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RESILIENT BUT NOT RECOVERED

LATINAS IN THE COVID-19 CRISIS

Author

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Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Katherine Gallagher Robbins, Sarah Javaid, Emily Martin, Marissa Moore, Maria Patrick, Beth Stover, Julie Vogtman, Hilary Woodward, and GQR for their help with the development, design, factchecking, review, and dissemination of this fact sheet.

Introduction

The COVID-19 crisis upended our economy and our lives, and uncertainty about the future is now a constant for many. Although the pandemic-induced recession has officially ended—due in large part to the American Rescue Plan Act and other robust relief measures enacted in 2020 and 2021—millions of people lost jobs and income that they have not yet recovered. And the recovery has been uneven: many women—particularly Black women, Latinas, and other women of color—are still struggling to make ends meet, especially in the face of rising costs.

Even before the pandemic started, Latinas had long been failed by underinvestment in our economic and social infrastructure—which, coupled with inadequate workplace protections, left many Latinas stranded at the intersection of racial and gender inequities laid bare by COVID-19. In 2022, the National Women's Law Center partnered with polling firm GQR to hear from Latinas across the country about how they have been faring in the pandemic.¹ This analysis captures key findings from that research, highlighting how two years of the COVID-19 pandemic have affected Latinas' jobs, their finances, their health, and their lives—and detailing the investments and supports they need to thrive.

About the Data

Unless otherwise noted, data in this fact sheet is from a February 2022 poll conducted by polling firm GQR and the National Women's Law Center (the "NWLC polling"). The poll includes a nationally representative base sample of 1,000 adults in the United States, in addition to oversamples of Black women, Latinas, Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women, women who left the workforce at some point during the pandemic, women in low-paid jobs making \$15/hour or less, and state oversamples in Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, and West Virginia.² Quotes featured are from participants in focus groups and in-depth interviews led by Sprout Insight in December 2021.³

The pandemic had a multi-faceted impact on Latinas' economic well-being.

The pandemic wreaked havoc on the economy. Between February and April 2020, the U.S. economy shed nearly 22 million jobs, more than half of which (54.0%) were held by women.⁴ At its peak in April 2020, the unemployment rate for Latinas reached 20.1%, and it remained in the double digits for six months in 2020. While we are currently in a recovery, economic gains are not being experienced evenly across groups by race and gender.

“[When] everything was shut down, I didn’t have any work. So any kind of money coming in came to a complete halt. And I had to figure out how to make some type of money. There was just no way.”

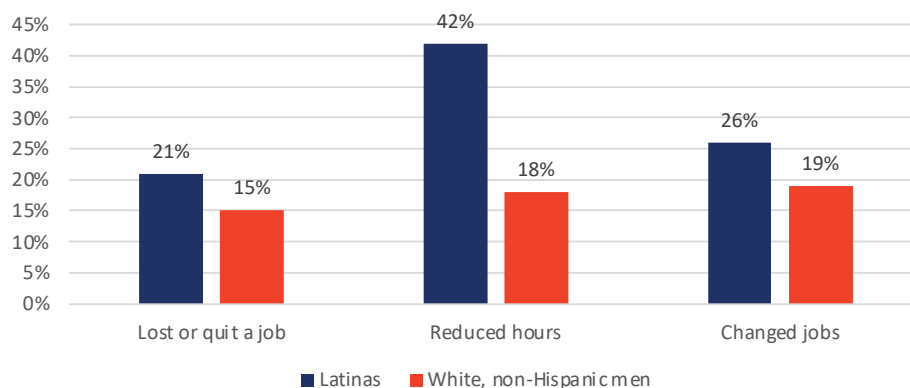
– Latina, Arizona; has worked multiple jobs during the pandemic as a bartender, caterer, food delivery person

NWLC polling affirms that the pandemic appeared to disrupt Latinas’ employment more severely than it did white men’s. For example, Latinas were far more likely than white men⁵ to see their hours of paid work reduced during the pandemic and were somewhat less likely than white men to find a new job after losing or quitting one. Among Latinas who were employed in February 2020:

- More than two in five (42%) report that they or their employer reduced their hours during the pandemic.
- More than one in four (26%) say they changed jobs in the pandemic.
- More than one in five (21%) say they lost or quit a job in the pandemic.

Among all Latinas who lost or quit a job during the pandemic, 58% have since gotten a new job (compared to 65% of white men). And not all change was bad: over half of Latinas (52%) say their new job or employment status is better than their previous one, suggesting that the recovery’s tight labor market is having a positive impact.

Pandemic Employment Changes for Latinas and White Men Employed in Feb. 2020



COVID-19 created stress and shifted Latinas' household responsibilities and plans.

The COVID-19 pandemic upended all of our lives as it forced people out of school and work and separated them from their routines and support systems. This had a dramatic impact on Latinas' household and family care responsibilities, future plans, and financial situations, especially as compared to their white male counterparts.

- About two in three Latinas (67%) say they had to take on a lot more household chores and care of family members during the pandemic, compared to 46% of white men.
- Over half of Latinas (53%) report being parents—the highest of any surveyed group by race and gender. Ongoing school and child care disruptions have interfered with Latinas' ability to work: Among Latina mothers, half (50%) report

they reduce their hours, work more nights/weekends, or stop working altogether when their children are not in school or they do not have child care.

- More than a quarter of Latinas (28%) report they are caregivers for ill or disabled family members, compared to 20% of white men.
- About one in seven Latinas (14%) say they delayed or abandoned plans to have children because of the pandemic, and nearly one in six Latinas (16%) report that the pandemic forced them to delay their retirement plans.⁶
- Three in 10 Latinas (30%) say their financial situation is worse now than before the pandemic, compared to 22% of white men.

**Three in 10 Latinas
30% say their
financial situation
is worse now than
before the pandemic.**

The pandemic severely impacted Latinas' mental health.

“Mentally I feel like it could be better. I would like to be less paranoid, less anxious. But during the pandemic it's been hard to kind of turn that off.”

– Latina, Virginia; works as a web specialist

**Six in 10 Latinas
60% report that the
pandemic had a
negative impact on
their mental health.**

The COVID-19 crisis caused many people to be separated from family, friends, and other support networks and to lose jobs, access to child care, and more. As a result, COVID-19 negatively impacted Latinas' mental health.

- Six in 10 Latinas (60%) report that the pandemic had a negative impact on their mental health, compared to 44% of white men. Nearly one in four Latinas (23%) report a very negative mental health impact.
- More than one in three Latinas who reported a negative impact on their mental health (36%) have sought mental health treatment, such as therapy or medication.
- However, nearly two in three Latinas who reported a negative mental health impact (64%) say they did not seek mental health treatment; while a majority (59%) say they could handle the issue on their own, one in three (34%) report that treatment or professional help was not affordable, too hard to access, or they did not have time to pursue it.
- Nearly half of Latinas cite bills and expenses as one of their top two sources of stress (49%), followed by their personal health (32%) and their family's health (21%).

Latinas often work in essential, undervalued jobs—and many are looking for better pay, opportunity, and autonomy at work.

Many Latinas have worked in front-line occupations during the pandemic, providing child care and education services to children, working in grocery stores, and serving as personal care and home health aides to those who needed care—but many of these essential roles remain low-paid.⁷ Indeed, Latinas have long been overrepresented in low-paid jobs,⁸ and the NWLC polling confirms they are more likely than white men to be paid \$15 an hour or less and less likely than white men to be in salaried jobs.

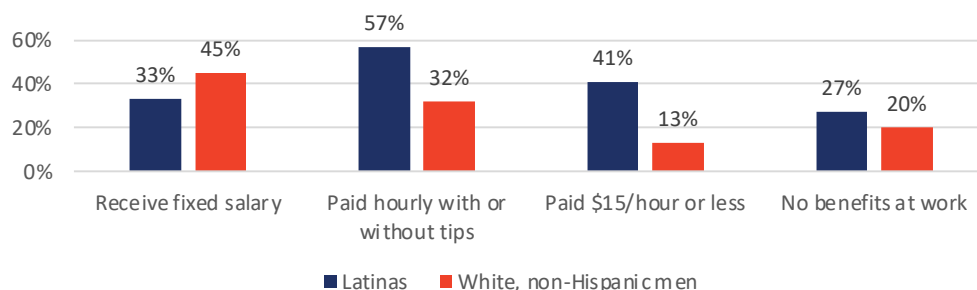
“We, everybody in the house was, is an essential worker. I didn’t stop work.” – *Latina, Arizona; works as a nanny*

- Nearly half of Latinas (47%) report they were essential workers during COVID-19.
- More than half of Latinas (57%) say they are paid hourly (including in tipped jobs), compared to 32% of white men.

- One in three Latinas (33%) say they are in salaried jobs, compared to 45% of white men.
- More than two in five Latinas (41%) report making \$15 per hour or less, compared with 13% of white men.
- Over one in four Latinas (27%) say they received no benefits—i.e., no health insurance, retirement benefits, paid sick days, paid family or medical leave, or paid vacation time—from their current or most recent job, compared to 20% of white men.
- More than one in four Latinas (27%) receive their work schedule with two weeks’ notice or less.

In the NWLC polling, more than one in four Latinas (28%) say they are planning to change jobs within the next six months. As Latinas look to their next job, salary and benefits are a top priority: half of Latinas (50%) say that salary and benefits are one of the two most important features to them in a job, followed by opportunities for career growth (25%) and control over their hours (25%). One in five Latinas (20%) say the ability to work from home is one of the two most important features to them; currently, most Latinas (58%) say they only work in person, while 41% work from home at least some of the time.

Select Employment and Compensation Features, Latinas and White Men



Moving toward a full recovery for Latinas.

The COVID-19 pandemic took hundreds of thousands of lives in the United States and wrought deep financial and emotional pain for millions. The federal government's response in the first years of the pandemic prevented still greater devastation and set the stage for a strong recovery. But without further—and substantial—policy intervention, the United

States will not achieve a full or sustainable recovery, particularly for Latinas, who have been hit hard by this crisis. Policies that bolster families' incomes, ensure access to health care—including reproductive health care—without cost barriers, and help people both work and care for their loved ones are essential. These policies are incredibly popular among Latinas.

Policy	Share of Latinas support
Provide all workers with paid family and medical leave to take time to care for a child, recover from a serious health condition, or care for a family member with a serious health condition	90%
Grant employees the right to request a work schedule change without fear of retaliation, and require employers to provide at least two weeks' notice of work schedules for workers in jobs with variable hours	90%
Increase funding to make home- and community-based services for seniors and people with disabilities more widely available and improve job quality for home care workers	89%
Ensure families can access high-quality, affordable child care , making sure no family pays more than 7 percent of their income for child care and early educators are paid a living wage	88%
Fund free pre-kindergarten for all children ages 3 and 4	87%
Increase the wage that employers are required to pay tipped workers , so that tipped workers are entitled to the same minimum wage as anyone else, before tips	86%
Provide access to comprehensive health care with no cost-sharing	84%
Gradually raise the national minimum wage from \$7.25 per hour to \$15 per hour, then automatically increase it to keep pace with rising wages	84%
Ensure all families can access the full child tax credit and continue payments that gave families up to \$300 per child monthly	80%
Protect employees' right to discuss salaries with colleagues , so employees can find out if they are being paid unfairly compared to their coworkers	79%
Protect the right and ability to access reproductive health care , including abortion	77%
Require employers to report pay data by gender, race, and ethnicity to the agency that enforces workplace discrimination laws, so the agency can identify pay discrimination	75%

- 1 For more details and reports drawn from the NWLC-GQR polling data, see <http://www.nwlc.org/resilientbut-not-recovered>.
- 2 Margin of error on a probability sample of this size for the national base is lower than +/-3 percent. Margins of error for the oversampled groups range from +/-3.3 percent for women who left the workforce to +/-6.1 percent for AAPI women. Margin of error is higher among subgroups. GQR survey data were weighted by age, race, and census region to reflect the U.S. population, as well as weighted to income by race.
- 3 In partnership with NWLC, Sprout Insight conducted qualitative research interviews from December 7–13, 2021 with a total of 35 working women between the ages of 25–55 years from Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Of the 35 women, 22 participated in 20-minute in-depth individual virtual interviews, and the remaining 13 women participated in three 90-minute virtual focus groups. Women were recruited to quotas for racial/ethnic background (i.e., AAPI, Black, Latina, and white) and job type (hourly and salaried). Women varied in relationship status, employment situation, and income.
- 4 Brooke LePage, “Women’s Jobs Are Being Added Back to the Economy—But Many Need Improving” (National Women’s Law Center, June 2022), <https://nwlc.org/resource/womens-jobs-are-being-added-back-to-the-economy-but-many-need-improving/>.
- 5 In this fact sheet, data from NWLC’s polling on white men refers to white, non-Hispanic men.
- 6 Sample size for white men who responded that the pandemic impacted retirement or family plans is too small for independent analysis.
- 7 Jasmine Tucker, “55 Cents on the Dollar Isn’t Enough for Latinas” (National Women’s Law Center, October 2020), <https://nwlc.org/resource/equal-pay-for-latinas/>.
- 8 Jasmine Tucker & Julie Vogtman, “When Hard Work is Not Enough: Women in Low-Paid Jobs” (National Women’s Law Center, April 2020), <https://nwlc.org/resource/when-hard-work-is-not-enough-women-in-low-paid-jobs/>.



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