

Knowledge

JUNE
2025

Without Borders

An Overview of International University
Students' Impact in Québec

BY VOLUME10

Knowledge

JUNE
2025

Without Borders

An Overview of International University
Students' Impact in Québec

PAR VOLUME10

The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this report are solely those of Volume10 and do not necessarily reflect the views of the foundations, whose involvement was limited to providing the funding for this project.

Table of Contents

The Study in a Nutshell	10	The Study in Numbers	12	The Post-Graduation Impact of International Students	104	Portraits	154
				Benefits for Québec Leaving Québec After Graduation			
A Movement Steeped in the History of Knowledge	14	Understanding the Various Drivers of Student Mobility	18	Calling into Question Québec's Welcoming of International Students	182	So Now What?	228
		The Reasons for Student Mobility The Rise of English-Speaking Countries International Enrollments in Canadian Universities The Emergence of Student Mobility in Québec Overview of International Enrollments in Québec Universities		Studying in Québec: A Complex Process An Admission Tradition Called into Question Factors Behind Contemporary Reforms The French Language in Québec Influential Media Coverage Impacts Already Being Felt A Strategic Vision for Universities and Québec's Scientific Positioning			
The Impact of International Admissions	48			People Interviewed	236		
The Impact on Universities Research and Teaching: A Particularity of Graduate Studies International Students' Role in Graduate Studies Rankings and Internationalization: The Importance of Standing Out The Economic Impact of International Students on the Host Community A Factor in Urban Transformation							

Methodological Note

For the purposes of this study, an international student is defined as a person enrolled in a post-secondary institution in Québec, who is neither a Canadian citizen nor a permanent resident, and whose place of permanent residence is outside Canada at the time of application.

Although CEGEPS and colleges also welcome international students, our study focuses on the three cycles of university studies : bachelor's degrees (undergraduate) and master's degrees and doctoral degrees (graduate).

The data collected for this study combines secondary data from government and university sources and primary data from hundreds of interviews conducted with players from the education, research, economy, and civil society sectors.

Word from the Study's Sponsors

Echo Foundation
Hewitt Foundation
Jarislowsky Foundation
The Molson Foundation

R. Howard Webster Foundation
The Rossy Foundation
Sandra and Alain Bouchard Foundation
Trottier Family Foundation

We are pleased to have supported the study “Knowledge Without Borders: An Overview of International University Students’ Impact in Québec.”

The assessment of international students’ impact on Québec’s cultural, social, and economic prosperity is an important topic for all Quebecers, as it has the potential to enhance the well-being of our community members.

We wanted to support the production of a factual, objective, and independent study to provide everyone with basic facts, expose the many economic, cultural, and social mechanisms in place, and share real stories from international alumni who studied at Québec universities.

We would like to thank the Volume10 firm for carrying out this thorough work, which relied on data analyses, interviews with over eighty managers and directors from civil society, and the presentation of more than twenty-two profiles of former international students.

We would like this study to feed a debate that concerns us all. Because the successful welcome and integration of international students must contribute to Québec’s prosperity.

We hope you will find this study interesting and that it will fuel your reflection on a topic that is so important for our future and collective success.

The Study in a Nutshell

Associated with the very creation of universities in the Middle Ages, international student mobility has always supported the two large missions of the academic world: to produce and disseminate knowledge. Today, this age-old practice remains a powerful driver of international collaboration and innovation.

In Québec, international student mobility evolved in a unique manner. While some universities such as McGill have been welcoming international students since the nineteenth century, French institutions remained relatively isolated from the rest of the world until the Quiet Revolution. It was only after the reforms of the 1960s that French universities, including the newly formed University of Québec network, really opened up to the world.

Today's reality is quite different: Close to one student in five at a Québec university is from abroad, a ratio that increases to one in two at the doctoral level. This presence of international students, far from being marginal, has become critical for our institutions. It enriches the classroom environment through a diversity of worldviews, it stabilizes university finances as schools face stagnating domestic enrollments and the limited growth of other revenue sources, and it actively supports research in strategic sectors.

In several cutting-edge sectors, specifically science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), the contribution of international students is simply irreplaceable. Without them,

Québec's research base would be severely undermined by a structural shortage of local talent.

The economic impact is also considerable. In 2022, international student spending reached \$4.2 billion in Québec, nearly 1 percent of the provincial GDP. But beyond the numbers, the entire ecosystem is reinforced: housing, the restaurant industry, transportation, and culture. This international presence also strengthens the dynamism of university towns, particularly in rural areas.

After graduation, international students also contribute to Québec society in two ways. Those who settle in Québec—and who have already partially integrated through their student experience—enhance our skilled labour pool, start businesses, and stimulate innovation. Those who leave have the potential to become ambassadors for Québec, facilitating scientific, cultural, and commercial exchanges with their countries of origin.

Yet, since 2022, several reforms have complicated the welcoming of these students. Admission quotas, uncertainty regarding immigration streams, and growing mistrust have weakened Québec's international student ecosystem. A significant drop in applications has already been observed, with an average 45 percent decrease in Québec universities.

If this trend leads to declining international student numbers in Québec, certain institutions will be forced to undertake a rationalization process. The quality of programs is also at risk, and, as the most talented students are also the most mobile, the idea of studying in Québec may simply be rejected. In the long run, it will be the cutting-edge sectors of Québec's economy that will be most affected as local businesses and organizations will face a reduced talent pool.

Welcoming international students does, of course, come with its share of challenges, notably francization, housing, and institutional capacity. But these challenges are manageable if tackled with rigour and coherence. Conversely, the advantages would be major, systemic, and sustainable for Québec society.

In the context of increased competition for recruiting international talent, and as the United States are adopting more restrictive policies, Québec finds itself at a strategic crossroads. Rather than proceeding with a quickly assembled plan, the province would benefit from a coherent and ambitious vision, built around three fundamental principles.

1. Attract and welcome international students whose profiles align with Québec's values and priorities, while ensuring institutions allocate the necessary resources to guarantee a student experience that lives up to Québec's promise.

2. Retain these talented students by building strong bridges to the job market, recognizing their entrepreneurial potential, and facilitating their social integration, notably through the learning of French.

3. Promote Québec on the world stage by forging lasting relationships with graduates—whether they choose to stay in Québec or not—thus transforming the Québec experience into a powerful driver of global influence.

The implementation of this vision requires making all players accountable: Universities need to be more accountable in their welcome practices, employers more committed to professional integration, and governments more coherent in their immigration policies. It also requires a rigorous follow-up of post-graduation trajectories and a push to encourage Québec's own students to study abroad.

At a time when global dynamics are accelerating, Québec's ability to turn this openness into a lever for development will be one of the keys to its future success.

The Study in Numbers

57,440	17%
international students enrolled in Québec universities	of students in Québec are from abroad
49%	56%
of students at the doctoral level are from abroad	of international students are from French-speaking countries
~30%	
post-study retention rate in Québec for holders of a post-graduation work permit	

86.6%	1/4
international graduate employment rate	cost ratio for the government to educate an international student at university compared to a person born in Québec (from birth to university graduation)
\$4.2B	-46%
contributed annually by international students to Québec's GDP	drop in university applications by international students for the 2025–2026 school year
+10	
changes to international student admission policies from both Ottawa and Québec since 2020	

A Movement Steeped in the History of Knowledge

Since the first universities were founded a thousand years ago, studying abroad has supported the two large missions of the academic world: the production and dissemination of knowledge. Studying in another country is viewed as a positive experience, enabling students to not only acquire cutting-edge knowledge but also participate in the emergence of fresh perspectives.

Many of history's greatest philosophers, scientists, and artists viewed studying abroad as a source of inspiration, even an essential rite of passage. One could wonder whether, without the opportunity to train in another country, the Copernicuses, Rubens, or Curies of this world would have accomplished their most famous feats.

Marie Curie (1867–1937), physicist and chemist of Polish origin, is seen delivering a lecture at the Conservatoire des arts et métiers in Paris in 1925. She first arrived in France as an international student and went on to become the first woman to receive two Nobel Prizes — in Physics (1903) and Chemistry (1911).

Photo by Jacques Boyer / Roger Viollet
via Getty Images.



For the host university, city, and country, the presence of international students fosters cultural diversity, open-mindedness, networking, and innovation. It nurtures and promotes the institutions, all while building vital bridges between the host society and the rest of the world.

So, despite the challenges this age-old practice can present, welcoming international talent into our educational institutions contributes to our collective wealth in numerous ways.

In the context of globalization and the knowledge economy, the notions of mobility and innovation are at the heart of all national economic strategies. Yet, several countries—the United States, England, and Canada, for example—are currently rethinking their immigration policies, and, collaterally, the acceptance of international student cohorts, with the contributions of these cohorts now being called into question.

A better understanding of the benefits these international students bring is needed, notably their impact on Québec society, culture, and economy.

This study covers the entire post-secondary sector, but focuses primarily on universities, which form the core of its analysis.

Beyond general opinions on the issue, the study paints a portrait of our welcome practices, in light of national development ambitions. Informed by interviews with specialists, as well as the most recent data on student mobility in Québec, the study aims to constructively feed current public debates.



**Understanding
the Various**

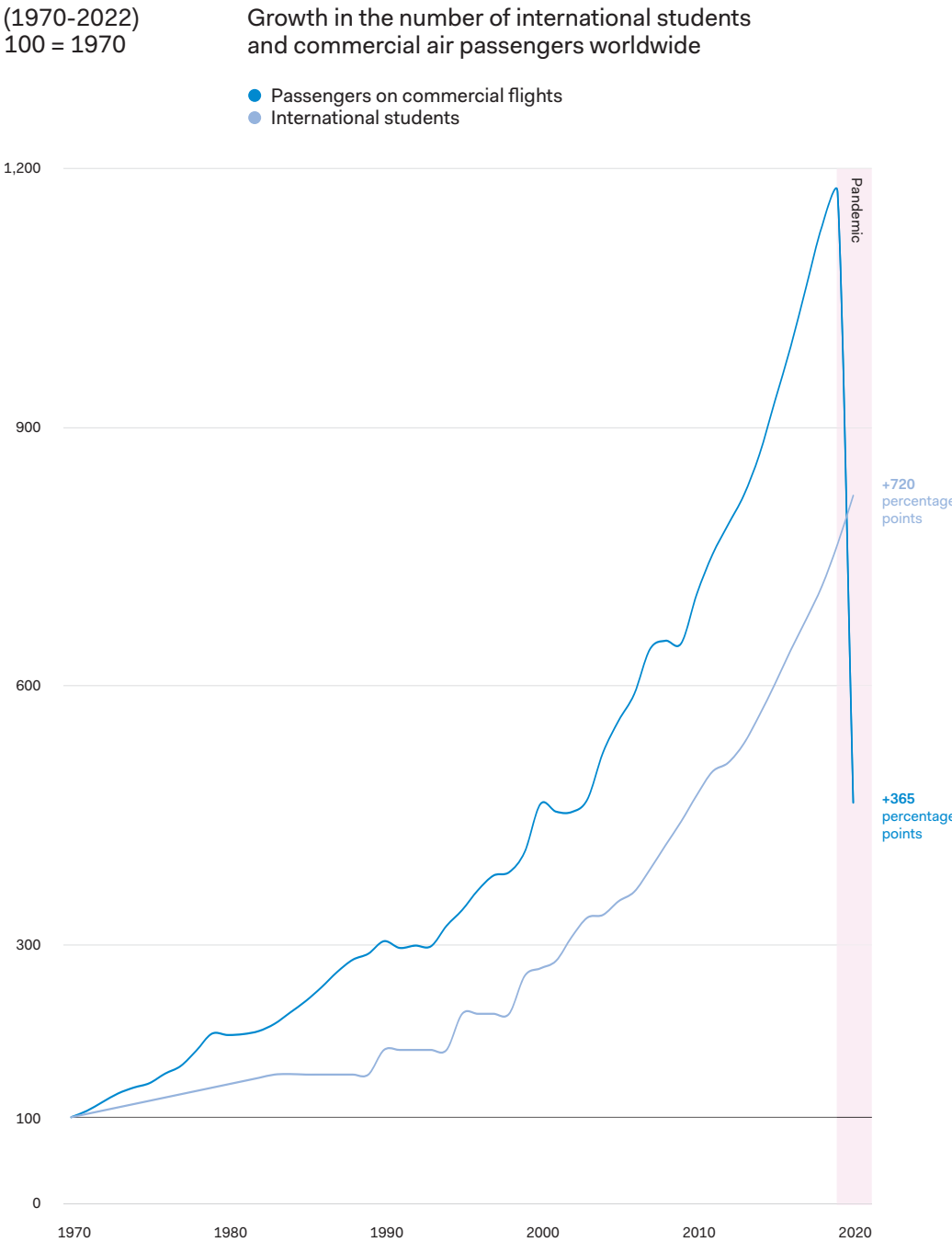
**Drivers
of Student
Mobility**

The Reasons for Student Mobility

Reflecting on international student mobility means first examining the educational, social, and economic gap that exists between the desire to learn or the need for training and what a country offers in terms of higher education.

In other words, the phenomenon we are interested in is the result of this tension between individual aspirations for rewarding education and the limitations of the education offered in the country of origin, or more simply put a response to a thirst for discovery.

International mobility can take various forms, including enrollment in full programs, participation in student exchanges, dual-diploma programs, and even training offered as part of a partnership, such as thesis co-supervisions. This wide range of opportunities is facilitated by structuring initiatives such as the Erasmus exchange programs, the organization of universities into international networks, or academic recognition through international accreditations.

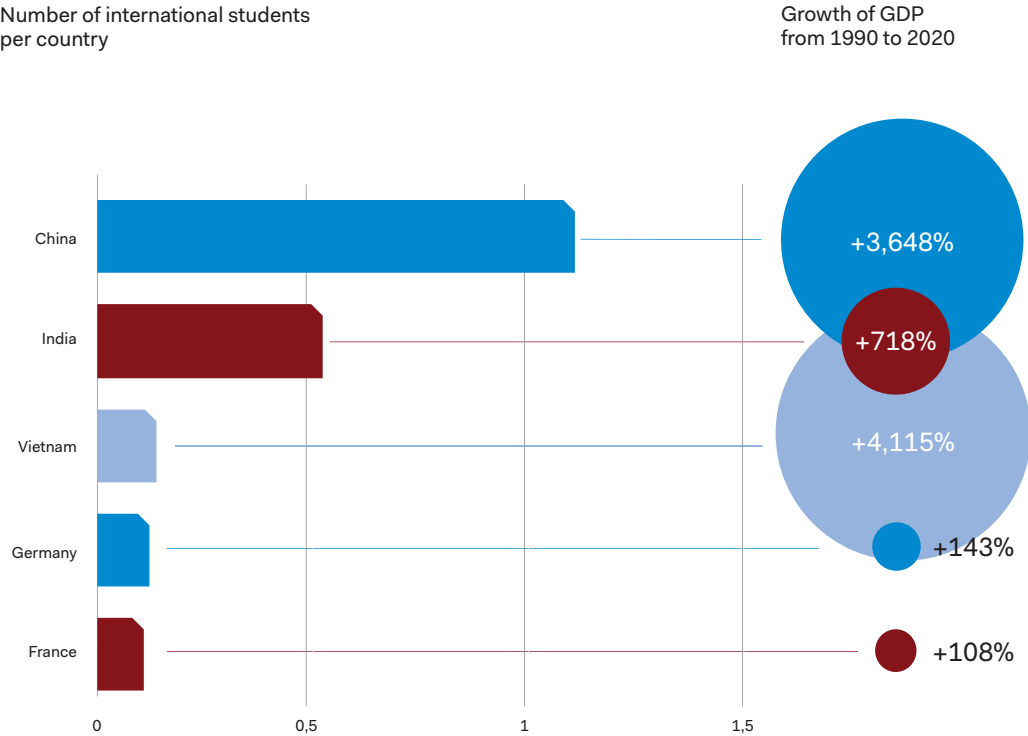


The sharp rise in commercial flights reflects the growing intensity of international exchanges of all kinds and, more broadly, the acceleration of globalization – a trend that includes the rise of studying abroad.

Economic globalization is also behind the second factor that accelerated this growth: the emergence of a middle class in many formerly disadvantaged nations, where students aspire to study abroad to pursue their upward socio-economic mobility.

(2020)
In millions

The top 5 international student source countries and their GDP growth

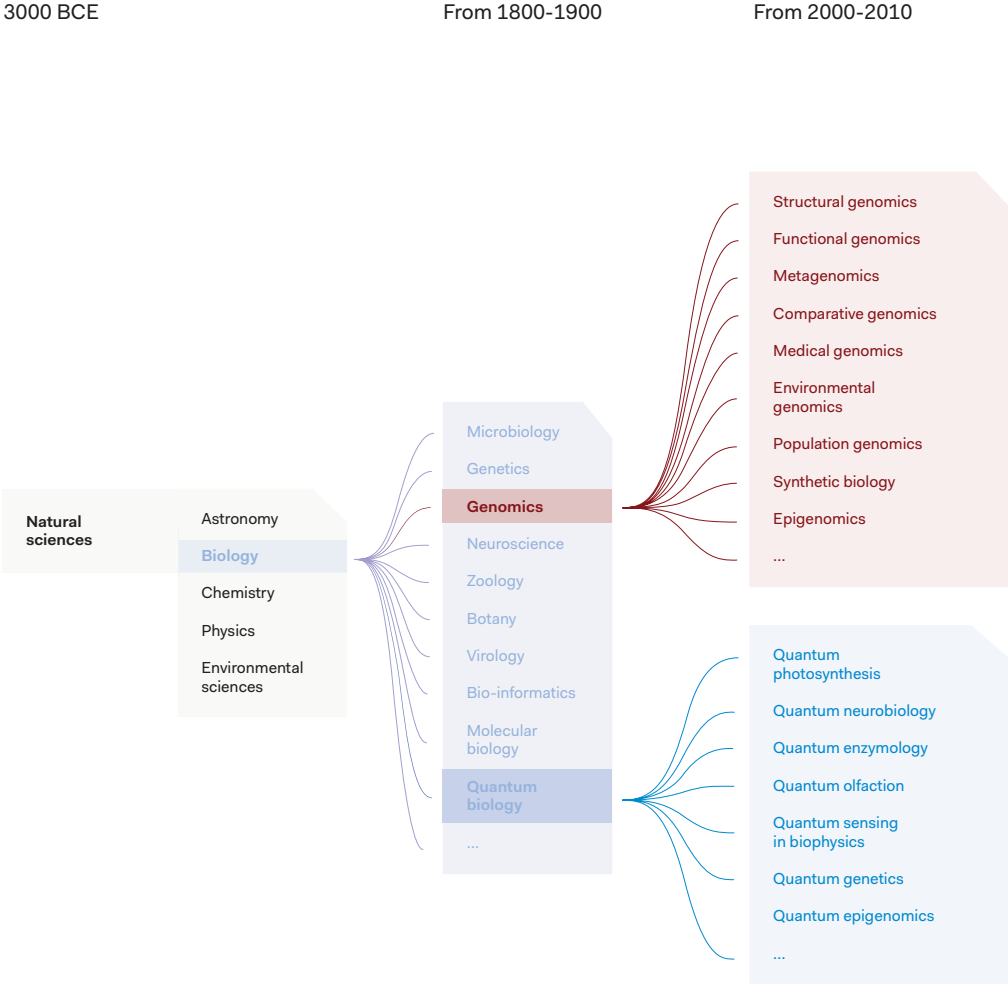


The three countries that send the most students to study abroad—China, India, and Vietnam—have seen their GDP grow substantially since the 1990s, two phenomena that feed off each other.

During this period, Germany and France have turned student mobility into a lever for European integration.

The third factor pertains to disciplines of knowledge becoming more and more complex, leading to a need for over-specialization in state-of-the-art centres, which are concentrated in a limited number of poles of excellence.

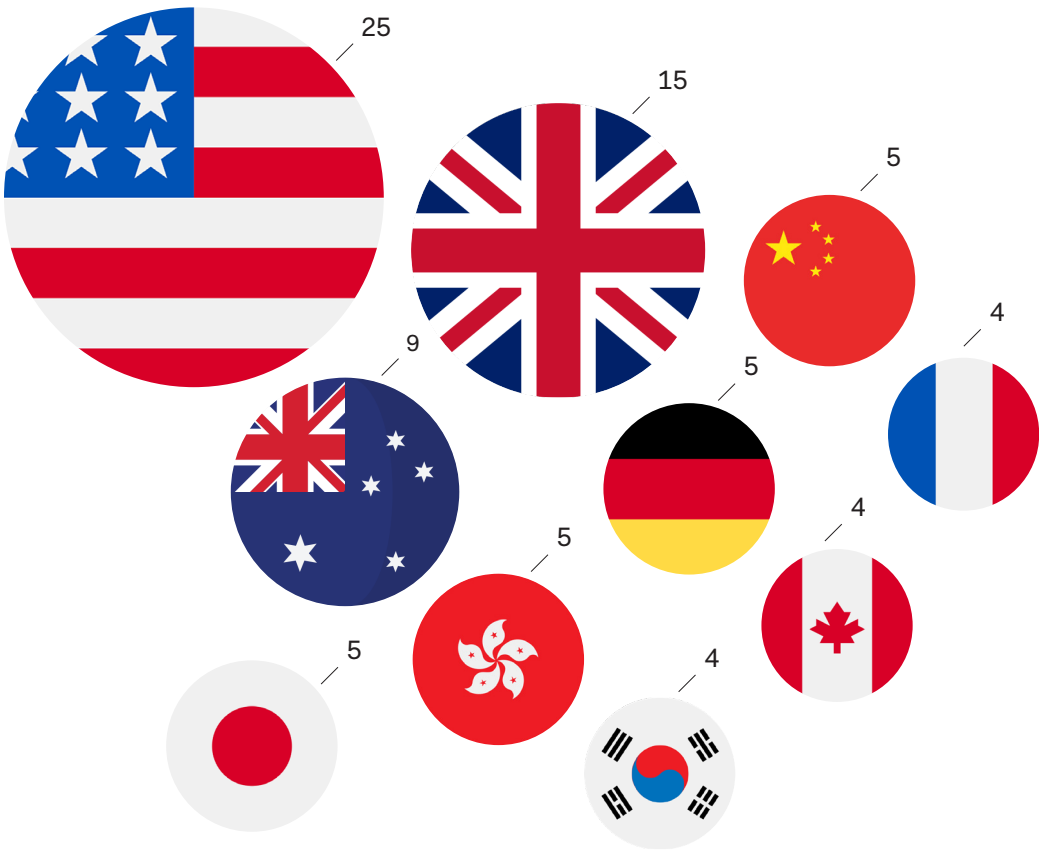
Example of knowledge over-specialization
(Examples of biology sub-disciplines)



The Rise of English-Speaking Countries

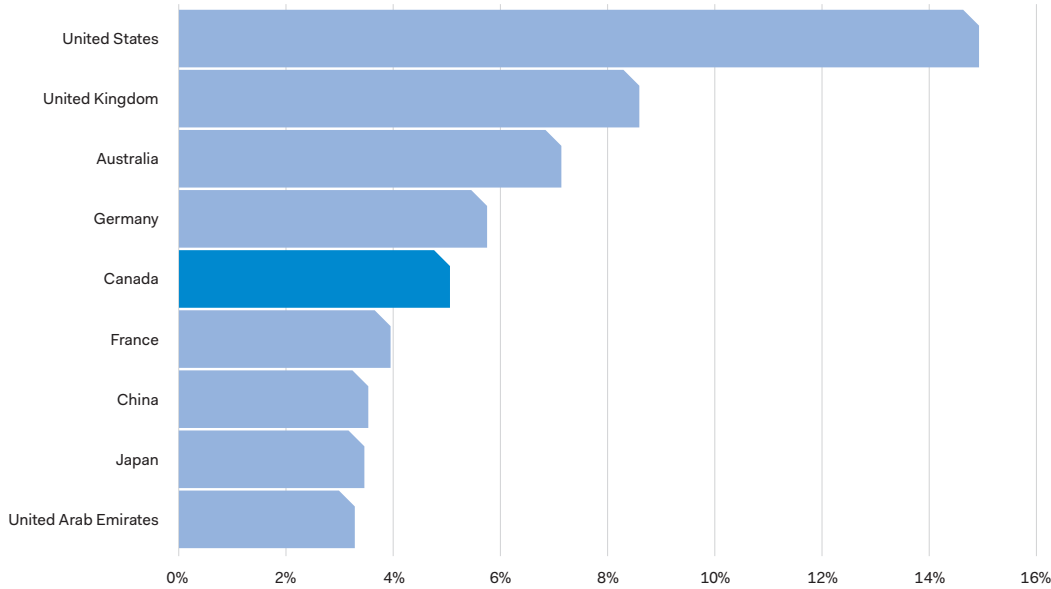
Today, most of these state-of-the-art centres are in the United States and the United Kingdom, thanks to the long-standing, diverse, and rich university networks in both countries.

(2025) Number of institutions per country that are ranked in the top 100 universities in the world by QS



In fact, English-speaking countries have benefitted the most from this student mobility boom, attracting the largest share of international students.

Global percentage (2020) The 10 countries that welcome the most international students



Jewish scientists and American innovation

In addition to being naturally open to immigrants, English-speaking countries knew how to capitalize on the flow of talent. In the United States, for example, the arrival of Jewish scientists fleeing the Nazis led to a 31 percent increase in patents in their fields, with a lasting impact on innovation.

Parker, C. B. (2014, August 12). *How Jews who fled the Nazis revolutionized American science*. Phys.org.

These countries are home to some of the world's top-rated and best-funded universities, ensuring unrivalled research capabilities and a prestige that benefits the country's entire educational network.

Moreover, the United States, the United Kingdom, and to a certain extent, Australia top the list as their national language—English—is also the leading language for international communication. English-speaking nations are therefore naturally favoured when it comes to student mobility, particularly for the fifty-five countries where English is the second language.

Add to this the fact that the United Kingdom is still benefitting from the colonial ties of the British Empire, which date back to the seventeenth century.

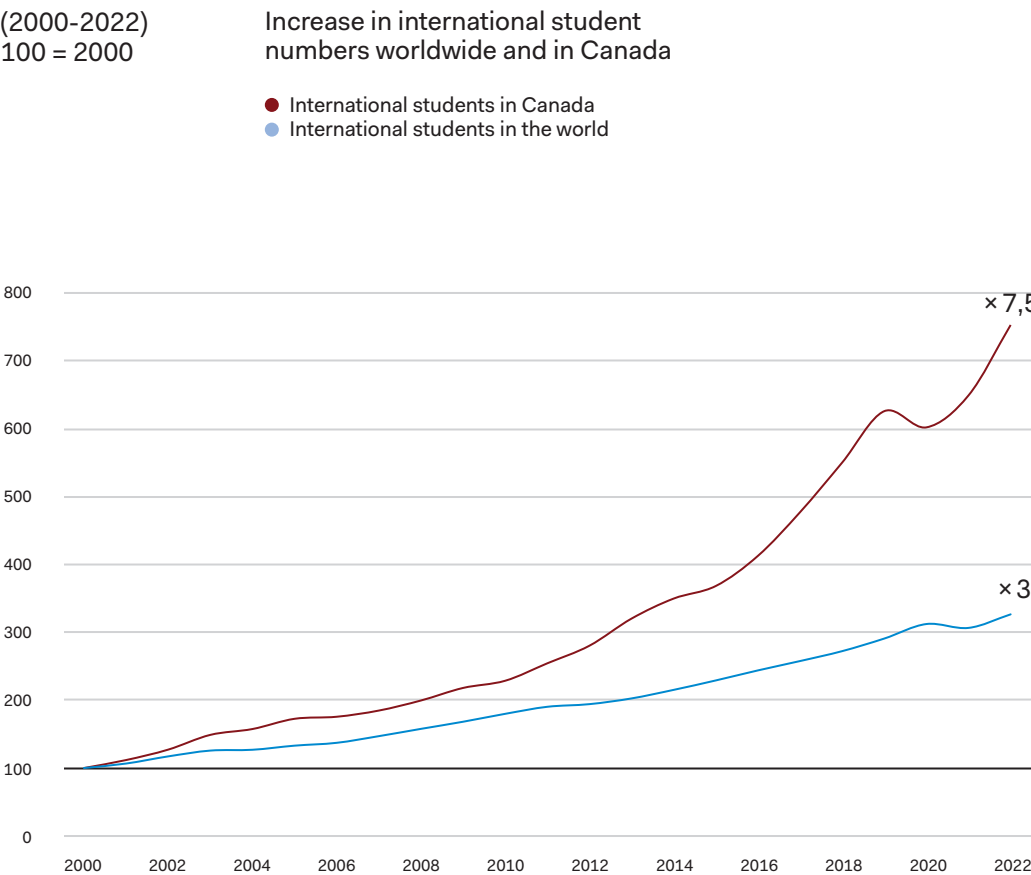
In the case of the United States, the international projection of the country's economic, political, strategic, and cultural interests makes the idea of pursuing a university education there an attractive one.

And last, aside from a high concentration of specialized centres and the English language, these nations also stand out for their robust and innovative economies, which naturally attract students who wish to stay in their host country after graduation.

Their appeal is reinforced by the value placed on higher education, which permeates popular culture and presents university as an almost inescapable gateway to social and professional success.

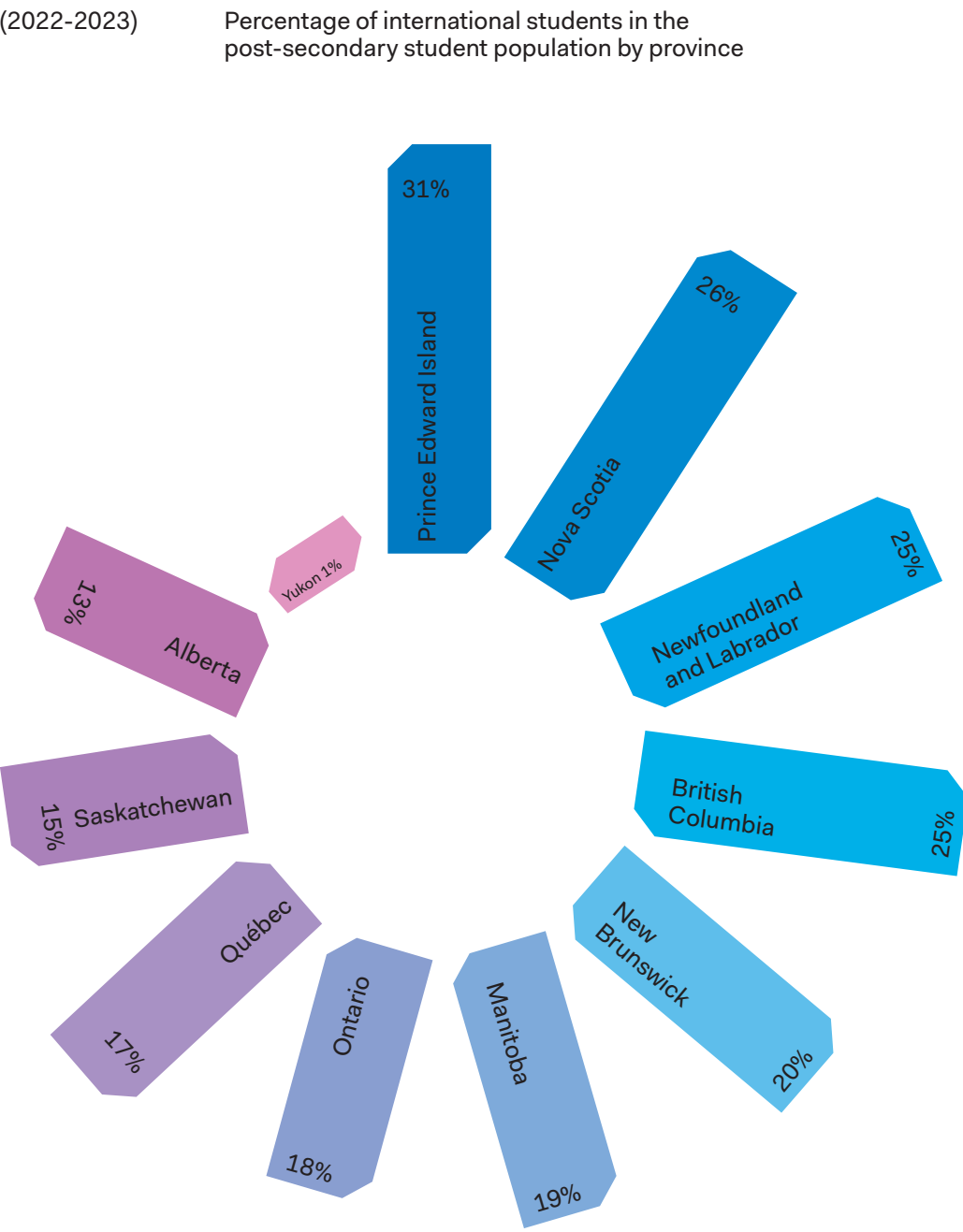
International Enrollments in Canadian Universities

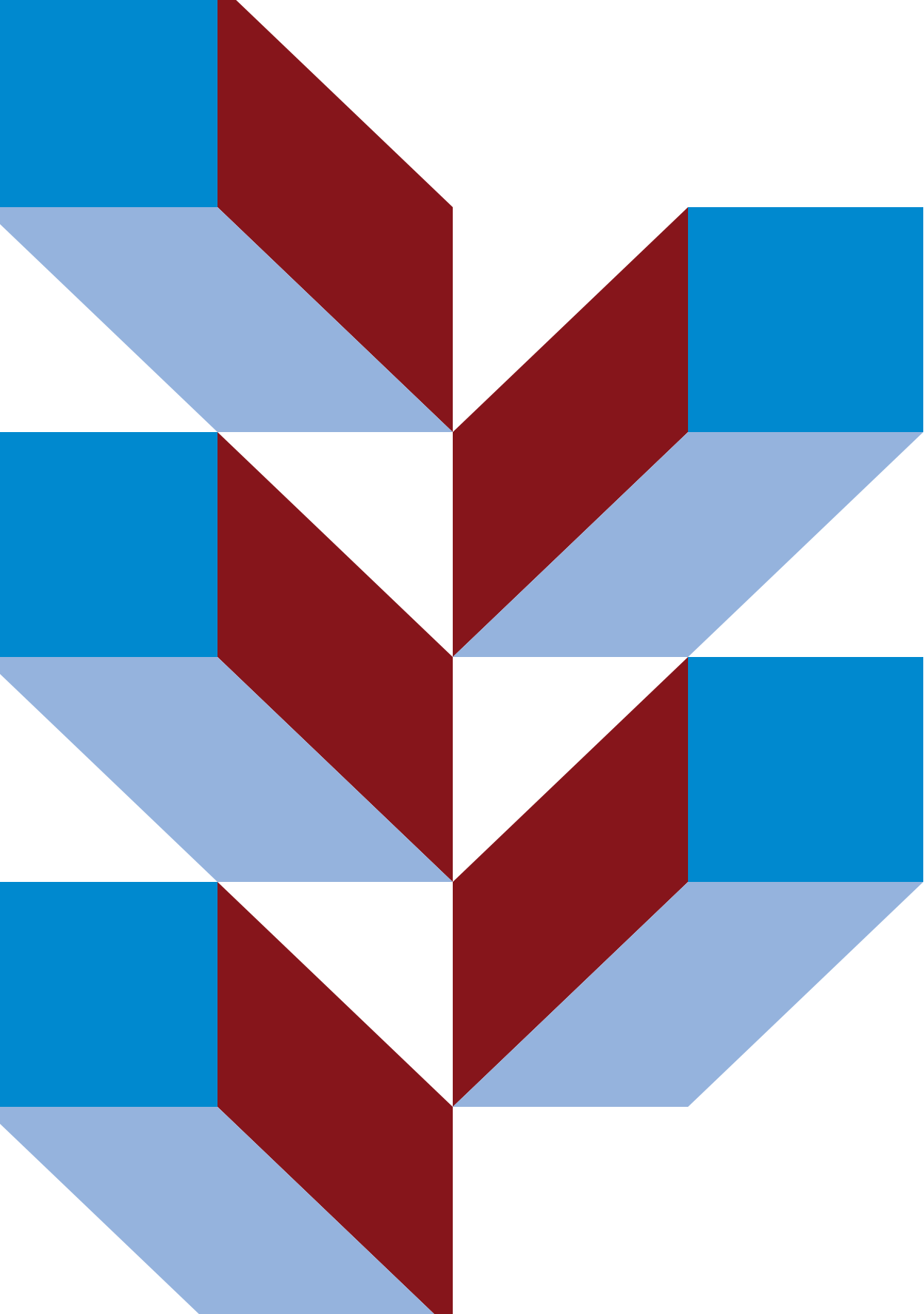
As three quarters of Canada is English-speaking, the country has also benefitted from a rise in its international student population over the last two decades.



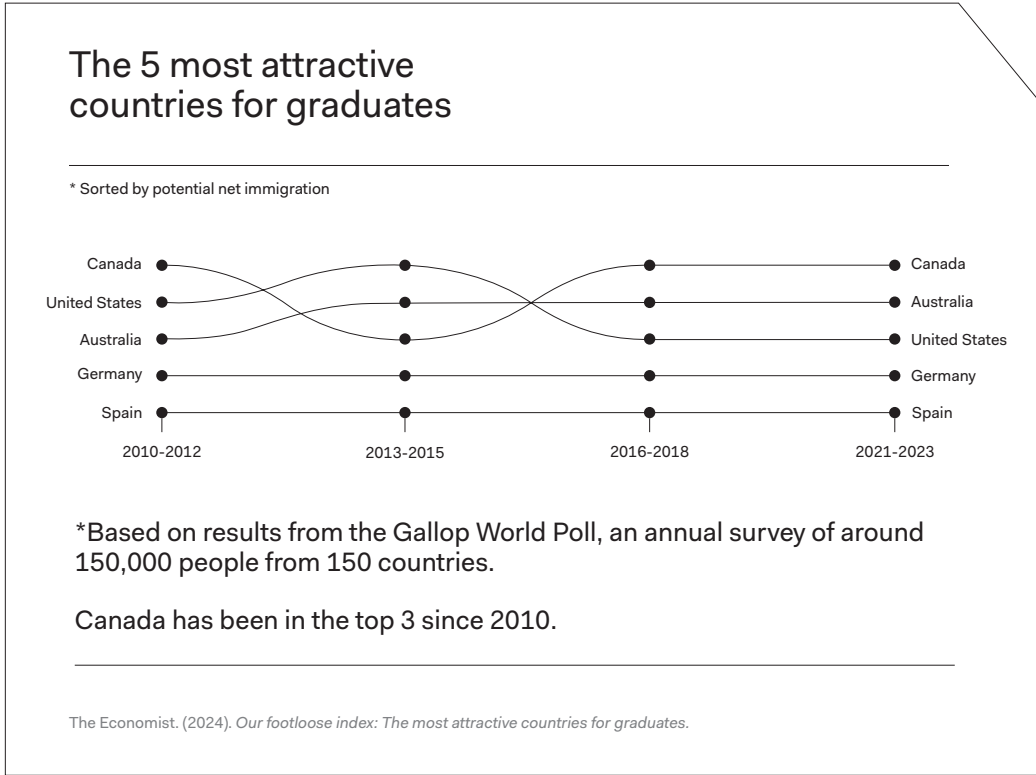
Its least populated provinces, as for example Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia, have the highest relative share of international students in higher education.

In terms of absolute size, however, Ontario is home to the largest international cohort.





An important part of the appeal of Canadian universities stems from the fact that they are considered almost equivalent, sometimes superior, to American universities in terms of quality, but with much lower tuition fees. In addition to being in North America—on the doorstep of the world’s leading economic and cultural power—they are a popular choice because Canada is perceived as a stable and safe society, which is open to immigration.



The Emergence of Student Mobility in Québec

Founded in 1821, six years before the University of Toronto, McGill University is one of the oldest universities in Canada. Modelled on the British university, it is also the first Québec institution to have built a strong international reputation over the course of the twentieth century, making it the hub of student mobility in Canada it is today.

A few years after the founding of what some have called the “Harvard of the North,” Bishop’s University, the second-oldest English university in Québec, opened its doors (1843). Drawing inspiration from American campuses built in small communities, Bishop’s also started accepting large numbers of international students, despite its small size.

Finally, the creation of Loyola College (1896) and Sir George Williams University (1925), which would become Concordia University in 1974, also forged, on a voluntary basis, diverse international ties, notably with Communist China and Caribbean nations.

As for French universities, the student mobility landscape was quite different, i.e. non-existent, until the 1960s. Since the first higher learning institutions were created in the seventeenth century, the Catholic Church exercised strict control over all knowledge and culture institutions.

In 1852, the Catholic Church, through the Séminaire du Québec, obtained a royal charter and officially founded Laval University. The constituting act or act of incorporation gave the seminary the right to confer degrees and all the rights, powers, and privileges of a full university.

In 1878, Laval University opened a second campus in Montréal, which would become the University of Montréal in 1920. However, the number of programs offered there was still quite limited.

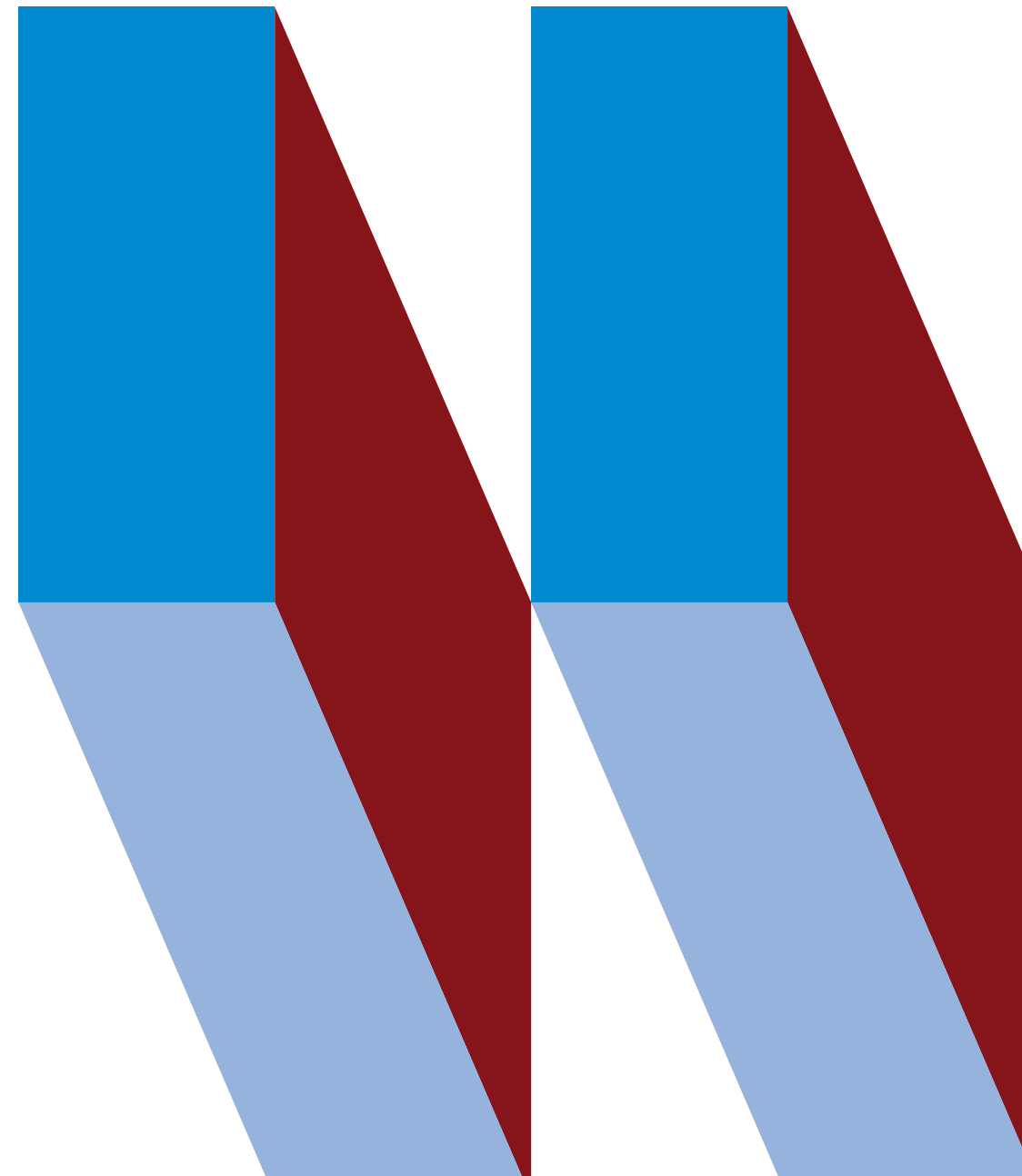
Paradoxically, while Francophone Québec welcomed very few international students, many of Québec’s French-speaking students went to study abroad.

The Carnegie Library

Once known as the city of a hundred steeples, Montréal had more churches than libraries, reflecting a Québec where faith won over knowledge, even trying to control it. At the turn of the twentieth century, Montréal authorities refused a \$500,000 donation by Andrew Carnegie to build a large-scale public library.

Westmount, a predominantly English-speaking city, had a public library since 1892. Montréal would have to wait until 1903 for a technical library, intended to train the workforce.

Lavoie, A. (2019). *In the heart of Montreal, A cathedral of knowledge*. Goethe-Institute.
Radio-Canada. (2019). *Les bibliothèques à Montréal, une histoire « riche et un peu désespérante »*.



Educational trends in Québec

These academic exchanges shaped a new, better-educated Québec elite, often with degrees from leading American or European universities. Specialized in economics, engineering, constitutional law, or the social sciences, these experts played a key role in modernizing Québec, notably by advising the Lesage government during the Quiet Revolution.



Jacques Parizeau's University Studies

- **HEC Montréal**
Bachelor of Commerce, 1950
- **Institut d'études politiques de Paris**
Diploma completed in 1953,
with a specialization in political economy
- **Faculté de droit de Paris**
Advanced Graduate Degree (DES)
in Economics, 1953.
- **London School of Economics**
PhD in Economics, 1955, thus becoming
the first premier of Québec to hold
such a degree from the LES

Fabula. (2017). *Le moment américain des universitaires québécois : appropriations, transferts et réseaux (1930-1960)*.

It was only at the beginning of the Quiet Revolution, following the recommendations of the Parent Report (1963-1966), that a secular, primarily public higher education structure emerged, organized into three cycles and offering a wide range of disciplines and research activities. This French-language higher education system began opening up to the world.

General and vocational colleges (CEGEPs) first began opening their doors in 1967 and the law creating the University of Québec network was passed at the end of 1968, leading to the founding of the

university's first three institutions in 1969 (Montréal, Trois-Rivières, and Chicoutimi). The various universities in Québec set up a wide range of graduate programs.

Scholarships for international students or to study abroad contributed to breaking the isolation of Québec universities. Universities also looked to establish inter-university agreements and recruit faculty from other countries when there was a shortage of specialists in Québec. Thus, during the 1960s, Québec's educational institutions began the process of internationalization.

Overview of International Enrollments in Québec Universities

Québec’s higher education system includes all post-secondary programs and institutions and is divided into two levels: college (pre-university) and university. The Government of Québec recognizes 48 CEGEPs and 18 universities, as well as several national institutes, conservatories, and vocational or technological institutes.

Spread across all administrative regions of the province, these public and private institutions offer instruction in French, except for six English-language CEGEPs and three English-language universities.

(2025)
Québec*

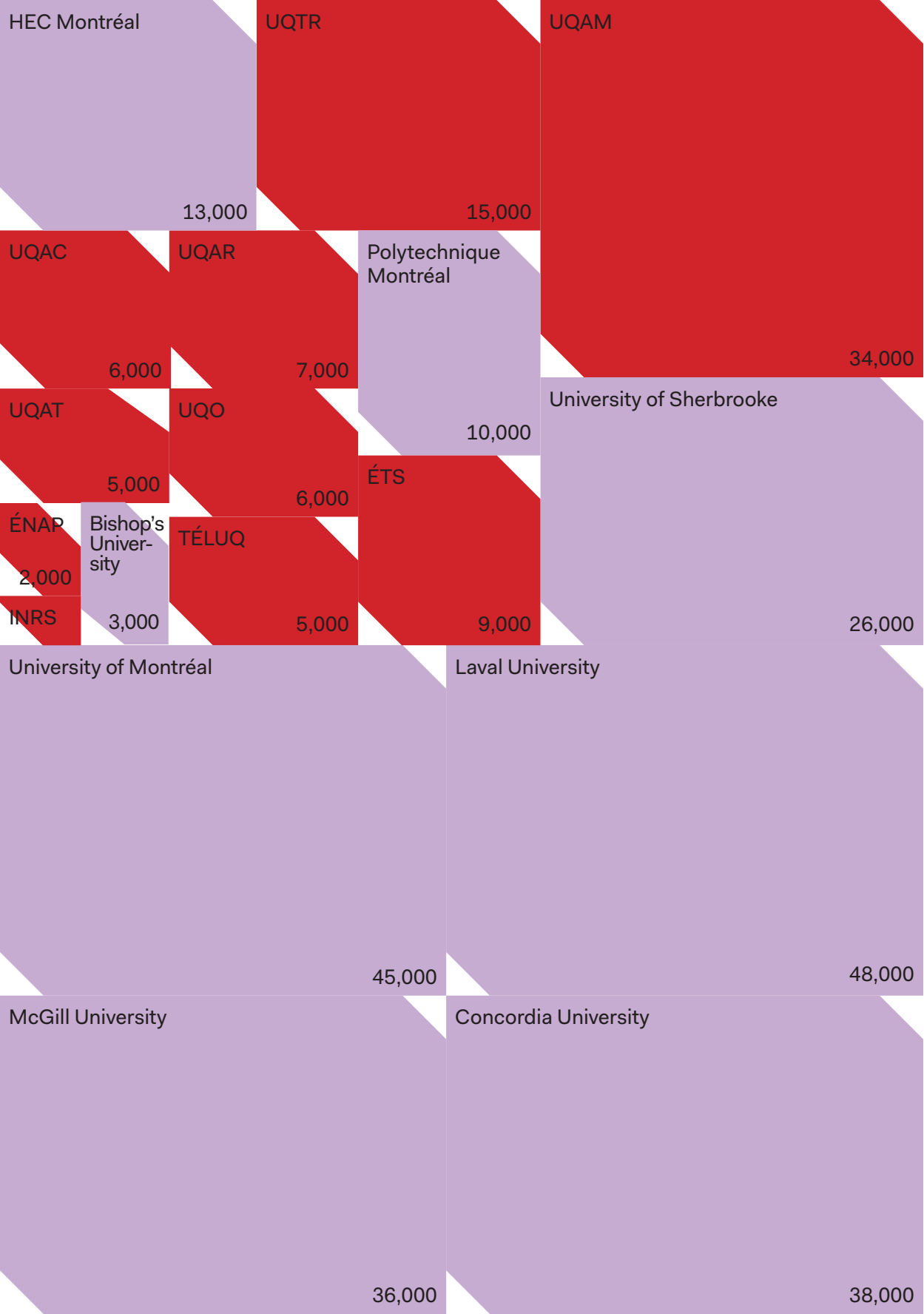
Distribution of post-secondary institutions by administrative region

* Québec also has one online CEGEP and one online university.



● CEGEPS ● Private institutions ● Universities

1. Abitibi-Témiscamingue 2. Centre-du-Québec 3. Chaudière-Appalaches
4. Laurentides 5. Côte-Nord 6. Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine



← Fall 2023 enrollments

Québec universities by size of student body and by type of university

- Charter universities
- University of Québec network

The eighteen universities in Québec, which welcome more than three hundred thousand students per year in their twenty-nine campuses, are subject to the same laws and government policies. They all perform the same functions: to offer three cycles of higher education (bachelor's degree, master's degree, and doctoral degree), to engage in research and creation, to transfer knowledge, and to provide services to the community.

However, universities have a mixed legal status. Ten of them—those in the University of Québec network—are public universities: They exist by virtue of a general act of the National Assembly, supplemented by a government decree establishing each institution. The others, often referred to as “chartered universities,” were founded by private groups (or by the National Assembly, at the request of private groups).

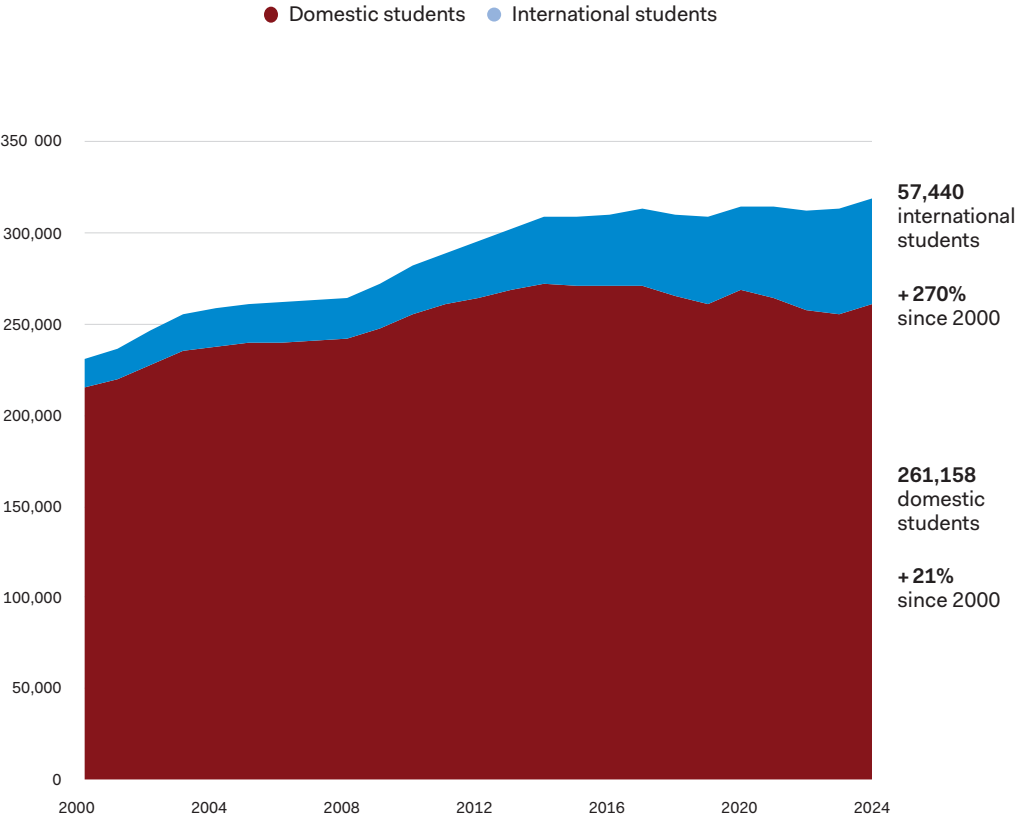
In 2024-2025, close to one person in five (18 percent) studying at the university level was not from Canada.

McGill University boasts a student body made up of 150 different nations, while 20 percent of Bishop's student body is made up of international students.

All universities have internationalized and today welcome large numbers of students from abroad. Some of the province's regional cities, such as Saguenay, Sherbrooke, and Trois-Rivières, have the highest relative share of international students in their general population.

(2000-2024)
Québec

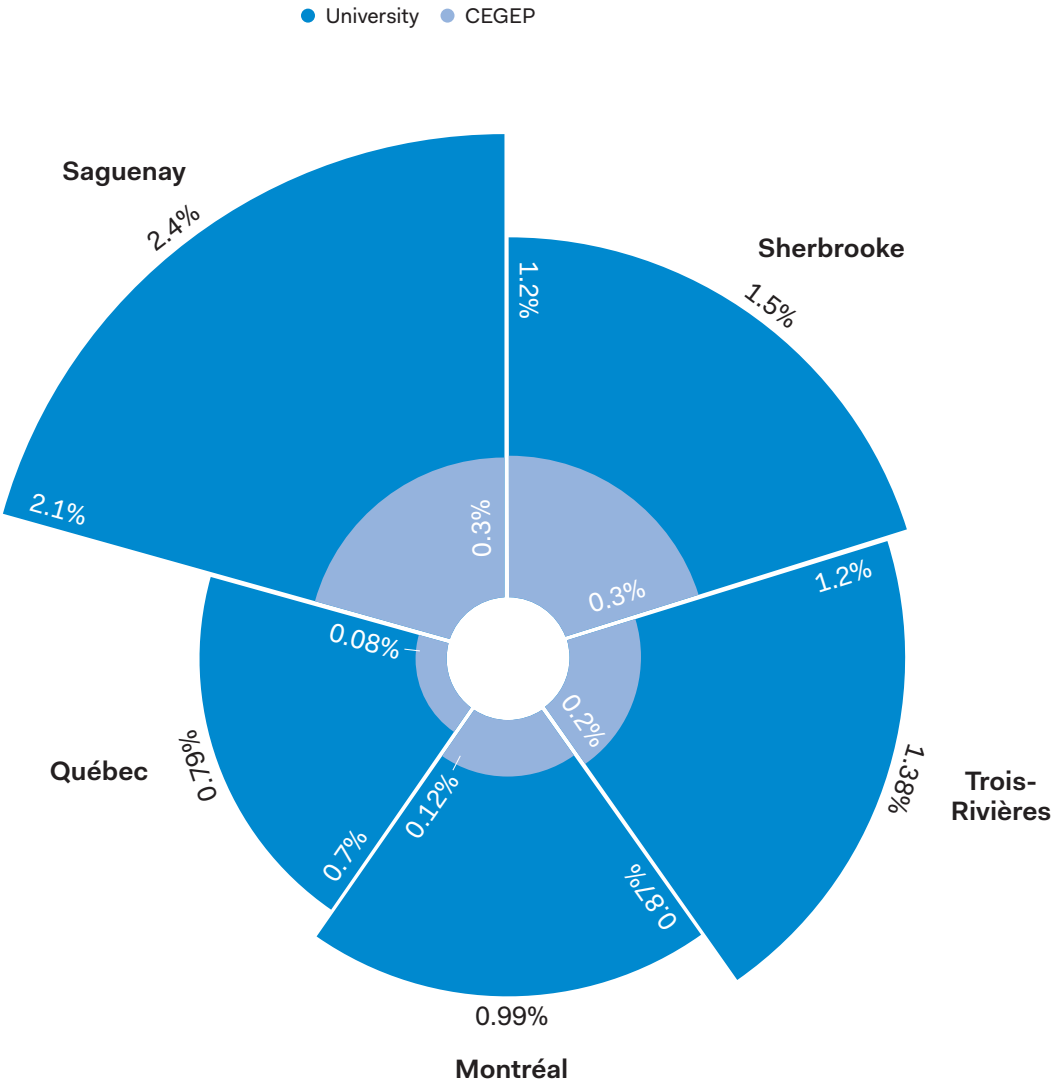
Number of students enrolled in university in the fall 2023 semester by student status



The percentage of international students in all university enrollments has risen from 7 percent in 2000 to 18 percent in 2024.

(2022-2023)

Percentage of international students in the population of the census metropolitan area

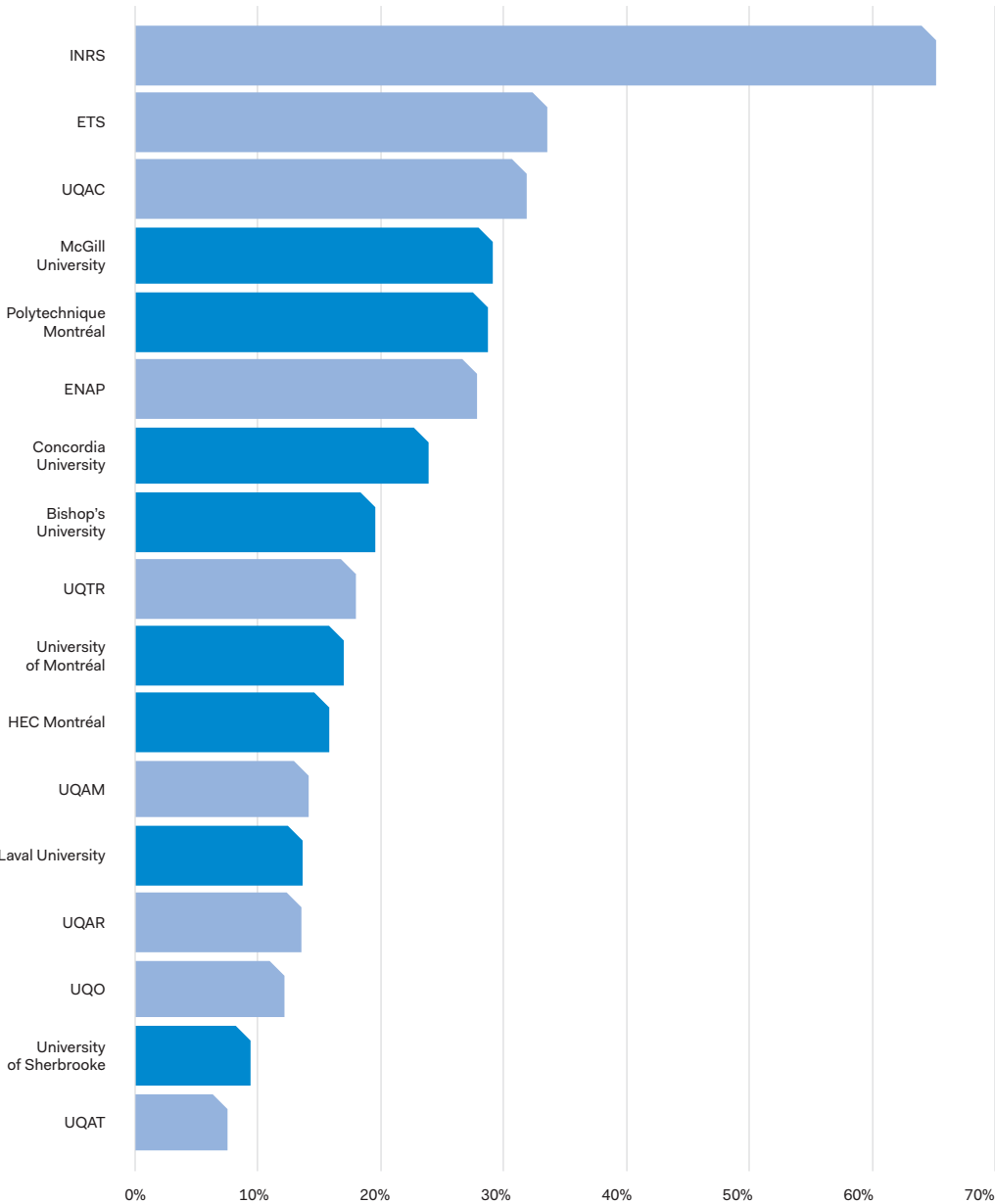


Over the last sixty years, French universities in Québec, which were lagging in terms of international student admissions compared to other countries around the world, have caught up to their English counterparts.

(2023-2024)

Pourcentage of international students in each university

- Charter universities
- University member of the Université du Québec network



In fact, the three Québec universities with the largest percentage of international students in their student body—the Institut national de la recherche scientifique, the University of Québec at Chicoutimi, and the École de technologie supérieure—are all Francophone institutions.

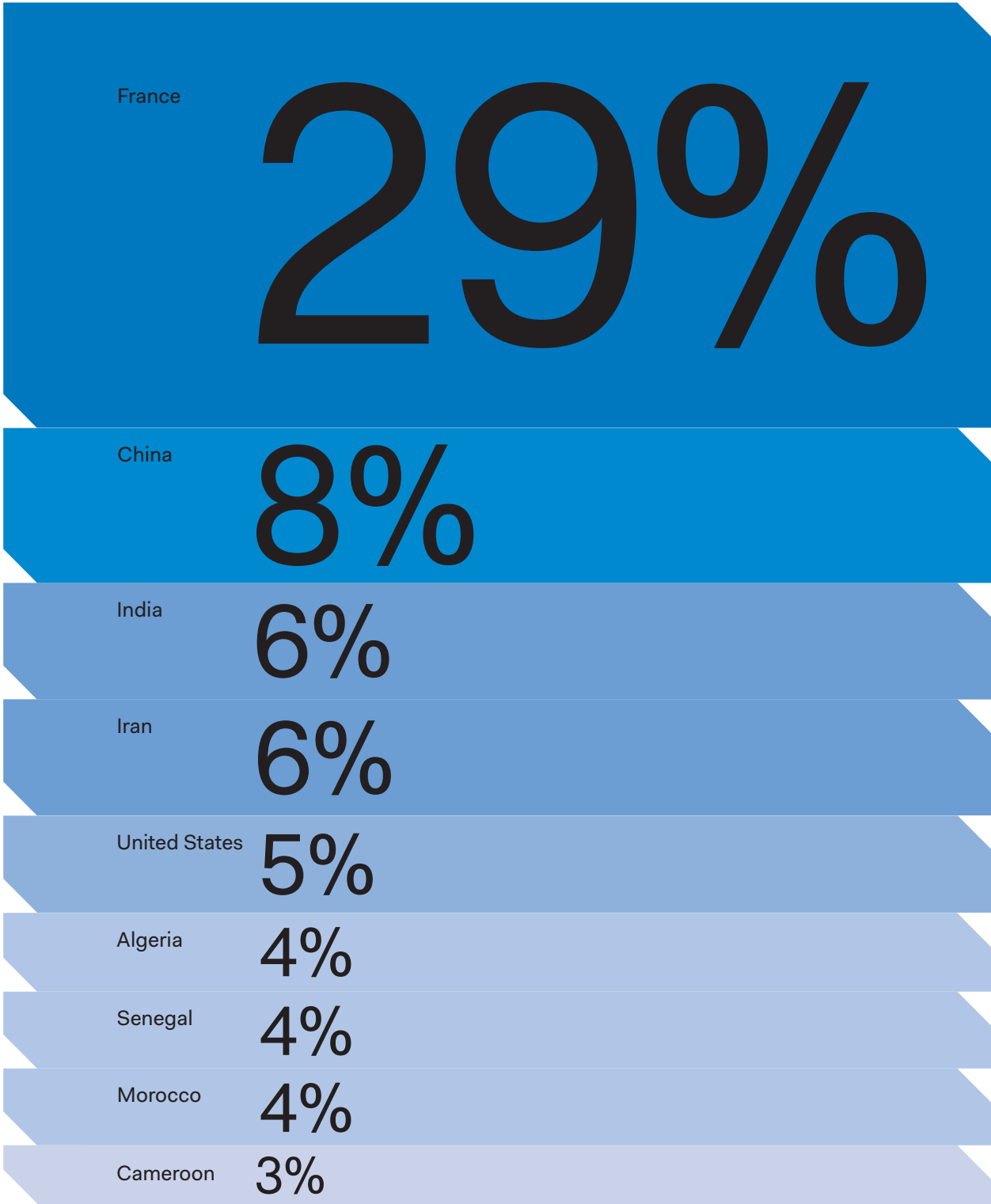
In addition to benefitting from the world’s positive perception of English-language universities, today, universities in Québec are coveted by students from France and other French-speaking countries.

Other Québec educational institutions (such as the Royal Military College Saint-Jean, the Institut de tourisme et d’hôtellerie du Québec, the Conservatoire de musique et d’art dramatique du Québec, and the Institut de formation théologique de Montréal) are also authorized to offer university-level programs and degrees.

(2023-2024)
Québec

Top 12 nationalities of international students
enrolled in universities in the fall semester

Other countries (34%)



International students come to Québec through a variety of channels, reflecting the diversity of their educational journeys and mobility strategies. Some enter through student exchange programs governed by inter-university agreements, which enable them to spend a few semesters in Québec without leaving their home institution.

Others opt for dual-diploma programs, which award both a Québec diploma and one from their home university, boosting their employability and international recognition.

Last, most students choose to enroll in a regular bachelor's, master's, or doctoral program to earn a Québec university degree.

As much on the French as on the English side, Québec universities act as a port of entry for a large international student population. They build bridges with their counterparts in other countries by developing joint study programs, research partnerships, dual-diploma programs, and exchange projects.

1

Case study

International Mobility at HEC Montréal

Thanks to various university partnerships, HEC Montréal welcomes a large international student body. The school offers many dual-diploma programs with eight renowned institutions: the University of Melbourne, the SDA Bocconi School of Management in Italy, the Norwegian School of Economics, the Université libre de Bruxelles, and various other major French institutions such as the EDHEC Business School.

HEC Montréal also has numerous student exchange agreements in place, giving students from around the world the opportunity to study temporarily in Québec.

Most international students at HEC Montréal (about 75 percent) are enrolled in regular bachelor's, master's, or doctoral programs. This is a common trend in all Québec universities.

The Impact of International Admissions



The Impact on Universities |

Quality and reputation are the top reasons why Québec universities admit international students.

First, the presence of international students considerably enriches the learning environment. With different cultural and professional backgrounds, these students promote open-mindedness and bring a diversity of perspectives to the issues raised in class.

Their interactions with local students are mutually beneficial: in addition to strengthening their communication and listening skills, they help build professional networks that will support their future careers.

“It’s a priceless opportunity for young Quebecers to spend time with students from all over the world during their university studies. Whether they stay in Québec or not, these exchanges provide them with a valuable sense of openness to the world and an international network that will shape their future.”

Frantz Saintellemy (Our translation)
Chancellor, University of Montréal

International students' contribution to the social and cultural enrichment of the university learning environment



Networking and impact on careers

Promotes future collaborations and professional opportunities in a globalized world

Cultural exchanges and open-mindedness

Fosters diversity and intercultural understanding. Enriches the academic and social environment through cultural interactions and events

Academic enrichment and innovation

Improves critical thinking skills, cognitive flexibility, and complex problem-solving

Development of intercultural skills

Develops empathy and the ability to work with different communication styles

Appeal and promotion of institutions

Reinforces institutions' reputation and increases diversity on their campuses and their appeal as global players in education

Intercultural Dynamics in Institutions of Higher Learning: The École nationale de danse contemporaine de Montréal

At the national contemporary dance school in Montréal, 35 percent of students are from abroad, mainly France, where dance is taught at a young age at the conservatory. The presence of these international students stimulates cultural emulation and the artistic enrichment of the school's cohorts.

They expose their peers to new approaches that stem from the sharing of techniques acquired in their home country,

enhancing the technical dimension of the training. In return, their Québec classmates stand out for their creativity and artistic expression, giving them a different perspective on interpretation and body movement.

This complementarity between technique and expression nurtures a dynamic learning environment and better prepares artists to grow on the world stage.

“Admitting international students means confronting other realities. And that’s how you break down preconceived ideas.” (Our translation)

Claude Corbo

Former Rector, University
of Québec at Montréal (UQAM)

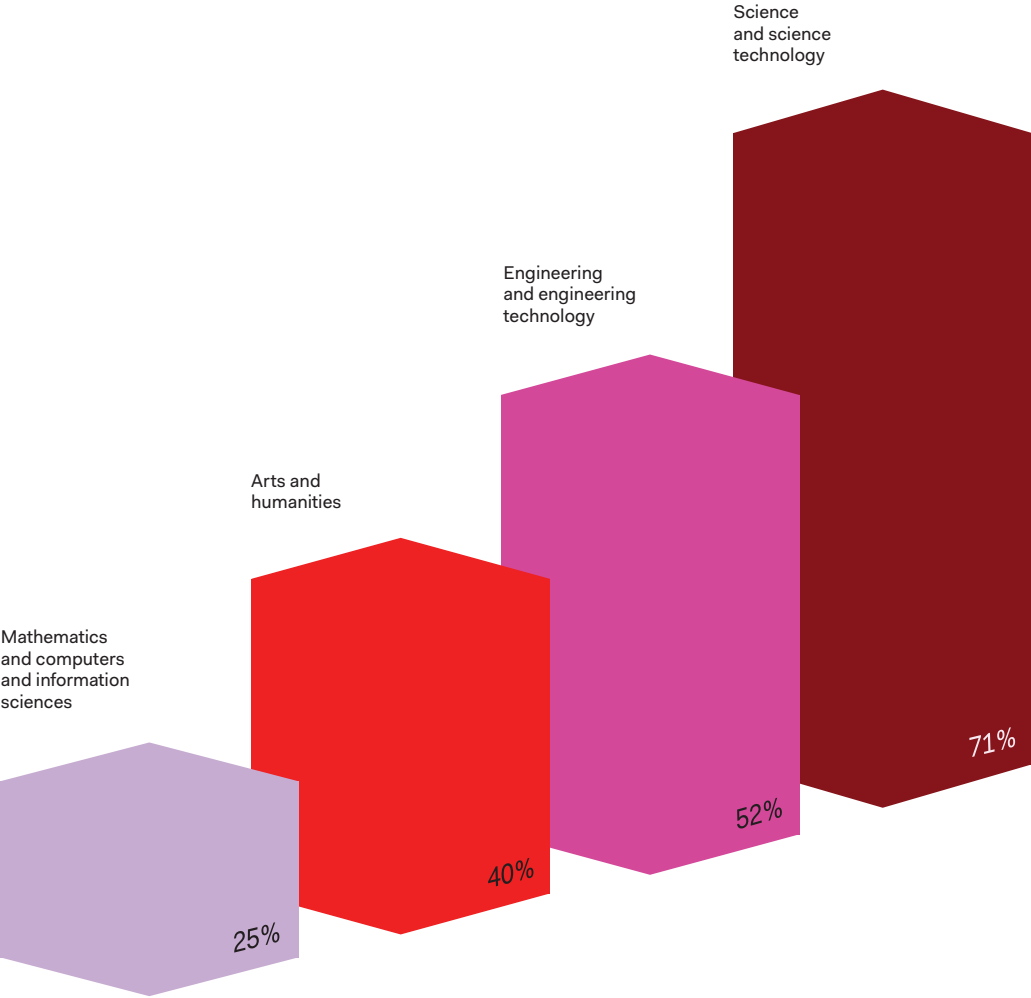
Second, international students are essential if post-secondary institutions are to continue offering a wide range of programs and courses that meet the different expectations of their students and contribute to advances in world knowledge.

In fact, many institutions rely on these international cohorts to meet critical enrollment thresholds, allowing them to maintain a rich and diverse academic programming.

Without these cohorts, Québec's university network would be forced to start an optimization process of—or start making cuts to—its entire programming. Such an exercise, while useful in many ways, would come at a cost, namely a decrease in the number of courses offered and the cut of less popular programs, a phenomenon that would play out in varying degrees throughout Québec's universities.

This could also reduce access to higher education in Québec's outlying areas, forcing students to move to larger cities and thus weakening the economic and social dynamism of smaller cities and towns.

(2022-2023) Percentage of international students enrolled at the University of Québec at Abitibi-Témiscamingue by program



At UQAT, more than 70 percent of students enrolled in science and technology are international students. A drop in this number could compromise the diversity of programs offered in this field.

3

Case study

CEGEPs and Universities:
A Similar Reality

A study conducted by the Fédération des cégeps on the impact of international students in Québec's public CEGEPs revealed their crucial role in ensuring program sustainability. In fact, 74 percent of CEGEPs stated that the presence of international students allows them to continue offering programs threatened by low enrollments.

Without the international student community, twenty-eight programs would have been considered as struggling in 2019-2020, running the risk of being suspended or cut because of insufficient enrollments. Among these programs,

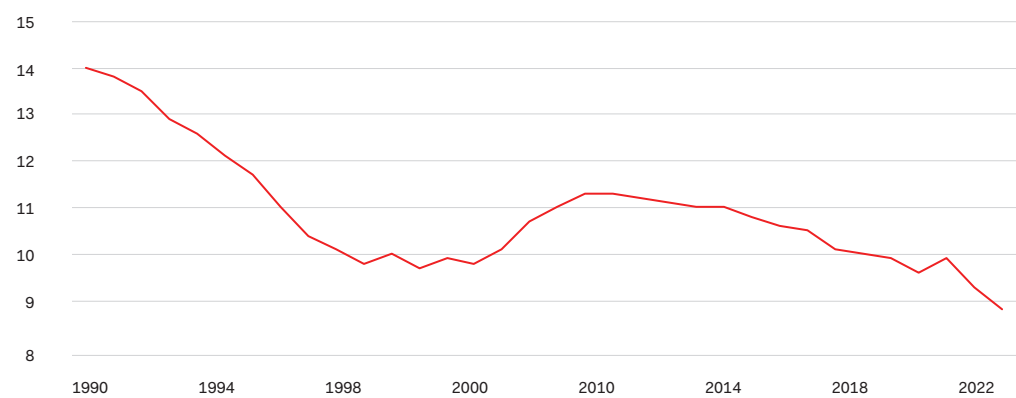
twenty-one are offered in schools outside of Montréal or Québec City, emphasizing the importance of international admissions for the viability of CEGEPs in regional communities.

The contribution of international students is particularly critical for technical programs, which are more vulnerable to fluctuating enrollment numbers: 84 percent of international students are enrolled in these programs, specifically business administration, computer science, accounting and management, nursing, and tourism.

The enrollment issue is particularly critical in a context where the Canadian-born student population has been stagnating for over a decade.

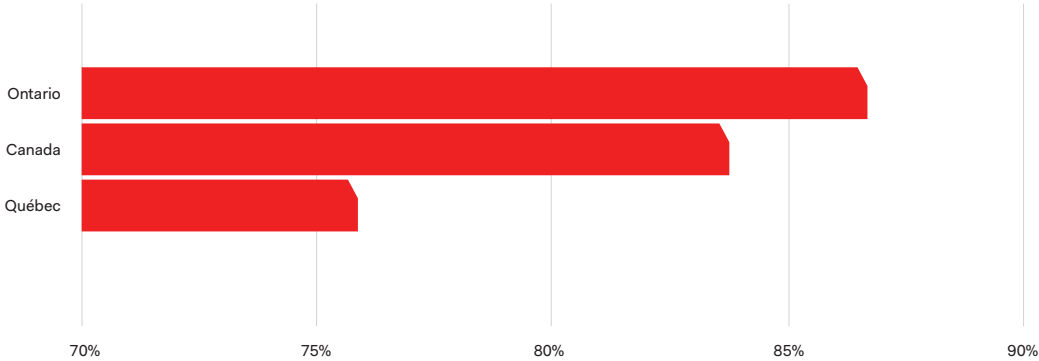
In Québec, there is an outright stagnation, if not a decline, in domestic enrollments in certain regions. This is due to a falling birth rate as well as student retention challenges at the high school level and a certain loss of interest in higher education. It is thanks to international students that universities have been able to compensate for this decline and maintain a wide range of programs and courses.

(a) Birth rate in Québec, per 1,000 inhabitants (1990 to 2023)



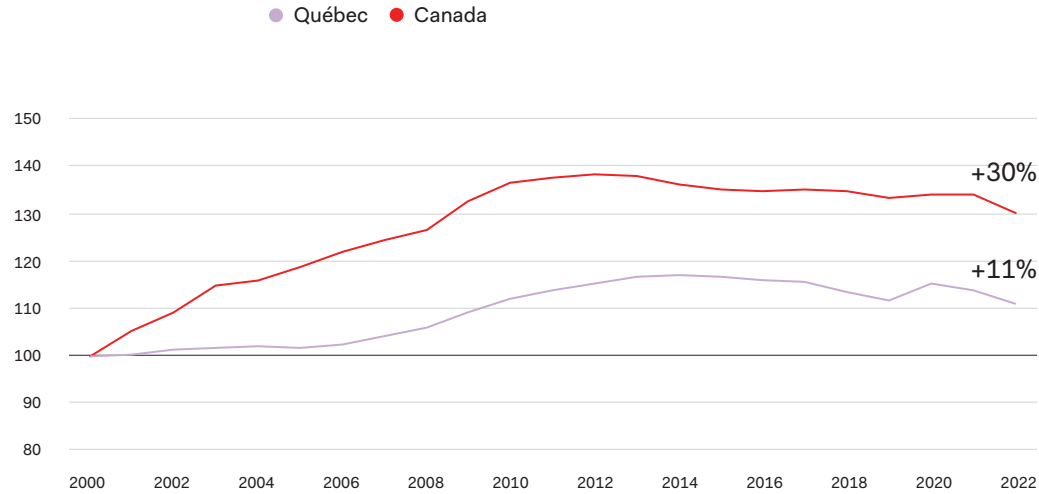
a. Statistics Canada, Table: 17-10-0005-01.

(b) High school graduation rates (2021-2022, Canada, Québec, Ontario)



The declining birth rate and the lower high school graduation rate have resulted in stagnating student enrollments in higher education.

(c) Student enrollment trends in post-secondary institutions (Fall 2000-2022, Canada and Québec, 100 = 2000)



b. Statistics Canada, Table: 37-10-0221-01.
c. Statistics Canada, Table: 37-10-0018-01.

Declining Enrollment of Québec Students at the University of Québec at Montréal (UQAM)

Domestic enrollment ↓ 21%
International enrollment ↑ 32%

From 2017 to 2023, UQAM's student population decreased by 16.8 percent, representing 6,700 fewer students, a decline that can be explained by a 21 percent drop in domestic (Québec) enrollments. During the same period, international enrollments have increased by 32 percent, representing an additional 1,000 students.

In 2024, recruitment initiatives reversed this trend, reaching a 3 percent growth in full-time equivalent numbers of students compared to 2023.

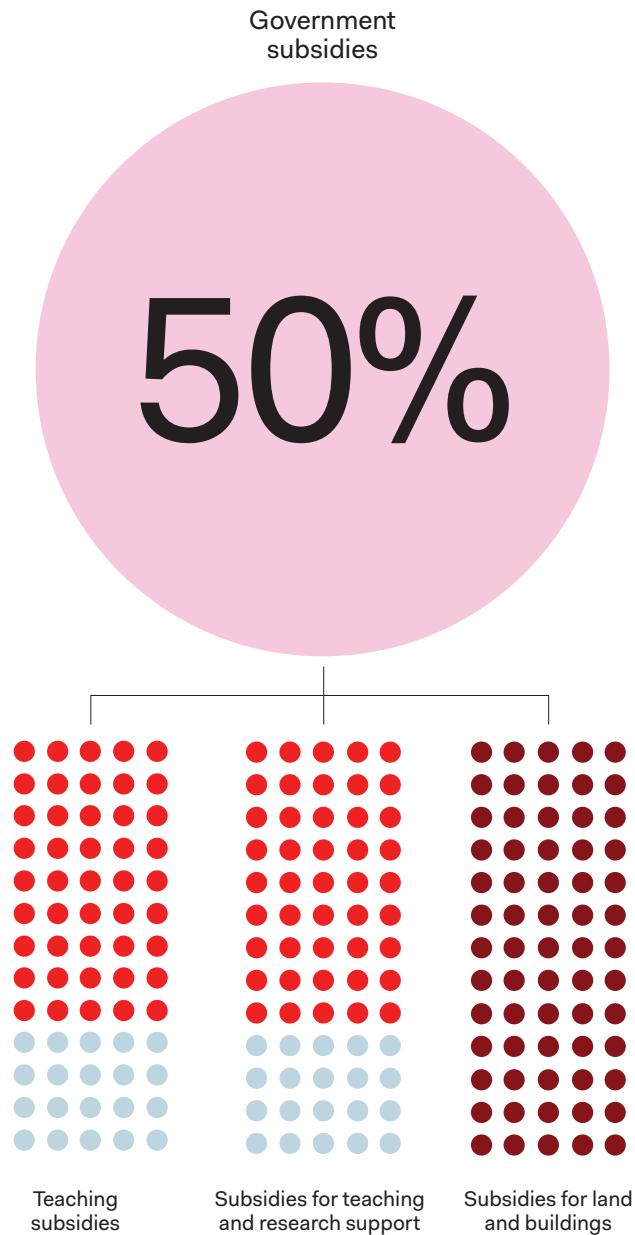
Third, universities recruit students from outside Canada because of their funding model, which is based on balancing fixed expenses and variable revenues.

In fact, around 85 percent of their expenses are tied to staff salaries, and therefore governed by long-term contracts that are difficult to compress in the short-term.

University revenues come from government funding (50 to 60 percent), tuition fees (10 to 15 percent), and other sources. They are closely linked to university enrollment, which is the main variable used to calculate the government's contribution.

Québec's university funding model is based on four funding sources and depends primarily on the number of students.

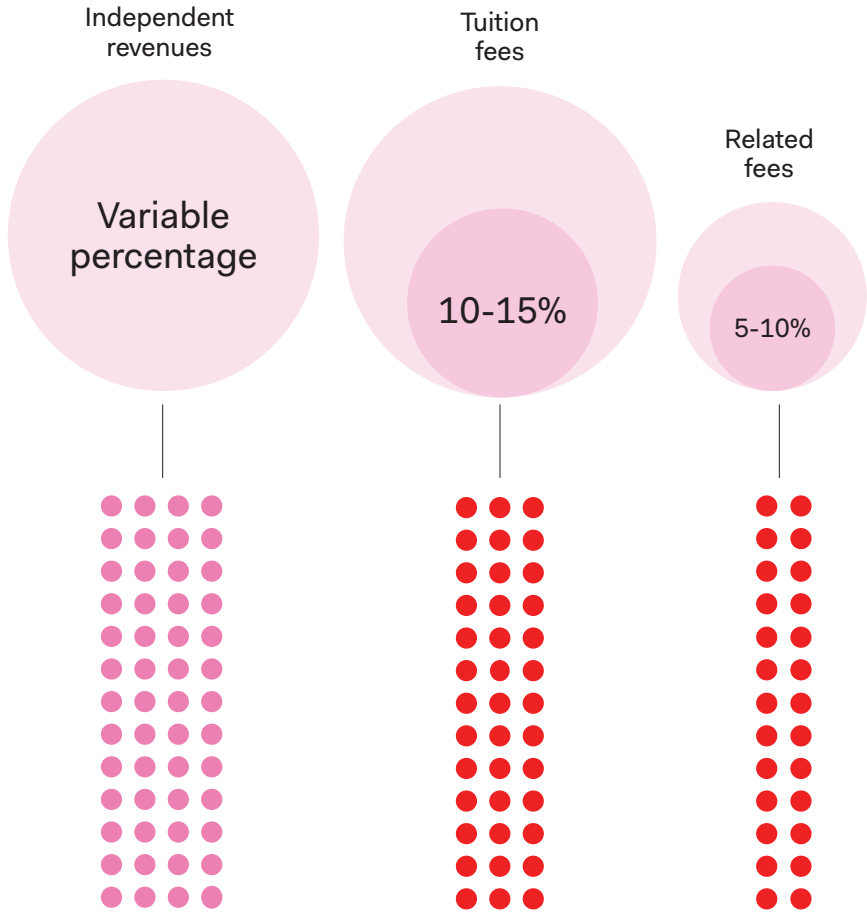
While revenue source proportions vary, the funding model remains the same for charter universities and universities in the UQ network.



Factors determining the level of funding and their total weight in the funding calculation

- Number of students
- Maintenance (buildings, security, land, etc.)
- Volume and/or type of activity
- Other

The number of students enrolled determines about 50 percent of university funding. It directly influences the amount of government subsidies and other revenue sources, such as space and maintenance requirements, activity levels, and related fees.



In a context where the domestic pool of students is stagnating and where neither tuition fees nor government funding compensate for the increase in university expenses, the funding of Québec universities, particularly when compared to those in other Canadian provinces, remains a major structural issue.

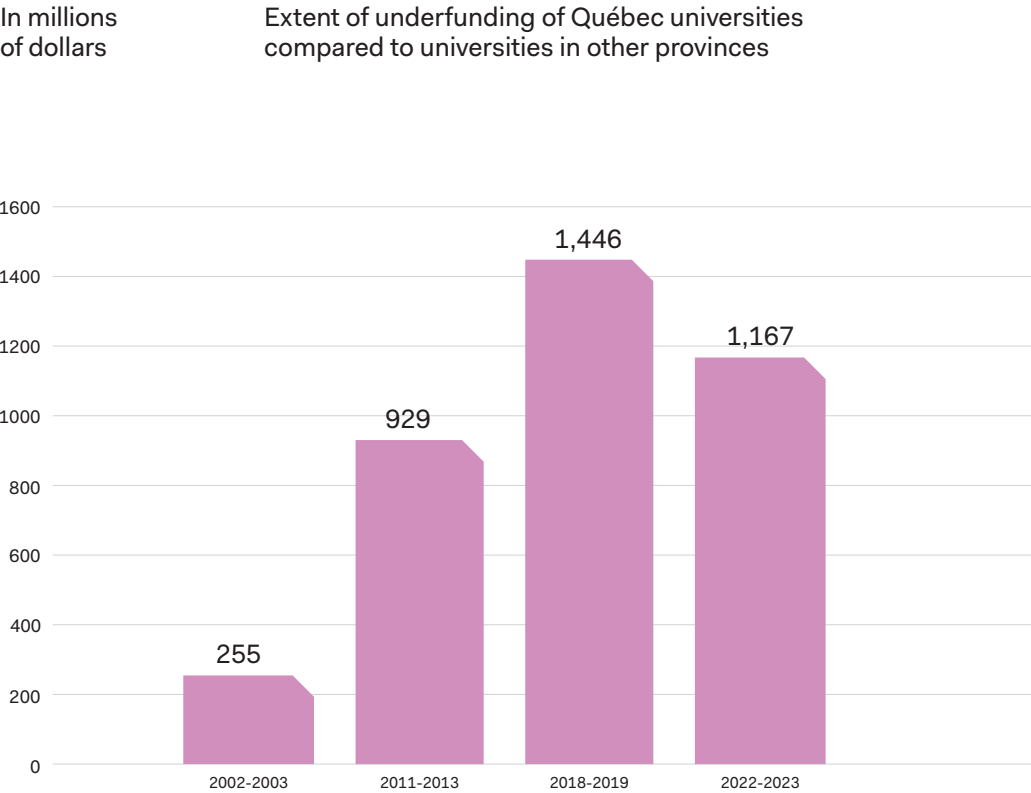
Considering regional specificities and differences in student composition— notably a higher proportion of graduate and part-time students in Québec—net operating resources per capita remain considerably lower than in universities outside of Québec.

This funding gap has widened over the past decades, with a low point in 2018-2019, followed by a slight upturn. This upturn, however, has not been enough to close the gap and ensure equitable funding.

The growing budgetary pressure is forcing Québec institutions to turn to alternative sources of revenue, namely international tuition fees, with international

students now playing a key role in the financial stability of the province's university network.

In fall 2019, the province deregulated tuition fees for most international students enrolled in Québec universities, thus allowing each institution to set its own international fees. In exchange, these institutions lost the operating subsidies they used to receive.



An investment of \$1 billion per year in Québec universities would be needed for them to reach the level of funding of Canadian universities.

(2024-2025)
In thousands of dollars

Estimated annual tuition fees for a full-time student at the University of Québec at Montréal

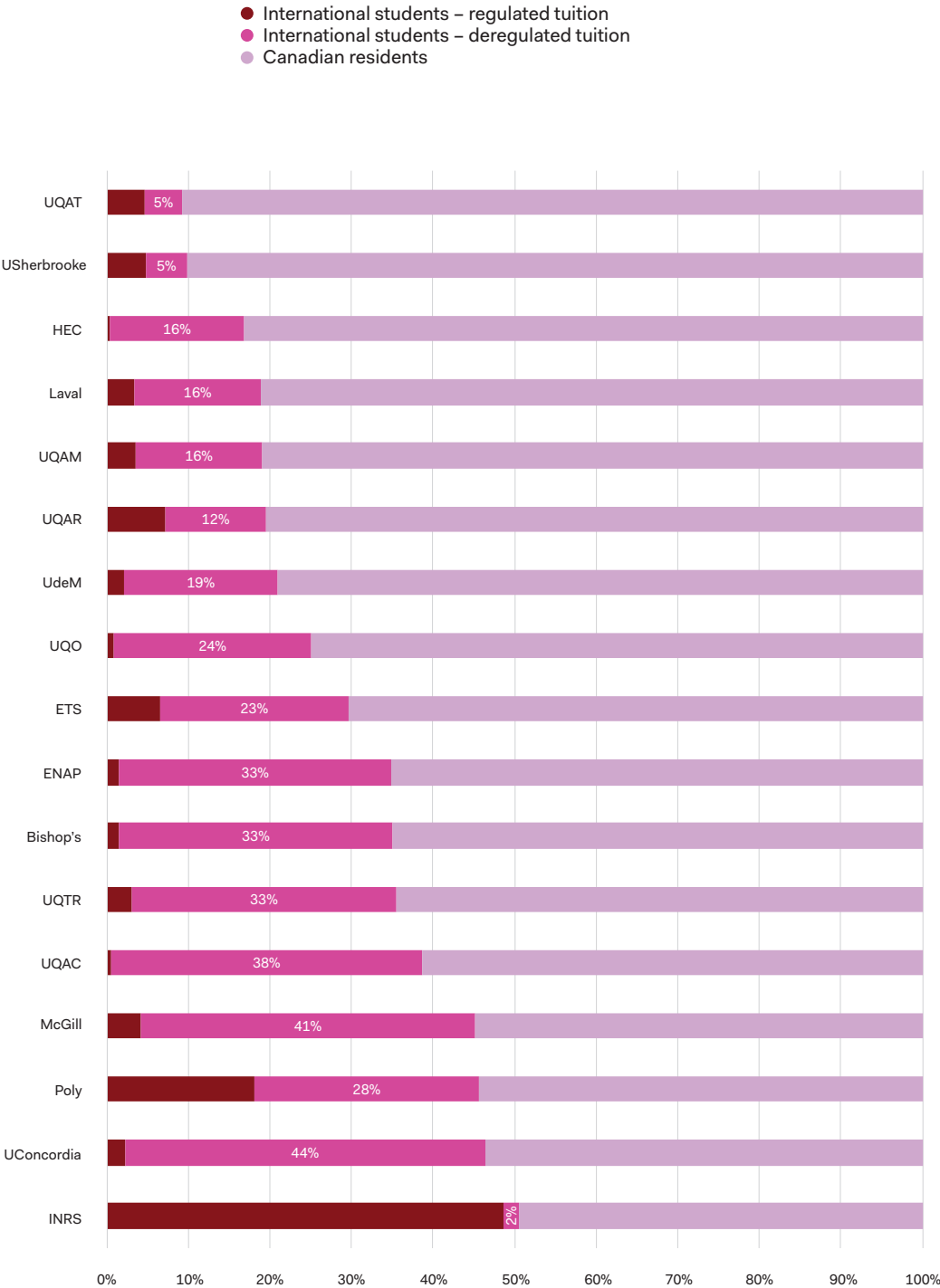
Program	Québec students	Out-of-province students	French or Belgian students	International students
Bachelor's level	3	10	10	25
Non-thesis – Master's level	3	8	3	18
Thesis – Master's level	4	11	4	23
Doctoral level	4	4	4	4

There are exceptions to this deregulation, notably for thesis-based master's programs and doctoral degrees, as well as for certain countries benefitting from reciprocal agreements, such as France and Belgium. In these cases, tuition fees are determined based on those charged to Canadian students at the undergraduate level and those charged to Québec students at the graduate level.

This situation creates the illusion of a bias: French universities, coveted by French-speaking students, earn less revenue than English universities. Additionally, at the international level, English universities have a larger recruitment pool, allowing them to charge higher tuition fees, which only accentuates the financial gap.

Regulated international tuition fees are set by the government, such as the fees for students from France or for doctoral students. Deregulated tuition fees are set by the institutions themselves.

(2022-2023) Revenues from students, by category and university



5

Case study

The Rapid Rise of International Students in Private Colleges

In 2022, 36 percent of the student body in private colleges in Québec was made up of international students, up to 65 percent in the case of unsubsidized colleges. Over the past ten years, the number of international students has been on the rise, with a sharp increase from 2017 to 2021. Foreign enrollments in unsubsidized private colleges have increased ninefold.

Several private colleges lure international students with the promise of obtaining the much-coveted post-graduation work permit. However, the Canadian and Québec governments recently restricted access to this permit, which should slow down this rapid growth.

6

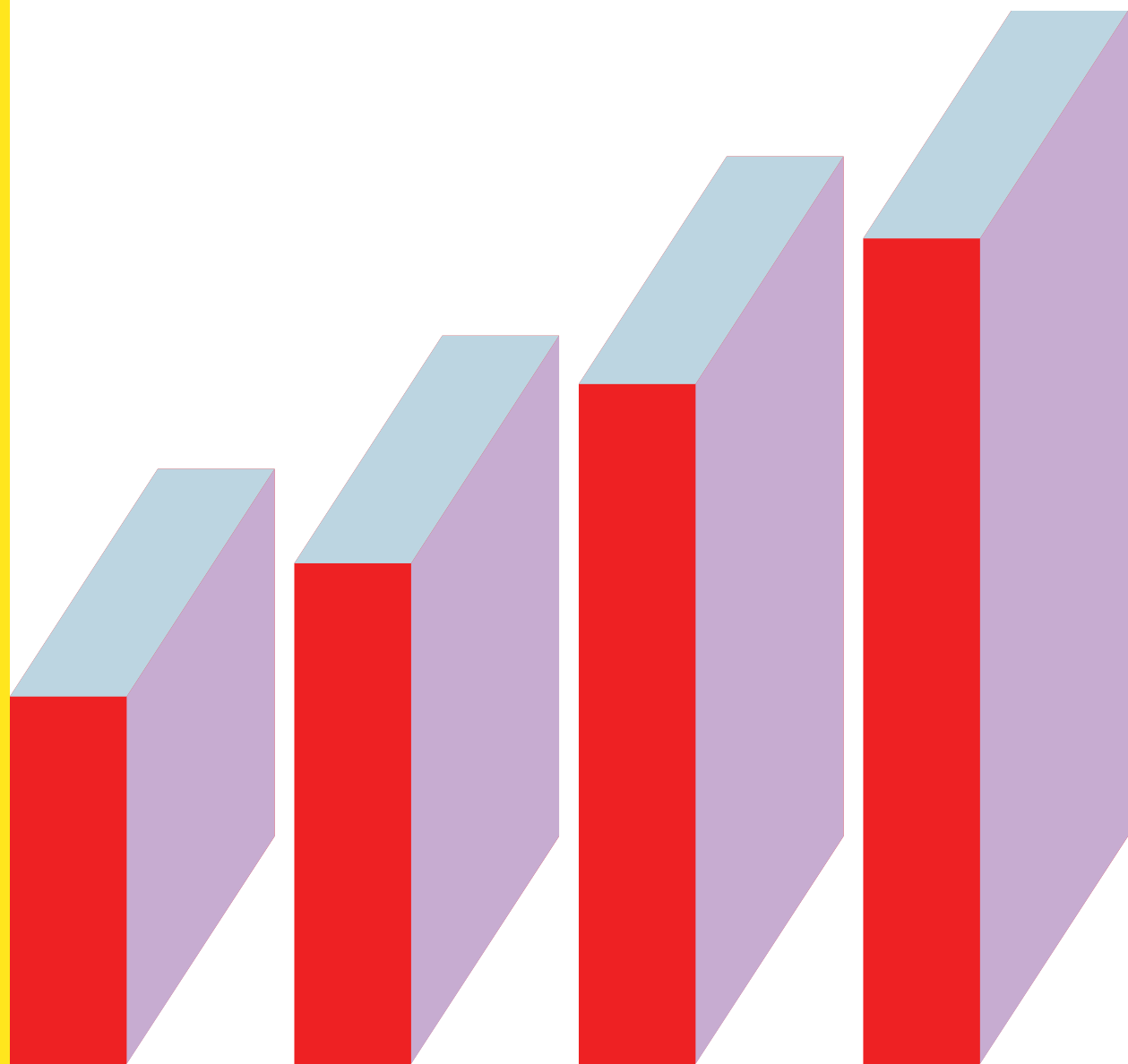
Case study

International “Ghost” Students

In Québec’s higher learning institutions, “ghost” students are students who are enrolled in classes but never attend, sometimes for several consecutive semesters. This situation presents challenges for universities, specifically for course planning, student number management, and resource organization and allocation.

This could in part be caused by the long wait times to obtain a visa or study permit, but a more in-depth study is needed.

In 2024, the Government of Québec sought to correct this disparity by modifying its funding model. A portion of international tuition fees is now recovered and redistributed among universities, on an equalization basis.



Research and Teaching: A Particularity of Graduate Studies

While welcoming a large international student population is now an integral part of the Québec university system, the issue is becoming crucial for graduate programs and postdoctoral research activities.

The mission of universities rests on two pillars: the production of new knowledge through research and innovation and the transmission of knowledge. These two pillars mutually reinforce one another:

Research updates and enriches teaching practices, while teaching feeds research by fostering new methodological approaches and skills, all while stimulating curiosity and motivation.

Research plays a key role in contemporary Québec universities, which generate almost 40 percent of all research and development work carried out in the province.

In academia, research responsibility falls largely on professors, whose schedules vary according to academic tenure and role, discipline, and institution. Professors can devote as much as 50 percent of their time to research and administrative tasks, with the remainder going to teaching.

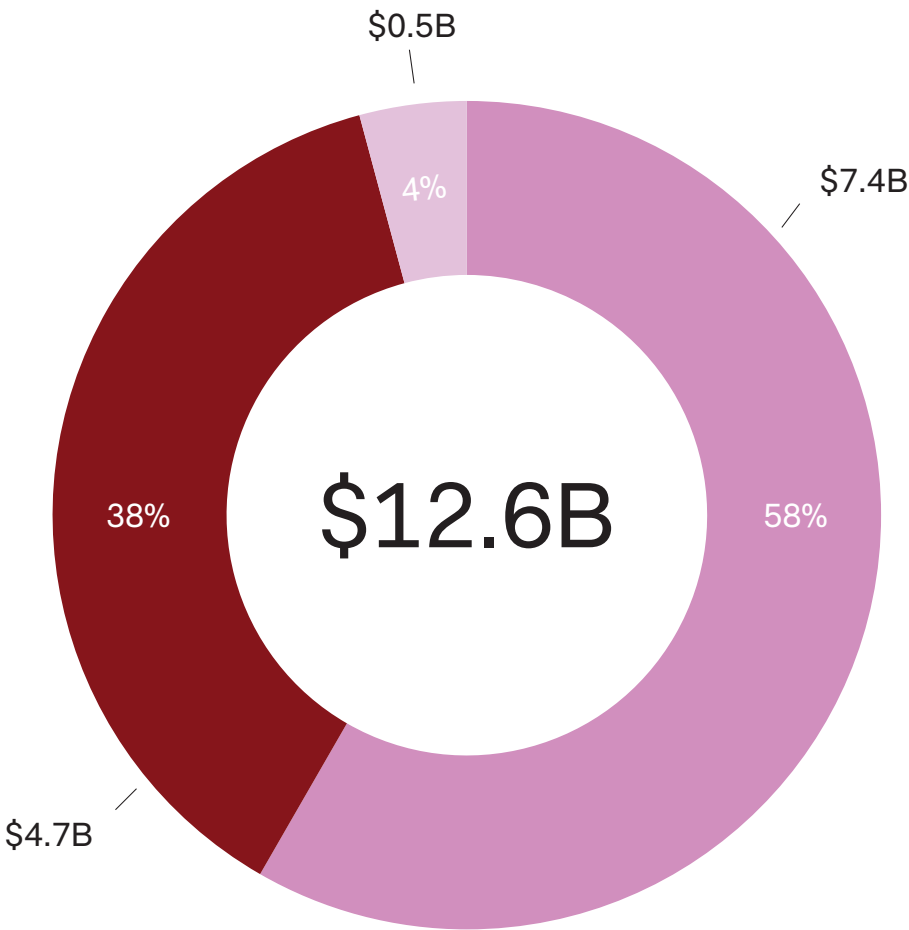
But research is not solely reserved to professors: It also relies on the participation of graduate students

and contributions from postdoctoral researchers. In addition to working on their own theses or dissertations, graduate students assist professors and contribute to advances in knowledge. Their academic journeys often mirror that of a buddy system (compagnonnage) in the applied arts, where learning is done through hands-on experience and the transmission of expertise.

(2022)
Québec

Expenditures on research and development by sector in Québec

- Companies
- Higher education
- Governments



Internationalization Driving Scientific Development in Denmark and Sweden

Despite a limited population, Denmark and Sweden are leaders in scientific research. Their success rests on strong public support for universities and a proactive internationalization strategy.

International admissions play a key role in this dynamic, as demonstrated by the attraction policies of Scandinavian universities such as well-funded research programs and international university partnerships. Foreign talent participates

in knowledge production, enriching the diversity of scientific perspectives and contributing to knowledge dissemination, even after these students leave the country.

Student mobility and international recruitment for research are pillars of scientific development in these countries, which value innovation, scientific collaboration, and co-publication.

In the Québec university network, very few specialists would be able to carry out their research without student participation. In many cases, over 50 percent of the

funding researchers receive is used to finance master's or doctoral scholarships, to pay students for their participation in faculty research.

“There just aren’t enough Quebecers pursuing graduate studies in science. When I was a researcher, my lab never would have achieved such international success without the work of international students.” (Our translation)

Rémi Quirion
Chief Scientist of Québec,
Fonds de recherche du Québec

Yet Québec does not produce enough graduate students. In addition to the challenges of a low birth rate and low student retention, the thirst for research is not as widespread in Québec as it is elsewhere. This reality is further heightened by the province's relatively strong economy and recent labour shortages, making it easier to secure employment without the need for long studies.

An important cultural difference is another key factor of this reality: Technical and vocational training is highly valued in Québec as a fast track to employment. Higher education is viewed as a major time commitment and financial investment, which likely dissuade students looking for immediate income.

Faced with these challenges, many researchers are struggling to recruit locally, and institutions are hiring large numbers of international staff. With more than a third of graduate students coming from abroad, it would simply be impossible to maintain the intensity of university research without their input.

(2023-2024)
Québec

Distribution of international students
by university cycle

Undergraduate students

13%

international
students

220K

Master's students

31%

international
students

65K

49%

international
students

Doctoral students

20K

Research Infosource's Top Research Universities

In 2024, four Québec institutions ranked in Research Infosource's top 10 best research universities in Canada: the University of Montréal, McGill University, Laval University, and the University of Sherbrooke.

Ranking is based on the research impact and competitiveness of institutions according to various performance criteria,

including scientific research funding and research intensity by faculty and graduate students. Publication output, impact, and scope are also evaluated.

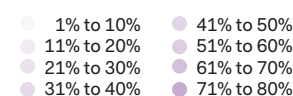
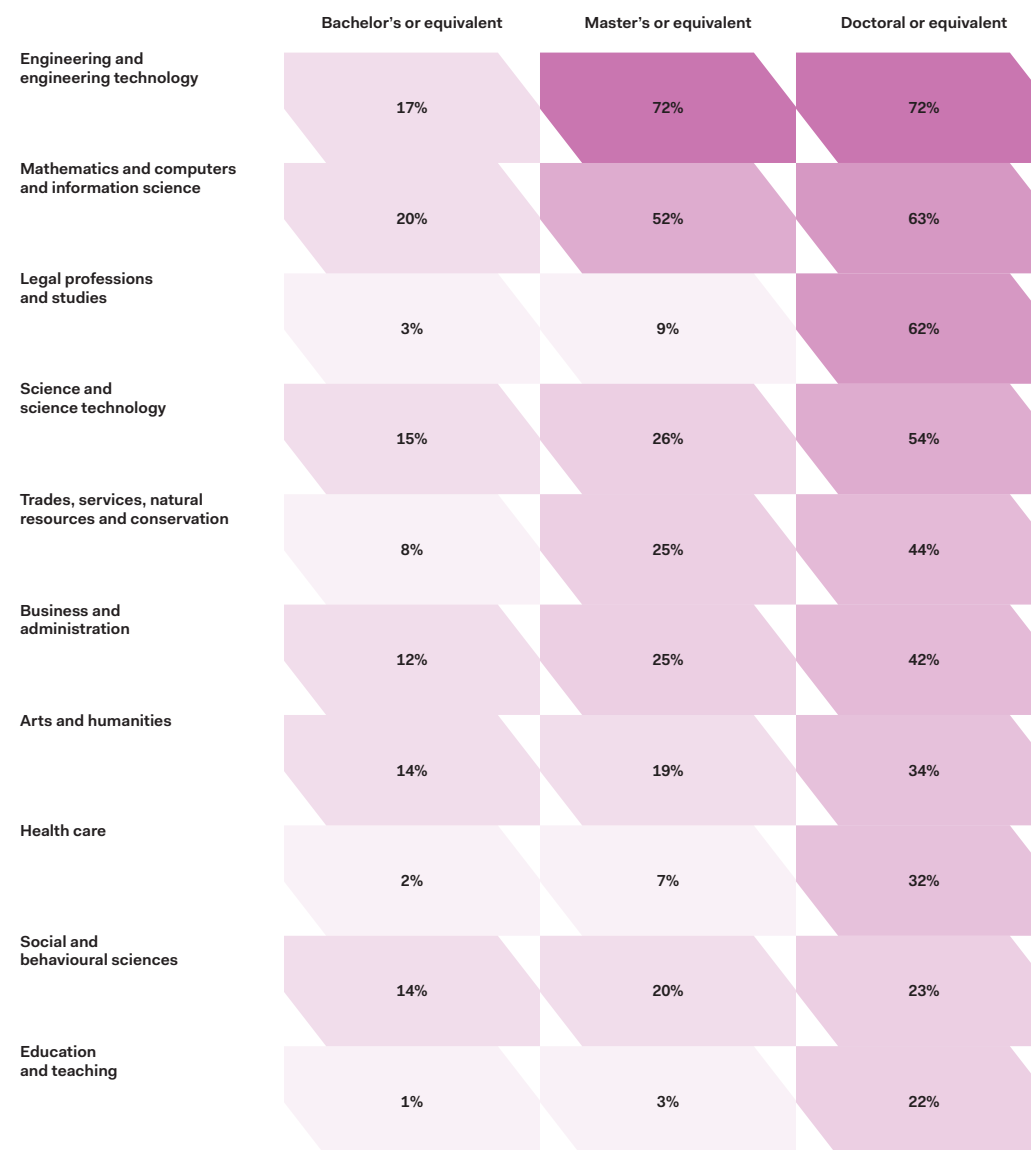
The inclusion of several Québec universities on this list highlights their major contributions to scientific progress and their ability to innovate.

This situation is exacerbated in leading centres of applied sciences, such as engineering, mathematics, information science, and health science, and

consequently in sectors of the future for Québec such as artificial intelligence, batteries, and the quantum industry.

(2022-2023)

Concentration of international students by program and university cycle



Statistics Canada, Table: 37-10-0232-01.

The Importance of International Student Input for the Volt-Age Research Program

Powered by \$123 million in investment from the Canada First Research Excellence Fund and funding from other partnerships, Concordia University's Volt-Age program has been dedicated to electrification research since 2023. Welcoming large numbers of internationally mobile students is essential to maintain the program.

Volt-Age recently received \$40 million in federal funding to support 250 doctoral students in cutting-edge fields such as energy storage and electric infrastructures. The talent required is rare at the national scale, thus the importance of recruiting from abroad. Many of these international students choose to settle long-term in Québec and their presence fosters international collaboration and innovation and promotes Québec's positioning as a world leader in clean tech.

The Importance of International Student Input in Health Research Laboratories

A 2025 survey conducted by Volume10 of 606 federally funded Canadian research chairs demonstrated the decisive role international students play in Québec laboratories. In fact, 96 percent of faculty members recruited at least one international student, and on average 50 percent of students on the teams surveyed were from other countries.

The contribution of internationally mobile students is particularly high in technology, mathematics, and health research (30 percent of international students). This has contributed to advances in neuroscience, medicine, psychology, psychiatry, and public health. The research being carried out deals with neurodegenerative or cardiovascular diseases, immunology, genetics, developmental psychology, and health policy, among others.

For many faculty members, the presence of international students is critical to the smooth running of their laboratories.

"In my field, international PhD or postdoc students are key to our operations." (Our translation)

– Professor in Regenerative Medicine

"Attracting the brightest minds from around the world benefits the entire student population in Québec. It gives them access to people whose research is among the best on the planet. This international talent contributes in an important manner to the economy, and in the case of clinical psychology to the offering of mental health services during their internship." (Our translation)

– Professor in Clinical Psychology

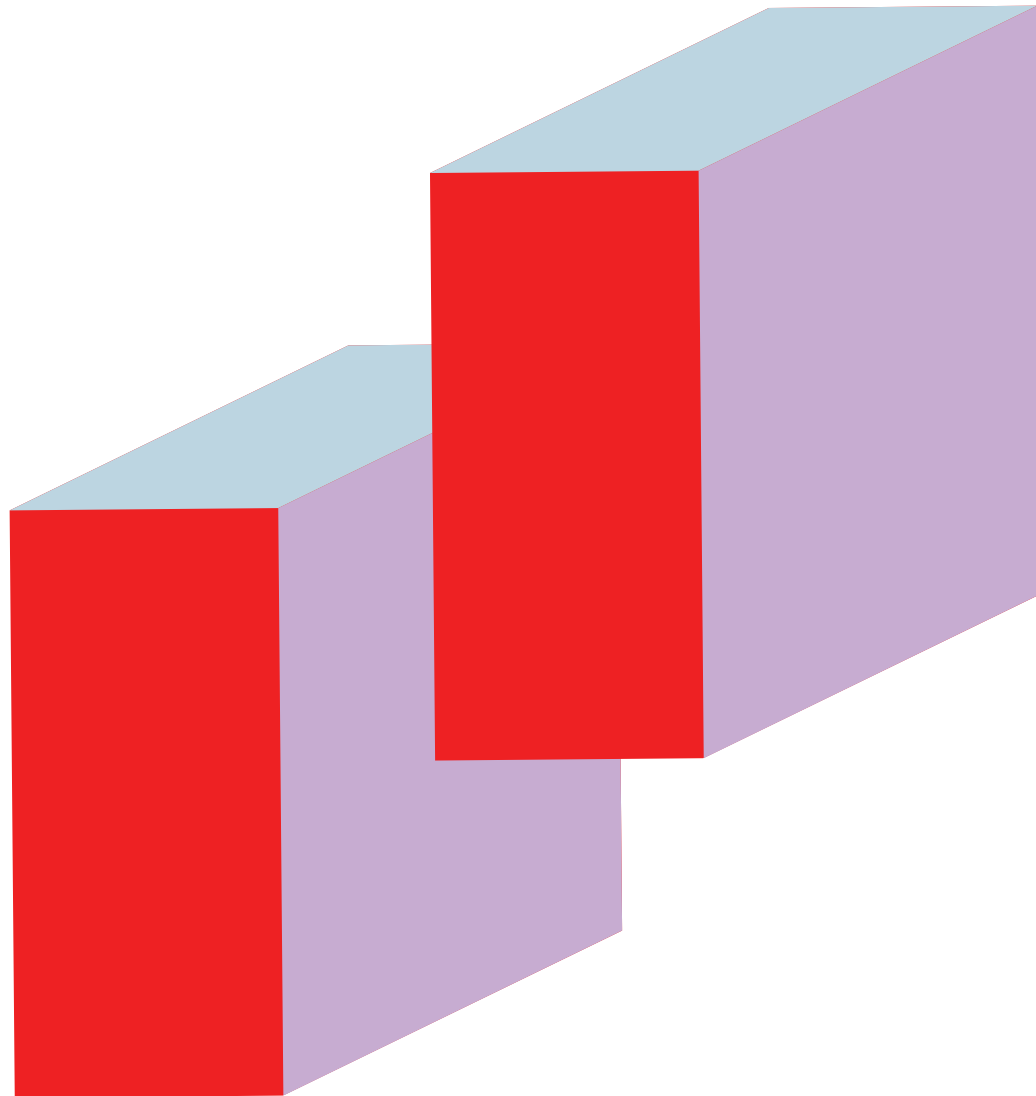
“The CIUSS de l’Estrie – CHUS welcomes international students, particularly in medical fields and those involved in the diploma recognition process. However, their numbers may be fewer and their role more minor than in non-territorial university hospital centres, as the institution has a local, regional, and tertiary vocation.” (Our translation)

Stéphane Tremblay
President and CEO, CIUSSS de l’Estrie – CHUS



International Students' Role in Graduate Studies

International students do not just settle for keeping up with university research in Québec. Through their professional networks for example, they also help expand Québec research by fostering new collaborations with laboratories in other countries.



11

Case study

The Key Role International Students at the UQTR Play in Creating New Collaborations

At the Institut de recherche sur les PME (INRPME)—the University of Québec at Trois-Rivières's research institute on small to medium enterprises—international graduate students Rahma Chouchane and Soumaya Meddeb helped create a partnership with ESSECT's LARIME laboratory in Tunisia. Their networks and understanding of Tunisian academia allowed them to target the ideal research team.

The initiative helped structure a grant application of \$375,000, which is crucial to the project's launch, sparking a soon-to-be-official collaboration agreement between UQTR and Tunisia. The presence of the two students has had a direct impact on the quality of their team's research work, enriching analyses and producing more relevant publications in the human and social sciences, where context plays a key role.

To ensure the sustainability and advances of university research as a whole, graduate programs need to recruit from abroad. Without international students, Québec's contribution to global knowledge would dwindle, and the lack of qualified staff would force top-level professors to leave.

In the context of growing global competition, universities must therefore preserve the excellence of their research but also retain the international students and staff they managed to attract.

“International students drive much more than research: They stabilize finances, enrich campus life, prepare our graduates to work anywhere, and project our universities onto the world stage.” (Our translation)

Caroline Prud'Homme
Executive Advisor to the Vice-Rector
of Studies and Training, University
of Québec at Trois-Rivières (UQTR)

Spotlight

The Challenges International Students Face During Their Studies in Québec

The international student experience in Québec is marked by several obstacles that impact integration and success: academic adjustment, language barriers, social isolation, financial constraints, and administrative complexity.

Adjusting to a different academic system at university

Québec's teaching methods, specifically interaction, independence, and project-based work, contrast with the lecture-style teaching of many countries. Some students have difficulty adapting, especially in the absence of support. The wide range of levels and the lack of awareness raising with faculty complicate students' integration.

Navigating the complex federal and provincial administrative procedures

Obtaining and renewing study permits, document processing wait times, and access to health-care services are long and complex processes, which generate stress and uncertainty. An error can compromise a person's status and access to work or essential services.

Overcoming the language barrier and isolation

Even in English programs, speaking French is required to interact with others, understand cultural references, and break isolation. Domestic and foreign student communities do not have many opportunities to build relationships.

Facing substantial financial pressure

While Québec is more affordable than the United States or Europe, tuition fees and the cost of living are major concerns, especially for students from more economically disadvantaged countries. With high tuition fees and limited resources, many students need to work to support themselves and risk jeopardizing their academic performance.

Student Mobility Services at Québec Universities

Québec institutions support international students by offering various types of welcome and integration services: administrative support, assistance for obtaining study permits and navigating the immigration process, lodging orientation and assistance, orientation sessions, housing search services, opening of a bank account, socialization and mentoring activities, twinning programs, events, and workshops.

The **University of Sherbrooke** offers welcome webinars, a detailed welcome guide, and an intercultural integration course to promote inclusion and collaboration at the university.

Laval University offers the *Comment ça va?* follow-up program, which relies on a questionnaire on stress, language, social integration, and other related topics to help the student affairs office tailor its support services and suggested resources.

The **École nationale d'administration publique (ENAP)** requires international students to complete a virtual preparatory training on Québec society, followed by a one-week integration into student life. Six people are responsible for supporting international cohorts to foster networking and academic success.

The **Institut national de la recherche scientifique (INRS)** offers international students psychological support services, a network of allied resources (help centre), and a bi-monthly newsletter on time and stress management activities or on activities to help them learn French.

McGill University guides international students before and after their arrival, specifically through the McGill 101 program, which includes sessions on how the university works, course registration, and various other aspects of life in Québec. In November, for International Education Month, panels and meetings to reinforce the feeling of belonging are held.

The **University of Québec** network created the Immi+ platform to support student mobility. This tool includes many resources on various topics such as Québec social and cultural codes, rights and responsibilities, and housing.

HEC Montréal offers the *Expérience Québec* immersion course, which includes theoretical sessions, company visits, and meetings with managers. By illustrating Québec's cultural, social, and economic particularities, the program aims to facilitate integration and adjustment.

Bishop's University provides international students with personalized support from the day they are admitted to the day they graduate. These include a one-week orientation session before classes start, on-campus activities, and access to immigration and integration advisors to help them adjust to their new living environment.

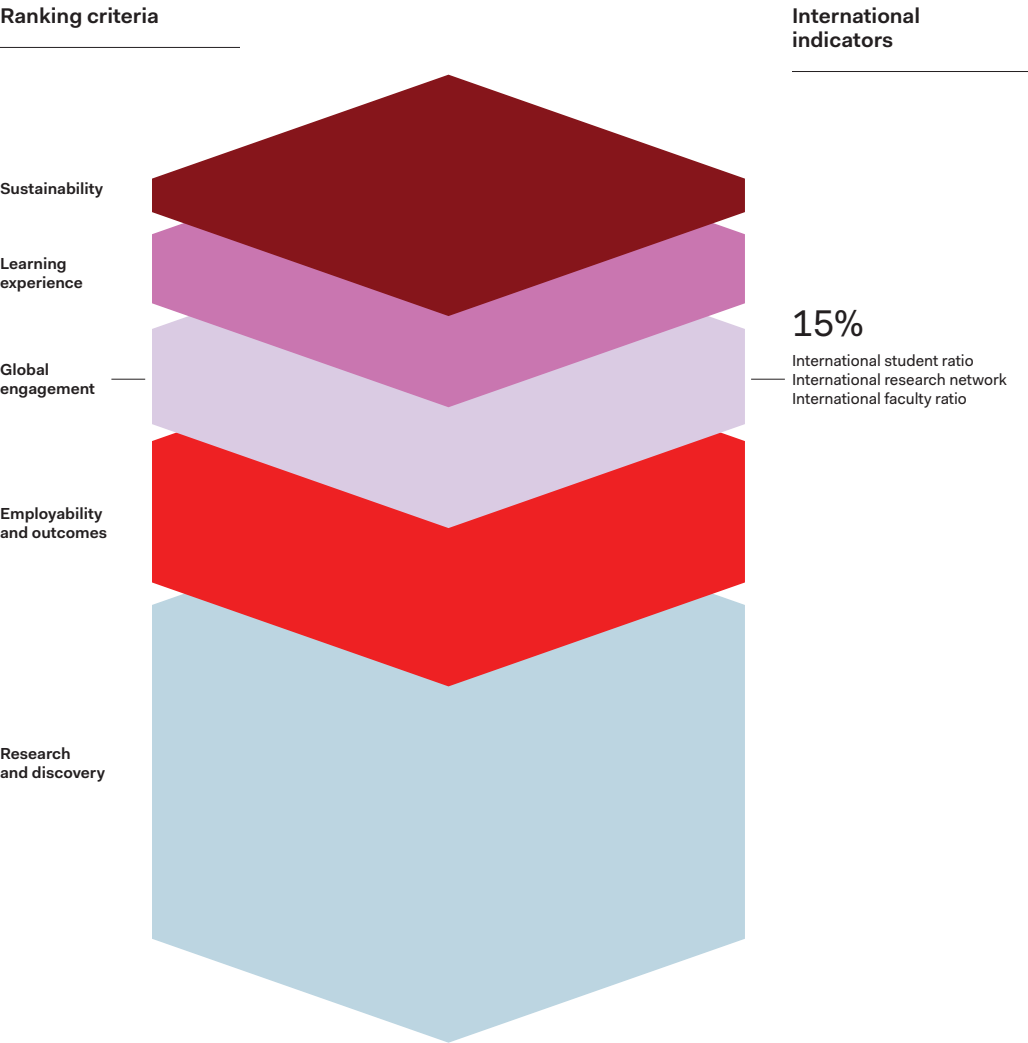
Rankings and Internationalization: The Importance of Standing Out

Global university rankings consider institutions' international openness as part of their evaluation criteria, although the weight given to this factor varies across ranking systems.

(2024-2025)

Evaluation Criteria and Sub-Criteria of the QS University Ranking





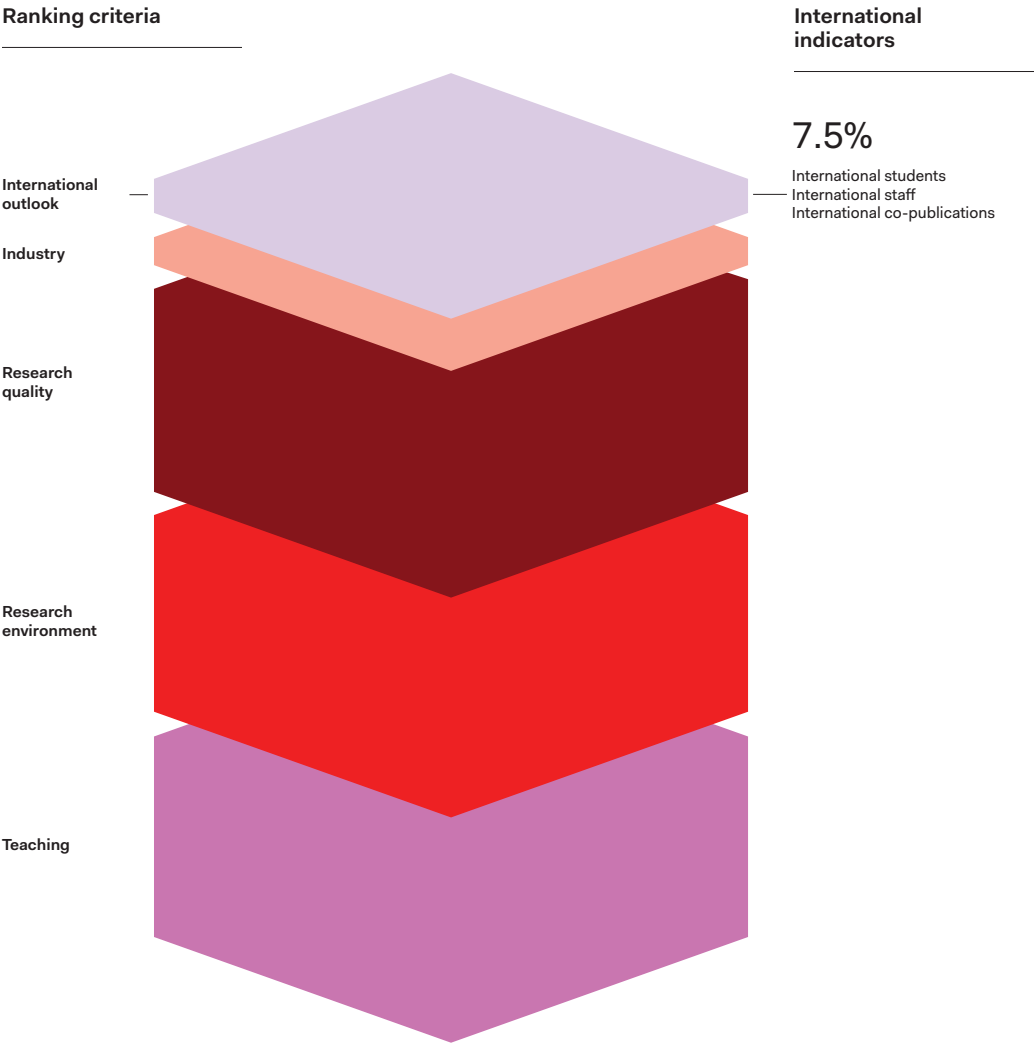
Global university rankings often rest on open-mindedness, internationalization, and research reputation. For example, in the QS ranking—one of the most influential in the world—research quality counts

for 20 percent of the score. International admissions (staff and students) as well as scientific co-writing account for 15% of the score awarded.

(2024-2025)

Evaluation Criteria and Sub-Criteria of the Times Higher Education University Ranking





The rankings place equally crucial importance on the quality and number of scientific publications, a metric strongly influenced by the presence of international students.

All these elements contribute to a university's position on the world stage, but the influence of the rankings goes well beyond image: Rankings also impact the ability to secure funding, hire, and innovate. A favourable ranking attracts top-level talent, thus reinforcing the virtuous circle where reputation and excellence feed off one another.

Global competition pushes Québec universities to focus on strategic collaborations and large-scale research programs to boost their rankings. Initiatives such as Mitacs, which facilitates exchanges between the research and business communities, or the Canada First Research Excellence Fund, which finances poles of excellence, are a testament to this desire for openness to the world.

To attract international talent, institutions are therefore using various strategies—exemptions, scholarships, financial assistance—which, in return, add to their reputation and standing.

Welcoming a large and diverse international student population is not just a strategic choice, but a necessity to strengthen research, raise the level of education, and carve out a place for Québec universities in the global knowledge ecosystem.

Internationalization, which has been at the heart of government policies since the 2000s, has been reaffirmed by the ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur in its 2023-2027 strategic plan.

(2023-2027)

Excerpt from the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Higher Education (available in French only)

is toutes les régions
nement supérieur

rieur facilitent la collaboration
t pour but d'améliorer l'accessibilité
cours de formation. Ils visent également
sur de la région, à répondre aux enjeux
un modèle adapté aux besoins locaux.

abil de nombreux partenariats actifs dans
ques, les programmes de formation intégrés.
aux. De nouveaux partenaires viendront

CIBLE 2024-2025	CIBLE 2025-2026	CIBLE 2026-2027
10	15	20

Objectif 2.3 : Augmenter la mobilité étudiante régionale et la mobilité étudiante francophone internationale

Le Ministère soutient la mobilité interrégionale par l'entremise d'une aide financière aux étudiantes et étudiants souhaitant s'inscrire dans un programme d'études offert par un collège en région, leur offrant ainsi une expérience pédagogique enrichissante pour leur réussite et permettant de diversifier leur parcours scolaire. Ce programme de bourses encourage l'attraction et la rétention d'étudiants dans les collèges en région, contribuant ainsi à la vitalité de leurs programmes d'études.

Attirer davantage d'étudiants internationaux dans les collèges et les universités francophones du Québec est une priorité gouvernementale. La présence d'étudiantes et d'étudiants francophones internationaux sur les campus québécois peut également favoriser la création d'un environnement éducatif diversifié et enrichissant, procurant à l'ensemble de la communauté étudiante des occasions de découvrir de nouvelles cultures et de nouvelles façons de penser, en plus d'élargir leurs horizons. Cette mobilité contribue au rayonnement du Québec et à la promotion de sa culture et de la langue française dans le monde entier.

INDICATEURS	VALEUR DE DÉPART	CIBLE 2023-2024	CIBLE 2024-2025	CIBLE 2025-2026	CIBLE 2026-2027
12. Nombre d'étudiants bénéficiaires d'une bourse de mobilité interrégionale	2022-2023 700 (cibles par cumul)	2 100	2 500	2 900	4 000
13. Taux d'étudiants internationaux financés dans les collèges et les universités francophones du Québec	2021-2022 71,4%	71,6%	71,7%	71,8%	72,0%

1. Données provisoires

Plan stratégique 2023-2027 | 35

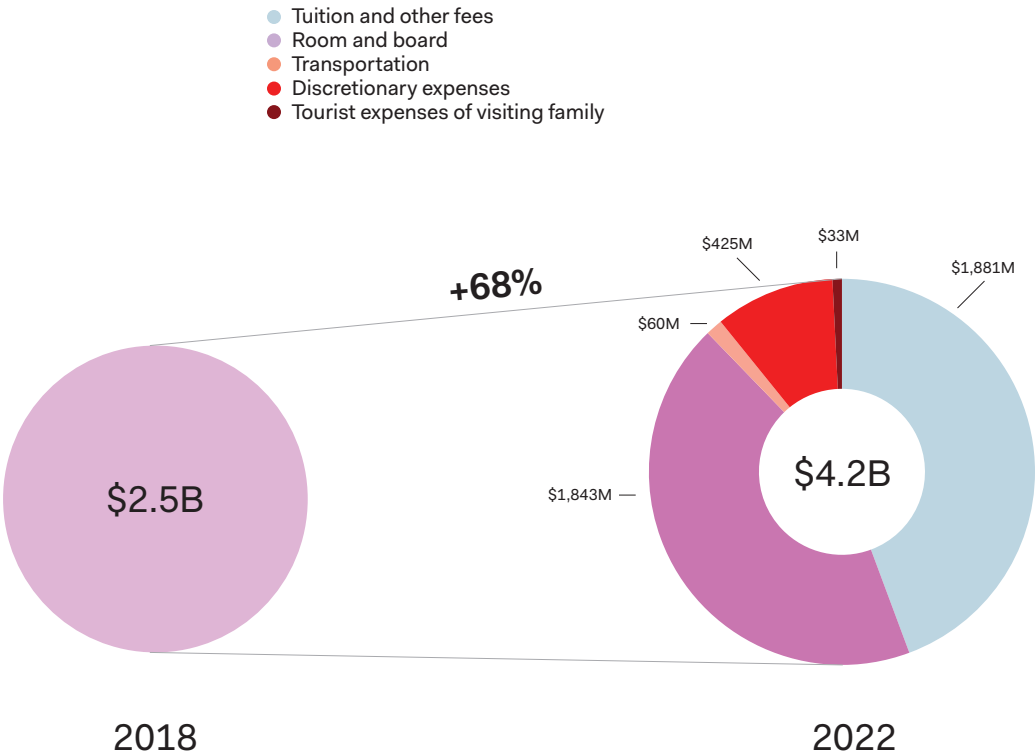
Objective 2.3: Increase regional student mobility and international mobility of Francophone students.

The Economic Impact of International Students on the Host Community

The international student population is not just passing through. International students live in the host society, spending and contributing to the local economy. In 2022, international student spending in Québec reached \$4.2 billion, just under 1 percent of Québec's GDP, which is substantial.

While tuition fees are a key element, international students' economic impact goes well beyond that: They also contribute to housing, transportation, food, retail, culture, tourism, and so on. Visits from family and friends alone injected \$33.4 million into the economy.

(2018-2022) Estimate of international student spending in Québec



This spending creates a chain reaction. It directly supports key sectors such as food services, hospitality, and retail. Indirectly, it boosts local businesses and suppliers.

Last, its induced effect translates into additional income for the workforce in beneficiary sectors, which is then reinjected into the economy.

Contribution to GDP and jobs in 2022

In 2022, the total annual expenditures of international students contributed \$3.8 billion to Québec's GDP and supported 47,762 jobs.

The presence of international students also generates substantial tax revenues with \$1.1 billion in taxes in 2022, thanks in part to employment income. International education, which is considered an

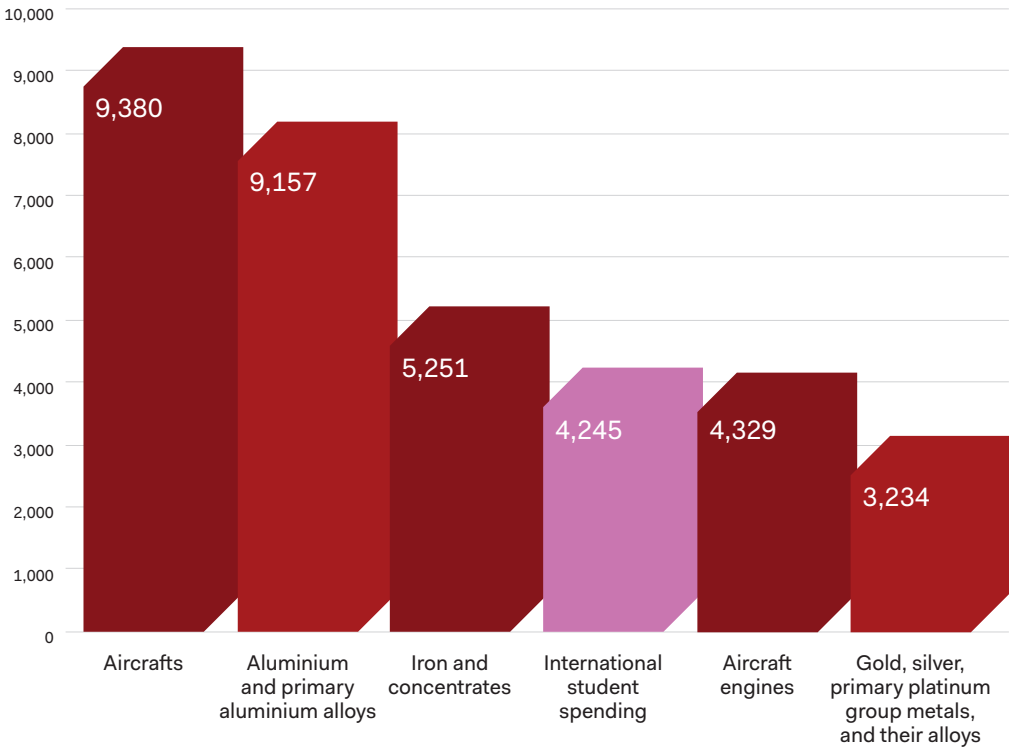
export of services, represents 12 percent of Québec's total service exports, an economic driver comparable to several other key industries.

Volume of international education exports in Québec

In 2022, Québec's international exports totalled \$158.5 billion, with \$127.9 billion in goods and \$30.6 billion in services. The expenditures of international students on education, considered as an export of services, accounted for 12 percent of Québec's total service exports.

Commerce international Québec. (2024). *Étude économique sur les exportations au Québec*; Global Affairs Canada. (2022). *Economic impact of international education in Canada*. Government of Canada.

(2022) Québec, In millions of dollars Comparison between Québec's international education services, measured in total expenditures by international students, with other main merchandise



Global Affairs Canada. (2022). *Economic impact of international education in Canada*. Government of Canada; Statistics Canada. (2025). *International Trade Statistics*.

A growing number of international students work while they study in Québec, a trend that was reinforced by the easing of the rules regulating their right to work off campus between 2014 and 2024.

Percentage of students who work during their studies

In 2018, 44 percent of international students had a job, which is twice as many as in 2000.

Since 2014, international students can work off campus for up to 20 hours per week without needing a specific work permit. This limit was suspended in 2022, then replaced with a temporary cap of 24 hours per week in 2024.

Crossman, E., et al. (2021). *International students as a source of labour supply: A summary of recent trends*. Statistics Canada. Government of Canada.

The presence of international students in high-demand sectors—such as food services, hospitality, and retail—enables them to contribute to the economy while gaining valuable local work experience.

Their integration into the job market increases the pool of skilled labour, supports regional vitality, and helps them become firmly rooted in Québec society and local values.

(2018)
Canada

Distribution of international students who declared income while studying by job sector



13

Case study

Contributions of International Students to the Tourism Industry

In tourism-related courses, cultural diversity is a key asset. The close to 60 international students at the Institut de tourisme et d'hôtellerie du Québec (ITHQ)—which offers specialized training related to hospitality and hotel and restaurant management—enrich in-classroom learning and actively participate in the workforce, facilitating connections with tourists.

During their studies and after graduation, international students also fill the sector's labour needs. Their integration in the job market brings specialized skills, while diversifying the tourism sector and society.

A Factor in Urban Transformation

The impact of international student cohorts on cities in Québec aligns with the impact of the universities themselves on local city vitality, particularly when campuses are centrally located and well integrated into the urban fabric.

Downtown Montréal is the most striking example: The high concentration of young people studying at the University of Québec at Montréal (UQAM), McGill University, Concordia University, and the École de technologie supérieure (ÉTS) fuels commercial and social activity, making universities key drivers in city life.

14

Case study

Campus Philly: Focusing on University Students to Fuel Economic Growth in Greater Philadelphia

At the beginning of the 2000s, Philadelphia focused on the student population to revitalize its local economy. Campus Philly, a non-profit organization, was founded in 2004 to build a bridge between universities, including their growing international student numbers, and the greater Philadelphia area.

Campus Philly built partnerships with universities, businesses, and chambers of commerce to increase its regional retention rate of recent graduates from

25 percent to 50 percent. It organizes networking events, supports cultural integration, and facilitates access to resources such as internships, job postings, and cultural activities.

Between 2000 and 2017, the number of Philadelphians with a university diploma increased by 115 percent. This growth has a direct impact on productivity and Philadelphia's appeal to businesses looking for a skilled workforce.

“Welcoming international students means banking on an active, connected, and engaged population. They fuel the local economy, integrate, settled, and often stay. A city that takes its student life seriously invests in its own future.” (Our translation)

Pierre Franck Honorin
Vice-President of International Talent,
Montréal International

The arrival of students from other countries contributes to transforming the ecosystems in the neighbourhoods that welcome them. Their presence supports a wide range of businesses and services (cafés, restaurants, specialized grocery stores, bookstores, etc.) and stimulates rental housing demand, particularly close to campuses.

Although their demographic weight remains limited on the large city scale, their concentration in certain areas can occasionally apply pressure to the rental market, particularly in neighbourhoods already under pressure or where there is limited residential housing diversity.

The McGill “ghetto” and moving day

Special edition! The McGill move-out day examined

Printed on May 6, 2015



The “McGill Ghetto,” a student neighbourhood with many long-standing residents, is sometimes the scene of tensions between residents and the student community, particularly exacerbated at times like moving day.

Garbagefinds (2015).

15

Case study

Universities and Urban Development

University of Québec at Montréal (UQAM) – Quartier Latin, Montréal

With over thirty-five thousand students and thirty buildings, UQAM is the largest property owner in Montréal's Quartier Latin neighbourhood. Its presence stimulates urban activity, supports local businesses, and contributes to the cultural vitality of the area.

University of Québec (UQ) – Saint-Roch, Québec City

UQ's establishment in the Saint-Roch neighbourhood was part of a co-construction initiative that brought together residents, artists, academics, and elected officials. It played an important part in the area's revitalization and upgrading of public spaces.



UQ – Quartier Saint-Roch

Concordia – Quartier Concordia, Montréal

The development of iconic pavilions and pedestrian spaces has transformed the area, reinforcing its accessibility and appeal. Concordia plays a central role in neighbourhood beautification and vitality.

University of Sherbrooke – University City

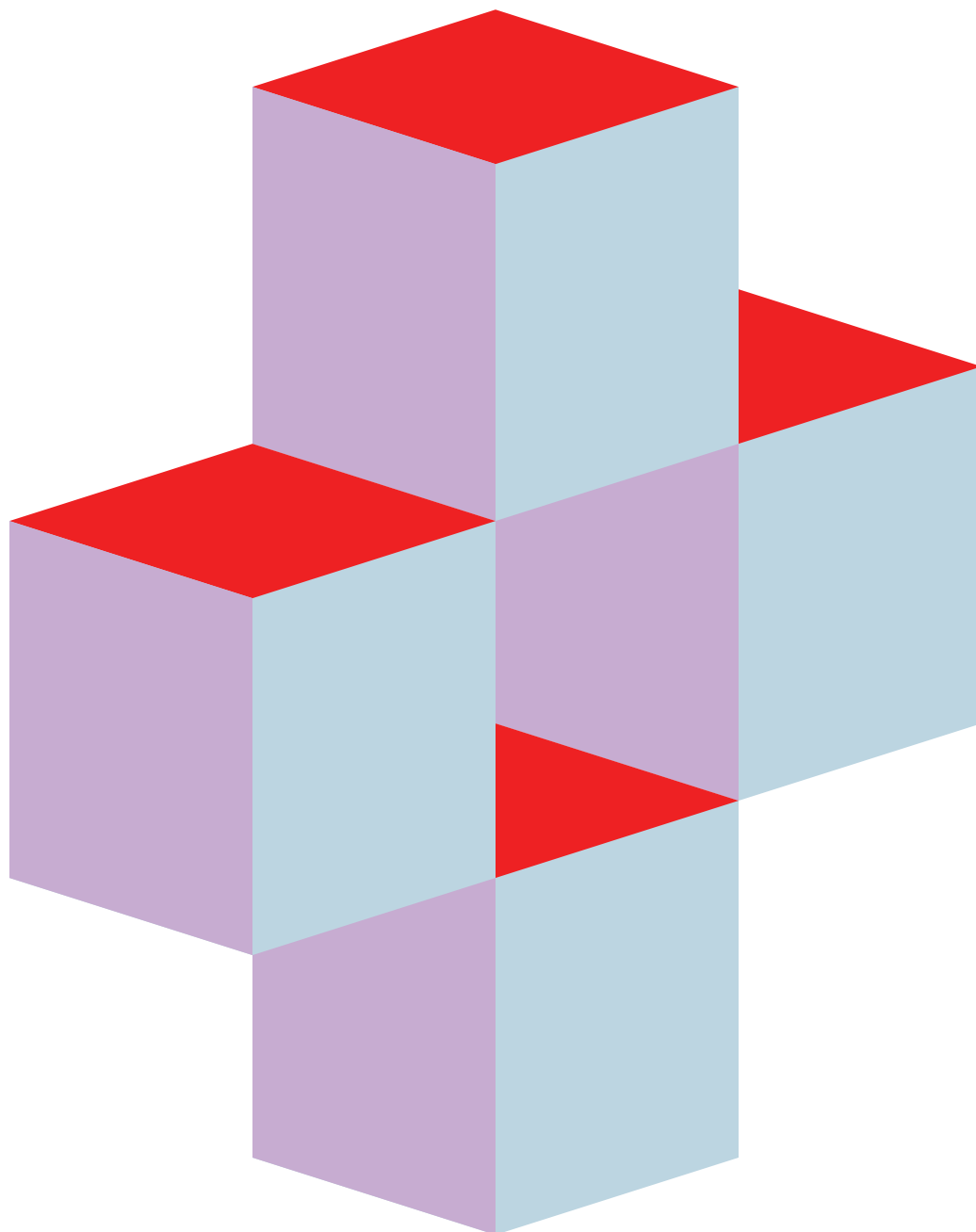
Since 2004, students can take public transit for free, promoting student mobility throughout the entire Sherbrooke area. This novel program makes living off campus easier and allows students to better integrate into the city and contribute to its economic and social dynamism.



Concordia – Quartier Concordia, Montréal

Mémoire PL74 UQAM (2024); INRS (2015); Concordia University (2012); University of Sherbrooke (2024); Volume10 interviews, research, and analyses.

In terms of infrastructure, student population density is prompting cities to adapt public transportation, reorganize pedestrian and bicycle paths, and expand certain public services. This transformation, although initiated by the presence of universities, are beneficial for the entire population, as they improve urban accessibility.



16

Case study

The UQAR and International Students: Driving Regional Dynamism

The University of Québec at Rimouski (UQAR) participates in promoting the region's appeal and developing its economy, welcoming a growing number of international students.

Their presence impacts local and commercial vitality, fills certain labour needs, and mitigates the effects of an aging population and the negative net migration of young adults.

However, their long-term integration depends on access to affordable housing, an issue governments are addressing through the building of student housing and the UTILE project, which was announced in October 2024. These initiatives will double housing capacity, relieving some of the pressure on the rental market and facilitating the welcoming of international students.

Last, the internationalization of the student population is shaping the cultural and social life of university districts. It promotes the emergence of intercultural events, festivals, and initiatives, increasing the exposure of Québec cities to global influences and networks.

This mix contributes to reinforcing the appeal of cities, although its effects vary according to the extent to which the student community has integrated local life and settled after graduation.

“Québec City is known for its quality of life. But for international students to truly fit in, locals need to understand their challenges and what they bring. Welcoming them means opening up access to housing, employment, and society. It also means strengthening Laval University’s commitment to the French-speaking world and to science.” (Our translation)

Marie-Alexandre Lepage-Lemieux
Coordinator, International Student Services,
Laval University

MTL Students Association to help international students integrate and socialize

Founded in 2024 by Grace Nlom (HEC Montréal), MTL STUDENTS fights the social isolation of international students by organizing weekly activities. With over 2,500 members signing up in just a few months, this initiative shows the power of social media as a lever for integration and retention.



Morin, R.-A. (2025). Se faire des amis loin de chez soi. *La Presse*.

Spotlight

Integration Challenges for International Students in Host Communities

International student populations also face major challenges in terms of housing, social integration, and adjustment to urban life.

Solutions have been emerging to improve access to housing for international students and limit their instability. UTILE is developing affordable, non-speculative student housing, providing university students with access to stable, affordable rents, reducing their vulnerability to the private rental market.

On average, their rent is 31 percent higher than that of residents, often due to a lack of knowledge of the law. This willingness to pay more is driving up rents in some areas, putting further pressure on the rental market.

Montréal’s future university city aims to build moderately priced student housing on the site of the former Royal Victoria Hospital, freeing up units in neighbourhoods where pressure for available housing is high.

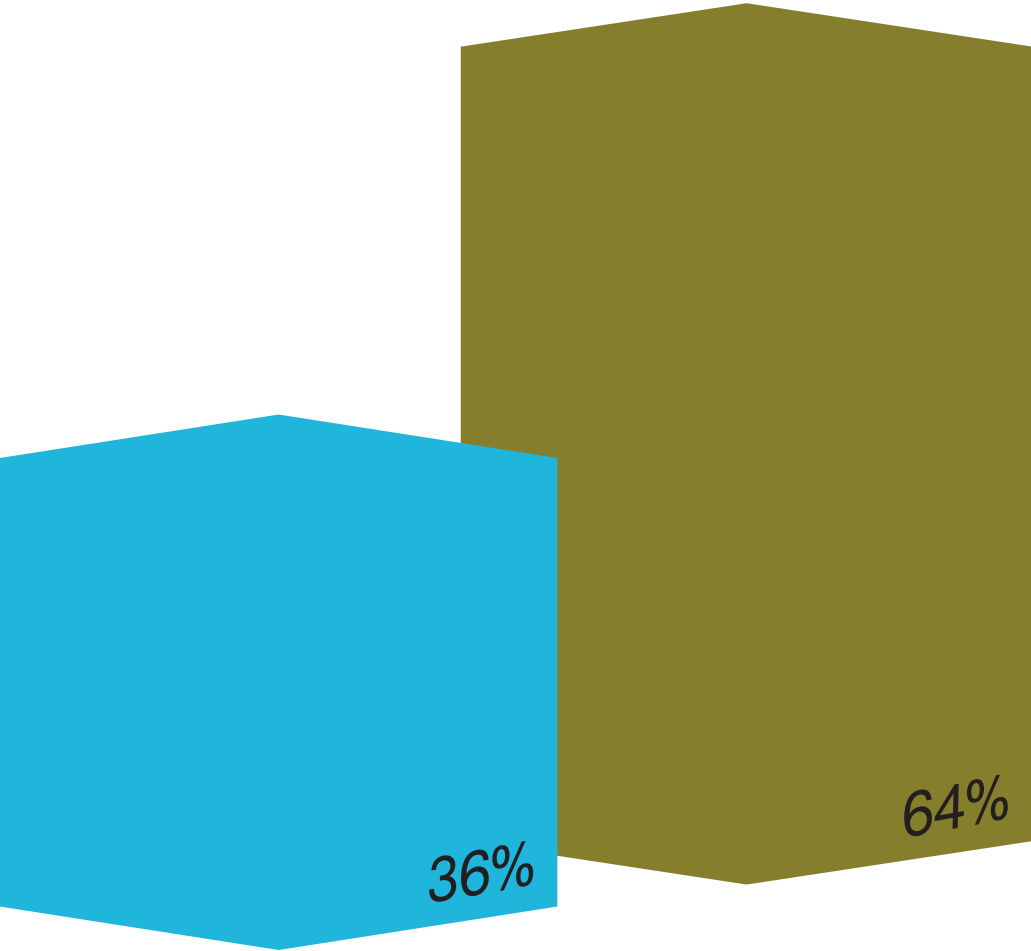
Most live in closed university bubbles, with little interaction with the local community. Neighbourhoods with high concentrations of students are also more likely to reinforce social isolation, tensions between social groups, and a cultural disconnect.

The Post- Graduation

Impact of International Students



Upon graduating from university, international students may choose to return to their country of origin, or remain in Québec to work and live, often permanently. In both situations, their contribution to Québec continues post-graduation, but the nature of this contribution can differ.



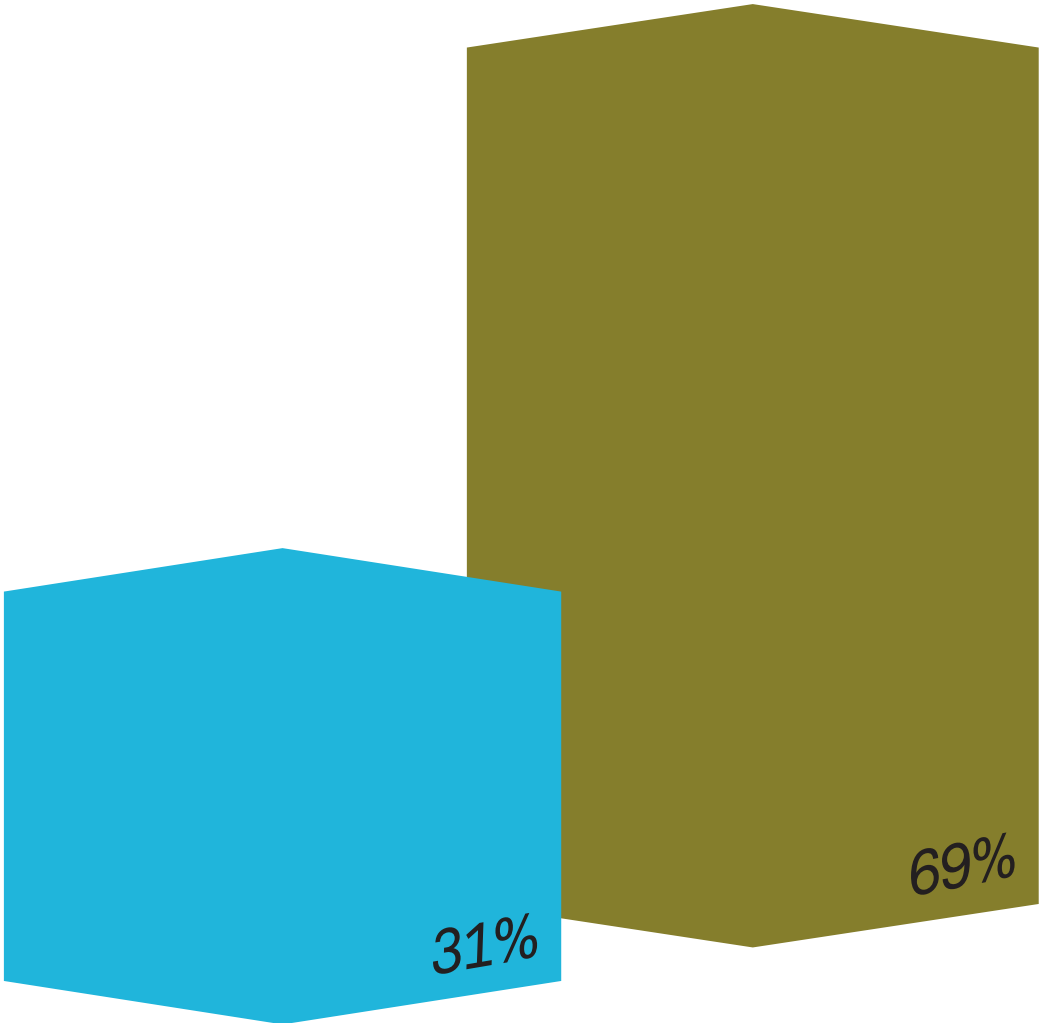
About 36 percent of international students obtained a post-graduation work permit after their studies, according to data from IRCC.

(2023)
Québec

Percentage of international students who stay in Québec after their studies

- Stay
- Leave

According to different sources, the percentage of international graduates who stay in Québec is approximately 30 percent.



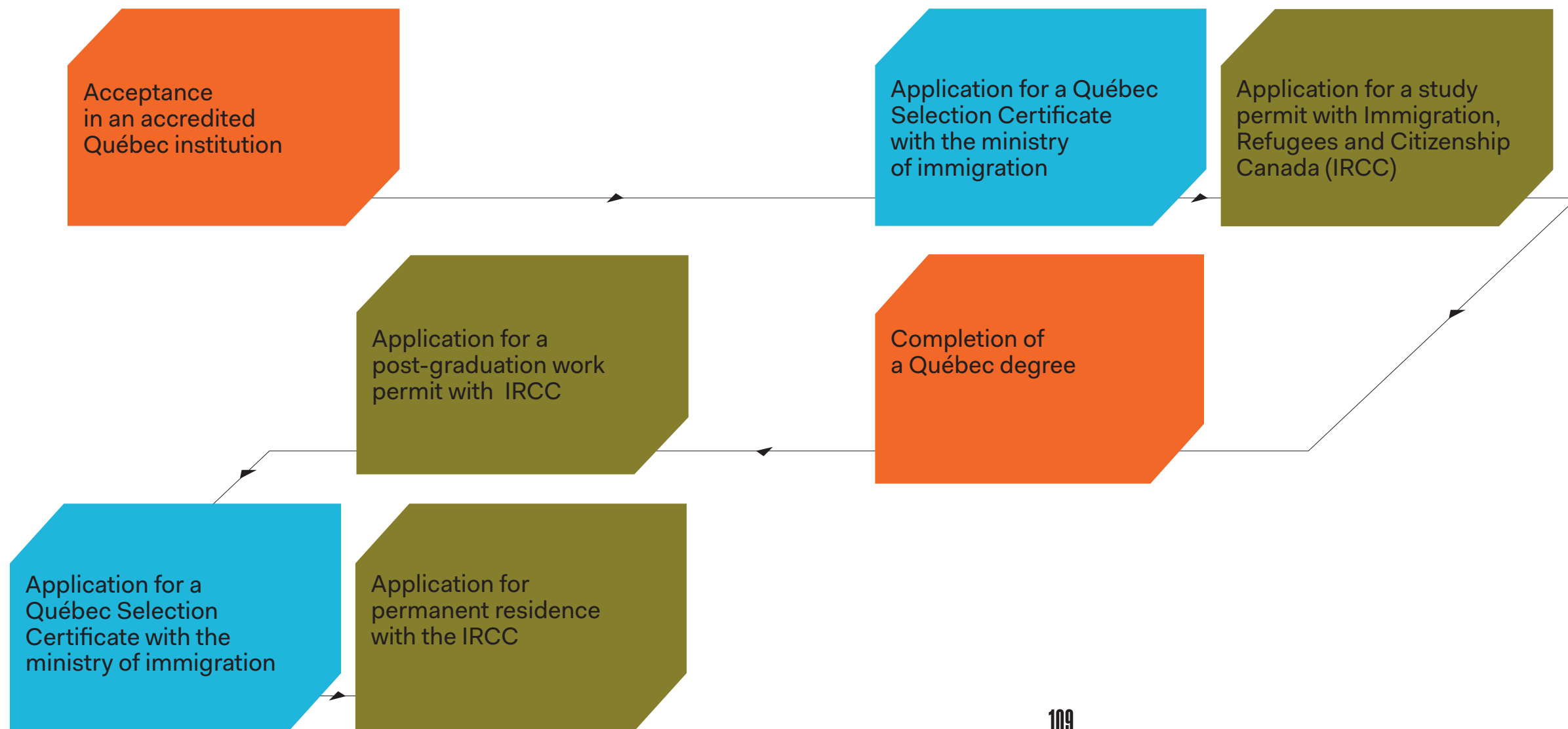
A 2021 study by Statistics Canada shows that 31 percent of international students obtained permanent residence ten years after obtaining their first study permit.

Living in Québec After Graduation

Although there is no public policy to retain new graduates who are foreign nationals, Québec does enable their integration by opening up pathways toward permanent immigration. After successfully completing a university program in Québec, they can apply for a post-graduation work permit to work full-time, and eventually, settle here permanently.

The immigration process and international students' path to residency

- Québec
- Canada
- Institutions of higher learning



Applying for Post-Graduation Work Permits

Ontario: the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP)

The OINP allows eligible graduates to apply for permanent residence after their studies. They can apply to OINP for a nomination as international students or skilled foreign workers. The permanent residence application is then submitted to the federal government. Ontario's Express Entry Streams are other potential avenues to residency for individuals that meet the economic immigration criteria of federal programs.

The Atlantic Provinces: Atlantic Immigration Program (AIP)

This program speeds up the permanent residence process for graduates with a job offer from a designated local employer. This simplified process helps companies hire for jobs that are hard to fill locally, while fostering the retention of talent in Canada's Atlantic provinces.

Australia: Temporary Graduate Visa

After completing their studies, graduates can obtain a temporary visa through two streams: the Post-Vocational Education Work Stream for in-demand sectors, which is valid for up to eighteen months, and the Post-Higher Education Work Stream for university graduates, which is valid for up to two years. Applicants must have studied a minimum of two years in English at an accredited Australian institution.

The United States: Optional Practical Training (OPT)

This program allows graduates from accredited American institutions to stay in the country for twelve months and work in their field of study. A twenty-four-month extension is possible for certain sectors (science, technology, engineering, mathematics).

United Kingdom: Graduate Route Visa

With this visa, graduates are authorized to work or look for work in the United Kingdom for two years after completing a bachelor's or master's degree or for three years after completing a PhD. The diploma must be from an accredited school and the student's study visa must be valid when applying.

France: Titres de séjour post-diplôme

After completing their studies, graduates from a French institution can apply for a one-year "job search/company creation" residence card. If graduates find employment, they can apply for the "salaried worker" or "passport talent" residence card depending on income and sector. After ten years of regular residence, individuals can apply for permanent residence and then citizenship.

This two-stage approach is beneficial for all parties involved. For the host country, applications come from people who have lived in the country before applying for permanent residency, and who are generally better integrated into the job market. For immigrants, this route is an opportunity to discover life in Québec before making a long-term decision.

It is also particularly beneficial for the province's more rural areas, as study abroad opportunities promote the discovery of these regions and international students are more likely to settle here because of the connections they have already made.

“International students tend to integrate into Québec successfully. Having a degree from Québec and a student network to help you advance are assets for overcoming other challenges, such as finding a job that matches your skills set and developing a lasting sense of belonging.” (Our translation)

Marie-Christine Ladouceur-Girard
President and CEO, Maison de l'innovation sociale

Many new graduates also choose to stay for more personal reasons: attachment to the culture, quality of life, the desire to start a family with someone they have met here, and so on. Whether professional, economic, or sentimental, these reasons reflect Québec's ability to attract and retain international talent.

Factors that entice international students to settle in Québec are similar to those behind any type of immigration, but new graduates have three distinct advantages. First, their experience in Québec means they have already assimilated local cultural codes and values, thus facilitating their social integration. Second, their Québec university diploma is recognized by employers meaning they do not need to go through the tedious foreign credential recognition process. Finally, they have already built up a network at university, both professional and social, which speeds up integration and hiring.

“Those who had a first acculturation experience through their studies are better prepared. They understand Québec, its codes, its market. So, when Hydro-Québec hires them, it shows right away.” (Our translation)

Sylvain Nadeau
Director, Research and Innovation,
Hydro-Québec's Research Institute (IREQ)

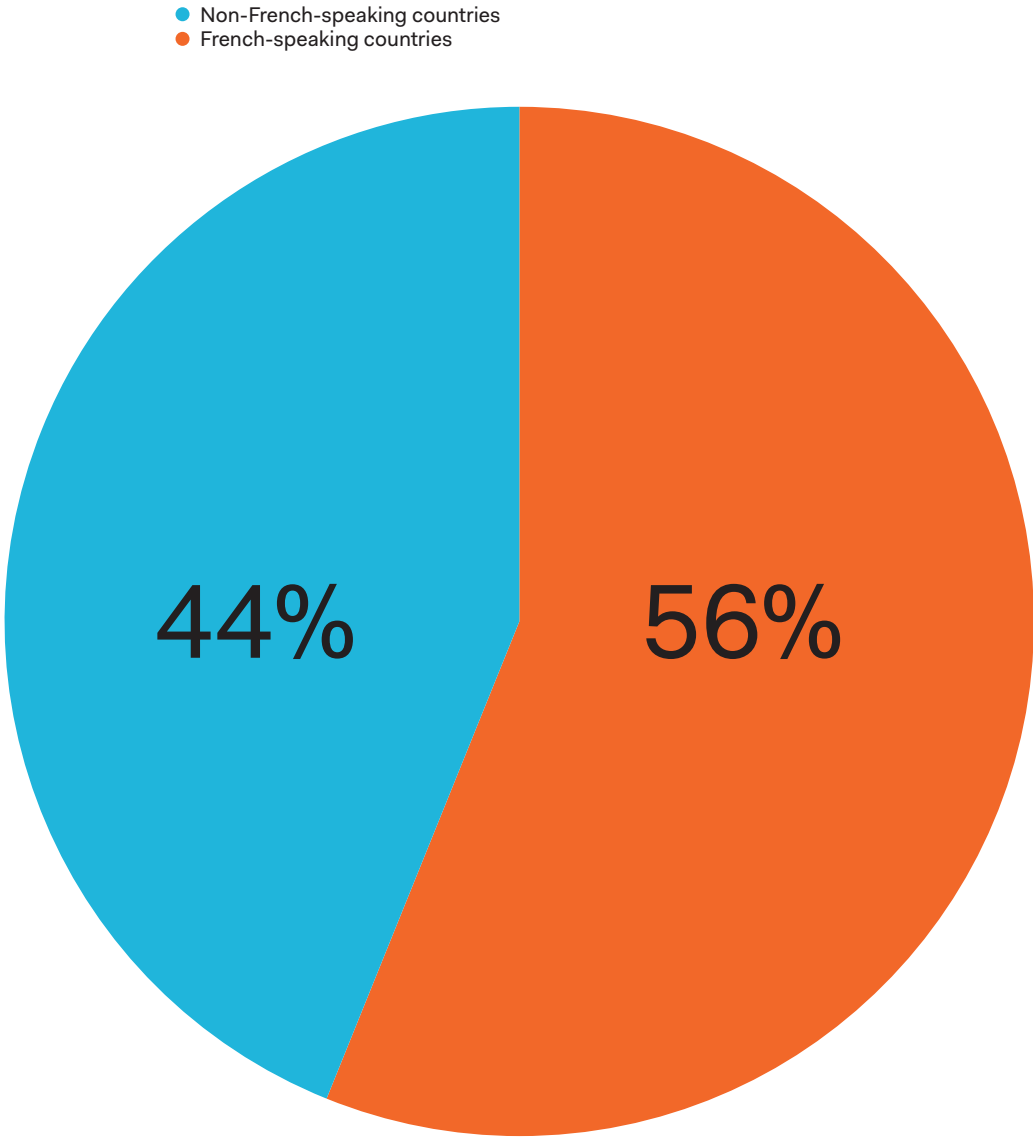


For the people who do stay, one of the most widespread challenges is mastering the French language, which is important for them to integrate into the job market and Québec society.

Since 2023, the minimum language requirements to obtain a Québec Selection Certificate are as follows: level 7 knowledge of spoken French and level 5 knowledge of written French.

(2023)
Québec

Percentage of international university students from French-speaking and non-French-speaking countries



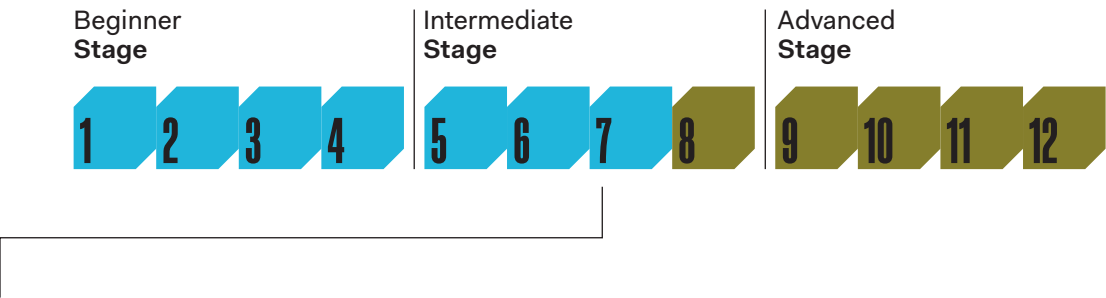
44 percent of international students come from non-French-speaking countries.

Learning French is a challenge, especially in a context where research is largely done in English, reducing daily exposure to the language during their studies.

Québec scale of French proficiency levels
(Established by the Government of Québec)

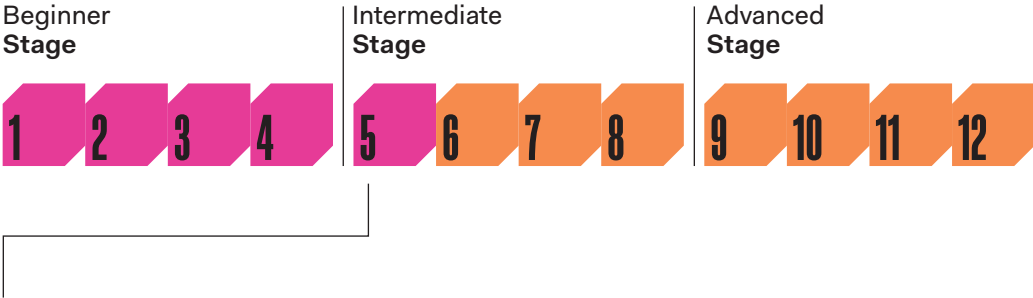
A person who would like to settle in Québec through the Québec Graduate Stream must show **level 7 knowledge of spoken French** and **level 5 knowledge of written French**.

Spoken French Level 7 Required



Oral Comprehension	The individual grasps the main points of conversations, cultural productions, or presentations on general interest or specific topics. They comprehend concrete and sometimes implicit statements expressed in sometimes complex syntactic constructions. They understand varied vocabulary.
Oral Production	The person can converse about general interest or specific topics and communicate effectively in presentations. They can make concrete statements expressed in sometimes complex syntactic constructions. They use varied vocabulary.

Written French Level 5 Required

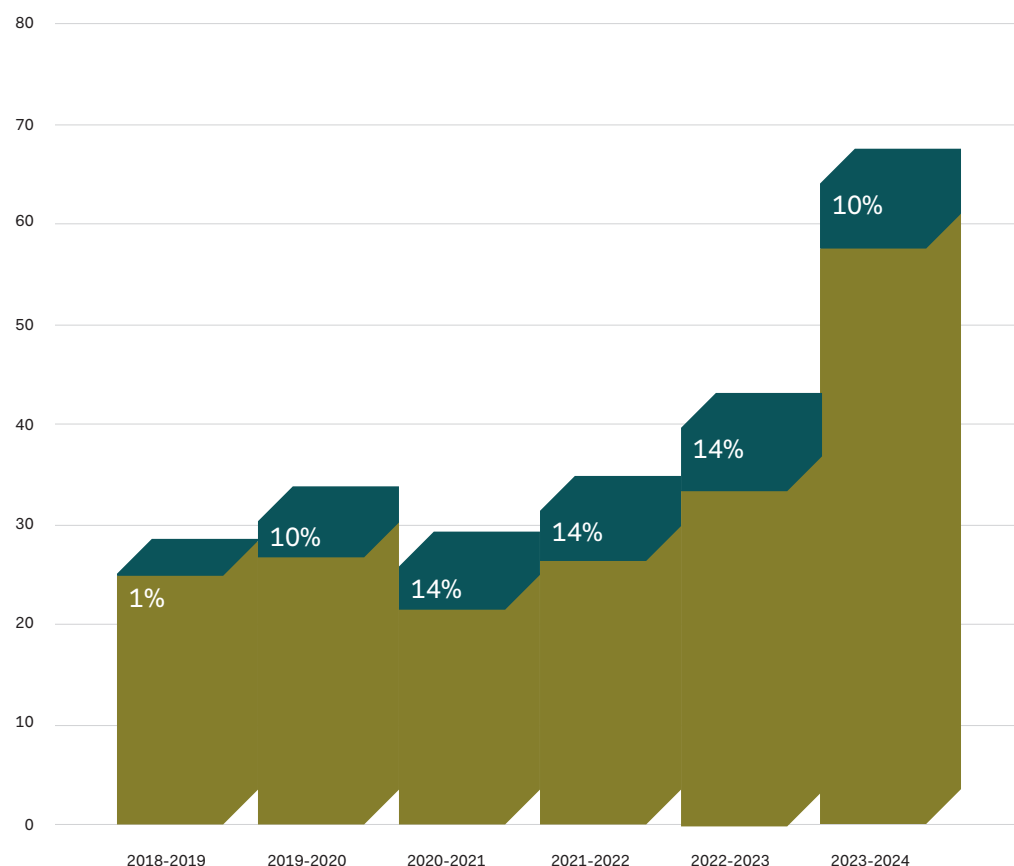


Written Comprehension	The person understand the main ideas in texts on everyday topics that are a few paragraphs in length. They understand factual, explicit, and concrete content expressed in simple or sometimes complex syntactic constructions. They understand varied vocabulary.
Written Production	The person can write short texts of a few paragraphs in length on everyday topics. They communicate using factual and concrete statements expressed in simple or sometimes complex syntactic construction. They use basic vocabulary.

(2018-2024)
Québec
In millions

Change in the number and proportion
of international students enrolled in French
courses offered by the ministry of immigration

● International students
● Other categories



In 2023–2024, international students enrolled in French courses offered by MIFI accounted for 10% of total registrations.

Francization Initiatives in Universities

Concordia University helps students learn French through its Succeeding in French program, which includes courses, tests, practical resources, and LexiConcordia, its specialized translation software. Full-time international students at the undergraduate and graduate levels can also benefit from a French course fee exemption, paying the Québec tuition rate for French courses.

The University of Montréal offers a four-month intensive online French program for non-Francophone students who plan to study at the university. The program helps them reach an advanced-intermediate level of proficiency—required for most

study programs—without having to take other French tests. Once completed, the program is recognized as proof of language proficiency for twenty-four months.

UQAC offers an accredited French program to help non-Francophone students learn to read and write French. Offered as an all-level beginner, intermediate, or advanced intensive or regular program, it combines language immersion, courses on Québec culture, and active teaching. Personalized support and the opportunity to stay with a French host family are also possible.

The Government of Québec offers French courses and financial assistance through Francisation Québec. However, certain changes introduced in 2024 have reduced the accessibility of these services: the suspension of the participation allowance for part-time courses, the end of support for the staff of large companies, and the closure of French courses at several school service centres.

Despite the struggles of many individuals in learning French, the employment rate of new graduates from abroad is only slightly lower than that of the Canadian-born population with a comparable level of education.

Comparison of employment rates of graduates living in Canada 3 years after graduation

Results of the 2023 National Graduates Survey (NGS)

Graduate	Employment Rate				
	Average	College	Bachelor's	Master's	Doctorate
Canadian	91%	88.6%	91.9%	94.6%	94.2%
International	88.6%	89.6%	84.5%	91.3%	90.6%

On average, the income of international graduates is 19.6 percent lower than that of Canadian graduates three years after obtaining their diploma.

Etmanski, B. (2025). *International student graduates' labour market early outcomes: Results from the National Graduates Survey*. Statistics Canada. Government of Canada.

Study Here, Succeed Here: Comparison of Immigrant Incomes by Country of Study

People who studied in Québec before obtaining their permanent residence integrate better economically. One to two years after settling in Québec, immigrants who studied two to three years in Canada earn on average 27 percent more than those who did not.

Proficiency in both official languages, local work experience, and the understanding of Québec society can all explain this advantage.

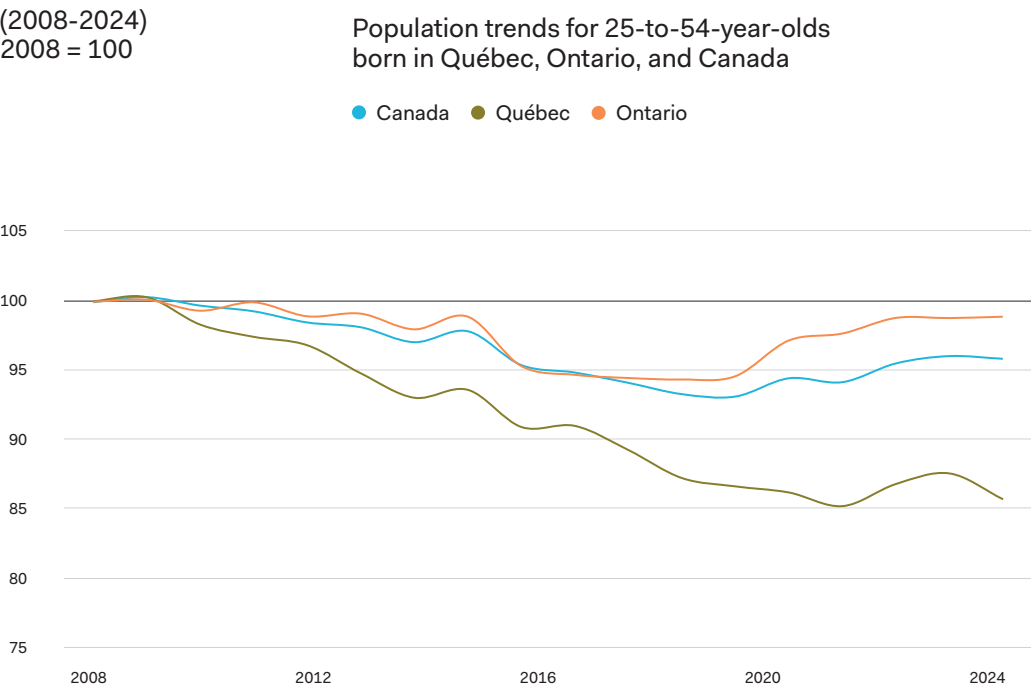
And these gains are not temporary: Ten to eleven years after arriving, individuals with two to five years of study in Canada earn 9 percent to 12 percent more than other immigrants. In addition to making their entry into the job market easier, Canadian diplomas reinforce the ability to understand Québec's professional and cultural realities.

Statistics Canada (2022). *Volume10 interviews, research, and analyses*.

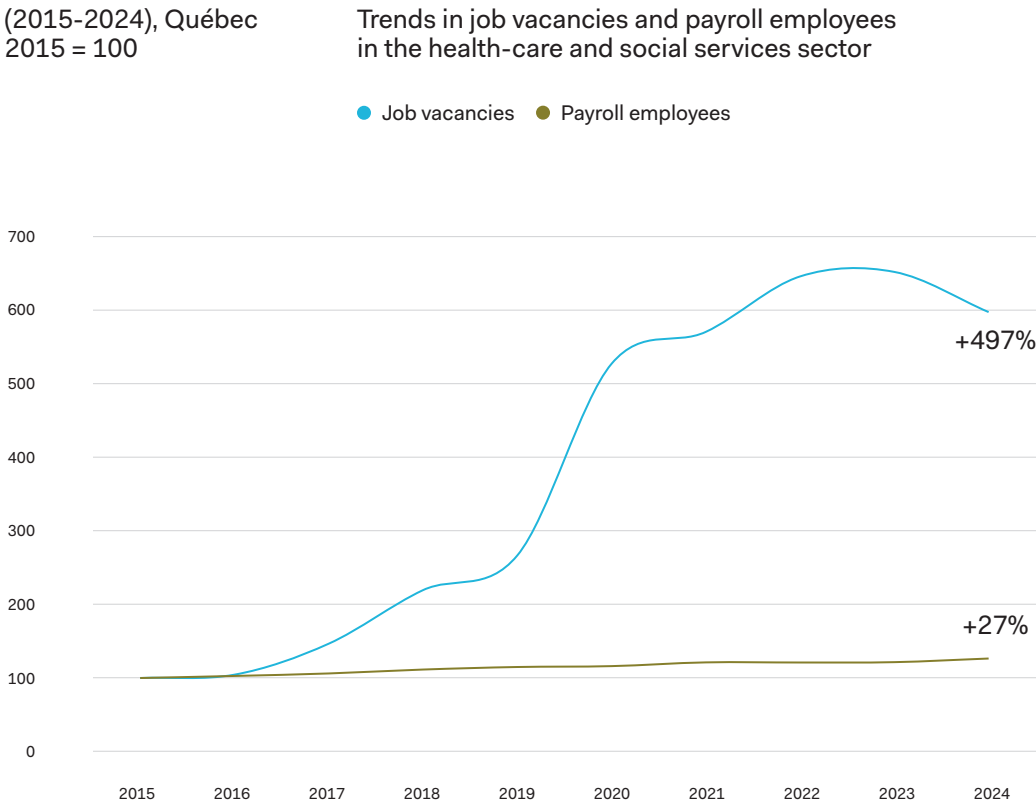
Benefits for Québec |

The immigration of international graduates has many benefits for Québec. First, with an aging population and a low birth rate, the ratio between working Quebecers and those who depend on working Quebecers is becoming less and less tenable.

Student immigration can address this issue, specifically in key sectors such as health care and social services where there are not enough qualified workers to meet growing demands.



Population decline for 25-to-54-year-olds born in Québec is more pronounced than in Ontario or the rest of Canada.



In this context of skilled labour shortages, retaining international students after they graduate from university is critical, as it also represent an accelerated gain of professional skills. While the requirements for several jobs have increased, the number of native-born Quebecers with a post-secondary diploma is decreasing, thus widening the gap between supply and demand.

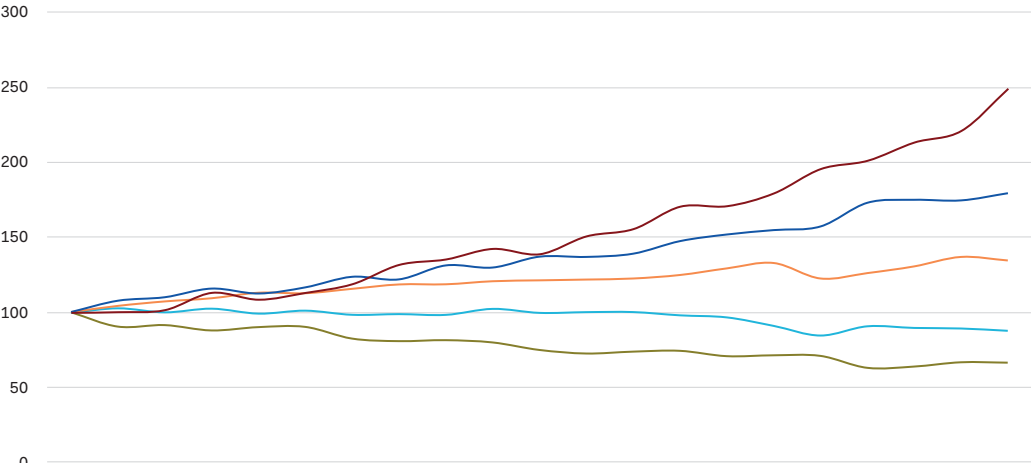
Beyond just the numbers needed to fill labour shortages, the attraction and retention of international talent has become critical, as the digital transition and several substantial technological advances have increased the level of expertise required.

The need for skilled labour is more pressing in innovation sectors such as STEM, i.e. science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. These disciplines are central to the most technologically advanced societies, where demand exceeds the number of locally trained individuals—a problem exacerbating the skills deficit in several strategic sectors.

(2004-2024), Québec
2004 = 100

Employment rate by educational attainment

- Graduate degree or certificate above the bachelor's level
- Bachelor's degree
- Post-secondary certificate or diploma
- High school graduate
- Some high school



For several years now, the employment rate for university graduates has grown more, particularly for individuals with a graduate degree (+150 percent).

The RBC report: How post-secondary education can help fix our productivity crisis



Post-secondary education is one of Canada's greatest strengths, but it is not being used to its full potential. This directly impacts the standard of living Canadians can expect, especially in an increasingly competitive global economic context.

To remedy the situation, the RBC report recommends better coordination between educational institutions and the job market, with more work-integrated learning opportunities and greater value placed on research by businesses.

RBC Thought Leadership. (2025). *A Smarter Path: The case for postsecondary education reform*.

Demand (vacant job positions)

51,981

This analysis of demand does not take into account possible peaks in demand linked, for example, to the energy transition, the development of the battery industry, increasing digitization or the simultaneous launch of major infrastructure projects.

Supply (job candidates)

52,556

The assessment of supply rests on new university graduates ready to enter the job market, new immigrants in engineering professions, and professionals looking for employment.

Demand (vacant job positions)

51,981

The supply and availability of engineering professionals are also influenced by government policies adopted over the years.

Supply (job candidates)

49,833

A 20 percent drop in the number of international students, imposed by these policies, therefore leads to a drop in supply projections, especially as they account for 34 percent of all engineering graduates.

Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec. (2023). *Projections: Offre et demande de professionnelles et professionnels en génie au Québec: Horizon 2033*; Statistics Canada. Table: 37-10-0020-01.

20

Case study

Post-Graduation Survey
and Sectors That Employ
International Graduates

International students with a diploma from a Québec institution work mainly in STEM-related fields (i.e., science, technology, engineering, mathematics) as well as in business and administrative sectors.

Data from post-graduation surveys shows a strong presence of these graduates in universities, research centres, and private businesses offering professional, scientific, and technical services.

Statistics Canada: Table: 37-10-0020-01, Table: 36-10-0402-02; Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec (2025); Volume10 interviews, research, and analyses.

IREQ and International Students' Contributions to Energy Innovation

The Institut de recherche d'Hydro-Québec (IREQ) is a technology research centre focused on renewable energy. Its almost four-hundred-person-strong research and technical teams are dedicated to improving Québec's energy infrastructure and fostering its transition to sustainable solutions.

IREQ carries out 40 percent of its projects in partnership with universities and relies heavily on international student recruitment for its pool of energy innovation specialists. This shows that talent from abroad is a key driver in Québec's scientific and technological advancement in a sector undergoing rapid transformation.

“Québec needs to make choices if we want to attract major companies to set up their headquarters here, and ultimately innovate. Access to a diverse pool of talent, such as international students, is fundamental to support this goal.” (Our translation)

Hélène V. Gagnon

Chief People and Sustainability Officer
and Senior Vice-President,
Stakeholder Engagement, CAE

The increasing specialization of knowledge, which began twenty years ago, has led to a growing need for expert international talent in most sectors of the economy, whether scientific, cultural, manufacturing, or financial.

In this context, Québec's competitiveness increasingly depends on its ability to attract highly specialized talent, regardless of where it comes from. It is no longer just a question of cutting-edge technologies, but of excellence in all the fields in which Québec wishes to excel.

22

Case study

Circus Arts and International Students

Recognized as a world centre for the circus arts, Québec benefits from the international reputation of circus troupes such as Cirque du Soleil, Les 7 doigts, and Cirque Éloize.

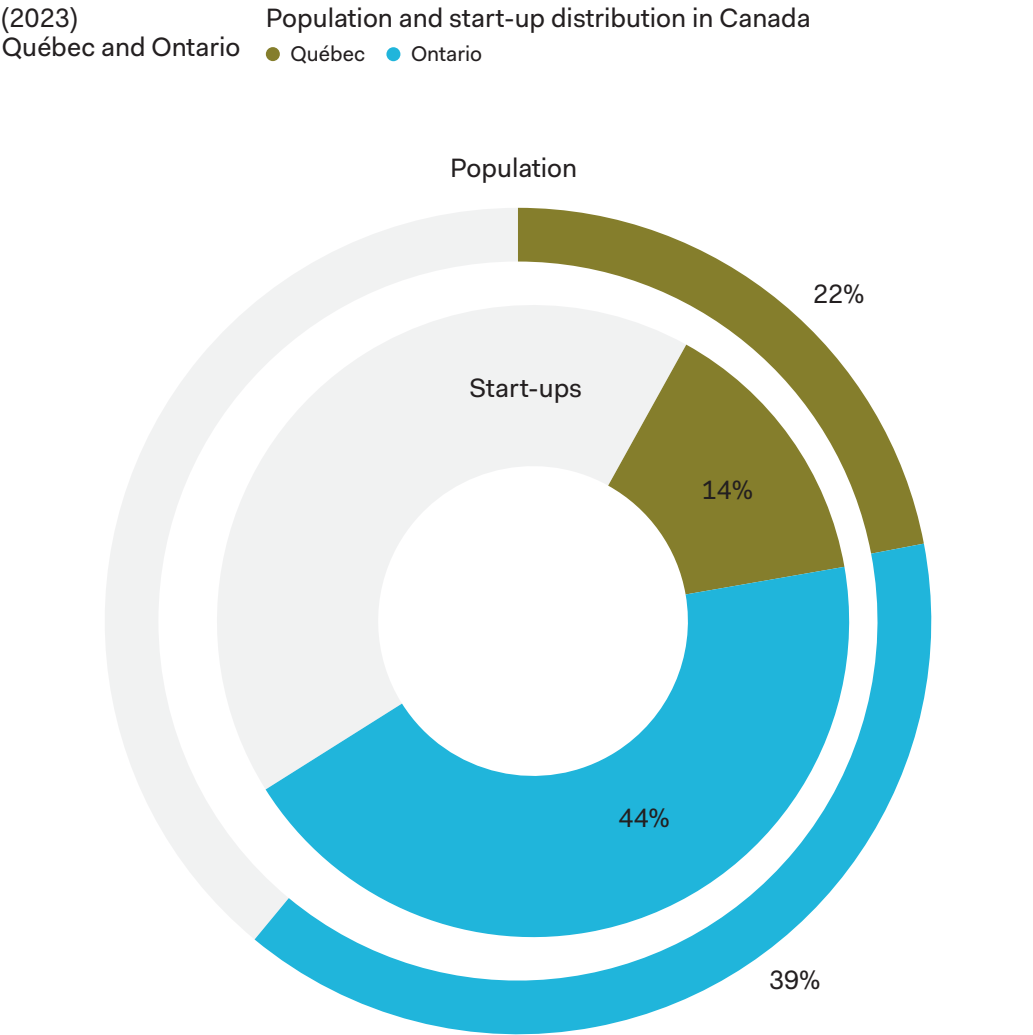
Each year, the college-level programs of the National Circus School (NCS) accept some 120 artists in Montréal, over 55 percent of whom are from outside of Québec. International recruitment is essential as there are not enough local applicants, particularly because of the lack of high-level preparatory training in Québec and Canada.

Yet, recent legislative changes are jeopardizing the NCS's training quality and viability by restricting international admissions. New federal measures are also limiting access to post-graduation work permits, further complicating the recruitment and retention of international talent, which is key for the sector's dynamism and reputation.

“In public debates on international students, it is essential to remember the richness a diverse environment brings. We have people from 90 different nationalities working at Cirque du Soleil, and even our least international shows feature at least 20 different nationalities. That diversity isn’t just a detail—it’s what drives our success.” (Our translation)

Daniel Lamarre
Executive Vice-Chair of the Board,
Cirque du Soleil

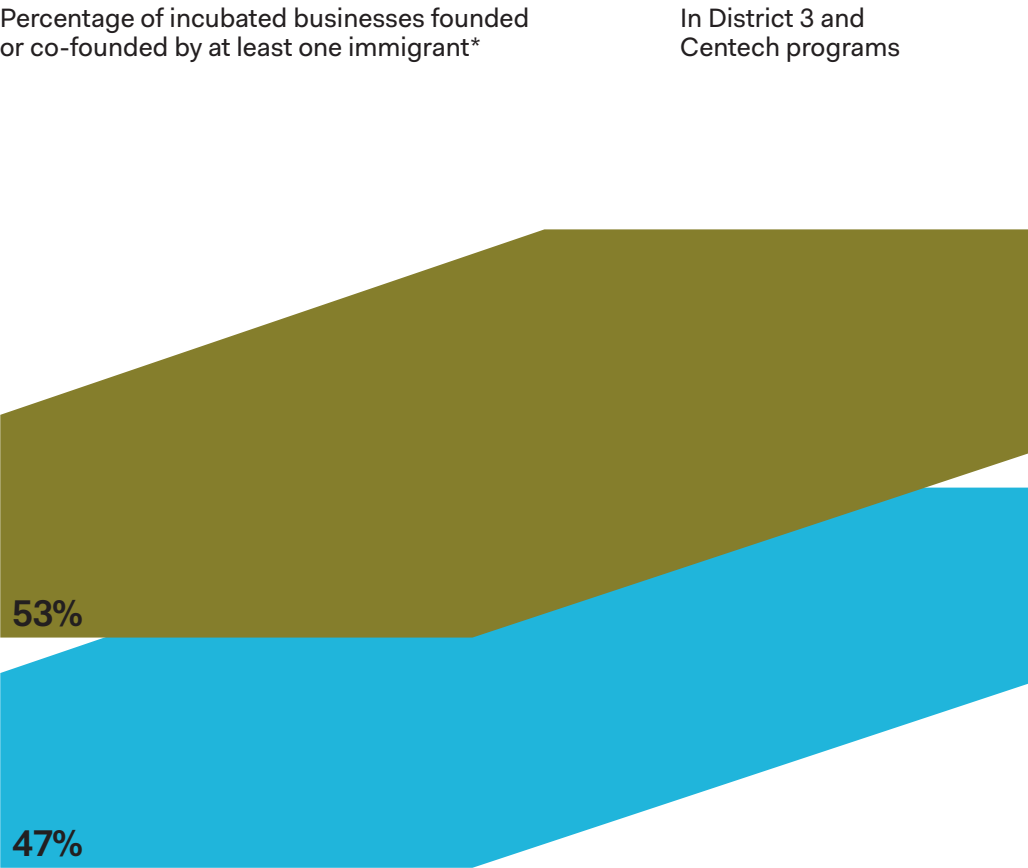
Entrepreneurial innovation—an important driver of renewal and growth for any modern society—also relies heavily on the presence of international talent. Historically, Québec has lagged in this respect.



With 22 percent of the Canadian population but only 14 percent of start-ups, Québec is lagging behind Ontario (44 percent of start-ups for 39 percent of the population).

By further supporting international students, particularly in STEM, to become entrepreneurs, Québec is giving itself the means to close the gap with Canada’s leading provinces when it comes to the creation of innovative technology companies. This talent is a strategic resource for building tomorrow’s economy.” (Our translation)

Richard Chénier
President and Ceo, Québec Tech



- At least one co-founder who is an immigrant
 - Other companies
- * With one of the following statuses: temporary study or work permit, permanent resident, or holder of a Québec Selection Certificate.

Several studies have also shown that a signification proportion of Québec's most dynamic start-ups were founded by immigrants, including international students.



- At least one co-founder with a study permit
- At least one co-founder who is an immigrant (excluding study permit holders)
- Other companies

“For all sorts of reasons, more immigrants start businesses. Becoming an entrepreneur is often their way of carving out a place for themselves.” (Our translation)

Marjorick Foisy
General Director, Centech

“We often forget that starting a business is a real option for researchers. When 80 percent of PhD graduates leave academia, it’s rather straightforward: starting a business is a viable path, and full of potential.” (Our translation)

Anna Ehrhardt
Director of Administration
and Operations, District3

International students’ ability to navigate cultures, seize transnational opportunities, and mobilize diverse networks is a real asset for Québec innovation. Capitalizing on this talent not only supports entrepreneurship, but also enriches the basis for long-term value creation.

College Level Training

The college network also fills pressing skilled labour needs in Québec, specifically in the food services, hospitality, design, management, and digital technology sectors.

Among the subsidized private colleges focused on internationalization, LaSalle College is known for exporting its expertise around the world through a network of affiliated campuses on several continents. Its international reach makes it a key player of Québec's education system abroad, while contributing to the province's appeal as a training destination.

From Campus to Economy:
Positive Externality and Impacts
of Student Mobility in AI

Québec has established itself as a centre of excellence in artificial intelligence, a field in which international student contribution is critical.

At Montréal's Institut de valorisation des données (IVADO), most of the members of the scientific leadership team were part of the international student community before making their mark in Québec's research sector. Today, they are training

the new generation of international students, further contributing to advances in AI research and promoting Québec's role in AI.

IVADO's talent and the entire AI ecosystem in Montréal are also attracting big companies such as Google and Microsoft, who come to Montréal to work on research and innovation.

“International students have a remarkable thirst for success, because for them failing comes at a much greater cost.” (Our translation)

Aurélie Labbe
Scientific Co-Director, IVADO

Beyond their direct contribution to the organizations they join or found, people from the international student community enrich their workplace and, more generally, Québec society. Their social and cultural input can be seen in all sectors, including the arts and gastronomy. Moreover, those from French-speaking countries contribute in major ways to the vitality of the French language in Québec.



Recruiting from the international student community, an economically strategic choice

(2023)
Federal and provincial

Comparison of government expenditures for Québec-born individuals with a graduate degree vs. individuals who came to Québec to study

	Students with Québec residence	International students
Birth and early childhood	\$36,600	\$0
Kindergarten and elementary school	\$140,035	\$0
High school and college (CEGEP)	\$160,040	\$0
University	\$100,025	\$100,025
Total expenditures	\$438,700	\$100,025

- The education of international students costs the government less as their pre-university education was financed abroad.
- International students pay higher tuition fees and spend three times as much as local students (\$245,000 over four years for an international student versus \$93,500 over four years for a Québec student).
- Whether international students stay in Québec or not, they contribute to the provincial economy during their studies.
- If international students stay, they integrate the job market and fully participate in the economy.

Today, in many sectors, international experience is seen as a major asset. It not only shows off one's academic skills, but also highlights the ability to adapt to complex environments and diverse cultural contexts.

It is no coincidence, then, that the executive committees of major Québec businesses include many people who did part of their studies abroad. The open-mindedness that stems from this experience fosters an ability to deal with complexity, collaborate on an international scale, and innovate in diversified environments.

Managers who studied abroad intuitively recognize the strategic value of mixed teams, where experiences and perspectives complement each other.

“Studying in London helped me to better understand European government mechanisms, but especially the different perspectives of my teams and clients. An international experience makes us less focused on our own reality.” (Our translation)

Hélène V. Gagnon

Chief People and Sustainability Officer
and Senior Vice-President, Stakeholder Engagement,
CAE who studied at the London School of Economics

“INSEAD changed my perspective. Studying abroad means learning to think differently, to navigate complexity, and to redefine who you are, both as a professional and a human being.” (Our translation)

Lili Fortin

President and CEO, Tristan, MBA from INSEAD

“It is not my training as a doctor that made me who I am today, but my studies abroad.” (Our translation)

Dr. Lucie Opatrny

President and Executive Director,
McGill University Health Centre (MUHC),
Graduate from the Harvard Business School

Diversity in Business: An Advantage Boosted by the Presence of International Students

Research by the Institute for Governance of Private and Public Organizations (IGOPP) highlights how diversity on boards of directors and leadership teams fosters innovation, informed decision-making, and competitiveness. And yet, there is still a lack of diverse representation in Canadian businesses.

International students who studied in Québec have the potential to fill this gap. In addition to enhancing company culture with their unique perspectives, they have

been exposed to Québec's norms and values, thus making their integration into the company easier.

IGOPP shows that diverse businesses perform better and are better positioned internationally. Leveraging the integration of international students on teams and boards of directors is a strategic lever to attract and retain highly skilled labour while reinforcing a company's competitiveness.

Leaving Québec After Graduation

Not everyone who studies in Québec chooses to stay here long-term: Most return to their home countries to reunite with family and friends or pursue their studies or careers elsewhere. But their impact on Québec's economy, culture, and society can be felt well after they finish their studies.

The international community that has studied, lived, and sometimes worked in Québec develops a keen understanding of the society. The subsequent potential to facilitate relationships between Québec and students' home countries is immense. After leaving Québec, these graduates become natural allies who can drive exchanges, institutional cooperation, and business opportunities.

Their roles as intermediaries between their home societies and Québec also align with scientific diplomacy, where academic exchanges, joint research, and connections between institutions foster international collaboration, global problem-solving, and Québec's strategic positioning on the world stage.

These often-informal ties are discreet, yet powerful assets for Québec's internationalization. For this reason, several delegations closely follow the post-graduation journeys of international students and maintain close ties with them.

Québec's Delegation in Senegal

Québec's Invisible International Alumni Network: A Strategic Asset for Québec Diplomacy

Interview with Iya Touré, Québec Delegate-General in Dakar, Senegal

Tracking international students after they graduate is a recurring challenge for many universities and Québec's delegations abroad. Despite the importance of international alumni in bilateral relations, there is still no structured tool or database to systematically follow-up with them. "We organize activities, send invitations on social media but only some people respond; that doesn't give us a good overall picture (our translation)," explains Iya Touré, the Québec Delegate-General in Dakar. Several other delegations and offices, Canadian embassies, and educational institutions echo this observation.

And yet, the impact of the international alumni community is still tangible. "As soon as we introduce ourselves, people mention that they studied at Sherbrooke, Laval, or HEC... or that their kids are studying there. It happens a lot (our translation)," says Touré. This shared connection makes it easier to access high-level stakeholders and opens doors. Touré remembers a meeting with a minister in Benin, for example, which was orchestrated by the minister's assistant ... who studied in Québec.

Instances like these have a snowball effect as the "scientist in residence" pilot program, a recent delegation initiative, illustrates. A young Senegalese data expert and doctoral student, who studied at the University of Québec at Montréal, was accepted into the program for a one-year term. Thanks to his contacts back in Senegal, he facilitated an important meeting with the president of the country's national assembly, which included an

influential cabinet member who had also studied in Québec. A few weeks later, the Senegalese government recruited this young data scientist.

"I was asked if I was disappointed that he left. Not at all. He'll be more useful to his country, and now I have an ally, a go-between, in government (our translation)," states Youré.

The pool of recent graduates is also a valuable resource for local diplomatic recruitment. "They understand our culture, our language, and they know winter (our translation)," adds Touré with a laugh. In his delegation, the vast majority of people, whether expatriates or local staff, have a direct link to Québec.

Touré himself is a former international student. He came to Québec at the age of 18 to study at HEC Montréal before embarking on a remarkable career in Québec's economic apparatus. For over seventeen years, he held strategic positions at Investissement Québec, specifically as vice-president of Ressources Québec (mines, hydrocarbons, and energy) and as senior director of specialized funding and director for northwestern Québec, developing a keen understanding of regional economic realities and the local industrial fabric.

"I'm a product of Québec and proud of it. I learned everything there. And today, I represent Québec on the world stage." (Our translation)

Iya Touré,
Québec Delegate-General in Dakar

The best way to maximize this impact is to cultivate a sense of lasting loyalty from the very start of one's studies, an approach that is more common in English universities. Nevertheless, French institutions in Québec are beginning to follow up with their international graduate cohorts: Some even organize events abroad to maintain relationships with former students and encourage philanthropic giving.

When international students graduate and leave Québec, they hold a strong influence and become strategic intermediaries in the formal and informal networks they built during their studies. Their experience abroad contributes to the circulation of knowledge and the solidarity between nations.



HEC Paris and Its “Alumni Houses” Around the World

HEC Paris relies on HEC Alumni, a powerful international alumni network, to recruit top talent. With six representative offices on five continents, the school organizes events, develops partnerships, and reinforces its local reputation.

Since 2023, new “alumni houses” in London and Beijing have also served as meeting places for the HEC community. Supported by eighty thousand people around the world, the network directly contributes to the school's global appeal, and more broadly to the promotion of France's higher education system around the world.

Without these crucial networks, which depend on key people, Québec could not remain competitive in key sectors.

International Graduates in Italy: A Strategic Asset for Québec

Québec's delegations around the world and universities make lists and organize events to mobilize and maintain ties with alumni, who today occupy influential positions.

In Rome, several alumni work in United Nations agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of

the United Nations, the World Food Programme, and the International Fund for Agricultural Development. While in Milan, Teatro alla Scala's fundraising and sponsorship manager—who graduated from HEC Montréal in 2017—builds bridges between her institution and Québécois culture.

The power of word-of-mouth in attracting international talent

While universities make targeted efforts to attract international students, they have noticed that a significant number of applicants come from countries where no prospecting was done. This confirms the importance of the “Québec brand” with international students, amplified by word-of-mouth. By sharing their experience, international students help attract other international talent, enriching the network.

Volume10 interviews, research, and analyses.

On the business side, Québec-trained international graduates also represent a valuable resource, even after their departure. They facilitate prospecting, canvassing, and networking with local talent, opening the door to new markets. In a world where success rests largely on the quality of networks, student mobility is a strategic advantage.

“We train artists here who end up at the Ballet de Lorraine or in Zurich. Our schools rival the best in the world—like the Paris Opéra Ballet School. We’re exporting Québec know-how. And that’s a powerful way to showcase Québec on the world stage.” (Our translation)

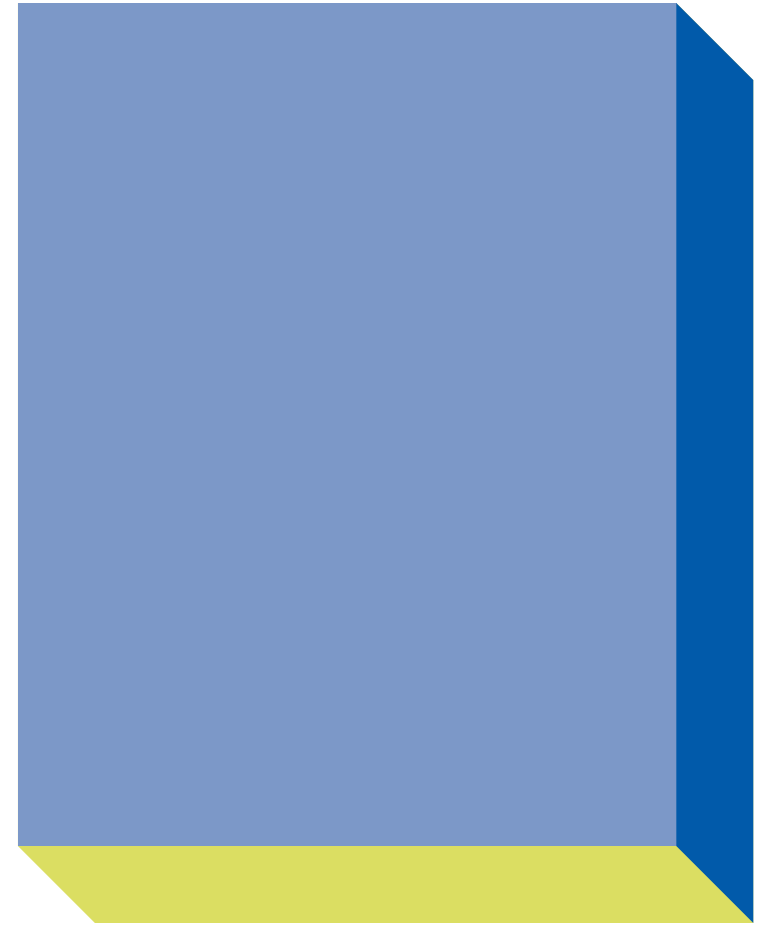
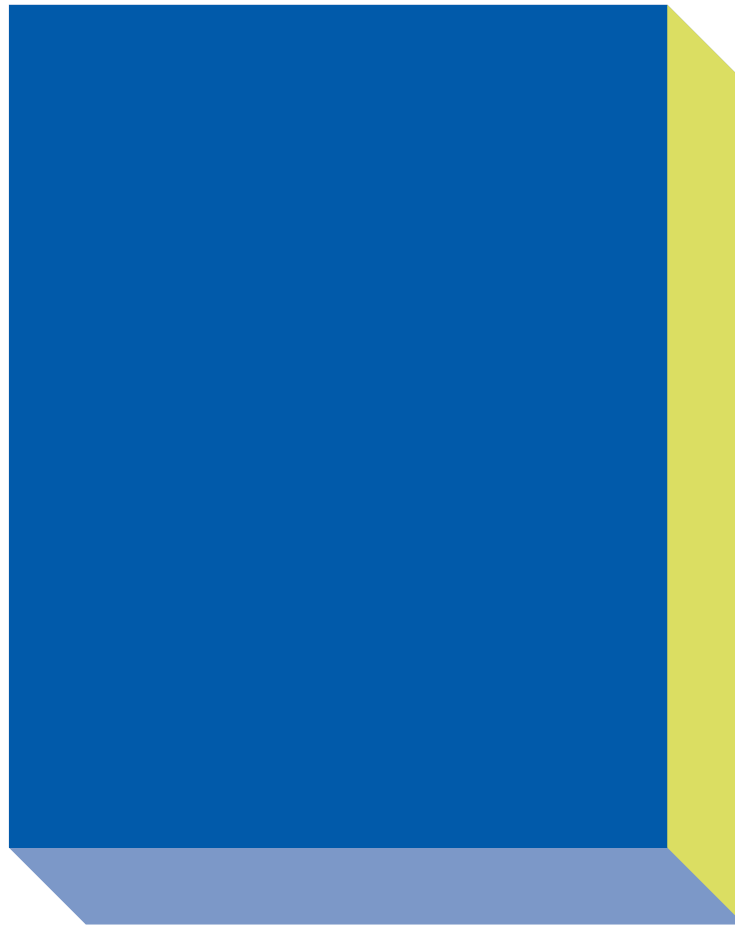
Alix Laurent
Executive Director, École supérieure
de ballet du Québec

In other words, international students who complete a degree in Québec become the province’s best economic, scientific, and cultural ambassadors. By forging relationships with specialists, companies, and institutions in their home countries, they promote exchanges, partnerships, and the identification of talent. They also contribute to the international reputation of Québec products and expertise.

“Welcoming international students and encouraging Québec students to study abroad is the best way for a society like Québec to build international networks and relationships.” (Our translation)

Henri-Paul Rousseau
“Le triangle exportations,
immigration et éducation,” 2017

Portraits



Aldo Bensadoun
A Dream Born of Many Cultures

Discipline: Business
Country of Origin: Morocco, Algeria
Current Residence: Québec

Born in Morocco to French parents born in Algeria., Aldo Bensadoun studied at the Henri-IV Lycée in France before crossing the Atlantic to study at Cornell University in the United States. However, when he visited Montréal on a weekend trip, he instantly fell in love with the city: Seduced by its bilingualism, ambiance, and warmth, he decided to transfer to McGill University to pursue a degree in economics.

“I felt like it was truly fertile ground to grow. There were no barriers, no walls, that prevented me from advancing,” states Bensadoun.

At McGill in the 1960s, a time of great social unrest, Aldo discovered more than academics: He immersed himself fully in the intellectual and artistic counterculture, which would shape his vision of the world. Inspired by the big issues of the decade and the philanthropic involvement of key figures in Québec, he developed a profound conviction: To prove it was possible to succeed in business without compromising your values as a human being—love, respect, and integrity.

After a short return to France to complete his military service, he decided to move back to Montréal, attracted by the entrepreneurial freedom he felt there. After a few years of working in retail, he founded Aldo in 1972, the company that bears his name. Right from the outset, his goal went beyond commercial success: He wanted to build a human-centred company that would actively contribute to the economic dynamism of his adopted community.

For him, Montréal was more than just a host city: It was the foundation for his personal and professional success. He emphasizes the important role “the authentic community, the absence of rigid social barriers, and the harmonious coexistence of languages and cultures,” played in his journey.

“I maybe wouldn’t have achieved all of this in Europe,” he confides, expressing his gratitude to Québec and Canada for providing a space of freedom and growth.

Awarded the Order of Canada and the Ordre national du Québec, Bensadoun is still driven by a strong belief: **“The idea is to attract people to Québec who want to keep this flame alive.”** He believes Québec needs to keep its doors open to international students as it is **“this mix of cultures and ideas that makes society evolve.”**

He humbly concludes: **“I had a dream, I wanted to achieve something, and it was the ambiance in Canada that allowed me to become who I am today.”**

Now recognized as one of the leading figures in the Québec and Canadian economy, Bensadoun has never forgotten what Montréal offered. His numerous philanthropic contributions to education, culture, and innovation are a testament of his deeply-rooted attachment to the society that helped him thrive.

His trajectory is a shining example of everything Québec can gain when it opens its doors to international talent.



Gina Cody
Engineer, Business Leader, Philanthropist,
and International Education Advocate

Discipline: Building Engineering
Country of Origin: Iran
Current Residence: Ontario

- **Aryamehr University of Technology (1975-1979)**
Bachelor of Engineering
- **Concordia University (1979-1981)**
Master of Building Engineering
- **Concordia University (1981-1989)**
PhD of Building Engineering
- **Construction Control Inc. (CCI)**
Engineer, then President and CEO and Principal Shareholder

Dr. Gina Cody is an Iranian-Canadian engineer and business owner whose journey perfectly illustrates the transformative power of education, ambition, and perseverance.

In 1979, at the height of the revolution in Iran, she emigrated to Canada with a bachelor's degree in engineering from Iran's top university, \$2,000 in her pocket, and a rock-solid determination to pursue her studies. She decided to come to Montréal, as her brother had just finished his engineering degree at Concordia University. Accepted at both UCLA and McGill University, it was ultimately Concordia that changed her destiny: A professor, impressed by her academic performance, offered her a scholarship on the spot. **"I arrived Labour Day weekend. A professor saw my grades and said, 'Why would you study elsewhere? I'm offering you a scholarship.' That changed everything,"** recounts Dr. Cody.

This moment was a turning point in her life and the start of her long-term commitment to Québec and higher education. In 1981, she completed her master's degree in

engineering at Concordia. In 1989, she became the first woman in the history of the university—and the first in Canada—to obtain a PhD in building engineering.

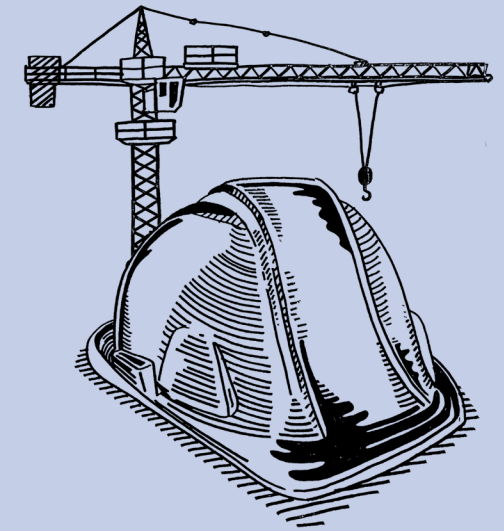
Deeply attached to Montréal, where her husband—of Québécois and Irish descent—was also living, she decided nonetheless to move to Toronto due to a lack of professional opportunities in Québec at the time. Her career in the private sector spanned more than thirty years, working for large real estate investment trusts, developers, and Canadian institutions. She was the president and CEO and principal shareholder of CCI Group Inc., a national engineering-consulting firm based in Toronto, where she worked until she retired in 2016.

Today, Dr. Cody is one of the few women to preside over a company listed on the TSX60 (CAPREIT). She also chairs the board of European Residential REIT, and sits on the boards of several organizations, including EllisDon Construction, CIMA+, and Sienna Senior Living.

Known for her deep desire to give back, she always wanted to pay the support she received forward. In 2018, she made a historic gift of \$15 million to Concordia University—one of the largest donations ever made by a woman in Canada—to promote diversity and inclusion in engineering and computer science. The school's Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science has been renamed the Gina Cody School of Engineering and Computer Science in her honour.

"Montréal welcomed me with open arms. It changed my life. I always felt like I wanted to give back and open doors for the next generation."

Today, she is the chancellor of Concordia University and sits on the advisory board of the Gina Cody School, where she continues to influence the institution's strategic orientations. She was also named honorary lieutenant-colonel of the Canadian Armed Forces' 34th Combat Engineer Regiment in Montréal.



Foutsé Khomh
From International Student to One
of Québec's Leading AI Developers

Discipline: Software Engineering and Artificial Intelligence
Country of Origin: Cameroon
Current Residence: Québec

Originally from Cameroon, Foutsé Khomh grew up in an environment where learning, knowledge, and books occupied a central place. His father, a mathematics professor, passed down his passion for numbers, while his mother, an English teacher, opened his mind to communication and different cultures. His insatiable curiosity and constant need for intellectual stimulation quickly set him apart, and he would skip class frequently out of boredom.

He began his university studies in mathematics in Cameroon before turning to software engineering. It did not take long for him to realize that his real interest lay in technology's ability to concretely impact society. But he found little satisfaction in the research being carried out around him, seeing a disconnect between the problems associated with education and the real needs of the society in which he was evolving. After working in the private sector, which he felt was redundant, he decided to return to research.

Through a string of meetings, he ended up in Québec, guided by childhood friends who had studied there. More importantly, he was attracted to the way Québec researchers engaged in scientific discussions with students. When he

arrived at the University of Montréal, the rich intellectual environment—with iconic figures such as Gilles Brassard in cryptography and Yoshua Bengio in artificial intelligence—left an impression on him.

"I had it all: a stimulating environment, complex problems to solve, and friends by my side," remembers Khomh.

After completing his degree, he thought about heading to the United States to work in industrial research, but his mentors urged him to stay in Québec. They argued that in Québec, he would not just have an impact but he would retain the freedom essential to his research. So he asked himself: Why did Gilles Brassard chose to stay in Québec when he could have left? He realized that staying would have a snowball effect: If he stays and builds a strong ecosystem, then he will attract other top international talent. **"There's a reciprocal influence between the research specialists who choose to stay. By seeing Yoshua Bengio and Gilles Brassard build something here, I understood that where you are does not matter so much. If you strongly believe in what you are doing, you can build a fertile environment wherever you are."**

Becoming a professor at Polytechnique Montréal means he is now invested in the training and engineering research of the next generation of artificial intelligence and software engineering experts. At the university, he supervises both domestic and international students and emphasizes the importance of recruiting from abroad to fuel Québec's research pipeline. **"We have the opposite challenge: I celebrate every time I attract an undergraduate student to pursue graduate studies, because if I don't, then we would have to recruit from abroad. Today, we have a global reach, which allows me to attract talent from Thailand, Italy, Belgium, and other countries."**

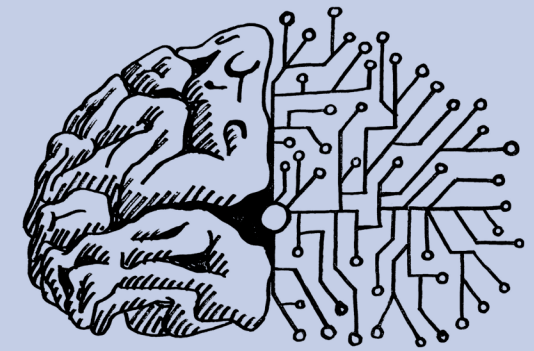
Over the years, he has become aware of the strategic impact of research and the need to develop a strong scientific ecosystem locally. **"It's easy to believe that opportunities are better elsewhere, but the truth is, we have the power to build and innovate here. It's more stimulating to build in Québec and to see the direct impact on society."**

His commitment does not stop at his research; he is convinced that a diversity of ideas is key for innovation. **"In science, a diversity of opinions and ways of thinking is crucial for creativity. We're so much stronger and richer when we must**

face different approaches. Otherwise, we risk all thinking and framing our problems in too uniform a way. That's why it's so critical to bring in new blood and fresh insights."

Yet, he worries about recent restrictions on international students and the increased competition in attracting scientific talent. **"We have built a great ecosystem, but we need to preserve it. Today, other countries like France are investing heavily to attract the best AI researchers. We need to give ourselves the means to remain competitive."**

Khomh's story is the perfect example of an international student who, through talent and dedication, contributed to the rise of AI in Québec. His journey illustrates the importance of student mobility and scientific research in driving innovation and technological development. Today, he continues to promote Québec on the world scientific stage, training the next generation of specialists to shape the future of AI and software engineering.



LAUREN

Lauren Rathmell

From Biochemistry to Rooftop Farming:
A Journey Rooted in Montréal

Discipline: Biochemistry

Country of Origin: United States

Current Residence: Québec

Lauren Rathmell's story begins just across the border, in Vermont. When it came time to choose a university, she was looking for a place that was close to home, urban, and vibrant. Montréal checked all the boxes. **"It was less than two hours away, familiar but exciting. I knew the city, and McGill was one of my top choices,"** she recalls. The decision came down to McGill and New York University, but Montréal's international energy, its accessibility, and McGill's strong academic reputation sealed the deal.

Lauren enrolled in a biochemistry program with a minor in neuroscience. It was a field she loved, but beyond the lectures and labs, it was the city and the campus that made a lasting impression.

"What's unique about McGill is that it's a historic institution right in the heart of the city. You feel part of something bigger."

That sense of belonging, coupled with the diversity she encountered at McGill, shaped the way Lauren would later build her own company. **"It really broadened**

my worldview. You connect with people from everywhere, not just geographically, but from different disciplines and perspectives. That kind of exposure becomes a foundation."

What followed was not a grand plan, it was a series of timely steps and bold choices. A year after graduating, Lauren and her co-founders launched Lufa Farms, the world's first commercial rooftop greenhouse. What started as a visionary concept quickly became a growing reality. **"I was doing independent research at McGill's Macdonald Campus in sustainable farming and hydroponics. That research, those resources, and the professors there helped get our first greenhouse off the ground."**

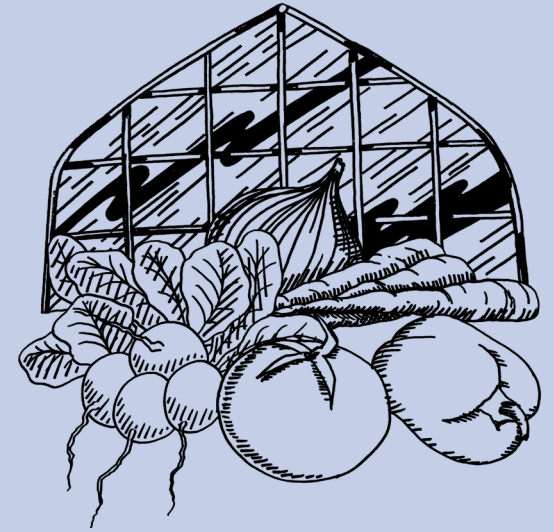
By 2011, Lufa Farms was producing and delivering a few hundred food baskets a week. Today, the company delivers thirty thousand baskets weekly, operates over five hundred thousand square feet of rooftop greenhouses and indoor farms, employs nearly one thousand staff, and feeds roughly 2 percent of Montréal. **"We've built a vertically integrated,**

online farmers' market. We grow food, source it, package it, and deliver it directly to our customers. We don't go through retailers. It's transparent, local, and sustainable."

While the company's core operations remain centred in Montréal, its model and influence reach far beyond the city—paving the way for new approaches to urban farming around the world.

Montréal, Lauren says, was the right place to launch such a bold idea. **"The entrepreneurial atmosphere here is open and supportive—especially in urban agriculture. There's a strong network, and we were lucky to be part of a movement that kept growing."**

Though she technically came from "next door," Lauren embodies what many international students bring to Québec: bold ideas, global perspectives, and deep local impact. Her journey—grounded in science, nurtured by Montréal, and fuelled by innovation—has helped reshape the way a city feeds itself.



GEOFFREY

Geoffrey Gaguère

A Belgian Living Out His Passion in Québec

Discipline: Theatre

Country of Origin: Belgium

Current Residence: Québec

When Geoffrey Gaguère discovered Québec theatre at a festival while he was a student in dramatic arts at the Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles, it was a revelation. The bold staging, organic acting, and freedom of interpretation he observed in Wajdi Mouawad's adaptation of *Voyage au bout de la nuit* left a deep impression on him. It was a pivotal moment and led him to audition for the National Theatre School of Canada.

"If I hadn't gone to the National Theatre School, I wouldn't have the career I have today," he confides. The training was a springboard, enabling him to forge lasting ties with his peers and carve out a place for himself on the Québec theatre scene.

For thirty years now, Gaguère has called Québec home, immersing himself fully in its dramatic culture, history, and social codes.

"I dove in body and soul," he says. But the experience was not without its pitfalls: His Belgian accent was a challenge in an environment where the Québécois accent is a fundamental tool. As a result, he developed other skills, notably in directing.

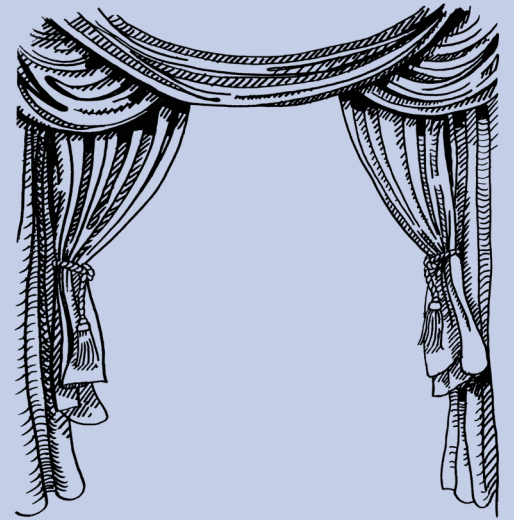
After performing on some of Québec's biggest stages, specifically at the Théâtre Denise-Pelletier, Théâtre Duceppe, and Théâtre du Nouveau Monde (TNM), he turned to artistic direction. From 2008 to 2018, he oversaw the artistic direction at Théâtre Debout, a theatrical creation company. From 2014 to 2022, he managed the Théâtre Espace Libre, where he implemented a structuring development strategy and increased support for a new generation of performers and creators.

In 2023, his commitment to the transmission of knowledge brought him to the helm of the Conservatoire d'art dramatique de Montréal, a role that enabled him to continue shaping the future of Québec's theatre scene.

Now the managing director of the TNM, Gaguère uses his sensible approach and hybrid career to promote all aspects of theatre. For him, theatre is a place of welcome, dialogue, and openness. Regarding recent government announcements on culture, he insists: **"Cutting yourself off from the other, regardless of where they are from, is a mistake. Our ability to welcome others is what will enable us to overcome current challenges."**

His philosophy of inclusion and connection is what fuels his work and breathes new energy into the TNM.

Gaguère is one of the emblematic faces of Québec theatre, proving that the art of performance in Québec is first and foremost a story of openness, pushing boundaries, and passion.



Effrosyni Diamantoudi
A Greek Professor Calls Montréal Home

Discipline: Economics
Country of Origin: Greece
Current Residence: Québec

- **University of Ottawa (1992-1994)**
Bachelor of Business Administration
- **McGill University (1994-1995)**
Master of Economics
- **Concordia University (1995-2000)**
PhD of Economics
- **Aarhus University, Denmark (2000-2003)**
Assistant Professor
- **Concordia University (2003-2025)**
Professor, Associate Professor, Full Professor,
Dean of Graduate Studies

For Effrosyni Diamantoudi living in Canada was not a long-term goal, rather a temporary adventure, a thirst for something different. But when she travelled to Montréal for the first time as an undergraduate student at the University of Ottawa, the city left an impression on her—one that would influence the rest of her career. Attracted to Montréal's openness and dynamic nature, she applied for a master's degree at McGill University, where she was immediately thrown into a sort of microcosm of the world, with different cultures blending naturally.

“Just image the meals we shared,” she recalls. **“It was so authentic: Every person would bring a traditional dish from their home country.”**

Yet, she had no plans to settle in Québec; like her classmates, she was focused on her studies and on enjoying her time in a welcoming city.

After completing her PhD, she lived in Europe for six years. Despite a successful teaching career in Denmark, the pull Montréal had was too strong and she

accepted a position at Concordia University, shaping her professional and personal life. Today, Montréal is so much more than just a city to her: It is where she lives, learned French, integrated, and started a family.

Despite her attachment to Canada, Dr. Diamantoudi has seen how universities have changed how they welcome international students. **“When I first came here in 1995, at the time of the referendum, there were political discussions on Québec's struggles, but I never felt blamed,”** she states. **“Today, things have changed.”**

She believes that international student's high employability, mobility, and talent are valuable assets. The presence of international students fosters diversity and innovation, but if policies become too restrictive and they no longer feel welcome, they are likely to leave. And Canada risks losing the very people who have shaped its academic and economic landscape.



FRANCIS

Francis Mugombozi
A Pillar of Innovation in Québec

Discipline: Engineering
Country of Origin: Democratic Republic of Congo
Current Residence: Québec

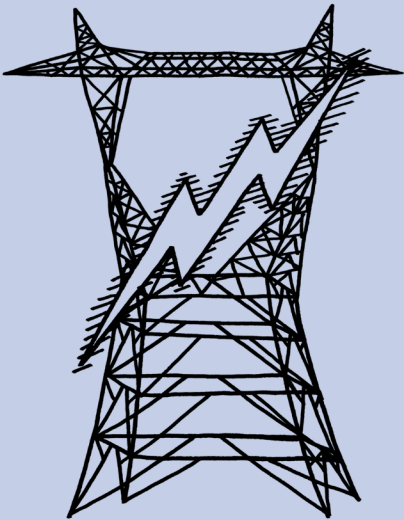
- **Polytechnique Montréal (2001-2005)**
Bachelor of Engineering
- **Polytechnique Montréal (2005-2007)**
Master of Science
- **Polytechnique Montréal (2008-2013)**
PhD of Engineering

When DRC-native Francis Mugombozi arrived in Montréal in 2001 to study at Polytechnique Montréal, he never imagined we would become the head of research and development at Hydro-Québec's Research Centre (CRHQ) and a key player in Québec innovation. A specialist in power system simulations, he is behind two major innovations: the EMTP advanced power system simulation software and co-simulation. These technological advances, which today are used worldwide, illustrate the direct impact international expertise has on Québec's energy sector.

As a researcher, he played a critical role in the modernization of the EMTP software, redesigning one of its key modules. He updated the programming language and integrated innovative features, using parallel computing to carry out calculations simultaneously. This made calculation times almost thirty times faster, improving engineering efficiency and enabling simulations otherwise impossible. His work helped accelerate project development and enhanced the accuracy of analyses.

At Hydro-Québec, he also introduced the co-simulation concept, an approach that allows several simulators to work at the same time while remaining independent. Ultimately, this breakthrough makes it possible to identify and mitigate cybersecurity risks.

Mugombozi's journey illustrates the contributions international students make to Québec innovation and the importance of welcoming and integrating international talent. His work has not just benefitted Hydro-Québec, but the entire energy sector, strengthening Québec's reputation as a research and development leader.



AMIR

Amir
Not All Smooth Sailing for
a Chemical Engineering Graduate

Discipline: Chemical Engineering
Country of Origin: Iran
Current Residence: British Columbia

- **Petroleum University of Technology (2009-2013)**
Bachelor of Engineering
- **Iran University of Science and Technology (2013-2015)**
Master of Science
- **Laval University (2018-2023)**
PhD of Chemical Engineering
- **University of British Columbia (2023-2025)**
Post-Doctoral Fellow in Mechanical Engineering

Motivated by the opportunity to undertake a PhD in chemical engineering under the supervision of a renowned expert, Amir arrived at Laval University in 2018, after completing a master's degree in science in Iran. Despite his enthusiasm, he soon realized that his limited understanding of French was an obstacle, particularly when he tried to open a bank account or socialize. In addition, his doctoral schedule did not allow him to devote much time to the subsidized French courses in which he was enrolled.

His integration into the international student community was also difficult, despite the friends he had made since his arrival and his great admiration for the university's culture and environment. Outside Laval University, however, his path was even more complex: Québec job

prospects in his field were limited, and job applications sent to other provinces yielded no positive results. Immigration policies further complicated things, as to qualify for permanent residence in Québec, he had to master French (level B2) and have worked in the province for at least a year. Waiting times were also very long, whereas his peers in British Columbia could apply for residency much more quickly. So, in 2024, he moved to Vancouver to take advantage of a better job market and an easier integration process without language barriers.

Despite the challenges he faced, Amir still feels connected to Québec and continues to learn French, stating that he would return to Québec if an interesting job opportunity presented itself.

DIANA

Diana Moreno
From Colombia to Drummondville:
A Commitment to French and the Community

Discipline: French
Country of Origin: Colombia
Current Residence: Drummondville

Colombia-native Diana Moreno dreamed of living in a French-speaking country for a long time. Her dream is what brought her to Québec, attracted by the language, culture, and geographic proximity to Latin America. In 2010, she enrolled in the University of Québec at Trois-Rivières to perfect her French at the International French School, which became her gateway to a new life.

After her studies, she started working in the private sector as an assistant controller at a food processing plant. She then moved into public service, working for the ministry of transportation, where she climbed the ranks, becoming an administrative technician before returning to the public sector as a project accountant at EXP.

But what really sets Moreno apart is her social engagement. She has actively contributed to her community—first in Trois-Rivières, then in Drummondville—getting involved with numerous organizations and committees. An interpreter and translator for INTRO Drummondville, a member of the city's immigration board since 2020, a volunteer for the Drummondville symphony orchestra, and a board member for several cultural and educational organizations, she also sits on the local committee to promote French. In a nutshell, she is a shining example of successful integration, rooted in community participation and generosity.

Touched by the values of equality and solidarity she witnessed when she first arrived, Moreno states that she feels like she truly belongs: “**Québec is my home, body and soul.**”

ISABELLE

Isabelle Péan
How a Student Exchange in SME Management at UQTR Played a Decisive Role

Discipline: SME Management
Country of Origin: France
Current Residence: Québec

- **François Rabelais University, Tours (France)**
Master 1 of Economics, Advanced Graduate Diploma in Business Management
- **University of Québec at Trois-Rivières**
Master of Small and Medium Enterprise Management
- **Géo Alliance**
Advisor, Business Strategy
- **Innovitech**
Senior Director, Health and Life Sciences
- **CHU Sainte-Justine Foundation**
Director, Major Gifts and Strategic Research
- **CHU Sainte-Justine**
Manager, Business Partnerships
- **McGill University**
Director, Community Innovation
- **Polytechnique Montréal Foundation and Alumni Association**
President and CEO
- **Stratégie-i3**
Founder

“My graduate studies laid the foundations for my entire career in Québec.”

Isabelle Péan's dream to study abroad became a reality when she took part in a student exchange program between the University of Tours (formerly François Rabelais) in France and the University of Québec at Trois-Rivières (UQTR). She had no idea what to expect. But right from the outset, she integrated a dynamic and well-established international student community.

She quickly got involved with university life by working on campus, even writing a welcome guide for international students for the UQTR's student affairs office.

Unlike France, where education was more theoretical at the time, Québec provided her with a hands-on learning environment. This more concrete and applied approach profoundly enhanced her experience.

Thirty years later, Péan still lives and works in Québec. Her choice to study abroad was decisive for her future, and her student experience shaped a rather impressive career.

AHMAD

Ahmad Rajab
From an Uncertain Future in Lebanon to a Successful Civil Engineering Career in Québec

Discipline: Building Engineering
Country of Origin: Lebanon
Current Residence: Québec

- **Beirut Arab University**
Bachelor of Engineering
- **Concordia University (2021-2023)**
Master of Construction Engineering and Management
- **Tetra Tech (2023-2025)**
Construction Estimator

“Studying with other international students allowed me to make friends from diverse backgrounds, which broadened my worldview.”

After completing his bachelor's degree in Lebanon, Ahmad Rajab decided to pursue a graduate degree in civil engineering at Concordia University. His desire to study abroad was motivated by several factors, notably the collapse of Lebanon's banking system in 2019.

Before arriving in Canada, he already had an impression of the country as a place where we could work on large-scale engineering projects. Wanting to settle here permanently and contribute to Canadian society, he chose Québec because he wanted to learn French and develop his skills in a multicultural

environment. Despite initial language- and pandemic-related challenges, he quickly adapted to his new home with the help of classmates from diverse backgrounds and the solid network forged upon his arrival, even in the midst of a health crisis.

Graduating in 2023, Rajab now works as a civil engineer for one of the most prestigious engineering-consulting firms in Montréal. He is actively learning French and feels well integrated in his new community. By welcoming international students such as him, Québec offers a haven from which to rebuild a future and become a valuable asset to society.

PERRETTE

Perrette Subtil
The Impact of a France-Québec Education
on the Cultural Milieu

Discipline: Museology and Art History
Country of Origin: France
Current Residence: Québec

- **École nationale supérieure d'architecture de Lyon (1991-1993)**
Bachelor of Architecture
- **École du Louvre (1993-1998)**
Bachelor of Art History, Master of Museology
- **HEC Montréal (2001-2004)**
Advanced Graduate Diploma
in Cultural Organization Management

“Education is amazing for cultural integration.”

In 1998, Perrette Subtil came to Montréal for a two-month internship at the Canadian Centre of Architecture—an opportunity made possible by a partnership between the graduate programs in museology at the University of Montréal and the École du Louvre. She chose the Québec internship because she wanted to discover this internationally renowned institution in the only French province in North America.

Luckily, the University of Montréal and the Office franco-québécoise pour la jeunesse (OFQJ) organized the financial and administrative aspects of her trip, such as her plane ticket and visa, making the whole process easier. Later, her studies in cultural organization management at

HEC Montréal sped up her integration. Other factors also played a role, notably the three-day course on Québec history offered as part of the OFQJ's orientation session and her Québécois husband, a key player in her connection to local culture.

Subtil now works in cultural organization management, where it is her turn to recruit international students and share Québec's history and culture with them to facilitate their integration.

Seeing their deep desire to participate in Québec's economy, she believes they will thrive in the province's diverse cultural sector where Francophonie plays an important role.

CLARISSE

Clarisse Bascans
Thanks to the ÉTS Network, a French
Entrepreneur Achieves Success in Québec

Discipline: Engineering and Start-Up Ecosystems
Country of Origin: France
Current Residence: Québec

- **INSA Lyon (2014-2017)**
Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering and Development
- **École de technologie supérieure (ÉTS) (2016-2018)** -
Master of Engineering in Healthcare Technology
- **McGill University (2017-2018)**
Surgical Innovation Program
- **HEC Montréal (2018-2019)**
Incubator EntrePrism Program

“It makes you want to stay: You have people who believe in you and support you in starting a business.”

French student Clarisse Bascans came to study engineering at the École de technologie supérieure (ÉTS) in Montréal.

Undecided about her career choice, she wanted to take part in a two-year study exchange outside of Europe. She opted for Québec, falling in love with the work-life balance, which meant she could even enjoy herself during the week.

Her involvement with the student association and graduate student committee at ÉTS left an impression on her, giving her the opportunity to organize a host of activities. Over the years, she built an international circle of friends, which she still thinks of as her second family.

After graduating, Bascans was encouraged to start a specialized consulting firm with another graduate student and an ÉTS employee. Supported by several specialists, this project reinforced her sense of belonging and her desire to stay, and the young team joined the EntrePrism program, a start-up incubator at HEC Montréal.

Since October 2023, Bascans has been coordinating the creation of itechsanté, ÉTS's new health technology research and innovation institute.

KARINE

Karine Deshayes

A Former International Student Helps Develop Welcome and Mobility Initiatives

Discipline: Commerce and International Business
Country of Origin: France
Current Residence: Québec

- **HEC Montréal (1998-2001)**
Bachelor of Business Administration,
Marketing, International Business
- **HEC Montréal (2001-2007)**
International Student Advisor
- **Polytechnique Montréal (2007-2010)**
Coordinator, International Student Services
- **HEC Montréal (2010-2015)**
Manager, International Student Services and Lecturer
- **University of Montréal (2015-2017)**
Master of Educational Psychology
- **HEC Montréal (2013-2024)**
Manager, Preparatory Year Program
- **HEC Montréal (2015-Present)**
Faculty Lecturer, Management

Karine Deshayes came to Montréal in 1998 to study at HEC Montréal, where she developed the first welcome services for international students. She then worked as the coordinator of Polytechnique Montréal's international student services, and for ten years managed the preparatory year program, geared at helping international students prepare for their first year of undergraduate studies.

At the beginning of the 2000s, universities still had poorly structured welcome practices for international students. Immigration procedures were particularly difficult: Regulations forced students to find employment right after graduating or else they would have to return to their home country. Most of her friends did in fact return to France, but she was able to stay in Québec thanks to HEC.

She participated in developing the university's international welcome initiatives, specifically adapting promotional material to French audiences and structuring housing services.

Afterward, she supported international students at Polytechnique and HEC, whose services at the time were focused on crisis management (culture shock, financial struggles, no support network, etc.). She watched as government immigration strategies evolved, and how university strategies followed suit.

As manager of HEC's preparatory year program, Deshayes implemented innovative programs focused on prevention, cultural integration, and academic support, all targeting students right when they arrived. By supporting students, she has contributed to their success and well-being.

Since January 2025, she has been responsible for intellectual integrity and the student code of ethics, tackling new challenges associated with artificial intelligence. And she continues to pursue her mission of supporting international students and helping them successfully integrate Québec society.

ANDRÉ

André Carpentier

A Sherbrooke Doctor, Professor, and Researcher Who Does Not Shy Away from Recruiting International Talent

MD FRCPC, Scientific Director of the CHUS Research Centre, Canada Research Chair

INSA Lyon (2014-2017)

Engineering Degree – Mechanical Engineering and Development

École de technologie supérieure (ÉTS) (2016-2018) -

Master of Applied Science – Health Technologies

McGill University (2017-2018)

Graduate Certificate in Surgical Innovation

HEC Montréal (2018-2019)

Start-up Incubator – "EntrePrism"

“Accepting international students substantially increases our ability to get the best minds, the best ideas for the field. It’s very advantageous.”

A renowned endocrinologist, Dr. André C. Carpentier is also a professor at the University of Sherbrooke and the scientific director of the CHUS research centre. He is the Canada research chair in the molecular imaging of diabetes and plays a leading role in cardiovascular and metabolic research.

Throughout his impressive career, he has collaborated with many talented people from other countries, emphasizing their important contributions to his laboratory. These include French postdoctoral researcher Christophe Noll, who initially joined his team temporarily, then decided to stay in Québec long-term because of the career opportunities and the stimulating research environment. Today, he plays a central role in Dr. Carpentier's laboratory, directly influencing scientific progress at the CHUS.

According to Dr. Carpentier, international collaborations initiated at the university level often continue beyond the study period: These collaborations facilitate connections between Québec and other world-renowned institutions. French student Émilie Montastier, who also worked temporarily in Dr. Carpentier's laboratory in 2019, is now a professor in Toulouse. Her studies at the University of Sherbrooke helped establish long-term scientific interactions between Québec and France, including with Dr. Dominique Langin's laboratory. This incredible collaboration led to a high-impact publication, the sharing of animal models, and the awarding of a joint Canadian grant.

GILBERT

Gilbert F. Hounghbo
UQTR Graduate,
Director-General of the
International Labour Organization

Originally from Togo, Gilbert F. Hounghbo completed a bachelor's degree and advanced graduate diploma in accounting and finance at the University of Québec at Trois-Rivières in the 1980s. His studies in Québec were a turning point in this trajectory, laying the foundations for a remarkable international career. After serving as prime minister of Togo from 2008 to 2012, he was elected as the president of the International Fund for Agricultural Development, before being elected as director-general of the International Labour Organization (ILO). The first African to hold this position, he embodies inclusive leadership and a strong commitment to global tripartite dialogue.

Néo UQTR (2022, April 1). *Un diplômé de l'UQTR à la barre de l'Organisation internationale du travail.*

MOUSTAPHA

Moustapha Mamba Guirassy
A Senegalese Politician
Who Studied Electrical
Engineering at UQAC

Born in Dakar, Moustapha Mamba Guirassy is a Senegalese entrepreneur and politician whose career was marked by his studies at the University of Québec at Chicoutimi (bachelor of engineering, 1989) and Laval University (MBA, 1991). Before returning to Senegal, he also had the opportunity to work on large-scale projects for Alcan's Laterrière plant.

When he returned to his home country, he became a higher education pioneer, founding the African Management Institute (AMI), which today is an influential network in West Africa. While his career took him away from Québec, his studies in the province influenced his vision and approach to education and innovation, indirectly contributing to the academic and economic ties between Québec and Francophone Africa.

Wikipedia. Moustapha Mamba Guirassy. Retrieved April 7, 2025, from https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moustapha_Mamba_Guirassy.

MOULAY

Moulay Hafid Elalamy
The University of Sherbrooke's
Positive Impact on A Moroccan
Business Man and Politician

Moulay Hafid Elalamy is a leader in Morocco's industrial, financial, and political sectors. After studying information systems at the University of Sherbrooke, he began his career in Québec, working for the ministry of finance and in the insurance sector, before returning to Morocco to build the Saham Group.

Today, as a former minister and well-known entrepreneur, he continues to talk about the positive impact of his Québec education in the Moroccan media. Through his testimonials, he helps raise the profile of the University of Sherbrooke and Québec on the international stage, enhancing their appeal to students and the business community.

University of Sherbrooke. *Moulay Hafid Elalamy*. Bureau des gouverneurs. Retrieved April 7, 2025, from <https://www.usherbrooke.ca/gouverneurs/nos-gouverneurs/moulay-hafid-elalamy>.

SARA

Sara Magdouli
Transforming Industrial Waste
into Sustainable Solutions
in Abitibi-Témiscamingue

Guided by her passion for biotechnologies applied to sustainable development, Tunisian student Sara Magdouli chose to study at INRS. Attracted by the excellent research facilities, she undertook a PhD in water sciences, exploring innovative processes for producing biodiesel from yeast.

Today an associate professor at the University of Québec at Abitibi-Témiscamingue, she is also the coordinator of the contaminated effluents and process laboratory at the Centre technologique des résidus industriels (CTRI), where she develops bioprocesses to treat mining effluents and recover waste. From there, she continues to collaborate with her former INRS colleagues and the entire Québec scientific community, promoting her alma mater and environmental innovation in Québec.

INRS Foundation (2024, August 21). *Sara Magdouli Career Path*. <https://fondation.inrs.ca/inrs-foundation-1/testimony-details/2024-08-21/sara-magdouli>.

STÉPHANE

Stéphane Ruggeri
Connecting Science and
Innovation in Québec

To explore new horizons, both scientific and cultural, Stéphane Ruggeri left his native France to undertake a PhD in rechargeable nickel-metal hydride batteries at the INRS-EMT. Sharing his time between INRS and Hydro-Québec's Varennes facilities, he pioneered the use of mechanical grinding for battery materials.

After working for the National Research Council of Canada's Industrial Materials Institute, he returned to INRS for a post-doctorate on fuel cells for motor vehicles. Two decades later, this project resonates with the current energy transition. Today, Ruggeri is the growth and innovation specialist at Développement économique de l'agglomération de Longueuil, where he helps individuals and businesses turn scientific discoveries into a reality.

INRS Foundation (2024, December 11).
Stéphane Ruggeri Career Path.

SEDA

Seda Yasa
An International Scientific
Talent Trained in Québec

When Seda Yasa discovered the research on neurodegenerative diseases being carried out at INRS, she knew she had found the ideal place to undertake a PhD in biology. She left Turkey for Laval, home to the Centre Armand-Frappier Biotechnologie. For five years, she researched the role of CLN proteins in lysosomal storage disorders, notably Batten disease. Thanks to the Biotech City's state-of-the-art facilities and financial support from INRS, she has published scientific articles and participated in international conferences.

She is now pursuing her research at Harvard University, where she is a postdoctoral fellow. Her time in Québec provided her with the scientific foundations and resources she needed to position herself as a leading researcher. By sharing her positive experience at INRS and Laval, she is raising the profile of Québec research on the international stage.

INRS Foundation (2024, August 22).
Seda Yasa Career Path.

ROSE

Rose Pola Pricémou
From Montréal to Leading
Guinea's Digital Sector

Originally from Guinea, Rose Pola Pricémou obtained a master's degree in computer research from the University of Montréal and an MBA in information technology management from Laval University, before spending ten years working for major institutions in Québec and Canada.

Armed with this expertise, she returned to Guinea in 2016, first joining the ministry of mines and geology, then taking on strategic roles promoting investment and innovation. In March 2024, she was appointed minister of posts, telecommunications, and digital economy, where she steers Guinea's digital transformation. Her career in Québec has nurtured her ambitious vision and leadership, which contribute to promoting Québec's expertise around the world.

Diallo, P. (2021, October 26). *Découvrez qui est Rose Pola Pricemou, la nouvelle ministre de l'information et de la communication!* Planète 7.

ANNICK

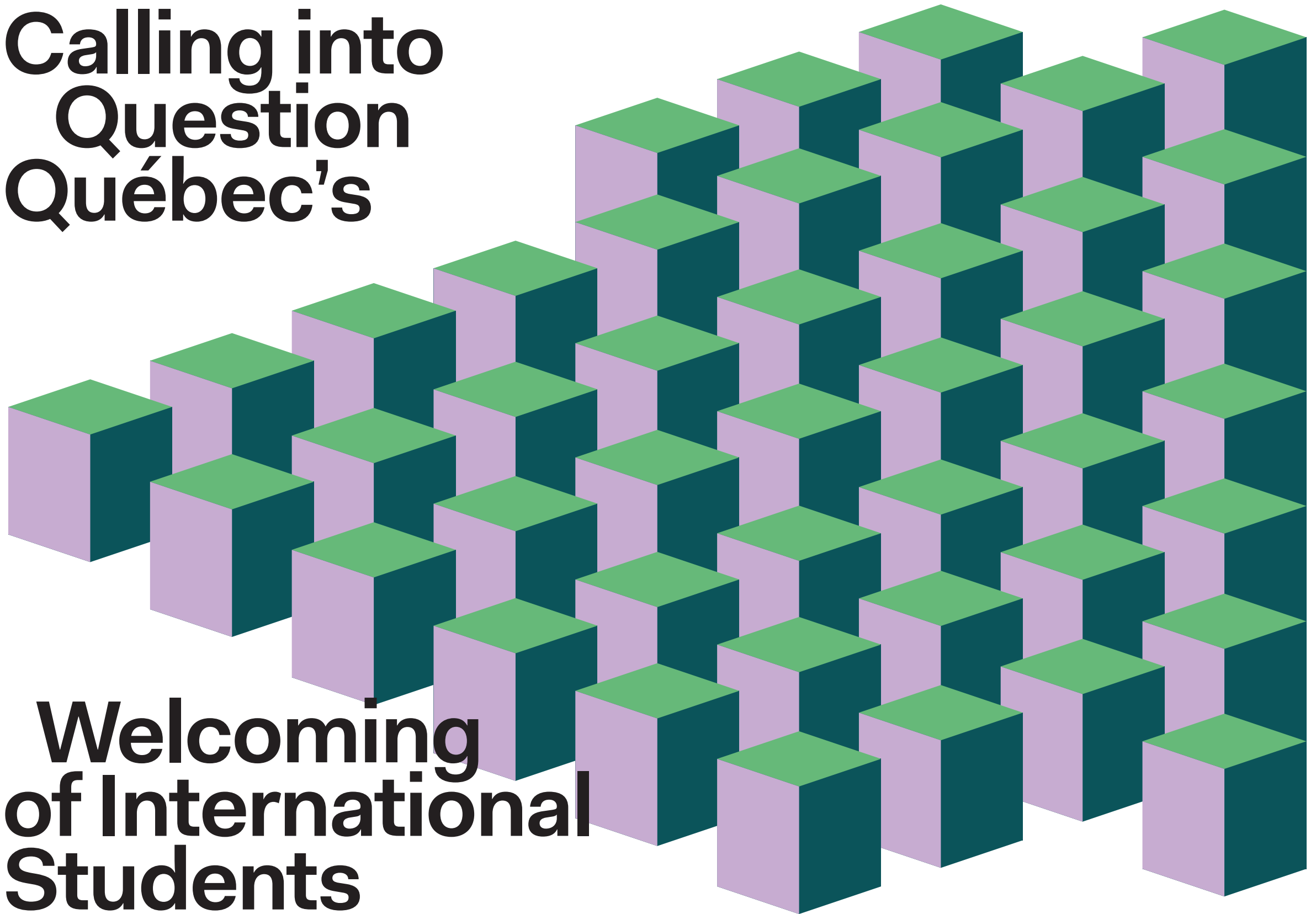
Annick Kwetcheu Gamo
Making Financial Literacy More
Accessible for a Lasting Social Impact

Founder and president of Code F., Annick Kwetcheu Gamo is committed to making financial education accessible to all. With a master's degree from France, she also completed an MBA in international management at Laval University. Through Code F., she helps individuals and businesses better manage their money and understand the impact of financial stress on well-being and productivity. She also actively participates in initiatives that promote economic inclusion.

In 2023, she was featured in CBC/Radio-Canada's Black Changemakers for her commitment to the community. Through her work, she contributes to strengthening the financial resilience of communities, offering concrete tools for a more stable and equitable future.

Marchand, L. (2023, February 24).
Money matters: She's helping people in Quebec City's Black community figure out finances. CBC News.

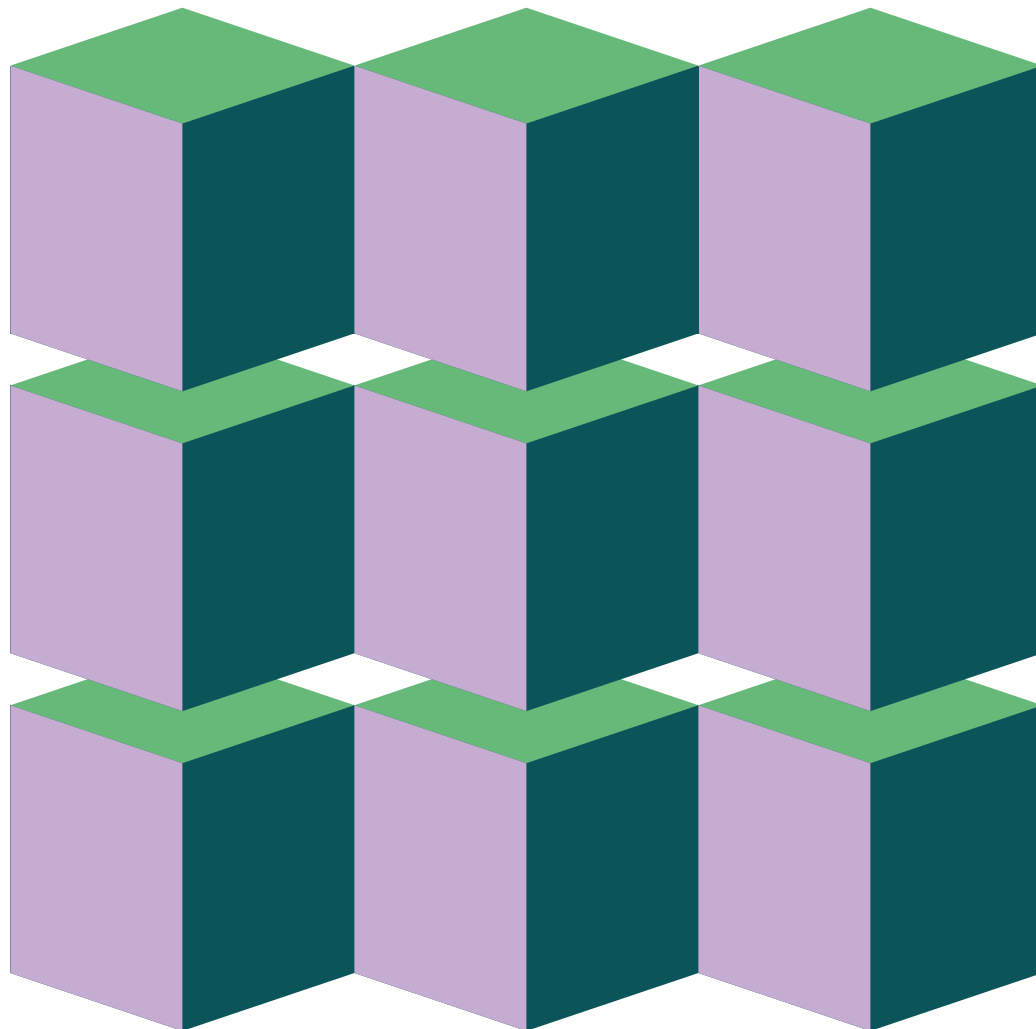
**Calling into
Question
Québec's**



**Welcoming
of International
Students**

Studying in Québec: A Complex Process

Every year, tens of thousands of international students embark on the arduous administrative process to pursue their education at a post-secondary institution in Québec. This complex process is fragmented by the need to meet the different criteria (prerequisites, documents, and deadlines) of the two levels of government at the same time.



29

Case study

Steps and Prerequisites to Study in Canada

Once accepted in a higher learning institution in Québec, international students must obtain a Québec Acceptance Certificate, then apply for a study permit with the Government of Canada.

Every step of the process requires several documents, including proof of financial capacity to cover tuition fees and cost of living and proof of language skills.

In some cases, medical exams and biometrics are also required. The entire process can take up to six months, depending on the time of the year, the country of origin, and the complexity of the file.

An Admission Tradition Called into Question

Despite a long tradition of promoting the internationalization of Québec and Canadian higher education, a shift in discourse and policy in this area has emerged in recent years. Once seen as a way to build a scientific and cultural reputation, welcoming international talent is now subject to control and restriction.

Since 2022, several major reforms in Québec have altered the framework for accepting international students. Often introduced without thorough consultation, these changes have made accessing education and immigration more complex, in addition to creating a climate of uncertainty for those concerned.

“When I was minister of education in the late 1990s, the international student phenomenon was not at the scale it is today—not in Québec or elsewhere. But already then, I saw in it an opportunity for exposure, especially through the welcoming of students from French-speaking countries. And I still stand behind this position today.” (Our translation)

Pauline Marois
Former Premier of Québec,
Chancellor of the University
of Québec at Montréal

“Right from the beginning of my term as premier, I recognized the strategic importance of international students for Québec. They were part of a no-holds-barred approach for our international relations: intervening where our interests are clear. It was in this spirit for example that I led the first ever mission abroad—to India—which was dedicated to universities, and implemented measures to facilitate access to permanent residence for international graduates.” (Our translation)

Jean Charest
Former Premier of Québec

“In the past, we spoke of international students in terms of training, attraction, and talent retention. We wanted to reinforce Montréal as a university city and strengthen the job market. Today, we are in an immigration mindset.” (Our translation)

Michel Leblanc
President and CEO,
Chamber of Commerce
of Metropolitan Montreal

The Internationalization of Higher Education in Canada: A Federal Perspective

1945-1970: The Emergence of Internationalization

After the Second World War, Canada promoted global collaboration and adopted a humanist view of internationalization.

In 1967, Foreign Affairs Canada established a section dedicated to international university relations. It was responsible for administering student mobility programs, which were viewed as crucial for fostering peace and understanding between different nations.

1970-1990: Expansion and Establishing a Foothold in Development Aid

During the Cold War, Canada supported student exchanges through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), reinforcing its diplomatic engagement through education.

1990-2010: Support for Businesses and Growth in Institutional Power

The economic crisis pushed universities to increase their international student body to compensate for a decrease in public funding.

The World Trade Organization's General Agreement of Trade in Services transformed education into a marketable service, and universities became key players in internationalization.

2010-2020: Institutionalization and Federal Strategies

In the 2010s, internationalization became a government priority. A 2009 report showed that international students contributed \$6.5 billion to the Canadian economy in 2008, a number that would increase to \$36 billion in 2022.

In 2014, Canada adopted its first *International Education Strategy*, with the goal of doubling its international university student population in five years. In 2015, Canada ranked seventh in the world in international student numbers.

In 2019, a new strategy focused on diversifying source countries to reduce Canada's dependence on China and India, and education was integrated into global economic competitive dynamics.

The 2020s: Research and Global Positioning

Canada's higher education institutions continued to attract an international clientele. In 2021, Canada ranked eighth in the world for scientific production.

Even if 40 percent of faculty and 37 percent of doctoral students came from abroad, there is no structured federal strategy to promote the international recruitment of scientific talent.

The Internationalization of Higher Education in Québec

1960-1980: Internationalization and Identity

With the Gérin-Lajoie doctrine (1965), Québec asserted its exclusive authority on education internationalization.

In 1972, an exemption from differential tuition agreement was signed with France, and then with other Francophone nations. Internationalization was viewed as a tool to recognize and position Québec in the French-speaking world.

1980-2000: Structuring and Asserting

During the 1980s and 1990s, Québec continued to consolidate its internationalization actions. In 1991, the province signed an accord with the federal government granting Québec the power to select the immigrants who can study and settle in the province.

2000-2010: Expansion and Diversification

This decade was characterized by the expansion of student mobility and the diversification of internationalization strategies. In 2022, Québec adopted its first education internationalization strategy, which focuses on student mobility, the promotion of Québec's know-how, and its integration into international university networks.

Thanks to tuition exemptions, Québec attracted a growing international community and reinforced its role as a study destination. In 2006, a Québec permanent representative was accepted at UNESCO, which recognized the province's influence and commitment to education.

2010-2019: Profitability and Restructuring

The internationalization of education became part of an economic profitability mindset: international recruitment was a strategic lever for institutions of higher learning, which bank on countries without reciprocal agreements to collect higher tuition fees.

In 2018, tuition fees for certain international students were deregulated, which meant institutions could set their own fees and increase their independent revenues.

2019 and On: Profitability,
Language Protection, and Research

Internationalization continued to be an economic driver, but new discussions on the promotion of French and the distribution of international students in English and French universities emerged.

In 2023, a reform introduced a floor price for international tuition, with 15 percent being redistributed to French-language universities to balance revenues and bolster French-language education.

The internationalization of research became important. In 2021, close to 49 percent of students enrolled in doctoral programs in Québec were from outside of Canada, compared to 37 percent in the rest of Canada. This 146 percent growth over ten years is supported by merit-based scholarships and increased participation in international research networks.

Post-Pandemic: A Turning Point in
the Internationalization of Education

The COVID-19 pandemic has deeply changed Québec's approach to internationalizing education. After decades of growth and appeal, a change of course has occurred, marked by a more restrictive discourse and increased management of student influx. International students are no longer seen as economic and scientific levers, but as a migratory variable that needs managing.

This shift is reflected in successive changes to immigration policies, creating a climate of instability for universities and their international clientele. At the same time, concerns about Québec's capacity to welcome international students have led to the rapid growth in international student numbers being called into question.

In January 2025, Ottawa implemented federal quotas, capping the number of study permits issued by province. While Québec remains under the federal cap, it has chosen to implement an additional cap, reducing the number of international students accepted by 20 percent. These restrictions are a clear break from previous policies: from now on, research, which was previously spared from these restrictions, is included in this threshold, limiting the international student intake potential of graduate programs.

“Over the years, students from abroad have gone from being student ambassadors to student clients or student researchers to foreigners.” (Our translation)

Olivier Bégin-Caouette
Associate Professor in the Comparative
Education Master's Program

Faculty of Education Sciences
University of Montréal

Co-Founder and Member, LIRES
(Laboratoire interdisciplinaire de recherche sur l'enseignement supérieur)

Principal Researcher, RIMES
(Regards interdisciplinaire sur les missions de l'enseignement supérieur)

July 2020	Québec: work experience criteria added to the Graduate Stream of the Québec Experience Program	International students with an eligible university degree now have to have accumulated twelve months of recognized work experience in Québec to be eligible for the program.
May 2023	Québec: announcement of a loosening of Graduate Stream requirements for the Québec Experience Program	The government announces its intention to remove the Québec Experience Program's work experience requirement for international students. However, only people who have completed an eligible diploma of study in French, or have completed three years of full-time secondary or post-secondary study in French are eligible for the program. Other graduates, even French-speaking graduates, are ineligible.
December 2023	Canada: mandatory verification of acceptance letters	Designated learning institutions are now required to verify the authenticity of all international student acceptance letters directly with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).
January 2024	Canada: national cap on study permits	The federal government announces a cap of 360,000 new study permits for 2024, a 35 percent decrease from 2023. This cap, distributed by province based on population size, aims to stabilize the growth of international students and reduce pressure on housing and services. This cap does not apply to graduate students (master's and PhD programs).
February 2024	Canada: two major reforms to International Student Program	The federal government announces an annual cap on new study permits: 485,000 in 2024. At the same time, reforms to the post-graduation work permit (PGWP) introduce a minimal language proficiency requirement. Eligibility for the PGWP is now reserved to graduates from public colleges enrolled in fields of study where there are labour shortages.
September 2024	Canada: cap on study permits and reforms to the PGWP	The federal government is setting an annual cap on new study permits at 485,000 for 2024. At the same time, reforms to the Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP) introduce a minimum language requirement. Eligibility for the PGWP is now limited to graduates of public colleges in fields officially classified as experiencing labour shortages.

October 2024	Québec: temporary suspension of the Graduate Stream of the Québec Experience Program	Since October 31, 2024, Québec is no longer accepting applications for the Graduate Stream of the Québec Experience Program. This suspension will be in effect until June 30, 2025, at the latest. Applications already submitted will be processed, and applications to add family members will not be affected by this suspension.
November 2024	Canada and Québec: changing schools or programs	Students who change designated learning institutions must apply for a new study permit and a new Québec Acceptance Certificate. Different procedures apply based on the student's situation.
November 2024	Québec: adoption of Bill 74	Québec adopts Bill 74, which is "an Act mainly to improve the regulatory scheme governing international students." This new bill gives the government more power to manage, and limit if applicable, the number of international students admitted into the province's CEGEPs, private colleges, and universities.
January 2025	Canada: decrease in the number of student permits	The federal government caps study permits at 437,000 in 2025, representing a 10 percent decrease from 2024. This measure is part of the continued efforts, which were started in 2024, to manage the growing number of international students in the country.
February 27, 2025	Québec: cap on applications for the Québec Acceptance Certificate for studies	Québec caps the number of applications to the Québec Acceptance Certificate for studies it will process at 124,760 effective from February 26, 2025, to February 26, 2026. This number, established by decree, is distributed by education level: 29,200 for colleges, 32,261 for vocational training, and 63,300 for universities. This measure only applies to new admissions, and excludes extensions of the Québec Acceptance Certificate.

Factors Behind Contemporary Reforms

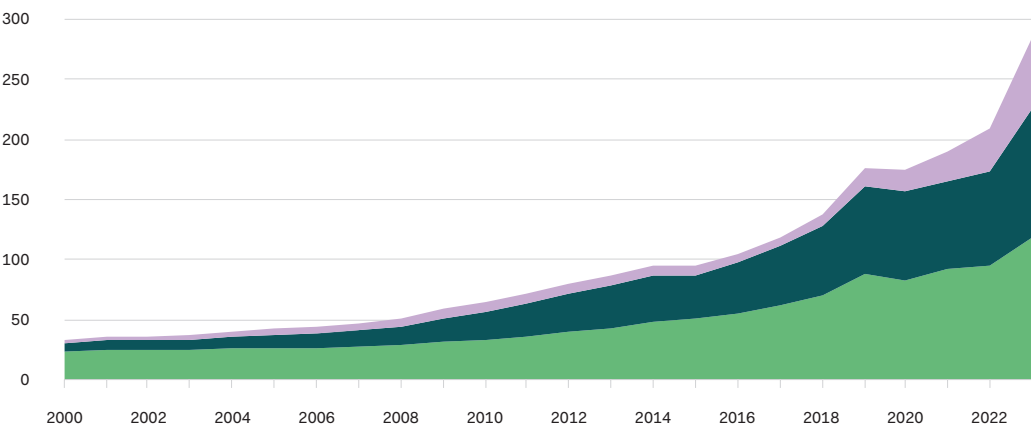
The measures recently adopted by the governments of Québec and Canada have occurred against a backdrop of sustained growth in temporary residence applications. These applications are not just to study or work but also include asylum claims.

Public debates have repeatedly called into question current recruitment and admission practices for international students. In response to the rapid growth of the international student population in certain institutions, governments have laid out a number of concerns: a lack of support, misleading or inadequate recruitment, the quality of instruction, and so on.

As of December 31, from 2000 to 2023, Québec, in thousands

Temporary study or work permits by program

- Work permits issued as part of the Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) Program
- Work permits issued as part of the International Mobility Program (IMP)
- Study permits



The rapid growth since 2025 of temporary immigrants who are authorized to work has made them the largest group of temporary immigrants (58 percent in 2023, excluding asylum claimants).

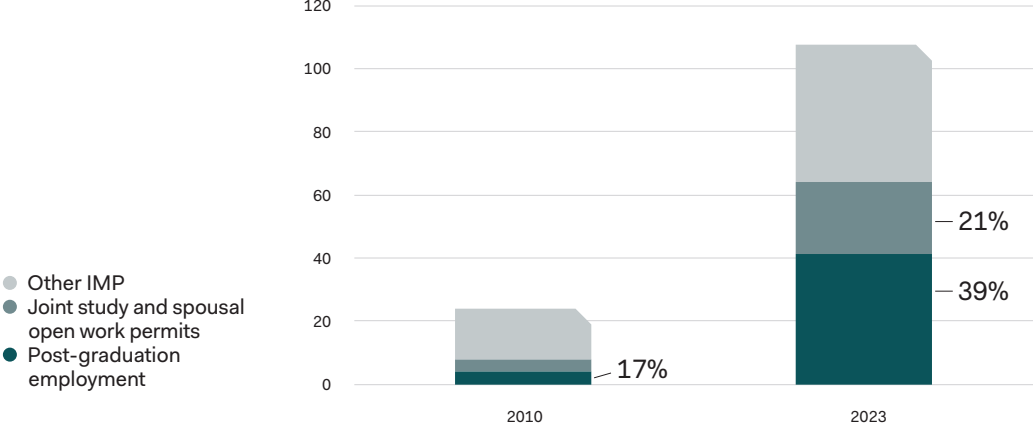
The number of study permits in Québec increased fivefold in the last 23 years and twofold since 2015.

“The governments of Québec and Canada are today confronted with an immigration crisis, which has led them to pile on laws and regulations that are overcomplicating existing procedures. The restrictions imposed on the admission of international students are making these students collateral victims of the immigration crisis.” (Our translation)

Jean Charest
Former Premier of Québec

As of December 31, from 2010 to 2023, Québec, in thousands

Percentage of international graduates in the number of work permits issued as part in the International Mobility Program (IMP)



The influx of international students has a dual effect on the number of temporary immigrants, as more and more of them stay in the country and obtain a work permit after their studies as part of the IMP.

Inquiry by the ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur on the Recruitment and Operations of Certain Institutions and Colleges

In 2021, the Québec ministry of higher education launched an administrative and regulatory investigation into several private colleges, to gain a better understanding of the rapid growth in foreign enrollments, particularly from India.

This investigation exposed the following irregularities: recruitment practices that were at times misleading, opaque fees, problematic partnerships with agencies, lack of pedagogical supervision, and artificial lengthening of program duration. Some school directors even faced criminal charges.

To remedy the situation, the action plan "Assurer la qualité des services éducatifs dans les collèges privés et encadrer le recrutement d'étudiants étrangers" (ensuring the quality of educational services in private colleges and overseeing the recruitment of foreign students) was deployed. It includes limiting the number of admissions per institution, setting up an inter-ministerial body, reinforcing the verification of study permits and institutions, as well as developing clear rules to regulate recruitment practices and fees.

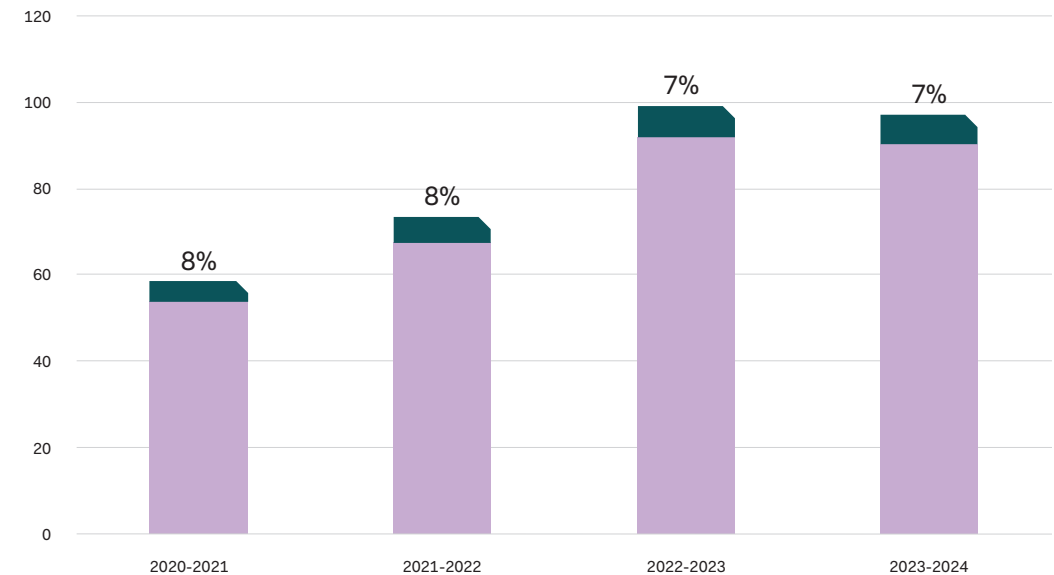
Other issues, such as the housing crisis and increased pressure on certain social services, have fuelled debates on welcoming individuals from other countries in general, including international students.

The province's capacity to accommodate immigrants is increasingly being invoked when discussing the balance between the needs of newcomers to Québec and the resources available, although the lines between the two remain blurry.

(2020-2023)
Québec

Number of people benefitting from the services of the
Programme d'accompagnement et de soutien à l'intégration (PASI)

● International students
● Other status in Canada



International students only represent a small percentage of people benefitting from PASI services.

The Housing Crisis and International Students

In many Canadian cities, student housing has become a central issue, particularly for international students. In Montréal, 91.8 percent of international students live in rental housing, a higher percentage than in all major Canadian cities. On average, they pay 10 percent more for rent than the local population, often because they end up living in co-ownerships or unsubsidized new buildings. More than half live with roommates, sometimes in precarious conditions.

While the growth of the international student population has put extra pressure on the rental market, the housing crisis was already well underway before the rise in international enrollments. The real issue—the lack of suitable, affordable housing—affects the entire student community.

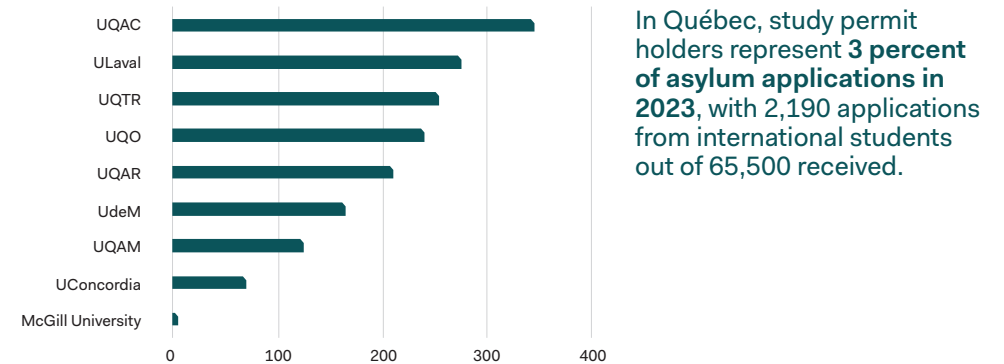
But solutions are emerging throughout Canada: construction of university residences, municipal projects, partnerships with non-profit organizations, and so on. These initiatives aim to create affordable long-term housing solutions, while reducing pressure on the private rental market.

Another recent phenomenon has also received a lot of attention: the rise in the number of people with study permits applying for asylum.

This phenomenon, however, is still poorly documented as only a minority of international students are filing asylum claims. Thus, the data available does not allow us to determine whether asylum was the initial intention or the result of a change in the claimant's situation after spending a certain time in the country.

Number of asylum applications
by individuals with study permits by university

From January 1 to September 20,
2024, Québec



“Anywhere there is migration, smugglers and other opportunistic networks appear; they exploit people’s hopes with promises of an easy life in the West, in Canada, or Québec.” (Our translation)

Stephan Reichhold

Executive Director, Table de concertation
des organismes au service des personnes
réfugiées et immigrantes

Criminal Networks and Study Permit Fraud

A Radio-Canada investigation, published on April 9, 2025, exposed the existence of an African criminal network orchestrating the fraudulent entry of international students into Canada. The network uses sophisticated fraud practices such as fake letters of acceptance, forged banking information, and false promises of scholarships.

By exploiting the aspirations of young people with limited resources, these schemes impact student populations, educational institutions, and governments.

Convinced by the legitimacy of these academic avenues, some students arrive in the country only to discover they are not in fact enrolled in the institution mentioned in their documents. Consequently, many find themselves in a foreign country with no legal immigration status and deprived of the right to study or work. Without other viable options, some choose to file an asylum claim.

Beyond disrupting individual trajectories, these types of fraud raise concerns on the lack of oversight of immigration intermediaries, the vulnerability of application processing systems, and the need to support and protect international students throughout their academic journeys.

Recent investigations have also revealed that certain criminal networks exploit the student immigration system by orchestrating the entry into the country of young people who are often ill-informed,

if not deceived, using falsified documents and false promises, further blurring the lines between voluntary and involuntary trajectories.

“Asylum claims by international students are still a misunderstood phenomenon due to a lack of data on their profiles, countries of origin, or the moment they are made. It’s a poorly documented reality, but one which deserves to be studied more closely.” (Our translation)

Stephan Reichhold

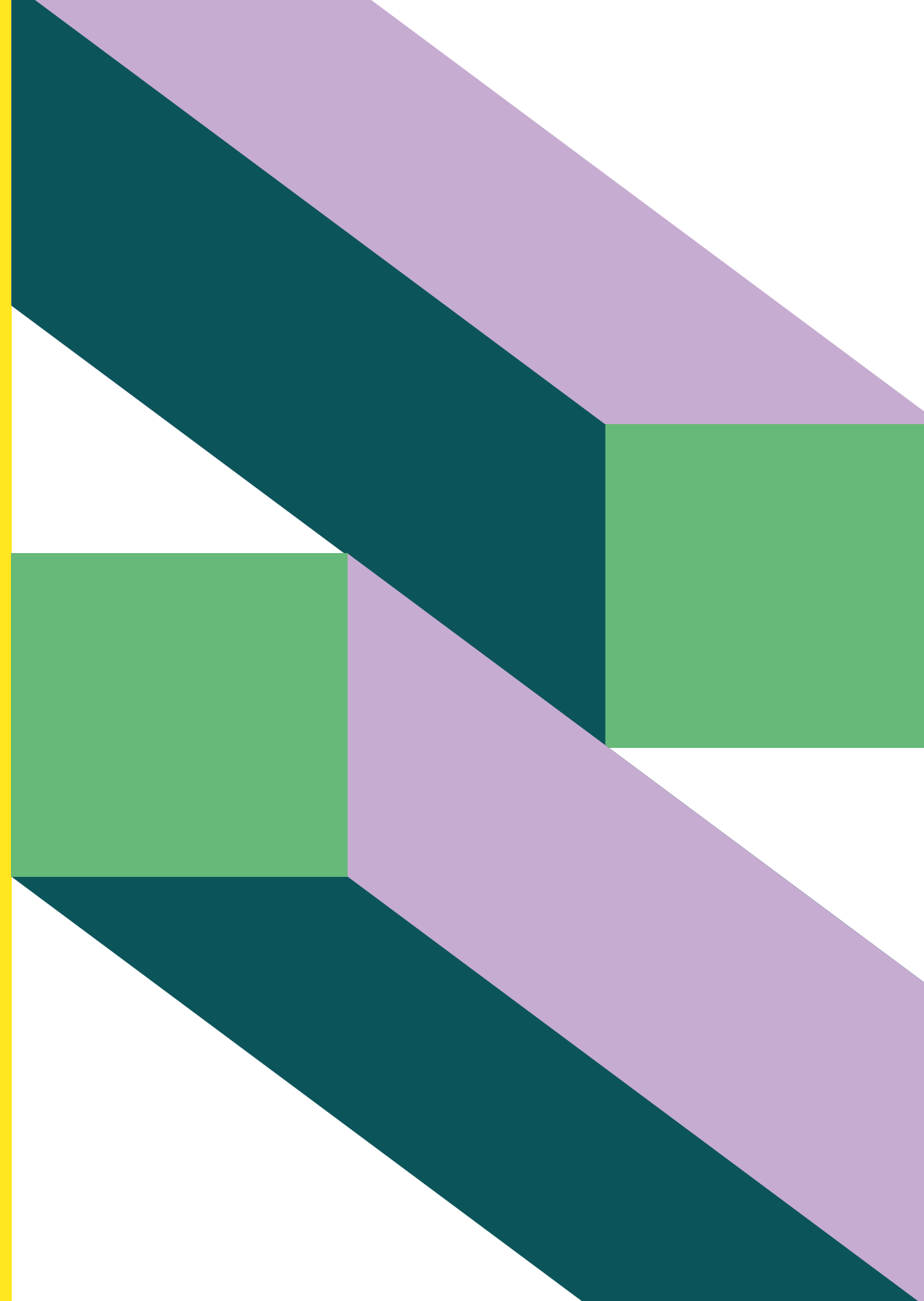
Executive Director, Table de concertation
des organismes au service des personnes
réfugiées et immigrantes

Reasons for Asylum Claims by International Students

The Rimouski organization Accueil et intégration BSL has noticed that most student asylum claims are motivated by unforeseen circumstances.

Some individuals who arrive in Canada before the date on their study permit are faced with two options at the border: return to their home country or file an asylum claim. Under pressure, without clear explanations, and having already invested large sums of money, they sometimes make an uninformed decision.

Financial insecurity is another important reason. In addition to high tuition fees, which are on average \$24,000 per year, international students are often misinformed of their real ability to support themselves on a part-time salary. If they stop studying, they could lose their immigration status, preventing them from working legally. Other unforeseen events, such as the withdrawal of a guarantor or a pregnancy not covered by insurance, can also lead to an impasse.



The French Language in Québec

The place of French in higher education, especially at the master's and doctoral levels, is also a concern. In all fields of academic research, 85 percent to 95 percent of the world's scientific publications are in English.

This reality naturally influences the language choices of researchers, including those in French-speaking environments.

English is thus used in education and advanced research to meet dissemination, visibility, and international collaboration obligations.

At the same time, however, certain initiatives aim to promote the use of French in research, as much to support French

scientific production as to reinforce its accessibility. The Fonds de recherche du Québec, for example, has implemented several initiatives including research grants for projects in French, partnerships with France to promote discoverability, and monthly prizes celebrating the best articles published in French.

Other concerns were also raised regarding the adjustment of teaching environments to the growth of international student cohorts.

In some institutions, the language balance has been called into question, notably when the predominant language of operation differs from that set forth in integration policies.

“In hindsight, we realize that we—specifically universities—didn’t address irritants at the source. Housing, for example, was relegated to a simple “get organized,” and the sensitivity to language, largely ignored. I fought so international students could work off campus during their studies to increase the chances of keeping them in Québec after they graduate. But once that was allowed, we ended up having students with no knowledge of French working behind a counter on Saint-Catherine Street. That’s a major source of irritation we should have anticipated and dealt with from the outset.” (Our translation)

Michel Leblanc
President and CEO,
Chamber of Commerce
of Metropolitan Montreal

34

Case study

The Netherlands: From Ambitious Internationalization to Linguistic Refocusing

For over a decade, Dutch universities have focused on internationalization by offering courses in English, including 70 percent of graduate programs. This shift, supported by institutions and the government, was accelerated by Brexit as the Netherlands wanted to position itself as an English-language study alternative in continental Europe.

In October 2024, the government announced a reform to re-establish Dutch as the main language of instruction at the bachelor's level. From now on, two thirds of content must be offered in the national language, restricting courses taught entirely in English to exceptional cases. This repositioning marks a major shift in the Dutch model.

35

Case study

Denmark: Relaunching Internationalization Through English

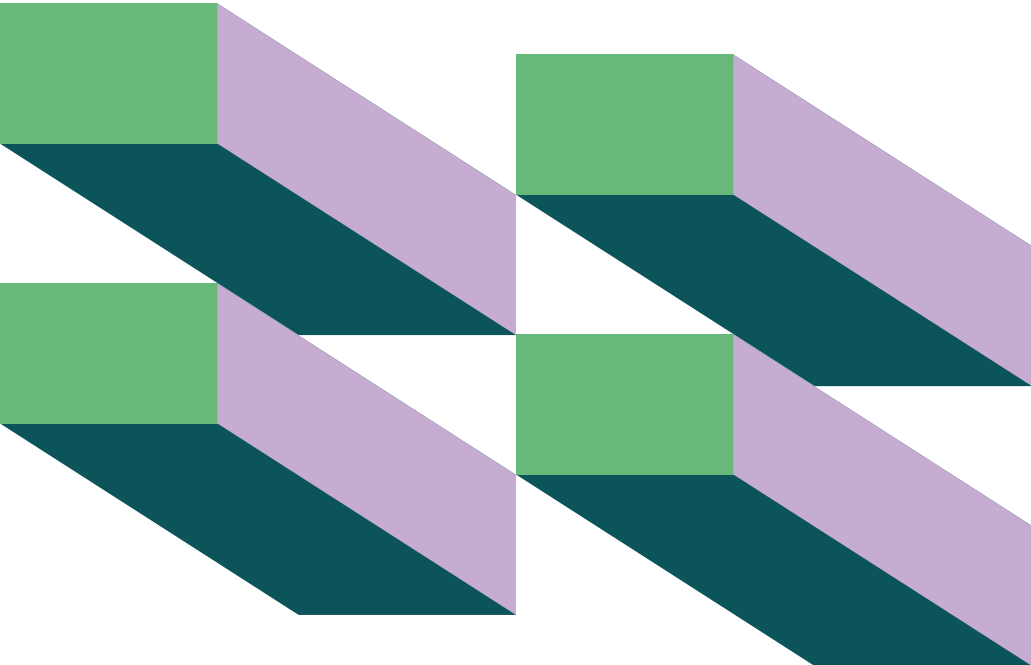
In summer 2023, the Danish government adopted a plan to reform higher education, aiming to expand the number of master's programs offered in English. As of 2024, universities can open 1,110 additional places per year, a number that will increase to 2,500 per year as of 2029.

This relaunch marks a change of course compared to previous restrictions, motivated by budgetary concerns. It meets a growing need for skilled labour, specifically in engineering and information technology. The long-term contributions of international students are also recognized: A third stay in Denmark ten years after their arrival and 80 percent participate in the job market.

“With the substantial growth in international student numbers, it became critical for UQAC to develop a real internationalization strategy. While the institution has evolved within an international perspective since it was founded in 1969, it has only taken action for the first time last fall to define a formal institutional strategy in this regard.” (Our translation)

Guylaine Simard
Chair of the Board, University
of Québec at Chicoutimi (UQAC)

Finally, several regions report challenges regarding the ability of institutions to offer individualized support, specifically where resources are more limited.



Access to Services and Support for International Students in Québec’s Regions

In Rimouski, organizations such as Accueil et Intégration BSL offer key support services to international students, complementing those offered by educational institutions. In 2023-2024, 31 percent of the organization's clientele were international students.

Services for international students and their partners include a twenty-four-hour training on Québec culture, hands-on

workshops on housing and tenant rights for example, social activities, and an intercultural twinning program.

Despite collaboration from the schools, these organizations and the people they support do face many challenges. The difficulty in finding housing and employment and regulatory instability create precarious conditions.

“Universities need international students, but we need the means to welcome, support, and offer them winning conditions. Otherwise, we forget about the whole adjustment curve that is key to their academic success.” (Our translation)

Sarah Toulouse
Executive Director, Accueil
et intégration Bas Saint-Laurent

“It’s my responsibility as a professor to encourage my international PhD students to consider pursuing their careers in Québec and to integrate successfully—specifically by learning French. But more broadly speaking, it’s also up to universities to actively support them in their integration.” (Our translation)

Gilles Savard
Full Professor, Department of Mathematical
and Industrial Engineering, Polytechnique Montréal

“International students’ success doesn’t just depend on them. It’s also up to us as an institution to train our academic community to better understand and support diversity.” (Our translation)

Pascale Lafrance
Managing Director, USherbrooke International,
Assistant Vice-Rector for International Relations,
University of Sherbrooke

Influential Media Coverage

Media coverage on concerns about international students is related to the public perception of the issue. While Québec media did choose information and story angles that reflect a plurality of perspectives, many articles established a direct link between the housing crisis and the large influx of university students from abroad.

Some publications even suggested that restricting international student enrollments would ease the pressure on the residential rental market. Other analyses have shown, however, that the international student population, which struggles with precarious conditions and high rents, is just as much a victim of the housing crisis as the local population.

Regardless of the broader context, the media focus on international university students has the power to shift public opinion on student mobility.

A sample of newspaper headlines about international students

Crise du logement: baisse importante du nombre d'étudiants étrangers au Canada pour deux ans, annonce Miller Le gouvernement Lepage juge que cette mesure n'aura qu'un effet limité au Québec	Limiter le nombre d'étudiants étrangers pour réduire la pression sur le marché immobilier Face à la crise du logement, le ministre fédéral du Logement considère l'idée de limiter le nombre d'étudiants étrangers	Explosion de l'immigration permanente au Québec: un seuil de 67 000 prévu l'an prochain Afin de freiner la hausse, Québec suspend deux de ses propres programmes d'accueil
Demandes d'asile: près de 14 000, déposées par des étudiants internationaux cette année	Immigration temporaire: les étudiants étrangers dans la mire de Québec	Immigration: le Canada peine à tenir des statistiques valables Des économistes remettent en question des données économiques canadiennes
Les étrangers, « boucs émissaires » de la crise du logement pour des experts	L'agression d'étudiants étrangers met en lumière la montée du racisme au Canada	Moins d'étudiants étrangers pour plus de logements? Le débat est ouvert
Moins d'étudiants étrangers, une «fausse bonne idée» pour libérer des logements	Les étudiants captifs de la crise du logement	Plusieurs étudiants sans logement à quelques jours de la rentrée
Étudiants étrangers : Québec décrète une baisse de 20 % des admissions	Québec veut faire un grand ménage, sans nuire aux régions	

Impacts Already Being Felt

Recent changes to regulations on international student admission and immigration have had notable impacts on Québec universities, especially at the graduate level.

First, in January 2024, the Government of Canada implemented quotas on international post-secondary admissions. This measure has had a major impact throughout Canada on applications and enrollment.

(2023-2024) Decline in international student applications

● 2024 ● 2023



In February 2025, the Government of Québec announced the implementation of provincial quotas limiting the number of international students admitted into Québec universities. For the 2025-2026 school year, the number was capped at 63,299 admissions overall, with specific breakdowns per institution.

While universities proposed basing quotas on a three-year average, to reflect the fluctuating nature of enrollments, the government instead took the number from the previous year (2023-2024), a “low” level for some universities. This approach enabled the government to go ahead with significant cuts to the number of admissions.

“Between April 2024 and April 2025, Québec universities recorded a steep drop in international applications, with an average drop of around 45.9 percent, and declines of up to 84.7 percent.” (Our translation)

Anonymous

Before the official announcement of these provincial quotas, some institutions were already reporting a considerable drop in applications due to the quotas imposed by the Canadian government and certain geopolitical tensions.

This decline in enrollments directly influences university funding, which largely depends on tuition fees from international students. It also raises issues on program appeal and quality as institutions report that they are struggling with recruiting, particularly for research.

“The effects of the caps were felt even before they were implemented: simple word-of-mouth in the countries of origin were enough to provoke a decline in applications.” (Our translation)

Mathieu Lefort
Director, International Relations,
École de technologie supérieure (ÉTS)

“Recruitment is growing increasingly difficult. Professors are receiving fewer applications and are struggling to find students to help advance their lab work.” (Our translation)

Marie-Anne Blackburn
Head of the International Office
at the University of Québec
at Chicoutimi (UQAC)

“The decision to restrict access to education for international students sends a rather damaging message to universities located outside of Montréal, which do not enjoy the same power of attraction on the world stage.” (Our translation)

François Gélneau
Vice-Rector, International
Affairs and Sustainable Development,
Laval University

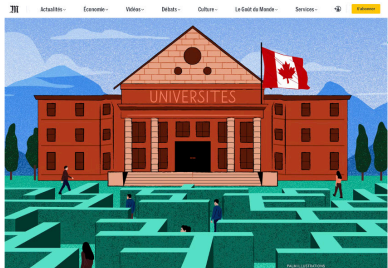
Moreover, the various announcements on the Québec Experience Program (*Programme de l'expérience québécoise* [PEQ]; see chronology of announcements) as well as its recent temporary suspension, have contributed to increasing the sense of uncertainty.

These regulatory measures are likely to dissuade students from pursuing their education in Québec, particularly when the terms to access these programs are unstable and changing.

“Recent changes to post-graduation permits and migratory statuses create a climate of uncertainty. Many students now feel that Québec—and even Canada—no longer wants them.” (Our translation)

Sylvie Bisou
Director, Attraction and Retention
of International Students,
Québec International

Headline from *Le Monde*



Des milliers d'étudiants français ont vu la porte du Canada leur claquer au nez

Par Eric Nunès et Elliott Dumoulin (Montréal, correspondance)
Publié le 11 mars 2025 à 05h00, modifié le 12 mars 2025 à 15h19

Thousands of French students have had Canada's door slammed in their face.
Le Monde, March 11, 2025.

“The means chosen to support international students are missing their mark. We’re attacking the numbers, not the real issues: the quality of the welcome, integration, lasting ties with the community and with employers.” (Our translation)

Hélène Antoniou
Chair of the Board of Governors,
Concordia University

As these changes pile up, Québec’s image as a welcoming and trustworthy study destination is weakening. The uncertainty that has emerged of late is diverting international applicants to other countries that offer a clearer, more stable study path.

37

Case study

Canada as a Welcoming Nation for International Students: A Tarnished Reputation

Since the pandemic, news stories on international students and major study destinations have been very polarized. On the one side, stories highlight the diversity and quality of host institutions; on the other, migratory restrictions, hikes in tuition fees, and integration difficulties are thrown into the spotlight.

The global student clientele now sees Canada, Australia, and the United States as less stable and welcoming study destinations than it once did. Between June 2023 and June 2024, the number of monthly searches using the keyword “studying in” decreased, with variations per country: an 18 percent decrease

for Canada, a 23 percent decrease for the United Kingdom, and an 8 percent decrease for Australia.

Several factors probably explain Canada’s declining reputation as a welcoming nation, starting with the implementation of a cap on study permits in 2024. Despite the initial exemption for graduate studies, their popularity has waned.

Between January and October 2024, approvals for graduate-level study permits have plunged by 27 percent compared to 2023. Due to the uncertainty generated by migration policies, this decline shows that even strategic sectors are affected.

“Canada is giving the impression that its doors are closing, and international students are going elsewhere. We’ve lost sight of what they bring to the country by only talking about what they take. We also need to do work here at home, with Canadians, to better understand their values and reduce prejudice.”

Larissa Bezo
President and CEO, Canadian
Bureau for International Education

The United Kingdom’s Strategy and the Impact on the Reputation of Its Universities

A Period of Openness

In 2019, the British government set the goal to welcome six hundred thousand international students by 2030. To achieve this, they launched the Graduate Route in 2021, a post-graduation permit that extends the right to stay in the country (by two to three years depending on the diploma) without the need for sponsorship.

Efforts to promote this new permit in other countries, notably to make up for the loss of international students following Brexit, have borne fruit: In 2022—eight years before the deadline—the country surpassed its goal with 758,888 international enrollments.

A Tightening of Restrictions

In May 2023, the Conservative government introduced major restrictions: a ban on international master’s students bringing dependents, the suspension of access to work visas before the end of studies, and cuts in budgets linked to the international student population.

These measures sent shockwaves throughout the country: Visa applications fell by 12 percent, visas for dependents by 83 percent, and withdrawals of applications soared (+127 percent). With

thousands of jobs cut and university budgets undermined, international students have started looking at Germany and Australia.

A Change in Political Direction

When the Labour Party was elected in July 2024, Secretary of State for Education Bridget Phillipson stated: “For too long international students have been treated as political footballs, not valued guests.”

Confirming that the Graduate Route would be maintained, she promised a stable, welcoming environment for international students, despite the continued restrictions on dependents.

Rapid Recovery as of January 2025

In January 2025, signs of a recovery were already being felt: applications rose by 27 percent, acceptance letters by 14 percent, and official acceptances by 31 percent. Increases were particularly notable for students from East Africa (+ 84 percent), West Africa (+ 27 percent), and Southeast Asia (+ 31 percent).

As such, the United Kingdom has slowly climbed back into second position as the most attractive university destination in the world, behind the United States.

ApplyBoard (2025); Electronic Immigration Network (2024); Home Office, UK Visas and Immigration (2024); StudyTravel Network (2024); Phillipson, B. (2024); Universities UK International (2025); ICEF Monitor (2025); Volume10 interviews, research, and analyses.

A Strategic Vision for Universities and Québec's Scientific Positioning

In a global context marked by rising protectionism and increased competition for university talent, Québec is at a strategic crossroads.

The new political orientations of the United States under the Trump administration are contributing to creating a less welcoming climate for international students. For Québec, this is a unique opportunity to show the world that it is a destination of choice for the brightest scientific minds.

Several challenges are, however, hindering Québec's ability to capitalize on this unprecedented opportunity, starting with recent immigration reforms and the suspension of the PEQ. These restrictive measures raise concerns that are undermining Québec's reputation and positioning in the world, while threatening the survival of several cutting-edge programs.

Other contradictory or incoherent actions are also preventing Québec from participating fully in global knowledge. First, foreign recruitment was encouraged to compensate for declining public funding, then a cap was implemented reducing the number of international admissions. Next, new francization requirements were imposed, but allocated

budgets were cut. Finally, the retention of locally trained international talent was promoted, but accessing permanent immigration programs was made more complex.

In these circumstances, we need to ask: What does the future hold for the internationalization of Québec's higher education system? Sooner or later, Québec will have to define the role it wants international students to play in its scientific, economic, demographic, and cultural development.

To turn the unprecedented potential of the current situation into a sustainable advantage, a clear, coherent and balanced strategy is needed.

“Attracting the best professors in the world is only possible if we guarantee they’ll have a team that is up to the task. You need a good coach to train the best players and Québec risks missing a unique window of opportunity to recruit top-level researchers as countries start to close themselves off.” (Our translation)

Philippe Gervais
Vice-President, Communications
and Institutional Relations,
McGill University



Capitalizing on America's Restrictions: How Countries Are Reinforcing their Scientific Talent Attraction Strategies

A State of Denmark

< **A State of Denmark**
Sponsorisée •

Looking to write your PhD or find a Postdoc position abroad? Sign up for our newsletter to explore opportunities in Denmark – a country with the perfect balance between cutting-edge research and a life beyond the lab.
#sciencehubdenmark



Choose France

Make it iconic. Choose France.

Safe Place for Science

Safe Place For Science

Aix Marseille Université

Instability in the United States: An Outflow of Talent

Donald Trump's election and policies have destabilized the research ecosystem. His administration has cut the budgets of major government agencies including the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It has restricted funding to certain scientific fields and blocked access to the country for several foreign specialists. This hostile climate has made researchers and academics question their future in the United States, creating a brain drain other countries are working hard to capitalize on.

Canadian Initiatives

In Canada, some institutions have taken advantage of this situation to attract talent. The University of Montréal launched a philanthropic initiative to raise \$25 million—with \$12 million already raised—to recruit international researchers, particularly in sensitive fields such as climate. In Toronto, the University Health Network (UHC) aims to recruit 100 young researchers in cutting-edge fields through its **Canada Leads 100 Challenge**, supported by an initial \$15 million investment.

Denmark: Targeted Visibility and Promises of Stability

Denmark was quick to respond. Under the banner A State of Denmark, a social media campaign promises international doctoral and postdoctoral students a top-level research environment and a great quality of life. This positioning paints the picture of a stable, welcoming, and scientifically forward-looking country.

France Reinforces Its Scientific Appeal

At the 2025 AI Summit, France unveiled the third phase of its national artificial intelligence strategy, asserting its ambition to become a world leader in the training, attraction, and retention of talent.

Fuelled by the France 2030 plan, this strategy revolves around three things: structuring research, accelerating innovation, and massively deploying AI in the public and private sectors.

The country expects to train one hundred thousand students per year in AI, fund two hundred additional theses, and develop nine new poles of excellence in AI, with \$565 million in investment.

The creation of the **Choose France for Science** platform, targeted visa programs (Passeport Talent, French Tech Visa), and major investments in data centres (close to \$161 billion) all support this strategy.

Aix-Marseille University launched the **Safe Place for Science** program to welcome fifteen international researchers. On their end, CentraleSupélec and the Paris Sciences & Lettres University have committed to financing AI research as well as climate science and health research.

These initiatives demonstrate France's desire to become a research haven and magnet for international talent.

“Canada and Québec are at a crossroads: To reduce the number of international students we accept is to compromise our ability to innovate and to risk managing stagnation rather than building for the future.” (Our translation)

Philippe-Edwin Bélanger
Director of Graduate Studies and
Student Success, Institut national
de la recherche scientifique (INRS)

“The issue of international students has always been strategic. Today, it has become more pressing as the United States moves towards isolationism. Québec could become a hub for talent, ideas, and capital—as long as it adopts a real vision of openness.” (Our translation)

Pierre Boivin
Chancellor, McGill University

“Universities have always been the backbone of a society’s progress. If we restrict their action or force them to follow government agendas, we not only weaken them, we weaken our democracy.” (Our translation)

Gina Cody
Chancellor, Concordia University

“I don’t understand why we’re still asking ourselves this question: Are international students important for Québec or not? Considering the state of the world, the state of demographics here, the state of research ... That we’re still hesitating between welcoming more students or fewer students, it’s absurd.” (Our translation)

Ben Marc Diendéré
Ambassador of Canada, Permanent
Observer to the African Union

So Now What?

An abstract geometric graphic on the left side of the page. It features several overlapping shapes in teal, light blue, and olive green. A large teal shape starts from the top left and extends diagonally down towards the bottom right. A light blue shape is positioned above it, and another light blue shape is to its right. An olive green shape is located below the large teal shape. At the bottom, there is a wide olive green base with a light blue shape on its right side.

Last winter, a client asked us to interview Polytechnique software engineering professor Foutsé Khomh at his organization's strategic manager retreat.

While the crux of the discussion dealt with the impact of artificial intelligence on our society, what stood out for us was Professor Khomh's personal journey: A brilliant student, who completed his university studies in Yaoundé, Cameroon, Khomh decided to come to Québec for his PhD and ended up staying.

Since the interview, we were curious about two things. First, how did Québec manage to attract this top talent from across the Atlantic? And conversely, what would Québec look like without the tens of thousands of students from all over the world, who today contribute to the dynamism of our cutting-edge sectors, beyond just university research?

It was on this day that the idea for this report took shape. This topic is not just a university topic. It impacts all Quebecers as it directly affects our collective future—economically, scientifically, socially, and culturally.

The Advantages Outweigh the Disadvantages

The international student situation is still something of a grey area. You only need to walk the streets close to university campuses at the end of the winter term to see some of the tangible effects: hastily emptied apartments, furniture discarded on the sidewalks, signs of a transient community, with all the irritants it brings to the neighbourhood.

The increased presence of international students also brings us face to face with some uncomfortable realities: from pressure on the housing market to a francization process that is often slower and more difficult than hoped, to the predominance of English at the graduate level—a reflection of a global dynamic Québec does influence but has little control over.

These difficulties have been exacerbated by the learning curve experienced by some Québec universities. For institutions that have only recently started accepting international students, the adjustment of the admission, integration, and post-graduation follow-up processes are proving to be more complicated than expected, failing to live up to the promises made to international students and the legitimate expectations of the host communities.

But beyond the institutions themselves, these concerns are part of a broader issue: the balance of an openness to the world and the preserving of Québec's distinctive identity. As a minority French-speaking nation in North America, Québec must reconcile its need to attract international talent with its need to maintain its sociocultural and linguistic cohesion. This tension between openness and identity preservation is not unique

to Québec, but it takes on a specific tone because of Québec's language, geographic and demographic situation.

These tensions and sources of irritations are real and must be acknowledged. But they do not, in our view, justify a closing off from the world.

Because restricting international student admissions in too hastily or improvised a manner would cut us off from the talent we need in many sectors, right when we need it most. It would also compromise our ability to influence, innovate, and create value in a world where talent moves around. Even more so now as American universities are going through a period of historic turmoil that risks driving many talented students and professors to pursue their studies and careers elsewhere.

It would deprive us of thousands of individuals who choose Québec based on positive word-of-mouth, often driven by the promise of a warm welcome, quality education, and open-mindedness. But by blurring the signals, changing the rules at a moment's notice, we are sending a message of mistrust. And it is the best people—those who are the most mobile because they are the most in-demand—who will cross us off their list.

Welcoming an international student population comes with its share of challenges. But these challenges are manageable, as long as we allocate the required resources, adopt a rigorous and ambitious approach, and acknowledge the legitimate concerns of local communities. With a coherent vision, the advantages would be major, durable, and transformative for our entire society.

Rather than arbitrarily reducing the number of study permits issued, it would be wiser to adopt a clear, predictable, and assertive strategy. It is not a question of defending internationalization at all costs, but rather recognizing lucidly that it represents a powerful lever for the future of Québec society. In sum, we can no longer afford to steer this issue without a vision for the future.

To move forward, Québec needs a clear, coherent, and assertive international student policy. This policy should be developed with universities, civil society, the private sector, and other stakeholders.

It should aim to achieve two complementary goals: to offer international students a credible and attractive study path; and to reassure the local population on the tangible effects of being open to international talent, notably regarding pressure on public services and housing, and dispel fears related to cultural identity and the protection of French as the common language.

The ambition to achieve this rests on three pillars: attract and welcome, retain, and promote.

Attract and welcome

Attracting the right profiles does not mean opening our doors indiscriminately. Québec must choose international students that align with its values and priorities, focusing on those who will actively contribute to its economic, social, and cultural vitality, and who will particularly strengthen the province's own linguistic character. This means ensuring that each institution involved makes the necessary efforts to build a high-quality attraction and welcome system, so as to guarantee a student experience that lives up to Québec's promise.

At the same time, it is important to remember that the presence of international students must and should help strengthen the educational offering for Quebecers, particularly by supporting key programs where a critical mass of students is a determining factor. Beyond the campus, it is also about creating vibrant communities that energize Québec's regions and nurture their long-term development.

Retain

Welcoming international students does not make sense if it is not accompanied by the concrete ability to integrate the students who want to stay into Québec's social, economic, linguistic, and cultural fabric. We need to build solid bridges to the job market, recognize students' entrepreneurial potential, and enable them to make lasting contributions as employees, innovators, and citizens. Success also rests on Québec's ability to welcome these students while respecting its fundamental values.

It is not the number of students accepted that will be decisive, but the commitment of stakeholders, specifically those in the local business community, to open their doors, support integration, and further recognize the potential of this new lifeblood.

Promote

The presence of international students is an underused strategic lever for strengthening Québec's global influence. By forging lasting ties with its graduates, Québec can leverage a powerful international network to promote its reputation, and encourage foreign investment in Québec. Making the most of this asset requires an active approach: nurturing relationships with graduates and alumni, positioning Québec as a land of opportunity, and using academic influence as a driver of economic, cultural, and diplomatic growth.

Rethinking our relationship to the welcome of international students requires more than just adjusting public policy; it also means holding the key players involved in this dynamic accountable. This requires a long-term vision based on clear courses of action.

We propose four of them below.

1. Reinforce universities' responsibility for welcoming and integrating international students

Each university must take full responsibility for its attraction strategies, welcome mechanisms, and integration practices. A charter of commitment, drawn up by each institution in consultation with its stakeholders, should clearly set out its vision, commitments, and best practices in the matter. This accountability should respect university autonomy, with transparent reporting adapted to the distinctive mission of each institution.

2. Facilitate international students' access to internships and field experience

Providing international students with easy access to internships and professional experiences is a key tool to helping them lay down roots in Québec and stay long-term. Work-integrated learning strengthens both the student experience and the job market integration process, benefitting employers and the province's economy.

3. Reinforce the collection and use of data to guide actions

A robust strategy for collecting and analyzing data on post-graduation career paths is essential, as a lack of data reduces our ability to realize the potential associated with welcoming international students. We should thus be able to track professional integration, skills mobilized, retention rates, and economic contributions. This data must be comparable, accessible, and co-produced with employers.

4. Boost the international mobility of Québec students

To build a Québec that is truly connected to the world, we also need to foster young people's desire to explore. To discover other societies, other campuses, other ways of thinking. Because student mobility should not be a one-way street. It is about movement. It is a lively exchange. By encouraging our own students to try their hand at the international experience, we are not just offering them personal fulfillment: We are strengthening their ability to contribute to Québec, to enrich it, and to open it up to the world.

Welcoming international students is a strategic opportunity for Québec. The interest shown by many countries, such as Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Australia, as well as Russia and China, in recruiting and welcoming international students should make it clear to Québec that it has a vital interest in increasingly doing the same.

However, it is not enough to increase enrollments or expand recruitment pools. The issue is much broader than that: It is about building an ambitious and coherent trajectory, based on appeal, integration, and influence.

At a time when global dynamics are accelerating, Québec's ability to turn this openness into a lever for development, innovation, and social vitality will be one of the keys to its future success.

– Volume10

Helen Antoniou Chair of the Board of Governors, Concordia University
Philippe Beauregard Chief Communications Officer, Concordia University
Louise Bédard Assistant Director of Employment Services, Laval University
Olivier Béguin-Couette Associate Professor, University of Montréal
Jean-Félix Brouillette Assistant Professor of Economics at HEC Montréal
Philippe-Edwin Bélanger Director of the International Office, Institut national de la recherche scientifique (INRS)
Larissa Bezo President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE)
Louis Félix Binette Executive Director, Main QC
Sylvie Bisou Director, Attraction and Retention of International Students, Québec International
Marie-Anne Blackburn Head of the International Office, University of Québec at Chicoutimi (UQAC)
Christian Blanchette Rector, University of Québec at Trois-Rivières (UQTR)
Pierre Boivin Chancellor, McGill University
Hubert Bolduc President of Investment, Québec International
David Brulotte Québec Delegate-General in New York
Geneviève Cantin-Chartré Advisor to Student Services, École nationale d'administration publique (ÉNAP)
Jean Charest Former Premier of Québec, Partner at TJC
Pierre Chenard Special Advisor, University of Montréal
Richard Chénier General Manager, Québec Tech
Gina Cody Chancellor, Concordia University
Claude Corbo Former Rector, Professor of Political Science, University of Québec at Montréal (UQAM)
Sonia Demontigny Director of UQAT International and of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Office, University of Québec at Abitibi-Témiscamingue
Effrosyni Diamantoudi Dean of Graduate Studies, Concordia University
Ben Marc Diendéré Ambassador of Canada, Permanent Observer to the African Union
Stéphane Drouin President and CEO, Anges Québec

Anna Karina Ehrhardt Director of Administration and Operations, District 3
Amélie Emard Student Recruitment Coordinator, Institut de tourisme et d'hôtellerie du Québec (ITHQ)
Marjorick Foisy General Director, Centech
Laurence Fouquette-L'Anglais Québec Delegate-General in Rome
Antoine Fournier Recruiter, CANAM
Hélène V. Gagnon Chief People and Sustainability Officer, CAE
Geoffrey Gaquère President and CEO, Théâtre du Nouveau Monde (TNM)
Marie-Ève Garand Regulated Immigration Advisor for International Students, Institut du tourisme et de l'hôtellerie du Québec (ITHQ)
François Gélinaeu Vice-Rector of International Affairs and Sustainable Development, Laval University
Sandrine Gérard Employment Advisor, Professional Development, Laval University
Lysange Gervais Immigration Advisor – International Student Success, Bishop's University
Philippe Gervais Vice-President, Communications and Institutional Relations, McGill University
Amel Gherbi-Rahal Research and Data Valorisation Manager, Unité de travail pour l'implantation de logements étudiants (UTILE)
Antoine Goutier Director, Office of Financial Evaluation and Analysis, University of Québec at Montréal (UQAM)
Nadia Hardy Vice-Provost, Associate Professor, Concordia University
Nancy Hardy Director of Student Services, University of Québec at Abitibi-Témiscamingue
Jean-François Harvey Director of Québec Affairs, Council of Canadian Innovators
Mia Homsy Vice-President, Workforce, Strategy, and Sustainable Development, Investissement Québec
Pierre-Franck Honorin Vice-President, Montréal International
Sarah Kalisa Director, International Student Services, McGill University
Foutse Khomh Full Professor, Polytechnique Montréal
Aurélie Labbe Full Professor and Scientific Co-Director, IVADO
Marie-Christine Ladouceur-Girard Executive Director, Maison de l'innovation sociale

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all the people who contributed to this study, whether through their invaluable insights or generous support.

Marie-France Lafaille Assistant Director, USherbrooke International, University of Sherbrooke
Pascale Lafrance Managing Director, USherbrooke International, Assistant Vice-Rector for International Relations, University of Sherbrooke
Daniel Lamarre Executive Vice-Chairman of the Board, Cirque du Soleil
Alexandra Langelier Executive Vice-President, Institute for Governance of Private and Public Organizations (IGOPP)
Éric Langlois Director and General Manager, École nationale du cirque
Alix Laurent Executive Director, École supérieure de ballet du Québec
Pascal Lebel Executive Director, Government Relations, Concordia University
Michel Leblanc President and CEO, Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Montreal
Mathieu Lefort Director, International Relations, École de technologie supérieure (ÉTS)
Marie-Alexandre Lepage-Lemieux Coordinator, International Student Services, Laval University
Jean-Félix Lévesque Senior Advisor, Government and Institutional Relations, McGill University
Guy Joffroy Lord Director, Rector's Office, University of Québec at Montréal (UQAM)
Yannick Machabée Research Office and Regulated International Student Immigration Advisor, Institut national de la recherche scientifique (INRS)
Céline Marie Human Resources Professional and Recruiter, Québec International
Pauline Marois Former Premier of Québec, Chancellor, University of Montréal at Québec (UQAM)
Pierre-Carl Michaud Full Professor, Department of Applied Economics, HEC Montréal
Annick Morin Director of Special Projects, HEC Montréal
Chuma Francis Mugombozi Chief of R&D, Hydro-Québec's Research Institute (IREQ)
Sylvain Nadeau Director, Research and Innovation, Hydro-Québec's Research Institute (IREQ)
Dr. Lucie Opatny President and Executive Director, McGill University Health Centre (MUHC)
David Ouellet General Secretary and Vice-Rector of Student Life, University of Québec at Rimouski (UQAR)

Jean-François Ouellet Director, Student Community Services, University of Québec at Rimouski (UQAR)
Fanny Pagé CEO, National Theatre School of Canada
Caroline Prud'Homme Executive Advisor to the Vice-Rector, Studies and Training, University of Québec at Trois-Rivières (UQTR)
Rémi Quirion Chief Scientist of Québec, Fonds de recherche du Québec (FRQ)
Stephan Reichhold Executive Director, Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes
Yves Rocray Executive Director, École nationale de danse contemporaine
Frantz Saintelémy Chancellor, University of Montréal
Gilles Savard Full Professor, Department of Mathematical and Industrial Engineering, Polytechnique Montréal
Charles Séguin Associate Professor, University of Québec at Montréal (UQAM)
Guylaine Simard Chair of the Board, University of Québec at Chicoutimi
Sébastien Tanguay General Manager, Le Camp
Alison Threatt Immigration Advisor – International Student Success, Bishop's University
Sarah Toulouse Executive Director, Accueil et intégration Bas-Saint-Laurent à Rimouski
Iya Touré Québec Delegate-General in Dakar
Dr. Stéphane Tremblay President and CEO, CIUSSS de l'Estrie – CHUS
Carl Viel President and CEO, Québec International
Karim Zaguib President and CEO, Volt-Age

Founded in 2015 in the tradition of large international consulting firms, Volume10 is a boutique strategic management consulting firm. We support businesses, public institutions, and civil society organizations in solving complex issues. Our mission is to tackle challenges differently to propel intelligent, sustainable solutions that are deeply rooted in their specific context.

Designed and produced by Volume10
www.volume10.com

Project co-directors
Félix-Antoine Joli-Cœur and Leila Dhar

Editing
Marie Mello

Translation from French to English
Tanina Drvar

Design
Caserne

Legal deposit, Bibliothèque
et Archives nationales du Québec, 2025



VOLUME

10