

SOLIDARITY FOREVER? - AN ANALYSIS OF CHANGES IN UNION DENSITY

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SUMMARY AND HIGHLIGHTS

For the purposes of this paper, union density, unionization and union coverage refer to the proportion of paid workers whose terms of employment are covered by a collective agreement.

Based almost entirely on data from Statistics Canada's *Labour Force Survey* for 1997 and 2002 and from comparable earlier household survey, the paper briefly examines changes in union density, from 1984 to 2002, and provides a much more comprehensive analysis of changes, from 1997 to 2002. (Data on union coverage has been available from the *Labour Force Survey* only since 1997.)

Part I summarizes forces driving union density. Density is basically a function of changes in employment in already unionized workplaces compared to non-union workplaces, and the rate at which non-union workers are organized into unions. Unfortunately, it is impossible to fully separate out the two key factors. New organizing in the 1990's has extended union coverage to somewhere between 1.4% and 1.8% of all non-union workers each year, but the positive impact on union density has been offset by overall changes in employment in union and non-union workplaces. New organizing has made a difference, but it has been a case of "rowing against the tide" in the job market as a whole. (A separate paper looks in detail at union growth from new organizing.)

It should be noted that union membership can be increasing even if density is decreasing. Between 1997 and 2002, union coverage grew by 350,000 to 4.2 million Canadian workers, but density fell by 1.5 percentage points, from 33.7% to 32.2%. Density has been falling in Canada but, unlike the US, unions have still been growing in terms of total numbers.

It should also be noted that union density may fall even if employment is stable or growing in union workplaces. What counts is not just what is happening in union workplaces, but in non-union workplaces as well. Union density has declined since 1997 more because of strong job growth in non-union workplaces than because of job losses in union workplaces. Again, unfortunately, it is difficult to precisely separate out the two factors.

Part II looks at structural changes in the job market impacting upon union density. The key strong points of Canadian unions as of the mid-1980's were among (mainly male) 'blue-collar' workers in primary industries, manufacturing, transportation, utilities and construction,

and among (mainly women) workers in public and social services. Unions were (and remain) very weak in private services.

It is often thought that union decline is associated with 'de-industrialization' and the erosion of male blue-collar jobs. However, from 1984 to 2002, the total job share of manufacturing declined only modestly, from 16.9% to 15.1% of all jobs. Primary industry, transportation and utilities jobs have also declined modestly, but from already low levels as a share of all jobs. The construction share of all jobs has slightly increased. The proportion of men in 'blue-collar' occupations fell only a little, from 44.0% to 40.6%, between 1990 and 2002.

It is also often thought that privatization and contracting-out have eliminated union jobs. Like the impacts of one-sided free trade deals and deregulation on the private sector, it is clearly the case that economic and policy changes have shifted the balance of power against unions in public services. The direct public sector has shrunk, from 26.1% to 22.2% of all jobs, since 1984. However, the employment share of the 'broader public sector' – direct government employment *plus* employment in health and social services, and education – has remained almost unchanged. And, union density among private sector workers in health and social services is fairly high.

Looking at private services, there has been an important shift of employment to business services since 1984. This wide range of mainly low union density industries has grown, from 5.5% to 10.2% of all jobs. Meanwhile, the jobs share of consumer services like trade and accommodation and food services has changed very little.

Another important change has been a modest decline in the still very high proportion of women in clerical, sales and services, and a corresponding increase in the proportion of women in technical and professional jobs requiring higher levels of education. However, the growth in these jobs for women has taken place mainly in high union density public and social services. Because job growth among women has been strongly tilted to public and social services, it has not tilted the scales against union density.

Finally, there has been no major shift since the mid-1980's from larger to smaller workplaces. Small workplaces of less than 20 workers, which have always had low union density, have been a major feature of the job market for at least the last twenty years.

In summary, 'structural' changes in the job market in terms of the kinds of jobs being created have not been a big negative for union density. It is changes *within* broad industries and occupations which have been most important.

Part III provides an overview of changes in union density since 1984. In 2002, just under one in three Canadian workers were covered by a collective agreement. The union coverage rate has trended down, by more than nine percentage points, from a high of 41.8% in 1984 to 32.2% in 2002.

The decline in density has been gradual rather than sudden, and it was concentrated in the recession and slow recovery period of the late 1980's through the mid-1990's. The decline has slowed with the economic recovery in recent years. Indeed, union density in 2002 was almost exactly the same as in 1999.

The decline in union coverage has been much more pronounced among men than among women. The coverage rate for men has fallen from almost one-half in the mid-1980's, and has continued to slip since 1997. The rate for women has fallen much less, and has remained steady at 32.0% since 1997. The gap in union coverage rates between women and men has shrunk from almost 10 percentage points in 1984 to just one-third of one percentage point today.

Unfortunately, no consistent data series for union coverage by public/private sector is available. However, union coverage in the private sector has probably fallen from about one in four in the mid-1980's to the present level of just under one in five.

The continuing slippage in private sector union density since 1997 is particularly disturbing given that this has been a period of strong job growth, not generally marked by the large layoffs and plant closures which hit union workplaces in the recession of the late 1980's and early 1990's. It suggests that there has been much more hiring in non-union than in union workplaces, combined with a low level of successful new organizing.

Overall union density would have fallen faster since the mid-1980's and in the past five years if it were not for the fact that density has remained high in the public sector, and that the public sector has continued to provide a major share of total employment.

Looking at union density by industry, there has been a marked decline in manufacturing since 1984, from one-half to one-third of all workers, and a sharp decline in transportation. Coverage in construction has been quite steady. Union density has remained very high in public and social services, and has generally slipped from already low levels in private services. There has been a generally pervasive fall in union density across the private sector, but it has been less marked in private services than in the traditional bastions of union strength in sectors with a high proportion of 'blue-collar' workers. (Changes since the mid-1980's should be interpreted cautiously because of a change in industry definitions.)

Part IV provides an analysis of changes in union density by detailed industries from 1997 to 2002. For this period, the data are fully consistent. This section looks at changes in the composition of jobs, and changes in density, and provides separate data for women and men in sectors where women make up a significant share of employment.

- Union density in the private sector has fallen by 1.9 percentage points since 1997, from 21.5% to 19.6%. Among men, coverage has fallen, from 26.1% to 23.3%, while among women it has fallen, from 16.0% to 14.5%. While the decline is, on the surface, a bit less among women, the rate of decline among men and women is about the same.
- The private sector paid workforce grew by 14.6% between 1997 and 2002, while the union-covered private sector workforce grew by only 4.6%. In absolute numbers, the private sector workforce grew by 1.3 million, while the number of union-covered private sector workers rose by just 88,000.
- In primary industries, both the (already low) employment share and union density have slipped. In the most important sub-sector – mining and oil and gas – density has fallen, from 28.9% to 23.4%.
- In utilities, with a steady but small employment share, coverage fell, from 72.3% to 67.5%.

- In construction, union coverage rose, from 32.4% to 33.6%, with the increase concentrated entirely in trade contracting. This suggests that the 'craft union' model remains a source of strength.
- In manufacturing, the employment share rose, from 16.8% to 17.1%, of all paid jobs, but union density fell sharply, from 36.3% to 32.4%. This in itself explains 0.6 percentage points of the 1.5 percentage point decline in overall union density.
- Density fell more among men than among women in manufacturing, and a detailed sub-sector analysis shows that the fall, while pervasive, was greatest in transportation equipment, plastics and rubber, and textiles. A major cause was much faster job growth in non-union firms. Density held up better than average, though at low levels, in 'high-tech' manufacturing. Data for occupations suggests that part of the manufacturing decline is associated with a shift from highly unionized 'blue-collar' jobs to technical and professional jobs.
- In transportation, density fell, from 45.2% to 43.7%.
- The decrease in union density from 1997 to 2002 was less marked in private services.
- In financial services, density rose, from 10.4% to 10.7%, because of an increase in insurance industries.
- In trade, density fell, from 14.9% to 14.1%, but was almost unchanged in retail trade (falling only from 15.4% to 15.3%).
- In accommodation and food services, density fell, from 8.7% to 8.0%.
- In information, cultural and recreational services, density fell, from 30.7% to 27.3%.
- In business services, density was stable at low levels.
- In public and social services, union coverage was unchanged at 75.8% in direct public sector jobs, which did not shrink as a share of all jobs between 1997 and 2002. Because of the fall in private sector density, the share of all union jobs which are to be found in the public sector rose, from 50.4% to 52.5%.
- In health and welfare services, the share of total employment has grown, and the public sector share of jobs has shrunk only slightly, from 57.2% to 56.2%. Union coverage in the public sector part of health and welfare services rose, from 73.9% to 78.7%, while union coverage in the private part (which includes not-for-profits) fell, from 31.5% to 28.1%. The net effect was that union density rose from 55.8% to 56.5%.
- In educational services, where the public sector share of jobs is very high and is rising, union coverage rose, from 73.5% to 73.8%.
- Direct government (public administration) employment fell, from 6.9% to 5.9% of all jobs, mainly because of cuts in municipal jobs, while union coverage remained constant at 72.2%.

Part V looks at union density in selected 'white-collar' occupations. The shift of jobs towards professional and technical occupations requiring higher levels of education is having a negative impact on union density because these kinds of jobs are very unlikely to be union jobs when they are in the private sector. Union density for these kinds of jobs is low and falling in the private sector, while density is high and stable in public and social services.

Part VI looks at the impacts of union density which come from the growth in part-time jobs. While union density is lower for part-time jobs, the proportion of women in part-time jobs has been falling, and union coverage of part-timers has been increasing in both the public and private sector. In the private sector, union coverage of part-timers rose, from 12.9% to 13.1%, between 1997 and 2002.

Part VII looks at the impacts of workplace size. Again, while workers in small workplaces (less than 20 workers) are much less likely to be unionized, the share of such jobs in the economy did not increase from 1997 to 2002, and union coverage rose in small workplaces while falling in large workplaces. In the private sector, union coverage in large workplaces (500 plus) fell sharply, from 47.3% to 40.9%, while rising slightly (though to just 8%) in very small workplaces.

Part VIII looks at union density by province since 1997, further broken down between men and women, and public and private sector workers. In 2002, in descending order, the highest union density provinces were Quebec (40.4%), Newfoundland and Labrador (39.1%), Manitoba (36.1%), Saskatchewan (35.8%), and BC (34.7%). In ascending order, the lowest union density provinces were Alberta (24.5%), Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia (all at 28.1%), and PEI at 30.9%.

Only Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, and British Columbia now have private sector unionization rates above the national average of 20%. The union coverage rate for Ontario is notably low considering Ontario's strong manufacturing base, and the rate for Quebec is notably high. High union density provinces have tended to have relatively union-friendly (PQ and NDP) governments in the 1980's and 1990's.

Generally speaking, the provinces with the highest union density in 1997, overall and in the private sector, experienced the smallest relative declines in density between 1997 and 2002. This suggests that weakness leads to further weakness.

Part IX looks at union density by city (census metropolitan area). Union density in very large cities, particularly the huge Toronto CMA, tends to be lower than the respective provincial averages. Union coverage in the Toronto CMA is now just 22.4%. Relatively low union coverage in major urban areas is of concern given that most job growth is taking place here, driven in large part by immigration. Strikingly, union density for women rose in the majority of cities, while falling almost everywhere for men.

Part X looks briefly at union coverage for workers of colour, Aboriginal workers and workers with disabilities. Union coverage rose slightly for all of these groups between 1996 and 2001. Union coverage among Aboriginal workers and workers with disabilities is about the same as the workforce as a whole (though it must be noted that both groups are very under-represented in the paid workforce for different reasons). Union coverage among workers of colour is lower than average, but rose from 19.7% to 21.3% between 1996 and 2001.

While the purpose of the paper is to provide data for the purposes of the discussion, it is appropriate to underline some very broad conclusions:

- Declining overall union density is a product of what is happening in the private sector.
- Within the private sector, unions have done worst in traditional areas of strength, and best in traditional areas of weakness. Thus, unions have done best in private services as opposed

to mining, manufacturing, transportation, and utilities, and, probably relatedly, best in part-time jobs, and best in smaller workplaces. The major exception is construction where union density has increased.

- Union density has held up much better among women than among men. High union density in public and social services combined with a high concentration of women in such services explains the closing of the union coverage gap between women and men. However, it seems likely that recent organizing efforts among women in the private service sector have had some positive impact on density.
- A small but growing source of weakness has been low and falling union density in technical and professional occupations in the private sector and, relatedly, in professional, scientific and technical services to business. To this extent, the shift to the 'new knowledge-based economy' is undermining union density.
- Changes in union density within industries seem to be more important than 'structural' shifts of employment between industries.
- Union density has held up better in provinces with relatively labour-friendly governments. Of the larger provinces, Quebec and BC have been major sources of union strength, and Ontario and Alberta have been major sources of weakness.

I. INTRODUCTION: FORCES DRIVING UNION DENSITY

Union density refers to the proportion of paid workers whose terms of employment are covered by a collective agreement. Paid workers are employees, i.e. they are *not* self-employed. About 2% of all paid workers are covered by collective agreements, but are not individual members of a union. They may be lower-level supervisors, or persons who pay dues but refuse to be union members on religious or other grounds. Throughout this study, the terms union density, union coverage and unionization refer to the proportion of paid workers who are covered by a collective agreement. Union density is driven by two key driving forces: changes in employment in already unionized workplaces compared to non-union workplaces; and the rate at which non-union workers join unions.

'Structural change' in the economy refers to the extent to which different industrial sectors and/or different occupations are growing faster or slower than average. For example, it is often believed that falling union density has been driven by 'de-industrialization' and the related erosion of male 'blue-collar' jobs. It is also often believed that unions have been negatively impacted by the rise of 'new economy' sectors like high tech and computer services, by the shift of employment to highly skilled professionals, and by a shift to smaller workplaces.

'Structural change' refers to changes *within* and not just between sectors and occupations. Clearly, union density will be driven by the relative rate of job growth in union and non-union parts of the same industry. For example, union density in auto parts manufacturing may fall because non-union firms grow faster than union firms, or because more union firms go out of business.

It has to be borne in mind that union density is the *proportion* of all paid workers who are covered by a collective agreement. It is quite possible for union coverage to rise in terms of total numbers, while falling as a percentage of all workers. Union density in Canada fell, from 33.7% to 32.2%, between 1997 and 2000. However, the total *number* of workers covered by the terms of a collective agreement rose by more than 350,000, from 3,844,000 to 4,201,000, over this period. Union density will fall if unionized jobs shrink, not in absolute numbers, but in comparison to non-union jobs in the economy as a whole or in an industrial sector. It can be noted that *absolute* union membership has been falling in the US, but not in Canada.

Without going into great detail, Canadian unions have been severely impacted by massive re-structuring in both the public and private sectors in the 1980's and 1990's. The major driving forces have been one-sided trade agreements and deregulation, which have greatly increased competitive pressures in the private sector, and privatization and contracting-out of public sector services. Many union jobs have been lost because of plant closures and layoffs. Many unionized employers in the 1980's and 1990's have been extremely reluctant to hire new workers.

Generally speaking, the rate of job growth or job loss in *already unionized* firms and sectors compared to non-union firms and sectors is a much more important driving force of union density than is new organizing. However, organizing non-union workers can make a difference.

New union certifications (minus decertifications) have made a fairly significant contribution to overall union density. (Johnson, 2002.) In the 1990's (1990 to 1998), unions have organized in the range of 60,000 to 100,000 workers per year, or 1.4% to 1.8% of all non-union workers. This was down slightly from the new organizing rate in the 1980's, which was in a range of about 1.5% to 2.0% of all non-union workers. Organizing activity would have led to total union membership growing by an average of 2.1% per year in the 1980's and 1.7% per year in the 1990's *if* nothing else had changed. However, union organizing was rowing against the tide, and the tide was rolling unions back despite considerable organizing efforts.

Obviously, the success rate of new organizing itself reflects many factors, including government legislation, the attitudes of employers, the efforts of unions, and the attitude of non-union workers towards unions. Structural changes in the economy have made employers more hostile to unions, resulting in stronger resistance to new organizing and, often, successful lobbying for more restrictive labour legislation.

There is strong evidence that most Canadian workers would prefer to be represented by a union. One major recent survey suggests that half (49%) of adult workers and 57% of younger workers want union representation. This is particularly the case for workers, especially younger workers, who have direct experience of unions or know about unions through family or close friends. There is, unsurprisingly, a close relation between support for unions and knowledge of what unions do in terms of providing a 'voice' for workers in the workplace and improving wages and benefits. (Gomez et al., 2001.) Support for unions is stronger than average among young workers, women and workers of colour.

New organizing has slowed rather than reversed the overall decline in union density. This may reflect not just 'rowing against the tide,' but also a failure by unions to devote enough

resources to the task, to co-operate more in organizing, and to reach out sufficiently to the 'new workforce.' The decline in union density may reflect difficulties reaching younger workers, workers of colour and recent immigrants, and precarious women workers in low-wage private services jobs. It may also reflect the fact that unions which have had a hard time hanging onto and making gains for current members find it hard to organize new members.

There is a circular effect between bargaining strength and organizing: declining density means less bargaining leverage, which means unions are then less attractive to the unorganized. Declining density also means that less internal resources are available for organizing. Finally, there may be a lack of 'fit' between the current legal/organizational model of workplace-based unions, and the realities of a changing job market. It is difficult for unions to organize and make gains for workers in very small workplaces, let alone for contract workers and the self-employed.

II. STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN THE ECONOMY: A LONG-TERM OVERVIEW

Table 1 provides data on total employment (including self-employment) by industry in 1984 and 2002. (We use 1984 as the base year, since the next section provides an overview of changes in union density from 1984 to 2002.)

The traditionally high union density sectors in Canada have been the 'goods sector' industries

— particularly manufacturing, mining and oil and gas, and construction — as well as transportation, communications and utilities, and public and social services. Union density has been much lower than average in private services, such as finance, trade, accommodation and food services, and services to business. Reflecting this industrial pattern, union density has been highest for male 'blue-collar' workers, and for public and social services workers, the majority of whom are women.

As shown in the table, the total employment share of primary industries has fallen since the mid-1980's, but from already very low levels. Utilities has remained about the same size,

Table 1 Percentage Distribution of Employment by Industry, 1984-2002			
	1984	2002	
Agriculture	4.0%	2.1%	
Forestry, Fishing, Mining, Oil, and Gas	2.7%	1.8%	
Utilities	1.0%	0.9%	
Construction	5.4%	5.7%	
Manufacturing	16.9%	15.1%	
Transportation and Warehousing	5.2%	4.9%	
Trade	16.3%	15.8%	
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	6.3%	5.8%	
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	3.4%	6.4%	
Management of Companies, Administrative and Support Services	2.1%	3.8%	
Education	6.4%	6.6%	
Health Care and Social Assistance	9.1%	10.4%	
Information, Culture and Recreation	3.8%	4.6%	
Accommodation and Food	5.6%	6.5%	
Public Administration	6.7%	5.0%	
Other Services	5.0%	4.5%	
Percentage Distribution by Type of Employment			
Employees	86.1%	84.8%	
(of which) - Public Sector	26.1%	22.2%	
(of which) - Private Sector	73.9%	77.7%	
Self-Employed	13.9%	15.2%	

Source: Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Survey*.

while transportation has shrunk a little. Manufacturing has, somewhat surprisingly, shrunk only a little as a share of total employment, from 16.9% to 15.1% of all jobs, and construction has grown. In summary, the traditional sources of male, 'blue-collar,' unionized jobs have shrunk a little, but not dramatically.

The employment share of public administration (i.e. direct employment by government) has fallen due to privatization and downsizing, from 6.7% to 5.0% of all jobs. However, employment in mainly public sector education and health care and social assistance services has increased from a combined 15.5% of all jobs in 1984 to 17.0% in 2002. The total public sector share of all employees has fallen, from 26.1% to 22.2%, but there is significant union density among private sector and not just public sector workers in health and social services. (Note that the "private sector" includes employees of not-for-profit agencies.)

In the traditionally low union density private services sector, the employment share of both finance and trade has shrunk a bit, while the share of accommodation and food services has risen a bit. Meanwhile, the employment share of business services – professional, scientific and technical services, and administrative and support services – has risen significantly from a combined total of 5.5% of all jobs in 1984 to 10.2% in 2002. The growth of business services – which includes a very wide range of jobs, from janitors and security guards, to lawyers and accountants, and computer systems staff – has been a major trend of the past two decades or so.

Table 2 provides an overview of changes in the occupational composition of the workforce in the 1990's, with separate data for women and men. Consistent with the industrial trends noted above, there has been a modest decline in traditional 'blue-collar' occupations among men. Between 1990 and 2002, the proportion of all men who were in the

Table 2

Occupational Segregation of Women and Men

% Distribution of Labour Force by Occupation	Men		Women		Weekly 2002
	1990	2002	1990	2002	
Managers (Not Senior)	10.8%	11.0%	7.1%	6.4%	\$1,117
	92.7%	94.2%	95.2%	96.0%	
Business, Finance, Administrative (of which: Secretarial, Administration, Clerical)	10.3%	9.8%	31.7%	27.2%	\$613
	78.1%	70.8%	93.1%	88.7%	
Natural and Applied Sciences	7.4%	9.8%	1.8%	3.0%	\$980
Health Occupations	1.8%	2.0%	9.3%	9.7%	\$689
Social Sciences (includes Education and Government)	4.7%	4.7%	7.7%	9.5%	\$834
Art, Culture, Recreation, Sport	2.1%	2.4%	2.7%	3.2%	\$579
Sales and Service Occupations	18.6%	19.7%	30.2%	32.2%	\$396
Trades, Transport and Equipment Operating	27.0%	24.7%	2.0%	2.0%	\$722
Primary Occupations	6.8%	5.2%	2.3%	1.5%	\$620
Occupations Unique to Processing, Manufacturing and Utilities	10.2%	10.7%	5.3%	5.2%	\$621
					\$651

Source: Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Survey*.

Table 3

Percentage Distribution of Employment by Establishment Size

Commercial Sector	1986	1997
<20	40.0	38.6
20-99	31.2	32.5
100-499	19.4	19.8
>500	9.4	9.1

Source: (1) Marie Drolet and Rene Morrisette. "Recent Evidence on Job Quality by Firm Size," Statistics Canada, 1998.

traditional blue-collar, high union density jobs — trades and equipment operators as well as manufacturing and processing occupations — fell, from 44.0% to 40.6%. Meanwhile, the employment share of men in a wide range of other occupations, particularly sales and service jobs as well as natural and applied sciences jobs, rose modestly.

Among women, the already low proportion of women in 'blue-collar' occupations fell, from 9.6% to 8.7%. The share of all women employed in generally low-paid and non-union sales and services jobs rose slightly

from 30.2% to 32.2%. There was, however, a significant decline in secretarial, clerical and administrative jobs among women, though this broad category of jobs still accounts for about one in four women's jobs. Women are still highly concentrated in 'pink-collar' clerical, sales and services jobs. These still account for almost six in ten jobs held by women. However, there has been a modest shift to higher level business jobs, and a continuing increase in health, social sciences and natural sciences occupations. There has also been a continuing increase in the already high proportion of women working in the skilled technical and professional occupations associated with public and social services.

It is often believed that unions have become weaker because of the decline of large workplaces. This may be part of the story in some sectors, particularly manufacturing. However, somewhat surprisingly, there has been little change since the mid-1980's in the distribution of employment by establishment size in the private sector. As shown in the table, in 1997, as in the mid-1980's, about 40% of workers were employed in very small workplaces with less than 20 workers. (Unfortunately, there is no consistent source of data from 1986 to 2002. Changes from 1997 to 2002 are reported below.) It is very difficult to organize small workplaces, and growing competition among small businesses may have made it harder to organize and gain leverage in bargaining. But, a shift from large to small workplaces does not really explain why union density has declined.

III. HISTORICAL TRENDS IN UNION DENSITY: AN OVERVIEW

The table provides reasonably consistent data on union coverage from 1984 to 2002 from Statistics Canada household surveys. (Until 1997, most data on unionization on Canada was from the CALURA survey, filed by unions, rather than from household labour force surveys. The break in the series has disguised the decline in Canadian union density to some degree, because CALURA underestimated union coverage in the 1980's by missing some smaller bargaining units. Fully consistent detailed data are available only for 1997 through 2002.)

In 2002, just under one in three Canadian workers were covered by a collective agreement. The union coverage rate has trended down, by more than nine percentage points from a high of 41.8% in 1984 to 32.2% in 2002. The decline in density has been gradual rather

than sudden, and it seems to have been concentrated in the recession and slow recovery period of the late 1980's through the mid-1990's. The decline has slowed with the economic recovery in recent years. Indeed, union density in 2002 was almost exactly the same as in 1999 and, as noted above, union coverage has recently grown in absolute numbers. This suggests that negative economic forces impacting on already unionized workplaces have played a more modest role in the recent past.

The decline in union coverage has been much more pronounced among men than among women. The coverage rate for men has fallen from almost half in the mid-1980's, and has continued to slip since 1997. The rate for women has fallen much less, and has remained steady at 32.0% since 1997. The gap in coverage rates between women and men has shrunk from almost 10 percentage points in 1984, to just one-third of one percentage point today.

Coverage rates are now almost the same for women and men. However, two-thirds of union women work in the public sector and one-third in the private sector, while well over one-half (61%) of unionized men work in the private sector. Coverage is much higher in the public sector (75.9%) than in the private sector (19.6%), and women in the public sector are more likely to be union members than are men. (The public sector consists of direct government employment, plus employment in directly government funded institutions, such as schools, universities and hospitals, but does not include many indirectly funded public and social services, such as child care and elder care.) Coverage in public and social services (public administration, education, and health and social services) has remained high, and increased between 1997 and 2002. Stable

Table 4

Changes in Union Coverage, 1984 - 2002

	1984	1988	1997	2002
Total	41.8	39.5	33.7	32.2
Men	46.0	43.2	35.2	32.3
Women	36.6	35.2	32.0	32.0
Public Sector	na	na	75.8	75.8
Private Sector	na	na	21.5	19.6
Age				
15-24	na	21.7	13.0	15.3
25-44	na	42.8	34.5	32.4
45-54	na	48.5	47.3	43.0
55 and over	na	44.3	37.8	36.3
Full-Time	45.5	43.1	36.0	33.8
Part-Time	23.4	30.5	23.6	24.2
Newfoundland	46.3	45.8	40.8	39.1
Prince Edward Island	35.2	36.0	29.1	30.9
Nova Scotia	42.5	37.3	30.3	28.1
New Brunswick	40.9	39.1	30.1	28.1
Quebec	49.7	46.2	41.4	40.4
Ontario	37.6	35.5	29.8	28.1
Manitoba	41.9	40.0	37.6	36.1
Saskatchewan	41.9	39.8	35.9	35.8
Alberta	33.4	38.0	25.8	24.5
British Columbia	46.4	40.0	36.3	34.7
Selected Industry				
Manufacturing	49.0	45.5	36.3	32.4
Construction	42.3	35.2	32.4	33.6
Transportation	58.4	57.8	45.2	43.7
Utilities	70.8	73.9	72.3	67.5
Trade	16.0	16.0	14.9	14.1
Accommodation and Food	11.5	13.2	8.7	8.0
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	12.9	12.2	10.4	10.7
Education	78.4	75.8	73.5	73.8
Health and Welfare	62.6	61.6	55.8	56.5
Public Administration	78.4	75.8	71.4	72.1

Source: Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Survey*, 1997 and 2002.

1984 and 1988 data are from the *Survey of Union Membership* and the *Labour Market Activity Survey*.

(As reported in J. David Arrowsmith, *Canada's Trade Unions: An Information Manual*. Industrial Relations Centre. Queen's University. 1992.)

Data are for workers covered by a collective agreement, slightly greater than union membership.

Industry data are not fully consistent due to change in classifications

union coverage for women compared to the continued decline among men since 1997 is mainly a function of the much greater likelihood of women working in public and social services.

There is no consistent long-term data on union coverage in the private sector. Likely, union density in the private sector has declined from about 25% in the mid-1980's to just under 20% today. (Note that Statistics Canada has changed its definition of the two sectors over time, so estimates of 30% coverage in the mid-1980's were too high compared to the 2002 definition.)

The continued slippage in private sector union density since 1997 – from 21.5% to 19.6% – is particularly disturbing given that this has been a period of fairly steady and, indeed, strong job growth. It suggests that there has been much more hiring in non-union than in union workplaces, combined with a low level of successful new organizing. Overall union density would have fallen much faster since the mid-1980's and in the past five years if it were not for the fact that density has remained high in the public sector, and that the public sector has continued to provide a major share of total employment.

The table provides an overview of union coverage by industry. Unfortunately, Statistics Canada has changed its classifications of industries so the data for 1984 and 1988 are not fully consistent with those for 1997 and 1998. Nonetheless, the major trends are clear.

In the private sector, unions are strongest in utilities, transportation, construction, and manufacturing, where many male 'blue-collar' workers have been and are still employed. There has been a marked decline of unionization in manufacturing – from one-half to under one-third of all workers – which is particularly striking. This decline has continued since 1997. Manufacturing is still a large part of total employment – about one in six jobs – so this has had a major impact on density in the private sector. There has also been a marked decline of union density in transportation. By contrast, union coverage in construction has been quite stable at about one-third of all workers since the mid-1980's, and coverage increased between 1997 and 2002.

Union coverage has always been low in private services. However, it has generally held up better than in the high union density 'blue-collar' sectors since the mid-1980's. Nonetheless, the decline in union density has taken place in all of the main private sector industries since 1984. The picture is a bit different for the period from 1997 to 2002, which is analyzed in detail below. Union density has slipped only slightly in trade and in accommodation and food services, and has actually increased a little in financial services.

Collective bargaining is most prevalent in public services – education, health and welfare services and public administration – where most unionized women are employed. Union density here has remained high (even in privately delivered health and welfare services, as will be shown below). There was a slight slippage in union density from 1984 to 1997, followed by a small increase between 1997 and 2002.

The decline in unionization is true of all age groups, but has been most marked among 25-44 year olds as opposed to youth. This reflects the likelihood that there has been little new hiring in unionized workplaces in recent years.

The decline has been least apparent in Newfoundland, PEI, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan, and most apparent in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Unions have done a bit

better (from a higher base) in Quebec than in Ontario. These differences suggest that political and not just economic factors have played a role.

HOW IMPORTANT IS STRUCTURAL CHANGE?

Over the period since the mid-1980's, the proportion of all jobs in the classic male blue-collar industries has fallen. But, the fall in the unionization rate *within* manufacturing, primary industries and transportation has been more significant in explaining falling unionization among men and in the private sector than the decline of these industries as a share of total employment.

The employment share of health care and social assistance and education has grown, though the share in public administration has shrunk modestly. Combined with little change in union density, this helps explain why unionization among women has been more stable than for men, even though public services have still been affected by government downsizing, privatization and contracting-out.

The employment share of private services has been growing every time, and unions are very weak in private services. Union density is particularly low in the fast-growing business services sectors, and more stable in consumer services. Clearly, if union density is to stabilize or grow, unions must become stronger in all parts of private services.

Consistent with the data presented above, a technically sophisticated decomposition of the decline in union density from 1984 to 1998 (Riddell and Riddell, 2001) finds that shifts of employment by industry and by occupation have, taken together, had very little overall impact on the unionization rate. The shift of jobs from male 'blue-collar' jobs in industry to jobs in services, many of them held by women, has had little net impact on the unionization rate. This is partly because public and social services as a whole have not shrunk, partly because manufacturing was the only high unionization sector to relatively shrink as a share of all jobs, and partly because the shift of jobs from men to women has helped unions. The big message from this study and from the data above is that the unionization rate overall has fallen because of a fall in the unionization rate *across* almost the entire range of private sector industries and occupations. Of course, there have been important changes *within* industries and occupations which affect unionization, notably increased exposure to foreign competition, deregulation and privatization, all of which have increased pressures on employers to contain wage costs and to raise productivity in ways which might be resisted by unions.

IV. TRENDS IN UNION DENSITY FROM 1997 TO 2002: A DETAILED ANALYSIS

Data from the *Labour Force Survey* on paid employment (excluding self-employment) make possible a detailed analysis of changes in union density by sector, industry and occupation. This analysis is presented below on an industry-by-industry basis, with some information on trends by occupation to add more detail. Throughout, separate data are presented for women and men in sectors where women make up more than a tiny share of employment.

UNIONS AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Union density in the private sector has fallen by 1.9 percentage points since 1997, from 21.5% to 19.6%. Among men, coverage has fallen, from 26.1% to 23.3%, while among women it has fallen, from 16.0% to 14.5%. While the decline is, on the surface, a bit less among women, the rate of decline among men and women is about the same.

As shown in the table, the private sector, paid workforce grew by 14.6% between 1997 and 2002, while the union-covered private sector workforce grew by only 4.6%. In absolute numbers, the private sector workforce grew by 1.3 million, while the number of union-covered private sector workers rose by just 88,000.

Table 5

Union Coverage in the Private Sector

	1997	2002	% Increase 1997-2002
Total Employment (000's)			
All	8,865	10,158	14.6%
Men	4,865	5,588	14.9%
Women	4,000	4,570	14.3%
Union Covered Workers (000's)			
All	1,908	1,996	4.6%
Men	1,268	1,333	5.1%
Women	640	663	3.6%
Union Coverage			
All	21.5%	19.6%	
Men	26.1%	23.8%	
Women	16.0%	14.5%	

Change in Coverage: 1997- 2002

All: Minus 1.9 percentage points or minus 8.8% compared to 1997 level.

Men: Minus 2.3 percentage points or minus 8.8% compared to 1997 level.

Women: Minus 1.5 percentage points or minus 9.4% compared to 1997 level.

UNIONS AND PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

Employment in primary industries has been shrinking as a share of total employment, and union coverage in primary industries has been in decline. The combined impact has been to reduce union density, though the effect is small because the primary industries sector is such a very small share of the total job market.

As shown in Table 6, the employment share of all primary industries has fallen since 1997. The combined primary industry share of all jobs has fallen from 3.2% in 1997 to 2.6% in 2001. The union coverage rate has fallen most significantly in mining and oil and gas extraction, from 28.9% to 23.4%.

The share of all union-covered workers in primary industries has fallen, from 3.2% in 1997 – proportionate to their overall share of the workforce – to just 2.0% in 2002.

Table 6

Unions and Primary Industries

	% Total Employees in Sector		Union Coverage	
	1997	2002	1997	2002
Agriculture	1.06%	0.91%	4.0%	4.0%
Forestry/Logging	0.58%	0.44%	37.1%	35.3%
Fishing, Hunting, Trapping	0.09%	0.08%	21.4%	20.3%
Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction	1.47%	1.21%	28.9%	23.4%

UNIONS AND UTILITIES

The utilities sector includes jobs in electricity generation and electricity and natural gas transmission and distribution, as well as jobs in water and sewer services.

Between 1997 and 2002, the utilities share of total employment remained steady at about 1% (1.02% in 1997 and 1.00% in 2002). Union coverage remained high, but fell, from 72.3% in 1997 to 67.5%, in 2002.

UNIONS AND CONSTRUCTION

The construction sector has grown since 1997, and union coverage in construction has risen, from 32.4% to 33.6%, giving a positive boost to overall union density.

The construction share of total paid employment rose, from 4.2% in 1997 to 4.6% in 2002, boosted by the housing boom of the last part of this period. About two-thirds of all construction employment is in trades contracting.

Table 7
Unions and Construction

	Union Coverage	
	1997	2002
Total Construction	32.4%	33.6%
Prime Contracting	37.3%	31.9%
Trade Contracting	29.8%	34.6%
Occupation		
Construction Trades	40.5%	42.6%
Helpers and Labourers in Construction	37.9%	33.9%

As shown in Table 7, union coverage rose significantly in trade contracting, from 29.8% to 34.6%, while falling in prime contracting.

Data for occupational categories shows that union coverage has rise in the construction trades, while falling for construction trades helpers and labourers.

The trend in construction suggests that the 'craft union' model of organizing workers on the basis of skill or trade still works in the 'new economy.'

UNIONS AND MANUFACTURING

Table 8
Unions and Manufacturing

	1997	2002
Total Paid Employment	1,916,000	2,231,000
% All Employees	16.8%	17.1%
(of which: Women)	27.9%	28.9%
Union Coverage		
All	36.3%	32.4%
Men	40.7%	36.3%
Women	24.9%	22.9%
% All Union Covered Workers	18.1%	17.2%

The continuing decline of unionization in manufacturing played a big part in the overall slippage of union density between 1997 and 2000.

Over the period, over 300,000 new jobs were created in manufacturing, and the proportion of all employees who were in the manufacturing sector rose, from 16.8% to 17.1%. "De-industrialization" clearly does not explain falling union density over the past five years.

What does help explain declining union density is the fall in union coverage *within* manufacturing. Union coverage fell significantly, by

almost four percentage points, from 36.3% to 32.4%, between 1997 and 2002.

Manufacturing is a big enough sector to strongly influence the overall rate of union coverage. Had the union coverage rate in manufacturing been the same in 2002 as in 1997, there would have been 87,000 more union members, and the overall union coverage rate would have 32.8% instead of 32.2%. Put another way, the fall in density in manufacturing explains 0.6 percentage points of the overall 1.5 percentage point decline in union density between 1997 and 2002.

As shown in the table, the proportion of women in manufacturing increased a bit over this period, from 27.9% to 28.9%, and the union coverage rate for women in manufacturing, while lower than that for men, did not decline proportionately quite as much. Had the unionization rate for men in manufacturing been the same for men in 2002 as it was in 1997, the economy-wide union coverage rate for men would have been 33.4% and not 32.3%.

Falling union density in manufacturing meant that the proportion of all union-covered workers in manufacturing fell from 18.1% to 17.2% – almost exactly the same as the share of manufacturing workers in total employment. In

other words, manufacturing workers are now no more likely than average to be covered by a collective agreement.

Table 9 provides a detailed breakdown by industries within manufacturing. The trend is almost uniformly down,

with particularly large declines in the relatively high density transportation equipment sector (auto, auto parts, aerospace, shipbuilding), plastics and rubber, and textiles. The former is

Table 9

Union Coverage by Manufacturing Industries

	1997	2002
Food, Beverage, Tobacco Products	39.8%	39.4%
Textile Mills Product	42.5%	34.7%
Clothing, Leather	26.8%	23.6%
Wood Product	44.7%	41.7%
Paper Manufacturing	65.1%	59.4%
Printing and Related	19.5%	15.5%
Petro/Coal Products	32.1%	31.7%
Chemical Manufacturing	19.3%	16.9%
Plastics and Rubber	32.8%	28.1%
Non-Metallic Mineral	41.4%	35.0%
Primary Metal Manufacturing	55.4%	54.1%
Fabricated Metal	24.5%	23.1%
Machinery Manufacturing	22.4%	18.5%
Computer/Electronic	13.5%	12.8%
Electronic Equipment/Appliance	34.0%	35.3%
Transport Equipment	53.6%	45.5%
Furniture and Related	25.6%	21.3%

Table 10

Union Coverage For Manufacturing Occupations

	Union Coverage		% Total Workforce	
	1997	2002	1997	2002
Machine Operators in Manufacturing	45.2%	42.2%	4.3%	4.9%
Assemblers in Manufacturing	42.8%	41.3%	2.0%	1.8%
Labourers in Processing and Manufacturing	42.5%	40.0%	2.0%	1.5%

probably explained, in large part, by new hiring in non-union Japanese auto plants and non-union auto parts firms.

It is interesting to note that union density held up relatively well – from low levels – in ‘high-tech’ manufacturing, i.e. computer/electronic products and electrical equipment.

It is also interesting to note that union coverage slipped less in the ‘blue-collar’ manufacturing occupations than it did for manufacturing as a whole. Employment in relatively unskilled manufacturing jobs such as labourers and assemblers has relatively declined. The proportion of manufacturing employees who are machine operators has increased. Also on the increase has been the proportion of persons in professional and technical occupations in natural and applied sciences in manufacturing, which usually require higher levels of education. For example, in durables manufacturing, the total number of workers in these two occupations rose by almost 50,000 between 1997 and 2002. The union coverage rate in these occupations is well below the manufacturing average. Thus occupational shifts *within* the manufacturing sector towards ‘white-collar’ jobs help explain the decline in union density.

UNIONS AND TRANSPORTATION AND WAREHOUSING

This sector includes air and rail transportation, urban transit, trucking, taxis, and postal services as well as warehousing. Most parts have traditionally been high union density industries.

Table 11

Unions and Transportation/Warehousing

	1997	2002
% Total Workforce in Sector	5.1%	4.8%
Union Coverage	45.2%	43.7%
Men	47.5%	45.6%
Women	38.5%	38.1%
Union Coverage		
Transport Equipment Operators	37.8%	34.3%

The share of transportation in total employment fell slightly, from 1997 to 2002, and union coverage fell slightly, from 45.2% to 43.7%.

About one in four workers in transportation are women. Union coverage for women is lower than for men, but fell by a bit less between 1997 and 2002.

UNIONS AND FINANCE, INSURANCE, AND REAL ESTATE

The financial sector has traditionally been a low union density sector, but union coverage increased slightly, from 10.4% to 10.7%. Unions represent workers in a few banks and credit unions, and some insurance offices are unionized. The union coverage rate in the insurance sub-sector rose, from 13.4% to 16.6%, and coverage rose more for men than for women. The majority of finance workers are women, and the union coverage rate for women in finance is slightly higher than that for men.

Table 12

Unions and Finance, Insurance and Real Estate

	1997	2002
% Total Workforce in Sector	6.5%	5.8%
% Women Workers in Sector	66.8%	61.7%
Union Coverage	10.4%	10.7%
Men	9.0%	9.9%
Women	11.1%	11.2%
Union Coverage		
Finance	9.4%	8.8%
Insurance Carriers/Funds	13.4%	16.6%
Real Estate	10.8%	10.4%
Rental/Leasing	6.4%	6.3%

UNIONS AND TRADETable 13
Unions and Trade

	1997	2002
% Total Workforce in Sector	15.7%	16.3%
% Women Workers in Sector	49.2%	50.4%
Union Coverage		
All	14.9%	14.1%
Men	16.8%	15.3%
Women	12.9%	12.9%
Retail Trade	15.4%	15.3%
Wholesale Trade	12.8%	9.8%
Retail and Sales Clerks	8.4%	9.3%
Cashiers	22.6%	20.7%

Unions have traditionally been weak in consumer service industries, where jobs are disproportionately low-paid and part-time. While this pattern holds in trade, union density is significant in food stores and beer and liquor retailing, and there is a union presence in both small and large stores.

About half of all trade workers are women and many young people work in the sector. The share of trade in total employment rose, from 15.7% in 1997 to 16.3% in 2002.

Union coverage in trade slipped slightly from 1997 to 2002, from 14.9% to 14.1%, mainly because of a sharper decline in wholesale than retail trade. Coverage in retail trade was almost unchanged at 15.4% in 1997 and 15.3% in 2002.

While women in the retail trade are less likely to be unionized than men, the coverage rate for women was unchanged, while it fell for men.

Looking at union coverage by occupations mainly to be found in this sector, union coverage increased for retail and sales clerks, while falling for cashiers.

Table 14
Unions and Accommodation and Food Services

	1997	2002
% Total Workforce in Sector	6.9%	6.9%
% Women Workers in Sector	61.1%	62.2%
Union Coverage		
All	8.7%	8.0%
Men	8.8%	8.6%
Women	8.6%	7.7%
Union Coverage		
Chefs/Cooks	12.5%	11.8%
Food and Beverage	9.1%	8.5%

UNIONS AND ACCOMODATION AND FOOD SERVICES

There is a union presence in larger hotels, and in a small number of bars and restaurants. However, union coverage has also slipped slightly from already very low levels, from 8.7% to 8.0%, with women being the most affected.

UNIONS AND INFORMATION, CULTURE AND RECREATION SERVICESTable 15
Unions and Information, Culture and Recreation Services

	1997	2002
% Total Workforce in Sector	4.5%	4.6%
% Women Workers in Sector	48.7%	49.0%
Union Coverage		
All	30.3%	27.3%
Men	31.4%	27.9%
Women	29.0%	26.7%

This sector includes many sub-sectors in which unions have traditionally been a significant presence: newspaper, periodical and book publishing; the motion picture and sound recording industries, TV and radio broadcasting, telecommunications, libraries and museums, the performing arts, professional sports, and a fast-growing new industry, gambling. Coverage has

declined quite significantly, from 30.3% to 27.3%, since 1997. The decline has been slightly greater among men than among women.

UNIONS AND BUSINESS SERVICES

There are two major industrial sectors which mainly consist of businesses selling services to other businesses. These are professional, scientific and technical services – such as legal, accounting, architectural and design, computer systems, and advertising services. Jobs in this sector are mainly held by well-paid professionals and support workers. The second major industrial sector of business services is management and administrative services – which includes a wide range of services, such as travel, employment services, facilities support, security services, and building cleaning services, as well as waste management services. Many jobs in this sector are low-paid, and unions have organized some major groups, such as security guards and cleaners.

While small, these two sectors are growing quite rapidly as a share of all jobs. Women represent close to one-half of all workers in both sectors.

Union coverage is very low in professional, scientific and technical services, but fell only slightly, from 5.8% to 5.7%. Coverage rose among women, while falling for men. (Note that the union coverage data do not apply to self-employed workers, who make up a large part of total employment in this sector.)

Union coverage was higher and also stable at about 15% in management, administrative and business support services. Union coverage also rose for women in this sector.

Table 16
Unions and Business Services

	Professional / Scientific / Technical		Management / Administrative	
	1997	2002	1997	2002
% Total Workers in Sector	4.3%	5.1%	2.9%	3.4%
% Women Workers in Sector	49.4%	48.3%	45.9%	47.1%
Union Coverage				
All	5.8%	5.7%	15.1%	15.0%
Men	7.5%	6.0%	19.8%	19.2%
Women	4.2%	5.4%	9.7%	10.4%

UNIONS AND PUBLIC AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Table 17

Unions and Public Services Restructuring - Total Public Sector

	1997	2002
Total Employees in Public Sector	2,555,000	2,908,000
Increase		353,000
% Increase		13.8%
% Total Workforce in Public Sector	22.4%	22.3%
% Men	43.8%	39.5%
% Women	56.2%	60.5%
Union Coverage	75.8%	75.8%
Union Coverage - Men	74.8%	73.6%
Union Coverage - Women	76.5%	77.3%
% All Union-Covered Workers in the Public Sector	50.4%	52.5%

The public sector is defined as employees who are directly employed by governments, or work for institutions directly funded by governments, such as school boards, universities and hospitals. The proportion of the total workforce in the public sector was almost unchanged from 1997 to 2002 (22.4% to 22.3%), and the union coverage rate was unchanged at 75.8%. Thus there was no significant decline in the relative

size of the public sector, and no decline in union coverage in the direct public sector.

Because of falling private sector density, unions have become even more tilted to the public sector since 1997. In 2002, 52.5% of all union members were employed in the public sector, up from 50.4% in 1997.

Note that the proportion of public sector employees who are women increased (from 56.2% to 60.5%) and the union coverage rate of public sector women increased (from 76.5% to 77.3%), while falling for men.

Table 18 looks at the three major industrial sectors which are predominantly – but not exclusively – made up of public sector workers: education services; health and social welfare services, and public administration. In education and health and welfare services, particularly the latter, many workers work in the private sector, which includes both for-profit and not-for-profit employers. Many indirectly government funded services (e.g., child care, home care, elder care) are included in the private sector.

For public and social services as a whole, the trend is to an increasing proportion of workers as a share of the total work force, and to an increased proportion of women workers. Union density has increased, despite some slippage in private/not-for-profit parts of social services. (Unfortunately, it is not possible to separate out private for-profit and private not-for-profit.) Clearly, high union density for women in public and social services has made a significant overall contribution to union density.

Table 18

Unions and Public Services Restructuring - Education, Health Care and Social Assistance, and Public Administration

	Education		Health Care / Social Assistance		Public Administration	
	1997	2002	1997	2002	1997	2002
Total #	876,000	968,000	1,185,000	1,412,000	793,150	777,867
% Total Workforce	7.7%	7.4%	10.4%	10.8%	6.9%	5.9%
% Women Workers in Sector	62.1%	65.8%	83.3%	84.3%	43.9%	46.7%
% in Public Sector	88.2%	92.3%	57.2%	56.2%	98.0%	99.7%
Union Coverage						
All	73.5%	73.8%	55.8%	56.5%	71.4%	72.1%
Public Sector	79.2%	78.8%	73.9%	78.7%	72.2%	72.3%
Private/Non-Profit Sector	31.0%	14.5%	31.5%	28.1%	na	na
% All Union Members in Sector	16.8%	17.0%	17.2%	19.0%	14.7%	13.4%

HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES

The share of total employment in health and welfare services has increased (from 10.4% to 10.8% of total employment), and the proportion of workers in the sector who are women has risen, from already very high levels, to 84.3%.

The share of total employment in the public sector part of health and social welfare services has fallen slightly, from 57.2% to 56.2%, and the union coverage rate in the private part of health and welfare services has slipped, from 31.5% to 28.1%. Meanwhile, however, union coverage in public sector health and welfare services has risen significantly, from 73.9% to 78.7%. The overall impact has been to increase union density, from 55.8% to 56.5%.

The share of all union members who are employed in health and social services increased significantly, from 17.2% to 19.0%.

Table 19

Union Coverage for Selected Public and Social Services

Occupations

	1997	2002
Judges, Lawyers, Psychologists, Social Workers, Policy and Program Officers	39.2%	42.4%
Professional Health	45.9%	44.8%
Nurse Supervisors, Registered Nurses	81.5%	84.0%
Technical - Health (Includes Medical and Dental, Technologists and Technicians, Licenced Practical Nurses)	64.7%	59.5%
Support Health Services (Includes Nurses Aides, Orderlies)	53.9%	54.4%
Teachers and Professors	80.6%	79.4%
Paralegals / Social Services (Includes Early Childhood Educators)	44.9%	43.3%
Child Care / Home Support Workers	35.0%	38.3%

EDUCATION

Union coverage has fallen very sharply in the (small) private part of educational services, though this sub-sector has shrunk relative to public sector educational services. (This could reflect a shift of some unionized employers from the private to the public sector.) Overall union density in education has increased slightly, from 73.5% to 73.8%.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Union coverage has remained constant and very high at 72.2% in direct government employment (public administration). However, the share of public administration in total employment fell significantly from 1997 to 2002, from 6.9% to 5.9%.

V. UNION DENSITY IN 'WHITE COLLAR' OCCUPATIONS

Overall, as noted above, there is a modest but continuing shift away from 'blue-collar' and clerical jobs towards professional and technical occupations. The shift towards jobs requiring higher levels of education in the 'new knowledge-based economy' appears to have undermined union density to a degree. That is because these occupations are highly unlikely to be unionized if they are found in the private sector.

Table 19 provides some data for occupational groups mainly to be found in public and social services. Coverage is generally quite stable, or increasing. It is notable that coverage is generally higher among those with professional skills and qualifications. However, union coverage has increased for child care and home support workers.

By contrast, as shown in Table 20, union density is generally very low and in decline for all 'white-collar' occupations in the private sector.

Table 20

Union Coverage for Non-Managerial "White-Collar" Occupations

	% Total Canadian Workforce		% in Private Sector 2002	Union Coverage Private Sector	
	1997	2002		1997	2002
Professionals in Business and Finance	2.48%	2.61%	79.5%	8.3%	7.9%
Finance/Insurance/Administrative	1.24%	1.25%	90.9%	6.0%	4.8%
Secretaries	3.00%	2.00%	65.2%	9.1%	8.2%
Administrative and Regulatory Occupations	2.21%	1.99%	71.1%	7.3%	5.9%
Clerical	10.60%	10.60%	75.3%	17.6%	14.6%
Professionals in Natural and Applied Sciences	3.34%	3.84%	78.5%	10.6%	7.4%
Technical Occupations in Natural and Applied Sciences	2.40%	3.00%	75.6%	23.6%	20.2%

VI. UNIONS AND PART-TIME JOBS

It has often been believed that a shift from full-time jobs to part-time jobs has undermined union density. Density is, indeed, significantly lower for part-time jobs, in both the public and private sector, as shown in Table 21. However, most part-time workers are women, and the incidence of part-time work for women fell from 1997 to 2002.

As shown in the table, union coverage is high among part-time workers in the public sector. At 68.7% in 2002, coverage was lower than 77.1% for full-time public sector workers, but the gap closed between 1997 and 2002 as union coverage rose faster for part-time than full-time workers.

In the private sector, union coverage of part-timers is low, but rose, from 12.9% in 1997, to 13.1% in 2002, with this increase concentrated among men.

Overall, neither a shift to part-time jobs nor declining union coverage among part-timers accounts for lower union coverage in 2002 compared to 1997.

Table 21

Unions and Part-Time Jobs

	Private Sector		Public Sector	
	1997	2002	1997	2002
% Part-Time Workers				
Men	10.7%	10.8%	7.8%	8.4%
Women	29.3%	27.8%	23.7%	22.5%
Union Coverage - Part-Time				
All	12.9%	13.1%	63.3%	68.7%
Men	12.9%	14.1%	47.1%	54.5%
Women	12.9%	12.7%	67.3%	72.2%
Union Coverage - Full-Time				
All	23.2%	21.1%	76.8%	77.1%
Men	27.5%	25.0%	76.4%	75.4%
Women	16.6%	15.2%	77.1%	78.8%

VII. UNIONS AND WORKPLACE SIZE

It was argued above that changes in the distribution of employment by workplace size have probably had little overall impact on union density.

Between 1997 and 2002, the proportion of all employees in very small workplaces fell slightly, and the union coverage rate in small workplaces of less than 20 rose slightly.

It is true that union coverage, in 2002 as in 1997, is much higher in very large workplaces, and rises steadily with workplace size. In 2002, density was 58.1% in very large workplaces of more than 500.

However, the largest decline in union density between 1997 and 2002 was in workplaces with 100 to 500 workers.

In the private sector, the decline in union density has been greatest in larger workplaces, and union density (while very low at about 8%) increased only in the very smallest workplaces.

Table 22

Unions and Workplace Size

Number of Employees at the Workplace	% All Employees		Union Coverage	
	1997	2002	1997	2002
<20	35.0%	33.3%	13.6%	13.9%
20-99	31.8%	33.0%	33.9%	32.9%
100-500	20.8%	21.5%	50.4%	44.5%
500 plus	12.4%	12.3%	61.7%	58.1%
Number of Employees at the Workplace	Union Coverage in Private Sector		in Public Sector	
	1997	2002	1997	2002
<20	7.6%	7.9%	59.5%	61.8%
20-99	21.2%	19.5%	76.5%	78.6%
100-500	38.6%	32.7%	79.4%	78.5%
500 plus	47.3%	40.9%	77.3%	78.7%

Table 23 (a)
Union Coverage by Province

	All		Coverage as % 1997 Level 2002
	1997	2002	
Canada	33.7%	32.2%	95.5%
Newfoundland and Labrador	40.8%	39.1%	95.8%
PEI	29.1%	30.9%	106.2%
Nova Scotia	30.3%	28.1%	92.7%
New Brunswick	30.1%	28.1%	93.3%
Quebec	41.4%	40.4%	97.6%
Ontario	29.8%	28.1%	94.3%
Manitoba	37.6%	36.1%	96.0%
Saskatchewan	35.9%	35.8%	99.7%
Alberta	25.8%	24.5%	95.0%
British Columbia	36.3%	34.7%	95.6%

(No data available for Territories.)

Table 23 (b)
Union Coverage by Province

	Private Sector		Public Sector	
	1997	2002	1997	2002
Canada	21.5%	19.6%	75.8%	75.8%
Newfoundland and Labrador	21.5%	20.7%	77.8%	77.7%
PEI	8.8%	9.5%	76.7%	80.5%
Nova Scotia	15.8%	13.5%	67.8%	72.0%
New Brunswick	14.6%	12.8%	71.7%	71.6%
Quebec	28.6%	27.4%	82.5%	82.0%
Ontario	19.4%	17.4%	70.9%	70.8%
Manitoba	21.5%	19.9%	78.6%	77.2%
Saskatchewan	19.1%	18.4%	76.8%	76.1%
Alberta	14.0%	12.6%	71.0%	72.6%
British Columbia	24.5%	21.4%	80.9%	81.1%

(No data available for Territories.)

Density in very large workplaces of more than 500 fell from 47.3% to 40.9%. And in workplaces of 100-500, density fell from 38.6% to 32.7%.

There were only small changes in union density by workplaces size in the public sector.

VIII. UNION DENSITY BY PROVINCE

Tables 23 (a), (b), and (c) provide data on union coverage by province, further presented for the private and public sector, and for women and men.

In 2002, in descending order, the highest union density provinces were Quebec (40.4%), Newfoundland and Labrador (39.1%), Manitoba (36.1%), Saskatchewan (35.8%), and BC (34.7%).

In ascending order, the lowest union density provinces were Alberta (24.5%), Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia (all at 28.1%), and PEI at 30.9%.

High union density provinces have tended to have relatively union-friendly (PQ and NDP governments) in the 1980's and 1990's.

The union coverage rate for Ontario is notably low considering Ontario's strong manufacturing base, and the rate for Quebec is notably high. In 2002, 30.0% of all union-covered workers in Canada were in Quebec, which had just 23.9% of all employees in Canada. Ontario had 39.7% of all employees, but just 34.7% of all union-covered workers.

Overall union coverage declined in all provinces except PEI between 1997 and 2002. Relative to coverage in 1997, the declines were the

least in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, Newfoundland and British Columbia, and the greatest in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Ontario. In short, the tendency was for the gap to grow between relatively high union density provinces and low union density provinces. This suggests that weakness is likely to lead to continuing weakness.

Union coverage in the public sector is high – above 70% – in all provinces, but notably below average in Ontario and Alberta, and well above average in Quebec, BC and PEI. Coverage has been quite stable in the public sector in all provinces.

The picture is much more varied for union coverage in the private sector, which ranged in 2002 from a high of 27.4% in Quebec, 21.4% in BC, and 20.7% in Newfoundland and Labrador, to just 9.5% in PEI and 12.8% in New Brunswick. Only three provinces now have private sector unionization rates of more than 20%. The private sector trend between 1997 and 2002 was down in all provinces, except PEI. Private sector density fell by 3.4 percentage points in BC, and by two percentage points in Ontario.

While union coverage was stable overall for women between 1997 and 2002, coverage of women fell in Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Quebec, and Alberta, while it rose modestly elsewhere. Union coverage for men fell in all provinces except PEI.

IX. UNION COVERAGE BY CITY

Not surprisingly, union coverage at the city (Census Metropolitan Area) level reflects the broad provincial pattern.

However, some larger cities have union coverage rates well below the provincial average. Notably, the coverage rate in the huge Toronto CMA was just 22.4% in 2002, well below the Ontario provincial average of 28.1%. The coverage rates in Montreal, Vancouver and Calgary are all a bit below the respective provincial averages. By contrast, union coverage rates are much higher than the provincial average in most smaller cities in Quebec and Ontario, often reflecting the existence of highly unionized ‘blue-collar’ industries. Also, reflecting public sector employment, capital cities tend to have a higher union density.

Table 23 (c)
Union Coverage by Province

	Men		Women	
	1997	2002	1997	2002
Canada	35.2%	32.3%	32.0%	32.0%
Newfoundland and Labrador	42.6%	40.3%	38.9%	37.9%
PEI	26.1%	27.0%	32.0%	34.5%
Nova Scotia	32.6%	27.0%	28.0%	29.1%
New Brunswick	31.5%	28.4%	28.5%	27.8%
Quebec	43.7%	42.3%	38.9%	38.3%
Ontario	32.1%	28.6%	27.2%	27.6%
Manitoba	37.0%	33.9%	38.1%	38.5%
Saskatchewan	32.9%	31.5%	39.0%	40.2%
Alberta	23.7%	22.6%	28.1%	26.6%
British Columbia	38.4%	34.4%	34.1%	34.9%

(No data available for Territories.)

This pattern for large metropolitan area union density to be lower than average is of concern given that a very large share of job growth in the 1990's was in just four major urban concentrations – Toronto, Montreal, the Calgary-Edmonton corridor, and Vancouver-Victoria. The great majority of new immigrants to Canada also go to these cities.

With the exception of Saskatoon, Vancouver and Thunder Bay (unchanged), union density fell in all CMAs between 1997 and 2002. However, in most cities – including Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa, union coverage rose for women, while falling for men. By contrast, union density for men fell everywhere except in Quebec City and Saskatoon, often quite sharply.

Table 24 (a)

Union Coverage by City

Census Metropolitan Areas	Gender	Years	Union Coverage (%)
St. John's	Both sexes	1997	41.4
		2002	36.6
	Men	1997	36.9
		2002	34.7
	Women	1997	45.9
		2002	38.5
Halifax	Both sexes	1997	31.3
		2002	27.4
	Men	1997	33.1
		2002	26.3
	Women	1997	29.7
		2002	28.5
Saint John	Both sexes	1997	30.6
		2002	27.2
	Men	1997	34.0
		2002	30.7
	Women	1997	27.0
		2002	23.6
Montréal	Both sexes	1997	37.7
		2002	37.0
	Men	1997	40.2
		2002	38.6
	Women	1997	35.0
		2002	35.3
Saguenay	Both sexes	1997	49.4
		2002	47.5
	Men	1997	53.8
		2002	50.7
	Women	1997	43.2
		2002	43.7

Source: Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Survey*.

(Produced by Statistics Canada from Master File)

Table 24 (b)
Union Coverage by City

Census Metropolitan Areas	Gender	Years	Union Coverage (%)
Québec	Both sexes	1997	46.9
		2002	45.9
	Men	1997	44.7
		2002	46.6
	Women	1997	49.4
		2002	45.1
Sherbrooke	Both sexes	1997	45.6
		2002	44.7
	Men	1997	46.7
		2002	44.5
	Women	1997	44.3
		2002	44.9
Trois-Rivières	Both sexes	1997	47.6
		2002	44.3
	Men	1997	50.8
		2002	47.2
	Women	1997	43.7
		2002	40.8
Ottawa-Gatineau	Both sexes	1997	39.5
		2002	38.4
	Men	1997	38.3
		2002	35.4
	Women	1997	40.8
		2002	41.7
Sudbury	Both sexes	1997	40.6
		2002	39.2
	Men	1997	45.2
		2002	38.2
	Women	1997	35.4
		2002	40.1

Source: Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Survey*.
(Produced by Statistics Canada from Master File)

Table 24 (c)
Union Coverage by City

Census Metropolitan Areas	Gender	Years	Union Coverage (%)
Toronto	Both sexes	1997	23.9
		2002	22.4
	Men	1997	25.5
		2002	22.8
	Women	1997	22.1
		2002	22.1
Oshawa	Both sexes	1997	39.1
		2002	36.4
	Men	1997	45.9
		2002	41.3
	Women	1997	31.4
		2002	30.8
Hamilton	Both sexes	1997	30.0
		2002	28.8
	Men	1997	34.5
		2002	27.7
	Women	1997	24.9
		2002	29.9
St. Catharines - Niagara	Both sexes	1997	33.0
		2002	31.6
	Men	1997	40.3
		2002	35.9
	Women	1997	25.3
		2002	27.0
London	Both sexes	1997	32.6
		2002	32.5
	Men	1997	35.4
		2002	32.9
	Women	1997	29.5
		2002	32.1

Source: Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Survey*.
(Produced by Statistics Canada from Master File)

Table 24 (d)

Union Coverage by City

Census Metropolitan Areas	Gender	Years	Union Coverage (%)
Windsor	Both sexes	1997	41.1
		2002	38.7
	Men	1997	45.5
		2002	40.7
	Women	1997	36.0
		2002	36.2
Kitchener	Both sexes	1997	27.8
		2002	23.6
	Men	1997	30.4
		2002	24.2
	Women	1997	24.9
		2002	22.9
Thunder Bay	Both sexes	1997	44.6
		2002	44.6
	Men	1997	51.5
		2002	48.2
	Women	1997	37.2
		2002	40.8
Winnipeg	Both sexes	1997	38.2
		2002	36.6
	Men	1997	38.4
		2002	34.9
	Women	1997	38.0
		2002	38.4
Regina	Both sexes	1997	41.0
		2002	37.6
	Men	1997	37.9
		2002	34.7
	Women	1997	44.2
		2002	40.6

Source: Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Survey*.
(Produced by Statistics Canada from Master File)

Table 24 (e)

Union Coverage by City

Census Metropolitan Areas	Gender	Years	Union Coverage (%)
Saskatoon	Both Sexes	1997	33.3
		2002	36.0
	Men	1997	30.7
		2002	33.5
	Women	1997	36.3
		2002	38.6
Calgary	Both Sexes	1997	23.4
		2002	21.5
	Men	1997	22.2
		2002	20.4
	Women	1997	24.8
		2002	22.7
Edmonton	Both Sexes	1997	29.9
		2002	29.3
	Men	1997	28.6
		2002	27.3
	Women	1997	31.3
		2002	31.5
Vancouver	Both Sexes	1997	32.7
		2002	33.1
	Men	1997	33.6
		2002	32.7
	Women	1997	31.6
		2002	33.5
Victoria	Both Sexes	1997	40.9
		2002	37.0
	Men	1997	39.2
		2002	34.9
	Women	1997	42.5
		2002	39.0

Source: Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Survey*.
(Produced by Statistics Canada from Master File)

X: UNIONS AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION GROUPS

Above, data on union density has been presented for both men and for women. Unfortunately, the *Labour Force Survey* does not provide data for workers of colour, Aboriginal workers and workers with disabilities. However, data on union coverage for paid workers are available from another source, the *Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID.)* Data for these groups are presented for 1996 and 2001 to provide some sense of recent trends. Note that the overall rate of union coverage as shown by the SLID survey was 29.1% in both 1996 and 2001, just about the same as in the *Labour Force Survey* data.

WORKERS OF COLOUR

Between 1996 and 2001, the proportion of all paid workers who reported belonging to a visible minority group rose from 8.4% to 9.3%. This mainly reflects the continuing impacts of immigration on the workforce.

As shown in Table 25, union coverage for visible minority workers rose from 19.7% to 21.3% over this period, rising a bit more among men than among women. Over this period, the proportion of all union-covered workers who reported belonging to a visible minority group rose from 5.8% to 6.9%.

While still under-represented in the unionized workforce, the gap between workers of colour and other workers has been closing in recent years.

	1996	2001
Union Coverage		
Visible Minority	19.7%	21.3%
Men	18.5%	21.2%
Women	20.9%	21.4%
Visible Minority Workers		
as % All Workers	8.4%	9.3%
as % Union Covered Workers	5.8%	6.9%

ABORIGINAL WORKERS

	1996	2001
Union Coverage		
All	27.3%	30.4%
Men	29.1%	29.1%
Women	25.5%	31.8%

As shown in Table 26, union coverage for Aboriginal workers rose from 1996 to 2001, from 27.3% to 30.4%, with the increase taking place entirely among women.

The proportion of all workers who were Aboriginal Canadians rose from 2.3% to 2.7% over this period, and the representation of Aboriginal workers in unions is now at 2.7%, the same proportion as in the workforce as a whole.

It should be noted that these data on Aboriginal workers can be misleading on several counts. The on-reserve population is not included, and urban Aboriginals are probably under-represented in the survey sample. Further, many Aboriginal persons of working age, particularly on reserves, are not included in the workforce.

WORKERS WITH DISABILITIES

Table 27
Unions and Workers with Disabilities

	1996	2001
Union Coverage		
All	31.4%	31.6%
Men	33.1%	31.8%
Women	29.2%	31.4%

As shown in Table 27, union coverage of workers with disabilities rose slightly from 1996 to 2001, and is slightly above average compared to the workforce as a whole. Again, however, it must be noted that the representation of working-age persons with disabilities in the paid workforce is well below average.

In 2001, 12.8% of the paid workforce reported having an activity-limiting disability, as did 13.7% of all workers covered by a collective agreement. Unfortunately, comparable data are not available for 1996 due to a change in the definition of disability.

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