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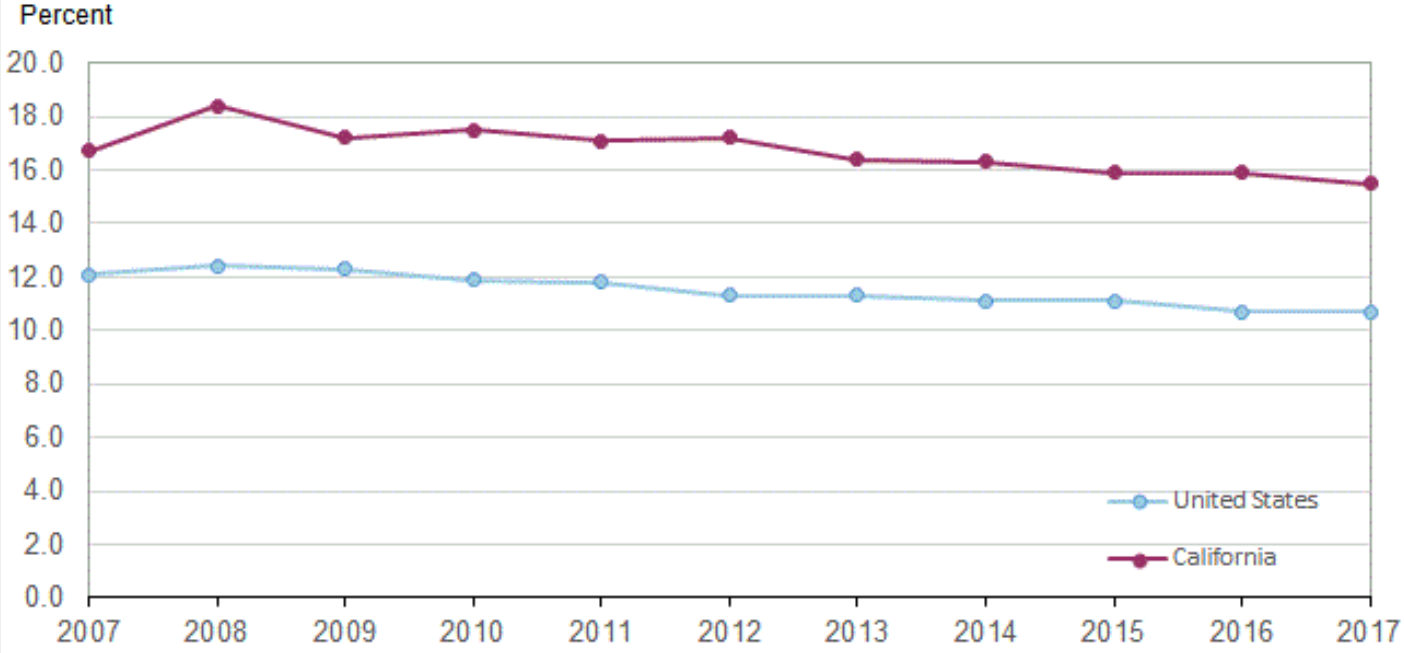
Union Members in California — 2018

In 2018, union members accounted for 14.7 percent of wage and salary workers in California, compared with 15.5 percent in 2017, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Assistant Commissioner for Regional Operations Richard Holden noted that the union membership rate for the state was at its series peak in 1989, when it averaged 18.9 percent, and at its lowest in 2018. (See chart 1 and table A.) Nationwide, union members accounted for 10.5 percent of employed wage and salary workers in 2018, down 0.2 percentage point from the 2017 rate. Since 1989, when comparable state data became available, union membership rates in California have been above the U.S. average.

Chart 1. Members of unions as a percent of employed in the United States and California, 2007–2017



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

California had 2,405,000 union members in 2018. In addition to these members, another 182,000 wage and salary workers in California were represented by a union on their main job or covered by an employee association or contract while not union members themselves. (See table A.) Nationwide, 14.7 million wage and salary workers were union members in 2018 and 1.6 million wage and salary workers were not affiliated with a union but had jobs covered by a union contract.

Table A. Union affiliation of employed wage and salary workers in California, annual averages, 2008–2018 (numbers in thousands)

Year	Total employed	Members of unions [1]		Represented by unions [2]	
		Total	Percent of employed	Total	Percent of employed
2008	14,889	2,740	18.4	2,909	19.5
2009	14,297	2,453	17.2	2,622	18.3
2010	13,892	2,431	17.5	2,578	18.6
2011	13,931	2,379	17.1	2,532	18.2
2012	14,483	2,489	17.2	2,666	18.4
2013	14,835	2,430	16.4	2,579	17.4
2014	15,135	2,472	16.3	2,652	17.5
2015	15,657	2,486	15.9	2,689	17.2
2016	16,001	2,551	15.9	2,796	17.5
2017	16,064	2,491	15.5	2,708	16.9
2018	16,399	2,405	14.7	2,587	15.8

Footnotes:
(1) Data refer to members of a labor union or an employee association similar to a union.
(2) Data refer to both union members and 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. All self-employed workers are excluded, both those with incorporated businesses as well as those with unincorporated businesses. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.

In 2018, 29 states and the District of Columbia had union membership rates below that of the U.S. average, 10.5 percent, while 20 states had rates above it and 1 state had the same rate. (See table 1.) Eight states had union membership rates below 5.0 percent in 2018. North Carolina and South Carolina had the lowest rate (2.7 percent each). The next lowest rates were in Utah (4.1 percent) and Texas and Virginia (4.3 percent each). Two states had union membership rates over 20.0 percent in 2018: Hawaii (23.1 percent) and New York (22.3 percent). (See chart 2.)

The largest numbers of union members lived in California (2.4 million) and New York (1.9 million). Over half of the 14.7 million union members in the U.S. lived in just seven states (California, 2.4 million; New York, 1.9 million; Illinois, 0.8 million; Pennsylvania, 0.7 million; and Michigan, Ohio, and Washington, 0.6 million each), though these states accounted for only about one-third of wage and salary employment nationally.

Technical Note

The estimates in this release are obtained from the Current Population Survey (CPS), which provides 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 national sample of about 60,000 eligible households. 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.

Beginning in January of each year, data reflect revised population controls used in the CPS. Additional information about population controls is available on the BLS website at www.bls.gov/cps/documentation.htm#pop.

Information about the reliability of data from the CPS and guidance on estimating standard errors is available at www.bls.gov/cps/documentation.htm#reliability.

Definitions

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

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

Union membership rate. Data refer to the proportion of total wage and salary workers who are union members.

Represented by unions. Data refer to both union members and workers who report 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. Union membership and earnings data exclude all self-employed workers, both those with incorporated businesses as well as those with unincorporated businesses.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200; Federal Relay Service: 800-877-8339.

Table 1. Union affiliation of employed wage and salary workers by state, 2017-2018 annual averages (numbers in thousands)

State	2017					2018				
	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	1,869	138	7.4	152	8.1	1,950	180	9.2	196	10.1
Alaska	304	55	18.1	59	19.4	299	55	18.5	60	20.0
Arizona	2,805	111	4.0	145	5.2	2,943	156	5.3	191	6.5
Arkansas	1,209	62	5.1	74	6.1	1,176	56	4.8	62	5.3
California	16,064	2,491	15.5	2,708	16.9	16,399	2,405	14.7	2,587	15.8
Colorado	2,494	238	9.6	273	11.0	2,564	281	11.0	307	12.0
Connecticut	1,645	278	16.9	295	17.9	1,677	268	16.0	280	16.7
Delaware	425	45	10.7	48	11.2	434	45	10.3	47	10.8
District of Columbia	347	34	9.8	40	11.5	354	35	9.9	41	11.6
Florida	8,573	480	5.6	570	6.6	8,702	484	5.6	588	6.8
Georgia	4,342	173	4.0	217	5.0	4,466	201	4.5	249	5.6
Hawaii	605	129	21.3	139	22.9	601	139	23.1	146	24.3
Idaho	723	35	4.8	42	5.8	733	34	4.7	41	5.6
Illinois	5,516	827	15.0	872	15.8	5,694	786	13.8	839	14.7
Indiana	2,987	266	8.9	289	9.7	3,049	269	8.8	283	9.3
Iowa	1,475	104	7.0	127	8.6	1,461	113	7.7	129	8.8
Kansas	1,296	101	7.8	131	10.1	1,283	90	7.0	129	10.1
Kentucky	1,810	174	9.6	232	12.8	1,812	161	8.9	207	11.4
Louisiana	1,780	78	4.4	96	5.4	1,785	89	5.0	104	5.8
Maine	576	66	11.4	81	14.0	573	74	12.9	85	14.8
Maryland	2,772	299	10.8	326	11.8	2,784	307	11.0	336	12.1
Massachusetts	3,231	401	12.4	431	13.3	3,397	464	13.7	493	14.5
Michigan	4,230	658	15.6	711	16.8	4,320	625	14.5	663	15.4
Minnesota	2,693	411	15.2	428	15.9	2,634	395	15.0	421	16.0
Mississippi	1,106	59	5.3	77	7.0	1,121	58	5.1	80	7.1
Missouri	2,613	226	8.7	265	10.1	2,675	251	9.4	283	10.6
Montana	419	50	11.9	57	13.6	427	50	11.8	60	14.0
Nebraska	858	70	8.2	78	9.1	882	59	6.6	71	8.0
Nevada	1,290	164	12.7	189	14.6	1,376	191	13.9	216	15.7
New Hampshire	642	72	11.3	83	13.0	664	68	10.2	77	11.6
New Jersey	3,898	630	16.2	665	17.1	3,935	587	14.9	639	16.2
New Mexico	769	52	6.7	63	8.3	812	56	6.8	67	8.2
New York	8,472	2,017	23.8	2,148	25.3	8,404	1,872	22.3	2,027	24.1
North Carolina	4,305	145	3.4	171	4.0	4,331	118	2.7	174	4.0
North Dakota	356	18	5.1	24	6.8	343	18	5.2	23	6.7
Ohio	5,062	635	12.5	688	13.6	5,054	639	12.6	722	14.3
Oklahoma	1,536	84	5.5	108	7.1	1,583	90	5.7	117	7.4
Oregon	1,763	262	14.9	277	15.7	1,738	242	13.9	256	14.7
Pennsylvania	5,543	665	12.0	723	13.0	5,575	701	12.6	748	13.4
Rhode Island	486	78	16.1	84	17.2	479	83	17.4	89	18.5
South Carolina	1,986	52	2.6	78	3.9	2,016	55	2.7	72	3.6
South Dakota	380	20	5.4	25	6.7	387	22	5.6	28	7.1
Tennessee	2,728	155	5.7	176	6.4	2,816	155	5.5	179	6.4
Texas	11,626	543	4.7	669	5.8	11,989	512	4.3	653	5.4
Utah	1,375	54	3.9	74	5.4	1,343	56	4.1	76	5.7
Vermont	288	32	11.0	35	12.1	291	31	10.5	34	11.6
Virginia	3,801	176	4.6	222	5.8	3,875	168	4.3	213	5.5
Washington	3,112	584	18.8	630	20.2	3,270	649	19.8	671	20.5
West Virginia	683	75	11.0	82	11.9	684	68	10.0	74	10.8
Wisconsin	2,778	230	8.3	250	9.0	2,700	219	8.1	233	8.6
Wyoming	243	15	6.0	16	6.7	235	15	6.5	18	7.7

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

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