

WOMEN IN AUSTRALIAN UNIONS 2011

ACTU Women's Committee

Acknowledgements

This report builds on work originally undertaken by Sonya Mezenic for the Centre for Labour Research, University of Adelaide in 1998. Sonya, with Professor Barbara Pocock as principal investigator, developed and conducted the 1998 survey of gender representation in Australian unions and prepared the 1999 report. While the survey has been adapted to meet the changing nature of Australian unions and the Australian workforce, the 2010 survey and 2011 report draw heavily from this initial study and comparisons between the studies are made where possible.

The 2010 survey was conducted by the ACTU Women's Committee with assistance from ACTU Member Connect. The results were compiled by Phil Lappin and the report drafted by Dr Kristin van Barneveld. Dr Rae Cooper from the University of Sydney provided specialist advice on the conduct of the survey and analysis of the responses. ACTU Industrial Officer Belinda Tkalcevic and Women's Committee Chair Therese Bryant prepared the final draft of the Report.

Members of the ACTU Women's Committee provided important advice on the modernisation of the 1999 survey questions, followed up responses from their own and other unions and provided important feedback on the draft report. ACTU Women's Committee members, Robyn May, Suzanne Hammond, and Catherine Davis played key roles in this work.

This report would not have been possible without the assistance of the unions who participated by completing the survey.

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 ABOUT THE WOMEN IN UNIONS SURVEY 2010

The Women in Unions survey is conducted every 10 years. The 2010 survey followed on from the inaugural survey conducted in 1999. The 2010 survey was distributed to all unions and asked questions to determine:

- Whether women are represented in the union movement proportional to their union membership?
- What is the representation of women in unions across different levels in the union?
- What policies and procedures do unions employ to encourage and support women as members and employees to participate at senior and influential levels in the union?
- What 'best practices' do unions employ to develop and support women members and employees?

For the first time, the 2010 survey also asked questions to determine:

- What policies and procedures do unions use to ensure women's issues are addressed through workplace bargaining processes?
- What policies and procedures do unions use to monitor bargaining outcomes in relation to women?

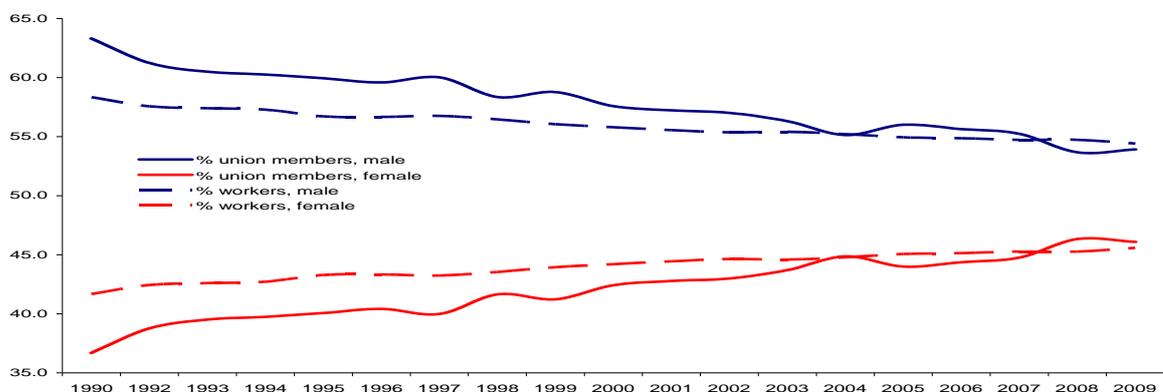
1.2 KEY FINDINGS OF THE WOMEN IN UNIONS SURVEY 2010

1.2.1 Female participation in the workforce and membership of unions has grown.

Unions should be commended for the significant progress which has been made in increasing the female membership of unions since the 1999 survey. Respondent unions to the 2010 survey reported that 56% of membership was female (this is higher than the ABS average of 48% and is reflective of the nature of the union respondents to this particular survey).¹

Survey respondents employed a number of strategies to improve women's participation in their union which has helped increase female membership. These strategies are discussed further in the body of this report. Gains in women's participation in the union movement can also be explained in part by the growth in women's participation in the paid labour force and increased union membership. Women now make up almost half of the paid workforce and almost half of total union membership, as demonstrated in the graph below.

Figure 1.1: Female and Male Employees as a Proportion of the Labour Force and Union Membership



Source: ABS 6310.0 - Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership, Australia, August 2009 (data is of members 'in main job'), and 6202.0 - Labour Force, Australia, Oct 2010. Note: ABS data is incomplete for 1991 for 6310.0 and has not been included.

¹ ABS Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership, August 2010. Note, the majority of the respondents to the 2010 Women In Unions survey have a significant proportion of female membership with a commensurate focus on women's participation, and as such, the results are likely to over state the progress of women's participation in unions overall.

1.2.2 Whilst women tended to be very active in workplaces, their participation in union activities tended to drop off in formal union structures linking the union to workplaces

The 2010 Survey finds that not only has women’s membership of unions increased but that women are particularly well disposed to taking up activist roles at the workplace.

- Union respondents reported that 54.8% of delegates were women and an astonishing 84.6% of deputy delegates were women.
- However women’s participation in more formal union structures dropped when women’s involvement moved away from the shop floor.

1.2.3 Women’s representation in elected and senior positions in unions has improved yet remains disproportionate

The 2010 survey confirmed that women’s increased union membership does not equate to increased influence with respect to union policies and activities, as they are still not proportionally represented within the formal decision making structures of unions, whether as employees or elected officials.

Within unions women are generally underrepresented at federal executive and council level and one union reported having no women on its federal executive.

According to the survey, women made up just 30% of elected Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries, 36.8% of branch committee members and 40% of elected Presidents or Vice Presidents, as demonstrated in the chart below.

Table 1.1: Gender Representation in Unions: senior officials, 1999 and 2010

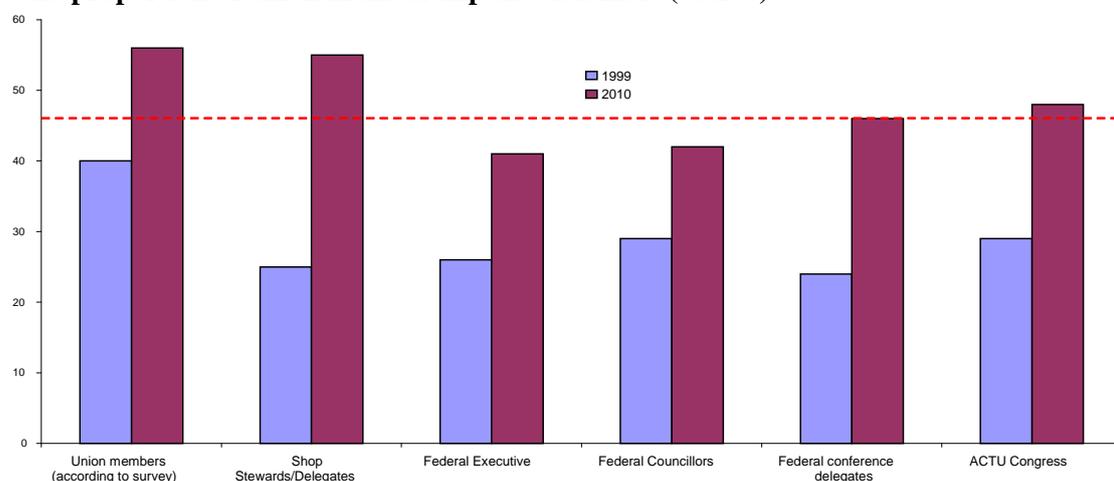
Position	Men	Women	Total	% Women (2010)	% Women (1999)
Secretary	7	3	10	30%	23%*
President	6	4	10	40.0%	39%
Vice President	13	9	22	40.9%	38%
Assistant Secretary	8	4	12	33.3%	21%
TOTAL: senior officials#	34	20	54	37%	28%

* 1999 data includes secretary and sec-treasurer roles.
 # 1999 data includes treasurer in category of senior officials.

1.2.4 Women’s representation in all forums has increased since the 1999 survey

There has been significant improvement in the proportion of women represented at all forums and the representation of women at the peak decision making body, ACTU Congress, reflects the proportion of women in unions generally.

Figure 1.2: Women’s share of key positions in Australian unions 1999 and 2010 compared to the proportion of union membership that is female (48.1%)



1.2.5 *Whilst the representation of women in senior positions within unions has improved since the 1999 survey,² there is still a clear pattern of gendered hierarchical and occupational segmentation within unions*

Women were under-represented in senior elected positions and overrepresented in the ranks of administration, support and 'specialist' positions in unions. These positions are often removed from the centre of power within unions, while men are more likely to succeed to positions of influence.

Key barriers to women's involvement in unions included:

- Lack of women in elected roles, female role models and female influence regarding union policies and administration;
- Persistent stereotyped perceptions of the role of women in unions;
- Lack of support for women delegates who wish to move into higher roles in the union; and
- Lack of flexible work options to assist women to balance work and family.

1.2.6 *About one third of unions have developed and implemented policies to support and encourage women employees*

- Around a third of union respondents either employed a women's officer and/or had an equal opportunity policy or childcare policy. Around a quarter had a work and family policy and/or an affirmative action policy and 3% reported having a proportional representation policy.
- About three quarters of unions reported that they provided paid parental leave, the right to part time work following parental leave, flexible work arrangements for employees or equal access to professional development and training for employees with family responsibilities.
- Women are underrepresented in leadership training. Of the 14 participants in the 2010 ACTU Union Management Course, just 3 were women.

1.2.7 *About one third of unions provided positive development opportunities for women*

- About one third of unions hosted an annual women's conference, enrolled women members in the Anna Stewart Memorial Project, ran courses specifically for women members, or provided childcare assistance for delegates to attend out of hours meetings and 14% conducted leadership programs for women members.
- Half of union respondents said that they arranged union meetings, conferences or training at appropriate times for members with caring responsibilities and about half of respondent unions distributed materials specifically for women members.

1.2.8 *Whilst unions had standard bargaining claims for a variety of issues important to women members, there is clearly room for improvement*

- About a third of unions reported that they had a standard workplace claim regarding equal remuneration,³ sexual harassment or equal employment opportunity;
- Almost two thirds of unions had standard bargaining claims for paid parental leave for primary and secondary carer's, for flexible work arrangements or for personal/carer's leave. About half of unions had standard bargaining claims for the right to return to work part time from parental leave and 14% for childcare assistance; and
- Where unions did have standard bargaining clauses for key women's issues they had successfully achieved them in at least 75% of agreements.

² In her 1999 report, Mezenic found gender representation gaps of between 11% and 20% in the formal structures of Australian Unions. In 2009, the story has improved somewhat with a greater proportion of women represented at all levels within the union movement.

³ One union reported that whilst it did not have a standard equal remuneration claim, it did have a policy of ensuring gender equal job classification and remuneration structures in bargaining.

1.2.9 *Less than half of unions reported having mechanisms in place to ensure women members' issues were adequately represented in bargaining*

- About half of unions conducted surveys to ascertain women's priority issues, or implemented mechanisms to ensure consultation of women members regarding bargaining claims and representation on bargaining committees; and
- About one third of unions regularly monitor the outcome of bargaining for women members, including review of outcomes of bargaining by the Executive Committee, Women's Officer and / or Women's Committee and monitoring through an enterprise agreement data base.

1.3 HOW ARE THESE FINDINGS RELEVANT TO UNIONS?

Without women members participating in union decision making processes and structures, the capacity of the union to reflect their views and address their issues, limits the union's ability to recruit and organise an evolving modern workforce.

Many of these 'women's issues' are highly relevant to male members. Unions must reflect modern family structures and issues such as balancing work and family in order to maintain their relevance to members and potential members, for whom this is an important issue.

The union movement also needs to continue to adapt to the changing nature of the workforce and become more inclusive of a diverse workforce and new forms of employment arrangements. Unions who embrace women activists, and support their progress through union career structures, increase their chances of accessing a greater pool of potential high quality employees.

Women union members and activists are a key projected growth area for all unions, in both female and male dominated sectors. The report highlights the readiness of many women to take up membership and to adopt active union roles in the workplace including as delegates and bargaining representatives.

Improved representation of women in elected positions would provide role models and support for women delegates and colleagues, as well as ensure the union's industrial priorities reflect women members' needs.

This Report aims to uncover some of the practices that unions are using which are successful in increasing women's membership and activity in the union.

1.4 WHERE TO FROM HERE?

The Report will be presented to ACTU Executive in July 2011.

Unions should be commended for the significant progress which has been made in increasing the female membership of unions since the 1999 survey.

However, there is still work to be done to improve women's representation in senior and elected positions in the union movement.

Unions can assist women to continue to grow within the union movement by removing the barriers women face in accessing senior and elected roles in their union. This could include, for example, providing working conditions that assist them to balance work and family commitments, ensure they have equal access to leadership training and support, and removing stereotype perceptions of women's capacity to take on senior positions.

Removing these barriers will improve the union's ability to attract the best possible leadership talent and tap into the growth potential of organising women workers.

The Recommendations outlined in this Report reflect the ideas and strategies used by unions participating in this survey. All unions are encouraged to review their activities in regard to women, including how they attract, retain and develop women members, delegates, employees, elected officials and leaders.

We encourage unions to continue to participate in and support this survey and hope it continues to be a useful tool for improving women's representation and participation in the union movement.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

This report acknowledges the improvements that have been made between the 1999 and 2010 surveys and recommends that Unions and Peak Councils continue to build on this progress. The Recommendations below are designed to increase women's active participation at all levels of the union movement.

2.1 WOMENS PARTICIPATION IN UNION STRUCTURES

ENCOURAGE WOMEN DELEGATES AND EMPLOYEES TO PARTICIPATE IN UNION STRUCTURES BY:

- 2.1.1 Setting appropriate goals, actions, resources and timeframes to increase women's active participation in the union;
- 2.1.2 Ensuring women members are consulted and their issues addressed, when developing union industrial priorities and growth campaigns;
- 2.1.3 Removing barriers which discourage the participation of women in union activities by taking into consideration the availability of employees and delegates with family responsibilities;
- 2.1.4 Identifying and sponsoring women delegates to move in to roles including elected positions;
- 2.1.5 Encouraging and supporting women employees to take on more senior roles within the union;
- 2.1.6 Ensuring women employees are afforded equal opportunities to access career development such as acting in higher duties and board positions;
- 2.1.7 Developing policies for union employees including the right to part time work following parental leave, flexible work arrangements, protection against sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination. Provide mandatory training for all officials and union employees regarding these union policies;
- 2.1.8 Consider establishing dedicated positions for women on union Committees of Management, Executive, Council, Congress, and other high level union committees;
- 2.1.9 Ensuring there is a union official(s) who has responsibility in the union for women's issues and reports at each union executive;
- 2.1.10 Establishing a women's committee and regular women's conference;
- 2.1.11 Monitoring and reporting to the union executive annually on the representation of women at all levels within the union; and
- 2.1.12 If not already required by legislation, considering submitting EEO reports annually to the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA).

2.2 PEAK COUNCIL LEADERSHIP AND REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

ENSURE PEAK COUNCIL LEADERSHIP AND REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN BY:

- 2.2.1 Ensuring women member's issues are included in industrial, growth and campaign priorities, actions and resources set at Union, TLC, ACTU Executive and Congress level;
- 2.2.2 Ensuring all unions have a representative on the ACTU Women's Committee and integrating the work of the Committee into other recognised priorities of the ACTU, including in education, industrial and campaigns;

- 2.2.3 Funding and participating in the ACTU Women in Unions survey which is to be conducted 12 months before each ACTU Congress with the findings to be reported as part of the formal Congress Agenda;
- 2.2.4 Ensuring that women remain proportionately represented at ACTU Congress and include consideration of women's issues in each item at Congress; and
- 2.2.5 Continuing to promote and support the Women in Male Dominated Occupations and Industries (WIMDOI) network by encouraging members to attend and actively participate in the biennial conferences.

2.3 BARGAINING AND INDUSTRIAL AGENDA

ENSURE WOMEN MEMBERS' ISSUES ARE INCLUDED IN THE BARGAINING AND INDUSTRIAL AGENDA BY:

- 2.3.1 Developing bargaining claims in consultation with women members including consideration of the suggested provisions contained in the ACTU Work and Family Bargaining Guide;
- 2.3.2 Bargaining for appropriate facilities and conditions for women workers in male dominated workplaces, and removing barriers which unfairly discourage women's participation;
- 2.3.3 Ensuring women representatives are on all bargaining committees; and
- 2.3.4 Implementing a bargaining checklist to ensure that women's claims do not "drop off" and review achievement of women member's bargaining priorities.

2.4 PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES

- 2.4.1 Continuing, improving and extending the Anna Stewart Memorial Project by developing a comprehensive, structured curriculum and mentoring program for women union activists;
- 2.4.2 Developing materials and resources, publicising union actions supporting women and providing role models of active women in the union; and
- 2.4.3 Ensuring union and ACTU training of delegates includes gender equality issues and union policies.

3. GENDER REPRESENTATION IN AUSTRALIAN UNIONS: WHY THIS SURVEY?

3.1 BACKGROUND

This report summarises the results of the second survey into gender representation in Australian unions. It is based on a 1999 report, *Gender Representation in Australian Unions*,⁴ and was conducted using similar survey questions and a similar methodology.

3.2 THE 1999 SURVEY

The 1999 survey found that women in unions were 'under-represented in almost all levels and especially where power was most concentrated – that is in elected positions and particularly amongst secretary and president positions'. While noting that women were 'edging up towards proportional representation in some areas in some unions', it was concluded that 'we have a long way to go to achieve gender representation in Australian unions' (p.6). The 1999 report made a series of recommendations aimed at improving the representation of women in Australian unions.

3.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE 2010 SURVEY

The ACTU Women's Committee determined in early 2009 that support would be sought at the June 2009 ACTU Congress for funding and cooperation to conduct a similar survey to the 1999 Mezenic survey. The aim of the survey was to discover where improvements had been made in gender representation in Australian unions and where more work might be needed.

In 2009, Congress adopted the following policy:

1. Congress acknowledges that participation in union decision-making processes which reflects workforce diversity and union membership is important to building union effectiveness.
2. Congress is committed to continue efforts to ensure that the make-up of union decision-making structures and processes reflect workforce diversity and union membership, including the proportional representation of women as workplace representatives, organising and industrial staff and elected officers.
3. Congress undertakes to:
 - a) conduct research to monitor the progress of women's representation in unions following on from the 1998 Survey on Women in National Unions;
 - b) develop appropriate policies in response to the findings of the research;
 - c) actively implement these policies within each union;
 - d) encourage the provision of training for all officers in discrimination and equity issues, including the additional family friendly entitlements and anti-discrimination remedies under the *Fair Work Act*; and
 - e) encourage affiliates to examine mechanisms to support the union participation of members with caring responsibilities.

⁴ Mezenic S (1999) *Gender Representation in Australian Unions 1998*, report produced by the Centre for Labour Research and the Australian Council of Trade Unions, Centre for Labour Research, Research Paper Series No.11, 11 October 1999, University of Adelaide.

3.4 WHO THE SURVEY COVERS

In 1999, 36 federal unions (including 6 state based unions) responded to the survey. As in 1999, all federal unions were invited to respond. Fourteen unions, including 3 state based unions⁵, responded to the 2010 survey representing just under 60% of union membership. These unions are listed below:

• CPSU PSU	• NSW NA*	• QPUE
• QPSU	• AEU	• ANF
• NTEU	• AMWU	• LHMU
• FSU	• APESMA	• CPSU SPSF
• MUA	• SDA	

The survey results cover 58.3% of the Australian union movement. It must be noted however that the majority of respondents have a significant proportion of female membership and therefore the results are likely to over-represent the position of women in unions.⁶ The list of participating unions and their proportion of female membership is at Appendix A.

⁵ The ASU provided responses to the survey but due to timing unfortunately the data could not be included in this report.

*The unions that participated for the first time in 2009 were the SDA, NSW Nurses Association, Queensland Police Union of Employees, QPSU, and APESMA.

⁶ It must be noted however that while the coverage was relatively high and the spread of union respondents was good, most of the 11 national union respondents have a significant proportion of female membership (see Appendix 1) and a number have pursued policies to engage women at various levels of the union (see Section 6). As such, the results are an over-representation of the position of women in unions rather than a picture that can be generalised to the union movement nationally.

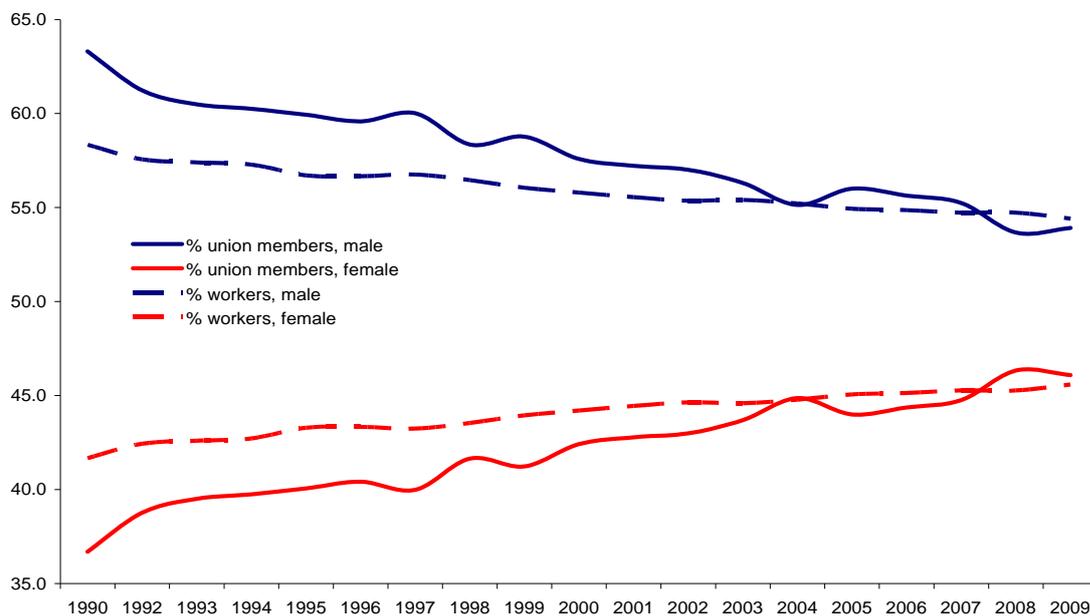
4. GENDER REPRESENTATION IN UNION MEMBERSHIP AND IN THE WORKPLACE

In 1999, unions reported that 40% of members were women. At that time, the ABS recorded that 41.6% of union members in their main job were women.

In contrast, in 2010, unions reported that 56% of all members were women. This compares to ABS data which shows that 48% of workers who are union members in their main job are women.⁷

The 2010 survey results broadly reflect the trends reported by the ABS which show increasing participation of women in the labour market and a corresponding increase in the proportion of women in the Australian union movement (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: Proportion of women and men in the labour force and in Australian unions 1990 – 2009



Source: ABS 6310.0 - Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership, Australia, August 2009 (data is of members 'in main job'), and 6202.0 - Labour Force, Australia, Oct 2010.

Note: ABS data is incomplete for 1991 for 6310.0 and has not been included.

⁷ While the increased proportion of women members being reported by unions between 1998 and 2009 reflects the growing participation of women in unions, the discrepancy is also explained by the fact that the SDA and NSWNA, both unions with a significant female membership participated for the first time in the survey in 2009.

5. GENDER REPRESENTATION IN UNION DECISION MAKING BODIES

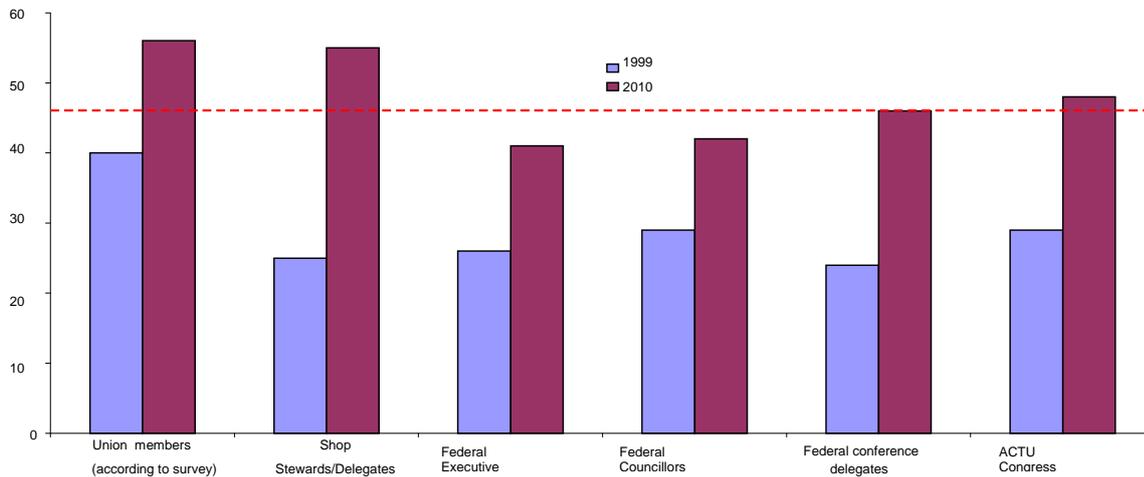
Keeping in mind that 48% of all union members are women, it is important to assess whether union decision making bodies reflect the level of representation of women.

In her 1999 report, Mezenic found gender representation gaps of between 11% and 20% depending on the decision making body. In several unions, it was reported that some decision making levels had no representation of women at all.

What is the gender representation gap? It is simply the difference between the proportion of union membership that is comprised of women (48%) and the proportion of women in particular positions in unions.

Figure 5.1 shows that in 2010 the story has improved somewhat. There have been improvements in the proportion of women represented at all forums and the representation of women at the peak decision making body, ACTU Congress, reflects the proportion of women in unions generally. There is still some work to be done within unions however, with women generally under-represented at federal executive and council levels and one union reporting having no women on its federal executive.

Figure 5.1: Women's share of key positions in Australian unions 1999 and 2010



5.1 FEDERAL UNION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES

In 2010, unions reported that women comprised 40.9% of those on their national executive. This is a gender representation gap of 7.1%, a significant improvement on the gender gap of 14% reported by Mezenic in 1999.

Among the 11 respondent federal unions, four had more than 48% representation of women on their national executive committee. These were unions whose industry coverage could generally be considered feminised such as teaching, accommodation and food services, administrative and support services and the finance and insurance services. Most of the remaining unions covered workers in more 'male' dominated industries including manufacturing and professional, scientific and technical services work.

The 2010 results are a marked improvement on the 1999 results where Mezenic found that 9 unions had no women on their federal executive. In 2010, just 1 federal union had an executive comprised solely of men.

5.2 FEDERAL UNION COUNCILS

Unions reported that 41.8% of their federal council members were women. This is a gender gap of 6.2% (see Figure 5.1). While representation of women on federal union councils does not yet reflect the proportion of union members who are women, it is an improvement on the 11% gap Mezenic reported in 1999.

Unlike in 1999 when it was found that the six unions that had no female representation on their federal executive also had no female representation on their federal council, in 2009, all unions had at least one woman representative at the federal council level.

According to the data reported, in 2009, women had achieved proportionate representation on federal council in 3 unions – the SDA, NTEU and LHMU.

5.3 FEDERAL UNION CONFERENCE

In 1999, Mezenic reported a gender gap of 16% between union membership and women's representation at union federal conferences. She found that just 24% of delegates to federal conferences were women. In 2010, among the five unions providing data on the composition of their delegation, 46% of delegates were reported to be women. This is more reflective of the proportion of union members generally.

It must be noted that the response rate to this question was low in the 2010 survey, and it would be interesting to assess the level of women representation according to each union's proportion of female members. This is an area for future research.

5.4 PEAK COUNCILS

In 1999, Mezenic reported that women were proportionately represented at ACTU Executive and on the ACTU Council. She suggested that this reflected the success of affirmative action rule changes and policy at the ACTU and suggested that unions pursue these changes to achieve proportionate representation on executive committees and at union council meetings.

The affirmative action policy adopted to ensure equal representation of women at ACTU Executive has achieved an important cultural acceptance of the appropriateness of women's participation at this level, as well as serving as a mechanism to develop women's skills and experience in participation at Executive level. However, it should be noted that presence at the Executive does not accurately reflect the level of power and influence that person has in their union, at Executive, or at other key decision making levels. This is something the union movement needs to address.

In her 1999 report, Mezenic noted unions had fallen behind in gender representation of delegations to ACTU Congress, where she found a gender gap of 20%. At the 2009 ACTU Congress, 48.5% of delegates were women. This is slightly above proportional representation and is a fantastic achievement reflecting the work that unions have done to ensure both women and men are represented at the peak union decision making body.

6. GENDER REPRESENTATION AMONGST OFFICIALS

One of the key areas of criticism in the 1999 report was the representation of women in elected positions in unions. Table 6.1 shows that while some gains have been made, women are still not proportionately represented at any level of senior elected officials. This is explored in more detail below.

Table 6.1: Gender Representation in Unions: senior officials, 1999 and 2010

Position	Men	Women	Total	% Women (2010)	% Women (1999)
Secretary	7	3	10	30%	23%*
President	6	4	10	40.0%	39%
Vice President	13	9	22	40.9%	38%
Assistant Secretary	8	4	12	33.3%	21%
TOTAL: senior officials#	34	20	54	37%	28%

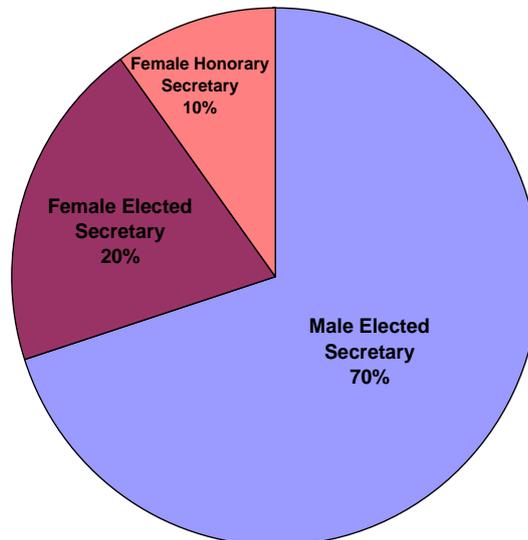
* 1998 data includes secretary and sec-treasurer roles.

1998 data includes treasurer in category of senior officials.

6.1 UNION SECRETARIES AND ASSISTANT SECRETARIES

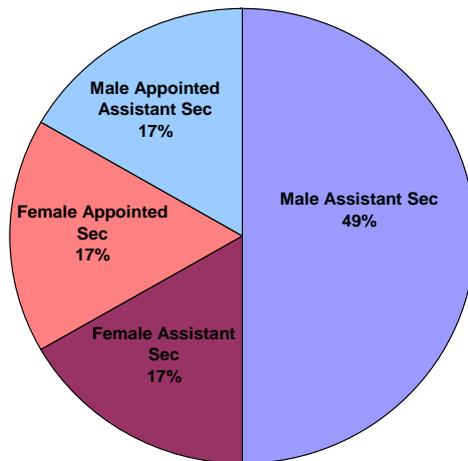
Women remain underrepresented at the top of the union movement. In 1999, Mezenic reported a 17% gender gap in the number of women union secretaries. In 2009, of the ten national unions providing data, three of the secretary positions were held by women and one of those positions was honorary rather than elected (Figure 6.1). This is a gender gap of 11.6%.

Figure 6.1: Union Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries, 2010



Of the 12 assistant secretary positions in national unions, 4 were held by women. This is a gender representation gap of 12.8%. Two unions did not have a female in either the secretary or assistant secretary positions and one union had women in both their secretary and assistant secretary positions.

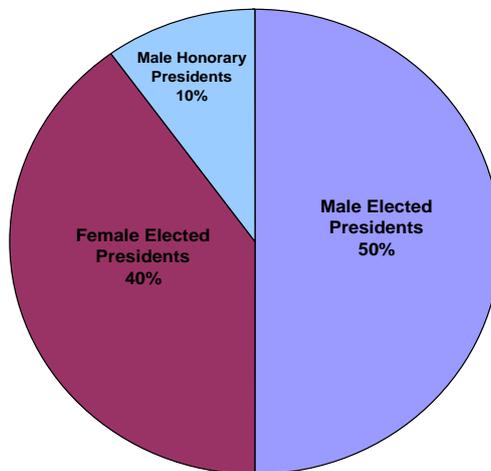
Figure 6.2: Assistant Secretaries, 2010



6.2 PRESIDENTS, VICE PRESIDENTS AND TREASURERS

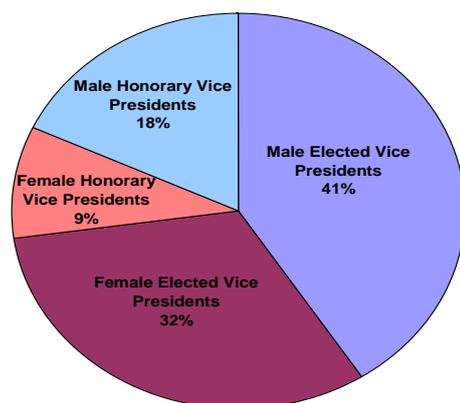
Among the ten federal unions that provided data, nine had an elected president. Of the elected presidents, 4 were women and 5 were men. The remaining union had an honorary male president. In other words, 40% of the president positions were held by women. This is in contrast to the 1999 data collected by Mezenic, who found that 21% of national presidents were women.

Figure 6.3: Union Presidents, 2010



All of the 22 vice president positions in national unions were elected. In the unions with multiple vice president positions, all except one had at least one female vice president. Of the three unions with only one vice president position, two were held by men. The proportion of women vice presidents is similar to that in 1999 where 38% of vice president positions were held by women.

Figure 6.4: Union Vice Presidents, 2010



6.3 INDUSTRIAL OFFICERS, ORGANISERS AND SPECIALISTS

In 1999, Mezenic found that women held 39% of industrial officer positions, but only 20% of organiser positions, and 29% of the combined industrial officer/organiser positions. In contrast women held 46% of the 'specialist' positions in unions. Specialist positions included education officer and women's officer. Mezenic concluded that women tended to be in appointed specialist positions which were often some distance from decisive power in unions.

The 2010 survey revealed that not much has changed in the non-elected positions in unions.⁸ Women are less likely to be in senior roles such as senior legal/industrial officers than in the less senior version of those roles (ie legal/industrial officer), and are more likely to be employed in 'specialist positions' which are removed from the centre of power within the union.

Table 6.2: Gender Representation in Unions: non-elected positions, 1999 and 2010

Position	Men	Women	Total	Women (2010)	Women (1999)	
Senior Legal/ Industrial Officer	7	4	11	36.4%	39%	
Legal/ Industrial Officer	18	16	34	47.0%		
Industrial/ Organiser (Combined role)	5	2	7	28.6%	29%	
Lead organiser/organiser	34	16	50	32%	20%	
Women's Officer	-	3.5	3.5	100.0%	100%	
Education Officer	2	6	8	75.0%	46%*	
Senior research officer	3	3.5	6.5	55.9%		
Research officer	1	2	3	66.6%		
	8	10	18	55.6%		
Communications officer	11	14	25	56.0%		
	6.5	6.5	13	50.0%		
OH&S officer	1.5	5	6.5	76.9%		
ATSI officer	2	1	3	33.3%		
TOTAL: non-elected positions						41%
Manager	3	6	9	66.6%		-
Admin/IT/Office support	40	109	149	73.2%	-	
TOTAL: office admin positions	43	115	158	72.8%	-	

* 1998 survey reported 'specialist officers'.

Note: due to the change in union roles between 1998 and 2009 some categories are not comparable.

⁸ Note that in a small number of unions some positions such as organisers are elected. However these positions are generally removed from the decision making positions in unions.

7. UNION ACTION AND POLICY FOR WOMEN

The 2010 survey builds on the questions asked in the 1999 survey around union action and policy for women to include questions around specific employee and delegate initiatives. It also includes questions around bargaining that were not included in the original survey. The results are summarised below.

7.1 UNION ACTION FOR WOMEN

There is a range of measures that unions use to improve the representation of women in unions. Table 3 summarises some of these actions.

Table 7.1 shows that in 2010, five unions (or 35.7%) employed a women's officer, an improvement on the proportion of unions employing women's officers in 1999. Of these, 2 were employed full time and 3 were part time. Of the remaining 9 unions that did not have a women's officer, 6 reported that a staff member was allocated responsibility for women's issues among their other duties. Five of these employees had not specific time allocated as part of their working time to women's issues. This suggests that for those employees, women's issues were probably not getting the attention necessary or employees were working on these issues outside of work time.

Table 7.1: Union actions for women, 1999 and 2010

Action	Number of Unions (2010)	% of Unions (2010)	% of Unions (1999)
Employ women's officer	5	35.7%	13%
National Women's Committee	9	64.3%	39%
Affirmative Action positions for State/National Executive	5	35.7%	33%
Affirmative Action positions for ACTU Congress	3	21.4%	-
Targets for women's representation on State/National Executive	2	14.3%	-
Targets for women's representation at ACTU Congress	2	14.3%	-
Targets for women's representation on bargaining teams	1	7.1%	-

Although most unions did not have a dedicated women's officer, most had a national women's committee and some employed other initiatives such as the use of affirmative action targets for representation on key decision making bodies. However, these initiatives were piecemeal and by no means widespread across the union respondents (note though some unions achieved proportional representation without the use of formal affirmative action positions or specific targets).

Where there were initiatives such as those outlined in Table 3, 86.7% of respondents said that they were effective or very effective in addressing women's issues and improving women's representation.

7.2 UNION POLICIES FOR WOMEN EMPLOYEES/OFFICIALS

Unions had a range of policies to address representation of women among union employees (see Table 4). 78.5% of unions reported that these internal union policies were effective or very effective in addressing women employees' issues and representation.

Table 7.2: Internal policies for women, 2009

Internal Union Policies	National Office %	State Office %
Equal opportunity policy	64.29%	42.86%
Affirmative action policy	21.43%	21.43%
Proportional representation	7.14%	0.00%
Work and family policy	35.71%	21.43%
Childcare policy	42.86%	28.57%

Unions were asked to outline whether they had any specific entitlements for women employees. Most unions provided employees with paid parental leave, flexible work arrangements, equal access to training and meetings for those with family or caring responsibilities, and specific professional development opportunities for female staff (Table 7.3).

Less common was the provision of leadership training for women, and childcare assistance to enable women to attend meetings, conferences or training. Leadership training was identified as important to give women access to more senior roles within unions. The ACTU Union Management Course provides an opportunity for women to develop leadership skills and form networks among senior unionists. Of the 14 participants in the 2010 course, just 3 were women.

More attention needs to be given to assistance such as childcare to enable women to participate in union activities that occur outside ordinary working hours where childcare is not necessarily available. Alternatively, consideration needs to be given to whether some union business could be restructured so that it occurs during normal working hours, rather than in informal/social settings outside of working hours.

Table 7.3: Entitlements for women employees/officials, 2010

Entitlements	National Office %	State Office %
Paid parental leave	78.6%	50.0%
Right to part-time work following parental leave	71.4%	50.0%
Flexible work arrangements for staff	78.6%	50.0%
Professional development opportunities for female staff	78.6%	50.0%
Equal access to training/meetings for staff with family and caring responsibilities	78.6%	50.0%
Childcare assistance to attend meetings, conferences or training	35.7%	35.7%
Leadership Training for Women	42.9%	21.4%
Training for leadership roles on managing workforce diversity	21.4%	14.3%
Regular Women's Conferences/Seminars/Networks	50.0%	28.6%

7.3 UNION ACTIONS TO ENCOURAGE FEMALE MEMBER PARTICIPATION

Unions reported that 54.8% of delegates were women and an astonishing 84.6% of deputy delegates were women. However, women's participation in more formal structures dropped when their involvement moved away from the shop floor. According to the survey, just 36.8% of branch committee members were women.

Unions used a range of strategies to assist in the development of women members. Some of these are detailed in Table 7.4. It is clear that the utilisation of these opportunities is low, with only a handful of unions actively providing positive development opportunities such as hosting an annual women's conference, running courses specifically for women members, providing childcare assistance for delegates to attend out of hours meetings, and/or ensuring meetings were conducted at times women could attend. Just half of union respondents said that they distributed materials on topics of particular interest to women members (such as sexual harassment, parental leave, equal pay and carers leave).

Table 7.4: Development opportunities for women members, 2010

Development opportunity for members	National Office %	State Branch %
Organising and sponsoring women's conferences	35.7	28.6
Organising and conducting women's courses /seminars	21.4	28.6
Organising and conducting women members to leadership training	7.1	21.4
Participating in the Anna Stewart Memorial Project	21.4	42.9
Enrolling women members in external women's conferences	35.7	35.7
Enrolling women members in external women's courses or seminars	28.6	21.4
Enrolling women members in external women's leadership training	7.1	21.4
Ensuring access to union meetings, conferences or training is at appropriate times for members with caring responsibilities	50.0	57.1
Providing childcare assistance for delegates attending meetings, conferences or training	21.4	28.6

Where these opportunities are provided, it is reported by unions that they are effective or very effective in addressing women members' issues and improving women's representation. Just one union respondent said that they believed that these measures were not effective.

7.4 BARGAINING FOR WOMEN MEMBERS

For the first time in 2010, unions were asked about whether issues of concern to women members were specifically taken into account in bargaining.

7.5 EQUAL REMUNERATION, SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Just three unions reported that they had a standard workplace claim regarding equal remuneration. These unions reported that they had successfully negotiated such a provision into 75% or more of their agreements.

Five unions reported having a standard claim regarding sexual harassment. Two unions reported having negotiated provisions regarding sexual harassment into more than 75% of their agreements and two other unions reported achieving this claim in about 50% of agreements they had negotiated to date.

Finally, four unions reported having a standard equal employment opportunity claim for bargaining. Three of the four unions had these provisions in more than 75% of agreements and the remaining union reported having negotiated clauses regarding equal opportunity into at least half of its agreements.

7.6 OTHER FAMILY FRIENDLY PROVISIONS IN STANDARD BARGAINING CLAIMS

Unions had a range of family friendly provisions in their standard bargaining claim although the adoption of these among respondent unions varied significantly. The most common claim was for paid maternity/primary carers leave although surprisingly not all unions reported having a standard claim for paid parental leave (Table 7.5). Analysis of the data suggests that a few unions chose not to provide responses to the questions in Table 7.5.

Table 7.5: Family friendly provisions in standard bargaining claims

Standard Claim Provision	Unions with provision (%)
Flexible work arrangements for employees with family or caring responsibilities	64.3
Personal/carer's leave	64.3
Access to other leave for caring purposes	57.1
Extended unpaid parental leave	35.7
Paid adoptive leave	64.3
Paid primary carer's leave (maternity)	71.4
Paid secondary carer's leave (paternity)	64.3
Access to other leave associated with the birth of a child	50.0
Part time work/job sharing	42.9
Childcare	14.3

Unions had made significant progress in achieving family friendly provisions through bargaining with most unions that negotiated standard clauses reporting that they had achieved these in at least 75% of agreements negotiated. Provisions where less progress had been made included childcare, extended unpaid parental leave and clauses relating to job share or access to part time work, in particular upon return from parental leave.

7.7 ASSESSMENT OF OUTCOMES FROM BARGAINING FOR WOMEN

Unions were asked if they had mechanisms in place to ensure that women member's issues were adequately represented in bargaining priorities. Six of fourteen unions responded that they had mechanisms in place. These mechanisms included:

- an annual women's survey combined with a women's working group of honorary officials to report on survey findings;
- through union women's committee and women's conferences where issues raised are incorporated for consideration in bargaining processes;
- via broad consultation with membership about development of the bargaining claim through sub-branch structures (i.e. sub-branch meetings, Executive, Council, working groups, surveys etc) and the use of a women's contact officer position in each sub-branch;
- through member surveys as part of formulating bargaining campaigns; and
- ensuring women representatives are on bargaining committees.

Unions were also asked if they monitored the outcomes of bargaining for women. Just four unions reported that they formally monitored outcomes. These unions reported that:

- Executive Committee receives an analysis of 'core claim' outcomes at the end of each bargain. The executive approval form for new agreements also includes details on content;
- ensuring the women's officer monitors and reports on progress; and
- through the use of an enterprise agreement database.

Finally, unions were asked if they had mechanisms in place to ensure that women members were adequately represented in the bargaining process. Four unions reported that they had mechanisms in place.

8. WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Unions should be commended for the significant progress which has been made in increasing the female membership of unions since the 1999 survey. However, despite these improvements women are still not proportionately represented in senior positions.

There is much more that unions can do to assist women grow within the union movement – such as providing working conditions that assist women members with caring responsibilities to actively participate in unions, conducting union business within working hours and ensuring women members participate in formal and informal leadership training.

It is clear from the survey results that there remain key barriers to women's employment in unions, including continuing under-representation of women in elected roles, continued stereotyped perceptions of the role of women in unions, a lack of support for women who wish to move into higher roles in the union and a lack of flexible work options to balance work and family.

Removing such barriers for women to participate in formal union structures and progress to key decision-making roles within the union will improve unions' ability to attract the best possible talent and to tap into the growth potential of organising women workers.

The Recommendations outlined in this Report reflect the ideas and strategies used by unions participating in the Survey. All unions are encouraged to review their activities in regard to women including how they attract and retain women members, delegates, employees, elected officials and leaders. We hope that unions will seriously consider implementing the actions outlined in the Recommendations that are relevant to them at this point in time.

We encourage unions to continue to participate in, and support this survey, and hope it continues to be a useful tool for improving women's representation and participation in the union movement.

Appendix 1: List of Participating Unions

Union Name		Women members (%)
<i>CPSU PSU</i>	<i>The Community and Public Sector Union (PSU Group) or CPSU</i>	57.01%
NSWNA	New South Wales Nurses' Association (NSWNA)	90.00%
QPUE	Queensland Police Union of Employees	26.09%
QPSU	CPSU-SPSF Group QLD Branch (QLD Public Sector Union)	na
<i>AEU</i>	<i>Australian Education Union</i>	71.83%
<i>ANF</i>	<i>Australian Nursing Federation</i>	na
<i>NTEU</i>	<i>National Tertiary Education Union</i>	54.66%
<i>AMWU</i>	<i>Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union</i>	9.50%
<i>LHMU</i>	<i>Liquor Hospitality Miscellaneous Union</i>	61.77%
<i>FSU</i>	<i>Finance Sector of Australia</i>	69.5%
APESMA	Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers, Australia	13.72%
<i>CPSU SPSF</i>	<i>Community and Public Sector Union - State Public Services Federation</i>	na
<i>MUA</i>	<i>Maritime Union of Australia</i>	4.91%
SDA	Shop Distributive and Allied Employees' Association	62.50%

Note: italics indicate unions that responded in both 1999 and 2010.



level 6 365 queen street
melbourne victoria 3000
t 03 9664 7333
f 03 9600 0050
w actu.org.au

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