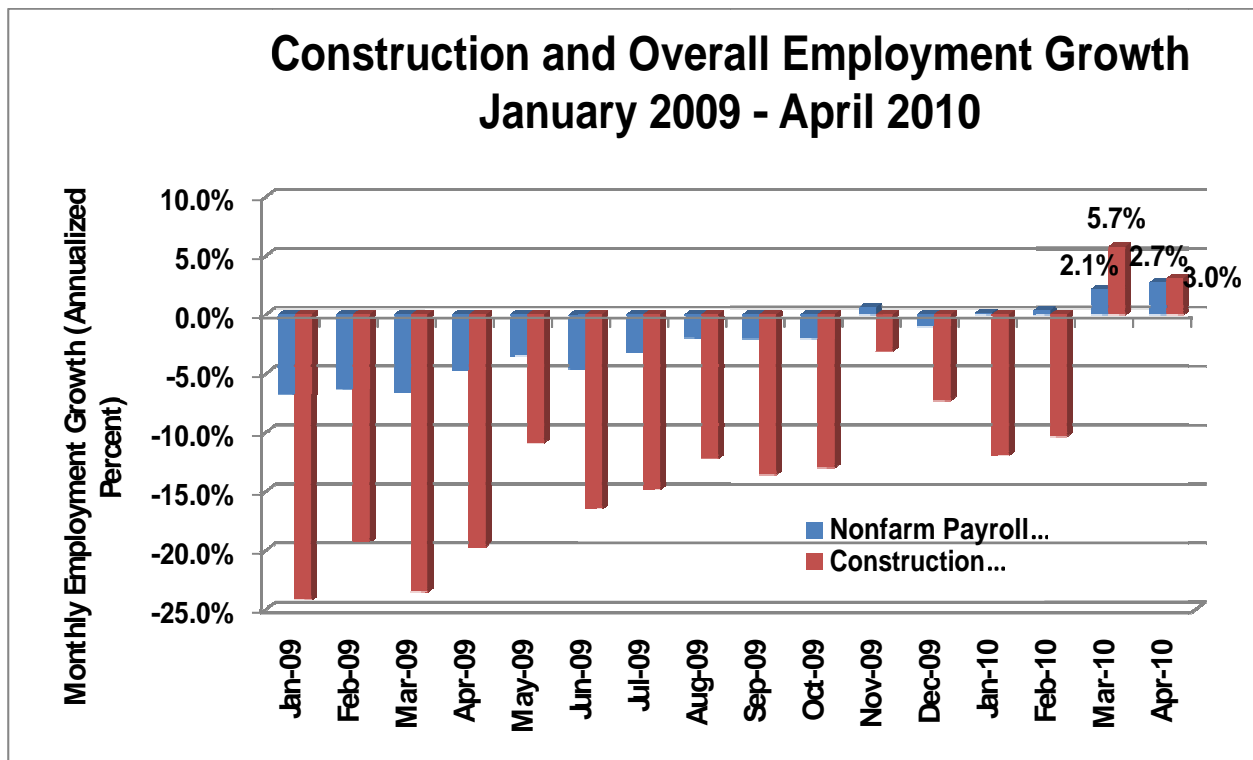


Will Construction Workers Rebuild the Economy?

Jobs losses in the construction industry that resulted from the housing market crash were acutely felt among Latino workers, who are disproportionately represented in construction. Latinos constituted 28.5% of all employed construction and extraction workers in 2009, but were only 14% of the total employed labor force.¹

How is the construction industry faring as the economy begins to add jobs? Figure 1 shows that growth in construction employment is a more robust but newer trend than overall employment growth (nonfarm payroll employment). While overall employment has grown for five out of the six past months, growth in construction employment only began in March.

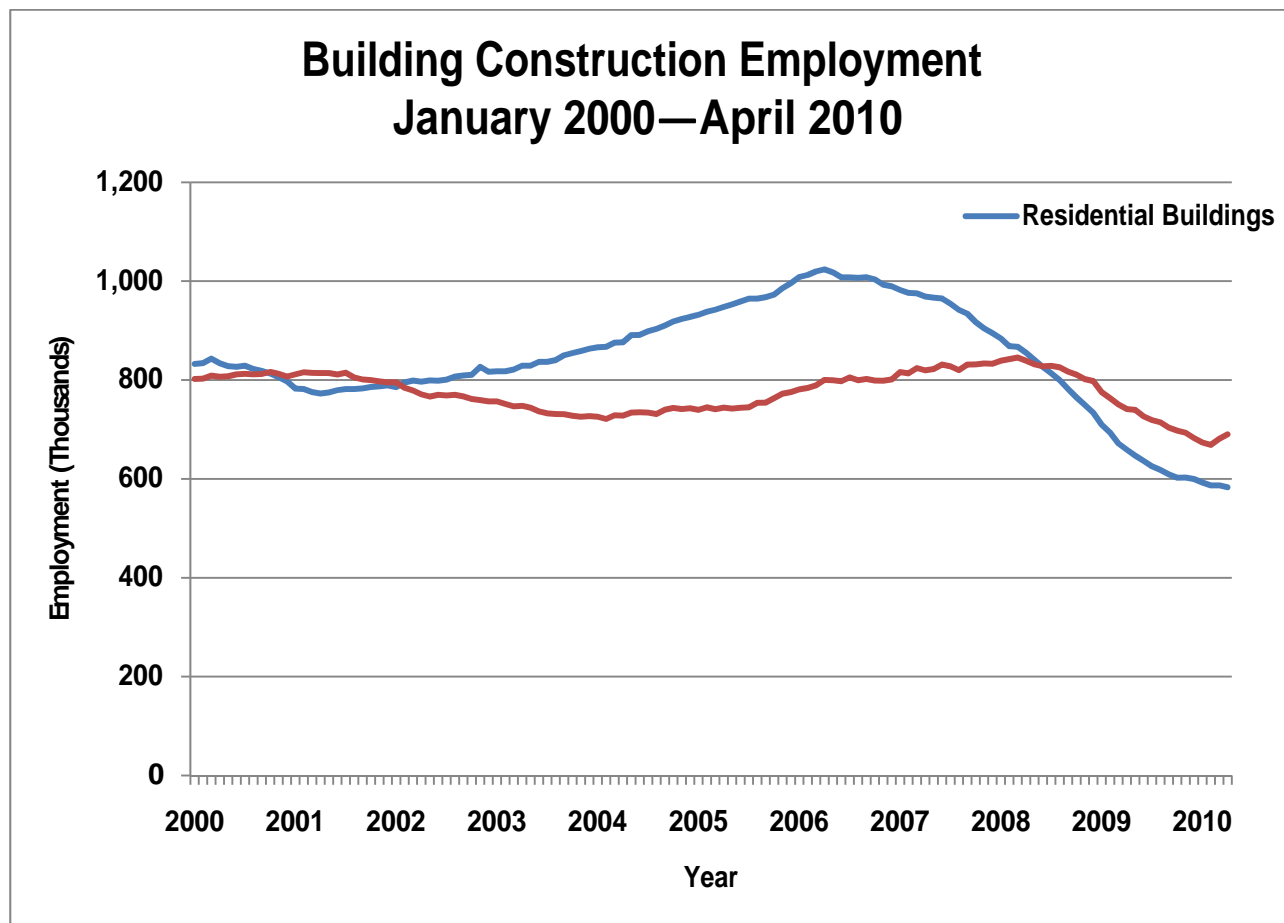
Figure 1.



Source: NCLR calculation using U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Data Retrieval: Employment, Hours, and Earnings," *Current Employment Statistics*. Washington, DC, <http://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesbtab1.htm> (accessed April 2010), Table B-1.

The degree to which construction fuels economic recovery depends on many factors. When it comes to employment in residential building construction—which tends to employ a greater share of Hispanic workers and fell below nonresidential building construction in June 2008—a surplus housing stock may keep employers reluctant to hire (see Figure 2). However, incentives for homeowners to retrofit their homes to be more energy-efficient, such as the "Home Star Energy Retrofit Act of 2010 (H.R. 5019), passed yesterday by the House of Representatives, could be good news for the residential construction industry, and for Latino workers.

Figure 2.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Data Retrieval: Employment, Hours, and Earnings,” *Current Employment Statistics*. Washington, DC, <http://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesbtab1.htm> (accessed April 2010), Table B-1.

¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Employed and experienced unemployed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity,” *Current Population Survey*, Washington, DC, 2009, Table 10 (unpublished).