

1. EDUCATION LEVELS AND STUDENT NUMBERS

Where do students go to study?

- Four countries – France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States – receive about half of all foreign students worldwide.
- The United States saw a significant drop as a preferred destination of foreign students between 2000 and 2006, falling from just over 25% of the global market share to 20%.
- Countries with a language of instruction that is widely spoken and read (English, French, German and Russian) dominate as study destinations.

Significance

This indicator describes students' preferred destinations and the impact of tuition fees on their decision of where to study abroad. Tuition fees are also an issue for destination countries amid a growing realisation of the trade benefits of international education. More of them are beginning to charge the full cost of education to their international students.

Findings

The four most popular destination countries in 2006 were as follows: the United States, which took in 20% of all foreign students worldwide; the United Kingdom, 11%; Germany, 9%; and France, 8%. Besides these, significant numbers of foreign students were also enrolled in Australia, which was the destination of 6% of the world's foreign students; Canada, 5%; Japan, 4%; and New Zealand, 2%.

The dominance of English-speaking destinations, such as Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, may be explained by the fact that students intending to study abroad are most likely to have learned English in their home country or wish to improve their English language skills through immersion and study abroad. An increasing number of institutions in non-English-speaking countries now offer courses in English as a way of attracting more foreign students.

Public universities in many OECD countries charge higher tuition fees for international students than for domestic students. However, universities in France, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico and Spain make no differentiation while the Nordic countries have generally not imposed fees on either domestic or international students. However, there are signs that this is changing. Denmark recently adopted tuition fees for non-EU and non-EEA international students, and Finland, Norway and Sweden are examining similar options.

Trends

A number of countries saw a fall in their market shares in foreign students in the first half of this decade. The most notable decline was in the United States, which was the designation for one in four international students in 2000, but only one in five in 2006. Germany's market share fell by about 1 percentage point, while Belgium and the United Kingdom registered a decrease of about one-half of a percentage point. By contrast, New Zealand's share grew by 1.9% and France's by 1.2%. The slump in the United States' share may be attributable to the tightening of conditions of entry for foreign students following the September 2001 attacks, and to increasingly pro-active marketing by universities in the Asia-Pacific region.

Definitions

Data on international and foreign students are based on the UOE data collection on education statistics, administered annually by the OECD. Students are classified as international students if they left their country of origin and moved to another country for the purpose of study. Students are classified as foreign students if they are not citizens of the country in which the data are collected.

Going further

For additional material, notes and a full explanation of sourcing and methodologies, see *Education at a Glance 2008* (Indicator C3).

Areas covered include:

- Trends in international education market shares.

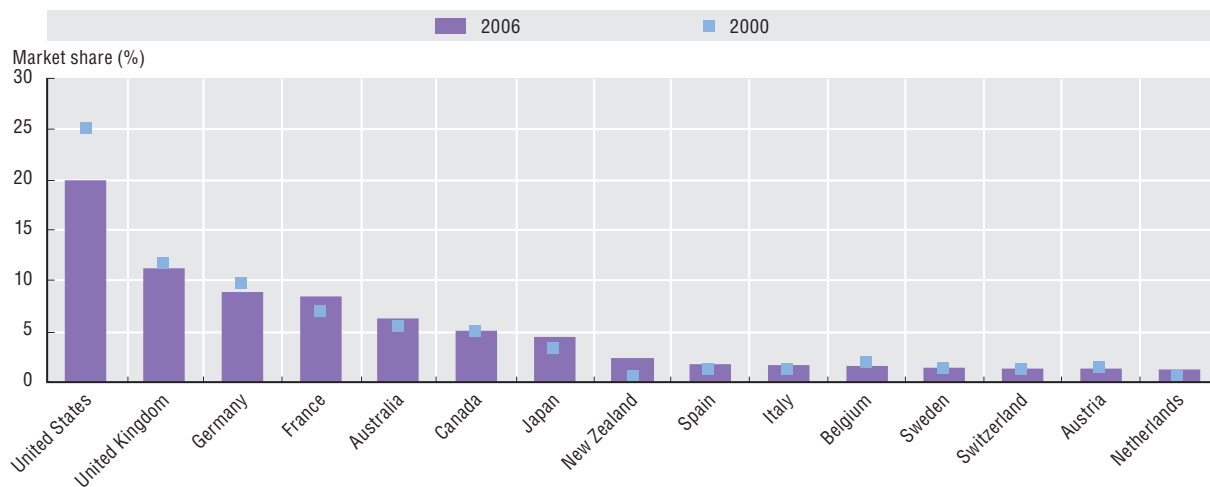
Further reading from OECD

Cross-border Tertiary Education: A Way towards Capacity Development (2007).

Internationalisation and Trade in Higher Education: Opportunities and Challenges (2004).

Figure 1.18. **Trends in market share for international education (2000, 2006)**

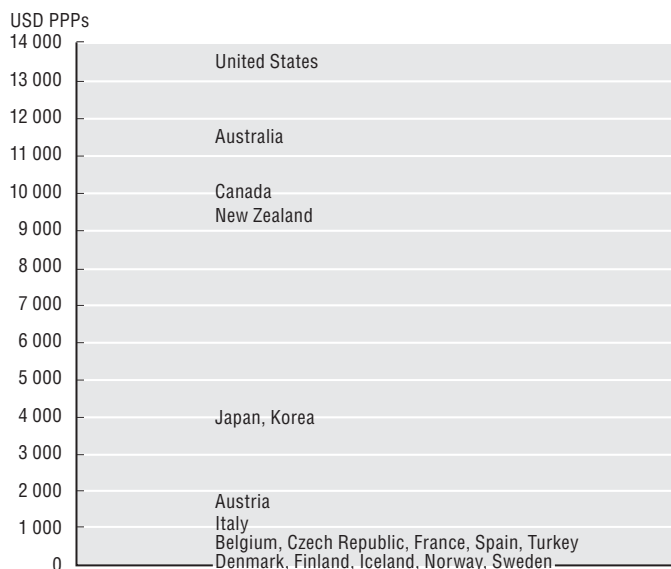
This figure shows the share of all foreign tertiary students taken by each of the major study destinations, and how that share has changed. Most notably, around a quarter of all foreign students went to the United States in 2000, but this has since fallen to about a fifth.



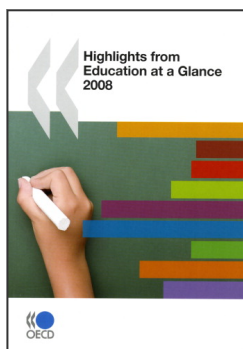
Source: OECD (2008), *Education at a Glance 2008*, Table C3.7, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/402158641726>.

Figure 1.19. **Average tuition fees charged to international students, 2004**

This figure shows the annual tuition fees charged by university-level institutions (tertiary-type A) to international students.



Source: OECD (2008), *Education at a Glance 2008*, Box C3.3, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/402158641726>.



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