

Vermont Legislative Joint Fiscal Office

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

ISSUE BRIEF

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Prepared by Joyce Manchester

Addendum to the Issue Brief of January 6, 2021: “Vermont’s Unemployment Insurance Recipients: Relatively High Proportions of Women, Older People, and Food and Lodging Employees”

The Issue Brief released by the Joint Fiscal Office on January 6, 2021 noted that in November 2020, more than 7,500 of the 10,400 Vermonters receiving regular Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits were women.¹ That means that women comprised about 73 percent of regular UI recipients, a much higher proportion than the nationwide share of 50 percent.

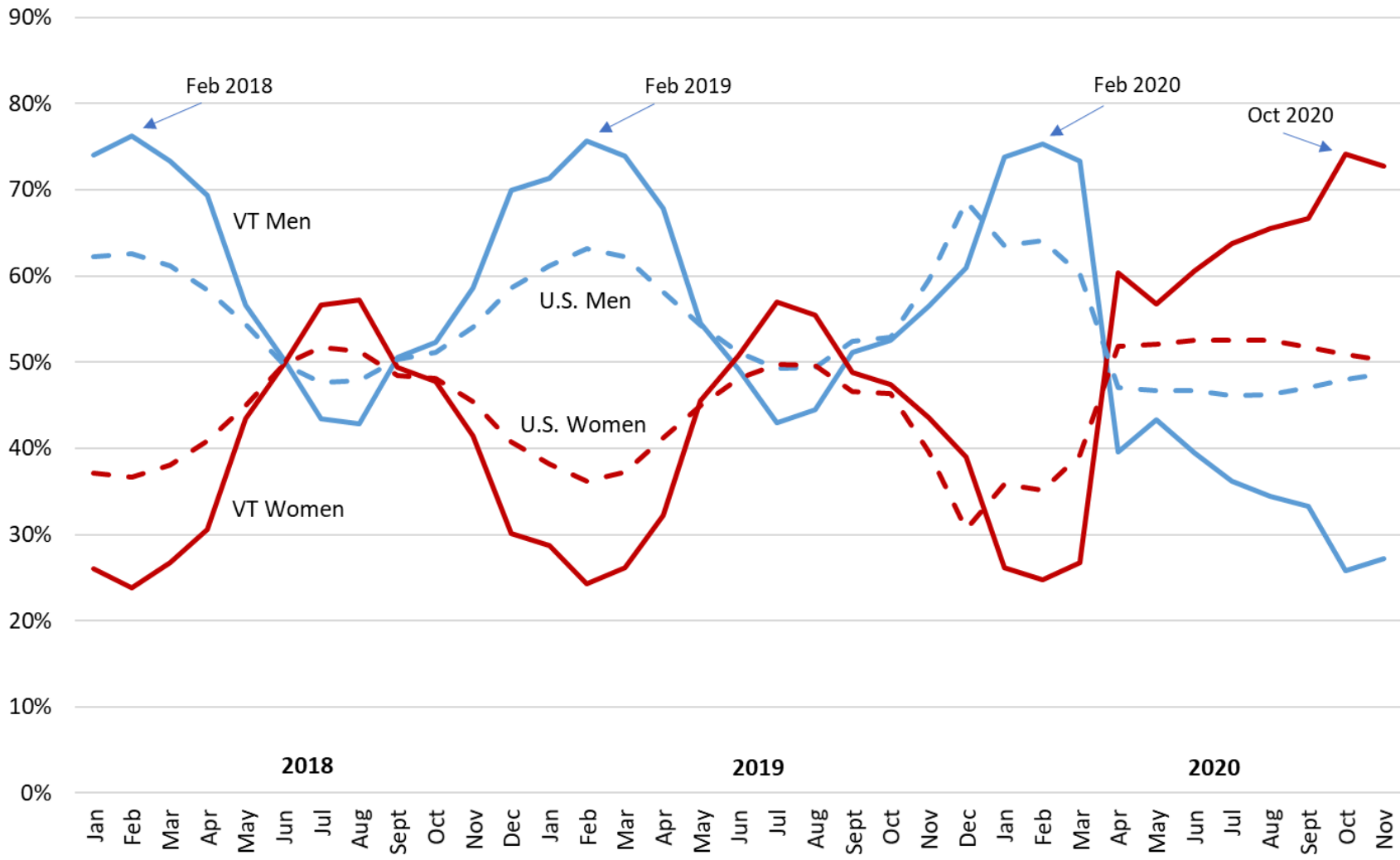
To better understand the context of that surprisingly large share of women among regular UI recipients in Vermont, JFO looked at the shares of men and women receiving those benefits during the period from January 2018 through November 2020. In both 2018 and 2019, men comprised a larger share of regular UI recipients between the winter months, generally October through May (see Figure 1 on page 2). Women comprised a noticeably larger share only during the summer months of July and August. That pattern changed in 2020 during the COVID-19 recession, however. The share of regular UI recipients who are women has been at least 55 percent and as large as 74 percent since April 2020.

Looking at the shares of regular UI recipients by industry helps to explain the substantial increase in the proportion of women receiving regular UI benefits. In 2018 and 2019, workers from the construction industry made up about one-third of regular UI recipients during the “deep winter” months but that share dropped to less than 10 percent during the summer months. In 2019, for example, construction workers were 35 percent of those receiving regular UI benefits in February, but that share dropped to just 5 percent in August 2019 (see Figure 2 on page 3). Those patterns were completely disrupted during the COVID-19 recession in 2020. In August through November 2020, the largest shares by industry were the Accommodations and Food Services sector (between 26 percent and 34 percent) and the Healthcare and Social Services sector and Retail sector (both between 11 percent and 13 percent).

Of course, other reasons help to explain the large share of women receiving regular UI benefits in Vermont. They may need to care for children or other family members, or they may hold jobs that do not allow them to work from home.

¹ See https://lifo.vermont.gov/assets/Publications/Issue-Briefs/1263dff53e/Women_and_older_workers_higher_share_on_UI_dec2020.pdf

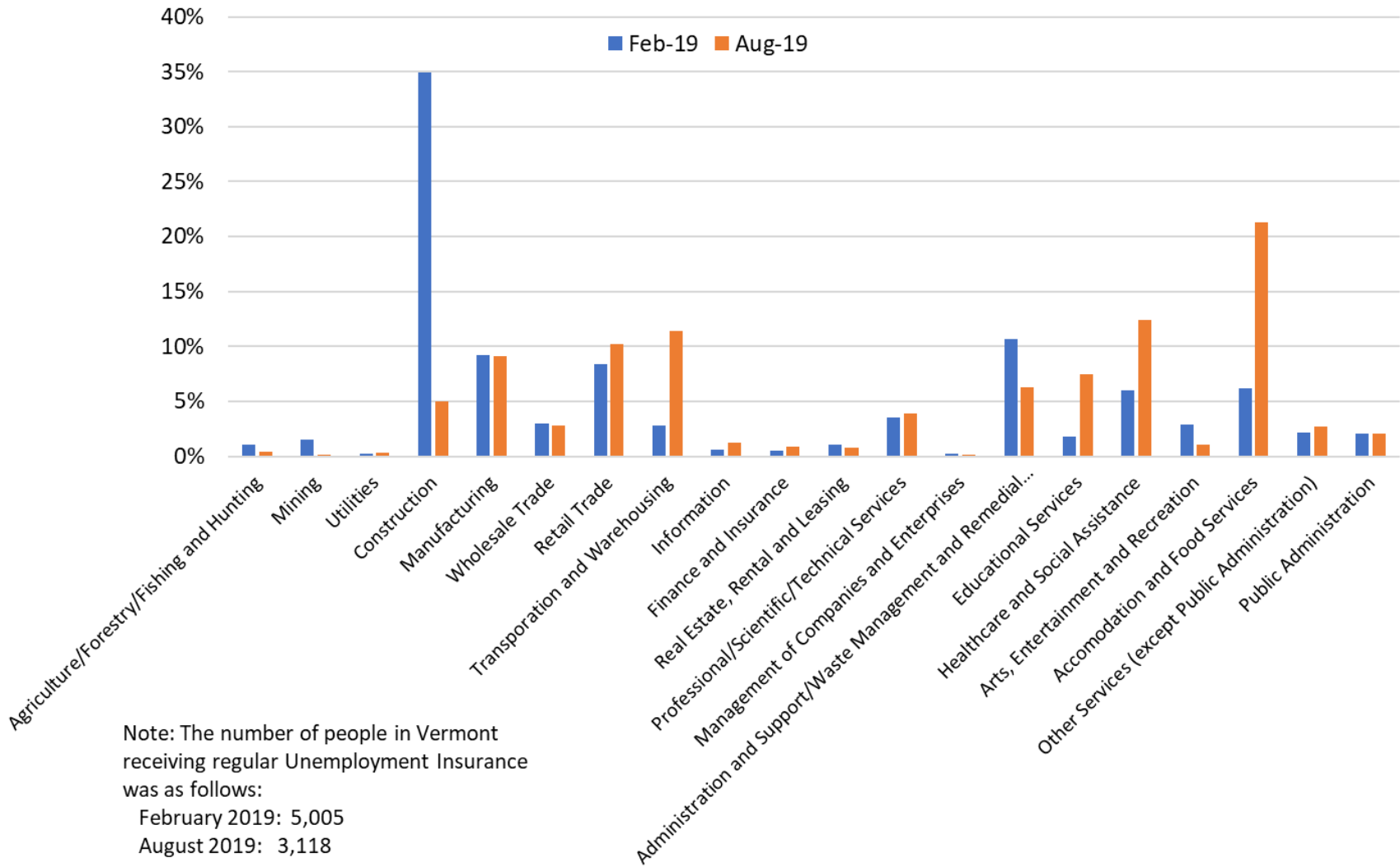
Figure 1. Regular Unemployment Insurance Recipients in Vermont and the United States: Share of Men and Women, January 2018 to November 2020



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Characteristics of Unemployment Insurance Claimants, January 2018 to November 2020.

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Figure 2. Share of Vermont Recipients of Regular UI Benefits by Industry, February 2019 and August 2019



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Characteristics of Unemployment Insurance Claimants, February and August 2019.

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