

Jobs Gains Continued to Slow in August, and Women Are Still Short Over 6 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 August, with the economy adding back only 1.4 million jobs, compared to 1.7 million added back in July. Even with these gains, less than half (47.9%) of the 22.2 million jobs lost in March and April due to the COVID-19 crisis have returned.¹ Over 3 in 10 (30.8%) of the jobs that returned in August are in the leisure and hospitality (which includes businesses like bars and restaurants) and retail trade sectors.² These were among the first jobs lost at the start of the pandemic, and if surging coronavirus cases force businesses to close, they are at risk of being lost again.

Women gained nearly 6 in 10 (58.4%) of the jobs added to the economy in August, while making up about half (49.8%) of the workforce.³ Even after August's gains, Black women and Latinas continue to be hit hard by the economic crisis: While the overall unemployment rate dropped to 8.4% in August,⁴ nearly 1 in 8 Black women (12.0%)⁵ and more than 1 in 10 Latinas (10.5%) remained unemployed.⁶ Involuntary part-time employment also remained at high levels, as nearly 1 in 5 women (19.8%) working part-time in August wanted to work full-time—and rates of involuntary part-time work were even higher for Latinas (28.0%), Asian women (24.5%), and Black women (20.7%).⁷ These high rates mean that even while people are working, there is widespread labor underutilization—with lower incomes for workers and the families depending on them. 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 15.1% in August.⁸

Only half of the 12.1 million women's jobs lost between February and April have returned.

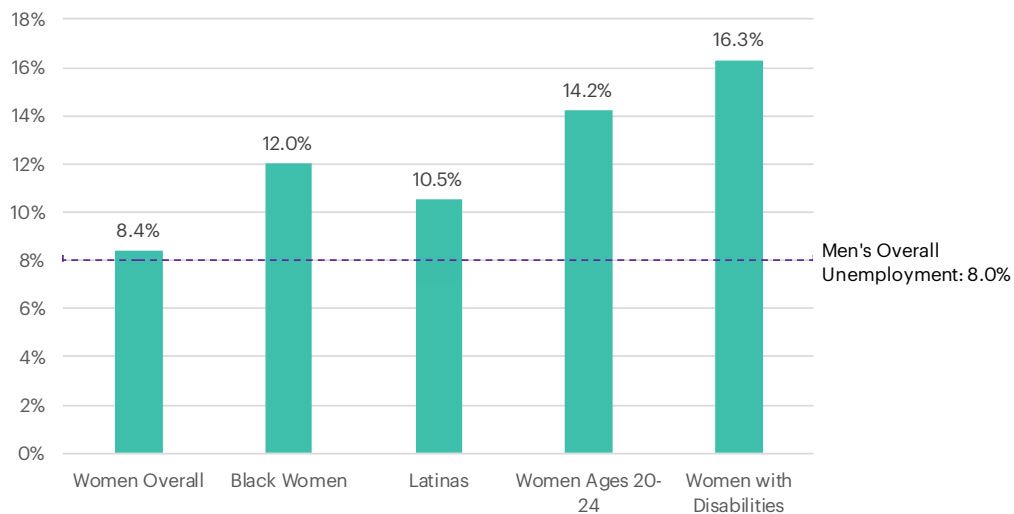
- Women have disproportionately suffered pandemic-related job losses: since February 2020, women have lost over 6.1 million net jobs, accounting for 53.2% of overall net job loss since the start of the crisis.⁹
- Women ages 20 and over were more likely than men ages 20 and over to be unemployed, with an unemployment rate of 8.4% compared to men's 8.0%.¹⁰ The unemployment rate for women in August now matches the highest unemployment rate for women during the Great Recession and subsequent recovery (8.4%).¹¹

Due to a misclassification error in the household survey component of the March, April, May, June, July, and August Employment Situation Summaries, the reported unemployment rate for August slightly underestimates the share of the labor force that was unemployed. BLS estimates that the actual unemployment rate for August was 0.7 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.

- Nearly 1 in 8 Black women (12.0%) ages 20 and over were unemployed in August.¹² Black women's unemployment rate was down from 13.5% in July, but still two and a half times higher than their pre-pandemic unemployment rate (4.8% in February).¹³
- Similarly, more than 1 in 10 (10.5%) Latinas ages 20 and over were unemployed in August, down from 14.0% in July,¹⁴ but more than double their pre-pandemic unemployment rate (4.9% in February).¹⁵
- In August, the unemployment rates for Black women and Latinas were more than one and a half times higher than the rate for white men ages 20 and over (6.9%).¹⁶
- In August, nearly 1 in 6 (16.3%) women with disabilities were unemployed¹⁷ – an increase of nearly 9 percentage points from February.¹⁸
- Pandemic-related job losses continue to hit younger women particularly hard, with about 1 in 7 (14.2%) women between the ages of 20 and 24 unemployed in August.¹⁹ And rates for young Black women between ages 20 and 24 (26.8%)²⁰ and young Latinas between ages 20 and 24 (17.1%) were even higher.²¹

Women's Unemployment Rates (August 2020)



Source: BLS, August 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 four 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 nearly 6 million jobs. Of those, nearly 2 in 5 (38.7%) have been in the leisure and hospitality sector, which includes businesses such as restaurants and bars.²² 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 if 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, July, and August, 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 over half (54.7%) of all of the jobs women gained over the past four months.²³

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

- In August, nearly 1 in 5 (19.8%) 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.²⁴ In February, only 10.7% of women working part-time were doing so for economic reasons.²⁵
- Rates of part-time work for economic reasons were even higher for Asian women (24.5%), Black women (20.7%), and Latinas (28.0%).²⁶

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- 1 NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Table B-1, available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesbtab1.htm> (last visited September 4, 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.
 - 2 NWLC calculations based on BLS, August 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table B-1.
 - 3 NWLC calculations based on BLS, August 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table B-1 and BLS, August 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/empst.t21.htm> (last visited September 4, 2020).
 - 4 BLS, August 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/empst.t01.htm> (last visited September 4, 2020). Figure is seasonally adjusted and for all workers ages 16 and over.
 - 5 BLS, August 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/empst.t02.htm> (last visited September 4, 2020). Figure is seasonally adjusted and is for Black women ages 20 and over.
 - 6 BLS, August 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 September 4, 2020). Figures is seasonally adjusted and is for Latinas ages 20 and over.
 - 7 NWLC calculations based on BLS, August 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/cpseea27.htm> (last visited September 4, 2020). Figures are not seasonally adjusted and are for women ages 16 and over in each demographic group.
 - 8 NWLC calculations based on BLS, August 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-1; BLS, August 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/empst.t16.htm> (last visited September 4, 2020); and BLS, August 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.
 - 9 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/cesbtab5.htm> (last visited September 4, 2020).
 - 10 BLS, August 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-1. Figures are seasonally adjusted and for women and men ages 20 and over.
 - 11 NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Table A-1, available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab1.htm> (last visited September 4, 2020).
 - 12 BLS, August 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-2.
 - 13 BLS, historical data for Table A-2, available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab2.htm> (last visited September 4, 2020).
 - 14 BLS, August 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-3.
 - 15 BLS, historical data for Table A-3, available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab3.htm> (last visited September 4, 2020).
 - 16 BLS, August 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-2. Figure is seasonally adjusted and is for white men ages 20 and over.
 - 17 BLS, August 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/empst.t06.htm> (last visited September 4, 2020). Figures are for women with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 64.

- 18** NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Table A-6, available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab6.htm> (last visited September 4, 2020).
- 19** BLS, August 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/empsit/cpseea13.htm> (last visited September 4, 2020). Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
- 20** *Id.*
- 21** BLS, August 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/empsit/cpseea14.htm> (last visited September 4, 2020). Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
- 22** NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Table B-5.
- 23** *Id.*
- 24** NWLC calculations based on BLS, August 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-27. Figures are not seasonally adjusted and are for women ages 16 and over.
- 25** 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>.
- 26** NWLC calculations based on BLS, August 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-27. Figures are not seasonally adjusted and are for women ages 16 and over in each demographic group.