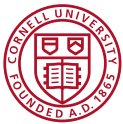


LABOR ACTION TRACKER

Annual Report 2023

Kathryn Ritchie, BSILR '24, Cornell University ILR School
 Johnnie Kallas, Assistant Professor, University of Illinois LER School
 Deepa Kylasam Iyer, PhD Student, Cornell University ILR School



ILR School



School of Labor & Employment Relations

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Suggested citation:

Ritchie, K., Kallas, J., & Iyer, D. K. (2024). Labor Action Tracker: Annual Report 2023. ILR School, Cornell University & LER School, University of Illinois. <https://www.ilr.cornell.edu/faculty-and-research/labor-action-tracker-2023>

Introduction

With the emergence of “hot labor summer” and an increase in the coverage of major work stoppages, 2023 marked an important year for the U.S. labor movement. We are excited to release the third Labor Action Tracker Annual Report, in which we present key findings from our 2023 work stoppage data. Since **funding cuts** by the Reagan administration in the early-1980s, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) has only documented work stoppages involving 1,000 or more workers that last at least an entire shift. By only recording large work stoppages, official data sources exclude the vast majority of strike activity, posing issues for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars in determining the extent of workplace conflict across the country. Increasing considerably over the past three years, strikes are an important tool for workplace and labor activism. In this report, we follow the lead of the BLS and document work stoppages, which include both strikes and lockouts. You can follow our project and view our monthly reports of strike activity on X (formerly Twitter) [@ILRLaborAction](#).

Methodology

This report is based on data we collected on strikes and lockouts in 2023. Detailed information on our project’s methodology can be found [here](#). Further details specific to the methodology for this report can be found throughout this document. We generate all our data on strikes from several public sources, including existing work stoppage databases, news articles, and social media posts. We follow rigorous verification protocols to ensure that a strike did in fact occur and to collect data on several related variables, including, but not limited to, the size, duration, industry, and demands of a strike. We link to the sources used to generate data on each strike on our site’s interactive map. We also collect data on labor protests, but only provide summaries of work stoppages in this report because our count of protests is less comprehensive. In light of our rigorous protocols, we may underestimate the total amount of work stoppages as we cannot include events that do not have adequate verifiable information.

Updated 2022 Findings

While following our strike tracking protocol, we occasionally find new information on work stoppages months after they occur. We found evidence of 11 additional strikes that occurred in 2022. The vast majority of the additional work stoppages (10 out of 11) were strikes by workers in the accommodation and food services sector. Nine of these were strikes conducted by workers organizing with Starbucks Workers United. We also found one duplicate strike in our data from last year, so we merged these two documented strikes. In one other case, we merged two strikes into one given their common

employer and overlap in demands. These two changes account for a net increase of 9 work stoppages. Our 2022 data now includes 433 work stoppages (426 strikes and 7 lockouts), which is reflected in this report. We do not plan on further updating data from 2022.

Key Findings from 2023

We documented 470 work stoppages (466 strikes and 4 lockouts) involving approximately 539,000 workers in 2023. These 470 work stoppages resulted in approximately 24,874,522 strike days.

While the number of work stoppages increased by ~9% (433 to 470) between 2022 and 2023, the number of workers involved in work stoppages increased by ~141% (224,000 to 539,000). This increase was primarily due to large, high-profile strikes including the SAG-AFTRA strike, the Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions strike, the Los Angeles Unified School District strike, and the UAW Stand-Up Strike. These were the four largest strikes of the year and accounted for approximately 350,100 of the 539,000 workers, or ~65% of all workers involved in work stoppages.



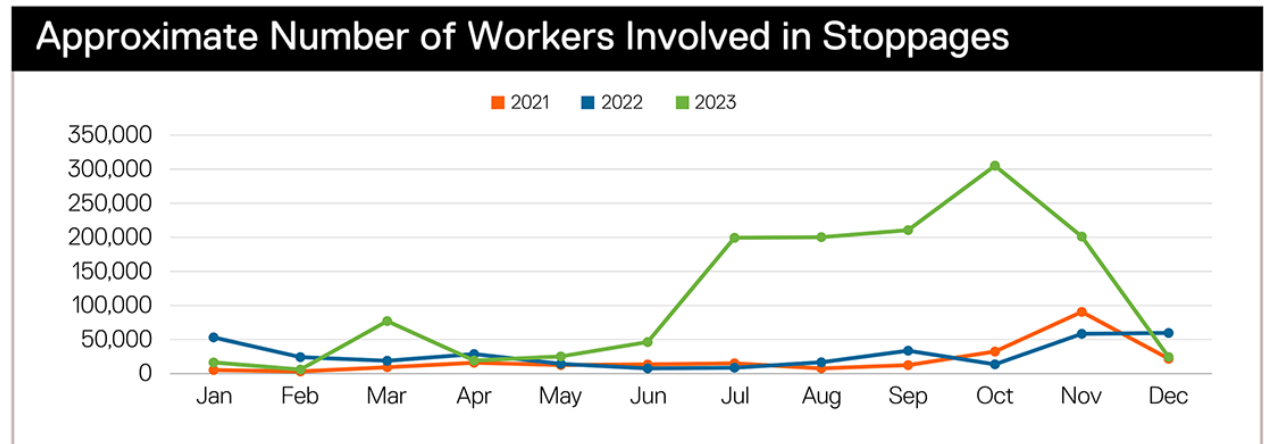
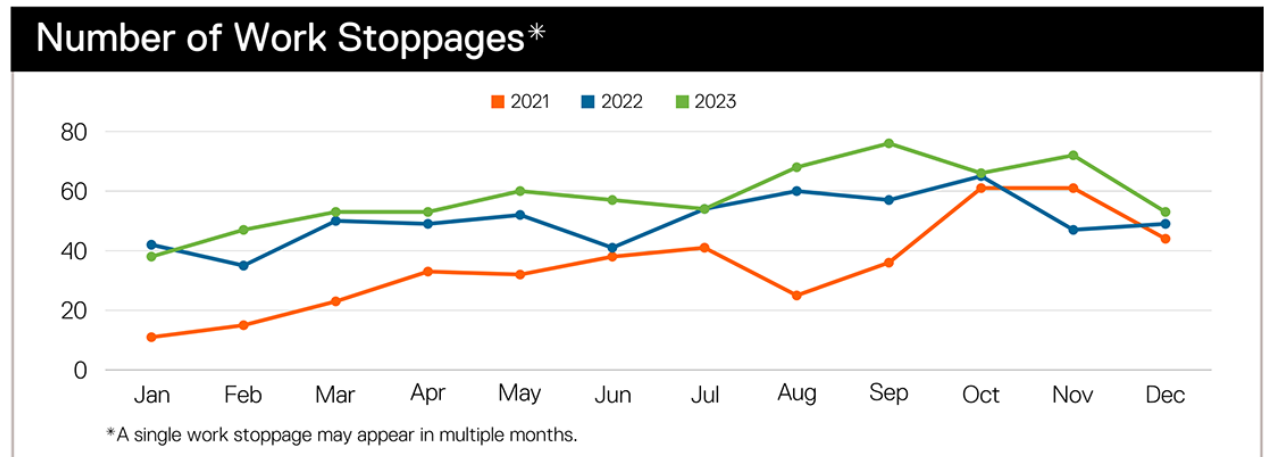
Some trends over the past three years are emerging in the data. First, like 2022, workers' top three demands in work stoppages were better pay, improved health and safety, and increased staffing. The number of work stoppages involving demands for a first contract more than doubled from 36 in 2022 to 74 in 2023. Second, also like 2022, workers in the accommodation and food service organized the highest number of work stoppages of any industry (~33%), but only accounted for ~6% of the total number of workers on strike. Of these strikes, 128 work stoppages, or ~82%, were organized by Starbucks Workers United or SEIU's Fast Food campaign. Third, unlike 2022, the number of workers involved in work stoppages was more evenly dispersed across industries, with information, health care and social assistance, and educational services as the top three industries. Fourth, there was a decrease in the percentage of all strikes organized by nonunion workers in 2023 (~22%) compared to 2021 and 2022 (~37% and ~31% respectively). Fifth, most work stoppages continue to be short, with the majority (~62%) lasting fewer than five days.

Despite considerable increases in the number of work stoppages and workers involved in stoppages since 2021, the level of strike activity still does not approach rates in the **1970s and earlier**, according to more comprehensive BLS data available at that time. The number of workers involved in stoppages in 2023 is similar to twenty-first century highs documented by the BLS in **2018** and **2019**, based on their narrower inclusion criteria. The total number of work stoppages, approximate number of workers involved in stoppages, and strike days have increased each year over the past three years.

FINDINGS

Number of work stoppages and approximate number of workers involved in stoppages per month

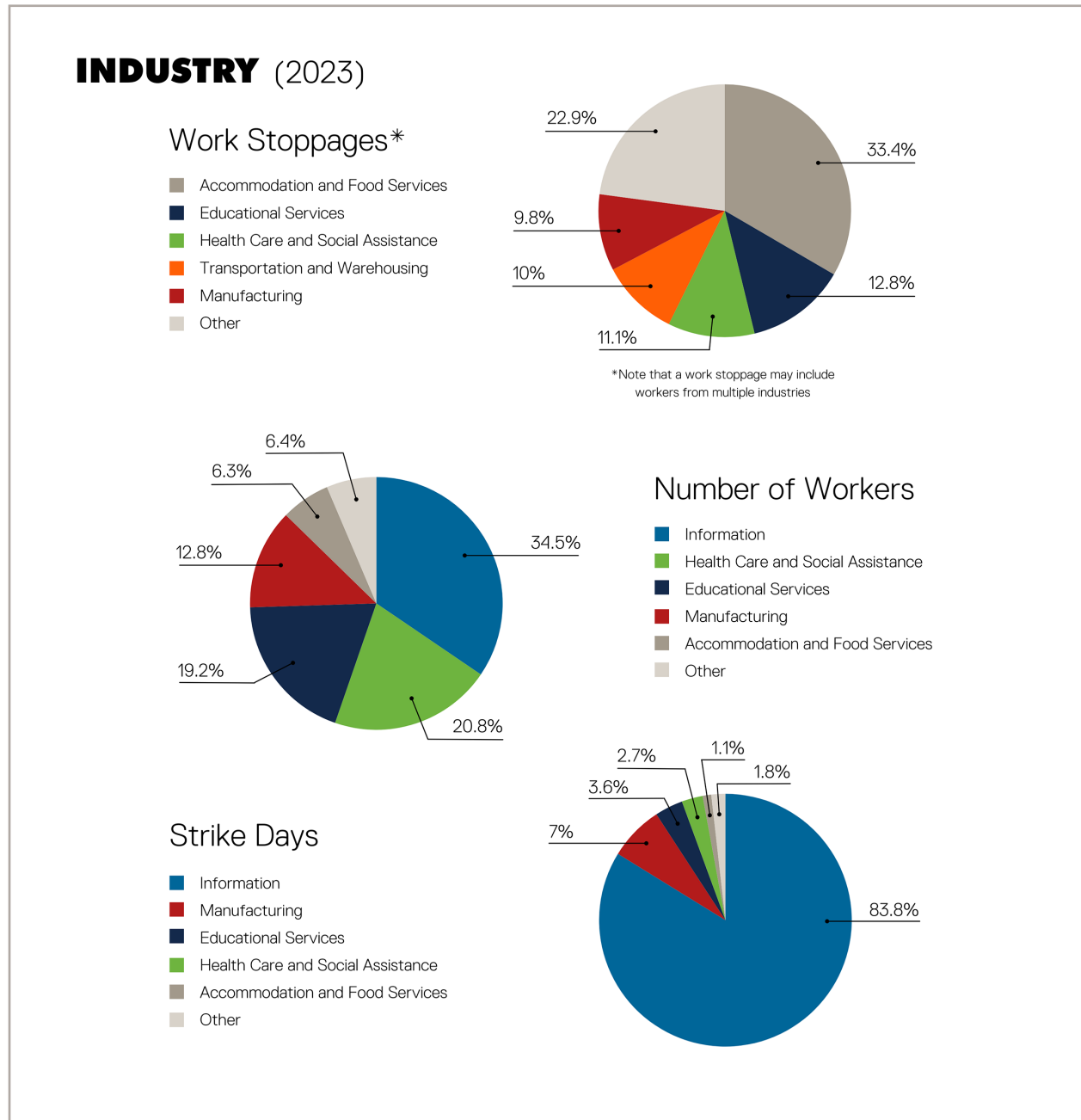
In 2023, approximately 539,000 workers were involved in 470 work stoppages (466 strikes and four lockouts), totaling 24,874,522 strike days. The number of work stoppages each month stayed relatively consistent before increasing considerably between August and November. The number of workers on strike each month spiked between July and November. In comparison to 2022, there were 37 more work stoppages with about 315,000 more workers on the picket line.



CORRECTION: The monthly July-December “approximate number of workers on strike” were corrected on 04/01/2024. The adjustments do not impact the 2023 total for number of workers on strike.

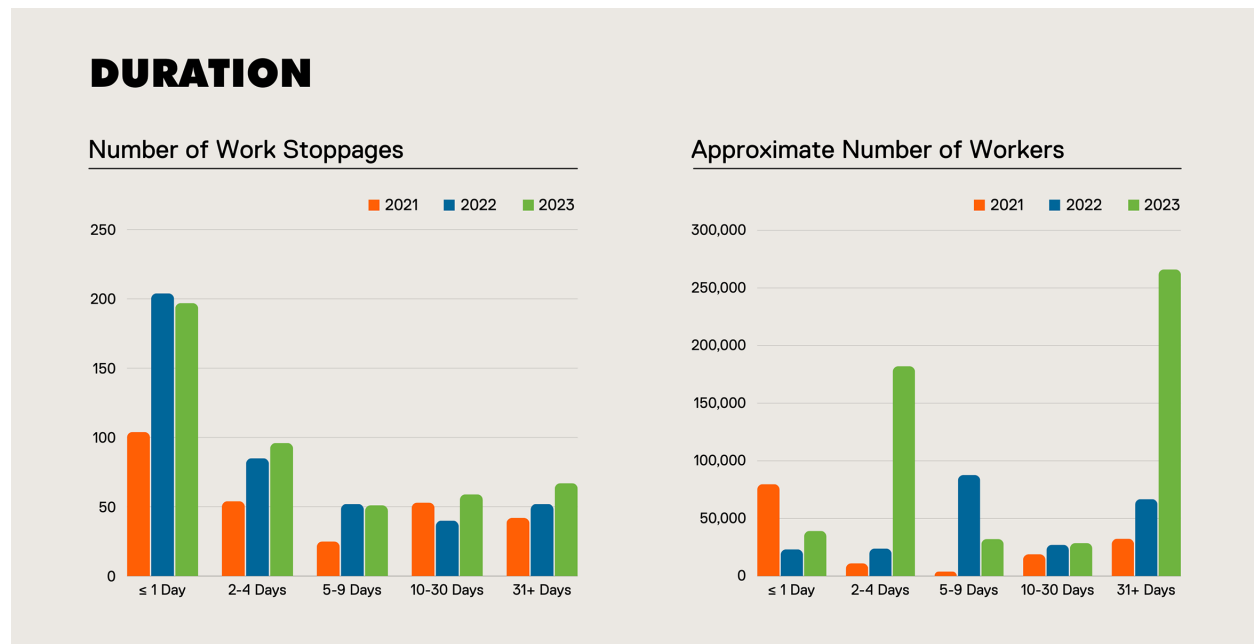
Labor action by industry

There were more work stoppages in the accommodation and food services industry than any other industry, accounting for 33.4% of total work stoppages. The information industry had the highest number of workers on strike, accounting for 34.5% of all workers on strike. The information industry also made up the majority of strike days, accounting for 83.8% of all strike days.



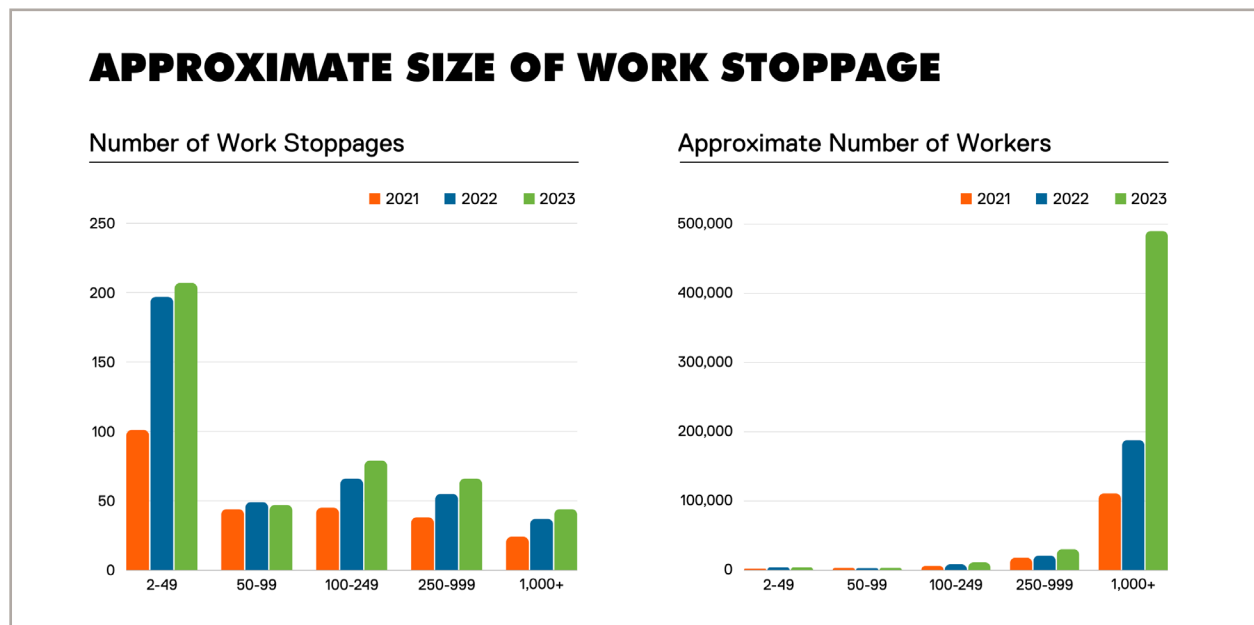
Labor action by duration

About 62% of all strikes in 2023 lasted less than five days. However, approximately half of workers involved in work stoppages in 2023 were on the picket line for longer than a month.



Labor action by size

Just over two-fifths of all work stoppages involved fewer than 50 workers. Of the approximately 539,000 workers involved in work stoppages, the vast majority participated in stoppages with greater than 1,000 workers.



Labor action by demands

The most common demands of work stoppages in 2023 were better pay, improved health and safety, and increased staffing. The number of work stoppages with a first contract demand more than doubled from 2022.

DEMAND

Work stoppages occurred for a variety of reasons in 2023

The top three demands of work stoppages were the same in 2022 and 2023



Demand	Work Stoppages*	Approximate Workers Involved	Strike Days
1. PAY	266	504,621	24,613,453
2. HEALTH AND SAFETY	138	27,097	678,453
3. STAFFING	113	161,606	2,506,275
Health Care	76	61,857	1,487,077
First Contract	74	11,245	123,028
End to Anti-Union Retaliation	64	10,543	40,719
Scheduling	55	62,677	1,430,611
Job Security	44	244,662	22,449,281
Retirement Benefits	39	92,181	1,617,682
Reinstate Terminated Worker	30	1,182	17,963
Union Recognition	13	476	1,776
Racial Justice	12	21,111	102,901

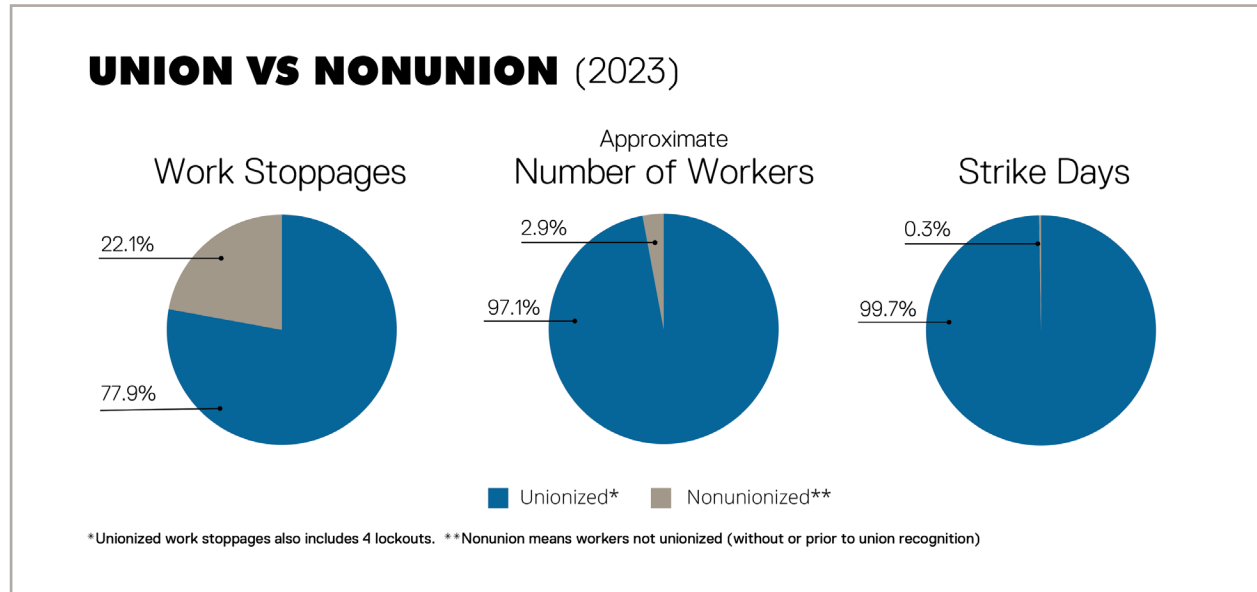
*A single work stoppage may have multiple demands. This list is not exhaustive.



Work stoppages with “First Contract” as a demand **DOUBLED FROM 2022 TO 2023**

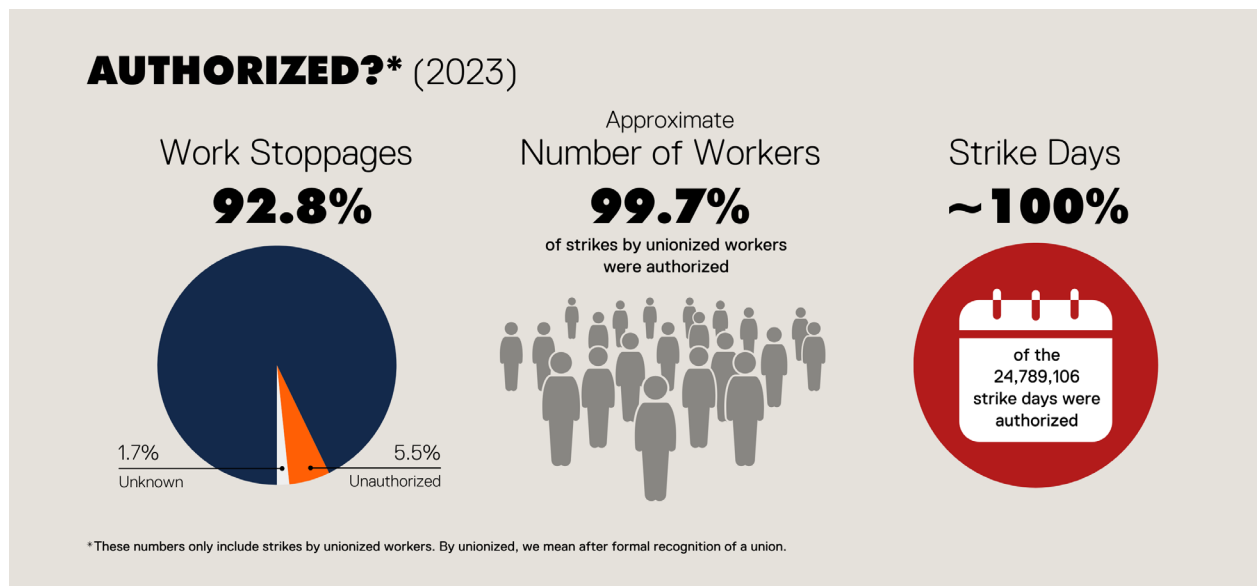
Labor action by unionization status

Almost four-fifths of work stoppages this year involved unionized workers (~77.9%), while just over a fifth of all work stoppages were led by nonunion workers (~22.1%). Unionized workers comprised the largest portion of workers involved in work stoppages and strike days, accounting for 97.1% and 99.7% respectively.



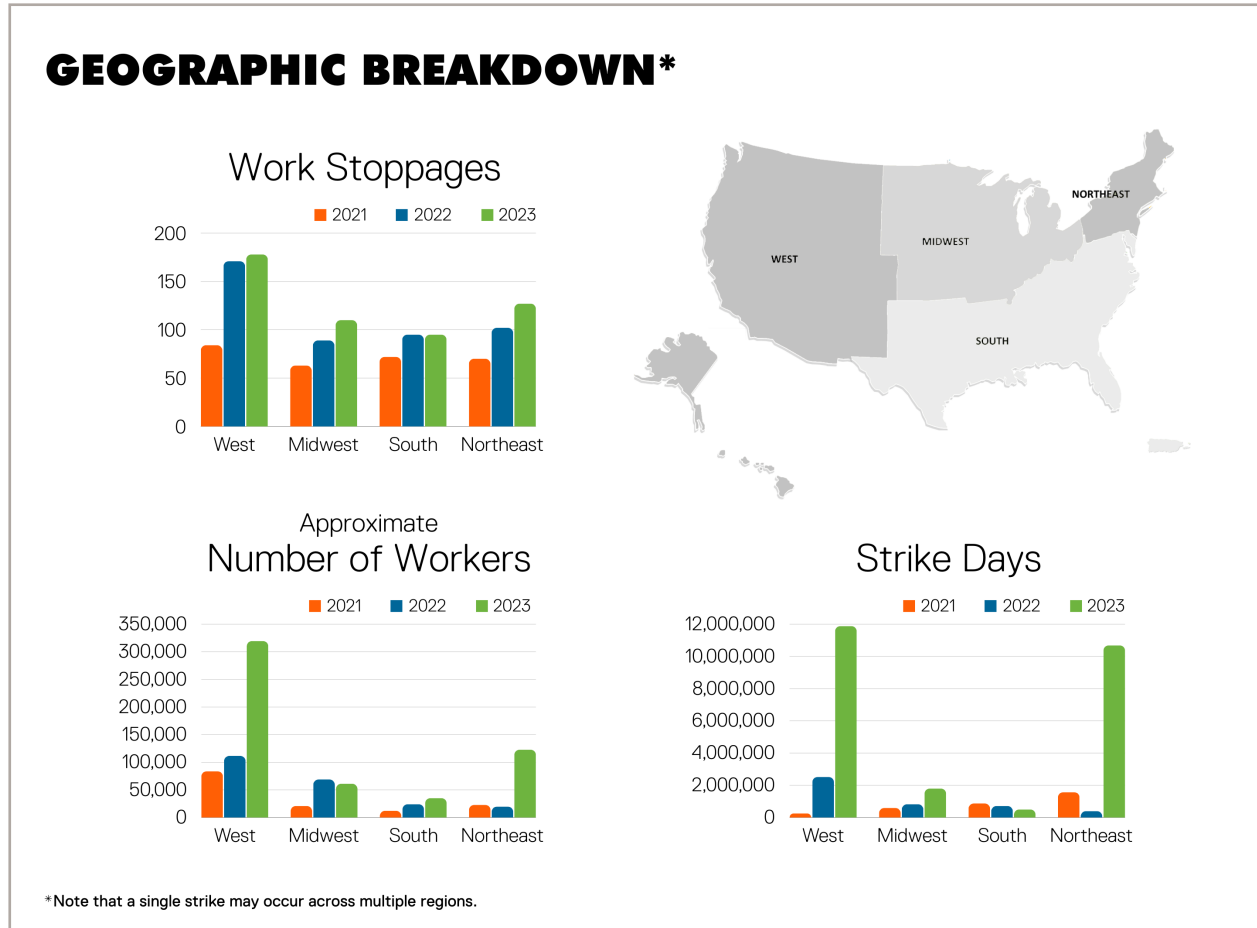
Labor action by authorization status

The vast majority (92.8%) of all unionized strikes were authorized by a union, compared to 5.5% that were unauthorized and 1.7% that were unknown. Authorized strikes overwhelmingly accounted for the number of workers on strike and strike days, accounting for 99.7% and 100.0% respectively. We round percentages to the nearest tenth.



Labor action by region

More work stoppages occurred in the West than any other region. The majority of workers on strike were also located in the West. In 2023, there were more work stoppages in the Midwest than the South, as compared to 2022.



DATA

Table 1

Monthly Work Stoppages and Approximate Number of Workers Involved in Work Stoppages

NOTE: A single work stoppage may appear in multiple months.

	Work Stoppages			Approximate Number of Workers		
	2021	2022	2023	2021	2022	2023
January	11	42	38	5,107	53,067	16,306
February	15	35	47	3,134	24,089	5,865
March	23	50	53	9,253	18,741	77,031
April	33	49	53	15,905	28,657	19,153
May	32	52	60	12,512	14,248	25,149
June	38	41	57	13,417	7,571	46,270
July	41	54	54	15,070	8,576	199,307
August	25	60	68	7,546	16,516	200,192
September	36	57	76	12,379	33,590	210,551
October	61	65	66	32,313	13,555	305,136
November	61	47	72	90,561	58,321	201,125
December	44	49	53	21,794	59,649	24,312

CORRECTION: The monthly July-December "approximate number of workers on strike" were corrected on 04/01/2024. The adjustments do not impact the 2023 total for number of workers on strike.

Table 2**Industry of Work Stoppages 2023**

Industry	Work Stoppages NOTE: A work stoppage may include workers from multiple industries.	Approximate Number of Workers	Strike Days
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	2	500	7,000
Mining	1	1,100	66,000
Utilities	5	652	19,012
Construction	4	524	8,596
Manufacturing	46	68,683	1,738,428
Wholesale Trade	3	1,376	16,636
Retail Trade	37	3,052	50,134
Transportation and Warehousing	47	6,390	101,590
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1	300	300
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	5	411	4,839
Management of Companies and Enterprises	0	0	0
Educational Services	60	103,143	883,183
Information	30	185,645	20,849,006
Finance and Insurance	3	1,650	101,250
Health Care and Social Assistance	52	112,198	672,000
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	9	321	38,096
Accommodation and Food Services	157	34,070	271,198
Public Administration	22	19,808	90,321
Administrative and Support and Waste Management	14	2,016	10,604
Other Services (except Public Administration)	2	68	3,548

Table 3**Duration of Work Stoppages**

Interval		Less than or equal to 1 Day	2 to 4 Days	5 to 9 Days	10 to 30 Days	31 plus Days
Work Stoppages	2021	104	54	25	53	42
	2022	204	85	52	40	52
	2023	197	96	51	59	67
Approximate Number of Workers	2021	79,774	11,078	3,968	18,920	32,369
	2022	23,226	23,924	87,698	27,126	66,792
	2023	39,120	182,072	32,135	28,635	266,111
Strike Days	2021	79,559	28,723	29,151	353,252	2,777,621
	2022	22,734	70,105	583,452	416,675	3,354,622
	2023	37,390	512,062	169,911	470,576	23,684,583

Table 4**Approximate Size of Work Stoppages**

Interval		2 to 49	50 to 99	100 to 249	250 to 999	1,000 plus
Work Stoppages	2021	101	44	45	38	24
	2022	197	49	66	55	37
	2023	207	47	79	66	44
Approximate Number of Workers	2021	2,101	3,067	6,221	17,933	110,950
	2022	3,775	2,993	8,366	21,018	188,000
	2023	3,797	3,189	11,239	30,243	490,115
Strike Days	2021	30,547	54,133	96,318	740,688	2,347,500
	2022	52,417	81,566	89,962	369,243	3,854,400
	2023	69,331	121,227	201,430	366,348	24,116,186

Table 5

Demands of Work Stoppages 2023

NOTE: A single work stoppage may have multiple demands. This list of demands is not exhaustive.

Demand	Work Stoppages	Approximate Number of Workers	Strike Days
Pay	266	504,621	24,613,453
Healthcare	76	61,857	1,487,077
Health and Safety	138	27,097	678,453
First Contract	74	11,245	123,028
Racial Justice	12	21,111	102,901
Staffing	113	161,606	2,506,275
Job Security	44	244,662	22,449,281
Retirement Benefits	39	92,181	1,617,682
Union Recognition	13	476	1,776
Scheduling	55	62,677	1,430,611
End to Anti-Union Retaliation	64	10,543	40,719
Reinstate Terminated Worker	30	1,182	17,963

Table 6

Union Versus Nonunion Work Stoppages

NOTE: *Unionized work stoppages also includes 4 lockouts

**Nonunion means workers not unionized (without or prior to union recognition)

Interval		Unionized*	Nonunionized**
Work Stoppages	2021	178	101
	2022	302	131
	2023	366	104
Approximate Number of Workers	2021	135,405	4,937
	2022	217,278	6,874
	2023	522,699	15,884
Strike Days	2021	3,017,400	251,786
	2022	4,370,681	76,907
	2023	24,809,355	65,167

Table 7

Authorized Versus Unauthorized Work Stoppages

NOTE: This only includes strikes by unionized workers. By unionized, we mean after formal recognition of a union.

Interval		Authorized	Unauthorized	Unknown
Work Stoppages	2021	143	19	11
	2022	266	25	4
	2023	336	20	6
Approximate Number of Workers	2021	125,971	2,032	5,317
	2022	179,742	1,856	130
	2023	520,489	1,056	401
Strike Days	2021	2,962,798	3,451	51,151
	2022	3,945,121	2,640	170
	2023	24,789,106	1,687	931

Table 8

Geographic Breakdown of Work Stoppages

Interval		Northeast	Midwest	South	West
Work Stoppages	2021	70	63	72	84
	2022	102	89	95	171
	2023	127	110	95	178
Approximate Number of Workers	2021	22,888	20,900	12,104	83,752
	2022	19,688	68,788	24,073	111,603
	2023	122,794	61,124	35,112	319,552
Strike Days	2021	1,569,124	592,754	869,018	254,695
	2022	394,522	821,108	714,873.5	2,517,084.5
	2023	10,687,464	1,801,978	499,518	11,885,562



ILR School



**School of Labor &
Employment Relations**

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN