

Dramatic Decline in Employment Hits Women Even More Severely than Men

Women's Unemployment Rate Exceeds Men for All Major Racial/Ethnic Groups

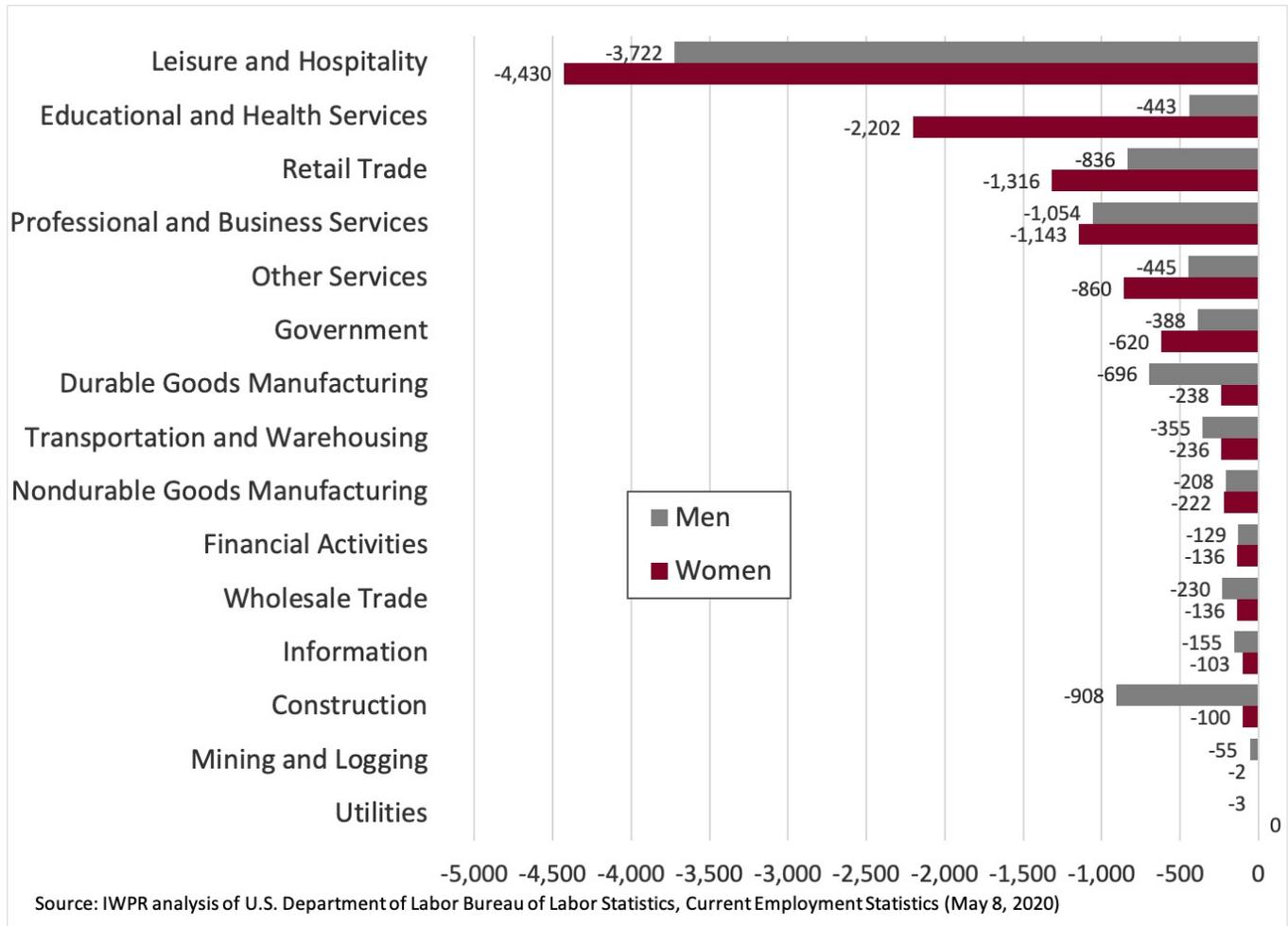
In the four weeks since mid-March, 20.5 million jobs were lost, according to new payroll data released by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics this Friday, May 8.ⁱ Women bore the majority of job losses, 11.3 million (55 percent of the total), compared with 9.2 million jobs lost by men. After women were more than half of all workers on payroll for the first three months of this year, their share has now fallen to 49.2 percent. The number of jobs lost by women in just one month was five times higher than the total decline in women's employment during the Great Recession of 2007-2009.

Employment declined in all major sectors of the economy since February. Job losses have been particularly severe in sectors where women are the majority of the workforce, such as Leisure and Hospitality (women lost 4.4 million jobs compared with 3.7 million lost by men) and Educational and Health Services (women lost 2.2 million compared with 443 thousand lost by men; Figure 1). These two sectors alone account for the majority (56.5 percent) of total job losses for women since February. Job losses in Retail Trade (women lost 1.3 million compared with 836 thousand lost by men) are the third biggest area of job loss for women.

In Leisure and Hospitality, women's job losses are broadly in line with their pre-COVID-19 share of employment: women lost 54.3 percent of jobs since, compared with a share of 53.3 percent of employment in February. In Educational and Health Services, women's job losses were higher than one would expect from their share of employment: they lost 83.3 percent of jobs, compared with a share of 77.4 percent of employment in February. Women's job losses were also disproportionate in Retail Trade where they bore 61.2 percent of job losses but were just 49.5 percent of workers in February.ⁱⁱ

Apart from Leisure and Hospitality, men's job losses were highest in Construction where they lost 908,000 jobs in construction, compared to 100,000 jobs lost by women in the sector; women's share of job losses, at 9.9 percent, is below their February share of total employment in the industry (at 13.2 percent; Figure 2 and IWPR analysis based on).

Figure 1: Women and Men Experience Jobs Losses in All Major Sectors of the Economy
 Change in Number of Jobs on Payrolls, February-April 2020 (In Thousands)



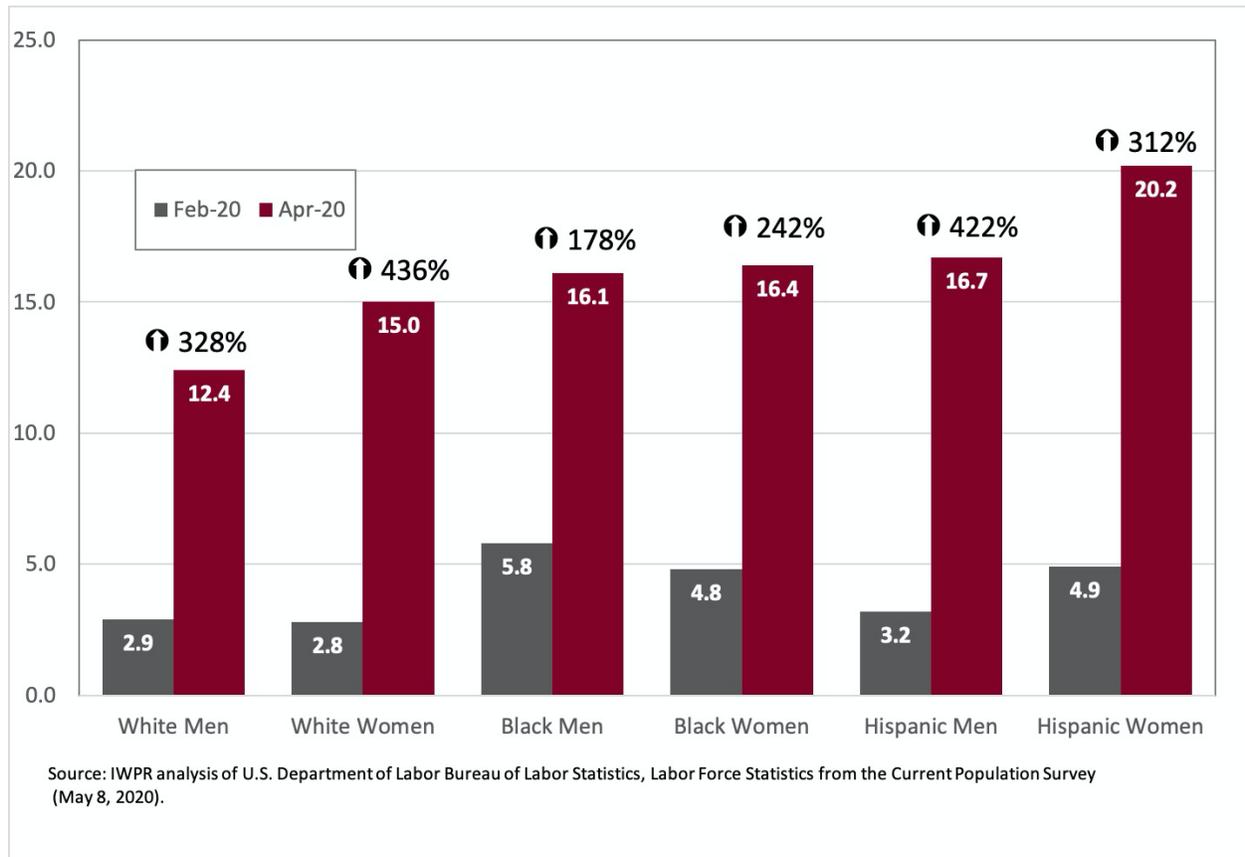
Unemployment Rates are Higher for Women than Men, Unlike Before COVID-19

Since February, the overall rate of unemployment rose from 3.5 to 14.7 percent for all workers ages 16 and older in April 2020 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020). While women’s rate of unemployment was slightly lower than men’s in February (3.4 compared to 3.6 percent), by April it had increased to almost three percentage point above the rate for men (16.2 percent compared with 13.5 percent). Unemployment is particularly high for young workers ages 16-19 who are particularly likely to work in Leisure and Entertainment and Retail Trade; between February and April, their rate of unemployment nearly tripled from 11.0 to 31.9 percent; unemployment for women aged twenty and older in April was 15.5 percent, and men’s 13.0 percent.

The latest data show marked differences in unemployment for women and men of the largest racial ethnic groupsⁱⁱⁱ (payroll data are available only for all women and men). Whether considering White, Black, or Hispanic women ages 20 years and older, their rate of unemployment is higher than that of men in the same group (Figure 2).

Figure 2: All Groups Saw Dramatic Increases in Unemployment since February- Rates of Unemployment are Particularly High for Hispanic Women

Unemployment Rates for Women and Men Ages 20 and Older, February and April 2020 and Change since February 2020 (Seasonally adjusted)



Hispanic workers have been hit particularly hard by the crisis. Hispanic women have the highest rate of unemployment (20.2 percent), an increase of more than 300 percent since February; Hispanic men's rate of unemployment is second highest, at 16.7 percent, and increase of over 400 percent since February (Figure 2). Hispanic women are overrepresented in low wage jobs in Leisure and Hospitality where the majority of jobs were lost, and are particularly likely to work in low paid jobs^{iv}; Hispanic men are disproportionately likely to work in Construction^v, the sector with the second largest job losses for men (Figure 1).

White women's rate of unemployment, at 15.0 percent in April, saw the biggest increase overall (436 percent since February); yet the rate of unemployment for both White men and White women remains below the rates for other women and men. The rate of unemployment for Black women increased to 16.4 percent, and for Black men, to 16.1 percent; Black men's unemployment rate was already higher than other groups' rates before the COVID crisis (Figure 2).

Single Mothers' Unemployment Tripled since February

The rate of unemployment rate of single mothers more than tripled since February (from 4.1 percent to 15.9 percent; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020). In the United States more than 1 million single mothers have become unemployed since February. Over half (55.5 percent) of all Black families with children and 36.9 percent of Native American families with children are headed by a single mother.^{vi}

This IWPR Quick Figure was prepared by Ariane Hegewisch, Zohal Barsi, and Jeff Hayes.

ⁱ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2020. "Employment Situation Summary." Economic News Release, May 8 <<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empisit.nr0.htm>> (accessed May 8, 2020).

ⁱⁱ IWPR calculation based on data provided in U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2020, as above.

ⁱⁱⁱ The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics does not publish unemployment data for other groups.

^{iv} See Elyse Shaw, Ariane Hegewisch, Emma Williams-Baron, and Barbara Gault. 2016. *Undervalued and Underpaid in America: Women in Low-Wage, Female-Dominated Jobs*, IWPR Report #D308; Washington DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research <<https://iwpr.org/publications/undervalued-and-underpaid-in-america-women-in-low-wage-female-dominated-jobs/>>; and Ariane Hegewisch and Zohal Barsi. 2020. "The Gender Wage Gap by Occupation 2019 and by Race and Ethnicity." IWPR Fact Sheet #C490; Washington DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research <<https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2020-Occupational-wage-gap-FINAL.pdf>>.

^v See Hegewisch and Barsi. 2020 in note above.

^{vi} See Elyse Shaw and C. Nicole Mason. 2020. "Holding Up Half the Sky: Mothers as Workers, Primary Caregivers, & Breadwinners During COVID-19." IWPR Fact Sheet Q081; Washington DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research <<https://iwpr.org/publications/holding-up-half-the-sky-mothers-as-workers-primary-caregivers-breadwinners-during-covid-19/>>.



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