



SHOWCASING IMMIGRANT VOICES: CALLING FOR A PARADIGM SHIFT

Executive Summary

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BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Canada is a country of immigrants

Canada has historically had one of the largest immigration intakes, proportionally speaking, of any country in the world. Economic immigration is one of the main sources of newcomers alongside family reunions and refugees.

Canada's interest in immigration policy

Major political parties in Canada have all demonstrated strong interest in the use of immigration policy for economic growth. The Liberal government announced plans to welcome 401,000 new permanent residents in 2021, 411,000 in 2022, and 421,000 in 2023.

Immigration is a net benefit to Canada's economy

- Immigration accounted for 80% of Canada's population growth in 2017 and 2018.
- Immigrants fill gaps in Canada's labor supply and help the country respond to fluctuations in job markets.
- Immigrants of all educational levels have positive and statistically significant effects on economic growth of Canada.
- Public opinion on immigration has remained highly positive throughout the pandemic.

Canada and multiculturalism

- Multiculturalism is an official policy of Canada.
- Multiculturalism benefits society as a whole.
- Immigrants are well-positioned to integrate into Canadian society.

Discrimination against immigrants in employment remains

- Immigrants typically earn less than Canadian-born workers with the same amount of education and work experience.
- Among immigrants, both the top and bottom earners tend to be first-generation immigrants, with white anglophone/francophone men at the top and women of color working in a non-native language at the bottom.
- Immigrant women in Canada face greater employment barriers and earn less money than both male immigrants and Canadian-born women.
- More research and actions are needed on this issue.

OUR FINDINGS

Background of respondents

- 285 responses were collected between February 22 - April 3, 2021.
- Most respondents lived more than 1 year in Canada as a permanent resident.
- Over 80% are visible minority.
- 26% have a bachelor's degree while 61% have a masters or higher.
- 83% were in middle or higher position before immigrating to Canada.

Current employment status in Canada

- 22% of respondents are unemployed and looking, more than double the unemployment rate of Canadian general population (February, 2021).

Job search and career advancement

- Respondents' first position in Canada: 71% entry level, 29% middle to executive level, whereas before immigration: 17% entry level, 83% middle to executive level.
- Over 46% of the respondents found seeking employment 'much more difficult than expected' and 27% found it to be 'somewhat more difficult than expected'.
- Within 6 months after moving to Canada:
 - 43% found a position that uses their previous professional experience
 - majority were either unemployed or working in an unrelated field
- 56% reported it took 6 months or more to find a position that uses their previous professional experience.
- More than 26% were still job searching after 12 months or more after moving to Canada.

Immigrants typically earn less than Canadian-born workers with the same amount of education and work experience due to discrimination.

Discrimination in employment

- A majority of respondents reported “lack of Canadian work experience” was a big hurdle.
- 39% of respondents reported disparity in compensation compared with equally qualified Canadian counterparts.
- 36% reported what they believed to be discrimination in the hiring process.

CAREER BARRIERS	PREVALENCE
Lack of Canadian work experience	71.14%
Lack of network or referrals for job opportunities	69.15%
Lack of career progression opportunities	41.29%
Salary disparity compared to equally qualified Canadian counterpart	39.30%
Underemployment	38.31%
Discrimination in the hiring process	35.82%
Devaluation of academic credentials	33.83%
Unemployment	31.84%
Language	9.95%
Other	9.95%
Child care	8.96%

OUR CALL TO ACTION

Our findings contradict the belief that the country’s policies promoting multiculturalism and inclusion in employment are working. We make three calls to action:

- ❖ Canadians must realize that the successful integration of immigrants relies not only on immigrants’ adaptation to their new home, but on Canadians’ own acceptance and open-mindedness to the contribution that immigrants can make as well.
- ❖ While the pandemic has exacerbated immigrants’ employment inequalities, it also presents an unprecedented opportunity for Canadians to redress the longstanding challenges that immigrants have faced and “build back better”.
- ❖ Canadians must urge governments and relevant organizations to take meaningful actions to bring the reality of immigrants’ experience closer to the international reputation that Canada projects.

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