

# Men Gained 220,000 Jobs in September While Women Lost 26,000

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The most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) monthly jobs report shows that the economy gained 194,000 jobs in September 2021.<sup>1</sup> However, women experienced no net job gains, and actually went backward last month: while men gained 220,000 jobs in September, women lost 26,000 jobs.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the overall job increase in September was relatively small. It would take over 2 years of growth at September's level to gain back the nearly 5 million jobs the economy has lost since February 2020.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, last month, 309,000 women ages 20 and over left the labor force entirely, meaning they are no longer working or looking for work. This was the biggest drop in women's labor force participation since September 2020, when 863,000 women left the labor force.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, 182,000 men ages 20 and over joined the labor force last month. With the exit of 309,000 women, women's labor force participation fell to 57.1% in September 2021 from 57.4% in August 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 57.1% since October 1988, more than a generation ago.<sup>5</sup>

Over 1 in 24 (4.2%) women ages 20 and over were unemployed in September 2021, down from 4.8% in August 2021, though this drop is likely driven by women exiting the labor force last month.<sup>6</sup> Over 1 in 14 Black women ages 20 and over (7.3%) were unemployed last month, along with nearly 1 in 12 Black men ages 20 and over (8.0%).<sup>7</sup> Over 1 in 18 Latinas ages 20 and over (5.6%) were unemployed in September 2021.<sup>8</sup>

## Women lost 26,000 jobs last month and are still short nearly 2.9 million jobs since February 2020.

- Since February 2020, the economy has experienced a net loss of nearly 5 million jobs; women account for 57.5% of those losses.
- The leisure and hospitality sector gained 74,000 jobs in September 2021, but just 7,000 of these jobs went to women. Women accounted for only 9.5% of last month's overall gains in the leisure and hospitality sector despite making up 52.7% of the sector's workforce.

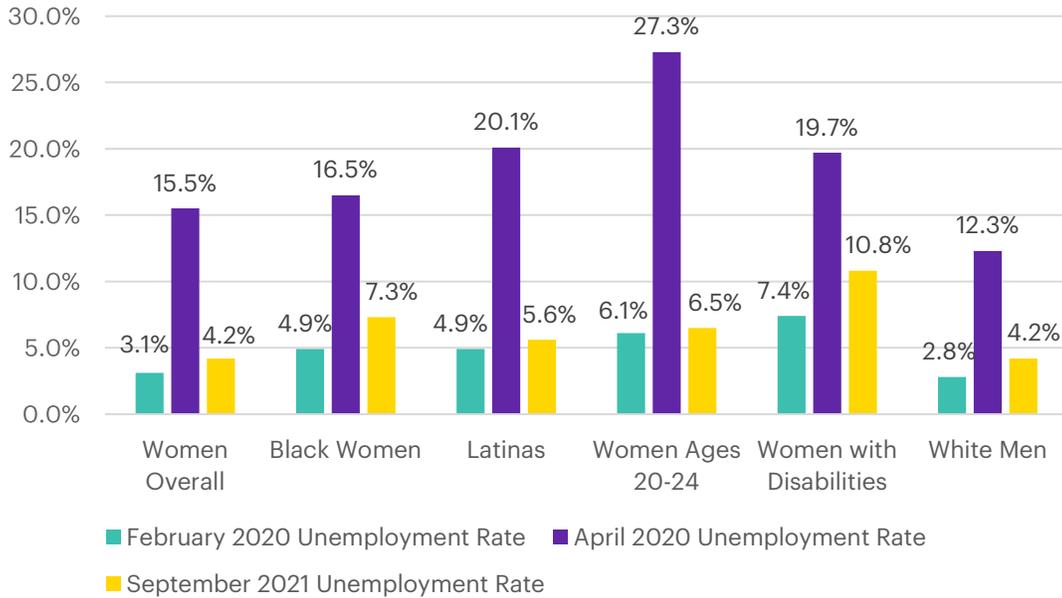
- The government sector lost 123,000 jobs last month. Women lost 86,000 jobs while men lost 37,000 jobs in this sector. Women made up 58.0% of the government sector's workforce. Within the larger government sector, jobs were lost in both state government education (16,600) and local government education (144,200) subsectors, both of which have female dominated workforces.
- Women lost 16,000 jobs in the education and health services sector while men gained 9,000. Women make up 77.1% of the education and health services workforce.
- In contrast to the above sectors, women disproportionately gained jobs in the retail trade sector last month. Of 56,100 retail trade jobs gained in September 2021, 40,000 went to women. Women accounted for 71.3% of retail's September gains and make up 48.5% of the sector's workforce.
- The child care sector gained 17,800 jobs last month. Accounting for September's gains, the net number of child care jobs lost since February 2020 is 108,700. The child care sector has lost more than 1 in 10 (10.4%) jobs since the start of the crisis.<sup>9</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 September 2021 slightly underestimates the share of the labor force that was unemployed. BLS estimates that the actual unemployment rate for September 2021 was 0.1 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.**

- Over 1 in 14 Black women ages 20 and over (7.3%) were unemployed in September 2021, down from 7.9% in August 2021. Nearly 1 in 12 Black men ages 20 and over (8.0%) were unemployed in September 2021, down from 9.1% in August 2021.<sup>10</sup>
- Over 1 in 18 Latinas ages 20 and over (5.6%) were unemployed in September 2021, down from 6.0% in August 2021.<sup>11</sup>
- About 1 in 29 Asian women ages 20 and over (3.4%) were unemployed in September 2021, down from 4.2% in August 2021.<sup>12</sup>
- By comparison, the unemployment rate for white men ages 20 and over was 4.2% in September 2021.<sup>13</sup>
- More than 1 in 10 women with disabilities (10.8%) were unemployed in September 2021. By comparison, their pre-pandemic unemployment rate in February 2020 was 7.4%.<sup>14</sup>
- Nearly 1 in 15 young women between the ages of 20 and 24 (6.5%) were unemployed in September 2021.<sup>15</sup> The unemployment rate was higher for Latinas ages 20 to 24 at 8.8%<sup>16</sup> and even higher for Black women ages 20 to 24 at 11.7%.<sup>17</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 September 2021, more than 1 in 3 unemployed women ages 20 and over (36.0%) had been out of work for 6 months or longer. Among unemployed women ages 16 and over, 33.8% had been out of work for 6 months or longer, including 30.3% of unemployed Asian women, 34.6% of unemployed Black women, and 36.1% of unemployed Latinas.<sup>18</sup>

Additionally, in September 2021, nearly 1 in 4 unemployed women ages 16 and over (24.4%) had been out of work for a year or longer.<sup>19</sup>

### If the nearly 2 million women who have left the labor force since February 2020 were counted among the unemployed, women's unemployment would have been 6.8% 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 September 2021, women's unemployment rate would have been 6.8% in September 2021 instead of the reported 4.2%. Similarly, if the nearly 1.1 million men who have left the labor force since February 2020 were counted as unemployed, men's unemployment rate would have been 6.0% last month instead of the reported 4.7%.<sup>20</sup>

Since February 2020, 291,000 Black women have left the labor force, along with 497,000 Latinas. If these women were counted as unemployed, the unemployment rate for Black women in September 2021 would have been 9.8% instead of 7.3% and Latinas' unemployment rate would have been 9.3% instead of 5.6%.<sup>21</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 *September 2021 Employment Situation Summary* (Washington, DC: October 8, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst17.htm>. Historical data available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesbtab1.htm>. Figures are seasonally adjusted.
- 2 NWLC calculations using , Table B-1 in *September 2021 Employment Situation Summary* and BLS, "Employment of Women on Nonfarm Payrolls by Industry Sector, Seasonally Adjusted," Table B-5 in *September 2021 Employment Situation Summary* (Washington, DC: October 8, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst121.htm>. Historical data available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesbtab5.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, Table B-1 in *September 2021 Employment Situation Summary*.
- 4 NWLC calculations using BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Sex and Age," Table A-1 in *September 2021 Employment Situation Summary* (Washington, DC: October 8, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst101.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.
- 5 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table B-1 in *September 2021 Employment Situation Summary*. 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.
- 6 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table A-1 in *September 2021 Employment Situation Summary*. 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.
- 7 BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Race, Sex, and Age," Table A-2 in *September 2021 Employment Situation Summary* (Washington, DC: October 8, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst102.htm>. Figure is seasonally adjusted.
- 8 BLS, "Employment status of the Hispanic or Latino population by sex and age," Table A-3 in *September 2021 Employment Situation Summary* (Washington, DC: October 8, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst103.htm>. Figure is seasonally adjusted.
- 9 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table B-1 in *September 2021 Employment Situation Summary* and BLS, Table B-5 in *September 2021 Employment Situation Summary*. State and local government education data available at <https://www.bls.gov/web/empst/cese5a.htm>. Figures are seasonally adjusted.
- 10 BLS, Table A-2 in *August 2021 Employment Situation Summary*. Figure is seasonally adjusted.
- 11 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table A-3 in *September 2021 Employment Situation Summary*. Figures are seasonally adjusted.
- 12 NWLC calculations using BLS, "(Unadj) Unemployment Rate – Asian, Women," *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey* (Washington, DC: October 8, 2021), <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/LNU04032342>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
- 13 BLS, Table A-2 in *September 2021 Employment Situation Summary*. Figure is seasonally adjusted.
- 14 NWLC calculations using "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Sex, Age, and Disability Status, Not Seasonally Adjusted," Table A-6 in *September 2021 Employment Situation Summary*, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst106.htm>. Historical data available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab6.htm>.
- 15 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: October 8, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/web/empst/cpseea13.htm>. Figure is not seasonally adjusted.
- 16 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: October 8, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/web/empst/cpseea14.htm>. Figure is not seasonally adjusted.
- 17 BLS, Table A-13 in *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey*. Figure is not seasonally adjusted.
- 18 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table A-36 in *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey*. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
- 19 NWLC calculations using BLS, "(Unadj) Number Unemployed for 52 Weeks & Over, Women," *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey* (Washington, DC: October 8, 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.
- 20 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table A-1 in *September 2021 Employment Situation Summary*. To calculate these adjusted unemployment rates, NWLC added the 1,968,000 women who have dropped out of the labor force since February 2020 to the number of women in September 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.
- 21 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table A-2 in *September 2021 Employment Situation Summary* and BLS, Table A-3 in *September 2021 Employment Situation Summary*. To calculate these adjusted unemployment rates, NWLC added the 291,000 Black women who have dropped out of the labor force since February 2020 to the number of Black women in September 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.