Transformation:
Declining and Shifting Union Membership

Union Membership and Its Proportion of the Labor Force, 1930-1993

Fewer Collective Bargaining Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total elections held seeking a collective bargaining representative</th>
<th>Percentage won by unions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>1,192</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>5,619</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>6,380</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>7,773</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>7,296</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>3,749</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>3,623</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>2,993</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Data are for fiscal years. For 1940 and 1950 all elections held, including runoffs and runoffs, are not necessarily closed in that fiscal year. 1992 data are preliminary.
Source: National Labor Relations Board.

The Ten Largest Labor Unions: Then and Now

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1952</th>
<th>1993</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(000)</td>
<td>(000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. United Automobile, Aircraft &amp; Agricultural Implement Workers</td>
<td>1,185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. United Steelworkers</td>
<td>1,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. International Brotherhood of Teamsters</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. United Brotherhood of Carpenters &amp; Joiners</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. International Association of Machinists</td>
<td>699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. United Mine Workers</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Hotel &amp; Restaurant Employees' International Alliance</td>
<td>402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. International Hod Carriers', Building &amp; Common Laborers Union</td>
<td>386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. International Association of Machinists &amp; Aerospace Workers</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Prior to 1993 these data were collected by the Bureau of Labor Statistics through canvasses of unions with headquarters based in the US. The 1993 data were collected through similar canvasses done by The Information Please Almanac. In all cases, the data are those provided by the individual unions and in some cases may be estimates.
Today's Unionists: Better Educated, More Affluent...

**Question:** Do you belong to a labor union (1936-37)? Are you (or is your husband) a member of a labor union (1952)? Do you (or your spouse) belong to a labor union (1986-93)?

**Union vs. Non-Union Households—Economic Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1936-37</th>
<th></th>
<th>1986-93</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Union</td>
<td>Non-Union</td>
<td>Non-Union</td>
<td>Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average+</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor/Poor+</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On relief</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15% Less than $15,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Union Households — Education**

- **1952**
  - College graduate: 6%
  - Some college: 26%
  - High school: 28%
  - Less than high school: 40%

- **1986-93**
  - College graduate: 19%
  - Less than high school: 20%
  - Some college: 23%
  - High school: 37%

**Union vs. Non-Union Households—Occupation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1936-37</th>
<th></th>
<th>1986-93</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Union</td>
<td>Non-Union</td>
<td>Non-Union</td>
<td>Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>23% Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11% Manager/sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18% Clerical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>48% Blue collar/service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3% Farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/None</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
<td>* Less than .05%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** For all dates shown, the data for that period have been combined.

**Source:** Surveys by the Gallup Organization, 1936-37 and 1952, and the National Opinion Research Center's General Social Survey (NORC-GSS), 1986-93.
...Older, Married and More Independent

**Question:** Do you belong to a labor union (1936-37)? Are you (or is your husband) a member of a labor union (1952)? Do you (or your spouse) belong to a labor union (1986-93)?

**Union vs. Non-Union Households—By Age**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Union 18-29</th>
<th>Non-Union 23%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1936-37</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986-93</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Union Households—Party Identification**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Republican</th>
<th>Democrat</th>
<th>Independent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986-93</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Non-Union Household**

- Democrat: 58%
- Republican: 41%
- Independent: 1%

**Union vs. Non-Union Households—Marital Status, 1986-93**

- Union: 71%
- Married: 51%
- Single: 21%
- Divorced/separated: 16%
- Widowed: 12%

**Note:** For all dates shown, the data for that period have been combined.

**Source:** Surveys by the Gallup Organization, 1936-37 and 1952, and NORC-GSS, 1986-93.
Voting—Union Membership Really Matters

1984 Election Vote

- Total
  - Union: Mondale 54%, Reagan 46%
  - Non-Union: Mondale 35%, Reagan 65%

- Income less than $25,000
  - Union: Mondale 60%, Reagan 40%
  - Non-Union: Mondale 42%, Reagan 58%

1988 Election Vote

- Total
  - Union: Dukakis 57%, Bush 43%
  - Non-Union: Dukakis 42%, Bush 58%

- Income less than $25,000
  - Union: Dukakis 65%, Bush 35%
  - Non-Union: Dukakis 48%, Bush 52%

1992 Election Vote

- Total
  - Union: Clinton 55%, Bush 24%, Perot 21%
  - Non-Union: Clinton 42%, Bush 39%

- Income less than $30,000
  - Union: Clinton 60%, Bush 23%, Perot 17%
  - Non-Union: Clinton 48%, Bush 32%, Perot 20%

Yes to the Idea of Labor Unions...

Question: Are you in favor of labor unions?

Source: Surveys by the Gallup Organization, latest that of February 15-20, 1946.

Question: Do you approve or disapprove of labor unions?


...But Considerable Concern

Question: Thinking about labor unions, do you have a generally favorable or generally unfavorable opinion of labor unions?

Labor Leaders Always Get Bad Marks

**Question:** Do you believe that many labor union leaders are racketeers?

- **1941**
  - Yes: 74%
  - No: 17%
  - No opinion: 9%

Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, October 9-14, 1941.

**Question:** Tell me if you tend to agree or disagree...Labor union leaders are out of touch with the workers they represent?

- **1986**
  - Agree: 61%
  - Disagree: 35%
  - DK/No opinion: 5%

Note: Survey asked of a split sample.

**Question:** Is corruption and graft pretty widespread in labor unions, is it just limited to a few unions, or isn’t there any corruption or graft in labor unions?

- **1957**
  - Widespread: 43%
  - Just a few: 34%
  - DK: 20%
  - Isn’t any: 2%

Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, April 6-11, 1957.

**Question:** Do you think labor union leaders are more interested in their own personal concerns or more interested in helping their members?

- **1994**
  - Helping their members: 30%
  - Own personal concerns: 55%
  - Non-Union:
    - Own concerns: 51%
    - Helping others: 38%
  - Union:
    - Own concerns: 57%
    - Helping others: 28%
  - Not sure: 15%


**Question:** How would you rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in these different fields—very high, high, average, low or very low...Labor union leaders...Business executives? (Those responding “low/very low”.)

- **Labor Union Leaders**
  - 1976: 21%
  - 1981: 49%
  - 1985: 43%
  - 1990: 43%
  - 1993: 49%

- **Business Executives**
  - 1976: 19%
  - 1981: 21%
  - 1985: 21%
  - 1990: 19%
  - 1993: 19%

Source: Surveys by the Gallup Organization, latest that of July 19-21, 1993.
What Do People Think About Unions? Not as Much as They Use To

Labor unions just aren't the issue they used to be. "Business vs. labor" questions were once common. They are now rare. People are no longer asked at all whether they are worried about labor "controlling the government." Many once saw labor posing some threat, and pollsters often asked questions (see the top of page 16) about support for vigorous regulation of unions. They found a lot of support for it.

The role of unions in the US is now seen as, in comparison to the past, so non-threatening and non-controversial, that what questions are asked on business vs. labor lines get contradictory results (as shown in the data at the bottom of page 16). That is, because the issue now lacks salience, questions asking about it pick up only weakly-held—and hence variable—responses.

Question: Which do you believe is more of a problem today—big unions or big business?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1949</th>
<th>1943</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Big business</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big unions</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both the same</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey by Opinion Research Corporation (ORC), October 1-14, 1949.

Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, July 30-August 4, 1943.

Question: Most people believe the government should not be controlled by any one group. However, if you had to choose which would you prefer to have control the government...big business or labor unions?

Question: ...Which of the following will be the biggest threat to the country in the future...big business, big labor, or big government?

Source: Surveys by the Gallup Organization, latest that of June 7-10, 1985.
Union Regulation Used to be a Big Concern...

**Question:** Do you think there should be more federal regulation of labor unions?

**1938**
- Yes: 59%
- No: 23%
- No opinion: 18%

**1951**
- Little or no regulation: 20%
- Regulate closely: 68%
- No opinion: 12%

**1965**
- Little or no regulation: 24%
- Regulate closely: 58%
- No opinion: 18%

*Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, July 4-8, 1938.*

*Source: Surveys by ORC, latest that of November 22-December 10, 1965.*

...But Opinion is Much Softer Now

**Question:** When you hear about labor disputes, who do you most often side with...the striking workers or company management?

**All Respondents**
- Striking workers: 50%
- Company management: 24%
- Both/neither: 12%
- Not sure: 14%

**Non-Union Households**
- Striking workers: 47%
- Company management: 27%
- Both/neither: 12%
- Not sure: 14%

*Source: Survey by Yankelovich Partners for Time/CNN, June 2, 1994.*