



# Labour

## **Union coverage in Canada, 2012**

*Workplace Information Division,  
Strategic Policy, Analysis, and Workplace Information Directorate*

*April 2013*

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**PDF**

Cat. No. : HS21-6/2012E-PDF

ISSN: 1929-2228

## Introduction

The Workplace Information Division conducts an annual survey of international, national, independent and other labour organizations in Canada. Surveyed organizations represent bargaining units of 50 or more workers.

## Overall coverage

As of January 2012, 4,663,736 workers were covered by collective agreements, an increase of 37,595 from January 2011. This corresponds to a coverage rate (covered workers as a percentage of non-agricultural paid workers) of 29.9%, slightly below last year's rate of 30.2%. This is the first time since 1965 that union coverage has fallen below 30%, based on Labour Program records. The coverage rate is slightly lower than Statistics Canada's 31.6% (see Methodology).

## Coverage by type of organization

Examining coverage by type of organization (Table 1), national unions represented 69.2% of total union coverage whereas international unions represented 25.3%. Independent local organizations and directly chartered organizations made up only 3.9% and 1.6% respectively of total union coverage. The share of union coverage by type of organization remained relatively unchanged from the previous year.

**Table 1:**  
**Composition of unions in Canada, by type of organization, 2012**

	Unions		Coverage	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
National .....	188	24.3	3,226,260	69.2
International .....	40	5.2	1,181,312	25.3
Local independent.....	257	33.2	179,709	3.9
Directly chartered unions.....	290	37.4	76,455	1.6
<b>TOTAL</b> .....	<b>775</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,663,736</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Note:** "National unions" represent only workers in Canada, whereas "international unions" represent workers in Canada and the United States. "Independent local organizations" represent workers that have no affiliation. "Directly chartered unions" are locals representing workers that are directly affiliated to a labour congress.

**Source:** Workplace Information Division, Strategic Policy, Analysis, and Workplace Information Directorate, Labour Program, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

## Methodology

Union coverage is defined as union members and persons who are not union members but covered by collective agreements.

Union coverage data is collected directly from labour organizations using a self-reporting survey. If the required information is not received in the year of the survey, we use the latest reported figures. This assumption allows us to aggregate the data by affiliation to congresses and by organization type.

Non-agricultural paid workers (NAPW) are used in the calculation of the union coverage rate as they represent the workforce that could potentially be covered by unions. The NAPW includes employees, self-incorporated with paid help, self-incorporated with no paid help, and excludes all workers in the agriculture industry. This differs from Statistics Canada's method of calculating the union coverage rate (see CANSIM table [282-0011](#)).

### Coverage by union size

Unionized workers are highly concentrated in a small number of large unions. Table 2 shows that 46.6% of covered workers in national and international unions belong to just eight unions, each covering at least 100,000 workers. At the other end of the spectrum, 167 unions covering fewer than 10,000 workers represent only 8.0% of unionized workers, with an average size of 2,166 workers.

### Affiliation

Among labour congresses in Canada and the United States, the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) represents the largest share of workers covered by collective agreements at 70.2% (Table 3), a slight increase from last year's share of 69.9%. The remainder of affiliated workers were covered by the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN) representing 6.9%, the Centrale des syndicats du Québec (CSQ) at 2.7%, the Centrale des syndicats démocratiques (CSD) at 1.6%, the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) at 0.8%, and the Confederation of Canadian Unions (CCU) at 0.2%. Unions representing the remaining 17.6% of workers covered were not affiliated to any congress.

**Table 2:**  
**National and international unions, by size, 2012**

	National		International		Total	
	Unions	Workers	Unions	Workers	Unions	Workers
Under 1,000.....	74	27,574	7	3,008	81	30,582
1,000–9,999.....	71	273,826	15	57,309	86	331,135
10,000–29,999.....	16	280,497	7	103,339	23	383,836
30,000–49,999.....	10	382,390	3	117,993	13	500,383
50,000–99,999.....	11	688,271	6	423,636	17	1,111,907
100,000 and over.....	6	1,573,702	2	476,027	8	2,049,729
<b>TOTAL.....</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>3,226,260</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>1,181,312</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>4,407,572</b>

**Source:** Workplace Information Division, Strategic Policy, Analysis, and Workplace Information Directorate, Labour Program, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

**Table 3:  
Union coverage, by congress affiliation, 2012**

	Workers	Percentage
<b>Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)</b> .....	<b>3,276,178</b> .....	<b>70.2</b>
American Federation of Labour and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) / Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) .....	711,821 .....	15.3
Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) only .....	2,132,843 .....	45.7
Change-to-Win (CtW) / Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) .....	431,459 .....	9.3
Directly Chartered Union .....	55 .....	0.0
<b>Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN)</b> .....	<b>322,982</b> .....	<b>6.9</b>
Federation .....	316,982 .....	6.8
Directly Chartered Union .....	6,000 .....	0.1
<b>Centrale des syndicats du Québec (CSQ)</b> .....	<b>125,880</b> .....	<b>2.7</b>
<b>Centrale des syndicats démocratiques (CSD)</b> .....	<b>75,400</b> .....	<b>1.6</b>
Federation .....	5,000 .....	0.1
Directly Chartered Union .....	70,400 .....	1.5
<b>Confederation of Canadian Unions (CCU)</b> .....	<b>7,661</b> .....	<b>0.2</b>
<b>American Federation of Labor and     Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) only</b> .....	<b>36,040</b> .....	<b>0.8</b>
<b>Unaffiliated unions</b> .....	<b>819,595</b> .....	<b>17.6</b>
Independent international .....	1,992 .....	0.0
Independent local .....	179,709 .....	3.9
Independent national .....	637,894 .....	13.7
<b>TOTAL</b> .....	<b>4,663,736</b> .....	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Workplace Information Division, Strategic Policy, Analysis, and Workplace Information Directorate, Labour Program, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

### Affiliation changes and union mergers

Three unaffiliated unions became affiliated to labour congresses during 2012. The Winnipeg Association of Public Service Officers and its 774 members affiliated with the AFL-CIO / CLC. The Laurentian University Faculty Association (583 members) and the Mount Saint Vincent University Faculty Association (156 members) both affiliated with the CLC.

The merger of two of Canada’s largest unions, the National Automobile, Aerospace, Transportation and General Workers Union of Canada (CAW – 193,600 members) and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP – 114,893 members), marked 2012, creating the largest private-sector union in Canada. A founding convention to approve the new constitution, name, logo, and election of the first leaders for the new union will take place from August 30<sup>th</sup> through September 1<sup>st</sup> of 2013.

Three other union mergers took place in 2012:

- The McGill University Non Academic Certified Association merged with the Public Service Alliance of Canada, contributing 1,616 members.
- The Syndicat des chauffeurs de transport Jean-Marie Bernier inc. merged with the National Automobile, Aerospace, Transportation and General Workers Union of Canada, contributing 50 members.
- The Red Deer College Support Staff Association merged with the Alberta Union of Professional Employees, contributing 350 members.

### Legislative and regulatory changes

Two provinces made significant changes to the union certification rules in their labour relations statutes in 2012.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, Bill 37, which received Royal Assent on June 27, 2012, has amended several key provisions of the *Labour Relations Act*, including those regarding union certification requirements. Two changes in particular stand out in terms of their potential impact on union membership:

- A union can now be certified as bargaining agent without the need to hold a representation vote if it is supported by at least 65.0% of employees in the bargaining unit at the time of application. (Provisions for card check certification previously existed in the province, but they were repealed in February 1994.) As was previously the case, a union can also trigger a representation vote if it has the support of at least 40.0% of the employees in the bargaining unit.
- A new provision clarifies that employers are permitted to express their views, including in the context of a union drive, so long as they do not use coercion, intimidation, threats, promises, or undue influence.

In Quebec, Bill 33 (*An Act to eliminate union placement and improve the operation of the construction industry*) has made numerous amendments to the *Act respecting labour relations, vocational training and workforce management in the construction industry*, which governs labour relations in all sectors of the provincial construction industry. Bill 33 received Royal Assent on December 2, 2011. Most of its provisions came into force over the 2012 year.

Under the provincial construction industry labour relations regime, five labour unions and four employers' associations are mandated to negotiate sectoral collective agreements across the province. Union membership is mandatory for all construction employees. Every three years, 11 months before collective agreements come up for renewal, employees can select the union to which they wish to belong as part of a union election across the province. This determines the relative weight of each union in collective bargaining.

Although mandatory union membership will be maintained, Bill 33 contains several amendments that may potentially influence which labour organizations are selected by workers in the future to represent them. Among other changes, the new legislation:

- Proscribes the practice of union placement in the construction industry and provides for a new labour referral service administered by the Commission de la construction du Québec (eliminating union placement services may potentially weaken the appeal of unions that offered such services).
- Stipulates that completed ballots for all union elections are to be transmitted by mail, to ensure their secrecy and prevent intimidation.
- Increases the term of collective agreements from three years to four years, as of April 30, 2013 (which means that union elections will be less frequent).
- Provides that all representative associations are entitled to take part in the negotiation of collective agreements, regardless of the relative weight of their membership.
- Provides that the Commission de la construction du Québec may authorize an employee to change unions if it concludes that the union failed in its duty to represent the employee.
- Adds new financial disclosure requirements for unions and employers' associations, including the obligation to have their statements audited, disseminated to members and posted on the Internet.

**Appendix 1:  
Union coverage in Canada, 1996–2012**

Year	Workers (000s)	As a percentage of	
		Labour force	Non-agricultural paid workers
1996.....	4,033 .....	27.5.....	34.4
1997.....	4,074 .....	27.4.....	34.6
1998.....	3,938 .....	26.1.....	32.9
1999.....	4,010 .....	26.2.....	32.8
2000.....	4,058 .....	26.0.....	32.2
2001.....	4,111 .....	26.0.....	31.6
2002.....	4,174 .....	25.9.....	31.4
2003.....	4,178 .....	25.2.....	30.7
2004.....	4,261 .....	25.1.....	30.5
2005.....	4,381 .....	25.5.....	30.8
2006.....	4,441 .....	25.7.....	30.8
2007.....	4,480 .....	25.6.....	30.5
2008.....	4,592 .....	25.7.....	30.5
2009.....	4,605 .....	25.3.....	30.0
2010.....	4,645 .....	25.3.....	30.9
2011.....	4,626 .....	25.0.....	30.2
2012.....	4,664 .....	24.9.....	29.9

**Source:** Statistics Canada, the Labour Force Survey, Labour Statistics Division, CANSIM tables [282-0002](#) and [282-0011](#).

**Appendix 2:  
Labour organizations with 30,000 or more covered workers, 2012**

Name	Affiliation	Workers
Canadian Union of Public Employees .....	CLC.....	611,827
National Union of Public and General Employees.....	CLC.....	340,000
United Food and Commercial Workers Canada .....	CtW / CLC .....	245,327
United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International Union .....	AFL-CIO / CLC.....	230,700
National Automobile, Aerospace, Transportation and General Workers Union of Canada.....	CLC.....	193,600
Public Service Alliance of Canada .....	CLC.....	187,587
Fédération de la santé et des services sociaux .....	CSN.....	125,795
Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada .....	CLC.....	114,893
Teamsters Canada .....	CtW / CLC .....	93,351
Service Employees International Union.....	CtW / CLC .....	92,781
Laborers' International Union of North America.....	AFL-CIO / CLC.....	80,000
Alberta Union of Provincial Employees .....	Ind. ....	79,004
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario .....	CLC.....	76,166
FTQ Construction.....	CLC.....	69,914
Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.....	CLC.....	62,499
Fédération des employées et employés de services publics inc.....	CSN.....	60,700
Fédération des syndicats de l'enseignement .....	CSQ.....	60,000
Ontario Nurses' Association.....	CLC.....	59,500
Fédération interprofessionnelle de la santé du Québec.....	Ind. ....	59,463
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers .....	AFL-CIO / CLC.....	57,130
Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada .....	Ind. ....	56,778
Canadian Union of Postal Workers.....	CLC.....	54,247
United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada .....	AFL-CIO / CLC.....	50,374
United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America.....	CLC.....	50,000
International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers.....	AFL-CIO / CLC.....	50,000
Christian Labour Association of Canada .....	Ind. ....	49,882
Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association .....	CLC.....	48,318
UNITE HERE Canada .....	AFL-CIO / CLC.....	46,000
Alberta Teachers' Association .....	Ind. ....	44,465
British Columbia Teachers' Federation .....	CLC.....	43,563
International Union of Operating Engineers.....	AFL-CIO / CLC.....	41,993
Canadian Office and Professional Employees Union .....	CLC.....	36,287
Syndicat de la fonction publique du Québec.....	Ind. ....	35,125



**Appendix 2 (continued):  
Labour organizations with 30,000 or more covered workers, 2012**

Name	Affiliation	Workers
Fédération du commerce inc. ....	CSN.....	32,750
Fédération autonome de l'enseignement.....	Ind. ....	32,000
Amalgamated Transit Union .....	AFL-CIO / CLC.....	30,000
Fédération nationale des enseignantes et des enseignants du Québec.....	CSN.....	30,000
Fédération de l'industrie manufacturière .....	CSN.....	30,000

**Legend**

AFL-CIO – American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations

CLC – Canadian Labour Congress

CSN – Confédération des syndicats nationaux

CSQ – Centrale des syndicats du Québec

CtW – Change-to-Win

Ind. – Independent local organization

**Source:** Workplace Information Division, Strategic Policy, Analysis, and Workplace Information Directorate, Labour Program, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

**Appendix 3:  
Union coverage, by type of union and affiliation, 2012**

	Unions	Locals	Coverage	
			Workers	Percentage
<b>National</b> .....	<b>188</b>	<b>10,845</b>	<b>3,226,260</b>	<b>69.2</b>
Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) .....	48	7,200	2,132,843	45.7
Independent national .....	109	1,328	637,894	13.7
Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN).....	12	1,824	316,982	6.8
Centrale des syndicats du Québec (CSQ).....	14	417	125,880	2.7
Confederation of Canadian Unions (CCU).....	4	23	7,661	0.2
Centrale des syndicats démocratiques (CSD).....	1	53	5,000	0.1
<b>International</b> .....	<b>40</b>	<b>3,734</b>	<b>1,181,312</b>	<b>25.3</b>
American Federation of Labour and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) / Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) .....	30	3,584	711,821	15.3
Change-to-Win (CtW) / Canadian Labour Congress (CLC).....	3	71	431,459	9.3
American Federation of Labour and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) only .....	4	72	36,040	0.8
Independent international.....	3	7	1,992	0.0
<b>Directly chartered</b> .....	<b>290</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>76,455</b>	<b>1.6</b>
Centrale des syndicats démocratiques (CSD).....	287	0	70,400	1.5
Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) .....	2	0	55	0.0
Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN).....	1	0	6,000	0.1
<b>Independent local</b> .....	<b>257</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>179,709</b>	<b>3.9</b>
<b>TOTAL</b> .....	<b>775</b>	<b>14,615</b>	<b>4,663,736</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Workplace Information Division, Strategic Policy, Analysis, and Workplace Information Directorate, Labour Program, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

**Appendix 4:  
Canadian Labour Congress coverage, by affiliation, 2012**

	Workers	Percentage
<b>National unions</b> .....	<b>2,132,843</b> .....	<b>65.1</b>
Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) only .....	2,132,843 .....	65.1
<b>International unions</b> .....	<b>1,143,280</b> .....	<b>34.9</b>
American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) / Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) .....	711,821 .....	21.7
Change-to-Win (CtW) / Canadian Labour Congress (CLC).....	431,459 .....	13.2
<b>Directly chartered unions</b> .....	<b>55</b> .....	<b>0.0</b>
<b>TOTAL</b> .....	<b>3,276,178</b> .....	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Workplace Information Division, Strategic Policy, Analysis, and Workplace Information Directorate, Labour Program, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

The *Directory of Labour Organizations in Canada* is a listing that provides the following informations: affiliation, membership, number of locals, and president name of labour organizations in Canada. For more information, visit the [Directory of Labour Organizations](#).