

News

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UNION MEMBERSHIP IN CALIFORNIA, 2007

In 2007, 16.7 percent of wage and salary workers in California were union members, up from 15.7 percent in 2006, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Regional Commissioner Richard J. Holden noted that California had the largest number of union members—nearly 2.5 million—among all states nationwide. At its peak in 1989, the first year for which comparable state data were available, 18.9 percent of workers in California belonged to a union. (See table A.)

Nationally, union members accounted for 12.1 percent of employed wage and salary workers in 2007, essentially unchanged from 12.0 percent in 2006. The union membership rate for the U.S. has declined from a high of 20.1 percent in 1983, the first year for which comparable national union data were available. California was 1 of 20 states that had union membership rates above the U.S. average in 2007.

In addition to California's nearly 2.5 million wage and salary workers who were union members in 2007, another 176,000 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, nearly 15.7 million wage and salary workers were union members in 2007, while an additional 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 that of the U.S. average, 12.1 percent, while 20 states had higher rates. (See table 1.) All five states in the Pacific division (which includes California) had union membership rates above the national average in 2007. The three states in the Middle Atlantic division also reported union membership rates above the national average, while all states in the East South Central and West South Central divisions had rates below the national average. (See chart 1). Relative to 2006, 27 states registered lower union membership rates, 20 states recorded higher membership rates, and 3 states and the District of Columbia had no changes in their rates.

Five states reported union membership rates below 5.0 percent in 2007— North Carolina (3.0 percent), 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— 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, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, 0.8 million each; 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 union membership rate and the employment level. For example, California had more than five times as many union members as Texas, despite having only 50 percent more wage and salary workers. Also, Pennsylvania had nearly 80 percent more union members than Texas, despite having 4.4 million fewer wage and salary workers. Similarly, Virginia and Hawaii had virtually the same number of union members in 2007, even though Virginia’s wage and salary employment level was more than six times that of Hawaii.

Table A. Union affiliation of employed wage and salary workers in California, 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	11,826	2,239	18.9	2,584	21.9
1990	12,526	2,268	18.1	2,624	21.0
1991	12,116	2,185	18.0	2,503	20.7
1992	12,077	2,169	18.0	2,520	20.9
1993	12,018	2,139	17.8	2,415	20.1
1994	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1995	12,320	2,176	17.7	2,463	20.0
1996	12,461	2,061	16.5	2,340	18.8
1997	12,878	2,067	16.0	2,321	18.0
1998	13,338	2,154	16.1	2,408	18.1
1999	13,811	2,286	16.6	2,527	18.3
2000	14,359	2,295	16.0	2,546	17.7
2001	14,219	2,299	16.2	2,526	17.8
2002	13,955	2,444	17.5	2,619	18.8
2003	14,350	2,414	16.8	2,647	18.4
2004	14,414	2,385	16.5	2,588	18.0
2005	14,687	2,424	16.5	2,610	17.8
2006	14,501	2,273	15.7	2,444	16.9
2007	14,856	2,474	16.7	2,650	17.8

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.

(Include the table and map showing all state union membership since they are cited in the release)

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 in the U.S.. 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.

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 in 2007 on the monthly CPS estimates for the U.S. was 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 Western Information Office at 415-625-2270 from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 pm to 4:30 p.m. PT. Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-692-5200, TDD message referral phone number: 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 "Explanatory Notes and Estimates of Error" section of *Employment and Earnings*.

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

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 report no union affiliation but whose jobs are covered by a union or an employee association contract.

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)

