

Latinos in labor unions were better protected from job losses during pandemic

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Latinos in non-union jobs were seven times more likely than Latinos in labor unions to fall into unemployment during three key months early in the pandemic, according to a new report by the UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Initiative.

The report also found that Black and Latino union workers had higher wages than their counterparts in non-union jobs during the pandemic, but that both groups still received lower pay than white workers in union jobs.

Following previous studies demonstrating that Latinos faced disproportionate public health and [economic consequences](#) during the pandemic, the new report highlights the benefits that labor unions can provide to vulnerable workers during an economic crisis, said Sonja Diaz, the founding director of the Latino Policy and Politics Initiative.

"Labor unions gave us child labor regulations, work-free weekends and the collective power to demand better conditions," Diaz said. "Our report shows that during economic downturns such as the one we faced amid COVID-19, union jobs can also provide much-needed stability for workers and their families."

The report's authors analyzed data from the Current Population Survey, which is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, to understand the impact of the pandemic on employment rates, wages and union protections between January 2020 and June 2021. The time frame was chosen so the researchers could compare conditions from the outset of the pandemic in the U.S., the months of uncertainty that followed and the time period when policy actions began to spur an economic recovery.

Unionized workers of all races and ethnicities were less likely than non-union workers to experience job loss during the height of the economic downturn, but the report found that the effect was most pronounced among Latinos. For example, from April to June 2020, the employment rate for Latinos in labor unions fell by only 2.5%, while the employment rate for all union workers declined by 10.2%. During the same period, the employment rate for Latinos who were not in [labor unions](#) declined

by 18.5%, representing a loss of nearly 4.3 million jobs.

Diaz said the nation's [economic recovery](#) is inextricably tied to how well Latinos can bounce back from the setbacks they experienced during the pandemic. The report recommends policy actions including passage of the Protecting the Right to Organize Act of 2021, a bill that would make it harder for employers to obstruct organizing efforts. The legislation is currently awaiting action in the U.S. Senate.

"The economic devastation spurred by COVID-19 made it clear that it's essential to build more resiliency and strengthen wages for the nation's workers, particularly for groups that are most vulnerable during a crisis," said UCLA research analyst Misael Galdamez, the report's lead author. "Unionization is an important tool to give workers the economic stability and dignity that they deserve."

Previous research by the Latino Policy and Politics Initiative has examined other aspects of how the pandemic has affected the nation's economy and [labor](#) force, including one study which found that Latinas were more likely to drop out of the workforce than workers from other demographic groups.

More information: Report: latino.ucla.edu/research/more-than-solidarity/

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