Understanding the Impact of COVID-19 on Women in the Workplace: Strategies for Success
The Committee for Economic Development of The Conference Board (CED) is the nonprofit, nonpartisan, business-led public policy center that delivers well-researched analysis and reasoned solutions in the nation’s interest. CED Trustees are chief executive officers and key executives of leading US companies who bring their unique experience to address today’s pressing policy issues. Collectively they represent 30+ industries, over a trillion dollars in revenue, and over 4 million employees.
Presenter

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COVID-19 Impact on Women
The “She-cession”: COVID-19 Impact on Female Labor Force

- Women are heavily concentrated in COVID-19 affected industries
- Three groups of women have been most impacted
  - Mothers, especially of young children
  - Senior level leaders
  - Minority women, especially Blacks and Latinas, who are more likely to be sole earner head of households
- Women’s patchwork of childcare has fallen apart
  - Day cares, after-school programs, adult/elder care
- Women have taken on a greater share of childcare and home responsibilities than men, even while working
The “She-cession”: COVID-19 Impact on Female Labor Force (Cont’d)

• Stepping out or back from the workforce threatens to reverse women’s progress during the recent historic economic expansion

✓ Even if the reversal proves temporary, as is likely, the career consequences of the pandemic for individual women could have long-lasting effects

✓ Widen wage gaps, lower income and savings, reduce senior level representation
Gender Gaps in Labor Market Outcomes During the Pandemic

- Pandemic-induced job losses are concentrated among women, namely mothers and Black and Hispanic women.
- More than one experience for women in the workplace:
  - Adding on elements of diversity compounds the effects of the challenges.
- Recovery of women's employment and labor force participation:
  - Tied to available childcare and school calendar/school re-openings.
- The Silver Lining:
  - The pandemic has injected into the workplace an extreme experimentation with flexibility.
  - Flexibility of Location: remote work, less business travel, sourcing talent from different geographies.
  - Flexibility of Work Schedules: will allow women to remain competitive and thrive in the workplace.
A “gendered” workforce means women are concentrated in lower-wage and service-oriented jobs most impacted by social distancing.

Share of women in employment for selected occupations, 2019

- **All Occupations**: 47% women
- **Healthcare practitioner and technical**: 75% women
- **Education, training, and library**: 74% women
- **Community and social services**: 67% women
- **Business and financial operations**: 54% women
- **Legal**: 53% women
- **Life, physical, and social science**: 49% women
- **Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media**: 49% women
- **Management**: 40% women
- **Computer and mathematical**: 26% women
- **Architecture and engineering**: 16% women
- **Healthcare support**: 87% women
- **Personal care and services**: 77% women
- **Food preparation and serving related**: 55% women
- **Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance**: 42% women
- **Protective services**: 22% women
- **Office and administrative support**: 71% women
- **Sales and related**: 49% women
- **Production**: 29% women
- **Transportation and material moving**: 18% women
- **Installation, maintenance and repair**: 4% women
- **Construction and extraction**: 4% women

At the intersection of race and gender: Black and Hispanic women have been hardest hit by job losses

Percent change in employment from Feb 2020 (pre-pandemic) to July 2021 for men and women, by race and age, seasonally adjusted

Note: Totals for men and women refer to persons ages 16 and older; racial breakdowns refer to persons ages 20 and older. Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics
Workforce exits being driven by women of color

Percentage point difference in labor force participation rates from February 2020, for men and women, ages 20+, by race or ethnicity, February 2020-July 2021

Note: Totals for men and women refer to persons ages 16 and older; racial breakdowns refer to persons ages 20 and older. Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics
Parents, and especially mothers, are leaving the labor force due to home/family care and school disruptions

Percentage point difference in labor force participation rates from January 2020, for mothers and fathers, ages 25-54, by marital status and age of child, January 2020-April 2021

Note: Totals for men and women refer to persons ages 16 and older; racial breakdowns refer to persons ages 20 and older. Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics
Mothers reduce work hours more significantly than fathers when both are working from home

Gender gap in hours worked among married mothers and fathers, both employed in telecommuting-capable occupations February, March, and April 2020

Workplace Implications
Despite increased awareness of gender imbalances, the pipeline of women for leadership roles has gotten smaller.

Source: Bridget van Kralingen, et. al., "Women, leadership, and missed opportunities: Why organizations' good intentions are not good enough," IBM, March 2021.
Women in senior leadership positions are more likely to report feeling the stresses of the pandemic.

Percentage of employees feeling pressured to work more, burned out, or exhausted.

Women are more likely to step out or step back from the workforce

Percentage of employees who have considered changing their work situation during the pandemic, fathers and mothers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Fathers</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reducing My Work Hours</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switching to a Less Demanding Job</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking a Leave of Absence</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving From Full-time to Part-time</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving the Workforce</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Work from Home is not a Silver Bullet

“Flexibility in setting work schedules offsets some of the adverse impact of the pandemic on mothers’ employment, while the ability to work from home does not”

Percent Change from pre-COVID in being comfortable with asking for benefit

While WFH provides greater flexibility, a “hybrid” model with voluntary return to the office may widen opportunity gaps between men and women.

For employees who worked virtually/remotely during the pandemic, do you have a plan for how they can return to the office or work site?

- Returning will be required for all: 16%
- Returning will be required for some/voluntary for others: 42%
- Returning will be voluntary for all: 8%
- Unknown as of now: 17%
- Not applicable, in-person operations did not substantially change: 1%
- Other: 16%

Female CEOs on this year’s *Fortune 500* broke three all-time records

- The number of women CEOs of *Fortune 500* businesses hit an all-time high:
  - 41

- The number of Black women running *Fortune 500* businesses:
  - 2

- The highest-ranking business ever run by a female CEO

Q&A...