

## WHY DO WORKERS LEAVE UNIONS? – GROUP DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WORKERS IN CCOO-CATALONIA

### *Abstract*

This study analyses the characteristics of members leaving trade unions in Spain – specifically the Catalonia branch of Workers’ Commissions (CCOO-Catalonia) – alongside their reasons for leaving using a variety of data sources. Our findings indicate higher union attrition among members in more precarious employment situations (i.e. temporary employment, low seniority). In general, union leavers confirm that their job situation is an important reason for leaving the union. We therefore conclude that efforts made by unions to support members in vulnerable labor market positions are important in order to reduce rates of union attrition.

*Keywords:* union membership; union withdrawal; reasons to leave; job insecurity; Catalonia

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### **Introduction**

While recent empirical studies have reported a decline in union membership in some European countries over the last two decades (Riley 1997; Hyman 1997; Visser 2002; Machin 2004; Chechi & Visser 2005), union membership in Spain - whether due to low levels of union membership initially, the economic cycle or effective trade union activity - has grown steadily in the same time frame (Martinez Lucio 1998; Miguélez 2000; Frege and Kelly 2004). Nevertheless, the increase in union membership has been coupled with an overall increase in the workforce, so that it has not led to a significant increase in union density: while union memberships grew from 1,561,200 in 1990 to 3,080,000 members in 2009, union density only increased 3.9%, from 16.0% to 19.9% (Jordana 1996; Beneyto 2009). This trend is also true for the Spanish Workers' Commissions, or CCOO – Spain's largest union federation.

Focusing on the regional branch of CCOO in Catalonia<sup>i</sup>, membership figures reveal a dynamic picture. In 2005, 19,325 members left the union federation while 24,265 individuals joined, leading to a net gain of 4,940 members to the existing 165,536 members

registered at the end of 2004. In other words, 11.3% of members left the union, while those joining amounted to 14.5%. This high level of turnover reflects a situation where the majority of new members leave the union during the first two years. Given similarly volatile union membership in Britain, Waddington and Whitston (1997) suggest that recruitment strategies address the high rates of attrition and conclude that understanding the reasons behind leaving is essential in any attempt to consolidate union membership.

Therefore, the aim of our study is two-fold: first, we analyze the individual characteristics of those who leave unions in order to identify vulnerable sub-groups. Second, we investigate the reasons for leaving the union. Are these reasons rooted in the nature of the union and how it functions – the services offered, the channels for participation, the strategies for action, the attitudes of the leaders – or are they rooted in other factors unrelated to the union *per se*, such as work-related change (job, type of work or contract, retirement, etc.) or changes on the personal or family levels. Our main hypotheses link job situation to the probability and reasons for leaving the labor union. We are particularly interested in the theory of labor market segmentation which distinguishes between core workers (i.e. secure jobs) and peripheral workers (i.e. insecure jobs, atypical work and unconsolidated careers). The distinction is of special interest to the Spanish

institutional setting because of the dual nature of the Spanish labor market, which is particularly based on type-of-contract segmentation (Llorente 2007; Banyuls et al. 2009).

This paper is an explorative study. The dearth of previous studies - particularly in Spain - restricts one's ability to make comparisons. Furthermore, there is a lack of theoretical references which can serve as conceptual, descriptive and explanatory guides for the analysis of leaving labor unions. For example, Guest and Conway (2004) state that, "While there is sufficient theory about joining the unions, there are fewer explanations when it comes to continuity or the permanence of these members and even less when it comes to leaving". Finally, this study faced methodological difficulties in defining the sample population. We conduct our analyses using a combination of survey data and registry data from CCOO-Catalonia, a regional branch of one of the two main union federations in Spain. In order to select those who actually left the union for the second part of the analysis (reasons for union-leaving), we made use of a representative sample of union members with unpaid dues who had worked for relatively small companies. This is a major limitation of this study, which shows the difficulties in analyzing membership turnover.

### **Constructing a theoretical framework**

Previous studies have suggested that motives for union leaving represent one end of the spectrum of motives for union affiliation and participation in union activities. In keeping with the classification of incentives for union affiliation by Lange et al. (1982), we describe the parallel theoretical frameworks explaining union affiliation (Guest & Conway, 2004) and disaffiliation (Levesque, et al., 2005). According to Lange et al. (1982: 221), incentives for participation can be either material (i.e. instrumental), purposive (i.e. functional), or sociability or adversarial identification (us versus them).

After reviewing theories of trade union membership, Guest and Conway (2004) group the theories into four separate, though not mutually exclusive, categories. One category prioritizes adversarial identities in the company (us versus them) such that membership would be a result of power relations in the workplace. Another category centers on rational instrumental motives, where membership benefits exceed membership costs. A third category (the functional incentive) prioritizes union effectiveness in offering protection and job security. Finally, union membership can be a product of the social interaction derived from collectivist and professional group identities (the sociability incentive). These theories of union membership bear a strong resemblance to the theories of Levesque et al., (2005) constructed to explain union dissatisfaction and the withdrawal of union members. With respect to adversarial identity (us versus them), Levesque

highlights a problem in relation to differences in work type and working conditions. The individualization of labor relations, praised by managers, renders collective action difficult. It is expected that a decline in union membership would be caused by the union's inability to promote adversarial identities among workers which then translate into collective action. Similarly, instrumental incentives for union membership may be offset by a loss in negotiation power. This can occur with an increase in unemployment, proliferation of atypical and insecure contracts, or from a rise in subcontracting and outsourcing. Finally, functional and social incentives for union membership may be depleted by aggressive managerial strategies and by worker differentiation. Weakening the relationship between organization and union members renders the formation of collective and professional identities difficult, and depletes the protection offered by the union.

In short, a clear correspondence exists between Guest and Conway's explanatory approaches to union affiliation and Levesque's approaches to union withdrawal. The incentives mentioned in both can be a consequence both of union efforts to increase and maintain membership, and in the personal or labor situation of the individual. Seeking differences on these grounds, we may be better able to understand union withdrawal. We have categorized the reasons for union leaving into three main groups:

1) Union-Related. This category includes union withdrawal for reasons related to the union itself, and generally includes instrumental reasons and disagreement with the union. Instrumental grounds for leaving a union may occur in the event that the results of union's bargaining are deemed superfluous or unimportant, or in the event that union services are seen as deficient. Members motivated by instrumentalism will also take into account union dues, and are more likely to withdraw if dues are seen as too high. Conversely, disagreement with union policy may induce members with adversarial identification incentives to withdraw as well as those members for whom collective commitment to the job and co-workers (i.e. sociability incentive) were the initial motivation to join the union.

2) Personal and Family Motives. This category includes such factors as the birth of a child, major illnesses or divorce, each of which can affect the decision to leave a labor union. Personal and family motives are linked with work-related changes in many cases. For instance, caring for dependent relatives or having a major illness may also be cause for quitting employment (and thus union-leaving). In contrast, these reasons are not necessarily related to dissatisfaction with neither the union nor its functioning. As such, for the sake of analysis, "Personal and Family Motives" will encompass changes in both one's personal as

well as professional situation and will thus include all non-union related reasons for leaving, in opposition to the first category.

3) Work-Related. Work-related motives include changes in the employment status, job satisfaction and treatment by the employer. In these cases, the member does not blame the union or how it works. Work-related issues could include motives involving sociability incentives (i.e. collective or professional identities) and adversarial identification. A job change implies a new work environment, and likely different conditions that shape such collective or professional identities. It should be noted that rational cost/benefit calculations, clearly instrumental in nature, play a part in work-related reasons for union leaving. For instance, the benefits of membership may be almost completely offset upon becoming unemployed.

### **Previous empirical findings**

In this section, we will summarize empirical studies of union withdrawal and reasons for withdrawal. Gallie (1996) argues that, in Britain, “The membership crisis of the 80s can be seen as a sharp decline in workers’ commitment to trade unionism at a moment when the coercive power of the unions was being reduced” (due to conservative government’s anti-union legislation). However, Gallie does not find sufficient empirical



evidence in his research to support the notion of a general breakdown of British workers' commitment to unions given that only 25% of employed members withdraw for reasons having to do with the union itself. Rather, he notes that the reasons put forth stem primarily from changes in the work situation. 45% of members who withdrew from the union but remained employed cited job change as the reason and noted that in their new employment there are no unions. Of members who withdrew and became unemployed, 75% cited job loss as the reason for withdrawal. Gallie (1996) also finds that different levels of female labor union membership are attributable neither to individual or demographic factors, nor to trade union characteristics, but rather to the greater likelihood of women in Britain to be working part-time. In their analysis of a public sector union in the UK, Waddington and Kerr (1999) observe that 67.6% of members who withdrew from the union gave job factors as the reason, compared with 25% who mentioned dissatisfaction with the union and its activities. Klandermans (1986) notes that, regardless of the degree of initial commitment to the union, unemployment and job changes lead to disaffection - in other words, members' job and personal situations also have an impact. In examining the case of the Netherlands, Visser (2002) also notes that the strongest influences in joining or leaving a union come from factors outside of members' professional characteristics (e.g. unemployment or retirement), or from personal factors such as the birth of a child, divorce, etc<sup>ii</sup>.

The literature on reasons for union withdrawal shows different clusters of reasons that affect the decision to leave the union. Labbe and Croisat (1992) also suggest that apart from a context favoring commitment to either the company or to the union, workers' individual characteristics and motives also play a part in the decision-making process. Notably, in the empirical literature on union attrition, we find that job instability predicts a great deal of withdrawals and that members who leave the union tend to cite change in job situation as their grounds for leaving.

### **The Case under study**

Here, we briefly introduce some key characteristics of the Catalan, and Spanish, industrial relations system that will help us to link our case study with previous studies on union attrition. First, despite the great number of labor unions in Catalonia, like in Spain except for the case of the Basque Country, two union organizations stand out as most important and prominent: Comisiones Obreras (CCOO) and Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT). These two unions – along with the majority of existing unions – accept workers irrespective of the industry or company in which the workers are contracted. And both, like other continental European trade unions, recruit workers from all activity sectors. Even though their traditional base has been the Fordist worker (male manual worker in the

manufacturing sector), the CCOO and UGT, like other European trade unions, have recently incorporated service sector workers and women into their ranks. Differences between CCOO and UGT has been notable in their political orientation. However, since 1985 both unions moved away from their political references and have approximated their organizational strategies and action, thus leading to long-term collaboration. Miguélez (2004) claims that the memberships of both unions were key supporters of closer cooperation between unions which then forced bargaining agreements at the workplace level.

Second, the law in Spain recognizes the right of workers in companies with six or more employees to vote for their representatives (work council or comité de empresa). Normally in these elections, unions compete and present candidates who must be company employees; the results of these elections serve to measure the relative power among unions. It is important to note that the Spanish trade union system is based on dual representation within the company: the work council and the company's union branch (sección sindical), both with overlapping functions within companies (e.g. rights of collective bargaining at the workplace level). In Catalonia as well as in Spain, not only is there a clear dominance of the two major

trade union federations, CCOO or UGT, regarding union branches, but furthermore, more than 75% of work council members are members of one of these two unions.

Third, Spanish law guarantees a number of representatives to each local or national union, proportional to that obtained in the refereed elections of union representatives of the company workers in the field in question (i.e. sector and geographical level). Finally, the union which, alone or together with other unions, obtains a representation of more than 50% in a particular field has the legal right to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement with the industry counterpart in that particular sector; this agreement will then affect all companies and workers in the sector equally regardless whether or not they are union affiliates. So the system of representation in Spain takes on an 'open-shop' form, where due to the inclusive system of negotiations, all workers benefit from the improved working conditions negotiated by the union. Therefore, as observed by many others (Hamann, 2001; Fernandez Macias, 2003), Spanish trade unionism has a capacity for intervention that stands in opposition to its low levels of affiliation.

Within this unifying institutional setting, there is very little variation in the type of industrial relations across Spanish regions. Regional differences in membership composition mainly arise from labor market characteristics, where for example, a larger industrial tradition leads Catalan union membership to have a higher proportion of

industrial workers. This region has also recognized claims of national identity, but in contrast to similar regions in Spain like the Basque country or Galicia, no regional-specific union encompasses both national and social identities. Rivera (2001) indicates that national identities among workers in Catalonia were partly absorbed by CCOO-Catalonia.

We propose that the common components of the Spanish industrial relations system and labor market are mediators for union attrition from CCOO-Catalonia. On the one hand, the inclusive system of negotiation, the fact that unions encompass all economic sectors and union pluralism may well be behind union attrition. On the other hand, acute labor market segmentation in Spain (Llorente 2007; Banyuls et al. 2009) may temper the impact of the various components of the industrial relations system. To investigate this, we adopt the distinction made in studies of labor market segmentation (Doeringer and Piore 1971; Rubery and Wilkinson 1994), where workers can be divided along axes of centrality and periphery on labor conditions given by employers.

Core workers hold more desirable positions in the workforce, for example permanent, full-time positions. Core workers are valuable to employers given their relatively high-skill position and seniority (which is also taken as an indicator of workforce attachment). By contrast, peripheral workers are not necessarily less skilled, but given their relatively low seniority or the volatile demand for the product produced by their employer

(mainly due to the outsourcing of the non-added value part of the production by bigger companies), they face more unstable labor conditions. As a result, peripheral workers are more likely to hold fixed-term contracts, part-time positions or less work seniority. Firm size may also be an indicator of higher than average probability of work rotation. Research on Spain finds that groups such as women, first-time entrants into the labour market, immigrants and less educated workers are more likely to hold peripheral positions. The situation is very acute in Spain, where Banyuls et al. (2009) find that approximately 30% of the salaried workforce holds temporary contracts<sup>iii</sup>. These groups do not have only higher rates of unstable work, but they also have higher rates of unemployment due in large part to job instability.

Labor market segmentation is useful for proposing hypotheses that clearly link occupational situation to union attrition rates and reasons for union leaving. Insecure positions promote union withdrawal due to disrupted and unstable job trajectories since these do not allow for long-term exposure to collective identities and offer scant instrumental benefit for remaining unionized. Secure positions are more likely to be linked to work environments conducive to the formation of collective identities and the promotion of collective action.

For example, in the case of a person who joins a union when faced with a specific problem (e.g. solicits legal representation or counsel); we expect that they have joined the union recently in order to have a voice, will show little loyalty and is likely to withdraw soon. The departure from the union will likely coincide with a change in the employment situation or with the resolution of the problem for which he or she joined the union to begin with. Work changes – changing company, job, or working conditions – are expected to have a significant impact on the union membership of such workers. These workers may also withdraw from the union due to dissatisfaction with the union if union membership fails to improve working conditions. Thus, workers may blame the union for long-term job insecurity.

Given the trade union pluralism of the Spanish industrial relations system and the wide coverage of collective bargaining (van der Meer 1997; Hamann and Martinez Lucio 2003), union members with instrumental motives for membership may switch unions according to which trade union bargains most skillfully or which offers the best membership cost–benefit ratio. If no such switch occurs, there is then evidence of other incentives for union membership. In the case of scant instrumental incentive, the above commented functional, sociability and adversarial identity incentives play an important role explaining levels of unionization and activism, which also affects union attrition and

switching unions in case of job change. We expect those in core positions in the labor market to leave the union as a response to the lack of these types of incentives to remain unionized as they are more likely to remain in the same job. They will be more likely to leave due to disagreement with union decisions, while those who are not significantly at odds with union policies or ideologies will leave at retirement.

### **Data sources**

In this paper, we have used two sources of data. First, membership registries of the CCOO-Catalonia union federation were used to indicate the main trends in union withdrawal. Second, we produced a survey questionnaire to collect in-depth information on reasons for union leaving.

We analyzed the information contained in the union membership registries between 2002 and 2005. The registry has basic information on sex, age, nationality, employment situation, type of contract, firm size, and sector of economic activity for each member of the CCOO-Catalonia (around 180,000 members in 2008). The registry allows us to monitor yearly variation of characteristics of the membership, and we were thus able to establish a profile of union leavers.

The membership register is helpful in describing turnover rates for different groups of workers, but offers limited insight into the specific reasons for leaving a union.



Therefore, in order to more clearly establish the reasons and motivations for union withdrawal, we decided to distribute a questionnaire. Drawing on a representative sample of ex-union members was impossible given data protection regulations which prohibit contacting members who have resigned from the union. To circumvent this problem, we obtained a pseudo-sample of ex-union members by targeting registry members who had failed to pay union dues, but had not (yet) formally resigned, whether they intended to withdraw from union membership. We obtained access to the register of CCOO-Catalonia members who had not paid their dues between October 2005 and September 2006. There were 12,371 members with unpaid dues. From these, we drew a random, non-stratified sample of 798 (confidence level of 95.5% and in situations of supposed maximum uncertainty, included a tolerance of 3.4%). We contacted these members via telephone in November 2006.

The telephone call starts as a typical call from the union, reminding the member of the outstanding union dues. The caller then asked the member to state their reason for not paying the union dues (the first survey question)<sup>iv</sup>. The second question was whether the member intended to pay the dues or whether he or she wanted to withdraw from the union. In total, 251 individuals (31,5%) expressed the desire to leave the union federation. They then were asked to identify their reason for leaving the union. These reasons were later

grouped into eight categories<sup>v</sup>, which were subsequently organized into three categories (i.e. personal, work-related and union-related) and then two (i.e. union-related and non-union-related) in order to fit our analyses. We also asked about socio-demographic information (age, sex and educational attainment), individual labor situation and history (employment status, job seniority, number of companies worked for, occupational category, and firm size) and labor union (federation, length of service and use of union services for legal advice and training).

The main shortcoming in sampling ex-union members was that the registry of unpaid dues is restricted to companies with fewer than 20 CCOO members and without a union branch at the workplace. This restriction limits our analyses to ex-union members of relatively small companies<sup>vi</sup>. Research shows that larger firms, but above all those with some union presence (i.e. union branch or work council), have higher membership rates and participation in union activities than smaller firms and those without union presence (Jódar *et al.* 2011). Indeed, these are contexts in which the opportunity cost of joining the union is low because the union at the workplace level (and union members) motivate membership, offer protection and represent the workers' interests at the firm level. Around 40% of CCOO membership is located in companies with 20 CCOO members or less and without a union branch. As for the relatively high opportunity cost of membership among those in our

sample, as the lack of union presence diminishes the incentives commented above, we consider that those who join may have more than instrumental reasons to do so. Identification with the union, union members within the family context or simply to use union services might be well behind unionization. Therefore, we expect that the reasons for leaving the union may be more likely to be union-related. This source of potential bias underscores the exploratory nature of this study due, in good measure, to the need for strong protective measures to safeguard the confidentiality of this type of data.

### **Which type of union members leave and why do they leave?**

We now present the main results of the study. Table 1 shows the groups which, according to the membership registry, are more likely to join the union as well as maintain union membership. Paradoxically, however, some of these groups also exhibit the highest levels of union withdrawal.

-TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE -

While membership rates for women, foreigners, temporary workers, part-time workers, and young workers show the highest fluctuation when comparing inflow and outflow, these groups also show the higher membership growth and retention during the period of 2002 – 2005, when compared to the rest of the groups. Conversely, those aged 61

and over, show the highest rates of union withdrawal. Therefore, the groups showing most growth are characterized by highly volatile membership rates, and although their contribution to the overall membership figures as a whole is still slight, they nevertheless contribute to consolidating a stable membership. This pattern is most often found in sectors such as construction, retail, and hotel & catering, whereas the pace of growth is slower and steadier in the manufacturing industry. It should also be noted that these more dynamic sectors also have a higher proportion of workers with non-standard terms of employment and low job security (Banyuls et al. 2009).

In Table 2, we show reasons for leaving a union and of the reasons for doing so, as collected in interviews of ex-union members. We find (see last column in Table 2) that the majority of sampled members who leave (i.e. two-thirds) do so for work-related or family and personal (i.e. non-union-related) reasons. Unemployment, retirement, incapacity to work and lack of promotion account for an important part of the work-related causes while other changes in the employment situation account for considerably less. Indeed, the unified nature of the union membership registry allows an individual to remain in membership despite changing jobs or even employment sectors. Slightly more than a third of those who leave the union decide to withdraw due to union-related causes. Members most often reported that the union failed to adequately inform or advise them on union-

related issues. Other common union-related reason for leaving the union include: that a member joined the union in order to make use of certain union services that are no longer needed; union services do not work well; and even some members report that the union is not useful. The option of switching unions to another besides CCOO-Catalonia accounts for only 9% of union-related attrition. In general, union leavers express no intention of joining another trade union in either the short or long-term. Thus, according to the CCOO-Catalonia membership registry between 1992 and 2005, only 7.7% of those who previously left the union later rejoined. The overwhelming majority of those who left the union never rejoined. Last, the amount of union dues is also not an issue in CCOO-Catalonia<sup>vii</sup>.

-TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE -

We will now describe differences among union- and non-union-related grounds for union withdrawal. Regarding the sociodemographic variables, no significant differences are observed between men and women and their reasons for leaving the union. Indeed, 38% of women and 36% of men withdraw for union-related reasons. Differences do appear, however, when age is taken into consideration, since older workers are less likely to withdraw for union-related reasons (see Table 3). For members aged 26 to 45, union-related

reasons constitute around 45% of union withdrawals, while for members over 46, union-related reasons comprise less than 30% of withdrawals. Among non-union-related reasons, retirement or work incapacity were the main grounds for union withdrawal for those 46 and over, while unemployment, financial problems and work situation were the principal causes for individuals 45 and under, especially for those in the 26 to 35 age group.

-TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE –

Union-related reasons for union leaving are significantly correlated with the work situation (see Table 4). Union-related grounds are more common among those who remain employed after union withdrawal (around 50% of leavers from this category withdraw for reasons having to do with the union), especially among those who work in large companies (53% compared to 47% in smaller size companies). However, we found no differences for union-related reasons for leaving between employees with permanent (52,2%) and temporary contracts (50%). On the other hand, non-union-related reasons appeared more frequently among members who are unemployed after leaving the union (67,5% of leavers from this category withdraw for reasons not having to do with the union) and pensioners (89,1%)<sup>viii</sup>. Non union-related reasons are more common among those with high seniority

(54% for those with more than 5 years of seniority); in contrast to those with medium seniority (from 3 to 5 years), who display more union-related reasons (44%).

-TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE –

There is no clear relationship between trade union variables and grounds for union withdrawal. Nevertheless, non-union related causes (work-related and family and personal reasons) tend to be more frequent among those who leave before the end of their first year of membership (65% compared to 60% of those remaining in the union longer). This result may go hand-in-hand with the fact that workers joining the trade union within the past year are likely to be peripheral employees.

## **Conclusions**

First, we would like to reiterate the exploratory nature of our results due to the novelty of the subject under study both at the theoretical and conceptual levels and the limitations of drawing a representative sample of union leavers. In this paper, we studied the quantity of members who leave, identified types of members displaying a greater tendency toward union withdrawal and the reasons for their decisions in a regional branch of one of the two main union federations in Spain: CCOO-Catalonia. We have taken into

account the current state of the literature which includes Visser (2002) who identifies certain subgroups as more likely to leave the union and others as less; and also Labbe and Croisat (1992:91) who claim that “leaving the union in the case of France affects practically all the categories of the active population independently of their occupational status, sector of employment, age and place of residence”. We also consider the distinction made in studies on labor market segmentation (Doeringer and Piore 1971; Rubery and Wilkinson 1994) in order to hypothesize as to which type of employee is more likely to leave and for what reason. We stress that the security of a job position explains a great deal of difference on rates of withdrawal and reasons for doing so.

Women, older people and lower educated individuals are over-represented in the CCOO-Catalonia members who leave the union. If we look at work-related characteristics, the tendency to leave the union is greater among the unemployed, temporary workers, pensioners, unskilled workers with low seniority, workers in small workplaces, among those who have switched jobs, and finally among the newest union members.

Our results match those of a British union with similar membership composition to CCOO-Catalonia in Waddington (2006), where two thirds of ex-union members leave for non-union-related reasons. In both cases job status changes account for the majority of the non-union-related reasons. Departing from the results of the British case, in CCOO-



Catalonia dismissal is not a particularly important reason to leave the union while retirement is very often cited as a reason. Some institutional specificities may be behind that result for CCOO-Catalonia, such as the ‘inclusive’ collective bargaining in Spain (i.e. the labor law dictates that non-unionized workers benefit from collective agreements) which may lead to lower incentives for joining a union among those in unstable employment conditions or in union unfriendly firms. It may also lead to a lower propensity to leave a union when changing job, as union representation is generally region-wide.

These results might be taken with caution as our sample of leavers was drawn from a registry of unpaid dues only containing workers in companies with less than 20 CCOO members and without union branch. In these contexts workers have relatively less benefits from unionization than in larger firms with union presence. Therefore, in our sample we may overestimate those who joined the union for identification with the union, functional reasons and use of services and, in consequence, leave for union-related reasons.

To sum up, different groups are observed to have different likelihoods for leaving the union and within these, different subgroups are identified which leave the union for union-related and non-union-related reasons. These differences justify continued research along this path. It would also be useful to flesh out these profiles with variables like level of union involvement, service as a representative, participation in meetings, etc. Variables

such as these would be particularly relevant if a gender perspective was introduced since, even when controlling for the other variables, the proportion of women who leave unions is always greater than the proportion of men.

There is a common thread linking reasons for joining the union to those for leaving (Waddington 2006) which is based on improvements in salary and working conditions and also support given to members by the union. In the case of CCOO-Catalonia, it appears that questions related to services and organization (information and advice) are by far the most often cited. Moreover, regarding this, the results of the survey offer some possible points of interest for the union: more and better information, advice and services could be the starting point for finding ways to facilitate identification with the union and avoid answers like “since joining I’ve never needed anything from the union” which was used to justify leaving the union. This is also a possible line for future research, together with a rigorous analysis of the trade union trajectory or career using survival models and techniques.

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Table 1. Variation in total union membership according to worker groups in the CCOO-Catalonia. Period 2002-2005 (%)

	Percent of average membership	Average annual membership growth rate	Average annual attrition rate
<b>Total membership</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>4,0</b>	<b>11,1</b>
Men	66,2	2,3	11,0
Women	33,8	5,1	12,3
Age ≤ 30 years	13,9	15,8	17,7
Age 31-50 years	55,6	3,9	10,3
Age ≥ 61 years	4,8	-16,8	20,8
Temporary workers	1,3	10,7	13,0
Part-time workers	3,4	10,4	14,4
Unemployed	6,7	-3,6	18,4
Foreign workers	4,8	22,8	30,0
Small firm (1 to 50 employees)	37,9	3,2	14,4
Large firm (300 employees and more)	31,8	1,8	9,5
Up to 1 year of membership duration			20,7
Up to 5 year of membership duration			11,2
Union's legal services user			16,5
Union's training services user			6,0
Union representative			6,6

Source: CCOO-Catalonia membership registry (December 2005: 170,476 members). These figures are courtesy of Daniel Garrell, of the CCOO-Catalonia Research Centre.

Table 2. Reasons for leaving the union in CCOO-Catalonia

CCOO-Catalonia		Frequency	%	Reasons: three categories (%)	Reasons: two categories (%)
Work-related reasons	Unemployment due to termination of contract, dismissal or closure of company	25	10.0		
	Change of job	13	5.2		
	Retirement, incapacity to work	47	25.1		
	Others	32	12.7	53.0	
Family and personal reasons		26	10.4	10.4	63.3
Union reasons	Union is not useful	36	14.3		
	Dissatisfaction with union services	14	5.6		
	Disagreement with union actions	34	13.5		
	Preference for other union	8	3.2	36.7	36.7
Total leavers		251	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: CCOO-Catalonia attrition survey 2006.

Table 3. Union and non-union related reasons for union attrition, by age.

		<b>Union reasons</b>	<b>Non-union related reasons</b>
Age (V - Cramer: 0.268; sig. 0.003)	16 - 25	33,3%	66,7%
	26 - 35	50,0%	50,0%
	36 - 45	42,6%	57,8%
	46 - 55	37,2%	62,4%
	56 - 65	18,8%	81,3%
	More than 65	7,1%	92,9%
Total (N. 251)		36,7%	63,3%

Source: CCOO-Catalonia attrition survey 2006.



Table 4. Union and non-union reasons for union attrition by individual labour situation.

		Union reasons	Non-union reasons
Employment situation (V - Cramer: 0.329; sig. 0.000)	Unemployed	32,5%	67,5%
	Employed	52,2%	47,8%
	Fix-term employed	50,0%	50,0%
	Retired	10,9%	89,1%
	Other	16,7%	83,3%
Job seniority (V - Cramer: 0.228; sig. 0.043)	Up to 3 years	39,0%	61,0%
	4 to 6 years	46,2%	53,8%
	7 to 10 years	41,7%	58,3%
	More than 10 years	28,4%	71,6%
Total (N. 251)		36,7%	63,3%

Source: CCOO-Catalonia attrition survey 2006.

<sup>i</sup> Workers' Commissions of Catalonia or CCOO-Catalonia (Comissions Obreres de Catalunya) is the principal of the two biggest union federation in Catalonia.

<sup>ii</sup> Visser (2002) also notes that leaving is less frequent among men and that it declines with the following characteristics: age, length of the work week, wages, firm size, the level of unionization in the workplace and the frequency of contact with the union.

<sup>iii</sup> Hamann and Martinez Lucio (2003) or Polavieja (2003) elucidated the association between high levels of temporary work and the highly regulated labor market in Spain.

<sup>iv</sup> The primary motivation for not paying union dues was a lack of money in the bank account (51%). Other minor reasons are change in dues, change in bank information or error (15%).

<sup>v</sup> The categories are the following: (1) change in employment situation, (2) union unfriendly firm, (3) family reasons, (4) personal reasons, (5) dues are too expensive / union is not useful, (6) union services too expensive / poor functioning, (7) do not agree with union action or union leaders, (8) change to another union.

<sup>vi</sup> Comparing the characteristics of the leaves based on register information with the sample of 251 leavers find those working in small companies (less than 50 workers) are likely to be overestimated in the sample (49%) compared to the registered leaves (39%).

<sup>vii</sup> Comparing our findings to other cases, like the UK (Gallie 1996; Waddington and Kerr 1999; Waddington 2006), personal and work-related reasons have a greater impact in CCOO-Catalonia, meaning that personal or job situations affect the probability of leaving beyond their affects on the union itself and its functioning. Non-union related reasons also differ somewhat from those of Waddington (2006). In his analysis, the three British unions under study show three main areas of dissatisfaction leading to union withdrawal: ineffectiveness in improving wages and working conditions, reluctance among union leaders to contact or communicate with members and, insufficient help in resolving member problems. Moreover, the option of switching unions is more often reported.

<sup>viii</sup> Only 3,8% of the membership is retired from work. It should be kept in mind that retired union members pay membership dues - though these are lower when compared to the dues of working employees.