

MIGRATION PATHWAYS

Canada Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP)

Overview

The Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) allows Canadian employers to temporarily hire foreign nationals for up to one year for a variety of high- and low-paid jobs to fill gaps in their workforces.

Why was it started?

The program was started in 1973. Initially, it included only caregivers and agricultural workers. It was later expanded to include a variety of high- and low-skilled jobs.

In 2014, the program was reformed. It now includes five streams: high-wage workers, low-wage workers, global talent, foreign agricultural workers, and foreign academics. Only employers who have conducted a Labor Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) can hire temporary foreign workers.

How does it work?

The required LMIA verifies that there is a need for a temporary worker and that no Canadians or permanent residents are available to do the job. TFWP employers in Quebec face additional requirements.

Countries all around the world utilize migration pathways to train and bring over workers with needed skills. The CGD Migration Pathways database documents these pathways to promote innovation in this space. To explore the database, visit GSP.cgdev.org.



Country of Destination
CANADA

Country of Origin
NOT SPECIFIED (TOP 10 COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN IN 2019 WERE MEXICO, INDIA, GUATEMALA, JAMAICA, THE PHILIPPINES, THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA, THE UNITED STATES, CHINA, FRANCE, AND THE UK)

Skill
AGRICULTURE, HIGHER EDUCATION, SEAFOOD-PROCESSING, ICT, STEM, AND ANY OTHER SECTOR IN WHICH A CANADIAN EMPLOYER CAN PROVE THAT NO CANADIAN CITIZENS OR PERMANENT RESIDENTS ARE AVAILABLE TO FILL THE POSITION. AGRICULTURE IS THE MOST PROMINENT

Skill Level
ALL

Timeline
1973–ONGOING

Beneficiaries
527,247 BETWEEN 2013 AND 2018

The cost of applying for an LMIA is CAD\$1,000 (this fee is not required for employers in agriculture). Employers must advertise the job for a period of time under set requirements, produce a transition plan that shows that the employer intends to take steps to reduce reliance on temporary foreign workers over time (for high-paid positions only, agriculture is exempt), and adhere to strict criteria for employing a foreign national.

To qualify for the TFWP, an applicant must (1) have a job offer from a Canadian employer who has offered him or her a temporary position and obtained permission from the Canadian government to hire a foreign national via an LMIA and (2) not be inadmissible to Canada for any reason (medical, criminal, financial).

Workers must also apply for a work permit from Citizenship and Immigration Canada. This permit is for a specific period of time that cannot exceed one year. TFWP workers in Canada can legally work only for the employer named on their work permit and cannot switch employers once they enter Canada.

What impact has it had?

The TFWP continues to bring foreign workers into Canada. Downsides of the program include the fact that it is a program of last resort, used to fill jobs only for which there are no qualified Canadians available; work permits are employer-specific; and there is no reciprocity.

Further readings

Chartrand, Tyler, and Leah F Vosko. 2020. "Canada's temporary foreign worker and international mobility programs: Charting change and continuity among source countries." International Organization for Migration. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12762>

Government of Canada. 2021. "Government of Canada: Temporary Workers." Canada.ca. January 5. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/operational-bulletins-manuals/temporary-residents/foreign-workers.html>

Varrella, Simona. 2021. "Top 10 origin countries of TFWP permit holders Canada 2019." Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/555058/top-10-origin-countries-of-tfwp-permit-holders-canada/>



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