



# Evaluation of the Employment Insurance Seasonal Claimant Pilot Project (Pilot Project No.21)

## ABOUT THE PILOT PROJECT

In August 2018, Pilot Project No. 21 was implemented to provide 5 additional weeks of EI regular benefits, up to a maximum entitlement of 45 weeks, to workers that were identified as seasonal claimants within 13 targeted EI regions.

For the first time, the EI program distinguished seasonal claimants from other EI regular claimants for the purposes of providing additional benefits by relying on their historical claiming pattern. The parameters of the pilot project have been replicated until October 29, 2022 through amendments to the *Employment Insurance Act*.

## KEYS FINDINGS



By relying on the timing of a claim, the targeting mechanism shows some effectiveness in identifying claimants with a frequent pattern of seasonal work. However, the mechanism was sensitive to other non-seasonal measures that affect the start or end date of a claim.



Approximately 10% of all seasonal claimants have a period without income following their claim and the risk of this event to reoccur year-over-year is low.



For seasonal claimants, an impact analysis found that the pilot project reduced the incidence of having a period without income by over 7 percentage points. This impact steadily decreased as the number of EI regular benefit weeks claimants were entitled to increased.



Analysis points to the pilot project influencing subsequent work patterns of seasonal claimants who were eligible to additional weeks. Specifically, employment income decreased and benefit duration increased following the introduction of the pilot project, while total income remained unchanged.



Relative to previous pilot projects, Pilot Project No. 21 was more efficient at targeting seasonal gappers. Still, most of the additional weeks of benefits were paid to seasonal non-gappers.

## LESSONS LEARNED



- As evidence shows, any future permanent measure should take into account how sensitive the claiming pattern of an individual is to other temporary measures that affect the start and end date of a claim. As eligibility is based on the timing of when a claim is established, consideration could be given to other indicators which might better reflect seasonality than the timing of claim establishment.
- As Pilot Project No. 21 showed, a more targeted mechanism for identifying seasonal claimants can reduce the cost of the measure while supporting seasonal claimants who experience an income gap. However, evidence suggest that even with the more targeted approach of Pilot Project No. 21, it is difficult to ensure that additional entitlement weeks are only being used by those who would otherwise face income gaps.

The full evaluation of the EI seasonal claimant pilot project is available at:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/reports/evaluations/ei-seasonal-claimant.html>

