

Women's Labor Force Participation Increases as 397,000 Women Join Labor Force in May

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The most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data showed 397,000 women ages 20 and over joined the labor force last month, meaning they are now either working or looking for work. Women's labor force participation rate is now 58.3%. This is one percentage point below women's pre-pandemic rate of 59.3%, with 656,000 fewer women in the labor force in May 2022 than in February 2020.² Women ages 20 and over of every race and ethnicity experienced increases in labor force participation last month, with especially large gains for women of color, including 100,000 white women, 176,000 Black women,³ 135,000 Latinas,⁴ and 134,000 Asian women.⁵ Meanwhile, 46,000 men ages 20 and over left the labor force last month,⁶ driven by Asian men leaving the labor force in May.⁷ Even with these men leaving the labor force, women make up all net labor force leavers since February 2020.

The economy added 390,000 jobs in May. Women made up 46.4% of these gains, gaining 181,000 jobs.⁸ This marks 17 consecutive months of job growth for women but still leaves women down a net 723,000 jobs since February 2020. Women's jobs now make up 88.0% of the 822,000 net jobs lost in the pandemic.⁹

Women gained 181,000 jobs last month but are still short 723,000 jobs since February 2020.

- Since February 2020, the economy has experienced a net loss of nearly 822,000 jobs; women account for 88.0% of those losses.
- The leisure and hospitality sector gained 84,000 jobs in May 2022. Women gained 52,000 jobs in this sector, or 61.9% of the jobs added. Women make up 53.0% of the leisure and hospitality workforce.
- The retail trade sector lost 60,700 jobs in May 2022. Women lost 29,100 jobs, or 47.9% of the jobs lost. Women make up 48.7% of the retail trade workforce.

- The government sector gained 57,000 jobs in May 2022. Women lost 5,000 jobs while men gained 62,000. Women make up 57.9% of the government workforce.
- The education and health services sector gained 74,000 jobs in May 2022. Women gained 71,000 jobs, or 95.9% of the jobs added. Women make up 76.9% of the education and health services workforce.
- The child care sector gained 1,500 jobs last month. A net 117,400 child care jobs have been lost since February 2020. The child care sector is still missing 1 in 9 jobs (11.1%) lost since the start of the crisis.¹⁰ Women make up 92.5% of the child care workforce.¹¹

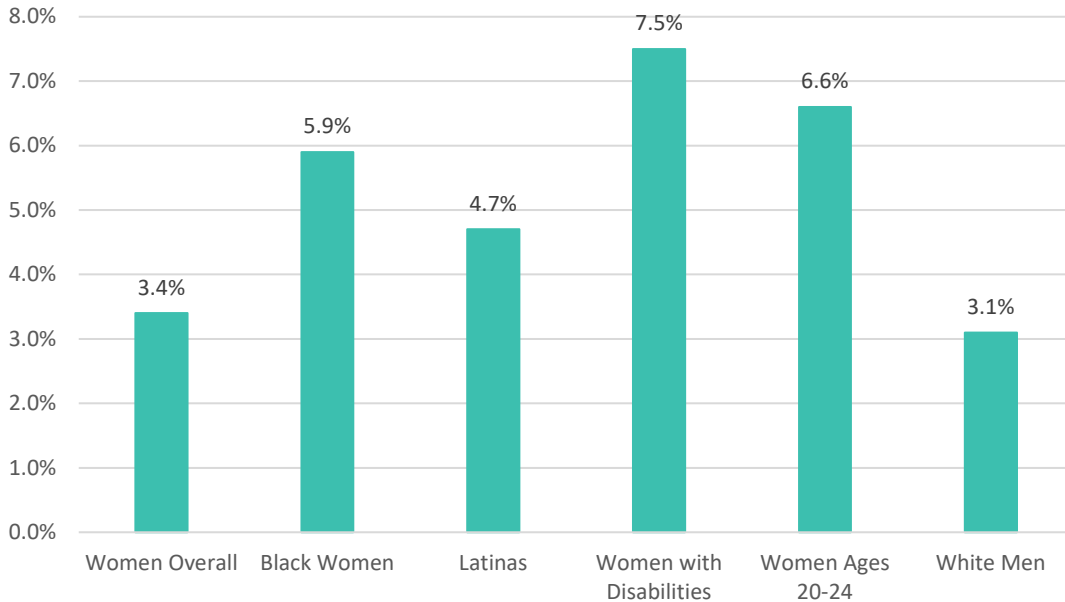
The overall unemployment rates masks higher rates for Black women, disabled women, and other groups.

- The unemployment rate for women ages 20 and over increased from 3.2% in April to 3.4% in May 2022. In comparison, the unemployment rate for men ages 20 and over decreased from 3.5% in April to 3.4% in May 2022.¹²
- The unemployment rate for Black women ages 20 and over was 5.9% in May 2022, up from 5.0% in April. The unemployment rate for Black men ages 20 and over decreased from 6.1% in April to 5.7% in May 2022.¹³
- The unemployment rate for Latinas ages 20 and over was 4.7% in May 2022, up from 3.8% in April.¹⁴
- The unemployment rate for Asian women ages 20 and over was 2.5% in May 2022, up from 2.4% in April.¹⁵
- The unemployment rate for women with disabilities ages 16-64 was 7.5% in May 2022, up from 7.0% in April.¹⁶
- The unemployment rate for young women ages 20-24 was 6.6% in May 2022, up from 4.9% in April. The unemployment rate for Black women ages 20-24 increased from 10.2% in April to 11.6% in May 2022,¹⁷ and the rate for Latinas ages 20-24 increased from 4.1% in April to 7.6% in May 2022.¹⁸
- By comparison, the unemployment rate for white men ages 20 and over was 3.1% in May 2022, unchanged from April.¹⁹

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

In May 2022, more than 1 in 5 unemployed women ages 20 and over (22.5%) had been out of work for six months or longer. Among unemployed women ages 16 and over, 20.7% had been out of work for six months or longer, including 31.0% of unemployed Asian women, 23.9% of unemployed Black women, and 21.4% of unemployed Latinas.²⁰ Additionally, in May 2022, over 1 in 7 unemployed women ages 16 and over (15.2%) had been out of work for a year or longer.²¹

Unemployment Rates for Selected Demographics, May 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.

Since February 2020, 656,000 women have left the labor force. If they were counted among the unemployed last month, women's unemployment rate would have been 4.2%.

Reported unemployment rates do not capture people who have left the labor force entirely and are no longer looking for work. If the 656,000 women ages 20 and over who have left the labor force since February 2020 were counted as unemployed in May 2022, women's unemployment rate would have been 4.2% in May 2022 instead of the reported 3.4%.²²

1. Data was factchecked by Sarah Javid.
2. NWLC calculations using BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Sex and Age," Table A-1 in *June 2022 Employment Situation Summary* (Washington, DC: June 3, 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. Throughout this factsheet, changes since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic are measured using February 2020 as a reference point. 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.
3. BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Race, Sex, and Age" Table A-2 in *June 2022 Employment Situation Summary* (Washington, DC: June 3, 2022). Historical data available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab2.htm>. Figures are seasonally adjusted.
4. NWLC calculations using BLS, "Employment status of the Hispanic or Latino population by sex and age," Table A-3 in *June 2022 Employment Situation Summary*. (Washington, DC: June 3, 2022), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.t03.htm>. Figures are seasonally adjusted.
5. NWLC calculations using "(Unadj) Civilian Labor Force – Asian, Women," *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey* (Washington, DC: June 3, 2022), <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/LNU01032342>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
6. NWLC calculations using BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Sex and Age," Table A-1 in *June 2022 Employment Situation Summary*, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.t01.htm>. Historical data available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab1.htm>.
7. NWLC calculations using "(Unadj) Civilian Labor Force – Asian, Men," *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey* (Washington, DC: June 3, 2022), <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/LNU01032301>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
8. NWLC calculations using BLS, Table B-1 in *June 2022 Employment Situation Summary* and BLS, "Employment of Women on Nonfarm Payrolls by Industry Sector, Seasonally Adjusted," Table B-5 in *June 2022 Employment Situation Summary* (Washington, DC: June 3, 2022), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.t21.htm>. Historical data available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesbtab5.htm>.
9. NWLC calculations using BLS, Table B-1 and Table B-5 in *June 2022 Employment Situation Summary*.
10. NWLC calculations using BLS, Table B-1 in *June 2022 Employment Situation Summary* and BLS, Table B-5 in *June 2022 Employment Situation Summary*. Figures are seasonally adjusted
11. NWLC calculations using BLS, Table B-1 in *June 2022 Employment Situation Summary* and BLS, "Women Employees, Thousands, Child Day Care Services" from the *Current Employment Statistics Survey (National)*, <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/CE6562440010>. Figures are seasonally adjusted.
12. NWLC calculations using BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Sex and Age," Table A-1 in *June 2022 Employment Situation Summary*. Figures are seasonally adjusted and capture women and men ages 20 and over.
13. BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Race, Sex, and Age" Table A-2 in *June 2022 Employment Situation Summary*. Figures are seasonally adjusted.
14. NWLC calculations using BLS, "Employment status of the Hispanic or Latino population by sex and age," Table A-3 in *June 2022 Employment Situation Summary*. Figures are seasonally adjusted.
15. NWLC calculations using BLS, "(Unadj) Unemployment Rate – Asian, Women," *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey*, <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/LNU04032342>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
16. BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Sex, Age, and Disability Status, Not Seasonally Adjusted," Table A-6 in *June 2022 Employment Situation Summary* (Washington, DC: June 3, 2022), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.t06.htm>.
17. 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* (Washington, DC: June 3, 2022), <https://www.bls.gov/web/empst/cpseea13.htm>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
18. 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: June 3, 2022), <https://www.bls.gov/web/empst/cpseea14.htm>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
19. BLS, Table A-2 in *June 2022 Employment Situation Summary*. Figure is seasonally adjusted.
20. 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: June 3, 2022), <https://www.bls.gov/web/empst/cpseea36.htm>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
21. NWLC calculations using BLS, "(Unadj) Number Unemployed for 52 Weeks & Over, Women," *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey*, <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.
22. NWLC calculations using BLS, Table A-1 in *June 2022 Employment Situation Summary*. To calculate these adjusted unemployment rates, NWLC added the 656,000 women who have dropped out of the labor force since February 2020 to the number of women in May 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.