

TRADE UNION-DEFINITION OF TRADE UNION

MODULE 4

DEFINITION

- **Definition:** Labour unions or trade unions are organizations formed by workers from related fields that work for the common interest of its members. They help workers in issues like fairness of pay, good working environment, hours of work and benefits. They represent a cluster of workers and provide a link between the management and workers.

- **Description:** The purpose of these unions is to look into the grievances of wagers and present a collective voice in front of the management. Hence, it acts as the medium of communication between the workers and management.

Regulation of relations, settlement of grievances, raising new demands on behalf of workers, collective bargaining and negotiations are the other key principle functions that these trade unions perform. The Indian Trade Union Act, 1926, is the principle act which controls and regulates the mechanism of trade unions. In India, political lines and ideologies influence trade union movements. This is the reason why today political parties are forming and running trade unions.

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HOW IT ELECT?

- The trade union, through an elected leadership and bargaining committee, bargains with the employer on behalf of union members ([rank and file](#) members) and negotiates [labour contracts](#) (collective bargaining) with employers. The most common purpose of these associations or unions is "maintaining or improving the conditions of their [employment](#)".^[1] This may include the negotiation of [wages](#), work rules, occupational health and safety standards, complaint procedures, rules governing status of employees including promotions, just cause conditions for termination, and employment benefits.
- Unions may organize a particular section of skilled workers ([craft unionism](#)),^[2] a cross-section of workers from various trades ([general unionism](#)), or attempt to organize all workers within a particular industry ([industrial unionism](#)). The agreements negotiated by a union are binding on the rank and file members and the employer and in some cases on other non-member workers. Trade unions traditionally have a constitution which details the governance of their bargaining unit and also have governance at various levels of government depending on the industry that binds them legally to their negotiations and functioning.
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HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

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- While union organizers in both countries faced similar obstacles, their approaches evolved quite differently: the British movement favoured political activism, which led to the formation of the [Labour Party](#) in 1906, while American unions pursued [collective](#) bargaining as a means of winning economic gains for their workers.
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MODERN DEVELOPMENTS

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- **Modern Developments**
- During the 20th century, craft unions lost ground to [industrial unions](#). This shift was both historic and controversial because the earliest unions had developed in order to represent skilled workers. These groups believed that unskilled workers were unsuitable for union organization. In 1935, for example, the AFL opposed attempts to organize the unskilled and ultimately expelled a small group of member unions that were attempting to do so. The expelled unions formed the congress of industrial organization.

Labour movement

- The strength of the labour movement at any given moment has been linked to general economic conditions. In times of full employment and rising wages, unionism typically loses some of its appeal, particularly among younger workers, while in recessionary times it becomes more attractive. By the end of the 20th century the [globalization](#) of the workforce had brought new challenges to the labour movement, effectively weakening collective bargaining in industries whose workers could be replaced by a cheaper labour force in a different part of the world.
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Who started?

- In the history of **America's** trade and labor unions, the most famous union remains **the American Federation of Labor (AFL)**, founded in 1886 by **Samuel Gompers**. At its pinnacle, the AFL had approximately 1.4 million members.
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