

News Release

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COVID-19 Pandemic Disproportionately Hurting Working Women

Washington, DC, December 18, 2020...The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate economic impact on women in ways that could have long-lasting effects on the U.S. economy, according to a [report](#) by the Committee for Economic Development of The Conference Board (CED).

The [report](#) – the latest in a series of Solutions Briefs – cites two critical factors that have magnified COVID-19’s impact on women. First, the lower-wage and service-oriented jobs which have been hardest-hit by the pandemic predominantly employ women. Those sectors include personal service, healthcare support, restaurant servers, food preparation, and administrative support. At the depth of the employment crisis, women’s employment – in absolute numbers – fell to its lowest point since the 1990s and has since only recovered two-thirds of that loss.

Second, women are far more likely than men to bear the brunt of disruptions to childcare and education. Even before the pandemic, mothers of children under age 18 reported spending nearly twice as much time on childcare and housework as fathers.

“This will likely be the first recession in half a century to feature a larger increase in unemployment rates among women than men,” said CED President Lori Esposito Murray. “When talented workers are forced to the sidelines the entire economy is hurt. Employers also miss out on important competitive resources. This catastrophe is a first-order national concern, and business leaders and policymakers must act quickly to respond to it.”

The report includes 11 steps business leaders and policymakers should take to mitigate the economic impact on women, including:

- **Both increase the availability and normalize the use of remote work and flexible hours.** This must include evaluating the performance of workers who use these options on an equal footing with those who do not.
- **Help women candidates advance into leadership roles,** through sponsorship, mentoring, and training for midcareer female workers. Business leaders should ensure that their companies are adopting existing best practices including prioritizing, disclosing, and rewarding efforts to reach gender parity.
- **Lawmakers should create a childcare stabilization fund** to ensure widespread access to safe, high-quality childcare, which is essential to speed the economic recovery.
- **Extend temporary paid leave programs,** which are scheduled to expire at year’s end, until COVID-19 is no longer disrupting normal care arrangements.

Read the new report, [COVID-19’s Impact on Women in the Workplace: Avoiding a Major Setback](#).

About CED

The Committee for Economic Development is the Public Policy Center of The Conference Board that delivers well-researched analysis, and non-partisan, reasoned solutions in the nation’s interest.

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