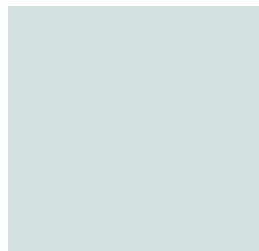




Women, Work and COVID-19

**Pathways to Prosperity Virtual Workshop
Newcomer Labour Market Integration in Pandemic Times
Katherine Scott, CCPA
February 22, 2022**



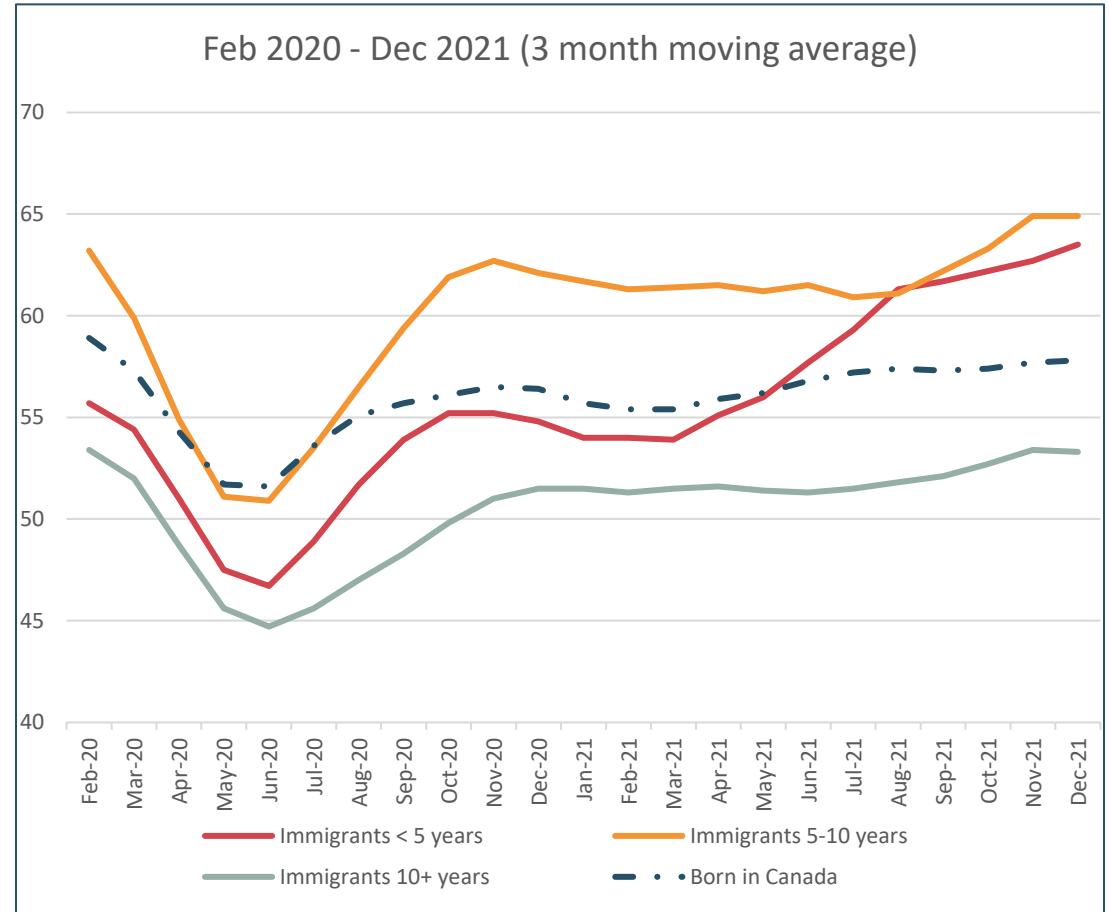
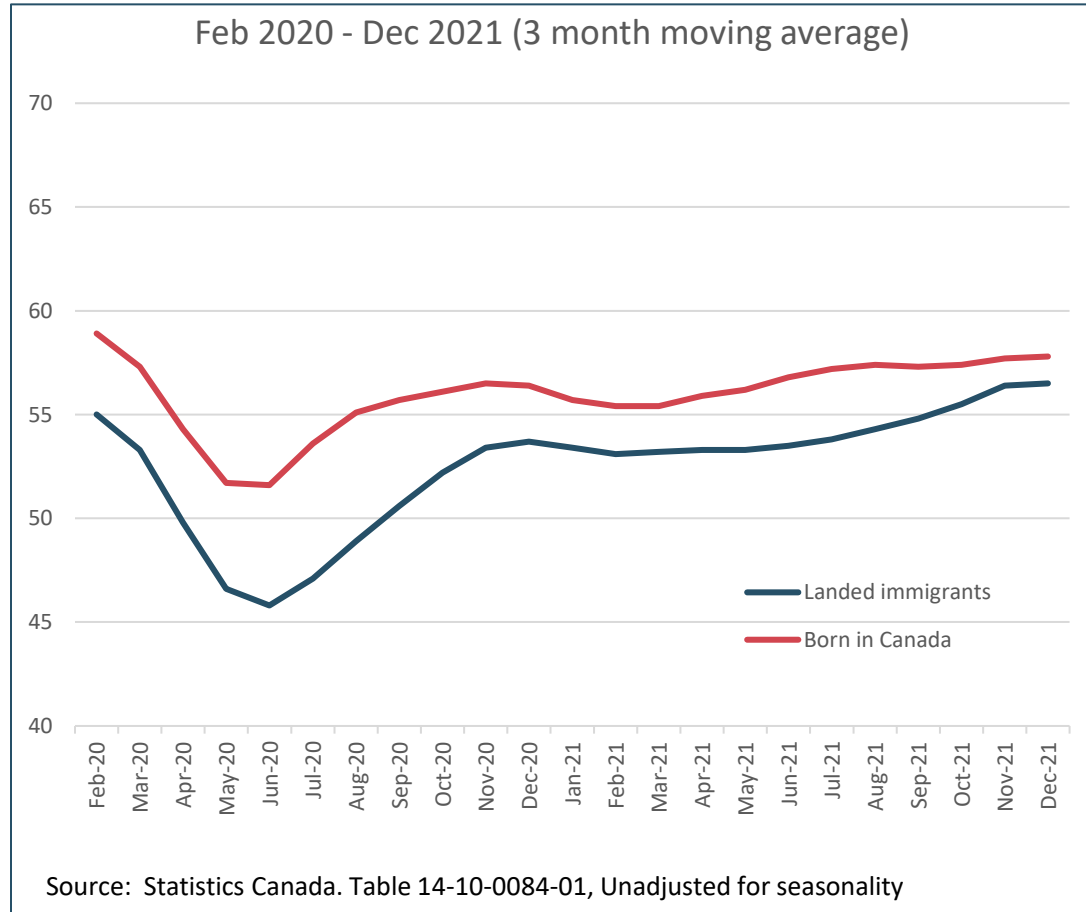


Path to recovery uneven

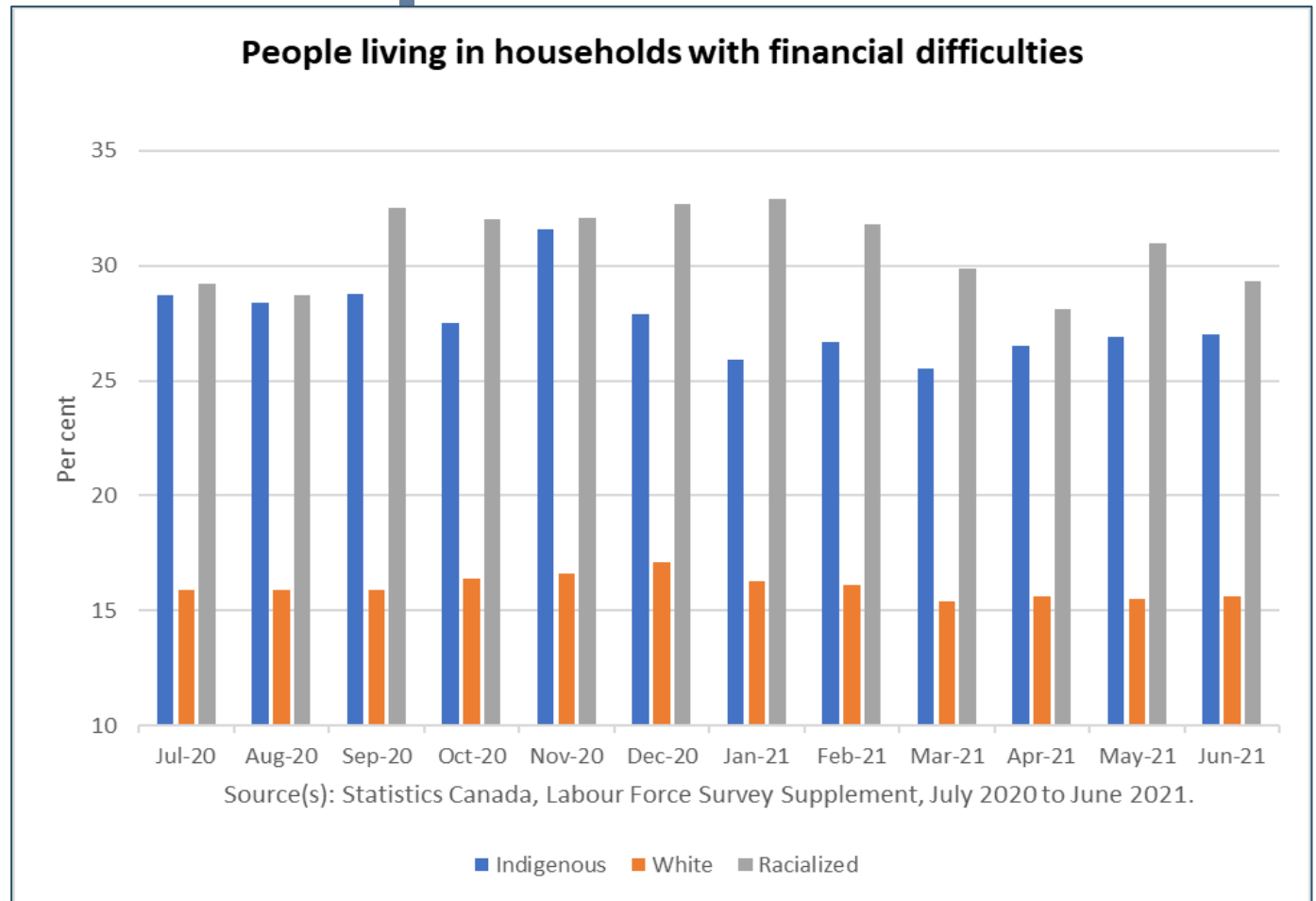
- Immigrant workers were especially hard hit during the initial lockdown
 - While immigrant women make up roughly one-quarter of all female workers (26%), they accounted for 37% of employment losses (and this doesn't account for reduced hours).
 - Rates of unemployment were particularly high among Southeast Asian, Black and Arab women over-represented in hard hit sectors.
- The initial recovery was particularly slow among immigrant women.
 - Barriers to their labour market participation were even greater through this period, reducing employment opportunities and access to important social supports, on the one hand, and intensifying domestic and caregiving responsibilities on the other (Nardon et.al., 2021; Ferrer and Momani, 2020).



Employment rate among women (15+ yrs) by immigration status



Other evidence reveals high levels of financial insecurity among Indigenous and racialized households, two times, on average, that of white households over this period



Source: : Sheila Block, custom tabulations - Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey (July 2020 – June 2021).



Challenging conditions ahead

- Behind the headline statistics, there are other key factors at play undermining immigrant women's economic security:
 - Over-concentration of immigrant women in lower-paying occupations and sectors, buffeted by recurring waves of COVID-19;
 - Limited access to needed supports and services as community services scaled back and pivoted away from in-person programming;
 - Failure of federal and provincial governments to institute necessary protections such as paid sick leave and supports for caregiving;
 - Many ineligible for financial aid of any kind including migrant workers, international students and undocumented residents.
- The rising costs of living especially for housing is compounding what is already a hugely difficult situation.
 - Average wage growth is still quite modest 3% year-over-year, well behind cost of inflation for key goods like [housing; child care; food](#)



Conditions exist for
advancing
progressive change

- Widespread acknowledgement of failures and shortcoming of public care infrastructure (e.g., long term care; public health; education)
- Heightened public interest; new constituencies advocating for change; established evidence base and lived experience
- Growing labour shortages in care services and transformation of other industries propelling change;
- Openness at federal level and committed funding for child care, long term care, public health



Entrenched barriers remain

- Jurisdictional conflict, a history of neglect and privatization, and a deep-seated intersectional bias (more evident in some jurisdictions than others) have undermined Canada's pandemic response and exploited women's care labour
- The rush for "cheap" fixes has begun:
 - Governments and business are stepping up their lobby to expand the use of temporary foreign workers to meet labour shortages and wind down pandemic supports
 - New gig intermediaries are rushing to fill the vacuum in long term care and home care services



Take Aways

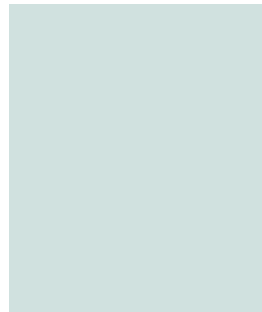
The prospect of moving key policy reforms forward will hinge on the same formula that is driving transformation in child care, including:

- strong federal leadership;
- a willingness to set and enforce measurable national standards;
- sustained and significant financial commitment; and, most importantly,
- sustained and broad community advocacy.



Contact

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Women “frontlined” and “sidelined” in the crisis

