

Leading indicator of international arrivals to Canada, December 2022

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Highlights

International arrivals to Canada—non-resident visitors and returning Canadians—nearly doubled compared with December 2021 but have not yet reached levels recorded before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 611,000 non-resident visitors that arrived from abroad at Canadian airports equipped with electronic sensors in December were almost double those that arrived in the same month in 2021.

In December, US residents took 785,800 trips to Canada through land ports with electronic sensors, over 465,400 more than in December 2021.

During the same period, the number of Canadian residents that returned by air from visiting abroad via kiosk-equipped airports (1.3 million) nearly doubled that from December 2021.

Compared with December 2021, 645,000 more Canadian residents—for a total of 1.3 million—returned from trips to the United States through land ports with electronic sensors.

This release provides a first glimpse of international arrivals to Canada in December 2022. Complete counts for the December reference month will be available with the release of "[Travel between Canada and other countries](#)" on February 22, 2023.

Holiday travel upended as winter storms surge

With COVID-19 border restrictions removed, the travel sector faced new challenges in December due to winter storms across the country. On December 22, for instance, Environment and Climate Change Canada issued several warnings and special weather statements for most of Canada.

Winter storms were felt coast-to-coast across Canada and the United States just as holiday travel was surging, causing many delays and cancelled flights. This left many air travellers stranded over the peak holiday travel period and may have dissuaded others from taking cross-border trips by motor vehicle.

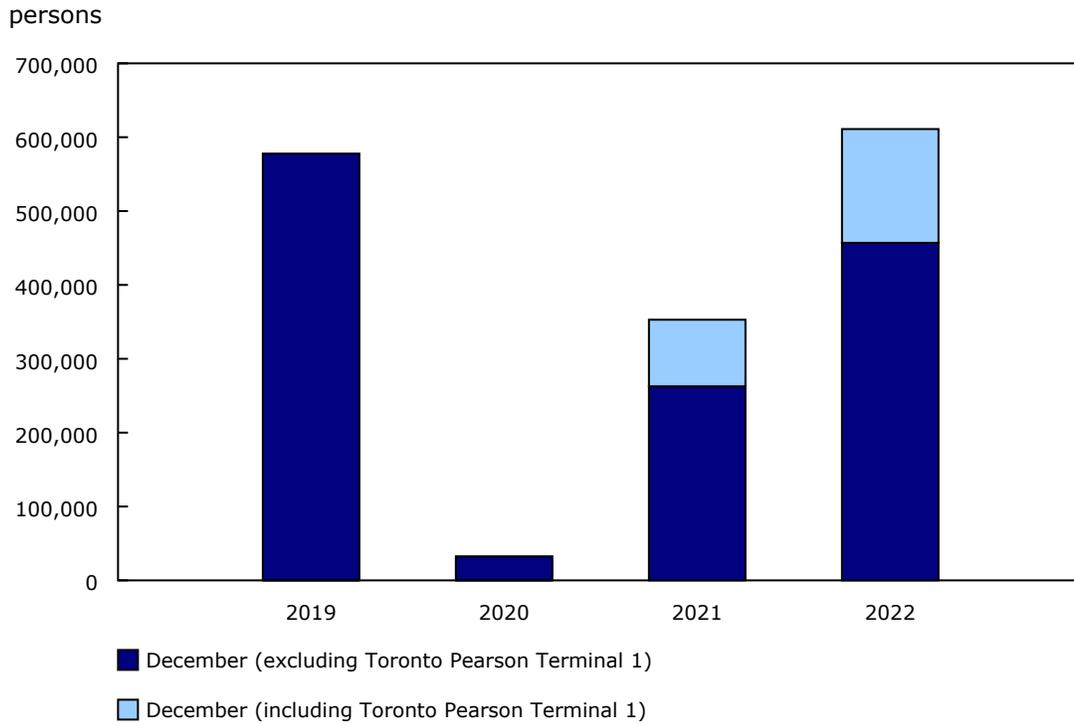
Non-resident arrivals by air

Arrivals of non-resident visitors from overseas countries (322,700) and the United States (288,300) at Canadian airports equipped with primary inspection kiosks (PIKs) totalled 611,000 in December, almost double that from December 2021 (352,900).

The number of non-resident arrivals by air seemed to exceed that observed in December 2019, before the pandemic. However, the total for December 2022 included arrivals at Toronto Pearson International Airport Terminal 1, which make up a sizeable portion of total arrivals. The PIK system was implemented at Toronto Pearson International Airport Terminal 1 in June 2021 (see Note to readers).



Chart 1
Non-resident visitors arriving in Canada by commercial aircraft, December, 2019 to 2022

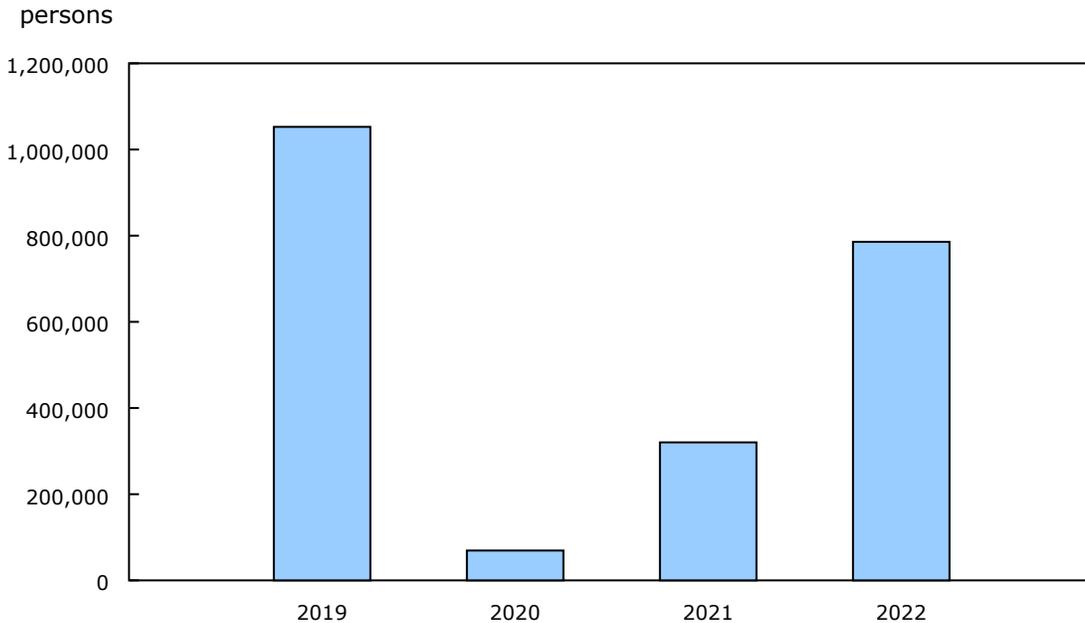


Source(s): Table 24-10-0056-01.

US-resident arrivals by land

In December, US residents took 785,800 trips to visit Canada, crossing by automobile through land ports equipped with the automated Integrated Primary Inspection Line (IPIL) application. This number was more than double that from December 2021 and represented nearly three-quarters (74.7%) of such arrivals from the same month in 2019.

Chart 2
United States-resident visitors arriving in Canada by automobile, December, 2019 to 2022



Source(s): Table [24-10-0057-01](#).

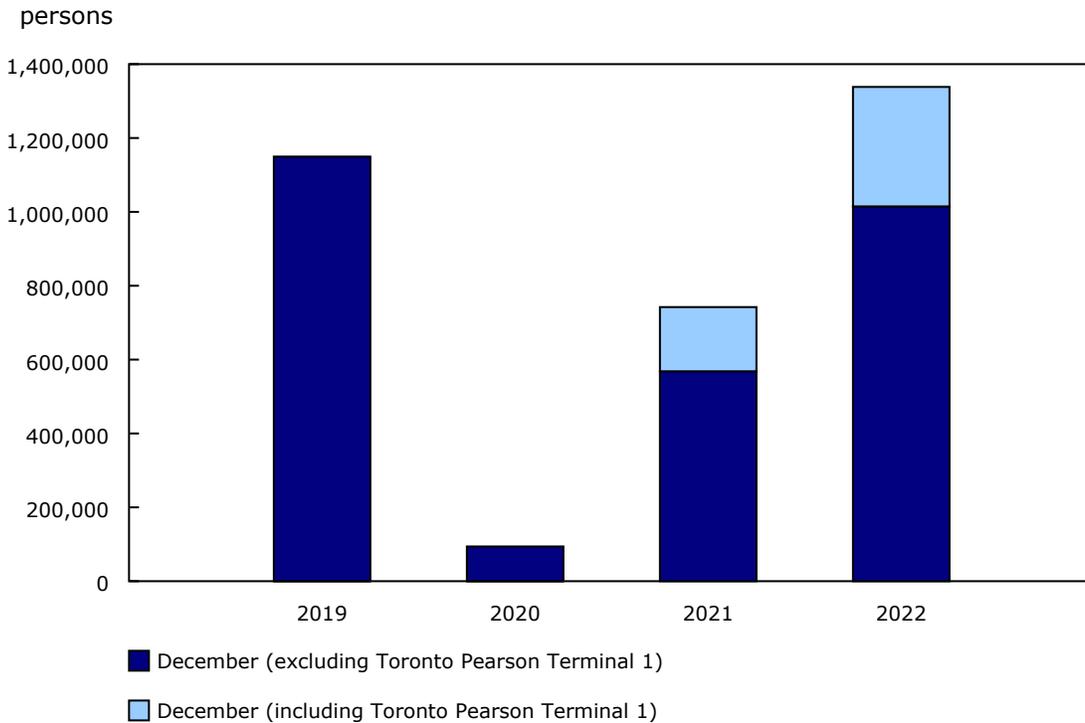
Canadians returning by air

In December, the number of Canadian residents that returned by air from abroad and landed at airports equipped with PIKs was 1.3 million, almost double the number of arrivals in December 2021 (742,200).

While the total number of arrivals may seem to exceed the pre-pandemic levels from 2019, note again that the December 2022 count included international arrivals at Toronto Pearson International Airport Terminal 1 (see Note to readers).

Excluding Toronto Pearson International Airport Terminal 1, in December Canadian airports recovered 88.3% of their December 2019 pre-pandemic volume of Canadians returning from abroad.

Chart 3
Canadian residents returning from visiting abroad by commercial aircraft,
December, 2019 to 2022



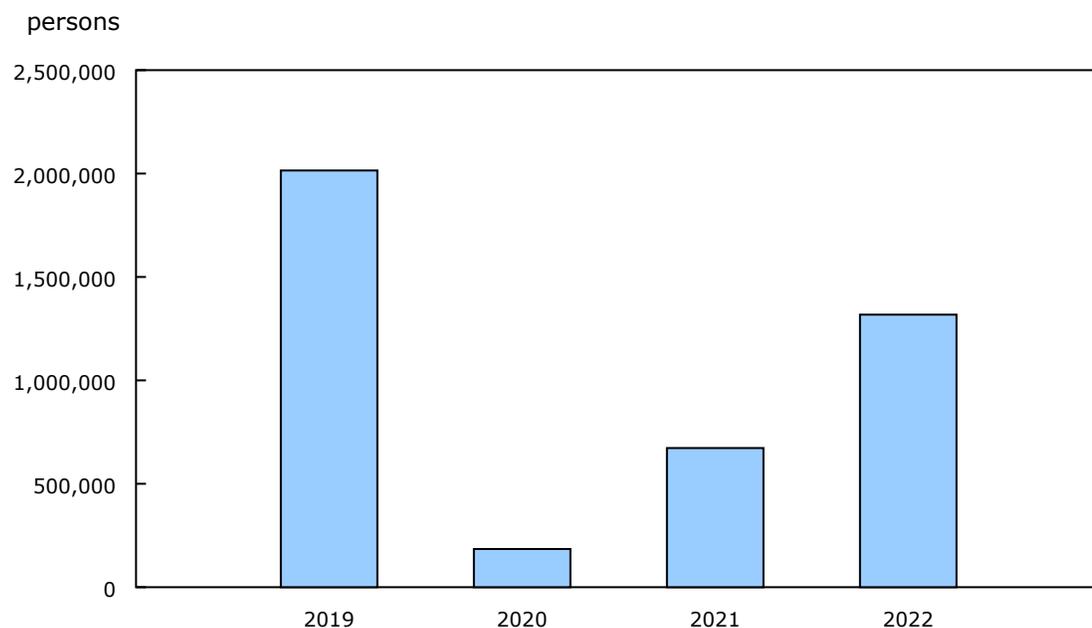
Source(s): Table 24-10-0056-01.

Canadians returning by land

In December, 1.3 million Canadian residents returned from visiting the United States, crossing by automobile via IPIL-equipped land ports. This was an increase of more than 645,000 trips from December 2021 (672,800).

In December, the number of returning Canadian-resident trips recovered less than two-thirds (65.4%) of that recorded for the same month in 2019 (2.0 million), before the pandemic, down from the almost three-quarters (72.3%) recovery reached in November 2022.

Chart 4
Canadian residents returning from visiting the United States by automobile,
December, 2019 to 2022



Source(s): Table 24-10-0057-01.

Note to readers

Counts of visitors entering the country by commercial aircraft are from the primary inspection kiosk (PIK) system. In 2020, the subset of arrivals by air represented approximately 58% of all international arrivals. PIKs were deployed at Toronto Pearson International Airport Terminal 1 on June 22, 2021, and, as of July 2021, these arrivals are included in the total counts, which has consequently improved coverage.

The coverage statement will be amended when a complete year of international traffic is observed for all Canadian airports.

Counts of visitors entering the country by automobile through land ports equipped with the automated Integrated Primary Inspection Line (IPIL) system represent a subset of US visitors and Canadian returning visitors by automobile. In January 2021, the IPIL land ports captured approximately 82% of all automobile entries. However, vehicles crossing the border with NEXUS authorization continue to be excluded.

In April 2022, the following IPIL ports switched mode from land to water: Yarmouth, Walpole Island, Point Alexandria (Wolfe Island), Pelee Island, Prince Rupert, Sidney and Victoria—other locations. Therefore, counts of visitors entering the country by land as of April 2022 exclude those crossing at these ports. In 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, visitors at these ports accounted for a small fraction (0.7%) of all visitors entering or returning to Canada by automobile.

Elements of Statistics Canada's Frontier Counts program were modified in January 2022. Although these changes will not have a significant impact on total estimates, readers are encouraged to review the concepts, definitions, data sources and methods for [Frontier Counts](#), especially when making historical comparisons and examining specific regions.

Traveller: A person making an entry into Canada for any purpose and any duration.

Visitor: A traveller whose trip purpose is related to tourism, namely personal, business, study, to be a crew member in a private vehicle (private aircraft or private boat) or whose purpose is not known, and whose trip duration is less than one year.

Available tables: [24-10-0056-01](#) to [24-10-0059-01](#) .

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5005](#).

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).