

All of the Jobs Lost in December Were Women's Jobs

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The most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) monthly jobs report shows that the economy lost 140,000 net jobs in December, marking the first month of job loss since the economy started adding back jobs in May 2020.¹ All of the jobs lost were women's jobs, with women losing 156,000 jobs and men gaining 16,000.² With December's losses, more than 2 in 5 (44.4%) of the over 22.1 million jobs lost in March and April due to the COVID-19 crisis have not returned.³ In December, 27,000 women entered the labor force after 863,000 exited in September.⁴ However, 154,000 Black women left the labor force last month, marking the largest one-month drop in their labor force size since March and April 2020.⁵ There were nearly 2.1 million fewer women in the labor force in December than there were in February, before the pandemic started.⁶

About 1 in 16 women ages 20 and over (6.3%) were unemployed in December, up from 6.2% in November.⁷ The unemployment rate for women in this age group is over twice as high as it was in February (3.1%).⁸ Adult men ages 20 and over had an unemployment rate of 6.4% in December, down from 6.6% in November.⁹ Even after December's gains, Black women and Latinas continue to be hit hard by the economic crisis: More than 1 in 12 Black women ages 20 and over (8.4%)¹⁰ and about 1 in 11 Latinas (9.1%) remained unemployed.¹¹ December's jobs data also indicates that many unemployed people have been out of work for most of the COVID-19 crisis. Among adult women ages 20 and over who were unemployed last month, about 2 in 5 (39.9%) had been out of work for 6 months or longer. For Asian women ages 16 and over, the share of unemployed workers who had been out of work for 6 months or longer was a startling 44.0%. For Black women and Latinas ages 16 and over, the corresponding rates of long-term unemployment were 40.8% and 38.3%, respectively.¹²

More than 2 in 5 of the 12.1 million women's jobs lost between February and April have not yet returned.

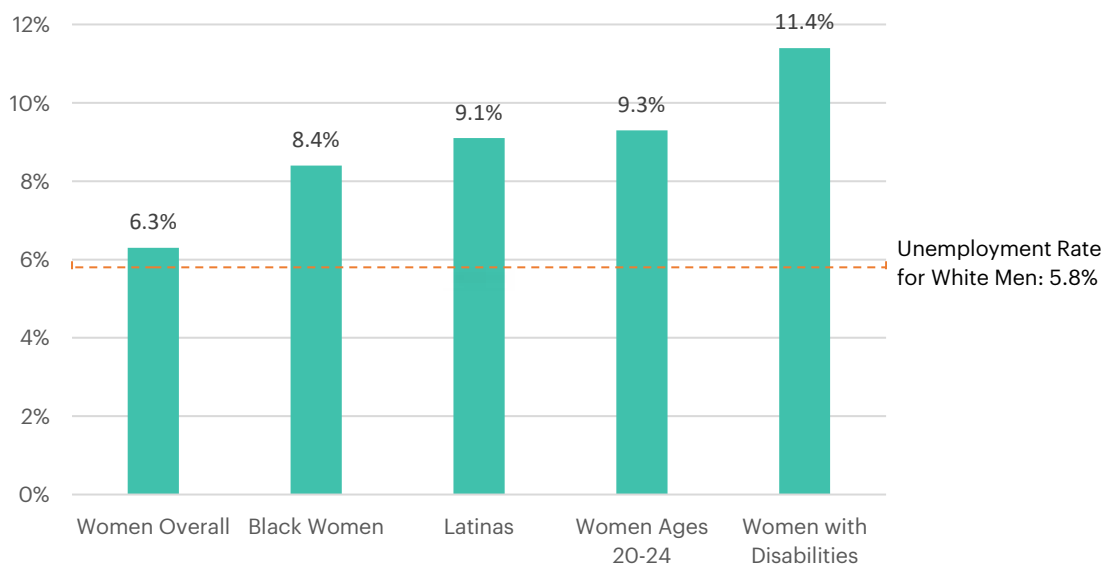
- Women have suffered the majority of pandemic-related job losses: since February 2020, women have lost over 5.4 million net jobs, and account for 55.0% of overall net job loss since the start of the crisis.¹³
- The leisure and hospitality sector lost 498,000 jobs in December. Women accounted for 56.6% of these job losses, while making up 53.1% of the leisure and hospitality workforce.¹⁴
- The government sector lost 45,000 jobs last month, with women accounting for 91.1% of those losses. Women make up 57.5% of the government workforce.¹⁵
- The retail trade sector gained 120,500 jobs in December. Women accounted for only 44.2% of those gains, while making up 48.5% of the retail trade workforce.¹⁶

Due to a misclassification error in the household survey component of every BLS Employment Situation Summary since March, the reported unemployment rate for December slightly underestimates the share of the labor force that was unemployed. BLS estimates that the actual unemployment rate for December was 0.6 percentage points higher than reported. The actual unemployment rates for demographic subgroups are also likely higher than reported.

The overall unemployment rate masks even higher rates for Black women, Latinas, and other demographic groups.

- More than 1 in 12 Black women ages 20 and over (8.4%) were unemployed in December.¹⁷ Black women's unemployment rate was down from 9.0% in November, but was still more than 1.7 times higher than their pre-pandemic unemployment rate (4.9% in February).¹⁸
- More than 1 in 11 Latinas ages 20 and over (9.1%) were unemployed in December, up nearly a full percentage point from November's rate (8.2%).¹⁹ This is more than 1.7 times their pre-pandemic unemployment rate (4.9% in February).²⁰
- By comparison, the unemployment rate for white men ages 20 and over was 5.8% in December.²¹
- More than 1 in 9 (11.4%) women with disabilities were unemployed in December²² – an increase of 4 percentage points from February's rate (7.4%).²³
- Pandemic-related job losses continue to hit younger women particularly hard, with over 1 in 11 (9.3%) women between the ages of 20 and 24 unemployed in December. The rate for young Black women between the ages of 20 and 24 was even higher, at 10.8%.²⁴ For young Latinas between the ages of 20 and 24, the unemployment rate was 10.1% in December.²⁵

Women's Unemployment Rates (December 2020)



Source: BLS, December 2020 Employment Situation Summary Tables A-1, A-2, A-3, A-6, and A-13. Unemployment rates for white men, women overall, Latinas, and Black women are seasonally adjusted and are for people ages 20 years and over. The unemployment rate for women ages 20-24 is not seasonally adjusted. The unemployment rate for women with disabilities is not seasonally adjusted and is for women ages 16-64.

Many unemployed women have been out of work for 6 months or longer, and many of those who are working are not getting the hours they want or need.

- In December, about 2 in 5 unemployed women ages 20 and over (39.9%) had been out of work for 6 months or longer. Among unemployed women ages 16 and over, 38.6% had been out of work for 6 months or longer, including 40.8% of Black women, 38.3% of Latinas, and 44.0% of Asian women.²⁶
- Nearly 1 in 6 women ages 16 and over (15.8%) working part-time in December were doing so involuntarily, meaning they wanted full-time work. These rates were even higher for Asian women (18.3%), Latinas (24.4%), and Black women (21.1%).²⁷

Many December marked the end of a catastrophic year for working women

- Between January and December 2020, nearly 2.1 million women left the labor force,²⁸ including 564,000 Black women²⁹ and 317,000 Latinas.³⁰
- Women lost more than half (55.0%) of the 9.6 million net jobs lost in 2020.³¹

1 NWLC calculations based on BLS, December 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Establishment Data Table B-1: Employees on nonfarm payrolls by industry sector and selected industry detail, available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst17.htm>.

2 NWLC calculations based on BLS, December 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Establishment Data Table B-1 and BLS, December 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Establishment Data Table B-5: Employment of women on nonfarm payrolls by industry sector, seasonally adjusted, available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst121.htm>.

3 NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Establishment Data Table B-1, available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesstab1.htm>. Throughout this factsheet, we measure changes since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic using the February 2020 Employment Situation Summary as a reference point.

4 NWLC calculations based on BLS, December 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-1: Employment Status of the civilian population by sex and age, available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst101.htm> and BLS, historical data for Household Data Table A-1, available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab1.htm>. Figures are seasonally adjusted and capture women ages 20 and over.

5 NWLC calculations based on BLS, December 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-2: Employment status of the civilian population by race, sex, and age. Figure is seasonally adjusted and is for Black women ages 20 and over.

6 NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Household Data Table A-1. Figures are seasonally adjusted.

7 BLS, December 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-1. Figures are seasonally adjusted.

8 BLS, historical data for Household Data Table A-1. Figures are seasonally adjusted.

9 BLS, December 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-1. Figures are seasonally adjusted.

10 BLS, December 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-2: Employment status of the civilian population by race, sex, and age. Figure is seasonally adjusted and is for Black women ages 20 and over.

11 BLS, December 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-3: Employment status of the Hispanic or Latino population by sex and age. Figure is seasonally adjusted and are for Latinas ages 20 and over.

12 BLS, December 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data for Table A-36: Unemployed persons by age, sex, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, marital status, and duration of unemployment, available at <https://www.bls.gov/web/empst/cpseea36.htm>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.

13 NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Establishment Data Table B-5, available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesstab5.htm>.

14 NWLC calculations based on BLS, December 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Establishment Data Table B-1 and BLS, December 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Establishment Data Table B-5.

15 *Id.*

16 *Id.*

17 BLS, December 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-2.

18 NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Household Data Table A-2.

19 BLS, December 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-3.

20 BLS, historical data for Household Data Table A-3.

21 NWLC calculations based on BLS, December 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-2. Figure is seasonally adjusted.

22 BLS, December 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-6: Employment status of the civilian population by sex, age, and disability status, not seasonally adjusted, available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst106.htm>. Figures are for women with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 64.

23 NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Household Data Table A-6, available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab6.htm>.

24 BLS, December 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-13: Employment status of the civilian population by age, sex, and race, available at <https://www.bls.gov/web/empst/cpseea13.htm>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.

25 BLS, December 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-14: Employment status of the Hispanic or Latino population by age and sex, available at <https://www.bls.gov/web/empst/cpseea14.htm>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.

26 NWLC calculations based on BLS, December 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-36. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.

27 NWLC calculations based on BLS, December 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-27: Persons at work in nonagricultural industries by age, sex, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, marital status, and usual full- or part-time status, available at <https://www.bls.gov/web/empst/cpseea27.htm>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.

28 NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Household Data Table A-1.

29 NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Household Data Table A-2.

30 NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Household Data Table A-3.

31 NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Establishment Data Table B-1 and BLS, historical data for Establishment Data Table B-5.