

News

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Bureau of Labor Statistics

Boston, MA 02203

Internet address: <http://www.bls.gov/ro1/>
For information: (617) 565-2327
Media contact: Walter Marshall (617) 565-2324

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UNION MEMBERSHIP IN MASSACHUSETTS, 2007

In 2007, the number of workers belonging to a union declined by 35,000 to 379,000 in Massachusetts, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Union members accounted for 13.2 percent of wage and salary workers in Massachusetts, down from 14.5 percent in 2006. Regional Commissioner Denis M. McSweeney noted that, although the State's 2007 union membership level was the lowest recorded in the 19 years of the data series, Massachusetts still ranked in the top quarter (12th) among all state levels nationwide. At the peak in 1990, the Commonwealth's union membership rate was 17.5 percent, or 479,000 workers. (See table A.)

Nationally, the number of workers belonging to a union rose by 311,000 to nearly 15.7 million in 2007. Union members accounted for 12.1 percent of employed wage and salary workers, essentially unchanged from 12.0 percent in 2006. In 1983, the first year for which comparable national union data were available, the union membership rate was 20.1 percent. Massachusetts was 1 of 20 states that had union membership rates above the U.S. average in 2007.

In addition to Massachusetts' 379,000 wage and salary workers who were union members in 2007, another 23,000 workers were represented by a union on their main job or were covered by an employee association or contract while not being union members themselves. Nationwide, 1.6 million wage and salary workers were represented by a union on their main job but not union members themselves.

In 2007, 30 states and the District of Columbia had union membership rates below the U.S. average of 12.1 percent, while 20 states had higher rates. (See table 1.) Relative to 2006, 27 states registered lower union membership rates in 2007, 20 states recorded higher membership rates, and 3 states and the District of Columbia had no changes in their rates.

Three of the six New England states posted union membership rates higher than that of the nation. Joining Massachusetts with higher rates were Connecticut (15.6 percent) and Rhode Island (15.0 percent), all located in the southern New England region. The remaining three states -- Maine (11.7 percent), Vermont (10.4 percent), and New Hampshire (9.7 percent), all in the northern New England region -- posted rates below the national average. All states in the Middle Atlantic and Pacific divisions reported union membership rates above the national average. In contrast, all states in the East South Central and West South Central divisions had rates below the U.S. average in 2007. (See chart 1.)

Among the five states reporting union membership rates below 5.0 percent in 2007, North Carolina posted the lowest rate (3.0 percent), followed by Virginia (3.7 percent), South Carolina (4.1 percent), Georgia (4.4 percent), and Texas (4.7 percent). Four states had union membership rates over 20.0 percent in 2007--New York (25.2 percent), Alaska (23.8 percent), Hawaii (23.4 percent), and Washington (20.2 percent).

Nearly half (7.8 million) of the 15.7 million union members in the United States lived in 6 states (California, 2.5 million; New York, 2.1 million; Illinois, 0.8 million; Michigan, 0.8 million; Pennsylvania, 0.8 million; and New Jersey, 0.7 million), though these states accounted for only about one-third of wage and salary employment nationally.

State union membership levels depend on both the employment levels and union membership rates. Massachusetts had about 20 percent fewer wage and salary workers than Virginia, yet had almost triple the number of union members. Conversely, Texas had less than one-quarter as many union members as New York despite having over 1.7 million more wage and salary employees.

Table A. Union affiliation of employed wage and salary workers in Massachusetts, annual averages, 1989-2007

(Numbers in thousands)

Year	Total Employed	Members of unions ¹		Represented by unions ²	
		Total	Percent of employed	Total	Percent of employed
1989	2,725	478	17.5	513	18.8
1990	2,735	479	17.5	513	18.8
1991	2,557	445	17.4	479	18.7
1992	2,557	434	17.0	468	18.3
1993	2,642	453	17.2	487	18.4
1994	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1995	2,649	428	16.2	471	17.8
1996	2,703	415	15.4	455	16.8
1997	2,794	423	15.1	463	16.6
1998	2,844	453	15.9	494	17.4
1999	2,875	465	16.2	492	17.1
2000	2,841	406	14.3	445	15.7
2001	2,940	433	14.7	468	15.9
2002	2,999	427	14.2	464	15.5
2003	2,925	416	14.2	454	15.5
2004	2,920	393	13.5	430	14.7
2005	2,886	402	13.9	431	14.9
2006	2,859	414	14.5	438	15.3
2007	2,882	379	13.2	402	14.0

¹ Data refer to members of a labor union or an employee association similar to a union.

² Data refer to members of a labor union or an employee association similar to a union, as well as workers who are not members but whose jobs are covered by a union or employee association contract.

n/a – Not available.

NOTE: Data refer to the sole or principal job of full- and part-time workers. Excluded are all self-employed workers regardless of whether or not their businesses are incorporated.

Technical Note

The estimates in this release are obtained from the Current Population Survey (CPS), which provides the basic information on the labor force, employment, and unemployment. The survey is conducted monthly for the Bureau of Labor Statistics by the U.S. Census Bureau from a scientifically selected sample of about 60,000 households nationwide. The union membership data are tabulated from one-quarter of the CPS monthly sample and are limited to wage and salary workers. All self-employed workers are excluded. The data in this release are annual averages.

Union membership data, particularly levels, for each year are not strictly comparable with data for earlier years because of the introduction of revised population controls used in the CPS. The effect of the revised population controls on the union membership estimates is unknown. However, as an example, the effect of the new controls for 2007 on the monthly CPS estimates for the U.S. would have been to increase the December 2006 employment level by 153,000 and the unemployment level by 10,000. The updated controls had little or no effect on unemployment rates and other ratios, such as union membership rates. For additional information, see "Adjustments to Household Survey Population Estimates in January 2007" in the February 2007 issue of *Employment and Earnings*, available on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cps07adj.pdf>.

For personal assistance or further information on union membership, as well as other Bureau programs, contact the New England (Boston) Information Office at 617-565-2327 from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. E.T.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 617-565-2072; TDD (Telecommunications Device for the Deaf): Message Referral Phone: 1-800-877-8339.

Reliability of the estimates

Statistics based on the CPS are subject to both sampling and nonsampling error. When a sample, rather than the entire population, is surveyed, there is a chance that the sample estimates may differ from the "true" population values they represent. The exact difference, or sampling error, varies depending upon the particular sample selected, and this variability is measured by the standard error of the estimate. There is about a 90-percent chance, or level of confidence, that an estimate based on a sample will differ by no more than 1.6 standard errors from the "true" population value because of sampling error.

The CPS data also are affected by nonsampling error. Nonsampling error can occur for many reasons, including the failure to sample a segment of the population, inability to obtain information for all respondents in the sample, inability or unwillingness of respondents to provide correct information, and errors made in the collection or processing of the data.

For a full discussion of the reliability of data from the CPS and information on estimating standard errors, see the Household Data section of the "Explanatory Notes and Estimates of Error" at http://www.bls.gov/cps/eetech_methods.pdf

Definitions

The principal definitions used in this release are described briefly below.

Union members. Members of a labor union or an employee association similar to a union.

Represented by unions. Union members, as well as workers who have no union affiliation but whose jobs are covered by a union or an employee association contract.

Wage and salary workers. Workers who receive wages, salaries, commissions, tips, payment in kind, or piece rates. The group includes employees in both the private and public sectors, but, for the purposes of the union membership and earnings series, excludes all self-employed persons, regardless of whether or not their businesses are incorporated.

Table 1. Union affiliation of employed wage and salary workers by state

(Numbers in thousands)

State	2006					2007				
	Total employed	Members of unions ¹		Represented by unions ²		Total employed	Members of unions ¹		Represented by unions ²	
		Total	Percent of employed	Total	Percent of employed		Total	Percent of employed	Total	Percent of employed
Alabama	1,930	170	8.8	194	10.0	1,895	180	9.5	201	10.6
Alaska	280	62	22.2	67	23.8	284	68	23.8	70	24.7
Arizona	2,584	197	7.6	250	9.7	2,619	230	8.8	255	9.7
Arkansas	1,130	58	5.1	67	6.0	1,154	62	5.4	75	6.5
California	14,501	2,273	15.7	2,444	16.9	14,856	2,474	16.7	2,650	17.8
Colorado	2,154	165	7.7	186	8.6	2,204	191	8.7	202	9.2
Connecticut	1,591	247	15.6	263	16.5	1,617	253	15.6	269	16.6
Delaware	396	43	10.8	45	11.4	396	47	12.0	50	12.8
District of Columbia	246	25	10.3	30	12.2	278	29	10.3	38	13.6
Florida	7,676	397	5.2	497	6.5	7,741	455	5.9	562	7.3
Georgia	3,974	176	4.4	230	5.8	4,181	186	4.4	226	5.4
Hawaii	562	139	24.7	146	25.9	556	130	23.4	135	24.2
Idaho	620	37	6.0	45	7.2	635	33	5.3	41	6.4
Illinois	5,684	931	16.4	979	17.2	5,802	842	14.5	884	15.2
Indiana	2,787	334	12.0	362	13.0	2,779	333	12.0	359	12.9
Iowa	1,424	161	11.3	199	14.0	1,417	149	10.5	185	13.1
Kansas	1,236	99	8.0	115	9.3	1,274	89	7.0	110	8.7
Kentucky	1,752	172	9.8	196	11.2	1,734	157	9.1	192	11.1
Louisiana	1,676	107	6.4	121	7.2	1,670	94	5.6	108	6.5
Maine	584	69	11.9	79	13.5	574	67	11.7	79	13.8
Maryland	2,614	342	13.1	386	14.8	2,598	335	12.9	376	14.5
Massachusetts	2,859	414	14.5	438	15.3	2,882	379	13.2	402	14.0
Michigan	4,299	842	19.6	879	20.4	4,193	819	19.5	865	20.6
Minnesota	2,479	395	16.0	416	16.8	2,460	400	16.3	419	17.0
Mississippi	1,065	60	5.6	78	7.3	1,068	72	6.7	95	8.9
Missouri	2,610	284	10.9	310	11.9	2,585	275	10.7	308	11.9
Montana	397	48	12.2	52	13.1	399	54	13.5	62	15.6
Nebraska	831	66	7.9	79	9.5	836	65	7.8	81	9.7
Nevada	1,124	167	14.8	191	17.0	1,177	182	15.4	208	17.7
New Hampshire	620	63	10.1	70	11.3	631	61	9.7	70	11.2
New Jersey	3,827	770	20.1	825	21.6	3,897	748	19.2	802	20.6
New Mexico	796	62	7.8	92	11.5	800	62	7.7	91	11.4
New York	8,115	1,981	24.4	2,060	25.4	8,150	2,055	25.2	2,146	26.3
North Carolina	3,810	126	3.3	155	4.1	3,771	114	3.0	147	3.9
North Dakota	300	20	6.8	24	8.0	303	19	6.4	23	7.6
Ohio	5,170	734	14.2	801	15.5	5,187	730	14.1	797	15.4
Oklahoma	1,453	93	6.4	112	7.7	1,456	103	7.1	124	8.5
Oregon	1,527	211	13.8	225	14.7	1,582	227	14.3	243	15.4
Pennsylvania	5,457	745	13.6	802	14.7	5,496	830	15.1	910	16.6
Rhode Island	498	76	15.3	79	16.0	497	75	15.0	78	15.8
South Carolina	1,775	59	3.3	74	4.2	1,873	78	4.1	111	5.9
South Dakota	351	21	5.9	25	7.2	354	23	6.5	27	7.7
Tennessee	2,550	153	6.0	174	6.8	2,596	138	5.3	166	6.4
Texas	9,751	476	4.9	576	5.9	9,899	463	4.7	566	5.7
Utah	1,121	61	5.4	69	6.1	1,153	67	5.8	78	6.8
Vermont	305	34	11.0	39	12.9	288	30	10.4	35	12.2
Virginia	3,446	139	4.0	179	5.2	3,502	129	3.7	167	4.8
Washington	2,772	549	19.8	583	21.0	2,874	579	20.2	616	21.4
West Virginia	710	101	14.2	110	15.5	724	97	13.3	107	14.7
Wisconsin	2,587	386	14.9	415	16.1	2,631	376	14.3	405	15.4
Wyoming	235	19	8.3	24	10.0	239	19	7.9	22	9.4

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NOTE: Data refer to the sole or principal job of full- and part-time wage and salary workers. Excluded are all self-employed workers regardless of whether or not their businesses are incorporated. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.

Chart 1. Union Membership rates by state, 2007 annual averages

(U.S. rate = 12.1 percent)

