



# TRAVELLING SAFELY

## PROTECTING YOUR RESEARCH WHILE TRAVELLING ABROAD

RESEARCH SECURITY CENTRE

SAFEGUARDING SCIENCE | 2025 | **MODULE 6**

BUILDING A **SAFE AND RESILIENT CANADA**

### THREAT ENVIRONMENT

If you conduct research in a sensitive area, you are a potential target even if you do not consider your research to be sensitive. Therefore, you could inadvertently contribute towards the economic, political, or military interests of a foreign government. Whether as part of a conference, a research partnership, an internship, or a student exchange—no matter where you're going, you could be targeted.

From a research security perspective, the threat largely comes from foreign interference and espionage activities, targeting intellectual property, cutting-edge technologies, and issues a foreign government considers sensitive.

Targeted information such as formulas, procedures, databases, software, manufacturing processes, and email exchanges can provide a competitive advantage to a state.

#### NOTE

Check the [Travel Advice and Advisories](#) section for detailed information on various risks, including arbitrary detention. Global Affairs Canada is responsible for keeping this tool up to date, continuously monitoring and analyzing trends and incidents affecting travelers abroad, and diligently gathering information from diverse sources.

## WHY TARGET CANADA (CANADIANS)?

As a member of multilateral fora such as the G7, the G20, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the Five Eyes, Canada has privileged access to valuable information.

Canada's historic relationship with the United States, characterized by the world's longest land border and collaboration through NORAD, amplifies its global presence and access to advanced American technology and research data.













Canada's leading position in fields such as aeronautics, medicine, pharmaceuticals, and quantum technology, supported by advanced laboratories and abundant natural resources, further elevates its attractiveness.

Additionally, the principle of open science, which promotes transparency and accessibility in research, inadvertently increases its vulnerability.

## BEST PRACTICES

### PRE-DEPARTURE

Before you travel abroad, regardless of the nature of your stay or whether you have been there before, familiarize yourself with your destination. If you are applying for a visa for the duration of your stay, bear in mind that the information you provide allows certain foreign governments to establish your profile, and in so doing, determine the interests you may represent. Even before you book your plane ticket and hotel room, information about you may be collected.

 Consult your institution's travel procedures and instructions	 Make a travel plan and communicate it to an appropriate contact	 Make a brief risk assessment of your destination's security/political climate
 Check Global Affairs Canada's Travel Advice and Advisories	 Discuss your concerns with the appropriate contacts at your university	 Share your itinerary with a trusted person
 Limit the number of devices you bring, and restrict their use to a minimum	 Install the latest updates on your devices and acquire the protection of a VPN	 Manage and store your passwords on a secure application
 Sign up with the Registration of Canadians Abroad	 Do a quick internet search on yourself to see what information is public	 Pay attention to Wi-Fi connections when flying

## UPON ARRIVAL (AIRPORT)

Please note that you are not in an international zone when you arrive. Contrary to popular belief, you are in fact under the jurisdiction of the country where the airport is located, even if you remain in the transit hall.

You should also note that dual citizenship is not recognized in all countries. There is a distinction between authorization and recognition of citizenship. Keep in mind that if you are a Canadian researcher with a second nationality, and your destination country does not allow dual citizenship, you may have difficulty accessing consular assistance in an emergency.



Conceal your luggage tags: do not assume that because you are Canadian, you have special status



Avoid using free or unfamiliar Wi-Fi connections: use encryption and VPNs if you must work over unprotected networks



Do not use self-serve charging stations: some of them could be designed to copy information to your devices



If you have checked baggage, assume it was searched during transit



Be aware that secondary or random searches can be used as a pretext to copy or seize your belongings



Transfer your sensitive files to the cloud and put your device in airplane mode

American and Canadian customs officers, for example, have the right to search travelers' electronic devices at the border for national security reasons, although this is quite rare. They can examine your photos, messages, and documents on your device but cannot access data stored remotely.

Searches can be superficial or thorough. In some countries, in the case of a thorough search, reasonable suspicion and approval from a superior are required. If you refuse to cooperate, this can result in consequences such as confiscation of your device or outright denial of entry.



## DURING YOUR STAY

Whether in transit, at the hotel, or at a conference, be aware that malicious actors can take advantage of every opportunity to steal information from you.



Do not post information or photos that may enable someone to identify where you are staying



Do not discuss information related to your research in public places



Do not leave your devices unattended: If you need to store them somewhere, remove the battery and the SIM card



Do not throw out work-related documents in the hotel room bin or in conference rooms



Do not use the “remember me” option on websites ; instead, retype your password every time



Be aware of who is looking at your screen, especially in public places



Deactivate Bluetooth when not in use. When it's on, your phone is detectable



Check the privacy and security settings of your fitness GPS tracking apps



Purchase a local SIM card or eSIM



Report any theft to your institution as quickly as possible



Use power chargers or consider using a data blocker when charging your devices



Make sure your research or conference ID access card is not displayed in public places

## UPON RETURN

Upon your return from a trip, other security tips apply. They are relatively minor, but you still want to take a few steps to protect your research.



Report any suspicious activity on your devices, as hackers can continue to mine data on your hard drive



Change your passwords



Watch out for suspicious new opportunities after your trip

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

The threat landscape is rapidly evolving. Canadians are targeted by malicious actors due to their participation in international alliances, their historic relationship with the United States, and their technical expertise. Before, during, and after your trip, be vigilant and follow the advice of your institution to protect your research and that of your institution.

## USEFUL RESOURCES

**[Travel Advice and Advisories](#)** – Travel advice and advisories help you make informed decisions and travel safely when outside Canada. Consult the page specific to your destination frequently, as safety considerations may change.

**[Getcybersafe.gc.ca](#)** – This is a national awareness campaign run by the Communications Security Establishment. It is designed to make Canadians more conscious of their online safety, and to inform them of the steps to take to protect themselves online.

**[Far From Home — A Travel Security Guide](#)** – This CSIS guide describes the nature of the threats posed by foreign intelligence, terrorism, and economic espionage. You'll find basic precautions that can help you mitigate risks, as well as steps to report suspicious incidents.

**[Safeguarding Your Research](#)** – Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada's portal provides information on how to protect your research. The Portal includes general information on research security as well as research security policies and guidelines.

## CONTACT US

For more information on research security, you can contact the Research Security Centre by sending an email to: [researchsecurity-securiteenrecherche@ps-ps.gc.ca](mailto:researchsecurity-securiteenrecherche@ps-ps.gc.ca).

