

The Jobs Report Shows a Strong Month, but Black Women's Labor Force Participation Drops and Unemployment Rate Rises

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The most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data shows the economy added 678,000 jobs in February 2022, with women making up 51.2% of those gains.² Despite these strong gains, the economy is still down a net 2.1 million jobs since February 2020 and women are down over 1.4 million net jobs since February 2020. This means women now make up more than two in three (68.5%) net job losers since the start of this crisis.³

Despite strong jobs numbers, the report also shows that 48,000 women ages 20 and over left the labor force last month, meaning they are neither working nor looking for work. This brings the total number of women who have left the labor force since February 2020 to over 1.1 million. By comparison, 479,000 men ages 20 and over entered the labor force last month. This means that for every woman who left the labor force last month, nearly 10 men entered the labor force and women now make up all labor force leavers since February 2020.⁴

Unemployment rates dropped or remained the same for almost every group by race/ethnicity ages 20 and older with one notable exception: Black women. The unemployment rate for Black women aged 20 and over increased from 5.8% in January to 6.1% in February 2022. Meanwhile, while many other groups were joining the labor force last month, 31,000 Black women left, bringing their labor force participation rate down from 61.9% in January to 61.7% in February 2022. Their pre-pandemic labor force participation rate was 63.9% in February 2020.⁵

Women gained 347,000 jobs last month but are still short over 1.4 million jobs since February 2020.

- Since February 2020, the economy has experienced a net loss of over 2.1 million jobs; women account for 68.5% of those losses.
- The leisure and hospitality sector gained 179,000 jobs in February 2022. Women gained 70,000 jobs in this sector, or 39.1% of the jobs added. Women make up 52.5% of the leisure and hospitality workforce.

- The retail trade sector gained 36,900 jobs in February 2022. Women gained 24,800 jobs, or 67.2% of the jobs added. Women make up 48.8% of the retail trade workforce.
- The government sector gained 24,000 jobs in February 2022. Women gained 32,000 jobs while men lost 8,000. Women make up 58.1% of the government workforce.
- The education and health services sector gained 112,000 jobs in February 2022. Women gained 84,000 jobs, or 75.0% of the jobs added. Women make up 76.8% of the education and health services workforce.
- The child care sector gained 7,900 jobs last month. A net 123,500 child care jobs have been lost since February 2020. The child care sector has lost over 1 in 9 jobs (11.7%) since the start of the crisis.⁶

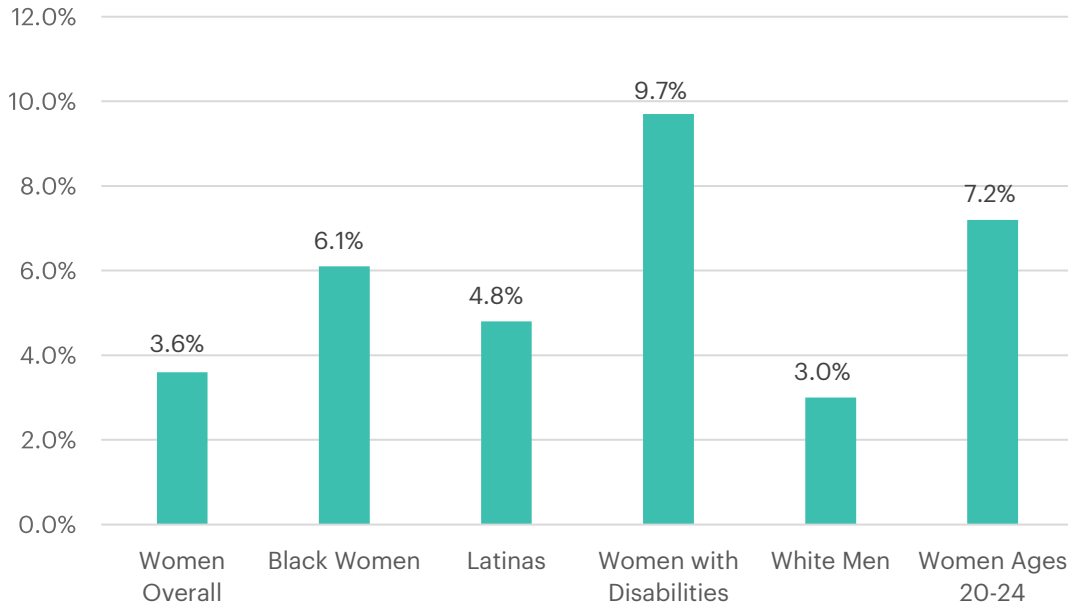
While unemployment rates went down for many demographic groups, the overall unemployment rates masks higher rates for Black women, Latinas, and other groups.

- The unemployment rate for women ages 20 and over remained unchanged at 3.6% last month. In comparison, the unemployment rate for men ages 20 and over decreased from 3.8% in January to 3.5% in February 2022.⁷
- Nearly 1 in 16 Black women ages 20 and over (6.1%) were unemployed in February 2022, up from 5.8% in January. Over 1 in 16 Black men ages 20 and over (6.4%) were unemployed in February 2022, down from 7.1% in January.⁸
- Nearly 1 in 20 Latinas ages 20 and over (4.8%) were unemployed in February 2022, down from 4.9% in January.⁹
- Nearly 1 in 35 Asian women ages 20 and over (2.7%) were unemployed in February 2022, down from 3.2% in January.¹⁰
- By comparison, the unemployment rate for white men ages 20 and over was 3.0% in February 2022, down from 3.2% in January.¹¹
- Nearly 1 in 10 women with disabilities (9.7%) were unemployed in February 2022, up from 7.9% in January.¹²
- Over 1 in 14 young women ages 20-24 (7.2%) were unemployed in February 2022, up from 5.9% in January. The unemployment rate for Black women ages 20-24 decreased from 14.2% in January 2022 to 13.8%¹³ in February 2022 and Latinas ages 20-24 increased from 5.9% in January 2022 to 7.3% in February 2022.¹⁴

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

In February 2022, nearly 3 in 10 unemployed women ages 20 and over (29.0%) had been out of work for six months or longer. Among unemployed women ages 16 and over, 27.1% had been out of work for six months or longer, including 27.8% of unemployed Asian women, 32.5% of unemployed Black women, and 22.9% of unemployed Latinas.¹⁵ Additionally, in February 2022, nearly 1 in 5 unemployed women ages 16 and over (19.3%) had been out of work for a year or longer.¹⁶

Unemployment Rates for Selected Demographics, February 2022



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 with disabilities is not seasonally adjusted and is for women ages 16-64.

If the over 1.1 million women who have left the labor force since February 2020 were counted among the unemployed, women's unemployment would have been 5.1% last month.

Reported unemployment rates do not capture people who have left the labor force entirely and are no longer looking for work. If the over 1.1 million women ages 20 and over who have left the labor force since February 2020 were counted as unemployed in February 2022, women's unemployment rate would have been 5.1% in February 2022 instead of the reported 3.6%.¹⁷

Since February 2020, 199,000 Black women have left the labor force, along with 41,000 Latinas. If these women were counted as unemployed, the unemployment rate for Black women in February 2022 would have been 7.8% instead of 6.1%, and Latinas' unemployment rate would have been 5.2% instead of 4.8%.¹⁸

- 1 Data was factchecked by Sarah Javaid.
- 2 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table B-1 in February 2022 Employment Situation Summary and BLS, "Employment of Women on Nonfarm Payrolls by Industry Sector, Seasonally Adjusted," Table B-5 in February 2022 Employment Situation Summary (Washington, DC: March 4, 2022), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.t21.htm>. Historical data available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesbtab5.htm>. Throughout this factsheet, changes since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic are measured using February 2020 as a reference point.
- 3 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table B-1 and Table B-5 in February 2022 Employment Situation Summary.
- 4 NWLC calculations using BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Sex and Age," Table A-1 in February 2022 Employment Situation Summary (Washington, DC: March 4, 2022), <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. Each year when January data is released, the Bureau of Labor Statistics adjusts its household survey data to incorporate new methodologies and population estimates from the most recent decennial Census and other sources. However, BLS does not revise past figures with these new estimates and therefore cautions the comparability of figures across years.
- 5 BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Race, Sex, and Age" Table A-2 in February 2022 Employment Situation Summary (Washington, DC: March 4, 2022). Historical data available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab2.htm>. Figures are seasonally adjusted.
- 6 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table B-1 in February 2022 Employment Situation Summary and BLS, Table B-5 in February 2022 Employment Situation Summary. Figures are seasonally adjusted.
- 7 NWLC calculations using BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Sex and Age," Table A-1 in February 2022 Employment Situation Summary (Washington, DC: March 4, 2022), <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.
- 8 BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Race, Sex, and Age" Table A-2 in February 2022 Employment Situation Summary (Washington, DC: March 4, 2022). Historical data available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab2.htm>. Figures are seasonally adjusted.
- 9 NWLC calculations using BLS, "Employment status of the Hispanic or Latino population by sex and age," Table A-3 in February 2022 Employment Situation Summary. (Washington, DC: March 4, 2022), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.t03.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: March 4, 2022), <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/LNU04032342>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
- 11 BLS, Table A-2 in February 2022 Employment Situation Summary. Figure is seasonally adjusted.
- 12 BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Sex, Age, and Disability Status, Not Seasonally Adjusted," Table A-6 in February 2022 Employment Situation Summary, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.t06.htm>.
- 13 BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Noninstitutional Population by Age, Sex, and Race," Table A-13 in Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey, <https://www.bls.gov/web/empst/cpseea13.htm>.
- 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, <https://www.bls.gov/web/empst/cpseea14.htm>. Figure is not seasonally adjusted.
- 15 NWLC calculations based on BLS, "Unemployed Persons by Age, Sex, Race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, Marital Status, and Duration of Unemployment," Table A-36 in Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey (Washington, DC: March 4, 2022), <https://www.bls.gov/web/empst/cpseea36.htm>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
- 16 NWLC calculations using BLS, "(Unadj) Number Unemployed for 52 Weeks & Over, Women," Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey (Washington, DC: March 4, 2022), <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/LNU03008735> and BLS, Table A-36 in Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
- 17 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table A-1 in February 2022 Employment Situation Summary. To calculate these adjusted unemployment rates, NWLC added the 1,121,000 women who have dropped out of the labor force since February 2020 to the number of women in February 2022 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.
- 18 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table A-2 in February 2022 Employment Situation Summary and BLS, Table A-3 in February 2022 Employment Situation Summary. To calculate these adjusted unemployment rates, NWLC added the 199,000 Black women who have dropped out of the labor force since February 2020 to the number of Black women in February 2022 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.