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Diversity Dividend

Canada's Global Advantage

Special Report

Bessma Momani and Jillian Stirk



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This report would not have been possible without crucial research, analysis, planning and logistical support carried out by Anna Klimbovskaia and Kira Williams.

Anna Klimbovskaia is the project manager and lead researcher for the Pluralism Project. She was responsible for project delivery as well as research collection and analysis, leading up to the *Diversity Dividend: Canada's Global Advantage* report.

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Executive Summary

As a growing number of countries turn inward and shut their doors to immigration and free trade, Canada stands poised to reap the benefits of its successful immigration policies and its diversity. A country whose citizens trace their origins to more than 200 nationalities should be the model for global connectivity. This diversity dividend ought to be Canada's global advantage and this report shows how to realize this potential and why it is imperative to do so.

Drawing on new statistical research, consultations with the business community and stakeholders, and academic literature, this report explores the link between a diverse workforce and economic prosperity. An in-depth statistical analysis of the Workplace Employee Survey (WES), a newly released Statistics Canada data set covering more than 7,900 workplaces in 14 industrial sectors with between 15,000 and 20,000 employees from 1999 to 2005, revealed in almost all sectors a significant, positive relationship between ethnocultural diversity and increased productivity and revenue. The WES data is unique, in that it provides and links information from both employees and employers, making it possible to isolate ways in which changes in workforce composition correspond to changes in business performance.

Viewed across all sectors, a one percent increase in ethnocultural diversity was associated with an average 2.4 percent increase in revenue and a 0.5 percent increase in workplace productivity. The relationship between ethnocultural diversity and performance was strongest in sectors that depend on creativity and innovation (such as information and cultural industries), communications and utilities, business services (such as information technology) and legal and other professional services (such as auditing and consulting).¹ The findings showed above average gains in transportation, warehousing and wholesale as well as secondary manufacturing. In many cases, these are the sectors that have undergone the greatest change and growth over the past 10 years. In other words, if Canada wants to

succeed in the high value-added sectors of the future, workplace diversity can be an important contributor to Canada's competitiveness.

To complement the statistical research, the authors hosted round tables in seven cities with more than 100 leading employers, and met with industry associations to gain their perspectives on workplace diversity. Executives confirmed what the quantitative data shows: workplace diversity is good for business. In these meetings, they said the benefits of diversity include access to a wider talent pool, the innovation and creativity that comes with different points of view, the ability to develop and tailor services for a more diverse group of customers at home and the improved understanding of market opportunities abroad.

Yet, almost all firms acknowledged challenges in reaching their goal of a more diverse and inclusive workforce. They talked about barriers to inclusion and what kind of policies and practices are needed so that diversity can be harnessed to drive innovation, productivity and global connectivity. Barriers included the recognition of credentials or of international experience, lack of access to language training for professional proficiency, reliance on traditional networks, unconscious biases in hiring and traditional corporate cultures. A smaller number of firms expressed concerns about "managing diversity" and what they saw as the potential for increased costs. Some recognized the value of diverse experience, but admitted they were not structured to attract and retain diverse talent. There was also a strong sense that both governments and industry are focused more on numbers and not enough on inclusion. As one executive stated, "For the last 20 years, we have been doing the same kinds of things: muscling through to get numbers for diversity, but we haven't changed the infrastructure or environment that we are operating in." The challenge is to change the way we think and the way we work, if we want to truly see the benefits of diversity.

In approximately 20 years, immigration will account for all net growth in Canada's population and workforce (Statistics Canada 2017). With an aging population and increased pressure on health care, pensions and other social services, a dynamic and productive skilled workforce will be an essential element in maintaining Canada's standard of living and remaining internationally competitive. Underemployed high-skilled immigrants are, in effect, a stranded resource, something the country

¹ For a detailed breakdown of businesses included in each industry, refer to the North American Industry Classification System codes breakdown on Statistics Canada. See www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3VD.pl?Function=getVD&TVD=118464.

Summary of Recommendations



Unlock talent: promote inclusive hiring

To attract and retain a talented workforce, employers need to adopt more inclusive hiring practices, such as blind recruitment, training to uncover unconscious bias, using diverse recruitment teams and eliminating Canadian experience requirements. Scaling up projects that link immigrants with professional associations and networks will improve access and opportunity.

Passport to employment: recognizing foreign education, credentials and experience

The underemployment of new immigrants presents a significant opportunity cost to the economy. Governments, regulatory bodies, business and educational institutions must tackle the barriers to recognizing foreign credentials and develop clear pathways to certification.



More than just words: invest in language training

Lack of fluency in English or French is one of the most often cited reasons for not hiring immigrants. It is time to reinvest in workplace-directed language training and to consider allocating more points in the immigration selection process for demonstrated professional fluency.

Measuring diversity and inclusion: what gets measured gets done

Indicators and benchmarks help employers understand their workforce, measure results and demonstrate to clients and staff their commitment to diversity and inclusion. Industry-led voluntary principles would improve performance and accountability to shareholders and consumers.



Procurement policies: leadership to drive innovation

Governments and business should include diversity and inclusion as one factor to be assessed in procurement processes. A combination of government legislation and industry-led certification mechanisms would provide a powerful incentive for diverse hiring and boost innovation.

Corporate culture: moving beyond numbers

Inclusive organizations have leaders who put a high value on fairness, merit and equitable treatment. They prioritize inclusion over diversity, values over numbers and they address myths. Leaders need to integrate diversity and inclusion into an organization's identity and core operations.



Understanding the story: the data deficit

Reliable data is key to understanding demographics and addressing barriers. The federal government should reinstate and expand the WES to capture fundamental changes in the Canadian economy. Job banks that match skills, employers and potential employees would create opportunities for all Canadians.

Connecting to the world: Canada's global advantage

Canada should be advocating the benefits of diversity and the circulation of talent. Business needs to recognize and reward international experience to drive innovation and build bridges beyond North America. Canada should use Group of Seven and Group of Twenty summits to champion diversity and showcase the diversity dividend.



Missed Opportunities: Barriers and Recommendations

If Canada is to benefit fully from diversity, it is critical to recognize and address the barriers to inclusion that remain both in the workplace and in society. If immigrants are marginalized, either economically or socially, not only will they fail to reach their economic potential, but they may fail to thrive, producing implications for broader social cohesion. It is in everyone's interest to ensure that when immigrants arrive they have, or can acquire, the tools they need to succeed.

Too often immigrants find themselves underemployed or shut out of occupations commensurate with their skills and experience. A separate project using the same Statistics Canada data set at the University of Victoria, has found that after controlling for both individual-level and firm-level factors that influence salaries, individuals with an immigrant background were penalized around \$7,000 in annual salary, compared to equivalent individuals without immigrant backgrounds (Fitzsimmons, Baggs and Brannen, forthcoming 2017). Even within diverse organizations, there is a serious disconnect between representation at the working level and in management.

Meaningful employment is a powerful driver of inclusion, not least because it promotes interaction among people from different communities and minimizes differences in pursuit of common goals. At the business round tables, almost all firms acknowledged they faced challenges in reaching their goal of a more diverse and inclusive workforce. They talked about barriers to inclusion and what kind of policies and practices are needed so that diversity can be harnessed to drive innovation, productivity and global connectivity. Barriers include conscious and unconscious bias in hiring, non-recognition of foreign credentials or international experience, limited access to language training for professional proficiency, lack of role models and mentoring, and corporate cultures that do not always support inclusion.

It is, however, not enough to simply reap the dividends that come from attracting highly skilled immigrants. Although this study focuses on the

economic results, that is only one element of the diversity dividend. What really matters is inclusion — and inclusion requires leadership. It requires breaking down barriers, addressing myths and fears, and countering racist and discriminatory practices. With global populism on the rise, Canadians need to make a choice about what kind of society they want. Diversity is as much about values as it is about economics.

This report offers a series of recommendations for government, business and organizations engaged in supporting diversity and inclusion. While some of them are not new, there is new urgency to unlocking potential and building an inclusive nation where everyone benefits. This study shows that Canada's diversity and global connections represent a significant global advantage, but one that not all Canadians have fully recognized or leveraged. To realize this potential will require policies that promote a more inclusive society and encourage Canadians to pursue what should be a global vocation. With the world becoming increasingly isolationist, this is the moment for Canada to seize and champion the diversity dividend.

Policy Recommendations



Unlock Talent through Inclusive Hiring

Employers have said they are struggling to attract and retain talent. They want a more diverse workforce, but too often rely on traditional hiring practices. When companies hire in their own image or consistently use the same approach, they continue to get the same results and may be missing opportunities to create a more diverse and innovative workforce. Smaller and medium-size companies with limited human resources capacity are likely to rely on word of mouth, which means hiring people in the same mold. Larger companies have more options, but still overlook qualified candidates due to implicit biases and a preference for Canadian education and work experience, even if it is not actually necessary or relevant for the job.

A 2011 study conducted in Toronto found that resumes with English-sounding names were 39 percent more likely to prompt callbacks than identical resumes with Chinese, Pakistani or Indian-sounding names (Oreopoulos 2011). While in some cases blind screening of resumes can eliminate discrimination based on foreign-sounding names, this is only a first step. Across the country, from the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia to the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council to the Immigrant Employment Council of BC, the role immigrant partnership or connector programs play in breaking down the barriers was consistently mentioned. These programs are key in helping immigrants and minorities access networks, find mentors and, most importantly, get practical experience or upgrade skills needed to access full-time employment. Student internships and co-op programs are also effective, low-risk ways to broaden the talent pool.

Business strategies for more inclusive hiring:

- Train managers and human resources staff to uncover and address unconscious bias.
- Implement blind screening of resumes, especially in larger organizations.
- Use diverse recruitment teams to recruit and better assess diverse candidates and their qualifications.
- Streamline and eliminate Canadian experience requirements.

Actions for governments and settlement agencies:

- Scale up projects that link immigrants and other minorities with professional associations and networks.



Passport to Employment: Recognizing Foreign Education, Credentials and Experience

Barriers to recognizing foreign credentials and experience

result in the underemployment of new immigrants and Canadians with international experience. In many cases, employers are unwilling or unable to assess foreign qualifications. In more regulated professions, overly bureaucratic mechanisms to

evaluate and upgrade credentials contribute to underemployment and the persistent shortage of skilled labour, which in turn presents a significant opportunity cost to the economy. In 2009, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration estimated the cost of not recognizing the foreign credentials of immigrants between \$2.4–\$5.9 billion annually (House of Commons 2009, cited in Melchers and Schwartz 2011). Underemployed immigrants are, in effect, a stranded resource. This problem is well-known and compounded by a lack of coordination between government, industry and professional associations. The 2017 federal budget provides new impetus and funding to address the issue.¹¹

Actions for governments:

- Establish clear roles and responsibilities for federal and provincial authorities and regulatory bodies, and mechanisms to address areas of shared jurisdiction.
- Eliminate, wherever possible, inter-provincial barriers and establish national standards.
- Provide support to colleges and universities for programs to upgrade foreign credentials.
- Expand bilateral reciprocal agreements to countries with comparable standards, for example, the Quebec-France Mutual Recognition Agreement covering more than 50 trades and professions.
- Include labour mobility clauses in new free trade agreements and update existing agreements to include new industries.

Actions for industry and regulatory bodies:

- Establish clear and timely pathways to certification with professional and trade associations.
- Create internships that lead to certification.

¹¹ See www.budget.gc.ca/2017/home-accueil-en.html.



More Than Just Words – Invest in Language Training

Lack of fluency in English or French is one of the most often cited factors for not hiring immigrants. A regional survey conducted in Vancouver in 2014 found that the two biggest obstacles preventing employers from recruiting and hiring recent immigrants were anxieties over language and soft skills (North Shore Immigrant Inclusion Partnership 2015). Even those firms that are actively seeking diverse employees, for example in the tech sector, indicated a lack of English-language proficiency was the biggest barrier to hiring new immigrants. Yet, most immigrants to Canada are accepted, in part, because of their language skills. In some cases, a lack of fluency is just a (mis)perception or an assumption or even a pretext. Anyone who has ever struggled with another language, however, knows the kind of sophisticated communication skills required for true professional proficiency comes with intensive training and practice. Cuts to language training programs have left some immigrants ill-prepared for the workforce and contribute to underemployment and missed opportunities. Lack of linguistic proficiency can also result in misunderstandings and can often be a factor in limiting opportunities for promotion, if either the employee lacks confidence or is unable to express themselves and to communicate as well as others. In fact, even at high levels of language fluency, Canadian employees who speak a language other than English or French at home receive significantly lower salaries, and are less likely to be promoted than otherwise identical employees who speak English or French as a mother tongue (Fitzsimmons, Baggs and Brannen, forthcoming 2017). But language training is not just for immigrants. An emphasis on learning multiple languages for all Canadians would unlock opportunities for work, study and travel in an increasingly interconnected world.

Actions for governments:

- Reinvest in higher-level language training programs for new immigrants.
- Raise the bar for language requirements and allocate more points for demonstrated professional or workplace fluency.

Actions for industry:

- Work with the education sector to develop and implement workplace-relevant language training that can be delivered on-site.



Measuring Diversity and Inclusion

Indicators and benchmarks are ways to measure results without setting quotas. It is essential for employers to understand the composition of their workforce in terms of employee characteristics such as gender and ethnicity and to demonstrate to clients and staff a commitment to diversity and inclusion. Indicators are also a way to share best practices across industries. Too often firms will say people are their greatest asset, but they have no data on their demographics, including on hiring, promotion or where people sit in the organization. As one manager put it, “what gets measured, gets done, and when it is the CEO who is asking, people pay attention.” But the numbers are not an end in themselves. The goal is to generate conversations that lead to inclusive approaches to attract, retain and ensure that all employees are productive members of the organization.

Actions for industry:

- Gather data on workforce composition, rates of promotion, career paths and retention.
- Review criteria for promotion, how partners are selected, how a firm defines potential and identify barriers.
- Establish and publicize industry-specific voluntary principles on diversity and inclusion so that shareholders and consumers can hold firms accountable.

“What gets measured, gets done, and when it is the CEO who is asking, people pay attention.”



Diversify Procurement to Drive Innovation

There is a growing movement toward making diversity and inclusion a business requirement

to be assessed in procurement processes. Benefits include increased competition among suppliers, access to innovation, links to new markets and community engagement. It also provides a powerful incentive for diverse hiring. Already common in the United States, there is growing pressure on firms to demonstrate workplace diversity in submissions for request for proposals (RFPs), which in turn contributes to the link between diversity and revenue. The challenge is to draft the RFPs in a way that matters, so the diversity requirement has impact and is not just based on numbers.

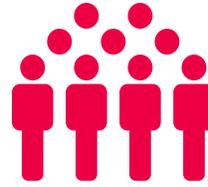
The impact of diversity on procurement can be seen in supply chains that depend on small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). There are 157,000 SMEs in the supply chains of large Canadian companies and many of these SMEs are owned and operated by immigrants. Canadian immigrants are more likely to own businesses, both small and incorporated firms, than those born in Canada. Approximately 24 percent of SMEs in Canada with at least one employee are owned or run by immigrants.¹² Immigrant-owned businesses are more likely to export than businesses that are Canadian-born owned (14 percent versus 11 percent), and nearly half of them introduced at least one type of innovation between 2012 and 2014 (Momani 2016). Large companies benefit from the innovation found in small companies, which is another way in which diversity benefits the Canadian economy.

Actions for government:

- Introduce legislation that requires government procurement to consider employment equity principles as a factor in assessing competing bids.

Actions for industry:

- Work with organizations such as the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion and the Canadian Aboriginal and Minority Supplier Council to develop a system of third-party certification, whereby firms can demonstrate how their policies and practices contribute to an inclusive workplace.



Change Corporate Culture: Moving beyond Numbers

Too often, employers have focused on numbers, on

improving the representation of women or ethnic minorities, Indigenous people or the disabled, hoping either that changing the composition of the workforce was enough or that over time a more diverse workforce would lead to a more inclusive organization. Many businesses stated that the challenge was not attracting, but rather retaining, a diverse workforce. In many industries, diversity at the working level or in customer service areas is not replicated in management. The challenge is to identify the barriers and to build organizations where employees feel valued, where people can express diverse views and where differences can drive creativity.

An inclusive corporate philosophy involves integrating diversity and inclusion frameworks into a firm's core processes and operations, instead of retrofitting diversity initiatives into existing structures. Fundamental business processes need to be re-evaluated to see if they favour a particular type or set of characteristics. Often managers who put structures or processes in place are not even aware of the limitations these structures put on others.

Building an inclusive workplace or an inclusive society starts at the top. The way in which leaders communicate their vision and measure results sets the tone and the expectations for the organization. Typically, the top performing companies on diversity have CEOs who are committed and engaged, and put a high value on fairness, merit and equitable treatment across the organization.

“You need champions at the top who don’t just talk about diversity, but demonstrate and recognize the value of inclusion through daily work. On ne gère pas la diversité, on la vit [You don’t manage diversity, you live it].”

¹² See www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=2941.

They prioritize inclusion over diversity, values over numbers and they address myths. As Dimitri Girier, senior advisor on diversity and inclusion at Banque Nationale, noted, “You need champions at the top who don’t just talk about diversity, but demonstrate and recognize the value of inclusion through daily work. On ne gère pas la diversité, on la vit [You don’t manage diversity, you live it].”

It is also critical to focus on middle management where decisions are made. If diversity is only found on the shop floor or at the front desk, changes in corporate culture and retention will be difficult. This is a serious problem for Canadian companies. One executive in the utilities industry said, “You need to know your nemesis and address the fears.” While it can be difficult for smaller firms to implement the same kind of progressive policies and practices we see in larger firms due to limits on resources, it is equally true that it is easier for smaller firms to subscribe to and implement a set of corporate values.

Actions for industry:

- Integrate diversity and inclusion objectives into core processes, operations and decision making.
- Make commitments to inclusion a leadership competency and ensure middle management reflects and implements corporate goals.
- Implement practices based on fairness, merit and equitable treatment.
- Address fears and tensions in a transparent manner.



Understanding the Story: The Data Deficit

Reliable data are key to understanding demographics and addressing barriers. The WES data set provides an important window on what was happening

in the Canadian labour force between 1999 and 2006. Unfortunately, the government stopped collecting the data in 2006. As a result, there is no information on the demographic changes in the workplace over the last 10 years, nor is there any data on industries in the new economy, the same industries that show the strongest correlation between diversity and economic returns. There are also important gaps in the WES itself. It does not

“You need to know your nemesis and address the fears.”

capture all second-generation immigrants, nor does it capture disabled persons or those who identify as LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning and other sexualities).

It is equally important to understand what opportunities exist in today’s labour market. It is very difficult to match skills with needs if no one has a full understanding of what the needs are. In many cases, immigrants bring a wide range of skills, but have difficulty finding work that matches their qualifications. Settlement experts highlighted the need for national job banks to understand supply and demand, and to help all Canadians access opportunities.

Actions for government:

- Reinstate and expand the WES to capture all second-generation Canadians, ethnic origin, visible minorities, disabilities and LGBTQ+.
- Add questions that assess inclusion indicators and employer and employee perceptions of inclusion.
- Work with industry to create and scale-up skills-based job banks that show labour market trends and link employers with potential employees.



Connect to the World: Canada’s Global Advantage

It has been argued that Canada’s diversity is not just an economic advantage, but its springboard to the world. Canadians, who trace their origins to more than 200 nationalities, should be the model for what global connectivity can look like. Employers say they value international experience and want access to new markets, but they do not always walk the talk. International education remains undervalued and young Canadians are not taking up the opportunities to acquire the cultural fluency employers say they need.

Actions for industry:

- Recognize and reward international experience to drive innovation and build bridges that will take business beyond North America.
- Make international experience a factor to be assessed in hiring and promotion.
- Working with the education sector, design and promote recognized international study-work opportunities, and leverage youth mobility programs to create international internships for young Canadians.

Actions for government:

- Work with bilateral partners to create an academic mobility program modelled on the EU Erasmus program that will give Canadians international experience and increase the number of foreign students coming to Canada.
- Continue to increase immigration in order to maintain and grow the economy.
- Use the Canada-hosted Group of Seven or Group of Twenty summits to champion initiatives such as international third-party certification of indicators and benchmarks, and to showcase the diversity dividend.

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