

Temporary Immigration: Visa and Visitor Policy

Fundamental Brief



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada

Canada

- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and its partners work collaboratively to facilitate the legitimate movement of people by managing access to Canada.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

Policy Lead

**Canada Border
Services Agency**

Enforcement

**Global Affairs
Canada**

International Relations

**Innovation, Science
and Economic
Development Canada**

Tourism Strategy

- Immigration screening is a critical tool used to manage entry to Canada, helping to facilitate genuine travelers; protect the health, safety, and security of Canadians; and maintain public confidence in the immigration program.

How Immigration Screening Works

- All visitors to Canada must undergo immigration screening.
- However, the type of screening depends on the level of risk posed by a visitor: lower-risk visitors can apply online for an **electronic travel authorization**; higher-risk visitors must apply for a **temporary resident visa**.
- This level of risk is determined by **nationality**.

Electronic Travel Authorization

Applies to 54 visa-exempt countries*



- Light-touch screening
- Apply online
- Most applications automatically approved in minutes
- Screens for immigration history
- Cost: \$7

United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Mexico are the top source countries for electronic travel authorizations.

Temporary Resident Visa

Applies to majority of countries

- Comprehensive screening
- Supporting documents required (passport, bank statements)
- Requires biometrics
- Screens for traveler intent
- Approved in weeks
- Cost: \$185 (\$100 temporary resident visa + \$85 biometrics fee)

China, India, and Brazil are the top visa-required source countries.

*United States citizens and certain other small groups are exempt from the electronic travel authorization requirement.

Canada's Visa Policy Framework

- Decisions regarding countries who do or do not need a temporary resident visa are guided by Canada's **Visa Policy Framework**, which assesses over 40 criteria (e.g., migration trends, social and economic factors, border control).
- Visa policy decisions seek to balance the benefits of facilitated travel, including trade and tourism benefits, with risks to the safety and security of Canadians.

Visa policy decisions require careful management

- A visa exemption communicates a message of trust and partnership; an imposition is perceived as damaging to a country's global standing.
- These decisions have measurable impacts on trade, investment, and cooperation with other countries regarding Canada's priorities on the international stage.

More and more people want to visit Canada

- Canada attracts more visitors each year, with volumes expected to grow by 8-10% annually for the foreseeable future. Other temporary entry categories (e.g., international students, foreign workers) are also seeing significant growth.
- This presents an important opportunity for Canada as international tourism currently generates approximately \$22.1B each year.



IRCC's Visa Processing Capacity

- Approximately **3.9 million electronic travel authorization** and **2.4 million temporary resident visa applications** were received in 2018.
- Increasing application volumes are straining IRCC's capacity to process visas within service standards (**14 days**) – the current average visa processing time is **22 days**.
- Processing times will continue to rise, running the risk that competitor countries may advance digital services more quickly.

- IRCC and its partners manage access to Canada using immigration screening as a critical tool to help protect the health, safety, and security of Canadians.
- All visitors are screened based on the level of risk they pose to Canada, with lower-risk visitors receiving a lighter touch. This risk is determined by nationality.
- The visa's broad, nationality-based approach remains an effective screening tool for higher-risk visitors, but balancing foreign policy, economic, and security considerations is challenging.
- Canada is attracting more visitors each year. This growth in application volumes is challenging IRCC's processing capacity, and it is expected that processing times will continue to exceed the Department's 14-day service standard without intervention.
- Briefings on modernizing and transforming services and keeping pace with volumes are expected.

