

Study: Immigrant women among board directors and officers: From admission in Canada to executive roles

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Despite decades of gains in the workplace, women continue to be underrepresented in leadership and decision-making positions.

A new Statistics Canada study released today, titled "[Immigrant women among board directors and officers: From admission in Canada to executive roles](#)," provides the first socioeconomic profile of immigrant women at admission who have reached management positions in their careers once employed in Canada. From an intersectional lens, exploratory estimates on disparities by gender and immigrant status for family, work and income characteristics are presented. The types of businesses where immigrant women executives contribute to corporate governance and strategic decision making were also examined.

Additional information related to gender and corporations can be found in the [Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Statistics](#) hub, the [Business Performance and Ownership Statistics](#) portal, and the [Representation of women on boards of directors and in officer positions: Visualization tool](#).

Fewer immigrant women in top decision-making roles

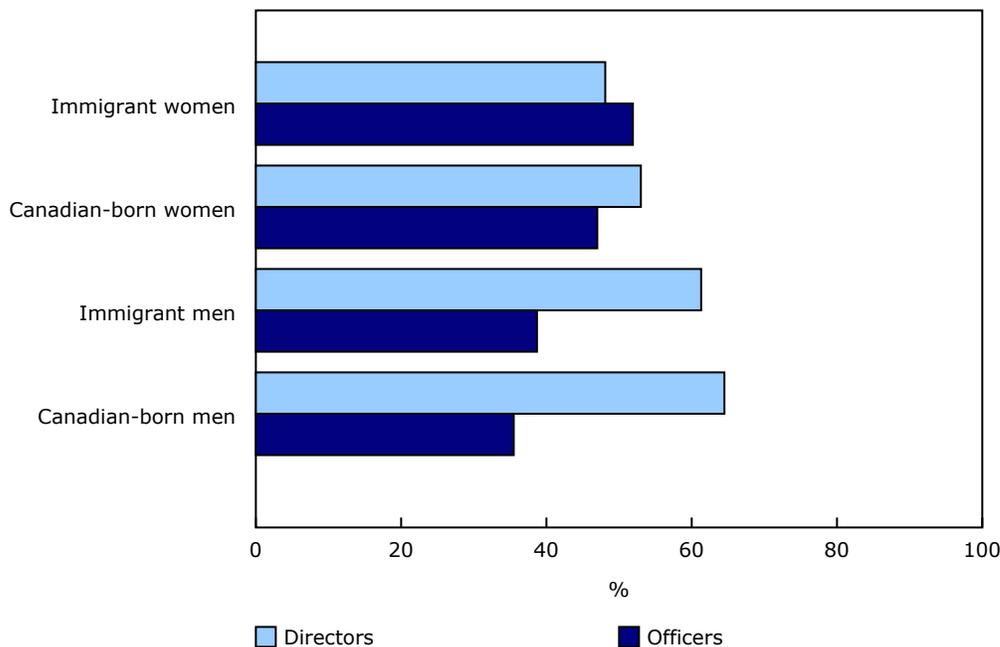
Women who reach an executive role in their careers tend to hold lower-level positions than men, or ones with less decision-making authority—patterns that are reflected among immigrant women executives.

Executives contribute either as a board director or as an officer. Among all executives, immigrant women were the least likely to contribute on a board of directors, with 48% of immigrant women working as board directors and 52% as officers. In contrast, Canadian-born men (65%), immigrant men (61%) and Canadian-born women (53%) were all more likely to work as board directors.

As officers, immigrant women were less likely to occupy higher top-level roles. For example, immigrant women officers (10%) were more than two times less likely to work as president of a corporation than immigrant men officers (22%), while immigrant women officers were more than two times more likely than immigrant men officers to hold a secretary position (11% for immigrant women officers, compared with 4% for immigrant men officers).



Chart 1
Share of executives by decision-making role, immigrant status and gender, 2016 to 2018



Source(s): Longitudinal Immigration Database, 2019 (5057); and *Corporations Returns Act*, 2016 to 2018 (2503).

Immigrant women executives are more likely to be admitted in Canada as a dependant or spouse under the economic category than immigrant men executives

Canadian immigrants can be admitted under three broad admission categories: economic immigrants, family immigrants and refugees. The majority of immigrant executives were admitted under the economic immigrant category, accounting for two in three immigrant women executives (66%) and more than four in five immigrant men executives (82%).

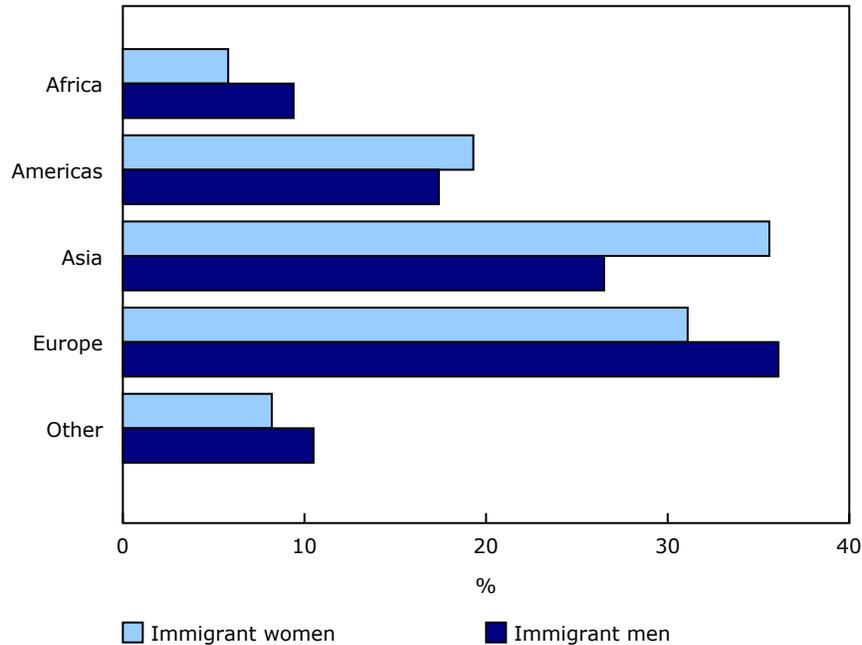
More specifically, economic immigrants can be admitted as a principal applicant or as a spouse or dependant. To be admitted as principal applicant, the individual must meet certain selection criteria, while a spouse or dependant is not assessed under selection criteria—they are automatically admitted with the principal applicant. Among directors and officers, immigrant women executives were more than two times (32%) less likely than immigrant men executives (66%) to arrive in Canada as principal applicants, while being more likely to be admitted as a spouse or dependant economic applicant (34% of immigrant women executives, compared with 16% of immigrant men executives).

Immigrant women executives are about four times more likely to be born in the United States or the United Kingdom than the broad population of immigrant women

Differences were noticed between immigrant women executives and the broad population of immigrant women when examining the top five countries of birth. For example, immigrant women executives were about four times more likely to be born in the United States or the United Kingdom than the total population of immigrant women. Specifically, the United States (12%) ranked first as birth country among immigrant women executives, followed by the United Kingdom (11%), China (8%), Hong Kong (6%) and France (5%). By contrast, the top five countries of birth among the overall population of immigrant women were China (11.1%), the Philippines (10.6%), India (10.0%), the United States (2.7%) and the United Kingdom (2.6%).

Nevertheless, Asia was the most prevalent region of birth among immigrant women executives, given that more than one-third of them were born in that region. Among the broad immigrant population of women, Asia was also the most frequently reported region of birth.

Chart 2
Continent of birth of immigrant executives, by gender, 2016 to 2018



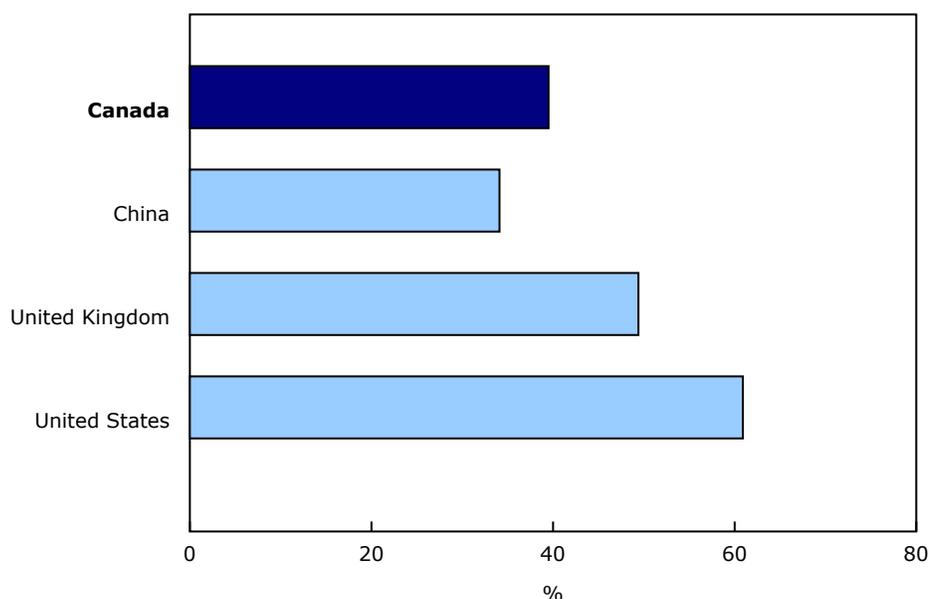
Source(s): Longitudinal Immigration Database, 2019 (5057); and Corporations Returns Act, 2016 to 2018 (2503).

Immigrant women executives are more likely to work for large financial corporations, located in Ontario and controlled by American enterprises

Almost two-thirds (63%) of immigrant women were contributing as executives among enterprises located in Ontario, while almost half of Canadian-born women executives (48%) worked in that province. Moreover, immigrant women executives were two times more likely than Canadian-born women executives to work for corporations controlled by American entities—and more likely to work for large corporations (47% of immigrant women executives, compared with 40% of Canadian-born women executives).

Further differences between immigrant women executives and Canadian-born women executives were found by region or country of birth. For instance, Chinese women executives (34%) were the least likely to work in large firms, whereas women executives born in the United States were the most likely to do so (61%). For Canadian-born women executives, 40% of them worked in large companies.

Chart 3
Share of women executives in large firms, by selected country of birth, 2016 to 2018



Source(s): Longitudinal Immigration Database, 2019 (5057); and *Corporations Returns Act*, 2016 to 2018 (2503).

Immigrant women executives register a larger gender pay gap than Canadian-born women executives

Examining the earnings of executives revealed a gender pay gap of 29% (or \$97,200) among immigrants and of 25% (or \$87,400) among Canadian-born individuals.

In contrast, immigrant women executives earned a similar median employment income to Canadian-born women executives. Differences in the earnings of executives among immigrant women and Canadian-born women were found when analyzing employment income by region or country of birth. For example, immigrant women executives born in the United States earned a median employment income 15% higher than Canadian-born women executives. In contrast, Canadian-born women executives earned a median employment income 34% higher than Chinese women executives.

Note to readers

Estimates presented in "Immigrant women among board directors and officers: From admission in Canada to executive roles" were created by identifying board directors and officers in 2016, 2017 and 2018 through the *Corporations Returns Act*, who were linked to the *Derived Record Depository* and then the *T1 Family File (2016 to 2018)* and the *Longitudinal Immigration Database (2019)*.

Definition

Secretary: The extent of the role of a secretary varies from one corporation to another. Overall, a secretary is responsible for taking minutes of all meetings of directors and shareholders. A secretary is also responsible for gathering and organizing all documentation presented to directors.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers [2503](#), [4105](#) and [5057](#).

The study "[Immigrant women among board directors and officers: From admission in Canada to executive roles](#)," part of *Analysis in Brief* ([11-621-M](#)), is now available.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).