

Escaping Precarity: An Analysis of Upward Mobility Strategies Mobilised by Temporary Foreign Workers under the Open Worker Permit for Vulnerable Workers

Geneviève Fournier
supervised by Danièle Bélanger

Illustrations by Juan Sebastián Perdomo



Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Canada

What happens when the OWPVW expires?

→ Sample of 12 participants whose permit had already expired when we interviewed them



PRECARITY

PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT

(Vosko, 2005)

UNCERTAINTY

REGULATORY EFFECTIVENESS

LACK OF CONTROL

DEGRADED INCOME PACKAGE

PRECARIOUS STATUS

(Goldring, Berinstein et Bernhard, 2009)

WORK AUTHORIZATION

RIGHT TO REMAIN PERMANENTLY

INDEPENDANCE

SOCIAL RIGHTS

TRAJECTORIES TYPOLOGY

MODEL TRAJECTORIES

Worker succeeds in reducing both employment precarity and status precarity.

3 CASES STUDIED

IMMOBILITY TRAJECTORIES

Worker manages to stabilize their situation but is unable to reduce employment and status precarity.

3 CASES STUDIED

RELEGATION TRAJECTORIES

Employment and/or status precarity increase throughout worker's trajectory.

6 CASES STUDIED



MECHANISMS IN CHUTES, LADDERS... AND BRIDGES

(Goldring et Landolt, 2013; Newman, 2006)

LADDERS

Upward mobility mechanisms

BRIDGES

Stagnation mechanisms

CHUTES

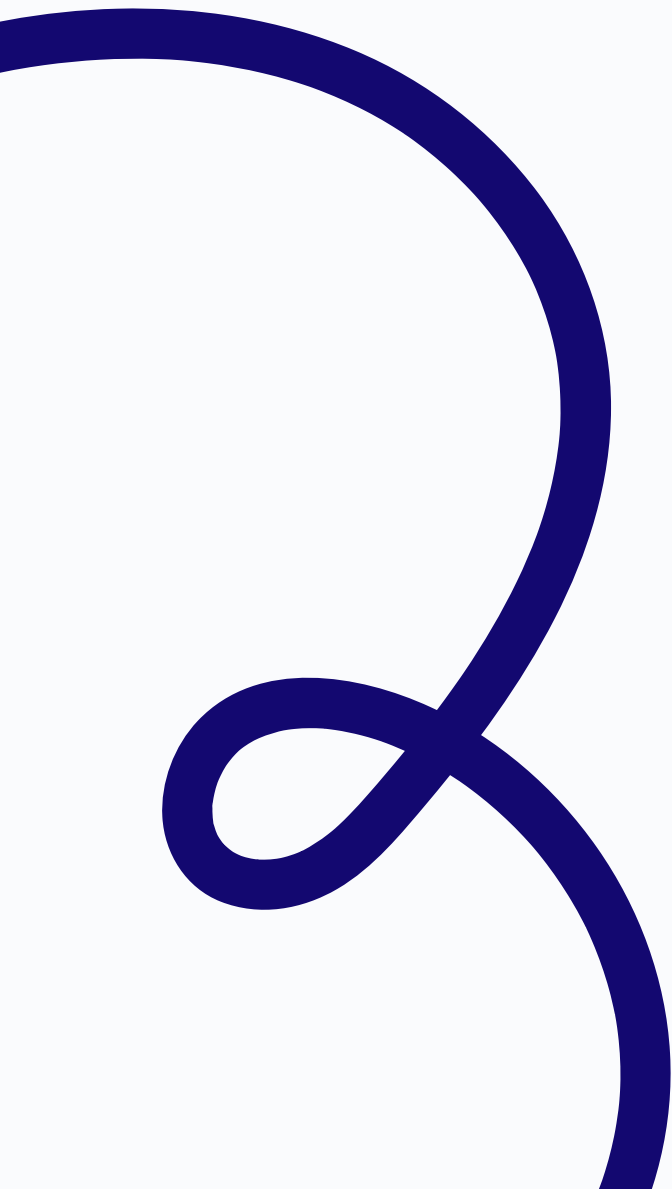
Downward mobility mechanisms



LADDERS

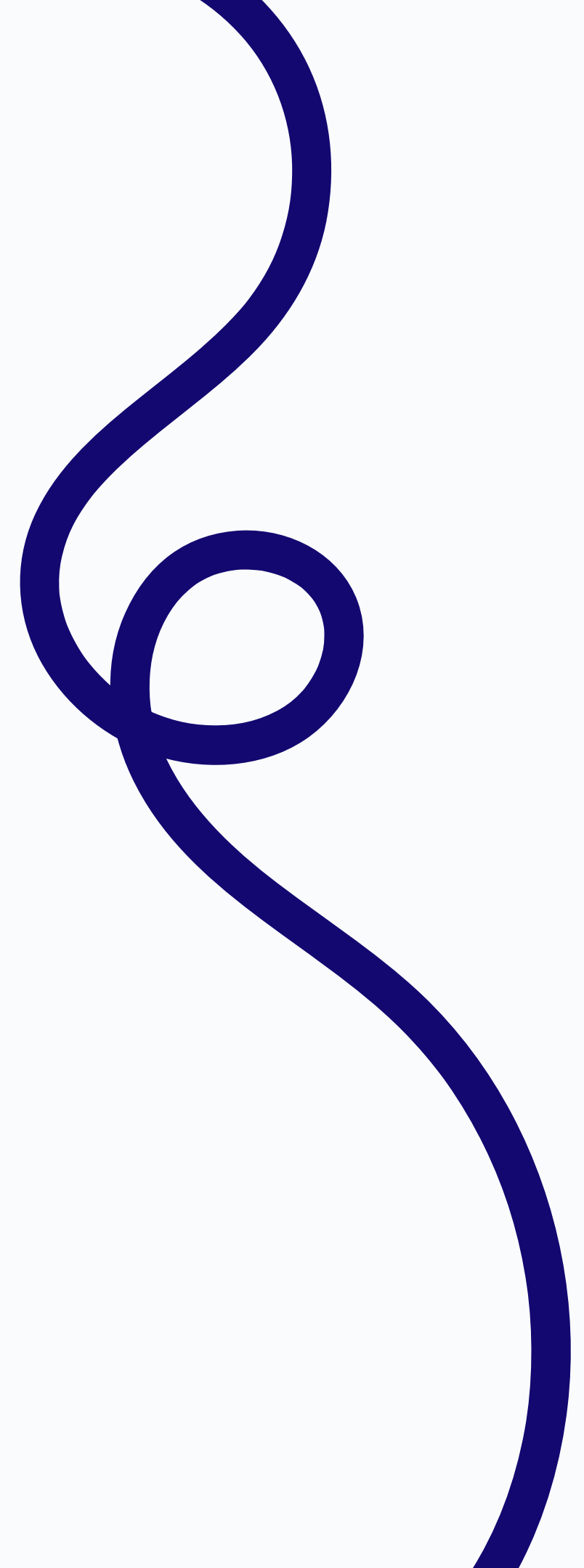
Access to a secure migratory status (outside
OWPVW program)

→ Secure migratory status gives access to
employment ladders



BRIDGES

Return to a closed work permit





CHUTES

Loss of status

Informal work

Cycle of abuse

Transition to a more precarious status

Unemployment

Most frequent obstacles are:

- Discrimination in hiring
- OWPVW of less than 12 months
- Social isolation
- Psychological scars
- Mandatory return to country of origin
- Fraudulent migratory industry



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aziz, A. (2022). A Promise of Protection ? An Assessment of IRCC Decision-Making Under the Vulnerable Open Work Permit Program. Migrant Workers Center. https://mwcbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/A-Promise-of-Protection_An-assessment-of-IRCC-decision-making-under-the-VWOWP-program.pdf

Basok, T. (2002). Tortillas and Tomatoes: Transmigrant Mexican Harvesters in Canada. McGill-Queen's University Press.

Bélanger, D. et Candiz, G. (2015). Fraises douces amères : territoire et précarité chez les travailleurs agricoles migrants de la région de Québec. Cahiers de géographie du Québec, 59(166), 7–28. <https://doi-org.acces.bibl.ulaval.ca/10.7202/1034346ar>

Bélanger, D; Oechslin, C; Ouellet, M; Fournier, G et Candiz, G. (2024). Sortie de secours ou cul-de-sac? Une analyse des effets du permis de travail ouvert pour les travailleurs vulnérables au Canada. Chaire de recherche du Canada sur les dynamiques migratoires mondiales. <https://dynamiques-migratoires.chaire.ulaval.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/FR-Sortie-de-secours-ou-cul-de-sac-Numerique-web.pdf>

Dépatie-Pelletier, E., Deegan, H., et Berze, K. (2022). Band-Aid on a Bullet Wound—Canada's Open Work Permit for Vulnerable Workers Policy. Laws, 11(36). <https://doi.org/10.3390/laws11030036>

Galerand, E. et Gallié, M. (2018). Travail non libre et rapports sociaux de sexe – À propos des programmes canadiens d'immigration temporaire. Revue Canadienne Droit et Société, 33(2), 223–241. doi:10.1017/cls.2018.20

Goldring, L., Berinstein, C. et Bernhard, J. K. (2009). Institutionalizing Precarious Migratory Status in Canada. Citizenship Studies, 13(3), 239-265. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621020902850643>

Goldring, L. et Landolt P. (2013). Producing and Negotiating Non-Citizenship : Precarious Legal Status in Canada, University of Toronto Press.

Newman, K. S. (2006). Chutes and Ladders: Navigating the Low-Wage Labor Market. Harvard University Press.

St-Arnaud, L. et Giguère, É. (2020). Les nouveaux visages de la précarisation du travail au Québec et au Canada : Les risques de penser la raréfaction de la main-d'œuvre sans penser le travail. Travailler, 2(44), 171-194. <https://doi.org/DOI.10.3917/trav.044.0171>

Vosko, L.F. (2005). Precarious employment: Understanding Labour Market Insecurity in Canada. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press. doi:10.1515/9780773585195

ABILITY TO AVOID JURIDICAL «LIMBO»

LIMBO AVOIDED

Direct transitions towards secure statuses and good quality jobs

TEMPORARY LIMBO

Temporary periods of uncertainty and reduced rights during transitions between statuses and/or jobs

PERSISTENT LIMBO

Prolongated periods of uncertainty and reduced rights for which no exit is foreseeable

