

AB Testing results - Alert styles & impact on IRCC Secure Account page

[FR version](#)

The Digital Transformation Office and IRCC Web UX, Research and Design (WURD) team ran a series of live AB studies of alert styles. The studies measured the impact of standard alert styling for Canada.ca vs IRCC's innovative and compressed alert band. The band is designed for situations where there are multiple alerts displayed on the same page that are semi-permanent. Like other sign-in pages, IRCC's Secure Account Sign in page often has 2 to 4 alerts posted. Since IRCC were the first to adopt the new Sign-in design pattern, we ran these studies to test the suitability of the alert band for that pattern.

Measure: Conversion rates of opens of the expand-collapse items in the band or alert for each condition. Conversion rates are the number of opens divided by the number of visits.

Method: Adobe AB Target was used to randomly assign visitors to each condition for their visit and return visits during the test periods.

Results are for visitors to both the English and French pages:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/account.html>

<https://www.canada.ca/fr/immigration-refugies-citoyennete/services/demande/compte.html>

Takeaways:

The IRCC alert band is as effective as the standard info alert across mobile and desktop, and as effective in mobile as a standard warning alert

- The exclamation icon is important to the IRCC alert band.
- The standard warning alert should be reserved for warnings - it distracts from important content, or should be placed above important content so users can return to their task after reading the alert
- Mobile users are more likely to notice/be distracted by alerts

Next steps: Update Alert guidance based on these results, together with the results from the Alert Styling Survey currently under way.

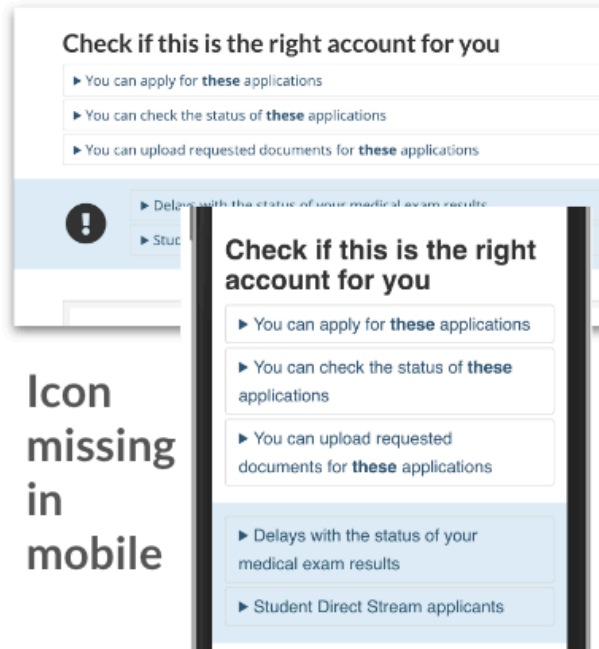
- Alert guidance for Canada.ca

<https://design.canada.ca/common-design-patterns/contextual-alerts.html>

Test 1: Compare IRCC alert band and standard warning alert

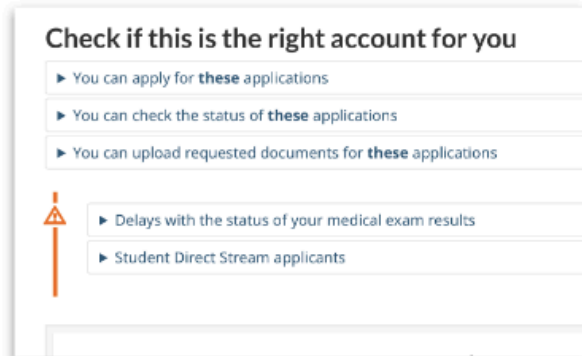
Jan 18 - Jan 23: Standard warning alert has significantly higher conversion rate (95% confidence, 99% power)

A: IRCC alert band (live)
(test)



A: 0.7% conversion rate
for 480,449 visitors

B: Standard warning alert

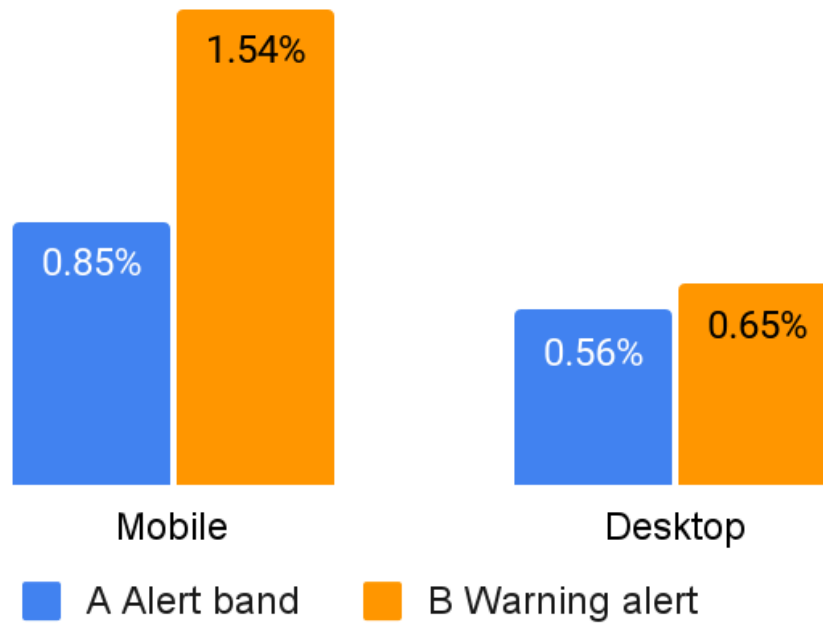


B: **1.0%** conversion rate
for 481,828 visitors

Findings: Alert band on mobile was missing the exclamation icon (code glitch)

- Warning alert on mobile had a dramatically and significantly higher conversion rate
- Warning alert on Desktop conversion rate is also significantly higher but not as dramatically

Test 1 Open rate by device across alert band and standard warning alert



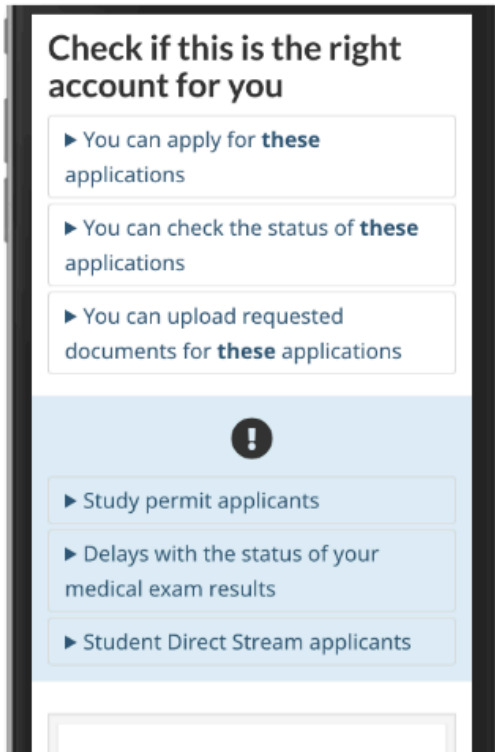
Takeaway: Much higher open rate on mobile for the standard warning alert suggests that the exclamation icon is essential to the IRCC alert band. Test 2 confirmed this.

Test 2: Compare IRCC alert band and standard info alert

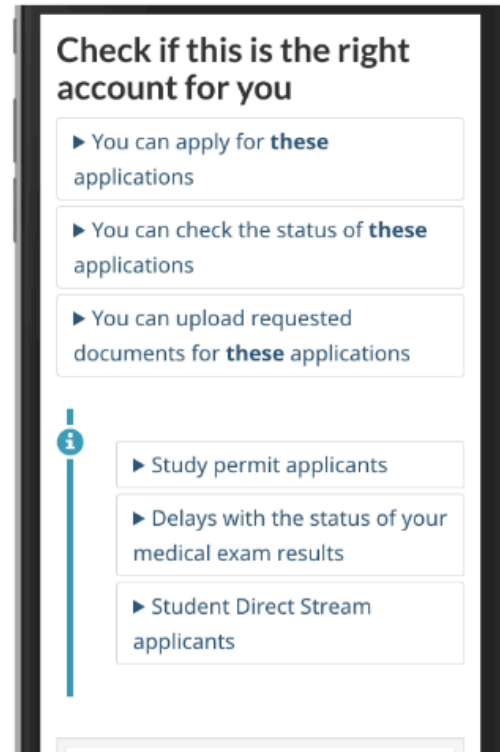
Jan 29- Feb 1: conversion rates are not significantly different (95% confidence, 33% power).

A: IRCC alert band (live)
(test)

B: Standard info alert



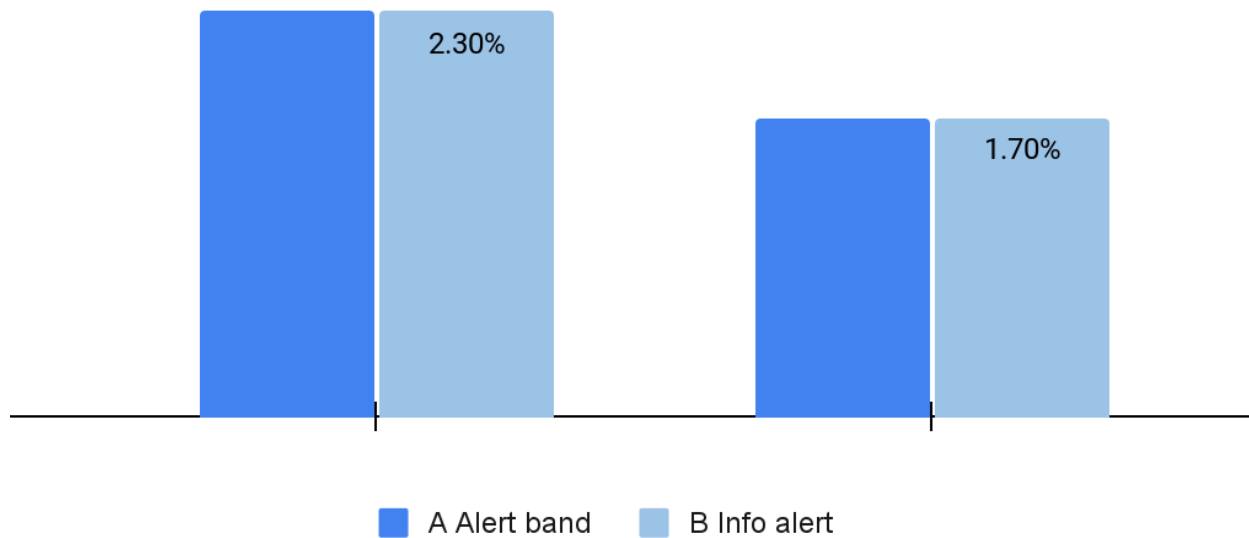
A: 1.96% conversion rate for 234,293 visitors



B: 1.92% conversion rate for 370,196 visitors

Findings: with the exclamation icon included in both desktop and mobile, the IRCC alert band performs similarly to a standard info alert.

Test 2 Higher open rate on mobile across alert band and info alert

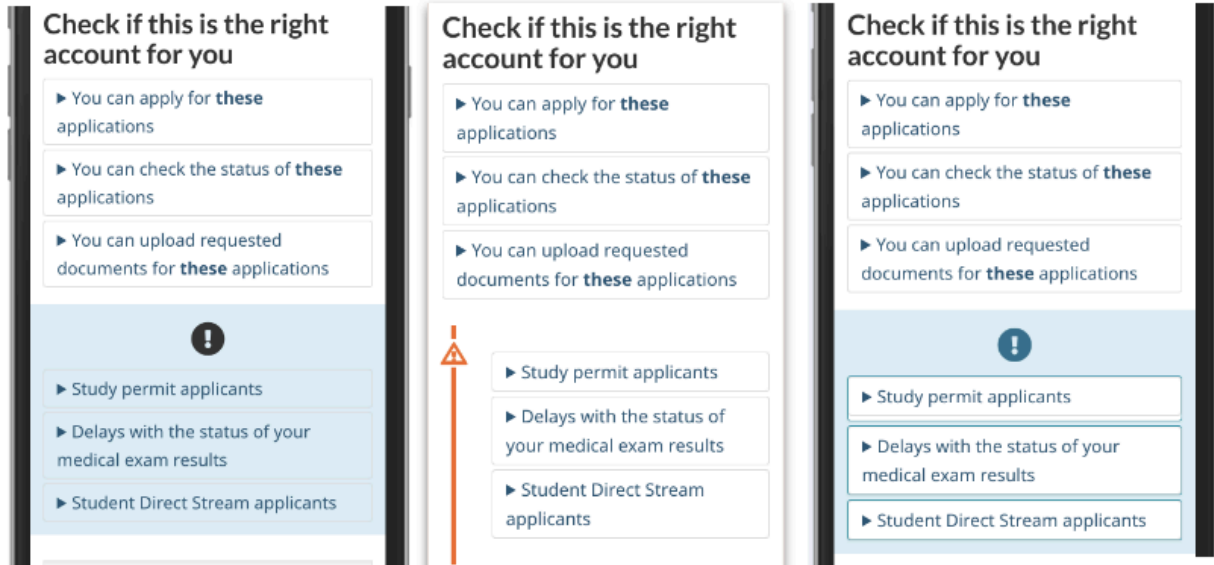


Takeaway: Similar to Test 1, the open rate on mobile is significantly higher than on desktop, signaling that mobile users are more likely to notice/use and potentially be distracted by alerts.

Test 3: IRCC alert band vs standard warning alert vs Contrast band

Feb 2 - Feb 5: Standard warning alert significantly higher than IRCC alert band ($p=0.0013$, power=98.95%), Contrast band higher than standard warning alert ($p=1.0$ power=100%)

A: IRCC alert band B: standard warning alert C: Contrast Bar



2.0% conversion rate
rate
for 164,224 visitors
visitors

2.4% conversion rate
for 168,659 visitors

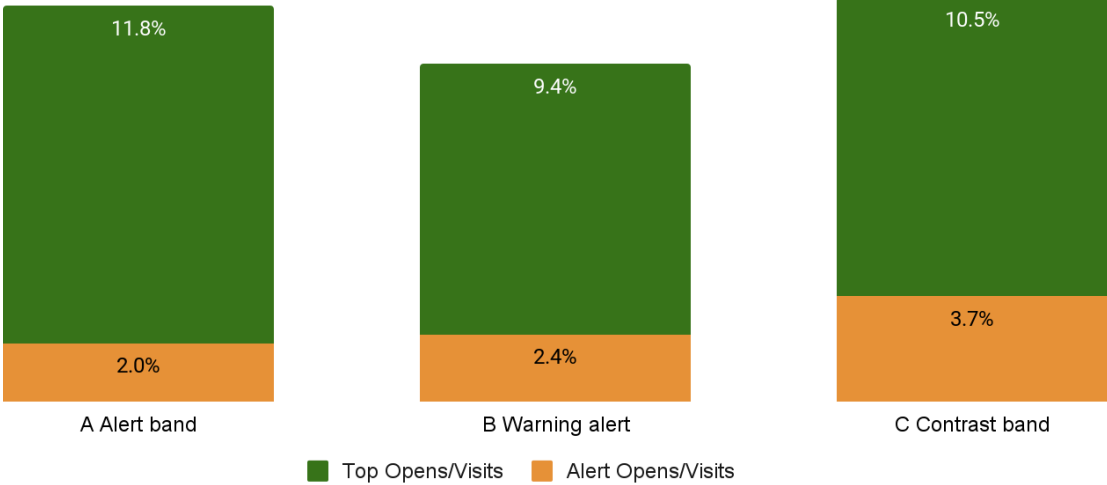
3.7% conversion
for 164,392

Findings: As expected from Test 1, the standard warning alert had a higher open rate than the IRCC alert band. The high Contrast band style had an even higher rate of opens, reaching 3.8%.

While it may appear that the standard warning alert or the Contrast band are more effective than the IRCC alert band at attracting attention, **this attention comes at a cost.**

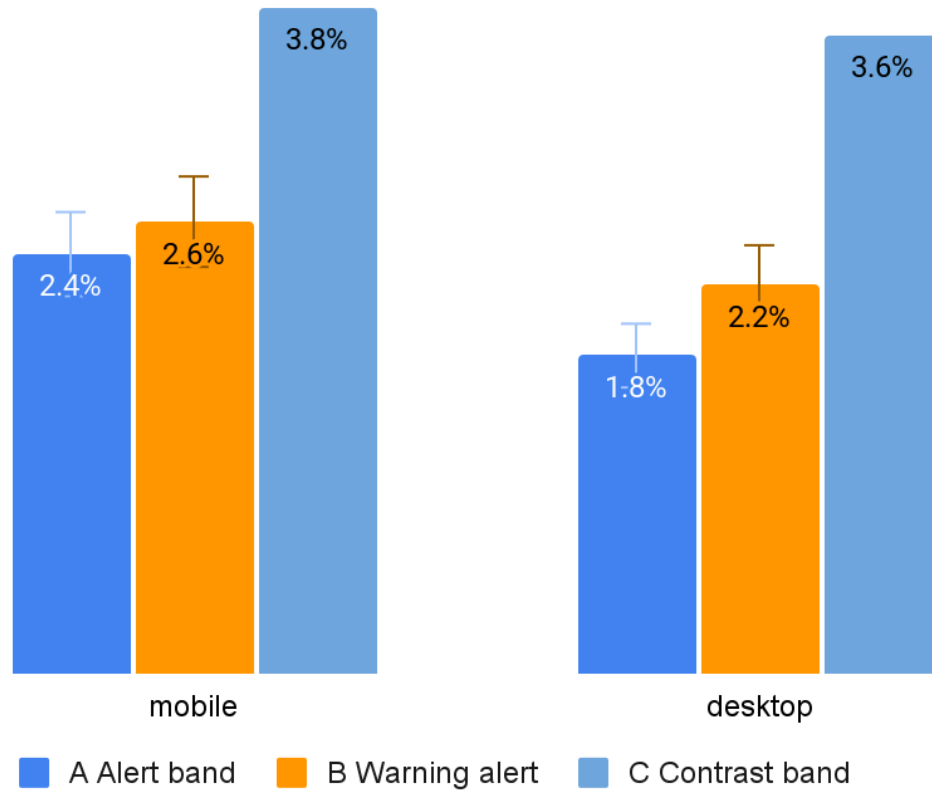
The items in the alert area are useful only to a minority of users of the page. Conversely, the items above the alerts in the 'Check if this is the right account for you' section are important to a majority of users. The data shows that fewer people open these important items when techniques to make alerts more visible are used.

Open rates for alert items vs top 'Check if this is the right account' opens



Takeaway: Higher visibility of warning and contrast attracted more opens on the alerts, at a cost of significantly decreased use of the important items above them.

It's possible that positioning alerts above main content would reduce the risk of distracting users from important main content. Further research would be useful to investigate the impact of location on the page.



Findings: As in previous tests, mobile visitors in all three conditions opened the alert items more frequently than desktop users.

Next steps: Update Alert guidance based on these results, and with the results from the Alert Styling Survey currently under way.

Proposed guidance:

- Add the Alert band as an option on the Sign in design pattern and other pages for semi-permanent alerts that apply to specific groups of users
- On sign-in pattern, guidance would advise using the standard warning alert style for temporary maintenance & technical warnings that apply to all users