

# Briefing Paper



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## Job Growth and Unemployment for Men and Women in Pennsylvania, 2007 to 2011

Since the beginning of the Great Recession in December of 2007 both women and men in Pennsylvania have experienced dramatic job losses and steep increases in unemployment. Almost three years after the official end of the recession, neither women's nor men's employment has reached pre-recession levels, but men's employment gain has been considerably stronger than women's. The gap between the number of women and men employed in Pennsylvania was wider at the end of 2011 than it was at the outset of the Great Recession. Women have not gained in the recovery relative to men.

The Great Recession added a new term to the national vocabulary: "mancession" as a response to the disproportionate job loss experienced by men compared with women. Nationally, men's job losses were close to three times as high as women's (in absolute terms). Yet "mancession" fits much less well for Pennsylvania. While job losses in Pennsylvania were also more severe for men than for women, the difference was much smaller and women lost only 20 percent fewer jobs than men. Pennsylvania's 2007–2009 recession should not be thought of as a "mancession."

A second term, however, is emerging since the end of the Great Recession and this applies well to Pennsylvania: "he-recovery," in response to the fact that men have regained a larger share of the jobs lost than women, and that during 2011 men's job growth has significantly outstripped job growth for women. This feature of the recovery is magnified in Pennsylvania. Women have proportionately regained fewer jobs than women nationally, and no jobs at all during the last year, while men in Pennsylvania have recovered a much greater share of job losses than men nationally. All net job gain in Pennsylvania during 2011 was experienced by men.

This briefing paper draws on pooled quarterly household survey data from the Current Population Survey to estimate changes in employment and unemployment for men and women. Pooled quarterly observations are presented as monthly averages.



**"Women's employment peaked later than men, fell for a more sustained number of quarters, and has recovered less of its pre-recession level."**

## Changes in Employment in Pennsylvania, 2007–2011

Job losses in Pennsylvania have been almost as severe for women as for men, both proportionately and absolutely. However, women's employment peaked later than men's, fell for a more sustained number of quarters, and has recovered less of its prerecession level. Total employment in Pennsylvania reached its highest point (during the 2000s), in the third quarter of 2008, then fell for each quarter until its lowest point in the last quarter of 2009 when it was 427,000 jobs below the peak. Each quarter since then saw positive gains in employment, and by the last quarter of 2011, the Pennsylvanian economy had regained 63 percent of all jobs that had been lost, considerably better than the national picture.

**Table 1. Employment in Pennsylvania: Monthly Averages in Each Quarter for Women, Men Aged 16 Years and Older in the Civilian Labor Force, 2007 to 2011**

Period	Women	Men	Total
<b>Q3-2007</b>	2,869,182	3,246,380*	6,115,563
<b>Q4-2007</b>	2,914,372	3,180,743	6,095,114
<b>Q1-2008</b>	2,888,535	3,090,699	5,979,234
<b>Q2-2008</b>	2,904,801	3,200,647	6,105,448
<b>Q3-2008</b>	2,923,917*	3,225,539	6,149,457*
<b>Q4-2008</b>	2,900,295	3,164,814	6,065,109
<b>Q1-2009</b>	2,830,285	3,051,766	5,882,051
<b>Q2-2009</b>	2,829,541	3,066,247	5,895,788
<b>Q3-2009</b>	2,791,120	3,043,177	5,834,298
<b>Q4-2009</b>	2,742,309	2,979,213**	5,721,521**
<b>Q1-2010</b>	2,765,221	3,006,359	5,771,580
<b>Q2-2010</b>	2,709,549**	3,051,768	5,761,316
<b>Q3-2010</b>	2,752,790	3,039,412	5,792,202
<b>Q4-2010</b>	2,772,481	3,060,878	5,833,359
<b>Q1-2011</b>	2,803,470	3,047,090	5,850,560
<b>Q2-2011</b>	2,744,239	3,073,497	5,817,736
<b>Q3-2011</b>	2,751,358	3,098,192	5,849,550
<b>Q4-2011</b>	2,735,245	3,144,949	5,880,194

Notes: \* Highest level of employment since 2000.

\*\* Lowest level of employment since beginning of National Recession.

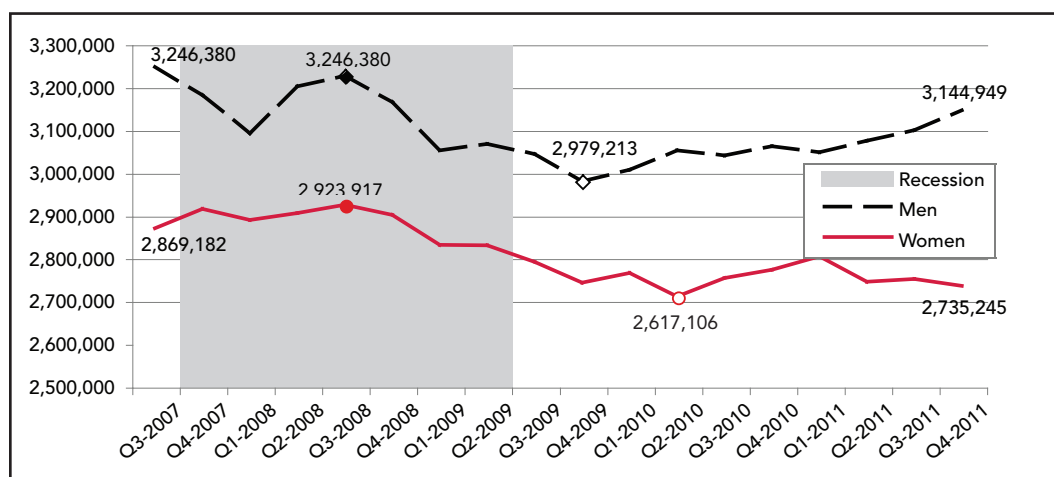
Source: IWPR analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey.

This overall change in employment masks separate fortunes for men and women, as is illustrated more clearly in Figure 1. Women's employment reached its highest level in the third quarter of 2008 and its lowest level in the second quarter of 2010. Subsequently, female employment rose for two quarters, but these gains were not sustained, with job losses outweighing job gains for women throughout 2011. By the end of 2011 women had only regained 12 percent of their total job losses of 214,370 since their highest employment in 2008. Moreover, in December 2011 women's jobs numbered only 25,696 more than at their lowest point, whereas men had gained 165,736 jobs since their lowest point.

Men's employment reached its highest point of the decade earlier, in the third quarter of 2007, just before the official start of the Great Recession. The high point of men's employment in the recession was in the third quarter of 2008 (same as for women). Men's employment then saw quarter-on-quarter losses until its lowest point in the last quarter of 2009,

after which men experienced quarter-on-quarter job growth for almost all of the next two years. By the end of 2011, men had regained 62 percent of the total male job loss of 267,170. During the 12 months of 2011, all net job gains were experienced by men, while women saw net job losses.

**Figure 1: Number of Women and Men Employed in Pennsylvania: Monthly Averages in Each Quarter for Women and Men Aged 16 Years and Older in the Civilian Labor Force, 2007 to 2011**



Source: IWPR analysis of Current Population Surveys, 2007-2011, showing monthly average for each quarter.

**“By the end of 2011 women had only regained 12 percent of their total job losses compared with men who had regained 62 percent of their recession job losses. During the 12 months of 2011, all net job gains were experienced by men, while women saw net job losses.”**

## Unemployment Rates for Men and Women in Pennsylvania

Both men’s and women’s unemployment rates rose sharply following the beginning of the Great Recession at the end of 2007. For most of the last four years men’s rate of unemployment was above women’s, but by the third quarter of 2011, male and female rates of unemployment had converged (Figure 2). The rate of unemployment reached its highest point at different times for women and men. Male unemployment peaked at 11.1 percent in the first quarter of 2010, more than double the rate of 4.6 percent in the third quarter of 2007 (Figure 2). Women’s rate of unemployment reached its highest point at 8.8 percent, in the third quarter of 2011, a year and a half after men’s rate peaked. Women’s peak unemployment rate was also more than double their 2007 rate of 4.3 percent (Figure 2). Single mothers experienced much higher rates of unemployment in Pennsylvania. At the end of 2011, 13.6 percent of unmarried women living with minor children were unemployed and looking for work compared with 6.9 percent for all women.

In the fourth quarter of 2011, the latest quarter for which data were analyzed, the rate of female unemployment was 6.9 percent and the rate of male unemployment 7.2 percent. The lower reported rate of unemployment for women may reflect a greater tendency for women to become discouraged and stop looking for jobs. Those who have not looked for jobs in the last month are not counted as officially unemployed. The reported rate of unemployment may fall either because an unemployed worker finds a job or because an unemployed worker gives up looking for a job. By the same token, the rate of unemployment may rise when someone who was jobless and had stopped seeking employment starts looking again. It is not uncommon to see unemployment rates rise when people perceive job prospects to be better because they then reenter the labor



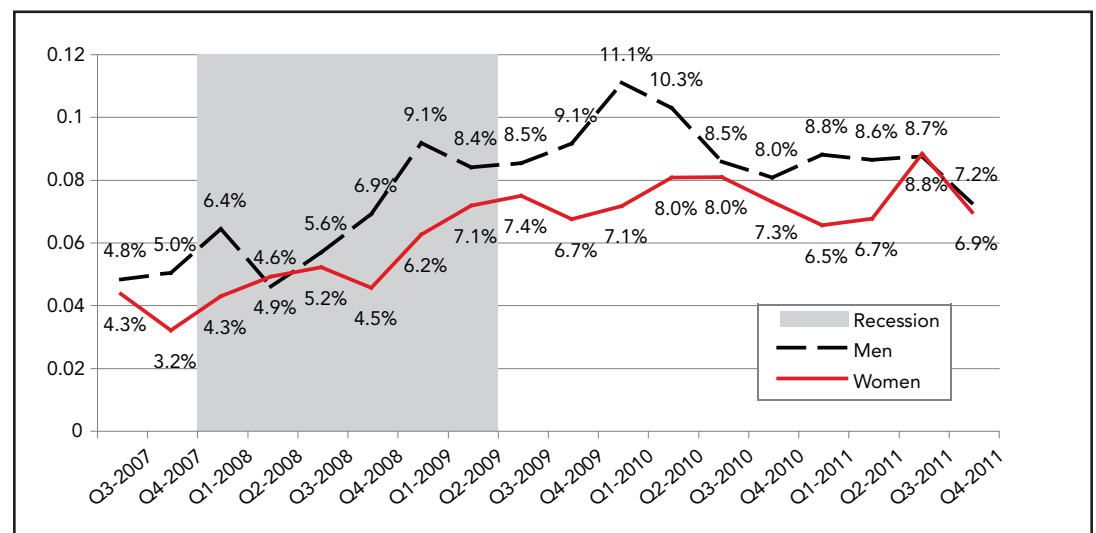
market and look for work. Finally, the unemployment rate may stay the same even though the number of employed people increases because of new entrants to the labor market, such as school leavers, college graduates or homemakers. Consequently, changes in the rate of unemployment alone may not tell the full story of the employment needs of the population.

During 2011, almost ten times as many women as men (158,600 and 16,500 respectively) left the labor force. This drop might be a reflection of a number of factors, such as differential rates of retirement or return to education between men and women, but might also be a result of different perceptions of employment prospects between men and women. As noted women may be more likely to give up looking

for work if they do not perceive jobs are available that will cover the costs of childcare and transportation that will meet their often complex schedule needs, especially when they have more than one child. Making childcare more affordable and available and ensuring that public transportation is convenient and affordable would go a long way toward easing women's job search.

Why are men doing better than women at this point in the recovery? One reason is that women are a disproportionate share of state and local government workers; those levels of government are still shedding jobs. From December 2010 to December 2011, 20,600 jobs were lost in Pennsylvania state and local government. Additional data show that women lost 60 percent of all jobs losses at the state and local level between June 2009 (when the recovery from the Great Recession officially began) to June 2012, the most recent data available (Fischer, Hartmann, and Logan 2012).

**Figure 2: Unemployment Rate for Women and Men Aged 16 Years and Older in Pennsylvania (Q4-2007 to Q4-2011)**



Source: IWPR analysis of Current Population Surveys, 2007-2011.

## Trends in Pennsylvania Compared with the United States

The Great Recession added a new term to the national vocabulary: “mancession” as a response to the disproportionate job loss experienced by men compared with women. Nationally, men’s job losses were close to three times as high as women’s (in absolute terms). Yet “mancession” fits much less well for Pennsylvania. While job losses in Pennsylvania were also more severe for men than for women, the difference was much smaller and women lost only 20 percent fewer jobs than men (Table 1). The main sectors of male job loss nationally, the construction industry and manufacturing, were less important as employers in Pennsylvania, partly as a consequence of earlier recessions which had destroyed many manufacturing jobs, and this limited male job losses in the current recession. Thus, Pennsylvania’s 2007-2009 recession should not be thought of as a “mancession.”

A second term, however, is emerging since the end of the Great Recession and this applies well to Pennsylvania: “he-covery,” in response to the fact that men have regained a larger share of the jobs lost than women, and that during the last year men’s job growth has significantly outstripped job growth for women. This feature of the recovery is magnified in Pennsylvania. Women have proportionately regained fewer jobs than women nationally, and no jobs at all during the last year, while men in Pennsylvania have recovered a much greater share of job losses than men nationally. All net job gain in Pennsylvania during 2011 was experienced by men (Table 2).

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**Table 2: Comparison of Employment Trends between Pennsylvania and the United States During and After the Great Recession**

	Pennsylvania		U.S.	
Recovery of total job loss recovered by end of 2011	Women:	12%	Women:	17%
	Men:	63%	Men:	43%
Women’s net jobs loss as a proportion of men’s net job loss (highest to lowest level of employment for each)	80.2%		36.5%	
Women’s net job gain as a proportion of total job gain in 2011	None (Q1-Q4 2011)		17.8% (Jan to Dec 2011)	
Female unemployment rate Q4- 2007	3.2%		4.7%	
Q4- 2011	6.9%		8.4%	
Male unemployment rate Q4- 2007	5.0%		4.9%	
Q4- 2011	7.2%		8.6%	
Female labor force participation	57.3% (Q4-2011)		59.6% (Nov. 2011)	
Male labor force participation	69.6% (Q4-2011)		73.4% (Nov. 2011)	

Source: IWPR analysis of BLS Current Population Surveys, 2007-2012.

The rates of unemployment in Pennsylvania for both men and women were below the corresponding national rates throughout the Great Recession and the subsequent recovery. But while nationally the rate of women’s unemployment has stayed substantially below men’s, in Pennsylvania rates converged during 2011.

## Need for Policy Action

Women are being left out of the employment recovery in Pennsylvania. It is essential that policy makers include the economic plight of women and their families in their programmatic responses to unemployment and job development in Pennsylvania.

- Workforce development is needed to ensure that women are able to benefit from new job growth on an equal footing with men.
- The state needs to ensure that women have access to affordable child care, full day kindergarten, and public transportation to aid in job retention.
- The state could look to the Affordable Care Act and the development of the State Health Insurance Exchange as opportunities for job creation for women, with new jobs related to the implementation of the exchange to be developed in administration and health care fields where women especially thrive.
- A review of training opportunities and educational counseling is called for to ensure that women are as likely as men to engage in training in growing occupations with family sustaining wages.
- Employers should be provided with training on best practices to recruit and retain women workers and ensure that equal employment opportunities and sexual harassment policies are enforced.
- The state could replicate the success of job creation initiatives through subsidized employment as was done with TANF emergency funds through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) in 2010; programs in Pennsylvania, such as Philadelphia Way to Work, used funds to subsidize wages up to \$13 an hour for 40 hours of work per week, specifically targeting TANF and SNAP beneficiaries as well as low-income parents with incomes up to 235% of the federal poverty line. These programs placed approximately 27,000 adults and youths in subsidized jobs.

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*For more information on Pennsylvania state efforts related to this work please contact Heather Arnet, CEO, Women and Girls Foundation, 412-434-4883 or visit [www.wgffa.org](http://www.wgffa.org). For information on the Institute for Women's Policy Research national work please visit [www.iwpr.org](http://www.iwpr.org) or contact Ariane Hegewisch at 202-785-5100.*



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The Women and Girls Foundation of Southwest Pennsylvania (WGF) is an independent, community-based foundation serving Southwest Pennsylvania. Our vision is to create a region where women and girls have equal access, opportunity, and influence in all aspects of their public and private lives. To realize this vision, the organization's active mission is to achieve gender equity by investing in public policy initiatives that will result in long-term systemic change impacting women and girls lives for generations to come. Website: