

This snapshot updates #39. These COVID-19 Analytical Snapshots are designed to capture the latest research, information and analysis in a fast-moving environment. Topics will be repeated from time to time as analysis develops. If you have an item to include, please email us at research@iom.int.



New research & analysis on international students & COVID

[Commentary: COVID-19 Pandemic and Higher Education: International Mobility and Students' Social Protection](#) by Başak Bilecen

[International Student Mobility and the Impact of the Pandemic](#) by Simon Mercado

[How COVID-19 is Impacting Prospective International Students Across the Globe](#) by Quacquarelli Symonds (QS)

[Internationalisation and COVID-19—Challenges and Lessons](#) by Maina Waruru

[The Experience of International Students Before and During COVID-19](#) by Alan Morris, Catherine Hastings, Shaun Wilson, Emma Mitchell, Gaby Ramia and Charlotte Overgaard

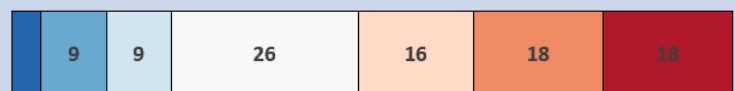
Some of the most popular destinations for internationals study, including [the United States and the United Kingdom](#), also happen to face some of the [highest caseloads of COVID-19](#). Pandemic-related mobility restrictions have forced [international students and universities to reconsider academic plans](#). Here are a few of the recent mobility-related policy decisions which students are facing:

- ⇒ United States officials sought to enforce a policy to [deport international students enrolled in online-only courses](#). The ensuing backlash—from universities, tech companies and subnational governments—forced federal officials to reverse course.
- ⇒ [Canada](#) may begin admitting international students in September 2020.
- ⇒ Japan [partially lifted](#) restrictions on international student entry.
- ⇒ While [New Zealand](#) remains closed to international students, [Australia](#) has initiated a [pilot programme](#).

Perceptions of International Students

According to [Study Portals](#), surveys found [increasing numbers of bachelor's-level students](#) making the decision to go to a different country than previously arranged or to study in their own country. Longitudinal surveys show that universities in the United States have begun reporting [substantial declines](#) in applications from international students (see figure).

How did international student application numbers for academic year 2020/21 compare to the previous year?



- Substantial increase
- Slight increase
- Slight decline
- Substantial decline
- Some increase
- About the same as last year
- Some decline

Figure note: Per cent of responses. Source: [IIE 2020](#)



International students lacking access to basic needs

New evidence suggests that international students may be “[disproportionately impoverished](#)” by the immediate and policy effects of the pandemic.

For example, [survey results of international students](#) in Australia revealed that substantial housing insecurity even before the pandemic hit. In a follow-up survey published in July 2020, 33% of students professed skipping some meals in order to pay for housing.

Students facing upswing in racism and xenophobia

The racism faced by international students has become [another front](#) in the politicization of migration, with international students in various countries expressing a feeling of being [caught in the middle of national or geopolitical tensions](#). Entry restrictions based on [nationality](#) have only become more pervasive. Read more about combating xenophobia and racism in [Analytical Snapshot #33](#).

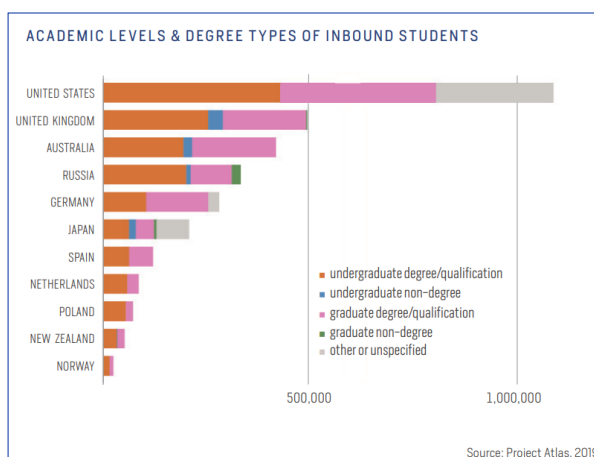
Universities shift to app-based language testing

In light of the difficulty of administering standardized testing instruments to prospective international students, [many universities in English-speaking countries](#) have approved the use of the app-based [Duolingo English Test](#) to assess language proficiency of prospective students as an alternative to traditional English exams, such as TOEFL. Duolingo has previously been recognized as a leading app used by [migrants and refugees](#) to improve language skills in a destination country.



International student mobility in data

- ⇒ [IOM Migration Data Portal: International Students](#)
- ⇒ [UNESCO Global Flow of Tertiary-Level Students](#)
- ⇒ [Project Atlas International Students Infographics](#)
- ⇒ [Our World in Data: International Student Mobility](#)



Alternative destinations for international students

With many students retaining the desire to commence or continue international studies, and with some of the most popular destinations inaccessible due to outbreaks or mobility restrictions, alternative academic destinations are beginning to gain attention. According to a recent survey, [China, Italy and India](#) have emerged as among the top choices for students looking to matriculate internationally in 2021.

This COVID-19 Analytical Snapshot has been produced by [IOM Research](#) (research@iom.int).

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