

A Quick Reference Guide to Residency Categories

The October referendum asks questions about who should have access to Alberta's health care, education, and financial support programs. To understand what the questions mean, it helps to know the different categories of people living in Alberta and how each is defined. This guide breaks down these categories in plain language.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

The referendum questions focus on specific groups of people who are living and working or studying in Alberta long-term, including temporary foreign workers, international students, refugee claimants. These groups pay taxes and contribute to their communities. They are different from casual visitors.

When you see the phrase "non-permanent residents" or "temporary residents" in the referendum information, understand that it refers specifically to these categories of people, not tourists or casual visitors.

THE BIG THREE GROUPS

Canadian Citizens

Who are they:

People who have been granted Canadian citizenship. This includes people born in Canada and people born outside Canada who have gone through citizenship application and taken the citizenship oath.

Access to Alberta services:

Full access to health care, education, financial supports, and all provincial programs. No restrictions.

Permanent Residents

Who are they:

People granted permanent residency in Canada. They are not citizens yet, but have been approved to live in Canada permanently. They have passed security and health checks and have been processed by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). Permanent Residents include Economic Immigrants, Family Class Immigrants and Refugees. Many permanent residents are on the path to citizenship.

Access to Alberta services:

Full access to health care, education, financial supports, and most provincial programs. Generally treated the same as citizens for service eligibility.

Temporary Residents (Non-permanent Residents)

Who are they:

People living in Canada on a temporary basis. They have been approved to live and work or study in Canada for a set period of time but do not have permanent residency. Unlike citizens and permanent residents, their stay in Canada has a defined end date (though it can be renewed).

Access to Alberta services:

Limited access. Most temporary residents do NOT have access to provincial financial support programs (income assistance, disability supports, child benefits). However, they typically have access to emergency health care and public schools. Access varies by category.

TYPES OF TEMPORARY RESIDENTS

Understanding Who Lives in Alberta



Temporary residents break down into several specific categories. Here are the main ones mentioned in the referendum:

Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW)

Who they are:

People from outside Canada who have been hired by a Canadian employer to work in Canada for a limited time. They have a valid work permit. Examples: agricultural workers, skilled tradespeople, health care workers hired for specific positions.

Why they matter for the referendum:

TFWs pay taxes and contribute to their communities. They have limited access to health and education services and do not have access to provincial financial support programs. The referendum asks whether TFWs should have further limits to their ability to access health and education services.

International Students

Who they are:

People from other countries who are enrolled in post-secondary education (university, college, vocational programs) in Alberta. They have a valid study permit. They come to Alberta to study and are expected to return home or move elsewhere after graduation.

Why they matter for the referendum:

International students pay tuition and taxes. Many work part-time and contribute to the economy. They have limited access to health and education services and do not have access to provincial financial support programs. The referendum asks whether International Students should have further limits to their ability to access health and education services.

Refugee Claimants (People Seeking Asylum)

Who they are:

People from other countries who have applied for refugee protection in Canada because they face persecution, violence, or other serious harms in their home country. They are waiting for their claim to be decided by Canadian authorities. While their claim is being processed, they live in Canada on a temporary basis.

Why they matter for the referendum:

Refugee claimants have limited access to provincial services while their claims are being processed. The referendum asks whether access should be restricted further.

UNDERSTAND THE CATEGORIES - QUICK REFERENCE TABLE

Category	Citizenship Status	Health Care Access	Financial Access	Supports	Education Access (K-12)
Canadian Citizens	Citizen	Full access	Full access		Full access
Permanent Residents	Permanent Resident (not citizen)	Full access	Full access		Full access
Temporary Foreign Workers	Temporary Resident (work permit)	Provincial Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan (AHCIP) provided after 3-mo to 1-yr wait. Employer emergency coverage is provided in between.	No access to Alberta social assistance. Employment Insurance only (55% earnings, max \$729/week).		Children may attend (public school)
International Students	Temporary Resident (study permit)	Free provincial AHCIP for students in 12+ month programs; eligible after 3 months of residency. Students in programs under 12 months pay for private insurance.	University emergency aid + merit scholarships only. No government student loans, provincial grants, or bursaries		Students pursuing degree/diploma receive free K-12 + provincial grants for their children. Children of students pursuing ESL must pay tuition. Students pursuing post-secondary: require own study permit
Refugee Claimants	Temporary Resident (asylum claim pending)	Comprehensive basic + supplemental (mental health, emergency dental, prescriptions) through federally-funded program	Refugee claimants are eligible for provincial Income Support only if they meet asset or residency criteria		Mandatory and free public K-12 with no study permit required. Alberta School Boards Association supports funding

* This guide was created to help voters understand the referendum questions. For official information on residency categories, visit Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) or Elections Alberta.