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Report Shows Union Membership Rates Declined In 2018

January 24, 2019 | [Labor And Employment, Unions And Union Membership](#)



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According to a report recently released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, union membership declined slightly in 2018 to 10.5 percent of the workforce – down from 10.7 percent in 2017. However, the total number of unionized workers remained basically unchanged, hovering around 14.7 million workers.

This decline in union members as a percentage of the workforce is consistent with a long term trend of declining union membership rates. For instance, in 1983, the first year the BLS published union membership data, the union membership rate stood at 20.1 percent – nearly twice what it was in 2018.

Other interesting data in the report:

- The union membership rate for public workers is 33.9 percent, a rate more than five times higher than for workers in the private sector, where only 6.4 percent of workers are union members.
- Workers in protective service occupations had the highest union membership rate of any occupation group at 33.9 percent, followed closely by education, training, and library occupations, at 33.8 percent.
- Men continued to have a higher union membership rate, 11.1 percent, than women, who were union members at a rate of 9.9 percent in 2018.

- Union membership rates in Hawaii (23.1 percent) and New York (22.3 percent) were the highest, while North and South Carolina (2.7 percent each) had the lowest rates.
- More than half of the nation's 14.7 million union members lived in just seven states: California (2.4 million), New York (1.9 million), Illinois (0.8 million), Pennsylvania (0.7 million), Michigan, Ohio, and Washington (0.6 million each).

In addition to these numbers relating to union members, there were an additional 1.6 million workers whose jobs were covered by a union contract but who were not union members.

The full [2018 union members](#) report is available from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. As noted earlier, the slight decline in union membership rates in 2018 is consistent with the long term decline in such rates. Stay tuned to the [BT Labor Relations Blog](#) for updates regarding the dynamic world of labor relations.