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## **THE POLLS—TRENDS**

### **LABOR UNIONS IN THE UNITED STATES**

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COSTAS PANAGOPOULOS  
PETER L. FRANCIA

**Abstract** In this study, we analyze data on public opinion and attitudes toward labor unions from the iPOLL Databank at the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research (University of Connecticut), the American National Election Study, and the Current Population Survey. Despite recent developments that suggest labor unions are in decline, we find organized labor has maintained reasonably strong public support. Although the data indicate that Americans remain skeptical about how much confidence they can place in unions and their leaders, the results make clear that the public continues to recognize the need for unions to protect the rights of workers. These results hold potentially important implications for the future of organized labor in the United States.

The American labor movement has experienced difficult times over the past several decades. During the mid-1990s, one columnist wrote that labor had “never been weaker in its 113-year-old history” (Beichman 1994; see also Goldfield 1987; Moody 1988; Sexton 1991; Buhle 1999; Lichtenstein 2002). A decade later, some political observers claim that little has changed (see, e.g., Judis 2005), with current events only adding fuel to the argument that organized labor is in decline. Since the 2000 election, organized labor has had to deal with a hostile U.S. Congress and the presidency of George W. Bush, who has presided over what many view as one of the most antiunion administrations in recent history. There also has been internal strife within the labor movement. In 2005, several major unions, representing more than 6 million workers, broke away from the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) to form their own labor federation, “Change to

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Win.” The defection prompted some labor experts and leaders, including AFL-CIO president John Sweeney, to suggest that the labor movement had been “weakened” (Dine 2005).

Yet, not everyone agrees that the news is all bad for labor (see, e.g., Dark 1999; Francia 2006). Indeed, a recent report by the Gallup Organization found that public opinion toward unions has remained positive throughout the past several decades (Kiefer 2005). These results suggest that while some indicators of labor’s strength and influence may be in decline, current public opinion of unions may be a different story. The most extensive research on this subject, Lipset and Schneider’s (1987) *The Confidence Gap*, concluded that the public had little confidence in unions and union leaders, but that the public held positive evaluations of labor unions in protecting workers from mistreatment by their employers.

In this article, we review the latest poll trends of labor unions in an effort to distinguish the areas in which unions have gained, lost, or made no progress over the last several decades. We rely on data that span eight decades collected from the iPOLL database available at the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, as well as data from the American National Election Study (ANES) and the Current Population Survey (CPS). The results reveal several important trends with implications for the larger debate about the strength and fate of the labor movement.

The first trend that we examine is membership in labor unions. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), which computes union density from the CPS and bases this measure on the percentage of wage and salary workers who belong to unions, reports a drop in union membership from a peak of one-third of the workforce in the late 1940s through the mid-1950s to less than 13 percent in 2005 (see table 1). Those advancing the thesis of union decline often cite this sharp and dramatic drop as the strongest evidence for their case.

The Gallup Poll and the ANES, which track the percentage of union households (a different measure based on the percentage of union households in the population rather than the percentage of union workers among wage and salary workers) also show declines, although they are significantly smaller than the CPS/BLS results (see tables 2 and 3). In fact, the Gallup and ANES data show no change at all in the percentage of union households over the past decade and a half. One obvious explanation for these dissimilar results is that they rely on different denominators. Another possible explanation is that union households that once had two union members now have just one. Alternatively, it might reflect differences in how the surveys treat retired union members. The CPS/BLS calculations do not include retired union workers; however, the Gallup Poll and the ANES would account for retired workers if respondents identified themselves or their spouse as members of a union. Whatever the explanation might be for these differences, the fact that union households have not declined significantly in recent years, despite drops in union membership as

**Table 1.** *CPS/BLS: Are you a member of a labor union or of an employee association similar to a union?*

Year	% of U.S. Workforce	Total Union Members
2005	13	15,685,000
2004	13	15,472,000
2002	13	16,146,000
2000	14	16,258,000
1998	14	16,211,000
1996	15	16,269,000
1994	16	16,748,000
1992	16	16,390,000
1990	16	16,740,000
1988	17	17,002,000
1986	18	16,975,000
1984	19	17,340,000
1982	22	19,571,000
1980	23	20,968,000
1978	25	21,756,000
1976	28	22,153,000
1974	28	22,165,000
1972	29	21,205,000
1970	30	20,990,000
1968	30	20,017,000
1966	30	18,922,000
1964	30	17,597,000
1962	30	16,893,000
1960	29	15,516,000
1958	30	15,570,000
1956	31	16,446,000
1954	32	15,808,000
1952	32	15,632,000
1950	32	14,294,000
1948	32	14,271,000

NOTE.—CPS/BLS, Current Population Survey/Bureau of Labor Statistics.

a percentage of the workforce, is a trend often ignored in the labor and interest group literature.

Table 4 tracks Americans' attitudes toward labor unions starting in 1937. The data suggest that favorable attitudes toward unions have fluctuated somewhat over this period, but the American public has generally held positive views of unions. Feeling thermometer data on unions collected by the ANES between 1964 and 2004 presented in table 5 reveal a similar pattern. The mean thermometer rating for unions (which can range from 0 to 100) remained above 50 in all years studied except in 1976 (when it dropped to 47). In fact, the most

**Table 2.** *Gallup:* Is anyone living in your household a member of the labor union?

Year	Union (%)	Nonunion (%)	Don't know/refused (%)	<i>N</i>
2005 <sup>b</sup>	17	83	—	1,004
1999	18	81	1	1,029
1992 <sup>a,b</sup>	16	81	3	2,485
1989 <sup>a,b</sup>	17	81	1	1,981
1982 <sup>a,b</sup>	21	76	3	2,675
1979 <sup>a,b</sup>	22	75	3	2,721
1972 <sup>a,b</sup>	25	74	1	3,154
1969 <sup>a,b</sup>	25	74	1	3,035
1962 <sup>a,b</sup>	27	72	1	3,729
1959 <sup>a,b</sup>	26	73	1	2,296
1952 <sup>a,b</sup>	29	71	—	2,465
1949 <sup>a,b</sup>	21	77	2	1,937
1942 <sup>a,b</sup>	17	83	—	2,938

NOTE.—Gallup, The Gallup Poll.

<sup>a</sup>Are you (or is your husband/wife) a member of a labor union?

<sup>b</sup>Indicates that Gallup asked this question multiple times in a given year. There is also an “undesigned,” “no answer,” or “no code” category rather than the “don't know” or “refused” category. We report the weighted averages. A “—” indicates less than 1 percent. Some rows may not add exactly to 100 percent because of rounding.

recent ANES survey (2004) registered the highest mean level thermometer rating (58) since 1966. Data displayed in tables 6 and 7 also show that most Americans' attitudes toward unions have been generally favorable since the mid-1990s.

Beginning in July 1952 and as recently as August 2005, Gallup has asked Americans if their sympathies were with unions or companies during labor disputes (see table 8). Interestingly, while the percentage of the workforce belonging to a union was at an all-time high in the 1950s (a period frequently cited by labor scholars as the apex of union power), public sympathy for unions was actually higher in 2005. In 1952, 47 percent sided with unions and 36 percent sided with companies. By comparison, 52 percent of Americans sided with unions whereas 34 percent sided with companies in 2005.

One explanation for labor's ability to win sympathy in recent years could be that major corporations, such as Enron, Tyco, Global Crossing, and World Com, were all involved in financial scandals in which workers lost their jobs and retirement benefits, and executives such as Kenneth Lay and L. Dennis Kozlowski were convicted of fraud and related criminal wrongdoing. These scandals may have reinforced the public's long-held suspicions about the self-interested motives of big corporations (Lipset and Schneider 1987, chap. 6), and may have helped make unions appear more favorable and sympathetic than big business.

**Table 3.** ANES: Do you or anyone else in this household belong to a labor union?

Year	Union (%)	Nonunion (%)	Don't know (%)	<i>N</i>
2004	17	82	1	1,212
2002	16	84	—	1,511
2000	14	86	1	1,807
1998	15	84	—	1,281
1996	17	83	—	1,714
1994	17	83	—	1,795
1992	16	83	1	2,487
1990	17	83	1	1,980
1988	19	80	1	2,040
1986	20	79	1	2,176
1984	21	78	—	2,257
1982	21	78	1	1,418
1980	26	74	1	1,614
1978	26	74	1	2,304
1976	23	76	1	2,870
1974	25	73	2	2,523
1972	25	73	1	2,704
1970	23	75	1	1,507
1968	25	75	—	1,557
1966	28	71	1	1,291
1964	24	76	—	1,571
1960	26	72	2	1,954
1958	24	75	1	1,822
1956	27	73	—	1,762
1954	28	71	1	1,139
1952	25	68	6	1,899
1948	23	74	3	662

NOTE.—ANES, Center for Political Studies at Michigan, American National Election Study. ANES, Cumulative Data File dataset. Data weighted. A “—” indicates less than 1 percent.

Labor’s ability to win public sympathy is even more impressive when one takes into consideration research that suggests that Americans are “unusually pro-capitalist” and dislike dissident movements, especially strikes (Page and Shapiro 1992). Indeed, data from the 1940s through the 1980s confirm that majorities of Americans consistently believe that many categories of workers, including government employees, public school teachers, policemen, firemen, sanitation workers, nurses, and postal workers, should not be permitted to strike (see tables 9–15). Perhaps not surprisingly, the public’s initial reaction in recent years (before learning of any details involving a labor–management dispute) is to side somewhat with business (see table 16).

**Table 4.** *Gallup:* Do you approve or disapprove of labor unions?

Year	Approve (%)	Disapprove (%)	No opinion (%)	<i>N</i>
2005	58	33	9	1,001
2004	65	29	6	1,003
2002	58	33	9	1,007
2001	60	32	8	1,013
1999 <sup>a</sup>	66	29	5	1,025
1997	60	31	9	819
1991	60	30	10	1,002
1986	59	30	11	1,539
1985	58	27	15	1,525
1981	55	35	11	1,534
1979	55	33	12	1,511
1978	59	31	10	1,536
1972 <sup>a</sup>	60	26	14	1,505
1967	66	23	11	1,523
1965	71	19	11	2,285
1963	68	22	10	1,525
1962	64	24	11	1,527
1961 <sup>a</sup>	67	21	13	3,208
1959 <sup>a</sup>	71	17	13	1,591
1958	64	21	15	1,553
1957 <sup>a</sup>	71	16	12	1,559
1953	75	18	7	1,488
1951 <sup>b</sup>	67	20	13	1,317
1948	64	21	15	1,481
1947	65	25	10	3,027
1946 <sup>c</sup>	67	33	—	2,946
1943 <sup>c</sup>	64	27	9	3,095
1941 <sup>c</sup>	61	30	9	3,152
1940 <sup>c</sup>	68	22	10	3,182
1939 <sup>c</sup>	71	21	7	3,117
1938 <sup>c</sup>	58	28	14	3,032
1937 <sup>c</sup>	73	21	7	2,958

NOTE.—Gallup, The Gallup Poll.

<sup>a</sup>Indicates that Gallup asked this question multiple times in a given year. We report the weighted averages.

<sup>b</sup>Are you for or against labor unions? (for/against/no opinion).

<sup>c</sup>Are you in favor of labor unions? (yes/no/no opinion).

However, even this pro-business inclination may be changing in a more favorable direction for labor. When Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) asked Americans if their first reaction was to side with unions or large companies during strikes, public support for labor has steadily improved since the early 1980s (see table 17). In 1981, for example, 40 percent of Americans reported

**Table 5.** ANES: Still using the thermometer, how would you rate the following groups: labor unions

Year	Mean	N
2004	58	1,048
2002	52	1,313
2000	55	1,468
1998	55	1,230
1996	54	1,488
1994	54	1,726
1992	54	2,149
1990	56	1,861
1988	55	1,680
1986	53	2,060
1984	54	1,839
1980	54	1,323
1976	47	2,225
1974	54	2,379
1972	56	1,977
1968	56	1,504
1966	58	1,273
1964	57	1,533

NOTE.—ANES, Center for Political Studies at Michigan, American National Election Study. ANES Cumulative Data File dataset. Data weighted.

Wording:

*1964–1968:* There are many groups in America that try to get the government or the American people to see things more their way. We would like to get your feelings toward some of these groups. I have here a card on which there is something that looks like a thermometer. We call it a “feeling thermometer” because it measures your feelings toward groups. Here’s how it works. If you don’t know too much about a group or don’t feel particularly warm or cold toward them, then you should place them in the middle, at the 50 degree mark. If you have a warm feeling toward a group or feel favorably toward it, you would give it a score somewhere between 50 degrees and 100 degrees, depending on how warm your feeling is toward the group. On the other hand, if you don’t feel very favorably toward some of these groups—if there are some you don’t care for too much—then you would place them somewhere between 0 degrees and 50 degrees.

*1970–1974:* (1970: As you know, there are many groups and persons in America that try to get the government or the American people to see things more their way. Please use the thermometer again—this time to indicate your feelings toward these groups or persons.) (1972, 1974: We’d also like to get your feelings about some groups in American society, using the feeling thermometer just as we did for the [1972: candidates; 1974: leaders]. If we come to a group you don’t know much about, just tell me and we’ll move on to the next one.)

*1976:* We’d also like to get your feelings about some groups in American society. When I read the name of a group, we’d like you to rate it with what we call a feeling thermometer. Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorably and warm toward the group; ratings between 0 and 50 degrees mean that you don’t feel favorably toward the group and that you don’t care too much for that group. If you don’t feel particularly warm or cold toward a group you would rate them at 50 degrees. If we come to a group you don’t know much about, just tell me and we’ll move on to the next one.

*1978–2004:* (Introduction to feeling thermometer questions): I’d like to get your feelings toward some of our political leaders and other people who are in the news these days. I’ll read the name of a person and I’d like you to rate that person using something we call the feeling thermometer. Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward the person. Ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that you don’t feel favorable toward the person and that you don’t care too much for that person. You would rate the person at the 50 degree mark if you don’t feel particularly warm or cold toward the person. If we come to a person whose name you don’t recognize, you don’t need to rate that person. Just tell me and we’ll move on to the next one.



**Table 6.** *Pew:* I'd like your opinion of some groups and organizations in the news. Would you say your overall opinion of . . . labor unions is very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable, or very unfavorable?

Dates	3/05 <sup>a</sup> (%)	2/02 <sup>b</sup> (%)	7/01 (%)	3/01 <sup>b</sup> (%)	7/99 <sup>b</sup> (%)	6/97 <sup>b</sup> (%)	5/97 <sup>b</sup> (%)	04/96 <sup>b</sup> (%)	2/96 <sup>c</sup> (%)	7/94 (%)
Very favorable	17	15	12	16	12	12	15	10	17	14
Mostly favorable	39	44	39	47	47	42	34	37	37	43
Mostly unfavorable	24	23	26	21	27	27	26	28	27	28
Very unfavorable	9	9	10	7	9	12	13	17	14	10
Can't rate	10	8	12	8	5	7	12	8	5	5
Never heard of	1	1	1	1	/	/	/	/	/	/
<i>N</i>	1,090	2,002	1,003	2,041	3,973	1,201	1,228	1,751	1,500	3,800

NOTE.—Pew, Pew Research Center for the People & the Press.

<sup>a</sup>(Now I'd like your view of some people and organizations.) Would you say your overall opinion of . . . labor unions is very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable, or very unfavorable?

<sup>b</sup>(I'd like your views of some groups and organizations. As I read from a list, please tell me which category best describes your overall opinion of what I name.) Would you say your overall opinion of . . . labor unions is very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable, or very unfavorable?

<sup>c</sup>(I'd like your views on some people and things in the news. As I read from a list, please tell me which category best describes your overall opinion of what I name.) Would you say your overall opinion of . . . labor unions is very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable, or very unfavorable?

**Table 7.** *Time/CNN/YP:* Thinking about labor unions, do you have a generally favorable or generally unfavorable opinion of labor unions?

Dates	8/95 (%)	6/94 (%)
Favorable	44	41
Unfavorable	38	45
Not sure	18	14
<i>N</i>	800	600

NOTE.—Time/CNN/YP, *Time/Cable News Network/Yankelovich Partners.*

that their first reaction was to side with a company compared to only 33 percent who said that their first reaction was to side with organized labor. The public's negative reaction to labor in 1981 may have been influenced by the unpopular decision of the air traffic controllers' union, PATCO (Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization), to go on strike. President Ronald Reagan took swift actions against the striking workers by calling in military controllers, supervisors, and new hires as permanent replacements for the striking workers. His actions were strongly backed by the public according to an August 1981 Gallup poll, which showed 59 percent approval for Reagan's dealing with the

**Table 8.** *Gallup:* In the labor disputes of the last two or three years, have your sympathies in general been—on the side of unions or on the side of the companies?

Dates	8/05 <sup>a</sup> (%)	8/02 (%)	8/99 (%)	7/52 (%)
Unions	52	44	45	47
Companies	34	36	37	36
Neither	6	5	5	/
Both	3	5	6	/
No opinion	5	10	7	17
<i>N</i>	1,007	1,007	1,028	1,500

NOTE.—Gallup, The Gallup Poll.

<sup>a</sup>Gallup/Cable News Network/*USA Today*.**Table 9.** *Gallup:* Should the people who work for the government be allowed to go on strike?

Dates	3/47 (%)	10/41 (%)
Yes	22	17
No	69	79
No opinion	9	4
<i>N</i>	1,500 <sup>a</sup>	1,500 <sup>a</sup>

NOTE.—Gallup, The Gallup Poll.

<sup>a</sup>Sample size is approximate.**Table 10.** *Gallup:* Should public school teachers be permitted to strike or not?

Dates	5/81 (%)	5/80 (%)	5/79 (%)	8/78 (%)	1/78 (%)	12/68 (%)	ORC <sup>a</sup> 10/68 (%)	2/68 (%)	10/65 (%)
Yes/should	37	40	45	44	44	35	29	36	36
No/should not	56	52	50	51	51	60	62	57	53
No opinion/DK	7	8	5	5	6	5	9	7	10
<i>N</i>	1,519	1,530	1,511	1,526	1,536	1,497	984	1,501	2,402

NOTE.—ORC, Opinion Research Corporation; Gallup, The Gallup Poll.

<sup>a</sup>(As I name each job, please tell me whether you think people in that job should be permitted to strike or no.) . . . School teachers. “DK” indicates “don’t know.”

air traffic controllers’ strike compared to just 30 percent who disapproved (with 11 percent who had no opinion).

By the late 1990s, however, most Americans’ first reaction was to side with labor than with business. One well-known strike in the late 1990s involved workers in the Teamsters union and the United Parcel Service (UPS). Unlike the unpopular air traffic controllers’ strike of 1981, the Teamsters were able to

**Table 11.** *Gallup:* Should policemen be permitted to strike or not?

Dates	8/81 (%)	5/79 <sup>a</sup> (%)	8/78 <sup>a</sup> (%)	1/78 (%)	9/75 <sup>a</sup> (%)	ORC <sup>b</sup> 10/68 (%)	10/65 (%)
Yes/should	28	34	30	33	41	25	25
No/should not	69	61	64	61	52	67	66
No opinion/DK	4	5	6	6	7	8	10
<i>N</i>	1,534	1,511	1,526	1,536	1,559	984	2,402

NOTE.—ORC, Opinion Research Corporation; Gallup, The Gallup Poll.

<sup>a</sup>Here are some questions about strikes by persons in various occupations. Should policemen be permitted to strike or not?

<sup>b</sup>(As I name each job, please tell me whether you think people in that job should be permitted to strike or no.) . . . Policemen. “DK” indicates “don’t know.”

**Table 12.** Should firemen be permitted to strike or not?

Dates	Gallup 8/81 (%)	Gallup 5/79 (%)	Gallup 8/78 <sup>a</sup> (%)	Gallup 1/78 (%)	Gallup 9/75 <sup>a</sup> (%)	ORC <sup>b</sup> 12/68 (%)	ORC <sup>b</sup> 10/68 (%)
Yes/should	27	34	29	32	39	29	23
No/should not	70	62	66	62	55	65	69
No opinion/DK	3	5	5	6	7	6	8
<i>N</i>	1,534	1,511	1,526	1,536	1,559	1,497	984

NOTE.—ORC, Opinion Research Corporation; Gallup, The Gallup Poll.

<sup>a</sup>Here are some questions about strikes by persons in various occupations. Should firemen be permitted to strike or not?

<sup>b</sup>(As I name each job, please tell me whether you think people in that job should be permitted to strike or no.) . . . Firemen.

“DK” indicates “don’t know.”

**Table 13.** *Gallup:* Should sanitation workers be permitted to strike or not?

Dates	8/81 (%)	8/78 <sup>a</sup> (%)	9/75 <sup>a</sup> (%)	ORC <sup>b</sup> 10/68 (%)	2/68 <sup>c</sup> (%)
Yes/should	40	40	46	33	43
No/should not	55	53	46	54	51
No opinion/don’t know	5	7	7	13	6
<i>N</i>	1,534	1,526	1,559	984	1,501

NOTE.—ORC, Opinion Research Corporation; Gallup, The Gallup Poll.

<sup>a</sup>Here are some questions about strikes by persons in various occupations. Should sanitation workers be permitted to strike or not?

<sup>b</sup>(As I name each job, please tell me whether you think people in that job should be permitted to strike or not.) . . . Sanitation workers.

<sup>c</sup>Should garbage men or sanitation men be permitted to strike, or not?

**Table 14.** *Gallup:* Should nurses be permitted to strike or not?

Dates	8/81 (%)	ORC <sup>a</sup> 10/68 (%)	2/68 (%)
Yes/should	37	28	29
No/should not	58	63	66
No opinion/don't know	5	9	6
<i>N</i>	1,534	984	1,501

NOTE.—ORC, Opinion Research Corporation; Gallup, The Gallup Poll.

<sup>a</sup>(As I name each job, please tell me whether you think people in that job should be permitted to strike or not.) . . .Nurses.

**Table 15.** *Gallup:* Should postal workers be permitted to strike or not?

Dates	8/81 (%)	8/78 <sup>a</sup> (%)
Yes/should	33	37
No/should not	64	58
No opinion/don't know	3	5
<i>N</i>	1,534	1,526

NOTE.—Gallup, The Gallup Poll.

<sup>a</sup>Here are some questions about strikes by persons in various occupations. Should postal workers be permitted to strike or not?

**Table 16.** *CBS/NYT:* When you hear of a disagreement between labor unions and business, and before you know any of the details, Is your first reaction to side with the unions or to side with business?

Dates	2/95 (%)	11/93 (%)
Side with unions	36	34
Side with business	43	44
Both/neither (vol.)	7	8
Depends (vol.)	5	6
Don't know/no answer	9	8
<i>N</i>	1,190	1,334

NOTE.—CBS/NYT, Columbia Broadcasting System/*New York Times*.

run a much more effective public relations campaign. The Teamsters publicized statistics, such as the after-tax profits at the UPS, which in 1996 exceeded \$1 billion. They added that the UPS built its profit margin by increasing its hiring of part-time workers, which went from 42 percent of its workforce in 1982 to 60 percent in 1997. Part-time workers, who in some instances reportedly worked 60 hours per week, were paid half the wage of workers that the UPS hired on a

**Table 17.** CBS: When you hear of a strike by a union against a large company, and before you know any of the details, is your first reaction to side with the union or to side with the company?

Dates	7/98 (%)	8/97 (%)	4/92 <sup>a</sup> (%)	9/81 <sup>a</sup> (%)
Union/side with union	42	42	41	33
Company/side with company	34	35	36	40
Depends	8	7	/	10
Both/both equally	1	/	2	/
Neither/neither both	8	10	10	8
Don't know/no answer	7	6	11	/
No opinion	/	/	/	9
<i>N</i>	979	973	1,530	1,479

NOTE.—CBS, Columbia Broadcasting System.

<sup>a</sup>CBS/New York Times.

“full-time” basis (Brecher 1997, 358). The Teamsters employed these and other statistics to paint their strike as a battle against corporate greed. According to three different polls from Gallup, Fox, and American Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), the Teamsters won the battle of public opinion. In August 1997, Gallup showed that Americans sided with striking UPS workers over management by a 55–27 margin; Fox gave unions a 44–27 advantage; and ABC showed union support at 40 percent compared to 30 percent for the UPS.

Indeed, organized labor hit on the theme of “corporate greed” throughout the 1990s as labor statistics indicated stagnating wages for many workers but rising salaries for corporate executives and skyrocketing profits for corporations. During much of the mid- and late 1990s, AFL-CIO president, John Sweeney, made a point to highlight the growing disparities between workers and corporate executives with his “America Needs a Raise” campaign (Francia 2006, 24). As the UPS strike illustrated, workers feeling the pinch of declining real wages amidst booming times for corporations and Wall Street may help explain the reversal in public sympathy for unions in the 1990s.

Reinforcing these results, additional public opinion data reveal that the public has generally sided with workers over management during several recent labor strikes (see table 18). In March 2001, respondents noted that they would favor striking airline workers over the airline industry by a decisive 56–19 margin. With respect to specific strikes, the results indicate that in July 1998 respondents favored striking United Auto Workers (UAW) workers over General Motors by a 41–32 margin, and as indicated earlier, a much greater percentage of Americans sided with striking UPS workers than did those who sided with management. At labor’s height in the 1950s, the public sympathy favored striking workers over management by a 47–23 margin during the Ford Motor Company strike

**Table 18. Side favored in strike**

Dates	Strike	Company (%)	Union/strikers (%)	Neither (%)	Both (%)	DK/not sure/no opinion (%)	N	Organization
3/01	Airlines	19	56	8	4	13	1,023	Gallup <sup>a</sup>
7/98	General Motors	31	42	5	6	16	619	Gallup <sup>b</sup>
8/97	UPS	27	55	6	4	9	819	Gallup <sup>c</sup>
8/97	UPS	27	44	8	4	17	906	Fox <sup>d</sup>
8/97	UPS	30	40	16	/	13	506	ABC <sup>e</sup>
3/89	Eastern Air	26	60	5	/	9	1,248	Harris <sup>f</sup>
10/67	Ford Motors	40	26	/	/	34	1,523	Gallup <sup>g</sup>
6/55	Ford Motors	23	47	/	/	30	1,462	Gallup <sup>h</sup>
9/49	Coal miners	44	27	/	/	29	1,500	Gallup <sup>i</sup>
4/47	Telephone workers	24	48	/	/	28	1,500	Gallup <sup>j</sup>
1/46	Electrical industry	15	29	/	16	41	1,500	Gallup <sup>k</sup>
1/46	Steel industry	20	34	/	23	23	1,500	Gallup <sup>l</sup>
1/46	Meat packers	16	31	/	16	36	1,500	Gallup <sup>m</sup>
1/46	General Motors	24	33	/	24	19	1,500	Gallup <sup>n</sup>
12/45	General Motors	41	36	/	/	23	1,500	Gallup <sup>o</sup>
12/37	Ford Motors	66	34	/	/	/	1,500	Gallup <sup>p</sup>
2/37	General Motors	37	34	18	/	11	1,500	Gallup <sup>q</sup>

NOTE.—ABC, American Broadcasting Corporation; Gallup, The Gallup Poll; Harris, Harris Organization (formerly Louis Harris and Associates); Fox, Fox News; UPS, United Parcel Service.

- <sup>a</sup>If airline workers decided to strike, which side would you favor—the airline workers or the airlines?
- <sup>b</sup>From what you have read or heard, whose side do you favor in the United Auto Workers strike against General Motors...The company or the union workers who are on strike?
- <sup>c</sup>From what you've heard or read, whose side do you favor in the UPS strike—the UPS company or the union workers who are on strike?
- <sup>d</sup>From what you've heard, which side do you sympathize with in the UPS (United Parcel Service) strike...UPS or the union workers?
- <sup>e</sup>You may have heard or read about the strike involving UPS, the United Parcel Service, and its union workers. Whose side would you say you're on in that strike?
- <sup>f</sup>In the labor dispute between...the striking machinists...and the management of Eastern Airlines, who do you sympathize with more—the strikers or the management?
- <sup>g</sup>In this particular strike, on which side are your sympathies—on the side of the (Ford Motor) company or on the side of the (auto workers) union?
- <sup>h</sup>Which side are you on (in the strike situation between the Ford Motor Company and the automobile workers' union)—the workers' or the company's?
- <sup>i</sup>Which side do you sympathize with (in the present coal strike)—the coal operators or the union?
- <sup>j</sup>In the current telephone strike are your sympathies on the side of the telephone company or on the side of the workers?
- <sup>k</sup>In the electrical industry strikes, which do you think is more in the right—the workers or the companies?
- <sup>l</sup>In the steel industry strikes, which do you think is more in the right—the workers or the companies?
- <sup>m</sup>In the meat packing industry strikes, which do you think is more in the right—the workers or the companies?
- <sup>n</sup>In the present General Motors strike, which do you think is more in the right—the workers or the company?
- <sup>o</sup>Which side are you more inclined to agree with (in the strike)—the Union or the Company (General Motors)?
- <sup>p</sup>In the present dispute between Henry Ford and the Automobile Workers Union are your sympathies with Ford or with the union?
- <sup>q</sup>In the current General Motors strike are your sympathies with the strikers or with the employers?

**Table 19.** *Gallup:* It has been suggested that no strike be permitted to go on for more than 21 days. If after 21 days, the union and the employer cannot reach an agreement, a government-appointed committee would decide the issue and both be compelled to accept the terms. Would you favor or oppose this idea?

Dates	3/72 (%)	10/68 (%)	1/68 (%)	3/67 (%)
Favor	65	67	69	68
Oppose	26	25	22	22
No opinion/don't know	9	9	9	10
<i>N</i>	1,514	1,497	1,502	2,253

NOTE.—Gallup The Gallup Poll.

**Table 20.** *Gallup:* It has been suggested that no strike be permitted to go on for more than 7 days. If after 7 days, the union and the employer cannot reach an agreement, a government-appointed committee would decide the issue and Both be compelled to accept the terms. Would you favor or oppose this idea?

Dates	7/66 (%)	12/65 (%)	9/65 (%)
Favor	54	58	51
Oppose	36	29	38
No opinion/don't know	10	13	12
<i>N</i>	1,503	1,545	1,571

NOTE.—Gallup, The Gallup Poll.

in 1955, but favored management by a 40–26 margin during a similar dispute in 1967.

Perhaps another reason that unions have received greater public support during recent strikes than in the past is that strikes have become much less common. According to data from the BLS, work stoppages involving 1,000 or more workers decreased dramatically during the 1990s. For example, there were 347 strikes involving 1,000 or more workers during the 1990s. By comparison, there were a total of 2,829 strikes involving 1,000 or more workers during the 1960s and 2,888 similar strikes during the 1970s (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2007). Indeed, strikes were common enough in the 1960s and 1970s that majorities of Americans supported resolving unsettled labor–management disputes via government-appointed committees (see tables 19 and 20). The decline in work stoppages in recent years may have contributed to a growing sense among the public that union members have become more judicious in their use of the strike.

Taken together, these data indicate that organized labor has performed quite well in the court of public opinion, especially in recent years. The polls make clear that labor's public support in disputes with business has remained steady

**Table 21.** *Gallup:* In your opinion, which of the following will be the biggest threat to the country in the future—big business, big labor or big government?

Dates	Business (%)	Labor (%)	Government (%)	Don't know/no opinion (%)	N
12/05	27	8	61	4	1,013
12/04	27	11	57	5	1,003
11/03	29	10	57	5	1,004
7/02 <sup>a</sup>	38	10	47	5	1,013
10/00	22	7	65	6	1,004
8/99	24	8	65	3	1,028
12/98	24	7	64	5	1,070
8/95	27	9	60	4	1,006
6/85	22	19	50	9	1,540
5/83	19	18	51	12	1,540
9/81	22	22	46	10	1,540
5/79	28	17	43	12	1,511
9/78	19	19	47	15	1,517
1/77	23	26	38	13	1,500
11/69	19	28	33	20	1,537
7/68	12	26	46	16	1,526
12/66	14	21	48	16	1,469
2/65	17	29	35	18	1,620

NOTE.—Gallup, The Gallup Poll.

<sup>a</sup>Gallup/Cable News Network/*USA Today*.

over time and even shows some signs of improving. This runs directly counter to what we might expect for a labor movement in decline.

The survey data suggest further that Americans are less likely to see labor than big business or big government as the biggest threat to the country's future (table 21). Since the mid-1990s, only about one in ten respondents find labor to be the biggest threat, compared to more than one in four respondents in the earliest studies conducted during the 1960s. Americans in recent surveys clearly find big government to be a greater threat. The data presented in table 22 reveal similar patterns. These findings may be the result of the perception that unions are in decline, or simply the plain recognition that union membership has decreased in recent years. It would certainly follow that a labor movement that many believe has grown weaker would correspondingly be seen as less of a threat.

Table 23 suggests that Americans' view of labor unions is generally positive. The plurality of respondents (49 percent) in both 1997 and 2001 believed that unions were "good for America." Data presented in table 24 indicate that strong majorities of Americans between 1999 and 2005 feel that unions are more helpful than harmful for workers who are members. At the same time,



**Table 22.** *Harris:* Looking to the future, which would you say is the biggest threat to the well-being of this country—big business, big labor or big government? *ORC:* In your opinion, which of the following will contribute most to the country’s future progress—big business, big labor or big government?

Dates	Org.	Business (%)	Labor (%)	Government (%)	All three/all the same (%)	Don’t know/no opinion (%)	N
2/81	Harris	21	16	53	5	5	1,254
4/76	Harris	10	15	32	32	11	1,523
2/75	ORC	37	19	16	9	20	1,209
8/69	ORC	34	17	17	16	16	2,004

NOTE.—ORC, Opinion Research Corporation; Harris, Harris Organization (formerly Louis Harris and Associates).

**Table 23.** *Fox:* In general, do you think labor unions today are good for America or bad for America?

Dates	3/01 (%)	8/97 (%)
Good	49	49
Bad	32	34
Not sure	19	17
N	905	906

NOTE.—Fox, Fox News.

**Table 24.** *Gallup:* Overall, do you think labor unions mostly help or mostly hurt. . . workers who are members of unions?

Dates	8/05 <sup>a</sup> (%)	8/03 (%)	8/01 (%)	3/99 (%)
Mostly help	69	76	74	73
Mostly hurt	25	20	20	24
Don’t know/refused	/	/	6	4
No opinion	6	4	/	/
N	1,007	1,003	1,013	1,021

NOTE.—Gallup, The Gallup Poll.

<sup>a</sup>Gallup/Cable News Network/USA Today.

majorities of Americans consistently believe that unions hurt workers who are not members (see table 25). In 2001, 2003, and 2005, majorities of respondents find that unions are helpful to companies where workers are unionized (see table 26). Additionally, most Americans between 1997 and 2005 believe that labor unions are advantageous (rather than harmful) for the U.S. economy generally (see table 27). In fact, in the most recent surveys, majorities of respondents expressed support for this viewpoint. Table 28 suggests that most

**Table 25.** *Gallup:* Overall, do you think labor unions mostly help or mostly hurt . . . workers who are not members of unions?

Dates	8/05 <sup>a</sup> (%)	8/03 (%)	8/01 (%)	3/99 (%)
Mostly help	38	36	36	35
Mostly hurt	52	54	50	55
Don't know/refused	/	/	14	10
No opinion	10	10	/	/
<i>N</i>	1,007	1,003	1,013	1,021

NOTE.—Gallup, The Gallup Poll.

<sup>a</sup>Gallup/Cable News Network/*USA Today*.**Table 26.** *Gallup:* Overall, do you think labor unions mostly help or mostly hurt . . . the companies where workers are unionized?

Dates	8/05 <sup>a</sup> (%)	8/03 (%)	8/01 (%)
Mostly help	53	58	52
Mostly hurt	40	35	38
No opinion	7	7	10
<i>N</i>	1,007	1,003	1,013

NOTE.—Gallup, The Gallup Poll.

<sup>a</sup>Gallup/Cable News Network/*USA Today*.**Table 27.** *Gallup:* Overall, do you think labor unions mostly help or mostly hurt . . . the U.S. (united states) economy in general?

Dates	8/05 <sup>a</sup> (%)	8/03 (%)	8/01 (%)	3/99 (%)	8/97 (%)
Mostly help	54	54	49	55	48
Mostly hurt	39	38	38	37	45
Don't know/refused	/	/	13	8	7
No opinion	7	8	/	/	/
<i>N</i>	1,007	1,003	1,013	1,021	1,014

NOTE.—Gallup, The Gallup Poll.

<sup>a</sup>Gallup/Cable News Network/*USA Today*.

respondents in 1991 and 1992 disagreed with the statement that unions stand in the way of economic progress in the United States.

Consistent with the conclusions of Lipset and Schneider, most Americans also believe that labor unions are necessary to protect workers. A Time/CNN/YP (*Time/Cable News Network/Yankelovich Partners*) poll indicated that in 1990 some 73 percent of Americans believed that workers still need unions compared to only 22 percent who believed that unions are no longer necessary (see table 29). Similar levels of support for unions were found in the same poll

**Table 28.** *NORC-GSS*: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Please indicate whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree: For the most part, unions just stand in the way of economic progress in this country

Dates	2/92 (%)	2/91 (%)
Strongly agree	9	6
Agree	24	27
Disagree	39	50
Strongly disagree	9	7
Don't know	18	11
<i>N</i>	1,517	1,517

NOTE.—NORC-GSS, National Opinion Research Center-General Social Survey.

**Table 29.** *Time/CNN/YP*: Do you think that American workers still need labor unions, or are labor unions no longer necessary?

Dates	8/95 (%)	6/94 (%)	3/90 (%)
Still need	68	67	73
No longer necessary	24	26	22
Not sure	8	7	5
<i>N</i>	800	600	500

NOTE.—Time/CNN/YP, *Time*/Cable News Network/Yankelovich Partners.

**Table 30.** *Fox*: Do you think labor unions actually help workers today, or do they mostly just collect dues?

Dates	10/99 (%)	6/98 (%)
Help workers	41	37
Just collect dues	44	46
Not sure	15	17
<i>N</i>	904	900

NOTE.—Fox, Fox News.

in 1994 and 1995. In the late 1990s, however, two Fox polls were somewhat less favorable for unions. In 1998, only 37 percent reported that unions “help workers” compared to 46 percent who reported that unions “just collect dues” (see table 30). These numbers improved slightly for unions in 1999 with 41 percent reporting that unions “help workers” compared to 44 percent who believed that unions “just collect dues.” Although the Fox numbers are the least encouraging for unions, it is worth noting that even these numbers suggest that unions, at worst, face an almost evenly divided nation as to whether they actually help workers. On a more encouraging note for organized labor, a

**Table 31.** *Pew:* (Now I am going to read you another series on some different topics. For each statement, please tell me if you completely agree with it, mostly agree with it, mostly disagree with it, or completely disagree with it.) . . . Labor unions are necessary to protect the working person?

Dates	7/03 (%)	5/90 (%)	5/88 (%)
Completely agree	30	25	26
Mostly agree	44	46	43
Mostly disagree	15	19	19
Completely disagree	8	6	7
Don't know	3	4	5
<i>N</i>	2,528	3,004	3,021

NOTE.—Pew, Pew Research Center for the People & the Press.

Values Update Survey from the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press reported significantly more support for unions than the Fox poll (see table 31). In 1988, 69 percent of Americans completely or mostly agreed with the statement that labor unions are necessary to protect the working person. That number increased to 71 percent in 1990 and to 74 percent by 2003.

While the public generally supports the need for unions to protect workers, American opinion toward unions is not all positive. Again following the earlier research of Lipset and Schneider, Americans express reservations about how much confidence they place in unions (see table 32). Opinion is also mixed about the overall job being done by labor unions. A 2005 Harris poll and an earlier 1993 poll showed that only about one of every three Americans rate the performance of unions as “excellent” or “good” whereas a plurality rate union performance as only “fair” (see table 33). Americans are further mistrustful of the people in charge of running labor unions (see tables 34 and 35). According to 1998 and 2001 Harris polls, only 37 percent of Americans reported that they trust union leaders to tell the truth. In 2002, this number slipped even lower to just 30 percent (see table 36).

This lack of confidence in unions and lack of trust in union leaders may explain why Americans support government regulations of unions. Throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s, there was strong support for laws requiring restrictions on strikes. According to ORC-POI (Opinion Research Corporation-Public Opinion Index), more than 80 percent of Americans favored a law to require unions to provide a notice of 60 days before workers can strike (see table 37). Likewise, Gallup polls in the late 1950s and 1960s found that majorities of Americans favored a law to prohibit unions from requiring more workers than are actually needed on a job (see table 38). Gallup also showed support for stricter federal laws to regulate unions (see table 39), as did the ORC, which found that a majority of Americans supported tighter government controls in dealing with labor unions (see table 40). In 1971, the ORC reported

**Table 32.** Now I am going to read you a list of institutions in American society. Please tell me how much confidence you, yourself, have in each one—a great deal, quite a lot, some, or very little? How about—Organized labor?

Dates	Great deal	Quite a lot	Some	Very little	None	Don't know/ refused	N	Organization
6/06	9	15	43	26	2	6	1,002	Gallup
5/05	12	12	47	23	2	4	1,004	Gallup
5/04	12	19	43	22	2	2	1,002	Gallup
6/03	12	16	47	20	2	3	1,029	G/CNN/USA
6/02	11	15	48	21	2	3	1,020	G/CNN/USA
6/01	12	14	43	23	3	5	1,011	G/CNN/USA
6/00	9	16	44	23	2	5	1,021	Gallup
6/99	13	15	44	24	2	2	1,016	G/CNN/USA
7/98	13	13	39	28	3	4	1,035	G/CNN/USA
6/98	11	15	45	22	2	4	1,003	G/CNN/USA
7/97	11	12	43	27	2	5	1,004	G/CNN/USA
5/96	11	14	44	26	2	4	1,019	G/CNN/USA
4/95	11	15	46	24	2	3	1,008	G/CNN/USA
3/94	11	15	41	28	3	2	1,036	G/CNN/USA
3/93	9	17	41	26	3	4	1,003	Gallup
11/91	12	13	43	29	/	3	1,174	ABC
10/91	11	13	42	31	/	2	1,009	ABC/WP
10/91	10	12	39	32	2	4	1,000	Gallup
3/91	13	16	40	25	/	1	1,006	WP
2/91	11	14	42	25	2	6	1,012	Gallup
9/90	12	12	42	32	/	3	1,011	ABC/WP
8/90	11	16	40	25	/	3	1,241	Gallup
9/88	9	17	40	27	4	3	1,030	Gallup
3/88	7	16	39	32	/	7	2,775	Gallup
7/87	7	19	39	28	3	4	1,607	Gallup
7/86	10	18	39	26	3	4	1,539	Gallup
5/85	8	20	39	27	3	4	1,528	Gallup
10/84	13	17	34	32	/	4	750	G/N
8/83	8	18	38	28	2	6	1,497	Gallup
11/81	11	17	32	25	12	4	1,508	Gallup
9/81	12	17	35	32	/	4	1,501	ABC/WP
4/79	14	22	33	24	3	4	1,509	Gallup
1/77	15	23	32	21	2	6	1,500	Gallup
5/75	14	22	34	23	2	6	1,626	Gallup

NOTE.—Gallup, The Gallup Poll; ABC, American Broadcasting Corporation; ABC/WP, American Broadcasting Corporation/*Washington Post*; G/CNN/USA, Gallup/Cable News Network/*USA Today*; G/N, Gallup/*Newsweek*.

**Table 33.** *Harris:* In general, how would you rate the job being done by...labor unions...Excellent, good/[pretty good] or fair/[only fair] or poor?

Dates	8/05 (%)	12/93 (%)
Excellent	7	4
Good/pretty good	25	30
Fair/only fair	48	39
Poor	19	23
Not sure	/	4
<i>N</i>	1,181	1,250

NOTE.—Harris, Harris Organization (formerly Louis Harris and Associates).

**Table 34.** *NORC-GSS:* (I am going to name some institutions in this country. As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?)...Organized labor

Dates	Great deal	Only some	Hardly any	Don't know/refused	<i>N</i>
8/04	13	54	28	5	2,812
2/02	11	60	23	6	2,765
2/00	13	51	27	10	2,817
2/98	11	52	29	8	2,832
2/96	11	51	30	8	2,904
2/94	10	52	32	6	2,992
2/93	8	53	32	7	1,606
2/91	11	48	34	7	1,517
2/90	11	53	31	5	1,372
2/89	9	51	33	6	1,537
2/88	10	50	35	5	1,481
2/87	10	51	33	5	1,466
2/86	8	47	39	5	1,470
2/84	9	53	36	3	1,473
2/83	8	49	39	4	1,599
2/82	12	53	30	4	1,506
2/80	15	50	30	6	1,468
2/78	11	46	38	5	1,532
2/77	15	50	32	4	1,530
2/76	12	48	33	8	1,499
2/75	10	54	29	6	1,490
2/74	18	54	25	3	1,484
2/73	16	55	26	4	1,504

NOTE.—NORC-GSS, National Opinion Research Center-General Social Survey.

**Table 35. Harris:** As far as people in charge of running labor unions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?

Dates	7/76 <sup>a</sup> (%)	8/75 (%)	4/75 (%)	3/75 <sup>a</sup> (%)
A great deal	10	13	14	16
Only some	39	36	41	44
Hardly any at all	42	29	37	32
Not sure	9	22	9	8
<i>N</i>	1,490	1,484	1,571	1,527

NOTE.—Harris, Harris Organization (formerly Louis Harris and Associates).

<sup>a</sup>How much confidence do you have in the people running labor unions—a great deal of confidence, only some, or hardly any confidence at all?

**Table 36. Harris:** (Would you generally trust each of the following types of people to tell the truth, or not?). . . Trade union leaders

Dates	11/02 (%)	11/01 (%)	10/98 (%)
Would trust	30	37	37
Would not trust	56	55	58
Not sure	14	8	5
<i>N</i>	1,010	1,011	1,013

NOTE.—Harris, Harris Organization (formerly Louis Harris and Associates).

**Table 37. ORC-POI:** If you were in congress, would you be for or against laws to do the following things. . . a law to require unions to give 60 days’ notice before they can go out on strike. For or against?

Dates	11/53 (%)	1/53 (%)	1/51 (%)	4/48 (%)
For	84	84	84	83
Against	11	12	11	12
No opinion	5	4	5	5
<i>N</i>	2,062	1,970	2,012	1,169

NOTE.—ORC-POI, Opinion Research Corporation-Public Opinion Index.

that more than three out of every five Americans agreed with the idea that the government should put pressure on unions to hold down their wage demands, compared to only about one in four in both 1964 and 1965 (see table 41).

Americans not only support government regulations of unions but also are leery of organized labor’s involvement in the political process. Surveys conducted in 1983 and 1984 show that majorities of Americans feel that it is inappropriate for unions to endorse presidential candidates (see table 42). Harris polls conducted between 1994 and 2005 show a divided public with almost

**Table 38.** *Gallup:* In order to provide work for union members, some unions require more workers than are actually needed on a job. How do you feel about this—should there be a law against this practice or not?

Dates	1/69 (%)	7/63 (%)	3/62 (%)	5/61 (%)	1/59 (%)
Yes	61	52	55	61	54
No	29	25	24	21	26
No opinion	11	23	21	17	20
<i>N</i>	1,461	3,668	1,599	1,601	1,591

NOTE.—Gallup, The Gallup Poll.

**Table 39.** *Gallup:* As things stand today, do you think the federal laws governing (dealing with) labor unions are too strict or not strict enough?

Dates	10/53 (%)	8/52 (%)
Too strict	10	14
About right	38	25
Not strict enough	34	42
No opinion	19	20
<i>N</i>	1,488	1,500 <sup>a</sup>

NOTE.—Gallup, The Gallup Poll.

<sup>a</sup>Sample size is approximate.

**Table 40.** *ORC:* Which government policy do you favor in dealing with labor unions—tighter controls over labor unions or easing up the controls over labor unions?

Dates	7/64 (%)	3/63 (%)	8/62 (%)
Tighter controls	51	61	61
Easing up	21	16	14
No opinion	28	23	26
<i>N</i>	1,040	1,000	976

NOTE.—ORC, Opinion Research Corporation.

equal percentages of Americans indicating that unions either have “too much” or “too little” power in influencing government policy, politicians, and policy makers in Washington (see table 43). Time/CNN/YP surveys reported nearly identical numbers in 1990, 1994, and 1995 (see table 44). Although Americans have reservations about union involvement in the political arena, paradoxically, in 2005, more than 38 percent of respondents to a Gallup poll indicated that they would like to see that labor unions in the United States have more power, up from roughly 30 percent from 1999 to 2004 (see table 45). This



**Table 41. ORC-POI:** Do you think the government should put pressure on unions to hold down their wage demands this year, or don't you think this is necessary?

Dates	1/71 (%)	11/65 (%)	2/64 (%)
Yes, should	61	36	36
No, not necessary	26	43	45
Don't know	13	21	19
<i>N</i>	1,050	2,062	1,025

NOTE.—ORC-POI, Opinion Research Corporation-Public Opinion Index.

**Table 42. CBS/NYT:** Do you think it's appropriate for labor unions to endorse a candidate for President, or is this something they shouldn't get involved in?

Dates	2/84 (%)	9/83 (%)
Appropriate	37	37
Not appropriate	54	55
No opinion	9	8
<i>N</i>	1,410	1,587

NOTE.—CBS/NYT, Columbia Broadcasting System/*New York Times*.

**Table 43. Harris:** (And now a question about the power of different groups in influencing government policy, politicians, and policy makers in Washington.) Do you think . . . labor unions have too much or too little power and influence in Washington?

Dates	11/05 (%)	2/04 (%)	2/03 (%)	2/02 (%)	4/01 (%)	3/00 (%)	2/99 (%)	11/94 (%)
Too much	43	48	43	46	44	39	42	46
Too little	46	37	37	35	37	40	41	43
About right (vol.)	4	8	8	6	9	7	7	3
Don't know/not sure	7	7	11	13	9	14	11	8
Refused	/	/	/	/	1	1	/	/
<i>N</i>	1,011	1,020	1,010	1,021	1,014	1,014	1,007	1,26

NOTE.—Harris, Harris Organization (formerly Louis Harris and Associates).

increase may reflect the fact that unions have had very little influence in the Republican-dominated Congress or the Bush White House. In the aftermath of the corporate scandals mentioned earlier, the public may view more union influence in government as a needed check on the power of big business.

In closing, the survey data we analyze indicate that labor unions have maintained public support, despite some developments and popular claims that

**Table 44.** *Time/CNN/YP*: Do you think that labor unions today have too much power, not enough power, or about the right amount of power?

Dates	8/95 (%)	6/94 (%)	3/90 (%)
Too much power	35	37	40
Not enough power	21	23	22
Right amount	35	34	33
Not sure	9	6	5
<i>N</i>	800	600	500

NOTE.—Time/CNN/YP, *Time/Cable News Network/Yankelovich Partners*.

**Table 45.** *Gallup*: Would you, personally, like to see labor unions in the United States have—more influence than they have today, the same amount as today, or less influence than they have today?

Dates	8/05 (%)	8/04 (%)	8/02 (%)	8/01 (%)	8/99 (%)
More influence	38	29	28	30	30
Same amount	29	36	36	35	36
Less influence	30	32	31	31	32
No opinion	3	3	5	4	2
<i>N</i>	1,001	1,017	1,007	1,013	1,028

NOTE.—Gallup, *The Gallup Poll*.

unions are in decline. Given the recent conservative political tenor of the nation, organized labor's ability to maintain public support defies other trends that have been less favorable for labor unions in recent years. While the public has maintained a healthy dose of skepticism about how much confidence they can place in unions and how much trust they can place in union leaders, Americans continue to recognize the need for unions to protect the rights of workers.

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