



APRIL 2021 | FACT SHEET

# Only About One Third of the 916,000 Jobs Gained Last Month Went to Women

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The most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) monthly jobs report shows that the economy gained 916,000 net jobs in March 2021, the largest gain since August 2020.<sup>1</sup> Women accounted for only 34.4% of net job gain last month, gaining 315,000 jobs while men gained 601,000.<sup>2</sup> Women would need nearly 15 straight months of job gains at last month's level to recover the over 4.6 million net jobs they have lost since February 2020.<sup>3</sup>

In March 2021, 495,000 women entered the labor force, meaning they are now either working or looking for work.<sup>4</sup> Even with this gain, the net number of women who have left the labor force since the start of the pandemic remains at over 1.8 million.<sup>5</sup> Women's labor force participation rate was 57.4% last month, up from 57.0% in February 2021, but still lower than their pre-pandemic labor force participation rate of 59.2% in February 2020.<sup>6</sup> Before the pandemic, women's labor force participation rate had not been as low as 57.4% since December 1988.<sup>7</sup> By comparison, more than 1.9 million men have left the labor force since February 2020. Their labor force participation rate was 69.5% in March 2021, compared to 71.6% in February 2020.<sup>8</sup>

Nearly 1 in 17 (5.7%) women ages 20 and over were unemployed in March 2021, down from 5.9% in February 2021.<sup>9</sup> The unemployment rate for women ages 20 and over is still more than 1.8 times higher than their pre-pandemic unemployment rate of 3.1% in February 2020.<sup>10</sup> Black women and Latinas continue to be hit particularly hard by the economic crisis: nearly 1 in 11 Black women ages 20 and over (8.7%)<sup>11</sup> and nearly 1 in 13 Latinas (7.3%) were unemployed last month.<sup>12</sup> Last month's jobs data also indicates that many unemployed people have been out of work for extended periods of time. Among adult women ages 20 and over who were unemployed last month, more than 2 in 5 (45.6%) had been out of work for 6 months or longer. Rates of long-term unemployment were similar for Black women ages 16 and over (46.5%), Latinas ages 16 and over (45.9%), and Asian women ages 16 and over (42.0%).<sup>13</sup>

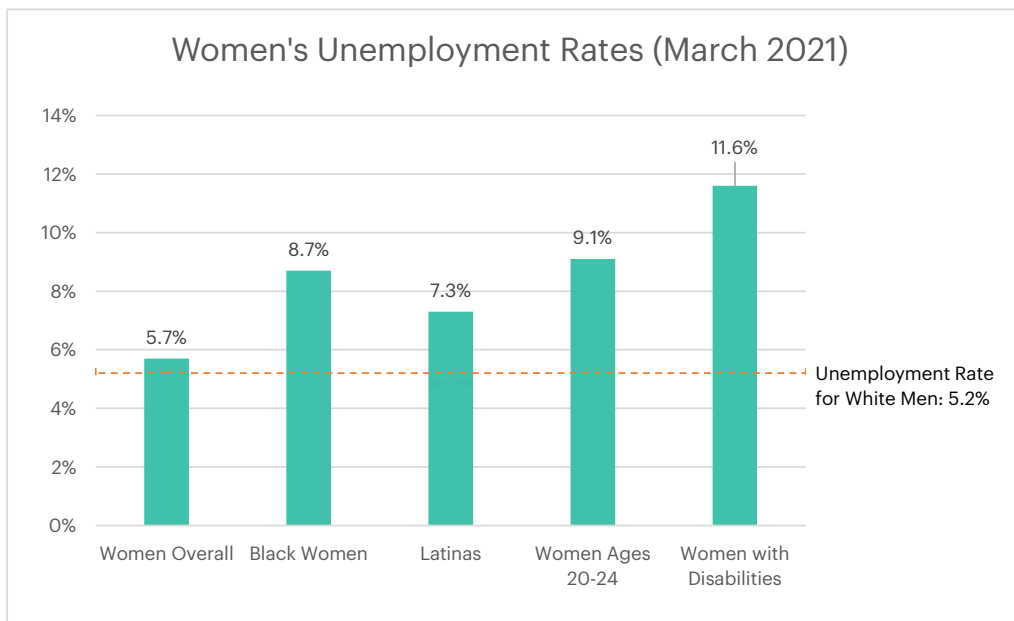
## Women gained 315,000 jobs last month but are still short over 4.6 million jobs since February 2020.

- The leisure and hospitality sector gained 280,000 jobs last month. Women gained 139,000 leisure and hospitality jobs, with this sector accounting for more than 2 in 5 (44.1%) of women's total job gains last month. Women accounted for 49.6% of last month's gains in the leisure and hospitality sector and made up 53.2% of the sector's workforce.<sup>14</sup>
- The government sector gained 136,000 jobs last month. Women accounted for 45.6% of these gains, a disproportionately low share given that women made up 57.5% of the government workforce.<sup>15</sup>
- The retail trade sector gained 22,500 jobs last month. Women accounted for only 2.2% of those gains, although they made up 48.4% of the retail trade workforce.<sup>16</sup> Women have lost 94.9% of the net jobs lost in the retail sector since February 2020.
- The child care sector gained 2,100 jobs last month.<sup>17</sup> Accounting for this slight gain, the net number of child care jobs lost since February 2020 is 164,000. The child care sector is still short nearly 1 in 6 (15.7%) jobs since the start of the crisis.<sup>18</sup>

Due to a misclassification error in the household survey component of every BLS Employment Situation Summary since March 2020, the reported unemployment rate for March 2021 slightly underestimates the share of the labor force that was unemployed. BLS estimates that the actual unemployment rate for March 2021 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.

- Nearly 1 in 11 Black women ages 20 and over (8.7%) were unemployed in March 2021, down from 8.9% in February 2021.<sup>19</sup> Black women's unemployment rate last month was still nearly 1.8 times higher than their pre-pandemic unemployment rate (4.9% in February 2020).<sup>20</sup> Similarly, nearly 1 in 10 Black men ages 20 and over (9.8%) were unemployed in March 2021,<sup>21</sup> which is more than 1.6 times their pre-pandemic unemployment rate of 6.0% in February 2020.<sup>22</sup>
- Nearly 1 in 13 Latinas ages 20 and over (7.3%) were unemployed in March 2021, down from 8.5% in February 2021.<sup>23</sup> This is still nearly 1.5 times their pre-pandemic unemployment rate (4.9% in February 2020).<sup>24</sup>
- More than 1 in 18 Asian women ages 20 and over (5.7%) were unemployed in March 2021, down from 6.0% in February 2021, and 1.9 times higher than their pre-pandemic unemployment rate (3.0% in February 2020).<sup>25</sup>
- By comparison, the unemployment rate for white men ages 20 and over was 5.2% in March 2021.<sup>26</sup>
- More than 1 in 9 (11.6%) women with disabilities were unemployed in March 2021<sup>27</sup> – an increase of over 4 percentage points from their pre-pandemic unemployment rate in February 2020 (7.4%).<sup>28</sup>
- Pandemic-related job losses continue to hit younger women especially hard, with approximately 1 in 11 (9.1%) women between the ages of 20 and 24 unemployed in March 2021.<sup>29</sup> The unemployment rate for Latinas ages 20 to 24 was even higher at 10.6%,<sup>30</sup> and the unemployment rate for Black women ages 20 to 24 was much higher at 17.5%.<sup>31</sup>



Source: BLS, March 2021 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 March 2021, more than 2 in 5 unemployed women ages 20 and over (45.6%) had been out of work for 6 months or longer. Among unemployed women ages 16 and over, 43.6% had been out of work for 6 months or longer, including 46.5% of Black women, 45.9% of Latinas, and 42.0% of Asian women.<sup>32</sup>
- Additionally, in March 2021, nearly 1 in 4 unemployed women ages 16 and over (24.2%) had been out of work for a year or longer.<sup>33</sup>
- More than 1 in 7 women ages 16 and over (15.0%) working part-time in March 2021 were doing so involuntarily, meaning they wanted full-time work. These rates were even higher for Latinas (26.4%), Black women (19.5%), and Asian women (18.5%).<sup>34</sup>

## If the over 1.8 million women who have left the labor force since February 2020 were counted among the unemployed, women's unemployment would have been 8.0% last month.

Despite 495,000 women returning to the labor force in March 2021, over 1.8 million fewer women were in the labor force compared to February 2020. Those who have left the labor force are no longer working or looking for work. Women's labor force participation level is now 57.4%, a level that, pre-pandemic, women had not seen since December 1988. By comparison, more than 1.9 million men have left the labor force since February 2020, and their labor force participation rate was 69.5% in March 2021.<sup>35</sup>

Reported unemployment rates do not capture people who have left the labor force entirely, as they are no longer counted among those who are unemployed. If the over 1.8 million women who have left the labor force since February 2020 were counted as unemployed in March 2021, women's unemployment rate would have been 8.0% in March 2021 instead of the reported 5.7%.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, if the over 1.9 million men who have left the labor force since February 2020 were counted as unemployed, men's unemployment rate would have been 8.0% last month instead of the reported 5.8%.

Since February 2020, 552,000 Black women have left the labor force, along with 503,000 Latinas. If these women were counted as unemployed, the unemployment rate for Black women in March 2021 would have been 13.4% instead of 8.7% and Latinas' unemployment rate would have been 11.1% instead of 7.3%.<sup>37</sup>

- 1 NWLC calculations based on BLS, March 2021 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/empisit.t17.htm>.
- 2 NWLC calculations based on BLS, March 2021 Employment Situation Summary, Establishment Data Table B-1 and BLS, March 2021 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/empisit.t21.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, March 2021 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/empisit.t01.htm>. Figure is seasonally adjusted and captures women ages 20 and over.
- 5 NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Household Data Table A-1, available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab1.htm>. Figure is seasonally adjusted and capture women ages 20 and over.
- 6 *Id.* Figures are seasonally adjusted and capture women ages 20 and over.
- 7 NWLC calculations based on 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.
- 8 *Id.* Figures are seasonally adjusted and captures men ages 20 and over.
- 9 BLS, March 2021 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-1. Figures are seasonally adjusted.
- 10 BLS, historical data for Household Data Table A-1. Figure is seasonally adjusted.
- 11 BLS, March 2021 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-2: Employment status of the civilian population by race, sex, and age, available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empisit.t02.htm>. Figure is seasonally adjusted and is for Black women ages 20 and over.
- 12 BLS, March 2021 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-3: Employment status of the Hispanic or Latino population by sex and age, available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empisit.t03.htm>. Figure is seasonally adjusted and is for Latinas ages 20 and over.
- 13 NWLC calculations based on BLS, March 2021 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data 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/empisit/cpseea36.htm>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
- 14 NWLC calculations based on BLS, March 2021 Employment Situation Summary, Establishment Data Table B-1 and BLS, March 2021 Employment Situation Summary, Establishment Data Table B-5.
- 15 *Id.*
- 16 *Id.*
- 17 NWLC calculations based on BLS, March 2021 Employment Situation Summary, Establishment Data Table B-1.
- 18 NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Establishment Data Table B-1.
- 19 BLS, March 2021 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-2.
- 20 NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Household Data Table A-2, available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab2.htm>
- 21 BLS, March 2021 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-2.
- 22 NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Household Data Table A-2.
- 23 BLS, March 2021 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-3.
- 24 BLS, historical data for Household Data Table A-3, available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab3.htm>
- 25 NWLC calculations based on BLS, Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey, Unemployment Rate – 20 yrs. & over, Asian Women, available at <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/LNU04032267>
- 26 NWLC calculations based on BLS, March 2021 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-2. Figure is seasonally adjusted.
- 27 BLS, March 2021 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/empisit.t06.htm>. Figures are for women with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 64.
- 28 NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Household Data Table A-6, available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab6.htm>.
- 29 BLS, March 2021 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/empisit/cpseea13.htm>. Figure is not seasonally adjusted.
- 30 BLS, March 2021 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/empisit/cpseea14.htm>. Figure is not seasonally adjusted.
- 31 BLS, March 2021 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/empisit/cpseea13.htm>. Figure is not seasonally adjusted.
- 32 NWLC calculations based on BLS, March 2021 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-36.
- 33 NWLC calculations based on BLS, March 2021 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-36 and BLS, Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey, Number Unemployed for 52 Weeks & over, Women, available at <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/LNU03008735>.
- 34 NWLC calculations based on BLS, March 2021 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/empisit/cpseea27.htm>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted and are for women ages 16 and over.
- 35 NWLC calculations based on 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 and men ages 20 and over.
- 36 NWLC calculations based on BLS, March 2021 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-1, available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empisit.t01.htm>. To calculate these adjusted unemployment rates, NWLC added the 1,833,000 women who have dropped out of the labor force over the last year to the number of women in March 2021 who were in the labor force and to the number of women who were unemployed and recalculated the share of women in the labor force who were unemployed. The same was done for men.
- 37 NWLC calculations based on BLS, March 2021 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-2: Employment status of the civilian population by race, sex, and age, available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empisit.t02.htm> and BLS, March 2021 Employment Situation Summary, Household Data Table A-3: Employment status of the Hispanic or Latino population by sex and age, available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empisit.t03.htm>. To calculate these adjusted unemployment rates, NWLC added the 552,000 Black women who have dropped out of the labor force over the last year to the number of Black women in March 2021 who were in the labor force and to the number of Black women who were unemployed and recalculated the share of women in the labor force who were unemployed. The same was done for Latinas.