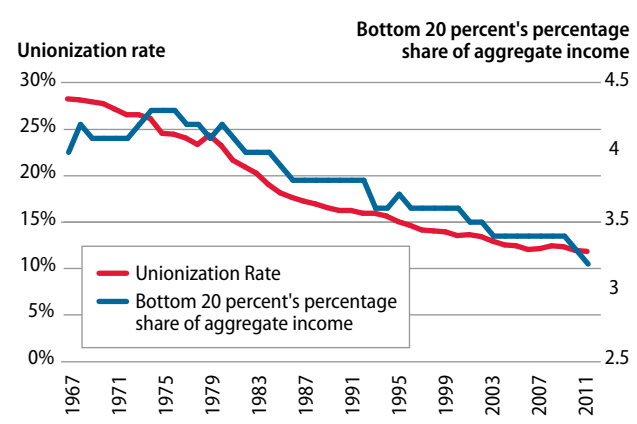


Unions

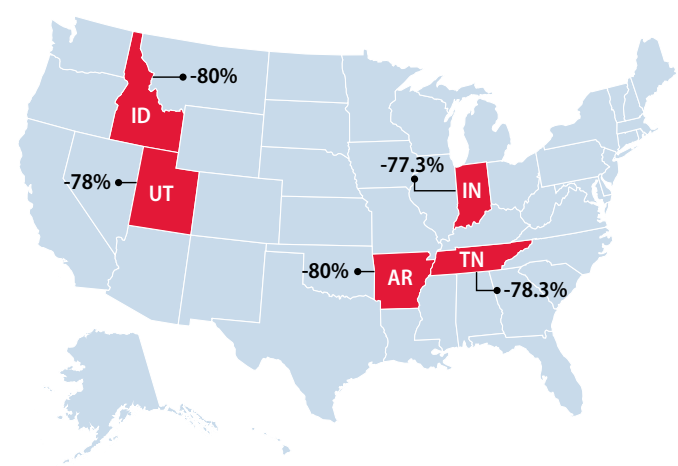
Low-income Americans have borne the brunt of the steady decline of organized labor over the past several decades. As union membership has fallen across the country, so has the share of household income going to those in the bottom 20 percent, and poverty rates have remained higher in states that are among the lowest in union membership. This is because unions—when they are allowed to fight for workers’ rights—directly benefit low-wage workers by increasing their hourly wages and improving their access to earned benefits like health care and pensions. These gains are not restricted to union workers, however, as unions also push for higher minimum wages for all workers and encourage lawmakers to strengthen state social safety nets for any who may need them. Encouraging greater union participation among the most vulnerable and halting attacks on basic workers’ rights are essential in order to ensure that low-wage workers and low-income individuals are not left behind during this economic recovery.

a *National union membership versus the bottom 20 percent’s share of income*
The bottom 20 percent’s share of household income has declined with national membership rates



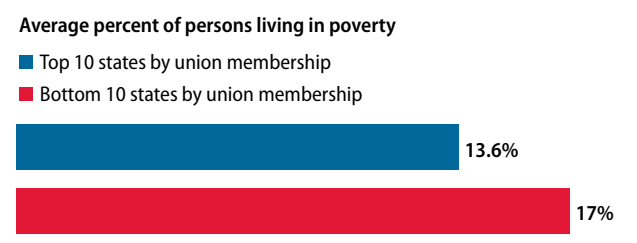
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Unionstats.com.

b *Decline of union membership*
Five states with greatest percent decline in membership from 1967 to 2012



Source: Unionstats.com.

c *Unions and poverty*
More highly unionized states had fewer individuals living in poverty in 2011



Source: U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey, Unionstats.com.

d *Minimum wage gap*
More highly unionized states have higher minimum wages



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Unionstats.com. Minimum wage figures are current as of January 1, 2013 and union membership rates are from 2012. Minimum wage figure for bottom ten states is the federal minimum wage since this is the effective minimum wage in these states, although the average of their state-mandated minimum wages is only \$7.05.

e

Strength of the social safety net

As of 2007, states with higher levels of unionization have stronger social safety nets

Average strength of social safety net index (50 = strongest)



Top 10 states by union membership



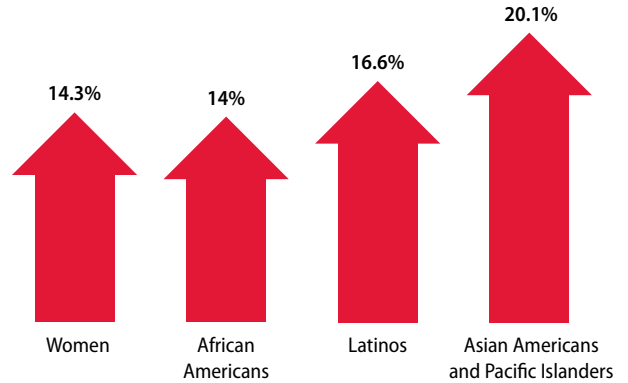
Bottom 10 states by union membership

Source: The Lewin Group and the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government, Unionstats.com.

f

Unions increase the wages of low-wage workers

Percent increase in wages for low-wage women and communities of color associated with being in a union



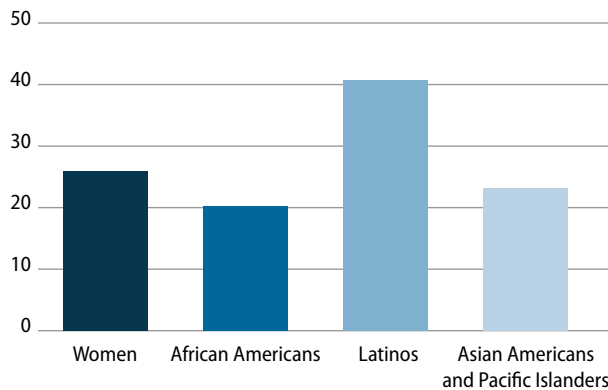
Source: Center for Economic and Policy Research: Women, African Americans, Latinos 2004-2007, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders 2003-2008.

g

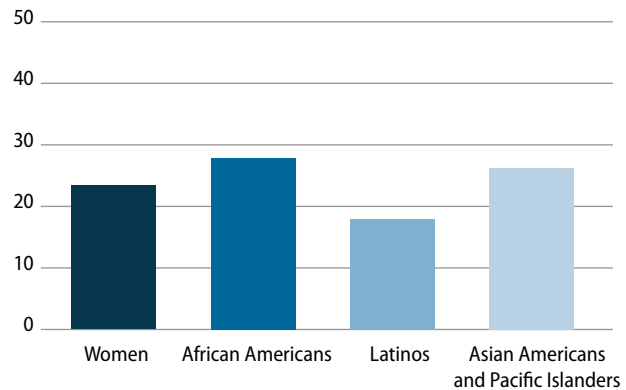
Unions help low-wage workers access benefits

Percentage-point increase in likelihood of low-wage women and communities of color having access to health care and retirement benefits associated with being in a union

Healthcare advantage (PP)



Pension advantage (PP)



Source: Center for Economic and Policy Research: Women, African Americans, Latinos 2004-2007, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders 2003-2008.

Unions help all workers, unionized and nonunionized alike. The decline of union membership by roughly 60 percent over the last 45 years has been detrimental to low-income Americans as well as the middle class and is counterproductive to the pursuit of income equality and democratic participation.

We must actively aim to reverse these trends to ensure that our workforce—our nation’s economic engine—is not struggling but is lifted up by a strong social safety net and safeguarded by meaningful workplace protections. Unions help achieve these goals and must be allowed to continue fighting for workers’ rights and benefits so that all American workers can best contribute to and fairly share in future economic prosperity.