

Women at Work 2022:

Full recovery from the
pandemic has proven elusive

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Executive Summary

It's been shown that women workers took a much bigger hit than men during the pandemic. More than 10.6 million women lost their jobs or left the labor force, compared to 9 million men.

Workers of both sexes are recovering, with 20 million jobs added since April 2020¹.

But a deeper look into the numbers reveals that the recovery has been uneven. The ADP Research Institute examined gains made by men and women since the pandemic began and found some stark differences.

The initial pain of the pandemic erased gains made in women's employment over recent decades. That means women are still playing catch-up during the current job recovery, thanks to the greater losses they sustained at the beginning of the pandemic.

Women are losing ground, too, in industries where they've been dominant – health care and hospitality and leisure.

Our study looked at employment by gender in those industries from March 2020 through March 2022 to see where disparities in the job recovery exist.

¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (April 2022). All employees, thousands, total private, seasonally adjusted.



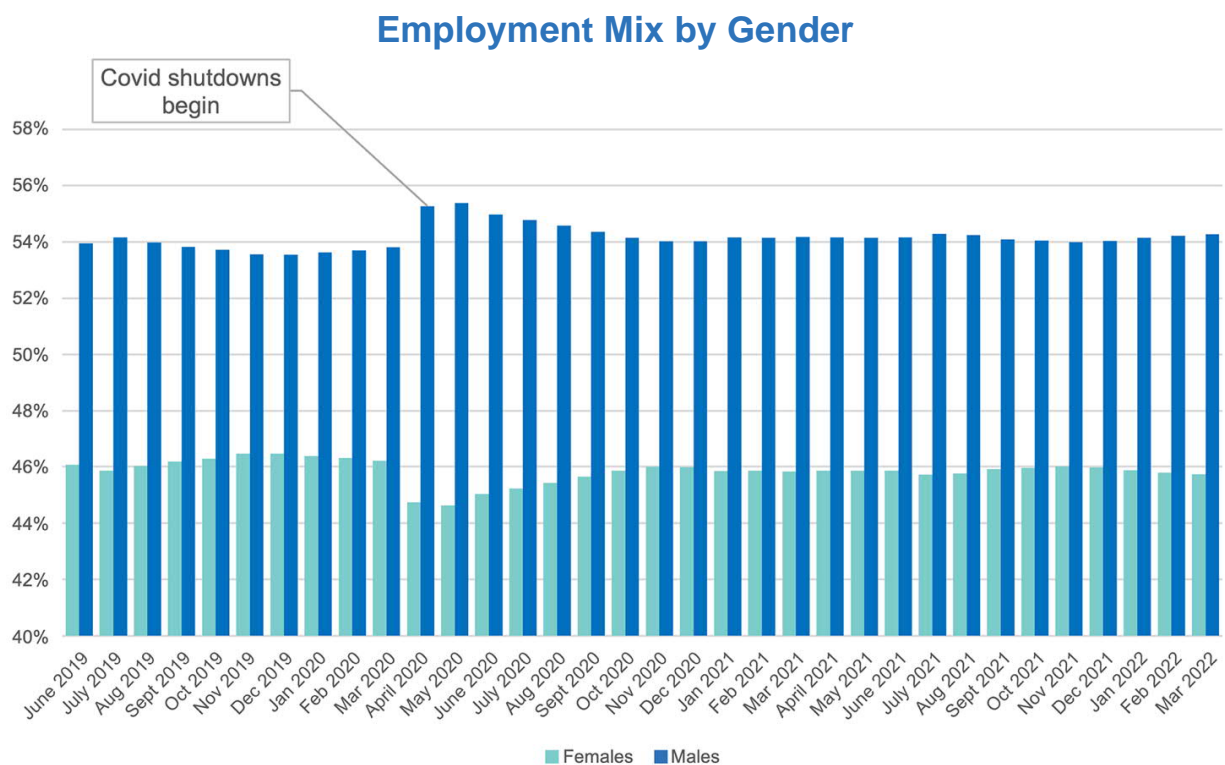
Employment Trends

Women Aren't Rushing to Rejoin the Labor Market

People are returning to the job market, but men are coming back in greater numbers.

In March 2020 of the ADP sample, women made up 46.2 percent of the workforce; men accounted for 53.8 percent.

Since then, women have lost ground. As of March 2022, women were 45.7 percent of the workforce and men were 54.3 percent.



The percentages might seem small, but they translate to hundreds of thousands of workers. If the employment mix had remained constant during the pandemic, it would equate to an additional 300,000 jobs for women today.

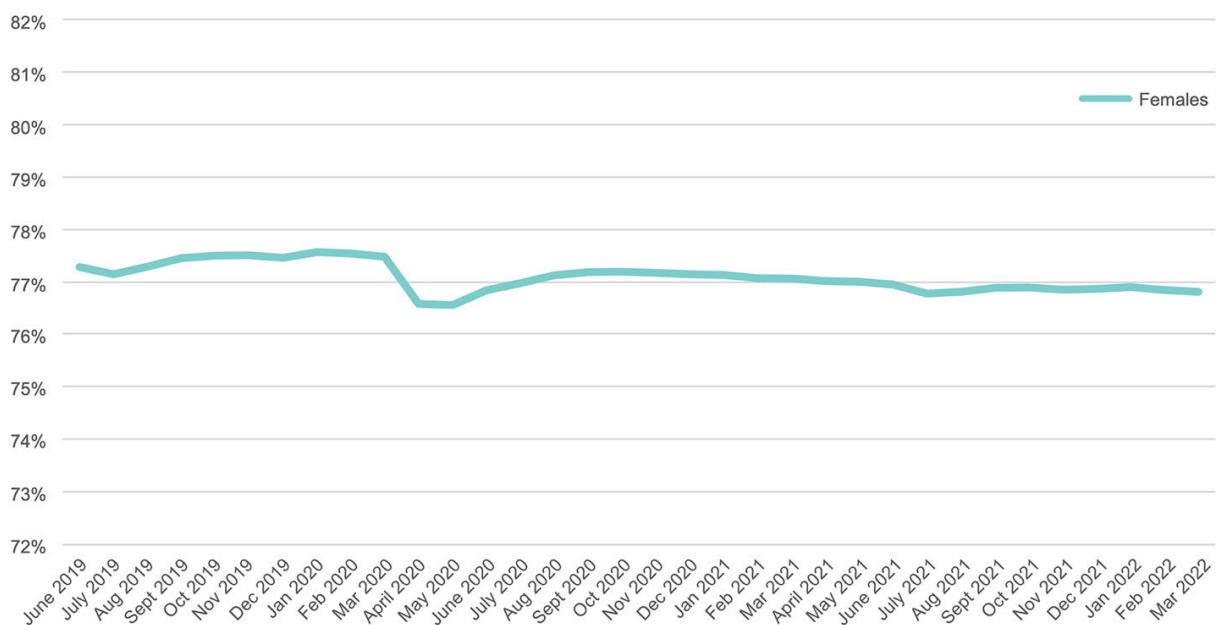
Women Are Losing Ground in Important Industries

The disparity is eating away at the number advantages women have long held in certain sectors, including health care and leisure and hospitality.

While men and women have largely recovered lost ground in certain sectors, such as information technology and professional services, women are lagging elsewhere.

In March 2020, 77.5 percent of health care industry workers – including doctors, nurses and dentists – were women. By March 2022, their industry share had fallen to 76.8 percent.

Health Care Industry – Female Employment



That loss of job share for women translates to about 144,000 health care jobs, according to ADP payroll records.

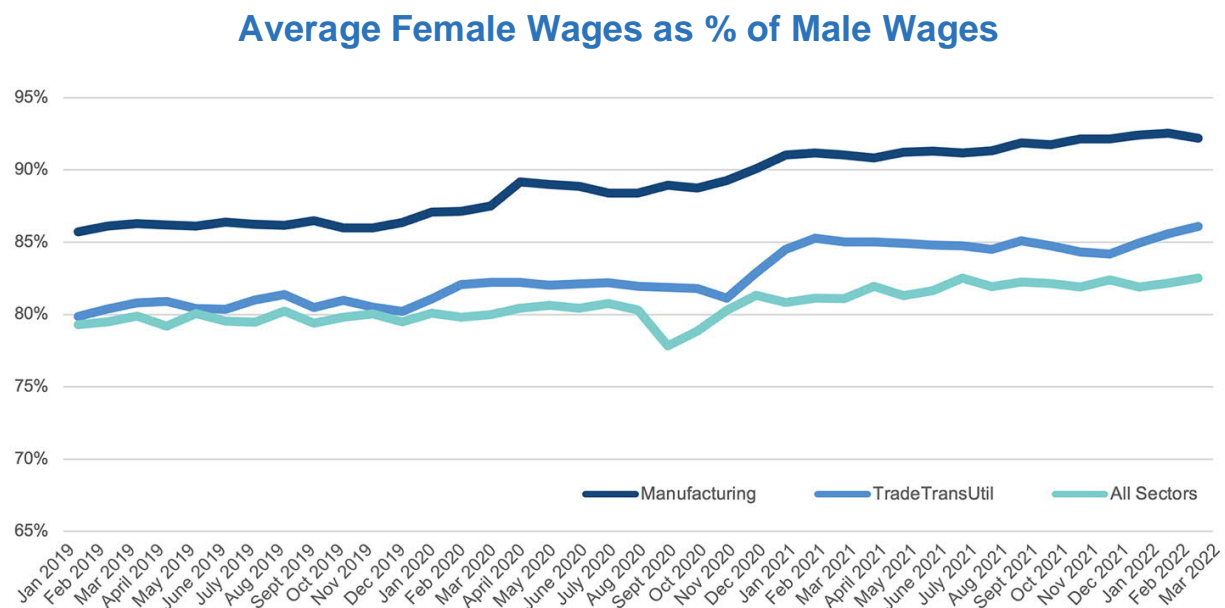
At restaurants, hotels, movie theaters and other leisure and hospitality employers, women held 49.8 percent of the industry's 16 million jobs before the pandemic hit.

Now, they're down to 49.2 percent, while men, again, have gained ground. The percentage shift amounts to 100,000 jobs lost by women.

Wage Trends

Women Are Closing the Wage Gap, But at a Cost

It's not all bad news for women. Even during the pandemic, they continued to narrow the wage gap and now earn 83 percent of what men do, up from 80 percent in January 2019.



Then again, those salary gains might have come at a cost – fewer jobs held by women. The low-wage earners which are over-represented by women in the workforce experienced the greatest job losses during the pandemic. The loss of low-wage jobs for women will inherently narrow the wage gap.

Manufacturing and trade represent industries where the wage gap has improved the greatest for women.

In manufacturing, the wage gap shrunk from 86 percent in January 2019 to 93 percent in March 2022. Trade showed a similar leap in gender pay equity, with the gap narrowing to 80 percent from 86 percent, over the same timeframe.

In other industries, there is greater room for improvement. For example, in information and finance and insurance, which had comparatively less job loss during the pandemic, the wage gap essentially remained and has been idling in the lower 70 percentile range for some years now. Jobs in these industries can be done remotely and losses weren't as severe compared to industries where there was upheaval in low-paying positions.

Conclusion

Women sustained greater job losses than men early in the pandemic and have struggled to rejoin the workforce during the recovery.

Conventional wisdom offers some possible reasons for women's slow return to the workforce. Many are primary care givers who need to be at home more due to disruptions to schools and daycare.

The gender wage gap provides a somewhat more positive outlook on pay disparities between men and women as the gap slowly narrows. However, the gains in pay equity for women have been uneven across the industries. Pay equity remained stagnant in industries which had a lower impact to employment such as finance and information.



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