NEWS RELEASE
BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

For Release: Monday, February 08, 2021 **21-177-PHI**

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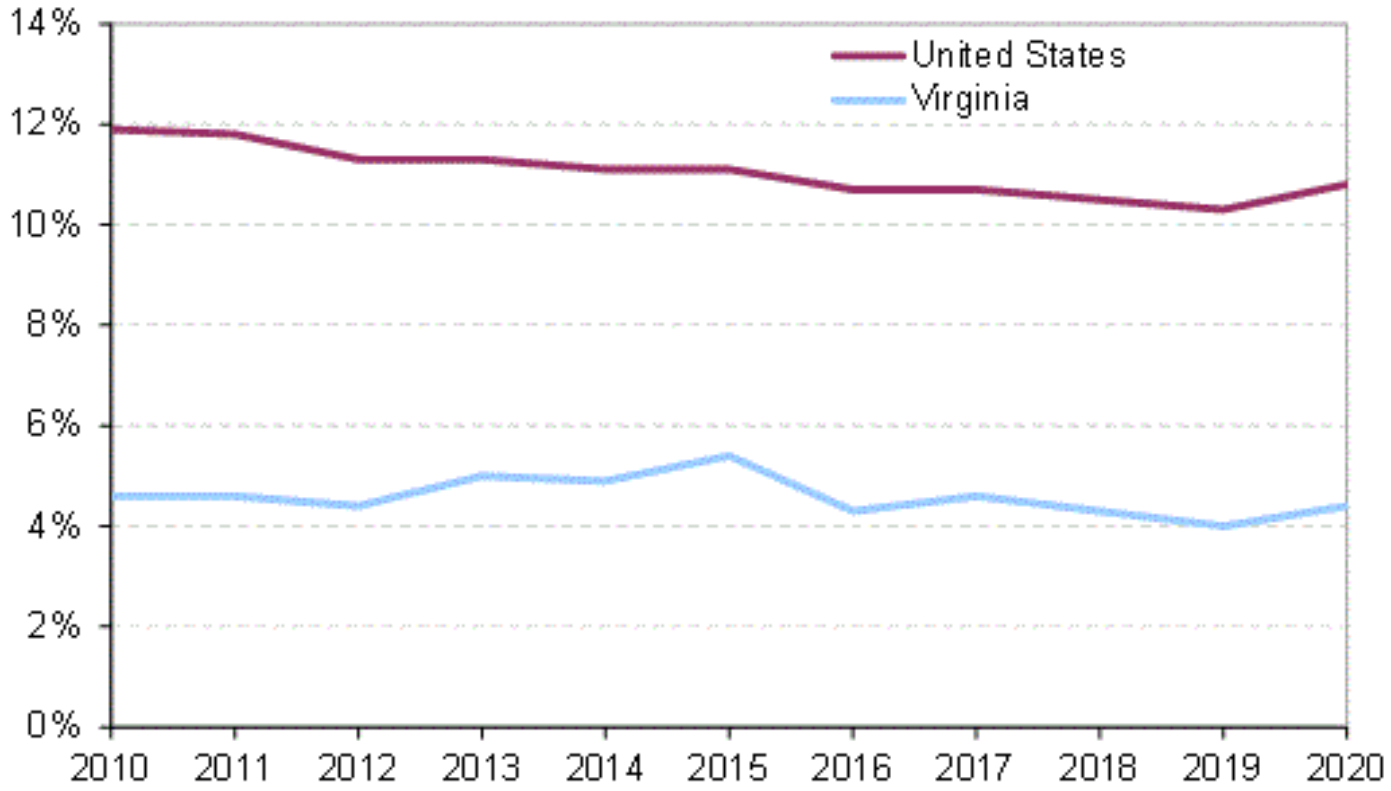
Union Members in Virginia — 2020

In 2020, union members accounted for 4.4 percent of wage and salary workers in Virginia, compared with 4.0 percent in 2019, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Acting Regional Commissioner Frank Waligorski noted that the union membership rate for the state was at its peak in 1992, when it averaged 9.3 percent, and at its low point in 2007 at 3.7 percent. (See chart 1 and table A.) Nationwide, union members accounted for 10.8 percent of employed wage and salary workers in 2020, up by 0.5 percentage point from 2019. Since 1989, when comparable state data became available, union membership rates in Virginia have been below the U.S. average.

Chart 1. Members of unions as a percent of employed in the United States and Virginia, 2010–2020



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Virginia had 164,000 union members in 2020. In addition to these members, another 37,000 wage and salary workers in Virginia were represented by a union on their main job or covered by an employee association or contract while not union members themselves.

Nationwide, 14.3 million wage and salary workers were union members in 2020 and 1.7 million wage and salary workers were not affiliated with a union but had jobs covered by a union contract. The number of wage and salary workers belonging to unions (14.3 million) was down by 321,000, or 2.2 percent, from 2019. However, the decline in total wage and salary employment was 9.6 million (mostly among nonunion workers), or 6.7 percent. The disproportionately large decline in total wage and salary employment compared with the decline in the number of union members led to an increase in the union membership rate.

Table A. Union affiliation of employed wage and salary workers in Virginia, annual averages, 2010–2020 (numbers in thousands)

Year	Total employed	Members of unions [1]		Represented by unions [2]	
		Total	Percent of employed	Total	Percent of employed
2010	3,473	161	4.6	196	5.7
2011	3,550	163	4.6	198	5.6
2012	3,592	159	4.4	197	5.5
2013	3,601	180	5.0	229	6.4
2014	3,665	179	4.9	228	6.2
2015	3,736	202	5.4	258	6.9
2016	3,748	160	4.3	226	6.0
2017	3,801	176	4.6	222	5.8
2018	3,875	168	4.3	213	5.5
2019	3,881	156	4.0	201	5.2
2020	3,703	164	4.4	201	5.4

Footnotes:
(1) Data refer to members of a labor union or an employee association similar to a union.
(2) Data refer to both union members and workers who report no union affiliation but whose jobs are covered by a union or an employee association contract.
Note: Data refer to the sole or principal job of full- and part-time wage and salary workers. All self-employed workers are excluded, both those with incorporated businesses as well as those with unincorporated businesses. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.

In 2020, 30 states and the District of Columbia had union membership rates below that of the U.S. average, 10.8 percent, while 20 states had rates above it. (See table 1.) Nine states had union membership rates below 5.0 percent in 2020. South Carolina had the lowest rate (2.9 percent). The next lowest rates were in North Carolina and Utah (3.1 percent and 3.7 percent, respectively). Two states had union membership rates over 20.0 percent in 2020: Hawaii (23.7 percent) and New York (22.0 percent). (See chart 2.)

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic Impact on 2020 Union Members Data

Data on union members for 2020 reflect the impact on the labor market of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and efforts to contain it. Comparisons with union membership measures for earlier years, including metrics such as the union membership rate should be interpreted with caution. The overall union membership rate and the rates by many demographic and employment characteristics increased despite declines in the number of union members. These increases reflect the disproportionately large decline in total wage and salary employment (mostly among nonunion workers) compared with the decline in the number of union members. Increases in median weekly earnings reflect the disproportionately large decline in employment in 2020, notably among lower-paid workers, such as those in the leisure and hospitality industry. More information on labor market developments in recent months is available at www.bls.gov/covid19/effects-of-covid-19-pandemic-and-response-on-the-employment-situation-news-release.htm.

Technical Note

The estimates in this release are obtained from the Current Population Survey (CPS), which provides basic information on the labor force, employment, and unemployment. The survey is conducted monthly for the Bureau of Labor Statistics by the U.S. Census Bureau from a scientifically selected national sample of about 60,000 eligible households. The union membership data are tabulated from one-quarter of the CPS monthly sample and are limited to wage and salary workers. All self-employed workers are excluded.

Beginning in January of each year, data reflect revised population controls used in the CPS. Additional information about population controls is available on the BLS website at www.bls.gov/cps/documentation.htm.

Information about the reliability of data from the CPS and guidance on estimating standard errors is available at www.bls.gov/cps/documentation.htm#reliability.

Definitions

The principal definitions used in this release are described briefly below.

Union members. Data refer to members of a labor union or an employee association similar to a union.

Union membership rate. Data refer to the proportion of total wage and salary workers who are union members.

Represented by unions. Data refer to both union members and workers who report no union affiliation but whose jobs are covered by a union or an employee association contract.

Wage and salary workers. Workers who receive wages, salaries, commissions, tips, payment in kind, or piece rates. The group includes employees in both the private and public sectors. Union membership and earnings data exclude all self-employed workers, both those with incorporated businesses as well as those with unincorporated businesses.

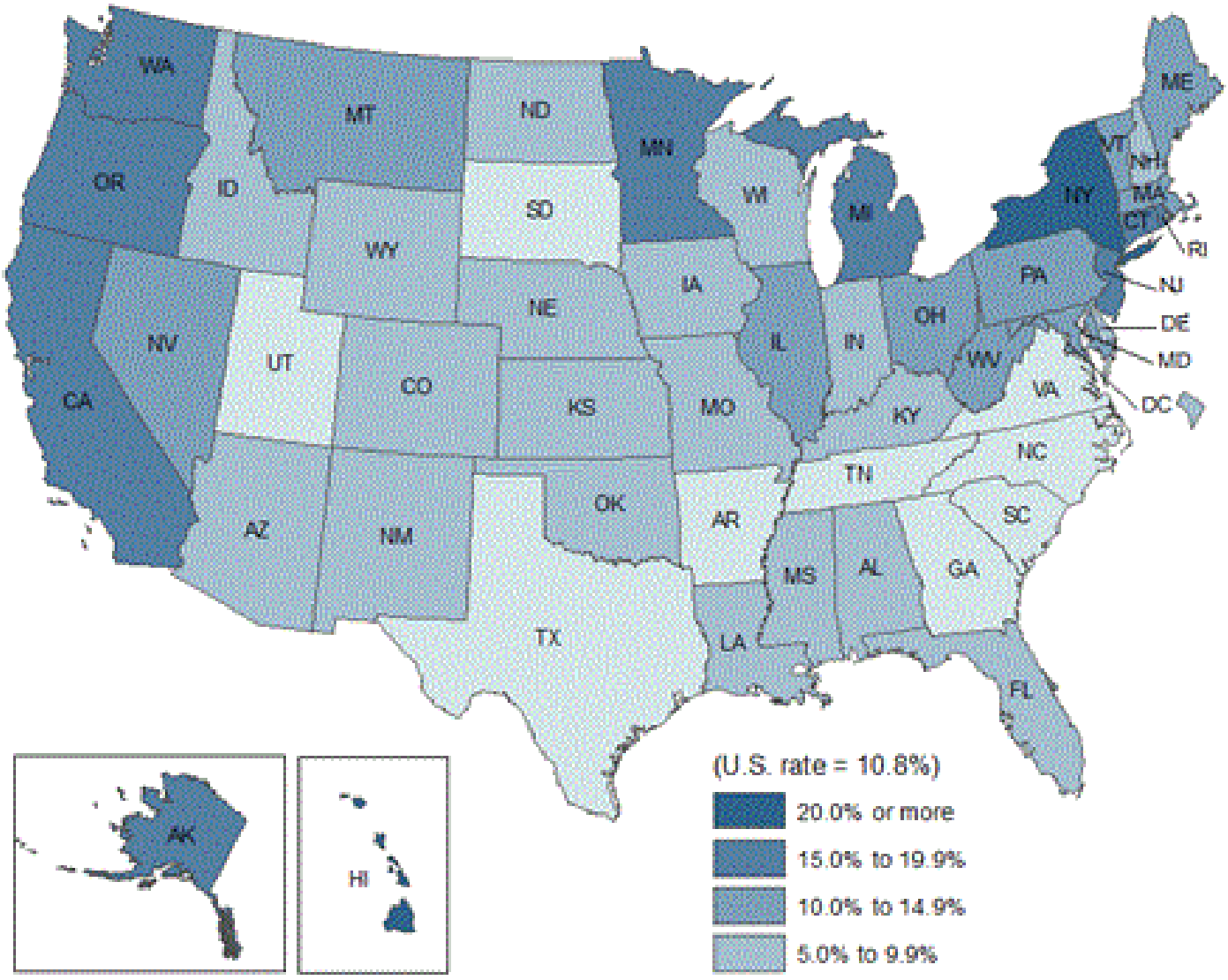
Information in this release will be made available to individuals with sensory impairments upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200; Federal Relay Service: 800-877-8339.

State	2019					2020				
	Total employed	Members of unions(1)		Represented by unions(2)		Total employed	Members of unions(1)		Represented by unions(2)	
		Total	Percent of employed	Total	Percent of employed		Total	Percent of employed	Total	Percent of employed
Alabama	2,041	173	8.5	199	9.8	1,896	151	8.0	164	8.7
Alaska	282	48	17.1	53	18.7	280	49	17.7	55	19.5
Arizona	3,028	174	5.7	214	7.1	2,909	155	5.3	207	7.1
Arkansas	1,200	62	5.2	71	5.9	1,158	55	4.7	69	5.9
California	16,485	2,504	15.2	2,726	16.5	15,069	2,441	16.2	2,655	17.6
Colorado	2,631	237	9.0	259	9.8	2,470	182	7.4	202	8.2
Connecticut	1,680	244	14.5	269	16.0	1,533	262	17.1	282	18.4
Delaware	432	38	8.7	43	9.9	424	41	9.7	44	10.3
District of Columbia	361	34	9.3	37	10.2	343	30	8.6	33	9.5
Florida	8,827	551	6.2	667	7.6	8,155	524	6.4	644	7.9
Georgia	4,422	180	4.1	223	5.0	4,173	194	4.6	271	6.5
Hawaii	574	135	23.5	147	25.5	508	120	23.7	130	25.7
Idaho	764	37	4.9	46	6.0	732	41	5.6	47	6.4
Illinois	5,658	771	13.6	832	14.7	5,178	739	14.3	788	15.2
Indiana	3,007	249	8.3	296	9.8	2,838	235	8.3	270	9.5
Iowa	1,543	97	6.3	122	7.9	1,401	93	6.6	128	9.1
Kansas	1,280	112	8.7	130	10.1	1,282	114	8.9	144	11.2
Kentucky	1,786	144	8.0	169	9.5	1,694	127	7.5	160	9.4

State	2019					2020				
	Total employed	Members of unions(1)		Represented by unions(2)		Total employed	Members of unions(1)		Represented by unions(2)	
		Total	Percent of employed	Total	Percent of employed		Total	Percent of employed	Total	Percent of employed
Louisiana	1,784	94	5.3	108	6.1	1,682	99	5.9	113	6.7
Maine	588	69	11.8	81	13.7	559	82	14.7	93	16.7
Maryland	2,912	330	11.3	371	12.8	2,690	351	13.1	380	14.1
Massachusetts	3,397	406	12.0	449	13.2	2,982	357	12.0	383	12.8
Michigan	4,323	589	13.6	648	15.0	3,974	604	15.2	661	16.6
Minnesota	2,662	364	13.7	381	14.3	2,515	398	15.8	427	17.0
Mississippi	1,105	70	6.3	93	8.4	1,034	74	7.1	86	8.3
Missouri	2,661	297	11.1	333	12.5	2,525	238	9.4	254	10.1
Montana	437	46	10.5	52	12.0	419	50	12.0	54	13.0
Nebraska	894	75	8.4	86	9.6	890	85	9.6	94	10.5
Nevada	1,379	201	14.6	222	16.1	1,208	161	13.4	186	15.4
New Hampshire	677	69	10.3	79	11.6	629	62	9.8	70	11.1
New Jersey	4,094	642	15.7	712	17.4	3,719	600	16.1	660	17.8
New Mexico	813	58	7.1	72	8.8	743	53	7.1	64	8.6
New York	8,253	1,732	21.0	1,877	22.7	7,552	1,661	22.0	1,784	23.6
North Carolina	4,396	102	2.3	150	3.4	4,128	129	3.1	161	3.9
North Dakota	356	21	6.0	27	7.5	338	21	6.2	25	7.4
Ohio	5,127	610	11.9	673	13.1	4,815	637	13.2	686	14.2

State	2019					2020				
	Total employed	Members of unions(1)		Represented by unions(2)		Total employed	Members of unions(1)		Represented by unions(2)	
		Total	Percent of employed	Total	Percent of employed		Total	Percent of employed	Total	Percent of employed
Oklahoma	1,554	96	6.2	123	7.9	1,501	90	6.0	114	7.6
Oregon	1,772	255	14.4	277	15.7	1,694	275	16.2	293	17.3
Pennsylvania	5,642	676	12.0	740	13.1	5,307	717	13.5	775	14.6
Rhode Island	475	83	17.4	90	19.0	455	81	17.8	87	19.1
South Carolina	2,140	47	2.2	59	2.7	2,036	59	2.9	77	3.8
South Dakota	395	22	5.6	26	6.7	385	17	4.3	21	5.5
Tennessee	2,947	135	4.6	162	5.5	2,678	117	4.4	137	5.1
Texas	12,334	497	4.0	642	5.2	11,607	563	4.9	693	6.0
Utah	1,409	62	4.4	83	5.9	1,403	51	3.7	75	5.4
Vermont	290	33	11.2	35	12.0	265	31	11.8	36	13.8
Virginia	3,881	156	4.0	201	5.2	3,703	164	4.4	201	5.4
Washington	3,393	638	18.8	684	20.2	3,201	557	17.4	596	18.6
West Virginia	704	72	10.2	78	11.1	666	71	10.7	75	11.3
Wisconsin	2,698	218	8.1	245	9.1	2,592	227	8.7	264	10.2
Wyoming	243	18	7.3	21	8.7	240	18	7.6	22	9.3

Chart 2. Union membership rates by state, 2020 annual averages



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.