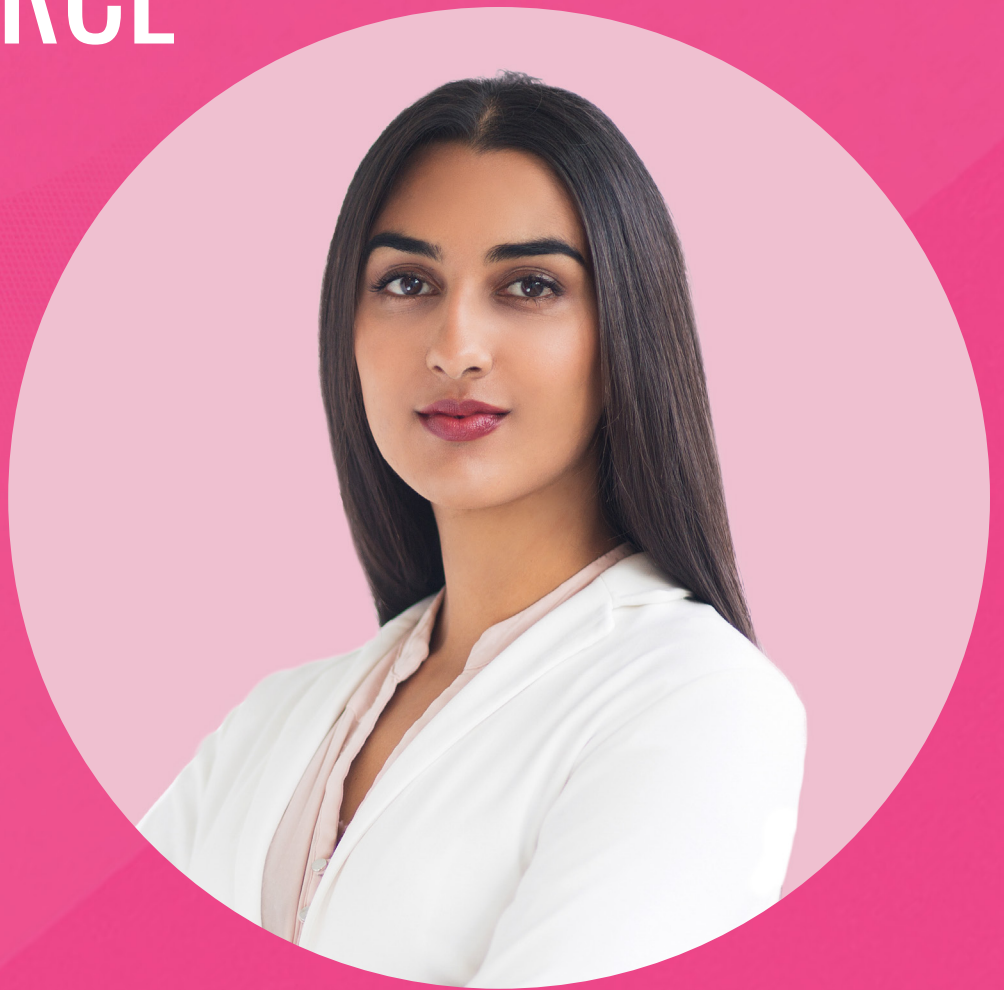


# Overlooked: CANADA'S FASTEST-EMERGING, HIGHEST-EDUCATED WORKFORCE



*Pink*  
ATTITUDE

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[www.PinkAttitude.ca](http://www.PinkAttitude.ca)

*In Partnership with*

**CulturaliQ**

# CONTENTS

## LIST AND DIVISIONS

|                                                                                  |    |                                                                                                                      |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| <b>Acknowledgements</b>                                                          | 3  | <b>E. Professional Development: Highly Valued But Lacking The Time</b>                                               | 53 |
| <b>Foreword</b>                                                                  | 4  | <b>F. South Asian Women Are Time-starved: The Unreasonable Pressure To Choose Between Career And Family</b>          | 56 |
| SEPHORA<br>TD                                                                    |    | <b>G. South Asian Women Overwhelmingly Value Diversity, Equity And Inclusion (DEI) Initiatives</b>                   | 58 |
| <b>Note From Pink Attitude: Ruby Dhillon CEO, Founder</b>                        | 5  | <b>H. Successful South Asian Women Are Not Immune To Systemic Barriers And Negative Perceptions In The Workplace</b> | 61 |
| <b>Executive Summary</b>                                                         | 6  |                                                                                                                      |    |
| <b>Setting The Stage</b>                                                         | 13 | <b>Untapping Potential: How Leaders Can Support South Asian Women In Their Careers</b>                               | 63 |
| A. Canada's Impending Employment Crisis                                          | 13 | A. Offer Effective DEI Initiatives                                                                                   | 64 |
| B. Prosperity Relies On Immigration                                              | 16 | B. Provide Targeted Mentorship And Sponsorship Opportunities                                                         | 66 |
| C. Covid-19 Highlights Systemic Issues In Canada's Labour Force                  | 23 | C. Offer Professional Development                                                                                    | 68 |
| <b>Primary Research Methodology</b>                                              | 25 | D. Provide Flexible Working Arrangements                                                                             | 69 |
| <b>Findings: South Asian Women Are Overlooked And Underemployed</b>              | 28 | E. Recognize International Credentials                                                                               | 70 |
| A. The Job Search: Barriers From The Beginning                                   | 29 | F. Improve Networking Opportunities                                                                                  | 71 |
| B. Employment: South Asian Women Face Bias, Unfair Treatment And Systemic Issues | 32 | <b>Conclusion</b>                                                                                                    | 72 |
| C. Hitting The Wall Mid-Career                                                   | 44 | <b>Credits</b>                                                                                                       | 73 |
| D. South Asian Women Are Resilient And Open To Better Opportunities              | 50 |                                                                                                                      |    |

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This National Study will support our work to address systemic issues for South Asian women and further the path to gender equality. The following is a list of sponsors supporting this study and the partners we have worked with.

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# FOREWORD

## SEPHORA

Over the last couple years, Sephora Canada has taken great strides in becoming a recognized leader in the social inclusion space. Through our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, we are committed to meaningful actions that support diverse hiring and advancement, both in our stores and our offices.

As the exclusive Retail partner of this first-of-its-kind study, Sephora Canada is proud to invest in understanding the potential of the growing South Asian women's workforce in Canada. As a leader in global prestige retailing, we have a great sense of responsibility to leverage and share the insights from this study and further understand the barriers that exist amongst South Asian women working in both the beauty and retail spaces.

Leveraging the employment potential of South Asian women will not only enable Sephora Canada to take an even stronger position in our diverse hiring and advancement efforts, but it will also help to elevate South Asian women and increase representation in the Canadian market.

Sephora Canada remains committed to listening to, investing in and amplifying diverse voices, because we believe in a world where everyone feels like they belong.

**We Belong to Something Beautiful.  
We Are Sephora.**



At TD, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of everything we do. They are core values embedded into every aspect of our business from our workplace practices to our customer relationships and community involvement. This commitment has been a formal strategy for nearly two decades and is aligned with our corporate vision to Be the Better Bank.

With 90,000+ colleagues and millions of customers worldwide, we understand the importance of feeling included and being your whole self, no matter where you are. Inside the bank, we set measurable targets for underrepresented groups - including women - and are making progress against them. We have targeted programs to enable, grow and accelerate talent development, including multiple Women in Leadership cohorts and Sponsorship in Action, a program that focuses on Visible Minority talent. The pandemic has exacerbated challenges facing South Asian women, and through programs, training and hiring practices, we're focused on ensuring we don't lose progress.

We're proud to support the unique research Pink Attitude champions to help empower South Asian Women in achieving their full potential. Working to understand the barriers that women from the South Asian community face helps us to focus our programs and policies on supporting the South Asian women labour force. At TD, we are committed to help build inclusive futures, where everyone has the opportunity to succeed in a changing world.







## NOTE FROM RUBY DHILLON CEO, FOUNDER

The South Asian community is the single largest visible minority group in Canada, comprising 25% of the visible minority population. Yet there has been little research or analysis completed on the experiences of South Asian women in the Canadian workforce, where so many face barriers and challenges on a daily basis.

Before we can begin addressing the issues South Asian women face as they navigate Canada's workforce, we must first collect pertinent data so that we can both understand the challenges they face and benchmark our efforts.

Pink Attitude was founded to empower South Asian women to reach their full potential. Recognizing the critical need for data regarding career-focused South Asian women in Canada, Pink Attitude partnered with CulturalIQ to

undertake a nation-wide survey that would provide empirical data that can be acted upon.

The reality is that South Asian women are highly educated, highly motivated and highly capable. They are here and want to work, but are being overlooked by Canadian employers at all stages of their employment, from searching for and obtaining work, to having their career progression stall. This situation must be rectified.

The goal of this report is to serve as a starting point. While having data is an important first step, action must ultimately be taken on this information. Leaders in both the government and within Canadian organizations must take meaningful subsequent steps to address the systemic issues South Asian women face. It is vital not only for these highly skilled workers in Canada, but for the workforce as a whole.



### PINK ATTITUDE TEAM

Names from Top Left: Jeet Dhillon, Shivani Patel, Ruby Dhillon, Priyanka Thaman, Sanjiv Jagota, Jas Somal, John Stevenson, Amit Puranik, Rahim Saleh, Steve Saberwal, Pam Bhatti

Bottom from Left: Nikita Patel, Ruby Bassi, Rashmi Vohra, Karen Grewal-Singh, Ashley Bassi, Lisha Gandhi



### PINK ATTITUDE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Names from Top Left: Ruby Dhillon, Rahim Saleh, Jasdeep Johal

Bottom Left: Sanjiv Jagota, Ruby Bassi, Jeet Dhillon, Shivani Thakur

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Clare Barnett  
Director  
Economic Development  
City of Brampton

“ We are a city of opportunities and as we invest in the economic recovery of our local businesses and economy, we have an opportunity to invest in the lives of our residents. Brampton is known for the highly skilled and educated workforce we have; tapping into the group of unemployed and underemployed South Asian women in Brampton is an opportunity to further unlock the potential of our residents, community and businesses. ”

This report presents findings from a national survey of participants from across Canada, who were asked about their experiences in looking for and obtaining work, as well as how they are treated within the workplace. It builds off previous research, as noted throughout the study, from Statistics Canada, Deloitte, Accenture and McKinsey, which has repeatedly found that while diversity and inclusion are vital to an organization's overall success, companies are still not harnessing the skills and resources available to them from all populations.

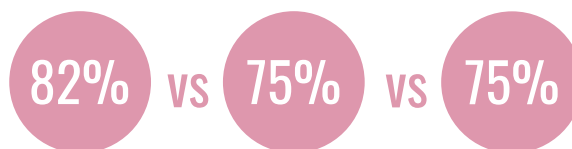
Research has repeatedly shown that diverse workplaces foster increased employee engagement and retention, as well as garner a more positive profile in the community. They also benefit from increased respect in the marketplace, as more consumers focus on buying from companies that show solid and sustainable corporate social responsibility policies and practices.

This survey collected and analyzed responses from **2,200 participants** identified through CulturalIQ's Online Mainstream and Ethnic Panels, including women and men from Canada's largest ethnic communities (South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino), and included White Canadians.

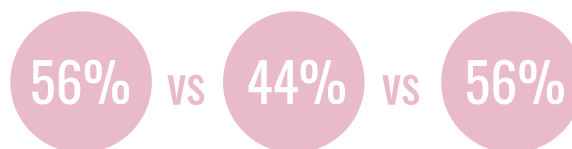
## When taken in context with previous research, our findings further strengthen the link between **race, gender and workplace success**:

South Asian women, despite being among the most highly educated segment of the population, disproportionately report feeling underutilized at work, resulting in more than **50% intending to quit their current role** – significantly higher rates than other populations. South Asian women are also vastly underrepresented in senior roles, such as at the executive and board levels within corporations, due to barriers in career progression.

These barriers begin with the job search, with South Asian women reporting higher rates of dissatisfaction in this category than all women and all men (82% compared with 75% and 75%, respectively). In addition, more South Asian women are stating that the job search took them more than a year (56% compared with 44% for all women and 56% for all men).



**South Asian women** reporting higher rates of dissatisfaction when searching for a job than **all women and men**



**More South Asian women** than **all women and men** stating that the job search took them more than a year

Compared with all women, South Asian women were more likely to report that their skillset is underutilized, that they feel **out of place culturally at work**, that they feel **they are treated less fairly than peers in the workplace**, and that they often feel belittled by their peers or managers.



This sentiment is consistently experienced, even for South Asian women identified as successful based on their responses to specific questions. In fact, more than **50% of successful South Asian respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements**:

| Top 2 box on a 5-point agreement scale                                         | Self Identify as Successful |             |                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|--------------------------------|
|                                                                                | South Asian Women           | White Women | Chinese, Black, Filipino Women |
| Culturally speaking, I feel sometimes out of place doing my job or at meetings | 61%                         | 40%         | 47%                            |
| Often times, I feel belittled by peers or managers at work                     | 60%                         | 38%         | 51%                            |
| I feel that the work that no one wants to do is dumped on me to do             | 60%                         | 39%         | 49%                            |
| I am expected to work longer hours compared to my peers                        | 59%                         | 43%         | 51%                            |
| I feel I am unfairly passed over for promotions that I feel I deserve          | 57%                         | 27%         | 43%                            |
| I am planning on leaving my current job within the next two years              | 57%                         | 26%         | 46%                            |
| My skillset is being underutilized                                             | 57%                         | 39%         | 47%                            |
| I feel that I am treated less fairly at work compared to some of my peers      | 55%                         | 32%         | 48%                            |
| I have experienced verbal harassment / discrimination at work                  | 55%                         | 31%         | 42%                            |



By mid-career, many South Asian women reported their progress has stalled, with more than half reporting having negatively shifted their perceptions of their career.

Among the statements that South Asian women agreed with:

| Top 2 box on a 5-point agreement scale                                                                  | Women       |       |         |       |          | Men         |       |         |       |          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|----------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|----------|
|                                                                                                         | South Asian | White | Chinese | Black | Filipino | South Asian | White | Chinese | Black | Filipino |
| I now have lower expectations in my career salary today than I did a few years ago                      | 64%         | 50%   | 38%     | 46%   | 43%      | 61%         | 43%   | 38%     | 68%   | 63%      |
| Career success continues to elude me                                                                    | 64%         | 45%   | 40%     | 46%   | 44%      | 62%         | 45%   | 48%     | 71%   | 74%      |
| I am thinking about switching my chosen career path                                                     | 59%         | 40%   | 33%     | 50%   | 49%      | 56%         | 36%   | 36%     | 58%   | 58%      |
| My work managers have made empty promises to me (e.g., lip service) as it relates my career progression | 58%         | 35%   | 34%     | 42%   | 44%      | 60%         | 40%   | 39%     | 66%   | 74%      |

This is in contrast to the total sample of all women, who agreed with these statements less frequently (50%, 46%, 41% and 37%, respectively). The total sample of all men similarly agreed with these statements less frequently than South Asian women (45%, 48%, 38% and 43%, respectively).

Additionally, more than half of South Asian women (57%) stated they plan on leaving their job within the next two years.

Among the highest reasons for leaving their job are unsatisfying work, poor management and unfair treatment (48%, 37% and 34%, respectively). Almost two-thirds of South Asian women said they would rather quit their jobs than wait for empty promises by their manager to come to fruition (65%), and a similar number feel they missed out on a job opportunity because they have an accent (64%).

These results are especially concerning given current trends that are negatively affecting Canada's labour pool, including job vacancies due to COVID-19 and Canada's low fertility rate. Continued failure to support and retain South Asian women in the workplace will have serious ramifications for Canadian corporations, which will find they are increasingly unable to retain a sustainable labour force.

South Asian women overwhelmingly report they value **mentorship, career development and sponsorship at work**. More than three-quarters of South Asian women agreed with the statements;

80%

“Mentorship is important for my professional development.”

80%

“Having a person at work to help elevate my career is important to me.”

70%

“Mentors who have a similar cultural background to mine are more relatable to me.”



It is imperative that such measures be taken for both economic and societal reasons. There is a business case to be made for having a diverse workforce, but beyond this, it is also the right thing to do.

**South Asian women are highly skilled, exceedingly experienced and have much to offer their employers.**

**It is not too late to take action.**

## **Our Recommendations**

How leaders can support South Asian women in advancing their careers include:

- **Provide Targeted Mentorship and Sponsorship Opportunities**  
Canadian organizations must provide targeted mentorship and sponsorship opportunities to underrepresented populations that are inclusive and accessible to South Asian women. These programs must be monitored and evaluated for their success in strengthening the career prospects of identified and participating talent.
- **Offer Professional Development**  
South Asian women overwhelmingly value the opportunity for professional development but companies must ensure their employees are aware of these programs and ensure appropriate representation and inclusion by South Asian women is delivered.
- **Provide Flexible Working Arrangements**  
The demand for a flexible work environment is now becoming a minimum requirement to recruit and retain talent, allowing professional and personal life balance.
- **Improve Networking Opportunities**  
Providing access to professional networks and allowing them time to build meaningful relationships play a vital role in advancing the career development of South Asian women.

- **Recognize International Credentials**

A significant barrier, for South Asian immigrant women during their initial job search, is the lack of recognition of their international experience and credentials by Canadian organizations.

Organizations must avoid the discriminatory actions associated with under-employing talent by discounting skills developed "outside of Canada".

- **Offer Effective DEI initiatives**

DEI initiatives need to be designed by tracking intersectoral data that captures the cultural nuances and unique challenges to help address the barriers faced by South Asian women.



**“ The Canadian economy can only benefit when all members of the workforce are fully utilized, including building an employment fabric that represents that of the population. In this way, our citizens and our communities are serviced by companies and organizations with depth and breadth of both skill/talents, but also cultural awareness and consideration. ”**

**Ingrid Macintosh**  
Vice President TD Wealth  
Head of Sales Enablement  
Marketing and Communications  
and Digital Strategy  
TD Asset Management



## SETTING THE STAGE

# A. CANADA'S IMPENDING EMPLOYMENT CRISIS



Debbie McDowell  
Director  
Communications and Social Impact  
Sephora Canada

Canada faces an impending employment crisis. With fertility rates falling, it is vital that employers find ways to attract, retain and engage diverse employees so that organizations can remain competitive; not only globally, but within their local markets. A diminished labour force, combined with an increasing social focus on diversity and other ethical practices, are highlighting huge gaps in corporate recruitment and retention efforts, particularly as they relate to diversity and inclusion.

“ We are committed to meaningful actions that support diverse hiring and advancement at Sephora Canada. Through this study, we’ve gained valuable insights to better understand the perceptions of Retail and Beauty industry jobs amongst South Asian women. With these learnings in hand, we will continue our efforts of attracting and retaining valuable South Asian talent across our organization. ”



This is not just an abstract issue; it is the all-too-real experience of many South Asian women that have not been treated fairly or equitably by employers in Canada. Despite this widespread experience and ongoing research into diversity, equity and inclusion in general populations, little has been done to understand what South Asian women know and live: they are overlooked, underemployed and underappreciated and, despite being a highly educated population that wants to work and feel valued, they are not being given adequate career opportunities.

Fundamental movements such as Black Lives Matter, #MeToo and #StopAsianHate have put a spotlight on systemic issues in society and the workplace. This research is being undertaken at a time of heightened awareness of bias and discrimination in the personal and professional spheres, as well as at a time when employers in

Canada are increasingly reflecting on their diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts.

Diversity is vital to corporate success. A 2020 McKinsey report (titled "Diversity wins") noted that companies that ranked in the top quartile for gender diversity on their executive teams were 25% more likely to have above-average profitability, compared with companies in the fourth quartile. Additionally, when it came to ethnic and cultural diversity, the companies in the top quartile performed 36% better than those in the fourth quartile. Greater representation was further linked to greater success.<sup>1</sup>

"Our latest report shows not only that the business case remains robust, but also that the relationship between diversity on executive teams and the likelihood of financial outperformance has strengthened over time," McKinsey notes.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters>

<sup>2</sup> Source: <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters>

Despite research indicating a correlation between diversity and business performance, a study by Deloitte<sup>3</sup> suggests continued patterns of discriminatory behaviour in the workplace.

## 15% VS 5%

WOMEN OF COLOUR WHO RESPONDED TO THEIR SURVEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO SAY THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED COMMENTS ABOUT THEIR COMMUNICATION STYLE THAN WHITE WOMEN

Deloitte notes that women of colour who responded to their survey are more likely to say they have experienced comments about their communication style than White women (15% vs 5%) and had their judgement questioned (14% vs 8%). Meanwhile, more than half of the women surveyed said they experienced some form of harassment or non-inclusive behaviour in 2021.

## 14% VS 8%

WOMEN OF COLOUR WHO RESPONDED TO THEIR SURVEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO SAY THEY HAD THEIR JUDGEMENT QUESTIONED THAN WHITE WOMEN

That non-inclusive behaviour includes:

- Being addressed in an unprofessional or disrespectful way
- Having judgement questioned
- Being given less opportunity for career progression
- Being given less opportunities to speak up in meetings
- Unwanted comments about appearance, gender, race or sexual orientation.

Putting added pressure on businesses to be more inclusive, consumers in Canada are becoming increasingly concerned about purchasing from companies that have a strong emphasis on corporate social responsibility, which includes a commitment to diversity and showing meaningful engagement on social issues. A 2019 report by Accenture Strategy showed that 55% of Canadians prefer buying goods and services from companies that have a shared purpose reflecting their beliefs and values.<sup>4</sup>

Employers in Canada have a solid foundation to draw from, as Canada encompasses a highly diverse and educated population.

Businesses must utilize this diverse population to ensure sustained growth and economic success, and to remain competitive globally in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Many corporations, however, are not fully harnessing the skill, expertise and knowledge available to them.

The combination of Canada's increasingly diverse population, societal issues that have brought diversity and inclusion to the forefront, as well as the emergence of COVID-19 (which has significantly altered the workforce), make this a vital time for Canadian organizations to shift how they view the diversity of that workforce, notably how they treat South Asian women through the recruitment, hiring and employment processes.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Women @ Work: A global outlook: <https://www2.deloitte.com/global/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/women-at-work-global-outlook.html>

<sup>4</sup> Source: <https://www.accenture.com/ca-en/insights/strategy/brand-purpose>

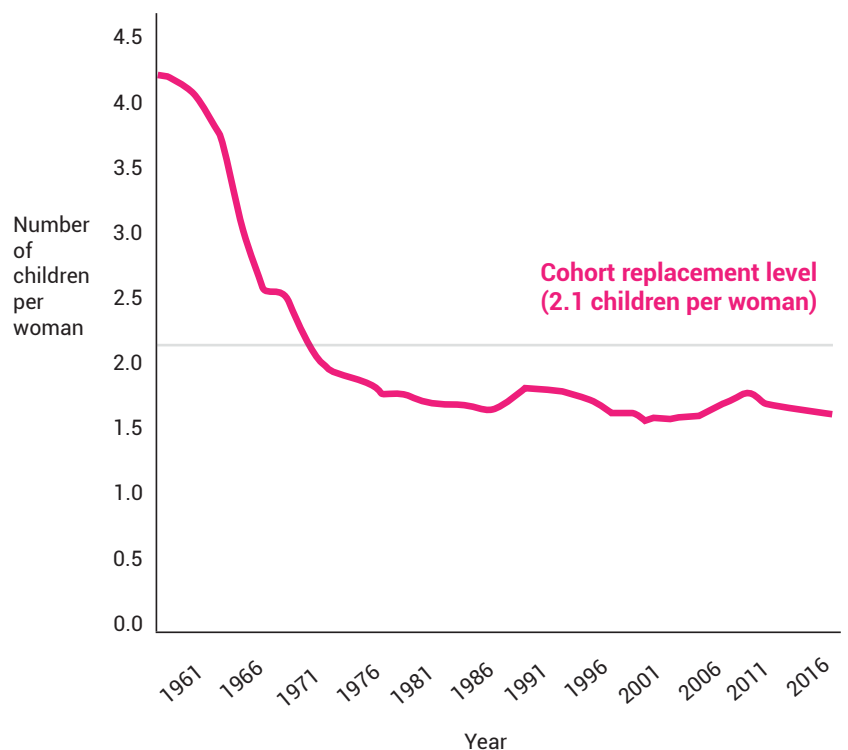
## SETTING THE STAGE

# B. PROSPERITY RELIES ON IMMIGRATION



Statistics Canada reports that Canada's fertility rate (the number of children a woman is projected to have during her reproductive years, based on women aged 15-49) has been falling since 2009, dropping to 1.54 children per woman in 2016. This rate is well below the cohort replacement of 2.1 children per woman (i.e. the fertility level required to replace the population in the absence of immigration).<sup>5</sup>

### TOTAL FERTILITY RATE, CANADA, 1961 TO 2016



<sup>5</sup> Source: <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/without-immigration-canadas-growth-could-be-close-to-zero-in-20-years-if-low-fertility-rates-persist-statscan>

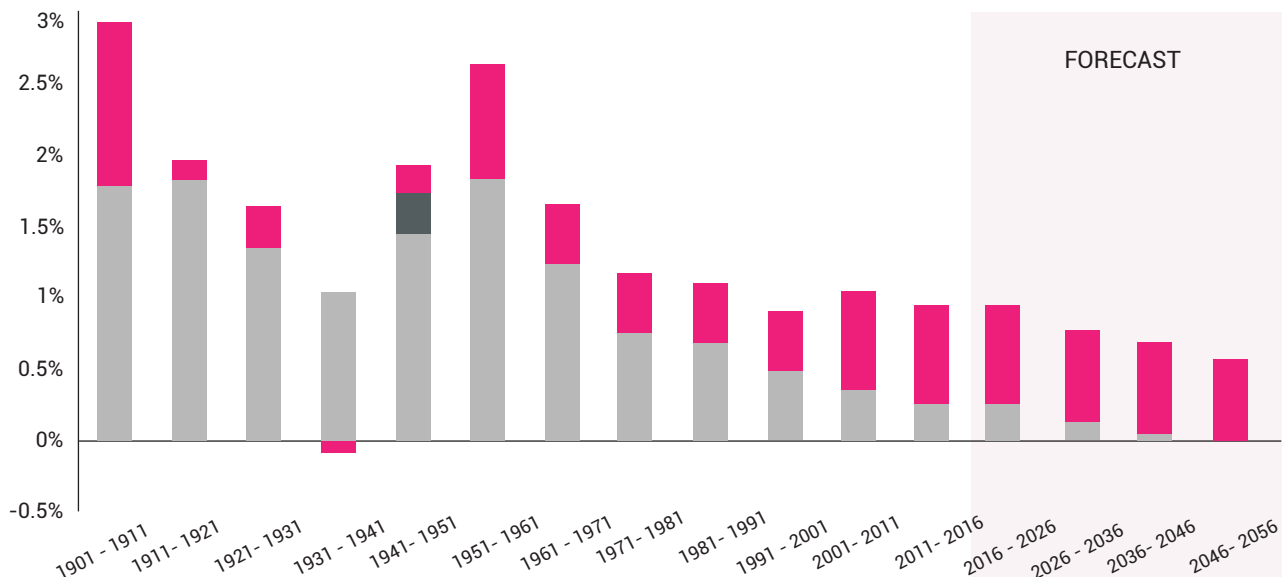
Canada's immigration program is important for the future of the country. Despite the falling fertility rate, in 2019 Canada experienced its highest-ever jump in population over a year. **Between July 1, 2018 and July 1, 2019**, Canada's population increased by **more than 531,497 people**. That increase was significantly driven by the arrival of immigrants and non-permanent residents (82.2%). Over the **next three years**, the Federal Government of Canada plans to bring in more than **1.3 million immigrants**.<sup>6,7</sup>

Without immigration, Canada's population growth rate is projected to be close to zero in 20 years.

## IMMIGRATION IS VITAL, OFFSETTING CANADA'S OTHERWISE DECLINING POPULATION

### POPULATION GROWTH RATE

Annual Average Growth Rate, Canada, 1901 - 2056



● Natural Increase    ● Migratory Increase    ● Growth related to the addition of Newfoundland and Labrador

<sup>6</sup> Source: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/mendicino-immigration-pandemic-refugees-1.5782642>

<sup>7</sup> Source: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2022/02/new-immigration-plan-to-fill-labour-market-shortages-and-grow-canadas-economy.html>





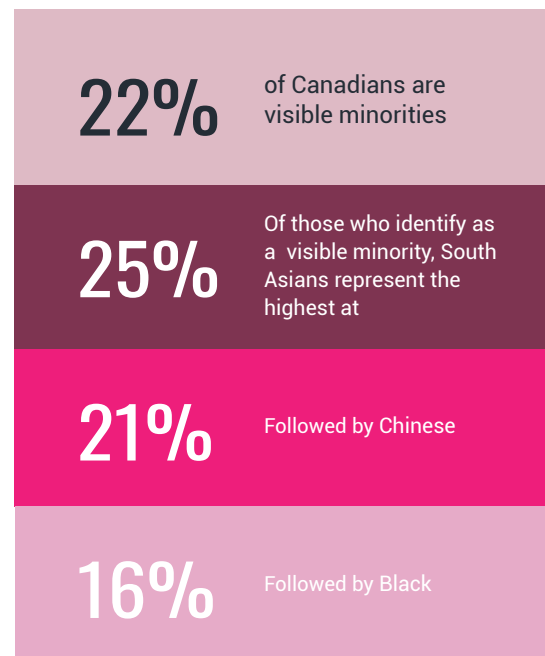
Jasdeep K. Johal  
Partner  
International Tax  
Deloitte

“ As a country, Canada is heavily dependent on immigration to help meet our labour needs in every industry and at every level. Trends indicate that the South Asian population is the highest immigrant group entering Canada and is expected to continue to grow. The National Study highlights that South Asian women have high career aspirations and are looking for mentorship and guidance to reach their full potential. Businesses that can unlock and leverage the full potential of this group should be well positioned for success. ”

## CANADA'S POPULATION IS DIVERSE.

According to data from the 2016 Census, 22% of Canadians are visible minorities. Of those who identify as a visible minority, South Asians represent the highest percentage at 25%, followed by Chinese at 21% and Black at 16%.

Of new arrivals to Canada, the highest percentage came from South Asian countries (28%), followed by the Philippines (11%) and China (9%). Immigrants from these three regions made up 48% of Canada's newcomers in 2018 .<sup>8</sup>



<sup>8</sup> Source: Statistics Canada, 2016

As immigration to Canada from some countries has stalled or decreased in recent years, immigration from India to Canada has skyrocketed. Between 2016 and 2019, there was a 116% increase in immigrants to Canada from India, compared with a 0% increase from China in the same period and a 45% decrease from the Philippines.<sup>9</sup>

116%

INCREASE IN IMMIGRANTS TO CANADA FROM INDIA

0%

INCREASE FROM CHINA IN THE SAME PERIOD

45%

DECREASE FROM THE PHILIPPINES



### BETWEEN 2007 AND 2019

THE NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN CANADA INCREASED FROM

**179,110 to 642,480**

### BETWEEN 2008 AND 2018

THE NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FROM CHINA INCREASED FROM

**43,090 to 142,985**

THE NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FROM INDIA INCREASED FROM

**8,270 to 172,625**

Students are also coming to Canada in increasing numbers. Between 2007 and 2019, the number of international students in Canada increased from 179,110 to 642,480. The main driving forces behind this increase in international students are China and India. From 2008 to 2018, the number of international students from China increased from 43,090 to 142,985, while the number of international students from India increased from 8,270 to 172,625.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Source: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada data, 2019

<sup>10</sup>Source: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada data, 2019

This presents a massive opportunity for Canadian organizations to utilize a young, highly educated workforce.

Despite this diverse population, South Asian employees still report experiencing discrimination while looking for work and seeking career advancement.



“ I was repeatedly discriminated against because of my skin colour, and most organizations do it subconsciously. Once in the job, I found it next to impossible to get promoted. ”

“ Due to my slightly different accent, my colleagues make fun of me. In the beginning, it affected my mental health too, but now I got used to it. ”



“ I applied for more than 50 companies suitable for my qualifications, but I was not even shortlisted for any, though I am a deserving candidate. ”

*South Asian, Female, 30-34 years old,  
<3 years in Canada (Winnipeg)*

“ I kept being refused by companies without giving me any solid reason. I was most qualified among all candidates. I [don't know what] the reason for rejection was. ”

*South Asian, Female, 35-39 years old,  
3-5 years in Canada (Hamilton)*

Although many have significant education and work experience when they arrive in Canada, only 39% of immigrants who obtain work are in jobs with duties similar to what they did before moving to Canada, reports World Education Service. Less than half of survey respondents said they found work in the same sector they worked in prior to their move.

This indicates a pattern in which Canadian experience is more highly valued, even if the international experience is similar—and regardless of whether the diversity of experience would benefit the employer.

Additionally, 25% of respondents said their levels of international education were not recognized.<sup>11</sup>

Within this cohort is a highly educated and underutilized group that is critical to the workforce today—women, and particularly South Asian women.

South Asian women are among the most highly educated group in Canada, with 37% obtaining a university degree, compared with 33% of women who are part of any visible minority and 21% of White women (Statistics Canada).<sup>12</sup>

The higher education trend continues into Master’s degrees, with 10.4% of South Asian women having earned one; in comparison to 6.5% of all visible minorities and 4.1% of non-visible minorities.

| Metric for Females         | South Asian | All Visible Minorities | Non-Visible Minority |
|----------------------------|-------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Have Any University Degree | 37.4%       | 33.8%                  | 21.9%                |
| Have Master's Degree+      | 10.4%       | 6.5%                   | 4.1%                 |

Despite being among the most highly educated group, South Asian women are also among the most underutilized and report a lack of meaningful engagement, advancement and support in their employment. This frustration is leading a high proportion of South Asian women to report that they are planning on leaving their job in the next two years, an exodus that will have long-term ramifications for employers.

<sup>11</sup> Source: <https://www.hrreporter.com/focus-areas/recruitment-and-staffing/immigrant-credentials-education-not-being-recognized/324637>

<sup>12</sup> Source: Statistics Canada, 2016

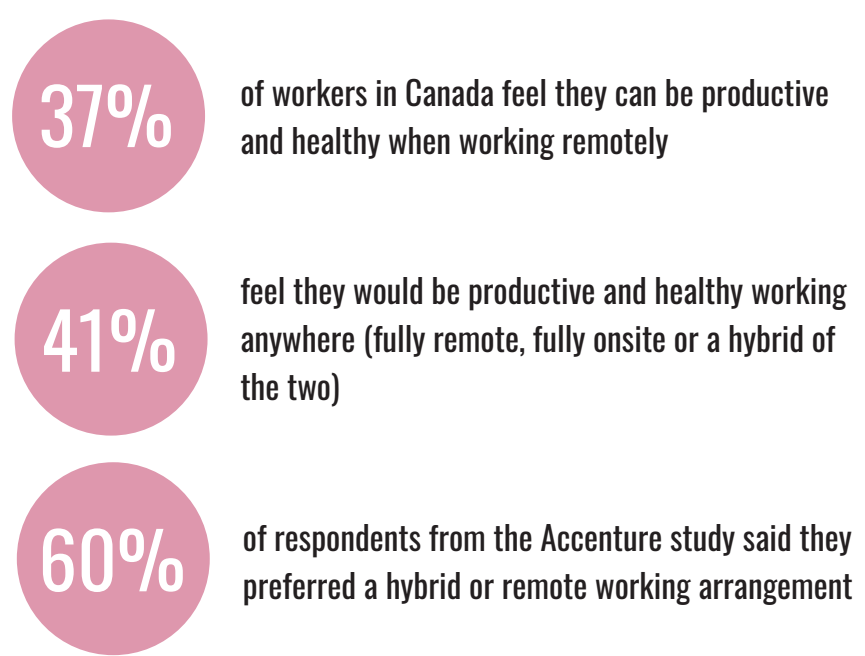


## SETTING THE STAGE

# C. COVID-19 HIGHLIGHTS SYSTEMIC ISSUES IN CANADA'S LABOUR FORCE

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted important systemic issues in Canada's labour force, but it has also created opportunities for new employment relationships. Employers in many industries were forced to establish new working arrangements, including enabling staff to work remotely or switching to a hybrid work system in which employee work locations alternated between working at home and working in an office.

A report by Accenture found that 37% of workers in Canada feel they can be productive and healthy when working remotely and 41% feel they would be productive and healthy working anywhere (fully remote, fully onsite or a hybrid of the two). Additionally, more than 60% of respondents to the Accenture study said they preferred a hybrid or remote working arrangement.<sup>13</sup>



37%

of workers in Canada feel they can be productive and healthy when working remotely

41%

feel they would be productive and healthy working anywhere (fully remote, fully onsite or a hybrid of the two)

60%

of respondents from the Accenture study said they preferred a hybrid or remote working arrangement

<sup>13</sup> Source: <https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/a-work-anywhere-workplace-is-what-canadian-employees-actually-want-today-according-to-new-report-by-accenture-839333935.html>

Meanwhile, COVID-19 has had a disastrous impact on women in the workplace. Deloitte reports that up to 77% of women say their workload has increased and 51% say they are less optimistic about their career prospects than they were before the pandemic. The numbers are even starker for women of colour, who are 57% more likely to report being less optimistic about their career prospects now than before the pandemic.<sup>14</sup>

77%

OF WOMEN SAY THEIR  
WORKLOAD HAS INCREASED

51%

SAY THEY ARE LESS OPTIMISTIC  
ABOUT THEIR CAREER  
PROSPECTS THAN THEY WERE  
BEFORE THE PANDEMIC

The World Economic Forum warns that the pandemic has set gender equity efforts back by at least a generation, putting employers at risk of losing some of their best talent and missing out on younger talent that value an inclusive culture.<sup>15</sup>

COVID-19 also disproportionately affected South Asian women, who experienced the highest unemployment rate relative to any other visible minority during the initial wave of the pandemic, significantly higher than the national unemployment rate. According to Statistics Canada, while the national unemployment rate for those aged 15-69 was 11.3% in July 2020, South Asian people had an unemployment rate of 17.8% and South Asian women in particular had an unemployment rate of 20.4%.

### SOUTH ASIAN, ARAB AND BLACK CANADIANS HAD THE HIGHEST UNEMPLOYMENT RATES IN JULY 2020

| Ethnicity                | %            |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| White                    | 9.3%         |
| National Average         | 11.3%        |
| Filipino                 | 13.2%        |
| Chinese                  | 14.0%        |
| Latin American           | 16.0%        |
| Southeast Asian          | 16.5%        |
| Black                    | 16.8%        |
| Arab                     | 17.3%        |
| South Asian              | 17.8%        |
| <b>South Asian Women</b> | <b>20.4%</b> |

<sup>14</sup> Source: <https://www2.deloitte.com/global/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/women-at-work-global-outlook.html>

<sup>15</sup> Source: [https://www.dw.com/en/wef-coronavirus-has-reversed-progress-on-genderequality/a57048120#:~:text=The%20Pandemic%20has%20reversed%20global.Gender%20Gap%20report%20released%20Wednesday.&text=Continuing%20at%20this%20rate%2C%20it,parity%20between%20men%20\\_and%20women](https://www.dw.com/en/wef-coronavirus-has-reversed-progress-on-genderequality/a57048120#:~:text=The%20Pandemic%20has%20reversed%20global.Gender%20Gap%20report%20released%20Wednesday.&text=Continuing%20at%20this%20rate%2C%20it,parity%20between%20men%20_and%20women)

# PRIMARY RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research was carried out in two phases:  
qualitative in-depth interviews and a quantitative survey



CulturaliQ

## QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

Pink Attitude and CulturaliQ invited senior and C-suite respondents across various industries in Canada to participate in one-on-one interviews. During Zoom discussions facilitated by a professional moderator, respondents provided their insights and perspectives on South Asian women in the Canadian workforce.

The insights collected during the interviews helped shape and influence the questions and research in phase two.

## NATIONAL QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

Eligibility was restricted to men and women who:

- Were 21 years or older as of the time of the survey
- Have a university degree or are in their final year of an undergraduate program
- Were employed or actively seeking employment at the time of the survey
- Value a career as opposed to simply having a job, as identified by agreeing with a survey statement
- Margin of error for the South Asian Women segment is within 3.7 percentage points, 19 times out of 20
- Coloured highlights in the tables that follow indicate significance at the 95% level (vs. White women / White men)

# 2,200

WOMEN AND MEN REPRESENTING  
VARIOUS DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS  
RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY

In all, **2,200 self-identified women and men representing various diverse backgrounds (across gender, race, ethnicity and tenure in Canada) responded to the survey.**

Of those, 1,500 were women (700 South Asian, 400 White, 285 Chinese, 52 Black and 63 Filipino) and 700 were men (158 South Asian, 300 White, 185 Chinese, 38 Black and 19 Filipino). Ages ranged from 21 to over 55, while tenure in Canada ranged from those who were born in Canada, to those who moved here from anywhere fewer than three years ago, to those who have lived here more than 10 years.

## Data collection method:

- **Study conducted from September 27 - December 22, 2021**

## Sample source:

- Respondents sourced from a stratified random sample of respondents in Canada through the CulturaPanel™ Online Mainstream and Ethnic Panels

## Survey length:

- Approximately 25 minutes

## Eligibility:

- Must have a university degree or be in the final year of an undergraduate program
- Must be currently employed (career or non-career) or actively looking for employment
- Must “value having a career and not just a job” (agree with statement)
- 21 years of age or older

## Sample Specifications:

- Total Sample: n=**2,200**
- Women: n=1,500 (South Asian n=700, White n=400, Chinese n=285, Black n=52 and Filipino n=63)
- Men: n=700 (South Asian n=158, White n=300, Chinese n=185, Black n=38 and Filipino n=19)
- Age: 21-34 (n=1,063), 35-44 (n=671), 45-54 (n=286), 55+ (n=180)
- Tenure in Canada: <3 years in Canada (n=146), 3-5 years (n=343), 6-10 years (n=379), 10+ years (n=598) and born in Canada (n=734)
- A “**success boost**” was also conducted with women only where respondents self-identified as “being successful” based on agreement with five statements (South Asian n=110, White n=103, Chinese, Black or Filipino n=222)

# WOMEN SELF-IDENTIFIED AS “BEING SUCCESSFUL” BY AGREEING (TOP 2 BOXES ON THE 5-POINT SCALE) TO FIVE STATEMENTS FROM BELOW:

HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS AS THEY RELATE TO EMPLOYMENT REGARDING YOUR CAREER IN CANADA?

| Please indicate using the 5-point scale below                                                                                       | Agree Strongly | Agree Somewhat | Neutral | Disagree Somewhat | Disagree Strongly |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|---------|-------------------|-------------------|
| You are compensated commensurate with your level of education                                                                       | 5              | 4              | 3       | 2                 | 1                 |
| You are compensated relative to your level of effort and initiative relative to other members of the team                           | 5              | 4              | 3       | 2                 | 1                 |
| You are appreciated by your peers and those who you report to (i.e. your voice is heard and you are effectively able to contribute) | 5              | 4              | 3       | 2                 | 1                 |
| You have achieved a work-life balance that you were looking for when you started your career                                        | 5              | 4              | 3       | 2                 | 1                 |
| You feel satisfied that you have achieved a level of success in your professional life                                              | 5              | 4              | 3       | 2                 | 1                 |



# FINDINGS: SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN ARE OVERLOOKED AND UNDEREMPLOYED



Monty Dhaliwal  
Lawyer  
Pallet Valo LLP



“ In a world economy dominated by the US, China and EU, Canada needs to take advantage of every efficiency available to it in order to compete. Canada needs to ‘punch above its weight’ and separate itself in some way from other similarly sized economies. Given the underutilization of South Asian women in the present economy and their existing bona fides, I think that a higher utilization rate of South Asian women would turbocharge productivity at every level. ”

## FINDINGS: SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN ARE OVERLOOKED AND UNDEREMPLOYED

### A. THE JOB SEARCH- BARRIERS FROM THE BEGINNING:

While women and male visible minorities in general report discouraging experiences in the workplace, the numbers are stark for South Asian women, who report feeling vastly more underutilized, out of place and belittled than other population segments.

Survey respondents noted that issues with their career began at the job search phase and continued into employment.

South Asian women and other women of colour experience headwinds not only from men but also from their non-visible minority counterparts. These women are more likely to express dissatisfaction with their job search. In particular, South Asian women are more likely to take one year or more to find work.

“ Even though I am fluent in English, it was hard to get a job due to my accent and my colour. I have a BA in Economics and Sociology and White Canadians with Grade 12 have an easier time getting a job! ”

*South Asian, Female, 60+ years old,  
10+ years in Canada (Edmonton)*

“ My whole education is from [another] country and that doesn't work in Canada. To find a good job in Canada, employers insist on being educated from a Canadian university. This is my struggle. ”

*South Asian, Female, 35-39 years old,  
<3 years in Canada (PEI)*

“It is taking a long time to find something, as all my work experience is ‘non-Canadian,’ and not valued as much as Canadian experience even though my Master’s degree is from here. Also, I am trying to work in an industry which doesn’t have too many people of colour.”

*South Asian, Female, 25-29 years old,  
<3 years in Canada (Edmonton)*

“ [With how the] reference system works in Canada, there is also prejudice. I attended an employment workshop and the facilitator told us that changing [our] surnames to European/Christian names help. I will never change my identity. ”

*South Asian, Female, 45-49 years old,  
6-10 years in Canada (Toronto)*



|                                    | Women       |       |         |       |          | Men         |       |         |       |          |
|------------------------------------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|----------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|----------|
|                                    | South Asian | White | Chinese | Black | Filipino | South Asian | White | Chinese | Black | Filipino |
| Dissatisfied with job search       | 82%         | 73%   | 87%     | 85%   | 90%      | 72%         | 75%   | 81%     | 76%   | 84%      |
| One year or more searching for job | 56%         | 42%   | 49%     | 53%   | 50%      | 63%         | 55%   | 58%     | 56%   | 50%      |

Those who described a positive experience during their job search noted that they received an education at a Canadian university and had both strong networking opportunities and strong support systems.

**“ I had gained a lot of experience already while studying at university in Canada. It gave me the ability to be able to connect with potential employers. ”**

*South Asian, Female, 21-24 years old,  
3-5 years in Canada (Regina)*

**“ I was positive about my job because my studies were completed at a Canadian university, so I was confident that I would be able to find a job related to my career! ”**

*Successful South Asian, Female, 35-39 years old,  
3-5 years in Canada (Toronto)*

**“ I had the Canadian qualifications needed and I had good friends and acquaintances who taught me the tips and tricks of actually applying for jobs, which was never taught in school. ”**

*Successful South Asian, Female, 30-34 years old,  
born in Canada (Toronto)*

**“ It was easy for me to apply [to] jobs after I got to Canada as I have enough connections with my friends and family living here. ”**

*South Asian, Female, 35-39 years old,  
3-5 years in Canada (Montreal)*

## FINDINGS: SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN ARE OVERLOOKED AND UNDEREMPLOYED

### B. EMPLOYMENT: SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN FACE BIAS, UNFAIR TREATMENT AND SYSTEMIC ISSUES

Once they are employed, South Asian women report feeling the pressure of high expectations at work while simultaneously feeling out of place and that they are treated less fairly than peers at higher rates than all women and men.

**60% vs 46% vs 46%**

SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN REPORTED THEIR SKILLSET BEING UNDERUTILIZED COMPARED WITH ALL WOMEN AND ALL MEN

**59% vs 35% vs 38%**

SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN SAID THEY SOMETIMES FEEL OUT OF PLACE CULTURALLY AT THEIR JOB OR IN MEETINGS, COMPARED WITH ALL WOMEN AND ALL MEN

**57% vs 33% vs 38%**

SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN REPORTED FEELING THEY ARE TREATED LESS FAIRLY AT WORK COMPARED TO PEERS VERSUS ALL WOMEN AND MEN

**57% vs 33% vs 37%**

SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN REPORTED FEELING MORE BELITTLED BY COLLEAGUES OR MANAGERS COMPARED TO ALL WOMEN AND MEN

Around 60% of South Asian women reported their skillset being underutilized (meaning both that they are obtaining jobs below their skillset and not being given opportunities for advancement), compared with 46% of all women and all men. Meanwhile, 59% of South Asian women said they sometimes feel out of place culturally at their job or in meetings, compared with 35% of all women and 38% of all men. Additionally, 57% of South Asian women reported feeling they are treated less fairly at work compared to peers, while 33% of all women and 37% of all men combined felt the same, and 57% of South Asian women reported feeling belittled by colleagues or managers, as opposed to 33% for all women and 37% for all men.



“ I feel my achievements are undermined compared to my non-South Asian peers. ”

South Asian Woman, 30-34 years old,  
born in Canada (Calgary)



| Top 2 box on a 5-point agreement scale                                                 | Women       |       |         |       |          | Men         |       |         |       |          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|----------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|----------|
|                                                                                        | South Asian | White | Chinese | Black | Filipino | South Asian | White | Chinese | Black | Filipino |
| My skillset is being <b>underutilized</b>                                              | 60%         | 45%   | 41%     | 58%   | 40%      | 58%         | 43%   | 44%     | 79%   | 68%      |
| I feel that I need to be <b>always available</b> for my employer during non-work hours | 60%         | 41%   | 34%     | 44%   | 43%      | 58%         | 47%   | 49%     | 61%   | 63%      |
| Culturally speaking, I feel sometimes <b>out of place</b> doing my job or at meetings  | 59%         | 33%   | 28%     | 50%   | 35%      | 57%         | 40%   | 35%     | 58%   | 42%      |
| I feel that I am <b>treated less fairly</b> at work compared to some of my peers       | 57%         | 31%   | 26%     | 37%   | 27%      | 58%         | 35%   | 30%     | 61%   | 63%      |
| Often times, I feel <b>belittled</b> by peers or managers at work                      | 57%         | 32%   | 28%     | 38%   | 32%      | 56%         | 34%   | 37%     | 58%   | 47%      |

“ While working on relevant projects, sometimes being the only person of colour or woman in the room, [I] felt like I had to be much louder and work harder to be heard than everyone else. ”

*South Asian, Female, 25-29 years old,  
<3 years in Canada (Edmonton)*

“ The cultural barriers that exist, even subtly, make one feel unsafe and unheard sometimes. ”

*Successful South Asian, Female, 25-29 years old,  
<3 years in Canada (Toronto)*



“As a newcomer to the country, I can see the effect of the language barrier as I have an accent when I speak. I am not comfortable as others pick up or joke about my accent.”

*South Asian, Female, 25- 29 years old,  
<3 years in Canada (Calgary)*

“I am reminded by my peers that I am different than them just because of my accent. And that makes me really anxious.”

*South Asian, Female, 25- 29 years old,  
<3 years in Canada (Toronto)*



South Asian women identified systemic issues as reasons they are pessimistic about their future opportunities, possibly relying on past experiences as an indicator of future struggles. For example, when asked why they are not optimistic about their future opportunities, responses included:

“Comments were made on my belief when I wanted to pray.”

*South Asian, Female, 30-34 years old,  
<3 years in Canada (Toronto)*

“Employees are mostly white, so minorities tend to be excluded in certain aspects. [There] needs to be a more inclusive workplace.”

*South Asian, Female, 25-29 years old,  
3-5 years in Canada (Halifax)*

“Because I do not have someone I can look up to at work for guidance, a mentor.”

*South Asian, Female, 35-39 years old,  
6-10 years in Canada (Quebec)*

“Because of my last experiences with discrimination and sexism in the workplace.”

*South Asian, Female, 21-24 years old,  
3-5 years in Canada (Halifax)*

“Because of cultural differences sometimes I don't feel safe opening up to people at work.”

*South Asian, Female, 30-34 years old,  
<3 years in Canada (Ottawa)*

“It's hard to do the struggle again! Now I just want to focus more on my children's education and career.”

*South Asian, Female, 45-49 years old,  
10+ years in Canada (Toronto)*



South Asian women identified unfair treatment and dissatisfaction at work as being major factors in the decision to leave their job, and focused more on autonomy and appreciation as being reasons to stay.

Unsatisfying work was a main reason South Asian women considered leaving their current job, with 48% saying they weren't satisfied with their work (compared with 35% of all women and 32% of all men). Poor management, low pay and being treated unfairly were next on the list at 37%, 35% and 34%, respectively (for all women, these results were 29%, 52% and 17% while for all men, these results were 34%, 43% and 20%, respectively).

| Motivations for leaving current job                     | Women       |       |         |       |          | Men         |       |         |       |          |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|----------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|----------|
|                                                         | South Asian | White | Chinese | Black | Filipino | South Asian | White | Chinese | Black | Filipino |
| Unsatisfying work                                       | 48%         | 33%   | 43%     | 41%   | 23%      | 29%         | 31%   | 44%     | 39%   | 40%      |
| Poor management                                         | 37%         | 28%   | 37%     | 27%   | 23%      | 23%         | 34%   | 50%     | 39%   | 30%      |
| Low pay                                                 | 35%         | 53%   | 48%     | 68%   | 42%      | 41%         | 44%   | 46%     | 43%   | 20%      |
| Being treated unfairly                                  | 34%         | 17%   | 12%     | 18%   | 12%      | 23%         | 19%   | 21%     | 25%   | 60%      |
| Not being promoted as quickly as desired                | 25%         | 17%   | 26%     | 23%   | 19%      | 27%         | 22%   | 31%     | 36%   | 20%      |
| Lack of trust by management for key projects or clients | 14%         | 8%    | 9%      | 9%    | 12%      | 23%         | 13%   | 15%     | 4%    | 30%      |
| Systemic barriers (e.g. racism, sexism, etc.)           | 13%         | 2%    | 5%      | 27%   | 8%       | 12%         | 6%    | 4%      | 29%   | 0%       |

“ Give career advancement opportunities. Work on employee satisfaction. Give more autonomy and flexibility. ”

South Asian, Female, 35-39 years old,  
<3 years in Canada (Toronto)

“ Everyone has aspirations in life and specific levels they would like to reach, including South Asian women like me. ”

South Asian, Female, 40-44 years old,  
10+ years in Canada (PEI)



**“ Adopt equality, diversity  
and inclusiveness policies. ”**

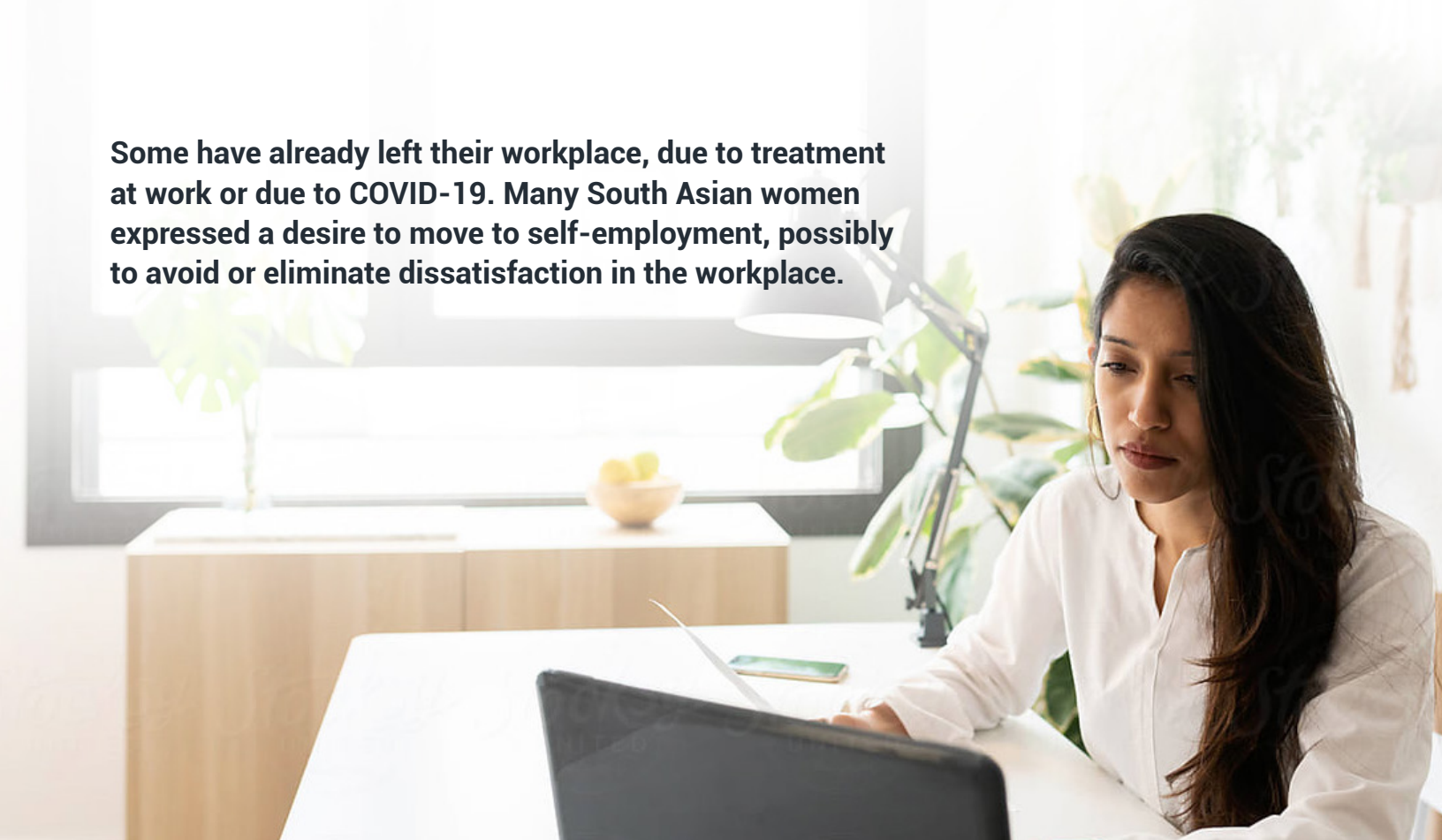
*South Asian, Female, 30-34 years old,  
6-10 years in Canada (Toronto)*

**“ Have trust and be open to  
discussions from new immigrants  
rather than being negative of all  
their ideas given to increase the  
top line of the company. ”**

*South Asian, Female, 30-34 years old,  
<3 years in Canada (Vancouver)*



Some have already left their workplace, due to treatment at work or due to COVID-19. Many South Asian women expressed a desire to move to self-employment, possibly to avoid or eliminate dissatisfaction in the workplace.



“ Being self-employed allows me to not have anyone blocking my career path. ”

*South Asian, Female, 30-34 years old, born in Canada (Edmonton)*

“ I switched to self-employment years ago after years of dissatisfaction and being taken advantage of. I will never go back. ”

*Successful South Asian, Female, 30-34 years old, born in Canada (London)*

“ My age is a bigger factor now. That is why I am now self-employed. I left retail to work in self-employed education. ”

*South Asian, Female, 60+ years old, born in Canada (Vancouver)*

“ No, I’m self-employed and do well like that. My career has room to grow into something more profitable than just doing IT for a company now. ”

*South Asian, Female, 25-29 years old, born in Canada (Montreal)*

South Asian women, including those who identify as highly successful and highly educated, also experience systemic issues when trying to advance their careers.

Those who have already obtained education credentials from their home countries experience challenges getting those credentials acknowledged in Canada. This means that many South Asian women are required to attain those same credentials in Canada through medical associations, law societies and other accreditation organizations if they want to pursue their career in the country.

“ Even with three years of Canadian experience, many employers still think that’s not enough. The main reason for not getting an interview is due to a lack of local market knowledge. I think that three years in Canada should be enough! ”

*South Asian, Female, 30-34 years old,  
3-5 years in Canada (Vancouver)*

“ Biased attitudes from potential employers. Requirement to pass through national exams to be licensed to work in my field. ”

*South Asian, Female, 40-44 years old,  
6-10 years in Canada (Calgary)*





This systemic barrier leaves many South Asian women underrepresented in senior-level roles and overrepresented in junior-level roles. As a result, few South Asian women in senior-level roles are available to mentor and sponsor junior-level female workers, creating a repeating cycle of underrepresentation.

“ I have both qualifications and overseas experience. I just need someone to take a chance on my abilities and skillset to mentor me at their organization and I am sure I can deliver [on] expectations. ”

*South Asian, Female 45-49 years old,  
<3 years in Canada (Ontario)*

“ In Canada it's almost impossible to find a job in your field; everyone keeps asking for experience. How on earth will I get experience when I am a new immigrant, they don't accept our degrees. ”

*Successful South Asian, Female, 30-34  
years old, born in Canada (London)*



“ I think it’s important for South Asian and other visible minority women to see role models that they can relate to and who look like them. Finding a good mentor can inspire them in advancing their careers. ”



**Manjit Singh**  
Executive Vice President  
Chief Financial Officer  
Sun Life

“ Canada does not recognize education outside of its own country, which is sad and unbelievable. ”

*South Asian, Female, 60+ years old,  
born in Canada (Vancouver)*

“ Most jobs required either a Canadian education or Canadian work experience and I had neither. The jobs that did not want these criteria met, never responded back positively. I feel it was because I had no employee reference in the organizations I was applying into. ”

*South Asian, Female, 30-34 years old,  
<3 years in Canada (Toronto)*



More than any other group of women, South Asian women believe they missed out on career opportunities because they are members of a visible minority and are women. Most also believe it's because they are immigrants. Compared with all women and all men, South Asian women were more likely to believe they lost an opportunity because they have an accent (64% vs 34% and 38%, respectively) and because they have a non-Canadian university education (60% vs 34% and 38%, respectively).

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**64% vs 34% vs 38%**

SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN WERE MORE LIKELY TO BELIEVE THEY LOST AN OPPORTUNITY BECAUSE THEY HAVE AN ACCENT COMPARED WITH ALL WOMEN AND ALL MEN

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**60% vs 34% vs 38%**

MORE SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN IN COMPARISON TO ALL WOMEN AND MEN BELIEVE THEY MISSED OUT ON CAREER OPPORTUNITIES BECAUSE OF A NON-CANADIAN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

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Percentage of South Asian women who agree they missed out on career opportunities because they:

**48%**

ARE A MEMBER OF THE VISIBLE MINORITY

---

**76%**

ARE A WOMAN

---

**76%**

ARE AN IMMIGRANT

## FINDINGS: SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN ARE OVERLOOKED AND UNDEREMPLOYED

### C. HITTING THE WALL MID-CAREER

Once they are in their career, South Asian women report higher levels of dissatisfaction, as evidenced by the high percentage who agreed with the following statements:

64%

I now have lower expectations for my career salary today than I did a few years ago

64%

Career success continues to elude me

59%

I am thinking about switching my chosen career path

58%

My managers have made empty promises to me (e.g. lip service) as it relates to my career progression

This is in contrast to all women, who agreed with those statements less frequently (50%, 46%, 41% and 37%) and all men (45%, 48%, 38% and 43%).

Ultimately, 68% of South Asian women identify as having settled for something less than they expected in their career, compared with 52% for all women and 49% for all men.

| Top 2 box on a 5-point agreement scale (strongly / somewhat agree)                                                   | Women       |       |         |       |          | Men         |       |         |       |          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|----------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|----------|
|                                                                                                                      | South Asian | White | Chinese | Black | Filipino | South Asian | White | Chinese | Black | Filipino |
| I now have lower expectations in my career salary today than I did a few years ago                                   | 64%         | 50%   | 38%     | 46%   | 43%      | 61%         | 43%   | 38%     | 68%   | 63%      |
| I now have lower expectations in my definition of "career success" today than I did a few years ago                  | 67%         | 54%   | 47%     | 48%   | 60%      | 64%         | 47%   | 36%     | 66%   | 74%      |
| I have now "settled" for something less than I originally planned in my career aspirations                           | 68%         | 51%   | 41%     | 48%   | 65%      | 68%         | 47%   | 39%     | 63%   | 74%      |
| Career success continues to elude me                                                                                 | 64%         | 45%   | 40%     | 46%   | 44%      | 62%         | 45%   | 48%     | 71%   | 74%      |
| I altered my career path due to discrimination or other systemic barriers                                            | 55%         | 31%   | 27%     | 42%   | 38%      | 53%         | 28%   | 31%     | 61%   | 58%      |
| I am thinking about switching my chosen career path                                                                  | 59%         | 40%   | 33%     | 50%   | 49%      | 56%         | 36%   | 36%     | 58%   | 58%      |
| My work managers have made empty promises to me (e.g. lip service) as it relates to my career progression            | 58%         | 35%   | 34%     | 42%   | 44%      | 60%         | 40%   | 39%     | 66%   | 74%      |
| All things being equal, I would rather quit my job than to wait for empty promises by my manager to come to fruition | 65%         | 40%   | 39%     | 42%   | 54%      | 62%         | 43%   | 45%     | 74%   | 63%      |



South Asian women in professional, managerial and office workers (non-management positions) express feeling dissatisfied with their career and unappreciated at work at higher levels than the total population, with office managers showing the highest levels of dissatisfaction. A significantly higher percentage of South Asian women who identified as office managers said they now have lower expectations for their career

salary than they did a few years ago, as compared with office worker non-managers. Office managers were also more likely to agree that career success eludes them, that they are thinking about switching career paths and that their supervisors have made empty promises to them as it relates to their career progression.

| South Asian Women: Job Type Currently Employed In                                                         |       |              |                   |               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|--------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Agreement scale (top 2 box on a 5-point scale)                                                            | Total | Professional | Manager and Above | Below Manager |
| I now have lower expectations for my career salary today than I did a few years ago                       | 64%   | 60%          | 71%               | 53%           |
| Career success continues to elude me                                                                      | 64%   | 62%          | 67%               | 61%           |
| I am thinking about switching my chosen career path                                                       | 59%   | 58%          | 64%               | 53%           |
| My work managers have made empty promises to me (e.g. lip service) as it relates to my career progression | 58%   | 58%          | 69%               | 53%           |



When compared with all women, South Asian women **report having more negative experiences and expectations** about their careers of whether they identify as a professional (e.g. lawyer, accountant, doctor, teacher, etc.), management or office worker.

South Asian women who identified as an office manager or professional were overwhelmingly more likely than White women to say they had altered their career path due to discrimination, have lower career expectations than they did a few years ago, and settled for less than their original career aspirations.

“ I feel like my career can go somewhere but I also feel a bit stuck. I have seen too much pass me by. ”

*South Asian, Female, 30-34 years old,  
6-10 years in Canada (Montreal)*





| Agreement scale (top 2 box on a 5-point scale)                                                                       | South Asian Women: Manager and Above | All Women: Manager and Above | All Men: Manager and Above | Gap vs All Women | Gap vs All Men |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| I altered my career path due to discrimination or other systemic barriers                                            | 56%                                  | 34%                          | 19%                        | -22              | -37            |
| I now have lower expectations in my definition of "career success" today than I did a few years ago                  | 69%                                  | 51%                          | 36%                        | -18              | -33            |
| All things being equal, I would rather quit my job than to wait for empty promises by my manager to come to fruition | 56%                                  | 38%                          | 32%                        | -18              | -24            |
| I am thinking about switching my chosen career path                                                                  | 53%                                  | 36%                          | 32%                        | -17              | -21            |
| Career success continues to elude me                                                                                 | 61%                                  | 44%                          | 40%                        | -17              | -21            |
| I have now "settled" for something less than I originally planned in my career aspirations                           | 61%                                  | 49%                          | 41%                        | -12              | -20            |
| My work managers have made empty promises to me (e.g., lip service) as it relates my career progression              | 53%                                  | 38%                          | 34%                        | -15              | -19            |
| I have or I am seriously thinking about going into business for myself (or are currently doing so)                   | 60%                                  | 42%                          | 45%                        | -18              | -15            |

| Agreement scale (top 2 box on a 5-point scale)                                                                       | South Asian Women: Professional | All Women: Professional | All Men: Professional | Gap vs All Women | Gap vs All Men |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|----------------|
| I altered my career path due to discrimination or other systemic barriers                                            | 56%                             | 27%                     | 24%                   | -29              | -32            |
| All things being equal, I would rather quit my job than to wait for empty promises by my manager to come to fruition | 63%                             | 38%                     | 34%                   | -25              | -29            |
| I am thinking about switching my chosen career path                                                                  | 62%                             | 39%                     | 37%                   | -23              | -25            |
| Career success continues to elude me                                                                                 | 58%                             | 33%                     | 34%                   | -25              | -24            |
| My work managers have made empty promises to me (e.g. lip service) as it relates to my career progression            | 58%                             | 37%                     | 39%                   | -21              | -19            |
| I have or I am seriously thinking about going into business for myself (or am currently doing so)                    | 61%                             | 44%                     | 46%                   | -17              | -15            |
| I have now "settled" for something less than I originally planned in my career aspirations                           | 62%                             | 48%                     | 48%                   | -14              | -14            |
| I now have lower expectations in my definition of "career success" today than I did a few years ago                  | 59%                             | 47%                     | 45%                   | -12              | -14            |

**There appears to be a link between how long women have been in Canada and their optimism towards their career. However this may increase only to about 6-10 years in Canada and then drop off again after 10 or more years.**

The group that indicated the greatest optimism towards their career are South Asian women who were born in Canada (78% feel empowered at work, 71% consider their manager as a mentor and 76% see a long-term future at their present company). The next most optimistic group was those in Canada between 6-10 years, responding to the same statements at similarly high rates (75%, 65% and 65%, respectively) .

This was followed by those with 3-5 years in Canada (59%, 62% and 59%, respectively). Those with fewer than three years and more than 10 years indicated the least positive feelings.

Tenure in Canada and career progression tend to be correlated, indicating that respondents with higher tenure in Canada are also likely to have progressed at least to office managerial roles and then become stuck in their position.

Top 2 box on a 5-point agreement scale

#### South Asian Women – Tenure in Canada

|                                                                                                                         | Less than 3 Years | 3-5 Years | 6-10 Years | 10+ Years | Born in Canada |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|----------------|
| I feel there is room for upward potential for me                                                                        | 62%               | 73%       | 71%        | 60%       | 79%            |
| I feel empowered at work                                                                                                | 52%               | 59%       | 75%        | 52%       | 78%            |
| I consider my manager as a mentor for my career                                                                         | 48%               | 62%       | 65%        | 59%       | 71%            |
| I see a long term future in staying with my present company                                                             | 36%               | 59%       | 65%        | 57%       | 76%            |
| There is someone at work (e.g. a manager or peer) who is helping me to elevate my career                                | 44%               | 59%       | 65%        | 53%       | 72%            |
| I would <b>rather quit</b> than to wait for <b>empty promises</b> by my manager to come to fruition                     | 30%               | 36%       | 31%        | 22%       | 46%            |
| My work managers have made <b>empty promises</b> to me (e.g. lip service) as it relates to my <b>career progression</b> | 56%               | 57%       | 50%        | 47%       | 72%            |

## FINDINGS: SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN ARE OVERLOOKED AND UNDEREMPLOYED

### D. SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN ARE RESILIENT AND OPEN TO BETTER OPPORTUNITIES

Despite the systemic barriers and issues they face in employment, **South Asian women remain resilient and are open to explore more meaningful opportunities** including new employment, switching careers and going into business themselves.

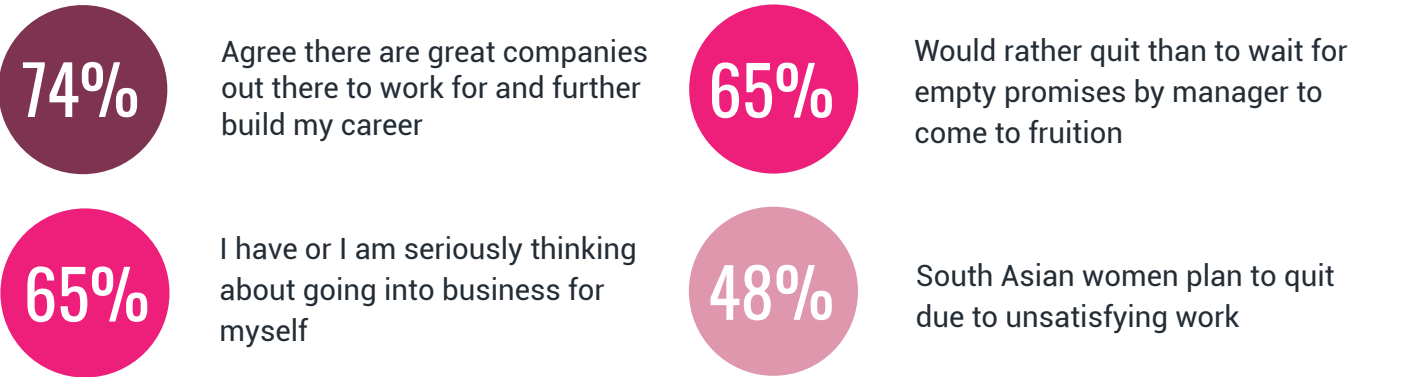
**Organizations that are serious about their DEI efforts, fair hiring and engagement practices must take action**, to ensure they do not lose these highly skilled South Asian women talent.

While most respondents to the survey agree that there are great companies out there for people like them to work at and build their careers, many are still considering self-employment. 65% of South Asian women are considering going into business themselves (compared to 46% for all women and 53% for all men) and 59% are considering switching careers (compared to 41% for all women and 38% for all men).

More than half of South Asian women (65%) would rather quit their jobs than to wait for empty promises by their employers, compared to all women who feel the same way (42%) and all men (46%)



# SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN:



A higher proportion of South Asian women are considering leaving their work (57%), at rates well above those expressed by all women (38%) and all men (40%).

| Top 2 box on a 5-point agreement scale                                       | Women       |       |         |       |          | Men         |       |         |       |          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|----------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|----------|
|                                                                              | South Asian | White | Chinese | Black | Filipino | South Asian | White | Chinese | Black | Filipino |
| I am planning on leaving my current job within the <b>next two years</b>     | 57%         | 36%   | 32%     | 42%   | 41%      | 61%         | 37%   | 28%     | 74%   | 53%      |
| I am considering leaving the workforce altogether <b>due to the pandemic</b> | 47%         | 24%   | 22%     | 15%   | 25%      | 46%         | 31%   | 20%     | 45%   | 58%      |

**57%** SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN PLAN TO QUIT THEIR JOBS WITHIN THE NEXT TWO YEARS OUT OF FRUSTRATION

**47%** PLAN TO QUIT THEIR JOBS WITHIN THE NEXT TWO YEARS DUE TO THE PANDEMIC



Although they are considering leaving their workplace, South Asian women showed among the **highest levels of confidence** in their educational qualifications, at levels equalling or higher than other groups of women. Specifically, they report confidence in their educational qualifications, professional working experience, ability to succeed in their chosen career and access to finding and obtaining a fulfilling job in their chosen career.

|                                                                                               | Women       |       |         |       |          | Men         |       |         |       |          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|----------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|----------|
| Top 2 box on a 5-point confidence agreement scale                                             | South Asian | White | Chinese | Black | Filipino | South Asian | White | Chinese | Black | Filipino |
| Educational qualifications                                                                    | 80%         | 80%   | 72%     | 81%   | 79%      | 81%         | 72%   | 75%     | 71%   | 79%      |
| Professional working experience                                                               | 78%         | 77%   | 68%     | 77%   | 83%      | 75%         | 71%   | 73%     | 74%   | 74%      |
| Speaking to my managers, clients and colleagues                                               | 75%         | 72%   | 65%     | 69%   | 73%      | 83%         | 74%   | 70%     | 84%   | 68%      |
| Having a high self-esteem & self-worth                                                        | 74%         | 69%   | 62%     | 69%   | 65%      | 74%         | 67%   | 69%     | 76%   | 68%      |
| Ability to succeed in my chosen career in Canada                                              | 73%         | 74%   | 66%     | 67%   | 76%      | 77%         | 70%   | 70%     | 79%   | 79%      |
| Having the access to finding and obtaining a fulfilling job with good pay in my chosen career | 72%         | 66%   | 55%     | 60%   | 67%      | 75%         | 66%   | 65%     | 63%   | 68%      |
| Financial acumen                                                                              | 66%         | 47%   | 53%     | 48%   | 54%      | 73%         | 60%   | 64%     | 63%   | 79%      |
| Entrepreneurship abilities                                                                    | 62%         | 45%   | 40%     | 46%   | 46%      | 66%         | 58%   | 55%     | 68%   | 63%      |



FINDINGS: SOUTH  
ASIAN WOMEN ARE  
OVERLOOKED AND  
UNDEREMPLOYED

## E. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: HIGHLY VALUED BUT LACKING THE TIME

“ I feel the biggest barrier facing South Asian and BIPOC women is a lack of meaningful mentorship and sponsorship; both of these are critical for getting ahead. South Asian and BIPOC women need bosses/sponsors/mentors who promote their work contributions to others, help them navigate organizational politics, socialize them and support them in building informal networks that support most high-potential individuals. There is certainly no lack of ambition, work ethic, education, or skills – it is the support system that is missing. ”

Puneet Mann  
Vice President  
Head Deposits and Lending  
Laurentian Bank



**South Asian women highly value continuing education, professional development and mentorship, and cite such programs as being important to them and their professional development.**

Compared to all women and all men, South Asian women were more likely to agree with the statements "Mentorship is important for my professional development" (80% versus 73% and 65%), "Having a person at work to help elevate my career (e.g. provide advice, etc.) is important to me" (80% versus 73% and 71%) and, notably, "Mentors who have a similar cultural background to mine are more relatable to me" (70% versus 55% and 56%).



|                                                                                                                                                      | Women       |       |         |       |          | Men         |       |         |       |          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|----------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|----------|
| Top 2 box on a 5-point confidence agreement scale                                                                                                    | South Asian | White | Chinese | Black | Filipino | South Asian | White | Chinese | Black | Filipino |
| It is important for me to have an employer who offers opportunities to build knowledge skills by funding my higher education, specific courses, etc. | 84%         | 81%   | 78%     | 69%   | 86%      | 85%         | 77%   | 80%     | 89%   | 89%      |
| Continuing education, seminars or training programs are important for my professional development                                                    | 82%         | 80%   | 75%     | 79%   | 90%      | 80%         | 72%   | 77%     | 79%   | 89%      |
| Mentorship is important for my professional development                                                                                              | 80%         | 72%   | 72%     | 75%   | 84%      | 77%         | 63%   | 71%     | 79%   | 74%      |
| Having a person at work to help elevate my career (e.g. provide advice, etc.) is important to me                                                     | 80%         | 72%   | 73%     | 73%   | 84%      | 75%         | 69%   | 78%     | 87%   | 89%      |
| Mentors who have a similar cultural background to mine are more relatable to me                                                                      | 70%         | 52%   | 62%     | 71%   | 62%      | 72%         | 53%   | 64%     | 82%   | 74%      |

Despite a desire for additional professional development programs, fewer than half of the South Asian women who responded to the survey made use of grants, scholarships, educational or career programs. In total, 45% of South Asian women used at least one program compared to 63% for all women and 67% for all men. A smaller number (18%) of South Asian women took part in an internship or co-op, as compared with 28% for all women and 30% of all men.

Although South Asian women value professional development and mentorship and training programs, they cite a lack of time due to family pressures and a heavy workload as being barriers to accessing such programs. Without this access, however, their ongoing career advancement opportunities become more limited, further disenfranchising them from their careers.

| Programs used in Canada      | Women       |       |         |       |          | Men         |       |         |       |          |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|----------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|----------|
|                              | South Asian | White | Chinese | Black | Filipino | South Asian | White | Chinese | Black | Filipino |
| Used any program             | 45%         | 64%   | 61%     | 71%   | 78%      | 70%         | 66%   | 60%     | 89%   | 79%      |
| NET Intern / Co-op           | 18%         | 28%   | 32%     | 37%   | 35%      | 38%         | 28%   | 29%     | 50%   | 37%      |
| Internship (unpaid)          | 11%         | 17%   | 14%     | 23%   | 17%      | 25%         | 13%   | 14%     | 37%   | 21%      |
| Co-op program (paid)         | 11%         | 14%   | 20%     | 15%   | 21%      | 21%         | 18%   | 18%     | 29%   | 21%      |
| NET Loan, Grant, Scholarship | 37%         | 50%   | 44%     | 58%   | 63%      | 54%         | 53%   | 45%     | 74%   | 74%      |
| Student grants               | 17%         | 19%   | 18%     | 23%   | 35%      | 23%         | 20%   | 18%     | 24%   | 21%      |
| Student loans                | 18%         | 32%   | 23%     | 38%   | 46%      | 25%         | 31%   | 27%     | 37%   | 42%      |
| Scholarships                 | 18%         | 27%   | 25%     | 29%   | 24%      | 28%         | 32%   | 22%     | 39%   | 26%      |
| None of the above            | 55%         | 37%   | 39%     | 29%   | 22%      | 30%         | 34%   | 40%     | 11%   | 21%      |

Additionally, a lack of awareness of these programs, combined with a lack of mentorship or guidance encouraging participation in such programs, may be responsible for the lower percentage of South Asian women accessing them.

Employers must offer such programs if they want to appeal to South Asian women. In offering such opportunities, however, employers must also consider the unique characteristics of the South Asian population and develop programs that meet their needs. Furthermore, they must ensure that South Asian women are aware of the programs and how to access them, while providing a framework that enables them to do so.

FINDINGS: SOUTH  
ASIAN WOMEN ARE  
OVERLOOKED AND  
UNDEREMPLOYED

F.  
SOUTH ASIAN  
WOMEN ARE  
TIME-STARVED:  
THE  
UNREASONABLE  
PRESSURE TO  
CHOOSE  
BETWEEN  
CAREER AND  
FAMILY

Excluding South Asian men, South Asian women reported a **higher sense of being unfairly pressured** to choose between caring for the family and building their career than other women and men.





While 54% of South Asian women feel pressure to choose between career and family, 34% of all women felt the same. Meanwhile, 53% of South Asian men also felt the family/career pressure, compared with 40% of all men.

The cultural expectations placed on South Asian women have resulted in them having less time to devote to career-building activities such as social networking, attending seminars after work, etc.

| Top 2 box on a 5-point agreement scale (strongly / somewhat agree)                                         | Women       |       |         |       |          | Men         |       |         |       |          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|----------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|----------|
|                                                                                                            | South Asian | White | Chinese | Black | Filipino | South Asian | White | Chinese | Black | Filipino |
| My workload in my household has increased since the COVID-19 pandemic began                                | 65%         | 45%   | 46%     | 50%   | 56%      | 62%         | 46%   | 43%     | 66%   | 68%      |
| I experience feelings of being pressured or influenced by family, friends, or members of the community     | 61%         | 36%   | 39%     | 38%   | 48%      | 62%         | 41%   | 30%     | 61%   | 68%      |
| I handle the majority of the childcare responsibilities                                                    | 59%         | 40%   | 36%     | 44%   | 54%      | 55%         | 35%   | 32%     | 61%   | 58%      |
| I feel unfairly pressured that I need to make a choice between caring for my family and building my career | 54%         | 32%   | 37%     | 40%   | 40%      | 53%         | 38%   | 33%     | 33%   | 53%      |





FINDINGS: SOUTH  
ASIAN WOMEN ARE  
OVERLOOKED AND  
UNDEREMPLOYED

**G.**  
SOUTH ASIAN  
WOMEN  
OVERWHELMINGLY  
VALUE DIVERSITY,  
EQUITY AND  
INCLUSION (DEI)  
INITIATIVES

South Asian women reported higher rates than all women and men, **of valuing a diverse leadership, gender diversity targets, inclusion of diverse perspectives and intersectoral tracking of equity and inclusion metrics.**



|                                                                                                            | Women       |       |         |       |          | Men         |       |         |       |          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|----------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|----------|
| Agreement scale (top 2 box on a 5-point scale) that organizations should have                              | South Asian | White | Chinese | Black | Filipino | South Asian | White | Chinese | Black | Filipino |
| A culture of inclusion, safety & belonging                                                                 | 85%         | 76%   | 76%     | 77%   | 87%      | 78%         | 66%   | 75%     | 74%   | 84%      |
| Has a diverse leadership or senior management team                                                         | 84%         | 71%   | 69%     | 71%   | 81%      | 74%         | 64%   | 68%     | 84%   | 84%      |
| Has gender diversity target goals for women within the workforce                                           | 83%         | 65%   | 68%     | 71%   | 76%      | 74%         | 57%   | 63%     | 79%   | 84%      |
| Having feedback mechanisms to capture diverse thoughts / perspectives                                      | 83%         | 75%   | 68%     | 73%   | 86%      | 72%         | 69%   | 70%     | 79%   | 84%      |
| Having measurement, tracking, and reporting systems related to diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives | 83%         | 65%   | 64%     | 77%   | 76%      | 78%         | 60%   | 71%     | 79%   | 79%      |
| Has a dedicated formal team for diversity, equity, and inclusion                                           | 82%         | 68%   | 60%     | 77%   | 76%      | 73%         | 63%   | 64%     | 79%   | 74%      |
| Is supportive of social justice movements                                                                  | 81%         | 69%   | 60%     | 71%   | 75%      | 75%         | 62%   | 66%     | 68%   | 68%      |
| A workforce representative of women                                                                        | 81%         | 70%   | 73%     | 75%   | 79%      | 72%         | 58%   | 66%     | 71%   | 84%      |
| A diverse workforce representative of individuals with disabilities                                        | 81%         | 70%   | 61%     | 71%   | 75%      | 76%         | 64%   | 65%     | 76%   | 84%      |
| Has an active Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) or Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program | 80%         | 66%   | 61%     | 67%   | 78%      | 75%         | 61%   | 68%     | 82%   | 84%      |
| A diverse workforce representative of the visible minority community                                       | 80%         | 65%   | 68%     | 73%   | 81%      | 78%         | 60%   | 65%     | 79%   | 79%      |
| Has diversity target goals for members of the visible minority community                                   | 80%         | 62%   | 60%     | 69%   | 78%      | 77%         | 59%   | 68%     | 82%   | 89%      |
| A diverse workforce representative of the LGBTQ2S+ community                                               | 77%         | 60%   | 53%     | 71%   | 70%      | 70%         | 52%   | 61%     | 53%   | 74%      |
| Has diversity target goals for members of the LGBTQ2S+ community                                           | 73%         | 57%   | 52%     | 63%   | 71%      | 69%         | 53%   | 59%     | 74%   | 84%      |



Likewise, many groups agreed that a company's brand image is improved by having DEI policies, and that DEI policies fostered stronger teams and were beneficial to them as workers.

| Top 2 box importance scale                                                                                        | Women       |       |         |       |          | Men         |       |         |       |          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|----------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|----------|
|                                                                                                                   | South Asian | White | Chinese | Black | Filipino | South Asian | White | Chinese | Black | Filipino |
| Having diversity, equity, and inclusion policies in the workplace helps to improve the brand image of the company | 85%         | 74%   | 75%     | 77%   | 78%      | 80%         | 68%   | 78%     | 84%   | 84%      |
| Diversity, equity, and inclusion policies make for stronger teams in the workplace                                | 83%         | 73%   | 75%     | 87%   | 75%      | 77%         | 66%   | 74%     | 84%   | 84%      |
| Diversity, equity, and inclusion policies are helpful to me                                                       | 82%         | 65%   | 61%     | 79%   | 81%      | 81%         | 58%   | 69%     | 76%   | 89%      |

## FINDINGS: SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN ARE OVERLOOKED AND UNDEREMPLOYED

# H. SUCCESSFUL SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN ARE NOT IMMUNE TO SYSTEMIC BARRIERS AND NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS IN THE WORKPLACE

As noted above, a subset of survey women respondents who self-identified as successful based on agreeing with five statements were placed in a category for successful career progression.

Successful South Asian women were more likely than successful White women to have a professional occupation, such as a doctor, lawyer, accountant or engineer (48% versus 42%, respectively). Furthermore, 64% of successful South Asian women were under 35 years of age, compared to 41% of successful White women.

Finally, having a specialization skillset was viewed as important for elevating careers among successful South Asian women (25%) compared to successful White women (16%).

48% vs 43%

SUCCESSFUL SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE PROFESSIONALS (COMPARED TO SUCCESSFUL WHITE WOMEN)

64% vs 42%

SUCCESSFUL SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE UNDER 35 YEARS OF AGE (COMPARED TO SUCCESSFUL WHITE WOMEN)

25% vs 18%

SUCCESSFUL SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN ARE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE A SPECIALIZED SKILLSET (COMPARED TO SUCCESSFUL WHITE WOMEN)

Successful South Asian women were more likely to identify as a professional (48%) and less likely to be self-employed (15%), and reported higher levels of financial acumen (83%) and entrepreneurial ability (72%).

**Successful South Asian women and other women of colour identified facing significant barriers to their career, at higher rates than successful White women.** This included feeling out of place culturally at work, feeling belittled, being expected to work longer hours than peers, being underutilized in their role and being forced to perform tasks that others do not want to do.

| Top 2 box on a 5-point agreement scale                                         | South Asian Women<br>(self-identify as successful) | White Women<br>(self-identify as successful) | Chinese, Black, Filipino Women<br>(self-identify as successful) |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Culturally speaking, I feel sometimes out of place doing my job or at meetings | 61%                                                | 40%                                          | 47%                                                             |
| Often times, I feel belittled by peers or managers at work                     | 60%                                                | 38%                                          | 51%                                                             |
| I feel that the work that no one wants to do is dumped on me to do             | 60%                                                | 39%                                          | 49%                                                             |
| I am expected to work longer hours compared to my peers                        | 59%                                                | 43%                                          | 51%                                                             |
| I feel I am unfairly passed over for promotions that I feel I deserve          | 57%                                                | 27%                                          | 43%                                                             |
| I am planning on leaving my current job within the next two years              | 57%                                                | 26%                                          | 46%                                                             |
| My skillset is being underutilized                                             | 57%                                                | 39%                                          | 47%                                                             |
| I feel that I am treated less fairly at work compared to some of my peers      | 55%                                                | 32%                                          | 48%                                                             |
| I have experienced verbal harassment / discrimination at work                  | 55%                                                | 31%                                          | 42%                                                             |

Similarly, successful South Asian women were also more likely to point to having had support from a **sponsor and mentor** to help elevate their careers than non-successful South Asian Women. 90% of successful South Asian women reported that someone at work helped them with career progress and said they had a manager who was a mentor and cared about their best interests. This was in comparison to 60% of non-successful South Asian women.

| Top 2 box on a 5-point agreement scale                | South Asian Women<br>(self-identify as successful) | South Asian Women<br>(do not self-identify as successful) | Gap |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| There is someone at work to help to elevate my career | 90%                                                | 56%                                                       | +34 |
| I consider my manager as a mentor                     | 89%                                                | 59%                                                       | +30 |



# UNTAPPING POTENTIAL: HOW LEADERS CAN SUPPORT SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN IN THEIR CAREERS

*Girish Ganesan*  
Senior Vice President  
People at S&P Global



“ Women remain disproportionately responsible for taking care of the home, including raising children. While family friendly work policies such as longer and paid maternity leaves, paternity leaves, optional part-time or shorter work hours and the opportunity to work remotely help address the need for greater flexibility, they fail to address the progression gap. ”

## UNTAPPING POTENTIAL: HOW LEADERS CAN SUPPORT SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN IN THEIR CAREERS

### A. OFFER EFFECTIVE DEI INITIATIVES

Organizations **need DEI programs** to specifically track and better understand South Asian women talent.

Movements such as Black Lives Matter have pushed the need for people in power to move beyond making general statements about a commitment to diversity and instead initiate meaningful change inside organizations.

This has led to the creation of DEI programs for many organizations across Canada. In turn, this helped to elevate social consciousness from coast to coast.

However, South Asian women are typically lumped into a category that includes women of “other ethnicities,” which unfortunately lessens visibility of this cohort.

DEI initiatives should be designed to appreciate and understand the cultural nuances that South Asian women bring to the table and the unique challenges they face (e.g. newcomer challenges, non-Canadian educational credentials, highly educated and qualified yet overlooked, time-starved due to cultural pressures, etc.).

**“ Unless you consciously include,  
you will unconsciously exclude. ”**

*Stephen Frost*

*December 20, 2021, DEI Expert and Consultant*



In recent times, DEI has become increasingly imperative as marginalized groups continue to face systemic issues and barriers within their workplaces and institutions.

DEI initiatives not only foster a sense of trust and belonging at work, they increase employee engagement and retention. Additionally, they can positively affect an organization's image and strengthen workplace teams.<sup>16</sup>

While more employers embrace DEI efforts, many groups, including South Asian women, still lag behind their non visible minority counterparts in career advancement.

Research respondents overwhelmingly reported valuing DEI initiatives and actions in their

workplace. Most respondents value a culture of inclusion, diverse leadership and data that enables reviewing and measuring DEI initiatives.

On average, South Asian women value these actions significantly, suggesting that Canadian companies and organizations must embed meaningful DEI initiatives and actions to appeal to these women, such as tracking and being aware of the challenges they face. In addition, they should be extending their DEI metrics to include South Asian women.

Besides offering meaningful DEI, employers should ensure their recruiters are trained for DEI and to recognize and address unconscious bias in hiring practices.

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<sup>16</sup> Source: <https://www.workhuman.com/resources/globoforce-blog/the-why-behind-d-i-how-diversity-and-inclusion-initiatives-benefit-business>

## UNTAPPING POTENTIAL: HOW LEADERS CAN SUPPORT SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN IN THEIR CAREERS

### B. PROVIDE TARGETED MENTORSHIP AND SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

“It’s challenging for young South Asian and BIPOC women to break the glass ceiling when they don’t see themselves in leadership positions. Corporate Canada needs to champion more women to the top and give young, diverse professionals something to aspire to.

Through sponsorship and mentorship, we can foster confidence in the next generation and empower them to achieve their full potential. Everyone needs to take responsibility to create a more equitable future for all.”

*Jeannine Periera*

Director  
Talent Development & Learning  
EY Canada





Having a mentor and/or sponsor at work significantly impacts South Asian women's perceived progress in their career. Women who self-identified as successful highlighted that they had someone at work to help with their career, a mentor and a manager who cares about their best interests, at higher rates than South Asian women who did not identify as successful.

This is further reflected in successful South Asian women reporting that they see a long-term future at their company, feel empowered at work and have support for their work-life balance. South Asian women who have support in the workplace feel more positively about their work environment.

Both mentorships and sponsorships provide life-changing career opportunities for women. While mentorships help women build their

networks, access leadership pipelines and develop the tools and experience they need to progress, sponsorships help women access opportunities and projects that prepare them for higher positions.

Research published in Employee Relations found that well-run and designed mentorship programs not only benefit the mentees, they benefit the mentors and become a vital part of an organization's cultural change strategy.<sup>18</sup>

Canadian organizations must make a concerted effort to provide mentorship and sponsorship opportunities for South Asian women at the same level and with the same parameters as those provided to other populations. Not only that, but they must ensure that the programs are accessible to South Asian women.

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<sup>18</sup> Source: <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/01425450610704506/full/html>





## UNTAPPING POTENTIAL: HOW LEADERS CAN SUPPORT SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN IN THEIR CAREERS

### C. OFFER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Similar to White, Chinese and Filipino women, South Asian women overwhelmingly value the opportunity for professional development, including higher continuing education, and seminars or training programs.

Such programs enable South Asian women to develop their skills and prepare them to meet the requirements of more senior-level jobs, making professional development programs an important step in career advancement. It's not enough, however, to offer the programs; **companies must ensure employees are aware of the opportunities and have the time to take part in them.**

The rise of micro-credential programs means employees can attain in-demand skills without taking on an enormous time commitment. Micro-credential programs offer employees highly focused, bite-sized information to improve their skills, knowledge and experience. They are shorter term and easier to acquire than degrees and are more cost effective. They can also be individualized to suit the employee's career goals, thus potentially increasing the likelihood of employee participation.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/markcperna/2021/10/05/small-but-mighty-why-micro-credentials-are-huge-for-the-future-of-work/?sh=7c45e0ef302b>

## FINDINGS: SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN ARE OVERLOOKED AND UNDEREMPLOYED

### D. PROVIDE FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

As mentioned previously, COVID-19 has highlighted the benefits of flexible working arrangements. As a result, employers now **see that more flexible working arrangements** - including staff working from home exclusively or working in a hybrid arrangement - are entirely feasible.

This provides a compelling opportunity for companies to access a more diverse workforce by allowing for non-traditional models, including less rigid requirements for where and when work happens.

Flexible work environments are increasingly critical for workers who have many family and personal demands, including multiple generations living in the same space, caring for older parents and/or raising children.

Compared with other women, **South Asian women valued more the ability to work from home exclusively**, while they rated hybrid working models similarly to other women.

## UNTAPPING POTENTIAL: HOW LEADERS CAN SUPPORT SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN IN THEIR CAREERS

### E. RECOGNIZE INTERNATIONAL CREDENTIALS

A barrier to obtaining meaningful work in Canada is not having international credentials or experience valued by Canadian industry associations and organizations. Immigrants who have obtained vital skills, knowledge and experience face the challenge of having to re-obtain credentials in Canada, undergo additional internships (sometimes unpaid), or take additional courses to prove they are capable.



FINDINGS: SOUTH  
ASIAN WOMEN ARE  
OVERLOOKED AND  
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## F. IMPROVE NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES



Access to a professional network is vital to career success. Lack of networking opportunities is a significant contributor to women experiencing a lack of career advancement.<sup>20</sup>

A professional network provides women with the support, resources and connections to facilitate career advancement, as well as guidance in navigating struggles. Women need a close networking circle of other women to gain critical information about how to address gender-based issues at work, such as leadership culture, politics and managing unconscious bias.<sup>21</sup>

Advice and guidance on such issues can enable women to feel more empowered and confident in their career prospects. A major issue with networking is the time commitment. South Asian women led all other survey segments, including both men and women, in reporting that they do not have time to socialize and network with influential people.

<sup>20</sup> Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/markcperna/2021/10/05/small-but-mighty-why-micro-credentials-are-huge-for-the-future-of-work/?sh=7c45e0ef302b>

<sup>21</sup> Source: [qz.com/work/1686082/a-specific-type-of-networking-helps-women-get-top-jobs](https://qz.com/work/1686082/a-specific-type-of-networking-helps-women-get-top-jobs)



# CONCLUSION

“ Every individual deserves the opportunity to maximize their potential. For an even brighter tomorrow, it’s imperative we unlock the talent of all today especially historically underrepresented communities who aspire to expand their contributions. A thriving Canada is one where opportunities for underrepresented populations like South Asian women are in-line with their immense talent. We all are accountable to shape that future. ”



*Jason Thacker*  
SVP Wealth Shared Services  
TD Bank Group

**Given current fertility rates, immigration is key to Canada's growth. A substantial portion of that growth comes from South Asian countries. Currently, employers in Canada are at risk of losing their highly educated and highly skilled employees, especially those of South Asian descent, due to frustrations caused by underemployment, lack of career progress and biases in the workplace.**

There is a long way to go to address these issues, but there are steps that can be taken immediately to begin the process. It is vital for leaders in government and Canadian organizations to take

immediate action to address the issues South Asian women (and all women of colour) experience in the workplace.

Having advocates to champion South Asian women in the workplace and sponsor them as they maneuver in their careers will help them progress to reach their full potential.

Canada must fully realize and harness it's untapped human potential to compete on a global scale.



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