THE REMOTE WORK MIRAGE: HOW DIGITAL LABOUR MARKETS REINFORCE INEQUALITY FOR RACIALIZED IMMIGRANT WOMEN

Marika Jeziorek

School of International Policy and Governance, Wilfrid Laurier University, Balsillie School of International Affairs, Canada

ABSTRACT

Remote work is often promoted as a flexible, democratizing force in the labour market. Yet for highly skilled racialized women—particularly immigrant women—this shift has not dismantled entrenched structural barriers. Instead, it has frequently reproduced them in digital form. This paper critically examines how race and gender intersect to shape access to remote employment, advancement, and economic security, both globally and in the Canadian context. Drawing on an intersectional framework, labour market segmentation theory, and scholarship on algorithmic hiring bias, it interrogates whether remote work mitigates or reconfigures pre-existing inequalities. The analysis shows that racialized immigrant women remain disadvantaged in digital hiring systems, underrepresented in leadership roles, and disproportionately burdened with unpaid care work—constraints that the remote work model has failed to resolve. The paper argues that far from being a meritocratic leveller, remote work can entrench a digitally mediated extension of existing inequalities unless deliberate structural reforms are enacted.

KEYWORDS

Remote work; Intersectionality; Digital labour markets; Racialized immigrant women; Algorithmic bias

1. INTRODUCTION

Remote work is widely promoted as a transformative shift in employment, offering flexibility, expanded participation, and digital inclusion for workers globally [1], [2]. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many professionals—especially women—benefited from alternatives to rigid office structures, such as balancing paid work with caregiving responsibilities and accessing jobs beyond geographic boundaries.

This optimistic narrative assumes that removing physical and geographic barriers demoratizes employment. However, emerging evidence suggests remote work does not automatically dismantle racial and gender hierarchies in the labour market. Instead, it may reconfigure or reinforce existing inequalities [3]–[5]. Highly skilled racialized women, particularly those with non-Western credentials, continue to face barriers in hiring, advancement, and leadership—even when legally authorized and well-qualified to work in countries like Canada [6], [7]. These challenges mirror those long present in traditional workplaces.

While remote work has enabled success stories, these often rely on structural advantages such as Western-recognized education, professional networks, reliable digital access, and alignment with market demands [8], [9]. For others—especially racialized women—credential devaluation, algorithmic discrimination, and exclusion from informal networks persist [10], [11]. As a result, remote work can reproduce a stratified workforce: those already privileged reap the benefits,

while those at the intersection of racial and gender disadvantage remain excluded from meaningful mobility.

Remote work also reshapes how racialized immigrant women experience visibility, legitimacy, and belonging in professional spaces. This paper adopts a critical-interpretive lens to examine how inequalities in digital labour markets are not only structural but experiential—affecting identity, recognition, and professional self-worth. Remote platforms and algorithmic hiring processes mediate these experiences, embedding new forms of exclusion within digital environments.

This paper focuses on highly skilled racialized immigrant women in global and Canadian contexts—an understudied group within both remote labour and migration policy literature. It contributes a critical intersectional perspective that foregrounds how digital labour segmentation, algorithmic bias, and caregiving expectations converge in shaping remote work experiences. While prior studies have addressed labour market challenges faced by racialized women and immigrants [6, 7, 9], these often examine traditional work settings or treat race and gender in isolation. This analysis bridges those strands by situating racialized immigrant women at the centre of inquiry into digitally mediated employment.

Contrary to claims that remote work promotes meritocracy, studies show that digital platforms and algorithmic hiring systems often replicate racial and gender bias [12], [4]. Non-Western credentials are undervalued, informal networks continue to shape opportunity, and racialized women remain underrepresented in leadership roles [10], [11], [13]. Remote work may offer flexibility, but it does not necessarily ease the unpaid caregiving burdens that fall disproportionately on women—sometimes intensifying work-family conflict [14], [15].

Rather than assuming remote work is inherently equalizing, this paper argues that it can serve as a digitally mediated extension of longstanding inequalities. Drawing on intersectionality, labour market segmentation theory, and research on algorithmic discrimination, it examines both global patterns and the Canadian context to assess: (1) Does remote work mitigate the systemic barriers racialized women face in traditional labour markets, or does it reproduce those barriers in new forms? (2) What structural and experiential dynamics contribute to persistent inequalities in remote, digitally mediated employment?

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This analysis draws on three intersecting theoretical perspectives to understand how racial and gender disparities are reproduced in digital labour markets: intersectionality, labour market segmentation, and algorithmic bias. Together, they illuminate how structural inequalities persist and adapt in remote work contexts.

2.1. Intersectionality: Compounding Race and Gender Inequities

Intersectionality theory highlights how social categories like race, gender, and class interact to produce compounded forms of disadvantage [16], [17]. Initially developed by Black feminist scholars to explain the marginalization of Black women, it is now widely used to understand workplace inequality. Racialized women often face a "double disadvantage" in employment due to the combined effects of racism and sexism [18], [19]. In Canada, for example, first-generation visible minority women earn $5,000 less than white women and $7,000 less than visible minority men, and are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed [20]. This framework is central to the present study, which focuses on how remote work outcomes are shaped by gendered and

racialized oppression. It helps assess whether remote work benefits all women, or primarily those from more privileged racial or class backgrounds.

2.2. Labour Market Segmentation in the Digital Era

Labour market segmentation theory posits that employment is divided into distinct segments: a primary segment of secure, well-paid jobs with advancement, and a secondary segment of precarious, low-wage work with limited mobility. Historically, women and racialized workers have been concentrated in the secondary segment due to systemic discrimination [21], [18].
This framework remains highly relevant in the digital era. Remote and platform-based work is reproducing a core-periphery structure: a minority of predominantly white, Western workers access high-status remote roles in fields like tech and finance, while others—often women, racialized minorities, and workers from the Global South—are clustered in freelance or contract-based digital work with little stability [9], [22]. The global reach of remote hiring allows companies to offshore tasks to cheaper labour pools, but instead of levelling the playing field, it reinforces hierarchical divisions.

For instance, permanent remote roles with benefits are often reserved for those with Western credentials and cultural capital. In contrast, marginalized workers—despite high qualifications—are more often relegated to gig tasks like content moderation or virtual assistance, with lower pay and no security. As van Doorn notes, gig economies exploit gendered and racialized labour, channeling already-marginalized groups into precarious roles [9].Labour market segmentation theory thus helps explain why remote work has not produced equal opportunity but rather a digital replication of existing inequalities [8].

2.3. Algorithmic Bias and Digital Gatekeeping in Hiring

Digital hiring systems were once promoted as a way to eliminate human bias by evaluating candidates "objectively" based on skills. In practice, however, these systems often replicate and even amplify existing inequalities [12], [4]. Algorithms trained on biased historical data or using proxies for privilege can disadvantage racialized and female candidates—especially in remote work contexts where face-to-face interactions are minimal.

Automated resume screeners frequently devalue non-Western credentials or experience,filtering out qualified applicants from Asia, Africa, or Latin America before human review. Name-based biases also persist: a Canadian field study found that resumes with English-sounding names had a 39% higher callback rate than those with Indian, Chinese, or Pakistani names—even with identical qualifications [23, p. 160].

Freelance platforms like Upwork and Fiverr further compound these issues. Their search and rating algorithms often result in lower visibility and pay for Global South freelancers, pushing racialized workers to accept lower rates [8], [24].These platforms thus function as digital gatekeepers, privileging Western credentials and majority-group identities.

The concept of "algorithmic oppression" captures how seemingly neutral technologies embed and perpetuate structural discrimination [12]. Without deliberate bias mitigation, remote hiring systems will continue to penalize racialized women—replicating familiar patterns of exclusion through new, opaque mechanisms. As a result, these biases remain a central factor in the underrepresentation of racialized women in higher-paying remote roles.

Drawing on the above theoretical lenses, the analysis now turns to the empirical patterns observed in remote work at a global level and in Canada specifically. Together, intersectionality,

labour market segmentation, and digital bias frameworks predict that without interventions, remote work is likely to replicate existing inequalities. The following sections examine whether and how these predictions bear out in reality, and what efforts are being made to address the disparities.

3. GLOBAL PATTERNS OF RACE, GENDER, AND INEQUALITY IN REMOTE WORK

3.1. Remote Work's Promise vs. Reality on a Global Scale

The global expansion of remote work in the past decade, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic [1], has often been celebrated as a "great equalizer" in employment [25], [4]. Optimistic accounts emphasize how remote jobs can empower people regardless of location: a qualified professional in a developing country, for example, could theoretically compete for the same high-paying job as someone in a major Western city, and working mothers could juggle careers and caregiving with newfound flexibility. Indeed, many success stories highlight individuals who used remote work to achieve better work–life balance or to access international opportunities previously out of reach [25]. These narratives reinforce the assumption that by removing geographic barriers and rigid office norms, remote work democratizes opportunity and fosters inclusion for women and racialized workers worldwide.

However, a growing body of research presents a more sobering reality: remote work does not inherently eradicate structural inequalities; instead, it often reconfigures them in digital form [3], [26]. Global labour market data suggest that preexisting race and gender disparities persist in who gets to reap the most benefits of remote work. While anyone with an internet connection can theoretically join the remote economy, access to the most lucrative and secure remote jobs remains uneven. White, Western professionals continue to dominate a large share of high-paying remote roles (especially leadership-track positions in fields like tech, finance, and consulting), whereas women of colour and workers from the Global South are more likely to be found in lower-paid gig work or peripheral roles. In other words, remote work has not eliminated the glass ceiling or the racial stratification of work; it has shifted the context but kept many of the same groups on top.

One mechanism driving this pattern is digital hiring and credentialism, as outlined in the theoretical discussion. Employers recruiting globally often exhibit preferences for candidates who signal Western norms—whether through education, previous employers, or even accents in video interviews. Highly skilled racialized women with non-Western qualifications report that they struggle to get noticed for top (remote) jobs, as their resumes are filtered out by systems or hiring managers biased toward "familiar" backgrounds [7], [6]. Even in freelance marketplaces open to worldwide talent, algorithmic filters and client biases tend to favour workers in the Global North. A recent study noted that on platforms like Upwork, freelancers from certain regions (often correlating with race/ethnicity) are systematically offered lower rates for the same work and appear less frequently in client searches. Claims that remote work is a purely meritocratic "flat world" thus overlook how power imbalances and historical inequalities are embedded in digital labour markets [12]. As a result, the racialized and gendered division of labour is reasserting itself online: the most privileged groups capture the flexible, well-paid remote positions, while marginalized groups often end up in more precarious digital gigs.

It is important to acknowledge that for some racialized workers, remote work has offered partial relief from workplace racism and microaggressions[27]. Several studies report that racialized employees—particularly Black and Indigenous professionals—found remote work environments

less emotionally taxing during the pandemic, citing reduced exposure to everyday bias and exclusion in physical office settings [28]. Pulse data indicates that flexible work arrangements are being adopted more frequently by people of colour, women, and working mothers compared to other groups[27]. These findings show that while remote work can reproduce systemic inequities through hiring and segmentation, it may also shield marginalized workers from interpersonal forms of discrimination that are harder to escape in person. However, this trade-off does not eliminate structural barriers; it suggests that achieving equitable work conditions requires not only improving access and advancement in remote roles, but also transforming the cultures of inclusion in both virtual and in-person workspaces.

Another crucial dimension of remote work's uneven impact is its interaction with gendered caregiving roles. Proponents of remote work have argued that flexibility particularly benefits women, who globally shoulder the majority of child care and household responsibilities. In theory, the ability to work from home should allow more women to remain in the workforce and advance their careers while managing family duties. However, empirical studies from the pandemic period reveal a more paradoxical outcome: women working remotely often experienced an increase in domestic labour and care demands, since being at home made them more accessible for family needs throughout the day [15], [14]. For many, this meant juggling professional tasks and childcare simultaneously, leading to longer workdays and heightened stress. Racialized women in various cultural contexts face additional expectations – for example, some cultures place a strong emphasis on women's roles in caring for extended family or community members, which can intensify when work is home-based [11]. Rather than liberating women from the "double shift" of paid and unpaid work, remote arrangements can entrench traditional gender norms, with women remaining the default caregivers even as they perform their paid job from home. For highly skilled racialized women, this double burden is layered on top of the structural hiring and progression barriers they face, making it even more challenging to compete with peers who do not have similar constraints. In global perspective, what emerges is not a uniform benefit of remote work for all women, but a scenario in which privileged women (often white and affluent) might leverage flexibility to advance, while others (particularly women of colour and those in less secure positions) struggle with increased invisible labour and stalled careers.

Furthermore, the global "gigification" of work has disproportionately affected marginalized workers. Even as full-time remote jobs exist, companies have increasingly unbundled work into contract-based tasks, often outsourced internationally. Racialized women are overrepresented in these gig economy roles, such as content moderation, transcription, online customer service, and other micro-tasking jobs [22], [9]. These positions typically offer lower pay, no benefits, and little stability, reinforcing a cycle of precarity. Scholars note that this phenomenon reflects long-standing global labour hierarchies: corporations in the Global North outsource lower-paid digital work to populations in the Global South (often women of colour), thereby saving costs while maintaining a facade of diversity and inclusion in their core workforce [8]. The result is a digital divide in economic security. For example, a U.S. or Canadian tech firm might boast that it has a diverse team of remote contractors worldwide; yet those contractors (perhaps a group of highly educated women in South Asia or Africa) may be earning a fraction of the salary of the firm's direct employees and have no path to promotion or decision-making roles. In this way, remote work can actually widen global inequalities by creating a new class of invisible, expendable workers who remain excluded from the benefits enjoyed by the predominantly white, Western professionals occupying the top tiers of the digital labour force.

In summary, the global landscape of remote work reveals a pattern of continuity in inequality amid change in work modality. Removing physical barriers and leveraging digital platforms have not automatically translated into meritocratic inclusion. Instead, systemic racism and sexism find

new channels: through algorithms, cultural biases, and economic arrangements that keep the playing field uneven. The promise of remote work as a driver of equal opportunity remains unfulfilled for many. Recognizing these patterns is the first step; the next is to examine what, if anything, is being done to address such inequities.

3.2. Policy Responses and Structural Gaps

Despite growing awareness of the exclusionary patterns in digital labour markets, policy interventions at the global level have so far been limited and fragmented. Governments and international organizations have only begun to grapple with the implications of algorithmic bias and remote work inequities, and their efforts often fall short of addressing the intersectional nature of the problem. Some initiatives have aimed broadly at increasing women's participation in tech and digital fields, or at improving digital skills training in developing countries. However, these programs frequently treat "women" as a monolithic group and rarely target the specific barriers faced by racialized women or women in the Global South [9]. For example, corporate and government programs under the banner of diversity in tech have tended to focus on gender equality in general, which in practice has often meant advancing the positions of white women in tech companies without concomitant gains for women of colour[20]. This can inadvertently widen intra-gender inequality, as white women move ahead while racialized women remain stuck in lower tiers.

In the domain of algorithmic hiring, regulatory steps are nascent. The European Union has introduced the Artificial Intelligence Act, which includes preliminary regulations on AI-based hiring and worker management tools[29]. These tools are categorized as "high-risk" and must comply with strict requirements related to transparency, data protection, and human oversight. While these measures signal an important recognition of automated bias, they currently focus more on issues like privacy and data governance rather than directly enforcing fairness or protecting marginalized groups. There is, as yet, no global standard for auditing algorithms for racial or gender bias in hiring. In the absence of clear regulations, tech companies and platform operators mostly police themselves, which often means bias mitigation is not a top priority unless there is a reputational or legal risk. As a result, the digital gatekeeping mechanisms described earlier remain largely intact. Candidates with foreign credentials or non-Anglophone names can still be routinely filtered out of remote job applicant pools with little accountability for employers or software vendors [12]. A stronger regulatory focus on algorithmic accountability and diversity outcomes is needed to change this, but such frameworks are only in formative stages in a few jurisdictions.

Another area of policy attention is the gig economy. A few governments, particularly in parts of the Global South, have started implementing labour protections for gig workers (e.g., minimum standards for platform-based freelancers or requirements for gig platforms to contribute to social insurance). However, these measures typically address local platform workers (such as ride-share or delivery workers in a city) and do not extend to the transnational remote gig work that highly skilled racialized women often engage in. For instance, an Indian or Nigerian woman doing freelance coding for overseas clients remains outside the purview of both her home country's labour laws (which usually don't cover export gig work) and the client's country regulations. This regulatory vacuum at the international level means that many remote workers of colour operate with few protections against exploitation or discrimination.

The persistence of a racialized segmentation of remote work is also reinforced by the relative invisibility of these issues in policy discourse. When policymakers and business leaders discuss the future of remote and hybrid work, they often highlight broad themes like productivity, employee well-being, and overall diversity metrics. Rarely do these discussions specifically

consider how race and gender intersect to shape who is benefiting from remote work. For example, the question "Will remote work undermine diversity efforts?" has been posed in human resource circles [30], but answers tend to focus on general diversity without unpacking the experiences of women of colour or other intersectional groups. This lack of nuance can lead to misguided solutions. A company might notice fewer women being promoted in remote settings and respond with a generic mentorship program for women—without recognizing that the women not being promoted are overwhelmingly non-white and face distinct biases that a one-size-fits-all program won't address. In effect, policy conversations often overlook racialized women, treating the challenges of "women" and "racial minorities" separately rather than addressing the compounded barriers at their intersection [13], [9].

In summary, current policy responses on the global stage have not yet caught up with the complex reality of intersectional inequality in remote work. Efforts to enhance digital inclusion and fairness remain piecemeal. There is a clear need for more targeted interventions—such as: regulations that require algorithmic hiring tools to be audited for bias; global labour standards for remote gig workers that prevent exploitative pay disparities; and diversity and inclusion initiatives that explicitly aim to lift up racialized women and other intersectionally disadvantaged groups in the digital workforce. Until such steps are taken, remote work will continue to operate in the shadow of the structural inequities detailed above. The next section turns to the case of Canada, a country often lauded for its multicultural workforce and skilled immigrant talent pool, to examine how these global patterns play out in a national context and whether Canadian policy and organizational practices are addressing the challenges faced by highly skilled racialized women in remote work environments.

3.3. Remote Work and Structural Barriers for Racialized Immigrant Women in Canada

Canada provides a revealing context to investigate the intersection of remote work, race, and gender because of its high levels of skilled immigration and its policy commitment to multiculturalism and employment equity. Highly educated immigrant women from around the world move to Canada each year, bringing advanced degrees and professional experience in fields such as IT, engineering, finance, and healthcare. In theory, the rise of remote work could offer these women new opportunities to engage in the labour market commensurate with their qualifications—allowing them to work for employers across Canada (or even internationally) without needing to relocate again, and to balance work with any family obligations in their new country. However, to date there is little systematic research on how remote work has actually impacted racialized immigrant women in Canada. Although based on UK data, Chung et al. exemplify a broader trend in the literature: studies of remote work often address gender but overlook the intersecting roles of race and migration status[14]. Meanwhile, research on the labour market integration of racialized immigrant women has tended to focus on conventional, in-person employment settings, highlighting issues such as credential devaluation, "Canadian experience" requirements, and workplace discrimination [6], [31]. Bridging these two bodies of knowledge, it appears that many of the structural barriers that hinder racialized immigrant women in conventional workplaces are likely mirrored in remote work settings.

One of the most significant hurdles for highly skilled newcomer women in Canada is the persistent devaluation of foreign credentials and experience. Even though immigrants may have the legal right to work and may possess qualifications equivalent to or even exceeding those of Canadian-born workers, employers often express skepticism about non-Canadian education or overseas work histories [6]. In traditional employment contexts, this results in many immigrants (especially women and visible minorities) being underemployed—working in jobs well below their skill level or struggling to find any employment in their field. In the remote work context,

similar dynamics are at play, potentially amplified by digital filters. Building on broader arguments about algorithmic bias and digital redlining [12], Canadian companies using automated hiring systems often configure them to prioritize applicants with Canadian or "Western" qualifications, effectively screening out many immigrants before the interview stage. For example, an immigrant woman with a master's degree and a decade of experience from a respected university in India or Nigeria may apply to a remote job based in Canada, but her resume might never pass the initial algorithm if the system flags her education or past employers as unfamiliar. Field experiments corroborate this kind of bias: resumes bearing foreign education or work experience receive significantly fewer callbacks from Canadian employers compared to identical resumes with all-Canadian backgrounds [7]. Even something as simple as the applicant's name can trigger bias. Oreopoulos and Dechief's study in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver found that applicants with Anglo-Canadian names had a much higher chance of being called for an interview than those with Chinese, South Asian, or Middle Eastern names, even when all candidates were educated and trained in Canada[7]. This kind of discrimination, whether conscious or algorithmic, means that many highly skilled immigrant women never get a fair chance in the remote job market—they are filtered out not due to lack of ability, but due to systemic biases that equate merit with certain privileged signals (Canadian schooling, English-sounding names, etc.).

For those racialized immigrant women who do manage to secure professional jobs (remote or otherwise) in Canada, additional barriers often curtail their career advancement. Research on workplace diversity in Canada shows that racialized employees, especially women, are disproportionately clustered in entry-level or mid-level positions, with very low representation in senior leadership [32], [33]. The remote work shift does not inherently change the glass ceiling effect; in fact, it may worsen the visibility challenges that minority women face. Advancement to managerial or executive roles often requires not just strong performance, but also sponsorship, mentorship, and networking within the organization. Racialized immigrant women frequently report exclusion from the informal networks that facilitate promotions [10]. In a virtual work environment, this can be exacerbated—without the chance hallway conversations or casual lunch meetings, employees who are already seen as "outsiders" might find it even harder to build relationships with mentors or leaders. The end result is a continuation of what has been observed in traditional offices: few racialized women make it into the leadership pipeline. National data underline this disparity. Ng and Gagnonreport that in Canada's largest city (Toronto), white women outnumber racialized women by 17 to 1 in corporate executive roles, and overall, racialized women hold only about 6.4% of management positions despite constituting over 10% of the workforce[34]. This stark underrepresentation in leadership reflects systemic biases and the cumulative effect of smaller barriers in hiring and promotion. There is little reason to believe that a switch to remote work eliminates these biases—in fact, if remote workers of colour are "out of sight, out of mind," they might be even more likely to be passed over for promotion in favour of those with whom leaders (perhaps unconsciously) feel more comfortable or familiar.

Another challenge specific to immigrant women in remote work is the lack of recognition and social integration in professional communities. Traditional diversity and inclusion efforts within Canadian workplaces have sometimes included affinity groups, diversity councils, or targeted leadership training aimed at supporting women of colour. But in remote or distributed teams, such initiatives may be absent or less effective. If a highly skilled newcomer woman is hired into a fully remote role, she may never meet colleagues or managers in person, which can isolate her from informal mentorship opportunities. Moreover, if she is working contractually or as a freelancer for Canadian clients, she might not have access to any workplace support systems at all. This isolation can stall career development and deprive individuals of the chance to demonstrate their capabilities beyond their immediate assigned tasks.

Compounding these professional barriers are the gendered expectations around caregiving, which remain significant for many racialized immigrant women. Canadian studies during the pandemic found that women, particularly mothers, took on more childcare and home-schooling duties when working from home, which often led them to reduce work hours or decline new responsibilities [35]–[37]. For immigrant women, there can be additional community or extended-family caregiving roles – for instance, caring for relatives who have also immigrated or supporting family abroad – adding layers to the "double burden." The flexibility of remote work can become a double-edged sword: it allows women to *stay* in the labour force while handling domestic duties, but it also reinforces the assumption that they will be the ones to absorb any slack in family care because "after all, she's at home." This can result in chronic time poverty and fatigue, which inevitably affect job performance or availability for advancement opportunities. Without supportive measures (like childcare support or flexible scheduling that genuinely acknowledges caregiving needs), remote work may entrench traditional gender roles in immigrant households just as in many others, limiting the extent to which women can capitalize on professional opportunities [15].

Considering policy and organizational responses in Canada, there have been some efforts recognizing the challenges faced by racialized immigrant women, but they rarely address the specific context of remote work. For example, the Canadian government launched an initiative in recent years aimed at "expanding employment opportunities for racialized newcomer women," providing funding for training and mentorship programs [39]. While beneficial, such programs are generally focused on helping women enter the workforce or become entrepreneurs; they do not yet directly tackle issues like algorithmic bias in hiring or the promotion gap in remote workplaces. Canada's official embrace of multiculturalism and employment equity does not preclude the persistence of cultural biases and structural exclusion in practice [6]. Racialized immigrant women may still be perceived as "culturally unfit" or face subtle forms of exclusion in remote settings—such as being left out of informal communication channels or facing value judgments tied to language, accent, or communication style. Employment equity legislation mandates reporting and encourages diversity hiring for women, visible minorities, Indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities, but these frameworks were conceived for traditional workplaces and do not extend well to the gig economy or remote contracting arrangements. Thus, a racialized woman working remotely as an independent contractor for a company may not count in that company's diversity statistics, effectively rendering her invisible in the equity accountability structure.

In summary, the Canadian context mirrors the global trends: highly skilled racialized immigrant women remain on an unequal footing in the remote work landscape. They face the dual credibility test of proving their foreign qualifications and overcoming racial biases in hiring algorithms; once in a role, they confront a virtual glass ceiling and often juggle intensifying care responsibilities. All of these factors suggest that, just as in traditional employment, targeted interventions are needed to ensure that the shift to remote work does not leave this group behind. Without explicit recognition of these intersectional barriers, the narrative of remote work as a flexible boon for women will ring hollow for those who continue to encounter the same systemic obstacles, now mediated through screens and software.

4. CONCLUSION

Remote work has been hailed as a transformative development that could make employment more accessible and equitable, but the evidence presented in this paper indicates that it has not automatically leveled the playing field for racialized and gendered minorities. Instead, remote and digital forms of work tend to reproduce many of the same inequalities found in traditional labour markets. In particular, highly skilled racialized women – such as immigrant women of

color in Canada – continue to be systematically excluded from the most lucrative and career-advancing opportunities in the remote work economy. Far from enjoying a meritocratic utopia, these women face algorithmic gatekeeping, persistent credential biases, exclusion from networks, and compounding care burdens that blunt the potential benefits of remote work.

By examining global patterns alongside the Canadian context, this study has shown that intersectional inequities pervade the remote work landscape. Globally, white Western professionals occupy a disproportionate share of stable, high-paying remote jobs, while women of colour are overrepresented in precarious gig work and outsourced roles that offer little security or mobility. The digital platforms and AI hiring tools that facilitate remote work often carry forward the biases of the past, filtering out racialized candidates and undervaluing non-Western qualifications [12]. At the same time, the gendered dynamics of work-from-home arrangements frequently reinforce traditional norms, as women continue to shoulder the majority of unpaid domestic labour [14], [15]. In Canada, despite the country's policies aimed at diversity and inclusion, these global trends manifest in familiar ways: credential devaluation and name-based discrimination impede the hiring of immigrant women; those who are hired often find themselves stuck below the glass ceiling, with tiny representation in leadership ranks[34]; and the flexibility of remote work is undermined by the intensification of care duties that fall on women [11].

These findings reaffirm the utility of intersectionality, labour market segmentation, and algorithmic bias as critical lenses for understanding how remote work perpetuates systemic exclusion. Rather than offering new opportunities for equity, remote work continues to reflect the structural patterns these theories predict—reproducing racialized and gendered disadvantage through digital forms.

Crucially, this paper also highlights a gap in both research and policy. Racialized immigrant women's experiences in remote work remain under-documented and under-appreciated in debates about the future of work. Most large-scale surveys and organizational diversity reports do not capture how remote or hybrid work models are affecting marginalized subgroups. There is an urgent need for data and studies that focus on these intersections—without such knowledge, policies and company practices risk being "colourblind" and "one-size-fits-all," thereby failing those who need support the most. For instance, diversity initiatives must evolve to account for remote workers; mentorship and sponsorship programs should be reimagined to ensure that women of colour working off-site are not overlooked for advancement. Similarly, as companies invest in AI for recruitment, they must implement regular audits and bias corrections to prevent systematic exclusion of candidates by race or gender. Policymakers should consider extending employment equity and anti-discrimination regulations to cover the new modalities of work (including gig and remote roles), ensuring that organizations remain responsible for equitable outcomes among all those who work for them, regardless of employment classification or location.

Ultimately, structural interventions are necessary to make remote work a tool for inclusion rather than another venue for exclusion. This includes: addressing bias in hiring algorithms and platform design (through both regulation and innovation in fair AI); actively recognizing and validating international credentials and experience to integrate skilled immigrants into appropriate roles (e.g., creating standardized ways to assess foreign qualifications in automated systems); fostering inclusive remote workplaces where networking and mentorship reach underrepresented groups (perhaps via virtual affinity groups or mentoring initiatives focused on racialized women in tech); and supporting remote workers with caregiving responsibilities (through flexible hours, childcare support subsidies, and normalizing the sharing of domestic labour). Without such measures, the shift toward remote work could entrench a two-tiered

workforce: a predominantly white, Western elite enjoying high pay and flexibility, and a diverse but marginalized group stuck in less secure, low-reward roles.

In conclusion, this paper contributes an intersectional, critical perspective to the discourse on remote work. It challenges techno-optimistic narratives by revealing how existing inequalities of race and gender are mirrored and sometimes intensified in digital work arrangements. Recognizing these patterns is the first step toward change. As society continues to embrace remote and hybrid models, it is imperative that researchers, organizations, and policymakers shine a light on the experiences of those at the margins of this new world of work. Highly skilled racialized women have much to contribute to the digital economy; ensuring they are not sidelined is not only a matter of justice and inclusion, but also vital for leveraging the full breadth of talent in a globally connected workforce. Achieving truly equitable remote work will require deliberate effort and structural reform—without it, remote work will remain, for many, a promise unfulfilled, a "digitally mediated" extension of the same inequities that have long plagued our traditional labour markets.Ultimately, recognizing the lived and structural dimensions of inequality in remote work is essential for crafting inclusive futures. This paper contributes to interdisciplinary understandings of how digital labour regimes not only reconfigure opportunity, but also shape how marginalized individuals experience recognition, exclusion, and agency in digitally mediated workspaces.

REFERENCES

[1] Choudhury, P. (Raj), Foroughi, C., & Larson, B. (2021). Work-from-anywhere: The productivity effects of geographic flexibility. Strategic Management Journal, 42(4), 655–683.

[2] Lund, S., Madgavkar, A., Manyika, J., & Smit, S. (2020, November 23). What's next for remote work: An analysis of 2,000 tasks, 800 jobs, and nine countries. McKinsey Global Institute.

[3] Hackl, A. (2023). Connecting without protecting: Intermediating the internet economy in digital livelihoods provision for refugees. Journal of Humanitarian Affairs, 4(3), 13–21.

[4] Kellogg, K. C., Valentine, M. A., & Christin, A. (2020). Algorithms at work: The new contested terrain of control. Academy of Management Annals, 14(1), 366–410.

[5] Bond, S. (2021, March 30). Remote work is leading to more gender and racial harassment, say tech workers. NPR.

[6] Guo, S. (2015). The colour of skill: Contesting a racialized regime of skill from the experiences of recent immigrants in Canada. Studies in Continuing Education, 37(3), 236–250.

[7] Oreopoulos, P., &Dechief, D. (2011). Why do some employers prefer to interview Matthew, but not Samir? Metropolis British Columbia Working Paper No. 11-13.

[8] Graham, M., Hjorth, I., &Lehdonvirta, V. (2017). Digital labour and development: Impacts of global digital labour platforms and the gig economy on worker livelihoods. Transfer, 23(2), 135–162.

[9] van Doorn, N. (2017). Platform labor: On the gendered and racialized exploitation of low-income service work in the on-demand economy. Information, Communication & Society, 20(6), 898–914.

[10] Momani, B., Finn, M., & Uszkay, J. A. (2022). Digital transformation of work: Gender considerations, impact on racialized women, and opportunities for skills retraining and entrepreneurship.

[11] Miller, M. (2024). Underemployed internationally trained women physicians: An opportunity to address Canada's healthcare worker shortage.

[12] Noble, S. U. (2018). Algorithms of Oppression: How search engines reinforce racism. NYU Press.

[13] Esses, V. M. (2021). Prejudice and discrimination toward immigrants. Annual Review of Psychology, 72, 503–531.

[14] Chung, H., Birkett, H., Forbes, S., & Seo, H. (2021). COVID-19, flexible working, and implications for gender equality in the United Kingdom. Gender & Society, 35(2), 218–232.

[15] Dunatchik, A., Gerson, K., Glass, J., Jacobs, J. A., & Stritzel, H. (2021). Gender, parenting, and the rise of remote work during the pandemic. Gender & Society, 35(2), 194–205.

[16] Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. Stanford Law Review, 43(6), 1241–1299.

[17] Hill Collins, P., & Bilge, S. (2020). Intersectionality (2nd ed.). Polity Press.

[18] Browne, I., & Misra, J. (2003). The intersection of gender and race in the labor market. Annual Review of Sociology, 29(1), 487–513.

[19] Raijman, R., & Semyonov, M. (1997). Gender, ethnicity, and immigration: Double disadvantage among recent immigrant women in the Israeli labor market. Gender & Society, 11(1).

[20] Institute for Gender and the Economy. (2019). Intersectionality and the implications for workplace gender equity. Rotman School of Management.

[21] Doeringer, P. B., &Piore, M. J. (1985). Internal labor markets and manpower analysis. M.E. Sharpe.

[22] Wood, A. J., Graham, M., Lehdonvirta, V., & Hjorth, I. (2019). Networked but commodified: The (dis)embeddedness of digital labour in the gig economy. Sociology, 53(5), 931–950.

[23] Oreopoulos, P. (2011). Why do skilled immigrants struggle in the labor market? A field experiment with thirteen thousand resumes. American Economic Journal: Economic Policy, 3(4), 148–171.

[24] Basir, N. (2024). Entrepreneurship and racialized immigrant women: The digital skills gap. Feminist Economics Forum Working Paper Series.

[25] Senz, K. (2019, July 29). How companies benefit when employees work remotely. Harvard Business School.

[26] Project Include. (2021). Remote work since COVID-19 is exacerbating harm: What companies need to know and do. https://projectinclude.org/

[27] Future Forum. (2022, January). Leveling the Playing Field in the Hybrid Workplace. Future Forum Pulse Report. [PDF] Available at: https://futureforum.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Future-Forum-Leveling-the-Playing-Field.pdf

[28] EmployDiversity. (2021). Marginalized staff prefer working from home. EmployDiversity Network. https://employdiversity.com

[29] European Commission. (2021). Proposal for a regulation laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence (Artificial Intelligence Act). COM(2021) 206 final.

[30] Agovino, T. (2022). Will remote work undermine diversity efforts? Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). https://www.shrm.org/

[31] Banerjee, R. (2022). A review of immigrant labour market barriers, outcomes and the role of employers in Canada. Canadian Journal of Economics, 55(S1).

[32] Ferrer, A., & Dhatt, S. S. (2023). Labour market barriers faced by highly educated racialized newcomer women in Canada. Statistics Canada Research Brief.

[33] Li, I. Z. (2024). Improving the employability and employment environment of racialized immigrant women.

[34] Ng, E. S., & Gagnon, S. (2020). Employment gaps and underemployment for racialized groups and immigrants in Canada. Diversity Institute Research Report.

[35] Leclerc, K. (2020). Caring for their children: Impacts of COVID-19 on parents. Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca

[36] Smith, J., Abouzaid, L., Masuhara, J., et al. (2022). "I may be essential but someone has to look after my kids": Women physicians and COVID-19. Canadian Journal of Public Health, 113, 107–116.

[37] Scott, K. (2021). Women, work and COVID-19: Priorities for supporting women and the economy. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

[38] Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. (2023). Expanding employment opportunities for racialized newcomer women. https://www.canada.ca/

AUTHOR

Marika Jeziorek is a PhD candidate in Global Governance at the Balsillie School of International Affairs (Wilfrid Laurier University), specializing in migration governance, digital labour markets, and intersectional policy analysis. Her research explores how digital platforms, remote work structures, and temporary protection mechanisms shape precarity for displaced and racialized populations. Marika's work spans academic research, policy analysis, and teaching. She has authored peer-reviewed articles, policy briefs, and book chapters, and is currently co-editing a special issue on migration and technology. She coordinates the Migration + Technology Hub, co-authors SSHRC-funded research, and presents regularly at national and international conferences. Marika draws on over a decade of interdisciplinary experience across academia, economic development, and international business in both Canada and Europe.