

Canada Expands Biometrics Requirement to 150 Countries

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Until now, Canada's biometric program was limited to countries perceived to present an increased risk with respect to fraudulent immigration documentation, asylum seekers, and refugee claimants. However, over the next two years, Canada will be expanding its biometric program in stages. It will eventually collect fingerprints and facial photographs from citizens of approximately 150 countries, up from 30.

The stated purpose of this sudden and massive expansion is the strengthening of our borders through increased identity verification. The biometric expansion will:

1. United States Citizens holding study permits or work permits; Expand the current biometric screening program of all temporary resident visa, study and work permit applicants (excluding U.S. nationals), as well as of all permanent residence applicants.
2. Verify the biometrics of these travellers upon their arrival at major airports and expand the capacity to collect biometrics and conduct fingerprint verification (i.e., in the secondary services and inspections area) at additional ports of entry.

The first stage of this expansion will begin on July 31, 2018, and will apply to foreign nationals coming from Europe, Africa and the Middle East who seek to work, study, immigrate, or simply visit Canada. The second stage will begin on December 31, 2018, and will apply to foreign nationals applying from Asia, Asia Pacific and the Americas.

The following individuals will be exempt from the requirement to give biometrics:

1. United States Citizens holding study permits or work permits;

2. Canadian citizens, citizenship applicants (including passport applicants), or existing permanent residents;
3. Visa-exempt nationals coming to Canada as tourists who hold a valid electronic travel authorization (eTA);
4. Children under the age of 14;
5. Applicants over the age of 79 (there is no upper age exemption for asylum claimants);
6. Heads of state and heads of government;
7. Cabinet ministers and accredited diplomats of other countries and the United Nations, coming to Canada on official business;
8. U.S. visa holders transiting through Canada;
9. Refugee claimants or protected persons who have already provided biometrics and are applying for a study or work permit;
10. Temporary resident applicants who have already provided biometrics in support of a permanent resident application that is still in progress; and
11. Those who apply for a Work or Study Permit, visa, or Permanent Residence from within Canada (until the in-Canada service is established).

Those subject to this expanded program will have to pay an individual fee of \$85, or a family fee of \$170. The biometrics data itself will be kept by the RCMP for a period of ten years. As such, repeat travelers will need to provide new biometrics once every ten years. This data will be shared with the U.S., the U.K., Australia and New Zealand. Notably, should one become a Canadian citizen, such information will be destroyed.