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California Union Membership and Coverage: 2023 Chartbook

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California Union Membership and Coverage

2023 CHARTBOOK

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August 2023

California union members are more diverse today than 20 years ago

California labor unions make a difference in the lives of working families. Workers covered by labor union contracts typically earn higher wages and have greater access to health care and retirement benefits. California labor unions back statewide labor policies that benefit union and non-union workers alike. See the UC Berkeley Labor Center (2018) "[The Union Effect in California](#)."

Sociologists and labor scholars [Milkman and Rooks \(2003\)](#) examined union density in California in the early 2000s. We update this work to examine recent trends in California. Findings include:

- Between 2021-2022, around 2.5 million Californians—around 16.2% of the workforce—were members of labor unions. Around 2.8 million—around 17.7% of the workforce—were covered by a union contract.
- Women make up at least half of union members in California today.
- The majority of union members are workers of color and reflect the diversity of California.
- Union membership in the San Francisco Bay Area and the Los Angeles Metro Area is more diverse than in California as a whole.
- Union density is stronger in California compared to the U.S. overall due to the strength of union density in the public sector and the growth of union coverage in health care and other smaller industries.

Key terms used in the Chartbook

A **labor union** is a group of workers who act collectively to negotiate wages, benefits, schedules, and other aspects of employment with their employer ([US DOL](#)). All workers covered by a union contract are represented by the labor union. We call these **covered workers** or **union coverage**. Workers who elect to become **union members** (typically through paying dues) collectively run the labor union through a democratic process.

Key Terms:

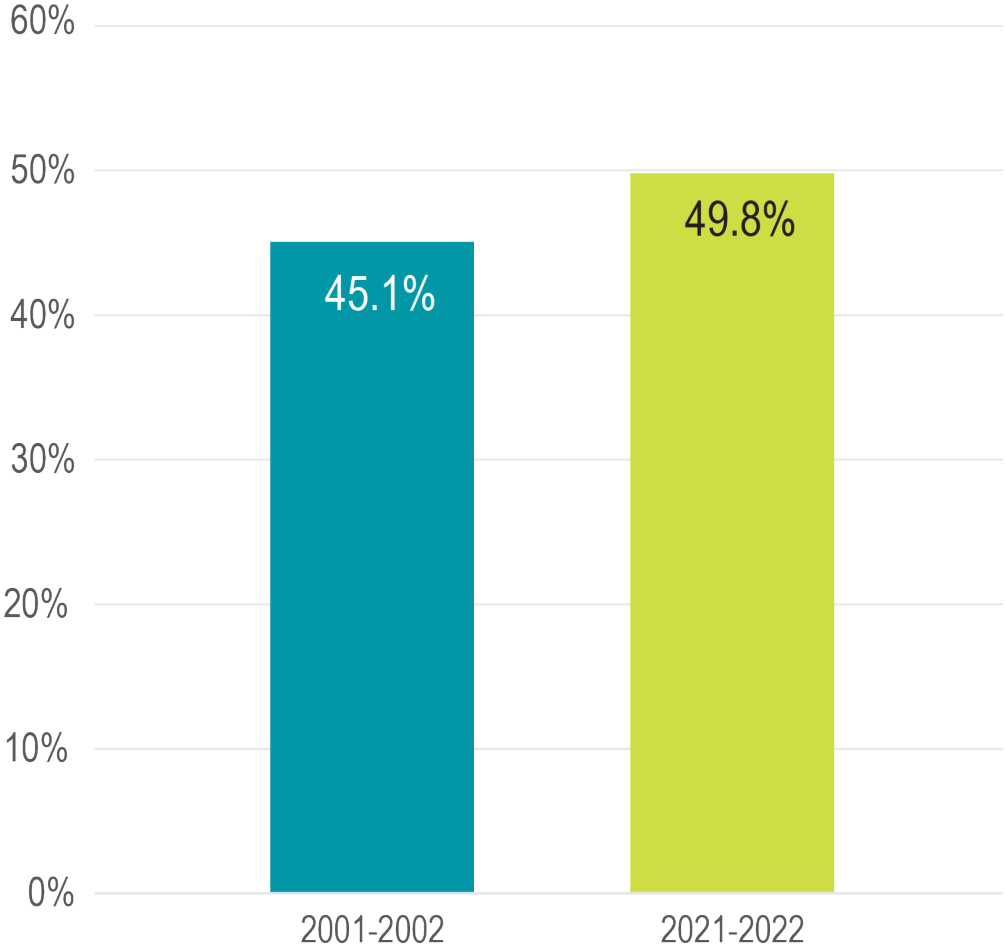
- **Employment:** Employed civilian wage and salary workers, age 16 and over.
- **Union membership:** Includes workers who are members of a labor union in their main job. We look at union membership for most of the analyses in the chartbook.
- **Union coverage:** Includes all workers covered under a union contract. We look at union coverage for industry-level analyses.
- **Unionization rate:** The share of a group (demographic or otherwise) who are union members or covered by a union contract.
- **Union density:** The share of wage and salary workers who are union members or covered by a union contract.

Data in this chartbook primarily come from the Current Population Survey. See Methods at the end of the chartbook.

Women make up half of union members in California today

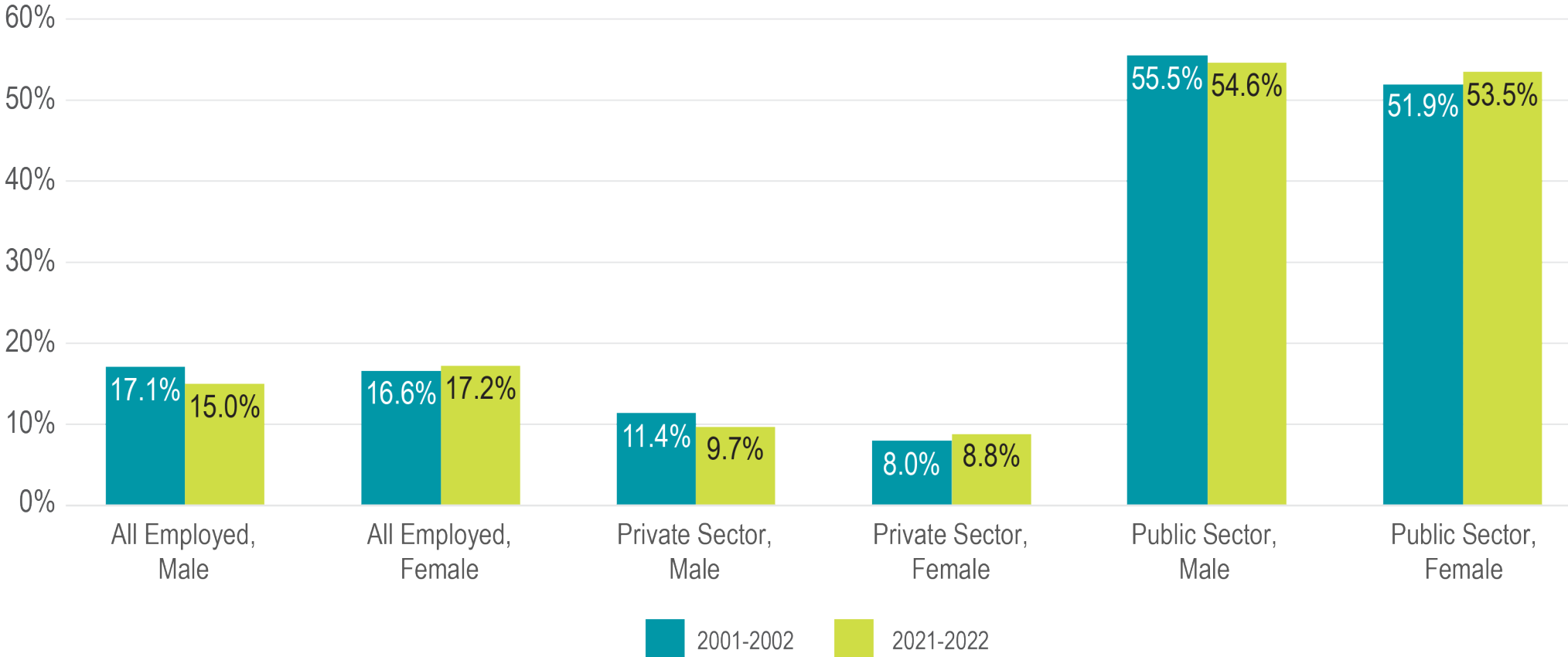
- In 2001-2002, the majority of union members were men. In 2021-2022, half (49.8%) of union members were women [\[Exhibit 1\]](#).
- In the last 20 years, union membership has dropped slightly for men in California but has grown slightly among women:
 - In 2001-2002, 17.1% of men in California belonged to unions. Union membership rates dropped to 15.0% for men in 2021-22 [\[Exhibit 2\]](#).
 - However, the share of women in the workforce who were union members increased slightly from 16.6% in 2001-2002 to 17.2% in 2021-2022 [\[Exhibit 2\]](#).

Exhibit 1. Share of Female Union Members, California



Source: Authors' analysis of the 2001, 2002, 2021, and 2022 EPI Current Population Survey (CPS) Outgoing Rotation Group data.
Note: These data represent union membership and do not include adjustment for IHSS or family child care providers.

Exhibit 2. Union Membership Rates, by Gender and Sector, California



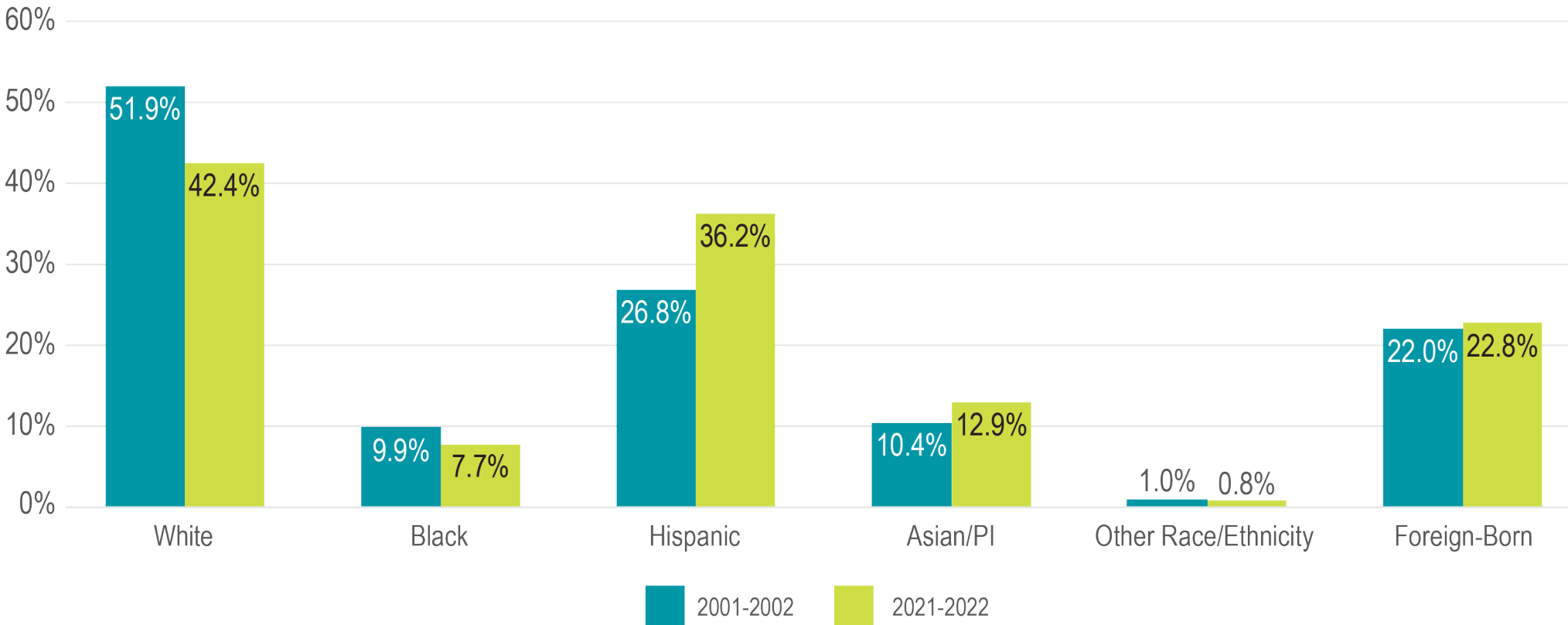
Source: Authors' analysis of the 2001, 2002, 2021, and 2022 EPI Current Population Survey (CPS) Outgoing Rotation Group data.
 Note: These data represent union membership and do not include adjustment for IHSS or family child care providers.

The majority of union members are workers of color and reflect the diversity of California

- In 2001-2002, the typical union member in California was a white male. In 2021-2022, the typical union member was a person of color [\[Exhibit 3\]](#).
- In 2021-2022, about four out of seven union members were workers of color (57.6%) [\[Exhibit 3\]](#).
- In 2021-2022, over a third of union members were Hispanic (36.2%), 12.9% were Asian or Pacific Islander, 7.7% were Black, and less than 1% were included in the “Other Race/Ethnicity” category* [\[Exhibit 3\]](#).
- In 2021-2022, almost a quarter of union members were foreign-born (22.8%) [\[Exhibit 3\]](#).

* Note: The “Other Race/Ethnicity” category includes those identifying as multi-racial and American Indian or Alaskan Native.

Exhibit 3. Union Membership Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Nativity, California

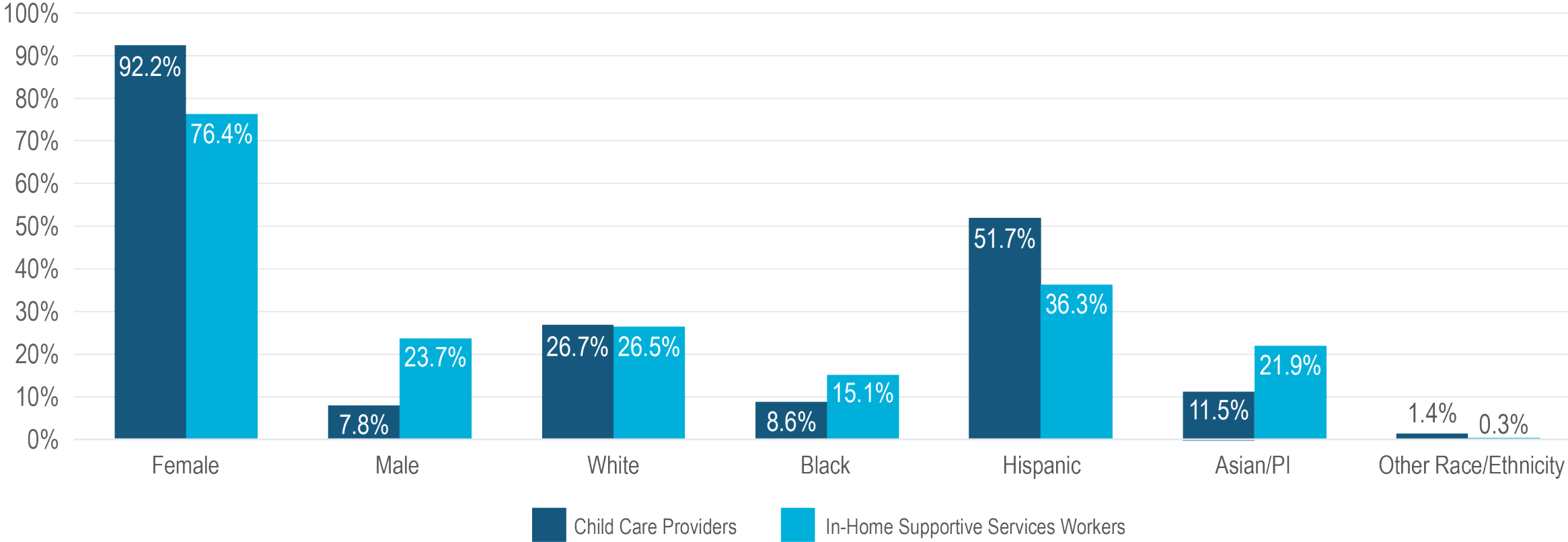


Source: Authors' analysis of the 2001, 2002, 2021, and 2022 EPI Current Population Survey (CPS) Outgoing Rotation Group data.
Note: These data represent union membership and do not include adjustment for IHSS or family child care providers.

In-home supportive service (IHSS) providers and child care providers are covered by collective bargaining but are undercounted in data on union coverage and membership

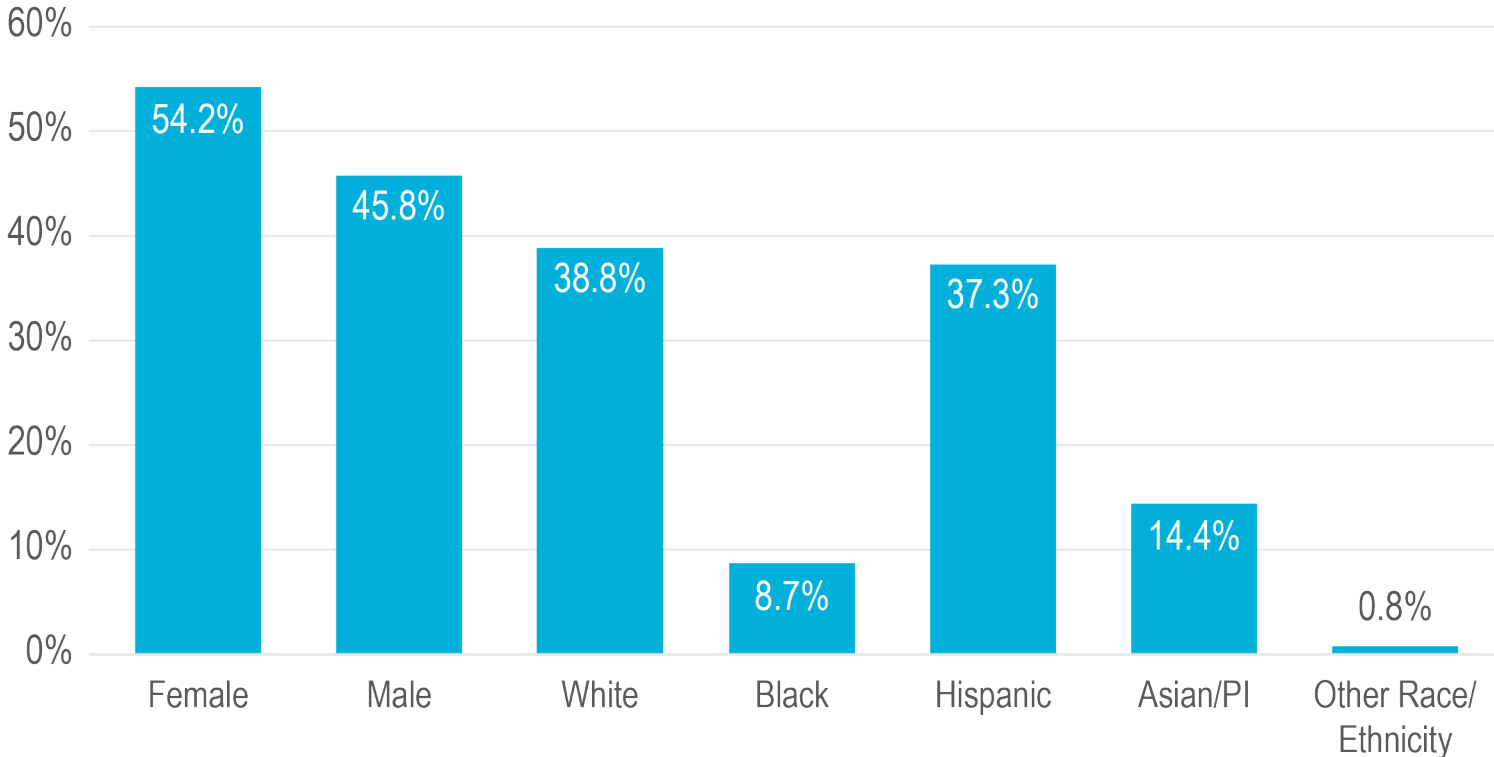
- In-home supportive service (IHSS) providers offer in-home assistance and care to older adults and disabled individuals, allowing these individuals to live safely in their homes. We find these workers are undercounted in Current Population Survey (CPS) data on union coverage and membership.
- Unionized family child care providers offer early learning and care for children receiving state-subsidized child care. These workers are not represented in CPS data on union coverage and membership because of their status as small business owners.
- Between 2021-2022 around half a million IHSS workers and around 33,400 family child care providers were covered by a union contract in California. Data on union membership and demographics is unavailable; however, using CPS data we estimate that the majority of IHSS and family child care providers are women and workers of color. See Methods for our approach [\[Exhibit 4\]](#).
- We estimate that if IHSS and family child care providers were represented in the CPS, the demographic make-up of union members would be even more diverse. Because data on union membership is unavailable for these workers, we look at union coverage. With the inclusion of IHSS and family child care providers, we estimate that over half of workers covered by a union contract are women (54.2%) and around three out of five are workers of color (61.2%) [\[Exhibit 5\]](#).

Exhibit 4. Estimated Demographics of Child Care Providers and In-Home Supportive Service Workers, California, 2021-2022



Source: Authors' analysis of 2021 and 2022 EPI Current Population Survey (CPS) Outgoing Rotation Group data.
 Note: See methodology for how we identified demographics of IHSS and family child care providers.

Exhibit 5. Union Coverage with the Inclusion of IHSS and Family Child Care Providers by Race/Ethnicity, California, 2021-2022



Source: Authors' analysis of 2021 and 2022 EPI Current Population Survey (CPS) Outgoing Rotation Group data, 2021 and 2022 California Department of Social Services Program Data, and data sourced from SEIU/CCPU.

Note: See methodology for how we estimated demographics of covered IHSS and family child care providers.

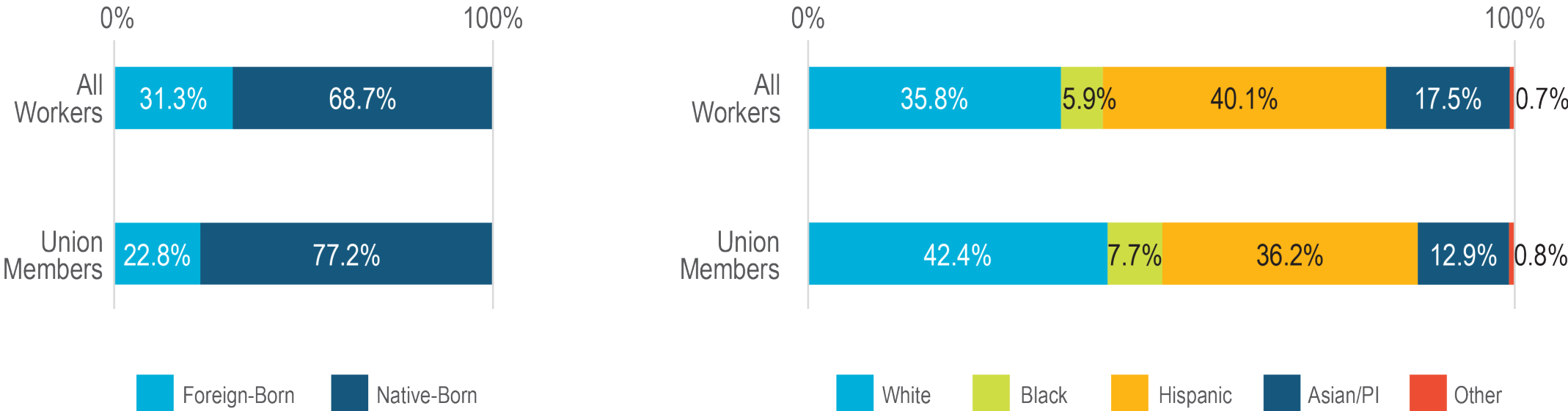
Union members in the San Francisco Bay Area and the Los Angeles Metro Area were more diverse than California as a whole

- In California overall in 2021-2022, white, Black, and native-born workers were more likely to belong to unions compared to their share in the labor force. Hispanic, Asian/PI, and foreign-born union members were underrepresented in unions compared to their share of the labor force [\[Exhibit 6\]](#).
- However, workers of color made up a greater share of union members in the San Francisco Bay Area* and the Los Angeles Metro Area** compared to California as a whole.
- In the San Francisco Bay Area in 2021-2022, about three out of five union members were workers of color (61.4%) and Asian/PI workers made up about one-third of union members, a greater proportion than their share of the labor force (25.3%) [\[Exhibit 7\]](#).
- In the Los Angeles Metro Area, almost 70% of union members were workers of color, including almost half (47.3%) who were Hispanic. Hispanic and Asian/PI workers were more likely to belong to unions compared to their share of the labor force [\[Exhibit 8\]](#).

* Note: The San Francisco Bay Area includes San Francisco, Alameda, Santa Clara, Marin, San Mateo, Sonoma, Napa, Contra Costa, Solano, and Santa Cruz Counties.

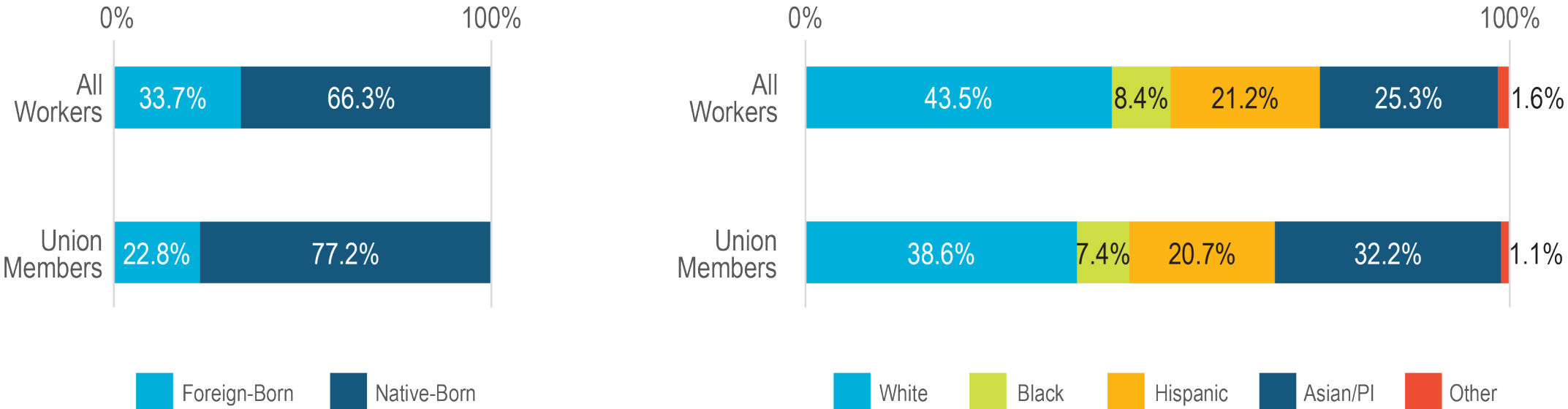
** Note: The Los Angeles Metro Area includes Los Angeles, Riverside, Orange, Ventura, and San Bernardino Counties.

Exhibit 6. Employment and Unionization Rates by Nativity and Race/Ethnicity, California, 2021-2022



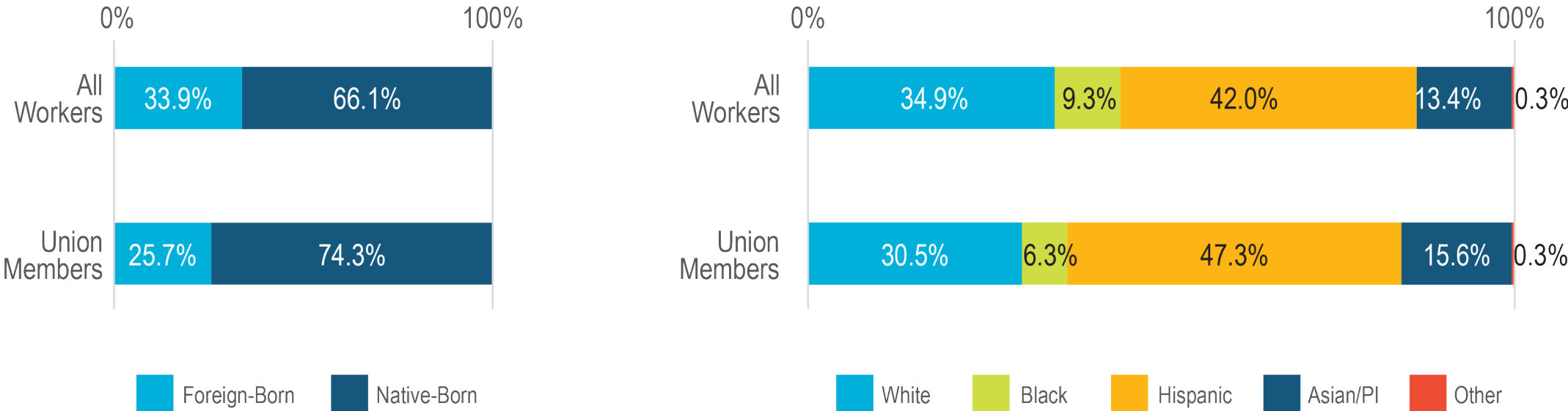
Source: Authors' analysis of the 2001, 2002, 2021, and 2022 EPI Current Population Survey (CPS) Outgoing Rotation Group data.
 Note: These data represent union membership and do not include adjustment for IHSS or family child care providers.

Exhibit 7. Employment and Unionization Rates by Nativity and Race/Ethnicity, San Francisco Bay Area, 2021-2022



Source: Authors' analysis of 2021 and 2022 EPI Current Population Survey (CPS) Outgoing Rotation Group data.
 Note: These data represent union membership and do not include adjustment for IHSS or family child care providers. The San Francisco Bay Area includes San Francisco, Alameda, Santa Clara, Marin, San Mateo, Sonoma, Napa, Contra Costa, Solano, and Santa Cruz Counties.

Exhibit 8. Employment and Unionization Rates by Nativity and Race/Ethnicity, Los Angeles Metro Area, 2021-2022

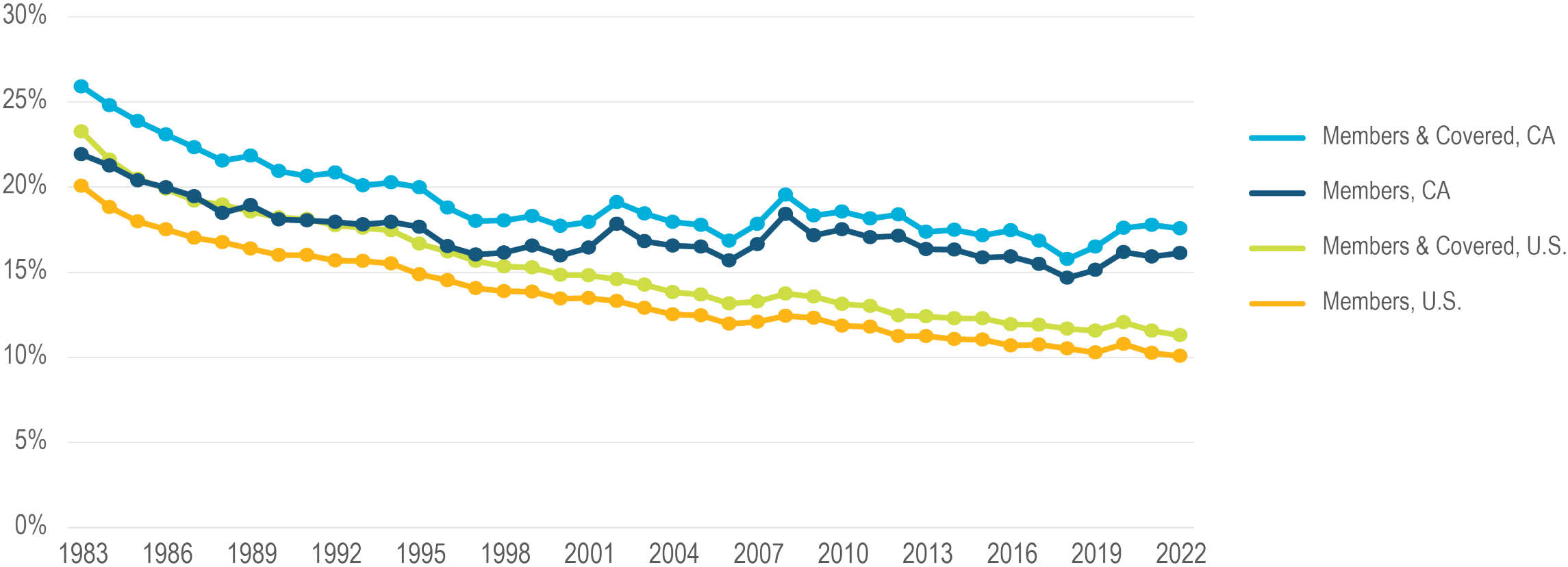


Source: Authors' analysis of 2021 and 2022 EPI Current Population Survey (CPS) Outgoing Rotation Group data.
 Note: These data represent union membership and do not include adjustment for IHSS or family child care providers. The Los Angeles Metro Area includes Los Angeles, Riverside, Orange, Ventura, and San Bernardino Counties.

Union density is stronger in California compared to the U.S. overall

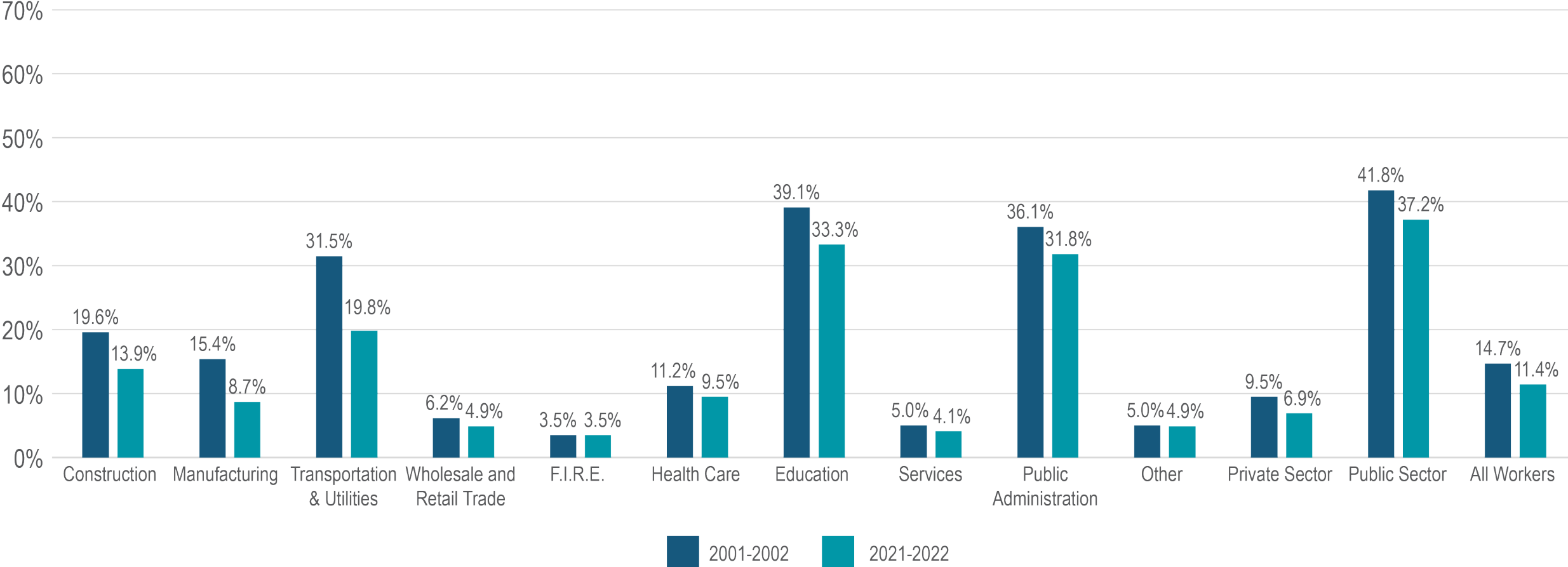
- Union membership and coverage have declined in the U.S. and California since the 1980s. But while union density has continued to fall in the U.S. as a whole, over the past 25 years union density in California stayed relatively flat between 16 to 18% [\[Exhibit 9\]](#).
- Between 2001-2002 and 2021-2022, the United States saw declines in union density across almost all industries and in the public and private sectors [\[Exhibit 10\]](#). In the same 20-year period, California also experienced declines in union density in some industries, particularly Transportation and Utilities, Manufacturing, and Construction. However, these declines were partly offset by increases in union density in Health Care and other smaller industries, as well as by the continued strength of union density in the public sector [\[Exhibit 11\]](#).
- Union density was particularly strong in the public sector, with four out of seven workers (57.7%) covered by a union contract in 2021-2022, a figure that has stayed firm over the past 20 years [\[Exhibit 11\]](#). And half of union members (50.7%) worked in the public sector [\[Exhibit 12\]](#).
- For the Manufacturing, Health Care, and Public Administration industries, trends in union density corresponded with trends in employment changes in California in the last 20 years. The share of workers employed in Manufacturing fell, as did the share of union-covered workers employed in that industry. However, the share of workers employed in Health Care and Public Administration grew along with the share of workers covered by a union contract [\[Exhibit 13\]](#).
- In contrast, the declines in union density in Transportation and Utilities and to a smaller degree Construction [\[Exhibit 11\]](#) coincided with an increase in the share of workers employed in these two industry groups along with a decline in the share of workers covered by a union contract [\[Exhibit 13\]](#).

Exhibit 9. Union Density, California and U.S., 1983-2022



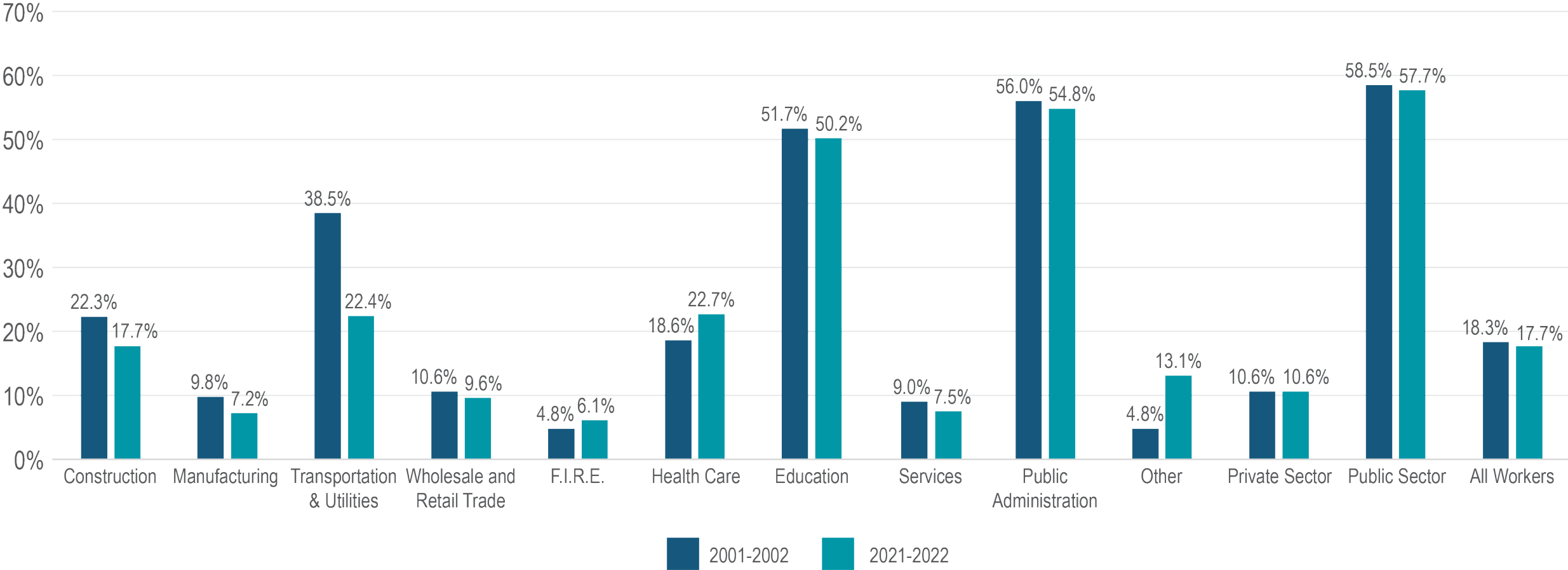
Source: Authors' analysis of Unionstats data (Hirsch, Macpherson, and Even 2023).

Exhibit 10. Union Density, by Industry Group and Sector, U.S.



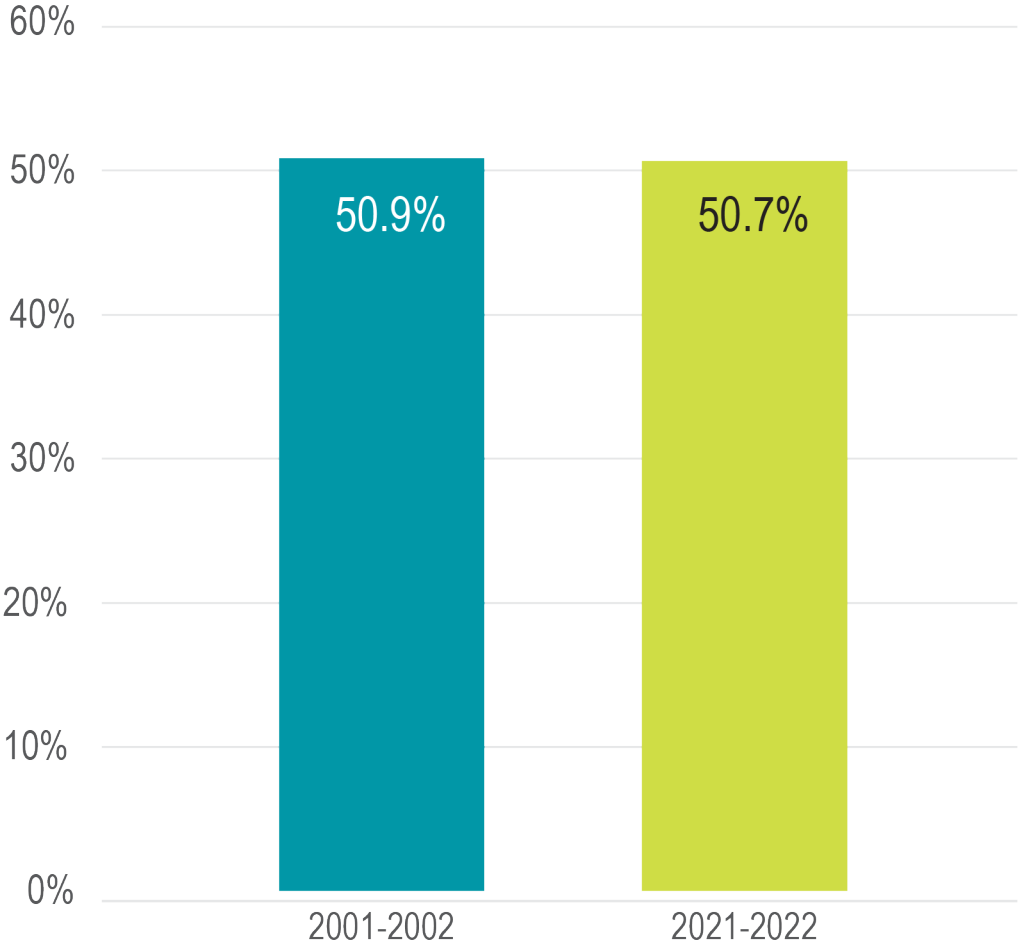
Source: Authors' analysis of the 2001, 2002, 2021, and 2022 EPI Current Population Survey (CPS) Outgoing Rotation Group data. Note: These data represent union coverage and do not include adjustment for IHSS or family child care providers. See methods for industry classification.

Exhibit 11. Union Density, by Industry Group and Sector, California



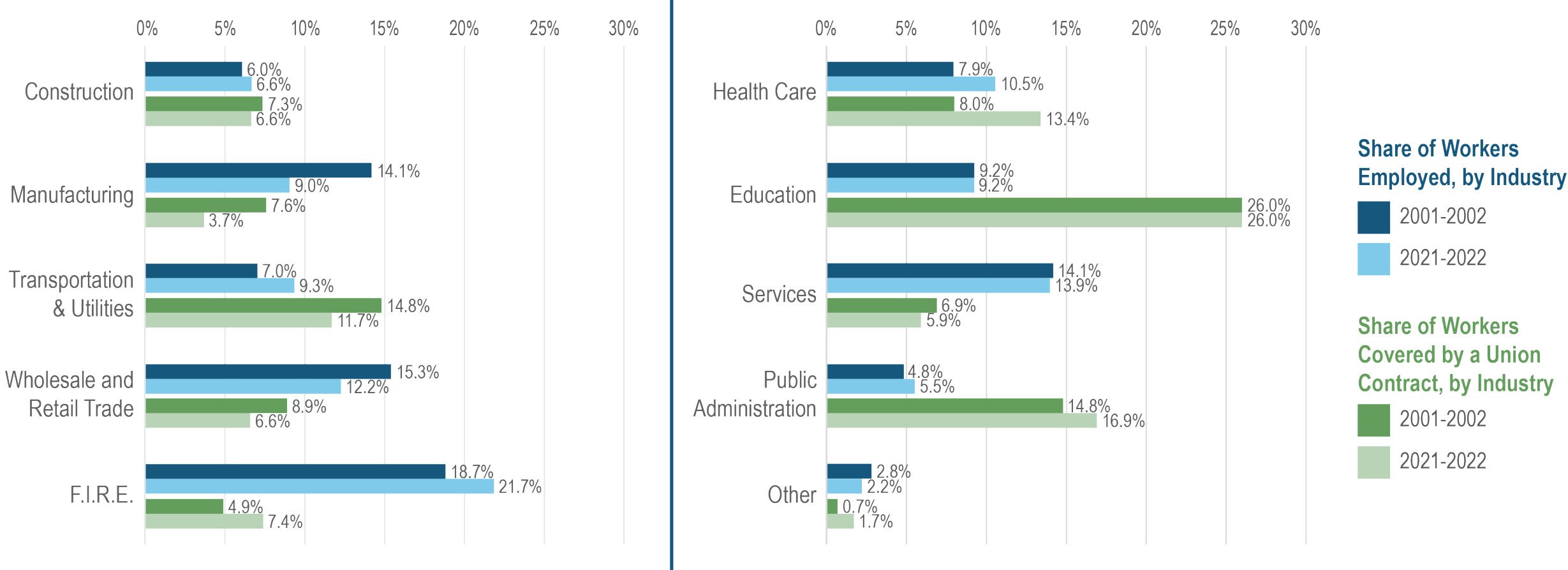
Source: Authors' analysis of the 2001, 2002, 2021, and 2022 EPI Current Population Survey (CPS) Outgoing Rotation Group data.
 Note: These data represent union coverage and do not include adjustment for IHSS or family child care providers. See methods for industry classification.

Exhibit 12. Share of Union Members Employed in the Public Sector, California



Source: Authors' analysis of the 2001, 2002, 2021, and 2022 EPI Current Population Survey (CPS) Outgoing Rotation Group data.
Note: These data represent union coverage and do not include adjustment for IHSS or Family Child Care Providers.

Exhibit 13. Employment and Unionization Rates, California



Source: Authors' analysis of the 2001, 2002, 2021, and 2022 EPI Current Population Survey (CPS) Outgoing Rotation Group data.
 Notes: These data represent union coverage and do not include adjustment for IHSS or family child care providers. See methods for industry classification.

Methods

Our main analyses used the [Economic Policy Institute's \(EPI\) data extracts](#) from the Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Group for the years 2001-2002 and 2021-2022. The sample includes employed civilian wage and salary workers, age 16 and over. Results are weighted using the 'orgwgt' sampling weight. Racial/ethnic categories are pulled from the 'wbhao' variable. Workers identifying as Hispanic regardless of race were assigned as Hispanic. The remaining categories represent non-Hispanic whites, Blacks, Asian/Pacific Islanders, and "other" which includes those identifying as multi-racial and American Indian or Alaskan Native. Industry groupings were based on [Milkman and Rooks' \(2003\)](#) using EPI's "mind16" variable. Our definition of the San Francisco Bay Area includes San Francisco, Alameda, Santa Clara, Marin, San Mateo, Sonoma, Napa, Contra Costa, Solano, and Santa Cruz Counties. Our definition of the Los Angeles Metro Area includes Los Angeles, Riverside, Orange, Ventura, and San Bernardino Counties. Our method of calculating unionization rates and density are based on [Milkman and Rooks \(2003\)](#) and [Hirsch and Macpherson \(2003\)](#). Data on long-term trends in union membership and coverage in California and the United States found in Exhibit 9 come from [Unionstats](#).

Data on in-home supportive services (IHSS) workers covered by collective bargaining come from the [California Department of Social Services \(CDSS\) Program Data](#) from 2021-2022. Data on family child care providers covered by collective bargaining were obtained through direct correspondence with SEIU/CCPU. Demographics of IHSS and family child care providers covered by collective bargaining are unavailable. We estimated the demographics of IHSS and family child care providers using data from the Current Population Survey. Child care providers were identified as working in the following occupations: Childcare Workers and Education and Childcare Administrators restricted to the Private Household and Child Day Care Services industries. We compared our demographic breakdown in the Current Population Survey to the Center for the Study of Childcare Employment's (CSCCE) estimates from [California Early Care and Education Workforce Study](#), which specifically surveyed family child care providers. While the Current Population Survey and CSCCE did not measure race/ethnicity identically, both sources of data find 71-73% of child care providers are workers of color, although our share of Hispanic workers is larger than CSCCE's estimate of Latina workers. In-home supportive services workers were identified in the Current Population Survey as Home Health Aides and Personal Care Aides restricted to the following industries: Social Services, Medical (except Hospital), Public Administration, and Personal Services including Private Households. We adjusted the number of IHSS workers covered by collective bargaining from the total provided in CDSS Program Data by subtracting the number of IHSS workers we could identify as covered by collective bargaining in the Current Population Survey. We did not adjust the total number of family child care providers covered by collective bargaining provided by SEIU/CCPU as we assume these workers are excluded from the Current Population Survey entirely due to their status as small business owners. We then estimated the demographics of IHSS and family child care providers covered by collective bargaining by multiplying the demographic breakdowns found in the Current Population Survey by the total number of IHSS and family child care providers. We adjusted the overall total number of workers covered by collective bargaining in the Current Population Survey to include IHSS and family child care providers in Exhibit 5 only.

Acknowledgements

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