

The Homeownership Attainment of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual (LGB) Immigrants: The Role of Social Relationships

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Introduction

Achieving homeownership is considered an important adult milestone, due to the status and wealth accumulation associated with purchasing a home (e.g. Alba and Logan 1992). The homeownership rates for immigrants in Canada are declining, and are lower than the Canadian-born population (e.g. Haan 2007b). Similarly, in the US, homeownership rates of unmarried gay couples are lower than married heterosexual couples, but higher than unmarried heterosexual couples (e.g. Leppel 2007).

Arguably, LGB immigrants are at risk for particularly low homeownership rates, as they tend to possess traits associated with lower homeownership attainment as identified under Foote and colleagues (1960) consumer choice model (e.g. Alba and Logan 1992), such as being more likely to be young, single, and visible minorities (Ramaj 2018). They may also be at higher risk of housing discrimination as immigrants, visible minorities, and sexual minorities (Friedman et al 2013; Murdie and Logan 2011).

Further, LGB immigrants may have less access to social resources to overcome housing discrimination compared to heterosexual immigrants, such as knowing coethnic realtors (Haan 2007a). This may be due to social isolation caused by homophobia from coethnics and xenophobia from Canadian-born LGB people (e.g. Logie et al. 2016). Purchasing a home is further complicated by the difficulty of choosing an area that will be accepting—for instance, LGB immigrants may face homophobia in ethnic enclaves, or xenophobia in LGB neighborhoods. Therefore, the compound disadvantage of homophobia and xenophobia may translate into LGB immigrants being both less likely to have resources to purchase a home if they aspire to do so, and less likely to want to live somewhere where there is uncertainty of acceptance.

Research Questions

1) Do LGB immigrants have lower homeownership rates compared to their heterosexual and/or Canadian-born counterparts?

To what extent are homeownership differences between LGB immigrants and their peers explained by...

- 2) ... group differences in the sociodemographic traits identified by the standard consumer choice model?
- 3) ... group differences in social network properties?
- 4) ... group differences in neighborhood detachment?

Data and Sample

Data: I pool data from the 2008 and 2013 Canadian General Social Survey (GSS), a nationality representative, cross-sectional, and repeated survey of non-institutionalized individuals aged 15 years and over in Canada (Statistics Canada 2010; Statistics Canada 2015).

Sample: Respondents ≥ 18 years old. $N = 38,300$ (27,200 heterosexual Canadian-born; 400 gay Canadian-born; 300 bisexual Canadian-born; 10,100 heterosexual immigrants; 150 gay immigrants; 150 bisexual immigrants)

Measures and Methods

Measures: *Homeownership* (whether or not the respondent owns their current dwelling). *Nativity status-sexual orientation* (see subgroups under “Data and Sample”). *Socio-demographic characteristics* (age; gender; visible minority status; number of adults in the household; number of minors in the household; marital status; education; employment status, logged personal income [adjusted to 2013 dollars]; living in Montreal, Toronto, or Vancouver; region of residence). *Network size and intensity* (having over 5 close friends; proportion of relatives living in same city; contact with friends; contact with relatives). *Network diversity* (having any friends that differ from respondent in terms of (1) ethnicity, (2) gender, (3) education). *Neighborhood detachment* (length of residence in neighborhood; perceived support from neighbors; connections with neighbors; participation in organizations).

Methods: I estimate four logistic regression models predicting odds of homeownership. Model 1 shows the zero-order association between the nativity status-sexual orientation and homeownership. Models 2 to 4 each successively add socio-demographic controls, social network properties, and neighborhood detachment measures. All analyses are weighted.

Results

Although they have high education levels, bisexual immigrants are at a high risk of low homeownership attainment, as they are likely to be young, a visible minority, single, have poor labor market outcomes, and be socially isolated and detached from their neighborhoods. For gay immigrants, their sociodemographic traits and neighborhood detachment may deter homeownership, but their stronger economic and social resources may help facilitate ownership should they choose to pursue it.

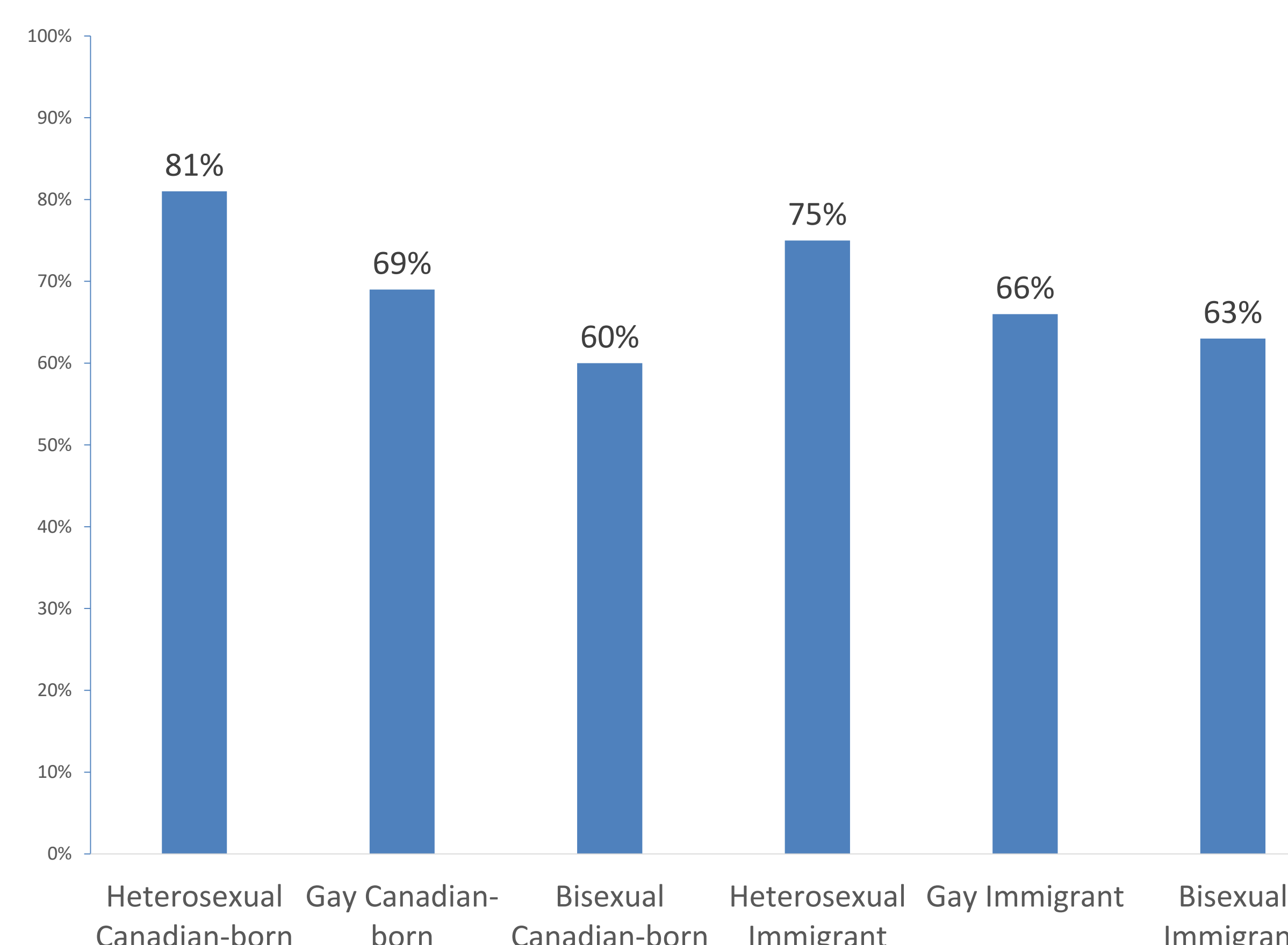


Figure 1. Percentage of LGB and heterosexual immigrants and the Canadian-born who are homeowners.

Sexual orientation-nativity status (Heterosexual Canadian-born)	Model 1 (zero order)	Model 2 (M1 + sociodemographic traits)	Model 3 (M2 + social networks)	Model 4 (M3 + neighborhood detachment)
Gay Canadian-born	0.53***	0.79*	0.82	0.85
Bisexual Canadian-born	0.35***	0.57***	0.61***	0.63**
Heterosexual immigrant	0.71***	0.60***	0.65***	0.71***
Gay immigrant	0.46***	0.77	0.81	0.99
Bisexual immigrant	0.40***	0.51***	0.59**	0.70

Table 1. Odds ratio for the effects of respondent and social network characteristics, and neighborhood detachment on odds of homeownership. Reference group in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Discussion and Conclusions

Gay immigrants have a homeownership disadvantage relative to Canadian-born heterosexuals, heterosexual immigrants, and Canadian-born gays. Bisexual immigrants are less likely than heterosexuals to own a home, but are slightly more likely than Canadian-born bisexuals.

Gay and bisexual immigrants have similar disadvantageous socio-demographic traits relative to Canadian-born heterosexuals (e.g. being younger). However, apart from economic resources, these socio-demographic differences relative to Canadian-born heterosexuals are larger for gay immigrants than for bisexual immigrants. This may be why sociodemographic traits explain gay immigrants' significant homeownership disparities with Canadian-born heterosexuals, but only partly do so for bisexual immigrants.

Bisexual immigrants are more likely to be socially isolated, which is associated with lower odds of homeownership. This may be why social network properties explain some of their significant lower odds of homeownership. On the other hand, social network properties account for very little of the ownership disparities between gay immigrants and Canadian-born heterosexuals.

LGB immigrants are significantly more detached from their neighborhoods compared to other groups, and this explains their homeownership disparities with Canadian-born heterosexuals. Due to the dual-marginalization of homophobia and xenophobia, LGB immigrants may have a challenging time forming positive relationships to their local community.

LGB immigrants often find service providers unhelpful for navigating housing markets (e.g. Chavez 2011), and my findings show that they have lower homeownership rates than heterosexuals and the Canadian-born. Service providers' lack of training in understanding and respecting the experiences of LGB immigrants may render these practitioners unable to meet the specific needs of LGB immigrants, and a mandate requiring said training may rectify this. Community-level efforts to support LGB immigrants' neighborhood integration can help them feel safe and accepted in their neighborhoods, and this may further encourage homeownership attainment.

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