

# SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN ONTARIO AND QUEBEC

POLICY PREVIEW

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The number of foreign students in Canada continues to grow rapidly. Canada was the destination for 7% of the world's international students in 2017, one of the top three countries that host the largest shares of international students in comparison to their total higher education populations.

The flow of international students is uneven across Canada. In 2017, 84% of international students enrolled in three provinces: Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec (CBIE 2018). Using the Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB)<sup>1</sup> this brief report describes the distribution of international students in Ontario and Quebec and compares their social characteristics and transitions from temporary to permanent status in the two provinces that are major destinations for international students in Canada.

Canada's constitution allows each province to organize and deliver its education programs.

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<sup>1</sup> The IMDB integrates administrative immigration data since 1980 with tax data since 1982. It provides detailed and reliable information on socioeconomic outcomes of immigrants after their admission. Along with connecting short-term and long-term outcomes with characteristics at admission, such as immigrant admission category, source country and knowledge of official language, the data base also provides pre-admission experience in Canada, such as work, or study permits. Several files are required in order to produce the IMDB. The Immigrant Landing File is a census of the people who have immigrated to Canada as permanent residents since 1980; it holds information on their characteristics at landing. Data on immigrants with pre-landing experience who landed in 1980 and thereafter and who hold non-permanent resident status have been used to create the Non-permanent Resident File (NRF). The file includes the number of permits, the type of permit (work or study, for example), and the first year of temporary residence. Finally, the Integrated Permanent and Non-permanent Resident File (PNRF), which combines information from the ILF and the NRF at the person level. The PNRF provides users with the ability to follow the

Although educational institutions (colleges, universities, and polytechnics) across Canada offer similar programs and credentials, often the length and composition of some programs vary. For example, students in Quebec are required to attend a college (i.e. CÉGEP)<sup>2</sup> before enrolling in a university in the province. CÉGEPs offer two types of programs: pre-university program and technical program. For international students, the length and characteristics of post-secondary programs may have a direct impact on their eligibility for employment and immigration opportunities in Canada. Data analysis reveals that international students are more likely to attend universities in Quebec than in Ontario. May be a college degree in Ontario is sufficient for international students to obtain employment and transition to permanent status.

migration history of immigrants, including their pre-landing experience in Canada, and determine whether a person was a non-permanent resident prior to landing. It is to be noted that records of non-permanent residents who have not become permanent residents are not included in this file (Evra and Prokopenko 2018, pp. 10-11, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/11-633-x/11-633-x2018011-eng.pdf?st=A-SiHrxb>).

<sup>2</sup> CÉGEP is a publicly funded pre-university and technical college in the province of Quebec's education system. Quebec students complete one grade fewer in total than other North American students before beginning post-secondary studies, completing high school at grade 11 instead of grade 12. CEGEP programs are typically two years in length with the exception of certain technical programs that are three years in length; the latter programs are generally for those wishing to enter a technical profession (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CEGEP>, <https://www.sram.qc.ca/international-student/what-are-cegeps>).

Two IMDB data files are used in this analysis: Non-permanent Resident File (NRF) and Integrated Permanent and Non-permanent Resident File (PNRF). The NRF contains information about people who entered Canada as non-permanent residents between 1980 and 2015. It allows us to examine trends in province of study and level of study. The PNRF contains detailed data about the sociodemographic characteristics of immigrants who landed in Canada between 1980 and 2015 including those who were non-permanent residents prior to landing. The data provide a snapshot of international students in Ontario and Quebec who transitioned from temporary to permanent residence.

#### *KEY FINDINGS*

- Ontario has been the destination for almost half of international students arriving in Canada.
- Most international students did not become permanent residents of Canada. Between

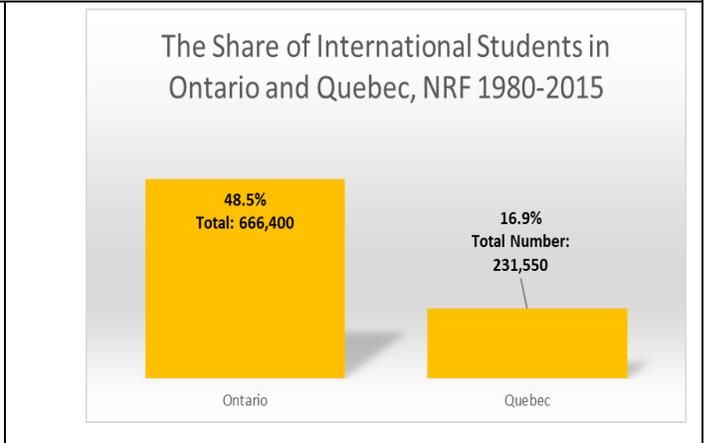
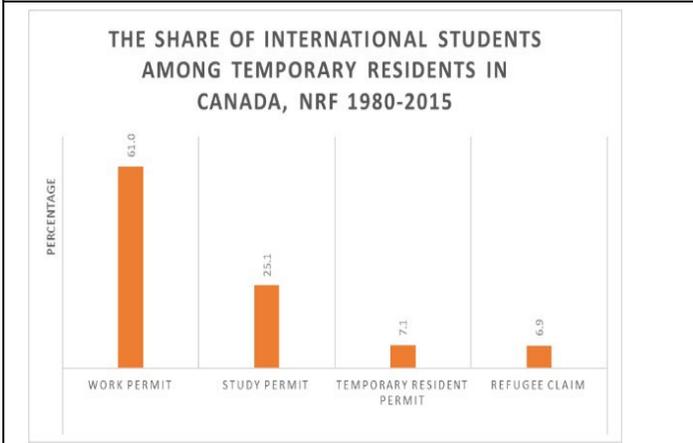
1980 and 2015, only minority, 38%, obtained permanent residence.

- Place matters:
  - International students are more likely to enroll at universities in Quebec than in Ontario.
  - Unlike in Ontario, men comprise the majority (58%) of international students who became permanent residents in Quebec.
  - There is a gender gap among international students with men more likely to enroll at universities than women and the gap is larger in Ontario than in Quebec.
  - Almost half of Quebec's international students are bilingual compared to only 3.7% in Ontario.

Provincial differences in the total number, level of study, gender and language fluency of international students are important for immigrant-serving organizations that strive to tailor appropriate and effective services and programs.

**Share of International Students in Ontario and Quebec**

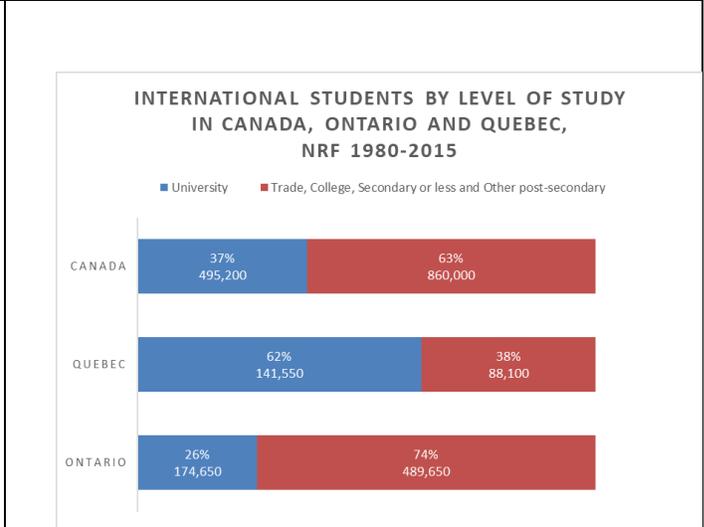
Between 1980 and 2015, 1,373,800 migrants entered Canada with a study permit. During this period, study permit holders comprised one quarter of all temporary residents (5,476,300) entering Canada. Ontario was the destination for almost half of international students entering Canada, while only 17% planned to study in Quebec.



**Level of Study at the Time of Entry**

Most international students in Ontario attended, college, trades and other non- university secondary institutions, while the majority in Quebec attended universities.

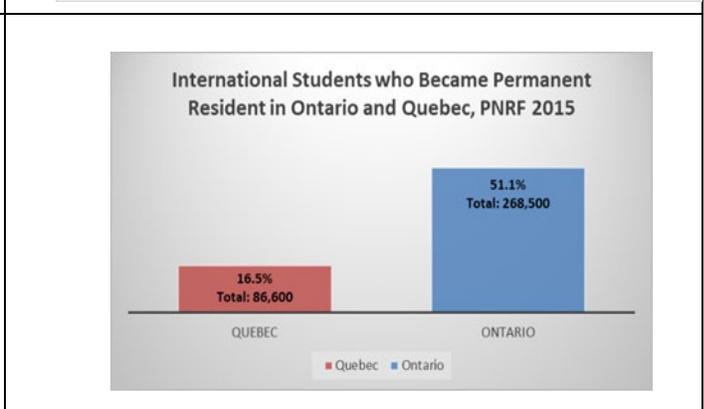
- Among international students in Ontario, only one quarter were enrolled at university.
- A much higher proportion of international students in Quebec (62%) was studying at university.



**Transition to Permanent Status**

Of 1,373,800 international students who entered Canada between 1980 and 2015, 525,300 (38%) became permanent residents.

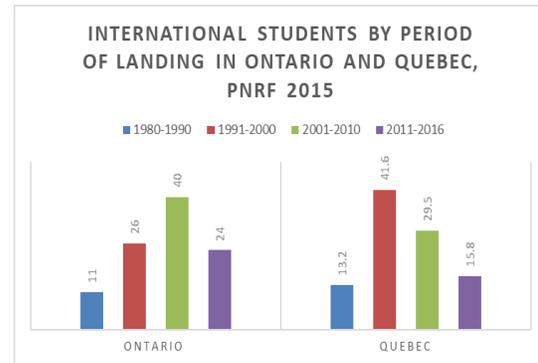
- About half (51%) of the international students who became permanent residents lived in Ontario.
- Only 16% of them lived in Quebec.



**Period of Landing**

Among the international students living in Ontario who became permanent residents, 40% landed between 2001 and 2010.

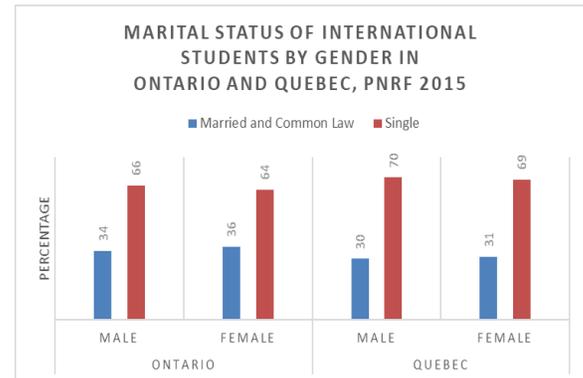
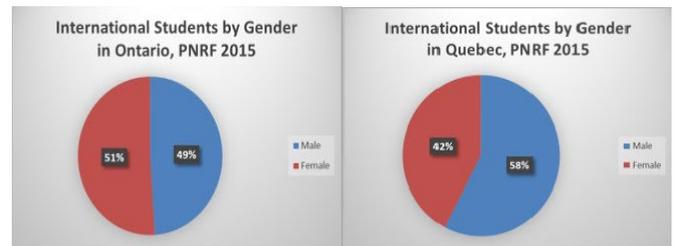
In Quebec, 41.6% of international students who became permanent residents landed earlier, between 1991 and 2000.



**Gender and Marital Status**

In Ontario, almost equal numbers of male and female students became permanent residents. In Quebec, men account for a larger proportion of the international students that get permanent residence, 58%.

Most men and women who gain permanent residence are single in both provinces.

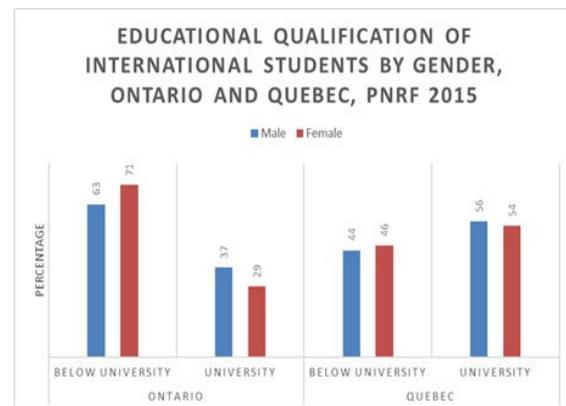


**Educational Qualifications At Landing**

When they became permanent residents, i.e., when they landed, more than half of all international students in Quebec were university-educated compared with only one third in Ontario.

Male international students are more likely to be university-educated than their female counterparts in both provinces, but the gender gap is larger in Ontario than in Quebec.

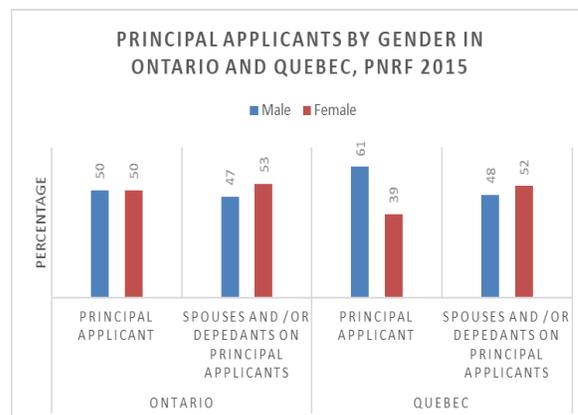
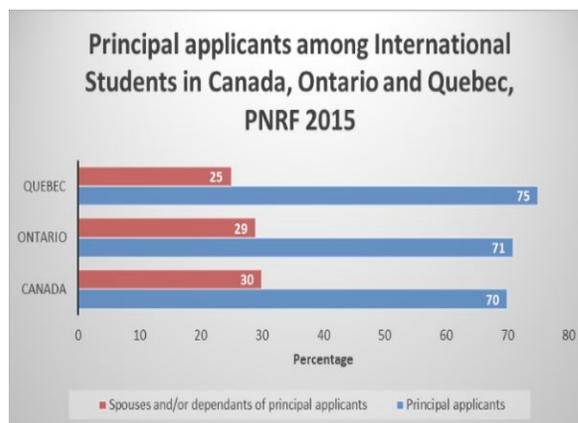
At the time of landing, 56% of male students and 54% of female students had a university degree in Quebec. In Ontario, only 37% of male students who landed had a degree, still higher than the 29% of female students landing in the province.



### Share of Principal Applicants

The majority of international students in Ontario and Quebec landed as principal applicants. Principal applicants who are screened on the basis of education, specific job skills, job experience, occupation, arranged employment, age and ability to communicate in English or French, among other factors are considered well prepared to enter the Canadian labour market.

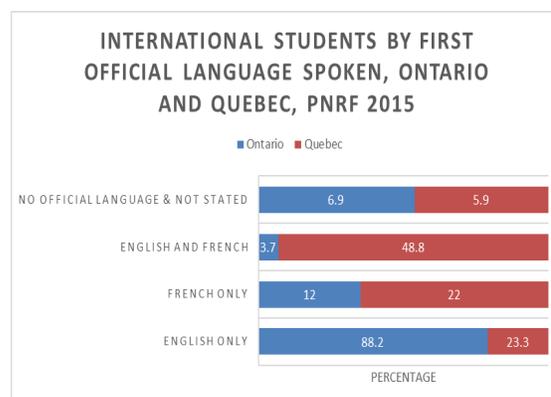
- Of the international students who landed in Ontario, 190,000, 71%, were principal applicants. In Quebec, principal applicants accounted for 75% of all international students.
- Men comprised a larger share (61%) of student principal applicants than women (39%) in Quebec. In contrast, the percentages of male (50%) and female students (50%) who become permanent residents as principal applicants are equal in Ontario.



### First Official Language Spoken

As expected, English is the first official language spoken by most international students, 88.2%, in Ontario. Less than one quarter of international students in Quebec, 22%, identified English as their first official language.

Bilingual international students dominate in Quebec where 48.8% of international students are bilingual. Only 3.7% of international students landing in Ontario speak English and French.



## References

**Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE).** (2018). International Students in Canada, Ottawa, Canada

[file:///E:/IMDB%20data%20analysis/International%20students%20data/International-Students-in-Canada-ENG%20\(1\).pdf](file:///E:/IMDB%20data%20analysis/International%20students%20data/International-Students-in-Canada-ENG%20(1).pdf)

**Evra, R., & Prokopenko, E.** (2018). *Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB), Technical Report, 2016*. Statistics Canada/ Statistique Canada