

Unsettled immigrant workers find themselves in precarious work five years after mass layoffs

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Older immigrant workers who have been laid off are falling through the cracks of Canada's employment system, with many of them ending up in temporary jobs with few benefits, finds a new study released today at Ryerson University's Centre for Labour Management Relations at Ted Rogers School of Management.

"We were interested in finding out how this group of workers has managed since the plant closure five years ago and whether they have found stable work again," says Winnie Ng, CAW-Sam Gindin Chair in Social Justice and Democracy and lead author of the study.

The study documented the experiences of 78 of the 2,400 older racialized workers who lost their jobs after Progressive Moulded Products (PMP), the largest auto-parts manufacturer in the Greater Toronto Area, filed for [bankruptcy protection](#) and closed their operations in June 2008. The co-authors of the report are Sedef Arat-Koc, Aparna Sundar, Grace-Edward Galabuzi and Sareh Serajelahi from Ryerson University, and Salmaan Khan of York University. The report's collaborator is the Canadian Auto Workers union (CAW).

"Nearly half of the research participants are now working in temporary jobs with poverty wages and no benefits. Our findings show that they are worse off than when they first came to Canada," says Ng. "The economic crisis has 'unsettled' these long term [immigrant workers](#) in a

highly competitive and precarious labour market. The systemic barriers of race, gender and age further marginalize this group of workers."

Highlights of the report's key findings include:

- One third of the immigrant workers have found permanent full-time employment of more than 25 hours per week. The remaining two-thirds were working in either precarious employment arrangements or are unemployed.
- Of those who are working in precarious employment scenarios, close to 40 per cent have been working on-call, casual work or other forms of temporary employment.
- Forty-two per cent of women participants who were in non-permanent positions were mostly employed in casual or on-call employment arrangements versus 25 per cent of their male counterparts.
- The majority of participants (77 per cent) indicated that their current wages and benefits are worse than when they were employed at PMP.
- Close to 70 per cent of participants believe that discrimination has been a barrier for them in finding work, citing age, race and language as the top three obstacles.
- The majority (87 per cent) of participants indicated they applied to temporary agencies to look for work compared to 13 per cent who did not.

The study outlines ten key recommendations to improve working and employment conditions for older immigrant workers who experience similar challenges and barriers to finding employment opportunities, including:

- calling for monitoring and regulation of temporary agencies;
- better access to settlement agencies for immigrants who have

- been living in Canada for more than three years; and
- better retraining and bridging programs for older workers and affordable childcare to accommodate the family needs of shift workers.

"This is an important study that goes beyond the national employment numbers and takes a hard look at the struggles workers face in today's labour market," said CAW President Ken Lewenza. "The PMP workers have showed tremendous courage and resiliency over these past years to retrain and get back on their feet – like so many other displaced, older manufacturing workers in Canada. They're doing their part, but are still worse off. Government officials and policy-makers should pay close attention to the recommendations provided by these workers – those who are falling through our country's [employment](#) gaps."

The study, is titled "An Immigrant All Over Again? Recession, Plant Closures and [Older] Racialized Immigrant Workers."

Provided by Ryerson University

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