

Study: The Rising Popularity of College Postgraduate Credential Programs in Canada

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College postgraduate credential programs—typically requiring a previous postsecondary credential as a prerequisite for entry and aimed at providing career-specific skills—have grown in popularity, accounting for 13% of all college graduations in 2019, more than double the share (6%) recorded five years before in 2014.

The largest part of this increase is due to the [growing number of international students at colleges](#). International students made up the majority (67%) of graduates from college postgraduate programs in 2019, with Indian students accounting for more than half (53%) of graduates. This contrasts the situation in 2014, when less than one-third (30%) of graduates from these programs were international students.

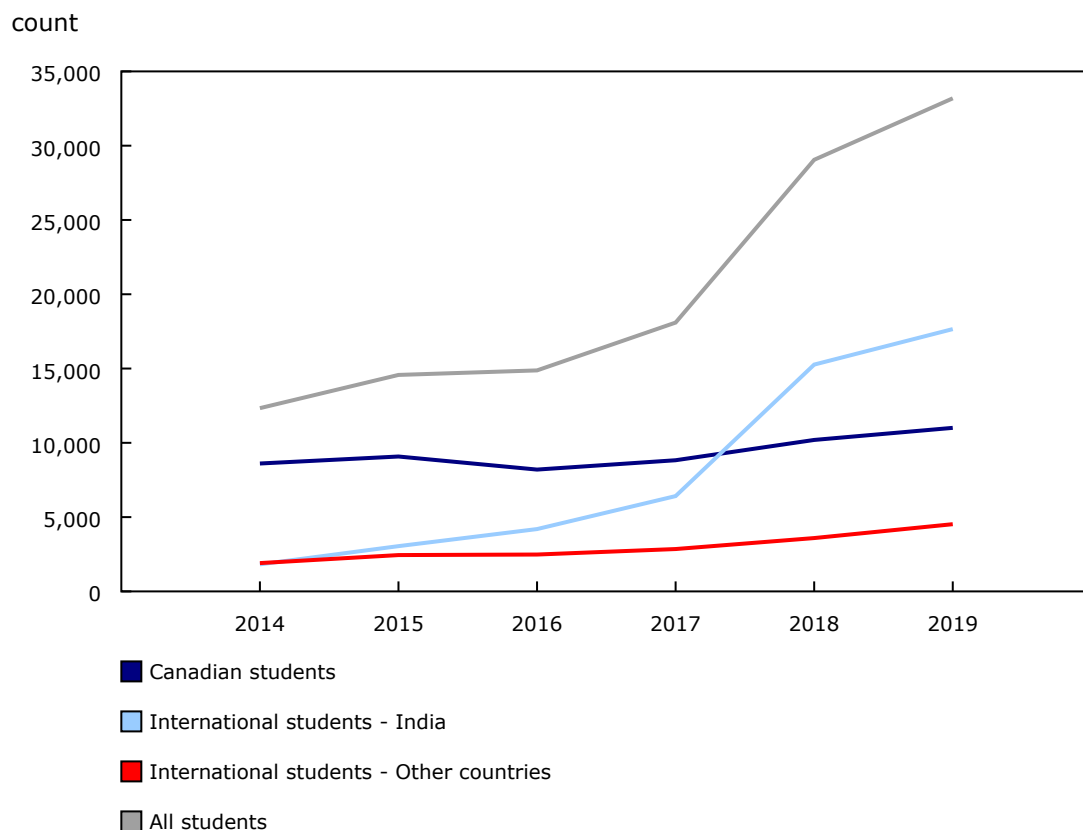
A new study released today, "[The rising popularity of college postgraduate credential programs in Canada](#)," sheds light on the outcomes of students graduating from these programs—in terms of graduation rates, transition to permanent residency, and post-graduation earnings.

Number of Indian international students driving growth in college postgraduate credentials

Graduations with college postgraduate credentials more than doubled from 2014 to 2019, rising from 12,300 to 33,200. This growth was mainly driven by Indian international students, whose graduations with these credentials grew tenfold over the same period, from 1,800 to 17,700. Increases among other international students and Canadian students were more modest, meaning that by 2019, 53% of graduates were Indian international students.



Chart 1
Graduations with college postgraduate credentials, by student type, 2014 to 2019



Source(s): Postsecondary Student Information System 2019/2020 (5017).

This is a unique phenomenon among all postsecondary programs, as a minority of graduates from other programs were Indian international students. For instance, Indian students made up 12% of graduates from non-postgraduate college certificates and diplomas, the credential with the next-highest share of Indian graduates.

Overall, 8 in 10 international students who completed a college postgraduate credential in 2015 gained permanent residency within five years of graduation

International students can have different reasons for completing a Canadian education. For many, a Canadian credential assists them in obtaining permanent resident status and finding high-quality employment in Canada. Others seek to obtain a Canadian credential for the experience of studying abroad and/or to improve their employment prospects at home.

Gaining permanent residency was a relatively common outcome among international students who completed a college postgraduate credential, with 80% obtaining it within five years of graduation. This compares to 71% for those who completed a non-postgraduate college certificate or diploma, 69% with a master's degree, and 50% with a bachelor's degree.

Permanent residency rates of Indian international students were above 80% for all four of these credential types, with the rate being highest among Indian students with a college postgraduate credential (85%).

Among international students from countries other than India, permanent residency rates were lower than those of Indian international students, and they also varied between credentials. They were highest among those with a college postgraduate credential (74%) and lowest among those with a bachelor's degree (49%).

College postgraduate credentials were associated with higher wage earnings than a non-postgraduate college certificate or diploma, but lower wage earnings than a bachelor's degree

On average, international students who graduated with a college postgraduate credential in 2015 earned \$44,000 in 2019. This average earning, which excludes those without any wage earnings, was higher than for those with a non-postgraduate college certificate or diploma (\$38,000) but less than those with a bachelor's degree (\$47,000).

A similar pattern existed among Canadian students, though the earnings associated with college postgraduate credentials (\$51,000) were closer to those earned with a bachelor's degree (\$53,000). These findings also varied by gender. Canadian women with a college postgraduate credential earned approximately the same as those with a bachelor's degree, while Canadian men with a college postgraduate credential earned approximately \$6,000 less than those with a bachelor's degree.

Note to readers

The analysis uses data from the Postsecondary Student Information System (PSIS) on graduations in the calendar years 2014 to 2019. Analysis of graduates by credential type is based on the most recently completed credential: thus, for example, the "bachelor's degree" category contains only those who did not complete a subsequent credential after their bachelor's degree. PSIS data for graduations in the calendar years 2014 to 2019 are also integrated with the longitudinal immigration database (IMDB) for analysis of transitions to permanent residency and with the T1 Family File (T1FF) for analysis of income.

Linkage rates to the IMDB for international students who graduated in 2015 were over 95% for both Indian students and those from other countries. Linkage rates to the T1FF for students who graduated in 2015 were over 99% for Canadian students; 97% for Indian international students; and 85% for international students from other countries (90% for those with a college postgraduate credential or non-postgraduate college certificate or diploma; 82% for those with a bachelor's degree).

PSIS data for graduations in the calendar years 2017 to 2019 were integrated with the 2016 Census to analyze prerequisite credentials among Canadian students. Weights designed specifically for use with PSIS-Census linkages were used.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers [4105](#), [5017](#) and [5057](#).

The article entitled "[The rising popularity of college postgraduate credential programs in Canada](#)" is now available in *Insights on Canadian Society* ([75-006-X](#)).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).