

Government data shows union construction workers more likely to receive job training than nonunion

Union coverage and work-related training in the construction industry

C. Jeffrey Waddoups. Industrial and Labor Relations Review, April 2014.

Overview

Scholars adhering to the standard “human capital” model have long argued that union coverage discourages employer investment in job training; others, assuming imperfect labor market competition, have contended that a demonstrable union effect increases investments in job training where collective bargaining institutions exist. Using data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation, the author identifies a large union effect in construction, and a smaller, yet statistically significant, effect in other private-sector industries. Nonetheless, the results are not entirely consistent with either the standard human capital model or models of imperfect competition.

Key Findings

- Most prior research on union coverage and job training investigated the labor market as a whole. The construction industry – marked by frequent but short-term demand for highly skilled employees – is characterized by distinctive training needs and institutions and merits separate examination.
- Through apprenticeship funds and hiring halls operated jointly with employers, unions in construction play a uniquely important role in remedying market failures and securing training opportunities for non-managerial workers.
- Union construction craft workers are 12% more likely to have participated in vocational training within the past ten years, and 5% more likely to have participated in skills upgrade training in the past year.

For more information, contact:

Jeffrey Waddoups: jeffrey.waddoups@unlv.edu

See abstract:

<http://bit.ly/1UD2pLA>

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