

Union membership and employment agreements – June 2016 quarter

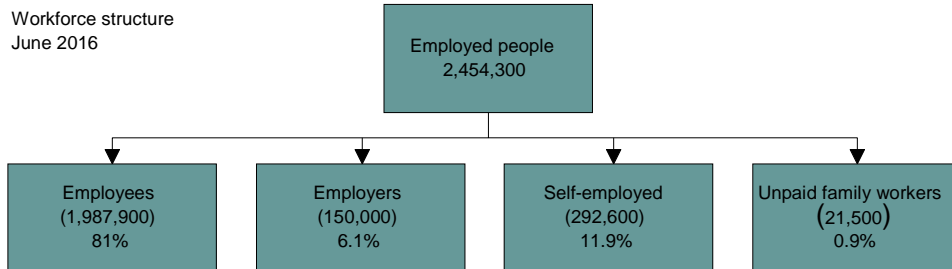
In the June 2016 quarter we introduced new measures to the Household Labour Force Survey. This article discusses two of those measures: 1) union membership of employees and 2) whether employees have a written employment agreement, and if they do, whether it is an individual or collective employment agreement.

Statistics NZ collected this information only twice previously, in the Survey of Working Life 2008 and 2012.

Union membership

Of the 2,454,300 employed people in the June 2016 quarter, paid employees made up the majority, with 8 in 10 workers in that group (see figure 1).

Figure 1

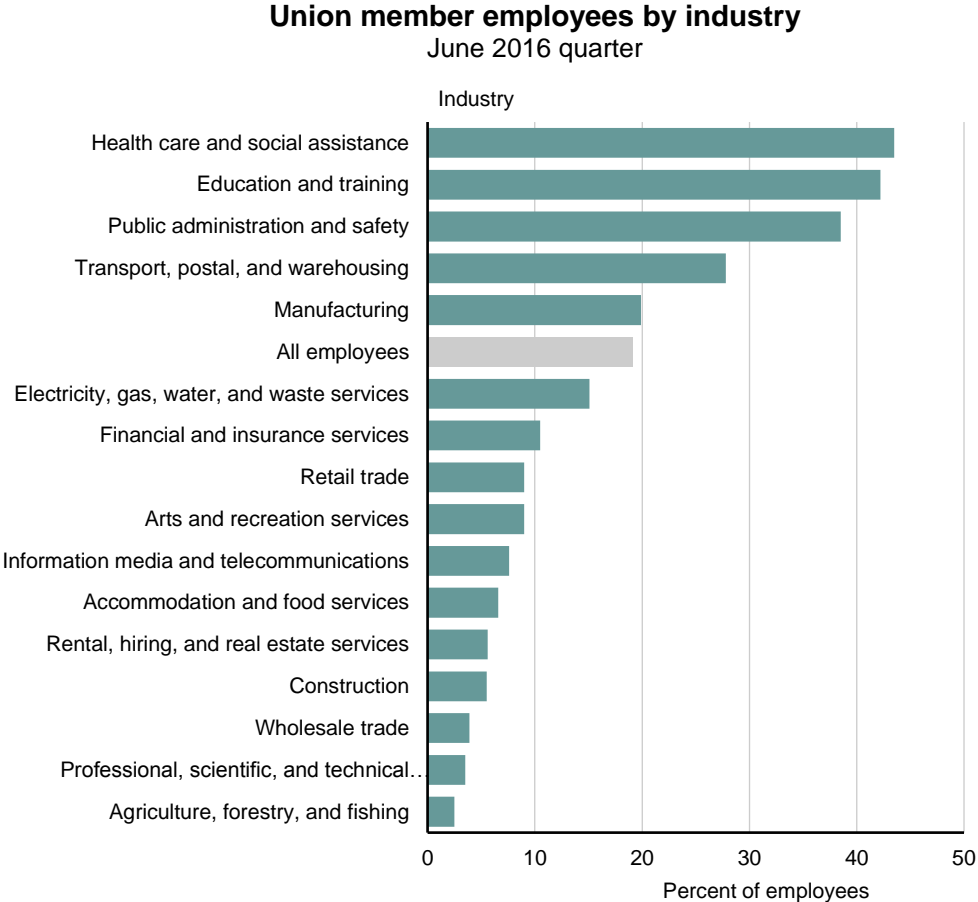


In the June 2016 quarter, around 1 in 5 employees belonged to a union, with most union members in full-time employment (86.9 percent) and in a permanent job (92.1 percent). Although the sex split for employees was similar (50.9 percent male, 49.1 percent female), women were more likely to be union members than men (6 in 10 or 58.7 percent).

People aged 30 years and over (30+) made up 70.9 percent of employees and 84.6 percent of union members. People under 30 made up 29.1 percent of all employees and 15.4 percent of union members. While only 2 in 10 (20.1 percent) of all employees worked part time, younger workers made up a larger proportion of that group (40.8 percent) than they did permanent workers (27.0 percent). [Note: on 14 September 2016 we amended the percentage of permanent workers from 26.2 percent to 27.0 percent]

Some industries are far more unionised than others (see figure 2). Over 4 in 10 employees in both health care and social assistance (43.5 percent) and education and training (42.2 percent) belonged to a union. Given the size of these industries (231,100 and 203,500, respectively), this means half (49.2 percent) of the 379,300 union members worked in only two industries. These industries have larger proportions of women (82.6 percent and 73.3 percent) than men (17.4 percent and 26.7 percent).

Figure 2



Source: Statistics New Zealand

The most unionised occupation was ‘professionals’, with around one-third (32 percent) belonging to a union (see figure 3). Of all employees who were union members, professionals was also the largest, with around 4 in 10 (41.9 percent) in this occupation.

Figure 3



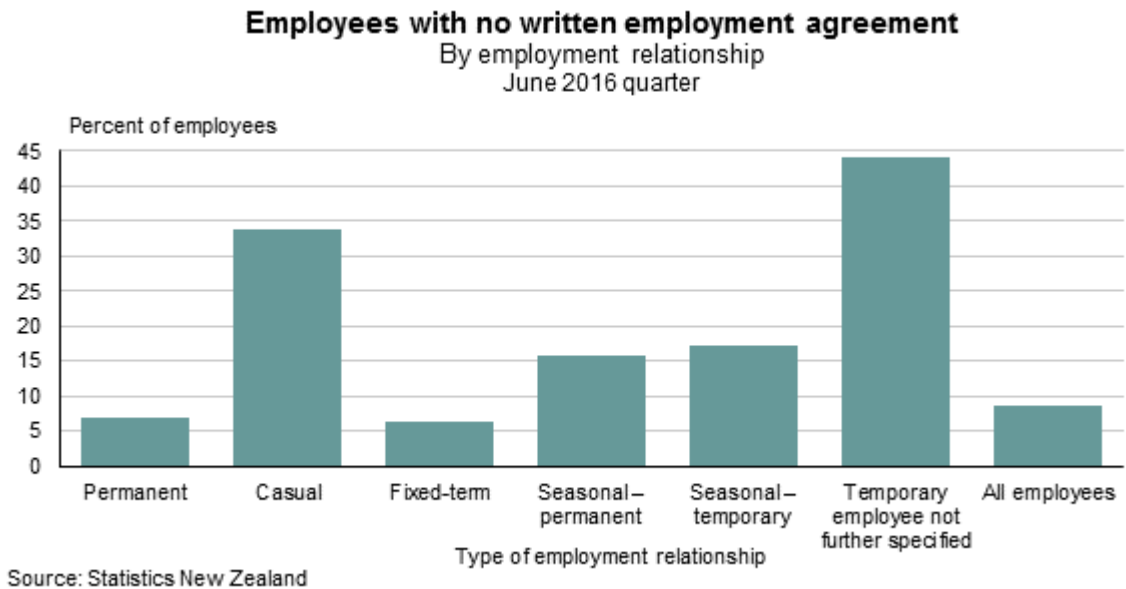
Written employment agreements

Although most employees (88.5 percent) reported they had a written employment agreement, there were some stark differences when looking into this further. Almost 1 in 10 (8.6 percent) said they did not have a written employment agreement. This equates to 171,000 employees not having their terms and conditions of employment agreed with their employer in writing. (A written employment agreement is a legal requirement in New Zealand.) An additional 56,300 (2.8 percent) said they didn't know if they had a written employment agreement or not.

Sex does not appear to play a major role in not having a written employment agreement, with 4.6 percent of men and 4.1 percent of women reporting they didn't have an agreement. Employees aged under 30 (10.7 percent) had a higher proportion without a written employment agreement compared with 7.7 percent of employees aged 30+.

Part-time employees (17.4 percent) were three times more likely to report not having a written employment agreement than full-time workers (6.4 percent). One-third of casual workers (33.7 percent) reported not having a written agreement compared with 6.8 percent of permanent employees.

Figure 4

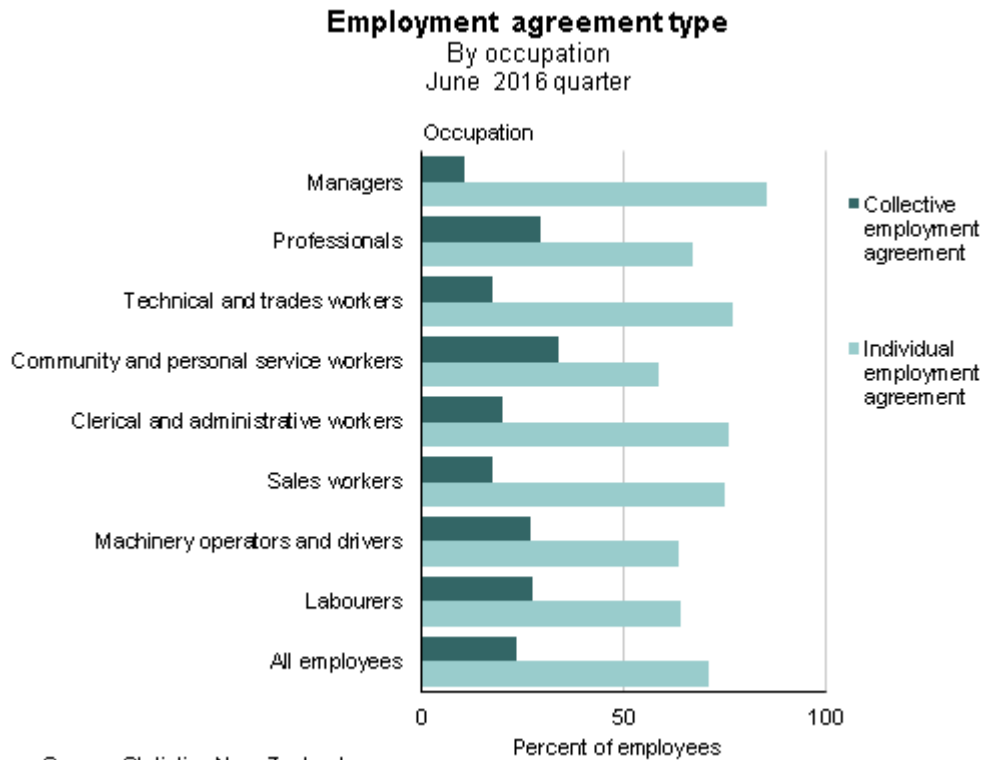


A higher proportion of union members (95.9 percent) reported having a written employment agreement compared with non-union members (87.6 percent). Only 2.4 percent of union members said they had no agreement compared with 10.4 percent of non-union members.

Of the 1,759,200 employees who reported they had a written employment agreement, 71.1 percent said they were on an individual agreement compared with 23.3 percent on a collective agreement. These proportions are reversed for union members. Of union members with a written employment agreement, 71 percent said they were on a collective agreement and 23.8 percent said they were on an individual agreement.

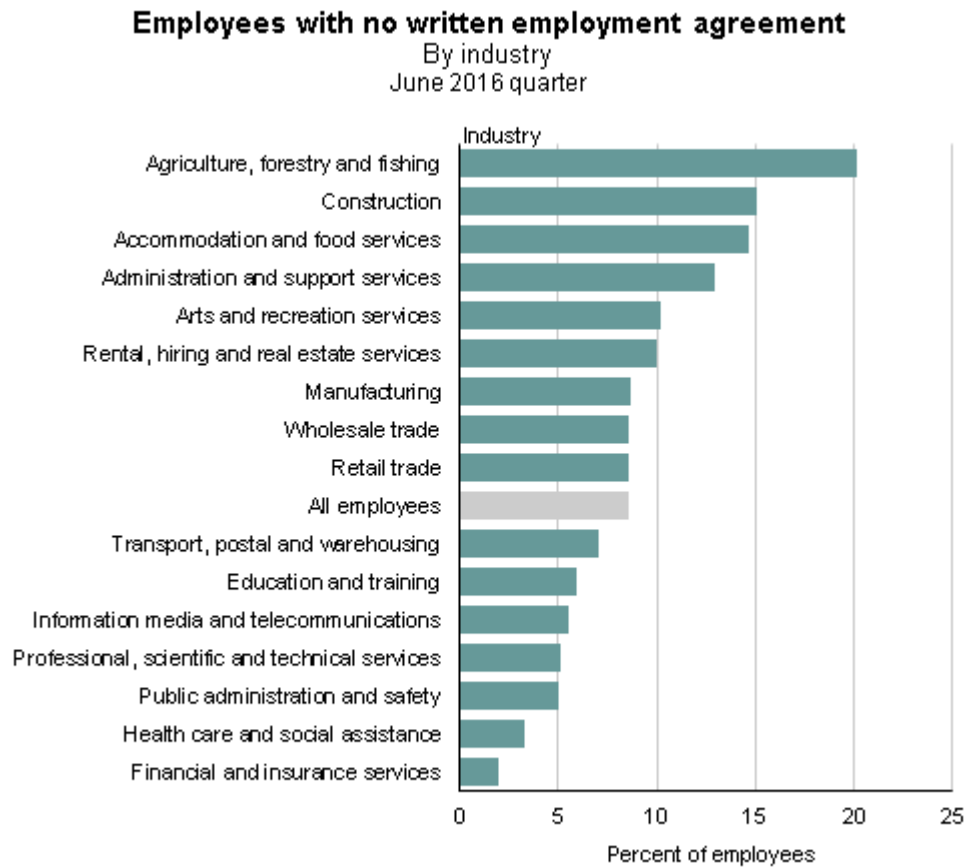
Community and personal service workers (34.1 percent) had the largest proportion with a collective employment agreement, while managers had the smallest (10.8 percent).

Figure 5



The proportions of employees who reported they didn't have a written employment agreement differed greatly by industry (see figure 6). Around 1 in 5 (20.1 percent) of employees in the agriculture, forestry, and fishing industry reported not having a written agreement. [Note: on 14 September 2016 we amended this percentage from 20.2 percent to 20.1 percent] This compared with just 2 percent of employees in the financial and insurance services industry who reported having no written employment agreement.

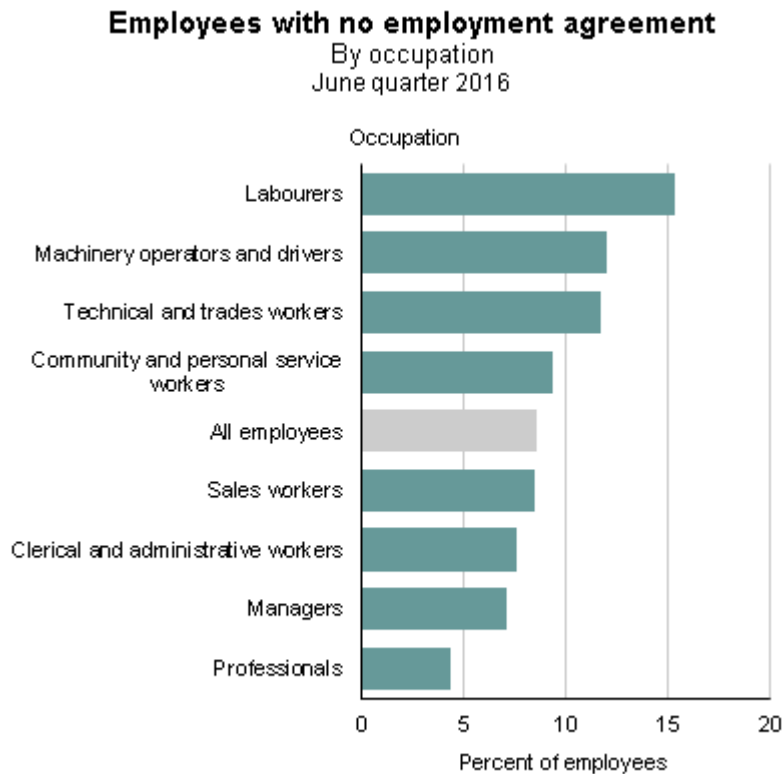
Figure 6



Source: Statistics New Zealand

The range of proportions of employees without a written employment agreement is not as broad by occupation as it is by industry (see figure 7). Labourers had the highest proportion (15.3 percent) and professionals the lowest (4.4 percent).

Figure 7



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