

VIRTUAL GLOBAL SESSION

The State of Student Recruitment 2026



Download the full report

Thursday, 18 June

Insights on international student recruitment
challenges, opportunities & trends in 2026.

Meet the panel



Mark Bennett

VP Research & Insight
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Marko Remes

Dean - International Business Operations
Edith Cowan University (Australia)



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Queen Mary University of London (UK)

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Assistant Director for Global Engagement
University of Central Missouri (USA)



Our most comprehensive analysis yet

67,000+

prospective student respondents

- Students from 150+ countries.
- Data collected between 1st Oct 2025 and 30 April 2026.
- State of Student Recruitment survey data supplemented by our **‘Share of Search’** analysis – which examines student behaviour and trends across Keystone’s network of student sites.

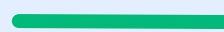


Shifting study intentions in 2026

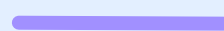
Coming after a year of upheaval and uncertainty, 2026 saw our survey audiences **rethink** and **widen** their range of target study destinations.



Rising



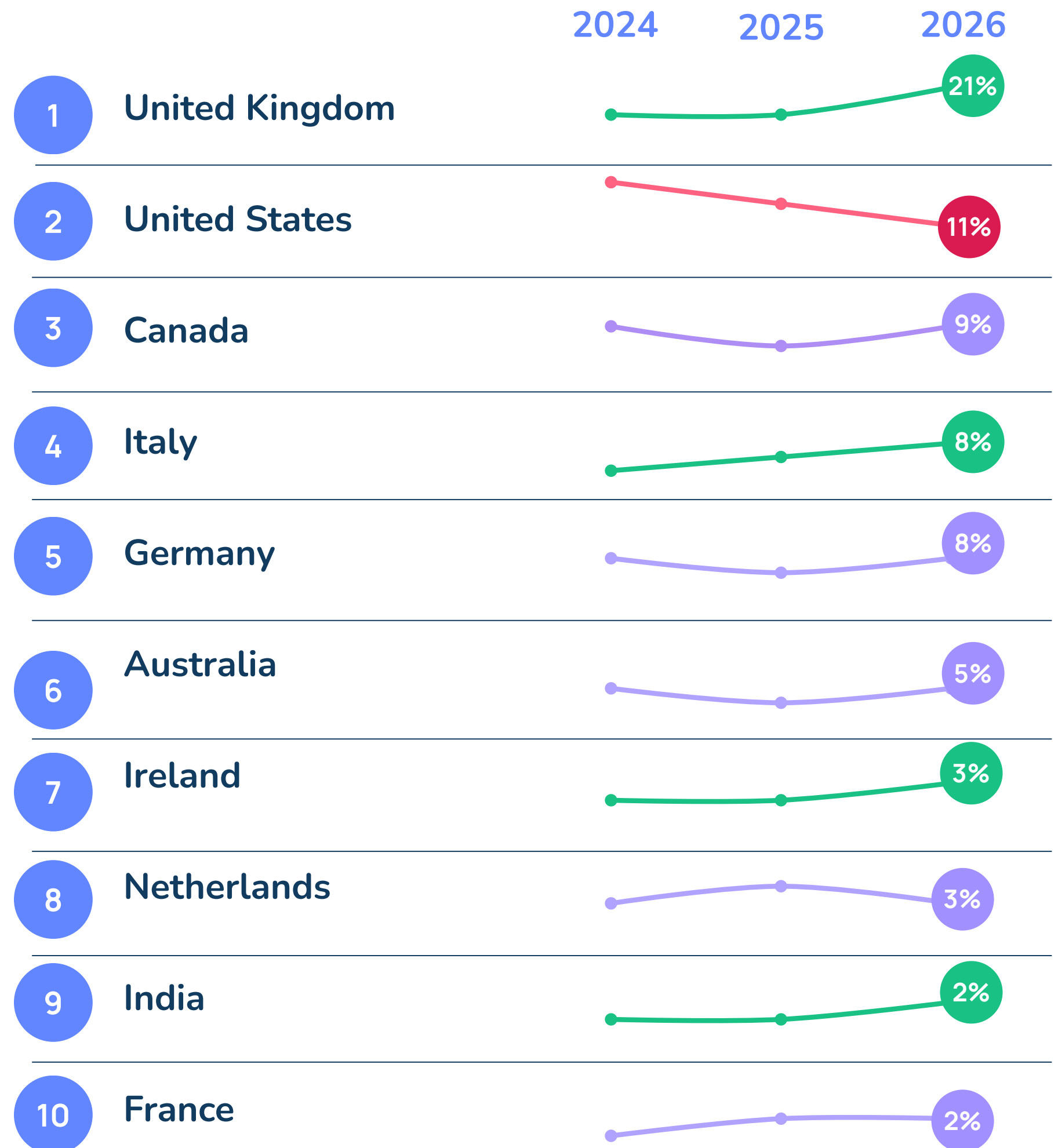
Flat or mixed



Falling



More data available on [keg.com/SSR2026](https://www.keg.com/SSR2026)



...amid changing perceptions

Prospective students don't think the **gap between destinations** is as big as we perhaps do.

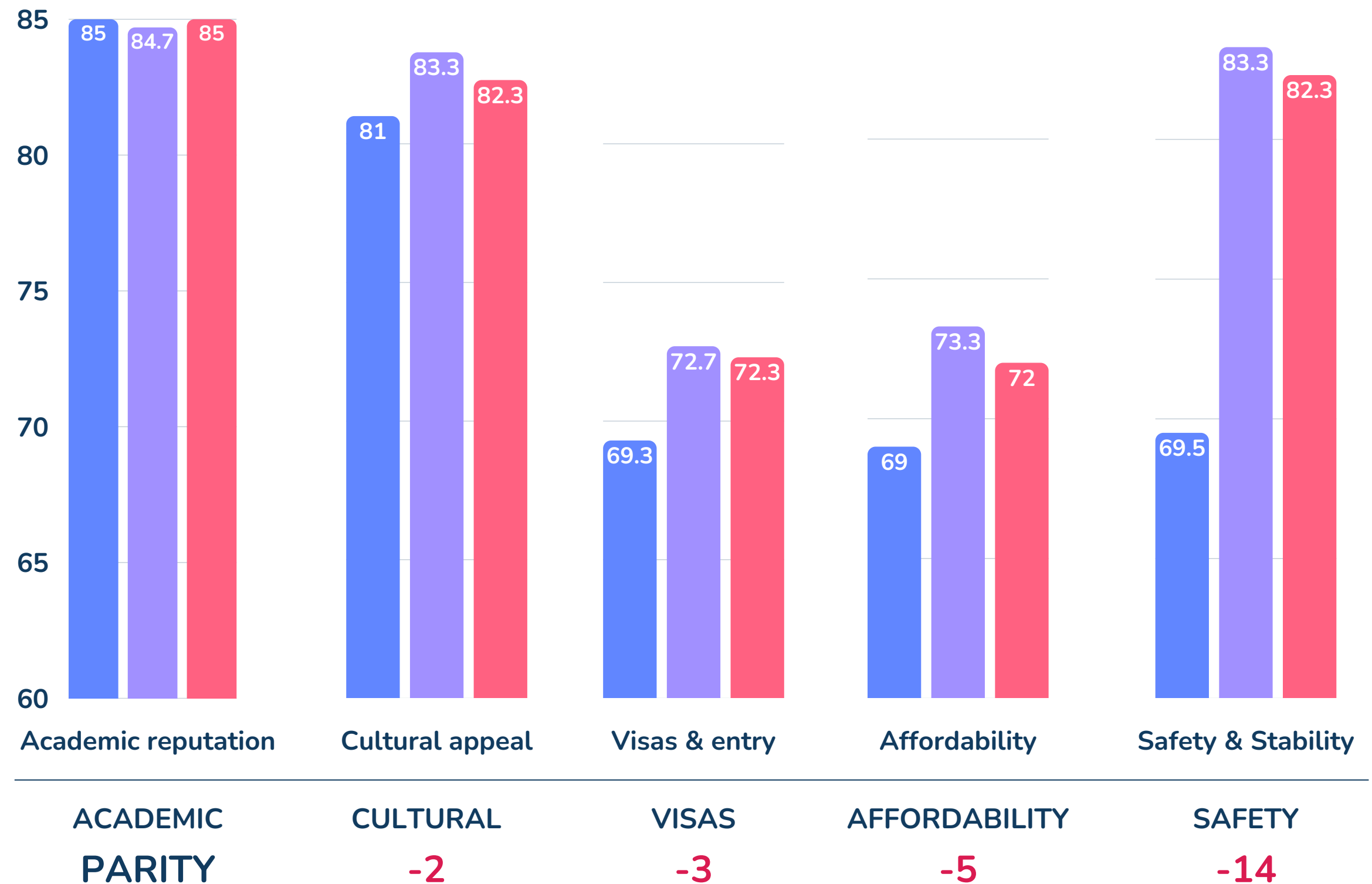
And the '**Big 4**' don't loom as large here.



Big 4
Uk - Canada -
Australia - USA

Asia
Japan - China - South
Korea

Europe
Germany - Ireland -
Netherlands - France

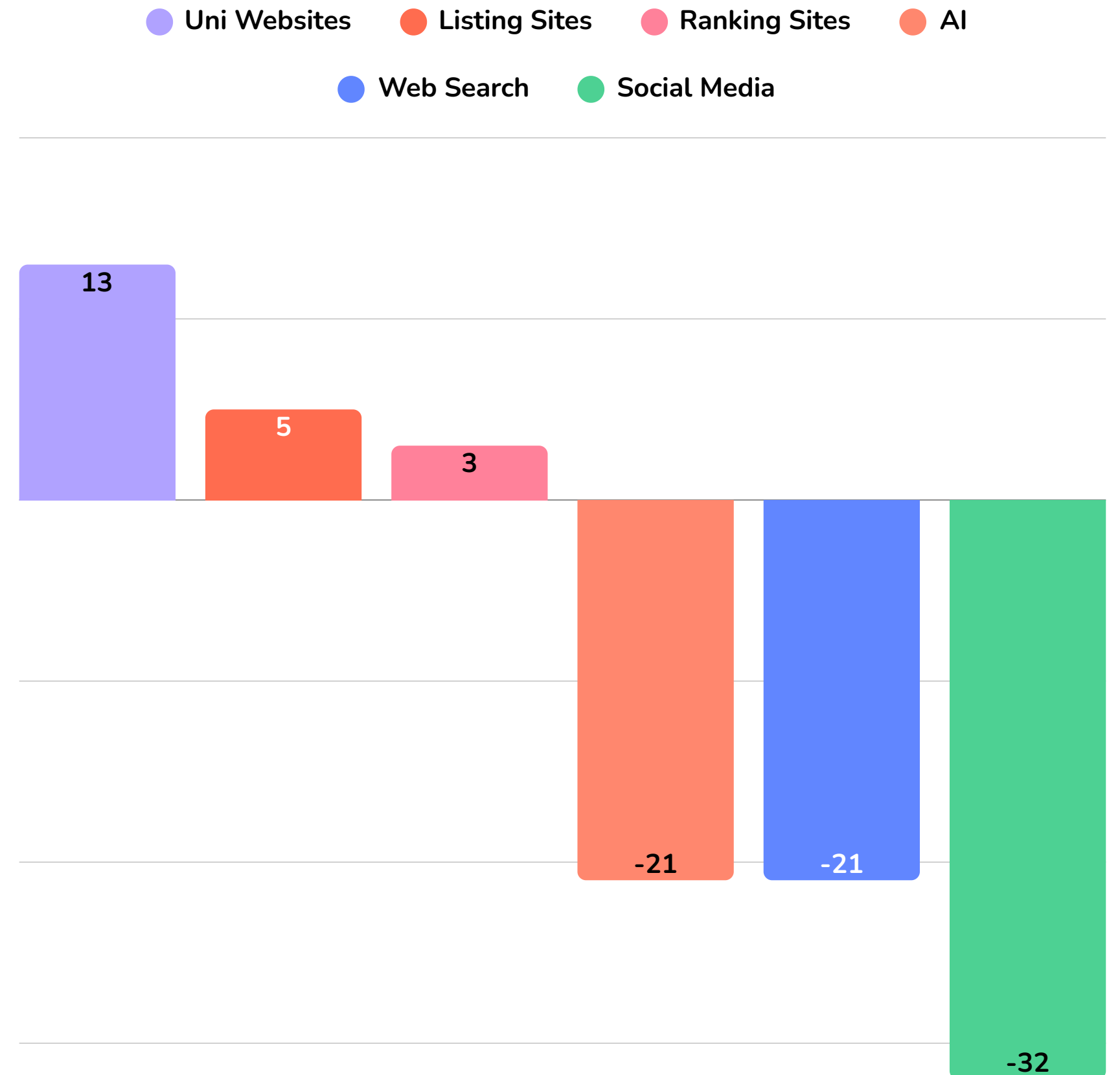


Search tools: the gap between **use** and **trust**

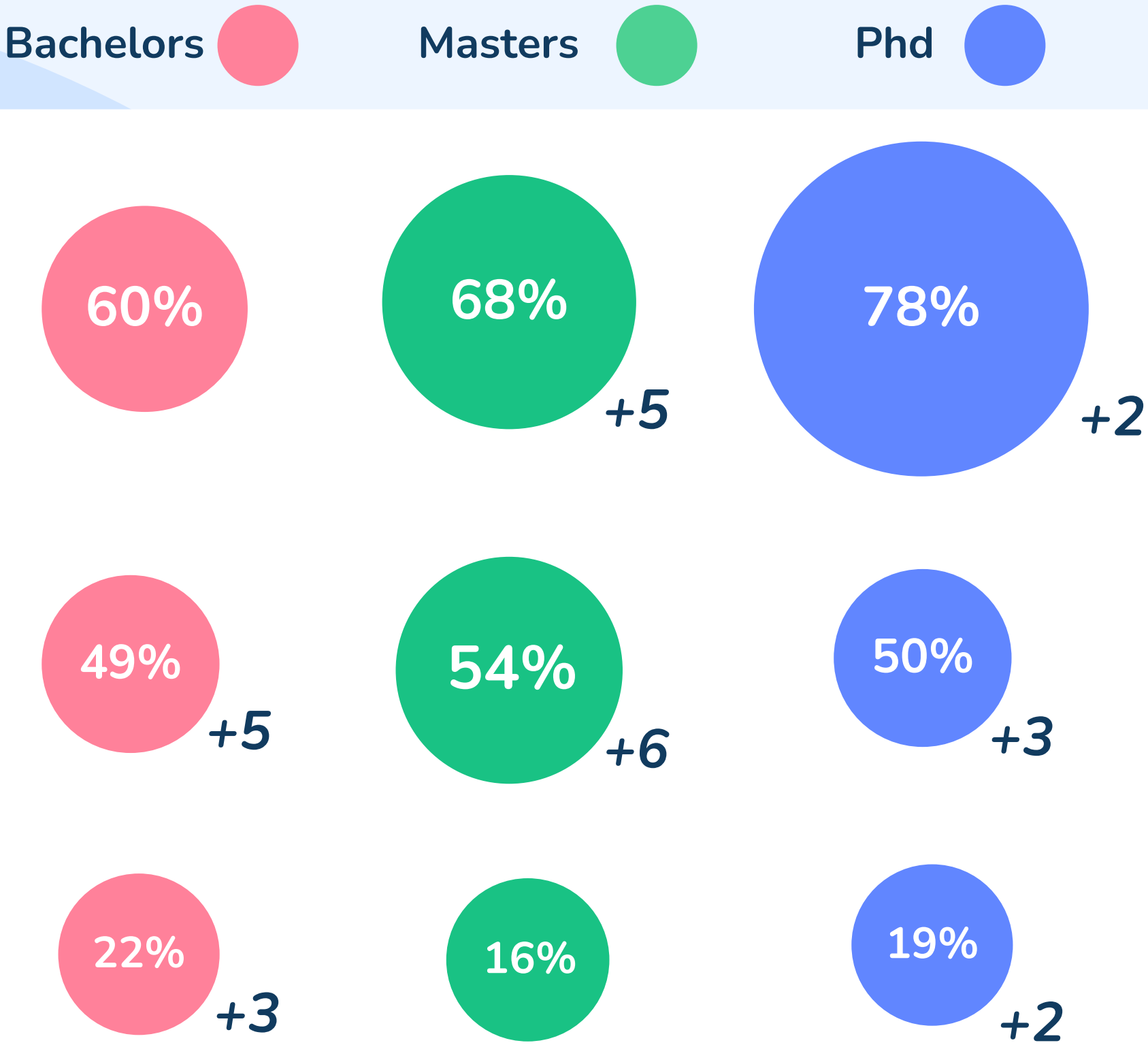
Over half of prospective students use AI or Social Media at least weekly, but these channels are amongst the least trusted.

Students trust **editorially curated** resources over **algorithmically organised** - or **generated** - content.

72% of prospective students believe the **university website** to be 'very' or 'extremely' trustworthy, compared to just **30%** for **AI**. It's no contest.

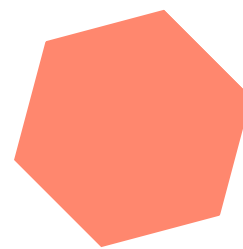


Students will take the time for authentic contact





Motivations are increasingly about longterm ROI



+17%

Adventure

Top for Bachelors, but also rising for Masters & PhD

+16%

Qualifying for further study

Top for Bachelors, but rising for Masters & PhD

+11%

Earnings

Rising whilst Subject and Challenge fall

+5%

Career progress

Rising at all levels, whilst Career entry drops -18%

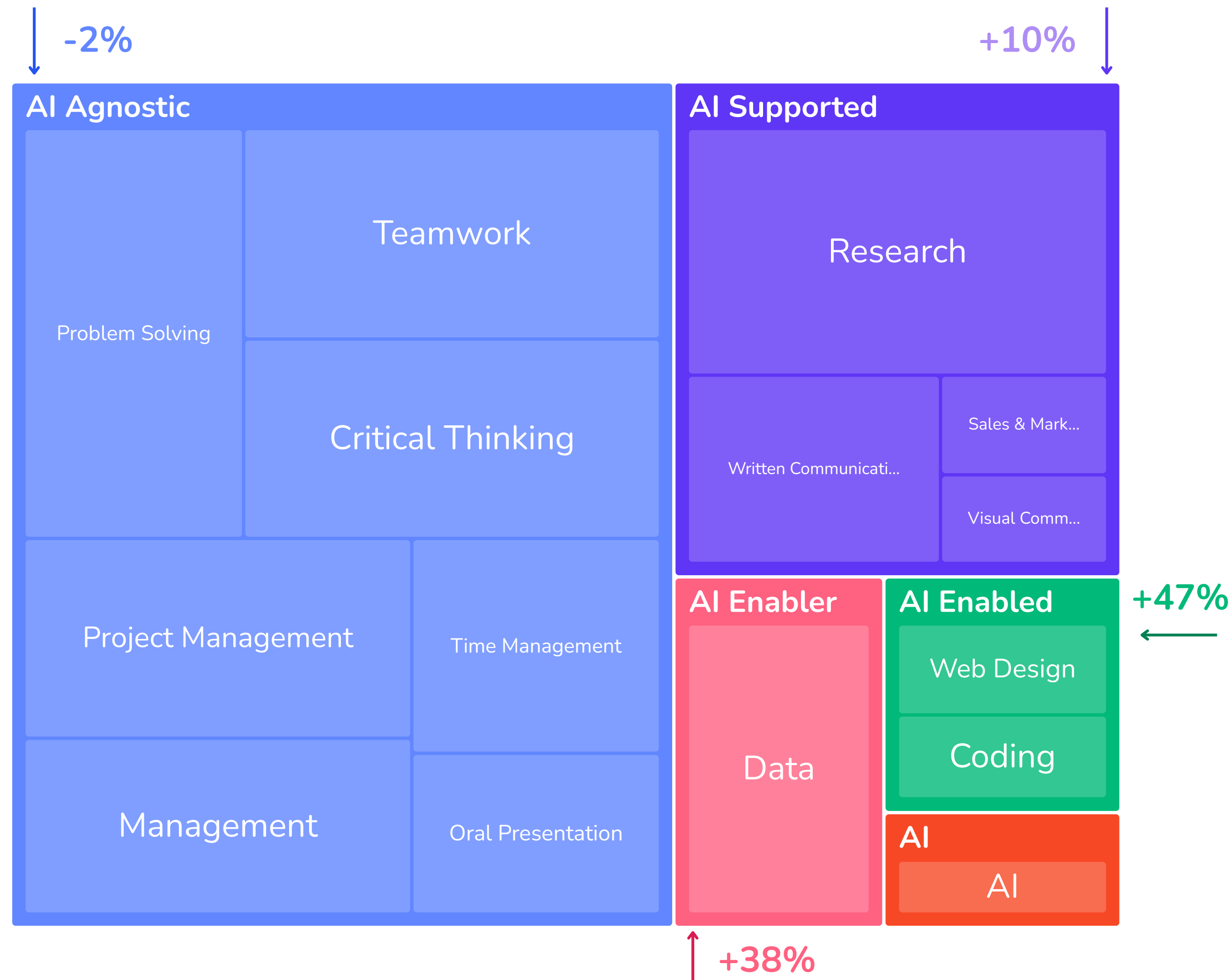
+5%

Skills

Top overall, at all levels, for the 3rd year running



Skills are being indirectly re-shaped by AI



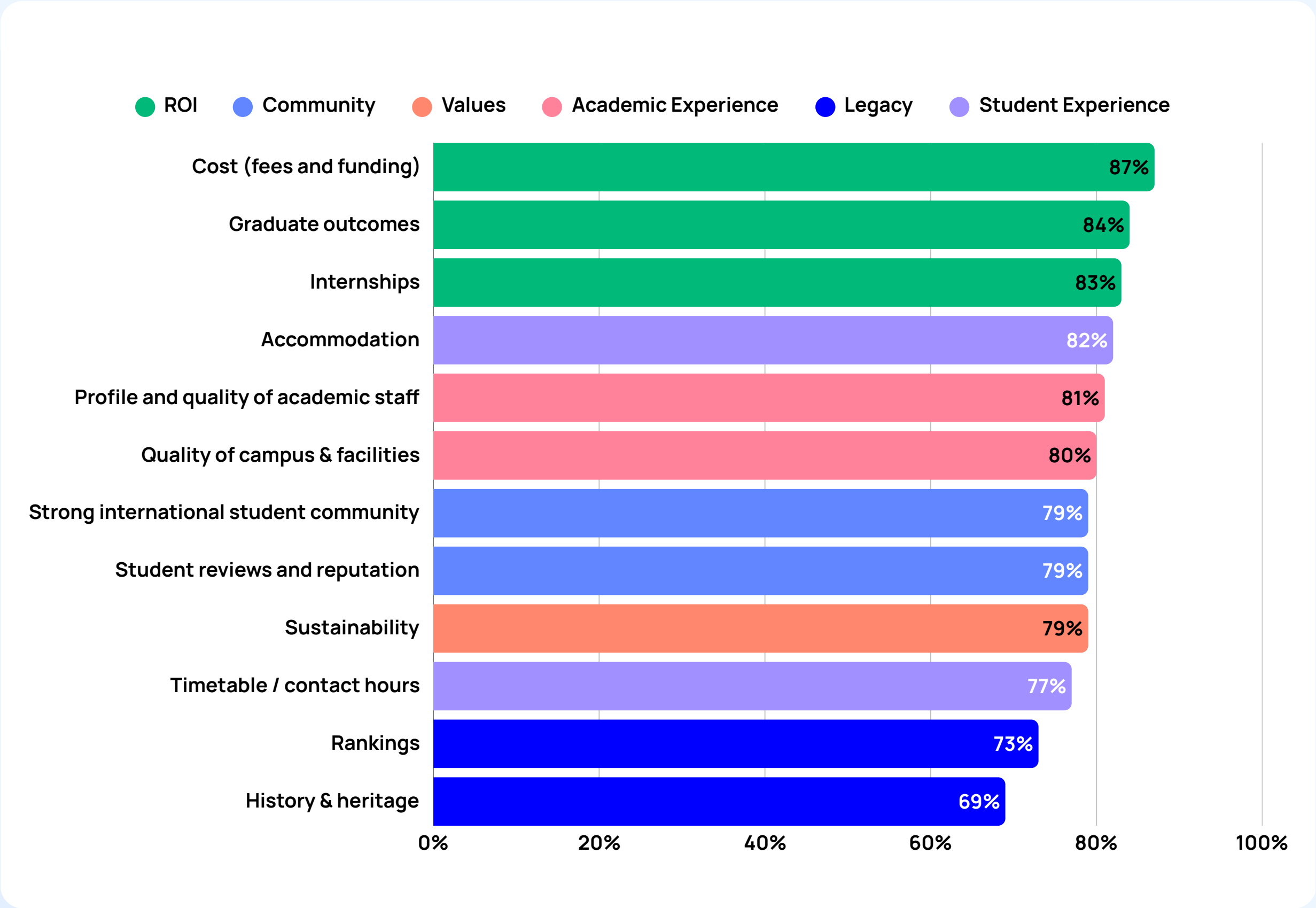
What matters most to students?

The highest priority for prospective international students isn't finding the right Country (28%).

It's finding the right University (32%) with the right Program (40%).



So what are the most important elements of a University and Program?



Download the 2026 report

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Any questions? Contact
marketing@keg.com



Download the
report here (PDF)



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