



**NATIONAL  
WOMEN'S  
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MAY 2020 | FACT SHEET

# After a Full Month of Business Closures, Women Were Hit Hardest By April's Job Losses

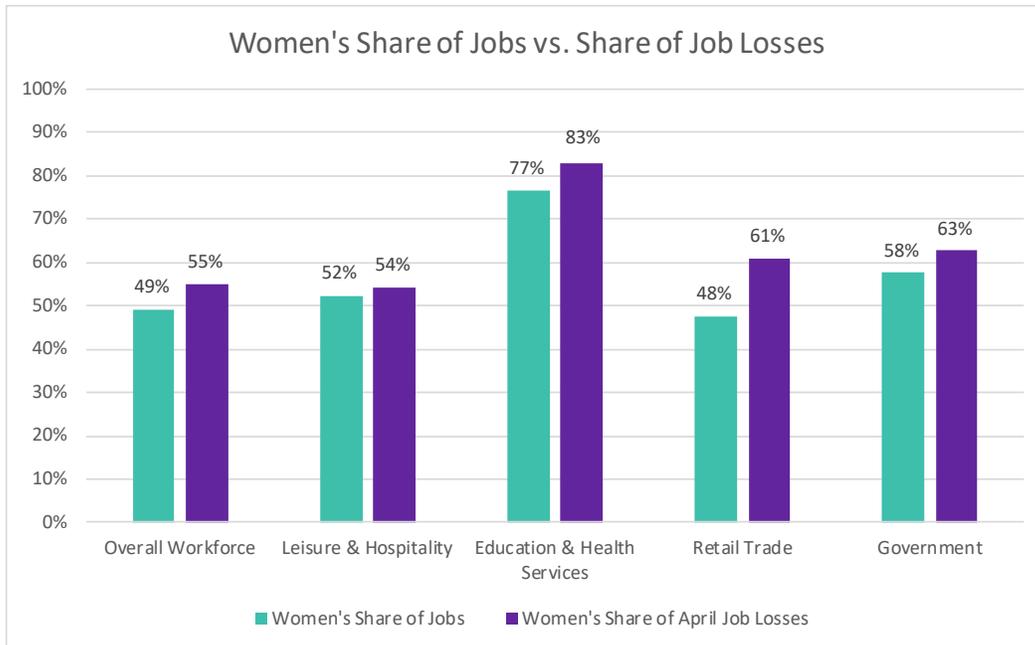
BY CLAIRE EWING-NELSON

The most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) monthly jobs data shows that the economy lost 20.5 million jobs between March and April 2020.<sup>1</sup> These numbers, based on survey results from mid-April, are the first to capture the effects of an entire month of business closures across the country due to COVID-19. The COVID-19 crisis has laid bare the disastrous consequences of longstanding racial and gender inequities, and women have proven particularly vulnerable to the pandemic's economic consequences. Women are overrepresented in the front-line workforce, making up the vast majority of workers risking their lives to provide health care, child care, and other essential services.<sup>2</sup> Women are also far more likely than men to work in part-time,<sup>3</sup> low-paid,<sup>4</sup> and/or tipped jobs,<sup>5</sup> meaning women were often struggling to make ends meet before the crisis hit—and faced a higher risk of losing their jobs as retail stores, restaurants, and other service sector businesses were forced to lay off workers or close their doors entirely.

## Women suffered the majority of April's massive job losses

Women made up 49% of the overall workforce, but accounted for 55% of job losses in April.<sup>6</sup> This was largely because they lost the majority of jobs in the industry sectors most affected by closures due to COVID-19:

- More than 1 in 3 (37%) of April's job losses came in the leisure and hospitality sector, which includes businesses such as restaurants and bars. Women lost more than 4.1 million leisure and hospitality jobs, accounting for 54% of job loss in this sector, though they make up only 52% of the industry workforce.<sup>7</sup>
- The education and health services sector, which includes jobs like teachers and nurses, lost over 2.5 million jobs. Women accounted for 83% (2.1 million) of those job losses, while making up 77% of the industry workforce.<sup>8</sup>
- Women lost nearly 1.3 million jobs in retail trade, making up 61% of job losses in that sector, despite making up less than half (48%) of the retail trade workforce.<sup>9</sup>
- Government employment also declined substantially last month, largely driven by losses in education jobs in local government and state government. Women lost 614,000 government jobs, accounting for 63% of all job loss in that sector, despite making up 58% of the government workforce.



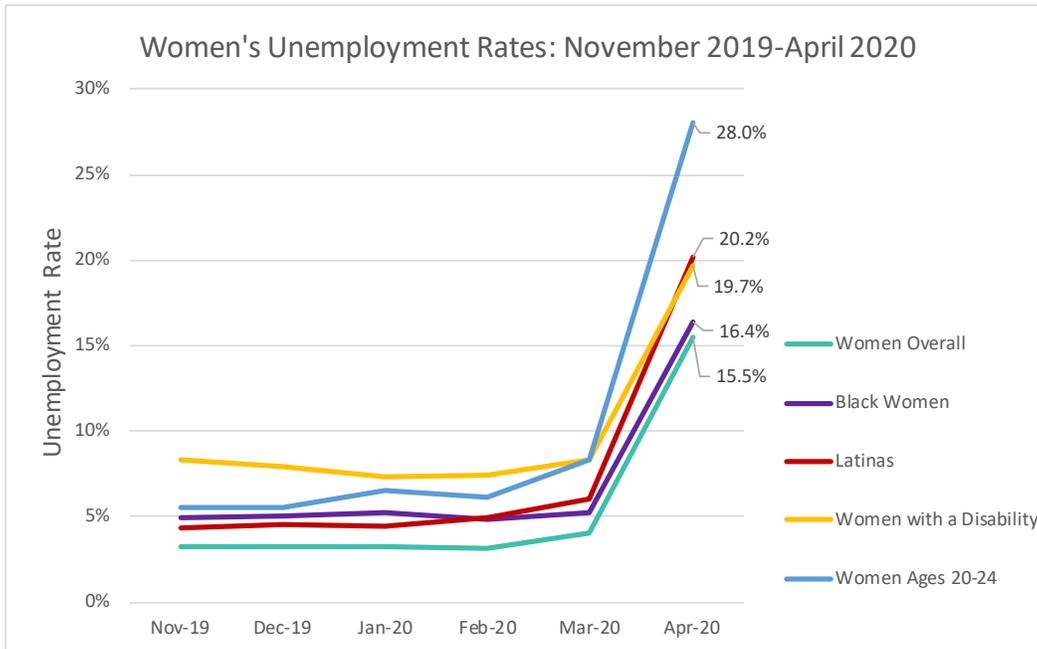
Source: NWLC calculations based on BLS April 2020 Employment Situation Summary Tables B-1 and B-5.

## April's job losses erased a decade of job gains for women

- Between the end of the Great Recession in July 2010 and the start of the COVID-19 crisis in February 2020, women gained 11.1 million jobs. In April 2020, the entirety of those gains was wiped out. By comparison, men gained 10.8 million jobs between July 2010 and February 2020 and saw 85% of those gains wiped out in April 2020.<sup>10</sup>
- Overall, more than 1 in 7 people were unemployed last month. Women (15.5%) were more likely than men (13.0%) to be unemployed.<sup>11</sup> The unemployment rate for women in April was 1.8 times higher than the highest unemployment rate for women during the Great Recession and subsequent recovery (8.4%). Since BLS began reporting data by gender (1948), women have never seen an unemployment rate in the double digits.<sup>12</sup>

## The overall unemployment rate masks higher unemployment rates for women of color and other demographics

- Women of color fared especially poorly in April, even in the context of huge job losses across demographics. For Black women, the unemployment rate increased to 16.4%,<sup>13</sup> and for Latinas it was 20.2%.<sup>14</sup> By comparison, the unemployment rate for white men was 12.4%.<sup>15</sup>
- In April, nearly one in five (19.7%) women with disabilities were unemployed – an increase of over eleven percentage points from March.<sup>16</sup>
- April's job losses hit younger women particularly hard, with the unemployment rate for women between the ages of 20 and 24 reaching 28% (compared to 24% for men in the same age group).<sup>17</sup>



Source: NWLC calculations based on BLS April 2020 Employment Situation Summary Tables A-1, A-2, A-3, A-6, and A-10. Unemployment rates for women overall, Latinas, and Black women are seasonally adjusted and are for women 20 years and over. The unemployment rate for women ages 20-24 is also seasonally adjusted. Unemployment rate for women with a disability is not seasonally adjusted and is for women ages 16 to 64.

## Many women worked part-time involuntarily in April

- In April, more than three in ten women (31%) working part-time wanted full-time work, but were unable to obtain it for economic reasons, such as their employer not giving them full-time hours.<sup>18</sup> In February, before the pandemic hit, only 11% of women working part-time were doing so for economic reasons.<sup>19</sup>
- Rates of involuntary part-time work were comparable for Black women (29%) and Asian women (26%). Latinas were even more likely to be working part-time involuntarily than women overall – nearly four in ten (39%) Latinas working part-time in April did so for economic reasons.<sup>20</sup>

1 NWLC calculations based on U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), April 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table B-1: Employees on nonfarm payrolls by industry sector and selected industry detail, available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t17.htm> (last visited May 8, 2020).

2 Hye Jin Rho, Hayley Brown, & Shawn Fremstad, Center on Economic and Policy Research, A Basic Demographic Profile of Workers in Frontline Industries (Apr. 2020), available at <https://cepr.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2020-04-Frontline-Workers.pdf>. Under CEPR's definition, women are 64 percent of all workers in front-line industries, including 77% of all health care workers, and 85% of workers in child care and social services.

3 Claire Ewing-Nelson, National Women's Law Center, Part-Time Workers Are Paid Less, Have Less Access to Benefits – and Most Are Women (Feb. 2020), available at <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Part-Time-Workers-Factsheet-2.26.20.pdf>.

4 Jasmine Tucker & Julie Vogtman, National Women's Law Center, When Hard Work Is Not Enough: Women In Low-Paid Jobs (Apr. 2020), available at [https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Women-in-Low-Paid-Jobs-report\\_pp04-FINAL-4.2.pdf](https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Women-in-Low-Paid-Jobs-report_pp04-FINAL-4.2.pdf).

5 National Women's Law Center, Women in Tipped Occupations, State by State (May 2019), <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Tipped-workers-state-by-state-2019.pdf>.

6 NWLC calculations based on BLS, April 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table B-1: Employees on nonfarm payrolls by industry sector and selected industry detail, available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t17.htm> (last visited May 8, 2020) and Table B-5: Employment of women on nonfarm payrolls by industry sector, seasonally adjusted, available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t21.htm> (last visited May 8, 2020). Figures are seasonally adjusted and capture total non-farm employment.

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Ibid.*

9 *Ibid.*

10 NWLC calculations based on BLS, Table B-1 historical data, available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesbtb1.htm> (last visited May 8, 2020), and Table B-5 historical data, available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesbtb5.htm> (last visited May 8, 2020).

- 11** NWLC calculations based on BLS, April 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-1: Employment status of the civilian population by sex and age, available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t01.htm> (last visited May 8, 2020). Figures are seasonally adjusted and for women and men ages 20 and over.
- 12** NWLC calculations based on BLS, Table A-1 historical data, available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab1.htm> (last visited May 8, 2020).
- 13** BLS, April 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-2: Employment status of the civilian population by race, sex, and age, available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t02.htm> (May 8, 2020). Figure is seasonally adjusted and is for Black women ages 20 and over.
- 14** BLS, April 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-3: Employment status of the Hispanic or Latino population by sex and age, available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.nr0.htm> (last visited May 8, 2020). Figures is seasonally adjusted and is for Latinas ages 20 and over.
- 15** BLS, April 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-2. Figure is seasonally adjusted and is for white men ages 20 and over.
- 16** NWLC calculations based on BLS, April 2020 Employment Situation Summary Table A-6: Employment status of the civilian population by sex, age, and disability status, not seasonally adjusted, available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t06.htm> (last visited May 8, 2020). Figures are for women ages 16 to 64.
- 17** NWLC calculations based on BLS, April 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-10: Selected unemployment indicators, seasonally adjusted.
- 18** NWLC calculations based on BLS, April 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-27: Persons at work in nonagricultural industries by age, sex, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, marital status, and usual full- or part-time status, available at <https://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/cpseea27.htm> (last visited May 8, 2020). Figures are not seasonally adjusted and are for women ages 16 and over.
- 19** NWLC calculations based on BLS, Table A-27 historical data. Data for all women working part-time available at <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/LNU02033505>. Data for women working part-time for economic reasons available at <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/LNU02033506>.
- 20** NWLC calculations based on BLS, April 2020 Employment Situation Summary, Table A-27.