

Over a Year Into the Pandemic, Women Still Face Economic, Housing, and Food Insecurity

By Claire Ewing-Nelson and Jasmine Tucker

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and compounded structural racial and gender inequities in the U.S. economy. Women have borne the brunt of pandemic-related job losses, accounting for 55.2% of net job loss since February 2020.¹ As of March 2021, more than 2 in 5 (43.6%) unemployed women ages 16 and over had been out of work for 6 months or longer and nearly 1 in 4 (24.2%) had been out of work for a year or longer.²

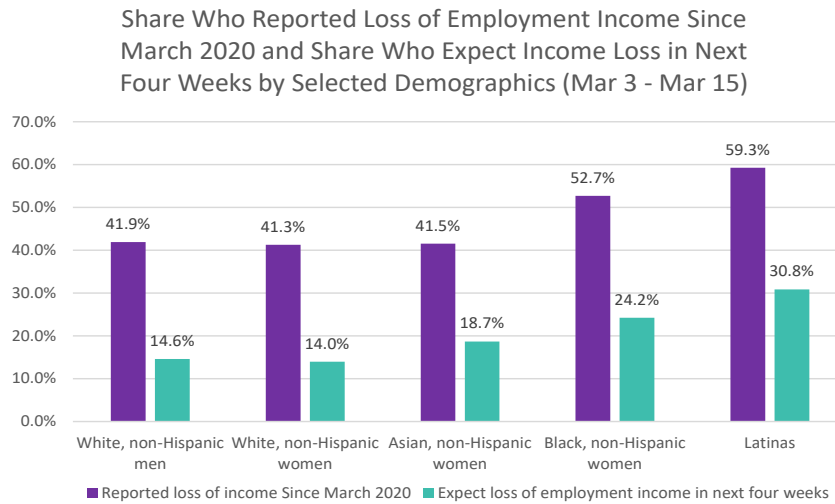
Due to already high rates of pre-pandemic economic insecurity³ and lost earnings due to racial and gender wage gaps,⁴ women entered the COVID-19 crisis with little or no financial cushion. Despite recent signs of economic recovery, many women and their families are still struggling to afford food and housing. This factsheet provides an analysis of week 26 (March 3, 2021 – March 15, 2021) of the U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey measuring the social and economic impact of COVID-19 on households.⁵ It shows that compared to white, non-Hispanic men and women:⁶

- Black, non-Hispanic women and Latinas were more likely to be in households that have lost employment income since March 2020.
- Asian, non-Hispanic women, Black, non-Hispanic women, and Latinas were more likely to report that they expected their household to lose employment income in the next four weeks.
- Black, non-Hispanic women and Latinas were more likely to be behind on their rent payments.
- Asian, non-Hispanic women, Black, non-Hispanic women, and Latinas were more likely to be behind on their mortgage payments.
- Black, non-Hispanic women and Latinas were more likely to be in households facing food insufficiency.

Nearly six in ten Latinas and over half of Black, non-Hispanic women were in a household that has lost employment income since March 2020.

Over 59 million women (46.2% of women overall) reported that their household had lost employment income since March 2020. Nearly six in ten Latinas (59.3%) and over half of Black, non-Hispanic women (52.7%) reported lost household income since the start of the pandemic, compared to 41.9% of white, non-Hispanic men and 41.3% of white, non-Hispanic women. These losses may be exacerbated in the coming weeks and months: Nearly one in five (19.2%) people overall expected their household to lose employment income in the next four weeks because of the pandemic.

Three in ten Latinas (30.8%), nearly one in four Black, non-Hispanic women (24.2%), and nearly one in five Asian, non-Hispanic women (18.7%) expected their households to lose employment income in the next month, compared to 14.6% of white, non-Hispanic men and 14.0% of white, non-Hispanic women.

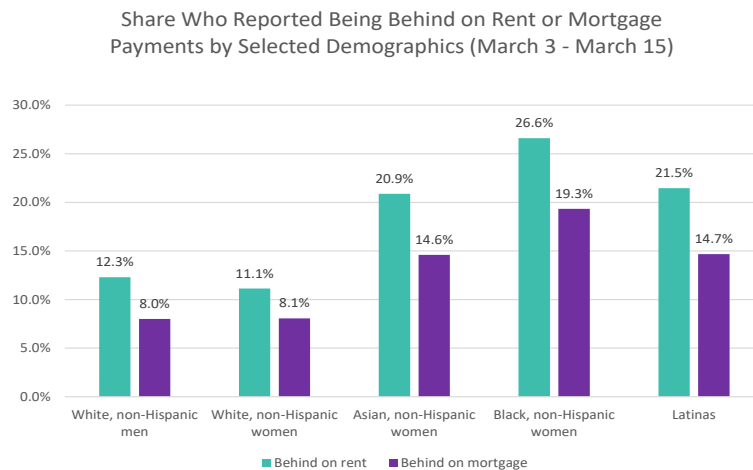


Source: NWLC calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2020-2021 Household Pulse Survey, using data from week 26 (March 3 – March 15). Survey respondents self-identified their sex as either male or female and self-identified their race and whether they were of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.

More than one in five Black, non-Hispanic women and more than one in six Latinas were behind on rent or mortgage payments.

Nearly 4.7 million women (17.1% of women who rent) reported being behind on their rent payment in the first half of March 2021. Among renters, more than one in four Black, non-Hispanic women (26.6%) and more than one in five Latinas (21.5%) and Asian, non-Hispanic women (20.9%) reported being behind on their rent. By comparison, only 12.3% of white, non-Hispanic men and 11.1% of white, non-Hispanic women reported being behind on rent payments.

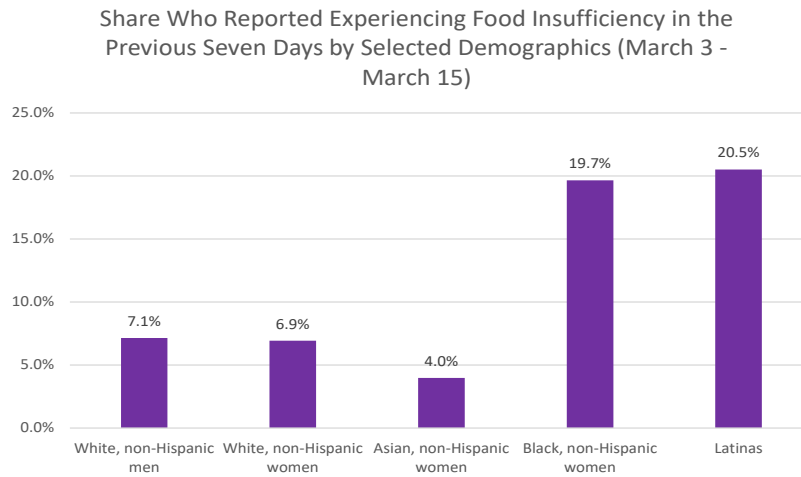
Nearly 4.6 million women (10.5% of women with mortgages) reported being behind on their mortgage payment in the first half of March 2021. Among homeowners with mortgages, nearly one in five Black, non-Hispanic women (19.3%) and more than one in seven Asian, non-Hispanic women (14.6%) and Latinas (14.7%) reported being behind on mortgage payments. Less than one in twelve white, non-Hispanic men (8.0%) and white, non-Hispanic women (8.1%) reported being behind on their mortgages.



Source: NWLC calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2020-2021 Household Pulse Survey, using data from week 26 (March 3 – March 15). Survey respondents self-identified their sex as either male or female and self-identified their race and whether they were of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.

About one in five Black, non-Hispanic women and Latinas did not have enough to eat.

In the first half of March 2021, nearly 11.8 million women (10.8% of women overall) reported sometimes or often not having enough food to eat in the prior seven days. Approximately one in five Black, non-Hispanic women (19.7%) and Latinas (20.5%) reported not having enough food in the past week, compared to 7.1% of white, non-Hispanic men and 6.9% of white, non-Hispanic women.



Source: NWLC calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2020-2021 Household Pulse Survey, using data from week 26 (March 3 - March 15). Survey respondents self-identified their sex as either male or female and self-identified their race and whether they were of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.

Thirteen months into the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of workers are still without a job and many have been looking for work since businesses first shut down last spring. This data shows that the country is still facing a major crisis, with Black, non-Hispanic women and Latinas facing persistently high rates of income loss, housing insecurity, and food insufficiency. The data collection period for this survey overlapped with the enactment of the American Rescue Plan on March 11, 2021, so these numbers likely do not capture any positive effects of the stimulus bill. We will continue tracking this data as agencies implement COVID-19 relief to make sure the recovery works for everyone – including the millions of women facing economic, housing, and food insecurity.

- 1 NWLC calculations using BLS, historical data for Establishment Data Table B-1: Employees on nonfarm payrolls by industry sector and selected industry detail, available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesbtab1.htm>.
- 2 Claire Ewing-Nelson and Jasmine Tucker, "Only About One Third of the 916,000 Jobs Gained Last Month Went to Women," *National Women's Law Center*, (Apr. 2021), <https://nwlc.org/resources/march-jobs-2021/>.
- 3 Jasmine Tucker and Julie Vogtman, NWLC, When Hard Work is Not Enough: Women in Low-Paid Jobs (Apr. 2020), available at <https://nwlc.org/resources/when-hard-work-is-not-enough-women-in-low-paid-jobs/>.
- 4 Jasmine Tucker, NWLC, The Wage Gap Has Robbed Women of Their Ability to Weather COVID-19 (Mar. 2021), available at <https://nwlc.org/resources/the-wage-gap-has-robbed-women-of-their-ability-to-weather-covid-19/>.
- 5 U.S. Census Bureau, Measuring Household Experiences During the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic, 2020-2021 Household Pulse Survey, available at <https://www.census.gov/data/experimental-data-products/household-pulse-survey.html>. The U.S. Census Bureau completed phase 1 of the Household Pulse Survey on July 31, 2020. Phase 2 of the Household Pulse Survey began on August 19 and phase 3 began on October 28. However, the questionnaire in phases 2 and 3 are longer than in phase 1, some questions are phrased differently compared to phase 1, and questions have been asked in a different order. There are also higher nonresponse rates to questions in phase 2 and 3 compared to phase 1. Previous NWLC analyses of the Pulse Survey are available at <https://nwlc.org/resources/nwlc-analysis-of-u-s-census-bureau-covid-19-household-pulse-surveys/>. "Weeks" is the term used by the Census Bureau to define separate data collections in all phases, but "weeks" may be shorter or longer than a 7-day period. Refer to each data collection for more information.
- 6 Due to overlapping margins of error, Asian, non-Hispanic women were not necessarily more likely than white, non-Hispanic men and/or white, non-Hispanic women to be in households that have lost employment income since March 2020, to be behind on rent, or to be in a household experiencing food insufficiency.