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# Women middle and senior managers



by Bassirou Gueye

Release date: October 23, 2024



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# Women middle and senior managers

by Bassirou Gueye

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/36280001202401000005-eng>

## Abstract

Workforce diversity, particularly the inclusion of women in leadership roles, significantly enhances business performance by improving financial outcomes such as return on assets, equity and sales. Studies show that having a greater number of women in top management positions not only drives profitability but also contributes to a more innovative and resilient corporate culture.

This study, primarily using data from the 2021 Census of Population, examines the representation of women in middle and senior management positions in Canada, comparing their characteristics with those of their men counterparts. The analysis also adopts an intersectional approach to explore the representation of women managers among racialized and Indigenous populations.

The results indicate that, despite some progress, women remain underrepresented in management roles, holding 42.7% of middle management and 30.8% of senior management positions as of 2021. Although women's average hourly wages have increased faster than men's, a gender wage gap persists: 8.7% for middle managers and 9.0% for senior managers in 2021, down from 19.3% and 20.0%, respectively, in 2001. Women's representation varies significantly by sector, with a higher presence in health care and social assistance and in educational services, and a lower presence in construction and in mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction. Additionally, women's representation among managers increases with the age of their youngest child.

Compared with their representation among non-managers, immigrants and racialized individuals are also underrepresented in management roles, with women in these groups facing additional barriers. Indigenous women are underrepresented among women middle managers (3.4%), though their proportion among women senior managers (4.5%) is comparable to their share among non-managers (4.1%). The study underscores the need for diversity and inclusion policies to enhance representation at the middle management level, which is crucial for preparing women for higher leadership positions.

## Author

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## Acknowledgments

This study is funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE). The author would like to thank Tia Carpino, Douwera Grekou, Wulong Gu, Sylvie Guilmette, Vincent Hardy, Filsan Hujaleh, Amélie Lafrance-Cooke, André Lebel, Alejandro Paez Silva, participants of the 58th Annual Meetings of the Canadian Economics Association, and reviewers from the Centre for Indigenous Statistics and Partnerships, as well as reviewers from WAGE, for their helpful comments, and Statistics Canada's Strategic Analysis, Publications and Training team for assistance with the release process.

## Introduction

Workforce diversity is a factor that positively influences business performance. Studies show that the inclusion of women directors enhances financial outcomes such as return on assets, equity and sales (Kılıç and Kuzey, 2016). Furthermore, having a higher number of women board members has a more significant impact on performance, compared with fewer women board members (Brahma et al., 2020). Ruiz-Jiménez et al. (2016) concluded that including more women in top management positions is not just about fairness or social equality, it also enhances the quality of decision making by senior managers, thereby fostering the development of organizational capabilities. However, in several countries, including Canada, the share of women managers is lower than that of men (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, n.d.). A report by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce (2024) shows that if the pace of growth of women's representation among managers remains the same, gender parity will not be reached in the boardroom before 2129.

In Canada, although the relationship between board diversity and business performance has not yet been empirically established, researchers have focused on the characteristics of decision makers within publicly traded companies. Since January 1, 2020, these companies have been subject to a disclosure requirement regarding the representation of women, racialized individuals, Indigenous peoples, and people with disabilities within their boards of directors and senior management (Jeffrey et al., 2019).<sup>1</sup> Since 2015, Osler has published an annual report on diversity disclosure practices.<sup>2</sup> The most recent report shows that 29% of board seats of companies listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange are held by women, 10% by racialized individuals, 0.9% by Indigenous peoples, and 0.7% by people with disabilities (MacDougall et al., 2023).

Statistics Canada has also significantly contributed to improving knowledge about the representation of individuals designated by the Employment Equity Act among boards of directors and officers (Longpré-Verret and Richards, 2021; Longpré-Verret and McKee, 2022; Statistics Canada, 2022a, 2023a). These studies provide a granular analysis of the characteristics of men and women on boards of directors and among officers, and they are mainly based on data from the Corporations Returns Act.

Unlike previous studies that have generally focused on representation at the top of companies (board directors and officers), this study sheds light on the representation of women at different management levels. It adopts a descriptive approach and mainly relies on the 2021 Census of Population to examine the representation of women in middle and senior management positions. It compares the characteristics of women managers with those of their men counterparts, including age, level of education, immigrant status and occupational group. From an intersectional perspective, this study also explores the representation of women managers based on whether they are part of the racialized population or Indigenous communities.

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1. This obligation has existed since 2015, but it applied only to women; it was expanded in 2020 to include racialized individuals, Indigenous peoples, and people with disabilities.  
2. For access to the different reports, see [Diversity Disclosure Practices Reports: 2015 To Today](#).

## Data and sample

With the exception of the underlying data for charts 1 and 2, this study is based on the 2021 Census of Population. The sample includes all workers aged 25 to 54 years who worked full time for at least 49 weeks in 2020 and were also employed in 2021.<sup>3</sup> A worker is defined as a salaried employee or a self-employed person. Unless otherwise indicated in the text, managers are workers who, in addition to the above-mentioned criteria, occupied middle or senior management positions. The major occupational groups used to define middle and senior managers are based on the National Occupational Classification 2021 and are provided in Table A1.

The pathway for a self-employed individual to take on a managerial role in their own business can be different from being hired in or promoted to a managerial position as an employee. The challenges and barriers faced by self-employed managers could be distinct from those encountered by employees in managerial roles. However, to provide a comprehensive overview of the characteristics of women in middle and senior management positions, the sample includes both employed and self-employed individuals.<sup>4</sup> While excluding self-employed workers from the analysis may change the numbers, it does not alter the findings of the analysis.

The sample is restricted to the core-aged population (25 to 54 years) because experience and seniority can play an important role in eligibility for management positions. Evidence from the Labour Force Survey shows that managers worked an average of 156 months for the same company, compared with 104 months for all workers (the average job tenure for senior managers was 167 months) (Statistics Canada, 2024).<sup>5</sup>

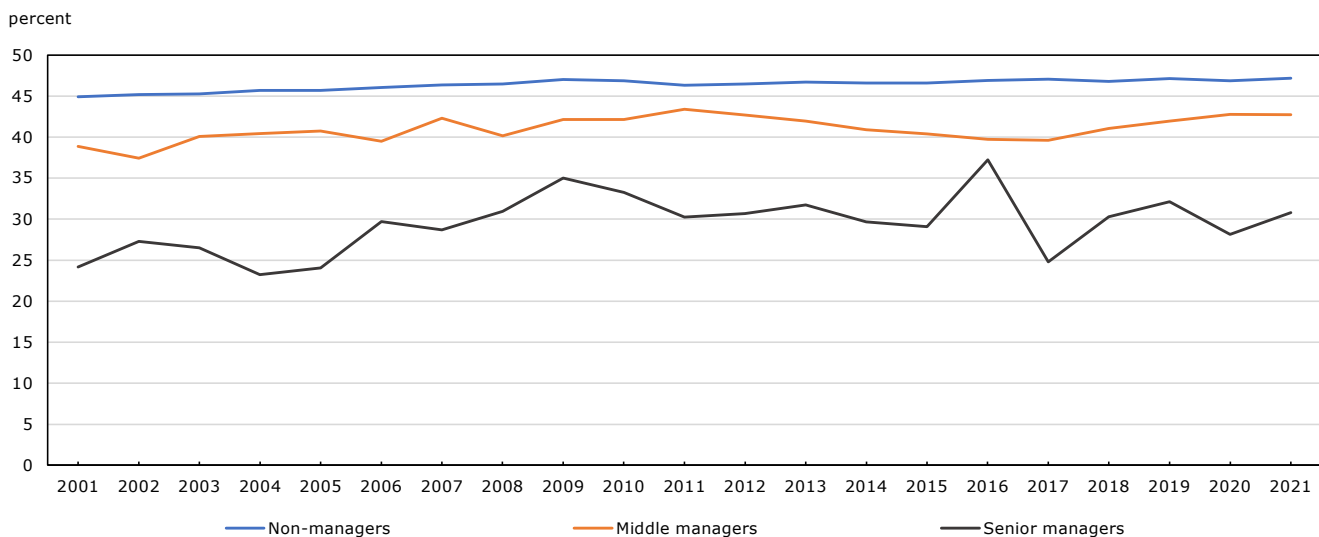
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3. The results presented in this report hold when considering a sample of workers aged 25 to 64 years.
  4. Statistics Canada's Centre for Labour Market Information is working on an article entitled "Access to managerial occupations, 2023," to be released in *Quality of Employment in Canada*. This article will look at access to management positions without combining salaried employees and the self-employed.
  5. This does not measure the extent of experience because only the continuous months spent in the current company are counted.

## Results

### Women remain underrepresented among middle and senior managers

The proportion of women among non-managers in Canada has remained relatively stable over the past two decades, going from 44.9% of non-managers in 2001 to 47.2% in 2021 (Chart 1). Women remain underrepresented among middle and senior managers. They held just over 4 in 10 middle management positions in 2021 (42.7%, compared with 38.8% in 2001). Their underrepresentation was more pronounced among senior managers, holding about 3 in 10 positions in 2021, despite minor improvements since 2001 (30.8% in 2021, compared with 24.2% in 2001).

**Chart 1**  
Share of women by occupation, 2001 to 2021



**Note:** "Women" is defined using sex at birth.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey.

Although the growth of the share of women among senior managers may indicate positive progress in their representation among decision makers, the proportion of women senior managers remains significantly lower than that of men senior managers. This underscores the gender gap at management levels and highlights the need to address barriers to women’s career advancement.

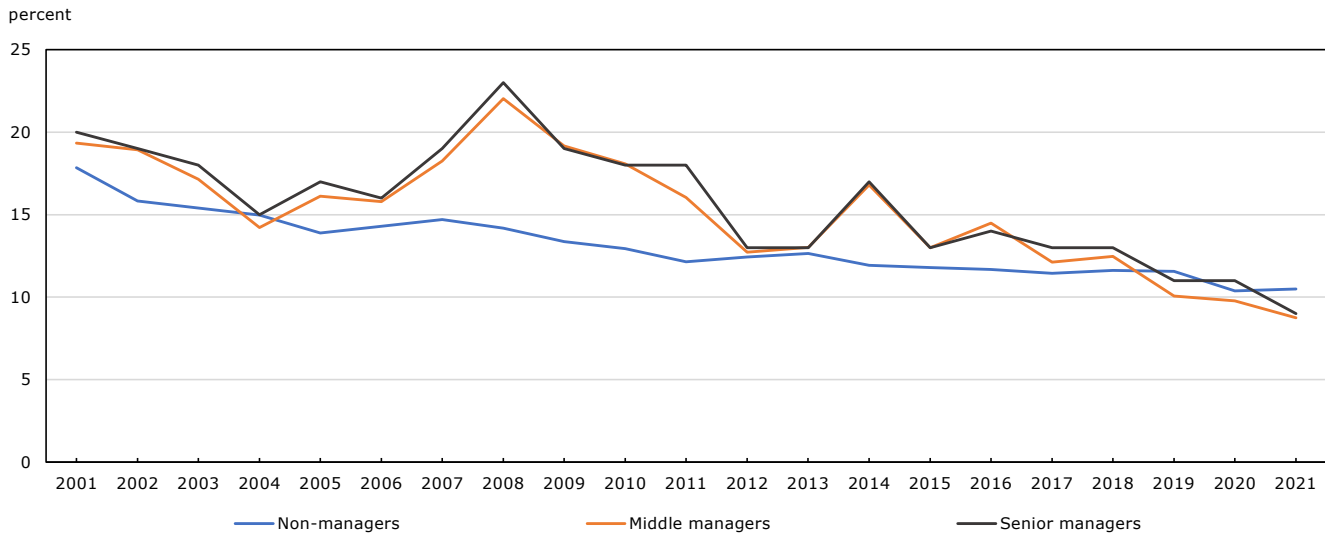
### The gender wage gap among middle and senior managers has narrowed over time

Overall, the average gender hourly wage gap<sup>6</sup> has decreased over the past two decades for all occupations (Chart 2). The gender wage gap among non-managers dropped from 17.8% in 2001 (meaning that women non-managers earned, on average, 17.8% less than men non-managers) to 10.5% in 2021. Interestingly, the gender wage gap was cut by more than half among middle managers (from 19.3% to 8.7%) and senior managers (20.0% to 9.0%).

6. The average gender hourly wage gap represents how much less women earn per hour, on average, than men, in percentage terms. When the gap is negative, it indicates how much more women earn per hour, on average, than men. The wage gap does not take into account the earnings of self-employed people.

Although gender parity has not been fully achieved in terms of wages across all occupations, the trend suggests progress in reducing this gap over the past two decades, especially for managers.

**Chart 2**  
**Average gender hourly wage gap, 2001 to 2021**



**Note:** "Gender" is defined using sex at birth.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey.

## Women predominate among managers in health and education but are underrepresented in many sectors

The representation of women varies considerably from one sector to another, both among non-managers and among middle and senior managers (Table 1). The sectors where women were the most predominant among non-managers were health care and social assistance (79.7%), and educational services (68.1%).

**Table 1**  
**Percentage share of women by sector and occupation, 2021**

Sector	Non-managers	Middle managers	Senior managers
		percent	
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	31.3	23.6	19.4
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	20.2	21.8	15.9
Utilities	25.1	29.7	26.7
Construction	13.3	14.7	12.4
Manufacturing	26.0	28.4	20.0
Wholesale trade	33.2	29.5	22.7
Retail trade	47.8	42.2	28.4
Transportation and warehousing	22.4	28.5	19.1
Information and cultural industries	35.7	40.5	27.6
Finance and insurance	55.0	49.0	33.7
Real estate and rental and leasing	45.5	39.4	27.3
Professional, scientific and technical services	40.8	37.9	25.2
Management of companies and enterprises	53.6	49.8	24.4
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	38.2	37.2	23.7
Educational services	68.1	60.4	48.4
Health care and social assistance	79.7	72.2	67.0
Arts, entertainment and recreation	46.9	44.4	40.5
Accommodation and food services	52.1	46.8	32.4
Other services (except public administration)	42.4	57.3	50.6
Public administration	48.4	45.8	51.7

**Note:** The category "women" includes women, as well as some non-binary people.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Women accounted for a smaller proportion of middle and senior managers in the majority of sectors, especially in the goods-producing sectors (Table 1). Women represented just over one in five middle managers (21.8%) and 15.9% of senior managers in the mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction sector. They were also underrepresented in the construction sector, where they held 14.7% of middle management positions and 12.4% of senior management positions. Moreover, fewer than one in five senior managers working in the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting sector (19.4%) and the transportation and warehousing sector (19.1%) were women. Women were also underrepresented among non-managers in these sectors.

The data also highlight that sectors where women were overrepresented among non-managers were often those where they accounted for the majority of management positions. For example, in the health care and social assistance sector, women were predominant among middle managers (72.2%) and senior managers (67.0%). In the educational services sector, they outnumbered men among middle managers (60.4%) and were represented almost equally with men among senior managers (48.4%).

It is also worth noting that while women accounted for 42.4% of non-managers in the other services (except public administration) sector, they outnumbered men among middle managers (57.3%) and were represented equally with men among senior managers (50.6%).

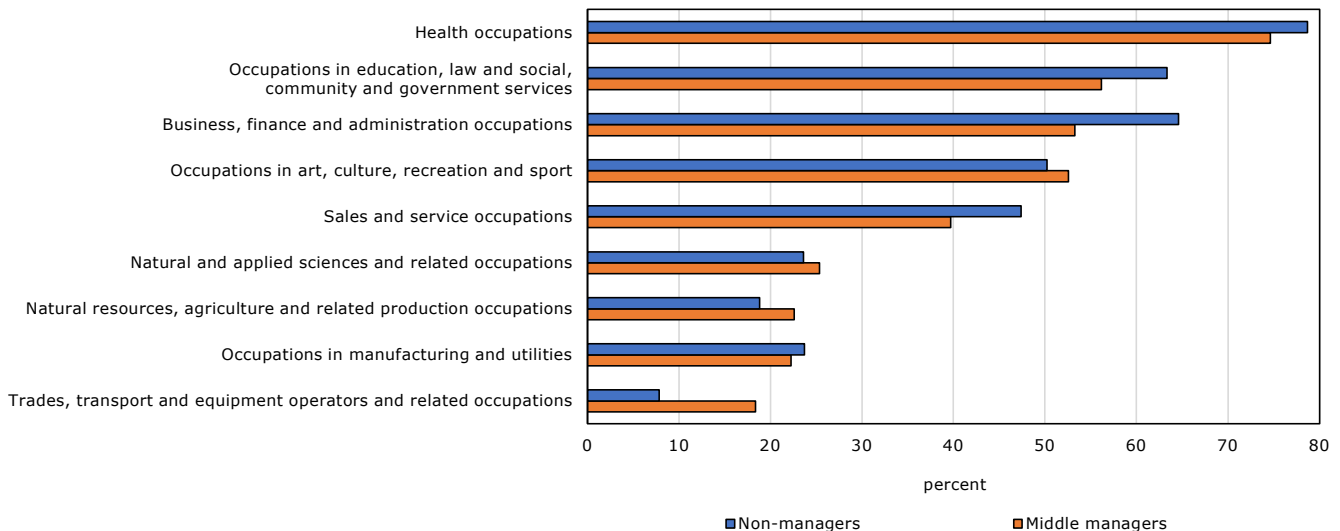


## Women’s representation among middle managers varies by occupational group

Although the industrial sector provides an indication of the differences between men and women in the labour market, it is generally associated with the company’s characteristics rather than the worker’s. For example, a person working for a company in the mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction sector may hold a job as a human resource manager. Therefore, it is worth looking at the representation of women in middle management positions according to the occupational group.

Women dominated in health occupations, accounting for three-quarters (74.6%) of middle managers in this group (Chart 3). Women were also the majority in middle management occupations in education, law and social, community and government services (56.2%). In addition, there were more women than men among middle managers in business, finance and administration occupations (53.3%) and in occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport (52.6%). In these occupational groups where women outnumbered men among middle managers, there were also more women than men among non-managers.

**Chart 3**  
Share of women among non-managers and middle managers by occupational group, 2021



**Note:** The category "women" includes women, as well as some non-binary people.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

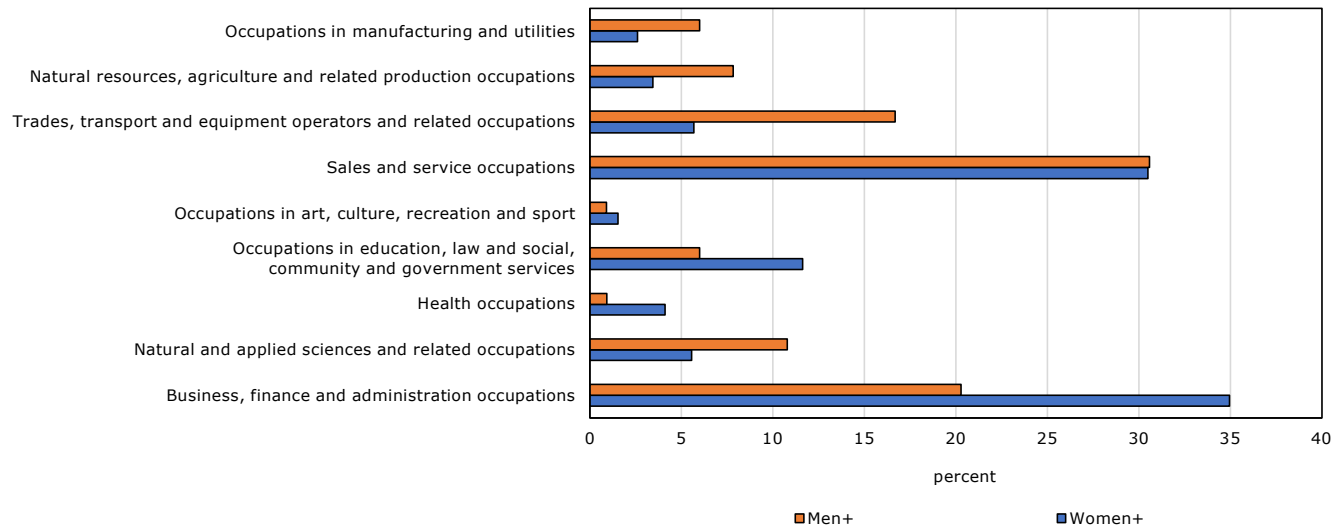
Women accounted for about 25% or less of middle managers in occupations related to science (e.g., 25.4% for natural and applied sciences and related occupations) and the goods-producing sector (natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations [22.6%]; and occupations in manufacturing and utilities [22.3%]). However, the share of women among middle managers was lowest in trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations (18.4%).

## Over three-quarters of women middle managers are concentrated in three occupational groups

There were differences and similarities in the distribution of women and men middle managers by occupational group. Regardless of gender, the top two occupational groups with the largest number of middle managers were business, finance and administration occupations (35.0% of women middle managers and 20.3% of men middle managers) and sales and service occupations (30.5% of women

middle managers and 30.6% of men middle managers) (Chart 4). Along with occupations in education, law and social, community and government services (11.6%), these occupational groups accounted for over three-quarters (77.1%) of women middle managers.

**Chart 4**  
**Distribution of middle managers by gender and occupational group, 2021**



**Notes:** The category "women+" includes women, as well as some non-binary people. The category "men+" includes men, as well as some non-binary people.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

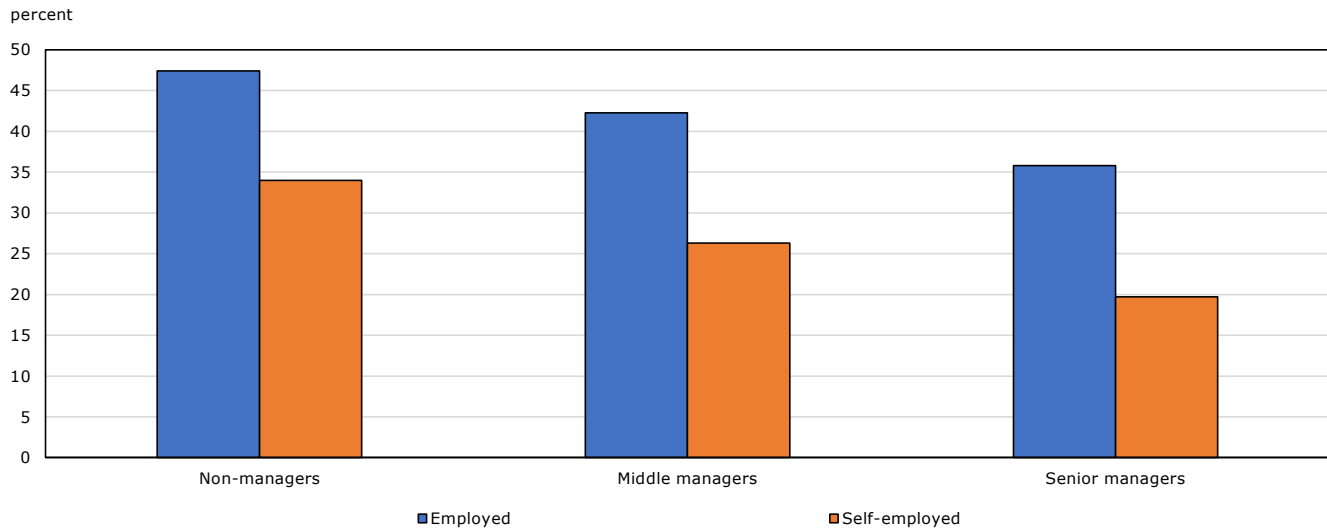
Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations (16.7%) was the third-largest group for men middle managers, followed by natural and applied sciences and related occupations (10.8%). Although the rank and share of some occupational groups were different, these patterns were generally comparable with those among non-managers for both men and women.<sup>7</sup>

## Women’s representation among self-employed managers is lower than among employed managers

Regardless of occupation, women’s representation among self-employed workers was lower than among employees (Chart 5). Although women represented 47.4% of employed non-managers, they accounted for 34.0% of all self-employed non-managers,<sup>8</sup> yielding a gap of 13.4 percentage points. Among middle managers, 42.3% of employees were women, compared with 26.3% of those who were self-employed. The share of self-employed women was even lower among senior managers; while women accounted for 35.8% of employed senior managers, they represented just under one in five self-employed senior managers (19.7%).

7. For example, business, finance and administration occupations were the most common among women non-managers, followed by occupations in education, law and social, community and government services (third among middle managers). Among men, the top four are the same, but the order is different between middle managers and non-managers.  
 8. A self-employed non-manager is an individual who operates their own business but does not hold a managerial position within that business.

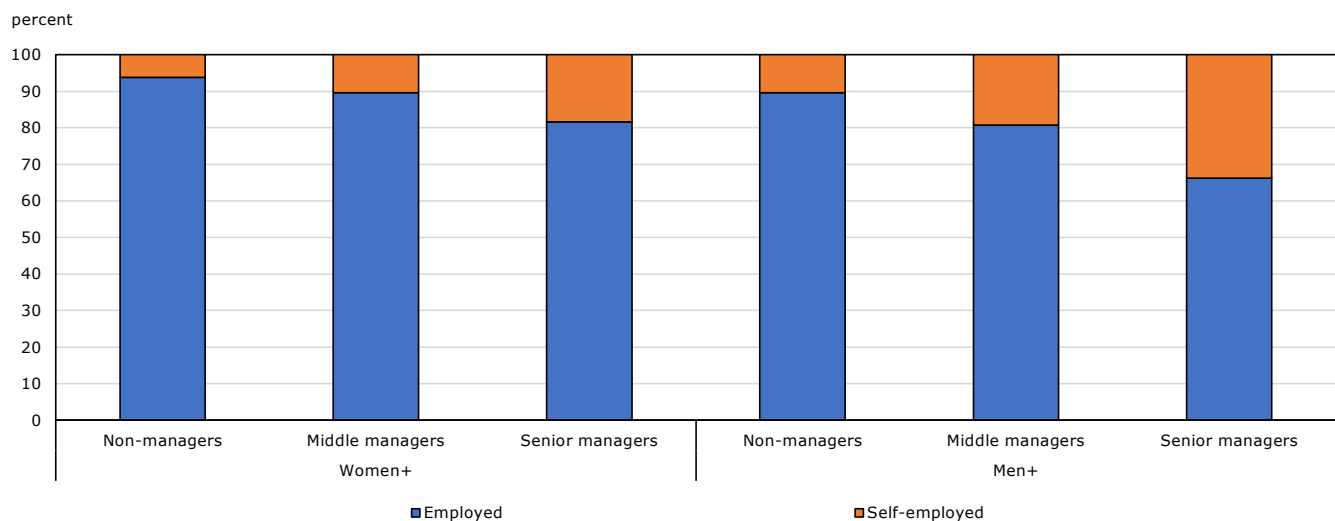
**Chart 5**  
Share of women by class of worker and occupation, 2021



**Note:** The category "women" includes women, as well as some non-binary people.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Chart 6 shows that women were proportionally less likely than men to be self-employed. Among non-managers, 10.4% of men were self-employed, compared with 6.2% of women. This gender difference was more pronounced among middle managers; 19.3% of men were self-employed, compared with 10.4% of women. The gap was even larger among senior managers, with 33.8% of men senior managers who were self-employed, compared with 18.4% of women.

**Chart 6**  
Distribution of workers by gender, class of worker and occupation, 2021



**Notes:** The category "women+" includes women, as well as some non-binary people. The category "men+" includes men, as well as some non-binary people.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Chart 6 highlights a more pronounced underrepresentation of women among self-employed middle and senior managers, compared with their presence among employed managers. Chart 6 indicates that women were proportionally less likely to be self-employed than men, both among middle managers and senior managers. While initiatives may be undertaken to reduce disparities in the labour market, it is also worth considering programs aimed at promoting and encouraging business ownership among women. This could contribute to increasing the representation of women among managers. According to data from the Canadian Employer–Employee Dynamics Database, women owned about 20% of private businesses and were equal owners with men of an additional 15% (Statistics Canada, 2022b). This means that more than 6 in 10 private businesses were owned by men. Tam et al. (2024) found that women accounted for 68.2% of middle managers and 74.3% of senior managers working in women-owned businesses. Furthermore, their findings indicate that, regardless of employment size, women outnumbered men among senior managers in women-owned businesses.

### Among middle and senior managers, women are outnumbered at all ages

The underrepresentation of women was observed in all age groups. Relative to their share among non-managers, women were outnumbered among middle and senior managers. In all age groups, women accounted for about 4 in 10 middle managers and 3 in 10 senior managers.

**Table 2**  
Share of women by age group and occupation

	Non-managers	Middle managers	Senior managers
		percent	
25 to 34 years	44.6	40.3	28.4
35 to 44 years	45.7	38.7	31.3
45 to 54 years	48.3	40.5	31.7
		number	
Average age	40	41	44

**Note:** The category "women" includes women, as well as some non-binary people.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

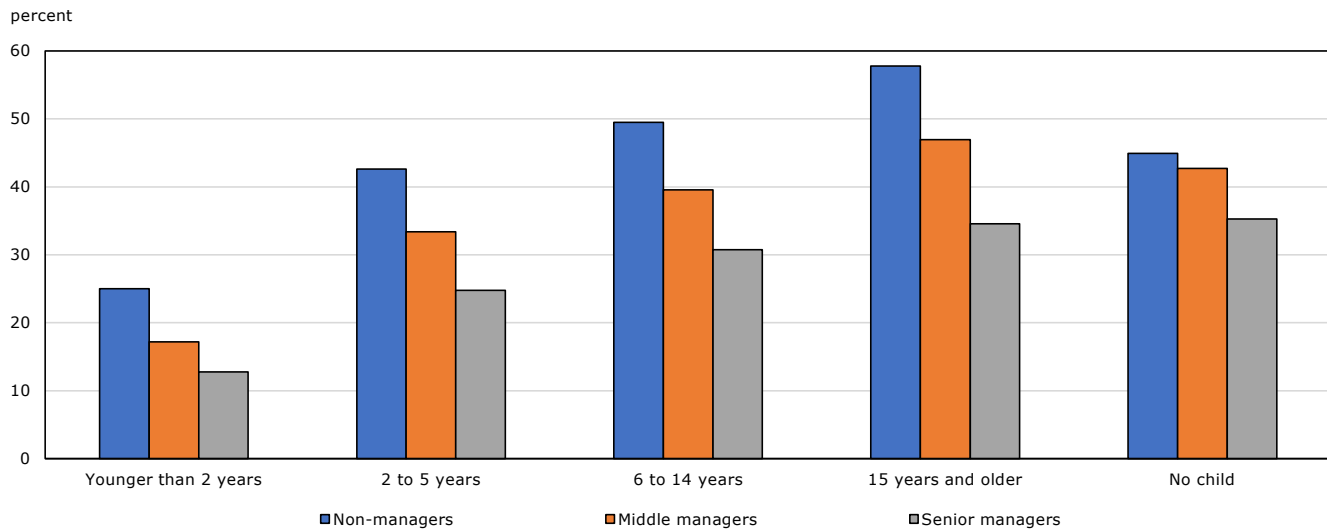
### The representation of women among middle and senior managers increases with the age of the youngest child

Motherhood and the presence of children in the family can affect men’s and women’s outcomes in the labour market differently. Moyser (2017) reported that women whose youngest child is younger than 6 have a lower employment rate, which increases with the age of the children. However, the variability in men’s employment rate based on the age of the youngest child in the household is low (ibid). Additionally, mothers earn less than fathers and than women with no children, indicating a potential motherhood penalty (ibid).

Furthermore, Cools et al. (2017) found that the increase in family size because of the birth of children reduces Norwegian women’s likelihood of being employed by higher-paying firms and their chances of being the highest earner at their workplace. However, the authors found no significant impact of parenthood on men’s labour market outcomes. Harkness et al. (2019) addressed a similar issue by concluding that in the United Kingdom, mothers tend to leave full-time jobs more frequently than fathers after having children, and if they do return to work, their career advancement often stagnates, with reduced prospects for promotion.

Among workers with children, as the age of the youngest child increases, there is notable growth in the percentage of women across all occupations. Women accounted for less than 2 in 10 middle managers whose youngest child was younger than 2 (17.2%), compared with almost half (47.0%) of middle managers whose youngest child was aged 15 or older (Chart 7).

**Chart 7**  
**Share of women by age of youngest child and occupation, 2021**



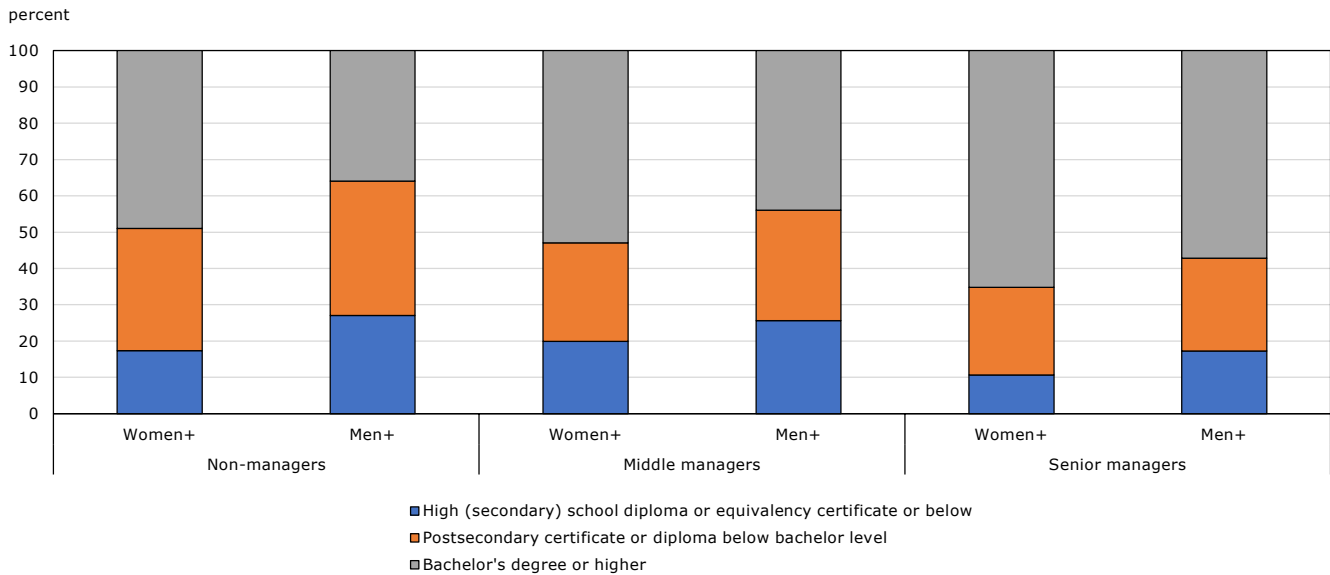
**Note:** The category "women" includes women, as well as some non-binary people.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

While women accounted for 35.2% of senior managers without children, they represented 12.7% of those whose youngest child was younger than 2. Meanwhile, one in four senior managers whose youngest child was aged 2 to 5 (24.8%) were women (Chart 7). The share of women reached 30.8% among senior managers whose youngest child was aged 6 to 14 but was still below the share of women among senior managers whose youngest child was aged 15 or older (34.5%).

## Women managers have higher levels of educational attainment than men

For both women and men, the proportion of workers with a bachelor’s degree or higher was greater among middle and senior managers than among non-managers (Chart 8). Regardless of occupation, women were more likely to have higher levels of educational attainment than men. Among middle managers, over half (53.0%) of women had a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared with 43.9% of men. The share of women with a bachelor’s degree or higher (65.3%) was even greater among senior managers and still higher than that of their men counterparts (57.2%).

**Chart 8**  
**Distribution of workers by educational attainment, gender and occupation, 2021**

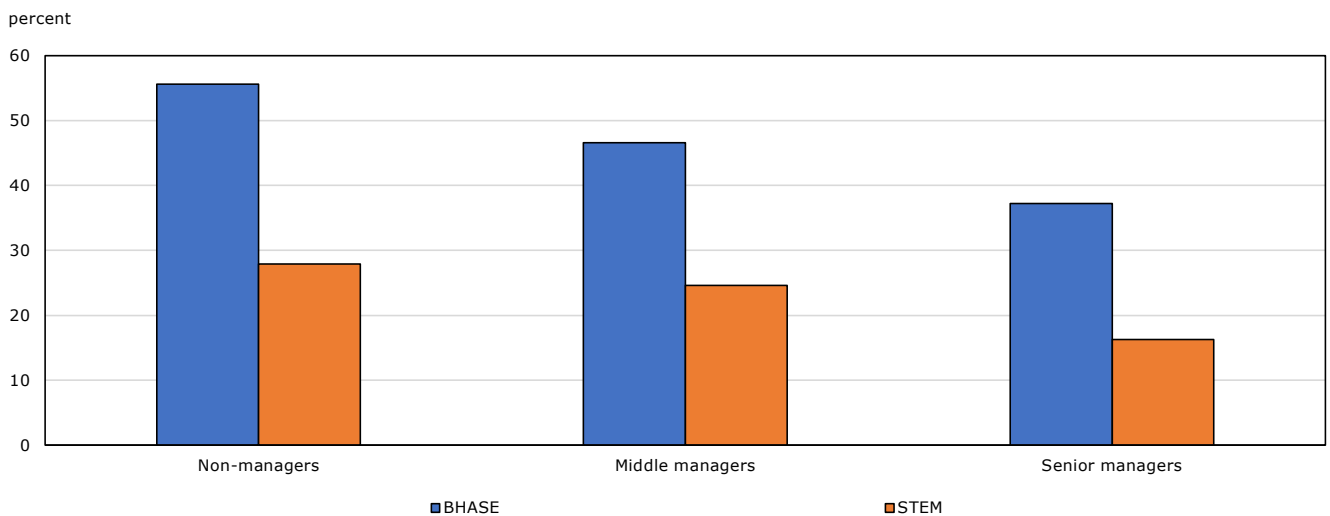


**Notes:** The category "women+" includes women, as well as some non-binary people. The category "men+" includes men, as well as some non-binary people.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

## Women’s representation among managers varies considerably by major field of study

Although education can be an important factor in professional advancement, other factors, such as skills, experience and field of study, may also play a significant role. Chart 9 highlights the difference in the representation of women among workers with a postsecondary degree, according to their field of study.

**Chart 9**  
**Share of women with a postsecondary degree by field of study and occupation, 2021**



**Notes:** The category "women" includes women, as well as some non-binary people. "BHASE" refers to business, humanities, arts, social science and education. "STEM" refers to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics and computer sciences.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

In all occupations, the share of women among workers who studied in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics and computer sciences (STEM) was about half of that among workers who studied in business, humanities, arts, social science and education (BHASE). About one in four middle managers with a postsecondary education related to STEM was a woman (24.6%), nearly half of the proportion among middle managers who studied in BHASE (46.6%) (Chart 9). While 37.2% of senior managers with an education in BHASE were women, women represented less than 2 in 10 senior managers who studied in STEM (16.3%).

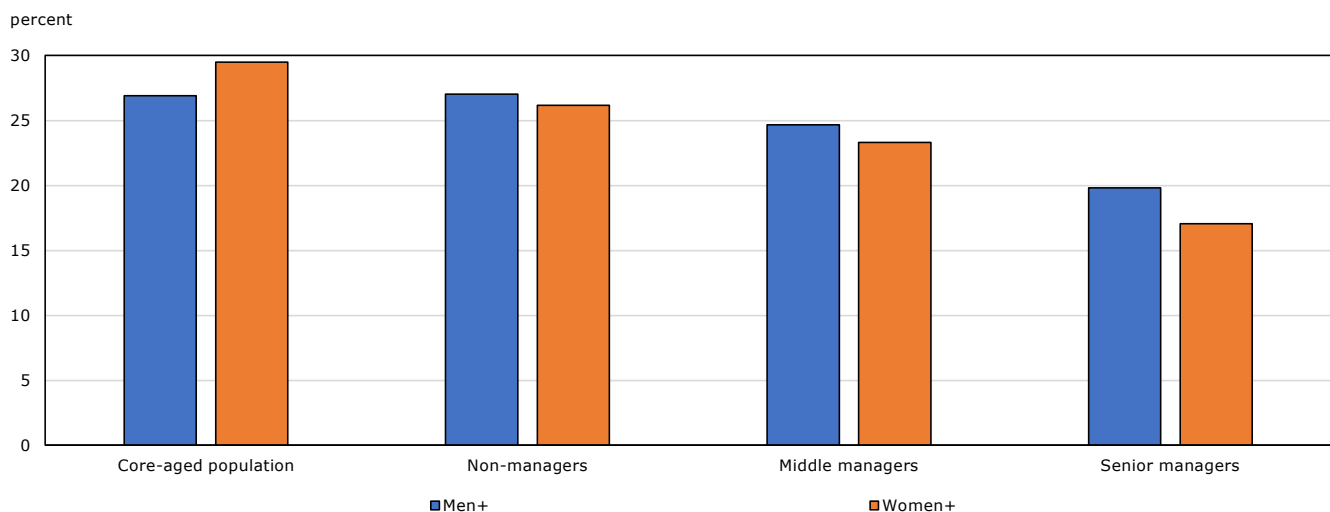
These data underline the differences in the representation of women among workers according to field of study, with a stronger presence in BHASE fields of study and a significant underrepresentation in STEM fields of study, especially among middle and senior management positions.

### The underrepresentation of immigrants among managers is more pronounced among women than among men

In 2021, among those aged 25 to 54, 27.1% of men non-managers were immigrants, comparable with their representation in the total population of men aged 25 to 54 (26.9%) (Chart 10). By contrast, immigrant women accounted for 26.2% of women non-managers and 29.5% of all women aged 25 to 54.

Comparing the representation of immigrant women among managers with that among non-managers, rather than the core-aged population (i.e., aged 25 to 54), helps avoid bias related to differences in labour market participation between immigrants and non-immigrants. Immigrant women in particular may have different labour force participation rates because of factors such as recognition of foreign qualifications and language barriers. If their representation among managers was compared with the general population, the difference in participation rates could distort the findings, creating the impression of greater or lower representation than actually exists. By comparing their presence among managers with immigrant women in non-managerial positions, the analysis focuses solely on women already active in the labour market, providing a more accurate picture. The same strategy is applied below for both Indigenous and racialized women.

**Chart 10**  
**Representation of immigrants by gender and occupation, 2021**



**Notes:** The category "women+" includes women, as well as some non-binary people. The category "men+" includes men, as well as some non-binary people. "Core-aged population" refers to the population aged 25 to 54 years.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Compared with their proportion among non-managers, immigrants were underrepresented among middle and senior managers. While immigrants accounted for 26.2% of women non-managers, they accounted for 23.3% of women middle managers (Chart 10). The representation of immigrants was even lower among women senior managers (17.1%), with a 9.1 percentage point gap relative to their share among women non-managers.

The underrepresentation of immigrant men was less pronounced than that of their women counterparts among middle and senior managers. For example, the gap between the proportion of immigrants among men senior managers (19.8%) and the share of immigrants among men non-managers (27.1%) was 7.3 percentage points (Chart 10). The gap was 2.4 percentage points for middle managers.

## The representation of women among managers varies by racialized group

Over the past 15 years, Canada's ethnocultural diversity has grown significantly. The share of racialized people rose from 17.7% in 2006 to 31.5% in 2021 among women aged 25 to 54 and from 16.6% to 29.5% among men in the same age group (Statistics Canada, 2022c). The racialized population is also diverse, although there is a relative concentration in four groups. Among racialized men and women aged 25 to 54, the South Asian population accounted for the largest share, followed by the Chinese and Black populations. These three groups together represented 60.5% of racialized men and 58.4% of racialized women. Along with the Filipino population, about 7 in 10 racialized people identified as members of one of these groups.

Overall, the racialized population was underrepresented in middle and senior management roles for both women and men. While racialized women accounted for 26.9% of women non-managers, they represented 22.5% of women middle managers, a gap of 4.4 percentage points (Table 3). Racialized men were also underrepresented among middle managers (22.9%), compared with their share among non-managers (27.3%), with a gap similar to that among women (4.4 percentage points). The same was true among senior managers, but the underrepresentation was more pronounced. Racialized people accounted for 14.5% of women and 15.5% of men in senior management roles, reflecting gaps of 12.4 percentage points and 11.8 percentage points, relative to their respective proportions among non-managers.



**Table 3**  
**Representation of racialized groups by gender and occupation, 2021**

	Core-aged population		Non-managers		Middle managers		Senior managers	
	Women+	Men+	Women+	Men+	Women+	Men+	Women+	Men+
	percent							
South Asian	8.1	8.7	6.5	8.2	5.9	8.1	4.1	5.2
Chinese	5.5	4.7	4.9	4.3	5.3	4.4	3.3	3.1
Black	4.7	4.5	4.2	4.0	2.5	2.2	2.0	1.5
Filipino	3.6	2.7	4.2	3.3	2.1	1.4	0.7	0.3
Arab	2.1	2.3	1.2	1.7	1.1	1.7	1.0	1.5
Latin American	2.2	2.1	1.8	2.0	1.6	1.5	0.9	1.0
Southeast Asian	1.4	1.1	1.1	1.0	0.9	0.7	0.6	0.4
West Asian	1.3	1.3	0.8	0.9	0.8	1.0	0.6	1.0
Korean	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.3	0.4
Japanese	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.3
Racialized group, n.i.e.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.3	0.4
Multiple racialized groups	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.5
Total racialized population	31.5	29.6	26.9	27.3	22.5	22.9	14.5	15.5
Non-racialized population	68.5	70.4	73.1	72.7	77.5	77.1	85.5	84.5

**Notes:** The category "women+" includes women, as well as some non-binary people. The category "men+" includes men, as well as some non-binary people. The concept of "racialized group" is derived directly from the concept of "visible minority." The *Employment Equity Act* defines visible minorities as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour." The abbreviation "n.i.e." means "not included elsewhere." This category includes people who provided written responses such as "Guyanese," "Pacific Islander," "Polynesian," "Tibetan" or "West Indian." "Core-aged population" refers to the population aged 25 to 54.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

The distribution of workers by racialized group reflects a trend similar to that of the general population aged 25 to 54, in the sense that the racialized groups with the highest shares among the general population generally also had the highest shares among workers, regardless of occupation (Table 3). However, representation varied by racialized group.

Focusing on the four most populous racialized groups, which accounted for around 7 out of 10 racialized managers, Table 3 shows that South Asian women, who represented 6.5% of women non-managers, accounted for 5.9% of women middle managers. For South Asian men, their proportion among men middle managers (8.1%) was comparable to that among men non-managers (8.2%). Moreover, both Chinese men and women were nearly as well represented among middle managers as among non-managers. However, the proportion of women middle managers who were Black (2.5%) was lower than the proportion of Black people among women non-managers (4.2%). The same was true of Black men (4.0% of men non-managers, compared with 2.2% of men middle managers). The proportion of middle managers who were Filipino (2.1% of women and 1.4% of men) was twice as low as the proportion of the Filipino population among non-managers (4.2% of women and 3.3% of men).

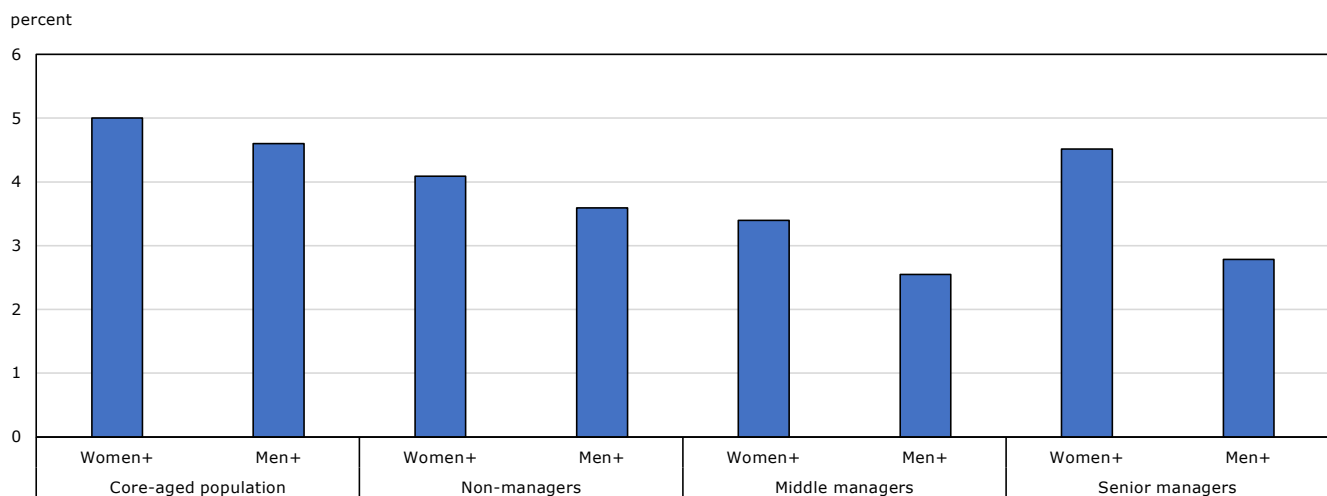
The underrepresentation of different racialized groups among senior managers relative to their respective share among non-managers was widespread. For most groups, the proportion of women senior managers who identified with that group was significantly lower than the proportion of women non-managers who identified with the same group. For example, while South Asian women accounted for 6.5% of women non-managers, they accounted for 4.1% of women senior managers. It is also worth noting the low representation of the Filipino population among senior managers, accounting for 0.7% of women senior managers (compared with 4.2% of women non-managers) and 0.3% of men senior managers (compared with 3.3% of men non-managers).

## Indigenous women are proportionally more represented than Indigenous men among managers

In 2021, there were approximately 688,000 Indigenous people aged 25 to 54, which is 45.6% more than in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2023b).<sup>9</sup> The non-Indigenous population in the same age group increased by 3.9% during this period. As a result, the proportion of Indigenous peoples among the core-aged population increased from 3.5% in 2006 to 4.8% in 2021, with a slightly higher proportion among women (5.0%) than among men (4.6%).

Indigenous peoples were underrepresented among middle and senior managers, compared with their share among non-managers. However, there were differences between Indigenous men and women in terms of representation across occupations. While 4.1% of women non-managers were Indigenous, Indigenous women accounted for 3.4% of women middle managers (Chart 11). The relatively lower Indigenous representation among middle managers was more pronounced among men; 2.5% of men middle managers were Indigenous, 1.1 percentage point lower than the share of men non-managers who were Indigenous. Interestingly, the share of Indigenous women among women senior managers (4.5%) was higher than that among women middle managers (3.4%) and close to that among women non-managers (4.1%).

**Chart 11**  
Share of Indigenous peoples by gender and occupation, 2021



**Notes:** The category "women+" includes women, as well as some non-binary people. The category "men+" includes men, as well as some non-binary people. "Indigenous" refers not only to those who are First Nations, Métis or Inuit, but also to those who reported membership in a First Nation or an Indian band, as well as those with Registered or Treaty Indian status. The results for First Nations people, Métis and Inuit are for the single identity population. "Core-aged population" refers to the population aged 25 to 54.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

These results show that, as with the total population aged 25 to 54, the proportion of Indigenous peoples was higher among women than among men regardless of occupation (Chart 11). Further, the difference in representation between Indigenous men and women increased with the level of occupation (non-managers, middle managers, senior managers). Among the population aged 25 to 54, the gap in representation between Indigenous women (5.0%) and men (4.6%) was 0.4 percentage points. The gap was 0.5 percentage points among non-managers, 0.9 percentage points among middle managers and 1.7 percentage points among senior managers.

9. Because of changes in the number of incompletely enumerated reserves and settlements over time, data from the 2021 Census on Indigenous peoples are not necessarily directly comparable with data from earlier iterations of the census—particularly for First Nations people living on reserve.

## The representation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit women is comparable between managers and non-managers

The increase of the Indigenous population from 2006 to 2021 was widespread across Indigenous groups. The population of First Nations people (+45.2%), Métis (+45.8%) and Inuit (+44.9%) aged 25 to 54 grew faster than the non-Indigenous population in the same age group (+3.9%) from 2006 to 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2023b). These findings hold true for both men and women.

The breakdown between middle and senior managers is not provided for Indigenous groups because of small sample sizes in certain cases. Therefore, the term “managers” includes both middle and senior managers. Representation across occupations varied by Indigenous group. First Nations women, who accounted for 2.9% of all women aged 25 to 54, represented 2.2% of women non-managers and 1.8% of women managers (Table 4). Relative to their share among men non-managers (1.8%), First Nations men were underrepresented among men managers (1.2%). However, although lower, the proportion of First Nations women among women managers (1.8%) was not significantly different from their proportion among women non-managers (2.2%).

**Table 4**

**Representation of First Nations people, Métis and Inuit by gender and occupation**

	Core-aged population		Non-managers		Managers	
	Women+	Men+	Women+	Men+	Women+	Men+
			percent			
First Nations people	2.9	2.6	2.2	1.8	1.8	1.2
Métis	1.8	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.2
Inuit	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1

**Notes:** The category "women+" includes women, as well as some non-binary people. The category "men+" includes men, as well as some non-binary people. "First Nations people," "Métis" and "Inuit" refer to the single identity population. "Core-aged population" refers to the population aged 25 to 54.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

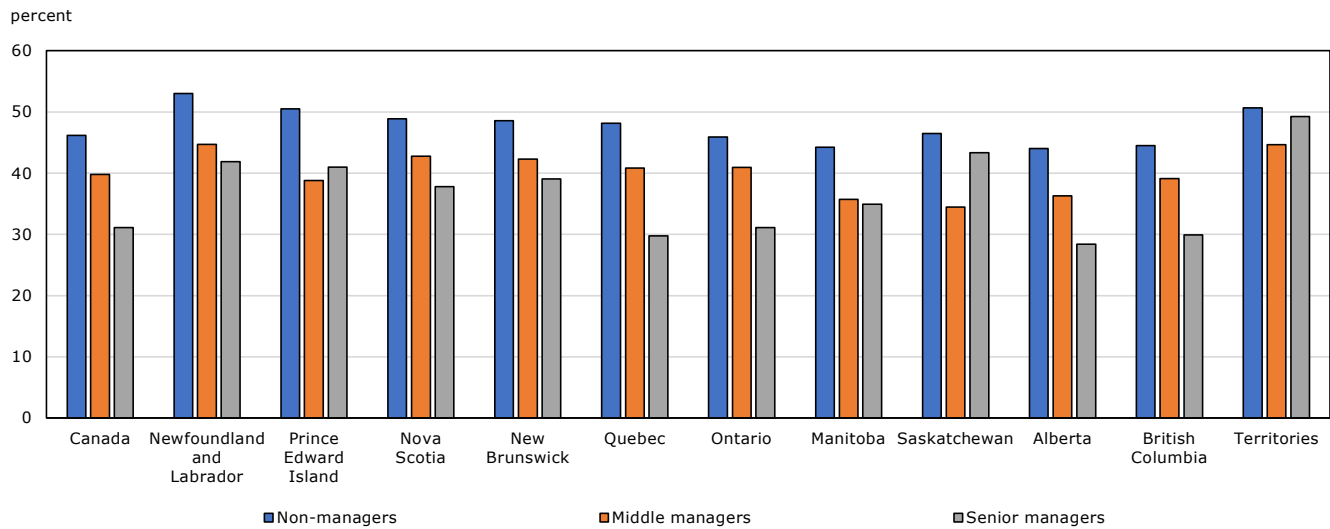
The proportion of Métis was slightly lower among women non-managers (1.6%) than among all women aged 25 to 54 (1.8%) (Table 4). Métis accounted for an even lower share among women managers (1.4%). For both men and women, Métis accounted for a lower share among managers than among non-managers, but the difference was not significant.

Inuit women (0.2%) were equally represented among non-managers and among all women aged 25 to 54. The share of Inuit was slightly lower among managers (0.1% for both men and women), but the difference was not significant.

## The representation of women among middle and senior managers varies by province or territory

The analysis presented in the previous sections is based on national-level results. Given that strategies for promoting greater representation of women among middle and senior managers may differ from one province or territory to another, it is worth exploring the results by province or territory. As shown in Chart 12, across all provinces and the territories, the proportion of women among managers was lower than among non-managers.

**Chart 12**  
**Share of women by province or territory and occupation, 2021**



**Notes:** The category "women" includes women, as well as some non-binary people. The territories include Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

However, the representation of women among middle and senior managers varied by province or territory. Newfoundland and Labrador (44.7%) and the territories (44.6%) had the highest shares of women among middle managers (Chart 12). It should be noted that, along with Prince Edward Island, these areas had the lowest numbers of workers in general, and of managers in particular. Except for these two areas and Nova Scotia (42.8%) and New Brunswick (42.3%), the proportion of women among middle managers was similar to or lower than the national average of 39.8%. Saskatchewan (34.4%), Manitoba (35.7%) and Alberta (36.2%) had the lowest shares of women among middle managers.

The territories almost had gender parity among senior managers, with women accounting for 49.2% of senior managers (Chart 12). Except for Alberta (28.4%), Quebec (29.7%), British Columbia (29.9%) and Ontario (31.1%), the provinces had a higher proportion of women among senior managers than the national average (31.1%). Saskatchewan (43.3%) and Newfoundland and Labrador (41.9%) exceeded the Canadian average by more than 10 percentage points.

## Conclusion

Diversity and inclusion play an important role in enhancing individuals’ well-being, business success, economic stability and social progress globally (International Labour Organization, 2022). Additionally, board gender diversity has a positive and significant impact on firm performance (Kılıç and Kuzey, 2016; Brahma et al., 2020). Therefore, it is worth understanding the extent to which individuals from diverse backgrounds contribute to Canadian businesses and organizations.

This study mainly relies on the 2021 Census of Population to analyze the characteristics of women in middle and senior management positions and compare them with those of their men counterparts. Given that some individuals may face more significant challenges because they belong to more than one group (e.g., Indigenous or racialized women), this descriptive analysis adopts an intersectional approach by comparing the characteristics of women and men based on their Indigenous or racialized identity.

The results show that, despite minor improvements in the representation of women in management positions over the past two decades, women remain underrepresented among middle and senior managers. Although the average gender wage gap among managers has decreased since 2001, a gap persists.

The representation of women among middle and senior managers varied by sector and occupational group, with a predominance in the health care and social assistance sector and the educational services sector, but a clear underrepresentation in many sectors, such as the construction sector and the mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction sector. Furthermore, over three-quarters of women middle managers were concentrated in business, finance and administration occupations; sales and service occupations; and occupations in education, law and social, community and government services.

The findings also indicate that the representation of women among managers increased with the age of their youngest child. Furthermore, among middle and senior managers, women had higher levels of educational attainment and were less likely than men to be self-employed. Additionally, relative to their share among non-managers, women were underrepresented among middle and senior managers across all provinces and the territories, but there was some regional variation in their level of representation.

Immigrants and racialized people were underrepresented among middle and senior managers relative to their share among non-managers. However, there were gender differences: for both groups, women were proportionally less represented among middle and senior managers than men.

The study also reveals that Indigenous women were underrepresented among middle managers, compared with their share among non-managers. However, the representation of Indigenous women was higher among senior managers than among middle managers and comparable to that among non-managers. Among each of the Indigenous groups, namely First Nations people, Métis and Inuit, the proportion of women among all managers (including both middle and senior managers) was not significantly different from their share among non-managers.

This study highlights the need to continue promoting the representation of diverse groups of women among managers. In addition to previous studies that have mainly focused on senior managers (board directors and officers), the study has shown that women of diverse backgrounds were generally underrepresented among middle managers. It could, therefore, be relevant to implement diversity and inclusion policies aimed at bridging the gap at this level, which can be a preparatory step for higher positions in businesses and organizations.

Despite the numerous studies on diversity among managers, there is still much to learn on the subject. A next potential investigation is to identify the organizational factors influencing the representation of diverse groups of women in management positions. This could, for example, determine whether companies owned by equity-seeking groups are more likely to have a diversified team of managers. Additionally, studies on the impact of diversity among managers on organizational performance, innovation and strategic decision making using Canadian data could also be considered. Establishing a positive and significant relationship could be a signal for businesses and organizations to consider diversity and inclusion in their recruitment and promotion processes. An intersectional analysis of compensation gaps that considers not only base salary but also any other form of compensation (such as bonuses) could also be considered to determine how different demographic groups in similar management roles compare regarding their total compensation.

## Appendix: Note to readers

### Definition of middle and senior managers using the National Occupational Classification 2021

#### Senior managers

- 00 Legislative and senior managers

#### Middle managers

- 10 Specialized middle management occupations in administrative services, financial and business services and communication (except broadcasting)
- 20 Specialized middle management occupations in engineering, architecture, science and information systems
- 30 Specialized middle management occupations in health care
- 40 Managers in public administration, in education and social and community services and in public protection services
- 50 Specialized middle management occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport
- 60 Middle management occupations in retail and wholesale trade and customer services
- 70 Middle management occupations in trades and transportation
- 80 Middle management occupations in production and agriculture
- 90 Middle management occupations in manufacturing and utilities

All workers in occupations not included above are considered non-managers.

## Gender and sex

This study uses the sex at birth variable from the Labour Force Survey and the two-category gender variable introduced in the 2021 Census of Population.

Beginning in 2021, the census asked questions about both the sex at birth and gender of individuals. While data on sex at birth are needed to measure certain indicators, as of the 2021 Census, gender (and not sex) is the standard variable used in concepts and classifications. For more details on the new gender concept, see [Age, Sex at Birth and Gender Reference Guide, Census of Population, 2021](#).

Given that the non-binary population is small, data aggregation to a two-category gender variable is sometimes necessary to protect the confidentiality of responses. In these cases, individuals in the category “non-binary people” are distributed into the other two gender categories. Unless otherwise indicated in the text, the category “men” includes men (and boys), as well as some non-binary people, while the category “women” includes women (and girls), as well as some non-binary people.

A fact sheet on gender concepts, [Filling the gaps: Information on gender in the 2021 Census](#), is also available.

## Indigenous identity

The results for Indigenous peoples include not only those who are First Nations, Métis or Inuit, but also those who reported membership in a First Nation or an Indian band, as well as those with Registered or

Treaty Indian status. The results for First Nations people, Métis and Inuit are for the single identity population.

## Racialized population

The concept of “racialized population” is derived from the detailed “visible minority” variable in the census. The term “visible minority” comes from the *Employment Equity Act*. The act defines visible minorities as “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour” (*Employment Equity Act*, 1995). The visible minority population consists mainly of the following groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Arab, Latin American, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese.

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