

**The causes of change  
– the realities of life  
for SAK unionised  
men and women**

**SAK membership survey 2000**





*SAK, the Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions, has represented the interests of Finnish employees since 1907, almost a century. Today, SAK represents over one million Finnish workers and their families. There are a total of 23 SAK affiliated unions and these represent the industrial sector, the public sector and the private services sector.*

*Over 80 % of the total Finnish workforce, of some 2.5 million, are organised in a trade union which represents them in their occupational sector. Nearly one half of these are members of a SAK affiliated union. SAK conducts a membership survey on a five yearly basis, and this survey gives an up to date picture of the lives, positions and expectations of Finnish employees.*

*The previous survey was conducted in 1995, during a severe economic recession. Many things have changed in this time, some for the better, some for the worse. There has been a period of continuous strong economic growth which has now lasted for a number of years, but unemployment is still the most burning problem in Finnish society. The latest SAK membership survey, of the year 2000, was conducted in circumstances which were characterised by the impending retirement of the large post-war generation, a situation which will affect both the world of work and the trade union movement in Finland.*

# **The causes of change – the realities of life for SAK unionised men and women**

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## **Introduction**

SAK, the Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions, commissioned a comprehensive membership survey during the year 2000, and replies to the related questionnaire were received from a total of 9948 members of the SAK affiliated unions. Starting in 1984, SAK has surveyed at five year intervals, the opinions of the members of its affiliated unions on the trade union movement, on the opportunities to have control over the issues which matter to them, on work in general, and on their expectations regarding work. The results portray the views, and the position in the world of work, of approximately one million Finnish wage earners. This recurring membership survey is the largest which is regularly undertaken in the field of NGOs in Finland. In addition to these comprehensive surveys, the opinions of the membership of the SAK affiliated unions are monitored twice yearly by means of less extensive questionnaires.

Four reports have been published on the results of the membership survey 2000, two by Jyrki Helin and one report each by Erkki Laukkanen and Marja Erkkilä. This booklet is a summary of these four reports.

## **The facilitators of change**

The second half of the 1990's was a time of recovery following a period of recession. The rate of employment rose but the recession left its mark which is still evident in the lives of the SAK members and in the values which they hold. There is widespread, long-term and repeated unemployment amongst the members of SAK affiliated unions, and those in employment find themselves increasingly engaged on short-term contracts or working part-time. The pace at the workplace is hard and the workforce is troubled by a feeling of insecurity.

The membership of SAK has clearly aged. This is most evident in the manufacturing industries and in the public sector. By the year 2010, the number of those in employment in Finland will have increased by 230,000 when compared with the corresponding figure which was recorded in 1995, and of these some 70,000 will enter into occupations which are represented by SAK. At the same time, over 800,000 people will leave the world of work, mostly in order to retire. During this 15 year period, from 1995 to 2010, more than 50 per cent of the total workforce will have left the world of work, and this will mean that the majority of the members of the SAK affiliated unions will have changed.

The increased percentage of small workplaces and atypical employment have, for some time, been prominent features of the changing world of work. At present some 50 per cent of the members of SAK unions are employed in a workplace which has less than 30 employees. The core question for the SAK affiliated unions is currently that of how to organise trade union activities at these small workplaces. The growth of atypical employment, and the use of short-term contracts in particular, presents another key problem. These issues do not affect SAK alone, concerning as they do the entire Finnish trade union movement and every wage earner.

The members of the SAK affiliated unions differ from the national workforce in general, inasmuch as their average age is higher and their vocational education lower. On average the SAK union member is 43 years old, which is a couple of years higher than the national average. The basic education of some 50 per cent of the current SAK union membership consists solely of that of a regular primary school or, additionally, of senior primary school, and more than 40 per cent do not hold any vocational qualification whatsoever. The other 50 per cent however, hold some middle ranking qualification, and this includes the holders of the matriculation certificate, which is the equivalent of British A-levels, who have no vocational qualifications. A university degree or similar is held by some 14 per cent of the membership, which is only half of the 28 per cent figure which applies to the Finnish workforce as a whole.

The level of education amongst the members of the SAK affiliated unions has slowly risen, and it is most likely that during the next 5 to 10 years this trend will start to grow exponentially. The change will be caused by the retirement from the world of work, during the period 2005 to 2010, on various types of pensions, of most of the large generation which was born during 1945 -1950. A large number of this generation have worked throughout their lives with no vocational qualification, and their retirement will mean that there will be fewer unqualified people in employment. As a result of this transition, the average level of education of the members of the SAK unions will rise to be close to that of the general national level.

### ***Membership of the Finnish central trade union organisations in 2000***

SAK:	1,071,000
STTK, representing white collar workers:	643,000
AKAVA, representing academic professionals:	391,000

### ***Who constitutes the SAK membership ?***

Men 580,000 (54 %)  
Women 500,000 (46 %)

Under 25 years of age 100,000  
Under 35 years of age 350,000

Public sector, one quarter, (250,000)  
Service sector, one third, (330,000)  
Industry, one half, (500,000)

Approx. 100,000 shop stewards

one quarter, (26 %), work on short-term contracts  
two fifths, (43 %), use information technology at work  
one in six is unemployed or participates in re-employment schemes

Job security is the most important goal at work

One in three took part in trade union activities during the last 12 months

**Members of the SAK affiliated unions in 2000**

	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Total</b>
	%	%	%
<b>Employer</b>			
Local authority or the government (incl. the utilities )	41	20	29
Industrial, construction or production company	19	50	36
Service sector company	29	20	24
Other	11	10	11
<b>Education</b>			
Matriculation certificate	16	7	11
Polytechnic or university	16	7	11
Vocational college	37	49	43
Vocational course or apprenticeship	22	22	22
No vocational education	23	20	21
<b>Unemployed, in government funded retraining or government supported employment</b>	18	14	16
<b>Perceived as very important in life</b>			
Family life	80	63	71
Leisure time interests	61	63	62
Work	51	43	48
<b>Gross earnings in full-time job (FIM per month)</b>	8,559	11,064	10,098
Euros	1,440	1,860	1,698

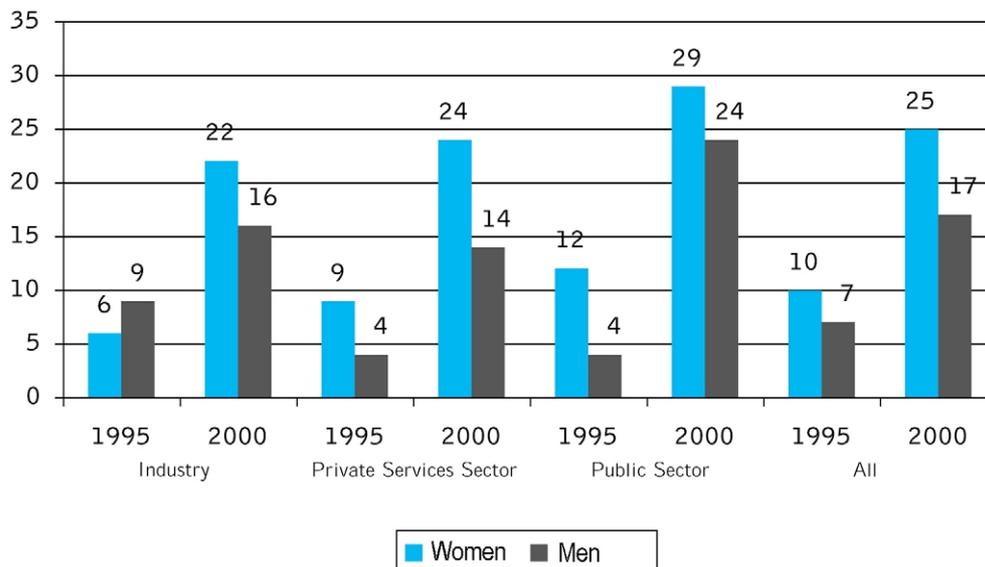
**Members of the SAK affiliated unions in 2000**

	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Total</b>
	%	%	%
<b>Working time</b>			
Permanent daytime occupation	56	59	58
Permanent evening, night or morning occupation	6	5	6
2 shift working	20	13	16
3 shift working	7	12	10
Other working hours	11	11	11
<b>Training provided by employer during the year</b>	27	32	30
<b>Most important goal at work</b>			
Job security	55	52	53
Good wages	18	29	24
Interesting work	14	10	12
<b>Most important reason for being a trade union member</b>			
Representation of interests by trade union	33	44	38
Unemployment benefits	43	37	40
Provides security in life	17	10	13

## Members of SAK unions on short-term contracts

Research results significantly indicate that the so-called atypical jobs have increased to such an extent that soon it will be impossible to classify the traditional regular working hours as "typical". Both part-time and short-term working has grown steeply in those sectors which are represented by SAK, although the use of short-term contracts seems to lead to situations which are detrimental to the employer. Short term employees are not as committed, to the same degree, to achieving the employer's targets as are the permanent staff. They remain less interested in the issues which concern the company and the employer. The majority of part-time and short-term workers feel that they have no influence over their own working conditions.

### Employment of men and women on short-term contracts in 1995 and 2000 (%)



Membership survey 2000: Men - Women

### The nature and length of current employment amongst the SAK membership

EMPLOYMENT	<i>permanent</i>		<i>short-term</i>		<i>TOTAL</i>	
	%	duration in years	%	duration in years	%	duration in years
full time	74	14	15	2	89	12
part time	5	10	4	2	9	7
other	1	6	2	4	2	4
TOTAL	80	14	20	3	100	12

Membership survey 2000: Basic Report

There are currently as many as one third of the female and one fifth of the male membership of SAK who are employed on either a part-time or short term basis. The employers appear to avoid offering permanent positions to those who are working on short-term contracts, even it appears that there will be an invariable demand for labour. Three years is the average period that people continue to work on short-term contracts with one employer.

The number of SAK members who work regular daytime hours is falling. During the last 16 years their number amongst the membership has been reduced from 71 % to 57 %. At the same time the percentage of shift work and flexible working time has increased. In the private services sector, less than one half of the SAK members (46 %) are nowadays engaged in regular daytime work.

During the last five years the percentage of short-term employment has grown from 14 % to 26 % in those sectors which are represented by SAK. At present more than a third of the female membership (35 %) is employed on a part-time or short term basis, whilst only five years ago the figure was barely one fifth, (19 %), who were so employed. The majority, (53 %), of SAK members who are under 25 years of age are working on short-term contracts. There are several worrying aspects which are associated with this trend. A positive side to the problem however, is that short-term workers have also learned to seek the services and security which is offered by the trade unions, which was the aim of the SAK project on short-term employment in 1997 - 1998.

## **One in every six members is unemployed**

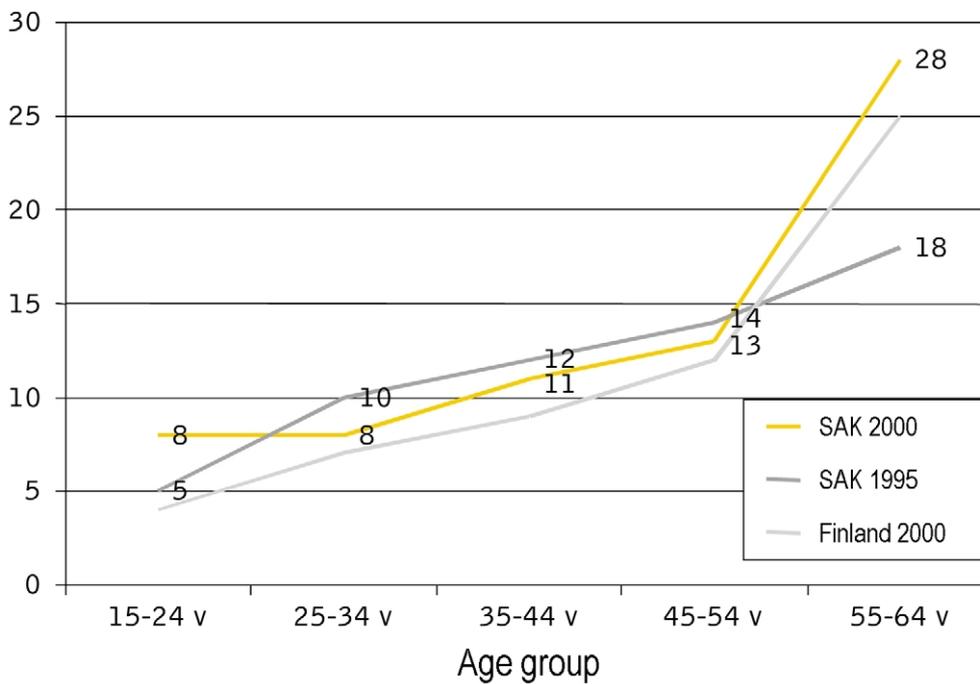
The unemployment rate amongst the members of SAK affiliated unions has fallen to the average national level. At the time of the survey, during the winter of 2000, 16 % of the SAK membership was either unemployed, in government funded retraining or in government supported employment. In the previous membership survey, which was conducted five years earlier, nearly one quarter of the members of SAK unions were unemployed or in receipt of re-employment support (23 %). The current unemployment rate of the younger SAK members has fallen below the national average.

Unemployment amongst the SAK membership tends to be long term. One third of those without work (33 %) are long term unemployed, ie they have been without employment for more than 12 months. The average period of unemployment is 15 months, but amongst those in the 55 to 64 age group it is as much as 28 months. Repeated unemployment has also increased. As many as three quarters (75 %) of all those SAK union members who are currently unemployed, have been made redundant on several occasions during the last five years.

**Position by gender of SAK members, aged under 60, in 1995 and 2000 (%)**

	Women		Men	
	1995	2000	1995	2000
Working	62	67	66	75
On maternity or care leave etc.	7	8	1	2
Laid off, on part time or short term basis	1	1	1	1
Laid off, temporarily	1	0	3	2
Unemployed, in government funded retraining or government supported employment	24	18	22	14
Studying	3	4	3	2
Retired	2	2	4	4
<b>Total %</b>	100	100	100	100
<b>Number</b>	1850	4276	2064	5168

**Period of unemployment, in months, by age group**



## Improvement in educational standard of SAK members

The educational standard of members of the SAK affiliated unions is constantly rising. Currently, only one fifth, or 21 %, of the SAK membership has had no vocational training at all, and only one in every eight, or 13 %, of those aged under 35 has no vocational qualifications. One tenth, or 11 %, of the total SAK membership has graduated from a vocational college or university, but this figure rises to 17 % for those members who are less than 35 years old.

Over two fifths, or 43 %, of the total SAK membership uses information technology at work. Of those under 35 years of age, a majority, 53 %, use information technology in their work, and such use is rapidly increasing. The use of information technology is most common in the private services sector and least so in the public sector.

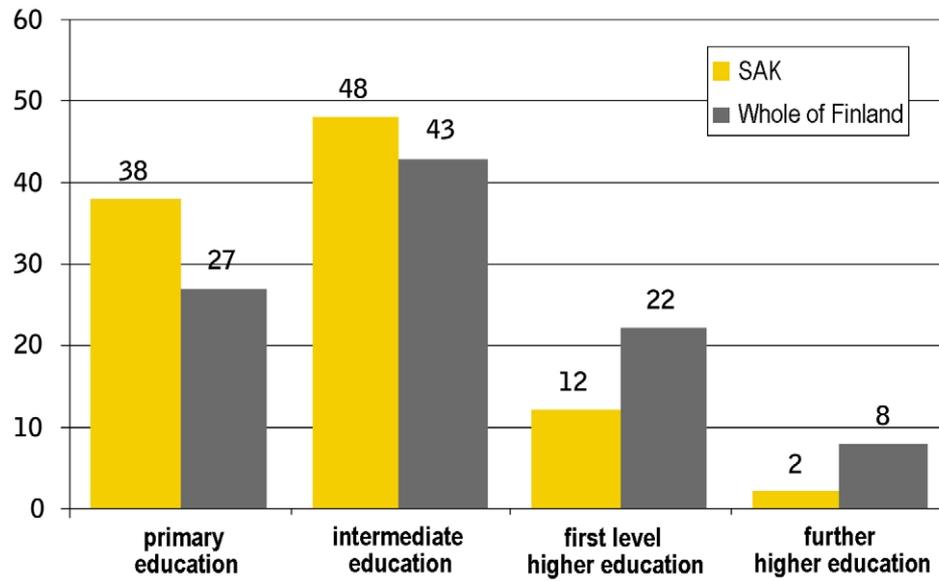
Despite the drastic changes which have taken place in the world of work, and the impending retirement of the post-war generation, barely one third, or 30 %, of the SAK membership has, during the last year, had the opportunity to participate in vocational training organised by the employer. The workers in those sectors which are represented by the SAK affiliated unions have been offered far less opportunity for such training than that of the national average of 47 %. The public sector employers and large business concerns are those most frequently offering staff training.

### The current situation and changes which have occurred since the previous survey:

- The majority of the members of the SAK affiliated unions regard themselves as being working class, and this is a view which has not changed with the passage of time. In 1984 a total of 93 % of the membership thought that, on the basis of their occupation, they represented the working class and this percentage is exactly the same today.
- The extent of trade union training is currently more or less on the same level as that of five years ago. During the last two years, 5 % of the respondents to the survey questionnaire had participated in trade union training. A total of 54,000 SAK members received trade union training.
- The figures which indicate participation in trade union activities have remained very close to those which were recorded in the 1995 survey. The interest shown in trade union matters by men has changed little from the 1995 level, but participation amongst women has fallen from 37 % to 30 % during the same period.
- The necessity of being better informed on the rights of the worker was mentioned as being the most important reason for participating in trade union activities. Nearly 50 % of the membership was of this opinion in 1995, a figure which was repeated in the year 2000.
- During the last five years the percentage of members who were engaged as trade union representatives fell from 28 % to 26 %. There are currently some 90,000 members who work as trade union representatives, and of this number, 13,000 are convenors. Some 22,000 members hold more than one voluntary trade union post. This represents 2 % of the entire membership.
- The function of the branch is currently seen in more or less the same light as it was five years ago. Three quarters of the respondents to the questionnaire are of the opinion that the central role of the branch, in addition to the representation of the interests of the workers, consists of the organisation of activities which increase solidarity amongst the workforce.
- The popularity of individual agreements has slightly increased since 1995. In the current climate of economic growth, some 20 % of respondents stated that they would prefer to personally negotiate their pay rises, whilst five years ago this figure was only 16 %.

- Nearly three quarters of the membership stated that they had enjoyed positive experiences of the trade union movement. The same result was received in the previous survey. Only 4 % said they had encountered negative experiences and this figure has not risen.
- The union journal and the branch newspaper or newsletter have remained the most important media sources of information on labour market policy, although there was slightly higher regard for these in 1995.

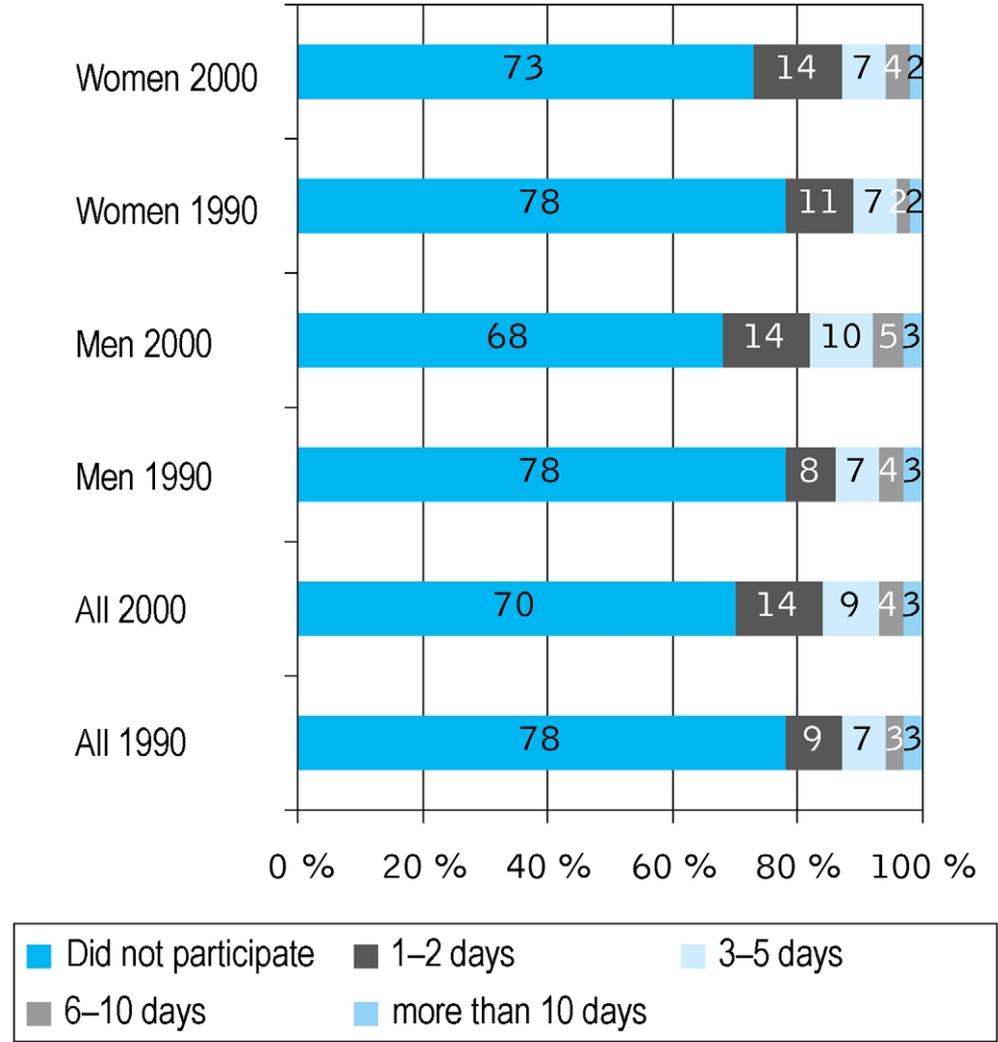
**Level of education amongst SAK members and nationally (%)**



Source: Finnish Centre of Statistics, Education 2000:2

Membership survey 2000: Basic Report

**Participation of men and women in vocational training organised by the employer during the preceding 12 months, in 1990 and 2000 (%)**



Membership survey 2000: Men - Women

## **The struggle against unemployment continues**

Most people join trade unions because of either their own deliberate decision or by following a suggestion made by someone else, for example by a shop steward. Earnings related unemployment benefit and the representation of the interests of the worker are still the primary reasons for joining a trade union, and between them they form 80 % of the quoted reasons for unionisation, a figure unchanged since the survey of five years earlier.

In return for their union subscription, the members look for support and security from the unions and from SAK. Such security is required for the struggle against unemployment, for defending unemployment benefit and related issues, such as improvements in the unemployment fund services, increases in opportunities for training, etc. These are the issues on which the membership most frequently judge the success, both of SAK and of the unions, in their work on behalf of the membership.

More than half of the membership is of the opinion that the unions have been successful in achieving their targets for improved working time and for health and safety at work. However, a higher percentage of the members were of this opinion, on both counts, five years ago. In addition, whilst nearly half of the membership thinks that the unions have been successful in negotiating better terms of pay, this is another area in which the percentage indicating satisfaction is lower than previously. The safeguarding of employment is the only area in which the percentage indicating satisfaction has risen. It must be said however, that this was helped to a degree by the growth of the national economy in Finland - partly by the centralised incomes policy agreement negotiated by the unions and partly by other factors.

The membership continues to see the struggle against unemployment as the primary target of the trade union movement as represented by the SAK affiliated unions. The defence of the terms of unemployment benefit is considered to be the second most important issue. However, during the last five years, the weight of these two issues has slightly decreased. Lobbying for taxation to be retained at a reasonable level, the reduction of the pay gap between the low paid and the high earners and the defence of the terms of both pensions and social security are other areas which the membership considers as being important.

The unemployment benefit fund services are seen by the SAK membership as the most important union service. Assistance, which is given in the form of advice and expertise, insurance cover, vocational retraining and further education are regarded as being next in the order of importance.

## **Job security is paramount**

Job security is paramount for the SAK membership. It is of the most importance to more than half, or 53 %, of the respondents. One quarter, or 24 %, of the members of SAK affiliated unions consider good pay as being important while for 12 % the importance lies in the content of the work. Graduates, both of vocational college and university, clearly value an interesting job, which offers variety, more highly than do those whose standard of education is lower.

## **Less control over own work**

The majority of the SAK membership, or 55 %, state that they are very, or fairly, interested in the concerns of their employer. This is 7 % fewer than was the corresponding figure of five years ago. The main explanation for this is the steep rise in the number of atypical employment contracts.

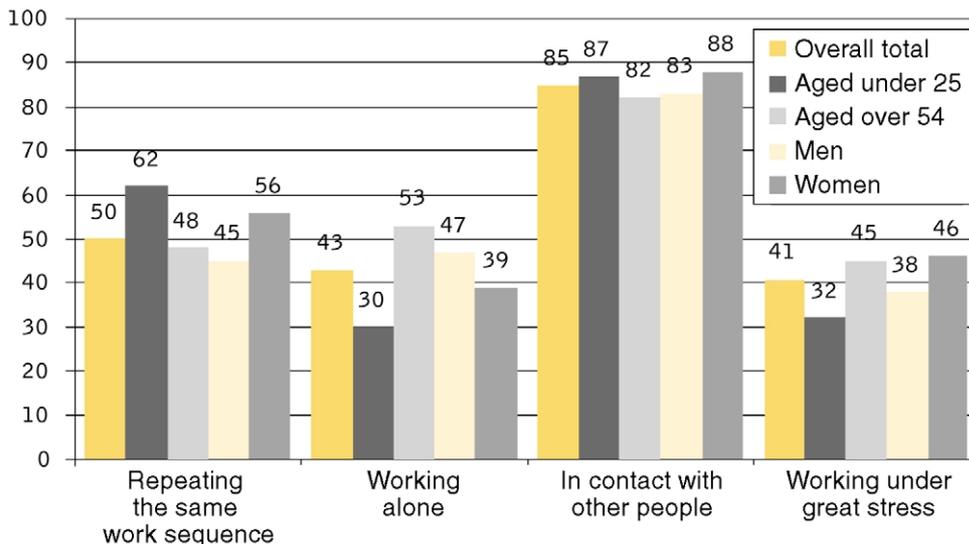
Research results show that the development of the world of work, since the recession, has not been solely positive. The opportunities which are open for the members of the SAK affiliated unions to exercise control over their own work has diminished. Less than half of the membership, or 49 %, state that they have a fair amount of control over their own work. The best opportunities for this exist in the public sector, which shows a figure of 57 %, whereas a similar majority, 58 %, of part-time and short term workers, feel that they are able to exercise very little control over their own work.

A good personnel policy appears to be of benefit to the employer. Employees are more interested in the employer's concerns, and are more committed to the company goals, at a workplace in which the management is perceived to value the workforce and where the employees feel that they are able to exercise some control over matters at work.

The demands which are made by the workload is a problem in those occupations which are represented by SAK. Two out of every five SAK members, or 41 %, spend more than half of their working time under great stress. Repetitive work is also common, one in two workers being obliged to repeat the same work sequence over and over again. The content of the work seems to become more varied with the employee's age, but ageing also leads to more stress and to undertaking more tasks that are done alone.

The members of the SAK affiliated unions are not particularly concerned about the future. However, a quarter of the members, or 24 %, are afraid that they will not be sufficiently skilled to compete in the future labour market and an even higher figure, 28 %, is concerned with the possibility of redundancy. One in three, or 35 %, feels that further training is needed in order to do the work and 40 % would be prepared to consider retraining and acquiring another qualification. In particular, the young and those who already have a good vocational education, have given consideration to the possibility of acquiring a second qualification. However, one in five, or 20 %, would prefer to stop working altogether.

**More than half of the working hours are spent ..... (%)**



## Who are the SAK unionised men and women ?

### Typical examples: Female home help, aged 45; Male metalworker, aged 42

The polarisation of the labour market amongst the OECD countries is most pronounced in Finland and in the other Nordic countries. One of the reasons for this is the fact that in the Nordic countries a greater number of publicly funded services are provided than in many other countries. This polarisation is stronger in the occupations which are represented by the SAK affiliated unions than is found in other groups of workers. According to the results of a survey on working conditions which was conducted by the Finnish Centre of Statistics, 77 % of SAK unionised women were engaged in jobs in which all, or the majority of workers, doing similar work at the same workplace, were also women. Correspondingly, 82 % of SAK unionised men are engaged in work which is mainly undertaken by men.

The segregation of the labour market lessened to some extent during the 1970's and the 1980's. This change reflected the trend of some previously male dominated occupations becoming less so. More rare however, is that of men entering the traditional female occupational areas. Both men and women still tend to choose both a typically gender based education and profession. Research which has been conducted on industrial occupations has shown that division by gender continues to operate at the workplace, regardless of changes in skills, requirements, work organisation or technology.

The majority of the employees of local authorities are women. KTV, the Trade Union for the Municipal Sector, is the largest union which is affiliated to SAK, and 72 % of its membership is female. Of the total of all SAK unionised women, 37 % are members of a public sector union. A similar percentage belongs to a private services sector union. Only one in four women is a member of an industrial trade union. The division of men and women, on an occupational basis, is currently the same as it was five years ago.

Two thirds of SAK unionised men remain as members of industrial trade unions. One quarter of the male membership of SAK is unionised in a service sector union while 12 % belongs to a public sector union. There has, during the preceding five years, been a slight transition of male employees from the public sector to the private services sector occupations. The occupational division of men and women has otherwise remained unchanged. Nevertheless, the number of both male and female industrial workers has decreased, whilst there has been an increase in the number of private services sector employees during the last ten years. The number of men who are employed in the public sector has diminished, but that of women has remained unchanged.

Both the Textile and Garment Workers' Union and PAM which is the new service sector union, and the Trade Union for the Municipal Sector are all SAK affiliated unions with a majority, or 60 %, of female members. A more balanced division of the genders, between 40 % and 60 %, in the membership exists in the Finnish Media Union, the Finnish National Union of State Employees and Special Services, the Finnish Seamen's Union, the Chemical Workers' Union, and also in the Postal Workers' Union. The largest unions with a male majority are the Metalworkers' Union, the Construction Trade Union, the Finnish Transport Workers' Union, the Wood and Allied Workers' Union, the Paperworkers' Union, and the Finnish Electrical Workers' Union.

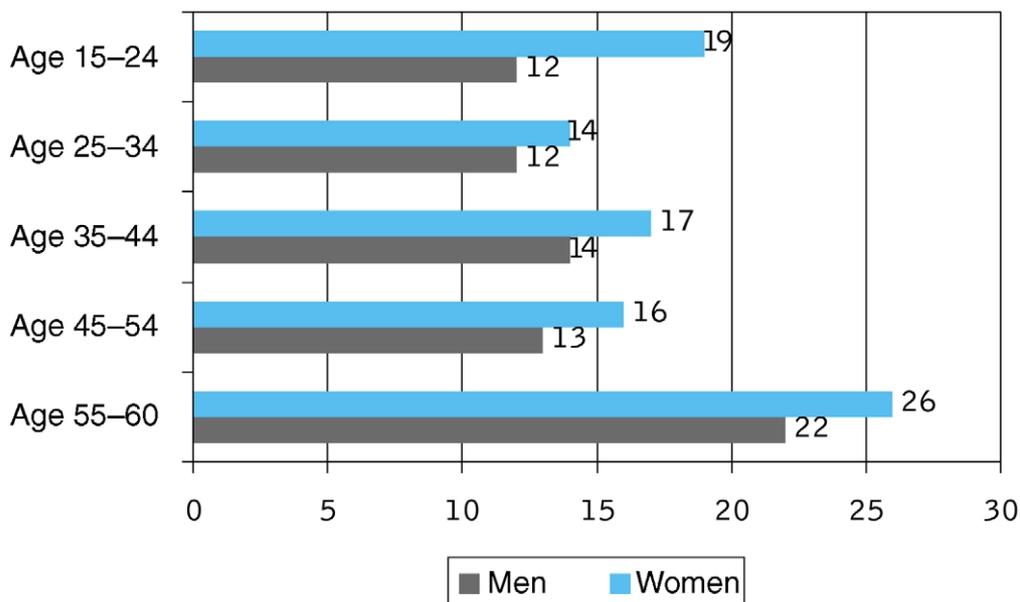
## One in five SAK unionised women is unemployed

16 % of those who responded to the questionnaire, 18 % of women and 14 % of men, were either unemployed, in government funded retraining or in government supported employment. Unemployment is highest amongst those SAK unionised women who are in the industrial sector and in the private services sector. These sectors also returned the highest female unemployment figures in 1995. Unemployment amongst men is currently most common in the public sector whereas five years earlier it was the manufacturing industry which showed the most widespread male unemployment.

The worst unemployment figures are those for SAK unionised women who are aged over 55, one in four of this group being without work. The older male workers also suffer most commonly from unemployment. Five years ago the two largest groups of the unemployed consisted of those either under 25 or over 55 years of age, but with the growth of the national economy, the figure for unemployment amongst the young has fallen back.

Unemployed women have participated more actively in government funded employment schemes, and in re-employment training, than have their male counterparts. 53 % of the women and 44 % of the men have taken up work in a job scheme supported by the government. Similarly, 40 % of the women, and 35 % of the men, have participated in re-employment training. The government funded employment schemes and the general re-employment training projects are most frequently focused on the SAK unionised women. Women who have been made redundant from administrative and office posts are often offered tailored re-training which can give them additional qualifications and which thus enhances their chances of finding a new permanent job. Those who are less well qualified to start with should also be offered training which is based on their individual needs.

### ***Unemployed SAK unionised members by gender and age (%)***



Membership survey 2000: Men - Women

## **Both partners, of one couple in every two, are SAK members**

The statistics show that 77 % of the SAK unionised women, and 73 % of the men, are either married or are living with a partner. It is common that both of these work in a sector which is represented by SAK. Currently 54 % of the female members (57 % in 1995), and 48 % of the men (53 % in 1995) are married to a member of a SAK affiliated union. One in five of the SAK unionised men has a wife who is a member of a white collar workers' union, and 12 % of the SAK unionised women have husbands who belong to a union which is affiliated either to STTK, the Finnish Confederation of Salaried Employees, or to AKAVA, the Confederation of Unions for Academic Professionals in Finland. This situation has remained unchanged for the last five years. However, the percentage of respondents who are aware that their partner is unionised, but who do not know in which union, has increased. The husbands or partners of the SAK unionised women most typically work in industrial occupations, whereas the wives of the men are most frequently employed by a local authority. The husband or partner of one in ten women is self-employed, whereas the figure for the wives or partners of the SAK unionised men is only 3 %.

The survey showed that 48 % of the women, and 45 % of the men, had children who were living at home. More than one half, both of the women, at 55 %, and of the men, at 59 %, who were married or were living with a partner, had children who lived at home. 31 % of the unmarried women and 8% of the unmarried men, had children who were living with them. These figures have not changed in the last five years. 9% of the women are single mothers and 3 % of the men are single fathers.

## **The meaning of work is now seen as being less important in life than previously**

Family life is still the central element in the lives of the SAK unionised women. Amongst men, hobbies and interests compete in importance with family life to an equal degree. Hobbies and interests are the second most important aspect in life for women, but are clearly less important than they are for men. The results of a survey on working conditions, which was conducted by the Finnish Centre of Statistics, show that most of the daily housework is carried out by women and therefore they do not have the time for hobbies and interests. However, nearly all household repair work is done by the men, many of whom regard this as a hobby.

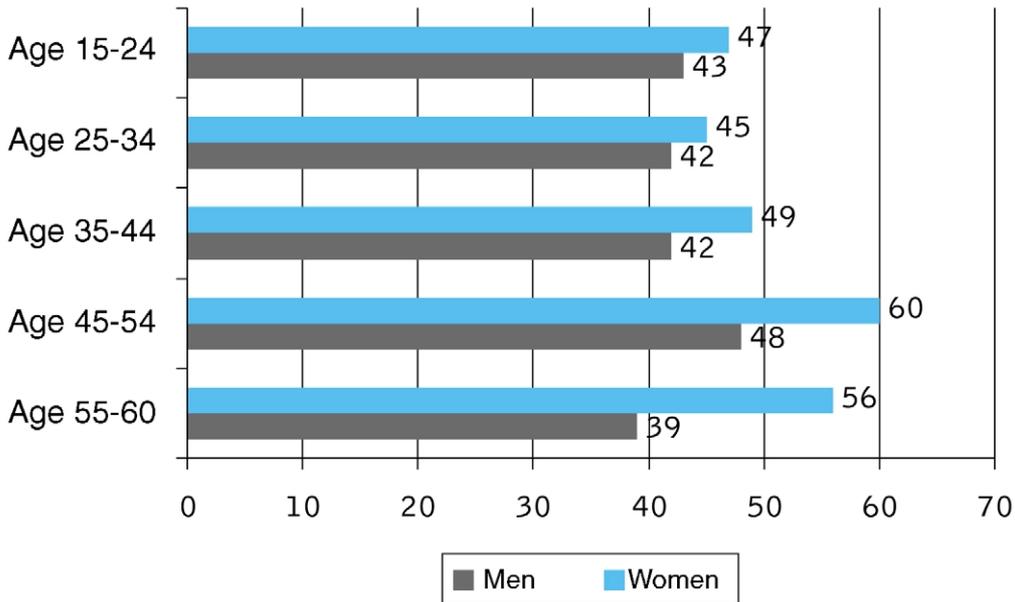
Almost half of the members of the SAK affiliated unions, or 48 %, currently regard work as being very important in their lives. In 1995 the figure for members who held this view was 54 %. However, work is still highly valued and a total of 90 % of the membership think that work is either very important, or fairly important, in their lives. In comparison with the previous survey, fewer men and women are now of the opinion that work is very important, and the figure has fallen more amongst men than amongst women. More women than men still regard work as being important. Work is most perceived as being very important by the 45 to 54 age group. The difference in the value which men and women place on work increases with age. More than half of women, aged 55 or more, still regard work as being very important. Only 39 % of men of the same age regard work as being very important. Those who are unemployed consider work as being slightly more important, (52 % regarding it as being very important) than those who are in employment.

**The central issues in life for the SAK unionised workers, by gender, (regarded as very important, %)**



Membership survey 2000: Men - Women

**The meaning of work to the life of the SAK unionised employee, by gender and age (regarded as very important, %)**



Membership survey 2000: Men - Women

## **Moving towards a middle class identity is slow**

The class self-identification of the SAK members has remained nearly unchanged for the last ten years. Three fifths of the members of SAK affiliated unions, or 61 %, regard themselves as being working class. However, the number of both men and women who identify themselves as being middle class has increased by 3 %. More members began to identify with the middle class during the period 1984 to 1990, than have during the last decade. Two thirds of men and half of all women, regard themselves as being working class. On average, a greater number of members currently regard themselves as belonging to one or another social class than did previously. This is the case despite the fact that in general, it might be thought that in a modern society, class division would have become less evident.

Occupation and position at work influence class identification. The survey indicates that 17 % the women who identify with the middle class, consider themselves to be administrative staff, (only 3 % of those who identify with the working class do so), whilst 5 % classify their work as supervisory or managerial. Similarly, 11 % of the men who identify with the middle class, regard themselves as being administrative staff, (2 % of those with working class identity), and 5 % hold a managerial post. The level of pay also affects class identification. The average monthly wage of the SAK unionised working class woman, in full-time employment, is 1427 euros, whilst the average monthly salary of those women who identify with the middle class is 1513 euros. Amongst men, this difference in pay is nearly 200 euros per month, the average monthly wage of a working class man in full-time employment being 1837 euros whilst the salary of the middle class man is 2023 euros.

Most of those who identify with being working class are employed in industry, whilst the least number is to be found amongst those who are engaged in the private services sector. Two thirds of both the men and women who are employed in the industrial sector identify with the working class, whereas for those who are engaged in the service sector, only half of the women and 58 % of the men so regard themselves. The age of the person significantly affects their own identification with a social class. The younger the person, the less distinct is their identification with any social class. The young are found to think of themselves as being middle class more frequently than do the older people, although they do not classify themselves as being white collar workers any more frequently than do their seniors.

## **The differences between men and women**

### **Division by gender**

According to the results of a survey on working conditions, conducted by the Finnish Centre of Statistics, the division by gender in the labour market is more pronounced in those occupations which are represented by the SAK affiliated unions than is the case in other sectors. Only 12 % of the SAK unionised employees, and 18 % of all employees including SAK members, carry out work which is undertaken by both men and women. The majority is employed in occupations which are clearly divided into work for men and work for women. Due to this division, men and women are in a different position from one another in the world of work. The nature of men's work is different from that of women's work and resultantly many other aspects also differ, for example working conditions, pay, employment contracts, working time and opportunities for training.

### **Training**

Men and women tend to have a different training profile. Women are more likely to hold a matriculation certificate or a college diploma than do their male counterparts. The education of men more commonly consists of comprehensive school and vocational college. The difference in the standard of education is more emphasised in the younger age groups. Training is offered, by the

employer, on a more frequent basis to men than it is to women. Women are more likely than men to feel that they are middle class and white collar workers.

### **Unemployment**

Women experience unemployment more often than men in all age groups. However, men are more likely than women to become long term unemployed.

### **The content of life**

Both the home and work are more important for women than is the case for men. The difference in the importance which is placed on work tends to increase with age. Women have a strong opinion of work as being important, even when they are older, whereas men have less interest in work after the age of 55.

### **Wages and salaries**

Women in full-time employment earn only 77 % of the earnings of men. At the height of her career, at the age of fifty, the average woman has not reached even the starting salary of a young man. Graduation from a college or university does not lift a woman into the earnings bracket in which men, with no vocational qualifications, are to be found. The primary reason for this is that men and women tend to work in different occupations. The most highly educated women work in the public sector, in which the level of pay is lower than that of other sectors. The majority of men work in industry, in which the wages are higher and where various, performance related, bonus pay systems have become more frequent. Productivity cannot be measured in the service occupations, in which women are typically to be found, in the same way as that of the male dominated industrial occupations.

### **Atypical employment contracts**

One third of women, but only one fifth of men, are in other than permanent, full-time employment. Short-term contracts have become more common amongst both men and women, but these are more often, in all sectors, applied to women rather than to men. Part time working has increased amongst women but has remained stable for men. The differences in the nature of employment, between men and women, derive from the fact that they work in different sectors. Part time work is commonly found in the private services sector and short-term contracts in the public sector.

### **The size of the workplace and shop stewards**

Women tend to work in smaller workplaces than men. One third of women and one fifth of men are employed in a workplace which has less than 10 employees. One quarter of men is employed in a workplace which has 200 or more employees, whilst only 16 % of women will be found in a workplace of this size. The visibility of the trade union branch depends on the size of the workplace. There are fewer shop stewards at the smaller workplace than there are in larger units. In total, 62 % of women, and 70 % of men, are employed in a workplace in which there is the certainty of the existence of a shop steward.

### **The nature of work and the opportunities for control**

Women interact more with other people in all sectors, including industry, than do men. Repetitive work sequences are also clearly more frequently to be found in women's occupations than in those of men. In this respect, the greatest differences appear amongst industrial workers, as in industry 47 % of women, and only 27 % of men, are involved in repetitive work for a minimum of three quarters of their working time. Women experience stress at work more often than men. For at least three quarters of their working time, 30 % of women work under such pressure that they are unable to talk with anyone, or to think of anything, apart from their work, whilst for men the figure is 21 %.

Men have more control over their work than women. In 1995 the opportunities for such control were equal for men and women, but since then the situation has deteriorated for women, whilst it has remained unchanged for men.

### **The goals of the employee**

A good level of pay is a more important goal for men than it is for women. Pay is the primary goal for 29 % of men, though only for 18 % of women. Women put the permanence of their job, interesting work and pleasant colleagues at a slightly higher level than do men.

### **Thoughts on future employment prospects**

Men are more confident about their own future than are women, 49 % of men and 38 % of women not being worried about the future. Women are more anxious about being unemployed, and about their ability than are men. However, men, more often than women, would consider giving up work. This difference is particularly marked amongst those over 55 years of age. In this group 60 % of men, but only 38 % of women, would consider leaving work.

### **Trade union membership**

The unemployment benefit is the most important reason for women to join a trade union, (43 %), whilst efficient bargaining is the factor which men value most highly, (44 %). In addition, the concept of 'the trade union providing security in life' is more significant for women, of whom 17 % think that this is the most important aspect, than for men, only 10 % of whom regard it as being the most important. Women have joined a trade union on the basis of their personal initiative more often than men, for whom a suggestion by the shop steward has been a decisive factor in joining.

### **Evaluation and the function of the trade union**

Men are more satisfied than are women with the results of trade union bargaining. The greatest differences in satisfaction appear in the results which relate to working time, unemployment fund services, health and safety issues and to the struggle against the increased use of part time or short term contract working. In these issues women do not give the trade unions the high evaluation points as do men. Women expect action from the trade union movement in bridging the earnings gap between men and women, in safeguarding public services and in improving training opportunities.

### **The SAK unionised woman is close to people**

Three quarters of SAK unionised women work in the service sector. Half of these are employed by a private employer and the remaining half work in the public sector. The largest number are employed by the local authorities. In the private services sector, shops, hotels and restaurants are the largest employers of women. One in four works in an industrial occupation. The largest industrial employers of women consist of the metal industry, the food processing industry and the textile and garment industry.

The average female member of a SAK affiliated union is 43 years of age, has had a primary school education and has attended a vocational course or vocational college. The level of education amongst women is largely dependent upon their age group. Of those who are aged under 25, one third have matriculated whilst a quarter hold a vocational college diploma or some higher qualification. Only between 3 % and 4 % of those over the age of 55 have received this level of education.

Slightly more than half, or 56 %, of women are in permanent day-time employment. Working in two shifts is the second most common arrangement amongst women, with one in every five being involved in this type of working. The two shift system is most frequently used in the private services

sector, in which women also work in the evening, morning and at night. In addition, women who are employed in industry may also work a three shift system.

Women tend to work in the smaller workplaces. One in every three women is employed at a workplace which has fewer than 10 employees, whilst one in four works where there are between 10 and 29 employees. One half of women are very, or fairly, interested in the concerns of the workplace, such as productivity, profitability and planning. The number of female employees who have an interest in such issues as these has decreased by 10 % over a period of five years. One in every three women considers that a pleasant working environment is important and is of the opinion that the management values the employees. One woman in six, however, believes that her own goals are not matched by those of the management.

Frequent interaction with other people is typical in women's work and 72 % of them are in contact with people for most of their working time. Repetitive work sequences, during at least three quarters of the working time, are conducted by 39 % of women, and by 50 % of those who work in industry. Work which requires a repetitive movement and action is most commonly conducted by younger women and also by those who are over 55 years of age.

A trade union presence at a workplace in which most of the employees are women has lessened, whilst the average size of the workplace has been reduced. 62 % of women know that there is a shop steward in the workplace, or are generally aware that their occupation is represented by a shop steward. The degree of such awareness has fallen by 10 % over five years. Only 48 % of women, in the private services sector, at present have the services of a shop steward.

Women do not, throughout the labour market, see their future as being particularly positive. One in three women is worried about the possibilities of being made redundant, losing their health or about their lack of sufficient ability and skill. Only slightly over one third of women, (38 %), do not worry about the future. Over a third, (37 %), feel that they need further training in their current job and over two fifths of them, (43 %), are prepared to think about being retrained for another type of occupation. Nevertheless, women are willing to continue working, only 16 % being prepared to consider giving up working completely, and even of those over 55 years of age, only 38 % are thinking of stopping work.

For women, the most important reasons for being a member of a trade union consist of the earnings related unemployment benefit, (38 %), and the representation of the interests of the workers by the union, (37 %). Women on short-term contracts place a greater emphasis on the unemployment benefit. In total, 43 % of women think that the unemployment benefit system is of primary importance, whilst one in three considers that the efficient representation of interests is the most important union service. Nearly 20 % regard the security, which the trade unions offer to their membership, as being the most important reason for joining. This aspect is particularly emphasised by public sector employees who are over 45 years of age. The unemployment benefit system is given as the primary reason for joining by those women who are under 45, and the representation of interests by those in the over 45 age group.

### **The SAK unionised man - working with machinery**

Two thirds of men earn their living either in industry or in the construction trades. Numerically the largest employers of male workers in industry are in the metal, construction, and wood and paper sectors. A quarter of men are employed in the private services sector. Various transport, sales and warehousing jobs are common occupations for men in the service sector. One tenth of men work in the public sector, and are mostly employed by a local authority. Transport and maintenance jobs are typical occupations for men in the public sector.

The average SAK unionised man is 42 years of age, has a basic or primary school education and has attended a vocational college. Seven per cent hold the matriculation certificate and another seven per cent have graduated from a college or university.

Over half of the men (59 %) have a regular daytime job. A full-time day job is most common in the public sector and in industry. One in four men works on a 2 or 3 shift system, the type of employment most commonly found in industry. In the private services sector only 43 % of men are employed in a regular daytime job. This figure is influenced by the fact that in the transport sector, which is a typical source of male employment, the working hours are extremely varied.

One in four men works at a large workplace, in which there are more than 200 employees. However, one in five men is employed in a small workplace whose employees number below 10. The number of small workplaces has clearly increased during the last fifteen years. 56 % of men are very or fairly interested in the concerns of their workplace, such as productivity and planning. A quarter of men think that their own goals match those of the management. It is more common for men in the industrial occupations to be employed at a workplace in which the emphasis is placed on efficiency, than it is for those workers in other sectors of employment. Two thirds of men are of the opinion that the employers value efficiency rather than any other factor.

A trade union presence is well visible at those workplaces in which the majority of the employees are male. 70 % of all male employees are represented by a shop steward. The representation of the interests of the workers, and communication with the workforce, clearly benefit from the fact that a shop steward is present. The method to be used in negotiating pay rises, divides the opinions of the men. One in two would favour negotiations for pay increases to take place at the workplace, whereas the remainder would prefer the bargaining to be conducted at the union level. Men under the age of 25 tend to believe in their own negotiating skills, and as many as 38 % of these would be prepared to negotiate their own pay increases, whereas only 14 % of men over 55 years of age would care to conduct their own negotiations.

Men look for job security and permanence of work. One in every two men now regards this as his most important concern. Only ten years ago, half of all men placed a good wage in the first position of importance. In the year 2000, this is the most important factor for only 29 % of men. Men who are in industrial occupations are the most highly paid of the members of the SAK affiliated unions, and these value the pay factor more highly than do the other groups.

Men tend to have a bright vision of their own future. Half of them are not at all concerned about their future in the labour market. One in five would consider starting their own business, and 38 % would be prepared to think about training for a different occupation. Whilst a quarter of men are worried about becoming redundant, the same proportion are prepared to consider stopping work completely and this applies to as many as 60 % of those who are over 55 years old.

Men tend to see unionisation as being an efficient method for the defence and advancement of the interests of the workers, and regard this as being the main reason for their membership of a trade union. This view is held by 44 % of men, whilst 37 % of them regard the earnings related unemployment benefit system as being the most important reason for being a member. The reasons for trade union membership are dependent on the age of the employee and on the change in his position on the labour market because of his age. The younger workers are employed on a short term contract basis with more frequency than are the older workers and therefore men who are below the age of 35 tend to regard unemployment benefits as being the most important reason for their membership of a trade union. Those who are over 45 give precedence to the efficient representation of the interests of workers.

## **The shop steward - the backbone of the trade union movement**

Some 90,000 people, or 8 % of the entire membership of SAK, hold a position as a trade union representative. Of these, 30,000 are shop stewards, another 30,000 are health and safety reps whilst the remaining 30,000 consist of deputy shop stewards and of members who hold various positions in the branches, local organisations and joint bodies. The number of shop stewards, and their percentage of the membership, has remained virtually unchanged for the last twenty years.

The coverage which is offered by the shop steward system has weakened, for the reason that workplaces have become smaller and it is not always possible to dedicate an individual shop steward to a small workplace. Judging by the experiences of shop stewards, there are more workplaces in which the rate of unionisation is growing, rather than those in which it is falling. In three quarters of all workplaces, the rate of unionisation has remained unchanged.

The average age of the union rep is 45 years, which is a couple of years more than that of the average age of the membership in general. The level of knowledge amongst the shop stewards, of matters which relate to the trade union movement and to their own vocation, has risen to a greater extent than it has amongst the membership as a whole. Similarly, the shop stewards have taken to using information technology more readily than has the average member and computer equipment is commonplace today to the majority of shop stewards. Identification with a social class is not a complicated matter for the shop steward as three in four shop stewards regard themselves as working class, which exceeds the average figure within the total membership.

One in three of trade unions representatives, and 30 % of shop stewards are currently women. The percentage of women reps has decreased during the last five years in the public sector whilst other sectors have seen an increase. While the number of female shop stewards has increased in industry, the figure has decreased in the private services sector and in the public sector. The participation of women in trade union events has declined. Only 30 % of female members participated in trade union events during the year 2000, whereas in 1995 the corresponding figure was 37 %. The growth in atypical employment, along with an increase in pressure at work, have been contributory factors to the fall in trade union activity amongst women workers.

### **The trade union is trusted**

In practice, the attitude of the Finnish employer towards the employee varies somewhat. The best workplaces in Finland are equal to the best anywhere in the world, in every aspect, but in the worst, non-advanced workplaces, neither the terms and conditions of collective agreements nor the legislated minimum standards are honoured. In this way the work of the shop steward varies from one workplace to the next. In non-advanced workplaces the shop steward is obliged to concentrate on finding solutions to the problems of individual employees and on monitoring adherence to the collective agreement, whilst in the advanced workplaces the shop steward is able, primarily, to focus the effort on the improvement, both of working practices and other activities, at the workplace.

Within the workplace, the employees enjoy the best industrial relations with their immediate supervisors, and overall the best industrial relations exist in the public sector. Bargaining is most active in the private sector. The personnel are represented on the management bodies in slightly over half of all workplaces. The greatest benefit that this has produced consists of an improvement in both information and the consultation of the workforce.

The trade union representatives are dedicated trade unionists. They are committed to the activities and the goals of the trade union movement. Their involvement with the trade union movement is not materialistic - they do not seek personal privilege - they are interested both in having an active influence and in active participation. Defending the interests of the workers is the main reason which is given for being unionised for two thirds of shop stewards, whilst the second most important reason is the desire to participate in the improvement of the conditions of work. Thirdly, is the wish

to support the goals of the trade union movement within society. Defending the unemployment benefit system is regarded as a primary task of the trade union movement.

Union branches are considered to be important by the shop stewards and they value the role of the branch in the daily representation of the interests of the workers. Shop stewards support the system of collective bargaining rather than individualism, and security in the form of the collective agreement is expected from the trade union. The shop stewards believe that the principles of pay and working time should be covered by national collective agreements, although benefits which are in excess of national agreements could be negotiated at a local level.

The shop stewards hold a positive view of their own union and of its successes in representing the interests of the membership in the labour market, and they hold a more positive view on these concerns than does the average member. The shop stewards consider that the least successful endeavours of their respective unions have been those which are aimed at curtailing the use of part time working and short-term contracts and in defending jobs. The majority of shop stewards have contacted their union in problem situations and nearly 90 % of them are satisfied with the expertise which the union was able to provide.

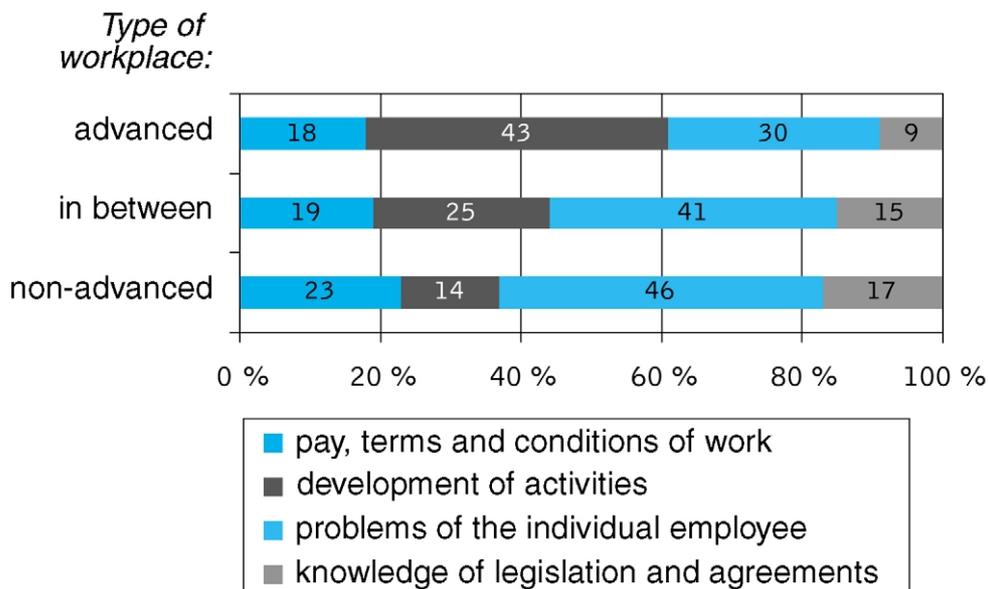
The most important target for further development is clearly the unemployment fund system which is managed by the unions. Assistance, in the form of advice and expertise, along with trade union training, takes the next position in the order of importance of the union services. Thus the services that the unions offer, correspond rather well with the expectations of the shop stewards.

The range of the work of the shop steward has been affected by the changes which have been implemented in almost half of the workplaces, in three quarters of which the field of activity of the shop steward having been curtailed. The shop stewards are interested in the concerns of their workplace, and, in advanced workplaces, participation in the development of the work, and in its organisation, is the central task of the shop steward.

The shop stewards have more control over their own work than have the rank and file members over theirs. As far as personal work conditions are concerned, the difference in the extent of control is only small, but the difference is clearly greater in those matters which are connected, in one way or another, to the role of the shop steward, such as methods of working and the purchase of equipment.

The solving of the problem situations of the individual worker, is the most likely factor to engage the shop steward. The second most likely area of activity in which the shop steward will be involved is the development of work and operations at the workplace. One quarter of all shop stewards participate, on a monthly basis, in negotiations on work organisation, on the purchase of new machinery and equipment, and on similar matters. The shop stewards in the industrial sector take part even more frequently in negotiations of this nature.

***In which area of activity the shop steward was most involved during the last year (%)***



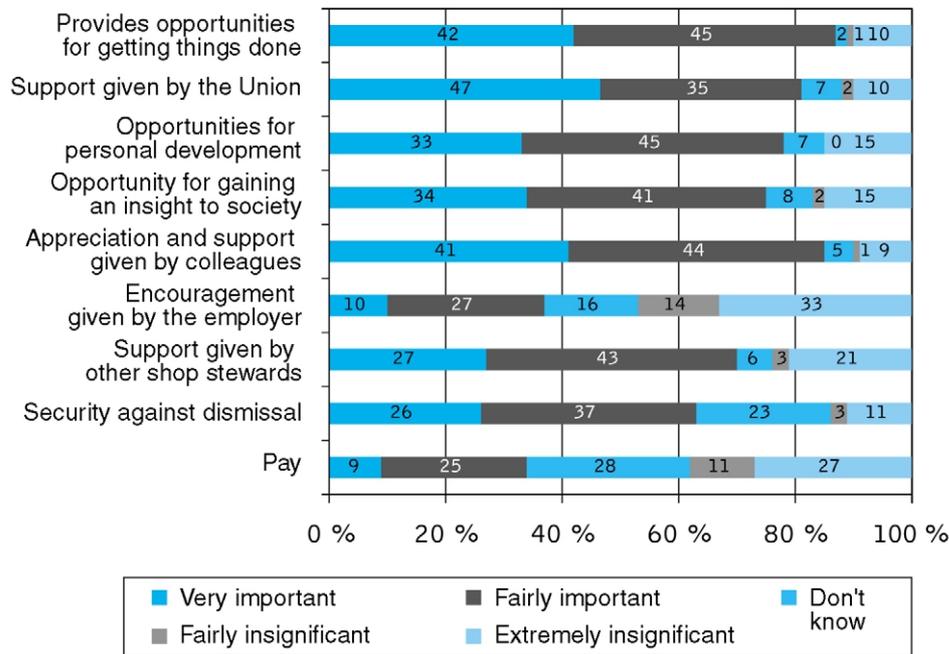
The union is the most important source of support for the shop steward on those occasions when a problem situation, which involves a union member, has arisen, and 80 % of shop stewards will expect this support from their union. Nearly 40 % of shop stewards have the support of a branch, a workshop group or a union representative's group at the workplace. Two thirds of shop stewards have joint activities organised for them, by their branch.

The shop stewards, more often than the rank and file members, consider that the workers within the workplace form a united group, which, for at least some of the time, will support the shop steward. The shop stewards are of the opinion that in general, they are rather good at managing the various areas of the negotiations which are a part of their duties.

Bargaining at a local level has steadily increased during the decade of the 1990's, primarily as the result of initiatives which have been proposed by the employer, but also because, towards the end of the decade, the employees have shown more interest in local bargaining. However, less information has been forthcoming from the employer, to the employees, on matters which are subject to local bargaining. Only some 40 % of shop stewards feel that they are in an equal position with the employer when in a negotiating situation. Of the other groups of employees at the workplace the members of STTK, the Finnish Confederation of Salaried Employees, are felt to be closer than are those of AKAVA, the Confederation of Unions for Academic Professionals in Finland.

The best aspect of being a shop steward consists of the appreciation and support which is given by colleagues, and following this is the fact that it provides opportunities for actually getting things done. Thirdly is the support which is given by the union. The shop stewards also appreciate the opportunity, which is offered by their role, to gain an insight into the world of work and into society in general. The most stressful aspects of the work of the shop steward consists of the negative attitude of the employer and of the indifference, which is occasionally displayed by colleagues, towards the interests of the workers who are being represented.

**The best aspects of being a shop steward (%)**



The shop stewards have a more secure feeling than does the average union member regarding their position on the labour market. Slightly more than one half of the current shop stewards are certain to continue in their duties. Some 6 % have decided to resign and the remainder have not yet come to a decision.

A variety of specific actions, for different situations, are needed for the strengthening of the shop steward system. An expansion of the shop steward system at the small workplace would require a significant degree of organisational support by both the local branch and the union, the encouragement of the workers and, in addition, managing to convince the employer of the benefits which are to be gained from streamlined bargaining relations. If it is not possible to nominate a shop steward, the union should, as a minimum measure, ensure that trade union information reaches the smallest of workplaces in that sector which it represents. Newly appointed shop stewards should not just be forgotten once they have been elected, but should be encouraged in their work, whilst new and interesting avenues are opened up to them. The essential facts about the role of the shop steward can be taught in an enjoyable and an entertaining manner. Collective agreements should be drawn up in a clear language, which will make them easily comprehensible even to the novice shop steward.

The support of the entire trade union movement will be required for the improvement of practices at the non-advanced workplaces, at which the implementation of even those minimum standards, which have been laid down by legislation and agreements, is not at all certain. At such workplaces in particular, collective agreements which have been written in a clear and easily understood language, alongside rising standards, are highly valued. At these workplaces the unions are expected to provide an essentially traditional representation.

At advanced workplaces, actions for the further, equal opportunity development of the unit, are needed, along with information and discussion on the changing trends in the world of work in the industrialised countries. Joint cooperation between shop stewards is also required at such workplaces, alongside comprehensive, specialised trade union training on production and distribution issues. In addition a stronger bargaining status is needed, primarily in connection with

outsourcing and networking. As globalisation spreads, so must the works councils of the multinational companies be extended to cover the whole world.

**Reasons for being unionised, in 1995 and in 2000  
(considered good descriptions, %)**

	1995			2000		
	<i>Convenor / shop steward</i>	<i>Union reps, (other)</i>	<i>Rank &amp; File Member</i>	<i>Convenor / shop steward</i>	<i>Union reps (other)</i>	<i>Rank &amp; File Member</i>
Defending the rights of the workers	66	61	47	66	61	46
Earnings related unemployment benefits	49	54	68	45	61	67
Provides security in life	35	24	37	36	40	38
Wants to support the goals of the trade union movement in society	56	41	28	50	39	22
Several colleagues are trade union members	51	49	47	48	44	42
In practice one must join a union to be accepted by one's colleagues	6	12	18	8	10	12
Wants to participate in improving working conditions	52	47	28	60	46	23

## **Annexe 1**

### **THE SAK AFFILIATED UNIONS**

AKU, the Automobile and Allied Sales Personnel Union

AKT, Finnish Transport Workers' Union

IAU, Air Transport Union

Chemical Workers' Union

KTV, Trade Union for the Municipal Sector

Metalworkers' Union

PAM, Service Unions United

Paperworkers' Union

Postal Workers' Union

Wood and Allied Workers' Union

Construction Trade Union

Finnish Railwaymen's Union

Railway Salaried Staff's Union

SEL, Finnish Foodstuff Workers' Union

SM-U, Finnish Seamen's Union

Finnish Musicians' Union

Finnish Social Democratic Journalists' Union

Finnish Electrical Workers' Union

Textile and Garment Workers' Union

VTY, Joint Organisation of State Employees

Finnish Locomotive Men's Union

Finnish Media Union

General Union of Journalists

### **The Affiliated Unions of the Joint Organisation of State Employees (VTY)**

KTV, Trade Union for the Municipal Sector

(KTV is affiliated to the VTY for those members who are employed by the government or local authorities)

Coastguard Union

Metalworkers' Union

(Metalworkers' Union is affiliated to the VTY for those members who are employed by the government)

SM-U, Finnish Seamen's Union

Finnish Customs Officers' Union

VAL, the Finnish National Union of State Employees and Special Services

VVL, Finnish Prison Officers' Union

### **The Affiliated Unions of PaU, the Service Sector Union**

AKU, the Automobile and Allied Sales Personnel Union

KEY, Union of Foremen in Commerce  
(Affiliated to PaU only)

PAM, Service Unions United