

Public sector jobs hold steady but unions may not

The number of government jobs has held pretty steady over the last five years, after some ups and downs during and immediately after the Great Recession. Of the 56,000 public sector jobs in Vermont, more than 31,000 are in education from pre-K through higher ed.

LATEST BLS DATA - JULY 20, 2018			
	JUN 2018	MAY 2018	JUN 2017
Labor Force	349,287	348,861	344,631
Employment	339,514	339,187	334,172
Unemployment	9,773	9,674	10,459
Unemployment Rate	2.8%	2.8%	3.0%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)

Union membership

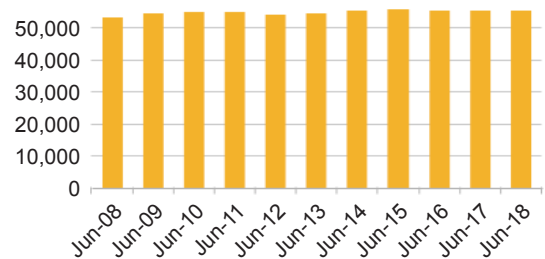
Vermont counted 32,000 union members—the lowest share of workers in a New England state in 2017—plus 3,000 nonmembers covered by union contracts. Now union participation, falling for decades, is likely to erode further. In *Janus v. AFSCME Council 31*, the Supreme Court ruled that public sector unions can no longer require employees who are not members but benefit from collective bargaining to contribute to the cost of that representation. Nationally, more than a third of public sector workers are unionized, compared with less than 8 percent in the private sector.

... and union wages

Union jobs tend to pay better than nonunion jobs. In 2017 the median wage for union jobs in Vermont was almost \$25 per hour, compared with just under \$18 for other jobs. Over the last decade, the real median wage—that is, adjusted for inflation—grew just over one-half of 1 percent per year for union workers, four times the rate for nonunion workers. That's not much for either. But, according to the [Economic Policy Institute](#), union gains tend to boost everyone's wages by guarding against wage theft, competing against nonunion employers, and enforcing labor standards.

Government jobs have barely grown or shrunk

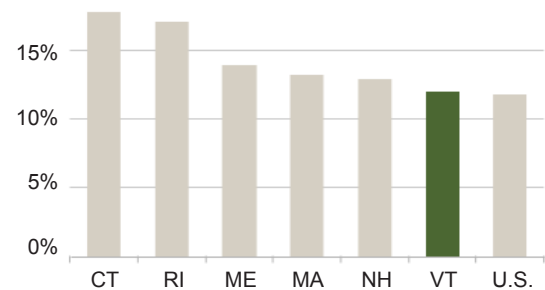
Federal, state and local government jobs, 2008-2018



Data source: Vermont Department of Labor

Vermont's union membership is near the national rate

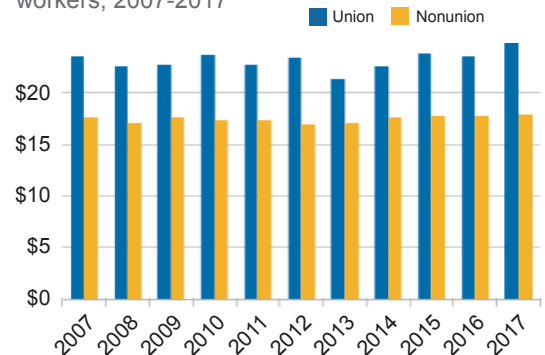
Share of employed workers represented by a union, New England states and U.S., 2017



Data source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Unionized workers consistently earn more

Real median wage, union and nonunion workers, 2007-2017



Data source: Economic Policy Institute analysis of Current Population Survey data