PRESS RELEASE | Canada

Methodology:
Results are based on an online survey conducted from November 7 to November 9, 2026, among 1,001 adults in Canada. The data has been statistically weighted according to Canadian census figures for age, gender and region in Canada. The margin of error—which measures sample variability—is +/- 3.1 percentage points, nineteen times out of twenty.

All things considered, do you think it's a good idea or a bad idea for Canadian colleges and universities to accept international students?

Very good idea / Good idea – 68%
Bad idea / Very bad idea – 22%
Not sure – 10%

Canadians Keep Mixed Feelings on International Students

More than three-in-four would welcome a federal crackdown on low-quality institutions that fail to deliver on their promises.

Vancouver, BC [November 26, 2026] – While most Canadians think the presence of international students in the country's colleges and universities is positive, there is widespread confusion about their actual numbers, a new Research Co. poll has found.

In the online survey of a representative national sample, 68% of Canadians think it is a good idea for Canadian colleges and universities to accept international students, while 22% consider this a bad idea and 10% are not sure.

Respondents to this poll were asked to pinpoint the percentage of international students currently enrolled on three different types of programs in Canadian colleges and universities.

While Statistics Canada data pegs the number of international students currently enrolled in Bachelor's degree programs at 18%, Canadians assume the number to be significantly higher, at 33%.

The average assessment of Canadians on the percentage of international students enrolled in Master's degree programs is 29% (lower than the actual 36%). The results are similar when Canadians ponder the percentage of international students enrolled in Doctoral degree programs, placing this proportion at 25% (also lower than the actual 36%).

Across the country, more than two-in-five Canadians (42%) think the number of international students who are accepted at Canadian colleges and universities should remain the same as now, while one-in-five (20%) favour an increase and just under three-in-ten (28%) would prefer to see a decrease.

"More than two-in-five Conservative Party voters in last year's federal election (42%) would reduce the number of international students allowed into Canada," says Mario Canseco, President of Research Co. "The proportions are lower among Canadians who voted for the Liberal Party (20%) or the New Democratic Party (NDP) (17%) last year."

Almost three-in-five Canadians (57%) think the federal government's decision to limit the number of permits issued for international students should be re-evaluated. This course of action is particularly popular among Atlantic Canadians (64%) and Quebecers (60%).

More than half of Canadians (56%) agree with the notion that international students help Canada deal with workforce shortages—a proportion that rises to 69% among Liberal voters.

More than three-in-four Canadians (77%) believe the federal government must crack down on low-quality institutions that lure international students with false hopes about housing and job placement.

Views are more nuanced on a separate question. More than two-in-five Canadians (42%) think international students have negatively impacted the Canadian economy, while almost half (48%) disagree with this assessment.

Canadians aged 18-to-34 are more likely to believe that international students have been detrimental to the nation's finances (49%) than their counterparts aged 35-to-54 (44%) and aged 55 and over (32%).

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About Research Co.

Simply put, we are curious about what people think and the decisions they will make. Some call it public opinion, others call it polling or public affairs. We never compromise facts for profit. Our agenda is the truth.

We have a global network of partners in the qualitative, data collection and data visualization specialities.

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