

LATINOS GET THE MOST NEW JOBS

Saint Paul Pioneer Press (Minnesota)

February 24, 2004 Tuesday CITY EDITION

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Section: BUSINESS; Pg. C3

Length: 396 words

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Body

WASHINGTON -- Latinos landed a disproportionate share of new jobs created last year, and most of those jobs went to very recent immigrants, according to a private foundation's report issued Monday.

More than half of the jobs were in construction, and most of the rest were in agriculture and business services -- much of it low-paying work requiring little English language skill. The Washington, D.C.-based Pew Hispanic Center, a nonprofit research group, found the gains greatest among Latinos who arrived in the United States after 2000. The findings are based on an analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics and Census Bureau data.

Overall, the number of employed Latinos rose by almost 660,000 between the fourth quarter of 2002 and the fourth quarter of 2003. The total was 17.7 million, which included unknown numbers of illegal workers.

By comparison, the non-Latino work force, which consisted of 121 million workers at last year's end, scored a net increase of 371,066 jobs.

According to Harry Holzer, professor of public policy at George Washington University in Washington, employers prefer "more appreciative and less demanding" immigrants.

"It is a form of discrimination, in a way, in favor of the foreign-born workers," said Holzer, who studies ethnicity and low-wage work.

In 2003, Hispanic unemployment declined from a June peak of 8.2 percent to 6.6 percent in December, Pew reported.

By comparison, according to the recent study by the National Urban League, the unemployment rate for African-Americans was 10.3 percent in December 2003. It's been in double digits for the past 14 months.

William Spriggs, co-author of the Urban League study, said job growth for Latinos wasn't a factor in the higher unemployment rate for African-Americans. His report concludes that Latinos and African-Americans generally compete in different job markets.

Among Hispanics, unemployment jumped to 7.3 percent in January 2004 as more Latinos entered the job market, according to the Pew report. African-American employment rose to 10.5 percent.

For the nation as whole, unemployment rose to 5.7 percent in December 2003 and 5.6 percent in January 2004.

Pew's study found that employment for Latinos born in the United States increased, but by far less than for new arrivals. Gains among Latino males were much greater than among Latino women.

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Subject: AFRICAN AMERICANS (89%); RESEARCH REPORTS (89%); LABOR SECTOR PERFORMANCE (89%); EMPLOYMENT GROWTH (89%); UNEMPLOYMENT RATES (89%); IMMIGRATION (78%); LABOR DEPARTMENTS (78%); RACE & ETHNICITY (78%); **JOB** CREATION (78%); HISPANIC AMERICANS (78%); LABOR FORCE (78%); FOREIGN LABOR (78%); STATISTICS (78%); NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS (77%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (76%); EMPLOYMENT RATES (74%); WAGES & SALARIES (73%); DISCRIMINATION (73%); FOUNDATIONS (72%); COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS (67%); PUBLIC POLICY (67%)

Company: GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL (55%)

Organization: US CENSUS BUREAU (57%); BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS (57%); BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS (57%); US CENSUS BUREAU (57%); GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY (55%); GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY (55%); NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE (54%); NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE (54%)

Industry: COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS (67%)

Geographic: DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, USA (79%); UNITED STATES (98%)

Load-Date: August 22, 2005