

# Study: How temporary were Canada's temporary foreign workers?

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Temporary foreign workers are admitted to Canada through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and the International Mobility Program (Government of Canada) with the objectives of addressing short-term labour shortages and advancing Canada's broad economic and cultural interests. The number of temporary foreign workers present in Canada increased from 52,000 in 1996 to 310,000 in 2015. Given the growing presence of temporary foreign workers, their rate and length of stay in Canada are relevant to national immigration and labour market policies.

This Statistics Canada study documents the length of time that temporary foreign workers remain in Canada and the extent to which longer durations of stays are the result of extended use of temporary residence permits or transitions to permanent resident status.

In the study, temporary foreign workers are defined as individuals who were aged 18 to 64 at the time of their arrival in Canada, who received a work permit between 1990 and 2009, and whose first admission to Canada was primarily for work purposes. These individuals were followed for at least five years, and for up to 15 years, after their first admission to Canada. The study is based on the Temporary Residents File.

Durations of stay among temporary foreign workers became longer through the 2000s. Of the 264,000 temporary foreign workers first admitted to Canada from 1995 to 1999, 13% (or 35,000) were still in Canada five years after their initial arrival. This was the case for 37% (or 187,000) of the approximately 500,000 temporary foreign workers first admitted to Canada from 2005 to 2009. The same pattern was evident 10 years after arrival among earlier cohorts. Specifically, 11% of temporary foreign workers first admitted to Canada from 1995 to 1999 and 18% of those first admitted from 2000 to 2004 were still in Canada 10 years after their initial arrival in Canada.

Almost 90% of temporary foreign workers who were still in Canada after 10 years had obtained permanent resident status, having made the transition from temporary foreign worker to landed immigrant. This was the case among temporary foreign workers in virtually all ongoing programs, with the exception of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program. Temporary foreign workers in this program were unique in that almost one-quarter continued to receive work permits for seasonal employment 10 years after their initial arrival in Canada. Temporary foreign worker programs, such as the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, have been associated with different options for transitioning to permanent residence status.

The research paper "[How Temporary Were Canada's Temporary Foreign Workers?](#)," part of the *Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series (11F0019M)*, is now available.

This study is part of a broader program of research on non-permanent residents in Canada, their transitions to permanent residence status, and their economic outcomes: "[Acquisition of Permanent Residence by Temporary Foreign Workers in Canada: A Panel Study of Labour Market Outcomes Before and After the Status Transition](#)"; "[International Students, Immigration and Earnings Growth: The Effect of a Pre-immigration Canadian University Education](#)"; "[Transition from Temporary Foreign Workers to Permanent Residents, 1990 to 2014](#)" and "[International students who become permanent residents in Canada](#)."

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