



Opinions on Unions and Work

Freedom and privileges at work
Perceived class identity



Summary of Report 5

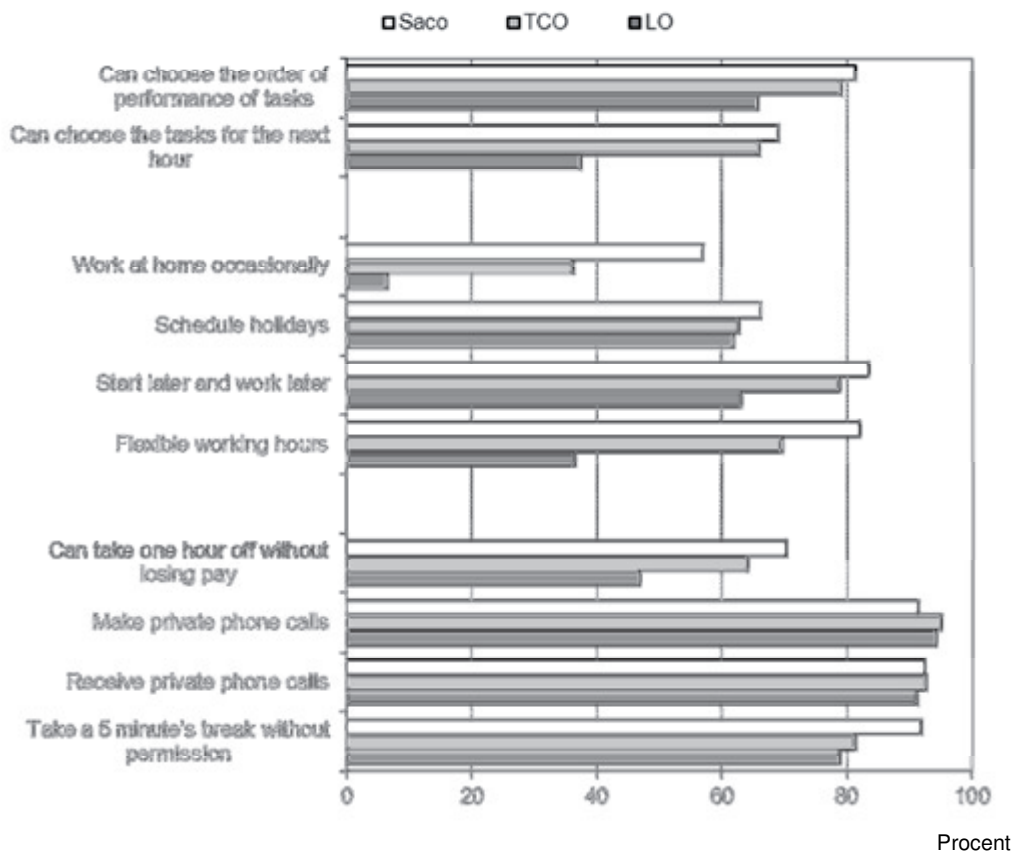
The fifth report in the series “Opinions on unions and work” deals with freedom and privileges at work as well as perceived class identity.

Freedom at work

LO members generally enjoy less freedom at work than members of the other two Swedish confederations: TCO (The Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees) and Saco, (The Confederation of Professional Associations). This applies to freedom as regards the performance of work and working hours, to take some time off, or private life. For instance, only 37 per cent of the members of LO affiliated unions have the privilege of choosing the work tasks for the next hour, whereas the corresponding figures for members of TCO and Saco unions are 66 per cent and 69 per cent respectively.

Similarly, a considerably lower number of LO members – 37 per cent - have flexible working hours, as compared to TCO and Saco members – 70 per cent and 82 per cent respectively (cf. diagram 2).

Diagram 2 Freedom at work, in 2011
LO, TCO and Saco members



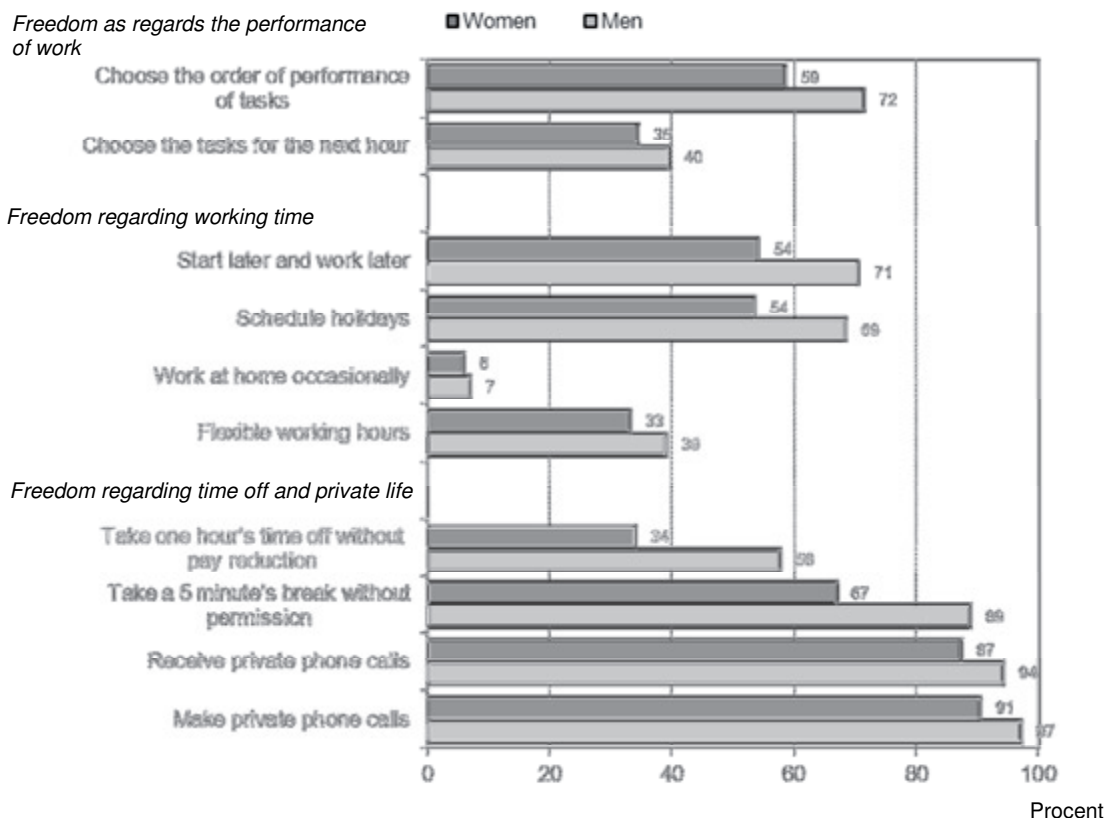
There are also large differences between women and men as regards freedom at work. Men can to a clearly larger extent than women enjoy each one of the ten privileges included in the study. This applies to LO members, as well as to TCO and Saco members. There are no exceptions to this fact in the study and the differences are often considerable.

Among LO members the largest differences can be found in terms of freedom to take some time off, i.e. the possibility of taking a one hours' break without reduction in salary and to take a break of 5 minutes without asking for permission. Out of male LO members 89 per cent and 58 per cent respectively have this possibility, whereas the corresponding figures for LO women are 67 and 34 per cent respectively (cf. diagram 2.18).

The difference is virtually identical as regards the possibility of coming to work later and working later in compensation, as well as scheduling annual holidays. Approximately 70 per cent out of male LO members and 54 per cent of female LO members have this possibility.

Scheduling your own work tasks, choosing the work tasks for the next hour, flexible working hours, receiving private phone calls during working hours, or making private phone calls are further privileges that generally apply to male LO members to a larger extent than female LO members.

Diagram 2.18 Freedom at work, women and men
LO members



Fringe benefits

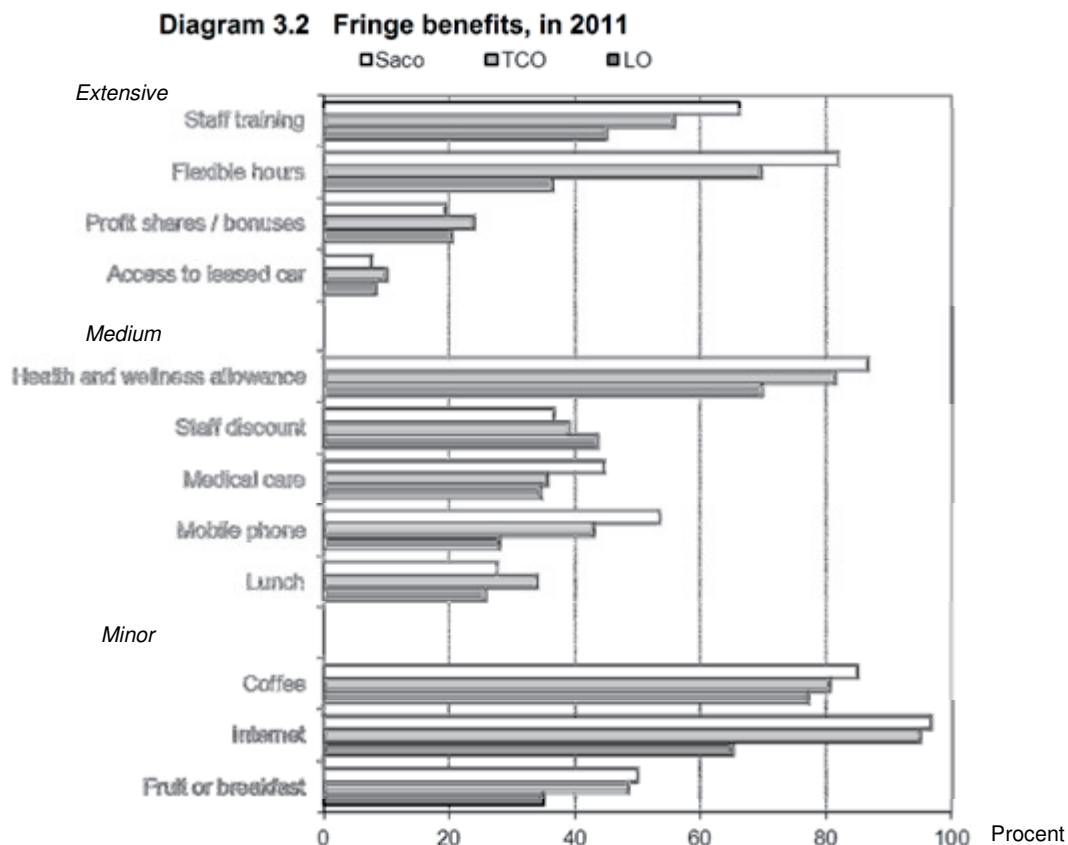
In addition to the salary, employees can have different benefits at work. They can be of smaller or larger extent, ranging between access to free coffee or fruit and access to company leased car or profit shares.

In the same way as freedom at work, benefits at work also differ between LO, TCO and Saco members and between men and women. Almost all privileges included in the study apply to LO members and to women to a lesser extent than to TCO and Saco members and men.

The largest differences between LO, TCO and Saco members can be found in benefits concerning access to staff training, health and wellness subsidies, mobile phone, flexible working hours and Internet. For instance, 56 per cent of TCO members and 66 per cent of Saco members get staff training at least one week per year, as compared to 47 per cent of LO members.

The differences between LO, TCO and Saco are however small as regards certain benefits, especially profit shares / bonuses and access to a leased car (cf. Diagram 3.2).

Only one of the benefits included in the study is more common among LO members. It concerns staff discounts and 44 per cent of LO members are entitled to this, as compared to TCO members (39 per cent) and Saco members (37 per cent).

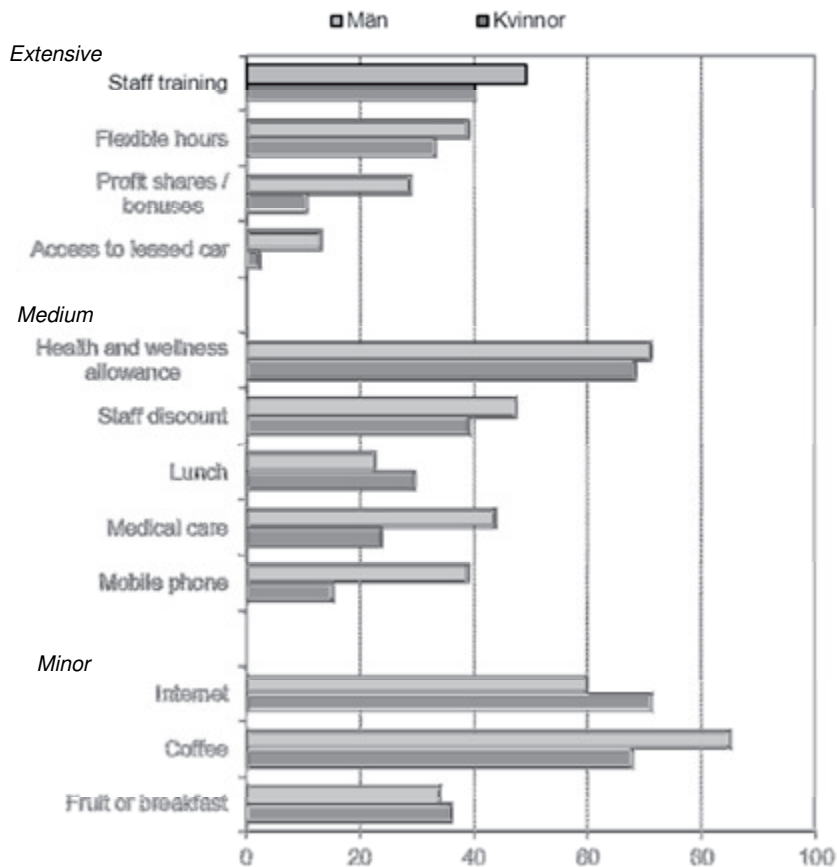


Most fringe benefits are provided to men to a larger extent than women. The main differences can be found in the so-called extensive benefits – such as staff training, flexible hours, profit shares and access to company leased car – since a clearly higher percentage of men than women have these benefits.

Also the fringe benefits of medium size, such as free / subsidised medical care and mobile phone mostly apply to men. There are however two categories of benefits accorded mostly to women – subsidised lunch and wellness allowance. Also benefits such as free fruit or breakfast and free Internet concern women to a larger extent than men.

As regards LO unions and their members, the differences between them are relatively extensive. Most LO unions at times exceed and at times stay below the general average of all LO unions. There are however three unions that mostly surpass the average – IF Metal (Metalworkers), the Food Workers' Union and SEKO (Union for Employees in Service and Communication), whereas two unions are mostly underneath the average – The Municipal Workers' Union and Transport Workers' Union.

Diagram 3.2 Fringe benefits, in 2011
LO members, Women and men



Perceived professional category – blue-collar worker or white-collar worker

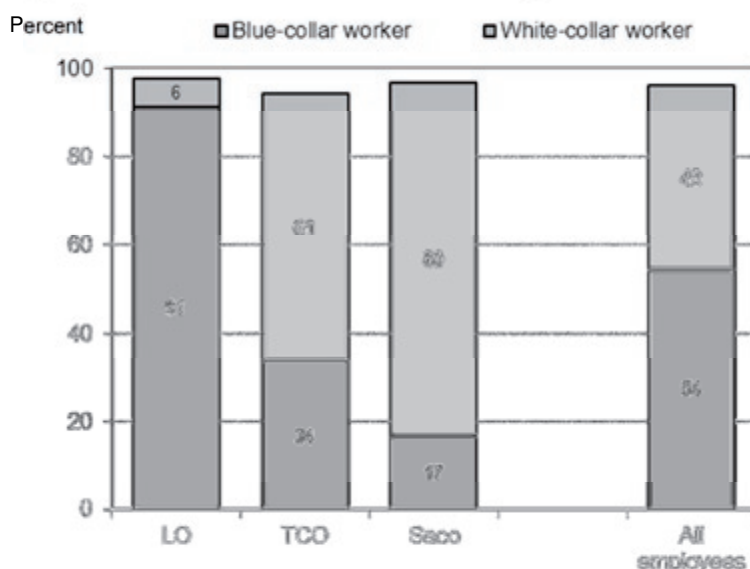
91 per cent of all members of LO affiliated unions state that they identify as blue-collar workers, while 6 per cent consider being white-collar workers (cf. diagram 4.1).

Even a large part of the members of both TCO and Saco unions state that they identify as blue-collar workers. As many as 34 per cent out of TCO members consider that they are blue-collar workers; the corresponding figure for Saco members is 17 per cent. A clear majority of both TCO and Saco members however consider that they are white-collar workers, 61 and 80 per cent respectively.

The differences between women and men as regards perceived professional category are small among members of LO affiliated unions. 90 per cent of LO women and 93 per cent of LO men consider belonging to blue-collar workers. The difference is bigger among members of TCO and Saco unions. 41 per cent out of TCO women, as compared to 22 per cent out of TCO men, do regard themselves as blue-collar workers. Among Saco women the percentage of those who identify as blue-collar workers is 21 per cent and Saco men 11 per cent.

Out of the members of TCO and Saco it is mainly those who work in the public sector – health care, school and care services, who consider themselves being blue-collar workers. As regards the unions affiliated to TCO, it is The Swedish Association of Health Professionals (Vårdförbundet), The Swedish Teachers' Union (Läraryrket) and The National Union of Teachers (Lärarnas Riksförbund) that have the highest percentage of members with the sense of being blue-collar workers – 60, 53 and 40 per cent respectively.

Diagram 4.1 Perceived professional identity: blue-collar worker / white-collar worker



Working class, middle class or upper class

In addition to the question regarding whether members regard themselves as blue-collar or white-collar workers, the survey also studied the perceived social class: working class, middle class or upper class. These two questions can at a first glance appear to be the same. However, the latter question is more complex in the sense that it reflects a person’s position in both professional life and private life.

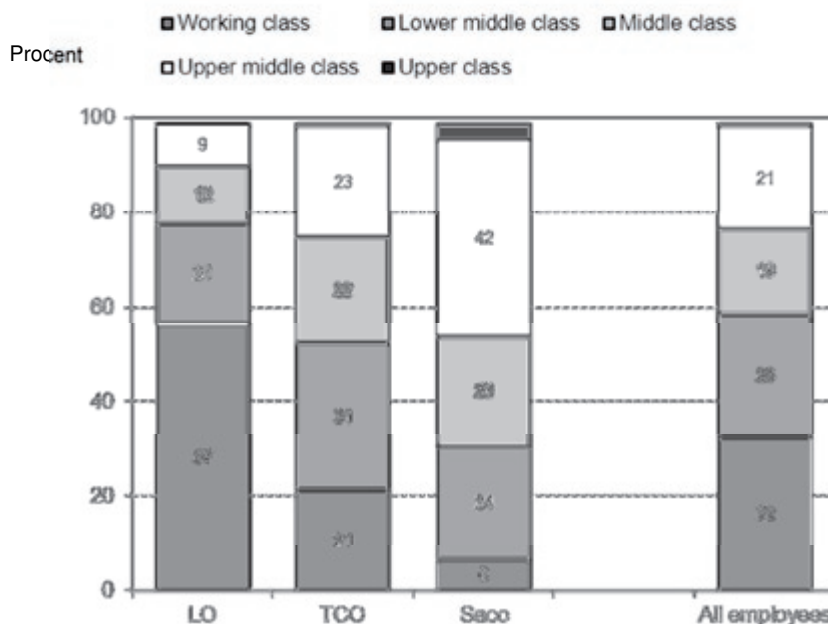
Two thirds, i.e. 66 per cent out of all employees identify as middle class, whereas 32 per cent - slightly over one third - consider themselves being working class. Hardly one per cent considers that they are part of the upper class.

Out of the 66 per cent with perceived middle class identity, a group representing 26 percentage units consider that they are lower middle class and 21 percentage units upper middle class. The remaining group – 18 percentage units – do not want to choose but identify simply as middle class.

Consequently, a clear majority of employees regard themselves as being middle-class. There is however a marked difference between the members of LO, TCO and Saco.

Among LO members, the perceived class identity is working class for 57 per cent and middle class for 42 per cent. Approximately one half of the latter group - i.e. 22 percentage units - consider that they belong to lower middle class.

Diagram 4.8 Perceived social class: working class, middle class or upper class?



The predominant opinion among TCO and Saco members regarding class is that they belong to the middle class. For 77 per cent (TCO) and 89 per cent (Saco) the perceived class identity is that of middle class, whereas 21 per cent out of TCO members and 6 per cent out of Saco members regard themselves as working class.

Three per cent of Saco members and one per cent out of TCO members consider that they belong to the upper class.

The sense of class belonging is relatively similar for women and men. There are however some differences since men, to a slightly larger extent than women, consider that they represent working class. This is however mainly true as regards LO members whereas this relationship is the reverse among TCO and Saco members.

The majority of members in almost all LO unions identify as working class. This percentage is the highest within SEKO (The Union of Service and Communication Employees), Målarna (the union of building painters) and IF Metal (the union of metal workers) – 60 per cent. Slightly below 60 per cent there are the Food Workers' Union, the Municipal Workers' Union and GS (the union of forestry and wood workers and workers in the graphic industry).

The Commercial Workers' Union (Handels) is the only LO union with a majority of members – 53 per cent – who regard themselves as being middle class.

Rapporten kan hämtas som pdf-dokument på LOs hemsida eller beställas från LO-distribution:

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Telefax: 026-24 90 26

Juni 2012

ISBN 978-91-566-2893-1

www.lo.se

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