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RECESSION HITS NEW YORK LATINOS HARDEST

Survey Says More than One in Four Lost a Job in the Past Year

Latinos Have Least Amount of Employer-Sponsored Benefits

Low-income Latinos were hit the hardest by the recession in the area of employment, with more than one in four losing a job, and more than three in 10 reporting a loss of wages, hours, and /or tips in the past year, according to a new survey by the Community Service Society of New York (CSS).

The survey interviewed more than 1,200 low-income New Yorkers this past summer. This is the first time CSS has produced a detailed publication examining the low-income Latino experience in New York City as part of its annual survey of low-income New Yorkers entitled "**The Unheard Third,**" now in its eighth year.

"Low-income Latinos in the current recession are living through what many of our parents went through in the Great Depression," said David R. Jones, president and CEO of the Community Service Society. "The Latino economic experience in New York can only be described as dire. The hemorrhaging of jobs could lead to an avalanche of potential homelessness and other hardships that will further threaten the quality of life for low-income Latinos in New York City."

According to the survey, 26 percent of low-income Latinos reported losing their jobs in the past year, 31 percent had their wages reduced, and 70 percent had less than \$500 in total savings.

Jones added that most Latino workers are heavily concentrated in industries hard hit in the recession: construction, manufacturing, and retail and, in addition, they represent the group with the lowest rate of unionization. The unemployment levels for Latinos and African Americans are now approaching those of the Great Depression. Unionized jobs provide an opportunity at a career and some degree of economic stability.

According to "**The Unheard Third 2009: Job Loss, Economic Insecurity, and a Decline in Job Quality/A Profile of Low-Income Latino New Yorkers,**" Latinos receive fewer employer-sponsored benefits than others in the areas of paid sick leave, health insurance for their families, and prescription drug coverage. Job insecurity ranks high on the list of

concerns of low-income Latinos with over 40 percent saying they are very concerned they will not be able to make ends meet because they or someone in their household will be out of a job or not working enough hours in the next 12 months.

The Unheard Third is the only survey nationally to assess the concerns and priorities of low-income urban residents. This year we found that New York City workers saw their employer sponsored benefits – such as paid sick leave and health care – cut across the board. Low-income workers, and especially low-income Latinos, fared the worst – less than 3 in 10 low-income Latinos received paid sick leave, and less than 1 in 5 received prescription drug coverage. Low-income Latinos are also more likely than other demographics to fear losing their jobs in the next year.

Low-income Latinos indicated that they are more than twice more likely than in 2008 to say the biggest problem facing New York City is employment or lack of jobs. They also report that finding or keeping a job is their top worry. The report also indicated that low-income Latinos are more likely to have multiple workers in their household but less likely to report a range of employer-sponsored benefits. Nearly half of low-income Latinos report experiencing three or more hardships in the last year, with job-related hardships more likely than in low-income white and black households.

“The Unheard Third” is the only poll of its type in the nation that surveys low-income people about living in a major metropolitan city. The survey, which interviews low-income residents of the five boroughs (including approximately 400 moderate and higher income residents), takes a look at living in the Big Apple through the eyes of struggling New Yorkers. In addition to jobs and benefits, the survey examines savings and hardships.

The authors of the survey are Jeremy Reiss, CSS Director of Workforce and Economic Security, and Krista Pietrangelo, CSS Strategic Planning and Policy Associate.

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“The Unheard Third,” conducted by CSS and fielded by the national polling firm Lake Research Partners, is a unique snapshot of the policy preferences and experiences of low-income New Yorkers. The survey is partially funded through the support of The New York Times Company Foundation. CSS has used the survey to inform and guide its research, direct service programs, and policy recommendations. It has served to narrow the focus of the agency’s agenda on the working poor and reinforce its belief that public policy aimed at this population must, in part, be guided by the life experiences and ideas of New Yorkers living in poverty.

For 160 years, the Community Service Society of New York has been the leading voice on behalf of low-income New Yorkers and continues to advocate for the economic security of the working poor in the nation’s largest city.