



# INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY 2024



TERRADOTTA



# Introduction

Global Engagement is essential for universities to thrive in today's interconnected world. Welcoming international students to U.S. campuses is a key pillar in a Global Engagement strategy, as it enriches the educational experience for all students and prepares the next generation of global citizens and leaders.

To support universities in this critical mission, Terra Dotta is pleased to present the results of our 2024 International Student Survey.

The research findings underscore both the enduring appeal of U.S. universities for international students and the opportunities for continued improvement in meeting their needs.

While students are drawn by the reputation, programs, and professional prospects offered in the U.S., they also encounter challenges in integrating socially and academically.

This survey provides insights for enhancing the international student journey and realizing the full potential of global engagement.

We invite universities to reflect on these findings, share best practices, and foster more welcoming and empowering opportunities for international students.





# Executive Summary

**The 2024 International Student Survey**, commissioned by Terra Dotta, provides a comprehensive understanding of the preferences, challenges, and aspirations of international students in the U.S. Notably, the survey **underscores the appeal of a U.S. college education, primarily due to:**

- **the high reputation of U.S. universities (58%),**
- **the quality of educational programs (48%), and**
- **the promising job prospects (45%).**

**Application patterns** reveal a focused approach, with most global students applying to 1-3 universities. This highlights the competitive nature of university admissions and the need for institutions to differentiate themselves to attract top talent.

**Social and academic challenges**, including homesickness and difficulty in social interactions, were anticipated by 33% of international students, with 29% seeking more support in these areas. Safety concerns, a significant issue before arrival, diminished post-arrival, suggesting effective university safety measures.





Post-graduation aspirations among international students show a **strong inclination towards U.S. employment**, with university policies significantly influencing these decisions. The survey reveals a **high satisfaction rate (63%) with post-graduation** work policies, indicating successful university initiatives. Interestingly, U.S. immigration policies and visa processes were not major deterrents, possibly reflecting a relatively smooth entry process for most students.

**Communication preferences lean towards email and phone calls**, emphasizing the need for clear and direct channels of communication between universities and international students.

Finally, the survey highlights the **critical role of affordability and academic program satisfaction in future enrollment decisions**, with 68% of international students citing cost as a key consideration.

This data is instrumental for universities and policymakers in aligning their offerings with student expectations and market demands to enhance the international student experience in the U.S. and maintain the country's position as a premier educational destination.





# KEY DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- **Country Selection:** A significant 58% of students favored the U.S. for its esteemed university reputation, while 48% were attracted by the programs offered, and 45% for job prospects in the country.
- **Information Sources:** The majority (65%) of students utilized university websites for research, indicating the importance of these platforms, while 38% engaged with agents, highlighting the value of personal guidance in the decision-making process.
- **Application Trends:** A focused application approach was evident, with 60% of students applying to 1-3 universities and 87% receiving acceptances from a similar number, suggesting a targeted and strategic selection by students.
- **Safety Concerns:** Safety concerns, initially significant for 49% of students, notably decreased after their arrival, reflecting positive adjustments and perhaps effective university safety measures.





- **Discrimination and Integration:** Almost half of students reported observing discrimination, contrasting with the 53% who felt well integrated, indicating a complex campus social environment.
- **Post-Graduation Plans:** Students' employment aspirations in the U.S. post-graduation were high (56%), with university policies playing a significant role, demonstrating the impact of institutional support on career planning.
- **Immigration Policies:** A majority (67%) of students reported that U.S. immigration policies did not deter their decision to study in the U.S., and 72% experienced no difficulties in the visa process, indicating a generally positive experience with immigration procedures.
- **Future Enrollment Influences:** Financial considerations were paramount, with 63% of students citing affordability as a key factor, alongside 38% who prioritized academic program satisfaction, highlighting these as critical areas for universities to retain and attract students.

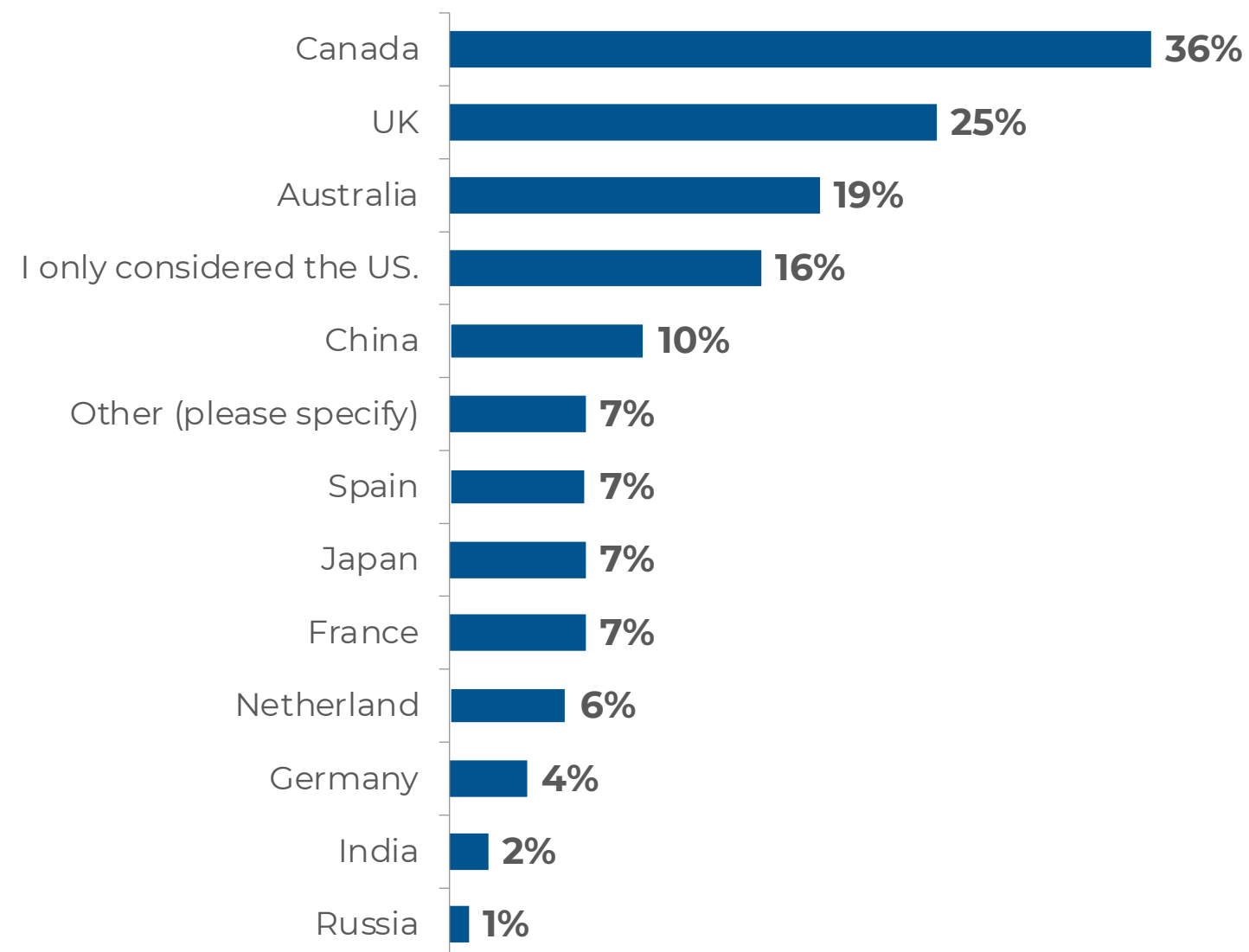




# International students considered a variety of countries. Deciding factors for the U.S. were reputation, job prospects and programs offered.

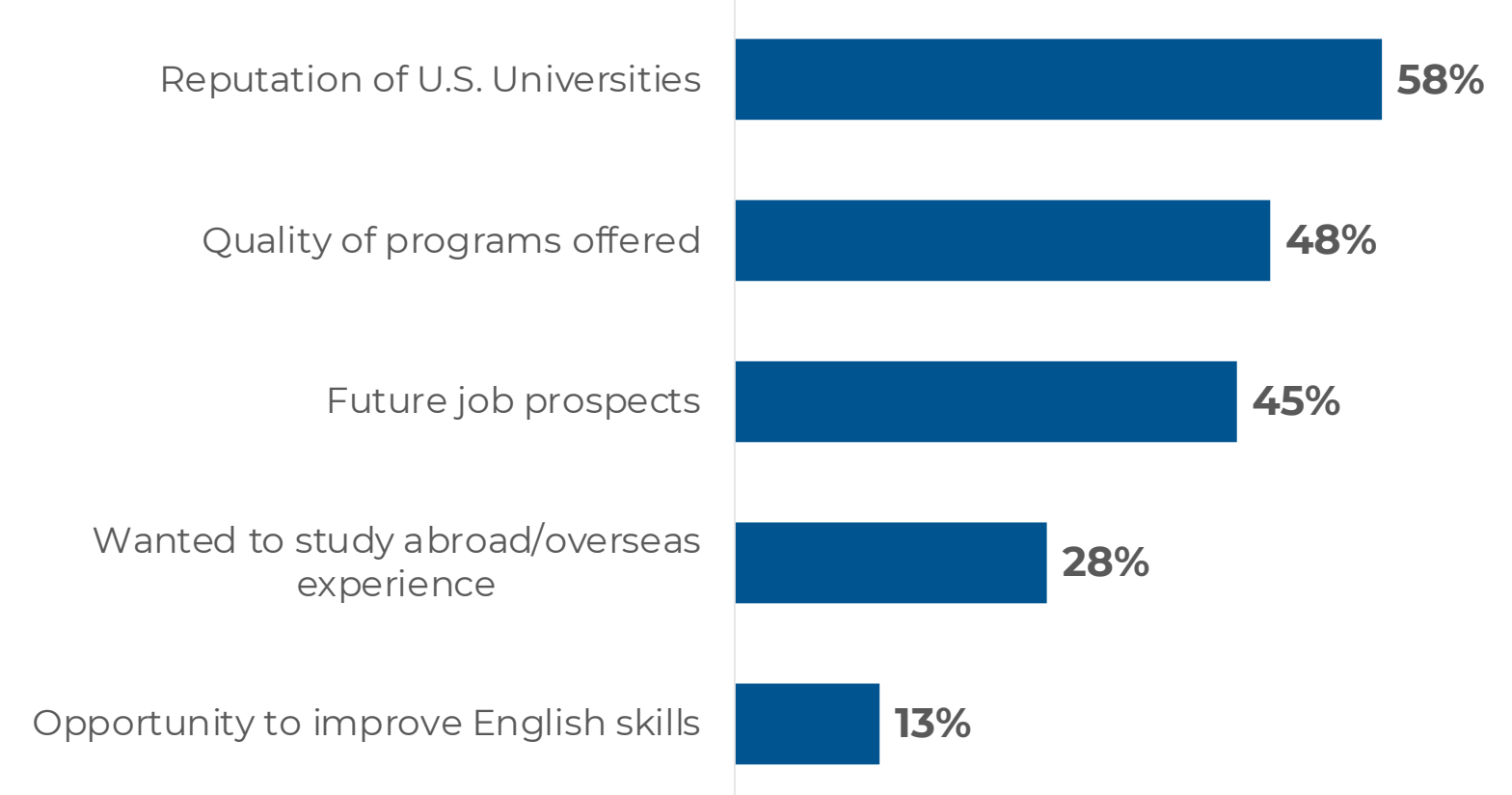
After the U.S., Canada, the UK and Australia were the top countries considered for international study.

**In what other countries were you considering studying? (Please select all that apply.)**



Reputation of U.S. universities, programs and job prospects were the deciding factors.

**What factors led you to choose education in the U.S. over other countries? (Please select all that apply.)**



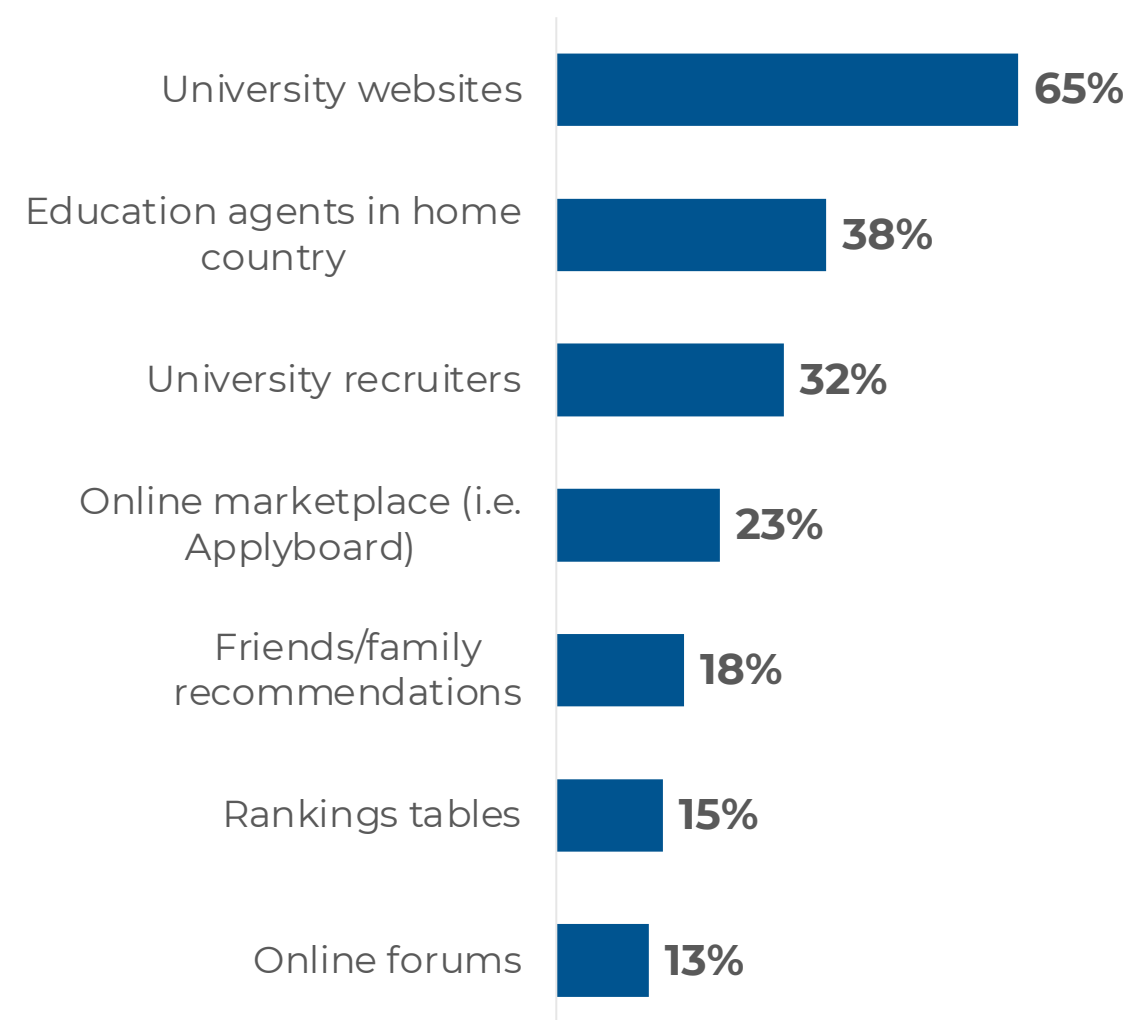
Source: Terra Dotta, 2024 International Student Survey; N= 356.

# Students researched through websites and recruiters. Final decisions between schools were based on programs offered and costs.

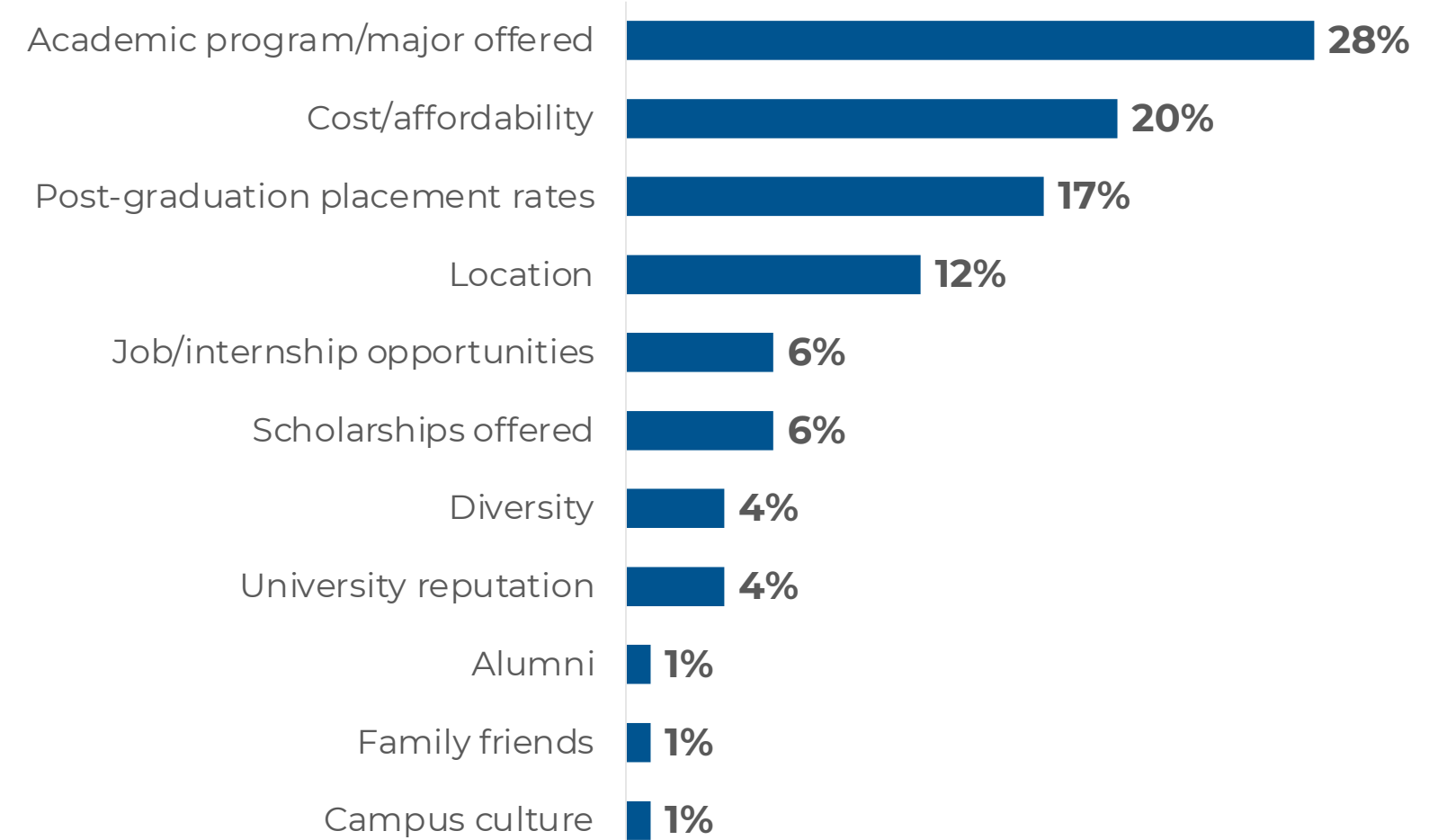
Websites & recruiters were key information sources...

...ultimately programs offered, and cost were deciding factors between schools.

**How did you learn about and research U.S. universities? (Please select all that apply.)**



**What made you ultimately choose your current university over others you were accepted to?**



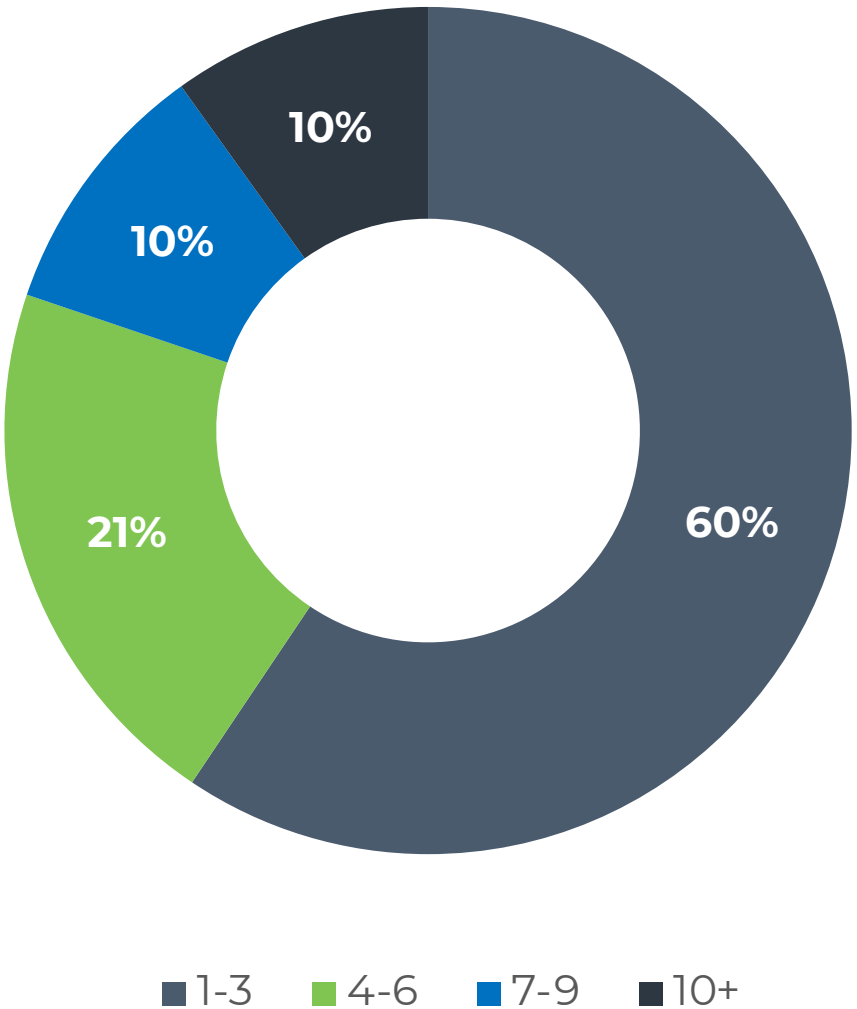
Source: Terra Dotta, 2024 International Student Survey; N= 356.



# Most international students applied to and were accepted to 3 or fewer universities.

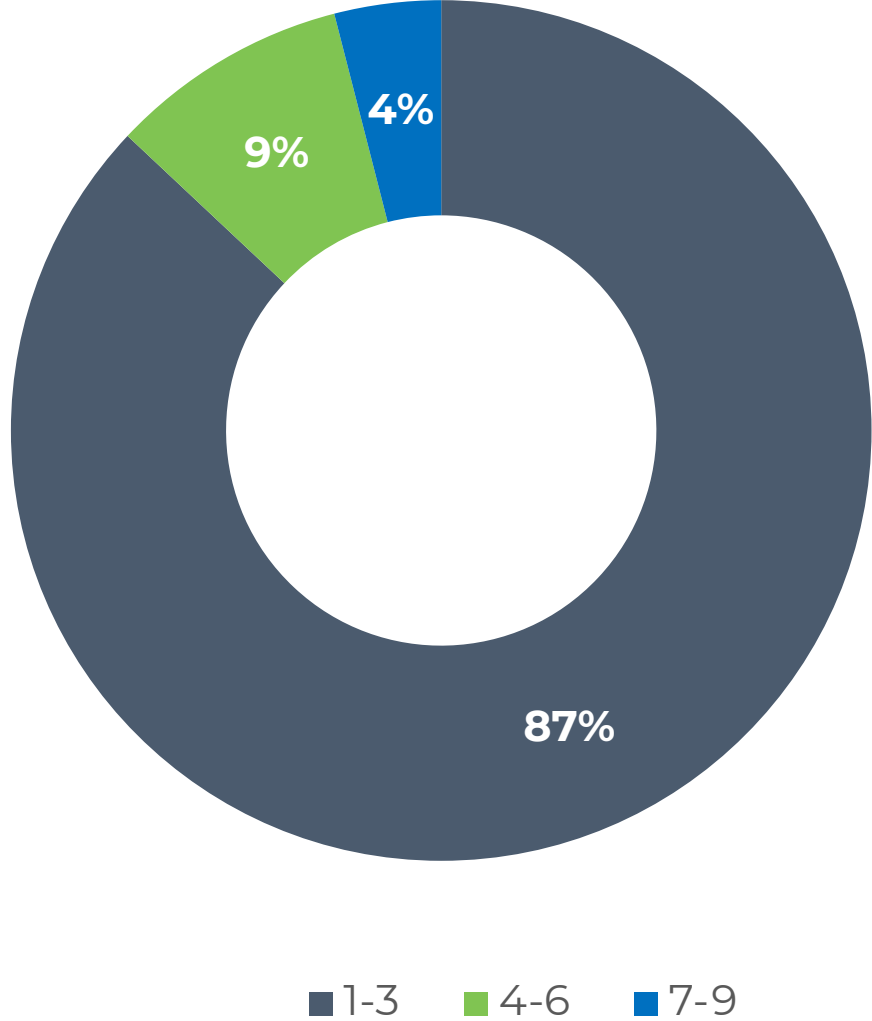
Most applied to three or fewer U.S. universities...

How many different universities in the U.S. did you apply to?



...and were admitted by three or fewer universities.

How many different I-20s did you receive from U.S. institutions?



Source: Terra Dotta, 2024 International Student Survey; N= 356.

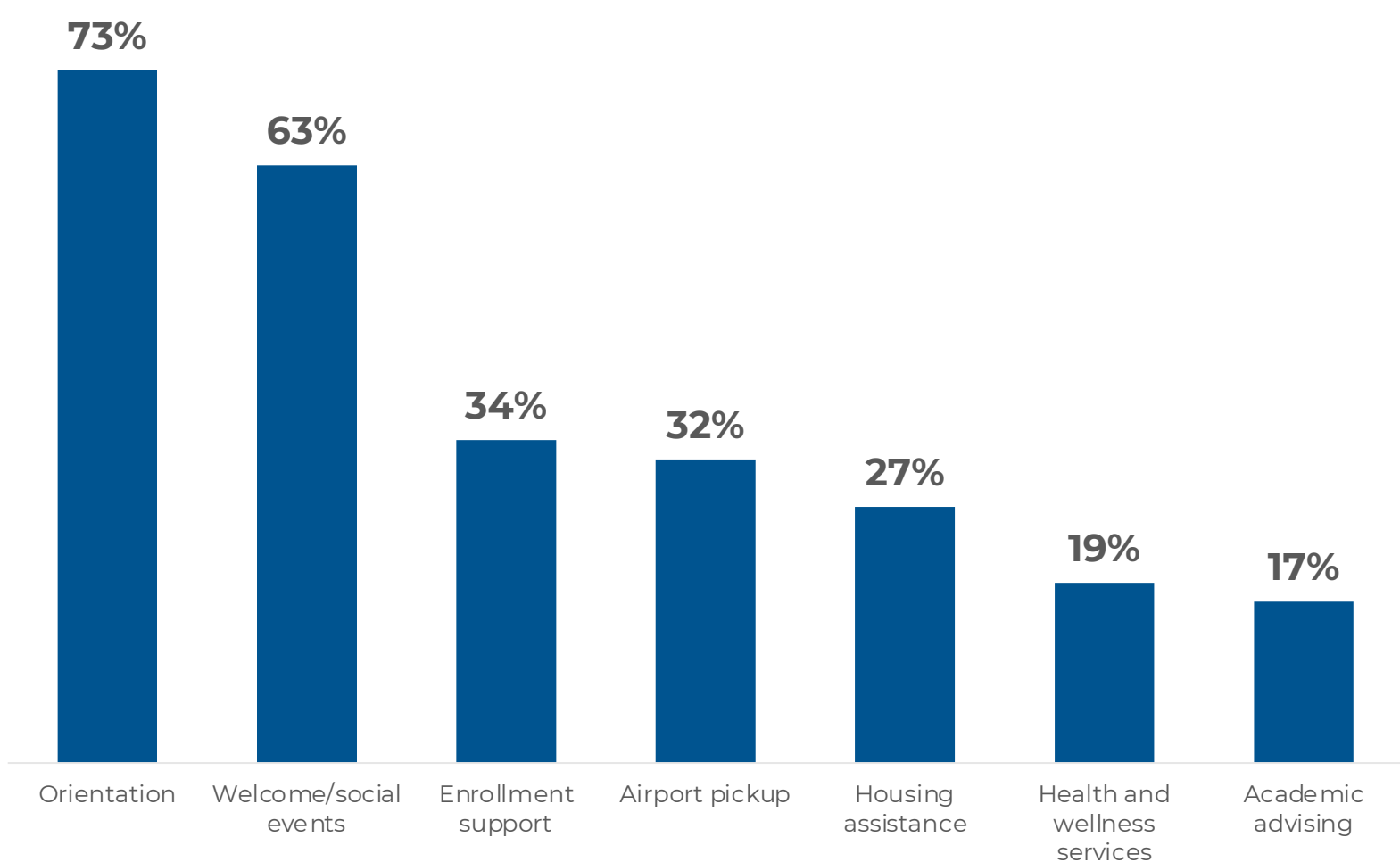


# Orientation and welcome events were common upon arrival.

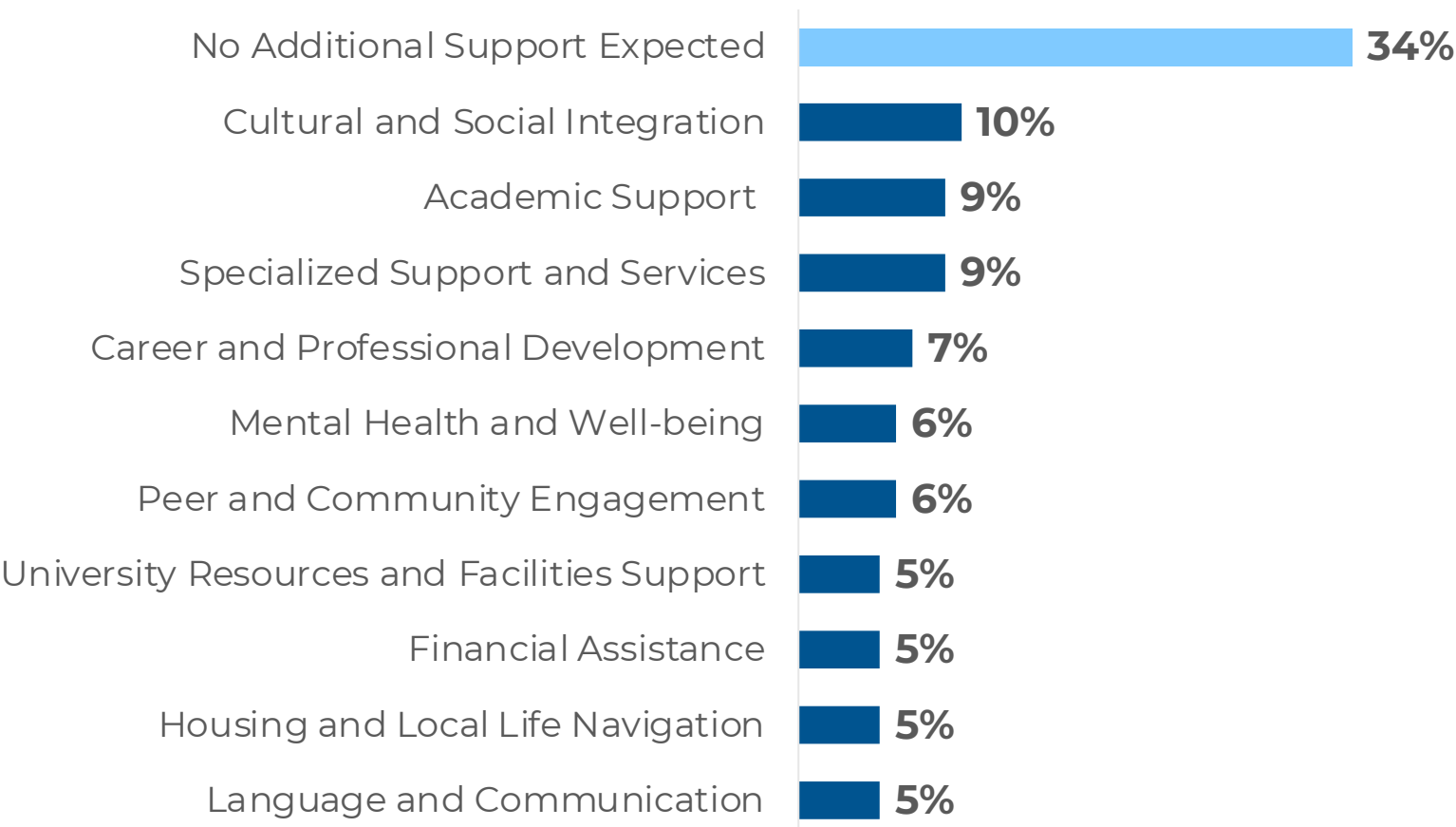
Orientation & welcome events were common upon arrival.

Students want more academic and social support.

What services or programs offered by the university were most helpful upon first arriving on campus as a new international student? (Please select all that apply.)



What support, if any, did you expect to receive but did not?



Source: Terra Dotta, 2024 International Student Survey; N= 356.

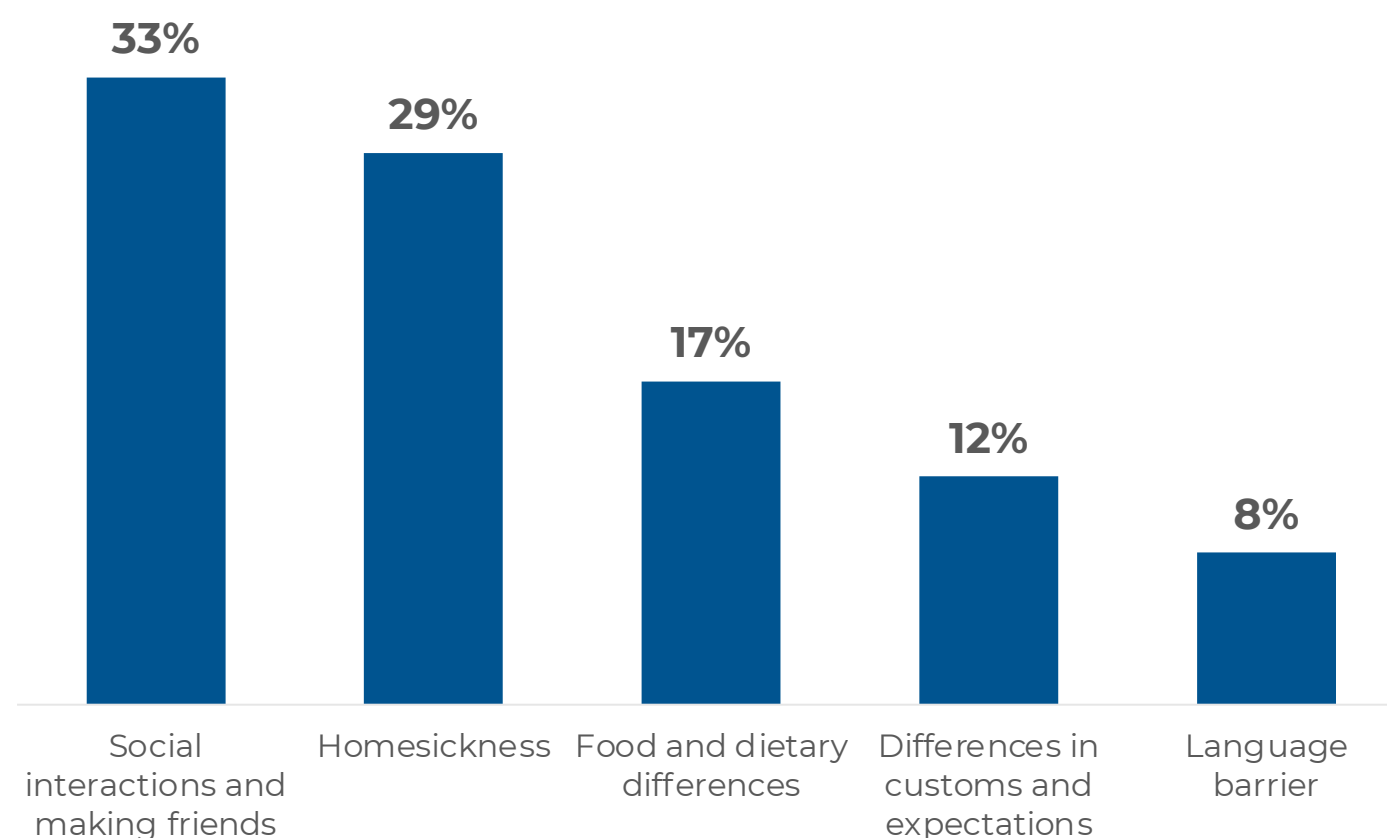


# Common anticipated challenges were homesickness and social interactions. Some wanted more pre-arrival information on social and classroom differences.

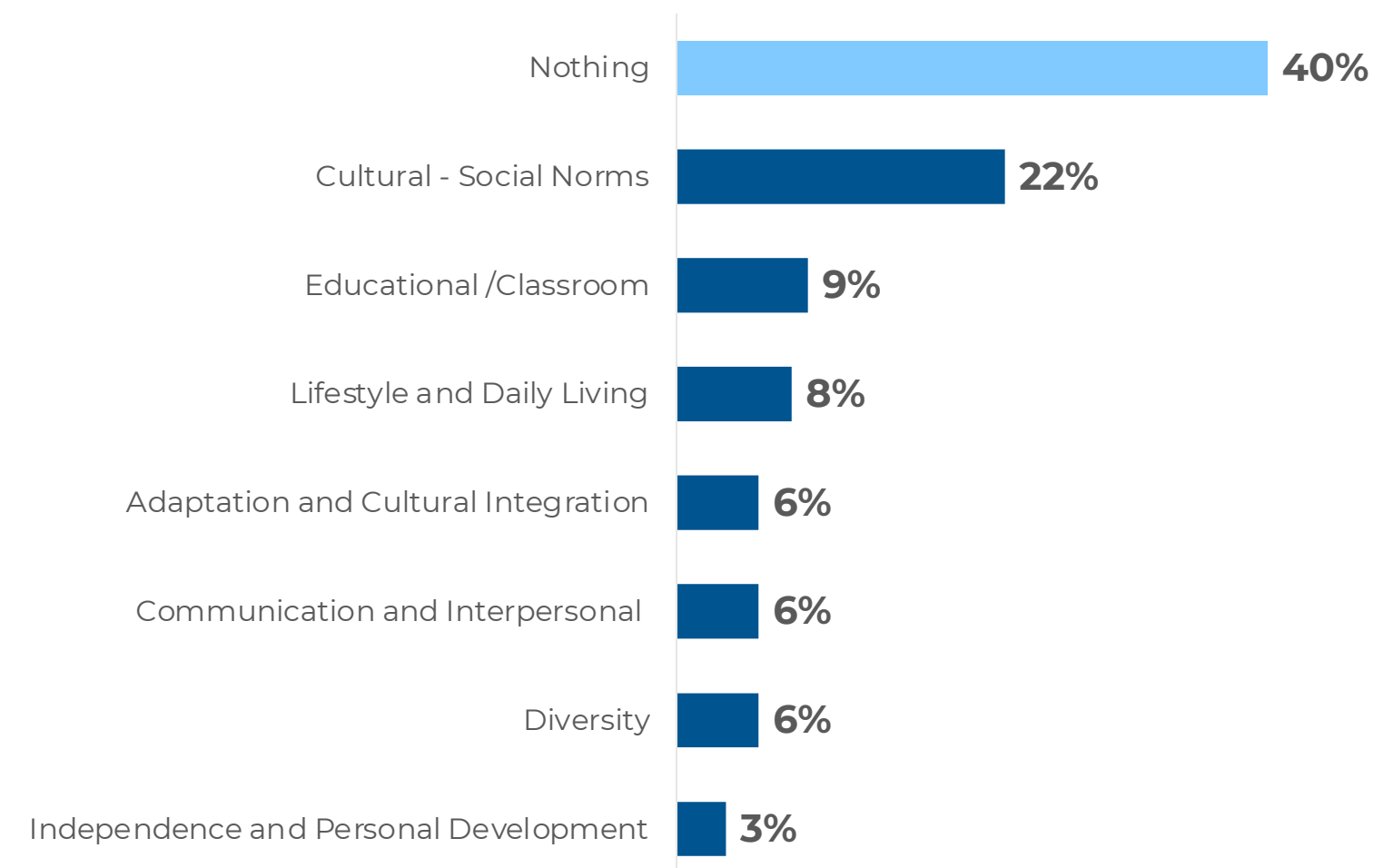
Common **anticipated** challenges include homesickness and social interactions...

...students wished they had more information on social and classroom differences.

**Before studying abroad, what did you anticipate might be the most challenging aspects of adjusting to a new culture?**



**Were there specific cultural differences or customs you wished you would have received guidance on before arriving?**



Source: Terra Dotta, 2024 International Student Survey; N= 356.

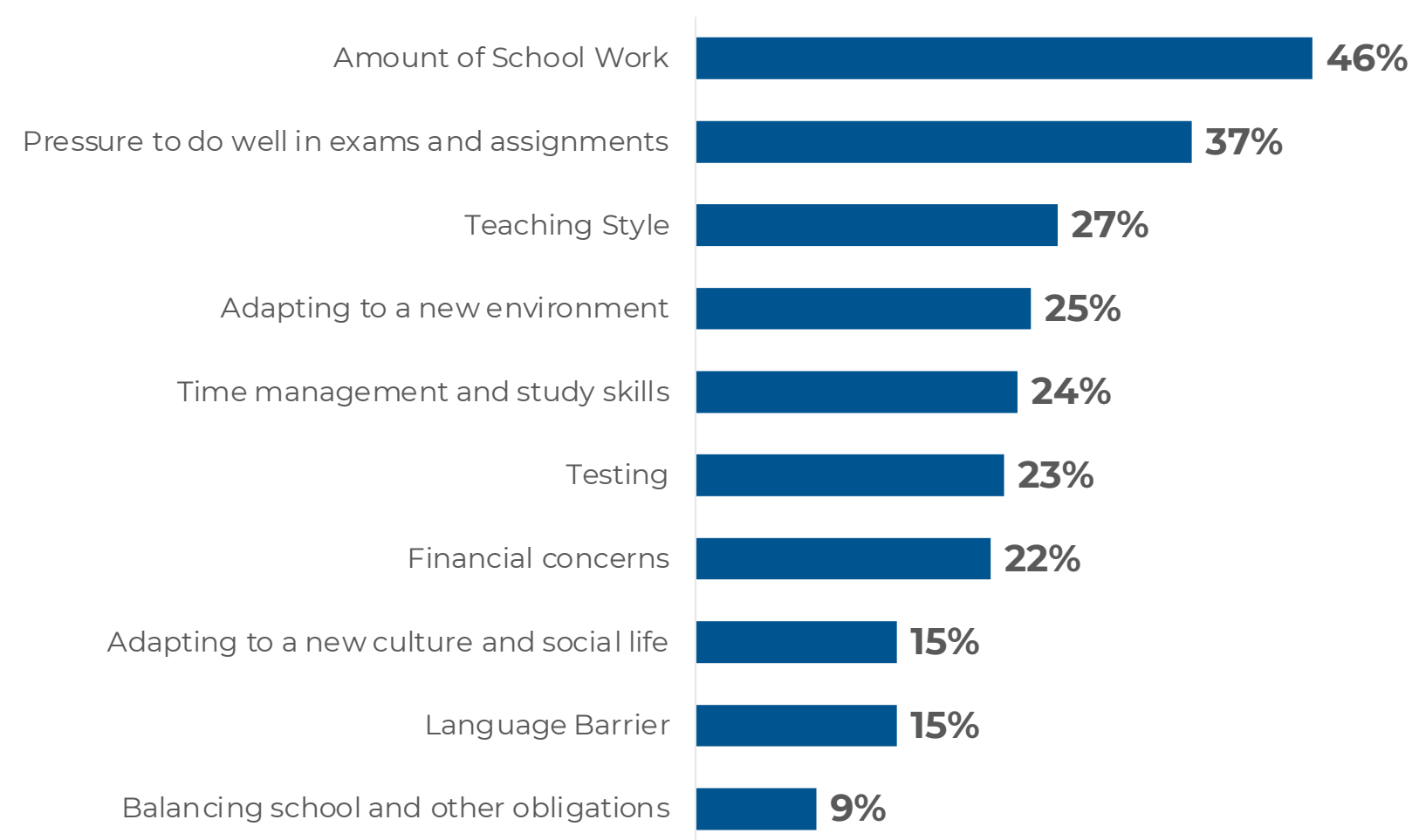


# Amount of school work and pressure to do well are sources of stress.

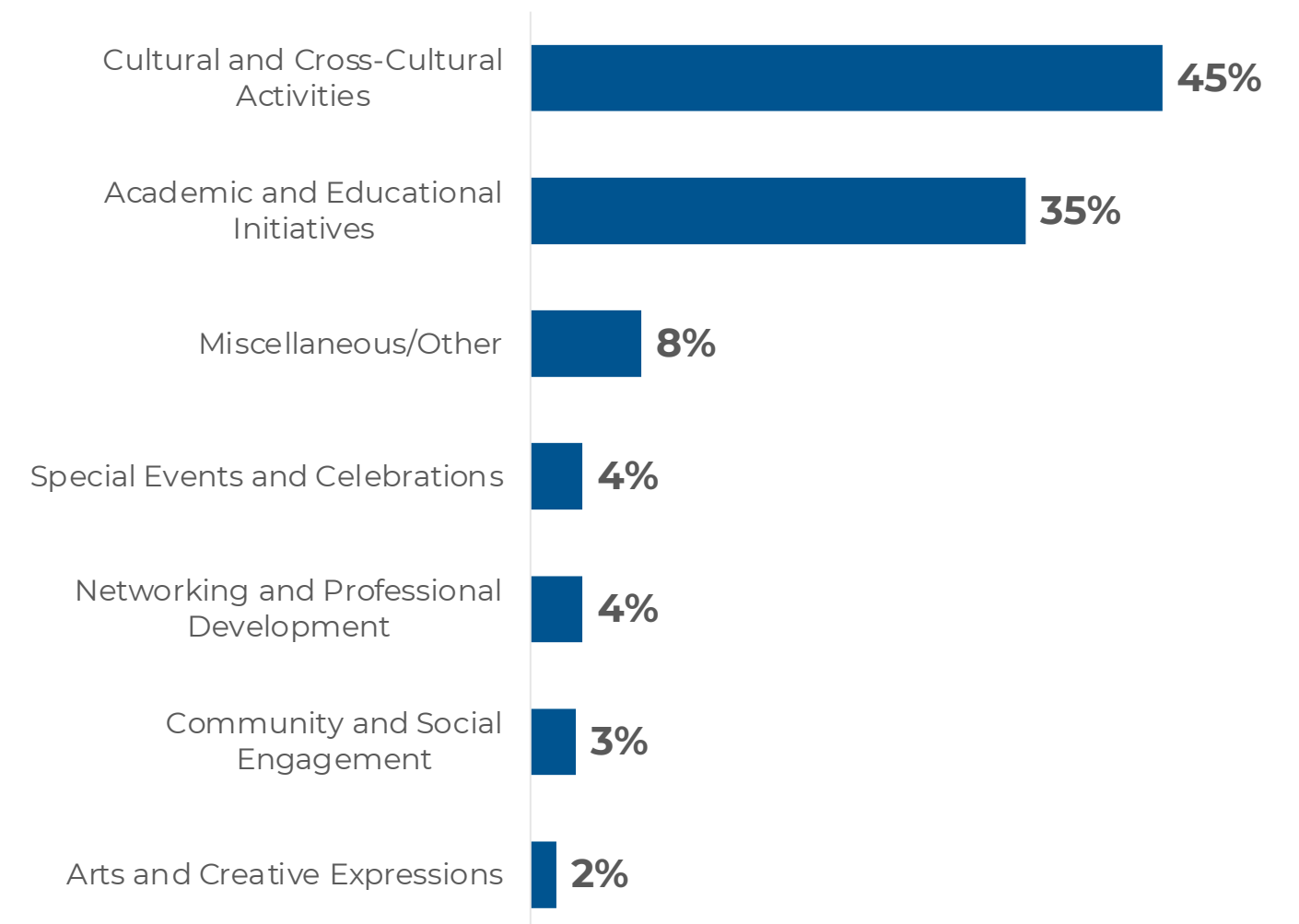
Amount of school work and pressure to do well are the biggest sources of stress.

More cross-cultural activities could help improve integration and interaction.

**What have been the biggest challenges or sources of stress in adapting to academic life in the U.S.?  
(Please select all that apply.)**



**What could improve integration and interaction?**



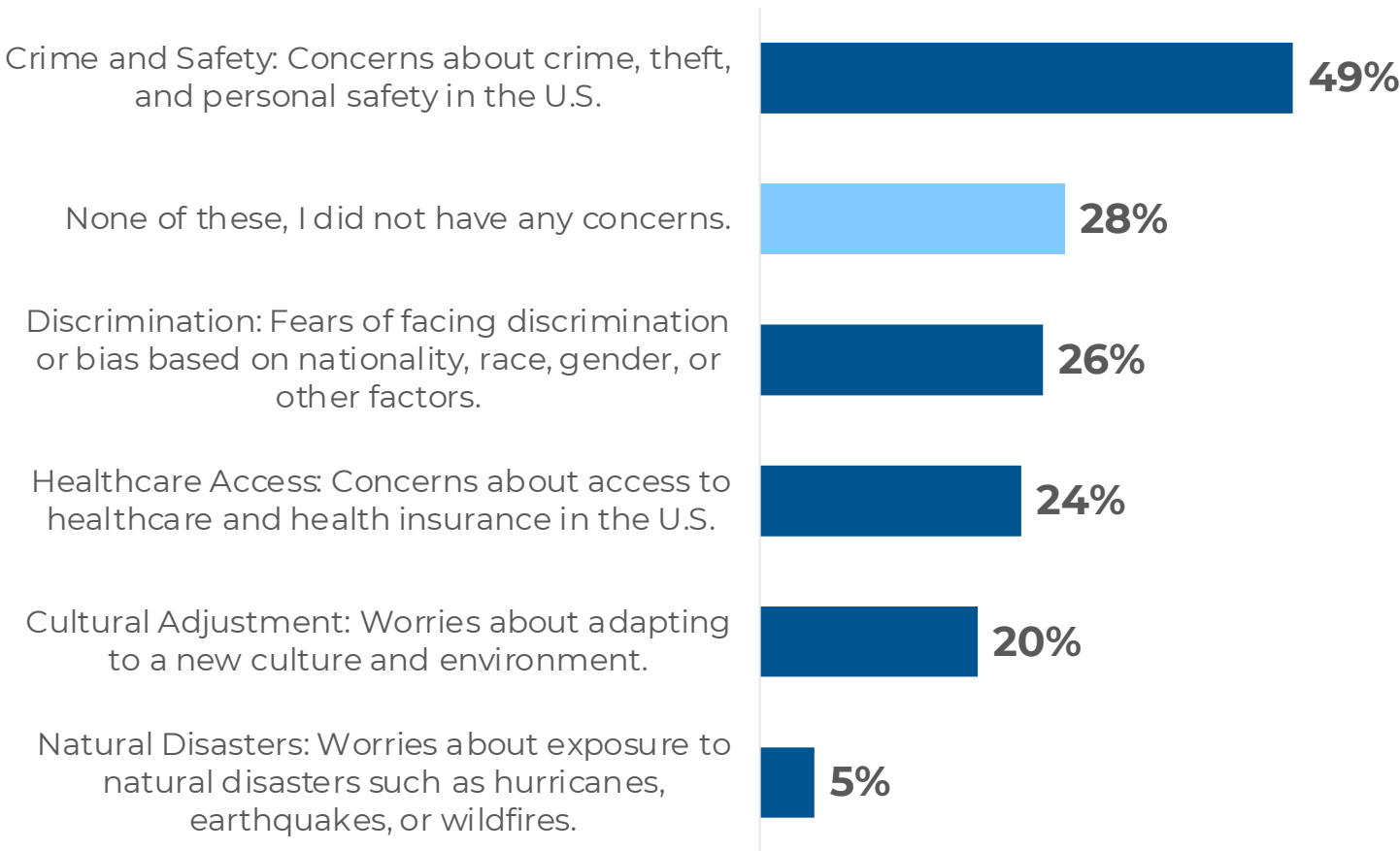
Source: Terra Dotta, 2024 International Student Survey; N= 356.



# Crime is a big concern prior to arrival. Post arrival it decreases and many students have no concerns.

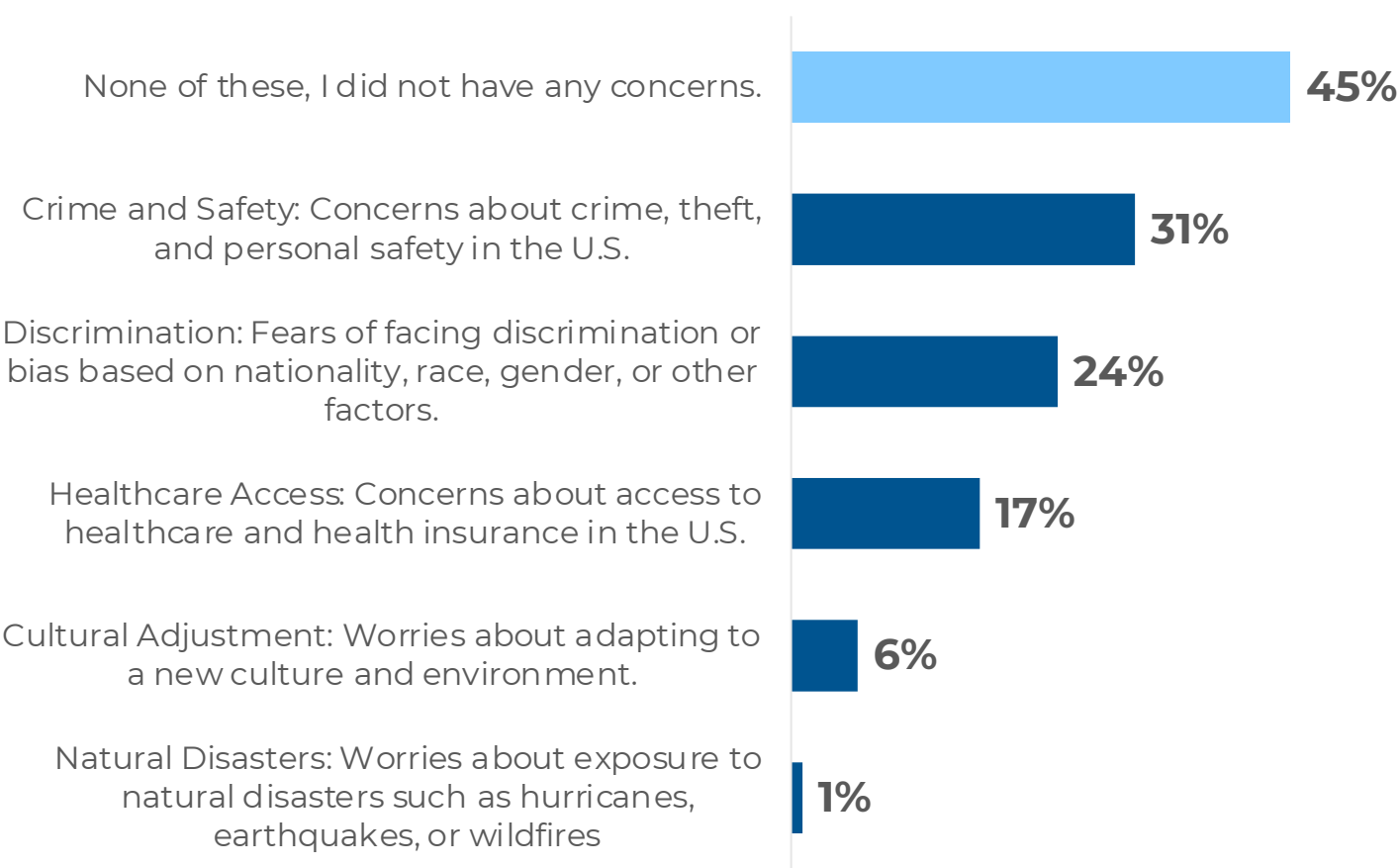
Prior to coming to the U.S. crime was the number one concern...

**What, if any, safety concerns (to your mental or physical well-being) did you have *prior to studying abroad in the United States*? (Please select all that apply.)**



...after arrival, the concern of crime lessened, and more students had no concerns.

**What are your concerns about healthcare and well-being now, *while currently living in the United States*? (Please select all that apply.)**



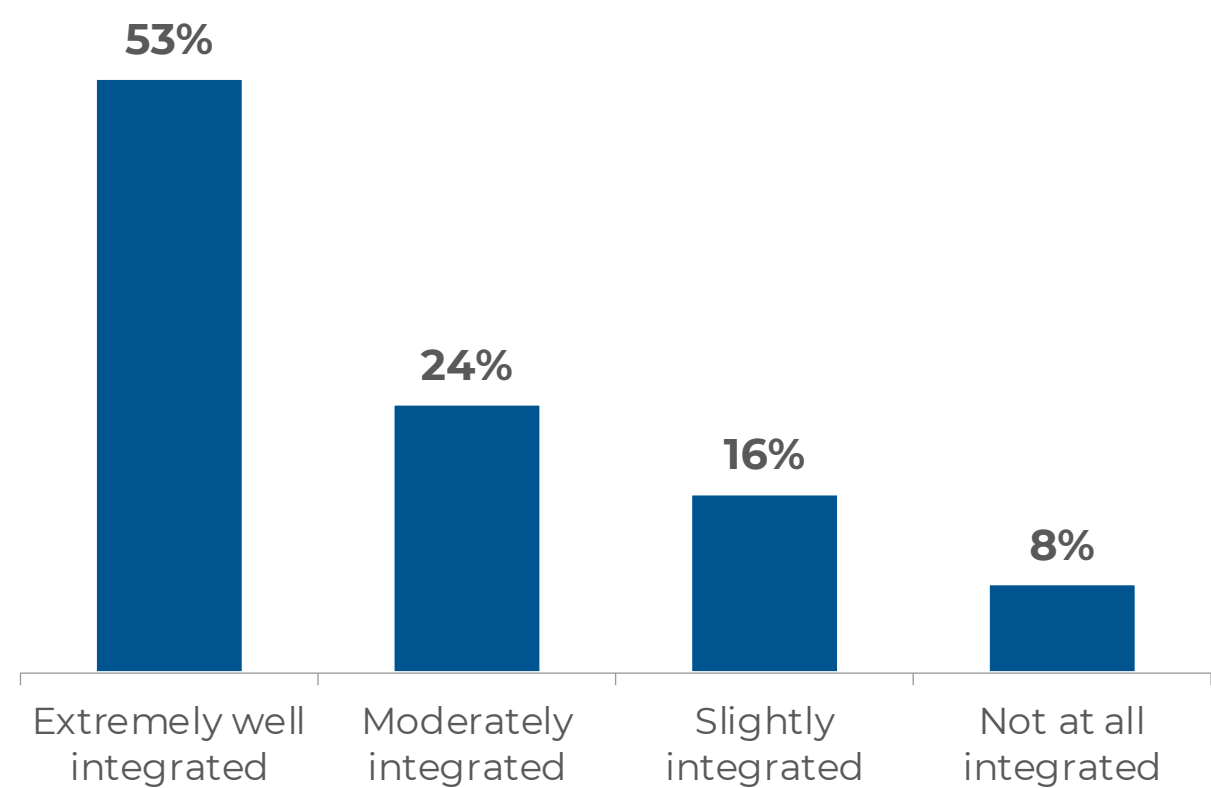
Source: Terra Dotta, 2024 International Student Survey; N= 356.



# Students feel integrated, however over half have witnessed some form of discrimination on campuses.

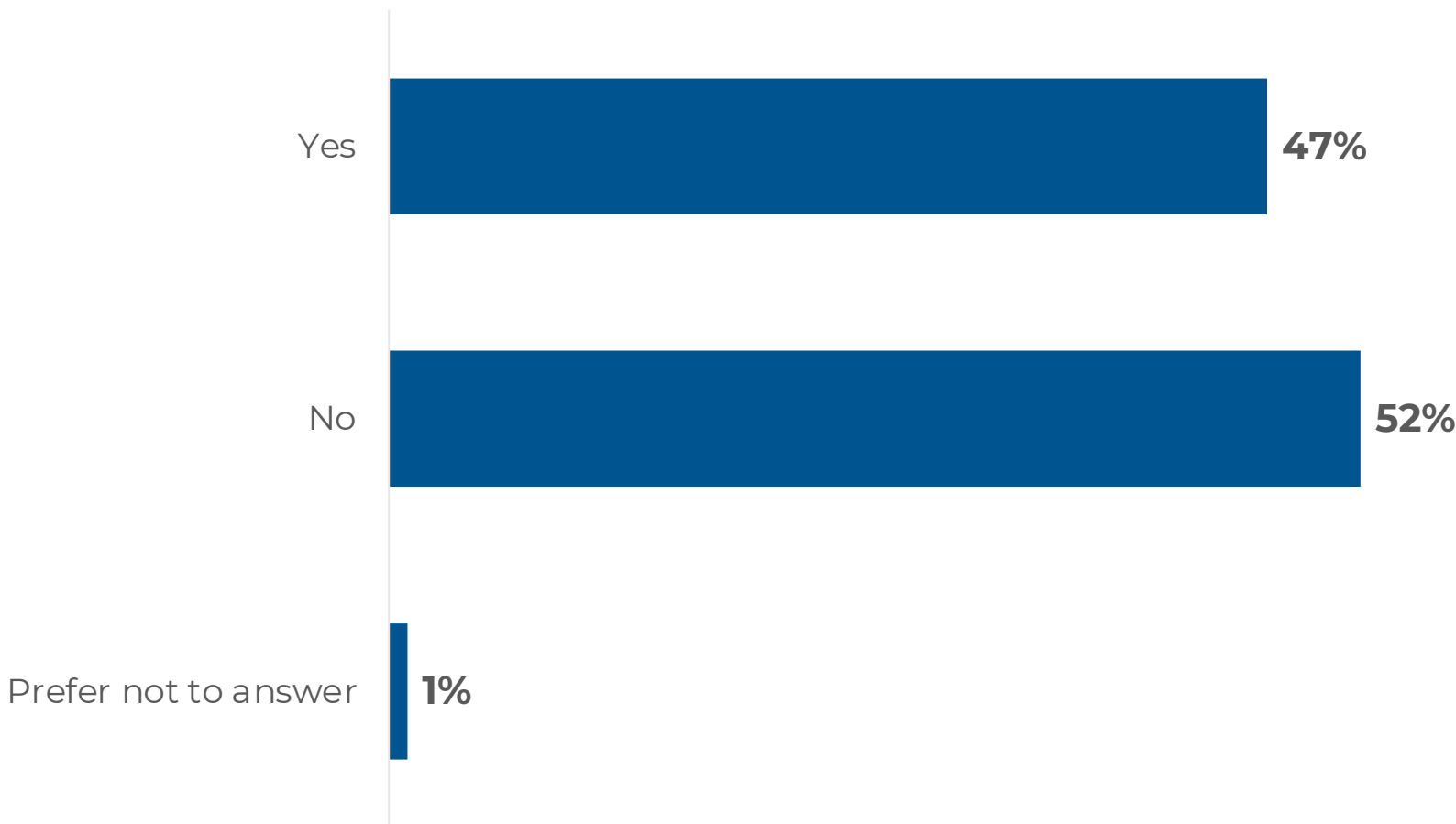
Most students feel integrated...

How well integrated do you feel into campus culture as an international student?



...however, almost half have witnessed some form of discrimination on campuses.

Have you personally experienced or witnessed discrimination on campus?



Source: Terra Dotta, 2024 International Student Survey; N= 356.

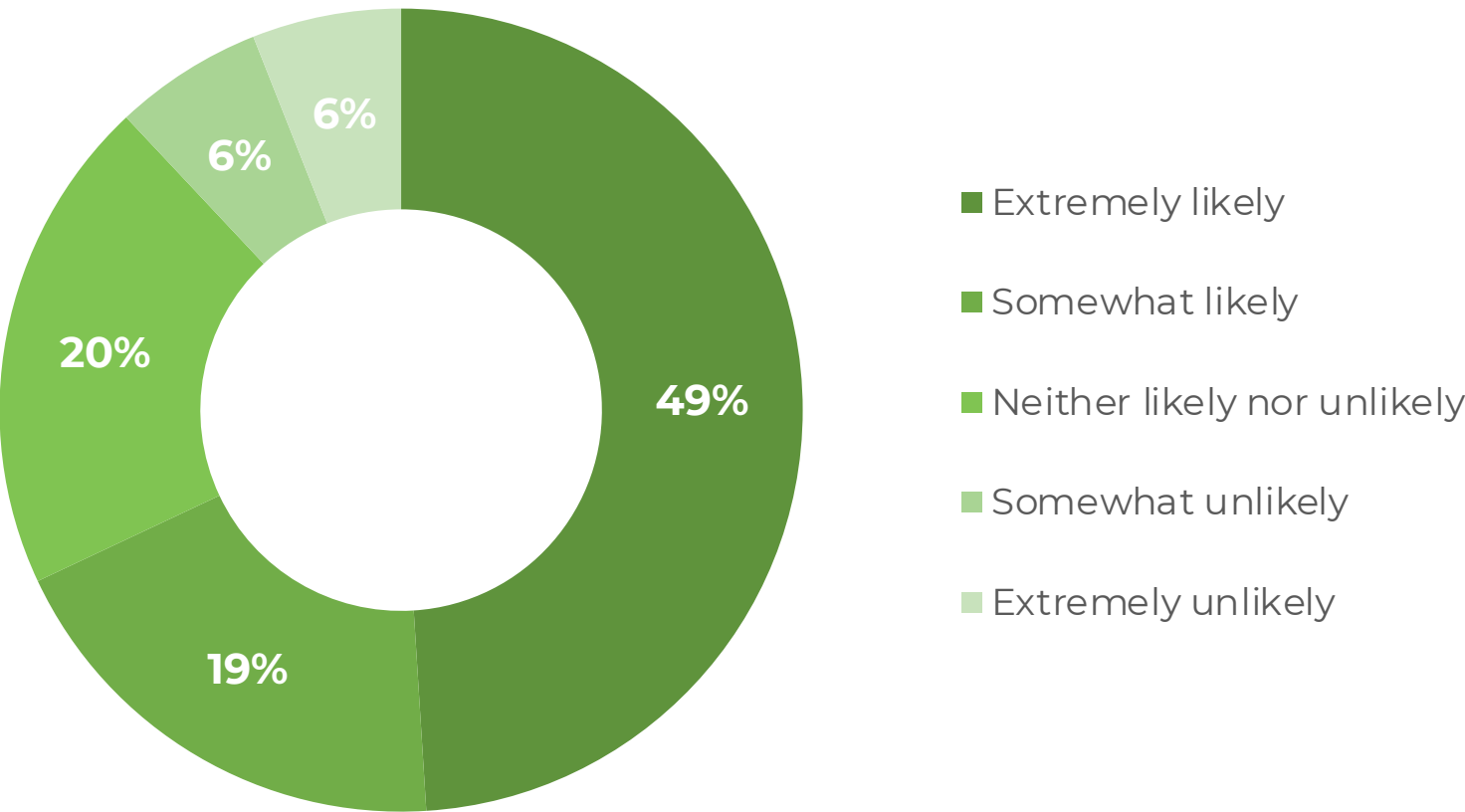


# International students plan to stay for the full duration of their programs unless cost and program satisfaction change significantly.

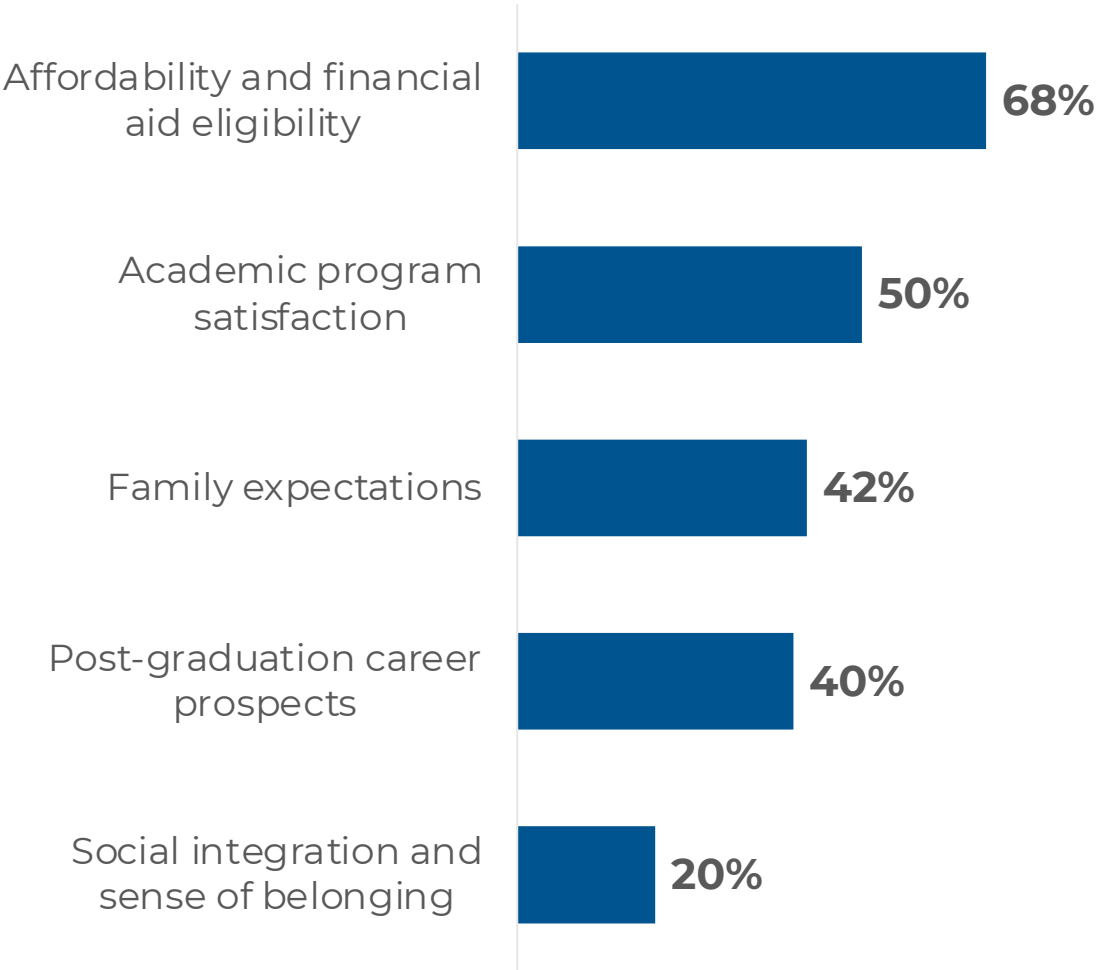
Majority plan to stay for the full duration of their program...

...cost and program satisfaction would be the main factors for leaving the university.

How likely are you to stay at the university for your full program duration?



What factors most determine whether you will remain enrolled at the university next year? (Please select all that apply.)



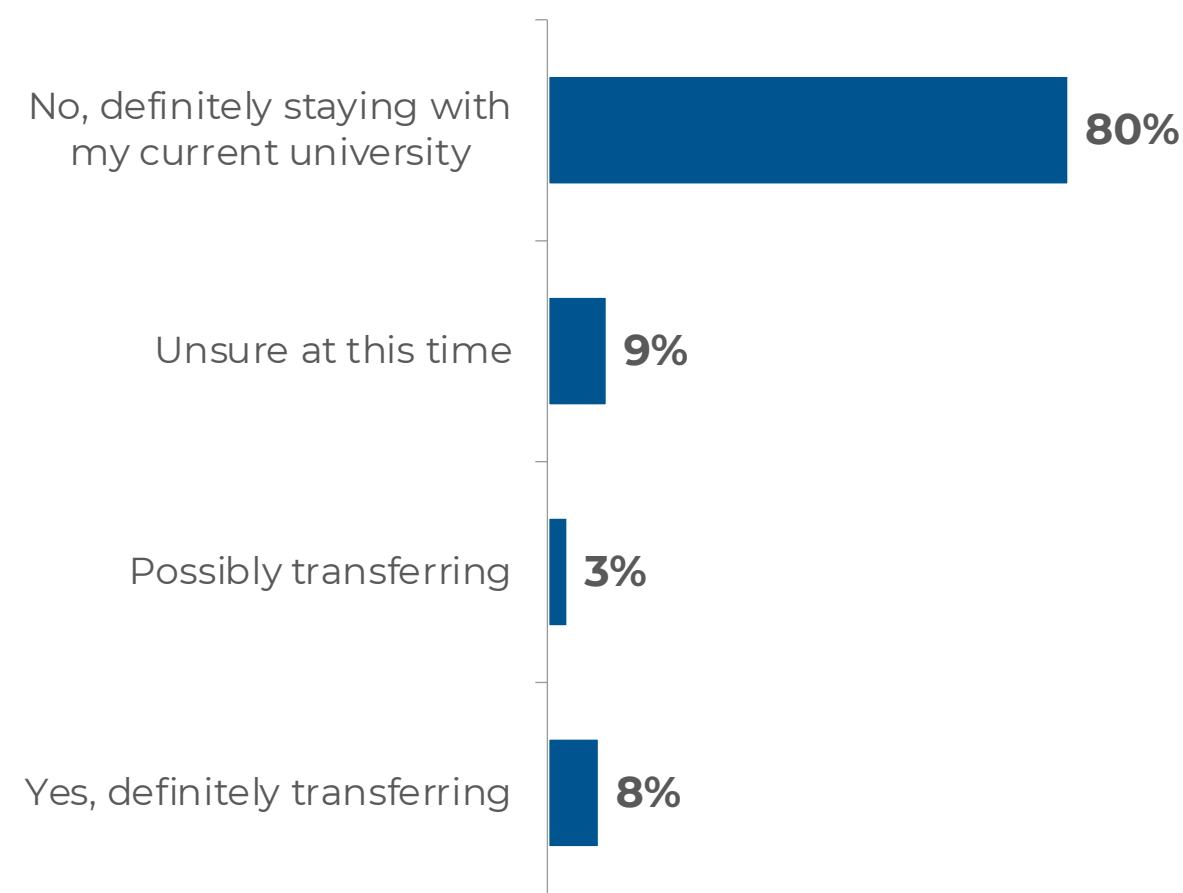
Source: Terra Dotta, 2024 International Student Survey; N= 356.



# International students plan to stay at their current university unless cost and program quality/offerings change significantly.

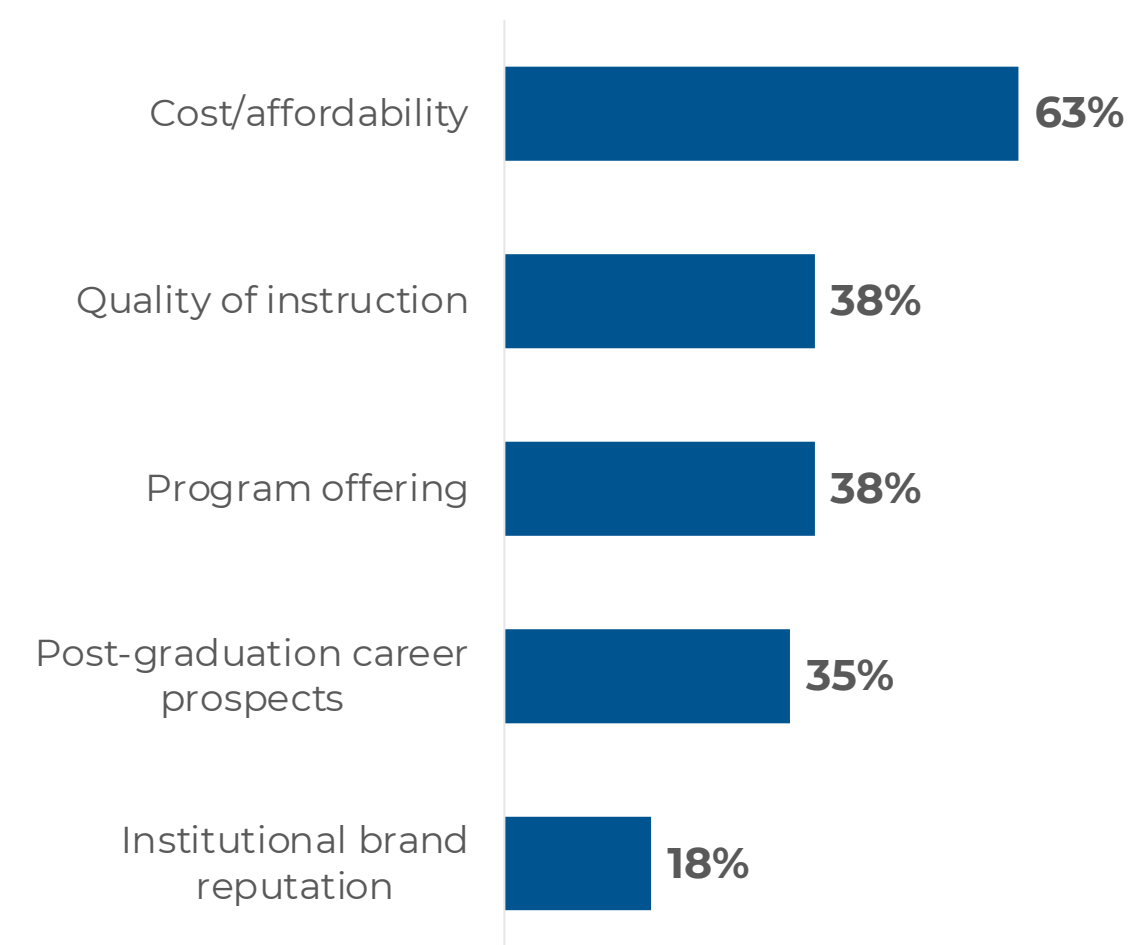
Majority of students are not transferring...

**Are you considering transferring to another university next year?**



...cost and program quality would influence their decision.

**Which factors would most influence that decision? (Please select all that apply.)**



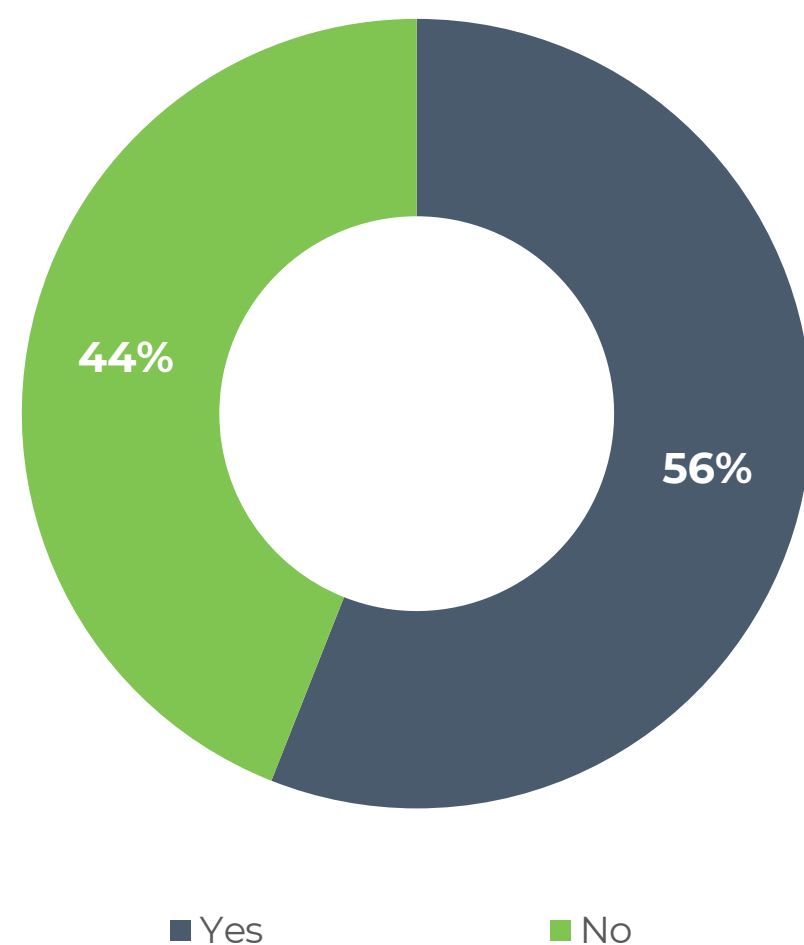
Source: Terra Dotta, 2024 International Student Survey; N= 356.



# Over half of students plan to seek employment post graduation. It was key when selecting the university, and most are satisfied with current policies.

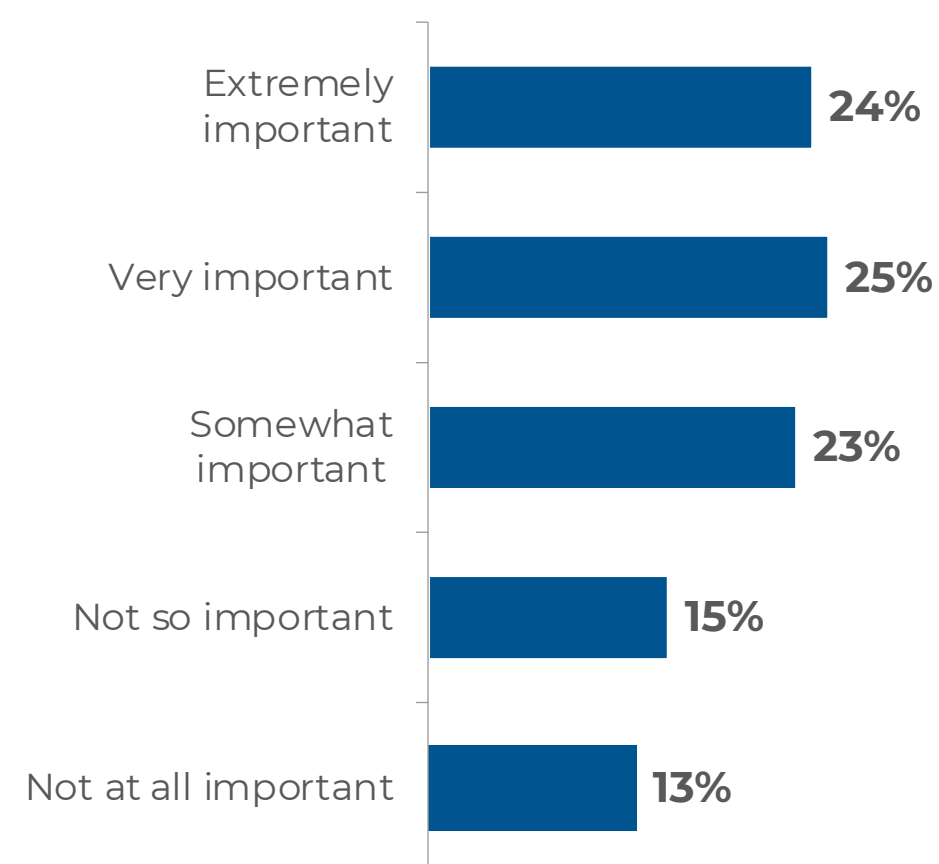
Over half of international students plan to seek employment post graduation...

**Are you planning to seek employment in the U.S. after graduation?**



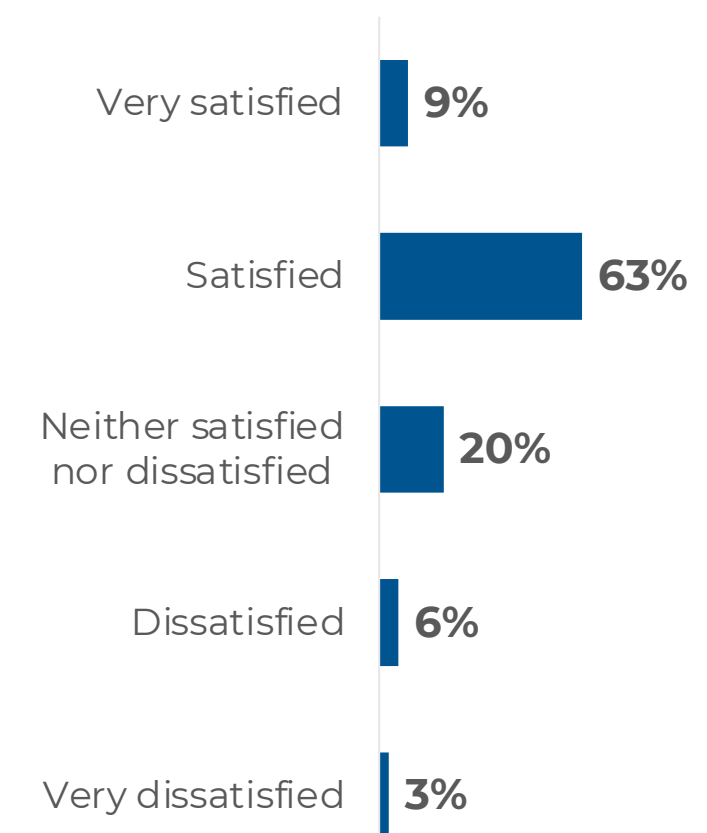
...over half stated it was important when selecting the university...

**How important is the ability to work in a country after graduation when choosing a study destination?**



...Most are satisfied with their university's post graduation work policies.

**How satisfied are you with current post-study work visa policies and employer sponsorship options available to international students in the U.S.?**



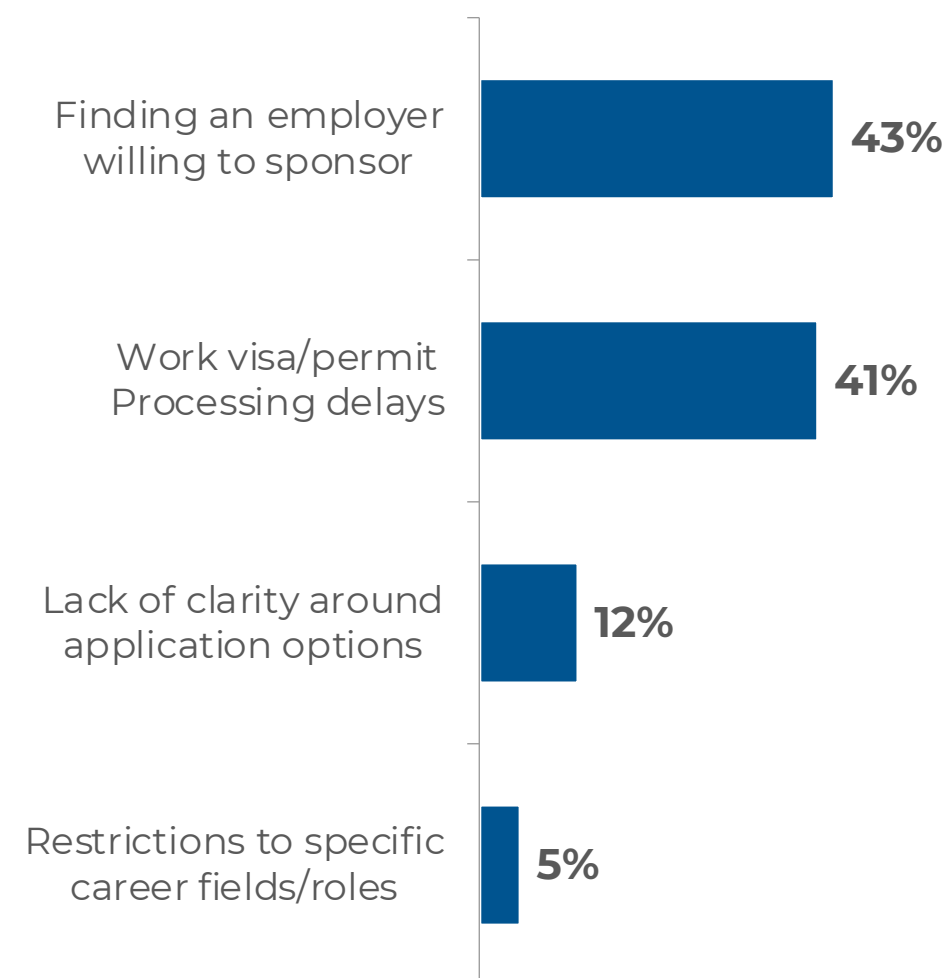
Source: Terra Dotta, 2024 International Student Survey; N= 356.



# Obtaining work visas, and finding jobs are the biggest challenge post graduation. Students would like expanded opportunities.

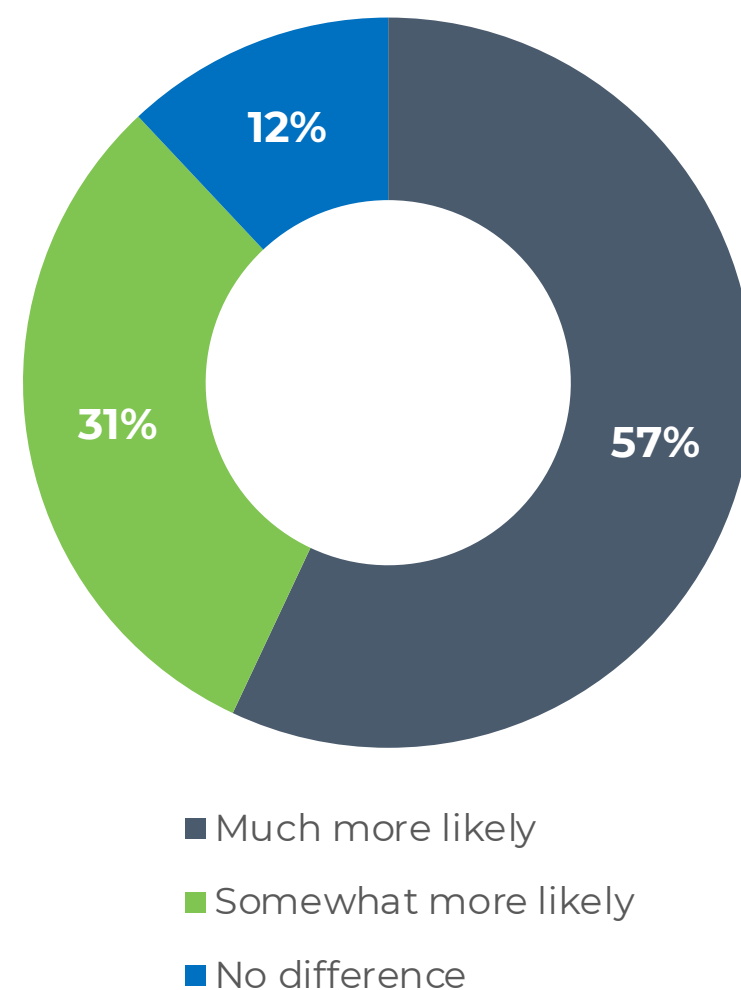
Work visa and finding employment are biggest challenges post graduation.

**What poses the biggest obstacle if hoping to secure employment and continue residing in the country post-graduation?**



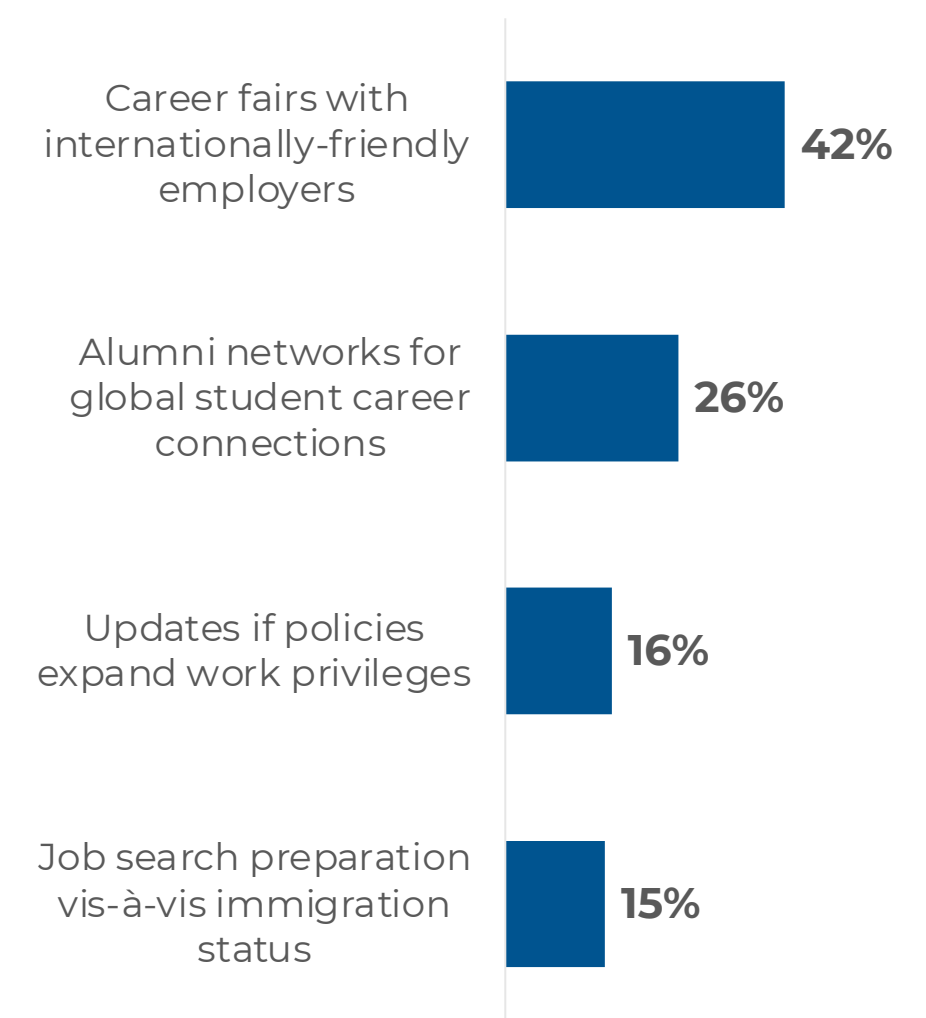
Students would recommend the universities if policies were expanded.

**How likely are you to recommend the study destination to peers considering global education if post-study work rights and career options were expanded?**



Career fairs and networks would be helpful.

**What support offerings from the university would be most helpful related to postgraduation employment prospects?**



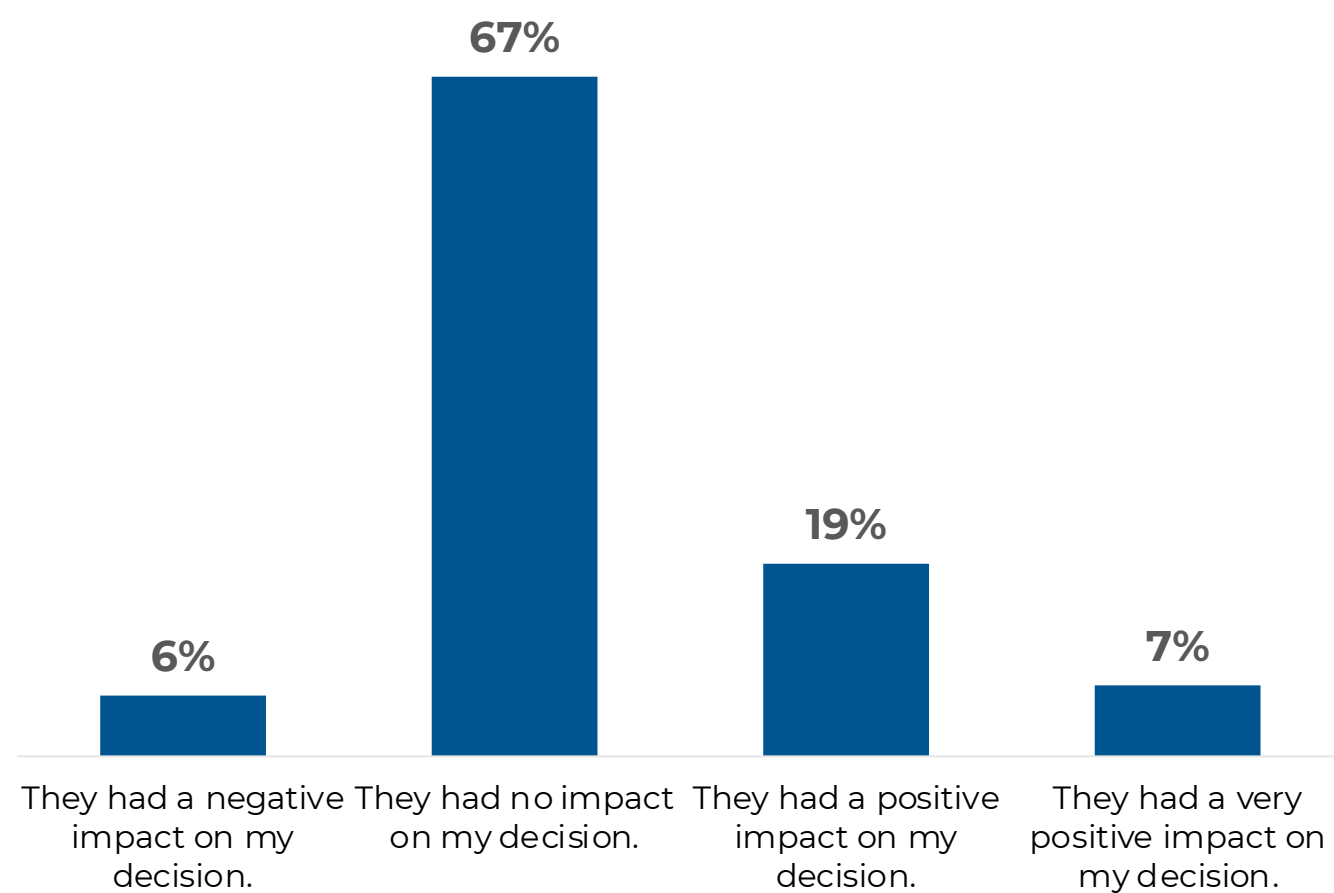
Source: Terra Dotta, 2024 International Student Survey; N= 356.



# Immigration policies had limited impact on student decisions.

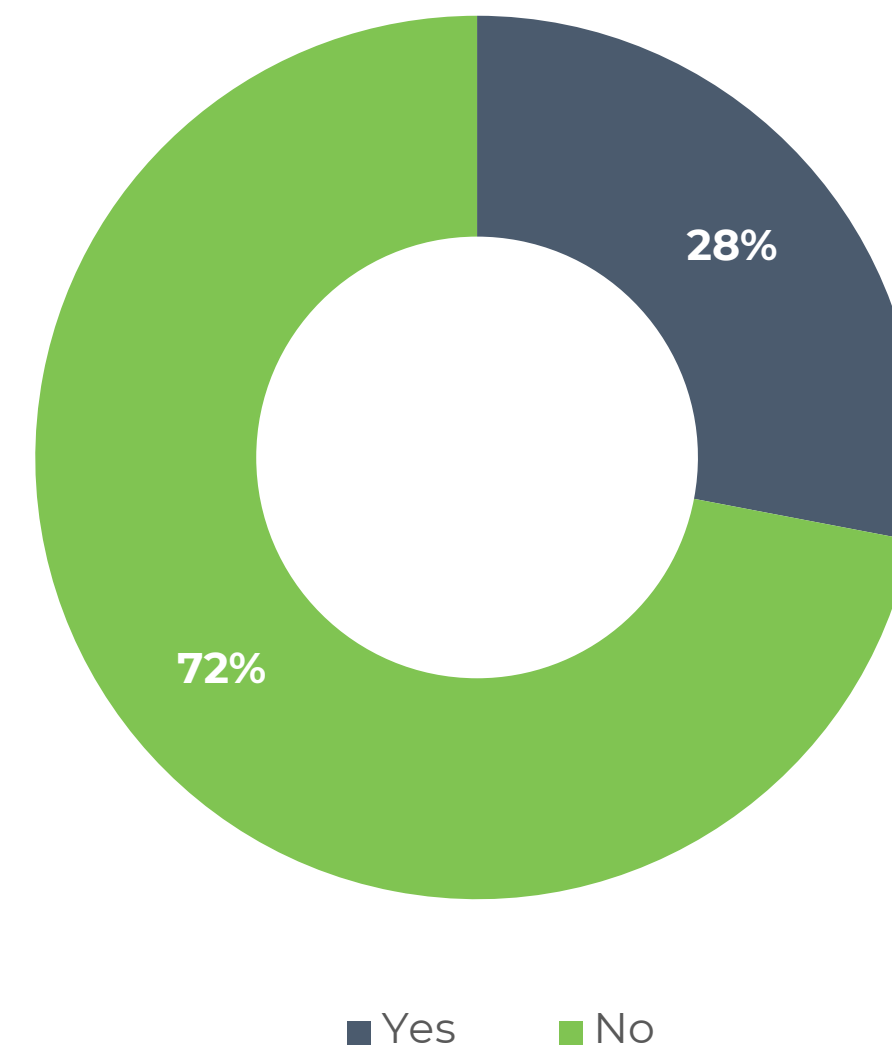
Most students stated immigration policies had limited impact on their decisions.

**How did U.S. immigration policies influence your decision to study in the U.S.?**



Most students didn't have any difficulties with the process.

**Did you experience any difficulties navigating the U.S. immigration system or obtaining your student visa?**



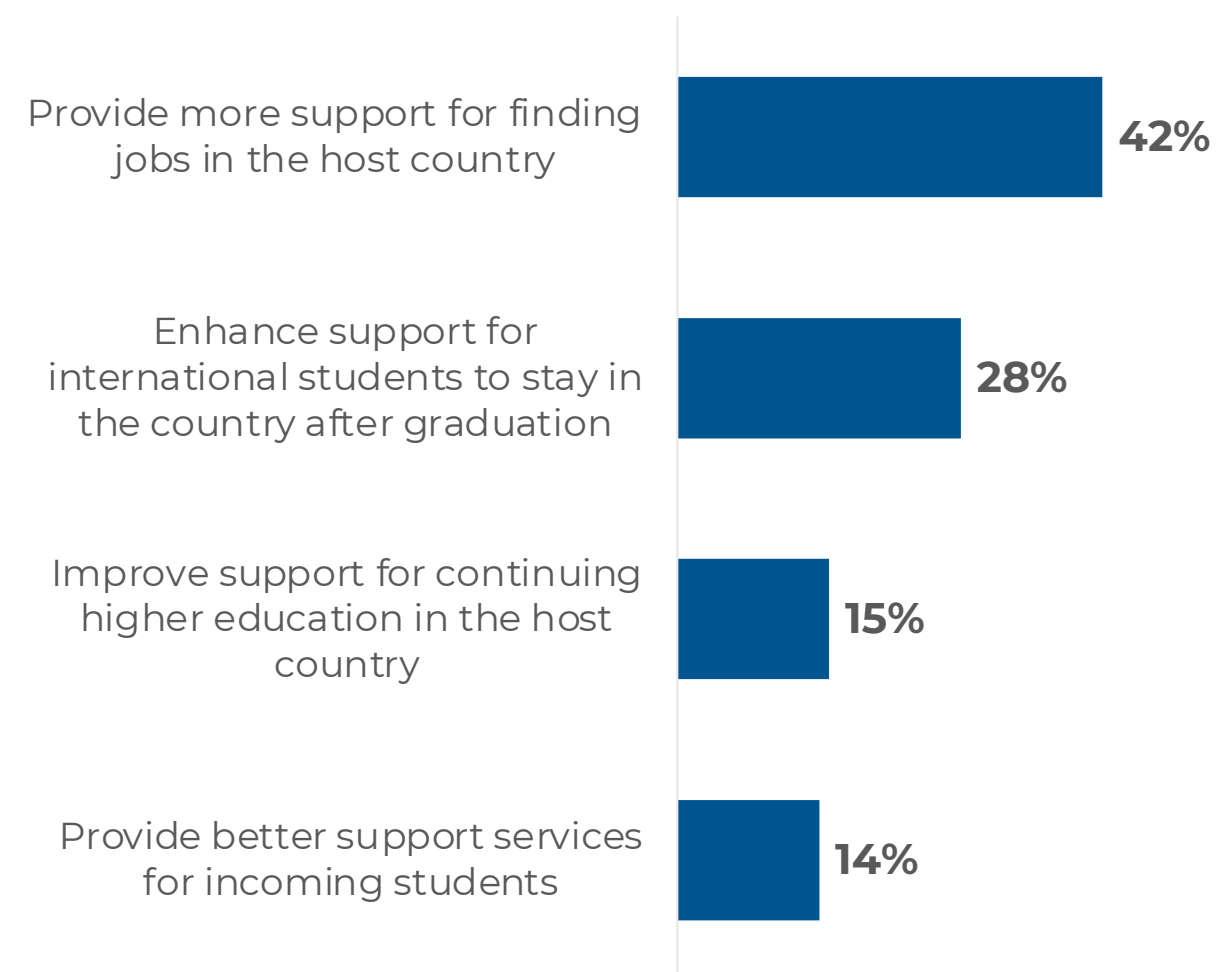
Source: Terra Dotta, 2024 International Student Survey; N= 356.



# More support post-graduation is desired from international students.

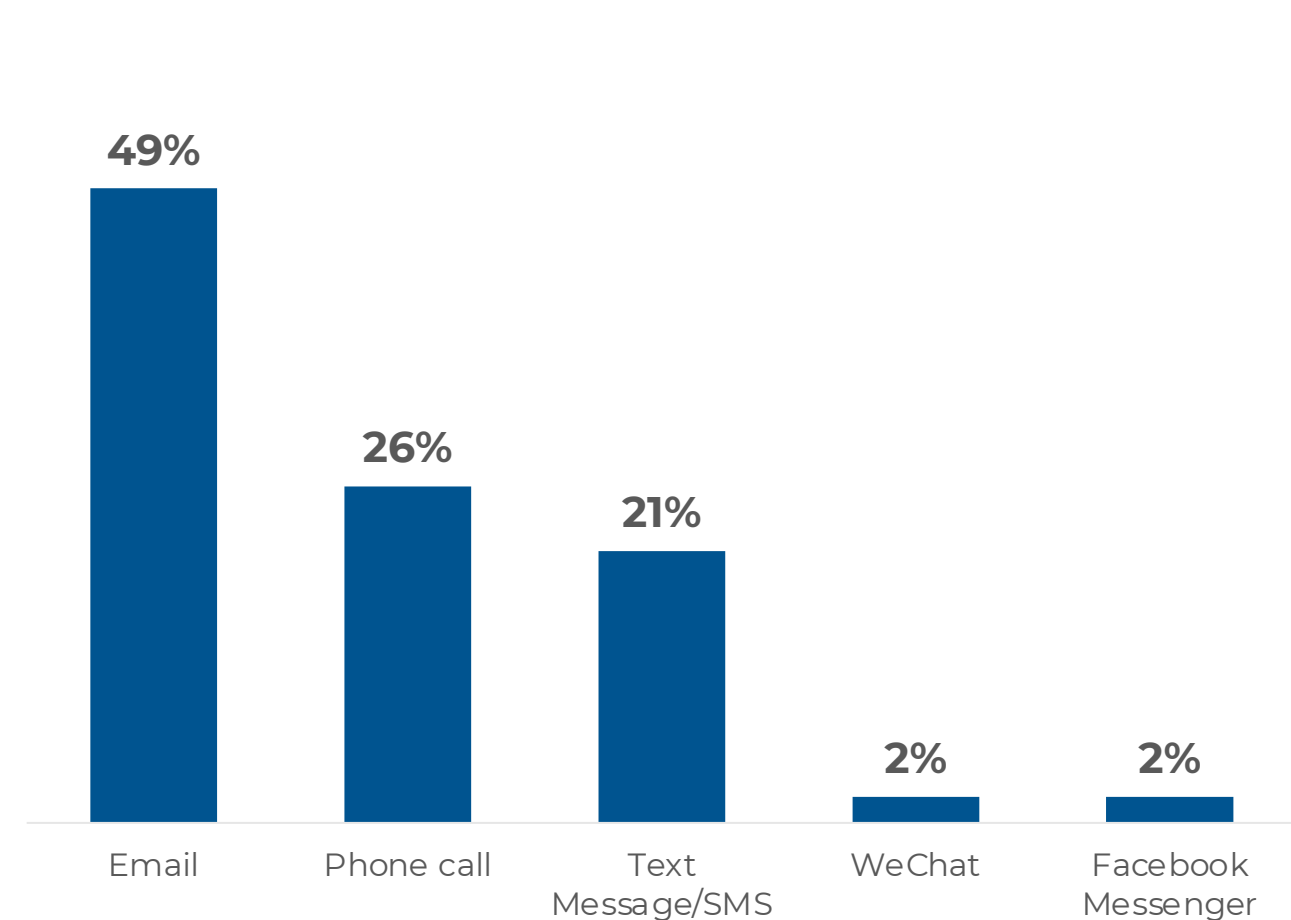
More support post-graduation is wanted by international students.

**If you could change one thing about the university to improve the experience for international students in the future, what would it be?**



International students prefer to be contacted by email and phone calls.

**When becoming a student in the U.S. what is your preferred way of communicating with your university?**



Source: Terra Dotta, 2024 International Student Survey; N= 356.



# Conclusion

- The 2024 International Student Survey by Terra Dotta provides insights into the experiences and aspirations of international students in the U.S.
- While the survey highlights the enduring appeal of U.S. higher education, it also reveals the challenges students face, such as social isolation and homesickness.
- To enhance competitiveness in attracting and supporting international students, U.S. institutions should consider these survey insights.
- By prioritizing student wellbeing, and advocating for supportive immigration policies, institutions can create a more welcoming and inclusive environment that supports current and prospective international students.





# APPENDIX

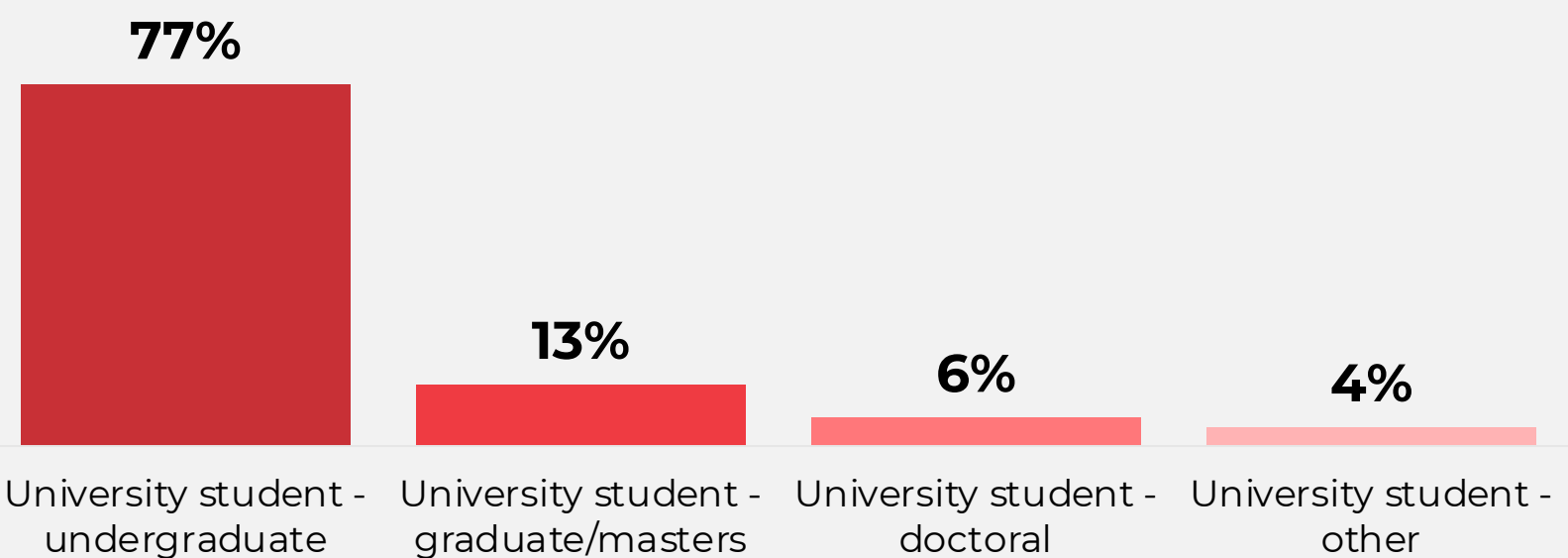


# RESPONDENT PROFILE

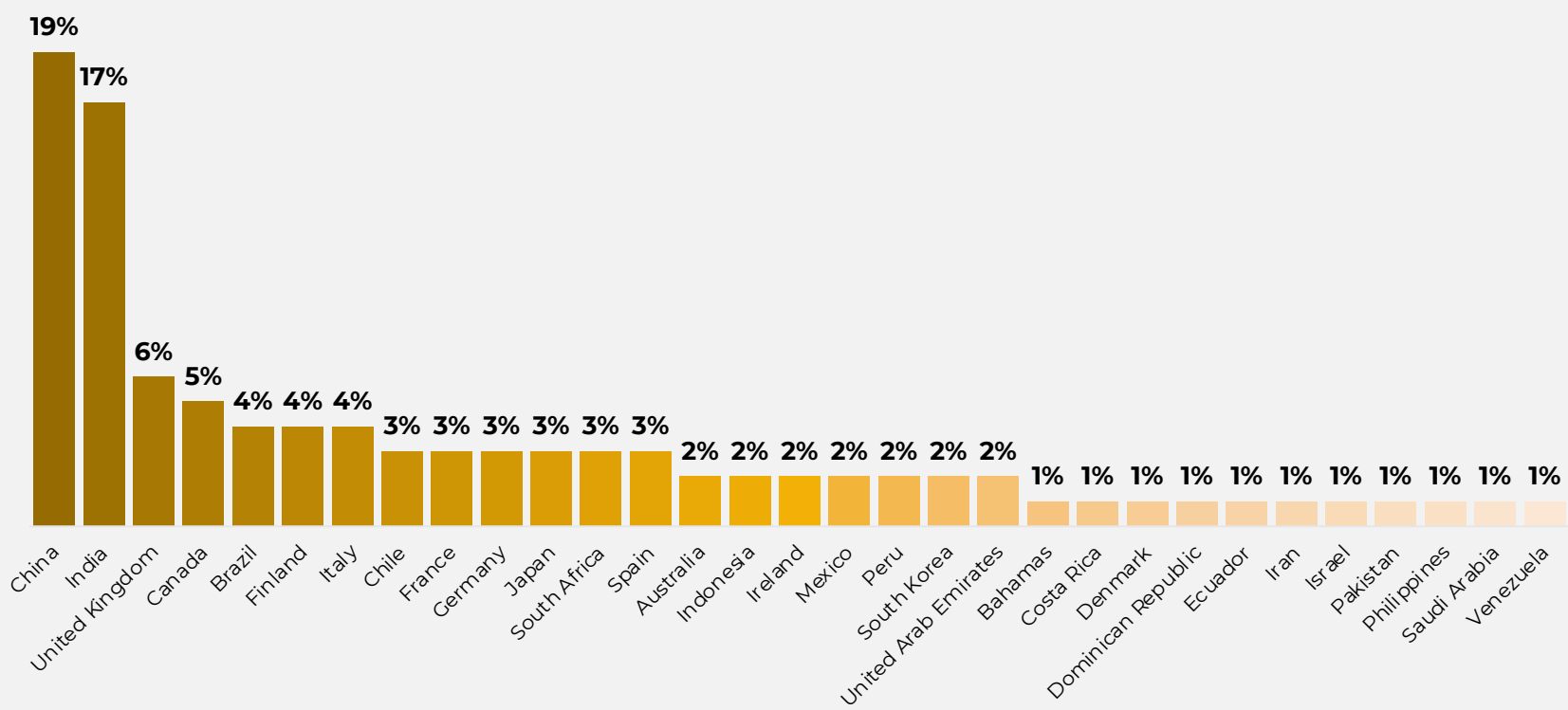


INTERNATIONAL  
STUDENTS  
Studying in the U.S.

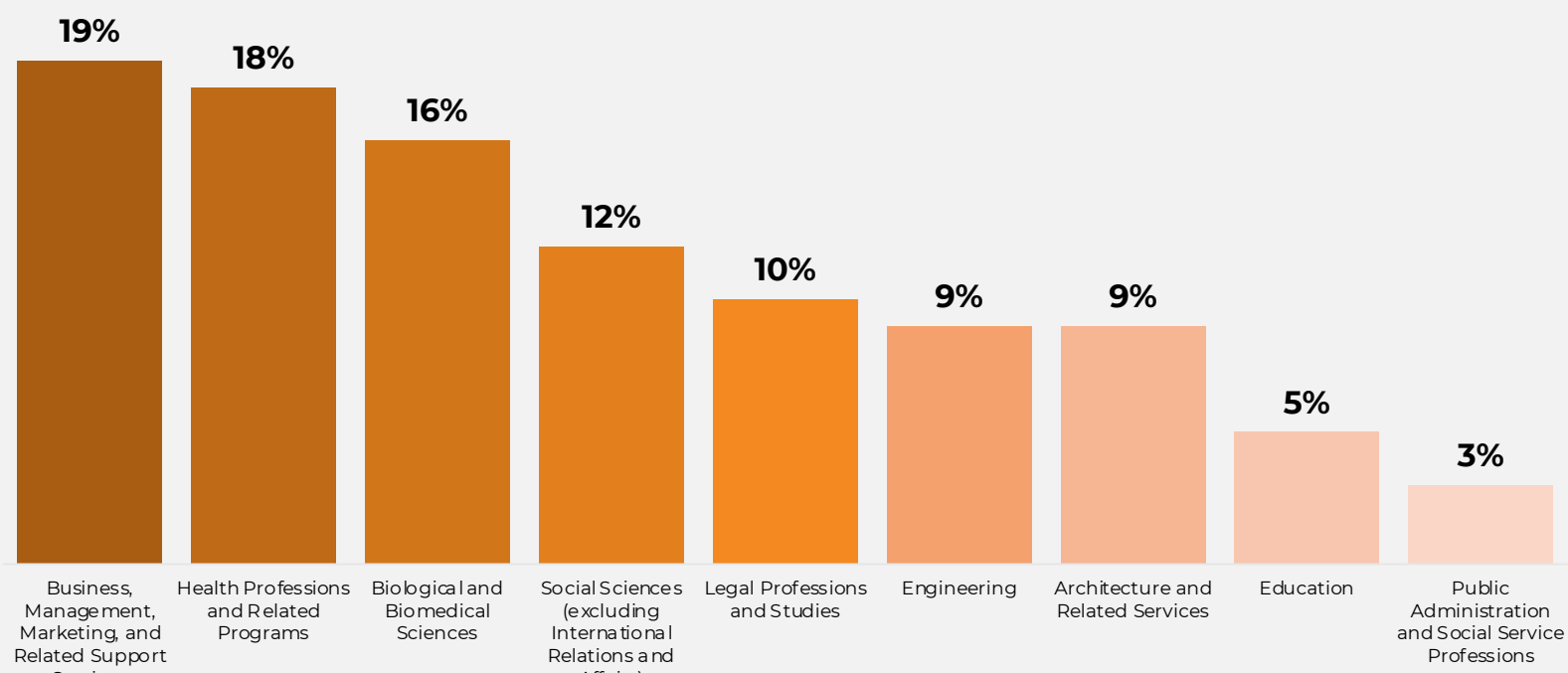
## RESPONDENTS BY STUDENT SITUATION



## RESPONDENTS BY HOME COUNTRY



## RESPONDENTS BY FIELD OF STUDY



# TERRA DOTTA FOR **GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT**

**Our cloud-based, modular solutions** encompass outgoing study abroad, incoming international student and scholar services (ISSS), global engagement dashboards, and travel risk management—including our award-winning AlertTraveler® mobile application.

Offering a seamless user experience, the platform serves as a hub for institutions' global experience programs, pulling in relevant cross-campus student data to enable advanced global engagement analytics.



## See for yourself.

We invite you to learn how Terra Dotta can help you achieve your global engagement objectives. Reach us online or contact your Terra Dotta representative.

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