According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 15.7 percent (75,000) of Rhode Island private and public sector workers were union members in 2021. This was down from 17.8 percent in 2020. The number of union members was 75,000, down 6,000 from 81,000 in 2020.

Nationally, the union membership rate was 10.3 percent in 2021, down half of a percentage point from 2020 and well below the 20.1 percent measured in 1983. Among the fifty states, Rhode Island reported the ninth highest union membership rate. Hawaii (22.4%), New York (22.2%) and Washington (19.0%) had the highest rates in the country, while South Carolina (1.7%), North Carolina (2.6%), Utah (3.5%), Texas (3.8%) and Arkansas (3.9%) had the lowest union membership rates in 2021.

Regionally, Rhode Island (15.7%) had the highest union membership rate in New England, followed by Connecticut (14.6%), Massachusetts (12.6%), Maine (12.4%), Vermont (12.3%) and New Hampshire (10.1%). Only New Hampshire had a union membership rate less than the national average.

Union members and workers whose jobs are covered by a union or employee association contract represented 11.6 percent of the nation’s wage and salary workers and 17.4 percent of Rhode Island’s wage and salary workers.