



# The *global* student experience

2025 **insights** and **analysis** from the world's largest survey of enrolled students.

## Includes:

### Feature articles:

- » How does this current generation of students view the impact of AI?
- » Who is going to recommend your institution? A study of the drivers of Net Promoter Score.
- » The voice of the Indonesian student.
- » The marked impact of students commuting.
- » **Spotlight on:** GCC students studying abroad

### Regional Focus Reports:

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students

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Across 40  
countries







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# Foreword

Welcome to the 2025 Global Student Experience report brought to you by Etio and the International Student Barometer. In keeping with previous years, the 2025 report benefits from an unrivalled sample of responses from 173,105 students, including 106,427 international students, studying at 132 institutions in 24 countries, making the International Student Barometer the world’s largest survey of enrolled students.

We have supported Higher Education institutions and national bodies around the world since 2005, tracking and benchmarking student and stakeholder opinion across the entire student journey. As the global higher education landscape undergoes significant change, our granular benchmarked analysis and actionable insights into today’s student experience takes on ever-greater relevance – for institutions seeking to improve their understanding of current and future student populations, and for national bodies looking to grow their student numbers.

We are proud to support our partner institutions’ and peak bodies’ endeavours to respond to the evolving challenges presented by the Higher Education landscape and provide continuous improvement in the student experience.



**Robin Hallows**  
Head of Surveys, Performance Benchmarking







# How does this current generation of students view the impact of AI?

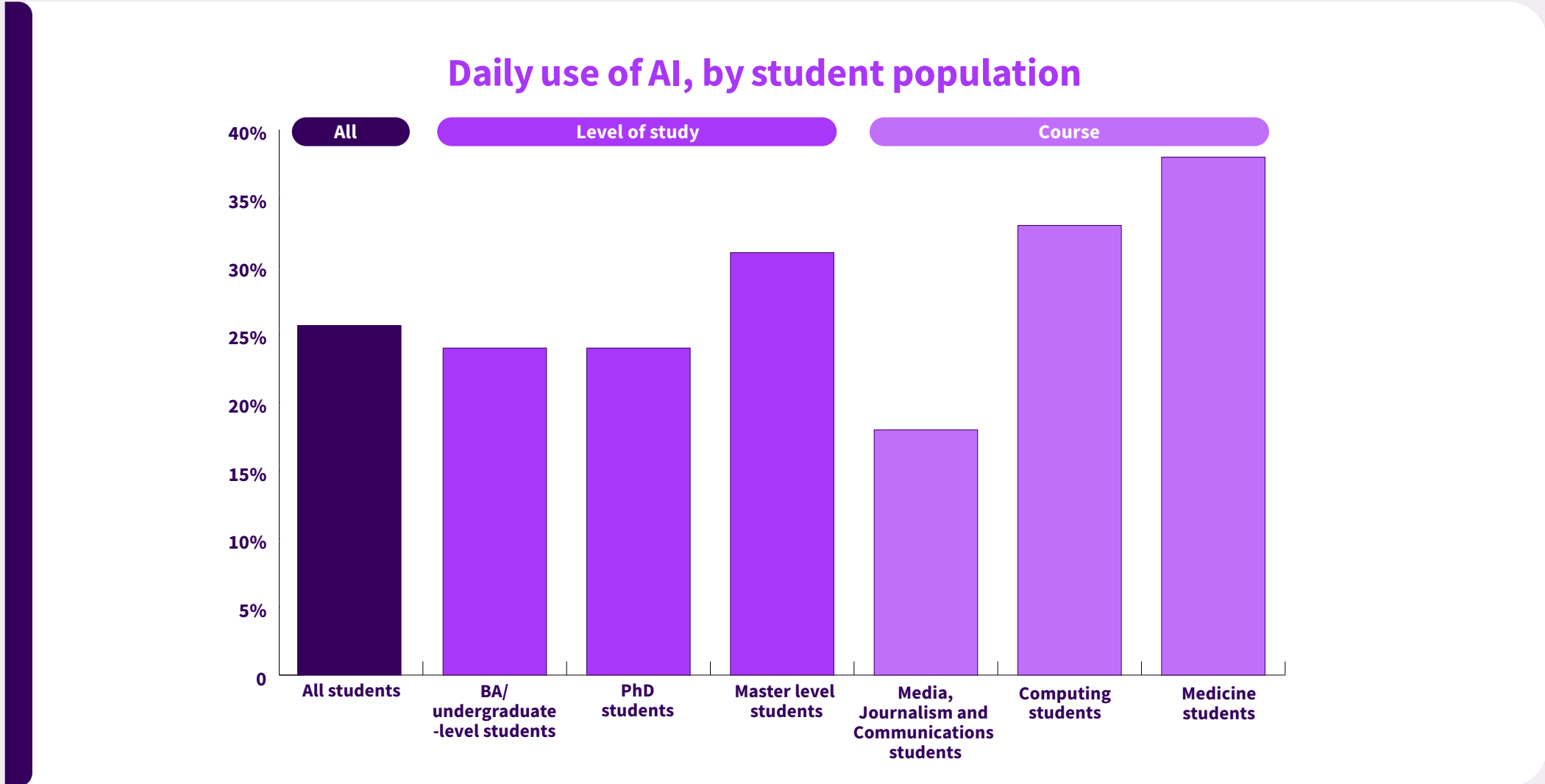
By Nannette Ripmeester, Regional Director - Europe & N.America

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has introduced new elements in the way students learn and work. Understanding how students perceive and interact with AI can help higher education institutions make informed decisions about whether and how to incorporate AI tools into curricula and support services.

Since 2024, the International Student Barometer (ISB) has expanded its learning satisfaction questions to include insights into how AI is currently integrated into educational settings, as well as into its perceived impact on students’ learning journeys and future career prospects. In this article, we will look at some global trends based on the ISB data gathered from over 106,000 students, but we will also pay attention to regional nuances revealing important differences in how students engage with these emerging technologies.

The ISB data gathers responses on AI spanning six main areas:

- 1. Usage
- 2. Overall satisfaction
- 3. Learning experience
- 4. Frequency
- 5. Areas of use
- 6. Impact



## Key insights:

### AI usage among student populations

Identifying whether students are relying on AI-based tools or technologies to assist their studies helps institutions gauge the current levels of usage. Globally 57% of enrolled students mention they use AI tools, with a significantly higher proportion of international students studying at European institutions acknowledging they use AI (74%) than international students studying in Asia (65%).

26% of students mention they use AI tools daily, with Master level students using AI tools the most (31% using it daily against 24% of both BA/undergraduate-level students and PhD candidates). When we look at study area, not surprisingly, Computing students are among the ones that use AI tools most frequently (33% daily use). Medicine students, with 38% stating they use AI tools daily, are among the top users, whereas only 18% of Media, Journalism and Communications students claim they use it daily.

## Overall satisfaction with AI integration

The ISB also measures students’ overall satisfaction with how AI technologies are integrated into their learning environment. This metric helps institutions understand whether their digital strategies meet student expectations or if adjustments and further integration are needed to enhance the study experience.

ISB data shows the highest satisfaction with online learning in Asia (65%). This might suggest that Asian institutions may be further along in adopting digital tools into their curricula, while regions with a lower satisfaction (e.g., the UK, which scores 47%) might hint at a stronger tradition of campus-centered education. When we look at the differences in satisfaction with online learning tools, we see that overall students are happiest with online learning resources and library facilities, an area where North American, European and UK institutions outperform Asian institutions.

## Impact on learning experience

Students are extremely positive about the impact of AI-based tools on their learning experience. We see a very high level of satisfaction globally of 94% (taking strongly agree (34%) and agree (60%) responses together), with North American institutions topping it with 96% of international students saying they strongly agree (42%) or agree (54%) that integrating AI technologies into their institution experience has positively enhanced their learning experience. Institutions in Asia also score 96% here but the percentage of international students saying they strongly agree is much lower (31%).

This type of information will enable institutions to assess whether students view AI as an asset or as a challenge, guiding decisions on embracing AI-driven learning tools more actively or prioritising different methods. Despite differences in modality preference, the overriding insight is that (international) students across all regions overwhelmingly seem to recognise the value AI brings.

## Frequency of AI usage by region (destination)

Understanding how often students use AI tools complements insights into students’ learning patterns and helps locate the role of AI in their education. Only 1% of international students surveyed in the ISB 2024 claim they never use AI-tools, whereas 26% state they use AI-tools on a daily basis.

Looking at regional breakdowns, it is interesting to notice that international students at North American institutions lead in daily interactions (32%) as well as weekly use (47%), possibly driven by the integration of AI tools in learning systems. It leads us to ask the question: Does higher daily usage correlate with stronger perceptions of AI’s usefulness?

Frequency of use by destination region					
Frequency of Use	Global ISB	North America	Europe	Asia	UK
Never	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Rarely	16%	11%	17%	14%	21%
Monthly	13%	10%	13%	16%	15%
Weekly	44%	47%	44%	44%	40%
Daily	26%	32%	25%	25%	23%

“Today’s students, particularly younger generations, interact with AI intuitively in their everyday lives, often without even realising it. To meet their evolving expectations, institutional departments (marketing, admissions, academics, career advisors, alumni relations, etc.) must align around a unified, student-centered experience. In this context, AI becomes the connective tissue that enables immediacy, personalisation, and predictive insight at scale.” says Alejandra Otero, Founder and CEO of geNEOus, enrolment management experts. With student expectations rising and attention spans shrinking, we need student satisfaction data helping us balance human emotional intelligence with the enhanced efficiency AI makes possible.

## Areas of use

The ISB also explores the specific domains in which AI tools might have had the most significant impact, including:

- » Academic advising and planning
- » Communication with lecturers and peers
- » Coursework and assignments
- » Research and information retrieval
- » Time management and organisation

Identifying the areas where AI makes the greatest difference helps institutions make informed decisions on how to tailor their support and development strategies to best meet students’ needs.

Across all regions, students concentrate their AI use in three top domains, with research and information retrieval as the most used domain:

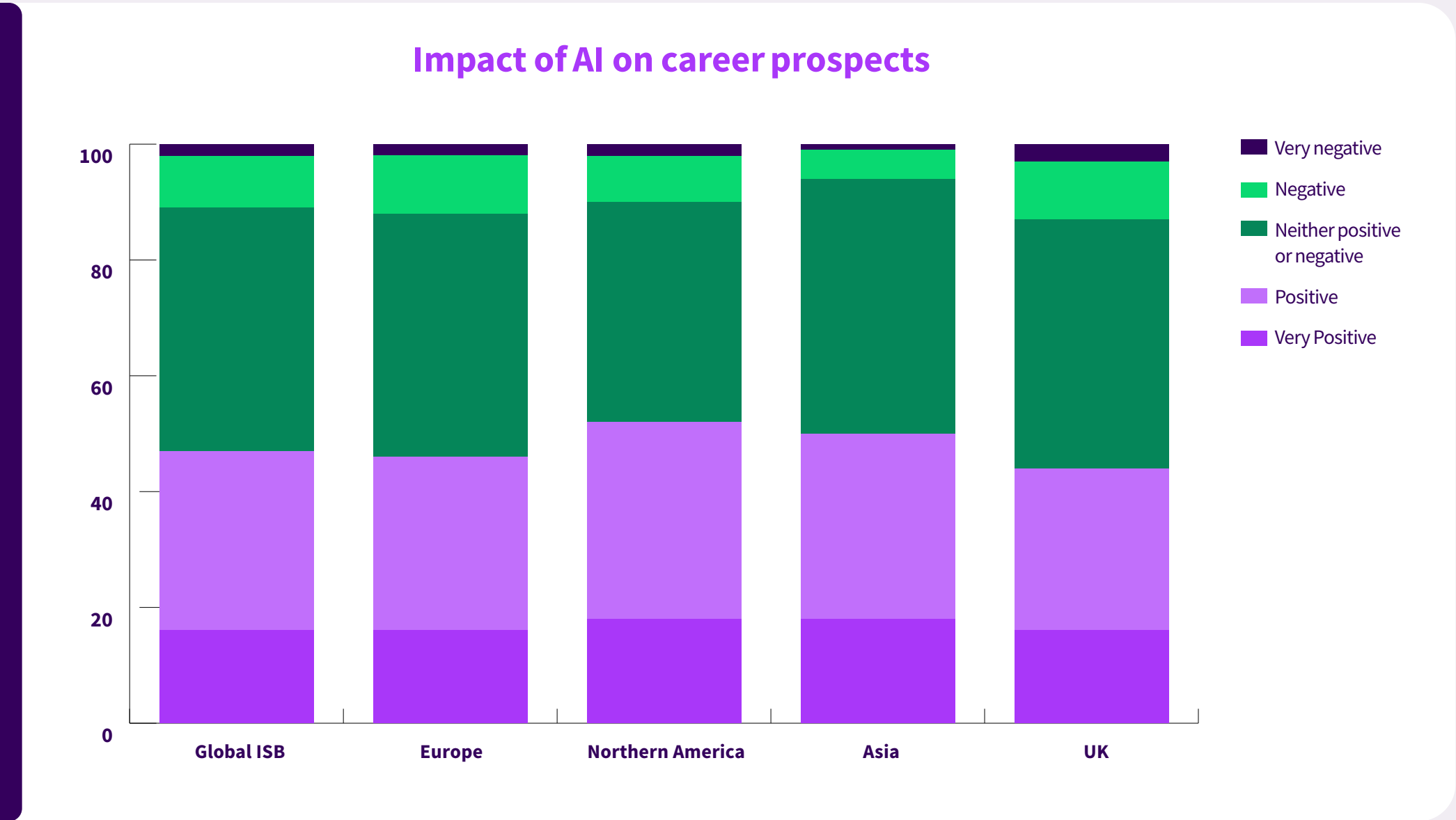
Top 3 areas where AI impacts student experience			
Region	1st (Top %)	2nd (Top %)	3rd (Top %)
Asia	Research & Information Retrieval (68%)	Academic Advising & Planning (48%)	Coursework & Assignments (47%)
Europe	Research & Information Retrieval (65%)	Coursework & Assignments (41%)	Academic Advising & Planning (46%)
North America	Research & Information Retrieval (74%)	Coursework & Assignments (48%)	Academic Advising & Planning (39%)
UK	Research & Information Retrieval (63%)	Academic Advising & Planning (48%)	Coursework & Assignments (36%)

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## Perceived impact on future careers

We have also asked students a question around the impact of AI on their future career prospects. This is an important question to address . Understanding whether students view AI as an enabling or hindering factor to their careers can help institutions better prepare their students for an AI-integrated workforce. For instance, the chart on the next page visualises students’ perceptions from various regions on how AI may affect their career prospects. The majority of students remain neutral about AI’s impact on their career prospects, while a substantial percentage of students globally view it positively. Negative perceptions are relatively low (only 11% globally), suggesting that students are generally optimistic about AI’s influence in determining their professional future.





Interestingly, we observe a general convergence on how students perceive AI’s impact. Despite some fluctuations between regions, the overall sentiment remains consistent, revealing a shared sense of cautious optimism or neutrality across various parts of the world when it comes to the impact of AI on careers. While the global story of AI-based tools in education is one of near-universal enthusiasm (94.5% positive), regional patterns remind us that modality preference, daily engagement, and application priorities differ. Irrespective of how we view the use of AI in higher education, the ISB data helps us to make decisions: Do we want to fortify digital classrooms, deepen tool integration, or respect the value of in-person learning? Notwithstanding the choices we make as educators, we need to understand how currently enrolled (and future) students view AI-based support in learning.



## Who is going to recommend your institution? *(A study of the drivers of Net Promoter Score)*

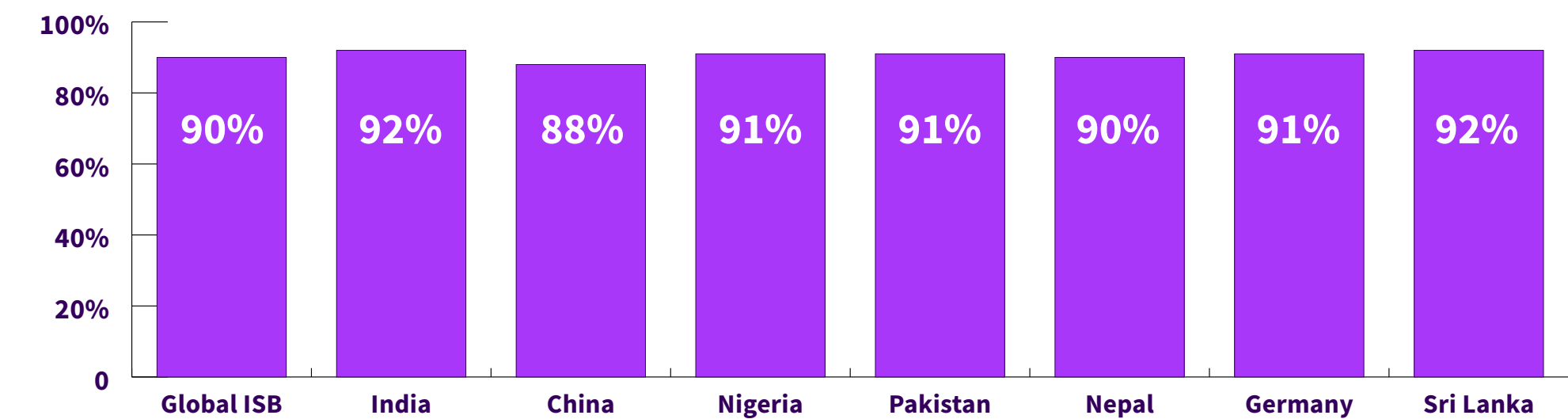
By Guy Perring, Regional Director – Asia

One of the great advantages of running the world’s largest survey of current international students is our ability to slice and dice the data across the vast range of demographics that we cover which includes gender, age, nationality, subject level, subject area and year of study.

This is, of course, extremely valuable for the individual institutions that we report back to allowing them to note differences in satisfaction rates across their faculties, their campus locations and leading many to set appropriate Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the following year’s Barometer.

A recent visit to India and various presentations to Indian institutions made me explore whether different nationalities have different responses and different drivers for their international study. We are well aware of course that generalisations about the behaviors of nationalities should be handled with care, and that ultimately our survey is made-up of hundreds of thousands of individual responses which in each case have very different motivations and life experiences. That said, it is interesting to note that when we look at the overall satisfactions and recommendations of the largest nationalities who are globally mobile there are some clear differences.

% Satisfied / Nationality



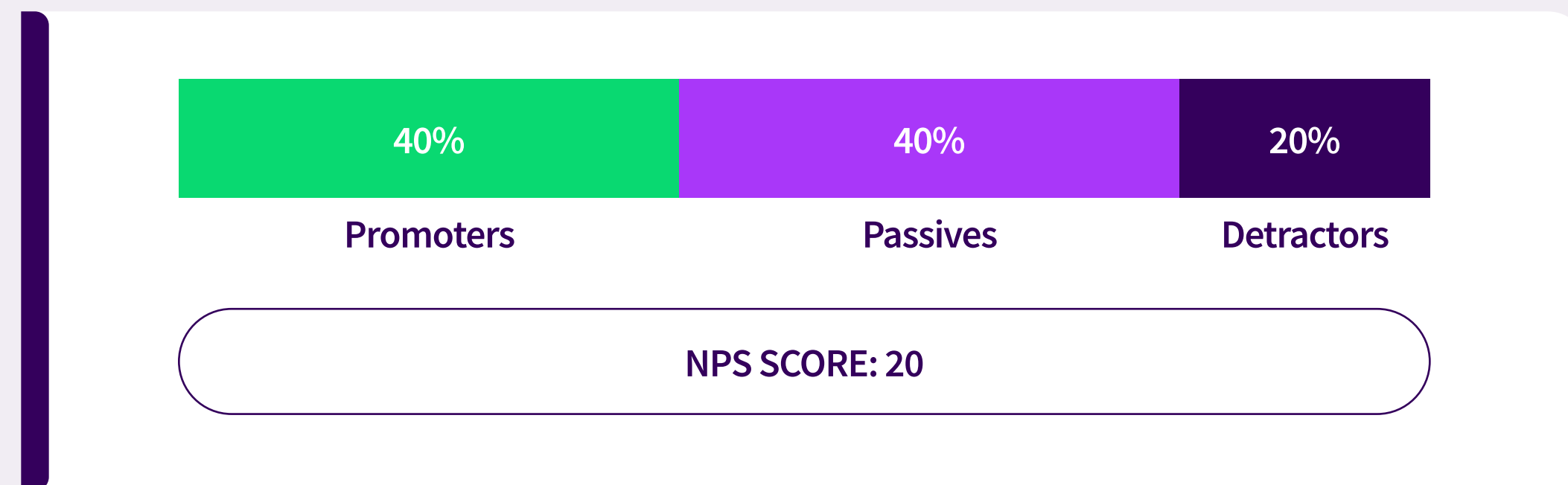
For example, if we look at the overall satisfaction with international study of the largest groups, we see some remarkable consistency.

Percentage levels here represent those students that are either satisfied or very satisfied, and as you can see, there is very little variation amongst nationalities, though Chinese students seem a little less satisfied than others. Also just to reiterate the student numbers involved - with over 21,000 Indian students and over 13,000 Chinese students responding, makes us extremely confident in the validity of this data.

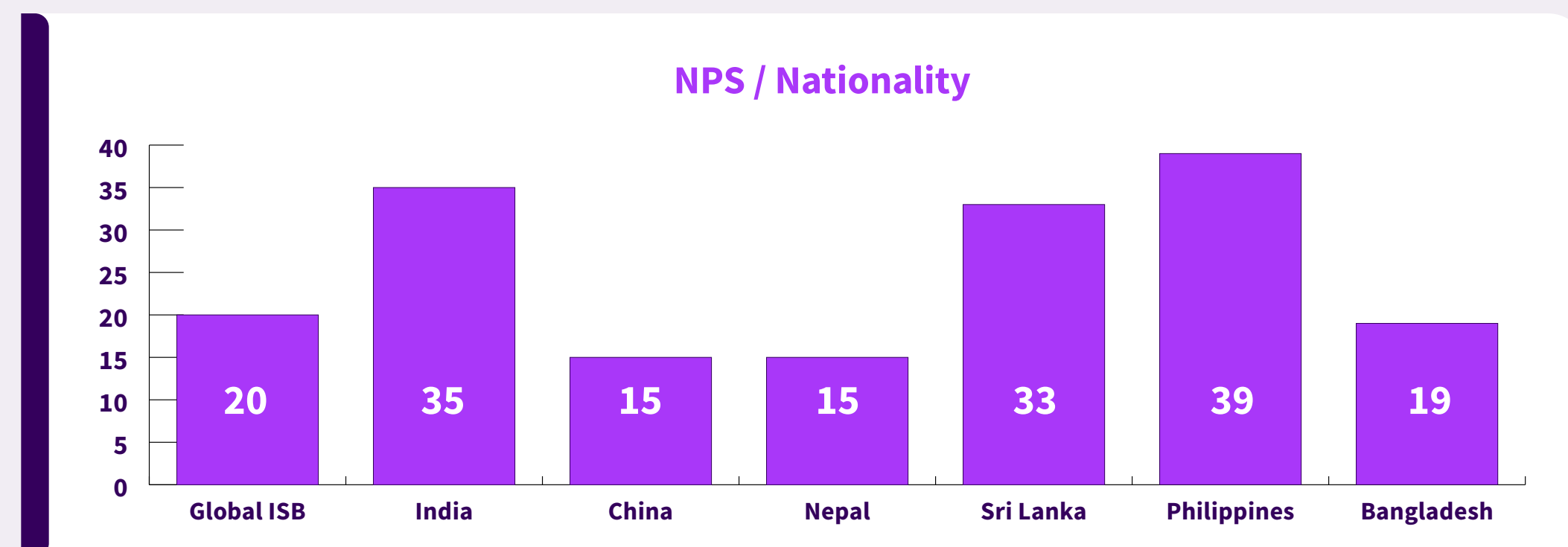
As an organisation, we have been paying increasing attention to the **Net Promoter Score**. This is more common in other industries, but increasingly higher education is using this score to understand if their students will recommend their institution to others. Explained simply, it’s a scale of one to 10 and the question to ask is, “*How likely would you recommend this institution to others thinking of applying*”. It’s really no different to the form you are sent after having landed after a flight or departed from your hotel. Both the hotel and airline are keen to know if you will recommend it to others in the future. Institutions should want to know if their students would recommend it too.



You can see below the calculation for the global Net Promoter Score of 20, which is a simple deduction of the detractors from the promoters. In this case, 40 – 20 = 20.



So, looking at that same data across nationalities it's pretty clear that Indian, Sri Lankan and Filipino students are much more likely to recommend your institution than other nationalities.



Of course this is aggregated data and it may vary if we dissect across subjects and levels – but why do we see such a disparity?

I showed this to a group of Indian institutions at the recent APAIE conference and a number of them believed that Indian students, once satisfied with their experience, are likely to become strong advocates for any brand and will develop a loyalty to that brand. Other nationalities are perhaps less willing to act as advocates based on their personal experience and are reluctant to become promoters of a brand.

Net Promoter Score (NPS) can vary across nationalities due to a combination of cultural, experiential, and institutional factors. Here are some of the key reasons:

### 1. Cultural Differences in Feedback and Recommendations:

Different cultures exhibit varying levels of willingness to openly praise or criticise. Some cultures are more reserved or modest, which can influence how students rate their willingness to recommend, even if their actual experience is positive. You can see the disparity for Chinese students between their satisfaction scores at 88% and relatively low NPS at 15.

### 2. Expectations and Standards:

Students from different countries often have different expectations based on their prior experiences, cultural norms, and the reputation of their home education systems. For example, students from countries with highly competitive or prestigious universities might have higher benchmarks, affecting their likelihood to recommend.

### 3. Language and Communication Styles:

Language barriers or differing communication styles can influence perceptions of support, quality, and overall satisfaction, subsequently impacting NPS.

### 4. Experience and Engagement Levels:

Some nationalities might engage more actively with support services, social activities, and networks, which can foster a stronger sense of belonging and satisfaction, leading to higher NPS. (Etio intends to conduct additional work on this to see the linkages and share further insights into this area.)



5. **Perceived Value and Return on Investment:**

Economic backgrounds, tuition costs, and post-graduation opportunities influence students’ perceptions of value. If students feel they receive good outcomes relative to their investment, they’re more likely to recommend.

6. **Institutional Factors and Support Systems:**

The quality and accessibility of student services, cultural inclusivity, and campus environment can resonate differently with various nationalities, affecting their overall enthusiasm and willingness to recommend.

In essence, NPS differences across nationalities reflect a complex interplay of cultural norms, expectations, personal experiences, and institutional support. Recognising these variations can help institutions tailor their strategies to better meet the needs of diverse student groups and foster higher advocacy levels worldwide.

Let’s look at the key drivers for this Net Promoter Score - globally, for our learning section in the survey, the areas that correlate most strongly with the NPS are as follows:

Highest correlation with NPS - learning elements	
0.46	Course organisation
0.46	Employability
0.45	Quality of lectures
0.44	Course content

1.00 is a perfect correlation; 0.00 is zero correlation.

Any items that have a correlation of over 40% can be considered important to students. Improve that aspect and they will be more likely to recommend.

**Course organisation** is about timetabling and ensuring students have access to all the optional modules.

**Employability** is ‘learning that will help me get a good job’ – so students seeing the connection between their future careers and the learning they do!

**Course content and the quality of lectures** are fundamental aspects of the learning experience!

So, if we just focus on learning, these are the items that students value and feel there is an institutional responsibility to get right.

Institutions can enhance these key areas—course organisation, employability, quality of lectures, and course content—by implementing certain strategies:

Course Organisation:

- » Streamline curriculum structure for clarity and logical progression.
- » Offer clear pathways and timelines for coursework, assessments, and milestones.
- » Incorporate flexible learning options (e.g., online modules, blended learning) to accommodate diverse student needs.
- » Use regular feedback mechanisms (surveys, focus groups) to identify and resolve organisational issues promptly.
- » Ensure timetabling does not create long days for students and ensure modules do not clash, allowing access for all.



### Employability:

- » Integrate practical, real-world projects, internships, or industry placements within courses.
- » Strengthen links with local and international employers to provide networking opportunities and employer-led workshops. This is even more important for international students who may not have the family networks or knowledge that local students possess.
- » Offer career development sessions, CV workshops, and interview preparation tailored to various industries and locations. Many international students will not work in their country of study, so institutions need to ensure they have a global outlook for employability.
- » Highlight employability skills within the curriculum, emphasising transferable skills like teamwork, communication, and problem-solving.
- » Make sure that all student populations have these opportunities and don't wait until the final years to start thinking of employability issues. It should start from day one.

### Quality of Lectures:

- » Invest in ongoing faculty development focused on innovative teaching methods, student engagement, and inclusivity.
- » Promote active learning techniques such as discussions, case studies, and group work.
- » Incorporate diverse multimedia and technology tools to enhance lecture delivery.
- » Gather student feedback on teaching effectiveness and use it to inform faculty development and course adjustments.

### Course Content:

- » Regularly review and update course materials to reflect current industry trends, research, and best practices.
- » Ensure course content is relevant, diverse, and inclusive, catering to different learning styles and backgrounds.
- » Incorporate interdisciplinary perspectives where appropriate to foster critical thinking.
- » Seek input from industry experts and alumni to ensure real-world applicability.

By continuously assessing and refining these areas through feedback, industry partnerships, and faculty development, institutions can provide a more engaging, relevant, and supportive learning environment that boosts student satisfaction and outcomes.

We recognise that the data presented in the above article is aggregated from over 106,000 students across 132 institutions, so identifying strengths and areas for improvement at the institutional level is essential for guiding strategic decision-making.

In summary, leveraging comprehensive data from the world's largest international student survey provides valuable insights into student satisfaction and advocacy across diverse nationalities and demographics. While overall satisfaction levels are remarkably high and consistent, variances in Net Promoter Scores highlight the importance of understanding cultural, experiential, and institutional factors that influence student feedback and recommendations. By focusing on key drivers such as course organisation, employability, quality of lectures, and course content—and implementing targeted strategies in these areas—institutions can significantly enhance the student experience. Continual assessment, adaptation, and tailored support will foster higher engagement, loyalty, and advocacy, ultimately strengthening the reputation and effectiveness of educational offerings on a global scale.





# The voice of the Indonesian student

By Guy Perring, Regional Director – Asia

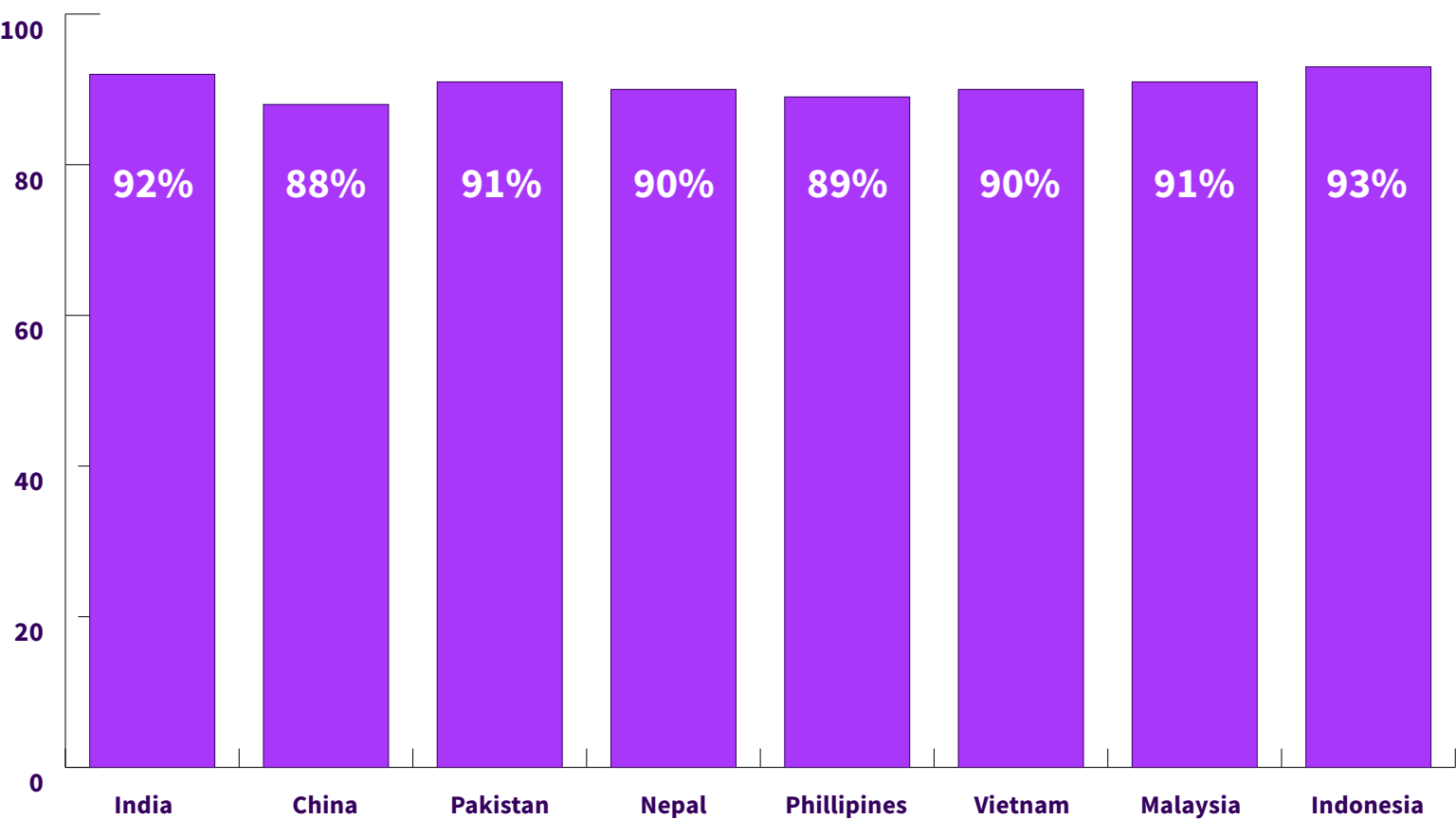
In 2024 the international student barometer (ISB) surveyed over 106,000 international students and with that data set the ISB is really the representative voice of the international student capturing nuances such as why they study at a particular institution, how satisfied they are with the learning and living and what makes them recommend your institution to others thinking of applying.

The breadth of our data set allows us to provide some real insights across our different demographics and in this article I wanted to look at the Indonesian student overseas and how they might differ from other nationalities.

We have over 1,800 Indonesia students who responded in 2024 and 93% of Indonesians are either satisfied or very satisfied with their university experience which as can be seen from the table on the right is in some cases significantly higher than other nationalities.

Of course, this broad-brush account does not take into account any differences across undergraduate and post-graduate levels nor to the different study destinations that Indonesians select. But broadly speaking, the data shows that Indonesians rate highly their overseas study experiences.

Overall Satisfaction



## Motivations

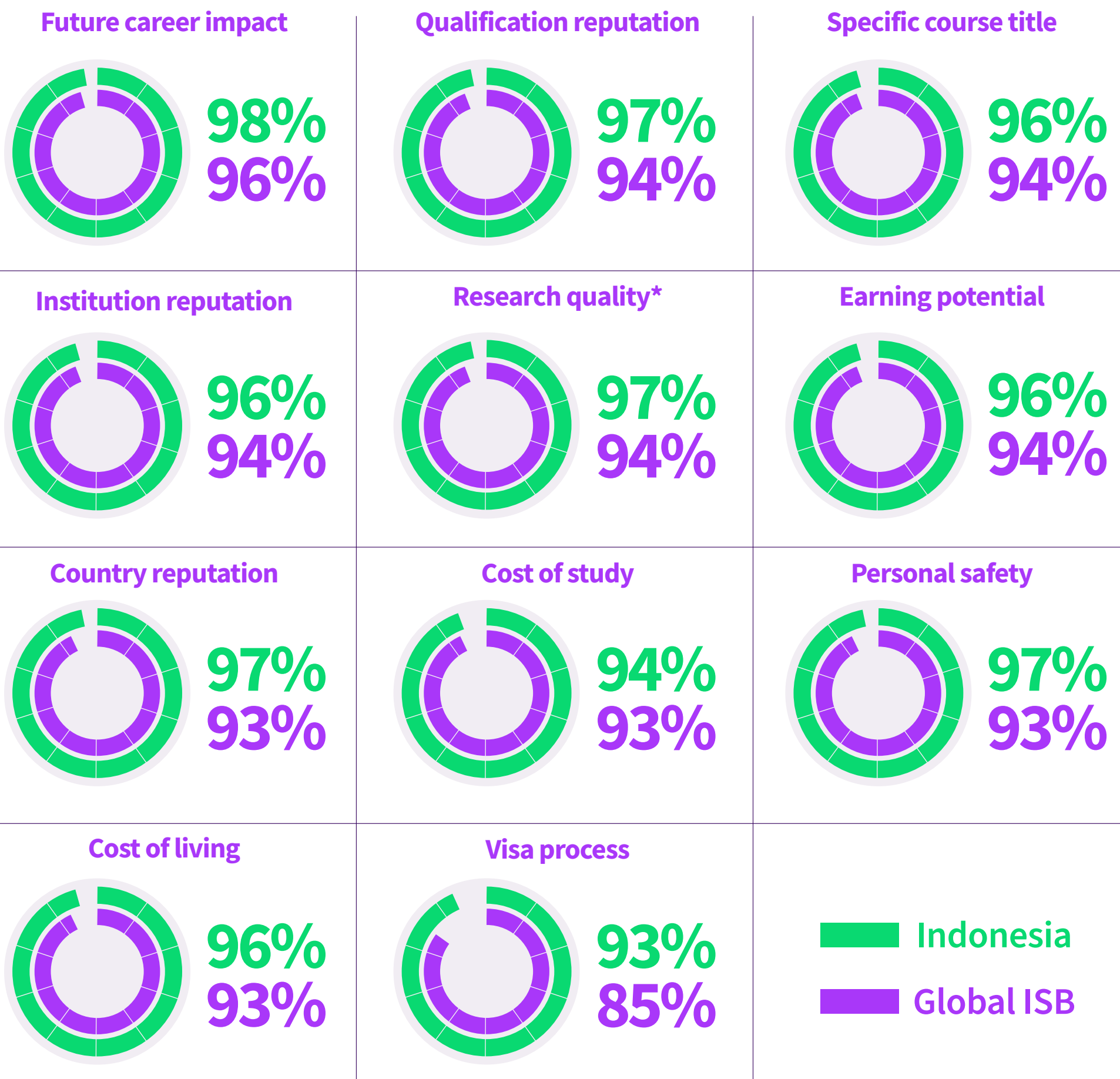
The reasons they choose to study overseas are not dissimilar from other nationalities with 98% of them saying that future impact career impact is key. So, improving their career prospects and, indeed, future earnings are key factors for Indonesian students in choosing an institution.

Note also that personal safety and cost of living is higher than the global benchmark by 3% to 4%.

We have seen the cost of living and cost of study rise in importance over the last few years, which is unsurprising based on the current economic situation which has affected many countries and filtered into students’ decision making processes.



Reasons students choose to study overseas



\*PhD students only.

Who helps you choose?

Along with the decision-making elements, another important area we cover are what or who influences their choice. For Indonesian students the website, education agents, friends and family are significant which is true globally. However, what is particularly interesting is where there are differences between Indonesian students and other nationalities.

Alumni

33% of Indonesian students said that alumni played an important part in helping them choose where globally only 24% of students say this is the case. Of course, leads to a number of important considerations for institutions wishing to recruit Indonesian students. It is vital to maintain connections with your Indonesian alumni and build these connections not only after they’ve left, but during that time with you and, obviously, ensure that they are delighted by all aspects of the experience.

Continuing relevance of exhibitions

The other noticeable difference is that 32% of Indonesia students said that an educational exhibition fair was important to them whereas only 15% said so globally.

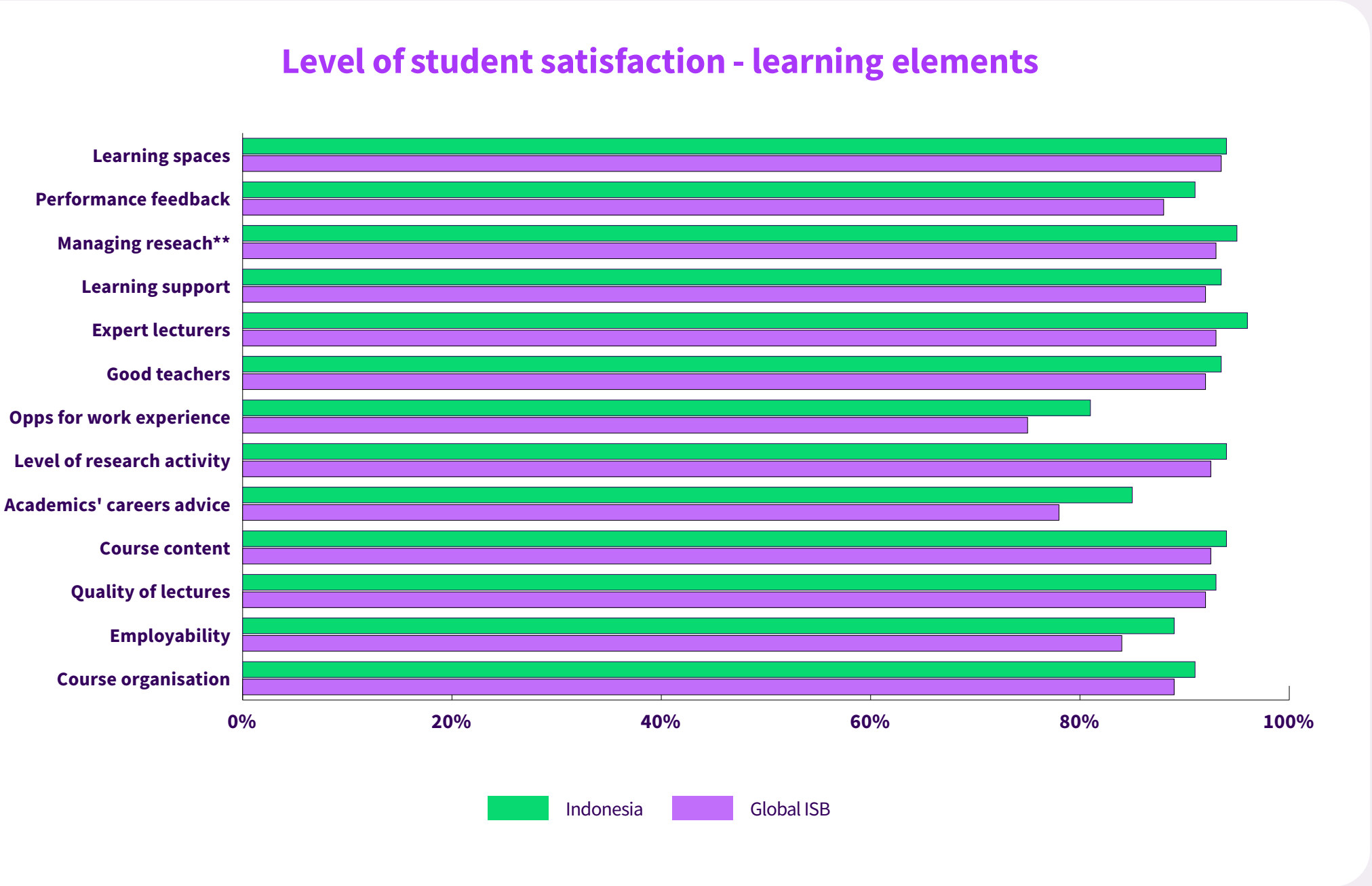
Our new Associate Consultant in Indonesia, Andrias Soesilo, pointed out that often international students from countries like China and India often have the opportunity to travel directly to see universities and explore their options. In contrast, Indonesian students tend to rely more on scholarships and may have less opportunity to visit countries or meet university representatives in person. To address this, universities often send representatives or organise fairs within Indonesia, sometimes through agents or local schools, to provide comprehensive information and facilitate connections with students. In addition, major institutions will have regional offices in India and China, less so in Indonesia.

## Living

Two areas within our living section that always have a strong correlation with the recommendation are making good contacts for the future and social activities. The former is about the ability to build a network which will benefit the student in their future career and life. 88% of Indonesian students said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with this aspect compared to 81% globally. In terms of social activities, which are reflective of the events that an institution or students’ union organises. Indonesian students again show high levels of satisfaction with 91% of Indonesian students saying they are satisfied or very satisfied compared to 85% globally.

## Learning

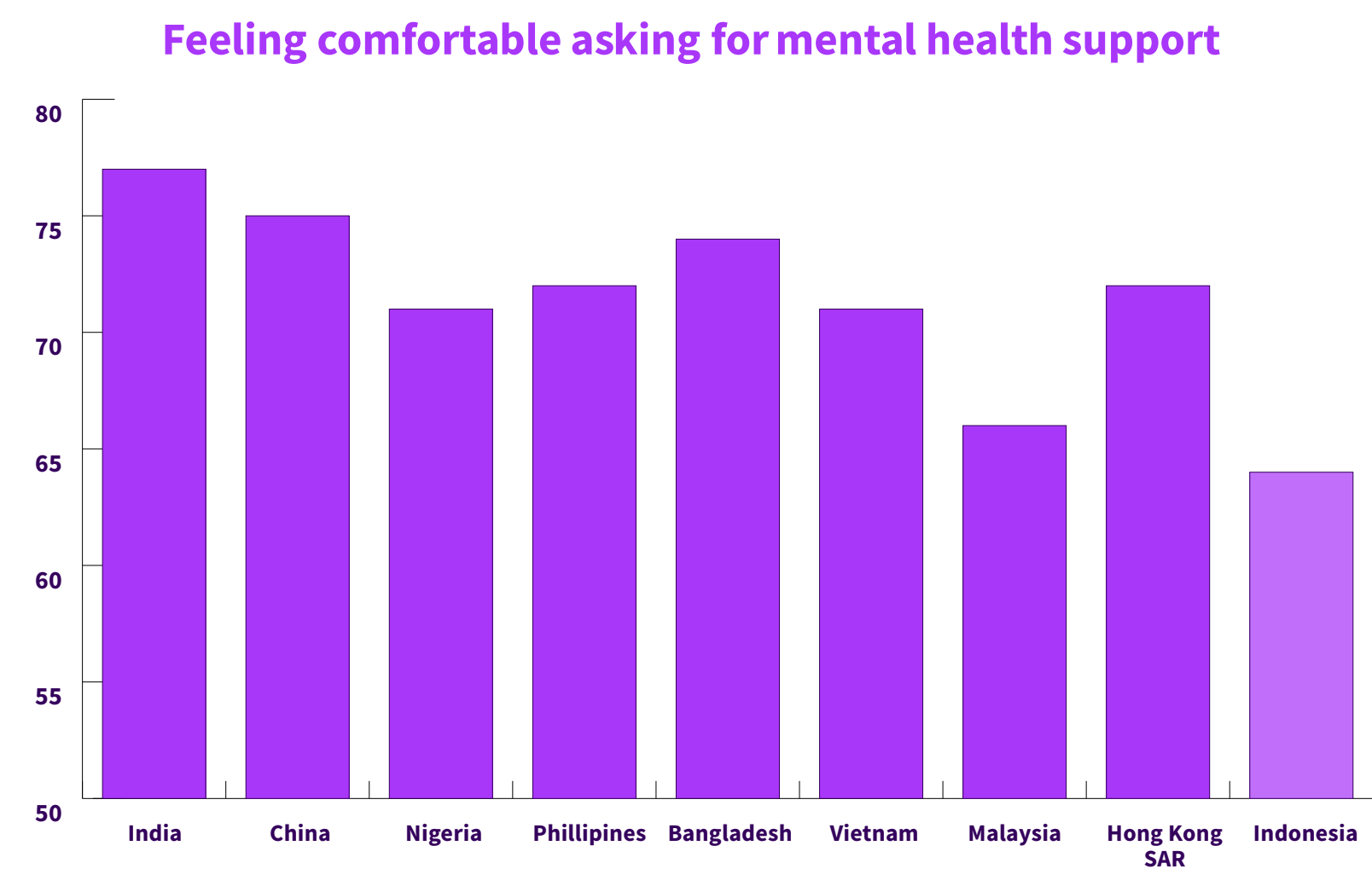
For Indonesian students their levels of satisfaction in our learning section are particularly high as you can be seen in the table to the right where no items are below the benchmark.





## Mental health support

In fact, the only clear area where there appears to be a negative difference between Indonesian students and the rest is in the area of mental health support. The question we ask is to what extent do you feel comfortable asking for mental health support and only 64% Indonesian students said they felt comfortable asking for mental health support which was one of the lowest of the major nationalities as can be seen from the table below.

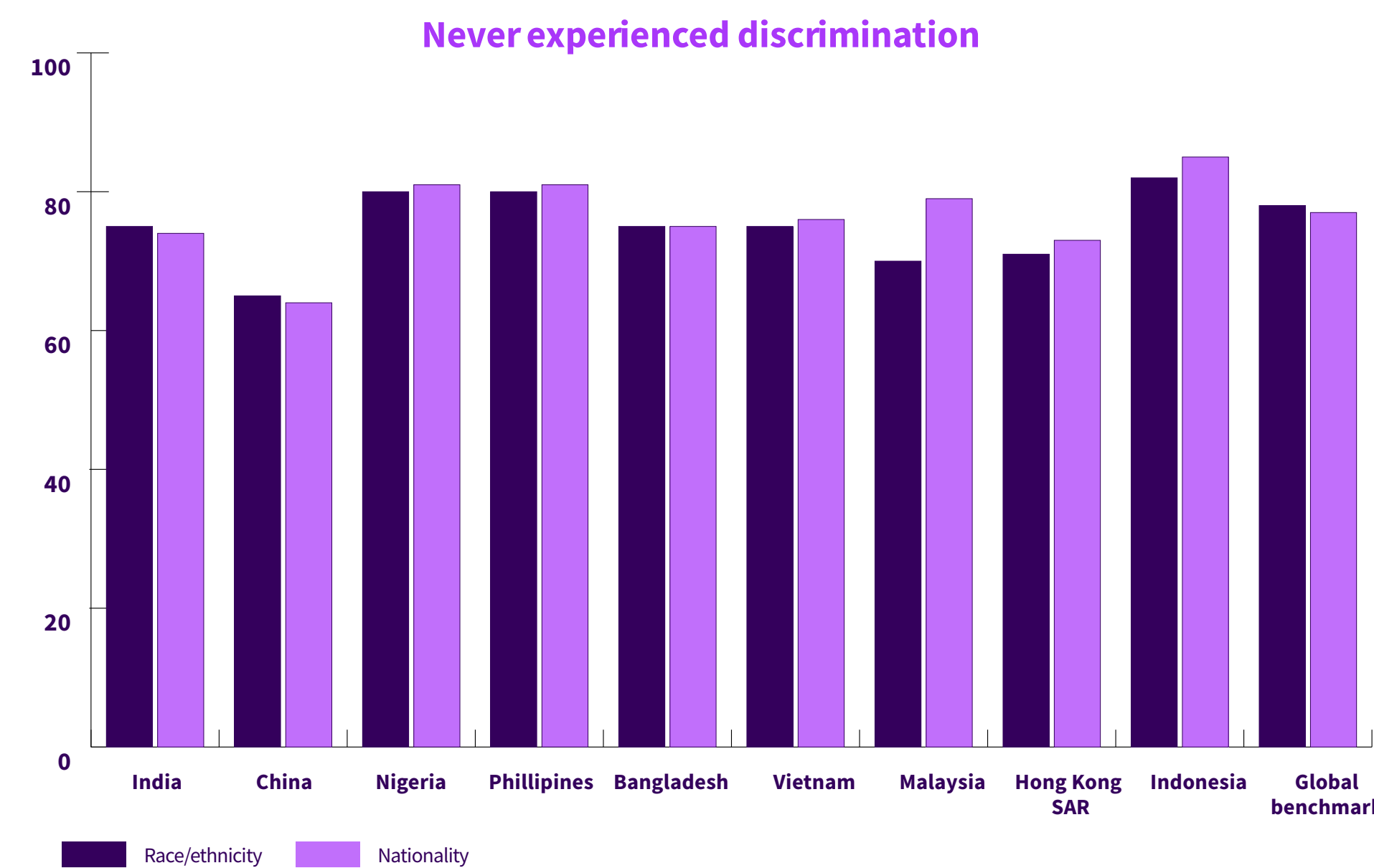


Again, our associate in Indonesia, Andrias, pointed out that Indonesians may first seek support from their own peers, rather than look externally.

It’s interesting to note the cultural differences and attitudes to mental health support within Indonesia where there is a high level of social stigma and discrimination associated with mental health issues. This data is clearly of great interest to those HE professionals who are tasked with tackling these issues amongst international students and need to be aware of these cultural differences.

## Inclusivity

The Barometer also has a substantial section on inclusivity, and it is particularly pleasing to see that Indonesians do not experience substantial levels of racism or perceived discrimination.



Of course, not a percentage to necessarily celebrate, and when 14% of Indonesians do experience discrimination, there is still a gap to close.

## Conclusion

As I hope this article has shown - our data set is so extensive that a deep-dive into a single nationality can draw out insights that can offer enormous benefit to the sector, institutions seeking to recruit Indonesia students, and also Indonesian students themselves who plan to study overseas in the future.

## Measure and understand the value of your student exchange and study abroad programmes.

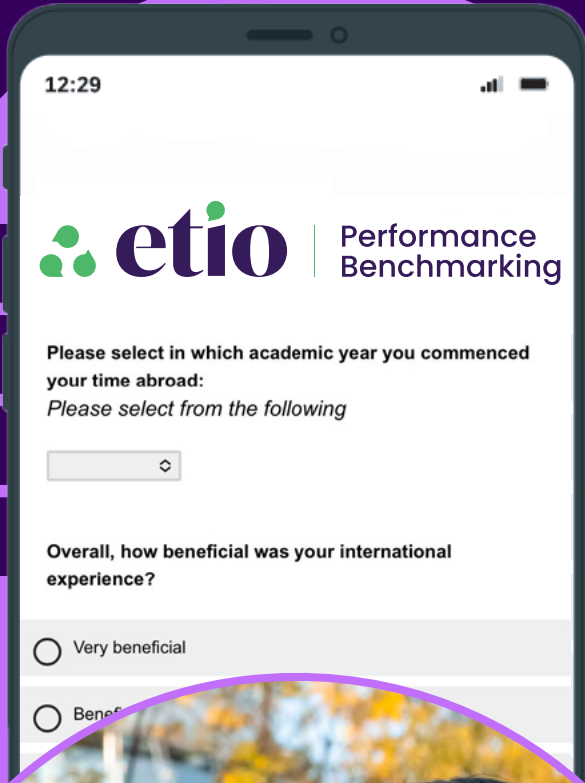
**iMPACT** helps institutions assess the value of outbound international work and study experience programmes in helping their students become more employable, confident global citizens.

- » Obtain substantive feedback across the range of your global exchange programmes.
- » Determine the types of international experiences which provide the most benefit for different student groups.
- » Gain actionable insights - filter data by country of study, institution, field of study, length of programme and time-since-completion.
- » Inform decisions that improve the quality of your outbound student experience.

“

*The iMPACT study has been an invaluable tool for CUHK in evaluating the outcomes of our global education programs and allowing us to benchmark our performance as well as report to key external stakeholders including funding agencies. It has enabled us to validate the success of the programs we offer in enhancing the global citizenship skills for all our students, paving the way for fruitful academic and professional careers.*

**Shally Fan - Director of Academic Links at Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK)**



[Download an overview of the survey structure](#)

[Request details about how your institution can participate](#)





# The marked impact of students commuting

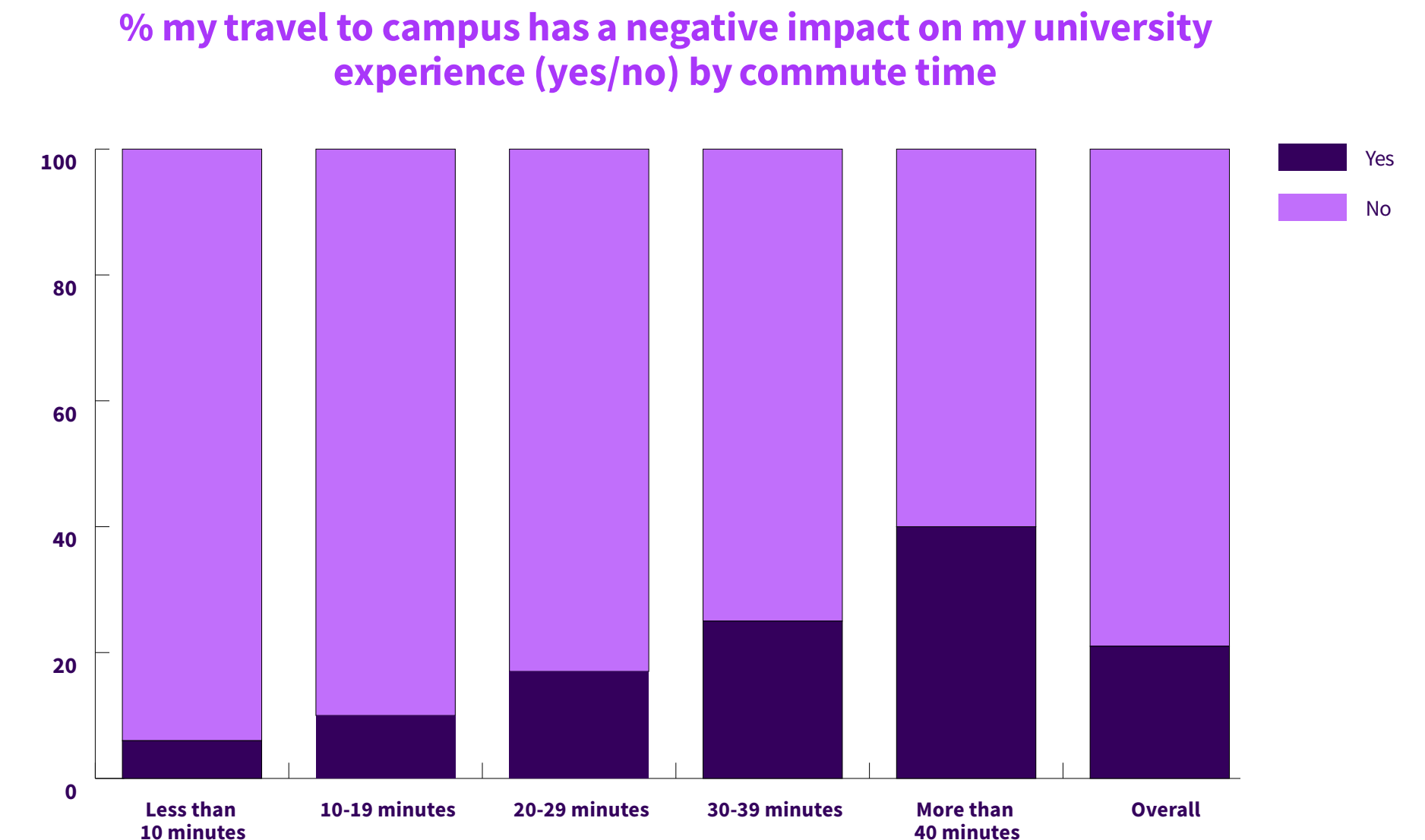
By Sam Camden, Client Consultant – Surveys

The term “commuter student” has typically been used to describe local domestic students who, through either choice or necessity, remain in their hometown and commute to university as opposed to living on-campus. More recently, however, the term has been increasingly applied to students who relocate for university, but – due mainly to persistent crises in the cost of living and around access to suitable accommodation – are forced to live further out and therefore undertake substantial commutes to and from campus. Given the added financial pressures international students can face, as well as the numerous additional challenges they have securing accommodation whilst navigating housing regulation, cultural, and language barriers, it is no surprise that a significant proportion of international students fall into this category. A new question block around accommodation and travel from the International Student Barometer (ISB) reveals the impact commuting to campus is having on the international student experience globally.

Our data shows us that not only are a large proportion of international students spending a significant time commuting to and from campus, but that this is having a negative impact on their university experience across a concerning range of areas. As you might expect, students who feel their commute negatively impacts on their university experience are significantly less satisfied in living-related metrics, such as their accommodation and social life, but their learning experience, and engagement with support services are also impacted. With the crises driving students further away from campus unlikely to be

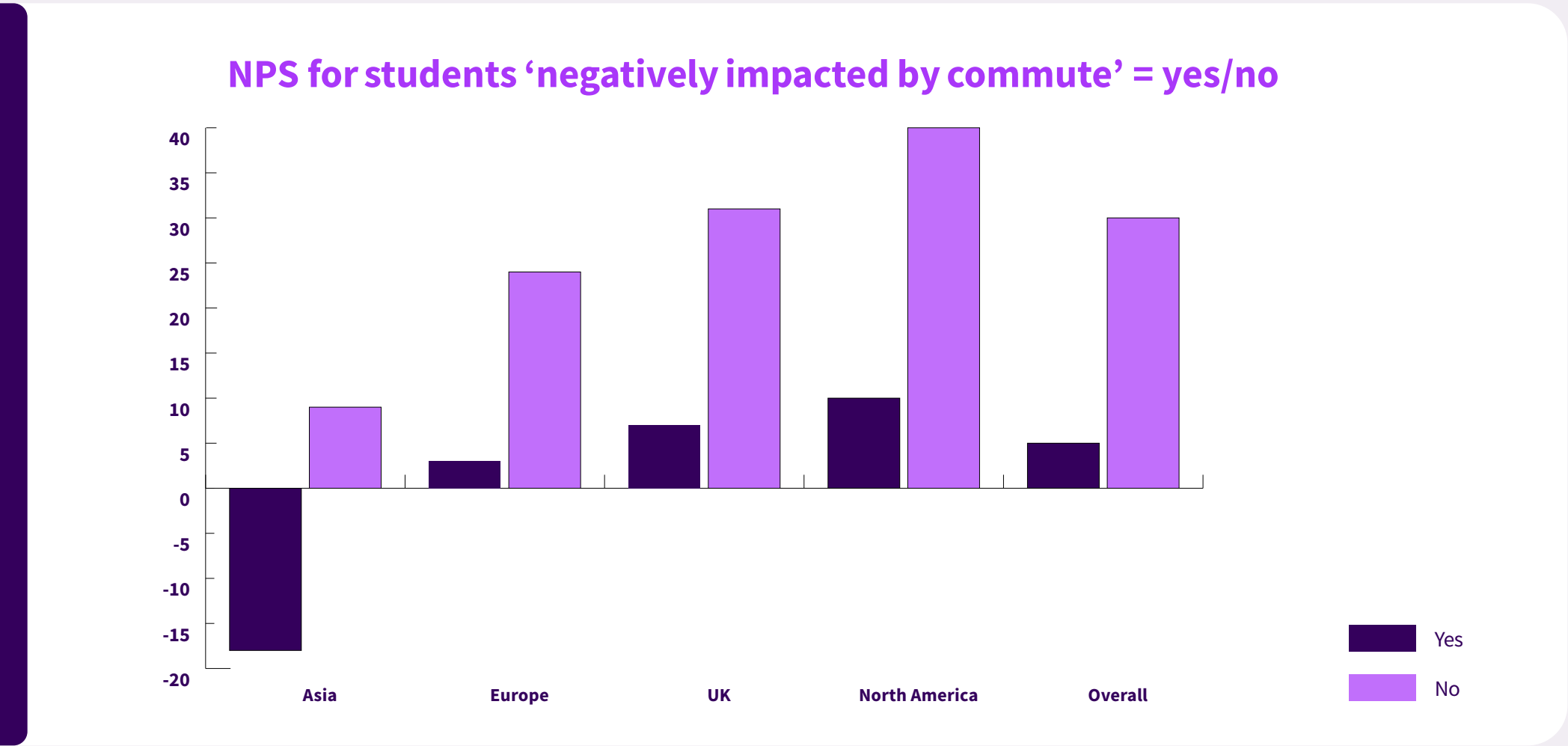
remedied anytime soon, an increasing emphasis needs to be placed on understanding the unique challenges faced by this cohort, and ensuring they are properly supported throughout their time at university.

Looking in detail at the results from the new ISB question block on accommodation and travel, we see that long travel times to and from campus (often via public transport) are commonplace, and that a significant proportion of international students across the global feel that this has a detrimental impact on their overall experience at university. A quarter of students surveyed reported commuting for 40 minutes or more to their main campus (where most of their classes take place), with over a fifth (21%) saying that their commute has a negative impact on their university experience. Of those students commuting for 40 minutes or more, the figure increases to 40% of students who say their commute impacts negatively on their experience.



When looking at the mode of transport the students took to and from campus, only 16% of students who were able to walk at least some of the time to campus said their commute negatively impacted on their university experience, versus 26% of students who took public transport, and 27% of students who drove whether by themselves or with others.

Students across the globe seem similarly impacted by long commutes. 24% of international students in North America reported that their travel to campus has a negative impact on their university experience, versus 23% in Europe (excl. UK) and 22% in Asia. Students in the UK were proportionally less likely to be negatively impacted, with 17% of students agreeing with this statement.



Drawing upon existing ISB metrics, we see that a student’s travel to and from campus can have significant influence on scores across a wide range of areas. Firstly, in terms of overall measures, students who report being negatively impacted by their travel to and from campus are less satisfied

with their overall university experience (-7%pts) and are less likely to recommend the institution to others. This latter measure, represented by their Net Promoter Score (NPS), was 25 points lower for students negatively impacted by their travel than for students who reported that this was not the case. Although unsurprising that there is some difference in overall scores between these groups, the extent to which, particularly with regards to the NPS, is the cause for some alarm. A substantially lower NPS for these students is also seen consistently across all the main regions for which we currently hold data. Students in Europe who reported that their experience is negatively impacted by their commute, have a lower NPS than those who did not by 21 points, versus 24 points in the UK, 26 in Asia and 29 for international students studying in North America.

**NPS for students reporting their experience is negatively impacted by their commute (vs NPS global benchmark)**

	Global	Europe	UK	North America	Asia
Net Promoter Score	20	-21	-24	-29	-26

The aspects of the student experience related to living – particularly around accommodation, the cost of living, and the ability of students to have a fulfilling social life – are, unsurprisingly, those most heavily affected by a student’s commute. Students whose university experience is negatively impacted by their travel to campus are less satisfied with making friends from their host country (-12%pts), their home country (-10%pts) and other countries (-9%pts), less satisfied with the organised social activities

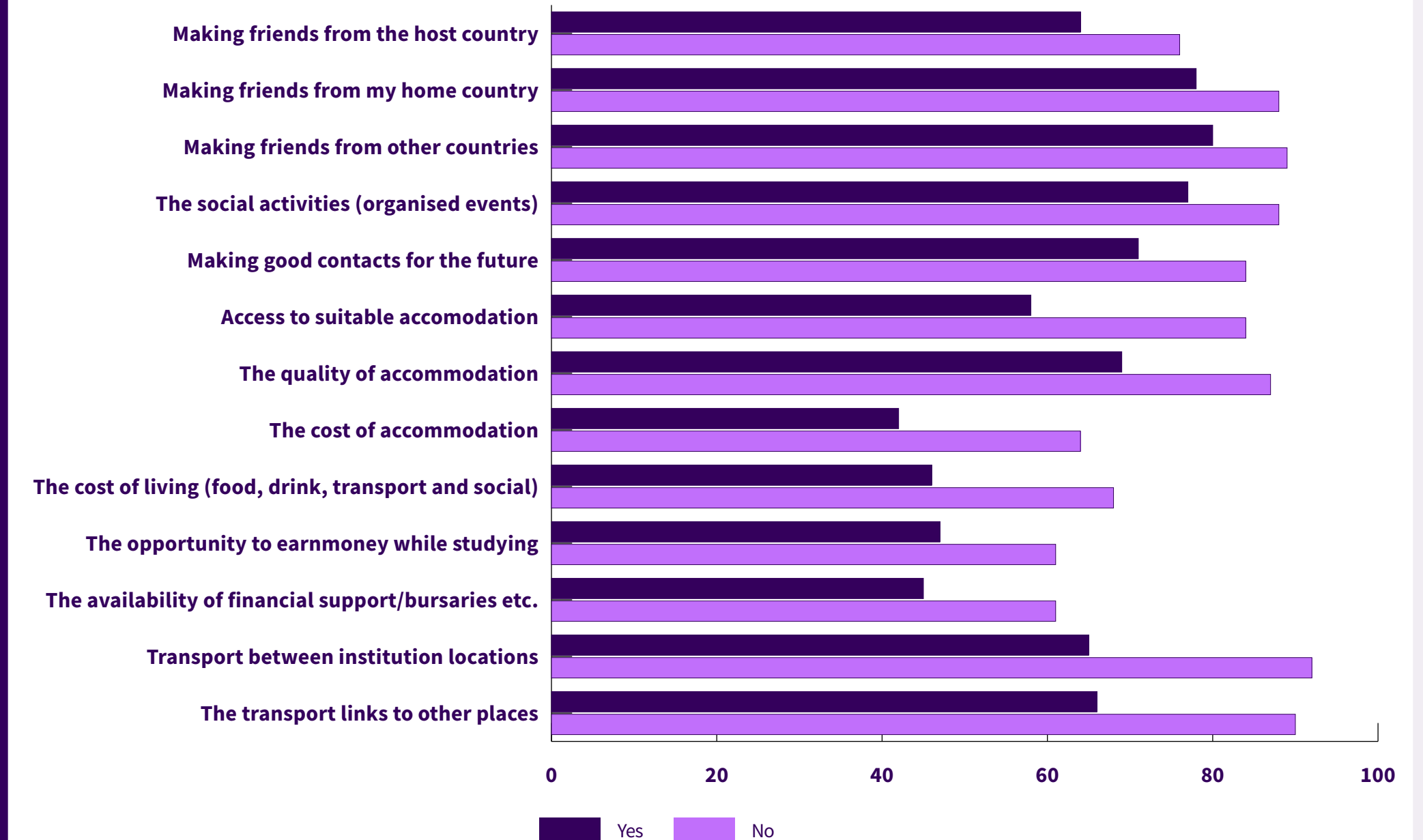


(-12%pts), as well as with making good contacts for the future (-13%pts). They are significantly less satisfied with the access to (-25%pts), the quality (-18%pts), and the cost (-22%pts) of suitable accommodation, and appear to be more impacted by financial issues, with satisfaction with the cost-of-living (-22%pts), opportunities to earn money whilst studying (-14%pts), and the availability of financial support (-16%pts) all dramatically lower than the equivalent scores for students who are not negatively impacted by their commute. Perhaps least surprising, these students are also less satisfied with the transport links both between institution locations and to other places – by 27 and 24% points respectively.

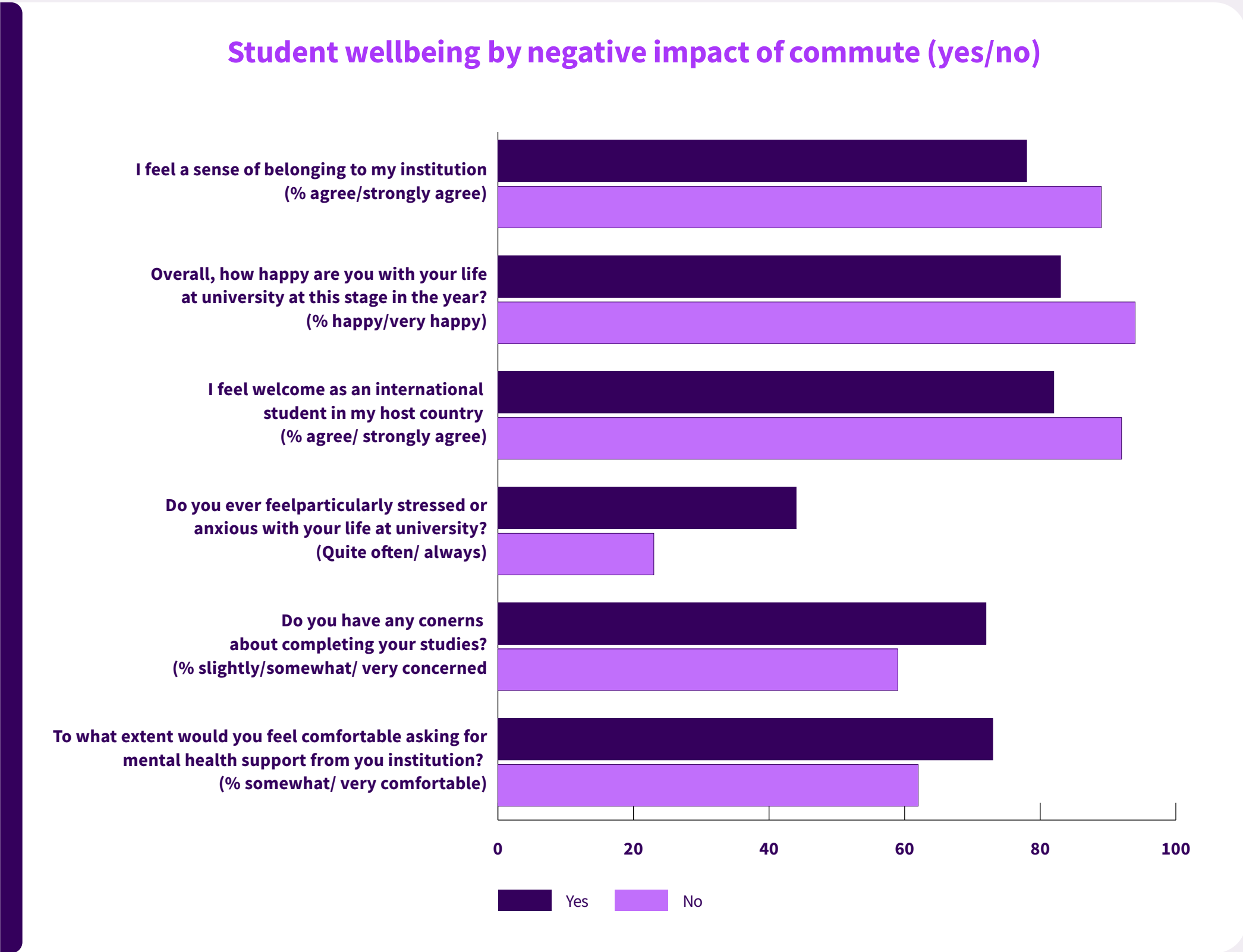
What is perhaps more concerning is in the range of areas in which these students seem to be impacted outside of their immediate living situation – in areas of learning, support and wellbeing. Students who report being negatively impacted by their travel to and from campus are 7 percentage points less satisfied with their overall learning experience than students who report not being negatively impacted. They are less satisfied with virtual communication with other students on their course (-7%pts), communicating with their lecturers and tutors (-5%pts) and getting time from academic staff and personal support with learning when needed (-8%pts). In terms of support, these students are less likely to have used key services such as the library and student advisory, by 5 and 9 percentage points respectively, and are significantly less satisfied with a variety of services, such as counselling, the careers service and disability support (all by 8%pts).

Finally, when looking at student wellbeing, those whose experience is negatively impacted by their commute feel less of a sense of belonging to their institution (-11%pts), are less happy with their life at university (-11%pts), and are less likely to feel welcome as an international student in their host country (-10%pts). Worryingly, these students are substantially more likely to feel stressed either “always” or “quite often” (+21%pts), to have concerns around completing their studies (+14%pts), and are less likely to feel comfortable asking for mental health support (-12%pts).

### Living satisfaction by negative impact of commute (yes/no)



Analysing the data from our new accommodation and travel question block, it is clear that the international commuter student faces several unique challenges which are having a profoundly detrimental impact on their university experience. On a global level, students who report being negatively impacted by their commute to and from campus are substantially less satisfied across a concerning range of metrics. This includes those directly linked to their living experience, with lower satisfaction levels reported across elements relating their accommodation, social life and the cost of living. But these students are also report significantly lower rates of satisfaction in several learning and support elements, as well as feeling less a sense of belonging and experiencing high rates of stress and anxiety. Amidst a seeming “permacrisis” in housing and the cost of living, universities must listen to and sufficiently support these students to ensure they have the same enriching university experiences as their peers based closer to campus.







# Spotlight on: GCC students studying abroad

By Masooma Fadhul, Operations Manager – Middle East

Studying abroad offers international students, and specifically Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) students, invaluable opportunities to gain international exposure, access high-quality education, and develop skills that are increasingly vital in today’s globalised economy. This experience enables students to build cultural awareness, expand their professional networks, and enhance their employability prospects. The opportunity to study in diverse environments helps GCC students broaden their perspectives, equipping them with the tools to navigate cross-cultural interactions effectively. Moreover, exposure to different academic methodologies supports their intellectual growth and critical thinking abilities. These experiences not only contribute to personal development but also prepare students to excel in competitive professional landscapes.

Based on the 2024 International Student Barometer (ISB) data, this article explores the key aspects of the experience of GCC students studying in the UK, highlighting trends, challenges, and opportunities. It examines how these students adapt to new environments while leveraging their education to achieve their aspirations.

## Key influencers in study destination Choices

The ISB 2024 findings reveal that GCC students prioritise the reputation of the host country, the specific course title, and personal safety when selecting a study destination. These factors consistently rank

higher than considerations such as institutional scholarships, opportunities to work while studying, or the availability of further study options. This underscores the importance of countries and institutions maintaining strong reputations and ensuring safe environments to attract students from the GCC region.

	Benchmarks		Student nationality		
% Importance Decision making element	Global	UK	Saudi Arabia	Kuwait	Oman
Specific course title	94%	95%	93%	100%	91%
Country reputation	93%	94%	91%	92%	92%
Cost of study	93%	93%	74%	62%	75%
Personal safety	93%	94%	98%	96%	96%
Availability of accommodation	91%	91%	81%	75%	NSV*
Institution scholarship/bursary	85%	87%	78%	82%	55%
Opportunities for further study	85%	87%	72%	76%	63%
Work opportunities	85%	85%	45%	38%	35%
Opps to work while studying	83%	84%	51%	45%	50%
Permanent residence	76%	76%	39%	40%	16%

\*NSV: No Significant Value. There is insufficient available data to judge this aspect.

# Accommodation planning and satisfaction

Accommodation is a critical aspect of the student experience, affecting both pre-arrival and post-arrival satisfaction levels. While 85% of Omani students organised their accommodation before arriving, lower rates were observed among Saudi Arabian (58%) and Kuwaiti (64%) students. These findings emphasise the importance of effective pre-arrival planning and targeted support to ensure a positive accommodation experience for international students.

% Organised accommodation prior to arriving	Benchmarks		Student nationality		
	Global	UK	Saudi Arabia	Kuwait	Oman
Yes	84%	82%	58%	64%	85%
No	16%	18%	42%	36%	15%

# The Role of Orientation Programmes

Orientation programmes play a vital role in helping international students adapt to their new environment. However, participation rates among GCC students vary significantly, with only 61% of Saudi Arabian students and 59% of Kuwaiti students attending orientation sessions, compared to the global average of 76%.

The primary reasons cited for non-attendance include beginning studies after the orientation programme concluded and a lack of awareness about available sessions. Addressing these barriers through improved communication and flexible programme timings could enhance the onboarding experience for GCC students.

Did you attend/participate in a formal orientation programme at this institution?	Benchmarks		Student nationality		
	Global	UK	Saudi Arabia	Kuwait	Oman
% Attended Orientation	76%	71%	61%	59%	67%
Why not attended					
I started after it took place	35%	38%	27%	23%	NSV*
Didn't know about it	31%	36%	47%	54%	NSV*

\*NSV: No Significant Value. There is insufficient available data to judge this aspect.

# AI in Higher Education: Transforming student experiences

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly integrated into the global education landscape, offering tools that enhance learning and streamline academic processes. According to ISB 2024 data, 57% of students globally reported using AI, with Saudi Arabian (52%) and Kuwaiti (46%) students showing notable adoption rates. Oman lagged significantly, with only 15% of students using AI-based tools.



% Using AI-based tools	Benchmarks		Student nationality		
	Global	UK	Saudi Arabia	Kuwait	Oman
Yes	57%	47%	52%	46%	15%
No	43%	53%	48%	54%	85%
AI positively enhanced learning experience					
Strongly Agree	34%	31%	39%	50%	NSV*
Agree	60%	62%	52%	42%	NSV*
Disagree	5%	5%	6%	8%	NSV*
Strongly Disagree	1%	1%	3%	0%	NSV*
% Frequency of use					
Never	1%	1%	3%	0%	NSV*
Rarely	16%	21%	13%	8%	NSV*
Monthly	13%	15%	19%	33%	NSV*
Weekly	44%	40%	39%	50%	NSV*
Daily	26%	23%	26%	8%	NSV*

\*NSV: No Significant Value. There is insufficient available data to judge this aspect.

The perception of AI as a positive influence is particularly strong among GCC students, with 50% of Kuwaiti students and 39% of Saudi Arabian students strongly agreeing that it improves their learning experience. Weekly usage rates also reflect this enthusiasm, with 50% of Kuwaiti students reporting regular engagement with AI tools. As AI continues to evolve, institutions seeking to attract GCC students should invest in cutting-edge technologies to meet growing expectations.

## Careers Support: Expectations vs satisfaction

The data shows that career support expectations and satisfaction vary across different countries. Specific expectations from careers support such as advice, placement, training, opportunities to meet employers, support, information, networking with alumni, employment and representation are higher in the UK and global benchmark compared to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Oman. However, no expectations were reported by a higher proportion of individuals in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Oman. (This can likely be attributed to the fact that the majority of GCC students are planning on returning to their home nation for employment.)

In terms of satisfaction, the rates were generally higher than their expectations across all countries. Information, support and advice were the most satisfying elements of careers support. Networking with alumni and placement had lower satisfaction rates in Oman compared to other nations. Overall, the UK had higher satisfaction rates than the Global ISB across most aspects, while Saudi Arabia and Kuwait showed strong satisfaction mainly in advice, information, and placement, and much higher than they anticipated in every other area.

Careers support element: Expectations	Benchmarks		Student nationality		
	Global	UK	Saudi Arabia	Kuwait	Oman
Advice	63%	57%	41%	36%	43%
Placement	61%	57%	24%	33%	41%
Training	60%	58%	43%	39%	51%
Opps to meet employers	58%	52%	27%	17%	35%
Support	57%	54%	40%	33%	51%
Information	52%	46%	28%	25%	32%
Network with Alumni	48%	43%	23%	13%	32%
Employment	48%	47%	15%	11%	24%
Representation	32%	30%	14%	17%	24%
None	7%	8%	28%	40%	24%

Careers support element: Satisfaction	Benchmarks		Student nationality		
	Global	UK	Saudi Arabia	Kuwait	Oman
Information	79%	84%	91%	93%	89%
Support	78%	83%	83%	87%	89%
Advice	77%	84%	87%	95%	95%
Opps to meet employers	75%	81%	83%	91%	79%
Training	74%	80%	87%	93%	69%
Network with Alumni	71%	75%	80%	91%	53%
Placement	65%	75%	88%	88%	79%

Example interpretation: Students from Saudi Arabia studying in the UK have an 80% satisfaction score with opportunities to network with Alumni; the average satisfaction score for all international students studying in the UK is 75%.



## Healthcare Support

Dissatisfaction with healthcare among students from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries differs significantly. Despite a high global satisfaction rate of 92%, only 65% of students from Saudi Arabia expressed satisfaction with healthcare services. This contrast is noteworthy, considering Saudi Arabia’s provision of free healthcare, which is accessible at all times to residents through General Practitioners, Emergency Rooms, and specialist doctors, with very affordable private hospitals throughout the country. This could be indicative of unmet expectations or concerns about healthcare accessibility at their overseas institutions.

Recognising these variations is critical to ensuring that GCC students feel sufficiently supported during their foreign studies. Educational institutions should focus on transparent communication about healthcare services and modify their offerings to better align with the students’ needs.

Support element	Benchmarks		Student nationality		
	Global	UK	Saudi Arabia	Kuwait	Oman
Health Centre	92%	90%	65%	91%	NSV

## Conclusions

The experiences of GCC students studying abroad highlight key trends, challenges, and opportunities that influence their academic journeys. Factors such as country reputation, personal safety, and course preferences significantly shape destination choices, while effective accommodation planning and orientation programmes enhance satisfaction. AI adoption is growing among GCC students, underscoring the importance of advanced technologies in education. Careers support expectations and satisfaction vary, with room for improvement in alumni networking and placement services. Additionally, healthcare dissatisfaction among some GCC students reflects the need for better communication and tailored support. Addressing these areas can enhance the overall international student experience for GCC learners.



The global  
student experience

*Focus reports from  
a selection of our  
regions*

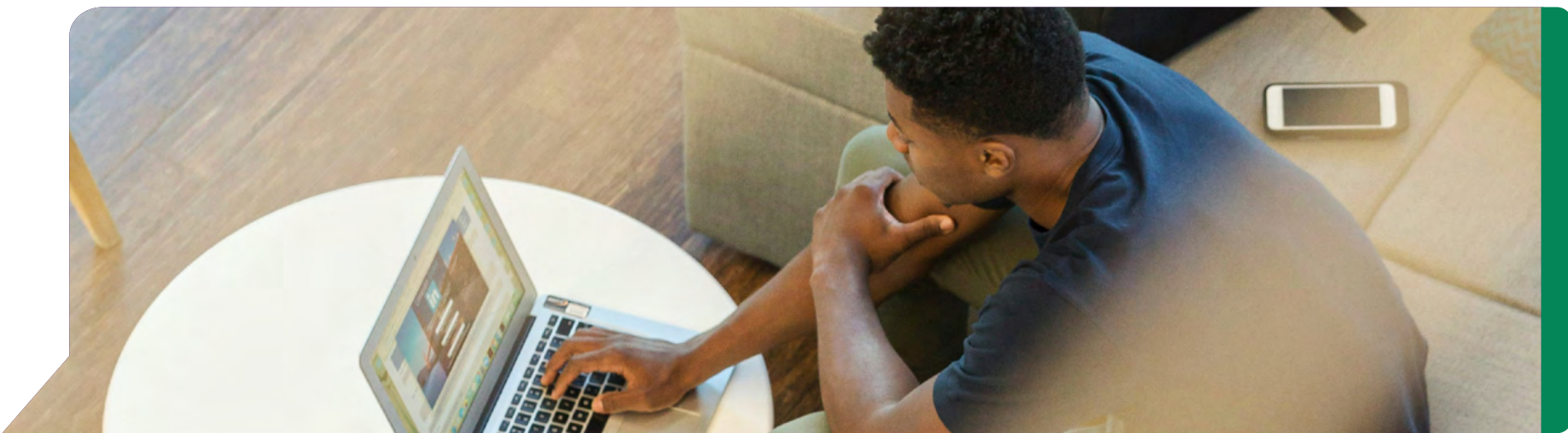




# Regional focus UK

By  
Robin Hallows, Head of Surveys

## Overall satisfaction



90%

Overall satisfaction  
in the UK

*In line with global benchmark*

80%

would recommend  
their institution

*1% above global benchmark*

23

UK Net Promoter  
Score (NPS)

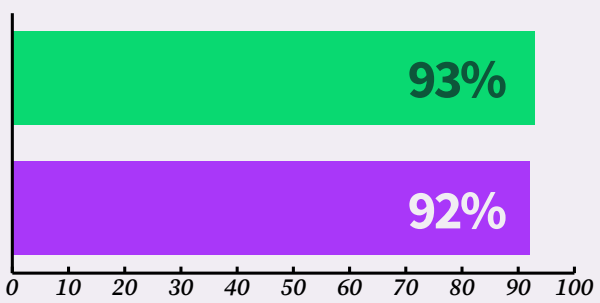
*Global benchmark = 20*

86%

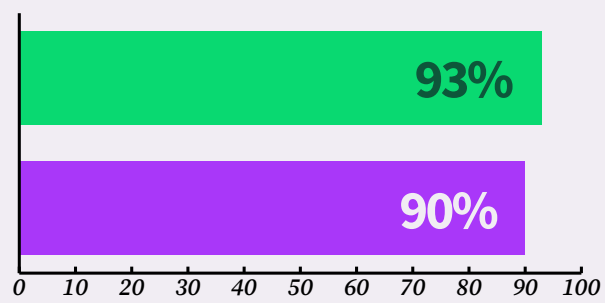
agree their current programme  
is good value for money

*3% above global benchmark*

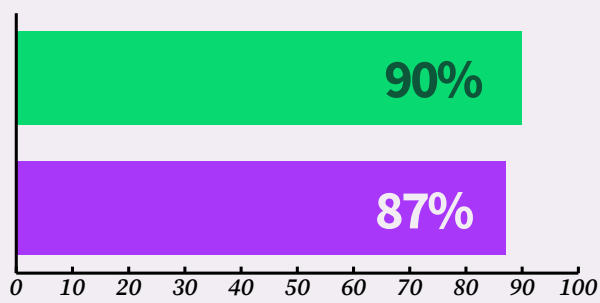
### Arrival



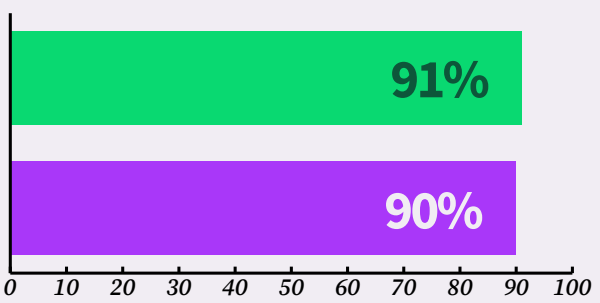
### Learning



### Living



### Support



UK Global ISB

Across UK universities participating in the International Student Barometer (ISB), we captured the voices of 33,000 international students. Their feedback is both enlightening and empowering, offering us a comprehensive understanding of their experiences.

The level of study of our respondents was consistent with 2024; 66% being enrolled on postgraduate taught programmes, 25% undergraduate programmes, 5% on PGR. Similarly, we saw very little change in the mix of nationalities of our international students. 25% were from India, 15% Nigeria, 14% China, 9% Pakistan and 4% from Nepal.

Although slightly lower than in 2024, 83% of students still identified the UK as their first choice for higher education—a testament to the exceptional experiences provided. The satisfaction scores across the on-campus experience reinforce this, as do the increasing likelihoods of students recommending the UK as a study destination. Our Net Promoter Score (NPS) rose to 23, up from 20, reflecting growing confidence in the UK’s appeal.

The arrival experience remains a standout strength, outperforming global ISB benchmarks, with individual satisfaction scores either remaining steady or improving slightly on the previous year. Understanding how their course of study will work —what we call “study sense”—emerged as a critical factor for incoming students, an area worthy of prioritisation.

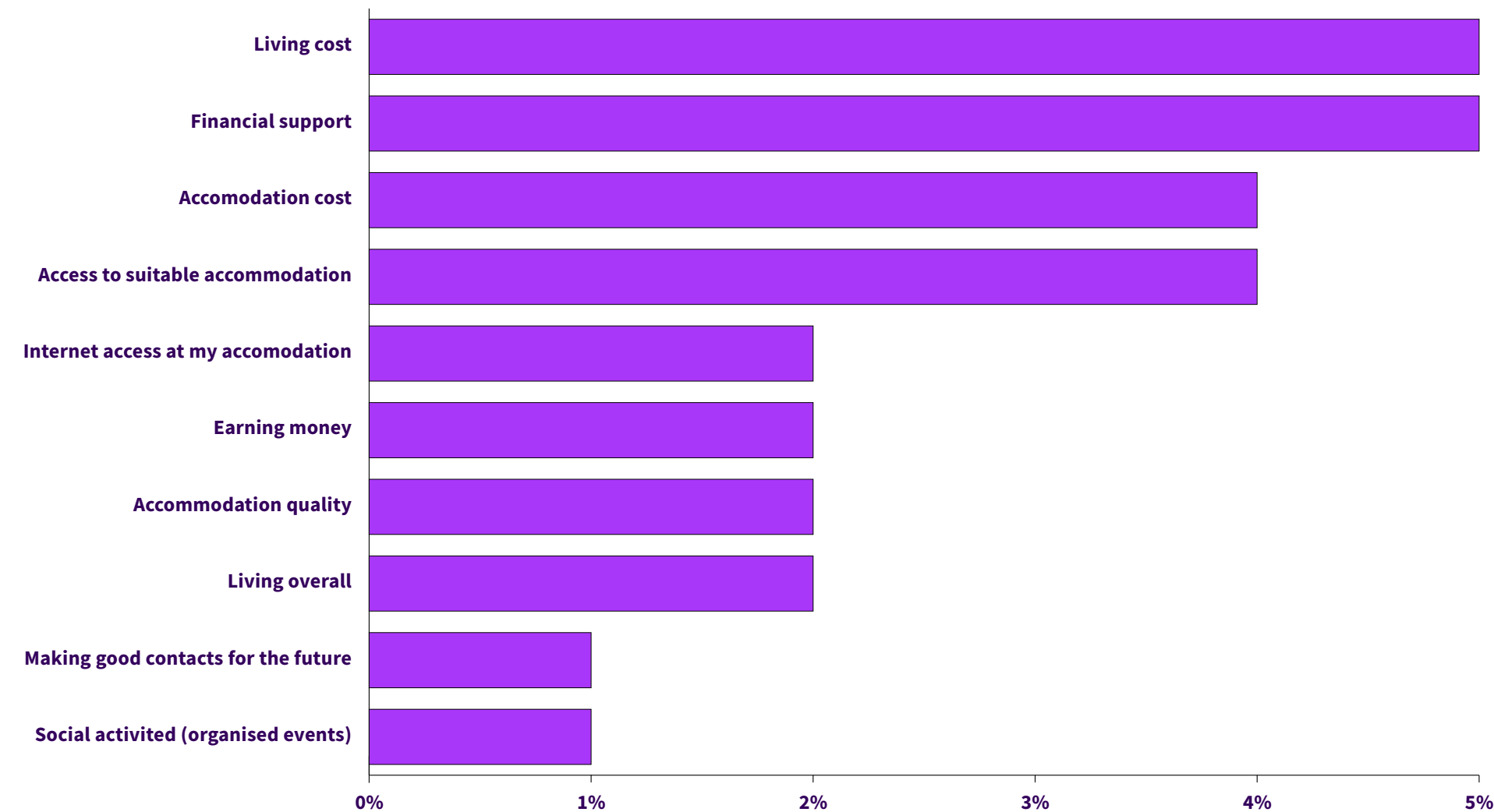
The learning experience itself consistently shines, reflected in consistently high satisfaction scores. The subject expertise of our lecturers, teaching ability and the quality of the lectures all remaining above benchmark. Our libraries, laboratories and learning spaces continue to be well regarded and, given the emphasis students put on careers, it’s pleasing to see that once again the UK outshines global benchmarks when it comes to employability.

Student satisfaction			
	UK	Global	Variance
Employability	87%	83%	3.7%
Academics’ careers advice	84%	78%	5.6%
Opps for work experience	81%	75%	5.3%

We saw some interesting changes within the living experience. Satisfaction with both living and accommodation cost unexpectedly increased 5 and 4 % points respectively. As those living in the UK all know, costs have most certainly not decreased since 2024, but our universities are perhaps being more up-front in setting expectations around costs. Access to suitable accommodation, which saw a huge dip in 2022/23, has also bounced back, clearly impacted by the reduction in those bringing their families with them. The living section of the ISB is also where we see that international students studying in the UK feel safe and secure. This is of increasing importance, for obvious reasons, but also an aspect that is becoming more and more important as a study destination decision factor, particularly for students from China.



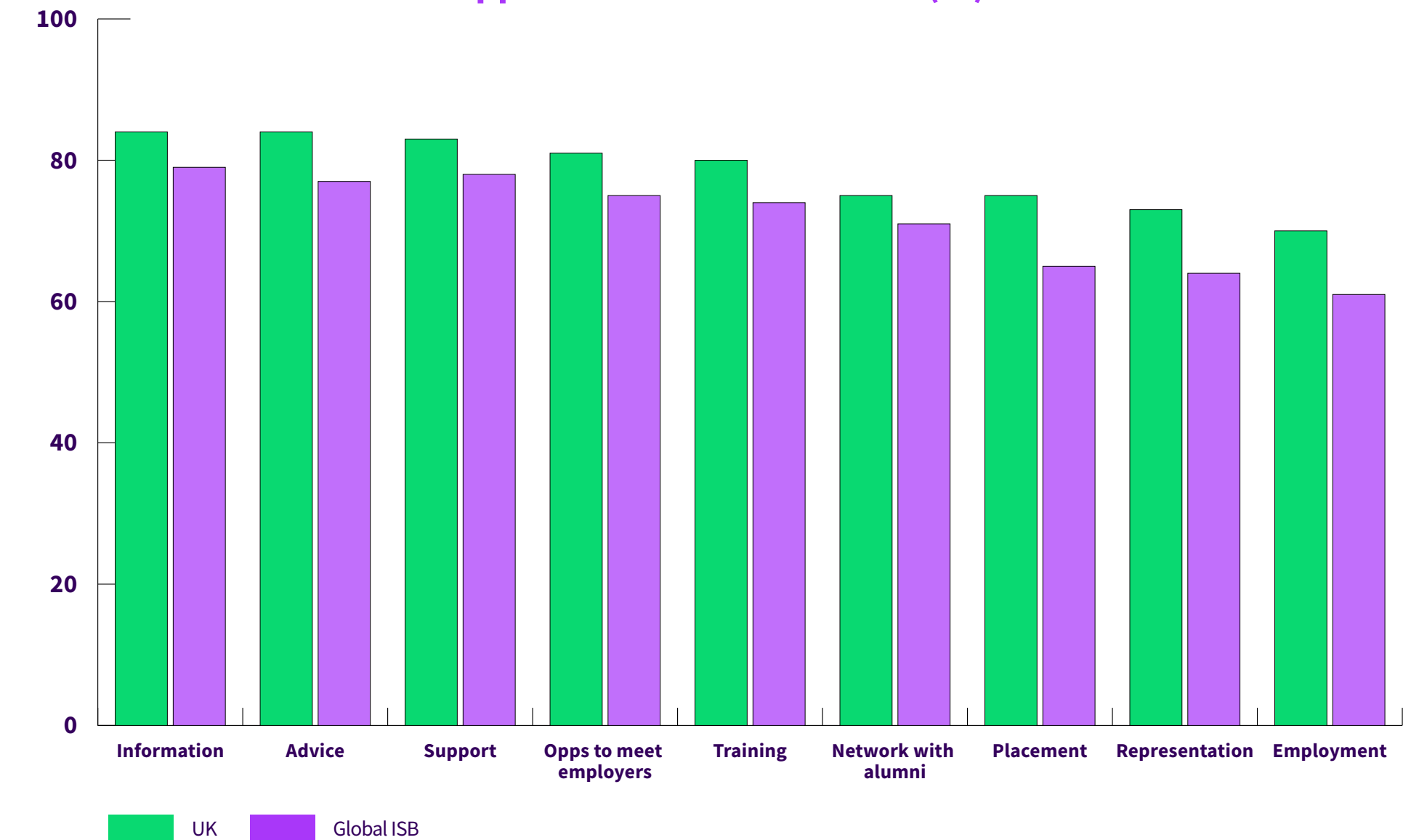
### Largest improvements in student satisfaction - UK



Overall satisfaction with support increased 1% point on 2024. Perhaps unsurprisingly we only ask for students' satisfaction on a service they've used, and in the usage stats there is an interesting difference. Personal tutors appear to be much more frequently used by students studying in the UK than elsewhere, with usage of 44% vs 26% (globally). Similarly, we saw higher usage of the careers advisory service with 28% using the service, vs 22% elsewhere. Satisfaction scores across the many support services were generally high with an average satisfaction score of 94%; and when compared against the Global ISB only satisfaction with the health centre was a little behind.

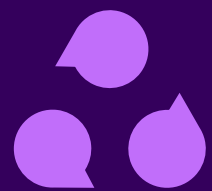
Yet again, employability was at the top of students' minds when it came to deciding where to study (96% of students rating Future career impact important or very important). The UK remains strong in this space, with higher satisfaction around many employability aspects both within learning (as mentioned above), but also through the support services delivered centrally.

### How satisfied are you with the following types of employment / careers support from this institution (%)



These strong results in the employability theme have resulted in our international students being more likely to feel prepared to meet their career goals. 91% of students reporting they felt prepared or very prepared, compared to 87%. The positive difference was most pronounced for final year students where preparedness was at 88% vs 83% in the Global ISB.

These findings highlight the UK's enduring appeal as a world-leading destination for international students. Empowered by the ISB, UK universities continue to make improvements in the areas of most importance to international students. As such, our institutions are increasing their competitive stance on the global higher education stage, enabling their students to achieve their aspirations by delivering exceptional academic, living, and employability experiences.



# ISB results UK - at a glance

“We’re competing in the same pools as some other universities, and we’re working more often than not with the same agents. We need to know what other institutions are doing and get a sense of how we are doing compared to them in order to develop our competitive edge.”

Christopher Sharpe, Director of International and Partnerships, University College Birmingham

## UK overall

Highest levels of satisfaction	98% Library service	97% Feeling safe and secure on campus	96% Submitting work remotely
Lowest levels of satisfaction	63% Earning money	63% Accommodation cost	64% Financial support

## UK vs global benchmark

Largest positive variance	10.7% Living cost (Food, drink, transport and social)	9.4% Employment (Securing a job for me)	9.2% Placement (Finding relevant work experience/ work placement opportunities)
Largest negative variance	-1.5% Health centre	-0.6% Finance office	NB: Only two elements of the student experience were below benchmark.





# Regional focus Europe

By  
Nannette Ripmeester, Regional Director -  
Europe and N.America

## Overall satisfaction



90%

Overall satisfaction  
in Europe

*In line with global benchmark*

80%

would recommend  
their institution

*1% above global benchmark*

21

Europe Net Promoter  
Score (NPS)

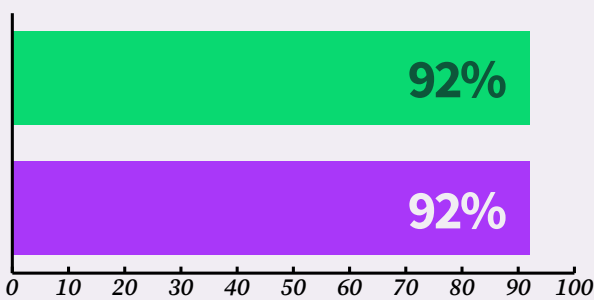
*Global benchmark = 20*

86%

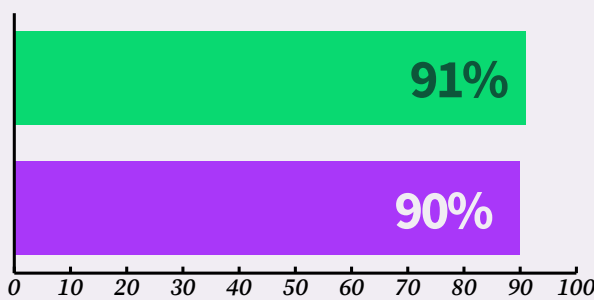
agree their current programme  
is good value for money

*3% above global benchmark*

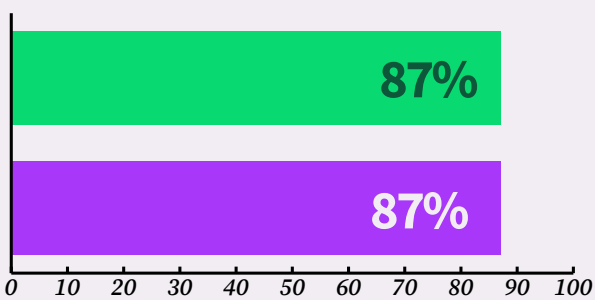
### Arrival



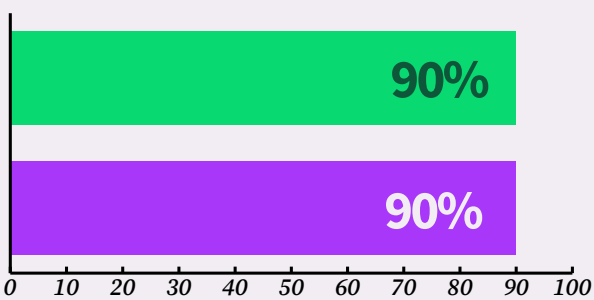
### Learning



### Living



### Support



Europe Global ISB

Once again, Europe proves to be a top destination for international students. In line with the positive trend of previous years, and the latest global benchmark, the 2024-25 European ISB results reveal a high overall satisfaction score of 90%. A notable achievement can be identified in recommendation rates. With 80% of students indicating they would recommend their Higher Education Institution (HEI), Europe surpasses the global benchmark by 1 percentage point and ranks first globally for this key indicator.

This upward trend is echoed in the region's Net Promoter Score (NPS), increasing from 19 in the previous year to 21 in 2024-25, placing Europe one point above the global average. In addition, perceptions of value have also improved, with 86% of students stating that their programme offers good value for money. This marks a 2-percentage point increase from the previous year and places Europe 3 points above the global benchmark.

What makes students in Europe feel like they are getting a better return on investment compared to those studying elsewhere? In this regional feature, we take a closer look at how Europe performs across the various components of the ISB to better grasp the region's strengths and where more attention is required.

### *The European experience: a lifestyle that resonates with students*

According to the 2024-25 ISB, international students in Europe are the happiest globally. This signals more than just academic satisfaction; it reflects a broader environment that prioritises wellbeing, inclusion, and overall quality of life. Europe particularly stands out in the area of Inclusivity, outperforming the global benchmark across all measured categories, from Gender identity and Sexual orientation to Race or ethnicity, Nationality, Religious beliefs, and Mental or physical disability. Safety is another defining strength, reflected in the 97% of students who report “Feeling safe and secure

on campus”, making it one of the highest-scoring elements in the survey. Mental wellbeing indicators further reinforce this picture. In particular, Europe has the highest percentage of students who report never feeling anxious or stressed (20%, compared to 17% globally), and the lowest share who report always feeling anxious or stressed (7%, against 8% globally).

Beyond personal wellbeing and safety, students also highly appreciate their physical surroundings and connectivity. Satisfaction rates for Campus environment (94%), Surroundings around institution (93%), and Transport links to other places (86%) are all above the global benchmark, suggesting that the overall living and mobility experience in Europe significantly enhances students' satisfaction and strengthens their perception of value for money. These results underline Europe's ability to provide a well-rounded experience, combining quality education with a safe, inclusive, and vibrant lifestyle that deeply resonates with international students.

*“We are happy to get such a good score from our international students about our campus. We agree with them (!), but it is always nice to hear others say they like your campus too. Our campus is a wonderful place to learn, work and live. Our international students become part of an international community with 13,000 students and 3,700 staff members, representing around a hundred nationalities. It feels like a small city, with everything you need. We are proud to hear our international students say they find our campus ‘really beautiful!’”*

**Inge Broekman, Advisor Policy & Analytics, University of Twente, The Netherlands**



### The employability paradox

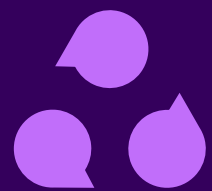
However, beneath this well-rounded student experience lies a clear paradox. While Europe leads in wellbeing, safety, and inclusivity, it falls short in several of the most critical areas that shape students’ learning satisfaction and likelihood to recommend their institution. In fact, Europe underperforms in the global top 5 elements identified through a derived importance analysis, namely Course organisation, Employability, Quality of lectures, Course content, and Academics’ careers advice. An area requiring urgent attention is Europe’s performance in dimensions related to Future career impact – the single most influential factor in international students’ choice of study destination, identified by 96% as a key priority. Despite its significance, Europe falls below the global benchmark in the Employability, Academics’ career advice, and Opportunities for work experience components from the Learning satisfaction area, as well as across all elements of Career support satisfaction.

The contrast becomes even more pronounced when UK institutions are excluded from the European ISB. For instance, satisfaction with Employability drops from 81% in the European benchmark including UK HEIS to just 73% excluding them, compared to a global benchmark of 83%. A similar pattern appears in Academics’ career advice, which falls from 75% to 64%, and in Opportunities for work experience, which declines from 72% to 60%, while the global average remains at 75%. Each of the elements mentioned above underlines the link between academic learning and the connection to the world of work, exactly the area that matters most for this generation of students when it comes to recommending their international study experience. This downward trend is also visible across all components of Career support satisfaction. Europe falls below the global benchmark by 1 to 3 percentage points when UK institutions are included. However, when UK institutions are excluded, the gap widens substantially, reaching differences of 9 to 24 percentage points, depending on the indicator.

Future career impact: the Europe-UK gap in student satisfaction

	Student satisfaction rate		
	Europe incl. UK institutions	Europe excl. UK institutions	Global benchmark
Employability	81%	73%	83%
Academics’ career advice	75%	64%	78%
Opportunities for work experience	72%	60%	75%

These disparities suggest that Europe’s performance in employability and career-related areas is rather concerning. The fact that UK institutions consistently score higher in these domains makes us realise Europe needs to up their game here. These findings point to a significant misalignment between what students expect from their institutions and what those institutions currently deliver. If European HEIs want to sustain and strengthen their global competitiveness, they must prioritise employability as a core tenet of the international student experience. However, the good news is that the foundation is already strong: Europe ranks first globally for student recommendation and is home to the happiest international students. These are powerful assets. By paying closer attention to employability and career development, being transparent with students, and managing their expectations, European institutions have the opportunity to lead the way, provided they enhance the ROI of employability.



# ISB results Europe - at a glance

“It’s a fantastic feature (the derived importance reporting), something my colleagues and I really appreciate. It brings objectivity to conversations with our schools, departments and academics; and it helps us understand how best to allocate resources to develop certain aspects of the university. You can rarely get that information from other surveys being run, so again, the ISB is quite unique in that respect.”

Toni Kaila, Specialist for International Affairs,  
Aalto University

## Europe overall

Highest levels  
of satisfaction

97%

Library service

97%

Feeling safe and secure on  
campus

96%

Submitting work remotely

Lowest levels  
of satisfaction

49%

Finding accommodation

55%

Earning money

55%

Financial support

## Europe vs global benchmark

Largest positive  
variance

3%

Value for money

2%

Visa advice

2%

Accommodation cost

Largest negative  
variance

-3%

Academics’ career advice

-3%

Health centre

-3%

Making friends from this  
country

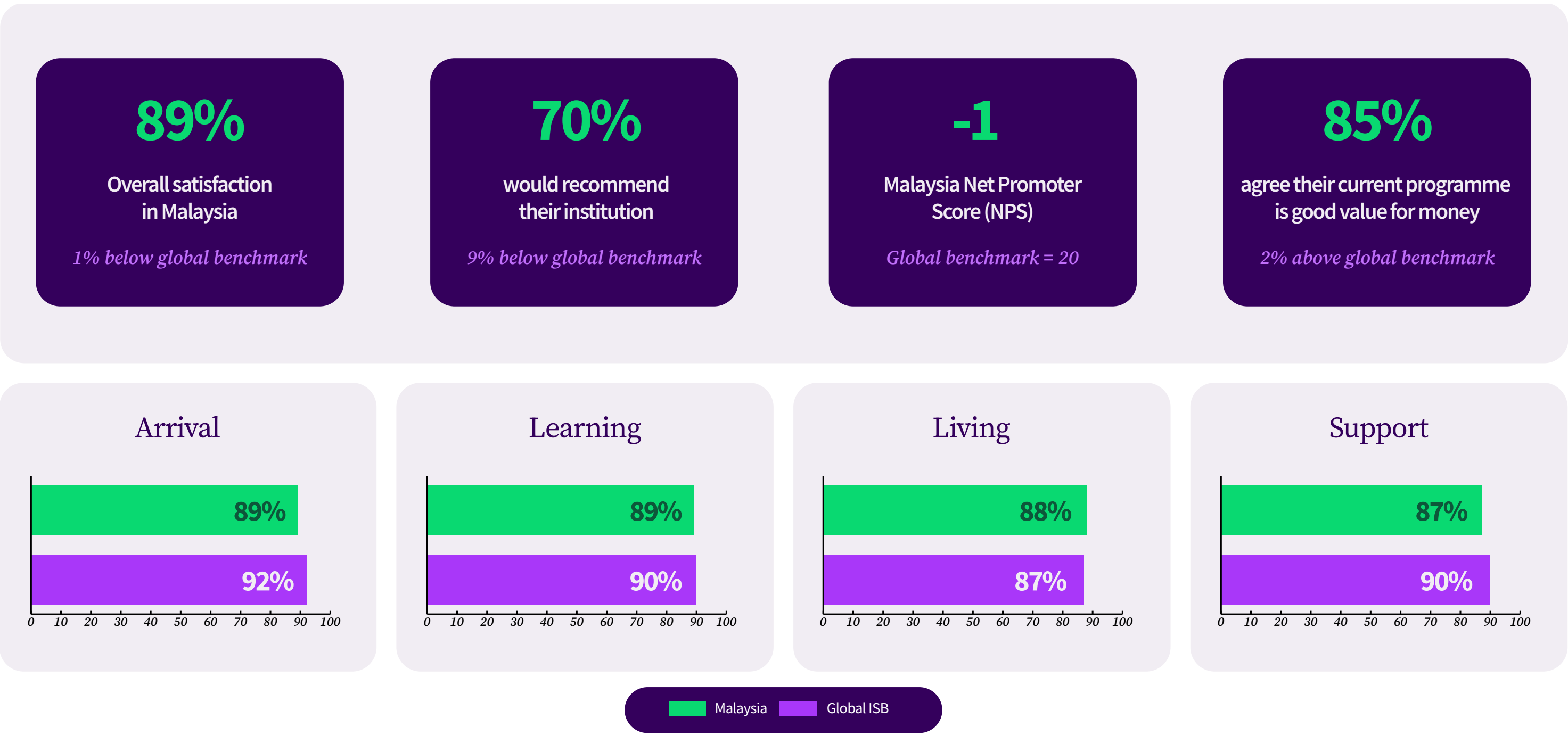
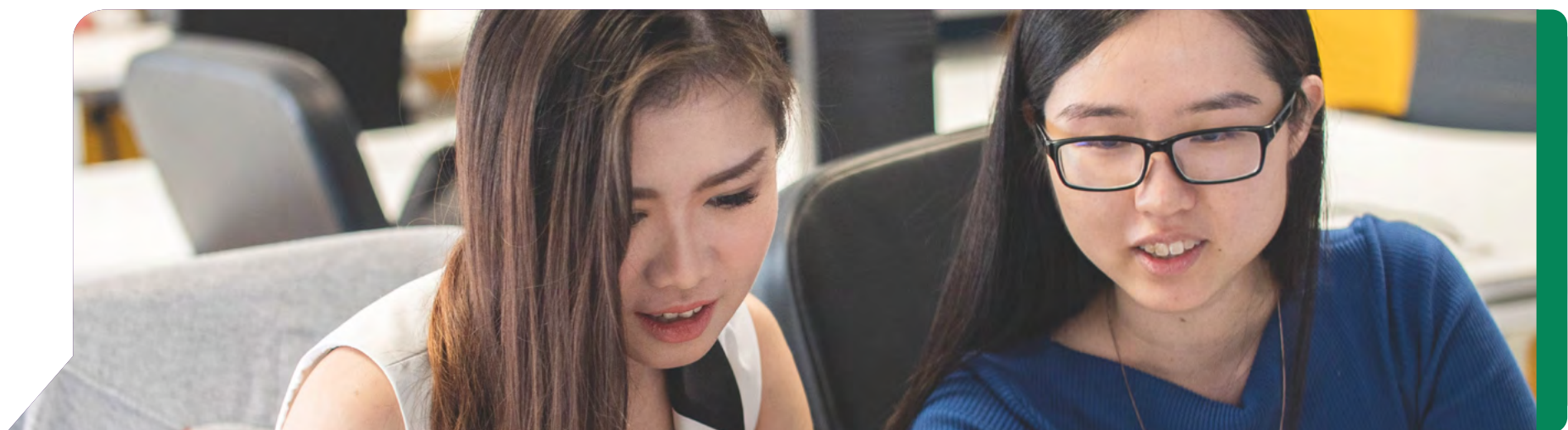




# Regional focus Malaysia

By  
Guy Perring, Regional Director - Asia

## Overall satisfaction



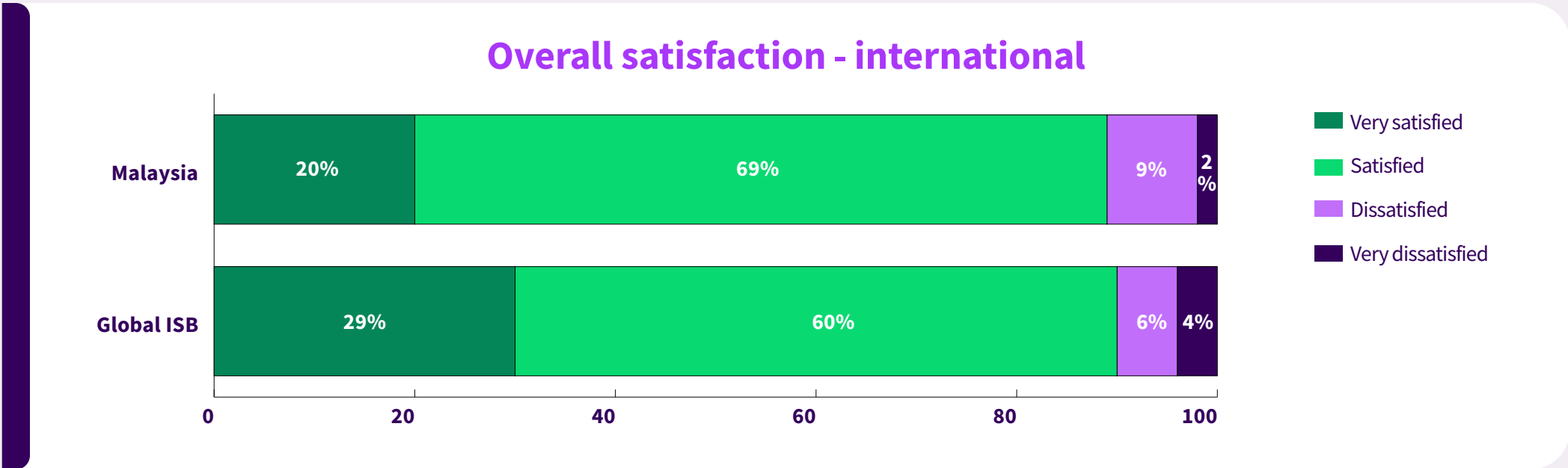
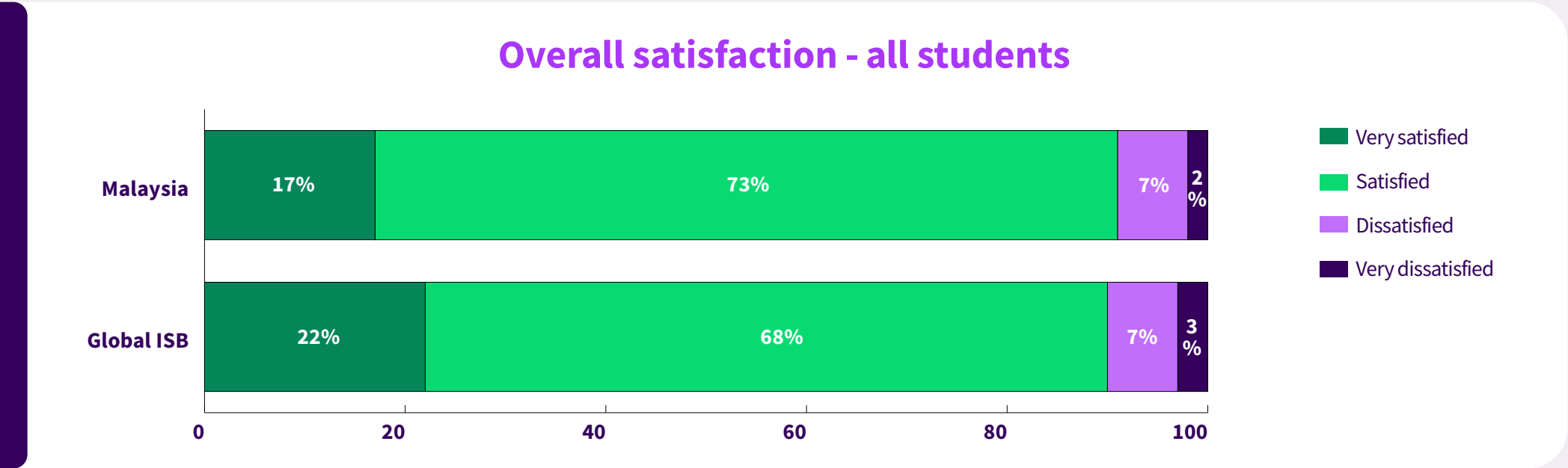
Malaysia has quietly emerged as a major international hub for international students over the last 15 years. Various initiatives by successive governments to promote this and encourage the setting up of overseas transnational education campuses has spurred on this growth. As with most destinations, the specter of COVID caused major decline in numbers and only now have numbers reached pre COVID levels. Targets of 250,000 international by the end of 2025 have been set.

We have been working in Malaysia for the last 15 years and have been privileged to see enormous growth in the quality of the provision and hence growing satisfaction for both local and international students.

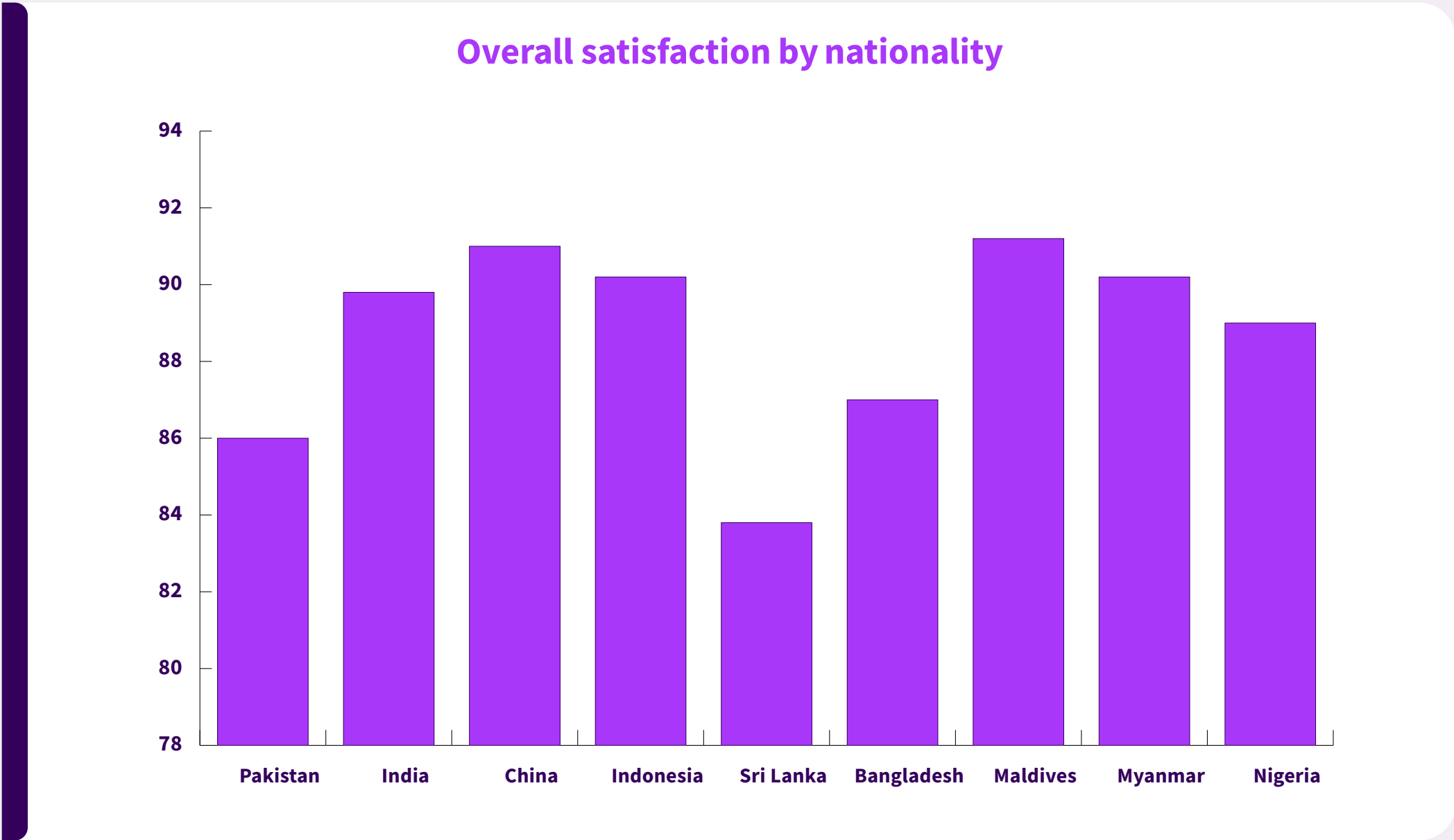
Focus on the international student

We’ve surveyed over 2,000 international students this year within Malaysia and around 15,000 domestic students. Overall satisfaction remains high at 90% of those who indicate they are either satisfied or very satisfied, while international students are slightly less satisfied with 89% saying they are satisfied or very satisfied.

As can be seen in the graphic for international students, 20% of those who indicated they were very satisfied compares less favourably with the international benchmark of 29% of students who claim they are very satisfied with their overall experience.



When we look at the nationalities and compare satisfaction rates both Chinese, Maldivians, Burmese and Indonesian students are the most satisfied nationalities at 91%.



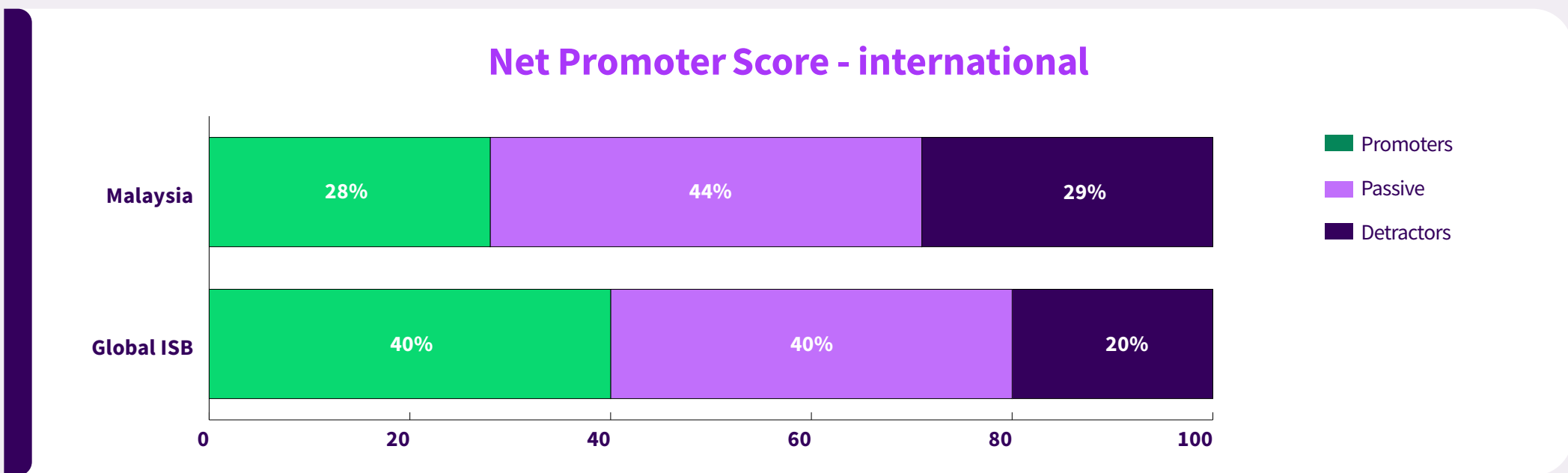


## Net Promoter Score

One of our increasing focuses is on the Net Promoter Score (NPS) which is commonly used across other industries, but is less prevalent in higher education. We would argue that institutions should increasingly focus on this metric despite it coming from a customer-centric mindset which higher education has at times been reluctant to embrace.

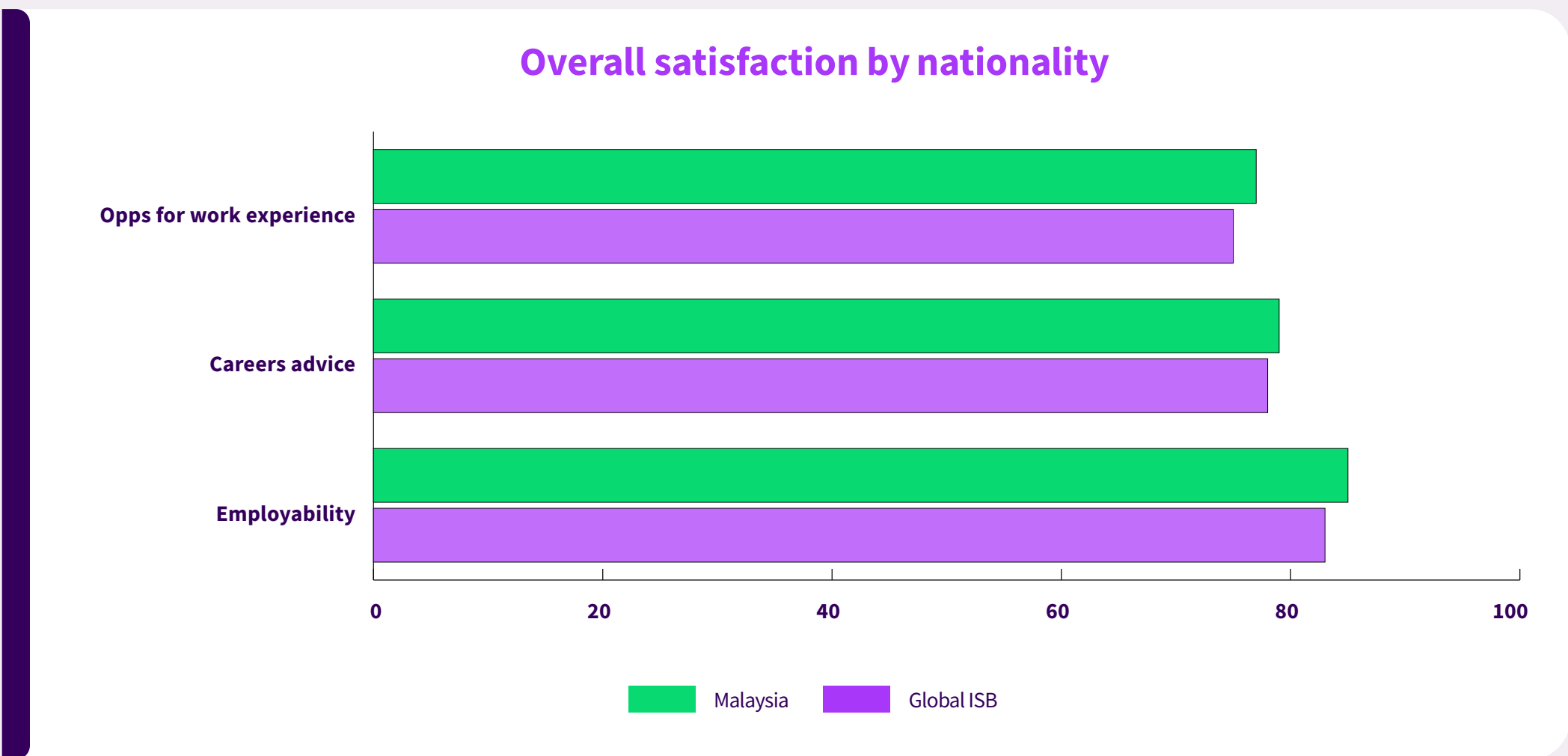
So, we asked the question “How likely is it that you would recommend the institution to a family or friend, on a scale of one to 10?” If you give a 9 or 10 you are a promoter. If you give a score below 6 you are a detractor.

The challenge for Malaysia is that 44% of students are relatively passive and only 28% of students give nines or 10s compared to 40% globally. We know that ‘word of mouth’ is such a powerful tool for student recruitment and Malaysian institutions need to be mindful of this significant gap and seek to negate the impact by addressing the key issues that affect students’ recommendation.



## Getting the employability agenda right

Malaysia has real strengths in the areas of employability which are significantly ahead of the benchmark. We have a number of questions related to this in the learning section. This includes employability (“learning that will help me get a good job”), academics careers advice and opportunities for work experience.



The excellence in this area reflects Malaysia’s institutional desires to ensure international students are primed and ready for the workplace. They have also been incremental improvements since 2023 by 1 to 2%.

## *Living – an affordable destination*

When we turn to our living section which covers, not just life on the campus, but also embraces areas such as overall living cost and accommodation, Malaysia unsurprisingly scores well in areas related to price since it is far more affordable for international students than the traditional destinations of the United Kingdom, Australia and the USA. For example, the living cost globally has a 59% satisfaction rate whereas Malaysia is 79%. This is also coupled with positive views about the cost of accommodation at 64% compared to 55% globally, and also financial support which indicates the range of bursaries and scholarships available both from the local institutions and sending governments.

## *Helping international students work whilst studying*

But Malaysia does struggle with the ability of assisting international students to earn money while studying, which is only at a 36% satisfaction rate compared to 57% globally. Some laws and regulations have been changed to make it easier for international students to work while studying, but it is still problematic, and local companies tend to be less enthusiastic to embrace the value that international students would bring to their companies and tend to rely on local hires. Institutions need to advocate for both changes in the law and lobby local companies to recruit international students.

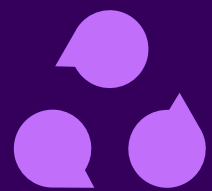
## *Ensuring effective integration*

Where Malaysia has always succeeded is in their ability to integrate international students within that campus. We have some questions that act as a proxy for successful international integration such as making friends with your own country, making friends with other countries and making friends from the host country.

Malaysia scores an 83% satisfaction rate when comparing making friends from the host country with the global benchmark of 72%. I would argue that both Australian and UK students have a lot to learn from their Malaysian counterparts in ensuring a welcoming environment within their institutions.

With the current global uncertainties and complex political dimensions in some of the major traditional destinations which perhaps doesn't favour international students, Malaysia clearly has a golden opportunity to benefit from some of this uncertainty and exceed its targets of 250,000 international students. It can only do this though by ensuring its current students are delighted and likely to recommend to others thinking of coming. The aggregated national and global data presented here gives some indications on the areas Malaysian institutions should consider in this regard, and we have an abundance of data that provides analysis into the correlation between various aspects of the student experience and students' propensity to recommend the institution to others. By gaining that deep understanding of their student populations, all institutions can empower themselves to not only continuously improve the student experience, but also leverage their students and alumni to help achieve their recruitment goals.





# ISB results Malaysia - at a glance

“At the University of Nottingham Malaysia, we are committed to delivering an exceptional student experience as we continue to grow and expand our offerings. The Student Barometer has become an invaluable tool for measuring and understanding our students’ perceptions across all aspects of university life.

As we implement new initiatives and make strategic investments, the Barometer allows us to assess their impact with clarity and precision. The ability to compare our performance locally, regionally, and globally provides vital context that supports continuous improvement. The insights we gain directly inform our planning and decision-making, ensuring that every step we take meaningfully enhances the student experience.”

Patrick Joseph - Registrar, University of Nottingham, Malaysia

## Malaysia overall

Highest levels of satisfaction	96% Faith provision	96% Submitting work remotely	95% Library service
Lowest levels of satisfaction	36% Earning money (The opportunity to earn money while studying)	60% Financial support (The availability of financial support / bursaries, etc.)	64% Accommodation cost

## Malaysia vs global benchmark

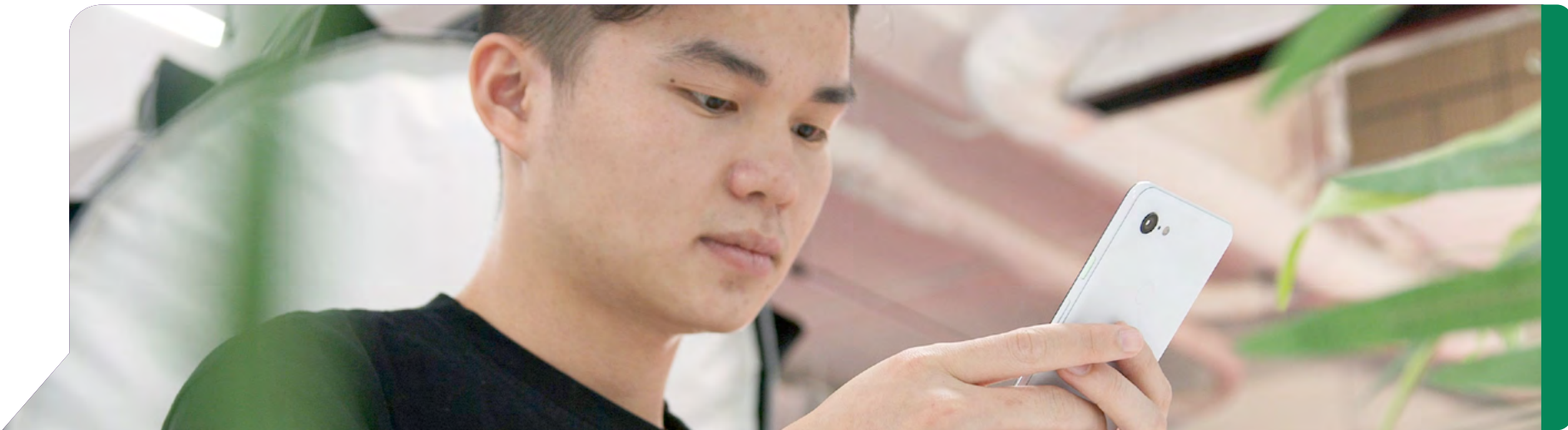
Largest positive variance	20% Living cost (Food, drink, transport and social)	11% Making friends from this country	10% Opportunity to teach (For PG only)
Largest negative variance	-20% Earning Money	-0.6% Internet access at my accommodation	NB: Only two elements of the student experience were below benchmark.



# Regional focus Singapore

By  
Guy Perring, Regional Director - Asia

## Overall satisfaction



89%

Overall satisfaction  
in Singapore

1% below global benchmark

70%

would recommend  
their institution

9% below global benchmark

1

Singapore Net Promoter  
Score (NPS)

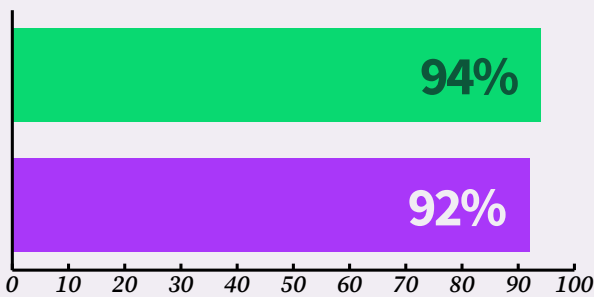
Global benchmark = 20

90%

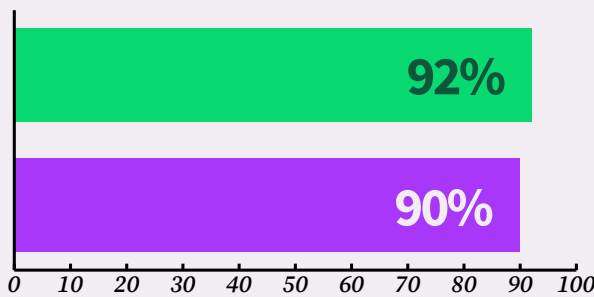
agree their current programme  
is good value for money

7% above global benchmark

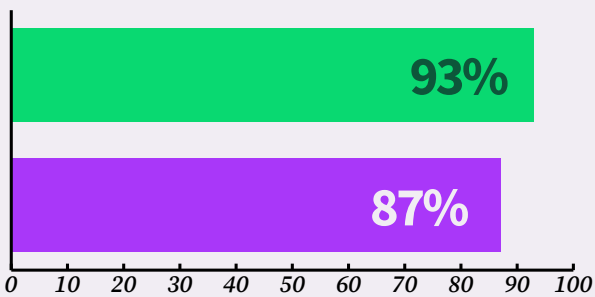
### Arrival



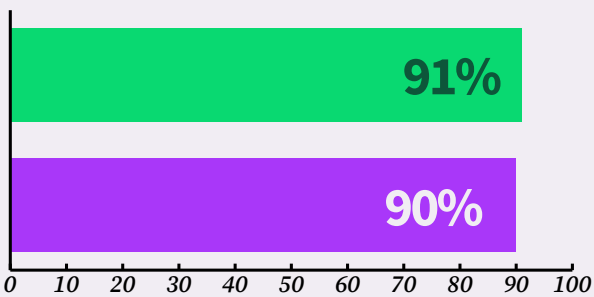
### Learning



### Living



### Support



Singapore Global ISB



### Laser focus on employability in Singapore

The International Student Barometer surveyed over 2,800 students in 2024 in Singapore. In common with international students globally their decision to study in Singapore is driven by future employability considerations and 97% of international students in Singapore point to future career impact and earning potential as the key factors in their decision-making process.

So, does Singapore to deliver on this promise?

The answer is a resounding yes with high scores in all the indices related to employability in our learning section, and, as can be seen, the differences between Singapore and the rest of the world are considerable. Note the percentage scores are students who are both satisfied and very satisfied.

Student satisfaction - employability elements

	Global	Singapore	Variance
Employability	89%	83%	6.50%
Academics' career advice	89%	78%	10.80%
Opportunities for work experience	86%	75%	11.00%

For employability, the actual question asked is “Learning that will help me get a good job”. So, this is manifested in the ability of students being able to see the connection between the curriculum, classroom activities and their future careers. Much of our work in Singapore is in the private sector and those institutions have a laser focus on employability and their range of subjects reflect this with business, engineering, life sciences, finance, and technology.

It can also be seen that Singaporean academics also give great career advice, and this is because the majority are often drawn from industry and have not spent all their working life in academia.

Looking at the data, we can also see some significant improvement in these areas by 2%-3% since 2023.

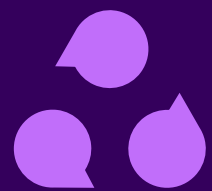
In addition, in our living section and also the support services we also have some indices that relate to future careers.

### Building a network

For example, we ask students to rate their satisfaction with “Making good contacts for the future”. In Singapore, international students have a 91% satisfaction rating which is 10% ahead of the global benchmark which sits at 81%. This question relates to building a network for their future whilst at university – and the high rating reflects Singaporean institutions’ efforts to provide both contact with local and international employees, as well as social clubs and events that create professional networks across the institution.

In the support section, we also look at Careers Support from the Careers Office, and again Singapore does well in this area with 94% of international students stating that they are either satisfied or very satisfied which is + 4% ahead of the global benchmark at 90%. This also represents a 4% improvement since 2023.

The data from the International Student Barometer underscores Singapore’s strong commitment to enhancing employability among international students. With high satisfaction scores across key indices such as academic relevance to future careers, career advice, work experience opportunities, and professional networking, Singapore consistently outperforms the global average. The targeted focus on industry-aligned curricula, practical career support, and opportunities for building professional networks reflect the nation’s strategic emphasis on preparing students for successful careers. As a result, Singapore not only meets but exceeds students’ expectations in fostering employability, making it a compelling destination for those prioritising future career prospects alongside quality education.



# ISB results Singapore - at a glance

“At PSB Academy, we are deeply focused on empowering our students with the skills, mindset, and environment they need to thrive in the workforce of tomorrow. As part of this commitment, we have invested significantly in upgrading our campuses to create future-ready learning spaces that support innovation and industry relevance.

The Student Barometer plays a key role in measuring the effectiveness of these investments. It gives us actionable insights into the student experience, helping us ensure our initiatives are aligned with our employability agenda. Beyond internal feedback, the Barometer also provides valuable local, regional, and global benchmarks that help us stay competitive and student-focused in a rapidly evolving education landscape. The feedback we receive directly informs how we refine our strategies, ensuring that our students are not only satisfied but truly prepared for life beyond graduation.”

Dr. Charles Ong, Dean, PSB Academy

## Singapore overall

Highest levels of satisfaction	99% Health centre	98% Feeling safe and secure on campus	97% Eco friendly attitude
Lowest levels of satisfaction	66% Earning money (The opportunity to earn money while studying)	76% Accommodation cost	76% Financial support (The availability of financial support / bursaries, etc.)

## Singapore vs global benchmark

Largest positive variance	20% Financial support	11% Careers advice from academics	11% Visa advice (For PG only)
Largest negative variance	-1% Physical Library	N/A	N/A



# Regional focus North America

By  
Nannette Ripmeester, Regional Director -  
Europe and N.America

## Overall satisfaction



89%

Overall satisfaction  
in North America

1% below global benchmark

77%

would recommend  
their institution

2% below global benchmark

31

North America Net Promoter  
Score (NPS)

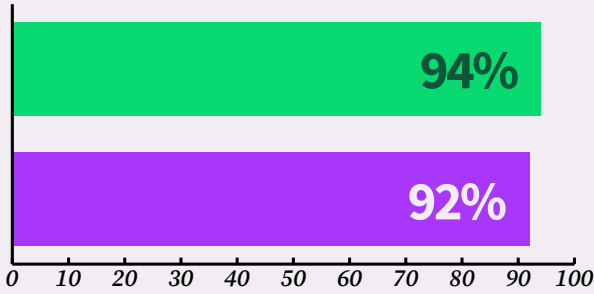
Global benchmark = 20

83%

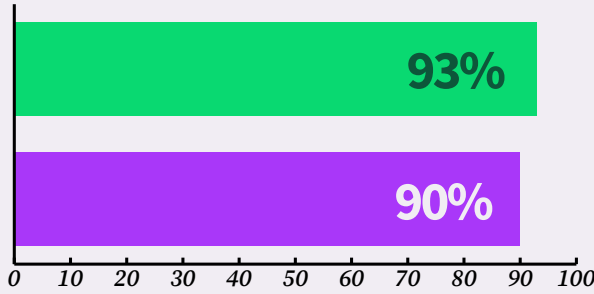
agree their current programme  
is good value for money

In line with global benchmark

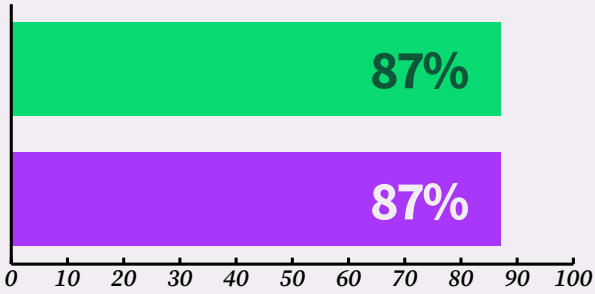
### Arrival



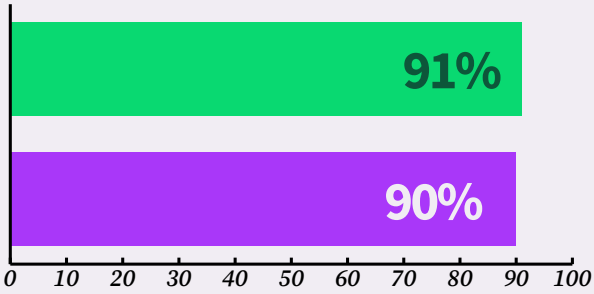
### Learning



### Living



### Support



North America Global ISB



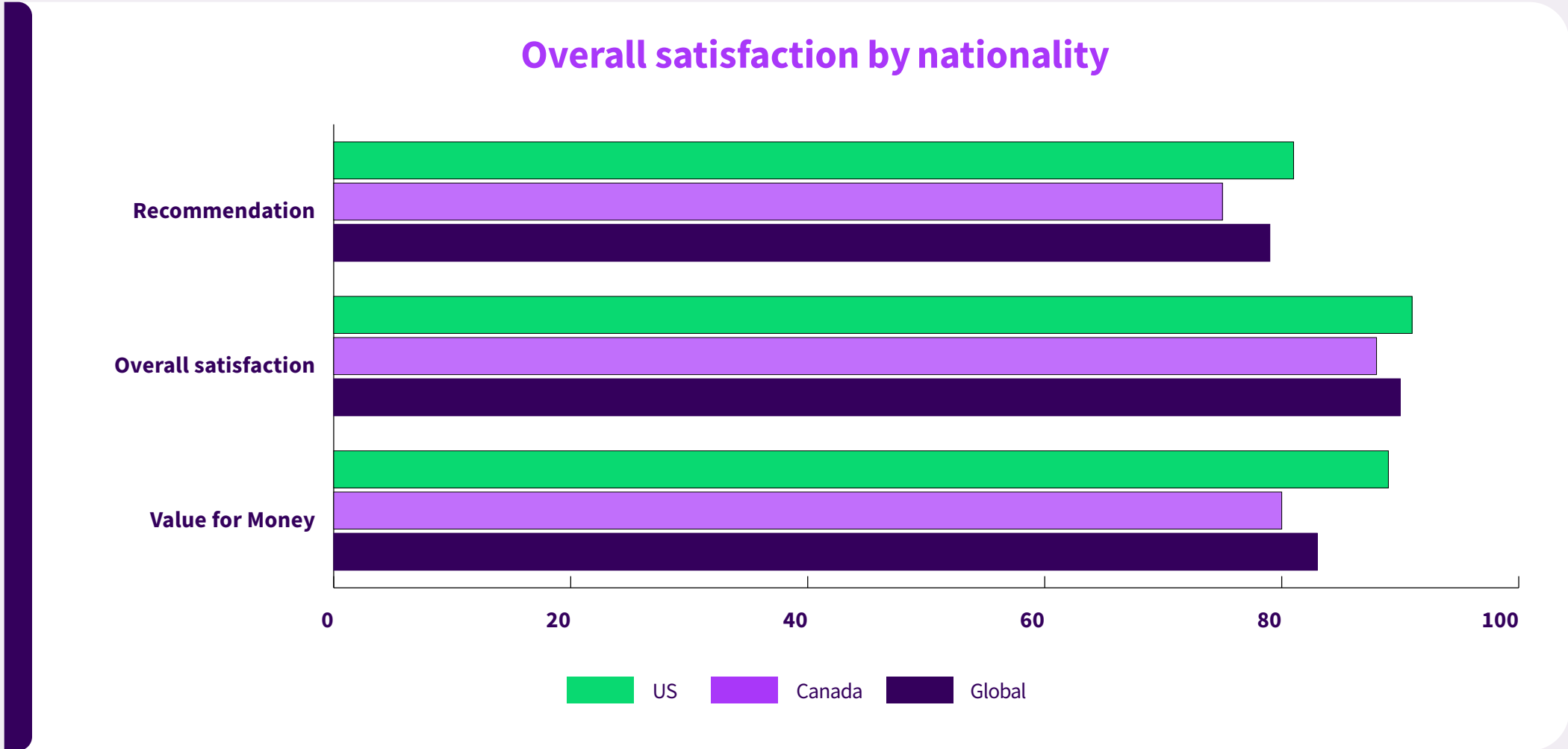
## 2024 ISB results - North America

When looking at the data for the 2024 ISB results for North America, what stands out is the high Net Promoter Score (NPS) for the region. The NPS is calculated based on subtracting the percentage of Detractors (students that give you a score of 6 or below) from the percentage of Promoters (students that give you a 9 or 10). North American institutions recorded the highest Net Promoter Scores (NPS) globally in the 2024 ISB. US institutions achieved an NPS of 34 and Canadian institutions 29, resulting in a regional average of 31 – well above the global benchmark of 20. However, the 2024 ISB results also show that the North American region falls below the global benchmark in terms of “Recommendation”, “Overall satisfaction”, and “Value for money”. This outcome appears to be largely driven by differences between US and Canadian institutions. US institutions perform above the global averages across these categories, with 81% of students willing to recommend their institution (compared to 79% globally), 89% happy with their institution’s “Value for money” (vs. 83% globally), and 91% reporting being satisfied overall (vs. 90% globally). In contrast, Canadian institutions attained 75% for “Recommendation”, 80% for “Value for money”, and 88% for “Overall satisfaction”.

What factors are shaping these outcomes? This regional feature examines how North American institutions perform across some key dimensions of the ISB, identifying both strengths and challenges.

### A leading region for employability

“Future career impact”, “Institution reputation”, and “Earning potential” are the three most influential decision-making drivers for students opting to study in North America. In the US, these factors are complemented by “Research quality” and “Country reputation”, whereas in Canada “Specific program title” and “Cost of study” play a more prominent role in influencing students’ decisions. Given the importance students place on career prospects, it is particularly noteworthy that North American institutions lead the global rankings in both “Support overall” and “Career goal preparation”. North



American institutions rank first globally for “Employability” (87%), “Opportunities for work” (81%), and “Faculty members’ (Academics’) career advice” (85%). “Career support satisfaction” is similarly strong, exceeding the global benchmark in all measured elements. Employability overshadows for the past 7 years any other decision-making factor for international students. The highest-ranking institution for this subject globally is Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) in Canada. Katie Orr, Director International NSCC reflects on this aspect, “We closely monitor the ISB results and our performance against both national and global benchmarks. It is essential that we meet the commitments we make to our students, with graduate employability serving as a critical indicator of our success — not only for our students but also for our province. Therefore, ensuring strong outcomes in career-relevant learning, by continuously engaging with student feedback and refining our services accordingly, remains a key priority for us.”

## *But some challenges remain*

What appears to drive lower “Overall satisfaction”, “Recommendation”, and “Value for money” scores in Canada is the overall living experience. Students at Canadian institutions expressed concerns across several aspects of their living environment, mainly in relation to the housing situation (aka high costs, few housing options). In the US, concerns were raised regarding the campus environment and transport connectivity. However, the most significant challenge for US institutions is student safety. When asked if they are “Feeling safe and secure on campus”, international students in the US benchmark score 4% lower (93% vs the global benchmark of 97%).

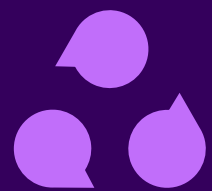
Inclusivity also emerges as an area requiring attention in North America. Particularly in the US, the share of students reporting experiences of discrimination is 3% higher than the global benchmark for categories such as “Religious beliefs”, “Race or ethnicity”, and “Nationality”. Canada shows a similar pattern, although less prominent, and with more emphasis on students reporting experiences of discrimination based on “Sexual orientation” and “Religious beliefs” (2% above the global benchmark). Three percent may not sound upsetting, but it is likely to be an explanation for students feeling less safe – and it is part of students’ perception of a study destination.

## *The impact of reputation*

Considering the importance that international students place on “Country reputation” when selecting a study destination – particularly among those choosing to study in the US – it is important to remain attentive to potential shifts in perception linked to the broader political climate. Since the 2024 ISB results were collected end of 2024, they do not yet reflect any impact on international students’ willingness to study in the US. However, historical data from previous ISB surveys in 2017 and 2018 suggested that changes in the political landscape following presidential elections had measurable effects. In 2017, 28% reported they would be less likely to choose the US as a study destination if

making their decision again, a figure that rose to 30% in 2018. These findings highlight that shifts in the political climate may influence perceptions of a country’s attractiveness as a study destination, underlining the importance of monitoring potential impacts on international students’ decision-making to better understand future trends.

North America holds a distinctive advantage in attracting international students, particularly through its strong emphasis on employability and graduate outcomes. However, the overall appeal of the region—both in the United States and Canada—remains closely influenced by government policies shaping the landscape for international talent.



# ISB results North America - at a glance

“The ISB offers a holistic view of the international student experience, from application to graduation. It enables UT Austin to make data-driven decisions to sustain positive aspects and improve areas that need attention. Being intentional and soliciting feedback is critical in our efforts to support international students as an integral part of the Longhorn community.”

Dr Sonia Feigenbaum, Senior Vice Provost for Global Engagement and Chief International Officer, The University of Texas at Austin

## North America overall

Highest levels of satisfaction	98% Library service	97% Feeling safe and secure on campus	96% Submitting work remotely
Lowest levels of satisfaction	63% Earning money	63% Accommodation cost	64% Financial support

## North America vs global benchmark

Largest positive variance	7% Careers advice - faculty members	6% Making friends from this country	6% Opportunities for work experience
Largest negative variance	-8% Housing cost	-5% Transport links to other places	-5% Financial support





# Performance Benchmarking

Etio Performance Benchmarking delivers comparative insights to the education sector worldwide, helping institutions enhance their competitive advantage and develop truly global graduates.

Our suite of survey tools helps education institutions around the world build competitor advantage by benchmarking the student experience across their operations, and evaluating their level of internationalisation.

## *International Student Barometer and Student Barometer*

Track and compare the decision-making, expectations, perceptions and intentions of your domestic and international students from application to graduation



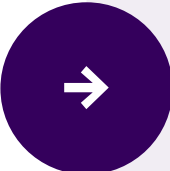
## *English Language Barometer*

Comprehensive insight into the student experience of your English language students



## *iMPACT*

Measure and benchmark the size and shape of your institution’s outbound student mobility programme





Performance Benchmarking - driving world-class financial performance and student experience through evidence and comparative insights

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