



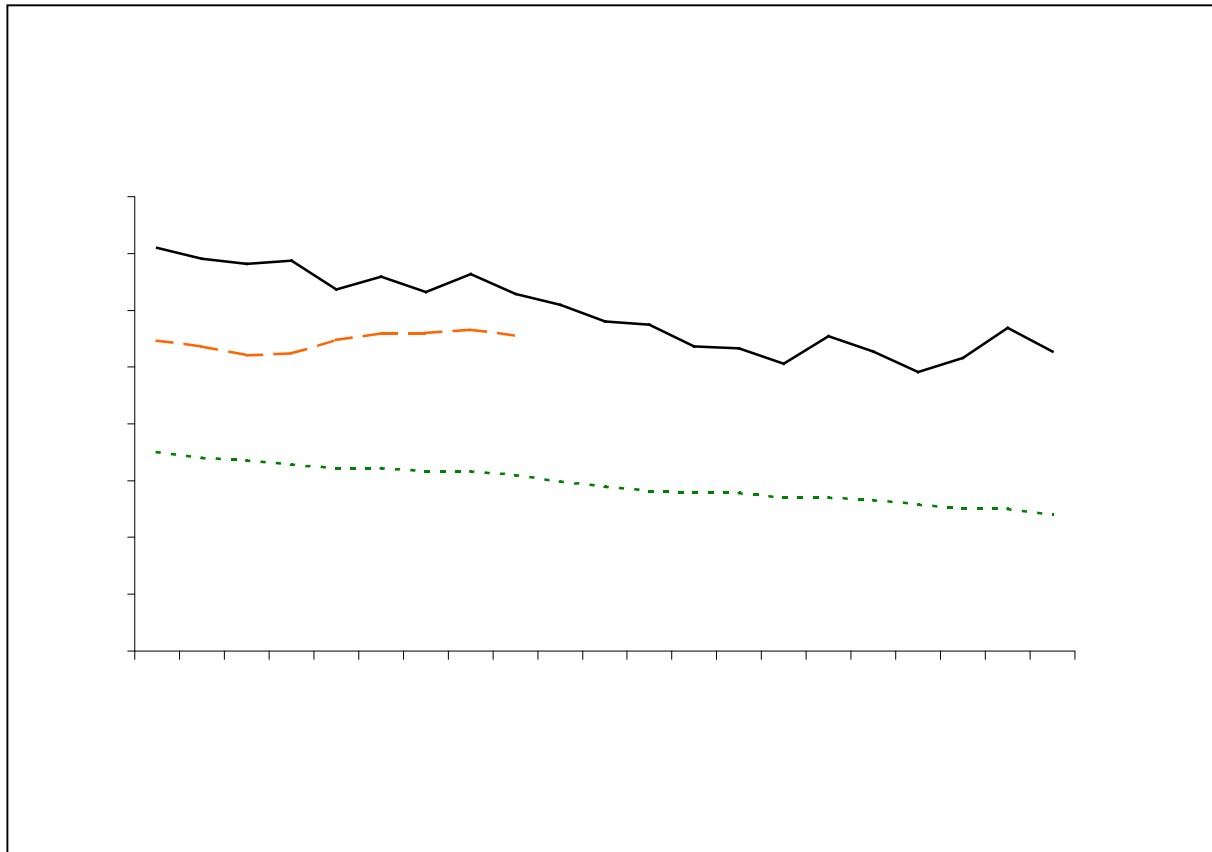
Immigrant workers have also registered large gains in union coverage since the late 1990s. In New York City, our findings for 2004-2006 reveal that of an immigrant workforce of 1.49 million wage and salary employees, 390,469 (26.2 per cent) are in union jobs. That mean

and Suffolk counties), and the wider New York Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA), as well as the rest of the country's 20 most populous metropolitan regions.

fell to a 29 per cent share of the work force in 1995-96, then dropped further to a low of 25.3 per cent in 2000. But in most years since then, the rate has fluctuated in a range of 26 to 28 per cent.

In contrast, Long Island's union membership density has over the same period followed a generally more stable pattern than the state or the city. Union density actually rose slightly from about 26 to 27 per cent in the

However, the city’s membership gains have not fully kept up with overall employment growth, resulting in a slight drop (one-half percentage point) in the union density rate since the late 1990s. And it remains well below the late 1980s level, when 34.4 percent of employed New Yorkers were in unions. In contrast, over the same period on Long Island, the unionization rate has remained remarkably stable, thereby shrinking the gap between city and suburb.



*Figure 1: Union Density Rate by Age Group, New York City, 1980-2006. The graph shows the union density rate for three age groups: 16-24 (dotted green line), 25-34 (dashed orange line), and 35 and over (solid black line). The y-axis represents the percentage of workers in unions, and the x-axis represents the year. The 16-24 age group consistently has the lowest union density rate, while the 35 and over age group has the highest. All three age groups show a general downward trend in union density rate over the period shown.*

## 1. Age Differences

Among major age groups in New York City, young working people aged 16 to 24 have the lowest rate of union coverage: 14.2 per cent in 2004-06 – less than half the rate of adults 35 and over (Table 2). Twenty years earlier, one in five of the city’s youngest workers had union coverage. By the late 1990s, that rate had slipped to 13 per cent. Since then both the number of 16-to-24 year-old union workers and their coverage density has been largely unchanged.

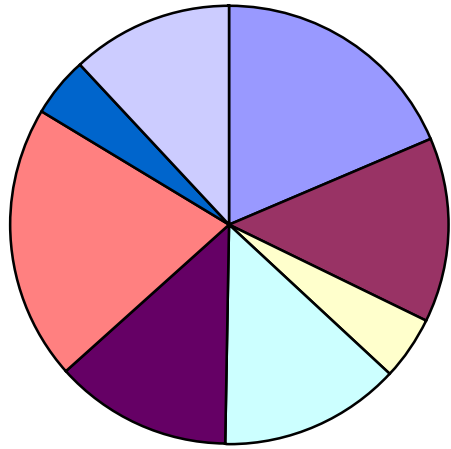
While 25-to-34 year-old New Yorkers continue to be much more likely than those under 25 to have jobs with union contract coverage, the number in unions actually fell by 5,153 from the late 1990s. But this was more than offset by union gains among their elders, of whom over one-third hold union jobs. Our findings reveal that only the city’s older workers aged 45 and over have experienced any sizable growth in union membership since the late 1990s.

A similar age ranking is evident on Long Island (Table 3), where just under ten per cent of the youngest workers have union coverage today, compared to over 30 percent of workers aged 45 to 64. Since the late 1990s there have been small declines in the number of 25-to-44 year-olds employed in covered jobs. A larger job gain among those 55 and over was the sole reason for a small net increase of about 4,450 more union jobs overall.



workers. And youth with parents of grandparents who are or were union members also appear more pro-union.

When students were asked their views on various statements about the impacts and value of unions, the results were much more clearly favorable to unions. Nearly 80 percent agreed that “Unions usually improve the pay & jobs of union members.” The much broader statement that “Unions are mostly good for the economy”





While the city's union coverage rate has fallen among men from 29.2 in the late 1990s to 26.2 percent today, the female rate has moved ahead from 28.3 to 29.2 percent over the same period. African American women are more likely than any other demographic group, male or female, to hold jobs with union representation: 43.8 per cent of black non-Hispanic women are now covered by unions. The black female union density rate of nearly 44 per cent is followed by that of African American men (36.5 per cent), Latina women (29.4 per cent), Latino men (27.9 per cent), white non-Hispanic women (27.4 per cent), white non-Hispanic men (26.1 per cent), Asian women (20.8 per cent) and Asian men (27.9 per cent). As Figure 5 shows, the union density rate of Hispanic working women not only exceeds that of white non-Hispanic women, Asian and other women, but is also higher than the rates of white, Asian, and Hispanic men.

Among the major Spanish origin ethnic groups in New York, union coverage is lowest for the mostly recent immigrants from Mexico (6.4 per cent) and highest for Puerto Rican workers (39 per cent). The Puerto

s

### 3. Immigration

After more than two decades of near-record immigration, a majority of New York City residents and a growing minority of its suburban neighbors are foreign born or the children of recent immigrants. While there is widespread recognition of the many economic, social and cultural benefits of multinational immigration, the rapid influxes of late have, as in the early twentieth century, ignited controversies over possible job and wage competition with the native born. A once-common stereotype held that most recent immigrants were so desperate and docile that they would accept the most derisory pay and working conditions without complaint. This was said to be even more the case with the undocumented, eager to avoid detection and deportation. Regardless of their legal status at entry, recent migrants often seemed largely “unorganizable” to many unions.

There is mounting evidence that many immigrants – far from being a uniformly docile, antiunion workforce ripe for endless employer abuse – are at least as willing as the native born to take collective action for better wages and working conditions. Nationwide, between 1996 and 2003, the number of foreign-born union members increased by 48 percent, to 1.8 million.<sup>14</sup> In sharp contrast, native-born union membership declined by 5.7 percent in this same period. It is indicative of their rapid labor force growth (as well as the stiff obstacles to union organizing) that immigrants’ union density still fell, from 12.1 percent unionized in 1996 to 10.2 percent 7 years later. Many immigrants, including the undocumented, have played leading roles in a number of major recent organizing drives, including the successful campaigns to unionize office building cleaners (“Justice for Janitors”), health care aides, limousine drivers and food service workers.<sup>15</sup>

In New York City, our findings for 2004-2006 reveal that of an immigrant workforce of 1.49 million wage and salary employees, 390,469 (26.2 per cent) are in union jobs (Table 8). That means that immigrants now account for 43.5 per cent of the city’s entire union work force.

As Table 8 indicates, the increase in unionized immigrants came entirely from naturalized foreign-born workers. The addition of 85,345 immigrants with US citizenship to union ranks more than made up for a loss of 27,048 non-citizen immigrants with union coverage since the 1990s. The latter are mostly recent arrivals, and their union density (17.8 per cent) is half that of foreign-born US citizens.

Likewise, on Long Island the far smaller immigrant population has followed a similar pattern since at least the late 1990s: increasing unionization among settled immigrants with US citizenship, declining union representation of more recent, non-citizen migrants. Native-born workers have the highest rate of union coverage (28.3 per cent), but foreign-born citizens are close behind (24.5 percent). The native-born and non-citizen union workforces actually fell slightly in this period, but increases among the foreign-born citizens were large enough for a net increase of 6,163 new immigrants in unions. Since immigrant workers were the sole source of the net increase of 5,550 new unionized workers since the late 1990s.

More labor unions in New York and elsewhere appear to

result was a decline in private sector union density from 27.7 to 20 per cent by the late 1990s.

Since then, both the private and the public sector have rebounded from the 2001 recession, though with much less new job growth in the latter than in the former. This trend brought the public share of total city jobs down to 15.3 per cent in 2004-2006, 3 percentage points lower than two decades earlier. The number of union jobs rebounded as well, and slightly increased the union coverage rate in the public sector while stopping its further erosion in the private sector. In fact, the creation of 16,677 net additional public sector unionized jobs accounted for a disproportionate 25 per cent share of all the city's additional union jobs (+66,492) in this period.

Which parts of the public sector have gained new jobs and which have lost since the 1990s? Table 10 shows that the less unionized (56.2 per cent in the mid-2000s)

recent changes in unionization locally. Our estimates suggest that union membership has increased in both New

unionized metro area, unions' organizing efforts and wage gains have not been enough so far to close the enormous gap between the average worker's rising productivity and stagnating real wages. And the recent declines in coverage of youth and non-citizen immigrants raise doubts about unions' prospects for future growth.

At the same time, the new findings here of impressive local gains in coverage of fast-growing segments of the work force, like female and naturalized immigrant workers, suggest that, even among groups posing special challenges to workplace organizing, the current state of New York unions remains hopeful.

***Largest Metro Areas, 2006***

Rank	Metropolitan Area	Total Population	Population 18-24	Population 25-64	Population 65+
1	New York	18,183,825	840,463	8,871,076	8,472,386
2	Los Angeles	13,310,273	307,443	6,321,087	6,681,743
3	Chicago	10,796,820	1,858,761	6,954,367	1,983,792

**Table 2 Union Membership and Coverage Rates by Age Group, New York City**

**1987-1989**

<b>A E</b>	<b>E p p o n</b>	<b>r p</b>	<b>C o r</b>	<b>r p</b>	<b>C o r</b>
16-24	369,480	63,055	73,121	17.07	19.79
25-34	819,598	251,941	281,796	30.74	34.38
35-44	620,985	228,697	245,362	36.83	39.51
45-54	450,677	200,409	208,698	44.47	46.31
55-64	301,428	139,354	145,523	46.23	48.28
65+	78,516	23,667	25,620	30.14	32.63
Tota	2,640,684	907,123	980,120	34.35	37.12

**1997-1999**

<b>A E</b>	<b>E p p o n</b>	<b>r p</b>	<b>C o r</b>	<b>r p</b>	<b>C o r</b>
16-24	369,744	43,276	48,587	11.70	13.14
25-34	842,469	193,606	206,517	22.98	24.51
35-44	775,867	230,212	239,105	29.67	30.82
45-54	561,891	199,012	208,635	35.42	37.13
55-64	277,338	106,377	108,482	38.36	39.12
65+	59,801	18,396	19,463	30.76	32.55
Tota	2,887,110	790,879	830,790	27.39	28.78

**2004-2006**

<b>A E</b>	<b>E p p o n</b>	<b>r p</b>	<b>C o r</b>	<b>r p</b>	<b>C o r</b>
16-24	347,483	45,159	49,304	13.00	14.19
25-34	871,297	182,697	193,266	20.97	22.18
35-44	804,232	222,705	230,252	27.69	28.63
45-54	674,950	219,019	229,891	32.45	34.06
55-64	384,483	157,877	164,155	41.06	42.70
65+	103,059	28,877	30,413	28.02	29.51
Tota	3,185,504	856,334	897,282	26.88	28.17

Notes: :CLD estimations from CPS Outgoing Rotation Group (ORG) Earnings Files.  
Averages of 3-year pooled samples in economic peak periods are used to improve reliability of estimates.  
Membership rates are the percentage of employed workers (aged 16 and over) who are union members.  
Coverage rates are the percentage of workers (members and non-members) who are represented by a union or employee association contract.

**Table 3 Union Membership and Coverage Rates by Age Group, Long Island**

**1987-1989**

<b>A E</b>	<b>E p p n</b>	<b>r p</b>	<b>Co r</b>	<b>r p</b>	<b>Co r</b>
16-24	241,831	32,114	33,286	13.28	13.76
25-34	296,970	72,640	75,449	24.46	25.41
35-44	270,387	92,078	95,896	34.05	35.47
45-54	199,067	66,378	69,869	33.34	35.10
55-64	142,535	40,400	42,435	28.34	29.77
65+	31,674	8,562	8,869	27.03	28.00
Tota	1,182,465	312,172	325,805	26.40	27.55

**1997-1999**

<b>A E</b>	<b>E p p n</b>	<b>r p</b>	<b>Co r</b>	<b>r p</b>	<b>Co r</b>
16-24	165,910	19,316	21,340	11.64	12.86
25-34	275,979	67,965	70,562	24.63	25.57
35-44	344,945	97,890	101,172	28.38	29.33
45-54	253,870	85,429	89,299	33.65	35.17
55-64	122,714	39,042	39,601	31.82	32.27
65+	38,003	5,742	6,485	15.11	17.06
Tota	1,201,421	315,384	328,458	26.25	27.34

**2004-2006**

<b>A E</b>	<b>E p p n</b>	<b>r p</b>	<b>Co r</b>	<b>r p</b>	<b>Co r</b>
16-24	157,906	14,237	14,963	9.02	9.48
25-34	230,428	64,088	66,935	27.81	29.05
35-44	340,900	93,833	99,646	27.53	29.23
45-54	291,311	83,346	87,101	28.61	29.90
55-64	172,254	53,776	56,695	31.22	32.91
65+	63,320	8,170	8,669	12.90	13.69
Tota	1,256,119	317,450	334,008	25.27	26.59

Notes: See notes in previous tab e.



*Table 4 Union Coverage Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, 1987-2006, New York City*

**Table 5 Union Coverage Rates by Spanish Origin Group,  
1987-2006, New York City**

	E p p n	Co r	Co r
<b>1987-1989</b>			
Mexican	23,101	2,242	
Puerto Rican	208,790	92,640	..
Cuban	22,545	11,466	
Centra South American	180,590	61,403	.
Other	99,720	37,811	
Tota : A Hispanics	534,746	205,562	..
<b>1997-1999</b>			
Mexican	101,030	6,849	
Puerto Rican	236,482	89,001	.
Cuban	18,098	4,802	
Centra South American	233,579	53,515	..
Other	155,273	39,119	..
Tota : A Hispanics	744,462	193,286	
<b>2004-2006</b>			
Mexican	91,676	5,899	.
Puerto Rican	227,886	89,613	
Cuban	12,756	3,516	
Centra South American	446,697	122,482	.
Other	16,746	6,062	
Tota : A Hispanics	795,761	227,573	

Notes:CLD estimates from 2006 CPS Outgoing Rotation Group (ORG) Earnings Files.  
Estimates are for wage and salary workers, ages 16

**Table 6 Union Coverage Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, 1987-2006, Long Island**

	F E p p n Co r			o r Co r		
	E p p n	Co r	Co r	E p p n	Co r	Co r
<b>1987-1989</b>						
White, non-Hispanic	468,327	98,543	21.04	561,639	173,579	30.91
B ack, non-Hispanic	45,313	14,920	32.93	38,501	18,297	47.52
Asian, Other	9,101	3,058	33.60	9,869	3,409	34.54
Hispanic	20,973	4,791	22.85	30,658	9,208	30.03
Tota	543,714	121,313	22.31	640,667	204,492	31.92
<b>1997-1999</b>						
White, non-Hispanic	490,842	114,902	23.41	490,646	155,086	31.61
B ack, non-Hispanic	38,734	12,561	32.43	37,460	14,127	37.71
Asian Pacific Is ander	11,117	1,116	10.04	18,804	1,426	7.58
Other	323	0	0.00	286	0	0.00
Hispanic	51,659	9,693	18.76	61,550	19,548	31.76
Tota	592,675	138,272	23.33	608,746	190,187	31.24
<b>2004-2006</b>						
White, non-Hispanic	472,916	119,626	25.30	478,955	143,979	30.06
B ack, non-Hispanic	54,555	18,919	34.68	44,712	12,612	28.21
Asian	28,072	2,928	10.43	28,182	7,603	26.98
Other	2,556	738	28.86	3,193	1,120	35.06
Hispanic	68,997	11,868	17.20	73,982	14,615	19.76
Tota	627,095	154,079	24.57	629,023	179,928	28.60

Notes: CLD estimates from 2006 CPS Outgoing Rotation Group (ORG) Earnings Files.

Estimates are based on wage and salary workers, ages 16 and over. Hispanics may b6)-201(b)-20135.6(7)-420.0(4)-3.3(5)1818733(O)1.37(4)183

**Table 7 Union Coverage Rates by Spanish Origin Group,  
1987 - 2006, Long Island**



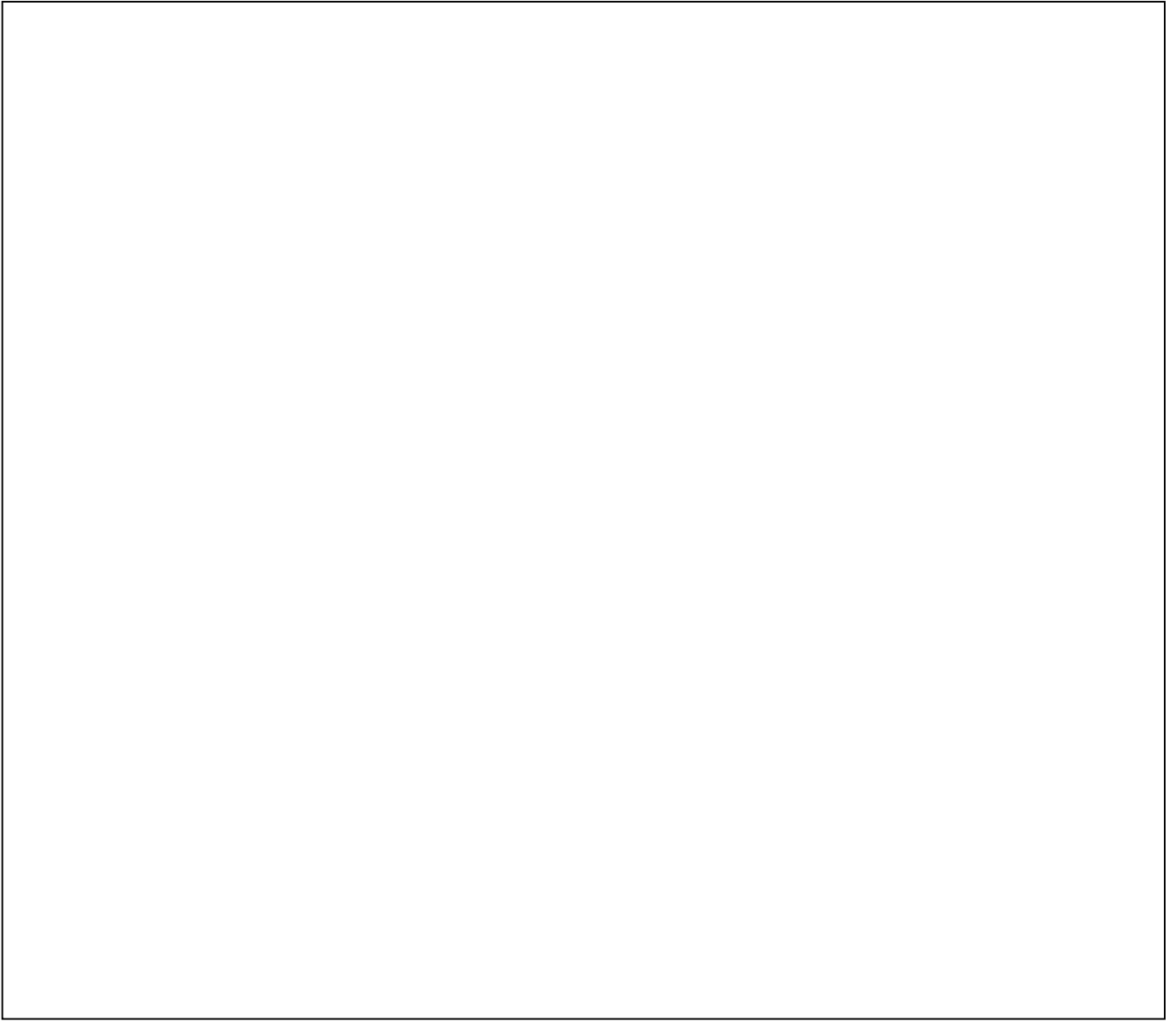
**Table 9 Union Coverage by Public and Private Employment Sectors, New York City and Long Island, 1987 to 2006**

E Y C Y	or			E p p n	r or	
	E p p n	Co r	Co r ;		Co r	Co r ;
	486,530	382,174	78.55	2,155,182	597,946	27.74
	478,695	348,280	72.76	2,408,414	482,510	20.03
	486,582	364,947	75.00	2,698,921	532,335	19.72

A D	or			E p p n	r or	
	E p p n	Co r	Co r ;		Co r	Co r ;
	225,916	152,045	67.30	958,465	173,760	18.13
	236,862	178,813	75.49	964,559	149,645	15.51
	272,652	199,303	73.10	983,467	134,705	13.70

**Table 10 Public Sector Union Coverage, by Government Level, New York City and Long Island, 1987 to 2006**

	E Y C Y			A D		
	E p p n	Co r	Co r ;	E p p n	Co r	Co r ;
<b>1997-1999</b>						
Federa	62,877	35,760	56.87	26,794	15,646	58.40
State	64,000	41,451	64.77	43,686	29,159	66.75
Loca	351,819	271,069	77.05	166,382	134,008	80.54
Tota	478,696	348,280	72.76	236,862	178,813	75.49
<b>2004-2006</b>						
Federa	59,522	33,444	56.19	31,222	19,964	63.94
State	72,785	51,596	70.89	47,198	33,480	70.94
Loca	354,276	279,907	79.01	194,233	145,858	75.09
Tota	486,582	364,947	75.00	272,652	199,303	73.10



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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This article is an extract of the full report, which contains additional tables and technical material. A pdf copy can be downloaded from the working papers section of the website: [www.hofstra.edu/cld](http://www.hofstra.edu/cld).

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007. "Union Membership in New York and New Jersey 2006," *BL r ss as* (May 22), [www.bls.gov/ro2](http://www.bls.gov/ro2). Nearly half of all the country's union members are concentrated in just six states: New York, California, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

<sup>3</sup> Hirsch, Barry T., David A. Macpherson and Wayne G. Vroman. 2001. "Estimates of Union Density by State" *Mont y Labor v , w*, 124 (7), July: 51–55.

. The 12 states with higher union density than New York in 1964 were: Michigan (44.8%), Washington (44.5%), Indiana (40.9%), Alaska (39.7%), New Jersey (39.4%), Oregon (38.9%), Pennsylvania (37.7%), Ohio (37.6%), Montana (37.4%), Minnesota (37%), West Virginia (36.5%), Illinois (35.6%).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Hirsch, Barry T and David A. Macpherson. 2002. "Union Membership and Coverage Database from the Current Population Survey: Note" *Industr ,a and Labor at ,ons v , w*, 56 (2), January: 349–54; Hirsch, Barry T and David A. Macpherson. 2003. "Union Membership and Coverage Database from the Current Population Survey: Note" *Industr ,a and Labor at ,ons v , w*, 56 (2), January: 349–54. See our technical appendix in the full report for more details.

<sup>5</sup> Among recent studies, see for example: Bennett, James and Bruce Kaufman. 2001.  *Futur o r ,vat ctor n ,on ,s ,nt*, Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe; Bronfenbrenner, Kate, *t a*. (ed). 1998. *r an , ,n to ,n w s arc on n ,on trat , s*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press; DeFreitas, Gregory. 1993. "Unionization Among Racial and Ethnic Minorities," *Industr ,a and Labor at ,ons v , w*, January: pp. 284–301; Farber, Henry and Bruce Western. 2001. "Accounting for the Decline of Unions in the Private Sector: 1973–98," *Journ o Labor s arc*, 22, 3 (Summer): 459–485; Freeman, Richard and Joel Rogers. 2006. *at or rs ant* (Updated Edition). New York: Cornell University Press; Kleiner, Morris. 1997. "Intensity of Management Resistance: Understanding the Decline of Unionisation in the Private Sector," *Journ o Labor s arc* 22, 3 (Summer): 519–540; Lalonde, Robert J. and Bernard D. Meltzer. 1991. "Hard Times for Unions: Another Look at the Significance of Employer Illegailities," *n ,v rs ,ty o C ,ca o Law v , w*, 48: 953-1010; Schmitt, John and Ben Zipperer. 2007. "Dropping the Ax: Illegal Firings During Union Elelction Campaigns," *CE port*. Washington DC: Center for Economic Policy Research, [www.cepr.net](http://www.cepr.net).

<sup>6</sup> US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2007. "Union Members in 2006," *BL r ss as* (January), [www.bls.gov/cps](http://www.bls.gov/cps).

<sup>7</sup> See the international comparisons in DeFreitas, Gregory (ed). Forthcoming 2008. *Youn or rs ,nt Goba Econo y Job C a n s ,n ort A r ,ca Europ and Japan*, Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.

<sup>8</sup> The poll was contracted by the AFL-CIO, 1999. *H , Hop s L ,tt ,ust*, Washington DC: AFL-CIO Mediacenter.

<sup>9</sup> Hetter, Katia. 2001. "Organized State of Mind: Poll Shows Enduring Support for Unions," *wsday* (Sept. 3).

Telephone interviews were conducted with a sample of 1511 persons, ages 18 and over, generated by Random Digit Dialing (to cover all possible phone numbers, listed and unlisted). Sample sizes were 600 in Queens and 911 in Long Island.