	18	10.17	36	18.56	38	15.45	37	14.80
<b>Strike Building</b>	5	2.12	2	0.29	31	17.51	4	2.06	3	1.22	0	0.00
<b>Strike Action</b>	2	0.85	2	0.29	6	3.39	2	1.03	0	0.00	0	0.00
<b>Solidarity</b>	3	1.27	46	6.56	16	9.04	12	6.19	12	4.88	16	6.40
<b>Engagement</b>	14	5.93	41	5.85	6	3.39	9	4.64	4	1.63	5	2.00
<b>News</b>	48	20.34	121	17.26	27	15.25	31	15.98	52	21.14	32	12.80
<b>Other</b>	46	19.49	65	9.27	6	3.39	2	1.03	15	6.10	8	3.20
<b>Democracy</b>	0	0.00	31	4.42	0	0.00	8	4.12	0	0.00	15	6.00
<b>Youth Forum/Conference</b>	45	19.07	90	12.84	24	13.56	49	25.26	93	37.80	32	12.80
<b>Total</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>701</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 4: Number of youth specific tweets for each union, per year

	GMB				PCS				Unite			
	2014-15		2015-16		2014-15		2015-16		2014-15		2015-16	
Youth specific?	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	111	47.03	291	41.51	54	30.51	86	44.33	172	69.92	81	32.40
No	125	52.97	410	58.49	123	69.49	108	55.67	74	30.08	169	67.60
<b>Total</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>701</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 5: Degree of engagement for year union, per year

		Likes (% of tweets with >5 Likes)	ReTweets (% of tweets with >5 ReTweets)	Tweet with Most Engagement
2014-15	GMB	6.78	10.59	We're outside parliament calling for an end to Revenge Evictions. Will you support us and #How4Housing
	PCS	1.69	9.04	If you don't know why the PCS are on strike or you're undecided, then here's 7 reasons why you should support today
	Unite	2.44	11.38	Walmart strikers win pay rise for 500,000 workers. Fantastic news, never doubt the power of a union. In solidarity. #WalmartStrikers
2015-16	GMB	23.36	42.21	Young people in Britain are being denied rights and opportunities at work. We are campaigning for a new #FairDeal! <a href="https://t.co/PjzAReUNlg=:https://twitter.com/GMBYoungMembers/status/702092554779684864/photo/1">https://t.co/PjzAReUNlg=:https://twitter.com/GMBYoungMembers/status/702092554779684864/photo/1</a>
	PCS	8.77	19.30	PCS young members on the March in London today! <a href="https://t.co/C8xV169yYt=:https://twitter.com/PCSYMN/status/721320729900380161/photo/1">https://t.co/C8xV169yYt=:https://twitter.com/PCSYMN/status/721320729900380161/photo/1</a>
	Unite	27.66	57.45	Due to our action today no worker was body searched!!! This is usually unpaid. Great response by the workers. #SportsDirectShame

Table 6: User mentions for each union youth section.

		Unique Users Mentioned	Number of Mentions	Top three users engaged
2014-15	GMB	45	87	@anonymiseduser, n=9; @anonymiseduser, n=8; @gmbyounglondon, n=7
	PCS	14	58	@pcs_union, n=31; @pcsymn, n=7; @boycottworkfare, n=6
	Unite	33	61	@decentwork4all, n=9; @anonymiseduser, n=6; @tucyoungworkers, n=5
2015-16	GMB	121	279	@younglabouruk, n=14; @gmbyounglondon, n=14; @gmbpolitics, n=12
	PCS	24	50	@pcs_union, n=12; @pcsymn, n=7; @pcsculturegroup, n=4
	Unite	19	30	@sportsdirectuk, n=9; @decentwork4all, n=3; @tucyoungworkers, n=2
2014-16*	GMB	148	366	@bmgyounglondon, n=21; @anonymiseduser, n=14; @younglabouruk, n=14
	PCS	34	108	@pcs_union, n=43; @pcsymn, n=14; @boycottworkfare, n=6
	Unite	44	91	@decentwork4all, n=12; @sportsdirectuk, n=9; @tucyoungworkers, n=7

\*2014-16 data includes some user accounts mentioned in both individual years' data, resulting in duplicate accounts, thus total unique users mentioned is not the sum of 2014-15 and 2015-16 data

Table 7: Hashtags used by each union account, per year

	2014-15					2015-16				
	Total Hashtags Used	No. Unique Hashtags	Mean hashtags / tweet	Hashtags Used >10 times	No. times used	Total Hashtags Used	No. Unique Hashtags	Mean hashtags / tweet	Hashtags Used >10 times	No. times used
<b>GMB</b>	178	89	0.75	#GMB14	18	698	206	1.00	#gmb	61
				#youngGMB	11				#livingwage	47
				#YWM14	15				#10poundnow	38
<b>PCS</b>	147	35	0.83	#weallneedapayrise	45	231	105	1.19	#pcs	26
				#J10	15				#pcsyms15	24
				#PCS	14				#tucywc16	12
<b>Unite</b>	213	68	0.87	#Fightfor5	29	252	97	1.01	#sportsdirectshame	65
				#TUCYWC15	22				#yl16	11
				#uniteYMC15	25					
				#uniteYWM14	24					

Table 8: Unique user accounts mentioned as a proportion of original tweets.

	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2014-16</b>
<b>GMB</b>	0.66	0.50	0.47
<b>PCS</b>	0.11	0.42	0.18
<b>Unite</b>	0.34	0.40	0.30