After the Great Recession



August jobless rates were 6.8 percent for women and 7.7 percent for men. GETTY IMAGES/BANANASTOCK RF

AN UNEVEN RECOVERY

Women have regained lost jobs during downturn while men still short 2.1 million

By Paul Wiseman and Christopher S. Rugaber
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. women have recovered all the jobs they lost to the Great Recession. The same can't be said for men, who remain 2.1 million jobs short.

The biggest factor is that men dominate construction and manufacturing — industries that have not recovered millions of jobs lost during the downturn. By contrast, women have made up a disproportionate share of workers in those that have been hiring — retail, education, health care, restaurants and hotels.

"It's a segregated labor market, and men and women do work in different industries, and even in different areas within industries," says Heidi Hartmann, an economist and president of the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

The gap was evident in the August unemployment rates: 6.8 percent for women, 7.7 percent for men.

In August, 68 million women said they were employed, passing the more than the 67.97 million who had jobs when the recession began in December 2007, the government says. Among men, 76.2 million were employed last month, down from 78.3 million in December 2007.

Since June 2009, one of the largest gains occurred in a measure of education and health services jobs. That category added nearly 1.6 million jobs, second most of any industry. Women gained nearly 1.1 million of those jobs.

Women have made big gains in professional and business services, a grab-bag category that includes architects, engineers, information technology workers and temps. Women also make up more than half of the workforce in hotels and restaurants, which has posted the third-largest gain of any industry.

Both men and women have been retiring, enrolling in school, registering for Social Security disability payments and just giving up on a weak job market.

BOTH GENDERS SEE LABOR FORCE DROP

The percentage of women working or looking for work has been dropping, just as it has for men.

» The so-called labor force participation rate for women was 57.3 percent last month, down from 59.4 percent in December 2007.

» For men, the participation rate has dropped to 69.5 percent, from 73.1 percent.