

LABOR'S DEMOGRAPHICS ...

REPORT FOR 2001

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, in 2000 the actual number of union members in the U.S. declined by 219,000 from the previous year. The percentage of U.S. wage and salary workers who were unionized dropped from 13.9 percent in 1999 to 13.5 percent in 2000.¹ In comparison, during 1999 the number of union members increased by 266,000. Historically, this increase comprised the largest annual growth in union membership in twenty years. Not since 1979, did a larger increase occur with workers joining unions.² The decrease in the number and percent of union members in 2000 reflects the continued historical decline in the number and percentage of workers who are organized in terms of the overall U.S. wage and salary workforce. In addition, a closer review of the reported data shows that unionization levels have continued to vary markedly according to demographic, occupational, and geographic characteristics of the U.S. population.

Union Membership: By Race, Sex, and Age

In 2000, there were 120.8 million wage and salary workers in the total employed workforce of the U.S. 13.5 percent (16.3 million) of these workers belonged to a union. 41 percent or 6.7 million of these union members were women, and 59 percent (9.6 million) were men. In terms of race, union membership among blacks was 17.1 percent, 13.0 percent for whites, and 11.4 percent for people of hispanic origin. The highest rate of unionization was found among black men at 19.1 percent.

Among age groups, the category continuing to have the highest levels of unionization were workers between the ages of 45 to 54, with an overall rate of 18.8 percent. This group was followed by workers who were 55 to 64 years of age, who had a union membership rate of 17.8 percent. The age groups least organized were 16 to 24 year olds at 5.0 percent, 25 to 34 year olds at 11.9 percent, and workers 65 years and older at 8.4 percent.

Unionization by Employment Sector, Industry, Occupation, and Full/Part -Time Status

While 56 percent of all union members (9.2 million) worked in the private sector, overall they comprised only 9.0 percent of U.S. wage and salary workers employed in that sector. Specific industries having higher rates of unionization included: transportation at 24.8 percent, communications and public utilities at 22.8 percent, construction at 18.3 percent, and manufacturing at 14.8 percent. Industries with low unionization rates were: finance, insurance, and real estate (1.6 percent), agriculture (2.1 percent), wholesale/retail trade (4.7 percent), and services (5.6 percent).

44 percent of union workers (7.1 million) were employed in federal, state, and local government. These unionized public employees made up 37.5 percent of U.S. wage and salary workers employed in that sector. The data for unionization in government showed the following: federal (32.0 percent), state (30 percent), and local (43.2 percent).

Among occupational categories, high levels of unionization occurred in professional specialty occupations (19.3 percent); protective services (39.4 percent); precision production, craft, and repair (21.9 percent); machine operators, assemblers, and inspectors (19.4 percent); transportation and material moving occupations (23.1 percent); and handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers, and laborers (17.3 percent). Low union rates were found in occupations involving: technical, sales, and administrative support (8.6 percent); technicians and related support (10.1 percent); sales (3.5 percent); and farming, forestry, and fishing (4.5 percent).

The percentage of full-time workers who were union members continued to be more than double that for part-time employees. 14.8 percent of full-time workers were members of a union, while 6.8 percent of part-time employees belonged to a union.

Union Affiliation and Earnings

According to the BLS, in 2000 the median weekly earnings for unionized wage and salary employees was \$696.00, and for employees not represented by a union they were \$542.00. This translates to an earnings differential of 28.4 percent (\$154.00) per week. The BLS reported that this earnings "difference reflects a variety of influences in addition to coverage by a collective bargaining agreement, including variations in the distributions of union members and non-union employees by occupation, industry, firm size, or geographic region."³ Table I reveals how the union and non-union wage differences were even greater for women, blacks, people of hispanic origin, and workers 65 years of age or older.

Table I: Median Weekly Earnings of Full-Time Wage and Salary Workers by Union Affiliation, Sex, Race, Hispanic Origin, and Age in 2000⁴

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Union Members</u>	<u>Non-Union Workers</u>	<u>Median Weekly Earnings Difference</u>	
			<u>Dollars</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Total, 16 years and over	\$696	\$542	\$154	28%
<u>Sex</u>				
Women, 16 years and over	\$616	\$472	\$144	31%
Men, 16 years and over	\$739	\$620	\$119	19%
<u>Race, Hispanic Origin, Sex, Age</u>				
Black, 16 years and over	\$596	\$436	\$160	37%
Women	\$564	\$408	\$156	38%
Men	\$619	\$479	\$140	29%

(continued next page)

(Table I, continued)

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Union Members</u>	<u>Non-Union Workers</u>	<u>Median Weekly Earnings Difference</u>	
			<u>Dollars</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Hispanic Origin, 16 years and over	\$584	\$377	\$207	55%
Women	\$489	\$346	\$143	41%
Men	\$631	\$394	\$237	60%
White, 16 years and over	\$716	\$565	\$151	27%
Women	\$631	\$482	\$149	31%
Men	\$757	\$641	\$116	18%
65 Years and Over	\$577	\$422	\$155	37%
Women	\$485	\$365	\$120	33%
Men	\$613	\$514	\$ 99	19%

Total Represented by Unions - Members and Non-Members

In 2000, 1.7 million wage and salary workers were not actual members of a union, but were represented by a union in their workplace, and therefore received rights, protections, wages and benefits provided by that representation. When these 1.7 million workers are included with the previously cited 16.3 million union members, the total number of workers in the U.S. who are represented by a union totals approximately 18 million or nearly 15 percent of the workforce.

Unionization by State and Geographic Division

The BLS statistics show that a significant and consistent difference in union membership levels existed in states according to their geographical area. For example, the rates of union membership were 15 percent or more in all states located in the "Middle Atlantic, East North Central, and Pacific divisions."⁵ By comparison, the level of union membership was below 15 percent in every state located in the "East South Central, South Atlantic, or West South Central divisions."⁶ The nine states with the highest rates of unionization all had rates above 18 percent. Table II portrays these states and the number and percentage of their workforce that were unionized:

Table II: States with the Highest Rates of Union Members⁷

<u>State</u>	<u>Number of Union Members</u>	<u>Union Members as a Percent of Employed in State</u>
Alaska	57,000	21.9%
Hawaii	124,000	24.8%
Illinois	1,046,000	18.6%
Michigan	938,000	20.8%
Minnesota	419,000	18.2%
New Jersey	762,000	20.8%
New York	1,958,000	25.5%
Rhode Island	80,000	18.2%
Washington	471,000	18.2%

States with very low percentage rates of union membership included: Arizona (6.4%), Arkansas (5.8%), Florida (6.8%), Georgia (6.3%), Louisiana (7.1%), Mississippi (6.0%), North Carolina (3.6%), Oklahoma (6.8%), South Carolina (4.0%), South Dakota (5.5%), Texas (5.8%), Utah (7.3%), and Virginia (5.6%).

Unions in Maine – 5 Year Overview

Table III documents union membership levels in Maine from 1996 to 2000. During these years, on average the percentage of Maine's workforce that was unionized was 14 percent, and the percentage represented by a union averaged nearly 16 percent.

Table III: Unionization in Maine, Annual Averages, 1996 – 2000⁸

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Employed -Wage and Salary Workers</u>	<u>Member of Unions</u>		<u>Represented by Unions</u>	
		<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Employed</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Employed</u>
1996	534,606	77,406	14.5%	87,801	16.4%
1997	532,000	72,000	13.5%	80,000	15.0%
1998	526,000	66,000	12.6%	75,000	14.3%
1999	544,100	84,000	15.4%	93,000	17.1%
2000	556,000	78,000	14.0%	92,000	16.6%

Maine Employment Projections

By the year 2008, Maine's total wage and salary employment is expected to reach a level of 628,612.⁹ Table IV shows the changes projected to occur in Maine's major employment sectors and selected industries from 1998 to 2008:

Table IV: Wage and Salary Employment By Sector and Selected Industries In Maine 1998 and Projected 2008¹⁰

Employment Sector	Employment Level		Change 1998 – 2008	
	<u>1998</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>Net Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Goods Producing Sector	118,649	115,188	-3,461	-2.9
Construction	24,973	27,039	2,066	8.3
Manufacturing	87,137	81,316	-5,821	-6.7
Agriculture, Forestry And Fishing	6,451	6,755	304	4.7
Service Producing Sector	447,257	513,424	66,167	14.8
Transportation, Utilities And Communication	28,238	30,270	2,032	7.2
Trucking/Warehousing	8,029	8,747	718	8.9
Wholesale Trade	26,772	28,748	1,976	7.4
Retail Trade	115,733	128,150	12,417	10.7
Finance/Ins. And Real Estate	28,105	32,802	4,697	16.7
Services	162,364	203,652	41,288	25.4
Hotels/Lodging Places	9,985	11,341	1,356	13.6
Auto Repair/Parking	4,517	5,549	1,032	22.8
Amusement/Recreation	6,189	8,385	2,196	35.5
Health	54,403	67,421	13,018	23.9
Educational	13,272	14,333	1,061	8.0
Social	21,481	30,002	8,521	39.7
Government	90,723	94,622	3,899	4.3
Federal	13,191	12,781	-410	-3.1
State	22,026	22,845	819.7	3.7
Local	55,506	58,996	3,490	6.3

The Challenge for Labor

In order for organized labor in Maine to maintain its 2000 membership level of 14 percent of the state's wage and salary workforce, Maine unions will need to organize an additional 10,000 workers by the year 2008, or 1250 workers per year, as well as maintain current representational levels in existing employment sectors. In 1982, organized labor represented 20 percent of Maine's wage and salary workforce.¹¹ For Maine unions to reestablish a 20 percent representation rate for the state's wage and salary workforce by 2008, they will need to organize an additional 48,000 workers or 6,000 workers per year, and also maintain current representational levels in existing employment sectors.

Maintaining 14 percent or attaining a 20 percent representation rate of Maine's wage and salary workforce will be a formidable challenge for organized labor in Maine. This challenge exists because the projections cited in Table IV portray a significant decline or stagnation in employment sectors where unionization has been high. Primarily, these include manufacturing industries as well as the federal government. However, the same workforce projections predict employment growth in sectors where unionization levels are either growing or have a realistic opportunity to grow. These include the service producing sector; construction; transportation, utilities, and communications; trucking and warehousing; and services, particularly in the health and social service fields, as well as amusements and recreation.

Dramatic changes in the economy have posed new challenges and realities for working women and men in Maine and throughout the nation. These changes are forcing workers to adapt in entirely new ways. Today's employees must be prepared to update their knowledge and skills frequently. They must be flexible enough to accommodate work schedules that no longer conform to the traditional 9 to 5 pattern, and independent enough to rely far less on traditional notions of job security. However, workers also need and want responsive representation in pursuit of employment that is safe, healthy, fair, and equitable. In order to meet the needs of today's workers, unions must also adapt and change. Employee organizations must address the realities of the changing nature of work, the implications of the world economy, and the impact and consequences of rapid technological developments in the workplace. Confronting these realities and challenges will enable unions to attract the attention of workers who are often overwhelmed, underpaid, and generally considered dispensable by an increasingly global economy.

End Notes

¹Except where noted, all of the national data in this briefing paper are derived from: U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Union Members in 2000," and Tables 1-5; (Internet address: <http://stats.bls.gov/newsrels.htm>). Released 1/18/2001. (Note: According to the BLS, wage and salary workers include those 16 years and over, in the public and private sectors "who receive wages, salaries, commissions, tips, payment in kind, or piece rates." Self-employed are not included in the BLS data and computations).

²U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Current Population Survey, May 1977-80, annual averages 1983-99*. Table entitled: "Union Affiliation of Employed Wage and Salary Workers, 1977-99."

³ U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Union Members in 2000," (<http://stats.bls.gov/newsrels.htm>) p.2

⁴ *Ibid.*, Table 2

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, Table 5

⁸ *Source for 2000 data:* U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Union Members in 2000," (<http://stats.bls.gov/newsrels.htm>). Table 5. *Sources for 1999 data:* Hirsch, Barry T., and MacPherson, David A., "Union Membership and Earnings Data Book: Compilations from the [BLS] Current Population Survey (2000 Edition)" Washington D.C.: Bureau of National Affairs (BNA) Inc., 2000 p.32. According to Dana Evans of the Maine Dept. of Labor, the notable difference in Maine union membership levels between 1998 and 1999 are probably the result of "sample based variations and wide confidence intervals." He estimated that the number of Maine union members in 1998 was probably higher than the 66,000 reported, thereby making the 1999 increase look larger than it actually appeared. *Source for 1998 and 1997 data:* U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Current Population Survey*, "Union Affiliation of Employed Wage and Salary Workers by State, Annual Averages, 1997-1998." Evans also states that the exclusion of the self-employed by the BLS accounts for the different totals in Maine's civilian labor force reported by the U.S. Dept. of Labor and the Maine Dept. of Labor. Self employed are included in the Maine Dept. of Labor data.

Source for 1996 data: Barry Hirsch and David MacPherson, Florida State University, *Union Membership and Earnings Data Book: Compilations from the Current Population Survey* (1997 edition), Washington D.C.: BNA, 1997, plus additional data provided by these authors.

⁹ Maine Dept. of Labor, Division of Labor Market Information Services, Economic and Demographic Research Group, Dana Evans, *Maine Employment Outlook, 1998 to 2008*, Augusta, Maine: Division of Labor Market Information Services, 2000. p. 3

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.3-5

¹¹ According to the Maine Dept. of Labor, Labor Market Information Service, in 1982, out of a total state wage and salary workforce of 415,000, 20.3 percent or 84,489 were union members.



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