



Women's Council
· Wisconsin ·

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SINGLE MOTHERS

OVERVIEW

The COVID-19 pandemic has heavily impacted occupations where women's employment is highly concentrated such as the hospitality, leisure, and retail industries. Already on the economic margins, many single mothers face increased economic risk and uncertainty. This factsheet looks at the risk factors and available data on the socio-economic impact of the pandemic on single mothers.

- 66% of low-wage jobs lost during the pandemic were occupied by women nationally [1]
- Women account for 55% of all jobs lost across the U.S since the beginning of the pandemic [2]
- Wisconsin has nearly 130,000 single mother households,* over 1 in 5 households with minor children [8]

▶ FAST FACTS (U.S)

1 IN 5 CHILDREN LIVE IN SINGLE MOTHER HOUSEHOLDS [3]



30% OF SINGLE MOTHER LED HOUSEHOLDS ARE LIVING IN POVERTY* [3]



WHEN RACE IS INCLUDED, EMPLOYMENT DISPARITIES ARE WORSE FOR SINGLE MOTHERS OF COLOR

SINGLE MOTHERS IN THE LABOR FORCE, FROM SEPTEMBER 2019 TO SEPTEMBER 2020 BY RACE/ETHNICITY [4]

White: 78.8% down to 73%

▼ **5.8% DECREASE**

Black: 72.5% down to 62%

▼ **10.5% DECREASE**

Hispanic: 76.5% down to 65.8%

▼ **10.7% DECREASE**

***BLACK AND HISPANIC WORKERS SAW A DROP IN EMPLOYMENT ALMOST DOUBLE THAT OF WHITE WORKERS**

"Job loss is due to the collapse of sectors where low-income women are concentrated, and single mothers are concentrated in low-wage jobs."

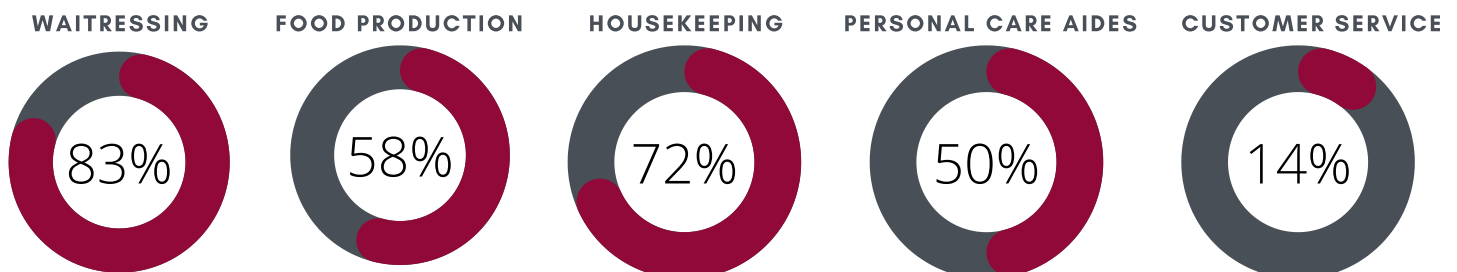
Ariane Hegewisch, Institute for Women's Policy Research

92% of childcare workers are women
40% of childcare workers are women of color

1 IN 5 CHILDCARE WORKERS HAVE BECOME UNEMPLOYED SINCE FEBRUARY 2020 [5]

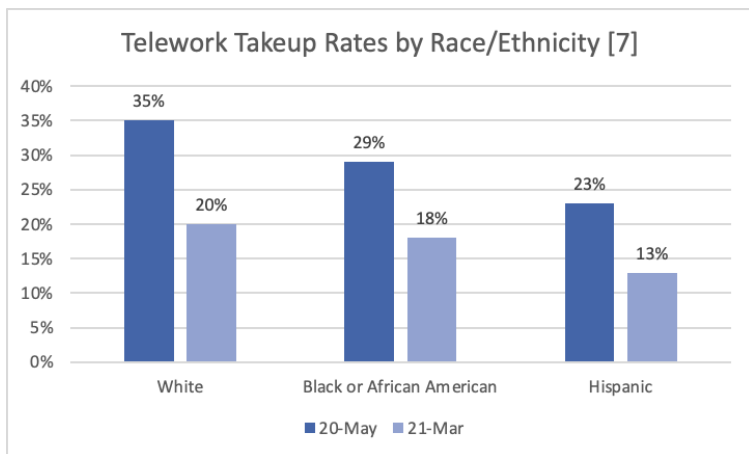
SINGLE MOTHERS HIT HARD BY JOB LOSS EARLY IN THE PANDEMIC

Percent of single mothers in selected low-wage jobs that became unemployed, April 2020 [3]



WORKING FROM HOME IS NOT ALWAYS POSSIBLE

Low-wage jobs often do not allow workers that ability to telework or work from home. This disproportionately affects women and women of color as they are the largest demographic of low-wage workers. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that 49% of white workers have the ability to work from home along with 40% for Black and 29% for Hispanic workers [6]. When looking at the take up rates of the ability to work from home during the pandemic, we see the same disparities between race/ethnicity.



RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

➤ Hope Network for Single Mothers

The Hope Network is a resource for single mothers in the Milwaukee area. This organization helps educate and provide financial support to single mothers in need.

<https://www.hopenetworkinc.org/>

➤ Wisconsin Department of Families and Children

The Wisconsin Department of Families and Children offers a range of support for single mothers and families in need across the state. Assistance programs exist for housing, employment, childcare, and many other areas of need for single mothers.

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/w2/parents/supportive-services>

➤ Wisconsin Works (W-2)

Wisconsin Works is an assistance program for low-income and/or unemployed parents in Wisconsin. This program not only offers financial support, but also provides educational support for sustainable financial security.

<https://www.benefits.gov/benefit/1684>

Notes on Data

When compiling this factsheet, data on single mothers was particularly hard to find. Real time data does not often exist, much of what we will learn on the socio-economic impact of the pandemic is likely underway and unreleased. Census data is currently available for years 2019 and earlier, while 2020 data will not be released until September 2021. Women faced and adapted to many previously uncharted challenges in work and family life due to the pandemic. Nationally, new data and reports are beginning to appear on issues of women's social and economic experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as paid and unpaid work, childcare, caregiving, mental health, and the challenges of potential return to work, as well as different subgroups of women (race, ethnicity, mothers, low-wage workers, etc.). We hope to report on these issues as new data and research becomes available.



The Wisconsin Women's Council promotes initiatives to empower women, conducts research on the status of women and engages in unique partnerships to address barriers and inequalities affecting Wisconsin women. The Council is comprised of 15 members appointed by the Governor and Legislative leaders.

Patty Cadorin, Chair
Christine Lidbury, Executive Director
Madelyn Adler, Research Assistant

*For purposes of this report, single mothers are those counted by the US Census Bureau as female heads of households, with their own children aged 18 or younger, no spouse present.

Sources:

- [1] National Women's Law Center, "When Hard Work is Not Enough: Women in Low-Paid Jobs", released April 2, 2020. <https://nwlc.org/resources/when-hard-work-is-not-enough-women-in-low-paid-jobs/>
- [2] National Women's Law Center, "All of the Jobs Lost in December were Women's Jobs", released January 8, 2021. <https://nwlc.org/resources/all-of-the-jobs-lost-in-december-were-womens-jobs/>
- [3] Henderson, Tim, "Single Mothers Hit Hard by Job Loss," Pew Charitable Trust, Stateline Article, May 26, 2020. Ariane Hegewisch quote as printed here.
- [4] Pew Research Center, "In the Pandemic, the Share of Unpartnered Moms at Work Fell More Sharply than Among Other Parents", released November 24, 2020. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/11/24/in-the-pandemic-the-share-of-unpartnered-moms-at-work-fell-more-sharply-than-among-other-parents/>
- [5] Third Way Report, "Child Care in Crisis", February 24, 2021. <https://www.thirdway.org/memo/child-care-in-crisis>
- [6] U.S Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, News Release, "Monthly Labor Review: Ability to Work From Home," June 2020. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/>
- [7] U.S Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, News Release, "Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Employment Situation News Release and Data," April 2021. <https://www.bls.gov/covid19/effects-of-covid-19-pandemic-and-response-on-the-employment-situation-news-release.htm>
- [8] US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, S1101: Households and Families, 2019 1-Year Estimate.

Other Supporting Sources:

- Institute for Women's Policy Research, "Women and the COVID-19 Pandemic: Five Charts and a Table Tracking the 2020 Shecession by Race and Gender," Quick Figure #Q094, January 2021. <https://iwpr.org/research/#Q094>
- US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, News Release, "The Employment Situation-January 2021," USDL-21-0365, released March 5, 2021. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/>