we celebrate

womens

history

month

March 2022

An in-depth look at the obstacles women have overcome throughout history and those they continue to face today.
Women See Gains in Employment In 2021

Nearly 1.8 million women left the workforce amid the pandemic due to schools closing, layoffs and more, and while there are millions of jobs to recover before getting back to pre-pandemic levels, more women than men joined the workforce in 2021.

According to independent, nonprofit newsroom The 19th, approximately a million women, which is twice the number of men, entered the workforce.

Many of the women who returned to the workforce last year were Latinas and Black women, who lost the most in 2020 because many were in people-facing jobs such as hospitality and healthcare at the start of the pandemic. The 19th reports that 1.1 million Latinas and 754,000 Black women were out of work between February and August 2020.

According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the demographic breakdown of how many women rejoined the workforce between December of 2020 and December of 2021 was as follows:
- 400,000 Latina/Latinx
- 337,000 Black women
- 284,000 Asian women
- 227,000 White women

While unemployment rates among women have dropped, there’s still work to be done — especially with regards to Black women, who have experienced a shaky recovery. Black women saw the smallest change in the unemployment rate at just 6.2% in December 2021, although this number was up from the 4.9% seen in November.

There are several factors that contributed to the gains in employment for women throughout the year, including higher vaccination rates and children being able to get vaccinated as well as less virtual learning and school closures.

Lauren Bauer, a fellow in economic studies at the Brookings Institution, told The 19th that with schools reopening and kids not having to learn online, that lessened the amount of caregiving responsibilities that fell on women at the start of the pandemic, leading to employment stability.

“When children have a safe and reliable place to be, moms are going back to work,” Bauer said. “The key story for the coming year is to make that continue to be true for everyone’s sake.”

To entice workers to physically come back into work once offices started to reopen, some companies reevaluated their benefits and began offering ones that extended to childcare in the form of backup childcare, on-site day-care services and stipends for affordable tutoring.

One company that saw a rise in the need for its services was Bright Horizons Family Solutions, which manages employer-sponsored childcare and facilitates childcare along with educational benefits.

In 2020, Bright Horizons saw more than 100 of its clients add backup care benefits. Backup care allows parents to take their children to a Bright Horizons daycare center at the last minute if needed. The company added that the use of this service was 20 times higher than pre-pandemic levels and continued to increase throughout the pandemic.

Some companies also offered shortened days in the office and continued offering a few work-from-home days to provide more flexibility to employees. Diane Swonk, Chief Economist at Grant Thornton, told CNBC that the last time the world saw employers really “bend over backwards to increase the participation of women in the labor market” was in the late 1990s.

“There’s no muscle memory, to what we’re going through in terms of labor market tightness, there’s something unprecedented about us all trying to open up at the same time,” she said. “Consumers are spending and businesses are scrambling to ramp up faster than workers are either able or willing to come back.”
Timeline (1800s-1980s)

Women's History Month takes place in March to celebrate women's strength, tenacity, resilience and contributions around the world. Women are diverse, with different backgrounds, sexual orientations, identities and abilities, and this month, we aim to celebrate all of them.

This Meeting in a Box is a valuable tool to continue your employees' cultural competence education, open up conversations about identity and gender equality and spotlight women's accomplishments. Because of the breadth of women's history, this timeline begins in 1789 after the ratification of the U.S. Constitution, but women played an important and essential role in America's history before and during the Revolution as well.

Photo credit: Shutterstock
In the last 30 years, women have made significant strides toward equality, improving their standing in the worlds of sports, science, and the military and boardroom. While there is still much to be done, women are knocking down doors every day, inching toward an equitable future.

**Timeline (1990s-2022)**

*Photo credit: Shutterstock*
What practices does our company already have in place to support women? What more can we do?

What can our organization do to support women’s accomplishments, both internally and in the communities we serve?

When looking at Biden’s Agenda for Women, what actions do you think will have the biggest impact, and where does more need to be done?

Which of these actions could we take as a company to help women in the workplace?

What have been the most significant changes in women’s roles in the past few decades?

Why are “firsts” important to note? What other significant changes for women’s rights come to mind?

Much of women’s history lessons involve white, middle or upper class women like Susan B. Anthony and Margaret Sanger, but women of many different backgrounds have played integral roles in the fight for gender and racial equality.

Why is it important to have a historical view on women’s rights that is diverse?
DiversityInc Facts & Figures

Available demographic, education, financial and business-related data regarding women helps us to understand why parity for women has profound demographic, financial, education and business benefits. These numbers can help us identify what we can do to celebrate a diverse array of women and address the range of issues they face. DiversityInc's unique Top 50 data also reveals the progress in the country's most competitive organizations, as well as the areas where there is room for growth when it comes to gender equity.

Photo credit: Shutterstock

Representation of Women & Women of Color Among 2021 Top 50 Participants

Formal Mentorship & Sponsorship Programs Among 2021 Top 50 Participants

Hall of Fame, Top 50 and Top 10 Participants
Biden’s Agenda For Women

The return of women to the workforce is on its way to recovery, but there are still obstacles ahead — and President Biden is looking to help more women make ends meet through his Agenda for Women.

Targeting equal opportunities and rights for women when it comes to healthcare, the economy, education and security is the goal of the agenda, but there are many policies at play that disproportionately affect women.

The agenda calls for four big initiatives to improve the quality of life for women in the United States:
• Fight for equal pay and invest in women-owned businesses.
• Provide affordable healthcare for all women.
• Make affordable childcare and care for older people and people with disabilities more accessible while providing paid leave and other benefits and protections in the workplace for women.
• Put an end to violence against women.

President Biden started putting these efforts into action on his first day in the White House by making sure many of his political appointees were women. Kamala Harris was sworn in as the first woman, Black and South Asian American Vice President. Recent key women appointees include:
• Heather Dowdy, Member, Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Access Board
• Hannah Raissa Ibañez, Member, Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Access Board
• Alexis Ander Kashar, Member, Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Access Board
• Madeline Rose Ruvolo, Member, Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Access Board
• Adm. Michelle Janine Howard, USN (Ret.), Member, Board of Visitors to the U.S. Naval Academy
• Lt. Col. Amy McGrath, USMC (Ret.), Member, Board of Visitors to the U.S. Naval Academy

Another item on Biden’s agenda is to “level the negotiating playing field” for women. This would entail the enactment of the Paycheck Protection Act, which would “ban the use of salary history to set wages and make hiring decisions, so employers have one less false justification for under-paying women and people of color.”

The administration is also making progress on promoting gender equity. Biden signed two executive orders last year on International Women’s Day. The first established a Gender Policy Council and the other, directed at the Department of Education, reversed protections that were given to those accused of sexual assault or harassment under a Title IX regulation by former President Trump’s education secretary, Betsy DeVos. It was a controversial move made by DeVos that upended guidance from the Obama-era that DeVos said denied due process to the accused.

The executive order signed by Biden ordered the Department of Education to look at all existing regulations to guarantee educational environments did not discriminate based on sex, which includes discrimination in the form or sexual harassment or sexual violence. It also ensured schools would not discriminate based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

While there’s still much to be done in terms of guaranteeing equal rights for men and women, this agenda may be the first steps in the right direction.