



WORKPLACE JUSTICE

UNION MEMBERSHIP IS CRITICAL FOR EQUAL PAY

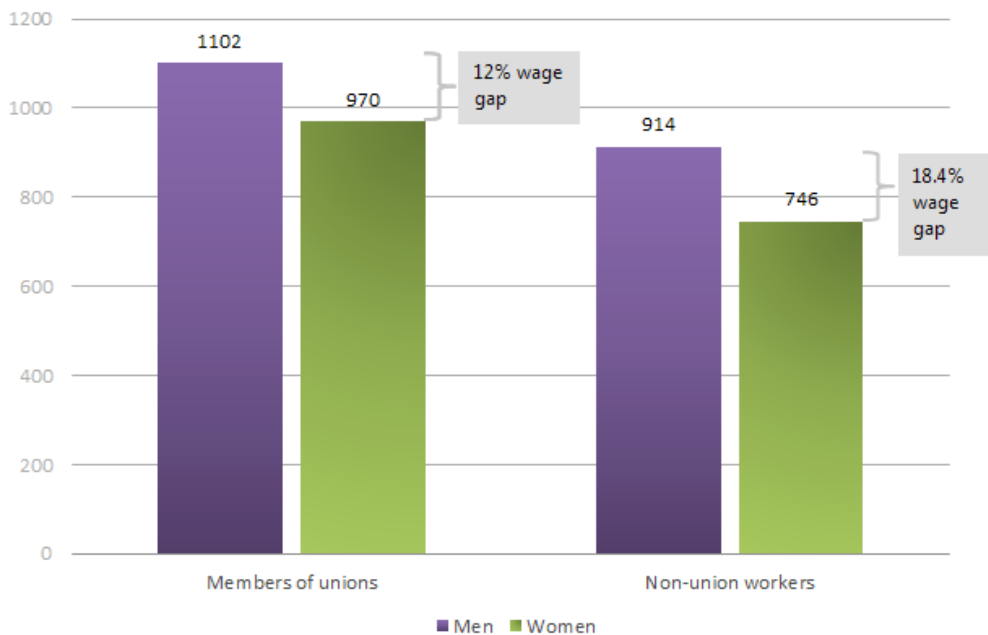
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Union membership boosts wages for all workers—but women see especially large advantages from being in a union. The gender wage gap among union women and men is about half the size of the wage gap among non-union workers, and female union members typically earn \$224 more per week than women who are not represented by unions—a larger wage advantage than men receive. Protecting and strengthening the rights of working people to come together to form a union is a key strategy for achieving equal pay for women.

The overall gender wage gap for union members is about half the size of the wage gap for those not represented by a union.

- Among non-union workers, women working full time typically make 81.6 percent of what their male counterparts make weekly—a wage gap of more than 18 cents.
- Among union members, that gap shrinks dramatically: women working full time typically make 88.0 percent of what their male counterparts make weekly—a wage gap of just 12 cents.
- Latina, Asian, and Black' women who belong to unions also experience smaller race and gender wage gaps. Among those working full time:

Wage Gap for Median Weekly Earnings by Union Membership, 2017



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Union Members Summary (Jan. 2018), Table 2, available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/union2.nr0.htm>. Figures are for fulltime workers.



- o The wage gap between Latinas and white, non-Hispanic men is 38 cents among non-union workers, compared to 29 cents for union workers.
- o The wage gap between Asian women and white, non-Hispanic men is 12 cents among non-union workers, compared to 6 cents for union workers.

• Greater wage transparency and standardization in collectively bargained wages, as well as the availability of formal grievance processes and union representation to address complaints regarding wages, likely contribute to the smaller gender wage gap among union members.

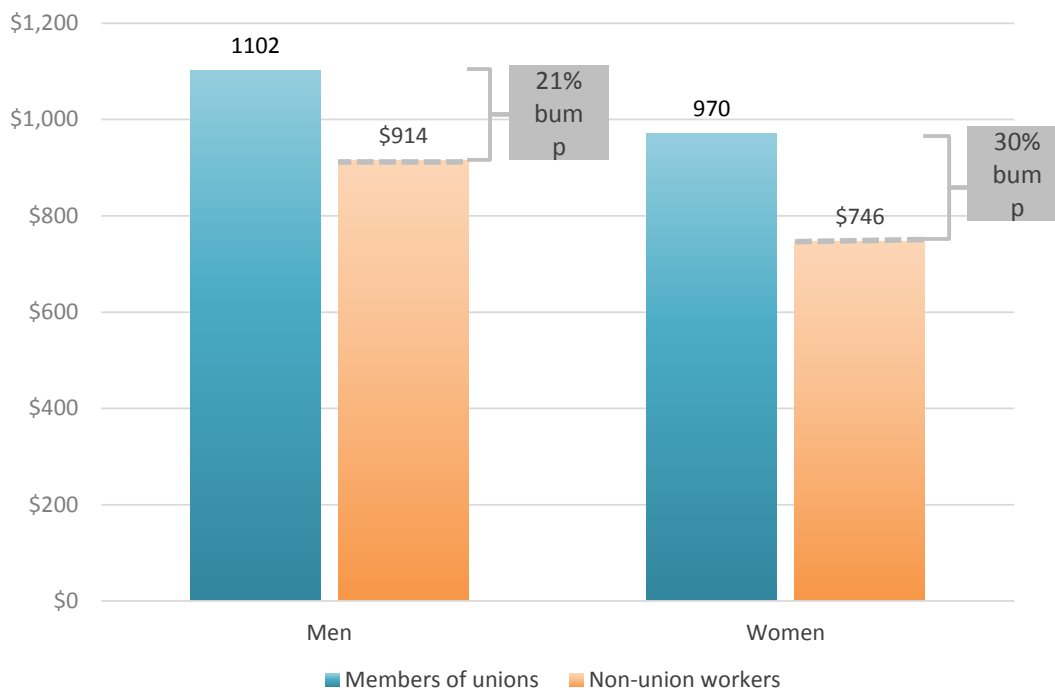
Women’s union wage advantage is larger than men’s.

- Union members typically make more per week than non-union workers—but the bonus is larger for women, both as a percentage and as absolute dollars, and is especially large for Latina women.
 - o Women union members who work full time typically make \$970 per week—30 percent more (\$224 more) than women non-union workers who typically make \$746 per week. In contrast, men union members who work full time typically

make \$1,102 per week—20.5 percent more (\$188 more) than men non-union workers who typically make \$914 per week.

- o Among women, Latina workers experience particularly large financial benefits from union membership. Among full-time workers, Latina union members typically make 36 percent more per week (\$227 more) than Latina non-union workers.
- o Among full time workers, Black women union members typically make 23 percent more (\$148 more per week) than Black women non-union workers.
- o Among full time workers, Asian women union members typically make 14 percent more per week (\$120 more) than Asian women non-union workers.
- o Among full-time workers, white women union members typically make 32 percent more per week (\$248 more) than white women non-union workers.

Median Weekly Earnings and the Union Premium, 2017



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Union Members Summary (Jan. 2018), Table 2, available at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/union2.t02.htm>. Figures are for full time workers.



The rate of union membership ticked down slightly for women between 2016 and 2017.

- The rate of union membership—the percentage of all employees who were members of unions—remained flat in 2017 at 10.7 percent.
- The percentage of employed women who were union members ticked down slightly between 2016 and 2017 to 10 percent from 10.2 percent, while the rate for men went up to 11.4 percent from 11.2 percent.
- The percentage of employed Latinas who were members of unions ticked up between 2016 and 2017 to 9.1 percent from 8.3 percent.
- Asian and Black women saw slight decreases in union membership. Black women who were members in a union decreased from 12.1 percent in 2016 to 11.7 percent in 2017. Asian women decreased from 10 percent in 2016 to 9.7 percent in 2017.

To promote equal pay for women, workers' rights to organize must be protected and strengthened—but these rights are under attack.

- Half the states have enacted so-called right-to-work laws, which hinder workers' efforts to organize and bargain collectively and result in lower wages for working people.² Defending against such laws is critical to ensure the economic security of all workers and equal pay for women.
- The ability of public service unions to promote equality and economic security for women, who make up a majority of those represented by public service unions, is presently being challenged in *Janus v. American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, Council 31*.³ The plaintiff

in that case is seeking to overturn nearly 40 years of Supreme Court precedent and weaken the ability of unions to advocate for policies that benefit the whole community – like equal pay for equal work, pay transparency, fair scheduling, paid parental leave, and anti-discrimination protections for LGBTQ workers, often unavailable under state or federal laws.

- Some lawmakers are working to strengthen the right of workers to band together. The Workplace Action for a Growing Economy (WAGE) Act,⁴ would discourage employer retaliation against workers who exercise their right to organize and would assure that if the right to organize is denied, remedies will be prompt and fair.

Technical note: Unless otherwise noted, all data come from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Union Members 2017 release (<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/union2.nr0.htm>). BLS data on union membership include all employed wage and salary workers 16 and older. Figures are annual averages. Data are not available broken down by gender and sector. Data on union representation (workers represented by unions include both workers who are union members as well as those who do are not members but whose jobs are covered by a union contract) are not reported here but are similar to those for union membership. Wage gaps in this analysis are calculated based on median weekly earnings. These data differ slightly from the often-used measure of median annual earnings for full time, year round workers. Using that measure, the typical woman makes 80 percent of what the typical man makes (see National Women's Law Center, *The Wage Gap: The Who, How, Why, and What To Do* (September 2017) available at <https://nwlc.org/resources/the-wage-gap-the-who-how-why-and-what-to-do/>

1. "Asian" includes those who identified themselves in the U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey as Asian. "Black" includes those who identified themselves as Black or African American. The "white" race category includes those who identified themselves as white. "Latinas" includes people of any race who identified themselves to be of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity.
2. Right-to-work laws make it illegal for unions to negotiate a contract that allows them to collect fair share dues from all of the employees who benefit from the union contract. Regarding lower wages, see Elise Gould & Will Kimball, ECONOMIC POLICY INSTITUTE, *"Right-to-Work" States Still Have Lower Wages* (Apr. 2015), available at <http://www.epi.org/publication/right-to-work-states-have-lower-wages/>. See also Jake Rosenfeld, Patrick Denice & Jennifer Laird, ECONOMIC POLICY INSTITUTE, *Union decline lowers wages of nonunion workers* (Aug. 30, 2016), available at <http://www.epi.org/files/pdf/112811.pdf>.
3. No. 16-1466 (S. Ct. 2018)(*cert granted* Jun. 6, 2017, *to be argued* Feb. 26, 2018). See Brief of National Women's Law Center, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, and 85 Additional Organizations Committed to Civil Rights and Economic Opportunity as Amici Curiae in Support of Respondents, <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Brief-of-National-Womens-Law-Center-The-Leadership-Conference-on-Civil-...pdf>.
4. H.R. 4548, S.2143, 115th Cong. (2017).

