



# **International Education Trends and Movements 2023**

**Making Education Accessible to Students Everywhere**



+1 360 205 5598



info@msquare.media



www.msquaremedia.com

# International Education Trends and Movements in 2023

---

<b>Overview</b>	<b>3</b>
CEO Pulse	3
<b>International Student Recruitment</b>	<b>5</b>
Destination and Source Markets	7
United States	7
Canada	8
United Kingdom	9
Australia	12
New Zealand	13
India, China, and Other Student Markets	13
Destination Markets on the Rise	14
Education Agents	15
<b>International Student Experience</b>	<b>18</b>
Student Inquiries	18
Housing	18
Study Preferences	19
Online Learning and Innovation	20
<b>Skills and Employability</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Sustainability, Wellness, and DEI</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Partnerships, TNE, and Strategic Alliances</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Final Notes</b>	<b>25</b>

---

This report is published by M Square Media (MSM) via its news and market intelligence arm MSM Reporter. Reproducing the content in part or in full is expressly prohibited without prior written permission of the company. For permission to use the content in this report, please contact [katrina.pascual@msquare.media](mailto:katrina.pascual@msquare.media).

The content contained in this report is provided only for educational and informational purposes. The company attempts to ensure that content is accurate and obtained from reliable sources, but does not represent it to be error-free. The links to third party information are provided as a courtesy and do not constitute an endorsement of those materials or the third party providing them.

For content inquiries, feedback, and questions, please contact:

[info@msquare.media](mailto:info@msquare.media) | [info@msmreporter.com](mailto:info@msmreporter.com)  
[www.MSquareMedia.com](http://www.MSquareMedia.com) | [www.MSMReporter.com](http://www.MSMReporter.com)

# Overview

An unprecedented number of people worldwide are pursuing international education, where themes of student experience quality and diversification prevailed in 2023. There was pent-up demand from the post-pandemic environment where some markets, such as Australia, confirmed that the number of international students coming into their country had almost reverted to pre-COVID levels. “An industry worth \$40 billion before the pandemic is now almost worth that much again,” Australia’s Education Minister Jason Clare said.<sup>1</sup>

Yet 2023 was also a year marked by turbulence, what with the Israel-Hamas conflict, the years-long Russia-Ukraine war, and the India-Canada diplomatic row. These global developments not only affected stakeholders’ decision-making, but also hounded international students’ physical and mental safety and wellbeing and hindered study abroad plans.

This report on trends and movements in international education seeks to help stakeholders by presenting a “lay of the land” based on industry reports, official government data, and MSM’s own 2023 business and market statistics. The trends and movements documented here are also where our nose for news, through our news and insights platform MSM Reporter, took us this year.

More than serving as a recap of the year that was, this report aspires to give us a peek into the changes and long-term consequences that will likely affect internationalization, international recruitment, and student mobility in the coming decade.

## CEO Pulse

How do we make light of these trends and movements in intl ed in 2023?

1. **Sustainable recruitment.** With the wealth of challenges faced by higher education institutions (HEIs) today, including reduced budgets and difficulty attaining diversity in their international student population, it’s high time to focus on an internationalization strategy that targets a diverse range of students from both traditional and non-traditional source markets worldwide.



UK government data, for example, showed the number of Indian students studying in the country exceeded the number of Chinese students in 2022—a shift that mirrors a general trend in other markets, such as the US, of diversifying the international student

---

<sup>1</sup> [MSM Reporter](#)

population from outside China due to political concerns and heavy reliance on this market for income.

2. **Strategic partnerships.** Strategic partnering in intl ed has greatly evolved alongside pandemic-related challenges in mobility and the rise of online learning models. It includes public-private partnerships (PPPs), licensing agreements, program pathways, and transnational education (TNE) delivery, which create opportunities for students to earn career-oriented credentials that will prepare them academically.

Building HEI capacity through strategic alliances not only drives study opportunities for students previously thought unfeasible, but also helps universities grapple with changing ways by which internationalization is implemented through the years.

3. **International student experience.** Internationalization isn't all about business and flourishing enrollment numbers; at its core is the international student experience as shaped by the HEI community.

To build a resilient and responsive international program, it is critical to develop academics' capacity in the space, especially in response to crises of geopolitical, health, and financial nature. One starting point: staff internationalization initiatives that academically, socially, and culturally align and educate university staff and international students.

Streamlining services also matters, as international students often face logistical issues in their journey that student support staff can help mitigate. International student services offices are a work in progress, holding great opportunities to assist international students with anything from visa status challenges to navigating in-person and online classes.

4. **Skills and employability.** Many countries worldwide face a very tight labor market, where there's the ongoing challenge of finding enough trained workers to meet current needs.

This labor market shortage is made more complex by the reality that jobs are evolving as we speak, as driven by the robot-oriented 4th Industrial Revolution. Some occupations have now changed due to automation, innovation, and novel technologies such as generative AI and explorations of web3 and the metaverse.

The changing nature of work cannot be overstated. Emerging with it are the ever-evolving demands for postsecondary education to align with needed skills and help international students become competitive—whether in further education or in their careers—post-graduation.

5. **Data analytics and pivoting.** In the face of upheavals and turbulence, it is important to have not only a comprehensive recruitment strategy in place, but also one that allows

institutions to quickly move its position during highly disruptive times. Listen to what current, up-to-date data tell you, where the tide is going, and what the gaps likely are.

Movements such as increasing English proficiency in Latin America; Asian countries such as Taiwan and Malaysia vying for top spots as student destinations (and not just senders); and introducing friendlier visa policies in traditional markets tell stories of change and let HEI decision-makers take a step back and calibrate their strategies to welcome more international students on campus.

International students offer a global perspective, inject cultural diversity, and make meaningful financial, social, and intellectual contributions. HEPI's 2023 Soft-Power Index revealed a notable trend in global leadership and education: over one-quarter of the world's countries are led by individuals educated in the UK, and a similar proportion by those educated in the US.<sup>2</sup> The study, encompassing 195 countries, found that 65 world leaders were educated in the US, and 58 in the UK. This represents 43% of the world's countries, underscoring the dominance of English-language education.

If this isn't power, then I don't know what is. The international education industry should be a good vanguard of this and do everything within its power to always upgrade the quality of the international student experience.

Beyond increasing student volume and prioritizing revenue, we should put a premium on matters such as the cultural exchange of information, language acquisition, scientific engagement and exploration, and learning for the betterment of the world, moreso now amid turbulence and disruption.

## International Student Recruitment

A report illuminated the sustained focus on international student recruitment by university leaders in Australia, Canada, and the UK, gathering insights from 100 senior operational and strategic leaders responsible for internationalization efforts in their respective universities.<sup>3</sup>

The findings include:

- **Internationalization continues to be a high priority**, especially in student recruitment, as attributed to several factors such as pandemic-driven financial setback, inadequate public funding, and diminishing numbers of tuition-paying students from China.
- **There's a notable lack of adequate institutional support**: few respondents agreed that there was sufficient resourcing for these efforts at the senior administrative level.
- **Universities increasingly turn to private partners**, such as agencies and pathway providers, to reach their international enrolment goals. Factors like a challenging

---

<sup>2</sup> [Higher Education Policy Institute](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Navitas and Nous Group](#)

recruitment environment in China and a desire to limit travel for environmental reasons contribute to this trend.

- **Revenue generation precedes student diversity or educational quality goals.** About 52 percent of respondents prioritized revenue, underscoring the financial pressures educational institutions face. Most respondents expect their universities to raise international student fees in the next couple of years after a period of stagnation from 2020 to 2022.
- **Country-wise, Canadian universities leaned towards increasing student volume as the primary goal, while UK universities tended to prioritize revenue.** This possibly indicates a more strategic approach to recruitment in the UK, influenced less by immigration policies and more by direct recruitment activities.
- **Scholarships were a lesser priority** among a significant number of university leaders, particularly those not among the top global rankings.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) issued over 1.9 million residence permits to international students enrolled in higher education across its nation members in 2022, according to its report published on Oct. 23. OECD's International Migration Outlook showed that migration flows to OECD countries, as well as the employment of immigrants, reached record highs in 2022, a clear sign of rebound after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report also revealed a notable 61 percent increase in study permits issued to new international students relocating to OECD countries over the past decade, spanning from 2012 to 2022. The number of residence permits granted to international students also rose by 24 percent since 2019 and by 32 percent since 2021.

The report found:<sup>4</sup>

- **The majority of the international students across the OECD** hailed from Asia, with China and India being the primary source countries. In 2021, 60 percent of international students in these nations were Chinese and Indian.
- **Other significant contributors to international student populations** across the OECD in 2022 included students from Vietnam, Germany, France, and Latin America.
- **For the fourth consecutive year, the United Kingdom retained its status as the most favored destination** for international students seeking higher education, surpassing the United States. Other prominent study destinations include Canada, Australia, and Japan.
- **The US accommodated nearly 20 percent of all international students**, making it the leading host country. The UK followed with 14 percent while Australia stood at nine percent.
- **In a notable shift, India became the largest source of international students in the US**, surpassing China for the first time in 15 years.

---

<sup>4</sup> [Erudera](#)



# Destination and Source Markets

## United States

In the US, international student applications generally continue to rise. The country hosted over one million international students in the 2022-23 academic year, based on data from the Open Doors 2023 Report. The numbers marked a nearly 12 percent climb from the previous year as well as the fastest growth rate in over 40 years.<sup>5</sup>

International students came to the US from over 200 places of origin in 2022-23, with eight of the top 25 sending countries reaching all-time highs: Bangladesh, Colombia, Ghana, India, Italy, Nepal, Pakistan, and Spain.

Eighty-nine percent of US colleges and universities reporting that 2023-24 applications have either increased or remained the same compared to the previous year.<sup>6</sup>

Highlighting the resilience of in-person learning for international students, 99 percent of participating institutions indicated that international students were attending classes on campus. Moreover, 66 percent of these institutions reported that all international students attended classes in person.

Undergraduate outreach has been primarily focused on India, Vietnam, South Korea, and Brazil. Graduate recruitment efforts were predominantly centered on India, China, Nigeria, and Vietnam. Interestingly, engaging current international students as a way to recruit prospective students was the most popular method of outreach, emphasizing the value of peer connection in recruitment strategies.

In a clear sign of recovery, 98 percent of reporting institutions offered only in-person study abroad or a combination of in-person and online options in summer 2023. Ninety-six percent of US colleges and universities reported increased or stable student participation in study abroad compared with the past year.

Enrollment in doctoral programs among international students grew by 9.7 percent since the Fall of 2018, the only category to show an upward trend during the pandemic.<sup>7</sup> Since Fall 2020, enrollments in master's and certificate programs have grown, from 95,716 in Fall 2021 to 122,328 in Fall 2022. At the same time, enrollments in doctoral programs increased, from 73,809 to 75,666 students.

---

<sup>5</sup> [U.S. News & World Report](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Institute of International Education \(IIE\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Council of Graduate Schools](#)



## Growth in Post-graduate Degrees in the US 2021-22

### Enrollments in Master's and Certificate Programs

Fall  
**2021**

95,716

Fall  
**2022**

122,328

### Enrollments in Doctoral Programs:

Fall  
**2021**

73,809

Fall  
**2022**

75,666

## Canada

Canada is on track to host about 900,000 international students in 2023, more than at any point in the country's history and about triple the number of students who entered the country in the past decade.

The biggest development this year for the sector in Canada appears to be the pledged reforms to the country's international student program, to be completed by the fall semester of 2024 and geared toward fighting fraud in international admissions and preventing bad players from preying on students.



The reforms are three-pronged:

- Designated Learning Institutions (DLIs) to be required to confirm the letter of acceptance (LOA) directly with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)
- A new “recognized institution” framework set to benefit postsecondary institutions with high standards
- An assessment of the popular Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP) criteria to better position it to meet Canadian labor market needs along with regional and Francophone immigration targets

In May, the Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) announced it will start accepting language test results from four new tests for Student Direct Stream (SDS) applicants beginning August 10.<sup>8</sup> The IRCC started to accept test results from CELPIP General, CAEL, PTE Academic, as well as TOEFL iBT Test, prior to which only IELTS General and IELTS Academic were the only tests approved for SDS applicants.

The SDS, launched in 2018, offers expedited processing of study permits for students from certain countries. Eligible are students who are legal residents of Antigua and Barbuda, Brazil, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, India, Morocco, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Senegal, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, or Vietnam.

## United Kingdom

Government data showed the UK had seen a significant uptick in sponsored study visas.<sup>9</sup> For the year ending September 2023, there were 486,107 sponsored visas issued, marking a notable increase from the pre-pandemic levels of 2019. This surge of 86 percent illustrates a robust recovery from the pandemic-induced decline observed in 2020 when the number of visas granted was at its lowest since the data series began.

Indian nationals represented a significant portion, receiving 133,237 visas or nearly five times higher than their numbers in 2019 and constituting over one-quarter of all grants in 2023. Chinese nationals, the second-largest group, saw a 7 percent decrease in visa grants compared to the previous year.

2023 also saw a notable uptick in the number of UK sponsored study visas granted to Nigerian nationals.<sup>10</sup> Among the top five nationalities receiving such visas, Nigerians experienced the most substantial percentage increase, rising by 73 percent from 33,958 in the year ending June 2022 to 58,680 in the year ending June 2023.

During the specified period, a total of 24,722 Nigerians were granted sponsored study visas. Experts attribute this surge in interest among Nigerian students to factors such as:

---

<sup>8</sup> [MSM Reporter](#)

<sup>9</sup> [UK government](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Business Day](#)

- The country's intellectual potential
- Cost-effective workforce
- Substantial working population
- Significant diaspora remittances
- The UK's altered immigration landscape following its departure from the European Union

There was also a substantial increase in dependent visas, comprising nearly a quarter of all study-related visas in 2023—growth seen particularly among Indian and Nigerian nationals and suggesting a shift toward more students coming for higher education, who are typically older and more likely to have families.

The significant economic contribution of international students to UK universities was also spotlighted in 2023: international students accounted for £1 in every £5 received by UK universities in the previous academic year.<sup>11</sup>

The report indicates that some institutions now depend on international tuition fees for more than one-third of their total income. Notably, renowned institutions like the Royal College of Art and the University of the Arts London reported that over half of their total income in 2021-22 came from EU and non-EU students, marking a significant rise from 2016-17.

As overseas tuition fees have risen by 71 percent in the past six years, international students' contribution to universities' total income also increased from 15.6 percent in 2016-17 to 21.5 percent in 2021-22. Meanwhile, the proportion of income from UK student fees has seen a slight decrease.

---

<sup>11</sup> [Higher Education Statistics Authority \(HESA\)](#)



## Growth in international students' contribution to universities' total income.

**2016-17:**  
**15.6%**



**2021-22:**  
**21.5%**



In most business schools, enrollment either declined or remained static in most business schools, with 39 percent reporting lower enrollments compared to last year.<sup>12</sup> Non-EU international student enrolments showed more variability, with nearly half of the schools reporting growth while around 33 percent observed a decline. Meanwhile, EU student enrollments remained largely unchanged for the majority of the business schools.

---

<sup>12</sup> [Chartered ABS Annual Membership Survey](#)

## Australia

Australia has traditionally been a favored destination for international students, particularly from India. Recent data between March 2022 and March 2023 revealed a substantial rise in international student enrollment in Australia, with India witnessing a surge of 28 percent.<sup>13</sup> Currently, international students constitute approximately 33 percent of all higher education enrollments in Australia.

Here's an overview of the educational engagement between Australia and India:<sup>14</sup>

1. **Growth in partnerships:** A significant increase in partnerships between Australian universities and Indian HEIs, with 38 Australian universities already having over 400 collaborations with Indian universities, mainly in the areas of academics and research. These collaborations have expanded dramatically, multiplying fivefold between 2007 and 2021.
2. **Nature of engagement:** The major engagement areas include academic and research collaboration, student mobility, and staff exchange.
3. **Leading Australian universities:** Deakin University and Western Sydney University have the most partnerships in India.
4. **Regional distribution:** Southern and Northern India's regional cities host a greater quantity of institutions tied to Australian universities. The Delhi National Capital Region, along with nearby cities in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, accounts for a substantial share of these partnerships.
5. **Indian HEI partners:** The collective partnerships of universities belonging to the Australian Technology Network and Innovative Research Universities account for 63.6 percent of the total collaborations. This is contrasted by the Group of Eight universities, constituting 21.8 percent of the partnerships.
6. **Research and academic collaboration:** Australian academics and researchers actively engage in Indian government schemes, resulting in numerous collaborative publications and projects.

The Australian government unveiled a series of measures to address immigration loopholes, fraudulent applications and the financial exploitation of international students. Key changes involved:

- Closing a loophole in immigration policy that allows education providers to shift international students who had been in Australia for less than six months from genuine study programs to arrangements facilitating work access.
- Raising financial requirements—increased the amount of savings required to obtain an Australian study visa by 17 percent—to discourage international students from engaging in exploitative work.

---

<sup>13</sup> [MSM Reporter](#)

<sup>14</sup> [MSM Reporter](#)

- Applying more scrutiny to high-risk groups of prospective students who tend to submit fraudulent applications.
- Considering using its powers to issue suspension certificates to high-risk education providers, as driven by concerns over providers with visa refusal rates exceeding 50 percent.

## **New Zealand**

New Zealand saw positive progress in its recovery from the decline in international student numbers caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Education New Zealand, the government agency responsible for promoting the country to foreign students, stated that international student enrollment has reached around two-thirds of pre-pandemic levels, despite the border closures.<sup>15</sup>

Currently, there are approximately 30,000 to 35,000 international students hosted by the country, compared to the pre-pandemic level of 45,000 to 50,000. Government data and statements note that the gap is gradually narrowing, with international students—with a significant proportion coming from China and India—arriving from various countries worldwide.

## **India, China, and Other Student Markets**

While the US and the UK still hold the top positions as preferred study destinations for Chinese students, Asian countries and territories like Hong Kong, Japan, and Singapore are gaining popularity, according to the 2023 Report on Chinese Students' Overseas Study.<sup>16</sup>

It added that these Asian territories and countries are being considered alongside Australia, Canada, and Europe. The report also found that Asian countries are capturing a larger share of the overall Chinese student market—at the expense of the US—mostly due to geopolitics, safety concerns, difficult entrance exams, and a weaker Chinese economy.

In the US, 2023 also charted significant growth among students from Sub-Saharan Africa, which has the highest growth rate among world regions at 18 percent.<sup>17</sup> Strong growth in US enrollment was seen in the following countries:

- Nigeria - 17,640 students
- Ghana - 6,468 students
- Kenya - 4,059 students
- Ethiopia - 3,006 students
- South Africa - 2,713 students

---

<sup>15</sup> [MSM Reporter](#)

<sup>16</sup> [New Oriental Vision Overseas Consulting Company](#)

<sup>17</sup> [U.S. News and World Report](#)



In the IIE's Fall 2023 Snapshot, there was a notable 40% of institutions focused on graduate recruitment in Nigeria and 75% anticipating increases in new enrollment from Nigeria in 2023-24.

## Destination Markets on the Rise

In 2023, Germany solidified its position as one of the world's top study destinations, surpassing Australia to claim the coveted third spot among non-English-speaking countries.<sup>18</sup> It had nearly 370,000 international students enrolled in its higher education system during the winter semester of 2022-23, with a 5 percent increase in international student enrollment compared to the previous year.

India led the pack among international students in Germany, with approximately 42,600 first-semester students. An intriguing development is China's newfound prominence, climbing to the second position for the first time, alongside Ukraine's notable increase in student numbers, up by 43 percent to a total of 9,100.

The number of international students attending Irish universities also surged to an all-time high, with over 35,000 students joining during the last academic year (one in seven of the total student population). According to data released by the Higher Education Authority, this represented a year-on-year increase of just over 10 percent.<sup>19</sup>

France was also intent on welcoming 30,000 Indian students to its educational institutions by 2030 as a pivotal part of its broader strategy to bolster its economic and cultural ties with India.<sup>20</sup> France is set to establish "international classes" within its universities and colleges, conducted in English to ease the transition for Indian students into the French educational system.

Taiwan's Ministry of Education (MOE) unveiled an ambitious plan to entice 320,000 international students to the country by 2030, with the goal of retaining at least 210,000 graduates within its borders after their studies.<sup>21</sup> Backed by an NT\$5.2 billion (\$162 million) investment, the plan involves establishing up to 10 overseas offices and introducing specialized programs, with a focus on STEM and finance fields to meet industry demand.

Meanwhile, South Korea launched the Study Korea 300K Project, seeking to attract 300,000 international students by 2027.<sup>22</sup> To address challenges posed by a declining birth rate and an aging population, South Korea began reshaping its visa policies and permanent residency measures, as well as initiated efforts to streamline the visa process, particularly targeting the swift entry of international workers in key sectors such as IT, technology and automobile companies.

---

<sup>18</sup> [MSM Reporter](#)

<sup>19</sup> [Irish Times](#)

<sup>20</sup> [MSM Reporter](#)

<sup>21</sup> [MSM Reporter](#)

<sup>22</sup> [MSM Reporter](#)

## Education Agents

The State of the International Student Recruitment and Enrollment Field Survey from AIRC: The Association of International Enrollment Management and market research firm BONARD presented a snapshot of international student recruitment as they collated responses from over 300 educational institutions and recruitment agencies on diverse aspects such as staff details, organizational targets, recruitment pathways, and institution-agency collaborations.<sup>23</sup>

Sixty percent of the agencies employed traditional recruitment strategies, which include in-person consultations with students and their families while others relied primarily on online communication or phone calls (16 percent). Notably, 5 percent of agencies used student data for institution matching, and 3 percent maintained direct contracts with institutions and collaborated with “master” agencies.

Master agencies represented 13 percent of respondents. Because of their association with multiple sub-agencies and commission-sharing model, they were found to have more substantial student representation.

From the results of the complementary survey, multiple variables emerged as challenges encountered by educational agencies when it comes to recruiting international students to the US:

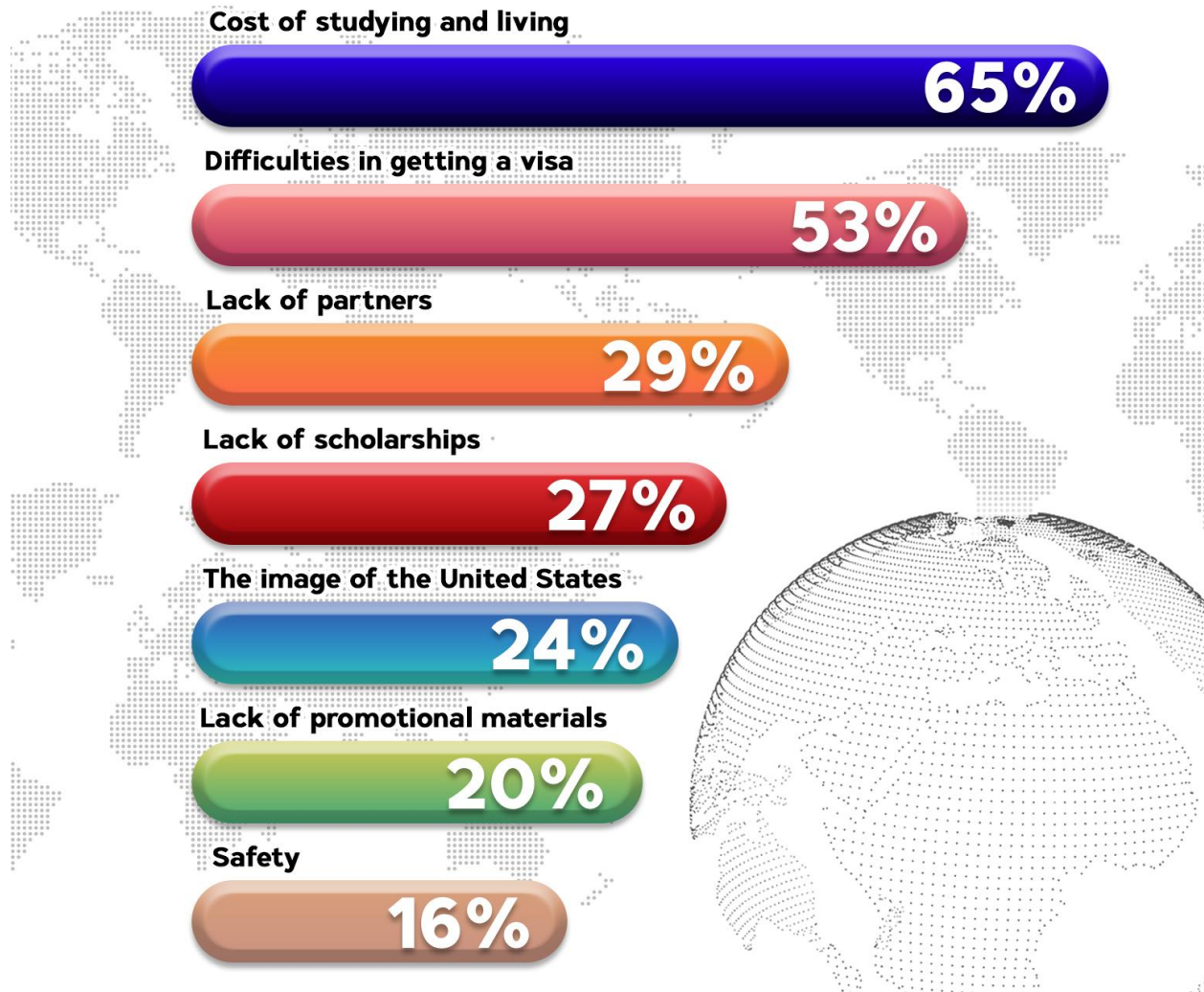
- Cost of studying and living (65%)
- Difficulties in getting a visa (53%)
- Lack of partners (29%)
- Lack of scholarships (27%)
- The image of the United States (24%)
- Lack of promotional materials (20%)
- Safety (16%)

---

<sup>23</sup> [AIRC: The Association of International Enrollment Management and BONARD](#)



## Challenges of agents in recruiting international students to the US:



Other survey findings show that collaboration between educational institutions and educational agencies is at 62 percent and that despite the pandemic, the budget of educational institutions for international student recruitment remained the same (57 percent).

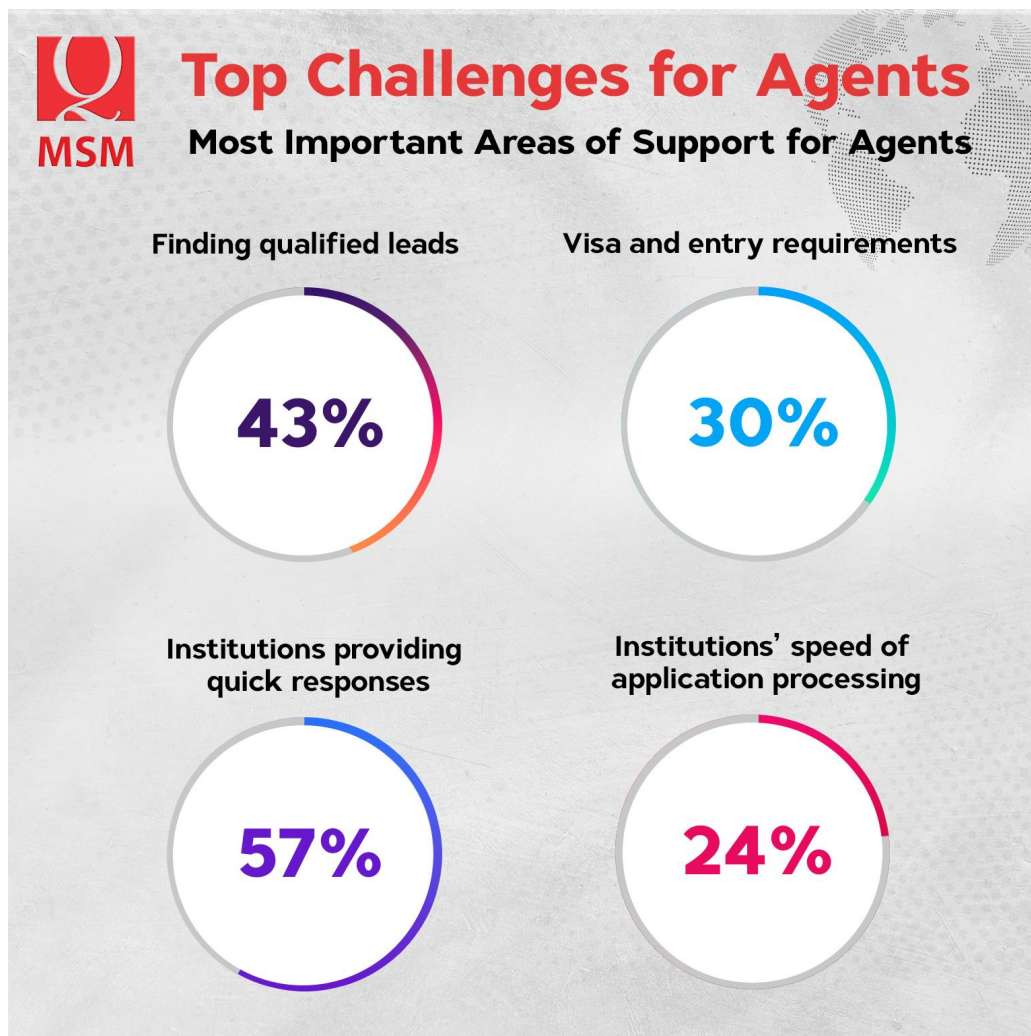
Agents, who serve as critical intermediaries in the sector, maintained increased optimism and a diversification in both the destinations and fields of study for prospective students.<sup>24</sup> Data gathered in Q3 of 2023 from 662 agents across 92 countries shows an anticipated increase in

<sup>24</sup> [ICEF via Agent Voice Survey](#)

enrollment across various programs, with pathway, undergraduate, graduate, and MBA courses seeing the most significant rise.

Affordability remained the chief concern among students when choosing international study destinations, while the following surfaced as top challenges and support areas for agents in their recruitment activities:

- **Top challenges:**
  - Finding qualified leads (43%)
  - Visa and entry requirements (30%)
- **Most important areas of support:**
  - Institutions providing quick responses (57%)
  - Institutions' speed of application processing (24%)



# International Student Experience

A survey, which collected responses from 126,000 students hailing from more than 200 countries and attending institutions in 126 countries, revealed that the US led its close competitors, Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom, in student satisfaction across various metrics.<sup>25</sup>

Assessing crucial domains such as admission process, student-teacher interaction, student diversity, quality of student life, online classroom experience, and career development, the survey found:

- Classroom experience saw the most significant improvement of 7.2 percent since 2021.
- Quality of student life marked an uptick of 6.4 percent.
- Among the “Big Four” study destinations, the US emerged as the only country to score above the global average. It notably excelled in admissions processing, student-teacher interaction, and career development.
- Ireland, which isn’t part of the “Big Four,” outperformed the UK in all aspects except online classroom experience.

## Student Inquiries

Also brought to the fore was widespread dissatisfaction and other pervasive issues among prospective students when it comes to universities handling student inquiries.

The 2023 Enquiry Experience Tracker identified Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand as the top-performing institution globally, with educational institutions in Australia and New Zealand accounting for six of the top 10 spots.<sup>26</sup> Scottish universities clinched the top average score globally, receiving high marks for friendly and trustworthy responses.

One insight was that although over 90 percent of students felt they could trust the information provided, only 40 percent found the replies warm or approachable.

## Housing

Housing was one hot topic this year across countries and territories. Skyrocketing rent prices in Canada’s major cities left more and more people struggling to find an affordable place to live, stirring national conversations about a crisis that often affects international students as they remain extremely vulnerable to housing discrimination, rent gouging, rights abuses and sexual harassment.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> [Studyportals, UniBuddy, and the British Council IELTS](#)

<sup>26</sup> [Edified](#)

<sup>27</sup> [The Conversation](#)



Canada had more than 807,000 international students in 2022, around 40 percent of whom come from India, and while all these students need housing, many of them face discrimination in the rental market.

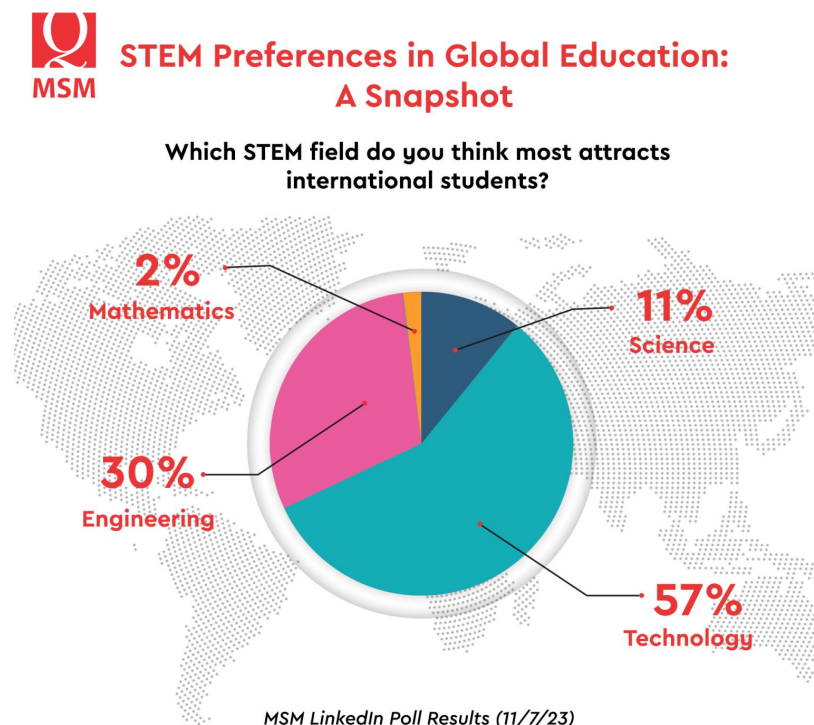
Similarly, Australia was hounded by a housing predicament intersecting with its policy on international students. Earlier this year, the Australian government decided to reintroduce a limitation on the working hours of international students—a maximum of 48 working hours every two weeks—which led to substantial financial difficulties for many students.

The influx of international students, with numbers rising from 555,000 to 725,000 within a year, intensified demand in an already strained housing market.

## Study Preferences

The results of a Nov. 7 MSM poll on LinkedIn shed light on the STEM preferences of international students, revealing a strong leaning toward Technology (57%) and Engineering (30%). This trend highlights the growing allure of tech-driven careers and the pivotal role of engineering in contemporary challenges.

On the other hand, Science (11%) and Mathematics (2%) seem to attract fewer students, possibly reflecting current job market demands or the need for increased engagement in these areas.



## Online Learning and Innovation

The online language learning market holds great potential in the international education landscape. Beyond mere instruction, it serves as a bridge fostering cultural appreciation and forging worldwide ties.

The online language learning market is set to reach \$31.5 billion by 2030, one factor for which is the demand for bilingualism and a wider access to education.<sup>28</sup>

The report, Artificial Intelligence Market In The Education Sector Market 2023-2027, from think tank Technavio foresaw a significant expansion of AI applications in education to boost learning outcomes.<sup>29</sup>

Over the next five years, the research found that the education sector is poised for a transformative leap, fueled by AI, with a projected net increase of \$1,100.07 million by 2027 due to AI in the education market setting the stage for revolutionary changes. These robust growth estimates suggest a compound annual growth rate of 41.14 percent within the forecast period, reflecting the rapidly accelerating pace of AI adoption in this sector.

Yet there is room to “humanize” these technological developments. A 2023 report from global audit firm EY emphasized the need for higher education institutions to pivot toward a human-centric model in their digital transformation efforts.<sup>30</sup> It urged placing the needs of students, faculty, and staff at the forefront for successful adaptation to evolving educational norms, as well as strategies including flipped learning, hybrid delivery, and upskilling faculty in digital pedagogy.

## Skills and Employability

Employability prospects not only fuel a student’s choice of a study destination but also how they recommend that study destination to others.<sup>31</sup> Future career impact, at 96 percent, also leads the list of study decision factors in the Global International Student Barometer 2022 survey.

An IDP study, which surveyed 10,000 international students, revealed that while the quality of education was the primary reason for choosing a particular country, good employment prospects were a close second in importance.<sup>32</sup>

Such findings gain prominence in light of separate statistics: a significant number of international graduates were entering low-skill jobs in areas like hospitality and retail, despite

---

<sup>28</sup> [SNS Insider](#)

<sup>29</sup> [Technavio](#)

<sup>30</sup> [EY](#)

<sup>31</sup> [Tribal i-graduate](#)

<sup>32</sup> [IDP](#)

widespread skill shortages across nearly every sector of the economy, according to a report from the Grattan Institute in Australia in October.<sup>33</sup>

A British Council report, scrutinizing the shifting trends and demands within the employment sector, identified essential skills and high-growth industries and projected that sectors including Digital and ICT, Manufacturing, Banking and Financial Services, Healthcare and Life Science, and Wholesale and Retail will critically shape East Asia's employment ecosystem.<sup>34</sup>

A report on Indian professionals provided several significant insights into the current trends and benefits of upskilling, especially in the context of career growth, job stability, and work-life balance.<sup>35</sup> It noted a 2.5-fold increase in performance appraisals and a 2.3-fold rise in promotion frequency for professionals who engaged in upskilling over the last 3-5 years, suggesting a strong correlation between continuous learning and career advancement.

## Sustainability, Wellness, and DEI

The Spring 2023 Snapshot in the US showed that over half of the study abroad students participated in faculty-led programs. The institutions are beginning to prioritize sustainability, with 40 percent noting that they have initiatives in place in their study abroad offices.

Amid a global health crisis heightening anxiety, the mental health and well-being of international students and educators are also front and center, with recommendations for mental health measures across all program aspects, including international students, host institutions, and program advisors and administrators.<sup>36</sup>

Given that mental health or psychological disorders are the most common categories of declared disability for foreign students, more than half (55 percent) of institutions that responded to their study offered information at an orientation session. Student services or academic assistance fairs (46 percent), print student resources (37 percent), and websites for disability resources were other ways to provide information to students.

---

<sup>33</sup> [Grattan Institute](#)

<sup>34</sup> [British Council](#)

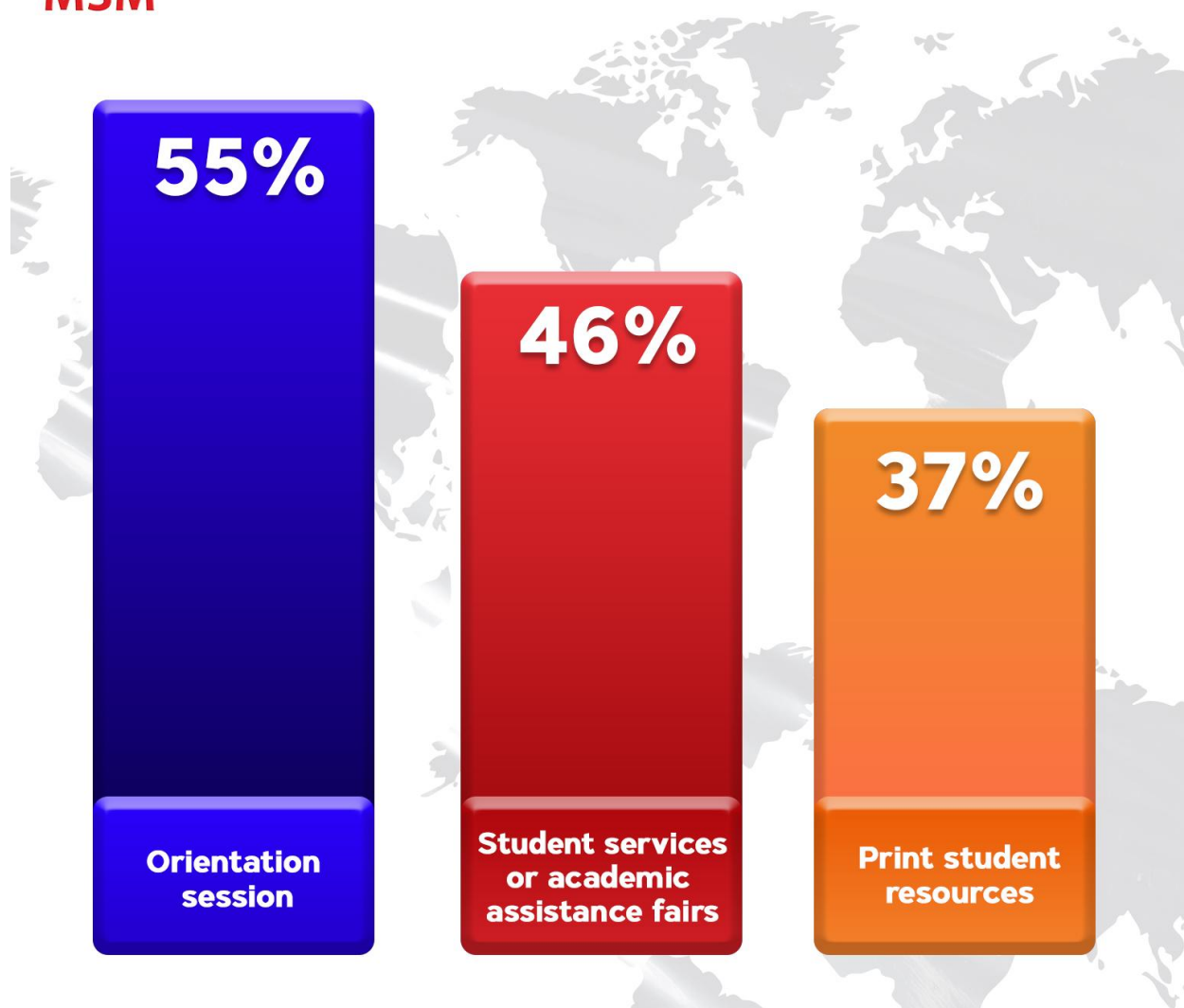
<sup>35</sup> [UpGrad](#)

<sup>36</sup> [Institute of International Education and AIFS Foundation](#)



## Mental Wellness Support Initiatives

MSM



Racism remained a relevant topic, with research from Ireland showing that two-thirds of international students experienced or witnessed racism, and with only one out of 10 incidents reported to authorities.<sup>37</sup>

Results of the survey, participated by over 420 international students (97 percent being from non-European Economic Area countries and mostly from Latin America and English language students), showed 63 percent of participants reported experiencing or witnessing racism in the country while 37 percent never witnessed or experienced it. Racism was also found to be most

<sup>37</sup> [Irish Council for International Students](#)

common in verbal form, followed by indirect form such as being treated differently or unfairly due to race. About 12 percent witnessed physical racism, which involved assaults, throwing objects, and being spat at, while 4 percent experienced or witnessed online hate speech.

Educators themselves, all across the globe, are not spared from challenges in well-being. The 2023 International Barometer on Education Staff report, which surveyed more than 26,000 education personnel from 11 territories, underscored the reality that educators universally feel undervalued and overwhelmed.<sup>38</sup>

Despite the variations in cultural and educational contexts, the prevailing sentiments of neglect and excessive workload are constant. The report also highlights a disturbing increase in workplace violence.

A white paper offered a comprehensive look into the educational experiences of Black and Hispanic doctorate recipients in STEM fields.<sup>39</sup> Drawing on data from three significant federal education datasets, the report revealed that Black scientists, though a small percentage of PhD recipients in STEM, incurred more student loan debt, took longer to complete their degrees, and were more likely to attend for-profit institutions with fewer resources.

This financial and institutional burden leads to a preference for industry jobs over academic roles, affecting the diversity of the academic workforce and the broader STEM field.

## Partnerships, TNE, and Strategic Alliances

India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has become a showpiece for collaboration to foster a more globally integrated educational framework, encouraging student and faculty exchanges and establishing Indian educational institutions abroad. Its core vision revolves around the concept of internationalization of Indian education, promoting research collaborations, facilitating faculty and student exchanges, and signing mutually beneficial agreements with foreign countries.

High-performing Indian universities are encouraged to expand globally, while top-ranked global universities are invited to establish campuses in India. Central to NEP 2020 is the recognition of credits from foreign universities, enabling Indian students to pursue dual degrees.

Two major initiatives related to NEP:

- A specialized educational initiative with the US, set to commence in fall 2024, will offer Indian students the opportunity to pursue one-year professional master's degrees in the US, particularly industrial specialization at prestigious American universities, concentrating on STEM fields.

---

<sup>38</sup> [Education International](#)

<sup>39</sup> [RTI International and Sloan Foundation](#)



- The British Council's research, titled *The Value of Transnational Education Partnerships*, underscores the significant impact of initiatives like NEP 2020, with key benefits including capacity building, enhancing teaching and research capabilities, improving student experiences and employability, and contributing to economic development.

Europe stays at a “crucial moment” to get buy-in for its international education collaboration.

A report from June 2023, created by the Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities and Bern Open Publishing, argued that “a conceptual shift to mobility is needed” to scale its transnational educational collaboration,<sup>40</sup> moving from simple targets such as 20 percent of European students physically studying or training abroad for three months or more by 2020. This was a goal set in 2011 by the 48 member states of the European Higher Education Area in 2011, one not achieved by many countries.

Erasmus+, on the other hand, reported in its 2022 Annual Report presented at the 6th European Education Summit that it continues to make a lasting impact on international education by supporting over 1.2 million students, learners, professors, teachers, trainers, youth workers, and young individuals.<sup>41</sup>

As what could be one of the biggest coalitions formed this year, the US for Success Coalition (USSC) was formed as a consortium that primarily advocates for policy changes that will help the US maintain its appeal as a destination for international students. The founding members of USSC are:

- Association of International Enrollment Management (AIRC)
- Alliance for International Exchange
- Educational Testing Service (ETS)
- FWD.us
- Institute of International Education (IIE)
- Niskanen Center
- NAFSA
- Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration
- Shorelight
- Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA)
- World Education Services (WES)

The US' share of international students has declined from 30 percent to 15 percent, while other countries such as Canada, the UK, and Australia have emerged as new and competitive options for international students. This shift underscores the evolving global landscape of higher education mobility.

---

<sup>40</sup> [University World News](#)

<sup>41</sup> [MSM Reporter](#)

# Final Notes

While it remains to be seen where the wind is exactly headed in 2024, these trends and movements in 2023 serve as a good mirror for educators, agents, and other stakeholders in the international education field, potentially influencing the way they build their business and marketing plans, their institutional branding, and their strategies in recruiting international students and shaping their experiences.

Yet one important consideration will always be the affordability of international education amid the rising cost of living in major destinations. 2023 has been replete with cost-of-living struggles for these students, spread across various needs and geographic locations.<sup>42</sup>

- **The fastest rental cost hike in Canada** in over 40 years
- **The cost of living has outpaced wages, according to 67 percent polled in the US** in September 2023 compared to 58% in 2022
- **Higher cost of living from the previous month, according to over 50 percent of consumers polled in the UK** during the fall
- **9 percent higher cost of living in Australia** in the quarter of September 2023 versus than the same quarter in 2022
- **90 percent of respondents in New Zealand in September 2023 cited “reducing living costs”** more highly than any other issue for the government to address

While governments are more closely scrutinizing the space and crafting more rules around the recruitment and protection of international students, the onus is always on the international education industry as a collective to tackle these crucial issues and challenges, and not stop at looking at them as mere numbers or datasets on their screens or business roadmaps.

---

<sup>42</sup> [ICEF Monitor](#)