



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada

2023-24 International Experience Canada (IEC) Study

Final Report

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Canada

2023-24 International Experience Canada (IEC) Study

Prepared for IRCC by Environics Research

Supplier name: Environics Research

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Executive summary

Background and objectives

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) manages International Experience Canada (IEC), a program that enables young Canadians to work and travel abroad. Through the program, IEC provides Canadian citizens aged 18-35 with a path to work permit or visa, giving them opportunities to work and explore one of over 30 partner countries and territories. As a reciprocal program, IEC also enables international youth citizens to work and explore Canada. The age limit and types of work permits available depend on the youth mobility arrangement negotiated with each partner country. The program includes options for Open Work Permits (i.e., Working Holiday) which do not require a job offer, as well as Employer-Specific permits that are tied to a valid job offer.

IEC aims to maximize reciprocity between international youth participation and Canadian youth participation. As a result, a primary objective of this research is to provide insights and build on past research to help IEC increase Canadian youth participation in the program.

The 2023-24 International Experience Canada (IEC) Study was designed to gather information about both IEC participants and non-participants (including communities of interest such as Indigenous youth and 2SLGBTQI+ youth), to inform policy development and communications, including development of new and targeted promotion and communication products, and identify barriers that IEC could address. This involves evaluating knowledge of the IEC program among its target audiences. More specifically, the objectives of the research include measuring:

- Awareness of IEC and interest in travelling abroad;
- Changing attitudes toward travel as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Attitudes toward working and travelling abroad (including work-integrated learning);
- Attitudes toward safety while travelling abroad and trust in foreign governments;
- Gaps in resources and services (including in work abroad services) for communities of interest;
- Attitudes, barriers and information gaps specific to identified communities of interest, past IEC participants and youth in general;
- Whether work experiences abroad result in improved cultural awareness by youth (versus those who do not undertake such experiences);
- Where youth obtain information about international travel destinations;
- Opinions of existing IEC promotional material and feedback about potential new materials to be used in the future.

Methodology

Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used to meet the research objectives. The quantitative phase consisted of an online survey with Canadian youth, aged 16 to 35. Although the IEC program is only available to youth aged 18-35, it is important for IRCC to understand awareness, priorities, motivations, and barriers among youth aged 16-17 who are nearly eligible for the program. The qualitative phase consisted of online focus groups. Both phases of research included particular communities of interest: Indigenous youth, 2SLGBTQI+ youth, youth with mobility, visual, or hearing impairments, and female youth in STEM fields.

Quantitative online survey: Conducted from December 4 to December 21, 2023, with 2,573 Canadian youth aged 16-35. Respondents were recruited from an online panel and respondents under 18 years of age needed parental consent before completing the survey. The survey was approximately 13 minutes in length and explored behaviours and attitudes toward international travel, perceived benefits and barriers of an international experience, and awareness and perceptions of the IEC program.

Qualitative online focus groups: 16 groups were conducted with Canadian youth aged 16-35. Groups consisted of five to nine participants each, for a total of 112 participants. Each session lasted approximately 90 minutes in length and explored interest in living outside of Canada, perceived benefits and challenges of an international working holiday experience, impressions and interest of the IEC program, and perceptions of the marketing materials. The qualitative research participants were recruited via telephone and e-mail by Trend Research, through organizations serving Indigenous youth, and through IEC partner organizations.

A more detailed methodology is presented in Appendix A of this report.

Statement of limitations: Since online panel surveys are not random probability samples, no formal estimates of sampling error can be calculated. Although not employing a random probability sample, online surveys can be used for surveys with the public provided they are well designed and employ a large, well-maintained panel.

Qualitative research provides insight into the range of opinions held within a population, rather than the weights of the opinions held, as measured in a quantitative survey. The results of the qualitative research should be viewed as indicative rather than projectable to the population.

Contract value

The contract value was \$199,784.00 (including HST).

Key findings

Quantitative phase

Consistent with 2023, travelling internationally is common among Canadian youth aged 18 to 35; four in five Canadian youth (81%) have travelled for leisure or business, reporting at least one international trip for this reason in their lifetime. Under half (46%) travelled specifically for a work, study, or volunteer experience. Of those who have travelled for work, study, or volunteering, three in five (61%) say they have obtained a visa for this purpose, consistent with 2023. International experience is most often self-arranged (50%) or arranged through school (36%).

When asked to reflect on their international experiences, young travellers view the opportunity to learn about new cultures (75%), the adventure (59%), and personal growth (50%) as the key benefits, mentioning other benefits (e.g., learning a secondary language, gaining career skills) less often. Two in three (64%) say they include their international experience on their resume, consistent with last year. Those who don't most commonly cite a perceived lack of relevance to a specific role. A similar proportion (67%) agree they are eager to highlight their international experience to potential employers, and nearly three in five (57%) believe their experience has improved their job prospects since returning to Canada.

Of those who say they participated in the IEC program, France, Australia, the UK and Germany remain the most visited IEC partner countries (France moved ahead of Australia in 2023 to become the top destination). Among IEC participants, total satisfaction (85%) and likelihood of recommending the program (83%) to family or friends are high. IEC participants credit a great overall experience and personal growth (42%) as the main reason for their satisfaction with the program.

As in past years, awareness of the IEC program is low; just one in five (19%) say they know the program well or know a fair amount. Those with awareness of IEC are most likely to have heard about it through family or friends (32%) or directly from an IRCC source (29%) – such as the IRCC website (14%), or the IRCC Facebook (10%) or Instagram (10%). One quarter also heard about it through general internet searches (24%). This is consistent with 2023 results. The desire to learn more about IEC is also consistent with 2023; nearly one in three (32%) say they are interested in learning more. Information would be most effectively conveyed through the internet (41%), while just over three in ten would like to receive information from an IRCC source directly (31%) – from the website (15%), Instagram (13%), an IEC information session (12%), or Facebook (9%). Others would prefer to receive information from an academic institution (25%) or from friends and family (22%).

Interest in future travel is high, with three quarters (76%) very or somewhat likely to travel for business/leisure, and two in five (41%) likely to travel for work. A quarter say they are likely to volunteer or study abroad (28% each). Six in ten youth (61%) say they are comfortable travelling internationally as long as they are vaccinated, and more than half (55%) agree they are more likely to travel when possible because the restrictions made it difficult for so long.

As in 2023, language, financial concerns, and obligations at home are the most prominent barriers preventing youth from pursuing travel experiences. Covid-19 is still a consideration for a third of Canadian youth.

Likelihood of participating in a program like IEC is consistent with 2023 at 40 percent. Three English-speaking countries, Australia, England, and the United States, top the list of interesting destinations for IEC or a similar experience, with Japan and France rounding out the top five. Youth most often said they would choose their destination based on its culture (24%), a simple desire to go (22%), or wanting to visit a beautiful place (15%).

Qualitative Phase

Most focus group participants had international travel experience in the past five years. These trips were often short vacations, but several participants had taken lengthier trips as well. Common destinations included the United States, Caribbean and South American countries, and Europe. Discovering different culture and lifestyles, experiencing nature, understanding diverse perspectives, connecting with new people, and disconnecting from day-to-day life were often named as key benefits of travelling. Barriers to travelling, such as cost, time, being away from family and friends, language barriers, cultural differences, and safety and health concerns were consistent across the groups. Most participants would shy away from countries impacted by conflicts or war. For women, 2SLGBTQ+ youth, and racialized youth, inequality and discrimination were also concerns that would steer them away from visiting other countries

Few participants were seriously interested in living outside of Canada for a longer period of time (i.e. more than a month), mainly because of other priorities in life and Canada itself being a great country to live in. Many also worried about the logistics and expenses of living abroad, and ensuring their affairs in Canada were taken care of in their absence. For those who were hesitantly interested, providing them with more details and support would increase their likelihood of living abroad.

Those who more readily saw themselves living outside of Canada were generally younger (i.e. under 24), still finishing school or in the early stages of career building, or already avid travellers. Past IEC participants were fairly aligned with these characteristics, though a couple of them had put more established careers on hold to pursue an international experience. The benefits of living outside of Canada long-term were distinct from short-term travelling; living in another country was seen as a way to build character and gain independence, immerse in a new culture and live a different life, learn or practice portable skills, and practice a second language. In terms of the unique challenges of living abroad long-term, participants mentioned a variety of concerns, including difficulty finding a job, struggling with mental health due to culture shock and loneliness, accessing health care services, and adapting to differences in the standard of living.

Previous awareness of IEC was quite low; usually just one or two people in each group said they had heard of the program before. First impressions of the IEC program, after it was described, were quite positive; participants liked the idea of having the government's guidance to smooth out the process, and were amenable to the idea of travelling while working. However, most participants were unclear about the benefits of using IEC, as opposed to getting a visa by themselves. A handful of youth in each group said they might be interested in participating in IEC; these were generally the same participants who had previously said they were interested in living outside of Canada. For past IEC participants, the program was seen as a positive experience that they would recommend to other youth without hesitation.

Overall, interest in participating in IEC was low, usually for the same reasons they gave for not living abroad in general. For participants coming from a disadvantaged background, working abroad seemed like a luxury that was only realistic for those with financial security. Also related to cost, some were concerned about things like finding affordable housing and stable income upon their return to Canada. However, most participants would recommend the program to someone else, if it seemed to be a good fit.

Discussing potential reasons why Canadian youth are less likely to use the program than incoming international youth, most hypotheses fell into four categories: cultural norms, geographic location, benefits of living in Canada, and cost of travel. Participants frequently mentioned the work-centred culture in North America, and pointed out that there is a stigma about taking a gap year or taking time away from career and family building. Canada's size, and its distance from other places, added layers of perceived difficulty, and some youth said they felt a stronger desire to travel within Canada than to go abroad. Several participants pointed out that Canada has a high standard of living, embraces diversity, and offers great education and career opportunities that make the country attractive to international youth, and make it enticing for Canadian youth to stay home. Finally, the cost of travel for Canadians, and the risks of financial setbacks were mentioned as prominent barriers to taking part in IEC.

Brainstorming ways to encourage more Canadian youth to take advantage of IEC, participants mostly focused on suggestions about promoting the program. There was a general consensus that youth should be introduced to options like gap year programs and work abroad opportunities at a young age, so they have time to consider and plan for these experiences as they go through high school and postsecondary education. Some participants also suggested financial assistance for the program, especially for youth coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, and more support for job searching, finding accommodation, and cultural adaptation.

Discussing the specific channels for reaching youth, many participants said it would made the program more relatable if they were to hear real life stories from actual IEC participants at in-person events like school presentations or job fairs. Being present on popular social media platforms, such as TikTok and Instagram, was

also seen to be very important, and many felt that short videos would be better than static posts at grabbing attention.

Participants overall reacted positively to examples of experiential marketing, though they had some difficulty connecting with this concept as a marketing technique for IEC. Some said that they might enjoy an immersive experience that showcased the nature, culture, and daily life in partner countries, or as a way of sharing IEC participant testimonials. However, for most, the concept was too abstract to grasp. A few participants raised questions about the accessibility of immersive marketing, if IEC is trying to reach vulnerable or disadvantaged audiences.

Participants were shown a variety of marketing materials, collectively called “Look and Feel,” consisting of a graphic image from the “Write Your Own Story” campaign, a mood board of stock images, a second graphic with the heading “Travel while working,” and a mock-up of a social media page.

Reactions to the “Write Your Own Story” graphic were divided. Some participants liked the aesthetic of the graphic, and some felt that, in combination with the tag line, it conveyed endless possibilities. Others felt the campaign message was too vague, and that they would not know what the campaign was about at first glance. The character in the graphic also drew mixed commentary; some felt she looked relaxed and free-spirited, but others perceived connotations of privilege and wealth because of her appearance and her clothes.

Overall perceptions toward the mood board were positive, though participants had some suggestions about specific images. A frequent suggestion was that multiple images would work better together to convey different aspects of IEC. Many acknowledged that the images looked like stock photos, but it did not necessarily make them inauthentic. In general, images that captured people in the moment were seen as more authentic, such as the man in the red jacket taking a selfie. Images that looked staged were seen as inauthentic, such as the man holding a surfing board.

Reactions to the “Travel while working” graphic were predominantly positive and consistent from group to group, with a few critiques. Participants liked that the graphics showed a variety of characters doing different things, and felt it more strongly conveyed the idea of travel and work than the “Write your own story” image. There were mixed reactions to the style; some liked the colours and the playful appearance, but others associated it with a common corporate style and felt it lacked originality.

Reactions to the social media mock-ups were generally positive. Across groups, participants were attracted to posts that looked like they contained detailed information, such as “Musts in Switzerland,” but felt that word-only posts were too boring to grab their attention. The youth with impairment group had particular criticisms about the “Be stronger than ever” as potentially ableist.

Participants were also shown different iterations of a short video for IEC, with different music options. Overall reactions to the videos were positive. A majority of participants thought the videos were effective at grabbing attention and creating interest toward the program. A few thought the videos were too fast to understand what was going on in the first viewing, and some had difficulty relating the math teacher to the concept of a work permit. The first music option was most popular across groups, noting that its fast-pace matched the visuals the best. The second music option was least popular, because it was felt to be too slow, and some thought it had a sensual aspect that didn’t go well with IEC.

Groups were asked to quickly review two IEC websites, one specific to outgoing travel to France, and the other a more general page about the IEC program. Participants were positive about the websites, finding them to be user-friendly, easy to navigate, accessible, and informative. They also liked the clear instructions and the layout on each website. Asked about how to improve them, several participants said they would like to see an FAQ section, and clear ways to contact IEC. Other nice-to-have elements mentioned were testimonials, costs and funding sources, and drop-down menus for the “how to get started” page.

Overall, Indigenous youth share similar views about the benefits of travelling, and the complexities involved in living abroad. Many of the issues they raised were similar to those mentioned in other groups, but were felt more acutely because issues like economic disadvantage and generational trauma tend to exacerbate barriers like the cost of travel, safety concerns, fears of racism and discrimination, and lack of medical care. Indigenous participants expressed a strong desire for personalized support to help them navigate the complexities and barriers of participation in IEC. Specific suggestions included assistance to overcome the daunting nature of the application process, more authenticity and representation in promotional materials, using social media for storytelling and sharing Indigenous perspectives, and clearer pathways for financial assistance and job support.

Political neutrality statement and contact information

I hereby certify as senior officer of Environics that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Communications Policy of the Government of Canada, and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research. Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

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Introduction

Background

International Experience Canada (IEC) is a program managed by IRCC offering Canadian youth the opportunity to travel and work in one of over 30 partner countries and territories. As a reciprocal program, IEC permits international youth citizens from partner countries/territories to travel and work in Canada as well. The age limit and types of work permits available varies depending on the youth mobility arrangement negotiated with each partner country but for Canadians to qualify, they must be citizens resident in Canada between the ages of 18-35.

The IEC program aims to maximize reciprocity between international youth participation and Canadian youth participation in the work-travel pathways negotiated with partner countries/territories, however, IEC officials believe participation in the program by Canadian youth is not as strong as it should be and is not reciprocal in terms of participants with almost all partner countries. IEC has a targeted stakeholder engagement and promotion plan in place, with the goal of increasing awareness of opportunities abroad, and increasing Canadian youth participation in the program.

Objectives

The purpose of this study is to build on knowledge gained from previous public opinion research studies, extending our time series data on Canadian youth awareness of International Experience Canada (2018-present) and interest in travelling abroad. It also includes a focus on better understanding the motivations and barriers for Indigenous youth and the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Objectives of the research include measuring:

- Awareness of IEC and interest in travelling abroad;
- Changing attitudes toward travel as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Attitudes toward working and travelling abroad (including work-integrated learning);
- Attitudes toward safety while travelling abroad and trust in foreign governments;
- Gaps in resources and services (including in work abroad services) for communities of interest;
- Attitudes, barriers and information gaps specific to identified communities of interest, past IEC participants and youth in general;
- Whether work experiences abroad result in improved cultural awareness by youth (versus those who do not undertake such experiences);
- Where youth obtain information about international travel destinations;
- Opinions of existing IEC promotional material and feedback about potential new materials to be used in the future.

To meet these objectives, Environics conducted two phases of research:

1. The **quantitative online survey** was conducted to gather information from Canadian youth by gathering feedback on their previous international experiences, views on travel in general, and their views on the IEC program and future intentions regarding international experiences.

2. **Online focus groups** were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of travel motivations, learn about youth impressions of IEC in more detail, and explore promotional strategies for raising awareness of the program among youth in general and among specific key audiences.

The quantitative phase provides tracking data on overall attitudes towards travel and international opportunities, while the qualitative research dives deeper into views of youth, including Indigenous youth, 2SLGBTQI+ youth, youth with impairments, women in STEM, and IEC participants to explore if and how their views differ on these topics. Overall, the research will inform future communications about the IEC program and strategies to encourage participation.

About this report

This report begins with an executive summary outlining key findings for the quantitative and qualitative research.

This is followed by a detailed analysis of the survey data. Provided under a separate cover is a detailed set of “banner tables” presenting the results for all questions by subgroup segments. These tables are referenced by the survey question in the detailed analysis. Please note that the question numbering referenced in this report, including in the questionnaire document and statistical tables, is not sequential for ease of comparison with tracking questions from past surveys.

The next section of the report is a detailed analysis of the focus group findings, which is organized to follow the order of topics in the discussion guide. Quotations from the focus group discussions are referenced throughout the report to better illustrate the findings when needed. Quotations are provided verbatim to the extent possible; due to errors in transcribing voice recordings to text, some light editing is involved in making sure the quotations are coherent and accurate. Quotations from the French groups have been translated into English for this version of report.

In this report, quantitative results are expressed as percentages unless otherwise noted. Results may not add to 100% due to rounding or multiple responses. Net results cited in the text may not exactly match individual results shown in the tables due to rounding.

Use of findings of the research

This report provides insight into the travel and work abroad behaviours and attitudes of Canadian youth and examines their perceptions and attitudes towards travel and work abroad experiences like those facilitated by IEC. Insights about perceived barriers and motivators to pursuing work abroad experiences will inform policy and allow targeted engagement and promotion. The survey results will also be used to inform corporate performance reporting requirements (such as Performance Information Profiles and associated Performance Measurement Strategy Framework) for the IEC program.

Statement of limitations: Since online panel surveys are not random probability samples, no formal estimates of sampling error can be calculated. Although not employing a random probability sample, online surveys can be used for general population surveys provided they are well designed and employ a large, well-maintained panel.

Qualitative research provides insight into the range of opinions held within a population, rather than the weights of the opinions held, as measured in a quantitative survey. The results of the qualitative research should be viewed as indicative rather than projectable to the population.

I. Detailed findings – Quantitative Phase

A. Demographic profiles of respondents

1. Respondent Demographics

The online survey was tailored to Canadian youth aged 16 to 35. Respondents were screened to include representation from a variety of communities: secondary school students, 2SLGBTQI+ youth, Indigenous youth, economically disadvantaged youth, and youth with disabilities and impairments. Of the 2,573 total respondents, 71 of which are under 18 years old.

Table 1: Demographics – Age

Age	Youth (n=2,573)
16-17	3%
18-24	36%
25-30	28%
31-35	33%

Table 2: Participants' Demographics – Gender

Gender	Youth 16+ (n=2,573)	Youth 18+ (n=2,502)
Female	50%	51%
Male	49%	48%
Another gender	1%	1%
Prefer not to say	<1%	<1%

Table 3: Participants' Demographics – Region

Region	Youth 16+ (n=2,573)	Youth 18+ (n=2,502)
NET: BC/Territories	13%	13%
Alberta	12%	12%
NET: MB/SK	7%	7%
Ontario	39%	39%
Quebec	23%	22%
Atlantic	6%	6%

Table 4: Participants' Demographics – Birthplace

Born in Canada	Youth 16+ (n=2,573)	Youth 18+ (n=2,502)
Yes	84%	84%
No	15%	15%
Prefer not to say	1%	1%

Table 5: Participants' Demographics – Immigrant Parents

Immigrant Parents	Youth 16+ (n=2,573)	Youth 18+ (n=2,502)
Yes, one parent	13%	13%
Yes, both parents	30%	30%
No	54%	54%
Prefer not to say	3%	3%

Table 6: Participants' Demographics – Languages Spoken

Languages Spoken	Youth 16+ (n=2,573)	Youth 18+ (n=2,502)
English	90%	90%
French	30%	30%
Other	8%	8%
Prefer not to say	1%	1%

Table 7: Participants' Demographics – Education

Education Level	Youth 16+ (n=2,573)	Youth 18+ (n=2,502)
Elementary school or less	2%	1%
Secondary school	17%	16%
Some post-secondary or current post-secondary student	14%	14%
College, vocational or trade school	22%	22%
Undergraduate university program	26%	27%
Graduate or professional university program	17%	17%
Prefer not to say	2%	2%

Table 8: Participants' Demographics – Identities

Identity	Youth 16+ (n=2,573)	Youth 18+ (n=2,502)
2SLGBTQI+	17%	17%
Indigenous	10%	10%
Women in STEM	7%	7%

Table 9: Participants' Demographics – Employment

Employment Status	Youth 16+ (n=2,573)	Youth 18+ (n=2,502)
Employed full-time for pay (i.e. more than 30 hours per week)	56%	56%
Employed part-time for pay	14%	14%
Self-employed	5%	5%
Unemployed, and currently seeking work	7%	7%
Homemaker	2%	2%
Student	12%	12%
Other	1%	1%
Prefer not to say	2%	2%

Table 10: Participants' Demographics – Physical Impairments

Physical Impairment	Youth 16+ (n=2,573)	Youth 18+ (n=2,502)
Vision impairment or vision loss not easily corrected with glasses or contact lenses	6%	6%
Hearing impairment or hearing loss that is a partial or total inability to hear	5%	5%
Mobility impairment that impacts your ability to perform tasks that require motor control and coordination	7%	7%
Other physical impairment not listed	1%	1%
No physical impairment	80%	80%
Prefer not to say	5%	5%

B. Travel Style and Behaviour

2. Past Travel Experience

Just under half (46%) report travelling outside of Canada for work, study, or volunteering at some point in their lives; of these, three in five (61%) say they obtained a visa for their travels. Half of these trips are self-arranged (50%).

Leisure or business continues to be the top reason for international travel among Canadian youth, with 80% reporting at least once such trip in their lifetime. Consistent with previous results, international travel is far less common for work (33%), study (29%), and volunteering (22%). Overall, just under half (46%) of youth have travelled for any of these reasons, a five percent decrease from the previous year. Travelling internationally is slightly higher among men (50%) than women (43%).

Three in five (61%) youth with experience outside of Canada say they obtained a visa for their travels, consistent with 2023 results. This includes less than half who obtained a visa to work (43%), to study (34%), and to volunteer (23%). Half of these trips are self-arranged, an 11-point increase from the previous year. This is followed by trips with school (36%), an employer (28%), or a travel company (23%). Reports of using each of these methods are higher than previous 2023 results.

Table 11: Past Travel Experience (% taking at least one trip)

Travel experience	Overall 16+ (n=2,573)	Overall 18+ (n=2,502)	16-17 (n=71)	18-24 (n=1,047)	25-35 (n=1,455)	Male (n=1,213)	Female (n=1,322)	2023 Overall (n=2,560)
Leisure or business	80%	81%	55%	74%	85%	80%	80%	85%
Work	33%	34%	18%	32%	35%	40%	27%	38%
Study	29%	29%	32%	32%	27%	31%	27%	34%
Volunteering	22%	22%	27%	25%	21%	23%	22%	26%
NET: Work, study, volunteering	46%	47%	41%	45%	48%	50%	43%	51%

Q3. How many times have you done any of the following activities outside Canada in your lifetime? Travel for...?

Table 12: Past Travel Experience (Mean number of trips)

Travel experience	Overall 16+ (n=2,573)	Overall 18+ (n=2,502)	16-17 (n=71)	18-24 (n=1,047)	25-35 (n=1,455)	Male (n=1,213)	Female (n=1,322)	2023 Overall (n=2,560)
Leisure or business	8.35	8.46	4.34	6.10	9.82	8.53	8.28	10.10
Work	2.42	2.40	3.30	2.29	2.46	2.73	2.15	2.65
Study	1.95	1.88	4.54	2.96	1.25	2.06	1.86	2.18
Volunteering	1.30	1.30	1.32	1.78	1.03	1.31	1.32	1.24

Q3. How many times have you done any of the following activities outside Canada in your lifetime? Travel for...?

Table 13: Visas and permits for each type of travel (Base: Worked/Studied/Volunteered Abroad)

Permits	Overall 16+ (n=1,175)	Overall 18+ (n=1,146)	16-17 (n=29)	18-24 (n=445)	25-35 (n=701)	Male (n=611)	Female (n=555)	2023 Overall (n=1,289)
Work	43%	43%	34%	45%	41%	49%	35%	47%
Study	34%	34%	52%	40%	30%	35%	33%	38%
Volunteer	23%	23%	34%	27%	20%	24%	21%	27%
Total Obtained Visa	61%	61%	76%	66%	58%	65%	58%	62%

Q6. Did you obtain a visa or permit to work, study or volunteer outside of Canada?

Table 14: Travel Arrangements (Base: Worked/Studied/Volunteered Abroad)

Travel arrangement	Overall 16+ (n=1,175)	Overall 18+ (n=1,146)	16-17 (n=29)	18-24 (n=445)	25-35 (n=701)	Male (n=611)	Female (n=555)	2023 Overall (n=1,289)
Self-arranged	50%	50%	34%	43%	54%	52%	47%	39%
Through school	36%	36%	52%	43%	32%	32%	41%	25%
Employer	28%	28%	14%	24%	30%	32%	23%	18%
Travel company	23%	23%	28%	24%	22%	24%	21%	10%
Non-profit	3%	3%	0%	2%	3%	2%	4%	1%
Government program	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	<1%
Other	1%	1%	0%	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%
Prefer not to say	3%	3%	14%	5%	2%	3%	4%	4%

Q8. How did you arrange your international experience?

Question updated to multiple response in 2024

3. Past International Travel Benefits and Challenges

Similar to previous years, learning about a new culture, exploration, and personal growth are the top three perceived benefits of international experience. Language barriers and culture shock were the biggest challenges. Despite these challenges, youth are excited to highlight their international experience to potential employers, with nearly two in three (64%) highlighting their international experience on their resume.

Canadian youth who travelled internationally identified learning about a new country or culture (75%) as the top benefit of their experience, followed by 59% saying exploration and adventure and half saying personal growth (50%). Learning a second language (43%) and professional development (40%) are also perceived to be benefits but mentioned to a lesser extent. These results follow the same patterns as previous years.

Similar to last year, about two in three (64%) say they listed their international experience on their resume after returning to Canada. Those who did not include their international experience on their resume most commonly cite a perceived lack of relevance or importance to the specific job applied for (23%), not thinking the experience was worth noting (10%), and simply not thinking of it or not knowing they could (10%) as the reason for not including international experience. These reasons were the top mentions in 2023 as well, though the proportion of youth listing these reasons has declined.

Most Canadian youth who travelled for work, study, or volunteering agree they are eager to highlight that experience to potential employers (67%) and that they feel the experience improved their job prospects (57%). Agreement with both statements is slightly lower than in 2023. Consistent with previous results, over half (55%) report being asked about this experience by potential employers.

When asked about challenges faced while travelling, youth most commonly mention language barriers (45%). This has been the top challenge over the past three years. Similar to previous results, the second biggest challenge is culture shock (38%). Other common challenges include safety challenges (28%), feeling isolated or lonely (27%), and financial issues (26%). Travel restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic is noted by one in five (19%), marking a continuous decline compared to 28% in 2023 and 37% in 2022.

Table 15: Key Benefits of Travel (Base: Worked/Studied/Volunteered Abroad)

Benefits	Overall 16+ (n=1,175)	Overall 18+ (n=1,146)	16-17 (n=29*)	18-24 (n=445)	25-35 (n=701)	Male (n=611)	Female (n=555)	2023 Overall (n=1,289)
Learned about a new country or culture	75%	76%	59%	71%	79%	77%	74%	73%
Exploration and adventure	59%	60%	38%	52%	64%	57%	62%	59%
Contributed toward my personal growth	50%	51%	31%	40%	57%	45%	56%	49%
Learned / improved a second language	43%	43%	38%	43%	43%	44%	42%	42%
International career experience / professional development	40%	40%	24%	36%	42%	43%	36%	42%
Other	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%

Not applicable	5%	5%	17%	6%	4%	4%	6%	5%
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Q4. What would you say are the key benefits you gained from your work, study or volunteer experiences outside of Canada?

*Caution: Small sample size (n<50)

Table 16: Included international experience on resume (Base: Worked/Volunteered Abroad)

Included on resume	Overall 16+ (n=1,008)	Overall 18+ (n=987)	16-17 (n=21*)	18-24 (n=377)	25-35 (n=610)	Male (n=554)	Female (n=446)	2023 Overall (n=1,289)
Yes	64%	65%	43%	64%	65%	64%	66%	65%
No	30%	30%	33%	29%	31%	32%	27%	30%
Not sure	6%	5%	24%	6%	4%	4%	7%	5%

Q24. Have you included your international work or volunteer experience on your resume after returning to Canada?

Question updated to only include work/volunteer experience in 2024

*Caution: Small sample size (n<50)

Table 17: Reasons for not including international experience on resume (Base: have not included experience on resume)

Reasons	Overall 16+ (n=308)	Overall 18+ (n=301)	16-17 (n=7*)	18-24 (n=111)	25-35 (n=190)	Male (n=177)	Female (n=124)	2023 Overall (n=391)
Didn't think it was relevant to the job	23%	23%	14%	12%	29%	20%	28%	42%
Not valid experience at the time	10%	10%	29%	12%	9%	12%	7%	14%
Didn't think of it/ didn't know I could/ didn't want to	10%	9%	29%	14%	7%	10%	11%	8%
Still working for the same employer / it was part of my work	8%	9%	0%	9%	8%	11%	4%	4%
Not needed/required education level / grade information only	6%	7%	0%	7%	6%	6%	8%	N/A
It was a very short trip	4%	5%	0%	2%	6%	4%	5%	6%
Informal experience/ was for personal growth	2%	2%	0%	5%	1%	1%	4%	1%
Trip was for study, not work	2%	2%	0%	3%	2%	1%	4%	3%
Trip was mainly for leisure/ didn't work or volunteer abroad	2%	2%	0%	2%	2%	2%	3%	5%
It was long time ago	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	2%	4%
Other	12%	12%	12%	14%	12%	13%	8%	4%
No specific reason	3%	2%	14%	1%	3%	4%	1%	3%
Don't know	17%	18%	0%	23%	15%	22%	10%	11%

Q25. For what reason have you not included this experience on your resume?

*Caution: Small sample size (n<50)

Table 18: Top 2 Box Agreement with statements about international travel (Base: Worked/Studied/Volunteered Abroad)

Strongly/ Somewhat Agree	Overall 16+ (n=1,175)	Overall 18+ (n=1,146)	16-17 (n=29*)	18-24 (n=445)	25-35 (n=701)	Male (n=611)	Female (n=555)	2023 Overall (n=1,289)
I am eager to highlight my international experience to potential employers	67%	68%	55%	68%	67%	68%	66%	70%
I feel that my international experience improved my job prospects upon returning to Canada	57%	57%	59%	58%	57%	59%	55%	63%
Potential employers ask about my international experience	55%	55%	52%	55%	55%	55%	55%	55%

Q26. How much do you agree with the following statements?

*Caution: Small sample size (n<50)

Table 19: Key challenges of travel (Base: Worked/Studied/Volunteered Abroad)

Key challenges	Overall 16+ (n=1,175)	Overall 18+ (n=1,146)	16-17 (n=29*)	18-24 (n=445)	25-35 (n=701)	Male (n=611)	Female (n=555)	2023 Overall (n=1,289)
Encountering a language barrier	45%	44%	55%	42%	46%	43%	46%	44%
Challenges with country customs / culture shock	38%	38%	31%	37%	39%	38%	37%	35%
Feeling safe or secure	28%	28%	28%	28%	28%	28%	29%	29%
Isolation or loneliness	27%	28%	24%	23%	30%	28%	27%	26%
Issues funding my travel experience	26%	26%	31%	24%	27%	24%	27%	25%
Challenges with travel, residency or employment documents	24%	24%	24%	25%	24%	28%	20%	25%
Challenges with my mental health	20%	20%	17%	23%	19%	22%	18%	N/A
Travel restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic	19%	19%	14%	21%	19%	21%	17%	28%
Impact on my obligations back in Canada	19%	19%	14%	21%	18%	21%	16%	19%
Challenges finding employment outside of Canada	16%	16%	31%	18%	15%	17%	16%	18%
Restrictions, lockdowns or work/school interruptions due to the pandemic	15%	15%	14%	17%	15%	17%	14%	19%
I did not know how to get started	14%	14%	24%	20%	11%	17%	11%	11%
Having to cut short time abroad due to the pandemic	9%	9%	10%	10%	9%	9%	10%	10%
Other	<1%	<1%	0%	0%	<1%	<1%	0%	1%
Not applicable	8%	7%	10%	5%	9%	6%	9%	9%

Q5. What would you say are the key challenges you faced during your work, study or volunteer experiences outside of Canada?

*Caution: Small sample size (n<50)

C. Work Abroad and Awareness of IEC (Youth)

4. Past Participation in IEC

About one in five (16%) report that they participated in the IEC program. Satisfaction with the program (85%) and likelihood to recommend IEC remain high (83%).

One in six (16%) say they have participated in the IEC program, consistent with last year. Of those who say they did IEC, 31% have participated more than once. The most common reasons for participating more than once are to learn about a new country or culture (68%) followed by obtaining international career experience or professional development (57%). Participation in other youth mobility programs is consistent with previous waves, with 16 percent saying they participated in International Youth Internship Program (IYIP) and five percent participating in International Aboriginal Youth Internships (IAYI).

The open work permit remains the most common travel stream, used by two-thirds of youth (66%). The proportion in this stream has decreased two percentage points since last year, while use of the Employer-Specific Work Permit has increased by 10 percentage points (41%). Among these past participants, France (23%), Australia (17%), and the UK (17%) remain the top three destinations. In the past year, popularity of France has increased making the top destination ahead of Australia. The majority of youth do not recall what kind of visa they obtained for their international experiences (71%). Most common mentions are a work permit/visa (7%), visit/tourism visa (6%) and a student visa (4%).

A strong majority (85%) of past participants say they are satisfied with IEC. When asked to elaborate on their satisfaction ratings, satisfied participants said it was because they had a great experience that contributed to personal growth (42%) and that everything was arranged professionally (12%). Neutral and dissatisfied participants did cite the great experience/personal growth (16%) but also mentioned feeling disappointed by their experience (14%) or experiencing some negative aspects like a complex process (11%). Likelihood of recommending IEC is more tempered this year with 83 percent of past participants very or somewhat likely to recommend IEC to a friend or family member compared to 89 percent last year.

Table 20: Past Participation in IEC (Base: Youth age 18+)

Participation	Overall 18+ (n=2,502)	18-24 (n=1,047)	25-35 (n=1,455)	Male (n=1,197)	Female (n=1,271)	2023 18+ (n=2,487)
Yes	16%	17%	16%	20%	13%	16%
No	77%	73%	79%	74%	81%	82%
Not sure	6%	10%	5%	6%	6%	2%

Q9. Have you ever participated in the International Experience Canada (IEC) program, which provides Canadian youth facilitated access to a work permit in 36 different countries and territories?

Base 2023: All youth respondents; Base 2024: Youth respondents age 18+

Table 21: Number of times participating in IEC (Base: IEC Participants)

Number of times	Overall 18+ (n=408)	18-24 (n=164)	25-35 (n=244)	Male (n=237)	Female (n=170)
Once	69%	68%	69%	67%	72%
Twice	28%	29%	27%	30%	25%
Three times or more	3%	3%	4%	3%	3%

Q9Ai. How many times have you participated in the IEC program?

New question for 2024

Table 22: Reason for participating in IEC more than once (Base: Participated in IEC more than once)

Reason	Overall 18+ (n=127)	18-24 (n=51)	25-35 (n=76)	Male (n=79)	Female (n=47)
Learning about a new country or culture	68%	68%	67%	73%	57%
Obtaining international career experience or professional development	57%	53%	59%	61%	47%
Learning or improving a secondary language	45%	48%	43%	42%	51%
Exploration and adventure	40%	37%	41%	37%	43%
International travel experience that contributed toward my personal growth	33%	28%	36%	32%	35%

Q9Aii. Which of the following are reasons that you chose to participate in IEC more than once?
New question for 2024

Table 23: Participation in other Canadian youth mobility programs (Base: Youth age 18+)

Other program	Overall 18+ (n=2,502)	18-24 (n=1,047)	25-35 (n=1,455)	Male (n=1,197)	Female (n=1,271)	2023 18+ (n=2,487)
Yes - International Youth Internship Program (IYIP)	16%	17%	16%	20%	13%	16%
Yes - International Aboriginal Youth Internships (IAYI)	5%	8%	3%	7%	3%	4%
Yes - Other	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
No	72%	66%	75%	67%	77%	74%
Not sure	6%	8%	5%	7%	6%	5%

Q9B. Have you ever travelled abroad using another Canadian youth mobility program such as the International Youth Internship Program (IYIP) or the International Aboriginal Youth Internships (IAYI)?

Base 2023: All youth respondents; Base 2024: Youth respondents age 18+

Table 24: International youth mobility program country(ies) visited (Base: IEC Participants or other youth mobility program participants)

Country	Overall 18+ (n=625)	18-24 (n=274)	25-35 (n=351)	Male (n=363)	Female (n=261)	2023 18+ (n=392)
France	23%	24%	23%	23%	24%	19%
Australia	17%	17%	17%	17%	16%	29%
United Kingdom	17%	15%	18%	16%	18%	15%
Germany	13%	9%	15%	11%	16%	14%
Italy	11%	11%	10%	8%	14%	8%
Mexico	9%	9%	9%	8%	10%	8%
Japan	9%	10%	9%	9%	9%	9%
Belgium	8%	6%	10%	8%	9%	12%
Spain	8%	12%	5%	7%	8%	4%

Hong Kong	7%	6%	8%	8%	5%	4%
Costa Rica	6%	6%	6%	5%	8%	11%
Switzerland	6%	4%	6%	5%	6%	3%
New Zealand	5%	5%	6%	5%	7%	6%
Sweden	5%	7%	4%	5%	4%	5%
Greece	5%	6%	3%	4%	6%	6%
Portugal	5%	3%	5%	4%	5%	5%
Denmark	4%	4%	5%	5%	3%	9%
Austria	4%	4%	5%	5%	4%	10%
Czech Republic	4%	5%	4%	5%	3%	6%
Chile	4%	3%	5%	3%	7%	5%
Croatia	4%	4%	4%	4%	3%	6%
Ireland	4%	3%	4%	4%	4%	3%
Korea (Republic of)	3%	4%	3%	2%	5%	5%
Netherlands	3%	2%	4%	3%	3%	3%
Poland	3%	2%	3%	3%	2%	4%
Ukraine	3%	3%	2%	2%	4%	3%
Taiwan	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%	1%
Estonia	2%	3%	1%	2%	1%	4%
Norway	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%	4%
Andorra	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	4%
Luxembourg	1%	2%	1%	1%	3%	1%
Latvia	1%	1%	1%	0%	2%	2%
Slovakia	1%	1%	<1%	1%	1%	4%
Lithuania	1%	1%	<1%	1%	1%	1%
Slovenia	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	2%
San Marino	<1%	<1%	0%	0%	<1%	2%
None of the above	7%	9%	6%	7%	7%	3%

Q10. Which country(ies) did you go to for your international experience?

2023 question wording: Which International Experience Canada partner country(ies) did you go to?

Base 2023: IEC participants; Base 2024: If IEC participants or other Canadian youth mobility program participant.

Table 25: Type of visa obtained (Base: IEC or other youth mobility program participants – mentions 3% or higher)

Permit name	Overall 18+ (n=625)	18-24 (n=274)	25-35 (n=351)	Male (n=363)	Female (n=261)
Work permit/visa	7%	3%	10%	7%	7%
Visit/tourism visa	6%	4%	7%	6%	5%
Student visa	4%	2%	5%	4%	4%
Other	5%	5%	5%	6%	3%
Don't know	71%	82%	62%	70%	71%

Q10A. What was the name of the type of visa you got from the host country when you participated in IEC/other youth mobility program?

New question for 2024

Table 26: IEC Travel Stream (Base: IEC Participants)

Stream	Overall 18+ (n=408)	18-24 (n=164)	25-35 (n=244)	Male (n=237)	Female (n=170)	2023 18+ (n=392)
Open work permit	66%	65%	67%	70%	60%	68%
Employer-Specific Work Permit (pre-arranged contract of employment was required)	41%	41%	41%	39%	45%	31%
Do not know	4%	4%	4%	3%	6%	1%

Q17A. What International Experience Canada stream did you travel through?

Table 27: IEC Satisfaction Rating (Base: IEC Participants)

Satisfaction	Overall 18+ (n=408)	18-24 (n=164)	25-35 (n=244)	Male (n=237)	Female (n=170)	2023 18+ (n=392)
Net: Satisfied	85%	87%	83%	87%	82%	89%
Very satisfied	37%	32%	40%	40%	32%	50%
Somewhat satisfied	48%	56%	43%	47%	49%	39%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	11%	9%	12%	10%	12%	8%
Somewhat dissatisfied	3%	3%	3%	2%	4%	2%
Very dissatisfied	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Do not know	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%

Q21. To what extent were you satisfied or dissatisfied with your work and travel abroad experience via the International Experience Canada program?

Table 28: IEC Satisfaction Rating Reasons (Base: Satisfied with IEC)

Reason satisfied	Overall 18+ (n=348)	18-24 (n=144)	25-35 (n=204)	Male (n=205)	Female (n=142)	2023 18+ (n=349)
Great experience/ personal growth	42%	38%	45%	39%	47%	40%
Everything was set up professionally	12%	15%	10%	13%	11%	3%
It was fun experience	11%	15%	9%	9%	14%	7%
Easy process/ good support	11%	11%	11%	9%	14%	11%
Ability to travel/see new places/meet people	8%	7%	8%	6%	9%	12%
Good program to learn	7%	5%	7%	6%	7%	9%
It was okay/could have been better	6%	6%	6%	8%	3%	6%
Some negative sides (e.g. Complex Process)	6%	5%	7%	5%	8%	1%
Didn't like it/ disappointed	1%	2%	1%	<1%	3%	N/A
Was able to work and earn money	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	5%
Didn't stay for long	<1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	<1%
To improve a second language	1%	0%	1%	<1%	1%	1%
Other	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	3%
No reason/my thoughts/just do	6%	6%	6%	7%	3%	3%
Not sure	3%	3%	3%	4%	2%	3%

Q22. Why do you say that?

Table 29: IEC Satisfaction Rating (Base: Neutral/Dissatisfied with IEC)

Reason neutral/ dissatisfied	Overall 18+ (n=58)	18-24 (n=19*)	25-35 (n=39*)	Male (n=31*)	Female (n=27*)	2023 18+ (n=43)
Great experience/ personal growth	16%	8%	20%	18%	14%	11%
Didn't like it/ was disappointed	14%	17%	12%	14%	14%	N/A
Some negative sides (e.g. Complex Process)	11%	4%	14%	14%	7%	7%
It was okay/could have been better	10%	28%	2%	12%	7%	12%
Didn't stay for long	2%	0%	3%	0%	4%	N/A
Other	2%	0%	3%	0%	5%	3%
No reason/my thoughts/just do	17%	6%	22%	11%	23%	25%
Not sure	18%	34%	11%	19%	17%	17%

Q22. Why do you say that?

*Caution: Small sample size (n<50)

Table 30: IEC Recommendation Rating (Base: IEC Participant)

Likelihood	Overall 18+ (n=408)	18-24 (n=164)	25-35 (n=244)	Male (n=237)	Female (n=170)	2023 18+ (n=392)
Net: Likely	83%	86%	81%	83%	83%	89%
Very likely	37%	38%	36%	38%	35%	48%
Somewhat likely	46%	47%	45%	45%	48%	41%
Neither likely nor unlikely	12%	12%	12%	14%	8%	8%
Somewhat unlikely	3%	2%	4%	2%	6%	2%
Very unlikely	1%	<1%	1%	0%	2%	1%
Not sure	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	<1%

Q23. To what extent are you likely or unlikely to recommend an international working abroad experience such as International Experience Canada to family or friends?

5. Awareness of IEC (Among all Canadian Youth)

General awareness of the IEC program among Canadian youth remains low, comparable to previous results. Those who know of IEC are most likely to have learned about the program through friends and family or general internet searches. One in three of those who have never heard of IEC are interested in learning more about the program, mainly via general internet searches, IRCC directly, schools, and word of mouth.

Awareness of those who know the program well (7%) or know a fair amount (12%) is similar to last year, while those who know a little bit has increased by five percentage points (18%). Those who are aware of IEC most commonly report learning about the program by word of mouth (32%) or from the IRCC itself (29%). Among those who learned about the program from the IRCC directly, the IRCC website is most cited (14%), followed by IRCC Facebook and Instagram (10% each). General internet searches (24%) are also quite common. Other sources include schools (19%), work (17%), and from various people posting on social media (17%).

Almost half (46%) say they have never heard of the IEC at all, a five-point decline compared to 2023. Among those who had never heard of IEC, one in three (32%) indicate interest in learning more about the program, preferably from internet (41%) or an IRCC source (31%) such as the IRCC website (15%), Instagram (13%), an IEC information session (12%), or Facebook (9%). About a quarter would like to receive information from an academic institution (25%) or from friends and family (22%). These trends and patterns are consistent with past results.

Table 31: IEC Awareness

Awareness	Overall 16+ (n=2,573)	Overall 18+ (n=2,502)	16-17 (n=71)	18-24 (n=1,047)	25-35 (n=1,455)	Male (n=1,213)	Female (n=1,322)	2023 Overall (n=2,560)
Know the program well	7%	7%	3%	7%	7%	8%	5%	9%
Know a fair amount about the program	12%	12%	8%	14%	11%	15%	10%	11%
Know a little bit about the program	18%	18%	10%	19%	17%	18%	18%	13%
Only know the name	14%	14%	13%	14%	13%	14%	13%	11%
Never heard of it	46%	45%	54%	41%	48%	40%	50%	51%
Do not know	5%	4%	13%	5%	4%	5%	5%	5%

Q17B. Before taking this survey, to what extent were you aware or unaware of the International Experience Canada program?

Table 32: How they became aware of IEC (Base: Aware of program)

Channel	Overall 16+ (n=1,285)	Overall 18+ (n=1,261)	16-17 (n=24*)	18-24 (n=547)	25-35 (n=714)	Male (n=661)	Female (n=613)	2023 Overall (n=1,121)
Friends and family	32%	32%	33%	29%	34%	29%	36%	34%
NET: IRCC / IEC Source	29%	29%	42%	27%	30%	33%	25%	32%
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada website (Canada.ca/iec)	14%	15%	4%	13%	16%	17%	12%	16%
International Experience Canada Abroad Facebook account: @CanadiansAbroadIEC	10%	10%	8%	10%	10%	11%	8%	13%
International Experience Canada Abroad Instagram account: @iec_abroad	10%	10%	29%	10%	10%	11%	9%	12%
General Internet search	24%	24%	29%	20%	26%	23%	25%	25%
Academic institution/School campus	19%	19%	13%	22%	17%	19%	19%	22%
Through my work	17%	17%	13%	18%	16%	19%	14%	17%
Person/group I follow on social media	17%	17%	13%	22%	14%	17%	17%	17%
From a news agency	12%	12%	13%	13%	12%	13%	11%	13%
Through a Recognized Organization (AIESEC, SWAP, etc.)	12%	12%	8%	13%	12%	15%	9%	14%
Specific websites I visit	<1%	<1%	4%	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%	1%
Other	1%	1%	4%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%
Do not know	4%	4%	0%	4%	4%	5%	3%	5%

Q18. How did you become aware of the International Experience Canada program?

*Caution: Small sample size (n<50)

Table 33: Want to receive information about IEC (Base: never heard of IEC/don't know)

Information	Overall 16+ (n=1,288)	Overall 18+ (n=1,241)	16-17 (n=47*)	18-24 (n=500)	25-35 (n=741)	Male (n=552)	Female (n=709)	2023 Overall (n=1,439)
Yes	32%	33%	26%	36%	31%	36%	29%	29%
No	48%	48%	40%	42%	51%	48%	48%	54%
Not sure	20%	19%	34%	22%	18%	17%	23%	17%

Q19. Would you like to receive information about the International Experience Canada Program?

*Caution: Small sample size (n<50)

Table 34: Preference to receive information about IEC (Base: interested in IEC information/don't know)

Method	Overall 16+ (n=676)	Overall 18+ (n=648)	16-17 (n=28*)	18-24 (n=284)	25-35 (n=364)	Male (n=286)	Female (n=375)	2023 Overall (n=659)
General internet search	41%	42%	21%	36%	46%	43%	40%	46%
NET: IRCC / IEC Source	31%	32%	21%	25%	36%	29%	33%	N/A
IRCC website (Canada.ca/iecc)	15%	15%	7%	12%	17%	16%	14%	20%
IEC Abroad Instagram account: @iecc_abroad	13%	13%	11%	9%	16%	10%	15%	17%
IEC information seminar/session / fair	12%	12%	11%	8%	14%	9%	13%	15%
IEC Abroad Facebook account: @CanadiansAbroadIEC	9%	9%	7%	6%	11%	8%	10%	13%
Academic institution / school	25%	25%	32%	26%	24%	22%	28%	27%
From my friends and family	22%	22%	25%	25%	20%	20%	23%	26%
Through my work	15%	16%	7%	13%	17%	17%	14%	22%
Person/group I follow on social media	15%	15%	25%	16%	14%	13%	16%	13%
From a news agency (in print or online)	13%	13%	11%	17%	11%	16%	11%	15%
Through a recognized organization (AIESEC, SWAP, etc.)	12%	12%	8%	13%	12%	15%	9%	16%

Specific websites	1%	<1%	4%	0%	1%	<1%	1%	1%
Other	4%	4%	0%	4%	4%	4%	3%	3%
Do not know	18%	18%	39%	23%	14%	17%	20%	16%

Q20. How would you prefer to receive information about the International Experience Canada program?

*Caution: Small sample size (n<50)

D. Motivations and Barriers to Work, Study, or Volunteer Outside of Canada

6. Attitudes Toward Future Travel

Interest in international travel remains strong with three in four (76%) youth expecting to travel outside of Canada for leisure or business before they turn 36. Having experienced the Covid-19 pandemic, over half feel comfortable travelling if they are fully vaccinated (61%) and feel more likely to travel international because of pent-up travel demand (55%).

The likelihood of youth wanting to travel for work, volunteering, and school is consistent with 2023 results. Most Canadian youth are looking forward to travelling internationally whether it's for leisure (76%), work (41%), volunteering (28%), or school (28%).

Where Covid-19 is concerned, three in five (61%) Canadian youth agree they feel comfortable travelling internationally if they are fully vaccinated. Many youth still feel a sense of pent-up travel demand with over half (55%) agreeing that they are more likely to travel internationally because travel restrictions made it difficult to travel for so long. However, the Covid-19 pandemic may have shifted their willingness to stay long-term in certain countries with more than four in ten (44%) agreeing there are places in the world they would no longer consider living in case of another pandemic. One third (33%) agree that the pandemic made them less likely to live outside of Canada in the future. These results are stable compared to 2023.

Table 35: Net Likelihood of travelling in the future before age 36

Likelihood of travelling <i>Net: Likely (Very/Somewhat)</i>	Overall 16+ (n=2,573)	Overall 18+ (n=2,502)	16-17 (n=71)	18-24 (n=1,047)	25-35 (n=1,455)	Male (n=1,213)	Female (n=1,322)	2023 Overall (n=2,560)
Travel for leisure or business	76%	76%	76%	75%	76%	75%	77%	78%
Work	41%	41%	52%	48%	37%	42%	40%	42%
Volunteer	28%	28%	42%	34%	25%	28%	29%	29%
Study	28%	27%	44%	38%	21%	28%	27%	29%

Q11. How likely are you to do any of the following activities outside of Canada in the future before you turn 36?

Wording of this question was changed since 2023, removing reference to when the Covid-19 pandemic is over.

Table 36: Agreement with statements about travel (Net: Strongly or Somewhat)

Agreement	Overall 16+ (n=2,573)	Overall 18+ (n=2,502)	16-17 (n=71)	18-24 (n=1,047)	25-35 (n=1,455)	Male (n=1,213)	Female (n=1,322)	2023 Overall (n=2,560)
I feel comfortable travelling internationally as long as I am fully vaccinated	61%	61%	59%	61%	61%	61%	60%	64%
I am more likely to travel internationally when it is possible because travel restrictions have made it difficult to travel for so long	55%	54%	56%	59%	52%	54%	55%	57%
There are places in the world where I would no longer consider living in case there is another pandemic	44%	44%	45%	45%	43%	46%	42%	44%
The pandemic has made me less likely to live outside Canada in the future	33%	33%	28%	34%	32%	33%	32%	36%

Q12. Having experienced the Covid-19 pandemic, how much do you agree with each of the following statements?

7. Future Travel Motivations and Barriers for Canadian Youth

When thinking about why youth want to travel abroad, opportunities for adventure and experiencing new cultures are the top motivators. Language barriers, financial issues, personal obligations, and not knowing how to get started remain the top barriers to youth pursuing opportunities outside of Canada.

When asked to consider motivations for international opportunities, exploration and adventure (79%) and learning about a new country or culture (76%) remain the top motivators for Canadian youth. Personal growth (68%), improving secondary language skills (68%), and professional experience (55%) are also strong motivators. These results are on par with 2023.

Participants were also asked to consider factors that prevent them from seeking international opportunities to work, study, or volunteer abroad. As in past years, potential language barriers (60%), financial issues (59%), obligations at home in Canada (54%), and simply not knowing how to get started (54%) are the main reasons Canadian youth do not take advantage of international opportunities.

After considering motivators and barriers, Canadian youth were also asked how likely they would be to participate in a program like IEC in the future. Two in five (40%) said they are at least somewhat likely to participate in an international program, consistent with previous results. Those who are likely to participate in an international mobility program like IEC say it's due to positive impressions of the program (20%), wanting to experience life abroad (18%), and general interest in travel (10%). As in previous years, Australia (24%), England (15%), and USA (13%), three English-speaking countries, are the top three destinations of interest. The top reasons for being interested in these destinations are culture (24%), having always wanted to visit (22%), and the landscapes and beauty of the cities (15%). Other reasons include general interest (12%), being another English or French speaking country (9%), having a reputation for friendly people (7%) and a strong economy (7%).

Those who are unlikely to pursue a work, study, or volunteer experience abroad were asked to elaborate on their reasoning. Consistent with previous results, a general lack of interest (30%) is the top reason, closely followed by timing or their life stage (28%).

Table 37: Travel Motivations (Net Agreement: Strongly/Somewhat)

Agreement	Overall 16+ (n=2,573)	Overall 18+ (n=2,502)	16-17 (n=71)	18-24 (n=1,047)	25-35 (n=1,455)	Male (n=1,213)	Female (n=1,322)	2023 Overall (n=2,560)
Exploration and adventure	79%	79%	76%	77%	80%	76%	81%	80%
Learning about a new country or culture	76%	77%	72%	75%	77%	74%	79%	78%
Personal growth	68%	68%	66%	67%	69%	65%	72%	71%
Learning or improving a secondary language	68%	68%	76%	68%	68%	65%	71%	68%
International career experience or professional development	55%	55%	54%	59%	54%	56%	55%	57%

Q13. Thinking about what motivates you to work, study or volunteer outside of Canada, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Table 38: Other travel motivations (mentions 3% or higher)

Motivation	Overall 16+ (n=2,375)	Overall 18+ (n=2,319)	16-17 (n=56)	18-24 (n=965)	25-35 (n=1,354)	Male (n=1,135)	Female (n=1,205)	2023 Overall (n=2,560)
Learning about a new country or culture	19%	19%	23%	18%	19%	17%	21%	25%
For curiosity/ discovering new things/different experiences	15%	15%	11%	13%	16%	13%	17%	N/A
Better job opportunities with higher salary	11%	11%	13%	12%	11%	13%	9%	9%
See the world	11%	11%	11%	12%	11%	9%	13%	N/A
Meeting new people	10%	10%	16%	10%	10%	10%	10%	9%
Pursuing international travel experiences that contribute toward my personal growth	8%	8%	11%	9%	7%	6%	10%	12%
A change of weather/scenery/place of living	7%	7%	7%	6%	7%	6%	7%	6%
Helping others/making a difference	6%	6%	7%	7%	5%	6%	5%	5%
I travel for leisure/fun/relaxation	5%	5%	4%	4%	5%	5%	5%	5%
International career experience or professional development	4%	4%	7%	3%	5%	3%	4%	4%
Exploration and adventure	4%	4%	5%	5%	4%	4%	4%	20%
For different perspective on life	3%	3%	5%	4%	3%	3%	3%	N/A
Visit family/friends	3%	3%	2%	4%	3%	3%	3%	4%
Other	3%	4%	2%	4%	3%	5%	2%	7%
None/nothing else	10%	10%	7%	8%	12%	11%	10%	13%
DK/NA	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%	6%	7%

Q14. What else motivates you to work, study or volunteer outside of Canada?

Table 39: Travel Barriers (Net Agreement: Strongly/Somewhat)

Barriers	Overall 16+ (n=2,573)	Overall 18+ (n=2,502)	16-17 (n=71)	18-24 (n=1,047)	25-35 (n=1,455)	Male (n=1,213)	Female (n=1,322)	2023 Overall (n=2,560)
I will encounter language barriers	60%	60%	63%	60%	59%	58%	62%	58%
I will face issues funding my travel experience	59%	59%	62%	61%	59%	54%	64%	58%
I have too many obligations here in Canada	54%	54%	45%	50%	56%	49%	59%	54%
I do not know how to get started	54%	54%	61%	58%	52%	52%	56%	54%
I will have issues finding employment outside of Canada	48%	48%	39%	47%	49%	46%	50%	50%
I will experience isolation or loneliness	47%	47%	49%	49%	45%	43%	51%	48%
I will not feel safe or secure	42%	42%	49%	44%	41%	38%	46%	43%
I might experience challenges with my mental health	42%	42%	54%	46%	39%	40%	44%	N/A
I will have an issue with travel, residency or employment documents	38%	38%	45%	40%	37%	38%	38%	37%
I will have an issue with the country customs or experience cultural shock	37%	37%	38%	38%	36%	39%	35%	38%
I have concerns about the Covid-19 pandemic or future similar pandemics	31%	31%	27%	31%	31%	32%	30%	37%

Q15. Thinking about what prevents you from working, studying or volunteering outside of Canada, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Table 40: Other travel barriers (3% or higher)

Other barriers	Overall 16+ (n=2,278)	Overall 18+ (n=2,227)	16-17 (n=51)	18-24 (n=933)	25-35 (n=1,294)	Male (n=1,092)	Female (n=1,152)	2023 Overall (n=2,560)
Too many obligations here in Canada	27%	26%	47%	25%	27%	23%	32%	19%
Issues funding my travel experience	24%	24%	8%	25%	24%	22%	25%	16%
No interest/prefer to stay in Canada/ would only travel for leisure	7%	7%	4%	6%	7%	7%	6%	9%
I will not feel safe or secure	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	2%
I will have an issue with the country customs or experience cultural shock	3%	3%	6%	4%	3%	4%	3%	3%
Anxiety/fear issues	3%	3%	2%	5%	2%	3%	4%	N/A
Time/not enough vacation time	3%	3%	2%	2%	3%	3%	2%	3%
Other	3%	3%	2%	3%	2%	3%	2%	4%
None/nothing else	18%	18%	12%	15%	20%	19%	17%	20%
Don't know	8%	9%	4%	10%	8%	10%	7%	10%

Q16. What else prevents you from working, studying or volunteering outside of Canada?

Table 41: Likelihood of participating in a program like IEC in the future

Likelihood	Overall 16+ (n=2,573)	Overall 18+ (n=2,502)	16-17 (n=71)	18-24 (n=1,047)	25-35 (n=1,455)	Male (n=1,213)	Female (n=1,322)	2023 Overall (n=2,560)
Net: Likely	40%	40%	45%	46%	37%	42%	39%	39%
Very likely	12%	12%	14%	13%	11%	13%	11%	12%
Somewhat likely	28%	28%	31%	33%	26%	29%	27%	27%
Neither likely nor unlikely	27%	27%	31%	28%	26%	27%	27%	23%
Somewhat unlikely	13%	13%	3%	12%	14%	13%	13%	14%
Very unlikely	15%	15%	13%	8%	20%	13%	17%	19%
Do not know	5%	5%	8%	5%	4%	5%	5%	4%

Q27. To what extent are you likely or unlikely to participate in a work and travel abroad program like International Experience Canada in the future?

Table 42: Reasons for being likely to participate in a program like IEC (3% or higher) (Base: Likely to participate)

Reason	Overall 16+ (n=1,067)	Overall 18+ (n=1,035)	16-17 (n=32*)	18-24 (n=496)	25-35 (n=539)	Male (n=506)	Female (n=545)	2023 Overall (n=993)
Positive impression of program/ curious about it/ sounds interesting	20%	20%	16%	20%	20%	20%	19%	32%
Explore new culture / work abroad / live outside Canada	18%	18%	22%	15%	20%	16%	19%	18%
Enjoy traveling/ seeing new places	10%	9%	13%	10%	9%	8%	11%	11%
Personal preference	8%	8%	6%	7%	9%	8%	8%	7%
Would add experience to my resume	7%	7%	6%	7%	6%	5%	8%	4%
Concern about Career/Financial/ Visa/Process/Safety	4%	5%	0%	4%	5%	5%	4%	4%
Age/Family/Life stage/timing	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%	3%
Need more information /don't know how	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%

Q28. Why do you say that?

*Caution: Small sample size (n<50)

Table 43: Reasons for being neutral about participating in a program like IEC (3% or higher)
 (Base: Neither likely nor unlikely to participate)

Reason	Overall 16+ (n=681)	Overall 18+ (n=659)	16-17 (n=22*)	18-24 (n=285)	25-35 (n=374)	Male (n=325)	Female (n=347)	2023 Overall (n=595)
Unsure about future/ Not interested/ Like Canada/already done it	12%	12%	18%	15%	10%	11%	13%	18%
Concern about Career/Financial/ Visa/Process/Safety	9%	9%	5%	7%	11%	9%	9%	10%
Need more information /don't know how	9%	9%	9%	7%	10%	7%	10%	10%
Age/Family/Life stage/timing	9%	9%	5%	5%	11%	6%	11%	11%
Have plans for my future/might consider it	7%	7%	5%	7%	7%	6%	8%	N/A
Happy/already established in life/career	4%	4%	9%	2%	5%	3%	5%	N/A
Depends on opportunities offered internationally	4%	4%	0%	4%	4%	5%	4%	5%
Haven't thought about it before	3%	3%	5%	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%
Not enough time to follow up on this	3%	3%	0%	3%	3%	3%	3%	N/A

Q28. Why do you say that?

*Caution: Small sample size (n<50)

Table 44: Reasons for being unlikely to participate in a program like IEC (3% or higher)
(Base: Unlikely to participate)

Reason	Overall 16+ (n=707)	Overall 18+ (n=696)	16-17 (n=11*)	18-24 (n=219)	25-35 (n=477)	Male (n=328)	Female (n=370)	2023 Overall (n=860)
Not sure about future/Not interested/Like Canada/Already went	30%	30%	36%	41%	27%	36%	25%	38%
Age/Family/Life stage/timing	28%	28%	36%	11%	34%	20%	36%	28%
Happy/Already established	14%	14%	18%	5%	17%	13%	14%	N/A
Concern about Career/Financial/ Visa/Process/Safety	12%	12%	9%	11%	12%	11%	12%	18%
Not enough time to follow up on this	3%	3%	0%	2%	4%	3%	4%	N/A

Q28. Why do you say that?

*Caution: Small sample size (n<50)

Table 45: Countries of interest for travel abroad (3% and above)

Country	Overall 16+ (n=2,573)	Overall 18+ (n=2,502)	16-17 (n=71)	18-24 (n=1,047)	25-35 (n=1,455)	Male (n=1,213)	Female (n=1,322)	2023 Overall (n=2,560)
Australia	24%	25%	21%	24%	25%	24%	25%	22%
England	15%	15%	13%	17%	15%	15%	16%	14%
USA	13%	13%	13%	13%	14%	16%	11%	13%
Japan	13%	13%	8%	13%	13%	15%	10%	12%
France	12%	12%	14%	12%	12%	12%	12%	12%
Italy	9%	9%	7%	11%	8%	8%	11%	9%
Germany	8%	8%	4%	7%	9%	10%	7%	8%
New Zealand	6%	6%	4%	3%	7%	4%	7%	7%
Greece	6%	6%	15%	6%	5%	4%	8%	5%
Brazil	6%	6%	11%	6%	6%	6%	6%	4%
Argentina	5%	5%	7%	6%	4%	7%	4%	6%
Ireland	5%	5%	7%	3%	6%	3%	6%	5%
Belgium	5%	5%	4%	5%	6%	5%	6%	5%
Costa Rica	5%	5%	4%	5%	4%	4%	6%	4%
Switzerland	5%	5%	3%	3%	6%	3%	6%	4%
China	5%	5%	4%	6%	4%	6%	4%	4%
Spain	4%	4%	4%	3%	5%	3%	5%	5%
Austria	4%	4%	3%	4%	4%	5%	3%	3%
South Korea	4%	4%	4%	5%	2%	3%	4%	3%
Scotland	4%	4%	3%	3%	4%	2%	5%	3%
Denmark	4%	4%	-	3%	4%	4%	4%	3%
Norway	2%	2%	1%	2%	3%	3%	2%	3%
Sweden	2%	2%	6%	2%	2%	3%	2%	3%

Q29. If you were to participate in a work and travel abroad program like IEC in the future, which country or countries would you be most interested in going to for such an experience?

Table 46: Reasons for destinations of interest (3% or higher) (Base: Likely to participate)

Reason	Overall 16+ (n=2,177)	Overall 18+ (n=2,121)	16-17 (n=56)	18-24 (n=883)	25-35 (n=1,238)	Male (n=1,033)	Female (n=1,111)	2023 Overall (n=2,112)
Culture/history/music	24%	24%	25%	22%	25%	25%	23%	24%
Always wanted to go/explore/visit	22%	22%	18%	22%	23%	20%	25%	20%
Beautiful place/landscape/nature	15%	15%	20%	17%	14%	11%	19%	12%
Interested in them/fun places	12%	12%	7%	13%	12%	14%	11%	20%
Language is the same/ English or French-speaking	9%	9%	5%	8%	10%	8%	10%	11%
Heard good things/good reputation/people are friendly	7%	7%	11%	6%	8%	6%	8%	5%
Strong economy/job opportunities	7%	7%	4%	6%	8%	8%	7%	8%
Developed/safe country	5%	5%	2%	5%	5%	6%	5%	6%
Familiarity/been there before/ I like it there	5%	5%	4%	6%	5%	5%	6%	9%
Climate/warm weather	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	6%
Family/friends/ know people there	5%	5%	9%	5%	4%	4%	6%	5%
Language is different/ to learn a new language	4%	4%	11%	3%	5%	3%	5%	3%
Food and drink	4%	4%	4%	5%	3%	4%	4%	4%
Ethnic homeland /my roots are there	4%	3%	7%	4%	3%	3%	5%	N/A

Q30. What is it about these destinations that makes them your top choices?

II. Detailed findings – Qualitative Phase

A. Travel history, motivations, and barriers

Past travel

Most focus group participants had international travel experience in the past five years. These trips were often short vacations to touristic destinations in the United States, Caribbean and South American countries, and Europe. Asian countries were brought up to a lesser extent. A few participants had taken lengthier trips involving multiple stops in different locations. The geographical and cultural proximity, and particularly the familiarity with the languages, of the US, and South American as well as European countries could explain the popularity of them as international travel destinations.

Benefits to travel

Those with travel experience discussed a range of positive experiences and benefits derived from travelling. Some common themes included:

- Exploring new places,
- People, culture, lifestyles, foods, and history.
- Experiencing nature – immersing in unfamiliar landscapes and sceneries.
- Connecting with other people.
- Learning about a different culture and other perspectives.
- The joy of discovery and adventure.
- Visiting family.
- Disconnecting from everyday responsibilities.
- Escaping from harsh winter weather.
- The 2SLGBTQ+ groups expressed a greater enthusiasm towards discovering and embracing unfamiliar cultures and perspectives, as well as getting out of one’s comfort zone and daily routine.

Barriers to travel

Many groups included one or two participants with no travel experience outside of Canada. While non-travellers included participants from all regions and age groups, it was more often younger participants (i.e. under age 20), youth with impairments, and Indigenous youth who had not travelled outside of Canada.

Participants were asked to discuss the barriers to travel, i.e. aspects that had made it more difficult or had prevented them from travelling entirely:

- The cost of travelling was the number one obstacle.
- Finding enough time to travel while being away from work and other life responsibilities. This was especially challenging for participants with young children and/or a promising career.
- Being homesick, and missing family and friends as well as pets.
- Language barriers.
- Fear of culturally inappropriate behaviour and experiencing awkwardness or embarrassment. In general, adapting to cultural differences was sometimes thought to be quite difficult.

- For some, travelling was seen as a hassle because of the logistics and the risk of complications like cancelled flights. A few mentioned being turned off by hearing “sketchy stories” in the media or from other people, such as pickpocketing and travel scams.
- For those with impairments or chronic illness, accessibility and medical support were major concerns that require detailed planning before a trip begins.

“I’d say at least for me a big barrier comes down to finances. Being capable of taking time off work and being able to justify that are hard. Even if I set money aside, I always come back in some sort of deficit because I could have been making money while I was gone.”

“I think the biggest barrier would be that I have a dog, who is my best friend in the whole world, and I would have a really hard time leaving him.”

“If it’s a country that speaks a different language, how will I be able to fit in comfortably?”

Future travel

Most participants were interested in travelling outside Canada in the near future. Future travel intentions included a wide variety of places; Europe and Australia were notably popular destinations. When asked about what places they would exclude from future travel plans, participants often listed the following general criteria:

- Places affected by conflicts or war.
- Places where gender and racial inequality and discrimination are prevalent.
- Places with crime and safety issues.
- For some, places with extremely different cultural norms and languages.

Interest in living outside of Canada

Interest in living outside of Canada for a longer period of time (i.e. more than a month) was limited; only a few participants said they would seriously consider this. This lack of interest usually came down to other priorities. Many felt time pressured as a young adult to start career and family building. They prioritized goals such as home ownership and other personal obligations than starting fresh and exploring life in another country. Some also felt it would be expensive and wanted to shy away from logistics of living abroad while ensuring things were taken care of at home. Lastly, several participants simply felt that Canada was a good country to live and grow their family as well as career, thus they had no intention of leaving.

“I, personally, at this time of my life, would not live abroad. I started a family. I’m looking to expand my family by having another child in the next couple of years. So, at this time it is not for me.”

“I think that right now for me, living abroad is just not an option, and when I do travel it really is for pleasure and not for anything else. I’m established in my career, so I wouldn’t be interested in working abroad and doing the career switch over. And all the troubles involved would be a bit too much for me.”

There were also participants who liked the idea of living abroad, but mostly at a fantasy level. How to get started was often unclear. Leaving a stable situation at home also seemed risky. Many of those who were hesitating would consider living abroad more seriously if they could get support with the process.

“Before living abroad, I would like to know about the requirements such as finance. Like I know, for working in Australia, you need a minimum of like five grand in your bank account and you have to prove that. If I knew all that, then living abroad is something I would do in a heartbeat. No question.”

Those who more readily saw themselves living outside of Canada were generally younger (i.e. under 24), still finishing school, in the early stages of career building, or already avid travellers. The length of stay they envisioned varied quite a bit from person to person, but mainly ranged from one to two years. Countries in the UK, Europe, and Australia were commonly mentioned as interesting destinations, as they seem relatively easy to adapt to from a cultural perspective, while the differences in landscape and lifestyle were enough for Canadian youth to still have a novel experience.

“We were talking about living in Australia. I think the way of life there is similar to Vancouver and other places in Canada from what I’ve heard. I think it would be more of an easy integration to move from Vancouver to Australia. But Australia looks so beautiful, so it definitely has enough differences to feel like a completely difference experience.”

The past IEC participants’ focus group exhibited similar characteristics as those who more readily saw themselves living abroad, i.e. generally younger, in the early stages of career building, and are already avid travellers. When asked if they were interested in living outside of Canada again in the future, all past IEC participants answered yes.

“Last week I was looking at my leave possibilities at work and I’m ready to go again. I’m quite lucky with what we have for leave offer, and if I could do this kind of leave more than once in my career, it’s definitely something I want to do again.”

Benefits of living outside of Canada

Participants also mentioned various benefits of living outside of Canada which were distinct from short-term travelling.

- Character building – discovering oneself, gaining independence, combatting loneliness, and problem solving in an unfamiliar environment.
- Being immersed in a new culture and experiencing other people’s lives would foster understanding and appreciation of different perspectives.
- Learning portable skills such as those in the hospitality industry that are useful anywhere, and sometimes different from one’s own professional training.
- Gaining unique life experiences before going into a career path.
- Learning, perfecting, or applying a second language.

“I was quite independent before, but moving to another country where you didn’t speak the language was a whole new experience. I was able to prove that I can do this thing. So whenever there’s something slightly challenging coming up now, I am like, I can sort this out.”

“I feel like I spend so much time of my life growing up in the same place, so I want to get that experience of living somewhere else. Whether it be just a different province, country, or a completely different continent. Even if you come back home eventually, getting that experience is just very beneficial to your life to understand the different cultures and experiences around the world.”

“I’m studying nursing and I’m also bilingual. If I live somewhere else where I can use that language more frequently to help people, I would enjoy doing so.”

Challenges of living outside of Canada

Like the general barriers of travelling discussed earlier, finance, logistics, and safety concerns were commonly mentioned as challenges of living outside of Canada. Other unique challenges were included:

- Finding a job when there is a lack of transferable skills or an established professional/personal network.
- Struggling with mental health due to being away from support systems and familiar medical care, and from culture shock and loneliness.
 - Most participants thought this could be managed, and that they would adapt.
 - Some mentioned concerns about obtaining prescription medication for things like depression, anxiety, ADHD, etc.
 - Mental health issues were mentioned in all groups but were especially concerning for participants of the 2SLGBTQ+ and youth with impairments groups.
- General health concerns, such as concerns about medical insurance, refilling prescriptions, and managing chronic conditions. Diabetes was often of particular concern in the Indigenous youth focus groups.
 - Many participants from the youth with impairments group were concerned about different accessibility rules in different countries and the need to have adequate support.
- Simply adjusting and adapting to differences in standard of living, considering the relatively high standard of living in Canada.

“I [work in] health care. So, I can only imagine how hard that would be to get established in another culture.”

“I take prescription medications. And I think that would definitely be a concern if I was living abroad. You know, how do I navigate that medical situation and affordability?”

“I feel like living in Vancouver is very different when it comes to racism. We kind of live in a bubble here, where everybody’s very accepting and open. I think adapting to a different standard would concern me being a person of colour, and then being a queer person of colour on top of that.”

“When travelling in places like South America, I know they don’t have the accessibility in place where I could be notified of an emergency in any event like at a hotel. Whereas in Europe I know there’re a lot of places that have those features. So, I always think about communication accessibility and safety in general.”

“I was in New Zealand for three weeks in early 2020. I got the flu and tried going into a clinic to get tested. It was like \$150 just for the visit so affordable health care is a big concern. I would really have to look into health insurance if I were to be [living abroad].”

B. International Experience Canada

Awareness, impressions, and interest

Participants were shown a written description of the IEC program, which the moderators also read out loud. Previous awareness of IEC was quite low; in most groups, nobody said they had heard of the program before. Of the few who knew the program, some had heard about it from incoming participants who came to Canada through IEC, while others had learned about it in passing from other sources. The concept of working and studying abroad in general was broadly familiar.

First impressions of the IEC program, based on the description shown, were positive. Participants felt it would be helpful to have support to smooth out the process of going to another country, and liked the idea of travelling while working. Knowing that IEC is an established government program was a point in its favour. However, most participants felt unclear about what IEC does or does not provide to participants. Some immediate questions about the program were common across groups:

- How is getting a visa through IEC different from getting it by myself?
- Are there any fees associated with getting support from the program?
- How much does the whole experience cost in average for different countries?
- What kind of support will be provided for finding a job? And what types of job are available?

“I think that any assistance with visa applications and paperwork would be welcome. And maybe [IEC] have a network of people that they can put you in touch with once you're there, or just help with meeting people and making friends. I think that kind of support is always welcome.”

Some youth said they might be interested in participating in IEC; these were usually the same youth who had expressed interest in living abroad more generally, i.e. those who were younger (i.e. under 24), still finishing school, in the early stages of career building, or already avid travellers

“It's definitely something that I want to look into for the future, especially considering that I'm 24 right now, and I still have 10 years technically to do it. I want to take advantage of all of this. I want to do like different countries in these 10 years.”

The IEC participants' group was asked questions about their experience with the IEC program and the benefits they received from it. In this group, the IEC program was widely seen as a positive experience that they would recommend to other youth without hesitation. Although the work experience that many participants had was not directly related to their career aspirations, the fact that the trip gave them a chance to experience something completely different was still worthwhile.

“Before I went to London, I had next to no hospitality experience. I learned all about waitressing, bartending, and some latte art and other coffee skills in London. Hospitality sector always needs people, so no matter where I go, I think it will be quite easy to find a job. If I had stayed here, I probably would have just gone directly into my major, which was history.”

Overall, interest in participating in IEC was low, usually due to the same reasons given for not living abroad in general (i.e. personal obligations, different life priorities, costs, and logistics for going abroad while having domestic affairs taken care of). Often, older participants (i.e. 25+) indicated that IEC is something they wished they had heard about when they were younger, before they were more settled. Moreover, participants were concerned that they would not earn enough money to support themselves in another country, or worried that exchange rates would put them at a financial disadvantage. Some youth noted that without generational wealth or substantial parental support, working abroad seemed like a luxury that was not realistic for them. This view was common among Indigenous youth, but present in the general population groups as well.

Also related to cost, some participants were concerned about finding affordable homes and secure stable income in Canada after being away.

“People are trying to get a job, and they're trying to go through university. And oftentimes not everyone has the luxury of having someone else to pay for university, so most of their money goes towards that and other basic needs. They're not really making enough money to set aside to travel.”

“I think the barriers to living in another country long term for me currently would be like financially, mainly. I'm on long-term disability. So, I have a limited income, and it's hard to find myself with enough money to leave the country.”

Regardless of their own reasons for not participating in IEC, most focus group participants said they would recommend the program to someone else, if it seemed to be a good fit.

Reciprocity

Focus group participants were given information about the reciprocal nature of IEC and told about a 1:3 ratio between Canadian youth going abroad and youth from other countries coming into Canada. Participants were asked to brainstorm ideas about why Canadian youth are less likely to use the program, and what could be done to close the gap.

Participants offered many suggestions that can be summarized in four broad categories:

Cultural Norms: Participants frequently mentioned the work-centred culture in North America as the main contributor to the lack of reciprocity. Canadian youth are expected to follow a linear trajectory from school to the workplace without taking time off between steps. The idea of a gap year is often discouraged. On the contrary, there was a perception among participants that young people in places like Europe and Australia are encouraged to see the world at a young age.

“We don't really have the mindset of taking a gap year and there are negative connotations attached to it. I took two gap years when I finished high school, but I felt like people were thinking, if you don't go to school right away, and don't start working and making money, what were you doing with your life? You were just having fun and exploring. But I think in a lot of other places in the world, [gap years] are more a way of life.”

Geography: Canadian youth often have an affinity for domestic travel, because of the diverse culture and landscapes contained within. Compared to other places, especially Europe where there are many different countries in close proximity, international travel outside of North America was seen to be daunting and difficult. Participants often felt that youth from other parts of the world were simply more accustomed to leaving their home countries, because geography made that an easier option.

“I feel like since Canada is such a large country, it's different traveling in here versus a smaller country. Like in Europe, the countries are much smaller and very close together and it's very frequent for them to travel between country to country. But here in Canada, I feel like more people just find more comfort, staying at home than trying to travel abroad.”

Benefits of Canada: Many participants pointed out that Canada has a high standard of living, and is well known for its health care system as well as having a culture that embraces diversity, equality, and freedom. Canada also offers high quality education and provides job opportunities with strong earning potential. These factors all

make Canada attractive to international youth looking for another country to live in, while making it less enticing for Canadian youth to leave.

“I can say it’s job wise when it comes to Canada. When you try to experience living in another country, the job will be based on your experience and the quality of education. Unlike here, it’s all equal. Whatever your education or degree is, you will work for it.”

“When I told people in the UK that I moved from Canada, they would be like, why did you move here like Canada is such a good country... We’re apparently super awesome so why would we leave?”

Cost: Across groups, cost was seen as a prominent barrier. The cost of travel itself was mentioned often, with many participants noting that Canadians pay relatively high prices for domestic and international flights. Other cost related factors included the high cost of living in Canada, and worries about attaining financial security in another country. There was also a common perception that without a financial safety net at home, working abroad wasn’t realistic.

“Tickets are really expensive. Life itself is expensive right now. So, cost of living is a big factor here.”

“It’s cheaper traveling from country to country in Europe, whereas traveling from Canada to other countries costs a lot of money.”

Focus group participants were asked to suggest ways of encouraging Canadian youth to take advantage of IEC. Most suggestions were about promoting the program, or promoting the idea of gap years and travel in general. Often, participants noted that it would be most effective to reach youth during high school or early post-secondary years to plant the seed, and give youth time to consider and plan. Promotional materials alone do not make cultural change, and group participants felt it was important to reframe the idea of gap years and international travel as beneficial experiences for youth, rather than a frivolity or a waste of time.

“Is it being built into the orientation and shown to high school or post-secondary students that hey, this is an option for you?”

“You want to catch people in high school because that’s when we want to travel and have the yearning. By the time you’re in a university or working, you’ve already focused on getting your life on track.”

Lastly, some participants suggested logistical and financial assistance for the program. Especially for youth coming from a disadvantaged background, funding for international flights and lodging could help them to see working and travelling abroad as a realistic option. Assistance with job searching, such as providing a list of available employers and information on transferrable skills and training were commonly mentioned as ways to motivate youth with concerns about financial stability.

“If there was any incentive to participate in the program, such as waiving fees or extending any provincial health insurance, things like that can provide more of an incentive.”

“I feel like it would be more incentive if they had a list of employers who were looking for specific jobs and things like that, so that people get set up in the right way. This would bring more comfort and then more interest.”

C. Promotional channels and materials

1. Channels

Discussing specific channels for reaching youth, in-person events were often suggested as an effective option. Many participants said it would make the program seem more relatable if they were to hear real life stories from actual IEC participants. Participants also liked the idea of presentations in high schools or post-secondary institutions, and information booths at school/job fairs or academic conferences; these are marketing activities that are already being done by IEC, but participants generally had no recall of encountering this themselves.

“I think, one of the better options would be to be present in something like a school fair where you can actually have someone to answer questions. You just want to know more and having someone there to just talk to and learn all about it would definitely be a very efficient way of doing it, rather than just having a poster with a website link or something like that.”

Social media presence was also important, considering the media consumption habits of the target audience (youth 16-35). TikTok and Instagram were seen as the most critical channels, while other social media platforms like Facebook and X/Twitter were seen to be less popular for this age group. In terms of format, most participants said short videos perform better than static posts at grabbing their attention. Participants also suggested types of content they would like to see in promotional materials:

- Testimonials from participants.
- Details on the benefits of IEC vs. getting a work permit or visa themselves.
- Details on the types of job available and job searching steps.
- Information about accessibility in other countries, especially for youth with impairments.
- Types of financial aid available.
- Access to someone who can answer questions.

“Having people who can speak on their experience, goes so much further than just an image saying ‘be adventurous.’ If you are leaving people wanting more, then that’s when they’re going to actually click that link.”

“Highlight what accessibility supports will be put in place so that we don’t have to figure it out on our own... it can be exhausting for us to always request for accommodation accessibility. It may not be feasible in all of the countries, but at least the information is out there.”

2. Experiential Marketing

Group participants were shown a paragraph describing the concept of experiential marketing and two examples to help them better understand it conceptually.

Participants enjoyed seeing the examples of experiential marketing, but few could recall seeing anything like this in person, and they had difficulty connecting this concept to the idea of marketing IEC.

“I can’t exactly think of a way that it would translate testimonials into an in-person experience.”

A few participants were able to run with the idea, and suggested ways that IEC could create immersive experiences to showcase the program and generate interest. One suggestion was using VR or interesting audio-

visual elements at a fair or conference booth, another participant suggested creating selfie backdrops of different countries that visitors could use for social media posts.

“It’s probably the easiest way to get attention. When something cool like that is happening in the middle of a city center it attracts people. People are going to post it on TikTok or Instagram. Then that’s going to be shared organically so people would be more aware of the program through that.”

“It could be footage of maybe an influencer, or someone who had a GoPro and filmed an experience, or just seeing a bird in a tropical country or something. You could visualize it via a VR headset. I think that’d be incredibly immersive and cool.”

Without a concrete IEC-specific example, the concept of experiential marketing was very abstract and made it difficult for participants to assess during the group discussions. A few had been to the art exhibits but very few had seen the concept applied to marketing, so they often did not have much to offer when being asked to brainstorm marketing ideas. A few participants also criticized the concept for only being accessible in major cities and to those without impairments.

3. Look and Feel – Write Your Own Story

The “Look and Feel” section of the discussion was based on four examples of promotional materials for IEC.

To start, participants were shown a digital copy of a graphic from a campaign called “Write Your Own Story.” They were asked to provide their impressions of the image in terms of its design, content, main message, and effectiveness as a tool for marketing IEC to youth. Reactions were divided:

Positive reactions

- Many participants liked the aesthetic of the graphic, and praised the colours for being trendy and soothing. Some also liked the mirror effect on the border of the graphic.
- Facing the airport while carrying only one backpack, many participants liked the sense of endless possibilities this character conveyed.
- “Write Your Own Story” suggested agency and possibilities as well, which was motivating.

“I feel like something like this helps inspire people by telling them that you have control over the path of your life. And having the international experience to go to different places can help you decide what you want to do.”

“I think it just says like you’re in charge of your own destiny and the world is your playground.”

Negative reactions

- The campaign message was seen by some to be too vague and not immediately connected to travel. In other words, they felt it could mean anything.
- It was not clear that the campaign was specifically for IEC, and many suggested including a call to action such as a website link or QR code. Many also said that since they would not know what the campaign was about at first glance, it would not grab their attention.
- There were negative comments about the character. Some felt she looked like an Instagram influencer, and was too well put together to be travelling. Others felt the character was unrelatable because she was white-passing and slim. Some simply disliked the hat the character was wearing.

“It's not telling me enough about IEC specifically as a program. This is kind of leaving it up to interpretation. And I get that right? Your own story maybe means that. But I don't know if it's a work program, or just a leisure travel thing.”

“She looks rather put together in a way. I just remember feeling and looking like a disaster when I was traveling. I was so stressed and like I had so much luggage and everything. So, I think that just kind of throws me off, especially if it's supposed to be like a long journey.”

- Many thought the airport background was the wrong choice because they saw it as the most stressful and least exciting part of travel. A few suggested showing destination countries or landmarks instead.
- Lastly, some participants just did not like the colour choices and thought they did not grab attention.

“There isn't much excitement happening other than just being in an airport.”

“I feel like the flight is the least appealing part of the travel.”

4. Look and Feel – Mood board

After reviewing the campaign poster, participants were shown a mood board of stock images that could be used in marketing materials. Participants were asked to judge the authenticity of the images and whether these images successfully conveyed the concept of travelling or working abroad.

Overall sentiment towards the images was positive, though participants had some suggestions about specific details. A frequent suggestion was to use multiple images in combination with each other, to better convey the different aspects of IEC. Many acknowledged that while most of the images looked like stock photos, it did not necessarily make them inauthentic or ineffective. Perceptions of authenticity were generally consistent across groups:

Authentic:

In general, images that looked like they were taken by amateurs, capturing people in the moment were seen as more authentic.

- Nearly everyone felt that the man in the red jacket taking a selfie was a very authentic looking photo.
- The women biting pizza slices while taking a selfie were also often seen as very authentic. However, some suggested showing the actual selfie that the women took, rather than a photo of them taking a selfie.

“From the photo of the guy in the red coat taking a selfie, you can see that he's just on a break from work, and he went to go sight-seeing in whatever country he's in.”

“I want to see the selfie of the girls eating a pizza, not a picture of them taking a selfie.”

Neutral/Mixed:

- Some felt the man wearing glasses, sketching at his desk could be authentic but it was unclear if he was working abroad.
- Some thought the woman wearing a hard hat, laughing out loud image could be staged, or just captured in the moment. The image did not specifically signal the idea of working abroad.

- The women on a scooter also had mixed feedback. Some liked how happy and sincere the women looked; others thought it would be hard to capture a moment like that without staging it.

“I’m sure there are people who are actually laughing at work, but these ones for me feel too staged.”

“The bike image is really unrealistic. I could see if, like you saw a cute couple driving by a super cool building, and then you chase them down to snap a pic. And you’re like, can I post this? I don’t know how that actually works.”

Inauthentic:

Conversely, images that looked like they were staged and captured by a professional were seen as inauthentic.

- The surfing photo was one that many pointed out as inauthentic because it looked too staged. Several mentioned details like the styled hair and artificial lighting effects.
- Many disliked the handholding image for being cheesy and overdone.
- Several thought that the image showing a high five was very vague. They did not think the image conveyed either travelling or working.

“I think that candid is always better, even if you look silly. Because you’re enjoying the moment.”

“The other one at bottom with the hand holding looks like a couple on Tumblr to me.”

5. Look and Feel – “Travel while working” graphic

Participants were shown graphics that will be animated and used in marketing materials, with the tagline “Travel while working” on top. The graphic shows cartoon-style characters doing different things like working on a laptop, riding a bicycle, and looking through a telescope, set against a backdrop of oversized suitcases and a world map. Reactions to the graphics were predominantly positive and fairly consistent from group to group, with a few critiques.

Positive reactions

- Participants liked that the graphics showed a variety of characters doing different things, which conveyed both travelling and working abroad. These details were especially appreciated:
 - The person on a bike conveyed a different type of work, rather than a typical office job.
 - The person looking at a world map communicated possibility and excitement more than the character in the “Write Your Own Story” graphic looking at the airport.
- Many liked the colours and the style of the graphics, finding them to be trendy and lively, and appropriate for the target audience (youth 16-35).

“The imagery that we’re seeing here is way clearer about what this program is compared to what we’re seeing before. Even just seeing the person on the suitcase, like with the laptop, it gives more of a vibe of working rather than solely travelling.”

“I like the guy looking at the map and having the big map in front of him. To me this little guy looking at a big map, looks like more opportunities than a person standing at an airport window looking at a plane.”

Negative reactions

- Negative reactions to the graphics mostly revolved around the style. Some associated the style with large corporations, and criticized it for being unoriginal. One participant felt it resembled a well-known graphic design style called Corporate Memphis.
- A few thought the colours were too pastel.
- Some nitpicked details including:
 - The graphic was dominated by the suitcases. Suggestions to improve included making the suitcases smaller and showcasing something else that also conveyed travelling.
 - The plane on the world map was flying away from the destination pin rather than toward it. Some also pointed out that the destination pin is on Canada.
 - A few suggested changing the telescope to a camera.
 - The person on their laptop could be a digital nomad who brought their existing job with them while travelling, rather than having a new job in the destination country.

“The whole small heads with large bodies graphic style I feel is a bit overplayed in the 2020s. And I think a more original art style would be better.”

“The colours are very pastel and bland. They aren’t popping or eye-catching.”

“Maybe I’m being too analytical. But I’m like, if we’re traveling outside of Canada, then the pin should be in other countries and not in Canada. And also, why is the plane not flying towards the pin?”

6. Look and Feel – Social media

Participants were shown a social media mock-up. Reactions to the posts were generally positive, with a few negative comments about the contents. Participants noticed that some posts directly referenced IEC while others looked like generic travel ads. The youth with impairments group also interpreted the posts from an accessibility standpoint.

Positive reactions

- Across groups, participants had more positive than negative sentiments about posts that were specific, i.e., “Musts in Switzerland,” those that combined work and travel, and those that directly referenced IEC or work opportunities. Some said that posts like these would intrigue them to click and find more about the program.
- Posts that had both image and word components received more positive reactions than words alone.
- Participants liked seeing multiple posts together as they communicated various exciting elements of the program.

“I like them overall. They feel very fresh and young. I also like the one that’s just about Switzerland because it’s not about going abroad just anywhere but singling out a country, or a potential opportunity just to give ideas.”

“I really like the travel and work post, and the way it showed the pictures of different experiences together really caught my eye.”

Negative reactions

- It was noted that posts such “Be adventurous” and “Be stronger than ever” looked like generic tourism ads.
- Some said word-only posts were too boring to grab attention.
- The youth with impairment group especially criticized the “Be stronger than ever” post for potentially sending out a ableist message. Kayaking was not seen as an accessible activity for those with mobility issues, and they felt left out by the connection between kayaking and strength. It was suggested that showing other activities could convey a more inclusive definition of strength.

“I don't really see ‘the be stronger than ever’ associated at all with international experience.”

“The only one I don't really like is ‘explore fall employment opportunities abroad’ because for me it wouldn't catch my eye. It's not because it's not relevant, it just seems kind of boring.”

“‘Be stronger than ever’ kind makes me feel crappy. Some of us can't be. It feels exclusive.”

7. Videos

Three versions of the same short promotional video with different background music were played to participants. The moderators then asked participants about their perceptions of the videos, and which background music they thought worked the best.

Overall reactions to the videos were positive. A majority of participants thought the videos were effective at grabbing attention and creating excitement toward the concept of living abroad. The website address was thought to be well placed, and important.

A few thought the videos were too fast to understand what was going on during a first viewing. Some said that showing a person doing math on the chalkboard after telling people that they needed a work permit was confusing; they seemed to interpret this as school, rather than work (as a teacher).

The first background music, which was fast-tempo and upbeat, was liked by a majority of participants in nearly all groups. Many thought it matched with the visuals of the video more than the other two music options, while communicating a sense of excitement and adventure. Participants also generally liked the third music option, which also conveyed excitement while being less aggressive than the first. The second music option was least popular; participants did not think the slow music matched the visuals very well. Some also said it was sensual, or that it reminded them of a lounge.

“I think what worked really well with that video was that it was short and upbeat, and it was almost teasing. It definitely works in the sense that it would bring traffic to the website, or at least on my behalf.”

“I like fast and short videos, but I was having trouble reading the words. It was too fast”

“The first one, I think, was the best one. It kind of like not only grabs your attention, but it's also a good beat. If this was the soundtrack to me travelling, I would definitely play it.”

8. Websites

The last IEC materials shown to participants were two web pages from the IEC website. One was an outbound page for France, providing people with country-specific information such as eligibility, types of work, types of visas, length of staying, etc. Another one was a “how to get started” page for the IEC program overall, focusing on the general process, broken out by steps. Links for destination countries were also available on this page. After showing the pages on screen and giving participants some time to browse on their own devices, the moderator asked for feedback on the available information and layout of the websites.

Positive reactions

Feedback on the websites were predominantly positive, including the following observations:

- Upon the initial visit, most participants found the websites user-friendly, easy to navigate, and accessible.
- Most participants thought they could find all the information they needed from the website. They liked the clear instructions, and the layout on each page, such as the drop-down menus used on the outbound page, and the steps on the “how to get started” page.
- External information on travel advisories, 2SLGBTQ+ travellers’ safety, recognized organizations, and job-related content were considered very helpful.

“I think at the surface level it's very user-friendly. It answers the basics like who can apply, what kind of visa do you need, how long can you stay, and where can you apply? The external links were also included so if you look further into France's government website to confirm the requirements, you could look there.”

“I think it's pretty good. I liked it at the bottom where it talked about recognized organizations because the one thing I worried about was how you could actually find a job somewhere else. So, I like how it's got that linked and then you can go directly and talk to people who can help you set up a work.”

Suggestions

Asked about how to improve the websites, participants had several suggestions:

- Participants would like to see an FAQ section, as well as ways to contact IEC such as a phone number, an email address, or a live chat.
- Testimonials on the websites would be appreciated.
- Information on how much each step would cost, and possibly include funding sources if available.
- The “how to get started page” would benefit from using drop-down menus for the steps to make it less overwhelming at first glance.

“I think having testimonials somewhere here would be useful for people that are interested in hearing other perspectives, especially people leaving Canada. I think that would be like a nice addition to the websites because these pages already gave you a good cover of information.”

“I think content wise, it (“how to get started”) is a little bit dense. If this is my first time looking for any information about the program, it's a bit too much. Maybe having dropdowns again. I think having the dropdowns like how the first page (the France outbound page) was, it would make it a little bit easier to navigate. Because I wanted to see step one through step six at a high level.”

D. Summary of Findings Specific to Focus Groups with Indigenous Youth

Participants in the Indigenous focus groups were divided by past travel experience; two groups included those with international travel experience, and one group without. Some participants who had only travelled to the United States were included in the non-travel group to make the groups balanced.

In general, participants in the Indigenous groups shared similar travel behaviour and motivations as the other groups, but some key differences emerged:

- Like the rest of the groups, Indigenous participants noted interest in travelling to a broad variety of different countries and regions. Often, they mentioned a specific interest in Indigenous communities, or places known for their Indigenous culture.
- Noted benefits of travel were similar overall, but Indigenous participants put a stronger emphasis on connecting with land and culture in general, and also frequently mentioned an interest in connecting with Indigenous people from around the world.

“Even though there is still discrimination against Indigenous peoples there, they have a different level of respect and understanding and integration of their Indigenous culture throughout their whole New Zealand culture.”

General barriers to travelling and living abroad, like the cost of travel and responsibilities at home, were frequently mentioned in the Indigenous groups as they were in the others. Other concerns that came up occasionally in other groups were a more prominent barrier for those in the Indigenous groups. Indigenous participants sometimes elucidated ways in which these issues can impact Indigenous youth differently, or more acutely, than non-Indigenous youth:

- Finances are a major barrier. While this is not unique to Indigenous youth on its face, many of these youth come from a background of economic disadvantage and generational trauma, which exacerbates the issue for them.
- Finances are also a greater issue for those living in remote communities where there are additional costs and time involved in travelling within Canada in order to reach an international airport.
- Fear-based judgment, stereotypes, and racism toward Indigenous people, as well as other aspects of identity like gender or sexual orientation, are of high concern to some.
- Travel limitations due to a police record or conviction are more likely to be an issue for those from disadvantaged backgrounds with frequent contact with police.
- Medical insurance and access to medical care is a strong concern; some participants mentioned that Indigenous people are often at a higher risk of mental health issues and certain ailments like diabetes, which makes access to medical care extremely important.
- Indigenous youth often have strong family ties and extensive obligations to parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews, and cousins. This makes it difficult for a young person to leave their community for an extended period of time, both in terms of the impact on themselves, and the difficulty it imposes on those who rely on them.
- For some, being away from their community and cultural resources is a source of unease that can lead to mental health impacts and difficulty adapting to a new place.
- Some Indigenous youth are very wary of travelling alone, as a result of the other barriers that impact them.

“One of the major things I was very scared about elaborating on with my own self, is telling people I'm Indigenous, especially here, because I know a lot of people and Norwegians are very much against the Sami, which is the Indigenous group I'm currently interacting with.”

“As a queer person it can be complicated to make sure you've done the research to find somewhere that's going to be safe and has laws that protect you.”

“I was traveling within Canada but I forgot my antidepressants and I panicked. Thankfully, I had this online system because nobody has a family doctor here in Nova Scotia. They were able to prescribe me my medication and send it to Ottawa... it was a smooth transition but I can't imagine that would happen internationally.”

Like other groups, Indigenous participants were generally not aware of the IEC program. Some thought they may have encountered people entering Canada through the program, but weren't familiar with outbound options.

“In Alberta, Banff National Park and Jasper National Park specifically, I noticed it's always Australians and New Zealanders working there. I've asked them about it. And they've told me that yeah, they came here on programs like this. They told me if you go back to Australia and you go to the waterpark, every lifeguard or slide attendant is Canadian.”

When discussing the discrepancy between Canadians going abroad with IEC, and international youth coming to Canada through the program, the perspective from Indigenous participants was generally in line with what was heard in other groups. There was a strong emphasis on the benefits of living and travelling within Canada.

“We've been told, Canada's the land of opportunity; you can learn French, you can learn English, you can go here, you can go there, the education system is seen as high quality.”

“A large part of the reason we'd do a program like this would just be for the experiences rather than the opportunities... and with Canada being a cultural mosaic, we can experience a lot of different cultures right here at home.”

“Why would I go elsewhere for school or work when there are some of the best schools and jobs here in Canada?”

Suggestions for marketing the IEC program, and increasing interest in it among Canadian youth were similar among Indigenous youth and the other focus groups. Often, they remarked on how few of them had heard of it before, and suggested that simple awareness seems to be a major issue from their perspective.

Promotional Materials

In general, reactions to the promotional materials were very similar between Indigenous groups and other youth. Indigenous youth were more vocal about a lack of representation in the photos of people used for marketing, not just in terms of ethnicity or Indigeneity, but also other characteristics like body type and disability.

“It's always a white passing individual on the picture... it's not my story. I don't feel like it is. I can't resonate with it.”

“It lacks so much diversity... the pictures they choose are not inclusive by any means. There's not one individual here that might have a visual disability to make it feel possible for everyone to actually do this. There's lack of ethnicity, race and colour.”

Indigenous participants were quick to point out that including more Indigenous youth in the IEC program would require more than just marketing. They expressed a strong desire for personalized support in navigating immigration processes and emphasized the importance of fostering partnerships and community connections for authentic representation. Specific support and efforts that would help include:

- Assistance to overcome the daunting nature of the application process.
- More authenticity in promotional materials.
- Using social media for storytelling and sharing more Indigenous perspectives.
- Clearer pathways for financial assistance and job support.
- Highlighting resources available to Indigenous youth interested in work and study abroad.

Appendix A: Methodology

To meet IRCC's research objectives, two phases of research were conducted with Canadian youth aged 16 to 35.

Quantitative phase

The **quantitative online survey** was conducted to understand travel behaviour and motivations among Canadian youth, from the perspective of the youth themselves. It gathered information on their travel experience, their views on travel in general and post-pandemic travel, their views on the IEC program and their future intentions regarding international experiences.

Sample design and weighting

A sample of 2,573 Canadian citizens aged 16-35 was drawn from an online panel of Canadians who have consented to participate in online surveys. These survey participants were qualified through a screener at the beginning of the survey. The sample was stratified by region, age, and gender based on the 2021 Census. Given the limited number of respondents aged 16-17, these cases were left unweighted.

Table 47: Gender

Gender	% of population	% of weighted sample	Actual Unweighted	Actual Weighted
Male	49%	50%	1,213	1,283
Female	51%	49%	1,322	1,256
Another gender	N/A	1%	29	26
No Response	N/A	<1%	9	8

Table 48: Age

	% of population	% of weighted sample	Actual Unweighted	Actual Weighted
16 to 17	9%	3%	71	71
18 to 24	32%	36%	1,047	916
25 to 35	59%	62%	1,455	1,586

Table 49: Jurisdiction

	% of population	% of weighted sample	Actual Unweighted	Actual Weighted
Atlantic	6%	6%	162	156
Quebec	21%	23%	548	585
Ontario	40%	39%	1,026	1,012
Manitoba / Saskatchewan	7%	7%	173	174
Alberta	12%	12%	324	311
BC/Territories	14%	13%	340	334

Questionnaire design and pre-test

Environics adapted the survey questionnaire provided by IRCC to meet the research objectives. Once finalized, the online survey was translated into French. The final online survey/screener is included in a separate cover.

Environics' data analysts programmed the questionnaire, then performed thorough testing to ensure accuracy in set-up and data collection. This validation ensured that the data entry process conformed to the surveys' basic logic. The data collection system handles sampling invitations, quotas and questionnaire logic (skip patterns, branching, and valid ranges).

Prior to finalizing the survey for field, a pre-test (soft launch) was conducted in English and French. The pre-test assessed the questionnaire in terms of question wording and sequencing, respondent sensitivity to specific questions and to the survey overall, and to determine the survey length. As no changes were required following the pre-test, the pre-test cases were included in the analysis.

Fieldwork

The survey was conducted by Environics using a secure, fully featured web-based survey environment from December 4 (soft launch pre-test) to December 21, 2023. The average interview length among those who completed the full quantitative survey was 13 minutes.

All respondents were offered the opportunity to complete the survey in their official language of choice. All research work was conducted in accordance with the Standards for the Conduct of Government of Canada Public Opinion Research – Online Surveys and recognized industry standards, as well as applicable federal legislation (Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, or PIPEDA).

Completion results

The participation rate for the survey was 13.9% (calculated as the number of responding units, divided by the sum of unresolved units, in-scope non-responding units, and responding units).

- Total number of sample units invited to participate: 41,422
- Invalid cases: 0
- Unresolved units: 35,058
 - Invitations bounce back: 0
 - Invitations did not respond: 35,058
- In-scope non-responding units: 607
 - Non-response from eligible respondents: 0
 - Respondent refusals: 0
 - Language problem: 0
 - Selected respondent not available (illness; leave of absence; vacation; other): 0
 - Early break-offs: 607
- Responding units: 5,757
 - Completed surveys disqualified – quota filled: 1,567
 - Completed surveys disqualified for other reasons: 1,617
 - Completed surveys: 2,573

Non-response bias analysis

The table below presents a profile of the final general population sample of Canadian citizen youth 16 to 35 (unweighted), compared to the actual population of Canadian citizen youth 16 to 35 (2021 Census information). Unweighted age samples 18+ are very similar to census proportions. Men are slightly underrepresented in the unweighted sample due to generally lower rates of participation in online panel surveys.

Table 50: Youth sample non-response bias: Gender (16 to 35)

Gender	Sample (unweighted)	Canada (2021 Census)
Male	47.1%	50.8%
Female	51.4%	49.2%

Table 51: Youth sample non-response bias: Age (16 to 35)

Age	Sample (unweighted)	Canada (2021 Census)
16 to 17	2.8%	8.7%
18 to 24	40.1%	32.5%
25 to 35	56.5%	58.8%

Statement of limitations

Since online panel surveys are not random probability samples, no formal estimates of sampling error can be calculated. Although not employing a random probability sample, online surveys can be used for surveys with the public provided they are well designed and employ a large, well-maintained panel. Respondents were informed about privacy and anonymity.

Respondent profile

The following table presents the distribution of survey participants by key demographic and other variables:

Table 52: Respondent profile

Total interviewed	Total sample %
Age	
16-17	3%
18-24	36%
25-30	28%
31-35	33%
Gender	
Female	49%
Male	50%
Gender diverse	1%
Education	
High school or less	18%
College/tech/some university	36%
University	43%
Language of survey	
English	86%
French	14%
Community type	
Urban area	80%
Rural	9%
Birthplace	
Canada	84%
Other	15%

Qualitative phase

EnviroNics Research conducted a series of 16 online focus groups with 112 Canadian youth aged 16 to 35 in January 2024 to discuss their experiences and perceptions of international travel in general, and the International Experience Canada program (IEC). The focus groups were conducted online using Zoom. Groups were recruited by region, with general population groups for Ontario (2), British Columbia (1), Atlantic provinces (1), Manitoba and Saskatchewan (1), Alberta (1), and Quebec (2). Additional groups were recruited for 2SLGBTQI+ youth (2), youth with mobility, visual, or hearing impairments (1), female youth in STEM fields (1), Indigenous youth (3), and youth who had participated in the International Experience Canada program (IEC) (1). The two Quebec sessions were conducted in French and the other fourteen sessions were conducted in English. French-speaking participants from outside of Quebec were also included in the two Quebec sessions.

The sessions were distributed as follows:

Target group	Dates	Time	Attendance
Ontario General population youth 16-36 (English)	Tuesday January 16	5pm EST	8
Manitoba and Saskatchewan General population youth 16-36 (English)	Tuesday January 16	7pm EST (6pm CST)	7
Quebec General population youth 16-36 (French)	Wednesday January 17	5pm EST	5
Quebec General population youth 16-36 (French)	Wednesday January 17	7pm EST	8
2SLGBTQI+ youth 16 to 24 (English)	Thursday January 18	6pm EST	8
2SLGBTQI+ youth 25 to 36 (English)	Thursday January 18	8pm EST	6
Ontario General population youth 16-36 (English)	Tuesday January 23	6pm EST	8
British Columbia General population youth 16-36 (English)	Tuesday January 23	8pm EST (5pm PST)	7
Atlantic Provinces General population youth 16-36 (English)	Wednesday January 24	5pm EST (6pm AST)	8
Alberta General population youth 16-36 (English)	Wednesday January 24	7pm EST (5pm MST)	8
Youth with mobility, visual or hearing impairments (English)	Thursday January 25	5pm EST	8
Female youth completing/have completed a Science, Technology, Engineering or Math (STEM) degree (English)	Thursday January 25	7pm EST	8
Indigenous Youth who have travelled outside Canada and the US (English)	Monday January 29	6pm EST	5
Past IEC participants (English)	Monday January 29	8pm EST	4
Indigenous Youth who have not travelled outside Canada and the US (English)	Tuesday February 13	6pm EST	5
Indigenous Youth who have travelled outside Canada and the US (English)	Tuesday February 13	8pm EST	9

Participants in all groups were 16 to 35 years of age, and groups were recruited to include a mix of ages, genders, ethnicities, and education levels. The groups lasted approximately 90 minutes each and consisted of between four and nine participants (out of eight people recruited for each group, while nine people each group were recruited for the last two Indigenous youth groups). Participants in most groups were provided a \$125 honorarium to encourage participation and thank them for their time commitment; participants in the Indigenous youth groups were provided a \$175 honorarium.

All groups were video- and audio-recorded for use in subsequent analysis by the research team, except for the three Indigenous groups. In addition to the Indigenous facilitator, the Indigenous groups were only attended by a dedicated notetaker from NVision, and a member of the Environics Research team. To minimize participant discomfort and avoid the perception that participants were subjects being observed and studied, Government of Canada observers did not attend these groups. During the recruitment process and at the session sign-in, participants provided consent to such recording and were given privacy and confidentiality assurances. All qualitative research work was conducted in accordance with professional standards and applicable government legislation (e.g., PIPEDA).

Recruitment

Groups were recruited using two methods. For all groups except the Indigenous youth groups and the IEC participants group, recruitment was conducted by Environics' qualitative partner Trend Research, which is one of Canada's most well established and respected qualitative research recruiting operations. This recruiting was conducted by telephone and e-mail by Trend's professional team of experienced and trained qualitative research recruiters. Trend maintains a panel of prospective qualitative research participants across Canada. The panel is composed of people who have taken part in quantitative surveys and agreed to be contacted to be potential paid participants in qualitative research projects, as well as people who are recruited to the panel through social media promotion.

Environics developed the recruitment screener and provided it to IRCC for review prior to its deployment with Trend. Participants were contacted randomly by phone and e-mail and screened to ensure they were invited to the appropriate session. Participants were also screened to ensure the groups included a mix of age, gender, ethnicity, education, and that they would be comfortable voicing their opinions in front of others. Normal focus group exclusions were in place (marketing research, media and employment in the federal government, and recent related focus group attendance). Participants recruited through Trend were offered a \$125 honorarium to encourage participation and thank them for their time commitment.

The three Indigenous youth groups and the IEC participants group were recruited using a networking approach, where organizations serving Indigenous youth and IEC partner organizations were asked to share information about the study with their own networks. Interested potential participants were directed to contact Environics Research. Those who contacted Environics were screened according to the same general criteria used for other focus groups, and to ensure they qualified as Indigenous youth (based on self-identification) or as participants of IEC. The networking approach was used due to the relatively low incidence of these groups within the general population. Note that a few members of the regional general population groups recruited by Trend also identified as Indigenous.

Participants in the Indigenous youth sessions were offered a \$175 honorarium, while IEC participants were offered a \$125 honorarium. Indigenous youth participants were recruited with an effort toward reaching a broad cross-section of Indigenous people living across Canada, but no specific quotas were set. Participants resided across Canada, including a variety of community types from major cities to remote communities. Note

that the following table is based on province/territory of permanent residence; some youth participants are currently attending school away from their home communities.

Indigenous Focus Group Participant Residence:

Province / Territory	Count
Alberta	5
British Columbia	2
Manitoba	5
Newfoundland and Labrador	1
Nova Scotia	1
Ontario	5
Quebec	1
Saskatchewan	1
Total	19

During recruitment, youth were asked to indicate which Indigenous group they identify with, i.e. First Nations, Métis, or Inuit. Of the 19 participants, 11 were First Nations, seven were Métis, and one was Inuit.

Indigenous Identity of Youth:

Province / Territory	Count
First Nations	11
Métis	7
Inuit	1
Total	19

In addition to the broader identity groups, some First Nations participants named the specific nations, bands, and communities that they are connected to, including a wide range of peoples such as Algonquin, Anishinaabe, Cree, Mi'kmaq, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh, and Coast Salish.

Moderation

Two senior researchers moderated most sessions, as follows:

- Stephanie Coulter, Senior Research Associate, Environics, moderated two general population sessions in English, as well as the sessions with youth with impairments, female youth in STEM fields, and past IEC participants in English.
- France Mercier, Senior Associate, moderated two French sessions, four English sessions with general population, and the two 2SLGBTQI+ youth sessions in English.

Additionally, the three Indigenous youth sessions were moderated in English by an Indigenous consultant, Gina Doxtator, from NVision Insight Group Inc.

Statement of limitations

Qualitative research provides insight into the range of opinions held within a population, rather than the weights of the opinions held, as measured in a quantitative survey. The results of the qualitative research should be viewed as indicative rather than projectable to the population.

Appendix B: Quantitative and qualitative instruments

English and French quantitative and qualitative instruments are provided under separate cover.