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Contact:
Charlie Leonard
618.303.9099
John Jackson
618.453.3106

Illinois Voters See Labor Positively; Their Labor Policy Views Less Favorable

Most Illinois voters say they have a favorable overall opinion of labor unions, but their policy preferences are less like those of union leadership, according to the results of the latest poll from the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

Among the 1,000 Illinois registered voters surveyed, more than half (57 percent) say they have at least a somewhat favorable view of labor unions, more than 20 points ahead of the 36 percent who have an unfavorable view.

However, voters are split on how much influence they would like unions to have – 30 percent support them having more influence, 29 percent think unions should maintain the influence they have, and 36 percent wish they had less influence.

The survey was conducted Sept. 27-Oct 2. It has a margin for error of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.

Wages and benefits for public sector unions have been an issue in Springfield, with Governor Bruce Rauner blaming them in part for the state's budget deficit. He has also advocated for workers to be able to opt-out of paying unions for the work they do negotiating in the private and public sectors. Unions have said the wages and benefits they negotiate strengthen the state's middle class. They also say even workers who don't belong to a union should pay their fair share of the costs the union incurs representing and bargaining for non-members.

Self-described liberals (75 percent), Democrats (73 percent), and members of union households (75 percent) were most likely to have favorable views of unions. Only among conservatives and Republicans (37 percent each group) did fewer than half hold a favorable view.

Historically marginalized groups tend to desire that unions have more influence than they do today. Notably, 49 percent of African Americans want unions to have more influence compared to only 26 percent of whites.

Similarly, 40 percent of people with household incomes below \$50,000 would like to see unions have more influence compared to only 24 percent of those with incomes over \$100,000.

What's in a name? "Right-to-work" vs "Fair Share."

Asked about their positions on right-to-work or "open shop" laws, respondents favored them by two-to-one, 48 percent to 24 percent. Notably, more than a quarter (28 percent) answered "other/don't know," suggesting a significant portion of the electorate is ambivalent or uninformed on the issue.

Most likely to favor right-to-work were conservatives and Republicans (64 percent and 63 percent, respectively). Most likely to oppose it were liberals and Democrats (36 percent and 32 percent), and members of labor union households (38 percent).

However, opinion shifted when interviewers explained "fair share" laws. Respondents were asked to choose between two statements: "When everyone in the workplace shares the gains won by the labor union, all workers should have to contribute to the union's costs for negotiating those gains" or "No American should be required to pay dues to a private organization like a labor union against their will."

There were 50 percent who supported the right to work description and 44 percent backing the fair share statement. Only 4 percent said they "don't know."

The fair-share position was most strongly favored by liberals and Democrats (61 percent and 55 percent), African Americans (52 percent), those in households earning less than \$50,000 per year (51 percent), and members of union households (55 percent). Conservatives and Republicans (65 percent and 67 percent) were most likely to favor the right to work position.

"The disconnect between Illinoisans' favorable view of unions, and preferences for policies the unions dislike is interesting," said Charlie Leonard, a visiting professor at the Institute and one of the designers of the poll. "I think this has to be in part because declining membership in unions leaves fewer people with the experience of the gains they've won for workers. And opposition to union influence has been a drumbeat message from business groups and Chamber of Commerce organizations."

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The margin of error for the entire sample of 1,000 voters is plus or minus 3.1 percentage points. This means that if we conducted the survey 100 times, in 95 of those instances, the population proportion would be within plus or minus the reported margin for error for each subsample. For subsamples, the margin of error increases as the sample size goes down. The margin of error was not adjusted for design effects.

Live telephone interviews were conducted by Customer Research International of San Marcos, Texas using the random digit dialing method. The telephone sample was provided to Customer Research International by Scientific Telephone Samples. Potential interviewees were screened based on whether they were registered voters and quotas based on area code and sex (<60% female). Interviewers asked to speak to the youngest registered voter at home at the time of the call. Cell phone interviews accounted for 60 percent of the sample. A Spanish language version of the questionnaire and a Spanish-speaking interviewer were made available.

Field work was conducted from September 27-October 2. No auto-dial or “robo” polling is included. Customer Research International reports no Illinois political clients. The survey was paid for with non-tax dollars from the Institute’s endowment fund. The data were not weighted in any way. Crosstabs for the referenced questions will be on the Institute’s polling web site, simonpoll.org.

The Paul Simon Public Policy Institute is a member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research’s (AAPOR) Transparency Initiative. AAPOR works to encourage objective survey standards for practice and disclosure. Membership in the Transparency Initiative reflects a pledge to practice transparency in reporting survey-based findings.

Simon Institute polling data are also archived by four academic institutions for use by scholars and the public. The four open source data repositories are: The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research (<http://ropercenter.cornell.edu/polls/>), The University of Michigan’s Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (<http://openicpsr.org>), the University of North Carolina’s Odum Institute Dataverse Network (<http://arc.irss.unc.edu/dvn/dv/PSPPI>), and the Simon Institute Collection at OpenSIUC (<http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/ppi/>).

Note: The “Paul Simon Public Policy Institute Poll,” the “Simon Poll” and the “Southern Illinois Poll” are the copyrighted trademarks of the Board of Trustees of Southern Illinois University. Use and publication of these polls is encouraged- but only with credit to the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at SIU Carbondale.

Frequency Tables¹

Favorability toward Unions

Would you say your overall opinion of labor unions is favorable or unfavorable?

Response	Percent (n=1000)
Favorable	57.2%
<i>Strongly favorable</i>	31.0%
<i>Somewhat favorable</i>	26.2%
Unfavorable	35.9%
<i>Somewhat unfavorable</i>	16.5%
<i>Strongly unfavorable</i>	19.4%
Other/Don't know	6.9%

Influence of Labor Unions

Would you personally like to see labor unions in the United States have more influence than they have today, the same amount as today, or less influence than they have today?

Response	Percent (n=1000)
More influence	30.3%
The same amount	29.1%
Less influence	35.9%
Other/Don't know	4.7%

¹ Values are rounded and may not sum to 100%.

Right to Work

Do you favor or oppose right-to-work or open-shop laws?

Response	Percent (n=1000)
Favor	48.0%
<i>Strongly favor</i>	<i>25.9%</i>
<i>Somewhat favor</i>	<i>22.1%</i>
Oppose	24.2%
<i>Somewhat oppose</i>	<i>8.8%</i>
<i>Strongly oppose</i>	<i>15.4%</i>
Other/Don't know	27.8%

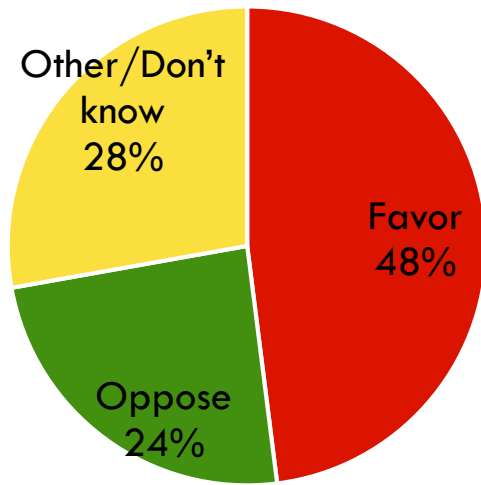
Fair Share

I'm going to read two statements about organized labor, then ask you to tell me which comes closer to your own views, even if neither is exactly how you feel. First is...

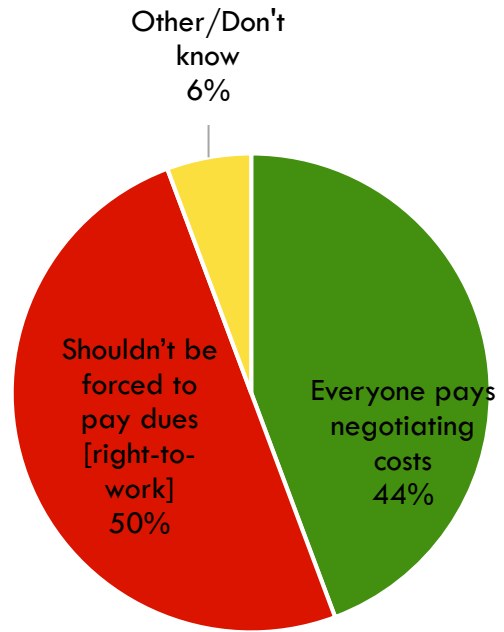
- When everyone in the workplace shares the gains won by the labor union, all workers should have to contribute to the union's costs for negotiating those gains OR*
- No American should be required to pay dues to a private organization like a labor union against their will.*

Response	Percent (n=1000)
Everyone pays negotiating costs	44.3%
Shouldn't be forced to pay dues	50.0%
Neither	1.8%
Other/Don't know	3.9%

Right-to-Work



Fair Share



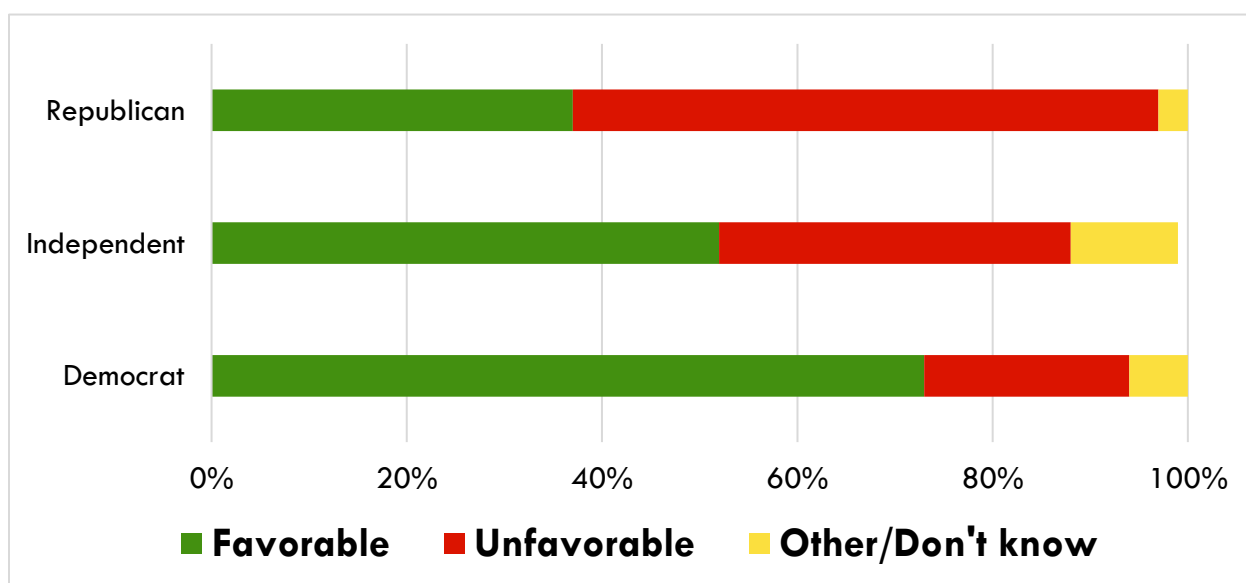
Demographic Crosstabs²

FAVORABILITY TOWARD UNIONS

By AREA

	Chicago City	Chicago Suburbs	Downstate
Favorable	59%	56%	58%
Unfavorable	37%	36%	35%
Other/Don't know	5%	8%	7%

By PARTY



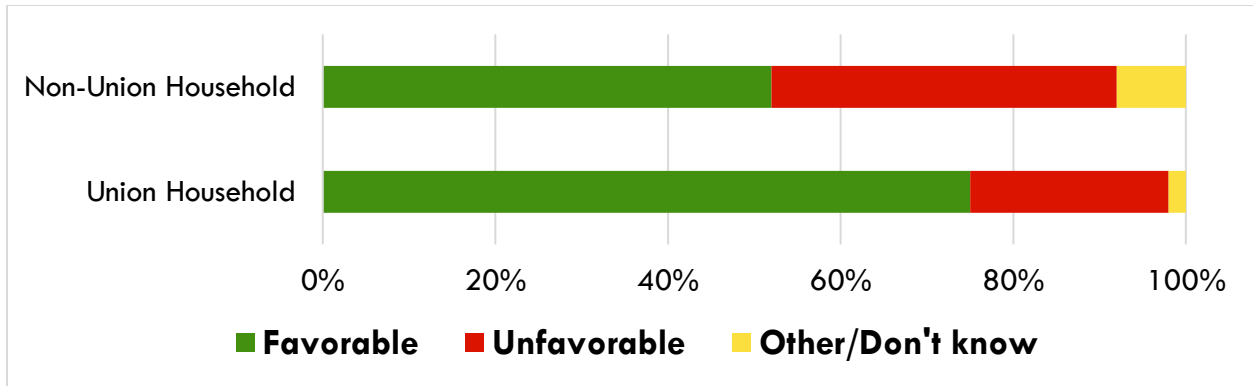
	Democrat	Independent	Republican
Favorable	73%	52%	37%
Unfavorable	21%	36%	60%
Other/Don't know	6%	11%	3%

By IDEOLOGY

	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
Favorable	75%	57%	37%
Unfavorable	19%	36%	56%
Other/Don't know	6%	7%	7%

² Values are rounded so may not sum to 100%.

By UNION MEMBERSHIP

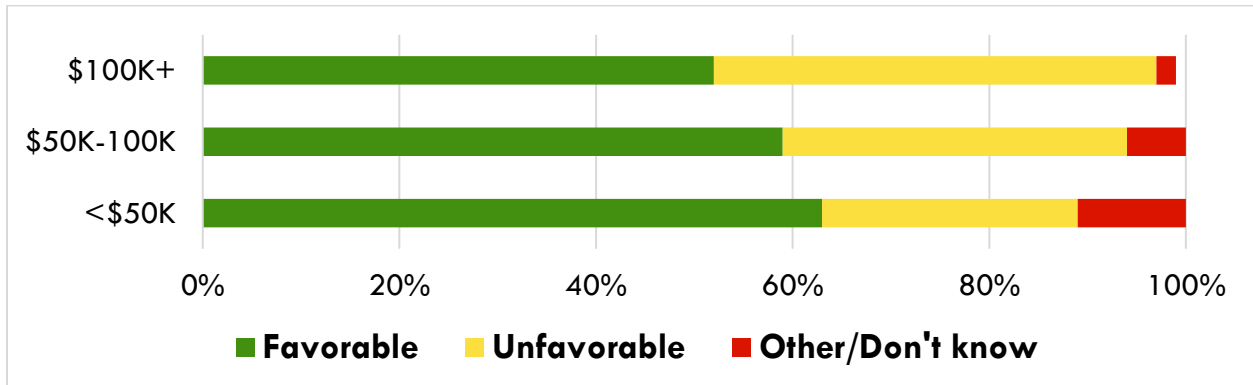


	Union Household	Non-Union Household
Favorable	75%	52%
Unfavorable	23%	40%
Other/Don't know	2%	8%

By RACE

	White	Black	Other
Favorable	56%	68%	57%
Unfavorable	38%	25%	37%
Other/Don't know	6%	7%	6%

By INCOME



	<\$50K	\$50K-100K	\$100K+
Favorable	63%	59%	52%
Unfavorable	26%	35%	45%
Other/Don't know	11%	6%	2%

INFLUENCE OF UNIONS

By AREA

	Chicago City	Chicago Suburbs	Downstate
More influence	30%	32%	28%
The same amount	31%	27%	31%
Less influence	36%	37%	35%
Other/Don't know	4%	4%	7%

By PARTY

	Democrat	Independent	Republican
More influence	43%	30%	9%
The same amount	33%	30%	23%
Less influence	19%	32%	65%
Other/Don't know	4%	9%	2%

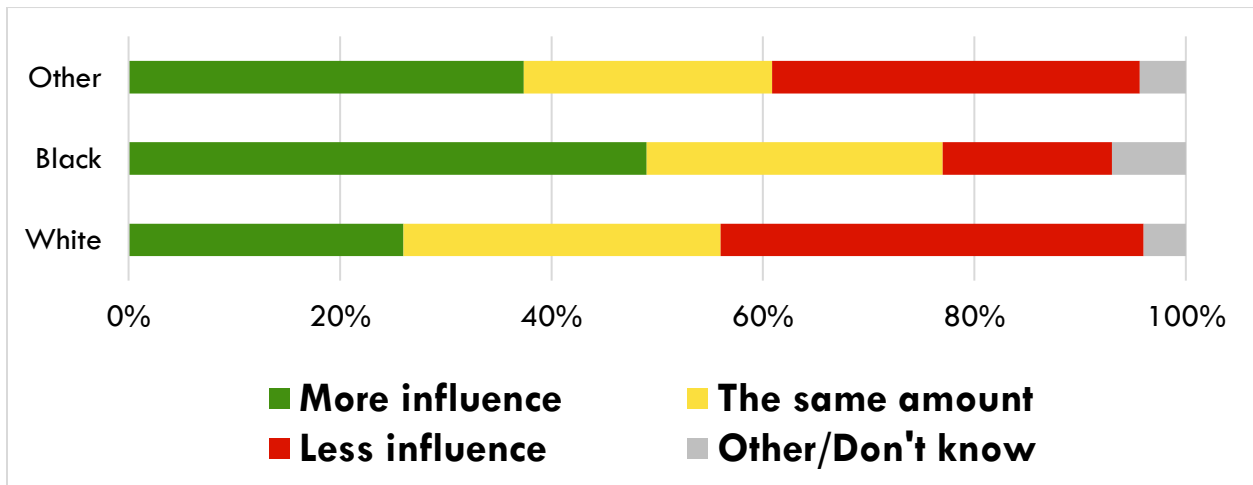
By IDEOLOGY

	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
More influence	47%	27%	15%
The same amount	33%	33%	22%
Less influence	16%	37%	58%
Other/Don't know	5%	3%	5%

By UNION MEMBERSHIP

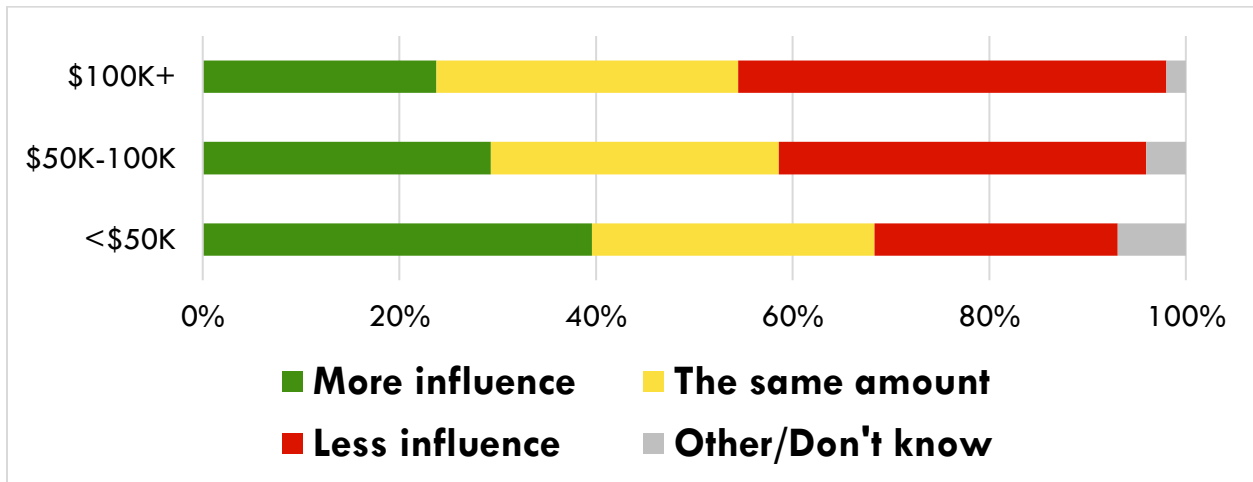
	Union Household	Non-Union Household
More influence	47%	25%
The same amount	33%	28%
Less influence	17%	42%
Other/Don't know	3%	5%

By RACE



	White	Black	Other
More influence	26%	49%	37%
The same amount	30%	28%	23%
Less influence	40%	16%	35%
Other/Don't know	4%	7%	4%

By INCOME



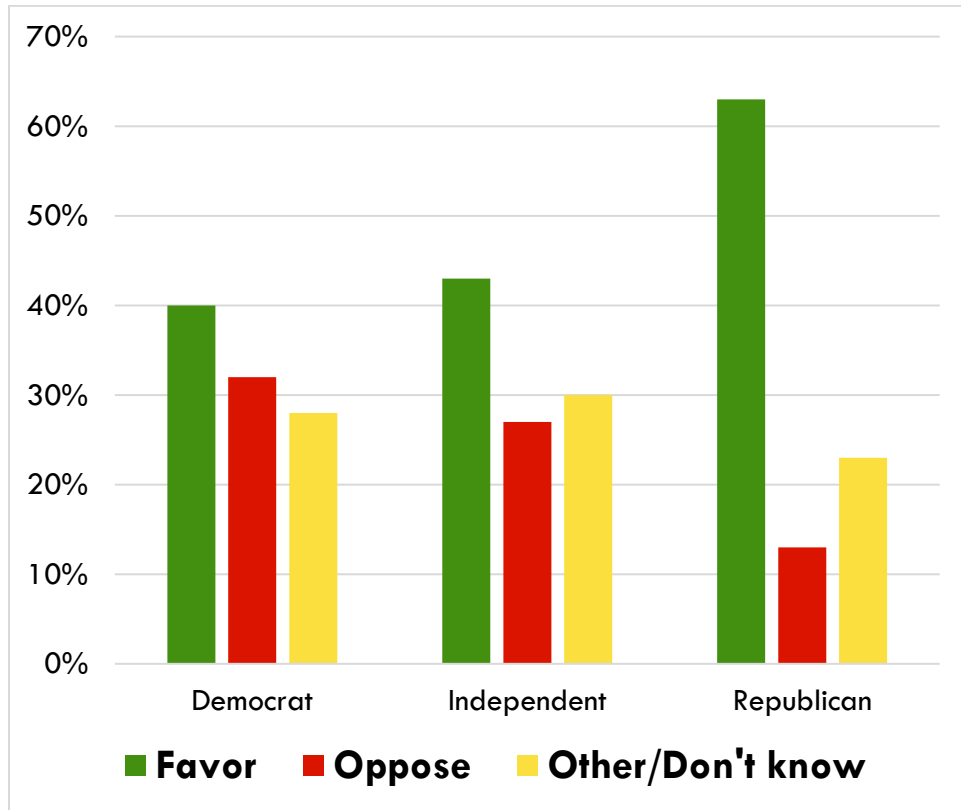
	<\$50K	\$50K-100K	\$100K+
More influence	40%	29%	24%
The same amount	29%	29%	31%
Less influence	25%	37%	44%
Other/Don't know	7%	4%	2%

RIGHT-TO-WORK

By AREA

	Chicago City	Chicago Suburbs	Downstate
Favor	45%	47%	51%
Oppose	26%	22%	26%
Other/Don't know	29%	31%	22%

By PARTY

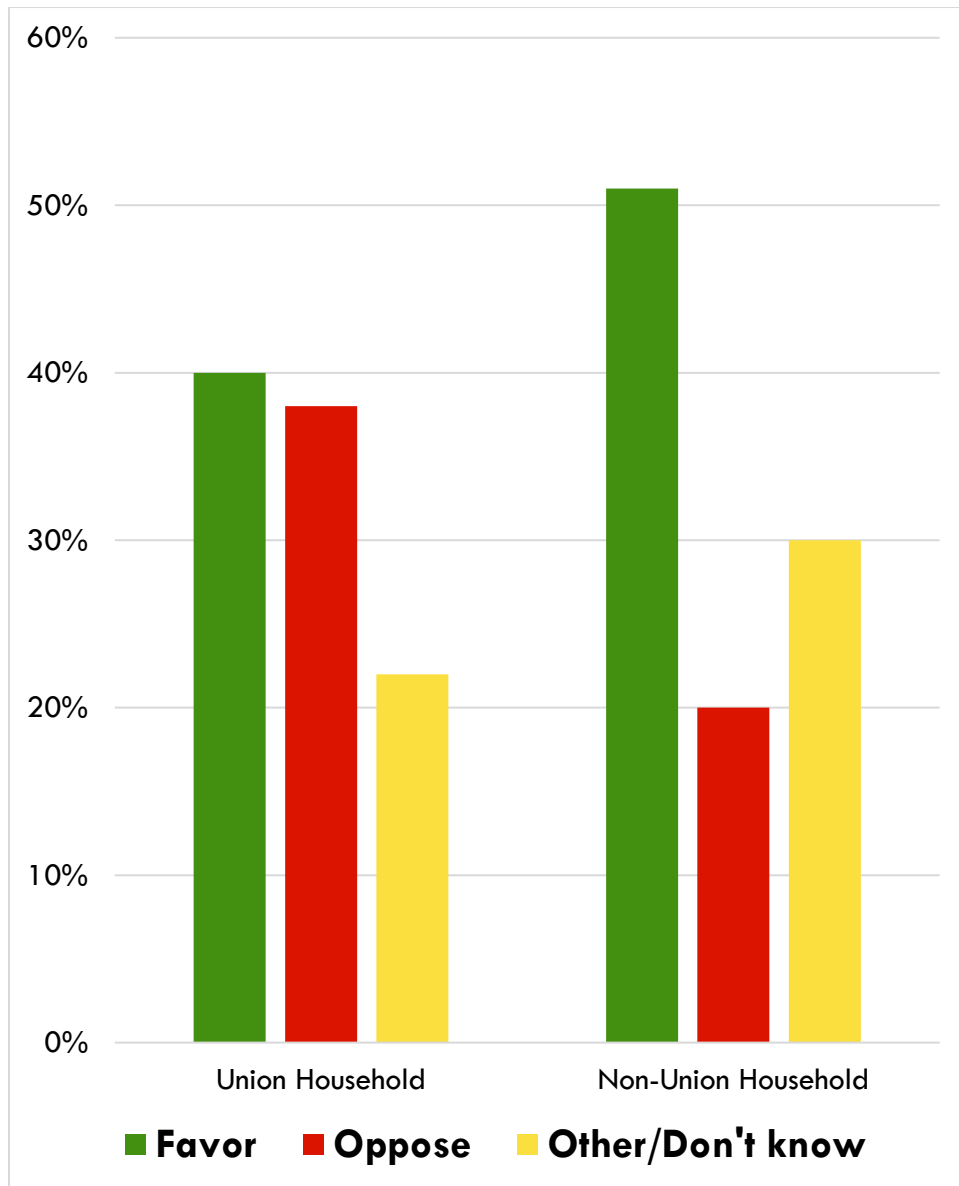


	Democrat	Independent	Republican
Favor	40%	43%	63%
Oppose	32%	27%	13%
Other/Don't know	28%	30%	23%

By IDEOLOGY

	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
Favor	35%	48%	64%
Oppose	36%	22%	14%
Other/Don't know	29%	29%	22%

By UNION MEMBERSHIP



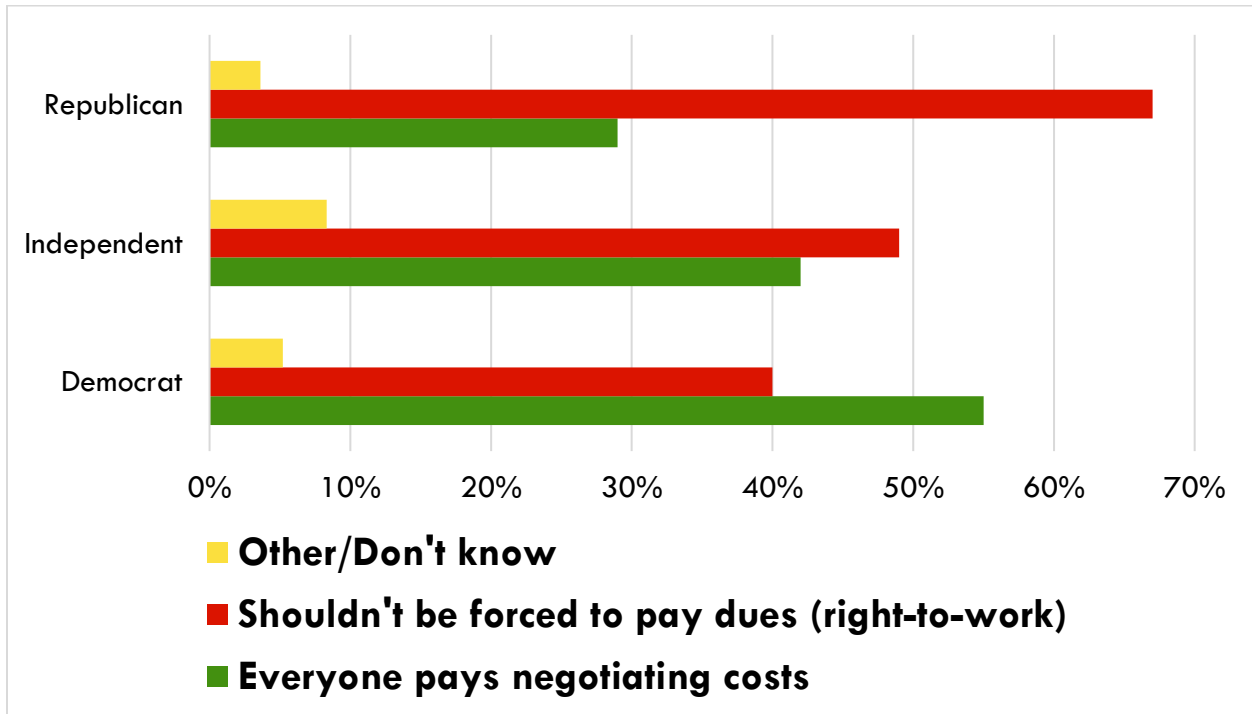
	Union Household	Non-Union Household
Favor	40%	51%
Oppose	38%	20%
Other/Don't know	22%	30%

FAIR SHARE

By AREA

	Chicago City	Chicago Suburbs	Downstate
Everyone pays negotiating costs	45%	45%	43%
Shouldn't be forced to pay dues	52%	49%	51%
Other/Don't know	4%	6%	6%

By PARTY

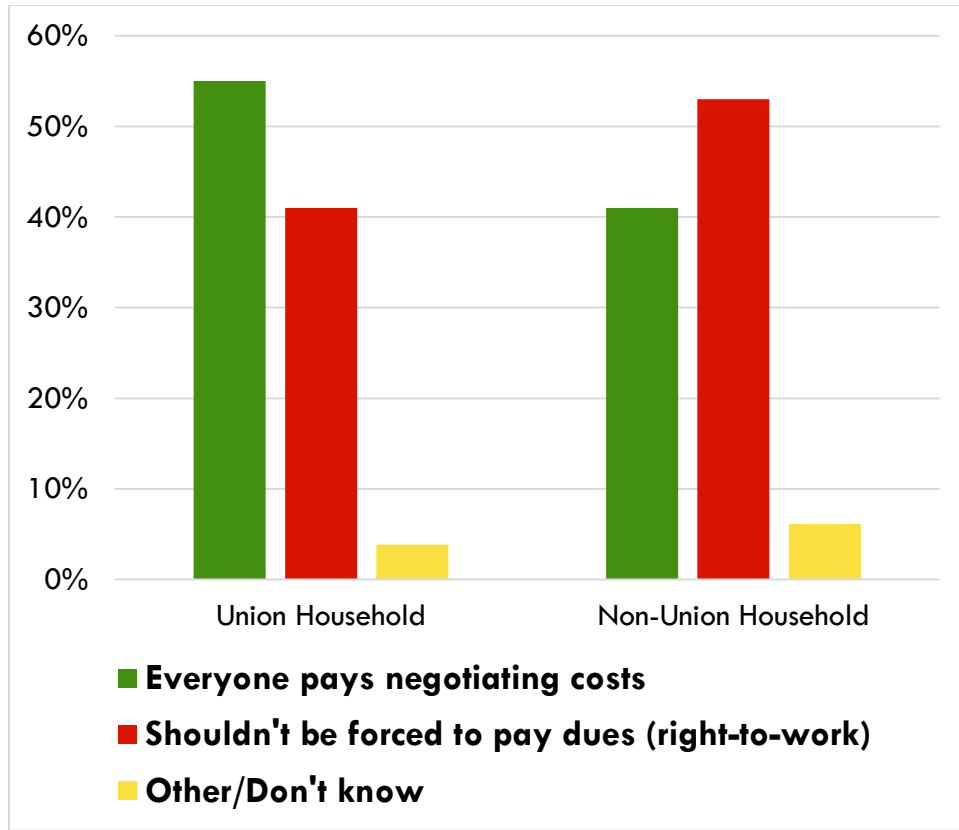


	Democrat	Independent	Republican
Everyone pays negotiating costs	55%	42%	29%
Shouldn't be forced to pay dues	40%	49%	67%
Other/Don't know	5%	8%	4%

By IDEOLOGY

	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
Everyone pays negotiating costs	61%	43%	30%
Shouldn't be forced to pay dues	34%	52%	65%
Other/Don't know	5%	5%	5%

By UNION MEMBERSHIP



	Union Household	Non-Union Household
Everyone pays negotiating costs	55%	41%
Shouldn't be forced to pay dues	41%	53%
Other/Don't know	4%	6%

By RACE

	White	Black	Other
Everyone pays negotiating costs	44%	52%	43%
Shouldn't be forced to pay dues	51%	41%	51%
Other/Don't know	5%	6%	5%

By INCOME

	<\$50K	\$50K-100K	\$100K+
Everyone pays negotiating costs	51%	46%	44%
Shouldn't be forced to pay dues	41%	50%	52%
Other/Don't know	8%	3%	3%