The uneven economic impact of COVID-19 across gender during the first months of the pandemic (Alon et al. 2020; Yavorsky, Qian, and Sargent 2021) led researchers and media reports alike to predict that COVID-19 will compound existing gendered labor market inequalities in the longer run (e.g., Landivar et al. 2020; Wood, Griffiths, and Crowley 2021). In this visualization (Figure 1), we seek to empirically test this claim drawing on representative quarterly data from Australia’s Labour Force and Average Weekly Earnings surveys collected between November 2019 and November 2021. We compare labor market trends by gender with respect to labor force participation, employment and underutilization rates, paid hours, weekly earnings, and expectations regarding future employment before the outbreak, during the height of the pandemic, and through to the immunization phase. All six key labor market indicators were converted into indexes with the sample from November 2019 set as the baseline at 100.

We find that women reported lower employment and labor force participation rates than men during the first months of the pandemic. However, this gap was modest and brief such that between May 2020 and November 2021, women’s employment rates not only recovered beyond pre-COVID levels but also improved slightly faster than men’s (by almost 2 percent). Underutilization rates, which are constructed by summing the number of unemployed and the number of underemployed and then dividing by the labor force, and thus provide a superior measure of untapped capacity in the labor market to the unemployment rate on its own, grew steadily during the pandemic, but slower among women than men. As lockdowns ended and jobs returned, underutilization rates dropped gradually and were 10 percent less than at baseline in November 2019.

The average weekly earnings of men and women have also increased compared with prepandemic levels, but again it is women who have fared better. Women’s earnings in November 2021 were 6.4 percent higher than prepandemic levels, compared with a 5.3 percent improvement for men. During the first months of the pandemic, both men and women scaled back their paid work hours at a similar rate (about 4 percent below pre-COVID levels). However, while women increased their paid work hours gradually and beyond prepandemic levels by November 2021, men’s paid work hours continue to remain well below pre-COVID levels (a 2 percent decrease by November 2021). Finally, despite the dramatic impact of COVID-19 on people’s lives, Australian workers were no more or less likely to think their jobs were at risk in the year ahead, and there was no gender difference in such perceptions.
Overall, this visualization depicts a common labor force trend in Australia: Women were hit harder than men during the first months of the pandemic but are also recovering faster than men. Although our analyses are of descriptive nature, they show no signs of women faring worse than men across six key indicators in the Australian labor market in the aftermath of the pandemic.

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**Supplemental Material**

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

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