

# Languages Canada

## How Language Learning Drives Canadian Youth Mobility and International Engagement

March 12, 2026

Presentation



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# Background

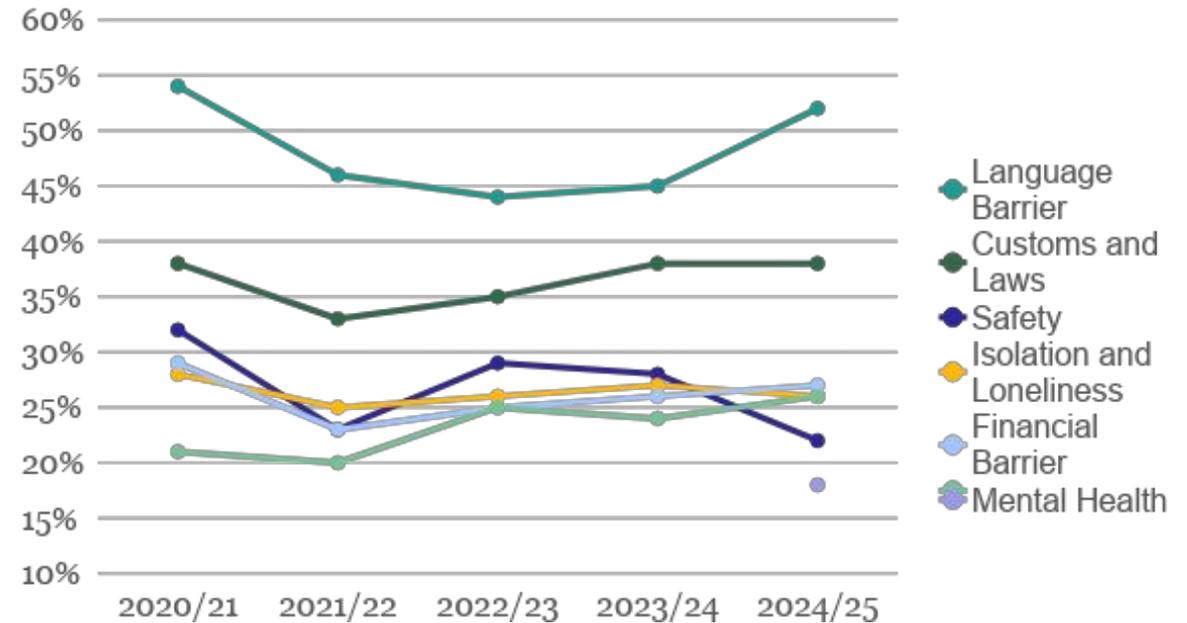
# Languages Canada and International Experience Canada

- International Experience Canada (IEC): a **reciprocal work/travel program with over 35 country partners** across Europe, East Asia, Oceania, and the Americas (18-35 age target).
- A self-directed program, but IEC partners with **Recognized Organizations** for optional support to both Canadian and foreign national youth participants (jobs, orientation, accommodations, etc.).
- The **Languages Canada Consortium**, comprising of eight accredited language schools, became a Recognized Organization (RO) of IEC in 2024 to offer:
  - **International youth** the opportunity to improve their English or French skills at an accredited language school and work with a Canadian employer to expand workplace language skills.
  - **Canadian youth** the opportunity to work abroad as English teachers in training, or tourism and hospitality sectors while immersing themselves in another language/culture.



# IEC's Reciprocity Conundrum

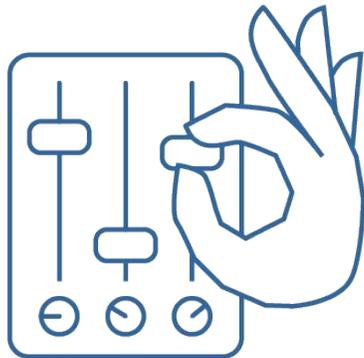
- IEC has historically been a major Canadian labour market contributor; but program success also depends on driving Canadian youth to **participate abroad (Reciprocity)**.
- Canadian youth are **not going abroad** in same numbers as international youth on IEC in Canada.
- IEC Public Opinion Research indicates that a high proportion of Canadian youth (59% in 2024) consider **language barriers** an obstacle when considering travelling abroad.
- IEC is constantly promoting to/engaging with Canadian youth and allies to **grow the program** beyond traditional destinations of English- and French-speaking countries (e.g., Europe, Indo-Pacific).



***Hypothesis Question: are students of a foreign/non-official language a potential untapped market for outbound work/travel experiences through IEC? Enter Languages Canada and Academica!***

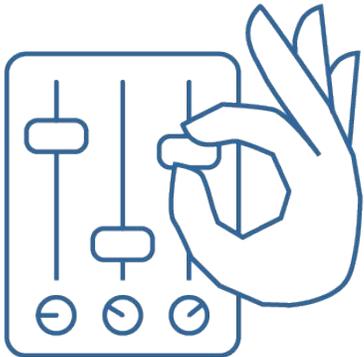
# Research Study

# Research Objectives



- Research study conducted by Languages Canada and Academica Group, with support from IRCC's IEC program
- Explore the connection between language learning and Canadian youth participation in outbound global mobility
- Consider how collaboration between universities and youth mobility stakeholders can unlock new pathways for young Canadians to engage in outbound global mobility

# Research Questions



1. What existing research and data is available related to the outbound mobility of students in undergraduate language programs in Canada?
2. What programs in Canada exist and how many students graduate from these programs each year?
3. What outbound global mobility programs exist, how many of these students participate in outbound global mobility each year, and what barriers prevent participation?
4. Are universities aware of the IEC program?

*Focus on undergraduate language programs in Korean, Mandarin, Japanese, and Spanish*

# Method



## Secondary Research

- Identify existing data and research
- Academic databases, institutional repositories, and grey literature



## Inventory Development

- Identify relevant undergrad programs and outbound global mobility opportunities
- Universities Canada UniversityStudy.ca database and supplemental internet searches



## Deep Dive

- Collect and validate information
- Email contact with programs, central global mobility units, and institutional research units

# Preliminary Findings

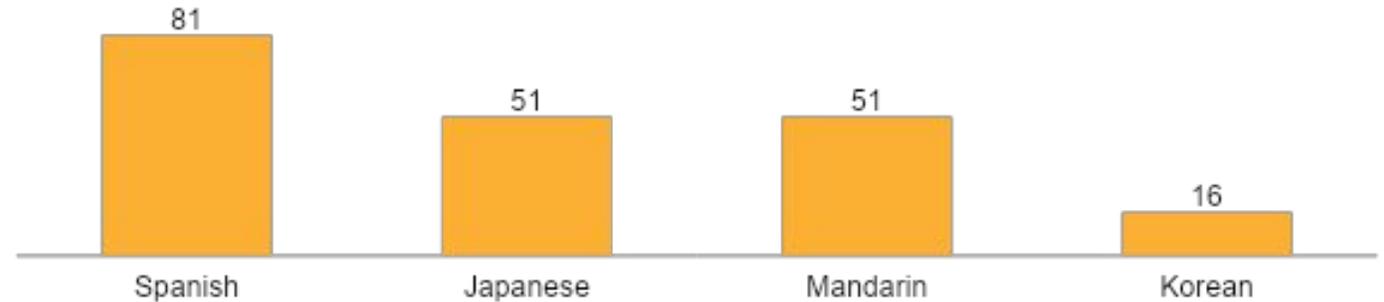
# What existing research and data is available?

- Limited information about outbound mobility for students in relevant undergraduate programs in Canada
- No existing data on the number of undergraduate students in Korean, Mandarin, Japanese, or Spanish programs in Canada who participate in outbound mobility
- Two research studies focused on self-reported experiences of outbound mobility among students enrolled in undergraduate Spanish programs in Canada

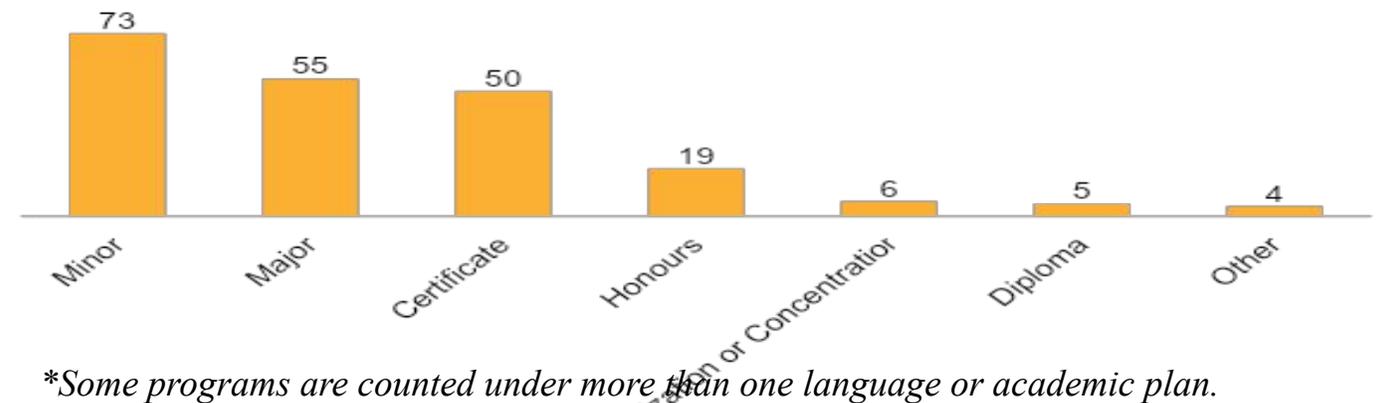
# What undergraduate programs in Canada exist?

- Identified 142 relevant programs at the undergraduate level (major, minor, diploma, or certificate) at 58 universities across Canada
- Most programs are related to Spanish (81), Japanese (51), or Mandarin (51), fewer are Korean (16)
- Programs often offered as a minor (73), major (55), or certificate (50)
- Selected 92 undergraduate language programs across 42 universities for the deep dive

Number of Undergraduate Programs by Language\*



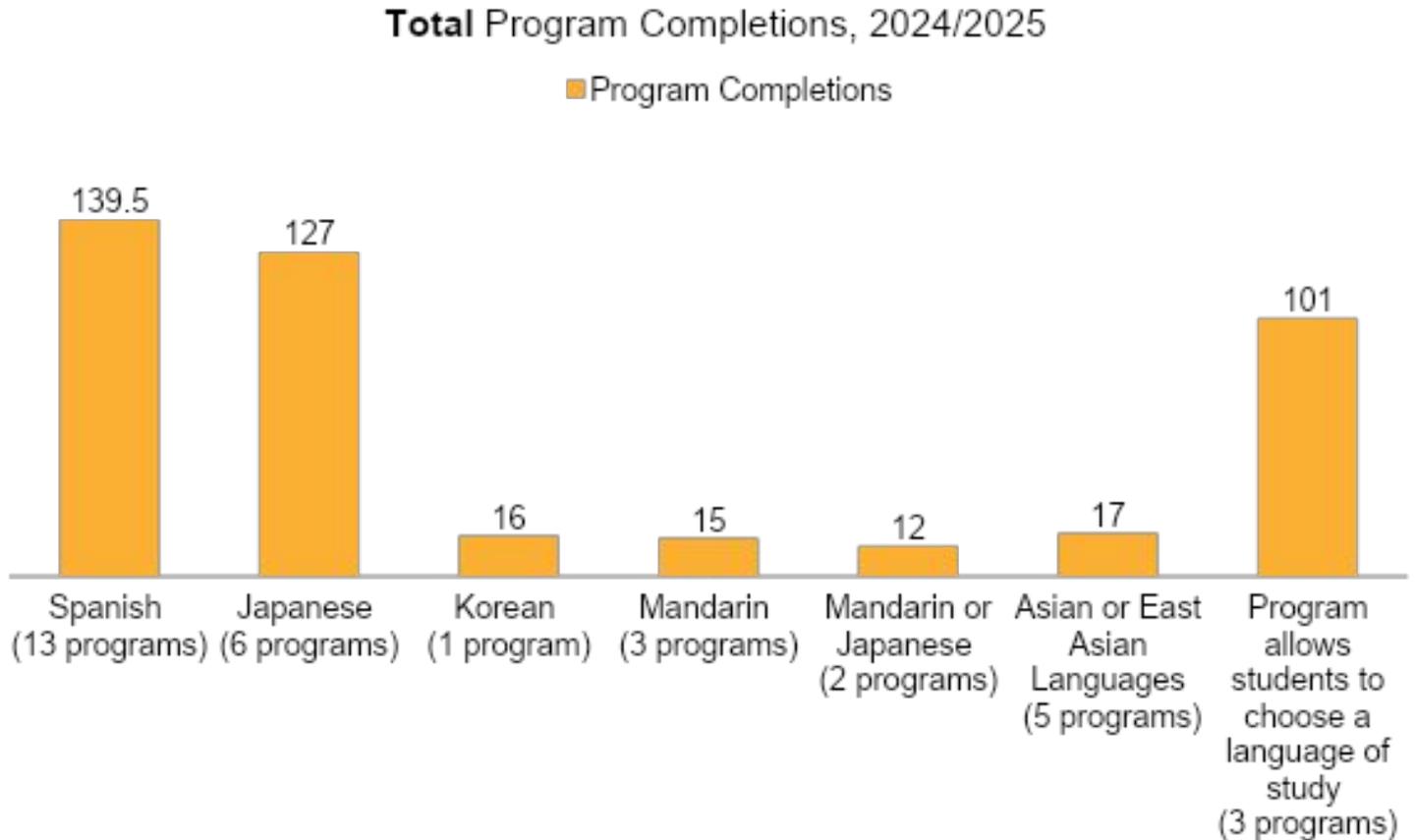
Number of Undergraduate Programs by Academic Plan\*



\*Some programs are counted under more than one language or academic plan.

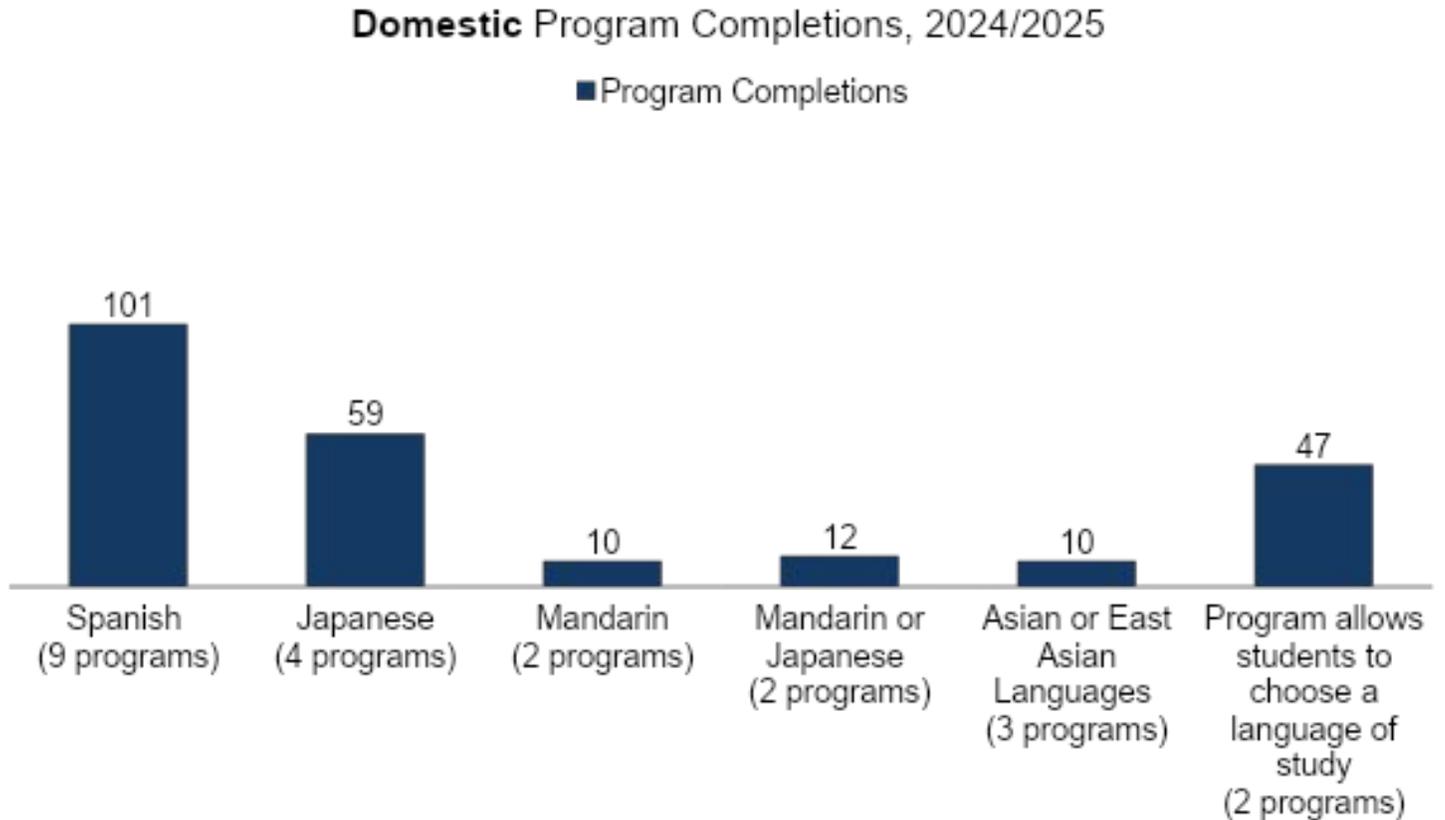
# How many students graduate from these programs each year?

- 427.5 program completions in 2024/2025 (based on 33 programs that reported data)
- Most completions are for majors (139)
- Many completions from certificates (112), minors (90.5), and diplomas (59)



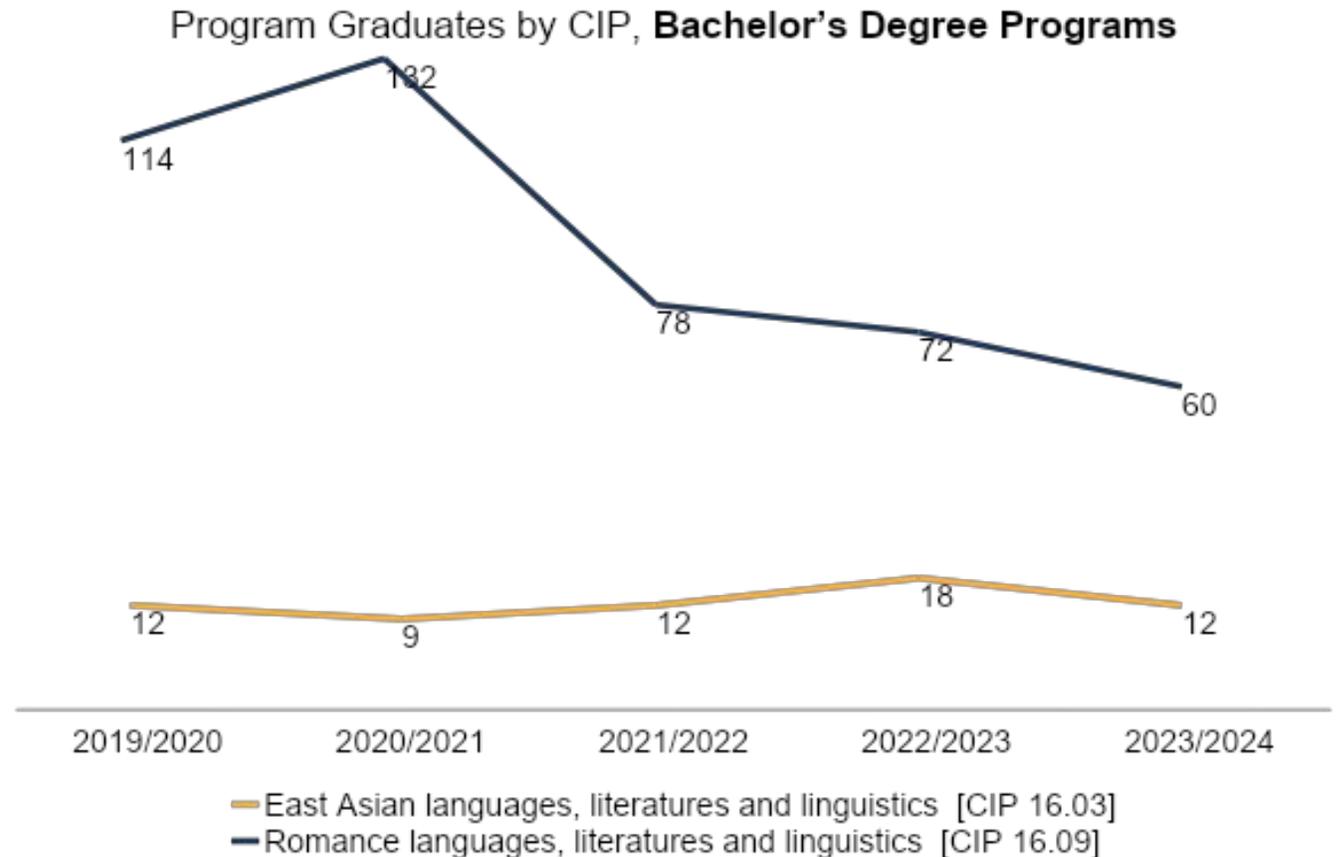
# How many students graduate from these programs each year?

- 239 domestic program completions in 2024/2025 (based on 22 programs that reported data)
- Most domestic completions for certificates (97) and majors (81)
- Many domestic completions for minor programs (27)



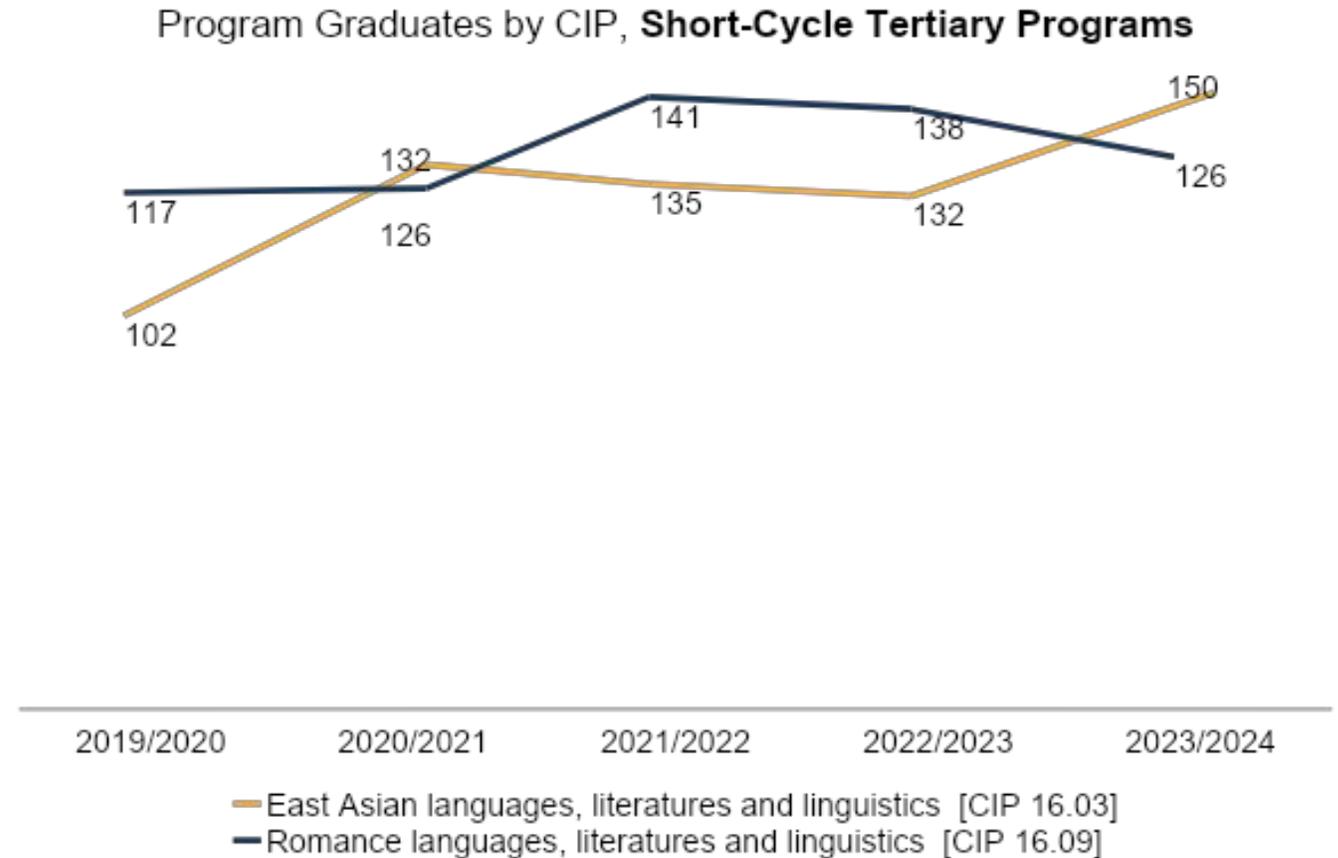
# How many students graduate from these programs each year?

- Statistics Canada reported 72 university graduates from relevant bachelor's degree programs in 2023/2024
- Trend toward declining number of graduates from *Romance languages, literatures and linguistics* programs (47% decline from 2019/2020 to 2023/2024)

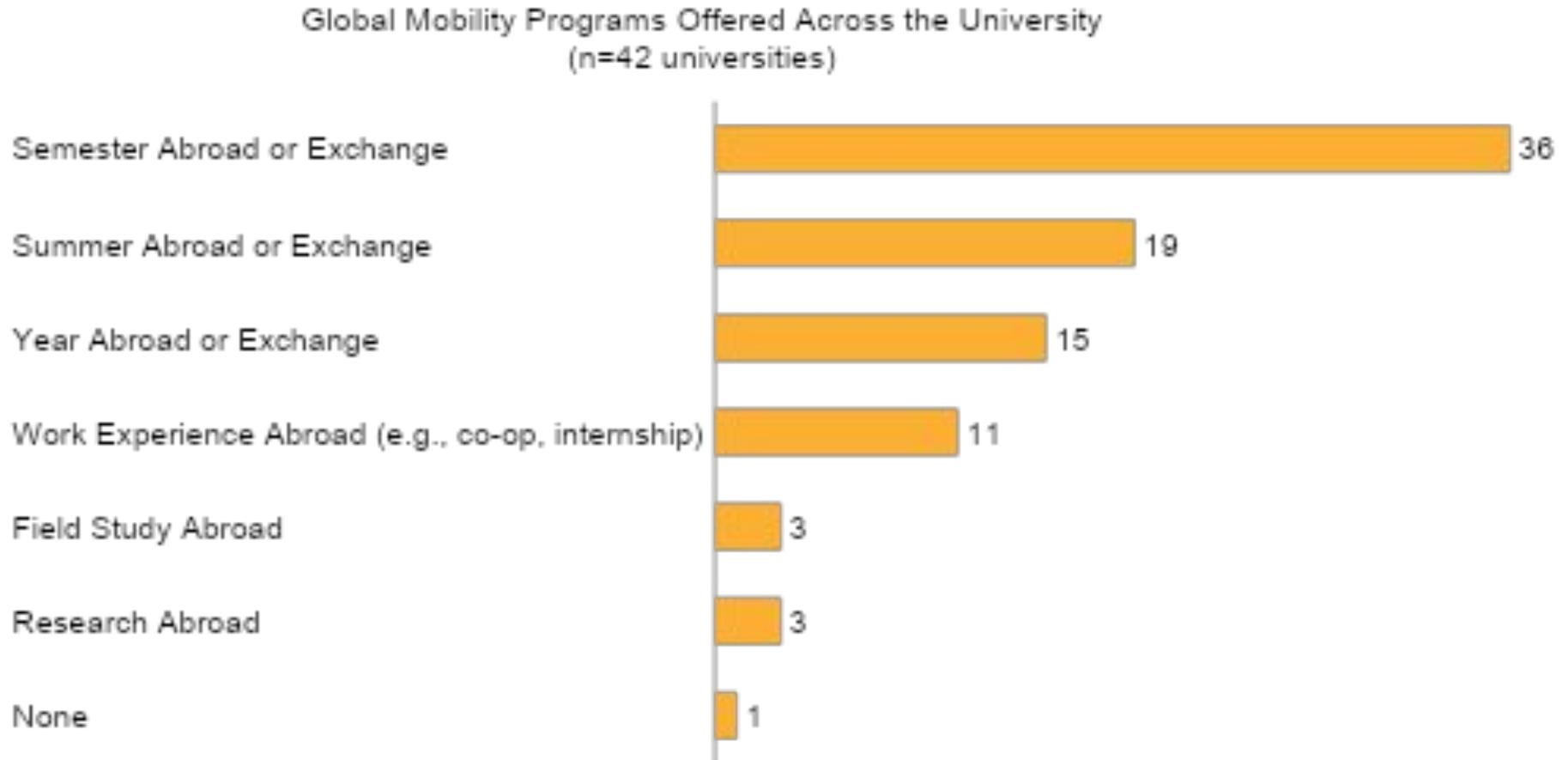


# How many students graduate from these programs each year?

- Statistics Canada reported 276 university graduates from relevant short-cycle tertiary programs in 2023/2024
- Trend toward increasing number of graduates from *East Asian languages, literatures and linguistics* programs (47% increase from 2019/2020 to 2023/2024)

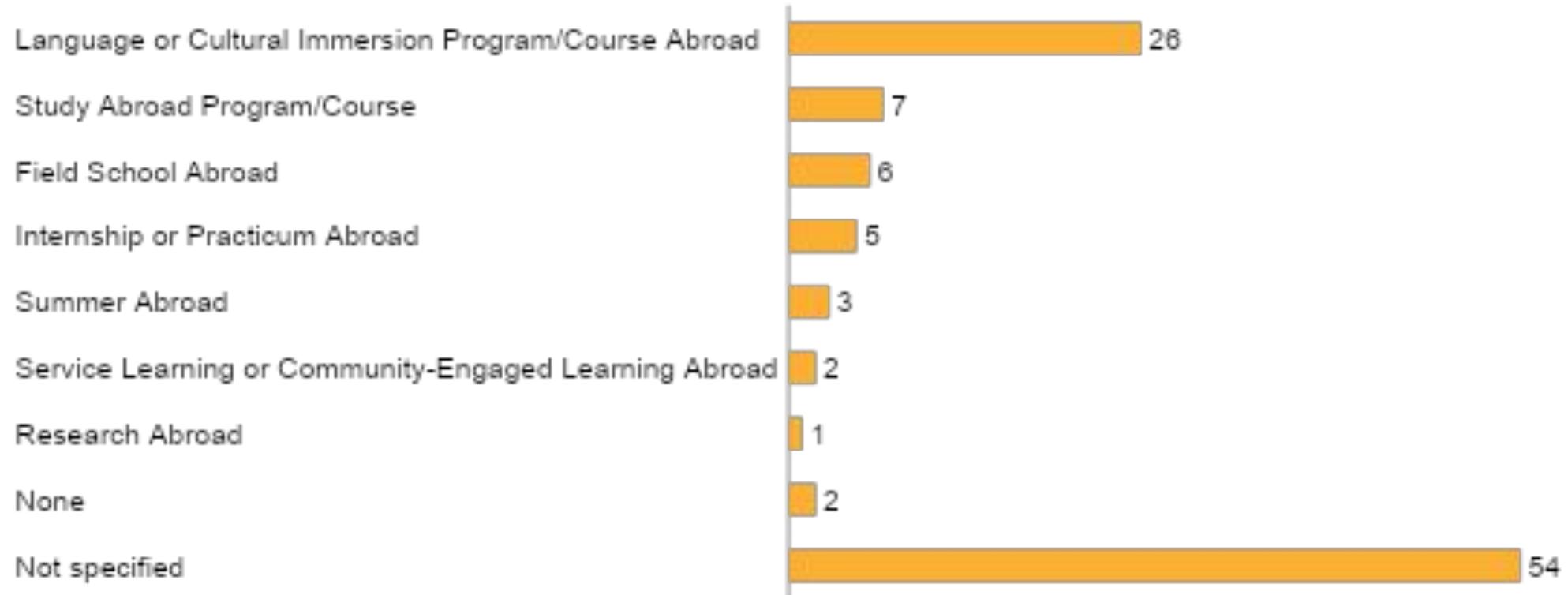


# What outbound global mobility programs are offered at the university-wide level?



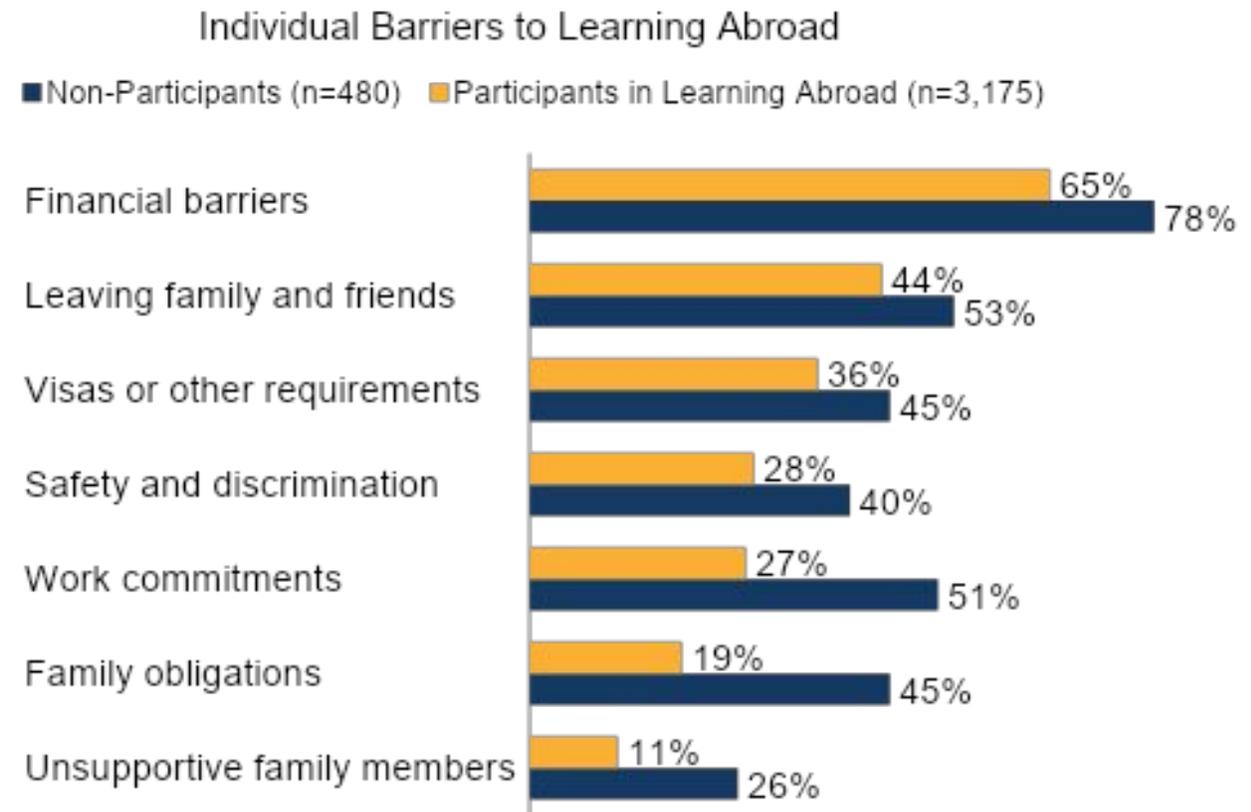
# What outbound global mobility programs are offered at the department or program level?

Global Mobility Programs Offered by Department/Program  
(n=92 programs)



# How many language students participate in outbound global mobility each year, and what barriers prevent participation?

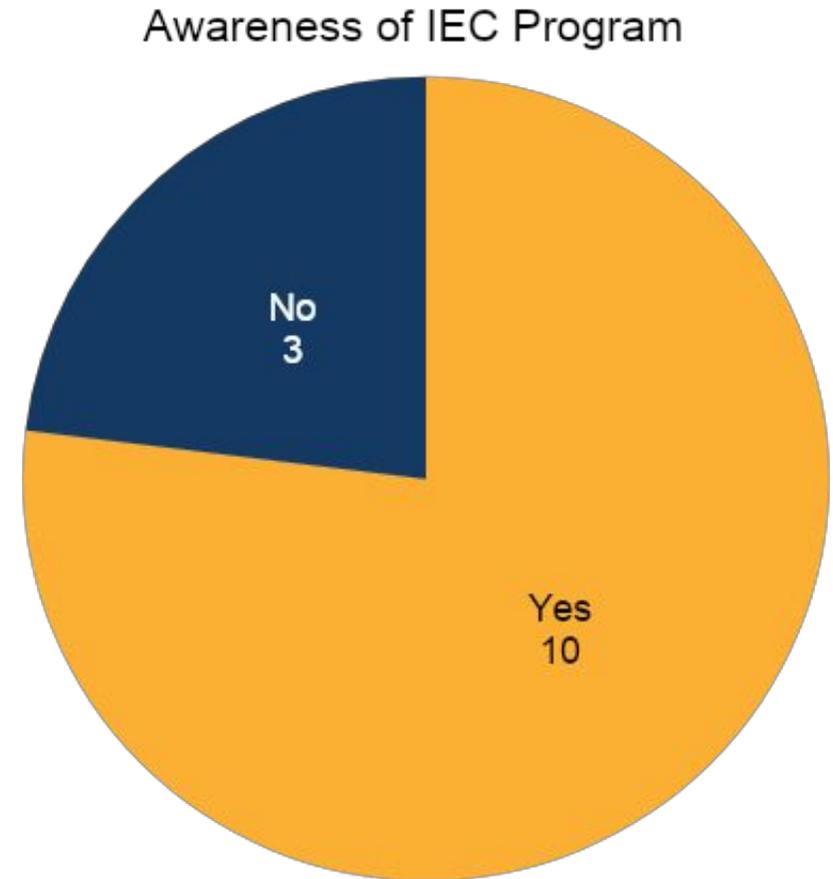
- Unknown – Few programs provided data
- Data collection is limited by:
  - Data often housed across multiple units
  - Inconsistent measures to count participation



Canadian Bureau for International Education (2024). *Canada in the World: Results of the CBIE Learning Abroad Survey Initiative*.

# Are universities aware of the IEC program?

- Of the 13 contacts who provided this information, 10 were aware of the IEC program



# Overall Takeaways

**Collaboration between Languages Canada, IEC, and universities offering language learning could unlock new pathways for young Canadians to engage globally**

- Over 140 relevant Spanish, Japanese, Mandarin, and Korean programs represent a potential audience for the IEC program
- High number of Spanish, Japanese, and Mandarin programs
- Growing number of graduates of *East Asian languages, literatures and linguistics* programs

**These students have access to outbound global mobility opportunities, but the volume of students participating in these opportunities remains unknown**

- Study abroad and exchange opportunities are most common at the university-wide level
- Language or cultural immersion opportunities are most common at the department or program level

# What's Next

## **Continue to collect and analyze data**

- Collect program enrolment data to provide more insight into the volume of undergraduate students in relevant language programs
- Further efforts to collect data on the number of undergraduate students in relevant language programs who participate in outbound global mobility

## **Future opportunities**

- Teaching English Abroad (for a semester or a year)
- Hybrid study/work opportunities (i.e., study Japanese in Japan combined with short-term work)
- Explore potential research and outreach opportunities with language students and programs

# Gaps & Future Research

- Among undergraduate students in relevant language learning programs:
  - How many graduate each year?
  - How many participate in outbound global mobility each year?
- What outbound global mobility opportunities are available at the program or department level?
- Does participation in outbound global mobility translate to interest in future travel work opportunities, such as those offered by the IEC program, after graduating?
- How could language education, higher education, and youth mobility stakeholders continue to collaborate to unlock new global pathways for young Canadians?

Questions?

# Thank you!

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