

Study: Men faring better in ‘recovery’

Gender-specific jobless rates going in opposite directions

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NEW YORK STATE — During the recession, men fared much worse than women, accounting for nearly three-quarters of the 7.5 million jobs that were eliminated.

That led some observers to nickname the recession “the mancession.”

But now that trend appears to be reversing itself, with observers describing the recovery as a “hecovery.”

During the economic recovery, women have struggled much more than men, according to a report from the Pew Research Center.

Between June 2009 and May 2011, men gained 768,000 jobs and lowered their unemployment rate by 1.1 percentage points, to 9.5 percent, according to Pew. During that same time period, women lost 218,000 jobs, and their unemployment rate increased by 0.2 points, to 8.5 percent.

Prior to the recession, the unemployment rate for men, 5.1 percent, was slightly higher than the unemployment rate for women, 4.9 percent.

“Men were hit harder during the recession, but they seem to be doing better in the recovery so far,” said James Parrott, an economist with the Latham-based Fiscal Policy Institute.

“Construction has stabilized, which has helped men. Manufacturing has improved a bit, and that’s helped men.”

But the Pew report shows that men are finding work in areas traditionally dominated by women, such as education and health services, and that they’ve outpaced women in 15 of 16 sectors, either gaining jobs while women continue to lose them or gaining jobs at a faster rate than women. The exception is state government, where women have added jobs during the recovery and men have lost them.

But that could change.

Many state governments are shedding jobs to cope with budget shortfalls. New York is preparing for another possible round of state worker layoffs, and in the past year, the Capital Region has lost about 8,200 government jobs.

Parrott also said that many school districts in New York are preparing to make massive cuts, and this could lead to devastating teacher layoffs, which would hurt women. “One area where you might expect women to get clobbered is teaching layoffs,” he said. “We’ve seen some, but we’re

expecting to see more in the fall.” He said that in New York, women fill about three-quarters of teaching jobs.

Rakeesh Kochhar, who authored the Pew report, said this is the first economic recovery in which the unemployment rates for men and women have gone in opposite directions — falling for men, but rising for women.

“Men have had success finding jobs in occupations and industries you don’t normally consider their strength,” Kochhar said.

Parrott said that the gap between male and female unemployment rates is closing: In upstate New York, the unemployment rate for men was 8.7 at the end of 2010, while the unemployment rate for women was 6.5 percent.

“There are not a lot of jobs anywhere,” Parrott said.

According to Pew, women have lost 433,000 jobs in manufacturing, retail trade and finance during the recovery, while men have gained 253,000 jobs in those sectors. Women gained 691,000 jobs in professional and business services and education and health services, but men gained 804,000 jobs in those sectors. Women lost 297,000 government-sector jobs, while men lost 133,000 jobs.

What’s unclear, Kochhar said, is “why women are not having the same success as men.” His report speculates that men are being more flexible as they look for work, more willing to do something completely different, at lower pay.

“Gender differences are not uncommon during recessions and recoveries,” Kochhar said.

“Men tend to get hit harder in recessions because they’re more heavily represented in blue collar industries.” He noted that layoffs during recessions used to be temporary, and as conditions improved, people returned to their old jobs. But in the 1990s, that pattern began to change, and once jobs vanished, they tended to vanish for good.

“Some industries are beset by long-term decline,” Kochhar said. This is forcing men to look for work in new areas, he said.