

S-32—Regarding International Students in Canada

Inquiry of Ministry

Question N^o.: S-32

By: Honourable Senator Downe

Date: February 3, 2026

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Question

Regarding international students in Canada: 1.For each of the past ten years: (a)How many international students have applied to study in Canada? (b)How many of these applications have been approved? (c)How many of those applicants underwent security/criminal record checks? (i)How many of those were granted access to Canada? (ii)How many were denied? (d)How many of these, having been admitted into Canada on the basis of letters of admission from educational institutions, never showed up to attend these institutions upon their arrival in Canada? (e)How many students were the subject of removal orders? (f)How many were actually removed from Canada? 2.How is Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada working with other agencies to address the possible misuse of the international student program by organized crime groups?

Reply

Insofar as Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is concerned:

1 (a) Study Permits Applications Received between January 1, 2015 and December 31, 2025, by Year of Received Date and Application Type (in Persons)

Year	Study Permit
2015	184.225
2016	235.440
2017	309.215
2018	345.650
2019	425.550

2020	315.760
2021	556.015
2022	713.770
2023	914.250
204	471.675
2025	262.900
Total	4.734.445

The above table captures new permits applications received from 2015 to 2025. Please note that values are rounded to the closest multiple of 5 for to prevent individuals from being identified when Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) data is compiled. Compared to other publicly available statistics, data may not sum to the totals indicated, as a result of rounding. Data up to December 31, 2025.

1 (b) Study Permit Applications Approved between January 1, 2015 and December 31, 2025, by Final Decision, Year of Final Decision Date and Application Type (in Persons)

Year	Study Permit
2015	129.530
2016	157.850
2017	201.555
2018	224.275
2019	252.920
2020	110.345
2021	328.070
2022	411.705
2023	508.865
204	263.225
2025	109.375
Total	2.697.715

The above table captures new permits approved from 2015 to 2025. Applications received in a calendar year may be approved in the subsequent calendar year. Please note that values are rounded to the closest multiple of 5 for to prevent individuals from being identified when Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) data is compiled. Compared to other publicly available statistics, data may not sum to the totals indicated, as a result of rounding. Data up to December 31, 2025.

1 (c) (i) and (ii)

All foreign nationals are screened before coming into Canada to determine their eligibility and admissibility, which includes a review for criminality concerns. IRCC officers assess permanent and temporary resident applications against departmental databases and risk indicators to ensure applicants are not inadmissible on grounds of security, human or international rights violations, or organized criminality. Inadmissibility findings that result in refusal may be as a result of various reasons, including but not limited to section 34 (security) section 35 (human or international rights violations), section 36 (serious criminality), section 37 (organized criminality), sections 38 (health grounds), and section 40 (misrepresentation). Applications requiring in-depth review are referred to Public Safety partners for additional screening.

The table below captures how many new study permit applications underwent an additional security screening, and how many were subsequently granted or denied access to Canada or were otherwise withdrawn.

Study Permits Applications Processed between January 1, 2015 and December 31, 2025, by whether they underwent Additional Screening by Public Safety partners, by Final Decision, Year of Final Decision Date and Application Type (in Persons)

Year of Final Decision		Study Permit Additional Screening
2015	Approved	6 685
	Refused	465
	Withdrawn	65
	Total	7 215
2016	Approved	6 525
	Refused	375
	Withdrawn	50
	Total	6 950
2017	Approved	6 175
	Refused	845
	Withdrawn	65
	Total	7 085
2018	Approved	5 790
	Refused	280
	Withdrawn	50
	Total	6 120
2019	Approved	3 405
	Refused	190
	Withdrawn	20

Year of Final Decision		Study Permit Additional Screening
	Total	3 615
2020	Approved	1 375
	Refused	35
	Withdrawn	10
	Total	1 420
2021	Approved	2 060
	Refused	100
	Withdrawn	30
	Total	2 190
2022	Approved	1 660
	Refused	100
	Withdrawn	30
	Total	1 785
2023	Approved	1 855
	Refused	110
	Withdrawn	60
	Total	2 025
2024	Approved	1 595
	Refused	220
	Withdrawn	115
	Total	1 935
2025	Approved	635
	Refused	290
	Withdrawn	150
	Total	1 070
Total		41 410

Please note that all values between 0 and 5 are shown as --. This is done to prevent individuals from being identified when IRCC data is compiled and compared to other publicly available statistics. All other values are rounded to the closest multiple of 5 for the same reason; as a result of rounding, data may not sum to the totals indicated. Data up to December 31, 2025.

Over a 10-year span (2015_2025), IRCC received 4 734 445 study permit applications:

All applications were assessed for admissibility, including criminality checks. Out of five million applications received over 10 years, 41 410 applications (0.9%) were sent to public safety partners for additional screening.

How many of those were granted access to Canada?

- Out of the 41 410 applications that underwent additional screening from 2015 to 2025, 37 760 were approved (91%) .

How many were denied?

- Of the 41 410 applications that underwent additional screening from 2015 to 2025, 3 010 were refused (7%). Applications can be refused for multiple reasons including inadmissibility provisions such as danger to public health or safety, misrepresentation, or failing to comply with any requirements.
- The remaining 645 applications (i.e., 2%), were withdrawn.

1 (d)

IRCC's international student compliance regime (ISCR) is based on data received from post-secondary Designated Learning Institutions (DLIs) as part of bi-annual reporting. DLIs are obligated to report on the enrollment status of the international students associated with their institution. When DLIs report students as potentially not actively pursuing their studies, IRCC may undertake follow-up verifications to determine whether or not the students are compliant with the conditions of their study permit.

Although the compliance reporting process was implemented in 2018, DLI participation only became mandatory following regulatory changes introduced in November 2024. As such, DLI participation in the compliance reporting has been voluntary up until very recently, and therefore, the data below is based on information provided by those DLIs who elected to report.

Notes:

- Compliance reports are only available for confirmed study permits. A study permit is confirmed and printed by the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) at a point of entry upon a student's arrival in Canada.
- The number of students who are reported as being potentially not actively pursuing their studies is not the same as the number of students who are confirmed as being not-compliant. Potential non-compliance needs to be verified by IRCC, and the student is always afforded procedural fairness and given the opportunity to explain their situation, before IRCC can make a decision about their compliance status.
- IRCC is working with the Province of Quebec to onboard the DLIs in Quebec to the ISCR and include enrolment status of international students in Quebec.

The table below captures the number of study permit holders who were reported by their DLI as potentially not having shown up to attend their classes upon their arrival to Canada. The table also provides the number of international students who hold a study permit each year, given that non-compliance is assessed against the latter data point rather than the number of permits approved in a given year.

Year	Total number of post-secondary study permit holders reported as potentially not showing up to attend their DLI upon arrival in Canada	Total annual number of study permit holders excluding extensions (all levels of study)
2018	9 895	218 400
2019	8 665	243 995
2020	1 805	64 545
2021	7 265	314 180
2022	15 205	395 385
2023	26 725	495 860
2024	16 200	293 260
2025	1 745	115 460

Please note that values are rounded to the closest multiple of 5 to prevent individuals from being identified when IRCC data is compiled. Data up to December 31, 2025. Data is preliminary estimates and subject to change.

2)

The Department works closely with the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) and other enforcement partners, as well as with provinces and territories, designated learning institutions, and regulatory bodies, to detect and disrupt organized fraud, safeguard program integrity, and protect bona fide students. These collaborative efforts are supported by information-sharing mechanisms, targeted compliance and enforcement activities, and international engagement aimed at reducing vulnerabilities across the student lifecycle.

All intelligence that is gained from these collaborative efforts is used to support better front-line decision making and to proactively support decision makers in identifying applications with potential fraud and deter program misuse. This includes:

1. Shared Investigations and Intelligence
 - IRCC conducts administrative investigations into high-risk applications and facilitators.
 - IRCC shares relevant fraud intelligence with CBSA and other law enforcement partners to inform enforcement decisions.
 - Where fraud is detected (especially coordinated or organized fraud), disruption mechanisms are deployed and may influence evaluation of future applications or trigger enforcement referrals.
2. Information from Designated Learning Institutions (DLIs)
 - DLIs report on student enrollment status under the International Student Compliance Regime (ISCR), which helps identify individuals who entered Canada on a study permit but did not appear at the DLI and clarify patterns of non-compliance.
3. System Enhancements
 - IRCC has introduced systematic letter of acceptance (LOA) verification where DLIs must authenticate all LOAs before study permits are issued, significantly reducing the ability of fraud networks to use fake documentation.
4. Collaboration with the College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants
 - IRCC works in the broader federal framework with the College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants, which regulates immigration representatives and can discipline or seek injunctions against unauthorized or unethical consultants who exploit prospective students.
 - Strengthening oversight of representatives helps disrupt organized schemes that rely on fraudulent representation.
5. Public Awareness and Prevention Campaigns
 - IRCC runs public outreach and awareness campaigns nationally and internationally to inform prospective students about the risks of fraud and how to recognize and avoid unscrupulous agents or schemes. This includes campaigns in key source countries.

