

# Women Gain 649,000 Jobs in July, Marking Largest One-Month Increase Since August 2020

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The most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) monthly jobs report shows that the economy gained 943,000 jobs in July 2021.<sup>1</sup> Women accounted for 68.8% of job gains last month, gaining 649,000 jobs while men gained 294,000. Nevertheless, women will need nearly 5 straight months of job gains at last month's high level to recover the nearly 3.1 million net jobs they have lost since February 2020.<sup>2</sup>

Last month, 28,000 women and 112,000 men ages 20 and over returned to the labor force, meaning they are now working or looking for work. Women accounted for just 20% of July's labor force reentrants, and women's labor force participation remained unchanged at 57.5% in July 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 20 (5.0%) women ages 20 and over were unemployed in July 2021, down from 5.5% in June 2021. The unemployment rate for women ages 20 and over is still over 1.6 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: About 1 in 13 Black women ages 20 and over (7.6%)<sup>5</sup> and over 1 in 15 Latinas ages 20 and over (6.7%) were unemployed last month.<sup>6</sup> And while many groups re-entered the labor force last month, Black women and Latinas showed net losses, with 65,000 Black women and 51,000 Latinas leaving the labor force in July.<sup>7</sup>

## Women gained 649,000 jobs last month but are still short nearly 3.1 million jobs since February 2020.

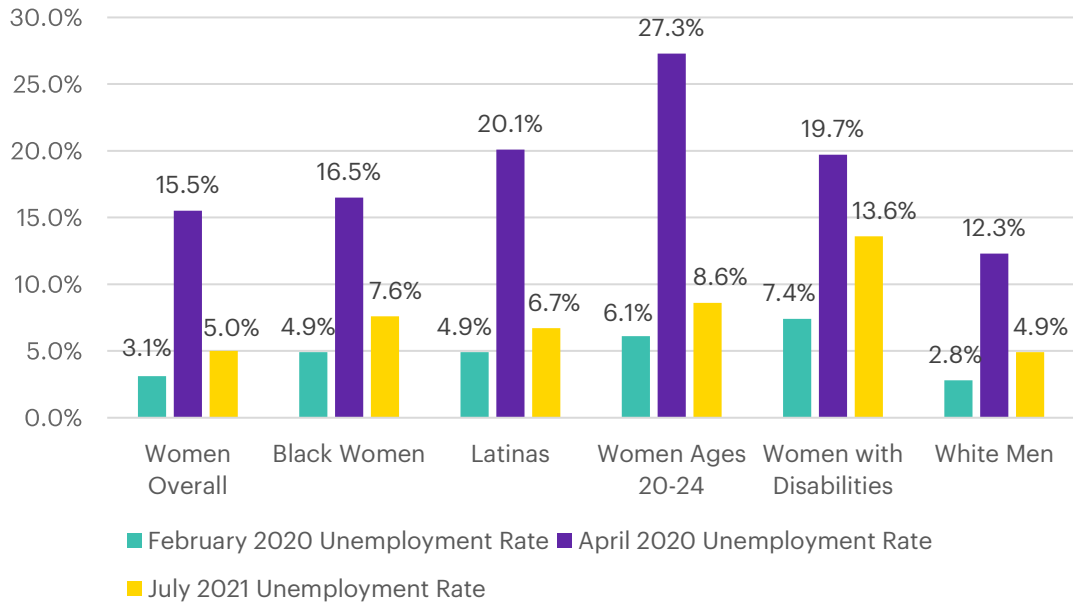
- The leisure and hospitality sector gained 380,000 jobs in July 2021, 205,000 of which went to women. This sector accounted for nearly one-third (31.6%) of women's job gains last month. Women accounted for 53.9% of last month's overall gains in the leisure and hospitality sector and made up 53.0% of the sector's workforce.
- The government sector gained 240,000 jobs last month. Women accounted for 91.3% of these gains while making up 58.1% of the government workforce. Gains in the government sector accounted for about one in three (33.7%) of women's overall job gains last month.
- Women gained 87,000 jobs in the education and health services sector. Women accounted for all of the gains in this sector and make up 77.3% of the workforce.
- The child care sector gained just 900 jobs last month; employment levels in this sector remain below pre-pandemic levels. Accounting for July's gains, the net number of child care jobs lost since February 2020 is 116,900. The child care sector has lost approximately 1 in 9 (11.2%) jobs since the start of the crisis.<sup>8</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 July 2021 slightly underestimates the share of the labor force that was unemployed. BLS estimates that the actual unemployment rate for July 2021 was 0.3 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 13 Black women ages 20 and over (7.6%) were unemployed in July 2021, down from 8.5% in June 2021. Black women's unemployment rate last month was still more than 1.6 times higher than their pre-pandemic unemployment rate (4.9% in February 2020). More than 1 in 12 Black men ages 20 and over (8.4%) were unemployed in July 2021, which is 1.4 times their pre-pandemic unemployment rate of 6.0% in February 2020.<sup>9</sup>
- Over 1 in 15 Latinas ages 20 and over (6.7%) were unemployed in July 2021, down from 7.9% in June 2021. This is still nearly 1.4 times their pre-pandemic unemployment rate (4.9% in February 2020).<sup>10</sup>
- About 1 in 20 Asian women ages 20 and over (4.9%) were unemployed in July 2021, down from 5.3% in June 2021, and more than 1.6 times higher than their pre-pandemic unemployment rate (3.0% in February 2020).<sup>11</sup>
- By comparison, the unemployment rate for white men ages 20 and over was 4.9% in July 2021.<sup>12</sup>
- More than 1 in 8 women with disabilities (13.6%) were unemployed in July 2021. By comparison, their pre-pandemic unemployment rate in February 2020 was 7.4%.<sup>13</sup>
- Pandemic-related job losses continue to hit younger women especially hard, with nearly 1 in 12 (8.6%) women between the ages of 20 and 24 unemployed in July 2021.<sup>14</sup> The unemployment rate was even higher for Latinas ages 20 to 24 at 11.7%,<sup>15</sup> and for Black women ages 20 to 24 at 12.1%.<sup>16</sup>

## Unemployment Rates by Month for Selected Demographics



Source: BLS, 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 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.

In July 2021, nearly 2 in 5 unemployed women ages 20 and over (39.0%) had been out of work for 6 months or longer. Among unemployed women ages 16 and over, 36.4% had been out of work for 6 months or longer, including 40.6% of unemployed Asian women, 41.0% of unemployed Black women, and 36.5% of unemployed Latinas.<sup>17</sup>

Additionally, in July 2021, more than 1 in 4 unemployed women ages 16 and over (25.6%) had been out of work for a year or longer.<sup>18</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 7.1% 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 July 2021, women's unemployment rate would have been 7.1% in July 2021 instead of the reported 5.0%. Similarly, if the over 1.4 million men who have left the labor force since February 2020 were counted as unemployed, men's unemployment rate would have been 7.0% last month instead of the reported 5.4%.<sup>19</sup>

Since February 2020, 440,000 Black women have left the labor force, along with 392,000 Latinas. If these women were counted as unemployed, the unemployment rate for Black women in July 2021 would have been 11.4% instead of 7.6% and Latinas' unemployment rate would have been 9.7% instead of 6.7%.<sup>10</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 *July 2021 Employment Situation Summary* (Washington, DC: August 6, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.t17.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 *July 2021 Employment Situation Summary* (Washington, DC: August 6, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.t21.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 *July 2021 Employment Situation Summary* (Washington, DC: August 6, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.t01.htm>. Historical data available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab1.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 *July 2021 Employment Situation Summary* (Washington, DC: August 6, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.t02.htm>. Figure is seasonally adjusted.
- 6 BLS, "Employment status of the Hispanic or Latino population by sex and age," Table A-3 in *July 2021 Employment Situation Summary* (Washington, DC: August 6, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.t03.htm>. Figure is seasonally adjusted.
- 7 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table A-2 in *July 2021 Employment Situation Summary* and Table A-3 in *July 2021 Employment Situation Summary*.
- 8 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table B-1 in *July 2021 Employment Situation Summary* and BLS, Table B-5 in *July 2021 Employment Situation Summary*. Figures are seasonally adjusted.
- 9 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table A-2 in *July 2021 Employment Situation Summary*. Historical data available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab2.htm>. Figures are seasonally adjusted.
- 10 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table A-3 in *July 2021 Employment Situation Summary*. Historical data available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab2.htm>. Figures are seasonally adjusted.
- 11 NWLC calculations using BLS, "(Unadj) Unemployment Rate - Asian, Women," *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey* (Washington, DC: August 6, 2021), <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/LNU04032342>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
- 12 BLS, Table A-2 in *July 2021 Employment Situation Summary*. Figure is seasonally adjusted.
- 13 NWLC calculations using "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Sex, Age, and Disability Status, Not Seasonally Adjusted," Table A-6 in *July 2021 Employment Situation Summary*, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.t06.htm>. Historical data available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab6.htm>.
- 14 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: August 6, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/web/empst/cpseea13.htm>. Figure is not seasonally adjusted.
- 15 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: August 6, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/web/empst/cpseea14.htm>. Figure is not seasonally adjusted.
- 16 BLS, Table A-13 in *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey*. Figure is not seasonally adjusted.
- 17 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table A-36 in *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey*. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
- 18 NWLC calculations using BLS, "(Unadj) Number Unemployed for 52 Weeks & Over, Women," *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey* (Washington, DC: August 6, 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.
- 19 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table A-1 in *July 2021 Employment Situation Summary*. To calculate these adjusted unemployment rates, NWLC added the 1618,000 women who have dropped out of the labor force since February 2020 to the number of women in July 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.
- 20 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table A-2 in *July 2021 Employment Situation Summary* and BLS, Table A-3 in *July 2021 Employment Situation Summary*. To calculate these adjusted unemployment rates, NWLC added the 440,000 Black women who have dropped out of the labor force since February 2020 to the number of Black women in July 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.