

A dip in the labor force and a slide for union membership

Half of Vermont counties lost workers last year, and the state's labor force dropped overall. The total change was small—75 fewer people working or actively looking for work—and may have been a temporary dip. Two years of growth preceded it, and the latest figures from the Vermont Department of Labor show the state's labor force grew again in the first half of 2019. Labor force numbers are based on workers' places of residence; jobs are counted at the place of employment. So while the labor force of Vermont's northwest counties fell, the region still accounted for

LATEST BLS DATA - JULY 19, 2019			
	JUN 2019	MAY 2019	JUN 2018
Labor Force	347,710	347,057	346,182
Employment	340,465	339,729	336,920
Unemployment	7,245	7,328	9,262
Unemployment Rate	2.1%	2.1%	2.7%

more than half of Vermont's job growth.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Union losses

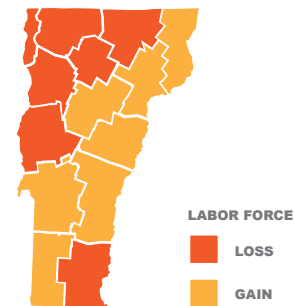
Vermont union membership shrank for the third straight year, to just 10.5 percent of wage and salaried workers, from 12.6 percent in 2015—the highest union participation rate since the Bureau of Labor Statistics first published Vermont-specific data in 2000. Vermont's decreasing union membership is part of a national trend: At 10.5 percent, the U.S. participation rate in 2018 was a little more than half of what it was 35 years ago.

Falling wages?

As union membership falls, Vermont's average wage is likely to follow. Union workers' median wage was 27 percent higher than nonunion workers' in 2018—about \$5.00 an hour more. With fewer workers earning union wages, Vermont's average wage can be expected to drop. While the overall effect may be small since unions represent just 10.5 percent of workers, it's a step in the wrong direction for Vermonters seeking a livable income.

Half of Vermont counties lost workers in 2018

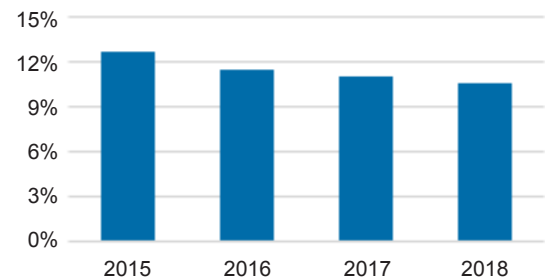
Labor force change by Vermont county, 2017-2018



Data source: Vermont Department of Labor

Union membership has declined for three years

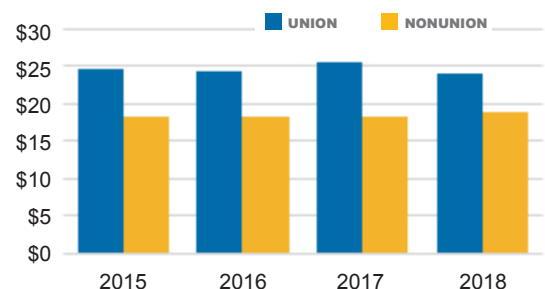
Percent of wage and salaried workers in Vermont unions, 2015-2018



Data source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Union workers earn more

Vermont real median wage, union and nonunion workers, 2015-2018



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