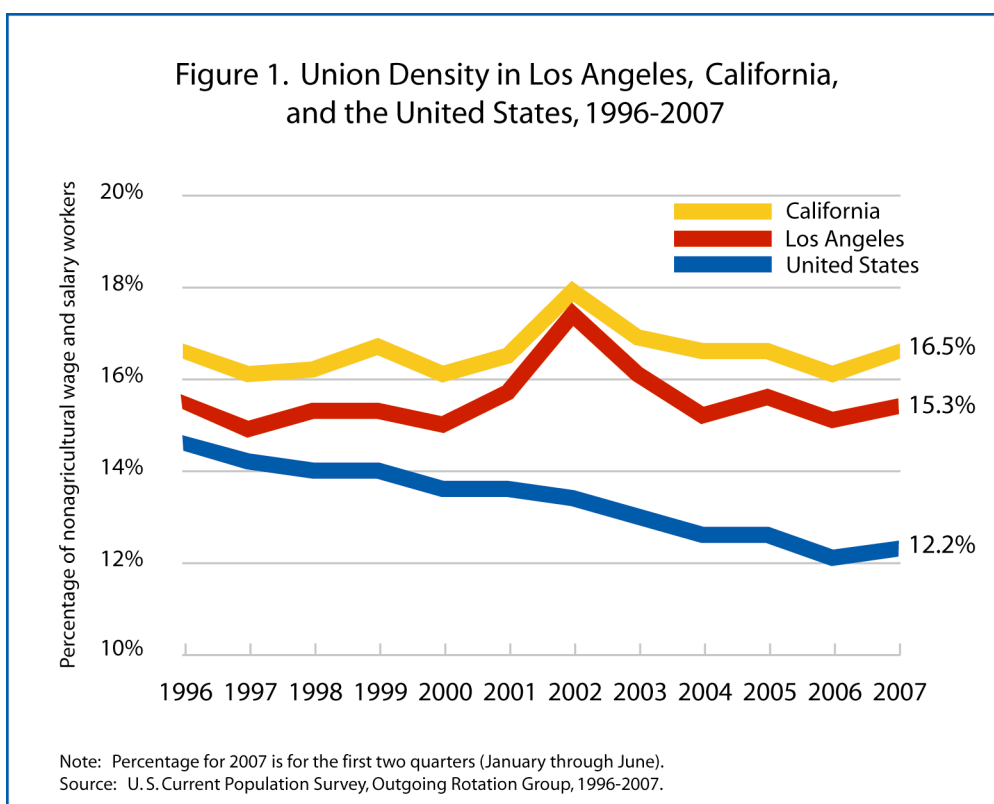


THE STATE OF THE UNIONS IN 2007: A PROFILE OF UNION MEMBERSHIP IN LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA AND THE NATION¹

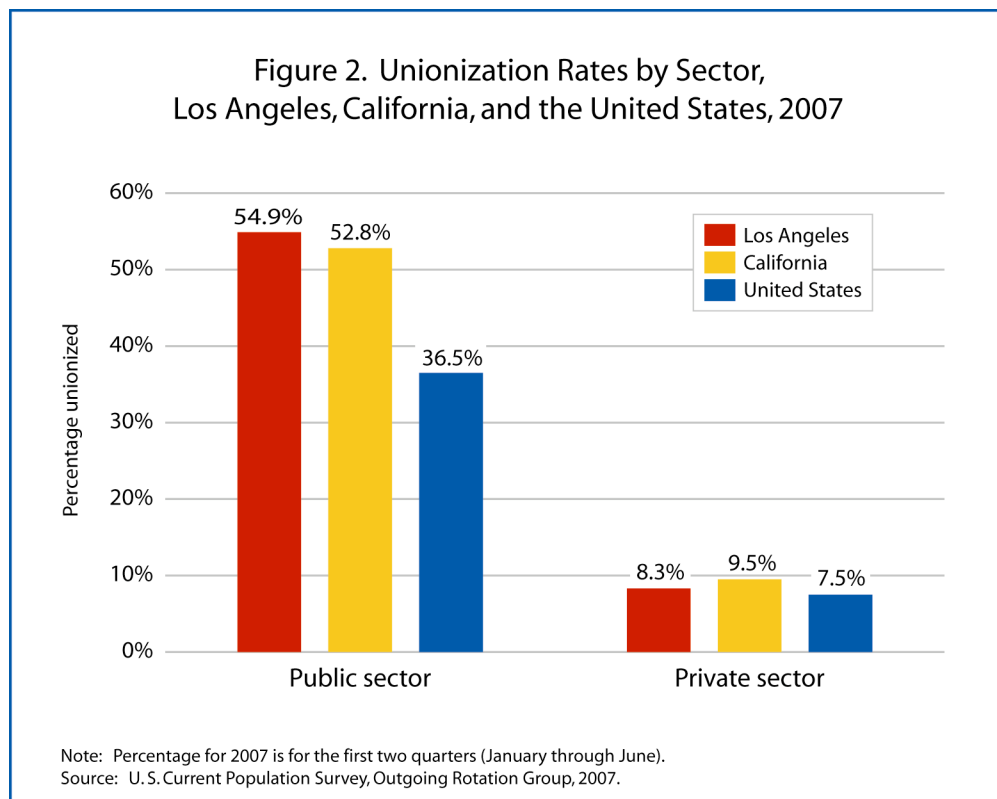
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September 2007

Over the past twelve years, the nation's unionization rate – the percentage of all employed wage and salary workers who are union members – has continued its relentless decline. However, in both the Los Angeles metropolitan area and in California, unionization has held steady over this period, and even edged upward in some years, as Figure 1 shows. The unionization rate in 2007 is 15.3 percent in the Los Angeles metropolitan area and 16.5 percent in California – in both cases well above the national average of 12.2 percent.



¹ This report is based on analysis of the U.S. Current Population Survey (CPS) Outgoing Rotation Group data for the first six months of 2007. We created a merged data set including the six monthly surveys conducted from January to June, inclusive, of that year. All results are calculated using the CPS unrevised sampling weights. The sample includes employed civilian wage and salary workers aged 16 and over. We followed the sample definition and weighting procedures described in Barry T. Hirsch and David A. Macpherson, *Union Membership and Earnings Data Book* (Washington D.C.: Bureau of National Affairs, 2007): 1-8. Special thanks to Rebecca Frazier for designing the graphics and for editorial assistance.

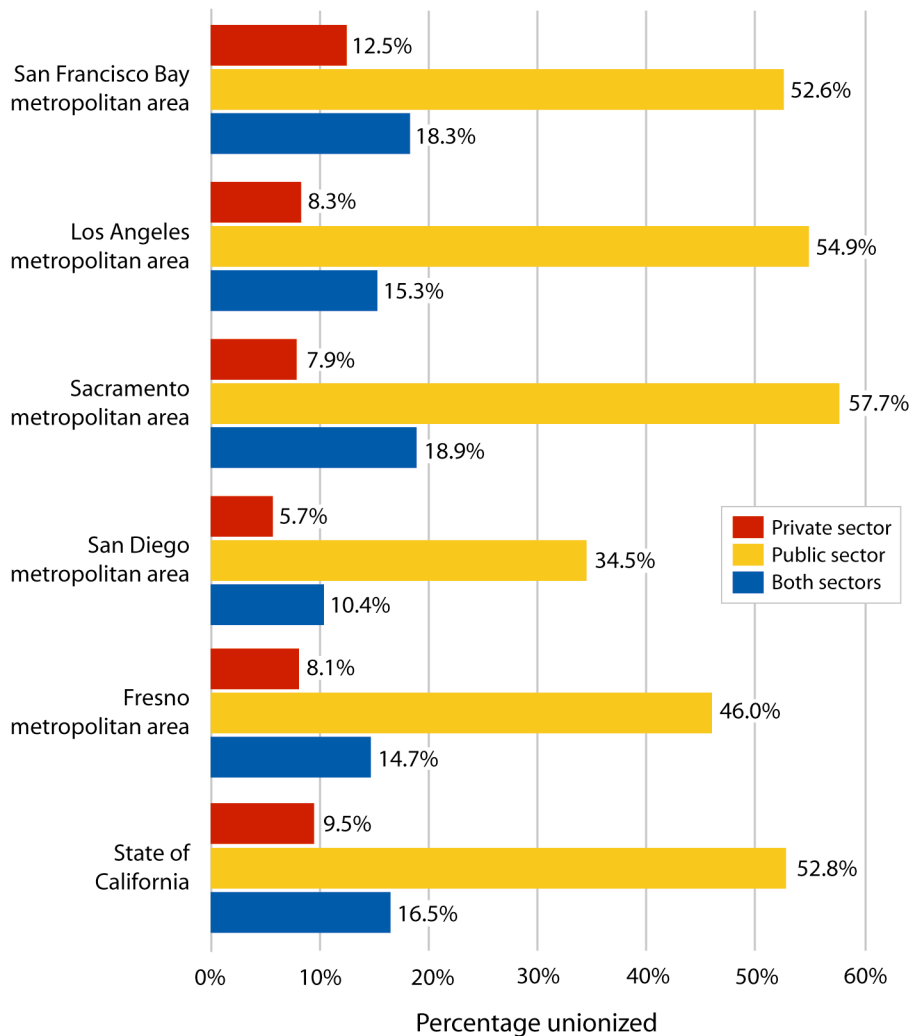
Unionization rates are consistently higher in the public sector than in the private sector. As Figure 2 shows, public-sector unionism is especially strong in Los Angeles as well as in California: in 2007, well over half of all workers in the public sector are union members, in both the Los Angeles area and in the state. In the nation as a whole, the unionization rate for public-sector workers is 36.5 percent; much higher than in the private sector, but well below the rates for public-sector workers in California or Los Angeles. Private-sector unionization in all three geographical units is much lower – indeed, in the single digits – but it is substantially greater in both California and Los Angeles than nationwide.



As Figure 3 shows, unionization rates in both the public and private sectors vary among California's major metropolitan areas. Sacramento has a relatively high rate of unionization in both sectors; while in San Diego and Fresno the opposite is true. Although historically the San Francisco Bay Area was the most highly unionized part of the state, while Los Angeles lagged far behind, in recent years the gap has nearly closed: today Los Angeles has nearly the same overall unionization rate as the Bay Area, and in the public sector the rate is slightly higher in the Southland.²

² The Los Angeles metropolitan area as shown in Figure 3 includes Los Angeles, Riverside, Orange, Ventura, and San Bernardino counties; the San Francisco Bay Area includes San Francisco, Alameda, Santa Clara, Marin, San Mateo, Sonoma, Napa, Contra Costa, Solano and Santa Cruz counties; the San Diego metropolitan area includes San Diego county only; the Sacramento metropolitan area includes El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento and Yolo counties; and the Fresno metropolitan area includes Fresno and Madera counties.

Figure 3. Unionization Rates in
Selected Metropolitan Areas, California, 2007

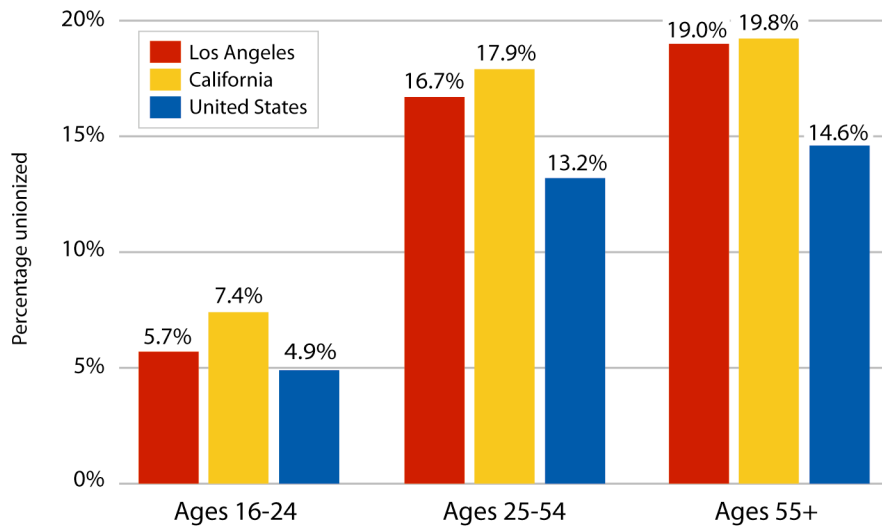


Note: Percentage for 2007 is for the first two quarters (January through June).
Source: U.S. Current Population Survey, Outgoing Rotation Group, 2007.

Unionization rates are highest for workers over 55 years old, as Figure 4 shows. They are extremely low among the youngest workers, those aged 16-24, a pattern that is consistent across the Los Angeles metropolitan area, the state of California, and the nation. This age variation reflects the fact that unionized jobs, on the average, provide workers with substantially higher wages than do nonunion jobs, as Figure 5 shows.³ Higher wages are typically associated with lower employee turnover, which generates an older workforce over time. In addition, unionized jobs generally offer more job security than nonunion jobs, which further reduces turnover and similarly contributes to an increase in the average age of unionized workers.

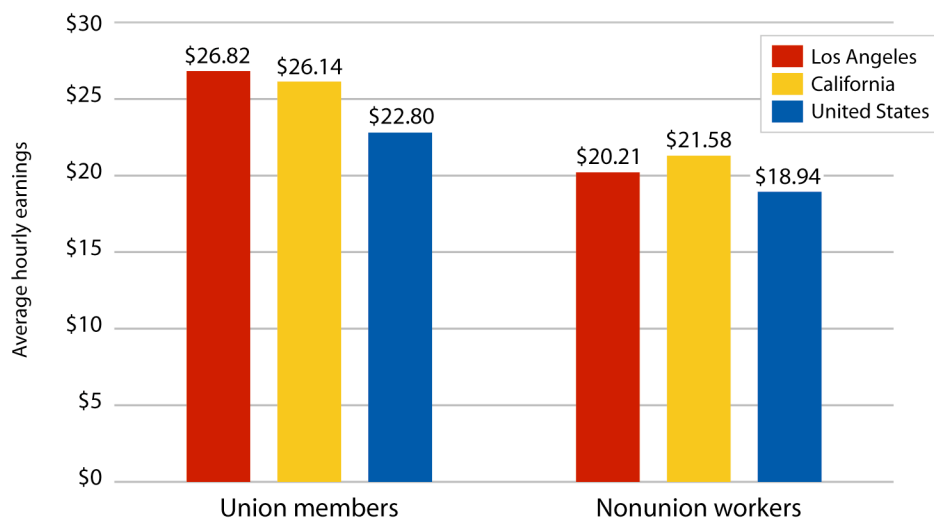
³ The earnings figures shown in Figure 5 are preliminary estimates, computed in 2007 dollars.

Figure 4. Unionization Rates by Age,
Los Angeles, California, and the United States, 2007



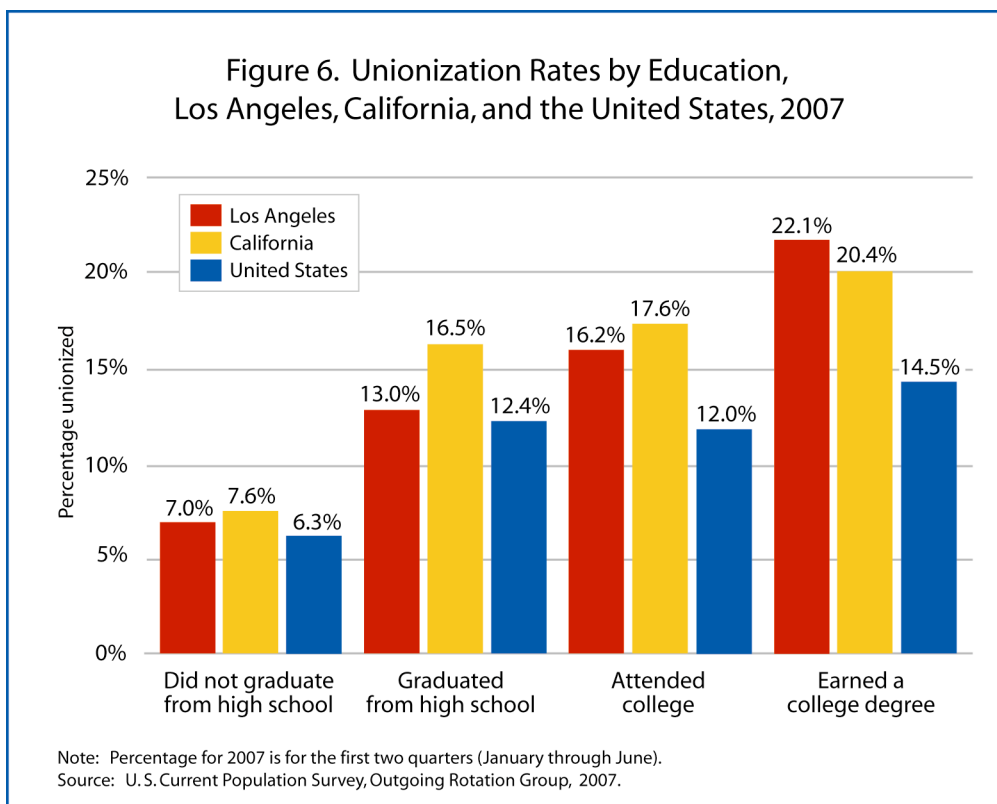
Note: Percentage for 2007 is for the first two quarters (January through June).
Source: U.S. Current Population Survey, Outgoing Rotation Group, 2007.

Figure 5. Earnings Differentials for Union Members and Nonunion
Workers, Los Angeles, California, and the United States, 2007



Note: Percentage for 2007 is for the first two quarters (January through June).
Source: U.S. Current Population Survey, Outgoing Rotation Group, 2007.

Figure 6 shows that in Los Angeles, California and the United States alike, the more education workers have, the higher their unionization rate tends to be. Whereas decades ago the archetypal union member was a blue collar worker with limited education, today mid-level professionals are much more likely to be unionized than anyone else, especially in sectors like educational services and public administration. As Table 1 shows, workers in the educational services industry group alone make up over one-fourth of all unionized workers in the L.A. metropolitan area, the state of California, and the nation; similarly, public administration accounts for over one-eighth of union members in all three jurisdictions. Both these industry groups include relatively large numbers of college-educated workers, and as Figure 7 shows, they have the highest unionization rates of all industry groups.



As Table 1 shows, the composition of union membership in the Los Angeles metropolitan area is somewhat different from that in the state and the nation. The highly unionized entertainment industry accounts for 4.7 percent of union members in the metropolitan area, nearly one-and-a-half times its share of California union membership, and more than double its national share. By contrast, manufacturing accounts for a much smaller share of union membership, both in the Los Angeles metropolitan area and in the state, than is the case nationally.

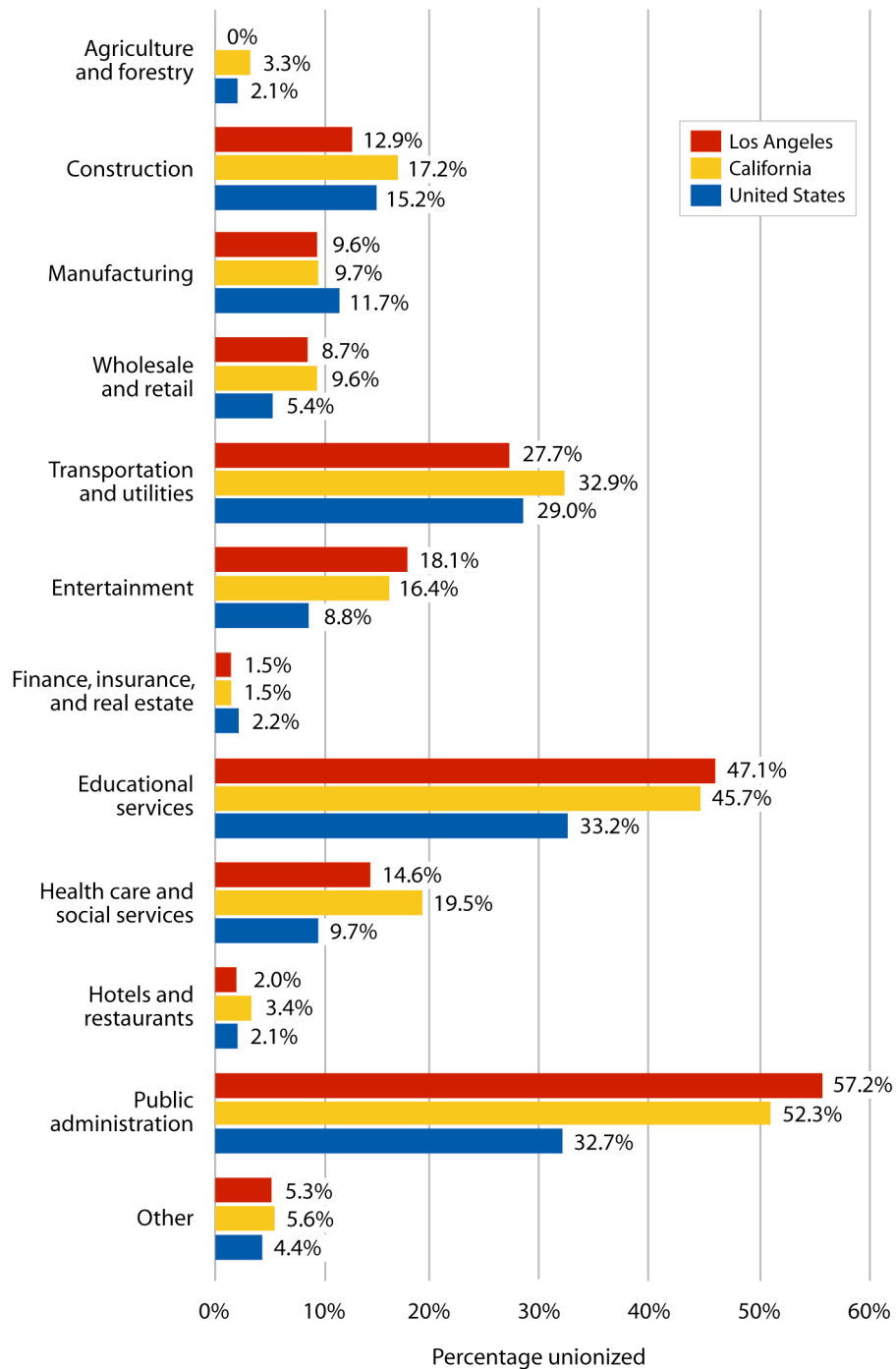
The high level of unionization in educational services and public administration also affects the gender-specific unionization rates shown in Figure 8, since both industry groups rely heavily on female workers. As Figure 8 shows, the unionization rates of employed women are actually slightly higher than those of employed men in Los Angeles and in California, whereas for the United States as a whole, the male unionization rate is about two percentage points higher than the female rate. This reflects the fact that the public sector is so much more highly unionized in California and Los Angeles than in the nation as a whole (see Figure 2 above).

Table 1. Number and Percentage of Union Members by Selected Industry Groups, for the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area, California, and the United States, 2007

	Los Angeles metropolitan area		State of California		United States	
Industry group	Number of union members	% of total	Number of union members	% of total	Number of union members	% of total
Agriculture and forestry	--	--	7,252	0.3%	22,842	0.2%
Construction	70,035	6.2%	196,167	8.0%	1,358,174	8.6%
Manufacturing	83,061	7.4%	152,203	6.2%	1,778,238	11.3%
Wholesale and retail	96,681	8.6%	206,832	8.4%	1,036,317	6.6%
Transportation and utilities	101,043	9.0%	228,395	9.3%	1,967,085	12.5%
Entertainment	52,699	4.7%	84,599	3.5%	288,528	1.8%
Finance, insurance, and real estate	7,986	0.7%	15,537	0.6%	194,364	1.2%
Educational services	337,657	30.1%	640,172	26.1%	4,253,222	27.0%
Health care and social services	114,798	10.2%	326,289	13.3%	1,547,197	9.8%
Hotels and restaurants	10,368	0.9%	32,529	1.3%	194,898	1.2%
Public administration	181,912	16.2%	416,234	17.0%	2,188,379	13.9%
Other	67,064	6.0%	147,559	6.0%	912,484	5.8%
Total	1,123,305	100.0%	2,453,768	100.0%	15,741,728	100.0%

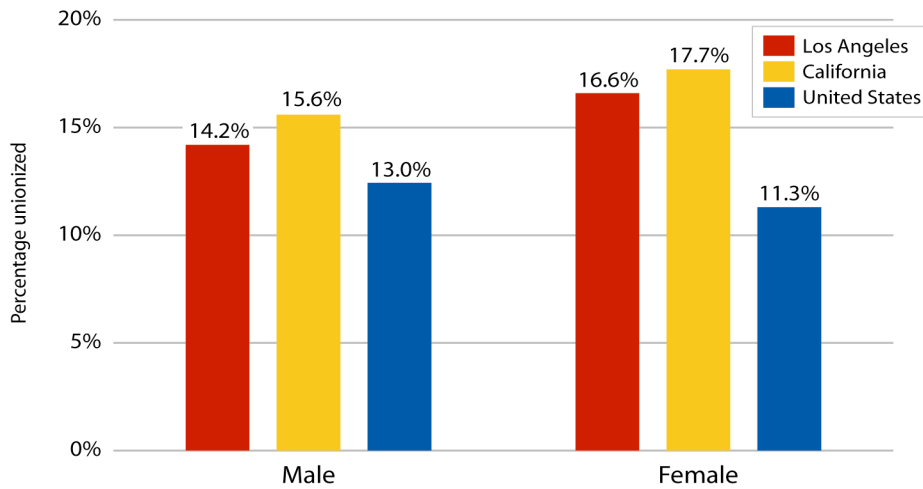
Note: Percentage for 2007 is for the first two quarters (January through June).
Source: U. S. Current Population Survey, Outgoing Rotation Group, 2007.

Figure 7. Unionization Rates by Industry Group,
Los Angeles, California, and the United States, 2007



Note: Percentage for 2007 is for the first two quarters (January through June).
Source: U.S. Current Population Survey, Outgoing Rotation Group, 2007.

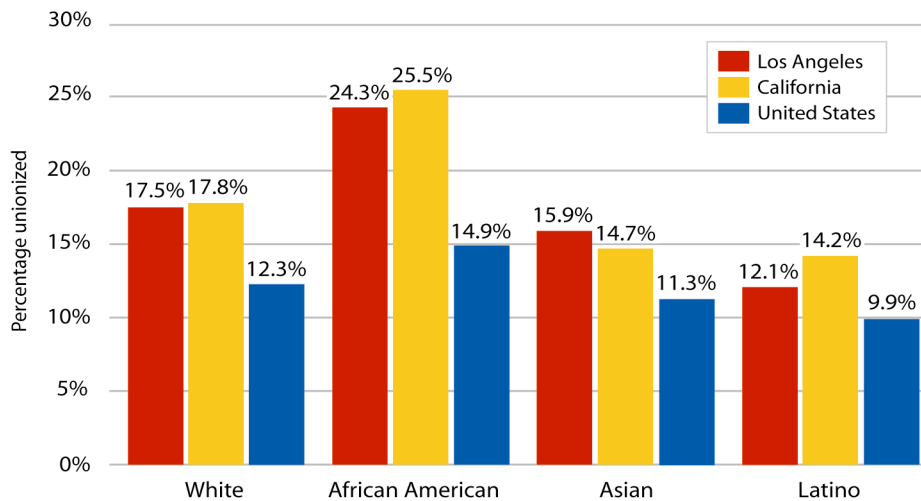
Figure 8. Unionization Rates by Gender,
Los Angeles, California, and the United States, 2007



Note: Percentage for 2007 is for the first two quarters (January through June).
Source: U.S. Current Population Survey, Outgoing Rotation Group, 2007.

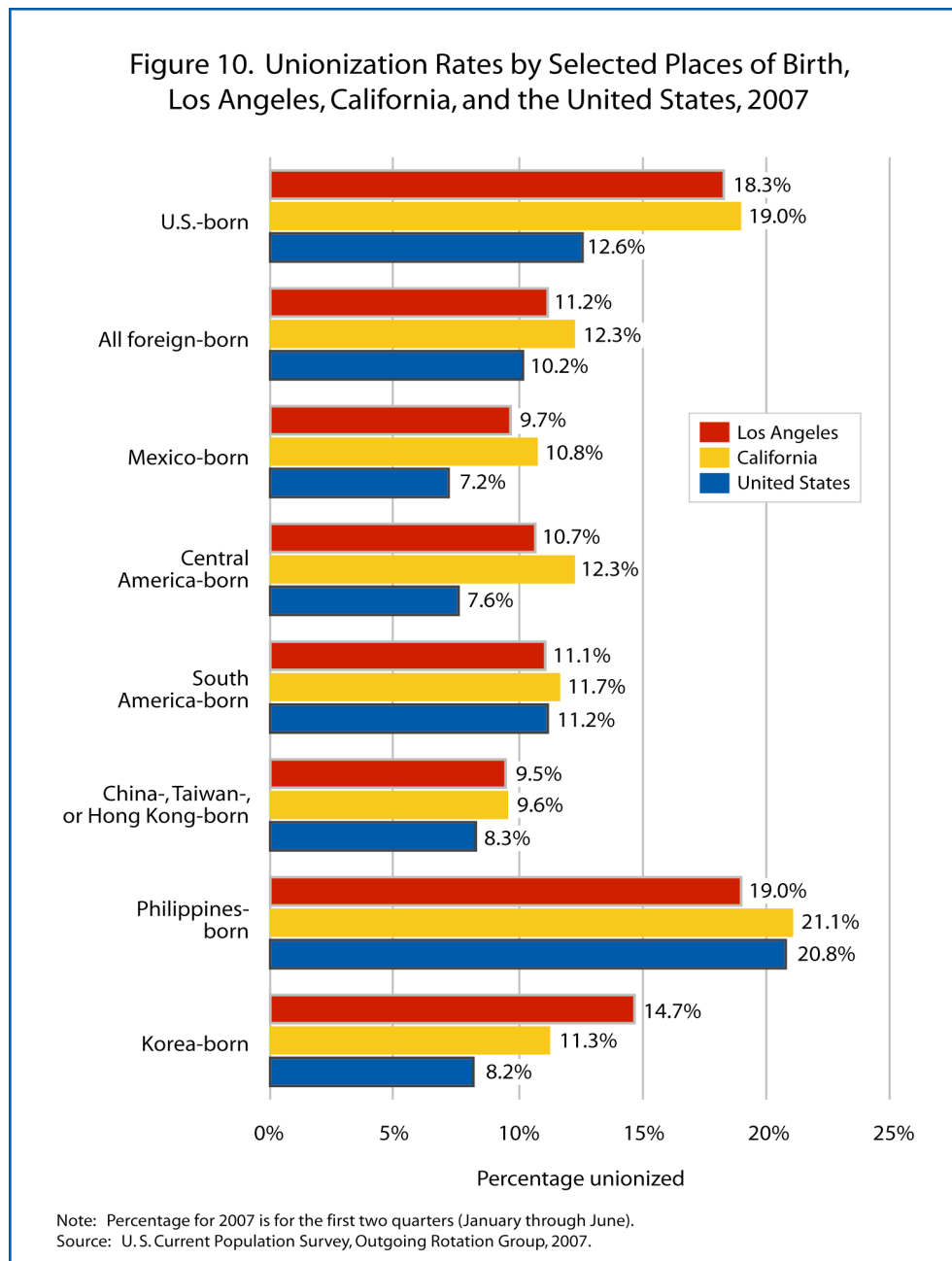
Figure 9 shows that unionization rates also vary by race and ethnicity. Indeed, African Americans have the highest unionization rate of any group shown, largely because of their relatively high concentration in public-sector employment.

Figure 9. Unionization Rates by Race/Ethnicity,
Los Angeles, California, and the United States, 2007



Note: Percentage for 2007 is for the first two quarters (January through June).
Source: U.S. Current Population Survey, Outgoing Rotation Group, 2007.

Unionization rates vary by nativity, or place of birth, as well. As Figure 10 shows, U.S.-born workers are more highly unionized than foreign-born workers as a whole. This is partly due to the fact that relatively few foreign-born workers are employed in the highly unionized public sector, with the exception of workers born in the Philippines. Fully 18.5 percent of workers born in the Philippines were employed in 2007 in the public sector in California, as were 18.0 percent of those in Los Angeles, and 14.6 percent of those in the United States as a whole. By contrast, only 5.1 percent of Mexican-born workers in California were employed in the public sector, only 4.7 percent of those in Los Angeles, and only 4.4 percent of Mexican-born workers nationwide. Again the high public sector unionization rates underlie what at first appears as a difference in nationality or nativity.



However, as Figure 11 shows, foreign-born workers who have become U.S. citizens, and those who arrived in the United States before 1990, have unionization rates higher than or comparable to those of U.S.-born workers. More recent arrivals, by contrast, have extremely low rates of unionization.

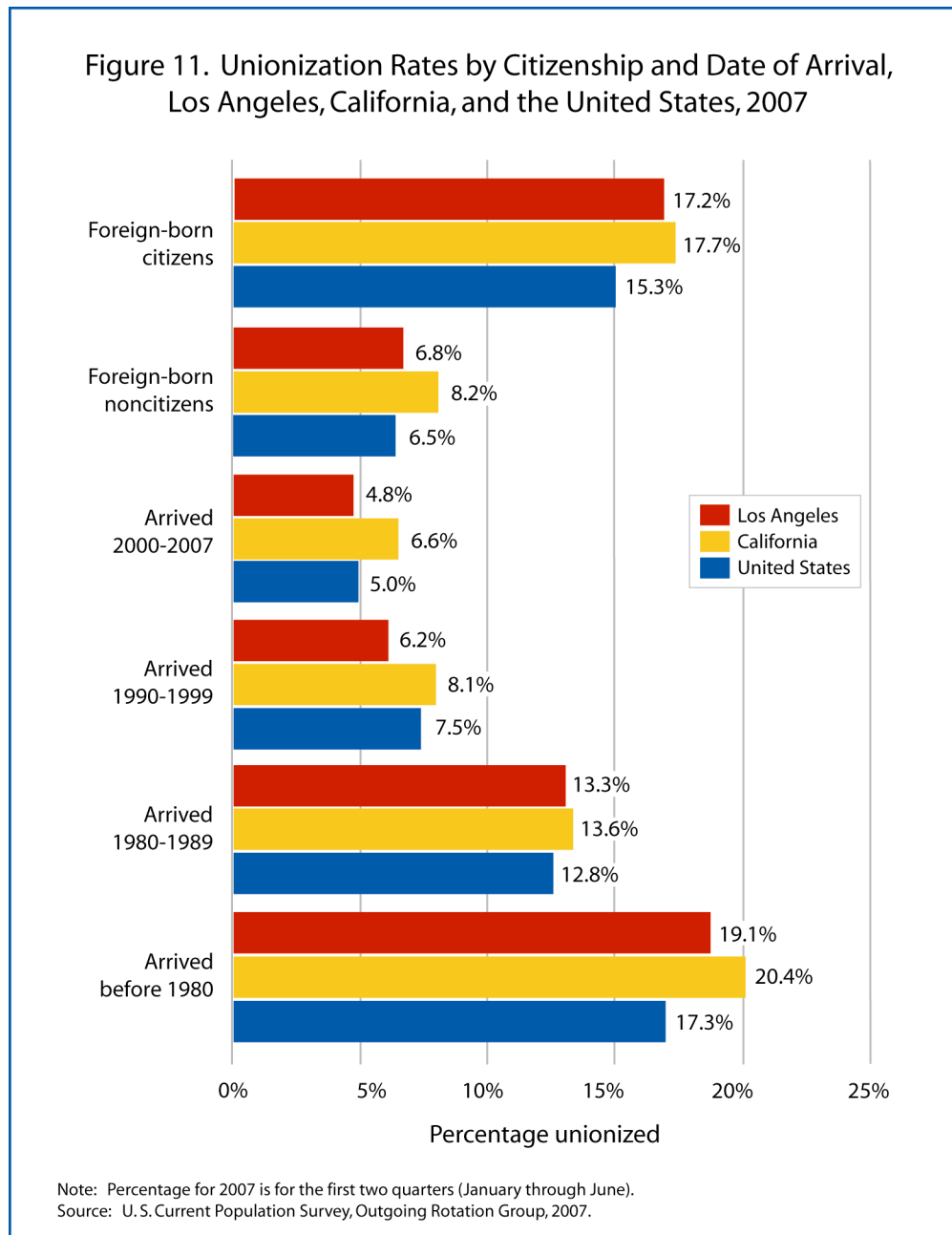
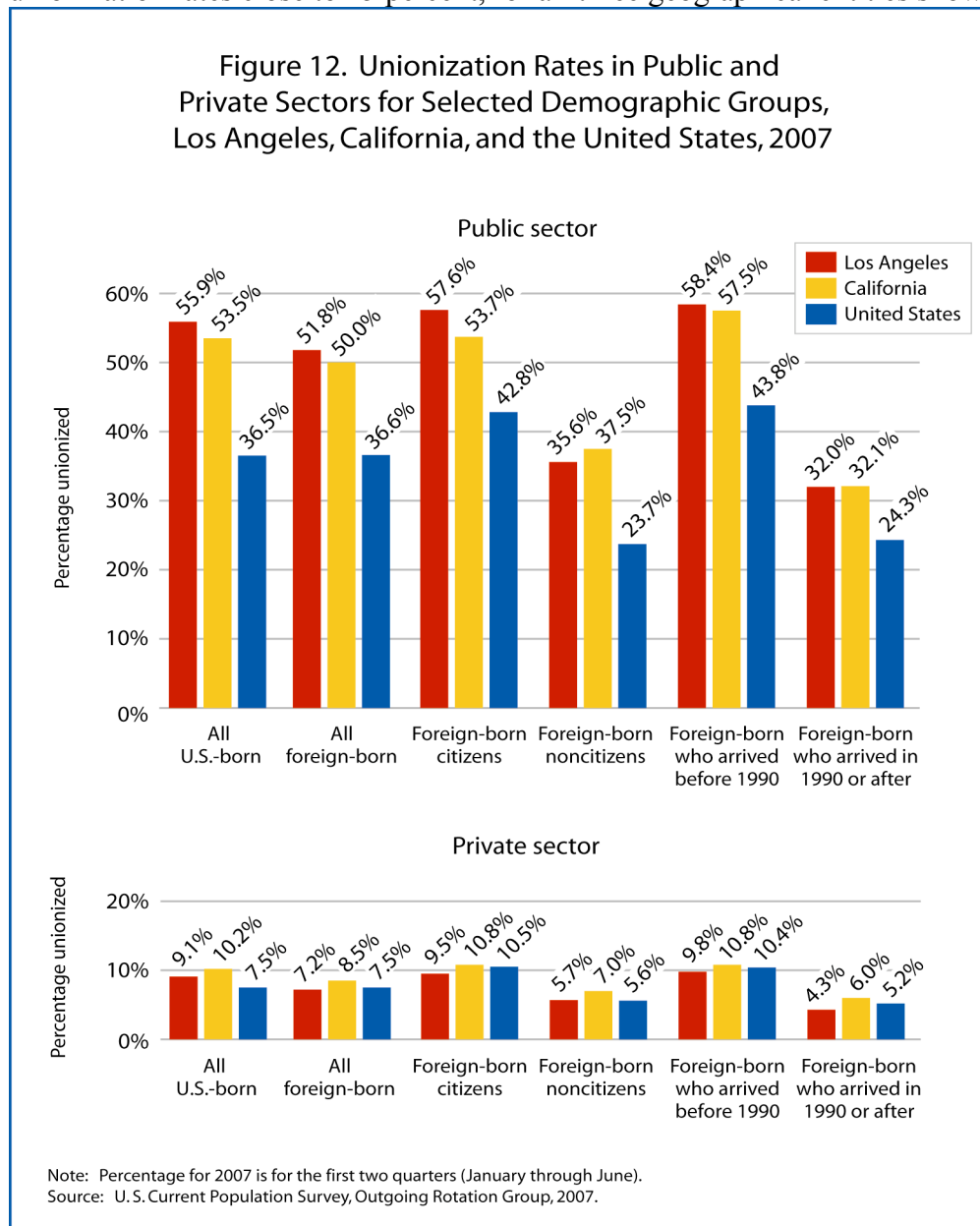


Figure 12 disaggregates the data for foreign-born workers between the public and private sectors. It reveals that unionization rates vary much less *within* each of these sectors than between them. Even foreign-born noncitizens and recently arrived immigrants, whose overall unionization rates are generally low (see Figure 11), have public-sector

unionization rates close to 25 percent, for all three geographical entities shown.



Relatively few noncitizens and recently arrived immigrants work in the public sector, however; only 5.0 percent of all foreign-born noncitizens in the United States, and only 6.4 percent of all foreign-born workers who arrived in or after 1990, are employed in this sector, compared to 17.7 percent of all U.S.-born workers. As a result, the high level of public-sector unionization for these immigrant groups does little to boost their overall unionization rate. By contrast, in the private sector, unionization rates are consistently low for all groups, seldom reaching into the double digits. Indeed, the main reason for the relatively low unionization rates among recently arrived immigrants and noncitizens is the fact that they are frequently employed in industries and occupations that rely on highly casualized and precarious forms of employment, either marginal to or entirely outside of the formal economy.

Unionization patterns in the Los Angeles metropolitan area and in California are similar in many respects to those in the United States as whole. At the same time, however, the labor movement in the nation's most populous state and in that state's largest metropolis has some distinctive features. Most important, although the overall level of unionization has continued its long-term decline nationally, it has been relatively stable and sometimes even increased in Los Angeles and in California over recent years. This reflects the region's unusual labor history and its relatively high level of public-sector unionization, as well as the fact that manufacturing (the sector in which unionization has declined most sharply nationally) has historically been less important in the state's economy than is the case in other parts of the nation.⁴

⁴ For more detailed analysis of the distinctive features of Los Angeles and California labor, see Ruth Milkman and Daisy Rooks, "California Union Membership: A Turn-of-the-Century Portrait," *The State of California Labor 2003*, available on line at <http://www.irle.ucla.edu/research/scl/pdf03/scl2003ch1.pdf> and Ruth Milkman, *L.A. Story: Immigrant Workers and the Future of the U.S. Labor Movement* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006).