

Latino Unemployment Drops to 7.9%

Latino unemployment edges down as economic activity picks up and key sectors experience job gains

INDICATORS	National	Latinos
Unemployment Rate Share of the labor force that is unemployed	6%	7.9%
Unemployed Those who are available to work, trying to find a job, or expect to be called back from a layoff but are not working	9.7 million	2.3 million
Employed Working people over the age of 16, including those temporarily absent from their jobs	150.8 million	26.9 million
Labor Force Participation Rate Share of the population over the age of 16 that is in the labor force	61.5%	65.6%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment Status of the Hispanic or Latino Population by Sex and Age," *Current Population Survey*, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empsit.pdf> (accessed April 2, 2021), Table A and A-3.

Employment in March 2021

Overall, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported that the economy added 916,000 jobs in March 2021, a sign of continued improvement in the labor market, suggesting that economic activity is picking up as pandemic-related restrictions ease and more people access vaccines. Additionally, BLS revised the February 2021 report to show that the economy gained 89,000 more jobs last month than was reported, putting the total number at 468,000 in February.

While the labor market is improving, overall employment remains far below pre-pandemic levels and many of the gains are concentrated in lower-wage sectors. Like February’s jobs report, most of the job gains occurred in the leisure and hospitality sector. However, sectors like public and private education and construction that were experiencing high job losses also saw improvements in March. Overall, these job gains are promising for Latino workers, who are disproportionately represented in the low-wage sectors that have been hardest hit by pandemic-related closures.

- At 7.9% in March, Latino unemployment continues to trend downward, but still remains nearly more than double the pre-pandemic average of 4%, a sign that the recovery will be slower for Latino workers. The overall rate is significantly down from the historic high of 18.9% in April 2020 but

remains 2.5% higher than its pre-pandemic level in February 2020. The number of unemployed workers is at 9.7 million—four million higher than in February 2020.

- The most significant employment growth this month occurred in the leisure and hospitality sector. This sector gained 280,000 jobs alone, as pandemic-related restrictions continue to ease and people access vaccines in many jurisdictions, a positive trend given that Latino workers overrepresent jobs in these areas. The continued resumption of in-person learning, and other school-related activities helped drive gains in both public and private education. Employment rose by 76,000 in local government education, 50,000 in state government education, and 64,000 in private education. The construction industry, a sector Latinos disproportionately represent and experienced consecutive months of job loss, saw gains of 65,000 in specialty trade contractors, 27,000 in heavy and civil engineering construction, and 18,000 in building construction. In these three sectors, employment is still below their February 2020 levels.
- The overall Latino unemployment rate dropped 0.6% from February 2021, and there was a 0.2% increase in Latino labor force participation. The increase in the Latino labor force’s participation rate can be attributed to the employment of Latina workers over 20 years of age, which rose by 0.5% in the last month. Observers have described the pandemic recession as the “she-cession,” with Black women and Latinas experiencing the highest job losses.¹ The American Rescue Plan, signed into law by President Biden this March, will provide temporary economic relief through rental assistance and unemployment benefits in addition to necessary funds to reopen schools and access child care. However, the progress that women will make is dependent upon significant, long-term investments. To support women in the workforce, the federal government must ensure they have the resources they need at home in order to balance their family responsibilities and work.

About Us

UnidosUS, previously known as NCLR (National Council of La Raza), is the nation’s largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization. Through its unique combination of expert research, advocacy, programs, and an [Affiliate Network](#) of nearly 300 community-based organizations across the United States and Puerto Rico, UnidosUS simultaneously challenges the social, economic, and political barriers that affect Latinos at the national and local levels.

For more than 50 years, UnidosUS has united communities and different groups seeking common ground through collaboration, and that share a desire to make our country stronger. For more information on UnidosUS, visit www.unidosus.org or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).

¹ Justin Fox and Elaine He, “The Pandemic Was Historically Bad for Working-Class Women,” *Bloomberg*, <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2021-03-30/covid-19-job-losses-were-historic-for-black-and-hispanic-women> (accessed April 2, 2021).