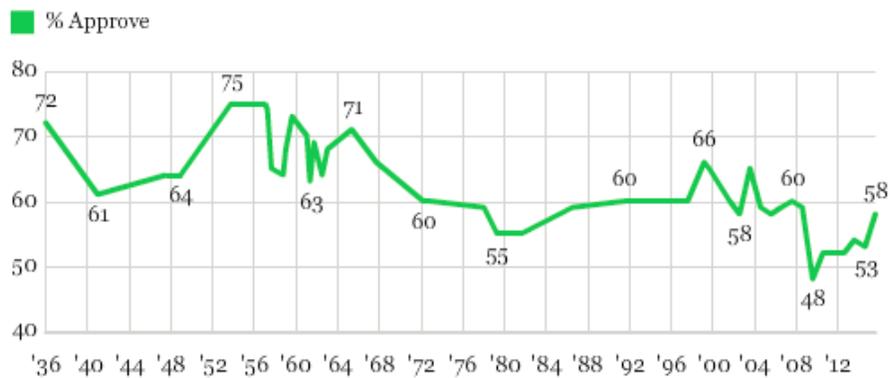


# LABOR ON THE RISE

It's been a rocky few years for labor to say the least. From the stripping of collective bargaining rights in Wisconsin to the addition of three more Right to Work states in as many years, labor unions have become the punching bag of the GOP because they know how critical they are to Democrats and progressives. Six years ago, popular support for labor unions hit an all-time low with only 48% approval and 45% disapproval, according to Gallup which has been tracking attitudes towards labor for nearly 80 years.

*Do you approve or disapprove of labor unions?*



GALLUP

But popular support for labor unions is returning to pre-recession levels. Just last month, Gallup released a poll announcing that labor unions are enjoying an approval rating of 58%, jumping five points over the last year and 10 points since 2009. That is in line with every Gallup poll for 70 years before the recession, which found a majority of Americans approve of labor unions (72% approve 1936 / 60% approve 2008). For the first time in more than six years, more Americans would like to see labor unions have a greater influence in the country rather than less (37% more / 35% less / 24% same). At the height of anti-labor sentiment in 2009, 42% of Americans said labor unions should have less influence while only 25% thought they should have more.

Today, union membership hovers around 11 percent - half of what it once was when data was first tracked over thirty years ago. Views are mixed on whether this decline in membership has been good for the country (45% mostly bad / 43% mostly good) but a majority of Americans believe it has been bad for working people (52% mostly bad / 40% mostly good).

So what has inspired this rising favorability towards labor? Could it be a byproduct of an improving economy coupled with frustration over stagnant wages? A retaliation against the bludgeon a number of GOP governors have taken to unions in their states? A result of changing demographics, specifically in lower wage industries like

food service and hospitality? Could it be some combination thereof?

Support among different demographics gives us a few clues. 66 percent of young adults, ages 18-34, approve of labor unions and 44 percent want them to have more influence - the highest ratings among all age groups. Unions also enjoy a higher margin of support among minorities, a demographic steadily growing as a share of the population.

	Approve of labor unions	Want unions to have more influence
	%	%
National adults	58	37
Men	52	33
Women	63	41
18 to 34 years	66	44
35 to 54 years	53	32
55 and older	58	37

GALLUP

African-Americans rate labor unions the most favorably (60% favorable / 29% unfavorable) while nearly half of Hispanics view labor unions favorably (49% favorable / 32 unfavorable). Among low earners, specifically those working full time in minimum wage jobs (earning less than \$30,000 annually), labor unions have a 23 point net favorability rating (54% favorable / 31% unfavorable).

Not only do minorities view labor unions more favorably, they are also more likely to be members of a labor union, according to the most recent data by the Bureau of Labor and Statistics. This fact is not lost on labor leaders who see mainstream efforts advocating greater racial equality and immigration reform as keys to their survival. Hispanics make up one-quarter of all workers in the accommodation and food services industry, and are joining labor unions' member roles at higher rates than white workers.

These trends look promising for the sustaining influence, if not meaningful growth, of labor unions. Which is why the slate of 2016 presidential candidates (Democratic, Republican and Donald Trump) are not ignoring them.

## Labor and 2016 Presidential Election

Among the GOP field, candidates wear their union-bashing credentials as badges of honor in a regular game of Who Hates Labor Unions More. Earlier this spring, Scott Walker went so far as to compare terrorist groups like ISIS to labor demonstrators during his first term. John Kasich joked that if he were king, he "would abolish all teachers' lounges, where they sit together and worry about 'Woe is us.'" And Chris Christie did not mince words when he said that the American Federation of Teachers deserved a punch in the face.

What they fail to fully appreciate: these workers are far more popular than any of these GOP candidates will ever be. Moreover, according to Pew Research, labor unions enjoy sizable favorability among GOP voters today. Many Republicans are favorable towards labor unions (31% favorable / 57% unfavorable), and they are especially popular with the following GOP voters:

- Republicans who didn't go to college (41% favorable / 43% unfavorable)
- Republicans under 35 years old (45% favorable / 44% unfavorable)
- Republicans earning less than \$30,000 per year (42% favorable / 42% unfavorable)

So the slate of GOP presidential candidates is out of step with a significant portion of their voters.

You will not hear such sentiments among Democrats, however. Democrats are more in sync with the American population on supporting labor unions, and in turn, labor households remain an important piece of the Democratic coalition. Obama would have lost the popular vote in 2012 without strong support from union households - he lost non-union households on election day, with union households giving him a margin of victory. The electoral impact would have been especially felt in the union-dense Midwest. In Michigan, for example, a state Obama won by nine points (Obama 54% / Romney 45%), Obama would have run dead even with Romney if no union households voted. In Wisconsin and Ohio, similarly, union households provided the margin of victory for Obama.

	<b>Union households as share of electorate</b>	<b>Obama 2012 vote among union households</b>	<b>Obama 2012 vote among non-union households</b>
<b>National</b>	18%	58%	49%
<b>Ohio</b>	22%	60%	48%
<b>Wisconsin</b>	21%	66%	50%
<b>Michigan</b>	28%	66%	50%

[2012 Exit Polls](#)

The union-dense Midwest is a region the GOP plans to win by alienating people of color and running up the white vote. Reality reveals this strategy's shortcomings, however: it's hard to win enough white Midwestern votes when you're telling a big chunk of these voters that their right to organize is what's ruining America.

Thank you for reading our pollsters' take on data and trends affecting the national political landscape. Stay tuned for regular thoughtful analysis on all things political. In the meantime, enjoy our round-up of favorite stories from the latest news cycle below.

- Anzalone Liszt Grove Research

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- >> Let's [welcome John McAfee](#) (of anti-virus software fame) to the 2016 presidential race.
- >> Jeb Bush goes on air with his [first ad](#) called "I've Delivered."
- >> The dog whistle politics of [Ben Carson](#).
- >> [Jimmy Carter's Unheralded Legacy](#)
- >> The state of gun violence in America, told in [17 maps and charts](#).
- >> Trump is [still a long shot](#), despite what the media will have you believe.
- >> [\\$1 Billion](#): the amount expected to be spent on digital media by political campaigns