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Opinions on unions and work

Trade unions in big cities



The Swedish Trade Union Confederation

Summary of the sixth report

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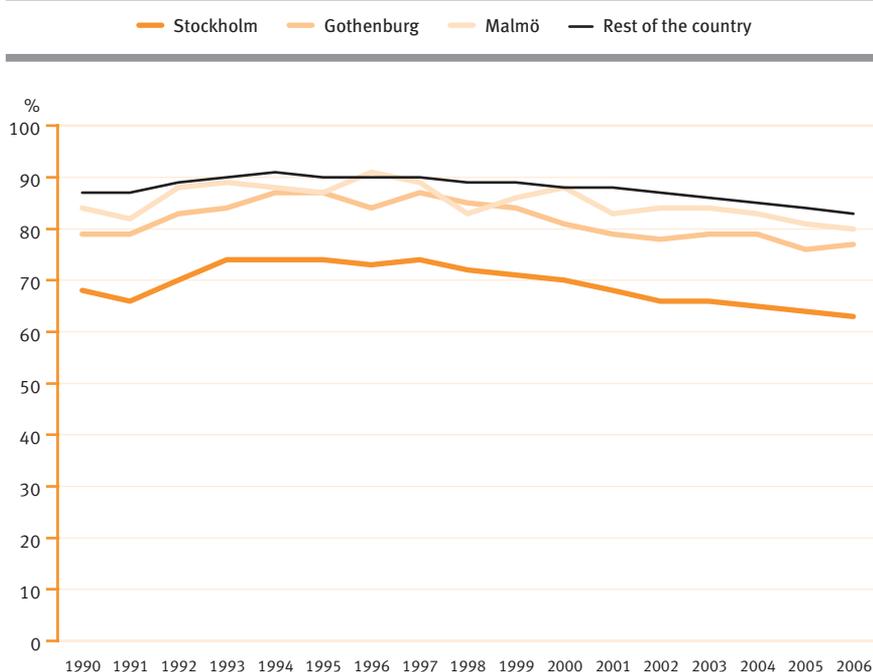
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Diagram 3.3 Rate of unionisation 1990–2006. Workers according to region
Per cent



Lower rate of unionisation in big cities, especially in Stockholm

The rate of unionisation is considerably lower in big cities than in the rest of the country. There is, above all, a lower rate of unionisation in Stockholm, while in Gothenburg and in Malmö, it is closer to average rate in the rest of the country.

The structure of the sectors, however, looks different in big cities, compared with the rest of the country. Private services are extensive especially in Stockholm. The fact that the rate of unionisation is lower among workers in private services cannot however explain the whole difference in the rate of unionisation. It turns out that the number of trade union members is lower in Stockholm than in the rest of the country (big cities excluded). This is true for all sectors. Arguing that there are more young people among those employed in big cities is not a sufficient explanation either, since the rate of unionisation among younger adults is lower in Stockholm than in the rest of the country.

Fewer feel as workers and working class in big cities

White-collar jobs are more common in big cities than in the rest of the country, and the percentage of white-collar workers is highest in Stockholm. White-collar jobs among LO members are also more frequent in big cities. Every tenth LO member in Stockholm considers him/herself to be

Diagram 3.6 Rate of unionisation according to sector in Stockholm and in the rest of the country in 2006 Workers. Per cent

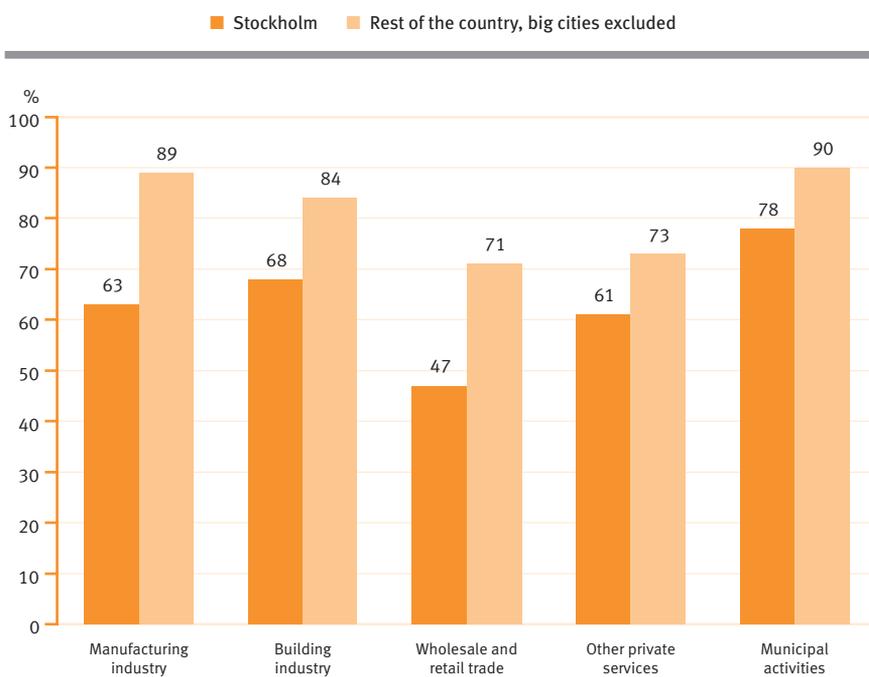
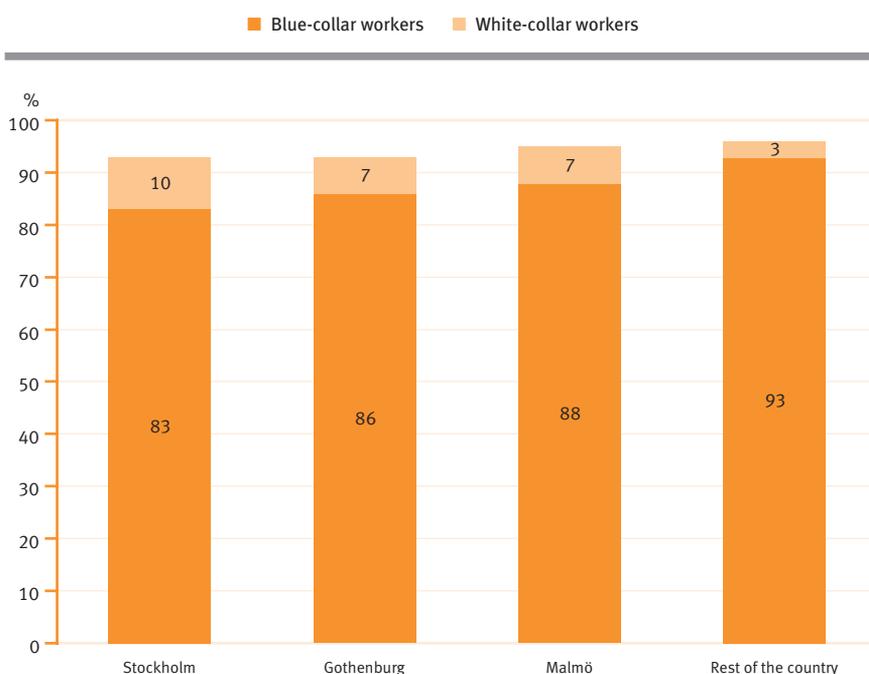


Diagram 7.1 Professional affiliation among LO members in Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö and the rest of the country



a white-collar worker, something that is three times as common as in the rest of the country (big cities excluded). Workers who are not trade union members, also feel like white-collar workers to a higher degree than workers who are LO members.

There are regional differences concerning to which social group you consider yourself belonging. Most LO members feel as working class. Their percentage is however not so high in big cities, where there are more LO members who feel as middle class than in the rest of the country. Workers who are not trade union members identify themselves to a larger extent as middle class than LO members. Moreover, the fact that there are more white-collar workers in Stockholm and other big cities probably implies that more workers live there together with a white-collar worker, which most likely also influences which class they consider themselves to belong.

Different (political) opinions in big cities and in the rest of the country

If you study party sympathies and how they differ between workers/LO members in big cities and the rest of the country, you can find certain differences. Male workers in big cities, who are not trade union members, sympathize more with the Conservatives and less with the Social Democrats. More LO members in big cities than in the rest of Sweden strive for the best

Diagram 8.3 Support low-income earners or best possible for own group LO members in Stockholm, Gothenburg/Malmö and the rest of the country. Women and men

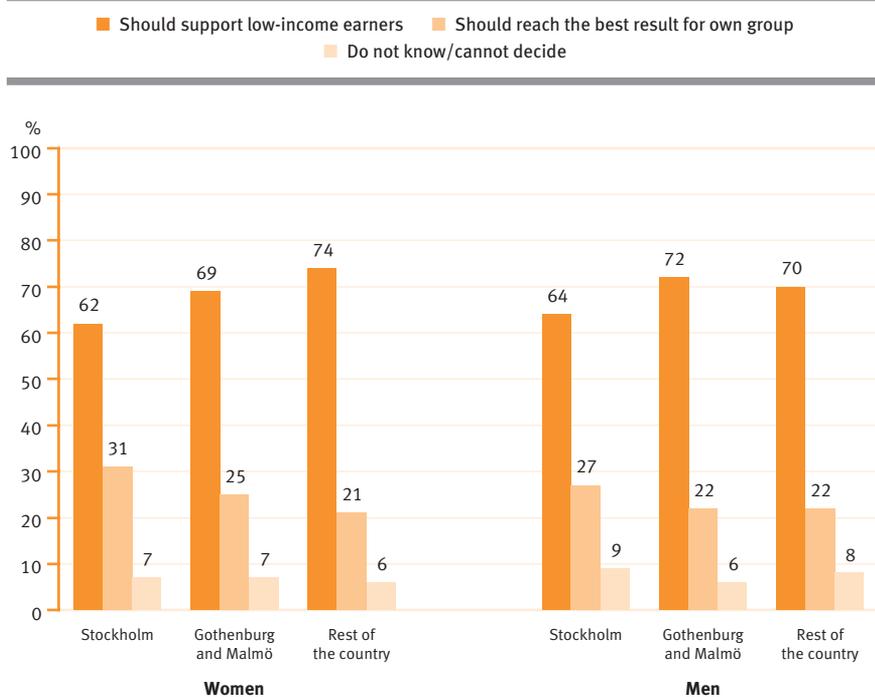
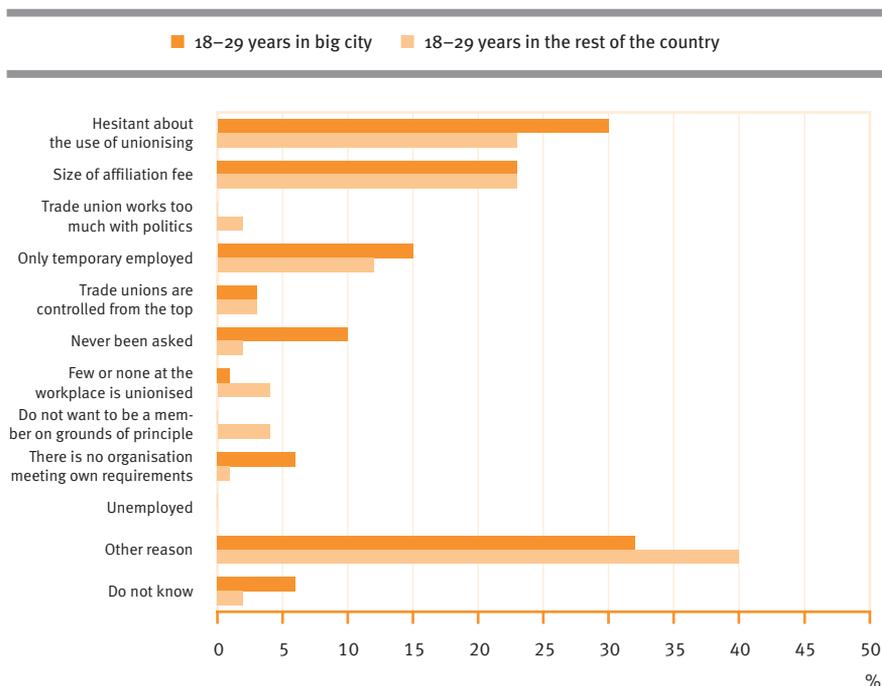


Diagram 4.3a For what reasons are you not a trade union member? Percentage of non-unionised workers 18–29 years in big cities and in the rest of the country



possible outcome of wage negotiations for their own group and fewer want to support low-income earners. The support for wage policy of solidarity is weakest in Stockholm. Here almost one third of LO members indicate that those well-paid should strive for the best possible outcome for their own group, compared to one-fifth in the rest of the country. Only slightly more than 60 per cent of the members in Stockholm want to support low-income earners, as compared with 70 per cent in the rest of the country.

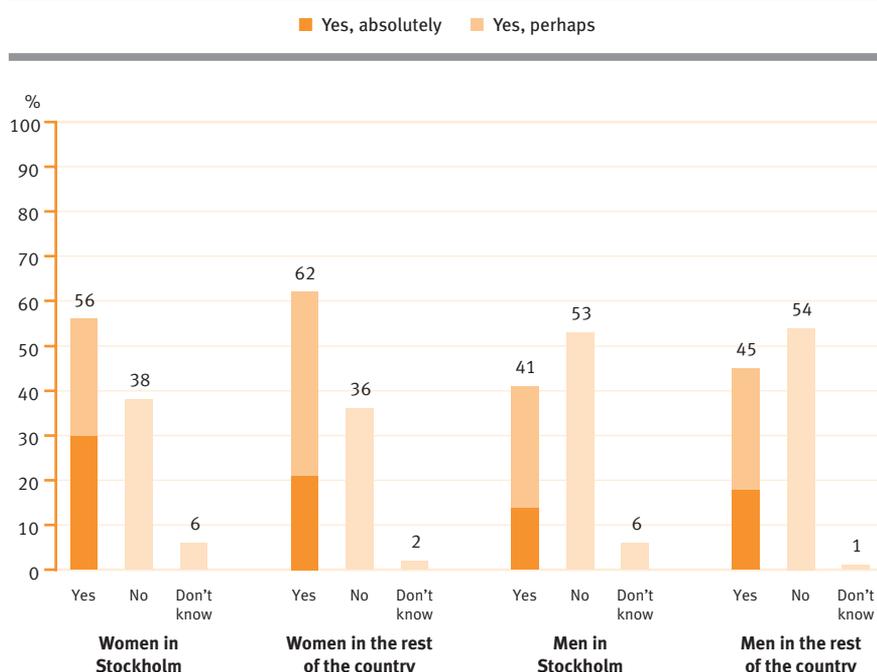
The same reason not to join the union – except that more young inhabitants of big cities are not even asked to join the union

The size of the membership fee and hesitation towards the use of being a trade union member are the two most common reasons why workers do not join the union. This is true for big cities as well as for the rest of the country. Every tenth young worker living in a big city indicates that he/she has never been asked to join the union, which is why they are not union members.

Many people in big cities can consider becoming trade union members

Approximately 50 per cent of those who are not trade union members can consider joining a union. There are also good opportunities to increase the trade union affiliation in big cities. This percentage is somewhat higher in

Diagram 4.5 Can consider joining the trade union Percentage of non-unionised workers. Women and men in Stockholm and in the rest of the country



Gothenburg and Malmö, and lower in Stockholm, compared to the rest of the country. Women who are not trade union members are more positive than men towards joining a union, both in Stockholm and in the rest of the country.

Great trade union interest in big cities – among those who have chosen to be members

The lower percentage of trade union members in big cities does not result in less trade union interest among those who have chosen to be members. Among LO members in big cities, trade union interest is bigger than in the rest of the country, according to trade union members' own opinion.

Similar opinion on trade union issues and the value of membership

Differences of opinion between LO members in big cities and in the rest of the country, concerning trade union issues and the value of membership, are not significant. The same five issues are considered to be important trade union issues in big cities as well as in the rest of the country. Opinions on how you benefit from trade union membership are similar in big cities and in the rest of the country. Men see more advantages of their trade union membership, both in Stockholm and in the country as a whole.

Diagram 5.1 Own opinion on trade union interest

LO members according to region



Many different regional opinions of the local trade union

Opinions on the influence of the local union are different in many ways. Men – and especially men in big cities – stand out because they want, more than others, the trade union to have less influence than today. In the rest of the country, more people are pleased with the influence the trade union has today, and the citizens of big cities – to a higher degree than LO members in the rest of the country – want the influence of the local trade union to increase.

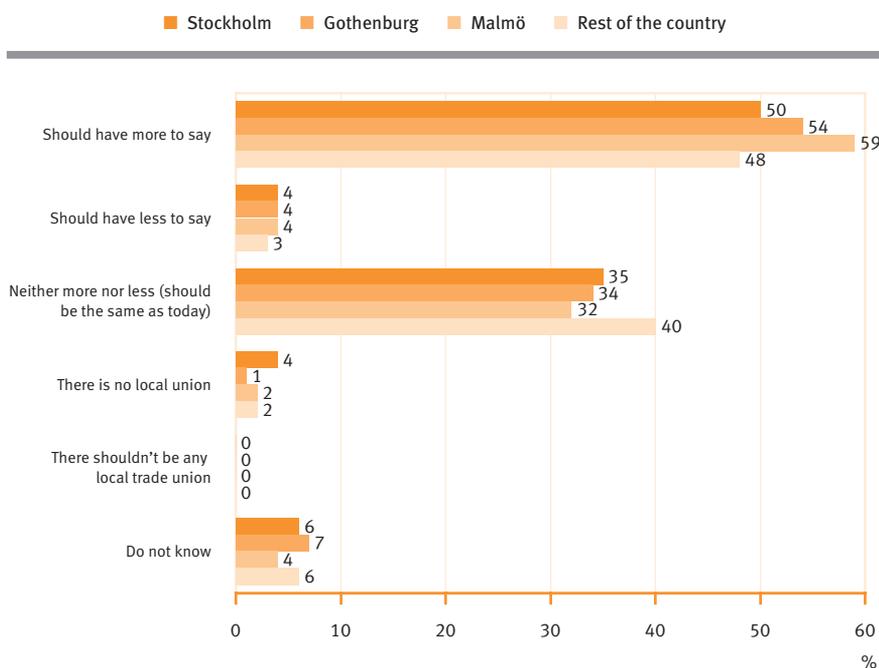
Great interest in assuming trade union tasks in big cities

The percentage of LO members having trade union tasks differ between Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö and the rest of the country. The explanation for this is probably that the percentage of members with a task differ a great deal between LO affiliates. The interest in assuming a task as trade union representative is higher in big cities than in the rest of the country.

Trade union activities

Participation in trade union meetings has generally decreased, with the exception of Gothenburg, where the number of participants has increased compared to earlier measurements. Between 26 and 39 per cent of LO members have participated in a trade union meeting during last year. Between

Diagram 5.5 Opinions concerning the influence of the local trade union at work-place LO members in Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö and in the rest of the country



six and seven out of ten LO members have contacted a trade union representative during last year, which is about as many as 18 years ago, when the study was carried through for the first time.

LO members in Gothenburg read their trade union paper somewhat more than LO members in the rest of the country.

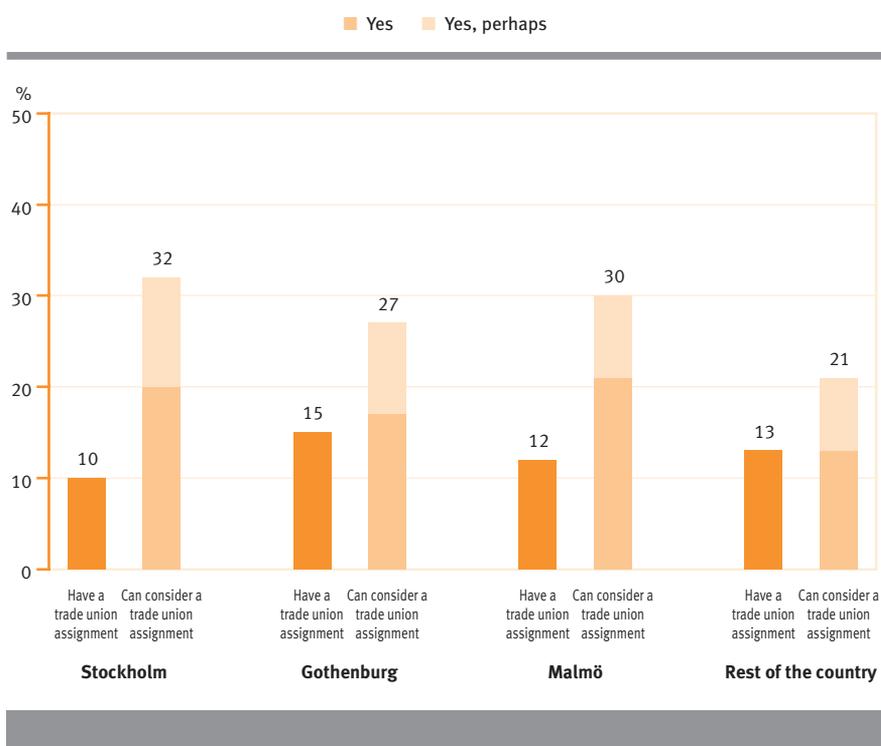
To sum up

The survey “Opinions on unions and work” cannot provide any plain and unambiguous explanations of the regional differences in the rate of unionisation. Our hope is however that this publication may create ideas, especially concerning the regrowth of trade unions in today’s society.

You can speculate on whether political opinions contribute to some extent to the lower rate of unionisation in big cities in general and in Stockholm in particular. At the same time as party sympathies seem to differ to some degree, there are no direct indications in the inquiry that this would be the case. Workers in big city who are not trade union members do not more often claim that this depends on the fact that they do not want to join the union on grounds of principle. However, more people indicate that the trade union works too much with politics.

Opinions on wage policy of solidarity with low-paid workers seem to differ between LO members in big cities and in the rest of the country.

Diagram 6.4 Have a trade union assignment or can consider assuming one
LO members in Stockholm, in Gothenburg, in Malmö and in the rest of the country



The weakest support for such wage policy can be found in Stockholm. In addition, workers in big cities consider themselves as workers and working class to less extent than those in the rest of the country. Is the attitude towards trade union membership strongly influenced by class and professional affiliation?

There is no doubt that labour market looks very different in regions of growth, such as big cities, and in other parts of Sweden in terms of, inter alia, the structure of sectors and mobility. It is not new that trade union activities are more difficult to conduct in sectors with many small workplaces. If there are no local trade union representatives, it is certainly more difficult for the employees to get a good picture of trade union activities. To reach out to young people at their workplaces is a big challenge, especially in big cities where people have a tendency to change jobs more often.

It is, however, positive that the interest in trade unions among members in big cities is great, even bigger than in the rest of the country. About half of workers who are not unionised can consider joining the trade union, even in big cities. There is also a big interest in taking trade union assignments.

Trade unions in big cities

The sixth report in the survey “Opinions on unions and work” deals with inhabitants of big cities and their relationship to trade unions. How does the view on trade unions and trade union affiliation differ between workers in big cities and workers in the rest of the country? The fact that unionisation rate is lower in big cities than in the rest of the country makes it interesting to study whether the view on trade unions, in all different aspects reflected in the survey, shows any regional differences.

To be able to improve and develop trade union activity, it is important to learn what views people have on many different issues and how the real conditions are. In order to find out, the survey “Opinions on unions and work” was carried out in 2006. More than 8 000 employed people in the whole country have been interviewed. This is the fifth time “Opinions on unions and work” has been conducted since 1988. The report is the sixth of seven that reflect the attitude of those employed to various issues as well as the view on work conditions.