

ABS data shows unions growing and members get paid more.

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There is a greater need for working Australians to be members of a union to protect their jobs, wages and conditions in these difficult economic times.

New ABS data released today shows there has been a lift in union membership of more than 56,000 workers and that, excluding casual workers, almost one in four (24%) employees in Australia are members of a union.

The data shows there are more than 1,750,000 workers that are members of a union and that union members earn, on average, \$96 a week more than non-members.

ACTU President Sharan Burrow said the new data was positive considering most of the Howard Government's WorkChoices IR laws were still in place when the ABS survey took place.

"This data shows unions are still relevant and strong.

"In these tough economic times it is especially important for workers to be members of a union.

"Unions help protect jobs as well as workers' wages and conditions.

"In the economic downturn, it is all the more important that workers support each other through their unions.

"We are working hard to protect as many jobs as possible and to safeguard the wages, conditions and entitlements of employees affected by the crisis.

"The lift in membership shown in today's ABS data is welcome considering many union members are excluded from the results because they are deemed to be contractors rather than employees.

The ABS data shows that the average earnings of a union member is \$1026 a week, which is \$96 a week more than non-union members (\$930). (Source: Table 14, p42 ABS 6310.0 Aug 2008)

"Despite the tough economic times, it is a very good time to join a union," said Ms Burrow.