

Despite Strong Job Gains in May, Black Women's Unemployment Rate Jumps Nearly a Full Percentage Point

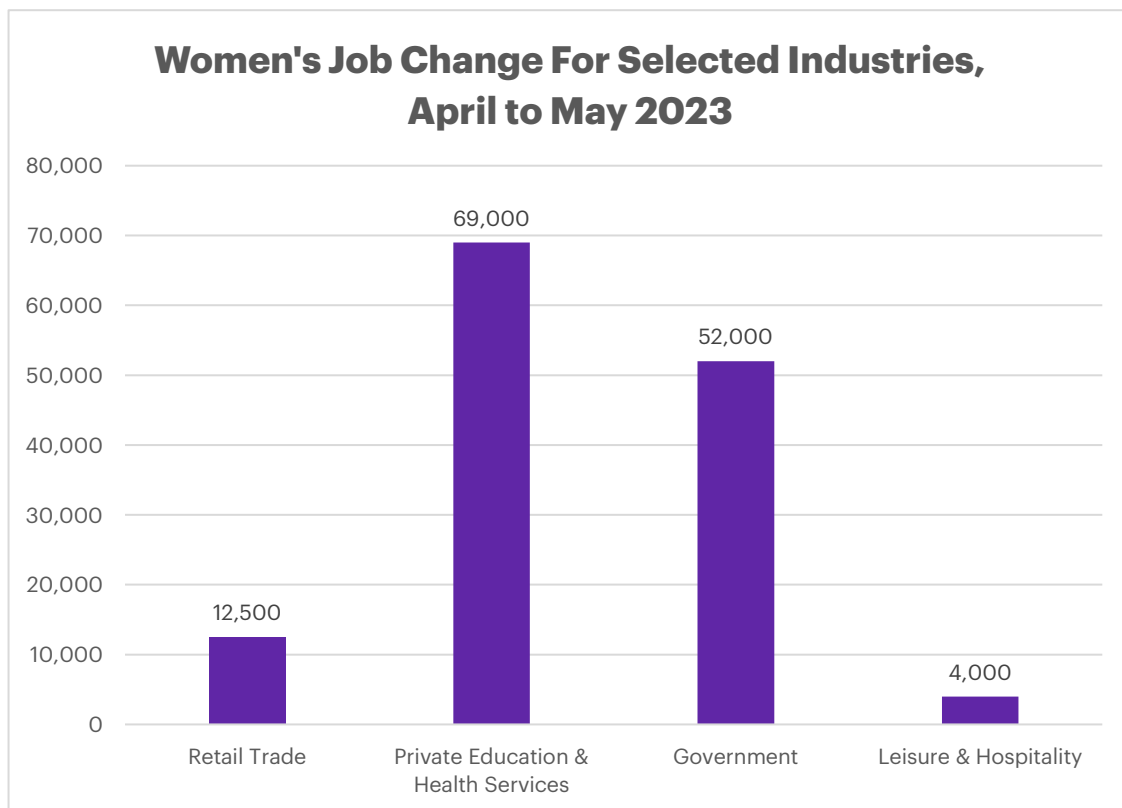
BY SARAH JAVAID AND BROOKE LEPAGE¹

The most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data also showed the economy added 339,000 jobs in May, 177,000 of which (52.2%) were women's jobs. May's gains mark 29 months of consecutive job gains for women and means women now hold over 1.5 million more net jobs now than in February 2020; by comparison, men hold nearly 2.2 million more net jobs now than in February 2020.² The overall unemployment rate for people 16 and over edged up from 3.4% to 3.7%, largely due to people entering the labor force as unemployed workers, meaning they are newly looking for work. While this overall unemployment rate remains low, it masks differences in unemployment rates for different groups. For example, the unemployment rate for Black women ages 20 and over increased almost a full percentage point, from 4.4% in April to 5.3% in May, and the data show a similarly large increase for Black men.³

The data also showed that 137,000 women ages 20 and over joined the labor force in May, meaning they are now working or looking for work, compared to 48,000 men who joined. The labor force participation rate for women ages 20 and over is now 58.7%, up from 58.6% in April, yet still below its pre-pandemic rate of 59.3% in February 2020. By comparison, the labor force participation rate among men ages 20 and over was 70.3% in May 2023, down from 71.5% in February 2020. While there were 409,000 more women in the labor force in May 2023 than in February 2020, there were over 1.7 million more men.⁴

Women gained 177,000 jobs last month but women’s job gains over the last three years still lag behind men’s job gains.

- Since February 2020, the economy has experienced a net gain of over 3.7 million jobs. Those jobs have disproportionately gone to men. In May 2023, men held nearly 2.2 million more net jobs, while women held over 1.5 million more net jobs compared to February 2020.
- The leisure and hospitality sector gained 48,000 jobs in May 2023. Women gained 4,000 jobs in this sector, or just 8.3% of the jobs added.⁵ 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.⁶ Women make up 52.2% of the leisure and hospitality workforce.
- The retail trade sector gained 11,600 jobs in May 2023. Women gained 12,500 jobs, or all of the jobs added, while men lost 900 jobs. Women make up 48.4% of the retail trade workforce.
- The government sector gained 56,000 jobs in May 2023. Women gained 52,000 jobs, or 92.9% of the jobs added. Women make up 58.5% of the government workforce.
- The private education and health services sector gained 97,000 jobs in May 2023. Women gained 69,000 jobs, or 71.1% of the jobs added. Women make up 76.8% of the private education and health services workforce.
- The child care services sector gained 3,600 jobs last month. Even with this gain, a net 50,000 child care sector jobs have been lost since February 2020⁷—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 92.9% of the child care workforce.⁸

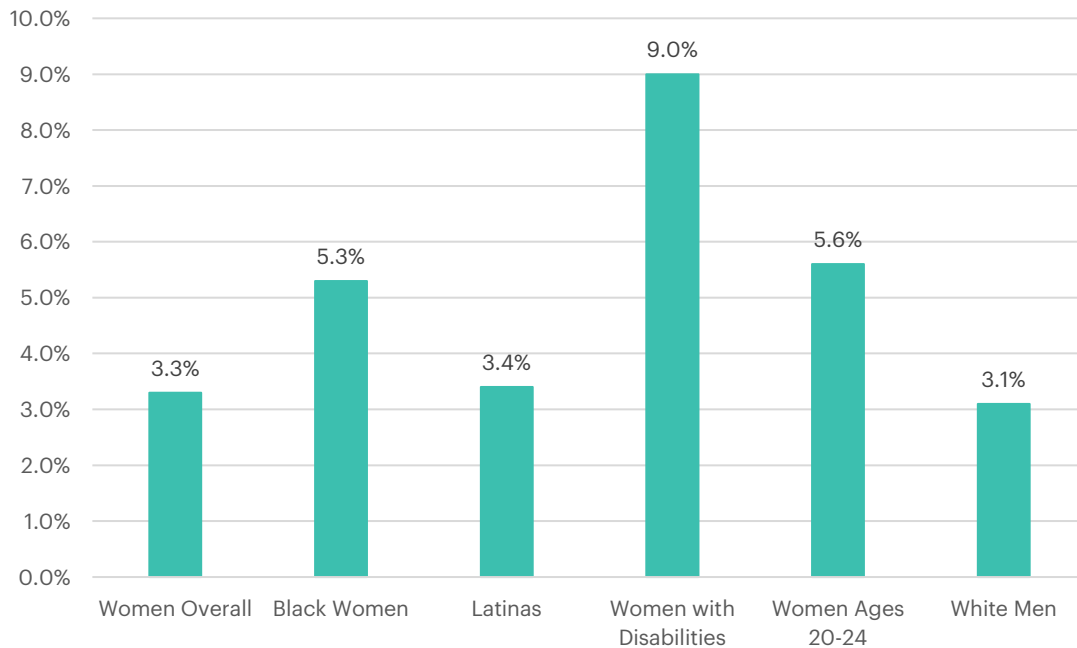


Source: BLS, Employment Situation Summary Table B-5. Figures are seasonally adjusted.

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

- The unemployment rate for women ages 20 and over increased between April and May from 3.1% to 3.3%. The unemployment rate for men ages 20 and over also increased from 3.3% in April to 3.5% in May.⁹ These increases are largely due to people joining the labor force as unemployed workers and were particularly large for Black women and men.¹⁰
- The unemployment rate for Black women ages 20 and over increased substantially from 4.4% in April to 5.3% in May. The unemployment rate for Black men ages 20 and over increased similarly from 4.5% in April to 5.6% in May.
- The unemployment rate for Latinas ages 20 and over decreased from 4.1% in April to 3.4% in May. The unemployment rate for Latinos ages 20 and over decreased slightly from 4.1% in April to 4.0% in May.¹¹
- The unemployment rate for Asian women ages 20 and over increased slightly from 2.0% in April to 2.1% in May.¹²
- The unemployment rate for women with disabilities ages 16-64 increased from 7.1% in April to 9.0% in May.¹³
- The unemployment rate for young women ages 20-24 increased from 3.9% in April to 5.6% in May. Similarly, the unemployment rate for Black women ages 20-24 increased from 6.0% in April to 9.3% in May while the unemployment rate for Latinas ages 20-24 decreased from 5.4% in April to 3.8% in May.¹⁴
- By comparison, the unemployment rate for white men ages 20 and over increased from 2.9% in April to 3.1% in May.¹⁵

Unemployment Rates for Selected Demographics, May 2023



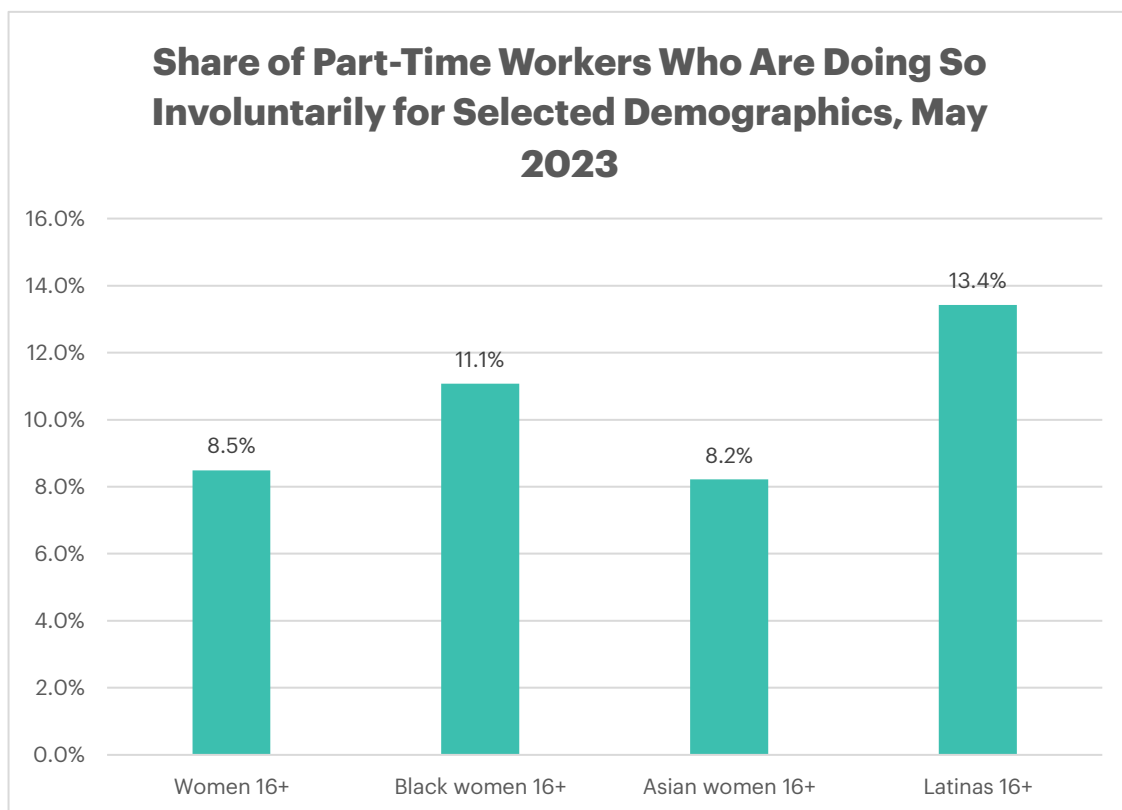
Source: BLS, *Employment Situation Summary Tables A-1, A-2, A-3, A-6, and A-13*. Unemployment rates for white men, women overall, Latinas, and Black women are seasonally adjusted and are for people ages 20 and over. The unemployment rate for women with disabilities is not seasonally adjusted and is for 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 six months or longer.

In May 2023, over one in five unemployed women ages 20 and over (21.9%) had been out of work for six months or longer. Among unemployed women ages 16 and over, 20.6% had been out of work for six months or longer, including 22.8% of unemployed Asian women, 22.0% of unemployed Black women, and 21.5% of unemployed Latinas.¹⁶ Additionally, in May 2023, over one in seven unemployed women ages 16 and over (14.6%) had been out of work for a year or longer.¹⁷

Many women working part-time are doing so involuntarily.

Nearly 19.2 million women ages 16 and over were working part time in May. Over one in 12 (8.5%) of these women 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 13.4% of Latinas ages 16 and over working part time, 11.1% of Black women ages 16 and over working part time, and 8.2% of Asian women ages 16 and over working part time.¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ Women, especially those with caregiving responsibilities, disproportionately shifted from full-time to part-time work during the pandemic.²⁰



Source: BLS, Employment Situation Summary Table A-27.

TERMINOLOGY

Labor force: The number of people currently working (people in the workforce) or not working but actively looking for work (unemployed people). Data come from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' monthly Current Population Survey.

Labor force participation rate: The number of people currently working or not working but actively looking for work (labor force) as a share of the civilian noninstitutional population (persons 16 and older who are not inmates of institutions or on active duty in the Armed Forces). Data come from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' monthly Current Population Survey.

Unemployment rate: The number of people who are not currently working but who are actively looking for work (unemployed people) as a share of the number of people currently working or actively looking for work (people in the labor force). Data come from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' monthly Current Population Survey.

Jobs lost or gained: Fewer (jobs lost) or more (jobs gained) people on employer payrolls. Does not account for people who have multiple jobs. Data come from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Employment Statistics survey.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Data factchecked by Jasmine Tucker.
- 2 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table B-1 in May 2023 Employment Situation Summary and BLS, "Employment of Women on Nonfarm Payrolls by Industry Sector, Seasonally Adjusted," <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t17.htm> and Table B-5 in May 2023 Employment Situation Summary (Washington, DC: June 2, 2023), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t21.htm>. Historical data available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesbtabs.htm>. 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 data to incorporate new methodologies and population estimates from the most recent decennial Census and other sources. However, BLS does not revise historical figures with these new estimates and therefore cautions the comparability of figures across years. At the end of each year, BLS also updates the seasonal adjustment factors and revises some historical, seasonally adjusted data to improve comparability. This impacts seasonally adjusted data through January 2018.
- 3 NWLC calculations using BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Sex and Age," Table A-1 in May 2023 Employment Situation Summary (Washington, DC: June 2, 2023), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t01.htm> and BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Race, Sex, and Age" Table A-2 in May 2023 Employment Situation Summary (Washington, DC: June 2, 2023), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t02.htm>.
- 4 NWLC calculations using BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Sex and Age," Table A-1 in May 2023 Employment Situation Summary (Washington, DC: June 2, 2023), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t01.htm>. Historical data available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab1.htm>.
- 5 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table B-1 in May 2023 Employment Situation Summary and BLS, Table B-5 in May 2023 Employment Situation Summary. Figures are seasonally adjusted.
- 6 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, June 2022), <https://nwlc.org/resource/womens-jobs-are-being-added-back-to-the-economy-but-many-need-improving/>.
- 7 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table B-1 in May 2023 Employment Situation Summary and BLS, Table B-5 in May 2023 Employment Situation Summary. Figures are seasonally adjusted. Historical data for Table B-1 is available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesbtabs.htm>. Historical data for table B-5 is available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesbtabs.htm>.

- 8 NWLC calculations using BLS, Table B-1 in May 2023 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 April 2023.
- 9 NWLC calculations using BLS, “Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Sex and Age,” Table A-1 in May 2023 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.
- 10 NWLC calculations using BLS, “Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Race, Sex, and Age” Table A-2 in May 2023 Employment Situation Summary (Washington, DC: June 2, 2023), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.t02.htm>.
- 11 NWLC calculations using BLS, “Employment status of the Hispanic or Latino population by sex and age,” Table A-3 in May 2023 Employment Situation Summary. (Washington, DC: June 2, 2023), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.t03.htm>.
- 12 NWLC calculations using BLS, “(Unadj) Unemployment Rate – 20 yrs. & over, Asian, Women” Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey, <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/LNU04032342>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
- 13 BLS, “Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Sex, Age, and Disability Status, Not Seasonally Adjusted,” Table A-6 in May 2023 Employment Situation Summary (Washington, DC: June 2, 2023), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.t06.htm>.
- 14 NWLC calculations using 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 2, 2023), <https://www.bls.gov/web/empst/cpseea13.htm> and 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 2, 2023), <https://www.bls.gov/web/empst/cpseea14.htm>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
- 15 BLS, Table A-2 in May 2023 Employment Situation Summary. Figure is seasonally adjusted.
- 16 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 2, 2023), <https://www.bls.gov/web/empst/cpseea36.htm>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
- 17 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 May 2023 Employment Situation Summary. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
- 18 NWLC calculations using 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: June 2, 2023), <https://www.bls.gov/web/empst/cpseea27.htm>. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
- 19 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/>.
- 20 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, October 2022), <https://nwlc.org/resource/part-time-working-caregivers-need-unemployment-insurance-reform/>.