



## Supporting Migrant Workers: Key Insights and Challenges

This guide provides an overview of the current landscape for migrant workers in Canada, highlighting key facts, support systems, and the unmet needs of these workers.

### Overview of the Canadian Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP)

The Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP), managed by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), plays a crucial role in addressing labor shortages by allowing employers to hire foreign workers for temporary positions. The program is essential for industries facing specific labor challenges, particularly when Canadian citizens or permanent residents are not available.

- **Migrant workers are a critical component of Canada's labor force**, with over 600,000 temporary foreign workers supporting key sectors such as agriculture, food processing, hospitality, and construction.
- **These workers fill essential roles in both high-demand and low-wage positions**, helping stabilize industries with significant labour shortages.
- **The Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) and the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) are the primary channels for bringing temporary workers into Canada.**

## Key Facts and Figures on the Canadian TFWP (2023-2024)

### 1. POSITIONS APPROVED

In 2023, **239,646** positions were approved nationwide through positive Labour Market Impact Assessments (LMIAs), reflecting strong demand for temporary foreign workers in various sectors. [Open Canada Portal](#)

### 2. SECTOR BREAKDOWN

The Agricultural Stream, particularly SAWP, accounts for the largest share. In BC, from Q1 2023 to Q2 2024 **34,395** TFWs in the agricultural stream were approved under positive LMIAs.

### 3. GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

TFW positions span all provinces and territories, with Ontario, British Columbia, and Alberta being the largest recipients due to the concentration of industries like agriculture, construction, and services in these regions.

### 4. TOP SOURCE COUNTRIES

Mexico, Guatemala, and Jamaica provide the majority of temporary foreign workers to Canada, particularly in the agricultural sector, supported by long-standing agreements under the SAWP.

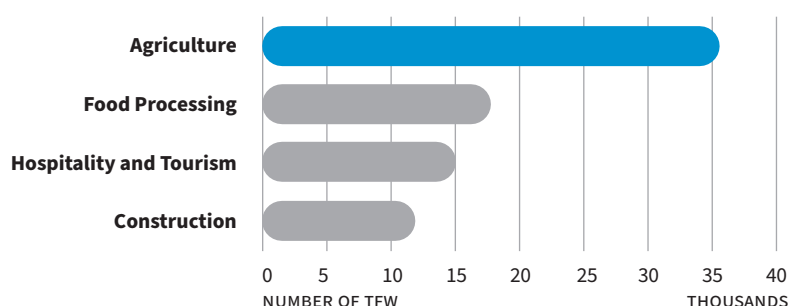
### 5. TOTAL NUMBER OF TFWs

The total number of work permit holders in Canada in Q2 2024 was 1,344,092. [Stats Canada](#)

### LMIA DEFINED

An LMIA is a document Canadian employers may need before hiring a foreign worker. A positive LMIA shows there is a need for a foreign worker because no Canadian worker is available. After the employer obtains a positive LMIA, the foreign worker can apply for a work permit.

### Agriculture Sector has noticeably higher number of TFWs



## Overview of Temporary Foreign Workers in British Columbia (BC)

British Columbia's TFW population is spread across five key economic regions.

### 1. Mainland/Southwest (Metro Vancouver)

The majority of TFWs work here, driven by demand in hospitality, construction, and food processing.

### 2. Thompson-Okanagan

TFWs are primarily employed in agriculture and food production.

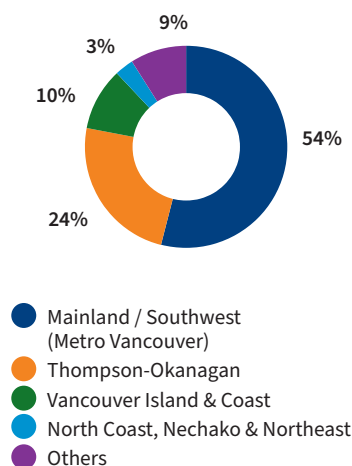
### 3. Vancouver Island/Coast

Key sectors include tourism, food services, and seasonal agriculture.

### 4. North Coast, Nechako, and Northeast

Fewer TFWs work in these regions, mainly supporting resource extraction and smaller-scale agriculture.

### Distribution of TFW Positions in BC by Region



Source: [Open Canada Portal](#)



## The Migrant Worker Support Program (MWS) and the CARE Program

The [Migrant Worker Support Program](#) (MWS), launched nationally by ESDC, aims to provide migrant workers with access to services that help them understand and exercise their rights. The program seeks to reduce vulnerabilities, promote fair treatment, and ensure workers are aware of available resources.

### Key Facts about the MWS Program

#### 1. FUNDING

Initially funded with \$49.5 million in 2021, in 2024 the program was given an additional \$41 million to operate for two more years.

#### 2. NUMBER OF FUNDED ORGANIZATIONS

Over 110 community-based organizations across Canada receive funding, including 10 primary recipients with over 100 sub-agreement holders.

#### 3. SERVICE DELIVERY

In 2023, these organizations facilitated over 300,000 service interactions with migrant workers, providing orientation services, legal support, advocacy, and emergency assistance. [ESDC, 2024](#)

### The CARE Program

The [Collective Advocacy for Rights and Education \(CARE\) Program](#) at DIVERSEcity, part of the MWS framework, is one of the two BC-based programs funded to support migrant workers. The CARE Program provides comprehensive services, including:

- One-on-one case management (helping with government benefits, job search, and training)
- Mental health support
- Legal aid and advocacy
- Emergency support for workers facing mistreatment or job loss
- Social, cultural, and recreational activities
- English language classes tailored for migrant workers





## Needs of Migrant Workers: Insights from ESDC and CARE Program Surveys

Recent surveys conducted by ESDC and the CARE Program have identified critical areas of need:

### 1. LANGUAGE AND TRANSLATION SERVICES

Language support was cited by 62.5% of CARE survey respondents, with 22% of ESDC respondents reporting language issues in daily life and 17% struggling at work.

### 2. HEALTHCARE ACCESS

Medical services were ranked as the second most-needed service, with 45% of CARE respondents indicating a need for improved healthcare access.

### 3. TRANSPORTATION SUPPORT

Both ESDC and CARE surveys identified transportation as a major challenge, particularly in rural areas, where 19% and 17.5% of respondents, respectively, reported difficulties accessing workplaces and services.

### 4. HOUSING AND ACCOMMODATIONS

Around 12% of ESDC respondents reported issues with employer-provided accommodations, including overcrowding and poor conditions, indicating a need for better housing standards.

### 5. RIGHTS EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

While 76% of ESDC respondents knew their rights, many lacked awareness of specific protections, such as the open work permit for vulnerable workers. This highlights the need for better education on rights and available support.

### 6. SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

Social isolation remains a concern, with 10% of ESDC respondents reporting mental health challenges due to separation from family, pointing to the need for community integration programs.

### 7. WORKPLACE SAFETY AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

Abuse and discrimination remain significant issues, with 15% of ESDC respondents reporting abuse (physical, mental and sexual) and 13% facing discrimination, underscoring the need for stronger workplace protections and safety measures.

## Conclusion

The Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) and supporting programs like the Migrant Worker Support Program (MWS) and CARE Program provide essential services to migrant workers in Canada. However, key challenges remain, particularly around language access, healthcare, transportation, and workplace rights. Addressing these challenges requires ongoing efforts to improve support systems, strengthen protections, and ensure that migrant workers can thrive in Canada.

**DIVERSEcity**  
community resources society

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