

IWPR # Q083

June 2020

Women Gain Disproportionately Fewer Jobs in May, and Face Disproportionately Higher Job Losses since February

As the Economy Starts to Grow Again, Job Growth and Unemployment Continue to Differ Strongly by Gender, Race, and Ethnicity

As the economy has started to add jobs again in May, strong gender differences remain. The U.S. Bureau of Labor's [June Employment Situation Release](#) shows a 2.5 million increase in nonfarm payroll employment; of these fewer than half, 45.6 percent or 1.1 million jobs, went to women. Overall, the number of workers on payroll is still 19.6 million below its pre-COVID lock-down level in February 2020. Job losses have disproportionately impacted women. In February, women were 50.2 percent of workers on payroll, but they are 55.9 percent of those who lost jobs since February (Table 1).

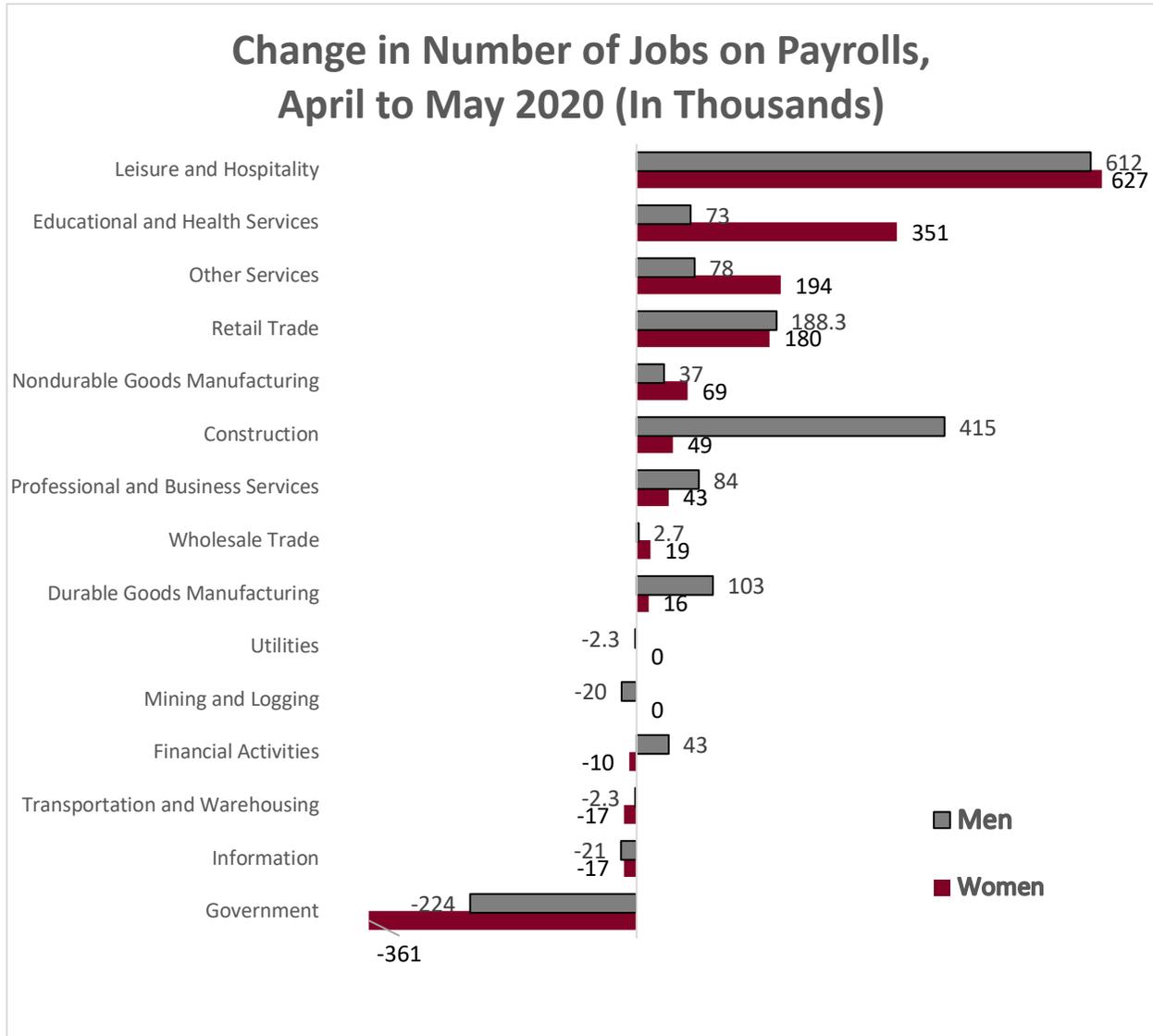
Job growth in May has been strongest in the Leisure and Hospitality sector for both women and men, with the sector adding a total of 1.2 million workers to payroll. Other sectors with strong growth for women are Education and Health Services, Other Services, and Retail Trades (Figure 1). Men also saw strong job growth in Construction, as well as in Retail Trades and Durable Goods Manufacturing.

Yet, not all sectors added jobs. Almost 600,000 jobs were lost in the government sector; women's job losses of 361,000 accounts for 61.8 percent of these losses, somewhat above women's pre-COVID share of employment in the sector (of 57.9 percent; Table 1). Jobs in the government sector typically come with benefits such as health insurance, retirement funds, and paid sick leave; such benefits are much less common in Leisure and Hospitality, Retail Trade, and Other Services, where employment is growing again. Women also suffered employment losses in Information, Transportation and Warehousing, and Financial Activities (where men gained 43,000 jobs; Figure 1).

Recovery varies strongly by subsectors. In retail, Building Material and Garden Supply Stores (33 percent female in February) and Food and Beverage Stores (50 percent female) are at the same level of employment they were in February, and General Merchandise Stores (58 percent female) are at 97 percent of February levels, while employment in Clothing Accessories Stores (72 percent female) is still at less than half of its February level, despite some growth during May.¹

Another sign of the halting recovery is employment growth in Child Care Centers, a sub-sector with an almost exclusively female workforce (97 percent female in February). Employment in Child Care Centers grew by 44,000 jobs in May, a 7 percent increase since April, although employment continues to be below what it was, at just 68.6 percent of where they were in February.

Figure 1. In May, the Economy Added Jobs in Several Sectors but Job Losses Continue in the Government Sector



Employment Levels Still Far Below Where They Were Pre-COVID

Overall, employment levels in all major sectors continued to be substantially lower in May than they were in February, including close to 4 million fewer jobs for women in Hospitality and Leisure, close to 2 million fewer jobs in Education and Health, and over one million fewer jobs in both Retail Trades and Professional and Business Services (Figure 2). Gender differences in job losses to some extent reflect occupational and sector segregation; women are much more likely than men to work in service sector occupations which have seen the largest job losses during the pandemic. Yet, in almost all sectors, women’s job losses are larger than one would expect just from the sectoral distribution of employment (IWPR calculation based on Table 1).

Figure 2: Employment Levels Continue to be Substantially Lower Than in Pre-COVID in February, More So for Women Than Men

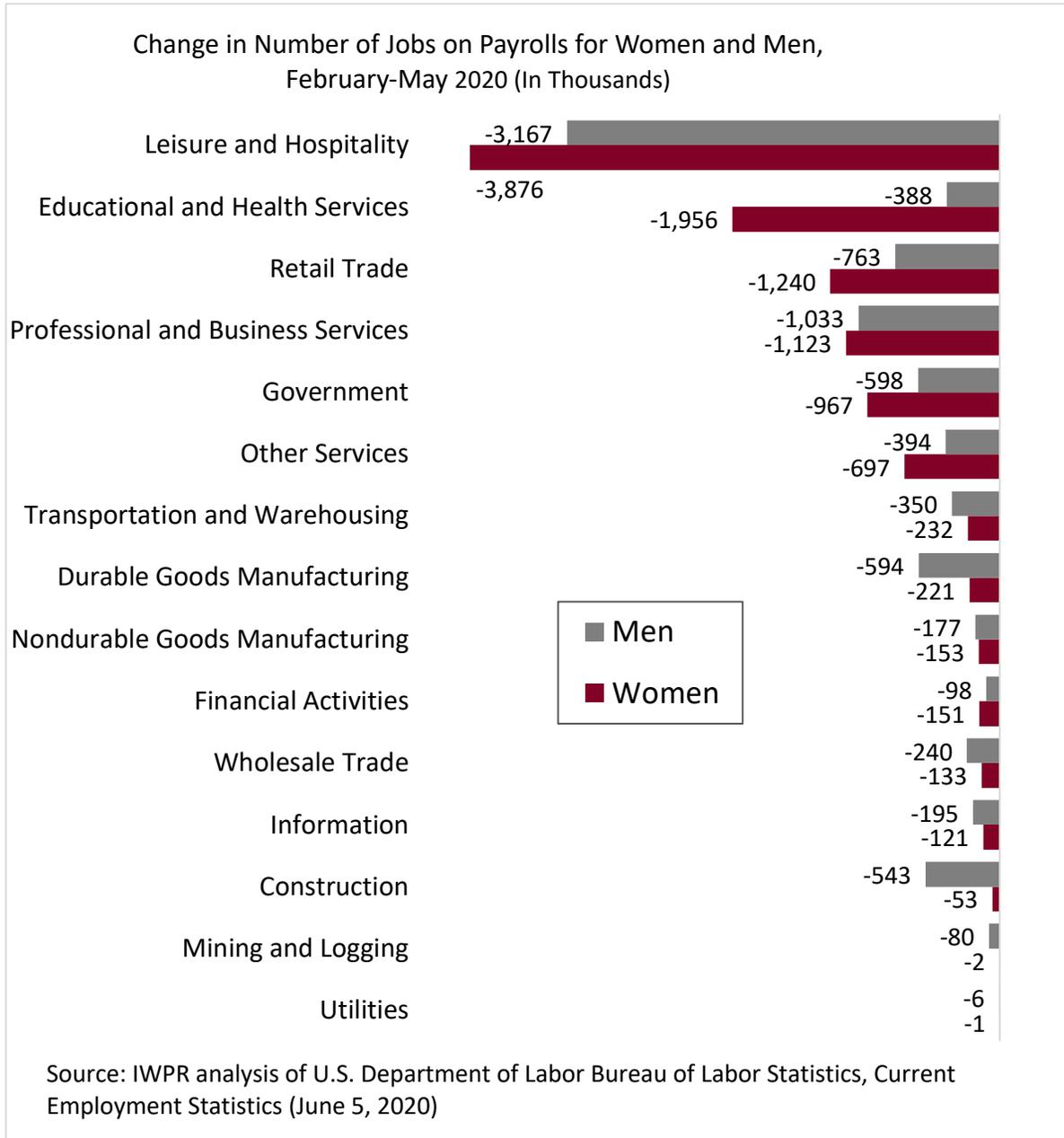


Table 1: Women and Men on Payroll by Industry Sector Since February 2020: Total Employment in Sector, Women’s Share of Employment, Women’s Share of Job Losses and Job Growth

| | Pre-COVID Lock Down | | | Change Last Month | | | Change Since COVID Lockdown | | |
|------------------------------------|--|---------------|--------------|---------------------------------|--------------|--------------|------------------------------------|----------------|--------------|
| | Number of workers on Pay Roll February 2020 ('000) | | | Change April to May 2020 ('000) | | | Change February to May 2020 ('000) | | |
| | Women | Men | Women (%) | Women | Men | Women (%) | Women | Men | Women (%) |
| Mining and Logging | 95 | 622 | 13.2% | - | (20) | 0.0% | (2) | (80) | 2.4% |
| Construction | 996 | 6,650 | 13.0% | 49 | 415 | 10.6% | (53) | (543) | 8.9% |
| Durable Goods Manufacturing | 1,956 | 6,108 | 24.3% | 16 | 103 | 13.4% | (221) | (594) | 27.1% |
| Nondurable Goods Manufacturing | 1,727 | 3,070 | 36.0% | 69 | 37 | 65.1% | (153) | (177) | 46.4% |
| Wholesale Trade | 1,790 | 4,147 | 30.1% | 19 | 3 | 87.4% | (133) | (240) | 35.6% |
| Retail Trade | 7,755 | 7,904 | 49.5% | 180 | 188 | 48.8% | (1,240) | (763) | 61.9% |
| Transportation and Warehousing | 1,465 | 4,217 | 25.8% | (17) | (2) | 87.9% | (232) | (350) | 39.8% |
| Utilities | 133 | 414 | 24.4% | - | (2) | 0.0% | (1) | (6) | 8.2% |
| Information | 1,152 | 1,746 | 39.8% | (17) | (21) | 44.7% | (121) | (195) | 38.3% |
| Financial Activities | 4,995 | 3,855 | 56.4% | (10) | 43 | 30.3% | (151) | (98) | 60.6% |
| Professional and Business Services | 9,898 | 11,671 | 45.9% | 43 | 84 | 33.9% | (1,123) | (1,033) | 52.1% |
| Educational and Health Services | 19,025 | 5,566 | 77.4% | 351 | 73 | 82.8% | (1,956) | (388) | 83.4% |
| Leisure and Hospitality | 8,993 | 7,880 | 53.3% | 627 | 612 | 50.6% | (3,876) | (3,167) | 55.0% |
| Other Services | 3,160 | 2,779 | 53.2% | 194 | 78 | 71.3% | (697) | (394) | 63.9% |
| Government | 13,180 | 9,595 | 57.9% | (361) | (224) | 61.7% | (967) | (598) | 61.8% |
| Total | 76,225 | 75,602 | 50.2% | 1,143 | 1,366 | 45.5% | (10,926) | (8,626) | 55.9% |

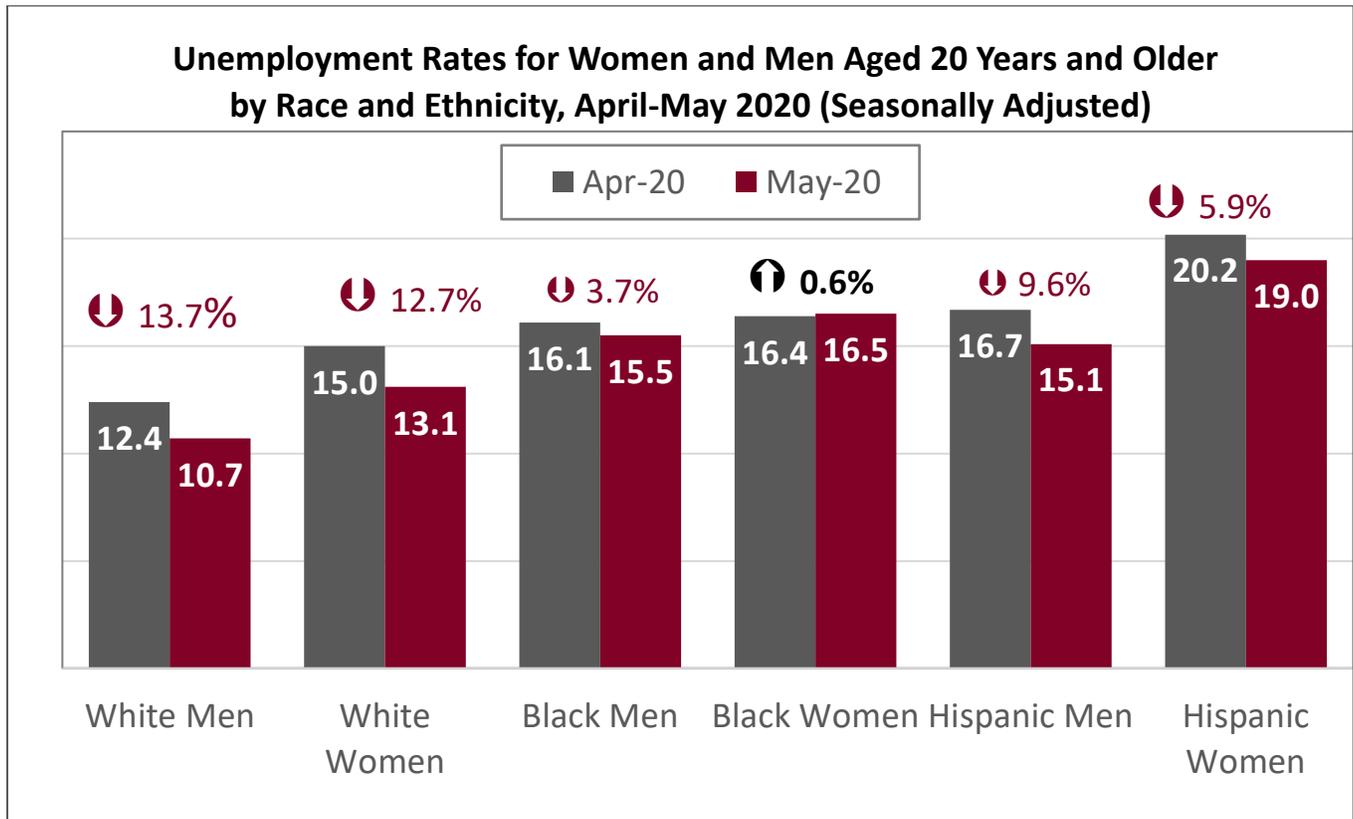
Source: IWPR analysis of U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics (June 5, 2020)

Unemployment Falls, But Substantial Racial and Ethnic Differences Persist

While still in double digits, the [rate of unemployment](#) fell for both women (to 13.9 percent) and men (to 11.6 percent) aged 20 and older; the rate counts those who actively looked for work in the previous four weeks and thus does not capture people who have given up hope on finding a job (but would take one if it was available).

The rate of unemployment is higher for women than men, whether White, Black, or Hispanic. Payroll data, which are based on a survey of employers, are not available by race or ethnicity. Data from the Current Population Survey, a household survey, highlight substantial differences in the impact of the crisis on women and men of the largest racial and ethnic groups. The rate of unemployment is highest for Hispanic women, at 19.0 percent, followed by Black women at 16.5 percent Black men at 15.5 percent, and Hispanic men at 15.1 percent. The rate of unemployment is lowest for White men, at 10.7 percent, and White women at 13.1 percentⁱⁱⁱ (Figure 3). White men and White women also saw the largest percentage change in unemployment.

Figure 3: In each of the Largest Racial/Ethnic Groups, Women’s Rates of Unemployment are higher than Men’s, and have Fallen or Changed less than Men’s



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).

Unemployment for Young Women and Men has Close to Tripled since February, and is still Rising for most Groups

[Unemployment](#) is particularly high among young people ages 16-19. With the exception of young White women and men, the rate of unemployment for Black and Hispanic teens was already in the double digits in February, prior to the COVID pandemic. In May, four in ten young Hispanic men (39.8%) and young Black women (38.4%) report not being able to find a job, as well as over a third of young Hispanic women (35.1%), three in ten young Black men (30.1%) and close to three in ten young White women (29.0%) and men (27.7%). Since April unemployment substantially decreased for young White women, and marginally for young Hispanic women, but saw a further increase for young Black women and White, Black, and Hispanic men.ⁱⁱⁱ

As the economy reopens and employment has started to grow, there are clear signs of continued and worsening inequality amid sharp differences in the rates of unemployment by gender, age, race, and ethnicity.

ⁱ IWPR calculations based on BLS data series CES6562440001; CES4244500001; CES4244600001; CES4244800001 CES4245100001; CES4245200001 (extracts, June 5, 2020).

ⁱⁱ ‘White’ includes ‘White Hispanic’ women and men; it is likely that the unemployment rate would be lower if restricted to White non-Hispanic workers only but sample sizes are insufficient for the U.S. Bureau of Labor to publish these data.

ⁱⁱⁱ IWPR calculations based BLS series LNS14000016; LNS14000017; LNS14000019; LNS14000020; LNS14000022; LNS14000023 (extracts, June 5, 2020).

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

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