Winning is Contagious: Social Learning and Dynamics of Union Support*

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Abstract

While the decline in unionization in the U.S. has been gradual over the last several decades, union growth has occurred in spurts, such as the recent wave of organizing in retail and service sectors. We combine observational data from recent union elections with a large-scale information experiment involving 9,000 employed retail and service workers to study the dynamics underlying these growth episodes. Our findings point to *social learning* as a key driver. Observationally, past union victories strongly predict future wins. Experimentally, providing workers with information about recent union wins significantly increases their willingness to support unionization by raising beliefs about coworker support and the perceived benefits of unionizing. In contrast, information about labor market tightness—capturing economic conditions and outside options—primarily shifts beliefs about private benefits but has little effect on coworker support and only modestly increases union support. Responses to union information are strongest among those who receive less information or news about unions, and those with low baseline beliefs about coworker support, patterns consistent with social learning. Together, these results provide causal evidence that social learning, rather than economic fundamentals alone, plays a central role in triggering bursts of union growth.

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1 Introduction

How do unions grow? While there has been a recent revival of popular and academic interest in labor unions, much of the economic evidence on union dynamics comes from a period of monotonic union decline. Union density in the United States peaked in the mid-twentieth century and has gradually fallen since the 1950s. By contrast, episodes of union growth are rare and sharp: virtually all of the increase in private-sector unionization in the twentieth century U.S. occurred during a single decade-long "spurt" following the passage of the Wagner Act (Farber et al., 2021). Similar bursts of union growth can be observed in other OECD countries as well (Freeman, 1998).

This pattern suggests that union growth is not a steady, incremental process, but rather more likely to be governed by non-linear processes. Growth dynamics appear to be similar to processes of rapid diffusion seen in diverse contexts from product adoption to protest participation to technological change (see e.g., Conley and Udry, 2010; García-Jimeno et al., 2018; Cantoni et al., 2024; Munshi, 2004; Banerjee et al., 2013; Breza and Chandrasekhar, 2019). Although economists have posited that economic conditions may explain support for unionization, a common explanation for such diffusion is social learning—individuals updating their beliefs about the payoffs to an action after observing others' experiences. Both economics and sociology have emphasized social learning as a mechanism that can generate sharp, self-reinforcing increases in participation (Young, 2009). In the context of unions, this explanation suggests that observing successful organizing efforts at other workplaces may increase workers' willingness to support unionization at their own, potentially triggering waves of activity.

This paper provides new evidence on the role of social learning in driving union growth. We begin by presenting observational evidence using elections data from the recent spurt of Starbucks unionization. Election wins rise sharply with initial wins in the time series, consistent with social learning models of collective action. We also document a strong correlation between past and future union election wins. While these patterns are suggestive of learning, we cannot directly observe workers' beliefs from these data and other confounds such as increased organizing effort can also explain these patterns. To establish causality and understand mechanisms, we design and run an information experiment with 9,089 employed retail and service-sector workers in the United States, a group at the center of the recent wave of union organizing. The experiment tests for the relative importance of economic conditions and social learning in explaining union support. We show that information about recent union activity and wins at other workplaces increase workers' stated and, to a lesser degree, revealed willingness to support unionization for themselves. Information about economic conditions does not have such an effect.

Using a simple framework that describes the decision to support a union, our experimental design tests whether information shifts the perceived likelihood of winning an union election, and the perceived costs and benefits of unionizing. Participants in the experiment are recruited online and are randomly assigned to one of three treatments or to a control condition. The first treatment focuses on the tightness of local labor markets (*Tightness*, showing respondents the average time it takes an unemployed worker to find a new job in the retail and

service sector in their state. The second treatment provides information about recent union elections (*Union*), highlighting a dramatic recent increase in union formation in the retail and service sectors. The third treatment combines both types of information (*Combined*). The control group receives information on national employment levels.[1] Cross-randomizing information about labor market conditions allows us to disentangle social learning from purely economic considerations, such as the perceived risk of job loss or the expected benefits of unionization.

Using beliefs data collected both before and after the information treatments were delivered, we first establish that the treatments shifted beliefs about union activity and labor market conditions. The vast majority of respondents, 84%, underestimated union activity in the retail and service sectors in 2022–23. The union treatment increases the estimated number of elections in the following year by 90% ($p<0.01$), with gains concentrated among those who underestimated union activity at baseline. The tightness treatment also shifts beliefs about the ease of finding a new job by respondents' baseline priors: those who underestimate the unemployment duration update negatively about the ease of finding a new job, while those who overestimate the unemployment duration update positively.

We then examine impacts on stated measures of union support, focusing on the vast majority of respondents that underestimated union activity at baseline. Information about recent union activity significantly increases workers' willingness to support unionization, while information about labor market tightness has little effect. The *Union* and *Combined* treatments raise an index of union support by 0.09–0.13 standard deviations ($p<0.01$), whereas the *Tightness* treatment alone generates smaller and statistically weaker effects (0.04 s.d., $p=0.16$). We also find striking differences in how the two types of information treatments shape perceptions of coworker support for unionization and the private economic returns to unionization. The union information significantly increases perceptions of coworker support as well as the perceived benefits from forming a union, while the tightness information only increases the latter. This pattern points to social learning as a key driver in shaping union support.

The impact on union support partially translates into changes in actual behavior. We consider three behavioral measures of union support. First, we ask respondents whether they are willing to pay for an information video about unions, and find that the *Union* treatment increases incentivized willingness to pay. We also partnered with the *Emergency Workplace Organizing Committee* (EWOC) and ask respondents whether they would be interested in signing up for a newsletter from EWOC, and in sharing their contact information with EWOC. We do not find significant impacts of the union treatment on these two measures. This suggests that while the union treatment may increase respondents' interest in unions and willingness to support a union, they are not enough to spur interest in spearheading union organizing.

To further probe the social learning mechanism, we examine heterogeneity in treatment effects along two baseline dimensions: (i) prior awareness of union organizing at one's employer, and (ii) perceived coworker support. The effect of the union information is concentrated among respondents who were previously unaware of organizing at their workplace,

[1] All information is delivered via short videos.

and is stronger for those expecting lower levels of coworker support. These patterns indicate that the treatment primarily operated through social learning rather than alternative channels, providing direct evidence that information about others' union activity can shift beliefs and increase willingness to support unions.

This paper contributes to the literature on union dynamics seeking to understand the forces that shape the growth and decline of unions over time and across institutional contexts. Prior work has examined factors behind union decline in the U.S. and other OECD countries: trade competition (Charles et al., 2023); right-to-work laws (Fortin et al., 2022); management opposition (Nüß, 2024); and other political and institutional factors (Farber and Western, 2002). A contemporaneous set of papers use experimental methods similar to ours to explore links between union support and underlying economic conditions. A closely related paper is Pezold et al. (2023), which also examines the effects of labor market tightness on union activity. Similar to our results, they find limited evidence of a relationship between the two. Biasi et al. (2025) show that wage inequality negatively affects high-wage workers' willing to support unions. Our paper suggests that non-economic factors can play as large or larger a role in explaining surges in union organizing.

Our work is also related to the literature on the impact of information on collective action. Several studies have examined the effects of information diffusion on protest attendance using variation in access to communications or transportation infrastructure (García-Jimeno et al., 2018; Enikolopov et al., 2020). These papers find that greater exposure to information leads to more protest activity, suggesting that there is underlying support for protests and that learning about others protesting increases one's willingness to engage. We similarly find that information about unionization not only increases the perceived benefits of unionizing, but also beliefs about whether others support unions. If a critical mass is needed to unionize, information may push groups over the number needed to start organizing.

Finally, our paper relates to a literature documenting how information affects beliefs. Early work examined how providing information about things like inequality and immigration affect peoples' views about policies surrounding these topics (Alesina et al., 2018, 2023; Page et al., 2025). More recently, researchers have focused on how individuals use narratives to make sense of data (Andre et al., 2024), and how such narratives may affect beliefs (Barron and Fries, 2024). We apply these methods to understand union support. We do not test for differences in the effectiveness of data versus a narrative, but show that providing digestible information about others' success in forming a union can be more important than information about the economy.

2 The Recent Spurt in Union Activity

Following the COVID pandemic, there was a highly publicized wave of worker organizing and union activity across the U.S. Workers at several prominent non-unionized retailers and service establishments—from Starbucks to Amazon to Apple—held union elections for the first time. Rather than being isolated or merely high-profile events, this activity reflected a broader shift: Figure 1 shows a sharp increase in NLRB-held union representation elections

in the retail and service sectors in 2022 and 2023, relative to both the prior five years and to trends in other sectors. More generally, interest in unions appeared to be peaking in the last decade during this time.[2]

Anecdotal news reports from this surge in worker organizing often highlight how workers were motivated by seeing other workers take action in their workplaces and organize successful union campaigns. For instance, a Starbucks worker in California reported that "his interest in forming a union began after he saw a TikTok video about the union effort at the coffee chain's location in Buffalo" (Betts, 2022). Appendix A provides several similar examples that underscore the role of social learning in union organizing. Although anecdotal, these suggest that non-economic factors, such as seeing others' success in forming a union, may play an important role in determining union support.

Alongside this increased union activity, labor market tightness increased dramatically in the post-COVID recovery, making it easier for workers to find new jobs (Autor et al., 2023). An increase in outside options could have further supported workers' willingness to organize unions. For instance, workers may be more willing to take risky collective action if they believe they can find alternative jobs more easily in the event of firings or retaliation. Similarly, workers may be able to bargain for better conditions by credibly threatening to move to another job. This narrative of worker power in tight labor markets was widely discussed during the post-COVID period (see Appendix A). On the other hand, tighter labor markets may also reduce the appeal of unionization if workers can simply switch to a new, better job, rather than invest in organizing.

2.1 Observational evidence from NLRB elections

A particularly salient firm that experienced a surge in union activity in the last few years is Starbucks. Starbucks is a large firm with thousands of establishments. Initial organizing in Buffalo, described in detail by Brisack (2025), quickly propagated to other Starbucks locations across the country. Panel (a) of Figure 2 show the rapid growth of NLRB election wins: there is a sharp and sudden increase towards the end of 2021, after which the pace decelerates.

We also directly estimate the relationship between current and lagged wins. Panel (b) shows a binned scatterplot of the number of Starbucks NLRB wins in a given month on the lagged number of Starbucks wins, controlling for a cubic polynomial in time. The estimated coefficient on lagged wins is 0.78 (s.e. 0.10), indicating a strong positive association.

This evidence from the time-series of a single employer is suggestive, but many confounds preempt a causal interpretation. For example, endogenous organizing effort by unions—like that waged by Starbucks Workers United—would induce serial autocorrelation in holding and winning elections, even conditional on a polynomial in time. Moreover, even if this pattern were causal, it does little to shed light on the mechanism driving union activity. In order to isolate the role of contagion in beliefs, we next turn to our survey.

[2]Appendix Figure C1 shows searches for "Union Organizing" and "National Labor Relations" from January, 2020 through 2025. Notable spikes begin to appear in early 2021 with large spikes in searches throughout 2022.

2.2 Survey evidence

Consistent with the anecdotal evidence that social learning played a role in the post-COVID unionization wave, in our survey of over 9,000 employed hourly retail and service workers (discussed in detail in the next section), we find that individual willingness to support unions varies systematically with perceived support among co-workers, knowledge of union activity, and social media use. For example, Panel (a) of Figure 3 shows a statistically significant and positive correlation between respondents' beliefs about the share of coworkers who would support a union and their own support for unionization (details of the variable construction are in Section 3.4).[3] Panels (b) and (c) show the same relationship, but split the sample based on whether respondents report being aware of any union activity at their specific workplace or at their broader employer. Conditional on perceived coworker support, union interest is significantly higher when a respondent has heard about organizing activity, further reinforcing the influence of social exposure. Panel (d) examines social media usage, which played a prominent role in amplifying union campaigns during this period. We find that greater engagement with social media is significantly associated with stronger union support, even after controlling for age.[4]

Appendix Table D1 provides additional evidence to suggest that social media may have played a role in spreading information about unions. Column 1 shows the relationship between a respondent's social media use and having seen news articles about your employer, conditional on respondent age. Columns 2 and 3 show that respondents who aret on more social media platforms have a more favorable view of unions even conditional on one's familiarity with unions (column 3).

However, in line with other recent work by Pezold et al. (2023), we find little relationship between perceptions of labor market tightness and union support. Panel (a) of Figure 4 shows the relationship between one measure of perceived labor market tightness—beliefs about how many months it would take to find a new job—and union support. Although labor market tightness is hypothesized to be a driver of union support, we find no relationship between perceptions of unemployment duration and union support. Panel (b) similarly shows no relationship between wages and union support. The only indicator that is correlated with union support are beliefs about the benefits of unionizing (panel (c)), many of which are non-monetary improvements such as more respect in the workplace. Beliefs about costs such as store closures or layoffs are uncorrelated with union support (panel (d)).

The design of our survey experiment, discussed next, more rigorously tests between the role that social learning and labor market conditions play in driving union support.

[3] All results in Figure 3 use data from the control group only. Details of the experimental design follow in the next section.

[4] Respondents could report using Facebook, X/Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Reddit, Discord, or "Other" platforms.

3 Design and Data

3.1 Sample recruitment

Given the sectoral focus of union activity in the post-COVID period, we focused our sampling strategy on employed, hourly wage workers in the retail or services sectors. We recruited our sample using two sources: YouGov and Prolific. YouGov is a commercial survey company and Prolific is an online survey platform. We recruited 6,000 respondents through YouGov and 3,089 on Prolific, giving us a final sample of 9,089 individuals.

3.2 Experimental design

Participants were randomly assigned to one of four experimental groups, each of which involved viewing a short informational video with varying content. The treatments were designed to test for social learning alongside theories that unionization is driven by economic conditions. The *Union* information treatment tests whether social learning influences union interest, while the *Tightness* treatment tests whether information about labor market conditions shapes union interest. The *Combined* treatment provides experimental variation to assess how the effects of social learning are moderated by information on labor market conditions.

Control: Participants received information on national employment levels in the United States. Specifically, they watched a video stating that "There are currently roughly 158.5 million employed individuals in the U.S."

***Tightness* treatment:** Participants received information on their local labor market conditions—namely, the number of months it would take an unemployed person to find a new job in the retail or services sectors in their state of residence.[5] The customized video contained a message of the following form: "In your state, it usually takes an unemployed person about X months to find a new job in the retail or service sectors that they are willing to work."

***Union* treatment:** Participants receive information on the number of union representation elections held from 2017–2023 and the overall success rate of these elections. This information is specific to the retail and services sector and shows a large increase in activity in 2022–23 compared to previous years. The script for the video is available in Appendix **??**.

***Combined* treatments:** Participants receive both videos from the *Union and Tightness* treatments. The video on recent union activity is shown first, followed by information regarding their local labor market conditions.

[5]To provide this information, we computed at the state-level the average length of time it took an unemployed person to find a job in the retail or services sectors using Current Population Survey data from the recent past (see Appendix B.1 for details).

To assess respondents' perceptions of the information provided, we asked them to rate its credibility at the end of the survey. Across groups, 65–72% of respondents rated the information as either credible or very credible; only 1–2% considered it not credible at all.

3.3 Framework

We provide a simple framework of an individual's decision to support a union to guide our empirical analysis. An individual i is willing to support a union if the expected marginal benefit of their support exceeds the marginal cost:

$$[Pr(win|S_i = 1) - Pr(win)] * b_i > c_i \tag{1}$$

where $S_i = \{0, 1\}$ denotes the individual's own support for the union, b_i is the perceived benefit from a successful union effort, and c_i is the perceived cost of union support. $Pr(win)$ depends on average co-worker support, $E(S_{-i})$; an individual's action marginally increases the probability of a win such that $Pr(win|S_i = 1) > Pr(win)$. This decision rule highlights that beliefs about coworker support matter independently of one's own perceived returns or costs—union support is strategic and conditional on expectations about others' behavior.

Our experimental variation targets these underlying determinants of union support: private economic returns (b_i and c_i) and the likelihood of winning ($Pr(win)$). We discuss how each treatment may affect these parameters and, in turn, individuals' support for unions. Under a Bayesian updating framework, individuals who are initially pessimistic or optimistic about labor market tightness or union activity should respond in opposite directions when presented with new information; therefore, the discussion below separates the discussion for these groups.

Tightness: This treatment directly targets the perceived private returns from unionization (b_i and c_i). Respondents who overestimate labor market tightness at baseline will learn that the labor market is worse than they believed. This could lower net returns from unionization either by increasing c_i—as it becomes harder to find a new job if they are laid off from their current job while trying to organize—or reducing b_i if poor economic conditions are believed to weaken bargaining power. On the other hand, learning that the labor market is better than expected could either increase or decrease benefits from unionization. Workers could choose to stay and organize their workplaces or, given better outside options, simply move to a better job. Lastly, although the treatment targets private returns, it could also affect the perceived probability of winning if respondents believes that others have correct information about the labor market.

Union: This treatment explicitly targets the probability of winning a union by showcasing truthful information about the increase in union activity and successes in the retail and service sectors. Respondents who underestimate union activity at baseline learn that support for unions may be greater than they imagined, which may affect beliefs about their coworkers' support for union, $Pr(win)$. Such updating should be strongest among those with low

initial perceptions of coworker support, a hypothesis we test directly. Information on union successes may also affect perceived benefits or costs—for example, by raising the credibility of wage gains or lowering expected risks. Conversely, those who overestimate union activity learn that support is weaker than they believed, potentially reducing their own willingness to support.

Combined: This treatment jointly targets beliefs about labor market conditions and union activity, allowing us to understand how economic conditions and beliefs about winning interact to shape union support. For example, respondents who learn that labor market prospects are worse than they believed may be more inclined to organize if they simultaneously learn that coworker support for unions is stronger than they imagined.

Taken together, these three treatments provide experimental variation that allows us to investigate the relative importance of the underlying channels of union support.

3.4 Survey data and procedures

3.4.1 Pre-treatment modules

Before receiving the treatments described in section 3.2, participants completed a baseline survey. This included modules on demographics, social media usage, employment, and beliefs about unionization and labor market conditions. Only those who were employed as hourly workers in the retail or service sectors were invited to complete the full survey.

In the employment module, we asked respondents about their primary job, including hours, wages, and sector. We also collected information on working conditions, job satisfaction, workplace relationships, and employer and establishment size. Next, we assessed participants' views on unions. This included questions about prior knowledge or experience with unions; whether they or their coworkers had ever taken action to improve their workplace; and perceptions of coworker support for unions.

Finally, we elicited prior beliefs related to our treatments. For union activity, respondents were asked to estimate the average number of union elections per year in 2022 and 2023 in the retail and services sector.[6] We also asked them to predict the success rate of union elections in the past year. To measure perceptions about labor market tightness, we collected beliefs about job-finding under unemployment in three different ways: (i) ratings on a 5-point scale measuring how difficult or easy it would be for the respondent to find a new job similar to the their current job; (ii) the number of months it would take the respondent personally to find a new job; and (iii) the number of months it would take others like them to find a new job.[7] These responses were recorded in 0.5-month intervals and top-coded at 10 months.

We incentivized accuracy for two belief measures closely tied to our treatments: (i) the number of union elections and (ii) the expected number of months it would take someone

[6]The exact question was: "Between 2017 and 2021, there were 660 union elections on average every year in the service and retail sectors. What do you think is the average number of union elections in a year in the last two years (2022 and 2023) in the service and retail sectors?"

[7]Appendix C.2 shows that these measures are correlated. On average, respondents believe it would be easier for them than for others to find a new job. This could reflect either optimism or private knowledge about their own prospects not adequately reflected in our tightness measure.

similar to the respondent to find a new job in the retail and services sectors.[8] The 10% of respondents who were closest to the truth received a bonus payment of $1.

3.4.2 Post-treatment modules

After the delivery of the information treatments, we asked a series of questions to (i) establish changes in beliefs about union activity and labor market conditions and (ii) capture self-reported and behavioral outcomes related to union support.

To measure belief updating, we asked respondents two questions. First, they were asked to estimate the number of union elections held in the retail and service sectors in 2024. Second, they rated their agreement—on a scale from 1 to 5—with the statement: "If I lost my current job for any reason, it would be easy for me to find a new job with similar pay and working conditions as my current job."

To measure union support, we asked respondents to rate their interest in discussing unionization with a coworker, the likelihood they would talk to a coworker about unions in the next month, and whether they would vote yes for a union. We combine responses to these three questions into an index measuring union support, constructed following Anderson (2008). We also elicited measures of co-worker support by asking respondents about the share of their co-workers who would be willing to (i) sign union cards and (ii) vote to form a union.[9]

To test whether the treatments affect the perceived benefits and costs of unionizing, we asked respondents to agree or disagree with a series of statements about the effects of unions. Specifically, to measure benefits, we ask whether their workplace unionizing would improve their pay/benefits, and respect in the workplace. To measure costs, we ask whether they believe that unionization would result in their workplace being shut down, in reduced work hours, or in their dismissal. We also combine these items into separate indices of perceived benefits and perceived costs.

We also implemented four behavioral measures, each involving different levels of stakes or effort, to assess how willing respondents were to take costly action support unions. These measures included: willingness to receive an informational guide on how to organize in the workplace; sharing a testimonial either in support or against unionization; a take-it-or-leave-it willingness to pay offer to access the videos shown to the respondent; and willingness to connect with a workplace organizer.

Finally, we also collected reservation wages, job search intentions, beliefs about credibility of information, and additional demographics, including partisan and religious identity.

3.5 Summary statistics

Sample characteristics: Table 1 shows sample characteristics for the combined samples (column 1) and YouGov and Prolific samples separately (columns 2 and 3). Across most demographics, the samples from the two sources are fairly similar, though the YouGov sample has

[8] In the analysis, we use respondents' *own* prior for labor market perceptions, since this beliefs should more directly shape how they update and respond to the information treatments.

[9] About 20% of respondents answered "do not know" for these questions. We recode these responses to have the mean of the control group.

a larger fraction of male respondents (47% compared to 31% in Prolific).

To compare our sample with national data, we include statistics from the 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) in column 4. To mimic our eligibility criteria as closely as possible in the ACS sample, we restrict to individuals between the ages of 18–65 who are working part- or full-time in the retail and services sectors.[10] The samples are similar, except in terms of education and family income. Our sample is slightly more educated—for example, 29% of our sample has a college degree, compared with 21% in the ACS sample. Our respondents are more likely to be from lower-income family backgrounds: 27% report family incomes below $40,000, compared with 10% in the ACS.

Baseline beliefs about union activity: Figure 5 shows the distance between respondents' prior beliefs about union activity in 2022–23 and the true number of NLRB union representation elections during that period. The vast majority of respondents underestimate the the number of elections held: 84% of respondents estimate union activity to be lower than the truth. We refer to this sample as 'union pessimists.'

Baseline beliefs about labor market conditions: Figure 6 plots the gap between each respondent's prior belief about how many months it would take them to find a new job if they became unemployed and the actual average unemployment duration in their state. The benchmark measure of average unemployment duration is calculated from the CPS for workers currently employed in retail and services in the respondent's state. While there is variation in beliefs, the majority of respondents (64%) report shorter expected durations than the CPS average, suggesting they believe it would be easier for them to find a new job (i.e., 'labor market optimists').[11] The median difference between respondents' priors and the CPS measure is -1 month.

Sample overlap in baseline beliefs: Given the cross-randomized design, there are two dimensions of misperceptions that we aim to correct, either individually or jointly. The precision of our estimated treatment effects therefore depends on the joint distribution of respondents across these dimensions. Appendix Table D2 reports available sample sizes by baseline misperceptions across both dimensions. The distribution shows relatively large cell sizes for union pessimists—whether paired with labor market optimists or pessimists—while the corresponding cells for union optimists are much smaller.

3.6 Randomization balance

We report randomization checks in Appendix Table D5 using data from the pre-treatment survey modules. For the full sample, we compare baseline covariates across the three treatment groups—*Tightness*, *Union*, and *Combined*—relative to the control group and to each other. Out of 72 pairwise comparisons, only 4 yield statistically significant differences, consistent

[10] These are industry codes 4070-5790, 7580-7790, 7940-8470, 8561-8670, 8680-8670, and 8780-9290.
[11] About 7% of respondents report a value equal to the CPS average.

with chance imbalance on these covariates. We also report whether all three treatments are jointly equal to zero for each covariate and do not find evidence of systematic imbalance.

4 Results

We begin by showing the first-stage relationship between the experimental treatments and respondents' beliefs measured after treatment. We then show the impact of the treatments on union support. We find that "union pessimists"—those who underestimate the number of union elections—significantly increase their interest in and support for forming a union. In contrast, we find little evidence that learning about the labor market affects union interest.

4.1 First-stage

To establish a first-stage, following the delivery of the information treatments, respondents were asked to estimate the expected number of union elections in 2024 and to report, on a five-point scale, the perceived ease of securing a job comparable to their current position in the event of unemployment.

Our first stage estimating equation is:

$$y_i = \alpha + \beta Tightness_i + \gamma Union_i + \delta Combined_i + \psi_s + \epsilon_i \tag{2}$$

where we include (mutually exclusive) binary indicators for the three information treatments, *Tightness*, *Union*, and *Combined*. We also include fixed effects for our sampling source (Prolific or YouGov), denoted by ψ_s.

As responses to the information treatments may vary by the heterogeneity in priors documented in section 3.5, we also interact the treatment indicators for being pessimistic about union activity—i.e. underestimating the number of union elections—and about labor market tightness—i.e. overestimating unemployment duration—and estimate:

$$\begin{aligned} y_i &= \alpha + \beta Tightness_i + \gamma Union_i + \delta Combined_i + p_i \\ &+ \beta'(Tightness_i \times p_i) + \gamma'(Union_i \times p_i) + \delta'(Combined_i \times p_i) \\ &+ \psi_s + \epsilon_i \end{aligned} \tag{3}$$

where p_i is an indicator that respondent i is pessimistic about *either* labor market tightness or union activity (depending on the treatment we are looking at).

Table 2 presents results from both specifications.[12] Across treatments, individuals update their beliefs in the expected direction. Respondents assigned to the *Union* and *Combined* treatment predicted substantially more union elections in 2024 than those in the control group—-an 85–90% increase (p<0.01; column 1). This effect is driven by respondents who were pessimistic about union activity at baseline (column 2), while those who initially overestimated union elections revised their expectations downwards.[13]

[12] Appendix C.3 presents figures showing the first-stage across the full variation in beliefs.

[13] We note that posteriors about union elections in the *Combined* treatment are marginally lower than in the *Union* treatment, suggesting there may be some influence of receiving tightness information on union estimates.

Turning to the impacts of tightness information, we find heterogeneous effects on beliefs about the ease of finding a job if unemployed. On average, this information has a negative, but not statistically significant, impact (column 3). However, conditional on baseline priors (column 4), individuals in the *Tightness* and *Combined* treatments who initially underestimate unemployment duration update negatively about finding a job by 0.125–0.14 points—a 4–4.5% effect (p<0.01) relative to the control mean. Conversely, those who overestimate unemployment duration update that it would be easier by 0.23–0.26 points to find a new job (7.4–8.4% effect, p<0.01).

Importantly, we find no cross-treatment effects between the individual treatments: the *Tightness* treatment does not alter expectations about the number of union elections, and the *Union* treatment does not affect beliefs about the ease of finding a job.

4.2 Willingness to support a union

Having established a strong first stage, we now estimate treatment effects on union support. For ease of interpretation, in all subsequent analysis unless otherwise noted, we focus on union pessimists—respondents who underestimated union activity at baseline—since they constitute the vast majority of the sample.[14] We present both simple ITT estimates (specification 2) and ITT estimates interacted with baseline labor market pessimism (specification 3), as belief updating moves in opposite directions by priors.

Table 3 reports treatment effects on an index of union support, constructed from three measures of willingness to engage with unions.[15] The *Union* and *Combined* treatments raise union support by 0.09–0.13 standard deviations (p<0.01), while the *Tightness* treatment has only a small and statistically insignificant effect (column 1). We can also reject equality of coefficients between *Tightness* and the other two treatments. Appendix Table D6 shows that this pattern is broadly consistent across each of the three index components.

We next examine how effects vary by baseline labor market perceptions. Among labor market optimists—who learn that the labor market is worse than they expected—the *Tightness* treatment modestly increases the union support index by 0.056 s.d. (p=0.07, column 2). On the other hand, for labor market pessimists—who learn that conditions are better than expected—the effect dissipates. The interaction term, $T\times$ Pessimist LM, is negative, yielding a small, insignificant net effect. These results suggest that information about labor market conditions influences union support asymmetrically, increasing willingness to organize when prospects are worse than expected but having little effect, or even dampening support, when prospects turn out to be better.

In contrast, the *Union* and *Combined* treatments increase union support more uniformly. Among labor market optimists, the index rises by 0.10–0.15 s.d. (p<0.01, column 1), nearly twice the effect of *Tightness*. The *Combined* treatment is somewhat larger than the *Union* treatment alone, though equality can only be rejected at p=0.13. While labor market pessimism attenuates these positive effects, the interaction terms are not statistically significant,

[14] For completeness, we report the corresponding estimates for union optimists in the Appendix and discuss them in section 4.5 of the main text.

[15] These include: whether the respondent is interested in talking to a coworker who wants to form a union, whether they plan to discuss unions with coworkers within the next month, and willingness to vote for a union.

and the net effect remains positive even for pessimists. We again reject equality of coefficients between *Tightness* and the other two treatments (p=0.002–0.125).

Overall, learning about union activity more strongly shifts interest in union formation, suggesting that social learning may be more important than labor market considerations in shaping union support.

4.3 Determinants of willingness to support union

Our framework presents three variables through which information might affect union support: perceived costs, benefits, and likelihood of winning (coworker support). We next examine treatment effects on these three underlying determinants. We expect the union treatment to impact the perceived likelihood of winning while the tightness treatment should influence beliefs about the costs of unionizing, with impacts on perceived benefits being ambiguous, as discussed in section 3.3. Each determinant is measured as an index (see section 3.4.2 for variable construction).[16]

Table 4 presents the results for union pessimists. The *Tightness* treatment increases perceived benefits (0.06 s.d., p=0.04, column 4), but has no significant effect on perceived coworker support or costs from unionization (columns 1 and 5). In contrast, the *Union* and *Combined* treatments increase coworker support by 0.076–0.103 s.d. (p<0.01, column 1), and these effects are statistically different from those of the *Tightness* treatment (p<0.01). Information on union activity also raises perceived benefits by a magnitude similar to the *Tightness* treatment, though–like *Tightness*—it does not affect perceived costs.

Columns 2, 4, and 6 show how these effects vary with baseline labor market perceptions. Labor market optimists in the *Tightness* treatment report higher perceived benefits from unionization (0.07 s.d., p=0.05, column 2), whereas labor market pessimists show a smaller response. That is, when respondents learn that their labor market prospects are worse than expected, they tend to view unions as more valuable, but do not expect greater support from coworkers or shifts in costs of unionization. Because unionization requires coordination, this lack of movement in coworker support may explain the more muted effects of the *Tightness* treatment on union support in Table 3.

Meanwhile, among labor market optimists, both the *Union* and *Combined* treatments significantly raise the perceived benefits of forming a union (0.07–0.10 s.d., p<0.05, column 4) *and* perceived coworker support (0.12 s.d., p<0.01, column 2). The effects of the *Union* treatment are smaller—and sometimes even negative—among labor market pessimists. Correcting these labor market perceptions, however, mitigates this pattern: in the *Combined* treatment, pessimists show a smaller decline in coworker support relative to the *Union* treatment and no significant difference in perceived benefits ($C\times$ Pessimist LM in columns 2 and 4).

Together, these findings highlight social learning as a central mechanism: only evidence of union success raises beliefs that coworkers will support unions. Yet, the strength of this channel is shaped by workers' perceptions of their outside options.

[16] Appendix Table D7 shows treatment impacts on each individual component of the three indices. Results for each component are broadly similar to the overall effects on the indices.

4.4 Behavioral outcomes

We have shown that the learning about union activity and successes significantly increases stated interest in supporting a union. We now turn to our behavioral measures to test whether changes in stated preferences translate into action. These measures range in intensity of action, from willingness to pay for access to union information videos to expressing interest in contacting an EWOC organizer.

Table 5 shows both simple ITT estimates as well as heterogeneous effects by labor market pessimism, as before restricting the sample to union pessimists. We find some evidence of behavior change: respondents exposed to the *Union* treatment are 3 p.p. (p=0.01, column 1) more willing to pay to gain access the union videos. However, we do not find evidence of greater willingness to receive a newsletter about workplace organizing or engage with volunteer organizers from EWOC. This suggests that belief updating can induce respondents to take low-cost individual actions, but this may not readily translate to higher-commitment activities that require coordination among coworkers.

What drives the disconnect between stated support and the behavioral measures? Appendix Figure C.4 shows that in the control group, union support is strongly correlated with the behavioral measures. This pattern suggests that while the *Union* treatment shifts beliefs and stated interest in unions, the magnitude of the shift may be too modest to translate into costly behavioral actions. In addition, we emphasize that these measures were collected shortly after the information, leaving open the possibility that stronger effects could emerge over time as updated beliefs crystallize into action. These results are also consistent with the broader aggregate pattern observed in U.S. labor markets where there is high levels of stated support for unions in surveys, but limited translation of that support into new union formation (Ahlquist et al., 2024).

4.5 Are effects symmetric for union optimists?

To understand whether effects are symmetric for union *optimists*—respondents who overestimate union activity at baseline (16% of sample)—we replicate the above analysis in Appendix Table D8. As before, we present both simple ITT estimates and estimates interacting the three treatments with an indicator for baseline labor market pessimism.

We find evidence that the *Tightness* treatment significantly lowers union support by 0.13 s.d. (p<0.01, column 1), an effect driven by labor market optimists at baseline (column 2). This decline is accompanied by a similar sized decline in perceived benefits from unionization (columns 5–6). In other words, after learning that the labor market is worse than expected, union optimists are less likely to support forming a union—the opposite of the response observed for union pessimists in Table 3. In contrast, for the *Union* and *Combined* treatments, the estimated coefficients on the union support index among labor market optimists are negative, but not statistically significant.

Although the direction of the estimates for union optimists are generally opposite from our findings for union pessimists, the smaller sample size of union optimists produces noisier estimates, limiting firm conclusions about the symmetry of the effects.

Beyond the limited sample size, one possible reason for the muted effects on union support among union optimists could be the role of prior exposure and experiences. Appendix Table D3 shows that those with more exposure to organizing, stronger social media presence, and more positive beliefs about the wage effects of unionization tend to be more optimistic about past union activity.[17] Such respondents may adjust their perceptions of overall union activity when presented with new information (see Table 2), but their underlying support for unionization may already be shaped by direct knowledge and experiences, making it less responsive to the treatments.

5 Mechanisms and Robustness

Our results thus far point to changes in the likelihood of a successful union campaign, driven by beliefs about coworker support, as a key channel through which information about union activity significantly increases willingness to support unions. Social learning may shape these beliefs by making success appear more feasible in light of others' victories and by raising expectations about coworkers' support for unionization. To probe these mechanisms directly, Section 5.1 examines heterogeneity in treatment effects by baseline proxies of the information environment: awareness of organizing activity at employer and perceptions of coworker support for unionization. We then complement this analysis by examining heterogeneity by respondents' job quality, as measured by the hourly wage and an index of non-wage amenities. This analysis sheds light on when individuals may be more willing to support unions, linking to the classic *exit versus voice* framework for understanding support for collective action in the workplace.

5.1 Heterogeneous effects by baseline information environment

Table 6 examines heterogeneity in treatment effects on union support by respondents' baseline information environment, restricting again to the sample of union pessimists. Under a social learning mechanism, respondents in weaker information environments should be more responsive to union information. Moreover, responses should be stronger where baseline perceptions of coworker support for unionization are weaker and respondents' marginal support is more likely to matter (see section 3.3). We test these hypotheses directly by examining whether effects vary by (i) respondents' awareness of organizing activity at their own employer (columns 1–2), and (ii) their perceived coworker support at baseline (columns 3–4). We show results interacting the treatments with baseline labor market pessimism, but simple ITT estimates are shown in Appendix D9.

Among labor market optimists unaware of organizing activity at their employer, the *Union* treatment increases support by 0.11 s.d. (p<0.01, column 1), whereas the effect is close to zero for those already aware at baseline (column 2).[18] Likewise, the *Union* treatment raises support by 0.13 s.d. among respondents who believed fewer than 75% of their coworkers supported

[17] Appendix Table D4 shows the same but for priors about the labor market.
[18] We can only reject equality of coefficients across this comparison at p=0.22.

unions at baseline (p<0.01; column 3), compared to a small and insignificant effect for those who believed support was 75% or higher.[19]

These results are consistent with social learning being the key mechanism through which information shapes willingness to unionize.

5.2 Heterogeneous effects by job quality

While the patterns above highlight the role of social learning in shaping union support, willingness to support unions may also depend on the quality of respondents' current jobs. Job quality may matter because it could change the relative desirability of exercising "voice" versus "exit," when respondents learn about their about outside options. Table 7 reports effect heterogeneity by job quality, measured using respondents' hourly wages (columns 1–2) and an index of non-wage job amenities and conditions (columns 3–4). In each case, we split the sample at the median to compare effects for workers in lower- versus higher-quality jobs.

For the *Tightness* treatment, above-median wage respondents who learn that labor market prospects are worse than they believed increase their union support by 0.1 s.d. (p=0.02, column 2). The corresponding effect for below-median wage respondents is much smaller (0.01, column 1) and not significant, though we can only reject equality at p=0.14. The pattern is similar when job quality is measured by non-wage attributes. In contrast, the net effects are much smaller, and even negative, among respondents who instead learn that the labor market is better than expected. These patterns suggest that workers in higher-quality jobs are more willing to support unions when they learn about poor labor market prospects, whereas those in lower-quality jobs appear less willing to do so. This is broadly consistent with an exit–voice interpretation, in which workers with worse jobs prefer to seek new employment rather than organize when they perceive exit to more feasible.

Turning to effects from the *Union* treatment, effects are positive across both quality measures, but the magnitudes vary. The effect is similar when quality is measured by non-wage attributes (columns 3–4). However, there is a larger, significant effect among higher-wage than lower-wage workers (0.15 s.d vs 0.06), though we can only reject equality at p=0.16; this pushes against the idea that higher wage workers will be less supportive of unions. As before, labor market pessimism moderate effects of the *Union* treatment, with consistently negative coefficients for the interaction term ($U\times$ Pessimist LM). The *Combined* treatment shows positive, significant effects across all groups, but without a consistent pattern in whether workers in higher- or lower-quality jobs are more responsive to the treatment.

Overall, while there is some evidence that job quality shapes responsiveness to information, particularly for the *Tightness* treatment, the effect heterogeneity for the *Union* treatment is more modest and less systematic than the starker patterns we observed by respondents' baseline information environment.

[19] We reject equality of coefficients in this comparison at p=0.03.

5.3 Alternative explanations

We now consider alternative explanations for our results and argue that the pattern of our results are inconsistent with each of these explanations.

Length and style of treatment videos: The delivery of the union and labor market tightness information videos differed in two aspects: length and narrative style. The union video lasted about 63 seconds, compared to 16 seconds for the tightness clip, raising the concern that greater exposure time led respondents to simply pay more attention to the union video. Under this view, our effects would reflect salience rather than learning. In addition, while both were fact-based, one might worry that the union script leaned more toward persuasion than neutral information delivery.

We offer three pieces of evidence to mitigate these concerns. First, in a recall check immediately after viewing, 92% of respondents in the *Tightness* group correctly recalled the information presented, compared to 81% in the *Union* group.[20] If anything, this suggests that the longer union video did not induce greater attention. Second, Appendix C.3 shows that updates in posterior beliefs about union activity are largest among respondents farthest from the truth at baseline, a pattern consistent with information-based learning. Third, if video length or narrative persuasion were driving the results, we would expect uniformly larger effects of the union information across all subgroups. Instead, the effects are heterogeneous by baseline labor market perceptions (Table 3), which is inconsistent with a pure salience or persuasion explanation.

Experimenter demand effects: Another concern is that our results reflect experimenter demand or social desirability bias—that is, respondents may have adjusted their answers to align with what they perceived the survey team expected, rather than genuinely updating their beliefs. Several pieces of evidence suggest this cannot be fully explain our findings. First, if respondents in the *Union* and *Combined* treatments thought the survey team sought pro-union responses, then it is unclear why we would only observe treatment effects on coworker support and perceived benefits, but not perceived costs (Table 4). Second, the heterogeneity we observe by baseline beliefs and environments (see Tables 3 and 6) is inconsistent with a simple demand-based explanation, which would imply more uniform effects. Finally, although effects on behavioral measures are smaller than on stated beliefs, the fact that they move in the same direction provides further evidence against demand as the sole driver.

6 Discussion

Our findings contribute to understanding why union growth occurs in concentrated waves, and often within sectors, rather than through gradual, linear increases across sectors. Consistent with classic work on information diffusion (Banerjee et al., 2013), we find that social

[20]Specifically, we asked respondents multiple choice questions and confirmed or corrected their answer as needed. Those who received tightness information were asked to recall the number of months it would take someone in their state to find a new job, while those who received union information were asked to report the average number of union elections in the retail and service sectors in 2022–23.

learning plays a central role in triggering surges in organizing. Observationally, past union victories strongly predict future wins within sectors, and experimentally, information about recent union successes raises workers' willingness to support unionization by shifting beliefs about coworker support and the likelihood of a successful campaign. Workers appear to learn from the successes of workers in similar types of jobs (e.g. in the food and hospitality industry), leading to upward shifts in union support.

By contrast, information about labor market tightness had small and heterogeneous effects, influencing support only among those who learned job prospects were worse than expected. This aligns with evidence from Pezold et al. (2023) showing weak links between tightness and union activity, suggesting that economic fundamentals alone cannot explain the sharp bursts of organizing seen historically.

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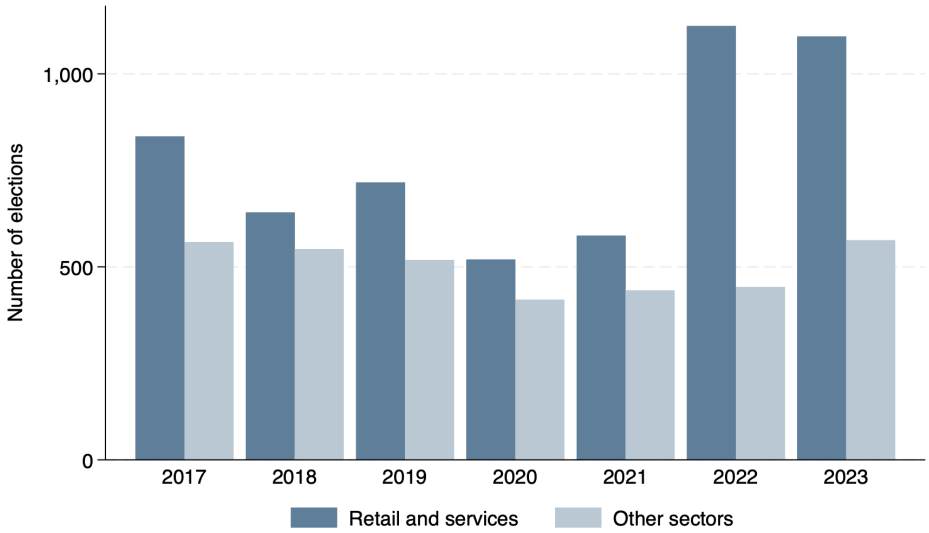
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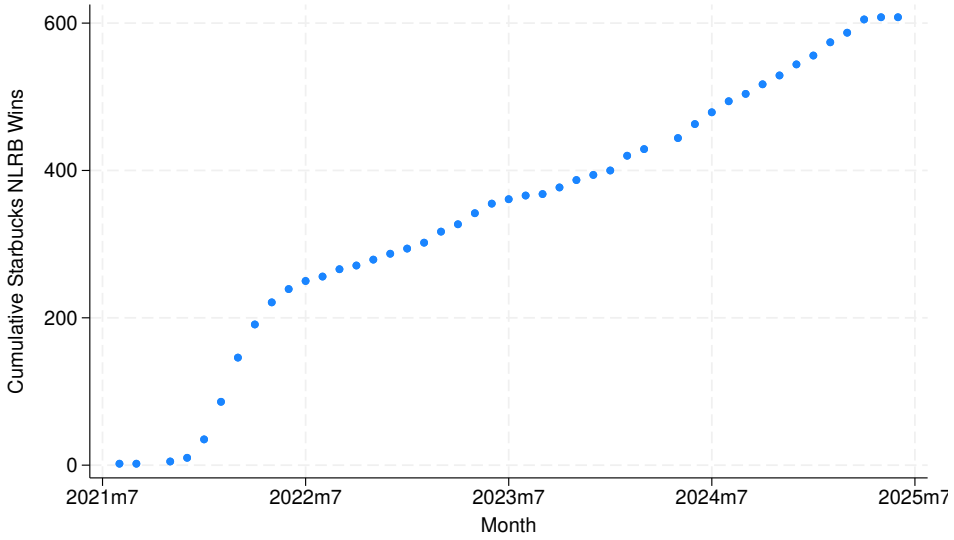
7 Figures

Figure 1: NLRB union elections from 2017–23

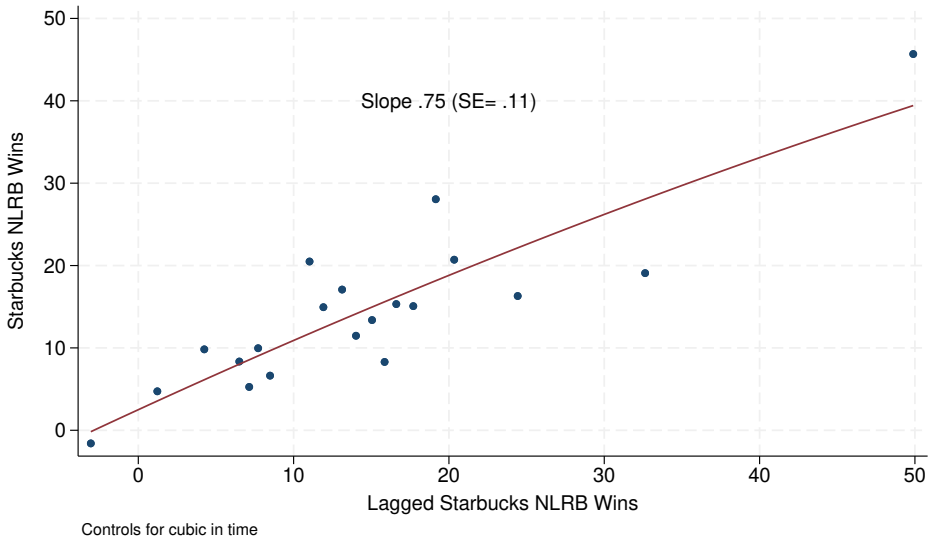


Notes: This figure shows the number of NLRB union elections held each year from 2017 to 2023. Source: Bloomberg Law.

Figure 2: Starbucks Organizing Wins



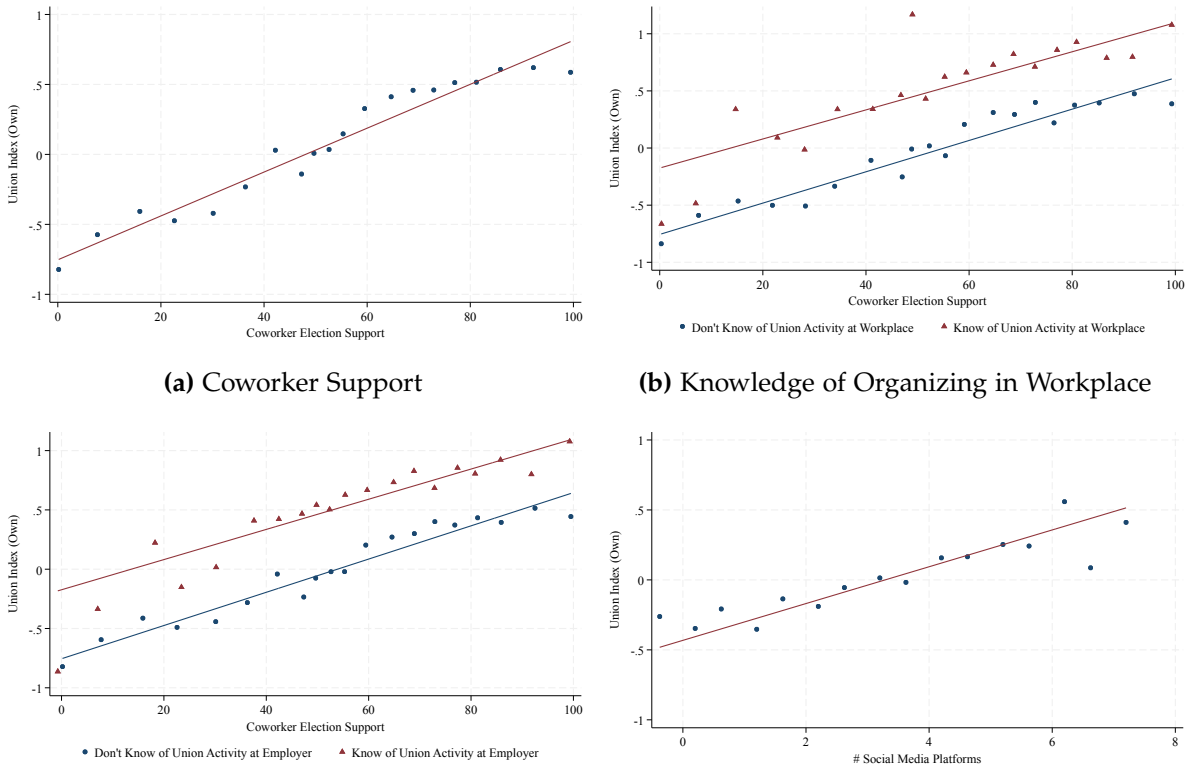
Panel (a): Cumulative Starbucks union election wins (2021–25)



Panel (b): Correlation between wins and lagged wins

Notes: Panel (a) shows the cumulative number of NLRB union election wins at Starbucks since July 2021. Panel (b) shows the conditional correlation between Starbucks NLRB wins and last month's number of Starbucks NLRB wins, controlling for a cubic polynomial in time.
Source: NLRB elections data.

Figure 3: Learning Correlates of Union Support for Control Group



(a) Coworker Support

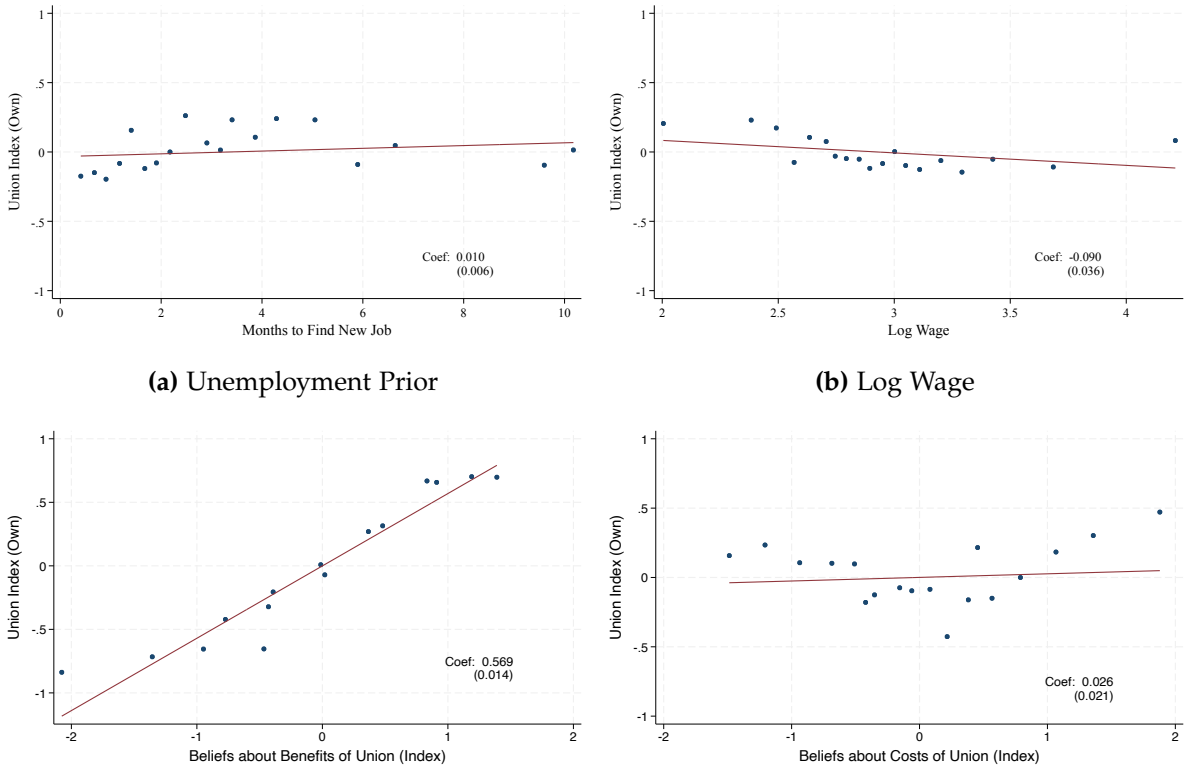
(b) Knowledge of Organizing in Workplace

(c) Knowledge of Organizing at Employer

(d) Social Media Use

Notes: This binned scatter plot shows the relationship between respondents' beliefs about the fraction of coworkers who would support a union (panels (a)-(c) or the number of social media platform respondents use (panel (d)) and an index variable that measures the respondent's support for a union. To construct the plot, the union support index is first residualized with respect to an indicator for a respondent being in the YouGov panel and additionally to age group bins (panel (d) only). The x-variable is then divided into 20 equally sized bins. Within each bin, the mean of the y-variable residuals are plotted against the mean of x-variable residuals. The unconditional mean of the union support index is added back in to help with the interpretation of the lines of best fit. Sample is restricted to control respondents. In panels (b) and (c), the sample is divided by those who know of union activity in their establishment of work or their employer more broadly, and those who do not know of such activity.

Figure 4: Economic Correlates of Union Support for Control Group



(a) Unemployment Prior

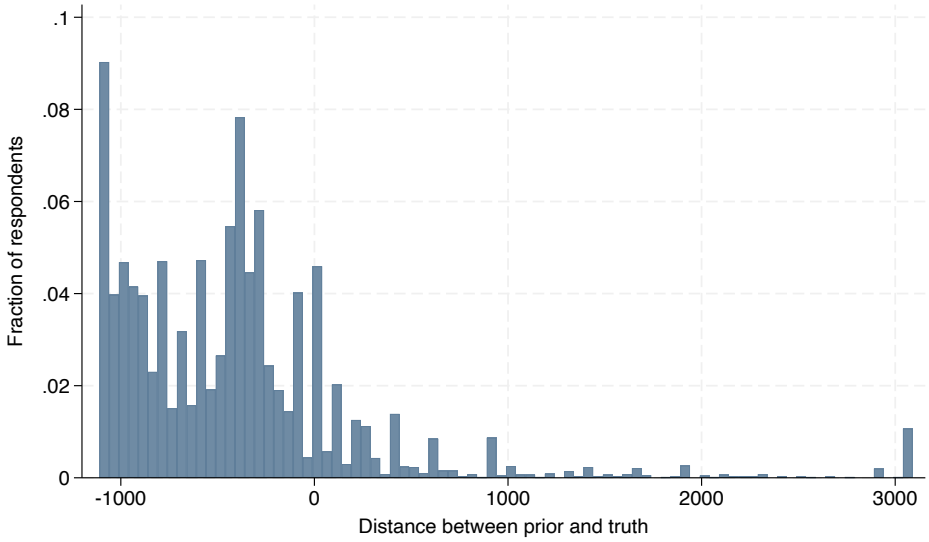
(b) Log Wage

(c) Beliefs about Benefits of Union

(d) Beliefs about Costs of Union

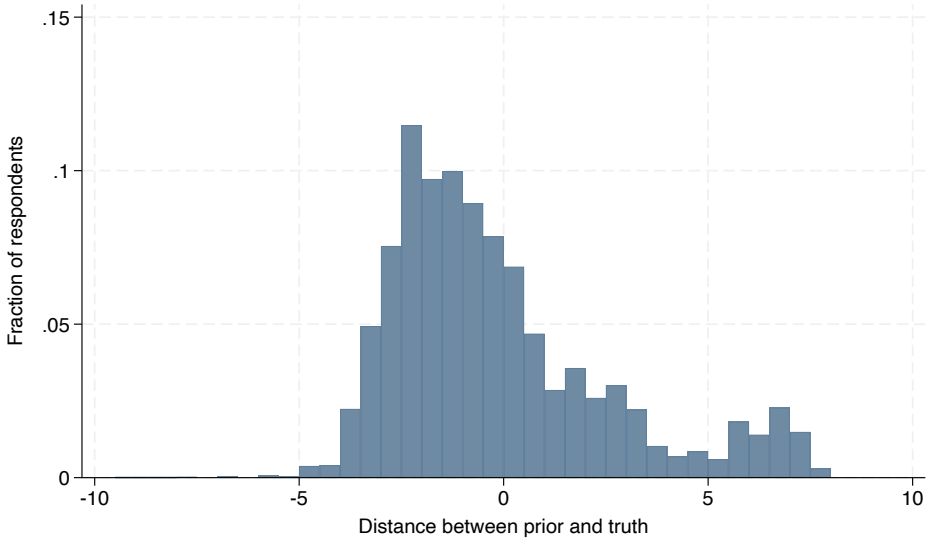
Notes: This binned scatter plot shows the relationship between economic variables and an index of union support. The x-axis in panel (a) is the number of months the respondent believes it would take them to find a job similar to their current one. In panels (c) and (d), the x-axis is an index of perceived benefits and costs of unionizing. The plots are constructed as described in the notes to Figure 3. The coefficient and robust standard errors are reported on the graph. Only the control sample is used to construct the plots.

Figure 5: Distance between prior on union elections and truth



Notes: This figure shows the distance between respondents' prior on the average annual number of union elections in 2022-23 and the truth. The true value comes from NLRB union elections data for the retail and services sectors obtained from Bloomberg Law.

Figure 6: Distance between prior about UE duration and truth



Notes: This figure shows the distance between respondents' prior about labor market conditions and the truth. We measure priors about labor market conditions as the expected number of months it would take the respondent get a new, similar job if they became unemployed. The true value is obtained from computing the average UE duration in the CPS for workers employed in the retail and services sectors.

8 Tables

Table 1: Summary statistics

	(1) YouGov Mean	(2) Prolific Mean	(3) Overall Mean	(4) ACS 2023
Gender				
Male	0.47	0.31	0.41	0.42
Female	0.52	0.67	0.57	0.58
Other gender identity	0.01	0.02	0.02	
Race				
White	0.63	0.64	0.63	0.57
Black	0.17	0.14	0.16	0.13
Other	0.19	0.23	0.21	0.29
Age group				
18 to 24	0.13	0.16	0.14	0.16
25 to 39	0.40	0.48	0.43	0.37
40 plus	0.46	0.36	0.43	0.48
Highest education				
High school or less	0.25	0.15	0.22	0.35
Some college/2-yr degree	0.37	0.39	0.38	0.33
College 4-yr degree	0.26	0.33	0.29	0.21
Post-graduate degree	0.12	0.13	0.12	0.11
Family income				
Upto 39,999	0.28	0.25	0.27	0.10
40,000 to 69,999	0.28	0.30	0.29	0.13
70,000 to 119,999	0.27	0.30	0.28	0.22
Above 120,000	0.17	0.15	0.16	0.33
Employment details				
Sector: Retail	0.34	0.37	0.35	0.28
Sector: Services	0.66	0.63	0.65	0.72
Hourly wage	21.33	21.18	21.28	24.51

Notes: This table reports basic demographic information on our sample of hourly, employed workers in the retail and services sectors. Columns 1 and 2 report the means of the variables separately for the YouGov and Prolific samples. Column 3 reports the overall sample mean, combining across the YouGov and Prolific samples. Column 4 shows summary statistics from the 2023 American Community Survey, restricting the ACS sample to individuals aged 18–65 who work part or full-time in the retail or service sectors. The hourly wage for the ACS is calculated by taking the average yearly income ($50,985.11) and dividing by 2,080 (40 hours of work per week times 52 weeks).

Table 2: First-stage effects

	Union elections in 2024 (in 100s)		Ease of finding a job	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Tightness (T)	-0.020	-0.501	-0.050	-0.139***
	(0.199)	(0.667)	(0.037)	(0.040)
Union (U)	5.663***	-1.626***	0.002	-0.007
	(0.189)	(0.585)	(0.037)	(0.040)
Combined (C)	5.381***	-1.828***	-0.058	-0.125***
	(0.187)	(0.588)	(0.037)	(0.040)
T × Pessimist Union		0.591		
		(0.682)		
U × Pessimist Union		8.713***		
		(0.608)		
C × Pessimist Union		8.605***		
		(0.610)		
T × Pessimist LM				0.256***
				(0.076)
U × Pessimist LM				-0.029
				(0.075)
C × Pessimist LM				0.233***
				(0.075)
Pessimist Union		-10.999***		
		(0.519)		
Pessimist LM				-1.141***
				(0.053)
p: T=U	0.000	0.031	0.158	0.001
p: T=C	0.000	0.012	0.821	0.737
p: U=C	0.091	0.626	0.101	0.003
p: T+TxP=U+UxP		0.000		0.017
p: T+TxP=C+CxP		0.000		0.885
p: U+UxP=C+CxP		0.082		0.023
N	9031	9028	9046	8898
Control Mean	6.314	6.314	3.095	3.095

Notes: This table shows treatment effects on posterior beliefs. The dependent variables are: the estimated number of union elections in the retail and services sectors in 2024, measured in 100s (columns 1–2); and the ease of finding a new job similar to the current one in the case of unemployment, measured on a 5-point scale where 1 is very difficult and 5 is very easy (columns 3–4). Columns 1 and 3 report simple intent-to-treat estimates, as per specification 2. Columns 2 and 4 fully interact the base specification with an indicator for whether the respondent was a baseline pessimist with regard to (i) union activity in 2022–23 and (ii) labor market conditions (see specification 3). A respondent is considered to be 'Pessimist Union' if their prior belief about union elections in 2022–23 was lower than the truth. A respondent is a 'Pessimist LM' if they believed that the number of months it would take to find a new job similar to their current one under unemployment was greater than the truth. The number of observations vary due to item non-response. The bottom panel reports *p*-values from tests of equality of coefficients between treatment arms. Regressions include a sampling source fixed effect. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. * $p<0.10$, ** $p<0.05$, *** $p<0.01$

Table 3: Support for unions

	Union support index	
	(1)	(2)
Tightness (T)	0.035	0.056*
	(0.025)	(0.031)
Union (U)	0.091***	0.103***
	(0.025)	(0.030)
Combined (C)	0.131***	0.148***
	(0.025)	(0.030)
T × Pessimist LM		-0.076
		(0.056)
U × Pessimist LM		-0.039
		(0.055)
C × Pessimist LM		-0.064
		(0.056)
Pessimist LM		0.066*
		(0.039)
p: T=U	0.028	0.125
p: T=C	0.000	0.002
p: U=C	0.110	0.131
p: T+TxP=U+UxP		0.075
p: T+TxP=C+CxP		0.029
p: U+UxP=C+CxP		0.660
N	7588	7458
Control Mean	-0.062	-0.062

Notes: This table reports treatment effects on individuals' willingness to support unions. Sample is restricted to baseline union pessimists. The dependent variable is an index of union support, based on three components that measure interest in talking to a coworker who wants to form a union, likelihood of discussing unions with coworkers in the next month, and willingness to vote for a union. egressions on the individual index components are shown in Appendix Table D6. Column 1 shows the simple ITT estimates, whereas column 2 reports heterogeneous effects by respondents' labor market perceptions. A respondent is classified as a "Pessimist LM" if they overestimated the number of months it would take to find a job comparable to their current one if unemployed. The bottom panel reports *p*-values from tests of equality of coefficients between treatment arms. All regressions include a sampling source fixed effect. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. * $p<0.10$, ** $p<0.05$, *** $p<0.01$

Table 4: Determinants of union support

	Coworker support		Benefits		Costs	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Tightness (T)	-0.004	0.011	0.060**	0.069**	0.001	0.005
	(0.028)	(0.034)	(0.029)	(0.035)	(0.027)	(0.032)
Union (U)	0.076***	0.124***	0.081***	0.101***	-0.003	-0.002
	(0.028)	(0.034)	(0.029)	(0.034)	(0.027)	(0.032)
Combined (C)	0.103***	0.122***	0.076***	0.070**	0.013	0.013
	(0.028)	(0.034)	(0.029)	(0.035)	(0.027)	(0.033)
T × Pessimist LM		-0.059		-0.039		0.007
		(0.062)		(0.066)		(0.061)
U × Pessimist LM		-0.164***		-0.080		0.007
		(0.062)		(0.065)		(0.062)
C × Pessimist LM		-0.070		0.018		0.011
		(0.062)		(0.064)		(0.061)
Pessimist LM		0.087**		-0.027		0.042
		(0.044)		(0.045)		(0.044)
p: T=U	0.004	0.001	0.460	0.351	0.867	0.828
p: T=C	0.000	0.001	0.581	0.982	0.659	0.807
p: U=C	0.339	0.945	0.851	0.363	0.545	0.647
p: T+TxP=U+UxP		0.874		0.879		0.889
p: T+TxP=C+CxP		0.051		0.302		0.808
p: U+UxP=C+CxP		0.076		0.232		0.709
N	7635	7499	7587	7457	7586	7456
Control Mean	-0.041	-0.041	-0.046	-0.046	-0.009	-0.009

Notes: This table reports treatment effects on the determinants on union support—coworker support, and benefits from and costs of unionization. Sample is restricted to baseline union pessimists. The dependent variables are all indices: coworker support index, formed from two variables that ask about the share of coworkers that would sign cards for a chance to have a union election and that would vote to form a union (columns 1–2); index of perceived benefits from forming a union, constructed from two variables measuring agreement on a 5-point scale with whether a union would increase pay and benefits and respect at work (columns 3–4); and, an index of perceived costs of forming a union, constructed from three variables measuring agreement on a 5-point scale with whether a union would reduce work hours, increase chance of firing, or of shutting down worksite (columns 5–6). Regressions on the individual index components are shown in Appendix D7. Odd-numbered columns report simple ITT estimates, while even-numbered columns report heterogeneous effects by respondents' labor market perceptions. A respondent is classified as a "Pessimist LM" if they overestimated the number of months it would take to find a job comparable to their current one if unemployed. The bottom panel reports *p*-values from tests of equality of coefficients between treatment arms. All regressions include a sampling source fixed effect. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. * $p<0.10$, ** $p<0.05$, *** $p<0.01$

Table 5: Behavioral measures

	WTP>0		Interest in newsletter		Interest in EWOC	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Tightness (T)	0.010	0.003	0.003	0.002	0.008	0.001
	(0.014)	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.019)	(0.014)	(0.017)
Union (U)	0.030**	0.028	0.011	0.007	0.003	0.001
	(0.014)	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.019)	(0.014)	(0.017)
Combined (C)	0.009	0.000	0.010	-0.003	0.005	0.001
	(0.014)	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.019)	(0.014)	(0.017)
T × Pessimist LM		0.012		-0.009		0.016
		(0.031)		(0.035)		(0.031)
U × Pessimist LM		-0.013		0.007		-0.001
		(0.031)		(0.035)		(0.030)
C × Pessimist LM		0.020		0.032		0.009
		(0.031)		(0.035)		(0.030)
Pessimist LM		-0.027		-0.015		-0.015
		(0.022)		(0.025)		(0.021)
N	7584	7454	7584	7454	7581	7452
Control Mean	0.254	0.254	0.409	0.409	0.239	0.239

Notes: This table reports treatment effects on behavioral measures of willingness to engage with unions. Sample is restricted to baseline union pessimists. The dependent variables are: whether the respondent was willingness to pay to gain access to videos they saw in the survey (columns 1–2); interest in receiving a newsletter on organizing in the workplace (columns 3–4); and interest in connecting with an EWOC workplace organizer. Odd-numbered columns report simple ITT estimates, while even-numbered columns report heterogeneous effects by respondents' labor market perceptions. A respondent is classified as a "Pessimist LM" if they overestimated the number of months it would take to find a job comparable to their current one if unemployed. The bottom panel reports p-values from tests of equality of coefficients between treatment arms. All regressions include a sampling source fixed effect. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Table 6: Effect heterogeneity by baseline information environment

	Dependent variable: Union support index			
	Organizing activity at employer		Coworker support at baseline	
	(1) No	(2) Yes	(3) Q1-Q3	(4) Q4
Tightness (T)	0.042	0.038	0.058*	0.010
	(0.031)	(0.072)	(0.035)	(0.059)
T × Pessimist LM	-0.041	-0.079	-0.081	0.141
	(0.057)	(0.142)	(0.065)	(0.102)
Union (U)	0.108***	0.007	0.129***	-0.018
	(0.030)	(0.076)	(0.035)	(0.056)
U × Pessimist LM	-0.016	0.042	-0.016	0.149
	(0.056)	(0.143)	(0.065)	(0.106)
Combined (C)	0.153***	0.088	0.152***	0.050
	(0.031)	(0.072)	(0.035)	(0.056)
C × Pessimist LM	-0.082	0.064	-0.046	0.112
	(0.057)	(0.133)	(0.067)	(0.102)
Pessimist LM	0.065	-0.076	0.048	-0.128*
	(0.040)	(0.096)	(0.047)	(0.069)
p: T=U	0.035	0.667	0.044	0.625
p: T=C	0.000	0.474	0.007	0.499
p: U=C	0.137	0.267	0.528	0.221
p: T+TxP=U+UxP	0.056	0.485	0.010	0.827
p: T+TxP=C+CxP	0.149	0.108	0.020	0.905
p: U+UxP=C+CxP	0.669	0.387	0.887	0.744
N	6324	1134	4906	1553
Control Mean	-0.178	0.617	-0.174	0.541

Notes: This table reports effect heterogeneity by respondents' baseline information environment. Sample is restricted to baseline union pessimists. The dependent variable is the union support index. Heterogeneity is shown along two pre-treatment covariates: (i) awareness of organizing activity at the respondent's employer (columns 1–2); and (ii) perceived coworker support for a union, split into the bottom 75% and top 25% of the distribution (columns 3–4). A respondent is classified as a "Pessimist LM" if they overestimated the number of months it would take to find a job comparable to their current one if unemployed. The bottom panel reports *p*-values from tests of equality of coefficients between treatment arms. All regressions include a sampling source fixed effect. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. * $p<0.10$, ** $p<0.05$, *** $p<0.01$

Table 7: Effect heterogeneity by current job quality

	Dependent variable: Union support index			
	Job quality: Wage		Job quality: Non-Wage	
	(1) Below p50	(2) Above p50	(3) Below p50	(4) Above p50
Tightness (T)	0.013	0.103**	0.038	0.074*
	(0.043)	(0.044)	(0.042)	(0.044)
T × Pessimist LM	-0.108	-0.074	-0.082	-0.072
	(0.085)	(0.075)	(0.075)	(0.083)
Union (U)	0.061	0.145***	0.111***	0.098**
	(0.042)	(0.044)	(0.041)	(0.044)
U × Pessimist LM	-0.046	-0.061	-0.048	-0.039
	(0.082)	(0.075)	(0.075)	(0.082)
Combined (C)	0.121***	0.182***	0.196***	0.109**
	(0.042)	(0.044)	(0.041)	(0.044)
C × Pessimist LM	-0.088	-0.078	-0.087	-0.058
	(0.083)	(0.076)	(0.074)	(0.085)
Pessimist LM	0.138**	0.041	0.066	0.072
	(0.060)	(0.052)	(0.053)	(0.058)
p: T=U	0.253	0.338	0.081	0.592
p: T=C	0.011	0.072	0.000	0.431
p: U=C	0.149	0.406	0.040	0.799
p: T+TxP=U+UxP	0.120	0.368	0.080	0.431
p: T+TxP=C+CxP	0.079	0.230	0.012	0.523
p: U+UxP=C+CxP	0.799	0.755	0.450	0.915
N	3626	3825	3611	3847
Control Mean	0.011	-0.128	-0.069	-0.054

Notes: This table reports effect heterogeneity by respondents' job quality. Sample is restricted to baseline union pessimists. The dependent variable is the union support index. Heterogeneity is shown along below and above median values of two pre-treatment covariates: (i) hourly wage (columns 1–2); and (ii) an index of non-wage job attributes (columns 3–4). The non-wage attributes include: measures of job satisfaction, friends at work, problems at work, voice on the job, and fair treatment at work. A respondent is classified as a "Pessimist LM" if they overestimated the number of months it would take to find a job comparable to their current one if unemployed. The bottom panel reports *p*-values from tests of equality of coefficients between treatment arms. All regressions include a sampling source fixed effect. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. * $p<0.10$, ** $p<0.05$, *** $p<0.01$

ONLINE APPENDIX

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A Qualitative reports about drivers of union activity

We provide a list of quotes from news reports and press releases that highlight the role of (i) social spillovers in union activity and (ii) labor market conditions in potentially shaping organizing and union activity.

Union activity

> (1) "When we see young people leading this movement, a lot of other young people say, 'Hey, this person is my age... and if this person could lead a labor movement at their store and get an election at their store, why can't I at my store?"' (Betts, 2022)

> (2) "After seeing Verizon workers in Washington win a union, we felt inspired and motivated to demand a voice and fight for the respect and dignity we deserve." (NABET-CWA Local 44, 2022)

> (3) "Starbucks employees around the country say they're seeing successful union votes at other locations and thinking they could improve conditions at their own stores by doing the same." (Molla, 2022)

> (4) "We definitely have seen what Starbucks has done—it's been incredibly inspiring—and Amazon as well." (Gibson, 2022)

Labor market tightness

> (5) "'OK, so what if Chipotle closes down?' They were like, 'Oh I'd just get a job at Qdoba, they're hiring for $14 an hour.' I think it's a tight labor market that is giving people a lot of power right now." (Furman, 2022)

> (6) "One is that we have historically a very tight labor market right now. [...] And this means that workers have a lot of leverage with their employers right now, which makes it more likely that they feel willing at this moment to sort of take risks, to demand more, because they know, if they get fired, that they can go out and get another job." (PBS NewsHour, 2023)

B Experiment details

B.1 Construction of *Tightness* information

We use monthly CPS microdata from October 2023–September 2024 to construct a measure of labor market tightness, which we define as the expected duration of unemployment spells. The construction proceeds in several steps. First, we identify individuals aged 16–64 who are unemployed at the start of the CPS reference period and follow them across months to observe transitions into employment. From this, we construct an indicator for moving from unemployment to employment between adjacent months (the UE transition). Restricting the sample to workers in retail and service industries, we calculate the average UE transition probability at the state level over the 12-month window. The inverse of this probability provides our measure of expected unemployment duration, i.e., the expected number of months to find a job in the retail and services sectors if unemployed. To reduce noise, we round the resulting duration measure to half-month increments. The table below shows the variation in the tightness measure across U.S. states in the experiment.

UE duration (in months)	States
2	Maine
2.5	Delaware, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota, Vermont
3	Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Michigan, Montana, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Utah
3.5	Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Missouri, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Virginia, Wyoming
4	Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, Texas, Washington
4.5	California, Connecticut, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin
5	Mississippi
5.5	North Carolina, West Virginia
6.5	Hawaii
10	District Of Columbia

B.2 Scripts from the information videos

Information on labor market tightness: This video had a duration of about 16 seconds and followed the script below:

> Did you know? In your state, it usually takes an unemployed person about X months to find a new retail or service sector job that they are willing to work.

Information on union activity: This video had a duration of 1 minute and 3 seconds and followed the script below:

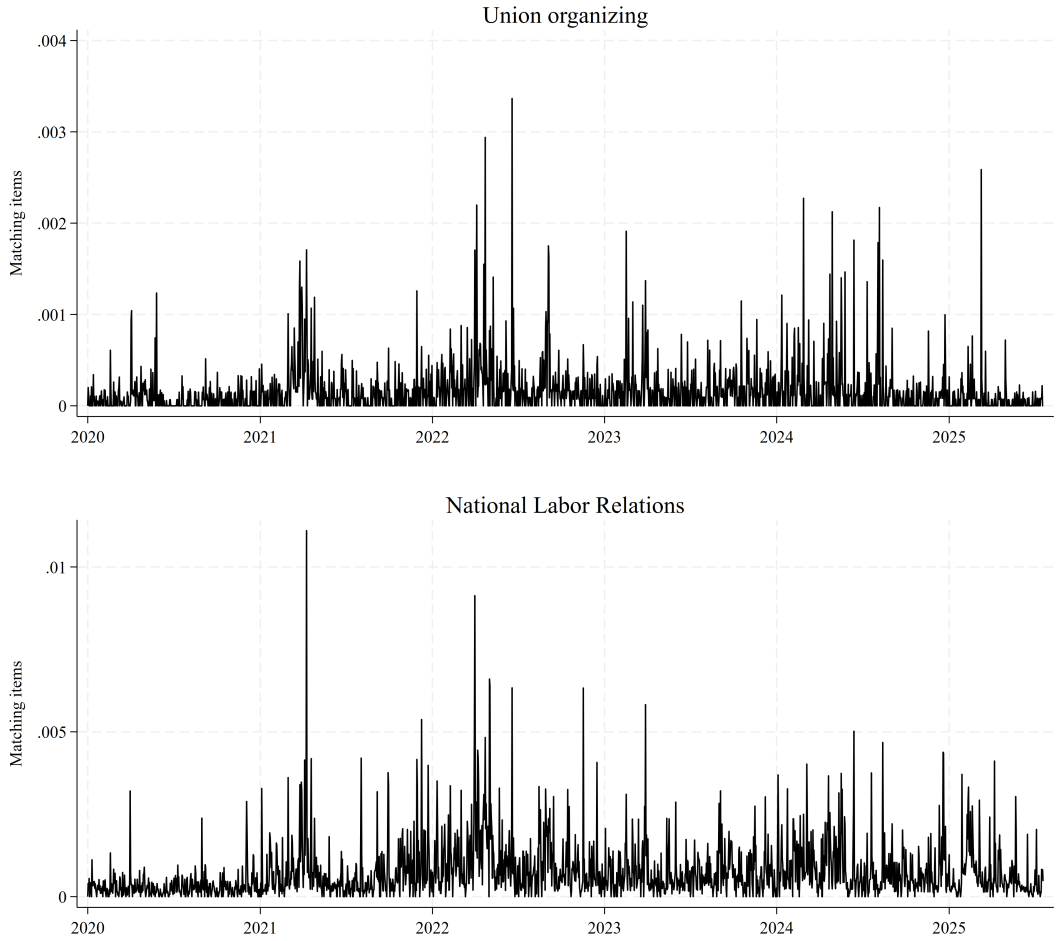
> Recently, retail and service workers around the country have been taking action to improve their workplaces—walking out, going on strike, and forming unions. To understand how this moment looks different from the recent past, we looked at the number of union elections followed by workers in the retail and service sectors over the last several years. Between 2017 and 2021, there were 660 union elections each year on average. But in the last two years, the yearly average jumped to

1,110 elections, an increase of nearly 70%. Workers are also winning about 80% of these elections. This dramatic recent increase in union elections comes from across the country. In this moment, retail and service workers—from Walgreens and Starbucks to restaurants and hospitals—are organizing new unions around the country.

C Additional figures

C.1 Union Searches

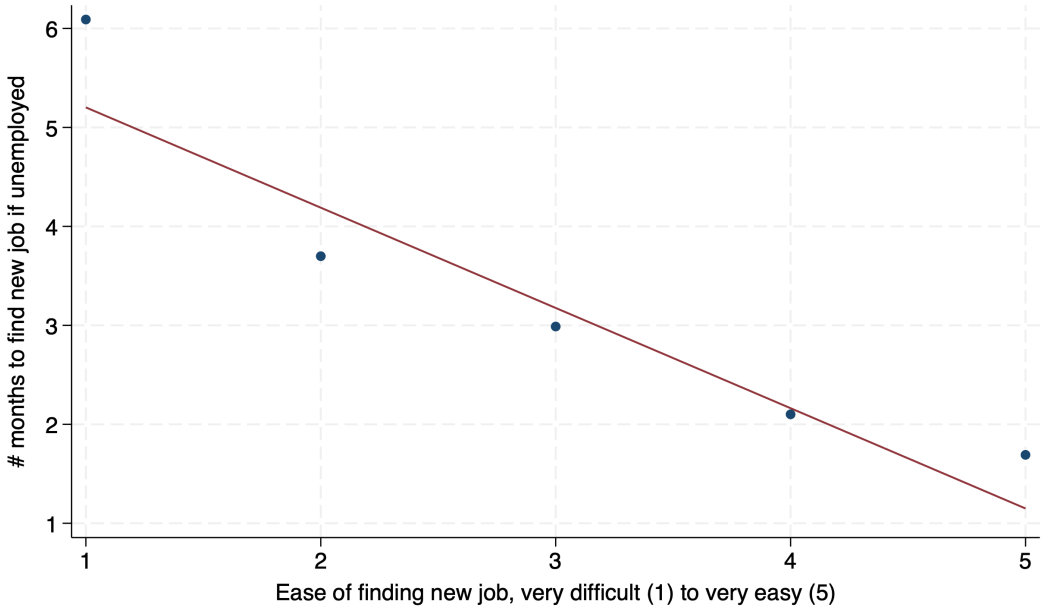
Figure C1: Searches for Union Terms



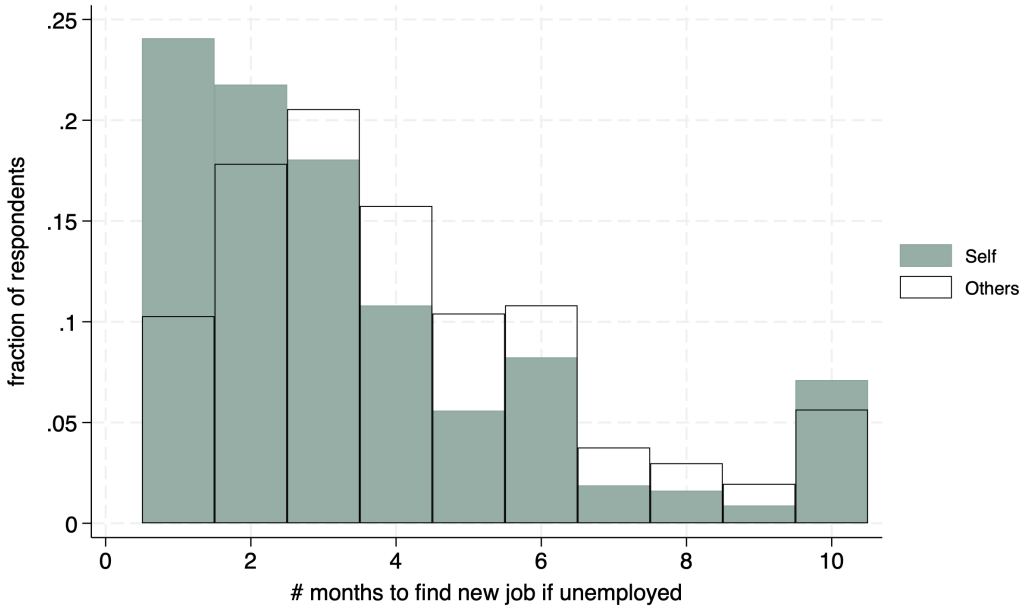
Source: Media Cloud.

C.2 Relationship between measures of labor market perceptions

Panel (a): Expected unemployment duration by perceived ease of finding a new job



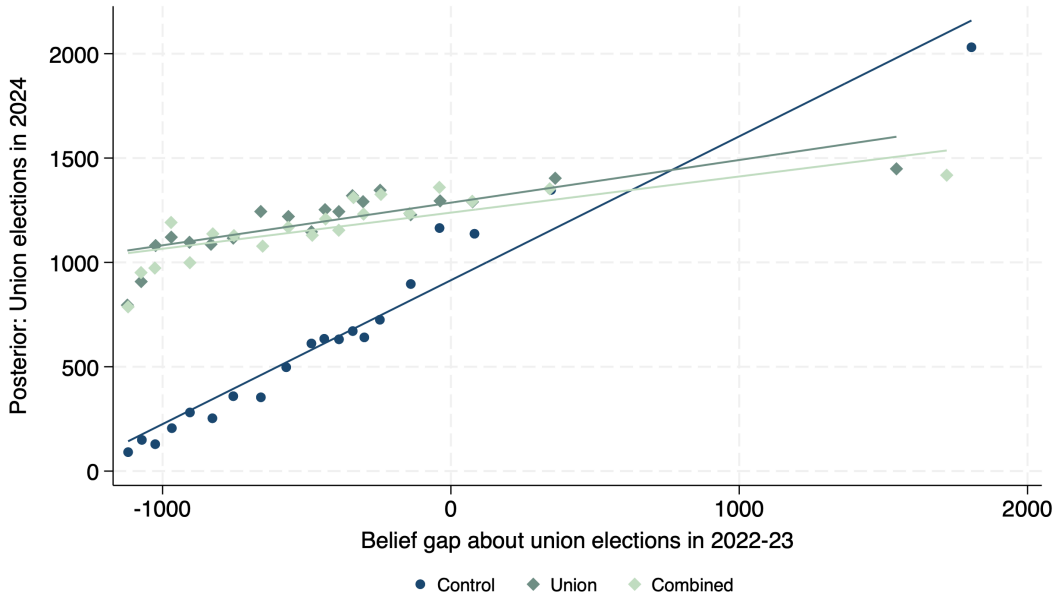
Panel (b): Expected unemployment duration: self versus others



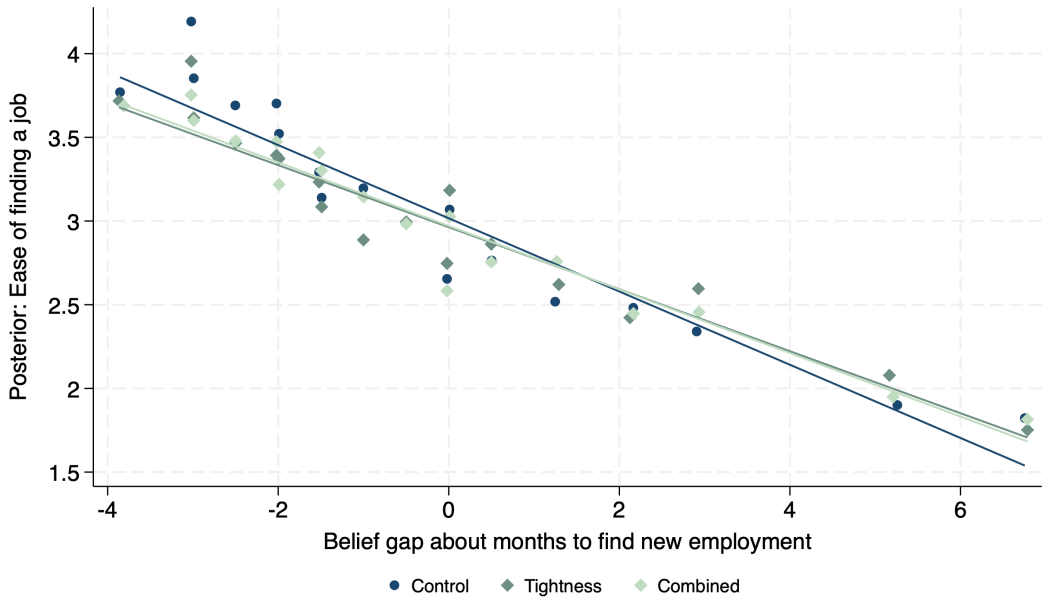
Notes: This figure shows the relationship between the three survey measures of labor market perceptions. Panel (a) presents a binned scatterplot of respondents' prior beliefs about the number of months it would take them to find a new job similar to their current one, plotted against a scale measure of perceived job-finding ease (ranging from 1=very difficult to 5=very easy). Panel (b) compares respondents' beliefs about their own job-finding prospects with their beliefs about "others like them."

C.3 First-stage effects

Panel (a): Information about union activity

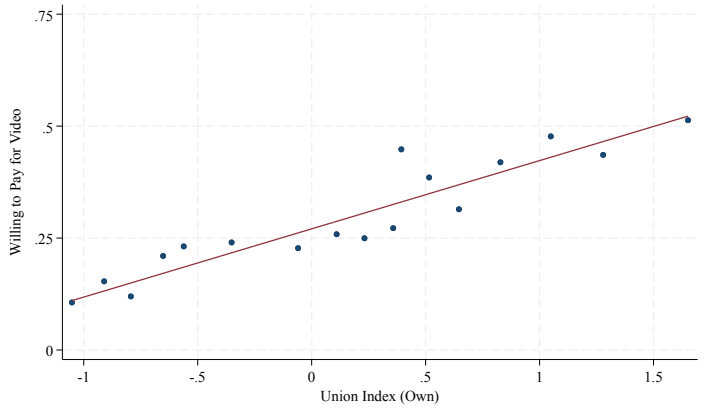


Panel (b): Information about labor market conditions

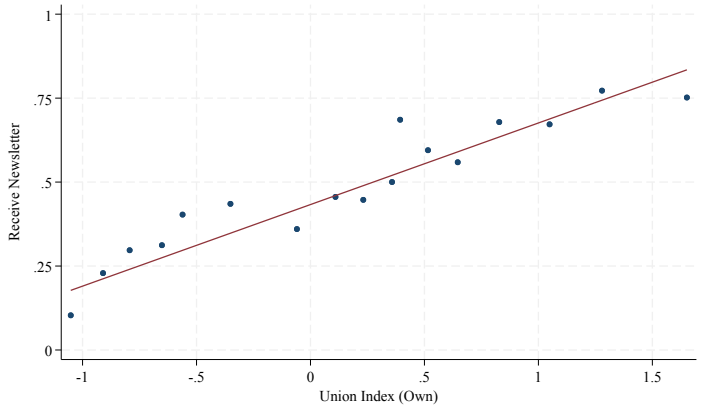


Notes: This figure presents binned scatterplots of treatment effects on posterior beliefs for the two types of information provided in the experiment. Panel (a) shows the effects on beliefs about union elections in 2024, plotted against the belief gap in union elections during 2022–23. Panel (b) shows the effects on reported ease of finding a new job on a 5-pt scale, plotted against the belief gap in the expected number of months to find a new job under unemployment. The belief gap is calculated as the difference between respondents' prior and the true value.

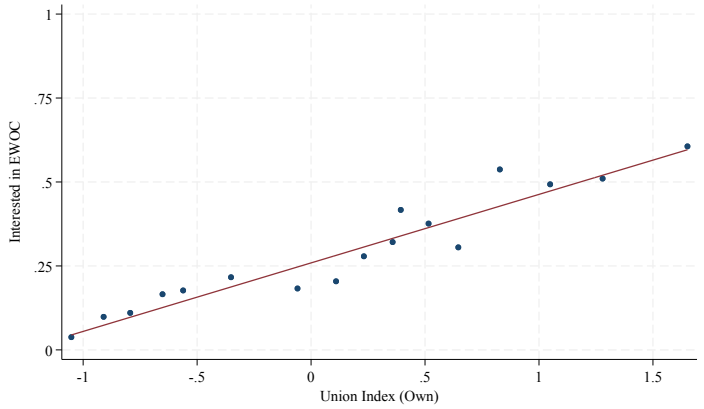
C.4 Relationship between union support and behavioral measures



(a) Pay for Informational Video



(b) Interested in Newsletter



(c) Interested in EWOC

Notes: This figure shows binned scatterplots of the relationship between our index of union support and behavioral measures from the survey. Sample is restricted to control respondents only. Panel (a) measures willingness to pay for accessing videos seen in the experiment. Panel (b) reports interest in receiving a newsletter about organizing in the workplace. Panel (c) reports interest in connecting with a volunteer organizer at EWOC.

D Additional tables

Table D1: Correlation between Social Media and Union Knowledge

	Employer in News	Union Election Prior	
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Num. Social Media Platforms	0.071***	44.06***	39.96***
	(0.014)	(9.597)	(9.47)
Union Familiarity (1-10)			14.42***
			(5.125)
N	2263	2261	2260

Notes: This table shows the relationship between the number of social media platforms a respondent reports using and their knowledge of unions. The outcome in column 1 is an indicator for having heard about one's employer in the news. In columns 2 and 3, the outcome is the respondent's prior on the number of union elections. All regressions are estimated using only the control group. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses.

Table D2: Sample size by baseline misperceptions

	Union optimist	Union pessimist	Total
Labor market optimist	889	4,872	5,761
Labor market pessimist	540	2,627	3,167
Total	1,429	7,499	8,928

Notes: This table shows the available sample sizes by subgroups defined by baseline misperceptions about union activity $\times$ labor market tightness. There are fewer than 9,089 observations due to item non-response for baseline beliefs. A 'union optimist' is defined as an individual whose prior on the number of annual union elections in 2022–23 exceeded the true value (and vice versa for pessimists). A 'labor market optimist' is defined as someone who estimated a shorter-than-actual duration to find a new job in the retail and service sectors under unemployment (and vice versa for pessimists).

Table D3: Correlates of Union Prior

	Prior: Union Elections							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Coworker support	1.6***							0.4
	(0.3)							(0.3)
Aware Organizing		140.8***						84.0***
		(19.8)						(21.9)
Unempl. Prior Others			12.6***					10.7***
			(2.9)					(3.1)
Num. Social Media				52.3***				47.4***
				(4.1)				(4.5)
Belief Union Wage Δ					20.8***			8.3*
					(3.5)			(4.1)
Log Wage						-4.2		-5.9
						(14.4)		(15.9)
# friends at work							14.4	-4.7
							(8.2)	(8.9)
N	7886	9083	9081	9083	9072	9064	9083	7860

Notes: This table shows the relationship between various factors and a respondent's prior about the number of union elections. In all regressions, we include an indicator that the respondent was in the YouGov sample (rather than the Prolific sample). Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses.

Table D4: Correlates of Beliefs about Unemployment

	Unemployment Prior (Months)							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Coworker support	0.000							0.000
	(0.001)							(0.001)
Aware Organizing Empl		0.202**						0.235***
		(0.070)						(0.070)
Unempl. Prior Others			0.464***					0.461***
			(0.013)					(0.014)
Num. Social Media				-0.046**				-0.088***
				(0.016)				(0.017)
Belief Union Wage Δ					-0.056***			-0.062***
					(0.014)			(0.015)
Log Wage						0.312***		0.205***
						(0.056)		(0.055)
# friends at work							-0.023	-0.044
							(0.032)	(0.031)
N	7889	9087	9085	9087	9076	9066	9087	7861

Notes: This table correlates various factors with the respondent's unemployment prior. The outcome is measured as the number of months, recorded at 0.5-month intervals, the respondent believes it would take them to find a job similar to their current job. In all regressions, we include an indicator that the respondent was in the YouGov sample (rather than the Prolific sample). Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses.

Table D5: Randomization balance

	Control	Difference			N	*p*-values for Tests of Equality			
	(1) Mean	(2) T-C	(3) U-C	(4) Combined-C	(5)	(6) T=U	(7) T=Comb	(8) U=Comb	(9) All=0
Female	0.58	-0.01	-0.01	-0.02	9,089	0.94	0.47	0.51	0.62
		(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)					
Age, in years	39.65	-0.56	-0.44	-0.89**	9,088	0.76	0.41	0.25	0.16
		(0.40)	(0.40)	(0.40)					
Has 4-year college degree	0.40	0.00	0.01	0.01	9,089	0.53	0.71	0.80	0.81
		(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)					
Race: White	0.65	-0.02	-0.02	-0.01	9,089	0.90	0.61	0.52	0.57
		(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)					
Sector: Retail	0.35	0.00	0.00	0.01	9,089	0.65	0.37	0.66	0.84
		(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)					
Hourly wage	21.45	0.00	-0.32	-0.34	9,069	0.50	0.46	0.95	0.79
		(0.46)	(0.45)	(0.46)					
Job tenure: More than 2 years	0.54	0.01	0.00	0.00	9,089	0.74	0.82	0.91	0.99
		(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)					
Establishment size	0.44	-0.01	-0.03**	-0.03**	9,088	0.28	0.23	0.91	0.10
		(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)					
Union elections per year (2022–23)	697.05	-3.63	-22.28	17.19	9,083	0.31	0.29	0.04	0.21
		(20.26)	(19.34)	(20.53)					
Expected wage change under union	1.74	0.03	0.07	0.01	9,078	0.50	0.70	0.28	0.64
		(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)					
Coworker support for union	52.55	-0.14	0.37	0.76	7,891	0.56	0.30	0.65	0.73
		(0.88)	(0.88)	(0.87)					
# months to find new job if unemployed	3.35	-0.05	-0.07	-0.02	9,087	0.79	0.69	0.51	0.82
		(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)					

Notes: This table reports randomization balance using data from the pre-treatment survey modules. Each row presents results from a separate regression. Column 1 reports the mean of the covariate for the control group. Columns 2–4 display coefficients and standard errors from regressions in which the covariate is regressed on mutually exclusive indicators for the *Tightness* (T), *Union* (U), and *Combined* treatment groups. Column 5 reports the number of observations. Columns 6–8 show *p*-values for tests of equality between treatment group coefficients. Column 9 reports the *p*-value from a joint test that all three treatment indicators are jointly equal to zero. * $p<0.10$, ** $p<0.05$, *** $p<0.01$

Table D6: Index components of union support

	Interested in union		Discuss with coworkers		Vote for union	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Tightness (T)	0.033	0.049	0.045*	0.050	0.011	0.030
	(0.032)	(0.038)	(0.027)	(0.033)	(0.016)	(0.019)
Union (U)	0.084***	0.092**	0.081***	0.087***	0.046***	0.056***
	(0.031)	(0.037)	(0.027)	(0.033)	(0.016)	(0.019)
Combined (C)	0.126***	0.150***	0.122***	0.119***	0.063***	0.078***
	(0.031)	(0.038)	(0.028)	(0.033)	(0.016)	(0.019)
T × Pessimist LM		-0.058		-0.018		-0.069*
		(0.071)		(0.061)		(0.036)
U × Pessimist LM		-0.017		-0.020		-0.035
		(0.071)		(0.062)		(0.035)
C × Pessimist LM		-0.094		0.007		-0.055
		(0.070)		(0.062)		(0.035)
Pessimist LM		0.114**		-0.007		0.051**
		(0.050)		(0.042)		(0.025)
p: T=U	0.104	0.252	0.201	0.265	0.030	0.188
p: T=C	0.003	0.008	0.007	0.042	0.001	0.013
p: U=C	0.185	0.119	0.153	0.353	0.306	0.246
p: T+TxP=U+UxP		0.163		0.501		0.046
p: T+TxP=C+CxP		0.260		0.077		0.036
p: U+UxP=C+CxP		0.752		0.280		0.944
N	7588	7458	7584	7454	7586	7456
Control Mean	2.214	2.214	1.510	1.510	0.539	0.539

Notes: This table reports treatment effects on individual components of the union support index. Sample is restricted to baseline union pessimists. The dependent variables are three components of the index of union support, which measure: interest in talking to a coworker who wants to form a union (columns 1–2); likelihood of discussing unions with coworkers in the next month (columns 3–4); and willingness to vote for a union (columns 5–6). The 4-point scale ranges from 1 ("not at all likely/interested") to 4 ("very likely/interested"). A respondent is classified as a "Pessimist LM" if they overestimated the number of months it would take to find a job comparable to their current one if unemployed. The bottom panel reports *p*-values from tests of equality of coefficients between treatment arms. All regressions include a sampling source fixed effect. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. * $p<0.10$, ** $p<0.05$, *** $p<0.01$

Table D7: Index components of determinants of union support

	Coworker support		Perceived benefits		Perceived costs		
	(1) Sign cards	(2) Vote yes	(3) ↑ Pay/benefits	(4) ↑ Respect	(5) ↓ Hours	(6) Firing	(7) Shut down
Panel A: Simple ITT effects							
Tightness (T)	-0.184	-0.088	0.059*	0.074**	-0.034	0.011	0.030
	(0.975)	(0.992)	(0.034)	(0.038)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.037)
Union (U)	2.757***	2.395**	0.058*	0.126***	-0.033	0.012	0.012
	(0.975)	(0.995)	(0.034)	(0.037)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.037)
Combined (C)	3.365***	3.703***	0.084**	0.084**	-0.006	0.037	0.020
	(0.984)	(1.009)	(0.034)	(0.037)	(0.035)	(0.036)	(0.037)
p: T=U	0.003	0.012	0.990	0.170	0.979	0.969	0.638
p: T=C	0.000	0.000	0.455	0.798	0.426	0.467	0.784
p: U=C	0.537	0.192	0.450	0.261	0.440	0.498	0.847
N	6050	6036	7584	7573	7577	7575	7575
Control Mean	48.401	49.837	3.587	3.294	2.834	2.550	2.613
Panel B: Effects by labor market pessimism							
Tightness (T)	0.015	0.627	0.059	0.097**	-0.016	0.004	0.034
	(1.163)	(1.186)	(0.040)	(0.045)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.044)
T × Pessimist LM	-0.914	-2.783	-0.012	-0.079	-0.029	0.032	0.011
	(2.178)	(2.211)	(0.077)	(0.084)	(0.078)	(0.078)	(0.083)
Union (U)	4.110***	4.246***	0.094**	0.133***	-0.033	0.004	0.025
	(1.165)	(1.190)	(0.040)	(0.045)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.044)
U × Pessimist LM	-4.706**	-6.240***	-0.130*	-0.043	0.012	0.044	-0.032
	(2.180)	(2.228)	(0.078)	(0.083)	(0.080)	(0.080)	(0.083)
Combined (C)	3.754***	4.532***	0.064	0.094**	-0.006	0.031	0.023
	(1.181)	(1.209)	(0.041)	(0.045)	(0.042)	(0.043)	(0.045)
C × Pessimist LM	-1.550	-2.947	0.070	-0.038	0.012	0.021	0.004
	(2.188)	(2.247)	(0.076)	(0.082)	(0.078)	(0.080)	(0.083)
Pessimist LM	2.169	3.619**	-0.043	-0.014	0.050	0.078	0.027
	(1.544)	(1.587)	(0.054)	(0.058)	(0.056)	(0.056)	(0.059)
p: T=U	0.000	0.002	0.380	0.411	0.688	0.995	0.840
p: T=C	0.002	0.001	0.918	0.950	0.805	0.516	0.812
p: U=C	0.763	0.812	0.445	0.379	0.514	0.519	0.969
p: T+TxP=U+UxP	0.869	0.930	0.221	0.309	0.721	0.857	0.462
p: T+TxP=C+CxP	0.091	0.044	0.189	0.581	0.430	0.802	0.803
p: U+UxP=C+CxP	0.127	0.057	0.011	0.624	0.682	0.945	0.627
N	5947	5932	7454	7443	7447	7446	7445
Control Mean	48.401	49.837	3.587	3.294	2.834	2.550	2.613

Notes: This table reports treatment effects on individual components of the determinants on union support—coworker support, and benefits from and costs of unionization. Sample is restricted to baseline union pessimists. Panel A show simple ITT estimates, whereas Panel B shows heterogeneous effects by baseline labor market pessimism. Columns 1–2 consider two measures of coworker support: the share of coworkers willing to (i) sign cards to have a union election or (ii) vote yes to form a union. Columns 3–4 consider benefits from unionization by measuring the respondents' agreement on a 5-point scale with whether a union would increase (i) pay and benefits and (ii) respect at work. Columns 5–7 measure perceived costs of forming a union by assessing respondents' agreement on a 5-point scale with whether a union would (i) reduce work hours, (ii) increase chance of firing, and (iii) shut down worksite. A respondent is classified as a "Pessimist LM" if they overestimated the number of months it would take to find a job comparable to their current one if unemployed. The bottom panel reports *p*-values from tests of equality of coefficients between treatment arms. All regressions include a sampling source fixed effect. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. * $p<0.10$, ** $p<0.05$, *** $p<0.01$

Table D8: Union support and determinants of support, Sample of baseline union optimists

	Union support index		Coworker support		Benefits		Costs	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Tightness (T)	-0.133**	-0.201***	-0.038	-0.071	-0.138**	-0.210***	-0.010	-0.001
	(0.061)	(0.073)	(0.059)	(0.068)	(0.064)	(0.074)	(0.065)	(0.076)
Union (U)	-0.014	-0.053	0.045	0.019	0.029	-0.023	-0.006	0.031
	(0.060)	(0.071)	(0.058)	(0.066)	(0.064)	(0.073)	(0.064)	(0.074)
Combined (C)	-0.005	-0.043	0.048	0.042	-0.040	-0.109	-0.047	-0.018
	(0.059)	(0.072)	(0.056)	(0.065)	(0.064)	(0.076)	(0.063)	(0.075)
T × Pessimist LM		0.218		0.115		0.194		-0.064
		(0.137)		(0.134)		(0.147)		(0.148)
U × Pessimist LM		0.151		0.126		0.133		-0.170
		(0.138)		(0.140)		(0.150)		(0.152)
C × Pessimist LM		0.122		0.042		0.177		-0.134
		(0.129)		(0.129)		(0.139)		(0.141)
Pessimist LM		-0.165*		-0.079		-0.220**		-0.014
		(0.092)		(0.092)		(0.102)		(0.105)
p: T=U	0.050	0.035	0.166	0.191	0.009	0.011	0.959	0.655
p: T=C	0.033	0.026	0.143	0.099	0.124	0.186	0.547	0.818
p: U=C	0.883	0.877	0.970	0.729	0.272	0.250	0.510	0.491
p: T+TxP=U+UxP		0.517		0.421		0.347		0.577
p: T+TxP=C+CxP		0.584		0.724		0.484		0.466
p: U+UxP=C+CxP		0.876		0.614		0.737		0.917
N	1446	1428	1448	1429	1446	1428	1445	1427
Control Mean	0.317	0.317	0.209	0.209	0.249	0.249	0.058	0.058

Notes: This table reports treatment effects on union support and the three determinants on union support for baseline union *optimists*. Baseline union optimists are individuals who overestimated union activity at baseline. The dependent variables are all indices: Columns 1–2 measure union support; columns 3–4 measure perceived coworker support for unionization; and columns 5–8 measure perceived benefits and costs from unionization. Odd-numbered columns present simple ITT estimates, whereas even-numbered columns present ITT estimates by baseline labor market perceptions. A respondent is classified as a "Pessimist LM" if they overestimated the number of months it would take to find a job comparable to their current one if unemployed. The bottom panel reports *p*-values from tests of equality of coefficients between treatment arms. All regressions include a sampling source fixed effect. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. * $p<0.10$, ** $p<0.05$, *** $p<0.01$

Table D9: Effect heterogeneity by baseline information environment, Simple ITT estimates

	Organizing activity at employer		Received employer news via media sources	
	(1) No	(2) Yes	(3) Q1-Q3	(4) Q4
Tightness (T)	0.033	0.021	0.038	0.057
	(0.026)	(0.062)	(0.029)	(0.048)
Union (U)	0.103***	0.019	0.127***	0.031
	(0.025)	(0.064)	(0.029)	(0.047)
Combined (C)	0.129***	0.115*	0.141***	0.092*
	(0.026)	(0.060)	(0.029)	(0.047)
p: T=U	0.006	0.978	0.002	0.597
p: T=C	0.000	0.116	0.000	0.473
p: U=C	0.297	0.121	0.638	0.206
N	6444	1144	5007	1568
Control Mean	-0.178	0.617	-0.174	0.541

Notes: This table reports effect heterogeneity by respondents' baseline information environment. Sample is restricted to baseline union pessimists. The dependent variable is the union support index. Heterogeneity is shown along two pre-treatment covariates: (i) awareness of organizing activity at the respondent's employer (columns 1–2); and (ii) perceived coworker support for a union, split into the bottom 75% and top 25% of the distribution (columns 3–4). A respondent is classified as a "Pessimist LM" if they overestimated the number of months it would take to find a job comparable to their current one if unemployed. The bottom panel reports *p*-values from tests of equality of coefficients between treatment arms. All regressions include a sampling source fixed effect. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. * $p<0.10$, ** $p<0.05$, *** $p<0.01$

Table D10: Effect heterogeneity by employer quality, Simple ITT estimates

	Employer quality: Wage		Employer quality: Non-Wage	
	(1) Below p50	(2) Above p50	(3) Below p50	(4) Above p50
Tightness (T)	-0.010	0.078**	0.016	0.055
	(0.037)	(0.035)	(0.034)	(0.037)
Union (U)	0.051	0.125***	0.096***	0.086**
	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.034)	(0.037)
Combined (C)	0.104***	0.156***	0.173***	0.093**
	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.034)	(0.037)
p: T=U	0.091	0.180	0.019	0.392
p: T=C	0.002	0.029	0.000	0.310
p: U=C	0.129	0.399	0.024	0.861
N	3703	3877	3690	3898
Control Mean	0.011	-0.128	-0.069	-0.054

Notes: This table reports effect heterogeneity by respondents' job quality. Sample is restricted to baseline union pessimists. The dependent variable is the union support index. Heterogeneity is shown along below and above median values of two pre-treatment covariates: (i) hourly wage (columns 1–2); and (ii) an index of non-wage job attributes (columns 3–4). The non-wage attributes include: measures of job satisfaction, friends at work, problems at work, voice on the job, and fair treatment at work. A respondent is classified as a "Pessimist LM" if they overestimated the number of months it would take to find a job comparable to their current one if unemployed. The bottom panel reports *p*-values from tests of equality of coefficients between treatment arms. All regressions include a sampling source fixed effect. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. * $p<0.10$, ** $p<0.05$, *** $p<0.01$