

Covid, Carework and Gender

Jerry A. Jacobs

Department of Sociology
University of Pennsylvania

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Experiments are suppose to vary just one condition

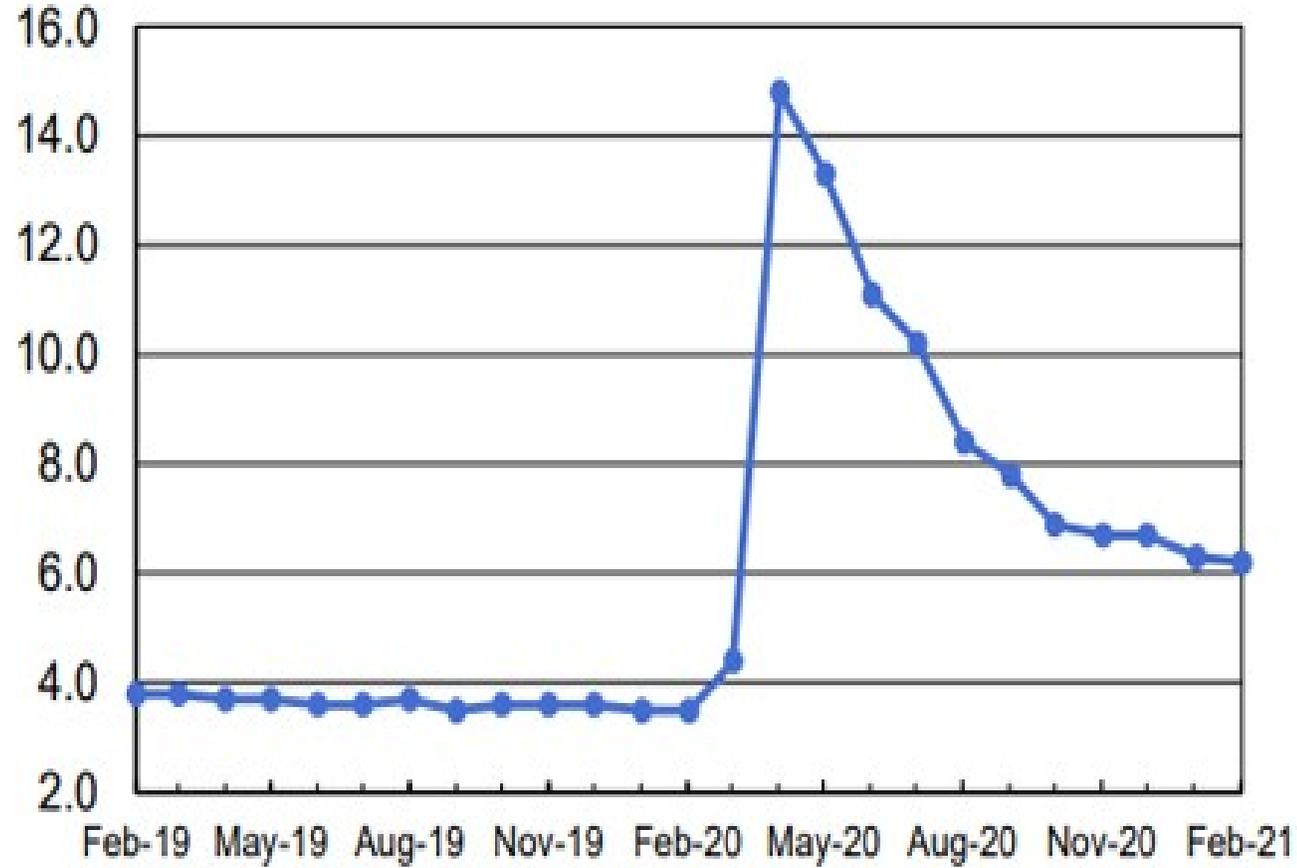
- The pandemic as a “natural experiment” dramatically increased the availability of remote work but also closed many schools and limited access to child-care and home based elder-care
- But as schools reopen the positive effects of remote work will become more evident.
- The prospects for major investments in family care also bode well for working mothers in particular and working parents in general, as well as for many other families with caregiving responsibilities for older relatives and family members with disabilities

Outline

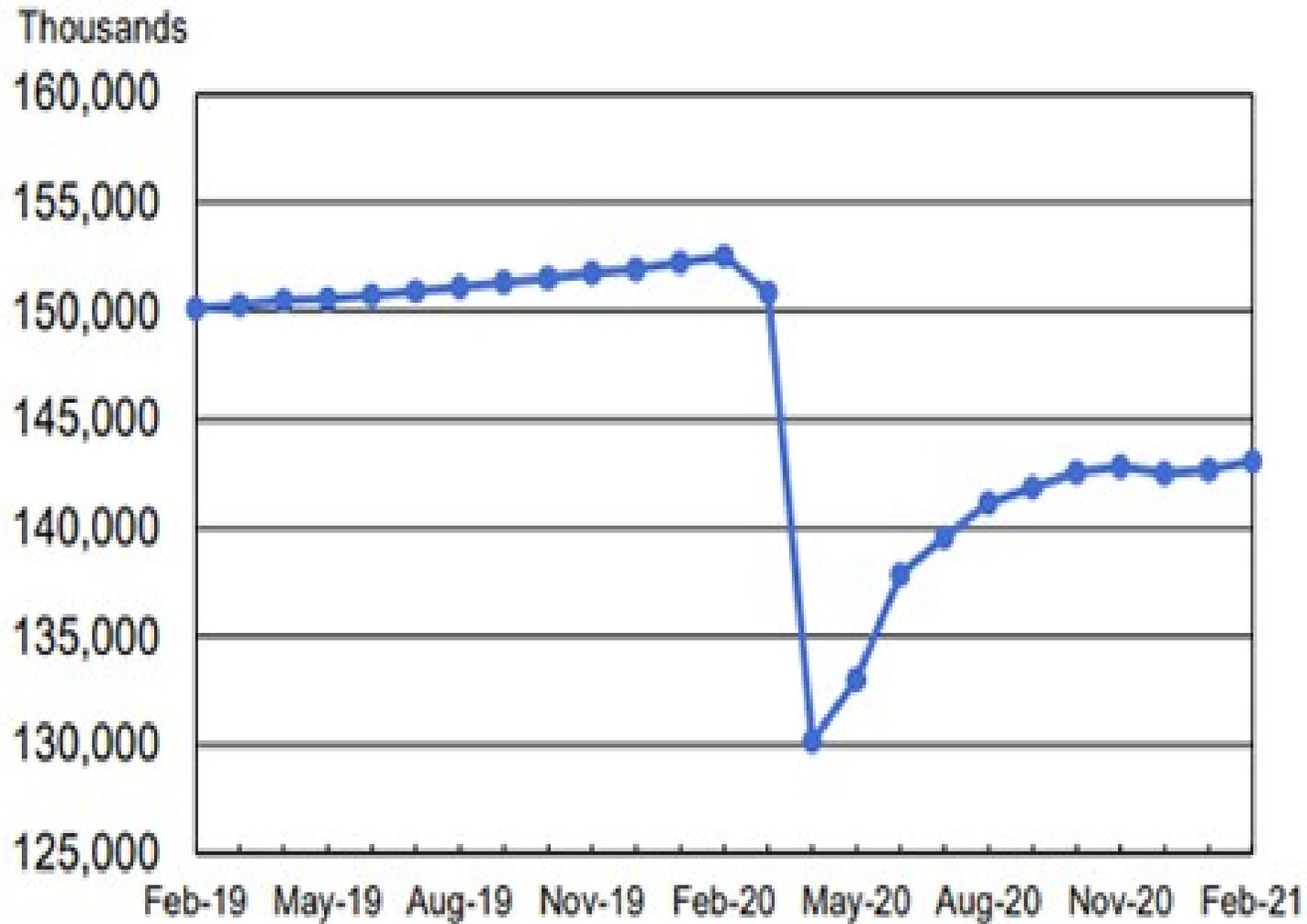
- 1. Pandemic has disproportionately affected women's employment
 - Women are concentrated in industries and occupations most affected by pandemic restrictions
 - Closure of schools and loss of child care has disproportionately affected working mothers
- 2. Effects have reinforced inequality – not everyone has had the opportunity to work remotely
- 3. Increased opportunities to work remotely will likely benefit women in the longer term, with some important caveats
- 4. Longer-term effects are also likely to be unequal, unless:
- 5. Biden Family Care Plan, if enacted, would go a long way to expanding child care for working parents
- 6. Research questions: opportunities for working women, gender equality in parenting and family caring, single mothers, family caregiving

**Chart 1. Unemployment rate, seasonally adjusted,
February 2019 – February 2021**

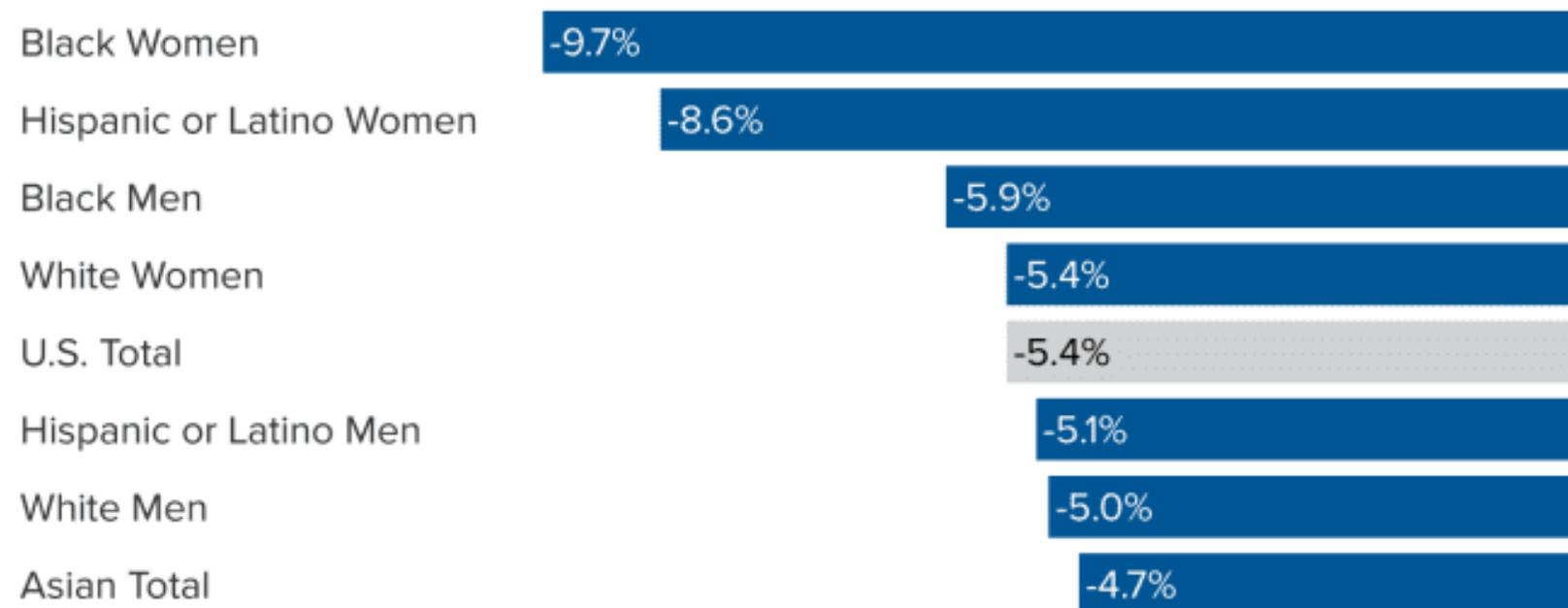
Percent



**Chart 2. Nonfarm payroll employment, seasonally adjusted,
February 2019 – February 2021**



Change in employment compared to February 2020 (pre-pandemic) levels



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, CNBC analysis. Data is seasonally adjusted and includes those 20 years and older for gender breakdowns and 16 and older for totals. Data for Asian men and women is not available.



Employment Dislocation by Industry Sector

Industry	February 2020	% Change April 2020	% Change April 2021
Leisure & Hospitality	16.9 million	-48.6%	-16.8%
Retail	15.6 million	-15.2%	- 2.6%
Local Government	14.7 million	- 5.5%	- 6.5%
State Government	5.3 million	- 4.3%	- 5.5%

COVID reduced working women's hours and not just labor force participation

- **COVID-19 and the gender gap in work hours**
- [Caitlyn Collins](#), [Liana Christin Landivar](#), [Leah Ruppanner](#), [William J. Scarborough](#)
- *Gender, Work, and Organization* 28:101-112.

the gender gap in work hours has grown by 20–50 per cent
(in the early months of the pandemic)

Gender Inequality endures in the Household Division of Labor

Dunatchick, Allison, Kathleen Gerson, Jennifer Glass, Jerry A. Jacobs and Haley Strizel. "Gender, Parenting and the Rise of Remote Work During the Pandemic: Implications for Domestic Inequality in the United States." **Gender & Society** 35(2): 1-12.

We are not done yet

- Evictions
- Foreclosures
- Disrupted supply chains
- Lag for businesses that have closed
- New variants, new waves: we're not done with the pandemic until the world is done with the pandemic

Remote Work Is Largely a Plus for Working Women (and Men)

- 1. Work and Family Researchers Network
- 2. Flexible Work Arrangements among the top policy priorities of work-family researchers
- 3. working remotely one or two days a week increases flexibility and enables working families and working parents in particular to achieve a greater degree of work-place balance
- 4. companies and other employers now realize that working at home is not just a euphemism for not working and needs to be factored into post-pandemic planning

Caveats about remote work

- Blurred boundaries – risk of being “on call” 24-7
- “Digital cultural capital” – need for skills to manage on-line life
- Remote workers could lose out in office politics and promotion opportunities
- Whoever is working at home may pick up more of the housework and parenting responsibilities

Managing “Digital Cultural Capital”

Ollier-Malaterre, Arianne, Jerry A. Jacobs and Nancy P. Rothbard. 2019
“Technology, Work and Family: Digital Cultural Capital and Boundary
Management.” **Annual Review of Sociology** 45:425-447.

Remote Work Tug of War

- It is too soon to say when remote workers will return, how many days per weeks, and how work will be configured
- Unlikely to be 100 percent back in the office vs. never work in person
- Despite potential benefits to employers – such as reduced cost of office space – employers appear to want workers back in the office more than worker themselves want to return
- This context poses a risk for those who work remotely more...

Many “essential” workers will not be able to work remotely

- Retail sales, hospitality
- teachers, hospital personnel, first responders
- Question: will expanded remote work represent a new form of the digital divide?

Biden Family Care Plan has the potential to support working families

- Affordable, high quality child care has the potential to increase labor force participation on the part of mothers in general and especially those with less education and lower earning potential
- Increased continuity of labor force participation can increase women's career prospects and retirement savings
- Paid family leave also has similar positive potential
- Direct financial support to families with children also has the potential to narrow inequalities and to promote opportunities for children in families with limited financial means

Many important issues that need to be followed during the coming transition period and for an extended time thereafter

- Women's labor force participation
- Gender gaps in
 - earnings,
 - promotion opportunities
 - hours of work
- Gender segregation of occupations
- Division of caregiving and household labor
- “Scarring” effects of the pandemic

Diversity / Intersectionality

- Diverse groups:
 - Race and ethnicity
 - LGBTQ status
 - Education
 - Parental status
 - Partnered status
- Diverse caregiving needs
 - Child care needs vary greatly by age
 - Older relatives
 - Family members with disabilities

Remote work

- How many days per week
- How is remote work configured
- Does partner (if present) work remotely
- Boundaries: how manage employees demands
- Impact on work-family balance
- Impact on organization productivity
- Impact on promotion opportunities

Integrated (connected) data systems that will enable us to track future economic dislocations

- Family data, not just individual (ATUS – one person, one day)
- First and second jobs
- Time use
- Care needs
- Financial security
- Large enough to track subgroups (or opportunities to supplemental analyses of subgroups)
 - One partner worked remotely, single mothers,

Overall I am cautiously optimistic
about the post-pandemic period