



CAMBRIDGE

Destination Survey 2023

Survey data reveals global university destinations and subject choices of students sitting Cambridge AS and A Levels.

About the research

There are more than 10,000 Cambridge schools in over 160 countries worldwide. A subset of these responded to the survey.

Responses were received from 372 Cambridge schools representing 20,582 students.

The sample size of schools and students is similar in size to that surveyed in 2022.



Executive summary



Economic considerations: Economic issues are driving student decision-making, particularly thinking about the impacts of inflation and cost-of-living increases



Geopolitical instability: Whilst not a major trend, this is the first year that we have seen geopolitical tensions cited as a reason for students choosing to stay closer to home when considering a destination. This was mentioned by a wide range of respondents, including those in Pakistan, China, India and eastern Europe.



Destinations: The traditional English-speaking countries of UK, USA, Canada and Australia remain popular international destinations for Cambridge students. Australia appears to be growing slightly in popularity.



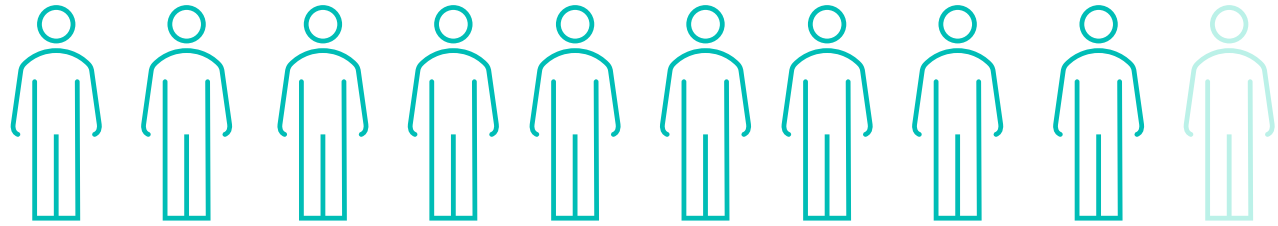
Improving domestic education: Some respondents say that the improving education in their home countries (both in terms of provision and reputation) may be encouraging students to go to university in their own countries. This was particularly noted by respondents from India.



Key Facts & Figures

Key facts & figures

92%



of Cambridge students progressed to university in 2023
(compared to 95% in 2022)

Key facts & figures



of the 2023 student cohort progressed to university in their own country (compared to 46% in 2022).



of the 2023 student cohort progressed to university in outside their own country (compared to 47% in 2022).

Key facts & figures



of Cambridge students from schools who completed the survey went on to attend a top-500 ranked university (compared to 61% in 2022).



In 2023, Cambridge students from schools who completed the survey progressed to at least 380 of the world's top 500 universities (compared to 363 in 2022).



Destination Countries

Countries in order of popularity with Cambridge students

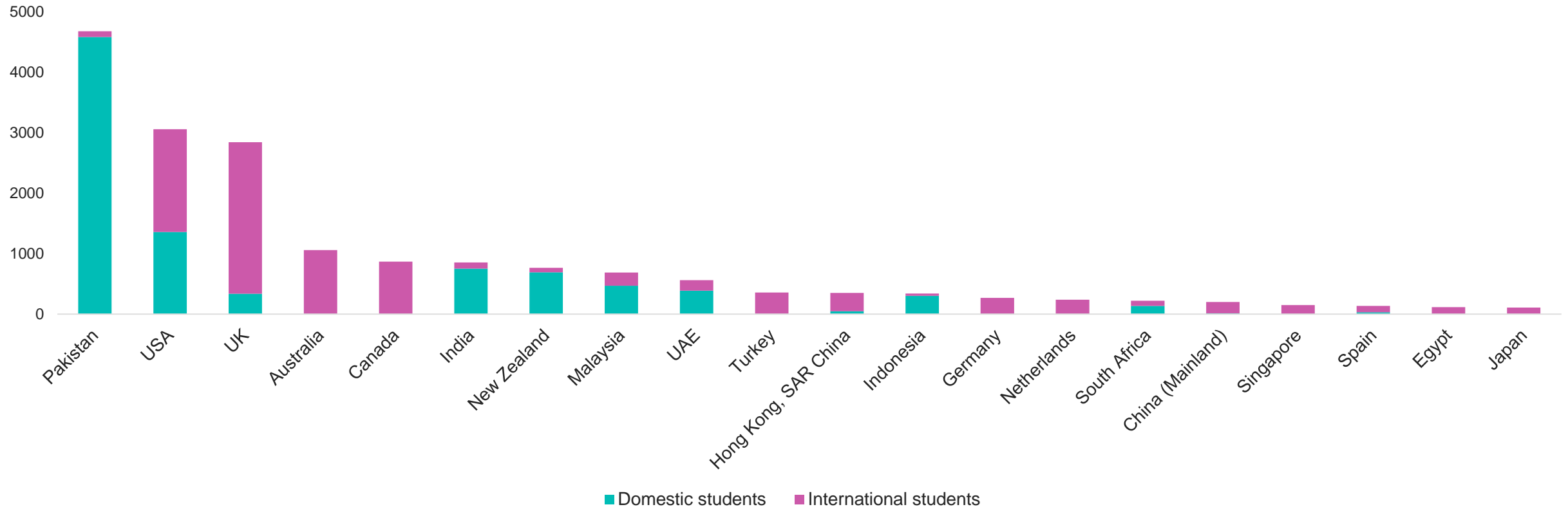
Numbers shown are based on calculated estimated number of students attending university in each country, based on the response of the available school sample.



These numbers are based on a survey of 372 Cambridge schools. The total number of Cambridge students who attend university in these countries will be much higher.

Destination countries: domestic vs overseas students

The chart shows the destination countries, and the number of students progressing to university in that country, split between domestic students (i.e. those who attended school in that country) vs international students (i.e. those who attended school in another country).

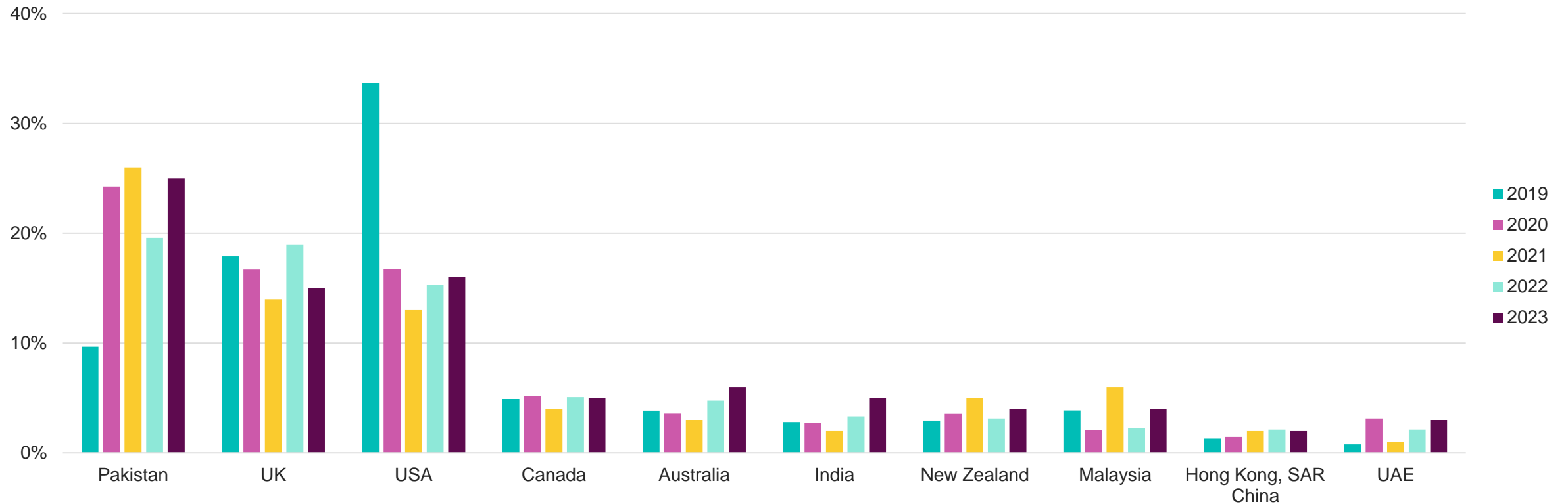


Only includes countries with over 100 students recorded as progressing to university in that country

Trends in student destination country

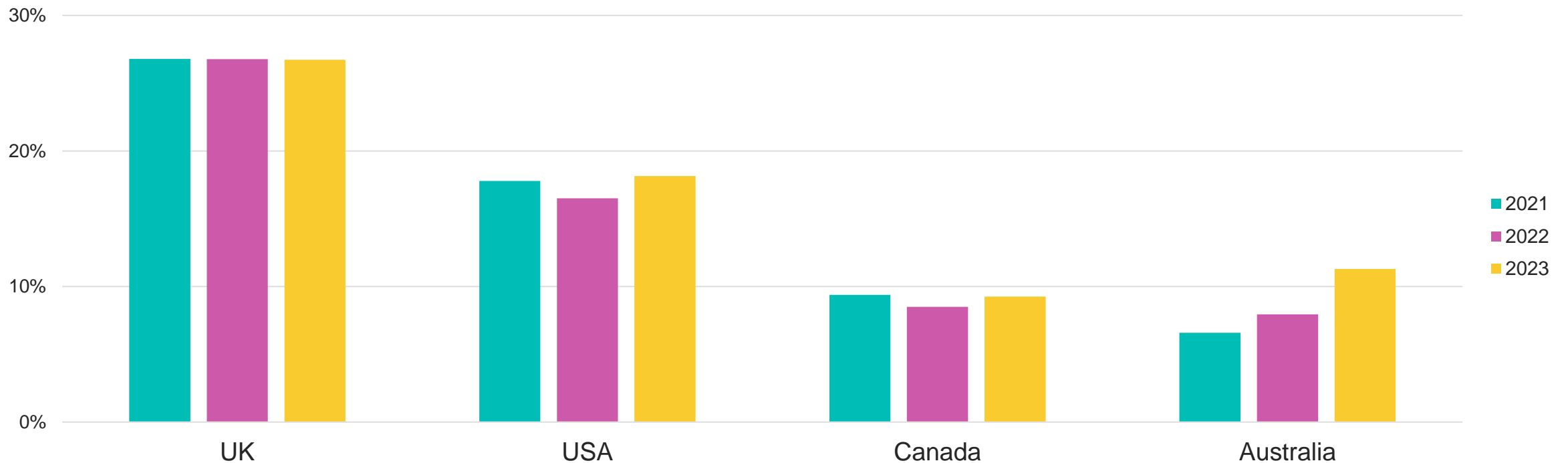
The chart shows the trends in the proportion of Cambridge students progressing to university in the top ten destinations for the past 5 years

(The 2019 figures for USA was likely caused by a particularly high number of responses from USA schools in the data sample for that year; 2020 figures were affected by declining student numbers due to the Covid pandemic).



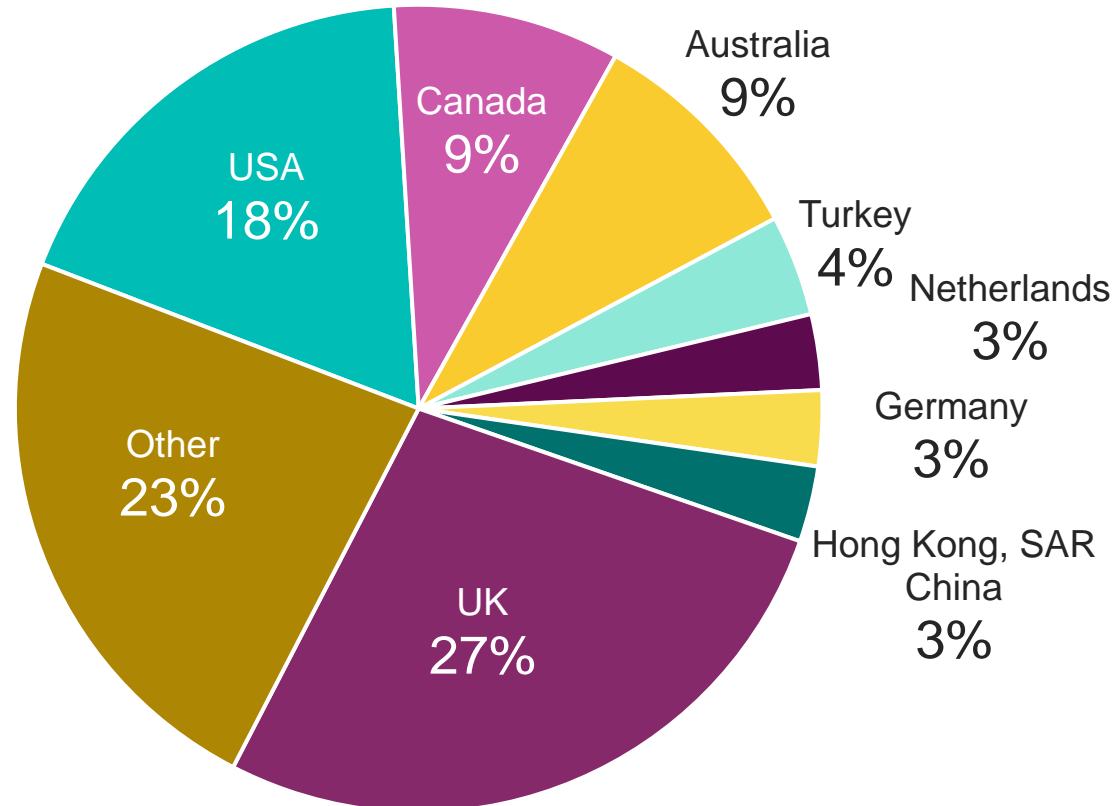
Trends in student destination country: international students only

The chart shows the trends in the proportion of Cambridge students progressing to university in the top four destinations for the past 3 years, excluding domestic students.



Which markets attract most overseas Cambridge students?

The chart shows the % of the 2023 Cambridge cohort who progress to university overseas, by their destination country



Top 3 destinations by school region

The table shows the most popular destination country by school region. For example, for schools in the UK, the UK is the most popular destination followed by USA & Hong Kong, SAR China.

Countries in **pink** are new to the 'top 3' compared to 2022 results.

	Most popular university destination 2023	2nd most popular	3rd most popular
UK	UK	USA	Hong Kong, SAR China
Europe	Netherlands	UK	Portugal
N. America	USA	Mexico	France, UK (joint 3rd)
Middle East & N. Africa	UAE	UK	USA
Pakistan	Pakistan	USA	UK
Sub-Saharan Africa	South Africa	UK	USA
S. Asia	India	USA	UK
E. Asia	UK	USA	Hong Kong, SAR China
SE Asia & Pacific	New Zealand	Malaysia	Indonesia

Reasons for studying in the main international destinations

The following pages show the reasons for studying in the top 4 international destinations, but looking at all destinations where students study overseas, and their reasons for doing so, we can see...



Interest in the country

Countries which are ranked highly for students being interested in their culture etc are USA, Canada, Australia and Japan.



Existing links

Egypt and Indonesia were more likely to be chosen due to existing links with the country.



Quality of teaching

USA and UK were ranked highest out of the main destinations for the quality of teaching - although Hong Kong and Singapore are also rated very highly.



Value for money

Hong Kong, Malaysia and Turkey scored highest for value for money.



University reputation

UK scored highest for university reputation - closely followed by USA, Hong Kong, Singapore Canada, and Australia.



Future job prospects

USA and Canada are more likely to be chosen due to future job prospects.

UK

Main reasons for choosing are university reputation and future job opportunities.



Interest in the country/region



Value for money



Quality of teaching



Future job opportunities



University reputation



To improve language skills



Existing links to country



To experience a new culture

USA

Main reasons for choosing are future job opportunities and university reputation.



Interest in the country/region



Value for money



Quality of teaching



Future job opportunities



University reputation



To improve language skills



Existing links to country



To experience a new culture

Canada

Main reasons for choosing are future job opportunities and university reputation.



Interest in the country/region



Value for money



Quality of teaching



Future job opportunities



University reputation



To improve language skills



Existing links to country



To experience a new culture

Australia

Main reasons for choosing are future job opportunities and value for money.



Interest in the country/region



Value for money



Quality of teaching



Future job opportunities



University reputation



To improve language skills



Existing links to country



To experience a new culture

Changes in student destination

Insights from open comments from schools which may not be reflected in the data.

Increased interest in European universities

Netherlands and Germany are emerging as countries generating more interest amongst international students from outside Europe.

Staying closer to home

Some students in Asia are choosing to stay closer to home at regional universities as the quality of local education options improves.

Australian & Canadian universities increasingly popular

Australian and Canadian universities are increasingly popular for the high ranking of the universities and perceived better value for money.

Economic considerations

Financial instability is driving decisions based on cost and affordability; European students say that they are less likely to want to study in the UK due to higher fees.

“ 1. more diverse options, particularly schools in other Hong Kong and Singapore are becoming increasingly popular among Chinese students.
2. Financial concerns are becoming deciding factors to some families when making decision

“

China

“ The landscape of higher education is improving in India -- the quality and quantity of universities within India is seeing a positive turn, making it a more attractive option for students who previously considered studying abroad.

“

India

“ Last year it was only UK they were interested in. This year they have applied to Canadian, American as well as Arab universities in Turkey; Egypt; Lebanon etc.

“

Oman

“ Students are not applying to the UK as they did in the past- Now, they are looking at other destinations in Europe (Netherlands)

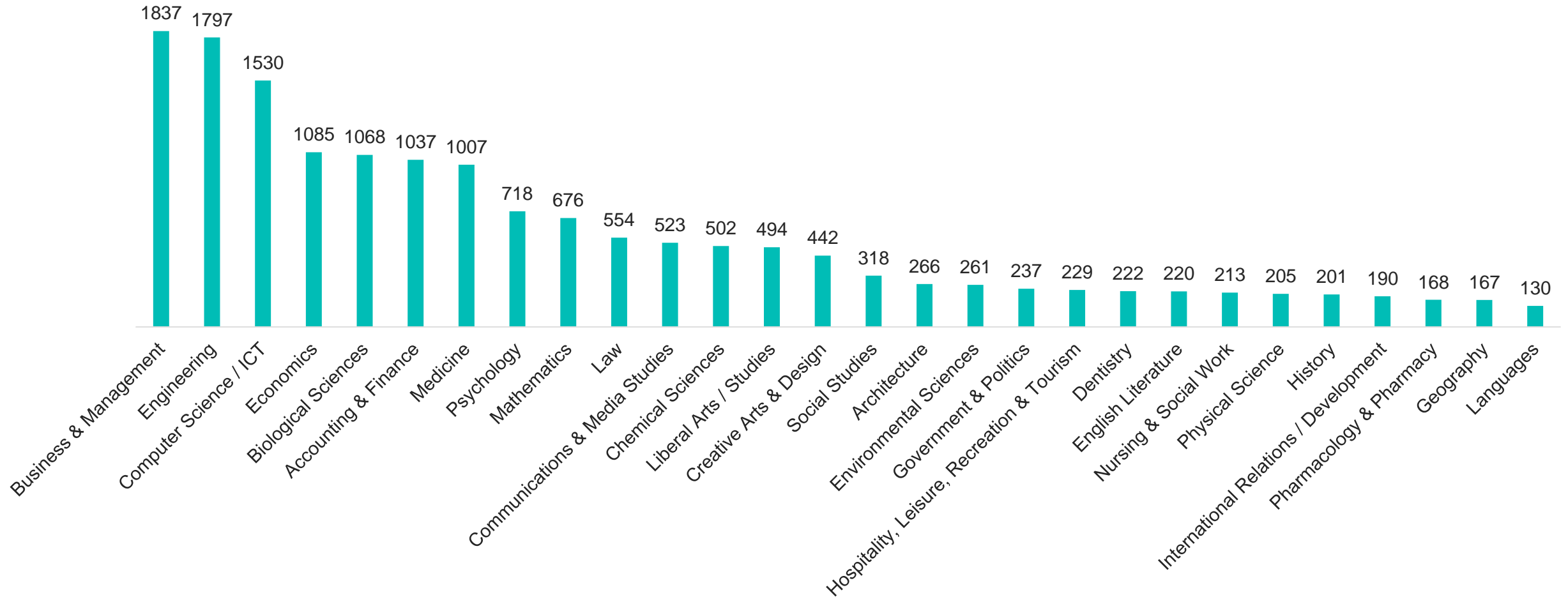
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Portugal



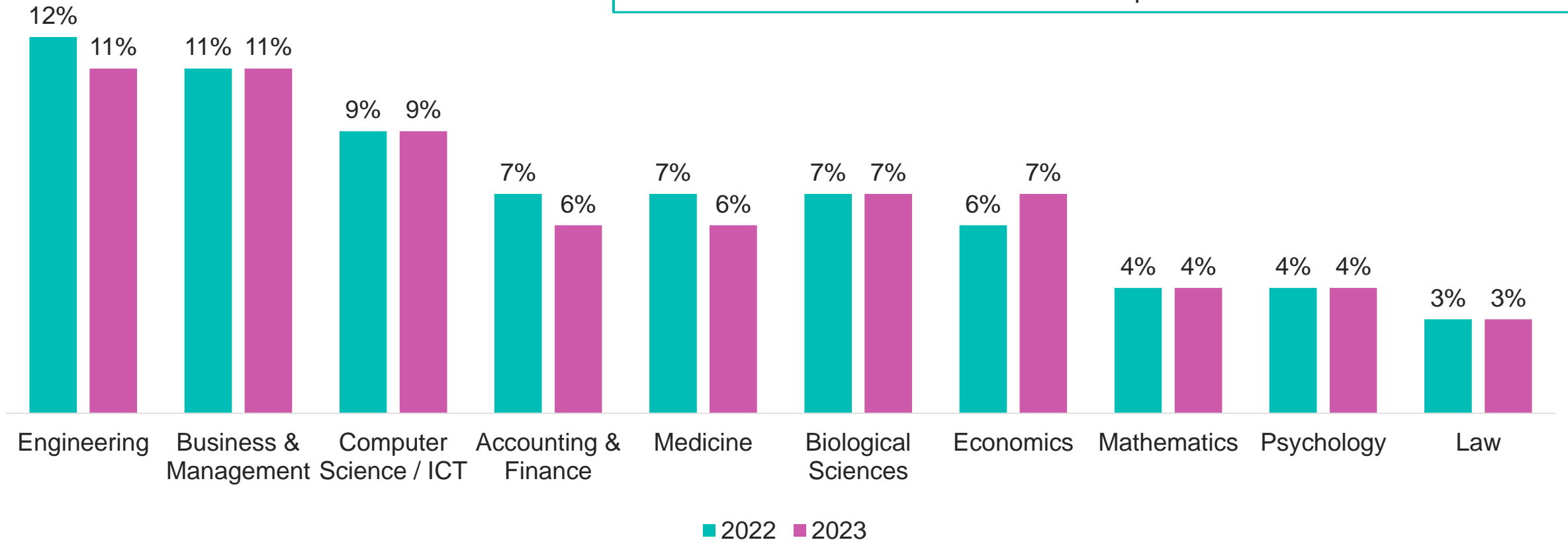
Subject Choice

Student numbers by subject applied to study at university



Top 10 subjects - student numbers year on year

There is little change in the order of the top ten most popular subjects - where there are differences, they are minimal and most likely explained by changes in the sample.



Changes in student subject choice

Insights from open-ended comments from schools which may not be reflected in the data.

Rising popularity of STEM

An increasing number of students are choosing STEM subjects, particularly engineering; computer science, data science and AI; and a growing interest in IT and in particular cybersecurity.

South Asia students interested in a broader range of courses

In South Asia where STEM and business have traditionally been more dominant there is increasing interest in liberal arts courses and interdisciplinary studies.

N American students less interested in 4-year courses

A couple of US schools reported that students were less keen on the traditional 4-year university course and more interested in vocational courses at state colleges that lead directly to employment opportunities.

“There definitely is an inclination towards Computer Science/ ICT and Business programmes; however, programmes related to music, design, psychology and economics are growing in the list of preferences.

“

India

“Data Science, AI, Business Management, Accounting & Finance are the most popular amongst students nowadays.

“

Pakistan

“We have more students choosing not to go to a university, they seem to be more eager to get into the working world.

“

USA

“More interest into the Computer or Data Science and Artificial Intelligence

“

Cyprus

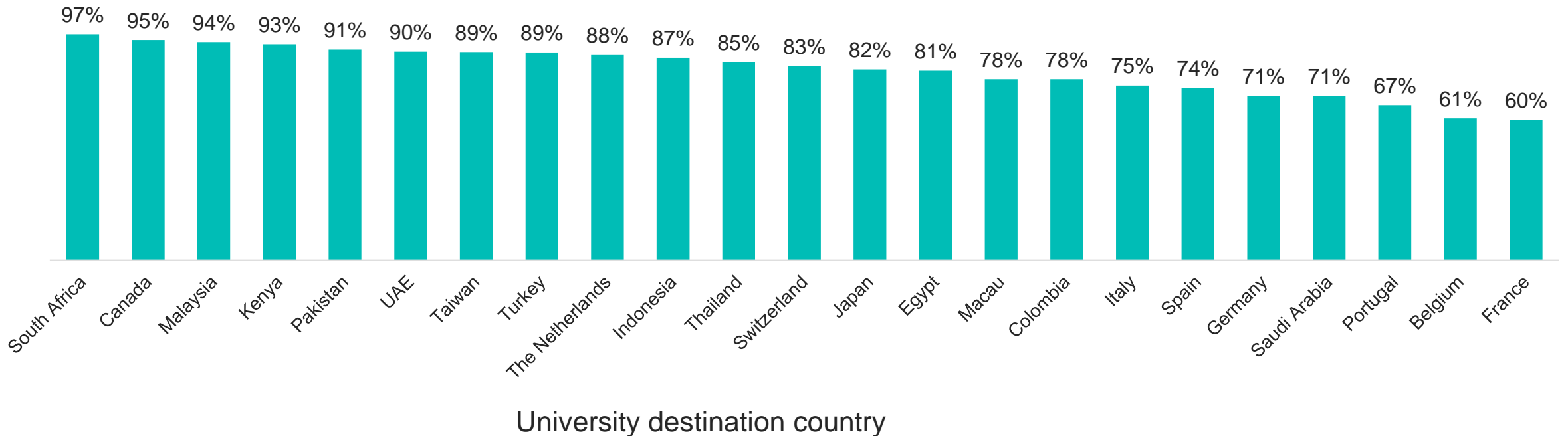


Language of Study

Studying in English

For university destination countries where English is not the first language, respondents were asked what the language of study was on the courses their students progressed to (NB more than one language could be selected).

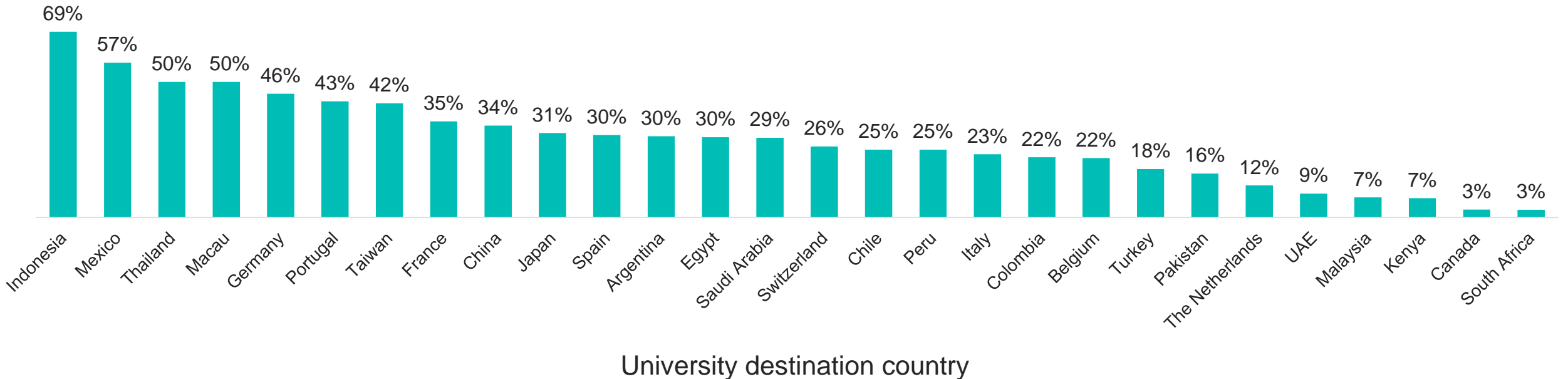
The chart shows the % of schools who had students progressing to the destination country saying that at least some of their students went on to study in English in their university destination country.



Studying in other languages

For university destination countries where English is not the first language, respondents were asked what the language of study was on the courses their students progressed to (NB more than one language could be selected).

The chart shows the % of schools who had students progressing to the destination country saying that at least some of their students were studying in languages other than English.



Only countries with >10 schools sending students are included



Individual Universities

Top 20 university destinations for Cambridge students

1. UCL (University College London)
2. = University of Toronto
3. = The University of Manchester
4. University of Melbourne
5. Monash University
6. University of Sydney
7. King's College London (KCL)
8. Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS)
9. The University of Warwick
10. Imperial College London
11. University of British Columbia
12. Fast National University of Computer & Emerging Sciences
13. University of Hong Kong
14. = Institute of Business Administration, Pakistan
15. = Durham University
16. National University of Sciences & Technology (NUST)
17. London School of Economics & Political Sciences (LSE)
18. The University of Nottingham
19. University of Edinburgh
20. University of New South Wales

18 out of 20 appear in the same list last year
except for 2 new entrants **in pink**.



Spotlight on Key Markets

Schools in China

47 schools responded



TOP 3 DESTINATION COUNTRIES

1. UK
2. USA
3. Australia



TOP 5 SUBJECTS

1. Engineering
2. Business & Management
3. Economics
4. Mathematics
5. Biological Sciences



TOP 5 UNIVERSITIES

1. UCL (University College London)
2. University of Melbourne
3. The University of Manchester
4. The University of Sydney
5. The University of Warwick

"More medical-oriented courses, less UK but more Netherlands and Australia."

Comments & trends

Some participants observed an increase in students opting for more medical-oriented courses.

One participant noted a decrease in students choosing universities in the UK, with a corresponding increase in preferences for universities in the Netherlands and Australia.

"Our border reopened by the end of 2022 (Covid) and thus the new graduates in 2023 were able to study abroad freely."

Schools in India

60 schools responded



TOP 3 DESTINATION COUNTRIES

1. India
2. USA
3. UK



TOP 5 SUBJECTS

1. Business & Management
2. Economics
3. Engineering
4. Computer Science / ICT
5. Accounting & Finance



TOP 5 UNIVERSITIES

1. NMIMS University
2. Flame University
3. Christ University
4. Ashoka University
5. University of Mumbai

"Most of the students set the goal to study abroad because of the quality of education and the exposure that they get there."

Comments & trends

Some participants noted an increased interest in European countries, particularly Germany, as study destinations.

Several participants observed a growing preference for Indian universities for undergraduate studies, with students opting to pursue postgraduate studies abroad.

A few participants mentioned a rise in interest towards specialized courses such as psychology, biotechnology, artificial intelligence, and computer science.

Some participants observed that students are now considering universities in countries other than the US, with preferences for Singapore, the UK, and Australia also being noted.

"More students opt for Singapore university. Some for the UK and US."

Schools in Indonesia

37 schools responded



TOP 3 DESTINATION COUNTRIES

1. Indonesia
2. Australia

No other countries had >1 student

"In previous years most of the student who took A /AS level tend to study overseas in Singapore, China, Japan or Canada. Some students in 2018, continue the study in Indonesia. However, last cohort year all of the students who took A level decide to continue their study in Australia. For the courses/subjects is still the same which are various among different subject area."



TOP 5 SUBJECTS

1. Business & Management
2. Engineering
3. Accounting & Finance
4. Computer Science / ICT
5. Medicine



TOP 5 UNIVERSITIES

1. Binus University
2. Monash University
3. Bandung Institute of Technology
4. University of Indonesia
5. University of New South Wales

Comments & trends

Some participants noted a reduction in the number of students choosing universities outside of Indonesia.

A few participants mentioned that students are increasingly opting for STEM courses.

Some participants reported that students are showing more interest in diverse fields such as Arts, Fashion, and Culinary, in addition to Sciences.

"A few students are taking not just Sciences but also Arts, Fashion and Culinary."

Schools in New Zealand

12 schools responded



TOP 3 DESTINATION COUNTRIES

1. New Zealand
2. Australia
3. UK

"More students looking to Australia rather than further abroad. In Australia they pay domestic fees if NZ citizens. As always, a focus on business, engineering and medical."



TOP 5 SUBJECTS

1. Engineering
2. Medicine
3. Law
4. Accounting & Finance
5. Economics



TOP 5 UNIVERSITIES

1. The University of Auckland
2. University of Otago
3. University of Canterbury
4. Auckland University of Technology
5. Victoria University of Wellington

Comments & trends

Some participants noted an increase in students choosing to study in Australia, primarily due to the benefit of paying domestic fees for New Zealand citizens.

Some participants reported no significant changes in students' choices or preferences regarding countries, universities, and undergraduate courses.

One participant mentioned that financial impacts are leading good students to remain in New Zealand for their first year before transferring overseas.

"There is an increase in applications to the USA. Otherwise, the majority of our students still apply to the STEM subjects."

Schools in Pakistan

45 schools responded



TOP 3 DESTINATION COUNTRIES

1. Pakistan
2. USA
3. UK



TOP 5 SUBJECTS

1. Computer Science / ICT
2. Engineering
3. Business & Management
4. Medicine
5. Accounting & Finance

"More students are shifting from medicine to computer science due to a shift in the global careers dynamics."



TOP 5 UNIVERSITIES

1. Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS)
2. Fast National University of Computer & Emerging Sciences
3. Institute of Business Administration (IBA) Karachi
4. National University of Sciences & Technology (NUST) Islamabad
5. Institute of Business Management

Comments & trends

Political and economic instability is affecting students but there is disagreement about the impact. Some say students are less able to afford to study abroad; others that they are more likely to want to study abroad for better opportunities elsewhere.

Most participants noted an increased interest in Computer Science, IT, and AI programs.

Several participants mentioned a shift towards more affordable study destinations, such as Canada, Turkey, and European countries.

"More students are interested in Canada and want to pursue IT / Computer Science / AI."

Schools in Thailand

14 schools responded



TOP 3 DESTINATION COUNTRIES

1. Thailand
2. UK
3. USA



TOP 5 SUBJECTS

1. Mathematics
2. Business & Management
3. Computer Science / ICT
4. History
5. English Literature



TOP 5 UNIVERSITIES

1. Chulalongkorn University
2. Mahidol University
3. Thammasat University
4. Chiang Mai University
5. Stamford International University

"Coming closer to where parents live due to costs. Parents do not have the same amount of disposable income to pay fees like they have done in the past."

Comments & trends

Some participants noted an increase in students choosing to study in Thailand due to financial difficulties post-COVID.

One participant observed more interest in mainland Europe among students.

Some participants mentioned that students are opting for universities closer to home due to cost concerns and reduced disposable income of parents.

"Economic difficulties for sure, safety issues in America has seen a decline in applications. Students fearing the cost of university so are looking at cheaper destinations."

Schools in USA

19 schools responded



TOP 3 DESTINATION COUNTRIES

1. USA

"Less students going to 4-year schools, more going to state colleges."



TOP 5 SUBJECTS

1. Biological Sciences
2. Business & Management
3. Engineering
4. Liberal Arts
5. Nursing & Social Work



TOP 5 UNIVERSITIES

1. University of Florida
2. University of Central Florida
3. University of South Florida
4. Florida State University
5. Florida International University

Comments & trends

Most participants did not notice any significant changes in students' choices regarding countries, universities, or undergraduate courses.

Some participants noted an increase in students wanting to pursue careers in psychology and mental health.

One participant observed fewer students opting for four-year schools, with more choosing state colleges instead. Some participants reported a trend of more students choosing not to attend university immediately after high school, preferring to enter the workforce instead.

"More wanting to go into psychology, mental health careers."



Progression

Which Cambridge qualifications do students use for university entry?

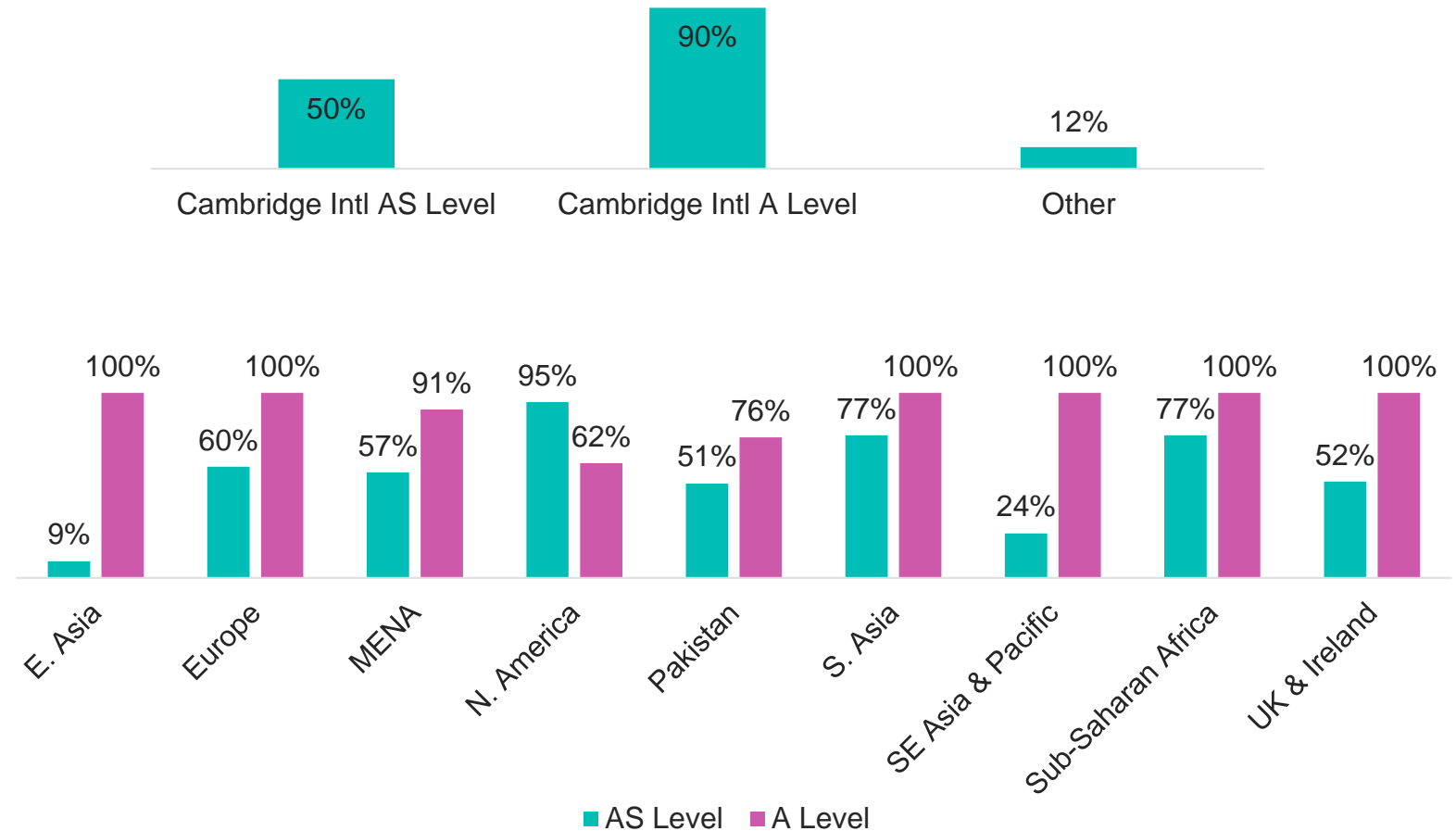
We asked which Cambridge qualifications students used for university entry.

90% of schools said students use Cambridge International A Level.

50% said students use Cambridge International AS Level.

N. America were more likely than other regions to use AS Level for university entry.

'Other' includes IGCSE, O Levels, AICE Diploma, SAT, IBDP, BTEC, qualifications from other exam boards such as Pearson/Edexcel, local diplomas/qualifications.





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For more information
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