

**Employees' Perceptions of Labor Unions**

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## I. Methodology and Sample Characteristics

### Methodology: Zogby America, 8/22/06 through 8/25/06

This is a telephone survey of employed adults nationwide, conducted by Zogby International. The target sample is 803 interviews with approximately 53 questions asked. Samples are randomly drawn from telephone cd's of national listed sample. Zogby International surveys employ sampling strategies in which selection probabilities are proportional to population size within area codes and exchanges. As many as six calls are made to reach a sampled phone number. Cooperation rates are calculated using one of AAPOR's approved methodologies<sup>1</sup> and are comparable to other professional public-opinion surveys conducted using similar sampling strategies.<sup>2</sup> Weighting by party, age, race, gender, union, and public service is used to adjust for non-response. The margin of error is +/- 3.5 percentage points. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.

Zogby International's sampling and weighting procedures also have been validated through its political polling: more than 95% of the firm's polls have come within 1% of actual election-day outcomes.

Sample Characteristics	Frequency	Valid Percent*
Sample size	803	100
East	215	27
South	202	25
Central/Great Lakes	249	31
West	138	17
Registered to vote	761	95
Not registered to vote	41	5
Very likely to vote	691	91
Somewhat likely to vote	53	7
Not likely to vote	17	2
Democratic	253	34
Republican	253	34
Independent/Minor party	179	24
Libertarian	4	1

<sup>1</sup> See COOP4 (p.38) in *Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates of Surveys*. The American Association for Public Opinion Research, (2000).

<sup>2</sup> *Cooperation Tracking Study: April 2003 Update*, Jane M. Sheppard and Shelly Haas. The Council for Marketing & Opinion Research (CMOR). Cincinnati, Ohio (2003).

<b>Sample Characteristics (continued)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent*</b>
Not sure of party	56	8
18-29	181	23
30-49	386	49
50-64	181	23
65+	39	5
18-24	80	10
25-34	160	20
35-54	406	52
55-69	123	16
70+	18	2
Did not answer age	16	--
Less than high school	29	4
High school graduate	146	18
Some college	227	28
College graduate+	401	50
White	598	75
Hispanic	72	9
African American	96	12
Asian/Pacific	8	1
Other/mixed	24	3
Did not answer race	6	--
Live in large city	181	23
Live in small city	203	25
Live in suburbs	209	26
Live in rural area	207	26
Progressive/very liberal	65	9
Liberal	152	20
Moderate	221	29
Conservative	243	32
Very conservative	65	9
Libertarian	14	2
Did not answer ideology	44	--
Roman Catholic	179	22
Protestant	416	52
Jewish	24	3
Muslim	--	--

<b>Sample Characteristics (continued)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent*</b>
Other (religion)	178	22
Did not answer religion	7	--
Member of union	47	6
Not member of union	756	94
Married	494	62
Single, never married	186	23
Divorced/widowed/separated	97	12
Civil union/domestic partnership	24	3
Less than \$25,000	90	13
\$25,000-\$35,999	97	13
\$35,000-\$49,999	141	20
\$50,000-\$74,999	152	21
\$75,000-\$99,999	110	15
\$100,000 or more	135	19
Did not answer income	77	--
Male	423	53
Female	380	47

\* Numbers have been rounded to the nearest percent and might not total 100.

## II. Narrative Analysis

1. Which of the following best represents your employment status?

Working full-time	74%
Working part-time	19
Working both full-time and part-time	7

Three-fourths of respondents (74%) are working full-time, and one in five (19%) is employed part-time. Seven percent of people hold down both full-time and part-time positions.

*There have been some things in the news recently about the pay and benefits of public employees compared to those of employees on private payrolls.*

2. Is it your impression that the compensation, pay, and benefits of public employees in your area is more or less than those who work for private businesses?

More	41%
Less	38
Not sure	21

Respondents are nearly evenly divided on this issue. Just over two in five (41%) feel that local public employees have higher compensation, pay, and benefits than employees of private businesses. A slightly smaller percentage (38%) believes that the compensation, pay, and benefits of public employees in their areas are less than those who work for private businesses. One in five (21%) is not sure.

3. Do you think that public employees should earn more or less or the same as employees in the private sector doing comparable work?

The same as	79%
More	10
Less	7
Undecided	4

An overwhelming four-fifths majority (79%) thinks that public employees should earn the same as employees in the private sector doing comparable work. The remainder of respondents are closely divided on whether they feel public employees should earn more (10%) or less (7%) than their private sector employee counterparts.

4. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the wages of public employees are on average about 12 percent higher than employees on private payrolls. Other studies have found that the cost of fringe benefits for government workers are 62 percent greater than they are in private employment. Knowing this, do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose with the level at which public employees are being paid, including salaries and benefits?

Strongly support	14%		
Somewhat support	26	<b>Support</b>	<b>40%</b>
Somewhat oppose	29		
Strongly oppose	26	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>55</b>
Not sure	7		

More than half (55%) oppose this higher level at which public employees are being paid. Opposition is somewhat evenly divided between “strongly” (26%) and “somewhat” (29%).

In comparison, two in five employees (40%) support the higher level of salaries and benefits paid to public employees. Support though, is almost twice as likely to come as “somewhat” (26%) than “strongly” (14%).

5. As you may have heard, many public pension plans are being under-funded. What do you think is the best way to deal with under funded public pension plans?

Reduce benefits	50%
Raise taxes	25
*Other	14
Not sure	11

**\*Other:** (Number in parentheses denotes frequency of similar response.)

- Individual accountability/control, privatize pensions & social security (19)
- Improve efficiency in government operations, cut programs & services (12)
- Improved management & stewardship of pension funds, restructure (8)
- Uniformity of private & public retirement plans (8)
- Both options (7); Neither option (7); Increase benefits (6)
- Honesty, transparency, accountability (5); Reduce executive/worker wage/benefits disparity (5)
- Reduce pay/employees pay more (5); Leave it alone, don't do anything (3)
- Legislation, enforcement, government should decide (3)
- Lower/restructure taxes (2); Reduce healthcare costs, implement national healthcare (2)

One-half of respondents (50%) think the best way to deal with under-funded public pension plans is to reduce the benefits. Half as many people (25%) think that raising taxes is the best way to deal with this. One in seven (14%) cites other means of dealing with this, and one in nine (11%) is not sure.

6. *Would you support or oppose a tax increase to increase the pay and benefits of public employees in your area?*

Support	28%
Oppose	70
Not sure	3

A vast seven-in-ten majority (70%) opposes a tax increase to increase the pay and benefits of public employees in their areas. In contrast, just over one in four (28%) would support an increase in taxes for this purpose. This latter percentage is nearly equal to those who say that the best way to deal with under funded public pension plans is to raise taxes (from Question 5).

*In the next series of statements, which statement, A or B, comes closer to your opinion.*

7. **Statement A:** *There was a time when unions were needed, but the need for them has now passed.* **Statement B:** *Unions are necessary, because without them, individual employees would be powerless.*

Statement A	46%
Statement B	51
Not sure	4

A slight majority (51%) sides with the notion that unions are necessary, because without them, individual employees would be powerless. Just under half (46%) though, are more likely to feel that there was a time when unions were needed, but the need for them has now passed.

8. **Statement A:** *Labor unions have too much influence on our political leaders and public policy.* **Statement B:** *Labor unions do not have enough influence on our political leaders and public policy.*

Statement A	55%
Statement B	38
Not sure	8

Employees are more likely to feel that labor unions have too much influence (55%) than not enough influence (38%) on our political leaders and public policy.



9. **Statement A:** Individual workers should be free to decide for themselves whether or not to join or support a union. Nobody should be required to join or support a union as a condition of employment. **Statement B:** No one should be a free-rider. If workers benefit from union representation, they should be required to pay their fair share of the cost of union representation.

Statement A	64%
Statement B	33
Not sure	3

Respondents are nearly twice as likely to say that individual workers should be free to decide for themselves whether or not to join or support a union (64%) than to say that workers who benefit from union representation should be required to pay their fair share of the cost of such representation (33%).

10. **Statement A:** Employees deserve to be paid on the basis of their own merit. Even where a union represents the majority of the workers, individual workers should be free to make their own deal with the employer. **Statement B:** Allowing individual employees to make their own deal would undermine the union's ability to negotiate better terms for its members. When a union is supported by a majority, the terms of the union contract must apply to all employees.

Statement A	50%
Statement B	44
Not sure	6

Half of respondents (50%) are more likely to say that employees deserve to be paid on the basis of their own merit; even where a union represents the majority of the workers, individual workers should be free to make their own deal with the employer.

Slightly fewer (44%), however, say that allowing individual employees to make their own deal would undermine the union's ability to negotiate better terms for its members; when a union is supported by a majority, the terms of the union contract must apply to all employees.

11. Are you a member of a labor union?

Yes	13%
No	88

One in eight (13%) respondents is a labor union member.

12. (Asked only of those who are not members of a labor union.) Would you personally like to be a member of a labor union?

Yes	20%
No	74
Not sure	6

One-fifth of those who are not labor union members (20%) say they would like to be a member of a labor union. Three-fourths (74%) would not.

13. Does some other member of your household belong to a labor union?

Yes	14%
No	85
Not sure	1

One in seven (14%) says another household member belongs to a labor union.

14. (Asked only of those who are not members of a labor union.) If an election were held tomorrow to decide whether your workplace would be unionized or not, do you think you would definitely vote for a union, probably vote for a union, probably vote against a union, or definitely vote against a union?

Definitely for	13%		
Probably for	22	<b>Vote for</b>	<b>35%</b>
Probably against	18		
Definitely against	40	<b>Vote against</b>	<b>58</b>
Not sure	7		

Nearly three in five employees who are not labor union members (58%) would vote against their workplace unionizing. Among these respondents, people are twice as likely to definitely vote against unionizing (40%) than probably vote against it (18%).

In comparison, just over one-third (35%) say they would vote for their workplace unionizing, with these people more likely to be probably for it (22%) than definitely for it (13%).

15. In general, do you approve or disapprove of labor unions?

Approve	55%
Disapprove	39
Not sure	6

Generally, more than half of employees (55%) approve of labor unions, but two in five (39%) oppose them.

913. Which of the following **best** describes your occupation?

Professional/Technical	29%
Managerial	15
Sales	12
Medical	10
Blue-Collar/Production	8
Service	7
Clerical	4
Homemaker	2
Military	1
Other	11

18. Which best describes your employment situation?

Employed by a private company	68%
Employed by a public or government agency	16
Self-employed	15
Not sure	2

Two-thirds of respondents (68%) are employed by private companies. One in six (16%) works for public or government agencies, and one in seven (15%) is self-employed.

19. (Asked only of those employed by a private company or self-employed.) Is anyone in your household, other than yourself, an employee of either the federal, state, or local government?

Yes	15%
No	84
Not sure	1

One-seventh of these respondents (15%) say another household member is employed by the federal, state, or local government.