

Bureau of Labor Statistics for 2019 Show Continued Decline of Union Membership

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Authors: [W. Eric Baisden](#), [Adam Primm](#)

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (“BLS”) released its 2019 data regarding union membership on January 22, 2020. The decline of union membership in the private sector continues. Since 1983, the number of union members has declined from 17.7 million union members to 14.6 million union members in 2019. Membership declined by approximately 100,000 from 2018. Nearly half of union members work in the private sector (7.1 million), while the remaining 7.5 million work in the public sector. Another 1.8 million workers are not union members, but work jobs covered by a union contract.

When examined as the union membership rate, or the percentage of wage and salary workers belonging to a union, the decline appears more drastic. Union membership in 2019 declined 0.2% from 2018 to 10.3%, which is only slightly more than one-half of 1983 membership levels (20.1%). Public sector membership declined to 6.2%. Among private sector industries, utilities (23.4%), transportation and warehousing (16.1%) and telecommunications (14.1%) experience the highest union participation rates.

Among the states, Hawaii and New York have the highest membership rates at 23.5% and 21%, respectively. Over half of the 14.6 million union members in the United States live in just seven states: California (2.5 million), New York (1.7 million), Illinois (800,000), Pennsylvania (700,000), and New Jersey, Ohio, and Washington with 600,000 each. North and South Carolina are the two lowest states at 2.3% and 2.2%, respectively. Six other states have membership rates below 5%.

For more information on this topic, contact a member of the firm’s [Labor & Employment Practice Group](#).

W. Eric Baisden at 216.363.4676 or ebaisden@beneschlaw.com; or

Adam Primm at 216.363.4451 or aprimm@beneschlaw.com.