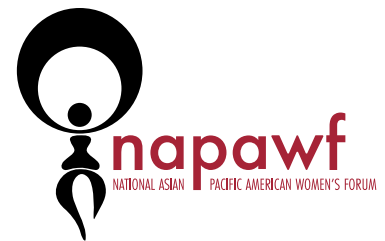


LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMEN

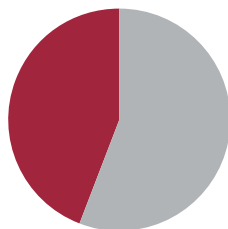
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AAPW Women Have Experienced the Highest Rates of Long-Term Unemployment During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the lives and livelihoods of millions of Americans due to increased morbidity, mortality, and unemployment rates. Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women in particular have been significantly impacted by the pandemic, facing an alarming increase in race/ethnicity- and gender-based discrimination, violence, and job losses.^{1, 2} Government data reveal that AAPI women experienced the highest rates of long-term unemployment of any racial/ethnic groups in the U.S. in 2020.^{3, 4}

Almost half (44 percent) of all AAPI women who experienced job losses in 2020 have been out of work for longer than six months.⁵ This staggering statistic is likely a result of the inter-



sectional effects of a number of factors such as race- and gender-based discrimination, immigration status, and working in jobs that make them more susceptible to both workplace harassment and job losses.

AAPW women are overrepresented in both the front-line and low-wage workforces: they make up 3.8 percent of the front-line workforce, despite only making up 2.9 percent of the overall workforce, and are typically paid less than their white male counterparts in the same occupations.⁶ These occupations include, but are not limited to, restaurant workers, salon workers, retail workers, and personal care aides. Not only were the aforementioned jobs disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, but working in such jobs also makes AAPI women increasingly susceptible to anti-AAPI violence and discrimination.

Racist incidents targeting AAPWs increased by 150 percent between 2019 and 2020, and a staggering 70 percent of the incidents reported in 2020 were by women or gender nonbinary individuals with many of these incidents happening in workplaces and in places of business.⁷

⁸ A national survey conducted by The National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF) found that nearly 78 percent of AAPI women have been affected by anti-AAPI racism in the last two years.⁹ A fear of facing violence and discrimination at the workplace, especially in low-wage jobs, further reduces AAPI women's ability to re-enter the workforce.

AAPW women's immigration status also plays a significant role in their employment, especially during the pandemic. From March 2020 through February 2021, immigrant women experienced the largest unemployment rates of any group in the United States, including US-born men, US-born women, and immigrant men.¹⁰ In May 2020, the unemployment rate for AAPI immigrant women increased to 17 percent.¹¹ Given that nearly 70 percent of adult Asians in the U.S. are foreign-born,¹² with many being recent immigrants or refugees, our community's workforce participation was again disproportionately impacted, this time due to immigration-related job losses.

Policy Recommendations

Due to the intersectional effects of immigration, occupational segregation, and gender-based harassment and violence, disaggregating data by ethnicity, immigration status, and gender on employment for the AAPI community is of critical importance. Aggregated data often hide the true experiences of certain ethnicities and perpetuate the "model minority" myth. For too long, our struggles have been erased by averages that do not accurately reflect our realities. The AAPI

community is a vast and incredibly diverse group encompassing more than 50 ethnic subgroups speaking more than 100 languages and dialects. There may be critical differences in the rates of unemployment among different ethnicities, and lumping us all together not only fails to acknowledge that, it also erases many of our distinct economic issues that need to be addressed.

For example, AAPI women working full-time are typically paid, on average, 85 cents for every dollar paid to their white male counterparts. However, disaggregated data from 2015 to 2019 reveal that many AAPI women experience much larger wage gaps, particularly Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander women. For example, Samoan and Tongan women only earn 60 cents for every white male dollar, Nepalese women only earn 54 cents for every white male dollar, and Burmese women earn only 52 cents for every white male dollar.¹³

Removing the barriers to active participation in the workforce, especially for immigrant women and communities of color, is crucial to ensuring that AAPI women have the autonomy to make critical decisions about if or when to become a parent and provide for our families so that we can truly thrive. Long-term unemployment does not just affect our community financially, but also has far-reaching consequences which include robbing AAPI women of their agency to do what is best for themselves and their families.

Endnotes

- 1 Kimmy Yam, “Anti-Asian Hate crimes increased by nearly 150% in 2020, mostly in N.Y. and L.A., new report says”. NBC News (March 2021). <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/anti-asian-hate-crimes-increased-nearly-150-2020-mostly-n-n1260264>
- 2 Migration Policy Institute, “U.S. Unemployment Trends by Nativity, Gender, Industry, & More, Before and During Pandemic”. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/migration-data-hub/us-unemployment-trends-during-pandemic>
- 3 Katherine Kam, “Why Asian American women have had highest jobless rates during last 6 months of Covid.” NBC News (January 2021). <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/why-asian-american-women-have-had-highest-jobless-rates-during-n1255699>
- 4 Marc Ramirez, “‘Invisibilized’: Asian Americans lead in long-term unemployment amid COVID-19 pandemic and hate attacks”. USA Today (April 2021). <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2021/04/07/covid-19-asian-americans-joblessness-has-lasting-longer-pandemic/4823285001/>
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Jasmine Tucker, “Asian American and Pacific Islander Women Lose \$10,000 Annually to the Wage Gap.” The National Women’s Law Center (March 2021). <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/AAPI-EPD-2021-v1.pdf>
- 7 Kimmy Yam, “Anti-Asian Hate crimes increased by nearly 150% in 2020, mostly in N.Y. and L.A., new report says”. NBC News (March 2021). <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/anti-asian-hate-crimes-increased-nearly-150-2020-mostly-n-n1260264>
- 8 Kimmy Yam, “There were 3,800 anti-Asian racist incidents, mostly against women, in past year”. NBC News (March 2021) There were 3,800 anti-Asian racist incidents, mostly against women, in past year (nbcnews.com)
- 9 Based on nationally representative survey of AAPI women conducted by NAPAWF (April 2021). <https://www.napawf.org/press-releases/041421>
- 10 Migration Policy Institute, “U.S. Unemployment Trends by Nativity, Gender, Industry, & More, Before and During Pandemic”. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/migration-data-hub/us-unemployment-trends-during-pandemic>
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Pew Research Center, “Key facts about Asian Americans, a diverse and growing population” (September 2017). <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/09/08/key-facts-about-asian-americans/>
- 13 Center for American Progress (CAP) analysis of median earnings for full-time, year-round workers by AAPI subpopulation based on Steven Ruggles and others, “Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, U.S. Census Data for Social, Economic, and Health Research, 2015-2019 American Community Survey: 5-year estimates: Version 10.0” (Minneapolis: Minnesota Population Center, 2021), available at <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/>. Figures are based on women’s and men’s median earnings for full-time, year-round workers. White, non-Hispanic men made \$58,000 annually, on average, between 2015 and 2019. Indian women represent those who self-selected “Asian Indian” as their race.