



International students' destinations by source region

This research snapshot outlines the most popular destination countries for tertiary students from major regions of the world using UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) data for 2017. The UIS data only counts students studying towards full tertiary qualifications in other countries and so does not capture students studying school or vocational courses (excepting full diplomas), nor students studying language or non-award courses.

Asia was the top source region for internationally mobile tertiary students in 2017 with 2.3 million international students, representing 43 per cent of all mobile students in 2017. The USA and Australia were the two top destination countries for those Asian students (Table 1).

Australia was also amongst the top 10 country destinations for students from the Middle East, from both North and South America and from Oceania. Australia was in the top twenty destinations for the other major regions listed below (ranked 18 with 14,958 international students from Europe, ranked 17 with 9,749 international students from Africa and ranked 12 with 951 international students from the Caribbean and Central America).

UNESCO reported a total of 5.3 million mobile tertiary students in 2017. This may be an underestimate of the full number as 140 countries across the world did not report hosting any international students. It is also the case that 595,326 of the students reported to UNESCO did not have a country of origin reported and hence those students (over 10 per cent of the total) could not be included in Table 1. For example, China reported hosting 157,108 international tertiary students in 2017, without reporting their country of origin. It is likely that China would appear as one of the top 10 destinations for students from Asia, were this data available.

Table 1. International students' destinations by source region

Asia			Europe			Africa			Middle East		
Country	Students	%	Country	Students	%	Country	Students	%	Country	Students	%
USA	654,245	28.7	UK	138,859	14.5	France	112,217	20.7	USA	103,610	26.4
Australia	315,514	13.8	Germany	100,367	10.5	USA	46,013	8.5	UK	31,747	8.1
UK	200,085	8.8	USA	68,269	7.1	South Africa	36,281	6.7	Turkey	29,230	7.4
Russia	164,074	7.2	Austria	61,417	6.4	UK	29,900	5.5	United Arab Emirates	29,102	7.4
Japan	151,522	6.6	Netherlands	54,945	5.8	Malaysia	24,229	4.5	Saudi Arabia	28,393	7.2
Canada	122,042	5.4	France	52,886	5.5	Saudi Arabia	23,853	4.4	Jordan	22,535	5.7
Germany	77,085	3.4	Poland	50,935	5.3	Germany	23,641	4.4	Germany	20,392	5.2
Malaysia	65,482	2.9	Italy	43,000	4.5	Canada	22,845	4.2	Canada	13,049	3.3
South Korea	63,801	2.8	Switzerland	38,296	4.0	Morocco	16,770	3.1	France	11,716	3.0
Turkey	45,841	2.0	Czechia	36,904	3.9	Turkey	14,282	2.6	Australia	11,151	2.8
Total	2,280,693			955,113			541,404			392,721	
South America			North America			Caribbean and Central America			Oceania		
Country	Students	%	Country	Students	%	Country	Students	%	Country	Students	%
Argentina	76,889	33.8	USA	28,169	21.3	USA	36,685	44.6	USA	6,634	26.4
USA	41,014	18.0	UK	22,508	17.0	Spain	7,384	9.0	Australia	5,272	21.0
Spain	22,492	9.9	Mexico	11,335	8.6	Dominican Republic	6,238	7.6	New Zealand	3,578	14.3
Australia	11,971	5.3	Canada	9,135	6.9	Canada	5,856	7.1	UK	2,636	10.5
France	11,579	5.1	Germany	7,228	5.5	France	4,729	5.8	Germany	1,106	4.4
Germany	8,424	3.7	Australia	5,598	4.2	UK	4,681	5.7	Canada	789	3.1
Portugal	8,290	3.6	Grenada	5,578	4.2	Germany	3,395	4.1	France	662	2.6
Brazil	8,290	3.6	France	5,343	4.0	Argentina	1,945	2.4	Japan	599	2.4
Italy	7,820	3.4	Ireland	3,235	2.4	Brazil	1,479	1.8	India	498	2.0
Canada	6,195	2.7	New Zealand	3,106	2.3	Italy	1,178	1.4	Saudi Arabia	351	1.4
Total	227,456			132,378			82,205			25,090	

The UNESCO Institute of Statistics data available at <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>. The OECD report 'Education at a Glance 2019' incorporating international student mobility data for 2017 is available at: <https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2019>.

For further information about this Research Snapshot Series contact the International Research and Analysis Unit by email: IEResearch@education.gov.au. The Research Snapshot series can be accessed from <https://internationaleducation.gov.au/research/research-snapshots/pages/default.aspx>.