

Nearly 40 Percent of Unemployed Women Have Been Out of Work for 6 Months or Longer

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The most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) monthly jobs report shows that the economy added back only 245,000 jobs in November, marking the smallest monthly increase since jobs started being added back to the economy in May 2020.¹ Despite these gains, 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.² Women gained 68.6% of the jobs added to the economy in November, while making up about half (49.8%) of the workforce, but still have lost a net 5.3 million jobs since February.³ In November, 10,000 women ages 20 and over left the labor force (meaning they are neither working nor looking for work),⁴ and there were nearly 2.2 million fewer women in the labor force in November than there were in February, before the pandemic.⁵

About 1 in 16 women ages 20 and over (6.1%) were unemployed in November, down from 6.5% in October.⁶ The unemployment rate for women in this age group is still nearly twice as high as it was in February (3.1%).⁷ Adult men ages 20 and over had an unemployment rate of 6.7% in November, marking no change since October.⁸ Even after November's gains, Black women and Latinas continue to be hit hard by the economic crisis: About 1 in 11 Black women (9.0%)⁹ and 1 in 12 Latinas (8.2%) remained unemployed.¹⁰ November'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, nearly 2 in 5 (38.6%) 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 44.9%. For Black women and Latinas ages 16 and over, the corresponding rates of long-term unemployment were 36.2% and 36.9%, respectively.¹¹

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

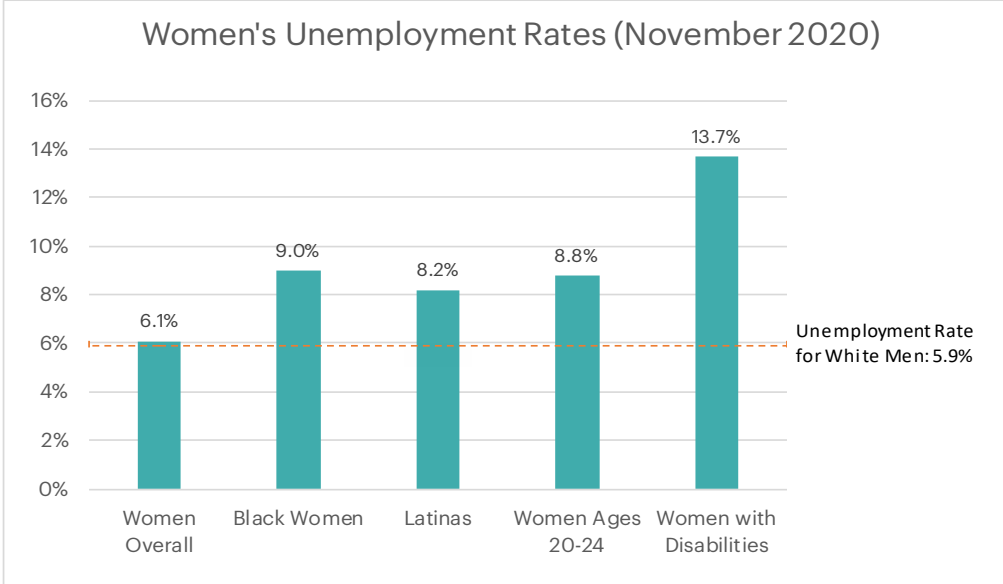
- Women have suffered the majority of pandemic-related job losses: since February 2020, women have lost over 5 million net jobs, and account for 53.6% of overall net job loss since the start of the crisis.¹²
- The leisure and hospitality sector gained 31,000 jobs in November. Women gained only 41.9% of these jobs, despite making up 53.3% of the leisure and hospitality workforce.¹³
- The retail trade sector lost 34,700 jobs in November. Women accounted for only 18.7% of those gains, despite making up nearly half (48.6%) of the retail trade workforce.¹⁴
- The number of state government jobs remained constant between October and November, while 13,000 local

government jobs were lost last month. Since February, more than 1.3 million state and local government jobs have been lost.¹⁵ While a gender breakdown is not available for these losses, women make up the vast majority of those working in state and local government and have likely been heavily affected.¹⁶

Due to a misclassification error in the household survey component of every BLS Employment Situation Summary since March, the reported unemployment rate for November slightly underestimates the share of the labor force that was unemployed. BLS estimates that the actual unemployment rate for November was 0.4 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.

- About 1 in 11 Black women (9.0%) ages 20 and over were unemployed in November.¹⁷ Black women’s unemployment rate was down from 9.2% in October, but was still more than 1.8 times higher than their pre-pandemic unemployment rate (4.8% in February).¹⁸
- Nearly 1 in 12 Latinas ages 20 and over (8.2%) were unemployed in November, down from 9.0% in October, but nearly 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 5.9% in November.²¹
- Nearly 1 in 7 (13.7%) women with disabilities were unemployed in November²² – an increase of over 6 percentage points from February’s rate (7.4%).²³
- Pandemic-related job losses continue to hit younger women particularly hard, with nearly 1 in 11 (8.8%) women between the ages of 20 and 24 unemployed in November. The rate for young Black women between the ages of 20 and 24 (15.8%) was even higher.²⁴ For young Latinas between the ages of 20 and 24, the unemployment rate was 9.9% in October.²⁵



Source: BLS, November 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 November, nearly 2 in 5 unemployed women ages 20 and over (38.6%) had been out of work for 6 months or longer. Among unemployed women ages 16 and over, 37.2% had been out of work for 6 months or longer, including 36.2% of Black women, 36.9% of Latinas, and 44.9% of Asian women.²⁶
- More than 1 in 7 women ages 16 and over (14.3%) working part-time in November were doing so involuntarily, meaning they wanted full-time work. These rates were even higher for Asian women (16.3%), Latinas (19.1%), and Black women (23.0%).²⁷

1 NWLC calculations based on BLS, November 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/empsit.t17.htm>.

2 NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Establishment Data Table B-1, available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesbtab1.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.

3 NWLC calculations based on BLS, November 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Establishment Data Table B-1 and BLS, November 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/empsit.t21.htm>.

4 NWLC calculations based on BLS, November 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/empsit.t01.htm>. Figures are seasonally adjusted.

5 NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Household Data Table A-1, available at <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/LNS11000026>. Figures are seasonally adjusted.

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

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

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

9 BLS, November 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.

10 BLS, November 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.

11 BLS, November 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/empsit/cpseea36.htm>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.

12 NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Establishment Data Table B-1 and BLS, historical data for Establishment Data Table B-5, available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesbtab5.htm>.

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

14 Id.

15 NWLC calculations based on BLS, November 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Establishment Data Table B-1.

16 Claire Ewing-Nelson, National Women’s Law Center, As State and Local Governments Face a Fiscal Crisis, Women’s Jobs Are on the Line (July 2020), available at <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Governmentworkersfactsheet-2.pdf>.

17 BLS, November 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, November 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, November 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-2. Figure is seasonally adjusted.

22 BLS, November 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/empsit.t06.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, November 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/empsit/cpseea13.htm>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.

25 BLS, November 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/empsit/cpseea14.htm>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.

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

27 NWLC calculations based on BLS, November 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/empsit/cpseea27.htm>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.