

Study UK: Research with prospective international students

2023-24

Pakistan insight
report



Purpose of this report

This brief report provides supplementary insights from Study UK's research with prospective international students, focusing specifically on Pakistan.

The report addresses the following questions:

- How has consideration of the UK among prospective students in Pakistan evolved over time?
- Which other destinations do they typically consider?
- What are the key destination perceptions that influence their decision-making when choosing a country of study?
- How do they evaluate the UK and its competitor destinations based on these perceptions, and what changes have occurred year-on-year?

Similar reports focusing on China and India, as well as the full report Study UK's 2023-24 research report with prospective international students, are available [on our website](#).

Study UK's 2024-25 research is nearing completion, with findings expected to be available in April/May 2025.



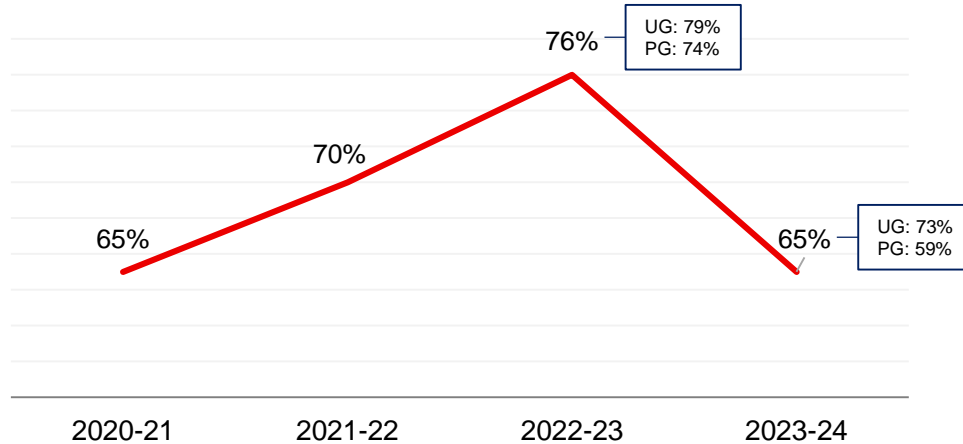
Sample and methodology

- Prospective international students aged 16-24 (50 per cent of sample) or 25-34 (50 per cent of sample), or parents of prospective international students of these ages took part in a 25-minute online survey between January and February, 2024.
- All respondents were residents of one of the countries below. The country samples are weighted evenly to create International totals, and all represent the mix of 40 per cent undergraduate and 60 per cent postgraduate students.

	Total sample	China 	India 	Indonesia 	Malaysia 	Nigeria 	Pakistan 	USA 
Students	1,700	300	300	300	300	100	100	300
Parents	630	100	100	100	100	70	60	100
Total	2,330	400	400	400	400	170	160	400

The UK's appeal as a study destination for prospective international students in Pakistan reached a peak in 2022-23, likely boosted by the introduction of the Graduate Route visa in 2021. However, recent data shows a reversion to 2020-21 levels, consistent with declines observed in other major competitors such as the USA, Australia and Canada, and a decline in postgraduate consideration. Despite this downturn, the UK remains the most considered destination, ahead of the USA, Australia, Canada, Germany, Ireland and others.

Percentage of respondents in Pakistan considering the UK



Top three study destinations considered by prospective students in Pakistan

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
UK	UK	UK	UK	UK
USA	USA	USA	USA	USA
Canada	Australia	Canada	Canada	Australia

Year-on-year, the preferred fields of study among prospective students in Pakistan remain largely consistent, with STEM subjects and business accounting for the majority. However, significant declines are evident in business/management/finance, as well as in computing/computer science, while smaller increases are apparent in other subjects.

Top ten subjects	2023-24	2022-23	Change
Engineering	24%	22%	+2pp
Business/management/finance	22%	30%	-8pp
Computing/computer science	21%	26%	-5pp
Medicine and dentistry	11%	11%	No change
Biological sciences (including biomedical sciences)	11%	8%	+3pp
Education	8%	7%	+1pp
Mathematical sciences	7%	5%	+2pp
Psychology	6%	4%	+2pp
Chemistry	6%	4%	+2pp
Physical sciences	6%	7%	-1pp

Respondents were asked to assess the importance of different ‘rational’ factors influencing their choice of study abroad destinations. Notably, prospective students in Pakistan place far greater emphasis on value considerations and post-study work opportunities compared to other respondents.

Rational perceptions	Most important – Pakistan	Equivalent ranking – All sample
Value for money	#1	#2
The cost of studying	#2	#6
High quality universities and academic research	#3	#1
Future employability globally after studying	#4	#4
Opportunities to work in the country after studying	#5	#10
The cost of accommodation and daily living	#6	#7
The availability of accommodation	#7	#9
Innovative and creative education system	#8	#5
Offers the specific course I’m interested in	#9	#3
Reasonable academic/language requirements	#10	#8

When asked about the key emotional factors influencing their decision-making, the responses of prospective students in Pakistan closely mirror those of their global peers. The most influential factors in choosing a destination include a welcoming environment, an attractive lifestyle and culture and opportunities to explore nature and the outdoors.

Emotional perceptions	Most important – Pakistan	Equivalent ranking – All sample
The country offers a welcoming environment	#1	#1
The country has an attractive life and culture	#2	#2
The country offers the opportunity to explore nature and the outdoors	#3	#3
It is easy to travel to and explore countries nearby	#4	#4
I have been inspired by alumni of that country	#5	#5
I know people who have studied there in the past	#6	#6
I have friends/family living there	#7	#7
I have friends/family currently studying there	#8	#8
I have previously studied with a university/higher education institution remotely or at an overseas campus of that country	#9	#11
I work/have previously worked for an organisation from that country	#10	#12

Respondents were then asked to rate the UK in comparison to a competitor set of 14 other destinations based on these same perceptions. Despite receiving more favourable ratings this year on cost factors like value for money, cost of studying, the UK still ranks low – at best, tenth out of 14 destinations – for these aspects. Conversely, the UK received significantly higher rankings for academic perceptions and future employability prospects.

Rational perceptions	% rating UK 'good' or 'excellent' (year-on-year change)	UK ranking in competitor set* (year-on-year change)
Value for money	71% (+5pp)	#10 (no change)
The cost of studying	58% (+11pp)	#13 (no change)
High quality universities and academic research	89% (+4pp)	#1 (+2 places)
Future employability globally after studying	83% (-5pp)	#3 (-2 places)
Opportunities to work in the country after studying	79% (+4pp)	#5 (+1 place)
The cost of accommodation and daily living	56% (+8pp)	#14 (-2 places)
The availability of accommodation	71% (n/a)	#12 (n/a)
Innovative and creative education system	88% (+1pp)	#2 (no change)
Offers the specific course I'm interested in	81% (+4pp)	#4 (no change)
Reasonable academic/language requirements	76% (no change)	#6 (+1 place)

P25. How would you rate the following countries for each of these when it comes to deciding to study there? Please click on the scale(s) below to indicate your answer, where 1 = very poor and 5 = excellent. Top ten shown. Base: Pakistan n=160. Base: all sample n=2,327
 * Competitor set: Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, USA



In terms of emotional perceptions, the UK shows declines across many categories with few positive changes in its ranking compared to the 14 competitors year-on-year. For students in Pakistan, a welcoming environment and attractive lifestyle and culture are essential emotional drivers. The UK's decline in these areas is therefore especially significant.

Emotional perceptions	% rating UK 'good' or 'excellent' (year-on-year change)	UK ranking in competitor set* (year-on-year change)
The country offers a welcoming environment	81% (-3pp)	#2 (no change)
The country has an attractive life and culture	78% (-6pp)	#3 (-2 places)
The country offers the opportunity to explore nature and the outdoors	84% (no change)	#1 (+2 places)
It is easy to travel to and explore countries nearby	77% (+6pp)	#4 (+1 place)
I have been inspired by alumni of that country	62% (-7pp)	#7 (-1 place)
I know people who have studied there in the past	69% (-6pp)	#5 (-1 place)
I have friends/family living there	59% (-4pp)	#8 (-1 place)
I have friends/family currently studying there	64% (-7pp)	#6 (+2 places)
I have previously studied with a university/higher education institution remotely or at an overseas campus of that country	36% (-7pp)	#11 (no change)
I work/have previously worked for an organisation from that country	38% (+9pp)	#10 (+2 places)

P25. How would you rate the following countries for each of these when it comes to deciding to study there? Please click on the scale(s) below to indicate your answer, where 1 = very poor and 5 = excellent. Top ten shown. Base: Pakistan n=160. Base: all sample n=2,327

* Competitor set: Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, USA

Key points

- Despite recent declines, the UK remains the most popular study abroad destination for prospective students in Pakistan, surpassing the USA, Canada and Australia.
- However, cost perceptions and value for money are crucial considerations in this market, and despite some improvements in positive associations with the UK, it is still perceived as less competitive compared to its rivals. Among students in Pakistan who do not consider the UK, high tuition fees and living costs are the primary reasons cited.
- On the other hand, the research highlights the UK's enduring strengths in academic areas (high-quality universities and research excellence) as well as the opportunity to work in the country post-study through the Graduate Route visa, which are significant advantages.



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