

Asian American and Pacific Islander Workers' Union Membership

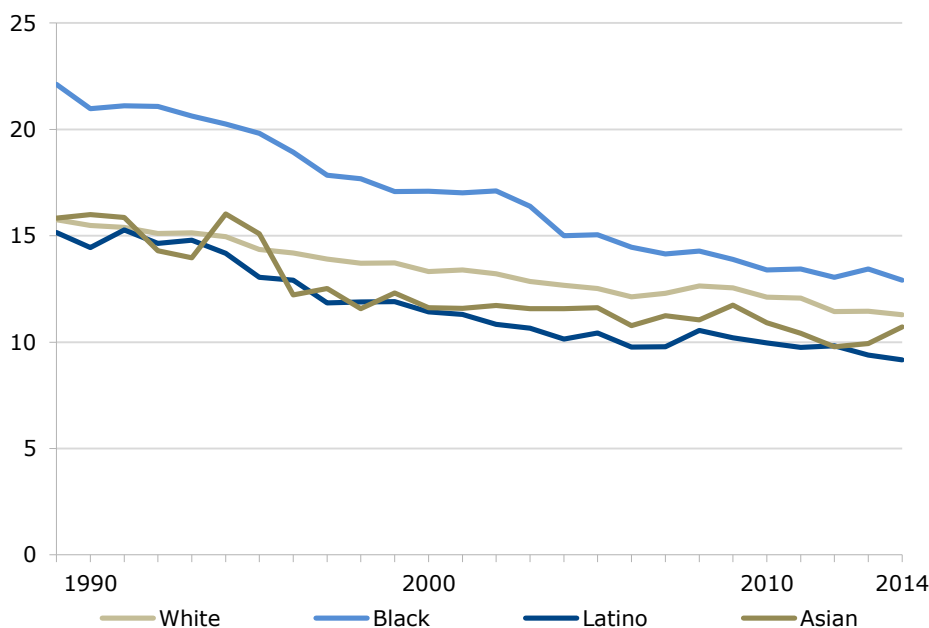
By Nicole Woo, Cherrie Bucknor, and John Schmitt*

The recent release of 2014 union membership data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) shows a sharp rise in union membership among Asian Americans, from 9.4 percent in 2013 to 10.4 percent in 2014, or an increase of 96,000 workers. While this may be a one-year blip, this increase could well be real, and it appeared in the context of decreases in unionization among all other racial and ethnic groups.¹

FIGURE 1

Union Membership Rate, By Race/Ethnicity, 1989-2014

(percent of employees)



Source: CEPR analysis of Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Group.



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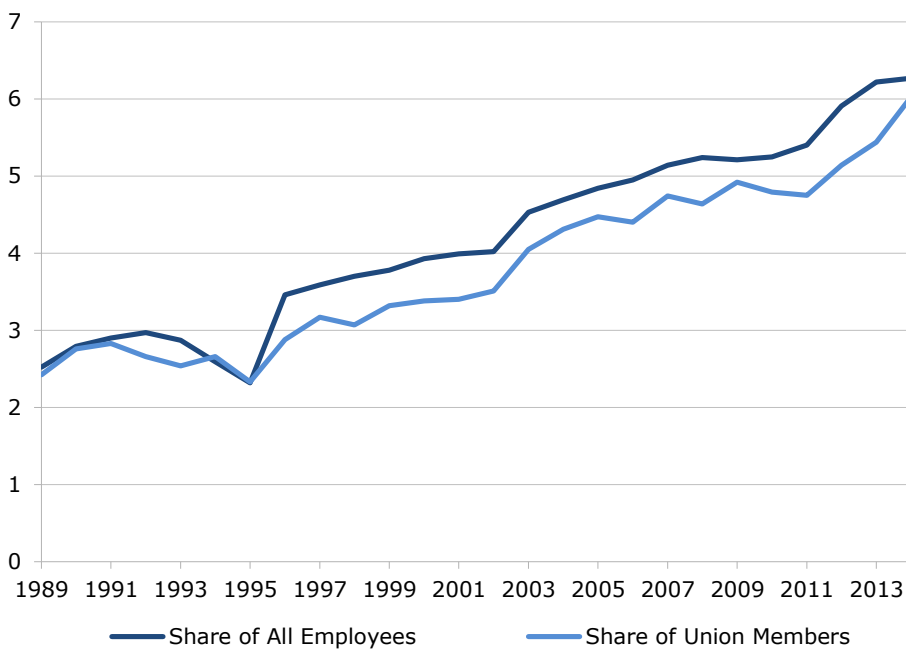
Looking more closely at the BLS data, the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR) finds that a large part of the increase in Asian American union numbers was fueled by an overall increase in union membership among foreign-born workers, from 8.8 percent in 2013 to 9.2 percent in 2014, or an additional 135,000 workers.²

Meanwhile, the unionization rates of the other major racial and ethnic groups all decreased between 2013 and 2014. The increase in the union membership rates for Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) workers left their share of the unionized workforce (6.03%) as close to their share of the overall workforce (6.27%) as it has been in 20 years.

FIGURE 2

Share of Asian Pacific Americans in Unionized and Overall Workforce, 1989-2014

(percent of employees)



Source: CEPR analysis of Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Group.

For an even more detailed analysis of AAPI workers, CEPR has pooled the years 2010-2014 in the tables below in order to compensate for the small sample size of AAPI workers in any single year of the Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey. A notable characteristic of AAPI workers is that about two-thirds (68.7 percent) are immigrants, while the overall workforce is only 16 percent immigrant. In addition, AAPI workers were more than twice as likely to be in the Pacific region as the overall workforce, with 4-in-10 (40.3 percent) of all AAPI workers and 6-in-10 (60.5 percent) of all unionized AAPI workers located there.

1 Bucknor, Cherie and John Schmitt. 2015. “Union Byte 2015.” Washington, DC: Center for Economic and Policy Research, January. <http://www.cepr.net/documents/union-byte-2015-01.pdf>.

2 The race/ethnicity categories in CEPR’s analyses differ from those published by the BLS. CEPR uses mutually exclusive categories, while the BLS includes Latinos in the data for the white, black, Asian, and “other” categories, as well as in the separate Latino category.

TABLE 1**Characteristics of Asian American and Pacific Islander Workers, by Gender, 2010-2014**

(percent)

	Female APA Workers		Male APA Workers		All APA Workers		
	Union	All	Union	All	Union	All	
Age							
16-24	4.3	10.5	5.6	9.8	4.9	10.2	
25-34	19.3	24.9	19.3	26.7	19.3	25.8	
35-44	26.4	26.1	25.0	27.0	25.7	26.6	
45-54	25.7	21.6	25.0	20.3	25.4	20.9	
55-64	20.7	13.9	20.3	12.6	20.5	13.2	
65+	3.7	3.1	4.8	3.7	4.2	3.4	
Region							
Northeast	19.5	18.8	20.4	21.1	20.0	20.0	
Midwest	7.7	11.5	8.3	12.2	8.0	11.9	
South	6.6	22.1	9.4	23.9	8.0	23.0	
West	3.7	5.0	3.6	4.7	3.6	4.8	
Pacific	62.5	42.6	58.3	38.2	60.5	40.3	
State							
CA	45.7	31.7	36.5	28.0	41.3	29.8	
NY	10.9	8.5	12.2	9.9	11.5	9.2	
TX	2.0	6.0	2.5	7.4	2.2	6.8	
HI	9.7	5.2	13.4	4.9	11.5	5.0	
NJ	4.2	4.2	3.7	4.9	4.0	4.6	
Education							
Less than high school	4.5	6.0	5.9	5.3	5.2	5.6	
High school	15.2	19.4	20.9	18.7	18.0	19.0	
Some college	19.6	21.2	28.7	19.7	24.0	20.4	
College	39.2	33.7	27.7	30.9	33.7	32.2	
Advanced	21.5	19.7	16.7	25.4	19.2	22.7	
Immigrants							
US-born	65.3	68.4	62.6	69.0	64.0	68.7	
Non-Manufacturing	34.7	31.6	37.4	31.1	36.0	31.3	
Manufacturing	96.6	90.8	89.6	84.8	93.3	87.6	
Private Sector	3.4	9.2	10.4	15.2	6.7	12.4	
Public Sector	50.3	86.4	55.9	89.2	53.0	87.9	
	49.7	13.6	44.1	10.8	47.0	12.1	

(thousands; data for 2014 only)

Total	460	4,030	418	4,559	878	8,589
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Notes: CEPR analysis of CEPR extract of the Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Group, 2010-2014. States listed above were the states with the highest share of Asian workers. Union refers to the percent of union members.

Comparing union membership rates of AAPI workers to those of the overall workforce yields some interesting results as well. While the overall union membership rate of AAPI workers (10.3 percent) is lower than that of all workers (11.4 percent), the unionization rate of female AAPI workers (11.3 percent) is actually higher than that of all female workers (10.7 percent). One of the starkest differences occurs among males in manufacturing: male AAPI workers in manufacturing are only 6.2 percent unionized, while all male manufacturing workers are 11.4 percent unionized.

TABLE 2**Union Membership Rate of Asian American and Pacific Islander Workers, 2010-2014**

(percent)

	Female APA Workers	Male APA Workers	All APA Workers	All Female Workers	All Male Workers	All Workers
All	11.3	9.5	10.3	10.7	12.1	11.4
Age						
16-24	4.4	5.2	4.8	3.6	5.0	4.3
25-34	8.5	6.6	7.5	9.3	10.2	9.8
35-44	11.5	8.9	10.1	11.8	13.3	12.6
45-54	13.7	12.0	12.8	13.3	15.4	14.3
55-64	17.2	15.9	16.5	14.3	15.6	14.9
65+	13.8	13.5	13.7	9.4	9.7	9.6
Region						
Northeast	11.7	9.2	10.4	17.1	18.2	17.7
Midwest	7.6	6.5	7.0	10.9	14.5	12.7
South	3.4	3.8	3.6	5.1	6.4	5.8
West	8.3	7.1	7.7	6.9	8.2	7.6
Pacific	16.4	14.4	15.4	17.9	16.7	17.2
State						
CA	16.1	12.3	14.3	18.0	15.9	16.9
NY	14.5	11.8	13.0	24.1	24.1	24.1
TX	3.7	3.1	3.4	4.6	5.7	5.2
HI	20.6	25.6	23.1	19.5	23.8	21.8
NJ	11.4	7.1	9.0	15.6	17.0	16.4
Education						
Less than high school	8.4	10.6	9.4	5.3	5.9	5.7
High school	8.9	10.5	9.7	7.9	13.4	11.0
Some college	10.3	13.7	12.0	8.5	14.4	11.3
College	13.1	8.6	10.8	12.2	10.1	11.1
Advanced	12.4	6.3	8.8	23.0	11.6	17.4
Immigrants	10.8	8.7	9.7	10.0	8.4	9.1
US-born	12.2	11.3	11.7	10.9	12.9	11.9
Non-Manufacturing	12.0	10.1	11.1	11.1	12.2	11.6
Manufacturing	4.1	6.2	5.5	6.3	11.4	10.0
Private Sector	6.6	6.0	6.3	5.0	8.3	6.7
Public Sector	39.8	36.5	38.2	35.5	36.7	36.0

Notes: CEPR analysis of CEPR extract of the Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Group, 2010-2014. States listed above were the states with the highest share of Asian workers. Union refers to the percent of union members.