

Latinos in Construction

Facts and Figures

Construction workers suffered some of the most severe job losses in the wake of the housing market crash. Given their overrepresentation in construction, Latinos' economic security depends heavily on the health of the construction industry. Despite signs of revitalization in the housing market, employment trends in construction are still fickle. This *Monthly Latino Employment Report* highlights basic statistics about Latinos in the construction industry.

Latino Employment Statistics for July 2013

The [latest report](#) from the U.S. Department of Labor shows that U.S. employment increased by 162,000 workers in June 2013. The national unemployment rate dropped from 7.6% to 7.4%, while the Latino unemployment rate increased slightly from 9.1% to 9.4%. The slight rise in Latino unemployment was in part due to an increase (+0.3 percentage points) in their labor force participation rate. The U.S. labor force shrank by 37,000 between June and July, and the number of discouraged workers—those who left the labor force because they believed there were no jobs available for them—was up by 136,000 workers from this month last year.

Table 1. The Employment Situation for Latino Workers in July 2013

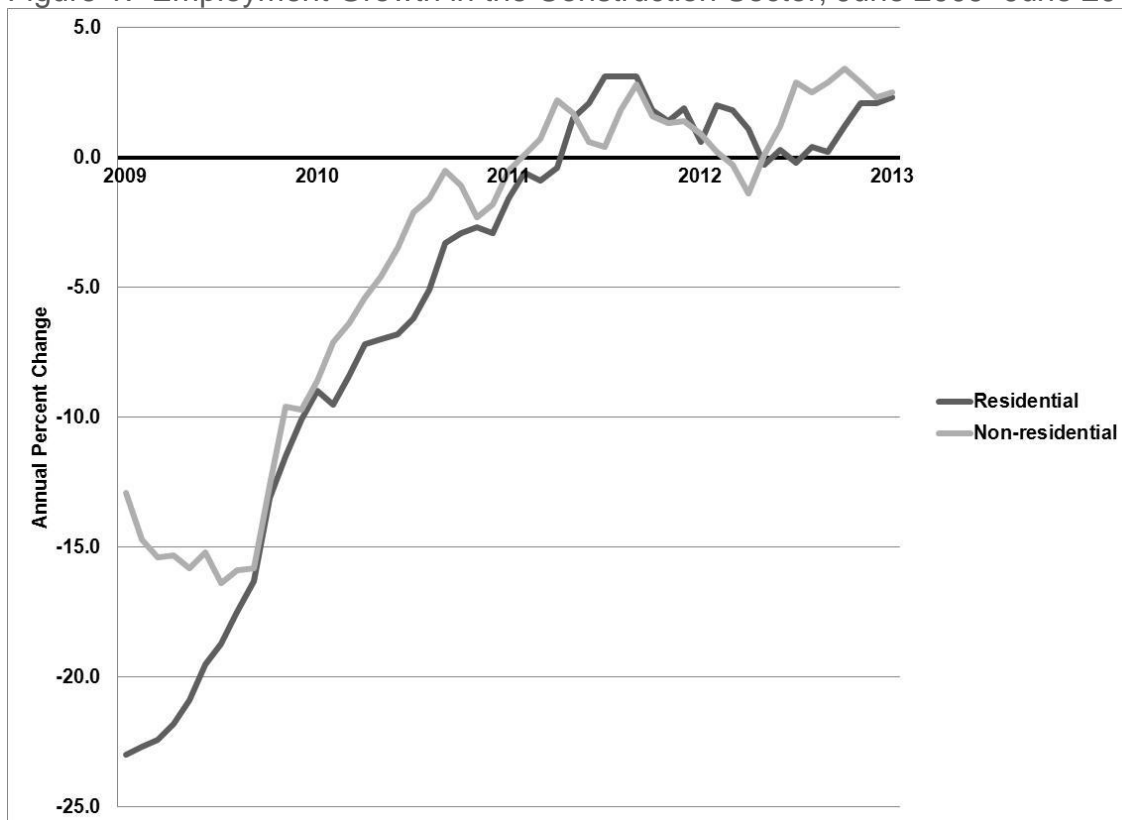
Indicators	Latinos, July 2013
Employed —Working people over the age of 16, including those temporarily absent from their jobs	23 million
Unemployed —Those who are available to work, make an effort to find a job, or expect to be called back from a layoff but are not working	2.4 million
Civilian Labor Force —The sum of employed and unemployed people	25 million
Not in the Labor Force —People over the age of 16 classified as neither employed nor unemployed	13 million
Unemployment Rate —Share of the labor force that is unemployed	9.4%
Labor Force Participation Rate —Share of the population over the age of 16 that is in the labor force	66.7%
Employment-Population Ratio —Share of the population over the age of 16 that is working	60.4%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment Status of the Hispanic or Latino Population by Sex and Age," *Current Population Survey*, <http://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab3.htm> (accessed June 7, 2013), Table A-3.

Employment Trends in Construction

Employment trends in construction have been mixed since the end of the Great Recession. After experiencing relatively strong gains at the start of 2013—for instance, 48,000 new employees between January and February—construction employment has faltered. Between June and July 2013, employment in construction shrank by 6,000. In fact, 1.1 million construction workers are unemployed.¹ The ratio of unemployed construction workers to job openings in construction is about [12 to one](#). Residential construction has added jobs for the first half of 2013, perhaps a positive sign of the sluggish growth in the housing market (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Employment Growth in the Construction Sector, June 2009–June 2013

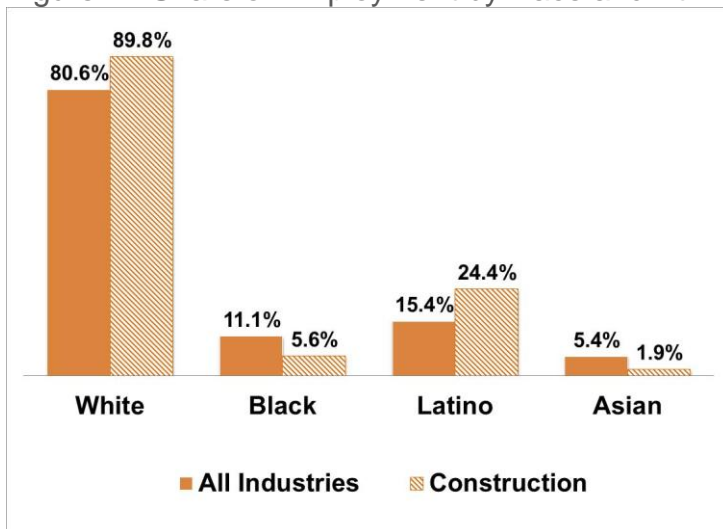


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employees on nonfarm payrolls by industry sector and selected industry detail," *Current Employment Statistics*. <http://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesbtab1.htm> (accessed August 1, 2013), Table B-1.

Latinos in the Construction Industry

Latinos are overrepresented in the construction industry compared to their share of the total U.S. workforce. Nearly one in four construction workers (24.4%) is Latino, compared to 15.4% of all employed workers. By contrast, Black and Asian workers are underrepresented in the construction industry (see Figure 2).

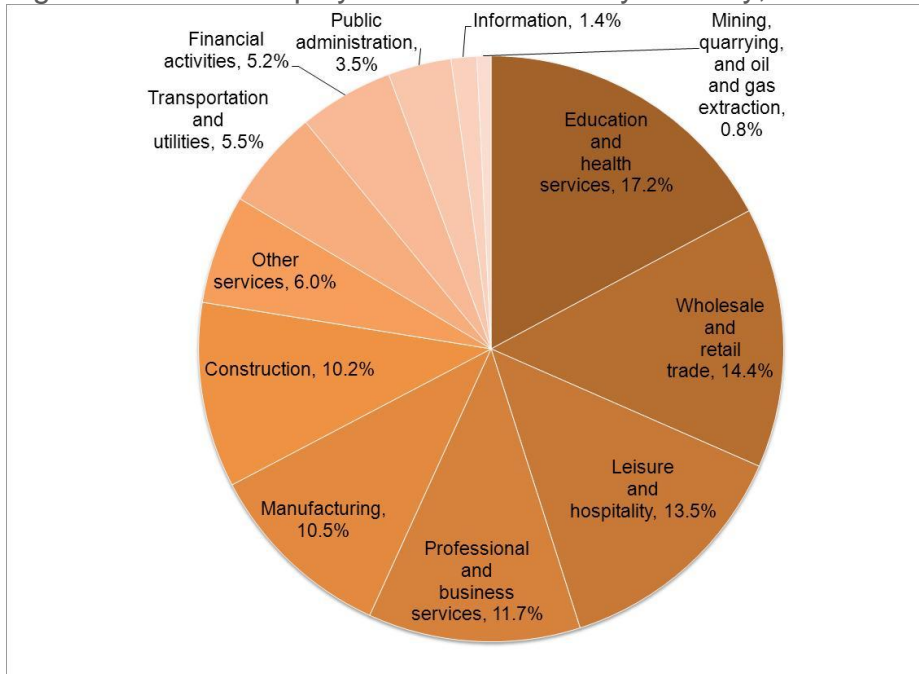
Figure 2. Share of Employment by Race and Ethnicity, 2012



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employed and experienced unemployed persons by detailed industry, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 2012 Annual Averages," *Current Population Survey*.

About 2.2 million Latinos work in the construction industry, the sixth largest employer of Latinos. As Figure 3 shows, the industry with the most Latino workers is education and health services. The construction industry employs 10.2% of the Latino labor force.

Figure 3. Latino Employment Distribution by Industry, 2012



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employed persons in nonagricultural industries by age, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 2012 Annual Averages," *Current Population Survey*, Table 14.

Hispanic women are extremely underrepresented in construction. In general, only 9% of workers in the construction sector are women.² Less than 4% of Latino construction workers, 82,000 people, are women.³

Latinos are underrepresented in higher-wage supervisory and management positions. Latinos are overrepresented in seven of the top ten construction occupations that employ the most people. As Figure 4 shows, the jobs with the greatest share of Latino workers are painters (42.6% Latino) and construction laborers (41.2% Latino). By contrast, Latinos represent only 14% of first-line supervisors and only 9.4% of managers. As Table 2 demonstrates, these are the two highest-paid occupations in construction.

Figure 4. Latino Employment Share in Top Construction Occupations, 2012



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "May 2012 national industry-specific occupational employment and wage estimates," *Occupational Employment Statistics*, http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/naics2_23.htm (accessed August 1, 2013); and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 2012 Annual Averages," *Current Population Survey*, <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm> (accessed August 1, 2013), Table 11.

Table 2. Annual Wages of Top Construction Occupations, 2012

Occupation	Annual Mean Wage
Construction Laborers	\$35,020
Carpenters	\$44,730
Electricians	\$52,520
First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	\$62,630
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	\$53,350
Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	\$48,590
Office Clerks	\$30,460
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	\$44,730
Construction Managers	\$90,090
Painters, Construction, and Maintenance	\$37,630

Falls are a leading cause of death in construction, where 45.1% of roofers are Latino. In 2011, 553 workers in the United States died from a fall at work. The majority of cases (57%) involved falls of 20 feet or less. The fatal injury rate for roofers, who face fall hazards on the job,

is 34.1 out of 100,000 workers. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) at the U.S. Department of Labor launched a safety awareness [campaign to educate workers about preventing falls](#) in construction. Overall, Latinos face the [highest fatality rate](#) of any worker group.

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Endnotes

¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Unemployed persons by industry, class of worker, and sex," *Current Population Survey*. Washington, DC, 2013, <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat26.htm> (accessed July 2013), Table 26.

² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employed and experienced unemployed persons by detailed industry, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity," *Current Population Survey*, Table 2.

³ NCLR calculation using U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employed persons in nonagricultural industries by age, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 2012 Annual Averages," *Current Population Survey*, Table 14.