

TRADE UNION LIBRARY AND  
EDUCATION CENTRE

# Building effective union service delivery

## *The results of a survey of four affiliates*

**Samuel Denga**  
September 2003

**N A L E D I**

NATIONAL LABOUR & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE



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By  
*Samuel Denga*



*While all NALEDI publications adopt a pro-labour perspective,  
their conclusions do not represent the policies of COSATU*

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# Introduction and background

Organising new and maintaining existing members is central to the strength of trade unions. In a context where union densities are in decline across the world, the focus on organising, and especially on maintaining members, has increased. To maintain membership, unions are increasingly focusing their attention on the provision of services to members.

The September Commission report and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) National Congress in 2000 resolved that there must be organisational renewal within COSATU affiliates. Organisational renewal includes providing members with a high level of service. Resolutions envisaged each COSATU affiliate establishing capacity to monitor service delivery to members on a regular basis and deal with problems and complaints as soon as they arise. Improved service starts by listening to members and understanding what they want, why they joined the union and how the union addresses their needs, both at the workplace and, more broadly, in society as a whole. This survey was undertaken to

assist four affiliates in evaluating their members' perception of the service that they receive from their union.

The central research questions addressed in this study focused on:

- The services that workers want from their unions;
- Whether unions are providing the right kinds of services;
- Whether workers are satisfied with the services they receive from the union.

Due to job losses across most South African sectors, unions need to both expand membership into new areas to counter the effects of job losses and consolidate existing membership by ensuring quality service to them.

This survey sets out to evaluate four affiliates' members' views on a range of issues related to quality service. This survey is a sounding board to assist unions in determining where improvements can be made to satisfy their members' needs.

## Objectives of this study

The main objectives of this study were to:

- Assist trade unions in assessing service delivery mechanisms;
- Create awareness among unions about the importance of sustained service delivery to members;
- Improve trade unions' understanding of service delivery issues in relation to sustaining membership;
- Ensure proper representation of women's voice in issues of service delivery.

The key questions of this study were:

- What services and support do members want from unions?
- Are members getting the services and support they want from the unions?
- Has service delivery within the unions improved or worsened in the past few years?
- What factors influence workers' decision-making in terms of joining or leaving their union?
- What strategies have been implemented by unions to deliver better services to members?
- What do members think should be done to improve service delivery in their unions?

The results are hoped to assist unions in focusing on those areas that are key to members' satisfaction with their union across service, public and manufacturing sector affiliates. Although the key outputs of the survey are reports to the affiliates on the responses of their members, this report should assist all unions in the process of identifying factors that will affect members' satisfaction with the services provided by the union. The survey is part of a larger project that focuses on the renewal of trade union affiliates in South Africa. As part of this process there will be a larger study commissioned later this year.

## Research methodology

The survey was conducted from February to June 2003. In terms of methodology, the study was conducted through face-to-face interviews with workers at their place of work. Six fieldworkers conducted 566 interviews in Johannesburg, Tshwane and Ekurhuleni.

Trade unions that participated in the study were:

- NUMSA (National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa). NUMSA organises in engineering, motor, tyre, rubber and auto assembly industry.
- SACCAWU (South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union). This union organises in the service industry, commercial, catering, tourism, hospitality and finance sectors.
- SADTU (South African Democratic Teachers' Union). SADTU organises in public and private primary and secondary schools, technikons, teacher training colleges and university academic staff.
- POPCRU (Police, Prisons Civil Rights Union). This union organises in South African Police Services, correctional services (prisons) and traffic departments.

Each union is to receive a detailed report on the results by their union to assist them in identifying the key issues unique to their union.

A reference group was formed consisting of all unions that participated in the study as well as COSATU. The reference group helped in brainstorming the questionnaire, trouble-shooting during the course of the study, and giving NALEDI names of companies or plants where interviews could take place.

## Limitations of the study

Due to budget and time constraints, the study was conducted only in Gauteng. In addition, the study was limited in terms of affiliates interviewed. Nevertheless it is a substantial survey which covers manufacturing, service and public sector employees and has generated some key

findings that will assist unions in assessing and developing strategies to satisfy their members. It will feed into the broader Organisational Renewal Project, where it can be fine-tuned and improved upon, as well as expanded to wider membership.

# Respondents’ profile: Who we surveyed

Before launching into the findings of the report around service delivery, it is important to develop a profile of exactly who was interviewed.

The results reflected in this report are based on the views of 566 workers. Table 1 shows the number of responses (members interviewed) per union. The target column shows the ideal number of interviews that would have given the study a half public sector, half private sector (with a two to one split between manufacturing and services) response rate. The most significant reason for not meeting the target of 600 respondents was the

reluctance of management to allow field workers to interview workers.

About 34% of the responses were from POPCRU, 33% from NUMSA, 17% from SADTU and 16% from SACCAWU.

Another target for this study was to try to achieve a 50-50 split between male and female respondents. Of those who took part in the survey, 52% were males and 48% were females. Figure 1 shows the gender classification of respondents.

The gender distribution was affected by the membership of the various affiliates. The gender distribution per union can be seen in Table 2.

Table 1: Respondents by affiliate			
Name of affiliate	Responses	% of responses	Target
1. NUMSA	186	33%	200
2. POPCRU	191	34%	200
3. SADTU	96	17%	100
4. SACCAWU	93	16%	100
Total	566	100%	600

Table 2: Gender by affiliate				
Name of union	Males (n)	% of Males	Females (n)	% of females
1. NUMSA	146	78%	40	21%
2. POPCRU	107	56%	84	44%
3. SADTU	23	24%	73	76%
4. SACCAWU	20	21%	73	79%
Total	296	100%	270	100%

Figure 1: Gender of respondents

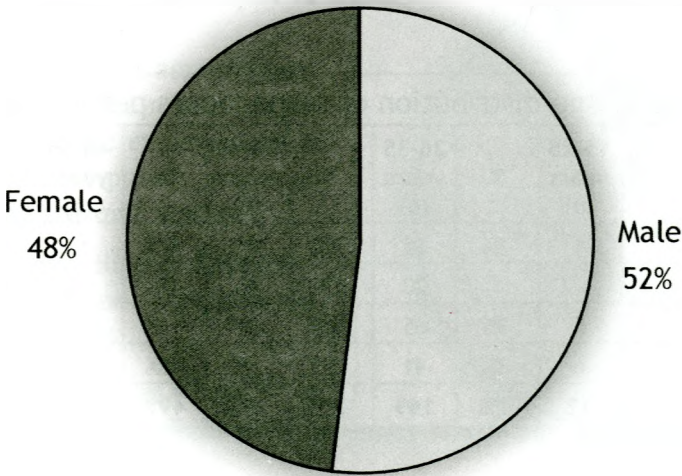
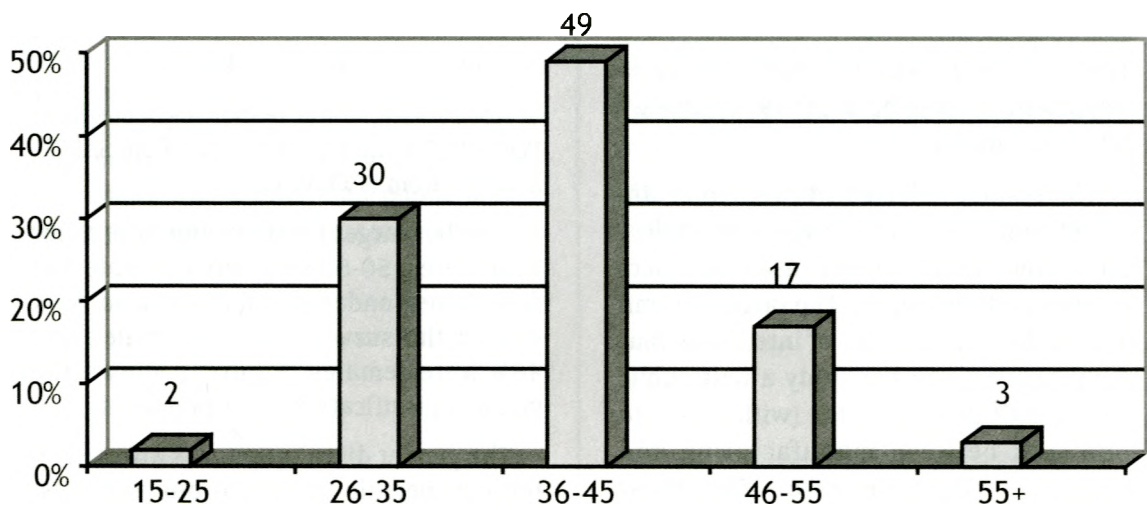


Figure 2: Age of respondents



The majority of females were from SACCAWU (79%) followed by SADTU (76%). On the other hand, the majority of males were from NUMSA (78%) followed by POPCRU (56%). These figures are in line with the gender composition of these affiliates.

The age distribution of the respondents can be seen in Figure 2.

About 49% of the respondents fall within the 36 to 45 years old category, followed by 30% between 26 and 35 years old. The low level of interviewees in the lowest age category is in line with Labour Force Survey, which shows high rates of unemployment amongst youth. The implication is that union members are getting older – not because youth do not join unions but because they do not have jobs.

The age distribution of respondents per union can be found in Table 3.

The majority of all respondents from four unions fall between 36 and 45 years (49%), followed by 26 to 35 years old (30%). Age 15 to 25 and +55 years have the lowest representation (2%).

The majority of respondents from all four unions are Africans (94%). Figure 3 shows racial classification. The majority of COSATU members are Africans as compared to other racial groups, especially from the four unions that participated in the study and the regions in which the study took place.

About 41% of the respondents have passed Grade 12/STD 10, 23% have a diploma or training certificate, 14% have primary education, 14% have degrees and 6% have passed STD 9/Grade 11 and below. Table 4 shows educational qualifications of respondents.

Table 3: Age distribution of respondents per affiliate

	15-25 years (n)	%	26-35 years (n)	%	36-45 years (n)	%	46-55 years (n)	%	+55 years (n)	%
1. SACCAWU	1	1%	35	38%	44	47%	13	14%		
2. SADTU			28	29%	46	47%	16	17%	6	6%
3. POPCRU	5	3%	65	34%	21	11%	21	11%	2	1%
4. NUMSA	6	3%	41	22%	89	48%	44	24%	6	3%
Total	12	2%	169	30%	277	49%	94	17%	14	2%

Figure 3: Racial group of respondents

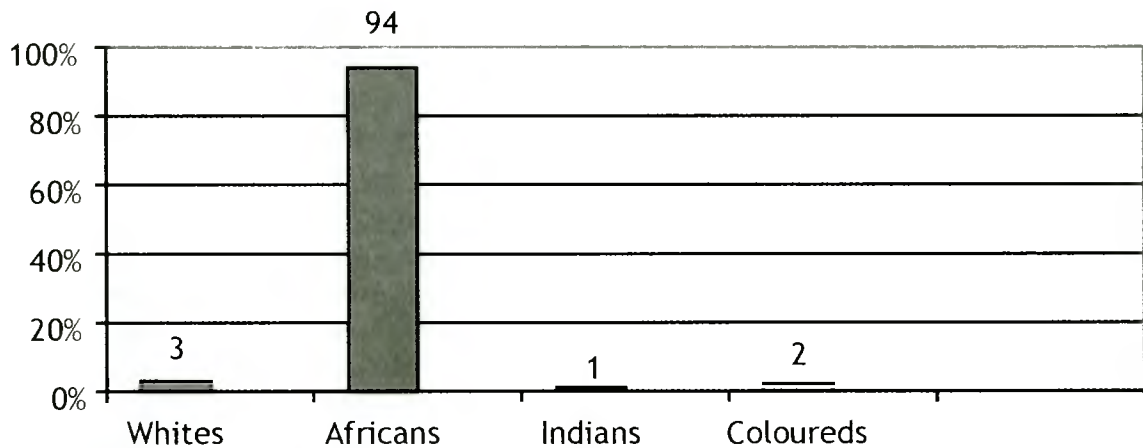


Table 4: Highest educational qualification of respondents

Qualification	Frequency (n)	Percentages (%)
No formal education	5	1%
Primary school (Std 5)	77	13%
Grade 6 to Grade 9	40	11%
Grade 12/Std 10	232	40%
Diploma/Training certificate	131	21%
Degree	79	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>566</b>	<b>100%</b>

This result was skewed by SADTU, which has a high proportion of members who have post-matric/Grade 12 qualifications. In fact only 4.1% of SADTU members surveyed do not have a diploma or a degree. For the bulk of the other affiliates, members mostly have matric/Grade 12 as their highest qualification.

### Employment status and benefits

About 94% of the respondents are employed on a permanent basis. The remaining 6% of those interviewed are employed on a temporary basis. Temporary workers include casual and seasonal workers.

When comparing affiliates, SACCAWU had the highest number of workers on temporary contracts (17%).

It is interesting to note that such a large proportion of the surveyed membership

consists of temporary workers. This shows that affiliates are rising to the challenge and organising a section of workers that are notoriously difficult to organise. The proportion of permanent to temporary

Figure 4: Respondents' contract of work

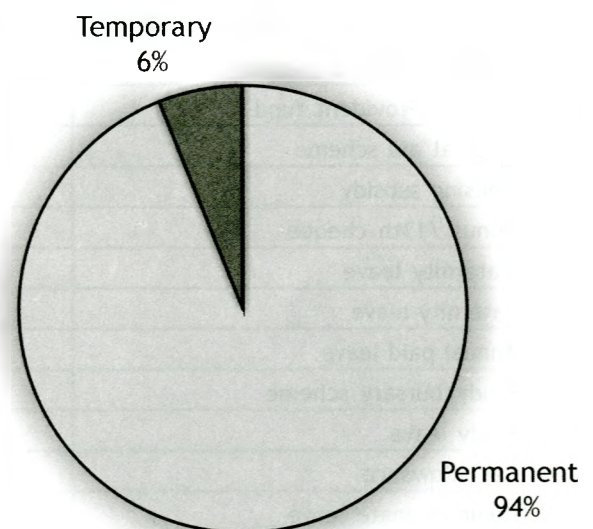


Table 5: Benefits respondents receive

Kind of benefits	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total %
Pension/Provident fund	98%	2%	100%
Medical aid scheme	72%	28%	100%
Housing subsidy	57%	43%	100%
Bonus /13th cheque	84%	17%	100%
Maternity leave	50%	50%	100%
Paternity leave	70%	30%	100%
Annual paid leave	86%	14%	100%
Study/bursary scheme	27%	73%	100%
Study leave	64%	36%	100%
Car allowance	3%	97%	100%
Compassionate leave	80%	20%	100%

workers is also in line with data across the labour market and counters claims that COSATU members are only from a core of permanently employed workers. With the growing trend towards atypical employment, it will become increasingly important for affiliates to develop new methods of representing these members. This is a future challenge that requires strategies from trade unions.

Table 5 shows the responses of workers regarding the benefits that they receive.

The majority of workers (98%) said that they receive provident or pension benefits as part of their employment. Other benefits received by workers were annual paid leave (86%), followed by a bonus or 13th cheque

(84%). About 72% of the respondents reported that they do not receive any study/bursary subsidies. This seems highly inappropriate when taking into consideration the skills shortage and illiteracy in South Africa.

Most of the respondents in all four unions, namely POPCRU, SACCAWU, NUMSA and SADTU, responded that they receive pension/provident fund, bonus/13th cheque, paternity leave, annual paid leave and compassionate leave.

The majority of respondents from the public sector, namely SADTU and POPCRU, receive medical aid schemes and housing subsidies. Private sector respondents are less likely to receive these benefits.

Table 6: Benefits received (by employment status)

Kind of benefits	Permanent	Temporary	Total %
Pension/Provident fund	95%	5%	100%
Medical aid scheme	98%	2%	100%
Housing subsidy	98%	2%	100%
Bonus /13th cheque	96%	4%	100%
Maternity leave	94%	6%	100%
Paternity leave	98%	2%	100%
Annual paid leave	96%	4%	100%
Study/bursary scheme	94%	6%	100%
Study leave	96%	4%	100%
Car allowance	94%	6%	100%
Compassionate leave	96%	4%	100%

Furthermore, the study shows that study/bursary subsidies are only available for a majority of members in SADTU and SACCAWU. Few respondents from POPCRU (26%) and NUMSA (7%) said that they receive study/bursary subsidies.

On the whole, the survey found that the public sector is a more consistent provider of benefits to its employees. This highlights an additional danger of the current process of organisations shifting ownership from public to private hands, that not only may there be a decline in services and retrenchments, but also that the private sector is less likely to offer benefits to employees.

Table 6 considers the provision of benefits by the employment status of respondents.

The results of the survey show that most of the respondents working on a temporary basis do not receive any benefits at all. This again highlights how workers who are employed on a temporary basis have an additional burden of lower wages and working conditions to add to the insecurity of their jobs. The challenge for unions is to re-engage in the past struggles that resulted in the extension of benefits to their permanent members, but this time for their temporary employed members.

## Respondents rate their union's services

In an attempt to determine where workers need the most assistance, the survey investigated the kind of problems that workers face at the workplace. About 91% of the workers are worried about the wages they receive from their work. This emphasised the need for unions to focus continually on improving the material lot of their members. It also highlights the need for broader campaigns such as COSATU's Living Wage campaign. Other problems encountered by workers are: insufficient benefits; lack of promotion; poor working conditions and lack of training. Table 7 ranks the responses from workers.

The problem of racism is common in private sector unions such as NUMSA (82%) and SACCAWU (45%), and less likely to be an issue for public sector respondents.

SACCAWU and NUMSA members are more likely to perceive a lack of benefits in their working environment.

POPCRU members were most likely (79%) to argue that there is a lack of promotion in their workplace.

NUMSA members (84%) and SACCAWU (55%) were more concerned about the poor treatment they receive from their managers.

**Table 7: Most common problems faced at the workplace**

Kind of benefits	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total %
1. Low wages	91%	9%	100%
2. Low benefits	82%	18%	100%
3. Lack of promotion	70%	30%	100%
4. Poor working conditions	64%	36%	100%
5. Bad management	59%	41%	100%
6. Poor treatment by management	58%	42%	100%
7. Lack of training	58%	42%	100%
8. Racism	47%	53%	100%
9. Weak trade union	37%	63%	100%
10. Gender discrimination	25%	75%	100%
11. Unfair disciplinary cases	37%	63%	100%

**Table 8: Most common problems at the workplace (by gender)**

Kind of problems	Males (Yes)	Females (Yes)
1. Low wages	53%	47%
2. Poor working conditions	56%	44%
3. Racism	65%	36%
4. Gender discrimination	48%	52%
5. Low benefits	54%	46%
6. Poor treatment by management	57%	43%
7. Unfair disciplinary cases	36%	64%
8. Lack of training	57%	43%
9. Lack of promotion	59%	41%
10. Weak trade union	48%	52%
11. Bad management	58%	42%

About 89% of NUMSA members said that a major problem they face at the workplace is bad management.

Although it is one of the lowest responses, just over a third of workers (37%) said that they suffer from a weak trade union in their workplace.

Table 8 below compares the opinions of men and women on the same issue.

Interestingly, men are more likely to experience racism at the workplace, with 65% experiencing racism as opposed to only 36% amongst women.

Women, on the other hand, are more likely to face the problem of unfair labour practices, with 64% of women saying they have experienced unfair labour practices as opposed to 36% of men. One reason for this may relate to dismissals due to maternity issues. It is interesting to note that women and men perceive the level of gender discrimination at their workplace at the same rate.

These are all issues which will receive increased attention in future studies, in an effort to seek greater clarity.

When asked whether their trade union had been successful in solving the problems they had identified at the workplace, 58% of the respondents said that their trade union helped them to solve the problems they faced, while 42% said that the union had been unsuccessful. This figure seems surprisingly high, and requires further investigation. Does the result relate to the endemic and pervasive nature of these problems at the workplace, or a perceived failure on the part of the union? In later sections of this report it seems that members are satisfied with their union's engagement with issues, perhaps pointing to the difficult struggle that lies ahead in transforming the South African workplace.

Table 9 shows the results when compared between affiliates.

The majority of NUMSA (83%) and SACCAWU (65%) respondents said that

Figure 5: Did the union help to solve these problems?

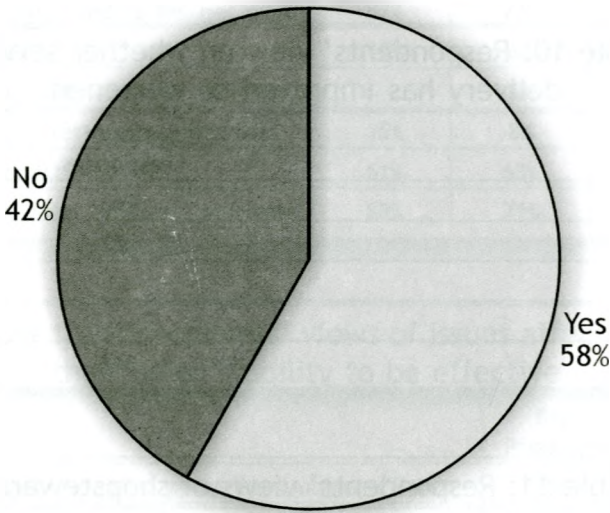


Table 9: Views on whether union successfully solved problem (by affiliate)			
Name of affiliate	Yes	No	Total %
1. NUMSA	83%	17%	100%
2. POPCRU	35%	65%	100%
3. SADTU	48%	52%	100%
4. SACCAWU	65%	35%	100%

their unions have helped them to solve work-related problems. On the other hand, 65% of POPCRU respondents and 52% of SADTU respondents said that their union had not solved work-related problems. This is probably an indication of how difficult it is to tackle the issue of transformation in large-scale government bureaucracies. This is definitely a challenge that needs to be met by public sector unions.

Respondents were then asked if service delivery to members has improved or worsened since they have been members of their union.

Table 10 shows that 48% of respondents said that service delivery has improved, whereas 33% said that it has stayed the same. Only 11% said that service delivery within their union has worsened.

This finding is probably one of the most significant of the study. There is often talk of the demise of trade union service, yet almost half the respondents believe that service delivery has actually improved since they joined the union. However, results of our survey showed that in one

union a majority of members surveyed believed that there had been a decline in service. The results of the overall picture would have been more positive if the negative results of this union's members were excluded from the study.

Although there is a high degree of variation between trade unions, we show later that about 74% of respondents agree or strongly agree that unions have been successful in negotiating basic conditions and union rights for workers. This result is one of the most significant, representing a high level of satisfaction and confidence amongst respondents.

Only 41% of respondents agree or strongly agree that if unions are giving members poor service, their work will be taken by legal consultants. This shows that the role of the union is seen as central to defending the rights of workers. About 66% of POPCRU, 61% of SACCAWU and 55% of SADTU agree or strongly agree that the work of the unions will be taken by legal consultants in the future if they are giving members poor service. The majority of age

Table 10: Respondents' view on whether service delivery has improved or worsened		
	No. of responses	% of responses
Improved	263	48%
Stayed the same	182	33%
Got worse	61	11%
Don't know	41	7%
Total	566	100%

Table 11: Respondents' views of shopstewards				
	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't know (%)	Total (%)
1. My shopsteward is committed to his/her work	82%	7%	11%	100%
2. My shopsteward is lazy	3%	74%	22%	100%
3. My shopsteward is corrupt	3%	73%	24%	100%
4. My shopsteward looks after his/her interest	13%	60%	27%	100%
5. My shopsteward is honest	70%	5%	29%	100%
6. My shopsteward looks after workers' interests	82%	6%	12%	100%

group 36 to 45 years (85%) and 26 to 35 years (76%) agree or strongly agree that the work of unions will be taken by legal consultants in the future if their members receive poor service.

The majority of respondents (77%) agree or strongly agree that their shopstewards represent them effectively in the workplace. Respondents were asked further about the behaviour of their shopstewards at the workplace. The responses are recorded in Table 11.

From Table 11, it seems clear that workers have very positive attitudes towards their shopstewards. The majority of workers (82%) said that their shopstewards are committed to their work and that shopstewards look after workers' interests.

To confirm opinions, we asked some negative questions about shopstewards. Workers were asked questions such as whether shopstewards were lazy or corrupt.

The results show that about 73% of the respondents said that their shopstewards are not corrupt, and 74% of the respondents said that their shopstewards are not lazy. Most of the workers interviewed have positive attitudes towards their shopstewards. As the frontline representative of the union, shopstewards seem to be held in high regard by the respondents to this survey. Table 12 is a comparison that takes into account the respondent's union.

The majority of respondents from all affiliates said that their shopstewards are committed to their work. Furthermore, the majority of respondents from all affiliates said that their shopstewards are honest and look after workers' interests. Only a small percentage of workers said that their shopstewards are lazy or corrupt.

Respondents were asked about factors affecting their union's ability to be effective and whether these issues are a big problem or not. Table 13 shows the responses from workers.

**Table 12: Respondents' views of shopstewards (by affiliate)**

	NUMSA	POPCRU	SADTU	SACCAWU
1. My shopsteward is committed to his/her work	87%	72%	84%	92%
2. My shopsteward is lazy	17%	6%	3%	1%
3. My shopsteward is corrupt	- -	5%	4%	1%
4. My shopsteward looks after his/her interest	15%	8%	7%	28%
5. My shopsteward is honest	61%	63%	79%	77%
6. My shopsteward looks after workers' interests	89%	71%	86%	86%

**Table 13: Respondents' views of issues affecting their union's ability to be effective**

	Big Problem	Problem	Not a problem
1. Shopstewards don't get enough support from union officials	15%	30%	55%
2. Shopstewards don't prioritise union issues	5%	30%	65%
3. Organisers lack experience/expertise	11%	37%	52%
4. Shopstewards' lack of experience	8%	29%	63%
5. Poor administration in the union	13%	32%	55%
6. Insufficient worker control in the union	11%	34%	55%
7. Internal squabbling among union membership/structures	15%	27%	58%
8. Employers tactics	43%	34%	23%
9. Insufficient communication between members and leadership	18%	48%	34%

The majority of respondents (77%) said that their unions are ineffective because of employers' tactics, which they regard as the biggest problem. Respondents did not see any problem with their shop stewards as far as their union's ability to be effective. The biggest internal union issue highlighted by membership was that 66% of the respondents said they believed that there was insufficient communication between

members and leadership. This is an area that needs attention and will be further investigated in future studies.

Workers were asked about their satisfaction with union activities and services. Table 14 shows responses from workers.

The responses suggest that unions need to prioritise education demands in their future negotiations and improve their

**Table 14: Respondents' levels of satisfaction with union activities and services**

	<b>Very satisfied</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Very dissatisfied</b>	<b>Total %</b>
1. Organising and mobilising workers at your workplace	21%	54%	20%	5%	100%
2. Negotiate to improve wages / working conditions	19%	48%	25%	8%	100%
3. Representing workers' interests in political and national debates	17%	44%	33%	7%	100%
4. Informing union members of important developments through newsletters	19%	44%	30%	7%	100%
5. Educating union members through workshops	15%	32%	44%	10%	100%
6. Educating workers on job skills through access to workplace/ SETA training	12%	28%	48%	12%	100%

**Table 15: Respondents' level of satisfaction with organiser/shop steward with regard to various issues**

	<b>Very dissatisfied</b>	<b>Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>Very satisfied</b>	<b>Total %</b>
1. Negotiating with employers	10%	17%	14%	50%	9%	100%
2. Representing staff on disciplinary hearings	5%	14%	14%	53%	14%	100%
3. Representing staff in dismissals and retrenchment cases	4%	16%	21%	46%	13%	100%
4. Representing workers at the CCMA	3%	8%	47%	31%	11%	100%
5. Mobilising workers at a workplace	3%	15%	14%	50%	18%	100%
6. Representing staff in sexual harassment cases	3%	10%	40%	34%	12%	100%
7. Taking forward gender issues	3%	11%	35%	40%	11%	100%

communication with their members. On the positive side, about 75% of the respondents said that they are satisfied or strongly satisfied with the way unions are organising and mobilising workers in the workplace. About 67% of the respondents are satisfied or strongly satisfied with their unions in terms of negotiating to improve wages and working conditions.

Respondents were asked about their satisfaction with daily union services such as negotiation with management, representation at disciplinary hearings, representation on dismissals and representation on retrenchments (Table 15).

About 68% of the respondents show that they are satisfied or very satisfied with the way shopstewards/organisers mobilise workers at the workplace. Other issues which workers are satisfied with are representation of staff at disciplinary hearings (67%), representation of staff in dismissals and retrenchment cases (59%), negotiation with employers (58%), and taking forward gender related issues (51%). Areas in which workers do not seem as

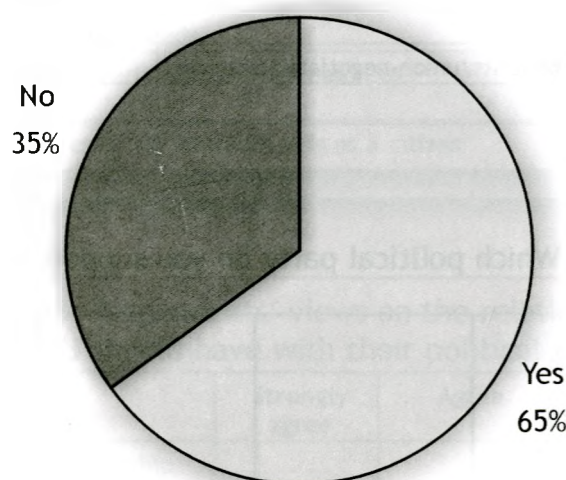
satisfied with their shopsteward/organis-er's performance is in the representation of staff in sexual harassment cases (45%) and representation at CCMA (42%). These are two areas which respondents obviously believe need further attention by their unions. Opinions on gender issues were once again uniform across women and men interviewed, with women being slightly more satisfied than men that their union was successfully advancing gender issues.

## Communication

Communication between the union and its members is very important. Some of the COSATU affiliates have newsletters, which they send to their members. Respondents were asked if they receive union newsletters. Figure 6 shows the responses from workers.

The figure shows that the majority of workers (65%) receive union newsletters from their union. The results are not significantly different across the affiliates surveyed.

Figure 6: Do you regularly receive a union newsletter?



## Politics and unions: Respondents' views

One of the most surprising results of the survey arose when workers were asked why they joined their union (Table 16). Respondents argued that the main reason offered was that they joined as a means of achieving solidarity at the workplace. In further studies this view is interrogated, as questions have been raised about the methodology used to acquire this result.

The majority of workers (66%) said that they belong to the union in order to achieve solidarity at work, followed by the need for better wages and benefits (10%). This result, suggests that the main reason they joined the union was to achieve solidarity at the workplace, which seems to contradict the same respondents' views on the role of their trade union. In future studies this issue will be addressed further.

Respondents were then asked about their political affiliation. They were offered a list of political parties in alphabetical order and asked to choose the **one** they support the most. The majority of respondents said that they support the ANC (75%) as a political party. Other parties supported are the SACP (4%) and the IFP (3%). See Figure 7.

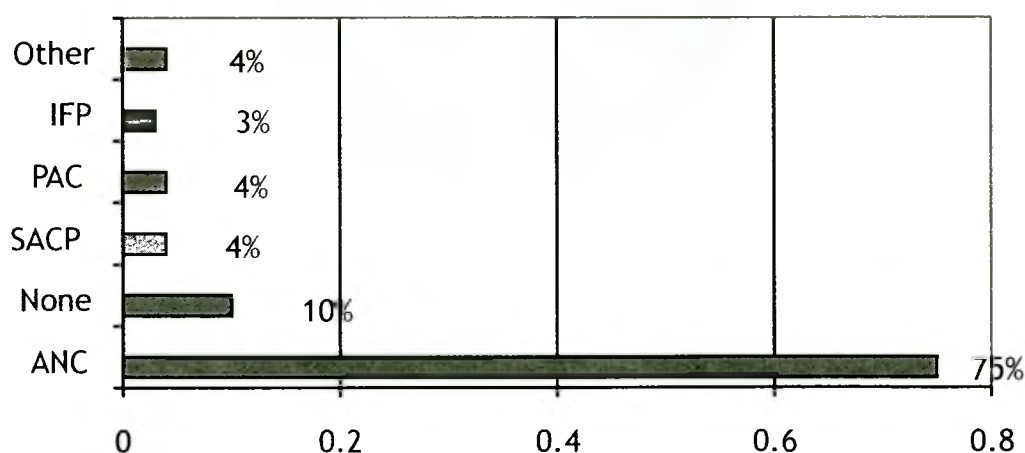
If we add the 4% support for the SACP to the 75% of the ANC, there is almost 80% support for the alliance amongst respondents. Taking into account the geographical spread, which is an area that has shown significant support for the ANC in the last two elections, this result is in line with expectations.

Interestingly, 10% of respondents claimed they did not support any political

Table 16: Why workers join unions

Reasons	Frequency (n)	%
1. To get solidarity at work	365	66%
2. To get better wages and benefits	55	10%
3. I believe in unionism	49	9%
4. To oppose apartheid	35	6%
5. To access to company benefits/union-negotiated services	18	3%
6. Other	44	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>566</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 7: Which political party do you support the most?



party. This apparent apathy seems high for a survey of trade union members, who are generally more politicised. This percentage includes those who refused to answer and undecided respondents.

Respondents were asked questions in order to get their political perspectives on why they support the above-mentioned political parties. Table 17 shows that about 40% regard their party as addressing the overall needs of South African citizens. About 35% said that they always supported that party and saw no reason to change. Only 20% said that the party adequately addresses workers' needs.

Again, this result points to the worker as a citizen of South African society, with less self-interest and more concern for the will and the need of the majority.

Workers were asked questions relating to the relationship between COSATU and their political party (Table 18).

The results show that about 70% of the respondents believe that COSATU should

have a relationship with their political parties (with almost 80% supporting the ANC/SACP).

About 78% of the respondents agree or strongly agree that COSATU should remain independent but form alliances with their party, thus showing support for the current organisational relationship to be found in the alliance.

This view was reinforced, with almost 75% of respondents tending to agree or strongly agree that COSATU should give conditional election support based on a party implementing agreed policies. However, respondents rejected the idea of COSATU giving up its independence (75% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree that COSATU should abide by all decisions of a political party).

Two thirds of those interviewed rejected the idea of a new workers' party being formed to contest the next (2004) election (Figure 8). A third however, were supportive of the idea. While a minority, this seems

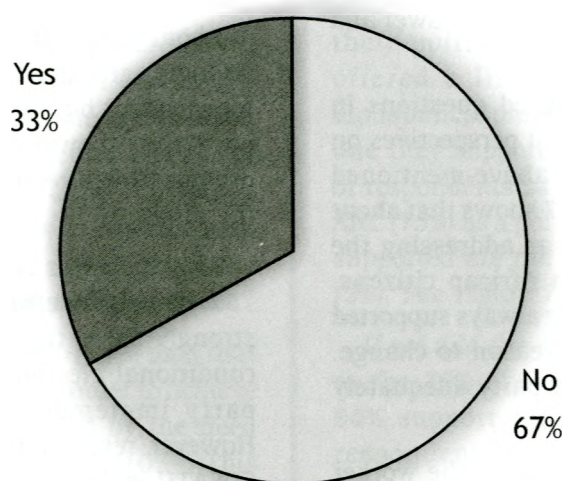
**Table 17: Respondents' reasons for supporting their party**

Statements	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. It adequately addresses worker needs	113	22%
2. I have always supported this party and see no reason to change support	177	35%
3. This party adequately addresses my overall needs as a citizen of South Africa	203	40%

**Table 18: Respondents' views on the relationship COSATU should have with their political party**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. COSATU should have no relationship with my party	12%	18%	43%	27%
2. COSATU should remain independent but form alliance with this party	31%	47%	11%	11%
3. COSATU should give conditional election support based on party implementing agreed policies.	20%	55%	14%	11%
4. COSATU should abide by all decisions of political party	9%	17%	45%	30%

Figure 8: Do you think a new workers' political party must be formed to contest elections?



surprisingly high considering the election is less than a year away.

Workers who said they supported the SACP were most likely to support the idea of the formation of a workers' party, with almost

half believing that a new workers' party should be formed to contest the next election.

Workers were asked questions focusing on their views concerning the role of unions in general (Table 19).

Table 19: Respondents' views on issues relating to the political role of unions

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain/ don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
1. Unions should concentrate more on workplace issues and less on politics in the future	26%	29%	5%	27%	13%	100%
2. Unions are doing enough to provide women leadership	18%	37%	23%	18%	4%	100%
3. Unions should work together with other social movements which want to improve the lives of the poor	51%	40%	5%	2%	2%	100%
4. Unions have been successful in negotiating basic conditions and union rights	26%	48%	14%	10%	2%	100%
5. The work of the unions will be taken by legal consultants (such as LegalWise) in the future if they are giving members poor service	16%	26%	24%	22%	17%	100%
6. The shopsteward/s in my workplace generally represent workers effectively	35%	42%	11%	10%	3%	100%
7. Unions need to organise casual workers	35%	36%	21%	4%	4%	100%

Another potential sign of growing apathy in the political arena is the finding that 55% of the respondents agree or strongly agree that unions should concentrate more on workplace issues and less on politics in the future. However 40% of the respondents disagree or strongly disagree that unions should concentrate more on workplace issues and less on politics in the future. The majority of POPCRU (66%) and NUMSA (65%) agree or strongly agree that unions must concentrate more on workplace issues and less on politics. By age group, about 95% of respondents between 36 and 45 years agree or strongly agree with the statement.

Furthermore, about 55% of the respondents agree or strongly agree that unions are doing enough to provide female leadership of unions. Only 22% disagree or strongly disagree that unions are doing enough to provide women leadership. The majority (76%) of NUMSA respondents agree or strongly agree that unions are doing enough to provide women leadership. The majority of POPCRU (93%) disagree or strongly disagree that unions are doing enough to provide women leadership. As can be expected, men were more likely to be satisfied with the performance of their union on the gender front, although the difference of opinion by gender was low. 57% of males agree or strongly agree that unions are doing enough to provide women leadership, whereas 43% of women also agree or strongly agree.

The majority of respondents (91%) agree or strongly agree that unions must work together with other social movements which want to improve the lives of the poor. This fact is interesting in light of earlier results, which tend to point to apathy towards political parties but a high support for social movements. Future studies will need to establish whether this is a growing trend but with this question attracting a majority of "strongly agree" views there is definite evidence that members embrace the social movement approach and have an affinity towards the growing number of social movements representing issues that affect the poor the most. Also of interest is the fact that after joining a union respondents are more likely to participate in community issues.

Respondents were asked about their political activism, whether they have participated in industrial strikes, stayaways, community picketing and university boycott. As far as participating in activities, some workers have never participated in any activities at all. About 32% of the respondents never participated in any industrial or workplace strikes, followed by 30% who did not participate in any national general strike or stay-away or union picket or demonstration. This figure seems low and may relate to growing apathy amongst members or an inability to participate due to "no work, no pay" policies of employers. Table 20 shows responses from workers.

**Table 20: Respondents participation in strikes and stayaways**

Have you participated in any of the following	Yes, before joining union	Yes, since joining union	Yes, participated recently	Not participated at all	Total
1. Workplace/industrial strike	20%	46%	2%	32%	100%
2. National general strike or stay away	18%	49%	3%	30%	100%
3. Union organized march	13%	60%	3%	24%	100%
4. Union picket/ demonstration	10%	58%	2%	30%	100%
5. Community picket, march or other form of protest	17%	39%	2%	41%	100%

Union meetings play an important role in informing workers about new developments at the workplace and their union. Through union meetings, workers may share ideas and debates. Respondents were asked if they have participated in union meetings. Table 21 shows responses from workers.

About 39% of the respondents said that they attend meetings regularly or they never miss meetings at all, whereas 46% said that they attend union meetings sometimes. This is a worrying trend and reinforces reports from the ground that point to a decline in attendance at union meetings.

When a comparison is made between males and females, about 44% of males attend meetings sometimes, regularly or do not miss a meeting at all. 37% of females said that they attend meetings

sometimes, regularly or do not miss a meeting at all.

Furthermore, respondents were asked if they feel comfortable voicing their views during union meetings (Figure 9).

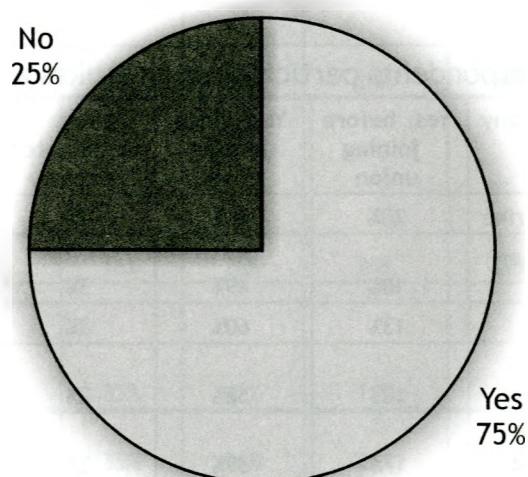
The responses show that about 75% of the workers feel comfortable to voice their views and participate in union meetings.

When comparison is made between unions, about 26% of NUMSA, 21% of POPCRU, 15% of SADTU and 13% of SACCAWU said that they feel comfortable to voice their views and participate in union meetings.

When comparison is made between males and females, about 40% of males and 35% of females said that they feel comfortable to voice their views and participate in union meetings. This shows little difference between men and women.

Table 21: Respondents' attendance of union meetings	
Frequency of union meetings attendance	Percentages (%)
1. Not at all	14%
2. Hardly ever	2%
3. Sometimes	46%
4. Regularly	32%
5. I don't miss a meeting	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 9: Do you feel comfortable to voice your views/participate in union meetings?



## Gender issues

We have already covered some gender issues and sexual harassment earlier in this report. This section considers respondents' views of their trade union's performance on some broader gender issues.

Workers were asked if their union fights for women's rights at the workplace. Figure 10 shows responses from workers.

The majority of respondents (75%) said that their trade union fights for women's rights at the workplace. Only 25% said that trade unions are not fighting for women's rights at the workplace. This shows that, on the whole, respondents believe that trade unions are working very hard on the issue of gender discrimination in the workplace. Some of the reasons given by workers were:

- Women are now doing the same job as men;
- Women are being protected against sexual harassment;
- Women are being promoted;
- Women get more time on maternity leave.

The results were further broken down by gender. The results can be seen in Table 22.

When comparison is made by gender the majority of both males and females agree that their trade unions fight for women's rights at the workplace. The awareness of male respondents to gender issues seems high, as their view correlates closely to that of women throughout the survey.

Figure 10: Does your trade union fight for women's rights at the workplace?

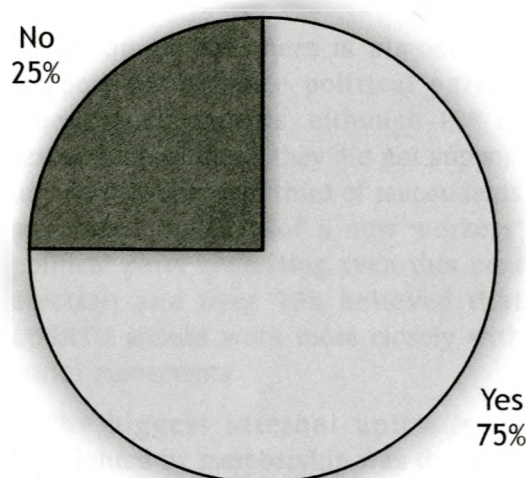


Table 22: Respondents views on whether their union fights for women's rights at the workplace (by gender)

	Yes	No	Total %
Male	75%	25%	100%
Female	74%	26%	100%

Table 23: Respondents' views of whether their union has been successful in bargaining with the employer on gender issues

	Yes	No	Total %
1. Maternity leave	86%	14%	100%
2. Parental rights	83%	17%	100%
3. Childcare facilities	32%	68%	100%
4. Equal pay for women and men	85%	15%	100%
5. Sexual harassment	83%	17%	100%
6. Employment equity	79%	21%	100%

Respondents were asked if their union has been successful in bargaining with the employer on gender related issues such as maternity rights, parental rights, childcare facilities, equal pay for women and men, sexual harassment policy and employment equity. Table 23 shows responses from respondents.

The results show that, with the exception of childcare facilities, unions are perceived to have been successful in securing success on the gender and family responsibility front. Only 32% of the respondents said that unions have been successful in bargaining for childcare facilities.

## Conclusion

On the brink of the 8th COSATU Congress and a national election, the survey provides some interesting insights into union members' views and opinions. While some issues require further investigation, we believe that the results of the survey should assist in identifying where unions should focus their attention to improve service delivery to their members. We highlight some of the key findings here.

We found that unions are organising temporary and casual members. However, we found that these members do not have access to benefits that have been won for permanent workers by earlier struggles of unions. The challenge is now for unions to re-engage and broaden the struggle for quality jobs for these 'atypical' workers.

On the whole, the survey found that the public sector is a more consistent provider of benefits to its employees and that there is more discrimination felt in private enterprises. We believe that this finding highlights the need for unions to resist commercialisation and privatisation of public services. At the same time, however, the survey found that members in public sector institutions were more likely to complain of problems at work relating to the lack of career advancement systems in the public service.

As can be expected, when asked what the most serious problem is at the workplace, workers complain of their wages and working conditions. Other problems encountered by workers are insufficient benefits, lack of promotion, poor working conditions, lack of training and women being more likely to experience unfair labour practices. These are all areas where unions need to focus their attention if they are to satisfy the needs of their members.

About 74% of respondents agree or strongly agree that unions have been successful in negotiating basic conditions and union rights for workers. Although we discovered strong support for their union and,

in particular, their shopstewards, only 52% of those surveyed said that their union was able to successfully combat their problems in the workplace. We believe that this result represents a recognition amongst members of the limitations of their union in the struggle to transform the workplace. Confirming this conclusion, we found that 48% of respondents said that service delivery had improved since they joined the union and 33% said that it had stayed the same. Only 11% of respondents said that service delivery within their unions had become worse since they joined.

We found that there is almost 80% support for alliance political parties amongst respondents, although 10% of respondents claimed they did not support any political party. A third of respondents supported the idea of a new workers' political party contesting even this next election and over 90% believed that COSATU should work more closely with social movements.

The biggest internal union issue highlighted by membership was that 66% of the respondents said they believed that there was insufficient communication between members and leadership. This is an area which obviously needs attention from the affiliates and will be further investigated in future studies. It appears that members are also attending union meetings less frequently.

We hope that the results of this survey will assist in the renewal of unions through the identification of areas for improved service delivery. We further urge affiliates to participate in the renewal process and encourage you to contact NALEDI to see how we can assist your union.

**NALEDI**

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