



On your radar: South Asia

Discover the motivations and preferences of 29,000 students from South Asia who are looking to study abroad.



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With more than a decade of experience in higher education, Juhi has supported thousands of students from across South Asia to achieve their study goals.

The QS perspective



“For many students from South Asia pursuing education abroad signifies embarking on a transformative journey, involving separation from family and their familiar cities and country. It is understandable that the safety and inclusiveness of a study destination takes on paramount significance.

As this report shows, many students from the region prioritise universities renowned for world-class teaching to ensure that their educational pursuits are truly worthwhile. Reputation and ranking are crucial because they provide assurance of academic excellence and open doors to better opportunities, both during their studies and in their future careers.

Students are increasingly exploring multiple options and they expect swift responses from universities to help them make an informed choice. It’s important that institutions are both proactive in their responses and set clear timelines and expectations for response times.

A significant number of candidates from South Asia are exploring opportunities to stay in the destination country after graduation. Whether this is possible is often determined by whether or not they are successful in securing full-time employment, underscoring the significance of choosing a university with a strong track record of graduate employment outcomes.

The rising cost of living is a growing concern. Economies in this region continue to grapple with high inflation and the after-effects of the pandemic. Scholarships and financial aid can substantially ease the burden of tuition fees and they are also a source of pride for students and their families.”

Key findings

from the 29,000 students in South Asia interested in studying abroad:

67%

say their biggest worry about studying in a different country is the cost of living followed by the availability of scholarships (59%).

51%

of respondents are now actively researching university sustainability efforts – and this rises to 55% for postgraduate research students.

44%

of South Asian students expect to receive notification of the outcome of their application within three days.

66%

expect to receive a full and personalised response to an enquiry within three days.

Most important factors when choosing a country to study in: It's safe and welcoming for international students (51%), the culture and lifestyle appeals to me (51%) and it offers high-quality teaching (48%).

Most important factors when choosing a university: It offers high-quality teaching (54%), it is welcoming to international students (54%), it has a good reputation as a place to study (44%) and it has well-ranked universities (44%).

The ability to connect with existing international students (58%) and information on work placements and links with industry (55%) are the most influential factors for decision making.

Recommendations

- Ensure that messaging around affordability, scholarships and part-time work opportunities are prominent across all your marketing channels and consider reviewing your financial support offer.
- Emphasise the credentials which showcase strong sustainability efforts. Now that students are increasingly seeking information about sustainability at universities, it's essential that this information is clear and easy to find.
- Review the way your information about the international student experience is presented to provide much-needed reassurance to concerned students that they'll be welcomed, feel safe and enjoy a varied cultural experience.
- Provide authentic student-led content and communications, to show prospective students the reality of international student experiences. Be sure to highlight links to industry and work placement opportunities.

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

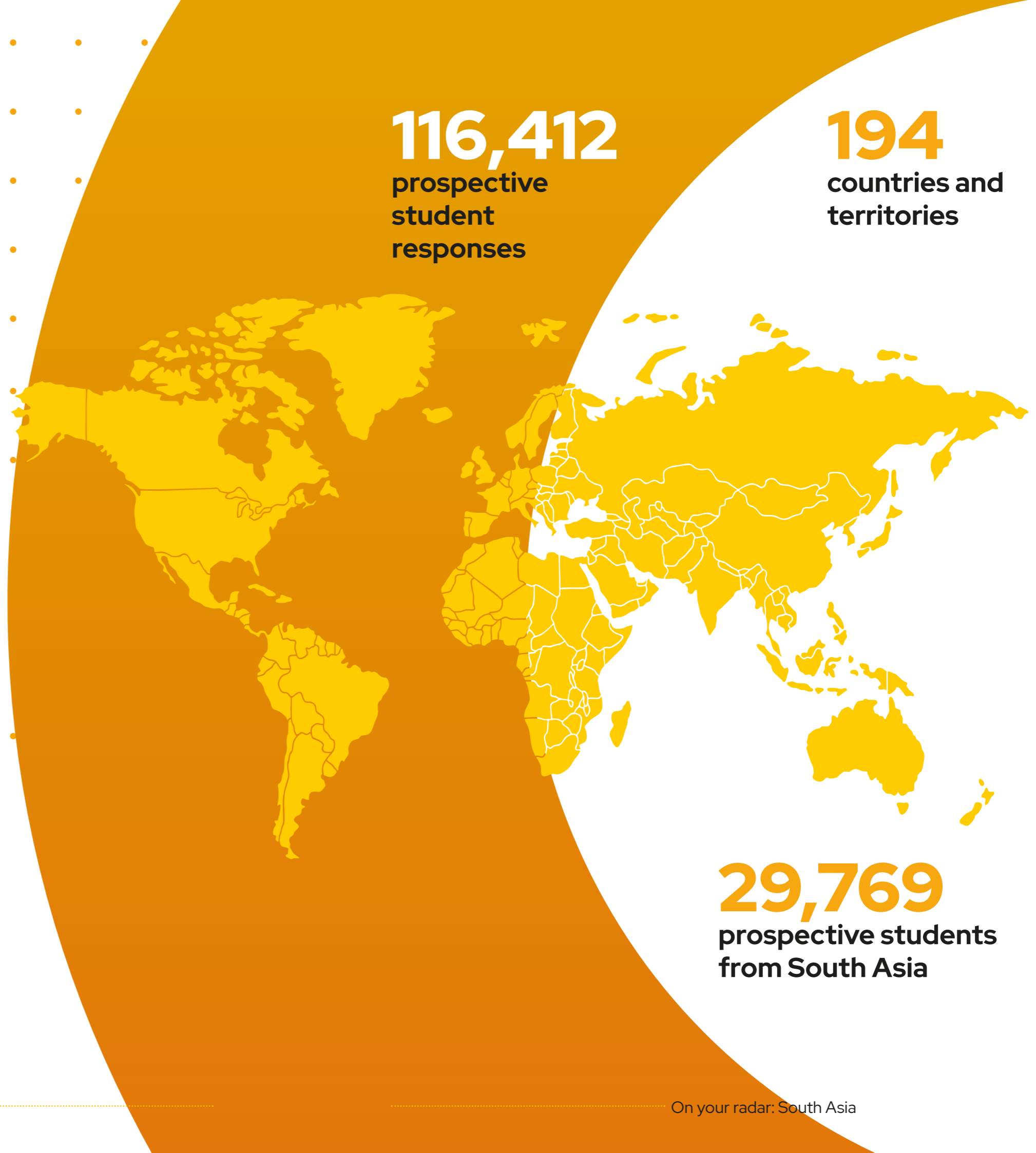
- Understand and fulfil evolving student priorities in the areas that matter most to them like employability and sustainability.
- Identify growth opportunities.
- Refine your brand positioning and showcase your differentiators.

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

29,769
prospective students
from South Asia





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What do prospective students in South Asia want and expect from universities?

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.



Funding and affordability

Affordability is the biggest concern about studying abroad for students from South Asia, with **67%** saying the cost of living was their greatest worry. This rises to **76%** of respondents from Sri Lanka, **70%** for those from India and **63%** for those from Pakistan. The second biggest worry on average for respondents across the region was the availability of scholarships (**59%**) - in Pakistan this was the number one concern (**66%**).

38% of respondents were planning to fund the cost of their tuition fees through support from parents and family. This has increased from **32%** in 2021, with the latest data showing that **24%** hope to successfully apply for a university scholarship, **16%** plan to apply for a loan and **11%** will use their salary or savings. There is considerable variation in reliance on university scholarships across global regions with South Asia second to Africa in dependency on scholarships: East Asia (**6%**), South East Asia (**19%**) and Africa (**29%**).

When choosing a town or city to study in, affordability is also a key factor. **59%** said being able to work while studying was an important influence along with the cost of living (**58%**) and affordable rental accommodation (**56%**). Working alongside studying rose to **66%** for respondents from Bhutan and **65%** for students from Sri Lanka.

Student views

I chose the UK among many universities across the world because of its extensive network of different art colleges, which offers the chance to get industry insights and discuss ideas through the diversity of students being enrolled."
A student from India

"According to what I have heard, the UK is the most astonishing destination for me as it offers a multicultural environment along with excellent education infrastructure. Also the shorter duration of courses will allow me to attain so much knowledge in a sufficient amount of time along with reducing tuition and accommodation costs."
A student from India

Universities in Australia are highly ranked with a range of options to choose preferred courses. Above all living expenses and course fees are affordable to me."
A student from Bhutan



Employability and career aspirations

58% of respondents from South Asia say that a high graduate employability rate is the most important consideration when thinking of graduate outcomes.

The second most important factor is how quickly students find employment after graduating from their course (50%). A high student satisfaction score (46%), a high rate of students going into their preferred industry (41%) and a high rate of students going to their preferred employer (43%) also feature among the most important considerations.

When asked what is most useful when making a decision about where to study, 55% of respondents said information on work placements and links to industry. South Asia is the region where this messaging matters most, compared to Africa (53%), Latin America (46%), Middle East (45%) and Central Asia (38%). For India, this factor was even more important and cited by 61% of respondents.



Top three career considerations when choosing a university:



63%

It allows me to learn new skills



59%

It will give me international experience



56%

It will help me to build a professional network

Spotlight on post-study work and employability

70%

of respondents in South Asia said that the ease of attaining a post-study work visa was a very important or extremely important factor when deciding which country to study in.

20%

of prospective students in South Asia intend to return home immediately after completing their studies.

51%

felt a clear path to permanent residency on completion of their course was very or extremely important to their choice of country.

51%

hope to stay in their country of study (between one and six years) with 13% hoping to stay permanently.

Student views



"World-class degrees from UK universities help you to prepare and succeed in your career. You enjoy a higher standard of education with institutions which rank among the best in the world and are more likely to secure post-study work opportunities through the new graduate route."

A student from India



"Compared to my home country, Australia is far more advanced in almost everything so by studying in Australia I can take advantage of those advanced technologies in enhancing my skills and knowledge."

A student from Bhutan



"It's comparatively easy to get a work permit and residence permit after completing an undergraduate course. And above all, Canada is a country full of economic prospects and job opportunities."

A student from Bangladesh

High-quality teaching

56% of respondents from South Asia said that a course offering high-quality teaching was the most important factor when choosing a course. It was also among the top three most important factors for choice of country and university.

Teaching quality is less of an influencing factor in South Asia than other regions: Latin America (67%), Middle East (62%) and Central Asia (65%). However in India, respondents cited high-quality teaching more than the average across the region in their choice of course at 64%.

Interest in online learning has reduced since 2021. It is likely that the global pandemic caused many to temporarily take a different view of online study while this was the only available option. Now that the worry and restrictions of COVID-19 have subsided, many are keen to return to the experience of being on campus and creating connections with fellow students. It's worth noting that the number of those who are extremely interested in online learning has remained quite consistent over the past three years, with those very interested falling from 10% in 2021 to 8% in 2023 and those extremely interested falling from 5% in 2021 to 4% in 2023.



Top six most important factors when assessing a university's teaching quality



63%

Up-to-date technology



59%

The university is ranked well overall in independent ratings



59%

The university has received recognition of its teaching quality via a countrywide measurement scheme



57%

The university's teaching staff



56%

A high graduate employment rate



56%

The university organises work placements as part of its courses



Spotlight on teaching

The ability to study while working is the main reason given for why online study could be a good choice (70% of respondents), followed by the convenience of studying from any location (69%) and flexibility (67%).

South Asia was among the regions where lower numbers of respondents were 'extremely interested' in online study at 4%, compared to 8% in Latin America and the Caribbean, 5% in Africa and 5% in the Middle East.

80% of those who are not interested in online study said that this was because they wanted to access the facilities of a university.

Environmental sustainability

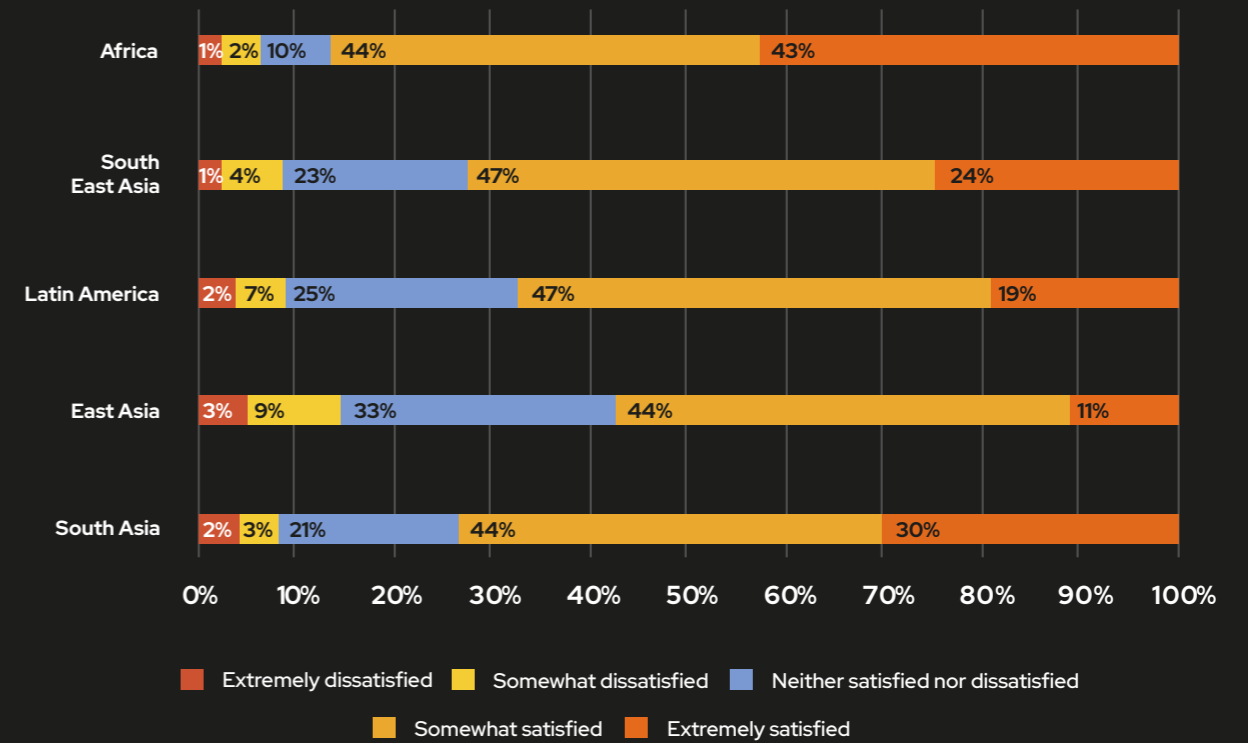
51% of prospective students in South Asia are actively researching universities' environmental sustainability strategy and efforts.

English language course students and postgraduate research students in the region are the most likely to research an institution's environmental sustainability (55%). Proactive research on environmental sustainability is significantly higher than the global average at every study level: postgraduate research students (44%), postgraduate taught students (42%), undergraduate students (37%) and foundation students (36%).

74% of those in the region who researched the level of environmental action being taken by universities say they are somewhat or extremely satisfied with the efforts being made, with 5% extremely or somewhat dissatisfied.

In 2022, 92% of respondents from South Asia said they felt universities were somewhat or very environmentally friendly. A fifth of respondents said they didn't know if universities could do more to be environmentally friendly. It is notable that 12 months later, over half of students are now actively researching an institution's environmental sustainability credentials.

For the institutions you have researched, were you satisfied with the level of environmental action from these institutions?



Student views



"The university placed first overall worldwide and first in Australia in a prestigious annual ranking, which assesses universities on their commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The rankings are based on universities' teaching, research, outreach and stewardship."

Student from India



"Environment is the foundation and support of human existence and survival and the guarantee of sustainable human development; environmental protection has undoubtedly become a common understanding and development strategy of all countries of the world."

Student from Pakistan



"While the level of satisfaction with environmental action can be subjective, it is clear that there is growing awareness of the importance of addressing environmental issues and a need for continued efforts in this area."

Student from India

Spotlight on environmental sustainability



Students from Bangladesh are the most likely in the region to be actively researching environmental sustainability strategies or initiatives, with Bhutan and The Maldives the least likely.



Those interested in Geographical and Environmental studies and Architecture, Building and Planning are the most likely to research a university's environmental sustainability.



The most important social responsibility actions which respondents felt universities could take were facilitating participation between students and the local community (67%) and making efforts to create a diverse student and staff community (65%).

Preferred communications and channels

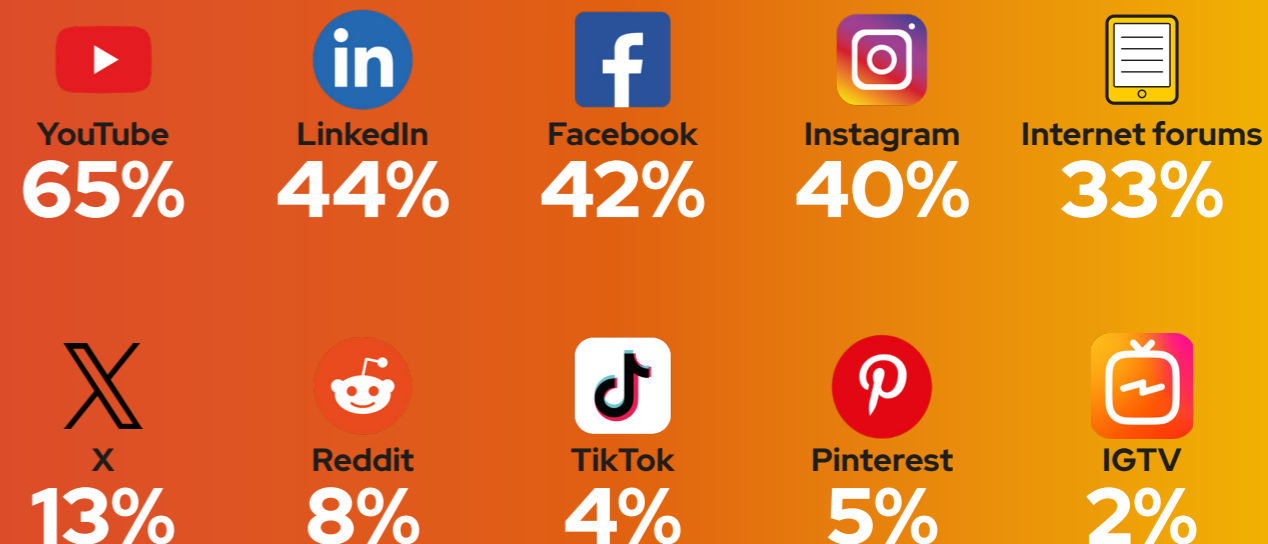
66% of prospective students from South Asia want a personal and complete response to an enquiry within three days.

Only 53% said that they received a personal and complete response from a university within three days last time they asked a question. This shows that there is a significant gap between the speed and quality of communication which students expect and what universities are currently able to deliver. Institutions looking to increase student numbers must be prepared to manage higher enquiry and application numbers – without compromising on quality and personalisation.



Spotlight on communications and channels

Top ten social channels for students in South Asia when making choices about where to study abroad



The use of TikTok as a channel for university research is growing in South Asia, increasing from 2% in 2022 to 4% in 2023. For undergraduate students, it's 6% and usage is lowest in India where only 1% say they are using the channel in this way.

86% of respondents say they want to hear from universities via email, followed by WhatsApp (67%), a phone call (38%) and text message (25%).

45% say that it's important to them that the person they're speaking to about their enquiry or application speaks to them in their preferred language.

44% expect to receive notification of the outcome of their application within three days.

Perceptions of studying abroad

The cost of living is the major concern among 67% of respondents from South Asia when asked about their biggest worry about studying in a different country. Availability of scholarships (59%), getting a job (53%) and finding accommodation (50%) were also concerns.

Messages around scholarships, part-time work opportunities and careers support are key when engaging with students from the region. It's also important to ensure that the breadth of support services available is made clear so prospective students know there is help available to find accommodation and a job.

Artistic 19% Modern 47% Vibrant 29%
 Welcoming 48% Safe 45%
 Clean 40% Beautiful 55%
 Affordable 27% Exciting 40%

What are the most important things when choosing a country to study in?



54%

It has universities with high-quality teaching



54%

It is welcoming to international students



44%

It has well-ranked universities



44%

It has a good reputation as a place to study

Student views



"The UK is renowned for having the most prestigious universities around the world. The UK is popular for its academic excellence and the quality of education. The country has a multi-cultural atmosphere and is very much international student friendly."
Student from India



"It is my dream to study in the US so that I can get more exposure to people from different parts of the world."
Student from India



"I am interested in studying in Australia because of the reputation of Australian universities and the good part-time job opportunities available to help cover education expenses."
Student from Pakistan

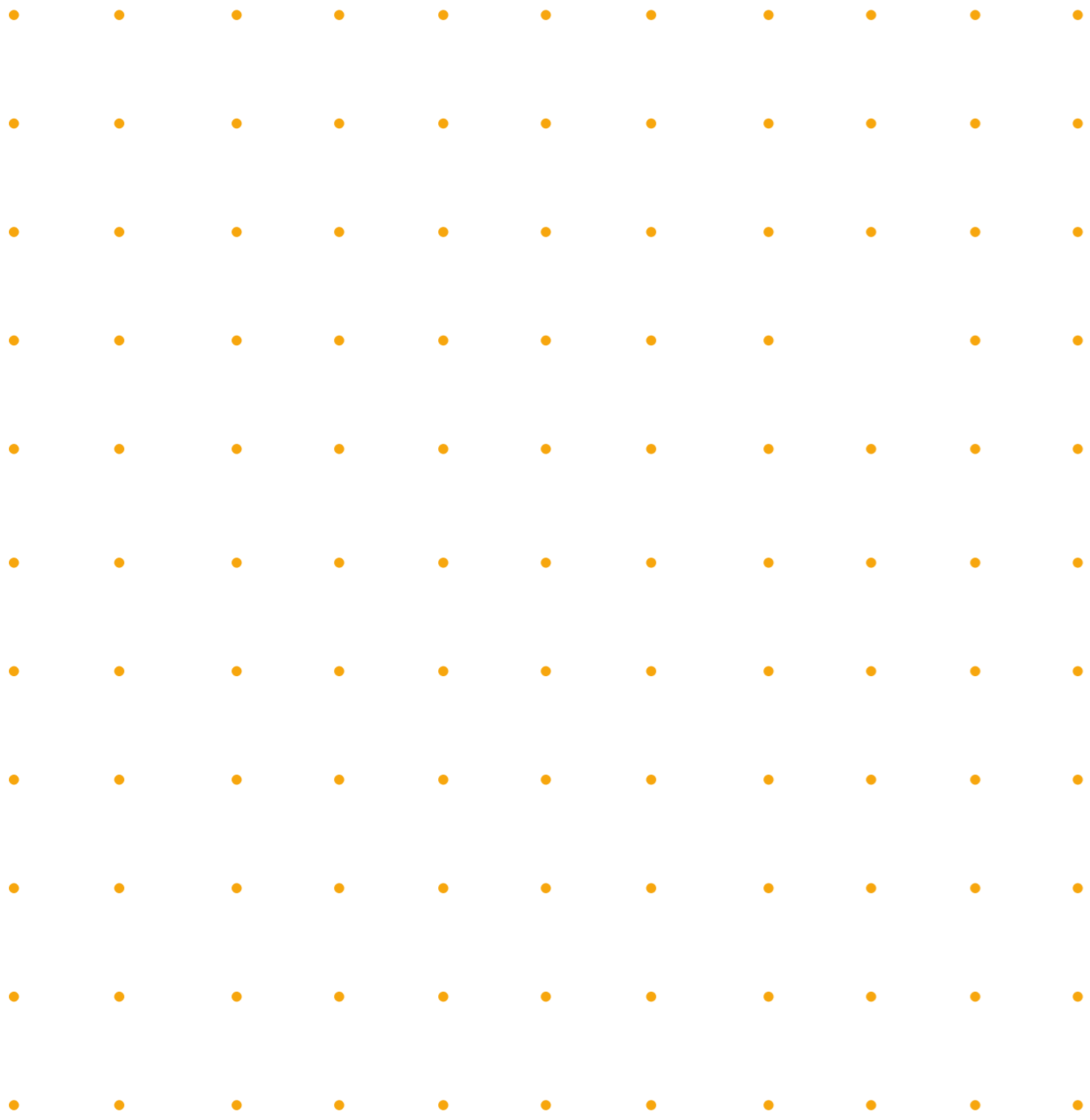


"I'm interested in studying in Australia due to its high-quality education system and strong reputation for research and innovation. The diverse and multicultural society, the unique natural beauty, and the good quality of life also appeal to me."
Student from Nepal



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.



Appendix

Demographic of survey respondents - 33



QS International Student Survey 2023

Demographic breakdown of
South Asia respondents

Bangladesh
Bhutan
India
The Maldives
Nepal
Pakistan
Sri Lanka

Gender

37%
female

57%
male

6%
prefer not to say or
to self-describe

Age

21%
17-20

32%
21-24

34%
25-31

13%
32 or older

Funding

49%
Self-funded

16%
Loan

28%
Scholarship

6%
Not sure
or other

Study level

2%
Foundation or
vocational

27%
Undergraduate

50%
Postgraduate taught

20%
Postgraduate
research

Main subjects of interest

25%
Business and
management

17%
Engineering and
technology

5%
Social sciences

13%
Computing

5%
Subjects allied
to medicine

4%
Medicine and dentistry

Household income

42%
Less than \$10,000 USD

17%
\$10,000-25,000 USD

7%
Over \$25,000 -
\$50,000 USD

3%
Over \$50,000 -
\$75,000 USD

4%
Over \$75,000 USD

29%
Don't know or prefer
not to say



Want to delve deeper into what your future students think?

We provide bespoke reports for institutions that 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.

