

Monday April 6, 2020

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Latinos and Asian Americans hit hardest by early COVID-19 job losses

Unemployment rate jumps in April

By Masao Suzuki |

April 5, 2020

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San José, CA - The headline news that the unemployment rate for March jumped by almost a full percentage point, to 4.4%, was bad enough. The actual unemployment rate was much higher by the end of March, given that the more 10 million people who lost their jobs and filed for unemployment insurance benefits in the last two weeks of March were not counted. Adding in these workers would have increased the unemployment rate by more than 6%, raising the total rate at the end of March to about 10.5%.

The official government unemployment rate also understates the number of jobless workers, as you have to be out of work and looking for work. With so many businesses shutting down and schools closing, many workers who were laid off didn't look for work. According to the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment report released on Friday, April 3, more than 1.5 million people stopped looking for work. If these workers were counted, the actual unemployment rate at the end of the month would have been another percentage point higher, at 11.5%.

The employment report also showed a big jump in workers who are working part time because they can't find a full-time job. This group of workers increased by almost 1.5 million just in the first half of the month. The rise in part-time workers also dragged down the average number of weeks worked in March. While they are still counted as employed by the Labor Department, they and their families are feeling the economic stress of the economic crisis.

Latinos and Asian Americans saw their unemployment rates jump by 1.6%, more than twice the increase of white Americans. This reflected the high concentration of these oppressed nationality workers in food services, the hardest hit industry in the beginning of the month. Latino workers have the highest percentage going without health insurance, putting them at greater risk during a pandemic. Latinos and Asian Americans also have the highest percentages of immigrants and undocumented - many of whom are restricted from getting any aid from the federal relief money going out to individuals starting next week.



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-- Joe Iosbaker

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