

Worksheet 4: Student Assignment: Does Union Membership Pay?

During class today you discussed the alleged “slavery” of baseball players by the owners. You have seen that baseball salaries skyrocketed after the reserve clause was eliminated and players were allowed to form a players union.

As a follow-up to that discussion, you are going to investigate the role of union membership in today’s society in order to determine if union membership helps or hurts employees.

1. Go to the following web site: <http://econ1.csun.edu/salbymajor/occup/occup.html>. Pick one occupation which you believe to be primarily one that is non-union and one that is primarily union. (If you are uncertain, ask your parents or your teacher for help.)
2. Write down the mean salary for each occupation.
3. Next, find one newspaper article on each occupation. Look for an article that discusses pay, benefits, negotiations, or other issues relating to the labor “marketplace” for that occupation. Each article should be cut-out and taped to a blank piece of paper. The name of the newspaper or magazine and the date of publication should be written next to the article.
4. Read each article carefully. Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper **for each article**:
 - a. Occupation name: _____
 - b. Mean salary: _____
 - c. Union or Non-union: _____
 - d. What issues regarding pay or benefits are currently facing this occupation?
 - e. Is this a popular occupation?
 - f. Would you want to become a member of this occupation? Why or why not?
 - g. Do you think the members of this occupation are underpaid or overpaid? How did you come to this conclusion?
 - h. If this is a union occupation, do you think the union helps or hurts the salary of the employees?
 - i. If this is a nonunion occupation, do you think a union would help or hurt the salary of the employees?