

extension of its coverage, have had their impact predominantly, indeed overwhelmingly, on the lightly organized sector.

It is a well-recognized phenomenon that an increase in the minimum wage, where effective, results in an upgrading of pay scales above the minimum. This has undoubtedly been a factor (how large we do not attempt to estimate) in the rise of average hourly compensation in the nonunion area, and in the relatively strong showing of that area in wage-trend comparisons.

Adding it up

To what extent these factors account for the absence of clear union wage leadership after 1952, it is hard to say. To some extent they are not even consistent with each other (the first suggests that we should not *expect* continued rate-of-gain leadership; the others, that save for the special factors cited—differential employment growth and the minimum wage—we would have seen more of it).

Whatever weight is attached to these explanations, the fact remains that the purely *statistical* evidence of union wage leadership in recent years is ambiguous and inconclusive. This does not necessarily mean that such leadership has been lacking, but it does imply that its presence and effects must be inferred from nonstatistical observation.

II. COMPOSITION OF UNEMPLOYMENT

We should like to comment next on an alternative explanation of the phenomenon under study (the apparent contrast between recent wage behavior and that of the twenties) that does not involve the question of wage leadership. It finds the source of this contrast in a statistical disparity arising from differences in the composition of unemployment in the two periods.

All we have for the twenties in the way of unemployment figures are global, or overall, estimates, with no breakdowns by age, sex, marital status, color, and so forth. We do have such breakdowns for the postwar period, however, and it is evident that unemployment in that period has been very unevenly distributed. We can illustrate by the figures for 1968.

Average unemployment rate, 1968

	<i>Percent</i>
Total -----	3.6
Male -----	2.9
Adults (20 and over) -----	2.2
White -----	2.0
Nonwhite -----	3.9
Teenagers (16 to 19) -----	11.6
White -----	10.1
Nonwhite -----	22.0
Female -----	4.8
Adults (20 and over) -----	3.8
White -----	3.4
Nonwhite -----	6.3
Teenagers (16 to 19) -----	14.0
White -----	12.1
Nonwhite -----	28.7

Note that unemployment rates ranged from 2 percent for white adult males to 28.7 percent for nonwhite teenage females.