



first publication

1. Introduction

in cooperation with the Institute for Strengthening Democracy in BiH / Presentation at the Eighth International Seminar *Democracy and Human Rights in Multiethnic Societies*.

1 Vrcan, Srdjan: Sociolog pred fenomenon nogometa. In: Sociologija 1, 1971.

2 Vrcan, Srdjan: Sport i nasilje danas u nas. Zagreb: Naprijed 1990.

3 Buzov, Željko/Magdalenić, Ivan/Perasović, Benjamin/Radin, Furio: Navijačko pleme. Zagreb: Pitanja 1990; Fanuko, Nenad/Magdalenić, Ivan/Radin, Furio/Žugić, Zoran: Zagrebački nogometni navijači: grupni portret s BBB u središtu. Zagreb: Institut za društvena istraživanja Sveučilišta u Splitu 1991; Lalić, Dražen: Torcida: pogled iznutra. Zagreb: AGM 1993.

4 Bjelajac, Slobodan: Socijalne karakteristike košarkaške publike u Splitu. In: Sociološki pregled 1-4, 1990; Kokan, Mijo: Socijalna struktura publike na waterpolo utakmicama u Splitu – diplomski rad. Split: Fakultet prirodoslovno-matematičkih znanosti i odgojnih područja Sveučilišta u Splitu 1992; Janković, Ivan: Socialna struktura publike na rukometnim utakmicama u Splitu – diplomski rad. Split: Fakultet prirodoslovno-matematičkih znanosti i odgojnih područja Sveučilišta u Splitu 1994; Grabar, Miljenko: Socialna struktura publike na nogometnim utakmicama u Splitu – diplomski rad. Split: Fakultet prirodoslovno-matematičkih znanosti i odgojnih područja Sveučilišta u Splitu 1992.

5 Lalić, D.: Razmjeri, karakteristike i uzroci krize posjeta prvoligaškim nogometnim utakmicama u hrvatskoj. In: Kineziologija 1-2 (1993).

Until recently, Croatian sociologists were treating sports and sport games as marginal phenomena. There has, however, been an indication that sports could even be politically important, particularly so if it is tied to aggressive behaviour such as has usually been occurring during or after bigger games. Therefore, Croatian sociologists have begun to study sports, especially where they are connected with excesses in mass sports, like football. Besides that, societal changes made leisure and sport into central issues (the increase of unemployment on the one hand and growing wealth on the other). The progress that has been made in the social sciences has had an important impact on the solution of some practical cultural problems.

The approach of Croatian sports researchers was until recently neither as fundamental nor comprehensive as it was in some other countries, but rather fragmented and occasional.

One of the first authors on the topic was Srdjan Vrcan, who suggested to Croatian sociologists to deal with such »simple« and »trivial« phenomena as sport. Football as a mass cultural phenomenon is filled with socially conditioned aggressions. Therefore, the game as the goal is suspended along with watching and pleasure. Changes in football are provoked by changes in society. Therefore, football is becoming more complicated and hard work connected with coach planning and with commercialisation. Football now differentiates between those who live for it and those who live of it. Bureaucratisation has been the main consequence of this development, since the bureaucratic structures have become the main organiser and carrier of those competitions. It is creating an elite in football as in society, which is deepening the distance between top-level professionals and the mass of amateur football-players.¹

Texts written on these topics in Croatia up to 1975 were concerned with particular social phenomena in sport and physical culture, but did not formulate any generalisations. Some authors dealt with morality in sports, others with social conflicts or introductory remarks only. The main goal of these attempts was to draw the public's attention toward social problems in sport. Later, papers started to treat sports and related topics more seriously, although they did so still only partially. Out of approximately 4400 sociological texts entered in a bibliography of the period 1974-1979, there was not a single text on the topic of sports.

From the 1980's onwards, Croatian sociologists began paying more serious and greater attention to sports. Numerous articles about sports appeared in issues of certain journals for social problems. Thus, for example, the journal *Pogledi (Views)* opened the topic of social functions of sport in 1984.

Although violence in sports was mentioned in some articles during the 1980's, Dr. Srdjan Vrcan was the first to have published a book on football violence, where he connected violence in football with violence in contemporary society. He also connected violence with the development of increasing crises, particularly with crises of values. According to him, violence is also linked to the marginal social position of young people as the almost exclusive actors of violence in football-matches. An undemocratic political system that had been strangling oppositional ideas for a long time is the third factor of violence at football-matches, since football has the appearance of being ideologically neutral. According to the author, the approaching democratisation in the 1990's would not solve the problem of violence, since the marginal social position of young people would still remain.²

Croatian sociologists began seriously treating the issues of sport fans in the 1990's, but their focus were groups of extreme football fans rather than fans in general,³ although some research projects were concerned with other fans as well.⁴ Further, Lalić named the causes of decreasing interest in football matches in the beginning of the 1990's to be the conditions of war as well as the lower quality of football rivals and the fall in the quality of football that occurred after the decay of Yugoslavia.⁵

Vrcan and Lalić explained the »fans tribe« and their tendency to join the military troops in the war, as occurred in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the structural connection between fans and politics. The politicization of fans and the instrumentalisation of their behaviour helped fasten the creation of nationalistic states. The legalisation of violence through »tribal« behaviour was transposed from the ends to the trenches. Swinging flags and

6 Vrcan, S./Lalić, D.: From Ends to Trenches and Back: Football in the Former Yugoslavia. In: Armstrong, Gary/Guilianotti, Richard (Eds.): Football Cultures and Identities. London: Macmillan 1999, pp. 176-185.

7 Perasović, Benjamin: Urbana plemena - sociologija subkultura u Hrvatskoj. Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada 2001.

8 Vrcan, S.: The Curious Drama of the President of a Republic Versus a Football Fan Tribe: A Symptomatic Case in the Post-Communist Transition in Croatia. In: International Review for the Sociology of Sport 1 (2002), pp. 59- 79.

9 Vrcan, S.: Nogomet, politika, nasilje – ogledi iz sociologije nogometa. Zagreb: Jesenski i Turk, Hrvatsko sociološko društvo 2003.

scarves was changed to swinging arms. Football »warriors« had transformed overnight into real soldiers. It was a small step from the symbolism of fan aggression to aggressive military and political symbolism, where one could be killed by the symbols as well. Militaristic football supporters became volunteers. Symbolism was used as a conflict supporter. The attitude that fans and nationalistic politics had provoked the war made them into the military avant-garde. In a society that was full of violence, football fans became its catalyser. The fans' subculture is spontaneous, goal-oriented, inventive, excessive and chaotic at the same time, but also organised, hierarchical and rigid. This makes it easy to transform from a state of chaotic spontaneity and unboundedness to one of very strict military discipline and command. Unfortunately, the reverse process was not that easily possible. Those who thought that post-war violence would easily be controlled after its culmination were very wrong.⁶

Therefore, the beginning of this century brought sports and sports fans at the very center of attention of Croatian sociologists. Perasović's book on urban tribes⁷ deals with young people's subculture considering violence to be a behavioural model that has passed through the following stages:

1. The first stage, at the end of the 1960's and beginning of the 1970's was characterised by rockers opposed to the political system;
2. The commercialisation of rock and roll culture lead to punk in the 1980's;
3. Further fragmentation transformed punk into counter-punk, because punk was a middle strata subculture (it is very close to the football ritual, although it is fans who created the style based on conflict with fans of opposed teams and police, including wider social elements such as competition, masculinity, alcohol etc.);
4. The emerging dark aspects of youth subcultures created parental hysteria and the prohibition of gatherings, including injustices to youth subcultures with all their common dimensions (The aggression of youngsters was not necessarily only real, but could also be symbolic. It is most strongly expressed in football hooliganism and fandom, including the issues of class and cultural environment, such as urban versus rural, modern versus traditional).

The notion of »Urban Tribe« identifies itself with subculture, but also has a double meaning: The tribe can be a particular actor, a group of individuals, but it can also mean an abstract group of features.

One year later, Vrcan wrote about the conflict between President Tudjman and the football tribe over the name of the football team *Dinamo*. This became the first public manifestation of the sport's political charisma with the resulting political consequences. The author concluded that the transition period is rich in problems connected to the relation between football and politics, particularly football passions and nationalism.⁸

The new Vrcan book deals with violence in and around football, the relationship between football and politics and football as an ancient game with a special concern for the situation of Croatia in transition. Finally, the author offers a sociological analysis of football in the cleft between the normal and the pathological.⁹

Generalizing, one could say that there have been at least two basic approaches in the sociological analysis of football and its fans:

1. The first approach tried to capture some problems of the sport deeper in the development by analysing the present and past and trying to predict the future prospectives;
2. The second approach tried to capture the essence of football (the closest to an anthropologic notion of humans as beings divided in social space and time).

Football fans can be divided into two main groups: the direct and the indirect fan. The first one is present at the stadium and supports the team as the »twelfth player«, the second type follows the matches via mass media (radio, TV, etc.).

2. Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Direct Fan

10 Buzov/Magdalenić/Perasović/
Radin 1990; Fanuko/Magdalenić/
Radin/Žugić 1991; Lalić 1993 (*Torcida*).

11 Buzov/Magdalenić/Perasović/
Radin 1990; Fanuko/Magdalenić/
Radin/Žugić 1991; Lalić 1993 (*Torcida*);
Bjelajac 1990; Bjelajac, S.: Nastanak
i razvoj kineziološke sociologije
u Hrvatskoj. Zbornik Fakulteta
prirodoslovno-matematičkih
znanosti i odgojnih područja
Sveučilišta u Splitu 2003.

Although the direct fan is in principle unorganized, one part of this group of fans is strictly organized, according to all Croatian or other studies on extreme fans.¹⁰ The unorganized group of fans has not been the subject of sociological concern; the organized fan was up to now the subject of numerous sociological studies in Croatia as well as in other countries. The reason for that was probably the groups' way of expressing their affiliation towards their clubs, as well as the violence that has been present in this group and its connection with crime, alcohol and drug consumption and political problems connected with that.



Organized Fan (*Torcida*, Split)



East and West are not organized

2.1. Characteristics of Organized Football Fans

11 Buzov/Magdalenić/Perasović/
Radin 1990; Fanuko/Magdalenić/
Radin/Žugić 1991; Lalić 1993 (*Torcida*);
Bjelajac 1991, Bjelajac 2003.

12 Lalić 1993 (*Torcida*).

Researchers' concern for organized football fans increased tremendously with the emergence of football hooliganism in the mid-1960's. It appeared first in Great Britain, the cradle of football and football hooliganism, and to a smaller degree in Italy, the Netherlands and other European and other countries. There are four theoretical interpretations of organized fans: The sub-cultural theory of ritualized aggression, the class theory of fans and their groups, socio-historical theory and the theory of the particularity of the sports world), but these are not the subject of this text. It is necessary, however, to state that all these theories agree in treating football cheering as a phenomenon typical of young people and closely connected to their social position. The Croatian studies of fans also prove the attempts of utilizing stadium violence by transforming marginal into central social groups and expressing a deep division between »us« and »them« by establishing a link between fans' and everyday violence.¹¹

Organized supporters differ from others in the more accepted expression of their concern for football, the intensity of emotional and symbolic identification and the willingness to support a club because of a favourable score. The ritual is sacred and publicly oriented. Without specific forms of communication with football players, rival fan and the public as a whole, the ritual would not exist (at least not in the present form). With different forms of ritual behaviour, organized fans try to provoke all those who are not identified as belonging to »them« and their life style. The most efficient way to realise this is physical violence, since it provokes public attention. Collective belonging, solidarity, the intention of excitement and adventure are accepted parts of the fan ritual. These three components directly counter everyday abandon, boredom and the perspectives of youngsters in their family, school and everyday life.¹²

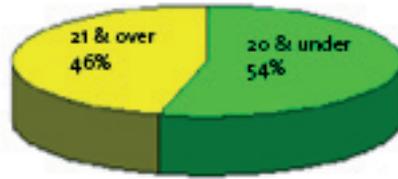
However, there are some structural differences between contemporary organized fans and previous groups. There are also differences to the organized fans of the 1990's. Thus, the *Torcida* members of the 1990's had many more youngsters among them than they do today (some of their establishers got older). Also, the *BBB* members from 1990's were exclusively younger than twenty.

13 Lalić 1993 (*Torcida*).

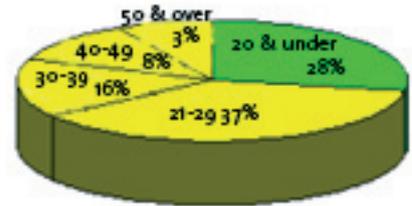
14 Fanuko/Magdalenić/Radin/žugić 1991.

15 Bjelajac 2003.

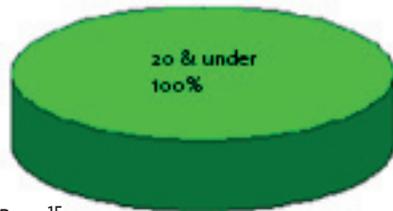
16 Fanuko/Magdalenić/Radin/žugić 1991.



Torcida 1993¹³



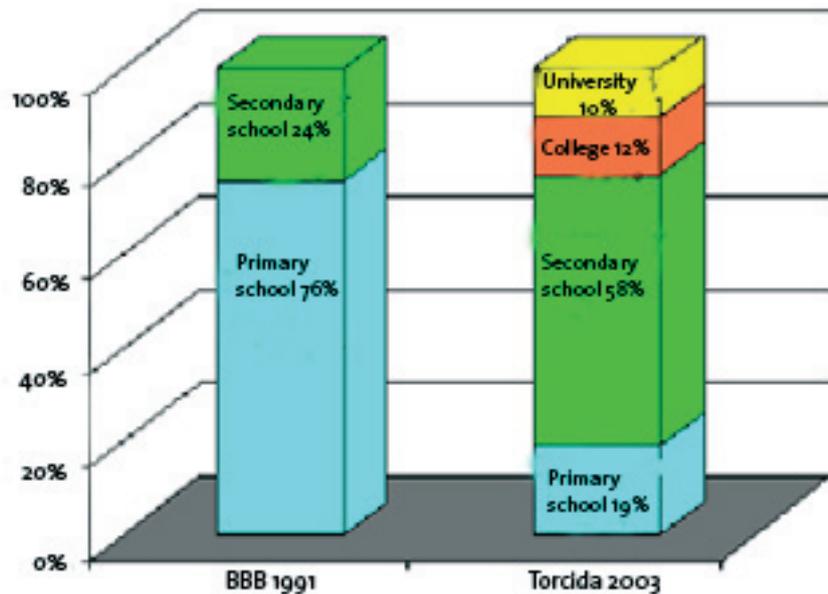
Torcida 2003¹⁴



BBB 1991¹⁵

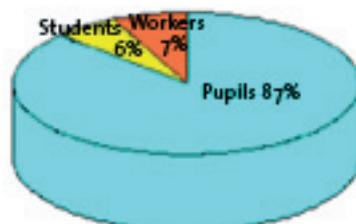
Graph 1: Age Structure of *Torcida* in 1993 and 2003 and BBB in 1991.

There were only three females in *Torcida* in the 1990's, compared to 7% of the members in 2003. There are also significant differences in social structures. Thus, the percentage of *Torcida* members with college and university degree has increased over time, while the percentage of workers has become significantly lower than before (*Torcida* from 1993 consisted to 68% of workers, in 2003, the workers made up 39%).

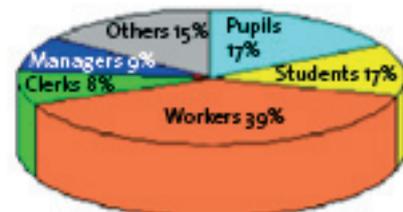


Graph 2: Educational Structure of BBB in 1991 and *Torcida* in 2003.

BBB¹⁶

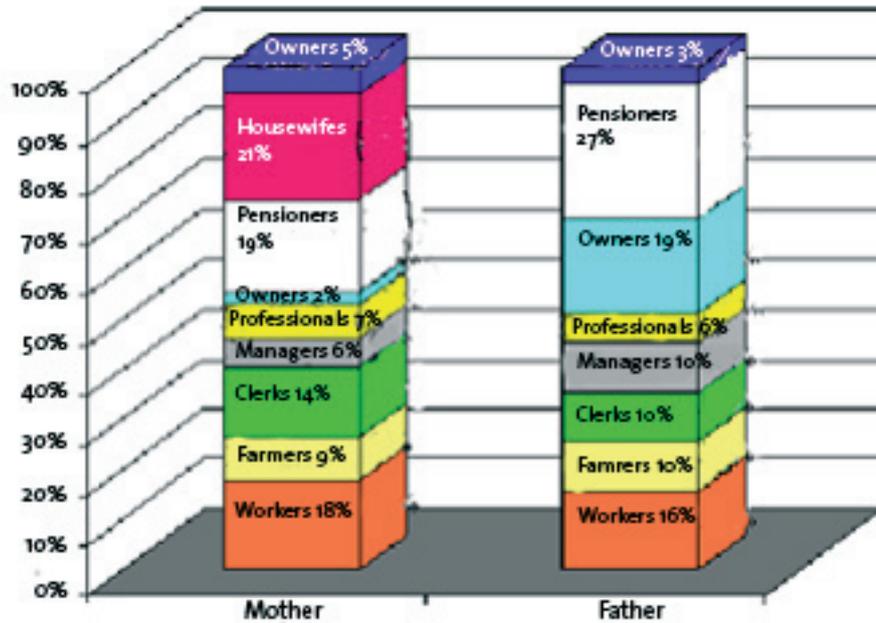


Torcida 2003



Graph 3: Occupational Structure of BBB in the 1990's and *Torcida* in 2003.

The occupational structure of *Torcida* members' parents indicates that they surprisingly originated from all kinds of families. Before such research was conducted, there existed the political prejudice that the *Torcida* members came from lower-income families (workers and rural families).

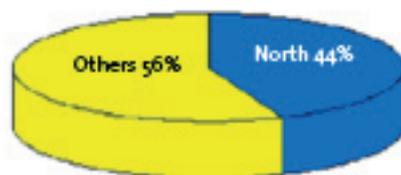


Graph 4: Occupational Structure of *Torcida* members' parents in 2003

Lalić first proved that *Torcida* members are mostly from the city of Split (75%). The research from 2003 arrived at the same result (only 16% were rural-born, all others in urban areas). However, this is not the case for their parents: 39% of the mothers and 33% of the fathers were rural-born, which indicates that there is a connection with rural areas.

Similarly, the analysis of family income per person indicates the presence of different social strata (a third each belonging to the lower, middle and higher strata). However, if asked, 46% of the fans will answer that they belong to the middle strata.

Last, but not least, *Torcida* members during the 1990's were settled in the north of the stadium. Thanks to the transformation of the stadium (following FIFA rules of installing chairs in all parts of the stadium), *Torcida* in 2003 occupied some other parts of the stadium as well as the north side. Their expansion also provided the opportunity for a better impact on other segments of the fan community (the unorganized fans) in order to transform the *Torcida* atmosphere.



Graph 5: Distribution of *Torcida* members over the stadium in 2003.

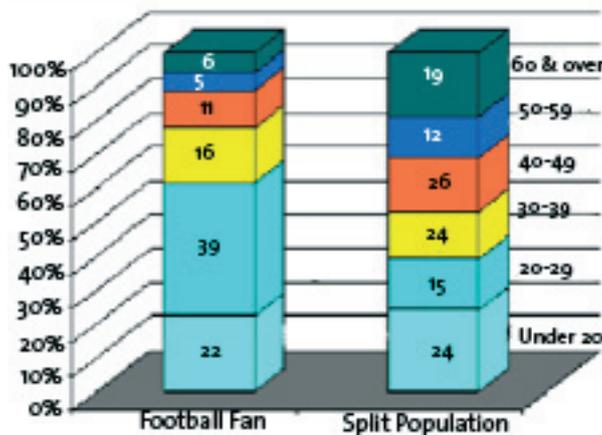
2.2. Characteristics of Unorganized Fans

¹⁷ Grabar 1992.

The research done in 2003 on two football matches in Split indicates very interesting and significant conclusions. The data on the social and demographic characteristics of unorganized fans indicate that this kind of fan also consists of young males. Thus, more than 50% of the fans are younger than 29 and 81% are male. However, compared to the 1990's, as well as in comparison to the organized fans, one can conclude that the number of females significantly increased, since according to Grabar only 2% of the fans in 1992 were female,¹⁷ and the 2003

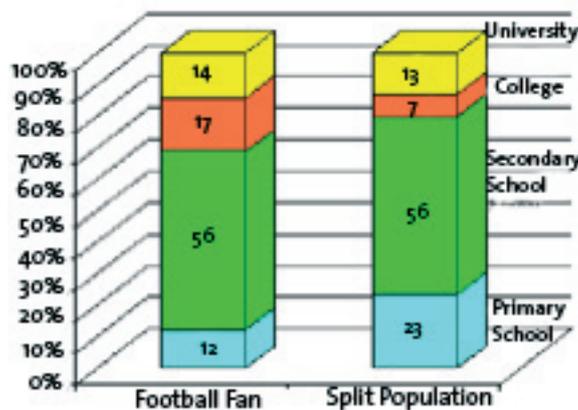
research showed 7% females among the organized fans. It is also a fact that the proportion of youngsters among the fans are three times higher than that of the population of the city of Split. The ninefold increase of the proportion of female fans among the community (from 2% to 18%) is the greatest change, indicating the degree of women's liberation. On average, the female fans are younger than their male counterparts (76% of the females are younger than 30, compared to 53% of the males). Furthermore, more female football fans belong to the student community than do male fans (35%, compared to 19%), although there are no differences between the genders in educational structure, rural-urban background, and some other social status features. The differences are significant, on the other hand, in sport preferences (women are more oriented towards swimming and tennis, males towards football and basketball).

Women within the football fan community visit football matches much more rarely than do the men. Thus, 57% of males are regular or frequent visitors of football matches, compared to 32% of females. On the other hand, only 9% of the male fans visit football matches rarely, compared to 39% of the females.



Graph 6: Age structure of unofficial fans compared to the population of Split in 2003.

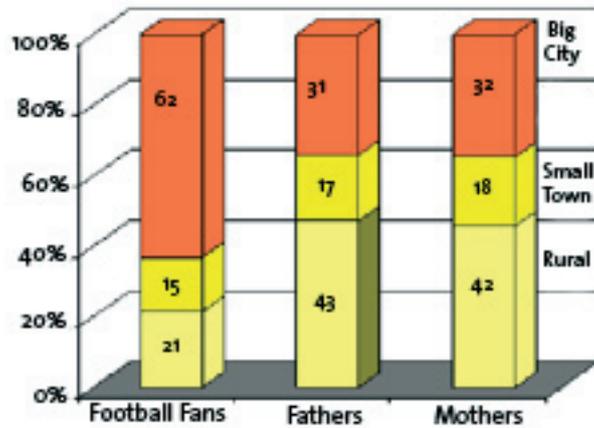
The unorganized football fan is on average also more educated than is the population of the city of Split on the whole.



Graph 7: Educational Structure of unofficial fans compared to the population of Split in 2003.

The unorganized football fan community mainly consists of urbanites, mostly born in the city of Split; although half of their parents were of rural origins (there is no significant difference between mothers and fathers).

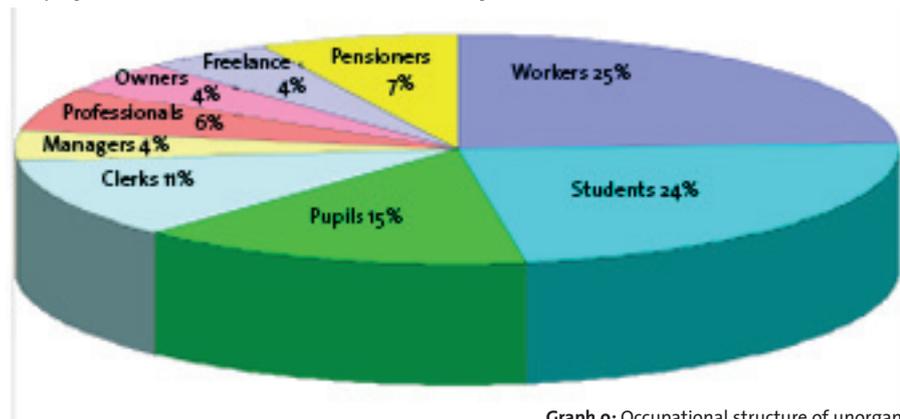
18 Vrcan 2003.



Graph 8: Place of birth of fans and their parents in 2003.

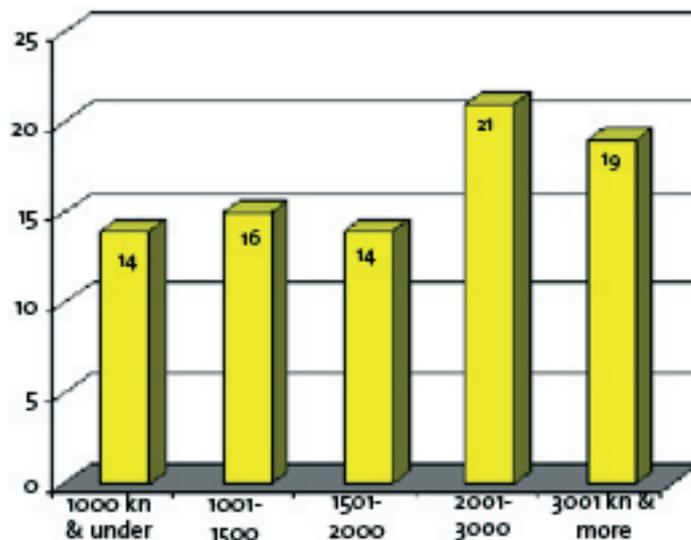
The unorganized football fan community consists mainly of employed people, and the number of pensioners is the lowest among the community (44% are employed, 9% temporarily employed, 28% are unemployed and 9% pensioners).

The majority of the unorganized football fans are workers (25%), followed by students (24%) and pupils (15%), clerks (11%), and the rest are professionals, private owners, managers, pensioners and others. This still supports the hypothesis about football as a workers' game, although many aspects of the social structure have changed (when football began in England, the players as well as the fans were exclusively workers).¹⁸



Graph 9: Occupational structure of unorganized fans.

The majority of the unorganized football fans belong to the middle social strata, since their families earn a medium income per person (2000-3000 kn). The number of higher income families is very low (an income of 5000 kn and more was found among 4% of the fans), and 25% of the families have a below-average income (less than 1500 kn per member).



Graph 10: Monthly earnings by family members in 2003.

