

6-25-1987

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Notes On Venezuelan Unemployment, Labor Market Conditions

by John Neagle

Category/Department: General

Published: Thursday, June 25, 1987

A labor market study covering the 1967-1987 period by the Venezuelan government's Central Statistics and Information Office (OCEI) released this week states that the age cohort currently experiencing the highest rate of unemployment are persons under 35. The OCEI points out that since 1980 self-employed and underemployed persons in the so-called "informal sector" have accounted for an increasingly larger proportion of the labor force. Of the three broadly defined economic sectors agriculture, services and manufacturing, in 1967 agriculture accounted for the largest number of workers. Since then, agricultural employment has steadily declined. The number of service sector workers surpassed agriculture in 1968; manufacturing sector employment superceded agriculture in 1978. Next, the study reveals that in 1986, women accounted for 30.8% of the labor force, up from 24.4% in 1967. Next, the proportion of all women participating in the labor force rose from 21.5% in 1967 to 27.4% last year. The OCEI study reveals that last year some 2.2 million workers (37.2% of the labor force) were employed in the informal sector. According to the pro-government Venezuelan Workers Confederation (CTV), in reality the informal sector contains large numbers of un- and underemployed persons. The CTV estimates that nearly two million Venezuelan workers pertain to the ranks of the un- and underemployed. In 1986, the Venezuelan labor force consisted of slightly more than 6 million persons, from a total population of 17.4 million. Official unemployment for the year averaged 11.7%. In 1967, the labor force numbered 2.84 million (of a total population estimated at 9.5 million), while official unemployment was 8.2%. (Basic data from PRENSA LATINA, 06/24/87)

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