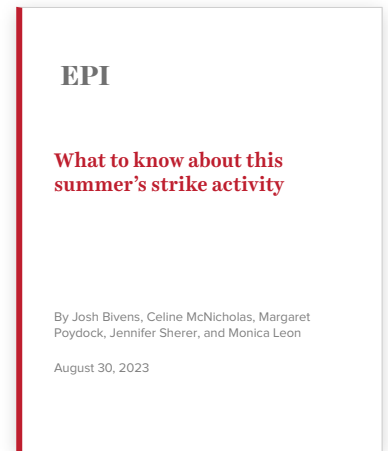


What to know about this summer's strike activity

What's spurring the rise in labor actions?

Summary: Thousands of workers across the country have been going on strike or threatening to go on strike this summer—fighting back after decades of rising economic inequality fueled by declining labor actions and union organizing. The right to unionize and go on strike has been under attack for decades, and many workers legally lack the right to strike.



Read the full report
epi.org/272453

Key findings

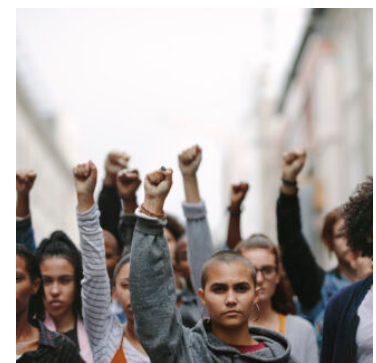
- Strong unions are key to ensuring that working families share in economic growth. As unionization rates fell sharply in the U.S. beginning in the late 1970s, the share of income going to the top 10% of households has climbed steadily.
- In 2018 and 2019, the number of workers involved in major work stoppages reached its highest levels since the 1980s but remained roughly 70% lower than the levels in the early 1970s and 80% lower than historic peaks. After falling sharply in 2020 and 2021, the number of workers involved in major stoppages rose 50% in 2022 and looks on track to rise again in 2023.

Why this matters

Strikes are a powerful tool that provides workers leverage to bargain for better working conditions and fair pay. But going on strike can put workers in a risky position. In some cases, employers can legally replace striking workers permanently. In most states in the country, striking workers are ineligible to apply for unemployment benefits.

How to fix it

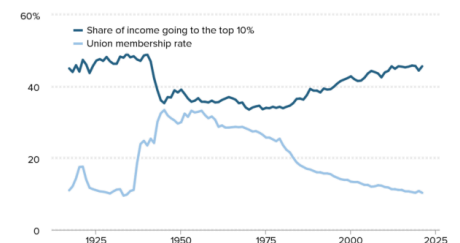
Strong federal and state policy measures are needed to ensure that all workers have the right to form unions and engage in collective actions—including strikes. These measures can help reverse the erosion of workers' rights and rebuild a prosperous middle class in the United States.



Charting the problem

As union membership declines, income inequality increases

Union membership and share of income going to the top 10%, 1917–2021



Source: Data on union membership follow the composite series found in Historical Statistics of the United States through 1982, updated through 2021 using Bureau of Labor Statistics, series ID: LUU0204899600. Income inequality (share of income to top 10%) data are from the [World Income Database](#).

Economic Policy Institute