

Quick Figure #Q096

June 2021

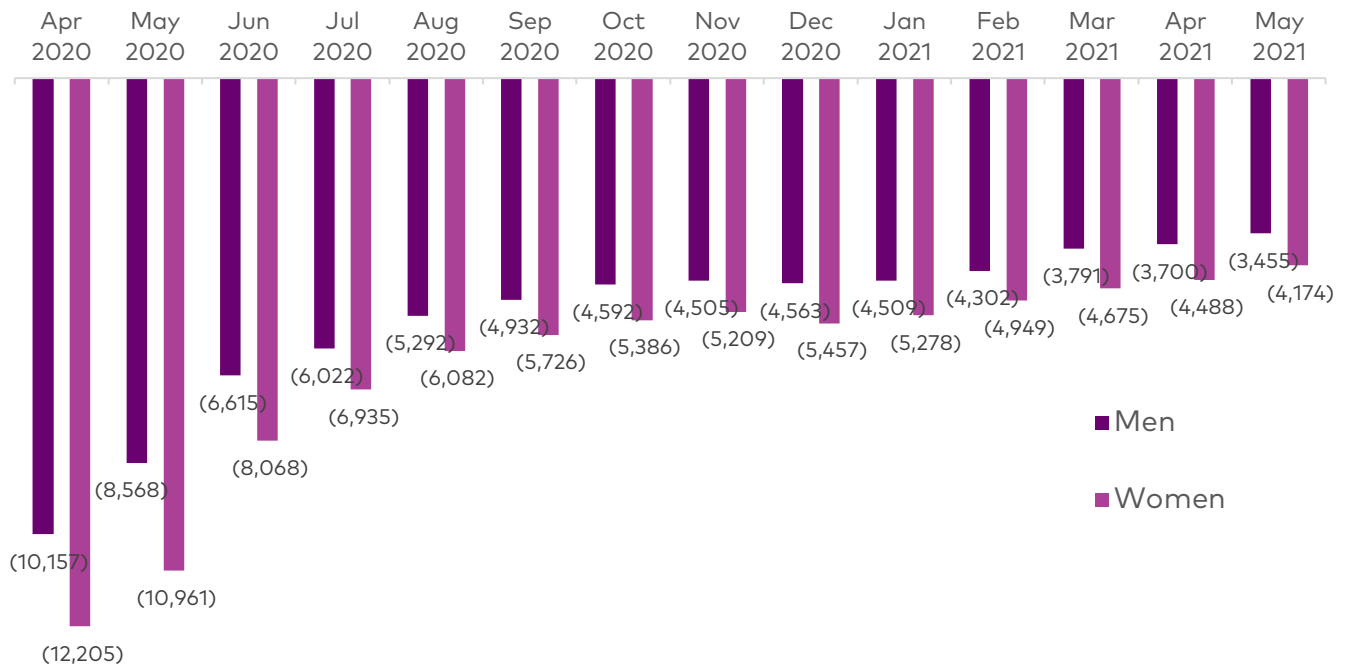
## **A SLOW CLIMB BACK FROM THE "SHE-CESSION": HIGH JOBS DEFICIT IN CHILD CARE AND SCHOOL SECTORS CONTINUES**

- Over half a million (559,000) new payroll jobs were added in May 2021, with the majority (56.2 percent, 314,000) going to women.
- Women gained most jobs in the sectors that continue to have the highest jobs deficits compared to February 2020—and women lost jobs in the financial activities and retail sectors.
- High jobs deficits in schools and child care centers point to difficulties for employed mothers and mothers wanting to return to work. Jobs in local government schools are still 556,000 below February 2020, and child care center jobs are at just 87 percent of pre-COVID levels while all jobs are back at 95 percent.
- The rate of unemployment fell for all adult women, but 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.
- Forty-four percent of adult women age 20 and older (1.6 million) have been unemployed for more than six months; another 1.8 million women have left the workforce since February 2020.

New jobs data<sup>1</sup> show that despite greater jobs gains in May 2021, women's recovery continues to lag behind that of men. Jobs on non-farm payrolls grew by 559,000 in May 2021, with women gaining 314,000 or 56.2 percent of new jobs. Yet, women's jobs on payroll are still 4.2 million below pre-COVID-19 levels, compared with 3.5 million fewer jobs on payroll for men (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. In May 2021, Women's Jobs on Payroll Were Still 4.2 Million Below Their Pre-Pandemic Level, Men's Were 3.5 million Below**

Deficit in Non-Farm Jobs on Payroll Compared to February 2020, by Gender (Thousands)



Source: IWPR analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics (June 4, 2021).

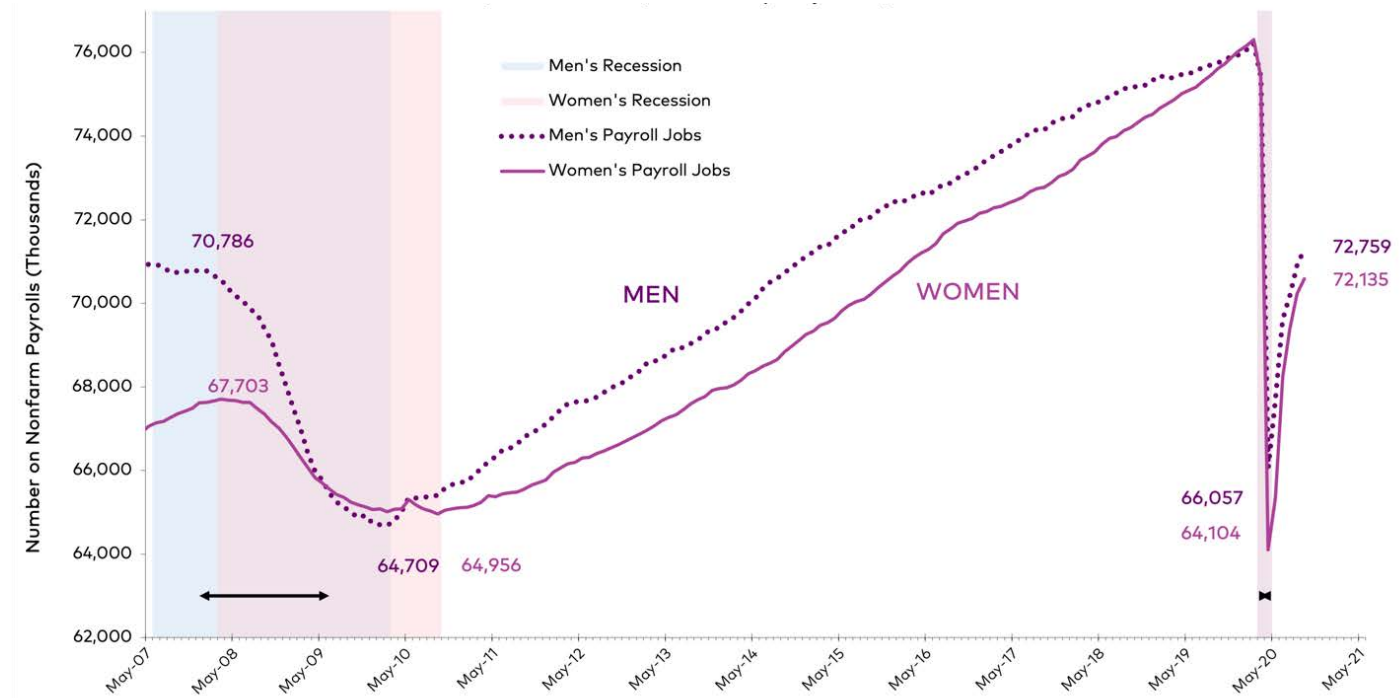
After steady growth in the number of women's jobs on employers' payrolls following the Great Recession, COVID-19-related job losses hit women much harder than men (Figure 2). Women had gained proportionately more jobs on payrolls than men after the Great Recession because of disproportionate job growth in Leisure and Hospitality and in Education and Health Services,<sup>2</sup> jobs which are disproportionately held by women, and are often low wage.<sup>3</sup> In February 2020, women held 53.3 percent of jobs on payroll in Leisure and Hospitality, 77.4 percent in Education and Health Services, 57.8 percent in Government,<sup>4</sup> the sectors that experienced the largest job losses because of the pandemic.

The jobs on payroll measure slightly overestimates women's share of total employment because it is based on a survey of employers of the number of workers they employ. This means that if someone holds jobs with two different employers (dual-job holders), they will be counted twice—and women are more likely than men to be dual jobholders—while self-employed workers are not counted, and men are more likely than women to be self-employed.<sup>5</sup> Yet, whether

full-time or part-time, each of the individual employment relationships provided income, and the lack of recovery highlights the continued difficulties for many women and their families.

### Figure 2. From the Great Recession to the "She-Cession": Women's and Men's Jobs on Payrolls from January 2007 to May 2021

Monthly Number of Women and Men on Payrolls, January 2007-May 2021 (In Thousands, Seasonally Adjusted)



Note: Official recessions from December 2007 (peak of business cycle) through June 2009 (trough of business cycle) and February 2020 (most recent peak) to present as determined by the National Bureau of Economic Research's Business Cycle Dating Committee.

Source: IWPR analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics (June 4, 2021).

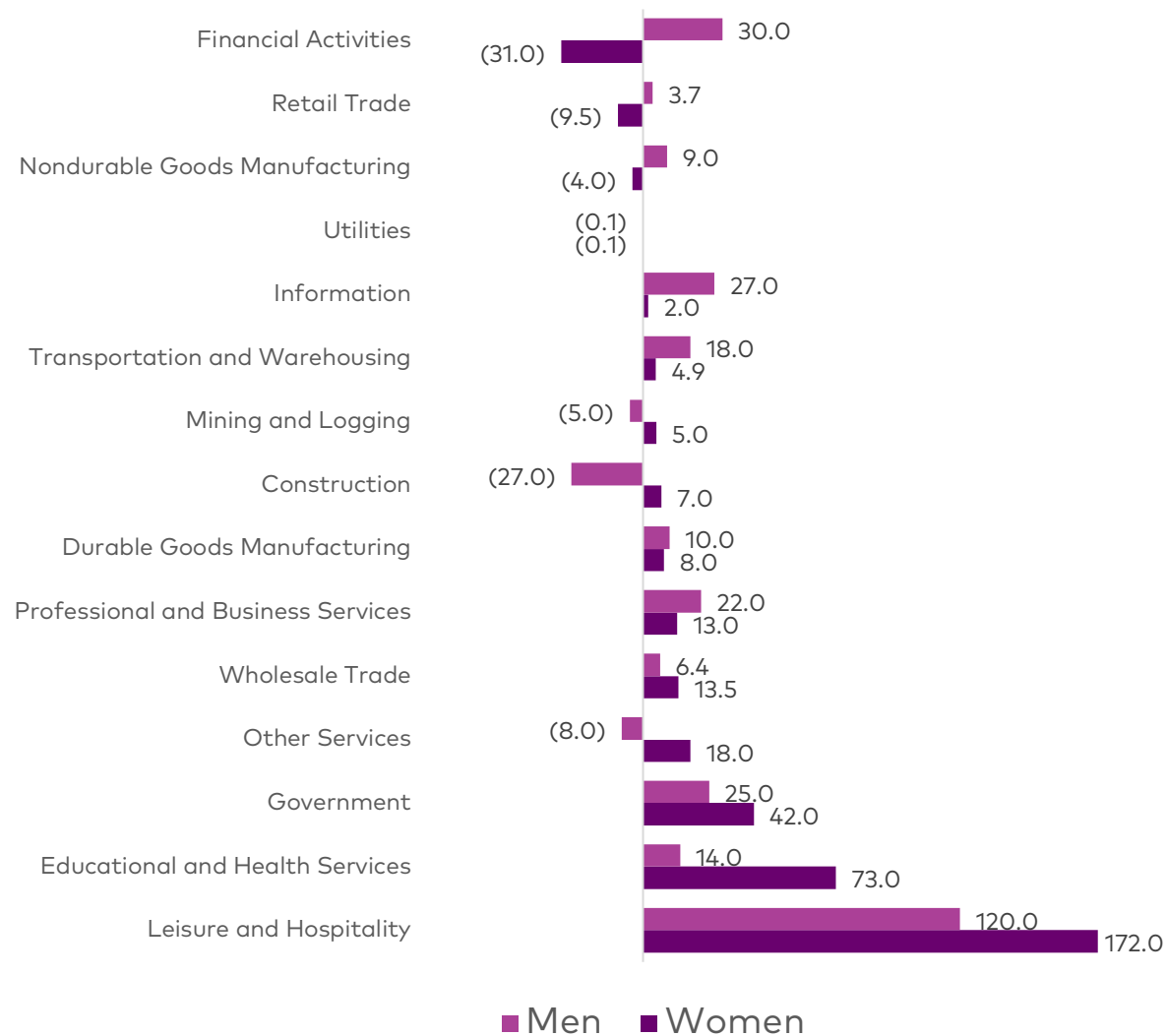
Between April and May 2021, jobs on payroll in Leisure and Hospitality, Education and Health Services, and Government saw the largest growth for women (Figure 3). Yet overall these sectors—and women's jobs in these sectors—are still far below pre-COVID-19 levels (Figure 4). In Leisure and Hospitality alone, women still face a jobs deficit of 1.4 million jobs in May, as well as a deficit of 0.9 million jobs in Education and Health Services and 0.7 million in Government.

Moreover, women also lost jobs between April and May 2021 in some sectors, including 31,000 in Financial Activities and 9,500 in Retail, further highlighting the precarious state of the COVID-19 recovery. Women are still 83,000 jobs below

their pre-COVID jobs in Financial Activities, while men's job numbers in this sector are 10,000 higher than they were pre-COVID (Figures 3 and 4).

### Figure 3. Women's Job Growth in May 2021 in Leisure and Hospitality, Education and Health Services, and Government

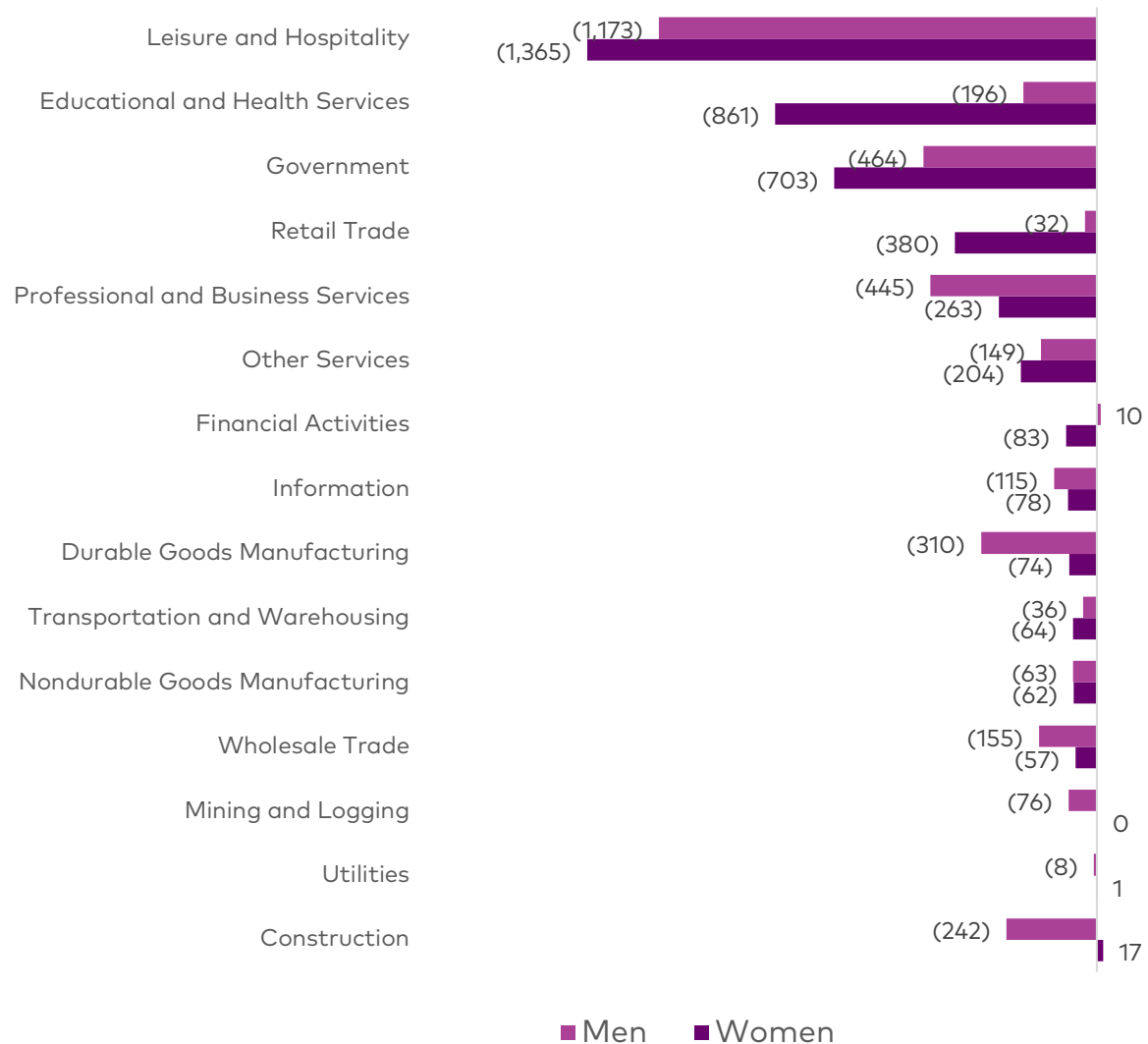
Change in Number of Jobs on Payrolls by Sector of Industry and Gender, April-May 2021 (In Thousands)



Source: IWPR analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics (June 4, 2021).

**Figure 4. Payroll Jobs Lag Millions Behind Pre-COVID Levels, especially in Leisure and Hospitality, Educational and Health Services, and Government**

Change in Number of Jobs on Payrolls for Women and Men, by Sector, February 2020–May 2021 (in Thousands)



Source: IWPR analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics (June 4, 2021).

Each of these sectors includes many subsectors. Differences in women's share of jobs in these subsectors provide the key to understanding differences in the impact of the pandemic. In Retail, for example, women were 72 percent of workers in Clothing and Apparel Stores before COVID—jobs in this subsector are still 23 percent below February 2020. By contrast, women were just one in three (32.7 percent) of workers in Building Material and Garden Supply Stores, and just one in five (20.1 percent) workers in Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers before the

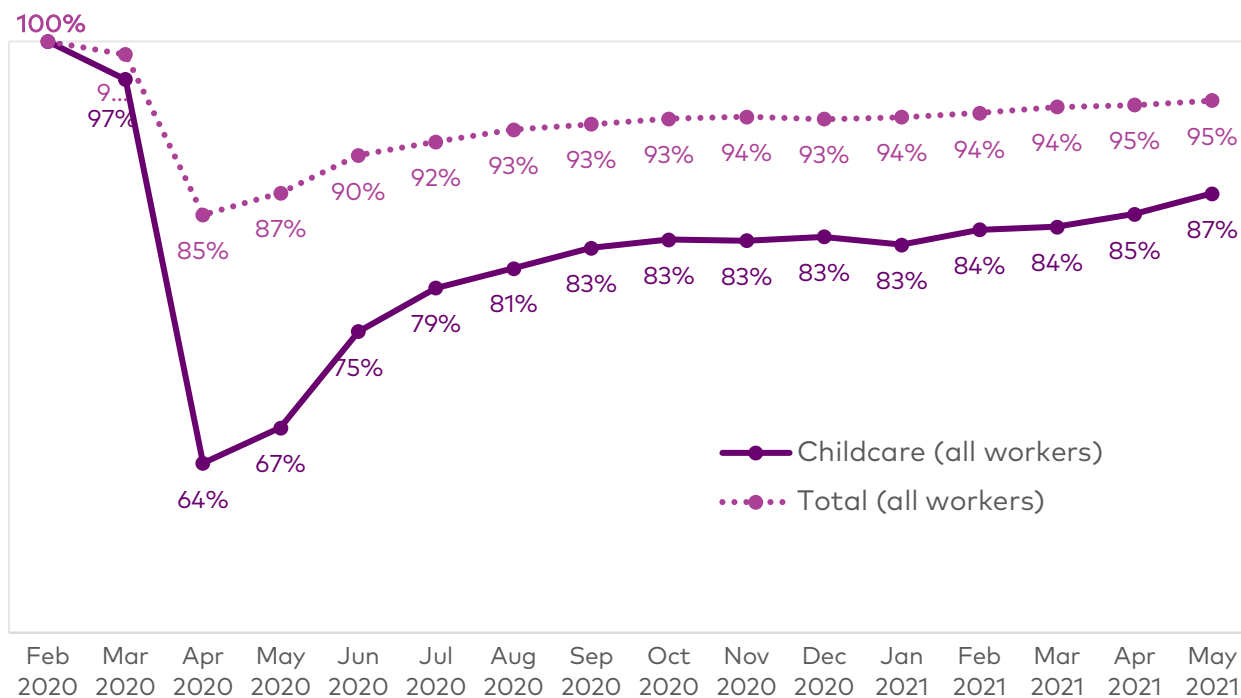
pandemic. These two subsectors have done much better than Clothing and Apparel Stores, however, with the former now having 10 percent more jobs than in February last year, and the latter within 3 percent of February 2020 levels.<sup>6</sup>

## SLOW PACE OF CHILD CARE RECOVERY AND SCHOOL REOPENINGS

Lack of recovery in Child Day Care Services (a subsector of Education and Health Services) and Local Schools (a subsector of Government) is poignant for women because they are much more likely than men to be the primary caregiver in their household and are also much more likely to work as child care workers. Jobs in public schools are still 556,000 jobs below February 2020 levels, and jobs in child care centers sit at 135,000 below February 2020 levels. Indeed, the child care jobs deficit is 2.6 times as large as the jobs deficit for the total economy (12.9 percent compared with below 5.0 percent pre-COVID levels, Figure 5).

**Figure 5. Recovery of Child Care Centers Jobs Lags Behind the General Recovery**

Recovery (Percent) of February 2020 Jobs on Payroll, February 2020 to May 2021



Source: IWPR Analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics (June 4, 2021).

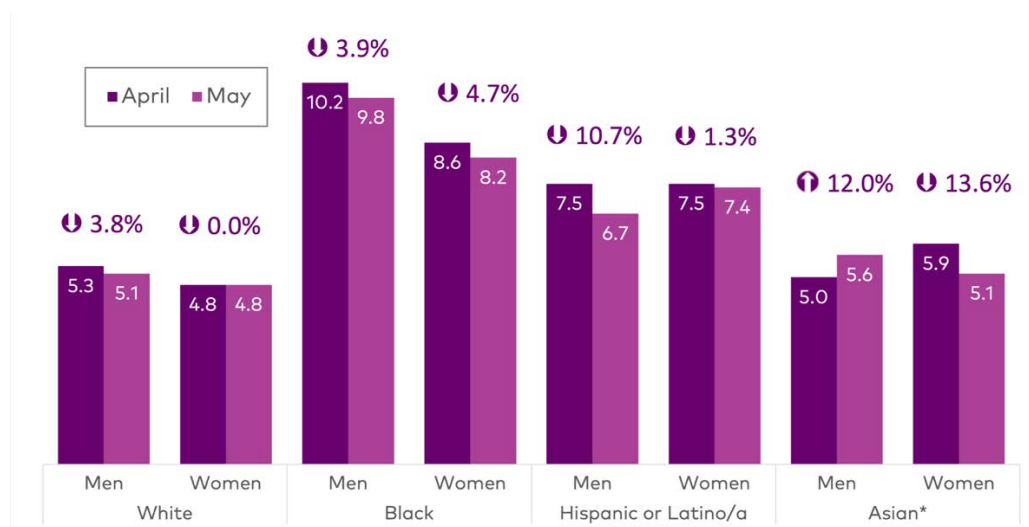
The slow pace of school and child care center reopening puts high burdens on parents, whether they are balancing work with child care or trying to return to work. At the same time, the slow recovery in these female-dominated sectors illustrates the slack demand for workers, and difficulties for unemployed women wanting to return to work.

## **UNEMPLOYMENT CONTINUES AT MUCH HIGHER RATES FOR BLACK AND HISPANIC/LATINA WOMEN**

The rates of unemployment improved slightly for both women and men in May 2021, from 5.6 to 5.4 percent for adult women, a 3.6 percent decrease from April 2021, and from 6.1 to 5.9 percent of adult men, a decrease of 3.3 percent. The rates of unemployment also fell for Asian, Black, and Latina women, but stayed unchanged for White women (Figure 6). Yet, 3.9 million adult women workers (20 and older, seasonally adjusted) are still unemployed, and the risk of unemployment continues to be substantially higher for Black and Hispanic or Latina women than it is for Asian or White women.<sup>7</sup> 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 6).

## Figure 6. Unemployment Rates Remain High for Black and Hispanic/Latina Women, at 8.2 and 7.4 Percent Respectively

Unemployment Rates for Women and Men Aged 20 Years and Older by Race and Ethnicity, April–May 2021 (Seasonally Adjusted\*), actual rates and percent change since previous month



Notes: \*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 (June 4, 2021).

The severity of the unemployment crisis is also shown by the high number of women who have been unemployed and looking for work for more than half a year: 1.6 million of adult unemployed women, or 44.0 percent, have been unemployed for more than six months. While the risk of long-term unemployment is similar for unemployed women of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, because Black and Hispanic/Latina women are so much more likely to be unemployed overall, they make up the majority of the long-term unemployed: 31.0 percent of all long-term unemployed women are Black, and 33.5 percent are Latinas, both more than twice their share of the total female labor force.<sup>8</sup>

## ADDED TO 1.6 MILLION LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED WOMEN ARE 1.8 MILLION WOMEN WHO LEFT THE WORKFORCE

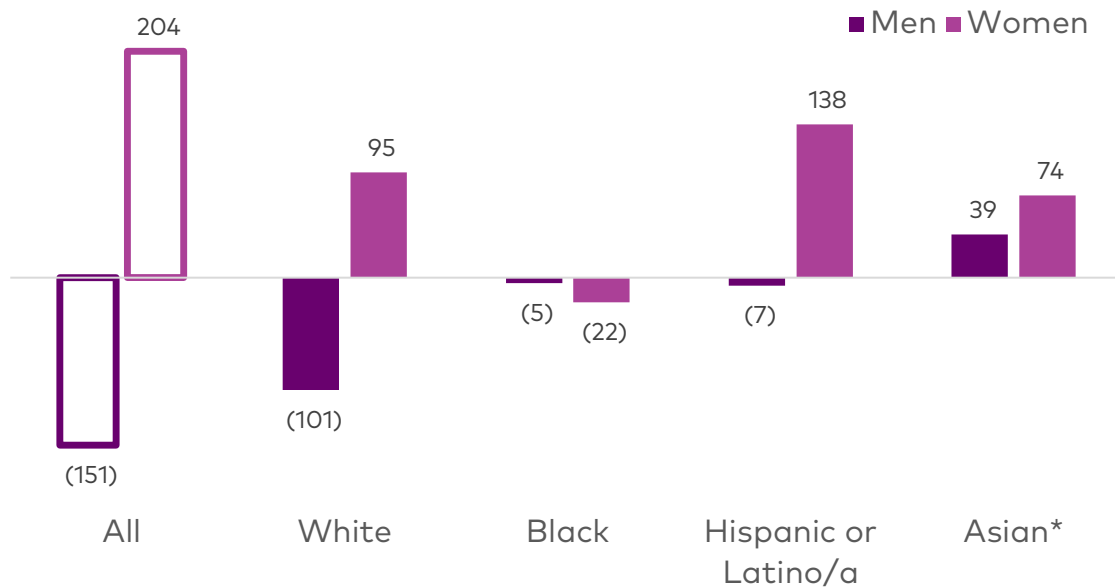
Only those who actively looked for work in the last four weeks are counted as unemployed; anyone who has given up hope of finding a job or who left work because of child care and other care-related issues is not included. Between April and May, over 200,000 adult women joined the labor force, but this average hides differences by race and ethnicity, with Latinas, White women, and Asian women



seeing growth, and Black women seeing a decline in civilian labor force numbers (Figure 7).

**Figure 7. Positive Labor Force Growth for Adult Women Hides Divergent Patterns for Women by Race and Ethnicity**

Change in Number in Civilian Labor Force, Ages 20 and Older by Gender, Race, and Ethnicity, April-May 2021 (Seasonally Adjusted\*, Thousands)

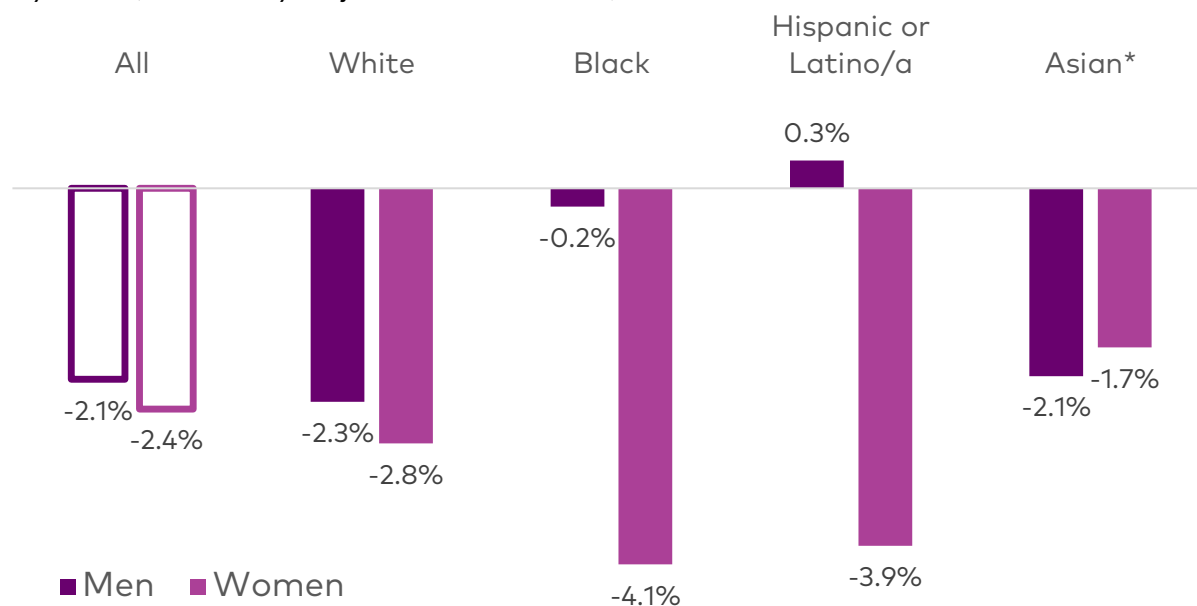


Notes: \*Data for Asians is not seasonally adjusted because seasonally adjusted data for Asian workers is not published by gender. Source: IWPR analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey Data (Accessed June 4, 2021).

Altogether 1.8 million fewer women and 1.7 million fewer men were in the civilian labor force in May 2021 compared with February 2020, either employed or actively looking for work. Since February 2020, adult women of each of the major racial and ethnic groups have been more likely to leave the workforce than men. Proportionately, the number of Black women in the labor force saw the biggest decline since pre-COVID, of 4.1 percent, while the number of Black men in the labor force declined by just 0.2 percent. The loss of jobs—and the constraints of parenthood—are more likely to manifest as labor market exits for women and as particularly high unemployment rates for Black men (see Figure 8). Hispanic or Latina women's labor force also declined strongly (by 3.9 percent) while the number of Hispanic or Latino men in the labor force grew.

## Figure 8. Black and Hispanic/Latina Women Forced Out of the Labor Market at High Rates

Percent Change in Number in Civilian Laborforce, Ages 20 and Older, February 2020-May 2021 (Seasonally Adjusted\*, Thousands)



Notes: \*Data for Asians are not seasonally adjusted because seasonally adjusted data for Asian workers is not published by gender.

Source: IWPR analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey Data (Accessed June 4, 2021).

## PUBLIC INVESTMENTS ARE NEEDED TO BUILD BACK A BETTER ECONOMY FOR WOMEN

Returning to work is likely to be difficult for those who have been unemployed for several months or left the workforce altogether. Not all jobs lost during the pandemic will come back, and some that were lost provided such poor wages and conditions that returning to these jobs will only perpetuate economic insecurity and inequality. The recovery effort must be designed to support the many women returning to paid employment by investing in job retraining initiatives and other social supports that help women access good jobs with family-sustaining wages.<sup>9</sup> As a cornerstone of the recovery, child care must be made accessible to all who require child care services, and be appropriately valued to ensure that child care workers earn a living wage. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the fault lines of gender and racial inequities in the economy. The recovery provides the opportunity, through targeted public investments, to build back better and generate long-term economic security for all women and their families.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Economic News Release: Employment Situation," June 4, 2021, <<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empisit.toc.htm>> (accessed June 4, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Philip Bump, "This Is What the Trump Economy Looks Like," *Washington Post*, December 6, 2019, <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/12/06/this-is-what-trump-economy-looks-like/>> (accessed June 4, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Elyse Gould and Melat Kassa, *Low-Wage, Low-Hours Workers Were Hit Hardest in the COVID-19 Recession: The State of Working America 2020 Employment Report*, Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute (2020) <<https://www.epi.org/publication/swa-2020-employment-report/>> (accessed June 6, 2021).

<sup>4</sup> See Table 1 in Ariane Hegewisch and Zohal Barsi, "Economy Adds More Jobs for Women Than Men, But Women Still 8 Million Jobs-on-Payroll Below February and Majority of All Who Lost Jobs," Quick Figure, IWPR #Q084 (Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2020), <<https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2020-July-Jobs-Day-QF.pdf>>.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Women in the Labor Force: A Databook* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, 2019), <<https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/womens-databook/2019/home.htm>> (accessed June 4, 2021). The Current Population Survey, which includes all workers and counts every person only once, provides a better estimate of individual women's share of the labor force. In May 2021, this was 47.0 percent; IWPR calculation based on Table A1 in U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Economic News Release: Employment Situation," June 4, 2021, <<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empisit.t01.htm>> (accessed June 4, 2021).

<sup>6</sup> IWPR analysis not shown elsewhere, based on U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Economic News Release, "Employees on Nonfarm Payrolls by Industry Sector and Selected Industry Detail," series CES4244100010, CES4244800010 CES4244400010, June 4, 2021.

<sup>7</sup> IWPR calculation based on U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Table A-36. Unemployed Persons by Age, Sex, Race, Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity, Marital Status, and Duration of Unemployment (May 2021)," Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey, June 4, 2021 <<https://www.bls.gov/web/empisit/cpseea36.htm>> (accessed June 4, 2021).

<sup>8</sup> In May 2021, Black women were 14.2 percent of the adult female labor force, and Hispanic/Latina women 16.4 percent; IWPR calculations based on Tables A1 and A2 from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Economic News Release," June 4, 2021.

<sup>9</sup> See National Skills Coalition, "Skills for an Inclusive Economic Recovery," Washington, DC: National Skills Coalition (2020) <<https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resource/publications/skills-for-an-inclusive-economic-recovery/>> (accessed June 4, 2021).

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