

Two and a Half Years Later, Women Finally Recover Pandemic-Related Job Losses

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The most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data showed that women gained 155,000 jobs in September 2022 and have now recovered their pandemic-related job losses. 263,000 jobs were added to the economy overall in September, meaning women gained 58.9% of the jobs added last month. This marks 21 months of consecutive job gains for women and means women now hold 85,000 more jobs now than in February 2020; by comparison, men hold 429,000 more jobs now than in February 2020.²

Unemployment rates edged down across the board in September, but for women, this was because many dropped out of the labor force entirely, meaning they are now neither working nor looking for work, and thus are no longer counted among the unemployed. 390,000 women ages 20 and over left the labor force in September, which means 817,000 fewer women are in the labor force now than in February 2020. By comparison, 727,000 *more* men are in the labor force now than in February 2020. Women's labor force participation rate was 58.0% in September compared to 58.4% in August, which is more than one percentage point below women's pre-pandemic labor force participation rate of 59.3%. Women make up 100% of net labor force leavers ages 20 and over since February 2020.³

Women gained 155,000 jobs last month which means they have recovered all net jobs lost since February 2020.

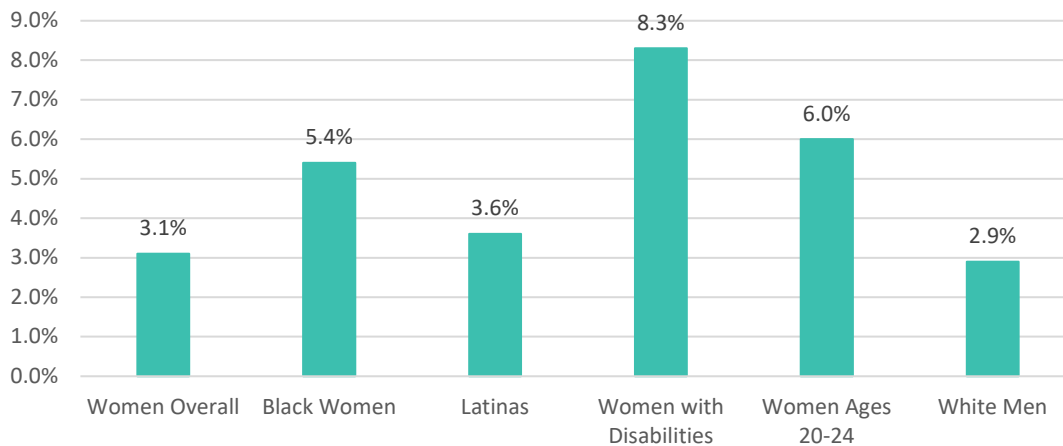
- Since February 2020, the economy has experienced a net gain of 514,000 jobs. Men held 429,000 more net jobs in September 2022 than in February 2020 while women held 85,000 more net jobs in September 2022 than in February 2020.
- The leisure and hospitality sector gained 83,000 jobs in September 2022. Women gained 45,000 jobs in this sector, or 54.2% of the jobs added⁴—but while leisure and hospitality jobs have been a key driver of the recovery for women, many of these jobs have low wages, unpredictable hours, and minimal benefits.⁵ Women make up 52.9% of the leisure and hospitality workforce.

- The retail trade sector lost 1,100 jobs in September 2022. Women gained 7,300 jobs while men lost 8,400. Women make up 48.9% of the retail trade workforce.
- The government sector lost 25,000 jobs in September 2022. Women's jobs were unchanged while men lost 25,000 jobs. Women make up 58.2% of the government workforce.
- The education and health services sector gained 90,000 jobs in September 2022, at the beginning of a new school year. Women gained 85,000 jobs, or 94.4% of the jobs added. Women make up 77.2% of the education and health services workforce.
- The child care sector lost 2,000 jobs last month. A net 102,400 child care jobs have been lost since February 2020. The child care sector is still missing nearly 1 in 10 jobs (9.7%) since the start of the crisis⁶—and ongoing staffing shortages in this sector particularly impede an equitable recovery, as they also make it harder for parents to secure the child care they need to work. Women make up 92.7% of the child care workforce.⁷

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

- The unemployment rate for women ages 20 and over decreased from 3.3% in August to 3.1% in September 2022. The unemployment rate for men ages 20 and over also decreased from 3.5% in August to 3.3% in September 2022.⁸
- The unemployment rate for Black women ages 20 and over was 5.4% in September 2022, down from 5.9% in August. The unemployment rate for Black men ages 20 and over decreased from 6.0% in August to 5.8% in September 2022.⁹
- The unemployment rate for Latinas ages 20 and over was 3.6% in September 2022, down from 4.3% in August.¹⁰
- The unemployment rate for Asian women ages 20 and over was 2.0% in September 2022, down from 3.1% in August.¹¹
- The unemployment rate for women with disabilities ages 16-64 was 8.3% in September 2022, up from 7.8% in August.¹²
- The unemployment rate for young women ages 20-24 was 6.0% in September 2022, down from 6.3% in August. The unemployment rate for Black women ages 20-24 increased from 12.8% in August to 13.5% in September 2022. The unemployment rate for Latinas ages 20-24 decreased from 7.8% in August to 6.3% in September 2022.¹³
- By comparison, the unemployment rate for white men ages 20 and over was 2.9% in September 2022, down from 3.1% in August.¹⁴

Unemployment Rates for Selected Demographics, September 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. The unemployment rate for women ages 20-24 is also not seasonally adjusted.

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

In September 2022, nearly 1 in 4 unemployed women ages 20 and over (23.2%) had been out of work for six months or longer. Among unemployed women ages 16 and over, 19.9% had been out of work for six months or longer, including 9.7% of unemployed Asian women, 26.7% of unemployed Black women, and 21.9% of unemployed Latinas.¹⁵ Additionally, in September 2022, nearly 1 in 9 unemployed women ages 16 and over (10.8%) had been out of work for a year or longer.¹⁶

Many women working part-time are doing so involuntarily.

Over 19.3 million women ages 16 and over were working part time in September. About 1 in 12 (8.3%) were doing so for economic reasons, such as slack business conditions, meaning they wanted to be working more hours but were unable to do so. This includes 15.1% of Latinas ages 16 and over working part time, 11.4% of Black women ages 16 and over working part time, and 6.1% of Asian women ages 16 and over working part time.¹⁷ In addition, many women work part time for reasons that BLS considers “voluntary” but may in fact reflect inadequate access to child care or other supports for working caregivers.¹⁸ Women, especially those with caregiving responsibilities, disproportionately shifted from full-time to part-time work during the pandemic.¹⁹

1. Data factchecked by Sarah Javid.
2. NWLC calculations using BLS, Table B-1 in September 2022 Employment Situation Summary and BLS, "Employment of Women on Nonfarm Payrolls by Industry Sector, Seasonally Adjusted," Table B-5 in September 2022 Employment Situation Summary (Washington, DC: October 7, 2022), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.t21.htm>. Historical data available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesbtat5.htm>.
3. NWLC calculations using BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Sex and Age," Table A-1 in September 2022 Employment Situation Summary (Washington, DC: October 7, 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.
4. NWLC calculations using BLS, Table B-1 in September 2022 Employment Situation Summary and BLS, Table B-5 in September 2022 Employment Situation Summary. Figures are seasonally adjusted.
5. More information on women's job quality during COVID-19 economic recovery can be found at Brooke LePage, "Women's Jobs Are Being Added Back to the Economy—But Many Need Improving" (National Women's Law Center, May 2022), <https://nwlc.org/resource/womens-jobs-are-being-added-back-to-the-economy-but-many-need-improving/>.
6. NWLC calculations using BLS, Table B-1 in September 2022 Employment Situation Summary and BLS, Table B-5 in September 2022 Employment Situation Summary. Figures are seasonally adjusted.
7. NWLC calculations using BLS, Table B-1 in September 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/CES6562440010>. Figures are seasonally adjusted. Women's share of the child care workforce is for August 2022.
8. NWLC calculations using BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Sex and Age," Table A-1 in September 2022 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.
9. NWLC calculations using BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Race, Sex, and Age" Table A-2 in September 2022 Employment Situation Summary (Washington, DC: October 7, 2022), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.t02.htm>.
10. NWLC calculations using BLS, "Employment Status of the Hispanic or Latino population by sex and age," Table A-3 in September 2022 Employment Situation Summary. (Washington, DC: October 7, 2022), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.t03.htm>.
11. 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.
12. BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Sex, Age, and Disability Status, Not Seasonally Adjusted," Table A-6 in September 2022 Employment Situation Summary (Washington, DC: October 7, 2022), <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 (Washington, DC: October 7, 2022), <https://www.bls.gov/web/empst/cpseaa13.htm>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
14. BLS, Table A-2 in September 2022 Employment Situation Summary. Figure is 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: October 7, 2022), <https://www.bls.gov/web/empst/cpseaa36.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, <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/LNU03008735> and BLS, Table A-1 in September 2022 Employment Situation Summary. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
17. NWLC calculations based on BLS, "Persons at Work in Nonagricultural Industries by Age, Sex, Race, Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity, Marital Status, and Usual Full- or Part-time Status," Table A-27 in Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey (Washington, DC: October 7, 2022), <https://www.bls.gov/web/empst/cpseaa27.htm>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
18. Brooke LePage, "Part-Time Workers Are Facing Heightened Uncertainty During COVID—and Most Are Women." (National Women's Law Center, February 2022), <https://nwlc.org/resource/part-time-workers-factsheet/>.
19. More information on how women shifted from full-time to part-time work can be found in Shengwei Sun, "Part-Time Working Caregivers Need Unemployment Insurance Reform" (National Women's Law Center, August 2022), <https://nwlc.org/resource/part-time-working-caregivers-need-unemployment-insurance-reform/>.