

Beginning the end of February, there were 3 million newly unemployed in Canada (1MM in March; 2MM in April -- the second and first largest drops respectively since the Labour Force Survey began in 1976). Recovery began to take place in May but the gendered nature of the current economic slowdown becomes more stark with each passing day.

Men have recouped nearly 14% of the nearly 1.5 million jobs that they lost in March and April while women have only recovered 5% of the 1.5 million jobs that they lost in March and April¹. Unemployment rose 6% for women but only 0.5% for men between April and May². Provincially, 14,600 more Nova Scotian women were unemployed in May than in April³.

Female Share of Total Employment in Canada



Chart prepared by Dr. Trevor Tombe. Source: Dr. Tombe's calculations using Statistics Canada data table 14-10-0287

Sectors dominated by women have been slower to reopen and are expected to be slower to recover to where they were pre-pandemic. Women were also, by and large, shut out of their industries earlier than men⁴.

¹ Statistics Canada. Labour Force Survey. May 2020. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200605/dq200605a-eng.htm?HPA=1>

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

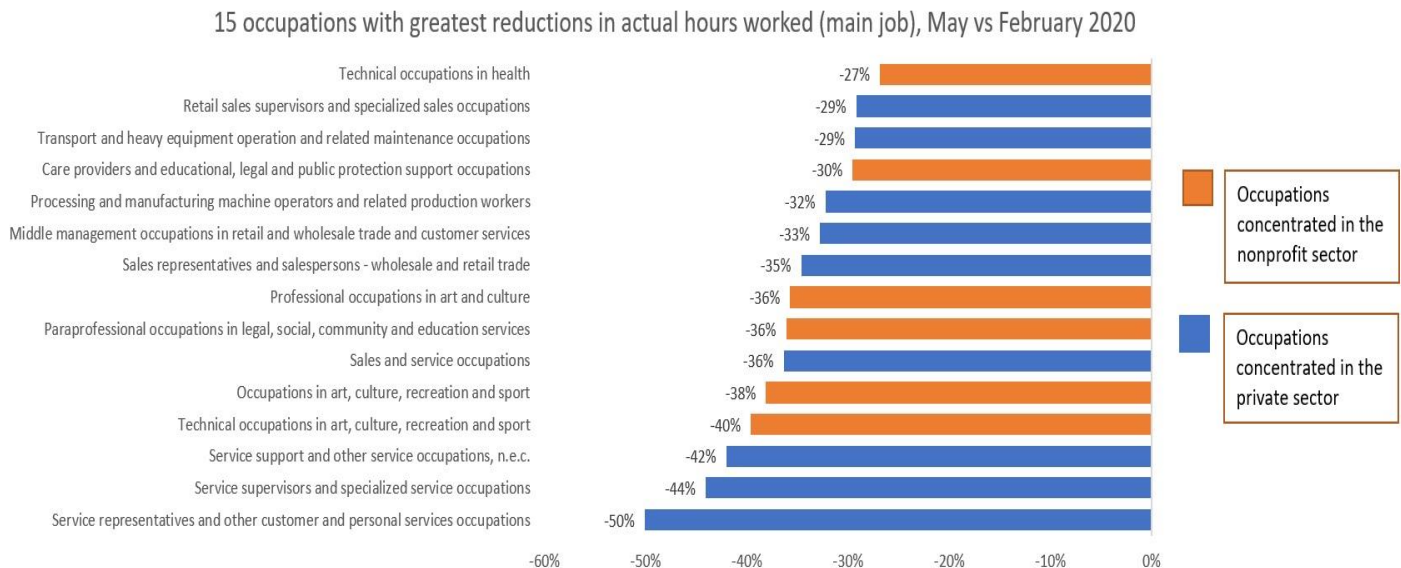
As women make up two-thirds of Nova Scotia’s nonprofit labour force and 67% of the sector’s leadership⁵, what commentators have coined the ‘shecession’ has significant implications for the nonprofit sector.

On March 27 the Community Sector Council of Nova Scotia (CSCNS) launched a survey of nonprofits to get a better understanding of emerging patterns in the sector. 519 nonprofit leaders responded and 248 participants completed the entire survey. The Survey closed on April 2, and the *Initial Impact of COVID-19 on Nova Scotia's Nonprofit & Voluntary Sector* was published on April 6. It can be read [here](#).

This Report is only an initial snapshot of COVID-19’s impacts on the sector, but it does reveal emerging patterns. 29% of nonprofits surveyed anticipated reducing the number of paid staff. In addition to layoffs, workers have seen hours cut. This is consistent with what is taking place across the country. As noted by Steven Ayer (see Figure 1), President of Common Good Strategies, 6 of the 15 occupations with the greatest reduction in actual hours worked in May 2020 compared with February 2020 were concentrated in the nonprofit sector⁶.

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Source: Statistics Canada. [Table 14-10-0300-01 Actual hours worked by occupation, monthly, unadjusted for seasonality \(x 1,000\)](#)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/1410030001-eng>. Note: Occupations as classified by the national occupation classification of 50 occupations. Analysis by Steven Ayer.

Chart courtesy Steven Ayer, Common Good Strategies

⁵ Atlantic Provinces Economic Council. *The State of the Nonprofit Sector in Nova Scotia*. 2020.

⁶ <https://twitter.com/steveayer/status/1268976599052976134?s=21>

Interviews that CSCNS personnel conducted with Executive Directors in April and May provide additional information regarding the toll that COVID-19 is having on the women working in the sector. In some instances, women working in areas that had not been shut down requested layoffs due to the lack of adequate child care available.

Women are disproportionately impacted by the closure of schools and childcare centres. 80% of the 94,000 Canadians wanting work but not in the labour force because of personal or family responsibilities are women⁷.

Those able to work from home are doing their best to juggle professional and personal obligations. One frequently sees children's faces pop into video conferencing calls. Even prior to COVID-19, there were limited childcare facilities, operating limited daytime hours. Those that began operating last week are operating at diminished capacity. Day camps in Nova Scotia are open this summer, also at diminished capacity. Many households are making the decision to not enroll their children, and women are shouldering this burden.

The Shutdown has forced women to put aside professional ambitions. While Nova Scotia appears to be past the first wave of COVID-19, a second wave, particularly one that again closes schools and childcare facilities, might well put an end to these ambitions.

⁷ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-06-05/meager-job-gains-among-women-hold-back-canada-s-virus-recovery>