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and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada

2025-26 International Experience Canada (IEC) Youth Study Final Report

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Canada 

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Executive Summary

Earnscliffe Strategy Group (Earnscliffe) is pleased to present this report to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) summarizing the results of quantitative research with Canadian youth (16 to 35), and qualitative research with youth (16 to 35), 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, women in STEM, Indigenous youth, mobility, visual or hearing impaired youth, and past IEC participants on awareness of International Experience Canada (IEC) and interest in travelling and living abroad.

Background and Objectives

International Experience Canada (IEC) is a program managed by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, which offers Canadian youth aged 18 to 35 the opportunity to travel and work in one of over 35 partner countries and territories. Because it is a reciprocal program, foreign youth from partner countries/territories can do the same in Canada.

The 2025-26 International Experience Canada (IEC) Study was intended to gather information about both IEC participants and non-participants (including communities of interest such as: 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, Indigenous youth, women in STEM, youth with impairments, younger youth between 16-18, and past IEC participants), to inform policy development and communications, including development of new and targeted promotion and communication products, and identify barriers that IEC could address.

This research builds on knowledge gained from previous public opinion research and includes a focus on better understanding the motivations and barriers to travel.

The total contract value of the research project was: **\$179,519.72 including HST.**

Methodology

To meet the research objectives, Earnscliffe conducted two phases of research: a quantitative phase (online survey) and a qualitative phase (focus groups).

Quantitative phase

For the quantitative phase, Earnscliffe conducted an online survey of Canadian youth aged 16 to 35, exploring travel behaviours and motivations, travel experiences, general views on travel and living abroad, awareness and views of the IEC program and future international experience intentions. The online panel survey was conducted with 2,515 Canadian citizens aged 16 to 35 from January 28 to February 16, 2026. The sample was stratified and weighted by region, age, and gender based on the 2021 Census.

Qualitative phase

For the qualitative phase, Earnscliffe conducted a series of twelve focus groups between February 4 and February 11, 2026, to discuss experiences and perceptions of international travel and living abroad, awareness of (or experience with) IEC, and feedback on approaches for marketing IEC to Canadian youth.

There were six focus groups with youth (16-35) in five key regions of the country: Atlantic Canada (1), Quebec (2), Ontario (1), the Prairies (1), and British Columbia/Territories (1). Additionally, we conducted one national focus group with: youth (16-18), members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community (16-35), Indigenous youth (16-35), female youth who are completing or who have completed a Science, Technology, Engineering or Math (STEM) degree (16-35), youth with a mobility, visual or hearing impairment (16-35), and past IEC participants (16-35). All of the groups were conducted in English except for the focus group with residents of Quebec and the National focus group with French-speaking Canadians. Those in official language minority communities were also invited to join a group in their preferred language.

The groups were conducted online using Zoom and each group was up to ninety minutes in length. Participants were given an honorarium of \$100 to \$150. Groups were recruited according to several criteria, with separate groups for several distinct audiences. In total, 110 participants were recruited and 91 participants participated in the focus groups.

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.

Qualitative research is a form of scientific, social, policy, and public opinion research. Focus group research is not designed to help a group reach a consensus or to make decisions, but rather to elicit the full range of ideas, attitudes, experiences, and opinions of a selected sample of participants on a defined topic. Because of the small numbers involved the participants cannot be expected to be thoroughly representative in a statistical sense of the larger population from which they are drawn, and findings cannot reliably be generalized beyond their number.

Key Findings

General travel behaviour among Canadian youth

- A majority of Canadian youth (78%) have travelled outside Canada for leisure or business at least once in their lifetime, similar to the previous wave.
 - Four in ten have travelled abroad for work (26%), study (25%), and/or volunteer experiences (18%). These experiences are most often self-arranged (47%), or arranged through school (39%) or an employer (23%).
- Among those who have travelled abroad for work, study, or volunteering, the most frequently cited benefits include exploration and adventure (54%), learning about a new country or culture

(51%), and personal growth (49%). Other commonly mentioned benefits include increased confidence, making friends abroad, and improved adaptability.

- Many youth who have travelled abroad also experienced some barriers, most often reporting encountering language barriers (37%) and financial challenges (32%), while about a quarter mention concerns related to safety or discrimination (26%), loneliness (25%), or culture shock (24%).
 - Compared to the previous wave, fewer respondents report experiencing language barriers and culture shock, while somewhat more report financial concerns and impacts on obligations in Canada.
- In the qualitative research, most participants described prior international travel as short-term leisure trips rather than longer work or study experiences. While many expressed interest in the idea of living or working abroad, it was often described as aspirational rather than something they were actively planning to pursue.
 - Younger participants tended to discuss international experience in exploratory terms, while older participants and those in post-secondary education were more likely to evaluate it in relation to career timing, financial feasibility, and practical considerations.

Gap years

- One in five youth (19%) say they have taken a gap year in which they travelled and/or worked abroad for up to twelve months.
- Gap years are viewed positively overall. About two thirds (65%) say the idea of taking a gap year is appealing.
- Among those who have taken a gap year, a third (35%) say they would like to take another one, and 14% of those who haven't, plan to take one before the age of 36.
- Financial considerations are the most frequently cited reason for not planning to take a gap year, with a quarter saying they cannot afford the experience or have financial obligations. Family or job commitments are also commonly cited reasons.
- Peer groups and friends are seen as the most encouraging influence on taking a gap year. Among those who have already taken one, encouragement most often came from friends, while among those who have not, peers are also expected to be the most supportive and often more supportive than family.
- The qualitative findings suggest that youth interpret the concept of a gap year in different ways. Some associate it with travel and personal growth between life stages, while others see it as time away from education or career progression. Cultural expectations around following a linear path from education to career were frequently mentioned as influencing decisions about extended travel abroad.

Awareness and perceptions of IEC

- Awareness of IEC remains limited. The majority (58%) say they had never heard of the program before taking the survey, representing an increase compared to the previous wave (54%). One in ten respondents (11%) say they know a fair amount about the program, and only a small share (3%) say they know the program well.
- Awareness most often comes through friends and family, Instagram, schools, and Facebook.
 - Compared to the previous wave, awareness through schools has increased, while awareness through friends and family and the official IEC website has declined slightly.

- When asked how they would prefer to receive information about IEC, youth most often point to academic institutions or school campuses (30%), general internet searches (30%), friends and family (25%), and Government of Canada or IEC websites (23%).
- Qualitative findings suggest that unaided awareness of IEC by name remains minimal. Participants often found the program name unclear and not descriptive of its purpose, sometimes assuming it referred to international youth coming to Canada rather than Canadians going abroad.
 - Even past IEC participants were often unfamiliar with the program by name and did not always connect it to their own international experience, suggesting a disconnect between program participation and program recognition.
- After learning more about IEC, focus group participants generally responded positively and viewed it as a legitimate opportunity for gaining international experience. However, many also sought clarification about what the program facilitates versus what participants are expected to arrange independently, particularly regarding employment, housing, and travel arrangements.
- Interest in participating in IEC or a similar program remains moderate. While some youth express genuine interest, many approach the idea pragmatically, weighing the potential benefits against financial costs, logistical complexity, and career timing considerations.

IEC participation

- One in ten youth (10%) say they have participated in the International Experience Canada (IEC) program or travelled abroad using a similar youth mobility program.
 - Participation is higher among men.
- Australia remains the most commonly mentioned destination among past participants (22%), followed by the United Kingdom (18%), France (14%), Italy (12%), and Germany (11%). Compared to the previous wave, travel to Italy and Finland has increased, while travel to Belgium has declined.
- Most participants travelled through an open work permit stream (63%), though this has declined from the previous wave. More than a third (39%) report travelling through an employer-specific work permit stream, while 11% say they are not sure which stream they used.
- Qualitative discussions with past IEC participants indicated that many learned about the program while already exploring international work or travel opportunities. Participants often described their experiences as personally transformative and valuable for building independence, confidence, and adaptability, though many also noted challenges related to finances, planning, or navigating administrative requirements.
 - Women in STEM participants were somewhat more likely to frame international experience in professional terms, discussing opportunities to learn from different workplace environments and approaches and build career-relevant experience abroad.

Satisfaction and impact

- Satisfaction with IEC experiences is high. About three quarters of participants who participated in IEC or travelled abroad using foreign countries' or territories' youth mobility programs say they were satisfied overall, including 36% who were very satisfied and 40% who were somewhat satisfied. Only a small share report dissatisfaction.

- Most participants also say they would recommend an international working abroad experience such as IEC to family or friends. More than eight in ten say they are likely to recommend it, including 36% who are very likely.
- Among those who have worked, studied, or volunteered abroad, about half (49%) say they have included their international experience on their resume. However, this has declined compared to the previous wave (63%).
 - Many also say they are eager to highlight their international experience to employers and that it improved their job prospects in Canada, although agreement on these measures has also declined from last year.
- Qualitative findings reinforce that many youth see international experiences as valuable for personal and professional development. Participants often describe gaining confidence, adaptability, and a broader worldview, though some note that translating these experiences into tangible career benefits can depend on the relevance of the work they performed abroad.

IEC work experience

- Most IEC participants (62%) say they would have pursued another work or travel option if IEC had not been available.
- A small majority (54%) say they arranged employment before going abroad, and most (85%) worked while abroad, often in more than one role.
 - Among those who worked abroad, full-time work was more common than part-time work.
 - Financial compensation was the most common form of payment, though a sizeable minority report receiving in-kind compensation such as room and board.
- Participants report a wide range of position types and earnings while abroad, and spending levels also vary considerably, suggesting that IEC work experiences differ substantially depending on the nature of the job, destination, and participant circumstances.
- Qualitative findings also indicate that employment experiences abroad vary widely, ranging from hospitality and tourism roles to professional or career-related positions. Some participants noted that while the work itself was not always directly related to their long-term career goals, the broader experience of living and working abroad was highly valuable.

Barriers, motivations, and considerations for international experiences

- Interest in future international travel remains relatively high, particularly for leisure travel. Nearly eight in ten youth say they are likely to travel internationally for leisure or business before age 36. However, intentions to travel abroad for work (33%), study (20%), or volunteering (19%) are lower and have declined slightly compared to the previous wave.
- Exploration and adventure (82%), learning about a new country or culture (79%), and pursuing international travel experiences that contribute to personal growth (74%) remain the strongest motivators for working, studying, or volunteering abroad.
 - Learning or improving another language (70%) and obtaining international career experience or professional development (62%) are also widely cited motivations.
- At the same time, financial barriers remain the most significant obstacles. Concerns about the cost of living overseas (72%) and funding travel experiences (68%) are the most commonly cited barriers.

- Other common concerns include language barriers (62%), not knowing how to get started (58%), obligations in Canada (49%), and finding employment abroad (48%).
- Interest in participating in a future work and travel abroad program like IEC is mixed. Four in ten youth say they are unlikely to participate (40%), while three in ten say they are likely to do so (30%).
 - Australia (20%), France (17%), the United Kingdom (15%), Japan (13%), and Italy (11%) are the most commonly preferred destinations among those interested in working or travelling abroad.
- Qualitative findings suggest that financial cost was the most frequently cited barrier to participation, followed by uncertainty about program logistics and how the program works in practice. Safety, accessibility, continuity of care, and social climate were also important considerations for some groups.
 - Qualitative findings also highlight that different groups consider additional factors when evaluating opportunities abroad. Youth with impairments emphasized accessibility planning and continuity of care, some 2SLGBTQIA+ participants noted that social climate and inclusivity of destination countries would influence destination choice, and Indigenous youth discussed how connection to land, family, and community shaped their perspectives on extended time abroad.

General and financial supports

- Youth most often say practical supports would encourage participation in an IEC program. The most frequently selected supports include a buddy system (34%), step-by-step planning, budgeting and visa guides (32%), visa application support (30%), job boards or employer partnerships (27%), and access to destination-country resources and networks (21%).
- Among those selecting them, most support types are seen as having a moderate or major impact on participation.
 - Emergency funds for unexpected expenses in particular are viewed as highly impactful (93%), followed by a buddy system (92%), job boards or employer partnerships (91%), scholarships or micro-grants (91%), and planning guides (88%).
- Financial assistance remains central to participation. Many youth say they would require a moderate or large amount of financial assistance to study abroad (74%) or volunteer abroad (72%), and more than half say they would require similar support to work while living abroad (54%).
 - A majority also say financial assistance would be a major or insurmountable barrier for studying abroad (62%) and volunteering abroad (61%).
- Qualitative findings suggest that financial cost, geographic distance, and limited awareness of IEC are seen as structural barriers to participation. Participants also emphasized the importance of clear information, practical planning support, and understanding how the experience would unfold once abroad, including confidence that help would be available if problems arose while abroad.
 - Participants also raised many operational questions about how the program works in practice, including participating countries, types of employment available, visa requirements, health insurance, salary expectations, taxes, and whether employment must be secured before departure.

- It was suggested they would be more likely to participate if the program clearly communicated what responsibilities remain with the participant, particularly around employment arrangements, housing, and emergency support while abroad.

Political Neutrality Certification

Research firm: Earnscliffe Strategy Group (Earnscliffe)

Contract number: CW2422655

Contract value: \$179,519.72 (including HST)

Contract award date: 2025-10-10

I hereby certify as a representative of Earnscliffe Strategy Group that the final 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.

Signed:

Date: March 12, 2026

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephanie Constable', written in a cursive style.

Stephanie Constable
Principal, Earnscliffe

Introduction

Earnscliffe Strategy Group (Earnscliffe) is pleased to present this report to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) summarizing the results of quantitative research with Canadian youth (16 to 35), and qualitative research with youth (16 to 35), 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, women in STEM, Indigenous youth, mobility, visual or hearing impaired youth, and past IEC participants on awareness of International Experience Canada (IEC) and interest in travelling and living abroad.

Introduction and Objectives

International Experience Canada (IEC) is a program managed by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada which offers Canadian citizen youth aged 18 to 35 the opportunity to travel and work in one of over 35 partner countries and territories. Because it is a reciprocal program, foreign youth from partner countries/territories can do the same in Canada.

The IEC program has the mandate to maximize reciprocity between international youth participation and Canadian youth participation in the work-travel pathways it has negotiated with over 35 countries and territories. IEC also 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.

This research will be used to provide insight into the travel and work abroad behaviors of Canadian youth, as well as perceptions and attitudes towards travel and work abroad experiences among IEC's target audience. Barriers and motivators to pursuing work abroad experiences will also help inform policy and targeted engagement and promotion.

The 2025-26 International Experience Canada (IEC) Study was intended to gather information about both IEC participants and non-participants, to inform policy development and communications, including development of new and targeted promotion and communication products, and identify barriers that IEC could address.

This research will build on knowledge gained from previous public opinion research studies, extending time series data on Canadian youth awareness of International Experience Canada from 2018 to present, and interest in travelling abroad.

The specific objectives of this research include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Awareness of IEC and interest in travelling abroad;
- Attitudes toward working and travelling abroad (including work-integrated learning);
- Attitudes toward safety while travelling abroad and trust in foreign governments;
- Attitudes toward mental health while travelling abroad and potential supports;
- Gaps in resources and services (including in work abroad services) or external environment (economy) 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, and skills development of, youth (versus those who do not undertake such experiences);
- Awareness of campaigns such as IEC influencer marketing; and
- Where youth obtain information about international travel destinations.

The total contract value of the research project was \$179,519.72 including HST.

Methodology

To meet the research objectives, Earnscliffe conducted two phases of research: a quantitative phase (online survey) and a qualitative phase (focus groups).

Quantitative phase

For the quantitative phase, Earnscliffe conducted an online survey of Canadian youth aged 16 to 35, exploring travel behaviour and motivations, travel experiences, views on travel and living abroad in general, awareness and views of the IEC program and future international experience intentions. The online panel survey was conducted with 2,515 Canadians citizens aged 16 to 35 from January 28 to February 16, 2026. The sample was stratified and weighted by region, age, and gender based on the 2021 Census.

Qualitative phase

For the qualitative phase, Earnscliffe conducted a series of twelve focus groups between February 4 and February 11, 2026, to discuss experiences and perceptions of international travel and living abroad, awareness of (or experience with) the International Experience Canada program (IEC), and feedback on approaches for marketing IEC to Canadian youth.

There were six focus groups with youth (16-35) in five key regions of the country: Atlantic Canada (1), Quebec (2), Ontario (1), the Prairies (1), and British Columbia/Territories (1). Additionally, we conducted one national focus group with each of: youth (16-18), members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community (16-35), Indigenous youth (16-35), female youth who are completing or who have completed a Science, Technology, Engineering or Math (STEM) degree (16-35), youth with a mobility, visual or hearing impairment (16-35), and past IEC participants (16-35). All of the groups were conducted in English except for the focus group with residents of Quebec and the National focus group with French-speaking Canadians. Those in official language minority communities were invited to join a group in their preferred language.

The focus groups were conducted online using Zoom and each group was up to ninety minutes in length. Participants were given an honorarium of \$100 to \$150. Groups were recruited according to several criteria, with separate groups for several distinct audiences. In total, 110 participants were recruited and 91 participants participated in the focus groups.

About this Report

The following report presents the analysis of quantitative and qualitative research. For each section of the report, results of each phase of research are presented beginning with quantitative results that provide a statistical analysis of youth impressions, experiences, and opinions, followed by relevant qualitative results to add nuance and insight into these views.

The term “respondent” and present tense is used when quantitative (survey) results are discussed, and “participant” and past tense when qualitative (focus group) results are discussed.

In this report, quantitative results are shown for all respondents for the current wave of research (2025-26) and the past wave (2024-25). Current results are also broken down to show male and female participants, as well as their current schooling status (in high school, in post-secondary, or not currently in school). Additionally other demographic breaks are discussed where significant, such as among key program target audiences: members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community (16-35), Indigenous youth (16-35), female youth (16-35) who are completing or who have completed a Science, Technology, Engineering or Math (STEM) degree (16-35), youth with a mobility, visual or hearing impairment (16-35), past IEC participants (16-35), and economically disadvantaged youth (16-35). Economically disadvantaged youth refers to those who report they would require a moderate or large amount of assistance to work while living abroad overseas for at least six months, and, say they would find getting the necessary assistance to work while living abroad overseas for at least six months to be a major or insurmountable barrier.

Unless otherwise noted, highlighted differences between sub-groups are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Statistically significant differences between these sub-groups are noted by a plus sign or a minus sign; the presence of a plus sign indicates that the result is significantly higher compared to the related comparison group, a minus sign indicates a lower result. Where significance testing is shown between the three education status sub-groups, a letter behind the + or - indicates the column in the table with which the result is statistically significantly higher or lower. Column labels are indicated in the last row of each table. The statistical test used to determine significant differences between proportions is the Z-test, the test used for comparing means is the two-tailed T-test. Sub-groups are only tested against related groups, for example, women are compared to men. Total results for 2025-26 are compared to total results from 2024-25. Differences between proportions of 5% or less are not indicated, and in some cases statistical testing has been omitted due to small base sample sizes.

Tables for some survey questions have been truncated for length and readability of the report. This is indicated below the tables, along with the threshold used. Complete data for each question with all response categories are included in the data tables (under a separate cover). Due to rounding or multiple response options, results may not add to 100%.

Details about the quantitative methodology are found in Appendix 1, and details about the qualitative methodology are provided in Appendix 2. A glossary of terms that explains the generalizations and interpretations of qualitative terms used throughout this report can also be found in Appendix 2. Research instruments (i.e. survey questionnaire, qualitative recruitment screener, focus group discussion guides) are appended under separate cover.

Verbatim quotations from qualitative focus group participants are included throughout the report to provide examples of participant responses in their own words.

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.

Qualitative research is a form of scientific, social, policy and public opinion research. Focus group research is not designed to help a group reach a consensus or to make decisions, but rather to elicit the full range of ideas, attitudes, experiences, and opinions of a selected sample of participants on a defined topic. Because of the small numbers involved the participants cannot be expected to be thoroughly representative in a statistical sense of the larger population from which they are drawn, and findings cannot reliably be generalized beyond their number.

Research Findings

This report is divided into eight main sections: general travel behaviour among Canadian youth; gap years; IEC participation and international internship; IEC awareness; satisfaction and impact; IEC work experience; motivations and barriers for international experiences; and general and financial support.

Section A: General travel behaviour among Canadian youth

1. Past travel experience

A majority of Canadian youth (78%) say they have travelled outside of the country for leisure or business in their lifetime, which is consistent with results from the 2024-25 research wave (80%).

Four in ten (40%) have travelled for work (26%), study (25%), and/or volunteering (18%), which is unchanged since the prior wave of research. These proportions are higher among men than among women, with 46% of men having travelled for work, study or volunteering, compared to 35% of women who have done the same.

Among high school students, the net non-leisure or business travel incidence is 33%, 12 points lower than among post-secondary students (45%). Among current post-secondary students, a third have travelled for study (34%), and one in five for volunteering (21%).

Overall, the mean number of lifetime trips to work outside of Canada is 4.1 (down from 5.8 in 2024-25), while the mean for study is up slightly (from 2.7 to 3.6 trips). The mean number of trips for volunteering is stable (1.6 vs 1.5). Among those who have taken at least one trip, the average number of lifetime trips is 15.9 for work (down from 21.3 in 2024-25), 14.4 for study (up from 10.7) and 8.5 for volunteering (up slightly from 7.8).

Table A1: Q3. How many times have you done any of the following activities outside Canada in your lifetime?

Base: All respondents

Column % [% taking at least one trip]	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Travel for leisure or business	78%	80%	76%	73%	79%	79%
Work	26%	33%+	20%	20%	26%	27%+(D)
Study	25%	29%+	22%	26%	34%+(DF)	21%
Volunteer	18%	22%+	15%	19%	21%+(F)	17%
NET work/study/volunteer	40%	46%+	35%	33%	45%+(DF)	40%
Sample size	2515	1138	1342	207	723	1545
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table A2: Q3. How many times have you done any of the following activities outside Canada in your lifetime?

Base: All respondents

Column % [% taking at least one trip]	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Travel for leisure or business	78%	80%
Work	26%	27%
Study	25%	26%
Volunteer	18%	19%
NET work/study/volunteer	40%	39%
Sample size	2515	2518

Notable differences by other segments include:

- 2SLGBTQIA+ youth are less likely than non-2SLGBTQIA+ youth to have travelled abroad for work (19% vs 28%), volunteering (14% vs 19%), or any work, study, or volunteering travel overall (35% vs 42%).
- Indigenous youth are less likely than non-Indigenous youth to have travelled for leisure or business (71% vs 79%), but more likely to have travelled abroad for work (40% vs 25%), volunteering (28% vs 17%), and overall work, study, or volunteering travel (50% vs 40%).
- Youth with impairments are more likely than youth without impairments to have travelled abroad for work (40% vs 25%), study (33% vs 24%), volunteering (29% vs 17%), and overall work, study, or volunteering travel (50% vs 39%).
- Women in STEM are more likely than youth who are not women in STEM to have travelled abroad for leisure or business (89% vs 76%).
- Economically disadvantaged youth are less likely than youth who are not economically disadvantaged to have travelled abroad for leisure or business (76% vs 81%), work (17% vs 32%), study (16% vs 31%), volunteering (13% vs 22%), and overall work, study, or volunteering travel (30% vs 47%).

Those who travelled for work, study or volunteering were asked a number of follow-up questions.

First, they were asked about the benefits they gained from this travel. The top three reasons given, all by about half of respondents, are exploration and adventure (54%), learning about a new country or culture (51%) and personal growth (49%). These top three reasons are all more often mentioned by women than by men. Personal growth is significantly more important among post-secondary students and non-students than among high school students.

A second tier of benefits mentioned includes increased confidence (44%), making new friends (38%), increased adaptability or flexibility (35%), expanded understanding of global issues (33%) and an increased ability to plan and organize (32%).

Changes observed between waves should be interpreted cautiously, as the response list was expanded in this research wave. The broader set of options may have influenced how respondents categorized their experiences, which could affect comparability with results from the previous wave.

Table A3: Q4. What are the benefits you gained from your work, study, or volunteer experiences outside of Canada?

Base: Those who worked/studied/volunteered abroad

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Exploration and adventure	54%	46%	64%+	47%	51%	58%
Learned about a new country or culture	51%	45%	59%+	48%	51%	52%
International travel experience that contributed toward my personal growth (e.g., increased confidence, adaptability or self-awareness)	49%	44%	54%+	32%	46%+(D)	53%+(D)
Increased confidence	44%	42%	47%	40%	43%	45%
Making friends abroad	38%	38%	37%	34%	36%	40%
Increased adaptability or flexibility	35%	34%	36%	26%	33%	38%+(D)
Expanded understanding of global issues (e.g., environment, social equity, sustainability)	33%	33%	33%	37%	30%	35%
Increased ability to plan and organize	32%	33%	31%	26%	30%	35%
Learned a new language or improved a second language skill	29%	28%	30%	26%	31%	28%
Connecting with family abroad	27%	26%	27%	32%	29%	25%+(D)
Developed a professional and global social network	25%	25%	24%	20%	24%	26%
Obtained international career experience or professional development	24%	25%	22%	15%	24%	25%
Other (please specify)	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Not applicable	5%	5%	4%	3%	5%	4%
Sample size	1040	551	480	79	331	617
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table A4: Q4. What are the benefits you gained from your work, study, or volunteer experiences outside of Canada?

Base: Those who worked/studied/volunteered abroad

Column %	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Exploration and adventure	54%-	62%
Learned about a new country or culture	51%-	76%
International travel experience that contributed toward my personal growth (e.g., increased confidence, adaptability or self-awareness)	49%-	62%
Increased confidence	44%	0%
Making friends abroad	38%	0%
Increased adaptability or flexibility	35%	0%
Expanded understanding of global issues (e.g., environment, social equity, sustainability)	33%	0%
Increased ability to plan and organize	32%	0%
Learned a new language or improved a second language skill	29%-	42%
Connecting with family abroad	27%	0%
Developed a professional and global social network	25%	0%
Obtained international career experience or professional development	24%-	38%
Other (please specify):	0%-	1%
Not applicable	5%-	2%
Sample size	1040	995

While there are some differences in sentiment among the various other sub-groups, the ordering of the top benefits are the same for all groups.

When asked what, if any, challenges they faced during their travels, young Canadians most often mention language barriers (37%) and financial barriers (32%). A second tier of concerns, each mentioned by about a quarter of respondents, includes concerns related to safety or discrimination (26%), loneliness (25%) or culture shock (24%). About one in five mention experiencing impacts on their obligations in Canada (19%), not knowing how to get started (18%) or documentation challenges (18%). Mental health challenges (13%) and issues finding employment abroad (13%) are experiences less often.

These findings are similar among women and men, and among current students and non-students. However, some changes are noted from the last wave of research: most notably, fewer 2025-26 respondents have experienced language barriers (-15 points), culture shock (-14 points), documentation issues (-8 points) and mental health challenges (-5 points) while more note impact on Canadian obligations (+7 points), not knowing how to get started (+6 points), financial issues (+5 points), or safety or discrimination concerns (+4 points).

Table A5: Q5. What are challenges you faced during your work, study, or volunteer experiences outside of Canada?

Base: Those who worked/studied/volunteered abroad

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Encountering a language barrier	37%	35%	39%	29%	36%	39%
Financial issues funding my travel experience	32%	32%	30%	30%	35%	31%
Concerns about personal safety, and/or racial, religious, sexual orientation, gender discrimination	26%	26%	26%	21%	30%	25%
Isolation or loneliness	25%	25%	23%	17%	24%	26%
Challenges with country customs and laws, cultural norms, or cultural shock	24%	26%	22%	19%	26%	24%
Impact on my obligations back in Canada (e.g., family, children, or career)	19%	20%	17%	15%	18%	20%
I did not know how to get started	18%	19%	17%	19%	19%	18%
Challenges with travel, residency, or employment documents/permits	18%	20%	15%	19%	21%	16%
Challenges with my mental health	13%	13%	13%	13%	14%	13%
Challenges finding employment outside of Canada	13%	17%+	9%	17%	15%	11%
Other (please specify)	1%	1%	1%	2%	0%	1%
Not applicable	13%	12%	14%	10%	10%	14%
Sample size	1040	551	480	79	331	617
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table A6: Q5. What are challenges you faced during your work, study, or volunteer experiences outside of Canada?

Base: Those who worked/studied/volunteered abroad

Column %	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Encountering a language barrier	37%-	52%
Financial issues funding my travel experience	32%+	27%
Concerns about personal safety, and/or racial, religious, sexual orientation, gender discrimination	26%+	22%
Isolation or loneliness	25%	26%
Challenges with country customs and laws, cultural norms, or cultural shock	24%-	38%

Column %	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Impact on my obligations back in Canada (e.g., family, children, or career)	19%+	12%
I did not know how to get started	18%+	12%
Challenges with travel, residency, or employment documents/permits	18%-	26%
Challenges with my mental health	13%-	18%
Challenges finding employment outside of Canada	13%	16%
Other (please specify)	1%	0%
Not applicable	13%+	8%
Sample size	1040	995

When looking at other segments, most subgroups follow a very similar ordering in terms of the challenges faced, but a few differences stand out:

- Economically disadvantaged youth place financial issues funding travel as the top challenge (41%), at a virtual tie for the overall #1 (together with language barriers), making cost the most prominent barrier for this group.
- Youth with impairments report concerns about safety or discrimination as a top challenge (37%), higher than among youth without impairments (25%), making it the most prominent challenge for this group.
- 2SLGBTQIA+ youth report isolation or loneliness more frequently (34% vs 23%), making it one of the most prominent challenges for this group relative to others.

2. Travel planning

Half of respondents who have either worked, studied or volunteered abroad say they got a visa or permit from their receiving country to do so. Half who worked abroad also did so (50%), while fewer who went to study (44%) or volunteer abroad (33%) say the same.

For all three types of travel, women are far more likely than men to have obtained these documents. Among current students, obtaining a work visa or permit is more common (61% among high schoolers and 55% among secondary students) than among non-students (46%).

There is a significant drop in the proportions who obtained these documents compared to the previous wave of research, with study documentation seeing a 14-point drop since 2024-25, volunteer documentation an 11-point drop, and work documentation a six-point drop.

Table A7: Q6. Did you obtain a visa or permit from another country to work, study, or volunteer outside of Canada?

Base: Those who worked/studied/volunteered abroad

Column % [% yes]	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Work	50%	58%+	36%	61%+(F)	55%+(F)	46%
Sample size	680	408	267	55	194	422
Study	44%	50%+	35%	49%	43%	44%
Sample size	640	334	301	63	249	321
Volunteer	34%	41%+	25%	39%	35%	33%
Sample size	464	255	207	45	156	258
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table A8: Q6. Did you obtain a visa or permit from another country to work, study, or volunteer outside of Canada?

Base: Those who worked/studied/volunteered abroad

Column % [% yes]	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Work	50%-	56%
Study	44%-	58%
Volunteer	34%-	45%

Most other subgroups follow a similar pattern in terms of obtaining visas or permits for work, study, or volunteering abroad, but a few differences stand out:

- Indigenous youth are more likely than non-Indigenous youth to report obtaining visas or permits for work (63% vs 48%) and volunteering (49% vs 33%).
- Youth with impairments are more likely than youth without impairments to report obtaining visas or permits for work abroad (67% vs 47%).
- Economically disadvantaged youth are less likely than youth who are not economically disadvantaged to report obtaining visas or permits for volunteering (26% vs 38%).

Almost half (47%) of those who travelled for work, study, or volunteering say their travel was self-arranged. Other frequent methods mentioned are through school (39%), employers (23%), or travel companies (17%). These results are largely consistent with the previous study wave, with only a drop of five points for employer-arranged experiences.

Among current post-secondary students, fully half (50%) had their international experience through school, compared to 36% among high school students and 34% among non-students. This latter group, on the other hand, is more likely to have had their employer make arrangements (28%), compared to 10% among high schoolers and 18% among post-secondary students.

Table A9: Q8. How did you arrange your international experience?

Base: Those who worked/studied/volunteered abroad

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Self-arranged	47%	47%	47%	45%	45%	49%
School or academic institution	39%	36%	44%+	36%	50%+(DF)	34%
Employer	23%	30%+	14%	10%	18%	28%+(DE)
Travel or adventure company	17%	19%+	14%	24%	19%	15%
Religious organization/Church	2%	1%	4%+	0%	2%+(D)	3%+(D)
Non-profit organization	2%	1%	2%	0%	2%+(D)	2%+(D)
Friends/family made arrangements	1%	1%	2%	7%+(F)	2%	0%
Government program	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%
IRCC Recognized Organization	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other (please specify)	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%
Prefer not to say	4%	4%	5%	7%	4%	4%
Sample size	1040	551	480	79	331	617
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table A10: Q8. How did you arrange your international experience?

Base: Those who worked/studied/volunteered abroad

Column %	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Self-arranged	47%	51%
School or academic institution	39%	37%
Employer	23%-	28%
Travel or adventure company	17%	20%
Religious organization /Church	2%	2%
Non-profit organization	2%+	0%
Friends/family made arrangements	1%+	2%
Government program	1%	0%
IRCC Recognized Organization	0%	0%
Other (please specify)	1%-	3%
Prefer not to say	4%	3%
Sample size	1040	995

3. Future travel intentions

Future travel intentions among youth remain relatively high for leisure or business travel, though intentions to travel outside Canada for work, study, or volunteer activities are lower. Nearly eight in ten youth (78%) say they are likely to travel internationally for leisure or business before age 36. About one-third (33%) report that they are likely to travel abroad for work, while fewer say they expect to travel for study (20%) or volunteer (19%) experiences.

Some travel intentions vary by gender and student status. Men are more likely than women to report intentions to travel abroad for work (39% vs 27%). High school and post-secondary students report significantly higher intentions to travel outside Canada across all categories compared to youth who are not currently students. In particular, high school students are most likely to say they expect to travel abroad to study (47%) or work (48%) or volunteer (31%) before age 36, compared to post-secondary students (31% study, 42% work, 21% volunteer) and youth who are not currently students (10% study, 27% work, 15% volunteer).

Compared to the previous survey wave, intentions to travel internationally have declined across all categories. The proportion of youth who say they are likely to travel for study declined by six points, leisure or business and volunteering each decreased by four points, and intentions to travel abroad for work by three points.

Table A11: Q11A. How likely are you to do any of the following activities outside of Canada in the future before you turn 36?

Base: All respondents

Column % [% likely]	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Travel for leisure or business	78%	79%	77%	82%	80%	77%
Work	33%	39%+	27%	48%+(F)	42%+(F)	27%
Study	20%	21%	19%	47%+(EF)	31%+(F)	10%
Volunteer	19%	19%	18%	31%+(EF)	21%+(F)	15%
Sample size	2515	1138	1342	207	723	1545
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table A12: Q11A. How likely are you to do any of the following activities outside of Canada in the future before you turn 36?

Base: All respondents

Column % [% likely]	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Travel for leisure or business	78%-	82%
Work	33%-	36%
Study	19%-	25%
Volunteer	20%-	24%

Column % [% likely]	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Sample size	2515	2518

When looking at other subgroups:

- Indigenous youth are more likely than non-Indigenous youth to say they are likely to travel abroad in the future for work (49% vs 32%), study (31% vs 19%), or volunteering (33% vs 18%).
- Youth with impairments are more likely than youth without impairments to say they are likely to travel abroad in the future for study (26% vs 20%) or volunteering (28% vs 18%), but less likely to say they are likely to travel for leisure or business (69% vs 80%).
- Women in STEM are more likely than youth who are not women in STEM to say they are likely to travel abroad for leisure or business (86% vs 76%), work (35% vs 25%), study (29% vs 17%), or volunteering (25% vs 16%).
- Economically disadvantaged youth are less likely than youth who are not economically disadvantaged to say they are likely to travel abroad for leisure or business (75% vs 82%), work (28% vs 38%), study (18% vs 22%), or volunteering (16% vs 22%).

Qualitative discussion of general travel behaviour among participants

Most focus group participants shared that they had travelled outside Canada, typically for leisure travel such as vacations and/or visiting with family and friends. For many participants, prior travel was short-term and structured, making the prospect of independently living and working abroad feel qualitatively different. A smaller number had taken longer trips abroad, though these were most often still leisure-oriented rather than for work or study.

Interest in living, working, or volunteering abroad was present across groups, though often described as aspirational rather than immediately planned. Younger participants (16-18) tended to discuss international experience in more abstract or exploratory terms, whereas post-secondary participants were more likely to evaluate it in relation to career timing, financial feasibility, and practical considerations.

“Imagine you walk out, and there's just this beautiful beach view, just right outside your door.” – Youth 16-18, National, English

“I don't want to live forever in Canada. I want to move. I want to find... there are so many countries and things that we don't know about. I want to find a country that is right for me.” – Youth 16-18, National, English

“I'm trying to gain my years of experience at one place, and to interrupt that would not be beneficial at this time. I'm in my 30s instead of my 20s, so if you maybe caught me five, six years ago, it would have been a different story.” – General population youth 16-35, British Columbia/Territories, English

“I would consider going to a different province but not necessarily moving out of Canada to pursue a career. And also, I think another huge barrier for this is, like, luxury, because it's a lot of money as well; towards food, rent, traveling

and, like, expenses for studying.” – Youth 16-35 Woman in STEM, National, English

Section B: Gap years

1. Experience taking a gap year

One in five youth (19%) report having taken a gap year in which they travelled and/or worked abroad for up to twelve months. Men (22%) are more likely than women (16%) to report having taken a gap year.

Table B1: QG1. Some youth between the ages of 18 to 35 take a “gap year” in which they travel and/or work in a foreign country for up to twelve months. An individual may pause or postpone their education or career to pursue international work, which may not be related to their career (e.g., hospitality), and travel through one or several countries as they work. Have you ever taken a gap year?
Base: All respondents

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Yes	19%	22%+	16%	15%	21%	19%
No	79%	76%	82%+	82%	77%	80%
Not sure	2%	3%	2%	3%	2%	2%
Sample size	2515	1138	1342	207	723	1545
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Notable differences by other segments include:

- Indigenous youth are more likely than non-Indigenous youth to report having taken a gap year (29% vs 18%).
- Youth with impairments are also more likely than youth without impairments to report having taken a gap year (29% vs 18%).
- 2SLGBTQIA+ youth are less likely than non-2SLGBTQIA+ youth to report having taken a gap year (15% vs 19%).

2. Appeal of taking a gap year

Overall, gap years are viewed positively by most youth. Two-thirds (65%) say taking a gap year is appealing, including 26% who say it is very appealing and 39% who say it is somewhat appealing. About three in ten say the idea is unappealing (28%), including 16% who say it is somewhat unappealing and 12% who say it is very unappealing, while 8% are unsure.

Views are broadly similar between men and women and differences by school status are also relatively small.

Table B2: QG2. How appealing is a gap year to you?

Base: All respondents

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
NET appealing	65%	65%	63%	66%	66%	63%
Very appealing	26%	25%	26%	26%	25%	26%
Somewhat appealing	39%	40%	37%	40%	41%	37%
Somewhat unappealing	16%	15%	16%	15%	19%+(F)	14%
Very unappealing	12%	13%	11%	16%	10%	12%
NET unappealing	28%	28%	28%	31%	29%	27%
Not sure	8%	7%	9%	3%	4%	10%+(DE)
Sample size	2515	1138	1342	207	723	1545
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Overall, most subgroups show a very similar distribution in how appealing they find the idea of a gap year, with one notable difference:

- Indigenous youth are more likely than non-Indigenous youth to find the idea of a gap year appealing overall (75% vs 64%).

3. Plans to take a gap year

Overall, nearly one in five (18%) respondents say they plan on taking a gap year (or another gap year) before they turn 36.

Men (21%) are more likely than women (16%) to say they plan to take a gap year.

Intentions also vary by school status. High school students (24%) and post-secondary students (25%) are more likely to say they plan to take a gap year compared to youth who are not currently students (14%).

Table B3: QG3. Do you plan on taking a gap year before you turn 36/another gap year before you turn 36?

Base: ALL

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Yes	18%	21%+	16%	24%+(F)	25%+(F)	14%
No	58%	55%	61%+	48%	50%	64%+(DE)
Not sure	24%	25%	23%	28%	25%	22%
Sample size	2515	1138	1342	207	723	1545
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Notable differences by other segments include:

- Indigenous youth are more likely than non-Indigenous youth to say they plan to take a gap year before age 36 (28% vs 17%).
- Youth with impairments are also more likely than youth without impairments to say they plan to take a gap year (29% vs 17%).
- Economically disadvantaged youth are less likely than youth who are not economically disadvantaged to say they plan to take a gap year (15% vs 21%).

Among youth who have *not* taken a gap year, 14% say they plan to take a gap year before they turn 36, while most say they do not plan to take one (61%) and a quarter are unsure (25%).

Table B4: QG3. Do you plan on taking a gap year before you turn 36?

Base: Those who have not or are unsure if they have ever taken a gap year

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Yes	14%	15%	14%	18%	20%+(F)	11%
No	61%	59%	63%	50%	53%	68%+(DE)
Not sure	25%	26%	23%	32%	27%+(F)	21%
Sample size	2027	875	1121	164	566	1259
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Among those who have already taken a gap year, about one third (35%) say they plan to take another gap year before they turn 36, while 43% say they do not plan to do so and 22% are unsure.

Men who have taken a gap year (40%) are more likely than women (27%) to say they plan to take another one.

High school students (57%) and post-secondary students (42%) who have taken a gap year are more likely to say they plan to take another one, compared to youth who are not currently students (28%).

Table B5: QG3. Do you plan on taking another gap year before you turn 36?

Base: Those who have taken a gap year

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Yes	35%	40%+	27%	57%+(F)	42%+(F)	28%
No	43%	39%	50%+	38%	37%	47%
Not sure	22%	21%	23%	5%	21%+(D)	26%+(D)
Sample size	488	263	221	43	157	286
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Among youth who are not planning to take a gap year in the future or are unsure if they will, financial considerations are the most commonly cited barrier. A quarter (26%) say they need the money, cannot afford a gap year, or have financial obligations. This is a particularly important reason among current non-students.

Family and life commitments are the next most common reason (14%), followed by already having a job or work commitments (9%) and focusing on career development or not wanting to delay starting a career (7%). A sizeable share of respondents (27%) say they are unsure of their reasons for not taking a gap year.

Women (18%) are more likely than men (11%) to say family or life commitments are a reason they would not take a gap year.

Differences are more pronounced by school status. Youth who are not currently students are more likely to cite financial barriers (29%), family or life commitments (20%), or work commitments (13%). High school and post-secondary students are more likely to cite academic considerations, such as wanting to finish their studies quickly (13% and 9%, respectively) or not wanting to fall behind academically (7% and 5%). As well, career development or not wanting to delay entering the workforce is a relatively important reason among current post-secondary students, coming in at the second-most important reason among this group at 12%.

Table B6: QG4. What are the main reasons why you wouldn't take a gap year?

Base: Those who are not planning on taking a gap year before turning 36/those who are not sure if they plan on taking a gap year before turning 36

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
I need the money / I can't afford it / I have financial obligations	26%	26%	26%	19%	23%	29%+(DE)
I have family/life commitments	14%	11%	18%+	6%	6%	20%+(DE)
I already have a job/career / I have work commitments	9%	9%	9%	2%	4%	13%+(DE)
Focused on career development / I don't want to delay getting a job or career	7%	8%	7%	10%	12%+(F)	5%
No need for it / Not interested	6%	6%	6%	4%	5%	7%
Feels like I'd be wasting time / I'd feel unproductive	5%	6%+	3%	9%+(F)	7%+(F)	3%
I want to finish my studies/earn my degree as quickly as possible	4%	3%	5%+	13%+(F)	9%+(F)	1%
I don't want to fall behind academically	2%	2%	3%	7%+(F)	5%+(F)	1%
Not currently in school / I've already graduated	2%	1%	3%+	1%	1%	4%+(DE)

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
May forget academic skills / Difficult to re-establish skills or habits / May lose motivation	2%	2%	2%	4%	4%+(F)	2%
I want to accomplish my life goals/get on with my life	2%	2%	1%	2%	3%+(F)	1%
Issues with travelling / High travel costs	2%	1%	2%	3%	2%	2%
Getting older in age / Current life stage	2%	2%	2%	0%	1%	2%+(D)
I've already taken a gap year	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%+(D)	1%+(D)
I like to be active	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%+(F)	0%
I'm already in school / I've just started	1%	1%	1%	3%	2%+(F)	0%
Unsure of current plan/goals	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Other	7%	7%	7%	8%	8%	6%
None / No reason	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Not sure	27%	29%	25%	35%+(EF)	26%	25%
Sample size	2055	904	1120	151	538	1331
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

4. Encouragement or discouragement from others

Among youth who have taken a gap year, peer groups and friends appear to be the most encouraging influence. More than half (55%) say their peers strongly (27%) or somewhat (28%) encouraged them to take a gap year, while three in ten (30%) say their peers were neutral and one in ten (10%) say they felt some level of discouragement.

Family members also tend to be somewhat encouraging, though to a lesser extent. About four in ten say their parents or guardians encouraged them (41%), while a third (33%) say their parents were neutral and a quarter (25%) say they felt some level of discouragement. Similarly, 42% say extended family members encouraged them, while 36% say family members were neutral.

Employers or future employers appear to play a more neutral role. Four in ten (41%) say their employer or future employer was neutral, while a quarter (26%) say they felt encouragement and 17% say they felt discouragement. A notable share (15%) say they are unsure.

Table B7: QG5.1. How much discouragement or encouragement did you feel from the following people about deciding to participate in a gap year?

Base: Those who have taken a gap year (n=488)

Column %	Strongly encourage	Somewhat encourage	Neutral	Somewhat discourage	Strongly discourage	Not sure
Your Peer Group or Friends	27%	28%	30%	7%	3%	5%
Your Parents /Guardians	19%	22%	33%	14%	11%	2%
Your Family (e.g., siblings, aunts, uncles)	18%	24%	36%	11%	5%	6%
Your Employer or Future Employer	11%	15%	41%	10%	7%	15%

Among youth who have not taken a gap year, many expect peers to be supportive if they were to take one. Nearly half (48%) say their peer group or friends would encourage them, including 19% who say they would strongly encourage them and 29% who say they would somewhat encourage them.

Views about family support are more mixed. About a quarter say family members would encourage them (27%), while a similar proportion say they would discourage them (28%), and 37% expect family members to be neutral.

Parents or guardians are seen as somewhat more likely to discourage participation. About a quarter (27%) say their parents would encourage them, while 42% believe their parents would discourage them.

Employers or future employers are most often viewed expected to voice discouragement (37%) rather than encouragement (11%), although they are often also perceived as neutral (33%), while one in five (19%) say they are unsure.

Table B8: QG5.2. How much discouragement or encouragement do you think you would receive from the following people about deciding to participate in a gap year?

Base: Those who have not or are unsure if they have ever taken a gap year (n=2027)

Column %	Strongly encourage	Somewhat encourage	Neutral	Somewhat discourage	Strongly discourage	Not sure
Your Peer Group or Friends	19%	29%	33%	7%	5%	8%
Your Family (e.g., siblings, aunts, uncles)	10%	17%	37%	16%	12%	8%
Your Parents /Guardians	8%	15%	29%	19%	23%	7%
Your Employer or Future Employer	3%	8%	33%	17%	20%	19%

Notable differences by other segments include:

- Economically disadvantaged youth are less likely to say they would receive encouragement from their peer group or friends (44% vs 51% among those not economically disadvantaged), family members (24% vs 31%), and parents or guardians (20% vs 27%).
- 2SLGBTQIA+ youth are more likely than those who are not 2SLGBTQIA+ to say they would receive encouragement from their peer group or friends (54% vs 46%).
- Indigenous youth are more likely than non-Indigenous youth to report encouragement from family members (40% vs 27%) and parents or guardians (33% vs 23%).
- Women in STEM are more likely than others to report encouragement from their peer group or friends (58% vs 52%) and parents or guardians (33% vs 22%).

5. Perceptions of gap years

Most youth believe that gap years are at least somewhat common among their peers. More than half (57%) say taking a gap year is either very common (11%) or somewhat common (46%), while 27% say it is neither common nor uncommon and 16% say it is uncommon.

Women (60%) are more likely than men (53%) to say gap years are common.

Post-secondary students are the most likely to view gap years as common (65%) and youth who are not currently students (53%) the least likely.

Table B9: Q6.1. As far as you know, how common is it for Canadian youth to take a gap year?

Base: Randomly assigned split sample with QG6.2

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
NET common	57%	53%	60%+	60%	65%+(F)	53%
Very common	11%	10%	11%	15%	9%	11%
Somewhat common	46%	43%	49%	45%	55%+(F)	42%
Neither common or uncommon	27%	29%	25%	22%	22%	30%+(E)
Somewhat uncommon	13%	13%	12%	13%	12%	14%
Very uncommon	3%	4%	3%	5%	1%	4%+(E)
NET uncommon	17%	17%	15%	18%	13%	18%
Sample size	1273	562	696	97	372	783
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

When asked to estimate the proportion of Canadian youth who take a gap year, responses vary widely, with a mean score of 34%. Estimates are most commonly concentrated between 11% and 50% of youth. This suggests that respondents often over-estimated the incidence of gap years, as results showed that one in five (19%) respondents had actually taken a gap year.

The most frequently selected ranges include 21–30% (19%), 11–20% (18%), and 41–50% (16%), though smaller shares estimate both lower and higher proportions.

Differences by gender and school status are modest. However, high school students (41% average) are somewhat more likely to estimate higher proportions of youth taking gap years, compared to post-secondary students (34%) and youth who are not currently students (33%).

Table B10: Q6.2. Based on the definition of gap year provided above, please provide your best estimate from 0 to 100 what proportion of Canadian youth take a ‘gap year

Base: Randomly assigned split sample with QG6.1

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
0	1%	2%	1%	1%	0%	2%+(E)
1-10	14%	17%	13%	7%	13%	17%+(D)
11-20	18%	18%	17%	15%	18%	19%
21-30	19%	20%	18%	16%	20%	19%
31-40	13%	11%	15%	15%	16%+(F)	11%
41-50	16%	15%	17%	20%	13%	16%
51-60	8%	8%	9%	15%+(F)	11%+(F)	6%
61-70	5%	4%	5%	7%	4%	5%
71-80	4%	4%	5%	4%	2%	5%+(E)
81-90	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%
91-100	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Mean	34.5%	33.1%	35.8%	40.7%	34.4%	33.2%
Sample size	1242	576	646	110	351	762
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Qualitative discussion of gap years

“Gap year” generated varied and sometimes conflicting interpretations. Younger participants often associated it with time between high school and post-secondary education. For some, the term implied a purposeful period of travel, reflection, or personal development, including attention to mental health and well-being. For others, however, it carried a less structured connotation and was viewed as time away from education or work without a clearly defined objective. Past IEC participants did not strongly identify their experience with the term.

“Basically, it’s like you take a break, like if you were in school, you take a break for the whole year, or if you were working, it’s maybe the same thing. Depending on whether something happened with your health, a burnout or something. Then you take a year to focus on yourself. Normally, that’s what a sabbatical year means to me.” – General population youth 16-35, Quebec, French

“People graduating high school that are unsure of what they want to do, and they take a gap year.” – General population youth 16-35, Atlantic Canada, English

“When I think of it, I think of backpacking around, like, the classic Europe or something. I don't really think of it as working as much as just traveling and spending that time after graduation.” – Youth 16-35 with a mobility, visual or hearing impairment, National, English

Cultural expectations in Canada of a linear life path – progressing from education to career, home ownership, and family – were frequently cited as influencing the lack of outbound participation. Participants suggested that extended time abroad may be viewed as interrupting this progression, and several noted that parental or societal expectations can reinforce this perspective, particularly where time abroad is perceived as delaying education or career establishment.

“Gap years may not be as much of, like, a thing in other countries, because traveling is so much more, easier and more accessible, and just kind of part of the culture so much already. Whereas in Canada it's just a bigger deal.” – General population youth 16-35, Atlantic Canada, English

“I would definitely tell my spouse, and I think that they'd be like, ‘Oh my god, this is a really cool opportunity’, but they'd also be like, ‘Oh my god, I'm not gonna be with you for a whole year?’” – 2SLGBTQIA+ 16-35 youth, National, English

When reflecting on why gap years are more common among youth from other countries, Canada's strong domestic appeal was cited as a factor. Some participants often described Canada as an appealing destination, noting that the country is perceived as offering a high quality of life, diverse experiences, and opportunities for young people. At the same time, some suggested that Canadian youth may feel less motivation to travel abroad for extended periods because they already see Canada as a desirable place to live and explore, and some expressed reluctance to be far from family or established support networks.

“It's a very safe and desirable place to come here, especially if you're taking a part of an international program. I feel like when you think of Canada, you're like, oh, everyone's nice and friendly, and, you know, we do have some nice scenery.” – General population youth 16-35, Atlantic Canada, English

Some participants also referenced a broader preference for financial and career stability during early adulthood, noting that extended time abroad may be perceived as introducing uncertainty during formative career stages. A few participants also perceived Canada as offering more structured opportunities or supports for youth from other countries, which they felt may help explain why Canada attracts more inbound youth mobility than Canadians pursuing similar opportunities abroad.

In discussion of the possibility of taking a gap year, participants who were not considering extended travel most frequently cited financial constraints, education or career commitments, family responsibilities, or uncertainty about how to begin planning.

“I think my partner’s input would matter, because if I’m leaving for a certain amount of time, then they would have to basically pick up the slack with everything else that’s going on here.” – Youth 16-35 with a mobility, visual or hearing impairment National, English

Some youth with impairments approached the opportunity with particular attention to accessibility planning and continuity of care as important preconditions for participation.

“My parents would probably try to discourage me, only for safety reasons. I feel like it depends where I was going, and if I was going by myself as well.” – Youth 16-35 with a mobility, visual or hearing impairment National, English

Some participants in the 2SLGBTQIA+ group noted that the social climate and inclusivity of destination countries would be factors they would consider when evaluating potential locations.

“As a queer person, I feel like anywhere that I travel, I have to vet first before I travel there to make sure that my gender identity will be respected and that I will be safe.” – 2SLGBTQIA+ 16-35 youth, National, English

“To have other experiences, culturally, or artistically, and again like, I know there’s queer people all over the world, so just to see the other things that are out there, it just gets more and more exciting the more you discover.” – 2SLGBTQIA+ 16-35 youth, National, English

Indigenous youth raised additional considerations related to connection to land, family, and community, which influenced how they evaluated the prospect of extended time abroad.

“My partner, like, is, very close with their family, so being away from our families, it's kind of a big deal right now.” – Indigenous youth 16-35, National, English

“Knowledge transfer, you know, taking lessons learned elsewhere in the world and applying them here, and vice versa, so people aren't making the same mistakes over and over again.” – Indigenous youth 16-35, National, English

“Could bring back knowledge or something, or, like, share info on what it's like to be abroad and work abroad and live away at home, or something.” – Indigenous youth 16-35, National, English

Section C: IEC participation and international internship

1. Past IEC participation

One in ten youth (10%) say they have participated in the International Experience Canada (IEC) program or travelled abroad using a youth mobility program. This has declined from 13% in the last wave of research. Note, however, that the wording of the question was expanded slightly for this year in order to provide a more in-depth description of the program. The previous wording was: “Have you ever participated in the International Experience Canada (IEC) program, which provides Canadian youth facilitated access to a work permit in more than 35 different countries and territories,” while the new wording was: “Have you ever participated in the International Experience Canada (IEC) program or travelled abroad using foreign countries’ or territories’ youth mobility programs? This type of travel includes applying for a visa that facilitates Canadian youth, aged 18-35 years, to work and travel abroad for up to two years, and includes working holiday streams, country-specific internship streams, or young professional streams.”

Men (14%) are more likely than women (6%) to say they have participated.

Table C1: Q9_NEW. Have you ever participated in the International Experience Canada (IEC) program or travelled abroad using foreign countries’ or territories’ youth mobility programs? This type of travel includes applying for a visa that facilitates Canadian youth, aged 18-35 years, to work and travel abroad for up to two years, and includes working holiday streams, country-specific internship streams, or young professional streams?

Base: Respondents 18+

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Yes	10%	14%+	6%	12%+	7%
No	86%	82%	90%+	85%	88%
Not sure	5%	5%	5%	3%	5%+
Sample size	2384	1096	1260	706	1542

Table C2: Q9_NEW. Have you ever participated in the International Experience Canada (IEC) program or travelled abroad using foreign countries' or territories' youth mobility programs? This type of travel includes applying for a visa that facilitates Canadian youth, aged 18-35 years, to work and travel abroad for up to two years, and includes working holiday streams, country-specific internship streams, or young professional streams? [Note wording change – 2024-25 question: Q9: Have you ever participated in the International Experience Canada (IEC) program, which provides Canadian youth facilitated access to a work permit in more than 35 different countries and territories?]

Base: Respondents 18+

Column %	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Yes	10%-	13%
No	86%+	82%
Not sure	5%	5%
Sample size	2384	2305

Notable differences by other segments include:

- Indigenous youth are more likely than non-Indigenous youth to report having participated in IEC or another youth mobility program (25% vs 8%).
- Youth with impairments are also more likely than youth without impairments to report participation (20% vs 9%).
- Economically disadvantaged youth are less likely than those who are not economically disadvantaged to report participation (6% vs 13%).
- 2SLGBTQIA+ youth are less likely than non-2SLGBTQIA+ youth to report participation (6% vs 11%).

Among those who have participated in IEC or a similar youth mobility program, Australia remains the most commonly mentioned destination. While again the largest proportion (22%) says they travelled there, this is down from 26% in the previous wave of research. The next most commonly mentioned destinations are the United Kingdom (18%), France (14%), Germany (11%), and Italy (12%). Smaller but notable shares say they travelled to Japan (9%), Austria (8%), Finland (8%), Denmark (7%) or Belgium (7%). Fewer participants say they travelled to Costa Rica (6%), Chile (6%), Hong Kong (6%), New Zealand (6%), or Mexico (5%).

Italy has become more popular this year compared to last year (+6 points), as has Finland (+5), while Belgium (-5%) has become less popular.

There are some differences by gender. Men are somewhat more likely than women to report travelling to Germany (13% compared to 4%), Denmark (10% compared to 0%), or Belgium (9% compared to 2%), while women are more likely to say they travelled to Mexico (11% compared to 2%).

Table C3: Q10. Which partner country(ies) and/or territory(ies) did you go to?

Base: Those (18+) who participated in IEC or travelled abroad using foreign countries' or territories' youth mobility programs

Note: Only responses 5% and above are mentioned

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Australia	22%	23%	20%	22%	23%
United Kingdom	18%	20%	15%	15%	23%
France	14%	14%	11%	13%	12%
Italy	12%	11%	11%	17%	9%
Germany	11%	13%+	4%	11%	12%
Japan	9%	9%	6%	13%	6%
Austria	8%	8%	9%	9%	8%
Finland	8%	9%	5%	11%	6%
Denmark	7%	10%+	0%	11%+(E)	5%+(D)
Belgium	7%	9%+	2%	5%	8%
Costa Rica	6%	6%	6%	7%	3%
Chile	6%	5%	8%	8%	3%
Hong Kong	6%	4%	10%	8%	4%
New Zealand	6%	6%	5%	2%	8%+
Spain	5%	6%	5%	7%	6%
Mexico	5%	2%	11%+	3%	8%
Sample size	236	157	77	85	114

Table C4: Q10. Which partner country(ies) and/or territory(ies) did you go to?

Base: Those (18+) who participated in IEC or travelled abroad using foreign countries' or territories' youth mobility programs

Note: Only responses 5% and above are mentioned

Column %	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Australia	22%	26%
United Kingdom	18%	20%
France	14%	12%
Italy	12%+	6%
Germany	11%	14%
Japan	9%	6%
Austria	8%	7%
Finland	8%+	3%
Denmark	7%	5%
Belgium	7%-	12%
Costa Rica	6%	7%

Column %	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Chile	6%	5%
Hong Kong	6%	5%
New Zealand	6%	4%
Spain	5%	6%
Mexico	5%	5%
Sample size	236	302

2. IEC stream

Among IEC participants, most travelled through an open work permit stream. Six in ten (63%) say they travelled using an open work permit, such as a working holiday visa. At the same time, more than a third (39%) say they travelled through an employer-specific work permit stream that required a pre-arranged job and 11% are not sure.

While the open work permit stream remains the more common pathway, the proportion reporting this stream has declined by six points from 69% the previous wave. At the same time, the proportion of respondents who are not sure has grown substantially (+8 points).

Table C5: Q17A. What International Experience Canada stream did you travel through?

Base: Those (18+) who participated in IEC or travelled abroad using foreign countries' or territories' youth mobility programs

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current post- secondary student	Not a current student
Open Work Permit (e.g., a working holiday)	63%	65%	59%	66%	60%
Employer-Specific Work Permit (e.g., pre-arranged contract of employment was required)	39%	42%	30%	41%	39%
Do not know	11%	9%	17%	11%	12%
Sample size	236	157	77	85	114

Table C6: Q17A. What International Experience Canada stream did you travel through?

Base: Those (18+) who participated in IEC or travelled abroad using foreign countries' or territories' youth mobility programs.

Column %	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Open Work Permit (e.g., a working holiday)	63%	69%
Employer-Specific Work Permit (e.g., pre-arranged contract of employment was required)	39%	44%
Do not know	11%+	3%

Column %	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Sample size	236	297

Section D: IEC awareness

1. Program familiarity

Most Canadian youth say they were not familiar with the International Experience Canada program before taking the survey. A majority (58%) say they had never heard of the program, while smaller shares say they had only heard the name (13%) or knew a little about it (14%). About one in ten respondents (11%) say they knew a fair amount about the program, and only a small share (3%) say they knew the program well.

Compared to the previous wave, awareness of IEC appears to have declined. The proportion who says they had never heard of the program has increased by four points (from 54%), while at the same time, the proportion who say they knew the program well dipped by two points (down from 5%).

Awareness also varies by gender. While two thirds of women (65%) say they never heard of IEC before taking the survey, half of men (51%) say the same. Men are more likely to say they knew a fair amount about the program (15% vs 8%), and twice as many men than women say they know the program well (4% vs 2%).

Differences by school status are more modest. Among current high school students, a larger proportion (6%) say they know the program well, which is three times higher than among post-secondary students (2%).

Table D1: Q17B. Before taking this survey, to what extent were you aware or unaware of the International Experience Canada (IEC) program?

Base: All respondents

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Never heard of it	58%	51%	65%+	60%	55%	59%
Only knew the name	13%	15%	12%	12%	14%	14%
Knew a little bit about the program	14%	15%	13%	11%	14%	15%
Knew a fair amount about the program	11%	15%+	8%	12%	14%+(F)	9%
Knew the program well	3%	4%+	2%	6%+(E)	2%	3%
Sample size	2515	1138	1342	207	723	1545
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table D2: Q17B. Before taking this survey, to what extent were you aware or unaware of the International Experience Canada (IEC) program?

Base: All respondents

Column %	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Never heard of it	58%+	54%
Only knew the name	13%	14%
Knew a little bit about the program	14%	16%
Knew a fair amount about the program	11%	11%
Knew the program well	3%-	5%
Sample size	2515	2518

Notable differences by other segments include:

- Indigenous youth are more likely than non-Indigenous youth to report higher awareness of IEC, with 23% saying they knew a fair amount or knew the program well (vs 13%) and fewer saying they had never heard of it (45% vs 60%).
- Youth with impairments also report higher awareness, with a quarter (27%) saying they knew a fair amount or knew the program well (vs 13%), and fewer saying they had never heard of it (42% vs 60%).
- Economically disadvantaged youth are more likely to say they had never heard of IEC (62% vs 54%).
- 2SLGBTQIA+ youth are also more likely to say they had never heard of IEC (63% vs 57%).

Qualitative discussion of IEC awareness and impressions

Participants were asked about their awareness of IEC, followed by a discussion of their impressions and reactions after learning more about the program. Unaided awareness of IEC by name remains minimal. The program name was widely viewed as unclear and not descriptive of its purpose, with many participants associating it with inbound internationals coming to Canada rather than Canadians travelling abroad.

“I’d go more with the first option that says we would visit Canada, because it’s experience Canada. If it’s about really living the experience in Canada, I don’t know, visiting places, coming to see the different provinces.” – General population youth 16-35, Quebec, French

“It almost makes me think, like, people are coming to Canada internationally. I know we just watched the video, but if I just heard the name, I don’t know if I would think that we’re going somewhere.” – General population youth 16-35, Prairies, English

“I don’t... experience could be a lot of things, just going to experience different culture, different life... and different work.” – General population youth 16-35, Atlantic Canada, English

Even past IEC focus group participants were often unfamiliar with the program by name and did not initially connect it to their own international experience.

“It's a little vague, right? International experience could mean a lot of different things, rather than grounding it to, like, more of, like, a youth program.” – Past IEC participant 16-35, National, English

“I just have a question, because I'm a bit confused. So does that mean that I'm... like, I am a participant of IEC currently?” – Past IEC participant 16-35, National, English

“In our little sample of 7 people, we're realizing that most of us did not know that IEC existed, and we went through third parties, meaning that these businesses came about because there was a gap, right?” – Past IEC participant 16-35, National, English

After learning more about the program, participants were asked to share their perspective on what IEC should be called. “International Experience Canada” was viewed by some as unclear and not descriptive of the program’s purpose.

“Young professional experience” was viewed positively by many participants because it clearly emphasized the work and professional component of the program. However, some noted it did not fully capture the international or travel dimension.

“Yeah, it doesn't kind of elicit the young people's part. It seems like you could get that experience anywhere, they're just gonna kind of help you get that experience.” – General population youth 16-35, Atlantic Canada, English

“Working holiday” generated mixed reactions. While some participants felt it was familiar and easier to understand, others expressed concern that the term emphasized the “holiday” component and downplayed the professional or work dimension.

“I've had friends, like, go on working holidays and, like, do short-term contracts and things like that, to help with their careers, or just because they want to try working abroad for a short period of time.” – General population youth 16-35, British Columbia/Territories, English

“International co-op” did not resonate strongly. Participants associated “co-op” with structured academic placements and did not feel it accurately reflected their understanding of IEC.

“So a lot of the people who I went to school with did long international co-ops in Germany, and it sounds like it's kind of the same idea, but it was sponsored by the school rather than the Canadian government.” – General population youth 16-35, Atlantic Canada, English

“International co-op just reminds me of stuff that's offered through the school already.” – Indigenous youth 16-35, National, English

Across alternatives, participants indicated that terms clearly signalling both work and international travel were most effective in conveying the program's purpose.

After being provided with a description of the program, shown an outbound video, and presented with a map and list of participating countries, participants were asked to share their reactions to the opportunity. Participants generally reacted positively to the idea of exploring the world through the program. However, few described it as something they were actively planning to pursue. As discussions progressed, participants began to question the extent of the government's role and what level of support the program provides beyond facilitating the opportunity to travel and work abroad.

The central question raised across groups was what the program facilitates versus what individuals are expected to arrange independently, most notably access to a travel and work visa. Participants sought clarity about the scope of government support available through the program, particularly whether assistance was provided with finding employment or accommodation in destination countries. As participants came to understand that these elements are typically arranged independently by participants, some expressed greater hesitation about how manageable the experience would be in practice. Youth directly out of high school seemed to feel even less prepared – financially, logistically, or in terms of confidence – to navigate an international work experience independently.

“Someone that's, like, not in high school, I think a little older. It's just a bit of an easier situation for them to, like, find the details.” – General population youth 16-35, Ontario, English

Participants also raised practical questions related to eligibility criteria, duration of stay, employment expectations, and whether work must be secured prior to departure.

“It wasn't really clear to me as to whether the organization assists you with finding a job internationally, or a position that might meet the type of criteria or financial ranking that you were looking for. Or whether you, you know, individuals are just encouraged to find a job abroad.” – General population youth 16-35, Prairies, English

“I think that if we had a mentor, that could help, so I could have someone who might be assigned to my file and whom I could call in case of an emergency, or to give updates about how I've settled in. It's just someone I could reach in case something goes wrong, that's something I would need for this program.” – General population youth 16-35, National, French

“I would say having job security, because I'm not going to change countries only to be sent home two weeks later or end up stuck in a country without income.” – General population youth 16-35, Quebec, French

“If you want people to try to get jobs overseas, I would try to accommodate them, at least for the first month or two, until they can get, like, their foot in the door.” – General population youth 16-35, Ontario, English

2. Program awareness and communications

Among youth who had at least heard of the International Experience Canada program before taking the survey, awareness most often comes through personal networks, social media, and schools. About a quarter say they learned about the program either from friends and family (23%), through Instagram (23%), or through a school or academic institution (23%). Similar shares say they became aware of IEC through Facebook (22%), while smaller proportions mention a general internet search (15%) or a person or group they follow on social media (14%).

Compared to the previous wave, awareness through schools has increased, rising five points from 18% to 23%, while there are fewer mentions of the official International Experience Canada or IRCC website (Canada.ca/iec) (9%, down from 12%).

Some differences appear by gender. Men are more likely than women to say they became aware of IEC through Instagram (27% compared to 19%), Facebook (26% compared to 16%), LinkedIn (12% compared to 6%), or X/Twitter (10% compared to 4%).

Differences also appear by school status. High school students are the most likely to report learning about IEC through school (33%), compared to post-secondary students (22%) and youth who are not currently students (22%). Post-secondary students are more likely to mention LinkedIn (14%) than other groups, while youth who are not currently students are somewhat more likely to report learning about IEC through the IEC or IRCC websites (11%).

Table D3: Q18. How did you become aware of the International Experience Canada (IEC) program?

Base: Those who only knew the name or more familiar

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
From my friends and family	23%	23%	23%	19%	22%	25%
Social media: Instagram	23%	27%+	19%	23%	27%	21%
School or academic institution	23%	20%	26%	33%+(F)	22%	22%
Social media: Facebook	22%	26%+	16%	22%	24%	20%
General internet search	15%	16%	14%	11%	13%	16%
Person/group I follow on social media	14%	15%	12%	12%	17%	13%
Social media: LinkedIn	9%	12%+	6%	10%	14%+(F)	7%
International Experience Canada or IRCC website (Canada.ca/iec)	9%	8%	9%	8%	5%	11%+(E)
Social media: X (Twitter)	7%	10%+	4%	7%	9%	7%
Through my work	6%	9%+	3%	6%	5%	7%
From a news agency (in print or online)	3%	4%+	2%	2%	4%	3%
Through a Recognized Organization of International	3%	3%	3%	1%	5%+(D)	3%+(D)

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Experience Canada? (such as SWAP, etc.)						
Specific websites I visit	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%
International Experience Canada information seminar, conference presentation, or fair	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
International Experience Canada traveling exhibit	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other (please specify)	0%	0%	1%+	1%	0%	1%
Do not know	8%	6%	9%	8%	6%	8%
Sample size	1068	574	480	95	325	633
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table D4: Q18. How did you become aware of the International Experience Canada (IEC) program?

Base: Those who only knew the name or higher

Column %	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
From my friends and family	23%	26%
Social media: Instagram	23%	23%
School or academic institution	23%+	18%
Social media: Facebook	22%	23%
General internet search	15%	17%
Person/group I follow on social media	14%	15%
Social media: LinkedIn	9%	11%
International Experience Canada or IRCC website (Canada.ca/iec)	9%-	12%
Social media: X (Twitter)	7%	7%
Through my work	6%	7%
From a news agency (in print or online)	3%	4%
Through a Recognized Organization of International Experience Canada? (such as SWAP, etc.)	3%	3%
Specific websites I visit	0%-	6%
International Experience Canada information seminar, conference presentation, or fair	0%-	4%
International Experience Canada traveling exhibit	0%	0%
Other (please specify)	0%	1%
Do not know	8%+	6%
Sample size	1068	1168

When asked how they would prefer to receive information about the IEC program, youth most often point to schools and online sources. Three in ten say they would prefer to receive information through an academic institution or school campus (30%) or through a general internet search (30%). A quarter

say they would prefer to hear about the program through friends and family (25%), while similar shares mention the official Government of Canada or IEC website (23%).

Smaller shares say they would prefer to receive information through their workplace (16%) or through a person or group they follow on social media (15%). Similar proportions say they would prefer to receive this information through a recognized IEC organization such as SWAP or GO International (13%), through an IEC information session or fair (13%) or through a digital newsletter (12%).

Preferences vary somewhat by gender. Women are more likely than men to say they would prefer to receive information through an academic institution or school campus (34% compared to 25%) or a general internet search (32% vs 27%), while preferences for most other channels are similar between men and women.

Differences by school status are more pronounced. High school students (48%) and post-secondary students (41%) are much more likely to say they would prefer to receive information through a school campus compared to youth who are not currently students (22%). Social media is also more often mentioned by high schoolers (20%) and post-secondary students (17%) than by those not in school (14%). Youth who are not currently students are somewhat more likely to prefer receiving information through a general internet search (32%) compared to post-secondary students (29%) and high school students (25%). Some IRCC social media accounts are more popular among post-secondary students than among high school students, including Instagram (11% vs 7%) and LinkedIn (8% vs 1%). The latter is also relatively popular among non-students (7%).

Table D5: Q20_NEW. If you were to receive information about the International Experience Canada (IEC) program, how would you prefer to receive it?

Base: All respondents

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Academic institution/School campus	30%	25%	34%+	48%+(F)	41%+(F)	22%
General internet search	30%	27%	32%+	25%	29%	32%+(D)
From my friends and family	25%	24%	25%	26%	28%+(F)	23%
International Experience Canada or other Government of Canada website (Canada.ca/iec)	23%	22%	23%	21%	22%	25%
Through my work	16%	17%	15%	16%	18%	16%
Person/group I follow on social media	15%	15%	16%	20%+(F)	17%+(F)	14%
Through a recognized organization of International Experience Canada (such as GO international, SWAP, etc.)	13%	14%	12%	14%	13%	13%

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
International Experience Canada information, seminar, session or fair	13%	12%	13%	13%	14%	12%
Digital newsletter	12%	12%	12%	13%	11%	12%
From a news agency (in print or online)	11%	11%	9%	12%	11%	10%
IEC or Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada Instagram account: @citimmcanada	10%	10%	9%	7%	11%+(D)	9%
IEC or Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada Facebook account: @Canadian Immigration and Citizenship	8%	10%	7%	7%	9%	9%
IRCC LinkedIn account: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada	7%	8%+	6%	1%	8%+(D)	7%+(D)
IRCC X (Twitter) account: CitImmCanada	4%	5%+	2%	3%	4%	4%
Specific websites I visit	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%+(D)
Email	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Social media (various)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other (please specify)	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%+(D)
Do not know	16%	15%	17%	13%	10%	18%+(D)
Sample size	2515	1138	1342	207	723	1545
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Qualitative discussion of preferred communication channels

Participants indicated that social media platforms – particularly Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Reddit, YouTube and LinkedIn – were among the most effective channels for reaching youth. LinkedIn was more commonly mentioned by post-secondary participants.

“I think it'd be pretty cool to see someone's experiences with the program. Social media influencers could, kind of give you a close-up of the life of someone who's going through the program.” – Youth 16-35, British Columbia/Territories, English

“I think it would be incredibly beneficial for Canadians who want to, to learn about it through influencers.” – Youth 16-35 with a mobility, visual or hearing impairment National, English

Educational institutions and public transit placements were also frequently mentioned as high-visibility channels.

“Job fairs. There's a lot of job fairs at universities and colleges, too, and having a booth set up with more info.” – General population youth 16-35, Atlantic Canada, English

“Sometimes, you know, like, once a year, they'll have a bunch of things come over, like, we'll have an army, we'll have different type of schools, just a bunch of things that broaden our view and see different experiences we could have. And if they would also present themselves there, more people would be conscious that it's possible.” – Youth 16-18, National, English

Word-of-mouth, including hearing about the program from peers or past participants, was frequently described as being potentially influential both for generating interest and establishing credibility.

“Testimonials again, just so, going back to past experiences, like, were they successful?” – General population youth 16-35, Ontario, English

“Testimonials from other people would probably make it a little bit more inviting, just so you have experience that someone's done it before.” – General population youth 16-35, Ontario, English

Official government websites and traditional media were viewed as important for establishing legitimacy and reinforcing trust in the program.

“A travel page, like, from an airline or from a travel program, like Expedia or something because... they're trusted. I know who they are, so they... I know that they'll have, like, actual information that I'm looking for, not just, like, ads and stuff like that, like, just trying to sell you on going.” – Youth 16-18, National, English

“Since you mentioned that it's a government program, I would go to the Government of Canada website as the source of truth, just to make sure that I'm not getting false information. It is an important piece of research that I need to do.” – Youth 16-35 Women in STEM, National, English

“I would be more likely to click on an ad that was actually sponsored by the government of Canada, and it said, would you like to work abroad, kind of thing. I feel like if anyone's thinking about that, the government seems like a trusted, safe, reliable source to get that information on.” – Youth 16-35 with a mobility, visual or hearing impairment, National, English

Section E: Satisfaction and impact

1. Satisfaction with IEC experience

As was observed in previous waves of this research, most IEC participants report being satisfied with their work and travel experience abroad. About three quarters say they were satisfied overall, including more than a third who say they were very satisfied (37%) and a little over four in ten who say they were somewhat satisfied (42%). A smaller share say they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (13%), while only a small percentage report dissatisfaction (5% combined). These satisfaction levels are consistent with the previous wave.

Satisfaction varies by gender. Men report higher satisfaction levels (85% satisfied, including 42% very satisfied) than women (67% satisfied; 24% very satisfied). Women are more likely to report neutral views (25% compared to 8%), with dissatisfaction levels the same across genders.

Differences also appear by school status. Youth who are not currently students are the most likely to say they are satisfied (84%; 43% very satisfied), compared to post-secondary students (70%; 30% very).

Table E1: Q21. To what extent were you satisfied or dissatisfied with your work and travel abroad experience via the International Experience Canada (IEC) program?

Base: Those (18+) who participated in IEC or travelled abroad using foreign countries' or territories' youth mobility programs.

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
NET satisfied	79%	85%+	67%	70%	84%+
Very satisfied	37%	42%+	24%	30%	43%
Somewhat satisfied	42%	43%	43%	40%	41%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	13%	8%	25%+	18%	12%
Somewhat dissatisfied	4%	5%	2%	6%+	3%
Very dissatisfied	1%	1%	2%	1%	0%
NET dissatisfied	5%	6%	3%	7%	3%
Do not know	2%	1%	4%	4%	1%
Sample size	236	157	77	85	114

Table E2: Q21. To what extent were you satisfied or dissatisfied with your work and travel abroad experience via the International Experience Canada (IEC) program?

Base: Those (18+) who participated in IEC or travelled abroad using foreign countries' or territories' youth mobility programs.

Column %	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
NET satisfied	79%	79%
Very satisfied	37%	36%
Somewhat satisfied	42%	43%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	13%	14%
Somewhat dissatisfied	4%	5%
Very dissatisfied	1%	1%
NET dissatisfied	5%	6%
Do not know	2%	1%
Sample size	236	297

Among participants who report being satisfied with their IEC experience, the most common reasons relate to the overall quality of the experience and opportunities for personal growth. One in five say the program provided a great experience or valuable life experience (19%), while one in ten say they were simply satisfied with the program and had no issues (11%) or describe the process as easy with good support (10%).

Table E3: Q22. Why do you say that?

Base: Those (18+) who participated in IEC or travelled abroad using foreign countries' or territories' youth mobility programs and those who were satisfied with IEC

Column % [% citing reason for satisfaction]	Total	Male	Female	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Great experience / Life experience / Personal growth	19%	17%	23%	27%+	13%
Satisfied / No issues / Like it / Good	11%	12%	7%	5%	12%
Easy process / Good support	10%	12%+	3%	15%+	5%
Some negative sides (e.g. complex process)	8%	5%	16%+	7%	9%
Ability to travel / See new places / Meet people	7%	8%	2%	9%	7%
It was a fun experience	3%	4%	2%	0%	5%+
Good program to learn	3%	3%	2%	1%	3%
No reason / My thoughts / Just do	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%
Learning about a new country or culture	2%	2%	2%	0%	2%
Was able to work and earn money	2%	2%	0%	0%	3%
Didn't like it / Disappointed	1%	0%	5%	2%	1%

Column % [% citing reason for satisfaction]	Total	Male	Female	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Expensive / Costly	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%
To improve a second language	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%
Other	4%	3%	8%	1%	5%
Not sure	42%	42%	43%	40%	46%
Sample size	187	134	52	59	97

This year, the option of “not sure” was actively offered to participants, contrasting from previous years where participants entered a written response in which some were coded as “not sure”. For this reason, comparative findings year over year should be regarded with caution.

Table E4: Q22. Why do you say that?

Base: Those (18+) who participated in IEC or travelled abroad using foreign countries’ or territories’ youth mobility programs and those who were satisfied with IEC

Column % [% citing reason for satisfaction]	Total 2025/26	Total 2024/25
Great experience / Life experience / Personal growth	19%	21%
Satisfied / No issues / Like it / Good	11%-	24%
Easy process / Good support	10%	14%
Some negative sides (e.g. complex process)	8%	4%
Ability to travel / See new places / Meet people	7%	4%
It was a fun experience	3%	3%
Good program to learn	3%-	11%
No reason / My thoughts / Just do	2%-	8%
Learning about a new country or culture	2%-	6%
Was able to work and earn money	2%	4%
Didn't like it / Disappointed	1%	0%
Expensive / Costly	1%	3%
Other	4%	4%
Not sure	42%+	10%
Sample size	187	236

Among the small group of participants who say they were neutral or dissatisfied with their IEC experience, reasons vary but tend to focus on aspects of the process or the overall experience. A small share mention negative aspects such as a complex process (5%) or say they were disappointed with the experience (4%). Some say they had no specific reason or simply provide general comments (8%).

Table E5: Q22. Why do you say that?

Base: Those (18+) who participated in IEC or travelled abroad using foreign countries' or territories' youth mobility programs and those who were neutral/dissatisfied with IEC

Column % [% citing reason for neutrality or dissatisfaction]	Total	Male	Female	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
No reason / My thoughts / Just do	8%	15%	0%	0%	19%
Some negative sides (e.g. complex process)	5%	4%	6%	0%	12%
Didn't like it / Disappointed	4%	0%	10%	4%	7%
Other	3%	0%	6%	5%	0%
Not sure	81%	81%	79%	91%	62%
Sample size	44	21	22	23	16

Again, because the option of “not sure” was actively offered to participants this year, contrasting from previous years where participants entered a written response in which some were coded as “not sure”, comparative findings year over year should be regarded with caution.

Table E6: Q22. Why do you say that?

Base: Those (18+) who participated in IEC or travelled abroad using foreign countries' or territories' youth mobility programs and those who were neutral/dissatisfied with IEC.

Column % [% citing reason for neutrality or dissatisfaction]	Total 2025/26	Total 2024/25
Satisfied / No issues	0%-	12%
No reason / My thoughts / Just do	8%	9%
Some negative sides (e.g. complex process)	5%	7%
Didn't like it / Disappointed	4%	7%
Other	3%-	20%
Not sure	81%+	31%
Sample size	44	58

2. Likelihood to recommend

Most participants say they would recommend an international work and travel experience such as IEC to family or friends. As was seen in the last wave, just a little over eight in ten say they are likely to recommend the program (84%), including more than a third who say they are very likely (37%) and nearly half who say they are somewhat likely (46%).

Some differences appear by current school status. Youth who are not currently students are the most likely to say they are likely to recommend the program (88%; 44% very likely), compared to post-secondary students (76%; 27% very).

Table E7: Q23. To what extent are you likely or unlikely to recommend an international working abroad experience such as International Experience Canada (IEC) to family or friends?

Base: Those (18+) who participated in IEC or travelled abroad using foreign countries' or territories' youth mobility programs

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
NET likely	84%	88%+	74%	76%	88%+
Very likely	37%	41%	29%	27%	44%+
Somewhat likely	46%	47%	46%	50%	44%
Neither likely nor unlikely	12%	9%	19%+	17%	9%
Somewhat unlikely	2%	1%	4%	5%+	0%
Very unlikely	1%	1%	2%	0%	2%
NET unlikely	3%	2%	6%	5%	2%
Do not know	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%
Sample size	236	157	77	85	114

Table E8: Q23. To what extent are you likely or unlikely to recommend an international working abroad experience such as International Experience Canada (IEC) to family or friends?

Base: Those (18+) who participated in IEC or travelled abroad using foreign countries' or territories' youth mobility programs

Column %	Total 2025/26	Total 2024/25
NET likely	84%	80%
Very likely	37%	39%
Somewhat likely	46%	41%
Neither likely nor unlikely	12%	15%
Somewhat unlikely	2%	4%
Very unlikely	1%	1%
NET unlikely	3%	5%
Do not know	1%	0%
Sample size	236	297

Notable differences by other segments include:

- Youth with impairments are less likely than youth without impairments to recommend an international work experience, with 73% saying they would recommend it (vs 88%). They are also less likely to say they are very likely to recommend it (20% vs 43%).
- Economically disadvantaged youth are more likely than those who are not economically disadvantaged to say they would recommend the experience (90% vs 83%), largely driven by higher “somewhat likely” responses (53% vs 45%).

Among those who say they would recommend the program, the most common reason relates to the overall quality of the experience. About one in six say the program offers a great life experience or personal growth opportunity (17%). Smaller shares say they recommend it because they were satisfied with the program overall or because it provides a good opportunity for youth (4%). Other reasons include the ability to travel and meet people (4%), the program's ease of use and support (4%), or the opportunity to work and earn money (2%).

Actively offered the option this year, a large share say they do not know or did not provide a specific reason. Comparative findings year over year should be regarded with caution.

Table E9: Q23A. Why do you say that?

Base: Those (18+) who participated in IEC or travelled abroad using foreign countries' or territories' youth mobility programs and who are likely to recommend an international working abroad experience to family or friends

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Great experience / Life experience / Personal growth	17%	19%	13%	18%	17%
Satisfied / No issues / Like it / Good	9%	9%	11%	10%	7%
Good opportunity	4%	4%	6%	3%	7%
Easy process / Good support	4%	5%	2%	7%	3%
Ability to travel / See new places / Meet people	4%	4%+	0%	6%	2%
Some negative sides (e.g. Complex Process)	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%
Was able to work and earn money	2%	2%	0%	0%	2%
It was a fun experience	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%
Didn't like it / Disappointed	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%
Expensive / Costly	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%
Other	6%	6%	5%	8%	6%
None / Nothing / No particular reason	6%	5%	7%	2%	5%
Don't know / Refused	46%	43%	54%	44%	48%
Sample size	200	140	58	66	102

Table E10: Q23A. Why do you say that?

Base: Those (18+) who participated in IEC or travelled abroad using foreign countries' or territories' youth mobility programs and who are likely to recommend an international working abroad experience to family or friends

Column %	Total 2025/26	Total 2024/25
Great experience / Life experience / Personal growth	17%-	26%
Satisfied / No issues / Like it / Good	9%-	24%
Good opportunity	4%	4%
Easy process / Good support	4%	5%
Ability to travel / See new places / Meet people	4%	2%
Some negative sides (e.g. Complex Process)	2%	1%
Was able to work and earn money	2%-	7%
It was a fun experience	1%	3%
Other	6%	4%
None / Nothing / No particular reason	6%	8%
Don't know / Refused	46%+	14%
Sample size	200	238

This year, the option of “don’t know” was actively offered to participants, contrasting from previous years where participants entered a written response in which some were coded as “not sure”. For this reason, comparative findings year over year should be regarded with caution.

3. Resume building

Among youth who have worked, studied, or volunteered abroad, half say they have included their international experience on their resume after returning to Canada (49%). Compared to the previous wave, inclusion of international experience on resumes has declined notably from 63%.

More men than women included their experience on their resume (52% compared to 45%).

Table E11: Q24. Have you included your international work, or volunteer experience on your resume after returning to Canada?

Base: Those who worked/studied/volunteered abroad

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Yes	49%	52%+	45%	43%	50%	50%
No	46%	43%	50%+	51%	44%	46%
Not sure	5%	5%	5%	6%	6%	4%
Sample size	1040	551	480	79	331	617

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table E12: Q24. Have you included your international work, or volunteer experience on your resume after returning to Canada?

Base: Those who worked/studied/volunteered abroad

Column %	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Yes	49%-	63%
No	46%+	32%
Not sure	5%	5%
Sample size	1040	837

Among those who have not included their international experience on their resume, the most common reason is that they did not feel the experience was relevant or applicable, cited by four in ten respondents (40%). Smaller shares say their trip was mainly for leisure and did not involve work or volunteering (13%), or that the experience was not needed for their education or career (8%). Other reasons mentioned include that the trip was very short (5%) or that they simply did not think about including it (4%).

Table E13: Q25. For what reason have you not included this experience on your resume?

Base: Those who have not included their international work, or volunteer experience on their resume after returning to Canada

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Did not feel it was relevant/significant/applicable	40%	41%	38%	42%	40%	40%
Trip was mainly for leisure/didn't work or volunteer abroad	13%	11%	15%	17%	16%	11%
Not needed/required education level/grade information only	8%	9%	7%	6%	4%	10%+(E)
It was a very short trip	5%	4%	5%	0%	3%+(D)	6%+(D)
Didn't think of it/Forgot	4%	3%	6%	4%	5%	3%
Have not updated CV yet/busy	3%	2%	3%	0%	1%	4%+(D)
Still working for the same employer/it was part of my work	2%	1%	2%	0%	1%	3%+(D)
International experience is not recognized/valued here	2%	2%	1%	0%	0%	2%+(D)
It was long time ago	1%	1%	2%	0%	1%	2%+(D)

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Informal experience was for personal growth	1%	1%	2%	4%	0%	2%+(E)
Trip was for study, not work	1%	1%	1%	0%	2%	1%
Resume is too long as is	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	0%
Other	4%	4%	4%	3%	8%	2%
None/Nothing/No particular reason	6%	7%	4%	18%	3%	5%
Don't know/Refused	11%	12%	10%	5%	13%	10%
Sample size	473	235	235	38	146	284
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table E14: Q25. For what reason have you not included this experience on your resume?

Base: Those who have not included their international work, or volunteer experience on their resume after returning to Canada

Column %	Total 2025/26	Total 2024/25
Did not feel it was relevant/significant/applicable	40%	33%
Trip was mainly for leisure/didn't work or volunteer abroad	13%	10%
Not needed/required education level/grade information only	8%	10%
It was a very short trip	5%	4%
Didn't think of it/forgot	4%	5%
Have not updated CV yet/busy	3%	2%
Still working for the same employer/it was part of my work	2%	1%
International experience is not recognized/valued here	2%	2%
It was long time ago	1%	3%
Informal experience/was for personal growth	1%	2%
Trip was for study, not work	1%+	0%
Resume is too long as is	1%	2%
Other	4%	4%
None/Nothing/No particular reason	6%	8%
Don't know/Refused	11%	14%
Sample size	473	269

Many respondents who have worked, studied, or volunteered abroad say they see value in their international experience when it comes to employment. However, these sentiments have become weaker since the last research wave. A majority agree with the statement that they are eager to highlight their international experience to potential employers (61%; down from 73% in the previous wave), while half say they feel their international experience improved their job prospects in Canada (50%; down from 59%). About four in ten say potential employers have asked about their international experience (43%; down from 55%).

Men are more likely to agree with all three statements than women.

Table E15: Q26. How much do you agree with the following statements?

Base: Those who worked/studied/volunteered abroad

Column % [% in agreement]	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
I'm eager to highlight my international experience to potential employers	61%	66%+	56%	67%	64%	60%
I feel that my international experience improved my job prospects in Canada	50%	57%+	42%	50%	53%	50%
Potential employers ask about my international experience	43%	49%+	35%	49%	43%	42%
Sample size	1040	551	480	79	331	617
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table E16: Q26. How much do you agree with the following statements?

Base: Those who worked/studied/volunteered abroad

Column % [% in agreement]	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
I'm eager to highlight my international experience to potential employers	61%-	73%
I feel that my international experience improved my job prospects in Canada	50%-	59%
Potential employers ask about my international experience	43%-	55%
Sample size	1040	995

Qualitative perspective on the career value of international experience

While international experience was generally viewed positively, participants noted that professional value may vary depending on industry, employer recognition, and alignment with career goals. The notion that someone might take a year off to work in hospitality to travel the world, was not appealing to most; especially those already established in their careers.

“I imagine that they would be opportunities that target people looking for experience rather than, you know, a big paycheck. And at the current point of my life, I'm looking like I've worked my way up to a certain, comfort level, so income would be higher than say working as a waitress in Italy.” – General population youth 16-35, Prairies, English

“I think the term gap in the career space has a very negative connotation. Like, if you try and apply for a job, and they're like, there is a literal gap in your resume.” – Youth 16-35 Woman in STEM, National, English

Women in STEM were somewhat more likely to engage with the program through a professional lens, framing international experience in terms of career development, professional growth, and learning from different workplace environments and approaches.

“I feel like the experience overall would be different. You'd be learning from different people.” – Youth 16-35 Woman in STEM, National, English

“When you're on LinkedIn and Indeed, you're seeing they need, like, 2 years of experience. They're not asking, where you volunteered, where you worked in another country for a few months, or anything like that. They want to know that you've done 2 plus years, like working. So, if this is just the 4 months, or whatever the time period is, I think it would be hard to come back and get a... like, apply for jobs in that field just because you did it somewhere else.” – Youth 16-35 Woman in STEM, National, English

Section F: IEC work experience

1. Alternative programs

Most IEC participants say they would have pursued another option for international experience if IEC had not been available. About six in ten (64%) say they would have pursued an alternative work or travel program to achieve a similar international experience, while about three in ten (29%) say they would not have done so and 7% are unsure.

Men (70%) are more likely than women (49%) to say they would have pursued an alternative program.

Table F1: QWE1. Without the International Experience Canada (IEC) program, would you have pursued an alternative work or travel program to achieve a similar international traveling experience?

Base: Those (18+) who participated in IEC or travelled abroad using foreign countries' or territories' youth mobility programs

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Yes	64%	70%+	49%	62%	63%
No	29%	25%	40%+	33%	28%
Not sure	7%	5%	10%	5%	8%
Sample size	236	157	77	85	114

2. Planning for employment

Nearly six in ten IEC participants (58%) say they made arrangements for employment before going abroad, while four in ten (40%) say they did not and 2% are unsure.

Men (64%) are more likely than women (41%) to say they had arranged employment before leaving.

Table F2: QWE2. Did you make arrangements for employment prior to going abroad?

Base: Those (18+) who participated in IEC or travelled abroad using foreign countries' or territories' youth mobility programs

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Yes	58%	64%+	41%	59%	55%
No	40%	34%	57%+	38%	44%
Not sure	2%	2%	2%	3%	1%
Sample size	236	157	77	85	114

3. Working abroad

Most IEC participants worked while abroad, often in more than one role. Four in ten (40%) say they worked one job, while a similar share (36%) say they worked two or more jobs at the same time. Another 13% say they worked two or more jobs at different times. One in ten (10%) say they did not work while abroad.

Some differences appear by gender. Men (44%) are more likely than women (30%) to say they worked one job, while women (21%) are more likely than men (10%) to say they worked two or more jobs at different times.

Differences also appear by school status. Youth who are not currently students (47%) are the most likely to say they worked one job, while post-secondary students (45%) are the most likely to say they worked two or more jobs at the same time.

Table F3: QWE3. Did you work at one or more jobs during your time abroad?

Base: Those (18+) who participated in IEC or travelled abroad using foreign countries' or territories' youth mobility programs

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
NET yes	89%	91%	83%	92%	85%
Yes, I worked one job	40%	44%+	30%	29%	47%+
Yes, I worked at two or more jobs at the same time	36%	38%	32%	45%+	28%

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Yes, I worked at two or more jobs, but at different times	13%	10%	21%+	17%	10%
No, I did not work	10%	8%	16%	8%	13%
Not sure or don't remember	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%
Sample size	236	157	77	85	114

Among those who worked while abroad, full-time work was more common than part-time work. A majority (59%) say they worked full-time jobs of 30 or more hours per week, while about a third (31%) say they worked part-time jobs. A smaller share (8%) say they worked both part-time and full-time jobs. Men (62%) are more likely than women (50%) to say they worked full-time, while women (35%) are more likely than men (29%) to say they worked part-time.

Current post-secondary students are more likely than non-students to have worked a combination of full time and part time jobs (13% vs 3%).

Table F4: QWE5. Did you work full-time or part-time?

Base: Those (18+) who participated in IEC or travelled abroad using foreign countries' or territories' youth mobility programs and those who worked at one or more jobs during their time abroad

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Full time jobs (i.e., 30 or more hours per week)	59%	62%	50%	58%	63%
Part time jobs (i.e., less than 30 hours per week)	31%	29%	35%	23%	33%
Both part and full time jobs	8%	7%	11%	13%+	3%
Not sure or don't remember	3%	3%	3%	6%	1%
Sample size	208	143	63	77	97

When asked what proportion of their time abroad they spent working, responses are spread across categories, though many are unsure. About a quarter say they spent 1% to 25% of their time working (23%), while a similar share say they spent 25% to 50% of their time working (27%). Another 12% say they spent more than half of their time working. However, a sizeable share (37%) say they are not sure or do not remember. Overall, the mean % of time spent working is 34.9%.

Table F5: QWE6. When you were abroad, what proportion of the time were you working?

Base: Those (18+) who participated in IEC or travelled abroad using foreign countries' or territories' youth mobility programs, and those who worked at one or more jobs during their time abroad

Column % [% proportion of time working]	Total	Male	Female	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
0	1%	1%	1%	0%	2%
1-25	23%	24%	20%	21%	21%
25-50	27%	29%	23%	31%	29%
51+	12%	10%	15%	17%	12%
Not sure or don't remember	37%	36%	40%	31%	36%
Sample size	208	143	63	77	97

Among those who worked while abroad, monetary payment was the most common form of payment. The largest proportion (46%) say they received financial compensation such as a pay cheque, while about a third (35%) say they received in-kind compensation such as room and board. Another 16% say they received both financial and in-kind compensation.

Differences by school status are observed. Youth who are not currently students (54%) are the most likely to say they received financial compensation, while post-secondary students (45%) are the most likely to report in-kind compensation.

Table F6: QWE7. Which of the following best describes how you were compensated for your employment while abroad?

Base: Those (18+) who participated in IEC or travelled abroad using foreign countries' or territories' youth mobility programs, and those who worked at one or more jobs during their time abroad

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
I received financial compensation (e.g. pay cheque)	46%	48%	42%	36%	54%+
I received in-kind compensation (e.g. room and board)	35%	33%	38%	45%+	27%
I received both financial and in-kind compensation (e.g. pay cheque and room and/or board)	16%	17%	13%	15%	15%
I did not receive financial or in-kind compensation for the work that I did	3%	2%	5%	2%	3%
Prefer not to say	1%	0%	3%	1%	1%
Sample size	208	143	63	77	97

Notable differences by other segments include:

- Youth with impairments are more likely than youth without impairments to report receiving in-kind compensation such as room and board (52% vs 29%), making this the most common form of compensation for this group. They are less likely to report receiving both financial and in-kind compensation (8% vs 18%).
- Women in STEM are also more likely to report receiving in-kind compensation (50% vs 28%).

Among the very small number of respondents who say they did not receive any financial or in-kind compensation for their work abroad, around a third say their job was part of an unpaid internship.

Among those who received financial or in-kind compensation while abroad, reported earnings vary widely. The most commonly mentioned amounts are \$5,001 to \$10,000 (18%), \$20,001 to \$30,000 (15%), and \$1,000 to \$5,000 (12%). About one in ten report receiving more than \$60,000 (11%), while smaller shares report amounts in other ranges.

There are some directional differences by gender. While men are somewhat more likely than women to report earnings of more than \$60,000 CAD (12% compared to 7%), women are somewhat more likely to report receiving less than \$1,000 CAD (11% compared to 3%).

Table F8: QWE9. Approximately how much financial compensation did you receive while you were working abroad? Please estimate the total amount in Canadian dollars.

Base: Those (18+) who participated in IEC or travelled abroad using foreign countries' or territories' youth mobility programs, and those who received financial or in-kind compensation for the work that they did

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Less than \$1,000 CAD	5%	3%	11%	3%	6%
\$1,000 CAD to \$5,000 CAD	12%	13%	10%	15%	14%
\$5,001 CAD to \$10,000 CAD	18%	17%	18%	20%	16%
\$10,001 CAD to \$20,000 CAD	9%	8%	11%	10%	6%
\$20,001 CAD to \$30,000 CAD	15%	16%	13%	15%	14%
\$30,001 CAD to \$40,000 CAD	10%	11%	9%	8%	13%
\$40,001 CAD to \$50,000 CAD	8%	9%	7%	9%	8%
\$50,001 CAD to \$60,000 CAD	7%	7%	9%	7%	8%
More that \$60,000 CAD	11%	12%	7%	8%	12%
Not sure or prefer not to say	4%	4%	5%	5%	3%
Sample size	200	140	58	74	93

IEC participants report a wide range of positions while abroad. The most common category is manager, administrator, or owner, mentioned by three in ten (32%). One in five (18%) say they worked in a

professional role. Smaller shares mention service roles (7%), office work (6%), sales roles (5%), manual work (4%), or being unemployed (3%).

Men (38%) are more likely than women (19%) to say they held manager, administrator, or owner roles.

Table F9: QWE10. What was your position title(s)?

Base: Those (18+) who participated in IEC or travelled abroad using foreign countries' or territories' youth mobility programs

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Manager/administrator/owner (Administrator, director, editor, entrepreneur, executive, manager, businessperson, politician, self-employed, etc.)	32%	38%+	19%	29%	32%
Professional (Archeologist, architect, artist, lawyer, banker, biologist, accountant, consultant, foreman, dentist, etc.)	18%	18%	21%	20%	19%
Personnel specialized in services (Security agent, taxi driver, hairdresser, cook, esthetician, clergy member, military force member, police officer, etc.)	7%	6%	11%	7%	6%
Office worker (Cashier, office clerk, accounting clerk, secretary, etc.)	6%	5%	9%	8%	5%
Personnel specialized in sales (Insurance agent, salesperson, sales clerk, real estate agent, real estate broker, sales rep, etc.)	5%	5%	4%	3%	5%
Manual worker (Farmer, packer, day labourer, labourer, miner, fisherman, forestry worker, etc.)	4%	5%	3%	4%	3%
Unemployed (Unemployment, welfare)	3%	3%	3%	4%	4%
Skilled, semi-skilled worker (Bricklayer, truck driver, electrician, machine operator, mechanic, painter, etc.)	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%
Science and technologies worker (Computer specialist, programmer-analyst, technician, audio-technician, lab technician, etc.)	2%	2%	1%	3%	2%
Student (Full-time or whose studies take up most of his/her time)	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%
Homemaker	1%	0%	3%	1%	1%

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Other	1%	1%	0%	3%	1%
Don't know / refusal	17%	15%	22%	16%	20%
Sample size	236	157	77	86	114

IEC participants report a broad range of spending while abroad, with two thirds spending \$15,000 or less. The most commonly mentioned spending range is \$10,001 to \$15,000, cited by one in five (23%). This is followed by \$1,000 to \$5,000 (21%) and \$5,001 to \$10,000 (18%). One in ten (12%) say they spent more than \$20,000.

Men generally spend more than women, with 32% of men spending \$15,000 or more, compared to only half that proportion among women (16%).

Table F10: QWE11. Approximately how much money did you spend (including food, accommodation, entertainment and other incidental expenses) while you were working and travelling in your destination country/territory?

Base: Those (18+) who participated in IEC or travelled abroad using foreign countries' or territories' youth mobility programs

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Less than \$1,000 CAD	7%	6%	8%	5%	7%
\$1,000 CAD to \$5,000 CAD	21%	18%	28%	25%	20%
\$5,001 CAD to \$10,000 CAD	18%	15%	22%	16%	15%
\$10,001 CAD to \$15,000 CAD	23%	23%	22%	21%	28%
\$15,001 CAD to \$20,000 CAD	15%	18%+	6%	16%	13%
More than \$20,000 CAD	12%	14%	10%	10%	14%
Not sure or prefer not to say	5%	5%	4%	8%	3%
Sample size	236	157	77	85	114

Section G: Motivations and barriers for international experiences

1. Experience preferences

Canadian youth are more likely to prefer working for a Canadian company while living overseas (36%) than working for an employer in the country they are visiting (16%). However, a sizable proportion has no preference between the two (36%).

Compared to the previous wave, preferences for working for a Canadian company remain stable, as does the share with no preference. However, the proportion who say they would prefer to work for an employer in the destination country has declined notably, from a quarter (25%) to 16%, while the share who are unsure has increased from 4% to 12%.

Men (19%) are more likely than women (14%) to say they would prefer to work for a local employer in the country they are visiting.

Some differences also appear by school status. High school students (22%) are the most likely to say they would prefer to work for a local employer, compared to post-secondary students (17%) and youth who are not currently students (15%).

Table G1: Q11B. If you were to work overseas, would you be more interested in working for a local employer in that country or to work for a Canadian employer while you lived overseas (i.e. a digital nomad)?

Base: All respondents

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
For a Canadian company while living overseas	36%	36%	36%	36%	36%	36%
Work for employer from that country	16%	19%+	14%	22%+(F)	17%	15%
Do not have a preference between the two	36%	34%	37%	33%	38%	36%
Do not know	12%	11%	13%	9%	9%	13%+(E)
Sample size	2515	1138	1342	207	723	1545
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table G2: Q11B. If you were to work overseas, would you be more interested in working for a local employer in that country or to work for a Canadian employer while you lived overseas (i.e. a digital nomad)?

Base: All respondents

Column %	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Do not have a preference between the two	36%	36%
For a Canadian company while living overseas	36%	35%
Work for employer from that country	16%-	25%
Do not know	12%	4%
Sample size	2515	899

Notable differences by other segments include:

- 2SLGBTQIA+ youth are more likely than those who are not 2SLGBTQIA+ to say they do not have a preference between working for a Canadian employer or a local employer while overseas (49%)

vs 33%). They are less likely to prefer working for a Canadian employer while living overseas (28% vs 38%) and also less likely to prefer working for a local employer in that country (12% vs 17%).

- Youth with impairments are less likely than youth without impairments to say they do not have a preference (28% vs 37%).
- Indigenous youth and economically disadvantaged youth are more likely to prefer working for a local employer in the country they are living in (21% vs 16% among non-Indigenous youth; 19% vs 13% among youth who are not economically disadvantaged).

Exploration and adventure remain the strongest motivations for international experiences among Canadian youth. Eight in ten respondents (82%) say they are interested in working, studying, or volunteering abroad for exploration and adventure. A similarly sized group says that learning about a new country or culture is also a strong motivator (79%). About three quarters say they are motivated by personal growth (74%). Seven in ten (70%) say they are motivated by learning or improving another language, while close to two thirds (62%) say they are motivated by obtaining international career experience or professional development. These findings are unchanged from the previous wave of research.

Women are more likely than men to say they are motivated by exploration and adventure (86% compared to 79%), learning about a new country or culture (83% compared to 76%), and personal growth (77% compared to 71%).

Differences by school status are also evident. High school students are the most likely to say they are motivated by exploration and adventure (90%) and learning or improving another language (78%).

Table G3: 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? I am interested in...

Base: All respondents

Column % [% in agreement]	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Exploration and adventure	82%	79%	86%+	90%+(EF)	82%	82%
Learning about a new country or culture	79%	76%	83%+	79%	82%	79%
Pursuing international travel experiences that contribute toward my personal growth (ex. increased confidence, adaptability or self-awareness)	74%	71%	77%+	80%	76%	74%
Learning or improving another language	70%	69%	71%	78%+(F)	74%+(F)	68%
Obtaining international career experience or professional development	62%	64%	61%	65%	68%	59%

Column % [% in agreement]	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Sample size	2515	1138	1342	207	723	1545
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table G4: 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? I am interested in...

Base: All respondents

Column % [% in agreement]	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Exploration and adventure	82%	82%
Learning about a new country or culture	79%	81%
Pursuing international travel experiences that contribute toward my personal growth (ex. increased confidence, adaptability or self-awareness)	74%	74%
Learning or improving another language	70%	68%
Obtaining international career experience or professional development	62%+	59%
Sample size	2515	2518

The top three other travel motivations mentioned by youth are fairly consistent compared to the previous wave, with learning about a new country or culture taking top spot at 19% (21% past wave). For curiosity, to discover new things or to have different experiences has risen from third to second at 13% (vs 10%) with better job opportunities with a higher salary dropping slightly to third place this wave (11%, unchanged since the past wave). Higher salaries are more of a motivation for men than women (13% vs 9%), and life experiences more likely to motivate women than men (10% vs 4%).

Table G5: Q14. What else motivates you to work, study, or volunteer outside of Canada?

Base: All respondents

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Learning about a new country or culture	19%	17%	20%	23%	18%	19%
For curiosity/discovering new things/different experiences	13%	11%	15%	10%	15%	13%
Better job opportunities with higher salary	11%	13%+	9%	13%	10%	11%
Meeting new people/networking	9%	7%	10%	13%	11%	7%
Experience/life experience/life goals	7%	4%	10%+	2%	8%+(D)	7%+(D)
A change of weather/scenery/place of living	6%	5%	6%	2%	6%	6%+(D)

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Pursuing international travel experiences that contribute toward my personal growth	5%	4%	5%	2%	6%	5%
Exploration and adventure	5%	5%	6%	4%	7%	5%
See the world	4%	3%	4%	5%	4%	3%
Helping others/making a difference	4%	5%	3%	1%	4%	5%+(D)
I travel for leisure/fun/relaxation	4%	3%	5%	5%	4%	4%
For different perspective on life	4%	2%	5%+	4%	3%	4%
Learning or improving another language	3%	2%	3%	4%	4%	2%
Better quality of life/Better cost of living (cheaper costs, etc.)	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%	3%
International career experience or professional development	2%	3%+	1%	2%	2%	2%
Visit family/friends	2%	2%	2%	7%	2%	1%
To study/school	1%	2%	1%	5%	1%	1%
Family heritage/Family history	<1%	0%	1%	0%	<1%	<1%
Other	8%	9%	6%	15%	7%	6%
None/Nothing else	14%	16%	12%	14%	9%	16%+(E)
DK/NA	6%	6%	6%	6%	7%	6%
Sample size	1473	677	780	99	389	963
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table G6: Q14. What else motivates you to work, study, or volunteer outside of Canada?

Base: All respondents

Column %	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Learning about a new country or culture	19%	21%
For curiosity/discovering new things/different experiences	13%+	10%
Better job opportunities with higher salary	11%	11%
Meeting new people/networking	9%	9%
Experience/Life experience/Life goals	7%	6%
A change of weather/scenery/place of living	6%	5%
Pursuing international travel experiences that contribute toward my personal growth	5%	6%
Exploration and adventure	5%	6%
Helping others/making a difference	4%	3%
I travel for leisure/fun/relaxation	4%	6%+
See the world	4%	4%
For different perspective on life	4%+	2%

Column %	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Better quality of life/Better cost of living (cheaper costs, etc.)	3%	2%
Learning or improving another language	3%+	1%
International career experience or professional development	2%	6%+
Visit family/friends	2%	2%
To study/school	1%	1%
Family heritage/Family history	<1%	1%+
Other	8%+	3%
None/Nothing else	14%	12%
DK/NA	6%	10%+
*Sample size	1473	2518

* Please note that, due to a technical error, Q14 was inadvertently omitted after the survey pre-test. Respondents were recontacted and the affected data were replaced. A total of 1473 completes were obtained through this recontact effort, conducted between March 4-10, 2026.

2. Barriers

Financial concerns continue to be the most significant barriers to working, studying, or volunteering abroad. As was seen in the previous wave, seven in ten respondents (72%) say they are concerned about how much money it would take to live overseas. A similar share (68%) again say they are concerned they will have financial issues funding their travel experience.

Other major barriers include language barriers (61%), not knowing how to get started (61%), and having too many obligations in Canada (60%, an increase of four points over 2024-25). Concern about finding employment abroad is also widespread (57%) and has increased by five points from 52% in the previous wave. A majority also say they are concerned about isolation or loneliness (53%).

Safety-related concerns have also increased. Nearly half (47%) say they are concerned about not feeling safe due to global conflicts or terrorism, up notably from 39% in the previous wave. More than four in ten (42%) say they are concerned about not feeling safe or secure more generally, including concerns about personal safety or discrimination, up from 39%. Concerns about mental health (40%) and documents or permits (40%, up from 34%) are also significant.

Women are more likely than men to express concern across most of these barriers. This includes most notably the cost of living overseas (77% compared to 67%), funding the travel experience (73% compared to 62%), safety related to global conflicts or terrorism (53% compared to 41%), feeling safe or secure generally (46% compared to 37%), isolation or loneliness (57% compared to 48%), and not knowing how to get started (64% compared to 57%).

Some differences by school status are also evident. High school students are more likely than other groups to express concern about funding their travel experience (75%) and feeling unsafe or insecure generally (49%). Youth who are not currently students are much more likely than current students to say

they have too many obligations in Canada (66%, compared to 53% of post-secondary students and 49% of high school students).

Table G7: 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? I am concerned...

Base: All respondents

Column % [% in agreement]	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
How much money it would take to live overseas	72%	67%	77%+	73%	75%	71%
I will have financial issues funding my travel experience	68%	62%	73%+	75%+(F)	68%	67%
I will encounter language barriers	61%	58%	64%+	59%	61%	62%
I do not know how to get started	61%	57%	64%+	63%	64%+(F)	59%
I have too many obligations here in Canada (e.g., family, children or career)	60%	56%	63%+	49%	53%	66%+(DE)
I will experience issues finding employment outside of Canada	57%	56%	58%	62%	59%	56%
I will experience isolation or loneliness	53%	48%	57%+	59%	53%	52%
I will not feel safe due to global conflicts or terrorism	47%	41%	53%	50%	50%	46%
I will not feel safe or secure (e.g., concerns about personal safety, and/or racial, religious or sexual orientation/gender discrimination)	42%	37%	46%+	49%+(F)	45%	40%
I will have an issue with travel, residency or employment documents or permits	40%	39%	41%	42%	42%	39%
I might experience challenges with my mental health	40%	37%	42%+	36%	42%	40%
I will have an issue with the country customs and laws, cultural norms or experience cultural shock	34%	35%	32%	36%	35%	33%
Sample size	2515	1138	1342	207	723	1545
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table G8: 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? I am concerned...

Base: All respondents

Column % [% in agreement]	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
How much money it would take to live overseas	72%	71%

Column % [% in agreement]	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
I will have financial issues funding my travel experience	68%	66%
I will encounter language barriers	61%	61%
I do not know how to get started	61%	59%
I have too many obligations here in Canada (e.g., family, children or career)	60%+	56%
I will experience issues finding employment outside of Canada	57%+	52%
I will experience isolation or loneliness	53%	50%
I will not feel safe or secure (e.g., concerns about personal safety, and/or racial, religious or sexual orientation/gender discrimination)	42%+	39%
I will not feel safe due to global conflicts or terrorism	47%+	39%
I might experience challenges with my mental health	40%	37%
I will have an issue with travel, residency or employment documents or permits	40%+	34%
I will have an issue with the country customs and laws, cultural norms or experience cultural shock	34%	33%
Sample size	2515	2518

Notable differences by other segments include:

- Economically disadvantaged youth report financial barriers more frequently, including the cost of living overseas (83% vs 69%), funding travel (85% vs 62%), and not knowing how to get started (71% vs 58%), making financial concerns the most prominent barriers for this group.
- 2SLGBTQIA+ youth more frequently report concerns about safety and discrimination (59% vs 39%), mental health challenges (56% vs 36%), and isolation or loneliness (62% vs 51%), making emotional and safety considerations are more prominent barriers for this group.
- Youth with impairments more frequently report safety or discrimination concerns (50% vs 41%) and mental health challenges (47% vs 38%).
- Indigenous youth report language barriers less frequently than non-Indigenous youth (53% vs 62%).

When asked openly if anything else prevents them from working, studying, or volunteering abroad, the most common additional barrier mentioned is having too many obligations in Canada. Similarly to the last wave of research, this is the top mention (17%). One in ten (10%) mention issues funding their travel experience.

Only small shares mention other barriers such as preferring to stay in Canada or only wanting to travel for leisure (4%), health or mental health concerns (2%), anxiety or fear issues (2%), feeling unsafe or insecure (2%), or isolation or loneliness (2%).

At the same time, a majority (51%) say there is nothing else that prevents them from working, studying, or volunteering abroad, which is consistent with the previous wave.

Table G9: Q16. Is there anything else that prevents you from working, studying, or volunteering outside of Canada?

Base: All respondents

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Too many obligations here in Canada	17%	15%	19%+	11%	15%	19%+(DE)
Issues funding my travel experience	10%	10%	11%	12%	10%	10%
No interest/prefer to stay in Canada/ would only travel for leisure	4%	4%	4%	3%	4%	4%
Health/mental health/mobility concerns/access to healthcare/mental healthcare	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%
Anxiety/fear issues	2%	2%	3%	1%	2%	2%
I will not feel safe or secure	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%	2%
I will experience isolation or loneliness	2%	2%	2%	6%+(EF)	2%	1%
I will have an issue with travel, residency or employment documents or permits	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Time/not enough vacation time	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
I do not know how to get started	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%
Need more information on opportunities/options	1%	1%+	1%	0%	2%+(DF)	1%
I will experience issues finding employment outside of Canada	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Other	3%	2%	3%	5%	2%	3%
None/nothing else	51%	52%	49%	55%	49%	51%
Don't know/Refused	8%	8%	8%	6%	10%	8%
Sample size	2515	1138	1342	207	723	1545
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table G10: Q16. Is there anything else that prevents you from working, studying, or volunteering outside of Canada?

Base: All respondents

Column %	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Too many obligations here in Canada	17%	15%
Issues funding my travel experience	10%	9%
No interest/prefer to stay in Canada/ would only travel for leisure	4%	3%
Health/mental health/mobility concerns/access to healthcare/mental healthcare	2%	2%
Anxiety/fear issues	2%	2%

Column %	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
I will not feel safe or secure	2%	2%
I will experience isolation or loneliness	2%	2%
I will experience issues finding employment outside of Canada	1%	2%
I will have an issue with travel, residency or employment documents or permits	1%	2%
Need more information on opportunities/options	1%	1%
Time/not enough vacation time	1%	1%
I do not know how to get started	1%	1%
Other	3%	4%
None/nothing else	51%	50%
Don't know / Refused	8%-	10%
Sample size	2515	2518

Notable differences by other segments include:

- Youth with impairments more frequently mention health, mental health, mobility, or access to healthcare concerns (10% vs 1%) and funding travel (17% vs 10%) as additional barriers.
- Economically disadvantaged youth more frequently cite funding travel experiences as an additional barrier (16% vs 8%).

Qualitative discussion of motivations and barriers

Across groups, interest in IEC tended to be pragmatic rather than aspirational, with participants carefully evaluating feasibility before expressing interest. Indeed, the perceived barriers seemed to outweigh the perceived benefits.

“I just feel like it seems quite daunting. There's quite a lot of things I would have to leave here if I wanted to move. You know, I rent my own apartment, so moving to a different country for several months would be very difficult for me.” – Youth 16-35 Woman in STEM, National, English

“I would say, depending on the country, the language barrier, the different, like... the different culture, like, you don't know if you're being rude there, or you know something you're doing is rude.” – Youth 16-18, National, English

The perceived benefits tended to relate to international travel experience generally rather than specific benefits related to the program. Participants spoke of international travel experience as offering independence, confidence, cultural immersion, and broadened perspective.

Past IEC participants confirmed these benefits reflecting on the personal growth, adaptability, leadership, and independence gained from the experience. A few also noted exposure to different workplace norms.

Participants who expressed interest cited cultural immersion, personal growth, independence, and exposure to different professional environments as key motivators. Past IEC participants similarly described extended travel as formative, independence-building, and perspective-expanding.

“It's a really, really great experience to do. It thickens your skin, it makes you learn a lot, and makes you feel, like, more, you know, cultured in a sense; but definitely being aware of your mental health, I think that's super important.” – Past IEC participant 16-35, National, English

“One of the takeaways from living abroad was all the soft skills that I acquired that can be translated to the workforce. So, like, leadership, adaptability, the ability to rely on myself to make my own decisions, yeah, being able to adapt to, like, quick situations, finding solutions, being pragmatic.” – Past IEC participant 16-35, National, English

“It gives you sort of a sense of self-reliance and self-confidence that then translates into the professional world.” – Past IEC participant 16-35, National, English

In discussing perceived barriers to participation, participants most frequently identified financial considerations, program clarity/ process, and safety, accessibility, and support. Financial cost was the most frequently cited barrier. Participants discussed travel expenses, accommodation, cost of living, exchange rates, emergency funds, and income uncertainty, with several noting broader economic pressures influencing feasibility. Participants raised detailed operational questions regarding participating countries, types of employment available, visa requirements, salary expectations, tax implications, health or insurance coverage, and application processes.

“However, like, in many other countries, healthcare isn't anything like it is in Canada, and it's much harder to get treatment.” – Youth 16-18, National, English

Most participants expressed uncertainty about whether IEC assists with securing employment or accommodations and were surprised to learn that these arrangements are largely participant-led.

“I would have expected there to be at least some type of assistance with getting a job, not just the visa.” – General population youth 16-35, British Columbia/Territories, English

“What happens if I show up there and there's a problem with my housing, I no longer have housing, I'm in another country. Of course, I'm sure most of the time things will go well, but if there's ever an emergency.” – General population youth 16-35, National, French

Participants also raised practical questions related to health care coverage, access to mental health and other supports while abroad, and how these aspects would be managed in another country. Safety abroad and availability of support while overseas were recurring considerations. As noted earlier, accessibility and continuity of care were especially important for youth with impairments, and some participants in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community referenced social climate as a factor in destination selection.

3. Future program participation

Interest in participating in a future work and travel abroad program like IEC is mixed, though more indicate they are not likely to participate. Three in ten are likely to participate, including 22% who say they are somewhat likely and 8% who say they are very likely. This is a notable seven-point decline from 37% likelihood in 2025. About a quarter (24%) say they are neither likely nor unlikely and four in ten are unlikely to participate, including 23% who say they are very unlikely and 17% who say they are somewhat unlikely.

Men (36%) are more likely than women (26%) to say they are likely to participate. Among high school students, 45% are likely to participate, compared to 38% among post-secondary students and a quarter (25%) of youth currently not in school.

Table G11: 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?

Base: All respondents

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
NET likely	30%	35%+	26%	45%+(F)	38%+(F)	25%
Very likely	8%	11%+	5%	12%+(F)	8%	7%
Somewhat likely	22%	25%+	21%	33%+(F)	30%+(F)	17%
Neither likely nor unlikely	24%	24%	24%	24%	26%	22%
Somewhat unlikely	17%	15%	19%+	12%	17%	18%+(D)
Very unlikely	23%	20%	25%+	11%	13%	30%+(DE)
NET unlikely	40%	35%	45%+	24%	30%	48%+(DE)
Do not know	6%	6%	6%	8%	6%	5%
Sample size	2515	1138	1342	207	723	1545
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table G12: 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?

Base: All respondents

Column %	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
NET likely	30%-	37%
Very likely	8%-	10%
Somewhat likely	22%-	27%
Neither likely nor unlikely	24%	23%
Somewhat unlikely	17%	16%
Very unlikely	23%+	19%
NET unlikely	40%+	35%

Column %	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Do not know	6%	5%
Sample size	2515	2518

Notable differences by other segments include:

- Youth with impairments are more likely to say they would participate (39% likely vs 30% among those without impairments) as are Indigenous youth (38% likely vs 30%) and economically disadvantaged youth (36% vs 25%).
- 2SLGBTQIA+ youth are more likely to say they are unlikely to participate (47% vs 39%).

Among those who say they are likely to participate in a program like IEC, the most common reason is a positive impression of the program. Nearly four in ten (38%) say the program sounds interesting or that they are curious about it, up from 34% in the previous wave.

Other top reasons include more opportunities, new experiences, or personal growth (17%), enjoying travel and seeing new places (11%), and wanting to explore a new culture, work abroad, or live outside Canada (10%; a decline from 14% in the past wave). Smaller shares mention study opportunities (6%) or more practical considerations such as future plans or needing more information.

High school students (19%) are the most likely to mention enjoying travel and seeing new places as a reason for interest, compared to post-secondary students (10%) and youth who are not currently students (8%).

Table G13: Q28. Why do you say that?

Base: Those who are likely to participate in IEC program

Column % [% reason for likely participation]	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Positive impression of program/ curious about it/sounds interesting	38%	40%	35%	36%	39%	38%
More opportunities/new experiences/personal growth	17%	17%	18%	19%	17%	17%
Enjoy traveling/seeing new places	11%	9%	13%	19%+(F)	10%	8%
Explore new culture/work abroad/live outside Canada	10%	9%	13%	14%	10%	9%
Opportunity to study abroad/new educational opportunities	6%	5%	7%	6%	5%	7%
Personal preference	3%	4%	2%	3%	2%	4%
Concern about career/financial/Visa/process/safety	3%	3%	3%	4%	1%	3%+(E)
Have plans for my future/might consider it	3%	2%	3%	1%	1%	4%+(DE)

Column % [% reason for likely participation]	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Need more information/don't know how	2%	2%	1%	3%	2%	1%
Age/family/life stage/timing	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%+(D)
Depends on opportunities offered internationally	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%	2%
Would add experience to my resume	1%	2%	1%	0%	1%	2%
Other	4%	6%+	2%	2%	6%	4%
None / Nothing	4%	5%	3%	4%	4%	4%
Don't know / Refused	8%	7%	9%	6%	10%+(F)	5%
Sample size	760	410	345	100	277	375
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table G14: Q28. Why do you say that?

Base: Those who are likely to participate in IEC program

Column % [% reason for likely participation]	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Positive impression of program/ curious about it/sounds interesting	38%	34%
More opportunities/new experiences/personal growth	17%	19%
Enjoy traveling/seeing new places	11%	12%
Explore new culture/work abroad/live outside Canada	10%-	14%
Opportunity to study abroad/new educational opportunities	6%+	4%
Personal preference	3%	3%
Concern about career/financial/Visa/process/safety	3%-	6%
Have plans for my future/might consider it	3%	1%
Need more information/don't know how	2%-	4%
Age/family/life stage/timing	2%	2%
Depends on opportunities offered internationally	2%-	3%
Would add experience to my resume	1%	1%
Other	4%	3%
None / Nothing	4%	3%
Don't know / Refused	8%-	12%
Sample size	760	912

Notable differences by other segments include:

- Indigenous youth more frequently cite a positive impression or curiosity about the program (46% vs 37%).
- Youth with impairments are less likely to cite certain motivations, including travel enjoyment (6% vs 12%) or exploring cultures or living abroad (4% vs 11%).

Among those who are neutral (neither likely nor unlikely) about participating in IEC, the most common reasons relate to uncertainty and competing future plans. About one in six (17%) say they are unsure

about the future, are not interested, like Canada, or have already done something similar, up from 12% in the previous wave. Another 14% say they have plans for their future and might consider it later, up from 7%.

Concern about career, financial, visa, process, or safety issues is mentioned by 11%. Smaller shares mention age, family, life stage, or timing (8%, down from 13%), that it depends on the opportunities offered (8%), or that they need more information (7%).

Compared to the previous wave, respondents are less likely to say they are already happy or established in life or career (3%, down from 7%), or that they have not thought about it before (3%, down from 8%). Mentions of the program sounding interesting have also declined sharply, from 9% to 1%.

Women (11%) are more likely than men (6%) to mention age, family, life stage, or timing as reasons for their neutrality.

Table G15: Q28. Why do you say that?

Base: Those who are neutral in participating in IEC program

Column % [% reason for neutrality in participation]	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Unsure about future/not interested/ like Canada/already done it	17%	17%	17%	23%	19%	14%
Have plans for my future/might consider it	14%	11%	15%	17%	10%	15%
Concern about career/financial/ Visa/process/safety	11%	10%	12%	8%	10%	13%
Age/family/life stage/timing	8%	6%	11%+	5%	6%	10%
Depends on opportunities offered internationally	8%	4%	11%+	2%	11%+(D)	7%
Need more information/don't know how	7%	7%	7%	11%	7%	7%
Happy/already established in life/career	3%	4%	2%	0%	2%	4%+(D)
Haven't thought about it before	3%	3%	3%	0%	2%	3%+(D)
Personal preference	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%
Explore new culture/work abroad/live outside Canada	1%	2%	1%	9%	0%	0%
Positive impression of program/ curious about it/ sounds interesting	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%
Enjoy traveling/seeing new places	1%	2%	0%	9%	0%	0%
Not enough time to follow up on this	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%
Other	3%	5%	2%	5%	4%	3%
None/Nothing	4%	5%	3%	0%	5%	3%
Don't know/Refused	23%	28%	19%	20%	25%	22%
Sample size	585	260	318	45	184	343

Column % [% reason for neutrality in participation]	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table G16: Q28. Why do you say that?

Base: Those who are neutral in participating in IEC program

Column % [% reason for neutrality in participation]	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Unsure about future/not interested/like Canada/already done it	17%+	12%
Have plans for my future/might consider it	14%+	7%
Concern about career/financial/Visa/process/safety	11%	10%
Age/family/life stage/timing	8%-	13%
Depends on opportunities offered internationally	8%	10%
Need more information/don't know how	7%	9%
Happy/already established in life/career	3%-	7%
Haven't thought about it before	3%-	8%
Personal preference	2%	2%
Explore new culture/work abroad/live outside Canada	1%	2%
Positive impression of program/curious about it/sounds interesting	1%-	9%
Enjoy traveling/ seeing new places	1%	1%
Not enough time to follow up on this	1%	1%
Other	3%	4%
None / Nothing	4%	3%
Don't know / Refused	23%	20%
Sample size	585	586

Among those who are unlikely to participate in IEC, age, family, life stage, or timing is the most common reason. Three in ten (30%) mention this, though that is down from 35% in the previous wave. A quarter (26%) say they are unsure about the future, are not interested, like Canada, or have already done something similar, which is similar to last year.

Concern about career, financial, visa, process, or safety issues is mentioned by 18%, up from 14% in the previous wave. Another 15% say they are happy or already established in life or career, down from 24% previously.

Women (34%) are more likely than men (26%) to cite age, family, life stage, or timing as a reason for not participating.

Differences by school status are more pronounced. Students are the most likely to say they are not interested, prefer to stay in Canada, or are unsure about the future (42% among high school students and 34% among post-secondary students, compared to 22% among non-students). Non-students, on the

other hand, are more likely to cite concerns about their careers or the processes (19%) than post-secondary students (13%).

Table G17: Q28. Why do you say that?

Base: Those who are not likely to participate in IEC program

Column % [% reason for unlikely participation]	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Age/family/life stage/timing	30%	26%	34%+	12%	18%	35%
Unsure about future/not interested/ like Canada/already done it	26%	28%	23%	42%+(F)	34%+(F)	22%
Concern about career/financial/ Visa/process/safety	18%	17%	19%	16%	13%	19%+(E)
Happy/already established in life/career	15%	16%	15%	15%	15%	16%
Personal preference	3%	3%	3%	2%	5%	3%
Have plans for my future/might consider it	2%	2%	2%	4%	4%	1%
Need more information/don't know how	2%	3%	1%	4%	2%	2%
Depends on opportunities offered internationally	1%	2%	1%	0%	2%+(D)	1%+(D)
Health/mental health concerns	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	2%+(D)
Haven't thought about it before	1%	1%	1%	0%	2%	1%+(D)
Not enough time to follow up on this	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Other	1%	1%	1%	0%	2%	1%
None/Nothing	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Don't know/Refused	7%	6%	7%	13%	9%	6%
Sample size	1033	408	603	47	222	754
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table G18: Q28. Why do you say that?

Base: Those who are not likely to participate in IEC program

Column % [% reason for unlikely participation]	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Age/family/life stage/timing	30%-	35%
Unsure about future/not interested/like Canada/already done it	26%	25%
Concern about career/financial/Visa/process/safety	18%+	14%
Happy/already established in life/career	15%-	24%
Personal preference	3%+	0%
Have plans for my future/might consider it	2%	2%
Need more information/don't know how	2%	2%
Depends on opportunities offered internationally	1%+	1%
Health/mental health concerns	1%	2%

Column % [% reason for unlikely participation]	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Haven't thought about it before	1%	1%
Not enough time to follow up on this	1%-	2%
Other	1%-	5%
None/Nothing	1%	1%
Don't know/Refused	7%	7%
Sample size	1033	894

Notable differences by other segments include:

- 2SLGBTQIA+ youth are less likely to cite life stage or family obligations (17% vs 34%).
- Youth with impairments are also less likely to cite life stage timing (18% vs 31%) but more likely to cite health or mental health concerns (14% vs 0%).

4. Interest in countries

Australia remains the top destination of interest for a future IEC or work and travel experience, though interest has declined since the previous wave. One in five respondents (20%) say they would be most interested in going to Australia, down 7 points from 27% last year. France now ranks second at 17%, up from 13%, followed by the United Kingdom (15%), unchanged from the previous wave.

Interest in several other destinations has increased modestly, including Japan (13%, up from 10%), Italy (11%, up from 9%), and Germany (10%, up from 7%). At the same time, interest in the United States has declined notably, from 15% to 9%, and Switzerland has also dropped from 10% to 6%. Smaller shares continue to mention destinations such as New Zealand (7%), Spain (5%), China (5%), Ireland (5%), and Greece (5%).

Some differences appear by gender. Men are more likely than women to express interest in Japan (16% compared to 10%), Germany (13% compared to 8%), the United States (11% compared to 7%), and China (7% compared to 3%). Women, by contrast, are more likely to mention Italy (14% compared to 7%) and Greece (7% compared to 3%).

Students are the most likely to express interest in France (23% for high schoolers and 19% for post-secondary students, compared to 14% among non-students).

Table G19: Q29. If you were to participate in an International Experience Canada (IEC) or a work and travel experience in the future, which country or countries would you be most interested in going to for such an experience?

Base: All respondents

Note: Only response 3% and above are mentioned

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Australia	20%	20%	21%	21%	18%	22%
France	17%	15%	18%	23%+(F)	19%+(F)	14%
United Kingdom	15%	14%	16%	15%	15%	15%
Japan	13%	16%+	10%	11%	15%	12%
Italy	11%	7%	14%+	12%	10%	11%
Germany	10%	13%+	8%	12%	12%	9%
United States	9%	11%+	7%	8%	8%	10%
New Zealand	7%	6%	8%	9%	7%	7%
Switzerland	6%	6%	7%	5%	8%+(F)	5%
Spain	5%	5%	6%	3%	5%	6%
China	5%	7%+	3%	3%	5%	5%
Ireland	5%	4%	6%	5%	5%	5%
Greece	5%	3%	7%+	6%	5%	5%
Brazil	4%	5%	4%	6%	5%	4%
Finland	4%	3%	5%	4%	4%	4%
Denmark	4%	5%	4%	1%	4%+(D)	5%+(D)
Belgium	4%	4%	4%	2%	5%	4%
Netherlands	4%	3%	4%	6%	4%	4%
Norway	3%	4%+	2%	5%	3%	3%
Sweden	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%	4%
Costa Rica	3%	2%	4%+	1%	3%	4%+(D)
South Korea	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%	3%
Iceland	3%	2%	4%+	3%	2%	3%
Bahamas	3%	2%	4%+	3%	2%	3%
Sample size	2515	1138	1342	207	723	1545
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table G20: Q29. If you were to participate in an International Experience Canada (IEC) or a work and travel experience in the future, which country or countries would you be most interested in going to for such an experience?

Base: All respondents

Column % [top three]	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Australia	20%-	27%

Column % [top three]	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
France	17%	13%
United Kingdom	15%	16%
Japan	13%+	10%
Italy	11%	9%
Germany	10%+	7%
United States	9%-	15%
New Zealand	7%	6%
Switzerland	6%-	10%
Spain	5%	6%
China	5%+	3%
Ireland	5%	5%
Greece	5%	6%
Brazil	4%	4%
Finland	4%	4%
Denmark	4%	4%
Belgium	4%	4%
Netherlands	4%	3%
Norway	3%	3%
Sweden	3%	3%
Costa Rica	3%	4%
South Korea	3%	3%
Iceland	3%	2%
Bahamas	3%	2%
Sample size	2515	2518

Respondents most often cite cultural and experiential reasons for choosing their preferred destinations. About a quarter (23%) say culture, history, or music make these destinations appealing, unchanged from the previous wave. Other common reasons include that the destinations seem interesting or fun (18%, down from 23% in 2024-25) and that they have always wanted to visit or explore them (15%, up notably from 8%).

About one in seven respondents (14%, up from 11%) say the destinations appeal because they are beautiful places with appealing landscapes or nature, up from 11% previously. Similar to the previous wave, one in ten mention practical considerations such as the language being familiar, the country being developed or safe (9%), or strong job opportunities and economic prospects (9%).

Several other motivations appear less frequently but remain present in respondents' explanations. These include hearing good things about the destination or its people (7%), climate or warm weather (7%), quality of life (6%, up from 3%), and having family or friends there (6%, up from 4%). Mentions of familiarity with a destination or having visited before have declined somewhat (5%, down from 8%), while fewer respondents now say they do not know why the destination appeals to them (3%, down from 9%).

While men are more likely to mention general interest or “fun” (21% vs 16%) as reasons, women are somewhat more likely than men to say they have always wanted to visit their chosen destinations (18% vs 11%) or to cite the place’s beauty (18% vs 11%).

Table G21: Q30 What is it about these destinations that make them your top choices?

Base: Those who chose at least one destination as their top choice.

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Culture/history/music	23%	23%	24%	24%	23%	24%
Interested in them/fun places	18%	21%+	16%	19%	18%	19%
Always wanted to go/explore/visit	15%	11%	18%+	11%	14%	16%
Beautiful place/ landscape/ nature	14%	12%	16%+	16%	14%	13%
Language is the same/English or French-speaking	11%	10%	11%	12%	11%	10%
Developed/safe country	9%	9%	9%	10%	7%	9%
Strong economy/job opportunities	9%	10%	7%	7%	10%	8%
Heard good things/good reputation/people are friendly	7%	8%	7%	10%	6%	7%
Climate/warm weather	7%	6%	8%	3%	5%	8%+(DE)
Quality/way of living/good place to live	6%	5%	6%	5%	6%	5%
Family/friends/know people there	6%	4%	7%+	5%	7%	5%
Familiarity/been there before/I like it there	5%	6%	5%	3%	4%	6%
Similar to my country /Similar customs	5%	5%	4%	6%	7%+(F)	4%
Ethnic homeland/my roots are there	4%	4%	4%	5%	5%+(F)	3%
Exotic/different/unique	4%	4%	4%	3%	3%	4%
Language (unspecified)	3%	2%	5%+	5%	3%	3%
Social/political values	3%	3%	2%	4%	2%	3%
Location/Ease of travel/Convenient	2%	3%	2%	4%	2%	2%
Language is different/to learn a new language	2%	2%	3%	4%	3%	2%
Food and drink	2%	2%	3%	1%	2%	3%
Educational system/Schooling	1%	2%+	1%	3%	2%	1%
Other	6%	6%	5%	4%	7%+(F)	5%
None/Nothing	2%	2%+	1%	1%	2%	1%
I don't know/refusal	3%	3%	2%	3%	3%	3%
Sample size	2071	945	1102	172	617	1261
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table G22: Q29. What is it about these destinations that make them your top choices?

Base: Those who chose at least one destination as their top choice.

Column %	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Culture/history/music	23%	23%
Interested in them/fun places	18%-	23%
Always wanted to go/explore/visit	15%+	8%
Beautiful place landscape/ nature	14%+	11%
Language is the same/English or French-speaking	11%	9%
Developed/safe country	9%	8%
Strong economy/job opportunities	9%	10%
Heard good things/good reputation/people are friendly	7%	7%
Climate/warm weather	7%	6%
Quality/way of living/good place to live	6%	3%
Family/friends/know people there	6%	4%
Familiarity/been there before/I like it there	5%-	8%
Similar to my country/similar customs	5%+	0%
Ethnic homeland/my roots are there	4%	3%
Exotic / different/unique	4%	2%
Language (unspecified)	3%+	2%
Social/political values	3%	2%
Location/ease of travel/convenient	2%+	0%
Language is different/to learn a new language	2%	3%
Food and drink	2%	3%
Educational system/Schooling	1%	0%
Other	6%-	8%
None/Nothing	2%	0%
I don't know/refusal	3%-	9%
Sample size	2071	2148

Notable differences by other segments include:

- 2SLGBTQIA+ youth are more likely to cite language familiarity (14% vs 10%) and social or political values (6% vs 2%) as being the appeal of their top destinations.
- Indigenous youth are less likely to cite English or French language familiarity (5% vs 11%) or developed or safe countries (5% vs 9%).
- Youth with impairments more frequently cite family or friends living there (10% vs 6%).

Section H: General and financial support

1. Programs and supports

Respondents most often point to practical guidance and peer supports as the types of assistance that would encourage participation in an IEC program. A third say a buddy system that pairs participants going to the same country (34%) or step-by-step guides for planning, budgeting and visa processes (32%)

would encourage them to participate. Three in ten mention visa application support such as guides or FAQs (30%), while a similar share say access to job boards or employer partnerships for short-term work (27%) would be useful.

About one in five say access to destination country resources and networks (21%) or day-in-the-life videos showing what a youth exchange program is like (19%) would help encourage participation. Smaller shares mention supports such as resume and interview workshops (16%), cultural orientation sessions (16%), mental health resources (15%), online community groups (14%), short videos addressing common challenges (14%) and packing or relocation checklists (13%). Only a small share say none of these supports would encourage them to participate (13%).

Some differences appear across groups. Women are more likely than men to say most supports will be interesting and encouraging, most notably a buddy system would encourage participation (39% compared to 27%), step-by-step planning guides (35% compared to 29%) and visa application support (33% compared to 26%). High school students are more likely than others to value a buddy system (48%), scholarships or micro-grants for underrepresented groups (29%) and online community groups (21%). Post-secondary students are also more likely to mention scholarships or micro-grants for underrepresented groups (31%) while visa application support is more popular among non-students (32%) than among students.

Table H1: QD20. Below are a series of programs and supports that could be made available to youth interested in participating in International Experience Canada (IEC) programs. Please select the ones that would most encourage you to participate in a youth program.

Base: All respondents

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
A buddy system to pair you with someone going to the same country	34%	27%	39%+	48%+(EF)	32%	32%
Step-by-step guides for planning, budgeting, and visa processes	32%	29%	35%+	35%	33%	32%
Visa application support (e.g., guides, FAQs)	30%	26%	33%+	25%	27%	32%+(DE)
Emergency fund access for unexpected expenses	29%	26%	32%+	28%	30%	29%
Access to job boards or employer partnerships for short-term work	27%	25%	30%+	27%	27%	27%
Scholarships or micro-grants for underrepresented groups	24%	19%	28%+	29%+(F)	31%+(F)	20%
Access to destination country/territory resources and networks	21%	23%	20%	22%	24%	21%
Day-in-the-life videos showing what a youth exchange program is like	19%	17%	22%+	23%	21%	18%

Column %	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Cultural orientation sessions before departure	16%	16%	16%	21%	15%	16%
Resume and interview workshops tailored for international work	16%	16%	15%	13%	16%	16%
Mental health resources for adjusting abroad	15%	14%	17%+	18%	16%	15%
Online community groups to connect with other participants	14%	13%	16%+	21%+(F)	15%	13%
Short videos addressing common challenges and how to overcome them	14%	14%	14%	13%	15%	14%
Success stories from past participants highlighting benefits	13%	13%	13%	16%	11%	14%+(E)
Packing and relocation checklists	13%	14%	11%	15%	15%+(F)	11%
Webinars or live Q&A sessions with IEC experts and past participants	11%	12%	10%	11%	10%	11%
Other	1%	1%+	0%	1%	0%	1%
None of the above	13%	15%	12%	8%	9%	15%+(DE)
Sample size	2515	1138	1342	207	723	1545
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Notable differences by other segments include:

- 2SLGBTQIA+ youth are more likely to say a buddy system (41% vs 32%), emergency funds (38% vs 27%), scholarships or micro-grants (33% vs 22%), and mental health resources (27% vs 13%) would encourage participation.
- Indigenous youth are more likely to select success stories from past participants (19% vs 13%) and destination-country resources (29% vs 21%).
- Youth with impairments are less likely to select a buddy system (26% vs 35%).
- Economically disadvantaged youth are more likely to select step-by-step planning guides (37% vs 31%), emergency funds (37% vs 26%), scholarships (28% vs 24%) and mental health supports (18% vs 15%).

Among those who selected these supports, most say they would have a meaningful impact on participation. More than nine in ten say emergency fund access for unexpected expenses (93%), a buddy system (92%), access to job boards or employer partnerships (91%) and scholarships or micro-grants for underrepresented groups (91%) would have a moderate or major impact. Large majorities also say step-by-step planning guides (88%), visa application support (87%) and access to destination country resources (85%) would have a meaningful impact. Informational supports are also seen as impactful by most respondents, including resume workshops (82%), online community groups (82%), day-in-the-life videos (81%), success stories from past participants (80%) and cultural orientation sessions (80%).

Table H2: QD21. From the choices you selected in the previous question, please rate the extent of the impact this support would have.

Base: Those who selected each choice

Column % [% moderate/major impact]	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Emergency fund access for unexpected expenses	93%	91%	95%	95%	91%	94%
Sample size: Emergency fund access for unexpected expenses:	729	290	419	59	218	446
A buddy system to pair you with someone going to the same country	92%	89%	94%+	94%	95%+(F)	91%
Sample size: A buddy system to pair you with someone going to the same country	823	294	513	93	230	493
Access to job boards or employer partnerships for short-term work	91%	88%	94%+	85%	92%	92%
Sample size: Access to job boards or employer partnerships for short-term work	684	277	396	53	202	418
Scholarships or micro-grants for underrepresented groups	91%	89%	92%	93%	92%	89%
Sample size: Scholarships or micro-grants for underrepresented groups: sample size	612	216	379	64	224	318
Step-by-step guides for planning, budgeting, and visa processes	88%	85%	90%+	96%	88%	86%
Sample size: Step-by-step guides for planning, budgeting, and visa processes	806	319	473	67	244	490
Visa application support (e.g., guides, FAQs)	87%	83%	90%+	91%	82%	88%+(E)
Sample size: Visa application support (e.g., guides, FAQs)	757	303	442	55	201	497
Access to destination country/territory resources and networks	85%	81%	90%+	73%	86%	87%
Sample size: Access to destination country/territory resources and networks	537	262	267	43	172	319
Resume and interview workshops tailored for international work	82%	83%	81%	94%	79%	82%
Sample size: Resume and interview workshops tailored for international work	392	189	196	27	116	242
Online community groups to connect with other participants	82%	76%	86%+	80%	80%	83%
Sample size: Online community groups to connect with other participants	363	145	212	42	110	206

Column % [% moderate/major impact]	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Day-in-the-life videos showing what a youth exchange program is like	81%	78%	84%	87%	77%	81%
Sample size: Day-in-the-life videos showing what a youth exchange program is like	499	191	301	49	162	281
Success stories from past participants highlighting benefits	80%	81%	79%	89%	76%	80%
Sample size: Success stories from past participants highlighting benefits	332	155	174	33	80	218
Mental health resources for adjusting abroad	80%	74%	84%+	77%	79%	81%
Sample size: Mental health resources for adjusting abroad	388	153	226	36	118	232
Cultural orientation sessions before departure	80%	77%	81%	77%	80%	80%
Sample size: Cultural orientation sessions before departure	403	184	211	44	113	243
Short videos addressing common challenges and how to overcome them	78%	71%	83%+	69%	78%	79%
Sample size: Short videos addressing common challenges and how to overcome them	363	159	198	29	110	220
Webinars or live Q&A sessions with IEC experts and past participants	77%	74%	81%	75%	74%	79%
Sample size: Webinars or live Q&A sessions with IEC experts and past participants	270	135	135	24	76	169
Packing and relocation checklists	71%	66%	75%	73%	69%	71%
Sample size: Packing and relocation checklists	306	152	151	25	102	174
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Notable differences by other segments include:

- Economically disadvantaged youth are more likely to report strong impact from emergency funds (96% vs 91%), job boards or employer partnerships (94% vs 90%), visa support (92% vs 84%) and planning guides (91% vs 86%).
- 2SLGBTQIA+ youth report stronger impact from success stories (92% vs 78%) and mental health resources (88% vs 75%).
- Indigenous youth report stronger impact from planning guides (94% vs 87%).
- Youth with impairments report somewhat lower impact from several supports, including resume workshops (65% vs 84%) and day-in-the-life videos (64% vs 82%).

2. Financial assistance

Financial assistance is seen as more important now than it was a year ago and is particularly important for studying or volunteering abroad. Most respondents say they would require a moderate or large amount of financial assistance to study abroad (74%, up from 66% in 2024-25) or volunteer abroad (72%, up from 63%), while just over half say the same about working while living abroad (54%).

Perceived need is higher among women than men: to study abroad (78% vs 70%), to volunteer abroad (76% vs 67%), and to work abroad (57% vs 51%).

At the same time, a notable share say they would require little or no financial assistance. About four in ten say this about working abroad (42%, including 12% who say they would not need any), while roughly a quarter say the same about volunteering abroad (24%; 10% none) or studying while living abroad (22%; 7% none). Men are somewhat more likely than women to say they would require little financial support, particularly for volunteering abroad (29% compared to 19%) and studying abroad (26% compared to 18%).

Table H3: Q12A_NEW. How much financial assistance would you, personally, require to do so?

Base: All

Column % [% moderate/large amount]	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Studying abroad	74%	70%	78%+	80%+(F)	78%+(F)	72%
Volunteering abroad	72%	67%	76%+	75%	73%	71%
Working while living abroad	54%	51%	57%+	60%+(E)	51%	55%
Sample size	2515	1138	1342	207	723	1545
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table H4: Q12A_NEW. How much financial assistance would you, personally, require to do so?

Base: All

Column % [% moderate/large amount]	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Studying abroad	74%+	66%
Volunteering abroad	72%+	63%
Working while living abroad	54%	56%
Sample size	2515	2518

Table H5: Q12A_NEW. How much financial assistance would you, personally, require to do so?

Base: All

Column % [% none/little amount]	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Working while living abroad	42%	45%+	39%	37%	46%+(DF)	41%
Volunteering abroad	24%	29%+	19%	21%	24%	24%
Studying abroad	22%	26%+	18%	17%	20%	23%+(D)
Sample size	2515	1138	1342	207	723	1545
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table H6: Q12A_NEW. How much financial assistance would you, personally, require to do so?

Base: All

Column % [% none/little amount]	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Working while living abroad	42%+	38%
Volunteering abroad	24%-	30%
Studying abroad	22%-	29%
Sample size	2515	2518

Notable differences by other segments include:

- Economically disadvantaged youth show the strongest financial need across activities, including studying abroad (94%), volunteering abroad (90%), and working abroad (100%).
- 2SLGBTQIA+ youth are more likely to say they would require moderate or large financial assistance, particularly for studying abroad (85% vs 72%) and volunteering abroad (82% vs 70%).

Consistent with these findings, many respondents who require some level of assistance say obtaining financial assistance would be a significant barrier. Six in ten say it would be a major or insurmountable barrier for studying abroad (62%, and up from 54% in the previous wave) or volunteering abroad (61%, up from 57%). Nearly half say the same about obtaining financial assistance for working while living abroad (46%, comparable to the previous wave).

Table H7: Q12B_NEW. If you decided to do each of the following, how significant a barrier would getting the necessary financial assistance be for you?

Base: Those who indicate they would need some level of assistance

Column % [% major/insurmountable barrier]	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Studying abroad	62%	61%	62%	55%	57%	66%+(DE)
Studying abroad: sample size	2330	1023	1274	193	693	1408
Volunteering abroad	61%	58%	63%+	51%	62%+(D)	63%+(D)

Column % [% major/unsurmountable barrier]	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Volunteering abroad: sample size	2330	1023	1274	193	693	1408
Working while living abroad	46%	46%	46%	39%	42%	50%+(DE)
Working while living abroad: sample size	2206	976	1197	187	642	1338
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table H8: Q12B_NEW. If you decided to do each of the following, how significant a barrier would getting the necessary financial assistance be for you?

Base: Those who indicate they would need some level of assistance

Column % [% major/unsurmountable barrier]	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Studying abroad	62%+	54%
Volunteering abroad	61%+	57%
Working while living abroad	46%	47%
Sample size	2206-2230	2102-2016

Notable differences by other segments include:

- Economically disadvantaged youth report the highest levels of financial barriers across activities, including studying abroad (89%), volunteering abroad (85%), and working abroad (100%).
- 2SLGBTQIA+ youth are more likely to view financial assistance as a major or insurmountable barrier, particularly for studying abroad (68% vs 60%) and volunteering abroad (69% vs 59%).

Many respondents expect that at least some of the financial assistance they would require would come from private borrowing. Three in five say most or all of the financial assistance needed to study abroad would come from private borrowing such as loans or credit (60%, up from 56% in the previous wave), while a majority say the same about volunteering abroad (55% - more likely among women at 57%, than men, at 52%; unchanged from the previous wave). A smaller but still notable share say most or all of the financial assistance needed to work abroad would come from private borrowing (43%; down from 48%).

However, a substantial minority say little or none of their financial support would come from borrowing. Nearly half say little or none of the financial assistance required for working abroad would come from private borrowing (45%), while about three in ten say the same about volunteering abroad (31%) and studying abroad (28%). High school students are somewhat more likely than others to expect limited reliance on borrowing for working abroad (56%).

Table H9: Q12C_NEW. How much of the financial assistance you think you would need would come from private borrowing (e.g. a bank loan, credit card debt, etc.)?

Base: Those who indicate they would need some level of assistance

Column % [% most/all of financial assistance would need to come from private borrowing]	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Studying abroad	60%	59%	61%	58%	58%	62%
Studying abroad: sample size	2330	1023	1274	193	693	1408
Volunteering abroad	55%	52%	57%+	50%	52%	57%
Volunteering abroad: sample size	2330	1023	1274	193	693	1408
Working while living abroad	43%	43%	43%	37%	40%	47%+(D E)
Working while living abroad: sample size	2206	976	1197	187	642	1338
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table H10: Q12C_NEW. How much of the financial assistance you think you would need would come from private borrowing (e.g. a bank loan, credit card debt, etc.)?

Base: Those who indicate they would need some level of assistance

Column % [% most/all of financial assistance would need to come from private borrowing]	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Studying abroad	60%+	56%
Volunteering abroad	55%	55%
Working while living abroad	43%-	48%
Sample size	2206-2230	2102-2016

Table H11: Q12C_NEW. How much of the financial assistance you think you would need would come from private borrowing (e.g. a bank loan, credit card debt, etc.)?

Base: Those who indicate they would need some level of assistance

Column % [% none/small amount of financial assistance would need to come from private borrowing]	Total	Male	Female	Current high school student	Current post-secondary student	Not a current student
Working while living abroad	45%	47%	43%	56%+(F)	49%+(F)	40%
Working while living abroad: sample size	2206	976	1197	187	642	1338
Volunteering abroad	31%	34%+	28%	33%	34%+(F)	28%
Volunteering abroad: sample size	2330	1023	1274	193	693	1408
Studying abroad	28%	31%+	25%	33%+(F)	31%+(F)	25%
Studying abroad: sample size	2330	1023	1274	193	693	1408
Column label	A	B	C	D	E	F

Table H12: Q12C_NEW. How much of the financial assistance you think you would need would come from private borrowing (e.g. a bank loan, credit card debt, etc.)?

Base: Those who indicate they would need some level of assistance

Column % [% none/small amount of financial assistance would need to come from private borrowing]	Total 2025/2026	Total 2024/2025
Working while living abroad	45%+	41%
Volunteering abroad	31%	33%
Studying abroad	28%-	32%
Sample size	2206-2230	2102-2016

Notable differences by other segments include:

- Economically disadvantaged youth are more likely to expect most or all of their financial assistance to come from private borrowing for all international experiences: for studying abroad (74% vs 56%), volunteering abroad (69% vs 50%), and working abroad (67% vs 30%).

Qualitative discussion of general and financial support

Financial cost, geographic distance, and limited awareness of IEC were consistently identified as structural barriers to outbound participation.

“I would need to know the cost of living, that would tie in with financials, and what I would be making, and if it would be worth it. Especially coming in, I would look for the teaching jobs, and certain countries pay their teachers higher, so those countries would be of interest.” – General population youth 16-35, Prairies, English

“I think cost is a huge thing, because if I'm looking into something, I'm like, well, what is this gonna cost me? Well, how can I get funding?” – 2SLGBTQIA+ 16-35 youth, National, English

Conclusions

The findings from this research reinforce that awareness of the International Experience Canada (IEC) program remains limited among Canadian youth. More than half of respondents report that they had not heard of the program prior to taking the survey, and qualitative discussions similarly suggest that few youth are familiar with IEC by name; including those who have participated in the program in the past. Despite this low awareness, the underlying concept of living, working, or travelling abroad is generally viewed positively, and many youth acknowledge the personal, cultural, and professional benefits associated with international experiences.

The research also highlights that interest in international experiences among Canadian youth tends to be pragmatic rather than aspirational. Many participants express curiosity about living or working abroad, but they frequently evaluate these opportunities through the lens of financial feasibility, career timing, and personal obligations. Survey results show that intentions to travel abroad for work, study, or volunteering remain moderate and have declined slightly compared to the previous wave, suggesting that broader economic pressures and competing priorities may influence decision-making. Focus group findings also suggest that some participants expect a greater level of practical support than the program is designed to provide. While IEC facilitates access to a visa and the opportunity to work and travel abroad, some participants – particularly younger participants – anticipated additional guidance to help navigate the experience. This included support with finding employment, accommodations, or having a point of contact who could provide assistance or reassurance if challenges arise. In these cases, participants sometimes expressed hesitation about whether the opportunity would be manageable in practice.

Financial considerations emerge as a significant barrier to international experiences. Youth frequently express concern about the cost of travel, accommodation, and living expenses, as well as uncertainty about income opportunities abroad. In the qualitative discussions, participants often noted that while the idea of working abroad is appealing, the perceived financial risk can make such experiences feel unattainable without additional planning resources or clearer pathways to employment. Life stage also shapes how these risks are perceived. Those established in their careers, often expressed hesitation about disrupting their professional trajectory to take on temporary work abroad that may be lower paid or less aligned with their current roles. Others were often more open to the idea of working abroad but indicated that they would want more structured guidance or practical assistance to help them navigate employment, housing, and other logistics once in destination countries.

The findings also point to additional barriers faced by some groups of youth. Participants with mobility, visual, or hearing impairments highlight concerns about accessibility and continuity of care while abroad, while some 2SLGBTQIA+ participants describe the importance of considering the social climate and safety of destination countries. Indigenous youth sometimes frame international experiences in relation to family, community, and connection to land, which can influence how they evaluate the prospect of extended time away from home.

Overall, the results suggest that there is meaningful potential to increase Canadian youth participation in international mobility programs if awareness can be improved and key concerns addressed. Providing additional support (should it be possible), clearer information, highlighting the personal and cultural benefits of international experiences, and reaching youth early in their education or career planning process may help normalize the idea of working and travelling abroad.

Appendix 1: Quantitative Methodology Report

Survey methodology

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 experiences, their views on travel and living abroad in general, their awareness and views of the IEC program and their future international experience intentions.

Questionnaire design

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

The questionnaire was programmed, then thoroughly tested by Leger programmers 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.

Sample design and selection

A sample of 2,515 Canadians citizens aged 16 to 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.

Table 1: Gender

Base: All respondents

	Percent of population	Percent of weighted sample	Actual unweighted	Actual weighted
Male	49%	49%	1138	1231
Female	51%	49%	1342	1239
Another gender	N/A	1%	25	30
No response	N/A	<1%	10	15

Table 2: Age

Base: All respondents

	Percent of population	Percent of weighted sample	Actual unweighted	Actual weighted
16 to 17	9%	9%	131	229
18 to 24	32%	34%	845	851
25 to 35	59%	57%	1539	1435

Table 3: Sample distribution by region

Base: All respondents

	Percent of population	Percent of weighted sample	Actual unweighted	Actual weighted
Atlantic	6%	6%	142	156
Quebec	21%	22%	580	564
Ontario	40%	39%	969	982
Manitoba / Saskatchewan	7%	7%	175	173
Alberta	12%	12%	330	306
British Columbia / Territories	14%	13%	319	334

Data collection

The online survey was conducted in English and French from January 28 to February 16, 2026 and took an average of 16 minutes to complete. The survey was fielded by Leger using their proprietary online panel.

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).

Please note that, due to a technical error, Q14 was inadvertently omitted after the survey pre-test. Respondents were recontacted and a total of 1431 completes were obtained between March 4-10, 2026. The original 42 pre-test responses were retained and added to these results. As a result, the base size for Q14 was 1473.

Weighting

In addition to setting quotas, the data is weighted based on age, gender and region, to reflect the population in Canada, as reported by Statistics Canada.

Quality controls

Leger’s panel is actively monitored for quality through a number of approaches (digital fingerprinting, in-survey quality measures, incentive redemption requirements, etc.) to ensure that responses are only collected from legitimate Canadian panel members.

Participation rate

The participation rate for the survey was 37% (calculated as the number of responding units, divided by the sum of unresolved units, in-scope non-responding units, and responding units).

- Total entered survey: 4281
 - Completed: 2515
 - Not qualified/screen out: 893
 - Over quota: 467
 - Suspend/drop-off: 406
- Unresolved (U): 4328
 - Email invitation bounce-backs: 30
 - Email invitations unanswered: 4298
- In-scope non-responding (IS): 406
 - Qualified respondent break-off: 406
- In-scope responding (R): 2743
 - Completed surveys disqualified – quota filled: 0
 - Completed surveys disqualified – other reasons: 228
 - Completed surveys – valid: 2515
- Response rate = $R/(U+IS+R)$: 37%

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 similar to census proportions, with younger groups slightly underrepresented due to lower rates of participation in online panel surveys. Gender proportions are very similar to census data.

Table 1: Gender distribution comparison to census

Base: All respondents

	Sample (unweighted)	Canada (2021 Census)
Male	48.9%	49.2%
Female	49.3%	49.4%
Another gender	1.8%	1.4%

Table 2: Age distribution comparison to census

Base: All respondents

	Sample (unweighted)	Canada (2021 Census)
16 to 17	9.1%%	9.9%
18 to 24	33.8%	33.0%
25 to 35	57.0%	57.1%

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.

Appendix 2: Qualitative Methodology Report

Focus group methodology

For the qualitative phase, Earnscliffe conducted a series of twelve focus groups between February 4 and February 11, 2026, to discuss experiences and perceptions of international travel and living abroad, awareness of (or experience with) the International Experience Canada program (IEC), and feedback on approaches for marketing IEC to Canadian youth. The focus groups were conducted online using Zoom and each group was up to ninety minutes in length. Participants were given an honorarium of \$100 to \$150. Groups were recruited according to several criteria, with separate groups for several distinct audiences.

There were six focus groups with youth (16-35) in five key regions of the country: Atlantic Canada (1), Quebec (2), Ontario (1), the Prairies (1), and British Columbia/Territories (1). Additionally, we conducted one national focus group with: youth (16-18), members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community (16-35), Indigenous youth (16-35), female youth who are completing or who have completed a Science, Technology, Engineering or Math (STEM) degree (16-35), youth with a mobility, visual or hearing impairment (16-35), and past IEC participants (16-35). All of the groups were conducted in English except for the focus group with residents of Quebec and the National focus group with French-speaking Canadians. Those in official language minority communities were also invited to join a group in their preferred language.

A total of 8-10 participants were recruited for each group; between 6 and 10 attended each session. Attendance for each group is included in the table below. In total, 110 participants were recruited and 91 participants participated in the focus groups.

Table 1: Focus group distribution

	Date	Audience	Region (Language)	No of recruits	No of participants
1	Wednesday, February 4, 2026	General population youth 16-35	Atlantic Canada (EN)	10	9
2	Wednesday, February 4, 2026	Youth 16-18	National (EN)	10	8
3	Wednesday, February 4, 2026	General population youth 16-35	Prairies (EN)	10	6
7	Monday, February 9, 2026	General population youth 16-35	Ontario (EN)	10	9
8	Monday, February 9, 2026	2SLGBTQIA+ 16-35 youth	National (EN)	8	8
9	Monday, February 9, 2026	Youth 16-35 Women in STEM	National (EN)	8	8

	Date	Audience	Region (Language)	No of recruits	No of participants
4	Tuesday, February 10, 2026	General population youth 16-35	Quebec (FR)	10	8
5	Tuesday, February 10, 2026	Indigenous youth 16-35	National (EN)	8	7
6	Tuesday, February 10, 2026	General population youth 16-35	British Columbia/Territories (EN)	10	8
10	Wednesday, February 11, 2026	General population youth 16-35	National (FR)	10	6
11	Wednesday, February 11, 2026	Youth 16-35 with a mobility, visual or hearing impairment	National (EN)	8	7
12	Wednesday, February 11, 2026	Past IEC participants 16-35	National (EN)	8	7
Total				110	91

Recruitment

Participants were recruited using a five-minute screening questionnaire. The screener contained a series of standard screening questions to ensure participants qualified based on their age, location, and influence with young Canadians, ensuring a good mix of other demographics such as gender, household income, vocation, etc. The recruitment screener is included under a separate cover.

Our fieldwork subcontractor, Quality Response, relied on panels and databases of Canadians; this is the approach employed most often for this type of recruitment. Quality Response reaches out to members of their database first via email and followed up with telephone calls to confirm respondent eligibility and availability.

Quality Response's database includes approximately 35,000 Canadians with profiling on a range of attributes including standard personal demographics, household composition, medical background, technology usage, financial services, health and wellness, business profiles, and other relevant criteria. Their database is constantly being updated and replenished and operates out of their own, onsite telephone room in Toronto, Ontario. Potential group participants are recruited to their database via mixed-mode: following a proprietary telephone survey, online, referral, social media and print advertising. Quality Response understands the nuances of qualitative recruiting and the importance of locating qualified, interested respondents. Their recruiting is undertaken in strict accordance with the Standards for the Conduct of Government of Canada Public Opinion Research – Qualitative Research.

Reminder calls were made prior to the groups to confirm participants' intention to attend and to encourage higher rates of participation. To encourage full participation, participants were given an honorarium of \$100- \$150.

A total of eight to ten participants were recruited for each group. All participants agreed to the presence of observers and recording of the session during the screening process and at the beginning of the session (for those who attended). Arrangements were made to permit Government of Canada staff to observe all sessions virtually.

Moderation

Groups were moderated by Stephanie Constable (SC) and Gregor Sharp (GS) who are all on Earnscliffe's Standing Offer for Public Opinion Research. In our experience, there is value in using multiple moderators as it ensures that no single moderator develops early conclusions. Each moderator takes notes and summarizes their groups after each night. The moderators each provide a debrief on their groups including the functionality of the discussion guide; any issues relating to recruiting, turnout, or technology; and key findings including noting instances where they were unique and where they were similar to previous sessions. Together, they discuss the findings both on an ongoing basis in order to allow for probing of areas that require further investigation in subsequent groups, and before the final results are reported.

The moderator guides used in the focus groups are included under a separate cover.

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.

Glossary of terms

Table 2: Glossary of terms

Generalization	Interpretation
Few	Few is used when less than 10% of participants have responded with similar answers.
Several	Several is used when fewer than 20% of the participants responded with similar answers.
Some	Some is used when more than 20% but significantly fewer than 50% of participants with similar answers.
Many	Many is used when nearly 50% of participants responded with similar answers.
Majority/Plurality	Majority or plurality are used when more than 50% but fewer than 75% of the participants responded with similar answers.
Most	Most is used when more than 75% of the participants responded with similar answers.
Vast majority	Vast majority is used when nearly all participants responded with similar answers, but several had differing views.

Unanimous/Almost all	Unanimous or almost all are used when all participants gave similar answers or when the vast majority of participants gave similar answers and the remaining few declined to comment on the issue in question.
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Appendix 3: Quantitative and Qualitative Instruments

English and French quantitative instruments are provided under separate cover.

Appendix 4: Tabulated Data

A full set of tabulated data is provided under separate cover.