



# The recruitment edge: Australia and New Zealand

Discover what 43,000 students say they expect and want from universities in Australia and New Zealand.



# Key findings from 43,000 students interested in Australia and New Zealand

#1

The number one factor when choosing a country for their course is that it is welcoming to international students.

2/3

Nearly two thirds of students expect a complete and personalised response to an enquiry within three days. Only 48% say they have received this level of service from universities to date.

1/2

Almost half of candidates cite a high graduate employment rate as the most important factor when choosing a course.

43%

of prospective students are actively researching universities' environmental sustainability strategy and efforts.

## Executive summary

Universities in Australia and New Zealand provide world-leading teaching and research excellence combined with cities and communities with a reputation for being friendly and welcoming. During the COVID-19 pandemic, both countries experienced considerable disruption to campus life and student pipelines as a result of strict border closures and lockdowns. It is testament to the strength of their long-established reputation for excellence that both countries have rebounded so quickly. Now, universities in the region need to set their sights beyond recovery and reinvigorate their ambitions for student number growth – which is well within their grasp.

## Recommendations

- Be sure to emphasise your commitment to environmental sustainability, ensuring this is a stand-out message across all your marketing channels.
- Highlight exactly what your careers service offers – be clear about the support available and how you can help students to find their dream jobs in the region, overseas or in their home country.
- Consider how machine learning and other technological solutions might enable you to scale your enquiry, admissions and offer management to deliver the response times applicants expect.
- Use of TikTok to research universities has skyrocketed from 2% in 2020 to 19% in 2023 so it's time to ensure it's part of your channel mix.
- Let international students know how much they mean to your institution and how proud you are to be a diverse, welcoming campus.

# Real voices, smart choices

With granular insights from more than 115,000 prospective students the QS International Student Survey – the largest global survey of its kind – has been guiding recruitment strategies for over a decade.

# Stay one step ahead

You can use the QS International Student Survey data and insights to

- Understand and fulfil evolving student priorities in the areas that matter most to them like employability and sustainability.
- Identify growth opportunities.
- Refine your brand positioning and showcase your differentiators.

Would you like help with applying our insights and recommendations to your marketing and recruitment plans? Or would you like help with refining your strategy? [Contact us today](#) and our student recruitment experts will be happy to guide you.

**116,412**  
prospective  
student  
responses

**194**  
countries and  
territories



**43,378**  
interested in Australia  
and New Zealand



# Contents

**What 43,378 students interested in Australia and  
New Zealand say about:**

- Environmental sustainability - 08
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# Did you know

that if you partner with us for the QS International Student Survey you receive a bespoke report for your institution?

It's free to participate and we ask that you invite your prospective students to complete the QS International Student Survey.

[Register your interest](#) in partnering with us for the QS International Student Survey 2024 today.

What do prospective students want and expect from universities in Australia and New Zealand?

## Environmental sustainability

**43%** of prospective students looking to study in Australia and New Zealand are actively researching universities' environmental sustainability strategy and efforts.

Universities in both Australia and New Zealand have taken impressive strides forward in action on tackling climate change. Almost two thirds (62%) of those who researched the level of environmental action being taken by universities in the region say they are satisfied with the efforts being made. This compares favourably to students reviewing the environmental sustainability credentials of universities in the US (58%) but is slightly lower than those interested in the UK (65%) or Canada (65%).

# Success story: University of Auckland

Top 10 in the world for  
sustainability  
(QS World University  
Rankings: Sustainability  
2023)



In your opinion, what is the most important element that universities must not overlook in their efforts to advance environmental and social impact?

**“I believe reliable data is the most critical ingredient. Others include people, leadership, culture – you name it! However, data seems to be the one ingredient that is often missing.”**

**Dr Jingwen Mu**  
Former Senior Global Strategy Advisor to the Vice-Chancellor at the University of Auckland and member of QS Rankings Advisory Board, University of Auckland

[Read our interview in full](#)



## Spotlight on environmental sustainability

Postgraduate research students are the most likely to research the level of action a university is taking on environmental sustainability (49%), followed by postgraduate taught (43%) and undergraduate (39%).

Those planning to study history, philosophy and religious studies are the most likely (58%) to research a university's environmental sustainability strategy and efforts, with psychology students the least likely (26%).

# Top 5

universities in  
Australia  
for sustainability

# Top 5

universities in  
New Zealand  
for sustainability

**12** Australian universities featured among the world's top 100 in the QS World University Rankings: Sustainability 2023.

**3** New Zealand universities featured among the world's top 100 in the QS World University Rankings: Sustainability 2023.

University	Global rank	University	Global rank
The University of New South Wales	<b>=5</b>	The University of Melbourne	<b>51</b>
The University of Sydney	<b>=5</b>	RMIT University	<b>53</b>
The University of Adelaide	<b>36</b>		

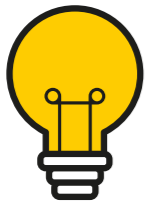
University	Global rank	University	Global rank
The University of Auckland	<b>10</b>	Victoria University of Wellington	<b>116</b>
The University of Otago	<b>47</b>	Massey University	<b>125</b>
The University of Canterbury   Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha	<b>95</b>		

# Employability and career aspirations

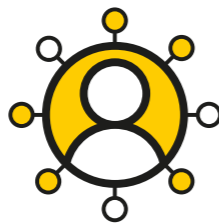
46% of candidates interested in studying in Australia and New Zealand cite a high graduate employment rate as the most important factor when choosing a course.

For students, getting the job they want remains a key driver in international student decision-making. Post-study work policy remains important but it's the graduate employment rate that matters most.

## Top three career considerations when choosing a university



Learn new skills (61%)



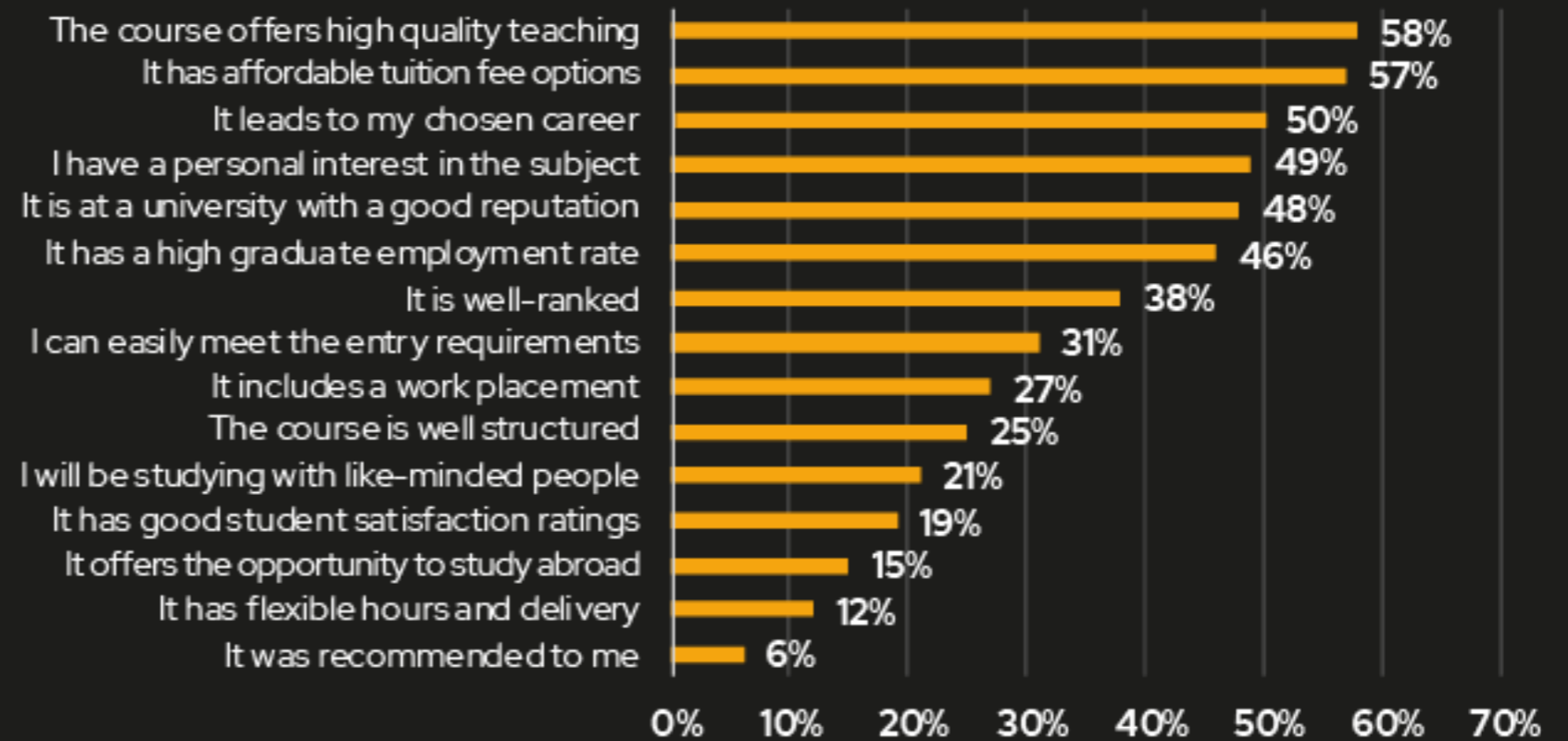
Build a professional network (54%)



Improve my employment prospects (51%)

When we asked prospective students to select the top five most important factors when choosing a course, the third most common answer was that it leads to their chosen career (50% of responses), closely followed by a high graduate employment rate (46% of answers).

## What five things are most important to you when choosing a course?



## Spotlight on post-study work and employability

**45%**

of prospective international students hope to stay in Australia or New Zealand temporarily after they graduate.

When choosing an employer, the most important factors are salary and benefits (65%), work-life balance (41%) and career progression (28%).

**26%**

hope to stay permanently in New Zealand after completing their studies compared to 18% who hope to stay permanently in Australia.

Students interested in Australia and New Zealand are more positive about staying in the country permanently after graduation than those considering the US (15%) and the UK (13%)

**67%**

say that gaining employment in their home country once they've graduated is very important or extremely important to them.

Creativity, problem-solving and analytical skills are the skills which prospective students think employers value most.

**98%**

of students say that it's important that their chosen university has a careers advice service – with 41% saying this is extremely important.

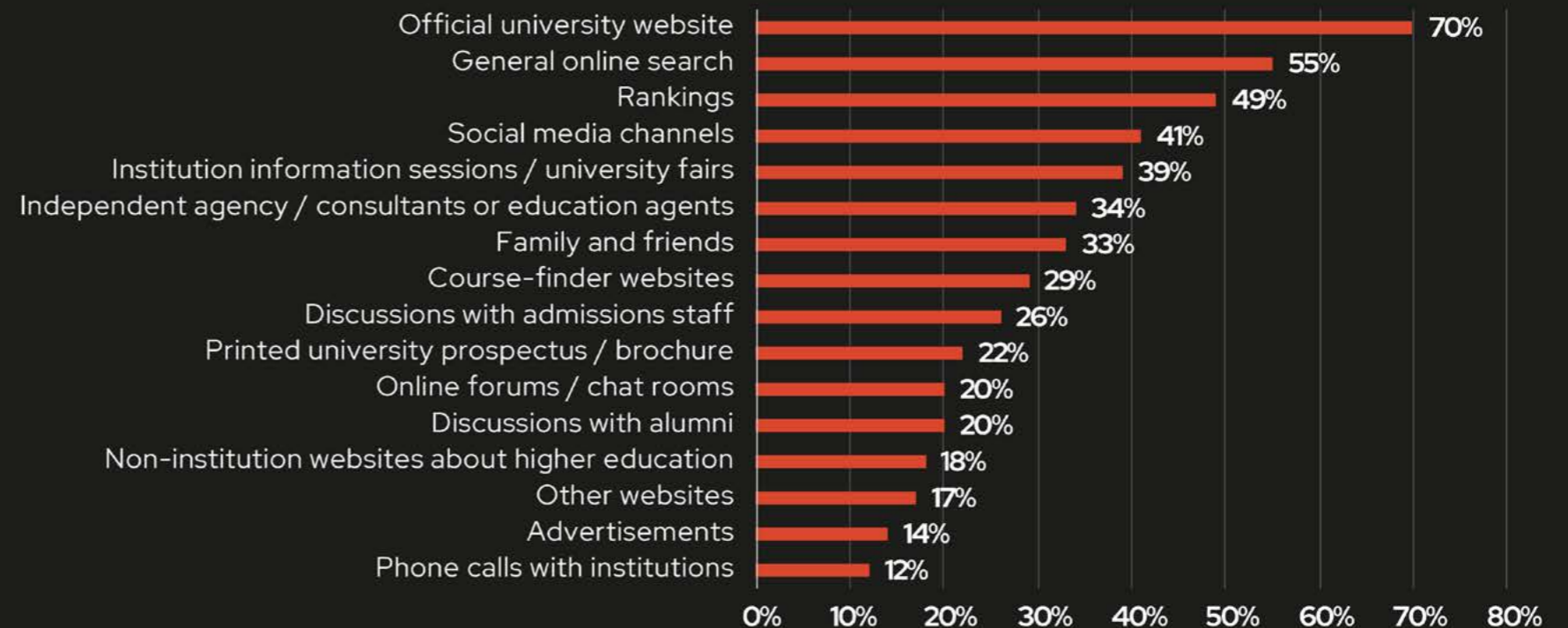
# Preferred communications and channels

**63% of students interested in studying Australia and New Zealand expect a complete and personalised response to an enquiry within three days**

University enquiry teams are not currently meeting students' expectations when it comes to enquiry response times or application outcome communications. Institutions looking to grow student numbers must be prepared to manage higher enquiry and application numbers – without compromising on quality and personalisation.

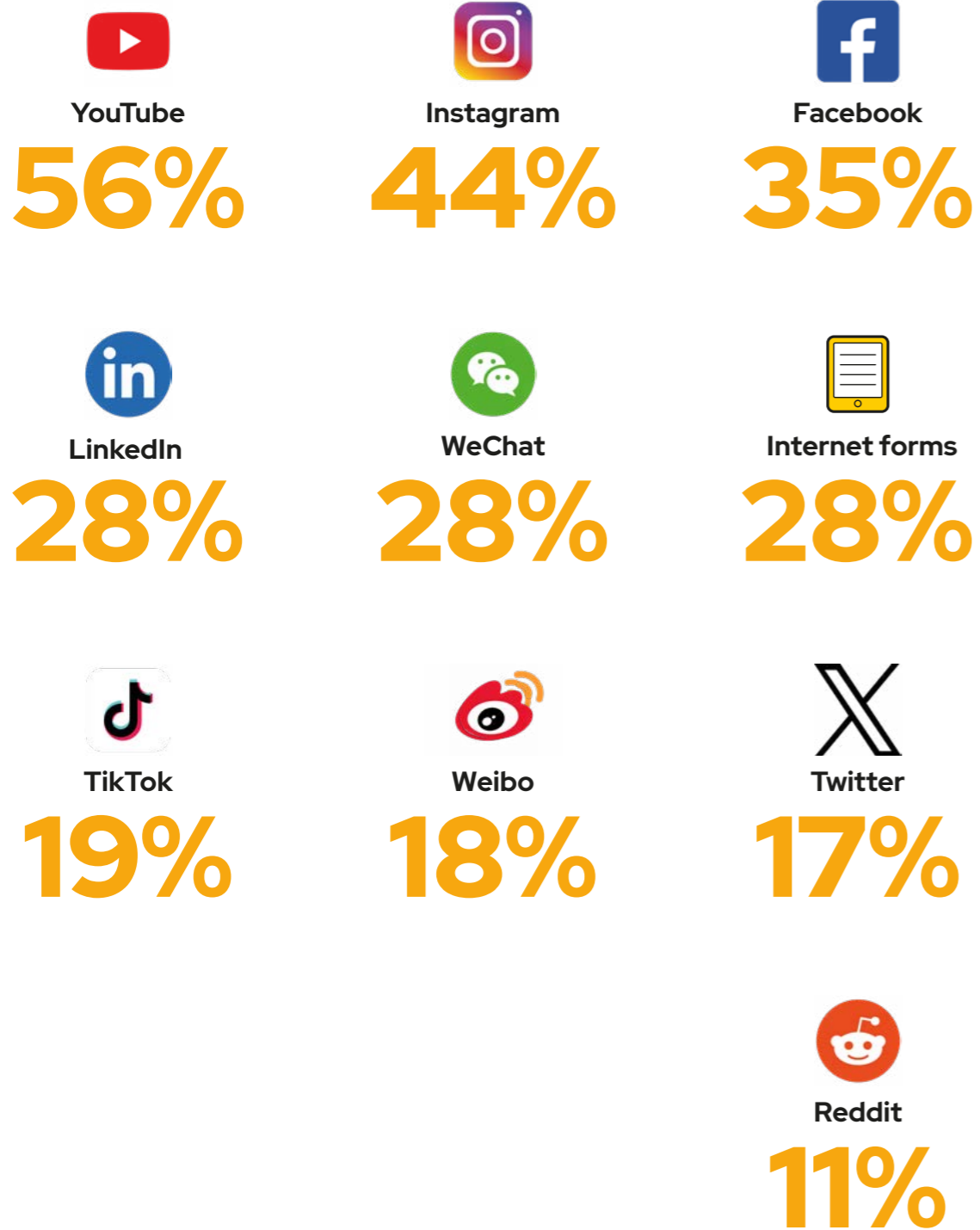
When we asked prospective students to select the top five most important information sources when researching a university, the university website was the most significant by a considerable margin (**70% of responses**). Almost half (**49%**) refer to university rankings and less than a quarter (**22%**) say they find printed brochures and prospectuses useful.

**What are the five information sources you've found most useful when researching a university?**

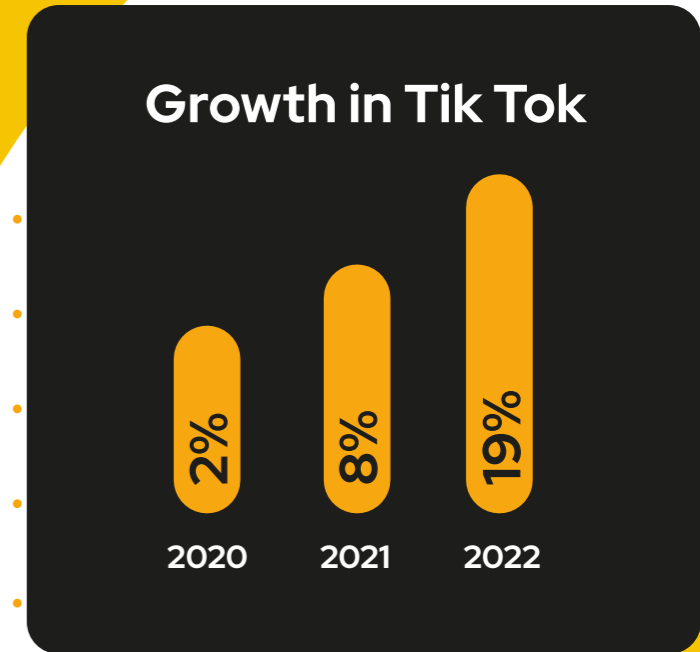


# Spotlight on communications and channels

Top ten social channels for researching universities



Almost a fifth (19%) of students are now researching universities on TikTok – and it's unsurprisingly even higher for prospective undergraduate students (23%).



**34%** of students want to communicate via a phone call but it's email (84%) and WhatsApp (45%) that are the preferred methods of getting in touch.

**23%** of students expect daily contact from a university once they've received an offer and 49% expect weekly contact.

Only **48%** of students say they'd received a complete and personalised response within three days of submitting an enquiry to a university.

**63%** of students expect a complete and personalised response to an enquiry within three days.

**38%** expect to receive notification of the outcome of their application within three days.

# Perceptions of Australia and New Zealand

# 1

The number one factor when choosing a country for their studies is that it is welcoming to international students.

Australia and New Zealand have long been perceived as safe and welcoming destinations for international study but the pandemic caused significant disruption and it's important to continue to highlight the benefits of studying in this region over others, particularly as Canada and the UK have improved their post-study work policies.

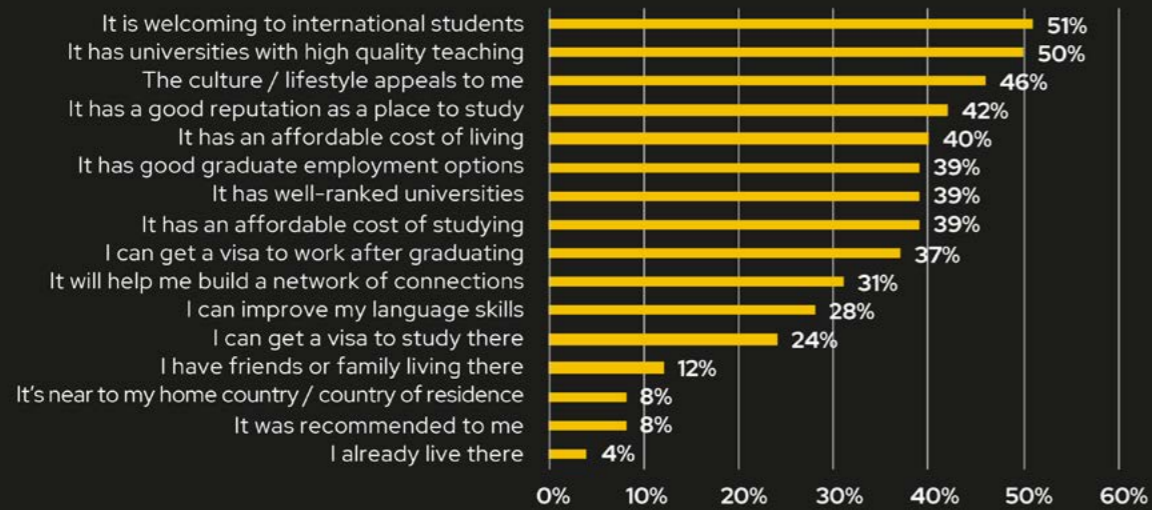
What words would you use to describe Australia?

Artistic 15% **Safe 44%** Exciting 34%  
**Welcoming 48%** Vibrant 34%  
Clean 41% **Beautiful 65%**  
Affordable 19% **Modern 40%**

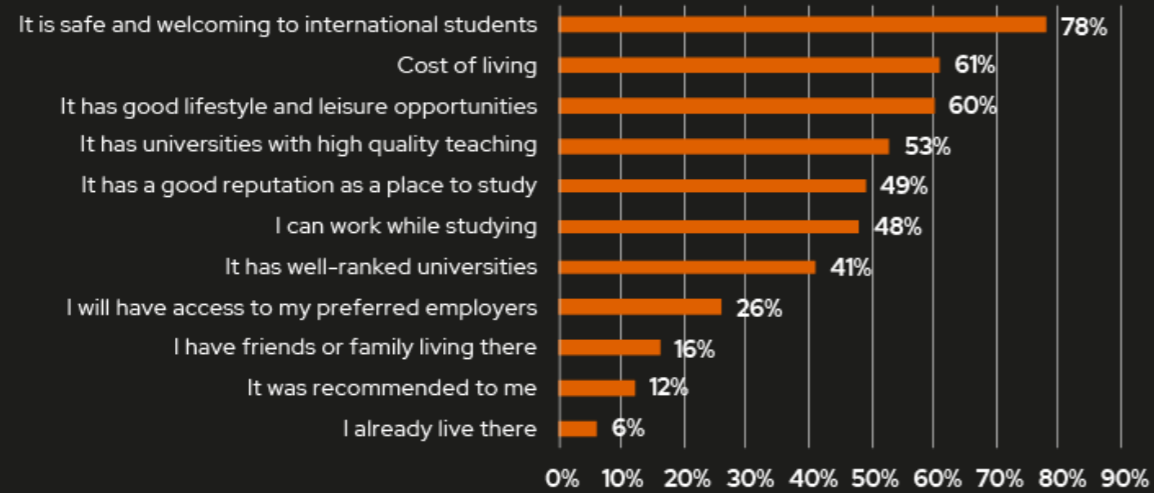
What words would you use to describe New Zealand?

Artistic 10% **Safe 53%** Exciting 23%  
**Welcoming 47%** Vibrant 17%  
Clean 64% **Beautiful 75%**  
Affordable 21% **Modern 25%**

**What five things are most important to you when choosing a country to study in?**

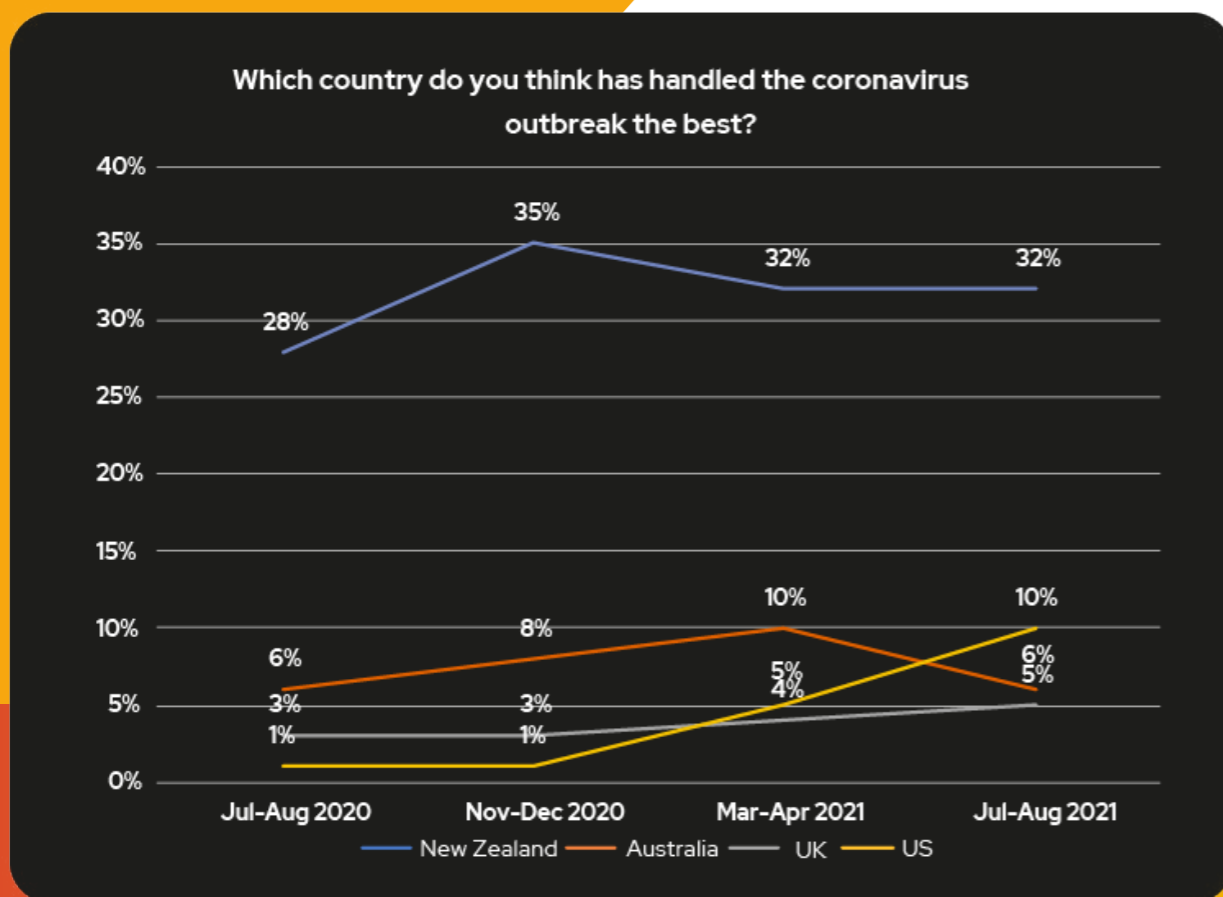


**What five things are most important to you when choosing a town or city to study in?**



LOCATION  
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 LOCATION

New Zealand consistently came out as the country which prospective students felt handled the pandemic best, topping the sentiment analysis of the monthly surveys QS conducted to analyse student sentiment by a considerable margin.



Source: QS monthly COVID-19 surveys

**79%** of those looking to study in New Zealand or Australia now believe it is safe and 64% think both countries are becoming increasingly welcoming to international students.

## Spotlight on country perceptions

If students decided to study at home rather than abroad,

**44%**

said that their parents would feel positive about the decision.

Unsurprisingly, safety is the biggest concern of parents –

with **38%**

saying this is parents' number one worry about international study, followed by

**21%**

saying a course which will lead to a good job.

Cost of living (67%) is what worries students most about studying abroad, followed by safety (54%) and getting a job (46%).

# Student views

A snapshot of free text responses

## Why Australia?

It's a welcoming country to international students with an abundance of job opportunities and various other pathways."

The first factor is that students can obtain a postgraduate visa to work locally. Secondly, the weather is similar to my country."

Australia has a good reputation for the course that I am going to pursue. There are good employment opportunities after completing the course and the living environment is so friendly."

It has well ranked universities which are affordable, has a wide range of scholarships and financial aid, a welcoming environment and a good number of years to stay and work after graduating."

## Why New Zealand?

It's a safe country where you can follow your religion. No racism. I'm impressed by your ex-prime minister."

New Zealand offers scholarships for international students. It's known for its innovation and research, quality life and it's also safe and peaceful."

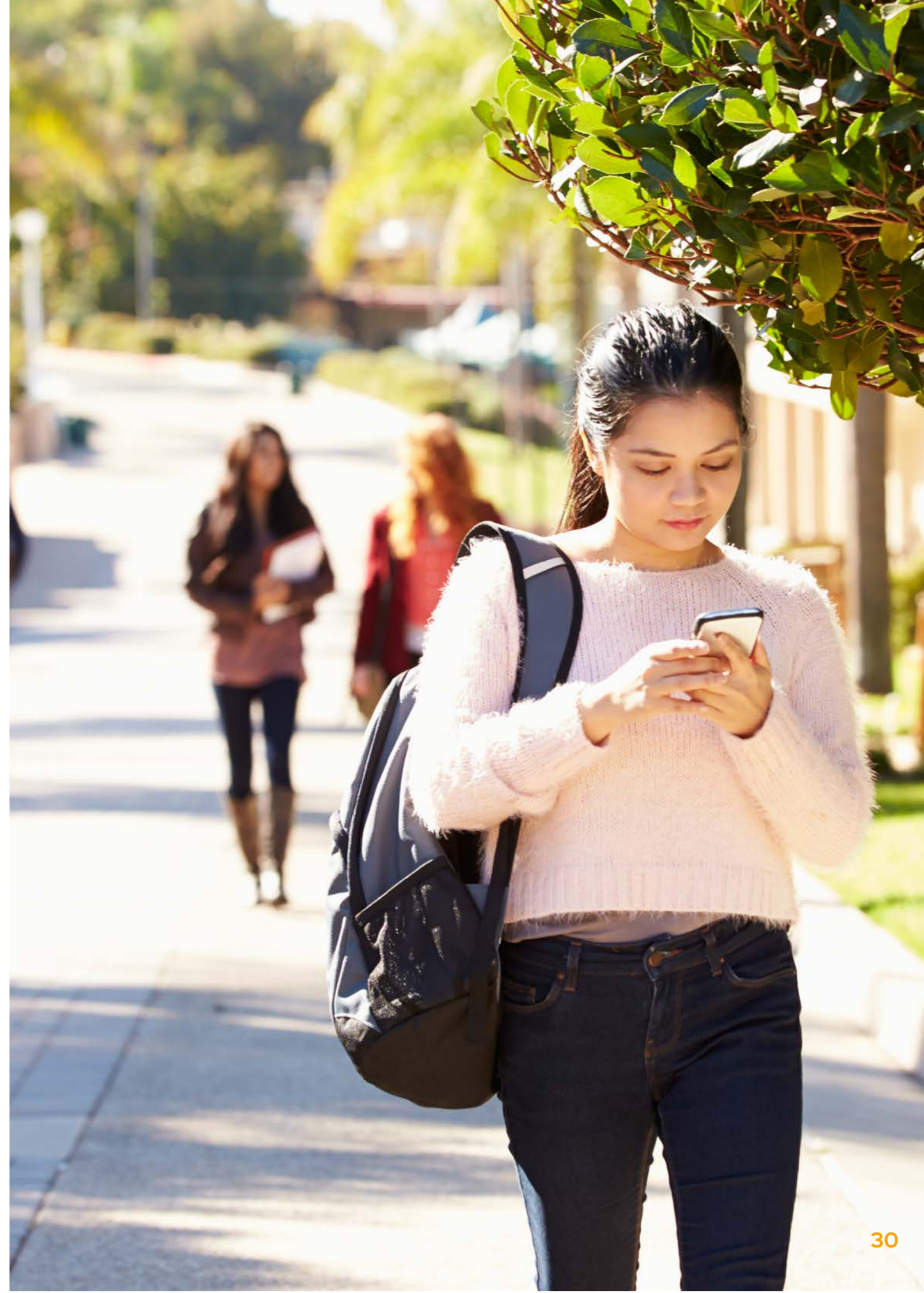
I am interested in studying in New Zealand because of the quality of education, good healthcare facilities, and prioritized development of research and innovation. In line with this, I am overall interested in living in this country to help myself focus on my studies."

With an excellent education system, internationally accredited qualifications, ample research opportunities and a matchless quality of life, New Zealand has a lot to offer."



# Appendix

The current student recruitment landscape - 31  
Opportunities for growth - 35  
Demographic of survey respondents- 37



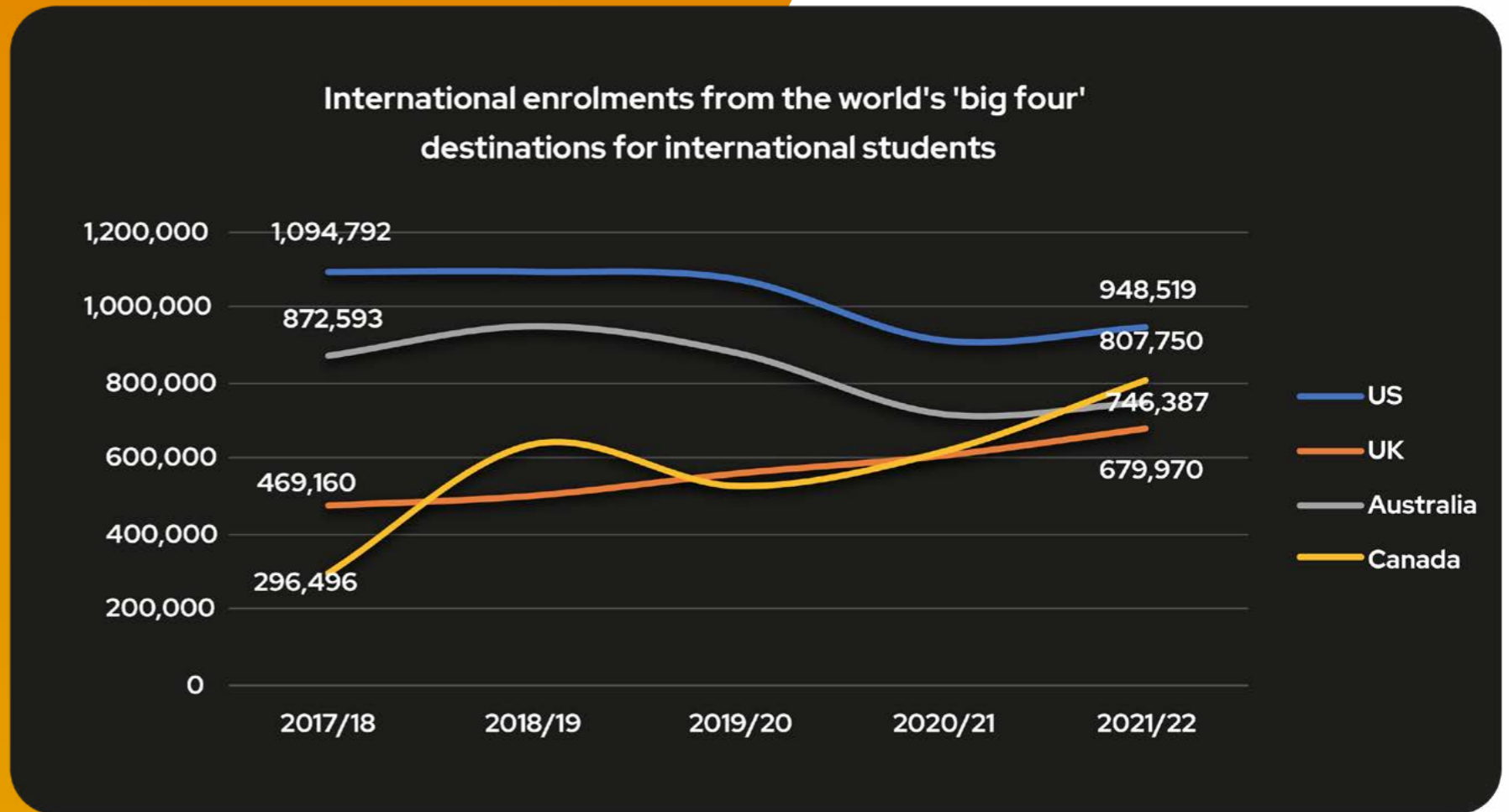
**The current student recruitment landscape**

AUSTRALIA  
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The record-breaking performance of Australian universities in the QS World University Rankings 2024 saw three Australian universities ranked among the world's top 20 universities for the first time. The University of Melbourne reached a historic high for any Australian university of 14th place, with the University of Sydney and the University of New South Wales tied for 19th place. Australia was also the only country to take two of the top ten spots in the QS Best Student Cities rankings launched last week – with Melbourne (4th) and Sydney (7th).

**How does Australia fare among the 'big four' destination markets?**

The "big four" study destinations include 178 (36%) of the QS World University Rankings top 500 universities and attract over 2,450,000 internationally mobile students, which represents approximately 37% of the total. While Australia, UK, Canada and the US remain the world's top four destination markets, Australia slipped behind Canada in student volumes through the pandemic. The stellar performance of Australian universities in the QS World University Rankings shows that universities are better placed than ever to regain and grow market share.



Source: HESA, OpenDoors, Erudera, Austrade

# Top 10

source locations  
for Australia,  
the UK, the US  
and Canada

## Where are Australia's key strengths?

	AUSTRALIA	UK	US	CANADA
1	China	China	China	India
2	India	India	India	China
3	Nepal	Nigeria	Nepal	Philippines
4	Colombia	Pakistan	Colombia	France
5	Vietnam	US	Vietnam	Nigeria
6	Thailand	Hong Kong	Thailand	Iran
7	Brazil	Bangladesh	Brazil	South Korea
8	Philippines	Malaysia	Philippines	Vietnam
9	Pakistan	France	Pakistan	Mexico
10	Indonesia	Italy	Indonesia	United States

Source: HSEA, OpenDoors, Erudera, Austrade

Australia is leading the 'big four' in average score for citations for faculty, average overall rankings score and academic reputation. Professor Mark Scott, Vice Chancellor of the University of Sydney, said:

It is wonderful to see Australian and Sydney universities stand out among the top global universities with their highest rankings to date. Five of our universities are among the world's top 50 most esteemed by the global academic community and tying with UNSW in 19th place is a significant shared achievement. It affirms Sydney's reputation as being a great global city for higher education.

We know our universities are some of the best in the world due to their focus on world-class research and teaching, with fairness in access to education and opportunity – and it is wonderful to see this recognised by one of the world's most prestigious rankings organisations."



## “Forward-thinking and dynamic”

**QS CEO Jessica Turner** spoke at a reception event held at the University of Sydney – her alma mater – in June 2023 to share and analyse the results of the QS World University Rankings 2024.

### She said



What is clear is that Australian institutions stand out in their service to students – both Australians and international students.

Many Australian institutions are forward thinking and the dynamism of the sector here – the focus on research impact, employability and sustainability and strong links built over decades across multiple countries, have all helped to achieve improved performance for Australian institutions as this ranking evolves and innovates.

The average scores of Australian universities in QS academic and employer reputation indicators, as well as in the research impact metric, position the country among the world top 10 performers, recognising its enduring and growing global influence.

Additionally, Australia achieves the 11th highest average score in Sustainability, a crucial aspect we are proud to include in our rankings. This aligns with the shifting priorities of the current and future generations of learners and of society at large.”

NEW ZEALAND  
NEW ZEALAND  
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NEW ZEALAND

Each of New Zealand's eight universities improved their year-on-year position in the QS World University Rankings 2024. New Zealand's number one university, the University of Auckland, achieved its highest ever rankings performance at 68th in the world. In the top 300, the University of Otago ranked in 206th place and Massey University, up an impressive 53 places to rank in joint 230th place. The introduction of a new sustainability metric in this year's rankings has emphasised New Zealand's clear dedication to environmental and social change, with the University of Auckland featuring in the global top 10 in the sustainability indicator, and three more universities ranked within the top 100 for this metric.

## Where are the key strengths of New Zealand's institutions?

In another metric introduced into the rankings methodology in 2023, Employment Outcomes, which consider graduate employment rates and alumni impact, the University of Auckland again performs exceptionally, ranking among the global top 30. The University of Canterbury also secures a strong position here with Massey University emerging as the leading local performer in the International Research Network metric, securing the 215th spot, with the University of Auckland ranked 220th.

New Zealand's continued popularity as a study destination is evident, with Auckland University of Technology and Massey University ranking among the world's top 100 for their proportion of international students. In terms of reputation, the University of Auckland is particularly esteemed within the global academic community, ranking 65th in the academic reputation indicator. The University of Otago and Victoria University of Wellington also feature among the world's top 200 in this metric. However, there is room for improvement in the Employer Reputation metric, where only the University of Auckland and the University of Canterbury appear among the global top 300.

# QS International Student Survey 2023

Demographics of those interested in Australia or New Zealand study

## Gender

**53%**  
female

**42%**  
male

**5%**  
prefer not to say or  
to self-describe

## Age

**30%**  
17-20

**31%**  
21-24

**24%**  
25-31

**14%**  
32 or older

## Funding

**65%**  
Self-funded

**8%**  
Loan

**20%**  
Scholarship

**7%**  
Not sure other

## Study level

**5%**  
Foundation or  
vocational

**35%**  
Undergraduate

**44%**  
Postgraduate taught

**16%**  
Postgraduate  
research

## Main subjects of interest

**23%**  
Business and  
management

**12%**  
Engineering and  
technology

**11%**  
Computing

**7%**  
Subjects allied  
to medicine

## Household income

**24%**  
Less than \$10,000 USD

**16%**  
\$10,000-25,000 USD

**13%**  
Over \$25,000 USD-  
\$50,000 USD

**6%**  
Over \$50,000-  
USD-\$75,000 USD

**2%**  
Over \$75,000 USD

**Want to stay  
one step ahead?**

**Would you like help with applying our insights and recommendations to your marketing and recruitment plans? Or would you like help with refining your strategy?**

**Contact us today and our student recruitment experts will be happy to help.**



## Want to delve deeper into what your future students think?

We provide bespoke reports for institutions which partner with us to encourage prospective students to participate in the QS International Student Survey.

Benchmark the needs and wants of your prospective students against other universities in the region and across the globe.

**Register your interest** in partnering with us for the QS International Student Survey 2024.