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CANADIAN WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS:
***TOWARDS A DIVERSE,
INCLUSIVE AND INNOVATIVE
ECOSYSTEM***

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OVERVIEW OF THE EDITION

IMAGINING THE NEW ECOSYSTEM

MIRIAM TAYLOR (PhD) is the Director of Partnerships and Publications at the Association for Canadian Studies and the Metropolis Institute. She is Managing Editor of *Canadian Issues* and *Canadian Diversity*.

Created in collaboration with The Women's Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub, this special edition of *Canadian Diversity* entitled, "Canadian Women Entrepreneurs: Towards a Diverse, Inclusive and Innovative Ecosystem", arises in connection with the Women's Entrepreneurship Conference (now postponed until March 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic). The issue outlines the structural challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in different fields and from diverse communities; exposes the need for further research into disaggregated data; and explores innovative approaches to correcting existing inequities in the system for the benefit of the economy as a whole.

In their introduction, Wendy Cukier, Suzanne Gagnon & Tania Saba, point to the ways in which the current social and economic framework limits the full potential of women entrepreneurs. They call for a systemic approach based on understanding the distinct needs and challenges of women so as to determine the interventions required to allow women full inclusion in an ecosystem that fosters innovation and success.

The issue is divided into three sections:

- The Reality of Women in Business;
- An Evolving Ecosystem; and
- The Path to Inclusion.

Section (1) opens with an article by Ingrid C. Chadwick and Alexandra Dawson outlining five common misconceptions about women and entrepreneurship. Pointing to the inaccuracy of such misconceptions is important in itself, but in their exposé the authors succeed in revealing the nature of the structural constraints that are at the root of these stereotypes – an essential first step if we are serious about changing attitudes and perceptions. A second article, by Zohreh Hassannezhad and Shannon Pestun, consists in a very thorough overview of the different models and types of financing available to women entrepreneurs. The article includes a consideration of the systemic and cultural barriers women encounter in seeking and obtaining financing and identifies emerging approaches and initiatives seeking to facilitate access to funding.

Section (2) examines women's entrepreneurial activities in the spheres of global trade, technology and agriculture. In their article on the challenges and opportunities faced by Canadian women entrepreneurs in global trade, Clare Beckton and Janice McDonald go beyond exposing the important challenges faced by women entrepreneurs engaging in international trade to highlight the great potential for the economy as a whole of opening up the pathways for women in the import/export world.

Considering the barriers to women's technology entrepreneurship, Jaigris Hodson, Shandell Houlden, Chandell Gosse,

and Laura Lefevre point in their literature review to women's perceived lack of legitimacy in technology entrepreneurship, a space that continues to be dominated by a male-centric culture. They recommend that "initiatives be introduced at multiple levels, so that problems of culture, access to resources, education, and changes in policy," all be addressed. The building of more tools and the creation of educational opportunities are all essential, according to the authors, to facilitate equal access for women, particularly those in the more precarious budding gig economy.

In an article on women entrepreneurs in agriculture, Gina Grandy, Christie Newton and Amber Fletcher reveal how little is known about women entrepreneurs in the agricultural industry and deplore how often the contributions of these women are overlooked and overshadowed. They identify barriers in the areas of financing, networking, training, and work-life balance. They point to the essential importance of understanding the specific challenges and opportunities faced by women, and accounting for intersectionality and territorial differences, if we are serious about bringing women out of the margins. Indeed, the underrepresentation of women is exposed by the authors as a missed opportunity, as women's new insights and innovative practices enhance not only the industry itself but represent significant social and economic gains for society as a whole.

Section (3) examines the intersectional challenges faced by Indigenous, Black and Immigrant women entrepreneurs and identifies the steps that must be taken to allow them to flourish and contribute to their full potential. Despite a plethora of barriers, explain Ashley Richard and Samantha Morton, Indigenous entrepreneurship is growing at twice the rate of that of non-Indigenous women. However, additional support is lacking and sorely needed. Such programming must be developed with a respect for cultural norms and preferences. Empathy and relationship building, for instance, are key elements in the implementation of any successful program aimed at Indigenous women entrepreneurs.

Nadine Spencer and Jodi-Ann Francis-Walker identify structural factors that limit the growth potential of Black entrepreneurs, such as access to financing, lack of social capital, limited intergenerational wealth and the scarcity of role models. One of the keys to breaking through the limitations imposed by such barriers, explain the authors, is to move away from tendencies to homogenize the Black community. Unless we take fully into account "the differences in culture, historical experiences, and challenges faced by those born in Canada versus those who immigrated to Canada, who also have distinct cultural identities and experiences," we will never understand the dynamics of the Black experience. Building capacity early on by providing access to mentoring, coaching and sponsorship that are culturally appropriate is vital. Fostering the creation of a pool of aspiring young entrepreneurs will add to the

repertoire of available mentors in the community. Like other experts, the authors bemoan the limited availability of disaggregated data, so essential to addressing problems at their root, particularly as regards women entrepreneurs in the Black community.

In their article on the barriers to entrepreneurship for immigrant women, Guang Ying Mo and Ruby Latif also evoke the burden of structural barriers and propose the need for a multileveled approach allowing immigrant women to move beyond challenges to accomplish their goals across the entire ecosystem, from capacity training to networking, from policies to culture, from language to technology.

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP ECOSYSTEM

WENDY CUKIER, MA, MBA, PhD, DU (HC), LLD (HC), MSC, is one of Canada's leading experts in disruptive technologies, innovation processes and diversity. She is the Founder of Ryerson University's Diversity Institute, leading numerous projects aimed at promoting the participation and advancement of underrepresented groups, including women, racialized people and Indigenous peoples. Dr. Cukier has assisted organizations in becoming more inclusive through innovative programs such as DiversityLeads funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, which tracks the progress, impediments and evidenced-based strategies for promoting diversity in organizations.

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INTRODUCTION

In Canada, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) account for the majority of private sector jobs and entrepreneurship is understood to be an engine of economic growth (Government of Canada, 2019). There is considerable research linking diversity and inclusion to innovation and business performance. For example, a study by RBC suggests that

a 10% increase in women-owned SMEs could add \$198 billion to the Canadian GDP (Cooper, 2013). However, Canada's entrepreneurship ecosystem still contains barriers for women¹ entrepreneurs, racialized and immigrant entrepreneurs, and Indigenous entrepreneurs.

This does not dampen the entrepreneurial aspirations of diverse Canadians: numerous studies demonstrate that

1 By women we include those who self-identify as "women" in terms of gender, distinct from sex; our study is inclusive of cis women, trans women, and other women.

immigrants are more likely to be entrepreneurs, sometimes because they are “pushed” or excluded from traditional employment, but more often because they are “pulled” by a compelling opportunity (Diversity Institute, 2017). In fact, a study by Cukier et al. (2017) shows that 81% of immigrants would choose entrepreneurship even if other employment opportunities were available. Additionally, 34.7% of all startups are created by first-generation immigrants in Ontario (Davis et al., 2013), and businesses owned by immigrants are more likely to leverage international connections and to export (Zolin & Schlosser, 2013). The research is complex; there is little doubt that many women and diverse Canadians are over-represented in the gig economy by necessity rather than choice, as they are discriminated against and their labour market mobility is blocked (Dheer, 2018).

“While women and diverse entrepreneurs bring fresh new ideas, services, products, and approaches to the market, they often face difficulties to starting and growing their businesses due to structural barriers.”

Overall, Canadian businesses need to be encouraged to innovate, to grow, and to tackle global markets if they are to scale up. It is often said that Canada does not have a start-up problem, but rather a scale up problem (Cukier et al., 2020). It is important to understand the barriers that businesses led by women and diverse entrepreneurs face and the supports they need to survive and thrive, especially in a post-COVID-19 environment that has disproportionately impacted women. Although there are a variety of entrepreneurship training programs, incubators, development programs, and financing options in Canada, women entrepreneurs currently face barriers in accessing supports (Cukier & Chavoushi, 2020). Research also shows that diverse entrepreneurs, such as immigrant, Indigenous, and Black entrepreneurs, have less access to financing and to other supports (see: Carrington, 2006; Constantinidis et al., 2006; Lee & Black, 2017). This has implications for the entire economy. While women and diverse entrepreneurs bring fresh new ideas, services, products, and approaches to the market, they often face difficulties to starting and growing their businesses due to structural barriers. For example, women account for only 16% of SME majority owners, even though they make up 37.4% of self-employed Canadians – a total that accounts for well over a million women (Statistics Canada, 2020). They are also over-represented in the service industries – e.g. health and beauty, food and hospitality – while underrepresented in technology and manufacturing, which are often more conducive to high growth and export. Women entrepreneurs also make up the majority of self-employed people in health care and social assistance (69.7%), educational services (66%) and other services (55.2%) and are less likely to have incorporated businesses

(ISED, 2018). While the gaps are narrowing, women-led businesses are less likely to be high growth than those owned by men and are slightly less likely to export (ISED, 2018). They tend to have smaller, newer operations and to be under-financed. All of these factors have resulted in women-led businesses being much harder hit by COVID-19 and also less able to access supports. Similar patterns are seen when we look at Indigenous entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs who identify as Black.

A recent survey exemplifies the challenges faced by diverse women entrepreneurs due to COVID-19 in Quebec (Saba & Cachat-Rosset, 2020). In some cases, the experience of diverse racialized and immigrant entrepreneurs are comparable to other entrepreneurs but in other instances, diverse women entrepreneurs find themselves in more difficult situations. They are undeniably in more precarious financial situations as a result of the crisis, while facing barriers to accessing financing. While women entrepreneurs are, in general, in great need of support to turn their businesses around or to expand them, diverse women entrepreneurs report significantly higher needs in terms of expertise and skills development, support for adapting their products and services, and the need for guidance for going digital.

Thanks in part to the government’s Women Entrepreneurship Strategy (WES), which aims to double the number of women owned businesses by 2025, there is growing attention on women and diverse entrepreneurs; however, gaps in the research remain. The Government of Canada has also announced targeted supports for Indigenous and Black entrepreneurs, but more baseline data are needed to assess “what works.” This special issue provides insight into some of the issues that need further exploration, such as the need to challenge current approaches to thinking about women entrepreneurs, as well as the challenges that they face at many levels of the ecosystem, and the particular issues facing women in technology. We also touch on the unique experiences of immigrant entrepreneurs, Black entrepreneurs, Indigenous entrepreneurs, and those in rural communities in an effort to highlight the importance of further investigation and the need for disaggregated data.

“Many of the models and assumptions that underpin current thinking about innovation and entrepreneurship are highly gendered and culturally framed. As a result, the very way in which we think about entrepreneurship and innovation can have the unintended consequence of excluding large segments of the population.”

TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

Much has been written on the importance of creating the conditions to support entrepreneurship and how interconnected ecosystems of organizations can create a context in which entrepreneurs and women-owned SMEs can thrive (see: Cukier et al., 2020; Cafley et al., 2020). Research on global entrepreneurial ecosystems places a priority on post-secondary institutions as drivers of innovation and entrepreneurship through the commercialization of technology. It also focuses on the ways in which infrastructure and government policies can enable or present barriers to entrepreneurship (GEM, 2017). Many of the models and assumptions that underpin current thinking about innovation and entrepreneurship are highly gendered and culturally framed (Beckton et al., 2016; PwC, 2018). As a result, the very way in which we think about entrepreneurship and innovation can have the unintended consequence of excluding large segments of the population. For example, culture and values have a profound impact on shaping the context for entrepreneurship (Cukier, et al., 2014).

“While organizations supporting women entrepreneurs in Canada have made important strides over the last two decades, the resources available to women – particularly to racialized women and Indigenous women – are not as significant as those available for individuals considered to be mainstream or stereotypical entrepreneurs.”

Building on its ecological model for change, the Diversity Institute applies a gender and diversity lens to understand systemic barriers and identify points of leverage to drive change towards an inclusive innovation ecosystem (Cukier et al., 2020). The ecological model considers the ecosystem from the macro-level, the meso-level, and the micro-level. The macro-level includes government policy, planning, taxation, social norms and infrastructure, all of which affect opportunities for entrepreneurs. At the meso-level, organizations can play a significant role in the entrepreneurship ecosystem by supporting R&D, training, financing, and providing business-related supports to stakeholders. There are more than 2,500 of these organizations in Canada and their policies and practices have a profound impact on the opportunities available to entrepreneurs at every stage of development. The Diversity Assessment Tool (Cukier & Smarz, 2012) is particularly well-suited for this purpose. The Diversity Assessment Tool assesses organizational practices, policies, and processes in a comprehensive manner. It examines all aspects of an organization's activities, ranging from governance, human resources, and culture, to procurement, product and program design, and marketing and communications. Using this framework, an organization can evaluate

their activities to better support diverse women entrepreneurs at the meso-level. Finally, at the micro-level, it is critical to consider the knowledge, beliefs and behaviours of individual women entrepreneurs. It is important to think of ways to build interest and capacity in entrepreneurship among women and diverse groups, while challenging the biases, discrimination, and micro-aggressions they face from others in the ecosystem. To increase opportunities for women and entrepreneurs, an integrated strategy needs to be grounded in evidence and needs to target the levers that drive concrete transformations in the ecosystem. While organizations supporting women entrepreneurs in Canada have made important strides over the last two decades, the resources available to women – particularly to racialized women and Indigenous women – are not as significant as those available for individuals considered to be mainstream or stereotypical entrepreneurs (Cukier et al., 2020; Cafley et al., 2020).

DEVELOPING AN INTEGRATED STRATEGY TO “WALK THE TALK”

Much has been written about the issues of gender stereotyping in leadership, management, and expertise, but nowhere is this more pronounced than in entrepreneurship. Discourses of ‘innovation’ tend to synonymize the term with ‘technology,’ which excludes many of the innovations offered in other fields where women entrepreneurs are more prominent, such as the arts and creative industries, social entrepreneurship, the service industry, and accommodation and food services (Cukier et al., 2020). Exclusion occurs despite the inherently entrepreneurial nature of freelance art (Brodman & Berazneva, 2008) and social innovation (Phills et al., 2008). There is nothing in the definition of entrepreneurship that limits it to technology or to for-profit enterprises. Entrepreneurs simply pursue opportunities that they can exploit (Stevenson, 1983; Drucker, 1985). In a broader view, entrepreneurship is a multi-level phenomenon that involves all levels of society – regions, organizations, and individuals – for the purpose of wealth creation (George & Zahra, 2002) or social change (Desa, 2010). However, the strong association of entrepreneurship and innovation with a narrow set of activities permeates our society and shapes the policies and programs available to entrepreneurs, leading to barriers for women and other diverse entrepreneurs.

When studying the discourses about entrepreneurs, it is impossible not to notice that it is gendered and skewed towards technological innovation (Beckton et al., 2016). The lionized image of an entrepreneur is a non-racialized man in the tech sector. These stereotypes exclude women and innovations by women entrepreneurs and create a system in which women are underrepresented at every step of the entrepreneurial journey (PwC, 2018). These stereotypes, which are widely reinforced and reproduced in the media, impact how programs are designed and impact the experiences of women

entrepreneurs navigating these programs. Fundamentally, stereotypes also prevent women from aspiring to be entrepreneurs since everything they see and hear excludes them, and role models that look like them are nowhere to be found (Hamilton, 2013; Mundy, 2014).

“The number of women entrepreneurs is increasing more rapidly than the number of men entrepreneurs, but they are still under-represented and facing discrimination and inequities in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).”

While men occupy the predominant image of the tech entrepreneur, this image is misleading. According to recent research, over half of recently launched online businesses are woman-owned (PayPal Canada and Barraza & Associates, 2018). The number of women entrepreneurs is increasing more rapidly than the number of men entrepreneurs, but they are still under-represented and facing discrimination and inequities in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Gender biases are still strong in the tech industry, and it is challenging for women to access appropriate training, support, and to raise capital.

“Women are more likely to identify as “changemakers” or as artists rather than entrepreneurs, even though these activities are inherently entrepreneurial.”

Cracking cultural stereotypes on multiple levels is one of the toughest challenges in growing women entrepreneurship because it is so pervasive, and affects government policies, entrepreneurial education, organizational practices as well as individual beliefs and behaviours (Cukier & Chavoushi, 2020). For example, in many cultures, entrepreneurship is the domain of men. Entrepreneurial behaviour is thought to be a “masculine” trait, and women are perceived as “risk averse” and “untrustworthy” (Jennings & Brush, 2013). These cultural stereotypes also lead to differences in how men and women evaluate business opportunities (Gupta et al., 2014) and also how they are judged. Identical pitches presented by men and women entrepreneurs, for example, produce very different results (Balachandra et al., 2019). So deeply rooted is this definition of “entrepreneurship” that most women do not immediately identify with it. This is particularly true of Indigenous peoples. For example, if asked, “do you want to start a business,” many Indigenous entrepreneurs will say no; however, if asked, “do you want to support your community,” they will say yes (CCAB, 2016). Similarly, women are more likely to identify as “changemakers” or as artists rather than

entrepreneurs, even though these activities are inherently entrepreneurial.

Women's challenges in entrepreneurship range from lack of training and mentorship to trouble with raising capital due to gender bias. The start-up ecosystem is mainly characterized by a “bro culture” of “alpha males” (Korreck, 2019). As such, women are less inclined to participate in technological entrepreneurship. The masculine corporate culture is often cited as a barrier to women's success as entrepreneurs (Korreck, 2019). The differences in the connectivity, density, and strength of networks among stakeholders, along with the formation of socially separated clusters, can impact the inclusiveness of an entrepreneurial environment (Neumeyer et al., 2019). Yet the conventional approach in entrepreneurship studies often only considers these issues in isolation, rather than examining the system and the critical inter-related issues that constitute it. The dominance of men in the tech sector makes it socially inhospitable to women and leads to a scarcity of female role models in the field (Ezzedeen & Zikic, 2012).

Stereotypes and prejudice lead to another major hurdle faced by women entrepreneurs: access to financing. Women are under-represented as decision makers. They represent only 15.2% of partners and 11.8% of managing partners in venture capital firms in Canada, which can turn women entrepreneurs into “discouraged borrowers” (Prasad, 2009). In the end, women entrepreneurs seek and receive less financing than men (32.6% vs. 38%) and over 83% of women-owned SMEs use personal sources of financing to start their business (Cukier et al., 2020). This phenomenon is not limited to Canada. Globally, the research points to gender-based barriers for access to financing for women (Constantinidis et al., 2006). In order to inform concrete recommendations, more research on the Canadian context is required.

Women entrepreneurs also face challenges in exporting. However, there has been a positive trend in recent years; the number of women-owned businesses exporting their goods and services has nearly doubled between 2011 and 2017, from 5.7% to 10.8%. During that same period, the increase experienced by men-owned businesses was much more modest, increasing from 11.8% in 2011 to 13.6% in 2017 (ISED, 2018). The sharp increase is partly associated with sectoral shifts, strengthening the conclusion that many of the barriers are structural. It is harder for women entrepreneurs to export in some sectors (where they are often overrepresented) (Cukier et al., 2020). Indeed, the increased number of exporting women-owned businesses is accompanied by an increase in manufacturing and wholesale trade and a decrease in accommodation and food services.

At the individual level, research suggests that stereotypes affect entrepreneurial intention, career preferences, and alertness to new business opportunities. A proactive personality, entrepreneurial self-efficacy and creativity are all positively

correlated with entrepreneurial intentions (e.g. Fuller et al., 2018; Gupta & Bhawe, 2007). Entrepreneurial intent and behaviour can be affected by social and psychological variables (motive, value sets, and attitudes), as well as by personal demographic characteristics (age, formal education, family and professional experience, marital status and gender) (Robichaud et al., 2018). The socialization process (family, formal and informal education, professional experiences, etc.) also adds an additional layer to the process of developing entrepreneurial intent. However, the barriers in the societal and organizational levels also affect women's individual beliefs and behaviours. Systemic barriers can discourage potential entrepreneurs.

How do we overcome the barriers confronted by women entrepreneurs? Diversity is good business and good business is often about measuring performance – “what gets measured, gets done” (Cukier et al., 2020). There needs to be a framework to evaluate strategies aiming to advance women's entrepreneurship. Women entrepreneurs are defined in many ways, and many self-employed women who are entrepreneurs do not identify as such, all of which complicates the development of approaches to evaluating diversity and inclusion. Evaluating the innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem requires a multi-layered approach that is inclusive and applies an intersectional lens.

“Women entrepreneurs are not a monolithic group, and we need to be careful to address this when developing systems and policies.”

THE NEED TO APPLY AN INTERSECTIONAL LENS

“Women entrepreneurs” are not a monolithic group, and we need to be careful to address this when developing systems and policies. Researching women entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds yields rich stories about when and why they chose to become entrepreneurs (Diversity Institute 2017; Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Dheer, 2018; Hou & Wang, 2011). For instance, immigrant women will often become entrepreneurs because they are excluded from traditional job markets. According to Cukier et al. (2020), they also engage in entrepreneurship as a result of the discrimination they face and the lack of labour market mobility in Canada (Dheer, 2018).

Immigrant entrepreneurs are an important part of the Canadian economy. In some ethnic groups of immigrants, women's self-employment rates are higher than the Canadian national average, because self-employment presents a potential for economic independence and an alternative when cultural or family obligations make it less practical to take traditional jobs (Hou & Wang, 2011). However, as in the case

of women entrepreneurs in general, immigrant women entrepreneurs face barriers ranging from a lack of support to a lack of tools that would help them develop their businesses. This holds true even when taking into account the fact that immigrants often have better-than-average credentials, higher levels of entrepreneurial intent, superior aptitudes, knowledge of global markets and global networks, strong community ties, and social capital (Dheer, 2018). Despite these qualifications, women immigrant entrepreneurs face the compounded barriers of being women and immigrants.

“Definitions matter; self-employment needs to be included as entrepreneurship, because it has considerable impact on what activities are counted and supported by policies and by training programs for entrepreneurs.”

Indigenous women entrepreneurs are another group that require further study through an intersectional lens. The lack of resources, infrastructure, and opportunities on reserves increases the barriers for this group. Indigenous women are more likely than other women to pursue entrepreneurship, especially when including self-employment (Cukier et al., 2020). This is true despite the fact that Indigenous peoples as a whole report lower rates of entrepreneurship. As discussed earlier, definitions matter; self-employment needs to be included as entrepreneurship, because it has considerable impact on what activities are counted and supported by policies and by training programs for entrepreneurs.

“What is needed to advance diversity and inclusion in the entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem is a systemic approach that applies rigorous and appropriate evaluation.”

While farmers represent a long-standing example of Canadian entrepreneurship, they are often completely ignored in discussions on entrepreneurship and diversity. While the farming sector remains quite patriarchal, women entrepreneurs are also active in the sector (Contzen & Forney, 2016). In the farming sector, women are under-represented as majority owners of farms even though they often have shared ownership with their partners (CAHRC, 2019). In this sector, farmers depend significantly on financial institutions for capital. They need capital to operate, but they also need capital as they are highly vulnerable to disasters in ways that entrepreneurs in other sectors are not. In Canada's rural and northern communities, there are several obvious barriers to entrepreneurship, including a lack of appropriate infrastructure, access to training and self-confidence, as well as double standards for women (Saugeres, 2002; Wright and Annes, 2016; CAHRC, 2015).

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The problem is multi-layered and multi-faceted, and the stakes are high. There is no simple solution that will suddenly create a diverse and inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem. We need to focus on an approach that is layered and that will foster concrete and transformative change, especially in the context of COVID-19, which has disproportionately impacted women entrepreneurs. Based on a recent report by Cukier et al. (2020), key recommendations include:

- Challenging stereotypes by changing the discourses and showcasing women and diverse role models;
- Advancing affirmative actions, such as targets and supplier diversity programs for women and diverse groups in procurement, and making sure to define entrepreneurs in a way that is inclusive of self-employment;
- Addressing policy gaps and programming at the societal level;
- Applying a gender and diversity lens and collecting disaggregated data on COVID-19 impacts, as well as on programs supporting entrepreneurs;
- Ensuring that adequate attention is paid to supports such as affordable and accessible childcare and home-schooling for children, which are particularly critical for immigrant women;
- Considering innovative approaches to meet women's needs – crowdfunding, micro-grants, customized counselling, mentoring and sponsorship;
- Using levers, such as funding instruments, advocacy and organizational practices, and making them more inclusive;
- Addressing individual issues that affect behaviours, perceptions, and choices to ensure that women see opportunities;
- Rigorously assessing best practices to develop a coherent strategy.

What is needed to advance diversity and inclusion in the entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem is a systemic approach that applies rigorous and appropriate evaluation. By doing this, it is possible to gain insights and to better understand the types of interventions that improve the ecosystem at all levels in Canada. COVID-19 is impacting everyone, but we need to ensure that women are not disproportionately impacted and that efforts toward full inclusion continue to move forward.

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FIVE COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT WOMEN AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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Women entrepreneurs represent a critical resource for the Canadian economy and society as a whole. However, women continue to remain underrepresented despite being the fastest growing segment of entrepreneurs worldwide.¹ This underrepresentation of women in entrepreneurship is harmful for both the economy and progress towards equality. As illustrated by a recent study by the Boston Consulting Group,² if women participated in entrepreneurship as much as men do, global GDP would rise by an estimated 3%-6%, adding

\$2.5-\$5 trillion to the global economy. In Canada, raising participation of women in the economy to the level of that of men would add an estimated \$150 billion to GDP.³ These important considerations have led the Government of Canada to take action. More specifically, the government launched the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy⁴ (WES) in 2018. The strategy committed an overall \$5-billion investment to support women in entrepreneurship, with the goal of doubling the number of women-owned businesses by 2025; a number that

1 Elam, A. B. Brush, C. G., Greene, P. G., Baumer, B., Dean, M. & Heavlow, R. (2019). *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2018/19 Women's Entrepreneurship Report*. www.gemconsortium.org/file/open?fileId=50405

2 www.bcg.com/publications/2019/boost-global-economy-5-trillion-dollar-support-women-entrepreneurs.aspx

3 www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/107.nsf/eng/home

4 www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/107.nsf/eng/home

has increased by 50% between 2014 and 2017, signalling that, while a challenging goal, doubling the number is not unrealistic.⁵

“In Canada, raising participation by women in the economy to the level of that of men would add an estimated \$150 billion to GDP.”

Fuelled by this momentum, this article aims to contribute to the debate on making entrepreneurship more gender inclusive by offering evidence-based insights grounded in research on entrepreneurial intent and gender norms to help address common misconceptions about motivation, success, funding capabilities, risk-taking, and established networks about women and entrepreneurship. By shedding light on these persistent misconceptions, we hope to further spur this important debate and encourage sustainable and concrete transformational efforts toward greater gender inclusivity in entrepreneurship moving forward.

MISCONCEPTION 1: “WOMEN ARE NOT MOTIVATED TO BECOME ENTREPRENEURS”

One of the preeminent misconceptions about women and entrepreneurship is that (1) “women are not motivated to become entrepreneurs.” While it is true that women are less likely than men to start a business, the difference is not as striking as one may assume. For example, while women only own 15.6% of Canada’s small- and medium-sized businesses in 2017, women accounted for 37% of self-employed Canadians in 2019,⁶ a significant number that signals a strong entrepreneurial interest. Women are also highly likely to be self-employed without describing themselves as entrepreneurs, which largely decreases the proportion of entrepreneurs who are women.⁷ Additionally, the language surrounding

entrepreneurship tends to be more masculine,^{8,9} with words describing entrepreneurs typically being “risk taker,” “achievement-oriented,” and “confident.” When thinking about great self-made entrepreneurs, many will be able to quickly name men such as Bill Gates, but far fewer will think of Sara Blakely even if given time to do so. Taken together, the masculine norms and characteristics surrounding entrepreneurship contribute to misconceptions about women as being less suited to be entrepreneurs, ultimately driving women away from pursuing entrepreneurship.

“When thinking about great self-made entrepreneurs, many will be able to quickly name men such as Bill Gates, but far fewer will think of Sara Blakely even if given time to do so.”

MISCONCEPTION 2: “WOMEN ARE NOT SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEURS”

Another misconception is that (2) “women are not successful as entrepreneurs.” As shown by a 2018 study by the Boston Consulting Group,¹⁰ startups founded or cofounded by women actually tend to perform better over time, generating 10% higher revenue over a five-year period. Part of the explanation for the misconception about women’s limited entrepreneurial success lies in the masculine norms surrounding entrepreneurship, whereby entrepreneurial ventures mainly receive attention as a function of how large, profitable, high growth, and internationally connected they are. These characteristics are more common in male-run ventures, and as such, the current metrics exacerbate the gender imbalance.¹¹ Research has shown that the myth surrounding underperforming women entrepreneurs stems from the disconnection between a traditionally more masculine definition of entrepreneurial success and the different entrepreneurial motivations that women tend to have, in terms of the types of goals and

5 Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub (2020). The State of Women’s Entrepreneurship in Canada 2020. Toronto: Diversity Institute, Ryerson University.

6 Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub (2020). The State of Women’s Entrepreneurship in Canada 2020. Toronto: Diversity Institute, Ryerson University.

7 Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub (2020). The State of Women’s Entrepreneurship in Canada 2020. Toronto: Diversity Institute, Ryerson University.

8 De Bruin, A., Brush, C.G. & Welter, F. (2006). Introduction to the special issue: towards building cumulative knowledge on women’s entrepreneurship. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 30(5), 585-593.

9 Winn, J. (2005). Women entrepreneurs: can we remove the barriers? *The International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 1(3), 381-397.

10 www.bcg.com/publications/2018/why-women-owned-startups-are-better-bet.aspx

11 Marlow, S. & McAdam, M. (2013). Gender and entrepreneurship: advancing debate and challenging myths; exploring the mystery of the under-performing female entrepreneur. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior and Research*, 19 (1), 114-124.

industries they prioritize.¹² For example, women have been shown to focus more on socioemotional motives, including an emphasis on employee and family relationships and the ability to have a positive societal impact, and they have a higher presence in consumer service industries where profitability is lower and investors are less likely to place their money.¹³

“By measuring and valuing a more gender-inclusive view of entrepreneurship and expanding what it means to be successful, there is a lower chance that we will miss the opportunity of supporting more women pursuing entrepreneurship at all stages of growth and profitability, using business models that suit them and their desires, in all types of industries.”

These different motives and priorities help explain why women are more likely to run smaller businesses with lower profitability and growth relative to men, but it is critical to emphasize that lower performance is not the same as under-performance. That is, traditional measures of success have been developed for male-led entrepreneurship, and, as a result, we need to consider other measures of success, such as social impact, to capture the effects of women who pursue non-traditional entrepreneurial paths. The point here is not to minimize the low number of women who are business owners, nor to ignore women entrepreneurs who start innovative and high growth ventures, but rather to highlight the need to incorporate a broader conceptualization of entrepreneurship in general and of entrepreneurial success in particular. By measuring and valuing a more gender-inclusive view of entrepreneurship and expanding what it means to be successful, there is a lower chance that we will miss the opportunity of supporting more women pursuing entrepreneurship at all stages of growth and profitability, using business models that suit them and their desires, in all types of industries.

MISCONCEPTION 3: “WOMEN ARE NOT CAPABLE OF SECURING ENOUGH FUNDING FOR THEIR BUSINESS”

Another misconception about women entrepreneurs is that (3) “women are not capable of securing enough funding for their business.” While women are less likely to receive financial backing as entrepreneurs, research does not suggest that this is due to their lack of capabilities.¹⁴ Rather, scholars have found that women are less likely to ask for financial funding, especially larger amounts, either because they do not require it or because they are discouraged from applying due to the fear of rejection stemming from the masculine stereotypes surrounding entrepreneurship. Indeed, research shows that, when women do ask for financial backing, they are asked different types of questions, and that these questions hold them back relative to men.¹⁵ That is, finance providers tend to ask women prevention-focused questions that concentrate on their potential failures, while men are asked promotion-focused questions that centre on potential and expected success. Not surprisingly, women’s prevention-focused questions do not instill confidence in their entrepreneurial endeavours, which helps explain why they tend to receive less funding. Overall, this misconception that women’s lack of financial backing is due to their own inability to be successful as entrepreneurs is harmful as it does not properly address the reason for this financial imbalance. Rather, there is a clear need for eliminating gender biases in the financial allocation process, particularly with regard to the types of evaluations that are put in place in order to encourage more women entrepreneurs to request the appropriate funding support.

“We are more used to reading accounts about entrepreneurs taking financial risk (more typical of men) and less about risk relating to standing up for what you believe is right or choosing the ethical route when faced with a dilemma, even if this means lower financial success.”

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- 12 Marlow, S. & McAdam, M. (2013). Gender and entrepreneurship: advancing debate and challenging myths; exploring the mystery of the under-performing female entrepreneur. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior and Research*, 19 (1), 114-124.
- 13 Eddleston, K. A., & Powell, G. N. (2008). The role of gender identity in explaining sex differences in business owners’ career satisfier preferences. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 23(2), 244-256. Jennings, J. E. & Brush, C. G. (2013). Research on women entrepreneurs: Challenges to (and from) the broader entrepreneurship literature? *Academy of Management Annals*, 7(1), 661-713.
- 14 Orser, B.J., Riding, A.L. & Manley, K. (2006). Women entrepreneurs and financial capital. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 30(5), 643-665.
- 15 Kanze, D., Huang, L., Conley, M. A., & Higgins, E. T. (2018). We ask men to win and women not to lose: Closing the gender gap in startup funding. *Academy of Management Journal*, 61(2), 586-614.

MISCONCEPTION 4: “WOMEN DO NOT BECOME ENTREPRENEURS BECAUSE THEY ARE RISK AVERSE”

Women's attitude toward risk and failure is another misconception in entrepreneurship: (4) “women do not become entrepreneurs because they are risk averse.” Certainly, there is some research that points to this misconception being true, although it is by no means a “trait” that is typical of most women^{16,17}. We suggest two possible explanations for this. First, it is due to the way women are socialized in line with cultural norms and expectations.¹⁸ For example, studies indicate that men tend to be overconfident and more optimistic than women with regard to the likelihood of achieving high gains. Second, this misconception is often due to the definition of risk and the stories we are exposed to.¹⁹ We are more used to reading accounts about entrepreneurs taking financial risk (more typical of men) and less about risk relating to standing up for what you believe is right or choosing the ethical route when faced with a dilemma, even if this means lower financial success. In general, women tend to take the latter type of risk more than men do. Therefore, we need to address this cultural bias and take a broader view of entrepreneurial risk (in line with a broader view of entrepreneurship, as advocated above) that goes beyond the purely financial one.

MISCONCEPTION 5: “WOMEN DO NOT ESTABLISH THE RIGHT NETWORKS TO BECOME SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEURS”

A final misconception we would like to address here is that (5) “women do not establish the right networks to become successful entrepreneurs.” Research has shown that women generally develop more formal mentoring and networking relationships (i.e., with the assistance or intervention of external organizations) than men, who tend to have more

informal (i.e., spontaneous) ones alongside the formal ones.²⁰ Compared to informal mentoring, studies have suggested that formal mentoring provides fewer benefits in terms of career development and psychosocial functions (such as developing a sense of professional self and providing counselling or role modelling) and is generally less effective.²¹ However, while research indicates that informal mentoring is more effective than the formal type, there is no evidence to suggest that women entrepreneurs' less developed informal networks are a result of preferences or inability to connect informally with other individuals. If women are less likely to engage in informal mentoring, it is rather because women are less likely to know other women entrepreneurs personally since there are fewer women than men entrepreneurs (and women tend to seek out other women for support).²² Despite this limitation, women are actually more active than men in supporting other women. A report by Catalyst indicated that 65% of high potential women who received career development support later actively supported other women in their career (compared to only 56% of men).²³ Also, formal networks have been shown to work (despite research pointing to informal networks being more effective): for example, an Ernst & Young survey concluded that 27% of women who participated in teaming/mentoring programs had “easy” access to funding compared to 19% of women entrepreneurs overall.²⁴

“Rather than discounting formal networking as being less effective than informal networking, we need to continue encouraging women to enter entrepreneurship because, as the number of women entrepreneurs increases, we can expect there to be additional opportunities to network informally as well.”

16 Jianakoplos, N.A., & Bernasek, A. (1998). Are women more risk averse? *Economic Inquiry*, 36(4), 620-630.

17 Caliendo, M., Fossen, F. M., & Kritikos, A. S. (2009). Risk attitudes of nascent entrepreneurs – new evidence from an experimentally validated survey. *Small Business Economics*, 32(2), 153-167.

18 Ragins, B. R. & Cotton, J. L. (1991). Easier said than done: Gender differences in perceived barriers to gaining a mentor. *Academy of Management Journal*, 34(4), 939-951.

19 Ragins, B. R. & Cotton, J. L. (1999). Mentor functions and outcomes: A comparison of men and women in formal and informal mentoring relationships. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 84(4), 529-550.

20 [www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY_Its_who_you_know_Women_entrepreneurs_and_the_impact_of_networks/\\$FILE/EY-Its-who-you-know-Women-entrepreneurs.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY_Its_who_you_know_Women_entrepreneurs_and_the_impact_of_networks/$FILE/EY-Its-who-you-know-Women-entrepreneurs.pdf)

21 www.catalyst.org/research/high-potentials-in-the-pipeline-leaders-pay-it-forward/

22 [www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY_Its_who_you_know_Women_entrepreneurs_and_the_impact_of_networks/\\$FILE/EY-Its-who-you-know-Women-entrepreneurs.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY_Its_who_you_know_Women_entrepreneurs_and_the_impact_of_networks/$FILE/EY-Its-who-you-know-Women-entrepreneurs.pdf)

23 McAdam, M., Harrison, R. T., & Leitch, C. M. (2019). Stories from the field: Women's networking as gender capital in entrepreneurial ecosystems. *Small Business Economics*, 53(2), 459-474.

24 Ajzen, I. 1991. The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2): 179-211.

Having said that, the focus on all-woman networks needs to be addressed as it can ghettoize women entrepreneurs as opposed to giving them access to a more diverse network.²⁵ In sum, women entrepreneurs have fewer opportunities to network and find mentors informally, but this is due not to their preference for this type of networking nor to an inability to create informal ties with other individuals. It is due, rather, to an overall lack of women entrepreneurs with whom to connect informally. In addition, when women join formal networks, they greatly benefit from this support and tend to “pay it forward” to help other women entrepreneurs. Therefore, rather than discounting formal networking as being less effective than informal networking, we need to continue encouraging women to enter entrepreneurship because, as the number of women entrepreneurs increases, we can expect there to be additional opportunities to network informally as well. Both types of networking clearly need to be encouraged in order to transfer expertise, build reputation, access funding, and generally provide tangible and intangible resources to women entrepreneurs.

With the goal of contributing to the current debate about the need for more gender inclusivity in entrepreneurship, this article sheds light on five critical misconceptions about women and entrepreneurship that are harmful to women's motivation and ability to succeed as entrepreneurs. These misconceptions have emerged due to the masculine nature of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, and, for that reason, until we are able to promote a more inclusive view of entrepreneurship, the present context is likely to continue to discourage women entrepreneurs. To accomplish this, we – researchers and practitioners alike – need to engage in efforts toward change targeting attitudes, beliefs, and social norms surrounding entrepreneurship.

According to one of the most influential theories predicting entrepreneurial behaviour, the Theory of Planned Behaviour,²⁶ individuals' motivation toward entrepreneurship stems from three factors. Individuals are more likely to want to become entrepreneurs if:

- they have a positive attitude toward entrepreneurship;
- they believe they have the ability to become entrepreneurs (based on past experiences and anticipated obstacles); and
- they believe others around them approve of them as entrepreneurs.

Considering the role of the social context in shaping individuals' beliefs and attitudes, it is clear that current gender biases work against all three of these factors for women and are thus particularly detrimental to women's entrepreneurship.

More specifically, and as illustrated in the common misconceptions described above, gender biases are likely to:

- reduce women's positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship;
- make them less confident in their capabilities as entrepreneurs; and
- make them question others' support of them as entrepreneurs relative to men.

Therefore, if we want to encourage more women to enter and succeed in entrepreneurship, we need to address the underlying gender biases currently holding women back.

While eradicating gender bias in the short run is an unrealistic task, the Canadian Government's Women Entrepreneurship Strategy is pushing us toward having a constructive dialogue about what is working and what is not when it comes to the promotion of more women entrepreneurs. Its provision of financial backing and educational support for women entrepreneurs is also critical in this regard. Having said that, we need to keep in mind that, to increase entrepreneurial behaviour, research points to the importance of changing attitudes, beliefs, and social pressures more broadly. Further effort is thus imperative to promote women's attitudes and beliefs about the desirability of becoming entrepreneurs, including more attention to how we can eradicate biases creating obstacles in the current educational, social, and financial systems. By offering evidence-based insights into commonly held misconceptions about women as entrepreneurs, we hope to highlight what some of these obstacles are. More specifically, we have illustrated the need to measure entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial success in a more comprehensive way to ensure we support more women who tend to have smaller businesses with fewer employees and with various objectives. For example, challenging stereotypes which associate entrepreneurship with technology and ensure there is support in other sectors where women are more likely to be found – services, retail, hospitality – is critical. Additionally, it is important to recognize that women entrepreneurs are highly diverse and no one size fits all. We have emphasized the need for financial providers to avoid the use of gender-biased questions and evaluations to avoid missing

25 McAdam, M., Harrison, R. T., & Leitch, C. M. (2019). Stories from the field: Women's networking as gender capital in entrepreneurial ecosystems. *Small Business Economics*, 53(2), 459–474.

26 Ajzen, I. 1991. *The theory of planned behavior*. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2): 179–211.

opportunities in funding women's businesses. Prospective entrepreneurs should be evaluated according to the same criteria, with the same questions. We have also encouraged a debate aimed at broadening society's view of entrepreneurial risk taking by pointing out that the situation is considerably more nuanced than simply saying, "men entrepreneurs are risk takers and women entrepreneurs are risk averse". Lastly, we have advocated for continued support for formal networking opportunities, despite evidence pointing to the greater effectiveness of informal networking, at least until women have access to a greater pool of other women (and men) entrepreneurs who can act as informal mentors, supporters, and sponsors. Overall, we encourage policymakers, educators, and entrepreneurial support organizations to address these gendered challenges to help create impactful and sustainable change for more gender inclusivity among Canada's entrepreneurs.

FINANCING FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS¹

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SHANNON PESTUN is a proud Metis woman entrepreneur and Senior Adviser, Business and Finance for the Women's Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub (WEKH). Shannon is leading WEKH's work in mapping Canada's financial ecosystem and building programming that increases women's access to financial, social and entrepreneurial capital. A former business banker, Shannon's commitment to advancing women's entrepreneurship has been widely recognized. In 2019, she was appointed to serve on Canada's women's entrepreneurship strategy expert panel. She was also recognized as a SHEInnovator by SHEInnovates Alberta, a pilot chapter for UN Women and a finalist for the Diversity Ambassador of the Year award by Women in Finance – Canada.

FINANCING FOR ENTREPRENEURS IN CANADA

Multiple studies have concluded that Canada does not have a startup problem but rather a scale up problem. While Canada has a high rate of companies achieving high growth in the first five years, few break into the ranks of 100 plus employees. Many of the enterprises, particularly those owned by women, stay small. The reasons for this are complex and multilayered. While issues surrounding access to investment and particularly to venture capital are often illustrated with apocryphal stories of Canadian entrepreneurs having an easier time finding capital abroad than at home, there is no easy fix. A study from BDC, for example, noted that micro-businesses account for the lion's share of growth in businesses in recent years, and that, each year, only 2% of mid-sized Canadian businesses succeed in becoming large businesses, exceeding the 500-employee mark. Those more likely to become large typically were:

1. more productive than their competitors in the same economic sector;
2. had invested more significantly in their fixed assets; and
3. were present in at least three Canadian provinces (Ratte, 2016).

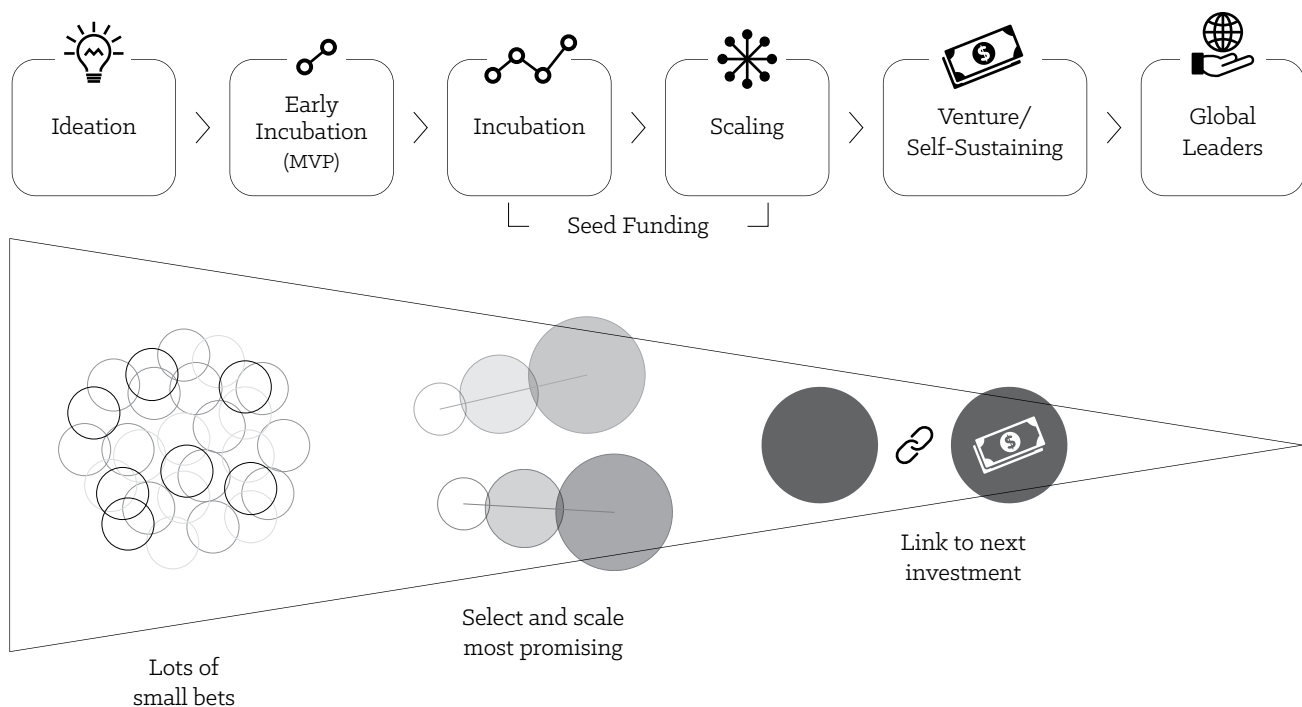
“There is actually limited empirical research in Canada on what works and when to help companies scale, and there is very little that looks specifically at women-owned businesses.”

1 Portions of this paper are adapted from Cukier, W., et. al., (2020) The State of Women Entrepreneurship in Canada. Toronto: Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub. <https://wekh.ca/research/the-state-of-womens-entrepreneurship-in-canada>.

Other experts have maintained that the secret to growth is not just access to financing but also access to markets, particularly big customers, and that procurement is a critical tool. In addition, access to talent has been identified as a critical issue in efforts to scale in all sectors but particularly the technological one (Ruffolo, 2018). Other specialists focus on the need for professional management, leadership and ensuring that financing is coupled with capacity building on every level (Moresby & Guinea, 2018). Still others point to fragmentation in the system and the challenges in navigating to the next stage – stories abound of startups lurching from pitch competition

to pitch competition or being distracted with fee for service work in the absence of financing. But in spite of the extensive discussions about the challenges of scaling up and the recommendations of industry experts and associations, there is actually limited empirical research in Canada on what works and when to help companies scale, and there is very little that looks specifically at women-owned businesses (Rowe et al., 2019). Also, important to note is that many of these traditional models are based on the assumption that all entrepreneurs aspire to grow their businesses, which is not always true for women (Morris et al., 2006).

FIGURE 1: INCUBATION PIPELINE



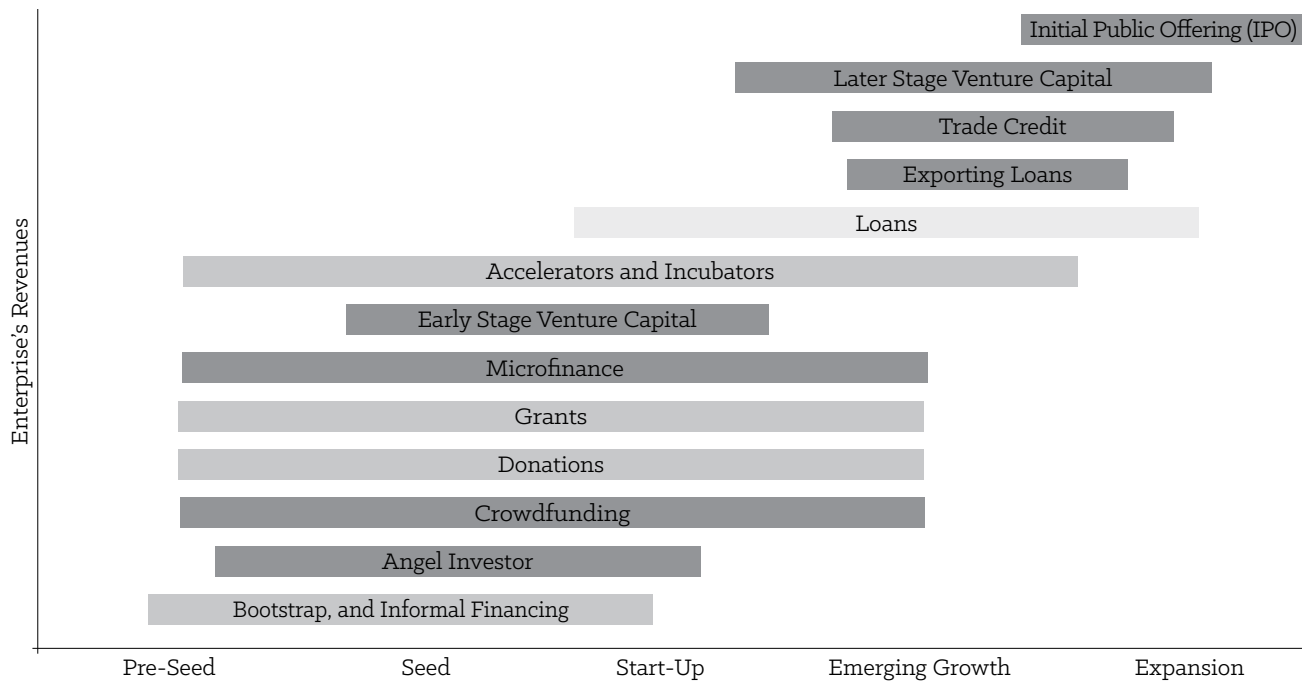
STARTUP FUNDING

Startup funding comes in many forms, e.g., bootstrapping, microfinance such as small business loans and credit cards, or giving up equity in exchange for early stage financing. Equity financing often involves venture capitalists or angel investors. However, as today's financial landscape continues to evolve, startups are accessing capital in less conventional manners that can provide them the funding they need when big banks will not. While generally startup funding starts with the investors personal cash, depending on the types of business, the next steps might differ. For technology-based businesses,

the next step is angel capital and early stage venture capital funds, but for all other startups (which may include main-street operational businesses), small business loans, and start up grants can be a good choice. The Government of Canada small business loans programme, for example, helps entrepreneurs launch a business by providing loans for equipment and leasehold improvements – even if a business isn't yet operational.

Entrepreneurs can access finance from different sources, ranging from their personal investment to venture capitalists and the public stock market (Table 1).

FIGURE 2: THE FINANCING DIAGRAM (ESCALANTE, 2018)



DIFFERENT TYPES OF FINANCING EXPLAINED

BOOTSTRAPPING AND INFORMAL FINANCING

Bootstrapping has been defined in many ways in the literature, yet has remained somewhat understudied (Smith, 2009). For instance, Winborg and Landström referred to bootstrapping as “methods for meeting the need for resources without relying on long-term external finance from debt holders and/or new owners” (Winborg & Landström, 2001). Globally, the notion refers to creative financing that does not rely on more traditional external sources of financing and equity (Van Osnabrugge & Robinson, 2000; Freear, et al., 1995; Harrison et al., 2004). Often characterized as facing high uncertainty, startups must frequently explore the avenue of bootstrapping given the unwillingness of big banks and venture capitalists to take a chance on them (Smith, 2009). Research has also found that high-growth women entrepreneurs are more likely to finance their growth with personal and business equity funding (Yacus et al., 2019). For women entrepreneurs specifically, obtaining access to finance has been historically complicated, no doubt to some extent as a function of implicit bias and sexism (Coleman & Robb, 2009; Orser et al., 2000; Yakus et al., 2019). The literature suggests that bootstrapping and informal financing is important to business startups, especially when they are not successful in or discouraged from acquiring formal finance or when their strong social ties make it easy to

bootstrap finance (Atherthon, 2012). In Canada, over 83% of women-owned SME’s use personal sources of financing to start their businesses and only 18.8% of women entrepreneurs in Canada tend to acquire finance from their friends or relatives (ISED, 2018). Funding from family and friends is somehow neglected in academic finance literature due to the sparseness of reliable data on this issue (Basu & Parker, 2001).

ANGEL CAPITAL

An angel investor is a high net-worth individual who provides financial backing for small startups or entrepreneurs. Angel capital refers to the funds that “angel investors” provide either as a one-time injection to help the business get off the ground or as an ongoing injection to support and carry the company through its difficult early stages. Angel investors supply funding in exchange for taking an equity position in the company.

CROWDFUNDING

Crowdfunding is a collaborative finance alternative that pools small amounts of money from numerous people, usually via web platforms, to fund a specific project (Braund & Schwittay, 2016). Crowdfunding has proved to be a successful

mechanism to help women entrepreneurs raise capital when resources are scarce (Greenberg & Gerber, 2012). Crowdfunding reports show that it's the only financing avenue where women are outperforming men (PwC, 2017). Capital is often raised through online social networks in which the large audience (the "crowd") contribute a small amount of money (Kuppuswamy & Bayus, 2013). When raising financial resources to start a business, crowdfunding may offer an attractive alternative for women entrepreneurs who face more barriers to accessing traditional financing.

“Crowdfunding reports show that it's the only financing avenue where women are outperforming men.”

DONATIONS

A Donation is capital given by anyone for charitable purposes and to benefit a cause. Donations for startups and businesses are not repayable and there is no financial repayment expectation for the donated funds.

GRANTS

Grants are often thought of as free money that are given by a specific granting body, namely the government, corporations, foundations, educational institutions, businesses, or an individual. While the Government is the primary grant provider, non-profits, municipalities, institutions, and private businesses may also offer grants and subsidy programs. A grant is capital that doesn't need to be repaid (i.e., free money) that provides non-financial gains for the receivers such as increased visibility and credibility. Given the competitive nature of grant seeking, the use of allocated funds is often tied to many restrictions and conditions. Receiving such funds is not easy and the application process is very time-consuming. Grant eligibility criteria can include variables such as levels of government, type of industry, structure of business, demographic group, government priority, investment, type of activity, etc. (BusinessLink, 2016). In Canada, for example, Startup Canada has partnered with Evolocity Financial Group to invest in STEM-based companies that are led by women. They provide micro-grants to women entrepreneurs to help them start and grow their businesses.

MICROFINANCE

Microfinance has a great impact on small enterprises. Small enterprises often have high returns to capital, but it's difficult for them to access credit from official banks. Small enterprises that operate at low levels of capital may find it hard to return

capital if production functions display decreasing returns (Bruhn et al., 2012). Commercial banks often refuse the loan applications of small enterprises since the revenue generated by small loans is low compared to the fixed costs and operational costs of lending to micro firms (World Bank, 2009). However, microfinance programs have been quite effective in contributing to women's ability to earn an income, and have resulted in economic empowerment, increased well-being for women and their families, and wider social and political empowerment. There are multiple microfinance programs in Canada aimed to support women entrepreneurs e.g., Paro Micro loans, Alterna Micro Finance, Microcredit Montreal, and Oasis which is exclusively for francophone women entrepreneurs.

“Microfinance programs have been quite effective in contributing to women's ability to earn an income, and have resulted in economic empowerment, increased well-being for women and their families, and wider social and political empowerment.”

EARLY-STAGE VC FUND (SEED FUND)

Entrepreneurs can access finance in the early stages of their business from venture capitals. VCs are generally for high-growth, disruptive companies and most mainstream operational businesses in the service sector won't apply for this funding. VCs provide different types of funding to businesses at different stages. VCs invest in three stages of companies namely seed capital, early stage capital, and expansion fund. Seed stage VCs tend to invest small amounts of capital at an earlier stage in a company's growth, for a target ownership of about 10–25%.

ACCELERATORS AND INCUBATORS

Incubators are often funded by universities or other economic development agencies. They do not often provide capital to startups, and therefore don't usually take an equity stake in the companies they support. Accelerators, on the other hand, invest a specific amount of capital in startups in exchange for a predetermined percentage of equity. The accelerators bear a greater responsibility for the success of a startup due to the capital they invest (Zajicek, 2017).

LOANS

A loan is a repayable amount of money given to another party in exchange for the loan principal plus interest, based on the

terms that are agreed upon by each party before the money is advanced (Kagan, 2020). There are various types of loans available for entrepreneurs in all stages of their business including: revolving loans, term loans, micro loans, and government loans.

TRADE CREDIT

As a business-to-business (B2B) agreement, trade credit provides a chance for a given customer to purchase goods without being obliged to pay cash up front. The supplier is paid rather at a later scheduled date, usually a period of 30, 60, or 90 days. Invoices record the transactions (Kagan, 2019).

LATE STAGE VENTURE CAPITAL

At later stages of a company's evolution, VCs as private equity investors, provide capital to potentially high-growth companies in exchange for an equity stake (Ganti, 2020). Research shows that women are underrepresented in this type of funding due to the male dominance that exists in technology entrepreneurship.

INITIAL PUBLIC OFFERING (IPO)

An initial public offering (IPO) refers to the process of offering the shares of a private corporation to the public in a new stock issuance.

“Men-owned firms are also more likely to use trade credit, capital leasing, venture capital, or angel funding while women-owned businesses are more likely to use a source of government funding.”

FINANCING CANADIAN WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Much of the research asserts that women are less likely to seek growth financing, including equity capital, that are mostly used by men (Rosa & Sylla, 2016). Majority women-owned SMEs are less likely to seek credit from financial institutions or to seek financing from family and friends (Rosa & Sylla, 2016). They are unlikely to get supplier credit or capital leases, but are more likely to receive government loans, grants, or subsidies (Rosa & Sylla, 2016). Firms wholly owned by men are four times more likely to report receiving venture capital than firms wholly owned by women (Brush et

al., 2014). Men-owned firms are also more likely to use trade credit, capital leasing, venture capital, or angel funding while women-owned businesses are more likely to use a source of government funding.

The literature at large suggests that gender differences do not impact approval rates of debt financing. However, there are some indications pointing to women facing higher refusal rates or being provided with less favourable conditions when seeking loans (e.g., higher interest rates, different collateral requirements). Using data collected from Statistics Canada (2000 and 2001), Madill, Riding and Haines (2006) found differences between men and women entrepreneurs and their experiences with debt financing (Madill et al., 2006). Women entrepreneurs are less likely to apply for loans. Echoing the discouraged borrower argument, Madill and colleagues found 5.6% of women entrepreneurs did not apply for loans as they feared being turned down, compared to only 3.1% of men entrepreneurs. Men invoked the absence of a need for financing as a reason for not applying at a higher rate than women entrepreneurs (86.8% vs. 82.3%). Additionally, different gender experiences have been noted in the relationships of men and women entrepreneurs with their lenders. Men entrepreneurs have longer relationships with their loaners than women (9.71 years vs. 8.09 years respectively, $t = 3.037$, $p = .002$); women entrepreneurs are more likely to have personal banking relationships with their business banker than men (74% vs. 68% respectively) (Madill et al., 2006).

Gender had no statistically significant impact on loan turn-down decisions (after size and sector of loan applicants are accounted for). Loan applications were more likely to be rejected for smaller firms, firms with low ratios of earnings to loan size request, firms for which lenders required high levels of personal collateral, and firms with high debt/asset ratios. (NOTE: this can maybe explain why some literature found higher rejection rates for women as they tend to occupy smaller size businesses).

Data from the Kauffman Firm Survey 2004–2006 (USA), surveyed 4,928 firms. Results found women started their firms with significantly lower amounts of total financial investment, equity investment, and debt investment than men. By the third year of operation, approximately twice as many men use external debt (bank loans, lines of credit) compared to women (total debt of USD 41,379 vs. USD 22,174, men vs. women) (Coleman & Robb, 2009).

A Meta-analysis done by Poggesi et al. (2016), that reviewed 248 papers published in the last 14 years, revealed that gender differences in debt financing behaviours are explained by two factors:

- Women are less likely to apply for credits/loans due to “self-discriminatory” behaviours (i.e., fear of rejection as a motive for not applying);

TABLE 1: FINANCING TYPES

Financial Model	Explanations	Stage of company
Bootstrapping and informal financing	Methods for meeting the need for resources without relying on long-term external finance from debt holders and/or new owners	Pre-seed, Seed, Startup
Angel Capital	Funds that “angel investors” provide a one-time injection to help the business get off the ground or an ongoing injection to support and carry the company through its difficult early stages.	Pre-seed, Seed, Startup
Crowdfunding	A collective effort by people who network and pool their money together in order to invest in and support efforts initiated by other people or organizations.	All stages
Donations	A donation is capital given by anyone for charitable purposes and to benefit a cause. Donations are not repayable and there is no financial repayment expectation for the given cash.	Seed, Startup, Growth
Grants	Grants are funds that are given by a specific granting body, particularly the government, corporations, foundations, educational institutions, businesses, or an individual. This is often thought of as free money.	Seed, Startup, Growth
Microfinance	Microfinance is defined as a programme for very poor people to finance “self-employment projects that generate income” (microcredit Summit, n.d.).	Seed, Startup, Growth
Early stage Venture Capital	A venture capitalist (VC) is a private equity investor that provides capital to companies - in their early stages or when they exhibit high growth potential - in exchange for an equity stake.	Seed, Startup, Growth
Accelerators and Incubators	Accelerators and incubators are either funded by government funds or VCs and can be source of finance for entrepreneurs	Pre-seed, Seed, Startup, Growth
Loans	Money that is received from government, banks, credit unions, developmental lenders, etc. and needs to be paid back.	All stages
Trade Credit	Trade credit is a B2B agreement: a form of 0% financing, which allows the business to increase assets while deferring payments and not accruing interest during the agreed upon payment period.	Growth, Expansion
Late Stage Venture Capital	At later stages of a company, VCs as private equity investors provide capital to potentially high-growth companies in exchange for an equity stake.	Growth, Expansion
Private Equity	Raising fresh capital by selling shares of the company to the public, institutional investors, or financial institutions.	Growth, Expansion
Initial Public Offering	IPO is the process, that the company issues shares of stocks to the public and lists these securities on a stock exchange. Companies go public primarily to acquire more capital from outside the company for the expansion or improvement of its business operations.	Growth, Expansion

- The gender of the borrower does not affect the borrower-loaner relationship (or rather, there are mixed findings), but when the “gender of the organization” is unambiguously female, women entrepreneurs have to face higher borrowing costs.
- Women hold negative perceptions of banks as sources of finance – due to past experiences resulting in discouragement (Poggesi et al., 2016).

“Empirical literature on gender differences in borrowing, risk, and defaults is lacking, particularly in Canada.”

In another study by Yacus et al. (2019) data from the Kauffman Firm Survey (2004–2011) was analyzed. The results showed that:

- High-growth female business owners are less likely to rely on personal debt, but no differences were observed as to reliance on business debts.
- However, women are more likely than men entrepreneurs to use personal equity finance over business equity
- Women entrepreneurs are more likely to achieve high growth with equity funding than debt funding (Yacus et al., 2019).

Still, empirical literature on gender differences in borrowing, risk, and defaults is lacking, particularly in Canada. A US study indicates that single women, controlling for age, educational attainment, race, and income (but not family status) tend to have higher instalment loan balances, higher revolving credit utilization rates, and greater prevalence of delinquency and bankruptcy histories than comparable single men. Reflecting such differences in debt usage and credit history, on average, single woman consumers have lower credit scores than comparable single men consumers (Li, 2018).

As shown in Table 2, the data from Statistics Canada reveal that the vast majority of SMEs (over 83%) used their own personal financing to start their business (ISED, 2018). The second most used source of funds, accessed by roughly one third of firms, is credit from a financial institution. However, the share of women-owned firms using external financing for startup funding (32.6%) is lower than that of men-owned firms (37–38%). Similarly, among businesses that were wholly owned by women, only 37.4% of received external financing in 2017, and most of these businesses (90.6%) did not apply because financing was not required for their business. Rates of borrowing from friends and family or using retained earnings is nearly equivalent between women-owned and men-owned firms (ISED, 2018). Table 5 shows the sources of startup funding used by SMEs by share of women owner-

ship. It is important to note that a single firm can use more than one source of funding and usually does. Of businesses that were wholly owned by women, 68.3% received finance from a domestic chartered bank, 23.8% from a credit union, 8.6% from government institutions, and 1.3% from an online alternative lender (ISED, 2018).

The reasons that women entrepreneurs struggle to obtain financing are multifaceted and are often considered to be the result of women's choices. For example, some argue that women are risk averse (Nelson, 2012) and fear failure (Tsai et al., 2016). As a result, it is claimed, women prefer to rely on savings. Even in the tech industry, 80% of founders use personal savings as their primary source of funding. Female tech founders are also less likely to seek funding from friends, family, networks and acquaintances (5% for women vs. 23% for men) (Knowledge at Wharton, 2016).

In 2015, women-owned enterprises had lower growth rates and lower growth intentions compared to those owned by men (Industry Canada, 2015). Several barriers affect their growth, such as “rising business costs, fluctuations in consumer demand for products or services, and increasing competition (Industry Canada, 2015). In 2007, the rates of ‘requested external financing’ were similar for men-owned enterprises, women-owned enterprises, and equally owned enterprises (ISED, 2018). In 2011, the rate was lower for women-owned enterprises (29%) than those owned by men (37.5%) and those owned equally by men and women (36.6%) (Industry Canada, 2015). Women are more likely to be ‘discouraged borrowers’ and find it ‘too difficult or time-consuming’ to apply and acquire financing than men (ISED, 2018).

Majority women-owned SMEs had a lower ‘ratio of authorized to requested debt financing’ than majority men-owned SMEs in 2011, but the difference was not significant in 2014.

“There is little doubt that societal, institutional, and individual factors play a role in women’s access to funding. This can include pervasive stereotypes and bias, but also processes and practises in financial institutions largely shaped by men-dominated systems.”

BARRIERS TO ACCESS CAPITAL

There is extensive research suggesting that women face barriers to financing and that the implications are significant for the global economy (Constantinidis et al., 2006). There is little doubt that societal, institutional, and individual factors play a role in women’s access to funding. This can include pervasive stereotypes and bias, but also processes and practises in

financial institutions largely shaped by men-dominated systems. Researchers also suggest that women are more likely to get higher interest rates and worse term sheets, which increases the financial burden of borrowing. Women are less dependent on credits to finance their businesses, and others are more dependent on certain types of finance, including “doorstep finance” or payday loans (Goodman et al., 2016). Canadian venture capital firms are also highly gendered, with women comprising only 15.2% of partners and 11.8% of managing partners in these firms (Female Funders & Highlight Beta, 2019).

Both academic and popular publications indicate the structural barriers and economic discrimination faced by women are compounded by the law as well as culture - women are still thought to be untrustworthy and risk-averse around the world (Merelli, 2018). Women’s preferences and behaviours also play a role. For example, they are more likely to think of themselves as ‘discouraged borrowers’ than their male counterparts (Prasad, 2009). Women are more likely to find it “too difficult or too time consuming” to apply for and receive financing than men (ISED, 2018). Discouragement is

also important to understanding the business experience of people of colour, as it affects how they distinguish between unnecessary challenges and interesting opportunities (Neville et al., 2018).

However, more recent research suggests cause for optimism. Some of the differences between men and women are diminished when size and sector are accounted for in the data. For example, when controlling for certain factors, women entrepreneurs were equally likely to receive access to financing when compared to men (Orser et al., 2006). When examining gender differences among Canadian SME owners seeking external financing (including commercial debt, leasing, supplier financing, and equity capital), and after controlling for size and industry sector as well as potential gender differences in owners’ strategic choices (application rates) and financiers’ evaluative responses (turndown rates), research has suggested that businesses that were majority owned by women were just as likely as men to seek external financing but not equity capital. It also concluded that men and women business owners who do apply for financing were equally likely to obtain capital” (Orser et al., 2006).

TABLE 2: STARTUP FUNDING BY WOMEN OWNERSHIP SHARE (2017)

Startup Funding	Women Ownership Share					
	None	1% - 49%	50%	51% - 99%	100%	>50%
Credit from financial institutions	38.0%	36.5%	39.4%	36.8%	31.8%	32.6%
Personal financing used toward business	83.0%	83.7%	86.5%	83.4%	84.1%	84.0%
Financing from friends or relatives of business owner(s)	16.8%	18.2%	17.3%	18.8%	15.7%	16.2%
Retained earnings (from previous or other business)	11.6%	11.6%	12.8%	18.0%	11.1%	12.2%
Trade credit from suppliers	17.9%	14.2%	17.9%	14.5%	9.3%	10.1%
Capital leasing	12.9%	11%	9.2%	5.0%	7.8%	7.3%
Government loans, grants, subsidies and non-repayable contributions	3.8%	4.2%	3.6%	6.2%	4.7%	4.9%
Financing from angel investors and venture capital providers	2.4%	3.2%	0.8%	0.9%	0.6%	0.6%
Other	2.3%	3.6%	1.7%	5.6%	2.3%	2.8%

Source: ISED (2018). Survey on financing and growth of small and medium enterprises (SFGSME), 2017. Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada, Government of Canada. www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/o61.nsf/eng/o3086.html

EMERGING APPROACHES

There is evidence of efforts being made to bridge the investment gaps. Recommendations from task forces on women entrepreneurship around the world have been a call to action (Canada-United States Council for Advancement of Women Entrepreneurs and Business Leaders, 2018).

MAKING EXISTING SYSTEMS MORE INCLUSIVE

Some have responded with clear strategies and accountability metrics for traditional funders. For example, BDC Capital's Women in Technology Venture Fund, which invests directly in women-led tech companies, venture funds with women partners, and works with partners to further develop the ecosystem. In the UK, Investing in Women Code works to convince banks and VC to commit to tracking and publishing key performance indicators on funding for women entrepreneurs (e.g., average account value). Canadian financial institutions are increasing their targeted support for women entrepreneurs but impacts of these new approaches are as yet unclear.

“Acknowledging the existing barriers for women entrepreneurs, new initiatives have sprung up providing targeted support for women entrepreneurs in the tech sector in Canada.”

FUNDS TARGETING WOMEN

Acknowledging the existing barriers for women entrepreneurs, new initiatives have sprung up providing targeted support for women entrepreneurs in the tech sector in Canada. Some of these are listed below.

The Women Entrepreneurship Strategy (WES) launched as part of the 2018 federal budget aims to double the number of women led businesses in Canada by 2025. Women's Enterprise Organizations of Canada (WEOC) provides supporting services including business skills development, access to financing, networking and export opportunities for women entrepreneurs. The 51 brings together accredited investors and entrepreneurs for democratized access to female capital for female-led businesses. Sandpiper Ventures is investing in female tech entrepreneurs across Canada. SheEO provides funding of women-led enterprises by individual women, called Activators, who vote for the ventures to receive the funding as a zero percent interest loan (SheEO, 2019). The Startup Canada Women Founders Fund was established to support women entrepreneurs in STEM businesses through microgrants, as well as diverse services and programs to

address the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs (Startup Canada, 2020). BDC Capital's Women in Technology (WIT) Venture Fund is also significant, as it is one of the largest venture capital funds in the world dedicated to investing and funding women-owned technology companies through both direct and indirect investment and ecosystem development. Communitech's Fierce Founders program is another example and there are many more. Some scholars have suggested that some of these funds are flawed and may represent repackaging of existing investments rather than additional funding (Merelli, 2018).

EMERGING MODELS

MICROFINANCING

Global research on microfinancing that considered 350 microfinance institutions (MFIs) in 70 countries, found holding a higher percentage of women clients in MFIs is associated with lower portfolio risk, fewer write-offs, and fewer provisions, all else being equal. Microfinance programs contribute to women's ability to earn an income, and result in economic empowerment, increased well-being for women and their families, and wider social and political empowerment. Additionally, the programs or services involving men also significantly change men's attitudes and behaviours as an essential component of achieving gender equality (Mayoux, 2002). Interaction effects reveal that, while focus on women is generally associated with enhanced repayment, this trend is stronger for nongovernmental organizations, individual-based lenders, and regulated MFIs (Espallier et al., 2011). Nevertheless, microfinancing studies around the world, including a recent one in Brazil, have shown that, all things being equal, women entrepreneurs receive smaller loans and induce smaller losses for the lender (Agier & Szafarz, 2010). “Although [more reliable] than men, women entrepreneurs [...] seem to undergo a never-ending curse” (Agier & Szafarz, 2010). Other research has confirmed that this is also true for microfinancing in Canada, although large-scale studies on mainstream financial institutions are limited. While some have advocated for a more gender-neutral approach to banking to remove barriers to women, others have argued for a more gender-intelligent approach, tailoring approaches to women's needs.

CROWDFUNDING

Digital technologies, on the other hand, have been described as mechanisms that “offer possibilities for destabilizing conventional gender differences overcoming some of the structural barriers that hinder women's access to financial

services, enhancing financial literacy, and addressing mobility constraints” (Orser et al., 2019). There is some evidence to suggest that crowdfunding does level the playing field when it comes to raising capital.” Rewards-based crowdfunding campaigns are commonly offered in one of two models via fundraising goals set by an entrepreneur: “Keep-It-All” (KIA), where the entrepreneur keeps the entire amount raised regardless of achieving the goal, and “All-Or-Nothing” (AON), where the entrepreneur keeps nothing unless the goal is achieved: (Cumming et al., 2020) “KIA projects tend to be less successful, since the crowd bears the risk that an entrepreneurial firm undertakes a project that is underfunded and hence more likely to fail after the campaign” (Cumming et al., 2020).

There has been some debate as to which of the environments is most conducive to encouraging female entrepreneurship. Typically rewards-based, all-or-nothing (AON) platforms such as Kickstarter require users to set fundraising goals that must be met in order to receive financing. In contrast, Indiegogo functions with a “Keep-it-All” (KIA) model where a fundraising goal is set, and the creator keeps the entire amount raised no matter what they achieve. (Moritz 7 Block, 2016).

New crowdfunding programs have been created specifically targeting women. For example, there are rewards-based crowdfunding programs that support women entrepreneurs: For example, ATB Financial, an Alberta-based financial institution, offers a unique cohort-based crowdfunding initiative that uses rewards-based crowdfunding as a funding option. For example, a jewelry designer looking for funds to support expansion might reward everyone who contributes \$100 with an original piece of jewelry. If the entrepreneur meets their goal, funds are released. In its second year, 32 women participated in the campaign and more than half (17) met their funding goal with an average raised of \$5377 per campaign exceeding the average raised by other crowdfunding campaigns (\$824 with a 22.4% average success rate).

CONCLUSION

This article reviewed the current state of financing for entrepreneurs and the similarities and differences between men and women entrepreneurs in Canada. Research shows that women and men are different in their attitudes towards financing due to both structural and individual barriers. Acknowledging the barriers for women entrepreneurs, there have been several emerging trends aimed at improving access for them. These include the emergence of new approaches to financing such as crowdfunding and microfinancing, and efforts to tackle systemic bias in mainstream financial institutions. This paper has limitations. Its focus is largely on early stage businesses finance, and it doesn’t include a consideration of various types of social financing methods that have emerged to support women entrepreneurs. We suggest that

government, financial organizations, educators, and stakeholders should strengthen the capacity for financial and digital literacy programs to assist women by considering digitization for financing, commercialization, marketing, and exporting. Policies should be further developed to provide human capital to support research development and implementation. Also, adequate attention should also be paid to help women overcome barriers at the micro level, including women empowerment programs.

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CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FACED BY CANADIAN WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN GLOBAL TRADE

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INTRODUCTION

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are the backbone of the Canadian economy, with small enterprises employing 8.29 million individuals (69.7%), and medium enterprises employing 2.37 million individuals (19.9%) (Government of Canada, 2019). Women are an intrinsic and growing part of SMEs. They are increasingly seeing entrepreneurship, including self-employment, as a source of opportunity to provide a means for earning income; create a product or services; fulfill a need in the marketplace and/or create a better work-life integration on their own terms. While export is an important driver of economic growth and innovation for entrepreneurs, Canadian companies have not fully exploited the potential for growth of international markets. This includes women-owned businesses, which are less likely to export than men-owned businesses, due in part to additional barriers and challenges. Numerous women entrepreneurs are using export as a source of growth, and opportunities exist to increase the

number of women entrepreneurs engaged in export if barriers and challenges are addressed. The aim of this article is to find transformative and practical solutions to encourage women-owned businesses to export.

“Canadian companies have not fully exploited the potential for growth of international markets. This includes women-owned businesses, which are less likely to export than men-owned businesses, due in part to additional barriers and challenges.”

The export of products and services is a means for growth and opportunity to increase impact across multiple markets by meeting a wider range of customer needs; improving efficiency; innovation through the generation of new ideas

and exposure to new technologies and processes; and lowering costs (Brown, 2017). In 2018, exports accounted for 30.2% of Canada's GDP and amounted to \$672 billion (Allen, 2018; Statistics Canada, 2017). Recent trade agreements have expanded the potential markets and increased opportunities for businesses. Yet these opportunities have not been fully realized in many instances because entrepreneurs are not aware of them, need further information respecting export processes or lack necessary funding. However, Canada's relatively small domestic market makes it necessary for many firms to tap into global markets for growth (Manseau, 2017). In addition to often being larger and globally better than similar companies that are domestically oriented, exporting companies are more likely to experience higher growth compared to non-exporting companies. Indeed, 10% of exporters achieved 20% growth or higher in sales annually compared to 8% for non-exporters between 2009 and 2011 (Seens, 2015; World Trade Organization, 2017).

“More than ever Canada needs to have the full growth opportunity represented by women entrepreneurs with their innovative spirit and knowledge and desire to grow.”

Challenges and opportunities exist for women entrepreneurs in contemplating access to diverse markets. Recently we completed a study looking at the challenges and opportunities facing women entrepreneurs who are seeking to export. The findings in this study relate to a pre-COVID-19 world but are still undeniably applicable. More than ever Canada needs to have the full growth opportunity represented by women entrepreneurs with their innovative spirit and knowledge and desire to grow. Women entrepreneurs have been hard hit by COVID-19 and now need support to grow and thrive.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is a scan of the current literature and reports, focusing on the export ecosystem, the positive benefits of export and the factors that come into play when entrepreneurs are considering export as a means of growth. The literature recognizes that the decisions made by women entrepreneurs are multidimensional and affected by their business sector and size. Structural gender-specific differences must be considered when examining the challenges facing women entrepreneurs in their desire to exploit export opportunities so as to promote growth. Women's businesses tend to be smaller and predominately in the retail and service sector, and some are not incorporated affecting their eligibility for grants and funds.

According to a 2018 report from the Conference Board of Canada, there was an increase to \$483.6 billion in exports

of Canadian goods in 2017, 41.9% of which came from SMEs (Government of Canada, 2019b). However, 93% of all SMEs report their sale destination to be within their local municipality or region and only 11.7% of Canada's SMEs sell their goods outside Canada. There are opportunities to expand global markets and help Canadian SMEs adopt a more international mindset (Government of Canada, 2019b).

Unsurprisingly, the main market targeted by exporters is the United States (Seens, 2015), but with rising access to technology, trade agreements, and increasing openness in general, new markets are opening up, such as Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, as well as Southeast Asia. This is the case despite the reluctance of Canadian exporters to attempt penetration of less traditional markets (Hall, 2019). Unquestionably, in addition to an opportunity to gain more consumers and knowledge, exporting is also a way to build resilience and cope more effectively with fluctuations in the domestic market and in the business cycle; it spreads the risk and has the potential to reduce volatility by 20%, revitalize growth and extend product life cycles (Garcia-Vega, & Spaliara, 2012; Deloitte, 2014; Dzhumashev, Mishra, & Smyth, 2016).

An overwhelming number of factors impacting the propensity of women entrepreneurs to export are structural (Government of Canada, 2020). They are often active in sectors less likely to export; their businesses tend to be smaller and younger; and some prefer to be of service to their own community. Nevertheless, the percentage of majority women-owned SMEs that export doubled from 7.4% to 14.8% between 2011 and 2017, according to Global Affairs Canada (Baur, 2019).

The main challenges faced by women entrepreneurs seeking to export are numerous and, based on the 2017 Survey Financing and Growth of SMEs (SFGSME), can be summarized in five categories:

- Differences in perceived risk and obstacles: women tend to identify more logistical obstacles, border obstacles, financial risk, etc;
- Financial resources: women tend to have a harder time finding investors, mentors, networks, and often end up using personal assets for financing, which can slow growth (Beckton, McDonald & Marquis-Bissonnette, 2018);
- Bias vis-à-vis the technology sector: A lot of the financing for entrepreneurs tends to go into the tech sector, which is not the main sector of activity for women entrepreneurs (Beckton, McDonald & Marquis-Bissonnette, 2018);
- Technology skills: There is often insufficient knowledge regarding e-commerce technology (Beckton, McDonald & Marquis-Bissonnette, 2018; Arendt, 2008);

- Burden of unpaid work for women: Women are still disproportionately taking care of the emotional labour at home, and this can lead to women entrepreneurs missing important opportunities (Cesaroni & Paolono, 2016).

What emerged from the literature is a need for more information (and more centralized information) as well as more support and resources. Many resources do exist, but in a relatively standardized fashion that may not be suitable for women entrepreneurs and through networks and channels in which they might not yet feel welcome.

METHODOLOGY

This research builds on the results of in-depth interviews with 96 women entrepreneurs. The respondents were identified through multiple selection methods including self-selection, award winners, fellow entrepreneurs' recommendations, recommendations from organizations in the ecosystem such as women's business centres, and immigrant women's organizations to ensure representation across Canada, diversity of sectors and different sizes of enterprises. Fifty-three of the entrepreneurs interviewed were exporting their product(s) or services, 29 were considering exporting and 15 were in businesses where export was less of a viable option.

This research also builds on the results of a survey conducted by EDC, a partner in the study, which compares experiences and perspectives of 815 entrepreneurs, including 463 women and 261 men. These surveys with entrepreneurs were conducted with a business panel through Maru/Blue and have similar characteristics to the overall profile of Canadian Businesses in terms of region, size and high-level sector. The respondents were business owners or executive leaders within the company. The entrepreneurs surveyed were diverse in terms of the sectors, size and age of the enterprises, as well as the background of the entrepreneurs themselves. Of the respondents, 23% of women and 19% of men were racialized, 9% of women and 10% of men had a disability, and 4% of men and women were indigenous, providing a good cross section of experiences.

“Women entrepreneurs are ambitious, resilient, innovative and often eager to grow their business through export opportunities.”

INTERVIEWS WITH WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

This section includes the results of the interviews with 96 women entrepreneurs, with the aim of helping us understand

the factors affecting decisions to export. It was evident there was both a desire to export for growth (where it made economic and logistical sense), as well as a recognition of the financial and other risks and requirements around market intelligence and logistics. Women entrepreneurs are ambitious, resilient, innovative and often eager to grow their business through export opportunities. Through these interviews, a number of themes emerged which help us better understand both the challenges and potential solutions. The main themes are as follows: the importance of exporting, enablers of exporting, the challenges to exporting, and the supports that are needed.

IMPORTANCE OF EXPORTING

Many perceived the chance of exporting as an important opportunity to grow their businesses and were keen to, as one respondent said, “grow my business outside of Canada.” Another respondent affirmed that, through exporting, “in 5 years, I can transform this business into a big global business if I can position the business properly... I need to navigate the system.” Clearly, the importance of exporting is not lost on women entrepreneurs. Even those who had never really considered export before, were now interested in it, or at least in learning about it. One wise respondent said that “we need to have women think about global opportunities. We can eliminate the fear in doing so and demystify export.” This particular quote highlights an important point in the literature: the need to clarify the process and provide more support and resources. While the importance of exporting was well understood, some women entrepreneurs still prefer to focus on local and national markets, which for them were challenging enough.

ENABLERS OF EXPORTING

Exporting is a process that requires a tremendous amount of work and the interviewees mentioned different enablers that could help them navigate the process, including having a clear strategy such as building networks and connections. One woman described how having her booth near the Trade Commissioner Service booth at a trade show led to connections, and another referred to the advantages of women business networks and other such organizations. Through networking, it is also possible to find mentors and sponsors who will help open doors and share knowledge, information, and experience. E-commerce was also mentioned as an enabler of exporting and has become increasingly the way to do business as a result of COVID-19. While not without their challenges, platforms such as Shopify make it easier to operate online.

There is also an important role to be played by governments and agencies in enabling women entrepreneurs to become

successful exporters. Many attribute their success to the support and services they received from organizations such as Export Development Canada, the Business Development Bank of Canada, the Trade Accelerator Program, etc. Women entrepreneurs felt better equipped to grow their businesses globally after having participated in export training programs.

“A core challenge identified in the interviews is the need for timely, relevant, and accessible information relating to potential markets, logistics for product export and legal and customs rules.”

CHALLENGES TO EXPORTING

Even the most experienced exporters were honest about the existence of the challenges facing them. Crafting the right strategy is challenging, and the financing to implement it can also be hard to find. While there is a wealth of information for entrepreneurs on how to expand and grow their businesses, many women entrepreneurs were not sure where and who to turn to for relevant advice. Even women entrepreneurs who are already exporting mentioned this same concern on occasions when they have doubts or questions. Entrepreneurs expressed the desire to speak to a “real person” who could help them navigate the journey to becoming successful exporters. While written information and videos were helpful, entrepreneurs were often left with unanswered questions specific to their business or industry. Women entrepreneurs want to have better support in navigating the process and more guidance to find the right information and to be informed about the resources and services they can access. A core challenge identified in the interviews is the need for timely, relevant, and accessible information relating to potential markets, logistics for product export and legal and customs rules. One entrepreneur’s comment that “if it takes more than 15 minutes to find it then it is not useful,” reflected the concerns expressed by many of the entrepreneurs. Many (including some who were exporting) were not aware of the services offered by the Trade Commissioner’s service or Export Development Canada and some, who had used the service, were not satisfied with their result.

“Women entrepreneurs are often managing both family responsibilities and their business, requiring them to focus on the best use of their time.”

Women entrepreneurs are often managing both family responsibilities and their business, requiring them to focus on the best use of their time. Even though this study was conducted pre-pandemic, COVID-19 has exacerbated the challenges, with schools and daycares closed. Preliminary information suggests that women are bearing more of the extra childcare and schooling responsibilities. This readily translates into less time for their business at a time when renewed focus is essential both for survival and renewal. It underlines, yet again, the need for timeliness and ease of finding the relevant information.

“A desire was expressed for existing boards and trade organizations to become more inclusive of women entrepreneurs and their needs.”

While networks are key to the ability to navigate the multiple challenges of export, accessing relevant ones can be an enormous challenge. One successful exporter described her network as the source of important information allowing her to learn from the experience of others. Those lacking networks struggled to find ones that were relevant and warranted the use of the limited time they had available. A desire was expressed for existing boards and trade organizations to become more inclusive of women entrepreneurs and their needs. Some women entrepreneurs did take the initiative and form networks of their own. Although all women networks are important, it is equally important for women to be connected to broader business networks that are working to become more inclusive.

One of the key pieces of information sought after was market intelligence. Small businesses often could not afford a market intelligence study nor did they have team members who could spend their time doing these studies. Those who did have access to good market intelligence found it very helpful in guiding their choice of market and the timing of entry. One entrepreneur described how a market intelligence study from a provincial agency enabled her to understand the potential market and better prepare for entry. Knowledge of process, legalities and customs rules were also identified as challenges both in the interviews and the survey.

Other important challenges mentioned by interviewees were accessing supplier diversity programs for preferential procurement; the competition for talent and expertise that is already challenging for large corporations but even more so for SMEs; finding reliable manufacturers and suppliers; discrimination and difficulty in being taken seriously as a woman and especially as a young woman (or as an older woman).

SUPPORTS THAT ARE NEEDED

What women entrepreneurs need is better access to information and support so that they can be more knowledgeable about the export process and all the resources and supports available to them. Navigating the system needs to become easier and more efficient by providing a clear blueprint outlining the way to do things and clearly laying out the pathways. Women entrepreneurs also benefit from more role models and from hearing about success stories from other women entrepreneurs. They require better access to financing, and the overall ecosystem needs to become more inclusive and diverse in order to be more welcoming to women entrepreneurs. Being a woman, whether you are younger or older, should not be an impediment.

SURVEY

The survey was sent to both men and women and reflected differences in men and women entrepreneurs' reported experiences and business sizes. For instance, while 52% of women led businesses reporting sales of less than \$250,000, only 31% of men owned business reporting similar figures. Another key point that emerged from the survey is that a mere 26% of women owned businesses that were incorporated, compared to 41% for men owned enterprises. Being unincorporated undeniably impacts the types of resources available to businesses, including financing, which is one of the main challenges mentioned above. As reflected in the literature review, women had smaller businesses with smaller numbers of employees. Generally, the key findings of the survey echoed and validated what was conveyed in the interviews of women entrepreneurs.

“One of the main findings from the survey is that while 44% of men-owned business export as a global growth strategy for their business, only 29% of women-owned business did the same.”

The literature showed that a lot of the resources were unevenly distributed by sector, favouring technology. Women-owned businesses are half as likely to be in the ICT sector (5% compared to 11% for men owned businesses) based on the survey results. In high exporting sectors, such as technology, IT, software products, and manufacturing products, men-owned businesses were twice or thrice as present.

One of the main findings from the survey is that while 44% of men-owned business export as a global growth strategy for their business, only 29% of women-owned business did the

same. Indeed, 60% of the women-owned businesses mentioned turning to export only after clients sought out their services or products or services outside Canada, compared to only 48% for men-owned businesses. This may indicate that men-owned businesses tend to be more aggressive in pushing to export, while women-owned businesses are more likely to wait for demand to provide a pull to export. This is not surprising considering the challenges reported by women entrepreneurs.

The main obstacle cited by survey respondents also echoed what was mentioned in the interviews. 34% of women-owned businesses mentioned being unfamiliar with the procedures and the paperwork to sell their products and services outside Canada, compared to only 19% for men owned businesses. This echoes what was said earlier about the dire need for clearer pathways to export. This holds even truer when considering that 41% of women-owned businesses that responded to the survey described their level of literacy as “beginner” when it came to their understanding of what was required to allow their company to enter new markets and expand their consumer base outside of Canada. In contrast, only 23% of men-owned businesses described themselves as “beginners”. Clearer pathways and more guidance to navigate the resources and supports available would help improve literacy and foster propensity to export.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

A few characteristics stand out in the study when looking at the stories of successful women entrepreneurs. They tend to be larger and in sectors more prone to exporting. These successful women were actively seeking out information, networks, and mentors to obtain the support needed to foster success. Successful women entrepreneurs in general, were also more experienced, having been in business for a longer time, were ambitious and more tolerant of risk. Immigrant women entrepreneurs were also somewhat more prone to seeing the opportunities of exporting and running their business globally. Lastly, successful women entrepreneurs were more likely to have participated in the different programs offered and to have taken advantage of all the resources available generally.

“Successful women entrepreneurs should be proactively sought out and encouraged to export and we should ensure that they have easy access to the information regarding services, market information, grants, legal information, tax and tariffs information, networking opportunities.”

As was highlighted by the interviews and the survey, there is a need to further enhance services, especially for women entrepreneurs. The benefits of exporting need to be made more salient, and more diverse role models need to be showcased. All of the tools and supports available need to be more publicized and made more readily available through sources consulted by women entrepreneurs, so that navigating the process of exporting becomes friendlier and less of a labyrinth. The benefits of exporting for the Canadian economy are clear. Consequently, successful women entrepreneurs should be proactively sought out and encouraged to export and we should ensure that they have easy access to the information regarding services, market information, grants, legal information, tax and tariffs information, networking opportunities, etc.

Promoting the benefits of exporting should also include encouraging women to expand their skills and knowledge and to take advantage of programs available to them, such as the Trade Accelerator Program, which is supported by Export Development Canada and the Forum for International Trade. Another interesting avenue to encourage women to think more globally would be to urge them to participate in supplier diversity programs that could increase their possibilities to export.

While the data from this study was collected before the pandemic, we now know women have been impacted the most by COVID-19, as it relates to employment and entrepreneurship, because the majority of women-owned businesses are in the retail and services sectors which have been disproportionately impacted. A recent study by WEKH confirms this disproportionate impact on women-owned businesses. Prior to COVID-19, many of the entrepreneurs interviewed struggled to obtain financing or to self-finance when they decided to export. It is true that some businesses have thrived during the pandemic, because their sectors were not as impacted, they were able to pivot their business to online or to provide the different products or services required during the pandemic. But many have not thrived, particularly in hospitality and tourism and other sectors most impacted by COVID-19. While women entrepreneurs tend to be innovative, there have been limitations to their ability to survive in the current climate with rent challenges, business slowdowns and all of the other requirements. The growth of women owned businesses is essential to the health of the economy in Canada. Yet they struggle and even more so in the face of the pandemic.

Programs designed to assist businesses impacted by COVID-19 often exclude women owned businesses because of their size and number of employees. Unless changes in assistance programs happen, there will be longer-term negative impacts for the businesses that cannot recover and for the economy as a whole. One entrepreneur said recently that she has been unable to pay the rent on her newly opened shop and does not know if she can survive - a story which was shared by many other business owners. No doubt the business landscape will be different after COVID-19.

“Women bring many strengths to their entrepreneurship such as collaboration and partnerships, resilience and innovation. These strengths are much needed if Canada is to recover successfully from the pandemic.”

No roadmaps exist for the post-COVID economy. All of the supports mentioned in the report will be more important than ever. Identifying promising markets and dealing with unstable supply chains, and border closures and restrictions, impacted by both the pandemic and global politics, will be even more challenging. Access to relevant information and funding support are needed more than ever to ensure women entrepreneurs can thrive. Women bring many strengths to their entrepreneurship such as collaboration and partnerships, resilience and innovation. These strengths are much needed if Canada is to recover successfully from the pandemic.

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RESEARCHING THE BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S TECHNOLOGY ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

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INTRODUCTION

As Cukier et. al., (2020) have stated, both entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship studies are dominated by discourses and policies that privilege one entrepreneur archetype: the young white male most often associated with the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields. Figures like Mark Zuckerberg, Bill Gates, and Steve Jobs dominate the popular conception of the entrepreneur - and especially that of the technology entrepreneur.

Women entrepreneur figures are chronically underrepresented. When they are portrayed, they are often highly criticized, a

“Both entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship studies are dominated by discourses and policies that privilege one entrepreneur archetype: the young white male most often associated with the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields.”

salient example of which is Elizabeth Holmes (Aidis, 2018). They are often placed on the fringe of “legitimate” entrepreneurship in feminized industries such as home decorating, cooking, self-care, cosmetics and fashion, or shopping (Cukier, this issue; Meliou et al., 2018). They are often labelled with terms like “momprenneur” and “funpreneur” and subjected to “feminine devaluation” (Ronen, 2017, p. 2; Byrne et al., 2019).

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THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP ECOSYSTEM

Cukier et al. (2017; See also Cukier in the introduction to this issue) point to an ecology of barriers that undermine women entrepreneurs and trivialize their use of technology. To effectively understand and assess barriers to diverse women entrepreneurs, scholarship must examine each level of the entrepreneurial ecosystem: individuals, organizations, policies, and cultural norms. Identification and mitigation of barriers at only one level of the ecosystem will only be partially effective, and such initiatives may not endure over time. For example, some scholarship has identified the lack of women in STEM as a possible pipeline issue that impacts the number of diverse women technology entrepreneurs. However, even as numbers of women in STEM have increased, women technology entrepreneurs have still struggled, and numbers have remained low (Cukier et. al., 2020).

To understand the full spectrum of barriers for women entrepreneurs in the tech or ICT space, we wanted to understand if indeed an entrepreneurship ecosystem model is useful. We thus conducted a literature review of the most recent literature, in the hopes that we could determine some opportunities for interventions and highlight spaces that still need attention. We examined the most recent scholarship at the time of writing to see general trends and identify barriers for women entrepreneurs with respect to technology or ICT use.

METHODS

We began with the guiding question: What does the most recent research related to women entrepreneurs and ICT or technology use reveal about key opportunities and barriers? From this question we conducted a systematic review of the recent literature. The literature used in this study was identified through querying the search string (women OR female) “entrepreneurs” AND (technology OR tech OR ICT*

OR digital) in the Royal Roads University library database for research published in 2019. The preliminary query returned 435 records. Parameters were set to exclude articles that were not peer-reviewed, which narrowed the population to 236 records. Records were then reviewed for duplication (n=20) and lack of alignment with the research question (n=171). The remaining dataset of 44 articles formed the sample of records that would be coded for this study. We grouped the articles according to broad themes based on any findings or insight into ICT or technology use for women entrepreneurs. We were able to identify three broad themes in the literature:

1. ongoing discussion of who qualifies as a technology entrepreneur;
2. highlights of the benefits and challenges of ICT and tech as they relate to women entrepreneurship; and
3. barriers to fostering women tech and ICT entrepreneurs.

“In an age where crowdwork, the sharing economy, and the gig economy have transformed self-employment, the definition of who counts as a technology entrepreneur has not kept up with the times, and needs to be reimaged.”

TECHNOLOGY ENTREPRENEURS, WHO COUNTS?

In an age where crowdwork, the sharing economy, and the gig economy have transformed self-employment, the definition of who counts as a technology entrepreneur has not kept up with the times, and needs to be reimaged (Bogenhold, 2019). The most recent literature confirms that technology still tends to be associated with men as a result of broader (popular) cultural messaging (Wheadon, & Duval-Couetil 2019; Wu, 2019). Additionally, women are still not captured in the broad idea of entrepreneurship generally - male entrepreneurship tends to be reinforced in the media, to the detriment of women. For example, the treatment of women entrepreneurs in tech on the popular show Shark Tank tends to belittle or demean their expertise (Wheadon, & Duval-Couetil, 2019). This doesn't make sense when considered in the context of some of the world's most successful technology firms. For example, Shaw, & Sørensen (2019), note how Amazon is a retail business that is also known as a technology company, Tesla is a manufacturing business that is known as a technology company, and even Walmart is considered to be moving into the technology space. Despite these notable examples (all with Male CEOs), often women-owned businesses that use technology to sell products or services do not count as technology companies (Meliou, Mallett, & Rosenberg 2018). Women often lack perceived legitimacy in the technology entrepreneurship space by virtue of being women (Vershina, Rodgers, Tarba, Khan,

& Stokes, 2019). Women tend to have less access to programs that can help them grow as technology entrepreneurs (or even entrepreneurs with technology) (Coleman, Henry, Orser, Foss, & Welter, 2019), and as a result women owned businesses are generally smaller and more likely to fail than men's are (Yacus, 2019).

BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF ICT USE FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

For both women entrepreneurs in the technology space, and women entrepreneurs who simply use technology as part of their business, there are many benefits to using ICT in the course of their business. ICT use allows women entrepreneurs to reach a much broader audience than they would otherwise, particularly for those entrepreneurs in rural areas (Kapinga, 2019; Bhattacharya, R, 2019). ICT use can also connect women entrepreneurs from underserved areas with mentorship opportunities they would otherwise be unable to access (Byrne et. al., 2019), increasing women entrepreneurs' social capital, and in particular, bridging social capital (Crittenden, Crittenden & Ajjan, 2019). The integration of ICTs into their businesses also helps women to start businesses with less upfront costs. It allows women who do not have a physical location for their business to increase their reach, and expand their business networks and other opportunities (Matthews, 2019), bridging social and cultural divides to potentially reach new markets for their products and services (McAdam, Crowley, & Harrison, 2019; Pinem, 2019).

“For both women entrepreneurs in the technology space, and women entrepreneurs who simply use technology as part of their business, there are many benefits to using ICT in the course of their business.”

For women who wish to scale their businesses, ICTs can help them do this by providing both access to information and also funding opportunities they wouldn't have otherwise (Pergelova, Manolova, & Yordanova, 2019). Though typically women have a harder time financing their businesses than men do (Cukier, 2017), crowdfunding platforms and algorithmic funding opportunities can level the playing field if gender is left out of the description of the business (Zhang & Chen, 2019; Hervé, Manthé, Sannajust, & Schwiembacher, 2019; Hernandez, Raveendhran, Weingarten, & Barnett, 2019). For women entrepreneurs juggling multiple responsibilities, ICTs and particularly social media can make them, and their labor, more visible. One positive study showed that “work at home moms” receive more acknowledgement for their professional endeavors than they have in the past (Russum, 2019).

The use of ICTs for women entrepreneurs also presents new challenges, however. When women entrepreneurs use social media to reach new markets, they are required to engage in the affective labor of online identity construction and maintenance (Anderson, Warren, & Bensemman, 2019). The use of ICTs can lead to the blending of public and private life and time, which negatively impacts work-life balance, and intensifies work for the entrepreneurs who are using ICTs (Adisa, Gbadamosi, Mordi, & Mordi, 2019; Brydges, 2019; Matthews, 2019). Often the industries that are most likely to have women entrepreneurs with a technology focus are ones that centre on “momprenuers”, “funpreneurs” or fashion and fitness entrepreneurs, which means that the women working in these industries also must undertake aesthetic labor – that is the need to ensure that they personally fit a desirable aesthetic all the time (Brydges, 2019). This means that women entrepreneurs on social media or in the technology space in a visible way are always on display, as their life and lifestyle choices bleed into their business and business promotion more that it would for their male counterparts. (Brydges, & Sjöholm, 2019).

BARRIERS TO DEVELOPING WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN ICT

“These male-centric cultures and cultural values mean that women opt out of pursuing the same opportunities as men, meaning that initiatives that could grow the pipeline often fail to do so. This is often due to systemic misogyny issues present in the technology sector, startup incubators, and the business financing sector.”

Despite the many benefits of technology for entrepreneurship, recent research shows that men are more likely to be “lead users” of ICT in companies. Men tend to have higher job levels (for example, CEOs are more likely to be men) and are more likely to adopt and guide mobile technology use in companies (Hallikainen, Alamäki, & Laukkanen, 2019). This trend may be due in part to the fact that initiatives to foster women's entrepreneurship, particularly with regards to technology entrepreneurship are still lacking. For example, high-technology incubators tend to be high-pressure, male driven environments with cultures that are at best unappealing and at worst actively hostile to women (Bendell, Sullivan, & Marvel, 2019). While some scholarship suggests that specific personality traits that tend to be associated with men (such as stability, extroversion and willingness to take risks) are requirements for digital entrepreneurship (Bode, Bode et. al., 2019), these are likely the result of gender biased structures that undervalue the input, skills and traits that women technology entrepreneurs possess (Striebing, Kalpazidou Schmidt, & Palmén,

2019). These male-centric cultures and cultural values mean that women opt out of pursuing the same opportunities as men, meaning that initiatives that could grow the pipeline often fail to do so. This is often due to systemic misogyny issues present in the technology sector, startup incubators, and the business financing sector (Hernandez, Raveendhran, Weingarten & Barnett, 2019).

Digital divides still exist for many women entrepreneurs who would otherwise enter into the technology space. For example, entrepreneurs who are themselves in poverty or otherwise limited in resources and cannot access the needed physical technology or reliable broadband internet, cannot experience the benefits of ICTs for their businesses, nor can they start a business that is primarily internet based (Neumeyer, Santos, & Morris, 2019). Finally, for women who speak English as a second language and who come originally from countries that privilege access to education for men over women, coping with technology and conducting business using technology can be a major challenge (Shastri, Shastri, & Pareek, 2019).

IMPLICATIONS

The literature makes clear that, although in some ways ICT creates new and important opportunities for women entrepreneurs to technologize their businesses and create new opportunities, key barriers exist culturally, politically and practically that will first of all limit the number and types of women who choose to start ICT based businesses, and secondly, result in those women who currently have ICT based businesses to choose to drop out, or otherwise experience failure. This is particularly salient during a time when COVID-19 has increased the responsibilities on women for childcare, emotional labour and other work in the home. Importantly, though ICTs present new opportunities for women entrepreneurs, they also amplify some of the challenges women entrepreneurs were already facing, and introduce new ones.

“The ecological model proposed by Cukier allows us to understand and likely address key barriers for women entrepreneurs in the ICT or technology space. It recommends that initiatives be introduced at multiple levels, so that problems of culture, access to resources, education, and changes in policy are all taken into account.”

The ecological model proposed by Cukier (2017; Cukier et. al, 2020; Cukier, introduction to this issue) allows us to understand and likely address key barriers for women entrepreneurs in the ICT or technology space. It recommends that initiatives be introduced at multiple levels, so that problems of culture, access to resources, education, and changes in policy are all taken into account. The recent literature, taken together, shows that indeed there is an ecology of overlapping barriers at work that may be excluding women in business with an ICT component from identifying as technology entrepreneurs and also from resources that benefit technology entrepreneurs. A 360-degree approach is thus needed to support women entrepreneurs in the technology or ICT space.

In support of women entrepreneurs in Canada, who may represent a wide variety of cultural, geographic, and socio-economic backgrounds (Cukier et. al., 2020), we can learn from the latest scholarship. We must consider how technology and technology entrepreneurship is defined, and how these definitions exclude women. We must aim to build more tools and educational opportunities (such as gender-blind algorithmic funding mechanisms; or woman-friendly incubators) that facilitate equal access, and we must integrate policy changes to provide support for self-employed, gig economy, and social media based small business.

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WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN AGRICULTURE: MAKING AN IMPACT IN THE MARGINS

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INTRODUCTION

Rural entrepreneurship engages with place and space (Korsgaard et al. 2015). Certainly not all activity in agriculture in Canada is centred in the rural context, however, there is no denying that much of the primary production in agriculture does happen rurally, outside of urban centres. The contributions of women entrepreneurs in agriculture span a diverse range of industries. Many of these women operate rurally as farm operators. Despite increasing interest in women in agriculture, agri-food, and related industries – as evidenced by a number of provincial and national conferences devoted to women in agriculture and agri-food, and growing numbers of women graduating with agriculture degrees – the representation of women entrepreneurs in these industries remains low across the country. For example, only 30% of farm operators nationally are women (Statistics Canada, 2017a).

“There is a notable gap in the literature pertaining to women, agriculture and entrepreneurship.”

There is a notable gap in the literature pertaining to women, ag, and entrepreneurship. Studies exist on women entrepreneurs generally, and on women in ag (e.g., farm women, farm operators); however, very little research connects these three topics. Most of the existing literature does not refer to farm operators as entrepreneurs and this, in part, may explain the lack of studies formally connecting the topics. We review the literature on women entrepreneurs in agriculture to offer a comprehensive starting point for an agenda to advance both the research and practice of women's agriculture entrepreneurship. Our focus is upon women entrepreneurs in agriculture but given the scarcity of research on this specifically, we also consider women in agriculture more broadly. Our scope is national, however, as researchers located in Saskatchewan, we insert provincial considerations from Saskatchewan as examples throughout. This seems particularly appropriate given Saskatchewan's noteworthy agriculture and food exports, which in 2018 totalled more than \$13 billion or 20% of Canada's total agri-food exports (Ministry of Agriculture 2019). Agriculture and agri-food industries represent approximately 10% of Saskatchewan's gross domestic product (Statistics Canada 2019a).

The agriculture and agri-food industry broadly construed – including primary production, processing, value-add activities,

agricultural financing, corporate agriculture (e.g., inputs, production, marketing, export), advocacy, and other activities – will be collectively described in this article as “ag.”

DEFINING AG ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Broadly speaking, an entrepreneur is understood to be an individual who “innovates by recognizing opportunities, makes moderately risky decisions that lead into actions requiring the efficient use of resources and contributing an added value” (Filion 2011 41). Typically, entrepreneurial activity is measured by business ownership, but a broader interpretation would also include self-employment (Cukier and Chavoushi 2020). In Canada, women-owned businesses account for approximately 16% of all small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and approximately 38% of self-employed Canadians (Industry Canada 2015, Statistics Canada 2019b).

Fitz-Koch et al. (2018) characterize ag entrepreneurship as including

- The generation of new opportunities or expansion of existing business into new ventures;
- Diversification activities, whether on- or off-farm; and
- Businesses or income-generating initiatives conducted in addition to “traditional” agricultural production; that is, pluriactivity.

Ag businesses in Canada remain driven by individuals and families, with sole proprietorships comprising more than half of all ag businesses (51.7%), followed by partnerships (22.9%), family corporations (22.5%), and non-family corporations (2.7%) (Statistics Canada 2017b). In this article ag entrepreneurs are understood to be those who develop an ag-related business venture, whether it be primary production, small business, home-based business, value-add activity, processing activity, online-based business, or product-based business. This definition includes farm operators.

UNDERREPRESENTATION AND INVISIBLE WORK

“Women are underrepresented across agriculture industries broadly. Women represent only 25% of ag managers and 29% of business owners in Canada.”

Women are underrepresented across agriculture industries broadly. Women represent only 25% of ag managers and 29% of business owners in Canada (Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council 2015). Of 65 national and provincial ag associations, only 12% have a woman as their Board Chair or President, 12% have a woman in the “second-in-command” role of Vice-President or Vice-Chair, and 28% have at least one woman on their Board’s executive committees (Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council 2015). A 2015 Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council (CAHRC) report indicated that in 2014, women accounted for 25% (or less) of managers in all sectors of ag except horticulture, at 38% (Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council 2015, Statistics Canada 2013). Only 33% of ag service contractors, farm supervisors, and specialized livestock workers are women. Increasing workplace diversity in ag is essential to productivity and retention (Wechsler 2015). Existing statistics also show a significant gender wage gap in ag employment. For example, although women represent nearly half of agrologists in Saskatchewan (48%), women agrologists working full-time earned nearly \$20,000 less, per year, than their full-time men counterparts (Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists 2019).

Indigenous people are underrepresented in ag, largely due to the negative legacy of colonial policies such as the Permit and Pass systems (Tang 2003). In the 2016 Census of Agriculture, only 3% of Aboriginal* led firms were ag businesses. According to the 2011 National Housing Survey, 2% of the ag population identified as Aboriginal. Of these, a majority (58%) were general farm workers or harvesting labourers, while 38% were managers in ag or horticulture. By 2016, 2.7% of the ag population identified as Aboriginal and 1.9% of ag-operators were Aboriginal, which reflects a 53.7% increase from 1996 (Gauthier and White 2019). Aboriginal women constitute only 0.19% of all ag managers and 0.014% of ag representatives, consultants, and specialists in Canada (Statistics Canada 2018a). They comprise 0.02% of supervisors in food and beverage processing. Statistics do suggest, however, that Aboriginal women are slightly better represented amongst Aboriginal farm operators compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts. Women account for 33.3% of Métis and 36.8% of First Nations farm operators, but in the general population, women comprise approximately 30% of farm operators (Gauthier and White 2019).

Some data suggests that Indigenous peoples’ representation in ag sectors is growing. Many Indigenous communities and First Nations have developed thriving ag initiatives, such as the Muskoday Organic Growers Cooperative in Saskatchewan. Recent initiatives, such as Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan’s (WESK) Matchstick program in

* The term Aboriginal is used here as it is the term used by Statistics Canada.

Saskatchewan, offer support for Indigenous women entrepreneurs in all sectors (Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan 2018).

According to Statistics Canada, in 2018, 99% of businesses in ag were small businesses (Statistics Canada 2019c). Across the country, women-owned SMEs have experienced faster growth than both men-owned enterprises and enterprises owned equally by men and women (Grekou et al. 2018). In the ag sector, however, equally owned businesses grew faster than women-owned enterprises (Grekou et al. 2018). Considering the strong history of family farming in Canada and the fact that many farms are run as spousal partnerships or family corporations, a rise in equally owned farm businesses can still serve as an important indicator of women's formal ownership and involvement as ag entrepreneurs. Indeed, while nearly 92% of Canadian farms operated as sole proprietorships in 1971, by 2016 that number had dropped to 52% in favour of more partnerships and family corporations (Statistics Canada 2017c). Nonetheless, it should still be noted that, as of 2016, the majority of farm partnerships did not have a written agreement (17% without, compared to 5% with a written agreement) (Statistics Canada 2017c). Thus, many women ag entrepreneurs are likely overlooked in accounting for women ag entrepreneurs across the country.

“Women struggle to be recognized as farmers because the discourse of the traditional family farm positions them as primarily responsible for unpaid work, such as domestic and caregiving work or other undervalued tasks.”

Women contribute to the ag sector in various ways; however, most existing research focuses on on-farm work. Women contribute to the overall well-being of the family farm through a variety of tasks, including management and operation of the farm, off-farm employment, and domestic and caregiving work (Archuleta and Russell 2009, Danes and Rettig 1993, Fletcher and Knutilla 2016). Despite women's many and diverse contributions, academic studies show that gendered divisions of labour remain strong in industrialized ag settings (Alston et al. 2018, Fletcher and Knutilla 2016, Keller 2014). Women struggle to be recognized as farmers because the discourse of the traditional family farm positions them as primarily responsible for unpaid work, such as domestic and caregiving work (Folbre 2001) or other undervalued tasks. On the farm, they are often viewed as helpers or supports (Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council 2015, Gibson et al. 1993).

In most male-dominated industries, the perpetuation of stereotypes remains a barrier to women's advancement. Previous research has demonstrated how stereotypical ideas

about masculinity and femininity reinforce gender roles in ag. For example, in industrialized societies, the notion of a “farmer” connotes masculinity, while the traditional notion of the “farm wife” has made women's farm activities less visible (Annes and Wright 2016, Carter and Lopez 2019). These notions may hinder women from either becoming farmers or being recognized as such. Stereotypes portray women as “incomplete farmers” who lack certain physical, psychological, or social attributes vital for farming (Saugeres 2002).

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN AG PRIMARY PRODUCTION

The proportion of women farm operators in Canada has increased over the past 20 years. Prior to 1991, only one farm operator could be identified on the Census of Agriculture. Due to the common identification of men as the primary farmers, women's contributions to family farming were uncounted and invisible. In 1991, Statistics Canada first allowed reporting of multiple farm operators on the census, which increased the official recognition of many farm women (Roppel et al. 2006). In 1996, women in Canada accounted for 25% of farm operators, and this proportion has only increased to approximately 30% as of 2016 (Statistics Canada 2018b).

“The contributions of women often become overshadowed by the image of the independent male farm owner who is responsible for making decisions related to the farm.”

The data from the 2011 Census of Agriculture reported that women farm operators were more likely to work part-time on the farm than male operators (Statistics Canada 2012). About 60% of women farm operators, compared to 40% male operators, reported working less than 30 hours per week on the farm. However, the contributions of women often become overshadowed by the image of the independent male farm owner who is responsible for making decisions related to the farm (Contzen and Forney 2016). Further, many tasks performed by women, such as cooking meals for hired workers, moving machinery, or driving for parts, are not necessarily recognized or counted as farm work.

“Many contemporary farmers diversify income streams and mitigate financial risk through off-farm work.”

Data from Statistics Canada 2011 National Household Survey shows that there is a strong division of on-farm labour, with men performing 75% of production and

operations and women representing 82% of business, finance, and administrative workers (Statistics Canada 2013). This division of labour and framing of women's on-farm work perpetuates the invisibility of women farmers by promoting the idea that certain on-farm jobs are less essential than others.

Many contemporary farmers diversify income streams and mitigate financial risk through off-farm work (Shumsky and Nelson 2018). In 2016, 44.4% of all operators and 58.7% of young women farm operators (under 40 years of age) reported working off-farm. Young farm operators who seek off-farm work tend to be employed in management occupations (22%), business, finance, and administration occupations (21%), education, law, and social community government services occupations (13%), and health occupations (13%). Off-farm income is often used to supplement farm and household finances (Barthez 1982, Contzen 2008); however, off-farm employment may also provide a source of fulfilment for women (Fletcher 2017), particularly considering the ongoing lack of recognition for their on-farm work. Since more off-farm opportunities exist in urban areas, an increasing number of young farm operators are moving away from rural areas and seeking education more than in previous years (Shumsky and Nelson 2018).

WOMEN IN AGRI-FOOD

Agri-food, which includes agriculture, fisheries aquaculture, and food and beverage processing, contributes 2.9% to Canada's GDP and 12% of exports (Statistics Canada n.d.). The industry has major challenges in remaining competitive on the global market, including labour shortages and continued market pressures to innovate and seize value-added opportunities (Industry Canada 2018a). Canada has relied on foreign workers to offset the labour shortage. To help meet market demands and diversify the workforce, the Economic Strategy Table – Agri-Foods recommended that Canada increase the proportion of women managers in the food processing industry to 50% by 2025 (Industry Canada 2018a). In 2017, women accounted for only 36% of managers in food processing (Industry Canada 2018b).

WOMEN AND AG INNOVATION

“In Saskatchewan, for example, the changing landscape of ag has brought new opportunities for women entrepreneurs. Value-added activities, specialty agriculture, organic, and alternative marketing arrangements offer innovative alternatives. Agritourism is also expanding.”

In Saskatchewan, for example, the changing landscape of ag has brought new opportunities for women entrepreneurs. Value-added activities, specialty agriculture, organic, and alternative marketing arrangements offer innovative alternatives. Agritourism is also expanding. Value-added activities differentiate the raw product or commodity by capturing or creating novel value, which increases economic or social value of the product. Recent government investments have sought to increase value-added activity in Saskatchewan from its total revenue of \$3.5 billion in 2012 (Pon 2020). Specialty agriculture activities in Saskatchewan include differentiated, “niche” commodities, like wild rice or spices, which are produced for smaller sub-markets (Hamlin et al. 2015). Value-added, specialty agriculture, and alternative marketing arrangements – like direct-to-consumer (e.g., farmgate sales; farmers' markets) or community-supported agriculture (CSA) – may offer access to new markets, reduced competition, and reduced exposure to market fluctuations (Hamlin et al. 2015). Organic ag also provides market incentives for producers who adhere to specific guidelines about environmental practices and animal welfare (Standards Council of Canada 2018).

Producers are drawn to these activities for a variety of reasons. While market factors are important, studies have shown that personal values – whether environmental, social, or political – are major motivations for producers who go organic or market locally (Beingessner and Fletcher 2019, Stephenson et al. 2017). Although further research is needed on the gender dimensions of such activities, previous studies suggest that organic or “niche” ag activities may prove particularly appealing to women (Ball 2014). Women's participation in CSA may be informed by an ethic of care (Jarosz 2011). Women may also be drawn to organics through a concern for the environment and health (Hall and Mogyorodó 2007, Rissing 2013). Considering the barriers to conventional ag, especially for women, the smaller scale or less capital-intensive nature of some alternative activities may offer exciting windows of opportunity for women ag entrepreneurs.

Women ag entrepreneurs are also expanding into agritourism. Agritourism helps inform the non-farming public of farm issues, which may help to make connections between these two populations (Wright and Annes 2016) and reshape societal expectations of farmers and farming (Annes and Wright 2016). Women farmers with higher education or previous career experiences are innovative, tend to diversify farm operations, and branch out into farm tourism (Annes and Wright 2016).

BARRIERS FOR WOMEN AG ENTREPRENEURS

While some observers have argued that women's underrepresentation in the ag sector is due to lack of interest or

different priorities (Hursh 2017), such explanations disregard the structural barriers women experience in a male-dominated industry.

A 2018 report by Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan identified several barriers that women in Canada face when pursuing entrepreneurship (Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan 2018). These barriers include access to financing, networking challenges, lack of business training and mentors, and maintaining work-life balance. In a 2015 Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC) survey of 532 men and women in agribusiness, 95% of women reported having experienced or witnessed all of the following barriers (in order of prevalence): facing double standards; pursuing off-farm income to help support the family; being denied the opportunity to advance; managing the traditional tasks of child-rearing and performing farm tasks viewed as “support” work; few women role models at senior levels; remoteness of location; access to training; breaking into the “old boys club”; stereotypes about capability from co-workers/senior management; lack of mentoring opportunities; and lack of confidence to pursue more senior roles (Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council 2015). In addition, a study conducted by the Agriculture and Food Council in 2016, which intended to increase economic outcomes for women in ag in Alberta, identified finance (e.g., access to capital) as the number one barrier to women ag entrepreneurs (Agriculture and Food Council 2016).

Women, however, have found ways to facilitate their entry into ag, such as borrowing farmland to reduce some financial risk (Shumsky and Nelson 2018). In 2016, Canadian women primary operators reported renting or leasing, on average, 233 acres more land than males. Borrowed land accounted for 71% of women operators’ total land on average. Not many farms are solely owned by women (Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council 2015). Furthermore, women-owned farms tend to be below average in size and have above-average turnover rates in ownership. Based on the 2016 Canadian Census, 80% of farms with women operators had two or more operators: independent women operators only account for 20% of women operators, whereas that proportion was 50% for independent male operators (Statistics Canada 2018b). As farms grow larger and require more capital, it may be even more difficult for women to become primary operators in the future.

Women entrepreneurs in general are more likely than men entrepreneurs to rely on internal funding such as savings or loans from family and friends instead of external funding (e.g., loans from banks) (Industry Canada 2015). Internal sources of capital may not be as large as external sources; therefore, women entrepreneurs may not have sufficient capital to develop new products or grow their businesses to the same extent as men (Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan 2018). Additionally, women-owned businesses tend to receive

less venture capital and experience higher rejection rates for financing than their male competitors (Industry Canada 2015). This disparity in access to capital may, to some extent, dictate the career opportunities for women ag entrepreneurs: women ag entrepreneurs may be more likely to operate in lower value-added fields that demand less capital funding (Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan 2018).

“Underrepresentation of women entrepreneurs in agriculture, agri-food, and related industries is a missed opportunity. Women provide new insights and innovative practices that increase economic and social value for farms, agri-food industries, and society in general.”

THE WAY FORWARD

Women entrepreneurs contributed approximately \$148 billion to the Canadian economy in 2011-13 and, narrowing the gender gap, could add \$150 billion by 2026 (Devillard and Vogel 2017). Underrepresentation of women entrepreneurs in agriculture, agri-food, and related industries is a missed opportunity. Women provide new insights and innovative practices that increase economic and social value for farms, agri-food industries, and society in general (Annes and Wright 2016).

In this article we have only scratched the surface in understanding women ag entrepreneurship in our country and how women sit at the margins. In outlining a way forward, we propose several questions that can guide research, policy and practice to advance women ag entrepreneurship in Canada.

- In conceptualizing women ag entrepreneurship as rural entrepreneurship, does this constrain or enable the advancement of women ag entrepreneurship research and practice?
- Do women farm operators see themselves as entrepreneurs?
- What role do men play in supporting and advancing women ag entrepreneurship?
- How do intersectional inequalities affect women ag entrepreneurs?
- What are the gender dimensions of organic and “niche” ag activities, which appear to be particularly appealing to women?
- How are entrepreneurial support organizations responding to the needs of women ag entrepreneurs?

- What systemwide changes need to happen for women ag entrepreneurs to have an equal voice in how ag, in both rural and urban contexts, is shaped and developed in our country for the future?

We need to better understand the challenges and opportunities that face women ag entrepreneurs in Canada. In doing so, we need to account for intersectionality, as well as provincial and industry differences, so that the path forward is one where women ag entrepreneurs no longer exist at the margins. There are significant social and economic positive gains to be made from such an agenda.

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INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN CANADA

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INDIGENOUS ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurship is a vessel that can help Indigenous women create promising futures for their communities. Currently, there is a thriving community of Indigenous women entrepreneurs across the country, each taking on unique challenges and making valuable contributions to their communities. Despite a plethora of barriers, Indigenous women are establishing businesses, and entrepreneurship is growing at twice the rate of non-Indigenous women (Impakt, n.d.). The effects of residential schools, the Indian Act and other regulatory and economic exclusion of Indigenous peoples are prevalent in many communities and cannot be ignored - entrepreneurialism has been proven to not only enrich the lives of the Indigenous women who start a venture, but also the lives of their families and entire communities. When reviewing the current literature available on Indigenous women's entrepreneurship, a common theme identified was that maximizing profit is not

the main motivation behind starting a venture - Indigenous women often start their business to meet a specific need in the community, or out of a desire to achieve financial independence to support themselves and their families.

“Currently, there is a thriving community of Indigenous women entrepreneurs across the country, each taking on unique challenges and making valuable contributions to their communities. Despite a plethora of barriers, Indigenous women are establishing businesses, and entrepreneurship is growing at twice the rate of non-Indigenous women.”

In 2016, The Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) released *Promise and Prosperity: The Aboriginal Business Survey* (CCAB, 2016). General trends from this survey showed that Indigenous women-owned businesses tended to be smaller, focused on the service industry, and have a community/social focus (CCAB, 2016). These findings were directly in line with a 2013 report, *Entrepreneurship among First Nation Women in the Atlantic Region*, which found that 88% of existing businesses were considered microbusinesses and their business ideas developed as a result of identifying a need/opportunity in the marketplace (Diochon et al., 2014). The 2016 Aboriginal Business Survey revealed valuable findings about the current status of Indigenous entrepreneurship. The large scope of the report does not leave much room for a focused investigation on Indigenous women's entrepreneurship.

“Indigenous women often start their business to meet a specific need in the community, or out of a desire to achieve financial independence to support themselves and their families.”

In 2016, the Indian Business Corporation (IBC) launched their first Indigenous Women's Business Fund. In 2019, IBC undertook a third-party evaluation of the fund and met with 33 Indigenous women entrepreneurs. When asked to describe themselves, the Indigenous women entrepreneurs who participated in the study identified traits that fell under four main themes: resilient, resourceful, impactful, and influential (Indigenous Business Corporation, n.d.). In addition, this study proved that while Indigenous women face additional barriers and may need more patient lending processes and greater support with their business plans, they are more likely to repay their loans than men are (Indigenous Business Corporation, n.d.).

“While it takes more effort, patience, support, and time to support Indigenous women entrepreneurs, the overall business success rate for Indigenous women is higher than men.”

The third-party evaluation found that 57% of Indigenous women needed support with their business plans, compared to 41% of their male counterparts; 50% needed financial coaching, compared to 38% of Indigenous men; 43% needed support with grant writing, compared to 35% of Indigenous men. The evaluation even found that Indigenous women were 16% more likely to miss two or more loan payments than Indigenous men. However, the IBC reported that only 5% of

loans given to Indigenous women were write-offs, compared to 18% of loans given to Indigenous men (Indigenous Business Corporation, n.d.). This evaluation proved that while it takes more effort, patience, support, and time to support Indigenous women entrepreneurs, the overall business success rate for Indigenous women is higher than men.

Currently, there is scarce literature and data on Indigenous women's entrepreneurship in Canada, but interest is growing. Ignoring the unique needs of Indigenous women excludes them from programming that may appear to be gender neutral (Indigenous Business Corporation, n.d.). The IBC third-party analysis, though using a small sample, drew attention to the fact that Indigenous women face: overt sexism, lateral violence, and troubles being taken seriously or being treated with respect (Indigenous Business Corporation, n.d.). Addressing all of these issues, compounded with committing the extra time and support for Indigenous women, will require hard work, but will be the key to moving forward towards an equitable economy.

Applying a diversity and gender lens, this work uses the 2016 Aboriginal Business Survey data to generate a clearer description of the current status of Indigenous women entrepreneurs, particularly the types of businesses they own, the strategies they use to overcome challenges, and technology and innovation they use to maintain business.

FOCUSING ON INDIGENOUS WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

The CCAB, in collaboration with Environics Research, a research firm, conducted the 2016 Aboriginal Business Survey via telephone with 1,101 First Nations (on- and off-reserve), Inuit and Métis business owners across Canada, between February 10 and March 10, 2015. All the respondents self-identified as Indigenous and owned a business. Approximately 37% of the respondents were women and 73% men; 52 identified as Métis, 47% First Nations, and 2% Inuit (CCAB, 2016).

In partnership with the Women's Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub (WEKH), the CCAB conducted a follow-up quantitative analysis using the weighted survey data to compare the Indigenous entrepreneurs who are women and those who are men to reveal the characteristics of businesses owned by the Indigenous women entrepreneurs and the challenges they face. The preliminary results are published in the *Indigenous Women's Entrepreneurs report*.

SIZE OF BUSINESS

Most women (83%) and most men (75%) own one business, and men more often own more than one. 67% of women have

a sole proprietorship, compared to 57% of men. Slightly more women have partnerships (13%) than men (11%), and more men (31%) have corporations than women (20%).

“A majority of Indigenous entrepreneurs have businesses in the service industry, in fields such as professional services, scientific, and technical services, arts, entertainment, recreation, educational services, and health care. Women entrepreneurs are more concentrated in this sector.”

A majority of Indigenous entrepreneurs have businesses in the service industry, in fields such as professional services, scientific, and technical services, arts, entertainment, recreation, educational services, and health care. Women entrepreneurs are more concentrated in this sector – almost three quarters (74%) of Indigenous women entrepreneurs work in the service industry as opposed to 54% of men entrepreneurs.

Secondary industries, such as retail, transportation and warehousing, and manufacturing, are comparable between genders (17% men and 18% women). Women’s businesses are rarely in construction (5%) and natural resources (3%). This may be because women are more likely to own one business without employees, so they may not often have the capacity to work in fields where large-scale projects are common.

While the majority (71%) of Indigenous entrepreneurs, which is equal between women and men, had their businesses off a First Nations reserve, women are slightly more likely to have a business operated from their home (69%) compared to 64% of men-owned businesses.

“In general, businesses owned by Indigenous women are not doing as well as those owned by Indigenous men.”

In terms of the size of business, Indigenous women-owned businesses tend to have fewer employees than Indigenous men-owned businesses. 30% of Indigenous women entrepreneurs have employees, compared to 40% of Indigenous men. The average for women-owned businesses is 9 while the average for men-owned businesses is 14. Although both Indigenous men and women had Indigenous employees, women-owned businesses tend to have a higher percentage of Indigenous employees. On average, 61% of the permanent full-time staff of Indigenous women-owned businesses are Indigenous, compared to only 51% at Indigenous men-owned businesses. In addition, Indigenous women are more likely to have an all-Indigenous staff, at 44% of respondents compared to 26% of men-owned businesses (Tab. 1).

TABLE 1: FULL-TIME INDIGENOUS EMPLOYEES IN BUSINESSES OWNED BY THE INDIGENOUS ENTREPRENEURS

Indigenous Employees	Men	Women
None	21%	20%
1-9%	1%	-
10-19%	6%	4%
20-29%	7%	5%
30-39%	7%	4%
40-49%	4%	1%
50-59%	12%	7%
60-69%	7%	5%
70-79%	2%	4%
80-89%	6%	5%
90-99%	1%	-
100%	26%	44%
Mean (including 0)	51%	61%

In general, businesses owned by Indigenous women are not doing as well as those owned by Indigenous men. Indigenous woman-owned businesses experienced less revenue growth in 2015 compared to their male counterparts. Only 36% of women entrepreneurs, compared to 44% of men entrepreneurs, reported an increase in revenues, and 22% of women entrepreneurs, compared to 16% of men, reported the decrease in revenues in 2015 (Fig. 1). Fewer Indigenous women business owners (71%) reported a net profit in the previous fiscal year compared to Indigenous men (79%).

“Compared to Indigenous men, Indigenous women are more likely to use personal savings (60% vs. 52%).”

The majority of Indigenous women and men entrepreneurs are dependent on personal savings as the main source of financing when starting up their businesses. Compared to Indigenous men, Indigenous women are more likely to use personal savings (60% vs. 52%). The second biggest source of financing for Indigenous men is business loans or lines of credit from financial institutions (16%), while for women, it is

FIGURE 1: BUSINESS'S GROSS SALES REVENUES IN THE PAST YEAR

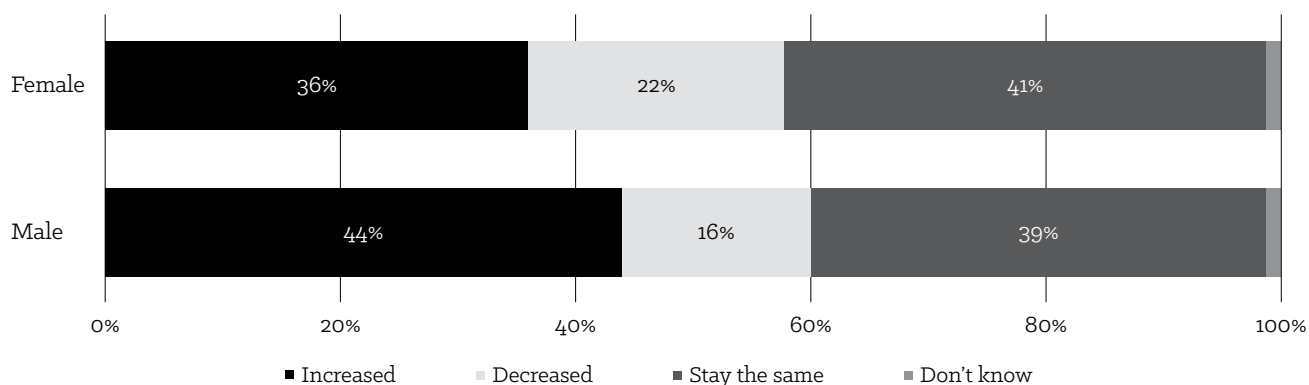


TABLE 2: THE MAIN SOURCE OF FINANCING USED TO START UP THE BUSINESS

Source of Financing	Men-Owned	Women-Owned
Personal savings	52%	60%
Business loans or lines of credit from financial institutions	16%*	7%
Aboriginal lending agencies or capital corporations	7%	8%
Personal loans or lines of credit from financial institutions	7%	6%
Federal government grants or loans	4%	6%
Retained earnings	2%	-
Provincial/territorial government grants or loans	2%	1%
Loans from financial institutions (unspecified)	1%	-
Financial assistance from family/friends	-	1%
Aboriginal Business Canada	-	1%
Other	4%	3%
Don't know	4%	6%

the Indigenous lending agencies or capital corporations (8%). It is clear that women entrepreneurs are more unlikely to use loans or lines of credit from financial institutions or government grants (Tab. 2). This is also true for financing their business in the established phase.

BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

Indigenous women and men have similar perceptions of their business' success. About half of Indigenous women (53%) and men (51%) viewed their business as extremely or very successful. Few Indigenous women (5%) and men (6%) viewed their business as either not very or not at all successful. For those that identified their business as extremely and very successful, both men and women entrepreneurs agreed that the main reasons for their success were 1) hard work and lots of time and effort, 2) good client base and steady work, and 3) good reputation and recognition.

Both men and women entrepreneurs who reported less successful businesses, identified the same reasons for their struggles. These reasons seem to be more challenging for women than for men.

- Marketing difficulties (38% for women and 21% for men);
- Poor economy/market (34% for women and 17% for men);
- Not fully committed to business/part time (24% for women and 15% for men).

BUSINESS NETWORKS

Entrepreneurs consider financing, marketing, and the growth of their businesses to be closely tied to their business networks and local communities. Indigenous women entrepreneurs, compared to their male counterparts, were more likely to seek formal (27% vs. 21%) and informal (63% vs. 56%) advice for their business within such a network. The survey found that 83% of the Indigenous women rank their community relationships as most important to their business success, and 80% of the Indigenous men rank their suppliers as most important (Tab. 3).

Less than one third of men- and women-owned businesses (32% for both) have the experience of using government loans and grants for small businesses, and even less of them used government financial support for employment, training and apprenticeships, with women-owned businesses having a slightly higher percentage than men-owned businesses (27% vs. 23%). Among these programs, Aboriginal Business Canada (AANDC) and Provincial/Territorial government programs are the top two that men- and women-owned businesses have used. The third highest for women-owned businesses are apprenticeship programs (7%) and Federal programs for men (7%).

“ Indigenous women entrepreneurs show a more open attitude toward innovation and new technology... In addition, Indigenous women entrepreneurs consistently use social media at higher rates than men.”

TABLE 3: OPINIONS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIPS TO BUSINESS SUCCESS

Relationships	Men	Women
Local community	77%	83%
Suppliers	80%	72%
Banks, credit unions or other financial institutions	74%	74%
Other companies, either Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, with whom your partner	72%	72%
Aboriginal political leadership	57%	63%

USE OF INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Indigenous women entrepreneurs show a more open attitude toward innovation and new technology than men. In 2015, 52% of men and 55% of women entrepreneurs introduced new products or services, while 45% of men and 44% of women introduced new processes. In addition, Indigenous women entrepreneurs consistently use social media at higher rates than men, with Facebook (56%), their company website (27%), LinkedIn (28%), Twitter (21%), and email (14%) being the most common (Tab. 4). 26% of women and 35% of men entrepreneurs did not use social media at the time of the interview. Overall, more than 85% of the businesses have internet connection.

DISCUSSION

The CCAB report found that 67% of Indigenous women ran sole proprietorships and were more likely to operate a business from home. Indigenous women see entrepreneurship as a way to achieve financial independence, control, and freedom. But they are also forced to balance many, often unpaid, roles as caregivers and community members. When Indigenous women run their businesses from home, they are managing their household needs, the needs of their children, and the needs of their business. For many Indigenous women, family comes first, and this means that they are often unable to dedicate working full time for their business.

“Indigenous women see entrepreneurship as a way to achieve financial independence, control, and freedom. But they are also forced to balance many, often unpaid, roles as caregivers and community members.”

Our analysis found that 60% of Indigenous women used personal savings to finance their businesses. Traditional banks are averse to providing loans to Indigenous women entrepreneurs operating on reserves due to constraints imposed by the 1876 Indian Act, which heavily restricts and regulates all aspects of life for Indigenous peoples in Canada to this day. Despite undergoing dozens of revisions, the initial essence of control is still prevalent and acts as an economic sanction for Indigenous peoples today. The Indian Act restricts any personal or real property from being used as collateral for a mainstream financial loan, restricts land use on reserves for business purposes, and affects taxation. All Indigenous entrepreneurs wanting to start a business on reserves must navigate these regulations, requirements, and red tape. It is three times as complex to start a business on reserves because of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada and the bureaucracy of band politics (Brown et al., 2016).

The findings on financial challenges faced by Indigenous entrepreneurs are also consistent with a report published by The National Aboriginal Economic Development Board in 2017, which states that 51% of Indigenous businesses identified

TABLE 4: SOCIAL MEDIA USE BY INDIGENOUS ENTREPRENEURS

Social Media	Men	Women
Facebook	40%	56%
Company website	23%	27%
LinkedIn	20%	28%*
Twitter	21%	23%
E-mail	7%	14%
Google+	4%	5%
Photo sharing sites like Instagram and Flickr	3%	6%
YouTube	3%	4%
Pinterest	1%	5%
Other mediums (e.g. radio, newspaper, TV ads)	3%	2%
Internet (unspecified)	2%	2%
Company blog	1%	2%
Kijiji	1%	
Other	4%	5%
Don't use social media	35%	26%
Don't know	2%	1%

locating potential sources of funding as a barrier to business development (The National Aboriginal Economic Development Board, 2017). In Canada, Indigenous entrepreneurs face many challenges and barriers when it comes to accessing capital, forcing them to resort to less than ideal “solutions” such as: cutting into personal savings, borrowing from family and friends, using credit cards, and working multiple jobs (The Conference Board of Canada – Northern and Aboriginal Policy, 2017). Capital is essential for entrepreneurs and their businesses to thrive (The National Aboriginal Economic Development Board, 2017). While Indigenous entrepreneurs face barriers in accessing capital at an individual level, Aboriginal Financial Institutions (AFIs) also face barriers in accessing financing, often having greater demand for loans than they have capital to lend (Impakt, n.d.).

“The Indian Act restricts any personal or real property from being used as collateral for a mainstream financial loan, restricts land use on reserves for business purposes, and affects taxation... It is three times as complex to start a business on reserve because of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada and the bureaucracy of band politics.”

Indigenous women entrepreneurs face an additional level of barriers to accessing financing because they often have different financing needs than Indigenous men. Unfortunately, many of the loans and programs AFIs offer are not for women specifically. For example, Indigenous women are more likely to start a small business or micro-enterprise that does not need a large amount of capital at first and would benefit more from a microloan (Impakt, n.d.).

“Empathy and relationship building are key to the success of any program in an Indigenous community.”

Many programs supporting Indigenous entrepreneurship offer a “one size fits all” format. However, our analysis found that Indigenous women and men face different barriers. According to the NIEEDB (The National Aboriginal Economic Development Board, 2017), AFIs are currently the best opportunity to provide funding for Indigenous entrepreneurs, but less than a handful of them currently offer programming specific to women.

Empathy and relationship building are key to the success of any program in an Indigenous community, and the same rules apply to creating programming to support Indigenous women entrepreneurs. This means that ecosystem players need to fundamentally revamp the ways in which they do business

so that there are program offerings created by Indigenous women for Indigenous women.

CONCLUSION

Supporting Indigenous women's entrepreneurship is important for community prosperity, especially when more than 80% of Indigenous women entrepreneurs rank their community relationships as most important to their business success. Their businesses provide employment opportunities for others in the community. Indigenous women-owned businesses tend to have a higher percentage of Indigenous employees.

While this paper identified some of the obstacles faced by Indigenous women entrepreneurs, it is important to note that despite known barriers, Indigenous women-owned businesses have been thriving in recent years. In 2016, 71% of Indigenous women-owned businesses reported a net profit in the previous fiscal year. It will be crucial to use WEKH Indigenous Women's Entrepreneurship Needs Analysis (forthcoming) as a tool, when developing programs to meet the unique needs of Indigenous women entrepreneurs and continuously support their growth and success. This report highlighted areas and gaps where business support organizations can focus their efforts to best support Indigenous women entrepreneurs.

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BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES: BLACK ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN CANADA

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INTRODUCTION

While there has been growing awareness of anti-Black racism in Canada, the murder of George Floyd has galvanized people around the world calling for action. Much of the focus has been directed to systemic racism across major institutions – policing, education and health care – as well as on barriers to employment and advancements. While 4% of the Canadian population is Black, there are significant barriers to employment and leadership, and Black Canadians are dramatically overrepresented in low income, low-skilled and precarious work and underrepresented in leadership roles. A recent study on boards of directors for example revealed that of 1600 corporate board members across Canada, only 13 are Black.

“While 4% of the Canadian population is Black, there are significant barriers to employment and leadership, and Black Canadians are dramatically overrepresented in low income, low-skilled and precarious work and underrepresented in leadership roles.”

Canada's Black community accounts for approximately 4% of the total Canadian population (Table 1 - Statistics Canada, 2019). With a diverse ethnic blueprint, the Black community is often homogenized, resulting in a lack of understanding of the dynamics involved with the Black experience, including the differences in culture, historical experiences, and challenges faced by those born in Canada versus those who immigrated to Canada, who also have distinct cultural identities and experiences (Kipusi, 2020). In the 2016 census, only 40% of the Black community reported being born in Canada, with the remainder born in Africa and the diaspora. Immigration and natural increase continue to account for population growth within the Black community. As immigrants, approximately 70% of Blacks arrive in Canada through the economic and family reunification classes while roughly 30% arrive as protected persons or refugees. Within the Black community, there are significant differences between those who identify as being from the Caribbean and those who are more recently from Africa. There are significant differences at the level of education and occupational class as well as identity and in many cases distinct social networks and organizations (Appendix 1 outlines some of the organizations providing support targeting Black entrepreneurs).

“With a diverse ethnic blueprint, the black community is often homogenized, resulting in a lack of understanding of the dynamics involved with the Black experience, including the differences in culture, historical experiences, and challenges faced by those born in Canada versus those who immigrated to Canada, who also have distinct cultural identities and experiences.”

BLACK ENTREPRENEURS LITERATURE

There is an extensive body of research on Black entrepreneurship in the United States. Data from the U.S. show that Blacks are less likely to be business owners or self-employed than the overall U.S. population (Christnacht, Smith & Chenevert, 2018), tend to have less success in entrepreneurship compared to their white counterparts (Fairlie, 1999; Fairlie & Robb, 2007) and tend to be newer (Census, 2015) and smaller in nature (Fairlie & Robb, 2008). Research reveals complex intersecting factors that shape the outcomes for Black entrepreneurs compared to others. Access to financing is a major barrier for Black American entrepreneurs. For example, Black led businesses tend to be smaller and therefore less likely to have access to financing. Additionally, wealth disparities between Black and White households serve as a limiting factor for the success of new business startups (Lofstrom, Bates & Parker, 2014). Moreover, Black-owned ventures have

a lower probability of obtaining resources at a level similar to white-owned ventures, due to the difference in credit ratings (Jaiswal, 2018). Others have found that Black entrepreneurs are more likely to be “discouraged borrowers” expecting to be discriminated against and therefore unlikely to seek financing (Bates & Robb, 2016; Lee et al., 2019).

Studies have also found that social capital is cited as a barrier to success for Black entrepreneurs. Howard (2019) found that Blacks do not have the same access to professional social networks as White entrepreneurs and these networks are often key to successful business expansion. Moreover, Black Americans do not have the same relational networks or ethnic enclaves as other immigrant groups in the U.S. and therefore do not grow at the same rate as businesses owned by other minority groups.

“The intergenerational transfer of wealth, or lack thereof, can also be compounded when gender and class are added as dimensions of identity, leaving black women with the lowest levels of wealth relative to black men, white women, and white men.”

Studies in the U.S. also confirmed that many black individuals become entrepreneurs as a result of being excluded from traditional employment, concluding it has become a “logical response to racism” (Wingfield & Taylor, 2016). A U.S.-based study, however, indicates that access to capital becomes a larger obstacle to growth for African American firms and particularly for women (Conley, 2018). Lack of personal wealth for these entrepreneurs is often limiting. The intergenerational transfer of wealth, or lack thereof, can also be compounded when gender and class are added as dimensions of identity, leaving Black women with the lowest levels of wealth relative to Black men, white women, and white men (Winfield & Taylor, 2016).

BLACK ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN CANADA

In Canada, however, there is limited research specifically focused on Black entrepreneurs in part because of the limited availability of disaggregated data that distinguishes the experience of Black entrepreneurs compared to other racialized entrepreneurs. Table 1 shows disaggregated (micro) data from Statistics Canada (2016), which confirms that approximately 3.5% of the Black population was self-employed (Statistics Canada, 2016). Many self-employed Canadians are engaged in gig work, which is increasing and, in some respects, represents a new variant of long time contractual and piece work. This growing gig economy contains a disproportionate number

of racialized and Black workers. Often gig workers and entrepreneurs are pushed into self-employment because of exclusion from mainstream employment but in other instances they choose it as a preferred pathway.

“In Canada, however, there is limited research specifically focused on Black entrepreneurs in part because of the limited availability of disaggregated data that distinguishes the experience of Black entrepreneurs compared to other racialized entrepreneurs.”

In the most recent survey data, it is estimated that Black self-employed entrepreneurs account for 3.5% of the population – for approximately 34,000. Among these, approximately 30% are women, slightly less than in the general population (See Table 1). Extrapolating from other research, we expect that Black entrepreneurs will represent a higher proportion of self-employed Canadians compared to majority owners of SMEs. Self-employed entrepreneurs, in turn tend to be

under-financed, smaller, in services sectors and more vulnerable generally than SMEs.

Research on Black entrepreneurship in Canada indicates that Blacks go into entrepreneurship for several reasons. Uneke (1996) found that Black business owners pursued self-employment to have more agency or personal autonomy and to make more money. Similarly, in a study conducted on Black and Portuguese entrepreneurs, Teixeira (2001) found that Black entrepreneurs chose self-employment to gain autonomy and economic independence. However, he also found that Blacks were more likely to go into business due to unemployment or a lack of available jobs.

“Although billionaire Michael Lee Chin is proud of his Jamaican heritage, there are few prominent entrepreneurs who are Black. Canadians across the country celebrate Viola Desmond’s advocacy, few know that she was a successful entrepreneur.”

TABLE 1: CANADA’S POPULATION HIGHLIGHTING SELF-EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS OF RACIALIZED COMMUNITIES

Group	Population	Self-Employed	Percent Self-Employed	Self-Employed		Percent Self-Employed who are Women
				Men	Women	
Canada	34460064	2211369	6.4%	1411070	800,299	36.2%
Aboriginal (Indigenous)	1626625	49,369	3.0%	29,628	19,741	40.0%
Arab	506,003	30,369	6.0%	23,296	7,073	23.3%
Black	994,793	34,370	3.5%	24,222	10,148	29.5%
Chinese	1454571	96,965	6.7%	56,816	40,149	41.4%
Filipino	731,099	14,259	2.0%	6222	8,037	56.4%
Latin American	414,918	21,778	5.2%	12,889	8,889	40.8%
Other Asian	700,624	52,740	7.5%	32,518	20,222	38.3%
South Asian	1805102	106,443	5.9%	78,443	28000	26.3%
Immigrant	7493196	601,738	8.0%	400,220	201,518	33.5%
– Before 1990	2623136	235,779	9.0%	162,375	73,404	31.1%
– 1990-1999	1420855	140,743	9.9%	92,443	48300	34.3%
– 2000-2010	2119718	166,519	7.9%	105,740	60,779	36.5%
– 2011-2016	1122971	45,626	4.1%	30,740	14,886	32.6%

Source: Statistics Canada (2016) Census 2016 Public Use Microdata File (PUMF); Statistics Canada (2019). www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/98M0002X

While Black-focused organizations like the Black Business Professional Association have long celebrated the achievement of the Black community, there has been limited attention paid to Black entrepreneurship in mainstream Canadian Business. While organizations such as the Canadian Aboriginal and Minority Supplier Council (CAMSC) promote targeted procurement to support diverse businesses, there has been limited attention focused on targeted strategies for Black businesses. Although billionaire Michael Lee Chin is proud of his Jamaican heritage, there are few prominent entrepreneurs who are Black. Canadians across the country celebrate Viola Desmond's advocacy, few know that she was a successful entrepreneur.

BLACK ENTREPRENEURS IN TORONTO

In 2015, the City of Toronto undertook a study (2015a) to examine the ways in which the City could improve its outreach to the Black small business community. The study highlighted the existing systemic barriers faced by the Black entrepreneur community. In Toronto, approximately 200,000 individuals self-identified as Black (8.5% of the total Toronto population), making it the largest representation of the Black community Canada-wide. The study included a higher number of individuals from the Caribbean community, and therefore responses may be skewed towards the Afro-Caribbean community. Of the 242 Black-led businesses responding to the questionnaire, 133 were located in the City of Toronto.

Findings from the survey indicate that professional services (32%), including advertising and business consulting are the focus of Black-led businesses while educational services (11%), arts and entertainment (15%) account for other industries. In 2014, the top five employment sectors in Toronto were health care and social assistance, accommodation and food services, finance and insurance, professional services, and retail trade (City of Toronto, 2015b). These five industries comprised half of all jobs in the city. Findings from the survey show that over half of Black-led businesses also operate in the same top five industries. Moreover, Black businesses tend to be fairly new, as results from the survey demonstrate that the majority of Black-owned businesses (59%) in Toronto have been operating for five years or less. Additionally, of the 133 respondents from Toronto, an overwhelming majority of those surveyed are small businesses (98%) with about half (48%) being self-employed and 32% employing between two and five individuals.

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

If there is little research generally on Black entrepreneurs, there is even less specifically on women although anecdotal

evidence suggests that the barriers are amplified for Black women. It is well documented that women entrepreneurs face a number of gendered and structural barriers including stereotypes (i.e., men in tech are generally considered to be entrepreneurs) and access to supports (WEKH, 2020) such as financing and training opportunities. Even when programs have been developed targeting Black entrepreneurs, women often are not included.

“If there is little research generally on Black entrepreneurs, there is even less specifically on women although anecdotal evidence suggests that the barriers are amplified for Black women... Even when programs have been developed targeting Black entrepreneurs, women often are not included.”

The City of Toronto research (2015a) also indicates that barriers to growth for Black businesses include a lack of access to credit due to having new businesses or businesses that are less than five years old, lack of networking opportunities, and limited access to professional development training. This puts Black women-led businesses in particular at risk as the survey found that businesses owned and operated by Black women tend to be newer (68%) in contrast with those operated by their male counterparts (48%).

While there are many barriers to success for Black female entrepreneurs, there are also upsides to entrepreneurship. For example, the majority of immigrant business owners, if given the opportunity to work in a job with similar income, choose to remain self-employed (Hou & Wang, 2011). Entrepreneurship can often provide alternative paths to traditional employment for women. A study on female Ghanaian entrepreneurs in Canada found that the primary motivation for entrepreneurship was the flexibility allowing for better work-family balance (Nkrumah, 2016). This sentiment that self-employment can be a solution to women with domestic responsibilities has been echoed in other studies (Jeon & Ostrovsky, 2016)

“While there are many barriers to success for Black female entrepreneurs, there are also upsides to entrepreneurship... Entrepreneurship can often provide alternative paths to traditional employment for women.”

BARRIERS AND AREAS OF SUPPORT

Research has found that Black entrepreneurs in Canada are more likely to report experiencing barriers to establishing

their business than other ethno-racial groups including Portuguese (Teixeira, 2011) and Chinese (Uneke, 1996) Canadians.

The very limited research on Black entrepreneurs in Canada has shown that Black entrepreneurs often face barriers to accessing financial assistance and often have to rely on personal savings. A study examining Black and Chinese entrepreneurs in Canada found that Black business owners are less likely to receive business loans from a financial institution when compared to Chinese business owners (47% vs. 84% respectively) (Uneke, 1996). The study found that the absence of adequate collateral and equity were the main reasons for being rejected for financial assistance. Similarly, in comparison to Portuguese business owners who indicate language proficiency as the major barrier to establishing their business, Black business owners were most likely to state that access to financing was the largest barrier. This sentiment has been echoed in the Toronto study (2015a) where young entrepreneurs (aged 18 to 34) as well as owners of firms operating for five years or less state that access to financing was the area in which they needed the most support from the city. Difficulty in accessing financing for these two groups is likely due to the lack of established credit.

Apart from access to financing, the Toronto study (2015a) found that marketing (58%) and networking and learning opportunities (55%) were also areas they would like to see support from the city. Young entrepreneurs also listed connecting with knowledgeable mentors (54%) as an additional area where assistance from the city is needed. Respondents from Toronto also stated that expanding their business and securing affordable space (41%) were areas that needed greater support. There were also varying needs based on the industry that Black entrepreneurs are involved in. Those in retail, for example, highlighted the need for access to marketing opportunities (80%) and financing (60%), while a significantly smaller amount (20%) were concerned with opportunities for mentorship. Scaling (67%) and export (67%) were the main concerns for Black entrepreneurs in health services.

The lack of social capital and relational networks was cited in the U.S. research as an explanation for the lack of success of Black entrepreneurs (see Howard, 2019). Similar findings on lack of relational networks have been found in Canada. Research comparing Chinese and Black entrepreneurs in Canada found that the majority of Chinese business owners (76%) used unpaid family labour in comparison to 24% of Black business owners (Uneke, 1996). The study also found that Black business owners did not have access to the same business organizations and group resources that Chinese business owners did. In the Canadian study comparing Portuguese and Black entrepreneurs, Teixeira (2001) found that Black entrepreneurs were less likely to rely on community resources/information and relied less on family and friends than their Portuguese counterparts.

As stated earlier, the Black community is not a homogenous entity, and this is evidenced by the distinct needs of different ethnic groups in Toronto's Black business community. For example, although networking and learning opportunities and marketing are the two most common concerns overall, Toronto business owners who self-identify as being of African heritage say that expanding their businesses and securing affordable space are particularly critical areas that need support from the city. Meanwhile, Caribbean/West Indian-led firms see accessing financing as a crucial area in addition to networking and marketing. Another important difference between Black-Caribbean and Black-African entrepreneurs is the language barrier that African Black entrepreneurs encounter. A study on Ghanaian female entrepreneurs in Canada found that language proficiency serves as a barrier to successful entrepreneurship (Nkrumah, 2016). This is not the case with Caribbean entrepreneurs as much, as English tends to be their native language. However, discrimination against foreign accents tends to affect both Caribbean and African Black individuals.

“Anti-Black sentiments towards Black entrepreneurs and Black businesses by financial institutions were cited as an important factor in the lack of access to financial assistance.”

In light of this, the Black community faces discrimination in the form of systemic racism and microaggressions, which results in barriers to socioeconomic advancement, particularly for the Black community in entrepreneurship. Microaggressions are typically carried out through brief interactions where the aggressor intentionally or unintentionally insults or uses stereotypes, for example, against people of colour, whereas systemic racism refers to systems of oppression and established racist policies within institutions (Matthews, 2020). For example, anti-Black sentiments towards Black entrepreneurs and Black businesses by financial institutions was cited as an important factor in the lack of access to financial assistance (Uneke, 1996). Black business owners in the study reported financial loan application rejections as a result of Blacks not traditionally being associated with business success (Uneke, 1996). Moreover, there has been historical discrimination against Blacks who were excluded from events and clubs where social networking would normally occur and business contacts would traditionally be made (Uneke, 1996). Thereby, leading to a lack of Black businesses (Uneke, 1996) and Black role models in business. Black entrepreneurs have had to find a number of strategies to combat racism and discrimination towards them including remaining in the background or being “faceless” when running their business (Nkrumah, 2016).

ADDITIONAL BARRIERS CREATED BY COVID-19

COVID-19 has affected all Canadians. However, there are those who are affected far more than others. While small and medium enterprises and self-employed entrepreneurs have faced catastrophic effects – in terms of layoffs and closures – Black entrepreneurs are facing an even greater burden in part because of structural inequality, discrimination and access to needed supports. The effects on Black women entrepreneurs are compounded by the crushing impact of school and daycare closures, the burden of unpaid work in the home and access to basic infrastructure.

“Black entrepreneurs are more likely to have businesses in the service industry, own smaller businesses, and be self-financed, making them among the most susceptible to disruption by COVID-19.”

Additionally, Black entrepreneurs are more likely to have businesses in the service industry, own smaller businesses, and be self-financed, making them among the most susceptible to disruption by COVID-19.¹ For example, the data shows that the top three industry sectors in North America in which Black-led businesses operate, based on the North American Industry Classification System categories, are professional services, arts, entertainment and recreation, and educational services. Of note, these are the businesses that experienced the most disruption during the initial phases of COVID-19. Research of Black entrepreneurs generally, and Black women entrepreneurs in particular, also reveals the absence of role models. The media are dominated by tech stereotypes and voices advocating for the tech and innovation sector, often excluding the types of main street and service-type businesses that Black Canadians are more likely to own (Senior & Cukier, 2020).

“During the initial phases of the lockdown, only 10% of Black-owned businesses remained open, and 80% of the businesses reported not having a cash flow for April’s bills and 85% were concerned about closing permanently.”

In response to the challenges presented by COVID-19, the federal government has implemented various programs to mitigate the challenges created by the pandemic (Table 2), but as the BBPA research indicates, many Black businesses are

not positioned to take advantage of these. While these programs address some of the issues faced by entrepreneurs, the Black community has highlighted the need for additional supports.

The Black Business and Professional Association (BBPA) participated in a survey on “How is COVID-19 Impacting your Business” administered by the province of Ontario. The survey was part of a pilot study and compared the experiences of members of the BBPA and members of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) as it relates to the supports available from the federal government. When asked about the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, 80% of the members of the BBPA reported that it would not benefit them, as opposed to just 37% of members of the CFIB. While COVID-19 has impacted businesses due to extended closures, the effect on businesses owned by Black entrepreneurs has been more pronounced. During the initial phases of the lockdown, only 10% of Black-owned businesses remained open, and 80% of the businesses reported not having a cash flow for April’s bills and 85% were concerned about closing permanently. This is a contrast to members of the CFIB who reported that 20% were fully open, and when compared to Black businesses, less than half of the businesses were concerned about April’s cash flow (30%) and permanent closure (39%). As it relates to debt capacity, 56% of the members of the CFIB were unable to take on additional debt, compared to 98% of members surveyed by the BBPA. Table 2 provides a sample of responses from the survey.

“In an effort to improve access to supports for Black entrepreneurs, a diversity lens is needed in the development and delivery of programs being implemented to support small businesses.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

The starting point for an evidence-based response is better data and particularly data disaggregated by ethnic origin and gender. The Black business community is not homogenous and we need a better understanding of what their businesses need. In an effort to improve access to supports for Black entrepreneurs, a diversity lens is needed in the development and delivery of programs being implemented to support small businesses. Additionally, in considering the historical and systemic barriers that persist within the Black community, a nuanced view of the uneven impacts of COVID-19 must be considered by policymakers, researchers and corporations.

1 Diversity Institute (2020). *Black Canadian Women in Action*.

TABLE 2: SAMPLE OF RESPONSES FROM THE SURVEY ON BUSINESSES AFFECTED BY COVID-19

	Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB)	Black Business & Professional Association
1. Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy will not help	37%	80%
2. Do not think they will qualify for a Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA)	20%	80%
3. Are fully open	20%	10%
4. Do not have cash flow to pay April Bills	30%	80%
5. Worried about permanent closure	39%	85%
6. Unsure they will be able to reopen	32%	60%
7. Can survive less than a month under current conditions	25%	85%
8. Believe government should make emergency money available to businesses that have been hardest hit to cover fixed costs	86%	98%
9. Lack capacity to take on debt	56%	96%

Source: Black Business and Professional Association. (2020). "Black Business and Professional Association Survey Reveals Marked Disparities Between COVID-19 Effects on Black Businesses and Other Businesses in Canada". Toronto, 2020

We have to continue efforts to fight systemic discrimination and particularly anti-Black racism, to challenge stereotypes and celebrate the successes of Black entrepreneurs. "If you cannot see it, you cannot be it" and while initiatives such as the Harry Jerome Awards and Great Black North initiative are important, we need to tackle stereotypes head on in mainstream media and culture. As well, understanding the structural issues affecting self-employed entrepreneurs and those in the service sector is critically important. A gender and diversity lens on major programs with specific targets and accountability is also critical.

"Procurement policies in government and in large corporations assigning a portion of organizational spending to Black businesses, coupled with programs to build capacity, have proven to be effective in the U.S. and can be extended to Canada."

At the institutional level, we need more data on the processes and policies in financial institutions, business support organizations, incubators and other key components of the entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem to address barriers faced by Black entrepreneurs and particularly immigrants and women, given intersectional issues. Targeted financial investment and grant programs are needed to help level the playing field as well as support for organizations designed specifically to assist Black entrepreneurs. Procurement policies in government and in large corporations assigning a portion of organizational spending to Black businesses, coupled with programs to build capacity, have proven to be effective in the U.S. and can be extended to Canada.

We also need to build capacity for Black entrepreneurs starting at an early age. Particular focus on the opportunities of entrepreneurship, financial literacy, business and technology skills are critical to build the pool of aspiring entrepreneurs. Targeted training programs focused on Black entrepreneurs and particularly Black Women are also important. Access to culturally appropriate mentoring, coaching and sponsorship are also vital.

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Wingfield, A. H. & Taylor, T. (2016). "Race, gender, and class in entrepreneurship: Intersectional counterframes and black business owners." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 39(9), 1676–1696.

ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR BLACK ENTREPRENEURS (ECOSYSTEM MAPPING):

Africa-Canada Chamber of Commerce	www.canadaafrica.ca
African-Canadian Development Cooperation (ACADEC)	www.africandevdevelopment.ca
Audace au féminin – Salon international de la femme noire	www.sifn-montreal.com
Black Business and Professional Association	www.bbpa.org
Black Business Initiative	www.bbi.ca
Black Canadian Women in Action	www.bcwinaction.ca
Black Professionals in Tech Network	www.bptn.ca
Canada East Africa Chamber of Commerce	www.canada-eastafrica.com
Canadian Association of Urban Financial Professionals	www.caufp.ca
Canadian Black Chamber of Commerce	www.blackchamber.ca
Canadian Council on Africa	www.ccafrica.ca
Caribbean-Canadian Chamber of Commerce & Community	www.c5ontario.com
CASA Foundation	www.casafoundation.ca
Chantier d'Afrique du Canada (CHAFRIC)	www.chafric.ca
Force leadership africain	www.forceleadershipafricain.org
Forum économique international des Noirs (IBEF)	www.fein-ibef.com/home
How She Hustles	www.howshehustles.com
Impact Hub	www.impacthub.net
Jeune chambre du Congo-Kinshasa au Québec	No website available
M3E	www.missionentrepreneulle.com/index.php
Nigerian-Canadian Business Association	www.ncbn.ca
Programme d'aide à l'entrepreneuriat (PAEN)	www.economie.gouv.qc.ca/bibliotheques/programmes/aide-financiere/programme-daide-a-lentrepreneur-iat-paen/?no_cache=1
Réseau des entrepreneurs et professionnels africains	www.repaf.org

Source: Diversity Institute Ecosystem Mapping of organizations within the DI Network. 2020.

BARRIERS TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP FOR IMMIGRANT WOMEN: A CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

Immigrant entrepreneurship has increasingly become an important part of the Canadian business landscape. It is also a significant contributor to Canada's economy, as it offers newcomers a pathway to labour market entry and participation (Diversity Institute, 2017; Ensign & Robinson, 2011; Eraydin, Tasan-Kok & Vranken, 2010; Robertson & Grant, 2016). Entrepreneurship also represents a viable and fulfilling career option for immigrant women (Braidford et al., 2013; Byrne et al., 2019; Orser et al., 2019) as the research suggests that immigrants face unique social barriers to securing gainful employment due to systematic barriers, and covert or unconscious biases (Diversity Institute, 2017).

The literature also suggests that underrepresented groups choose entrepreneurship as a way to circumvent issues, such as dissatisfaction with salary and employment. Systemic barriers that filter racialized immigrants in particular into low-wage, low-skilled jobs often result in their dissatisfaction with

their current employment (Bauder, 2003; Teixeira & Lo, 2012; Wayland, 2011). Women, especially racialized women or immigrant women, face an extra brand of discrimination in the workplace, including being passed up for promotional opportunities that they are qualified for or being subjected to a hostile work environment (Branker, 2017). Consequently, some immigrant and racialized women seek entrepreneurship as an alternative to traditional employment (Momani, 2018).

“The lack of recognition of foreign credentials in the Canadian market has been shown to cause underemployment and unemployment among immigrants... In some cases, these factors lead skilled and educated immigrant and racialized women to pursue entrepreneurship.”

Moreover, structural and cultural barriers that exist in the broader labour market, such as discrimination based on race and gender, can further entrench existing inequities (Robertson & Grant, 2016). Immigrants are often excluded from traditional job markets due to organizational and societal factors, such as the lack of recognition of foreign credentials. The lack of recognition of foreign credentials in the Canadian market has been shown to cause underemployment and unemployment among immigrants (Byrne et al., 2019; Orser et al., 2019). A 2015 Statistics Canada report confirmed that immigrant women are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed when compared to their Canadian-born counterparts, despite on average possessing higher levels of education (Statistics Canada, 2015). In some cases, these factors lead skilled and educated immigrant and racialized women to pursue entrepreneurship (Robertson & Grant, 2016).

However not all immigrants engage in a “necessity based” pursuit of entrepreneurship. Opportunity is often cited as a primary motivating factor that leads newcomers to immigrate in the first place (Langford, Josty & Holbrook, 2013); as such, many immigrants partake in “opportunity-based” entrepreneurship (Diversity Institute, 2017; Langford, Josty & Holbrook, 2013). Research conducted by Hou and Wang (2011) indicates that nearly two thirds of immigrant entrepreneurs would elect to remain self-employed if offered a job with a comparable income. Immigrant entrepreneurship is also associated with increased innovation, as newcomers seek achievement and influence (Dimitratos et al., 2016), helping to drive economic growth by contributing to the high-performing innovation ecosystem (Bauder 2008; Hiebert, 2003; Marger, 2006; Ostrovsky, Picot & Leung, 2019).

Currently, there are some programs aiming to support women entrepreneurs, including those who are immigrants – for example, the Women’s Entrepreneurship Hub (WE-Hub), or Workforce Innovation and Inclusion Project (WIIP). However, it is unclear how such programs could advance immigrant women’s entrepreneurship in the Canadian innovation ecosystem, which includes factors at the macro- (e.g., policy and norms), meso- (e.g., training and networks), and micro-levels (e.g., attitudes and behaviours) (Cukier et al., 2014; Orser et al., 2019).

“An effective strategy to advance immigrant women’s entrepreneurship must be grounded in evidence and a deep understanding of how the innovation ecosystem works.”

In this article, we argue that an effective strategy to advance immigrant women’s entrepreneurship must be grounded in evidence and a deep understanding of how the innovation ecosystem works. This article uses a case study to highlight a

training program for immigrant entrepreneurs and examine how such programs could remove barriers to entrepreneurship and help accelerate the growth of immigrant women-led enterprises.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is ample evidence that immigrants are overrepresented among entrepreneurs in Canada and many of them are choosing entrepreneurship and self-employment as a viable alternative to traditional employment (Statistics Canada, 2018b). According to the GEM Canada 2013 report, the rate of entrepreneurial activity is higher among first-generation immigrants in Canada than in the general population (Langford, Josty & Holbrook, 2013), i.e., 34.7% of all Ontario start-ups are run by first-generation immigrants (Davis et al., 2014).

A 2017 study by the Diversity Institute highlighted that newcomers to Canada face unique barriers to entrepreneurship in Canada. Some barriers include cultural issues, such as language and understanding the Canadian market; understanding regulations and taxes; and access to funding or the talent required to build a business.

Similarly, a report by the Global Diversity Exchange at Ryerson University states that “some of the most common challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs are language proficiency, knowledge of the business culture and practices, and the securing of financing” (Sim, 2015). The report also states that many face difficulties securing bank loans due to business inexperience in Canada, inadequate work experience and the absence of a credit history (Sim, 2015). Other challenges an immigrant entrepreneur can face are: insufficient financial resources (Chrysostome & Arcand, 2009), lack of knowledge of local markets and culture (Clydesdale, 2008), regulatory barriers to starting a business (Ley, 2006), and barriers due to overt and unconscious biases (Terjesen & Elam, 2009).

Immigrant women entrepreneurs face a host of barriers to success. For example, cultural restrictions and/or family obligations have been found to disadvantage immigrant women entrepreneurs (Wayland, 2011). A study conducted by Premji and Shakya (2017) showed that individual (micro) barriers to success include racialized discrimination, and gender roles related to the household, including child minding and lack of, or low, spousal support. Others have found limiting factors such as cultural barriers, and a lack of access to financing or other resources also put immigrant women at a disadvantage for maintaining traditional employment, and persist at the micro-, meso-, and macro levels (Balachandra et al., 2013; Clark, 2008; Huang et al., 2013). Additionally, uneven access to services, and the absence of social networks and mentorship in the Canadian market can serve as further bar-

riers to the success of newcomer entrepreneurs (Entrepreneur, 2018; Ozkazanc & Clark Muntean, 2018).

Further to this point, immigrant women are at a disadvantage as it relates to “pitching” their business ideas (Balachandra et al., 2013; Clark, 2008; Huanget al., 2013 as cited in DI, 2017) in order to access funding. The “pitching” process presents its own unique set of challenges, including the language barrier, cultural considerations and access to wrap around services so they can attend training/workshops to guide them – although it is important to note that “pitching” does not necessarily determine the success of a business (Diversity Institute, 2017).

Immigrant women are also more disadvantaged than their Canadian-born counterparts when it comes to accessing entrepreneurship training. The literature notes significant gaps relating to access to wraparound services (Maharaj & Wang, 2015; Milaney et al., 2020), with particular emphasis on a lack of access to childcare and transit (City of Toronto, 2013). Having access to childcare is a key factor contributing to the higher participation rates of women in entrepreneurship training (Milaney et al., 2020). Additional barriers surrounding language and cultural disparities also put immigrant women at a disadvantage, including the “pitching” process itself which is often necessary to obtain funding for businesses.

“To create real change in the entrepreneurship ecosystem that will combat the systemic barriers (faced by immigrant women entrepreneurs), evidence-based strategies need to be developed to drive change.”

Immigrant services rarely provide support for newcomers wanting to pursue entrepreneurship (Lee, 2017). There are also many restrictions to service eligibility for certain groups (e.g., student visas restrict access to services for starting businesses at universities). To create real change in the entrepreneurship ecosystem that will combat the systemic barriers, evidence-based strategies need to be developed to drive change. To this effect, Ryerson University’s Diversity Institute operates at the nexus of research and innovation in the areas of diversity and inclusion and has been globally recognized for its work and partnerships with industry. It uses research to drive change. The research on innovation systems and best practices has helped shape policy and practice and the focus on results has helped strengthen our efforts. The Diversity Institute continues to expand their efforts to advance women and underrepresented groups in technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship. One example of this is the Women’s Entrepreneurship Hub (WE-Hub), a skills-based training program designed to help reduce barriers to entrepreneurship for low-income women. The program has been

successfully offering participants the tools and resources needed for participants to start their own business. Another example is the Newcomer Entrepreneurship Hub (NEH) that has supported immigrant entrepreneurs, including racialized women entrepreneurs. In the next section, we will discuss the NEH in more detail to highlight how it can remove barriers to the growth of immigrant entrepreneurship and contribute to the innovation ecosystem.

CASE STUDY

This paper conducts a case study to examine the role of an immigrant entrepreneurship support program, the Newcomer Entrepreneurship Hub (NEH), to explore the role of such a program in the innovation ecosystem, particularly how it helps immigrant women entrepreneurs overcome barriers to achieving success.

Started in 2018, the NEH is a skills-based training program designed to help reduce barriers to entrepreneurship faced by new immigrants in Canada. The Hub offers participants the tools and resources they need to start their own business through key partnerships. Specifically, the NEH provides participants with 40+ hours of entrepreneurship training led by industry professionals and Ryerson University’s Ted Rogers School of Management faculty. Participants of the program are also matched with business mentors and are provided with low-risk market testing opportunities. Additionally, wraparound supports are provided to ensure ease of access to programming. The program offers a cross-sector, multi-pronged solution to the social and economic challenges Ontario is currently facing, by integrating several components into one seamless model.

In its beginning phase, the NEH aimed to break down the barriers to entrepreneurship for 100+ newcomers to help them gain employment, start a small business, and/or develop the knowledge, skills and connections needed for developing entrepreneurial ventures. There are five main goals outlined for the NEH, which include:

1. increasing entrepreneurship skills in newcomers;
2. facilitating access to business financing resources;
3. providing real-world hands-on business testing opportunities;
4. building social capital through mentorship and networking opportunities; and
5. supporting participants in areas that will increase their ability to participate in training, launch businesses and gain financial independence.

In the first year of its operation, 104 people enrolled and 59 in total completed three cohorts of the program. This study looks at participants' evaluation of each training event so as to assess the effectiveness of the program.

FINDINGS

Demographic data from the participants were collected from the post-training surveys distributed in Cohorts 1 (N=8) and 2 (N=18), and the pre-training surveys distributed in Cohort 3 (N=25). Among the participants, 52.9% of the participants were identified as women and 47.1% identified as men. In terms of educational attainment, almost 40% of participants had a bachelor's degree, and slightly less than 40% had a master's degree or a PhD. About one fifth (21.5%) of the participants had a high school or college diploma. 54.6% of the participants had two or more years of business experience.

The immigrant participants were from 22 countries (Figure 1) with the most participants coming from India, Nigeria and Syria, followed by China, Eritrea, and Venezuela. The majority of the participants were racialized people.

When examining immigration status in Figure 2, it is evident that the majority of participants (55%) were permanent residents, while 20% had a temporary visa, 20% had claimed refugee status, and 5% were conventional refugees.

As shown in Figure 3, the participants came to Canada through a variety of streams: 41.3% were refugee claimants, 21.7% were

skilled workers, 10.9% were family class immigrants, 8.7% had study permits, 6.5% were government-assisted refugees, or came from other streams.

In total, about half (45.8%) of the participants had an annual income of less than \$25,000, and 29.2% of the participants reported an income of between \$25,000 to \$50,000. Only 2.1% had an annual income of more than \$100,000. As shown in Figure 4, when income was broken down by gender, women participants were overrepresented in the lower-income brackets (less than \$50,000).

In terms of sources of income, many of the participants indicated multiple sources (Figure 5). The frequently reported sources of income were employment wages (37.2%) and social assistance (30.2%). Slightly less than one quarter (23.3%) were self-employed.

Figure 6 indicates the industries represented by participants' businesses. Overall, 43.9% of the participants were in services, including construction, consulting, educational services, and transport and shipping services; 41.5% were in sales, including selling food or groceries, importing/exporting, and selling other items; while 14.6% were in multiple businesses. The multiple selections category reflects either that several industries were represented, that the respondent is engaged in multiple businesses, or the lack of a clear business vision.

A unique aspect of the NEH training curriculum is that each topic is led by an industry professional who has real life experience in their respective fields. The variety of instructors also made for a unique learning experience for participants

FIGURE 1: COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

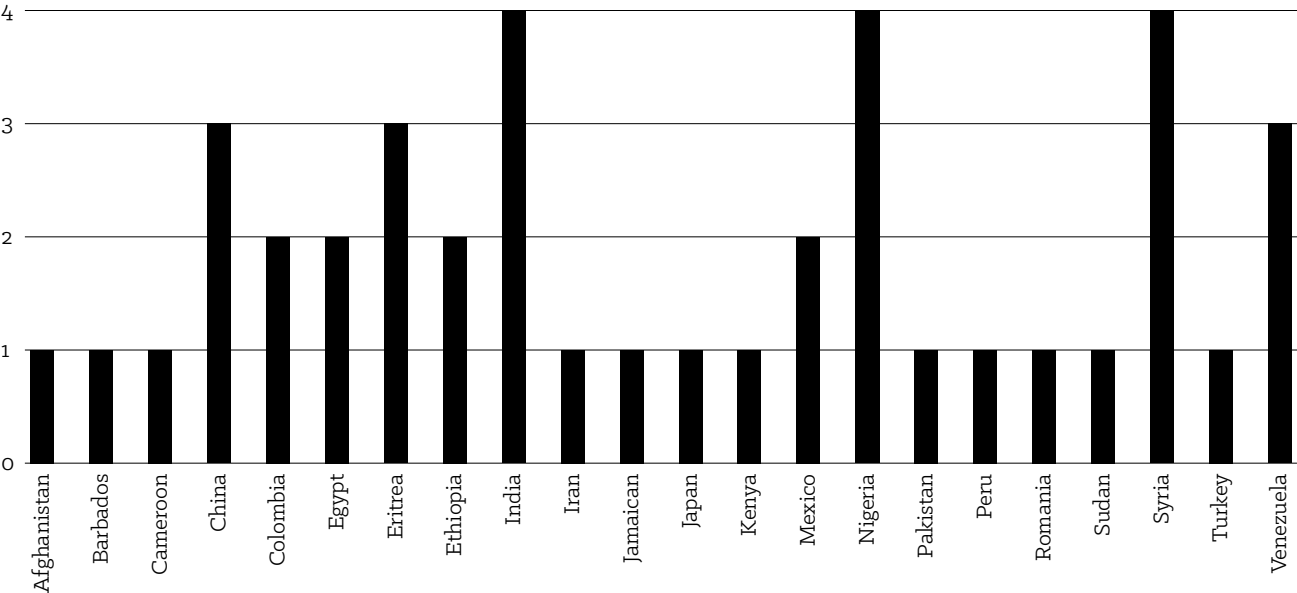


FIGURE 2: IMMIGRATION STATUS

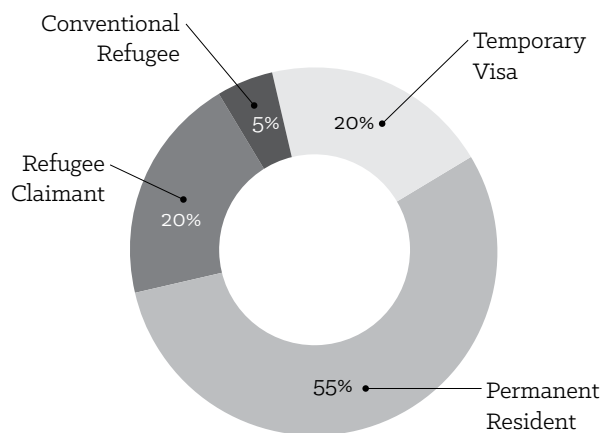
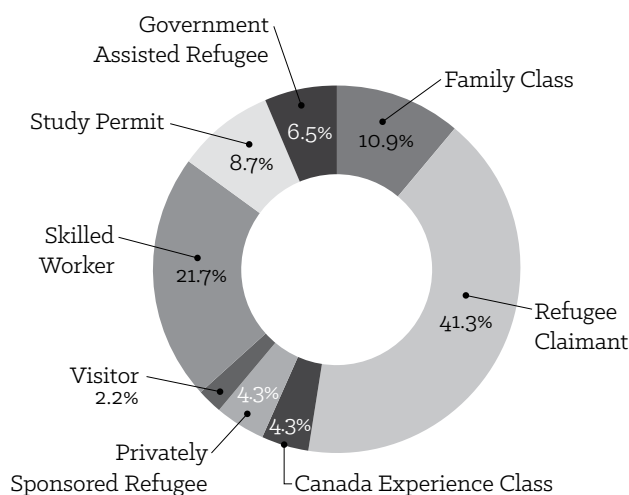


FIGURE 3: IMMIGRANT STREAM - ENTRY TO CANADA



as they were able to understand entrepreneurship from myriad perspectives and have the opportunity to interact with all instructors. The topics included business models (e.g., Business Canvas), financing (e.g., Canadian Financing Landscape), legal issues (e.g., All Things Legal), branding (e.g., Building a Brand), marketing (e.g., Marketing), employment standards and rights (e.g., Employment & OHS Standards), leadership (e.g., Business Leadership), technology use (e.g., Personal Branding and Social Media Use), and so on.

Overall, the participants reported high satisfaction scores with regards to the training workshops, with 90% from Cohort 1, 88% from Cohort 2, and 89% from Cohort 3.

Furthermore, participants provided positive feedback about the effectiveness of the training program at the level of skills

development. Prior to beginning the training and again upon completion, participants were asked to rate their skills in a number of areas. The pre-training and post-training surveys with Cohort 3 showed that participants reported an increase in their knowledge particularly in the fields of finance and regulations (from 47% to 77%), business skills (58% to 75%), and connections and networks (57% to 78%) (Figure 7).

The training resulted in multiple successful business stories. During the first year, there were 32 mentorship matches, 53 market testing opportunities accessed, and 32 businesses established as a result of the program.

DISCUSSION

Over three cohorts, 59 participants completed the Newcomer Entrepreneurship Hub training program. The participant survey shows an average satisfaction rate approximately of 89% over all cohorts. Participant pre- and post-training surveys revealed an overall improvement in a number of skill areas, including networking skills, marketing skills, and knowledge of finance and regulations in Canada.

High financial and educational requirements for admission through Canada's immigration system creates a talent pool for entrepreneurship (Langford, Josty & Holbrook, 2013). This trend was reflected in the NEH case – most of the participants had a post-secondary education degree and many of them had had entrepreneurial experience prior to their participation in the program. Data from the 2016 census show that, in Ontario, the three largest visible minority groups were South Asian, Chinese and Black (Statistics Canada, 2019). Although this case study uses a small sample, it is notable that the majority of participants were from South Asia, China, and countries with a majority Black population.

Obtaining financing has been a major challenge for immigrant entrepreneurs (Diversity Institute, 2017). The evaluation results of the case study offer further evidence showing that the newcomers in the NEH were challenged with financing difficulties in starting up their own businesses, with almost half of the participants reporting an annual income lower than \$25,000, and women particularly concentrated in the low-income brackets. This result is consistent with the research of the WE-Hub program, where all participants were women and the vast majority of them were receiving social assistance or sustaining themselves on part-time employment and/or savings (Scadding Court Community Centre, n.d.).

Meanwhile, the NEH program provided the participants with training to help them overcome other barriers to success. One significant barrier for immigrant entrepreneurs identified by existing research is limited knowledge of the Canadian legal environment and a lack of access to information about the

FIGURE 4: ANNUAL INCOME BY GENDER

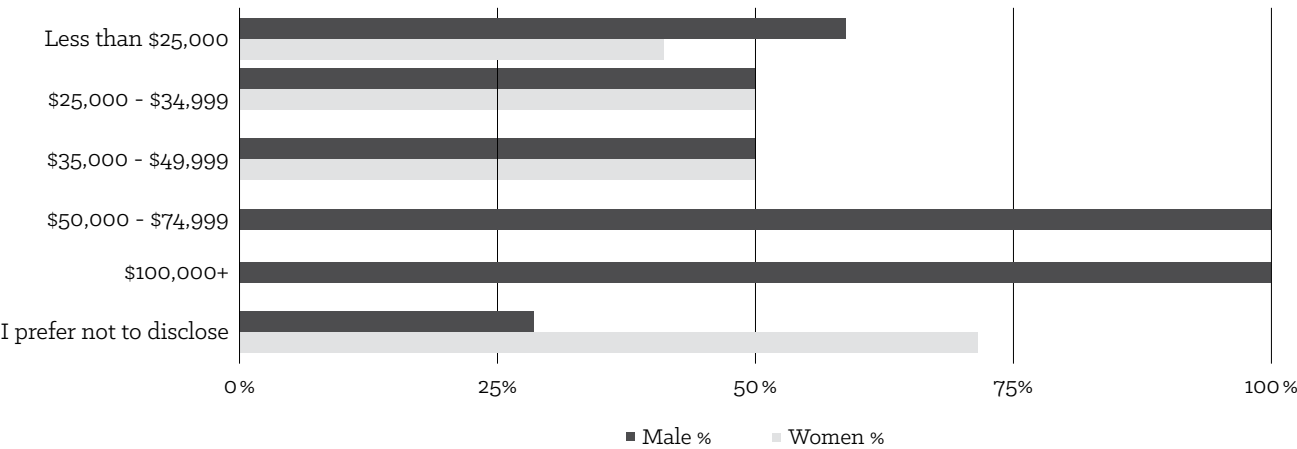


FIGURE 5: SOURCE OF INCOME

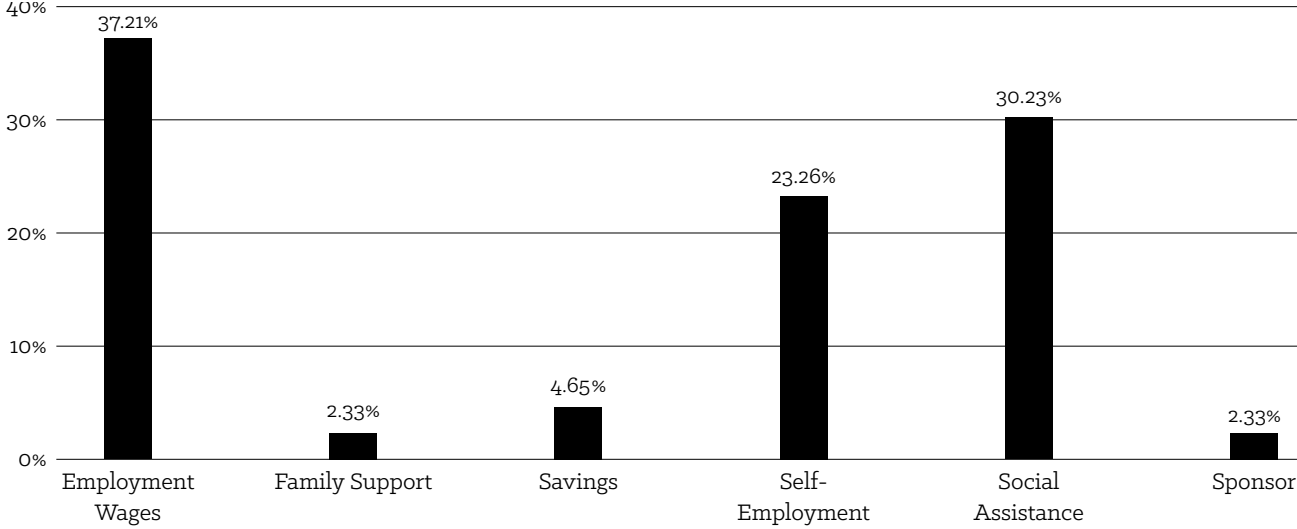


FIGURE 6: BUSINESS INDUSTRY

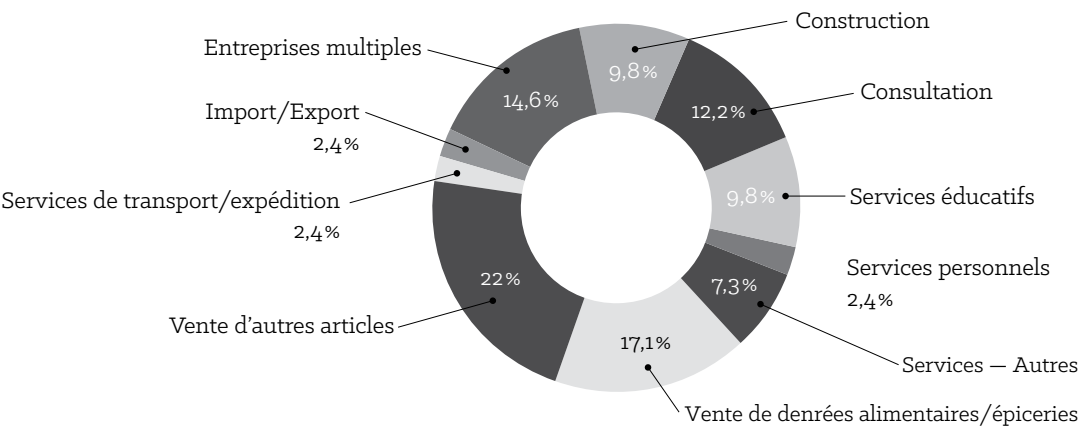
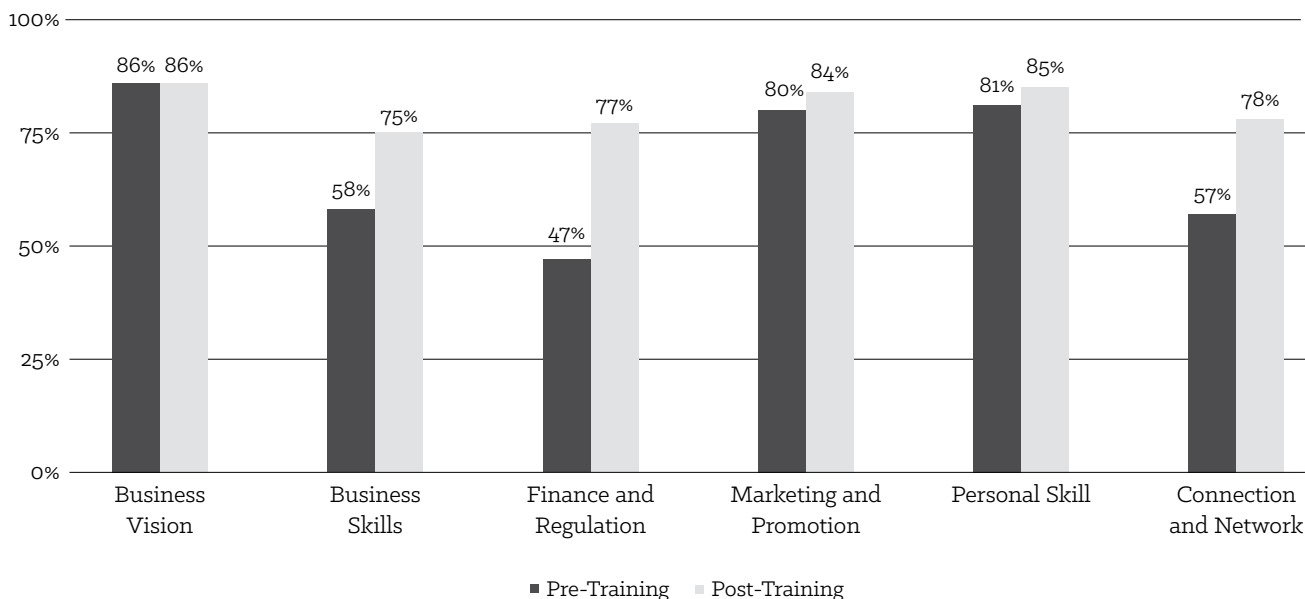


FIGURE 7: PRE-TRAINING AND POST TRAINING SELF-REPORTED SKILL SCORES



loan requirements of financial institutions (Atallah & Rebelo, 2006; Bates et al., 2016; Brenner et al., 2010; City of London, 2015). The training on finance and regulations was particularly well received by the newcomers as evidenced by the high satisfaction scores because such content met the needs of the newcomer immigrants. Such needs echoed the needs of women entrepreneurs participating in the WE-Hub training (Scadding Community Centre, n.d.). Since finance and regulations are crucial factors in the innovation ecosystem, helping immigrant women entrepreneurs to obtain necessary knowledge serves as one of the measures to bridge individual entrepreneurs' practice to the legal environment at the macro-level.

The NEH program also facilitated networking opportunities – the participants were naturally connected to similar newcomer entrepreneurs and industry professionals through the workshops. As a result, the participants reported a substantial increase in their business networks, which can be considered a contributing factor to the high satisfaction score. Immigrant women entrepreneurs are often more in need of networking opportunities – this is also clearly indicated among women entrepreneurs in the WE-Hub training – because women entrepreneurs are challenged with limited social connections (Ozkazanc & Clark Muntean, 2018). Therefore, this program successfully helped the participants develop their networks or connect to existing business networks, which is a key component at the meso-level of the innovation ecosystem.

NEH builds on the skills and experience that newcomers

bring to the table, by providing them with the necessary tools and supports to start a business in Canada. While other business programs offer business development, such as coaching and sales assistance, NEH adds value by acknowledging the additional challenges for vulnerable newcomers, including unfamiliarity with Canadian norms and regulations, language barriers, financial limitations (e.g., credit checks) and exclusion from traditional programs due to refugee/claimant status. The diversity of NEH cohorts (many refugees, women, and low-income participants) shows the effectiveness of accessibility measures like the wraparound supports, as well as a strong outreach strategy through community partners.

CONCLUSION

The NEH training addresses factors at multiple levels in the innovation ecosystem that support entrepreneurship, from skills to networking opportunities, from policy (regulations) to culture (Canadian norms), and from language to technology. Furthermore, it is clear that the training provided services that met the needs of the immigrant entrepreneurs, particularly immigrant women entrepreneurs.

The case study also confirms that the NEH offers an effective model to support immigrant entrepreneurs, who are often women and racialized people, to overcome structural barriers to entrepreneurship and helps accelerate the growth of immigrant enterprises in the Canadian innovation ecosystem. Based on the findings, we make the following recommendations:

- Entrepreneurship should be treated as a legitimate and important pathway to success for newcomers. While entrepreneurship does present risks, newcomers should have the opportunity to explore it as a pathway to success. Settlement and service agencies should be able to refer newcomers to the appropriate resources.
- Immigration policy should recognize that many newcomers in the family class become entrepreneurs and provide opportunities for transition from Student to Startup Visa to allow highly skilled international students to transition to entrepreneurial opportunities.
- Immigrant entrepreneurs can benefit from training programs and information for starting or growing a business in Canada, including region-specific supports. Service providers, chambers of commerce, and government agencies can also work to grow awareness of and access to financing and funding programs, as well as to knowledge of the legal environment and regulations in Canada.

It is notable that newcomers are a diverse body coming from different countries, through different streams, and facing different barriers. Although there are social services designated for permanent residents, refugees and those who are on temporary visas may not qualify for those services. In addition, women entrepreneurs in this category of newcomers face unique challenges. We argue that the future development of programs and services should incorporate policies to address the specific needs of these populations to support their entrepreneurial efforts related to factors at various levels of the innovation ecosystem.

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