

# Vermont Legislative Joint Fiscal Office

One Baldwin Street • Montpelier, VT 05633-5701 • (802) 828-2295 • Fax: (802) 828-2483

## ISSUE BRIEF

Date: January 6, 2021

Prepared by Joyce Manchester

### Vermont's Unemployment Insurance Recipients: Relatively High Proportions of Women, Older People, and Food and Lodging Employees

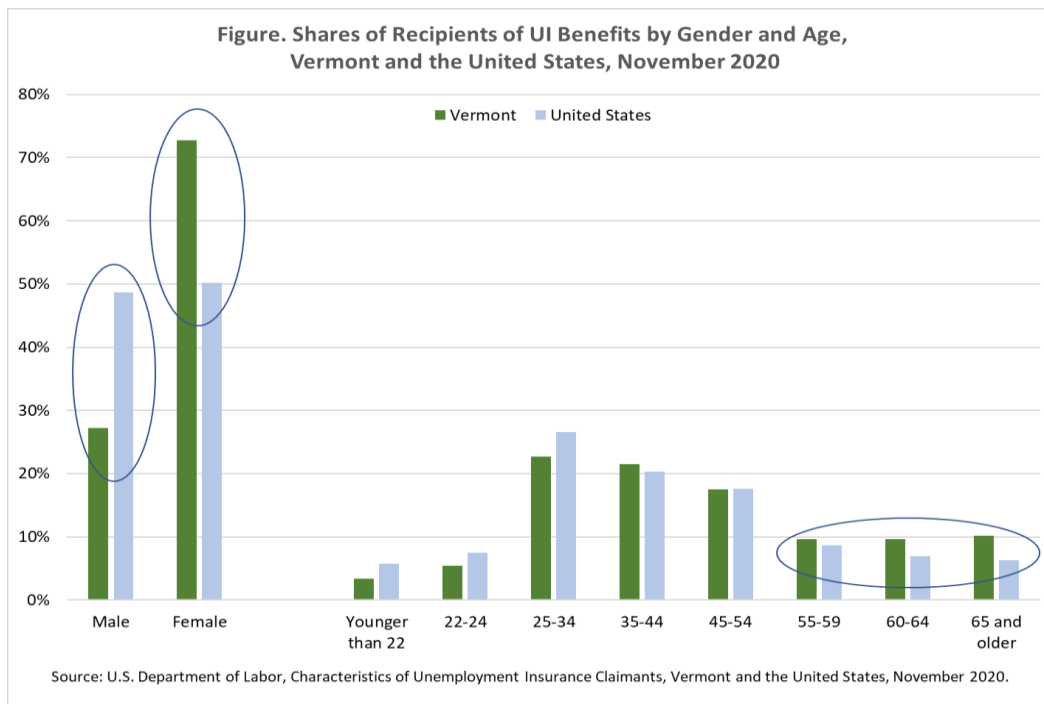
#### Summary

Based on information about recipients of traditional Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits during the week ending November 14, 2020:

- More than 7,500 of the 10,400 Vermonters—about 73 percent—were women, a much higher proportion than the nationwide share of 50 percent.
- Older Vermonters comprised greater shares of the UI recipients than was true for the United States.
- Workers in the Accommodation and Food Services sector were 26 percent of UI recipients, substantially above the nationwide share of almost 15 percent.

#### Characteristics of the Recipients of Unemployment Insurance Benefits

Each month, the U.S. Department of Labor collects information on characteristics of people who receive traditional UI benefits in each state. The most recent information is for the week ending November 14, 2020. In Vermont, women and older workers have been especially adversely affected during the COVID-19 recession (see the Figure). Unfortunately, we have no information about individuals receiving the new Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) for the self-employed and sole proprietors. Here we present data on traditional UI recipients only. For comparison, we look at shares of UI recipients in Vermont and the United States.



The share of unemployment benefit recipients who are women is especially large in Vermont in the current recession. Across the United States, women made up about half or 50.2 percent of UI recipients in November 2020, but that share was close to three-quarters or 72.8 percent in Vermont. Men made up just 27.2 percent of UI recipients. The large share of Vermont women in the current recession stands in sharp contrast with the smaller share in November 2009 during the Great Recession, when just 38.5 percent of the unemployed in Vermont were women. That recession was dubbed the “mancession” because jobs held by men were disproportionately affected by the financial crisis. By contrast, the current recession is called the “shecession” by some.<sup>1</sup> Women are suffering disproportional effects in part because they are often employed in jobs not amenable to working from home, such as the hard-hit hospitality sector, or because they are caring for children with shifting school schedules or older people at risk of suffering from COVID-19.

The COVID-19 recession has also led to a higher share of older workers on traditional unemployment in Vermont than in the country overall. A substantially greater share of workers ages 55 and older received UI benefits in Vermont (again see Figure above). The difference is particularly stark in the 65 and older age group. In Vermont, 10.2 percent of UI recipients were 65 or older, whereas that share was 6.3 percent in the United States. A smaller share of UI recipients in Vermont was at the lower end of the age distribution, below age 35. A small part of those differences is explained by demographic differences in the age structure of the population but by no means all.

Looking at the sectors of Vermont’s economy that account for the larger shares of UI recipients reveals further differences between the COVID-19 recession in Vermont and the United States. In Vermont, we see much higher shares of UI recipients from the Accommodation and Food Services sector and, to a lesser extent, from the Healthcare and Social Assistance sector and the Educational Services sector. Those differences among sectors further support the idea that the COVID-19 recession is much harsher for Vermont women than in the United States overall.

<b>Table. Share of UI Recipients by Industry, Vermont and United States, November 2020</b>		
	Vermont	U.S.
Accommodation and Food Services	26.1%	14.6%
Healthcare and Social Assistance	12.6%	10.5%
Educational Services	5.0%	3.7%
Source: U.S. Department of Labor		

<sup>1</sup> Eleni Karageorge, “COVID-19 Recession is Tougher on Women,” (Monthly Labor Review, September 2020), <https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2020/beyond-bls/covid-19-recession-is-tougher-on-women.htm>. Also see “Shecession: The Pandemic’s Impact on Women in the Workforce,” (WBUR On Point, October 22, 2020), <https://www.wbur.org/onpoint/2020/10/22/shecession-the-pandemics-impact-on-women-in-the-workplace>.