



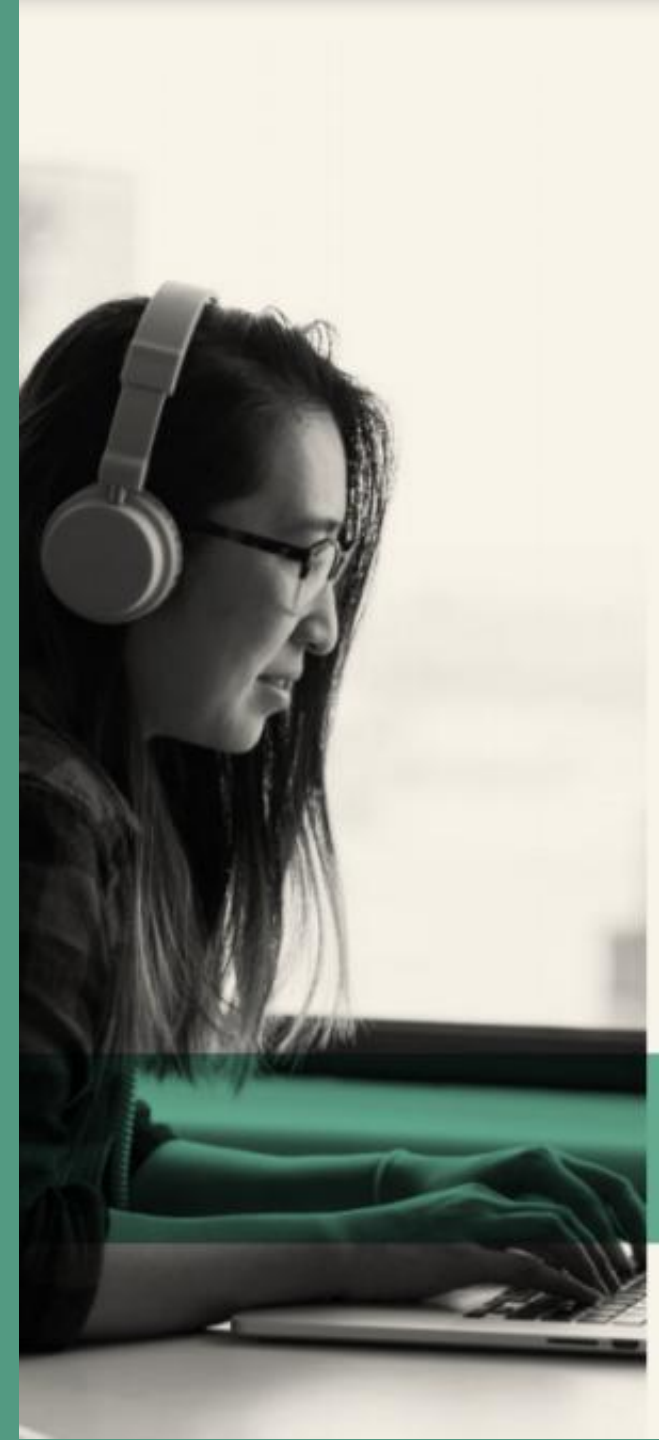
#IDEAS4GenderEquality

The Ontario Business Perspective

Claudia Dessanti

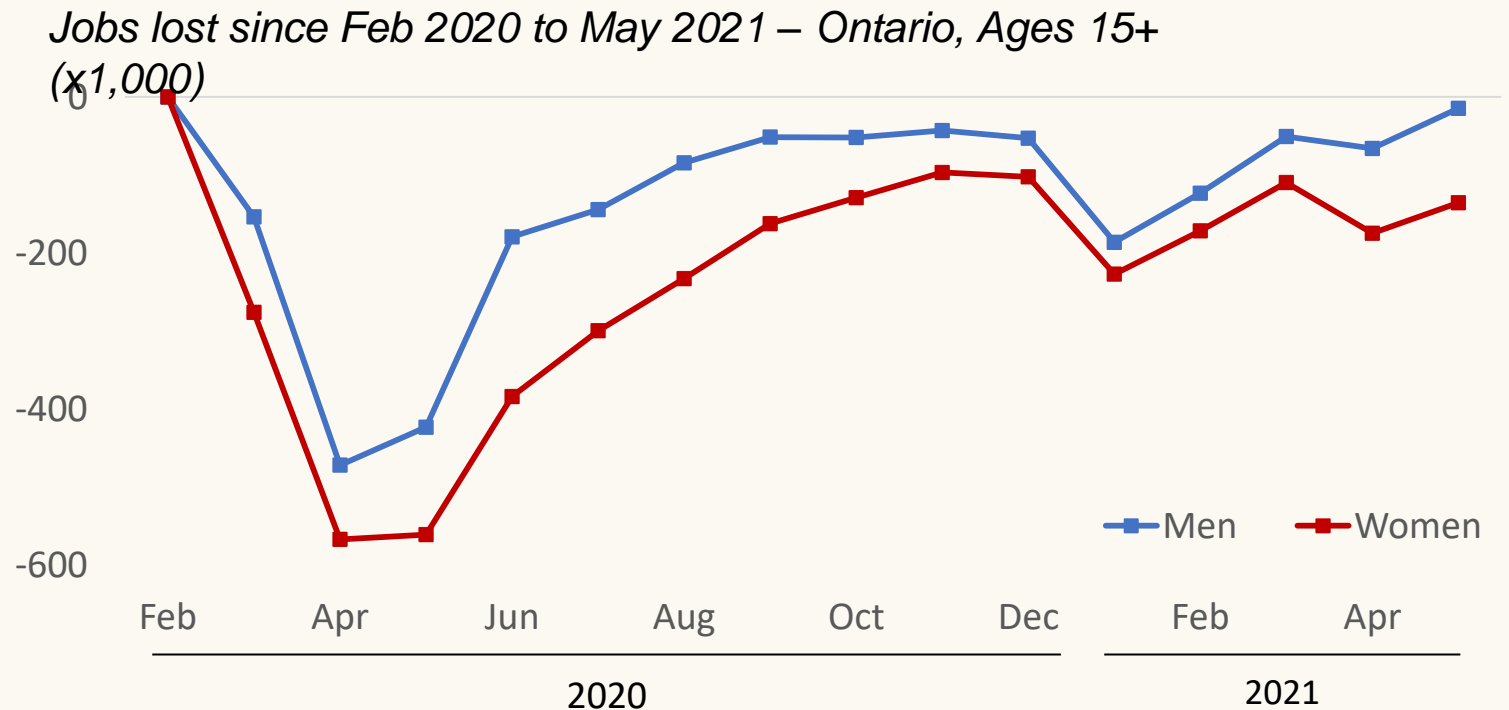
Senior Manager, Policy

Ontario Chamber of Commerce

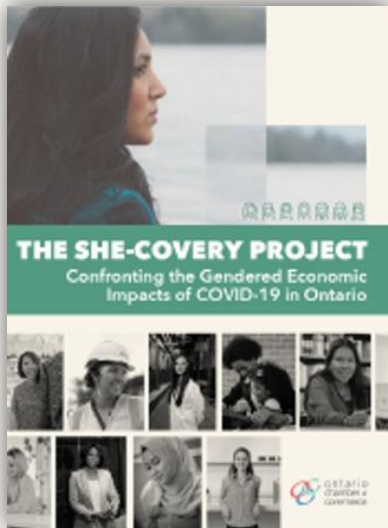


The COVID-19 Watershed

- March 2020: Women lost **twice as many jobs** as men in Ontario.
- Women are concentrated in sectors impacted by lockdown measures.
- Many mothers were forced to exit the workforce or reduce hours of work to take on **childcare** as schools closed.
- **Women entrepreneurs** were more likely to lose contracts, lay off staff, and close their businesses permanently.
- Impacts were most severe for **intersectional groups** – including low-income women, racialized women, Indigenous women, immigrant women, transgender-identifying women, and women with disabilities.



OCC Response



- **Policy & advocacy:**

- *The She-Covery Project: Confronting the Gendered Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Ontario*
- September 2020
- 44 policy recommendations
- Partners: Ontario Power Generation, Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub (Diversity Institute)

- **Internal actions:**

- 50-30 Challenge
 - Current OCC board representation: 54% women, 38% racialized/Indigenous
- Diversity and inclusion policy
- Speaker representation at OCC events

Advocacy: The She-Covery Project



**Leadership &
Accountability**



Child Care



**Workforce
Development**



Entrepreneurship



Flexible Work

Advocacy Wins

- Historic Ontario-Canada Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (March 2022)
- Investing in Women's Futures Program (November 2021)
- Targeted training for women in skilled trades and technology (June 2021)
- Federal investments in diverse entrepreneurs, e.g., the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy, Venture Capital Catalyst Inclusive Growth Stream, and supplier diversity program (April 2021)
- Canada's Task Force on Women in the Economy (March 2021)
- Ontario's Task Force on Inclusive Economic Growth (March 2021)

Looking Ahead

- Continue working with OCC members to advance gender equity within the business community – programs, sharing of best practices, etc.
 - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council – TBC
- Apply a gender equity lens to all our policy, advocacy, programs, and other work.
- Advocacy priorities:
 - Child care – address shortage of early childhood educators
 - Reskilling – training opportunities for underrepresented women
 - Women entrepreneurs – supplier diversity; wraparound supports