

Quick Figure #Q095

April 2021

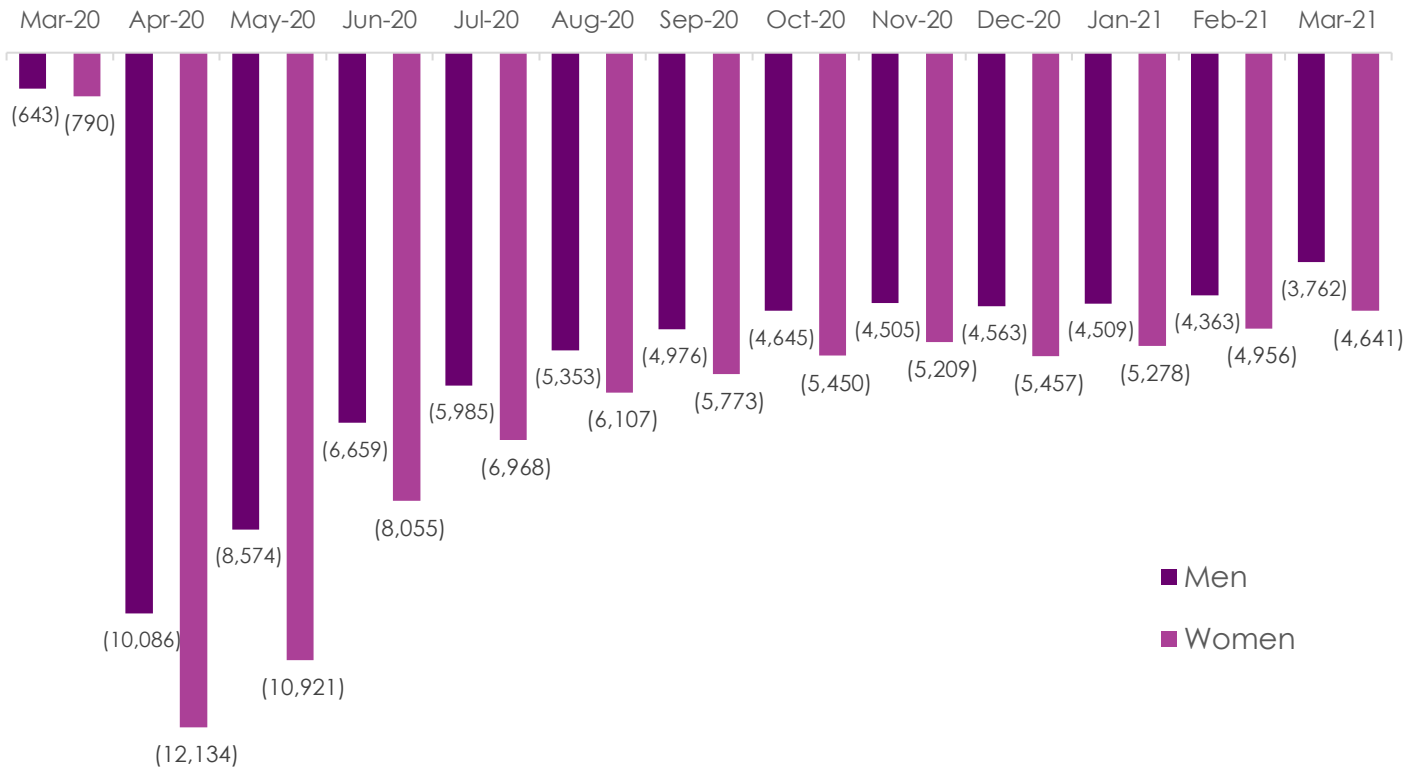
DESPITE RECORD JOB GROWTH IN MARCH 2021, GENDER GAP IN ECONOMIC RECOVERY WIDENED

- Nearly one million (916,000) new payroll jobs were added in March 2021, yet only one-third of these (315,000) went to women.
- Men gain more jobs than women in almost all sectors, even in those where (before COVID-19) women were the majority of workers.
- Women's higher job loss, and slower recovery, points to strong occupational segregation: Women make up the majority of workers in sectors most impacted by COVID-19.
- The jobs deficit in Child Day Care Services proportionately is almost three times as large as for all jobs on non-farm payroll, pointing to difficulties for mothers wanting to return to work.
- Black women's rate of unemployment is 1.7 times higher than White women's, and Hispanic/Latina women's is 1.5 times higher.
- While the overall rate of unemployment fell, the number of long-term unemployed women grew by 92,000; the number of long-term unemployed men fell by 32,000. More than four in ten women (43%) have been unemployed for more than six months.

New March jobs data¹ show that nearly one million (916,000) new payroll jobs were added, yet only one-third of these went to women (34.4 percent, or 315,000 payroll jobs). This marks an increased widening of the gender gap in recovery for a second month in a row. Women still need 4.6 million more jobs to get back to pre-COVID-19 levels, compared to men who need 3.8 million more jobs (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Women Are Still 4.6 Million Jobs Below February 2020 Levels

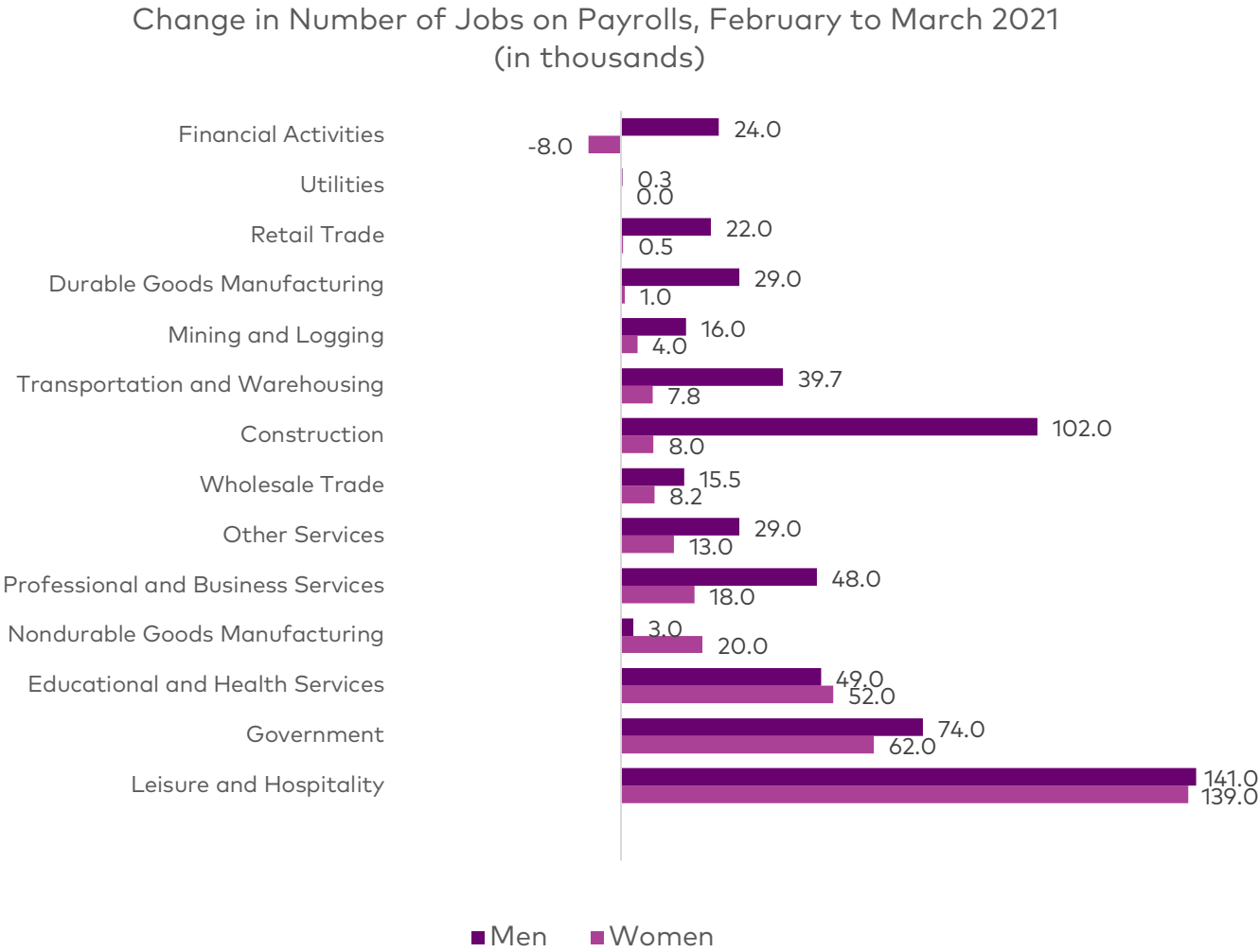
Change in Number of Jobs on Payrolls March 2021 compared with February 2020 by Gender (in thousands)



Source: IWPR analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics (April 2, 2021).

From February to March 2021, men gained more jobs than women in almost all sectors, including in the two sectors that added most jobs between February and March: Leisure and Hospitality; and Government. Women were a clear majority of workers in these two sectors prior to COVID.² Notably, in Financial Activities, women’s jobs on payroll declined (by 8,000), while men’s increased (by 24,000) (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Men Gained More Jobs than Women in Almost All Sectors



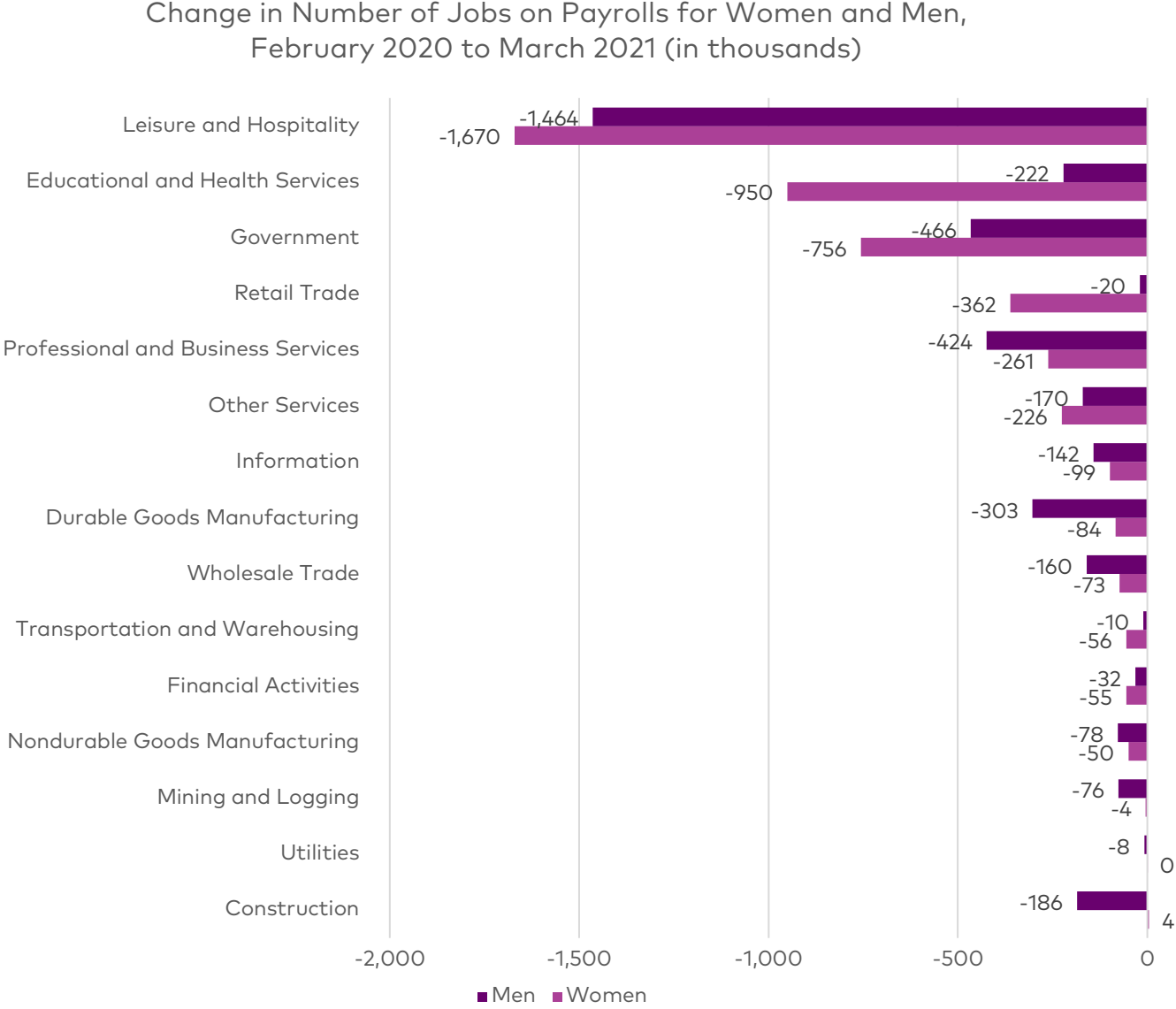
Source: IWPR analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics (April 2, 2021).

Gender disparities in the recovery reflect sector and occupational segregation. In the three sectors with the greatest jobs deficits compared to pre-COVID levels (Education and Health Services; Government; Leisure and Hospitality), the majority of workers on payroll prior to COVID-19 in February 2020 were women: 77.4 percent of workers in the Education and Health Services sector, 57.9 percent in Government, and 53.3 percent in Leisure and Hospitality.³ Women are still 1.7 million below February 2020 levels in Leisure and Hospitality (with men 1.5 million below), and 950,000 jobs below February 2020 in Education and Health Services (Figure 3).

The lack of recovery in Child Day Care Services, a subsector of Education and Health Services, is particularly poignant for women because they are much

more likely to be the primary caregiver for their children and are also much more likely to work as childcare workers than men. The child-care sector has still 164,000 fewer workers on payroll than pre-COVID-19, and the jobs deficit is almost three times as large as for the total economy (15.7 percent compared with below 5.5 percent pre-COVID levels).⁴

Figure 3. Payroll Jobs Still Lag Millions Behind Pre-COVID Levels, especially in Leisure and Hospitality, Education and Health Services, and Government



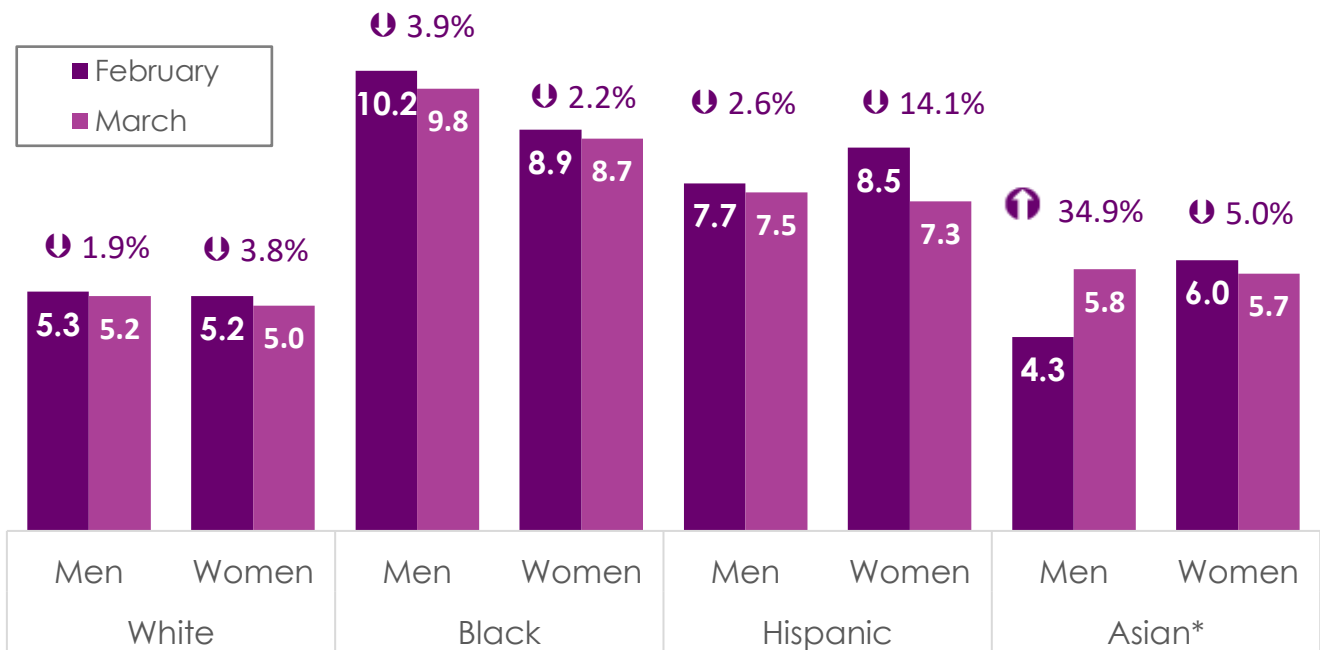
Source: IWPR analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics (April 2, 2021).

SHARP DIFFERENCES IN UNEMPLOYMENT BY GENDER, RACE, AND ETHNICITY

While the rate of unemployment improved slightly for women across the largest racial and ethnic groups, over 4 million adult women workers are still unemployed.⁵ Levels of unemployment differ sharply by race and ethnicity: Black women's rate of unemployment is 1.7 times higher than White women's, and Hispanic/Latina women is 1.5 times higher (IWPR calculation based on Figure 4).

Figure 4. Unemployment Rates Remain High for Black and Hispanic/Latina Women, at 8.7 and 7.3 Percent Respectively

Unemployment Rates for Women and Men Aged 20 Years and Older by Race and Ethnicity, February to March 2021 (Seasonally Adjusted*)



*Seasonally adjusted unemployment data for Asians by gender are not published by the BLS.

Source: IWPR analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey (April 2, 2021). Note: In March 2021, the rate of unemployment for all women workers was 5.7%, a 3.4% decrease from February 2021. The rate of unemployment for all men workers was 5.8%, an decrease of 3.3%.

While overall unemployment fell, long-term unemployment (27 weeks or more) increased for all women by 92,000 but fell for all men by 32,000 between February to March 2021. Among all women who are unemployed, 1.9 million, or 44 percent, have been unemployed for work at least half a year. Long-term unemployment increased most strongly for Black women (by 54,000) and White women (by 30,000) (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Long-Term Unemployment Numbers Fall for Men, but Rise for Women



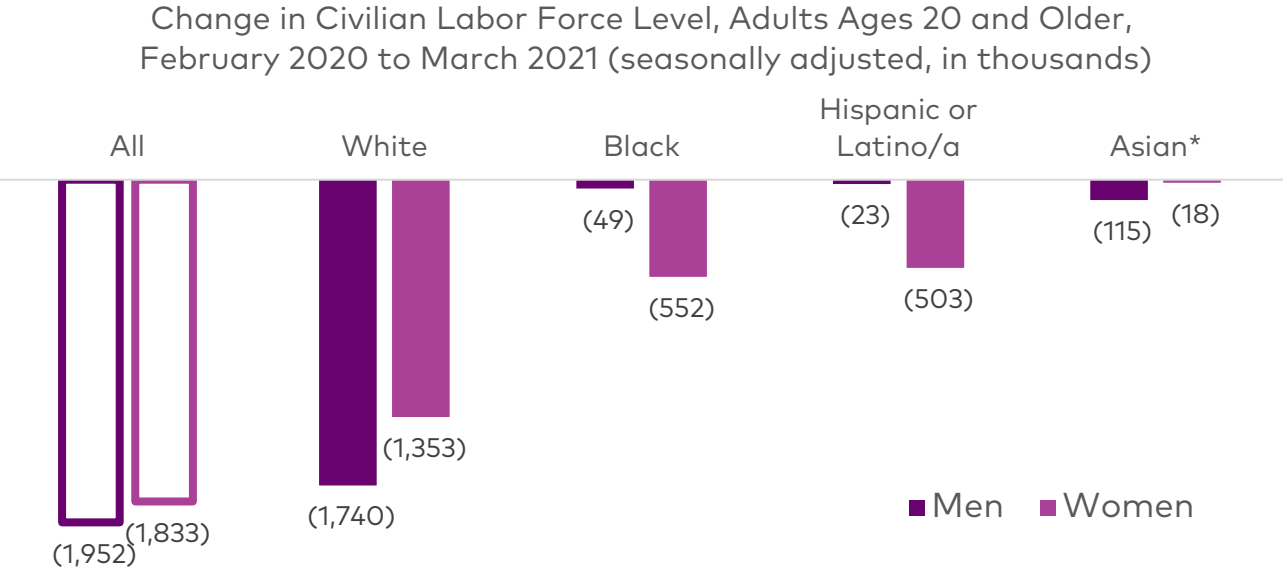
Source: IWPR Analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey Data (accessed April 2, 2021).

The growth in long-term unemployment has hit younger women particularly strongly. The number of women ages 25 to 34 out of work for more than six months increased by 104,000 (compared with 70,000 for men in the same age group), and by women ages 20 to 24 (70,000), while long-term unemployment fell for young men ages 20 to 24 and women ages 45 to 55 (both by 60,000). Long-term unemployment also fell for women and men ages 16 to 19, and for those older than 55 years, yet the rate of long-term unemployment continues to be substantially higher for women in older than younger age groups.⁶

ADDED TO 4.4 MILLION UNEMPLOYED ARE 1.8 MILLION WOMEN LEFT THE WORKFORCE

Only those who are actively looking for work are counted as unemployed. Added to the 4.4 million women and 5.5 million men who are unemployed are 1.8 million women and nearly 2 million men who left the workforce. The decline in the number of Black women in the labor force has been particularly sizeable: 552,000 fewer Black women in March 2021 than in February 2020 (marking a 5.1 percent decline); Hispanic/Latina women’s numbers in the labor force were 503,000 below (4.1 percent decline), and White women’s 1.4 million (2.4 percent decline) (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Black and Hispanic/Latina Women Forced Out of the Labor Market at High Rates



*Data for Asians is not seasonally adjusted because seasonally adjusted data for Asian workers is not published by gender. Source: IWPR analysis of US Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey Data (Accessed April 2, 2021).

Returning to work is likely to be particularly difficult for those who have been unemployed for several months or left the workforce altogether. Moreover, not all of the jobs lost during the pandemic will come back, and some of the jobs that were lost provided such poor wages and conditions that returning to these jobs will only perpetuate economic security and inequality. The recovery effort must be designed to support the many women returning to paid employment by investing in job retraining initiatives⁷ and other social supports that help women

access good jobs with family-sustaining wages. As a cornerstone of the recovery, child care must be made accessible to all who require child-care services, as well as appropriately valued to ensure that child-care workers earn a living wage.

ENDNOTES

¹ See U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021, "Employment Situation Summary," Economic News Release (April 2), <<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t17.htm>>.

² See Table 1 in Ariane Hegewisch and Zohal Barsi, 2020, "Women Gain Disproportionately Fewer Jobs in May, and Face Disproportionately Higher Job Losses since February," IWPR Quick Figure #Q083, Washington DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research, <<https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/QF-June-for-Lea-6-12.pdf>>.

³ As above.

⁴ IWPR analysis based on Table B1, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021, "Employees on Nonfarm Payrolls by Industry Sector and Selected Industry Detail," Economic News Release (April 2), <<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t17.htm>>.

⁵ IWPR calculation based on U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021, "Table A-36. Unemployed Persons by Age, Sex, Race, Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity, Marital Status, and Duration of Unemployment (March 2021)," Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey, <<https://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/cpseea36.htm>> (accessed April 2, 2021).

⁶ As above. The proportion of long-term unemployed among unemployed is 13.0% for women ages 16-19, 30% for women ages 20-24; 44.6% for women ages 25-34; 50.9% for women ages 35-44; 46.1% for women ages 45-54; 52.5% for women ages 55-64, and 56.8% for women 65 and older.

⁷ See National Skills Coalition, 2020, "Skills for an Inclusive Economic Recovery," Washington, DC: National Skills Coalition, <<https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resource/publications/skills-for-an-inclusive-economic-recovery/>>.

This Quick Figure was prepared by Ariane Hegewisch and Eve Mefferd. It was made possible with the support of the Ford Foundation, the JPMorgan Chase Foundation, and Pivotal Ventures, an investment and incubation company created by Melinda Gates.

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