



# Data Spotlight

October 10, 2023

## Unemployment in Transportation Remains Above Pre-Pandemic Levels; Women Experiencing Higher Rates Than Men

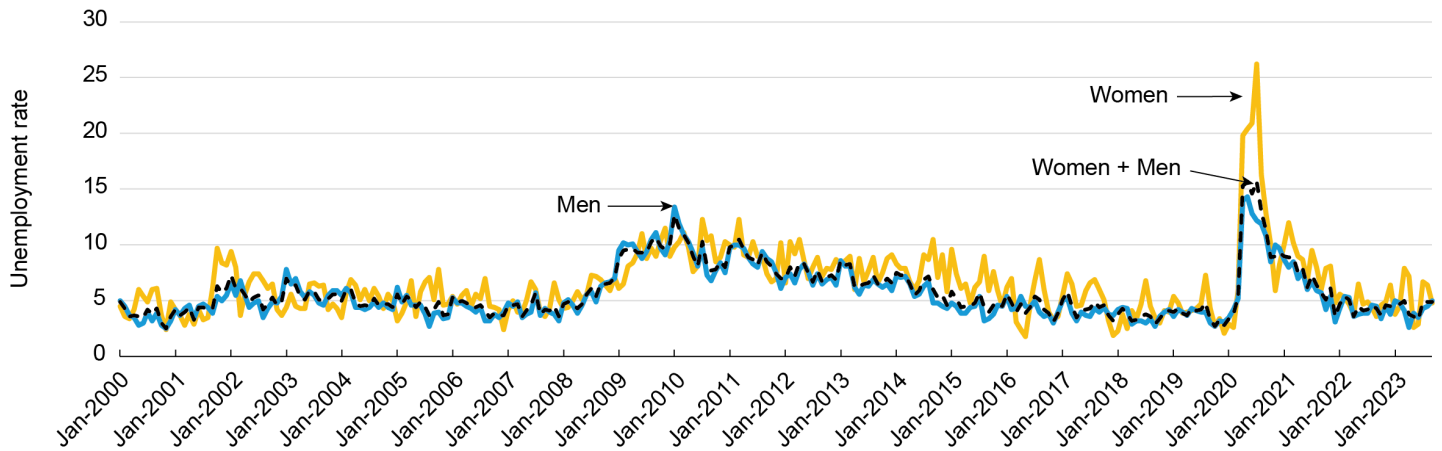
### HIGHLIGHTS:

- Women in the transportation and warehousing sector still experience higher rates of unemployment and greater fluctuations.
- Unemployment patterns for women in the transportation and warehousing sector differ from women in the U.S. labor force as a whole who experienced unemployment rates closer to those of men in the U.S. labor force.
- Some of the differences experienced by women in the transportation and warehousing sector from those of men in that sector and from all women in the U.S. labor force may be explained by the types of jobs that they hold.

Unemployment in the transportation and warehousing sector has improved substantially since reaching an all-time high during the Covid-19 pandemic, but unemployment is not yet back to pre-pandemic levels. Unemployment in the transportation and warehousing sector reached an all-time high of 15.7 percent in May and again in July of 2020 (figure 1), directly reflecting the effects of the Covid-19 outbreak, which was declared a pandemic in March 2020. As of September 2023, unemployment in the transportation and warehousing sector has shown marked improvement, falling 10.8 percentage points below that historic high. When comparing the same months to those of the previous year, unemployment in this sector had fallen in 24 of the 38 months since the July 2020 all-time high. However, the unemployment rate in the transportation and warehousing sector remains above the same month in the pre-pandemic year of 2019 in all but 4 of the 38 months.

Women in the transportation and warehousing sector experienced a higher level of unemployment than men in 2020—reaching 26.2 percent in July 2020 (figure 1). While their unemployment rate has exceeded that of men in the transportation and warehousing sector in 27 of the 38 months since July 2020, both genders experienced similar declines in unemployment, with women falling year-over-year in 23 of the 38 months compared to men falling in 25 of the 38 months since July 2020. For women in the transportation and warehousing sector, the unemployment rate fell below the 2019 level in 8 of the 38 months since July 2020; one month more than for men. The year 2019 is the first full year before pandemic effects. Women make up about 25 percent of the employed transportation and warehousing sector workforce. Women's share of unemployed persons in the transportation and warehousing sector is not available.

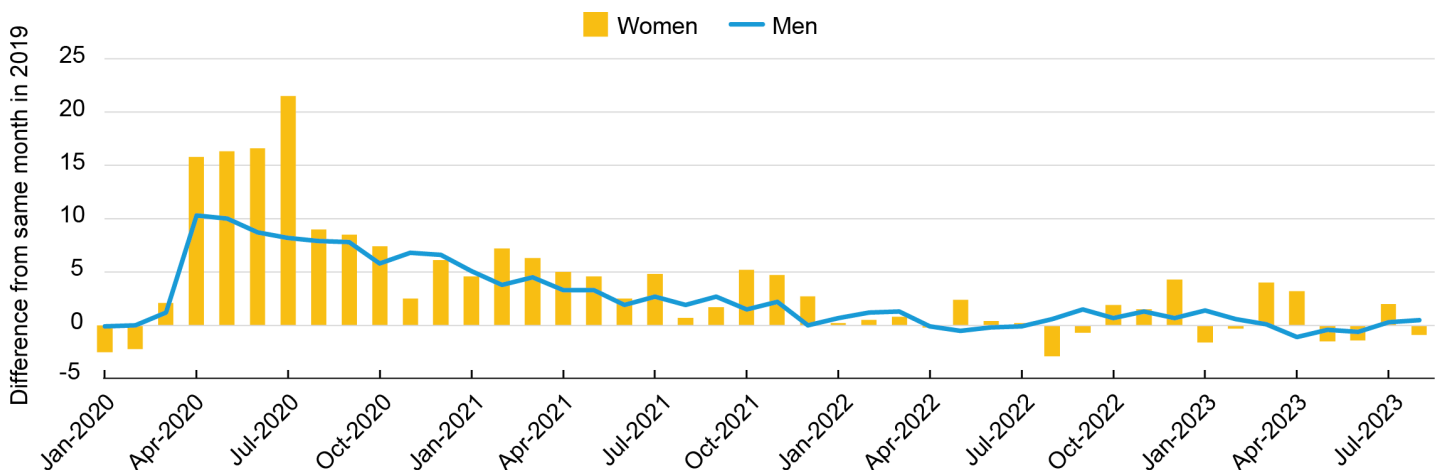
**Figure 1. Unemployment Rate in Transportation and Warehousing Sector**



Source: Calculations by U.S Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics from U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, series LNU04034168, LNU04034170 and LNU04034169 available at <http://www.bls.gov/cpi> as of October 2023.

While the number of months of decline is similar between women and men in the transportation and warehousing sector, women in the transportation and warehousing sector still experience higher rates of unemployment, and greater fluctuations. In September 2023, the unemployment rate for women in the transportation and warehousing sector was 0.2 percentage points less than for men (4.8 and 5.0 percent, respectively), but in August 2023, it was 1.9 percentage points higher than for men (6.4 versus 4.5 percent, respectively) (figure 1). For women, the September 2023 rate was 0.5 percentage points lower than September 2019, while for men it was 2.0 percentage points lower (figure 2). For men, their unemployment rate has steadily declined from the same month in 2019 with few exceptions; in contrast, the unemployment rate of women has fallen below, risen above, fallen back below, and then again increased above the 2019 level in the months since roughly September 2022. For example, women in the transportation and warehousing sector experienced a lower level of unemployment in 5 of the first 9 months of 2023 over the same month in 2019 but not consecutively.

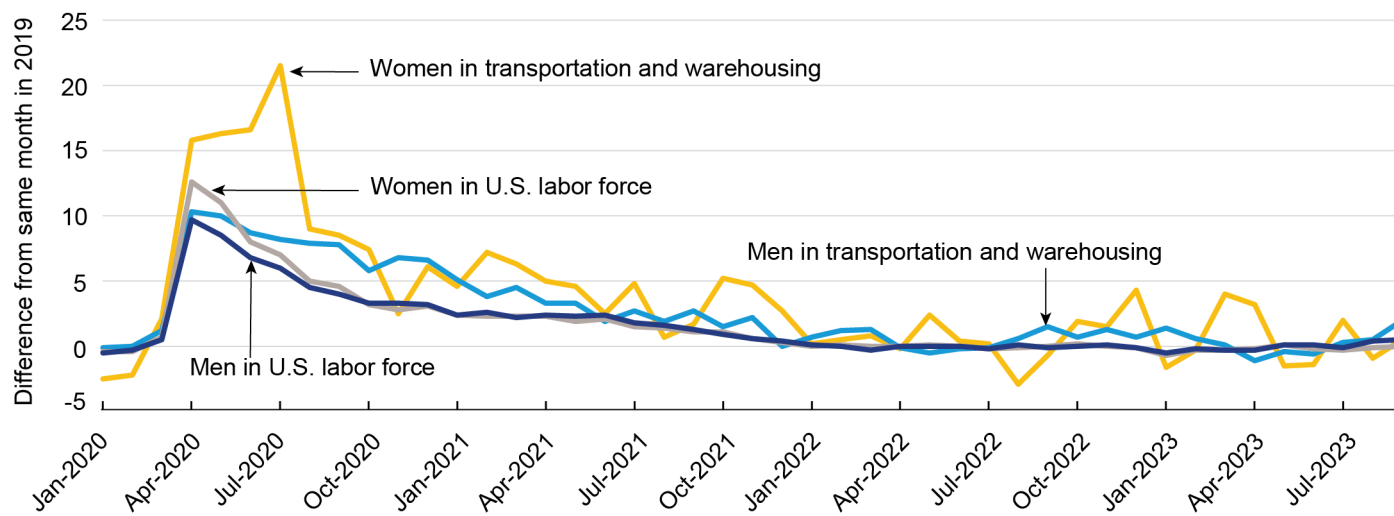
**Figure 2. Difference in Unemployment Rate for Women and Men in the Transportation and Warehousing Sector from Same Month in 2019**



Source: Calculations by U.S Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics from U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, series LNU04034170 and LNU04034169 available at <http://www.bls.gov/cpi> as of October 2023.

The patterns for women in the transportation and warehousing sector differ from women in the U.S. labor force as a whole who experienced unemployment rates closer to those of men in the U.S. labor force. In September 2023, the unemployment rate for women in the U.S. labor force was 0.4 percentage points lower than for men in the U.S. labor force (figure 3). In contrast, in September 2023 the unemployment rate for women in the transportation and warehousing sector was 0.2 percentage points below that of men in the transportation and warehousing sector.

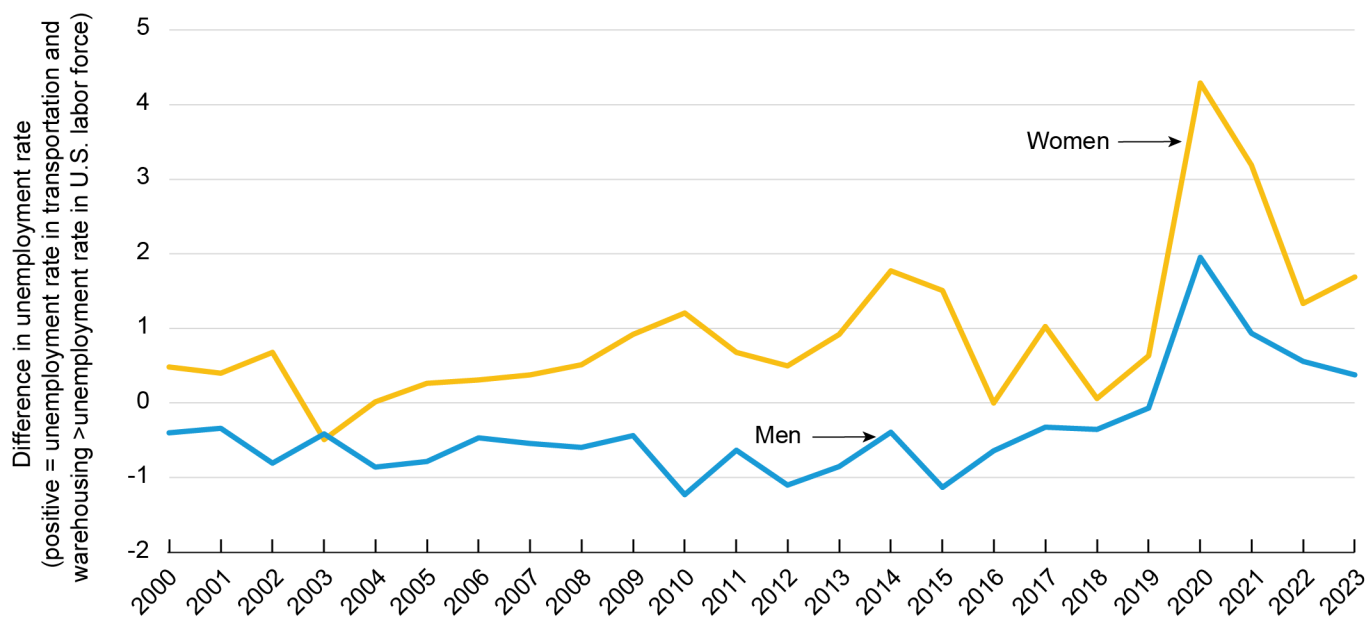
**Figure 3. Difference in Unemployment Rate from Same Month in 2019**



Source: Calculations by U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics from U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, series LNU04034170, LNU04034169, LNU04000002, and LNU04000001 available at <http://www.bls.gov/cpi> as of October 2023.

Women in the transportation and warehousing sector also differ from women in the U.S. labor force in that their average annual unemployment rate is higher (figure 4). In contrast, the average annual unemployment rate for men in the transportation and warehousing sector was lower than for men in the U.S. labor force prior to the pandemic. During the pandemic the average annual unemployment rate for men in the transportation and warehousing rose above the average annual unemployment rate of men in the U.S. labor force for the first time on record (with records beginning in 2000) while the difference between the average annual unemployment rate of women in the transportation and warehousing sector exceeded that of all women in the U.S. labor force by seven times the historical average. As of September 2023, these pandemic shifts persist in the transportation and warehousing sector, although to a lesser extent for men than women. The unemployment rate for men in the transportation and warehousing sector has fallen since the July 2020 peak but the unemployment rate for men in the transportation and warehousing sector still exceeds that of men in the U.S. labor force by an average of 0.4 percentage points in 2023 (based on data through September). In 2019, the average annual unemployment rate for men in the transportation and warehousing sector was lower than for all men in the U.S. labor force by 0.1 percentage points. The unemployment rate of women in the transportation and warehousing sector likewise fell from the July 2020 high, but the difference in the average annual unemployment rate for women in the transportation and warehousing sector from women in the U.S. labor force remains larger than the 2019 level—an average of 1.7 percentage points higher in 2023 (based on data through September) compared to a 0.6 percentage point difference in 2019.

**Figure 4. Difference in Average Annual Unemployment Rate of Women and Men in Transportation and Warehousing Sector from Women and Men in the U.S. Laborforce**



Source: Calculations by U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics from U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, series LNU04034170 and LNU04034169, available at <http://www.bls.gov/cpi> as of October 2023.  
 Note: Annual average of monthly unemployment. Data for 2023 are through April.

Some of the differences experienced by women in the transportation and warehousing sector from those of men in that sector and from all women in the U.S. labor force may be explained by the types of jobs that they hold. The transportation and warehousing labor force consists of both transportation occupations, such as pilots and truck drivers, but also non-transportation occupations, such as administrative support. Non-transportation occupations comprised 46 percent of all occupations within the transportation and warehousing sector in 2022. Unemployment rates for the different occupations within the transportation and warehousing sector are not available for either men or women nor as a combined rate. Unemployment rates likewise are not available for transportation occupations outside of the transportation and warehousing sector. Roughly 67 percent of all persons employed in a transportation occupation worked in the transportation and warehousing sector in 2022 and the remainder worked in a non-transportation industry (e.g., accountants).

For monthly unemployment rates and more information about the transportation workforce, see the Bureau of Transportation Statistics [Transportation Economic Trends section on employment](#).