

...Union card means higher wages compared to nonunion

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percent).

Notably, construction unions increased membership faster than the rate of job growth; the unionization rate was 13 percent in 2006.

Manufacturing, on the other hand, lost unionized jobs faster than the sector's overall decline in employment. Union membership in manufacturing fell to 11.3 percent in 2007 from 11.7 percent in 2006. Manufacturing jobs were once identified with unionized employment, but today manufacturing workers are less likely to be in a union than the average U.S. worker.

Industries with the lowest unionization were agriculture (1.5 percent) and finance (2 percent).

Older workers were more likely to be union than younger workers — 16.1 percent of workers age 55 to 64 and 15.7 percent of workers 45 to 54

were union, while just 4.8 percent workers 16 to 24 were union.

Unionization was higher for men (13.0 percent) than for women (11.1 percent). But the gap has narrowed since 1983, when the rate for men was about 10 percentage points higher than the rate for women. Since then, unionization rates have declined for both men and women, but faster for men.

Blacks were more likely to be union members (14.3 percent) than whites (11.8 percent), Asians (10.9 percent), or Hispanics (9.8 percent). And within racial categories, black men had the highest union membership rate (15.8 percent) while Hispanic women had the lowest (9.6 percent).

And full-time workers were twice as likely as part-time workers to be union members (13.2 compared with 6.5 percent).

About 1.6 million workers were

represented by a union, while not being union members themselves. Slightly more than half of them were employed in government.

Union members had median weekly earnings of \$863 (which works out to \$44,876 a year), while nonunion workers had median weekly earnings of \$663 (\$34,476 a year). Having a union to negotiate wages explains part of the difference, the BLS report explained, but there are other factors as well: union workers are more likely to be in higher-wage states, industries and occupations, and working for larger employers.

New York had the highest unionization rate (25.2 percent), followed by Alaska (23.8 percent), Hawaii (23.4 percent), and Washington (20.2 percent). Lowest in the nation was North

Carolina (3.0 percent); next lowest were Virginia (3.7 percent), South Carolina (4.1 percent), Georgia (4.4 percent), and Texas (4.7 percent).

Just six states accounted for nearly half of the nation's 15.7 million union members: California, with 2.5 million; New York, 2.1 million; Illinois, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, with 0.8 million; and New Jersey, with 0.7 million. Combined, the six states had 7.8 million union members.

For the first time, the unionization rate in the West (14.7 percent) exceeded the unionization rate in the Midwest (13.8 percent). California, which added over 200,000 union members in 2007, was where much of the growth took place. Illinois, conversely, weathered the largest loss of union membership of any state in

2007, as its share of unionized workers fell from 16.4 percent to 14.5 percent.

Union membership as a proportion of the workforce is still well below 20.1 percent, which was where it stood in 1983, the first year for which comparable data are available.

Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain admitted to some surprise at the union membership rise.

"Corporate America has been trying to drive a stake through our heart," Chamberlain said. "But folks are figuring out how to organize even in the most difficult conditions."

And in survey after survey, Chamberlain said, a majority of American workers say they want a union.

The full report is available online at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/union2.toc.htm>.

With the Teamsters

UPS Freight workers in Seattle sign union cards

An overwhelming majority of workers at the UPS Freight (formerly Overnite Transportation) terminals in the Seattle and Oakland, California, areas have signed authorization cards to become Teamsters. About 300 drivers and dockworkers are employed at the terminals, bringing the total number of UPS Freight workers who have submitted cards to more than 1,100 since last week, Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa announced.

"Now more than 1,100 workers at UPS Freight have taken the step to a more secure future," Hoffa said. "The momentum is moving this campaign forward fast."

The Seattle-area workers are employed at terminals in Tukwila and in Kent, and seek to join Teamsters Local 174 in Seattle.

"In recent years, we have fallen behind in this industry, so it's great to see UPS Freight workers joining the Teamsters to gain the job security, fair pay and excellent benefits they deserve," said Rick Hicks, secretary-treasurer of Local 174.

In addition to the workers in Oakland and Seattle, a majority of 833 workers in New England, Memphis and Detroit have submitted cards to become Teamsters.

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