

Women at Work Five Years Since the Start of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Any Progress?

Key Findings

- Women's employment has fully recovered from the pandemic, but it took nearly three years—and 11 months longer than men's—to reach pre-COVID employment levels,** finally achieving this in January 2023. From January 2020 to January 2025, the number of employed adult women increased by 2.4 million.
- Racial/ethnic disparities in adult women's unemployment have decreased since the pandemic.** In January 2025, Black women were 1.6 times more likely to be unemployed than White women, down from 2.1 times in January 2020. The unemployment ratio for Latina¹ to White women also dropped, from 1.6 to 1.4 times as high.
- Mothers' labor force participation rates reached pre-pandemic levels in 2023 when child care center jobs had also recovered.** Across race/ethnicity, mothers' labor force participation is as high or higher than it was before the pandemic. Yet, differences between mothers' and fathers' likelihood of being in the labor force remain large and unchanged. In 2024, 73.7 percent of mothers and 94.9 percent of fathers were in the labor force; in 2019, those rates were 71.9 and 94.7 percent, respectively.
- Women increased their share of jobs in higher-paying male-dominated sectors such as transportation and warehousing, construction, and utilities and decreased their share of jobs in lower-paying leisure and hospitality and in retail.** In January 2025, 264,000 more women were on payroll in transportation and warehousing and 194,000 more in construction than five years earlier, but there were 227,000 fewer women in retail and 122,000 fewer in leisure and hospitality.
- Occupational gender segregation is worse between parents of children ages 12 and younger than between other workers,** and in 2024 worsened for parents while improving for others. In 2024, the value index of occupational segregation between mothers and fathers of kids 12 or younger was 0.52, meaning that 52 percent of mothers or fathers would have to change their jobs for there to be no segregation; it was 0.45 between other prime-working-age (25–54) women and men.



Introduction

On March 13, 2020, President Trump declared a national emergency in response to the COVID-19 virus² and, subsequently, 42 states and territories issued mandatory stay-at-home orders.³ By April 2020, the overall rate of unemployment had spiked to 14.7 percent, up from 4.4 percent a month earlier, with adult women's unemployment reaching 15.5 percent and men's 13.0 percent.⁴ The unequal impact of pandemic job losses, as much as the low pay in many of the essential care jobs that remained, brought to the forefront long-standing gender and racial segregation in employment and the overrepresentation of Black and Latina women in the lowest-paid jobs.⁵ As low-wage jobs declined, the gender wage gap narrowed for full-time workers but widened among all workers.⁶ At the same time, the closure of schools and child and eldercare facilities underscored just how essential care work is for a functioning economy. This was illustrated most strongly when close to a million women left the labor force at the beginning of the 'at home' school year in September 2020.⁷

Five years on, employment has more than recovered, and unemployment has fallen to pre-pandemic levels. This fact sheet reviews whether key indicators for gender and racial/ethnic equality have changed since the pandemic, including employment and unemployment, the role of parenthood for labor force participation, and women's distribution across industries and occupations. IWPR's analysis finds some promising signs, such as the decline in racial/ethnic differences in unemployment and some improvements in gender segregation, highlighting the positive impact of economic and equity-focused policies in recent years. However, the issues highlighted during the pandemic, such as the care crisis, women's underrepresentation in well-paid technical and trade fields, and the overrepresentation of women of color in the lowest-paid jobs, still remain to be solved.



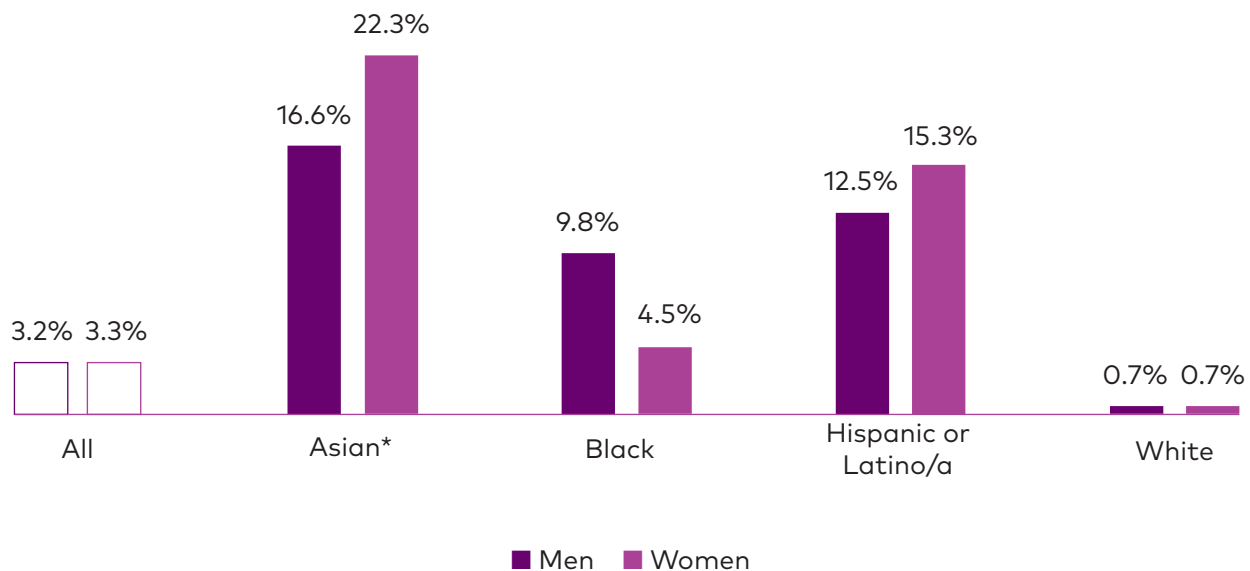
The fact sheet draws on monthly data from Current Employment Statistics and the Current Population Survey and microdata analysis of Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Survey (CPS ASEC). To assess gender segregation in occupations, IWPR calculated the index of dissimilarity, developed by Duncan and Duncan (1955),⁸ using data from the CPS ASEC.

It took almost a year longer for women to reach pre-pandemic employment levels than men.

Between February and April 2020, the number of adult employed women fell by 12.4 million.⁹ It took three years—until January 2023—for the total number of employed women to again surpass 2020 levels. While employment of adult men also fell dramatically, by 11.1 million, the decline was less severe than for women, and the recovery was 11 months faster, reaching pre-COVID-19 levels by February 2022.¹⁰ The slower recovery of jobs can have long-lasting impacts: Gaps in employment lead to lost earnings, lower wage growth, and hence less capacity to build up retirement savings and assets.¹¹

Women's and men's employment did not just recover but has grown substantially, by 2.4 million jobs for women and 2.6 million jobs for men (3.3 and 3.2 percent, respectively, compared to 2020). Employment growth has been particularly high for Asian women and Latinas, at 22.3 and 15.3 percent, respectively, while the number of employed White women and men increased by just 0.7 percent for each (Figure 1). This reflects the demographic composition of the workforce, with White women and men more likely to be at or near retirement age than other groups¹² and also more likely to have sufficient retirement savings to leave the workforce.¹³

Figure 1. Change in the Numbers of Employed Adults, January 2020 to January 2025



Source: IWPR analysis of US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey. Data released on February 7, 2025, available at <https://www.bls.gov/data/>.

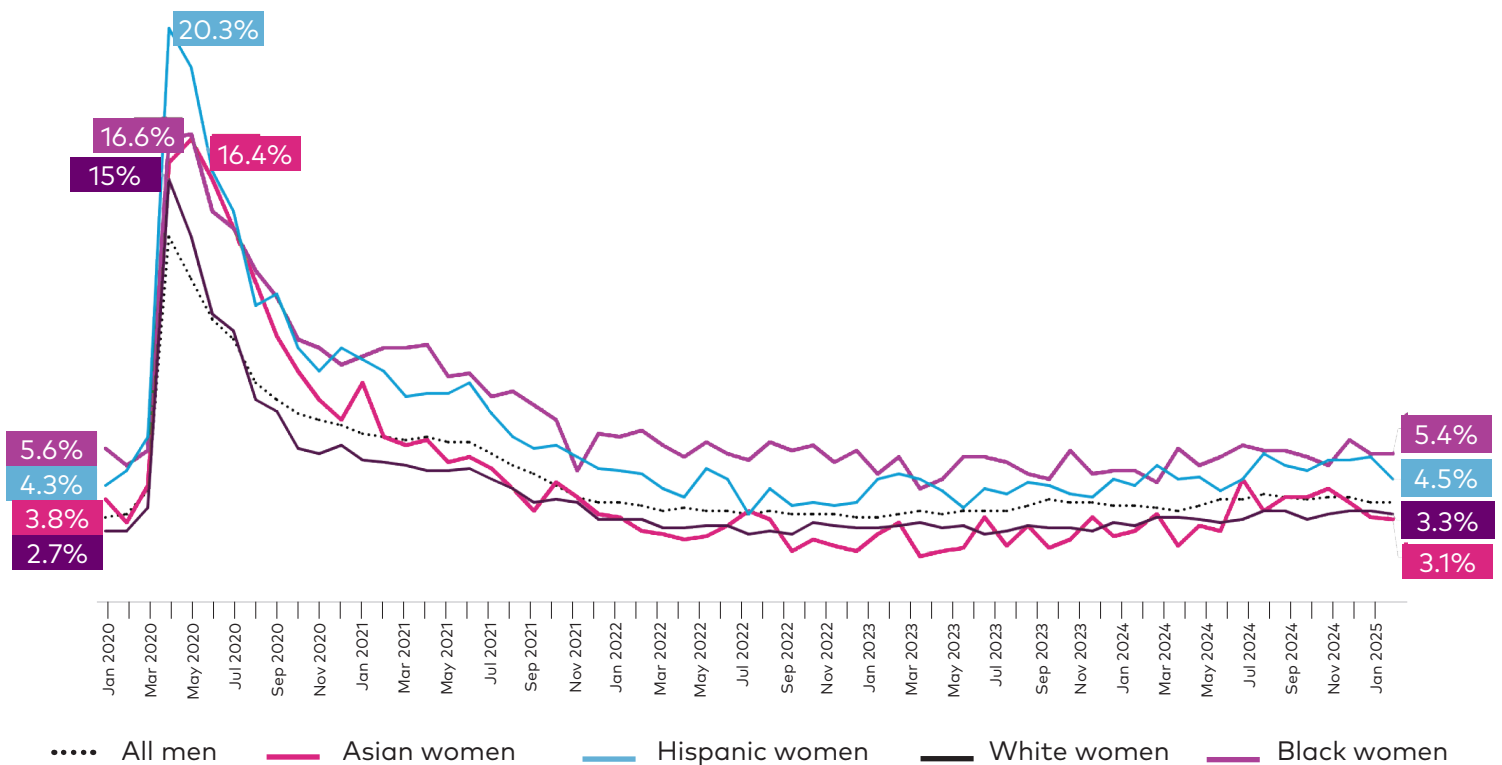
Notes: All men and women are 20 years and older. Racial categories are non-exclusive and may include Hispanics. Data for Native Americans are not published.

* Employment data for Asian workers are not seasonally adjusted and do not include Pacific Islanders.

Unemployment rates continue to be higher for Black and Latina women, but differences in the risk of unemployment are lower than before the pandemic.

Unemployment rates shot up in April 2020, with one in five Latina (20.3 percent), more than one in six Black (16.6 percent) and Asian (16.4 percent), and close to one in seven White (15.0 percent) women being unemployed and looking for work (Figure 2). It took around two years for the rate of unemployment to return to pre-pandemic levels. While the rise and fall in the rate of unemployment is similar across race/ethnicity, Black and Latina women have higher unemployment rates than White and Asian women and consistently did so during the pandemic. Yet, compared to before the pandemic, differences are less marked. In January 2025, Black women were 1.6 times as likely to be unemployed as White women, compared to 2.1 times as likely five years earlier, and Latinas were 1.4 times as likely to be unemployed as White women, compared to 1.6 times in January 2020. Notably, the strong economy during the last two years resulted in record-low unemployment rates for Black women.

Figure 2: Monthly Unemployment Rates for Adult Women by Race/Ethnicity, January 2020 to January 2025



Source: IWPR analysis of US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey. Data released on February 7, 2025, available at <https://www.bls.gov/data/>.

Notes: All men and women are 20 years and older. Racial categories are non-exclusive and may include Hispanics. Data for Native Americans are not published.

*Unemployment rates for Asian women are not seasonally adjusted and do not include Pacific Islanders.

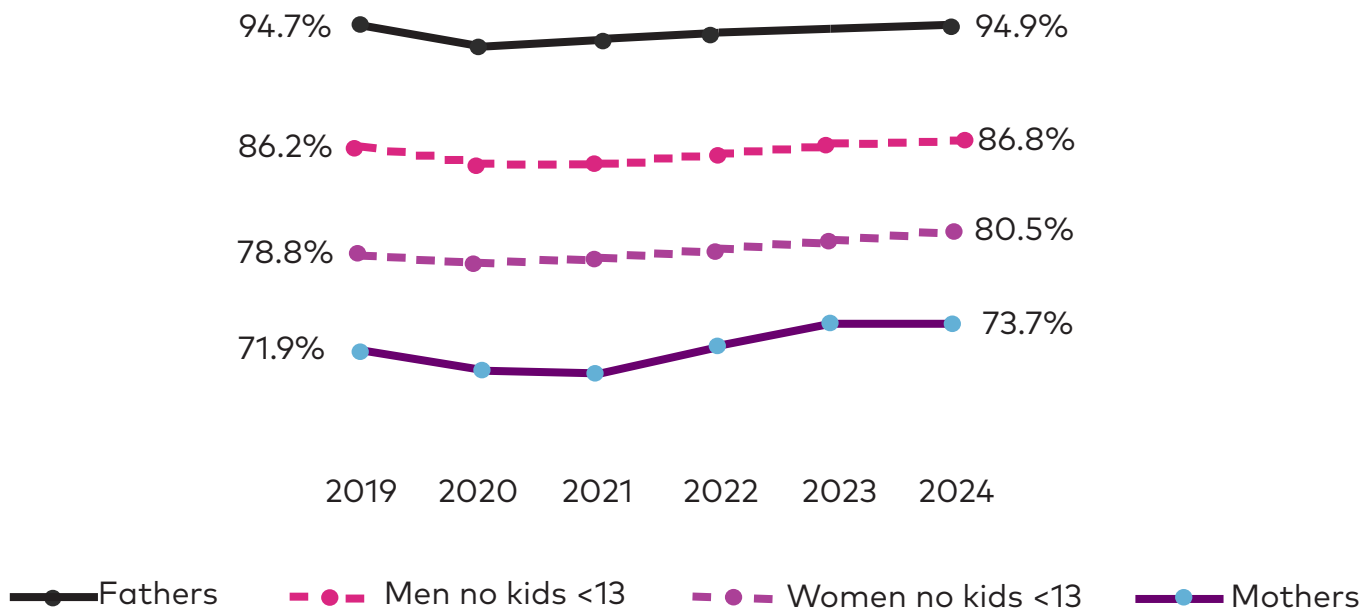
The likelihood of being in the workforce is higher for mothers than before the pandemic across race/ethnicity.

Labor force participation rates measure the percentage of the population that is employed or actively looking for work. Data show clear differences in these rates between women and men and how parenthood (of children ages 12 or younger) exacerbates these differences.

Mothers were particularly hard hit by changes in the pandemic labor market. Like other women, they were more likely than men to work in sectors with high pandemic-related job losses. Additionally, they carried the main burden for coping with the consequences of school and child care closures.¹⁴ While the labor force participation rates for mothers with children ages 12 or younger dipped slightly in the first year after the pandemic and then rose to slightly higher levels in 2024, overall, the trends have been fairly stable. More than seven in ten mothers were in the labor force (71.9 percent) before the pandemic in 2019 and a slightly higher share (73.7 percent) in 2024 (Figure 3). Predictions that mothers would leave the labor force in large numbers did not come to pass.¹⁵

Fathers of children ages 12 or younger had the highest rate of labor force participation, with more than nine in ten fathers either working or looking for work throughout the pandemic (Figure 3). Their labor force participation rate fell slightly in response to the pandemic but remained substantially higher than that of other prime-age men, and also of women, regardless of whether they had children or not (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Labor Force Participation Rates by Parental Status, 2019–2024



Source: IWPR analysis of 2019–2024 Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) microdata, (Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Version 12.0) IPUMS CPS, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

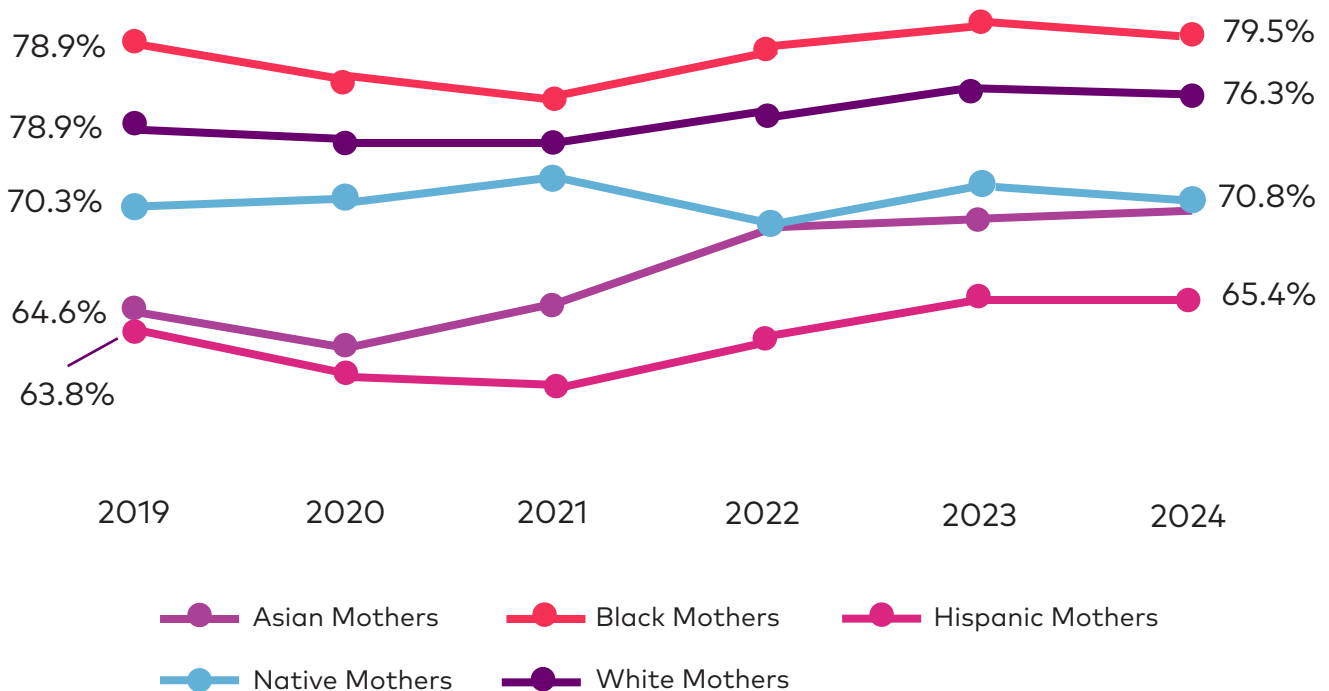
Notes: Men and women are prime working age, 25–54. Parents are defined as having children ages 12 years or younger.

Labor force participation rates were highest for Black and White mothers and lowest for Latina mothers both before and after the pandemic. Labor force participation rates were slightly higher after the pandemic, with Asian women experiencing the highest participation rate change, from 64.6 percent in 2019 to 70.3 percent in 2024 (Figure 4). Native mothers' rate was marginally higher in 2024 than in 2019.



Black and Latina mothers were most affected by the motherhood penalty during the pandemic because remote schooling lowered their employment rates the most when compared to women without children.¹⁶ Black and Latina mothers are more likely to be breadwinners compared to White mothers,¹⁷ making it even harder to compensate for lack of child care. Compared to White and Asian mothers, Black and Latina mothers were also more vulnerable to unemployment because of their concentration in service occupations and underrepresentation in positions that offer telework and flexible work schedules.¹⁸

Figure 4: Labor Force Participation Rates for Mothers by Race/Ethnicity, 2019–2024



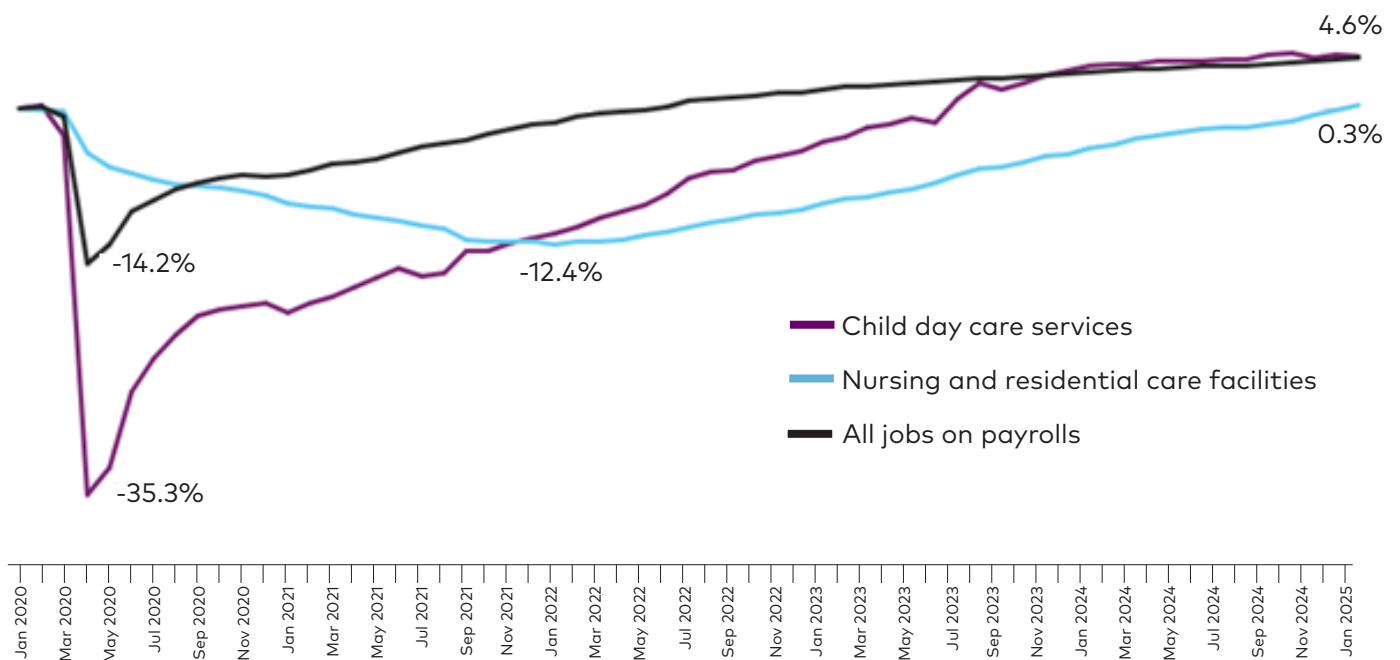
Source: IWPR analysis of 2019–2024 Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) microdata, (Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Version 12.0) IPUMS CPS, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.
Notes: Mothers are prime working age, 25–54. Mothers are defined as having children ages 12 years or younger. Racial categories are non-Hispanic, Hispanic mothers may be of any race. Natives are American Indian and Alaska Native; Asian includes Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.

Mothers' labor force participation rates recovered when jobs in child care centers did.

The difficulties during the pandemic for those caring for children or adults in need of care were brought home by the deep decline and slow recovery of employment in child care and nursing and residential care centers. Employment in child care centers fell by more than a third between February and April of 2020, a change more than twice as steep as the overall decline in jobs (Figure 5). It took until July 2023 for child care center jobs to get back to pre-pandemic levels, and then another five months for growth in child care jobs to have matched growth in overall employment (Figure 5).¹⁹ The recovery of child care jobs reflected strong federal and state investments in the sector.²⁰ It is noticeable that mothers' labor force participation rates also more than recovered in 2023.

Jobs in nursing and residential care centers, however, have still not fully caught up with the economic expansion. By January 2025, the number of payroll jobs in nursing care had only just exceeded pre-pandemic levels of employment but continued to lag behind general workforce growth (Figure 5). The burden of providing eldercare disproportionately falls on women.²¹

Figure 5. Monthly Payroll Job Changes in Child Care, Nursing/Residential Care, and the Overall



Economy as a Share of Jobs in Each Sector, January 2020 to January 2025

Source: IWPR analysis of US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics. Data released on February 7, 2025, available at <https://www.bls.gov/data/>.

Notes: Jobs on payroll data are collected directly from employers and include anyone who is directly employed. Because independent contractors are not included in this count, payroll numbers may underestimate total employment; because multiple job holders—such as someone with two part-time jobs—will be counted as an employee each time, payroll numbers may overestimate total employment.

The post-pandemic economy is (mostly) as gender-segregated as before the pandemic.

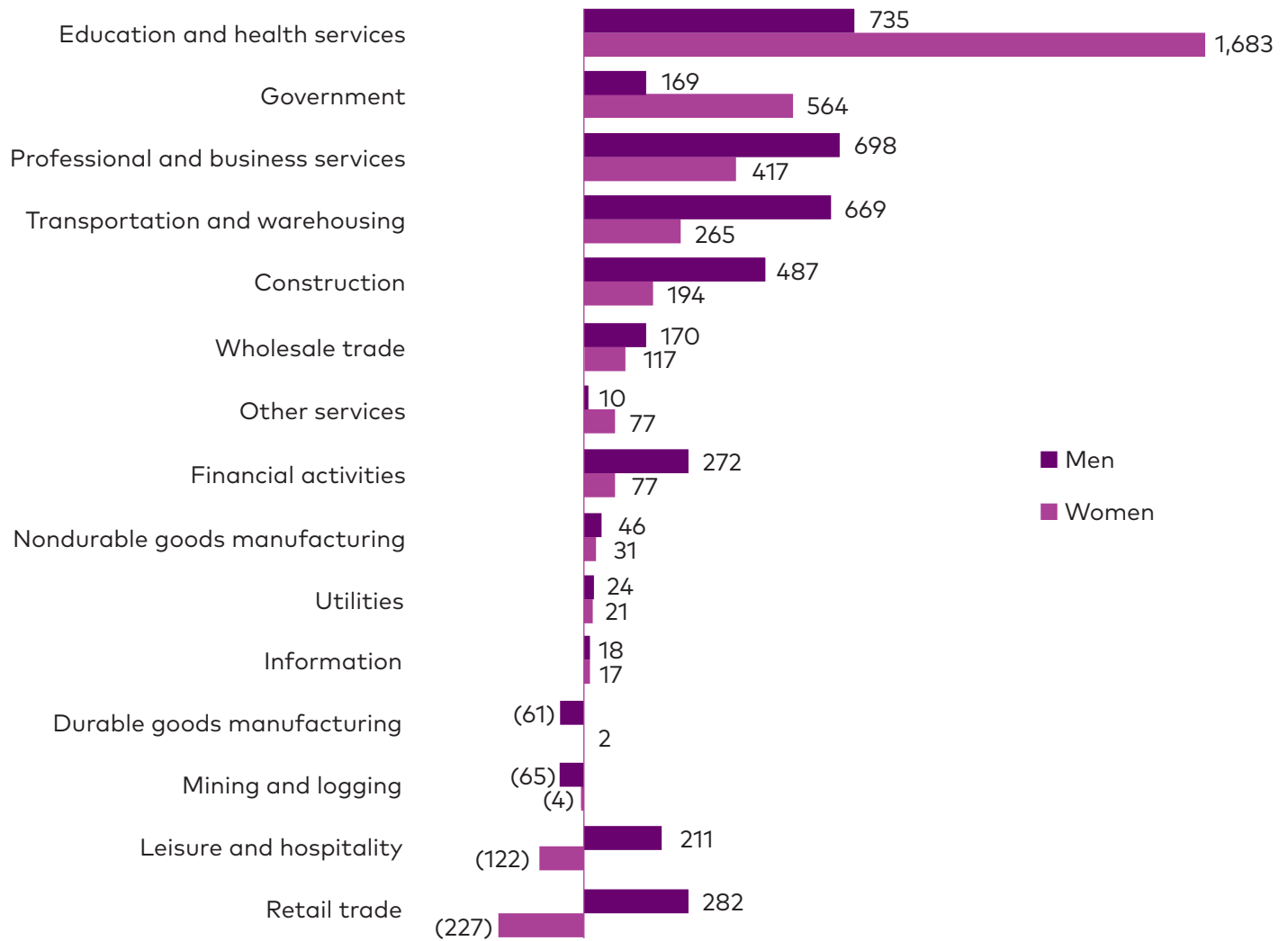
The recovery and strong recent growth have largely followed employment patterns found before the pandemic. The sectors where women gained most payroll jobs since 2020—education and health services (1.7 million), government (564,000), and professional and business services (417,000; see Figure 6)—were also the three most important sectors of employment for women before the pandemic (Table 1). Yet, it is worth noting that women’s jobs numbers in male-dominated sectors increased (even if these sectors do not account for a huge number of women) while they fell in leisure and hospitality and in retail—two large sectors where women’s numbers are still below pre-pandemic levels while men’s payroll job numbers are higher than before (Figure 6).

In retail and in leisure and hospitality, women’s jobs were still 227,000 and 122,000, respectively, lower than they were five years ago (Figure 6). Men, on the other hand, saw a growth in jobs in both sectors (Figure 6). These sectors continue to account for a large number of women’s jobs. Leisure and hospitality accounts for 11.2 percent and retail for 9.4 percent of all women’s jobs on payroll, yet this is lower than before the pandemic (11.8 and 10.1 percent, respectively, in January 2020; see Table 1).

Both of these sectors employ a comparatively even number of women and men, but with men’s jobs rising, and women’s falling, women’s share of jobs is now lower than before the pandemic, falling from 53.2 to 52.2 percent in leisure and hospitality, and from 49.5 to 47.9 percent in retail (Table 1). By contrast, women’s job numbers and their share of payroll jobs in three male-dominated sectors increased, from 25.7 to 26.3 percent in transportation and warehousing, 13.0 to 14.3 percent in construction, and 24.2 to 26.0 percent in utilities (Table 1). Average hourly earnings in these predominantly male sectors are substantially higher²² and also provide greater opportunities for full-time work than jobs in leisure and hospitality, nursing care, or retail, where women’s jobs are still below pre-pandemic levels.



Figure 6: Change in the Number of Jobs (in Thousands) on Payroll by Sector and Gender,



January 2020 to January 2025

Source: IWPR analysis of US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics. Data released on February 7, 2025, available at <https://www.bls.gov/data/>.

Notes: Jobs on payroll data are collected directly from employers and include anyone who is directly employed. Because independent contractors are not included in this count, payroll numbers may underestimate total employment; because multiple job holders—such as someone with two part-time jobs—will be counted as an employee each time, payroll numbers may overestimate total employment.

Table 1. The Distribution of Women’s Payroll Jobs and Women’s Share of All Payroll Jobs by Sector, January 2020 and January 2025

Sector	Women’s payroll jobs in each sector as percent of all women’s payroll jobs		Women’s percent of payroll jobs in each sector (% female)	
	Jan. 2020	Jan. 2025	Jan. 2020	Jan. 2025
Education and health services	24.9%	26.1%	77.3%	76.6%
Government	17.3%	17.4%	57.8%	58.5%
Professional and business services	13.0%	13.0%	45.9%	45.5%
Leisure and hospitality	11.8%	11.2%	53.2%	52.2%
Retail trade	10.1%	9.4%	49.5%	47.9%
Financial activities	6.6%	6.4%	56.6%	55.2%
Other services	4.2%	4.1%	53.4%	53.8%
Durable goods manufacturing	2.5%	2.4%	24.2%	24.4%
Wholesale trade	2.3%	2.4%	30.1%	30.6%
Transportation and warehousing	2.0%	2.2%	25.7%	26.3%
Nondurable goods manufacturing	2.3%	2.2%	36.0%	36.1%
Construction	1.3%	1.5%	13.0%	14.3%
Information	1.5%	1.5%	39.5%	39.7%
Utilities	0.2%	0.2%	24.2%	26.0%
Mining and logging	0.1%	0.1%	13.4%	14.0%
All payroll jobs	100%	100%	50.0%	49.9%

Source: IWPR analysis of US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics. Data released on February 7, 2025, available at <https://www.bls.gov/data/>.

Notes: Jobs on payroll data are collected directly from employers and include anyone who is directly employed. Because independent contractors are not included in this count, payroll numbers may underestimate total employment; because multiple job holders—such as someone with two part-time jobs—will be counted as an employee each time, payroll numbers may overestimate total employment.



Latinas have seen the largest post-pandemic increase of work in low-wage service occupations.

The economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic amplified the segregation of the economy, and particularly the overrepresentation of Black and Latina women in low-paying service jobs.²³ Differences in women's and men's distribution across industries and occupations and the lower pay in occupations that are predominantly female jointly account for over half of the gender wage gap.²⁴ Because pandemic-related job losses were particularly high in lower-paid service jobs while better-paying professional and managerial jobs faced fewer job losses, in the first two years following the pandemic, the gender wage gap marginally improved.²⁵ As the economy recovered, the wage gap widened significantly.²⁶ The widening of the wage gap reflects a number of causes,

including an increase in the paid hours worked by men, but also returns to the pre-COVID-19 economy. This includes the recovery of women's employment in service occupations—the broad occupational group with the lowest weekly full-time earnings in 2024 of just \$713 per week.²⁷



This shift was particularly pronounced for Latinas. In 2024, 25.0 percent of Latina full-time workers worked in service occupations, compared with 22.5 percent in 2020.²⁸ At the same time, the share of Latinas who worked in management, business, and financial occupations was marginally lower in 2024 than in 2020 (13.8 and 14.2 percent, respectively). By contrast, women of other races/ethnicities experienced a much smaller increase in working in service occupations but also an increase in the likelihood of working in management, business, and

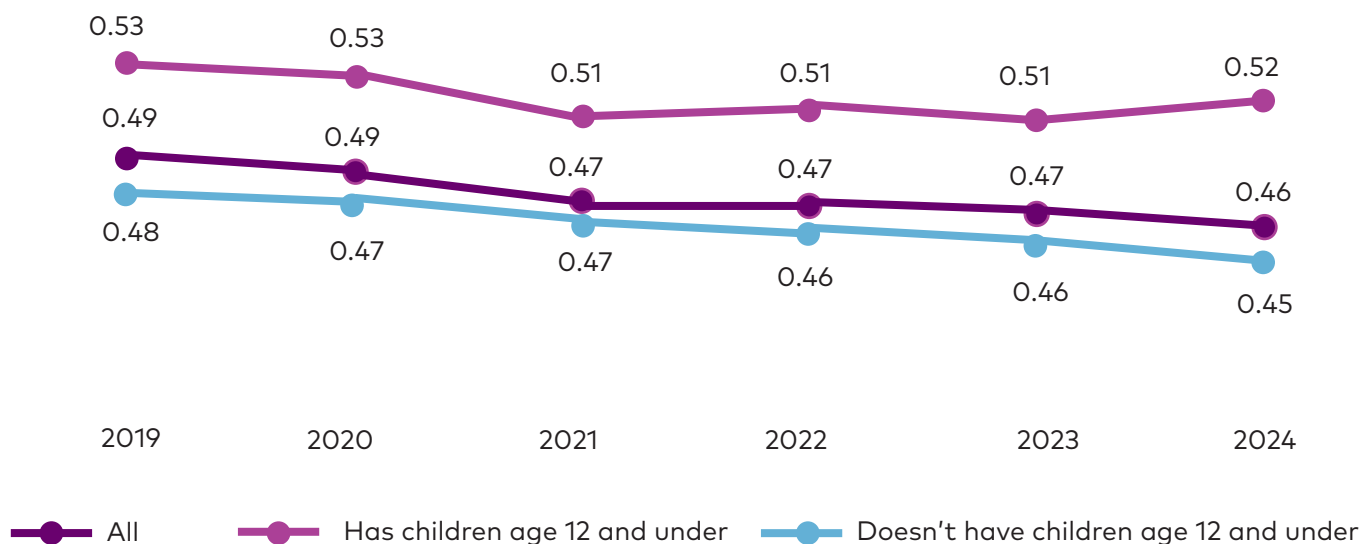
financial occupations. White women's share was 3 percentage points higher in 2024 than in 2020 (24.8 and 21.8 percent, respectively), Asian women's 1.6 percentage points (22.6 and 21.0 percent, respectively), and Black women's 1.4 percentage points higher (17.5 and 16.1 percent, respectively).²⁹

Occupational gender segregation fell after the pandemic but is highest, and has started to rise again, for parents of young children.

A more precise way of measuring the state of occupational segregation is the index of occupational dissimilarity.³⁰ The index measures how many women and men would have to change their occupations for women's share of the workforce in every single occupation to be the same as women's share of the total workforce. IWPR's analysis of the index for prime-age workers (25–54) and including anyone in the labor force suggests that occupations have become modestly more integrated since 2019. In 2019, the value of the index was 0.49, meaning that 49 percent of women and men would have needed to transition to different occupations to achieve gender parity. In 2024, the value of the index had fallen 3 percentage points to 0.46—still a high level of segregation but lower than previously (Figure 7).

Yet when analyzing trends separately for parents of children ages 12 or younger and other workers, it is noticeable that while in the first years of the pandemic occupational segregation declined for both those with children ages 12 or younger and for others, by 2024, the trends diverged (Figure 7). Segregation increased between mothers and fathers while continuing to decrease slightly between those with older or no children. Moreover, segregation between those with children under 13 is higher than gender segregation between other workers. These findings point to the persistent challenges mothers with younger children face in accessing economic opportunities. The burdens of caregiving, disruptions in child care, and the lack of flexible work options—challenges made especially visible during the COVID-19 pandemic—disproportionately impact mothers, reinforcing patterns of occupational segregation by gender.

Figure 7: Indices of Occupational Gender Dissimilarity by Parental Status, 2019–2024



Source: IWPR analysis of Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) microdata, IPUMS CPS, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.
Notes: Individuals in the labor force (age 25–54). Occupations are consistently classified using the 2010 Census occupational classifications.

Conclusions

Five years after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the dramatic collapse of the economy, the labor market has fully recovered, with employment and labor force participation rates surpassing pre-pandemic levels and unemployment rates falling to comparatively low pre-pandemic rates. However, the recovery has not eliminated pre-COVID gender and racial disparities in the labor market. While unemployment rates have declined across race/ethnicity, Black and Latina women continue to experience higher unemployment compared to White and Asian women. However, gaps have narrowed slightly since before the pandemic, pointing to improvements.

Despite some progress, the post-pandemic labor market remains gender-segregated. Women's employment gains have been strongest in traditionally female-dominated sectors such as education and health services. Yet their representation in male-dominated fields has also grown, likely a result of the proactive federal and state efforts to reduce discrimination, lack of information, and other barriers that have kept women's numbers low in higher-paying fields that do not require four-year college degrees.

Occupational segregation also remains more pronounced among parents, with mothers still being strongly segregated, reinforcing long-standing barriers to gender equality in employment opportunities. A key factor in women's labor force recovery has been the resurgence of jobs in the care sector, particularly in child care and nursing and residential care services. The delayed recovery of child care jobs was directly linked to the timing of the change in mothers' labor force participation, which dipped during the early years of the pandemic but has since rebounded as care services were restored. The employment recovery in these sectors underscores their critical role in supporting women's workforce engagement, especially for mothers, who bear a disproportionate share of caregiving responsibilities.

While the labor market has made significant strides, the pandemic revealed structural weaknesses in the care economy and highlighted the need for continued investments in child care and the care infrastructure, flexible work arrangements, and policies that address occupational segregation. Because of high levels of job segregation, it took substantially longer for women's employment to recover than men's. Women's slower job recovery may be a future factor in retirement inequality between women and men. Gaps in employment lead to lost earnings, lower wage growth, and hence, less capacity to build up retirement savings and assets.³¹ Closing these gaps will be crucial in ensuring that the labor market recovery translates into long-term gender equity and economic resilience for all workers.

This fact sheet was prepared by Ariane Hegewisch, Martha Susana Jaimes, PhD, Melissa Mahoney, PhD, and Cristy Mendoza. It was made possible with the support of Pivotal Ventures.

Endnotes

¹ In this report, we use the term Latina to refer to Hispanic or Latina women.

² "Proclamation on Declaring a National Emergency Concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Outbreak," White House proclamation (Washington, DC: March 13, 2020), <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/presidential-actions/proclamation-declaring-national-emergency-concerning-novel-coronavirus-disease-covid-19-outbreak/>.

³ Amanda Moreland et al., "Timing of state and territorial COVID-19 stay-at-home orders and changes in population movement—United States, March 1–May 31, 2020," *US Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 69 (35) (September 4, 2020), <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/pdfs/mm6935a2-H.pdf>.

⁴ US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2020. "Unemployment rate rises to record high 14.7 percent in April 2020," *The Economics Daily* (Washington, DC: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 13, 2020), <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2020/unemployment-rate-rises-to-record-high-14-point-7-percent-in-april-2020.htm#:~:text=Unemployment%20rate%20rises%20to%20record,U.S.%20Bureau%20of%20Labor%20Statistics.>

⁵ See, for example, US Women's Bureau "Bearing the Cost: How Overrepresentation in Undervalued Roles Hurt Women During the Pandemic" (Washington, DC: 2022) and C. Nicole Mason, Andrea Flynn, and Shengwei Sun, *Build(ing) the Future: Bold Policies for a Gender Equitable Recovery*, IWPR report #C491 (Washington DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2020), <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Policies-for-a-Gender-Equitable-Recovery-Finalism2.pdf>.

⁶ Ariane Hegewisch and Eve Mefferd, "The Weekly Gender Wage Gap by Race and Ethnicity: 2020," IWPR policy brief #C494 (Washington DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2021), <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2021-Weekly-Wage-Gap-Brief-1.pdf>.

⁷ Claire Ewing-Nelson, "Four Times More Women Than Men Dropped Out of the Labor Force in September," fact sheet (Washington DC: National Women's Law Center, October 2020), <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/september-jobs-fs1.pdf>.

⁸ Otis D. Duncan and Beverly Duncan, "A Methodological Analysis of Segregation Indexes," *American Sociological Review* 20 (2) (1955): 210-217, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2088328>.

⁹ IWPR analysis of US Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey; data for individuals 20 years and older released on February 7th, 2025.

¹⁰ As above.

¹¹ For an estimate of the pandemic on women's earnings, see Mark Drozd, Robert A. Moffitt, and Xinyu Zhao, "The Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic Recession on Less Educated Women's Human Capital: Some Projections," *Journal of Labor Economics* 42, no. 2 (2024): 289-323.

¹² See, for example, Joshua Montes, Christopher Smith, and Juliana Dajon, "'The Great Retirement Boom': The Pandemic-Era Surge in Retirements and Implications for Future Labor Force Participation," *Finance and Economics Discussion Series* (Washington, DC: Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.17016/FEDS.2022.081> and Katharine Abraham and Lea Rendell, "Where are the missing workers?," *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity Conference Drafts* March 30–31, 2023, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/BPEA_Spring2023_Abraham-Rendell_unembargoed.pdf.

¹³ See, for example, Andy Markowitz, "The Racial Retirement Gap in 7 Facts: Persistent disparities across American economic life squeeze Black workers' opportunities to save for retirement," *AARP Money*, October 18, 2023, <https://www.aarp.org/money/retirement/racial-savings-wealth-gap/#:~:text=Even%20among%20those%20private%2Dsector,of%20California%20Berkeley%20Labor%20Center.>

¹⁴ See, for example, Ran Liu and Siyun Gan, "Childcare facility closure and exacerbated gender inequality in parenting time during the COVID-19 pandemic," *Sociology* 58, no. 4 (2024): 985-1005, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00380385231224433> and Katherine Lim and Mike Zabek, "Women's labor force exits during COVID-19: Differences by motherhood, race, and ethnicity," *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 45, no. 3 (2024): 504-527, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10834-023-09916-w>. On differences in women's and men's participation in care work, see "Care Work After COVID-19: Men Help More, but Women Still Carry the Load," IWPR quick figure #Q114 (Washington DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research, February 2025), <https://iwpr.org/care-work-after-covid-19-men-help-more-but-women-still-carry-the-load/>.

¹⁵ For a critical discussion of assumptions about mothers leaving the workforce, see Claudia Goldin, "Understanding the economic impact of COVID-19 on women," *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, no. 1 (2022): 65-139, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/understanding-the-economic-impact-of-covid-19-on-women/>.

¹⁶ Liana Christin Landivar, William J. Scarborough, Leah Ruppner, Caitlyn M. Collins, and Lloyd Rouse, "Remote Schooling and Mothers' Employment During the COVID-19 Pandemic by Race, Education, and Marital Status," *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 9(3) (2023): 134-58, <https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2023.9.3.06>.

¹⁷ Elyse Shaw, C. Nicole Mason, Valerie Lacarte, and Erika Jauregui, "Holding Up Half the Sky Mothers as Workers, Primary Caregivers, & Breadwinners During COVID-19," IWPR brief #Q081 (Washington DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2020), <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Holding-Up-Half-the-Sky-Mothers-as-Breadwinners.pdf>.

¹⁸ US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2023. "Labor force characteristics by race and ethnicity, 2022," BLS Reports (Washington, DC: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023), <https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/race-and-ethnicity/2022/>.

¹⁹ The Current Employment Statistics estimates published on February 7, 2025, incorporated substantial revisions of prior estimates which had underestimated the number of payroll jobs in child care centers.

²⁰ See, for example, Rachel Wilensky, Alyssa Fortner, and Shira Small, "Federal Child Care Relief Funds: Increased Access and Supported Providers – Key Takeaways from Four States" (Washington DC: Center for Law and Social Policy, 2023); The Conference Board, "Child Care in State Economies-2024: A Report Series," <https://education.ced.org/child-care-in-state-economies?page=part-2>.

²¹ In 2021-2022, 37.1 million persons ages 15 and older provided eldercare; of these 59 percent were women. Of these eldercare providers, 24.7 percent were between the ages of 45 and 54, and 23.7 percent were 55 to 64 years old; slightly over a fifth (21.5 percent) also have dependent children. US Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Unpaid Eldercare in the United States 2021-2022: Data from the American Time Use Survey," news release, September 21, 2023, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/elcare.pdf>.

²² In January 2025, average hourly earnings for all employees—including everyone from manager to server and janitor—were \$22.57 in the leisure and hospitality sector, \$25.05 in retail, \$31.13 in transportation and warehousing, \$39.09 in construction, and \$52.39 in utilities; Federal Bank of St. Louis FRED Economic Data, based on US Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Employment Situation data released on February 7, 2025, <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/categories/11>.

²³ See, for example, US Women's Bureau, "Bearing the Cost: How Overrepresentation in Undervalued Jobs Disadvantaged Women During the Pandemic" (Washington DC: US Department of Labor, 2022), <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2022-11/BearingTheCostReportFactSheet.pdf>; Marina Zhavoronkova, Rose Khatta, and Mathew Brady, "Occupational Segregation in America" (Washington DC: Center for American Progress, March 29, 2022), <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/occupational-segregation-in-america/>.

²⁴ See Francine D. Blau and Lawrence Kahn, "The Gender Wage Gap: Extent, Trends, and Explanations," *Journal of Economic Literature* 55, no. 3 (2017): 789-865. See also Thomas B. Foster, Marta Murray-Close, Liana Christin Landivar, and Mark de Wolf, "An Evaluation of the Gender Wage Gap Using Linked Survey and Administrative Data," Center for Economic Studies Working Paper CES 20-34 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022), <https://www2.census.gov/ces/wp/2020/CES-WP-20-34.pdf>.

²⁵ Ariane Hegewisch, Miranda Petersen, and Nina Besser Doorley, "Gender and Racial Wage Gaps Worsened in 2023 and Pay Equity Still Decades Away," IWPR fact sheet #C527 (Washington DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research, September 2024), <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/IWPR-National-Wage-Gap-Fact-Sheet-2024.pdf>.

²⁶ Ariane Hegewisch et al., "Gender and Racial Wage Gaps Worsened in 2023."

²⁷ "Table A-2. Usual Weekly Earnings of Employed Full-Time Wage and Salary Workers by Intermediate Occupation, Sex, Race, and Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity and Non-Hispanic Ethnicity, Annual Average 2024" (Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, unpublished).

²⁸ 2024 data are IWPR calculations based on "Table A-2. Usual Weekly Earnings of Employed Full-Time Wage and Salary Workers" and Ariane Hegewisch and Eve Mefferd, "The Gender Wage Gap by Occupation, Race, and Ethnicity 2020," IWPR policy brief #C497 (Washington DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research, March 2021), <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2021-Occupational-Wage-Gap-Brief-v2.pdf>.

²⁹ As above.

³⁰ See Otis D. Duncan and Beverly Duncan, "A Methodological Analysis of Segregation Indexes." See also Ariane Hegewisch and Heidi Hartmann, "Occupational Segregation and the Gender Wage Gap: A Job Half Done," report (Washington DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2014), <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/C419.pdf>.

³¹ For an estimate of the pandemic on women's earnings, see Drozd et al., "The Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic Recession on Less Educated Women's Human Capital."

OUR MISSION

We win economic equity for all women and eliminate barriers to their full participation in society. As a leading national think tank, we build evidence to shape policies that grow women's power and influence, close inequality gaps, and improve the economic well-being of families.

