

News

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Union women earning more, new study finds

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CHARLESTON, W. Va. -- A new study shows West Virginia women who belong to unions get higher wages than those who do not. They are also more likely to get health and pension benefits.

In West Virginia, unionized women earn 8.4 percent more than their counterparts who are not union members. That comes out to 94 cents more in average hourly wages.

Nationally, union membership boosts women's wages by 11 percent, or an additional \$2 an hour, over non-union women.

"Unions and Upward Mobility for Women," a research report by economist John Schmitt, was jointly released on Friday by the Center for Economic and Policy Research in Washington, D.C., and the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy.

"For women, joining a union makes as much sense as going to college," Schmitt said. "All else [being] equal, joining a union raises a woman's wage as much as a full year of college and increases her chances of having health insurance by more than earning a four-year degree."

"Union coverage clearly improves the wages and benefits of West Virginia women," said Ted Boettner, executive director of the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy.

"The findings of a new study suggest that protecting workers' right to unionize is an important strategy for improving the economic status of women in our state," Boettner said.

Unions also bring advantages to employees beyond higher paychecks, Schmitt's study says.

More than three of every four unionized women have health insurance, compared to only two of every four women who are not represented under union contracts.

Unionized women are also more likely to have pensions, Schmitt's report states. More than 75 percent of unionized women have pension coverage, while fewer than half of non-union women do.

In low-wage occupations, unionized women are even more likely than non-union women to have health and pension coverage.

Women are also becoming a higher percentage of all union members. In 2007, 45 percent of all union members were women.

If the share of women in unions continues growing at the same rate it has during the past 25 years, Schmitt points out, women will become the majority of the unionized work force by 2020.

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