

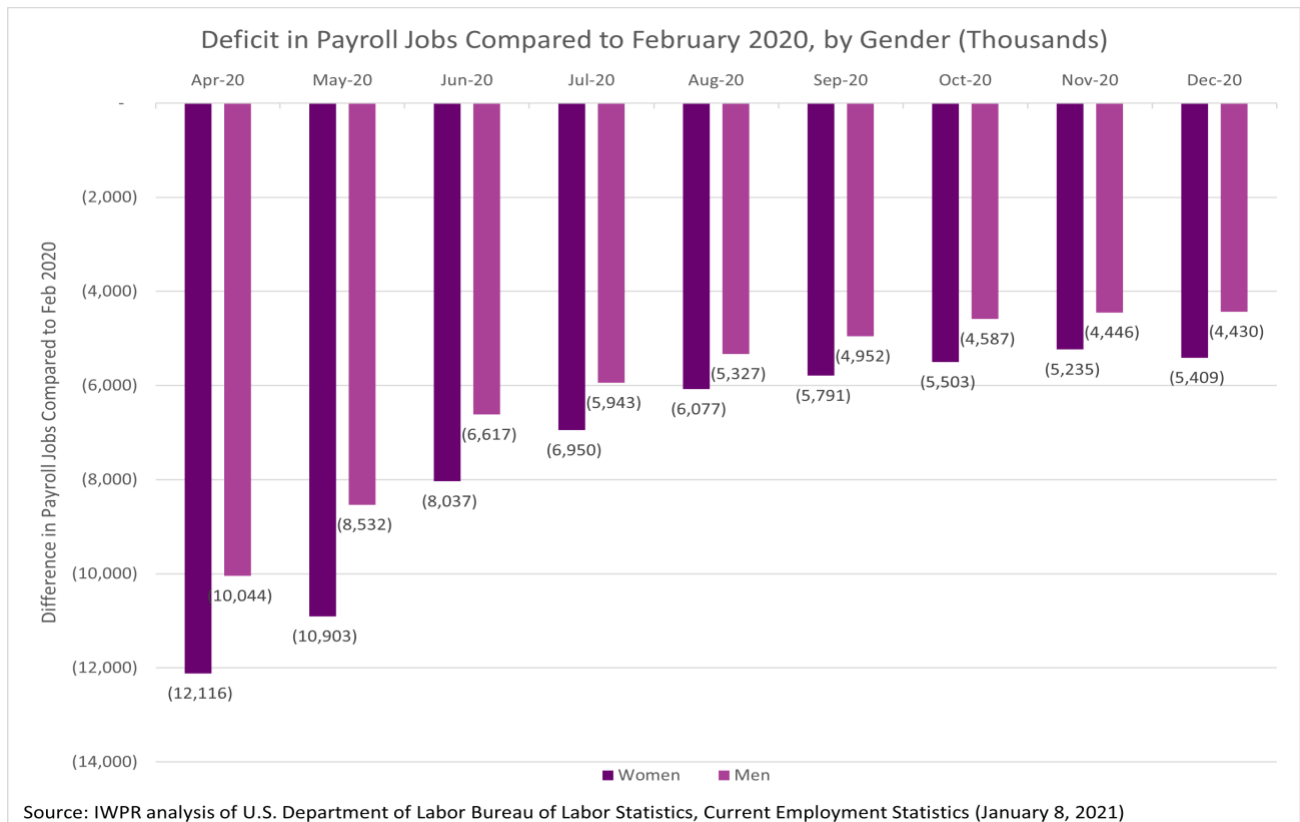
Quick Figure #Q094

January 2021

Women and the COVID-19 Pandemic: Five Charts and a Table Tracking the 2020 Shecession by Race and Gender

The COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating for the U.S. economy, and women, particularly women of color, have been hit especially hard. 2020 ended with women's numbers of jobs on payroll being still much further below their February levels than men's (Figure 1).

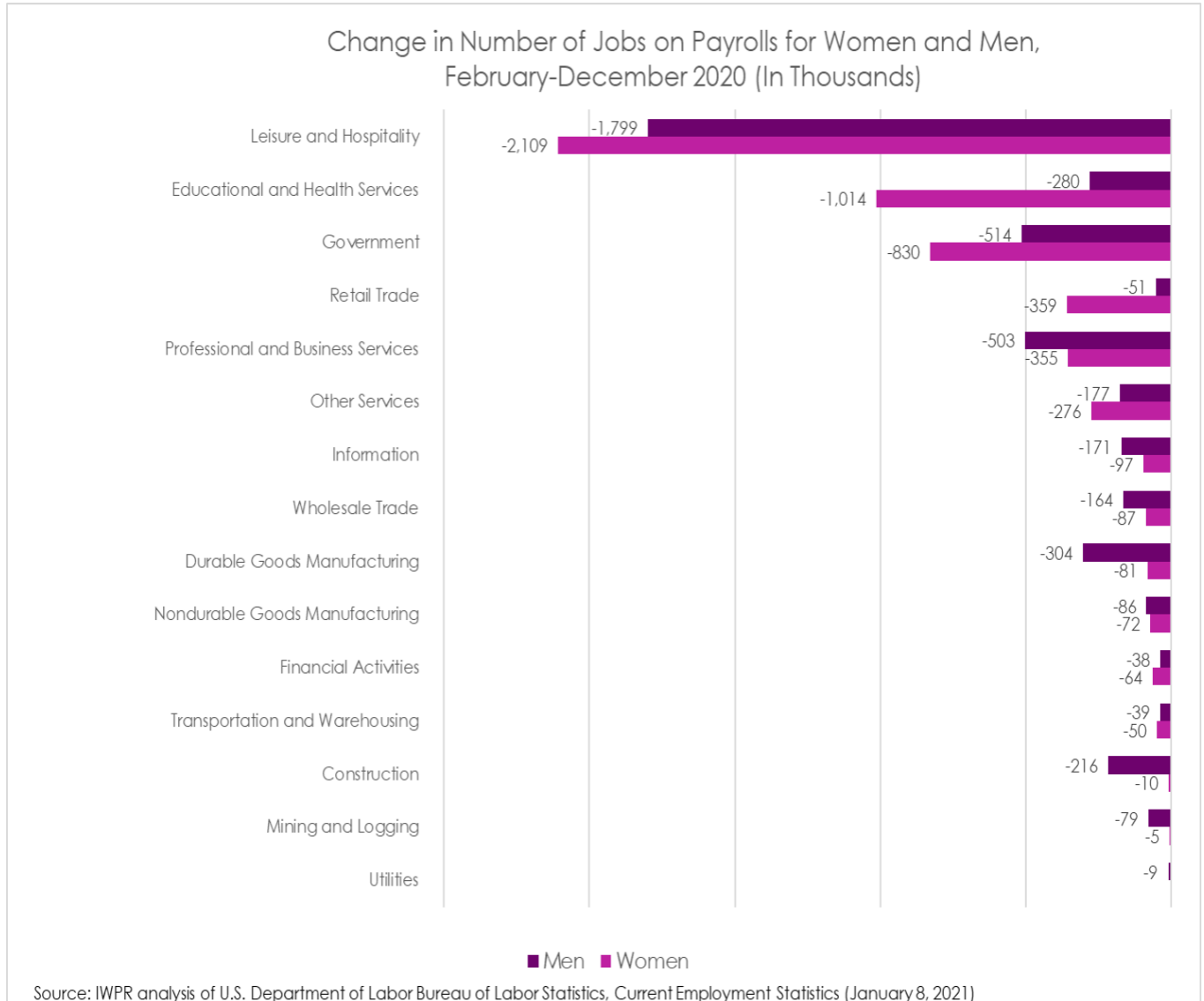
Figure 1: In December 2020, Women's Jobs on Payroll were still 5.4 million below their February Level, Men's were 4.4 million below.



Women's jobs on payroll have declined more than men's because women are more likely than men to work in the sectors that have been hardest hit by the pandemic. Job losses have been particularly severe in Leisure and Hospitality, Education and Health Services, Government Services, and Retail (Figure 2).

Women were the majority of workers in those sectors before the pandemic, and they were the majority of workers on payroll who lost their jobs since the pandemic began.

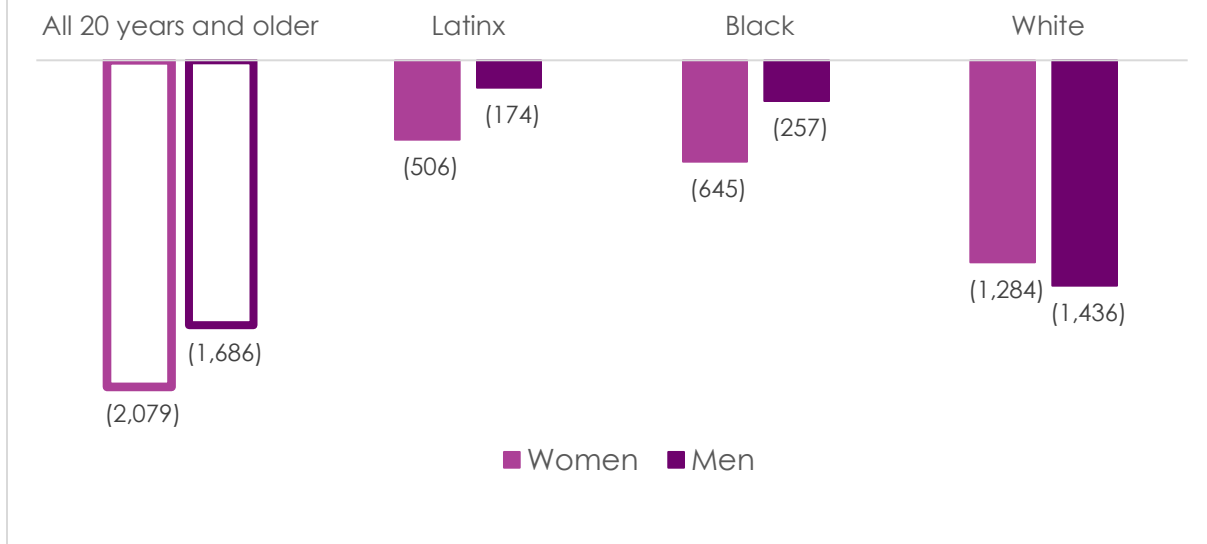
Figure 2: Women’s Decline in Jobs on Payroll Outnumbers Men’s in the Sectors with the Largest Job Losses between February and December 2020



Three hundred ninety three thousand more adult women than men left the workforce between February and December 2020. The civilian labor force includes anyone who is employed or who actively looked for work during the previous four weeks. The number of women in the labor force fell by 2.1 million, compared with a decline of 1.7 million for men. Black women’s labor force decline has been particularly strong: 645,000 fewer Black women were in the labor force in February than in December; Latinas’ numbers in the labor force declined by 506,000, and White women’s by 1.3 million (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Between February and December 2020, 393,000 more Women than Men Left the Civilian Labor Force

Change in Civilian Labor Force, Adults, February to December 2020 (in thousands)

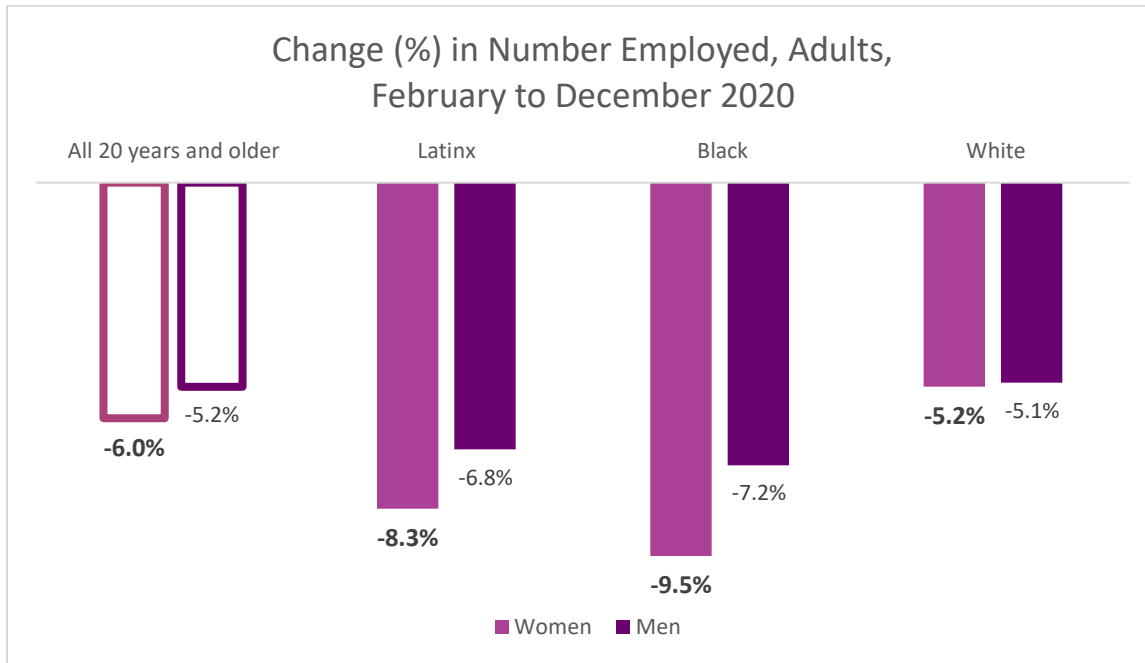


Notes: Adults 20 years and older; data for Asians and other race/ethnic groups shown are not published by gender.
Source: IWPR analysis based on U.S. BLS Data Tools Series Downloads, extracted January 8, 2021

The number of employed Black women dropped by 9.5 percent between February and December 2020, and of Latinas by 8.3 percent, a much steeper change than for White women (5.2 percent), and highlighting the particularly pernicious impact of the recession on women of color.

(Continued on next page)

Figure 4: Black Women’s Employment Has Fallen by Almost Ten Percent Between February and December 2020



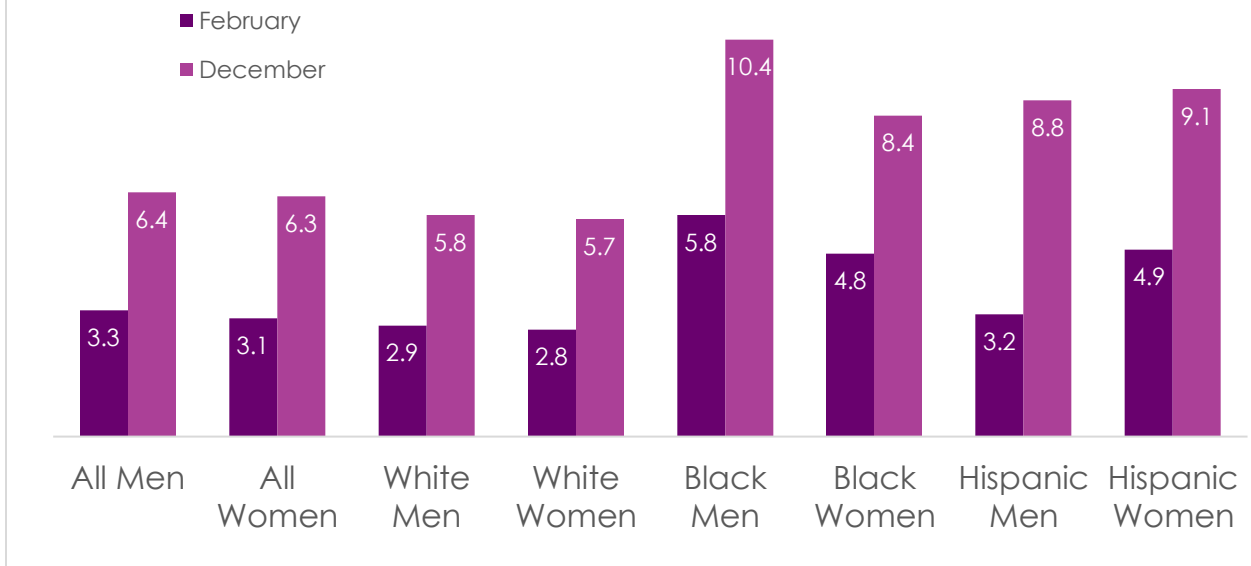
Notes and source: See Figure 3.

These differences in the impact of COVID-19 on women and men of different racial and ethnic groups are also very clear when looking at the rate of unemployment. The rate of unemployment measures only those who have not given up hope of finding a job and were actively looking during the previous four weeks. At 6.3 percent, the rate of unemployment is still more than twice as high for women ages 20 and older than it was in February 2020 (3.1 percent, Figure 5). Unlike earlier in the COVID-19 pandemic, unemployment is marginally lower for women than it is for men. Given that women lost more jobs than men, this higher rate of unemployment is likely a reflection of some women having become discouraged in their job search or having had to leave work and active job search because of difficulties with child care and the remote schooling.

Job losses have been particularly severe in high customer contact services sector jobs, jobs which disproportionately employed Black and Latina women, and where remote work is much less likely to be an option than in many professional service jobs, which employ a higher share of White women. These trends translate into sharp differences in the rates of unemployment; the likelihood of being unemployed is much higher for Latinas and Black women (9.1 and 8.4 percent respectively) than it is for White women (5.7 percent, Figure 5).

Figure 5: The Rate of Unemployment of Women Ages 20 and Older in December was more than Double the Rate in February 2020; Latinas have the Highest Rate of Unemployment among Women

Unemployment Rates for Women and Men Aged 20 Years and Older by Race and Ethnicity, February-December 2020 (Seasonally Adjusted)



Note: Data for Asian workers not published by gender. In December, the rate of unemployment for all Asian workers was 5.9% in December

Source: IWPR analysis of U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey (January 8, 2021).

While overall women are half of all claimants for state level unemployment benefits (50.2 percent in November- the most recently published data), their share of unemployment insurance claimants varies widely between states. In the majority of states, women outnumber men among claimants. In Vermont, three in four claimants were women (72.8 percent), compared to just slightly more than a third in Wyoming (Table 1), a reflection of different local economies and the different distribution of women and men across sectors and industries.

Table 1. Women Outnumber Men among Unemployment Insurance Claimants in the Majority of States

Women’s Share of State Unemployment Insurance Claimants by State, November 2020

State	Women’s Share of State UI Claims	State	Women’s Share of State UI Claims	State	Women’s Share of State UI Claims

VT	72.8%	CA	51.8%	WA	46.8%
AL	57.1%	MO	51.7%	ID	46.7%
MS	57.1%	NM	51.1%	NE	46.4%
NH	56.1%	MI	50.9%	OK	46.2%
DC	55.9%	KY	50.6%	MT	46.1%
CT	54.9%	NY	50.6%	KS	45.9%
TN	54.8%	WI	50.6%	MN	45.6%
MD	54.6%	HI	50.3%	AK	45.2%
ME	54.5%	IN	50.2%	TX	45.0%
NJ	54.3%	AZ	49.9%	AR	44.8%
SC	54.3%	OR*	49.8%	UT	43.2%
MA	53.2%	IA	48.6%	GA*	42.0%
VA	53.2%	IL	48.6%	WV	42.0%
NC	52.7%	CO	48.5%	ND	35.1%
RI	52.5%	DE	48.3%	WY	33.7%
LA	52.4%	SD	48.1%		
FL	52.3%	NV	47.8%		
PA	52.2%	OH	47.4%	TOTAL US	50.2%

Notes: *Women are the majority of claimants who provided information about their gender.

Source: IWPR compilation based on U.S. Department of Labor Office of Unemployment Insurance. 2020.

"Characteristics of Unemployment Insurance Claimants."

<<https://oui.doleta.gov/unemploy/content/chariu2020/2020Nov.html>> (Accessed Jan 2021).