NEWS RELEASE
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

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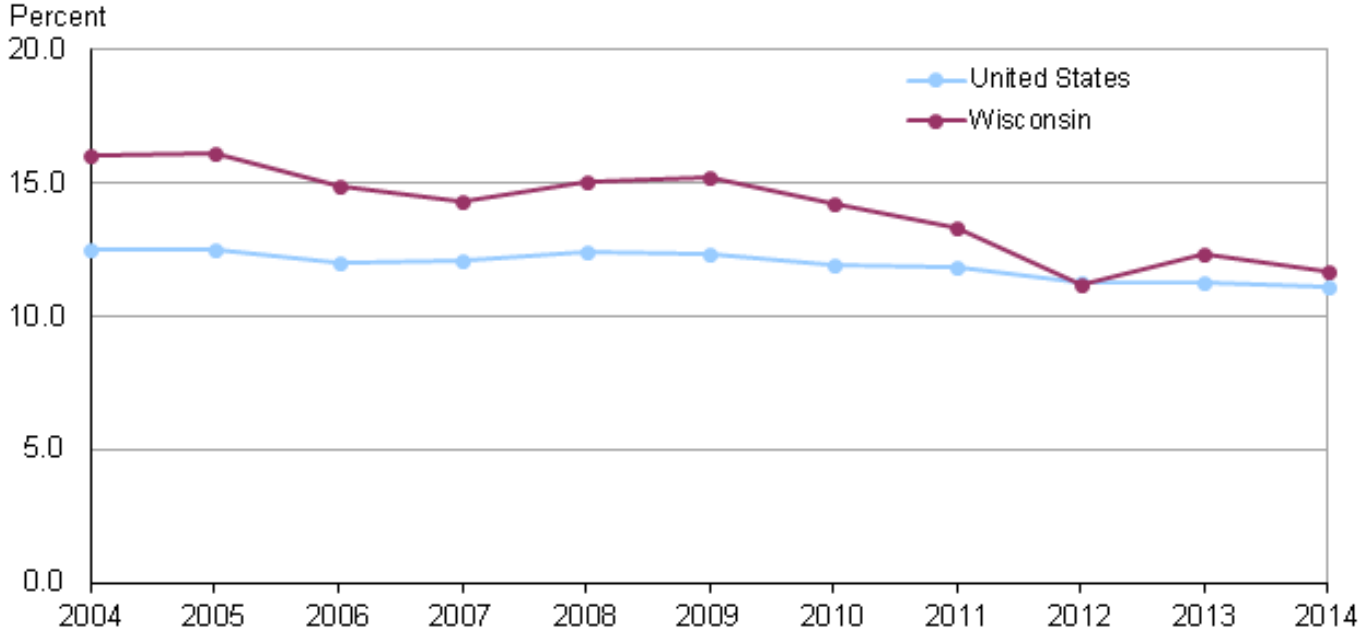
MIDWEST INFORMATION OFFICE: Chicago, Ill.
Technical information: (312) 353-1880 BLSInfoChicago@bls.gov www.bls.gov/regions/midwest
Media contact: (312) 353-1138

Union Membership in Wisconsin – 2014

In 2014, union members accounted for 11.7 percent of wage and salary workers in Wisconsin compared with 12.3 percent in 2013, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. (See table A.) Regional Commissioner Charlene Peiffer noted that the union membership rate for the state was at its peak in 1989, when it averaged 20.9 percent, and at its low point in 2012 at 11.2 percent. Nationwide, union members accounted for 11.1 percent of employed wage and salary workers in 2014, down 0.2 percentage point from 2013. (See chart 1.) Since 1989, when comparable state data became available, Wisconsin union membership rates have exceeded the U.S. average in all years except 2012.

Chart 1. Members of unions as a percent of employed in the United States and Wisconsin, 2004-2014



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Wisconsin had 306,000 union members in 2014. In addition to these members, another 21,000 wage and salary workers in Wisconsin 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, 14.6 million wage and salary workers were union members in 2014 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 Wisconsin, annual averages, 2004-2014 (numbers in thousands)

Year	Total employed	Members of unions [1]		Represented by unions [2]	
		Total	Percent of employed	Total	Percent of employed
2004	2,597	414	16.0	439	16.9
2005	2,551	410	16.1	438	17.2
2006	2,587	386	14.9	415	16.1
2007	2,631	376	14.3	405	15.4
2008	2,642	396	15.0	422	16.0
2009	2,528	385	15.2	400	15.8
2010	2,508	355	14.2	380	15.1
2011	2,538	339	13.3	358	14.1
2012	2,605	293	11.2	312	12.0
2013	2,569	317	12.3	337	13.1
2014	2,626	306	11.7	327	12.5

Footnotes:
(1) Data refer to members of a labor union or an employee association similar to a union.
(2) Data refer to members of a labor union or an employee association similar to a union, as well as 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 2014, 19 states had union membership rates above the U.S. average, of which 9 had rates above 15.0 percent. (See table 1.) Of the nine states with the highest rates, five bordered the Pacific Ocean, three were located in the Northeast, and the remaining state was in the Midwest. (See chart 2.) New York had the highest rate at 24.6 percent, followed by Alaska (22.8 percent) and Hawaii (21.8 percent). New York has had the highest union membership rate in the nation for 18 of the past 20 years. One state, Vermont, had a union membership rate that matched the U.S. average.

Thirty states and the District of Columbia had union membership rates below the national average of 11.1 percent in 2014. Nine states had union membership rates below 5.0 percent. Among these nine states, seven were located in the South, one was in the Midwest, and one was in the West. North Carolina had the lowest rate at 1.9 percent. The next lowest rates were in South Carolina (2.2 percent) and Mississippi and Utah (3.7 percent each). Union membership rates declined over the year in 27 states and the District of Columbia, rose in 18 states, and were unchanged in 5 states.

State union membership levels depend on both the employment level and the union membership rate. The largest numbers of union members lived in California (2.5 million) and New York (2.0 million). Over half of the 14.6 million union members in the U.S. lived in just seven states (California, 2.5 million; New York, 2.0 million; Illinois, 0.8 million; Pennsylvania, 0.7 million; and Michigan, New Jersey, and Ohio, 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 the 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.

Reliability of the estimates

Statistics based on the CPS are subject to both sampling and nonsampling error. When a sample, rather than the entire population, is surveyed, there is a chance that the sample estimates may differ from the "true" population values they represent. The exact difference, or sampling error, varies depending upon the particular sample selected, and this variability is measured by the standard error of the estimate. There is about a 90-percent chance, or level of confidence, that an estimate based on a sample will differ by no more than 1.6 standard errors from the "true" population value because of sampling error. BLS analyses are generally conducted at the 90-percent level of confidence. The state discussion in this release preserves the longtime practice of highlighting the direction of the movements in state union membership rates and levels regardless of their statistical significance.

The CPS data also are affected by nonsampling error. Nonsampling error can occur for many reasons, including the failure to sample a segment of the population, inability to obtain information for all respondents in the sample, inability or unwillingness of respondents to provide correct information, and errors made in the collection or processing of the data.

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.

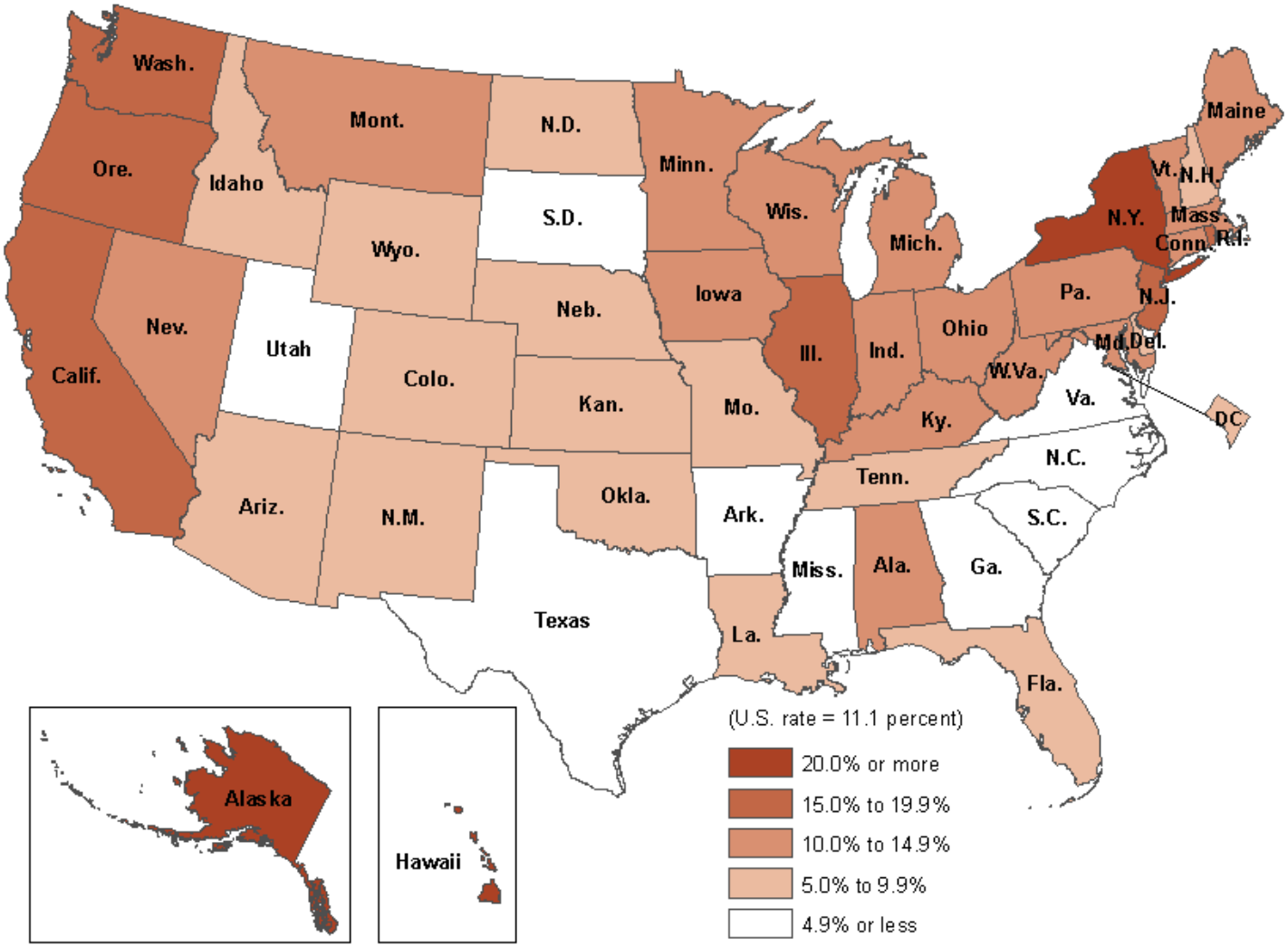
Table 1. Union affiliation of employed wage and salary workers by state, 2013-2014 annual averages (numbers in thousands)

State	2013					2014				
	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	1,894	203	10.7	222	11.7	1,887	204	10.8	228	12.1
Alaska	306	71	23.1	75	24.5	307	70	22.8	75	24.4
Arizona	2,452	122	5.0	147	6.0	2,593	138	5.3	173	6.7
Arkansas	1,072	38	3.5	44	4.1	1,108	52	4.7	60	5.4
California	14,835	2,430	16.4	2,579	17.4	15,135	2,472	16.3	2,652	17.5
Colorado	2,243	171	7.6	207	9.2	2,328	221	9.5	250	10.7
Connecticut	1,535	207	13.5	220	14.3	1,564	231	14.8	245	15.7
Delaware	370	38	10.3	41	11.0	384	38	9.9	43	11.3
District of Columbia	308	29	9.3	34	11.0	325	28	8.6	35	10.7
Florida	7,655	414	5.4	529	6.9	8,042	455	5.7	561	7.0
Georgia	3,958	209	5.3	248	6.3	3,926	170	4.3	193	4.9
Hawaii	549	121	22.1	129	23.6	572	124	21.8	131	22.9
Idaho	617	29	4.7	36	5.8	641	34	5.3	43	6.7
Illinois	5,397	851	15.8	882	16.3	5,500	831	15.1	880	16.0
Indiana	2,682	249	9.3	275	10.3	2,802	299	10.7	335	12.0
Iowa	1,421	143	10.1	171	12.0	1,459	156	10.7	184	12.6
Kansas	1,252	94	7.5	106	8.4	1,287	95	7.4	116	9.0
Kentucky	1,735	194	11.2	226	13.0	1,714	189	11.0	219	12.8
Louisiana	1,728	75	4.3	95	5.5	1,834	96	5.2	118	6.4
Maine	574	64	11.1	75	13.1	566	62	11.0	71	12.5
Maryland	2,665	308	11.6	349	13.1	2,612	310	11.9	347	13.3
Massachusetts	2,940	401	13.7	430	14.6	3,036	415	13.7	445	14.7
Michigan	3,889	633	16.3	656	16.9	4,028	585	14.5	631	15.7
Minnesota	2,532	362	14.3	381	15.0	2,538	360	14.2	380	15.0
Mississippi	1,040	38	3.7	44	4.2	1,028	38	3.7	46	4.5
Missouri	2,537	219	8.6	264	10.4	2,559	214	8.4	249	9.7
Montana	403	52	13.0	60	14.8	414	52	12.7	57	13.8
Nebraska	870	63	7.3	79	9.0	877	64	7.3	79	9.0
Nevada	1,154	169	14.6	186	16.1	1,173	169	14.4	192	16.4
New Hampshire	623	60	9.6	67	10.7	626	62	9.9	72	11.5
New Jersey	3,814	611	16.0	632	16.6	3,860	635	16.5	664	17.2
New Mexico	751	46	6.2	55	7.3	763	43	5.7	56	7.4
New York	8,149	1,986	24.4	2,104	25.8	8,060	1,980	24.6	2,081	25.8
North Carolina	3,879	117	3.0	184	4.8	3,936	76	1.9	126	3.2
North Dakota	342	22	6.4	29	8.5	353	18	5.0	24	6.9
Ohio	4,786	605	12.6	674	14.1	4,958	615	12.4	688	13.9
Oklahoma	1,516	114	7.5	144	9.5	1,465	89	6.0	106	7.2
Oregon	1,504	208	13.9	223	14.8	1,554	243	15.6	264	17.0
Pennsylvania	5,501	701	12.7	754	13.7	5,525	703	12.7	754	13.7
Rhode Island	459	77	16.9	82	17.8	453	68	15.1	72	15.8
South Carolina	1,855	69	3.7	86	4.7	1,884	41	2.2	61	3.2
South Dakota	362	17	4.8	21	5.8	363	18	4.9	22	6.0
Tennessee	2,543	155	6.1	188	7.4	2,514	127	5.0	141	5.6
Texas	10,877	518	4.8	647	6.0	11,205	543	4.8	700	6.2
Utah	1,253	49	3.9	67	5.4	1,236	46	3.7	57	4.6
Vermont	285	31	10.9	38	13.2	286	32	11.1	37	13.1
Virginia	3,601	180	5.0	229	6.4	3,665	179	4.9	228	6.2
Washington	2,882	546	18.9	568	19.7	2,914	491	16.8	536	18.4
West Virginia	686	87	12.7	93	13.5	687	73	10.6	80	11.6
Wisconsin	2,569	317	12.3	337	13.1	2,626	306	11.7	327	12.5
Wyoming	259	15	5.7	17	6.4	255	17	6.7	19	7.5

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

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 unincorportated businesses. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.

Chart 2. Union membership rates by state, 2014 annual averages



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.