

# 97% of Women Who Returned to the Labor Force in June Are Unemployed and Looking for Work

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The most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) monthly jobs report shows that the economy gained 850,000 jobs in June 2021, compared to 583,000 jobs gained in May 2021.<sup>1</sup> Women accounted for 47.6% of job gains last month, gaining 405,000 jobs while men gained 445,000. Nevertheless, women will need more than 9 straight months of job gains at last month's level to recover the nearly 3.8 million net jobs they have lost since February 2020.<sup>2</sup>

Last month, 148,000 women and 232,000 men ages 20 and over returned to the labor force, meaning they are now working or looking for work. Nearly all of the women (97%) who returned to the labor force last month are unemployed and looking for work, while only 3% of women who re-entered the labor force are employed. By comparison, only 12% of men who re-entered the labor force are unemployed, while 88% are working. These labor force re-entrants bring women's labor force participation to 57.5% in June 2021, up from 57.4% in May 2021. This remains well below their pre-pandemic labor force participation rate of 59.2% in February 2020. Before the pandemic started, women's labor force participation rate had not been as low as 57.5% since June 1989.<sup>3</sup>

About 1 in 18 (5.5%) women ages 20 and over were unemployed in June 2021, up from 5.4% in May 2021. The unemployment rate for women ages 20 and over is still nearly 1.8 times higher than their pre-pandemic unemployment rate of 3.1% in February 2020.<sup>4</sup> Black women and Latinas continue to be hit particularly hard by the economic crisis: Over 1 in 12 Black women ages 20 and over (8.5%)<sup>5</sup> and over 1 in 13 Latinas ages 20 and over (7.9%) were unemployed last month.<sup>6</sup>

## Women gained 405,000 jobs last month but are still short nearly 3.8 million jobs since February 2020.

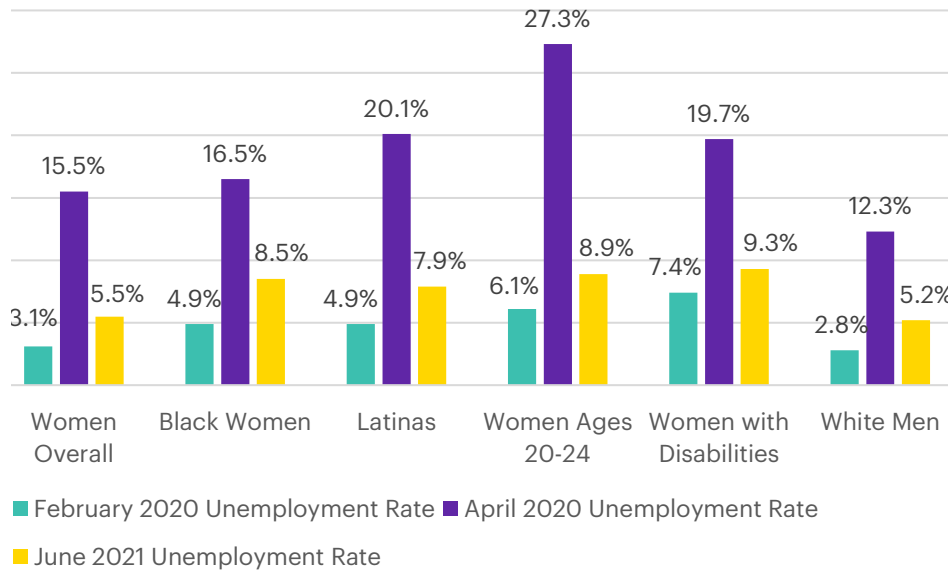
- The leisure and hospitality sector gained 343,000 jobs in June 2021, 146,000 of which went to women. This sector accounted for more than one third (36.0%) of women's job gains last month. Women accounted for 42.6% of last month's overall gains in the leisure and hospitality sector and made up 52.9% of the sector's workforce.
- The government sector gained 188,000 jobs last month. Women accounted for 60.1% of these gains while making up 57.6% of the government workforce. Gains in the government sector accounted for more than one in four (27.9%) of women's overall job gains last month. The local government education subsector, where women hold nearly 3 in 4 (73.9%) jobs, gained 155,200 jobs last month.
- Women gained 57,000 jobs in the education and health services sector. Women accounted for nearly all (96.6%) of the gains in this sector and make up 77.3% of the workforce.
- The child care sector gained 24,900 jobs last month but employment levels remain below pre-pandemic levels. Accounting for June's gains, the net number of child care jobs lost since February 2020 is 115,000. The child care sector has lost approximately 1 in 9 (11.0%) jobs since the start of the crisis.<sup>7</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 June 2021 slightly underestimates the share of the labor force that was unemployed. BLS estimates that the actual unemployment rate for June 2021 was 0.2 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.

- More than 1 in 12 Black women ages 20 and over (8.5%) were unemployed in June 2021, up from 8.2% in May 2021. Black women's unemployment rate last month was still more than 1.7 times higher than their pre-pandemic unemployment rate (4.9% in February 2020). 1 in 10 Black men ages 20 and over (10.0%) were unemployed in June 2021, which is nearly 1.7 times their pre-pandemic unemployment rate of 6.0% in February 2020.<sup>8</sup>
- Over 1 in 13 Latinas ages 20 and over (7.9%) were unemployed in June 2021, up from 7.4% in May 2021. This is still over 1.6 times their pre-pandemic unemployment rate (4.9% in February 2020).<sup>9</sup>
- More than 1 in 19 Asian women ages 20 and over (5.3%) were unemployed in June 2021, up from 5.1% in May 2021, and nearly 1.8 times higher than their pre-pandemic unemployment rate (3.0% in February 2020).<sup>10</sup>
- By comparison, the unemployment rate for white men ages 20 and over was 5.2% in June 2021.<sup>11</sup>
- More than 1 in 11 women with disabilities (9.3%) were unemployed in June 2021. By comparison, their pre-pandemic unemployment rate in February 2020 was 7.4%.<sup>12</sup>
- Pandemic-related job losses continue to hit younger women especially hard, with nearly 1 in 11 (8.9%) women between the ages of 20 and 24 unemployed in June 2021.<sup>13</sup> The unemployment rate for Latinas ages 20 to 24 was even higher at 9.5%,<sup>14</sup> and the unemployment rate for Black women ages 20 to 24 was much higher at 13.8%.<sup>15</sup>

## Unemployment Rates by Month for Selected Demographics



### Many unemployed women have been out of work for 6 months or longer.

- In June 2021, more than 2 in 5 unemployed women ages 20 and over (41.9%) had been out of work for 6 months or longer. Among unemployed women ages 16 and over, 38.7% had been out of work for 6 months or longer, including 42.4% of unemployed Asian women, 41.3% of unemployed Black women, and 36.5% of unemployed Latinas.<sup>16</sup>
- Additionally, in June 2021, more than 1 in 4 unemployed women ages 16 and over (28.6%) had been out of work for a year or longer.<sup>17</sup>

### If the over 1.6 million women who have left the labor force since February 2020 were counted among the unemployed, women's unemployment would have been 7.6% last month.

Reported unemployment rates do not capture people who have left the labor force entirely and are no longer counted as unemployed. If the over 1.6 million women who have left the labor force since February 2020 were counted as unemployed in June 2021, women's unemployment rate would have been 7.6% in June 2021 instead of the reported 5.5%. Similarly, if the over 1.5 million men who have left the labor force since February 2020 were counted as unemployed, men's unemployment rate would have been 7.6% last month instead of the reported 5.9%.<sup>18</sup>

Since February 2020, 375,000 Black women have left the labor force, along with 341,000 Latinas. If these women were counted as unemployed, the unemployment rate for Black women in June 2021 would have been 11.7% instead of 8.5% and Latinas' unemployment rate would have been 10.5% instead of 7.9%.<sup>19</sup>

- 1 National Women's Law Center (NWLC) calculations using Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), "Employees on Nonfarm Payrolls by Industry Sector and Selected Industry Detail," Table B-1 in *June 2021 Employment Situation Summary* (Washington, DC: July 2, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst17.htm>. Historical data available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesbt1.htm>. Figures are seasonally adjusted.
- 2 NWLC calculations using BLS, "Employment of Women on Nonfarm Payrolls by Industry Sector, Seasonally Adjusted," Table B-5 in *June 2021 Employment Situation Summary* (Washington, DC: July 2, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst121.htm>. Historical data available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesbt5.htm>. Throughout this factsheet, we measure changes since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic using February 2020 as a reference point.
- 3 NWLC calculations using BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Sex and Age," Table A-1 in *June 2021 Employment Situation Summary* (Washington, DC: July 2, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst101.htm>. Historical data available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsat1.htm>. Figures are seasonally adjusted and capture women and men ages 20 and over.
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Race, Sex, and Age," Table A-2 in *June 2021 Employment Situation Summary* (Washington, DC: July 2, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst102.htm>. Figure is seasonally adjusted.
- 6 BLS, "Employment status of the Hispanic or Latino population by sex and age," Table A-3 in *June 2021 Employment Situation Summary* (Washington, DC: July 2, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst103.htm>. Figure is seasonally adjusted.
- 7 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table B-1 in *June 2021 Employment Situation Summary* and BLS, Table B-5 in *June 2021 Employment Situation Summary*. Local government education data available at <https://www.bls.gov/web/empst/cese5a.htm>. Figures are seasonally adjusted.
- 8 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table A-2 in *June 2021 Employment Situation Summary*. Historical data available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsat2.htm>. Figures are seasonally adjusted.
- 9 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table A-3 in *June 2021 Employment Situation Summary*. Historical data available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsat2.htm>. Figures are seasonally adjusted.
- 10 NWLC calculations using BLS, "(Unadj) Unemployment Rate - Asian, Women," *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey* (Washington, DC: July 2, 2021), <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/LNU04032342>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
- 11 BLS, Table A-2 in *June 2021 Employment Situation Summary*. Figure is seasonally adjusted.
- 12 NWLC calculations using "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Sex, Age, and Disability Status, Not Seasonally Adjusted," Table A-6 in *June 2021 Employment Situation Summary*, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst106.htm>. Historical data available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsat6.htm>.
- 13 BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Age, Sex, and Race," Table A-13 in *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey* (Washington, DC: July 2, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/web/empst/cpsee13.htm>. Figure is not seasonally adjusted.
- 14 BLS, "Employment Status of the Hispanic or Latino Population by Age and Sex," Table A-14 in *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey* (Washington, DC: July 2, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/web/empst/cpsee14.htm>. Figure is not seasonally adjusted.
- 15 BLS, Table A-13 in *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey*. Figure is not seasonally adjusted.
- 16 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table A-36 in *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey*. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
- 17 NWLC calculations using BLS, "(Unadj) Number Unemployed for 52 Weeks & Over, Women," *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey* (Washington, DC: July 2, 2021), <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/LNU03008735> and BLS, Table A-36 in *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey*. Figure is not seasonally adjusted.
- 18 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table A-1 in *June 2021 Employment Situation Summary*. To calculate these adjusted unemployment rates, NWLC added the 1,646,000 women who have dropped out of the labor force since February 2020 to the number of women in June 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.
- 19 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table A-2 in *June 2021 Employment Situation Summary* and BLS, Table A-3 in *June 2021 Employment Situation Summary*. To calculate these adjusted unemployment rates, NWLC added the 375,000 Black women who have dropped out of the labor force since February 2020 to the number of Black women in June 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.