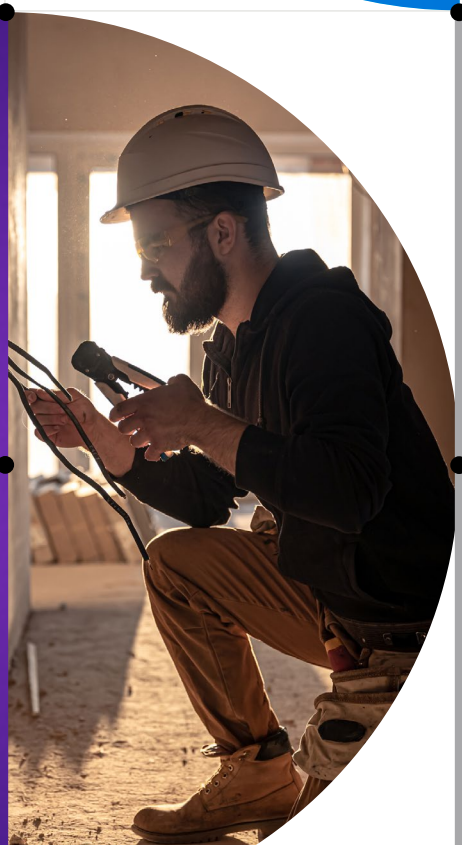
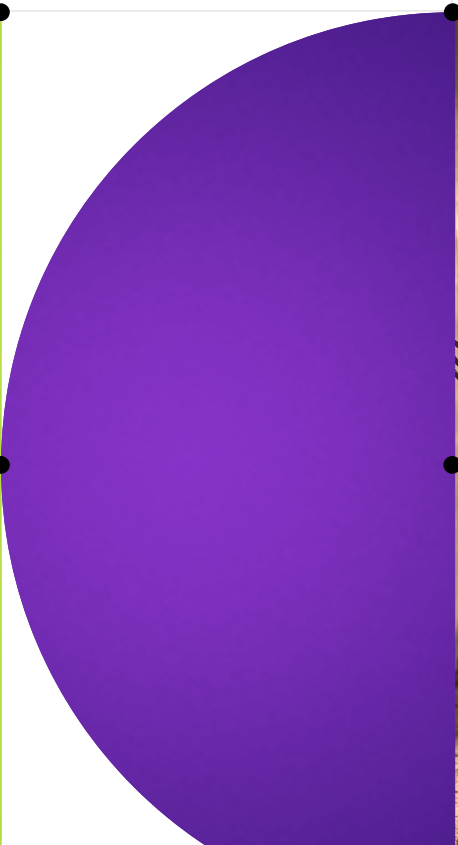
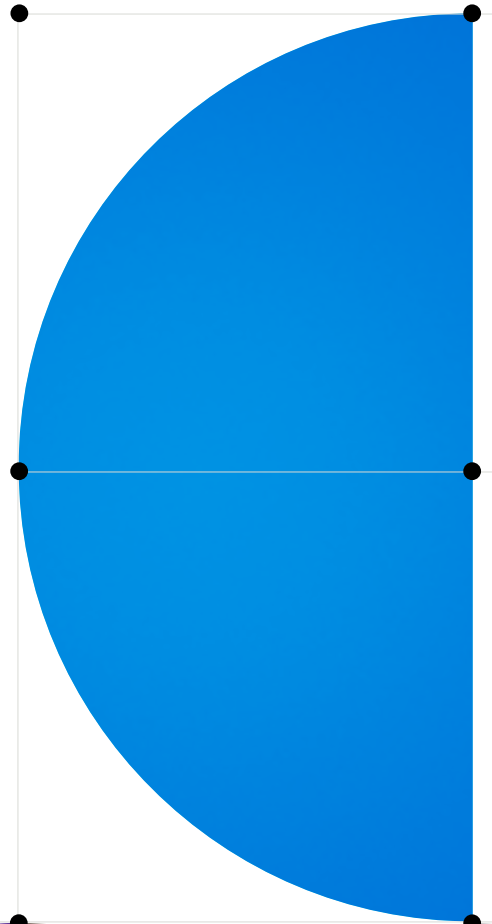


Maximizing care with union membership

How unions help employers
cultivate a happier, healthier,
and more loyal workforce with
always-on care



Introduction



Unions are having a renaissance — and they're poised to reshape the workforce with employee care.

Unions have led the charge for employee protections for decades, playing a pivotal role in the standardization of employer-provided benefits plans, along with advocating for fair compensation and safer working conditions. And, although unions have faced significant challenges over the past 40 years, the youngest generations have ushered in a change of course.

After decades of declining membership, unionization is now on the rise, driven by Gen Z and Millennial employees. Overall, union membership increased by 229,000 among employees younger than 45 in 2023⁽¹⁾. And attitudes toward unionization are changing, too:

7 in 10

Americans now agree that unions help, rather than hurt members, and a record high 47% believe unions indirectly help non-members as well².

64%

of Gen Z employees approve of unionization, and so do 61% of Millennials³.



Against this backdrop, unions are playing an increasingly pivotal role in shaping employee-employer dynamics — and helping employers attract and retain young talent. By negotiating on behalf of their members, unions are helping employers create an invigorating employee experience that supports workers' well-being, both at work and outside of work: A concept we call employee care.

Last year's Employee Benefit Trends Study first explored the role of employee care in boosting key talent metrics. We uncovered the pivotal role for care in enhancing mutually beneficial outcomes for employees and employers, from bolstering holistic well-being to enhancing job satisfaction and loyalty.

This year's report builds on the MetLife Care Model, focusing specifically on the growing role for unions in enhancing employee care.

We explore:

- How unions convey a competitive advantage in boosting outcomes for employees and employers
- The moments in which union members require more support — and the opportunities for unions to help
- Best practices and strategies for unions and employers to maximize outcomes with always-on care

Chapter 1

The state of the unionized workforce

A glimpse into how unions have bolstered several key talent metrics, including loyalty, satisfaction and employee care

A deep dive into our data revealed a striking yet simple truth: When it comes to maximizing mutually beneficial outcomes for employees and employers, unionization works.

Being a member of a union was linked to an increase across several key talent metrics, including job satisfaction and loyalty, continuing the upward trend that we've observed since 2022.

Notably, the positive impacts of union membership are particularly pronounced among the next generations of talent — Millennials and Gen Z. Younger union members consistently over perform compared to non-union members across several metrics, including those most valuable to employers.



UNION MEMBERS REPORT GREATER JOB SATISFACTION:

80% of Gen Z and Millennial union members report feeling satisfied with their job, **vs. 69% for non-members.**

79% of Gen X and Boomer union members report feeling satisfied with their job, **vs. 73% for non-members.**

UNION MEMBERS ARE ALSO MORE LOYAL TO THEIR EMPLOYERS:

78% of Gen Z and Millennial union members intend to remain with their employer for the next 12 months, **vs. 71% for non-members.**

79% of Gen X and Boomer union members intend to remain with their employer for the next 12 months, **vs. 76% for non-members.**

Unions help employers more effectively demonstrate care. But there's still more work to be done

Perhaps not surprisingly, unions also play a key role in helping employers demonstrate employee care.

66% of union workers say they feel cared for, compared to **59% of non-union employees.**

Strikingly, this positive trend is due entirely to greater feelings of care among Millennial and Gen Z union members, who are 1.2x more likely to feel cared for than their non-unionized counterparts.

Despite these promising trends, though, there remains a significant gap between perceptions of care amongst employees and employers:

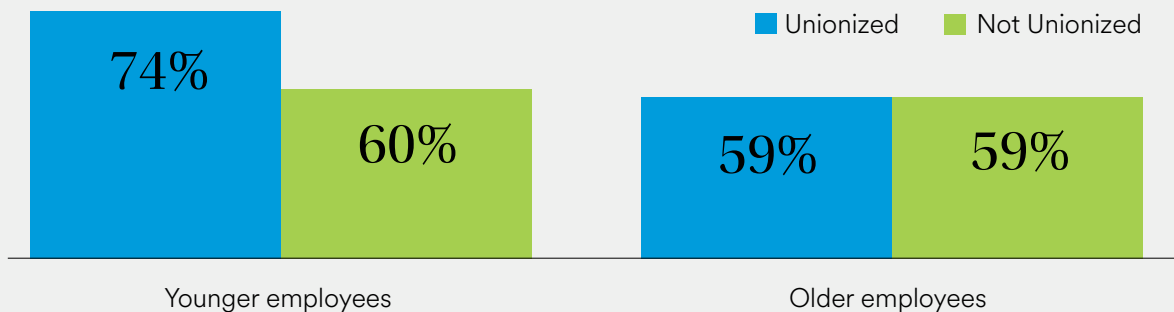
89% of employers with >50% union members say their employees feel cared for, **but 66% of union members report feeling cared for.**

THE RIPPLE EFFECT ON WORKER WELL-BEING

Greater feelings of care foster a healthier workforce. So perhaps it's not surprising that union members fare better than non-members when it comes to holistic wellbeing: well-being across physical, mental, social and financial health.

69% of union members report being holistically healthy compared to **44% of non-union employees.**

In the following chapters, we'll explore more deeply the nature of this care gap. You'll learn about moments when union employees need more care than they're currently receiving, and we'll share strategies for unions and employers to deliver the continuous care that employees expect.



The moments that matter most to union members

Identifying opportunities for employers and unions to demonstrate care

As generational shifts have swept across the workplace, employee care has become ever more imperative to attract top talent — particularly for Millennials and Gen Z.

94% of union members expect their employer to demonstrate care at work

96% for Millennial and Gen Z.

85% expect their employer to demonstrate care outside of work

93% for Millennial and Gen Z.

Doing this effectively requires having strategies and systems in place to provide care during key moments that occur in employees’ personal and professional lives — including those that may not be immediately visible in the workplace.

We’ve dubbed this approach **Always-On Care**: Care that allows employers to be ready for anything, so they can demonstrate care when employees — including union and non-union employees — need it most.

However, doing this effectively requires a deep understanding of employees’ needs and the moments they need support the most. To that end, we examined 55 moments to identify those that are most meaningful to today’s union members.

MOST IMPACTFUL WORK MOMENTS AMONG UNION EMPLOYEES:

- 1 Taking on a leadership role within the company
- 2 Receiving a promotion
- 3 Nearing retirement
- 4 Changing careers
- 5 Becoming a manager/mentor

MOST IMPACTFUL LIFE MOMENTS AMONG UNION EMPLOYEES:

- 1 Pregnancy
- 2 Buying a first home
- 3 Child struggling at school
- 4 Caregiving responsibilities for adult family member/friend
- 5 Loss of a family member/friend

We also uncovered key moments in which employees crave more care than they're currently receiving: Moments when unions and employers have an opportunity to step in with added support.

Work and life moments with the largest care gaps:

	Impact on employee	Employer demonstrated care	Care Gap
Experience harassment or bullying	90%	66%	24%
Ongoing mental health condition	86%	66%	20%
Loss of family member / friend	87%	67%	19%
Experience burnout	87%	68%	19%
Significant unplanned financial stress/expense	85%	68%	18%
Switch managers (s)	86%	69%	18%
Heavy workload	78%	60%	17%
Challenges with commuting to work	85%	70%	15%
Got a new pet	85%	71%	14%
Traveled domestically or abroad	73%	59%	14%

Finally, we explored the positive impact of delivering care during these challenging moments — revealing the transformative impact of always-on care on key talent metrics.

UNION MEMBERS WHO FELT CARED FOR DURING KEY WORK AND LIFE MOMENTS ARE:

46% more likely to feel cared for

95% more likely to be holistically healthy

31% more likely to feel satisfied with their job

15% more likely to feel loyal to their employer,

Compared to union members who didn't feel cared for during key moments.

In the next chapter, we'll share strategies to deliver always-on care during members' challenging work and life moments and bolster key talent metrics as a result.



What it takes to deliver always-on care

Three strategies to support union members across the employee experience

1. Stay flexible, and use empathic management to enhance feelings of care

Managers are frontline workers when it comes to delivering care: **When union members reported feeling cared for during key work and life moments, they pointed to empathic leadership as the top reason why.**

Unions should encourage employers to invest in empathic management training, as well as empower managers to adapt the workplace to employees' needs — for example, by providing flexible work hours or allowing workers to complete some tasks remotely during challenging life moments.

2. Close benefits availability gaps with expanded offerings

Benefits are central to the employee experience, and they're a critical component of always-on care. Here, union members — and their employers — have an advantage, with access to a broader range of benefits, as well as higher benefits satisfaction overall.

AVERAGE NUMBER OF BENEFITS OFFERED TO UNION MEMBERS VS. NON-UNION EMPLOYEES

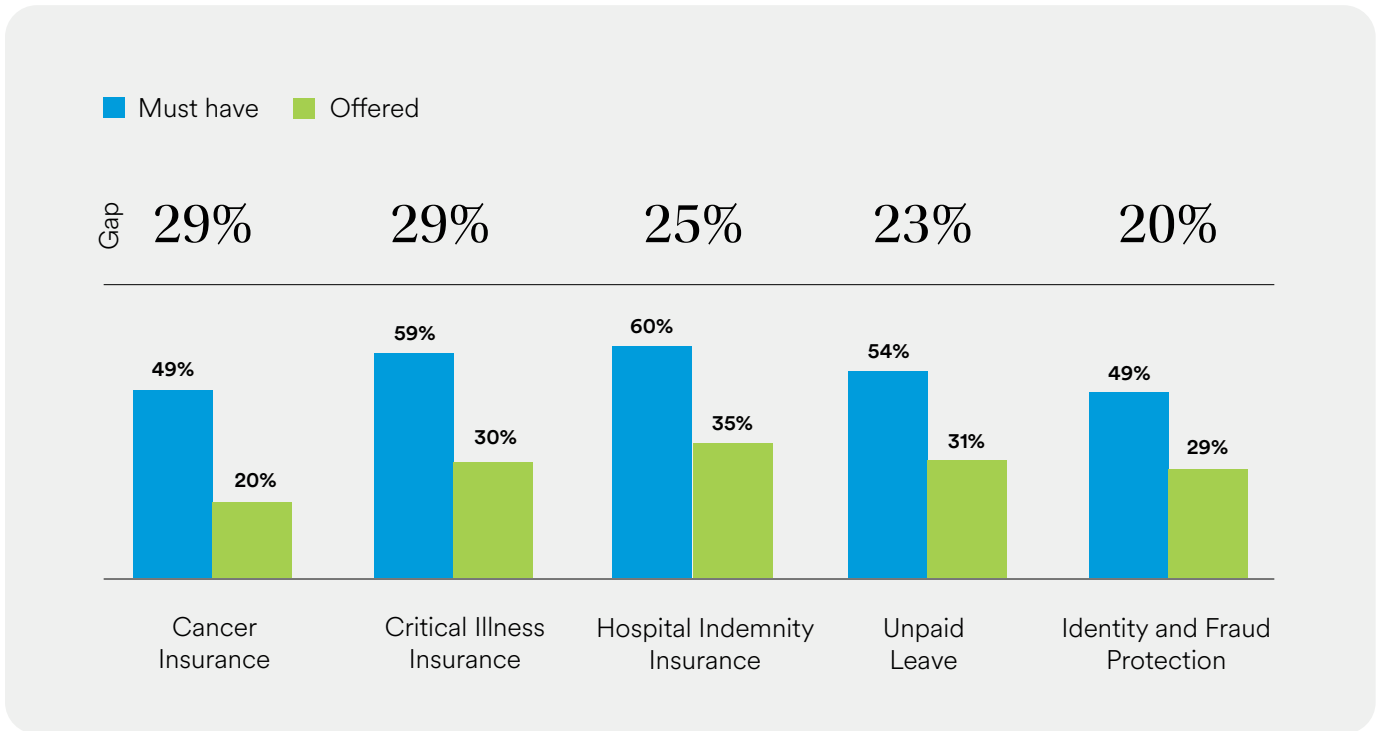
2022 8.6 (vs. 7.5)

2023 9.8 (vs. 7.7)

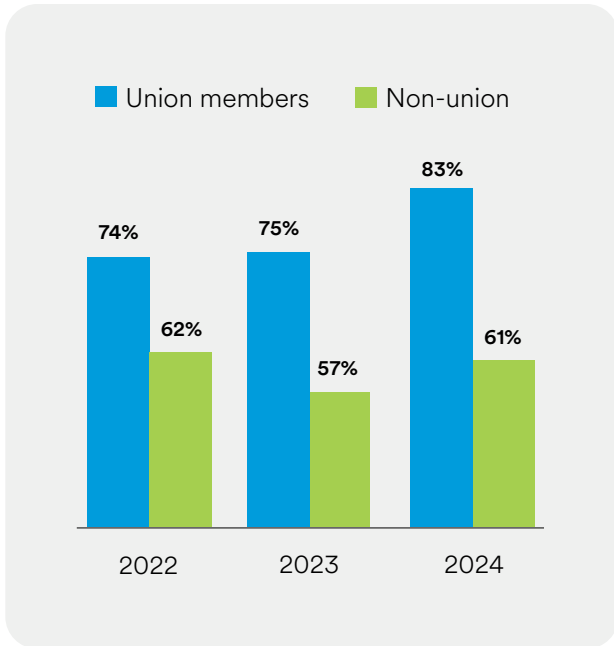
2024 10.6 (vs. 7.6)



Benefits with the largest availability gaps among union workers:

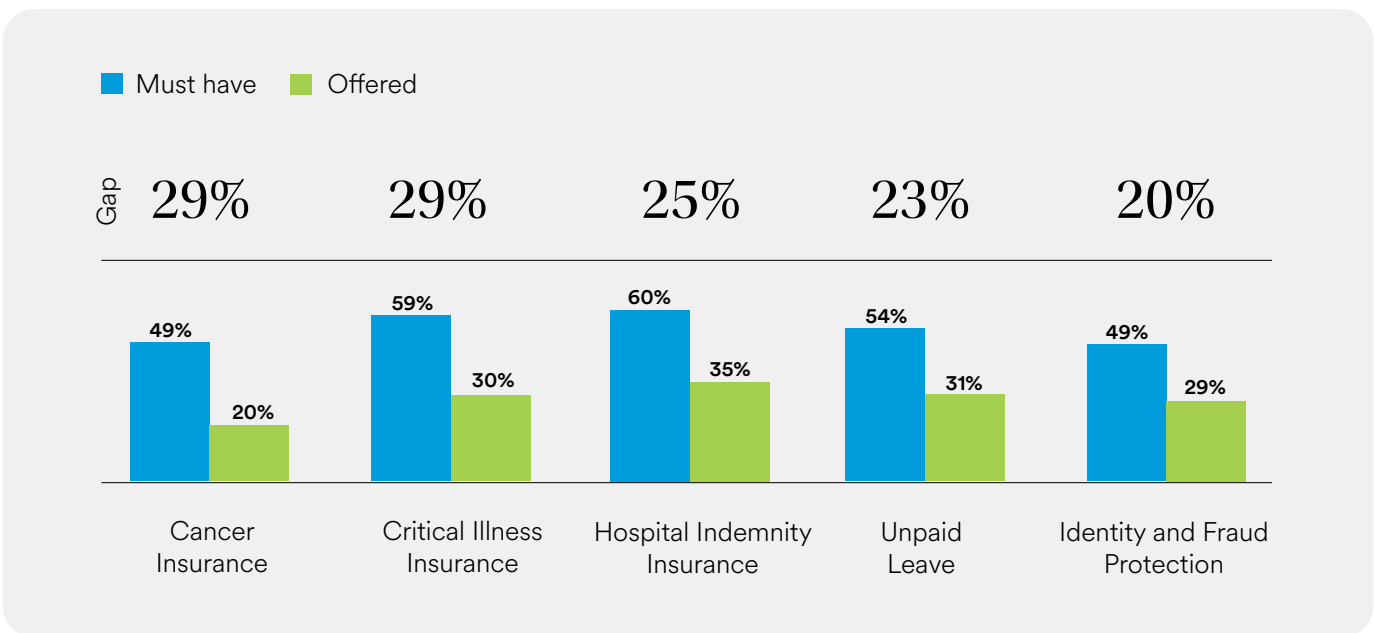


Benefits satisfaction across union members vs. non-union employees:



However, our research unearthed several gaps between which benefits union members need and what they’re being offered. These present opportunities for unions and employers to maximize care by expanding access to in-demand benefits.

Benefits with the largest availability gaps among union workers:



TOP 5 MOST IN-DEMAND BENEFITS AMONG UNION EMPLOYEES:

- 1 Medical (health) insurance

- 2 Paid leave

- 3 Disability insurance

- 4 Dental insurance

- 5 Vision care insurance or discount program

TOP 5 MOST IN-DEMAND BENEFITS AMONG NON-UNION EMPLOYEES:

- 1 Medical (health) insurance

- 2 401(k) or other defined contribution program

- 3 Dental insurance

- 4 Paid leave

- 5 Vision care insurance or discount program

3. Help employees overcome barriers to utilizing their benefits

When it comes to always-on care, simply offering more benefits is not enough — and unions and employers can maximize outcomes by ensuring employees can enroll in and use their benefits.

IMPACT OF ENROLLMENT:

1.7x Union members enrolled in 10+ benefits are 1.7x more likely to feel cared for than those enrolled in 4 or fewer benefits.

IMPACT OF UTILIZATION:

1.8x Union members that utilized 8+ benefits are 1.8x more likely to feel cared for than those who used 3 or fewer benefits.



How to boost benefits enrollment and utilization

1. Craft benefits communications tailored to key work and life moments

Benefits communications are perhaps the most effective tool to help employees learn more about the benefits available to them and empower them to select the right benefits for their needs.

Unions should create communications that highlight the real-world impact of workplace benefits and programs during impactful work and life moments.

2. Leverage technology to streamline enrollment

Delivering benefits via a centralized hub or portal makes it easier for employees to learn about their benefits — and enroll on the spot.

Consider deploying a solution that allows employees to enroll in benefits outside the open enrollment period, so workers can adjust their benefits packages as their needs change.

3. Provide flexible work arrangements so employees can utilize benefits during work hours

Offering flexibility day-to-day plays a key role in how easily employees can utilize their benefits. Allowing employees to adjust their hours to accommodate dental appointments, for instance, removes a barrier to benefits utilization, contributing to employees' feelings of care.

Conclusion

Employers are increasingly looking to employee care to bolster key talent metrics — and unions play a pivotal role in this mission. By negotiating on behalf of their members, unions help create a happier, healthier, and more loyal workforce, particularly among the next generation of leaders: Millennials and Gen Z.

Together, unions and employers can leverage care to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes, helping employees and employers alike achieve long-term success.



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2. Gallup: More in U.S. See Unions Strengthening and Want it That Way. August 2023
3. Center for American Progress: What you need to know about Gen Zs support for Unions



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