

UCAS

STUDENT
MINDSET
CONFERENCE

2024

PROJECT NEXT GENERATION

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PROJECT NEXT GENERATION

International Students:
Early Drivers and **Study Pathways**



RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Project Next Generation: Early Drivers and Study Pathways

- Insights into the early decision-making stages of international students aged 13–16 from China, France, India, Turkey, and the USA.
- Strategies to engage and inform students earlier in their journey.
- Understand motivations, address concerns, and tailor approaches by country and age to attract and support these students effectively.



METHODOLOGY

Project Next Generation took a quantitative approach to understand **what** are international students planning for their future, and **how** they choose subjects of interest and career pathways.



Online survey



2,035 responses from **students aged 13-16** from China, France, India, Turkey and the USA



Fieldwork dates: 16 – 31 May 2024

KEY THEMES IDENTIFIED:

1

The Future: Feelings & Confidence

2

Information, Inspiration, & Influence

3

Early Intentions of Future Studies

4

Choosing Where To Study



THE FUTURE: FEELINGS & CONFIDENCE

With an optimistic outlook and a strong link between subjects and careers, these are young people driven by following their passions first – over what makes the most money.



**THIS IS A GROUP OF
YOUNG PEOPLE WHO
EMBRACE THE
PRESENT WHILST
BEING OPTIMISTIC
ABOUT THE FUTURE**

**TRUST YOUR
INSTINCTS**

Student, France, 13

**JUST DO SOMETHING THAT YOU
ENJOY AND MAKES YOU HAPPY
BECAUSE THEN IT WON'T FEEL
LIKE WORK AT ALL**







Student, USA, 15

**MY PARENTS TOLD ME
'YOU CAN BE ANYTHING YOU
WANT, WE SUPPORT YOU'**

Student, Turkey, 15

LED BY THEIR HEARTS & GUIDED BY THEIR HEADS: YOUNG PEOPLE ARE PUTTING PASSIONS BEFORE PROFITS

- Enjoyment and happiness are their chief drivers

						
Positive re: Present	95%	91%	84%	73%	81%	81%*
Positive re: Future	96%	96%	89%	74%	72%	82%*

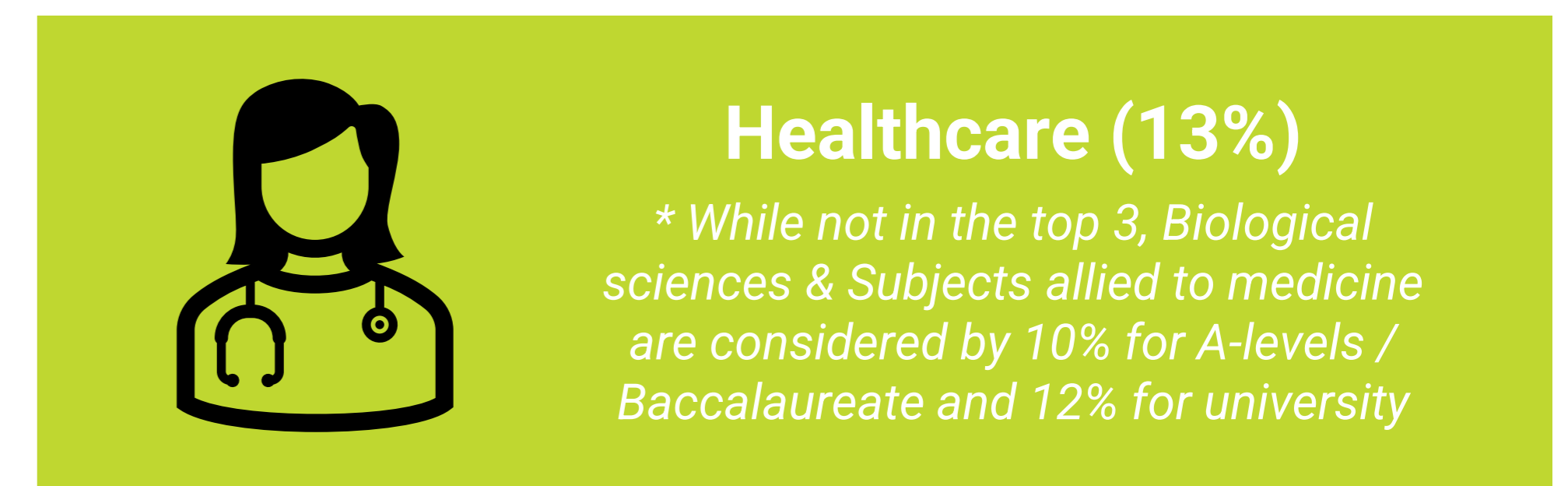
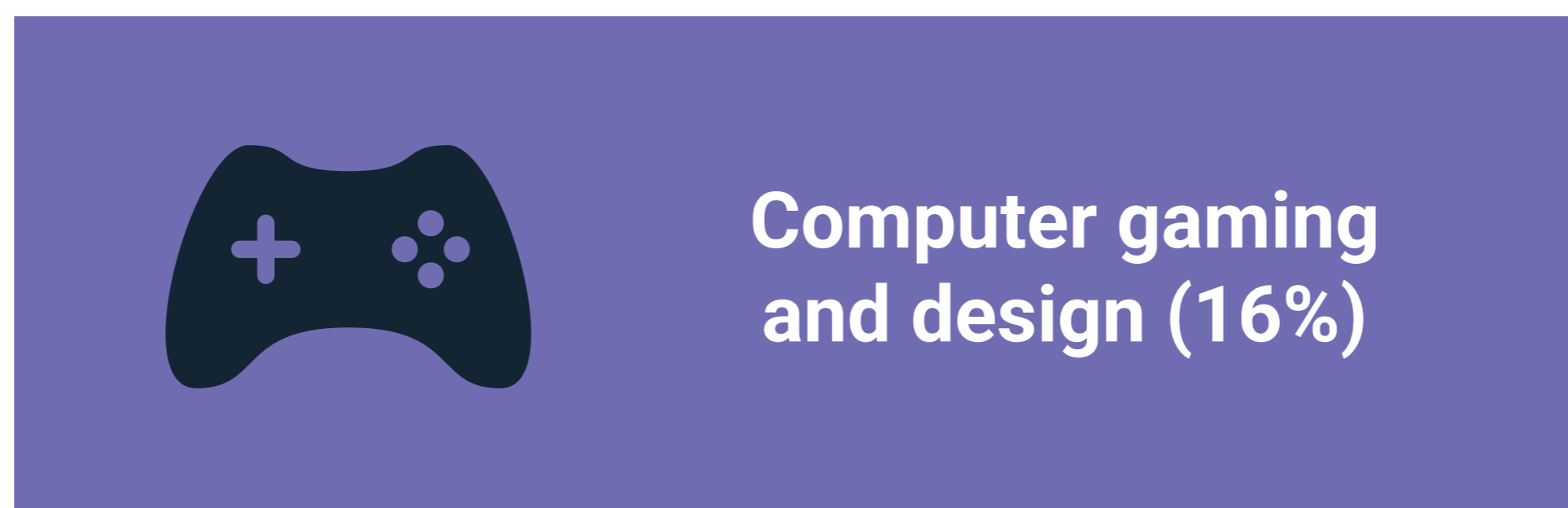
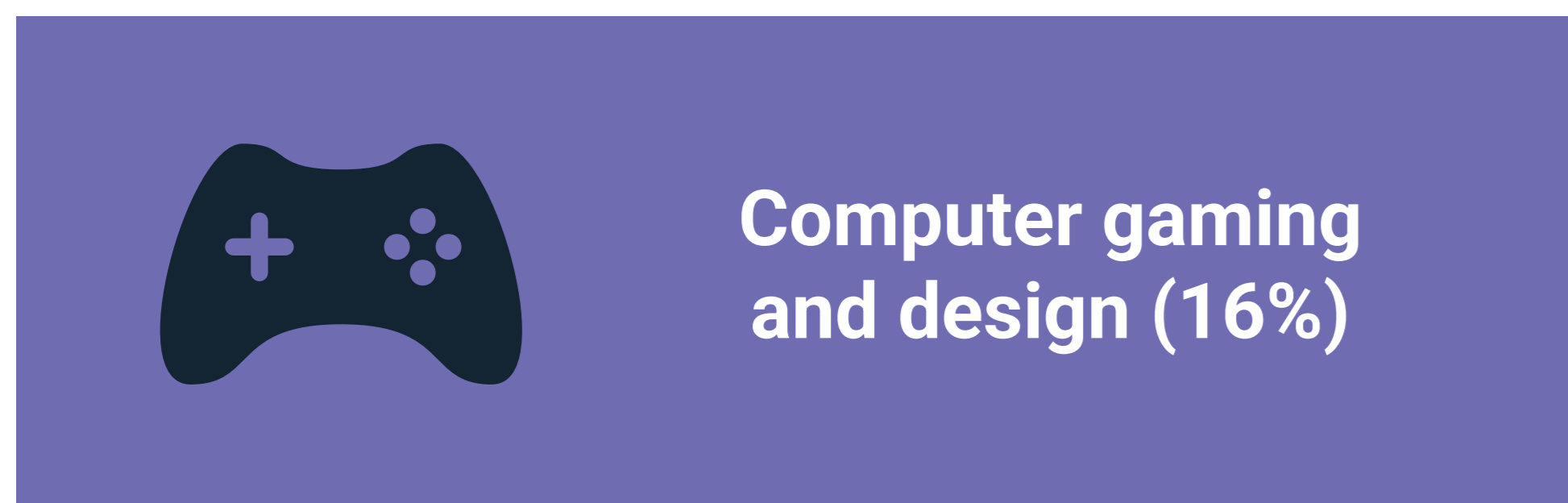
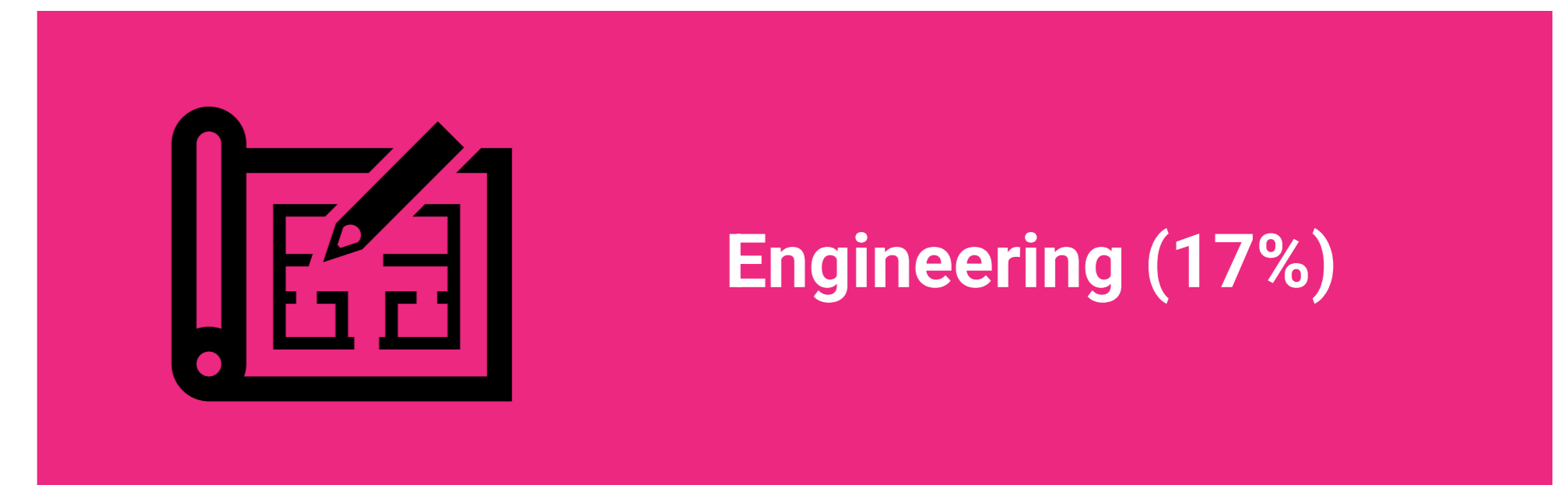
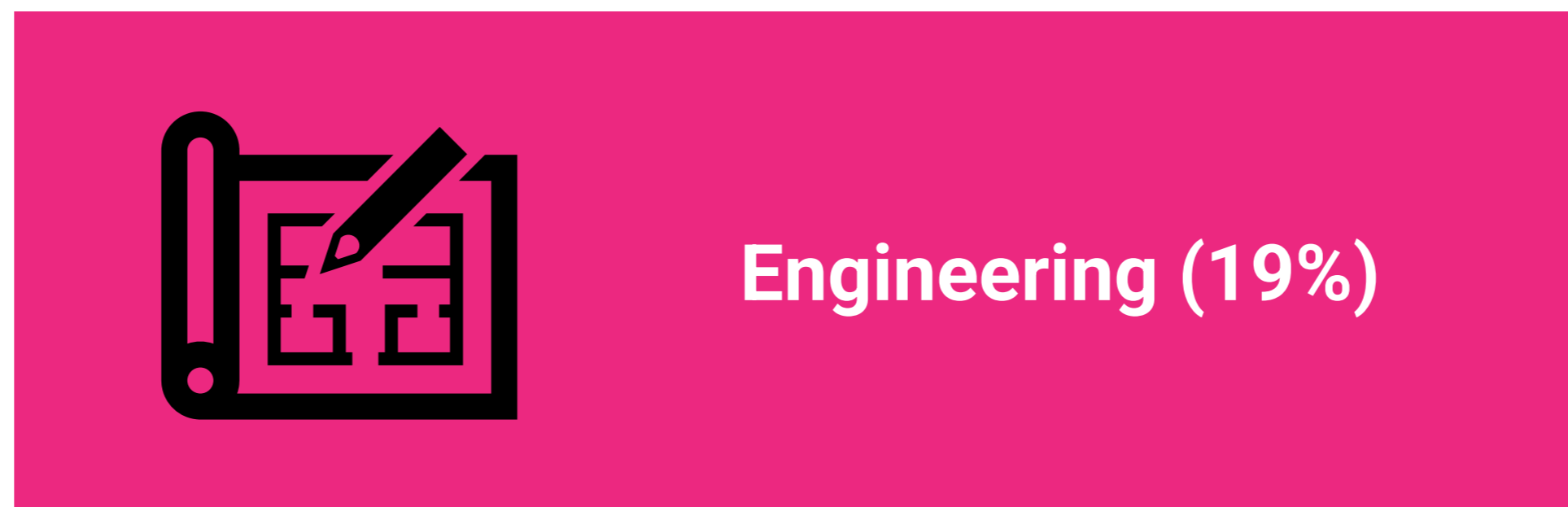
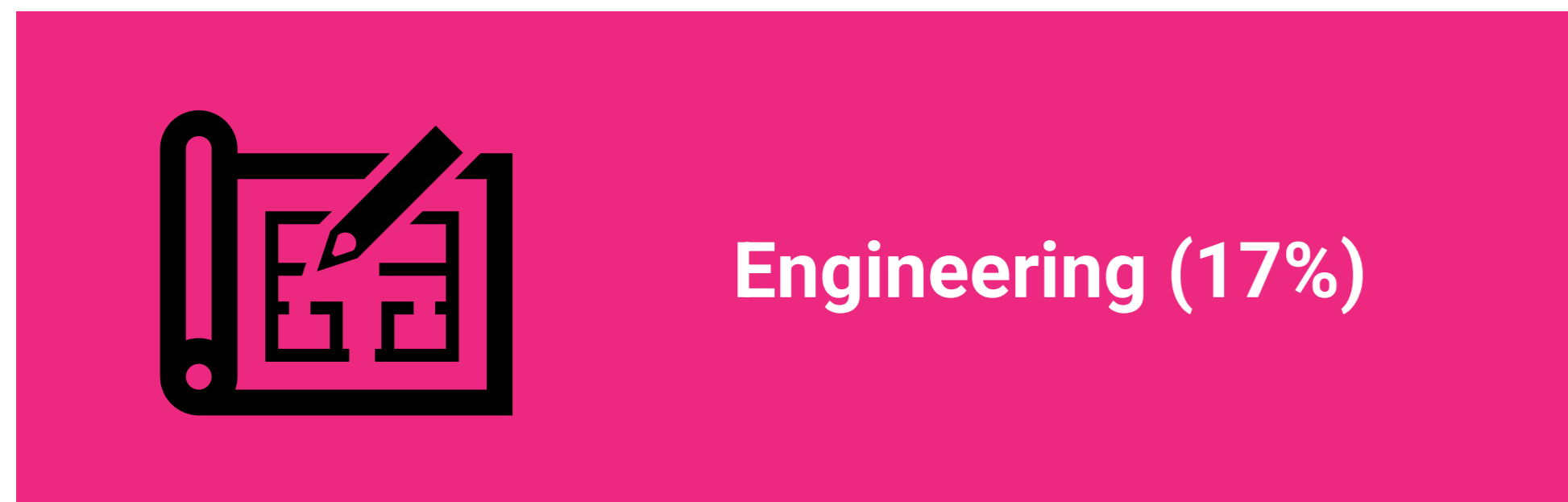
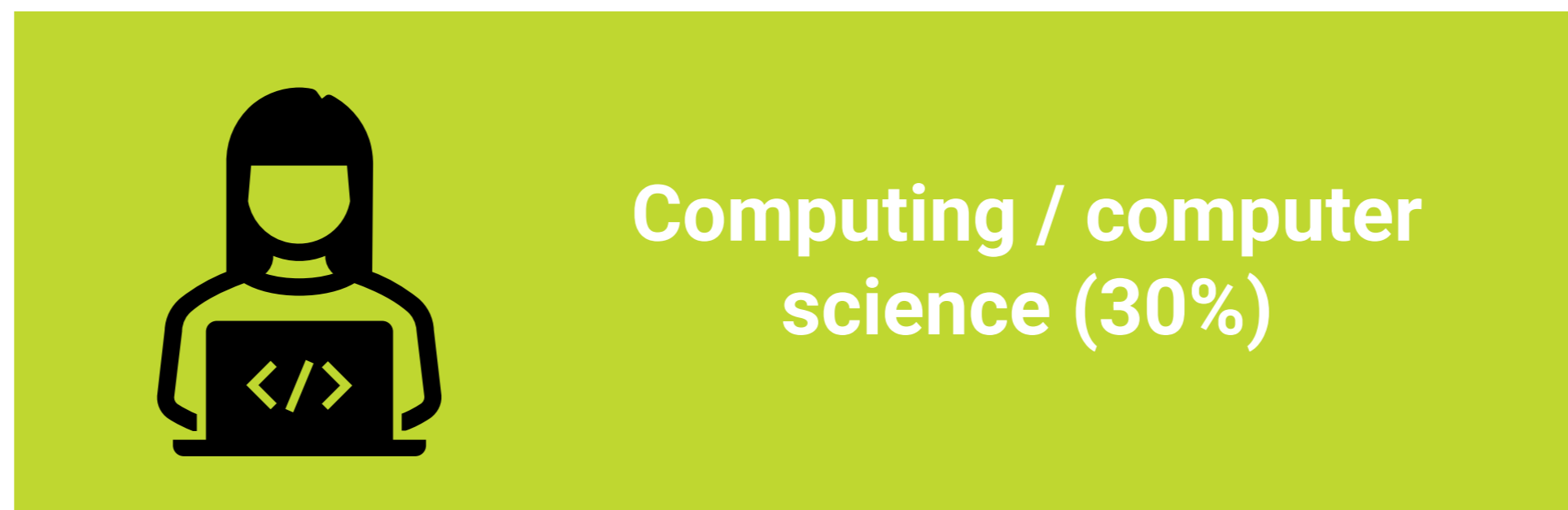
*Data taken from recent UK student survey commissioned by UCAS
B60 Overall, how do you feel about... Base: All (2,035)

STUDENTS LOOK TO FOLLOW THEIR PASSIONS AND INTERESTS FIRST OF ALL

Top subjects considered after the age of 16 (e.g. for A-levels, Baccalaureate, etc)

Top subjects considered for university

Top sectors for future careers



P10b What subject(s) would you consider studying after at school after the age of 16 (e.g. when you do A-levels, Baccalaureate, etc)? Base: Those who have an idea of what they want to study (1,916)
 S50 What subject(s) would you consider studying at university? Base: Those who are likely to apply to university (1,696)
 P20b Which of the following best describes the sector(s) in which you'd like to work in the future? Base: Those who have thought about their career plans (1,904)

THERE IS A STRONG CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDY INTENTIONS AND FUTURE CAREER PLANS

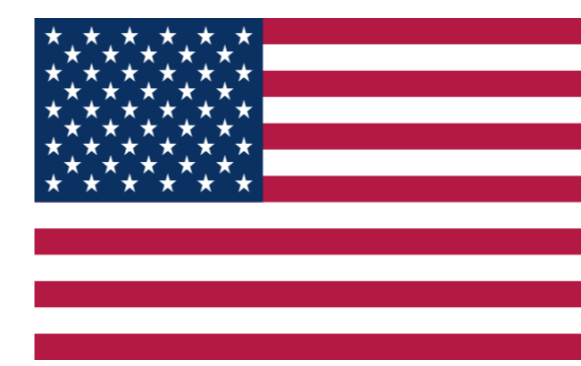
- When choosing a subject for university, they want it to be something they're interested in (60%), something they'll enjoy studying (56%), or that will help them pursue a career they're passionate about (55%).
- When it comes to their job, unsurprisingly, the same sentiments ring true – 58% are led by wanting a role that fundamentally interests them.
- IT and engineering are the two most popular sectors.



Chinese students are the **most likely** to have at least some idea about what they'd like to study in the future.



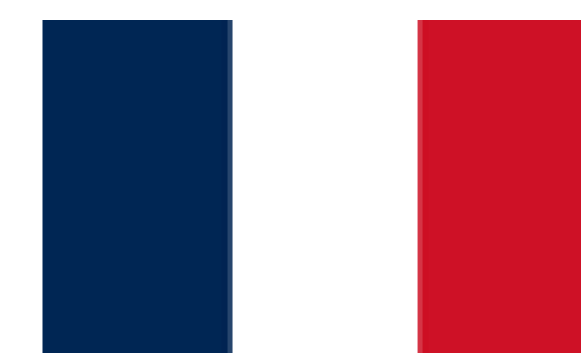
Indian students are the **most certain** about their future career, and most have begun researching study options.



American students are the **least likely** to have begun researching their further study options.



Turkish students are **most likely** to be certain about their future study plans.



And the French students are the **least certain** about their future study and career plans.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Empower young people to follow their dreams** with bright, positive comms that support their passionate approach and showcase how this mindset fits into life on your campus.
- **Tailor the type of content by nation** and recognise the subtle differences in motivations, priorities, and preparedness among students from different countries.
- **Don't forget to account for intra-country differences** as there are considerable differences in career interests based on the region a student lives in.



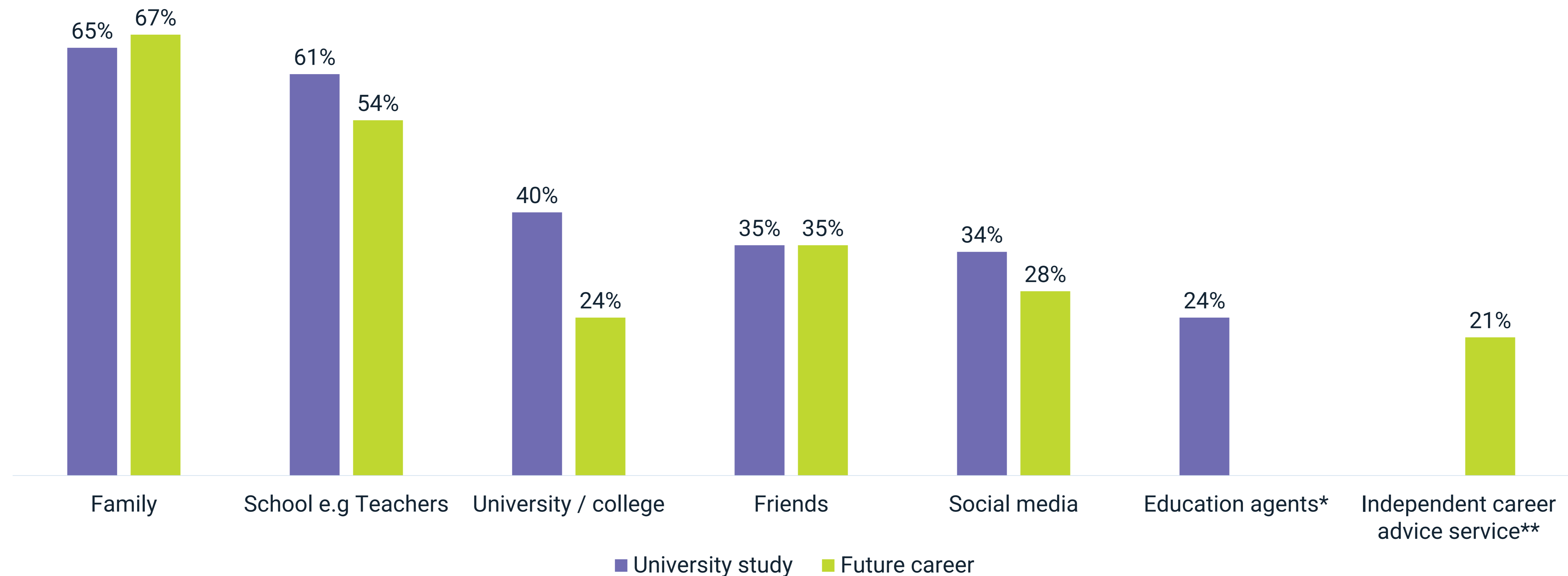
INFORMATION, INSPIRATION & INFLUENCE

When looking for support, students often look to family and teachers as key sources of advice.



DIGITAL RESEARCH, ANALOGUE REASSURANCE: THE ROLE OF INFLUENCERS IN MORE INFORMED DECISION-MAKING

Sources used for advice on university study and future careers

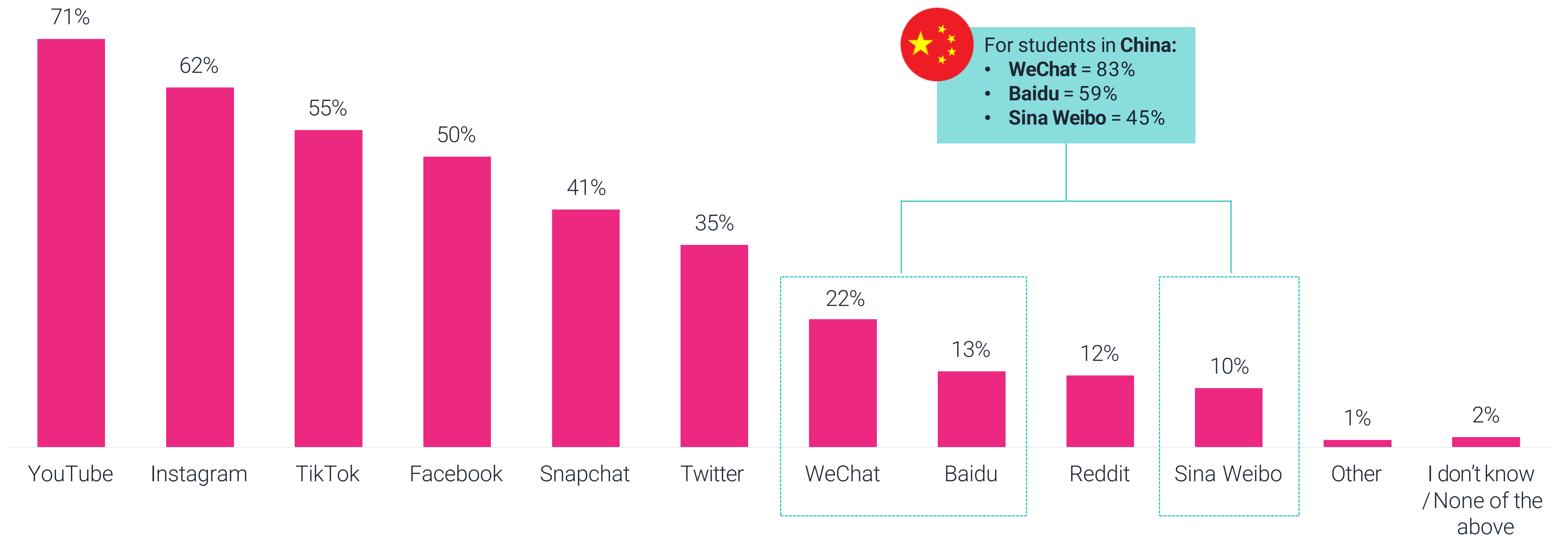


S70b Where do you look for advice on university study? Base: Those who have begun researching universities to some extent (1,646)

P60 Where do you go for advice on your future career? Base: Total (2,035)

THE DOMINANCE OF VIDEO PLATFORMS IN STUDENT PREFERENCES

- Nearly all students in our study use at least one social media channel for their research, and preference is heavily weighted towards platforms which prioritise video – with YouTube comfortably ahead of the pack.
- In China, students predominantly use WeChat, followed closely by Baidu and Douyin (the China-specific version of TikTok.)



M10. Which of the following social media channels do you use? Base: Total (2,035)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Connect and ally with valuable partners** such as family members and school staff who have the biggest say in supporting international students.
- **Play down the pressure** and offer support that does not overwhelm students. Emphasise the positive vested interest of parental guidance – whilst also empowering young people to make their own decisions.
- **Lead with video and video-first platforms** and make these the champion channels of your social media strategy.



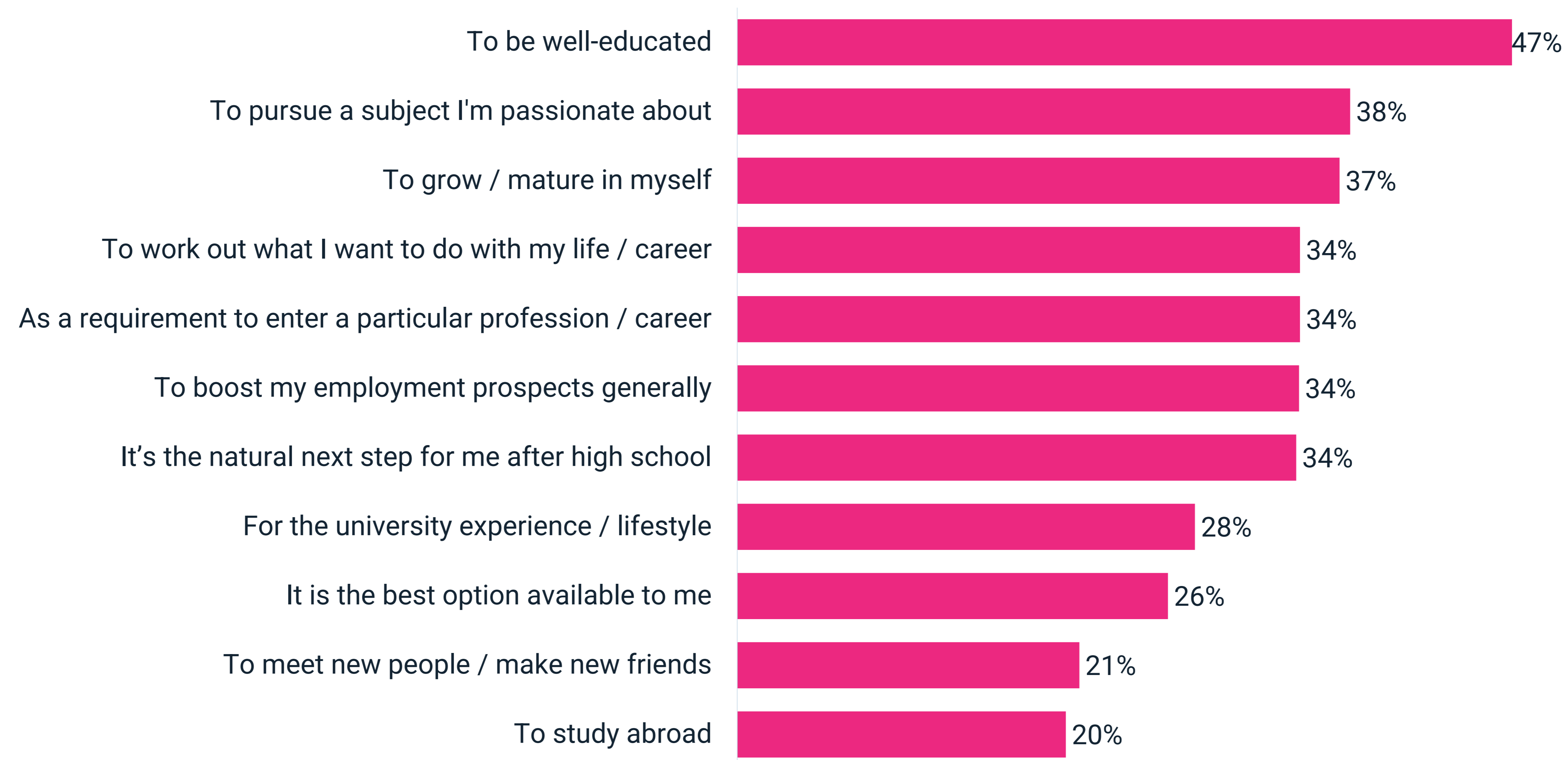
EARLY INTENTIONS OF FUTURE STUDIES

University rankings, styles of learning and facilities are key considerations in students' university choice.



WHAT MOTIVATES & MATTERS MOST? HOW TOMORROW'S STUDENTS ARE MAKING THEIR UNIVERSITY DECISIONS

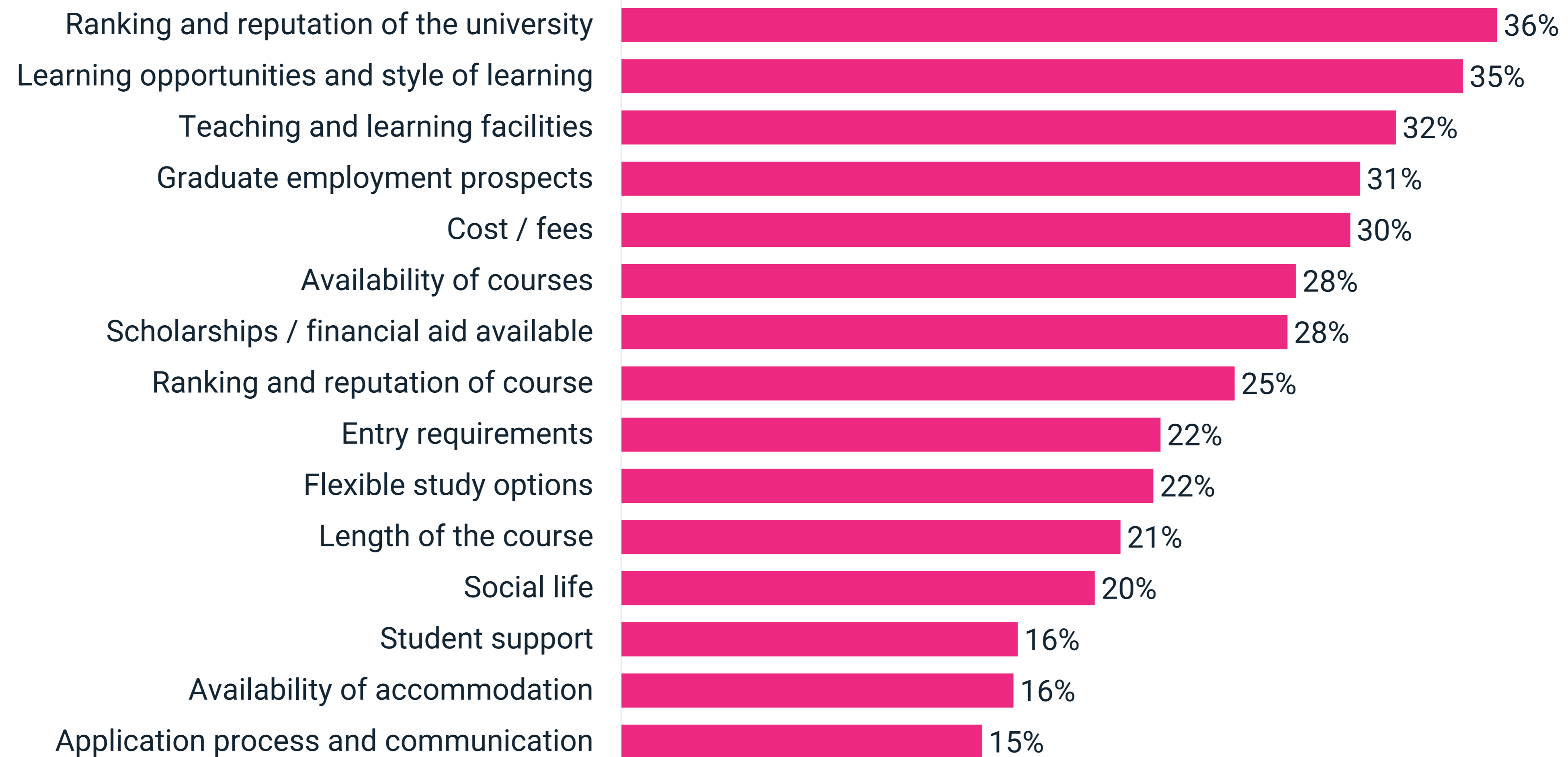
What are your main reasons for wanting to go to university?



S30. What are your main reasons for wanting to go to university? Base: Those who are likely to attend university in the future (1,696)

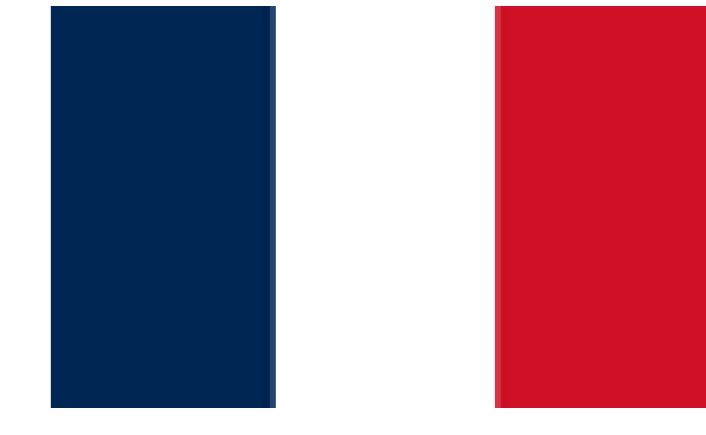
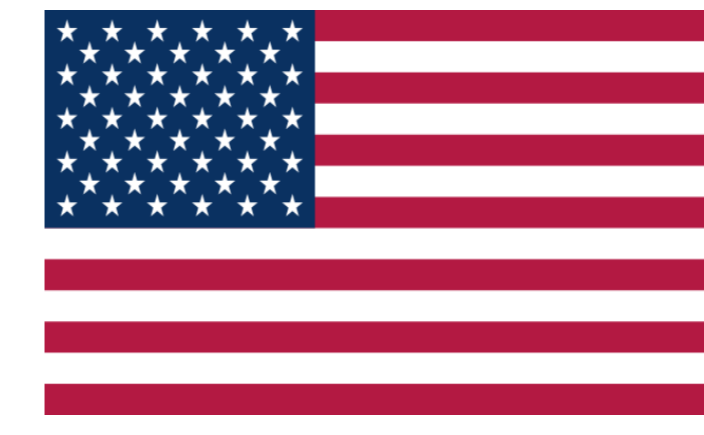
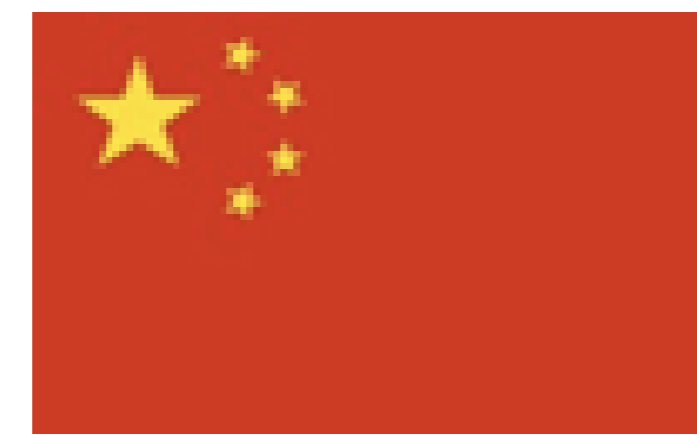
RANKING AND REPUTATION ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO UNIVERSITY CHOICE

What is important to you when choosing a university?



S85. What is important to you when choosing a university? (Select up to 5) Base: Those who are likely to attend university in the future (1,696)

REASONS FOR WANTING TO GO TO UNIVERSITY ARE DIVERSE



The main reason for going to university:

Becoming well-educated

To grow & mature in myself

Pursuing a subject passion

To enter a particular profession

Pursuing a subject passion

The main factor in choosing a university:

Ranking and reputation

Teaching and learning

Cost and fees

Ranking and reputation

Cost and fees

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Highlight the experience, not just the product:** international students understand the value of a degree, so don't waste resources on extolling its virtues. Instead, market the lifestyle factors or what makes your campus and offer unique.
- **But note that motivations vary massively** and there are incredibly different priorities and principles that should guide your geo-targeted conversion comms.
- **And don't get caught out by generalisations:** follow the data and ignore any preconceptions.



CHOOSING WHERE TO STUDY

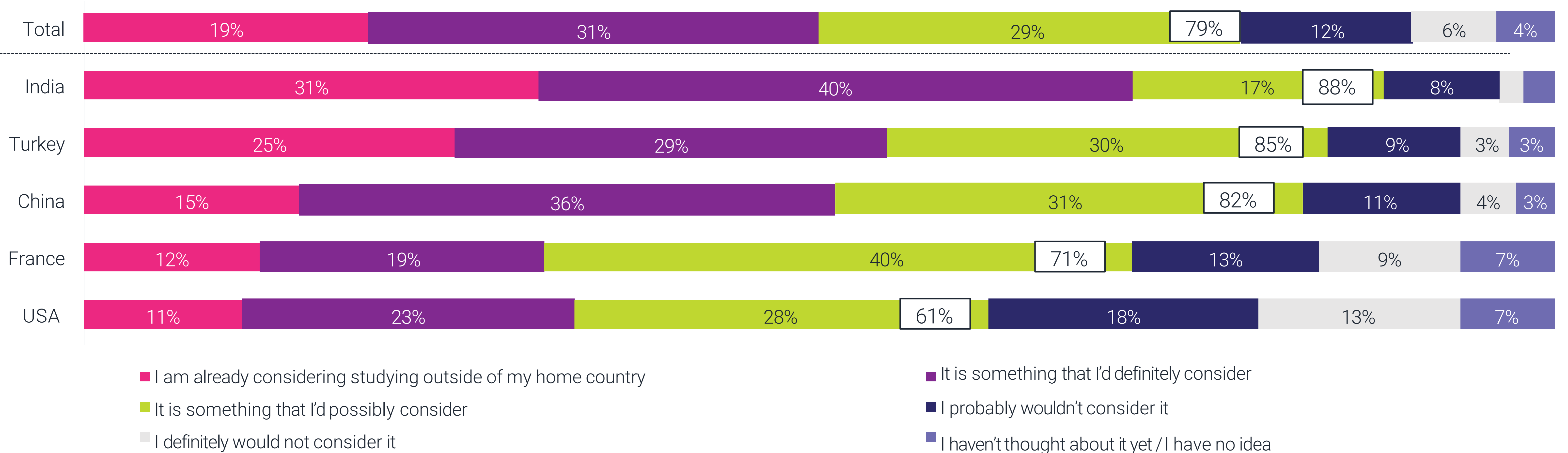
Receiving a high-quality education and enhancing future career opportunities are key drivers for this with the UK remaining one of the most popular study destinations.



STUDYING OVERSEAS IS AN AMBITION FOR ALMOST ALL AGES AND NATIONS

- But cost is the major obstacle, for almost 30%. There is similar trepidation around language barriers – and an unsettling lack of knowledge about the experience of studying abroad.

Is studying at a university outside of your home country something that you might consider?

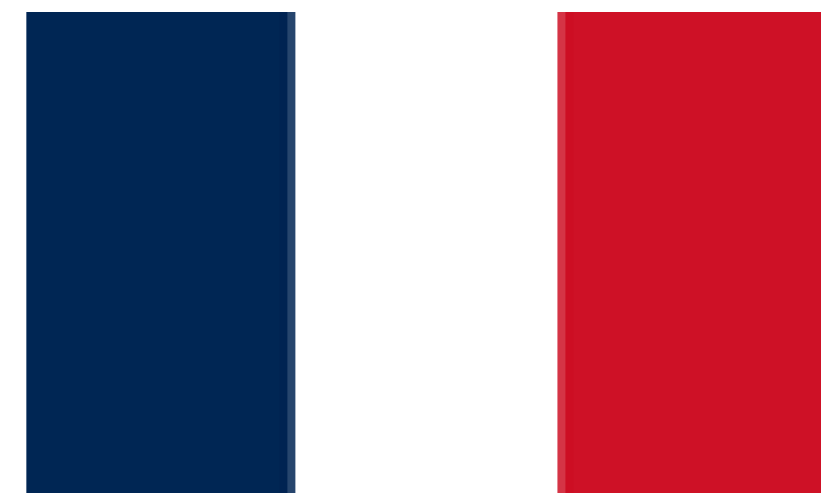


S90. Is studying at a university outside of your home country something that you might consider? Base: Those who are likely to attend university in the future (1,696)

DRIVERS BY COUNTRY



Most likely to study abroad



Most interested in language benefits



Most interested in quality education

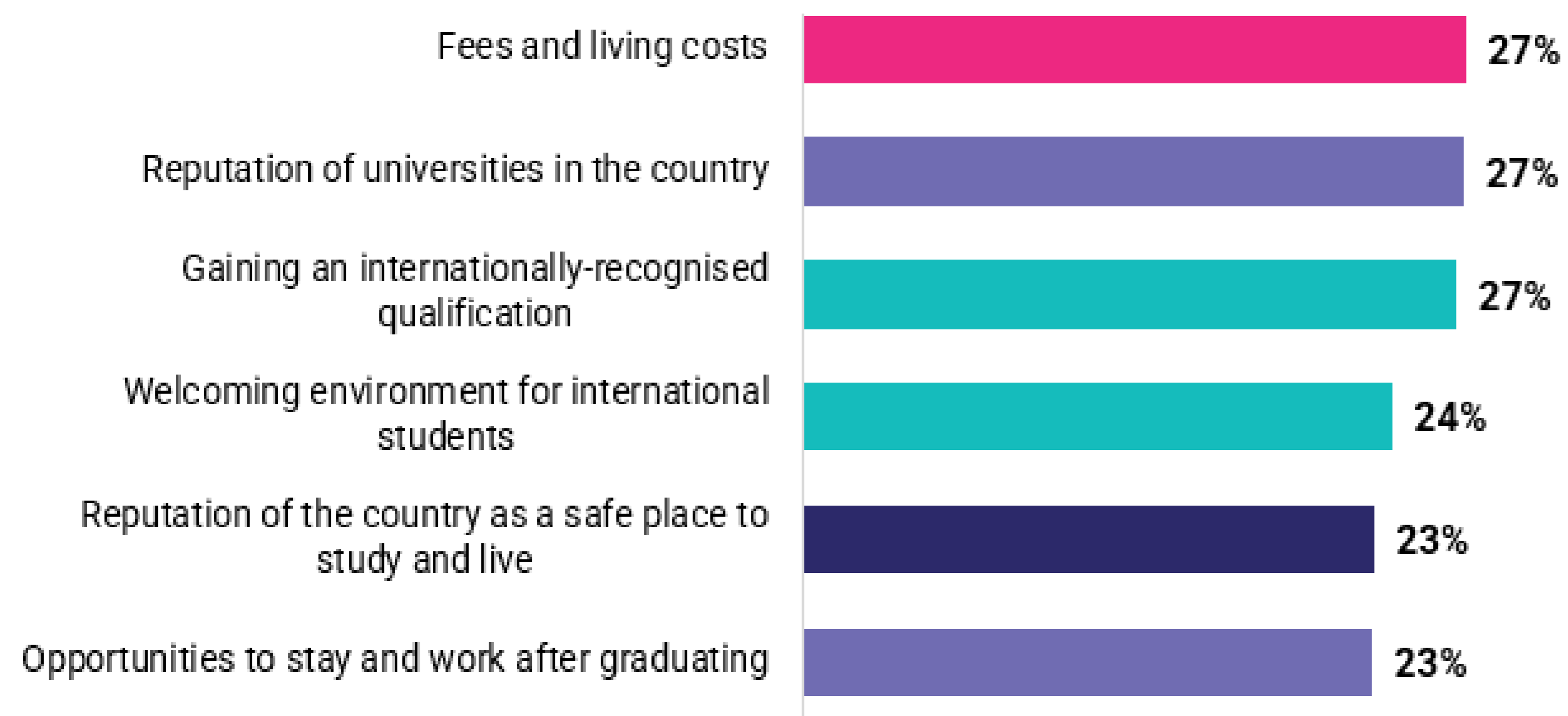


Most interested in life experience



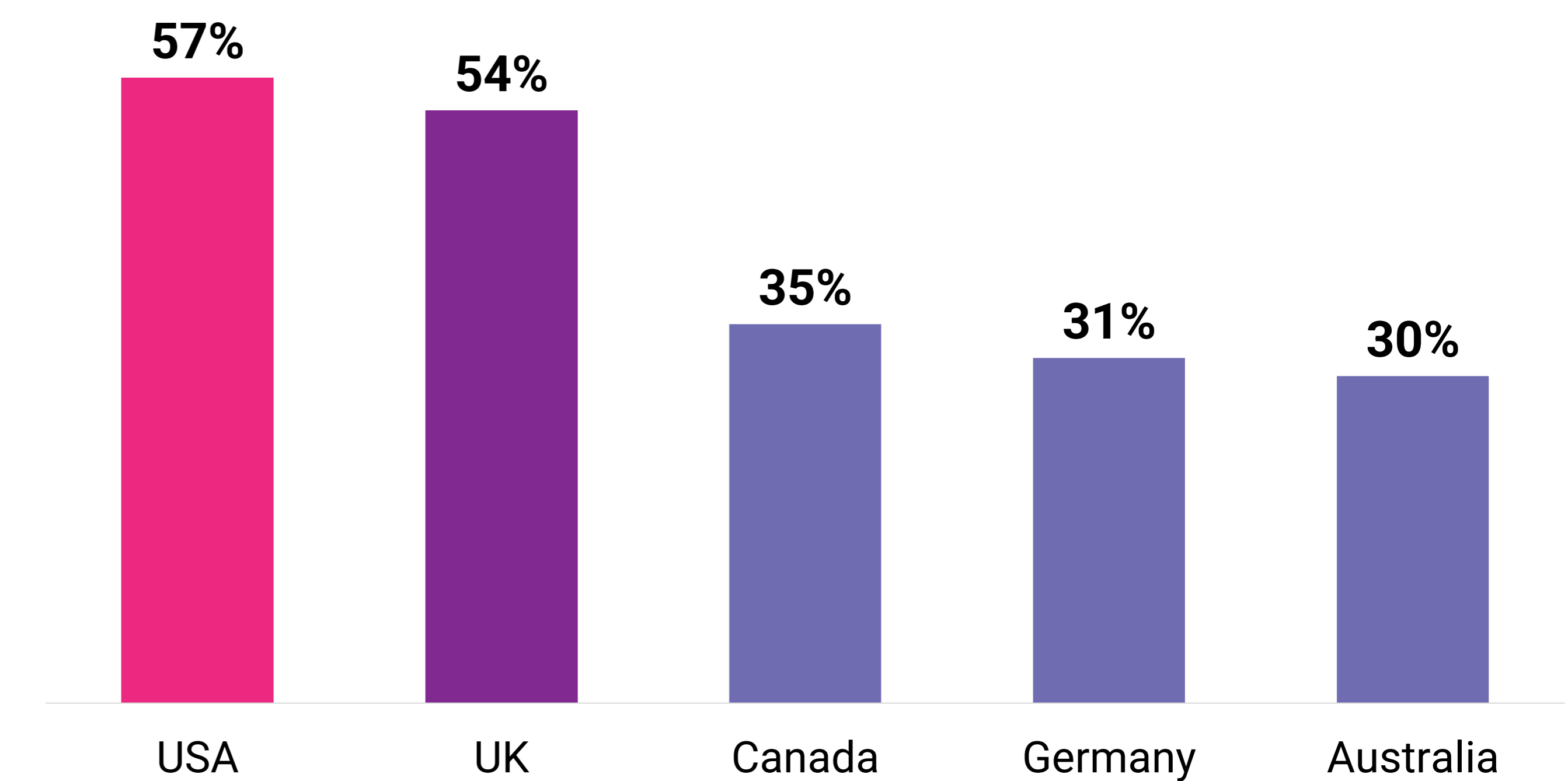
KEY FACTORS AND TOP DESTINATIONS WHEN CHOOSING WHERE TO STUDY ABROAD

What is most important to you in picking the country where you may study abroad?



S125. What is most important to you in picking the country where you may study abroad? Base: Those who would consider studying abroad (1,332)

Which, if any, of the following countries would you strongly consider as a potential study abroad location?



S120a. Which, if any, of the following countries would you strongly consider as a potential study abroad location? Base: Those who would consider studying abroad (1,332)

THE PUSH & PULL OF THE UK EXPERIENCE A DIVE INTO WHAT ATTRACTS INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS TO UK UNIVERSITIES



Learning environment
Diverse and vibrant culture
High quality and reputation
of its institutions.



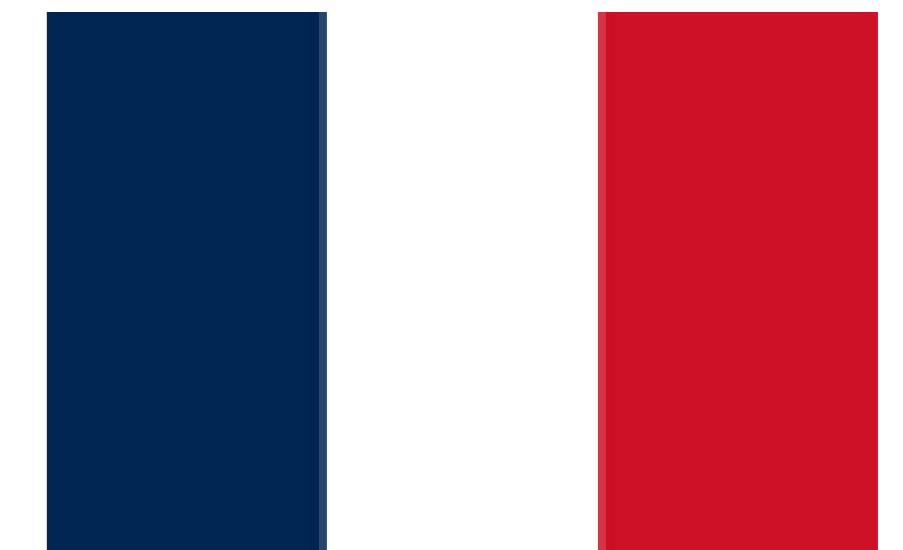
Reputation of UK universities
Quality of teaching and
facilities
Prestige associated with
studying in the UK
Enhanced career prospects.



Harmonious nature of
the cultures
Overall experience

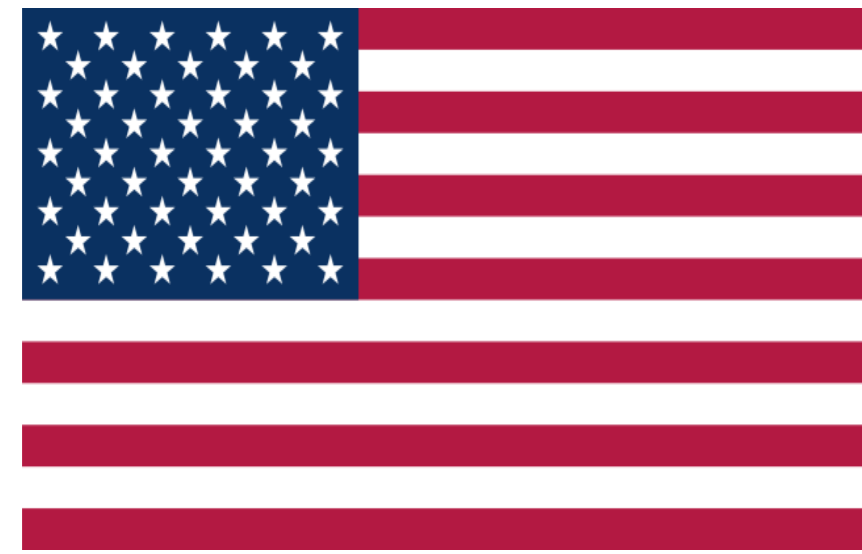


Quality of the
education
Personal development:
Academically and
language skills



Standard of education
in the UK

AND WHATEVER AGE, THERE ARE SOME UNDERSTANDABLY UNIVERSAL QUESTIONS THAT THEY WANT ANSWERS TO:



“What I would get out of it in the long term and how much it would cost.”

Student, USA, 15



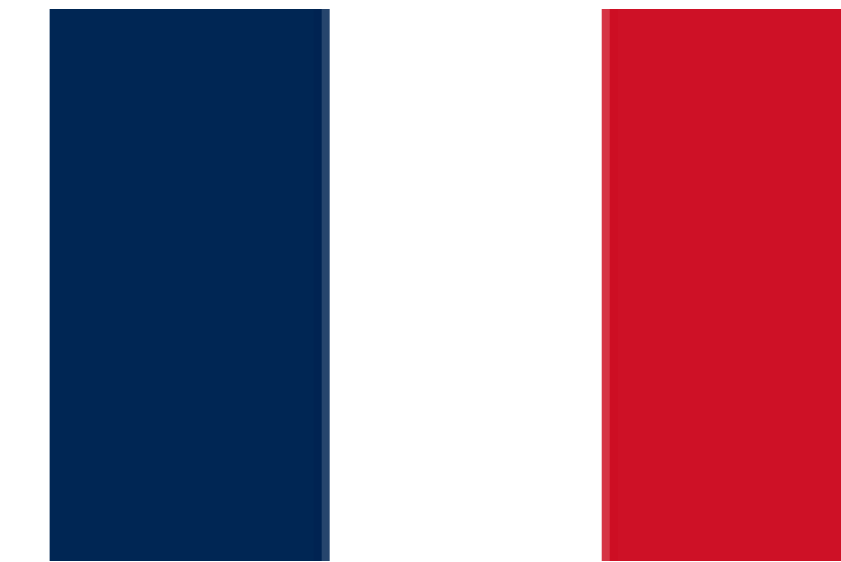
“Learn about the advantages of study abroad programs and which country and university is right for me”

Student, China, 13



“I would like to know how foreign students are treated there.”

Student, India, 15



“I'd like to know about the path of other French students who successfully studied abroad”

Student, France, 13



“To investigate whether studying abroad will be useful to find a job after graduation.”

Student, Turkey, 14

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Perception of UK education is a double-edged sword:** Provide clear, concise details on costs, available support, and examples of overseas student success.
- **Focus on your unique offer:** Localise content to showcase what makes your campus and city stand out.
- **Tailor by age:** Younger students value statistics like university performance; older students prioritise career prospects and cultural benefits.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Connecting with young people requires understanding cultural nuances and fostering relationships while they explore interests. In diverse markets like China and India, using current, relevant data is crucial for effective outreach.

Despite regional differences, some trends hold true across the board:

- This optimistic generation prioritises their passions, with many trusting their interests to guide their futures.
- Family and school staff are influential, as they remain the most trusted in-person advisors.
- Social media plays a vital role, particularly video platforms, which are increasingly important as students get older.
- The UK continues to be one of the most attractive destinations for overseas study.



THANK YOU & QUESTIONS

UCAS

