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# How Temporary Were Canada's Temporary Foreign Workers?

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**Telling Canada's  
story in numbers**

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# Background

- Temporary foreign worker programs have become a key component of international labour migration to Western developed countries.
- Little knowledge on how long foreign workers stay in the receiving country and the determinants of their migratory trajectories.
- The rate and length of stay of TFWs can strongly influence the receiving country's immigration and labour policies.

# Canada's TFW programs

About 310,000 temporary work permit holders were in Canada in 2015, accounted for 1.7% of the national employed work force. The number more than quadrupled since 2000

Two overarching programs:

- Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP): to fill short-term labour shortages, requires a labour market impact assessment
- International Mobility Program (IMP): to advance Canada's broad economic and cultural national interest



## Research Questions:

- How long did TFWs stay in Canada?
- Among those who stayed long, how many remained as temporary residents or obtained permanent residence?
- What were the factors affecting the length and type of TFWs' stay in Canada?



## **Possible determinants of TFWs' stay in the receiving country**

- Motivations: individual characteristics and source-country socioeconomic conditions
- Constraints: receiving country policies and regulations
- Enabling factors: local labour market conditions and existing own-ethnic communities

# Data

**Data:** the Temporary Residents File linked with the Immigrant Landing File

**Study population:** individuals aged 18 to 64 at arrival, first admission to Canada was primarily for work purposes, arrived between 1990 and 2009

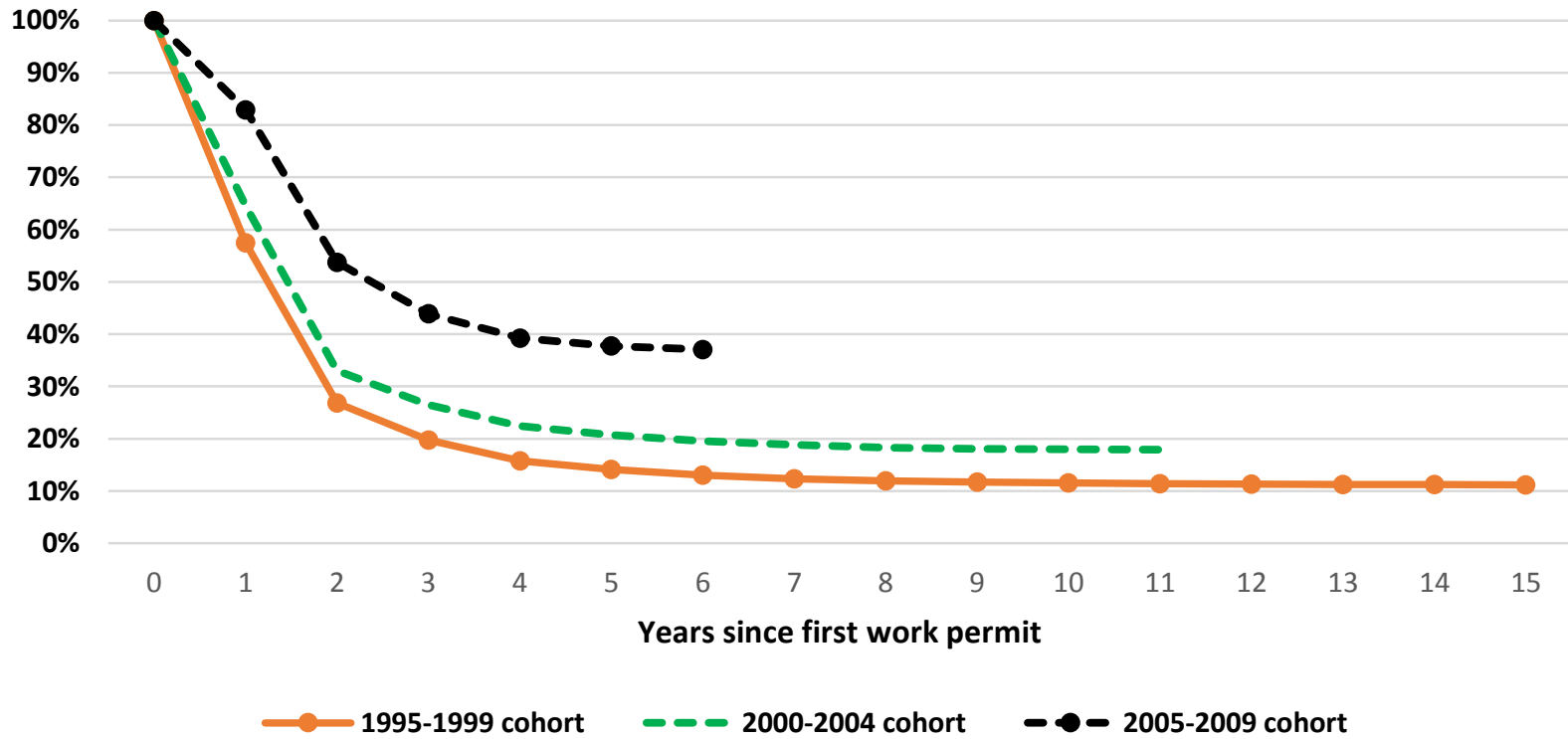
**Outcome:** annual TFW residence status (temporary resident, permanent resident, or absence)

**Determinants:** source-country standard of living, social stability, distance to Canada, and official language; arrival periods and work permit types; regional unemployment rates and co-ethnic concentration



# Most TFWs left within three years

Figure 1. Percentage of temporary foreign workers remaining in Canada, by years since first work permit





# Few remained as temporary residents after 10 years

Figure 2. Percentage of temporary foreign workers remaining in Canada as temporary residents, by years since first work permit







# Most long-term stayers gained permanent residence

Figure 3. Percentage of temporary foreign workers remaining in Canada as permanent residents, by years since first work permit



# Large differences by TFW program

Residence status among temporary foreign workers by program						
	3 years after arrival			10 years after arrival		
	<i>Temporary residents</i>	<i>Permanent residents</i>	Left	<i>Temporary residents</i>	<i>Permanent residents</i>	Left
<b>Temporary Foreign Worker Program</b>						
Live-in Caregiver	<b>57%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>13%</b>
Seasonal Agricultural Worker	<b>45%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>75%</b>
Low-skill TFWs	<b>47%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>36%</b>	---	---	---
Other TFWP	<b>13%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>86%</b>
<b>International Mobility Program</b>						
International Agreement	<b>10%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>94%</b>
Significant Benefit	<b>14%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>90%</b>
Reciprocal Employment	<b>7%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>94%</b>
Research and Studies Related	<b>16%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>77%</b>



# Differences by source-country factors

**Residence status among temporary foreign workers by source country characteristics**

	3 years after arrival			10 years after arrival		
	<i>Temporary residents</i>	<i>Permanent residents</i>	Left	<i>Temporary residents</i>	<i>Permanent residents</i>	Left
<b>Source country GDP per capita</b>						
Low	<b>37%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>49%</b>
Medium	<b>25%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>79%</b>
High	<b>9%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>93%</b>
<b>Source country social stability</b>						
Low	<b>37%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>54%</b>
Medium	<b>12%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>90%</b>
High	<b>8%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>93%</b>
<b>Distance to Canada</b>						
Short	<b>15%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>92%</b>
Medium	<b>10%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>87%</b>
Long	<b>26%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>69%</b>

# Conclusion

- The majority of TFWs left Canada within 3 years
- Long-term stayers obtained permanent residence
- Government policies and regulations played the key role in determining TFWs' length and type of stay
- TFWs' motivations to stay also mattered