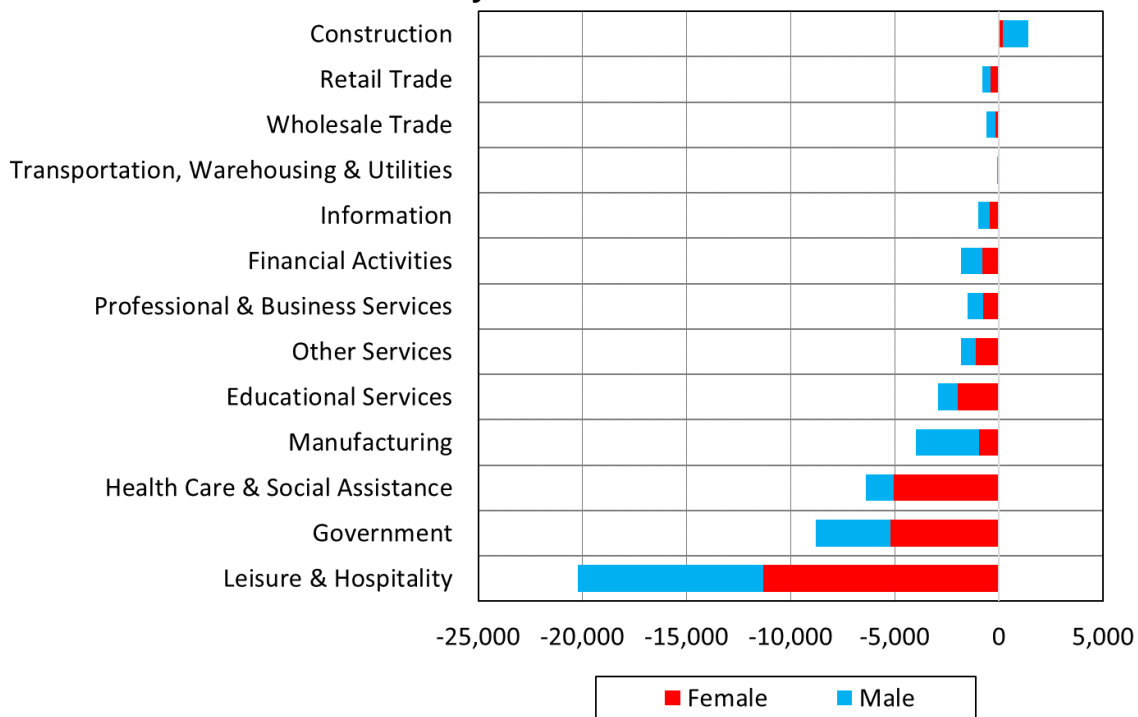


Maine’s Labor Market During the Pandemic: Impact by Gender

The pandemic had a dramatic impact on the labor market through most of 2020. A previous article, available [here](#), examined which sectors have been most impacted and how this period differs from the last recession. This article examines the differing impact by gender in the period from February, just before the COVID-19 virus caused business closures and alternative work arrangements, through December 2020.

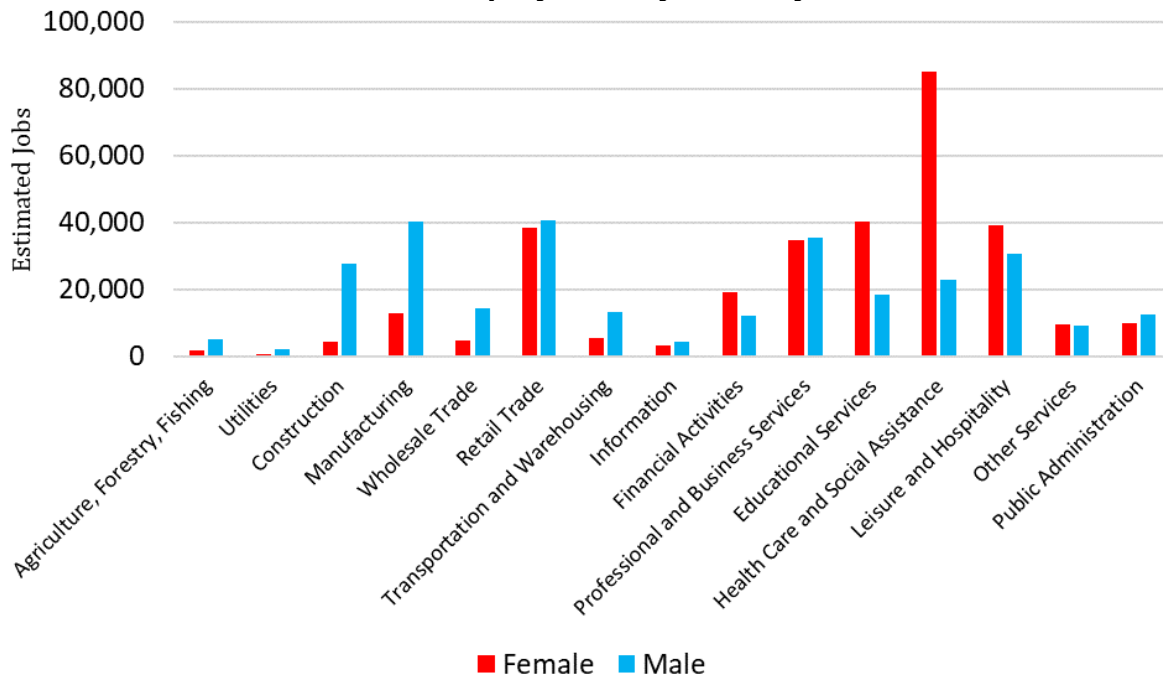
**Change in Jobs by Gender by Sector in Maine
 February to December 2020**



Source: Maine Department of Labor, Center for Workforce Research and Information, Current Employment Statistics. Share of employment by gender obtained from the Census Bureau Quarterly Workforce Indicators

In the ten months through December there was a net decrease of 48,400 jobs. Of that, we estimate that 27,600 jobs were lost by women and 20,800 by men. The 57 to 43 percent disparity is because women comprise a majority of jobs in the sectors most impacted by the pandemic: leisure and hospitality, educational services (both private and public, K-12 and higher education), and healthcare and social assistance. Of the five sectors that experienced the largest net job loss, only in manufacturing is the workforce primarily male.

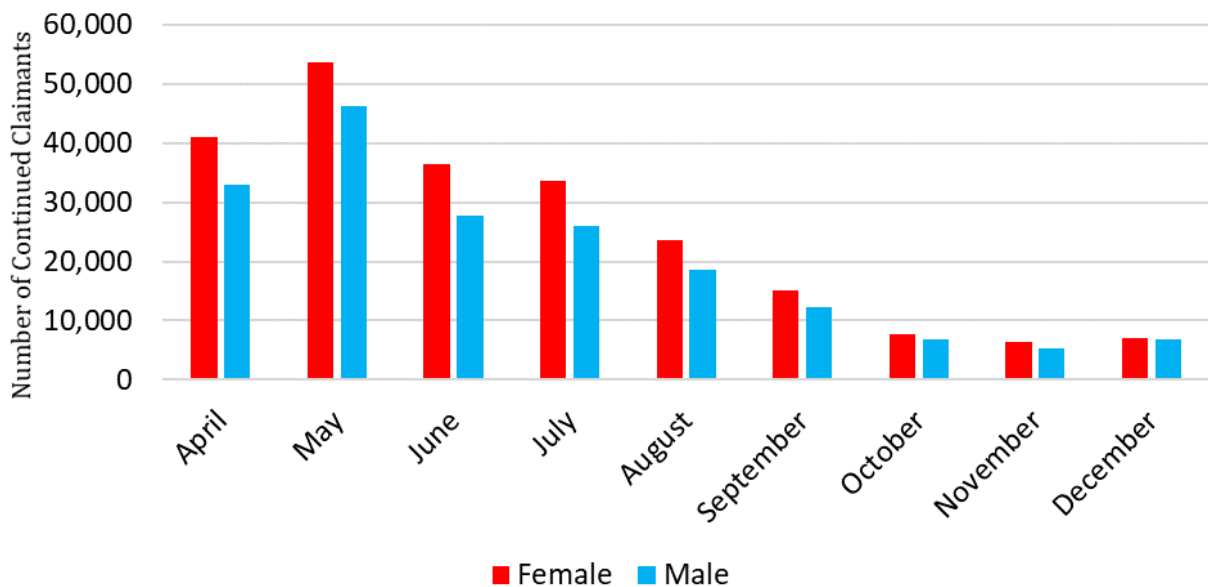
Maine Estimated Employment by Industry and Gender



Source: Census Bureau Quarterly Workforce Indicators 1-year Average (2019Q2-2020Q1)

Data from Maine’s unemployment insurance system is consistent with the pattern of job loss. Over the ten months, 55 percent of claimants for state unemployment insurance were women. Continued claims declined from the springtime highs through the summer and fall as some returned to work and others exhausted benefits. The gender gap peaked at 57 percent in June and gradually decreased each month to 51 percent in December.

Maine Continued Unemployment Claims by Gender



Source: Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Unemployment Compensation, ETA 203 Report. Notes: Count of claimants filing a continued claim during the week that includes the 12th day of the month, state unemployment insurance program

Along with the decrease in jobs, the pandemic caused a sharp decrease in labor force participation since February 2020. The share of the age 16 and over population in Maine in the labor force decreased 2.2 percentage points to 60.2 percent in December. This represents about 25,000 fewer people in the labor force at the end of the year than would have been the case if participation had remained at February levels.

The decrease in labor force participation was the result of many factors that prevented those who lost their job from looking for another, including fewer available job openings, personal safety concerns, school closures and hybrid learning models, and lack of childcare. (The labor force includes those who are employed and those who are not employed but are actively seeking and available for work – the unemployed. Retired and other people not employed who are not seeking or available for work are not in the labor force and not counted as unemployed.)

Since job loss has been somewhat greater among women than men and because of challenges related to caring for children, it might be expected that labor force participation decreased more among women than men. It is not clear if that has been the case in Maine because monthly estimates are not available.

All CWRI publications and presentations can be found [here](#). Future topics include: job impact by educational attainment, telework, reemployment and the challenge the pandemic has made for data collection and estimation.