

The State of New York Unions 2012

by Gregory DeFreitas and Bhaswati Sengupta

New York has, for nearly two decades, had the highest proportion of its workforce represented by unions of any state in the country. By 2006, the last year before the latest recession, 24.5 per cent of the state's employees were union members – twice the national rate.¹ But the national economic crisis that began in 2008 struck with particular force in heavily unionized industries like construction and manufacturing. And many state and local governments responded to mounting budget gaps by cutting unionized public sector jobs. What have been the cyclical impacts of the recession and the still-incomplete recovery on union representation? This paper explores this and related questions by focusing on New York, in particular the state's economic engine and population center, the New York City metropolitan area, centered in New York City and Long Island. We investigate the major characteristics of and trends in recent unionization in the New York Metropolitan Area through an empirical analysis of large microdata sets from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Surveys.²

1. New York in Recession and Recovery

New York's recession began later than most of the nation and the state's subsequent job recovery has generally been faster. By the start of 2012, the number of payroll jobs lost had been matched by job growth, while nationwide only about a third of job losses had been restored. Tens of thousands of jobs were cut in the public sector. But, New York's private sector jobs increased by 2 per cent in 2010-2011, the 6th-fastest of any state in the country. And the private sector job count has now reached an all-time high. Still the impacts of the 2008 financial meltdown have been as long-lasting here as elsewhere. The state's unemployment rate has hovered above eight per cent since 2009 and the average unemployed resident has been jobless for nine months. While the payroll job count is now back to its pre-recession level, of the new jobs created since 2009, their average salary is 40 per cent less than that of the jobs lost in 2008-2009.³ Recent job growth has been mostly in low-wage industries, led by restaurants, non-college educational services, and home health care.⁴

In New York City, total payroll jobs fell to a low of 3.69 million by 2009, then rebounded to the highest level on record: 3.8 million as of the first quarter of 2012. The city's private sector job growth has been even faster than the state pace. Over just the previous 12 months, of the total 65,000 jobs added, three out of four were concentrated in services. Within that supersector, professional and business services created the majority of new jobs. Education and

health services, which account for one-fifth of all jobs in the city, added 4,500 net new jobs last year. But the two subsectors in that category moved in opposite directions: 10,800 new health jobs were created as educational services shrank by 6,300 fewer positions. Continued strength in tourism boosted leisure and hospitality employment, thanks largely to bars and restaurants, sports and performing arts, and hotels. Retail firms also benefited, led by clothing and accessories stores. In contrast, higher-paying finance and real estate payrolls grew modestly (+1.5 per cent) over the 12 months through March. Wall Street's firms have added positions in the past year, but the job total is still 16,000 less than in the pre-recession days four years earlier.

The city's encouraging job news must be tempered by evidence of continuing shrinkage in construction, manufacturing and government. Construction payrolls declined by 15 per cent (-53,000, to a total of 307,000) from 2008 through 2011. Manufacturing has continued its secular shrinkage: over one-fourth of its 101,000 payroll jobs in 2007 were gone by early 2012. Government jobs are down too, though by far less: from a 2004-06 average of 555,000, they increased to 567,000 by 2009, before receding to an average of 542,000 in the first quarter of 2012.

Though job decline in these industries has not been enough of a drag to prevent net job growth, it has contributed to the still-high unemployment rate of city residents. The rate in early 2012 (10 per cent) was still double that in 2007-08, and actually rose during 2011 (Table 1). Nearly 389,000 were unemployed in March – 47,400 more than at this time last year. How can the positive news on payroll jobs be reconciled with the rise in unemployment? The job counts come from a monthly survey (Current Employment Statistics, CES) of New-York-based employers that asks how many workers are currently on payroll – but not whether those workers actually live in the city. Unemployment figures, in contrast, are derived from a survey of households (the Current Population Survey, CPS). Comparisons of figures drawn from two such different surveys must be done with caution.

But the side-by-side statistics on payroll jobs and employed NYC residents in Table 1 at least suggest that a striking trend has been underway since 2009: while the payroll job count reported by employers is now up by nearly 100,000, 41,800 fewer New York City residents say they have a job than three years ago. The household survey shows that the fraction of city residents seeking work has risen of late, but the number of actual job holders has

Table 1.
Number of Payroll Jobs, Employed Residents & Unemployment Rate, NYC and LI, 2001-2012

Year	New York City			Long Island		
	Payroll Jobs	Employed Residents	Unemp. Rate (%)	Payroll Jobs	Employed Residents	Unemp. Rate (%)
2001	3,690.1	3,431.5	6.1	1,222.9	1,365.9	3.8
2002	3,584.9	3,429.3	8.0	1,220.0	1,367.4	4.7
2003	3,531.7	3,413.4	8.3	1,227.3	1,372.9	4.8
2004	3,550.0	3,469.4	7.1	1,242.6	1,389.9	4.6
2005	3,603.3	3,539.9	5.8	1,244.6	1,407.5	4.2
2006	3,667.3	3,630.1	5.0	1,248.9	1,422.2	3.9
2007	3,744.6	3,673.5	4.9	1,265.6	1,427.0	3.8
2008	3,794.3	3,700.2	5.5	1,264.0	1,422.2	4.9
2009	3,693.4	3,607.1	9.2	1,227.3	1,373.1	7.2
2010	3,711.3	3,586.4	9.5	1,228.2	1,363.3	7.4
2011	3,786.0	3,592.2	9.0	1,239.3	1,357.2	7.1
2012:Q1	3,792.9	3,565.3	10.0	1,225.0	1,339.6	7.6

Note: Jobs and Employment in thousands. | Source: NYS Dept. of Labor

dropped, thereby swelling the unemployment rate. Notice in Table 1 the contrast between the NYC and Long Island trends: the latter's employers still reported 25,000 fewer jobs last year (1.24 million total) than in 2008, but the number of Long Islanders reporting that they were employed (1.34 million) exceeded the number of local jobs by over 100,000. This suggests that most of the new jobs reported by the city's employers in the CES went instead to commuters from Long Island, Westchester, and elsewhere in the region.

Like the city, Long Island has recently recorded net overall job growth, entirely due to more private sector hiring than public sector job cuts. Private sector growth has been dominated even more by services (86 percent of the total last year) than downtown. The biggest job loser has been construction, down by 13,000 jobs (-17.5 percent, to a total of just 60,300) over the period 2008-2011. Unlike the city, government jobs on Long Island are close to the 2009 level (206,700), and actually slightly more numerous than before the recession.

2. Union Density Trends

In 2011, of New York State's 7.9 million wage and salary employees, the latest government survey data reveals that, 1.91 million (24.1 percent) were union members. That means that New Yorkers have a union membership rate (or "membership density") that is both far

above the national average of 11.8 percent and higher than that of any other state. In fact, only two other states now have rates above 20 percent: Alaska (22.1) and Hawaii (21.5). At the other extreme, North Carolina is the least unionized state (2.9 percent).⁵

Certainly, New York has, like nearly all other states, experienced long-run declines in union density since the 1950s. But this has occurred at a much slower pace than elsewhere.⁶ In 1964, the first year for which time-consistent unionization figures for each state are available, New York's union density rate was 35.5 percent – not even high enough to place it among the top ten states that year. In 1964-84, while the national union membership rate dropped over 10 percentage points to 19.1 percent, New York's rate fell just 3.2 percentage points, to 32.3 percent. As Figure 1 shows, the state's membership density fell more rapidly from the early 1980s through the mid-1990s, then changed little through the mid-2000s, even as the national rate continues to shrink.

The influence of unions is greater than suggested by their membership figures, not least because union contracts cover some employees who report in surveys that they are not union members. For example, in New York in 2011, 162,000 workers said their job was covered by a union contract, in addition to the 1.91 million union members. Hence, the state's broader union coverage rate (or "coverage density") was 26.1 percent. Nationwide, 16.3 million

workers were covered by union contracts, accounting for 13.0 percent of wage and salary employees. But using coverage rather than membership rates alters neither New York's state ranking, nor the trends plotted in Figure 1.

To better understand these patterns, we need to look more deeply into unionization in New York's component regions. This report focuses on the New York City Metropolitan Area, home to the majority of the state's workers and of its union members. We base our statistical analysis on large microdata sets from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Surveys (CPS), a national survey conducted monthly on random samples of 50,000 to 65,000 households nationwide. The survey contains a wide variety of demographic, geographic and employment-related matters. Sampled households are interviewed once each month for four consecutive months. One year later, each of these "rotation groups" is again interviewed for a final four consecutive months. We utilized the CPS Outgoing Rotation Group files (CPS-ORG) for all the years 1986 through March 2012. The data set is not, of course, without limitations: in particular, it identifies only county of residence, which may differ from the county where the respondent works. We adopted the now-standard methodology employed in a series of state-level and metropolitan-level research papers by Barry Hirsch and David Macpherson.⁷

For each year from 1986 through the first quarter of 2012, we used the CPS samples to estimate union membership rates for New York City and Long Island residents. We plotted these annual estimates against the national rates in Figure 2. From a 1986 density of 35.5 percent, the city's union membership fell to a 29

Figure 1
% Wage & Salary Employees Who Are Members of or Covered by Unions, US & NY State, 1983 - 2011

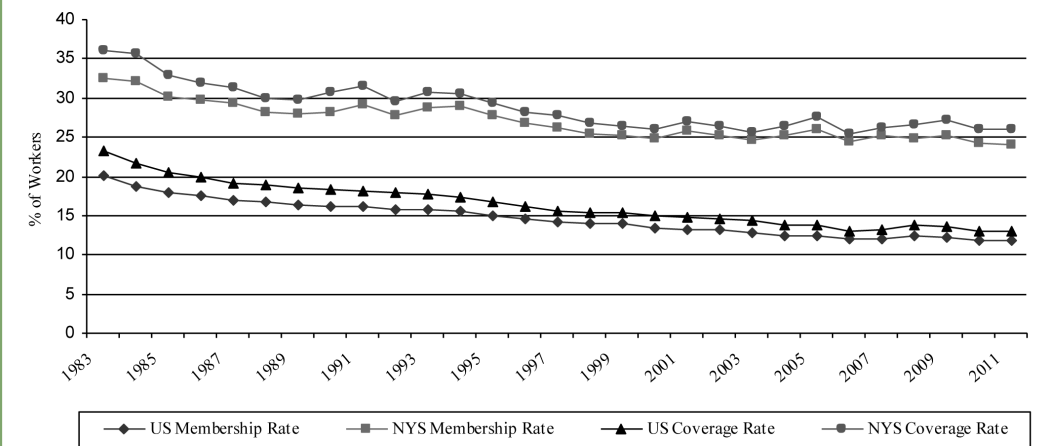


Fig. 1 Sources: US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012) and Hirsch, Macpherson and Vroman (2001).

Figure 2
Union Membership Densities for NYC and Long Island, 1986-2012

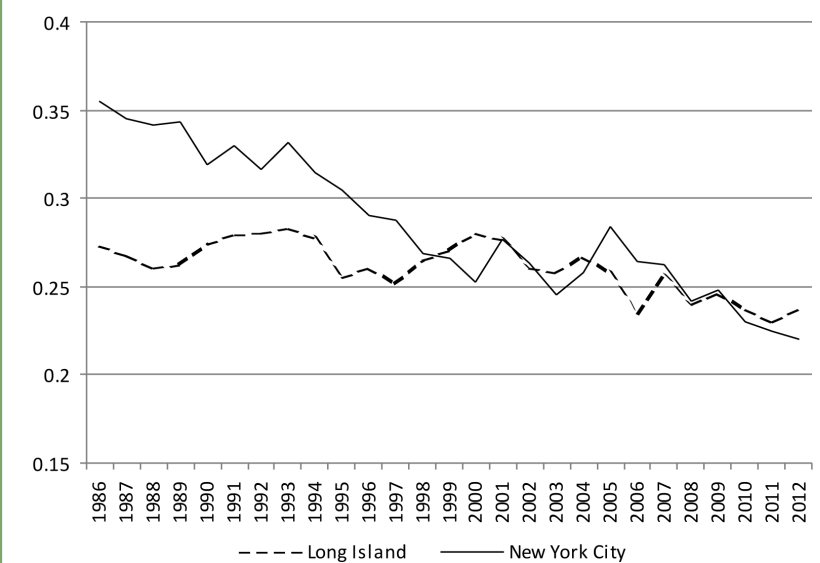


Fig. 2-6 source: Authors' analysis of US Census Bureau Current Population Survey (CPS-ORG) microdata files, 1986 to 2012. Samples limited to wage and salary workers aged 16 and over. Union membership rates are percentages of workers each year who report union membership.

percent share of the work force in 1995-96, then dropped further to a low of 25.3 percent in 2000. Thereafter it rebounded somewhat and remained at 26 percent or above in all but one of the following years through 2007. But, since the onset of the recession, the density rate has dropped markedly, down from 26.3 percent in 2007 to 22 percent in 2011-2012.

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 percent in the mid-1980s to 28 percent in the early 1990s. After dipping in 1995 to 1997, the Long Island rate rose to 27 percent in 1999 – the first year in the series that Long Islanders had a higher unionization rate than the city (26.6 percent). By 2007, density was still not much less (25.6 percent) than in the late 1990s boom years. But, as in the city, the recession years began a decline that has shown little sign of reversal. Over the last two years, the membership rate has been just over 23 percent.

What accounts for the patterns in local union density traced above? Even with the large national sample size of our Current Population Survey data source, the CPS metro-level subsamples are generally not large enough for a single year to yield statistically significant estimates on many narrowly defined demographic or economic subgroups. Recognizing this, we only used single-year data so far for city-wide or metro-wide estimates of union membership and coverage densities (Figure 2). In order to have large enough data samples for reliable estimates in more detailed analysis of specific age, racial, or job groupings in the New York metro area, we pooled the CPS data into three-year groupings: a) 1987, 1988, 1989; b) 1997, 1998, 1999; c) 2004, 2005, 2006; d) 2007, 2008, 2009 [“Great Recession years”]; and e) 2010, 2011 and 2012: I (“recovery years”). The first three and the last of these time-periods have the advantage that they correspond to business cycle peaks. We are thereby able to make peak-to-peak trend comparisons that minimize possible confounding influences from cyclical variations. Inclusion of the Great Recession enables evaluation of its impact and how much the still-fragile recovery since then has affected unions. In most of this analysis, we focus on the proportion of workers covered by union contracts rather than the slightly narrower membership density measure.

Table 2.
Union Membership And Coverage Rates by Age Group
New York City, 2004-2012

2004-2006					
AGE	Employment	Membership	Coverage Membership	Membership Rate	Coverage Rate
16-24	347,483	45,159	49,304	13.0	14.2
25-34	871,297	182,697	193,266	21.0	22.2
35-44	804,232	222,705	230,252	27.7	28.6
45-54	674,950	219,019	229,891	32.4	34.1
55-64	384,483	157,877	164,155	41.1	42.7
65+	103,059	28,877	30,413	28.0	29.5
Total	3,185,504	856,334	897,282	26.88	28.17
2007-2009					
AGE	Employment	Membership	Coverage Membership	Membership Rate	Coverage Rate
16-24	344,236	41,553	46,234	12.1	13.4
25-34	917,174	180,541	192,819	19.7	21.0
35-44	762,227	186,855	201,405	24.5	26.4
45-54	742,561	235,384	256,021	31.7	34.5
55-64	432,440	159,267	166,421	36.8	38.5
65+	116,009	27,309	29,810	23.5	25.7
Total	3,314,646	830,908	892,709	25.07	26.93
2010-2012					
AGE	Employment	Membership	Coverage Membership	Membership Rate	Coverage Rate
16-24	352,851	30,445	32,287	8.6	9.2
25-34	947,956	163,078	187,716	17.2	19.8
35-44	708,763	158,849	173,505	22.4	24.5
45-54	737,666	212,546	231,654	28.8	31.4
55-64	472,595	157,247	170,728	33.3	36.1
65+	129,224	37,155	40,987	28.8	31.7
Total	3,349,056	759,319	836,878	22.67	24.99

Notes: Based on CLD estimates from CPS Outgoing Rotation Group (ORG) Earnings Files. Estimates are based on wage and salary workers, ages 16 and above. Membership rates reflect the percentage of employed workers who are union members. Coverage rates reflect the percentage of employed workers that are covered by union or employee and association contracts. Coverage figures are averages of the respective three year period.

The time trends found in these larger data sets appear to be quite comparable with those described above. Figure 3 and Table 2 report our estimates for each of the three-year periods of the total number of residents employed, as well as the numbers of these who are union members or otherwise covered by a union contract.⁸ In New York City, between 1997-99 and 2004-06, the number of residents in labor unions rose from 790,879 to 856,334 – an increase of 65,455 (+8.3 percent). However, the city's membership gains over this pre-recession span did not fully keep up with overall employment growth, resulting in a slight drop (one-half percentage point) in the union density rate, to 26.9 percent. Over the following three-year period, 2007-2009, the recession was associated with a decline in both the absolute number of resident union members (-25,426, a -3 percent drop) and in the density rate. The latter fell nearly two percentage points, to 25.1 percent. Though the years since then have brought some positive job growth news, union membership fell by another 71,589 workers – a steeper decline of -8.6 percent. The fraction of New York's working residents who are union members has continued shrinking to 22.7 percent. The broader measure of union coverage fell much less (-4,573) between the mid-2000s and the recession period. But since then it has plunged by 6.6 percent (-58,831), dropping the total number of city residents with union representation to 836,878, or one-quarter of the workforce.

Long Island has not experienced nearly as much change over the span from the mid-2000s to 2010-2012. Just before the recession, its 317,450 union members account for 25.3 percent of all employees. By 2007-

2009, decline was evident in both average membership volume (down 18,644) and membership density (down to 23.9 percent). Unlike the city, the post-recession years have seen a rebound in both membership (up to a total of 311,211) and density, which now average the same rate as in the pre-recession period.

3. Age Differences

Youth employment has been particularly hard hit by the economic downturns and generally anemic wage and job growth of the past decade.⁹ And those who do find work are the least likely to have any union protections. Nationwide, the latest 2011 government report shows that a mere 4.4 percent of young workers ages 16 to 24 were union members, the lowest rate of any age group.¹⁰ The youth rate has dropped by over half from 9.1 percent in 1983, the first year in which the BLS began collecting annual membership rates by age group. Today, the 857,000 young union members under 25 (over 900,000 fewer than in 1983) account for just over 6 percent of all union members.

Among major age groups in New York City, young working people aged 16 to 24 have long had the lowest rate of union coverage. In the late 1980s, when more than one in three working New Yorkers was in a union, the rate was one in five among the city's youngest workers. By the late 1990s, that rate had slipped to 13 percent (less than half the rate of adults 35 and over), and through the mid-2000s both the number of young union workers and their coverage density remained fairly constant.

However, as Table 2 shows, that changed with the recession: the youth rate of union membership dropped to 12.1 percent in 2007-2009, then fell still more

Figure 3
Composition of Union Work Force, by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, 2010-2012, NYC

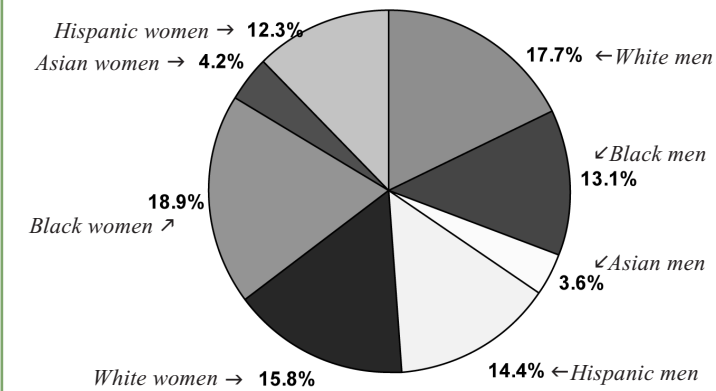


Figure 4
Composition of Union Work Force, by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, 2010-2012, Long Island

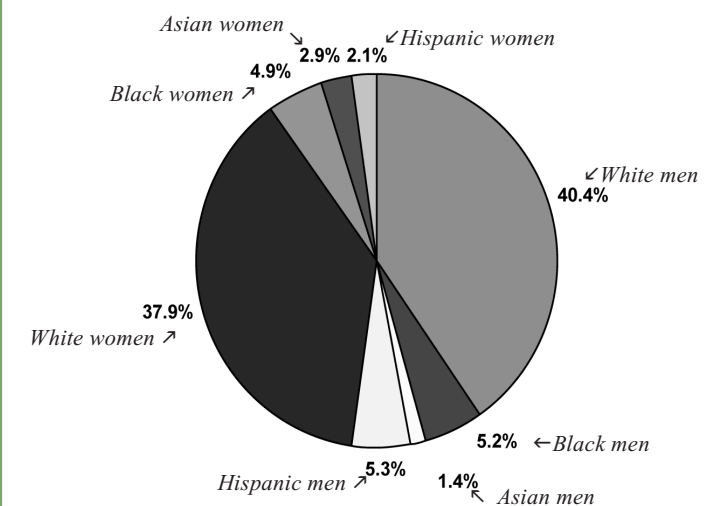


Table 3.
Union Membership And Coverage Rates by Age Group
Long Island, 2004-2012

2004-2006					
AGE	Employment	Membership	Coverage Membership	Membership Rate	Coverage Rate
16-24	157,906	14,237	14,963	9.0	9.5
25-34	230,428	64,088	66,935	27.8	29.2
35-44	340,900	93,833	99,646	27.5	28.6
45-54	291,311	83,346	87,101	28.6	29.9
55-64	172,254	53,776	56,695	31.2	32.9
65+	63,320	8,170	8,669	12.9	13.7
Total	1,256,119	317,450	334,008	25.3	26.6
2007-2009					
AGE	Employment	Membership	Coverage Membership	Membership Rate	Coverage Rate
16-24	167,366	16,086	16,934	9.6	10.1
25-34	223,563	57,760	59,675	25.8	26.7
35-44	324,695	78,271	81,702	24.1	25.2
45-54	301,927	90,733	94,422	30.1	31.3
55-64	182,190	46,102	49,221	25.3	27.0
65+	50,584	9,855	10,484	19.5	20.7
Total	1,250,325	298,806	312,439	23.9	25.0
2010-2012					
AGE	Employment	Membership	Coverage Membership	Membership Rate	Coverage Rate
16-24	134,185	11,777	14,079	8.8	10.5
25-34	235,261	58,457	58,998	24.8	25.1
35-44	306,836	89,852	93,282	29.3	30.4
45-54	304,696	94,685	98,009	31.1	32.2
55-64	192,676	48,000	50,099	24.9	26.0
65+	55,131	8,440	8,880	15.3	16.1
Total	1,228,784	311,211	323,346	25.3	26.3

Notes: Based on CLD estimates from CPS Outgoing Rotation Group (ORG) Earnings Files. Estimates are based on wage and salary workers, ages 16 and above. Membership rates reflect the percentage of employed workers who are union members. Coverage rates reflect the percentage of employed workers that are covered by union or employee and association contracts. Coverage figures are averages of the respective three year period.

sharply to 8.6 percent in 2010-2012. The number in unions fell nearly 15,000 over this same period, down to 30,445. The union coverage rate fell from 14.2 to 13.4, then to 9.2 in the latest, post-recession period. The most recent decline happened even as youth employment rose by nearly 8,000 (to 352,851).

The nature of the jobs that most youth find and of the firms that hire them likely account for a large share of the explanation. First, their jobs are more likely to be entry-level, low-skill and often part-time or temporary positions in small businesses – all characteristics long associated with low union density. Also, large numbers of youth jobs today have little choice but to work for wealthy and notoriously anti-union employers like Wal-Mart and most fast-food and small retail chains. And it remains true that many unions neglect organizing young workers and, when they do, tend to subordinate their interests in favor of those of more senior employees.

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 has fallen by nearly 20,000 since 2004-2006, cutting the membership rate from 21 percent to 17.2 percent. Our findings reveal that only the city's older workers aged 45 and over have experienced any sizable growth in union membership since the mid-2000s. Like their younger counterparts, this age cohort recorded more employment (up by nearly 41,000) since the recession years, but still had a shrinking share of it with union coverage.

A similar age ranking is evident on Long Island (Table 3), where 10.5 percent of the youngest workers have union coverage today, compared to 30 to 32 percent of those prime-age workers 35 to 54. Both the membership and coverage densities of the latter fell in the recession period. However, since then their densities have risen back to slightly above the pre-recession levels.

4. Gender, Race & Ethnicity

Over 63 percent of workers in New York City and 28 percent on Long Island are

Table 4.
Union Coverage Rates by Race, Gender and Ethnicity, 2007-2012, New York City

	Females			Males		
	Employment	Coverage	Coverage Density	Employment	Coverage	Coverage Density
2007-2009						
White, non-Hispanic	572,287	125,780	22.0	644,843	161,762	25.1
Black, non-Hispanic	430,083	164,916	38.3	326,355	126,628	38.8
Asian, non-Hispanic	214,714	32,025	14.9	255,830	42,058	16.4
Other non-Hispanic	11,675	3,417	29.3	9,484	3,873	40.8
Hispanic	395,061	106,053	26.8	454,314	126,197	27.8
TOTAL	1,623,820	432,192	26.6	1,690,826	460,517	27.2
	Females			Males		
2010-2012	Employment	Coverage	Coverage Density	Employment	Coverage	Coverage Density
White, non-Hispanic	592,944	132,143	22.3	639,987	147,813	23.1
Black, non-Hispanic	425,138	158,142	37.23	28,085	109,754	33.5
Asian, non-Hispanic	198,461	33,771	17.0	271,010	29,340	10.8
Other non-Hispanic	6,370	1,163	18.3	7,986	661	8.3
Hispanic	397,543	103,168	26.0	481,532	120,922	25.1
TOTAL	1,620,456	428,388	26.4	1,728,600	408,490	23.6

Table 5.
Union Coverage Rates by Race, Gender and Ethnicity, 2007-2012, Long Island

	Females			Males		
	Employment	Coverage	Coverage Density	Employment	Coverage	Coverage Density
2007-2009						
White, non-Hispanic	452,801	113,400	25.0	434,193	131,387	30.3
Black, non-Hispanic	51,891	12,346	23.8	39,184	12,676	32.4
Asian, non-Hispanic	28,418	4,093	14.4	35,395	7,289	20.6
Other non-Hispanic	1,760	—	—	3,152	662	21.0
Hispanic	78,291	9,683	12.4	123,326	19,029	15.4
TOTAL	615,053	140,710	22.9	635,272	171,729	27.0
	Females			Males		
2010-2012	Employment	Coverage	Coverage Density	Employment	Coverage	Coverage Density
White, non-Hispanic	428,750	122,543	28.6	453,132	130,632	28.8
Black, non-Hispanic	56,957	15,720	27.6	49,292	16,833	34.2
Asian, non-Hispanic	31,384	9,364	29.8	34,567	3,916	11.3
Other non-Hispanic	1,760	—	—	3,152	662	21.0
Hispanic	81,256	6,688	8.2	88,533	16,988	19.2
TOTAL	600,108	154,315	25.7	628,677	169,031	26.9

African American, Spanish Origin, or Asian. How have the recession and recovery affected the racial and ethnic mix of employment and union coverage? Compared with the pre-recession years 2004-2006, the only groups in the city whose employment was notably reduced by 2007-2009 were black and Hispanic men. The former lost about 9,000 jobs (-2.7 Percent) and Latinos lost over 45,500 (-9.1 percent). However, the number of each group with union coverage still rose by four to six thousand. Employment gains among other men and women more than compensated for their job losses.

By 2010-2012, both black and Hispanic men have recovered some of their earlier job reductions. But Latino employment has still not recaptured 40 percent of their recession losses. Asian and Latino employment gains most recently drove up the resident job count to 1.73 million men, 37,800 more than in the late 2000s. However, in this same period, the number of men with union coverage shrank by 52,027 – an 11.3 percent drop (Table 4). Every racial and ethnic group experienced declines in union coverage, with 35 percent of the total decline accounted for by the very groups (Asians and Latinos) whose employment was growing.

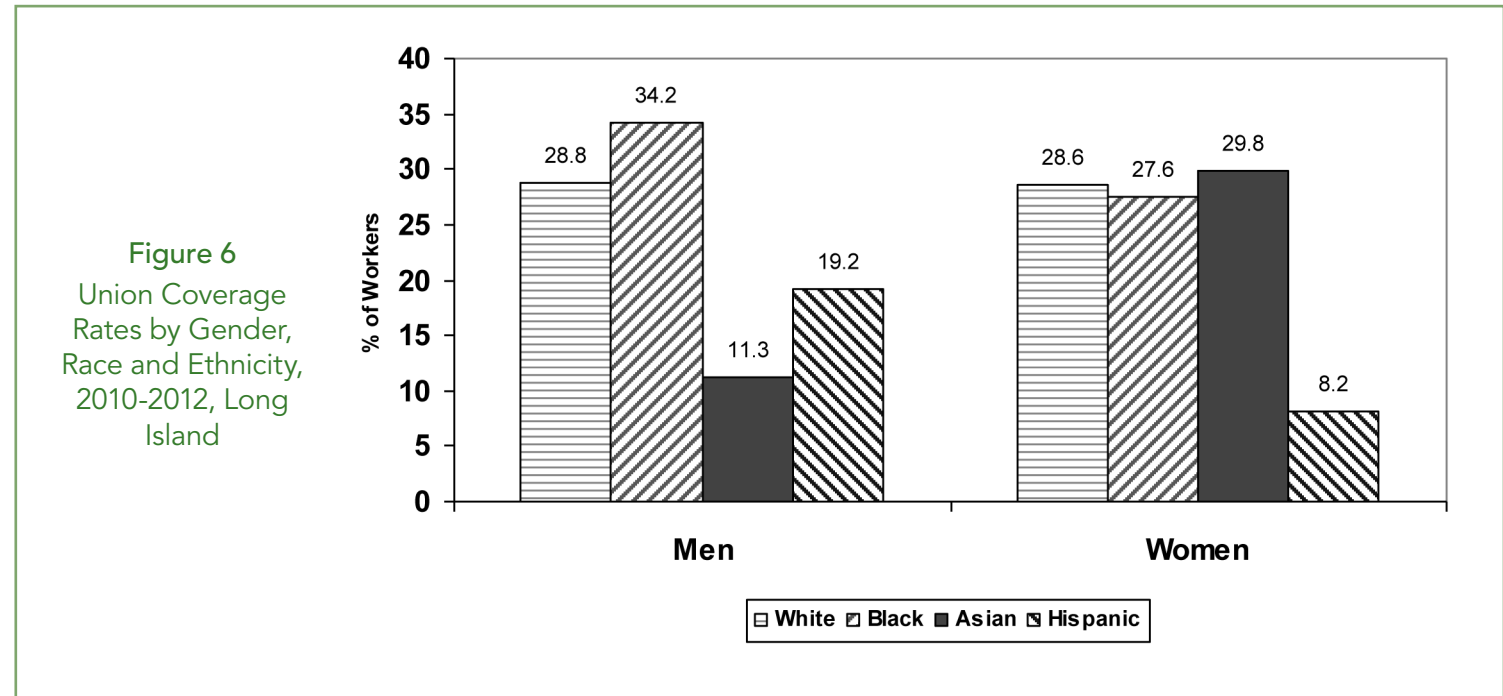
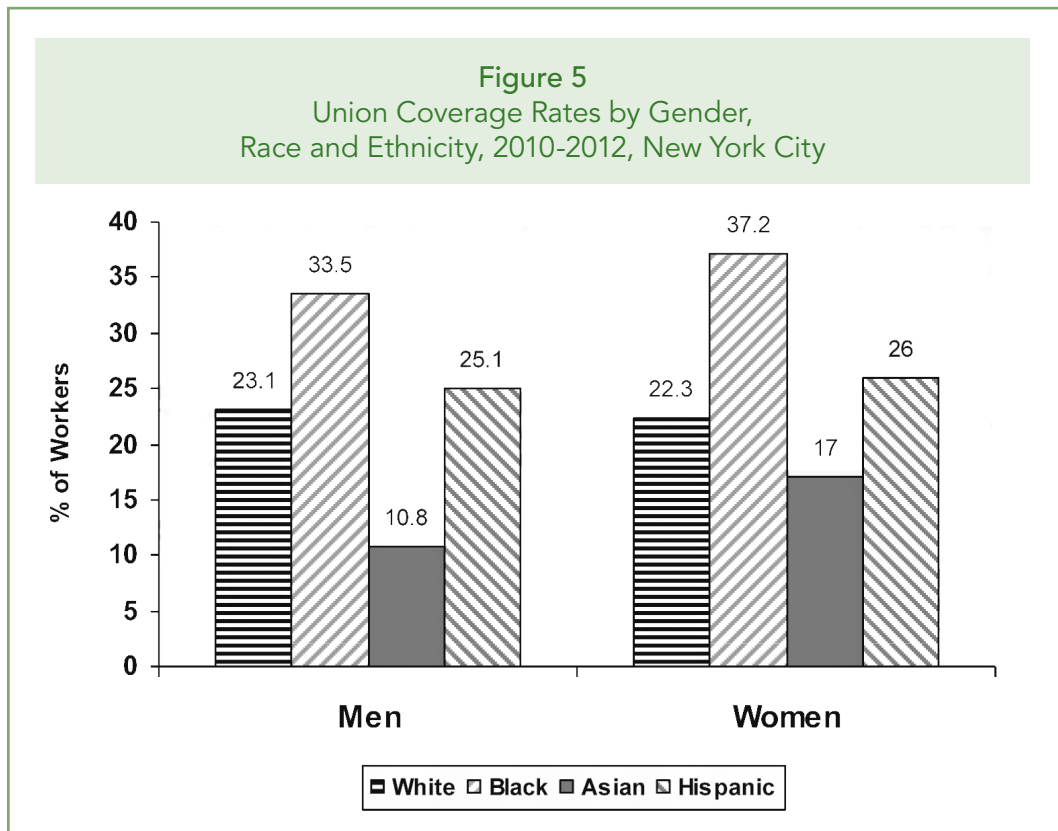
As Figure 5 shows, among male New Yorkers, African Americans have the highest union density, followed by black men (33.5), Latinos (25.1), white non-Hispanic men (23.1), and Asian men (10.8). The black union density rate nationwide also tends to

exceed that of any major racial or ethnic group. But the higher Hispanic rate compared to white non-Hispanic New Yorkers differs from the national pattern.

A higher proportion of New York's women (26.4 percent) than men (23.6 percent) has union representation at work. Among working women, black non-Hispanic have the highest proportion (37.2 percent) of all New York workers covered by a union contract, followed by Latinas (26), white non-Hispanic women (22.3), and Asian women (17). The 428,388 women currently employed in union jobs are nearly three times as numerous as their 147,813 white non-Hispanic male counterparts (Table 4). In fact the female share of the union work force (51.2 percent, as shown in Figure 3) has risen such that it has now more than reached parity with the male share. Although the number of working women with union coverage is down (by 3,800) since the recession years, the much steeper decline in union men meant their share of covered jobs declined.

Of all currently unionized workers on Long Island, the white male union share is over twice as large (40.4 percent) as in the city, but it has slowly declined over the years as a growing majority of its union workers are also now women and minority men (Figure 4). Both male and female employment counts are slightly lower today than in 2007-09. The fact that the total number of workers with union-covered jobs has still risen (by 10,907, or 3.5 percent)

reflects the fact that an increase of nearly 14,000 new union women outnumbered the number of men losing coverage (2,700). That is, new female union workers accounted for 100 percent of the total rise in Long Island's union coverage. Union contracts now cover 26.9 percent of men and 25.7 percent of women workers – and the gap between them has been cut in half since the late 1990s. Among working men, African Americans have the highest rate of union coverage on Long Island (34.2 percent), followed by non-Hispanic whites (28.8), Latinas (19.2) and Asians (11.3). Among working women, 28.6 per cent of whites and 27.6 per cent of blacks had union representation, but only 8.2 per cent of Latinas. The nearly 30 per cent density estimate for the still-small Asian female work force is surprisingly high, and well above our earlier findings. Given the small sample size for this subset, the estimate has weak statistical significance.



5. Immigration

Nearly one of every two New York City working people today is foreign born. Two-thirds of the 1.5 million foreign born are now U.S. citizens. In our 2007 study we found that, by 2004-2006, 26.2 per cent of immigrant workers held union jobs, accounting for 43.5 per cent of the city's entire union work force. Moreover, foreign-born U.S. citizens were the main source of union growth from the late 1990s through the mid-2000s: of the 66,492 increase in total union coverage in those pre-recession years citywide, 58,297 were immigrants – accounting for 87.7 per cent of union growth.

That has not been the case since then. As Table 6 indicates, both citizen and non-citizen immigrants have gained more jobs since the depths of the recession, but the number with union coverage has declined by 63,573. Their union density has shrunk as well: one in three naturalized immigrant workers had union coverage in 2007-09, but the coverage rate is only 29 per cent today. Non-citizen immigrants, mostly recent arrivals, have union density (14.3 per cent) less than half that of foreign-born US citizens. In contrast, native-born New Yorkers, captured gains in both jobs and coverage. Their employment has risen by 17,464 since the recession, and about 44 per cent of those job gains brought union representation. That was enough to maintain their rate of union coverage over this period at 27.5 per cent.

On Long Island the 261,000 foreign-born working people, though far less numerous than in the city, still account today for over 21 per cent of the local work force. Employment of more recent, non-citizen workers has decreased since 2007-09 by nearly 34,000, and the number with union jobs has been almost cut in half. This has

lowered their union density to just 6.5 per cent. The size of the native-born work force has also contracted (by over 11,000), but the number with union coverage has gone in the opposite direction: up by almost 8,000. In contrast, among settled immigrants with US citizenship, employment has risen by nearly 23,000, and an additional 8,372 now have union representation. This increase more than compensated for the declining union coverage (-5,391 jobs) of more recent, non-citizen migrants. Together with the increased number of union jobs among the native born, the higher coverage among naturalized immigrants caused the number of Long Island union workers to grow by 3.5 per cent, raising the union density rate from 25 per cent in 2007-09 to 26.3 per cent today. The native-born workforce has contracted by 11,500 since the recession period, though the number with union jobs rose by just over 2,000. As a result, their rate of coverage rose to 28.7 per cent.

6. Public and Private Industry Sectors

Of the 16.3 million American workers with union representation on the job today, the majority are now in the public sector. The private sector union coverage rate has shrunk from nearly one-fourth in 1973 to 7.6 per cent in 2011. But in the public sector, over five times as large a share of its much smaller work force (40.7 per cent) have union coverage, a density rate that has eroded (from 43 per cent in 2006) over the past five years. as states and localities have slashed their payrolls.

How does the New York Metropolitan Area compare with these national patterns? Over half a million New York City residents are employed in the public sector today, nearly 16 per cent of the work force. Our findings in Table 7 reveal, like the national pattern, an enormous public-private density gap, but substantially higher

Table 6.
Union Coverage Rates by Citizenship Status, New York City and Long Island, 2007-2012

	2007-2009			2010-2012		
	Employment	Coverage	Coverage Density	Employment	Coverage	Coverage Density
NEW YORK CITY						
Native Born, Citizen	1,790,593	489,902	27.36	1,808,077	497,643	27.52
Foreign Born, Non-Citizen	731,225	134,708	18.42	735,703	105,499	14.34
Foreign Born, Citizen	792,828	268,099	33.82	805,276	233,735	29.03
TOTAL	3,314,646	892,709	26.93	3,349,056	836,878	24.99
	2007-2009			2010-2012		
LONG ISLAND	Employment	Coverage	Coverage Density	Employment	Coverage	Coverage Density
Native Born, Citizen	979,457	269,649	27.53	967,958	277,577	28.68
Foreign Born, Non-Citizen	138,595	12,172	8.78	104,777	6,781	6.47
Foreign Born, Citizen	132,273	30,617	23.15	156,049	38,989	24.98
TOTAL	1,250,325	312,439	24.99	1,228,784	323,346	26.31

Table 7.
Union Coverage Rates by Public/Private Employment Sector, New York City & Long Island, 2004-2012

	PUBLIC SECTOR			PRIVATE SECTOR		
	Employment	Coverage	Coverage Density	Employment	Coverage	Coverage Density
NEW YORK CITY						
2004-2006	486,582	364,947	75.0	2,698,921	532,335	19.7
2007-2009	512,780	369,977	72.2	2,801,866	522,733	18.7
2010-2012	532,378	401,951	75.5	2,816,677	434,926	15.4
	PUBLIC SECTOR			PRIVATE SECTOR		
LONG ISLAND	Employment	Coverage	Coverage Density	Employment	Coverage	Coverage Density
2004-2006	272,652	199,303	73.1	983,467	134,705	13.7
2007-2009	258,720	183,870	71.1	991,605	128,568	13.0
2010-2012	259,268	193,197	74.5	969,517	130,149	13.4

	PUBLIC SECTOR			PRIVATE SECTOR		
	Employment	Coverage	Density	Employment	Coverage	Density
NEW YORK CITY						
2004-2006 to 2007-2009	26,198	5,029	-2.85	102,945	-9,602	-1.07
2007-2009 to 2010-2012	19,598	31,975	3.35	14,811	-87,807	-3.22
	PUBLIC SECTOR			PRIVATE SECTOR		
LONG ISLAND	Employment	Coverage	Density	Employment	Coverage	Density
2004-2006 to 2007-2009	-13,932	-15,433	-2.03	8,139	-6,137	-0.73
2007-2009 to 2010-2012	548	9,327	3.45	-22,089	1,581	0.46

Table 8.
Union Coverage Rates by Major Industry of Employment, 2007-2012, NYC

Industry	2007-2009			2010-2012		
	Employment	Coverage	Density	Employment	Coverage	Density
Construction	179,990	57,993	32.2	154,729	36,189	23.4
Manufacturing	142,539	21,517	15.1	130,357	12,120	9.3
Wholesale & Retail Trade	380,984	36,045	9.5	382,460	32,238	8.4
Transportation & Utilities	230,373	114,033	49.5	232,789	103,839	44.6
Information	123,902	30,184	24.4	114,050	14,850	13.0
Financial Activities	340,652	38,909	11.4	364,585	45,270	12.4
Professional & Business Services	355,101	39,716	11.2	395,023	44,066	11.2
Education & Health Services	874,860	395,089	45.2	892,735	391,773	43.9
Leisure & Hospitality	328,481	30,043	9.1	353,489	25,732	7.3
Other Services	193,684	22,431	11.6	157,523	11,287	7.2
Public Administration	161,554	106,401	65.9	170,808	119,513	70.0
All Industries	3,312,119	892,360	26.9	3,348,548	836,878	25.0

union coverage locally in both sectors. Since the mid-2000s, employment in both New York City's public and private sectors has risen. The public sector added over 26,000 new jobs by the recession period, and another 19,598 since then. Union coverage rose as well, up almost 37,000 (Table 7, lower panel). This pushed the sector's rate of coverage to 75.5 per cent.

The private sector added 103,000 more jobs from the mid-2000s through 2007-09, but the number with union representation dropped (by 9,602). Residents' employment gains shrank dramatically thereafter, to just an extra 14,811 by 2010-12. And private sector union jobs plunged by 87,807. The result was a sharp drop in the private sector coverage density: from 19.7 per cent in 2004-06 to 15.4 percent today.

The unionization gap between public and private sector jobs is even wider on Long Island: public sector union coverage rose from 67 per cent in the late 1980s to 73 per cent in 2004-2006, while over the same period the union share of the private sector dropped from 18 to 13.7 per cent. Unlike the city's pattern, Long Islanders found 13,932 fewer jobs in the public sector between then and 2007-09, and union-covered employment contracted even more (-15,433). Since then, the sector's employment has been flat, but over 60 percent of the union job losses have been recouped (+9,327 extra covered jobs). The public sector density rate is now 74.5 per cent, higher than in the recession years or in the mid-2000s.

The public sector represents a larger proportion (21.1 per cent) of the overall resident job count on Long Island than in the city. And

it accounts for 60 per cent of all of Long Island residents with union coverage. In contrast, in New York City, that sector's share of all union workers is 48 per cent. But in both parts of the region, job growth in local government and other highly unionized service industries appear to have been crucial to staving off much erosion in union density.

7. Industry-Specific Density Differentials

How have the changes in unionization varied by industry? The top five industries with the highest union coverage in New York City as of 2007-09 were: Public Administration (66 per cent), Transportation and Utilities (49.5), Education and Health Services (45.2), Construction (32.4), and Information (24.4). Manufacturing, with 15.1 per cent union coverage, ranked sixth. See Table 8 for a full set of industry densities. In Table 10, we estimate the proportions of New York City employment and union coverage changes from 2007-09 to 2010-12 that are attributable to changes in each industry. Three of the most unionized industries, construction, information and manufacturing, jointly accounted for 57 per cent of employment declines and for nearly 59 per cent of the declines in jobholders with union coverage. Two-thirds of employment expansion was in the lightly unionized finance, professional and business services and leisure and hospitality industries.

Long Island has a similar ranking of the top five industries with the highest union coverage as of 2007-09: Public Administration (70.6 per cent), Transportation and Utilities (46.4), Education and Health Services (40.6), Information (39.7), and Construction (28.2).

Table 9.
Union Coverage Rates by Major Industry of Employment, 2007-2012, Long Island

Industry	2007-2009			2010-2012		
	Employment	Coverage	Density	Employment	Coverage	Density
Construction	81,530	22,997	28.2	60,292	21,616	35.9
Manufacturing	80,788	8,121	10.1	81,474	9,781	12.0
Wholesale & Retail Trade	380,984	36,045	9.5	382,460	32,238	8.4
Transportation & Utilities	73,170	33,919	46.4	79,175	42,661	53.9
Information	45,890	18,207	39.7	41,503	5,971	14.4
Financial Activities	115,053	4,989	4.3	91,757	4,508	4.9
Professional & Business Services	118,672	10,194	8.6	135,029	11,701	8.7
Education & Health Services	335,982	136,455	40.6	344,398	151,686	44.0
Leisure & Hospitality	98,762	4,592	4.6	84,553	1,941	2.3
Other Services	61,628	2,800	4.5	58,664	4,737	8.1
Public Administration	72,252	50,984	70.6	73,998	52,473	70.9
All Industries	1,249,994	312,439	25.0	1,228,784	323,346	26.3

Construction and information industries alone accounted for 39 percent of employment declines and two-thirds of shrinkage in union coverage. Of these two, information experienced the largest decline (-12,236) in residents represented by unions. Though construction was down by 21,238 fewer residents employed, its union coverage was only reduced by 1,381 residents.

8. Union-Nonunion Wage Differentials

While many New Yorkers have lost union coverage in recent years, how have those still covered fared in their earnings relative to nonunion workers? On average, among full-time workers in the most recent years, the union-nonunion hourly wage differential is sizable: 22.4 per cent in NYC and 12.8 per cent on Long Island. In weekly earnings, Long Island union members average 26.6 per cent higher wages than nonunion workers, but the advantage in the city is only 7.6 per cent. The national union weekly earnings premium averaged 28.7 per cent in 2011. Of course, skill, experience, occupational, firm size and many other factors besides union coverage could affect such wage differences, as a rich economic literature has shown. We intend detailed investigation of local union-nonunion pay differentials in future work

9. Summary and Concluding Remarks

This study attempts to use statistical analysis of large Census Bureau microdata sets to explore some of the principal characteristics of union coverage in the New York Metropolitan Area today, and to trace recent changes in unionization locally from the years prior to the latest recession to the present. To make statistically reliable

estimates of detailed components of these trends, we relied on multiyear samples with adequate numbers of observations for reliable statistical estimates of specific worker groups, industries, etc. We pooled data as follows: a) 1987, 1988, 1989; b) 1997, 1998, 1999; c) 2004, 2005, 2006; d) 2007, 2008, 2009 ["Great Recession years"]; and e) 2010, 2011 and 2012:I ("recovery years").

Our estimates indicate that the fraction of New York City residents in unions declined from a 1986 density of 35.5 per cent to a 29 percent density in 1995-96, then dropped further to a low of 25.3 percent in 2000. Thereafter it rebounded somewhat and remained at 26 percent or above in all but one of the following years through 2007. But, since the onset of the recession, the density rate has dropped markedly, down from 26.3 percent in 2007 to 22 percent in 2011-2012.

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 percent in the mid-1980s to 28 percent in the early 1990s. After dipping in 1995 to 1997, the Long Island rate rose to 27 percent in 1999 – the first year in the series that Long Islanders had a higher unionization rate than the city (26.6 percent). By 2007, density was still not much less (25.6 percent) than in the late 1990s boom years. But, as in the city, the recession years began a decline that has shown little sign of reversal. Over the last two years, the membership rate has been just over 23 percent.

We explore a number of components of changes in both union

Table 10.
Changes in Employment & Union Coverage by Industry, 2007-2012

NYC	2007-09 to 2010-12		As % of Total Changes			
			Employment		Union Coverage	
	Employment	Union	Increase	Decline	Increase	Decline
Construction	-25,261	-21,804		30.27		27.49
Manufacturing	-12,182	-9,397		14.60		11.85
Wholesale & Retail Trade	1,476	-3,807	1.23			4.80
Transportation & Utilities	2,416	-10,194	2.02			12.85
Information	-9,852	-15,334		11.80		19.34
Finance	23,933	6,361	19.96		26.70	
Professional & Business Services	39,922	4,351	33.30		18.26	
Education & Health Services	17,875	-3,316	14.91			4.18
Leisure & Hospitality	25,008	-4,311	20.86			5.44
Other Services	-36,161	-11,144		43.33		14.05
Public Administration	9,254	13,112	7.72	55.04		
All Industries	36,429	-55,482				
Job Cuts	-83,455	-79,305		100.00		100.00
Job Gains	119,884	23,823	100.00		100.00	
Net Change	36,429	-55,482				

Long Island	2007-09 to 2010-12		Employment		Union Coverage	
	Employment	Union	Increase	Decline	Increase	Decline
Construction	-21,238	-1,381		32.13		7.02
Manufacturing	685	1,660	1.53		5.43	
Wholesale & Retail Trade	11,673	-2,908	26.01			14.79
Transportation & Utilities	6,005	8,742	13.38		28.60	
Information	-4,386	-12,236		6.64	62.25	19.34
Finance	-23,295	-481		35.25	2.45	
Professional & Business Services	16,357	1,507	36.44		4.93	
Education & Health Services	8,416	15,231	18.75	49.83		4.18
Leisure & Hospitality	-14,209	-2,652		21.50	13.49	
Other Services	-36,161	-11,144		43.33		14.05
Public Administration	1,747	1,489	3.89		4.87	
All Industries	-21,210	10,908				
Job Cuts	-66,093	-19,658		100.00		100.00
Job Gains	44,883	30,566	100.00		100.00	
Net Change	-21,210	10,908				

Table 11.
Median Earnings: Full-time Workers by Industry and Union Status, 2010-2012

NYC and Long Island Industry	Hourly Wage		Weekly Earnings		Union Pay Premium [%]	
	Non-Union	Union	Non-Union	Union	Hourly	Weekly
Construction	\$18.75	\$25.50	\$750	\$1,057	0.360	0.410
Manufacturing	19.88	16.15	810	663	-0.187	-0.181
Wholesale & Retail Trade	15.53	16.15	650	673	0.040	0.035
Transportation & Utilities	16.35	23.56	680	962	0.441	0.414
Information	25.00	21.63	1058	961	-0.135	-0.091
Financial Activities	26.40	19.23	1154	780	-0.272	-0.324
Professional & Business Services	23.08	21.44	980	903	-0.071	-0.079
Education & Health Services	18.75	22.50	760	900	0.200	0.184
Leisure & Hospitality	12.50	15.00	514	600	0.200	0.168
Other Services	13.25	15.00	540	600	0.132	0.111
Public Administration	24.88	25.00	1057	1000	0.005	-0.054

Table 12.
Median Earnings: Full-time Workers by Age, Gender & Union Status, 2010 -2012

	Hourly Wage		Weekly Earnings		Union Pay Premium [%]	
	Non-Union	Union	Non-Union	Union	Hourly	Weekly
NYC	\$20.83	\$25.50	\$768	\$826	0.224	0.076
Long Island	18.02	20.33	865	1096	0.128	0.266
Age						
20-29	16.00	19.00	681	760	0.188	0.116
30-44	20.17	23.12	865	951	0.146	0.099
45-64	19.23	23.10	800	961	0.201	0.201
Gender						
Male	19.72	23.58	840	978	0.196	0.164
Female	18.00	21.25	750	846	0.181	0.128

membership density and the broader union coverage density, including: age cohorts; gender, racial and ethnic groupings; immigration; public sector employment; and specific industry developments. The findings suggest that employment shifts toward lower-paying sectors with little union coverage, as well as some deunionization within traditionally more unionized industries have played influential depressive roles. At the same time, the relative stability of the highly unionized public sector continues to serve as an important counteracting force against more dramatic declines in total union density.

NOTES

- 1 See DeFreitas, Gregory and Bhaswati Sengupta. 2007. "The State of New York Unions 2007," *Regional Labor Review* 10 (1), Fall: 3-18; and US Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Union Members (Annual)," *BLS Press Release*, www.bls.gov.
 - 2 The research literature on the relationship between union coverage and business cycles, limited as it is, has more often tested the impacts of unions on unemployment, rather than how the cycle might affect unionized workers. See, for example, the articles in and past studies cited in Bennett, James and Bruce Kaufman, eds. 2001. *The Future of Private Sector Unionism in the United States*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
 - 3 NY State Comptroller, "NY State's Economic Recovery May Be Losing Steam," *Economic Trends in New York State* (2/02/2012).
 - 4 Fiscal Policy Institute. *The State of Working New York 2012: Disappointingly Weak Recovery* (September) www.fiscalpolicy.org.
 - 5 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012. "Union Members: 2011," BLS Press Release (January), www.bls.gov.
- Nearly half of all the country's union members are concentrated in just six states: New York, California, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.
- 6 Hirsch, Barry T., David A. Macpherson and Wayne G. Vroman. 2001. "Estimates of Union Density by State," *Monthly Labor Review*, 124 (7), July: 51-55.

⁷ See, for example, Hirsch, Barry T and David A. Macpherson. 2002. "Union Membership and Coverage Database from the Current Population Survey: Note," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 56 (2), January: 349-54; Hirsch, Barry T and David A. Macpherson. 2003. "Union Membership and Coverage Database from the Current Population Survey: Note," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 56 (2), January: 349-54. See our technical appendix in the full report for more details. As our paper was in final preparations for publication, we learned of a new paper on New York unions: Milkman, Ruth and Laura Braslow. Sept. 2012. "The State of the Unions 2012: A Profile of Organized Labor in New York City, New York State, and the United States," www.urbanresearch.org. While it also uses CPS data, its estimates are based on smaller 18-month pooled samples, omits nonunion members covered by union contracts, and does not have separate estimates for Long Island.

⁸ For more complete estimates on the pre-2004 periods, see DeFreitas and Sengupta (2007).

⁹ See, for example, Shierholz, Heidi, et al. 2012. "The Class of 2012: Labor Market for Young Graduates Remains Grim," *EPI Briefing Paper* (May), www.epi.org.

¹⁰ US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2007. "Union Members in 2006," *BLS Press Release* (January), www.bls.gov/cps.

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