

## Unions Support Workers and Grow the Middle Class

Unions play a vital role in strengthening the middle class and creating a fair workplace for Americans. Recent growth in union activity paired with the policies passed by Congressional Democrats and enacted by the Biden administration can help expand economic opportunity for working families and bring more people into the middle class.

### **Unionization improves pay and benefits for all workers, including workers who are not unionized**

- Unionized workers [earn](#) 10.2% more than their non-union counterparts.
- Union workers are almost 30% more likely to [have access](#) to employer-sponsored health benefits and more than 16% more likely to have access to paid sick leave compared to their non-union counterparts.
- High union density in a given industry corresponds with higher wages and more benefits for all workers—including those who are not union members—as unions set broader standards for employers.
- The decline of unions from 1973 to 2007 is [estimated](#) to explain about one-third of the rise in wage inequality among men and 20% of that rise among women.

### **Union representation increased by 200,000 in 2022, with tens of millions more showing a desire to unionize**

- In 2022, 16 million U.S. workers were [represented](#) by a union, an increase of 200,000 from 2021.
- Union election petitions increased by more than 50% in fiscal year 2022, the highest single-year increase seen by the National Labor Relation Board since fiscal year 2016.
- Union popularity is increasing with 71% of Americans [approving](#) of unions in 2022, the highest recorded level of support since 1965. (See figure below.)

### **Unions are essential in supporting women and people of color in the workplace**

- Unions play a critical role in [narrowing](#) racial and gender economic disparities. Black union workers are paid 13.1% more than their non-union counterparts and Hispanic union workers are paid 18.8% more than their non-union counterparts.
- Black, Hispanic, and Asian workers all saw increased [union coverage](#) over the last year, with Black workers having the highest union coverage rates at 12.7%.
- In 2022, men (11.6%) still had a [higher](#) unionization rate than women (11.0%), but the gender gap in unionization has been closing.
- Overall, hourly wages for female union workers are 4.7% higher than for their non-union counterparts. In the female-dominated service industries, union workers [make](#) 52.1% more than their non-union counterparts.

## **Unions are winning more labor elections than they have in the last 20 years**

- According to [data](#) from Bloomberg Law, union election wins were at a twenty-year peak in 2022.
- Notable election wins include: the first union at [Amazon](#) in April 2022, a series of [Trader Joe's](#) store location unionizations, and [over](#) 300 Starbucks store unionizations.
- Still, union membership is currently at its [lowest](#) level since the Bureau of Labor Statistics started recording the measure. Researchers and advocates attribute this to employers' [actions](#) against union efforts, rather than a decline in worker interest.

## **Labor laws are central to protecting workers and building America's middle class**

- The 1935 National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) [established](#) the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to enforce worker protections. Following its passage, union membership [grew](#) from only 3.6 million in 1935 to a peak of 16.6 million in 1957.
- Researchers recently [found](#) that increased union participation through the early to mid-twentieth century helped to grow the middle class through reduced income inequality.
- [Data](#) from the Economic Policy Institute shows an increase in union membership following the NLRA's passage that coincided with a drop in the share of income that went to the top 10%.

## **The Biden administration has been a leader in recognizing the importance of unions in our economy and passing legislation that promotes workers' rights to organize**

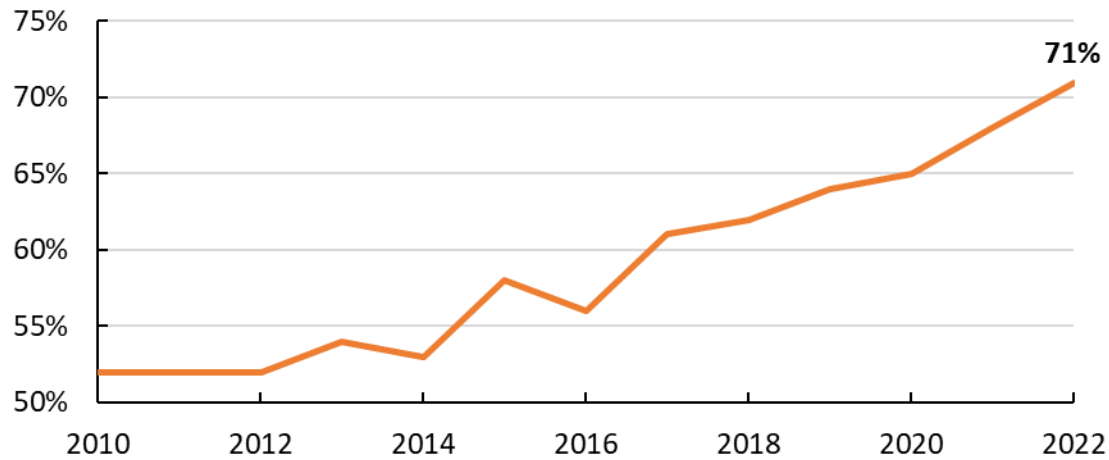
- [Provisions](#) within President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act include incentives to provide workers the prevailing wage for energy projects and [leverage](#) union Registered Apprenticeships to ensure more unionized workers fill jobs in building and maintaining clean energy infrastructure.
- Under President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, an array of federally funded construction projects must [adhere](#) to the Davis-Bacon Act—requiring contractors and subcontractors to offer benefits and the local prevailing wage to workers.

## **The Protect the Right to Organize (PRO) Act would expand labor protections that can expand the middle class and reduce income inequality**

- Under the PRO Act, which passed the House of Representatives last Congress, companies would be [barred](#) from finding permanent replacements for workers who have participated in strikes.
- The bill also further [enforces](#) worker protections by, among other things, allowing the NLRB to impose monetary penalties for unlawfully firing a worker and by barring employers from obligating workers to attend meetings that dissuade pro-union votes.

## Public Approval For Unions Has Been Growing Over the Last Decade

Approval of labor unions, percentage of respondents, 2010 to 2022



Source: Gallup

