

OUT OF WORK, TAKING ON CARE: YOUNG WOMEN FACE MOUNTING CHALLENGES IN THE "SHE-CESSION"

By Shengwei Sun, PhD

Longstanding inequities in access to quality jobs and affordable care, along with uneven caregiving responsibilities, create unique challenges for young women of color during this prolonged pandemic recession.

- Young women (aged 16 to 24) were more likely to lose their job than young men and workers of other age groups in the initial months of the pandemic recession, largely due to their concentration in industries and occupations that have been hit the hardest by the economic downturn.
- Among young women, Black and Latina women were more likely to be unemployed than white women during the pandemic. Racial disparities in unemployment rates that existed prior to the pandemic recession worsened in its initial months.
- The share of young women who are neither employed nor enrolled in school increased between 2019 and 2020, with the highest percentages observed among young Native American, Black, and Latina women.
- Young women across racial and ethnic groups are more likely than their male peers to identify care responsibilities as the main reason for not working for pay during the pandemic. The shares of young Black and Latina women not working for pay due to care responsibilities (13.1 percent and 11.5 percent, respectively) are the highest among young adults.
- More than one out of ten young Black women are single mothers, compounding their struggle to balance work and care needs.





The COVID-19 pandemic has caused one of the worst economic downturns since the Great Depression. In April 2020, the official unemployment rate for workers aged 16 and older spiked to 14.7 percent, its highest level since historical unemployment data first became available in 1948 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020). Women have experienced a disproportionate share of job losses since the start of the pandemic recession, a phenomenon referred to as the “she-cession.” Between February and May, 11.3 million women lost their jobs compared with 9.2 million men (Hegewisch, Barsi, and

Hayes 2020). Women’s outsized job losses are a direct result of the substantial impact of the pandemic on female-dominated industries like hospitality, education, entertainment, and even some parts of the health care system. As the pandemic continues, more women than men are dropping out of the workforce—due in no small part to the lack of a care infrastructure.

The current recession exacerbates existing inequalities. Higher-income earners have recovered most of the jobs lost since April, while low-wage workers experience persistent net loss (Long et al. 2020). Young, less educated, non-white, and women workers—who are overrepresented in low-wage jobs—experienced the largest job losses (Cortes and Forsythe 2020). These groups of workers and their families tend to lack the necessary savings to fall back on.

Young women of color are especially vulnerable to the pandemic recession, but public policies have failed to fully address their needs. Since the beginning of the pandemic recession, research has documented how declines in employment have disproportionately affected young workers (Aaronson and Alba 2020; Gould and Kassa 2020; Rho, Cai, and Fremstad 2020). Few studies have examined racial and gender disparities among young workers through an intersectional lens or scrutinized the root causes of these disparities.

This briefing paper seeks to address these gaps by asking: How has the pandemic recession affected young women of color compared with other workers? What kind of targeted policy responses would help young women of color, not just to survive the pandemic recession but to thrive in the long run? The briefing paper compares the labor market trends before and at the height of the pandemic recession among various demographic groups, and then investigates the sources of disparities in engaging in paid work by gender and race/ethnicity among young workers, focusing in particular on young women’s concentration in service industries and occupations and the uneven allocation of unpaid care responsibilities. Analyses are based on two data sources: Current Population Survey Basic Monthly data and the U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey.

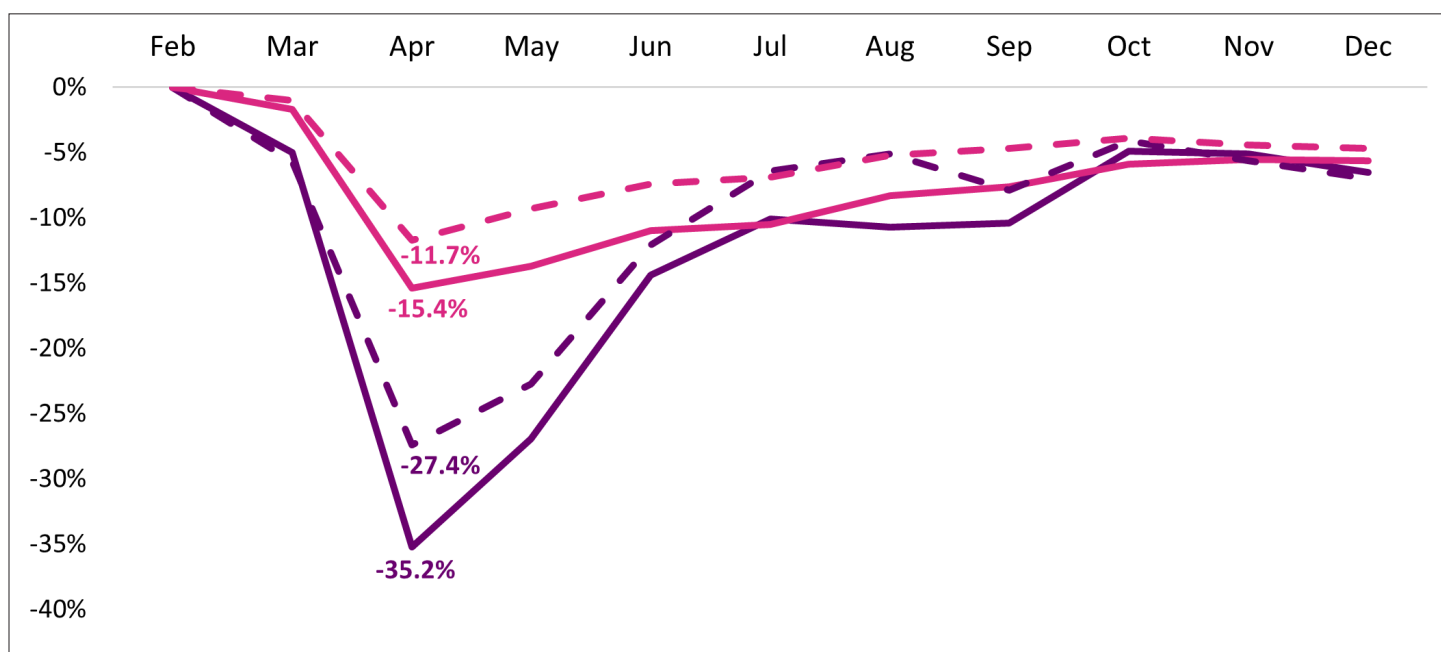
Findings from this briefing paper point to how concentration in low-wage service jobs, racial disparities in family and community resources, and gender disparities in care responsibilities create unique challenges for young women of color. The brief concludes with policy recommendations for tackling these issues.

LABOR MARKET TRENDS

Young Women Were the Most Likely to Lose their Jobs and Become Unemployed in the Initial Months of the COVID-19 Recession

The pandemic has led millions of young workers to lose their jobs, especially during its early months. Between February and April 2020, young women lost 35.2 percent of the jobs they held in February – representing more than 3.3 million jobs (Figure 1). Their percentage decline in employment exceeded young men's (27.4 percent, or 2.6 million jobs) and prime-age workers' (15.4 percent for women and 11.7 percent for men, or 10.1 million and 8.6 million jobs, respectively) during the same period. Although employment levels started to climb back after April, young women's recovery lagged behind young men's until November 2020.

FIGURE 1. Percentage change in employment since February 2020, by gender and age



Notes: For each gender by age group, employment percentage change in each month is calculated by subtracting the employment level in February 2020 from each month's employment level; this result is then divided by the employment level in February 2020 to obtain the percentage change.

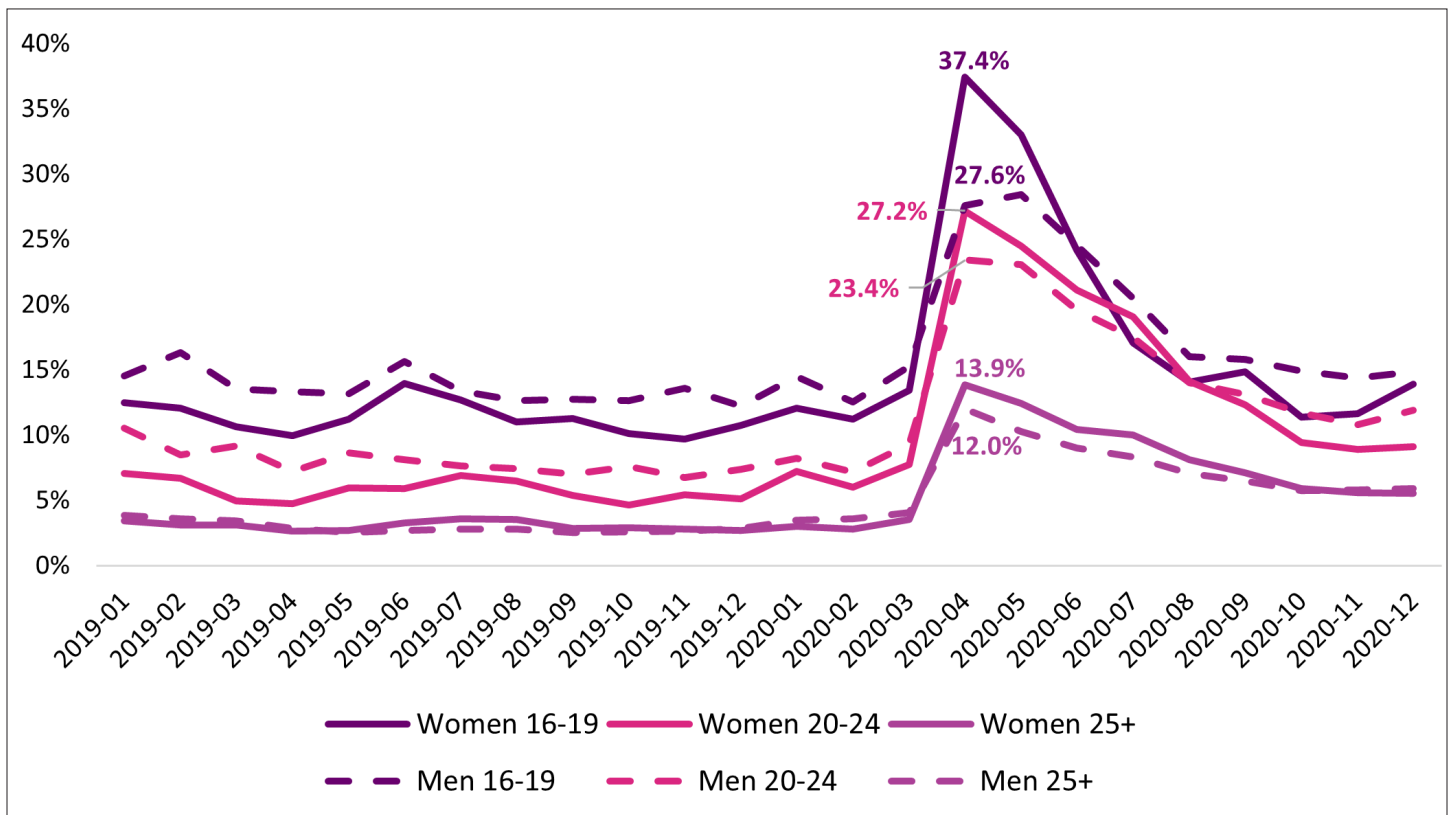
Source: IWPR analysis of non-seasonally adjusted labor force statistics from the Current Population Survey (<https://data.bls.gov/PDQWeb/In>).

The large number of jobs lost by women reversed the gender gap in unemployment. While before the pandemic young women had lower unemployment levels than their male peers, the unemployment rate for young women peaked at a higher point than for young men (Figure 2).¹ In April 2020, the youngest women (ages 16 to 19) had an unemployment rate of 37.4 percent, compared with 27.6 percent for their male counterparts.² In the same month, 27.2 percent of young women and 23.4 percent of young men aged 20 to 24 were unemployed.

¹ The unemployment rate represents the number of people who are not working and looking for work as a percentage of the labor force (which includes both the employed and unemployed).

² Due to the relatively small sample size for this group in the monthly Current Population Survey, the actual percentages might differ slightly from those presented here.

FIGURE 2. Monthly unemployment rates by gender and age, 2019-2020



Notes: Results are weighted and not seasonally adjusted.

Source: IWPR analysis of the basic monthly Current Population Survey microdata (January 2019-December 2020; IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org).

Racial/Ethnic Disparity in Unemployment Rates Worsened in the Initial Months of the Pandemic Recession

Women aged 25 and older generally have much lower unemployment rates than younger women. In both age groups, white women consistently have had lower unemployment rates than women of color. These gaps widened further during the pandemic, with women of color bearing the brunt of the economic crisis (Figure 3).

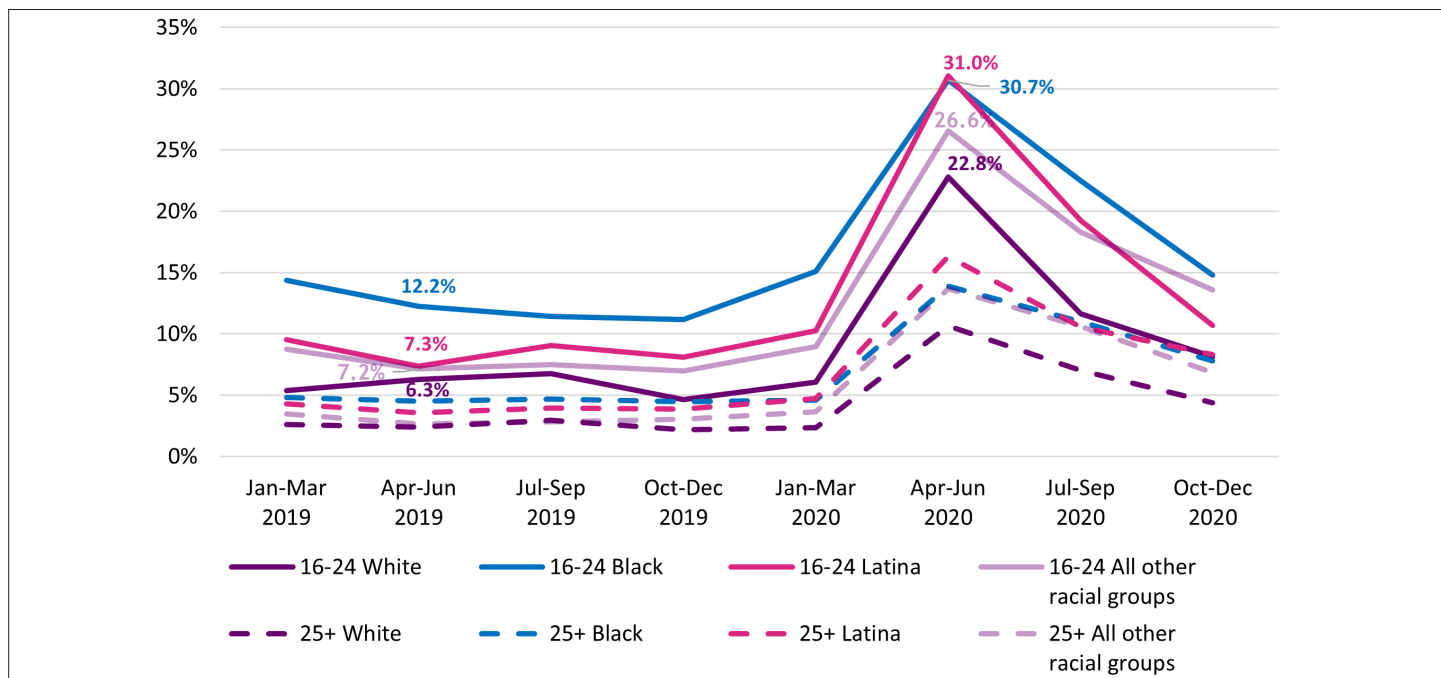
The following analyses compare labor market trends between April to June in 2019 with the same period in 2020 to gauge the impact of the pandemic recession.³ In the second quarter of 2019, 6.3 percent of young white women were unemployed, 5.9 percentage points lower than that of young Black women, and 1.0 percentage point lower than that of young Latina women. In



³ Quarterly data instead of monthly data are used for this part of the analysis to improve the reliability of the estimates by allowing for sufficient sample sizes among young women of each racial/ethnic group. These estimates are not seasonally adjusted, and comparisons are limited to the same quarter in 2019 and 2020.

the second quarter of 2020, unemployment rates for both young Black and Latina women surged past 30.0 percent, widening the unemployment gap between these groups and young white women to 7.9 and 8.2 percentage points, respectively. The gap in unemployment rates between young women from “all other racial groups” and young white women increased from 0.9 to 3.8 percentage points during the same period (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3. Unemployment rates among women, by race/ethnicity and age, 2019-2020



Notes: Results are weighted and not seasonally adjusted. “All other racial groups” include those who identify as multiracial, Asian and Pacific Islander, American Indian and Alaska Native, and other races not shown separately. Sample sizes are too small to analyze data separately for individual racial/ethnic groups in the “all other racial groups.”

Source: IWPR analysis of the basic monthly Current Population Survey microdata (January 2019-December 2020; IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org).

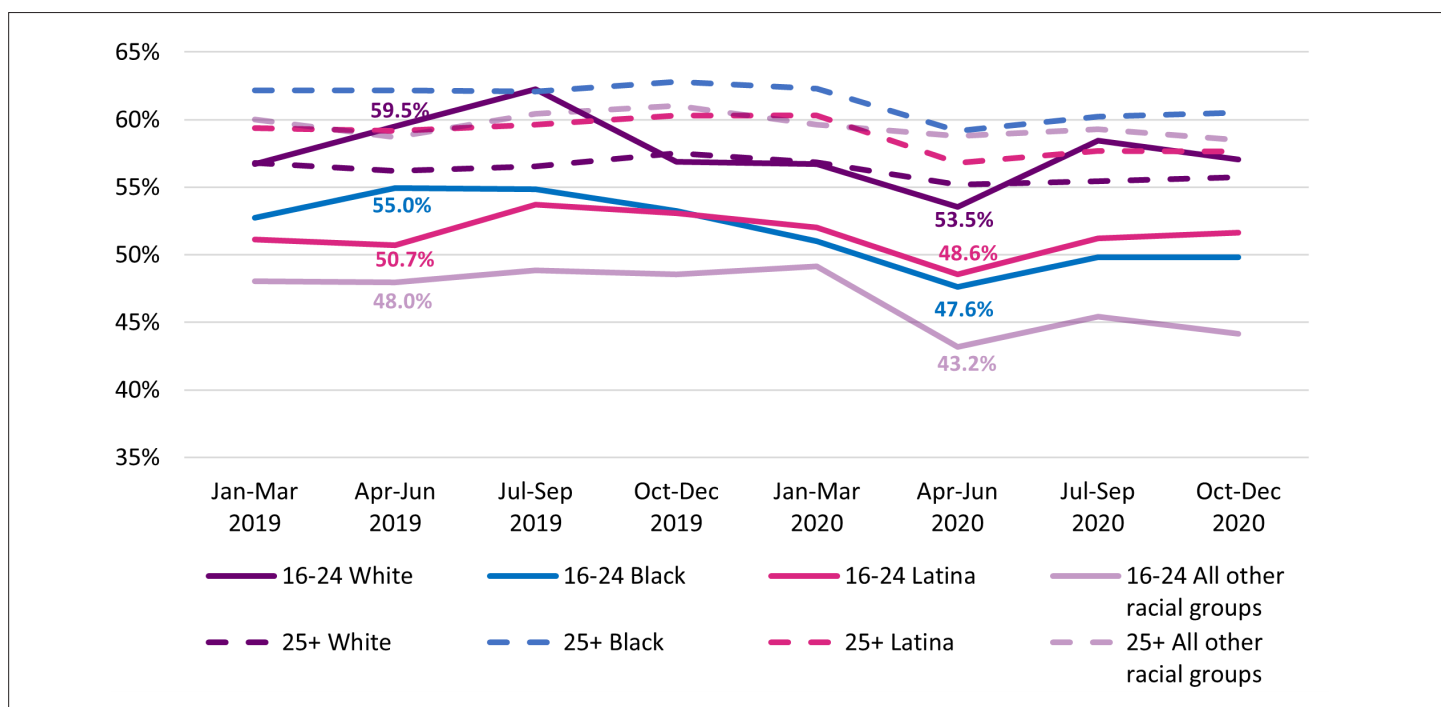
Young Black Women Experienced the Largest Decline in Labor Force Participation



Labor market distress can manifest in the form of both a rise in unemployment (among those in the labor force) and a fall in labor force participation.⁴ Labor force participation rates declined for women across racial/ethnic groups immediately after the pandemic recession began in March 2020; and they failed to recover to 2019 levels in the following months (Figure 4). Among both young women and women aged 25 and older, Black women experienced the largest decline in labor force participation rates between April to June 2019 and the same period in 2020.

⁴ The labor force participation rate is the proportion of individuals in the population who are employed plus those who are unemployed but are either actively looking for work or on temporary layoff.

FIGURE 4. Labor force participation rates among women, by race/ethnicity and age, 2019-2020



Notes: Results are weighted and not seasonally adjusted. "All other racial groups" include those who identify as multiracial, Asian and Pacific Islander, American Indian and Alaska Native, and other races not shown separately. Sample sizes are too small to analyze data separately for individual racial/ethnic groups in the "all other racial groups."

Source: IWPR analysis of the basic monthly Current Population Survey microdata (January 2019-December 2020; IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org).

Decreases in labor force participation among youth and young adults could reflect a confluence of demand and supply factors. On the demand side, youth and young adults have less education and work experience than prime-age workers, making it more difficult for them to secure employment during economic recessions when jobs are scarce. On the supply side, many are leaving the labor force as they become discouraged by the difficult labor market; some might be forced out of the labor force due to increased care responsibilities at home, while others are going back to school. Prior research finds that economic downturns tend to stimulate college enrollment rates (Long 2014). One reason is that the opportunity cost of attending college—the cost of forgoing work experiences while in school—drops tremendously during recessions. Unemployed workers may also view education as an alternative way to stay afloat during uncertain times while gaining new skills to improve their job prospects.

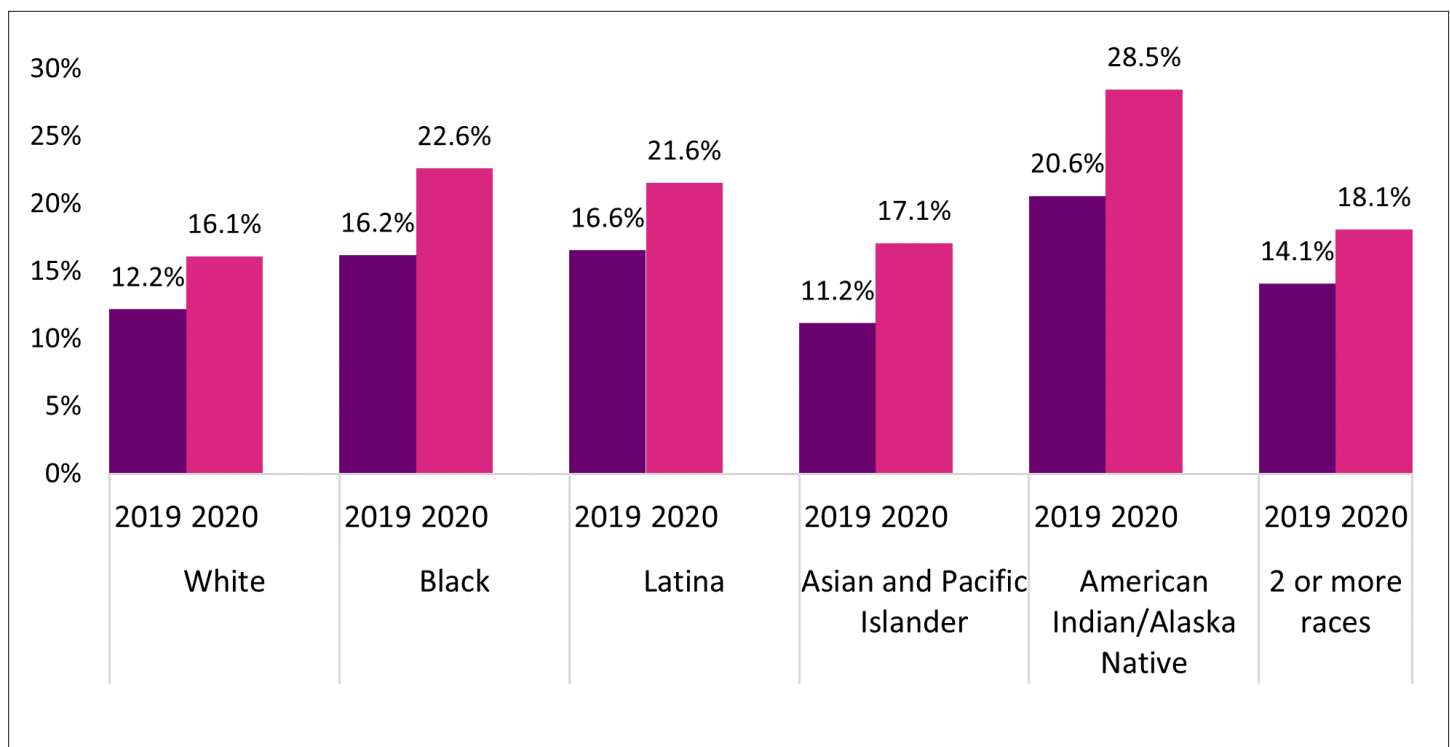
The Share of Young Women Neither Employed nor Enrolled in School Increased in the COVID Recession, Especially among Native American, Black, and Latina Women

While some youth and young adults who left the labor force are pursuing education, others—referred to as "opportunity youth"—are neither employed nor in school of any kind. Being disconnected from both school and the labor market as a young person diminishes one's opportunity to build skills and professional relationships, which is correlated with lower lifetime employment and earnings. The number of opportunity youth in the United States declined after the Great Recession from 14.7 percent in 2010 to 11.2 percent in 2018 (Lewis 2020). The pandemic-fueled recession disrupted the progress made in the past decade. A recent report estimated that the number of opportunity youth could swell to almost one-quarter of all young people (Lewis 2020).

Figure 5 shows that the share of young women neither employed nor enrolled in school increased across racial/ethnic groups between 2019 and 2020. Native American women had the highest disconnection rates in both years (20.6 percent in 2019 and 28.5 percent in 2020), followed by Black and Latina women. In 2020, more than one in four young Native American women and more than one in five young Black and Latina women were disconnected from both employment and school. The gap between young white women and all other racial and ethnic groups increased during the recession.

Racial disparities in disconnection rates reflect racial disparities in family and community resources. Young people from the most disadvantaged communities with the fewest resources are at the highest risk of being disconnected from both school and employment. Opportunity youth in the United States are nearly twice as likely to live in poverty and more than three times as likely to have a disability of some kind as their connected peers; they are also more likely to reside in “rural opportunity deserts” characterized by long-term, deep poverty (Lewis 2020). Further, a long history of racial residential segregation and unequal distribution of resources and services translates into a lack of educational resources and higher poverty rates for communities of color.

FIGURE 5. Percentages of young women (aged 16-24) not enrolled in school or employed, March-December 2019 and 2020



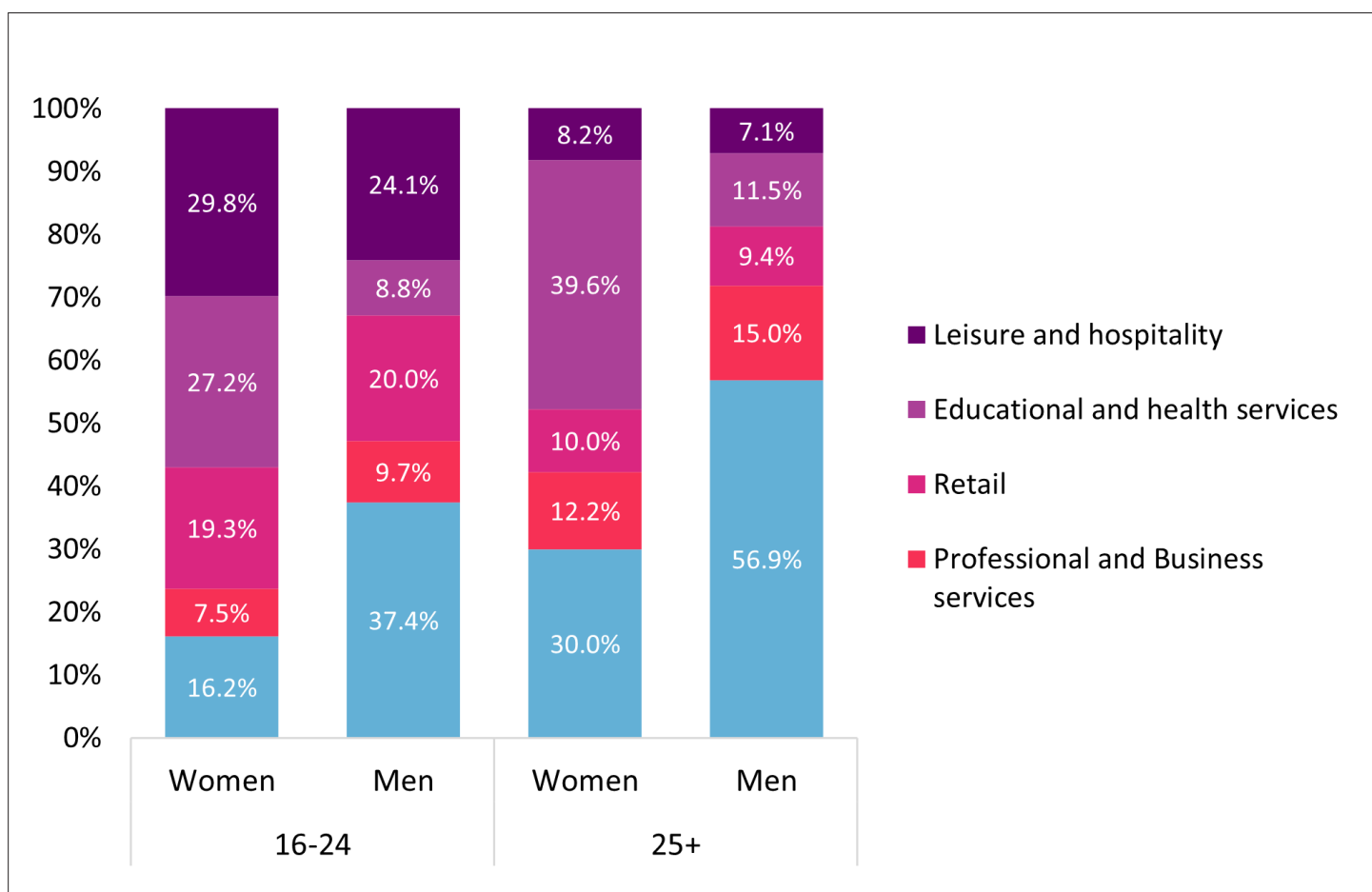
Notes: Results are weighted. This analysis focuses on March-December since the COVID-19 recession started in March 2020. Source: IWPR analysis of the basic monthly Current Population Survey microdata (March-December 2019 and March-December 2020; IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org).

SOURCES OF DISPARITIES: CONCENTRATION IN THE HARDEST-HIT SECTORS

Young Women Are More Likely Than Any Other Group to Be Employed in Industries and Occupations That Lost the Most Jobs in the COVID-19 Recession

Since the pandemic's onset, the disproportionate job losses among women have resulted directly from the substantial impact on female-dominated industries like leisure and hospitality, education, and some parts of the health care system. Figure 6 presents the share of workers—within each gender and age group—employed in four industries hardest-hit by the COVID-19 shutdowns compared with other industries.⁵

FIGURE 6. Percentages of workers employed in industries with the largest job losses during the COVID recession, by gender and age, 2019



Notes: Results are weighted.

Source: IWPR analysis of the basic monthly Current Population Survey microdata (January-December 2019; IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org).

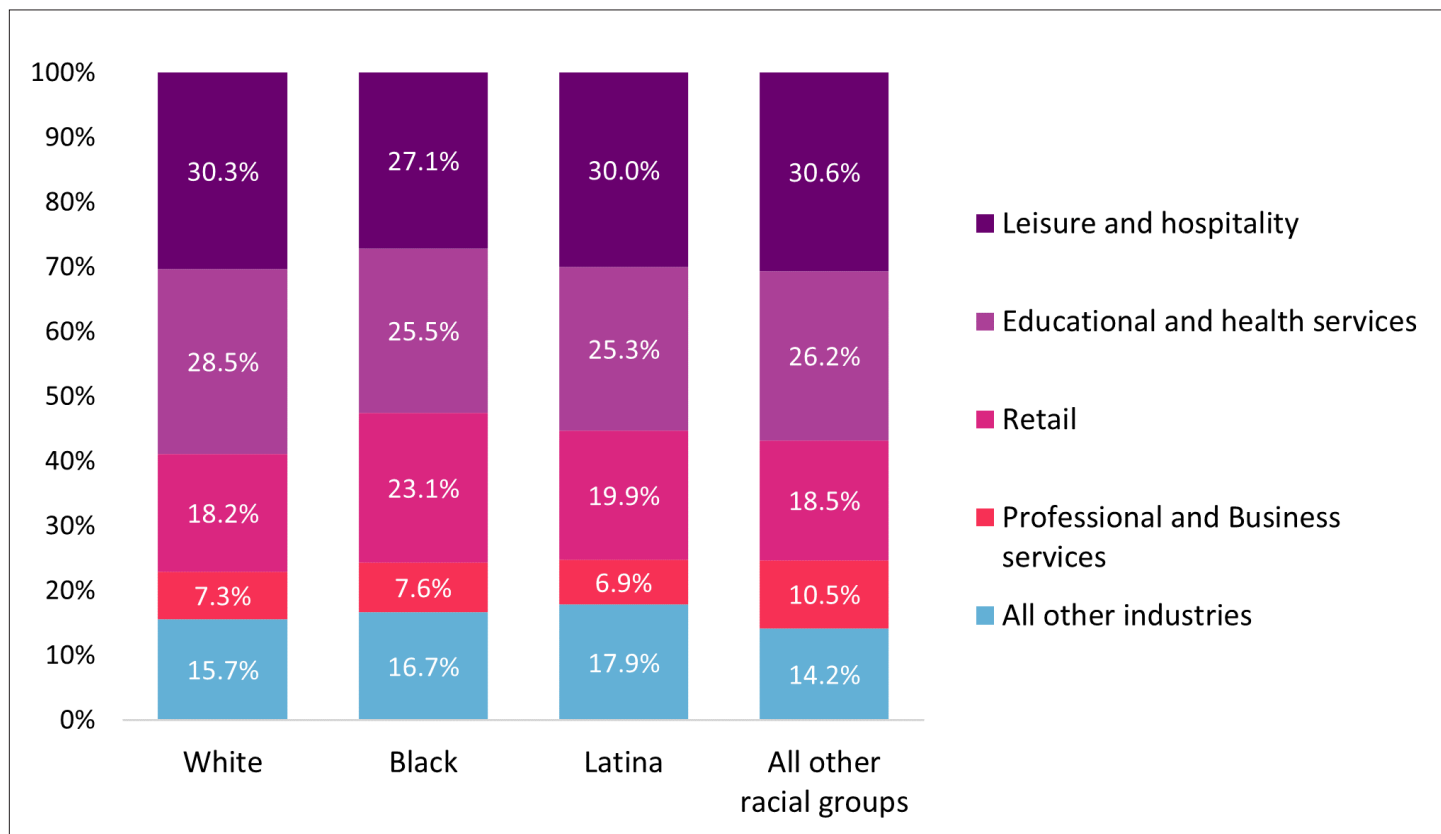
Young women ages 16-24 were most likely to work in these four industries most affected by the COVID recession (83.8 percent), followed by women aged 25 and over (70.0 percent), young men (62.6 percent), and older men (43.1 percent).

⁵ From mid-March to mid-April 2020, 20.5 million jobs were lost, more than 70 percent of which belonged to four industries: 8.2 million job losses in leisure and hospitality, 2.6 million in educational and health services, 2.2 million in retail trade, and 2.2 million in professional and business services (Hegewisch, Barsi, and Hayes 2020).

Among the four industries most affected by the pandemic recession, the Leisure and Hospitality sector and the Retail Trade sector have lower average hourly earnings (\$16.8 and \$20.0, respectively) than the other two (\$27.8 for Educational and Health Services and \$34.2 for Professional and Business Services) in December 2019.⁶ Both young women and men were heavily concentrated in the former two sectors, where many jobs are low-wage and come with no health insurance, retirement benefits, or paid leave benefits. Unlike young men, young women were also heavily concentrated in Educational and Health Services, a female-dominated sector.

Compared to gender, the racial/ethnic disparities in industry distributions were less pronounced. Figure 7 presents the shares of young women within each major racial/ethnic group working in the four industries with the largest job losses at the height of the pandemic recession. Young white women were slightly more likely than others to find employment in educational and health services jobs. Young Black women were the most likely to be employed in the retail trade sector (Figure 7).

FIGURE 7. Percentages of young women (aged 16-24) employed in industries with the largest job losses during the COVID Recession, by race/ethnicity, 2019



Notes: Results are weighted. "All other racial groups" include those who identify as multiracial, Asian and Pacific Islander, American Indian and Alaska Native, and other races not shown separately. Sample sizes are too small to analyze data separately for individual racial/ethnic groups in the "all other racial groups."

Source: IWPR analysis of the basic monthly Current Population Survey microdata (January-December 2019; IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org).

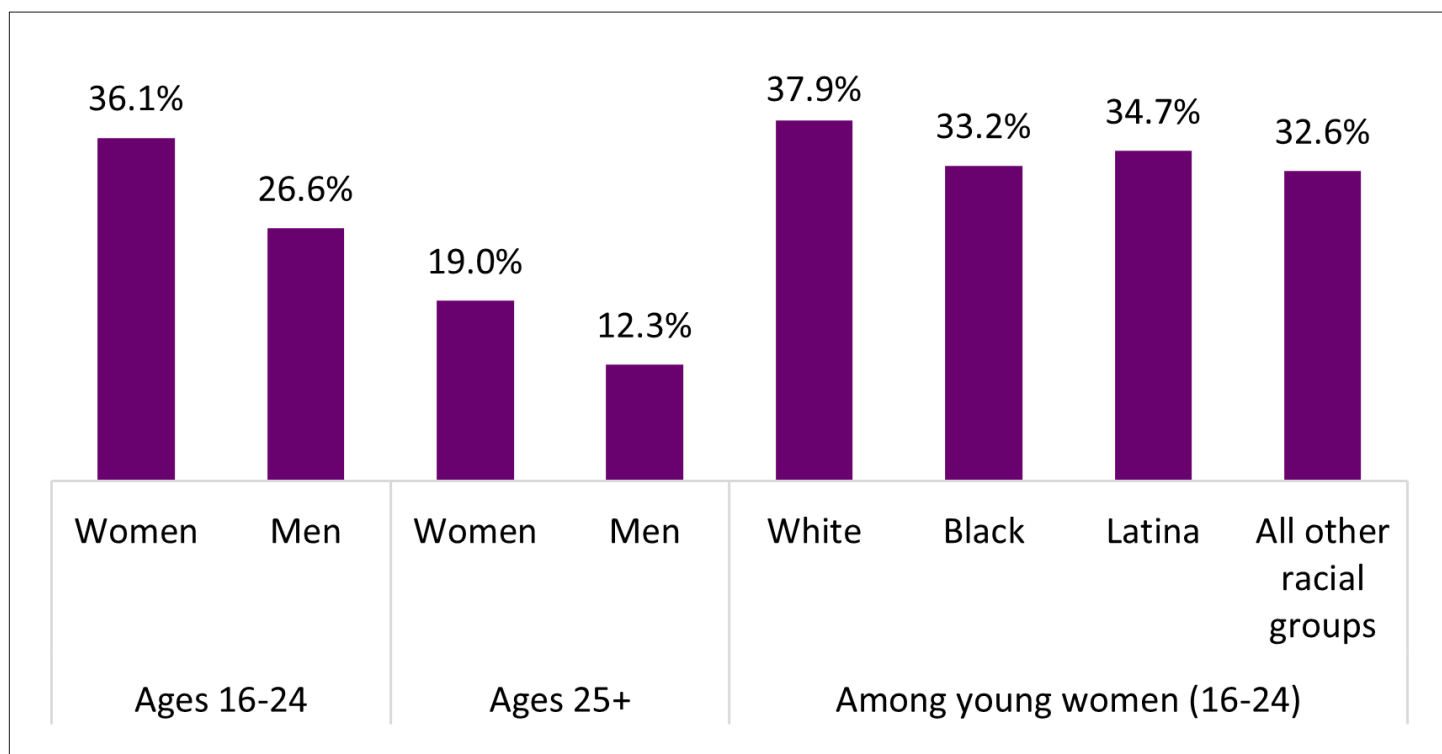
A similar pattern emerged when examining occupations. Service occupations experienced the largest job losses in the initial months of the pandemic, with 27.2 percent of service jobs shed between February and May (Gould and Kassa 2020). As Figure 8 shows, more than one in

⁶ See U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics "Industries at a Glance" (https://www.bls.gov/iag/tgs/iag_index_naics.htm).

three (36.1 percent) young women worked in service occupations in 2019, compared with about one in four (26.6 percent) young men, roughly one in five (19.0 percent) women over the age of 25, and slightly more than one in ten (12.3 percent) older men. Differences across racial/ethnic groups among young women were less pronounced. Among young women, white women had the highest share of employment in service occupations (37.9 percent), followed by Latina women (34.7 percent) and Black women (33.2 percent).

Taken together, these findings highlight how young women's position in the labor market renders them especially vulnerable to job losses induced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

FIGURE 8. Shares of workers employed in service occupations, by gender, age, and race/ethnicity, 2019



Notes: Results are weighted. "All other racial groups" include those who identify as multiracial, Asian and Pacific Islander, American Indian and Alaska Native, and other races not shown separately. Service occupations include Healthcare Support Occupations, Protective Service Occupations, Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations, Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations, and Personal Care and Service Occupations.

Source: IWPR analysis of the basic monthly Current Population Survey microdata (January-December 2019; IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org).

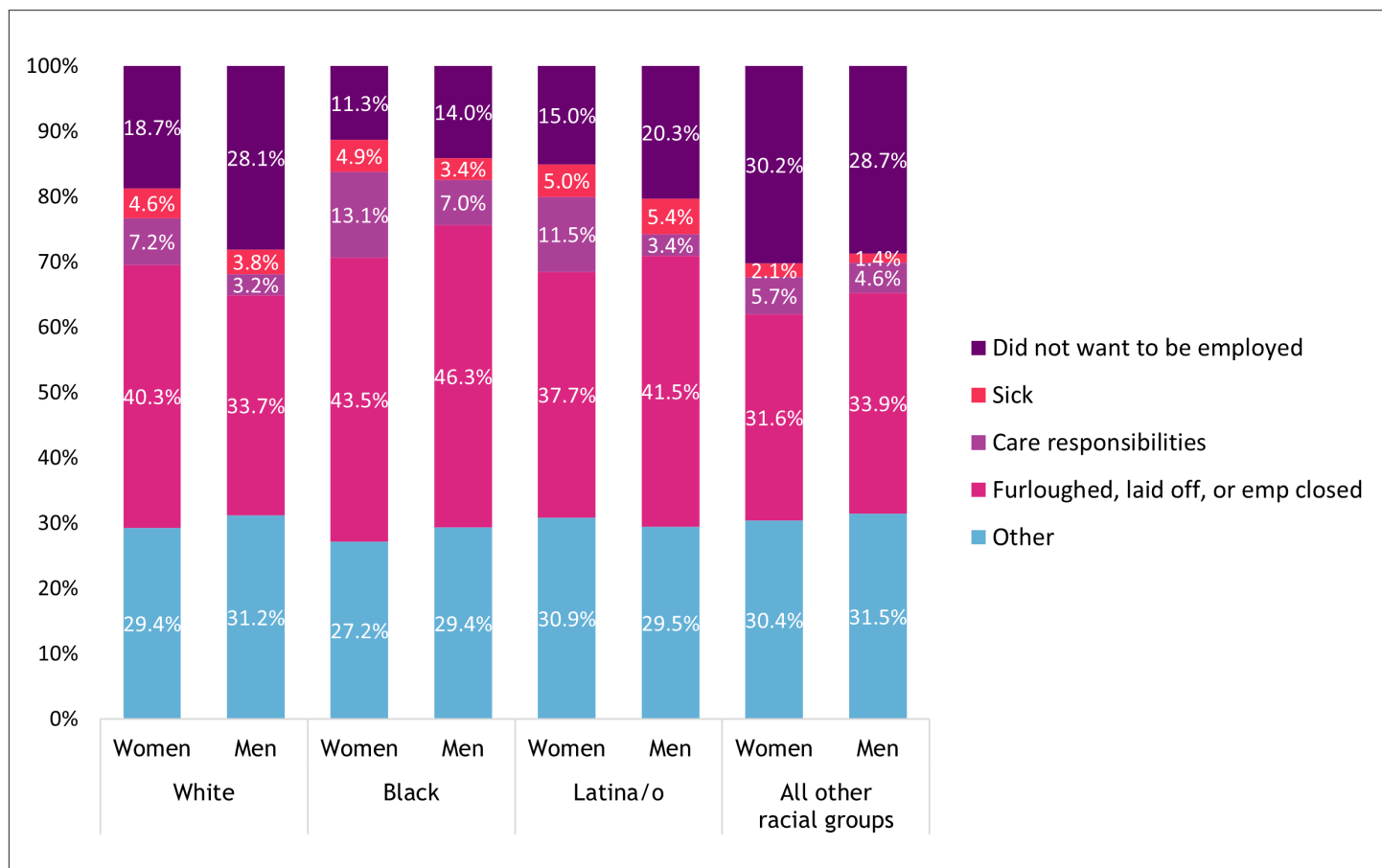
Young Black Workers Are Most Likely Not to Work for Pay Due to Furloughs, Layoffs, or Business Closures during the Pandemic Recession

To examine the pandemic recession's unequal effects more directly, Figure 9 shows the proportion of young adults within each gender and racial/ethnic group by the main reason for not working for pay in the last 7 days during the



pandemic. Compared to all other groups, a higher percentage of young Black women (43.5 percent) and young Black men (46.3 percent) reported being furloughed or laid off, or their workplace being closed. Their higher risks of being laid off or furloughed might not be entirely due to concentration in the hardest-hit job sectors. Prior studies find that Black workers tend to be “first fired” during economic downturns (Couch, Fairlie, and Xu 2018). These findings suggest that young Black workers occupy a particularly marginalized and precarious position in the labor market.

FIGURE 9. Main reason for not working for pay or profit in the last 7 days among young adults aged 18 to 24, by gender and race/ethnicity, April to November 2020



Notes: Results are weighted. “All other racial groups” include those who identify as multiracial, Asian and Pacific Islander, American Indian and Alaska Native, and other races not shown separately. “Care responsibilities” include caring for children, an elder, and/or someone with coronavirus symptoms.

Source: IWPR analysis of data from U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey, Weeks 1-18 (April 23-November 9, 2020).

SOURCES OF DISPARITIES: UNEQUAL CARE RESPONSIBILITIES

Among Young Workers, Black and Latina Women Are Most Likely Not to Work for Pay Due to Care Responsibilities during the Pandemic

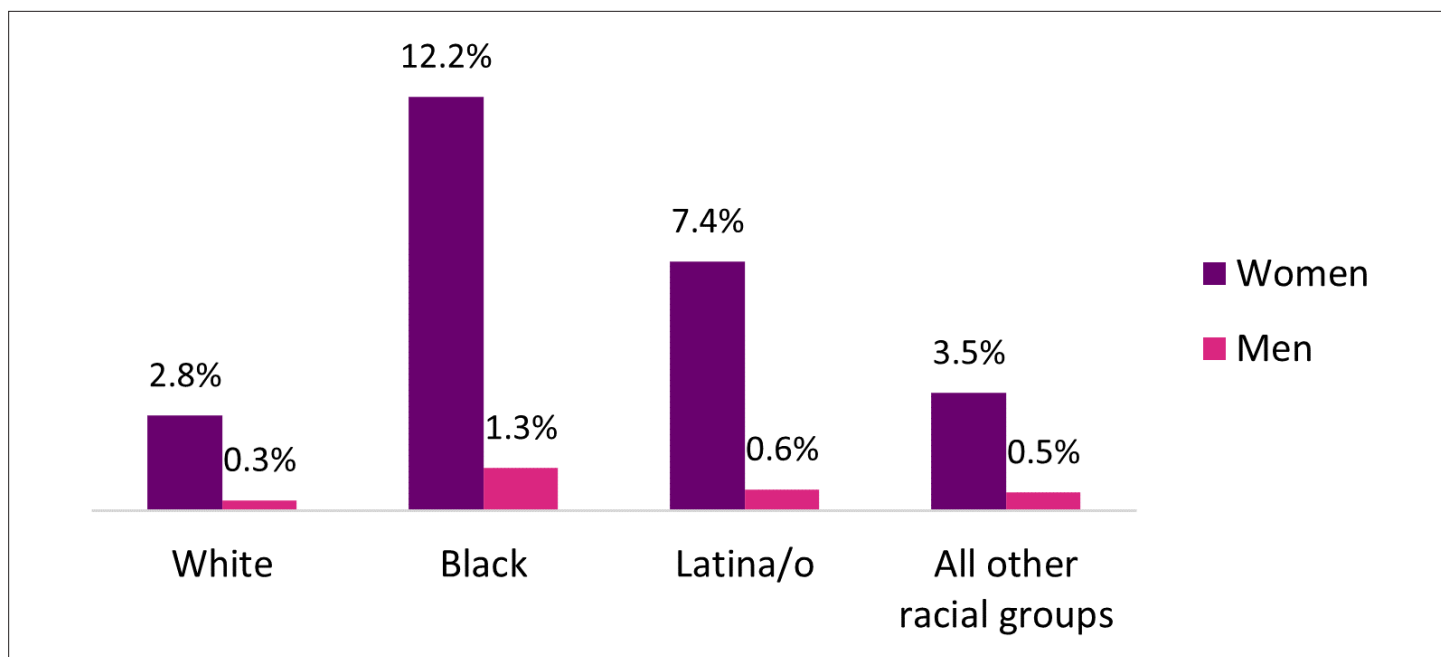
Young women are more likely than their male counterparts to identify care responsibilities as the main reason for not working for pay in the last seven days during the pandemic (Figure 9). The shares of young Black and Latina women not working for pay due to care responsibilities (13.1 percent and 11.5 percent, respectively) are the highest among young adults. Young Black

women are nearly twice as likely as young white women and more than four times as likely as young white men to say they did not work for pay due to care responsibilities. Among young men, Black men are the mostly likely to cite that reason.

Evaluating how care responsibilities may limit certain groups' capacity for paid work requires considering young women in the contexts of their families and communities and examining how gender norms and racial disparities shape their experiences. The role of unpaid care responsibilities has featured less prominently in public discussions of younger workers' experiences in the pandemic. Yet, with the pandemic pushing an increasing number of young people into living at home (Fry, Passel, and Cohn 2020), and with the care infrastructure collapsed and public health systems overwhelmed, young people are playing a part in providing care for their families and communities. Among non-parents, young adults who live at home may be providing care for their younger siblings; young people who reside in multigenerational households may need to care for older family members who are sick or have a disability.

Young parents face particular challenges balancing work, child care, and education. These challenges are more pronounced for young single parents who tend to lack social support and experience high rates of poverty. Young women aged 18 to 24 are much more likely than young men to be single parents across race/ethnicity groups (Figure 10). More than one in ten young Black women (12.2 percent) are single mothers, the highest among all groups of young adults, followed by Latina women at 7.4 percent. These findings underscore the fact that young women, especially young women of color, have suffered a reduction in employment during the pandemic partly because of their disproportionate caregiving responsibilities.

FIGURE 10. Percentages of young adults (aged 18 to 24) who are single parents by gender and race/ethnicity, 2019

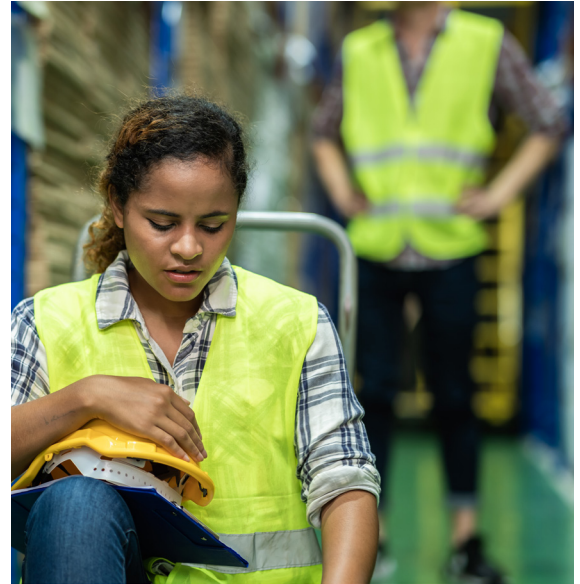


Notes: Results are weighted. "All other racial groups" include those who identify as multiracial, Asian and Pacific Islander, American Indian and Alaska Native, and other races not shown separately. Single parents are defined as not married, separated, or married but spouse absent and having one's own child(ren) living in the household.

Source: IWPR analysis of the basic monthly Current Population Survey microdata (January-December 2019; IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org).

The Role of Systemic Racism

Black and brown families and communities have been especially vulnerable to the coronavirus crisis. Longstanding systemic racial inequities have put communities of color at a higher risk of getting sick and dying from COVID-19 (CDC 2020). Black communities face greater rates of pre-existing conditions brought on by poverty, income and wealth inequality, residential segregation, and environmental racism (Bernstein and Jones 2020). In addition, workers of color have higher occupational exposure to coronavirus since they are overrepresented in the frontline workforce, whose jobs tend to come with low wages and lack paid sick days (Rho, Brown, and Fremstad 2020). The absence of universal health coverage further exacerbates Black families' lack of access to health care (Lewis and Fremstad 2020). Similarly, inadequate, costly care services put quality care out of reach for many families of color.



Gender norms around care intersect with systemic racial disparities in community resources to increase care responsibilities for Black and Latina women during the pandemic. It is widely recognized that women across all demographic groups shoulder the lion's share of unpaid care work at home. Less appreciated is the "unpaid, nonmarket work that women perform collectively to address urgent community needs that arise out of racial and ethnic group disparities" (Banks 2020). Focusing on Black women's experiences, Banks argues that when a community's resources for essential social services fall short, Black women are called upon to address the urgent community needs not met by public or private sectors. Their work in addressing these needs takes a variety of forms, including self-help groups, co-ops, and organizing mutual aid—the latter of which provides a crucial safety net for many low-income communities of color as they struggle with the dual economic and public health crisis.

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Findings from this study highlight how multiple structural forces—including a heavy concentration in low-wage service sectors, racial disparities in access to care and community resources, and gender norms around care responsibilities—combine to put young women of color at a particular disadvantage during the pandemic recession. Young Black and Latina women are not only more likely to be unemployed and leave the labor force, they are also more likely to be disconnected from both school and employment. In addition, they are most likely to identify care responsibilities as the main reason for not working for pay during the pandemic.

The dual crisis in public health and the economy heightens the importance of a robust and equitable care infrastructure in bolstering economic security for working women and their families. Pre-existing disparities in access to health care, child care, and other kinds of care support between communities with sufficient resources and those without translate into outsized care responsibilities for women of color. These insights must inform ongoing policy responses to support young women of color through the pandemic recession and beyond.



Recovery and relief efforts should be intentional in supporting youth and young adults.

- **Pandemic relief cash payments:** Both the first round of stimulus payments (\$1,200 per adult/\$500 per child) as part of the CARES Act in March 2020 and the second round of payments (\$600 per adult/\$600 per child) delivered a few months later excluded people over age 16 who were claimed as dependents by their parents. This restriction excluded millions of high school and college students, recent graduates, and young adults with disabilities. The third round of relief payment through the American Rescue Plan Act (March 2021) provides households with \$1,400 for each adult, child, and—finally—adult dependent if the filer who claimed them meets all other qualifications.⁷ Future pandemic response policies should continue to cover all young people in need.
- **Unemployment Insurance (UI):** The CARES Act extended and expanded benefits for those who typically are eligible for UI, and Congress created the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program to reach individuals who do not typically qualify for UI. The recently passed American Rescue Plan extends UI benefits and eligibility to September 6, 2021 and provides a \$300 weekly supplement (U.S. Department of Labor 2021). However, many recent high school and college graduates who had not yet secured post-graduation employment are not eligible for PUA benefits (Mishory and Stettner 2020). They would benefit from expanding the UI program to include a job seeker allowance (Gould and Kassa 2020) and fixing the state UI systems' patchwork nature.
- **Targeted support for opportunity youth:** Given that opportunity youth disproportionately come from low-income communities of color that have been hit the hardest by the pandemic, long-term recovery efforts should include strengthening the social safety net and public

⁷ The full text of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 can be accessed at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/1319/text>.

investment in disenfranchised communities through food stamps, public health clinics, housing assistance, schools, and programs for disadvantaged young people (Lewis 2020).

- Targeted support for student parents: Provide both immediate and sustainable support for student parents—many of whom are single mothers—as they struggle to balance education, child care, and work while facing immense food and housing insecurities (see Cruse, Contreras-Mendez, and Holtzman 2020).

Young women in particular would benefit from the creation of high-quality jobs with decent pay and job security.

- Create high-quality jobs and improve labor standards: As we rebuild the economy, we need to shift away from a model driven by the growth of low-wage, low-quality jobs, many of which are in the service sector. Raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour, ensuring workers' collective bargaining rights, and strengthening labor standards could yield outsized benefits to women of color and young workers concentrated in low-wage service sectors. As the Biden administration commits to investing in infrastructure building, a focus on addressing barriers young women face in accessing decent-paying jobs in trades and the "green economy" and promoting the creation of high-quality jobs in the care economy should also be prioritized.
- Renew the federal commitment to employment programs: Youth summer jobs programs and local service corps can address unemployment and help young adults build skills while simultaneously addressing community needs (Ross et al. 2020). Enacting a federal job guarantee would create jobs with living wages and full benefits for workers on projects that meet long-neglected community needs such as mass transit, internet access, and other essential infrastructure requirements (Blackwell and Hamilton 2020). Federal jobs programs such as AmeriCorps should target its recruitment towards young people, including opportunity youth (Kaverman 2020). In the same vein, federal and state governments can leverage subsidized employment programs to connect unemployed jobseekers to paid work. Such programs should be designed to redress long-standing racial, gender, and other inequities in access to quality employment (Schnur, Warland, and Young 2021).
- Generate job training opportunities and school-to-work pathways to middle-skill jobs: Many decent-paying, middle-skill jobs that require more education than a high school diploma but less than a four-year college degree are technical and trade positions in traditionally male-dominated industries (manufacturing, construction, and transportation). Young women would benefit from proactive initiatives to attract, train, and retain a diverse group of women in these jobs (see Childers, Hegewisch, and Shaw 2021).

Invest in a robust care infrastructure, provide universal access to health care, and increase investment in mental health.

- In the short term, provide urgently needed public funding to support the child care industry, K-12 schools, and parents with young children. Raise wages and provide adequate protection such as personal protective equipment and paid sick leave for care workers and essential workers, who are disproportionately people of color and young workers.
- Going forward, build a robust care infrastructure that simultaneously addresses the needs of working families and care workers—including comprehensive paid family and medical leave, equitable access to affordable, quality childcare and long-term care (especially

home- and community-based care), and decent wages and benefits for care workers. A robust care infrastructure is essential for reducing gender inequalities in both paid and unpaid work and lays a foundation for an equitable economic recovery.

- Transition from a fragmented health care system that disproportionately excludes Black and brown people to a universal, equitable health care system.
- Prioritize young people's mental well-being by increasing investment in mental health services that target young people, especially young people of color and those who live in under-resourced communities.

Increase government efforts to collect disaggregated data.

We need more collection of disaggregated data to make marginalized communities and patterns of inequalities more visible. Public policymaking would benefit from analyzing the intersection of gender, race, class, and other structural inequalities. At the same time, strong data privacy measures should be implemented to prevent the potential misuse of data.

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