

Student Trends: Latin America

Is Latin America a target market for your international student recruitment? Our findings can help you update your understanding of how students from South America, Central America, the Caribbean, Mexico, and Puerto Rico are thinking about study abroad and making decisions in 2021 and beyond.

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Our International Higher Education Survey reached 1,226 prospective students across Europe and more than 10,000 prospective students from around the world overall. View respondent data and customize country groupings with our [Student Insights 2021-2022 Dashboard](#) to find out more about specific regions or countries.

Regions:

Caribbean: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia

Central America: Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panamá, El Salvador

North America: Mexico, Puerto Rico

South America: Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Venezuela

Highlights

1. The UK is poised to overtake the U.S. as the most desired study abroad destination for Latin American students. While the U.S. still remains the top choice, the gap is closing. In 2019, the top two were separated by almost 15%, and two years later the difference has closed to less than 5%.
2. Mexican students show an increased interest in Media & Communications studies and a decreased interest in languages. Media & Communications reached 4th in the top programs list this year after ranking 10th last year. Language subjects, however, have

dropped from being the first most-desired study subject abroad in 2020 for Mexican students to ranking near last this year (4.7%). Looking at the entirety of Latin America tells the same story. Languages fell from 3rd on the top programs list in 2020 to 11th this year.

3. Latin Americans are 18.8% more interested in obtaining a Master's degree overseas since last year.
4. Program content and modules are 56.2% more important this year (67.6%) than last, reaching the top of the list overall. Last year's winner, the quality of professors and teaching, experienced a drop of 10.1% this year, though still claimed as a top program factor by over half of the prospective students in Latin America.
5. Virtual open days and fairs are a growing way that Latin American students prefer to get information about study abroad. About 10.6% of these students say that a school's virtual open days are helpful to them, which is double the global average. Study abroad fairs are also appreciated by 9.4% of students here, which is 51.8% higher than average.

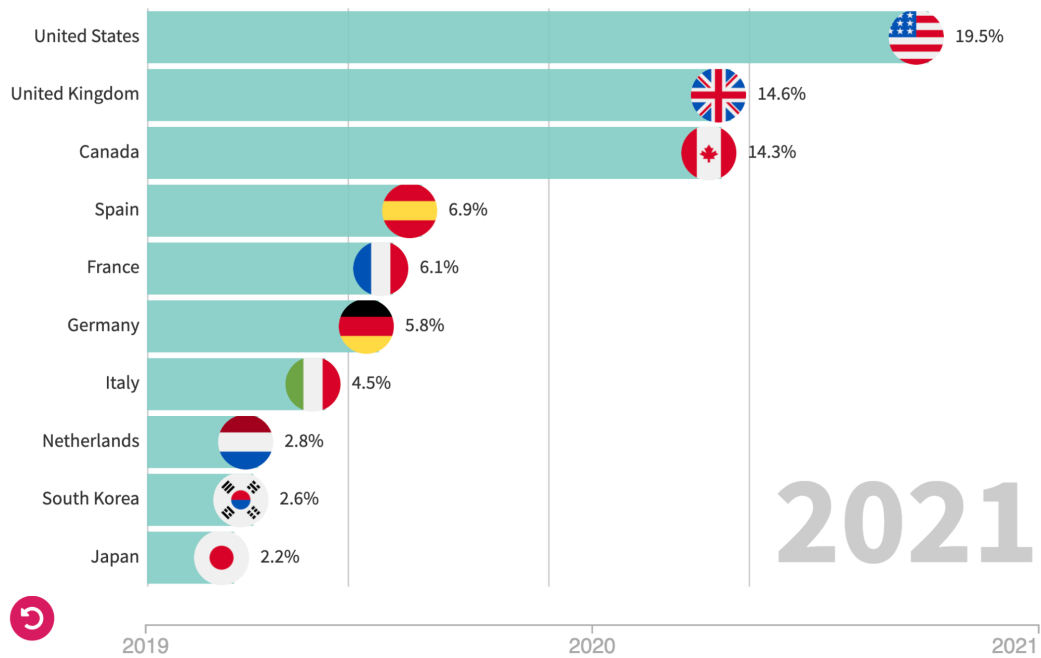
Study Abroad Trend Overview

Top Destinations: The UK is quickly closing in on the US as the most-desired study abroad country, with Canada close behind

Let's start with what we all want to know. Where do Latin American students want to study abroad?

[Click here](#) to see an animated visualization of the graph below.

Top Study Abroad Destinations for Latin American Students



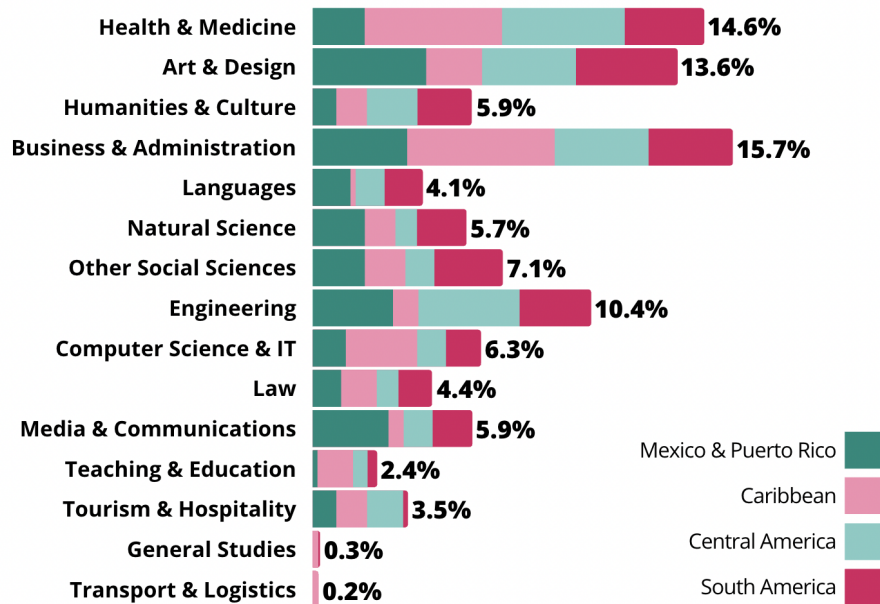
Australia and Sweden continue to miss reaching the top ten after ranking 7th and 10th in Latin America in 2019. However, while the top study abroad countries have otherwise remained very similar over the years, the gap is closing between the top destinations - the United States and the United Kingdom. In 2019, the top two were separated by almost 15%, and two years later the difference has closed to less than 5%. Will the UK overtake the United States as the most desired destination for Latin American students next year? At this rate, it seems so.

What about language? In this primarily Spanish and Portuguese-speaking region, 71.6% are looking towards English programs. The popularity of both English and French as languages of study (8.2%) has held relatively stable since last year.

Top Programs: Interest in Master's Programs abroad has risen by more than 6% since last year

When looking at preferred program length in these regions, students from Latin America show a relatively large interest in 1-5+ year study abroad programs. Programs under one year attract only 14.7% of prospective students this year as compared to 24% last year.

What subject do Latin American students want to study?



*This graph shows top study programs by average percentage. This differs from the data shown on the Student Insights 2021-2022 Dashboard, which is calculated by average respondent number.

The top fields of studies hold some interesting differences from other regions. For example, did you know that this is the only global region besides Asia where Business & Administration is the most desired subject for studies abroad? Latin Americans are also looking for creative inspiration overseas. Students in this region are more interested in Art & Design programs than in any other region in the world. Within the region, Art & Design is actually ranked first for students from South America as well as for Mexico and Puerto Rico.

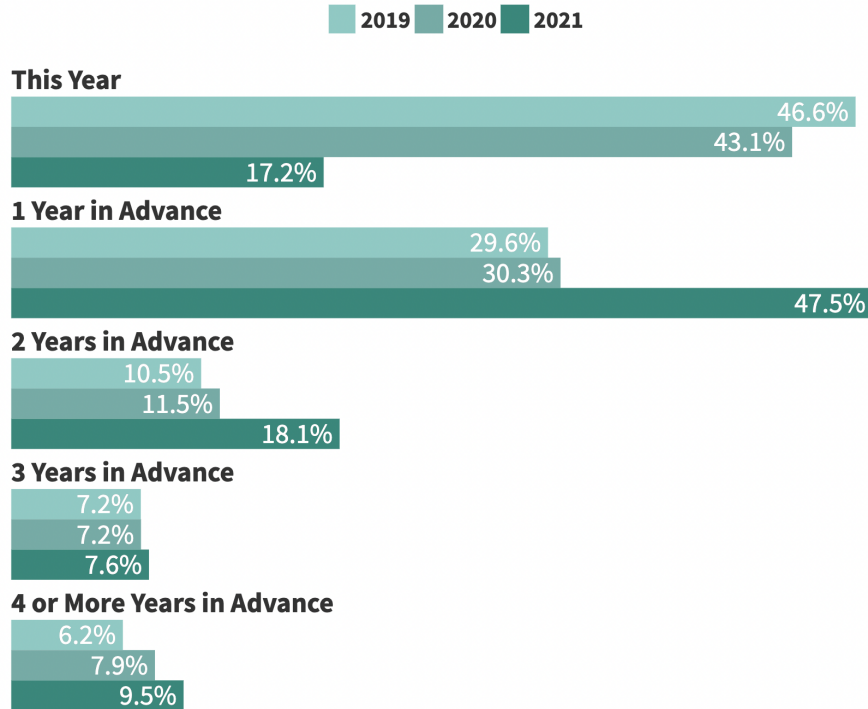
Another look at Mexico reveals one more surprise. Media & Communications programs have become more popular this year, reaching 4th in the top programs list this year after ranking 10th last year. Language subjects, however, have dropped from being the first most-desired study subject abroad in 2020 for Mexican students to ranking near last this year (4.7%). Looking at the entirety of Latin America tells the same story. Languages fell from 3rd on the top programs list in 2020 to 11th this year.

Student Journey: 63.7% more students are planning their overseas studies one to two years in advance than in 2020



Bachelor's and Master's degree programs are by far the most preferred program levels in Latin America, covering about 80% of students. While interest in Bachelor's programs has held relatively stable over the years, the same can't be said about Master's programs. Interest in Master's level programs has grown by 18.8% since last year. Offsetting this is a 30.7% decline in Ph.D. programs.

When are Latin American students planning to study abroad?



When do these students want to begin studying abroad? Similar to previous years, most Latin American students are planning on starting soon. However, this year there are 63% fewer students looking to start studying during the same survey year since 2019, and a 63.7% increase in the proportion of students looking at programs 1-2 years in advance in the same time period. So, while very short-term planning seems to have become less common, it still looks like the near future is full of new international experiences for Latin American students.

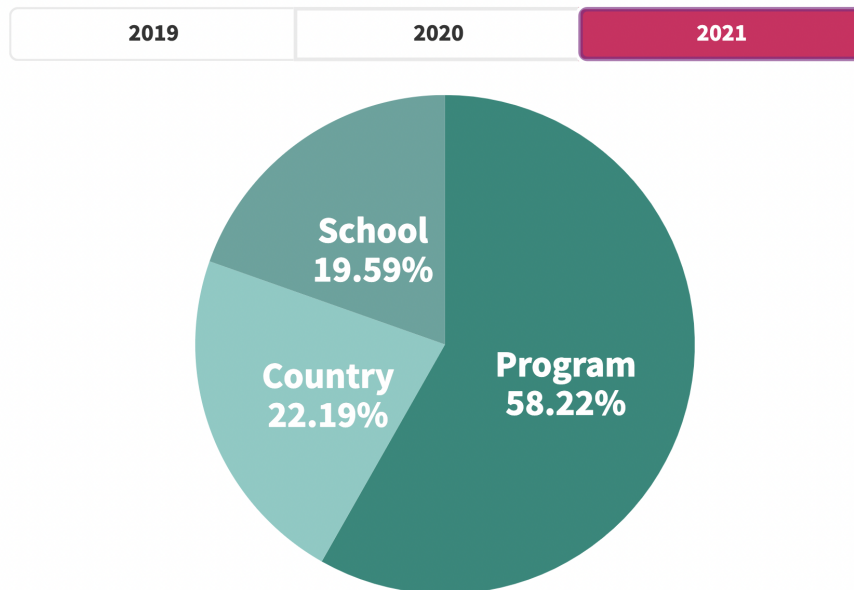
Marketing Insights

Top Considerations: Finding the right program has grown by 20.9% in importance as a first consideration since 2019

To learn about how Latin American students make study abroad decisions, we asked what they consider first when deciding where to study abroad.

[Click here](#) to see an interactive visualization of the graph below.

What do Latin American students consider first when deciding where to study abroad?

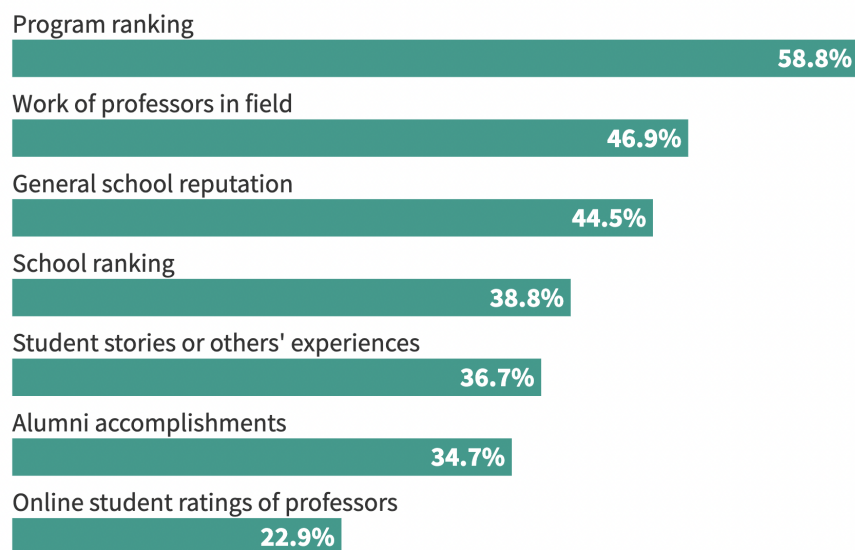


Finding the right program has become increasingly important when deciding where to study overseas with an increase of 20.9% since 2019. The study abroad school has also become more often considered first over time. In contrast, a destination country has fallen as a priority. 37.7% fewer Latin American students over the last two years chose the country as a first consideration when making decisions about study abroad.

What is most important in a program to students from Latin America who prioritize a program first? The content and modules of a program reach the top of the list overall with 67.6% of students, a 56.2% increase from last year. Last year's winner, the quality of professors and teaching, experienced a

drop of 10.1% this year, though still claimed as a top program factor by over half of the prospective students in Latin America in 2021. In Central America, things are seen a bit differently. You'll find that students here value work placement or internship opportunities the most in an overseas program (71.1%).

How do Latin American students judge teaching quality?



Up to two answers allowed.

Let's take another inside look at how teaching quality is actually judged by those who prioritize it. In Latin America, program rankings are seen as the top indicator of teaching quality by the majority of students. What else hints at quality instruction? Many also consider the work of professors in their field as well as the general school reputation to judge teaching quality when looking at international programs.

Top Motivations: Students are finding more motivation to study abroad in order to achieve career goals this year

Compared to last year, achieving career goals and personal development have each risen a place in ranking, displacing higher-quality teaching to fourth on the list. The factor, of higher-quality teaching, however, remains a high priority to 37.4% of Latin American students, second only to African students when looking globally.

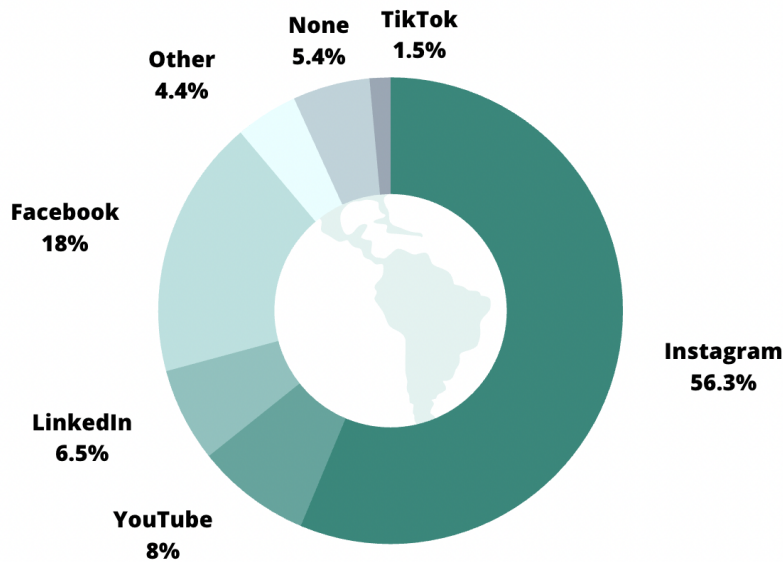
Latin America also has the second-highest number of students in the world thinking about visa options to live in another country as a top factor when considering study abroad (17.6%). This number rises even higher for South American students, where visa options are at the front of about a fifth of these students' minds. When zooming out again, you'll see that Latin America is also the global region with the most students looking for more study options than what their home country can offer (11.9%). In the Caribbean, however, almost double that say finding more study options is a top reason to study abroad!

Can you offer extra academic support for international students? Latin Americans are worried about class difficulty more than the average international student, especially in Mexico and Puerto Rico (22.2%) and South America (25.7%). However, there's been a 14.4% decrease overall in the proportion of students concerned about not speaking the local language of their study abroad country since last year. Adding to that, these students are ready to meet new people overseas. There are 30.8% fewer prospective Latin American students nervous about making friends or fitting in this year than in 2020.

Top Influences: Virtual Open Days and Study Abroad Fairs are seen as more helpful in Latin America than average

In Latin America, you should ensure that teachers are aware of international opportunities for their students. When making decisions about studying abroad, 21% of these students say that their teachers are a top influence, which is higher than any other global region.

Which social media platforms do Latin American students find most helpful to get more information about a university?



Where does your school have a social media presence? In 2019, we asked prospective students from Oceania how important different social media platforms were when researching study abroad options. Two years ago, YouTube was the top answer, followed by Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. What about in 2021? When we asked what students found to be the most useful to get more information about a university, 56.3% said Instagram, and 18% said Facebook.

What else might influence Latin Americans to try out life as international students? Scholarship information might just do it. This region has the second-largest amount of students besides Africa that see scholarships and funding information as the most helpful towards making a decision (66.6%), taking the top spot for the third year in a row.

Recommendations of family and friends, however, are seen as much less helpful than in the past when making decisions. This factor places second to last this year as compared to topping the list at second overall in 2019. Ranking also matters to students in this part of the world. Ranking lists of top schools, countries, and programs are seen as more helpful to Mexican (42.3%) and South American students (31.9%) than average.

Wondering if Latin Americans are interested in virtual promotions? Our survey says they are! About 10.6% of these students say that a school's

virtual open days are helpful to them, which is double the global average. Study abroad fairs are also appreciated here- +3% more than any other region (9.4%).

Student Voices from Latin America

Common Challenges

To understand the student perspective in this region more deeply, we asked: What are some common challenges for you and other students from your country who want to study abroad? Each response indicates the student's nationality, age, and top study abroad destination underneath.

- *"The greatest challenge is usually the cultural differences, but that is also usually the main motivation, it would be great to provide guidance and be tolerant. Besides that, my main challenge has been a financial one. I want to be a filmmaker and I have not been able to find financial support for that area."*
 - Peruvian; 22-25; Top Destination: United States
- *"Definitely financial problems and that some universities do not propose scholarships for international students, in my case I always see many for students within the European Union but not outside."*
 - Uruguayan; 18-21; Top Destination: United Kingdom
- *"It is difficult here to find associations who help young people who want to study abroad. It is not easy. The career I want to study in my country is not taken as something serious or with a future. Because of that, there are no universities that teach the topics I am interested in."*
 - Guatemalan; Under 18; Top Destination: France

Encouraging Students from Latin America

We also asked: What might encourage you to study abroad?

- *"Proper communication with the school that doesn't involve unnecessary promotional emails and generic replies. A proper international student support system/services. Scholarship opportunities."*
 - Jamaican; 18-21; Top Destination: United Kingdom

- *“A scholarship. A safe institution where discrimination and sexual harassment are completely prohibited and where international students are welcomed.”*
 - Colombian; 18-21; Top Destination: United States
- *“One of the things that makes me want to apply to a scholarship program is seeing the positive opinions of international students, as well as detailed information about the program, what it covers, and how to apply and submit all the necessary documents.”*
 - Peruvian; Under 18; Top Destination: Turkey

The information analyzed and statements made in this report are interpretations of data collected from users at [educations.com](https://www.educations.com). The use of this information is at your own discretion.

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