



The workers' survey for COSATU



Background to the report

Truly democratic organisations are based on their members' views and preferences. If we want to develop powerful and effective labour policies and strategies, we need to analyse the key challenges that confront us and how they are perceived by key labour constituencies. Late 2005, COSATU therefore decided to get input from both members and other workers on their recruitment and organisational strategies through a survey. The following report represents the findings from that survey.

The main aim of this survey was to explore the expectations and attitudes of workers towards trade unions, as well as their experiences as union members. The survey also examined workers' political preferences and attitudes towards current political issues.

The COSATU survey was conducted in the main metro areas. We selected a random sample in communities with an average income under R10 000 a month [per household](#). Furthermore, we designed the survey in order to represent the various population groups and so that almost half the sample was women. Self-employed people, workers employed alone or with only one other as well as the unemployed were excluded because we primarily aimed to get information from workers who are either trade union members or likely to become members. For these reasons, the survey does not fully represent the South African population or labour force. Rather, the survey represents a typical South African trade union constituency.

The survey covered almost 3000 workers. About 40 percent of the workers interviewed were union members, which is about the same as union density outside of farm and domestic work. Comparison with Statistics South Africa's national Labour Force Survey (which covers 30 000 households) suggests that the resulting sample is highly representative of the core formal working class. You will find more information about the survey and methodology in the appendix attached to this report.

The following report presents some key initial results from the survey. To assure easy, accurate and relevant access to the findings, we have presented the main findings with brief tables and commentaries. More substantial analytical reports and papers will be published from the data in the future providing more in-depth analysis on the challenges, characteristics, priorities, and real opportunities of workers and trade unions in South Africa.

C A S E was commissioned to draw the sample and conduct the fieldwork for the survey. The project was carried out under the management of Naledi. Liv Tørres, Neva Makgetla and Rudi Dicks developed the survey with help from CASE, NALEDI and COSATU. Makgetla and Tørres carried out the analysis and wrote up the final report. We would also like to thank all the workers who made their time available and whose views will shape the future struggles in South Africa.



1 The worker sample

The survey aimed to give information on the attitudes of workers toward the labour movement and key political and social issues. We therefore selected a sample of employed people similar to COSATU's core constituency. For this reason, the survey only covers workers in urban areas who are employed, but not in micro-enterprise. The survey also did not include people from either very rich or very poor communities.

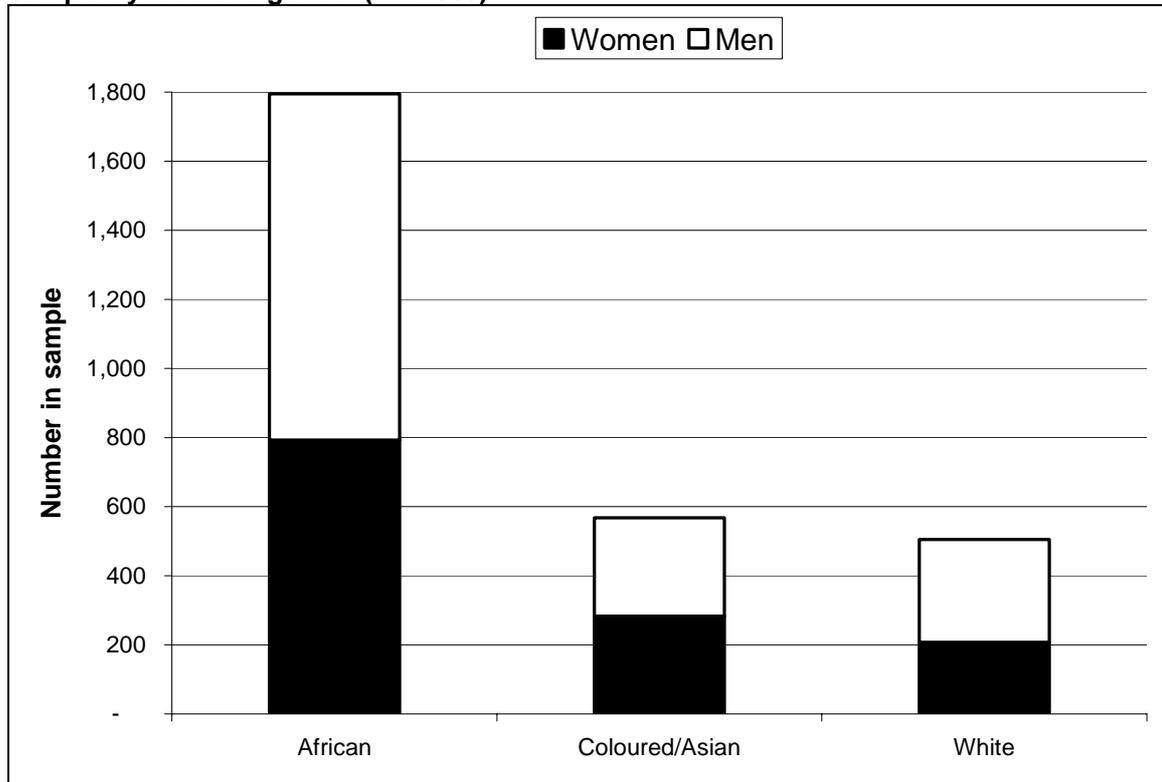
Comparison to the government's Labour Force Survey (which covers 30 000 households) suggests that the resulting sample was very representative of COSATU's core constituency. Some questions in the COSATU survey are similar to those in the Labour Force Survey – for instance, around people's incomes, their status at work, their occupations and industries. The answers to these questions are virtually the same as those in the Labour Force Survey for September 2005 (Statistics South Africa).

The survey does not, however, provide information on some key parts of the working class: the unemployed, who make up 40 percent of workers if we count those who want a paid job but are too discouraged to look for one; farm and domestic workers; and most of the informal sector, who are either self employed or employed in microenterprise.

Surveys are weighted to ensure that the sample better reflects the population as a whole. In this case, we had too few people in some regions, and too many in others. To correct this, we increased the weight of responses from workers in undersampled regions and decreased them in oversampled regions. All the results given here are weighted, unless we say otherwise.

Gender and race of workers in the survey

Sample by race and gender (n = 2868)



This graph pictures the sample of workers interviewed in our survey, after weighting. Around 1800 of the workers in the sample were African, 600 were Coloured or Asian, and 500 white.

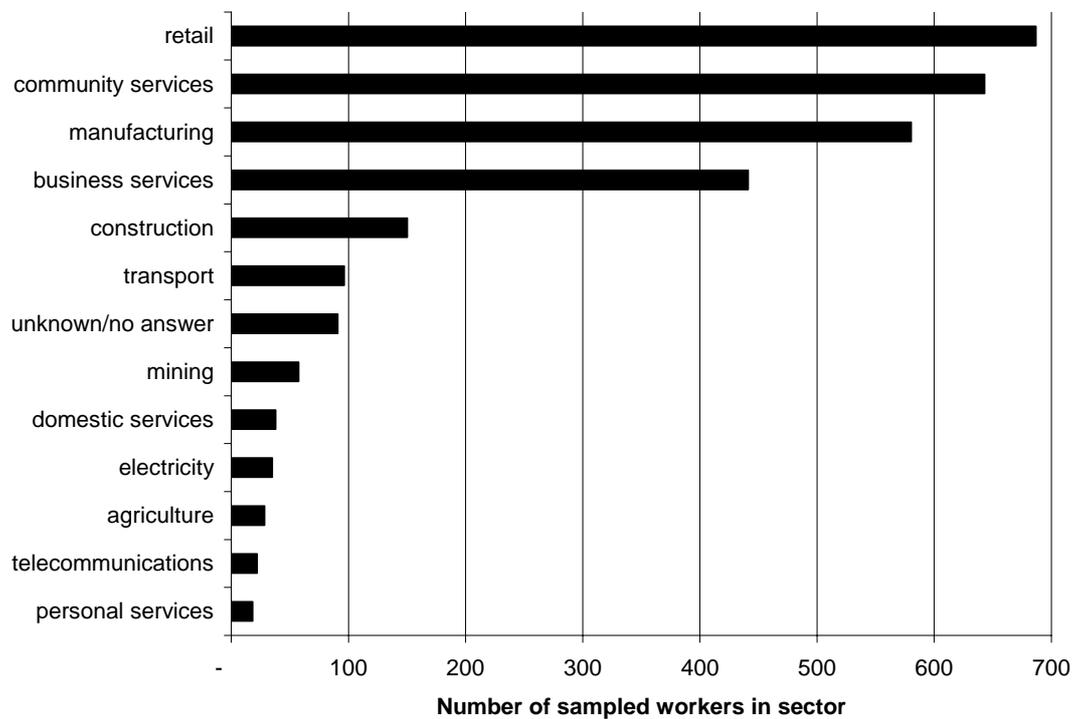
Some 45% of the workers in the sample were women. Since many women can't find jobs, that means that women made up a bigger share of the sample than they do in the paid workforce.

When we look at the sample in terms of education, more than three quarters of the sample completed their matric or some form of secondary education.

The average worker in the survey earned R3600 a month, but of them half earned under R2000 a month. This is the income level we would expect for workers if we exclude the groups the survey left out – the self-employed, domestic and farmworkers as well as the unemployed.

Sectoral employment of workers in the survey

Sectors of employment for workers in the survey (n = 2888)

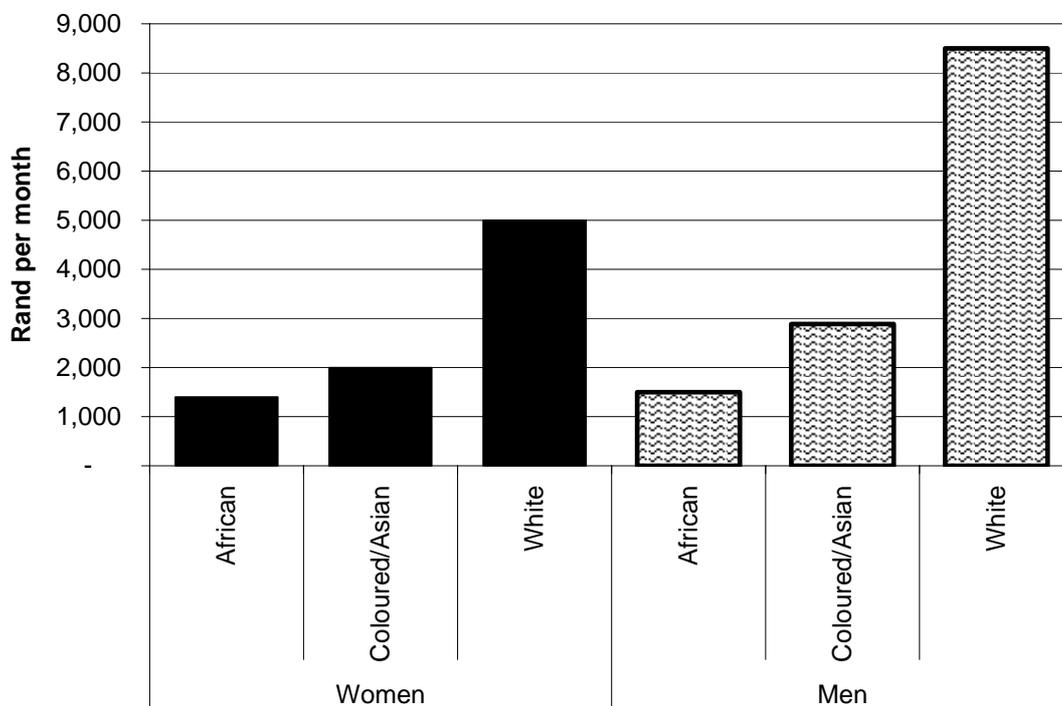


This graph shows the industries in which the workers sampled worked. The largest number were in retail, government and business services, with manufacturing coming third.

More than three quarters of the total sampled population were permanently employed, with no significant difference between men and women. Around 23 percent work for a government department or parastatal, and the rest in the private sector.

Incomes

Median income by race and gender (n = 1677)



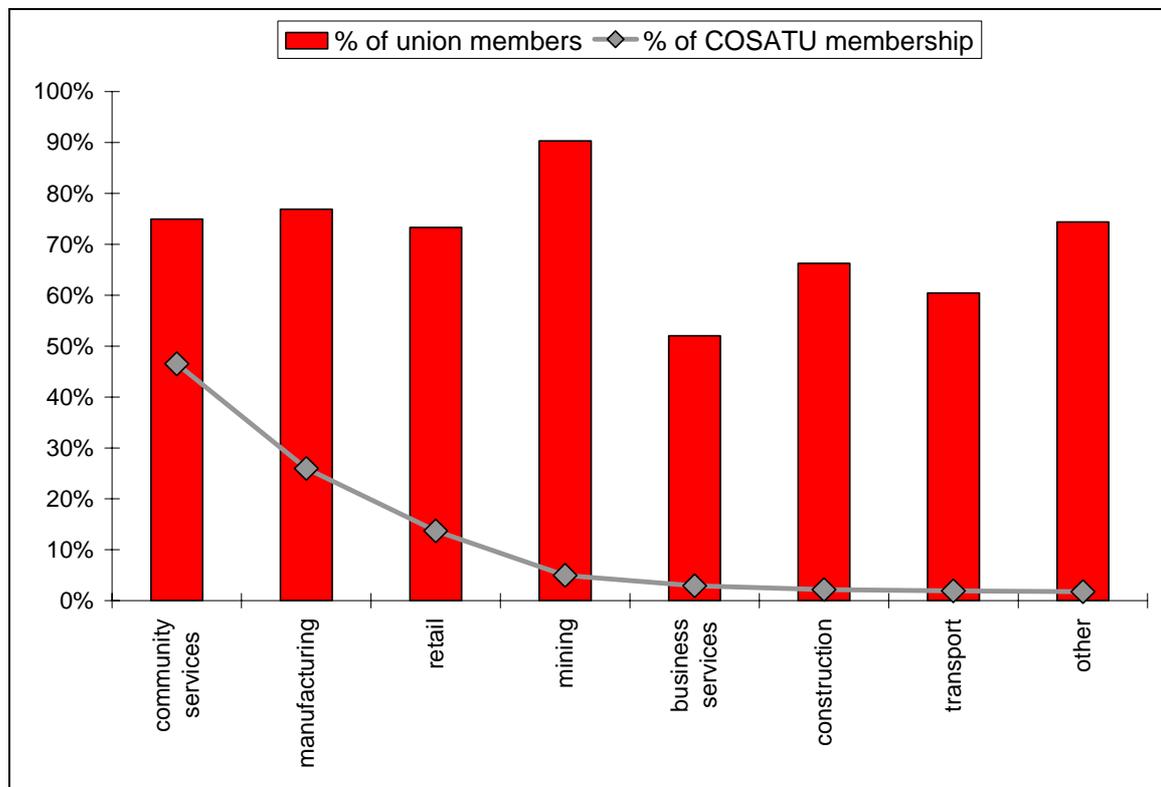
This graph shows the median wage reported by women and men in different racial groups in the sample. In most surveys, including this one, only between half and two thirds of people surveyed agree to answer this question.

Not surprisingly, white men were the highest earners. The median income was 60% as high for white women as for white men. For African men, it was 18% as high as for white men. In contrast, African women in the sample earned almost as much as African men. In part, this is because the survey excluded domestic workers, who make up 20% of all employed African women.

Union members generally earned much more than non-members. The average income for COSATU members was R4500 a month, compared to R6400 a month for other union members and R3000 for non-members. Half of COSATU members earned under R3500 a month, and the poorest 20% got under R1000 a month.

Trade union membership

COSATU's share in union membership by industry (n = 815)



This graph shows COSATU's share in trade union membership by industry, and the share of COSATU members by industry in the sample, after weighting. Almost a third of South African workers belong to unions, and two fifths if we exclude agriculture and domestic work.

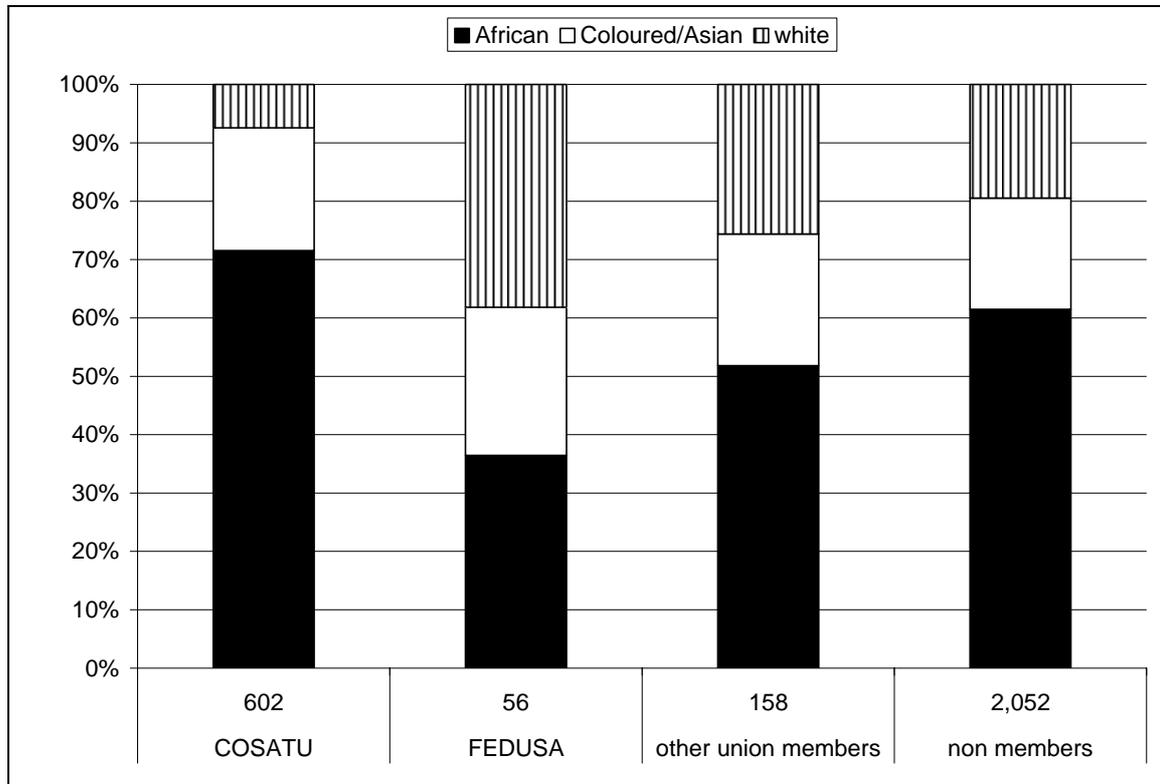
In the survey, three quarters of all union members belonged to COSATU. This is a higher share than we get by comparing COSATU's membership with the Labour Force Survey figures for union membership. It may result because the survey concentrated on working-class communities in metro areas.

COSATU affiliates accounted for over 60% of union members in all industries except business services, which include the banks, security and cleaning services, real estate and similar activities.

We know that NUM contributes over 10% of all COSATU members. In the sample, however, only 5% of COSATU members were miners. This is mostly because the survey only covered metro areas, which excludes most of the mining towns.

COSATU membership

Membership of federations by race (n = 816)



Just over 70 percent of COSATU members are African, 21 percent Coloured or Asian, and 7 percent White. 80 percent of black trade union members are COSATU members, compared to about 40 percent of five white unionists. In COSATU, 47 percent of members are women, compared to 44 percent for other unions and non-members. Workers aged under 30 years old make up a third of non-members but only 15 percent of members in both COSATU and other unions.

A quarter of COSATU members counted as professionals – mostly teachers and nurses – while 21 percent were semi-skilled production workers and 13 percent were elementary workers. In contrast, skilled and clerical workers made up a larger share of members in other unions. Just 14 percent of COSATU members, and 10 percent of other union members, had only primary education; most of the rest had some secondary, and about a quarter had a tertiary degree.

Composition of COSATU membership

The following tables show the composition of union membership and some basic conditions of work in major COSATU affiliates. Most of the differences reflect sectoral peculiarities. The tables only include unions with over 39 members in the sample. Only unions of more than 39 are included in the analysis because the results are not reliable for smaller groups.

Union membership by race, gender, age and experience

	number in sample	number after weighting ¹	% of union members who are:					median years in the job ²	median years in the union ²
			women	African	Coloured or Asian	White	under 30 years old		
NEHAWU	83	63	54%	81%	19%	0%	15%	11	9
NUM	108	39	6%	88%	7%	5%	34%	7	6
NUMSA	95	88	20%	66%	21%	9%	21%	8	6
POPCRU	68	49	50%	76%	4%	20%	23%	10	8
SACCAWU	56	49	59%	93%	6%	1%	18%	6	3
SACTWU	54	63	70%	37%	60%	0%	22%	6	6
SADTU	136	114	53%	90%	9%	1%	12%	9	8
SAMWU	56	41	41%	65%	21%	13%	8%	10	5
Other COSATU unions	102	101	57%	50%	32%	18%	30%	10	7
Other unions	193	214	43%	48%	23%	29%	7%	8	6
Non-members	1,912	2,065	44%	61%	19%	19%	17%	3	n.a.

1. We explain what weighting means in the footnote on page xx. 2. Median means the halfway point, not the average. In other words, half of all members have been less than the given number of years in the job or the union. We use the median rather than the average because the average may hide very big differences between workers.

Conditions of employment and education by union

	median income ¹	% not in permanent jobs	% with labour broker or sub-contracted	% working more than 8 hours/day	% in smaller enterprise (under 50 workers)	% with only primary education	% with tertiary education
NEHAWU	4,100	0%	24%	25%	26%	6%	37%
NUM	2,994	8%	7%	20%	52%	31%	4%
NUMSA	1,810	3%	2%	44%	25%	13%	3%
POPCRU	9,000	0%	21%	2%	7%	0%	18%
SACCAWU	2,900	18%	0%	12%	42%	6%	15%
SACTWU	536	0%	0%	28%	14%	19%	3%
SADTU	7,000	13%	21%	3%	75%	1%	86%
SAMWU	4,321	7%	6%	15%	21%	21%	2%
Other COSATU unions	2,400	5%	4%	41%	39%	28%	11%
Other unions	4,894	3%	7%	37%	40%	5%	16%
Non-members	1,500	28%	11%	33%	61%	10%	15%

1. Median means the halfway point, not the average. In other words, half of all members earn less than the monthly wage given here.



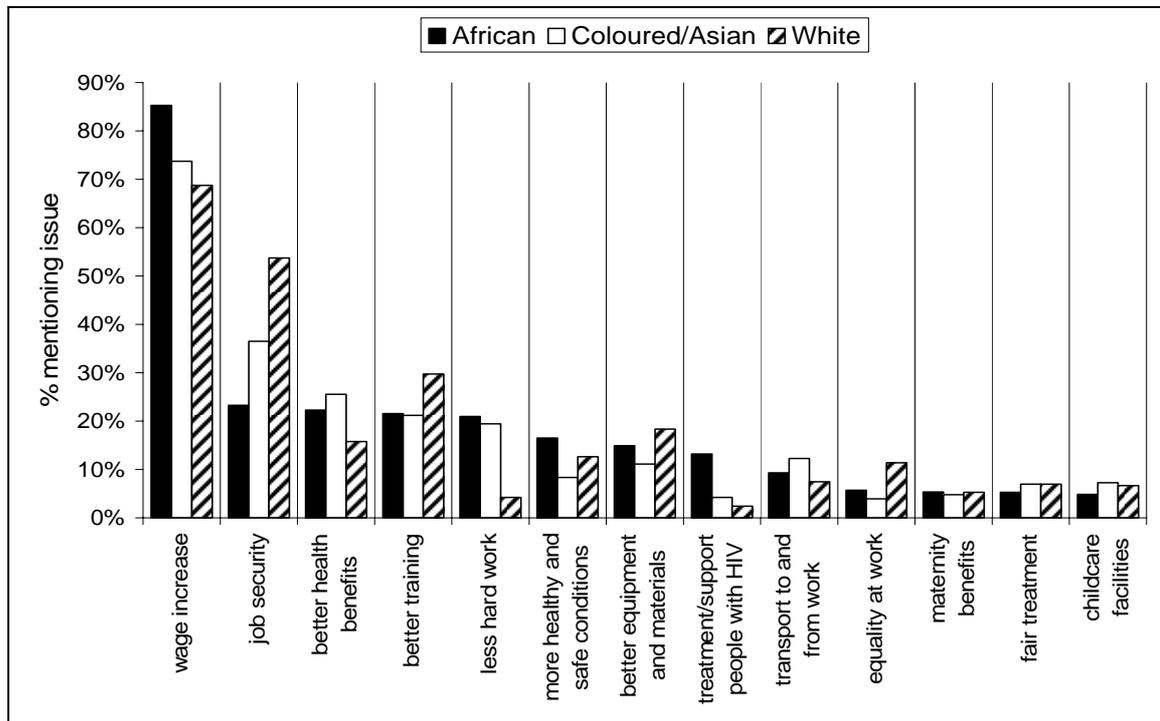
2 What do the workers want?

South African workers have won major victories in the past decade in terms of establishing and promoting workers rights in both the political field and in the labour market. The Labour Relations Act (1996), the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (1997) and other labour market reforms represent important advances from the apartheid labour regime for labour. Yet massive unemployment and retrenchments, outsourcing, growth of the informal sector, casualisation, subcontracting as well as employer pressure for more flexibility in terms of setting labour standard pose major challenges for membership, recruitment efforts, organisation building and mobilisation.

Workers' expectations of employers and the government will help shape collective bargaining strategies and outcomes as well as hopes for and perceptions of government delivery. We asked workers about their priorities in areas of wages, benefits, health and safety and so on, as well as their understanding of labour rights, and experience of discrimination. Differences emerged between workers of different races and gender. Trade union members also have different views from non-members.

What workers want from employers

What workers want from employers (n = 2868)



Almost all workers say they want better pay from their employer. Improved health benefits, training and less intense work are all mentioned by about one worker in five, listed right after remuneration and job security.

African workers are most likely to want higher wages, health and safety and support for people with HIV. Whites tend to be more concerned about job security, training and equality in the job – largely implying an end to affirmative action.

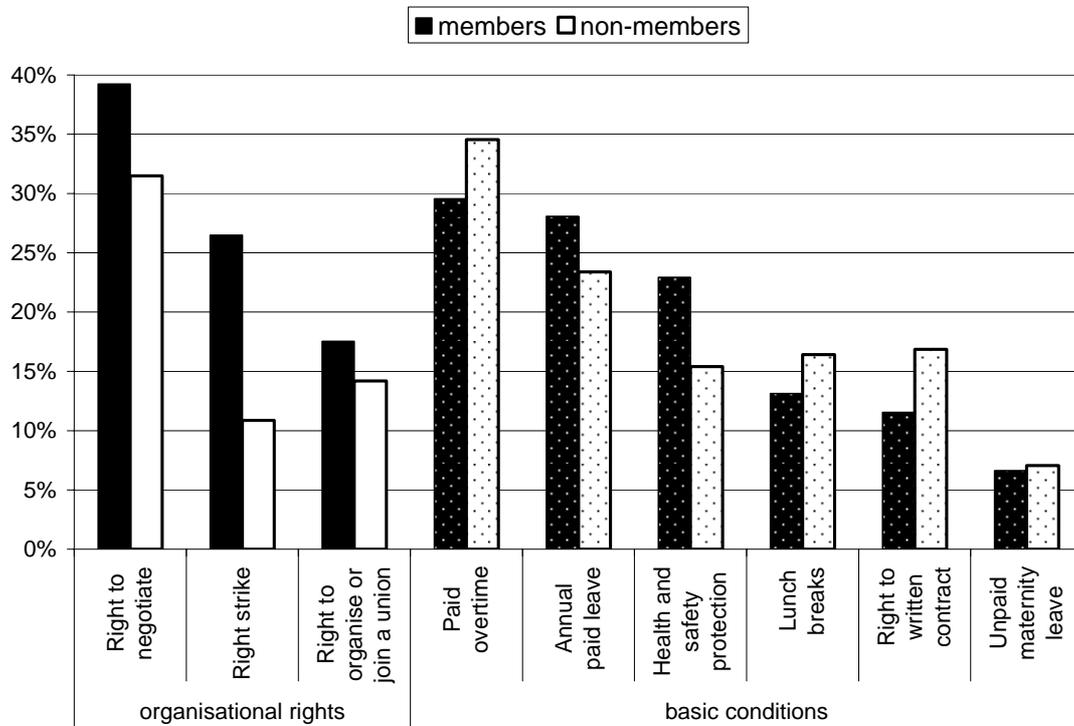
There were few differences amongst men and women in this area. Almost 10% of women mentioned maternity benefits but only 1% of men, and 7% of women mentioned childcare facilities, compared to 4% of men. Men are more likely to mention training, health and safety, the latter perhaps because more work in dangerous industries like construction and mining.

Younger workers are less likely to care about health benefits and occupational health and safety, and more likely to want better training. Young white workers, in particular, apparently feel threatened by affirmative action, which emerged in claims for job security and equality.

Higher pay came top of the list for both members and non-members. But union members tend to be more concerned about job security, work intensity, health benefits, and support for people with HIV and childcare. Non-members emphasise training and fair treatment at work.

Most important labour rights

What are your most important rights under the new labour law? (n = 2868)



This graph shows what workers say when asked what are their most important rights under the new labour laws. Union members are far more likely than non-members to mention organisational rights – the right to negotiate, strike and form a union. Non-members tend to focus on basic conditions, with paid overtime the most important.

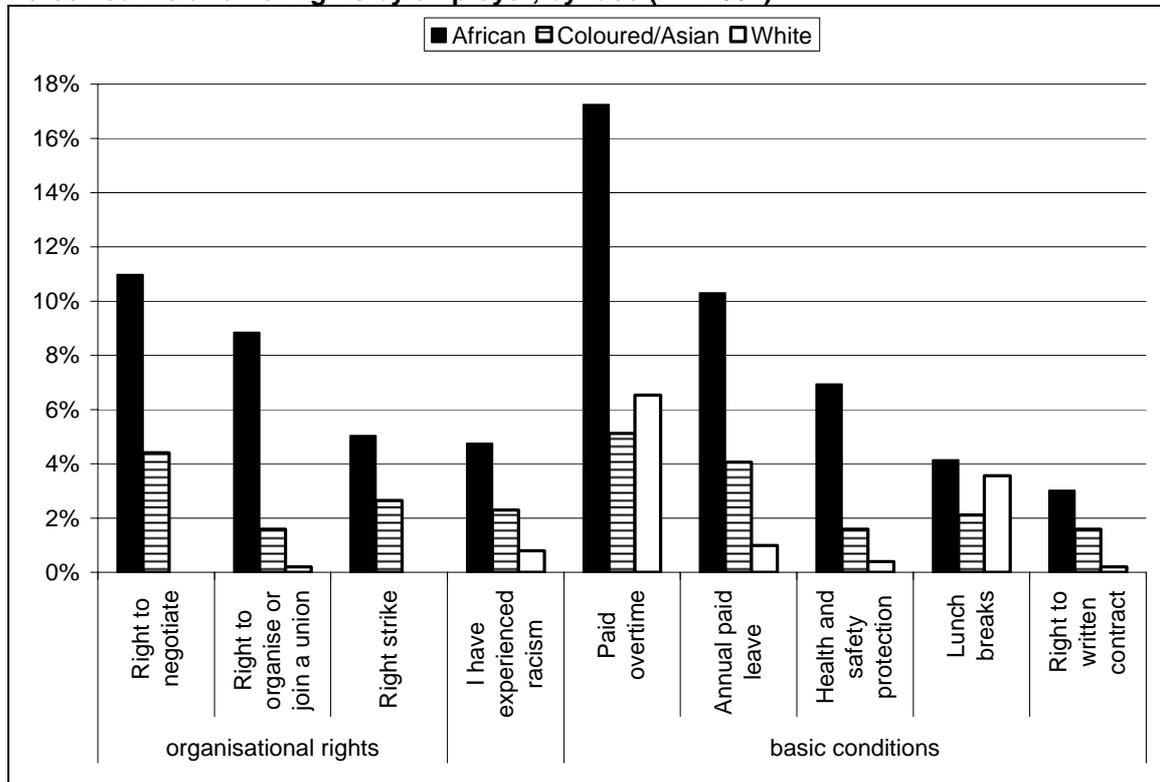
Similar differences emerged by race. African, Coloured and Asian workers are more likely than whites to mention organisational rights plus maternity leave.

When we look at perceptions of labour rights by gender, we find that 11 percent of women note maternity leave compared to only 3 percent of men. Apart from this, very few differences emerged between women and men in their responses to this question. Older and younger workers also did not provide significantly different answers.

Violation of rights

When asked if their employer violates their rights, 42 percent of Africans said yes, but only 22 percent of Coloureds and Asians and 11 percent of whites. The following table shows which rights they said had been violated.

Perceived violation of rights by employer, by race (n = 2857)



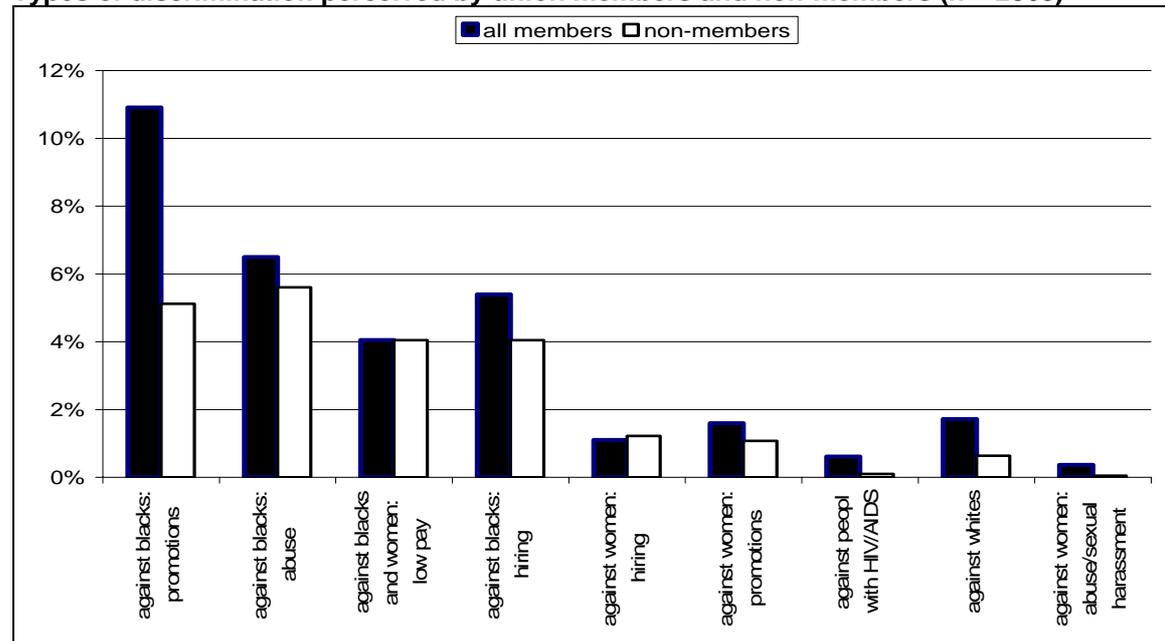
African workers are most likely to say the employer did not pay for overtime, violated their rights to negotiate and strike, and did not provide paid leave. Coloured and Asian workers show a similar distribution of violations. Whites mention almost only issues around paid overtime and lunch periods.

Union members are more likely than non-members to recognise violations of their rights. Some 37 percent of union members say the employer has violated their rights compared to only 31 percent of non-members.

Workers' answers on this question do not vary much by gender or age.

Discrimination at work

Types of discrimination perceived by union members and non-members (n = 2868)



As the graph above shows, union members were more likely to perceive discrimination than non-members, including against people with HIV.

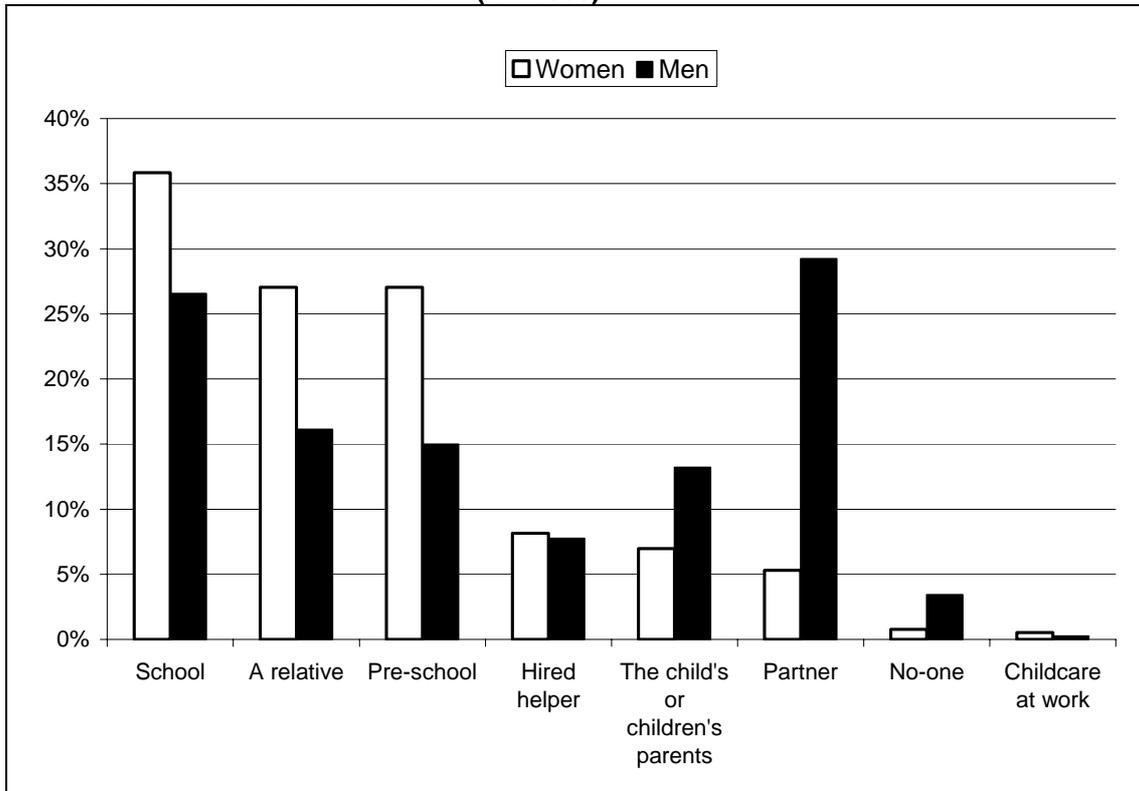
Data on pay and occupation by race and gender prove that black people, and especially black women, still face significant discrimination in the workplace. The survey suggests, however, that workers are far more aware of discrimination by race than gender. About 25 percent of African workers say their employer discriminates by race, compared to only around 10 percent of Coloureds and 5 percent of whites. One in seven African workers experiences racial abuse at work. Six percent of whites, but no black people, say their employer discriminates against whites. In contrast, relatively few workers – under 10 percent overall - perceive gender discrimination. The figure was only slightly higher for women than for men.

Perceptions of racial discrimination also vary substantially between the public and private sector. Black workers say they experience more racial discrimination in the private sector. White workers were more likely to claim discrimination in the public sector. But workers do not see much difference between public and private employers on gender discrimination.

African workers' experience of discrimination by race, but not by gender, varies by education. Some 12% of Africans with only primary education report racial abuse, compared to 6% of those with a tertiary degree. African workers with matric are more likely to report racial discrimination around hiring, promotions and training. Younger African workers – who are generally better educated – are more likely to see racial discrimination than older ones. Younger Coloured, Asian and White workers, however, see lower levels of discrimination than older workers.

Child care

Who looks after workers' children? (n = 1560)



About half of the workers surveyed have children under 13 years old in the household. For both men and women, school is the largest single source of childcare, while virtually none have childcare at work. Women are more likely to rely on a relative or pre-school to look after their children. Nearly 30 percent of men workers depend on their partner to care for their children, compared to 5 percent of women workers.

Nine out of ten workers of all races, both young and old and men and women, say they are satisfied with their childcare arrangements.



3 Recruitment

COSATU grew extraordinarily rapidly through the late 1990s, as workers took advantage of their new labour rights, including the right to organise in the public sector. At the same time, however, restructuring and downsizing in mining and manufacturing threatened union members. From the early 2000s, COSATU has not grown at all. Yet millions of workers remain outside the union movement, vulnerable to exploitation by their employers.

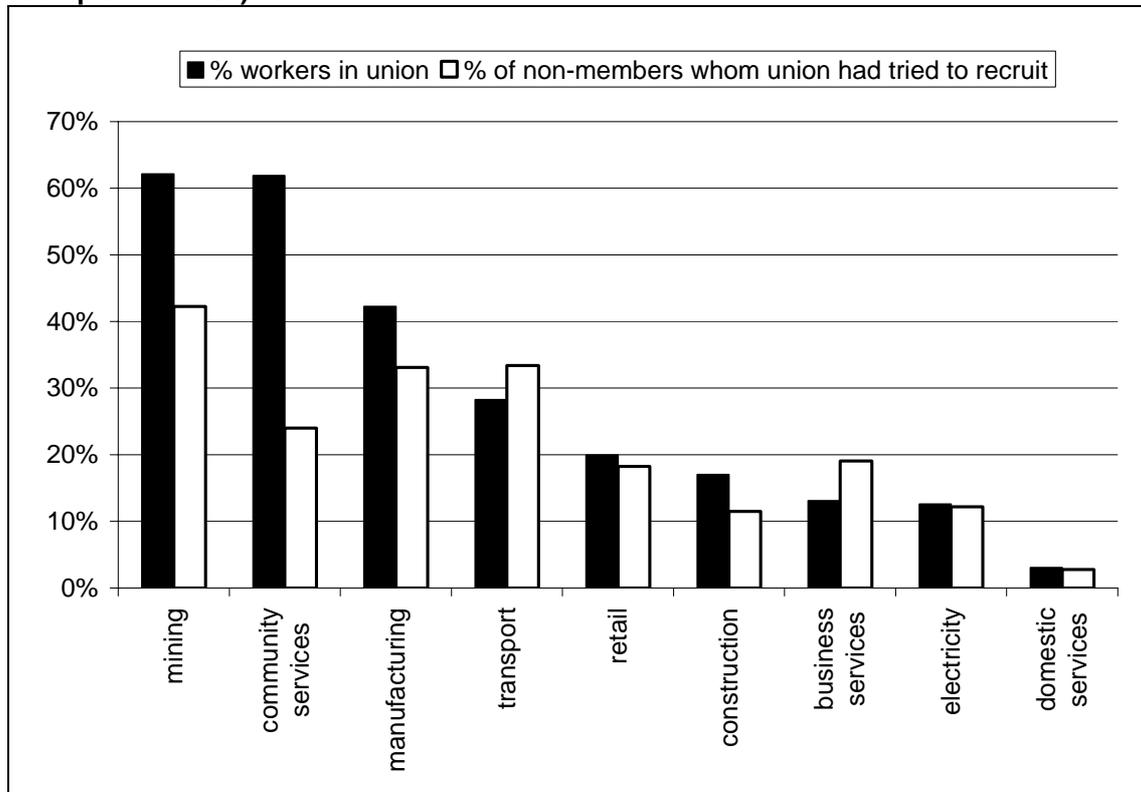
For this reason, COSATU's 2015 Plan ("Consolidate Working Class Power for Quality Jobs - Towards 2015," adopted by COSATU's Eighth National Congress in 2003) sets objectives for intensified recruitment of members.

To help the recruitment campaign, the survey asked non-members why they were not members.

The data in both this survey and the Labour Force Survey show that where and how someone works mostly determines whether or not they are a union member. Non-members are found in sectors with high turnover and smaller employers, such as domestic labour, agriculture, construction, security services and retail. Younger workers those with less than two years' experience with the employer are also less likely to join a union, as we will see in the following section.

Union density and recruitment

Union density and recruitment by industry (only in industries with over 25 in weighted sample. N = 1754)



The survey asked non-members if a union had ever tried to recruit in their workplace. Only about one in five said yes. As the chart shows, non-members are more likely to say a union had tried to recruit in industries where more workers are already union members. Where union membership is low, for instance in retail, construction, business services, electricity and domestic services, less than 20% of non-members say they were ever asked to join.

According to the survey, unions have still not begun to recruit heavily in new workplaces. Three quarters of non-members say there is no union where they work. Of these non-members, only 12% have seen a recruitment drive. In contrast, 57% of non-members in workplaces with a union had seen some recruitment effort.

The data suggest that Africans are more likely than other workers to join a union if one is established where they work. Some 82 percent of African non-members say there is no union in their workplace, compared to under 70% percent of Coloured, Asian and White non-members. There are no substantial differences in this area by gender or age.

Overall, only 8% of contract, seasonal or casual workers in the sample are union members, compared to 60% of permanent workers.

Reasons for not joining the union

Reasons given for not belonging to a union



The survey asks non-members why they do not belong to a union. As the chart shows, most say that they have never been recruited or that there is no union where they work. About 4% of black workers say they can't join a union because they are casual or temporary. Only 15% of African non-members, and 30% of Coloured and Asian non-members, say they do not like or need a union. In contrast, the vast majority of White non-members say they don't want a union or don't need one.

Just under 10 percent of non-members will not join because they object to the union's politics. Only five workers in the entire sample (all of them Coloured or Asian) blame the alliance with the ANC. That is less than one third of a percent of all workers.

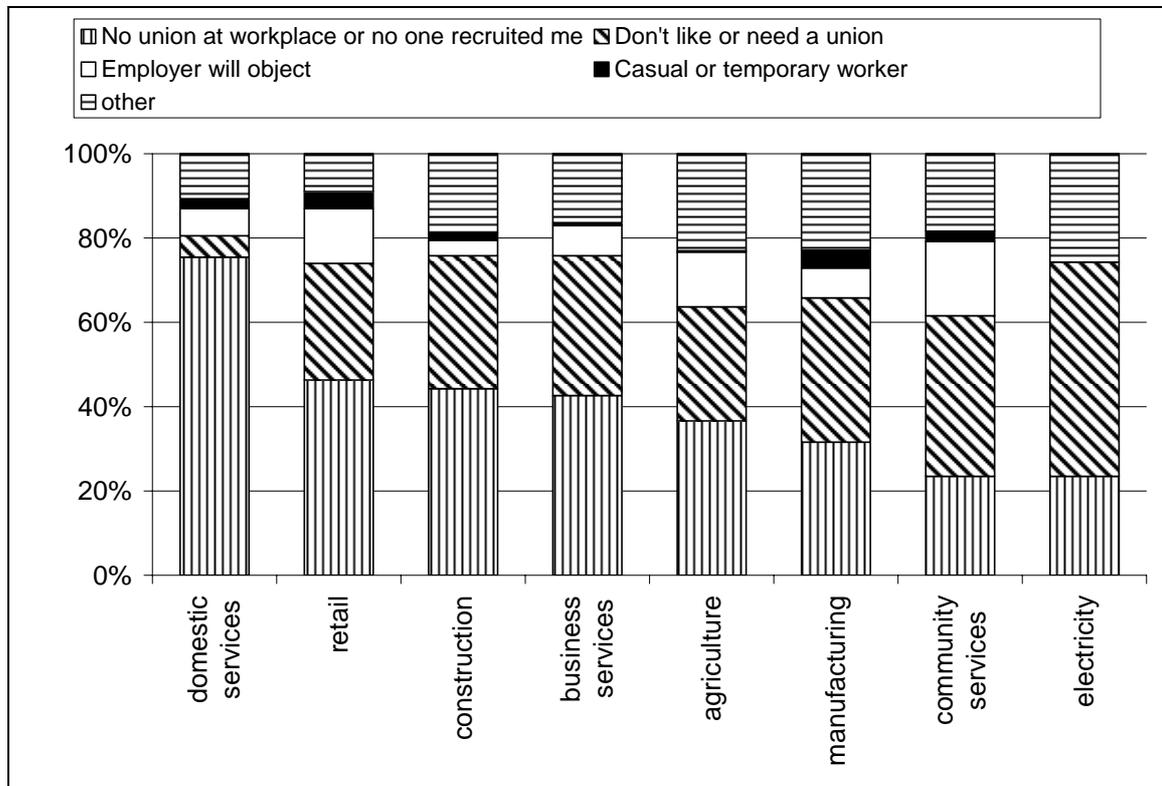
Younger workers are less likely to be hostile to unions. Some 40 percent of younger workers say they don't belong because there is no union in their workplace, and 10 percent say they don't want or need a union. In contrast, some 16 percent of older workers reject unions altogether.

Despite younger workers' relatively sympathetic view of the labour movement, they are far less likely to belong to a union. In the survey, only 17 percent of workers under 30 belong to a union, compared to 34 percent of older workers. The Labour Force Survey also finds that union membership is half as high for young workers as for older ones. In general, workers who have worked less than two years for the employer are much less likely to be a union member, whatever their age.

Women and men give essentially the same reasons for not joining a union.

Reasons for not joining the union by industry

Reasons given for not joining a union, by industry

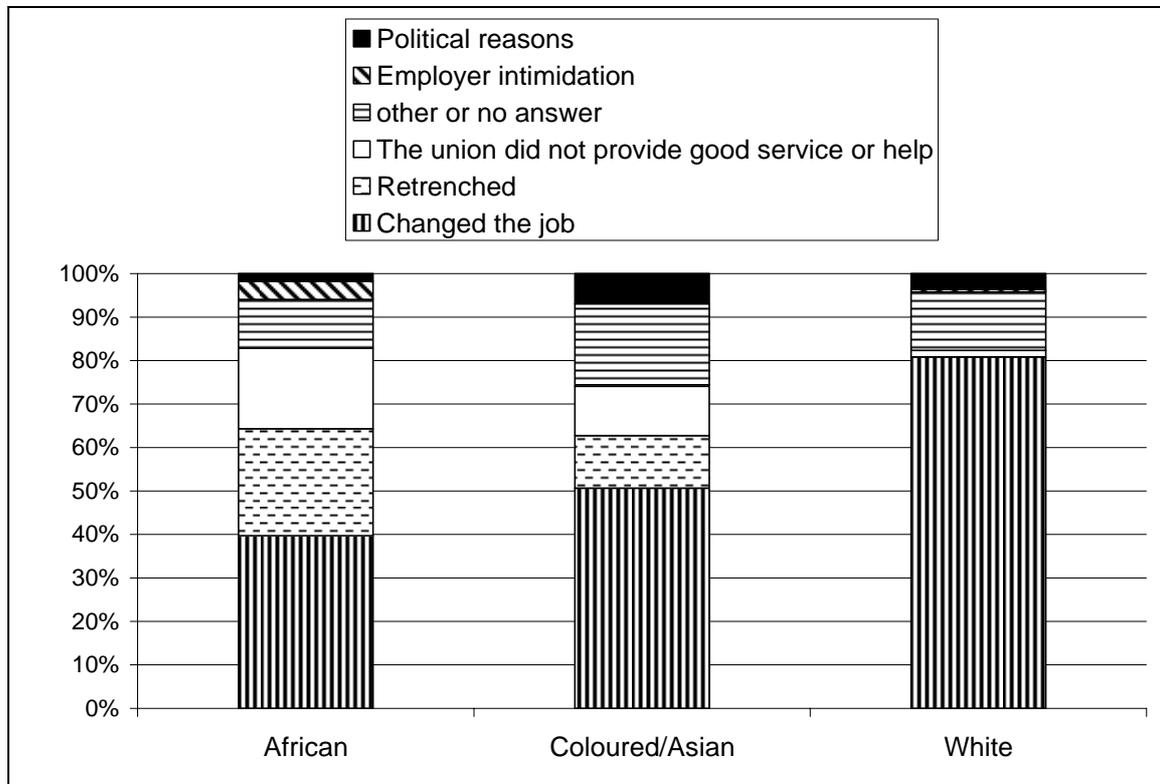


In industries with relatively low overall union density, such as domestic services, retail, construction and business services, non-members generally say they have not had contact with the union. In industries with stronger unions, most non-members have decided they do not want or need a union.

The “other” category for this question was very diverse and general.

Reasons for leaving the union

Reasons given for leaving a union in the past (n = 400)



About one in five non-members used to belong to a union. Most African workers who left the union said they left because they changed jobs – either due to retrenchment (25%) or because they moved to another employer (40%) where, presumably, there was no established union. Close to 20 percent of African workers left because of poor service, and about 5% because of employer intimidation.

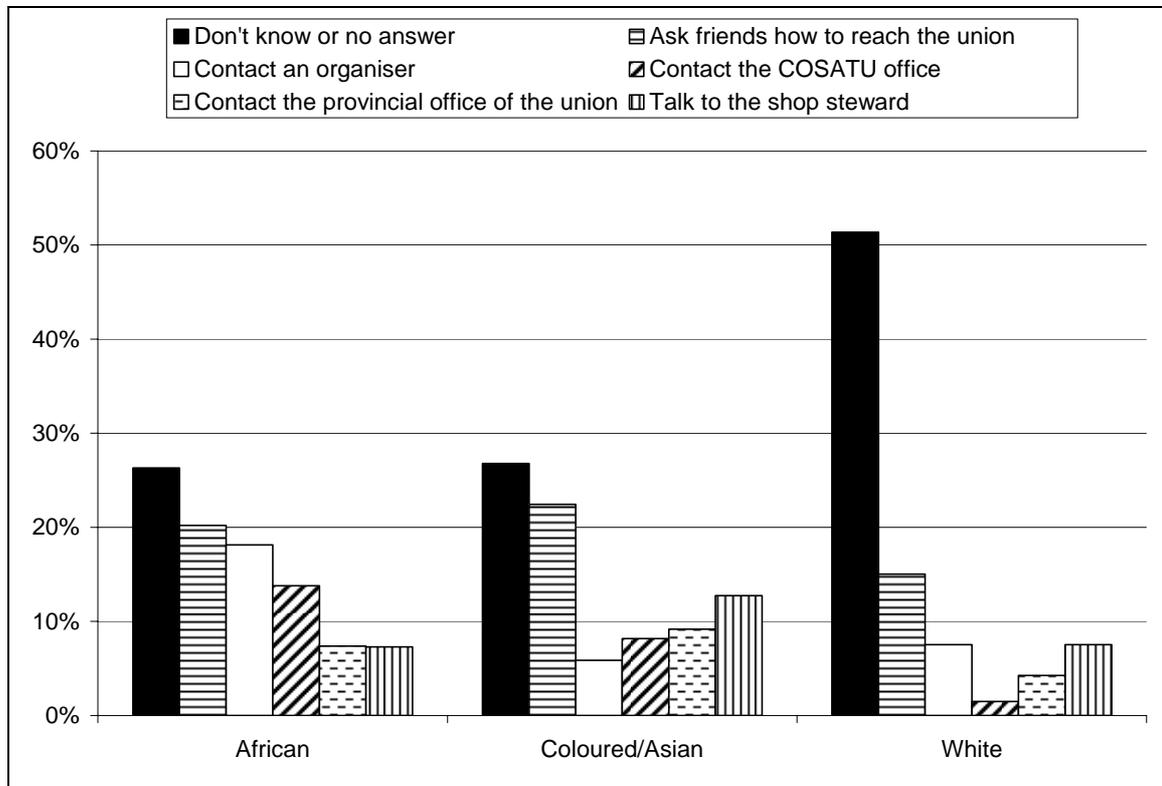
Coloured and Asian workers are more likely than Africans to leave the union because they changed jobs. As the chart above shows, relatively few of these former members blame poor service or retrenchment. Amongst whites, the vast majority of former union members left because they changed jobs.

In gender terms, women who left a union are less likely than men to blame poor service and more likely to mention employer intimidation, but the differences are not very large.

Of non-members who would not join because they did not like or want a union, 40 percent had earlier left a union because of poor service. Amongst the 20% of Africans non-members who actually rejected unions, half had left a union earlier because of poor service. That means that close to 10 percent of African non-members do not want to join now because of poor service from a union in the past.

How to contact the union

How non-members said they would contact a union (n = 2053)

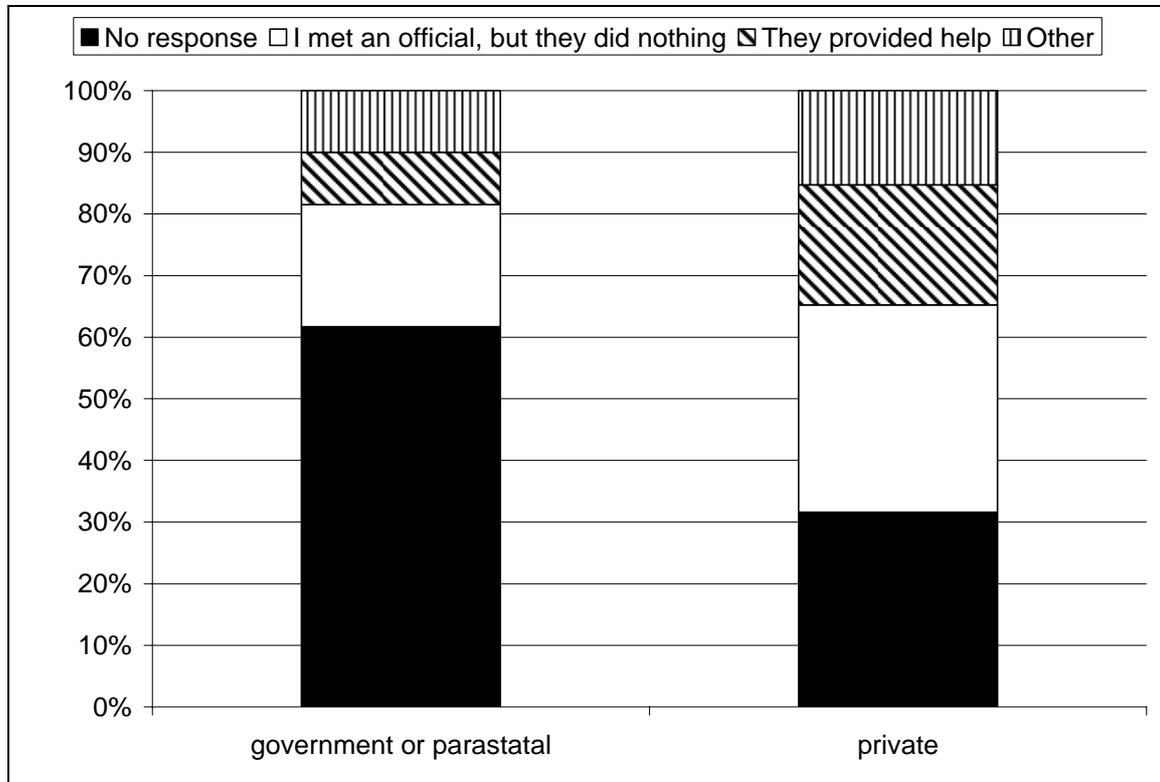


The survey asked unorganised workers how they would go about it if they wanted to contact a union. The answer suggest that most non-members don't know much about unions.

As the chart shows, the most common response from non-members – a quarter for black workers and half of whites – is that they don't know how to contact a union. The second most common is that they would ask their friends. African non-members were more likely to mention contacting an organiser, suggesting they had a somewhat better idea than other groups of how unions function.

Contact with the union by non-members

Did you ever try to contact a union? (n = 152)

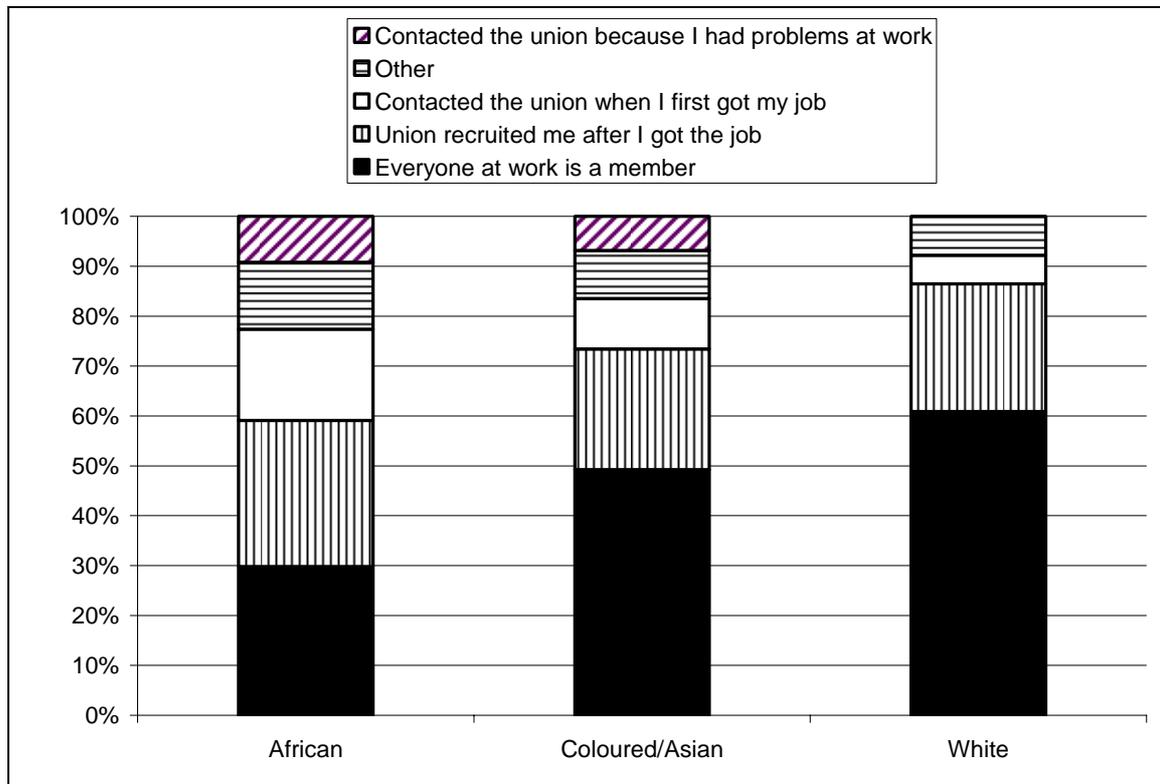


Only a small percentage of non-members have tried to contact a union (just under 10%). Many did not get a very helpful response. This may explain why these workers don't belong to a union. Union members report much better responses from unions, as discussed below.

For the few non-members who tried to contact a union, over 60 percent of government workers and 30 percent of private sector workers got no response at all. In around 30 percent of cases, a union official responded but did nothing. Only about 20 percent of these cases ended with the non-member getting some help from the union.

How members joined a union

How union members joined (n = 783)



The survey also asked union members how they joined the union. The results suggest that the main obstacle to recruitment remains the failure to contact workers outside of organised workplaces.

Over half of union members join when they start their job or because everyone at work is a member. In other words, most join a union that is already established in their workplace. Only around 25 percent say they were recruited after they started work. Just under 10 percent of black union members, but virtually no white members, contacted the union because they had problems at work. These are presumably the ones where, in contrast to non-members, the union responded and helped.

Virtually no differences emerge by gender or age. Workers with less experience are somewhat less likely than others to have contacted the union because of problems at work.

Finally, some 25 percent of members in unions that are not part of COSATU think their union is affiliated to COSATU. That suggests very broad support for COSATU outside of its own ranks.



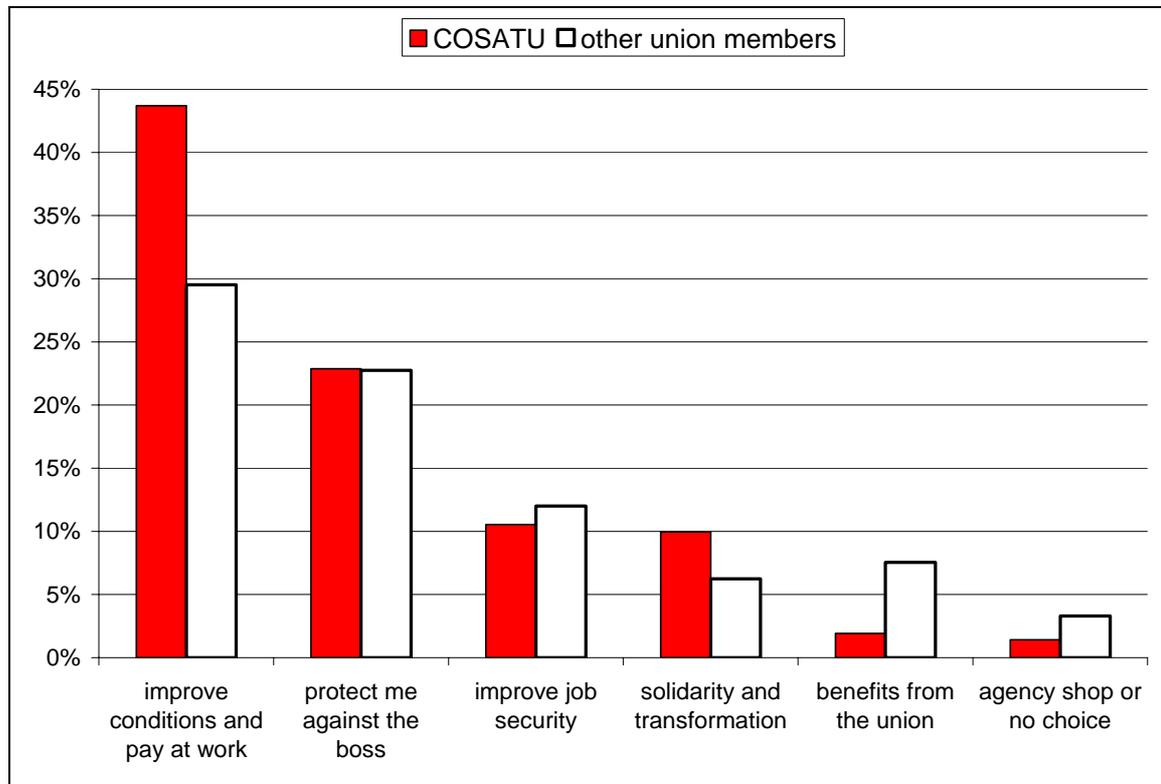
4 Organisational issues

COSATU's 2015 Plan sets a number of organisational objectives for COSATU, centred on the recruitment campaign and organisational renewal. The central aim is to build strong organisation and unity of the working class. Meeting these objectives is necessary for the working class to play a strong role in transformation well as to improve members' conditions of work and prevent job losses.

In this section, we look more closely at how workers perceive democracy in their unions and the service they receive. Overall it seems most COSATU members see their unions as highly accountable, but with scope for improving their work in technical terms. Women generally still seem less likely to be involved in or satisfied with union activities.

Reasons for belonging to a union

Reasons given for belonging to a union (n = 822)



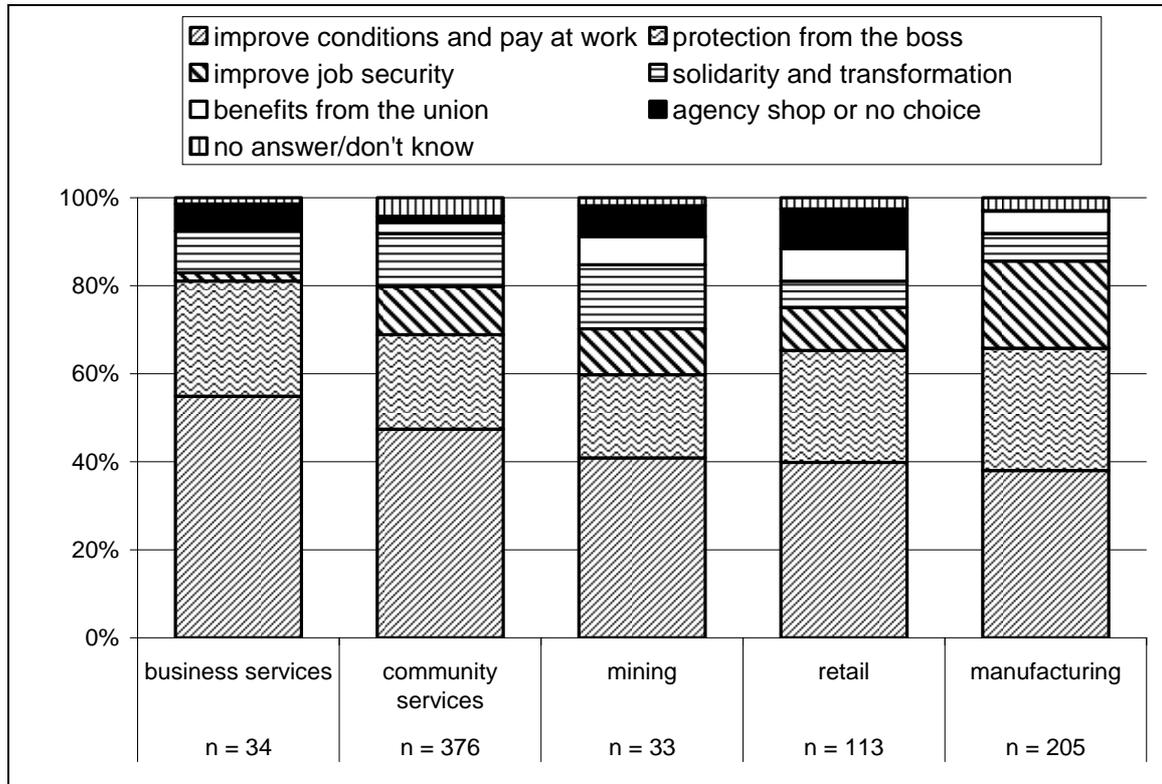
Some 44 percent of COSATU members see improved pay and conditions as the main reason for belonging to a union. A further 25 percent want a union to protect them against the employer. COSATU members are more likely than other unionists to see the union as a way to drive solidarity and transformation. They are less likely to want benefits from the union or say they only joined because they had no choice.

There are substantial differences by race, although not by gender. Africans emphasise pay and conditions. Whites are far more likely than other workers to want the union to protect job security and provide benefits. They are less likely to join a union in order to strengthen solidarity and social transformation.

Workers under 30 years old are less likely than older workers to talk about pay and benefits, and more likely to stress job security and benefits from the union. They are also less likely than older workers to raise issues around solidarity and transformation.

Reasons for belonging to a union by industry

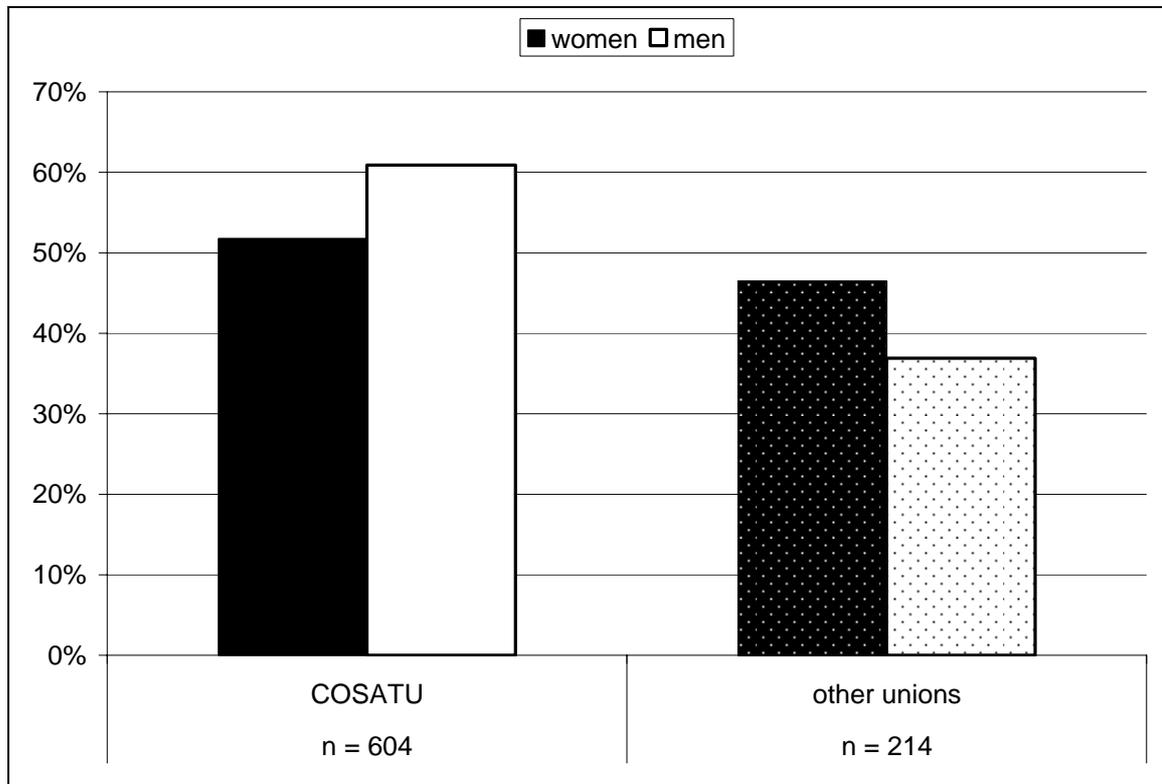
Why did you join the union, by industry



Substantial differences emerge in why workers join a union by industry. The chart shows only industries with over 30 members in the weighted sample. It suggests that job security is much more important for workers in manufacturing, while workers in the services and mining are more likely to emphasise solidarity.

Union democracy

Whether members attended a union meeting of any kind in the past year

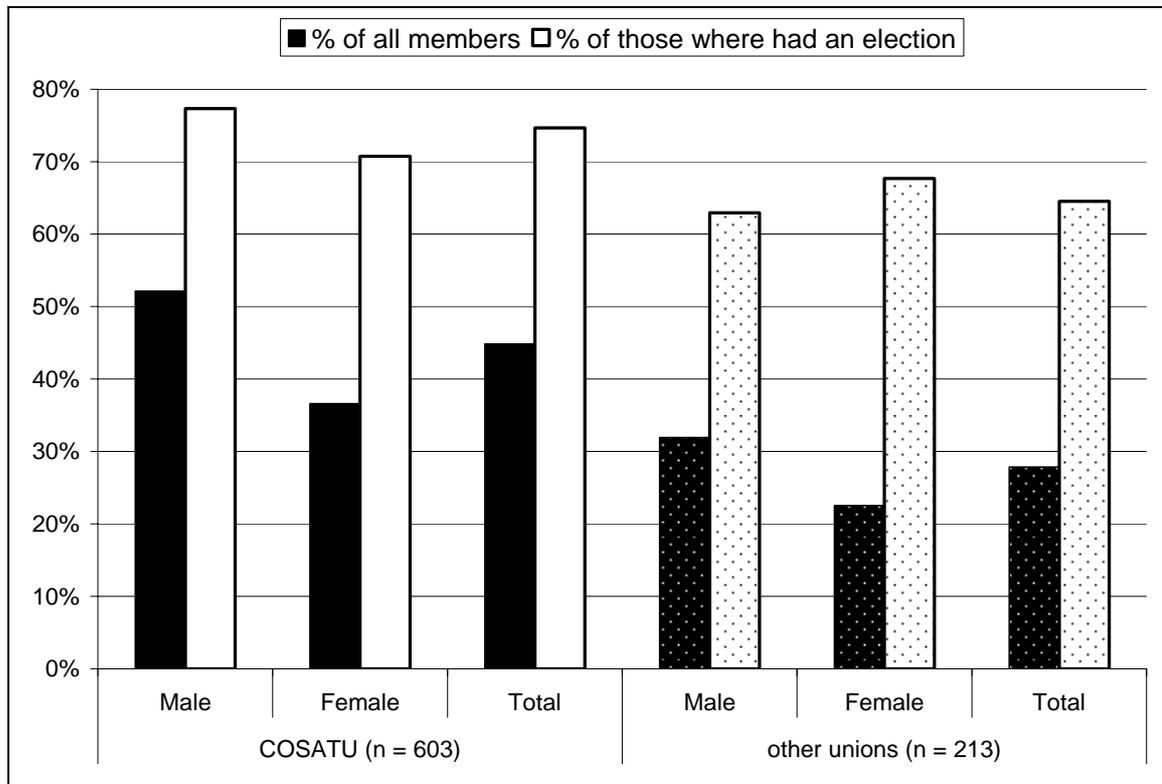


COSATU has always regarded worker control as central to meeting members' needs and representing the working class. The survey therefore asked members various questions about internal democracy. One of the questions related to attendance of union meetings. Over half of COSATU members have attended a union meeting of some kind in the previous year. Unions not affiliated to COSATU held meetings less frequently.

In COSATU, men are more likely to have been in a union meeting than women. Africans are more likely to have attended a union meeting than Coloureds, Asians or Whites. Almost 60 percent of public sector members report they had been in a meeting, compared to fewer than 55 percent of private sector members.

Shop steward elections

Whether members voted in shopsteward elections



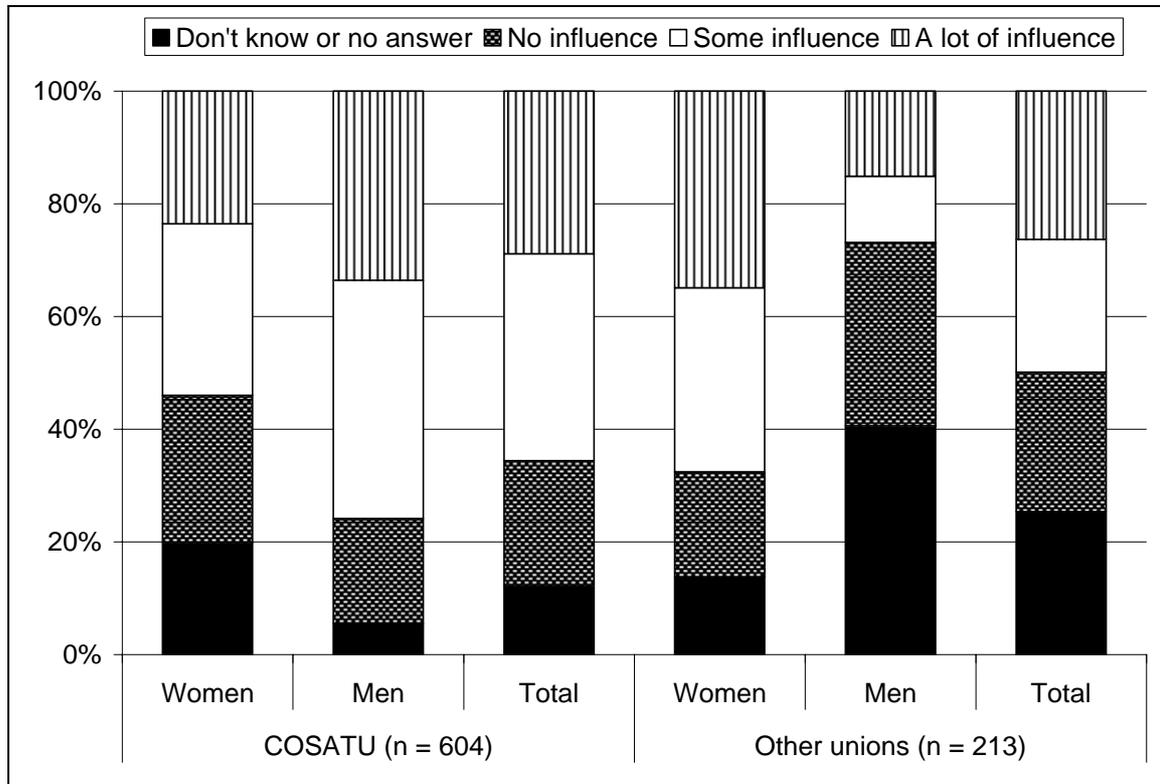
Half of all COSATU members reported that shopsteward elections had been held in the past year. The graph shows that where an election was held, 75 percent of members participate. Participation by women is, however, lower than by men. Women are less likely to have seen a shopsteward election in the past year, and less likely to have voted if one took place.

Members were more likely to participate in shopsteward elections in COSATU affiliates than in other unions.

Participation by white members and workers with under two years' membership is particularly low. White members in both COSATU and other unions were about a third as likely to have participated in a shopsteward election as black members. Members of less than two years standing were half as likely to participate in shopsteward elections as other members.

Workers' influence on shopstewards

Whether members feel able to influence their shopstewards to act on behalf of workers

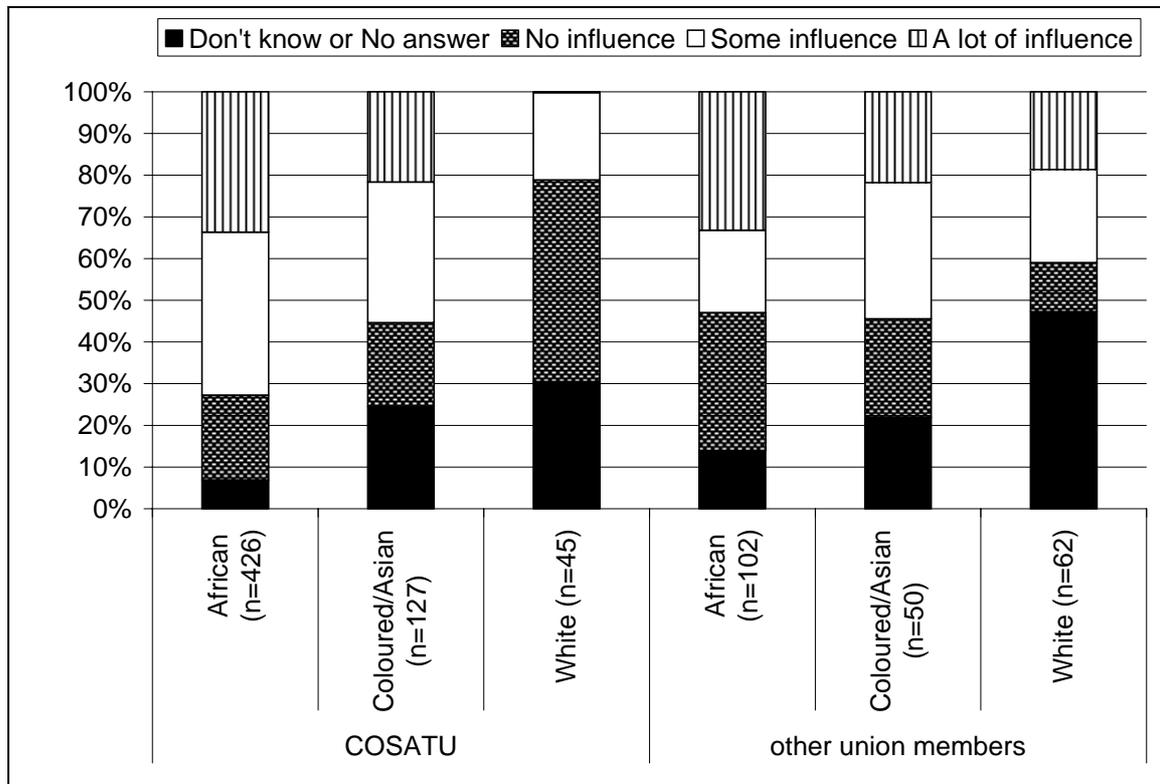


COSATU members generally feel more able than members of other unions to influence their shopstewards to act on behalf of workers. Two thirds feel they can influence their shopstewards somewhat or a lot, while a third say they don't know if they can or that they have no influence.

As the graph shows, women COSATU members feel less in control. Almost 45 percent of women, compared to 25 percent of men, say they cannot influence their shopstewards or do not know if they can. In contrast, women in unions outside of COSATU are more likely to say they can influence their shopstewards than men.

Workers' influence on shopstewards by race

Perceived ability to influence shopstewards by race

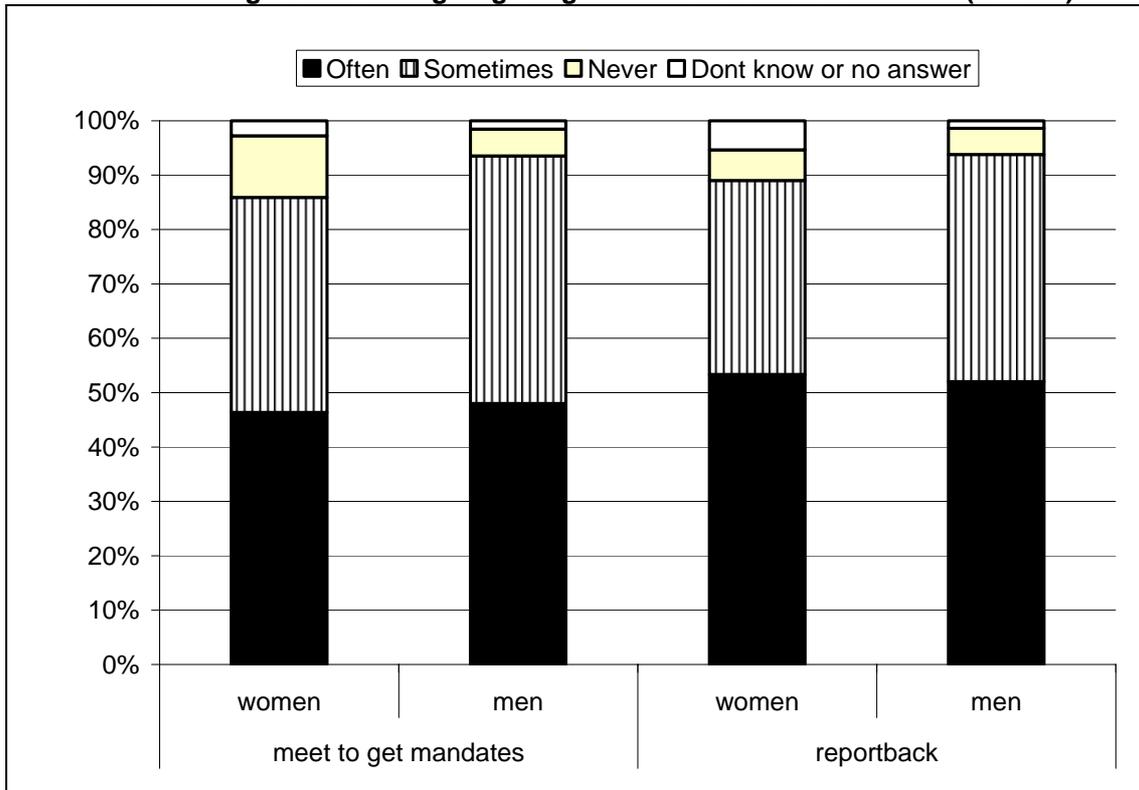


Very substantial differences emerge between black and white workers in their perception of their ability to control shopstewards. In both COSATU and other unions, only a minority of whites feel they can influence shopstewards at all. In contrast, in COSATU 73 percent of African members and 55 percent of Coloured and Asian members feel they can influence their shopstewards somewhat or a lot.

No substantial differences emerge by occupation, education or income level. But younger members are less likely than older members to say they can influence their shopstewards. Some 33% of members aged under 30 say they cannot influence their shopstewards, compared to 21% of older members.

Degree of internal democracy

How often meetings occur during wage negotiations in COSATU affiliates (n = 607)

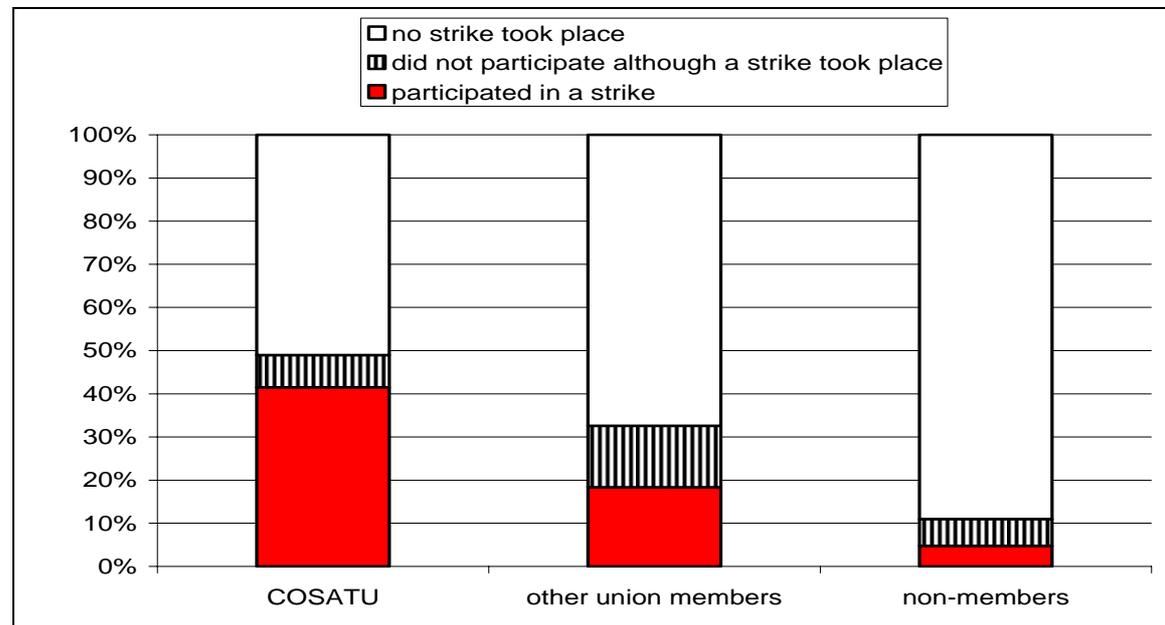


Just under half of all COSATU members say they meet frequently for mandating or reportback during wage negotiations, while most of the rest say they meet sometimes. Women are more likely than men to say they never met, however, or that they do not know about meetings. There are no major differences by race. COSATU members are rather more likely than members of other unions to say that their union meets during negotiations.

Around 10 percent of all union members in the private sector say their union never met them during wage negotiations, compared to about 5 percent of members in the public sector. Also, some 10 percent of members in companies with under 50 workers say they never had mandating or reportback meetings, compared to about 6 percent in larger companies.

Strikes

Percentage of workers who experienced and who personally participated in strikes in the past five years (n = 2868)



Ability to sustain a strike may be seen as one indicator of a union's strength. Half of COSATU members have seen a strike in their workplace in the past five years, compared to a third of members of other unions and just over a tenth of non-members. If a strike took place, some 85 percent of COSATU members say they participated, compared to only about half of other workers.

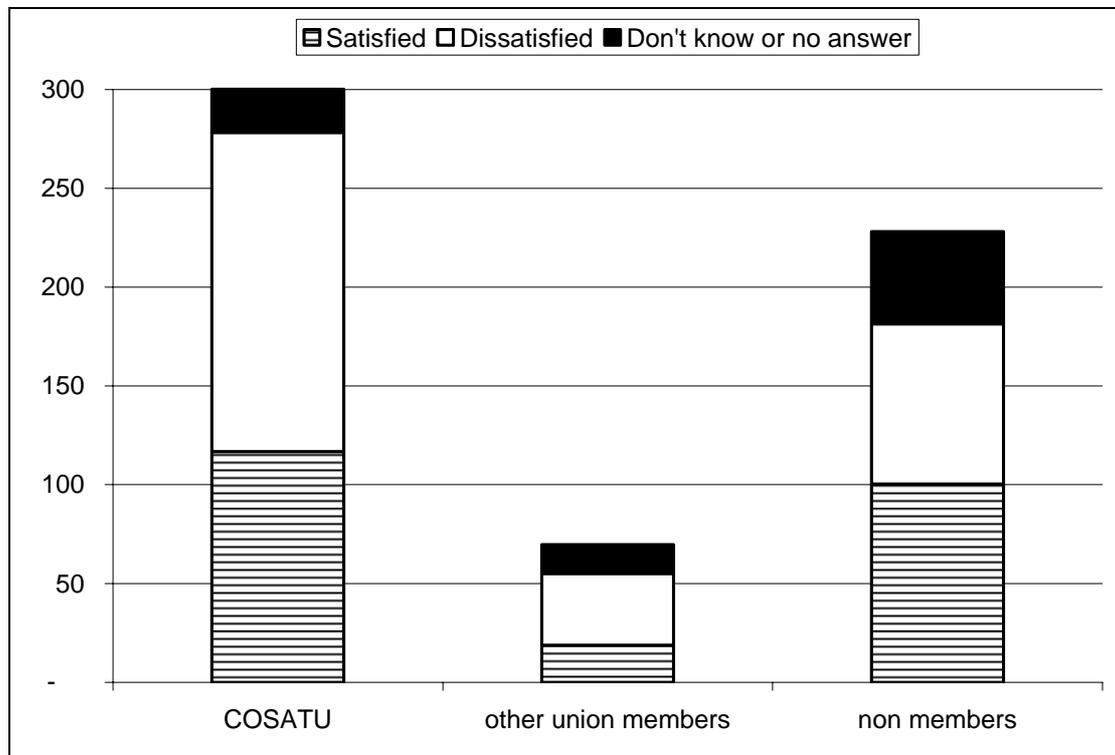
Whether members or not, African workers are most likely to participate in a strike if one happened. Of COSATU members, 91 percent of Africans say they participated if a strike occurred, compared to 84 percent of Coloureds and Asians and 10 percent of whites. Overall, 60 percent of men but almost 75 percent of women have participated in a strike if one occurred. Amongst COSATU members, however, there is virtually no difference in participation between men and women.

Amongst union members, about 45% have experienced a strike, both in the public and private sector and in large as well as small companies. In contrast, non-members are more likely to have seen a strike in their workplace if they are in the public sector and/or have an employer with over 50 workers. Altogether, workers are more than twice as likely to have experienced a strike if they work for the government or in a larger workplace. Almost 75 percent of public-sector workers said they participated in the most recent strike in their workplace, compared to 60 percent of private-sector workers. The difference probably reflects higher union membership in the public sector.

Only 55 percent of workers under 30 years old say they participated in a strike if one happened in their workplace, compared to almost 70 percent of older workers. The main reason is likely to be that younger workers generally do not belong to a union.

Satisfaction with outcome of strikes

Satisfaction with outcome of strike where one took place (N = 588)



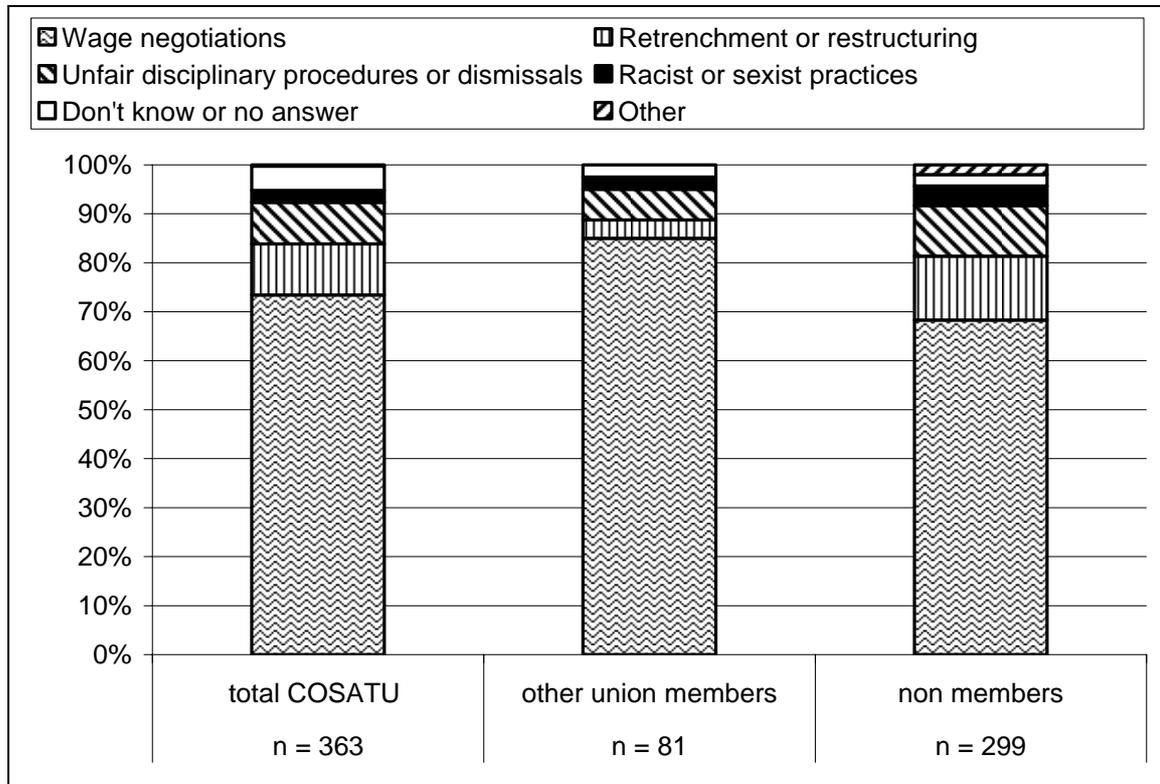
Some 40 percent of workers who experienced a strike in the past five years say they were satisfied with the outcome, while 47 percent were not satisfied and 14 percent don't know. Nonmembers are most likely to be satisfied with strike outcomes, but only relatively few participated in strikes at all.

By race, African workers are most likely to be dissatisfied with strike outcomes. Some 36 percent of African workers say they are satisfied with the results of the latest strike, compared to 44 percent of Coloureds and Asians and 50 percent of whites. No differences emerged between women and men.

Substantial differences emerge between sectors. In government services, less than a third of workers who experienced a strike in the past five years are satisfied with the outcome, compared to over half in retail, mining and transport. Just under 40 percent of workers in manufacturing are satisfied with the last strike. Overall, 32 percent of public-sector workers are satisfied with the outcome of the last strike, compared to 44 percent of private-sector workers.

Reasons for strikes

Reasons given for striking

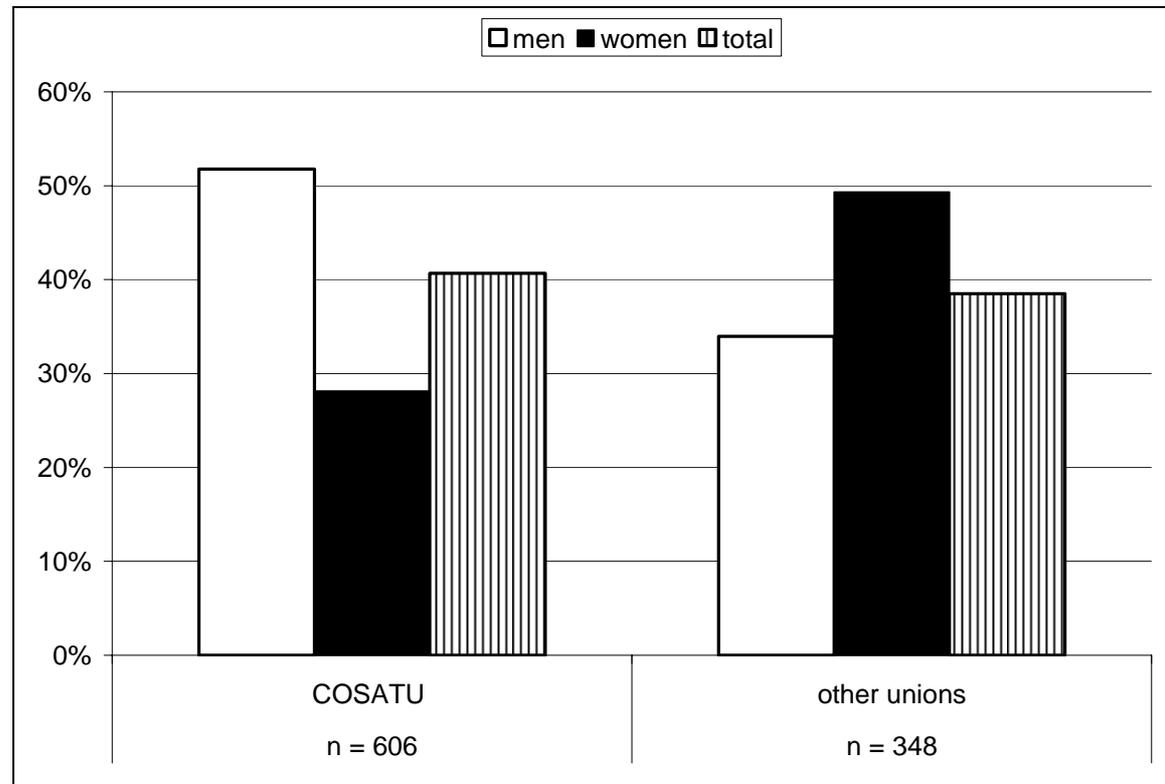


Most strikes are over pay, followed at a considerable distance by retrenchment or restructuring and unfair dismissals or discipline.

Coloureds and Asians were somewhat more likely than Africans or Whites to say they had been on strike over retrenchment. Private sector workers were more likely than government employees to mention retrenchment or unfair discipline. There were no major differences by gender or size of employer.

Trade union education programmes

Participation in union education programmes



COSATU has always given considerable attention to union education programmes as tools to sustain democratic debates and coherence, as well as to ensure that shopstewards have the skills and knowledge needed to meet members' needs.

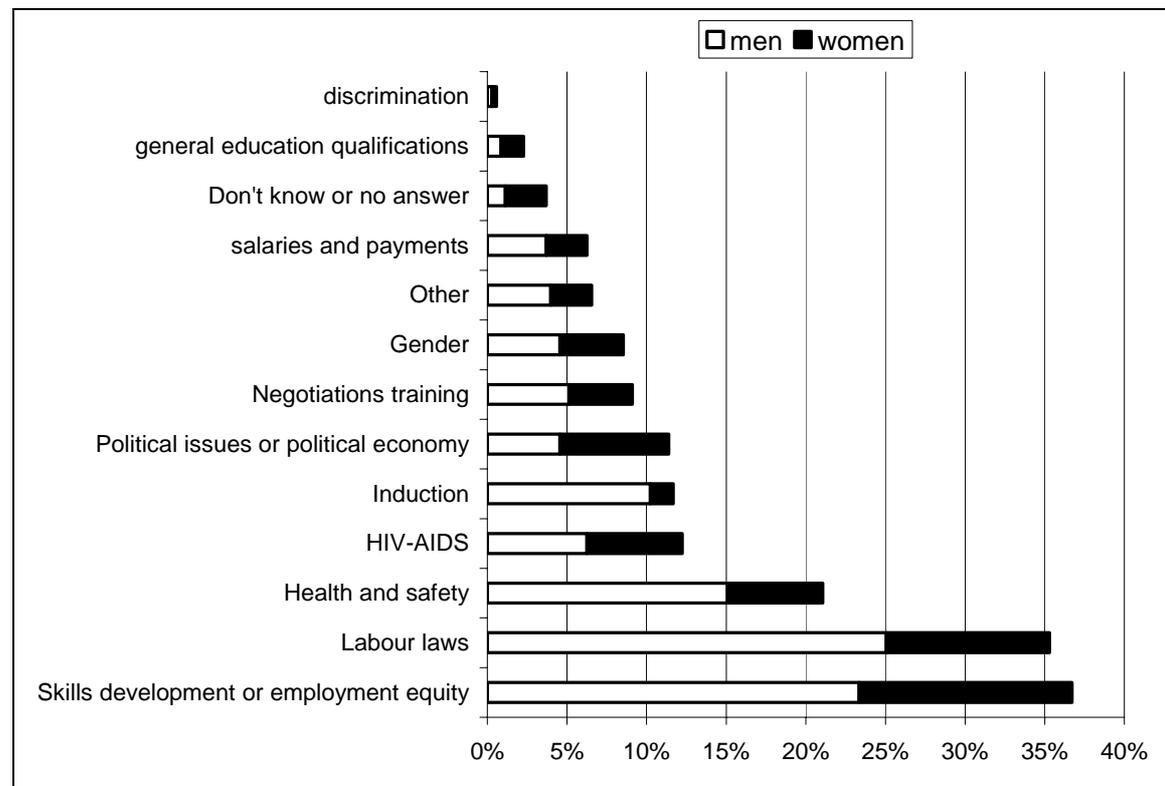
About 40 percent of union members in the survey had participated in some kind of union education programme. In some cases it seems these programmes were funded and organised by government departments with union support, for instance the Department of Labour workshops on employment equity and Department of Education training for educators.

Women are generally less likely to have participated in union education. In COSATU, just over 50 percent of men had participated in education programmes, compared to less than 30 percent of the women.

Some 45 percent of African COSATU members say they had participated in union education of some kind, compared to around 30 percent of Whites, Coloureds and Asians.

Participation in union education programmes

Participation in programmes by topic and gender (n = 351)



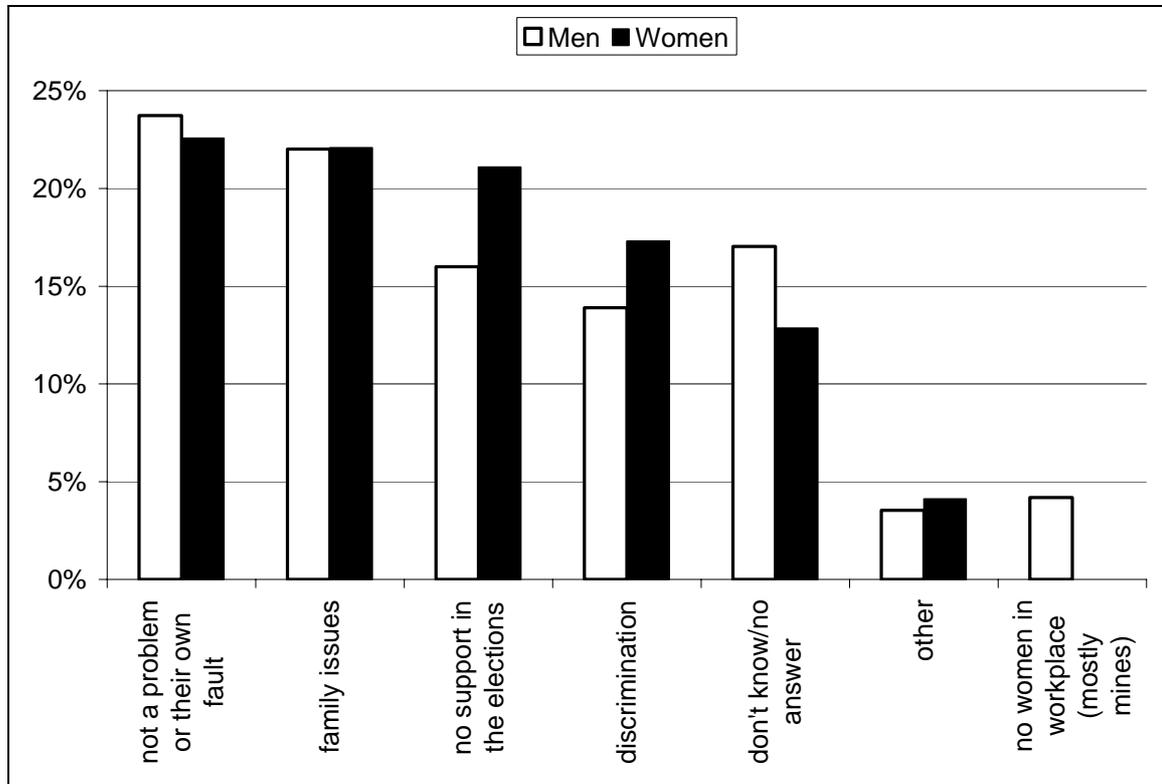
Over a third of workers who have participated in union education got training in employment equity and labour laws, while a fifth learned about health and safety. In part, this may reflect the extensive programmes provided by the Department of Labour. Around 10 percent of workers say they attended induction, political or HIV/AIDS programmes, and slightly fewer participated in programmes on gender and negotiations.

Men are more likely than women to have attended induction, labour law and health and safety programmes. Women are more likely to have participated in programmes on HIV/AIDS or politics.

Substantial differences emerge by province. Just over 10 percent of union members in KwaZulu Natal had attended a course on political issues or political economy, compared to under 2 percent in the rest of the country.

Representation of women in union leadership

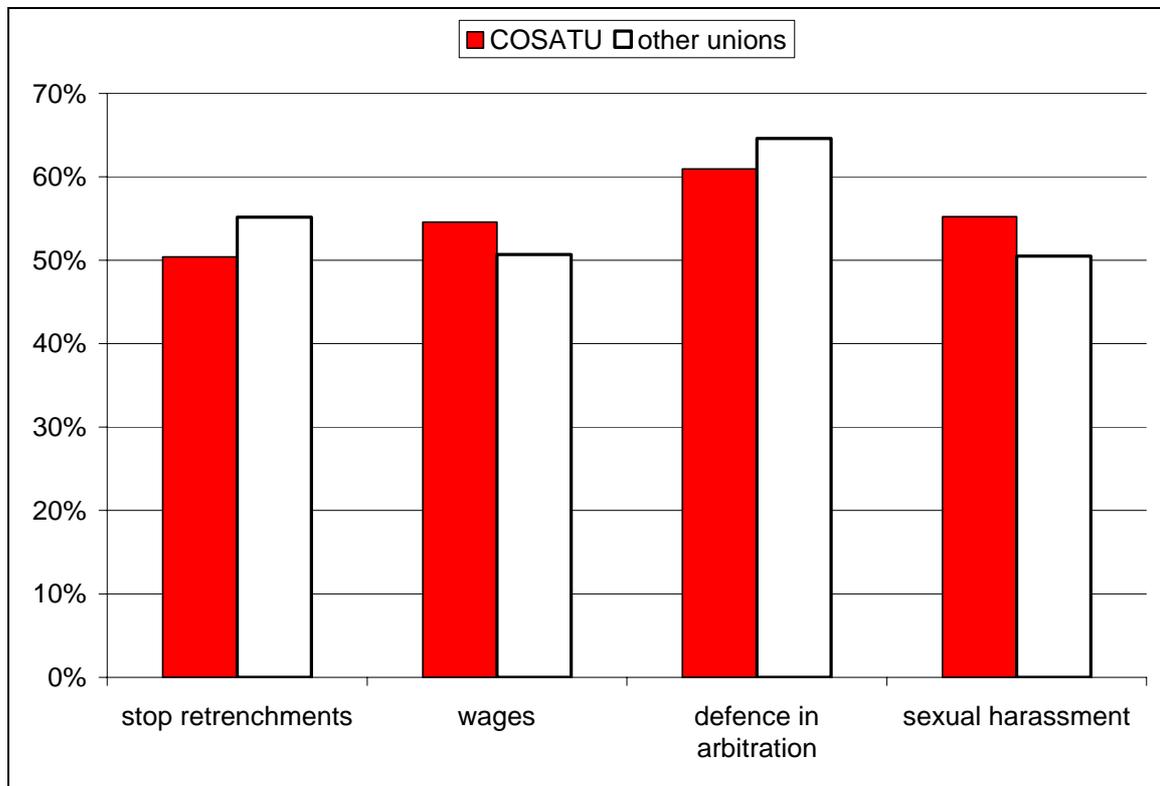
Why are there few women leaders and shopstewards in the union? (n = 816)



Just under a quarter of union members, with slightly more men, say that the lack of women in union leadership is not a problem or is due to women's own incompetence or lack of confidence. Almost as many say women are unable to take leadership positions because of family responsibilities. Women members are substantially more likely than men to say that the problem is discrimination or a lack of support in elections, and less likely to say they didn't know.

Satisfaction with union services

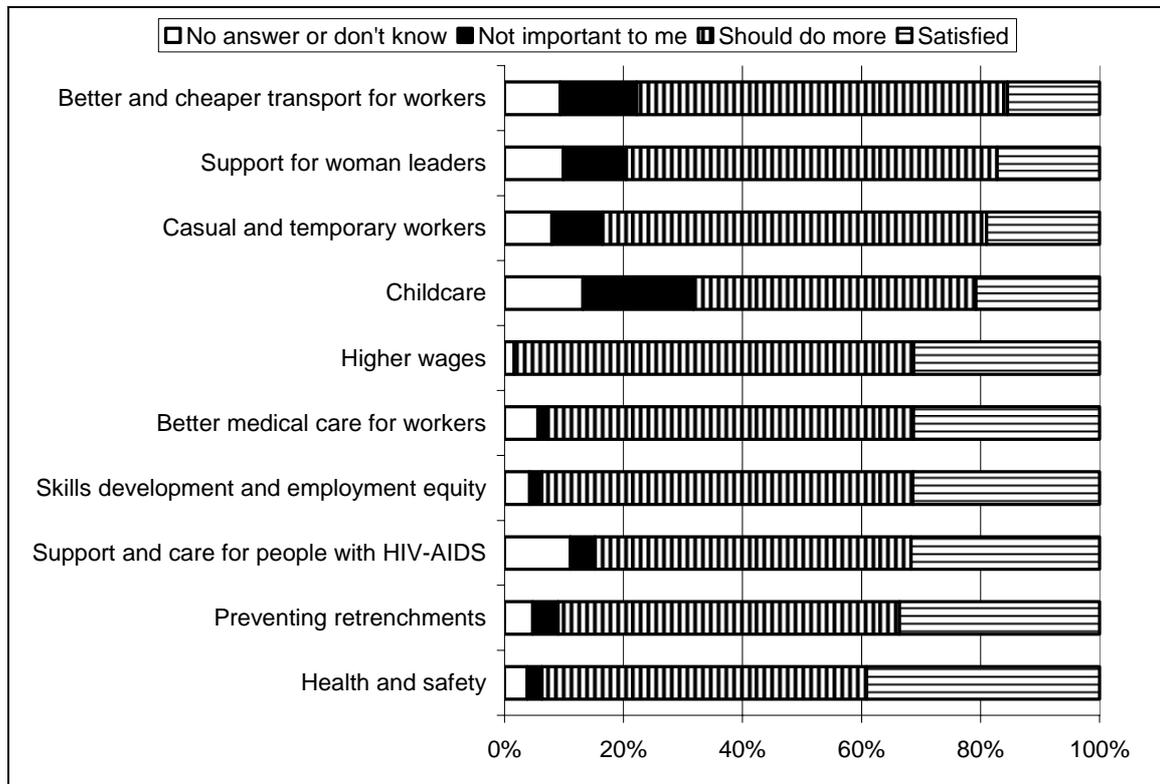
Percentage of members saying they believed their union would do very well in providing services (n = 818)



Most union members believe that their unions do very well in providing services to members. There are no major differences by gender. Africans in COSATU are slightly more confident about their union's work in most areas than other groups. Over half of workers in all groups think that their union does well except in the case of retrenchments, where the share thinking the union would do well fell to around 40 percent for Coloureds, Asians and Whites.

Importance of services

COSATU members' assessment of their unions' work in selected areas (n = 596)¹



Note: Workers were given the option of saying the issue was not important to them, in which case they would not evaluate the union's work in that area.

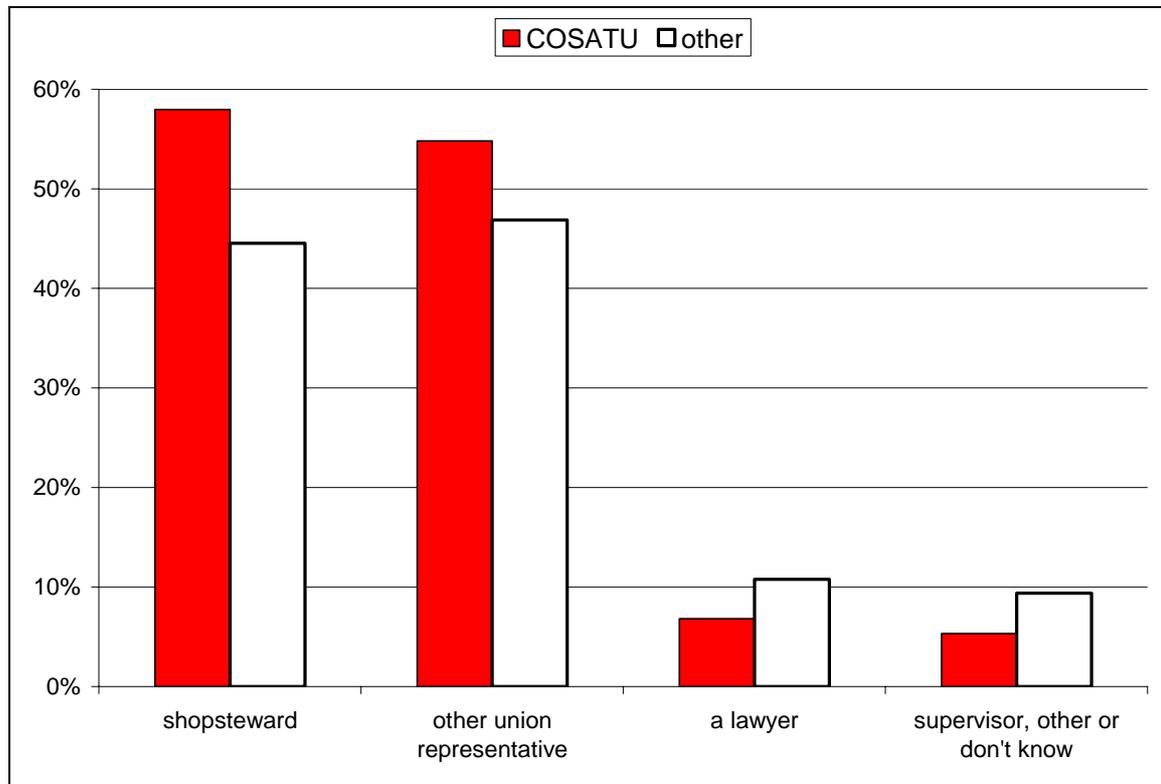
The graph shows that COSATU members were least interested in childcare, transport and support for women leaders. In most areas, they felt the union should do more. The highest levels of satisfaction emerge around health and safety and prevention of retrenchments, and the lowest on transport for workers and support for women leaders.

No major differences emerged between COSATU members by race on these issues. Nor were there substantial differences between public and private sector workers.

Men and women generally show the same levels of satisfaction in all areas. The only substantial difference is that only 16 percent of women are satisfied with their union's work on childcare, compared to 25 percent of men. Around 20 percent of women, however, said childcare was not an important issue for them in union work.

Who would members contact about problems

Who union members would contact if they had a problem at work (n = 815)



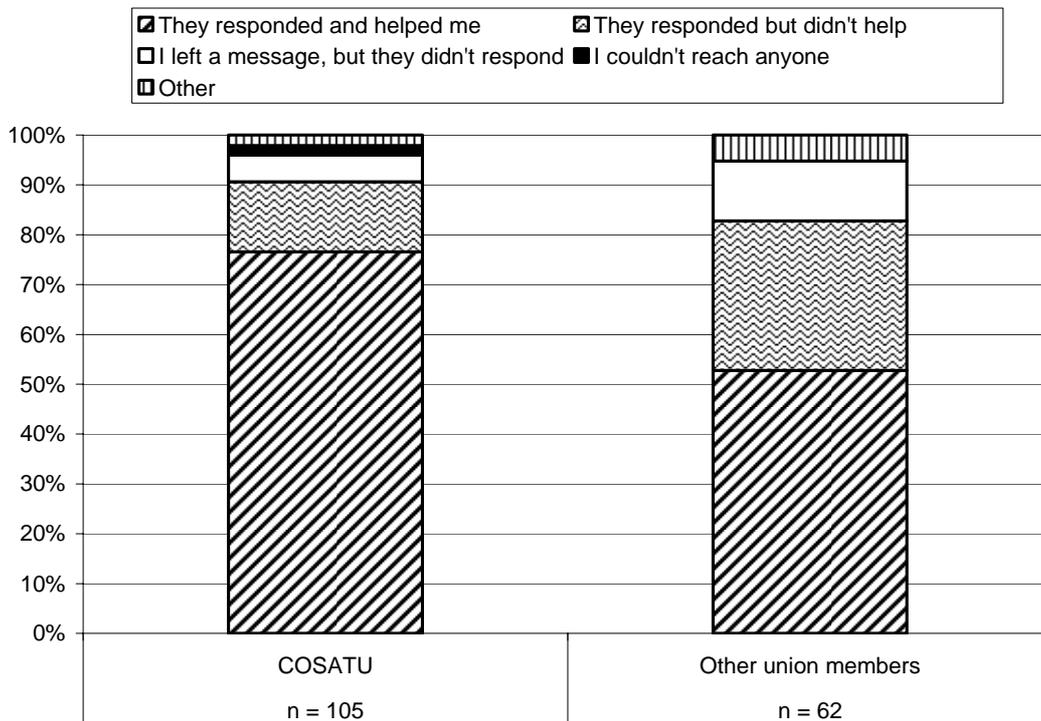
If they have a problem at work, COSATU members are more likely to contact their union than members of other unions. More than half of COSATU members say they will contact their shopsteward, while slightly less say they may also contact another union official or COSATU head office. Less than 10 percent mentioned a lawyer or their supervisor.

Women are less likely to approach their shopsteward for support than men are, and are more likely to contact other union representatives. Around 50 percent of women COSATU members say they would contact their shopsteward, while two thirds of them mention other union representatives. In contrast, two thirds of men COSATU members would go to their shopsteward, and less than half mention other union structures.

Two thirds of COSATU members in the private sector say they would contact their shopsteward, compared to only half of members in the public sector. In contrast, 8 percent of public-sector members say they would contact COSATU itself, compared to 3 percent of members in the private sector.

Results of contact with union

Results of contacting an organiser or provincial office (n = 167)

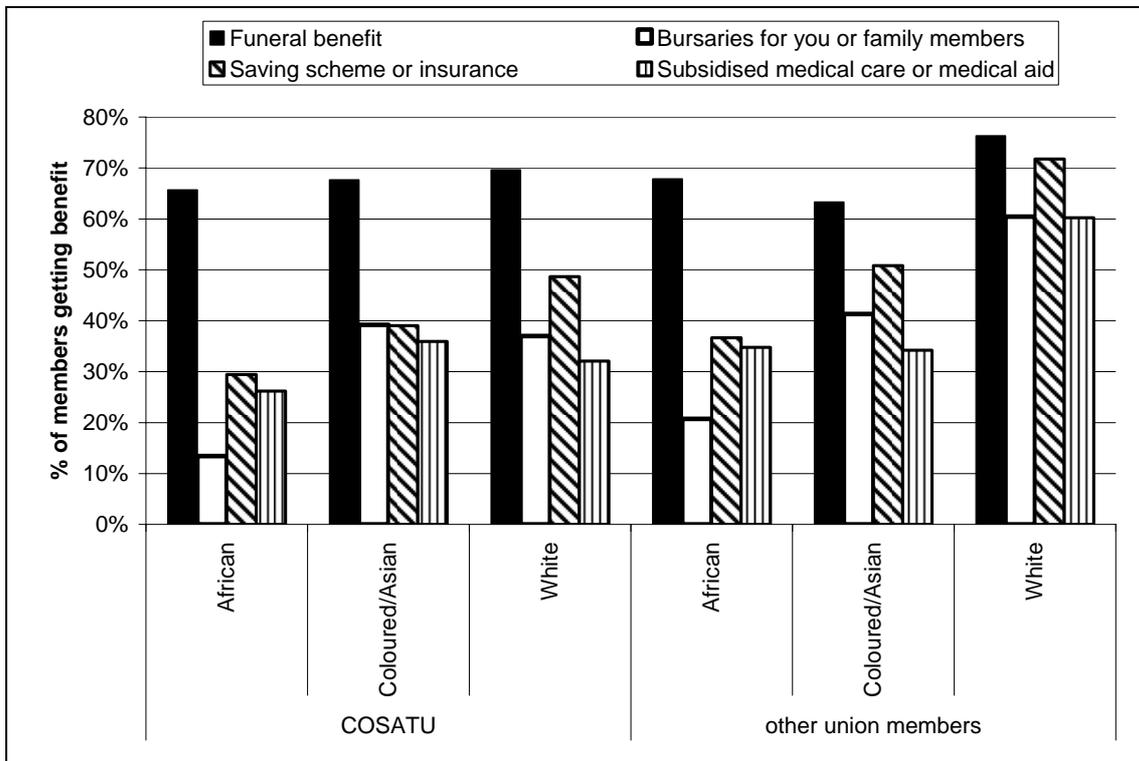


Around a quarter of union members had tried to contact their organiser or provincial office for assistance. The results were far better than for non-members. COSATU members are substantially more likely than members of other unions to see these contacts with the union as helpful.

Women members are far less likely to get help than men, however. Just over 60 percent of women members say their union responded and provided help, compared to 85 percent of men members. The results did not vary much by race.

Results of contact with union

Share of members getting benefits from unions (n = 809)



About two thirds of all union members say they get funeral benefits from their union. But Whites, and to lesser extent Coloureds and Asians, are more likely to get other benefits such as bursaries, medical care or insurance. These benefits are more likely to be provided by unions outside of COSATU, many of which originated as staff associations dedicated to providing benefits rather than other union services.



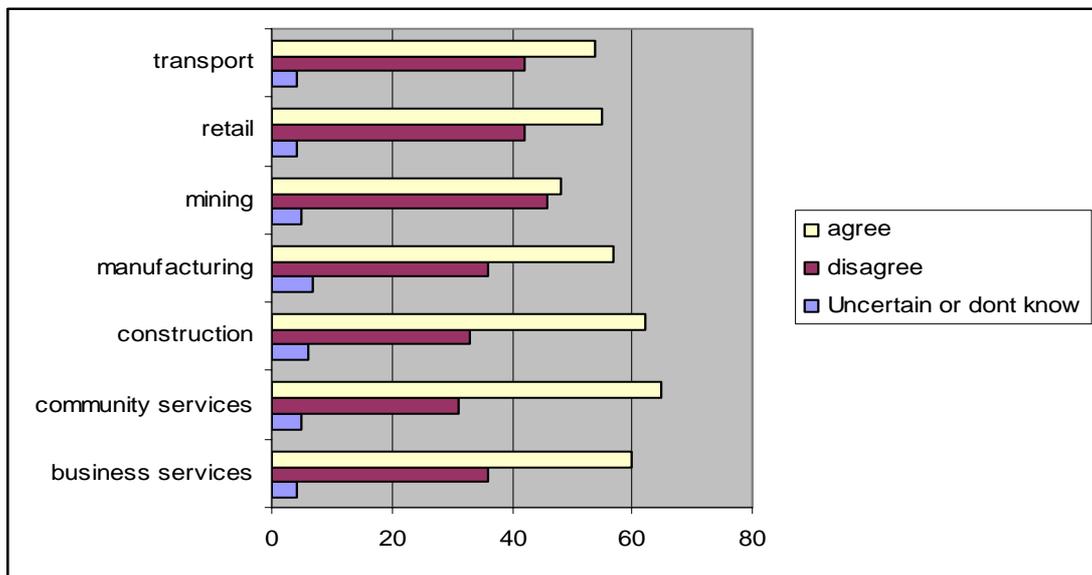
5 Workers and politics

Trade unionism and politics has been closely connected for decades in South Africa. Politicisation of trade unions found its background in the history of apartheid and apartheid labour laws as well as in the close ties with the democratic mass movement. COSATU in particular is guided by a vision of a union movement committed to defending its members but also to broader social transformation. The decade of democratic transition has raised new issues for the union agenda concerning union independence, the COSATU alliance with the ANC and the SACP, as well as delivery of the government.

At the political level, the COSATU 2015 Plan seeks to build the power and voice of the working class through strengthening working class formations. The programme recognises that the demands of the working class can only be realised through a strong Tripartite Alliance. Accordingly the Plan aims to strengthen the components of the Alliance. In particular, the Plan recognised the importance of ensuring the bias of the ANC and the National Democratic Revolution toward the working class. It called on workers to swell the ranks of the ANC and to strengthen the SACP and other organs of people's power. The following section explores the political attitudes and expectations of workers as well as their support for the Alliance and the goals of the 2015 Plan.

Relationship to management

It has become easier to work with management over the past five years. (n 2882)

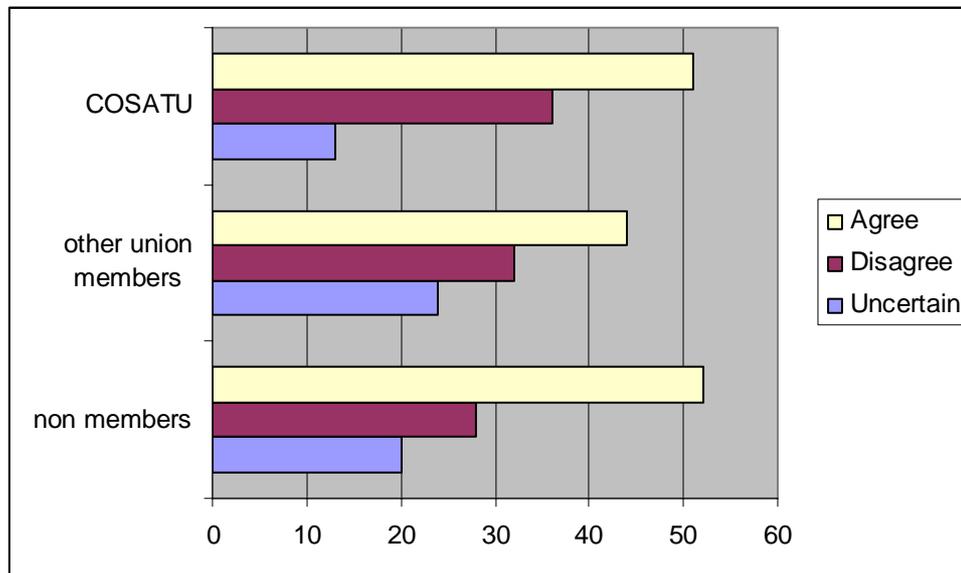


The majority of workers believe that it has become easier to work with management over the past few years. Africans are however more hesitant. While the large majority of coloured and Asian workers (70%) as well as white (78%) believe this is the case, just half of African workers confirm this impression. As we see in the graph above, there are also relatively strong differences of opinion between the large majority of employees in services who now find it easier to work with management on the one hand, and workers in the mining sector who are less inclined to think so. Furthermore, elementary workers are also less inclined to believe that there has been much change (46%) compared to professional and semi-professionals who believe there has been a positive development in their relations to management (70%).

There is on the other hand limited difference between trade union members and non-members, and between COSATU organised workers and members of other federations, when it comes to their perceptions of the relations with management.

Relationship with government

Government is favouring employers over workers (n 2876)

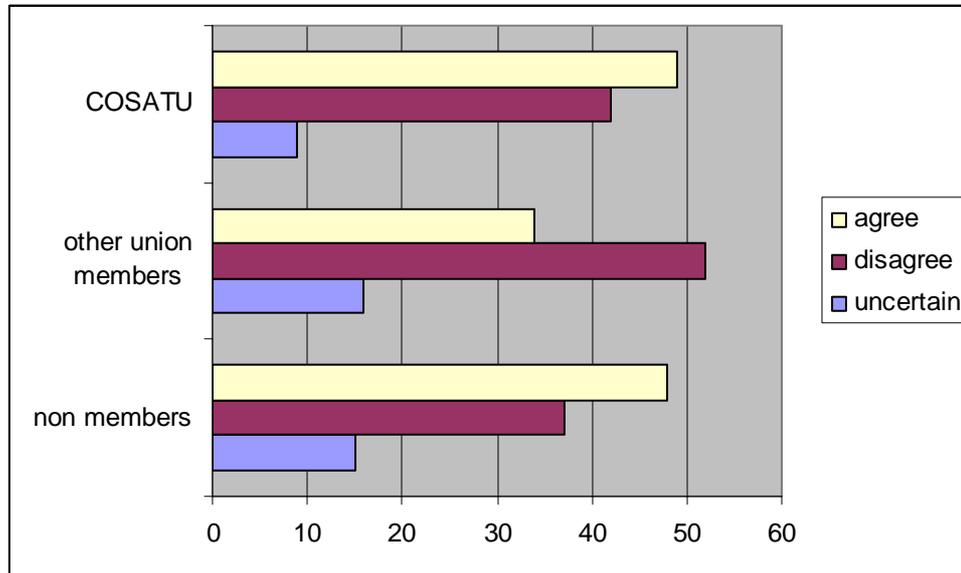


Just over half the workers (51%) believe that government favours employers over workers. 30 percent disagree and 18 percent is uncertain. As the graph above illustrates, COSATU workers are more inclined to argue that government favours employers over workers compared to workers organised in other federations. They hold similar views however with unorganised workers in this respect.

When we look at perceptions of government in terms of skills, we find that elementary workers similarly are more inclined to argue that government favours employers (64%) than most other occupational groups (less than 50%). The same pattern is reflected when comparing groups with different educational background. 60 percent of workers with only primary schooling believe government favours employers, while “only” about 40 percent of workers with matric believe that is the case. Likewise, 60 percent of African workers also believe that the government favours employers over workers, compared with only 30 percent of white workers sharing this view.

Will government's economic policy end poverty?

Government's economic policy will end poverty if we are patient? (no 2875)



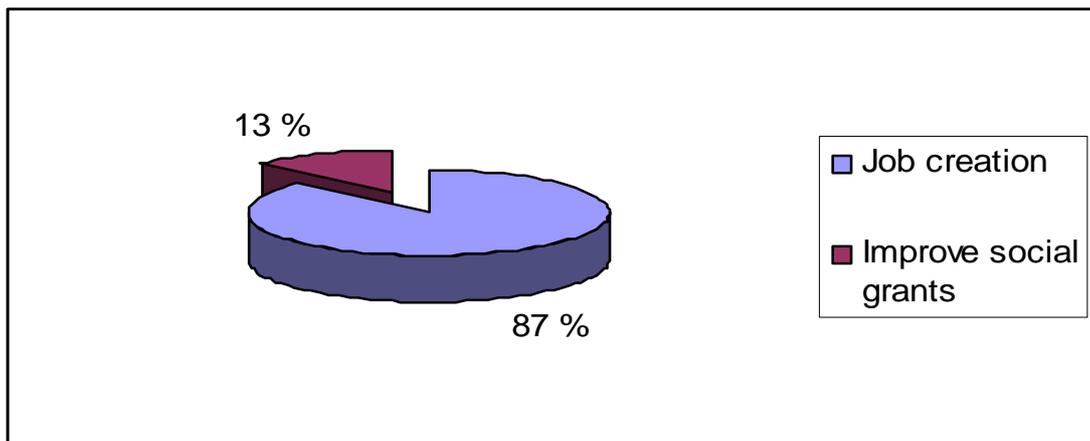
All in all, less than half the workers (47%) argue that government's economic policy will end poverty and unemployment if they only show patience. The majority seem to think that it will take more than the present day economic policies. The graph above illustrates that COSATU members have more trust in the government in this area than organised workers in other federations with 49 percent of COSATU workers supporting this view, while 34 percent of other federation workers agree.

When we look at trust in economic policy by racial background, African workers seem to demonstrate more patience when it comes to their expectations to the government's policies. While about 30 percent of white and coloured workers and 40 percent of Asian workers believe the government's economic policies will end poverty if they are patient, close to 60 percent of African workers demonstrate similar faith in the government. When we analyse the expectations to government's economic policies in terms of skills and education, we find interestingly that elementary and semi skilled workers seem to have more faith in the government's economic policies (50%) than skilled workers (43%) or semi-professionals (35%). The differences between various skills levels in this regard seem to reflect differences in educational groupings' expectations to the effects of government's economic policies with higher education groups being most pessimistic when it comes to their effect on poverty.

There are limited gender differences on these questions, indicating possibly less gender disagreements when it comes to economic issues than when it comes to other political questions.

Government actions to end poverty

What should government do to end poverty? (n 2466)



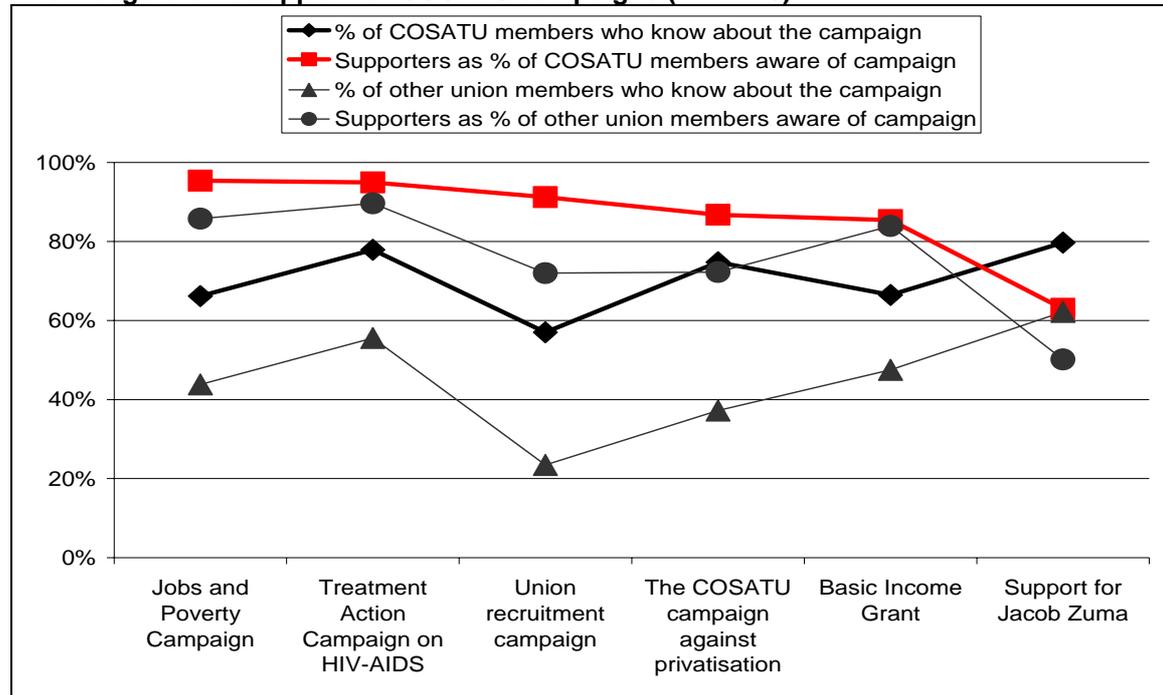
The graph above demonstrates an overwhelming support for job creation as the path to poverty alleviation. Job creation is seen as virtually the “one and almost only” route for the government in order to end poverty with 86 percent agreeing that job creation is the tool for the government in order to alleviate poverty.

Trade union members and non-members are fairly similar in their views about how to address poverty. Interestingly, white workers (22%) are more inclined than black workers (13%) to support the increase of social grants as a primary tool to address poverty. Similarly, 87 percent of black workers mention job creation as the most important poverty alleviation tool, while some 75 percent of white workers agree.

There were no significant gender differences in the priorities listed for government to end poverty. Both male (83%) and female (84%) union members also listed the creation of more jobs as a top priority for government to end poverty.

Support and awareness of COSATU campaigns

Knowledge of and support for COSATU campaigns (n = 2270)



The graph above looks at awareness and support for COSATU campaigns among COSATU members and other workers. Most workers knew about and supported COSATU's campaigns. The figures for knowledge about the campaign may be understated, since workers may know the demands but not recognise the official title of the campaign.

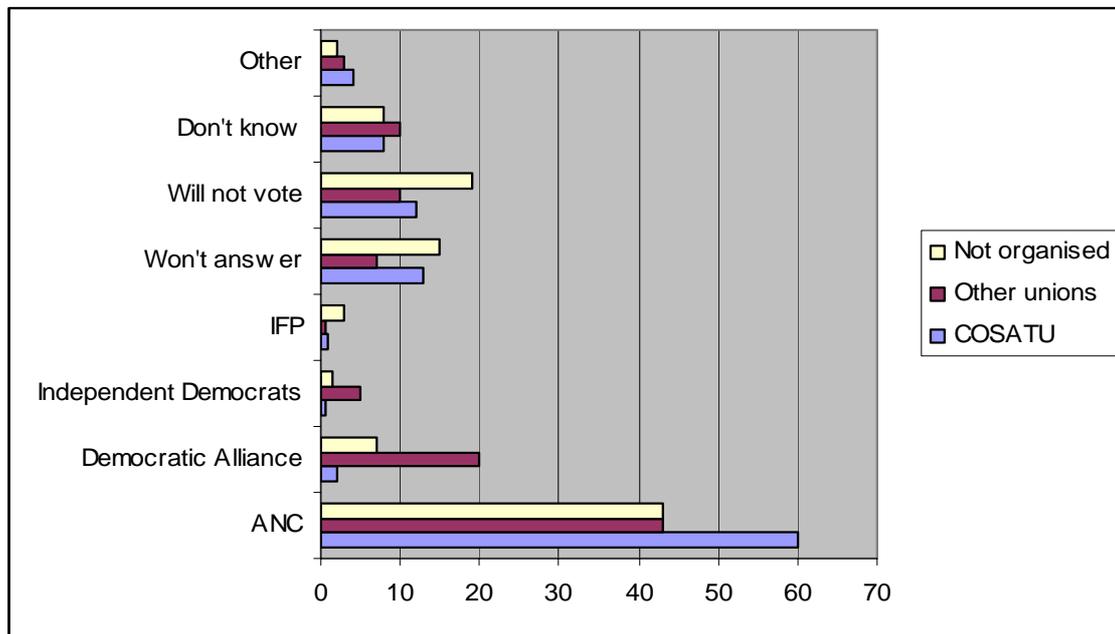
At least 80 percent of COSATU members supported the COSATU campaigns, except for the campaign in support of Jacob Zuma (JZ). African members were substantially more likely to know about the campaigns than Coloured, Asian or White members. Over 90 percent of African members supported all the campaigns except the JZ campaign, which 73 percent supported. In contrast, Coloured and Asian members' support of COSATU campaigns ranged between 93 percent (for the Jobs and Poverty Campaign) and 23 percent (for the JZ campaign).

White members were far less likely to know about campaigns than black members, with a low of 12% for the Jobs and Poverty Campaign. Over half of white members who knew about them supported the Jobs and Poverty, Treatment Action and Recruitment Campaigns, but less than a quarter supported the anti-privatisation, Basic Income Grant and JZ campaigns.

By province, workers in KwaZulu Natal were most likely to support all the campaigns, with over 85% support for each one. The Western Cape was least enthusiastic, although support for all campaigns was over 80% except for the recruitment campaign at 66%, the anti-privatisation campaign at 50% and the JZ campaign at 13%. No major differences emerged by gender.

Political support

If elections were to be held next week, which party would you vote for? (n 2883)



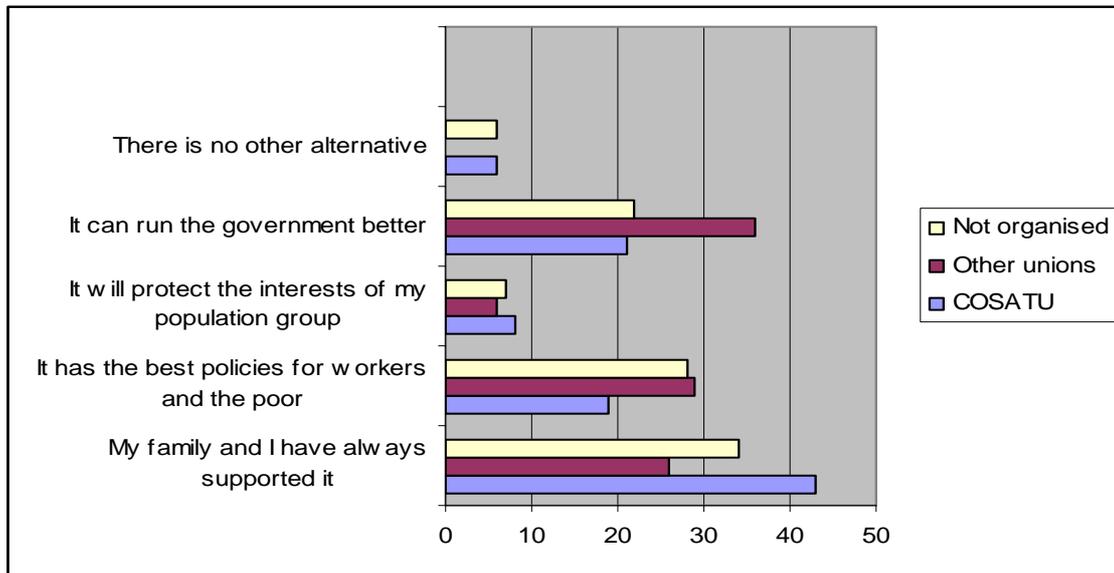
The graph above illustrates the workers' support for political parties by trade union affiliation with the ANC as a big leader. However, only half the workers claim they would vote for the ANC "if elections were to be held next week" with a relatively large proportion saying they either will not vote, don't know who to vote for or refuse to answer the question. Only 7 percent would vote for the DA, 2 percent for IFP and even less for the Independent democrats, PAC or the ACDP.

60 percent of COSATU members said they will vote for the ANC, with no other party getting above 2 percent (for the DA). But 12 percent of members said they wouldn't vote, 13 percent refused to answer and 8 percent claim to not know what party they will vote for. In contrast, only 43 percent of organised workers in other federations plan to vote for the ANC and 20 percent for the DA.

Among all the respondents (both organised and unorganised workers), women are more likely to vote for the ANC (49%) than their male counterpart (44%). In contrast to the overall pattern, male union members (64%) in general are more likely to vote for the ANC than their female counterparts (54%).

Reasons for political support to the ANC

Why would you vote for the ANC in particular? (n 1207)

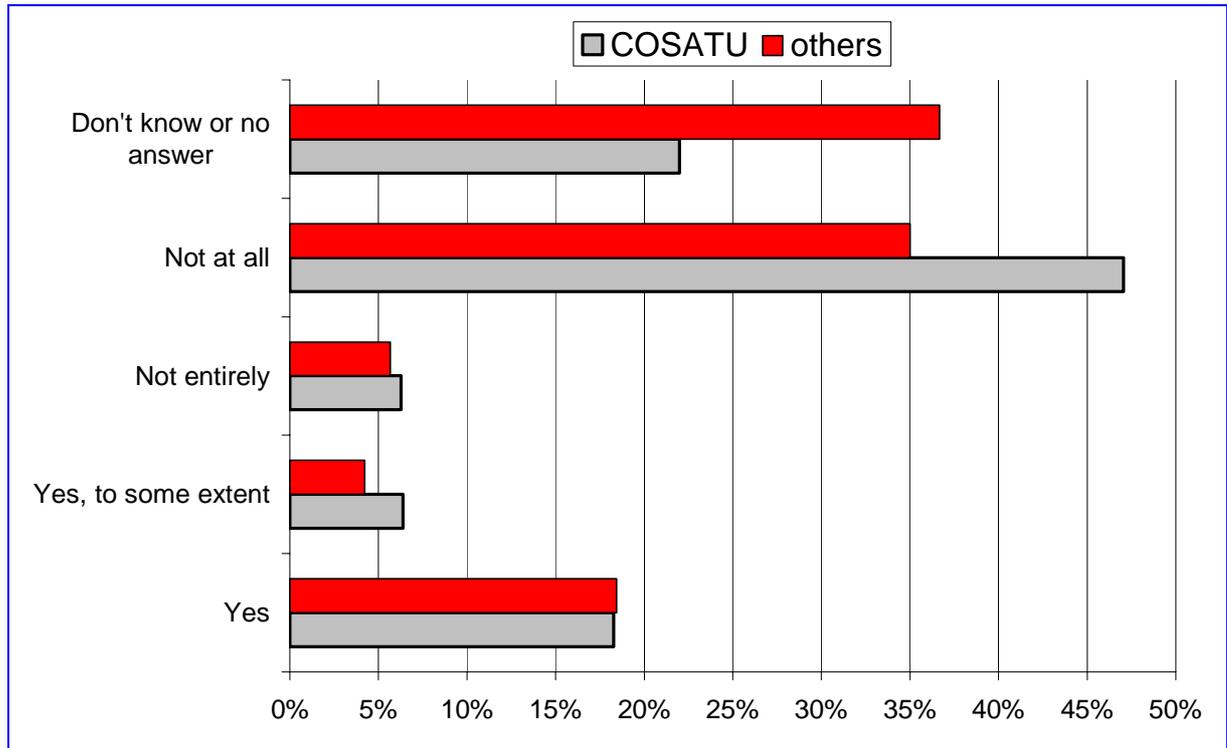


The graph above demonstrates the motivation of those who will vote for the ANC in the next election with about one third arguing that their vote is motivated by the fact that they and their family have always supported the ANC. Around 22 percent argue that the ANC can run the government better, and 6 percent claim that there is no alternative. In fact, only one out of four ANC supporters argues that they would vote for the ANC because of its policies, and its pro-worker and pro-poor policies in particular.

Most COSATU workers argue that they vote for their party because their family has always supported it (43%). There is also a larger portion of COSATU ANC supporters who claim this reason than what we find among unorganised workers or workers in other union federations. Relatively less COSATU workers also claim that they support the ANC because the party has the best policies for workers and the poor. Only 19 percent of COSATU workers argue that they have chosen their party because it has the best policies for workers or the poor.

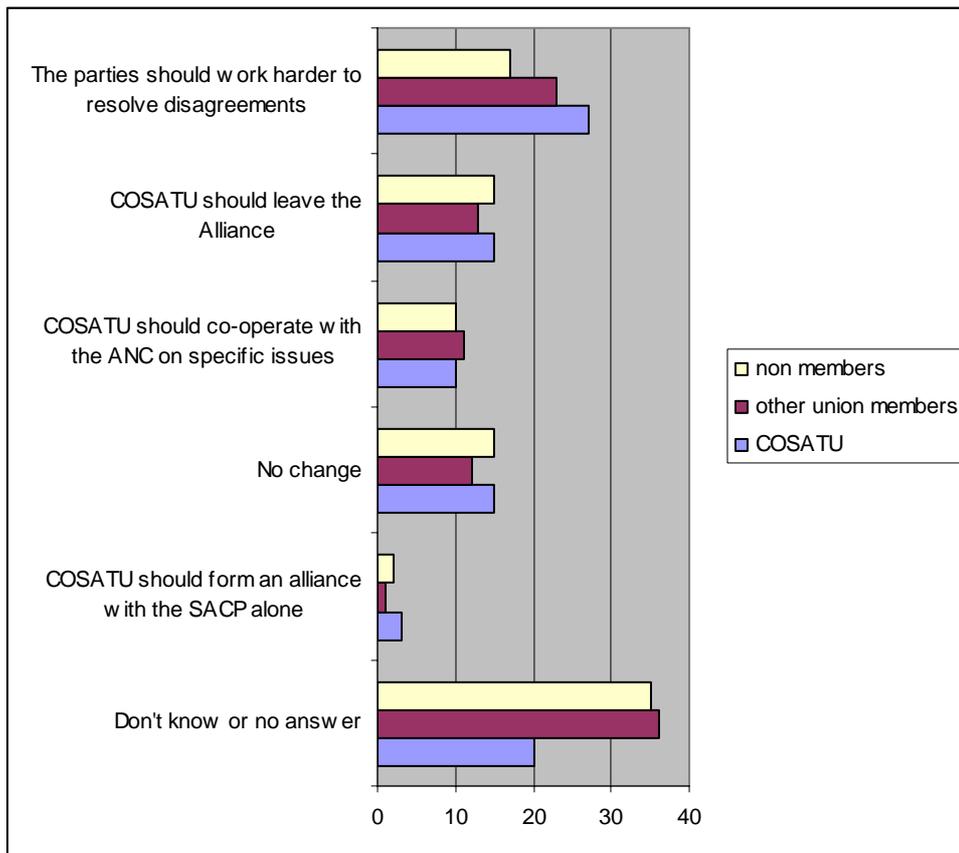
SACP: alliance or independence?

Should the SACP run for elections on its own?



Close to half of the workers believe SACP should not run for elections on their own and just under a quarter think it should. COSATU members are more hesitant about the issue with more workers being opposed to the idea and relatively less workers being uncertain.

Future of the alliance?



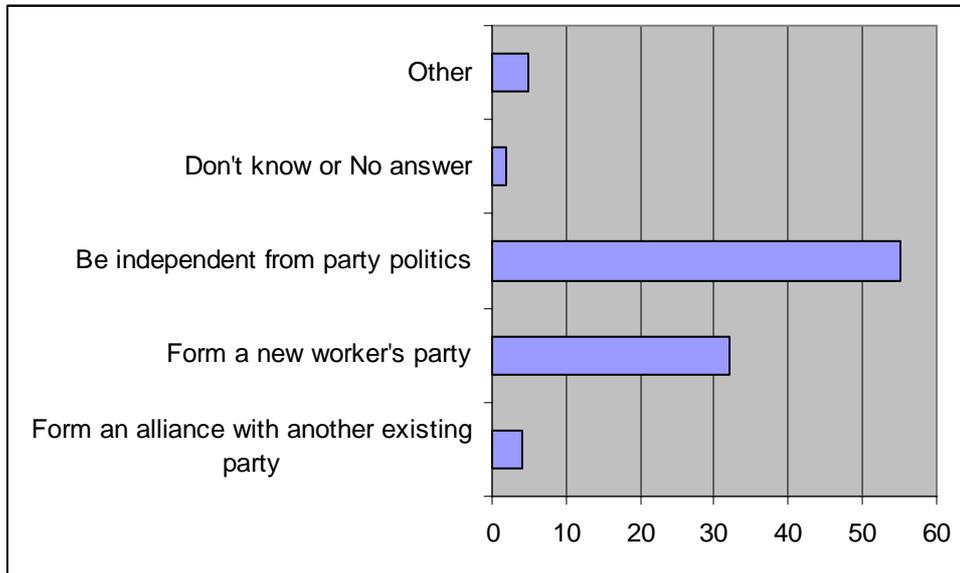
Only about 22 percent of COSATU members believe the alliance should remain unaltered, while 14 percent believe that COSATU should leave the alliance. One third does believe, however, that all parties should work harder to resolve disagreements. 28 percent of ANC worker voters also believe that all parties need to work harder to solve conflicts. Less than half of other union members and non-members think COSATU should remain in the Alliance. Of those believing that COSATU should leave the alliance, 60 percent think that the union movement should be independent of party politics while 30 percent believe that a new workers' party should be formed.

Less than 10 percent of workers believe that the conflicts within the alliance are not serious, while 25 percent believe that the conflicts are caused by the government and the ANC no longer listening to COSATU. Simultaneously, 47 percent of union members believe that national stay-aways are needed to put pressure on the government.

Females (37%) were more likely to report that they don't know or preferred not to answer the question as to what should happen to the alliance. In addition, males (18%) were more likely to report that Cosatu should leave the alliance. Union members (31% males and 25% females) were of the opinion that the parties should work hard to resolve their disagreements. Among union members, females (29% vs. 17% males) were again more likely to report that they don't know what should happen with this alliance or not to respond to the question.

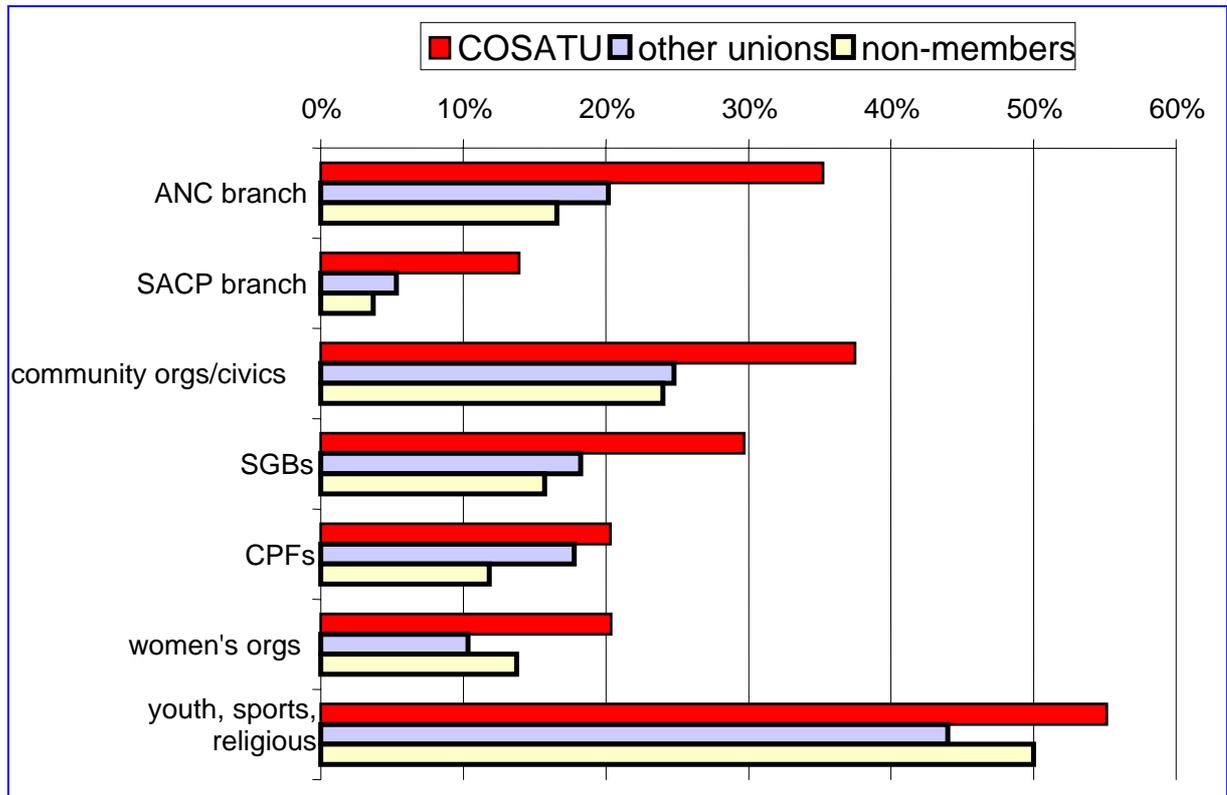
If COSATU should leave the alliance, what should it do?

If COSATU should leave the alliance what should it do? (n 487)



A large group of those who believe COSATU should leave the alliance argues that COSATU should stay independent of politics if it leaves the alliance. It should be reiterated that the group is dominated by Coloured/Asian and White workers.

Participation in organisations

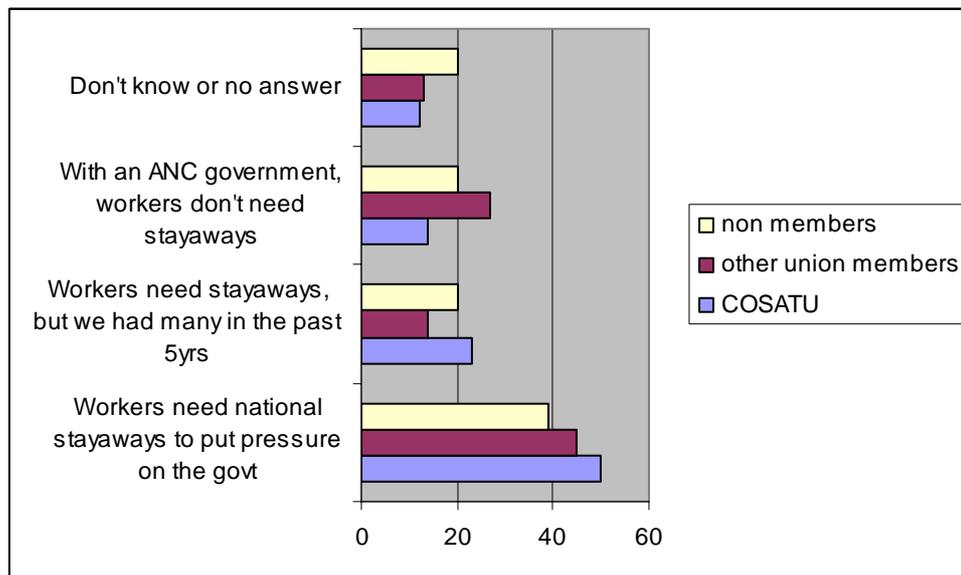


All in all, COSATU workers are far more active in organisational life than non-union workers or workers who are members of other federations. 35 percent of COSATU members belong to an ANC branch, and 14 percent to an SACP branch. In contrast, only 20 percent of members of other unions belong to an ANC branch, and only 17 percent of non members.

Within COSATU, membership of the ANC ranges from 56 percent in NUM to 10 percent in DENOSA. Membership of the SACP goes from 33 percent in CEPPWAWU (admittedly a small sample) and 25 percent in NUM to 4 percent in SACCAWU.

Support for general strikes?

Agreement with statements (n 2876)

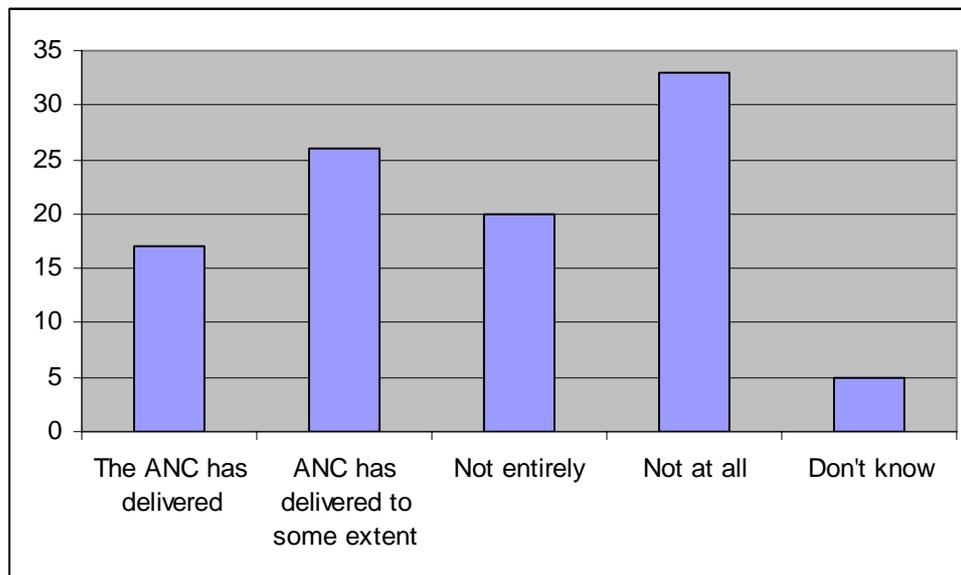


After the heavy turmoil in the labour market up till the 1994 elections, the mid 90s became a relatively quiet period in South African industrial relations. However, person-days lost as a result of strikes have increased significantly in recent years. Simultaneously, wage disputes now trigger most strikes, compared with political factors during the 80s and early 90s. More than half of our unionised workers reported that there had been a strike in their workplace in the past five years (see above). Virtually all our workers also mention wage negotiations as a cause of the strikes. Where there had been strikes, 83 percent of union members said they had participated, compared to less than half of non-members.

When it comes to political strikes, workers have not lost their confidence in stay-aways as a tool for worker influence. More than half (55%) believe that stay-aways are important to put pressure on the government. Three quarters of COSATU members agree that workers need to use general strikes to pressurise the state and business, although around a third of those think there has been too many general strikes in the past few years. In contrast, less than half of other union members and a third of non-members believe general strikes were necessary. Within COSATU, support range from over 80 percent in FAWU, NUMSA, SAMWU and NUM to under 60 percent in CWU and SATAWU. Over half of all black workers believe general strikes are necessary, compared to a fifth of whites. There is no difference in overall acceptance for stay-aways from men and women, but women trade unionists are somewhat less likely than men to think that workers need stay-aways.

ANC delivery

Do you think the ANC has delivered on its promises to workers? (N 2888)

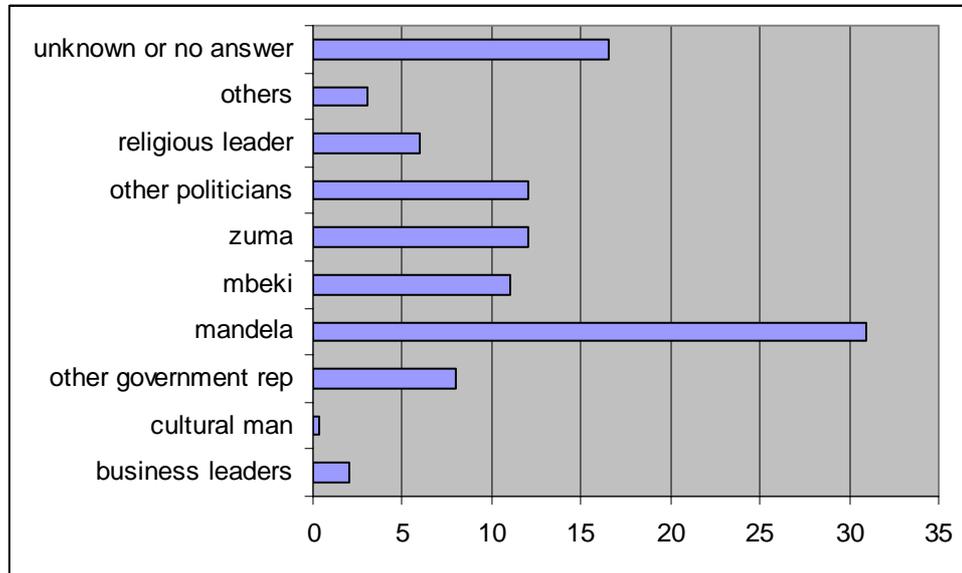


People's support for policy developments by governments, employers and unions will generally be determined by their own socio-economic resources, access to employment, wage levels, education etc. However, people's attitudes are also determined by ideological factors and more short-term political debates. In order to provide a basis for policy-making, we also investigated people's attitudes to the delivery of the ANC government.

More than half of the workers (both organised and non-union workers) believe that the ANC has not delivered or not delivered fully on its promises to members. 46 percent of COSATU members share this opinion in comparison to 53 percent of workers organised in other federations and 55 percent of unorganised workers. 42 percent of African workers say the ANC has not delivered, compared to 81 percent of whites. There were no significant gender differences in the interviewees' responses.

Important leaders

Who do you regard as your most important leader? Percent. (n 2889)



When asked who they regarded their most important political leader, a large majority mention Nelson Mandela. No other individual emerged as anywhere near as important, reflecting the depth of the succession debate. ANC Deputy President Jacob Zuma got slightly more support than President Thabo Mbeki.

It should be underlined that more than 15 percent did not want to answer the question. Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that we did *not* ask who they thought is most popular or who should be appointed to political positions now or in the future. The question simply asks workers to reflect on leaders' importance in society, which should be kept in mind when interpreting the results.

Appendix with background information on the survey

The COSATU survey was conducted in 12 selected urban areas and was stratified by population group and income level (using the 2001 census data). The sample population was restricted to communities with an average income between R1 000 and R11 000 per month. While assuring that we sampled as many of the traditional “working class”, and hence trade union constituency as possible, we may simultaneously have a bias against inclusions of lower-earning workers, who are more likely to be women, as well as higher-earning people (probably mostly men) in the survey. Furthermore, we designed the survey so that almost half the sample was women while excluding self-employed people and workers employed alone or with only one other. About 40 percent are union members, i.e. about the same as union density outside of farm and domestic work. Hence, the survey sample should not be seen as in any way representing the South African population or labour force, but rather a typical South African trade union constituency. The survey covered almost 3000 workers.