

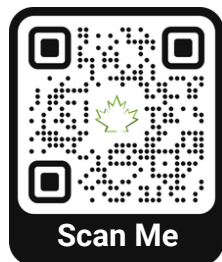


TOURISM INDUSTRY
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

ASSOCIATION DE L'INDUSTRIE
TOURISTIQUE DU CANADA

VISA TREND TRACKER

TRACKING VISITOR VISA PROCESSING PERFORMANCE IN CANADA



TOURISM INDUSTRY
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA
ASSOCIATION DE L'INDUSTRIE
TOURISTIQUE DU CANADA

🌐 tourismcan.ca | tiac-aitc.ca
1300-180 Elgin St.
Ottawa, ON K2P 2K6
TIAC_Advocacy@tiac-aitc.ca



RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1** Expand electronic travel authorization (eTA) eligibility to include additional countries where security objectives can be met.
- 2** Meet the published visitor visa service standard of 14 days.
- 3** Add targeted surge capacity to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) teams during peak processing periods.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Canada's economic growth depends in part on the ability of visitors, business travellers, investors, and delegates to cross borders in a way that is efficient, predictable, and secure. Visitor visa processing is not merely an administrative function of Canada's immigration system; it is a core driver of Canadian international competitiveness, including in tourism, investment attraction, and commercial collaboration.

The Tourism Industry Association of Canada's Visa Trend Tracker tool records and updates publicly available data on visitor visa processing times, supporting a more transparent and practical policy discussion. By keeping a historical record of processing times, the tracker makes it easier to identify where performance is improving, where it remains inconsistent, and where gaps persist between expected service standards and actual processing timelines.

This paper accompanies the launch of the tracker. It sets out the rationale for monitoring processing performance, outlines the implications of high visa processing times for tourism and broader economic activity, and identifies three practical areas where federal action would strengthen Canada's visitor mobility system. Its purpose is not to overhaul the broader visa policy framework, but to encourage targeted improvements that make the system more predictable and more responsive to Canada's visitor, economic, and trade objectives.

Three priorities should guide federal action:

1. Expand electronic travel authorization (eTA) eligibility to include additional countries where security objectives can be met.
2. Meet the published visitor visa service standard of 14 days.
3. Add targeted surge capacity to Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) teams during peak processing periods.



Tourism Builds

CANADA

WHY THIS MATTERS

Canada's visitor visa system plays a direct role in supporting inbound leisure tourism and a wide range of business, trade, and investment travel. Visitor movements generate economic activity, as well as help build the relationships that underpin long-term commercial outcomes across the country. When prospective visitors to Canada – whether for leisure or business – face difficulty in planning and uncertainty in visa timelines, adverse effects of visa processing extend well beyond the immigration system itself – impacting businesses and communities across the country.

This matters more in a competitive global environment. Other destinations are working to reduce friction in cross-border travel, improve service predictability, and facilitate low-risk mobility without compromising security. Canada has introduced more efficient approaches for some traveller cohorts, but performance across the broader visitor visa system remains uneven¹.

For TIAC, this underscores a significant area of advocacy. Tourism depends on more than destination marketing and air access. It matters whether potential visitors can secure the documents they need within a timeframe that supports real travel decisions. A transparent public record of processing performance helps ground priorities in evidence rather than anecdote.

WHY TIAC IS LAUNCHING THE TRACKER



TIAC is launching the Visa Trend Tracker to create a clear and accessible record of publicly reported processing times for visitor visas and related permits. It is not a substitute for government reporting. Rather, it is a practical accountability tool that enables visitors, residents, and other stakeholders to monitor performance over time and assess shifts in Canada's visitor mobility system, as well as its responsiveness to pressures.

Processing times are often discussed only in snapshots, making it difficult to identify patterns, seasonal demands, or persistent problem areas.

A weekly historical record helps fill that gap. It allows industry and government alike to see if published service expectations are being met consistently, if performance varies significantly across markets, and if operational improvements are translating into better outcomes.

For TIAC, the value of the tracker is straightforward: it brings transparency, comparability, and continuity to a conversation with real implications for tourism competitiveness and broader economic progress.

¹ Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, service standards.

² Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, public processing times pages.

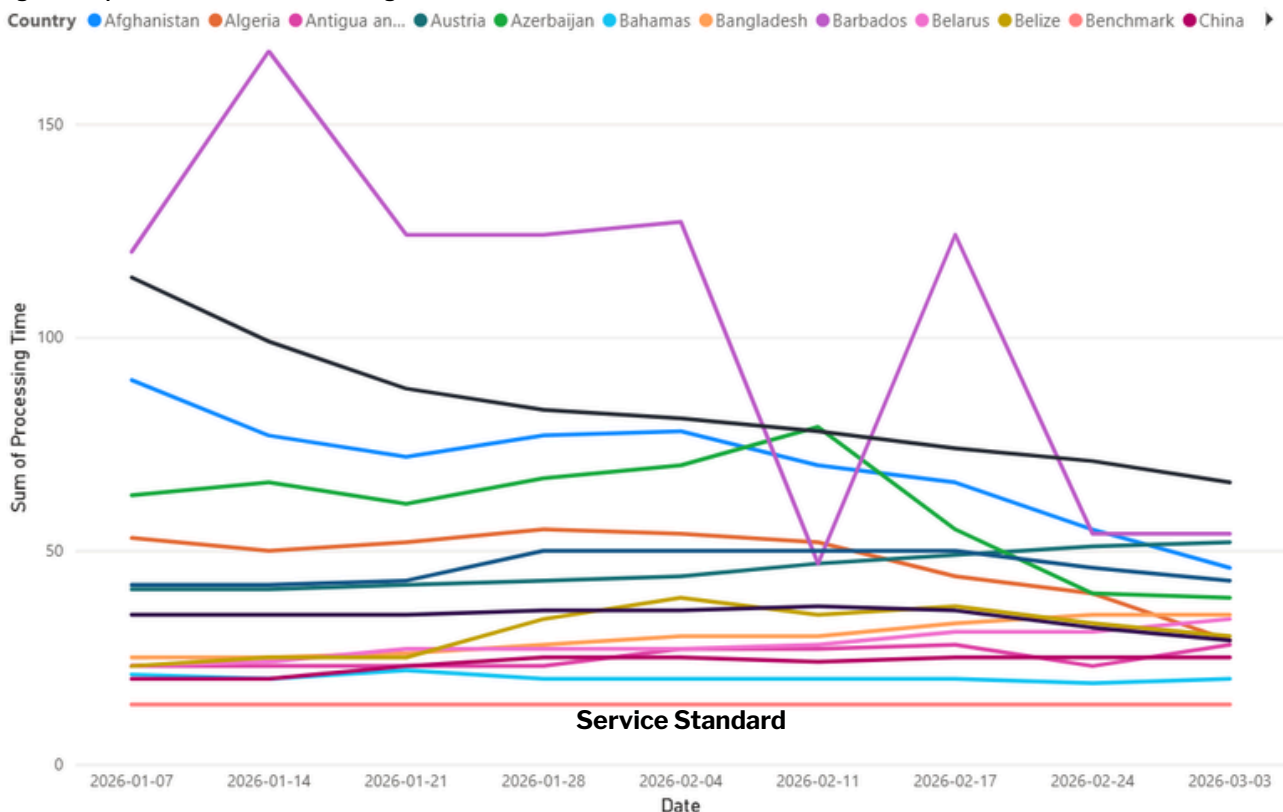
WHAT CURRENT PERFORMANCE SHOWS

The current picture is mixed. Some parts of Canada’s visa process are working well. The electronic travel authorization (eTA) system demonstrates that Canada can process low-risk travel quickly and efficiently, with a high degree of automation and clear service expectations³. Conditional eTA pathways also show that Canada can design smoother entry channels for some travellers from visa-required countries while maintaining admissibility safeguards⁴.

At the same time, visitor visa performance remains uneven. IRCC’s published service standard for new visitor visa applications from outside Canada is 14 days, yet current performance does not consistently meet that benchmark⁵. Publicly reported processing times also continue to vary significantly by country and over time⁶. That inconsistency matters for visitors making time-sensitive decisions, including both leisure and business travellers.

The issue is not simply whether Canada approves or refuses applications. It is about timing that supports visitors and realistic travel planning. Long or unpredictable processing times are a barrier, even for those who are ultimately approved for entry.

Figure: Comparison of Visitor Visa Processing Times and Service Standard



³ Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, service standards.
⁴ Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, electronic travel authorization eligibility and conditional eTA pathway information.
⁵ Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, service standards.
⁶ Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, public processing times pages.

A PRACTICAL POLICY AGENDA

Canada does not need a wholesale redesign of its visitor visa system to make meaningful progress. It needs targeted measures that improve predictability, reduce friction for appropriate cohorts, and reinforce operational capacity where pressure is known to occur.

TIAC recommends three priorities.

Expand eTA eligibility to include additional countries where security objectives can be met

The eTA system offers a clear example of what efficient visitor processing can look like. Where risk can be managed appropriately through pre-screening and existing compliance information, Canada should expand access to eTA-type pathways for additional countries⁷.

This does not mean weakening security screening measures. It means leveraging existing tools to reduce friction and processing time for lower-risk travellers where justified. Conditional eTA pathways already demonstrate that Canada is prepared to differentiate among traveller cohorts. Building on that approach would improve predictability for travellers and reduce pressure on the full visitor visa stream.

Over time, broader eTA eligibility could better align Canada's visitor entry system with its economic objectives by making it easier for more legitimate travellers to choose Canada as a destination for leisure, business, and event tourism.

Meet the published visitor visa service standard of 14 days

Canada has already established a public benchmark for visitor visa processing⁸. The federal priority now should be to meet this benchmark consistently.

A predictable visa processing system is essential for travellers and for the sectors that depend on international visitation. Travel decisions are often made within fixed booking windows. Conferences, tour programs, family travel, and business itineraries cannot always absorb lengthy or uncertain processing periods. If service standards are published, they should function as meaningful expectations rather than aspirational targets.

The Visa Trend Tracker supports this objective by making it easier to monitor whether performance is moving closer to, or farther from, that benchmark over time.



⁷ Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, electronic travel authorization eligibility and conditional eTA pathway information.

⁸ Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, service standards.

Address surge periods with targeted additional resources

Processing pressure fluctuates throughout the year. Visitor demand follows seasonal patterns, and the visa system should be resourced accordingly. When predictable surges occur, government should respond with targeted staffing, queue management, and operational support in the parts of the system under the greatest pressure.

This includes core processing capacity and the supporting infrastructure that can slow down applications, including biometrics access and appointment availability in high-friction markets. Canada has already shown that it can adopt targeted, time-limited measures to ease processing pressures for specific traveller groups while maintaining overall system integrity.

A more responsive surge model would improve service outcomes without requiring permanent overcapacity across the system. It would also help reduce the volatility that makes planning difficult for travellers and for the tourism sector.

CONCLUSION

Canada has proven it can facilitate visa processing effectively through lower-friction channels and for targeted cohorts. The challenge is not whether Canada is capable of delivering a more predictable system—it is whether that performance can be extended more consistently across visa streams.

For TIAC, the purpose of the Visa Trend Tracker is a practical public record of processing performance that provides evidence to support the tourism sector's policy priorities and Canada's economic interests.

The policy response should be equally practical: expand eTA eligibility where appropriate, meet published service standards, and add targeted resources during periods of peak demand. These actions would not resolve every issue in the visitor visa system, but they would make it more predictable, more efficient, and better aligned with Canada's tourism and economic goals.