

Halting Recovery Leaves Women's Unemployment in Double Digits, and Women's Payroll Employment Still 6.9 Million Below Pre-Crisis Levels

New jobs figures from July show much less job growth than in the previous month, and while women were the majority of those who gained jobs, they continue to face a higher jobs deficit than men, according to the U.S. Bureau for Labor Statistics latest Employment Situation release. Unemployment fell, but continues at historically high levels with 8.0 million women unemployed and looking for work,ⁱ and continues to disproportionately impact women and people of color.

Women were the majority (64.6 percent) of the 1.8 million employees added to non-farm payroll since mid-June, but women's payroll employment is still 6.9 million (9 percent) below February 2020, compared with men's jobs deficit of 6 million (7.8 percent below February).ⁱⁱ Women's employment on non-farm payrolls increased by 1.1 million between mid-June and mid-July 2020. Job gains were less than half of what were the previous month (4.8 million in total, of which 2.9 million went to women).

Women's payroll employment grew in almost all major sectors of the economy (Figure 1), but continues to be substantially below February's pre-COVID 19 levels (Figure 2). Difference in the distribution of women's and men's job growth largely reflect pre-crisis gender differences in the employment composition of industries (Table 1).

As in previous months, employment in Leisure and Hospitality added the largest number of jobs for both women and men, but this is also the sector where employment levels are still furthest below their February levels. Women's employment is still 2.3 million below what it was in February, at just 74 percent of its level in February.ⁱⁱⁱ Other sectors where women's employment is still substantially below pre-COVID levels are Education and Health Services (still down 1.3 million jobs for women), Professional and Business Services (down by 794,000 jobs), Government (down by 665,000 jobs), and Retail (down by 593,000 jobs; Figure 2).

Child Day Care Services added 45,000 jobs, but overall employment in this sector is still at just 79 percent of its February level. The slow recovery of child care services, a sector that largely employs women, highlights the difficulties for many parents, and particularly mothers, in returning to employment as the economy reopens.^{iv}

Figure 1. Women Gained Jobs in almost all Major Sectors of the Economy but...

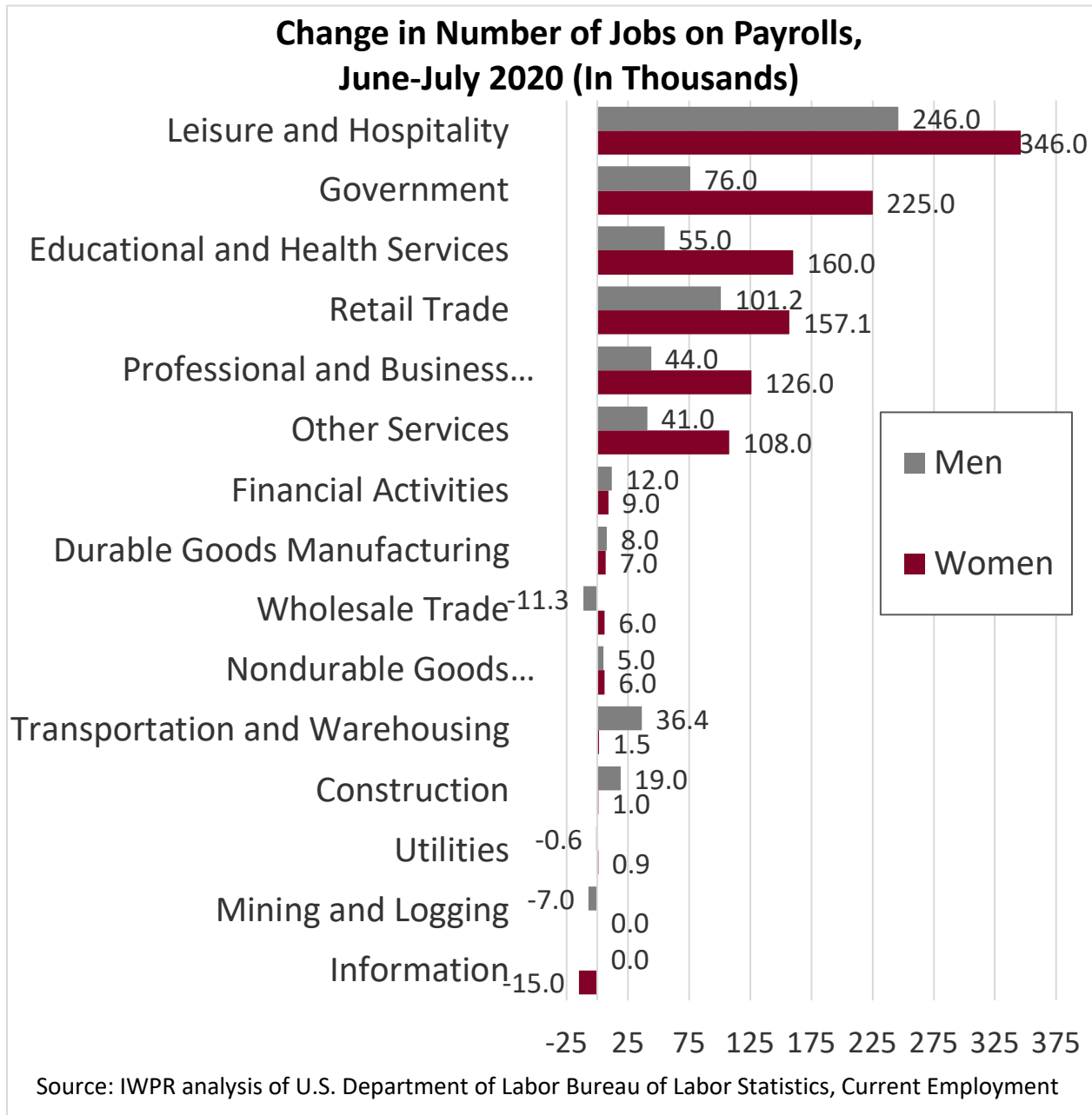


Figure 2. Women’s Employment Still Far Below Pre-COVID Levels

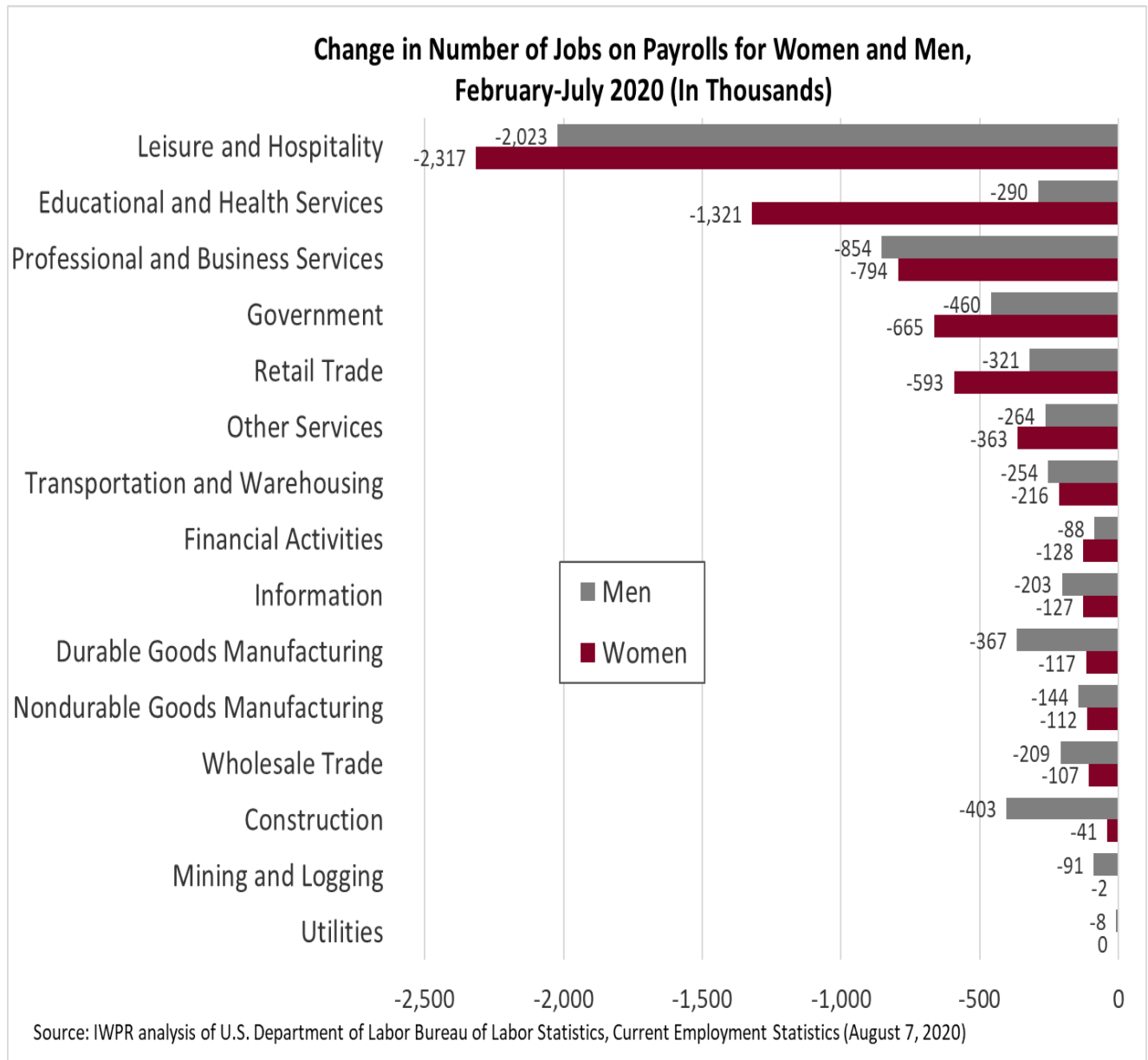


Table 1: Women and Men on Payroll by Sector of Industry since February 2020: Total Employment in Sector, Women’s Share of Employment, Women’s Share of Job Losses and Job Growth

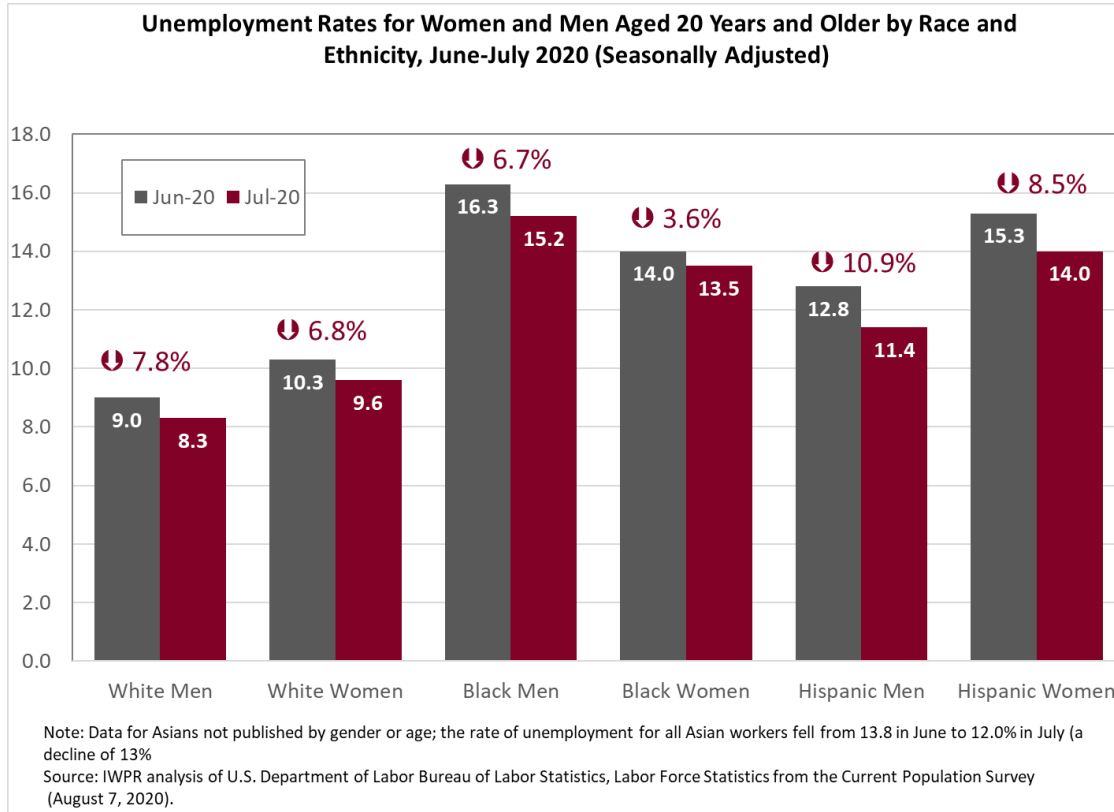
	Pre-COVID Number of workers on Pay Roll February, 2020 ('000)			Number of workers on Non- Farm Pay Roll July, 2020 ('000)			Since COVID Change February to July 2020 ('000)		
	Women	Men	Women (%)	Women	Men	Women (%)	Women	Men	Women (%)
Mining and Logging	95	619	13.3%	93	528	15.0%	(2)	(91)	2.2%
Construction	994	6,645	13.0%	953	6,242	13.2%	(41)	(403)	9.2%
Durable Goods Manufacturing	1,957	6,101	24.3%	1,840	5,734	24.3%	(117)	(367)	24.2%
Nondurable Goods Manufacturing	1,723	3,071	35.9%	1,611	2,927	35.5%	(112)	(144)	43.8%
Wholesale Trade	1,787	4,147	30.1%	1,681	3,938	29.9%	(107)	(209)	33.8%
Retail Trade	7,767	7,905	49.6%	7,175	7,584	48.6%	(593)	(321)	64.9%
Transportation and Warehousing	1,469	4,210	25.9%	1,253	3,955	24.1%	(216)	(254)	45.9%
Utilities	133	413.3	24.3%	133	405	24.7%	(0)	(8)	2.4%
Information	1,149	1,745	39.7%	1,022	1,542	39.9%	(127)	(203)	38.5%
Financial Activities	5,000	3,845	56.5%	4,872	3,757	56.5%	(128)	(88)	59.3%
Professional and Business Services	9,897	11,653	45.9%	9,103	10,799	45.7%	(794)	(854)	48.2%
Educational and Health Services	19,027	5,559	77.4%	17,706	5,269	77.1%	(1,321)	(290)	82.0%
Leisure and Hospitality	8,995	7,872	53.3%	6,678	5,849	53.3%	(2,317)	(2,023)	53.4%
Other Services	3,155	2,786	53.1%	2,792	2,522	52.5%	(363)	(264)	57.9%
Government	13,143	9,602	57.8%	12,478	9,142	57.7%	(665)	(460)	59.1%
Total on Payroll	76,291	76,173	50.2%	69,389	70,193	49.7%	(6,902)	(5,980)	53.6%

Source: IWPR analysis of U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics (July 2, 2020)

Unemployment Fell for Women of the Largest Racial and Ethnic Groups but Remains Historically High

The rate of unemployment declined for both women and men since mid-June but remains at historically high levels. One in ten women (10.5 percent) ages 20 and older and slightly fewer than one in ten men (9.4 percent) were unemployed and actively looked for work in July. Altogether The rate of unemployment is higher for White women compared to White men (9.6 and 8.3 percent respectively) and Hispanic women to Hispanic men (14.0 and 11.4 percent respectively). Black women’s rate is 13.5 percent, and Black men’s 15.2 percent (Figure 3). The rate of unemployment for Asian workers age 20 and older fell to 12.0 percent (data not published by gender).

Figure 3: Unemployment has Fallen, but still at Double-Digit Levels for all but White Men



Notes: Racial groups are exclusive; Hispanics may be of any race. Unemployment data for Asian workers or workers of other ethnic and racial backgrounds are not published by gender. Source: IWPR analysis of U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey (June 5, 2020).

The rate of unemployment does not capture anyone who has given up looking for work, and hence may undercount true levels of unemployment. The rate of labor force participation rate counts anyone who is employed or actively looking for work; for both women (and men it is still substantially lower than it was in February, suggesting that a substantial number of people may have given up looking for work).

Unemployment for Young Women ages 20 to 24 is Almost Double the Rate for Older Women

Younger women are still less established in the labor market and are much more likely to be impacted by unemployment. Unemployment is highest for women ages 20 to 24, at 18.8 percent the rate is almost twice as high as for women ages 25 to 54 (9.5%) and women ages 55 and older (9.6 percent). Unemployment among women ages 16 to 19 saw the biggest month-to-month decline, from 22.8 to 15.7 percent. The severity of the crisis can be seen when comparing the rate of unemployment for young women ages 20-24 between July this year and July 2019. This an age group which includes many recent college graduates or students looking for summer jobs to fund themselves through college. In July 2019, the rate of unemployment for women in this age group was 5.9 percent; now it is more than three times as high.^v

ⁱ Women workers ages 16 and older; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (August 7, 2020). Table A-10. Selected unemployment indicators, seasonally adjusted <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t10.htm>.


ⁱⁱ IWPR analysis based on U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics (August 7, 2020), Series CES0000000001- Total Payroll; CES0000000010.

ⁱⁱⁱ IWPR analysis based on BLS Current Employment Statistics, not shown elsewhere.

^{iv} IWPR analysis based on Table B1- Employees on nonfarm payrolls by industry sector and selected industry detail, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Economic News Release (August 7, 2020) <<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t17.htm>>.

^v U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (Aug 7, 2020) Table A 10; see note 1 above.

This IWPR Quick Figure was prepared by Ariane Hegewisch and Chandra Childers.



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