

Who Can Enter Canada during COVID-19

This fact sheet explains the law in general. It is not intended as legal advice for your particular problem. Because each person's situation is different, you may need to seek legal advice. The information in this fact sheet was reviewed by a lawyer, and was last updated on 1 December 2020.

Like many other countries in the world, Canada has temporary travel restrictions on who can enter the country during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a migrant worker, your travel may be impacted by these restrictions. This fact sheet explains the current COVID-19 travel restrictions, the mandatory quarantine requirement, and the relevant exemptions.

IMPORTANT: The information contained in this fact sheet is up to date as of date indicated above. However, the regulations on travel restrictions in response to COVID-19 are changing rapidly and frequently. It is strongly recommended that you do **not** rely on this content without also checking whether there have been any updates.

What are the current COVID-19 travel restrictions that Canada has?

As a general rule, no one with COVID-19 symptoms will be allowed enter Canada, regardless of their legal status in the country.

Foreign nationals are barred from traveling to Canada unless they satisfy certain requirements. What the requirements are depends on whether a foreign national is travelling to Canada from the United States or not.

If you are a foreign national travelling to Canada from any country other than the United States, your travel is barred **unless** it meets **both** of the following requirements:

- Your travel fits within one of the below exemptions:
 - family members;
 - workers, students and PRs;
 - discretionary categories; and
- Your travel is non-optional and non-discretionary.

For detailed information on the requirements, visit <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/coronavirus-covid19/travel-restrictions-exemptions.html>.

If you are a foreign national travelling to Canada from the United States, your travel will be allowed if it is non-optional and non-discretionary. This restriction will be in effect until at least 21 December 2020. Some examples of optional or discretionary travels include tourism, recreation or entertainment. Whether each travel is optional or discretionary is accessed by individual CBSA officers.

What do I need to do before departing for Canada?

As of 21 November 2020, all travellers coming to Canada by air will be required to submit their information electronically through ArriveCAN before they board the flight. ArriveCAN is a platform that allows traveller to submit mandatory information electronically before they arrive in Canada. You may download the ArriveCAN app on your phone or sign in online. For more information, visit Canada.ca/ArriveCAN.

For travellers coming to Canada by land or sea, they are strongly encouraged by the government to submit information electronically through ArriveCAN before their arrival. Doing so may help avoid additional delays for public health questioning at the border.

How do the restrictions affect migrant workers?

As outlined in general terms above, the current travel restrictions only allow certain groups of foreign nationals to travel to Canada. A migrant worker will be permitted to travel to Canada **only if** their travel is **essential**.

Essential travel refers to travel that is non-optional and non-discretionary. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) has listed requirements for a migrant worker's travel to be essential, which can be explained as follows:

First of all, you will need to have either a valid work permit or a letter of introduction from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) for your work permit application. Then, depending on the type of document that you hold:

- For holders of a valid work permit, your travel will be essential if you normally live in Canada. Even if you have been laid off from your work and don't currently have a job in Canada, your travel is still essential as long as your work permit is still valid and you normally live in Canada.
- For holders of a letter of introduction (for both open or employer-specific work permits), which means that you have not yet obtained your actual work permit, your travel will be essential if you have a valid job offer and you can work after completing a 14-day quarantine after entering Canada (unless you are exempted).

What would be some examples of non-essential travel for migrant workers?

If you are a holder of a letter of introduction, your travel can be determined as non-essential if:

- Your work-permit will be employer-specific, but the potential employer has closed their business due to COVID-19; or
- Your work-permit will be open, but you don't yet have a job contract upon your arrival at the Canadian border.

What are the requirements after I arrive in Canada?

Under the current rules, all persons entering Canada are required to complete a 14-day mandatory quarantine, unless exempted. As of 21 November 2020, all travellers who entered Canada and are under the mandatory quarantine will be required to submit information during their quarantine period through ArriveCAN or by calling 1-833-641-0343.

Essential workers may be exempted from the mandatory quarantine requirement. In other words, you may not need to be quarantined if you are entering Canada for the purposes of performing an essential job or function. However, if an essential worker displays any signs or symptoms upon entering Canada, this exemption will not apply. It is worth noting that traveling as a worker for an essential purpose does **not** automatically make you an essential worker.

For people who are exempted from the quarantine requirement, it is still required that they:

- monitor their health for COVID-19 symptoms;
- wear a non-medical mask or face covering while in public settings if physical distancing can't be maintained; and
- follow public health guidance and prevention measures from their local health authority and their employer.

Who are essential workers?

Generally speaking, an essential worker is someone who provides an essential service. For the purpose of quarantine exemptions, this may refer to anyone that the Chief Public Health Officer determines will provide an essential service. Whether a traveller is exempted by way of being an essential worker is to be determined upon their arrival at the Canadian border by a government representative. Some of the workers who have been granted quarantine exemptions for being essential workers include truck drivers, critical infrastructure workers and some technicians.

~~The list of essential workers who have been exempt from quarantine is not a broad one. In September 2020, the CBC has [reported](#) that the federal government has only granted quarantine exemptions to limited categories of workers, including “truck drivers, airline flight crews, health-care professionals, critical infrastructure workers and some technicians.”~~