

# Even With Modest Jobs Gains, Women Have Lost Almost 7 Million Jobs Since the Start of the Pandemic

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The most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) monthly jobs report shows job gains slowed in July, with the economy adding back only 1.8 million jobs, compared to 4.8 million gained in June.<sup>1</sup> This means that only about 2 in 5 (41.8%) of the 22.2 million jobs lost in March and April due to the COVID-19 crisis have returned.<sup>2</sup> Nearly half (48.2%) of the jobs that returned in July are in the leisure and hospitality (which includes businesses like bars and restaurants) and retail trade sectors.<sup>3</sup> These numbers reflect the state of the economy in early July, before some states re-imposed restrictions in response to surging coronavirus cases. Now that many businesses are being forced to close, the jobs that came back last month are at risk of being lost again.

July's gains are particularly fragile for women, who accounted for nearly two-thirds (64.6%) of the jobs gained last month, many of which were in leisure and hospitality and in retail trade.<sup>4</sup> Even after July's gains, Black women and Latinas continue to be hit hard by the economic crisis: While the overall unemployment rate dropped to 10.2% in July,<sup>5</sup> almost 1 in 7 Black women (13.5%)<sup>6</sup> and Latinas (14.0%) remained unemployed.<sup>7</sup> Involuntary part-time employment also remained at historic highs, as nearly 1 in 4 women (23.1%) working part-time in July wanted to work full-time—and rates of involuntary part-time work were even higher for Latinas (36.0%), Asian women (32.8%), and Black women (26.8%).<sup>8</sup> These high rates mean that even while people are working, there is widespread labor underutilization. Accounting for people working part-time involuntarily and those who recently stopped searching for work or are otherwise marginally attached to the labor force, in addition to those who are unemployed entirely, the unemployment rate for women ages 16 and over was 17.9% in July.<sup>9</sup>

## Only 2 in 5 of the 12.1 million women's jobs lost between February and April have returned.

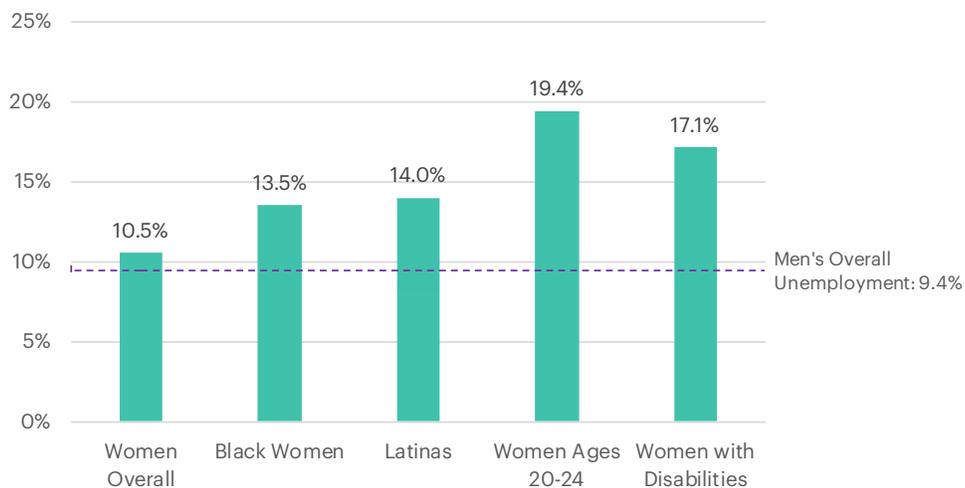
- Women accounted for 64.6% of July's job gains, while making up just under half (49.7%) of the workforce.<sup>10</sup>
- Women have disproportionately suffered pandemic-related job losses: since February 2020, women have lost nearly 7 million net jobs, accounting for 53.6% of overall net job loss since the start of the crisis.<sup>11</sup>
- Women ages 20 and over were more likely than men ages 20 and over to be unemployed in July, with an unemployment rate of 10.5% compared to men's 9.4%.<sup>12</sup> The unemployment rate for women in July was still 1.3 times higher than the highest unemployment rate for women during the Great Recession and subsequent recovery (8.4%).<sup>13</sup>

Due to a misclassification error in the household survey component of the March, April, May, June, and July Employment Situation Summaries, the reported unemployment rates for July slightly underestimate the share of the labor force that was unemployed. BLS estimates that the actual unemployment rate for July is up to one point 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.

- Nearly 1 in 7 Black women (13.5%) ages 20 and over were unemployed in July.<sup>14</sup> Black women’s unemployment rate is down from 14.0% in June, but still nearly 3 times higher than their pre-pandemic unemployment rate (4.8% in February).<sup>15</sup>
- Similarly, nearly 1 in 7 (14.0%) Latinas ages 20 and over were unemployed in July, down from 15.3% in June,<sup>16</sup> but nearly three times higher than their unemployment rate in February (4.9%).<sup>17</sup>
- By comparison, July’s unemployment rate for white men ages 20 and over was 8.3%, down from 9.0% in June.<sup>18</sup>
- In July, more than 1 in 6 (17.1%) women with disabilities were unemployed<sup>19</sup> – an increase of nearly 10 percentage points from February.<sup>20</sup>
- Pandemic-related job losses continue to hit younger women particularly hard, with nearly 1 in 5 (19.4%) women between the ages of 20 and 24 unemployed in July.<sup>21</sup> And rates for young Black women between ages 20 and 24 (25.4%)<sup>22</sup> and young Latinas between ages 20 and 24 (25.2%) were even higher.<sup>23</sup>

Women's Unemployment Rates (July 2020)



Source: BLS, July 2020 Employment Situation Summary Tables A-1, A-2, A-3, A-6, and A-13. Unemployment rates for men overall, 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 to 64.

## Many of the jobs women gained over the past three months are in the industry sectors most likely to be affected by another round of shutdowns due to COVID-19.

- Since the economy started to rebound in May, women have gained over 5.2 million jobs. Of those, about 2 in 5 (42.3%) have been in the leisure and hospitality sector, which includes businesses such as restaurants and bars.<sup>24</sup> The leisure and hospitality sector was among the first to suffer massive job losses when the COVID-19 crisis began, so many of the jobs gained back in that sector are likely to be at risk when businesses are forced to close again.
- Retail trade was another sector that suffered heavy losses at the start of the COVID-19 crisis. Over May, June, and July, nearly 1 in 6 (16.0%) of the jobs women gained were in retail trade. This means that leisure and hospitality and retail trade combined accounted for nearly 6 in 10 (58.3%) of all of the jobs women gained over the past three months.<sup>25</sup>

## While some jobs have returned, many women are not working the hours they want or need.

- In July, more than 1 in 4 (23.1%) women working part-time wanted full-time work, but were unable to obtain it for economic reasons, such as their employer not giving them full-time hours.<sup>26</sup> In February, only 10.7% of women working part-time were doing so for economic reasons.
- While the rate of involuntary part-time work for women in July was lower than its peak in April (30.6%), the April rate was the highest level of involuntary part-time work that women had ever experienced, and July's rate remains higher than at any period prior to the coronavirus pandemic.<sup>27</sup>

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- 1 NWLC calculations based on U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), July 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table B-1: Employees on nonfarm payrolls by industry sector and selected industry detail, available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst17.htm> (last visited August 7, 2020). Figures are seasonally adjusted and capture total non-farm enrollment.
  - 2 NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Table B-1, available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesbt1.htm> (last visited August 7, 2020). 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.
  - 3 NWLC calculations based on BLS, July 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table B-1.
  - 4 NWLC calculations based on BLS, July 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table B-1 and BLS, July 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table B-5: Employment of women on nonfarm payrolls by industry sector, seasonally adjusted, available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst21.htm> (last visited August 7, 2020).
  - 5 BLS, July 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-1: Employment Status of the civilian population by sex and age, available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst01.htm> (last visited August 7, 2020). Figure is seasonally adjusted and for all workers ages 16 and over.
  - 6 BLS, July 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-2: Employment status of the civilian population by race, sex, and age, available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst02.htm> (last visited August 7, 2020). Figure is seasonally adjusted and is for Black women ages 20 and over.
  - 7 BLS, July 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-3: Employment status of the Hispanic or Latino population by sex and age, available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.nr0.htm> (last visited August 7, 2020). Figures is seasonally adjusted and is for Latinas ages 20 and over.
  - 8 NWLC calculations based on BLS, July 2020 Employment Situation Summary, 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/cpseaa27.htm> (last visited August 7, 2020). Figures are not seasonally adjusted and are for women ages 16 and over in each demographic group.
  - 9 NWLC calculations based on BLS, July 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-1; BLS, July 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-16: Persons not in the labor force and multiple jobholders by sex, not seasonally adjusted, available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst16.htm> (last visited August 7, 2020); and BLS, July 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-27. Figure is not seasonally adjusted and is for women ages 16 and over. BLS defines people "marginally attached to the labor force" as those not in the labor force who want and are available for work, and who have looked for a job sometime in the prior 12 months (or since the end of their last job if they held one within the past 12 months), but were not counted as unemployed because they had not searched for work in the 4 weeks preceding the survey. "Discouraged workers" are a subset of "marginally attached" workers and are not currently looking for work because they believe there are no jobs available or that there are none for which they would qualify. For more information, see the BLS glossary: [www.bls.gov/bls/glossary.htm](http://www.bls.gov/bls/glossary.htm).
  - 10 NWLC calculations based on BLS, July 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table B-1 and BLS, July 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table B-5.
  - 11 NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Table B-1 and BLS, historical data for B-5, available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesbt5.htm> (last visited August 7, 2020).
  - 12 BLS, July 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-1. Figures are seasonally adjusted and for women and men ages 20 and over.
  - 13 NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Table A-1, available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab1.htm> (last visited August 7, 2020).
  - 14 BLS, July 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-2.
  - 15 BLS, historical data for Table A-2, available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab2.htm> (last visited August 7, 2020).
  - 16 BLS, July 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-3.
  - 17 BLS, historical data for Table A-3, available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab3.htm> (last visited August 7, 2020).
  - 18 BLS, July 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-2. Figure is seasonally adjusted and is for white men ages 20 and over.

- 19** BLS, July 2020 Employment Situation Summary, 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/empstat06.htm> (last visited August 7, 2020). Figures are for women with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 64.
- 20** NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Table A-6, available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab6.htm> (last visited August 7, 2020).
- 21** BLS, July 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-13: Employment status of the civilian population by age, sex, and race, available at <https://www.bls.gov/web/empstat/cpseea13.htm> (last visited August 7, 2020). Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
- 22** *Id.*
- 23** BLS, July 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-14: Employment status of the Hispanic of Latino Population by age and sex, available at <https://www.bls.gov/web/empstat/cpseea14.htm> (last visited August 7, 2020). Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
- 24** NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Table B-5.
- 25** *Id.*
- 26** NWLC calculations based on BLS, July 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-27. Figures are not seasonally adjusted and are for women ages 16 and over.
- 27** NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Table A-27. Data for all women working part-time available at <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/LNU02033505>. Data for women working part-time for economic reasons available at <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/LNU02033506>. BLS began reporting data on involuntary part-time work by sex in 1994. Prior to the start of the pandemic, the highest reported rate of involuntary part-time work among women was 22.5% in June 2013.