

# STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE STATES

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IWPR #R409

## The Union Advantage for Women

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The labor movement spearheaded many of the basic workplace protections we enjoy today, such as the minimum wage, the 40-hour work week, overtime pay, and adequate workplace health and safety (Hess et al. 2015) and has been an important voice in advancing policies that are especially important to women, such as paid sick leave and paid family leave policies at the state and local levels. For example, unions can help close wage gaps related to sex and race, in part by minimizing pay secrecy which makes it difficult for women and men to find out whether they are paid fairly and undermines attempts to reduce the gender wage gap. Transparency in criteria and decisions related to compensation, recruitment, and promotions can prevent bias and help women advance in their careers. Nonunion workers in the private sector are more than twice as likely as union workers to say that they are discouraged or prohibited from discussing their pay (Hegewisch et al. 2011).

This briefing paper presents an analysis of women's union membership and the union wage and benefit advantage for women by state and by race/ethnicity. It is based on an analysis of the Current Population Survey. Wage and benefit data are for all workers covered by a union contract, irrespective of their membership in a union.

### Women's Membership and Leadership in Labor Unions

Women make up a large and growing proportion of labor union members and have been closing the gender gap in union membership. In 2014, 6.6 million of 14.6 million union members were women, with women comprising 45.5 percent of all union members (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015a). Women's share of union members has increased in each of the last three decades, from 33.6 percent in 1984, to 39.7 in 1994, and 42.6 in 2004 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2014) and women are projected to be the majority of union members by 2025 (Jones, Schmitt, and Woo 2014). Of wage and salary workers overall in the United States, 11.7 percent of men and 10.5 percent of women are members of labor unions, with public sector workers five times as likely to belong to a union as private sector workers (35.7 percent compared with 6.6 percent; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015b). In 2013, 60.1 percent of union women worked in the public sector (Jones, Schmitt, and Woo 2014), or about 4 million women (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015a).

- The share of female workers who are labor union members or are covered by a union contract nationally is 11.9 percent, and ranges from a low of 3.8 percent in North Carolina to a high of more than one in four female workers (25.7 percent) in New York (Map 1, Table 1).
- While more men than women are in labor unions or are covered by a union contract (13.1 percent of men compared with 11.9 percent of women), in eight jurisdictions the percent of women is higher than men—California, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Oregon, and Vermont (Table 1).
- Women are more than half of workers in a union or covered by a union contract in the District of Columbia (52.7 percent) and six states—Connecticut (52.7 percent), Massachusetts (54.1 percent), New Hampshire (51.7 percent), Oregon (51.6 percent), Rhode Island (51.0 percent), and Vermont (56.8 percent). In three states—Missouri (32.3 percent), Wyoming (32.4 percent), and Indiana (32.8 percent)—women are fewer than a third of workers covered by union agreements (Table 1).

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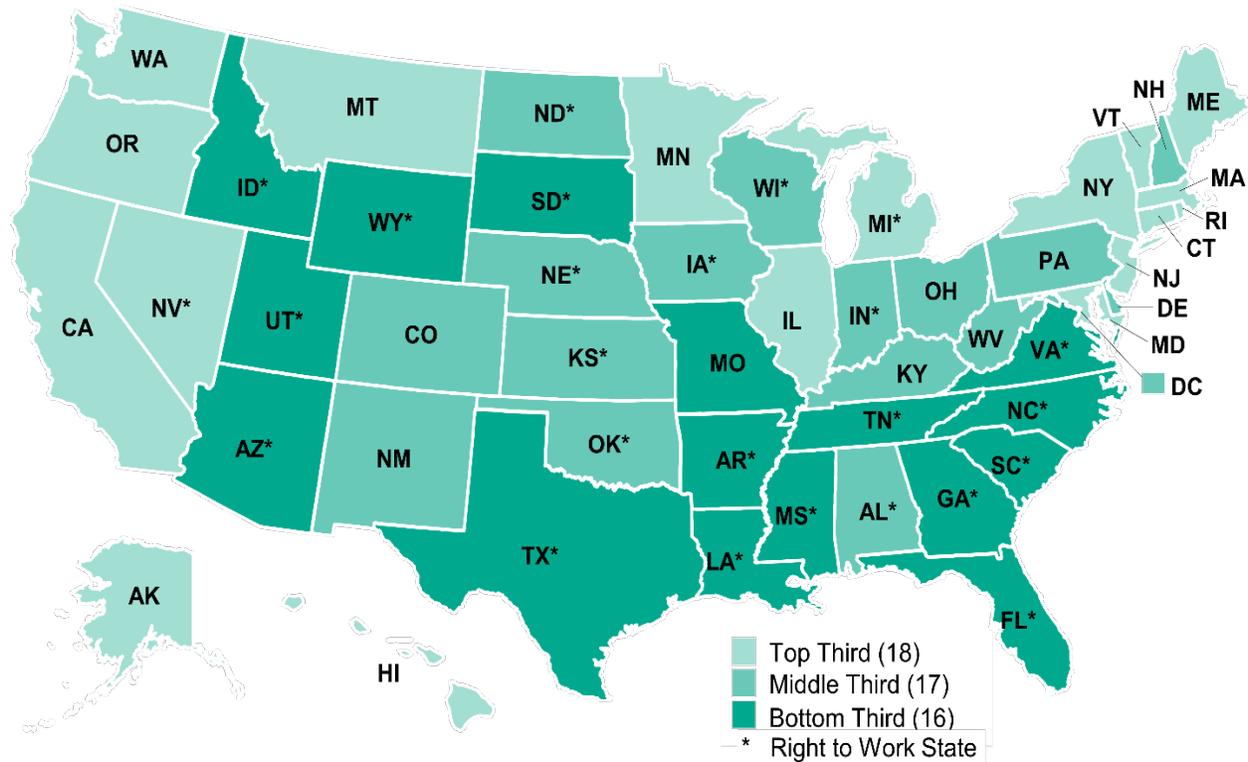
**Table 1. Union Membership and Coverage by Gender and State, and Right-to-Work States**

State	Share of Workers Who Are Union Members or Covered by a Union Contract <sup>a</sup>		Share of Union Workers Who Are Women <sup>a</sup>	“Right-to-Work” State <sup>b</sup>
	Women	Men	Percent	
Alabama	10.7%	11.8%	46.6%	Yes
Alaska	23.5%	24.7%	46.2%	No
Arizona	5.6%	7.6%	40.0%	Yes
Arkansas	3.9%	5.2%	40.6%	Yes
California	19.1%	16.8%	49.7%	No
Colorado	9.4%	9.6%	46.8%	No
Connecticut	16.4%	14.9%	52.7%	No
Delaware	10.3%	12.4%	45.8%	No
District of Columbia	10.7%	10.2%	52.7%	No
Florida	7.0%	7.4%	48.3%	Yes
Georgia	4.6%	6.0%	42.3%	Yes
Hawaii	21.1%	24.8%	44.3%	No
Idaho	5.4%	6.7%	40.6%	Yes
Illinois	14.7%	17.7%	43.9%	No
Indiana	7.6%	14.4%	32.8%	Yes
Iowa	11.2%	14.0%	43.9%	Yes
Kansas	7.7%	10.1%	41.4%	Yes
Kentucky	9.9%	13.7%	41.2%	No
Louisiana	5.1%	7.2%	39.4%	Yes
Maine	12.7%	13.8%	48.9%	No
Maryland	12.7%	13.4%	48.9%	No
Massachusetts	16.3%	14.1%	54.1%	No
Michigan	16.7%	17.2%	47.8%	Yes
Minnesota	15.2%	15.2%	49.1%	No
Mississippi	4.4%	6.2%	41.9%	Yes
Missouri	6.9%	14.4%	32.3%	No
Montana	13.8%	16.0%	46.4%	No
Nebraska	8.8%	9.3%	47.6%	Yes
Nevada	15.9%	16.8%	44.6%	Yes
New Hampshire	12.1%	11.2%	51.7%	No
New Jersey	15.9%	17.8%	45.9%	No
New Mexico	7.8%	8.4%	45.8%	No
New York	25.7%	25.6%	49.1%	No
North Carolina	3.8%	4.3%	45.9%	Yes
North Dakota	7.6%	8.3%	45.9%	Yes
Ohio	11.9%	16.3%	42.0%	No
Oklahoma	7.7%	9.0%	42.8%	Yes
Oregon	17.6%	15.6%	51.6%	No
Pennsylvania	12.1%	16.6%	41.0%	No
Rhode Island	17.5%	17.5%	51.0%	No
South Carolina	4.1%	4.6%	46.3%	Yes
South Dakota	5.9%	6.6%	46.8%	Yes
Tennessee	5.2%	6.9%	40.6%	Yes
Texas	5.9%	6.7%	42.5%	Yes
Utah	5.5%	6.1%	41.7%	Yes
Vermont	14.9%	11.5%	56.8%	No
Virginia	5.4%	6.4%	44.3%	Yes
Washington	18.4%	20.5%	44.3%	No
West Virginia	11.7%	14.9%	41.9%	No
Wisconsin	10.9%	14.9%	41.9%	Yes
Wyoming	5.5%	9.2%	32.4%	Yes
<b>United States</b>	<b>11.9%</b>	<b>13.1%</b>	<b>46.0%</b>	

Notes: Data are for workers ages 16 and older who are covered by union contracts, irrespective of union membership, and are four-year (2011–2014) averages. Data on right-to-work states are as of March 2015.

Sources: <sup>a</sup>IWPR analysis of data from the Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Groups (Version 2.0.1); <sup>b</sup>National Conference of State Legislatures 2015.

Map 1. Share of Women Workers Covered by a Union Contract and Right-to-Work States



Notes: Data are for workers ages 16 and older who are covered by union contracts, irrespective of union membership, and are four-year (2011–2014) averages. Data on right-to-work states are as of March 2015.  
 Sources: IWPR analysis of data from the Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Groups (Version 2.0.1); National Conference of State Legislatures 2015.

- There are 25 “Right to Work” states (Table 1), in which labor unions may operate but they cannot require employees, even those who would benefit from a contract negotiated by a union, to become members of the union or pay membership dues (Shierholz and Gould 2011). Twenty-five states and the District of Columbia do not have “Right to Work” laws. Generally, the share of women who are union members or covered by a union contract are higher in states that do not have “Right to Work” laws (Map 1).<sup>1</sup>

Despite their growth as a percentage of union members, women are still not as likely as men to hold leadership positions in unions. Women are 18.2 percent (10 out of 55) of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor–Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), 25.7 percent (9 of 35) of the International Vice Presidents of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), 38.1 percent (8 of 21) of the Executive Board of the Communications Workers of America (CWA), 42.9 percent (18 of 42) of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Vice Presidents, 50.0 percent (4 of 8) of the leadership of Service Employees International Union (SEIU), and 60.0 percent (3 of 5) of the General Officers of UNITE HERE (AFL-CIO 2015; AFSCME 2015; AFT 2015; CWA

<sup>1</sup> Of the 18 states in the top third for the share of women workers who are union members or covered by a union contract, only two, Michigan and Nevada, have “Right to Work” laws.

2015; SEIU 2015; UNITE HERE 2015). While these numbers do not provide information about the leadership of the local chapters of these labor unions, they do speak to the composition of their national union leadership.<sup>2</sup>

Women's leadership is critical to advances that are especially important to women and families—including equal pay, access to affordable child care, a higher minimum wage, and expanded access to paid sick days—and raising these issues to the forefront of unions' agendas. Union leadership can build the skills of talented women who may then expand their personal goals to include leadership in other areas of public life (Caiazza 2007).

## The Union Wage Advantage for Women

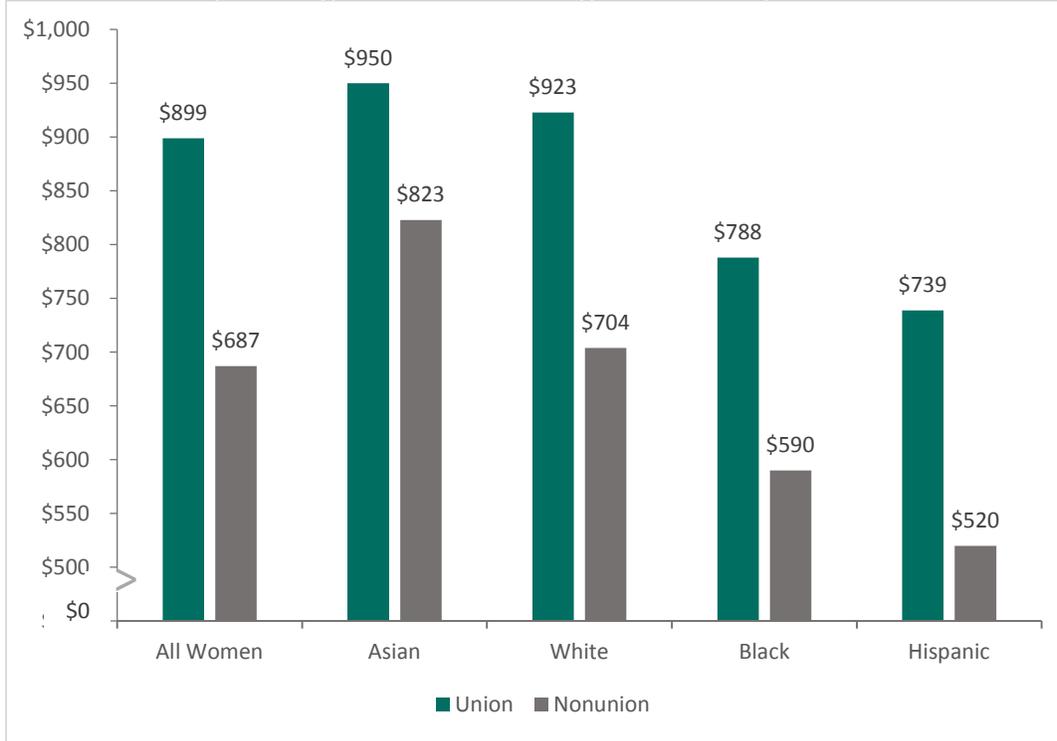
Union representation brings wage setting into the open and helps ensure that employers set wages based on objective criteria, such as skill, effort, and responsibility. Research shows that labor unions tend to raise wages and improve benefits for all represented workers, especially those at the middle and bottom of the wage distribution, who are disproportionately women (Jones, Schmitt, and Woo 2014).

- Among full-time workers ages 16 and older, women represented by labor unions earn an average of \$212, or 30.9 percent, more per week than women in nonunion jobs (Figure 1). Men of the same age range who are represented by unions earn, on average, \$173, or 20.6 percent, more per week than those without union representation (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015c). Earnings data in this section are not controlled for age, education, or industry; when controlled for these factors, the union advantage is smaller but still significant, especially for women and minorities (Jones, Schmitt, and Woo 2014).
- Union women experience a smaller gender wage gap. Women who are represented by labor unions earn 88.7 cents on the dollar compared with their male counterparts, a considerably higher earnings ratio than the earnings ratio between all women and men in the United States (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015c).
- Women of all major racial and ethnic groups experience a union wage advantage. The difference in earnings between those with and without union representation is largest for Hispanic workers. Hispanic women represented by labor unions have median weekly earnings that are 42.1 percent higher than those without union representation. Hispanic men with union representation have earnings that are 40.6 percent higher than their nonunion counterparts (Figure 1, Table 2).

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<sup>2</sup> Data on women's share of union leadership positions at the local level are not readily available.

Figure 1. Union Wage Advantage for Women by Race/Ethnicity and Union Status: Median Weekly Earnings for Full-Time Wage and Salary Workers, United States, 2014



Notes: Hispanics may be of any race or two or more races and are classified by both ethnicity and race. Asians do not include Pacific Islanders. Data are not available for Native Americans or those who identify with two or more races. Self-employed workers are excluded. 'Union' includes workers who are covered by a union contract, irrespective of union membership.

Source: IWPR compilation of data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015c.

Table 2. Union Wage Advantage by Gender, Union Status, and Race/Ethnicity, United States, 2014				
Median Weekly Earnings for Full-Time Wage and Salary Workers				
	Union	Nonunion	Union Wage Advantage	Union Wage Advantage (Percent)
All Women	\$899	\$687	\$212	30.9%
Hispanic	\$739	\$520	\$219	42.1%
Black	\$788	\$590	\$198	33.6%
White	\$923	\$704	\$219	31.1%
Asian	\$950	\$823	\$127	15.4%
All Men	\$1,013	\$840	\$173	20.6%
Hispanic	\$838	\$596	\$242	40.6%
Black	\$833	\$648	\$185	28.5%
White	\$1,041	\$867	\$174	20.1%
Asian	\$1,041	\$1,087	-\$46	-4.2%

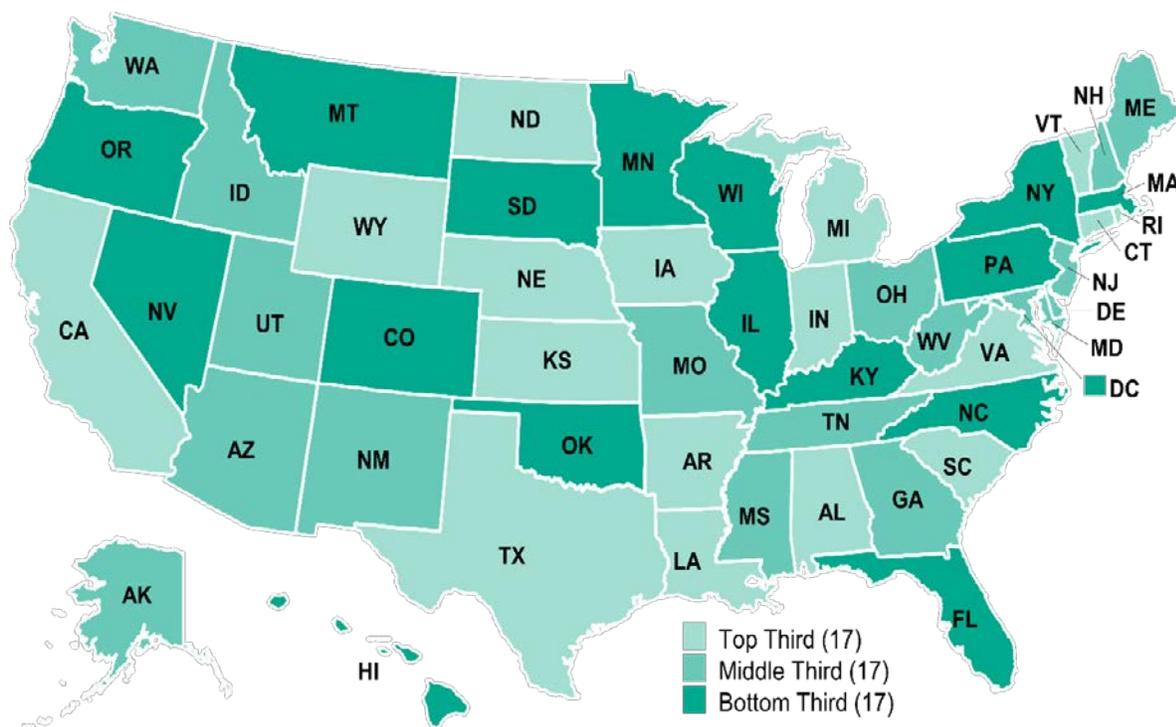
Notes: The wage advantage is the difference between the median weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers who are union members or are covered by a union contract, and those who are not. The wage advantage as a percentage is the wage advantage in dollars divided by nonunion women's earnings. Hispanics may be of any race or two or more races and are classified by both ethnicity and race. Asians do not include Pacific Islanders. Data are not available for Native Americans or those who identify with two or more races. Self-employed workers are excluded.

Source: IWPR compilation of data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015c.

The union wage advantage exists for women in every state, but the size of that advantage for women varies across states.

- In every state, the full-time weekly earnings of women covered by union contracts are higher than their nonunionized counterparts (Map 2, Table 3).
- Women who are covered by a union contract in Wyoming, South Carolina, and Louisiana have the largest wage advantage compared with nonunionized women, of 53.0, 46.2, and 42.1 percent, respectively (Table 3).
- The jurisdictions with the smallest union wage advantage for women are the District of Columbia (4.5 percent), Colorado (11.9 percent), and Hawaii (14.6 percent; Table 3).
- “Right-to-work” laws—which give employees the benefits of a union contract without having to pay union dues—are associated with lower wages for all workers (both union and nonunion), especially women. In right-to-work states (see Table 1), wages are about 4.4 percent lower for full-time, year-round female workers and 1.7 percent lower for full-time, year-round male workers than in non-right-to-work states (Shierholz and Gould 2011).<sup>3</sup>

Map 2. The Union Wage Advantage for Women



Notes: Data on earnings are median weekly earnings for full-time wage and salary workers aged 16 and older and are four-year (2011–2014) averages. Earnings are in 2014 dollars and are not controlled for age, level of education, or industry. Sources: IWPR analysis of data from the Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Groups (Version 2.0.1).

<sup>3</sup> Estimates are controlled for individual demographic and socioeconomic variables (including age, gender, race/ethnicity, marital status, education, urbanicity, union status, industry, occupation, whether a worker is an hourly worker, and whether a worker is a full-time worker), as well as state macroeconomic differences, including cost-of-living measures and the unemployment rate (Shierholz and Gould 2011).

**Table 3. Earnings and the Union Wage Advantage by Gender and Union Status, 2011-2014**

State	Median Weekly Earnings for Full-Time Wage and Salary Workers				Union Wage Advantage			
	Women		Men		Women		Men	
	Union	Non-union	Union	Non-union	Dollars	Percent	Dollars	Percent
Alabama	\$825	\$618	\$962	\$805	\$207	33.5%	\$157	19.5%
Alaska	\$935	\$728	\$1,198	\$976	\$207	28.4%	\$222	22.7%
Arizona	\$867	\$691	\$992	\$813	\$176	25.5%	\$179	22.0%
Arkansas	\$816	\$603	\$963	\$701	\$213	35.3%	\$262	37.4%
California	\$991	\$747	\$1,108	\$830	\$244	32.7%	\$278	33.5%
Colorado	\$865	\$773	\$1,004	\$990	\$92	11.9%	\$14	1.4%
Connecticut	\$1,119	\$844	\$1,173	\$1,123	\$275	32.6%	\$50	4.5%
Delaware	\$960	\$737	\$984	\$880	\$223	30.3%	\$104	11.8%
District of Columbia	\$1,124	\$1,076	\$1,150	\$1,203	\$48	4.5%	(\$53)	-4.4%
Florida	\$830	\$688	\$999	\$811	\$142	20.6%	\$188	23.2%
Georgia	\$878	\$674	\$962	\$832	\$204	30.3%	\$130	15.6%
Hawaii	\$795	\$694	\$978	\$805	\$101	14.6%	\$173	21.5%
Idaho	\$818	\$633	\$1,006	\$768	\$185	29.2%	\$238	31.0%
Illinois	\$848	\$726	\$984	\$895	\$122	16.8%	\$89	9.9%
Indiana	\$881	\$634	\$992	\$809	\$247	39.0%	\$183	22.6%
Iowa	\$856	\$655	\$992	\$817	\$201	30.7%	\$175	21.4%
Kansas	\$853	\$651	\$1,055	\$824	\$202	31.0%	\$231	28.0%
Kentucky	\$744	\$610	\$911	\$756	\$134	22.0%	\$155	20.5%
Louisiana	\$851	\$599	\$1,022	\$816	\$252	42.1%	\$206	25.2%
Maine	\$826	\$648	\$981	\$799	\$178	27.5%	\$182	22.8%
Maryland	\$1,071	\$837	\$1,111	\$1,002	\$234	28.0%	\$109	10.9%
Massachusetts	\$1,060	\$849	\$1,198	\$1,078	\$211	24.9%	\$120	11.1%
Michigan	\$910	\$691	\$969	\$902	\$219	31.7%	\$67	7.4%
Minnesota	\$958	\$769	\$1,086	\$952	\$189	24.6%	\$134	14.1%
Mississippi	\$753	\$599	\$952	\$761	\$154	25.7%	\$191	25.1%
Missouri	\$855	\$668	\$1,049	\$850	\$187	28.0%	\$199	23.4%
Montana	\$704	\$579	\$923	\$741	\$125	21.6%	\$182	24.6%
Nebraska	\$879	\$652	\$922	\$803	\$227	34.8%	\$119	14.8%
Nevada	\$757	\$632	\$909	\$746	\$125	19.8%	\$163	21.8%
New Hampshire	\$985	\$771	\$1,089	\$982	\$214	27.8%	\$107	10.9%
New Jersey	\$1,006	\$797	\$1,126	\$1,012	\$209	26.2%	\$114	11.3%
New Mexico	\$836	\$651	\$896	\$820	\$185	28.4%	\$76	9.3%
New York	\$942	\$751	\$1,018	\$902	\$191	25.4%	\$116	12.9%
North Carolina	\$787	\$657	\$957	\$796	\$130	19.8%	\$161	20.2%
North Dakota	\$881	\$665	\$1,029	\$864	\$216	32.5%	\$165	19.1%
Ohio	\$842	\$667	\$974	\$808	\$175	26.2%	\$166	20.5%
Oklahoma	\$722	\$616	\$960	\$779	\$106	17.2%	\$181	23.2%
Oregon	\$874	\$716	\$1,060	\$865	\$158	22.1%	\$195	22.5%
Pennsylvania	\$832	\$690	\$972	\$869	\$142	20.6%	\$103	11.9%
Rhode Island	\$1,015	\$724	\$1,089	\$922	\$291	40.2%	\$167	18.1%
South Carolina	\$896	\$613	\$850	\$780	\$283	46.2%	\$70	9.0%
South Dakota	\$746	\$613	\$958	\$762	\$133	21.7%	\$196	25.7%
Tennessee	\$800	\$621	\$904	\$746	\$179	28.8%	\$158	21.2%
Texas	\$896	\$637	\$1,017	\$790	\$259	40.7%	\$227	28.7%
Utah	\$819	\$643	\$1,010	\$877	\$176	27.4%	\$133	15.2%
Vermont	\$938	\$704	\$999	\$833	\$234	33.2%	\$166	19.9%
Virginia	\$1,099	\$796	\$1,078	\$980	\$303	38.1%	\$98	10.0%
Washington	\$945	\$748	\$1,099	\$985	\$197	26.3%	\$114	11.6%
West Virginia	\$782	\$606	\$954	\$830	\$176	29.0%	\$124	14.9%
Wisconsin	\$838	\$697	\$980	\$852	\$141	20.2%	\$128	15.0%
Wyoming	\$1,007	\$658	\$1,267	\$962	\$349	53.0%	\$305	31.7%
<b>United States</b>	<b>\$911</b>	<b>\$694</b>	<b>\$1,019</b>	<b>\$847</b>	<b>\$217</b>	<b>31.3%</b>	<b>\$172</b>	<b>20.3%</b>

Notes: For notes on calculation of wage advantage, see Table 2. Data on earnings are for those aged 16 and older and are presented in 2014 dollars. Data are four-year (2011–2014) averages, and hence differ from Figure 1 and Table 2. Earnings are not controlled for age, level of education, or industry.

Sources: IWPR analysis of data from the Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Groups (Version 2.0.1).

Across all major occupational groups women who are covered by a union contract earn more than other women. Women’s union advantage is largest in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations (95.5 percent), with union women enjoying almost double the weekly earnings of nonunion women in these occupations. Median weekly earnings are at least 20 percent higher for women working in production, transportation, and material moving occupations (26.7 percent), service occupations (26.4 percent), and office and administrative support occupations (22.2 percent). For women in professional and related occupations, the weekly wage advantage is 13.7 percent, and in all of these major groups it is at least seven percent compared with nonunion women in the same broad occupation (Table 4).

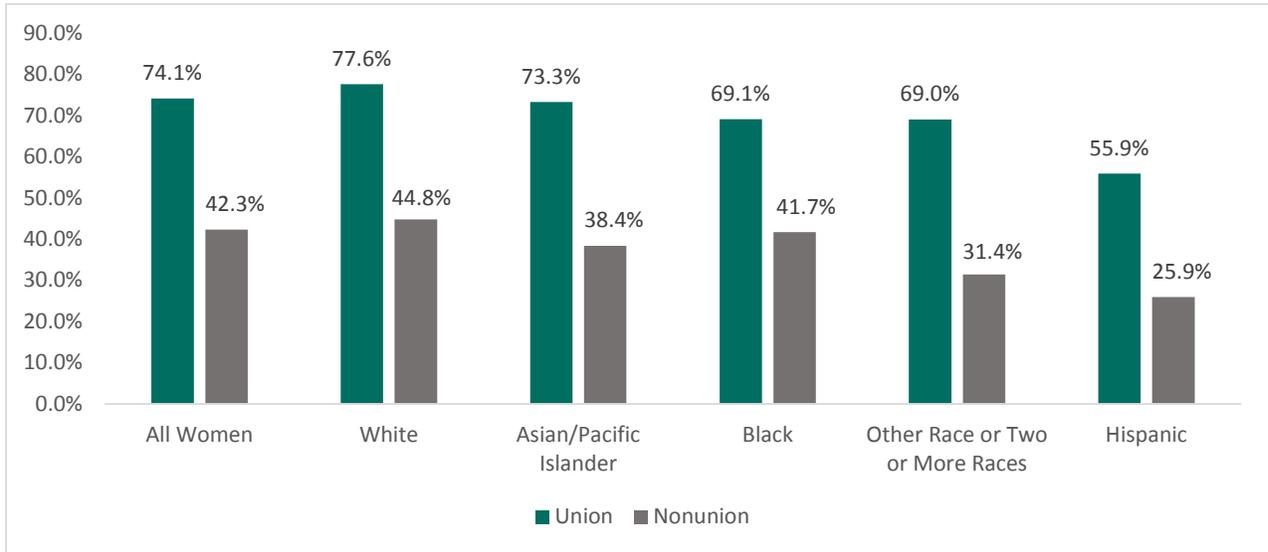
<b>Table 4. Median Weekly Earnings for Full-Time Workers by Gender, Union Status, and Occupation, United States, 2014</b>								
	<b>Union</b>		<b>Nonunion</b>		<b>Union Wage Advantage</b>		<b>Union Wage Advantage (in Percent)</b>	
	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Management, Business, and Financial	\$1,116	\$1,378	\$1,042	\$1,434	\$74	-\$56	7.1%	-3.9%
Professional and Related	\$1,055	\$1,238	\$928	\$1,313	\$127	-\$75	13.7%	-5.7%
Service Occupations	\$569	\$906	\$450	\$516	\$119	\$390	26.4%	75.6%
Sales and Related	\$618	\$817	\$572	\$864	\$46	-\$47	8.0%	-5.4%
Office and Administrative Support	\$771	\$962	\$632	\$663	\$139	\$299	22.0%	45.1%
Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance	\$989	\$1,058	\$506	\$718	\$483	\$340	95.5%	47.4%
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving	\$621	\$880	\$490	\$651	\$131	\$229	26.7%	35.2%

Note: For workers aged 16 and older. Data are four-year (2011–2014) averages. Earnings are in 2014 dollars. Source: IWPR analysis of Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Groups (Version 2.0.1) data.

## The Union Benefits Advantage for Women

Women who are labor union members (or covered by a union contract) are more likely to participate in a pension plan than those who are not unionized. Approximately three in four unionized women (74.1 percent) have a pension plan, compared with only slightly more than four in ten (42.3 percent) of their nonunion counterparts (Figure 2). Among the largest racial and ethnic groups, the difference in participation rates between union members and nonunion members ranges from about 27 percentage points for black women to about 35 percentage points for Asian/Pacific Islander women.

Figure 2. Percent of Women Workers with a Pension Plan by Union Status, United States, 2013

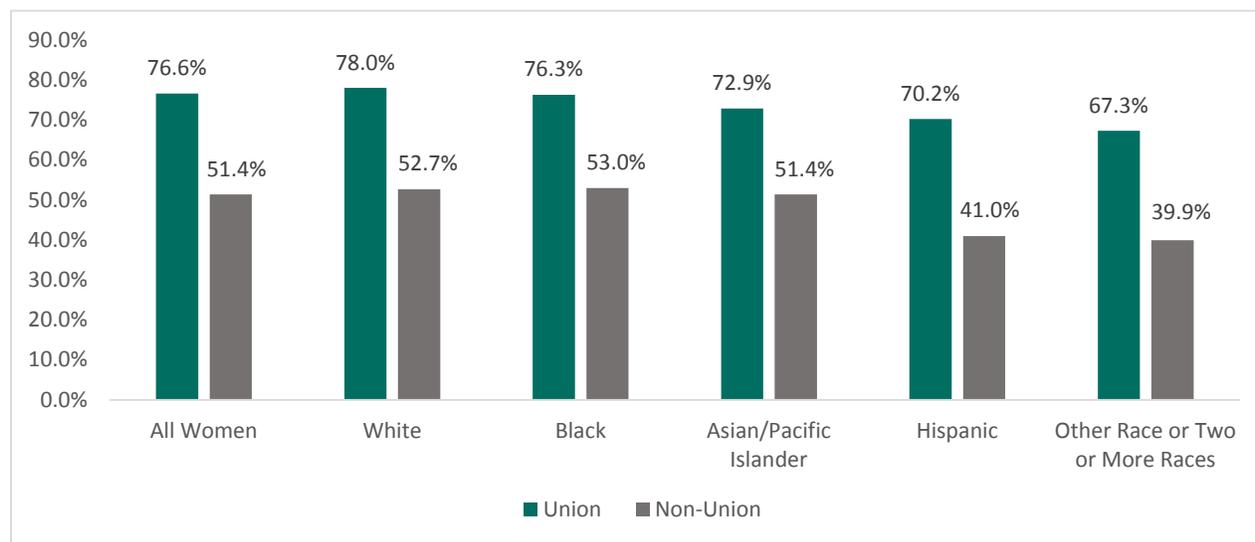


Notes: Racial categories are non-Hispanic. Hispanics may be of any race or two or more races. Data include all workers aged 15 and older and are three-year averages (2012–2014, for calendar years 2011–2013). Native Americans are included in “other race or two or more races”; sample sizes are insufficient to report estimates for Native Americans separately. Source: IWPR analysis of data from the Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement.

Women who are members of a labor union (or covered by a union contract) are also more likely to receive health insurance benefits through their job than those who are not unionized. As of 2013, approximately three in four unionized women (76.6 percent) had employer- or union-provided health insurance coverage, compared with about half (51.4 percent) of their nonunion counterparts (Figure 3). Among the largest racial and ethnic groups, the difference between coverage rates for union members and nonunion members was greatest for Hispanic women and women who identify with another race or two or more races (29.2 and 27.4 percentage points, respectively; Figure 3).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Health insurance is calculated for all workers and not controlled for age, level of education, or industry of employment; when controlling for these factors, the union advantage is smaller but still strong (Jones, Schmitt, and Woo 2014).

Figure 3. Percent of Employed Women with Health Insurance Coverage through Their Employer or Union by Race/Ethnicity and Union Status, United States, 2013



Notes: Racial categories are non-Hispanic. Hispanics may be of any race or two or more races. Data include all workers aged 15 and older and are three-year averages (2012–2014, for calendar years 2011–2013). Native Americans are included in “other race or two or more races”; sample sizes are insufficient to report estimates for Native Americans separately. Source: IWPR analysis of data from the Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement.

## The High Cost of Child Care

The cost of child care can present a formidable burden to families with young children. Between 1985 and 2011, the weekly out-of-pocket expenditure on child care for families with an employed mother almost doubled in real terms (U.S. Census Bureau 2013). As Child Care Aware of America (2014a) has documented, in the majority of states and the District of Columbia, the annual costs of center care for an infant are higher than the costs of attending a year of college at a public university, and in 22 states and the District of Columbia, the costs exceed 40 percent of the median annual income of single mothers (Hess et al. 2015). The cost varies considerably among states.

- The annual cost of center care for an infant as a proportion of women’s full-time, year-round median annual earnings is lowest in Alabama (16.8 percent of women’s median annual earnings). In seven other states—Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Tennessee—the costs are also lower than 20 percent of women’s median annual earnings (Table 5).
- The cost is highest in the District of Columbia (36.6 percent); in two other states—Massachusetts and Minnesota—costs are more than a third of annual earnings.

In thirty states, one week of additional earnings of union women compared with nonunion women is sufficient to cover at least the weekly costs of full-time child care in a center for an infant (Table 5).

- In three states, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Wyoming, the additional earnings of union women in a single week cover the costs of two or more weeks of full-time care for an infant in a center (Table 5).
- In nine states that also have relatively low child care costs—Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia—the additional earnings for union women in a single week could pay for between one and a half and two weeks of care.

**Table 5. Cost of Child Care, by State**

State	Average Annual Cost of Full-Time Infant Care in a Center, 2013 <sup>a</sup>	Annual Cost of Infant Care as Percent of Women's Median Annual Earnings <sup>a, b</sup>	Average Weekly Cost of Full-Time Infant Care in a Center, 2013 <sup>a, c</sup>	Weekly Cost of Infant Care as Percent of Women's Median Weekly Earnings <sup>a, d</sup>		Union Wage Advantage for Women <sup>d</sup>	The Weekly Union Wage Advantage Expressed in Weeks of Infant Center Care:
				Union	Nonunion		
Alabama	\$5,547	16.8%	\$107	12.9%	17.3%	\$207	1.9
Alaska	\$10,280	23.9%	\$198	21.1%	27.2%	\$207	1.0
Arizona	\$9,166	25.5%	\$176	20.3%	25.5%	\$176	1.0
Arkansas	\$5,933	19.8%	\$114	14.0%	18.9%	\$213	1.9
California	\$11,628	27.7%	\$224	22.6%	29.9%	\$244	1.1
Colorado	\$13,143	32.9%	\$253	29.2%	32.7%	\$92	0.4
Connecticut	\$13,241	28.8%	\$255	22.8%	30.2%	\$275	1.1
Delaware	\$9,058	22.1%	\$174	18.1%	23.6%	\$223	1.3
District of Columbia	\$21,948	36.6%	\$422	37.6%	39.2%	\$48	0.1
Florida	\$8,376	24.6%	\$161	19.4%	23.4%	\$142	0.9
Georgia	\$7,025	20.1%	\$135	15.4%	20.0%	\$204	1.5
Hawaii	\$11,748	29.4%	\$226	28.4%	32.6%	\$101	0.4
Idaho	\$6,483	21.6%	\$125	15.2%	19.7%	\$185	1.5
Illinois	\$12,568	31.4%	\$242	28.5%	33.3%	\$122	0.5
Indiana	\$8,281	24.4%	\$159	18.1%	25.1%	\$247	1.6
Iowa	\$9,185	26.2%	\$177	20.6%	27.0%	\$201	1.1
Kansas	\$10,787	30.8%	\$207	24.3%	31.9%	\$202	1.0
Kentucky	\$6,194	18.7%	\$119	16.0%	19.5%	\$134	1.1
Louisiana	\$5,655	17.7%	\$109	12.8%	18.2%	\$252	2.3
Maine	\$9,360	26.0%	\$180	21.8%	27.8%	\$178	1.0
Maryland	\$13,897	27.9%	\$267	25.0%	31.9%	\$234	0.9
Massachusetts	\$16,549	34.1%	\$318	30.0%	37.5%	\$211	0.7
Michigan	\$9,724	26.3%	\$187	20.5%	27.1%	\$219	1.2
Minnesota	\$13,993	35.0%	\$269	28.1%	35.0%	\$189	0.7
Mississippi	\$5,496	18.3%	\$106	14.0%	17.6%	\$154	1.5
Missouri	\$8,736	25.7%	\$168	19.6%	25.1%	\$187	1.1
Montana	\$8,858	28.0%	\$170	24.2%	29.4%	\$125	0.7
Nebraska	\$9,100	27.7%	\$175	19.9%	26.8%	\$227	1.3
Nevada	\$10,095	28.8%	\$194	25.6%	30.7%	\$125	0.6
New Hampshire	\$11,901	29.8%	\$229	23.2%	29.7%	\$214	0.9
New Jersey	\$11,534	24.0%	\$222	22.0%	27.8%	\$209	0.9
New Mexico	\$7,523	21.5%	\$145	17.3%	22.2%	\$185	1.3
New York	\$14,508	33.1%	\$279	29.6%	37.2%	\$191	0.7
North Carolina	\$9,107	26.0%	\$175	22.3%	26.7%	\$130	0.7
North Dakota	\$7,871	22.5%	\$151	17.2%	22.8%	\$216	1.4
Ohio	\$7,771	21.6%	\$149	17.7%	22.4%	\$175	1.2
Oklahoma	\$7,741	24.2%	\$149	20.6%	24.2%	\$106	0.7
Oregon	\$11,078	29.2%	\$213	24.4%	29.8%	\$158	0.7
Pennsylvania	\$10,470	27.6%	\$201	24.2%	29.2%	\$142	0.7
Rhode Island	\$12,662	29.4%	\$244	24.0%	33.6%	\$291	1.2
South Carolina	\$6,372	19.9%	\$123	13.7%	20.0%	\$283	2.3
South Dakota	\$5,571	18.6%	\$107	14.4%	17.5%	\$133	1.2
Tennessee	\$5,857	17.5%	\$113	14.1%	18.1%	\$179	1.6
Texas	\$8,619	24.6%	\$166	18.5%	26.0%	\$259	1.6
Utah	\$8,052	23.0%	\$155	18.9%	24.1%	\$176	1.1
Vermont	\$10,103	26.0%	\$194	20.7%	27.6%	\$234	1.2
Virginia	\$10,028	24.5%	\$193	17.5%	24.2%	\$303	1.6
Washington	\$12,332	29.9%	\$237	25.1%	31.7%	\$197	0.8
West Virginia	\$7,800	25.7%	\$150	19.2%	24.8%	\$176	1.2
Wisconsin	\$11,342	31.5%	\$218	26.0%	31.3%	\$141	0.6
Wyoming	\$9,233	25.6%	\$178	17.6%	27.0%	\$349	2.0

Notes: <sup>a</sup>Average weekly cost of full-time infant care in a center was calculated by IWPR by dividing annual costs as provided by Child Care Aware by 52. Weeks of infant care that could be bought with the wage advantage is the union wage advantage divided by the weekly cost of infant care. For notes on calculation of union wage advantage, see Table 2.

Sources: <sup>a</sup>Child Care Aware of America, 2014; <sup>b</sup>IWPR analysis of American Community Survey microdata (Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Version 5.0); <sup>d</sup>IWPR analysis of data from the Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Groups (Version 2.0.1).

## Policies to Support Working Women

Working women across the nation face challenges that demand attention from policymakers, advocates, employers, and foundations. While unionized women enjoy a number of advantages, much more progress needs to be made in order for women to achieve equality in the workforce. The gender wage gap among unionized workers is lower than among nonunion workers, but it does not disappear. There is no single factor that accounts for women's lower earnings—discrimination and lack of transparency, occupational segregation and the undervaluation of work done primarily by women, and the unequal distribution of unpaid family work between women and men all contribute to the gap. A number of policies and practices can accelerate the pace of change for women and make a powerful difference in the lives of women, men, and children:

- States should encourage the ability of unions to reach out to women, and to all workers, and allow them to organize. So-called “right to work” laws diminish this freedom.
- Unions and other organizations of workers can take steps to promote women's leadership. A study of women union activists identified seven strategies for promoting women's leadership within unions. Unions can highlight the importance of women's contributions; provide training on effective ways to mobilize women; encourage and support more women in leadership positions both nationally and locally; create and strengthen mentoring programs for women; provide dedicated space for women to voice their concerns; address women's priorities by using imagery and language that reflects their experiences; and provide flexible options for involvement by finding creative times and places to meet and providing supports such as childcare (Caiazza 2007). Several unions have developed mentoring programs to help women union members to advance and become effective union leaders (Hess 2012).
- Tackling occupational segregation by sex requires strategies to promote gender and racial equity in access to higher paid, non-traditional career training opportunities, including apprenticeships. It also requires lifting wages in occupations that are predominantly done by women; women in low-wage service sector occupations particularly benefit from increasing the minimum and tipped minimum wages. Women also benefit disproportionately from an increase in the overtime threshold, which requires premium pay for overtime hours for anyone whose base pay is below the threshold.
- Working women and their families need better access to quality and affordable child care, including child care supports for parents who are in training and education. School hours (including in kindergarten and pre-K) need to be aligned with the traditional work day, and parents need affordable child care options during school vacations and at non-traditional work hours.
- Working women and their families also need policies such as paid family leave and paid medical leave, paid sick days, and schedule predictability. Nationally, only a small minority of workers have access to paid family leave, and almost half of all women workers do not have access to earned sick days (Gault et al 2014; O'Connor, Hayes, and Gault 2014). A small but growing number of states and localities have statutes that provide workers access to paid leave: California, Hawaii, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island have paid leave statutes for temporary disability, family leave, or both. California, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Washington have statutes providing a right to earn paid sick days in at least one locality, if not statewide (Hess et al. 2015). Each of these states has higher than average union membership rates for women, and in each of these states, unions were active members of campaigns for paid leave rights.

## Methodology

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The data come from several sources, including the Current Population Survey, which are noted in the text or table and figure sources.

Where data are disaggregated by race and ethnicity, race and ethnicity are self-identified; the person providing the information on the survey form determines the group to which he or she (and other household members) belongs. People who identify as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race; to prevent double counting, IWPR's analysis separates Hispanics or Latinos from racial categories—including white, black (those who identified as black or African American), Asian/Pacific Islander (those who identified as Chinese, Japanese, and Other Asian or Pacific Islander), Native American (those who identified as American Indian or Alaska Native), and those who identify with another race or with two or more races.

When analyzing state-level Current Population Survey microdata, IWPR combined four years of data (2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014) to ensure sufficient sample sizes. IWPR constructed a multi-year file by selecting the 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014 datasets, adjusting dollar values to their 2014 equivalents using the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers, and averaging the sample weights to represent the average population during the four year period.

Some of the differences reflected in the data between women and men, different groups of women, or different states are likely to be statistically significant (they are unlikely to have occurred by chance and probably represent a true difference between the groups being compared). Other differences are too small to be statistically significant and may have occurred by chance. IWPR did not calculate or report measures of statistical significance; generally, the larger a difference between two values (for any given sample size), the more likely it is that the difference is statistically significant. Sample sizes differ among the indicators analyzed.

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*The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) conducts rigorous research and disseminates its findings to address the needs of women, promote public dialogue, and strengthen families, communities, and societies. The Institute's research strives to give voice to the needs of women from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds across the income spectrum and to ensure that their perspectives enter the public debate on ending discrimination and inequality, improving opportunity, and increasing economic security for women and families. The Institute works with policymakers, scholars, and public interest groups to design, execute, and disseminate research and to build a diverse network of individuals and organizations that conduct and use women-oriented policy research. IWPR's work is supported by foundation grants, government grants and contracts, donations from individuals, and contributions from organizations and corporations. IWPR is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization that also works in affiliation with the women's studies and public policy and public administration programs at The George Washington University.*