

# PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE ACT BY THE NUMBERS

## Unions Deliver Higher Wages, Better Benefits, and Safer Workplaces

When workers have the power to join together and negotiate with their employer, they secure higher pay, better benefits, and safer working conditions.

- A [recent study](#) revealed that, over the last eight decades, unions have consistently provided workers with a 10- to 20-percent wage boost over their non-union counterparts.
  - The benefits of union membership are so strong that children of union workers [enjoy greater economic mobility](#).
  - When union density is high, [nonunion workers receive higher wages](#) to match the standards in the industry and to discourage their workers from joining a union. Conversely, de-unionization in the private sector since the late 1970s has contributed to [wage losses among nonunion workers](#).
- Union members are almost [five times as likely to have a defined benefit pension](#) than non-union workers, and private sector workers covered by a union contract are [27 percent more likely to be offered health insurance](#) through their employer.
- Union membership helps to narrow the racial and gender pay gap.
  - Union members of color have [almost five times the median wealth](#) of their non-union counterparts.
  - For women who are members of unions or covered by union contracts, unions [nearly eliminate the gender pay gap](#).
- When union membership was at its peak of around 30 percent between the end of World War II and 1973, wage growth and worker productivity grew at nearly identical rates.
  - During this time, unions had the [greatest impact in boosting wages of black workers](#) and closing racial wage gaps.
  - Since then, as union membership has declined, worker productivity has increased by 73 percent while wages increased by 12 percent, adjusting for inflation.
    - The decline in union membership accounts for a [third of the rise in wage inequality](#) among men, and one fifth among women.

## Unions Are More Popular than Ever

Despite a decline in membership density, both workers and the general public support labor unions and collective bargaining rights.

- Last year, just [10.5 percent of American workers were union members and only 6 percent of private sector workers were union members](#).
- Despite this membership decrease, millions more American workers would join a union if given the opportunity.
  - In a [recent poll](#) of workers across the country conducted by MIT, 48 percent of non-union workers said they would vote to join a union if given the opportunity.

- A [2019 Gallup poll](#) found that 64 percent of Americans approve of labor union today – one of the highest approval ratings over the past five decades.
- According to the Hamilton Project, [hostile public policy and employer opposition](#) may be important in explaining the decline in union membership.

## **Employers Frequently Break the Law to Prevent Workers from Forming Unions**

**Without civil penalties in place, employers are incentivized to use an array of tactics to obstruct workers' right to collectively bargain.**

- [Research](#) shows that, in 2016 and 2017, employers were charged with violating federal law in 41.5 percent of all NLRB-supervised union elections.
  - Employers were charged with **illegally firing workers** in a fifth (19.9 percent) of all elections and a third (29.6 percent) of all NLRB-supervised elections.
  - Employers were charged with **illegally coercing, threatening, or retaliating** against workers supporting unions in nearly one in three (29.2 percent) of all elections.
  - Employers were charged with **illegally disciplining workers** for supporting a union in nearly one in three (29.3 percent) of all elections.
- Each year, employers spend nearly \$340 million to help prevent employees from organizing.