

Asylum

Key Messages

- The government is committed to ensuring Canadians' trust in the immigration system.
- We're making our borders stronger and making sure the system is resilient and responsive to emerging pressures.
- These efforts are working—asylum claims in 2025 were down 34% compared to 2024.
 - In 2025: 114 515 asylum claims received.
 - In 2024: 173 000 asylum claims received.
- Continuing this downward trend, claims in January and February 2026 were 35% lower compared to the same time period in 2025.
- Our actions and message are clear and effective: the asylum system should not be seen as a shortcut to immigrate to Canada.

Asylum Claims

- Asylum volumes are difficult to predict and are driven by a number of factors. In recent years, Canada received historic volumes of asylum claims.
- To address high volumes, Canada has increased its processing capacity, while at the same time implementing other changes to improve the integrity of our immigration programs.
- Our most recent Multi-Year Immigration Levels Plan, along with new integrity measures, will serve to better screen foreign nationals who apply to come to Canada and to limit the overall number of temporary residents admitted into the country.
- We are seeing results. In 2025, total asylum claims made across Canada fell by about 34% compared to 2024. Looking at more recent data, there were a total of 12 615 asylum claims from January to February 2026, which is a decrease of 35% compared to the same period last year.
- This figure reflects a decrease in claims across all modes. Between January 1 and February 28, 2026, airport claims decreased by 57%, land border claims decreased by 21%, inland claims decreased by 35%, and irregular claims decreased by 20% compared to the same period last year.

- Further reforms included in the Strengthening Canada's Immigration System and Borders Act will continue to improve the asylum system by enabling faster and more efficient decision making by the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB).

If asked—extortion and serious criminality:

- Immigration law is clear that serious criminality has serious implications for admissibility and continued presence in Canada. I will note that anyone can make an asylum claim and is entitled to due process. However, claimants charged with an offence such as extortion have their claim put on hold, pending the outcome of criminal or admissibility proceedings. In the event of a conviction and finding that they are inadmissible for serious criminality, they would no longer be eligible to proceed with their claim. Claiming asylum does not prevent criminals from being punished to the fullest extent of the law.
- Criminal investigations, prosecutions, sentencing, and court procedures fall within the authority of police services, prosecutors, and the courts. Those matters are addressed by other departments and I will defer to my counterparts at the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) and Public Safety to answer any further questions.
- Individuals whose claims are found ineligible for referral to the IRB due to serious criminality are eligible to apply for a restricted Pre-Removal Risk Assessment (PRRA), which is limited to the risk factors set out in section A97 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, namely the danger of torture, a risk to life, or the risk of cruel and unusual treatment or punishment. Should the review identify any of these risks, the individual would receive a reviewable stay of removal—in other words, they can remain in Canada until it is safe to remove them. However, it does not confer protected status on that person.

If pressed:

- We have prioritized strengthening document control in recent years. In January 2025, explicit authorities came into force for our immigration and border officers to cancel temporary resident documents, such as visas and electronic travel authorizations, on a case-by-case basis when new information comes to light that someone is inadmissible or no longer eligible to hold their document. They also have the authority in more limited circumstances to cancel study and work permits.

If asked—Bill C-12 and asylum eligibility:

- Security and public safety measures begin before arrival. Canada's immigration screening process is intentionally multi-layered. It involves Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), CBSA, and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. Bill C-12 introduces key changes to the sequence in which Minister's Due Diligence and refugee determination by the IRB occur. Minister's Due Diligence activities, which include triage and review of asylum claims, will be completed before a claim is referred to the IRB for determination.
- Every applicant is assessed for criminality, terrorism, human rights violations, organized crime, espionage, and public health risks. Screening occurs before travel, at the border, and—where

necessary—after entry into Canada. This layered approach ensures that the system is responsive, adaptable, and capable of addressing evolving threats.

- Bill C-12 also adds two new grounds of ineligibility for an asylum claim. For persons who made their claim more than one year after their first entry to Canada after June 24, 2020, or who entered irregularly and made a claim 14 or more days after that entry, their claim will no longer be eligible to be sent to the IRB. The new grounds apply to all claims made on or after June 3, 2025.
- These individuals would still be eligible for a PRRA to ensure they are not removed to a country where they may face persecution, torture, or serious harm.
- While we continue improving our system, we remain absolute about our values. Claiming asylum will not prevent criminals from being punished to the fullest extent of the law. Non-citizens with criminal convictions are subject to removal orders, processed by border enforcement. Serious criminality makes claims ineligible to be referred to the IRB, and it restricts a person from entering Canada. We monitor for criminality before a person arrives, detect it at the border, and stay vigilant for criminal acts by anyone—citizen and non-citizen alike—while in the country.

Airport, Inland and Land Border Claims

- Total claims made at airports dropped by approximately 72% last year: from 42 620 in 2024, down to 11 740 in 2025.
 - When comparing January–February 2025 to January–February 2026, airport claims fell by about 57%, from 2 300 to 1 000.
- Total claims made inland dropped by approximately 30% last year: from 111 265 in 2024, down to 77 625 in 2025.
 - When comparing January–February 2025 to January–February 2026, inland claims fell by about 35%, from 14 485 to 9 470.
- Total claims made at land borders increased by approximately 33% last year: from 14 770 in 2024, up to 19 635 in 2025.
 - When comparing January–February 2025 to January–February 2026, land border claims decreased by about 21%, from 2 045 to 1 610.
- While overall claims are down significantly, we continue to closely monitor asylum claims at the land border, particularly in Quebec.
- Notably, the total number of claims in Quebec specifically has also decreased, with claims down by 43% when comparing January–February 2026 (3 525 total claims) to the same period last year (6 140 total claims).

Temporary Residents

- IRCC is taking important steps to improve the integrity of the temporary resident program.
- The number of temporary residents claiming asylum is declining, as we enhanced screening of foreign nationals who apply to come to Canada. We are also limiting the overall number admitted into the country, as seen in the Multi-Year Immigration Levels Plan.
- Stronger screening and integrity measures led to a 43% drop in asylum claims from temporary residents in 2025 (86 275) compared to 2024 (151 220). This overall decline was driven largely by a 64% reduction in claims from temporary resident visa holders (99 170 in 2024 vs. 35 410 in 2025).
 - This trend continues with a 38% drop in asylum claims from temporary residents January–February 2026 (10 070) compared to the same period in 2025 (16 310).

Work Permits

- Work permits allow claimants to support themselves and their families while awaiting finalization of their claim, reducing reliance on provincial social assistance programs and emergency shelters. In cases where a claim is refused and the individual is no longer authorized to remain in Canada, their work permit is cancelled in accordance with immigration regulations.
- As of February 28, 2025, there are approximately 241 000 asylum claimants with work permits (including claimants who hold both a study and work permit).

If asked—Temporary workers claiming asylum (overall totals):

- In 2025, there were approximately 14 285 asylum claims made by individuals holding work permits or work permit extensions.
 - This figure includes asylum claims made by persons who were issued work permits under both the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and the International Mobility Program.
- The total number of claims made by workers in 2025 increased compared to 2024, when Canada received a total of approximately 8 760 claims from workers.
 - Conversely, the number of claims made by workers decreased from 2 160 January–February 2025 to 2 080 for the same period in 2026.

If asked—International students claiming asylum:

- In 2025, there were approximately 19 685 asylum claims made by individuals holding study permits or study permit extensions.
 - January–February 2026 has seen 2 120 asylum claims made by students.
- Most claims in 2025 were made inland and from persons who applied for a study permit in 2023 and 2024, before reforms to the student program were introduced.
- Claims from persons who applied for a study permit in 2025 remain low, demonstrating so far that reforms to the processing of study permits have been effective.

Processing Data and Timelines

- As of February 28, 2026, the overall processing time for 80% of eligibility decisions on asylum claims received was 17 days (18 days at IRCC and one day at CBSA).
- This performance is exceeding the target of processing 80% of the eligibility decisions in 30 days.
- Following an eligibility decision and once the medical exam is completed, the work permit processing time for asylum claimants is 13 days.

IRB Inventory

- As of February 2026, the Refugee Protection Division (RPD) of the IRB had an inventory of approximately 298K claims.
- The average wait time for a decision at the RPD of the IRB at the end of February 2026, was 18 months from the time a claim is ready for adjudication.
- With about 298K claims at the IRB pending determination, a claim filed today could wait roughly three years for a first level decision.

Protected Persons in Canada

- A Protected Person in Canada (PPiC) is someone who has been determined to be at risk of persecution or harm if returned to their country of origin, following a successful asylum claim or PRRA application.
- Protected Persons are permitted to live and work in Canada indefinitely and apply for permanent residence. The number of applications has grown faster than the space available in the Immigration Levels Plan, leading to a growing backlog.

- As part of a broader effort to return our immigration system to sustainable levels, IRCC will transition approximately 115 000 PPiCs and their in-Canada dependents to permanent residence in 2026 and 2027. This is in addition to this category's regular immigration targets in the 2026–2028 Immigration Levels Plan.
- Many protected persons have built their lives in Canada—working, studying, and contributing to our communities and economy. By reducing the backlog of permanent residence applications from PPiCs in a controlled and orderly way, we will help vulnerable people gain stability and support their integration.
- As of February 2026, the processing time for PPiC applications for permanent residence finalized in the previous six months was 32 months for those residing outside of Quebec, and 48 months for those residing in Quebec.
- As of February 2026 there was a total inventory of more than 156 000 applications from PPiCs, not including additional applications from dependent family members.

Safe Third Country Agreement

- Canada and the United States (U.S.) continue to apply the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) to manage asylum claims at our shared border. It is in the national interest of both countries to receive asylum claims in an orderly way that respects our border integrity and our obligations to protect those in need.
- Under the STCA, people must seek refugee protection in the first safe country they arrive in, either in Canada or in the U.S., unless they qualify for an exception or an exemption to the Agreement.
- Individuals who do not meet an exception or exemption are returned to the U.S. to pursue their asylum claim, or vice versa to Canada.
- The Government of Canada uses a robust framework to monitor developments in the U.S., and the impact that changes in policies and practices may have with respect to the U.S.' refugee protection system. Monitoring is done on an ongoing basis.
- At this time, the U.S. remains the only country designated as a safe third country. We do not comment on internal U.S. government measures.
- We are in regular contact with U.S. counterparts on issues related to our shared border, and expect this to continue.

Irregular Crossings

- The number of irregular arrivals into Canada at land borders decreased significantly following the implementation of the Additional Protocol to the STCA.
- Entering between ports of entry does not provide greater access to Canada's asylum system. Individuals who make a claim within 14 days of crossing irregularly will be turned back to the U.S., unless they meet an exemption or exception to the STCA.
- Canada did experience a slight increase in the number of irregular crossers that claimed asylum in the latter half of 2025. However, the numbers are still significantly lower than the 165 per day seen prior to March 2023 and the entry into force of the Additional Protocol. The daily average since then stands at 13 per day.
- So far in 2026, irregular crossings are down 20% compared to the same period last year (January–February).
- IRCC continues to work closely with CBSA and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to monitor changes in asylum volumes at the Canada–U.S. land border, including trends related to irregular crossers.
- Crossing between ports of entry presents very real dangers. Individuals should claim asylum in the first safe third country that they enter and do so legally at a port of entry.
- Through Canada's recent border actions, the RCMP has increased its presence and interceptions along the border. The RCMP will continue to work with law enforcement partners in Canada and the U.S. to monitor the shared border, as well as disrupt and investigate illicit cross-border movements in both directions.
- The Strengthening Canada's Immigration System and Borders Act (Bill C-12) received royal assent in March 2026. Two new eligibility requirements are now in effect and will apply to all claims made on or after June 3, 2025, including asylum claims from people who enter Canada between ports of entry along the Canada–U.S. land border and who make a claim after 14 days won't be referred to the IRB. This new eligibility requirement is intended to protect and reduce pressures on the Canadian asylum system.
- There is no change to the application of the STCA: people who make a claim at a port of entry along the Canada–U.S. land border or within 14 days of irregular entry continue to be returned to the U.S. unless they qualify for an exception or exemption.

Quebec

- In spring and summer 2025, Quebec saw spikes in asylum claims at the land border. The vast majority of arrivals have been Haitian nationals (60%) who are eligible for an STCA family exception, and who are primarily entering at the Lacolle port of entry.

- Since the summer spike, Lacolle land border claims have dropped significantly to volumes typically seen in recent years.
- Despite the seasonal spikes in land border claims, the overall volumes of asylum claims made in Quebec in 2025 were 32% lower compared to 2024:
 - Quebec 2025: 39 420
 - Quebec 2024: 57 820
- Looking at more recent data from January–February 2026, the total number of claims in Quebec decreased by 43% compared to the same period last year in last year.
- IRCC continues to work closely with CBSA and RCMP, as well as other federal partners to ensure alignment and coordination of the federal response.
- Contingency plans are in place should volumes rise. We are prepared to respond to any scenario.