

# More men than women have lost their jobs

Gender gap in state's jobless rate more than twice national average

The U.S. recession, officially the longest and deepest downturn since World War II, has earned the nickname "mancession" because more men than women have lost their jobs.

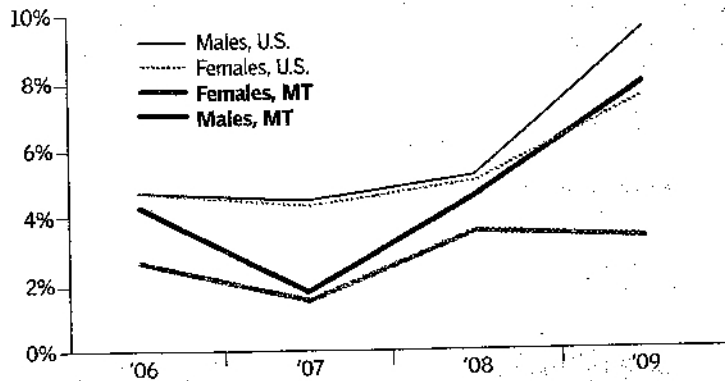
When the U.S. economy was booming in 2006, men and women shared the same 4.7 percent unemployment rate. But by March 2009, 7.5 percent of females were jobless, compared with 9.5 percent of the men.

For various reasons, the gender gap in Montana broadened to 4.5 percent, more than twice the national average.

According to Wendy Stock, a professor of economics and agricultural economics at Montana State University, this gap won't subside quickly during a recovery expected to be "slow and subdued."

Since the 1960s, more women have started working outside the home and now make up nearly half

## Male and female unemployment rates



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics seasonally adjusted figures for national unemployment rates and author's computations from March Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, for Montana figures.

VICTOR ADY/Gazette Staff

of the U.S. labor force.

"You can argue this is bitter-sweet. It hasn't happened as the economy moved up," she said.

And women still earn, on average, 70 cents for every \$1 a man earns.

More men than women work in forestry and fisheries, transporta-

tion and utilities and manufacturing, sectors that experienced some of the largest layoffs during Montana's recession.

Stock and several other economists spoke Tuesday at Montana State University Billings during the

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## Gender

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35th annual seminar by the University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research. The team of economists will deliver the economic briefing to audiences in nine Montana cities from Jan. 22 through March 17.

The U.S. recession officially ended last summer when the national economy started growing again.

In past recessions, a deep correction was followed by relatively quick recovery. But this turnaround is expected to be anemic and drawn-out.

During Montana's recession, jobs in education, health care and public services were healthier than other sectors. Women tend to work in those fields, so they were

less impacted by the economic correction, Stock said.

But just because a job becomes available doesn't mean it pays well.

"As the economy recovers, we see women who left the labor force coming back and we see more entry-level jobs," she said.

Some women during the recession left their jobs in disproportionate numbers, especially low-income workers and women with small children.

"As wages start to fall, this pushes some women over the edge in affording day care," Stock said.

Bad economic times obviously strain marriages, but divorce is an expensive option and Montana's divorce rate has increased only slightly during this latest downturn, Stock said. But tough times have other

effects on families.

"They delay pregnancy, and they delay the number of children they have," she said. "The lower the income, the less likely the woman is to have a child during a recession."

The bright spots for Montana's economy in the next few years lie in public service, health care, mining and energy, Stock said. Construction, transportation and manufacturing will take longer to recover.

Still, Stock advised caution concerning economic forecasts.

"Economists are great at making predictions. We've predicted nine of the last three recessions," Stock said, with a laugh.

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