

Building a Corporate Ladder FOR ALL H

The Case for Advancing Immigrant Talent in the Greater Toronto Area





Diversity Drives Success

About TRIEC

Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) champions the talent and experience that immigrants bring to the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). They support organizations to become more inclusive, and help newcomers expand their professional networks and understand the local labour market. They collaborate with leaders and organizations to build a GTA where immigrant professionals can contribute to their fullest potential.

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Executive Summary

Canada is undeniably making progress in providing better access to jobs for immigrants. Across the country, newcomer unemployment rates are at an all-time low. Large employers are more and more aware – and appreciative – of the valuable skills that immigrants bring. On top of that, different levels of government, corporations and the settlement sector are all looking for ways to address the challenges that hold immigrant talent back.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of efforts are focused on the immediate outcome: getting that first job in Canada. While necessary, this says very little about the quality of jobs that immigrants are securing and the extent they advance in their fields of expertise. Increasingly we have access to insights around immigrants who manage to advance to a commensurate position, one that matches their previous skills and expertise. However once they have stepped onto that first "rung" in the career ladder we know almost nothing about whether immigrants are advancing to executive positions, a data gap which prompted this study.

TRIEC wanted to look beyond the first phase of advancement to determine how newcomers and immigrants are progressing in their careers in Canada, specifically to answer the questions: Do immigrant professionals manage to climb the corporate career ladder smoothly? Do they reach executive and C-suite positions, or remain at lower levels within the organizational hierarchy?

To address these questions, this study undertook an analysis of executive profiles in the Greater Toronto Area, which reveals that immigrants are largely not reaching executive decision-making positions whether it is the corporate, public or non-profit sectors. This is the case even in finance and insurance and professional, scientific and technical services, where the largest concentration of immigrant professionals work. For the purposes of this study, we have used international education as a proxy for being an "immigrant" professional – based on where an individual obtained their university degree."

Key Findings

Overall:

Among the leading GTA employers across the public, private and non-profit sectors, 6% of executives are immigrants.

When broken down by sector:

- ► 5% of corporate executives in the GTA are immigrants.
- Public and non-profit sectors are faring only slightly better – with 6.6% of executives who are immigrants.

And when intersectionality, of gender and race, are factored in:

- Around 4.2% of executives in the GTA across the public, private and non-profit sectors are racialized immigrants and 2% of executives are immigrant women of colour.
- Only one in 100 corporate executives (1%) is a racialized immigrant woman.

The report also identifies the following barriers currently limiting opportunities for immigrant professionals and reducing their likelihood of achieving management and leadership positions:

- **1.** Exclusive focus on initial employment interventions
- **2.** Limited opportunities for commensurate employment
- **3.** Lack of equal access to management support and professional development opportunities
- **4.** Lack of transparent and inclusive promotion processes
- 5. Implicit bias and discriminatory practices



To overcome these barriers, TRIEC's recommendations and suggested good practices for employers are:

- Leadership development and mentoring
- Sponsorship opportunities
- Inclusion training for current leaders
- Inclusive professional development and promotion practices
- Commensurate employment first for newcomers
- Holistic talent management and diversity and inclusion strategies with an intersectional lens

It is vital to remember that starting one's career in a new country is incredibly challenging, even for professionals with years of experience. A wide variety of stakeholders from the settlement sector to government to employers play a role in improving immigrants' initial access to commensurate employment, so that we ensure international talent is leveraged to its full potential.

Just as we work to improve the employment foundations of newcomers, we need to be applying our minds to the systematic barriers, especially for women and racialized people, that limit immigrants' advancement once they do find work, and collaboratively implement the recommendations identified in this report, while staying attuned to new interventions continuously being developed.

Fostering immigrant talent by building a corporate ladder that all have the opportunity to climb, is not simply about fairness in opportunity; it's supported by a strong business case. Improving advancement opportunities helps to actualize the full set of benefits, of prosperity and productivity, that are created by a diverse, talented workforce. If our goal is to set Canada apart as a desirable destination for the world's best and brightest in their fields, we need immigrant leaders that will help Canadian businesses, non-profits and public institutions to innovate, grow and prosper.



Background

Canada has a longstanding history of economic immigration, and immigrant talent has been one of the key drivers of economic growth and innovation. In recent years, the demand for the range of skills and knowledge that immigrants bring has increased substantially. Canada's population is rapidly aging, over 9 million baby boomers will be leaving the workforce in the next decade.¹ This, accompanied by decreasing birth rates, present a pressing need to generate a sufficient workforce to ensure economic growth. Doing so depends on effectively managing immigrant talent.

Canada is not the only country facing the challenge of stagnating (even reversing) population and labour force growth, meaning the global competition for talent is rapidly intensifying.² To ensure successful attraction and retention of immigrant professionals, the country needs to ensure immigrants are able to make a timely transition into their professions at appropriate levels, as well as have opportunities for career advancement.

Underemployment³ has been one of the persistent challenges that immigrants, especially newcomers, face when they join the Canadian workforce. New immigrants to Canada often have to work in jobs that do not match their skills, education and training. Even many of those with years of international experience and advanced qualifications end up working in survival jobs with minimal income.⁴

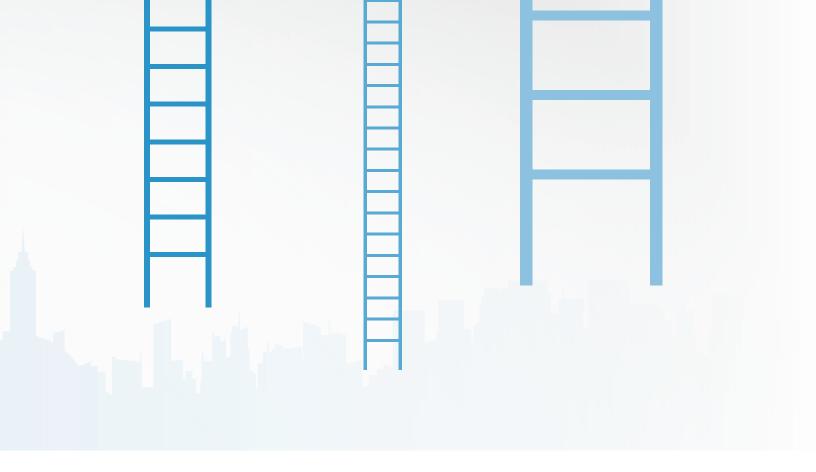


Aimee McArthur-Gupta et al., "Can't Go it Alone: Immigration Is Key to Canada's Growth Strategy," Conference Board of Canada, (2019): https://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=10150

Ejaz Ghani, "The global talent race heats up as countries and businesses compete for the best and brightest," WEF, (2018): https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/11/the-global-talent-race/

³ A person is considered underemployed if they hold a job outside of their field of expertise, one with lower seniority, or for which they are overqualified or over skilled.

⁴ TRIEC, "State of Immigrant Inclusion in the Greater Toronto Area Labour Market," TRIEC, (2018): http://triec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/TRIEC-State-of-Immigrant-Inclusion-Report-final-181123.pdf



While the gap in the unemployment rate between newcomers and people born in Canada has been narrowing in the last two decades,⁵ the same kind of progress has not been achieved in terms of commensurate employment or career advancement opportunities. In the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), almost half of newcomer men and two-thirds of newcomer women with a university degree were in jobs that required lower levels of education in 2016, compared to one-third of men and women born in Canada respectively.⁶ Even established immigrants in York, Peel and Toronto were earning less in 2015 on average (in real terms) than they did 35 years ago, while the incomes of people born in Canada have grown steadily in the same time period.⁷

One of the most neglected aspects of analysis related to underemployment is advancement— looking beyond first employment to determine how newcomers and immigrants progress in their careers in Canada. Do immigrant professionals climb up the corporate career ladder smoothly? Do they eventually reach executive and C-suite positions, or do they remain at lower levels within the organizational hierarchy?

Understanding whether immigrants are reaching senior executive and leadership positions is vital to addressing underemployment and to leveraging immigrant talent to improve both the economic and social future of Canada. Failing to allow immigrant professionals to reach their full potential, limits their direct (e.g. taxes) and indirect (e.g. global business insights and innovations) contributions to the economy. It's been proven that diversity at executive leadership level drives profitability and innovation.⁸ Therefore attaining genuinely diverse and inclusive leadership teams, along with an organization that internalize inclusion and strategically draws on a diverse human capital pool, including immigrant representation in senior positions will be key to Canada's growth and prosperity.

⁵ Yssaad and Fields, "The Canadian Immigrant Labour Market: Recent Trends from 2006 to 2017."

⁶ TRIEC, "State of Immigrant Inclusion in the Greater Toronto Area Labour Market."

Mihaela Dinca-Panaitescu et al. "Rebalancing the Opportunity Equation," United Way Greater Toronto, (2019): https://www.unitedwaygt.org/file/2019_OE_fullreport_FINAL.pdf

⁸ Vivian Hunt et al. "Delivering through Diversity," McKinsey & Company, (2018): https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/McKinsey/Business%20 Functions/Organization/Our%20Insights/Delivering%20through%20diversity/Delivering-through-diversity_full-report.ashx

Introduction

This paper provides an in-depth analysis of immigrant advancement and representation at the executive levels in the GTA corporate, public and non-profit sectors. The research questions to be considered are:

- 1. To what extent are immigrants in the GTA able to advance in their careers?
- 2. To what extent are female immigrants and/or racialized immigrants specifically, able to advance in their careers?

To respond to these questions, the study maps the GTA's existing executive profiles based on a sample of 659 executives and 69 organizations. An "immigrant" professional is defined using a proxy – specifically whether they obtained their bachelor's degree abroad (excluding the US or UK) or not. It then presents an analysis of the barriers limiting immigrant representation in management and leadership position, and concludes by putting forward a set of recommendations to eliminate or reduce these barriers, based on a literature review and key informant interviews.

The paper focuses on the GTA, a financial powerhouse of Canada, which, according to the 2018 Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) generated around 18.5% of Canada's overall gross domestic product (GDP)⁹ and where almost half of the population are immigrants.¹⁰ By 2036, the ratio of immigrants in the Toronto CMA is expected to grow to 57%.¹¹ This makes an analysis of the GTA's immigrant workforce vital to understanding opportunities for, and potential limitations on, growth including how immigrants are performing in terms of career advancement, and to what extent they are represented at the leadership level.

Methodology

The methodology of the study includes primary research on executive profiles along with a literature review and a series of key informant interviews with experts on talent management and/or diversity and inclusion in academia and the corporate and non-profit sectors.

The primary research involved the analysis of the profiles of 659 executives from 69 organizations across the GTA. The sample of organizations selected for analysis were being listed in the 13th Greater Toronto's Top Employers (2019) competition by Mediacorp Canada and the Globe and Mail. In addition, in determining the executives and organizations to be included in the sample the below criteria were followed:

- Only organizations with parent companies and headquarters in Canada were included.
- Executive level positions from Vice President level (or equivalent) and above were included.
- Executives based outside of Canada were excluded.
- Elected positions were excluded.

⁹ Statistics Canada, "Real Annual Gross Domestic Product Estimates 2011-2018," City of Toronto, (2019): https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/toronto-economy-labour-force-demographics/

¹⁰ Statistics Canada, "2016 Census of Population," (2016): https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/index-eng.cfm

¹¹ Laurent Martel, "The labour force in Canada and its regions: Projections 2036," Statistics Canada, (2019): https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/75-006-x/2019001/article/00004-eng.pdf?st=Fr7-8f41

An "immigrant" professional was defined using a proxy – specifically whether they obtained their bachelor's degree abroad (excluding the US or UK) or not. This was determined as a suitable proxy based on the rarity of Canadians obtaining their bachelor's degree abroad (only 2.1% of university-aged Canadians chose to study abroad for a university degree in 2016¹²). Therefore, earning a degree abroad is a relatively strong indicator that an executive is an immigrant. The analysis excluded degrees earned in the US or UK, since professionals from these countries do not face the same challenges as those from other source countries. 62% of all executives in the sample who were educated abroad got their degrees from the US or UK and were not defined as immigrants for the purpose of the analysis.

Those who immigrated to Canada before obtaining their bachelor's degrees were also excluded, because though they may face challenges in the labour market related to factors such as gender and ethnicity, a Canadian-earned degree limits the likelihood of their underemployment due to their status as an immigrant and means their professional work experience is gained in Canada.

Data on executives were collected through company websites, annual reports, investor reports, Linkedin and Bloomberg profiles, as well as other publicly available sources.

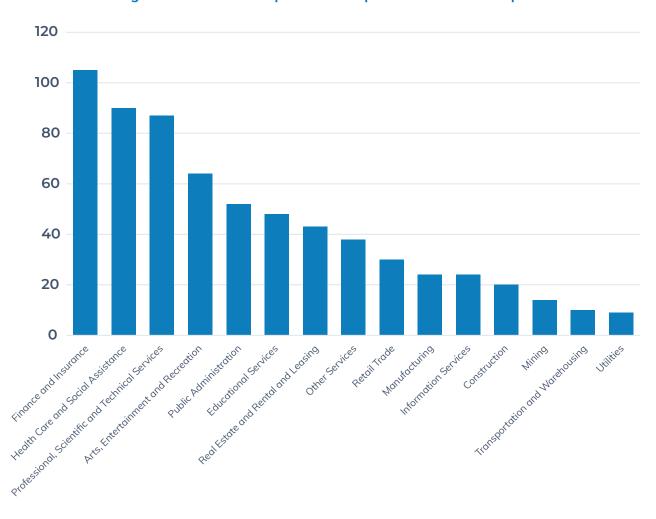


Figure 1. Number of top executives per sector in the sample

¹² UNESCO, "Gross outbound enrolment ratio by host region," UIS Statistics, (2016): http://data.uis.unesco.org/

Existing Evidence

The acknowledgement that immigrants face challenges in relation to career advancement is not new. In 2007, for instance, Catalyst Canada and Ryerson University conducted a survey among 17,000 employees and found that immigrants and people of colour perceived a "glass ceiling" that prevented them for reaching senior positions.¹³ Another piece of research in 2008 found that newcomer men, especially those that are racialized, started their careers in Canada in survival jobs. Even if their incomes improved over time, they eventually hit a ceiling that they could not penetrate.¹⁴

Almost a decade later, the circumstances have unfortunately not drastically changed. While most newcomers are people of color, racialized people are still largely invisible at the executive level in the GTA. In 2017, Ryerson University's Diversity Institute found that only 7.2% of senior leaders in Toronto's corporate sector and 9% of senior executives in the public sector were people of color.¹⁵ TRIEC's "State of Immigrant Inclusion" research reconfirmed the disparities in career advancement between immigrants and people born in Canada. While immigrants constituted more than half of the GTA's university-educated labour force, they made up only around one third of senior managers with a university qualification.¹⁶

Another indicator of the gap between immigrants and people born in Canada is the income trend. As immigrants age, and hypothetically reach more advanced stages in their careers, their incomes should align more closely with people born here. Yet, the salary income gap seems to be growing with age – in the GTA, economic immigrants between the ages of 35 to 44 on average earn around 25% less than people born in Canada, but by the time they are between the ages of 45 to 54 stand to earn almost 40% less than their Canadian-born counterparts.¹⁷ Immigrant women, regardless of their immigration category, earn around 54% less on average than non-immigrant men in the GTA between the ages of 35 to 44, but approximately 61% less between the ages of 45 to 54.¹⁸

¹³ San Grewal, "Brain Drain II: Immigrants let glass ceiling gather dust," Toronto Star, (2007): https://www.thestar.com/news/insight/2007/07/21/brain_drain_ii_immigrants_let_glass_ceiling_gather_dust.html

¹⁴ Krishna Pendakur and Simon Woodcock, "Glass Ceilings or Glass Doors? Wage Disparity Within and Between Firms," Journal of Business & Economic Statistics 28, no. 1 (2010): 181-189: https://www.jstor.org/stable/27799123?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

¹⁵ Wendy Cukier, "Diversity Leads 2011-2017" (presentation, October 4, 2017): https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/diversity/reports/ C25 Presentation-for-senior-leadership 4Oct2017.pdf

¹⁶ TRIEC, "State of Immigrant Inclusion in the Greater Toronto Area Labour Market."

¹⁷ Yilmaz Dinc, "Cracking the Immigrant Glass Ceiling," Your Workplace 21, no. 4 (2019): 11-12.

¹⁸ Statistics Canada, "2016 Census of Population," Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016205 (2016).

Primary Research Findings

Executive representation of immigrants

The study analyzed the executive level of highly ranked employers in the GTA, with a sample of 659 executives from 69 organizations in the private, public and non-profit sectors. Executives were identified across a series of categories, specifically: gender, ethnicity (white or racialized), country where their bachelor's degrees were obtained, source country (if applicable) and sector.

The analysis found that while 15% of executives completed their university education abroad, only 6% of executives hold a bachelor's degree from outside of Canada, the US or UK. This demonstrates that, overall, immigrant professionals are underrepresented at the executive level, since a bachelor's degree from abroad decreases the likelihood of reaching an executive position.

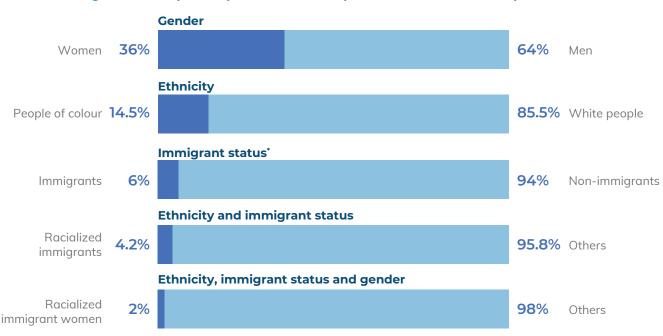


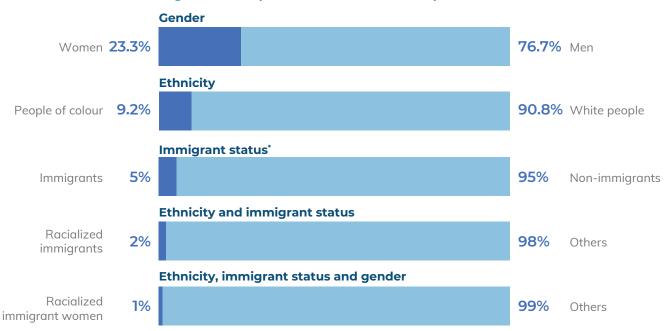
Figure 2. GTA public, private and non-profit sectors: Executive profiles

*Proxy for immigrants is having a bachelor's degree from abroad

The corporate sector had the least representation of immigrants, with **95% of corporate executives** having earned their university degrees from Canada, the US or UK. This means immigrants with bachelor's degrees from the most common source countries (both in terms of total number of permanent residents and economic immigrants admitted at least in the last two decades), such as India and China, ¹⁹ are almost completely absent in the corporate leadership of GTA. Public and non-profit sectors are faring only slightly better – with **6.6%** of executives having earned their university degree abroad (excluding the US and UK).

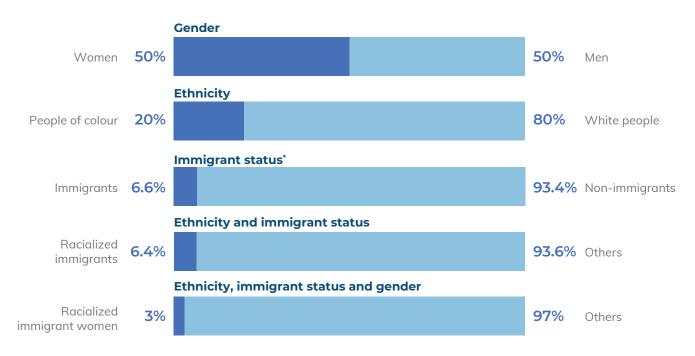
¹⁹ IRCC, "Facts and Figures 2016: Immigration Overview – Permanent Residents," IRCC, (2016): http://www.cic.gc.ca/opendatadonneesouvertes/data/Facts_and_Figures_2016_PR_EN.pdf

Figure 3. GTA private sector: Executive profiles



*Proxy for immigrants is having a bachelor's degree from abroad

Figure 4. GTA public and non-profit sectors: Executive profiles



*Proxy for immigrants is having a bachelor's degree from abroad

The first research question this paper set out to explore was: "To what extent are immigrants able to advance in their careers?" The results of the analysis show that immigrants are largely not reaching executive decision-making positions, whether it is the corporate, public or non-profit sectors. This is the case across the sample, even in finance and insurance and professional, scientific and technical services, fields where the largest concentration of immigrant professionals work²⁰ (see Figure 1 in the methodology section).

Role of gender, ethnicity and intersectionality

Analyzing immigrant representation at the executive levels would not be complete without considering how other aspects of identity affect immigrants' chances of career advancement. Gender and ethnicity were included in the analysis for this paper, unfortunately there was not enough data to support the analysis of other dimensions of diversity. It is well documented that women and people of colour occupy very few of the senior leadership and C-suite positions within the GTA, which this study confirmed. Among the leading GTA employers in the public, private and non-profit sectors, only 36% of executives are female and 14.5% are people of color. Only 6% are immigrants, as defined by this analysis.

These same results become more striking when intersectionality is taken into account, demonstrating how female immigrants and racialized immigrants face disproportionate challenges in executive representation, since, in the top GTA employers, only **around 4.2% executives are racialized immigrants and 2% of executives are immigrant women of colour** (those who have a bachelor's degree from abroad).

Again the corporate sector results are most stark here. Around 23.3% of corporate executives are female and 9.2% of all corporate executives are racialized. And only around 2% of corporate executives, who have a university degree from abroad, are from racialized groups. This makes clear that being racialized, and being a women, are significant disadvantages for immigrants in relation to career advancement.

The analysis found that immigrant women who are racialized are almost completely absent in corporate leadership. Around one in 100 corporate executives (1%) is a female person of colour with a bachelor's degree from abroad.

In the public and non-profit sectors, 50% of executives of prominent GTA public and non-profit employers are female, but considering the strong representation of women in the non-profit sector (up to 75% to 80% in Ontario),²¹ the rate provides limited cause for celebration. Around 20% of public and non-profit executives are people of colour. As in the corporate sector, racialized women, with a university degree from abroad, face disproportionate challenges in advancement, occupying a mere 3% of the senior executive positions in the GTA's leading public and non-profit organizations.

The second research question explored in the study was: "To what extent are female immigrants and/or racialized immigrants specifically, able to advance in their careers?" The findings indicate that immigrant women and racialized immigrants face an even thicker, harder-to-penetrate glass ceiling when it comes to career advancement than immigrants in general.

²⁰ Yssaad and Fields, "The Canadian Immigrant Labour Market: Recent Trends from 2006 to 2017."

²¹ ONN, "Decent Work for Women: A literature review of women working in Ontario's non-profit sector," ONN, (2018): https://theonn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Decent-work-for-Women-Literature-Review-March-2018.pdf



BARRIERS – Why immigrants rarely make it to the top

The findings of the executive profile analysis clearly demonstrated that immigrants in the GTA, especially those who are women and people of color, are significantly underrepresented in executive and C-suite positions of the leading employers from the corporate, public and non-profit sectors. To understand why this is presently the case it's important to consider the barriers that limit the representation of immigrants in management and leadership positions. Using a combination of a literature review and interviews with key informants from academia as well as the corporate and non-profit sectors the following barriers to immigrant career advancement were identified:

1) Exclusive focus on initial employment interventions

As the unemployment gap between immigrants, especially newcomers, and people born in Canada has been high, most of the efforts from government, the settlement sector and other non-profits have been focused on ensuring that newcomers land their first job in Canada. This had led to some progress in bridging the gap – with newcomer unemployment rate in the GTA decreasing to 9% in 2018 from 12.2% in 2014, compared to 4.7% for people born in Canada in 2018 (and 5.3% in 2014).²²

However, this focus on interventions (i.e. job and language training) to help with initial employment is not enough to support newcomers as they continue their employment journey in Canada. A reduced unemployment rate alone does not provide context around immigrants' incomes, or job calibre, all of which have a significant effect on the future career prospects of immigrants. Without interventions designed to support immigrants beyond acquiring their first job they remain at risk of being underemployed, possibly even taking on survival jobs. This prevents immigrants from reaching their full potential, and limiting their ability to contribute to the economy and society as higher earners, and ultimately, leaders.

2) Limited opportunities for commensurate employment

Due to a widespread inclination of employers to discount the value of professional experience obtained abroad, immigrants often have to begin their Canadian careers at more junior, even entry, levels. This mid or late career 'restart' makes it unlikely that they will be able to climb up to the top of the career ladder. Taking a lower level position has the potential to affect an immigrant's entire career in Canada.²³ One interviewee for this research referred to this as the "sticky floor" phenomenon, citing how immigrants end up stuck in jobs that are not in their fields and have limited opportunities for upward mobility.

Employer reluctance to hire immigrant talent for management-level positions in particular, plays a significant role in limiting advancement. The 2018 GTA Employer Survey by the Peel-Halton Local Employment Planning Council found only one in eight employers recruit newcomers for management-level positions.²⁴ These findings are echoed by TRIEC's recent research, which found that newcomer men and women are rarely represented at the top of the pay scale.²⁵

As one interviewee pointed out, cultural differences in management and leadership styles can play a role in this. There are certain cultural expectations in Canada around how a leader should behave, for example minimizing hierarchy, which informs who is considered qualified for management positions. There is often a perception that immigrants may not be able to identify the subtle differences expected in the Canadian workplace, and employers often fail to acknowledge or value diversity in their leadership styles.

²² Statistics Canada, "Labour force characteristics by immigrant status," Table 14-10-0083-01 annual, (2018): https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410008301&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.10&pickMembers%5B1%5D=3.8&pickMembers%5B2%5D=4.2

²³ TRIEC, "State of Immigrant Inclusion in the Greater Toronto Area Labour Market."

²⁴ Subha Tarim et al., "2018 GTA Employer Survey," Peel-Halton Local Employment Planning Council, (2019).

²⁵ TRIEC, "State of Immigrant Inclusion in the Greater Toronto Area Labour Market."

Securing a job that matches their skills and experience is an even greater challenge for women and racialized groups. People who are underrepresented because of multiple facets of their identity, whether gender, ethnicity and/or something else, are more likely to be unemployed or pushed into a survival job. University-educated racialized newcomer women, are almost 5 times more likely to be unemployed than white men born in Canada with a university degree (See Appendix I for details)²⁶ increasing their likelihood of needing to enter the workforce at a position beneath their previous experience level. Given that they are unable to secure commensurate employment in their early years in Canada, it is no surprise that racialized immigrant women are almost completely absent at the executive helm of GTA organizations.

As a group they also fare much worse economically. On average, university-educated racialized immigrants in Toronto, make \$50,000 less per year compared with white people born in Canada with equivalent degrees. The largest gap is between white men born in Canada and racialized female immigrants – a staggering \$95,500 difference on average (details provided in Appendix II).

The central challenge to securing commensurate employment for newcomers is the manner in which employers treat a lack of "Canadian experience." Many employers do not place equal value on work experience gained in Canada and work experience gained abroad.²⁷ Earlier studies show that, in terms of earnings, three years of international work experience was worth only as much as one year of work experience in Canada.²⁸ Employers also often discount the value of degrees obtained outside of Canada,²⁹ putting immigrants at a significant disadvantage for starting out in a good job in their field.

Processes for credential recognition also stand between newcomers and equivalent work opportunities. For regulated professions, lengthy and expensive assessment and examination processes³⁰ can be required to obtain a license to practice in Canada. The later effects of this can be seen in relation to career advancement, as many executives are sourced from regulated professions like law or accounting. Difficulty re-licensing in Canada means fewer immigrants in regulated professions, and thus a shallower pool of immigrant talent for recruitment to the C-suite.

One interviewee underlined another, broader, trend that furthers the problem of securing commensurate employment for immigrants and anyone new to the workforce – the rise of precarious work. As more and more jobs are becoming temporary and contract-based and therefore without advancement opportunities, organizations are not investing in grooming these workers for leadership.

²⁶ Yilmaz Dinc, "How far have immigrant women advanced in the workplace?," Canadian HR Reporter, (2019): https://www.hrreporter.com/columnist/human-resources-guest-blogger/archive/2019/03/08/how-far-have-immigrant-women-advanced-in-the-workplace/

²⁷ Margaret Eaton, "Canadian Experience Not Required," HR Professional Now, (2019): http://hrprofessionalnow.ca/top-stories/711-canadian-experience-not-required

Naomi Alboim et al., "The Discounting of Immigrants' Skills in Canada: Evidence and Policy Recommendations," IRPP Choices 11, no. 2, (2005): http://irpp.org/wp-content/uploads/assets/research/diversity-immigration-and-integration/new-research-article-4/vol11no2.pdf

²⁹ ibio

Lauren Heuser, "Closed Shops: Making Canada's engineering profession more inclusive of international engineers," 6 Degrees, (2018): https://www.inclusion.ca/site/uploads/2018/11/6-Degrees-Engineers-Report.pdf

3) Lack of equal access to management support and professional development opportunities

A sponsor is a senior manager/executive who acts as a champion for an employee throughout their career in an organization, who attaches their name to the performance of the employee, supports them to do better, backs them even when they make mistakes, exposes their talent and showcases their strengths within the company.³¹ Immigrants, especially newcomers, lack the same strong personal and professional networks as their counterparts born in Canada, making them less likely to secure executive sponsors to advocate for their professional development and promotion. Not having sponsors undermines the longer-term prospects of immigrants for senior leadership since, as one interviewee pointed out, they may not always have the 'social capital' to showcase their talent on their own.

A study by the Center for Talent Innovation and Bci Consulting found that executives in Canada are inclined to sponsor people that are similar to themselves (predominantly white men) in terms of gender and ethnicity. 74% of men in senior management and executive positions stated that at least one of their proteges shares their gender, and 66% reported that they sponsor someone who shares their ethnic background.³² In addition, the study highlighted that white professionals are more likely to be advocated for promotion by the senior leadership, compared to their racialized counterparts. Accordingly, many employees believe that their leadership potential is assessed based on "white male norms."³³ Considering that the majority of newcomers are people of color, this broader trend contributes to the underrepresentation of immigrants in executive leadership.

Another issue highlighted during key informant interviews was the role that line managers play in the advancement of newcomers. Without the commitment of middle management to workplace inclusion, it is challenging for newcomer talent to be recognized and valued in the first place, limiting their chances of having their potential identified by more senior leadership, or securing executive sponsorship.

4) Lack of transparent and inclusive promotion processes

The way an organization makes promotional decisions, and their process for recognizing high potential individuals for development opportunities, directly affects immigrants ability to climb their corporate ladder to management level and eventually to access C-suite jobs.

Studies show that decisions regarding promotions are mostly personal and driven by relationships at work,³⁴ which can pose a particular challenge for newcomers who have not had the opportunity to establish and nurture connections in their earlier years. A limited personal and professional network can limit newcomers' opportunities to secure formal or informal mentors and sponsors both inside and outside their organization. Not having equal access to Canadian networking culture, coupled with a lack of clarity around the promotion processes within their organization can significantly hamper immigrant employees' abilities to strategically advance at work.

³¹ See good practices section, p. 21 for more details on sponsorship and how it differs from mentoring.

³² Bhasin et al., "Sponsor Effect: Canada."

³³ ibid

³⁴ Jessica Rohman et al., "How You Promote People Can Make or Break Company Culture," Harvard Business Review, (2018): https://hbr.org/2018/01/how-you-promote-people-can-make-or-break-company-culture

5) Implicit bias and discriminatory practices

Implicit bias refers to "attitudes or stereotypes that affect the individual's understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner."³⁵ This bias and discriminatory practices that affect other groups in Canada such as women and people of colour, also negatively impact immigrants and their career advancement.

This happens when decision-makers in an organization assess potential candidates for professional development and promotion based on their own subtle standards of behaviour and success, without even being aware of it.³⁶ Their standards, shaped by personal experience and their own assessment of who would be a good 'fit' for their the team and organization may not be based on objective skills or qualifications. This can lead to more "traditional" or "safe bet" candidates³⁷ that leaders see as reflecting the existing culture of the organization, ultimately leading to the advancement of employees from the dominant group – white men born in Canada. During the key informant interviews, one interviewee highlighted that while some progress has been made in eliminating unconscious bias in recruitment and succession planning, a more permanent solution requires a strong cultural shift in understanding bias and privilege generally, rather than a set of workplace-specific tactical interventions.

Discriminatory practices also deepen the underrepresentation of immigrants, including in leadership positions. This may involve a person being overlooked for promotion because of being a person of color, a women or both. Additionally, employers regularly discriminate immigrants when, as described previously, they make work experience in Canada requisite for a position. Key informants confirmed this is still common practice in the GTA despite being defined as a type of discrimination by the Ontario Human Rights Commission.³⁸

Those who do secure work in their field, are still regularly impacted by bias in the workplace. Concerns over facing potential bias at work has been proven to cause individuals to feel 'on guard' and compelled to protect themselves, along with strong feelings of being 'different' from their colleagues based on ethnicity, gender and/or race. This effect is known as "emotional tax"³⁹ and a recent study by Catalyst Canada found that more than half to 70% of professionals who are Black, East Asian or South Asian are prone feeling this kind of bias-related strain at work. The need to be constantly on their guard led professionals of colour to indicate a strong intention to quit their current job.⁴⁰ Working under these draining conditions has the potential to prevent immigrants from developing quality relationships at work, establishing trust with colleagues and leaders and thus staying and growing in an organization.

³⁵ Cheryl Staats et al., "State of the Science: Implicit Bias Review 2015," Kirwan Institute, (2015): http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/research/ understanding-implicit-bias/

³⁶ Lori Mackenzie and Shelley Correll, "Two Powerful Ways Managers Can Curb Implicit Biases," Harvard Business Review, (2018): https://hbr.org/2018/10/two-powerful-ways-managers-can-curb-implicit-biases

³⁷ ibio

³⁸ OHRC, "Policy on Removing the 'Canadian Experience' barrier," (2013): http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-removing-%E2%80%9Ccanadian-experience%E2%80%9D-barrier

³⁹ Dnika J. Travis et al., "Emotional Tax: How Black Women and Men Pay More at Work and How Leaders Can Take Action," Catalyst, (2016): https://www.catalyst.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/emotional_tax_how_black_women_and_men_pay_more.pdf

⁴⁰ Jennifer Thorpe-Moscon et al., "Empowering Workplaces Combat Emotional Tax for People of Colour in Canada," Catalyst, (2019): https://www.catalyst.org/research/emotional-tax-canada/



1) Leadership development and mentoring

Leadership development programs are critical to train and nurture senior executives in an organization. These initiatives could be the pathways for immigrants to penetrate the glass ceiling, yet currently there is no documented leadership program targeting immigrants specifically. Programs designed to promote leadership development for other social groups can provide useful insights that could be adapted to benefit immigrants as well.

For instance Pitney Bowes, one of the largest global technology companies, implemented an initiative targeting young talent. The company engaged millennial talent strategically and early-on in their careers (those with less than ten years of experience) through an 18-month program to groom them for executive leadership positions. One of the key principles of the program was to "engage leaders to build leaders" where senior leaders in the company were assigned to the employees in the program as mentors to provide guidance on their professional development.⁴¹

Another critical aspect of this program was its format, designed as a sustained set of trainings and workshops, rather than as a one-time intervention. Along with mentoring, the program included structured networking opportunities with C-suite executives, personal development planning, strategic thinking and leadership trainings and hands-on learning projects. Importantly, the career advancement of the employees in the group was directly linked to succession planning of existing executives. As a result of these interventions, more than 40% of the participants were promoted or took on a more expanded role within the first year of implementation.⁴²

Among interventions for leadership development, mentoring has proven to be a particularly powerful tool to help organizations establish a diverse set of leaders. In the US, for instance, having a mentorship program in place increased a company's representation of black, Hispanic and Asian American women in management by 18% to 24%. The same study highlighted the need for mentorship programs to be formalized and designed to target underrepresented groups, since white men may more easily find mentors on their own, while others face difficulties doing so.⁴³ One key informant interviewee, cautioned that mentorship is not a silver bullet for advancement, and that for mentoring to succeed at enhancing genuine inclusion an organization needs committed senior leaders who are equipped with cross-cultural competencies to support and grow their staff.

One example of an intervention focused on the advancement of immigrants with a mentorship component, though not specifically up to the executive level, was a pilot program by RBC Insurance and TRIEC, implemented to improve existing talent management tools and practices to help immigrants rise through the ranks.

The program had three pillars of support for newcomer employees: career planning, skills development and networking. As part of career planning, newcomers participated in in-person group workshops, one-on-one career coaching and online learning sessions to clearly identify their career goals and to formulate or update their professional development plans. The skills development supported newcomer employees to enhance their leadership and self-marketing skills, along with their cross-cultural competencies. The employees were also matched with mentors from RBC Insurance for further guidance and support, and participated in mock interviews to gain more experience. As part of the last component of the project, the newcomer employees learned more about the value of networking and how to network effectively, again through workshops, mentoring and job shadowing.

⁴¹ Glem Dias and Eileen Springer, "Accelerating Global Millennials to Be Future Leaders," in Integrated Talent Management Scorecards, (American Society of Training and Development, 2013).

⁴² ibid

⁴³ Frank Dobbin and Alexandra Kalev, "Why Diversity Programs Fail," Harvard Business Review, (2016): https://hbr.org/2016/07/why-diversity-programs-fail

At the end of the pilot, all 9 participants who were part of the project reported that they had more confidence and knowledge about how to network. A majority of the group further reported that they had found new roles in the post-pilot assessments.

Having senior leaders as mentors and other opportunities to learn from and network with their organization's executives are important to helping immigrant professionals reach the top of the career ladder. Once these relationships are formed inclusive succession management can further dismantle the barriers that keep immigrants, especially women and people of color, from advancing.

2) Sponsorship opportunities

Another way to cultivate immigrant talent is through sponsorship. While currently there are no sponsorship initiatives directly targeting the advancement of immigrants, the practice has been documented as contributing to increased representation of women in executive positions.⁴⁴ Sponsorship thus presents the potential to develop the leadership potential of immigrants as well.

Sponsorship specifically aims to increase an employee's visibility with senior leadership and can therefore continuously connect them to further advancement opportunities, beyond a single salary increase or promotion.⁴⁵

For example, Kinetrics, a nuclear consulting company, has implemented a sponsorship initiative to help women break the advancement glass ceiling. The program included one-on-one relationships with current executives, meetings with sponsors on career development and other opportunities for skills development and visibility within the organization. After the implementation of the program the company observed a significant increase in applications by female candidates to manager/director positions, from 6% to 35%. However the long-term impact on women advancing to senior leadership remains to be seen.⁴⁶

One key informant to this research underscored that sponsorship requires elaborate design to produce effective results. Before sponsoring someone, executives need to see that the person they would be vouching for is talented and has potential. Creating this opportunities therefore depends heavily on an organization's middle managers who play the important role in connecting promising employees to more senior levels of management.



⁴⁴ Bhasin et al., "Sponsor Effect: Canada."

⁴⁵ Sylvia Ann Hewlett et al., "The Sponsor Effect: Breaking through the Last Glass Ceiling," Harvard Business Review, (2010): http://30percentclub.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/The-Sponsor-Effect.pdf

⁴⁶ Liz Daher and Margaret McBeath, "Case Study: Women in Leadership," Kinetrics, (2018).

3) Inclusion training for current leaders

It is challenging for immigrants to climb the career ladder in an organization that does not embrace diversity and inclusion. D&I policies and culture are driven, in almost all successful cases, from the top, and depend on a leadership team that is committed to achieving inclusion.⁴⁷ Executives need to be able to empower and unleash the potential of all the employees in their organization, regardless of their gender, ethnicity or immigration status. To do so they have to build an inclusive workplace culture, internalized by the rest of the organization, that not only acknowledges but strategically nurtures a diverse workforce.

For this to happen leaders themselves first need to be equipped with knowledge and capabilities to act inclusively and foster inclusion among their staff. They need to have a keen understanding of what stage of the D&I journey their organization is in, and then design and implement the necessary interventions to advance further. Doing all this requires dedicated resources, trainings and tools.

There are inclusive leadership training programs and tools, such as TRIEC's Certificate in Inclusive Leadership and Inclusive Workplace Competencies which provide leaders with the necessary know-how to continuously improve their D&I.⁴⁸ The leader profile that such programs are aimed at generating is someone who:

- is well-versed in cultural competencies (e.g. cross-cultural communication) and how to leverage them in a professional context
- is aware and knowledgeable about the business case of having a diverse and inclusive workforce
- is self-aware of their own unconscious bias as well as knowledgeable about how bias and micro inequities can affect decision-making processes within their organization
- is capable of formulating diversity and inclusion initiatives to eliminate such biases and inequities
- is skilled enough to plan, design and seek the implementation of inclusive HR policies from recruitment to advancement
- is supportive of monitoring and evaluation of the impact of diversity and inclusion programs as this brings strategic value
- and ultimately, is committed to build a workplace culture that flourishes on differences rather than similarities.⁴⁹

Achieving eventual diversity and inclusion at the executive level depends on the choices and actions of existing leaders, who need to champion an inclusive culture, lead by example as a role model to others and open up advancement pathways for underrepresented groups, including immigrants. Inclusive leadership training helps them to progress towards this goal.

Inclusive leadership is closely linked to workplace sponsorship that benefits women, people of colour and immigrants, as knowledge of D&I encourages senior executives to diversify whom they choose to groom and guide as future leaders.

⁴⁷ Eddy S. Ng and Greg J. Sears, "Walking the Talk on Diversity: CEO Beliefs, Moral Values, and the Implementation of Workplace Diversity Practices," Journal of Business Ethics, (2018): https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10551-018-4051-7

⁴⁸ TRIEC, "Certificate in Inclusive Leadership," Accessed September 11, 2019: https://triec.ca/build-your-inclusive-workplace/leadership/

⁴⁹ Centennial College, "Leadership and Inclusion Certificate," Accessed September 11, 2019: https://www.centennialcollege.ca/programs-courses/schools/school-of-advancement/programs/leadership-and-inclusion-certificate-6730/ and TRIEC, "Certificate in Inclusive Leadership."

4) Inclusive professional development and promotion practices

Tracking who accesses professional development opportunities and who gets promoted can help companies ensure that everyone in the organization, including immigrants, women and people of color, has a fair chance at advancement. Technology and data analytics allow for capturing trends that characterize gender or race-based bias, highlighting gaps in terms of compensation or benefits among different groups, and reflecting on practices in terms of hiring or promotion which may be biased.⁵⁰

KMPG, for instance, tracks the representation of women and people of color across the organization, including in promotion (e.g. who becomes a partner). The organization sets annual goals and then measures and communicates the progress,⁵¹ the same approach could be replicated for immigrants. Of course, as one interviewee for this study noted, the issue of promotion is not only about who is being promoted today, but how diverse the talent pipeline is for the long-term.

Another important consideration is that many newcomers feel compelled to strip down their resumes to avoid seeming overqualified in order to obtain lower levels of employment when they first arrive to Canada. As a result, their HR records may not reflect their true range of skills and experience as well as their full breath of study. This could lead to being overlooked for further development or a promotion in an area outside their current, underemployed, position. One interviewee for this study highlighted, how traditional structures like interviews do not allow candidates to showcase the full extent of their abilities. Creating and updating skills inventories that exist amongst all staff, including immigrant staff, could thus be critical for discovering hidden talent, which then could be leveraged for training and promotion decisions.

Once key informant drew attention to the potential to improve promotion systems by defining what soft skills and workplace culture really mean in practice, so that they do not become a means of exclusion. This ties into the need to acknowledge that there are cultural differences across management and leadership styles and that there is a responsibility on organizations to foster leaders and managers by being transparent about company culture and expectations as well as to be open to expanding these definitions to allow for new perspectives from global talent. It s not only up to the immigrants to navigate these cultural differences, employers need to acknowledge and value diverse approaches and perspectives too, both in the interests in the interest of inclusion as well as increasing productivity and creating opportunities for innovation.

Another interviewee made the case that the level of diversity staff of an organization see in their leadership often sets their career ambitions. The data from this analysis, and other recent research, shows that the current executive representation of women, people of colour and immigrants is very limited. Senior management should appreciate that they are leading by example. This means they need to not only introduce formal policies that advocate inclusion, but create a sense of fairness and transparency around how career advancement opportunities work with their organizations, and introductive interventions to correct for operating procedures that limit advancement for certain groups.

Juliet Bourke et al., "Diversity and inclusion: The reality gap," Deloitte University Press, (2017): https://www2.deloitte.com/ insights/us/en/focus/human-capital-trends/2017/diversity-and-inclusion-at-the-workplace.html#endnote-sup-11

⁵¹ Nicholas Keung, "Employment gap narrows between university-educated immigrants and Canadian-born counterparts," Toronto Star, (2019): https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2019/01/18/employment-gap-narrows-between-university-educated-immigrants-and-canadian-born-counterparts.html

5) Commensurate employment first for newcomers

Employers have an important role to play in helping immigrants secure commensurate employment, especially for newcomers, to ensure they start out their careers in Canada at a level that matches their potential. As highlighted previously in this research asking for "Canadian" experience neglects the years of experience and expertise that immigrant professionals have gained abroad.⁵² Instead of looking at "where" they have gained their experience, HR professionals should be encouraging their organizations to focus on "what" their skills and competencies entail.⁵³

Ensuring newcomers land in commensurate jobs is critical to securing immigrant representation at the executive levels. There are proven ways to support newcomers in this regard, by providing them with sector-specific insights and helping them to expand their professionals networks so that they do not have to 'restart' their careers or start out underemployed in Canada.⁵⁴

Bridging and mentoring programs help newcomers to obtain the local occupational and sector-specific skills and insights.⁵⁵ These programs also act as a lever for networking, a newcomers gain access to professionals in their field, who can help them connect with other professionals, source interviews and even secure job opportunities.

One example of an impactful bridging programs is the "Medical License Bridging Program" by the Catholic Immigration Centre. ⁵⁶ The initiative aims to empower international medical doctors by providing them with the knowledge and skills they need to become 'practice ready' in Canada's medical ecosystem. Globally-trained doctors in the program take part in 120 hours of interactive workshops and observerships (observing medical professionals undertaking tasks and responsibilities). The program was implemented in collaboration between community health centres, clinics and other health care facilities, as well as a faculty of medicine and has helped 44 international medical doctors to gain residency positions in Canada.

Another program that helps immigrants best leverage their skills in Canada is the Business Edge program at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management. The program focuses on the career advancement of immigrants by targeting participants who have at least one year of work experience in Canada but are in search of career opportunities to better match their skills and expertise. The program offers a combination of on-site classes, webinars, online resources, coaching, case studies and simulations to equip participants with the skills required to secure good employment opportunities within their field, specifically advanced communication, intercultural competencies, leadership and career management.⁵⁷ More than 77% of participants advance in their careers in one year after finishing the program, with an average of 28% increase in salary.⁵⁸

Supporting and scaling successful interventions to reduce immigrant underemployment today will play a vital role in the potential for immigrant advancement in years to come. Ensuring large scale representation of immigrant professionals in their fields of study and expertise provides a deeper talent pool from which future leaders and executives can be sourced.

⁵² Eaton, "Canadian Experience Not Required."

⁵³ Yilmaz Dinc, "Immigrant careers should match their skill level," Toronto Star, (2019): https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2019/07/10/immigrant-careers-should-match-their-skill-level.html

⁵⁴ ALLIES, Perceptions of Employment Barriers and Solutions, (2015).

⁵⁵ TRIEC, "State of Immigrant Inclusion in the Greater Toronto Area Labour Market."

⁵⁶ IRCC, "Medical License Bridging Program," Accessed September 11, 2019: https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/partners-service-providers/immigrant-serving-organizations/best-pratices/medical-licence-bridging-program.html

⁵⁷ Rotman School of Management, "Business Edge: Facts and Figures," Accessed September 11, 2019: http://www.rotman.utoronto.ca/ProfessionalDevelopment/BusinessEdgeforInternationallyEducatedProfessionals/BusinessEdge

⁵⁸ ibid

6) Holistic talent management and D&I strategies with an intersectional lens

Organizations need holistic talent management and D&I strategies that include immigrants as part of their efforts to diversify their talent pipelines and move towards more inclusive workplaces. To do so requires two complementary approaches: implementing the aforementioned good practices in leveraging immigrant talent, as well as applying an intersectional lens to the existing initiatives. For instance, as one interviewee put it, the practices organizations put in place to foster gender inclusion often end up centering white women. 'Success' is measured accordingly, without paying attention to the progress on inclusion of racialized women.

What is evident from the varied types of organizational initiatives required is that nurturing immigrant talent should not only be the responsibility of the HR or D&I teams. The barriers limiting advancement identified by this research and similar studies, find an intricate set of circumstances, ranging from the 'emotional tax' paid by those working in a setting where one is one of the few outside the dominant ethnicity or gender, to needing to restart one's career from scratch in Canada. They thus require equally intricate and interconnected solutions and active cooperation between an organization's executives, HR and D&I professionals, middle management and staff overall. This should include accountability regarding how international talent is treated, welcomed and appreciated.





Conclusion

The existing research on the subject, combined with the findings from this analysis, demonstrate clearly that immigrants in the GTA face a thick glass ceiling in terms of career advancement opportunities at the executive level, and the barriers and recommendations identify that breaking through it means collective work from across the labour market overall.

For organizations, immigrant leaders are critical to their innovation and creativity as well as the capacity to attract and retain international talent and clientele. There is a clear business case for grooming and nurturing immigrants for leadership in an increasingly globalised marketplace. Gender and ethnocultural diversity at the executive level pays off with better competitiveness and higher profits⁵⁹ – as does diversity and inclusion at all levels of an organization, in the form of more committed and engaged employees.⁶⁰ As one interviewee put it, without immigrants in decision-making roles, Canada's labour market will lack a global outlook, hurting the competitiveness of Canadian businesses in international markets and restricting opportunities for growth.

⁵⁹ Vivian Hunt et al. "Delivering through Diversity.

⁶⁰ Dalhousie University and CCDI, "National Diversity and Inclusion Benchmarking Study: Senior Leaders and Diversity Personnel," CCDI, (2019): https://ccdi.ca/media/1867/20190225-research-national-diversity-and-inclusion-benchmarking-study.pdf



Representation matters not just for current immigrants but the next generation too - the fewer immigrant women and people of color in leadership, the fewer the role models, mentors and sponsors available to support other's advancement. As one interviewee identified, we need to start a conversation around how whiteness informs the way people see leadership, and assume who is, or should be, a leader. Not doing so stands to deepen the existing underrepresentation of diverse talent, discouraging younger immigrants, women and people of colour from the start from making it to the C-suite.

As for seeking the best ways to nurture immigrant talent, it is evident there is much to learn from existing practices that support the intentional integration of different marginalized groups in the workforce. However there are also specific challenges that face immigrants in particular, such as not having Canadian work experience, that require more targeted and customized interventions.

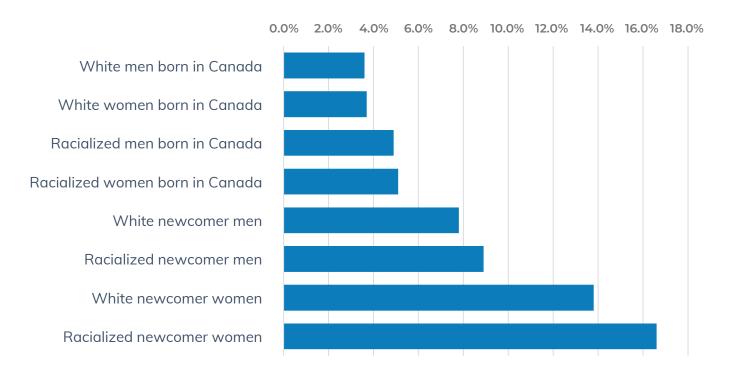
It is vital to remember that starting one's career in a new country is incredibly challenging, even for professionals with years of experience. A wide variety of stakeholders from the settlement sector to government to employers, play a role in improving immigrants' initial access to commensurate employment, so that we ensure international talent is leveraged to its full potential.

Just as we work to improve the employment foundations of newcomers, we need to be applying our minds to the systematic barriers, especially for women and racialized people, that limit immigrants' advancement once they do find work, and collaboratively implement the recommendations identified in this report, while staying attuned to new interventions continuously being developed. If our goal is to set Canada apart as a desirable destination for the world's best and brightest in their fields, we need immigrant leaders that will help Canadian businesses, non-profits and public institutions to innovate, grow and prosper.

Appendix I

Unemployment rates of university-educated newcomers and people born in Canada

Figure 5. Unemployment rate (Age 25-64, with university education or above, Toronto CMA) - 2016 Census

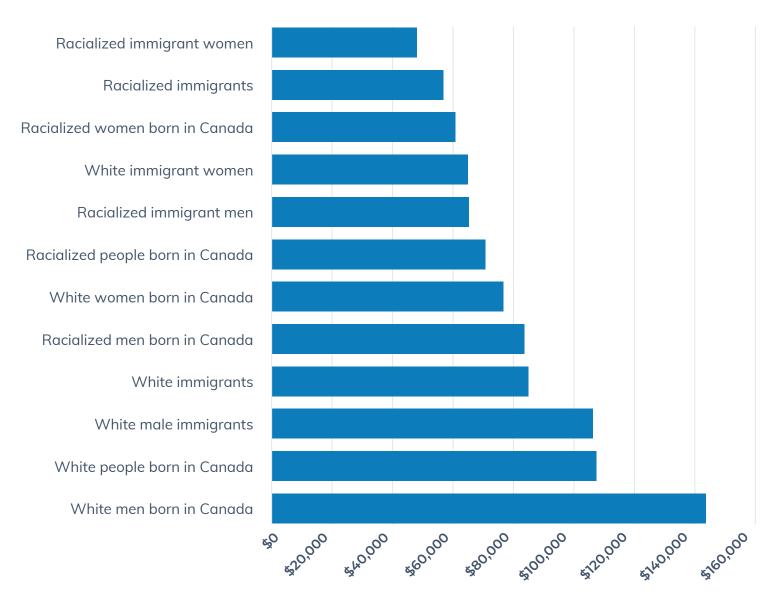


Source: Statistics Canada, "2016 Census of Population," Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016286 (2016).

Appendix II

Average employment income of university-educated immigrants and people born in Canada

Figure 6. Average employment income (age 25-64, with university education or above, Toronto CMA) - 2016 Census



Source: Statistics Canada, "2016 Census of Population," Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016277 (2016).

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