



Roaring '20s For Unions On The Horizon? Doesn't Appear So...

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January is upon us once again, which means the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) has released its [annual report on unionization rates](#) in America. While the United States' economy continues to head in a favorable direction generally, this year's BLS report mirrors those from [recent years](#) insofar that organized labor's [precipitous decline](#) in membership numbers continues.

The agency summarized the general landscape in the opening paragraph of its press release:

"In 2019, the percent of wage and salary workers who were members of unions—the union membership rate—was 10.3 percent, down by 0.2 percentage point from 2018, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. The number of wage and salary workers belonging to unions, at 14.6 million in 2019, was little changed from 2018. In 1983, the first year for which comparable union data are available, the union membership rate was 20.1 percent and there were 17.7 million union workers."

In other words, union membership has declined both on a pure numbers basis as well as in terms of percentage of the country's workforce.

The report also offers up several other interesting data points, including:

- Public-sector (i.e., government) employees had a unionization

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rate of 33.6 percent, compared to a paltry 6.2 percent among private-sector employees

- Protective service and education-related workers had the highest unionization rates by occupation – both north of 33 percent
- The gender gap is closing in terms of union membership, but more men (10.8 percent) still belong to unions than women (9.7 percent)
- Hawaii and New York had the highest unionization rates among the states, with rates at 23.5 and 21.0 percent, respectively. South Carolina and North Carolina had the lowest rates, coming in at 2.2 percent and 2.3 percent, respectively.

Between their ongoing decline in numbers, [corruption scandals](#), and changes by the National Labor Relations Board that generally are viewed as [favorable to employers](#), the '20s may not be a decade that unions in America are heading into with high hopes.