



**Trade Unions and Black and Minority
Ethnic Workers in Scotland: A Summary**

STUC Research

September 2004

The Unions Work Campaign has identified black and minority ethnic (BME) workers as a key recruitment area for growing the trade union movement in Scotland.

Facts about the black and minority ethnic population in Scotland...

- The size of the minority ethnic population in Scotland is just over 100,000; this is equivalent to 2% of the total Scottish population
- The age profile of the Scottish population reveals that minority ethnic groups have a younger age distribution than White groups
- Economic activity rates are lower amongst BME groups in Scotland
- BME workers are more likely to be employed in low unionised sectors of the economy
- Black workers in Scotland are less likely to work in the public sector than White employees
- High proportions of certain minority ethnic groups in Scotland are employed in small businesses
- The proportion of BME workers who are union members in Scotland is not available. However, a quarter of the UK BME population are union members.

The STUC are particularly interested as to how, through our Unions Work campaign, we can encourage more black and minority ethnic workers to become union members. The results of an STUC survey on widening participation and representation amongst these groups drew some interesting conclusions.

Results from STUC's Black and Minority Ethnic Activists Survey...

Main conclusions from the survey:

- Black members gave greater importance than other groups to equality and fairness at work
- Racial discrimination as well as other forms of discrimination – age, disability, equal opportunities for women – are amongst the top union priorities for black members

- The major reasons for black members becoming active are related to addressing the needs of these workers and discrimination in the workplace.

Some recommendations arising from findings:

- 81% of black members strongly agreed that all workplace reps should receive specific training to deal with racial discrimination and racial equality bargaining
- Almost two thirds of BME members believe specialist race or equality officers effectively promote BME issues in the trade union movement
- Over two thirds of respondents believe black networks should be supported
- 88% of respondents strongly agreed that finding out more about the size and location of Scotland's black trade union members is crucial
- Racial discrimination and equality and representation at all levels of union structures are the top priorities which BME members would like to see on the wider union agenda
- Campaigns to increase black workers would be most effective if BME recruiters were used.