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Women, Working Families, and Unions

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Executive Summary

One of every nine women in the United States (11.8 percent in 2013) is represented by a union at her place of work.

The annual number of hours of paid work performed by women has increased dramatically over the last four decades. In 1979, the typical woman was on the job 925 hours per year; by 2012, the typical woman did 1,664 hours of paid work per year.

Meanwhile, women's share of unpaid care work and housework has remained high. Various time-use studies conclude that women continue to do about two-thirds of unpaid child-care (and elder-care) work and at least 60 percent of routine housework.

The research reviewed here suggests that unions can provide substantial support to women trying to balance their paid work and their unpaid care responsibilities.

Unionized women earn, on average, 13 percent (about $2.50 dollars per hour) more than similar non-union women. The large union wage advantage holds for women across all education levels and even in typically low-wage occupations, including hotel cleaners, office cleaners, child-care workers, and health aides.

Since unions disproportionately raise wages at the middle and the bottom of the wage distribution, and since unions reduce gender wage disparities both across and within occupations, unionization works to reduce the gender pay gap. One recent analysis concluded that the size of the gender pay gap for union workers was only half the size of the gender gap for non-union workers.

Unionized women are 36 percent more likely than non-union women to receive health-insurance benefits through their job. Unionization has the biggest effect on health-insurance rates for women with less than a high school degree or working in a range of typically low-wage occupations, including hotel cleaners, office cleaners, child-care workers, and health aides.

Unionized women are also 53 percent more likely than non-union women to participate in an employer-sponsored retirement plan. Again, unions raise participation in retirement plans most for women with the least formal education or working in typically low-wage occupations.

Unionized workers are more likely to have access to all forms of family and medical leave. Union workplaces are 22 percent more likely than non-union workplaces to allow parents to take parental

leave for a new child, 16 percent more likely to allow workers to take medical leave for their own illness, 12 percent more likely to allow women to take leave for pregnancy, and 19 percent more likely to allow workers to take leave to care for a sick family member.

Unionized workers are more likely to have access to paid sick days, paid vacations, and paid holidays. In private-sector workplaces, union employers are 18 percent more likely to provide paid sick leave, 21 percent more likely to provide paid vacation, and 21 percent more likely to provide paid holidays.

Employers with unionized workers spend more per worker-hour on work-family benefits than employers whose workers are not unionized. In the private sector, employers with a union workforce spend, on average per hour of work, 75 percent more on paid sick leave, 48 percent more on paid vacations, 43 percent more on paid holidays, and 36 percent more on paid personal days.

Almost half of all unionized workers (45.8 percent in 2013) are women. If recent trends continue, women will be more than half of the union workforce by 2025.

Introduction

Between 1979 and 2012, the typical woman increased the number of paid-work hours she performs in a year by almost 80 percent, from 925 hours per year in 1979 to 1,664 in 2012 (**Table 1**). For the typical mother with children under the age of 18, annual hours more than doubled over the same period, from 600 in 1979 to 1,560 in 2012.[1]

TABLE 1

Annual Hours Worked, 1979 - 2012 (hours per year)

Percentile	1979	1989	2000	2007	2012	1979-1989	1979-2007	1979-2012
(a) Women, 16-64								
10th	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Median	925	1530	1820	1820	1664	605	895	739
90th	2236	2600	2600	2600	2600	364	364	364
(b) Mothers (children under 18)								
10th	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Median	600	1200	1600	1596	1560	600	996	960
90th	2080	2080	2080	2080	2080	0	0	0

Source: Appelbaum, Boushey, and Schmitt (2014) analysis of the CEPR March CPS extracts.

Part of the increase in women's annual hours of work reflects a rise in women's employment rates. In 1979, 47.5 percent of women age 16 and older were employed; in 2013, the share of women in paid work had increased to 53.2 percent.[2] But, most of the increase in women's annual hours of work reflects longer hours of work for women already in paid employment. For example, in 1979, women who worked long hours (longer hours than 90 percent of women) were on the job about 2,236 hours per year. As Table 1 shows, by 2012, women who worked long hours were putting in about 2,600 hours per year --substantially more than the 2,080 hours per year implied by the standard "full-time" job (40 hours per work week for 52 weeks of the year). Meanwhile, even as employment has generally become more precarious for both men and women over the last several decades, the share of women working part-time has not changed much and is actually slightly lower today than it was in 1979.[3]

1 Annual hours of work for women (ages 16 to 64) and mothers (with children 0 to 17 years old); see Appelbaum, Boushey, and Schmitt (2014), Table 2.

2 Bureau of Labor Statistics, http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat02.htm, accessed June 13, 2014. The women's employment-to-population rate peaked at 57.5 percent in 2000 and was at 56.6 percent in 2007, just before the onset of the Great Recession. In 1979, women were about 42 percent of the paid workforce; by 2013, the share had increased to 47 percent (analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics series LNU02000001 and LNU02000002, http://www.bls.gov/, accessed June 11, 2014).

3 Since 1979, the share of women in part-time jobs has varied between about 26 and 30 percent of all women in paid work. See Milla Sanes, http://www.cepr.net/index.php/blogs/cepr-blog/choosing-to-work-part-time, accessed June 13, 2014.

This large increase in women's hours of paid work, however, did not coincide with a comparable decrease in their share of unpaid work. Suzanne Bianchi, John Robinson, and Melissa Milkie (2006), for example, found that while the share of child-care work by fathers did rise between 1965 and 2000, fathers in 2000, on average, still spent only half as many hours as mothers did on child care. Data for 2005 prepared by the Bureau of Labor Statistics for the *United Nations Human Development Report 2007/2008* reached a similar conclusion: on average, men did only half the child-care work and one fourth of the "cooking and cleaning."[4] Even more recently, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reports that in 2010 men in the United States, on average, did only 40 percent of routine housework and less than one-third of care work.[5]

This report explores the role that unions can play in addressing the challenges facing women and families dealing with the effects of the fast pace of change at work and the much slower pace of change at home. We review a wide range of evidence that unions raise the wages and benefits of women workers, as well as increase access to various forms of paid leave including paid sick days and paid parental leave.

In the first section of this report, we present trends in unionization for women. Our analysis generally starts in 1983, the earliest year for which we have consistent, detailed data on the union status of U.S. workers.[6] We look at both the share of women workers who are unionized and at the demographic composition (age, race, education, and other characteristics) of unionized women.

The second section surveys the available data on the impact of unionization on women's wages, benefits, and access to various forms of paid leave.

The final section concludes with some observations about the potential role for unionization in broader efforts to address work-life balance issues.

Women and Unions

In 2013, 11.8 percent of women in the United States (about one-in-nine) were represented by a union at their place of work, down from 18.0 percent in 1983. But, as **Figure 1** shows, the decline over the same period in the unionization rate for men has been even steeper. As a result of these

4 United Nations Development Program (2007), Table 32.

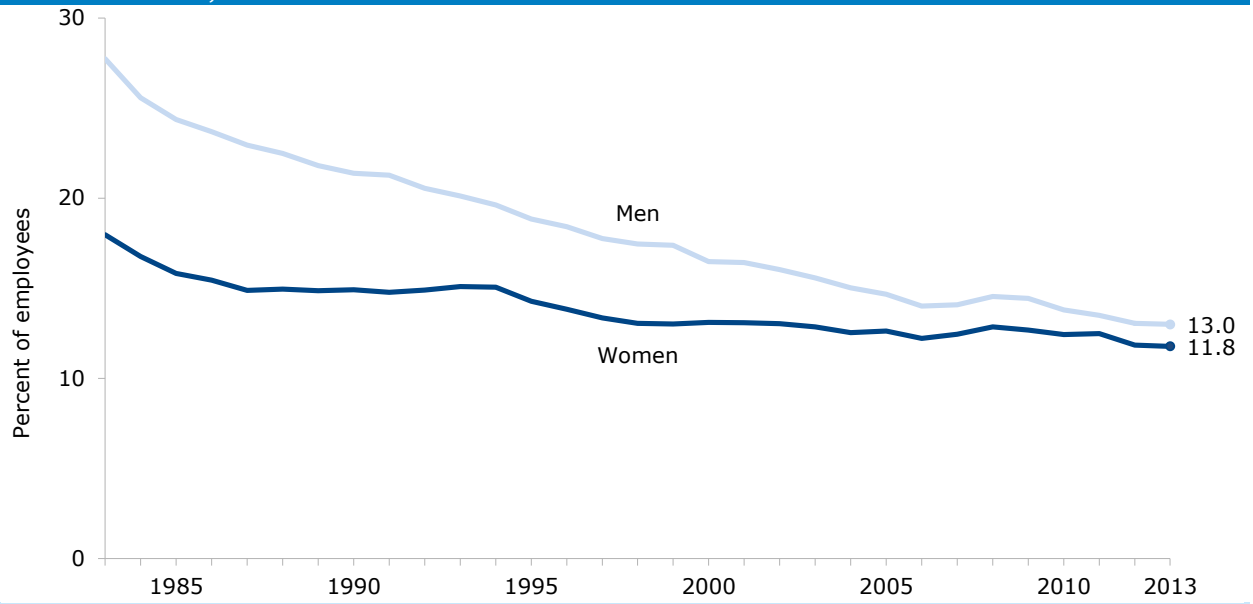
5 OECD, http://www.oecd.org/gender/data/balancingpaidworkunpaidworkandleisure.htm, accessed June 3, 2014. For an overview of the connection between time-use and inequality, see Folbre (2009).

6 We take most of the data analyzed here from the Outgoing Rotation Group (ORG) of the Current Population Survey (CPS), which contains detailed demographic and labor-market data for a large, nationally representative sample of U.S. workers. For further details on the CPS ORG data used here, see http://www.ceprdata.org/.

two trends, women now make up almost half of the unionized workforce (45.8 percent in 2013) and, if recent trends continue, are on their way to be a majority of union workers by 2025 (**Figure 2**). In seven states (Vermont, Massachusetts, Oregon, District of Columbia, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Rhode Island), women are already a majority of the union workforce (**Figure 3**). (**Figure 4** shows the corresponding unionization rates for women in each state.)

FIGURE 1

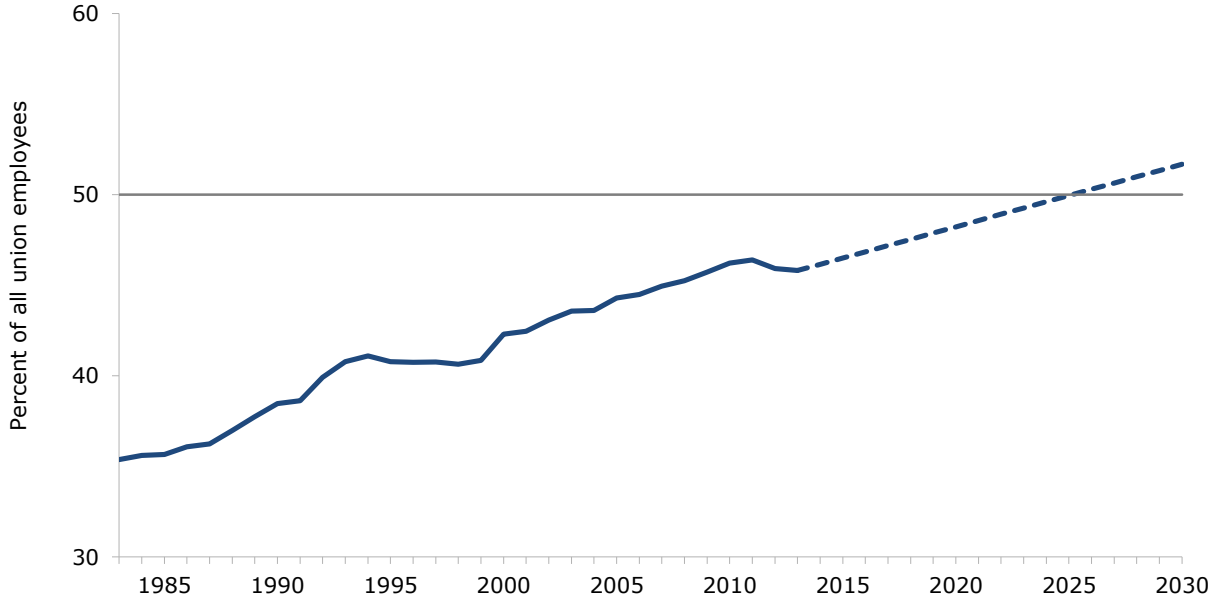
Unionization Rate, 1983-2013



Source: Authors' analysis of CPS ORG.

FIGURE 2

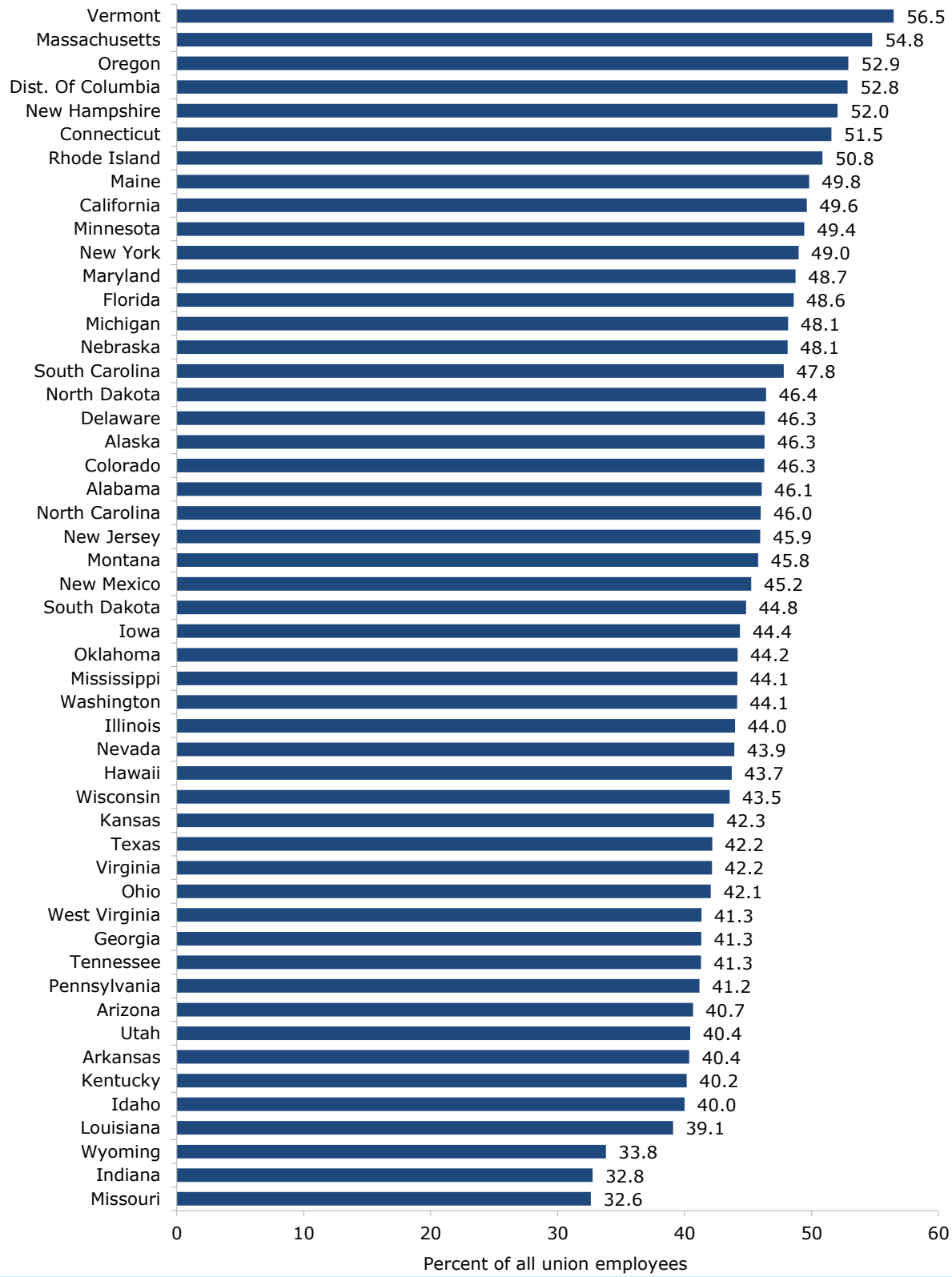
Women's Share of Total Union Employment, 1983-2030



Source: Authors' analysis of CPS ORG.

FIGURE 3

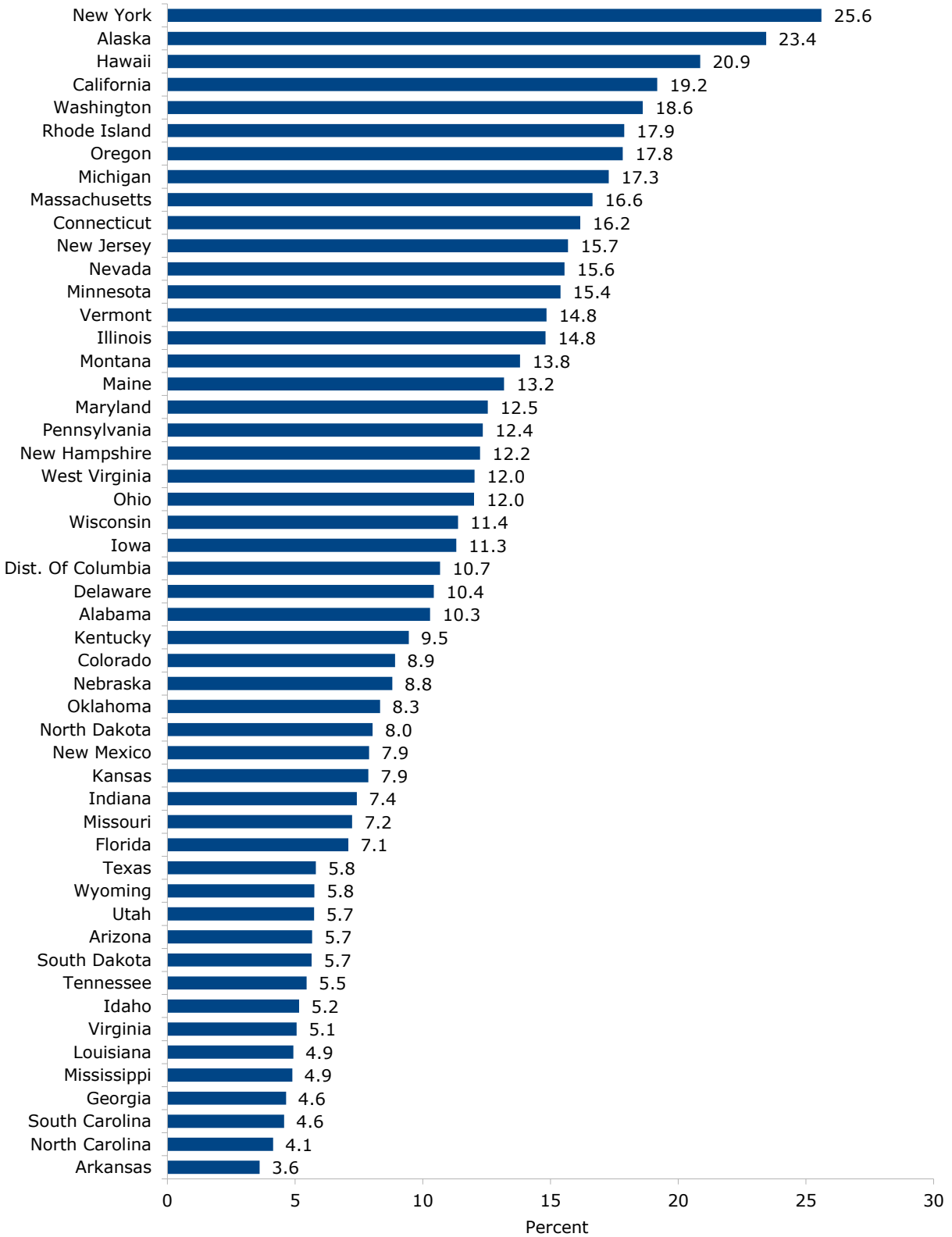
Women as Share of Union Workforce, 2011-2013



Source: Authors' analysis of CPS ORG.

FIGURE 4

Unionization Rate for Women, by State, 2011-2013

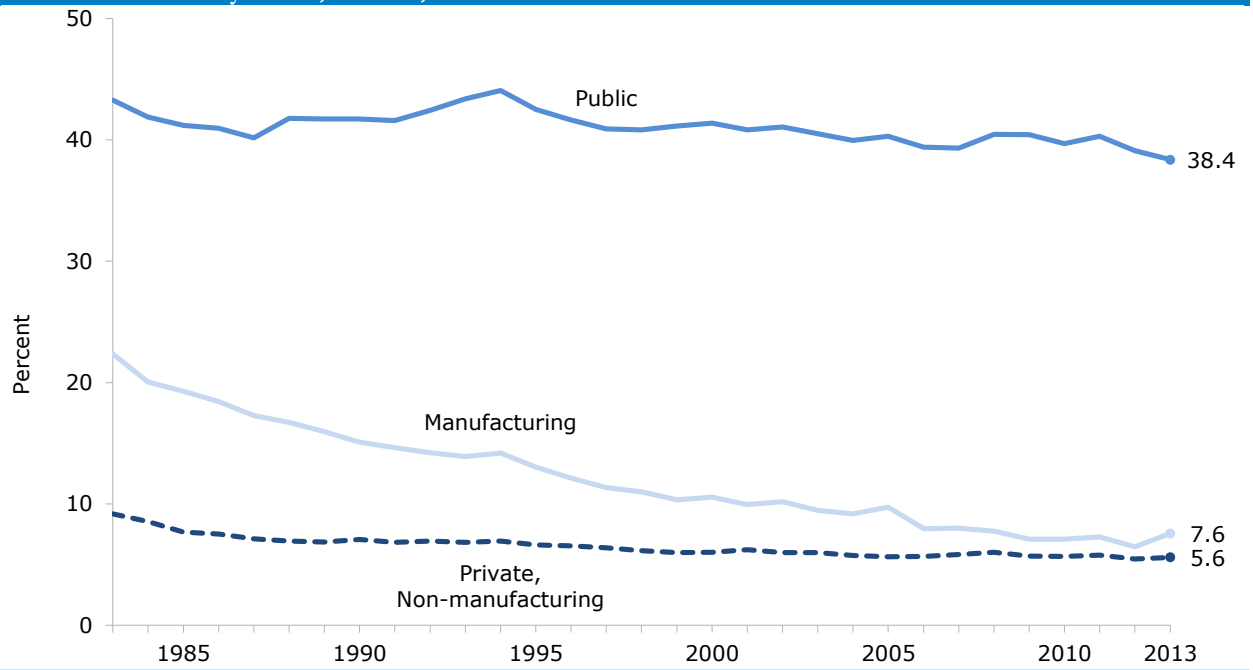


Source: Authors' analysis of CPS ORG.

The most important reason for the rise of women's share in the union workforce is the rising share of public-sector unions in the overall union workforce. In the 2010s, public-sector workers accounted for roughly half of the union workforce, up from less than one-third in 1979.[7] Since the late 1970s, the unionization rate for women has held steady in the public sector, even as it fell sharply in the private sector, especially within manufacturing (**Figure 5**). As a result, by 2013, well over half (60.1 percent) of unionized women are in the public sector, up sharply from less than half (47.1 percent) in 1983 (**Figure 6** and **Table 2**).

FIGURE 5

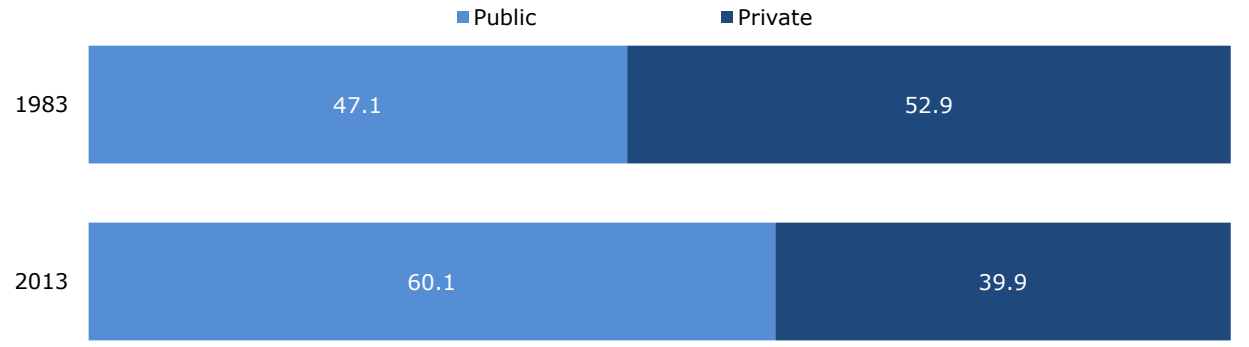
Unionization Rate by Sector, Women, 1983-2013



Source: Authors' analysis of CPS ORG.

FIGURE 6

Women Union Members, by Sector, 1983 and 2013 (percent)



Source: Authors' analysis of CPS ORG.

7 Barry Hirsch and David Macpherson, "U.S. Historical Tables," unionstats.com, accessed June 11, 2014.

TABLE 2

Composition of Women Employees and Women Union Workers, 1983 and 2013 (percent)

	1983		2013		Change (p.p.)	
	Employees	Union	Employees	Union	Employees	Union
White	81.7	74.8	65.8	65.6	-15.9	-9.2
Black	10.8	16.8	12.9	15.2	2.1	-1.7
Latino	4.9	5.6	14.0	12.6	9.1	7.0
Other	2.6	2.8	7.3	6.7	4.7	3.8
Asian	--	--	6.2	5.9	--	--
Age						
16-24	22.7	11.1	13.7	4.9	-8.9	-6.2
25-34	28.7	29.9	21.6	19.4	-7.1	-10.4
35-44	21.3	26.3	20.8	23.0	-0.4	-3.3
45-54	14.8	18.8	22.8	27.6	7.9	8.7
55-64	10.2	12.8	16.5	21.0	6.3	8.3
65+	2.3	1.2	4.6	4.1	2.3	2.9
Less Than HS	15.9	14.3	6.0	3.1	-9.9	-11.2
High School	40.7	37.4	25.5	18.9	-15.1	-18.5
Some College	24.8	18.9	32.1	25.6	7.3	6.7
College +	18.7	29.4	36.4	52.4	17.7	23.0
Immigrant	--	--	14.4	12.8	--	--
Manufacturing	15.8	19.9	6.8	4.4	-9.0	-15.5
Public Sector	19.1	47.1	18.0	60.1	-1.1	13.0
Northeast	21.7	30.3	18.9	28.3	-2.9	-2.0
Midwest	25.5	26.3	22.5	23.3	-3.0	-3.0
South	33.2	21.4	36.7	20.6	3.4	-0.8
West	5.1	3.8	6.9	4.8	1.8	1.0
Pacific	14.4	18.3	15.1	23.2	0.7	4.9

Notes: Authors' analysis of CPS ORG data, 1983 and 2013.

Tables 3 and **4** provide more detailed information on unionization rates for women by industry and occupation. In what is primarily the public sector, education, public administration, and public safety all have particularly high unionization rates. In what are primarily private-sector industries and occupations, construction and various manufacturing industries have high rates of female unionization. Several of the industry and occupation groups with high rates of union coverage have a mixture of public- and private-sector employment, including transportation, utilities, and health care.

TABLE 3

Twenty Industries with the Highest Unionization Rates for Women, 2011-2013 (unionized employees as a percent of total industry employment)		
1	Educational Services	37.3
2	Public Administration	30.5
3	Transportation and Warehousing	29.3
4	Other Information Services	19.9
5	Utilities	19.7
6	Forestry, Logging, Fishing, Hunting, Trapping	17.0
7	Transportation Equipment Manufacturing	15.8
8	Hospitals	15.8
9	Food Manufacturing	12.6
10	Telecommunications	12.0
11	Nonmetallic Mineral Products	10.0
12	Social Assistance	9.2
13	Beverage and Tobacco Products	9.0
14	Electrical Equipment, Appliance Manufacturing	8.1
15	Motion Picture and Sound Recording Industries	7.8
16	Waste Management and Remediation Services	7.2
17	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	6.7
18	Primary Metals and Fabricated Metal Products	6.7
19	Health Care Services, except Hospitals	6.5
20	Accommodation	6.3
Source: Authors' analysis of CPS ORG.		

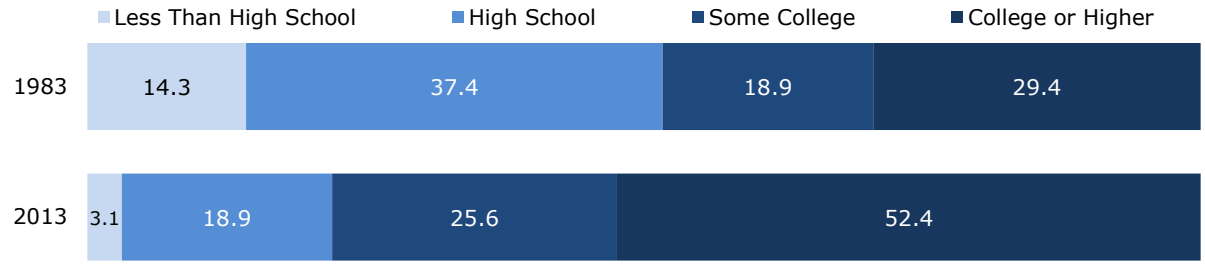
TABLE 4

Twenty Occupations with the Highest Unionization Rates for Women, 2011-2013 (unionized employees as a percent of total occupational employment)		
1	Education, Training, and Library Occupations	40.3
2	Protective Service Occupations	27.6
3	Construction and Extraction Occupations	22.1
4	Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	20.7
5	Community and Social Service Occupation	20.6
6	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	16.0
7	Healthcare practitioner and technical occupations	14.3
8	Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	13.5
9	Production Occupations	10.4
10	Healthcare Support Occupations	9.3
11	Office and Administrative Support Occupations	9.2
12	Architecture and Engineering Occupations	9.2
13	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	9.1
14	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	8.2
15	Computer and Mathematical Science Occupations	6.9
16	Business and Financial Operations Occupations	6.7
17	Personal Care and Service Occupations	6.6
18	Legal Occupations	6.6
19	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	6.2
20	Management Occupations	5.7
Source: Authors' analysis of CPS ORG.		

One implication of the important role played by the public sector is that a majority of unionized women have a college degree or more (**Figure 7**). In 2013, 52.4 percent of unionized women had graduated from college or had an advanced degree, compared to 36.4 percent of the overall female workforce in the same year, and compared to only 29.4 percent of unionized women in 1983. In 2013, less than one fourth of unionized women had a high school degree (18.9 percent) or less (3.1 percent).

FIGURE 7

Women Union Members, by Education, 1983 and 2013 (percent)

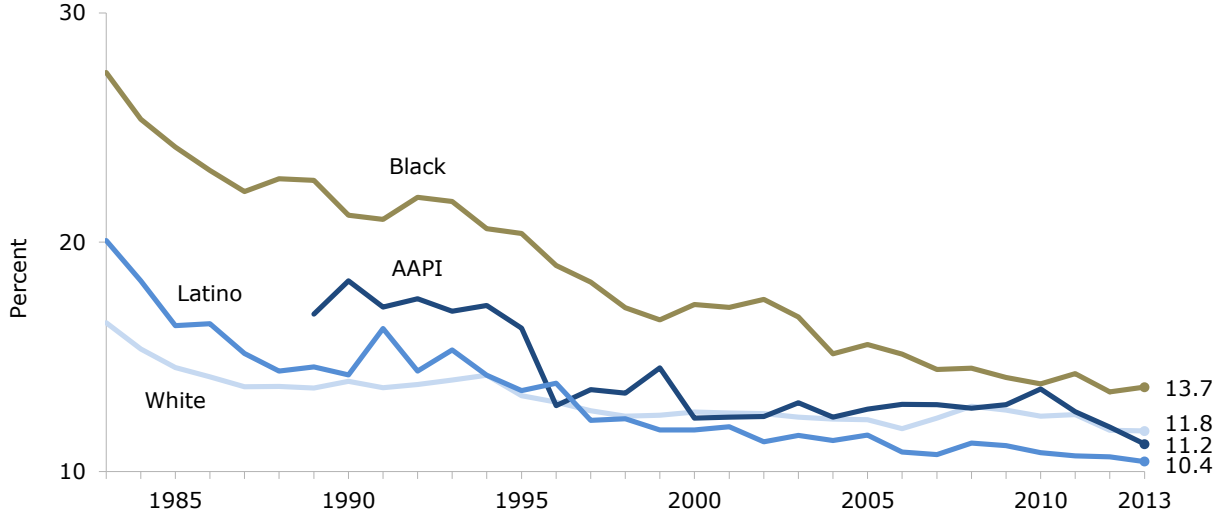


Source: Authors' analysis of CPS ORG.

Black women have traditionally had a much higher unionization rate than other racial and ethnic groups (**Figure 8**). In 1983, for example, more than one in four black women (27.4 percent) was represented by a union, well above the rate for Latino (20.1 percent) and white women (16.5 percent). By 2013, unionization rates had fallen for all these groups (and for Asian and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women, where data are available only from 1989 on). Black women still had the highest unionization rate (13.7 percent), but the margin is now much smaller relative to white (11.8 percent), AAPI (11.2 percent), and Latino (10.4 percent) women (Figure 8).

FIGURE 8

Unionization Rate for Women, by Race/Ethnicity, 1983-2013

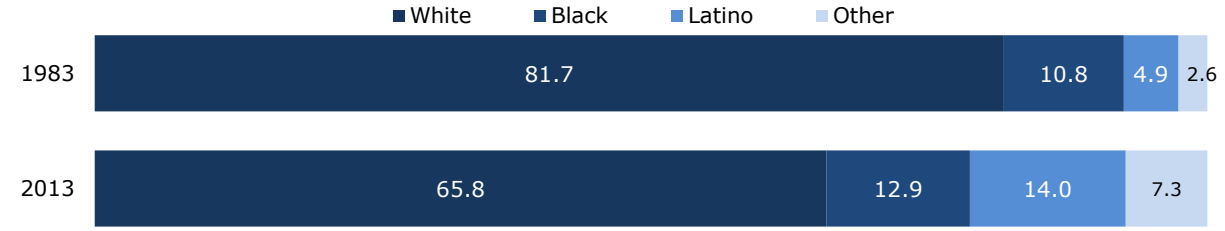


Source: Authors' analysis of CPS ORG.

These changes in unionization rates by race and ethnicity, combined with changing demographics of the workforce as a whole, contributed to a significant shift in the racial and ethnic make-up of women in unions. Over the last three decades, the share of white women in the union workforce fell substantially, from 81.7 percent in 1983 to 65.8 percent in 2013 (**Figure 9)**. Meanwhile, the share of African-American women increased slightly (from 10.8 percent in 1983 to 12.9 percent in 2013) and the share of AAPI and Latino women rose substantially (up 9.1 percentage points to 14.0 percent for Latino women, and up 4.7 percentage points to 7.3 percent for AAPI women).

FIGURE 9

Women Union Members, by Race/Ethnicity, 1983 and 2013 (percent)

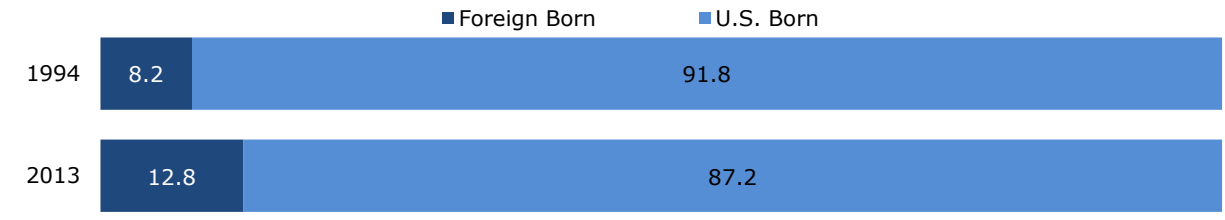


Source: Authors' analysis of CPS ORG.

The rise of unionized Latino and AAPI women, in particular, has brought with it an increase in the share of the immigrants in the female union workforce.[8] In 1994 (the earliest year for which data on union status and country of birth are available), about one-in-twelve women union workers (8.2 percent) was born outside of the United States; by 2012, the figure was about one-in-eight (12.8 percent, **Figure 10**). Note that the rise over this period in the share of foreign-born women in unions is entirely a function of their growing share in the overall workforce. For the last decade, the unionization rate for foreign-born women has been consistently below that of U.S.-born women (12.0 percent for U.S.-born women in 2013, for example, compared to 10.5 percent for foreign-born women in the same year, see **Figure 11**).

FIGURE 10

Women Union Members, Foreign-Born, 1994 and 2013 (percent)

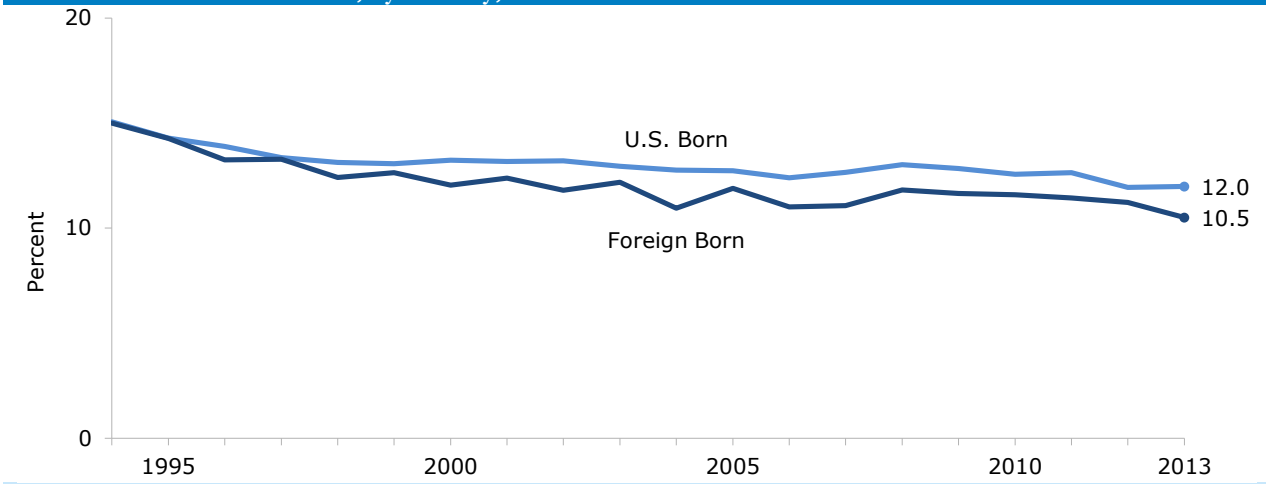


Source: Authors' analysis of CPS ORG.

8 In the workforce as a whole (women and men), roughly 70 percent of AAPI workers, 40 percent of Latino workers, 10 percent of black workers, and 5 percent of white workers were born outside of the United States. For more detailed discussion of immigrants in the union workforce, see Schmitt and Warner (2010) and Rho, Schmitt, Woo, Lin, and Wong (2011).

FIGURE 11

Unionization Rate for Women, by Nativity, 1994-2013

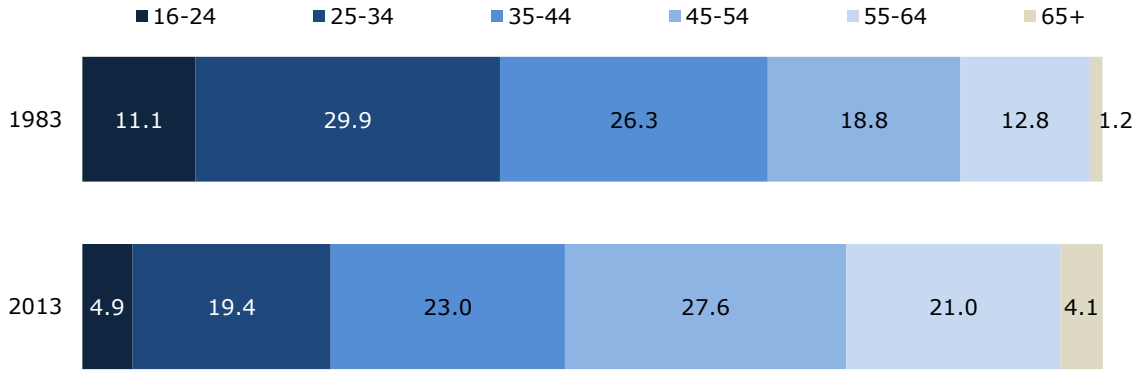


Source: Authors' analysis of CPS ORG.

One last dimension of the demographics of the unionized women's workforce worth highlighting is age. Union women are older than the workforce as a whole and the age gap has been growing over the last three decades. In 1983, 11.1 percent of union women were under the age of 25; by 2013, the share had fallen to just 4.9 percent (**Figure 12**). Meanwhile, the share of union women 55 and older increased from 14.0 percent in 1983 to 25.1 percent in 2013. As **Figure 13** illustrates, the decline in unionized younger women workers and the rise in unionized older women workers partly reflects a broader change in the age composition of the workforce. But, the figure also shows that the rise in older union women has been much sharper than for women workers overall.

FIGURE 12

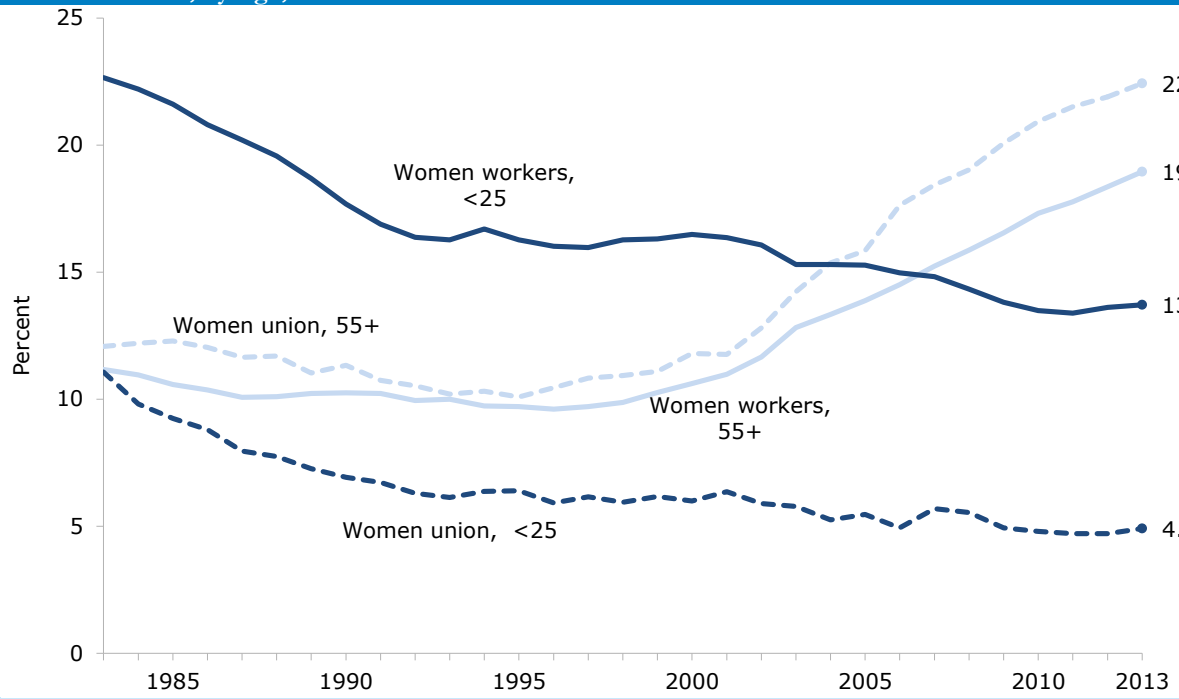
Women Union Members, by Age, 1983 and 2013 (percent)



Source: Authors' analysis of CPS ORG.

FIGURE 13

Women Workers, by Age, 1983-2013



Source: Authors' analysis of CPS ORG.

The Union Advantage for Women and Families

In this section, we document that unionized women earn higher wages, receive better health and retirement benefits, and are more likely to have access to a range of paid leave, from paid sick days, vacations, and holidays to paid family and medical leave.[9]

Wages and the Gender Pay Gap

On average, union women earn substantially higher wages than their non-union counterparts. As **Table 5** shows, in 2009-2013, women workers in a union earned, on average, about 27 percent more per hour than women who were not in a union ($24.68 per hour, compared to $19.38 per hour).[10] Union wages were much higher than non-union wages even in a range of typically low-wage jobs, including hotel cleaners (22 percent higher), office cleaners (30 percent higher), child-care workers (14 percent higher), and health aides (16 percent higher).

9 For historical overviews of the role of women in the labor movement, see, among others: Cobble (1993, 2005, 2007), Foner (1982), Gabin (1990), Kingsolver (1996), and Milkman (1990),

10 We have combined five years of data to provide a larger sample for analysis of union effects, especially for low-wage occupations.

TABLE 5

Wages, Health, and Retirement Coverage for Women, 2009-2013

	Unionization rate (percent)	Mean hourly wage (2013$)		Health-insurance (percent)		Retirement plan (percent)	
		Union	Non-union	Union	Non-union	Union	Non-union
All women	12.2	24.68	19.38	73.1	49.1	74.4	41.8
Maids and housekeeping cleaners	6.7	14.04	11.51	69.1	22.5	47.7	14.6
Janitors and building cleaners	14.0	15.36	11.81	77.3	29.5	55.3	24.4
Child care workers	6.2	12.84	11.31	27.2	15.0	32.3	10.7
Nursing, psychiatric, and home health aides	11.8	14.74	12.66	60.2	39.3	48.6	22.5
All non-management occs in retail industry	5.1	14.61	14.14	64.2	36.8	50.4	30.8

Notes: Authors' analysis of CEPR extract of the Current Population Survey (CPS) Outgoing Rotation Group and March CPS. Wage data exclude imputed values. Union refers to union membership or union coverage. Health insurance refers to participation in an employer- or union-sponsored plan where the employer pays some or all of the premium. Retirement plan refers to participation in an employer-sponsored plan, with or without employer contribution. Health and pension coverage refer to 2008-2012; wages refer to 2009-2013.

The data in Table 5, however, do not account for several systematic differences between union and non-union women. For example, as we saw in the preceding section, women in unions tend to have more formal education than women in the overall workforce. Unionized women are also typically older, more likely to live in higher wage states (such as Alaska, Hawaii, and New York), and more likely to work in the public sector than non-union women. In **Table 6**, we recalculate the union wage advantage using standard regression techniques to control for these factors.[11] Controlling for these factors reduces the impact of unionization on wages, but the union effect remains economically large and statistically significant. For all women, unionization still raises wages, on average, by 12.9 percent, which translates to about $2.50 per hour for a woman earning the average non-union wage. For women in typically low-wage occupations, the regression-controlled union wage advantage is also large: about 22 percent or $2.50 per hour for hotel cleaners; 28 percent or $3.25 for office cleaners; 24 percent or $2.75 for child-care workers; 16 percent or $2.00 for health aides; and 7 percent or $1.00 for non-management workers in retail.

Using the same statistical approach, we can also estimate the effect of unionization on wages of women with different levels of formal education. The first five bars in **Figure 14** show the average union wage premium, in percent terms, with education levels ranging from less than a high school degree to an advanced degree; for comparison's sake, the last bar shows the average for all women, regardless of educational attainment. Unionization raises wages for women at all educational levels. The effect is weakest --but still economically large and statistically significant-- for women with the least formal education (an 8 percent premium) and the most formal education (a 9 percent premium). The union wage premium is largest for women with a high school degree and no

11 We use ordinary least squares (with robust standard errors) to control for age (and age squared), education (five levels of educational attainment), state of residence, and two-digit industry. Following Hirsch and Schumacher (2004), we also exclude all observations where the Bureau of Labor Statistics has imputed wages.

additional schooling (15 percent) and women with some college education but no four-year degree (also about 15 percent).

TABLE 6

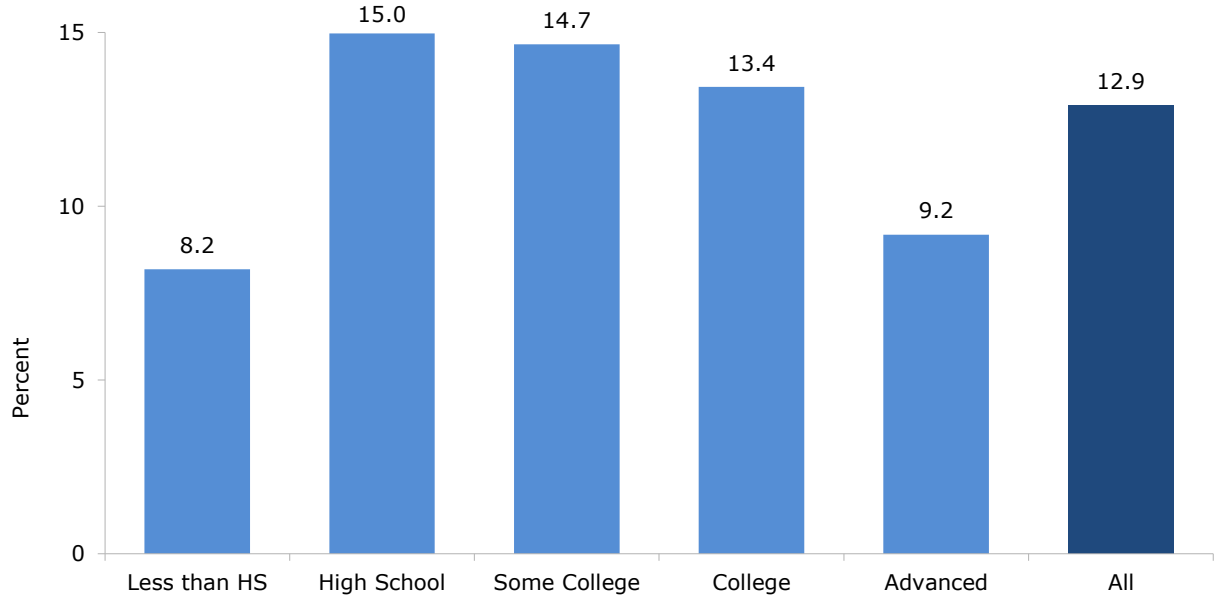
Regression-Adjusted Union Wages, Health, and Retirement Coverage for Women, 2009-2013

		Hourly wage	Health-insurance		Retirement plan	
	Unionization rate (percent)	Union premium (percent)	Union premium (p.p)	Coverage increase (percent)	Union premium (p.p)	Coverage increase (percent)
All women	12.2	12.9**	17.8**	36.2	22.2**	53.1
Maids and housekeeping cleaners	6.7	21.7**	40.4**	179.5	49.6**	339.4
Janitors and building cleaners	14.0	27.8**	47.5**	160.9	33.5**	137.5
Child care workers	6.2	23.6**	15.5	103.4	23.6*	220.6
Nursing, psychiatric, and home health aides	11.8	15.9**	18.9**	48.1	20.0**	89.0
All non-management occs in retail industry	5.1	6.8**	25.0**	67.8	19.5**	63.3

Notes: See notes to Table 5. "All women" regressions include controls for age, education, state, and two-digit industry; regressions for occupations include controls for age, education, and state. Union wage premiums in percent are converted from log points. Statistically significance at the 10% level is denoted with #, at the 5% with *, and at the 1% level with **. Union health insurance and pension coverage figures are percentage-point (p.p.) increases associated with union coverage or membership. Coverage increases in percent terms are relative to the current coverage rates for non-union workers. Health and pension coverage refer to 2008-2012; wages refer to 2009-2013.

FIGURE 14

Union wage advantage for women, by education, 2009-2013



Source: Authors' analysis of CPS ORG.

The positive effects of unions on women's wages can help to reduce the gender pay gap in at least two important ways. First, since unions disproportionately raise wages at the middle and the bottom of the wage distribution, unionization disproportionately boosts the wages of women, who, as a group, are overrepresented at the middle and the bottom of the wage scale. Second, the structure of union collective bargaining agreements works to narrow pay differentials both across and within

occupations inside unionized firms.[12] The reduced managerial discretion and the transparency provided by collective bargaining agreements can help to counteract the negative effects of the concentration of women in lower-paying occupations and the tendency of women to be more heavily concentrated at the middle and the bottom of wage distribution within any given occupation. Consistent with this logic, a recent analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics data by the National Women's Law Center found that in 2013 the gender wage gap among union workers was only half as large as it was among non-union workers.[13]

Health Insurance

Unionized women are also much more likely to have health-insurance benefits than women who work without a union contract. Almost three-fourths (73.1 percent) of women in union jobs have employer-provided (or union-provided) health insurance where the employer pays at least part of the premium, compared to just under half (49.1 percent) of women in non-union jobs (Table 5).

Employers in union workplaces are not only more likely to provide paid health insurance, but they also typically cover a higher share of the health-insurance costs than non-union employers. According to Jenifer MacGillvary and Netsy Firestein (2009, 3): "Companies with 30 percent or more unionized workers are five times as likely as companies with no unionized workers to pay the entire family health insurance premium. Even when unionized employees are required to pay part of their family insurance premium, they pay a much lower share of the premium than nonunionized workers do—13 percent of the premium compared to 32 percent."

The strong union advantage for health-insurance coverage holds even after controlling for women's age, formal education, state of residence, and industry of employment: unionized women were still about 36 percent more likely than non-union women to have health-insurance coverage (calculated as a 17.8 percentage-point union premium, in Table 6, relative to a non-union coverage rate of 49.1 percent, in Table 5).

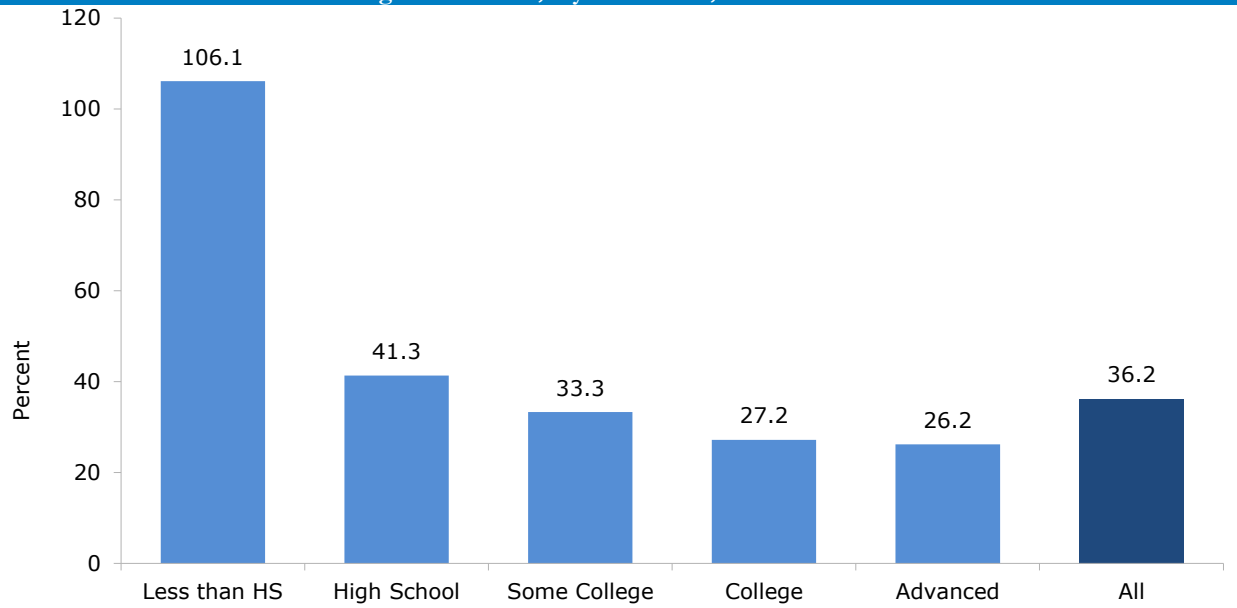
As was the case with wages, these union effects are large for women at all educational levels --and especially large for women with the lowest levels of formal education. Women with less than a high school education are more than twice as likely to have employer-provided health insurance if they are represented by a union (**Figure 15**).

12 For a comprehensive overview of the impact of unions on workers, firms, industries, and the economy, see Freeman and Medoff (1984) and Bennett and Kaufman (2007).

13 National Women's Law Center, "Gender Wage Gap for Union Members Is Half the Size of Non-Union Workers' Wage Gap," http://www.nwlc.org/our-blog/gender-wage-gap-union-members-half-size-non-union-workers-wage-gap, accessed June 13, 2014.

FIGURE 15

Union Health-Insurance Advantage for Women, by Education, 2009-2013



Source: Authors' analysis of March CPS.

The strong, positive effects of unionization on health insurance also apply to women in typically low-wage occupations. Hotel housekeepers, office cleaners, health aides, and non-management retail workers are between 19 percentage points and 48 percentage points more likely to have health insurance if they are covered by a union contract.[14]

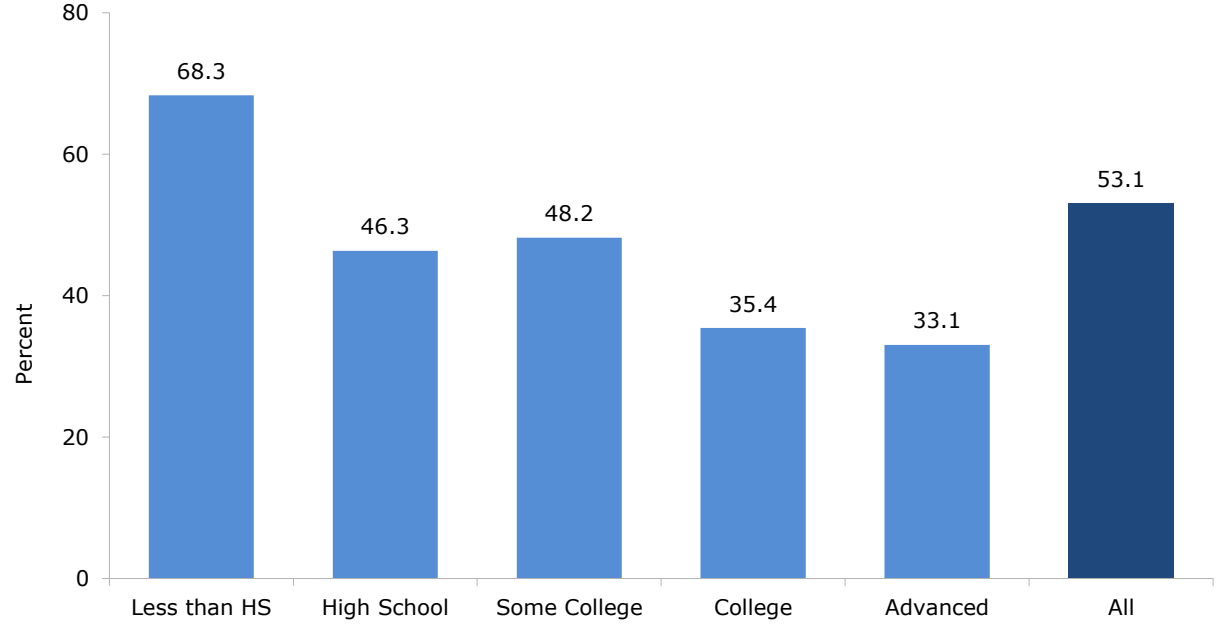
Retirement

A similar picture holds for retirement plans. Almost three-fourths (74.4 percent) of unionized women participate in some form of employer-sponsored retirement plan, compared to well below half (41.8 percent) of non-union women (Table 5). Even after controlling for key worker characteristics, unionized women are 53 percent more likely than comparable non-union women are to have a retirement plan (Table 6). When it comes to retirement plans, the union advantage is particularly large for women with the least formal education (**Figure 16**) as well as for women in a range of typically low-wage occupations, including hotel cleaners, office cleaners, child-care workers, health aides, and retail workers (Table 6).

14 Unionized child-care workers are about 16 percent more likely than non-union child-care workers are to have health insurance, but the effect is not statistically significant in the data we analyze here.

FIGURE 16

Union Retirement-Plan Advantage for Women, by Education, 2009-2013



Source: Authors' analysis of March CPS.

In the analysis in Tables 5 and 6, we define a worker as having a retirement plan if their employer offers and the worker participates in a retirement plan, even if the employer makes no contribution to the plan. Unfortunately, the CPS data do not allow us to distinguish between defined-contribution retirement plans (such as 401(k) plans) and defined-benefit plans (traditional pension plans where workers receive a guaranteed payment that depends on their pay and years of service) or to track the level of any employer contribution. But, John Budd's (2005, Table 1) analysis of 2004 Employer Costs for Employee Benefits data finds that, in the private sector, union workers are much more likely than non-union workers to have a defined-benefit retirement plan.

Family and Medical Leave

Union workplaces are substantially more likely than non-union workplaces to allow workers to take family and medical leave. Based on an analysis of the 2012 Family and Medical Leave Act worksite survey, Helene Jorgensen and Eileen Appelbaum concluded that firms with a union presence were 22 percent more likely to allow workers to take parental leave for a new child, 16 percent more likely to allow workers to take medical leave for their own illness, 12 percent more likely to allow workers to take medical leave for pregnancy, and 19 percent more likely to allow workers to take medical leave to care for a family member (**Table 7** and **Figure 17**).[15]

15 Unpublished tabulations supplied by Jorgensen and Appelbaum. The increases in the likelihood of being allowed to take leave are based on the ratio of union to non-union rates in rows two and three in Table 7.

TABLE 7

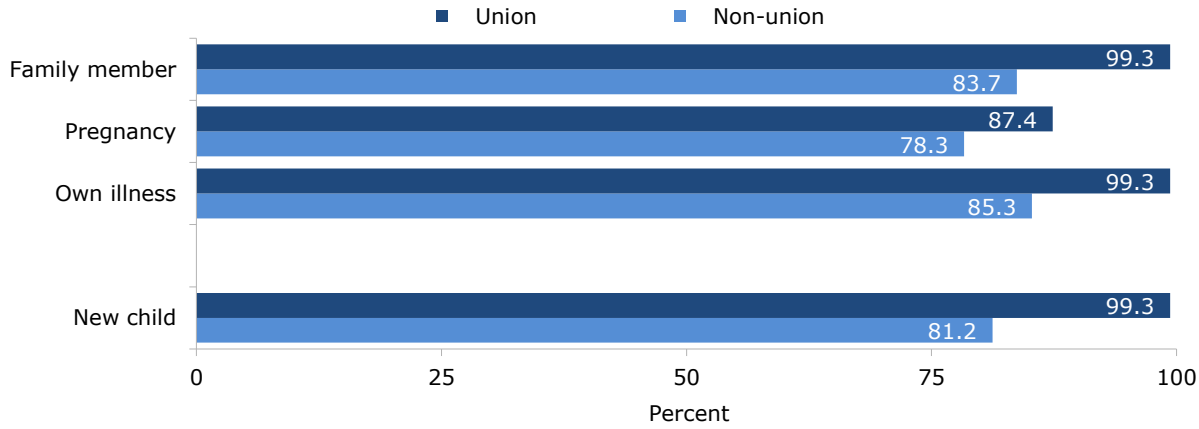
Worksites Allowing Family and Medical Leave, By Union Status, 2012 (percent)

	Parental Leave	Medical Leave		
Leave type	New child	Own illness	Pregnancy	Family member
All firms	81.7	85.7	78.6	84.2
Union presence	99.3	99.3	87.4	99.3
No union	81.2	85.3	78.3	83.7
Small firms (1-49)				
Union presence	99.7	99.7	80.8	99.7
No union	79.8	84.2	76.7	82.5
Medium firms (50-250)				
Union presence	96.5	96.5	96.5	96.5
No union	97.5	99.2	97.4	98.0
Large firms (251 and up)				
Union presence	100.0	100.0	99.8	100.0
No union	92.7	93.5	93.5	93.0

Notes: Unpublished analysis of 2012 FMLA Worksite survey by Helene Jorgensen and Eileen Appelbaum. Workplace weighted estimates. Details available on request.

FIGURE 17

Access to Family and Medical Leave, 2012



Source: Unpublished tabulations supplied by Jorgensen and Appelbaum.

Women covered by a collective bargaining agreement are also much more likely than non-union women to take paid parental leave. Using CPS data, Heather Boushey, Jane Farrell, and John Schmitt (2013, Figure 5) calculate that unionized women were 1.6 times more likely than comparable non-union women to take family leave. They also found that when women do take parental leave, union women are about 13 percent more likely than non-union women to have that leave paid.[16]

MacGillvary and Firestein (2009) report an even higher union advantage when they focused on the availability of paid family leave for hourly workers. Hourly workers in unions were 59 percent more

16 Boushey, Farrell, and Schmitt (2013, 11-13), calculated as a 6.2 percentage-point union advantage in their Figure 12 divided by raw non-union baseline average of 45 percent in their Figure 11 and in their text on p. 11.

likely to receive fully paid or partially paid family leaves than hourly workers who weren't in unions.[17]

One reason that union workplaces allow greater access to paid family and medical leave is because many collective bargaining agreements include language guaranteeing these kinds of leaves (and often requiring that these leaves be paid). But, MacGillvary and Firestein note that unions may also promote compliance with the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), both by educating workers about their rights under the FMLA and by monitoring firms' compliance with their obligations under the law. They estimate that: "Companies with any unionized employees are 1.7 times as likely to comply with the FMLA as companies without any unionized employees."[18]

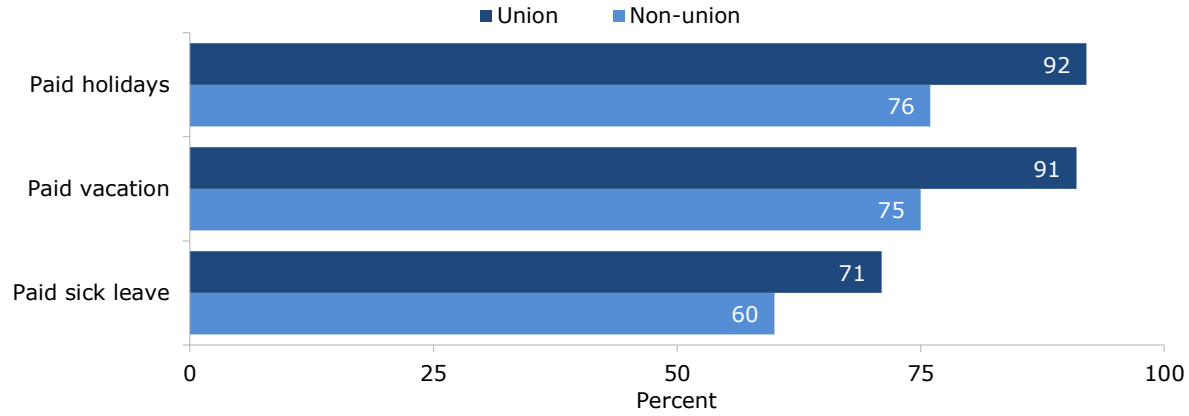
But, even before passage of the FMLA, union workplaces were substantially more likely to have maternity leave benefits than non-union workplaces[19] and unions had a "major impact" on "availability of [parental] leave," though only for women.[20]

Paid Sick Days

According to the most recent data from the National Compensation Survey (NCS), in the private sector, unionized workplaces are 18 percent more likely than non-union workplaces to offer paid sick leave (**Figure 18**).[21] These rates of access to paid sick days are reflected in private-sector employer expenditures for paid sick days (**Table 8**).

FIGURE 18

Access to Paid Leave, Private Sector, 2013



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014, Table 5) analysis of National Compensation Survey.

17 MacGillvary and Firestein (2009), p. 3: "Unionized workers are more likely to receive fully paid and partially paid family leaves. Comparing hourly workers who take leave, 46 percent of unionized workers compared to 29 percent of nonunionized workers receive full pay while on leave."

18 MacGillvary and Firestein (2009), p. 3.

19 Dalto (1989), Table 1, p. 258.

20 Wunnava and Ewing (2000) p. 51.
Dalto (1989) analyzed the 1977 Quality of Employment Survey; Wunnava and Ewing (2000), the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth for the 1990s.

21 These findings are consistent with other research. See, for example, Budd (2005).

TABLE 8

Average Employer Costs for Paid Leave Benefits, Private Industry, 2013
(dollars per hour of work)

	Union	Non-union
Paid sick leave	0.42	0.24
Paid vacation	1.51	1.02
Paid holidays	0.86	0.60
Paid personal	0.15	0.11

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014, Table 5) analysis of National Compensation Survey.

Union workers are also much more likely than non-union workers to be able to use sick days to care for a sick child. According to MacGillvary and Firestein (2009, 3): "Unionized workers are 1.3 times as likely as nonunionized workers to be allowed to use their own sick time to care for a sick child, and they are 50 percent more likely than nonunionized workers to have paid personal leave that can be used to care for sick children."

Paid Vacation Days and Paid Holidays

In the private sector, union workers are also much more likely than non-union workers to have paid vacation days and paid holidays. In 2013, private-sector union workers were 21 percent more likely to have paid vacation days or paid holidays than non-union workers in the private sector (Figure 18).[22]

Child-care Benefits

Unionization also improves worker access to child-care services. Citing Department of Labor data, MacGillvary and Firestein (2009, 4) conclude: "In the private sector, 19 percent of unionized workers compared to 10 percent of nonunionized workers receive child-care resource and referral services from their employers. Additionally, 37 percent of private-sector unionized workers compared to 31 percent of private-sector nonunionized workers have dependent care reimbursement accounts, in which part of their salary is set aside each month on a pre-tax basis to pay for eligible child-care expenses."

22 As before, we calculate the relative probabilities as the ratio of the union to non-union coverage rates. These results are consistent with earlier research; see, for example, Budd (2005).

Conclusion

A large body of evidence supports the conclusion that coverage by a collective bargaining agreement substantially boost women's earnings and increase their access to benefits that enable them to meet the needs of their families, such as health insurance, retirement plans, paid sick days, paid parental leave, and family medical leave.

While unionization rates have been falling steadily for women (and for men) for the last several decades, one-in-nine women in the U.S. workforce is still covered by a union contract. At the same time, because unionization rates have been falling more slowly for women than they have for men, the share of women in the overall unionized workforce has been growing steadily, and women today make up just under half of all union workers --on their way to being a majority of union workers by 2025.

While unions --on their own-- cannot bring the nation's workplace policies in line with the needs of the 21st century working families, unions can play a central role in that process. In recent decades, as women have become a rising share of the union workforce, union contracts have become increasingly responsive to the particular concerns of working women --from higher pay and better benefits, to paid sick days, paid family leave, and paid medical leave. As women move toward majority status in the labor movement, the potential for unions to contribute to a broader work-family agenda can only increase.

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