



Toronto Region Immigrant
Employment Council

Diversity Drives Success



State of Immigrant Inclusion

in the Greater Toronto Area
Labour Market



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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Thank you to our survey dissemination partners

ACCES Employment

CERIS

Chinese Canadian Advertising, Marketing and Media Association

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Corporate Council for Volunteerism

Council for Access to the Profession of Engineering

Hispanotech

Human Resources Professionals Association

Indo-Canadian chamber of Commerce

Information and Communications Technology Council (ICTC)

Latin American MBA Alumni Network

Markham Board of Trade

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Contents ■

■ 1	Executive Summary	p 5
■ 2	Immigrant Success: Then and Now	p 10
■ 3	The Labour Market: Then and Now	p 19
■ 4	Key Barriers: Then and Now	p 25
■ 5	Communication and Collaboration: Then and Now	p 30
■ 6	Appendix I: Key Dates	p 36
■ 7	Appendix II: Who is Immigrating to the Greater Toronto Area	p 37



Executive Summary

The Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) was founded in 2003 to ensure that immigrants in the Greater Toronto Area could enter the labour market and find work in their field. A series of successful television advertisements raised awareness of immigrant talent being wasted in “survival” jobs – the eponymous tale of the doctor who drives a cab – and the problem of experience and credentials not being recognised.

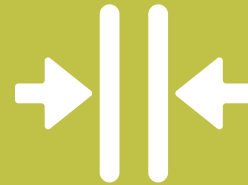
Fifteen years on, there have been changes, both in terms of what the local labour market looks like and in terms of immigrants' chances of finding career success. We've also come to recognize in the last fifteen years that our goal isn't just lowering the unemployment rate for immigrants – or making sure they don't get stuck in “survival” jobs. A larger goal we all aspire to is the true inclusion of immigrant professionals in the workplace.

Our research in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) found that there has been progress in many of these areas, and that there are areas where we still need to press for change.

Progress

The unemployment gap is narrowing

- ▶ The gap between the respective unemployment rates of newcomers in the GTA with a Bachelor's degree and people born in Canada has narrowed, although at 12.5 per cent in 2016, the unemployment rate for university-educated newcomers is still twice that of the rate for people born in Canada.



Employers who focus on hiring immigrant professionals are more likely to appreciate benefits

- ▶ 80 per cent of GTA employers who said their organization had a focus on immigrant professionals also said they felt immigrants had positively affected their organization.



Increased focus on diversity and inclusion = increased efforts to attract and retain immigrants

- ▶ 61 per cent of the employers we surveyed said that a new focus on diversity and inclusion was the main reason their organization had changed its practices around hiring and retaining immigrants in the last few years.



Areas for improvement

Newcomers with a Canadian degree are doing better than those without

- ▶ Newcomers in the GTA who gained a Bachelor's degree or higher in Canada are more likely to be working in a job that requires a degree.
- ▶ Newcomer women in the GTA who gained their degree outside Canada are the least likely to be working in a job that requires a degree.
- ▶ This could mean that some immigrants are paying for a degree as a way of getting around the Canadian experience barrier.



Women are lagging behind

- ▶ Women newcomers in the GTA who have a university degree earn on average half the amount of their Canadian-born counterparts. This has barely changed in 15 years.



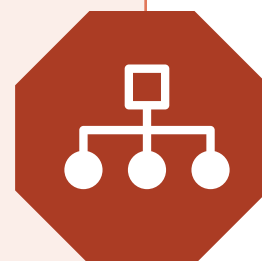
Fewer newcomer men are getting to the top of the pay scale compared to men born in Canada

- ▶ While the median income of GTA newcomer men with a Bachelor's degree in 2015 was 74 per cent of what a qualified non-immigrant man would earn, their average employment income was just 41 per cent that of their Canadian-born counterparts.
- ▶ This suggests that fewer newcomer men are earning at the higher end of the salary spectrum.



Immigrants are underrepresented in senior positions

- ▶ Just 35 per cent of senior managers with a university degree in the Greater Toronto Area are immigrants...
- ▶ ...even though immigrants make up 52 per cent of the university-educated workforce.
- ▶ Around 86 per cent of recent immigrants in the Greater Toronto Area are visible minorities¹...
- ▶ ...yet visible minorities make up only 3.3 per cent of Boards of Directors and 9.2 per cent of senior management in the corporate sector in the Greater Toronto Area².
- ▶ One in seven of the employers we surveyed have programs in place to support immigrants to advance within the organization.



With these findings in mind, we propose the following recommendations:



Turn to page 34 of this report to read more about these recommendations.

TRIEC was built on a consultative approach, and all we have achieved so far could not have been done without the input of our stakeholders. These findings and their proposed solutions are intended as a starting point for further discussion. We would welcome your input and suggestions

Research Methods

The study was conducted in the summer and fall of 2018, with a primary focus on the GTA. The methodology gathered a range of perspectives, drawn from:

- ▶ A review of more than 60 high-quality research reports and policy documents from 2000 to 2018.
- ▶ An online survey widely distributed. Approximately 200 employers, employment service providers and individuals responded.
- ▶ A face-to-face dialogue session with nine leaders of Professional Immigrant Networks (immigrant-led professional associations).
- ▶ Face-to-face dialogue sessions with 25 employers in the GTA.
- ▶ Individual interviews with 12 stakeholders, policy experts, and service providers.
- ▶ Original research looking at data from the 2001 Census, 2006 Census, 2011 National Household Survey and 2016 Census.

Key terms used in this report

Immigrant professional

People who have immigrated to Canada and have post-secondary education and/or professional training and experience.

Most of the people TRIEC serves are permanent residents, although some may have become citizens. This definition also includes refugees who meet the above criteria.

The term newcomer has also been used in cases where we are specifically referring to landed immigrants (permanent residents) who have been here five years or less.

Greater Toronto Area

The city of Toronto and regions of Durham, Halton, Peel, York. The Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) covers an equivalent area.

Employment Service Providers

Agencies who support newcomers to find meaningful employment by offering training, counselling and job development support.

The background is a solid blue color with a pattern of dark blue squares of various sizes scattered across it. Thin, light blue lines connect some of these squares, creating a network-like structure. In the upper left, a white square with a dark blue border contains the number '2'.

2

Immigrant Success: Then and Now

TRIEC was founded to create the conditions for immigrants to succeed in the labour market. To what extent have their chances of finding success in the GTA improved? In measuring the success of immigrants over the last fifteen years, we looked at four indicators:

■ **Unemployment** ■ **Underemployment** ■ **Income** ■ **Career success/
career advancement**

A note on the data and terms used in this section

In the following analysis of data, we use the term “newcomer” to refer to someone who has been a landed immigrant for five years or less at the time of the data source. So, for example, if the data source is the 2016 Census, a newcomer is someone who became a landed immigrant between 2011 and 2016.

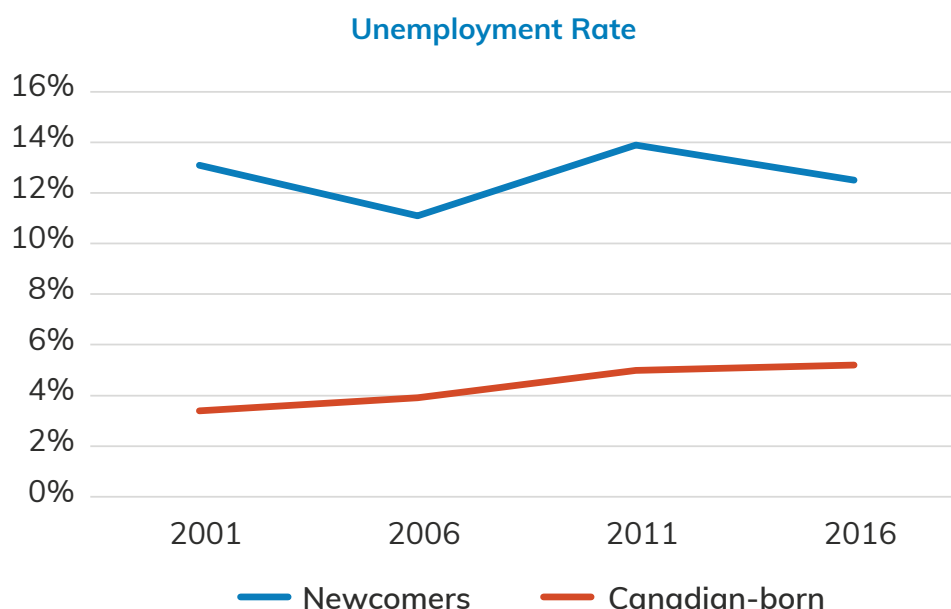
We have only looked at newcomers who have a Bachelor’s degree or higher, taking this as an indicator of people who are highly skilled and highly educated.

All the data relied on in this section come from one of four censuses: the 2001 Census, 2006 Census, 2011 National Household Survey and the 2016 Census.

All data refer to residents in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area. Where this was not accessible, we looked at combined data for Toronto, Durham, York, Peel and Halton.

Unemployment □

- The unemployment rate for university-educated newcomers has not changed significantly, but the gap between newcomers and Canadian-born people has narrowed



According to this graph, the unemployment rate for newcomers with a Bachelor’s degree or higher in the Greater Toronto Area fell in 2006, rose in 2011 and by 2016 had decreased again slightly. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate for people born in Canada has risen consistently. This suggests that although unemployment has gone up, newcomers have been able to weather these changes.

If we look at how the ratio of the newcomer unemployment rate to the Canadian-born unemployment rate has changed over time, this does indeed suggest that the circumstances of newcomers are improving: In 2001, newcomers had an unemployment rate that was 3.85 times higher the rate for Canadian-born residents. By 2016, this had dropped to 2.4 times higher. The gap persists, but it is getting smaller.

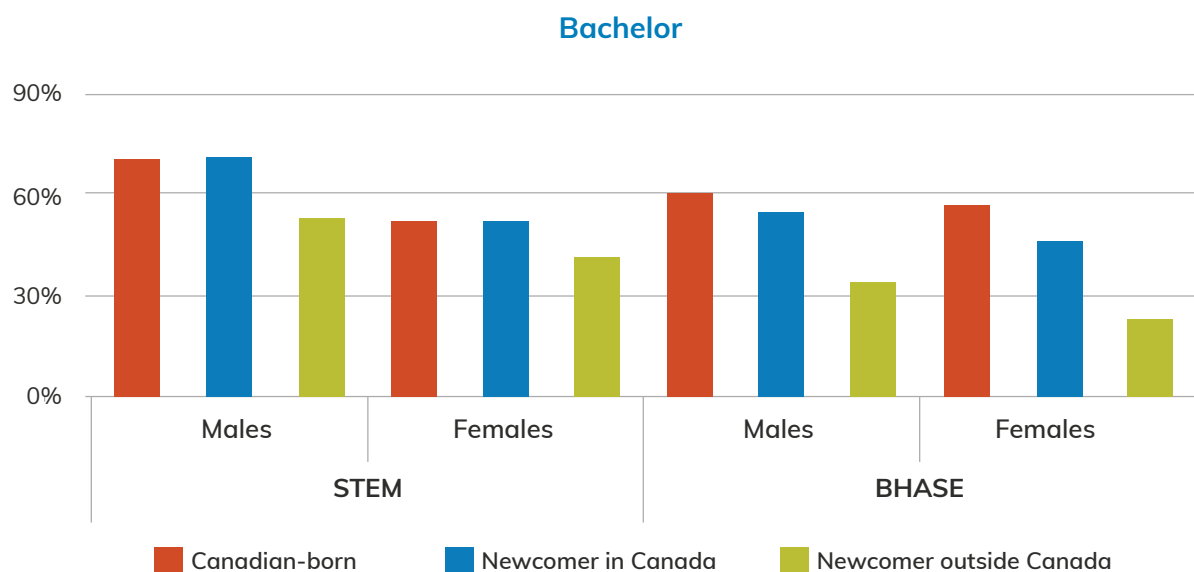
	2001	2006	2011	2016
Newcomers with a Bachelor's degree or higher	13.1%	11.1%	13.9%	12.5%
Canadian-born with a Bachelor's degree or higher	3.4%	3.9%	5.0%	5.2%
Ratio	3.85	2.85	2.78	2.40

However, these figures also do not tell us about the type of employment that newcomers have been gaining. For those who are employed, we wanted to know whether the work that immigrant professionals are finding is commensurate with their education and experience

Underemployment □

- ▶ Newcomers who gained a Bachelor's degree or higher in Canada in a STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics/IT) subject, are doing nearly as well as their Canadian-born counterparts.
- ▶ Newcomers with a Bachelor's degree from outside Canada in a non-STEM subject are much worse off than their Canadian-born counterparts – especially women.
- ▶ The number of newcomers in the GTA with a Bachelor's degree from a Canadian university has doubled.

One of the ways in which someone can be underemployed is if they are overqualified for the job they are in. The following graphs compare people born in Canada to newcomers who arrived between 2011 and 2016. They compare STEM degrees to BHASE (everything else, including business, law, humanities, social studies, health care, and so on) degrees. They show what percentage of people in each category are working in a job that requires a university degree.

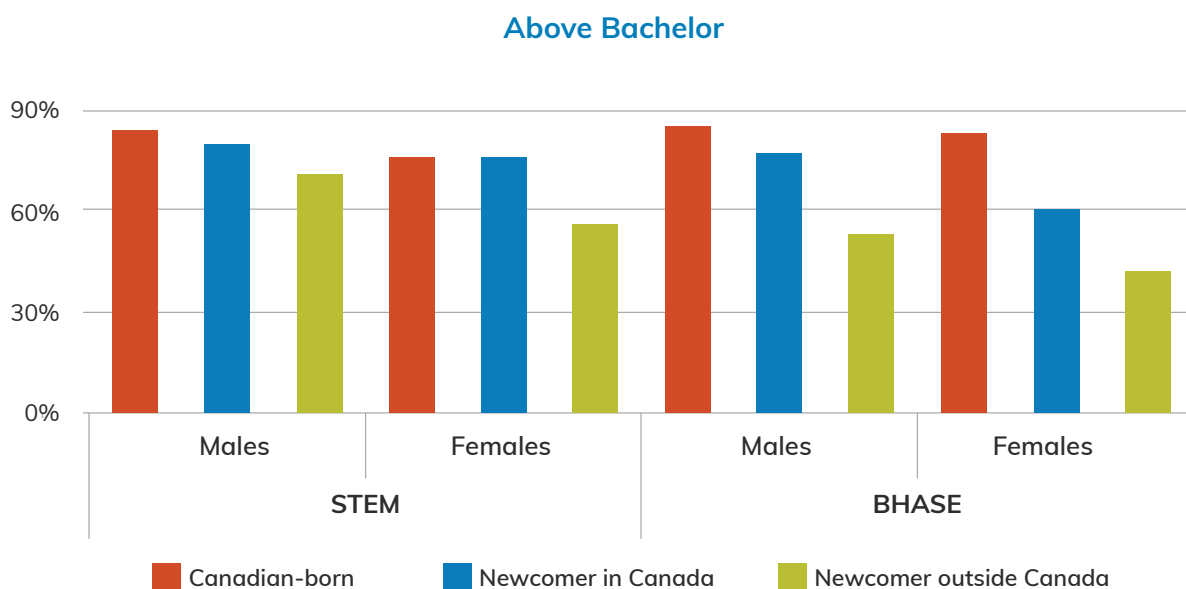


When it comes to securing work that requires a Bachelor's degree or higher, newcomers with a Bachelor's degree that they acquired in Canada in a STEM subject are doing well. There is not much difference between these newcomers and their Canadian-born counterparts – although women, whether born in Canada or not, are not doing quite as well as men.

However, in each of these categories, newcomers with international degrees are not doing as well as both their Canadian-born counterparts, and other newcomers with Canadian degrees in similar subject areas.

When it comes to non-STEM degrees, being born in Canada is more of an advantage. Newcomers with a Bachelor's from a Canadian university are doing **slightly** less well, and newcomers with international degrees are doing **even less** well than their Canadian-born counterparts. The group with the lowest number in an education-commensurate job is newcomer women who gained their degrees abroad.

The overall numbers are higher for people who have a degree above Bachelor level, but the pattern is the same.



This is not a new issue: a working paper by CERIS looking at data from 2000-2004 found that immigrants who accessed post-secondary education in Canada were more likely to do well in the labour market³. Now, it seems that the message is getting out that having a degree from Canada can increase your chances of getting education-commensurate work. In 2006, eight per cent of newcomers to the GTA had gained a degree in Canada. By 2011, this figure had more than doubled, to 18 per cent, and in 2016 this remained similar, with 17 per cent of newcomers acquiring a Canadian degree.

Why has this number increased? In part, this may be due to an increase in international students transitioning to permanent residency. It may be too, that immigrants who have degrees from their country of origin are re-qualifying once they arrive, or they are taking additional qualifications in order to pursue an alternative career path.

Either way, the fact that immigrants who gain Bachelor's degrees in Canada are at an advantage over those who do not is troubling. Even though around half (57 per cent) of employers that took our survey reported that they are having success in the credentials immigrants have gained outside of Canada, the data suggest that there may still be challenges around this. We discuss this further in the section of this report on key barriers.

Our research found that outcomes do eventually improve for immigrants with time. Looking at the tables below we can see that both immigrant men and women with a Bachelor's degree or higher who arrived in Ontario before 1990 are just as likely to be working in a job that requires a university degree as their Canadian-born counterparts.

Immigrant men with a Bachelor's degree or higher	Canadian-born	Immigrant by period of arrival					
		Before 1981	1981-1990	1991-2000	2001-2005	2006-2010	2011-2014
Percentage in full-year full-time job	66%	62%	69%	66%	64%	59%	53%
Percentage in job requiring university degree	68%	74%	67%	62%	55%	54%	54%

Immigrant women with a Bachelor's degree or higher	Canadian-born	Immigrant by period of arrival					
		Before 1981	1981-1990	1991-2000	2001-2005	2006-2010	2011-2014
Percentage in full-year full-time job	57%	56%	61%	56%	53%	44%	37%
Percentage in job requiring university degree	64%	67%	62%	53%	47%	42%	37%

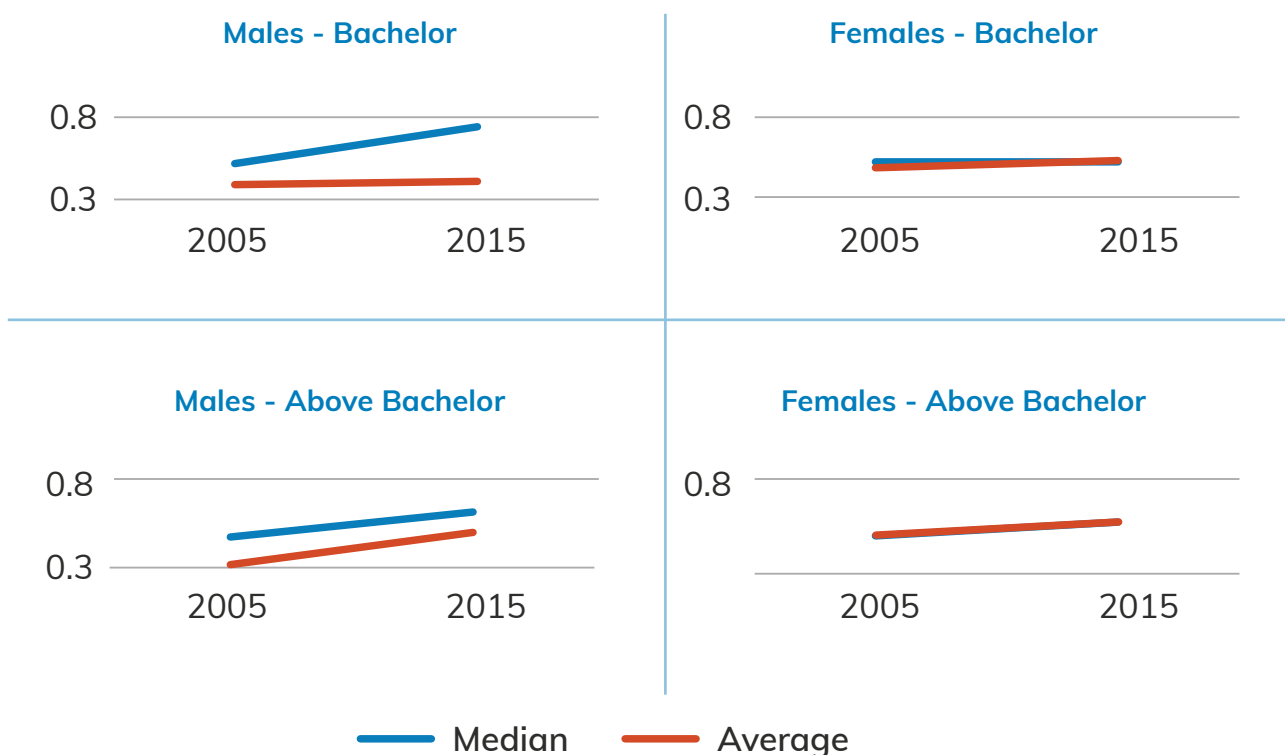
Nevertheless, it is taking too long for immigrants to catch up with their Canadian-born counterparts. Underemployment at the start of an immigrant's working life in Canada can have a long-lasting impact. According to a report by the Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity, "it takes immigrants between twenty-one to thirty years in Ontario to reach the same employment level as their Canadian-born peers"⁴. As one participant in our consultations said, "Once you start lower, it follows you during your entire career. You try to catch up constantly."

Income

- ▶ There is still a gap between what people born in Canada with a Bachelor's degree or higher earn and what newcomers with the same education earn.
- ▶ The income of university-educated newcomer women has not significantly increased since 2005 – they still earn about half the amount of their Canadian-born counterparts.
- ▶ Newcomer men are struggling to reach the same levels of high income as their Canadian-born counterparts, suggesting they start their careers at a lower income level.

The charts below show compare the employment income of newcomer women and men with a Bachelor's degree or higher to that of someone born in Canada.

They show data from the 2006 and 2016 Censuses, looking only at people who were working full-time and year-round. This means we compared the incomes of newcomers and their Canadian-born counterparts from the last full year before the Censuses were taken - 2005 and 2015.



Statistics Canada, 2006 Census and 2016 Census

□ Immigrant men are not getting to the top of the pay scale

The top left graph shows that the median income for immigrant men with a Bachelor's degree has increased over time, but this does not tell the whole story. The average income for this group has not increased.

This graph is essentially looking at the averages taken from a long list of salaries for university-educated newcomer men. The middle value, or median, in this list is increasing, but when you add every salary in the list up, and divide it by the number of salaries in the list to get the average, the result is not increasing over time. This suggests that within the list of salaries that we looked at for 2015, the number of salaries at the higher end of the scale are not enough to bring the average up.

In other words, some university-educated immigrant men's salaries are increasing, but not as many are getting to the higher end of the pay scale as their Canadian-born counterparts.

Men who hold a degree above Bachelor level only fare slightly better: their average income was 51 per cent that of their Canadian-born counterparts (their median employment income was 63 per cent that of non-immigrants).

□ Newcomer women are lagging behind their Canadian-born counterparts

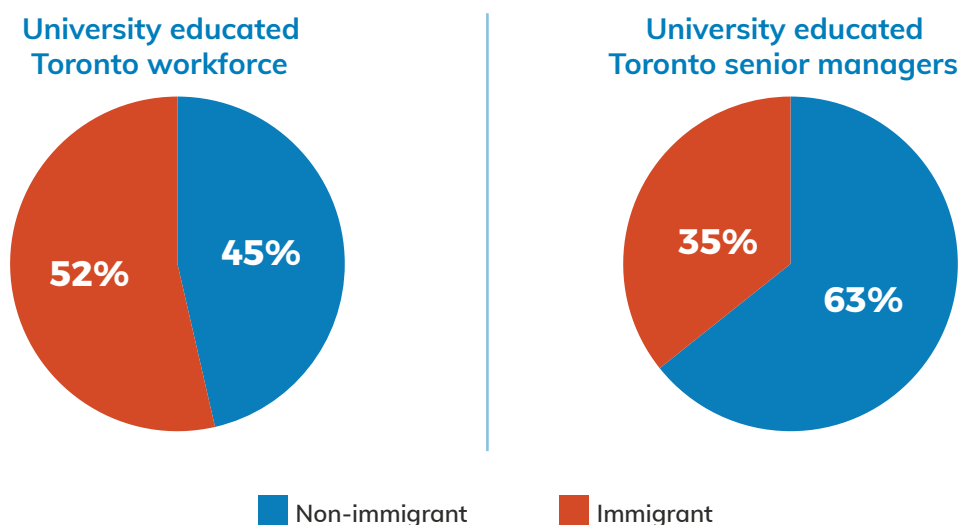
Women on the other hand, have seen their income increase at a much smaller rate since 2005 compared to women born in Canada with a Bachelor's degree or higher.

At the time of the most recent Census, women newcomers with a Bachelor's degree or higher were still earning, on average, just over half the amount of their Canadian born counterparts. The median income for newcomer women with a Bachelor's degree in 2015 was 54 per cent that of Canadian-born women and their average income was 55 per cent of women born in Canada. The median and average income for newcomer women with a degree above a Bachelor in 2015 was 57 per cent that of Canadian-born women with the same qualifications.

Career Advancement

- ▶ University-educated newcomers are less likely to be in senior management positions than their Canadian-born counterparts.
- ▶ Employers are likely to prioritise other forms of inclusion initiatives over those that help newcomers progress.

The 2016 Census suggests that compared to their Canadian-born counterparts, immigrant professionals are less likely to be in senior management positions. Looking at Toronto's university-educated workforce (2015), just over half are newcomers. However, in the senior management segment of that workforce, just over one third are newcomers⁵.



In our consultations we heard from employers and immigrant professionals that promoting and advancing immigrant professionals continues to be a challenge. This reflects a study we carried out in 2015, which found that 20 per cent of employers would not consider hiring a recent immigrant into a senior leadership or executive position in the Greater Toronto Area⁶.

Why is it difficult for immigrants to progress into senior level positions? Participants in our consultations reported many employers hesitate to bring in talent from other organizations or other sectors into mid-management or senior level positions, feeling that their experience will not be transferable.

Another possibility is that many immigrants struggle for the same reason that other populations in the GTA struggle. Around 86 per cent of recent immigrants in the Greater Toronto Area are visible minorities⁷. Yet visible minorities make up only 3.3 per cent of Boards of Directors and 9.2 per cent of senior management in the corporate sector in the Greater Toronto Area⁸. Immigrants from non-white backgrounds could be facing challenges around being new to the country and dealing with the barriers of prejudice and discrimination at the same time.

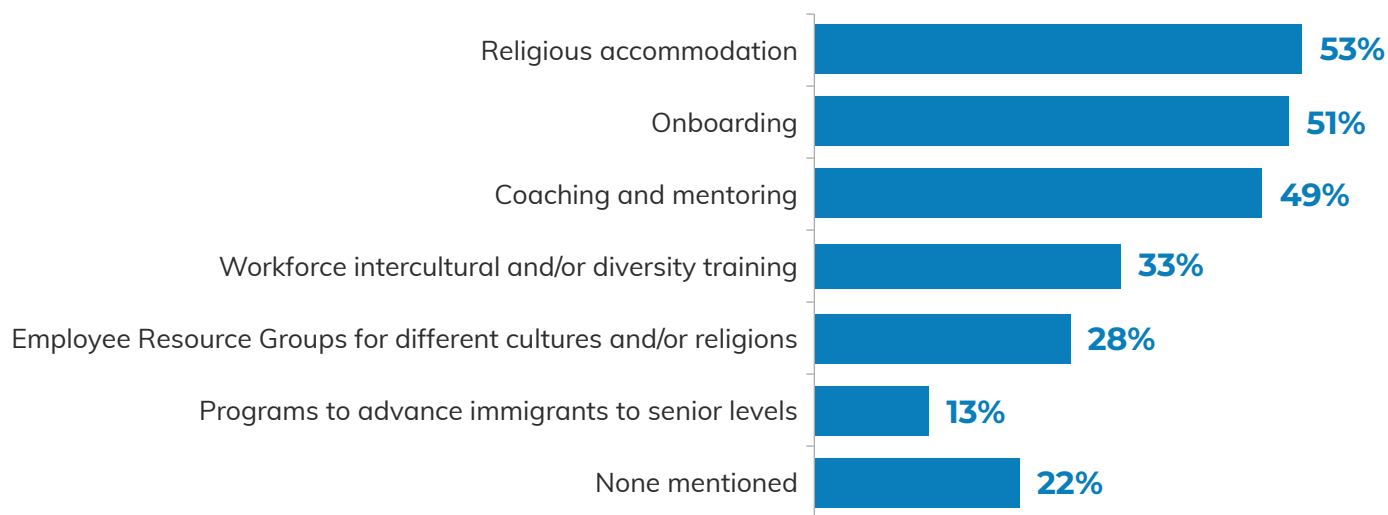
“There is a lack of clear and straightforward understanding of the game. We need to learn both the rules to get in as well as the rules to advance our career.”

—Professional Immigrant Networks (PINs) Leader

The news is not all bad. Just over half of employers in our survey reported they had had some success with advancing immigrants into more senior levels. However, of all of the ways to support the inclusion of immigrant employees, employers were *least likely* to have programs for immigrant career advancement (see Figure 1). Only about one in seven employers reported having such programs. Without advancing immigrants into senior management positions, it is unlikely that GTA employers will see the full business benefit of this talent - and immigrant professionals will not achieve their full potential.

Figure 1. Few employers invest in advancement programs

Does your organization currently invest effort in any of the following practices for immigrant inclusion? (check all that apply)



N=72 employers

TRIEC's underemployment pilot project with a leading financial services sector institution in 2016 found a source of hidden talent in their call centre. Immigrant professionals had taken key skills and qualifications off their resumes so that they could apply for a survival job—leading to a lack of awareness about talent that existed within the organization. With résumés that reflected their qualifications, and access to coaching and feedback, three out of eight employees who participated in the program got new jobs, with one jumping up two ranks in their employment. There is much more talent to be discovered.

External to employers, our consultations identified that there is a lot of support for getting the first job, but not enough support to retain, coach and guide newcomers through the rest of their journey. There are very few mentoring or bridging programs to address the needs of immigrants who may be employed or who are no longer “newcomers”. Business Edge at the Rotman School of Business was mentioned as one program that addresses the needs of immigrants and assists them in their career progression but it is only available to 60-65 people a year. Ascend Canada supports pan-Asian newcomers to become leaders in their organizations through building leadership skills and networking. Similarly, immigrant-led professional associations also support in-career advancement for their members through networking. Nevertheless, there has not been a concerted effort to address these challenges at scale.

“There are lots of supports for getting jobs but after that you are on your own.”

—Professional Immigrant Networks (PINs) leader



3

The Labour Market: Then and Now

There are many factors things that affect an immigrant professional's ability to succeed in the Greater Toronto Area labour market, including the practices and attitudes of the companies that will employ them, and trends and changes in the labour market itself. Employers are a critical piece of the puzzle of getting immigrants to skills-commensurate employment. Without their commitment and willingness to engage, even the most qualified immigrant would struggle to secure meaningful employment. Equally, there has been much discussion in recent years about the future of work and how this will affect the labour force. As part of this labour force, immigrants will need to continue to be agile in the face of these changes.

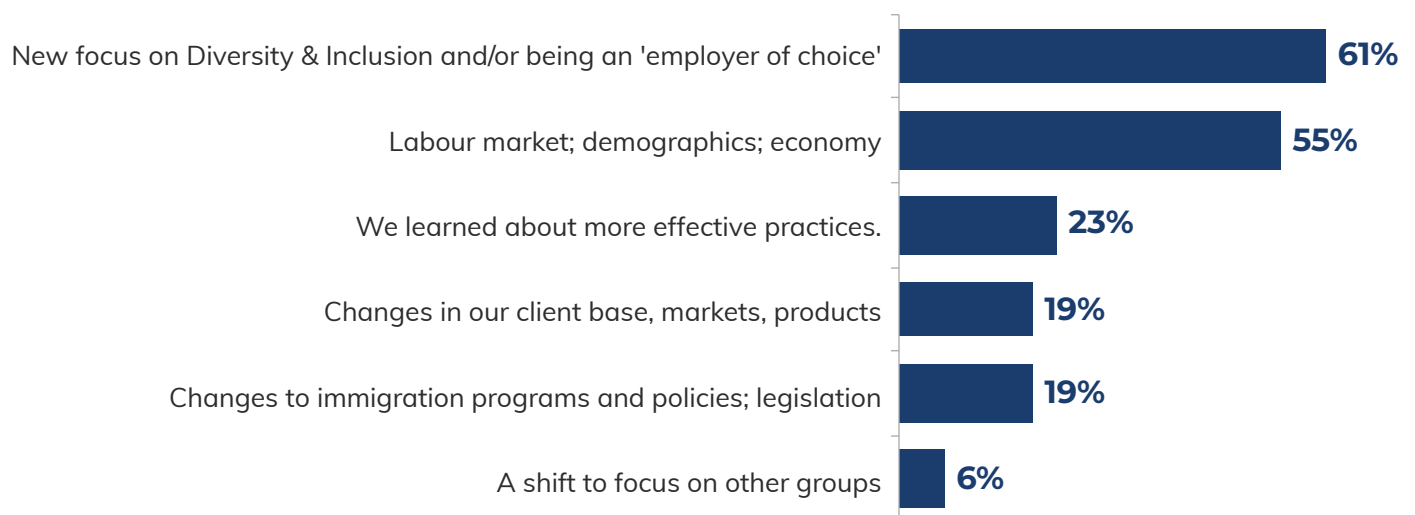
Employer practices and attitudes □

□ Hiring the market

Over the years, more and more organizations have started to see that “to win your market, you need to hire the market”⁹ and that in order to do this, employers need to position their brand to be attractive to potential immigrant employees. Employers in our survey reported that over the years they are most likely to have changed their immigrant employment practices as part of a company effort to focus on diversity and inclusion as well as positioning themselves as an “employer of choice” in a competitive labour market. This is closely followed by a perceived need to respond to changes in labour market demographics.

Figure 2. An employer brand and the realities of the labour market drive changes

***If your organization has made significant changes in its approach to recruiting, and retaining and promoting immigrant talent, what stands out to you as the main causes for those changes?
(Check all that apply.)***



N=31 employers who provided a reason for having changed their practices in the last 15 years

□ Immigrants bring diversity

We also asked employers in our survey why their organization focused on hiring and retaining immigrants currently. The most commonly reported reason was (see Figure 3) that it brings greater diversity to the organization. This reflects an increase in research that shows positive links between diversity and business performance¹⁰. For many employers, the business case for hiring immigrants is connected to a wider business case for building a diverse workforce.

Figure 3. Employers report 'business case' reasons for employment of immigrant professionals
If hiring, retaining and promoting immigrants is a priority for your organization, why is that?
(multiple choices permitted)



N=55 employers who provided at least one reason for placing a priority on immigrant employment

□ From Diversity to Inclusion

While diversity is still important, our employer consultations confirmed findings from earlier research¹¹ that over the years, GTA employers have started increasingly paying attention to the “Inclusion” side of “Diversity and Inclusion”. Leveraging diversity to achieve greater innovation (also a frequently cited reason for hiring immigrants in our survey) is increasingly seen to be dependent on a corporate culture change towards creating a more inclusive workplace experience for newcomers. As a result, most recent research shows a greater interest in creating this experience of inclusion – not just growing the diversity numbers¹².

The last fifteen years have seen employers undertake various initiatives to make their workplaces more inclusive. For example, one employer in our survey reported that in the last several years they have introduced new inclusion initiatives such as: leadership training, bias training, leadership development for immigrants with 3-5 years' tenure with company, and a greater focus on diversity at management levels.

Conversely, more than half of the individuals who responded to the survey reported that they “never” or “rarely” see employers taking action to recruit and retain more immigrants in their workplace, suggesting that it can be difficult for those leading these initiatives to raise awareness about them and engage employees.

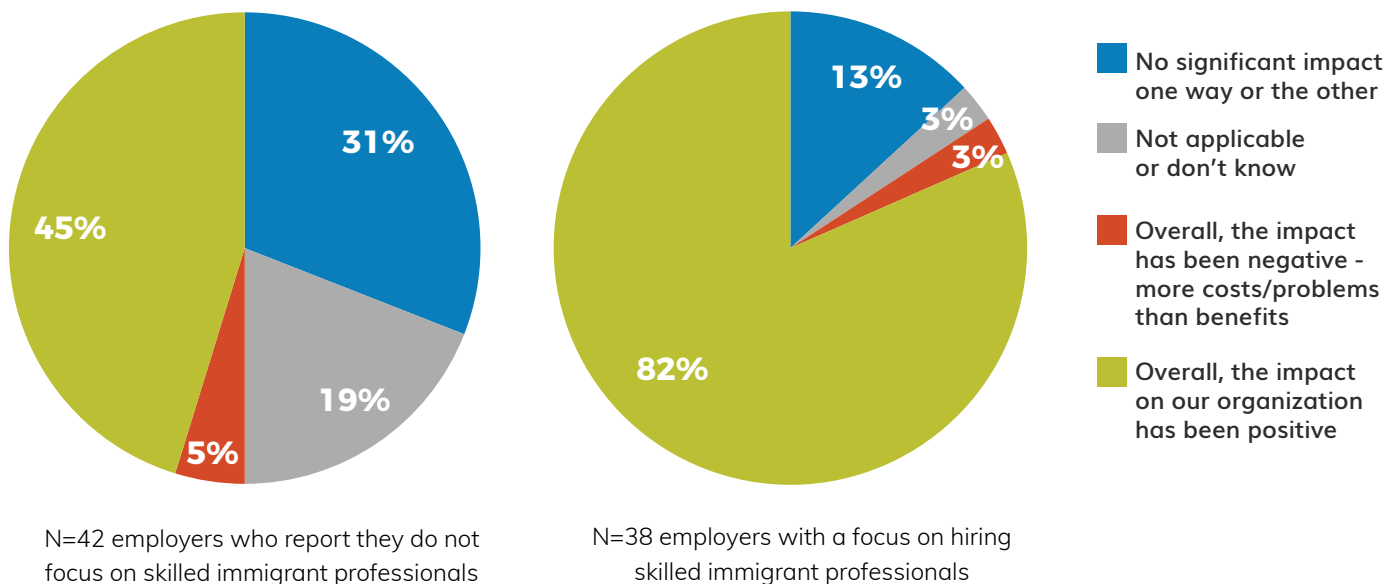
In order to build an inclusive workplace, a shared understanding of what inclusion means is needed. Tools such as TRIEC's Inclusive Workplace Competencies can help organizations create a shared definition for inclusion and set a standard for inclusive behaviour.

An additional tool for employers, an inclusion measurement framework, is currently in development. This is a potential new avenue with promise to support employers in having a strategic focus and fostering real behavioural change within their organizations.

□ Being intentional makes a difference

Our research also found that employers that specifically focus on hiring immigrant professionals are more likely to appreciate the benefits they bring. More than 60 per cent of the employers in our survey reported that over the past 15 years, hiring immigrants has had a positive impact on their organization. If we look at just those employers who have a practice of intentionally recruiting and hiring immigrants, over 80 per cent of those employers report that immigrants have positively affected their organization.

Figure 4. Employers who focus on hiring skilled immigrant professionals are more likely to see positive impacts



This suggests a “catch-22” style situation where in order to see the business case for hiring immigrants, you have to first of all focus on bringing them in to your organization. But in order to be motivated to hire immigrants, you have to first of all see the business case.

Some employers see hiring immigrants as being at odds with merit-based hiring

Our survey suggests that some employers do not intentionally seek out immigrants because they see it as at odds with a merit-based approach to hiring. A large number of employer respondents to the research survey reported that this was their primary reason for not prioritizing the hiring, retention and promotion of immigrant professionals. This suggests a lack of a clear understanding of the subtle barriers and biases that affect hiring and promotion decisions and lead to an under-utilization of immigrant talent – at entry level and beyond.

Figure 5. Employers without a focus on immigrant professionals declare a focus on ‘merit’

If hiring, retaining and promoting immigrant professionals is not a priority for your organization, why is that? (You can choose up to three and add a comment to explain.)



N=59 employers

Changes in the Labour Market

□ Precarious Work

The labour market has shifted in the last 15 years, making it more difficult to maintain a stable career – for everyone, particularly immigrants. Precarious employment, short-term contracts, shorter stays in companies and part-time work are much more prevalent. Recent research in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area shows that just over 37 per cent of the region's workforce was working in precarious employment positions, and that temporary jobs are increasing at a faster rate than permanent roles¹³. Across Ontario, newcomers are more likely to be in precarious work. For example, 33 per cent of immigrants report that they have entered self-employment because of a lack of suitable paid jobs, compared to 20 per cent of Canadian-born workers¹⁴.

□ The Future of Work

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is redefining the meaning of work, along with the skills and competencies needed to undertake certain tasks. New jobs are emerging, while others are becoming redundant with new developments in technology, artificial intelligence and robotics. In Ontario, for instance, around 46.5 per cent of jobs could be vulnerable to automation¹⁵. Accordingly, the demand for skills such as analytical thinking, creativity, complex problem-solving and emotional intelligence have been on the rise.

The rise of the gig economy, which is a labour market consisting of “contingent workers,” such as freelancers, temporary employees and contractors¹⁶, will require workers to be agile and resilient¹⁷. Immigrants have proven themselves to be incredibly adaptive and resilient however they, like all Canadian workers, will be affected by these changes. For people in the GTA labour market, these trends mean that all workers will need to be resilient in the face of change and learn “how to learn” to pursue multiple career paths.

□ **Shifting Attitudes**

Over the last several decades, public opinion in Canada has generally been more positive about immigration and multiculturalism than in other countries. Today there are divided opinions about immigration targets. Our key informant interviewees highlighted that there is a rise in a new climate of populism that can fuel anti-immigrant sentiments. The global rise of populism has not left Canada untouched.

According to a recent survey by Angus Reid, almost half of Canadians find the 2018 target of welcoming 310,000 permanent residents too high. In 2014, only around one third of Canadians thought that immigration targets should be lowered¹⁸.

The recent narrative about refugee claimants has raised concerns – from both people born in Canada and immigrants – that the immigration system is flawed and unwieldy, and that refugee claimants are “jumping the queue” ahead of economic immigrants¹⁹. In fact, refugee claims are processed separately¹⁹. This could impact on how all immigrants are perceived.

Nonetheless, a survey released in late 2018 found that overall, 76 per cent of Canadians continue to agree that the economic impact of immigration is positive²¹. We must continue to monitor these shifts in public opinion and be ready to address any new shifts as they arise – or we could risk losing the progress we have made.

What has worked?

- ✓ More employers seeing the benefits of hiring immigrants
- ✓ An increased focus on creating inclusive workplaces
- ✓ Tools and resources that help employers create a shared definition of inclusion

What needs to change?

- ▶ Reinforce the benefits of immigration and the need for immigrants in the labour market
- ▶ Focus on supporting immigrants in changing sectors with the skills and competencies needed to adapt to change



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4

Key Barriers: Then and Now

When TRIEC was being formed, a clear consensus started to emerge amongst key players in the immigrant employment eco-system, including people in the settlement sector, policy analysts, and employers, about the main barriers to immigrant employment:

- Credential recognition
- The need for Canadian experience
- Perceptions about language and communication skills, particularly those specific to the workplace (e.g., occupation-specific language);
- Bias and discrimination (whether intentional or not)²².

The Challenges of Credential Recognition □

Credential recognition could refer to one of two things. Firstly, the challenges those in licensed or regulated professions face when trying to become licensed to practice in this country. Secondly, there is the barrier faced by immigrants who have gained degrees from universities outside Canada which are not always recognised by employers.

In regulated professions, there has been some progress in the last fifteen years. In 2006, the passing of the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act by the provincial government led to the creation of the Office of the Ontario Fairness Commission and the first reviews of regulatory practices. The purpose of the Office is to ensure that registration practices are transparent, objective, impartial and fair. Legislation in Ontario now requires certain regulated professions to have fair registration practices²³.

The Office of the Fairness Commissioner in Ontario reports a significant improvement in compliance rates for the “assessment of qualifications” in the 2016- 2018 period compared to 2011-2012 or 2013-2014. Where several years ago only about 25 per cent of regulatory bodies were in compliance, now 61 per cent are; however the Office acknowledges that this result still shows a large need for improvement²⁴.

In terms of support for employers to better understand the value of international qualifications, there has also been progress. To acquire permanent residency, immigrants must have their international educational credentials evaluated by a respected third-party organization. Many immigrants now include that credential evaluation on their résumé. To what extent can employers now better understand these international credentials? In our survey, 57 per cent of employers reported that they are having success in understanding the résumés of immigrants and assessing the credentials they have gained outside of Canada. Less than a quarter (21 per cent) reported that this was a barrier to hiring immigrants. This number is encouraging, but we should still continue to make efforts to move the needle. Designated providers of academic credential assessments such as World Education Services (WES) have services that support employers to better understand the value of international academic credentials. Services such as these should be promoted to employers as a support in hiring immigrants into appropriate positions.

Canadian Experience

In today's increasingly globalised economy, an employee having international experience can be a great asset. Yet when TRIEC began, the value placed by many employers on work experienced gained in Canada was seen as a major barrier to success for immigrants.

What do employers mean when they say they want Canadian experience? Past research has shown that employers acknowledge that many immigrants have both the experience and expertise required for the immediate job. However, they want to know whether the immigrants have the soft skills i.e. the fit within the organizations, their ability to resolve conflict, be comfortable with workplace communication, and figure out who to know and how to be successful in the workplace more broadly²⁵ "Immigrants have expertise and experience – the “know-what” and “know-why” to do the job. What they [...] are often seen to be lacking [...] is contextual knowledge and contacts – the “know-how” and “know-who” to be successful in the Canadian environment”²⁶. “Canadian experience”, then, has sometimes been used as a catch-all term for broader concerns about “cultural fit”.

Symbolic progress has been made on this issue. The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) determined, in 2013, that a “strict requirement for “Canadian experience” is prima facie discrimination and can only be used in very limited circumstances”²⁷. In their report, “Removing the Canadian Experience Barrier” they recommended that instead of asking for Canadian experience, employers should describe the specific knowledge and skills they require of candidates and assess people individually²⁸.

However, in our consultations it was suggested that some employers are still asking for Canadian experience. To test this claim, we carried out a quick search of online job postings and uncovered several examples of “Canadian experience” requirements²⁹. Some were posted by the employer directly, but many had been posted by search agencies. In our consultation process, a representative of a staffing agency emphasized that many employers still ask them to include Canadian experience in the job requirements. While this agency uses the opportunity to educate employers about the OHRC guidance, it seems clear that more awareness is needed.

Further, as we have already discussed, immigrants seem to be using Canadian education as a “proxy” for Canadian experience, paying for degrees and post-graduate qualifications that will give them exposure to Canadian workplace practices and help them build their networks. A post-secondary education in Canada can expose immigrants to the workings of the local job market, and help them make connections and build their networks. Post-secondary education, however, is expensive, and those who are not able to afford a second degree could be at a disadvantage.

Over the years, there have been initiatives to support both immigrants and employers to move the needle on this issue:

► **Supporting immigrants:**

Initiatives such as the CareerEdge internship program, support participants to gain experience in this country. More recently, the federal government through Employment and Social Development Canada have been piloting several initiatives that support newcomers to gain exposure to the Canadian labour market, in order to test the most effective approach.

► **Supporting employers:**

Employers often need to meet immigrants before they understand the richness and value of the experience they bring. Initiatives such as mentoring including ACCES Employment's Speed Mentoring, which brings professionals in hiring positions into closer contact with immigrant talent. In 2017-2018, 72 per cent of mentors in TRIEC Mentoring Partnership said they were more likely to hire an immigrant professional after taking part in the program.

However, these programs are not as widespread as they could be. Three years ago, The Boston Consulting Group³⁰ projected that there was a potential demand for 6,000 mentors in the GTA and while TRIEC Mentoring Partnership has been enhanced to make it more efficient, it would be impossible to meet this demand with current resources. Research to identify what works to more quickly integrate immigrant talent into the labour market should also be used to help scale those programs to support more immigrants and employers. Guidelines around the Canadian experience requirement could also be enforced more strictly.

Perceptions about language and communication skills □

Economic immigrants have always needed to demonstrate a high standard of English in order to obtain their permanent resident status. Yet when TRIEC began there was a concern that immigrants' ability to communicate in English was not sufficient for them to be able to communicate successfully in the workplace.

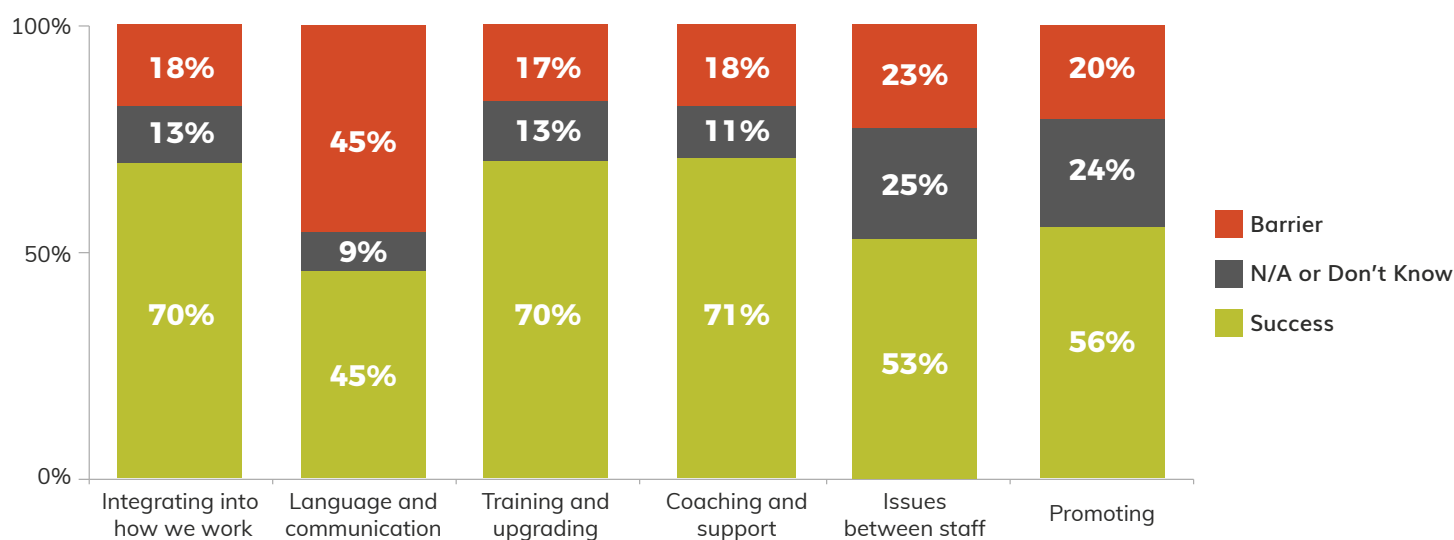
Over time, there has been new recognition from employers that for immigrant professionals in the knowledge economy, the language training "problem" had been defined too narrowly and awareness of the actual problem of cross-cultural differences in communication was low amongst employers³¹.

However, in a 2015 study carried out by ALLIES, 95 per cent of employer respondents attested to language and communication being the biggest barrier to hiring immigrants. Interestingly, however, only 27 per cent of immigrants saw this as being a significant barrier. To quote the report, "In other words, newcomers think they have adequate communication and language skills but employers do not"³².

Our survey suggests that in the three years since that report, not much has changed. Employer respondents identified "overcoming language and communication barriers" as the issue where they experience the least success and experience the greatest challenge in retaining and promoting immigrant employees. [see Figure 2].

Figure 2. Employers find language / communication challenges still a barrier

When your organization attempts to retain and promote immigrants, which of the following pose barriers or significant challenges



N=30 employers

This suggests a disconnect between many employers, who still believe that language and communication is a barrier, and immigrant candidates, who do not. There is an opportunity for stronger collaboration between language training providers and employers to address the gaps and ensure that these programs address the needs of employers. Such collaboration will also help to identify whether these gaps are indeed language barriers or problems of cultural differences.

Bias and discrimination

Discrimination is defined by the Canadian Human Rights Commission as “an action or a decision that treats a person or a group badly for reasons such as their race, age or disability”³³. There are also the related terms of unconscious bias, micro-inequities, and in-group favouritism.

Since TRIEC began, research has emerged on the effect of bias (unconscious or otherwise) on hiring decisions. In 2012, a joint study by the University of Toronto and Ryerson University found that job applicants with “Asian” names were between 45 and 60 per cent less likely to be called for a job interview than those with Anglicised names, and that this was nearly twice as prevalent in smaller organizations³⁴. Although it is important to note that not all immigrants are people of colour, and by no means are all people of colour living in Canada immigrants, undeniably, intersections between race and immigration status exist when it comes to experiences in the workforce. For example, according to the 2016 Census, Canada’s top three source countries for immigration were India, China, and the Philippines³⁵. Some employers have piloted “name-blind” recruitment processes to address this, but these have had mixed results³⁶ and more work may need to be done to test the effectiveness of this solution³⁷.

What has worked?

- ✓ New regulations around access to licensed professions
- ✓ Guidelines around the Canadian experience requirement
- ✓ Initiatives such as mentoring, which help employers appreciate the breadth of immigrant talent available.

What needs to change?

- ▶ Scale solutions that work such as mentoring
- ▶ Increased promotion of services that support employers to recognise international credentials.
- ▶ Wider awareness and understanding of Canadian experience guidelines

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5

Communication and Collaboration: Then and Now

The “Eco-System” □

The players that contribute to and impact on immigrants' career success in the GTA could be described as part of an “eco-system”. This eco-system is incredibly complex with many, many players including employers, municipal, provincial and federal governments, non-profit and community organizations, third-party evaluators, recruiting organizations, employment service providers, immigrant-serving organizations, immigrant-led organizations amongst many others.

In 2002, a comprehensive review of the elements of the immigrant employment “eco-system” emphasized: “The system components are interdependent. The right mix and quality of programs and services will not exist without collaboration from relevant stakeholders”³⁸. The Maytree Foundation called for a ‘systems approach’ to the issue of skilled immigrant employment instead of ad hoc as was typical at the time, and TRIEC was created to bring about a focus on employment issues for immigrant professionals at a policy and program level³⁹.

Since that time, each of the elements has become stronger and more effective. The service delivery sector has been responding to needs as funding allows and building new bridging programs and other supports for immigrants.

Communication and Collaboration □

In 2018, some elements of this eco-system show more consistency and alignment with each other. For example, governments more regularly consult with employers and consider labour market realities when setting policies and programs. As a result, changes have been introduced that are designed to streamline processes and increase immigration policy's responsiveness to emerging needs.

However, each of the stakeholder groupings engaged in this research commented on the disconnects remaining between various elements of the eco-system and confirmed the need for greater and more effective communication, coordination and collaboration amongst stakeholders. These issues raised could be grouped into two broad themes: those relating to what happens before an immigrant lands in Canada, and those that related to what happens after.

There is undoubtedly a skills shortage in today's labour market. 60 per cent of employers in our survey for this research reported that compared to the past several years they find it harder now to find talent. Employment service-providing agencies that took our survey reported that employers can usually fill their positions, but it takes considerable outreach and a longer time period. Our face-to-face consultations with employers confirmed that they are concerned about this issue.

Employers have reported that they appreciate the business case for hiring immigrants but do not know how to navigate the plethora of information and resources. They believe that governments and employment service providers are focused primarily on immigrants' rather than employers' needs and may not always be aware of services that can connect them to talent. They would like to see more focused employer services (i.e., translation of transcripts, assessment of credentials, work English, orientation to the world of work and specific industries, etc.) and better outreach from service agencies to employers and industry associations⁴⁰. There was a consensus in our insight sessions that SMEs, in particular, need support tailored to their needs – pragmatic, easy-to-use, effective.

On the other side, stakeholders such as government, employment service providers and settlement agencies have faced longstanding challenges in engaging employers. As one of the key informant interviewees commented, the rate of change and the accompanying uncertainty can cause many issues for all stakeholders involved. Poor coordination and a shortage of trust among various elements of the eco-system have an impact on the outcome of the programs.

However, there have been some positives. Since TRIEC began fifteen years ago, some immigrant-serving organizations have been substantially increasing their connection to employers. The growth and success of Bridging programs in particular have required close collaboration with employer advisors. Additionally, the arrival of the LIPS has provided a multi-stakeholder planning table to communities to help drive co-ordinated action and support to create welcoming communities.

The federal government has the largest funding envelope for settlement and immigration of all the players and, this fall, conducted a deep and detailed consultation with the immigration sector with specific outreach to employers. This outreach is a very good step in taking the temperature of the eco-system and trying to find ways to positively impact it through their funding.

In summary, the eco-system of immigrant employment has definitely evolved since 2003. All the main protagonists have an increased understanding of the issues that new immigrants face and have made strides in addressing these issues through diverse policies and programs. But despite this collaboration, there is still more work to be done.

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6

Recommendations

While there has been progress over the last 15 years, we need to do more if we are to be able to deliver on the promise of prosperity for all people—including immigrants-- and if Canada is to remain competitive in the fight for global talent. Below are a few recommendations for action that can be taken to move the needle. This is certainly not an exhaustive list. We hope they will provide a starting point for discussion.

Support immigrants to achieve success throughout their careers and into leadership roles



- ▶ **Measure engagement** - Ensure that all employees can bring their whole selves to work. Is there a perception of equity in access to professional development, mentoring, coaching and career development opportunities? What hidden bias might be preventing more diversity in management and senior management roles? Why is leadership not being shared?
- ▶ **Make career development a priority for immigrants** - Understand that immigrants are underrepresented at leadership levels, recognize that perhaps more effort and resources are needed to help create a level playing field for immigrants, especially women and immigrants who are also people of colour.
- ▶ **Find hidden talent** – what talent might be hidden in the employer's entry level or low-skilled jobs? The resume on file might not reflect the real talent and skills of the immigrant employee who desperately took a role for which they were over-skilled.
- ▶ **Seek out supports** – agencies are ready to support employers to make their workplace more equitable and seek out hidden talent.

Support immigrant women



- ▶ Immigrant women need more supports to give them equal footing in the workplace. A recent injection by the federal government of \$32 million for pilot projects that support racialized immigrant women in employment will provide important findings on how to bridge the gap between immigrant women and Canadian-born women.

Scale what works



- ▶ Governments and employers can provide further support for programs that empirically demonstrate they support immigrant inclusion: Bridging and mentoring programs, workplace inclusion programs for organizations, support for career advancement in organizations.

Make the Canadian experience requirement a thing of the past



- ▶ Help employers understand the restrictions on making 'Canadian experience' a strict requirement in the hiring process.
- ▶ Continue to monitor the acquisition of Canadian degrees as a proxy for Canadian experience—this needs more research and understanding. Should this be a recommendation to immigrants to help them more quickly acquire their job of choice? Can educational institutions provide more support?

Change how we think about credentials – Canadian and international



- ▶ Newcomers should not be expected to take an additional Bachelor's degree in Canada in order to gain access to the job market. That said, there are many bridging programs and other professional certificates and courses that you can take in Canada as part of continuing professional development. Immigrants who arrive in Canada with a Bachelor's degree or higher can use these credentials to gain exposure to the local labour market and complement their existing qualifications.
- ▶ Equally, employers can leverage organizations that can support them to recognize international credentials.

Appendix I –Key dates

How TRIEC's history fits with key moments in immigrant employment policy.

1993 – Immigrant selection system changes to attract more highly skilled immigrants. By 2004, 45 per cent of immigrants to Canada have university degrees⁴¹.

2000 – Study identifies good practice in immigrant employment initiatives, but points out that many employment programs need scaling and extending⁴².

2001 – Immigration and Refugee Protection Act passed, in part to address anticipated shortages in the labour market. Introduction of new immigration classes including the Federal Skilled Worker Program⁴³.

2002 – The report “Fulfilling the Promise”⁴⁴ makes recommendation that a leadership council should be created to address the problem of immigrant unemployment in the GTA.

2002 – Leaders gather at the Toronto City Summit Alliance and discuss potential solutions to immigrant unemployment.

2003 – The Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) formed as a catalyst for change.

2004 – TRIEC's flagship program, TRIEC Mentoring Partnership, is launched to bring existing mentoring programs together under one partnership umbrella.

2005 – Signing of Canada Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA), a new partnership between the federal government and the government of Ontario leading to new funding directed towards settlement services. 30% of this funding went towards employment programs.

2006 – Government of Ontario passes the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act. Office of the Fairness Commissioner is created.

2006 – TRIEC holds first Immigrant Success (IS) Awards ceremony; winners included Ernst & Young and St Michael's Hospital.

2006 – TRIEC launches advertising campaign featuring TV spots and out of home advertising to raise awareness of immigrant talent being wasted in the Greater Toronto Area.

2007 – Canadian Immigration Integration Program, a partnership between the federal government and local service providers, is piloted to offer pre-arrival services to newcomers. It became a fully-fledged program in 2010⁴⁵.

2008 – Ontario government introduces Employment Ontario; funding is devolved from the federal government and a “no wrong door” policy is developed.

2008 – Federal government introduces Canadian Experience Class to make it easier for some temporary workers and international students to transition to permanent residency.

2008 – Federal government call for proposals launches the first set of Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) to provide community support, direction and leadership to foster immigrant inclusion. The Greater Toronto region now has nine LIPs.

2011 – TRIEC launches the Professional Immigrant Network program to provide a home for over seventy immigrant-led professional organizations dedicated to supporting immigrant employment.

2012 – TRIEC becomes a charitable organization, independent of its “parent” Maytree.

2012 – TRIEC launches online learning platform, TRIEC Campus.

2013 – Ontario Human Rights Commission introduces guidelines around Canadian experience requirement

2015 – Federal government launches Express Entry, a new online selection system to manage applications for permanent residence.

2015 – In response to the conflict in Syria and the growing global refugee crisis, federal government pledges to welcome 25,000 Syrian refugees by February 2016.

2017 – Federal government sets new three-year immigration targets, aiming to welcome 340,000 immigrants annually by 2020.

2017 – TRIEC launches the Inclusive Workplace Competencies, a resource to define and set the standard for inclusive behaviour in the workplace

Appendix II – Who is immigrating to the Greater Toronto Area – and how has this changed?

The following tables compare newcomers who arrived up to five years before the 2001 and 2016 Censuses.

This is what they show:

Education: there has been a slight increase in immigrants with a university degree, and a slight increase of people with a Master's degree (among those aged 15 years and older).

	1996-2001	2011-2016
Bachelor's degree or higher	38%	45%
Master's degree	10%	14%

Source country: there have been decreases in immigrants who were born in Eastern Europe and Eastern Asia, but increases in immigrants who were born in South-East Asia as well as West Central Asia and the Middle East (data is for all newcomers).

PLACE OF BIRTH	1996-2001	2011-2016
United States	1%	2%
Central and South America	5%	5%
Caribbean and Bermuda	5%	4%
Europe	17%	9%
United Kingdom	1%	1%
Other Northern and Western Europe	1%	1%
Eastern Europe	11%	4%
Southern Europe	4%	2%
Africa	6%	7%
Asia	66%	72%
West Central Asia and the Middle East	9%	15%
Eastern Asia	23%	16%
South-East Asia	8%	14%
Southern Asia	26%	27%
Oceania and other	0%	0%

Field of study: looking at immigrants with a post-secondary degree, there have been increases in people with degrees in Business-related and Health-related fields (among those aged 15 years and older).

1996-2001		2011-2016	
Commerce, management and business administration	11%	Business, management and public administration	17%
Health professions and related technologies	5%	Health and related fields	9%

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