

# Unions support strong families with better benefits and due process, (**Economic Policy Institute Report-August 24, 2017**)

About six in ten adults (63 percent) say the average working person in the United States has less job security now than 20 or 30 years ago. And the lack of paid sick days is depriving many workers of funds needed for basic necessities—an especially difficult problem for the lowest-wage workers, about three-fourths of whom don't get any paid sick days. Uncertain work hours, last-minute shift changes, and other scheduling practices are also hurting families. And research shows that jobs that are insecure, unpredictable, and risky also affect communities and society as a whole.

But working people in unionized workplaces are more likely to have benefits that strengthen families and improve job security and predictability. (Some of the items in the list below provide union–nonunion comparisons not adjusted for personal characteristics and other factors, while some, where indicated, provide adjusted comparisons.)

## Union workers are more likely to be covered by employer-provided health insurance.

More than nine in 10—94 percent—of workers covered by a union contract have access to employer-sponsored health benefits, compared with just 67 percent of nonunion workers. When adjustments are made for other characteristics that may affect benefits coverage—such as sector (public or private), industry, region, employee status (full- or part-time) and establishment size—union workers are 18.3 percent more likely to be covered.

## Union employers contribute more to their health care benefits.

Unionized employers pay 77.4 percent more (per hour) toward their employees' health coverage (providing better benefits for a greater share of workers) than comparable nonunion employers. Occupations with higher-than-average union impact on employer provided health care include transportation, services, construction, extraction, and installation/maintenance/repair.

## Union workers have greater access to paid sick days.

Almost nine in 10—87percent—of workers covered by a union contract have access to paid sick days, compared with 69 percent of nonunion workers. Almost all—97 percent—of union workers in state and local government have paid sick days, compared with 86 percent of their nonunion peers. In the private sector, 79 percent of union workers have paid sick days compared with 67 percent of their nonunion peers.

## Union workers are more likely to have paid vacation and holidays.

In the private sector 89 percent of workers covered by a union contract get paid vacation and paid holidays, whereas 75 percent of nonunion workers get paid vacation and 76 percent get paid holidays. For workers overall (private and public) 80 percent of union workers get paid holidays while 75 percent of nonunion workers do. Equal shares of union and nonunion workers (74 percent) get paid vacation. When adjustments are made for other characteristics that may affect benefits coverage—such as sector (public or private), industry, region, employee status (full- or part-time), and establishment size—union workers are 3.2 percent more likely to have paid leave.

## Employers contribute more to paid vacation and holidays for union workers than nonunion workers.

Union employers contribute 11.4 percent more toward paid vacation and holidays for their workers than do comparable nonunion employers. Industries and occupations with higher-than-average employer contributions toward paid vacation and holidays include production, transportation, office and administrative support, service occupations, and construction.

## Unions provide due process.

Private employment in every state except for Montana is generally at will, with employers free to dismiss workers for almost any reason, except for reasons specified by law (e.g., on account of race, religion, disability, or other identities that are protected classes). Union contracts have provisions that allow workers to be fired, but only when the employer shows a proper, documented performance-related reason for dismissing the worker. Usually, contracts include a transparent process for disciplining workers, and the employer—except in extreme cases—must follow that process and give a worker a chance to improve performance before the employer moves to dismiss the worker.

## Union workers have more input into the number of hours they work.

Almost half (46percent) of nonunion workers say they have little or no input into the number of hours they work each week, compared with less than a quarter (22 percent) of union workers.

## Union workers get more advance notice of their work schedules.

More than one in three workers (34.4 percent) who belong to a union get at least a week's advance notice of their work schedules, whereas less than one in four nonunion workers (23.2 percent) do. (These calculations exclude workers whose schedules never change). Unions also bring better benefits to the broader labor force. Here is a specific example of

how unions have helped secure crucial benefits for workers by taking their concerns to the lawmakers and to the public at large:

### **Winning paid sick days for workers.**

There is no federal law that ensures all workers are able to earn paid sick days in the United States. For workers who fall ill or whose families depend on them to provide care in the event of an illness, this means sick days can be incredibly costly. This is a particular problem for low-wage workers, 73 percent of whom have no opportunity to earn paid sick days. Unions have participated in coalitions to enact paid sick days laws. For example, voter outreach by the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) helped win passage of a paid sick days law in Oregon, while SEIU was a key player in enacting the nation's strongest paid sick days policy, in Massachusetts.