

UCAS

PROJECT NEXT GENERATION

EARLY DRIVERS AND
STUDY PATHWAYS
ADVISER REPORT

(CHINA)





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| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

China is one of the world's largest source markets of international students, and represents one of the largest groups of international students in the UK. This report provides insights into the decision-making process of these students, between the ages of 13 - 16, as they consider higher education and career options.

It aims to help advisers to support students mindfully and effectively at key points in their journey. The research is based on a bespoke survey involving 2,035 young people from China, India, USA, Turkey and France – with more than 400 Chinese participants – examining their motivations, information requirements, and sources of influence.

In a country the size of China, there are significant regional differences – particularly when comparing eastern cities and provinces to the rest of the country.

The key findings of this research study indicate:

- ▶ The priorities of students in China aligned to their passions and interests more than careers and remuneration. Only 23% are actively and strategically mapping out their future.
- ▶ The UK is China's preferred study location, with 60% of students saying they would consider it. The nearest competitor is the USA, with 47%, and the nearest European competitor is France, with 37%.
- ▶ Compared to other international students, those in China are less likely to consult their families and more likely to opt for social media – which requires its very own strategy, given that the country runs many of its own, nationally-exclusive social media channels.
- ▶ Prestige matters to students in China. The most important factor in picking a country is gaining an internationally recognised qualification (37%), and the most important factor in choosing a university is its ranking and reputation (46%).
- ▶ Whilst the UK ticks both of these boxes and is already the preferred destination for most students, they still have plenty of reservations – about culture, cost, communication, and careers. As an adviser, you must be aware of the most common questions they ask at each age.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT WHAT INFLUENCES THE CHOICES INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS MAKE WHEN IT COMES TO TIME FOR APPLYING TO HIGHER EDUCATION, YOU CAN READ OUR [WHERE NEXT? REPORT](#)



| FOREWORD

The UK's international student enrolment landscape has changed significantly over the last decade, with more overseas learners attracted by the prestige, quality of education, and career opportunities that British degrees can offer. China has always been an important part of this picture. Its students revere our education system, our job market, and – perhaps most of all – the overall experience of living and learning in Britain.

The past few years have shown that nothing is guaranteed in international student mobility, but it is clear that UK universities continue to be attractive to students in China, who overcome cultural and linguistic barriers to embrace new opportunities. Prior challenges, however, are now sharpened by the fact that students are starting their research and decision-making process at a much younger age. This report aims to help you keep your finger on the pulse of what the next generation of students in China want and need to know about studying in the UK – and to understand the reasons why.

Whilst many reports investigate sentiment of current applicants to higher education, we hope this one is useful to you, in the crucial work you do in providing expert information, advice, and guidance on a world full of opportunities. UCAS is proud of its community of advisers and counsellors, and as you read through this report, please do reach out to us with your thoughts and ideas as to how we can play our part in continuing to provide support for you and your students into the future.

How to make the most of this report:

1. **Pay close attention to the nuances** in regional preferences, changing behaviours by age, differences between study vs career advice, and each chapter's focus on specific support needs. As teachers, counsellors, and advisers – you can use these insights to tailor your conversations very specifically and plan your study abroad guidance sessions on an individual level.
2. Look closely at **who students consider influencers** at each stage of their educational journey. Analogue guidance plays a huge role in helping students navigate a world of opportunities to find their 'best fit', but some advice is seen as more valuable from counsellors, some more so from parents, and for other information they are looking to social media.
3. At the end of each chapter, you will find a **summary of UCAS tools and resources** to help you and your students navigate the UK higher education system and process. This covers the whole student journey, from discovery tools when a student is researching their options, through to enrolment and integration. UCAS is much more than just an application portal, it's your partner with all the support you need.
4. It is also interesting to compare the findings of this report with those of our previous research into the experiences of Chinese students once they enter UK higher education - **read that report in full**.

Des Cutchey
Head of International Strategy



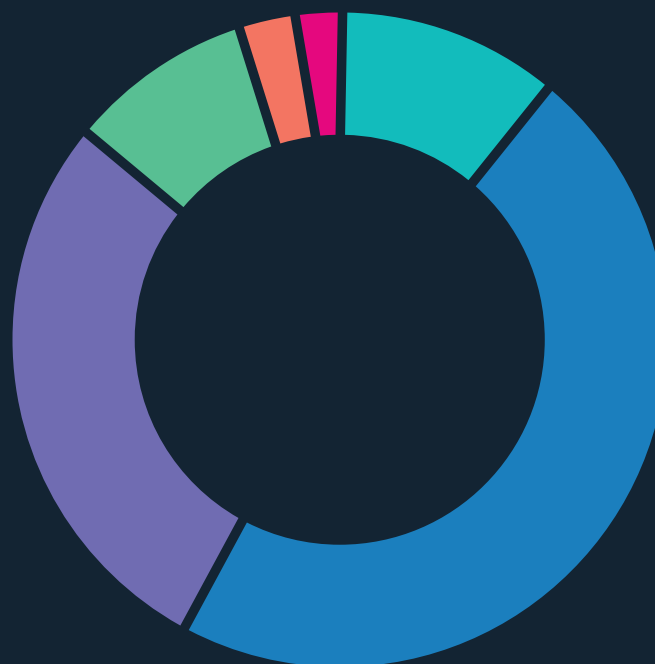
Methodology

WE CONDUCTED A BESPOKE RESEARCH PROJECT WITH INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AGED 13 - 16.

Engaging with 2,035 young people – with more than 400 from China – we set out to answer two big questions:

1. What are they planning for the future, and what drives/helps them to make these choices?
2. How do they choose particular pathways, subjects, careers, or professions?

China Regions



East China
47%

South Central China
28%

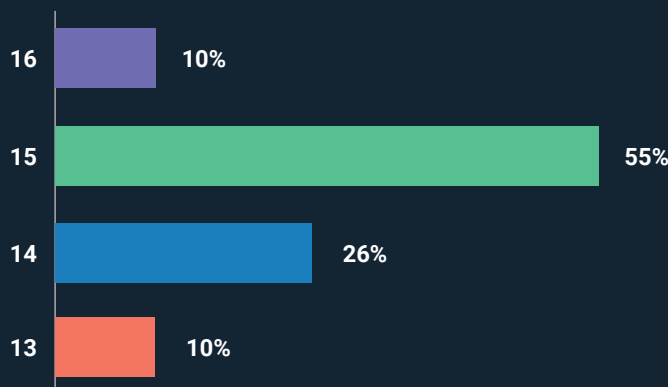
North China
11%

Southwest China
9%

Northwest China
3%

Northeast China
2%

Age



Male

54%

Female

45%

Some regional and age-based findings are drawn from a low sample size and are indicated by footnotes.

CHAPTER 1 - FEELINGS & CONFIDENCE

Students in China have strong self-belief and they trust in their instincts. They know what they want, and they pursue it with excitement.

Decisions are driven by passions and interests and that includes a passion for UK universities.

Students in China are the most optimistic of all the nationalities we surveyed, with over 95% feeling positive about both the present and the future.

This bright outlook translates directly into their approach to make decisions – when we asked them **whether they were mapping out their future, only 23% said yes.**

Self-belief, following their instincts, and sticking to what they enjoy are key philosophies for this demographic – whose approach is focused on fulfilment over finances.

This certainly doesn't mean that there's no strategy to their decision-making, but rather that there's an element of faith involved. This is **a group which believes in the power of their passions.**

And remember, many parents of this age group are now Millennials – which means young people are getting very different advice to what has traditionally been given.



MY ADVISER TOLD ME TO...

"RELAX AND
GET CREATIVE
WITH
ABANDON"

Male, 15

"CONSIDER NOT ONLY
HOW MUCH I EARN
BUT ALSO HOW MUCH
I CAN HELP OTHERS."

Male, 13

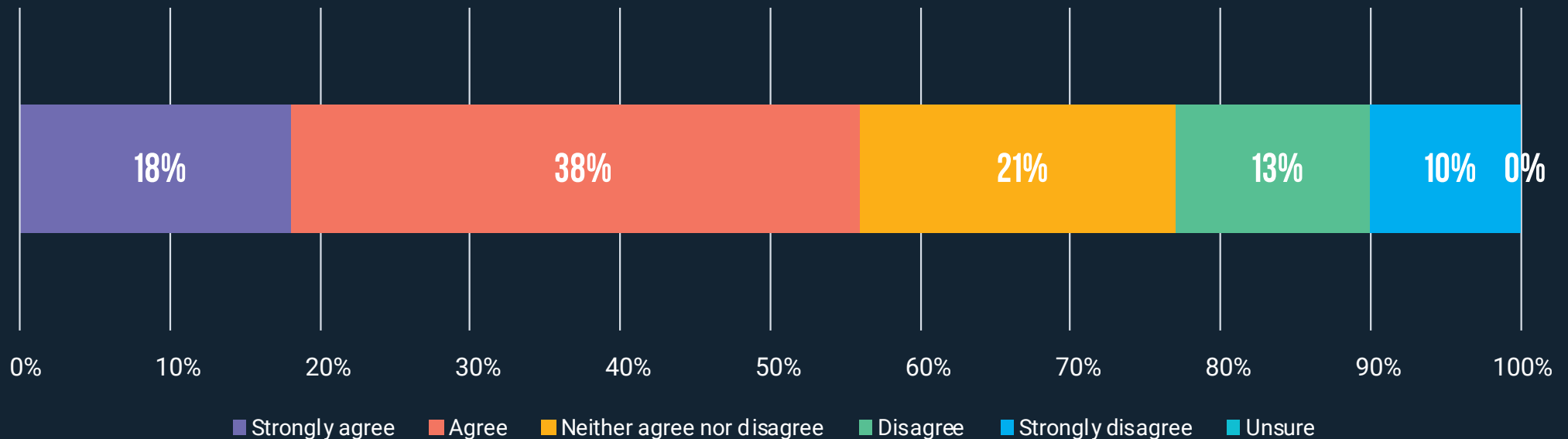
"LEARN HOW
TO DISCOVER
THE BEAUTY
OF LIFE"

Female, 14

"FOLLOW MY HEART AND CHOOSE
A SUBJECT IN EDUCATION BASED
ON MY INTERESTS AND CURRENT
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS"

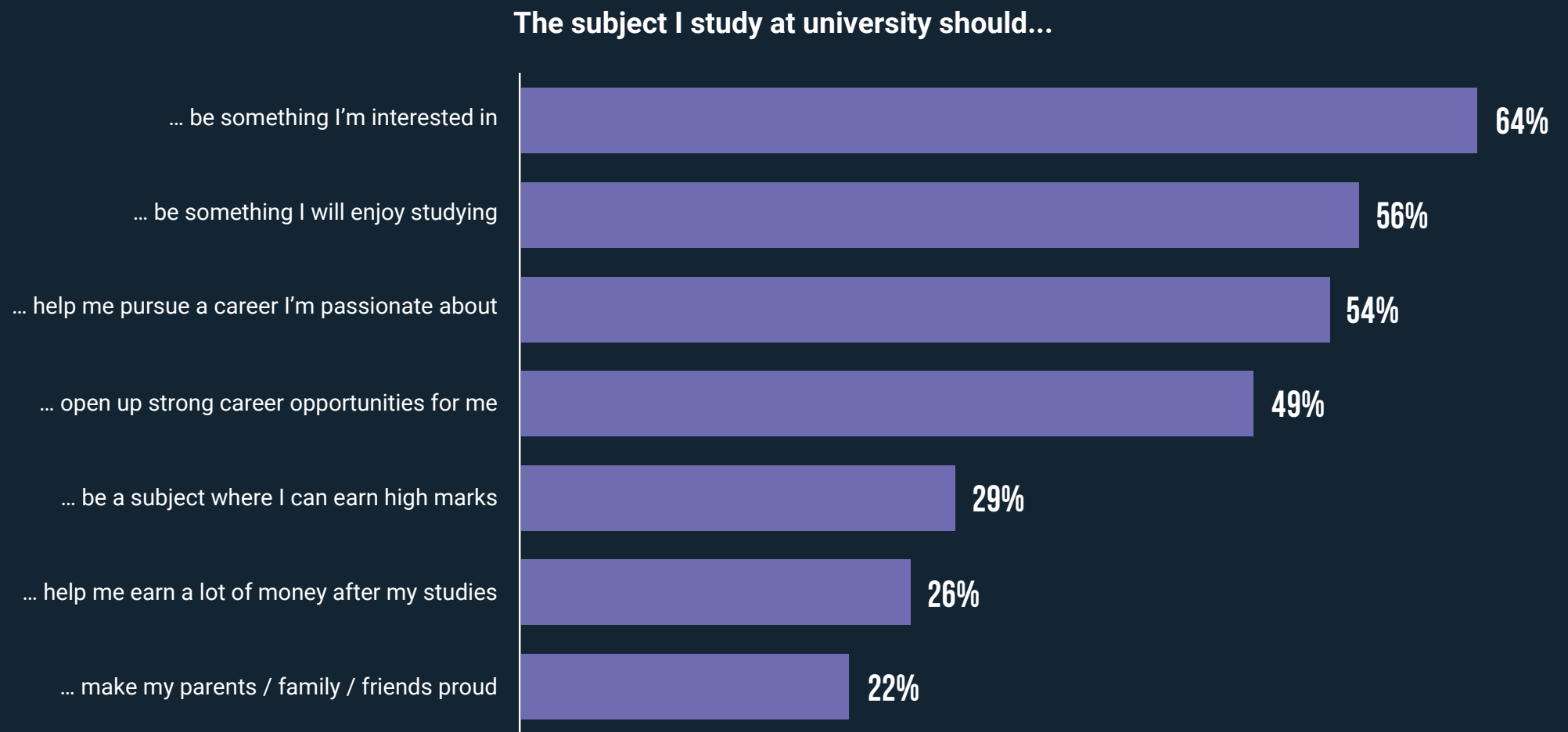
Female, 16

I'm not trying to map out my future– I'm sticking to what I enjoy / what I am good at and the rest will take care of itself



I'm not trying to map out my future – I'm sticking to what I enjoy / what I am good at, and the rest will take care of itself: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (410)

Whilst this relaxed approach is quite universal, it's more prevalent in those aged 14 (58%) – who are **less likely to think about mapping their future out in detail**. You can see this clearly by looking at the motivations they have for pursuing specific subjects:



Q: The subject I study at university should... (376)

The **three most popular options are all personal or emotive drivers**, whilst those concerning financial returns and career opportunities are less popular – albeit the latter remains an important consideration for nearly half of all respondents.

It is important for advisers to nurture healthy mindsets which prioritise fulfilment, but also to promote keeping an open mind and realistic expectations. Ask yourself (and ask them):

- ▶ Do their passions align with skills needs and job markets?
- ▶ Can the skills learned from their hobbies be applied to potential careers?
- ▶ What future professions can they match current hobbies to and what are the best routes to follow?

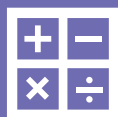
Our research shows that careers and earnings become more important as these students age, but by 16 years old many will be somewhat locked into subject paths. By asking these questions earlier, you can help them make **better decisions that align with passions and careers**.

There is already a strong link between study intentions and future career plans – especially for the most popular choices. They may not be making every decision based on its material return, but the subjects they're interested in certainly align with UK growth sectors.

TOP SUBJECTS CONSIDERED AFTER THE AGE OF 16



Computing /
computer science
(19%)



Mathematical
Sciences
(19%)



Subjects allied to medicine
e.g. nursing, midwifery, pharmacy,
veterinary science etc.
(18%)

TOP SUBJECTS CONSIDERED FOR UNIVERSITY



Computing /
computer science
(33%)



Subjects allied to medicine e.g.
nursing, midwifery, pharmacy,
veterinary science etc.
(21%)



Accounting & Finance
(20%)



Information
Technology / IT
(39%)



Communications /
Information
(16%)



Healthcare
(14%)

Q: What subject(s) would you consider studying after at school after the age of 16 (e.g. when you do A-levels, Baccalaureate, etc)? Base: Those who have an idea of what they want to study (391)

Q: What subject(s) would you consider studying at university? Base: Those who are likely to apply to university (376)

Q: Which of the following best describes the sector(s) in which you'd like to work in the future?
Base: Those who have thought about their career plans (384)

Whilst there is a clear alignment between subjects and careers, make sure you dive deeper into the difference between subjects vs specialisms and sectors vs professions. A student interested in medicine may not intuitively explore pathways in research, healthcare management, or global public health. With your advice, they may uncover lesser-known career opportunities tied to their interests.

And for students from China, who may not be as familiar with non-selective universities, make sure you highlight the strength of opportunities available across a variety of institutions.

China's population is almost double that of Europe and its East and West are 3,000 miles apart – which is similar to the distance between London and New York. So, understandably, there are significant differences between provinces.

Mathematical Sciences, Law and Chemistry are all significantly more popular subject choices among students from East China, while subjects allied to Medicine are more popular in North China – which nearly 2 in 5 are considering studying*.





45% of students from East China say they'd like to work in IT in the future, with Engineering and Law also more popular in this region. Accounting and Pharmaceuticals are much more popular among North Chinese students.

54%

of respondents intend to apply
to university immediately after
school

92%

of respondents intend to
apply to university at
some point

82%

of respondents are
already considering
studying abroad

60%

of respondents are
considering the UK as
a study destination

Despite their relaxed approach to the future, **more than half of respondents are already researching their options** – which are primarily focused on university and, when it comes down to choosing a country, a university in the UK.

The UK has an enduring appeal as a study destination for students in China, who appreciate its reputation for academic excellence, cultural diversity, and strong graduate outcomes. The key differentiators of the UK education system – like its shorter degree durations, globally recognised qualifications, and focus on independent learning – mirror the priorities of this demographic.





TOOLS AND RESOURCES

1. **Subject Guides** - Detailed guides provide insights into what it's like to study specific subjects, how to access these fields, and the potential career opportunities they offer. These guides help students make informed decisions about their future.
2. **Location Guides** - These guides are designed to assist prospective students in exploring various regions, cities, and countries within the UK, and provide detailed insights into local universities and colleges, student life, cultural attractions, accommodation options, and employment opportunities. With the help of these guides, students can make informed decisions about where to pursue their higher education based on their preferences and needs.
3. **The Hub** - A tailored experience that adapts to each student's interests and goals, offering personalised advice, relevant tools, and guidance to ensure they feel supported at every stage of their journey.
4. **International Podcast** - Experts and students discuss what it's like to study in the UK, budgeting, visas, post-graduate options and more.

CHAPTER 2 - INSPIRATION & INFLUENCERS

Young people have never had more opportunities and options, so they need support as early as possible to help them make informed decisions with open minds.

Especially valuable is advice that comes from real students.

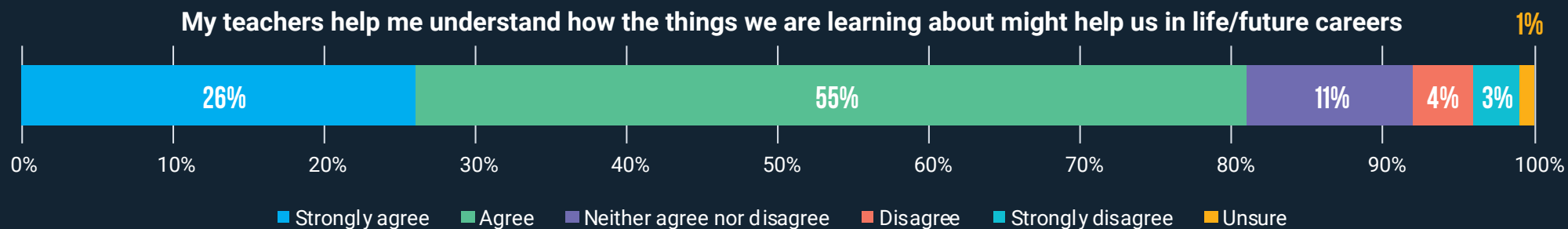
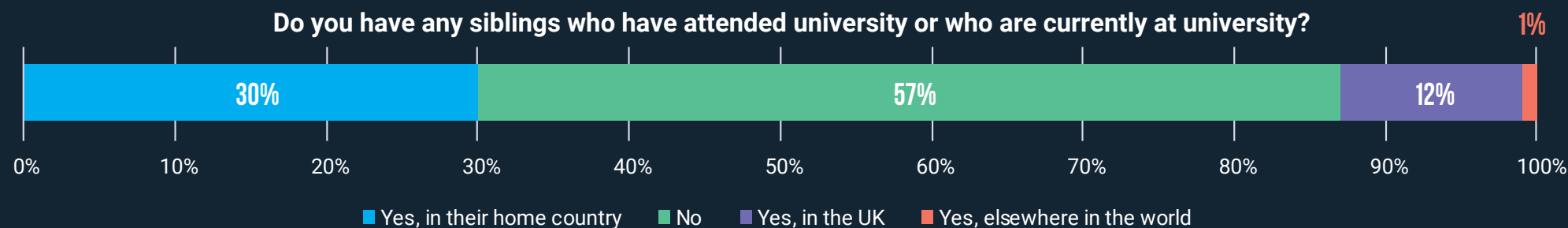
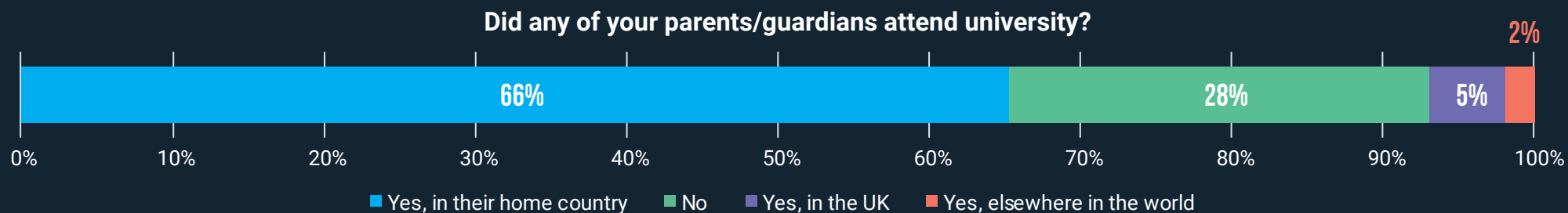
It's not always family that has the most influence

Sometimes insight from peers can be just as impactful

Making life-changing decisions is tough at such a young age. That's why students need holistic, rounded advice from a range of sources – not just those closest to them.

Family members, particularly parents, often play a decisive role in shaping student aspirations. **80% of respondents said that they are listened to** by their parents/guardians when making decisions about their future, but **57% also feel some parental pressure**.





Q: Did any of your parents / guardians attend university? (410)

Q: Do you have any siblings who have attended university or who are currently at university? (410)

The same goes for siblings, friends and classmates – who all influence younger students by shaping their perceptions of universities and courses. Students may aspire to follow similar paths as their peers or feel drawn to institutions that others in their network have chosen.

There is a crucial role for advisers to offer objective, practical advice and informed insights that reassure parents while empowering students. It is essential that students have mentors who recognise their potential and spark interest in areas they may not have considered, expanding their horizons and encouraging them to consider diverse options beyond the obvious choices.

FAMILY

Despite being the most significant influencer for both university study and future career, students in China are **significantly less likely to seek advice from their families**.



SOCIAL MEDIA

By contrast, **social media is consistently a more significant influence on students from China**. They are also much more likely to look to universities and colleges for advice on their future career.



13 YEARS OLD

Teachers and family are the dominant sources of influence at this age – and students rely on them as they explore future university options and careers. Friends also play a big role – peer discussions about aspirations are common at this stage.

14 & 15 YEARS OLD

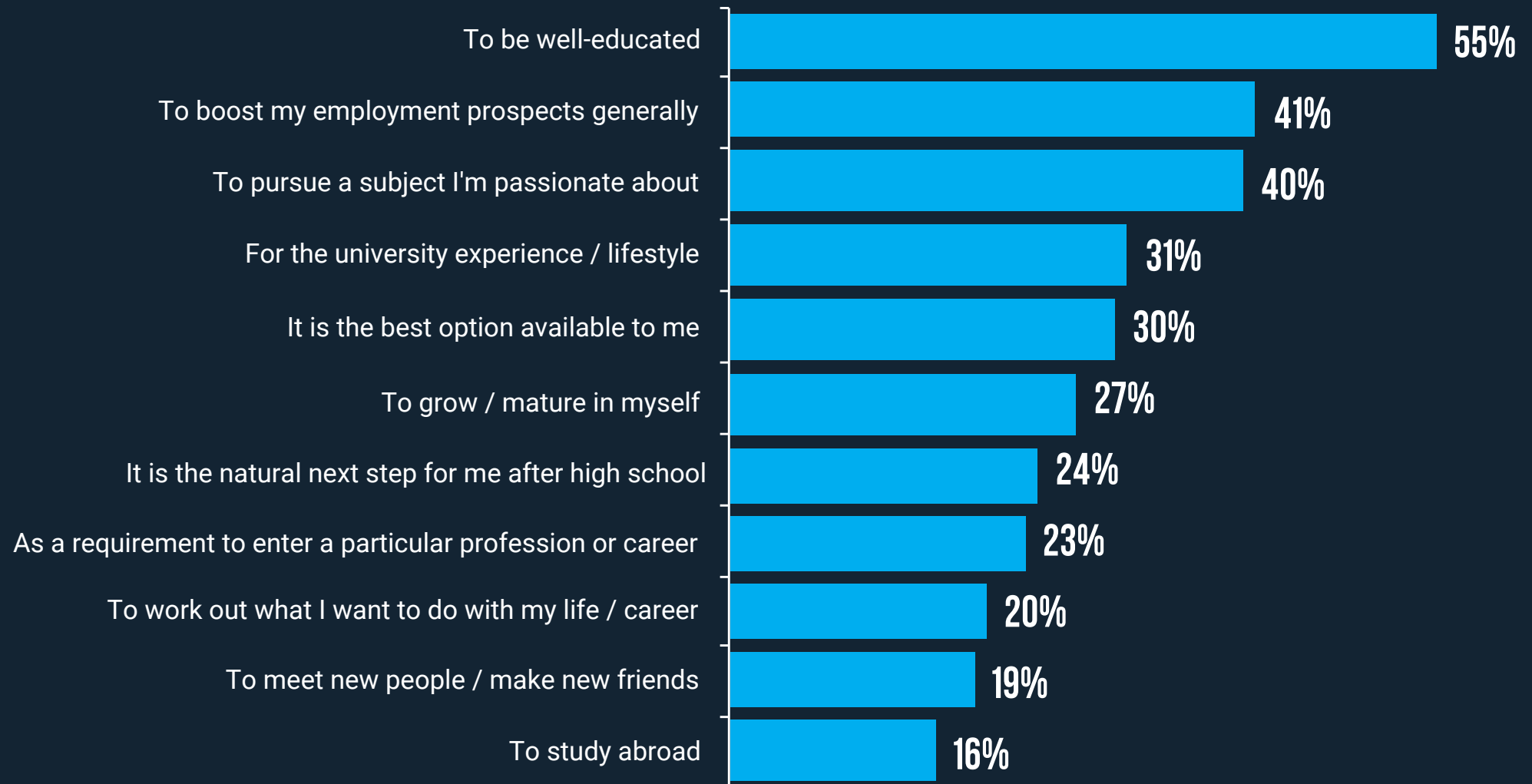
Universities, colleges, and social media gain more influence as they get older. Those in this age group are increasingly looking toward higher education institutions to inform their decisions. The increased use of social media reflects the increasing role of digital platforms in shaping career perspectives.

16 YEARS OLD

At 16, family re-emerges as a dominant influence on both study and future career options suggesting that they, once again, turn to their close networks for support in major decisions.



What are your main reasons for wanting to go to university?



Q: What are your main reasons for wanting to go to university? (376)

There is an interesting incongruity with the motivations for wanting to attend university. In a rare example where passion and interest aren't first choices, the most popular choice for this question (which asked specifically about university, rather than a more generic plan for life) highlighted the desire for a strong education and employment prospects. Given the costs of studying abroad, there is an understandable desire to achieve some tangible return on investment. Analysed by age, we can be more granular*:



13

YEARS OLD*

Nearly half (49%) are driven by a **passion for a particular subject**, while 38% see university as a natural next step after high school.

14

YEARS OLD

Employment prospects become more important, with 45% aiming to **boost their job opportunities**. 38% are also excited about the **university lifestyle**.

15

YEARS OLD

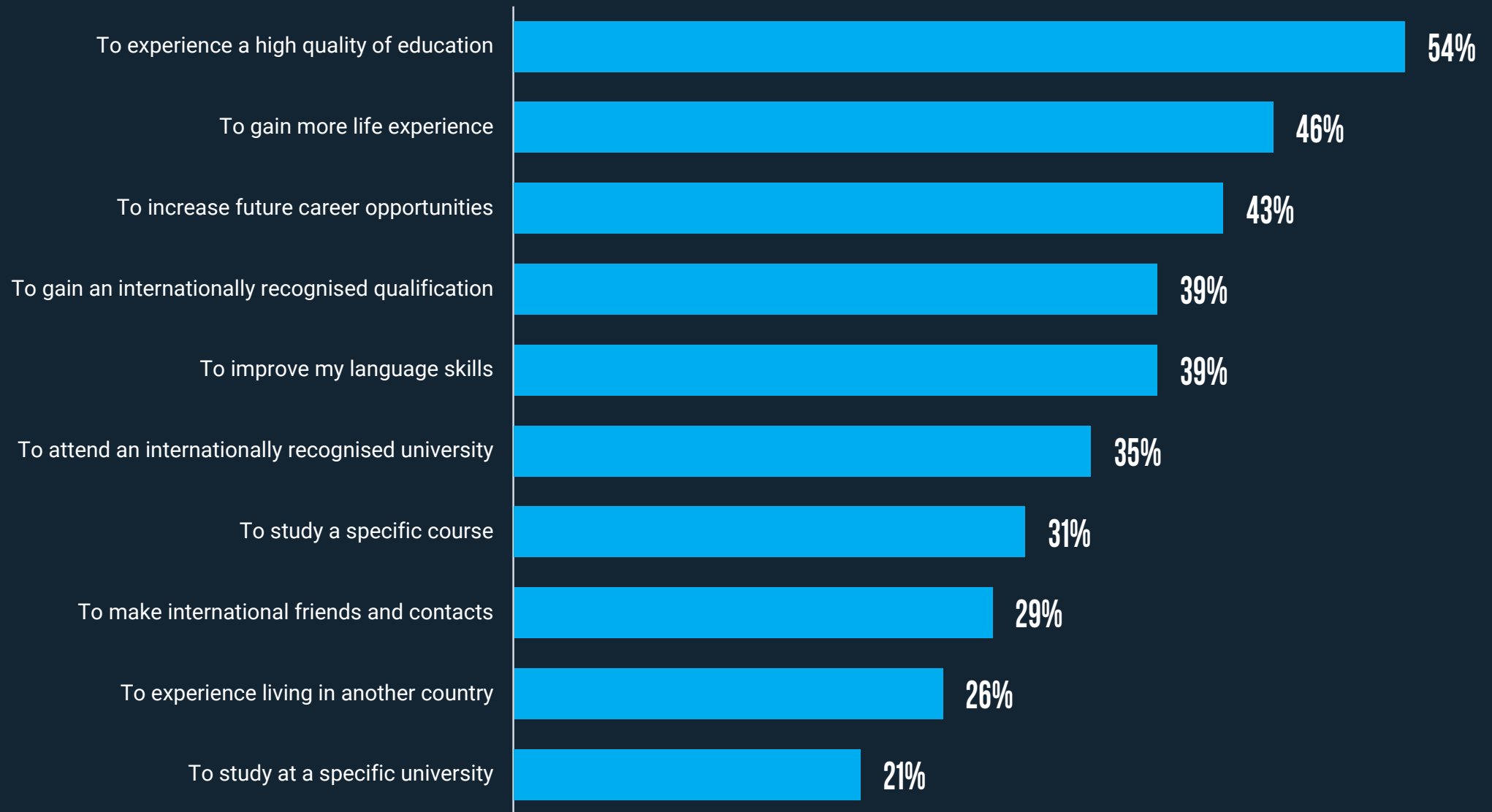
These are the most interested in **studying abroad**, with 18% citing it as their primary reason for wanting to attend university.

16

YEARS OLD*

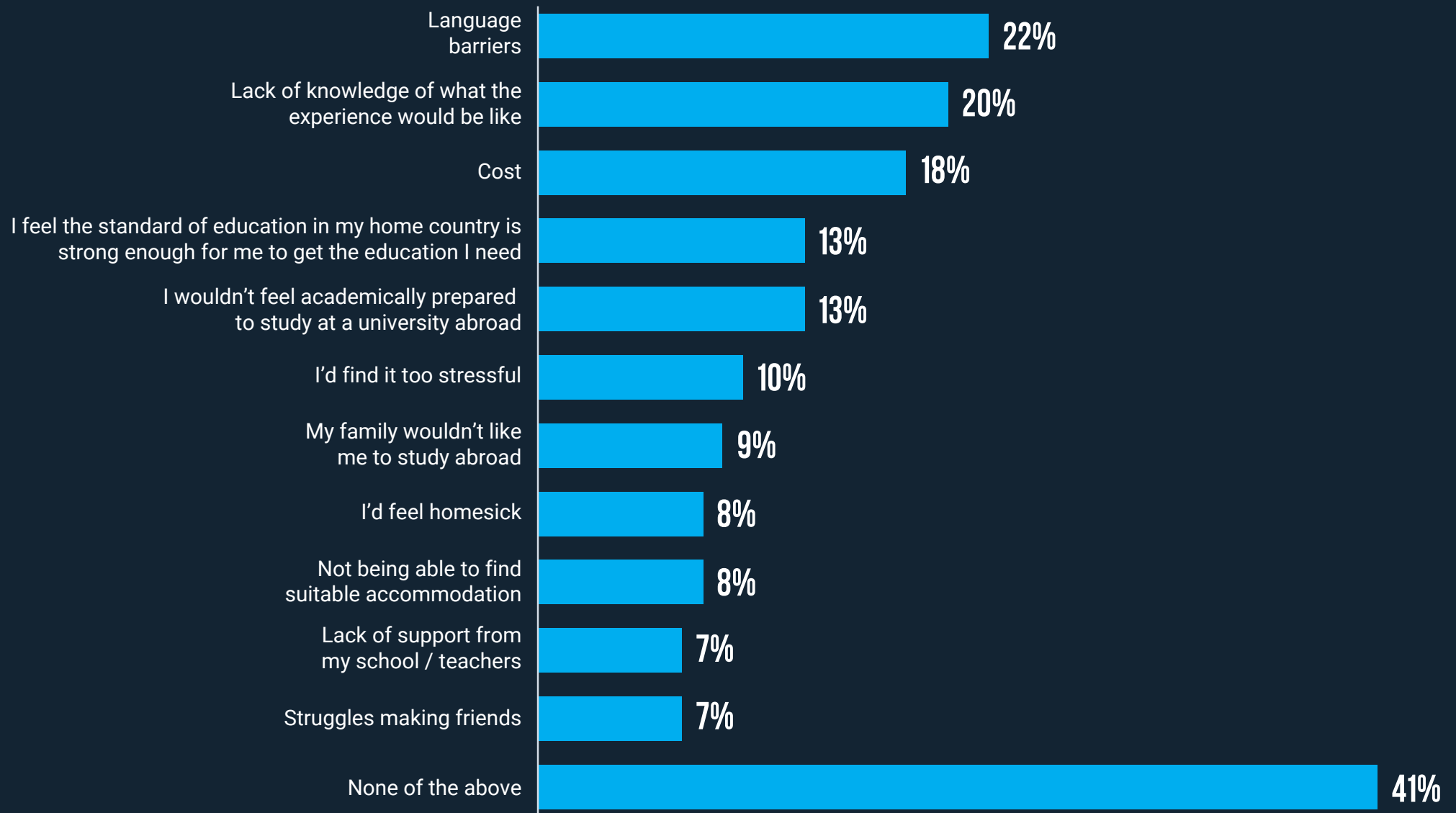
Personal growth becomes a key motivator, with 33% wanting to go to university to develop and mature as individuals.

What do you hope to get out of studying abroad?



Q: What do you hope to get out of studying abroad? (310)

What, if anything, do you think would prevent you from studying abroad?



Q: What, if anything, do you think would prevent you from studying abroad? (376)

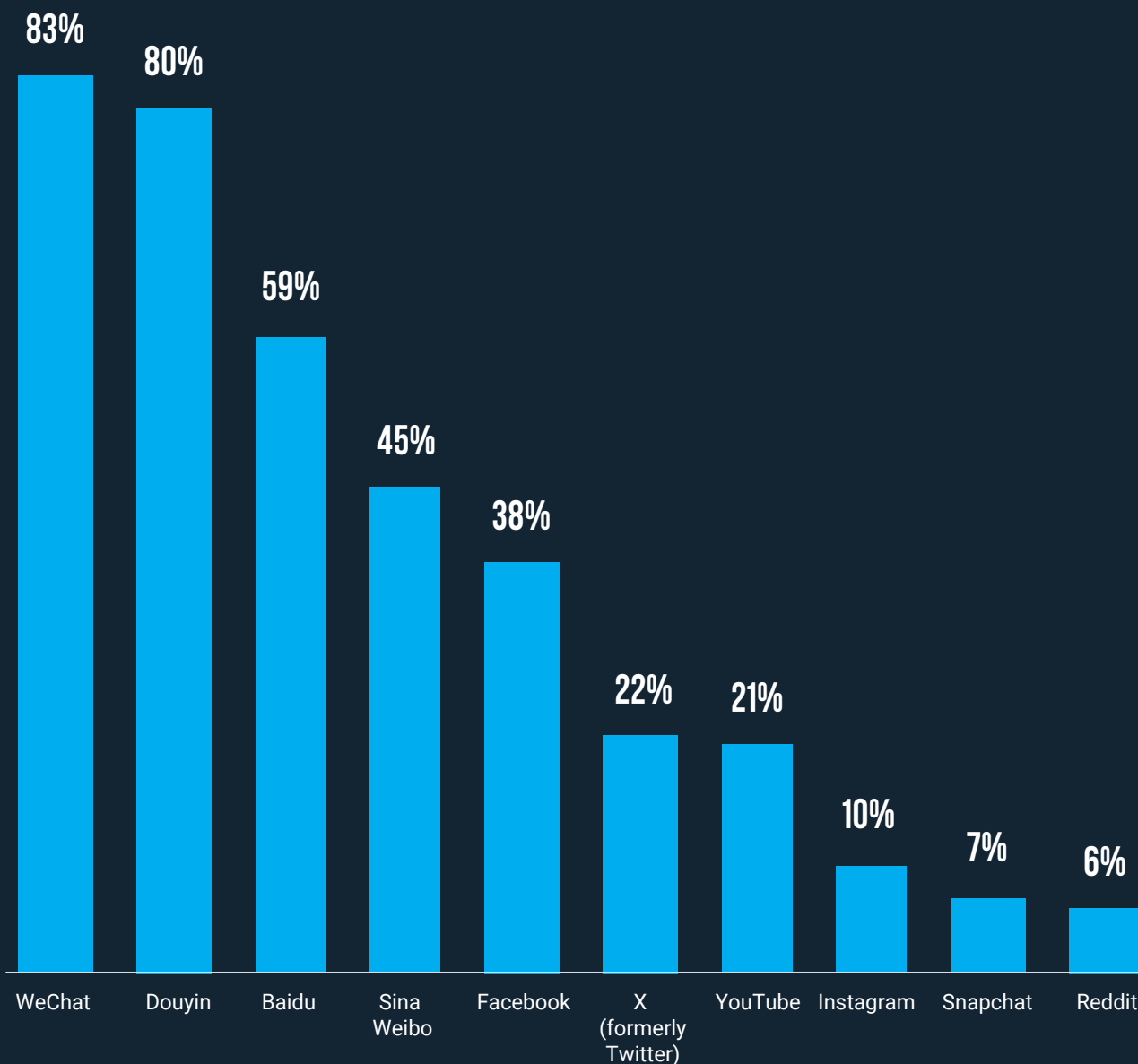
Students in China are very eager to pursue opportunities abroad, and **41% of students indicate there are zero barriers that would prevent them doing so** – reflecting a strong willingness, among a significant portion, to overcome potential challenges.

But there are several concerns that may hold the rest of the respondents back, including practical challenges like language barriers, a lack of knowledge of what the experience would be like and the concern of the financial cost of studying abroad – and other concerns around their academic readiness, emotional stress, and lack of support. These concerns are more prominent in the youngest respondents.

Some of these can be answered and resolved, but some of them are inherent and intrinsic challenges of studying abroad. Rather than trying to downplay them, focus instead on highlighting the key advantages – like gaining a global perspective, accessing a high-quality education, and developing independence.

Naturally – because of the distances involved – social media is an important research tool for students in China looking to study abroad. It also exposes them to naturally occurring content from existing students – which we know is a powerful influence. Real-life examples of people who have pursued similar journeys can be reassuring and inspiring, bringing the process to life and making aspirations feel tangible.

Which of the following social media channels do you use?



Q: Which of the following social media channels do you use? (410)



WeChat is a Chinese super-app that combines messaging, social networking, mobile payments, and other services.



Douyin is the China-specific version of TikTok, made by the same company as TikTok and was the original of the two almost identical apps.



Sina Weibo (usually just called Weibo) is a microblogging platform which is very similar to Twitter/X but run by a Chinese platform called Sina.

Nearly every student we spoke to uses at least one social media channel for their research.

WeChat is ahead of the pack, and it is widely used by all the age groups.

Douyin, which prioritises video content, is the runner-up, with 87% of 14-year-olds using this as their preferred social media channel.

Sina Weibo is used by nearly half of Chinese students (45%). However, platform adoption varies regionally, with usage in East China falling below the national average (39%).

Students in East China (home to Beijing, Shanghai, and more western influence) are significantly more likely to use X (formerly Twitter) compared to others. **33% use the platform here, making it 3x as popular** as South-Central China.

Social media is a powerful tool where you can leverage your alumni network and arrange for students to hear from (and speak to) international students about their experience of studying abroad. Highlighting diverse role models across a variety of subjects, careers, and cultural backgrounds can expand students horizons and show them the breadth of possibilities available.

Low base size <50

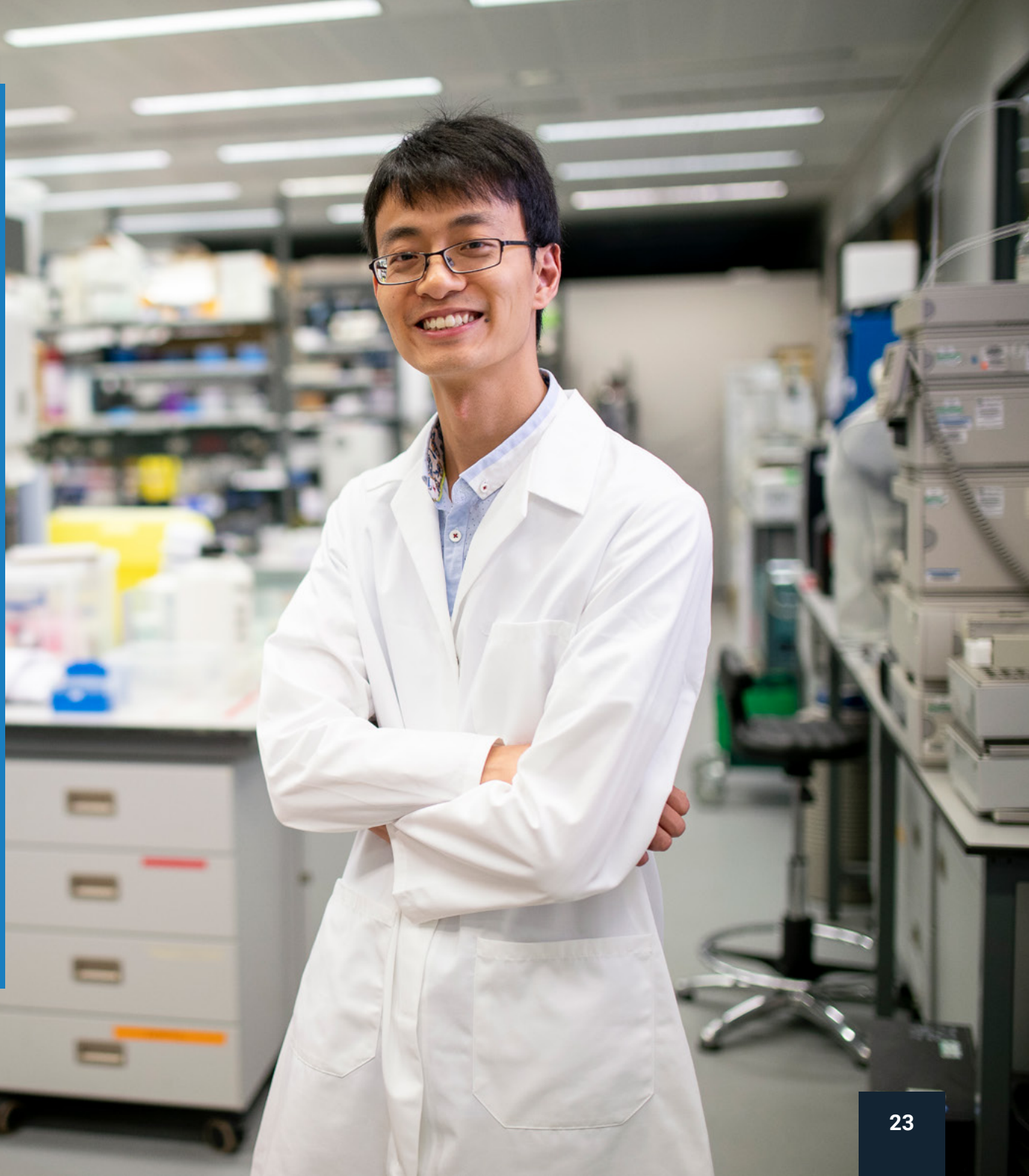


TOOLS AND RESOURCES

5. **The Hub** - A personalised platform tailored to each student's needs, offering relevant information, advice, and support to simplify decision-making and help them stay organised.
6. **Provider Profiles** - Universities and Colleges' search tool is an online resource that allows prospective students to explore and discover higher education institutions across the UK. Accessible at UCAS Explore, this tool enables users to:
 - Search for Institutions: Input specific queries or browse through a comprehensive list of universities and colleges.
 - Filter Results: Narrow down options based on criteria such as region, study modes, and qualifications offered.
 - Access Detailed Profiles: View information about each institution, including available courses, campus facilities, accommodation options, and student life.

This tool is designed to assist students in making informed decisions about where to pursue their higher education by providing detailed and up-to-date information on various institutions.

7. **UCAS WeChat** - A dedicated channel for advisers and counselors in China, featuring articles about studying in the UK and guides on UCAS processes, ensuring localised support and clear communication.



CHAPTER 3 - INDEPENDENCE & IMPORTANCE

Students want agency, but they need the guidance and the tools that will give them the confidence to decide for themselves..

To make independent decisions, they need to decide what's important to them. Which changes each year as they age.

The older these students get, the more their independence grows, and the more they move away from familial influence.

Younger students tend to rely more on their families for guidance about their futures, but as they grow older, the influence of teachers becomes more significant. This is perhaps even more pronounced in this international pool of students, and specifically in China (where language and cultural barriers are starker than in other markets.) Independence is going to be a more important character trait for this group.

As an adviser, encourage them to take ownership of their decisions while providing a safety net of support and guidance – especially when it comes to those on the fence about university.

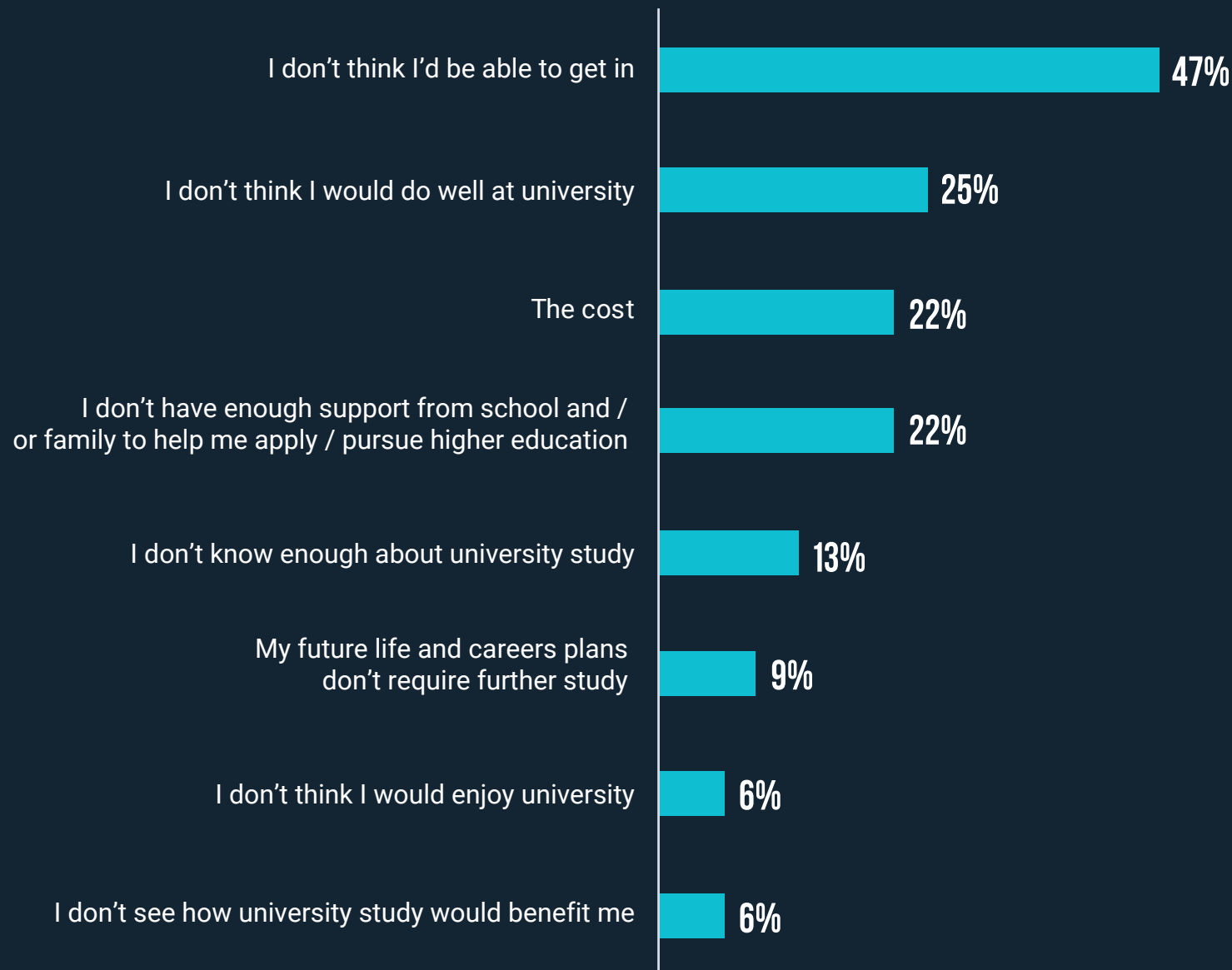


Gaps in academic confidence are commonly cited by students, alongside financial concerns and limited awareness of available opportunities. Offering clear information, reassurance, and tailored resources can help students overcome these perceived barriers.

Concerns about university vary depending on students' perceptions of their abilities and circumstances. Some worry about whether they'll be accepted, while others are more focused on how successful they might be once enrolled. Financial barriers are also a significant factor, with many students citing cost as a reason they may not consider applying. These concerns are often shaped by general impressions of university expenses rather than detailed knowledge of scholarships or financial aid.

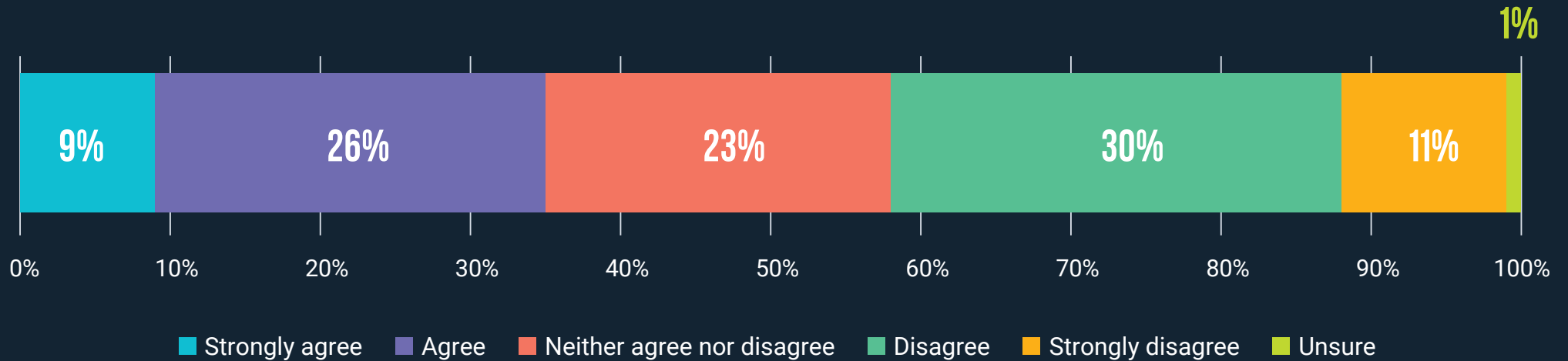
This highlights the importance of early guidance around funding options. Supporting students by addressing financial concerns, signposting scholarships, offering budgeting advice, and highlighting available financial support can make a meaningful difference in their decision-making process.

What are the main reasons you don't think you will apply to university?



Q: What are the main reasons you don't think you will apply to university? (Low base size, 32)

My choices about my future are restricted by not having enough money



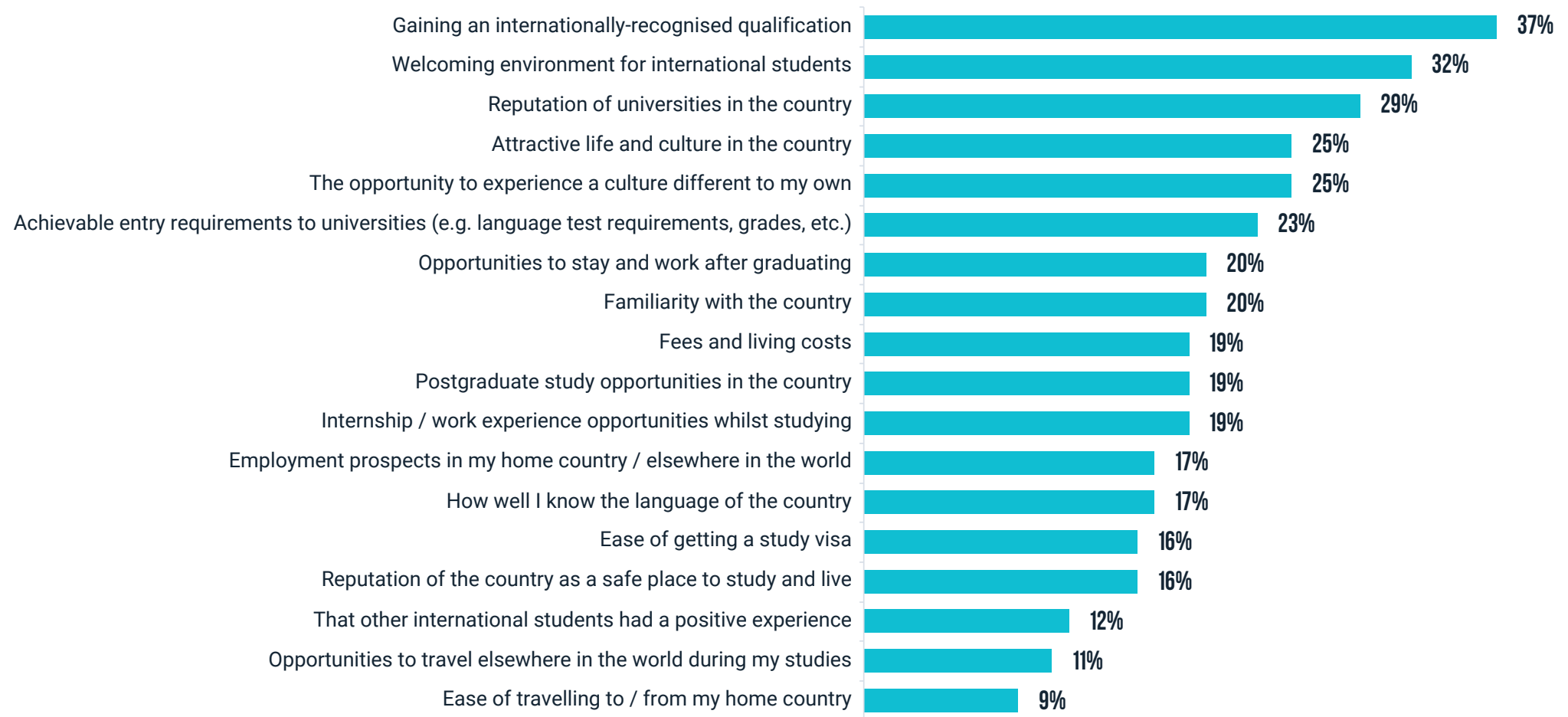
My choices about my future are restricted by not having enough money: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (410)

Cost **less likely to be a barrier for those East China (11%).**



For those who overcome the money matters of international study, the next decision is choosing a country:

What is most important to you in picking the country where you may study abroad?



Q: What is most important to you in picking the country where you may study abroad? (Select up to 5) (310)



Priorities vary by age, which reflects their evolving perspectives on education, career prospects, and personal comfort.

13 YEARS OLD*

Gaining an internationally recognised qualification is the most important thing (48%), showing their strong focus on securing a degree that enhances their global career prospects. They also emphasise the value of internship and work opportunities (44%), indicating an early awareness of the importance of practical experience alongside academic achievement.

14 YEARS OLD

As they become more financially conscious, **fees and living costs** (29%) emerge as a major factor in their decision-making. This suggests that as they start considering study abroad options more seriously, affordability becomes a key concern.

15 YEARS OLD

The reality of studying abroad becomes more poignant as they reach 15, when the desire for a **'welcoming environment'** (37%), highlights the importance of inclusivity and student support services. This age group likely seeks reassurance that they will feel comfortable, safe, and integrated into student life in their chosen country.

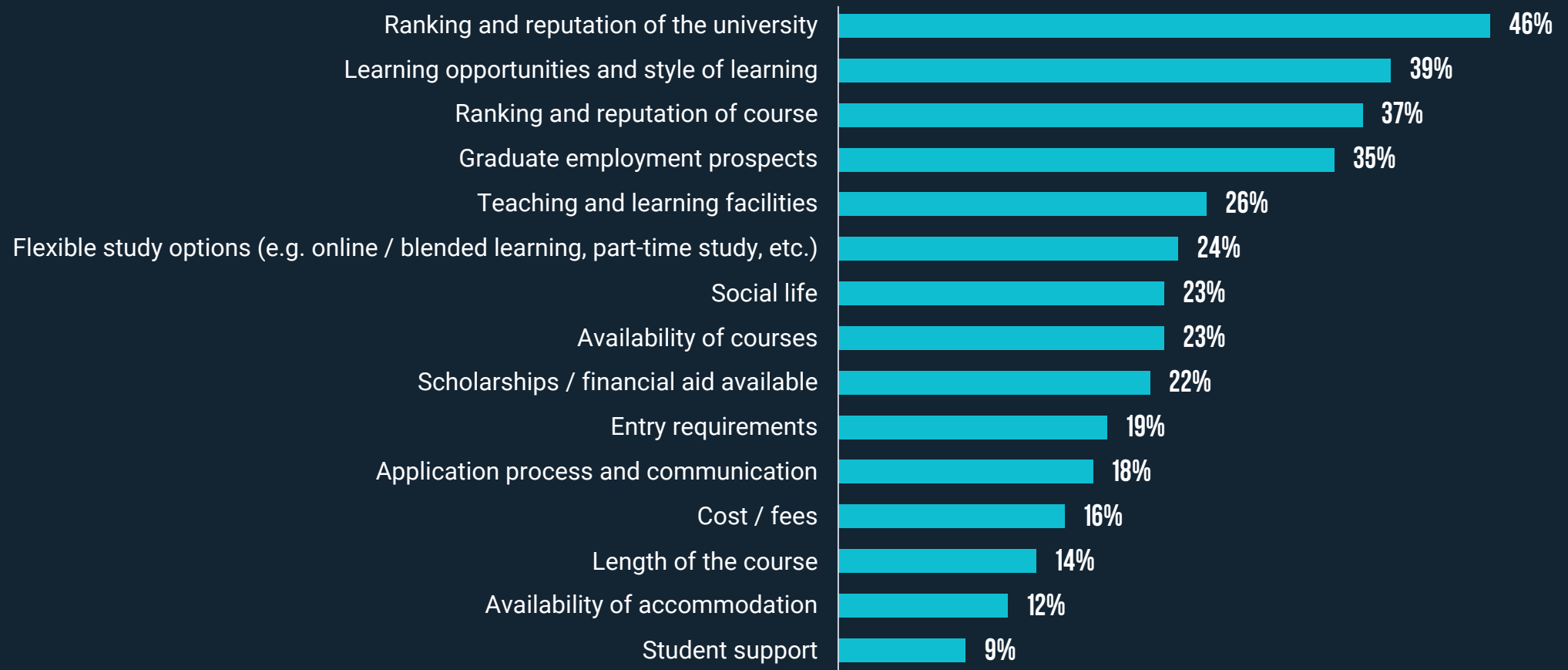
16 YEARS OLD*

And at 16, **familiarity with the country** (29%) is at its most important, indicating that as students get closer to making concrete decisions, they may lean toward destinations they already know through family ties, previous travel, or cultural exposure.

When combined, the most important factor overall is securing an internationally recognised qualification (37%), which shows how much students in China value degrees that offer global career mobility – along with the **reputation of universities in the country (29%).**

Once they've settled on a country, choosing a specific university shines a light on a more specific set of considerations:

What is important to you when choosing a university?



Q: What is important to you when choosing a university? (Select up to 5) (376)

When choosing between institutions, students in China are primarily driven by academic reputation, career outcomes, and the quality of their learning experience. Ranking and reputation of universities is the most important consideration overall – but just like with the country, everything changes by age:



57% consider the **prestige of an institution** important, highlighting the perceived value of studying somewhere well-known



41% highlight **learning opportunities** and **style of learning** as a key factor, indicating a growing interest in how their education will be delivered rather than just the university itself.



Practical aspects of education gain more importance here, with 27% of 15-year-olds valuing **teaching and learning facilities**. This suggests that as students get closer to making real decisions about their academic future, they start considering the quality of the learning environment.



Now they need to make their biggest decisions, so the logistical aspects of applying to university become paramount. 36% now express a heightened interest in the **application process** and **communication**. At this age, understanding entry requirements, deadlines, and admissions procedures becomes essential.

Low base size <50



TOOLS AND RESOURCES

8. **Subject Guides** - With just one click, students can explore detailed breakdowns of subject areas, including entry requirements, course content, and career pathways. This helps them make informed decisions about their academic journey and future careers.
9. **UCAS Subject Spotlights** - UCAS Subject Spotlights are free, on-demand virtual experiences designed to help prospective university students explore various subjects before applying. By engaging with Subject Spotlights, students can gain valuable subject insight, enhance their personal statements, and make informed decisions about their future courses.
10. **Budget Tools** - Financial concerns can be overwhelming for students considering higher education. These tools provide practical support and guidance, helping students manage costs, plan budgets, and explore funding options, making money matters less stressful.



CHAPTER 4 - EXPERIENCE

It's hard to envisage the experience of living and studying 5,000 miles from home.

For students to understand what the experience is actually like, they need information.

The UK is China's preferred study destination. But there's much more to decision-making than reputation.

For Chinese students looking to study abroad, particularly somewhere as culturally different as the UK, the requirement for experience-based information is heightened.

Their decision-making process involves not only understanding the academic requirements but cultural factors, costs, and long-term career opportunities. For young students, this decision is often shaped by the advice and experiences shared by others, especially those who have already gone through the process.



The reputation of a UK education goes a long way on the international market, and much more than just its academic prestige – spanning many related benefits like teaching style, diverse populations, and culture:

"THE UK IS KNOWN FOR ITS HIGH QUALITY AND HIGH STANDARDS OF EDUCATION AND ITS THREE-YEAR UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS ARE SHORTER THAN THE ONES IN MOST COUNTRIES, WHICH SAVES A LOT OF MONEY AND TIME."

Female, 16

"THE UK'S HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS ARE OFTEN RANKED AMONG THE HIGHEST IN THE WORLD AND KNOWN FOR THEIR RESEARCH QUALITY AND TEACHING EXCELLENCE"

Male, 15

"THE UK IS A MULTICULTURAL COUNTRY WHERE STUDENTS CAN STUDY IN AN INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND INTERACT WITH FELLOW STUDENTS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD"

Female, 14

"THERE'D BE A GOOD LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND HIGH-QUALITY AND SPECIALISED TEACHING."

Male, 13

"I'D HAVE BRITISH-STYLE STUDY AND LIFE EXPERIENCE."

Male, 13

However, that does not mean you should become complacent as an adviser, because the information and guidance desires from students are still significant. The experiential advice they require can be categorised into five main groups:

► **Culture & way of life**

► **Affordability & cost of living**

► **Comparisons to China**

► **Academic & language requirements**

► **Experience of current students**

Culture & way of life

They're eager to experience new environments, but they also want assurance that they will feel comfortable and supported. Additionally, the study environment must suit personal routines.

Introduce students to resources or programmes that help them understand the cultural differences they might encounter in their host country – such as pre-departure orientations, intercultural workshops, or by connecting them with international student groups at the university they plan to attend.

I would like to know...

"ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT, LOCAL CULTURAL DIFFERENCES, SECURITY, ETC."

Female, 15

"IF THE ENVIRONMENT TO STUDY ABROAD IS FRIENDLY."

Female, 16

"WHETHER THERE IS A GOOD ENVIRONMENT THAT FITS MY STUDY ROUTINES."

Male, 16



Affordability & cost of living

The cost of studying abroad is often the largest concern. Students are particularly interested in learning more about tuition fees, the cost of living, and scholarship opportunities.

Help students understand the full scope of costs involved – not just the course fees or rent. Guide students on creating a budget for studying abroad and offer tips on managing finances in a foreign country. Assist them to apply for scholarships, grants, or financial aid options.

I would like to know...

**"I NEED TO LEARN ABOUT THE
COST OF STUDYING ABROAD."**

Male, 15

"THE COST COVERAGE"

Female, 16

**"THE COST, LANGUAGE
BARRIERS, AND HOW EASY TO
APPLY FOR A SCHOLARSHIP"**

Female, 16



Comparisons to China

Another crucial factor is the comparison between studying abroad vs studying in China. This includes considerations such as academic quality, employment prospects after graduation, and the recognition of degrees from foreign universities.

This will help students to appreciate not only the academic environment, but also how a degree from a foreign institution is perceived in the global job market.

Assist students to explore how an international degree might influence their career prospects – both on returning home and also if staying to work abroad. This may include connecting students with alumni or industry professionals who can offer career insights.

I would like to know...

"THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, PROFESSIONAL RANKINGS AND EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS OF TARGETED COUNTRIES AND COLLEGES, ETC., AND TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENT, COST OF LIVING AND CULTURAL ADAPTABILITY."

Male, 13

"SCHOOL RANKINGS, POPULARITY, STUDY STYLE, TRUE VALUE OF GRADUATION CERTIFICATE, RESEARCH CAPABILITIES, ETC."

Female, 14

"VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR THE COUNTRY TO STUDY ABROAD, JOB PROSPECTS AFTER GRADUATION AND UNIVERSITY RECOGNITION"

Male, 15



Academic & language requirements

Understanding how to navigate application processes – whether when securing a visa, fulfilling language requirements, or meeting specific academic standards – helps students approach their international studies with confidence.

Assist them to navigate the academic and language requirements for UK universities, and support them with meeting deadlines, following application instructions, and submitting required materials accurately.

Some students may need to interview as part of the application process (such as for scholarships). You can help them with practice interviews, refining personal statements, and improving their overall presentation.

I would like to know...

"APPLICATION PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS."

Male, 16

"THINGS TO BE PREPARED FOR, ENGLISH LANGUAGE EXAMS, ETC."

Female, 13

"REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDYING ABROAD AND LANGUAGE BARRIERS"

Female, 13



Experience of current students

One of the best ways to learn about studying abroad is through the experiences of those who have already done it.

Introduce students to those who have studied in the same destination – helping to provide realistic insights into student life and cultural nuances. Encourage them to participate in orientation programs designed specifically for international students – which often provide cultural tips, practical advice (e.g. opening a bank account, using public transportation), and ways to get involved in campus communities.

I would like to know...

"LEARN ABOUT THE LIVES OF FOREIGN STUDENTS AND HOW TO FULFIL THE CREDIT REQUIREMENTS."

Male, 15

"CONSULT A RELATIVE OR FRIEND WHO STUDIED ABROAD"

Male, 14

"THE PROCESS OF STUDYING IN A FOREIGN UNIVERSITY AND MAKE CONNECTIONS"

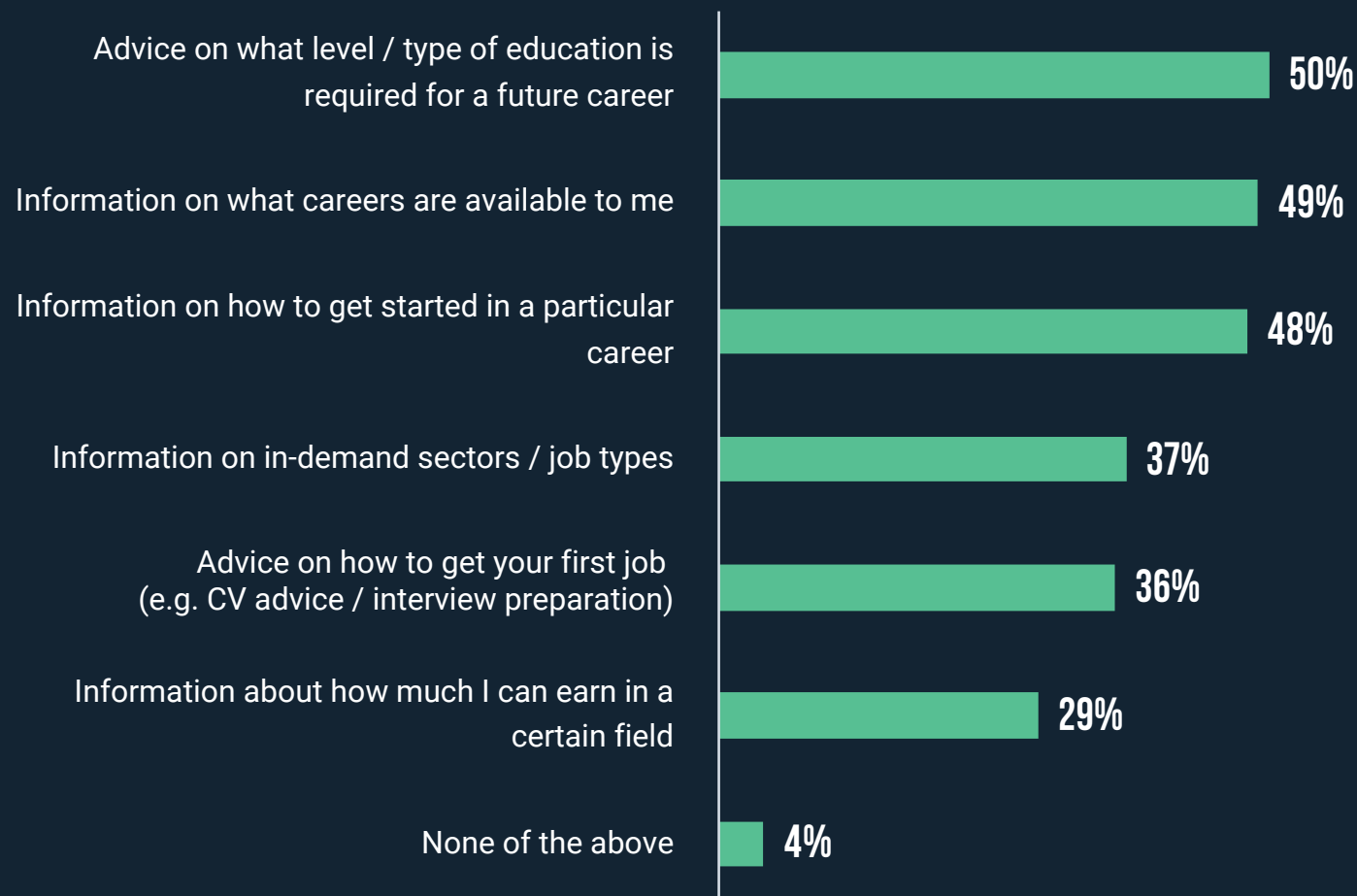
Male, 14



Another challenge with international study, beyond the academic experience itself, is having to also envisage the world of work in an unfamiliar country. Or, for those returning home for employment, ensuring that a foreign degree will equip them for the type of work they want to do in their domestic market.

To help students in the start of their journey towards their future career, provide resources or advice about educational paths and how these link to specific careers. Help them understand how experiential programmes like internships or volunteering can play a key role in gaining the right skills and experience. And highlight how different interests lead to other career opportunities.

What type of career advice / information are you most interested in?



Q: What type of career advice / information are you most interested in? (410)

Despite being some years away from entering the post-university world of work, these students already have an idea of what good looks like when it comes to career advice.

The best career advice I've had so far is...

"THE BEST CAREER ADVICE I'VE EVER RECEIVED IS THAT CHOOSING WHAT I DO WELL WOULD MAKE THINGS EASIER AND CHOOSING WHAT I LIKE WOULD MAKE ME GET MORE MOTIVATED."

Female, 15

"CONTINUOUSLY LEARN NEW SKILLS AND EXPERTISE TO STAY AHEAD OF COMPETITION AND ADAPT TO CHANGING WORK ENVIRONMENTS."

Female, 14

"MY TEACHER ADVISED ME TO PURSUE FURTHER STUDIES IN MEDICINE BASED ON MY ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERSONALITY. I CERTAINLY AGREED."

Male, 14

"CAREER PLANNING IS TO SET MY GOALS AND INTERESTS, CHOOSING AREAS THAT SUIT ME, AND CONTINUALLY IMPROVING MY SKILLS."

Female, 16

"WORK HARD ON YOUR CURRENT COURSES FIRST AND WORK TOWARDS GOALS YOU SET. NO MATTER WHAT CHOICES I MAKE, IT IS UP TO ME TO MAKE THE EFFORT."

Female, 15

"DEVELOP A LIFELONG LEARNING MINDSET, MAKE CONNECTIONS AND KEEP OPEN-MINDED."

Male, 13

The journey toward choosing a career is a mix of excitement, uncertainty, and discovery. For many, the best advice they've had comes from those who encourage them to combine their unique strengths, interests, and academic achievements.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

- 11. Careers quiz** - Start with the careers quiz to help students identify possible career paths based on their interests and skills.
- 12. Events tool** - Encourage participation in open days (online or in person), online tastings, and virtual tours to help students learn more about their options before making decisions.
- 13. Unibuddy chat in the UCAS hub** - Use the Unibuddy chat to connect students with current students. This can provide valuable insights into the day-to-day experience of university life, helping students gain a realistic understanding of the course, campus culture, and support systems.



Age Profiles

13

14

15

16

DECISION-MAKING

Optimistic about their future, with a focus on what they enjoy and what they are good at

Strong interest in university study at all ages, with a desire to be well-educated and to pursue one's passion

Pressure from parents increases

Choice of which subject to study starts

Choice of which subject to study firms up

Subject choice driven by passions and interests/strength/need for future career

Interest in studying abroad increases over time

MOTIVATORS AND INFLUENCERS

Family and school/teachers are key influencers on both study options and future careers

The cost, reputation of universities, and gaining an international qualification are key in students' decisions of where to study

Ranking and reputation of universities

Learning and teaching facilities and a welcoming environment for international students

Global career and graduate employment prospects

Practical aspects of education: understanding the level/type of education required for specific

RESOURCES

University websites are the main research channels across all ages

Friends and peers, speaking to people they know

Social media and university/college more significant advice sources

League tables and online search engines

WeChat is the most commonly used social media channels at all ages

| WHAT NEXT?

The Hub is a tailored digital experience that adapts to each student's interests and goals – with personalised advice, relevant resources, and guidance.

Many of the tools mentioned and recommended in this report live in The Hub:

CAREERS QUIZ

Help students to identify possible career paths based on their interests and skills.

SUBJECT GUIDES

Insights into what it's like to study specific subjects, how to access these fields, and the potential career opportunities they offer.

PROVIDER PROFILES

UCAS's "Universities and Colleges" search tool helps prospective students discover and compare UK institutions, including course details, facilities, and accommodation options.

INTERNATIONAL PODCAST

Experts and students discuss what it's like to study in the UK, budgeting, visas, post-graduate options and more.

SUBJECT SPOTLIGHTS

UCAS Subject Spotlights are free, on-demand experiences that help prospective students explore subjects, enhance personal statements, and make informed course decisions.

BUDGET TOOLS

Practical support and guidance to help students manage costs, plan budgets, and explore funding options.

PARENTS' PODCAST

Keeping parents in the loop about changes to application processes, deadlines, and support systems.

EVENTS TOOL

Open days (online or in person), online tasters, and virtual tours to help students learn more about their options before making decisions.

UNIBUDDY CHAT

Connect future students with current students who can share valuable insights into the day-to-day experience of UK university life.

LOCATION GUIDES

UCAS Location Guides offer city, region, and country overviews, highlighting universities, lifestyles, and unique educational landscapes across the UK. Explore them at UCAS Location Guides.

CHECK OUT OUR PREVIOUS REPORTS:

▶ **Global Insights:**

What are the experiences of Chinese students in the UK?

▶ **Where Next?**

What influences the choices international students make?

To receive future reports and insight direct to your inbox,
sign up ucas.com/forms/sign-adviser-updates

Or if you've got questions about any of these resources
or want to know how else we can support you:

international@ucas.ac.uk

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