



La Fe Policy Research and Education Center



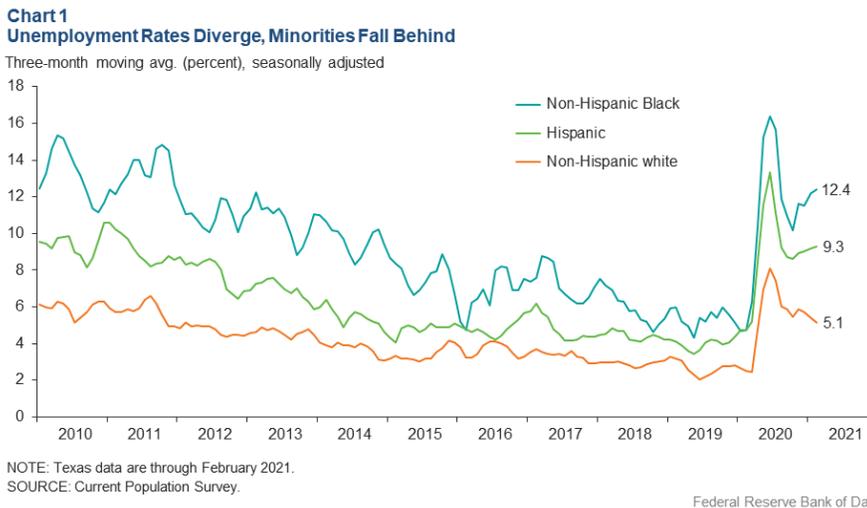
Promoviendo Bienestar para Familias y Comunidad con Conocimiento, Confianza y Poder
Promoting Family and Community Well-Being through Knowledge, Trust, and Empowerment

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Latinas and Covid -19 Workforce Impact: Who’s Paying Attention?

Juan H Flores, M.U.P.

The Covid-19 pandemic hit hardest on Texas’s people of color, even more so than the great recession of 2008.¹ Although jobs are being recovered across the state, the gaps in unemployment rates between non-Hispanic Whites and Blacks and Latinos continue to exceed those before the pandemic. Furthermore, some jobs will likely not return, and many workers, particularly women, have dropped from the labor force.



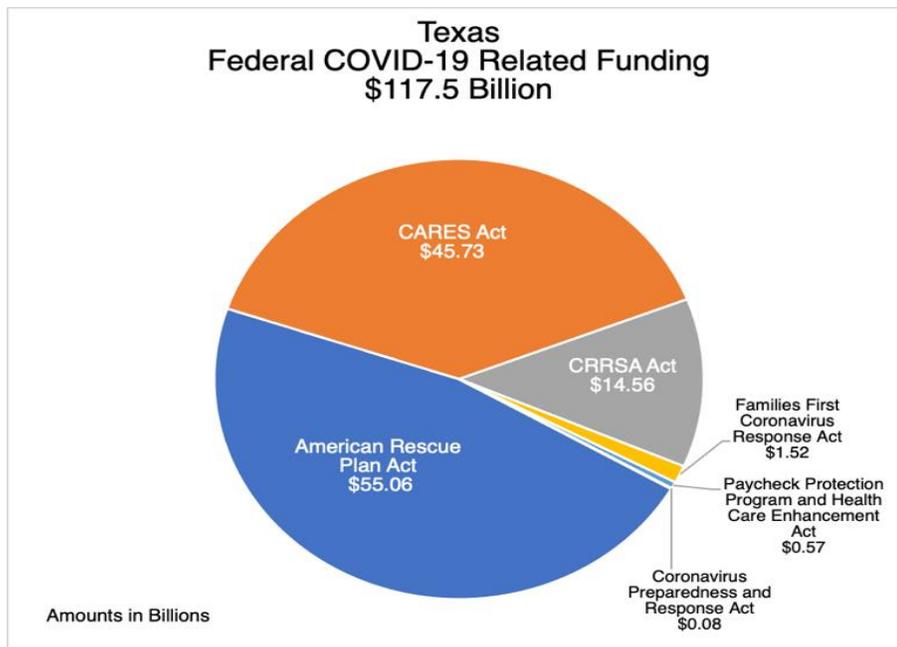
“Women have been especially affected because they are disproportionately employed in the service sector and frequently must deal with parental duties.”² Notwithstanding the combination of low wages, poor benefits, and lack of access to childcare – what decision would you make to stay employed in the service industry?

According to Victoria DeFransesco Soto, co-author of “America’s recovery from the 2020 ‘shecession’: Building a female future of childcare and work,”³ – men are making some gains in the job numbers, but women are losing. Latinas have been disproportionately hit with health and economic hardships that will have long-term implications if targeted job reskill and retooling programs are not implemented.⁴

Covid-19 magnified multiple gender gap issues, particularly among women of color. Texas Latinas experience higher poverty rates, lower access to health care, and significant obstacles to access quality daycare for their children.⁵ At the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic in April 2020, Latinas had the highest unemployment rate in the nation.⁶

In 2021, Texas ranked 45th in the ‘wage gap’ between Latinas and non-Latino White men.⁷ For each dollar White men were paid, Latinas were paid 46 cents. The age at which Latina career earnings would catch up to age 60 non-Latino White men career earnings would be 107. Indeed, Texas ranked (45th) as one of the worst states for women in terms of the economy and well-being across 25 key metrics.⁸

With optimism, Texas2036 points to the \$117.5 billion that state, local, and educational institutions are expected to receive through Covid-19 stimulus fund legislation.⁹ They hope state and local leaders will take this massive investment “to prepare the state’s future in a way that benefits the next generation.” Who will comprise most of the next generation, particularly the labor force that will be the dominant economic contributing force? LATINOS.



Source: Federal Funds Information for States, COVID State Allocation Spreadsheet, August 2021

State demographer, Steve Murdock made clear that Latinos were the next generation in 2013.¹⁰ Countless reports have validated this fact but have had limited legislative impact in making substantive human capital investments in the ‘next generation’ from state government.

Stimulus funds have undoubtedly helped individuals, families, and businesses. State and local government stimulus funding will continue to assist families with financial, housing, health, and other social resource needs. Educational institutions are also being helped. However, equity in

the distribution of stimulus funds and **progressive** local and state policies are required to achieve ‘structural changes’ that advance social and economic mobility.

It’s no surprise that progressive policies that would positively impact gender equity include:

- Equal pay for equal work
- Increase the minimum wage
- Paid Sick Leave
- Fair Work Schedules
- Paid family and medical leave
- Access to quality health care
 - Health insurance
 - Family Planning
- Abortion Services
- Maternal Services
- Childcare Access and Support
- Increase affordable housing access
- Protecting rights of immigrant women and families
- Workforce training with wrap-around support service

Dallas, Houston, Austin, and San Antonio have all produced reports demonstrating gender disparities and inequities and their disproportionate effects on Latina’s and their families. As previously noted, the state is a significant contributor to gender inequities that disproportionately marginalize Latinas.

The state's lack of attention to the optimism expressed by Texas2036 is amply reflected by the 87th regular, 1st, and 2nd special legislative sessions. Their priorities were voter suppression, the border wall and security funding, white-washing civics education, and other cultural war policies over significant human capital investments or addressing the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

It’s apparent from reports and media that local governments, businesses, and community coalitions are making efforts to address gender disparities and inequities. Concurrently, they have been the leading efforts to mitigate and manage the Covid-19 pandemic.

It’s also apparent that Governor Abbott and state legislative leadership view some of these local efforts as too progressive or even as ‘socialist’ policymaking. As a result, state Republican leadership has been taking legislative and legal action to overrule and preempt local human capital investment ordinances and policies.¹¹ Texas lawmakers must address many policy deficits to ensure all women and families have quality reproductive health care, safe workplaces, equal representation in government, and economic security.¹²

Latinas state contributions are wide-ranging, from population and labor growth to essential workers across multiple occupations. Latinas have made progress in education and gains in professional fields and leadership roles. However, their numbers are significantly underrepresented, as made evident by numerous reports.

The resilience and importance of Latinas to our families have always been apparent. Their pivotal population and economic contribution to Texas’s growth and future must no longer be undermined or ignored.

¹ <https://www.dallasfed.org/research/swe/2021/swe2101/swe2101e.aspx>

² Abid, www.dallasfed

³ AMERICA'S RECOVERY FROM THE 2020 "SHECESSION": Building a Female Future of Childcare and Work, LBJ School of Public Affairs, UT Austin, and YWCA, eliminating racism empowering women, October 2020

⁴ <https://www.mckinsey.com/about-us/covid-response-center/inclusive-economy/what-we-lose-when-we-lose-women-in-the-workforce>

⁵ Economic Issues for Women in Texas 2020, Texas Women's Foundation

⁶ <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/January-Jobs-Day-FS.pdf>

⁷ <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Latina-Women-Overall-Lifetime-Losses-2021-v2.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.click2houston.com/news/texas/2021/03/01/texas-is-one-of-the-worst-states-for-women-survey-finds/>

⁹ https://texas2036.org/posts/a-historic-opportunity-to-shape-the-future-of-texas/?mc_cid=bcca5fd369&mc_eid=5ceb3d9a5c

¹⁰ Changing Texas: Implications of Addressing or Ignoring the Texas Challenge, Texas A&M University Press, December 16, 2013. Steve H. Murdock PhD, Michael E. Cline, Mary A. Zey, P. Wilner Jeanty, and Deborah Perez

¹¹ <https://www.texastribune.org/2021/04/12/texas-employee-benefits-sick-leave-senate/>

¹² Economic Security for Women and Families in Texas, Center for American Progress, August 13, 2021, Diana Boesch and Carolyn Sabini.