



Introduction

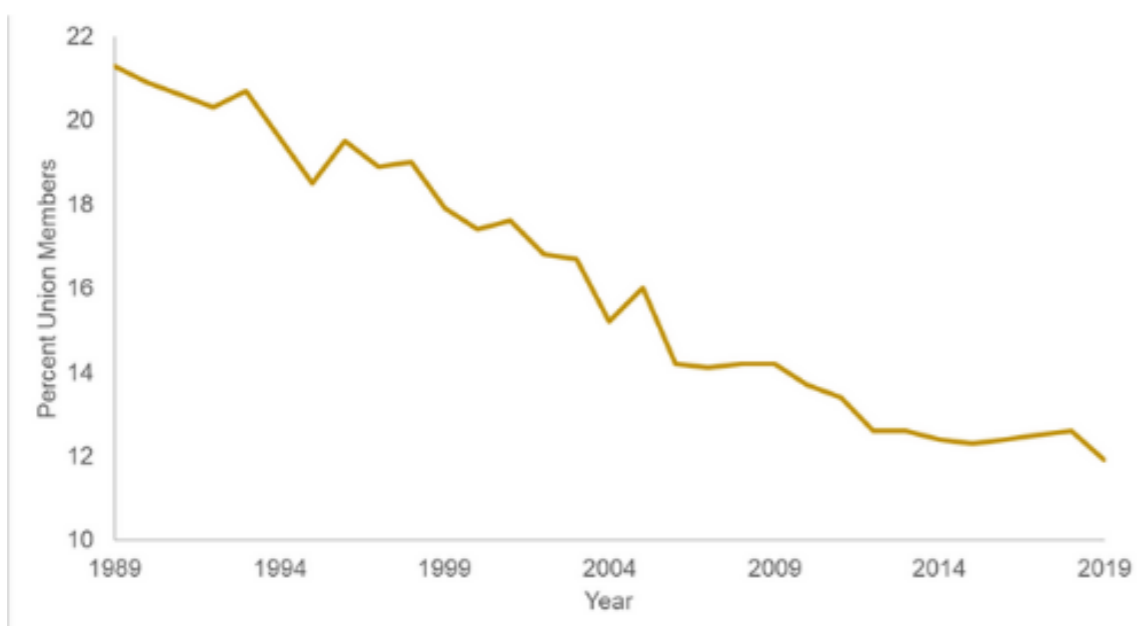
Increasing access to worker supports can prevent IPV by increasing Ohioans' economic stability. **Influential worker supports include unions and meaningful anti-discrimination policies.**

Unions

Union representation typically leads to positive benefits for workers, including higher pay, more benefits, and stronger workplace policies.^{315,316,317,318,319} Positive effects of unionization are particularly strong for women and people of color.^{320,321} For example, **women in unions earn 9.2% more** than similar women who are not in unions.³²² **Workers who are not union members also benefit from the work of unions in their industry** through higher wages.³²³ Overall, **unions improve pay and working conditions**, especially for workers from under-resourced communities, and these benefits extend to non-union workers.

Ohio has higher unionization rates than the national average.³²⁵ However, union membership rates have decreased significantly over the past 30 years. Lower union representation can lead to worsening work environments for Ohio's workers and thus, increased risk for IPV perpetration.

Ohio Union Membership, 1989-2019



Declines in union membership are driven by three major factors:

- Reduction in size of the manufacturing workforce
- Overt and sustained efforts by employers to suppress union organizing
- Political efforts to discourage labor organizing

The manufacturing industry employed 15% of Ohio workers in 2019, down from 26% in 1990.³²⁸ This decline mirrors national trends. **Manufacturing workers are more likely to be unionized than most other workers.** Declines in this industry led to declines in the statewide unionization rate.³²⁹ Service industry jobs are largely replacing manufacturing work. While unions are rarer in the service industry, they can have a big impact. **Unionized workers in food service and janitorial services are compensated 87% higher than nonunionized workers.**³³⁰

Poverty does not cause intimate partner violence (IPV). Rather, the same conditions that create poverty also create the risk factors for IPV.

Several risk factors for IPV are related to economic and financial security. They range from personal factors to conditions affecting our entire society.

Economic Risk Factors for IPV Perpetration

- **Societal Factors:** Income inequality
- **Community Factors:** Neighborhood poverty, diminished economic opportunities, high unemployment rates
- **Relationship and Individual Factors:** Economic stress

Strengthening household financial security and strengthening supports for workers and families are two ways to reduce risk for IPV perpetration in Ohio.

Examples of anti-union practices used by employers include:



- Hiring anti-union law firms
- Surveilling employees
- Illegally firing employees for union activity

When employees seek to unionize, **employers often engage in both legal and illegal practices to discourage unionization or to stop it entirely.**³³¹

In 2019, The Economic Policy Institute found that nationally, **"[e]mployers are charged with violating federal law in 41.5% of all union election campaigns"**.³³²

Workers in service industries are not unionizing because their employers use their power in legal and illegal ways to coerce them into not unionizing, not because they do not want to or because they do not understand the benefits of unionization.

Labor unions improve working conditions by increasing the power workers have relative to their employers. This is especially important for low-wage and under-resourced workers who otherwise have little power in our society.³³⁶

Declining union membership and political opposition to unions threaten to rollback gains for unionized workers and create a ripple effect that lowers wages for non-unionized workers as well. **Reductions in unionization can increase families' economic stress and decrease their financial stability. These outcomes increase their risks for violence in their homes and communities.**

Anti-Discrimination Policies

Most workers are protected from workplace discrimination by **Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964**.²⁹⁴ This law prohibits "employment practice[s] that cause a disparate impact on the basis of **race, color, religion, sex, or national origin**".²⁹⁵ Title VII was amended in 1978 to "prohibit sex discrimination on the basis of **pregnancy**".²⁹⁶ On June 15, 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the term "sex" also included members of **the LGBTQ community**.^{297,298}

Several other federal laws impact workplace discrimination in Ohio. **The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967** prohibits workplace discrimination against individuals **over 40 years old**.^{301,302} In **1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act** extended discrimination protection to **individuals with physical and mental disabilities, those who are perceived to have disabilities, and those who have previously had a disability**.^{303,304} Finally, the **Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008** prohibits **discrimination on the basis of genetic information**, such as a genetically-linked higher likelihood for certain diseases.³⁰⁵

To summarize, employers cannot discriminate against employees on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, sexuality, pregnancy, national origin, age, disability status, or genetic information.³⁰⁶

Anti-discrimination laws apply to almost all private and public employers. However, **statutory protections are not useful if they are not enforced. Most instances of workplace discrimination, including sexual harassment, go unreported**.^{307,308} Employees often cited **fear of retaliation** as the reason they don't report discrimination even though retaliation is also illegal under those same laws.

Labor Policy Barriers and Opportunities

Barriers

- Union membership is decreasing and there is little ability or political support to foster growth.
- The EEOC has a significant backlog in discrimination claims while also experiencing declining staffing and funding.
- Racial discrimination claims have a lower success rate than discrimination claims in general.

Opportunities

- Ohio has higher unionization rates than the national average.
- Workers have statutory protection from workplace discrimination.
- The US Supreme Court recently ruled that LGBTQ workers are protected from workplace discrimination.

60% of workers who looked into filing a complaint in 2018 decided not to, likely due to the difficult process.³⁰ Even when employees do **file a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), very few see any justice**, or even an investigation. According to the Center for Public Integrity and Vox, only **13% of complaints in 2018 resulted in a settlement or another form of relief** for the worker.³¹⁰ **Nearly 30% of cases were deemed to be "low priority"**. Low priority cases are rarely investigated at all. **Only 0.5% of cases in this category result in relief** for the worker.

Racial discrimination claims have historically low success rates. These claims are less likely to succeed than the average for all claims filled with the EEOC.



All employees should have a workplace that is free from hostility, discrimination, intimidation, and violence. Poorly enforced anti-discrimination laws can have a substantial effect on the lives of Ohio's workers and negatively impact their risk factors for violence. When many workers in a community encounter employment discrimination, it can increase risk factors for IPV perpetration like neighborhood poverty and unemployment rates.

Labor Policy Recommendations & Action Items

Implement and enforce comprehensive anti-discrimination policies.

Expand union protections including union organizing and labor rights.

References can be found at <https://www.odvn.org/intersecting-pandemics/>