

# Union Membership Up to 16-Year High

**Despite intense pressure on labor unions across the country, a historic union-busting campaign against federal workers and little support from the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), close to half-a-million Americans joined unions in 2025, according to new data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).**

The new union members bring the total number of workers represented by unions to a 16-year high of 16.5 million — still only a quarter of the total workers estimated to want a union. But increasing union membership is a reassuring sign for a labor movement up against lawmakers and corporations openly hostile to collective bargaining.

The data points to enormous opportunity for unions and for OPEIU in particular as the industries the union represents, such as insurance, have some of the lowest membership rates in the American workforce at only 1.2 percent. With the insurance industry employing 3 million people nationally, these numbers represent huge swaths of the country missing out on the higher pay and better benefits workers are more likely to get through a union.

The new data provides updated figures confirming the concrete impact labor unions have on the lives of their members. For example, the median salary of a nonunion worker in 2025 stood at 84 percent of the average union member's wage. But not everyone enjoys these benefits equally. Women

are still unionized at rates that lag behind men, and the data reveals an underrepresentation of Asian Americans in the labor movement. These lags, however, do not indicate a lack of interest in becoming union members. For example, young workers approve of unions at rates exceeding any other age group but enjoy the benefits of union membership at rates lower than any other group.

Shifts in industries and labor in the United States are also impacting union membership. Heavily unionized industries, such as manufacturing and mining, have been in decline, while less unionized industries, such as hospitality and technology, have been growing. This all comes as the NLRB faced significant funding cuts and lost 10 percent of its staff in 2025, making it difficult to enforce the few protections workers have against illegal employer behavior.

Despite the constant challenges from decades of policy aimed at impeding union growth, the data tells the story of a labor movement invigorated with a wave of grassroots, pro-union energy.

