

The Evolving Student

**Where are they looking?
What are they thinking?**

Wednesday 22nd April 2026



Welcome!

- Your audio and video is off - you can only hear and see the presenter.
- The webinar is recorded - we will email a copy tomorrow.
- If you have any technical issues, email marketing@keg.com.

Questions - please write in the Q&A tab!



About Keystone Education Group

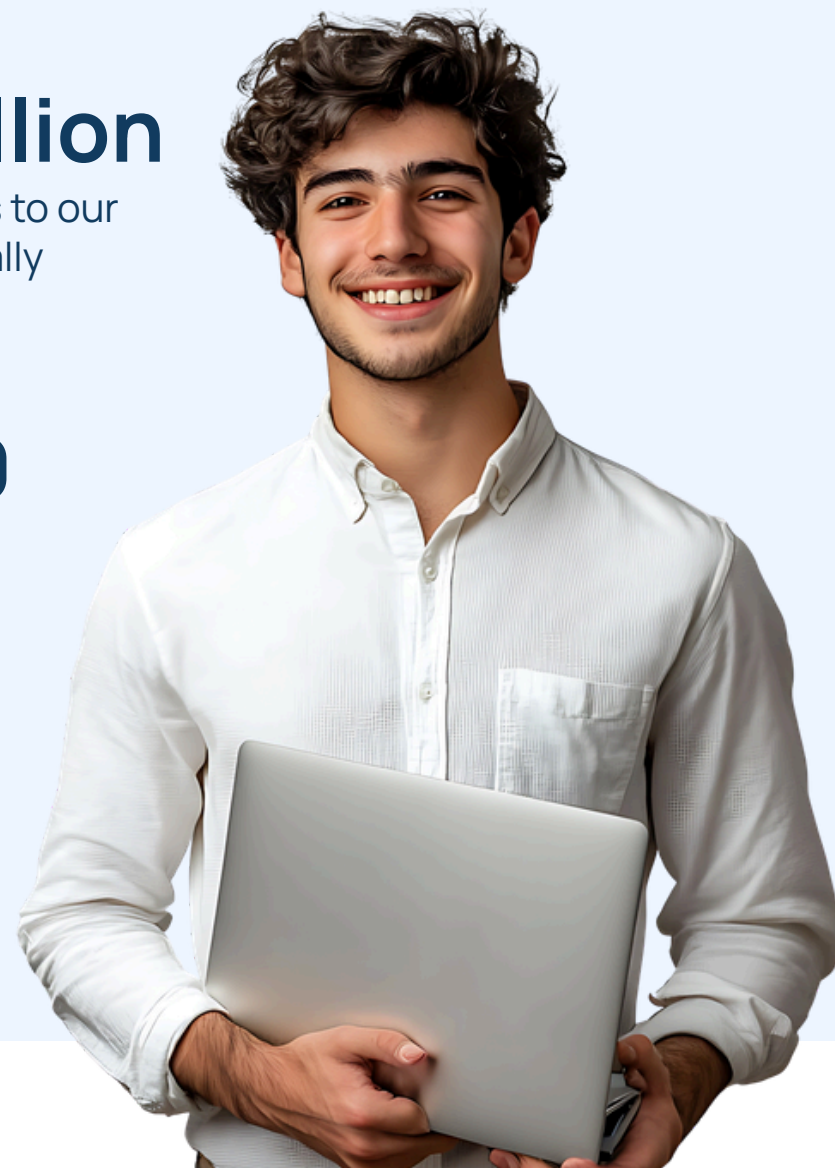
We've got you covered.

Keystone connects educational institutions with students at the right time in the right place.

5,000+
partner institutions

100 million
student visitors to our websites annually

70,000
direct student enrolments each year



Student Marketing Services

Student Placement

Enrolment Services

Professional Training



Explore

PROGRAM PROMOTION

Across our websites, including:

- Educations.com
- FindAMasters.com
- FindAPhD.com
- bwl-studieren.com
- Studentum.se
- Studentum.fr

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

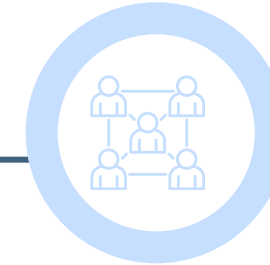
STUDY FAIRS

EMAIL MARKETING

KEYSTONE HUB CRM

CAMPUS STORIES

KEYSTONE APPLY



Engage

STUDENT ADVISORY & APPLICATION SUPPORT

BEYOND ABROAD EDU NATION

STUDENT ATHLETE RECRUITMENT

KEYSTONE SPORTS



Enrol

ENQUIRY MANAGEMENT

ADMISSIONS SERVICES

CONVERSION & COMPLIANCE

RETENTION

SHORT-TERM & LOCUM

Powered by **UNIQUEST**



Evolve

CONNECTING LEARNERS & PROVIDERS ON SITES, INCLUDING:

- Findcourses.com
- Findcourses.co.uk
- kurser.se
- utbildning.se
- Topformation.fr
- finddannelse.dk
- kursfinder.de
- koulutus.fi



Empower

Keystone's Higher Ed Insights

Read the latest trends impacting the industry and access hundreds of reports, webinars and expert commentary to help inform your marketing and recruitment strategies.



My job



Dr. Mark Bennett
VP Research & Insight
Keystone Education Group

I look at data. I find stories in it. I decide which stories are important. I tell them.





My job



Dr. Mark Bennett

VP Research & Insight
Keystone Education Group

I look at data. I find stories in it. I decide which stories are important. I tell them.

In a former life I was an English Lit PhD. And I know stories have patterns - or genres.





My job



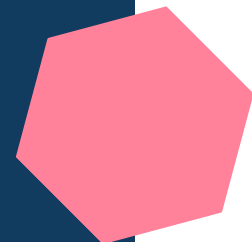
Dr. Mark Bennett

VP Research & Insight
Keystone Education Group

I look at data. I find stories in it. I decide which stories are important. I tell them.

In a former life I was an English Lit PhD. And I know stories have patterns - or genres.

There is a particular genre of international education story...





The (typical) international education story

When it comes to international education, our characters and settings are usually audiences and destinations. Who wants to study where. And why.





The (typical) international education story

When it comes to international education, our characters and settings are usually audiences and destinations. Who wants to study where. And why.

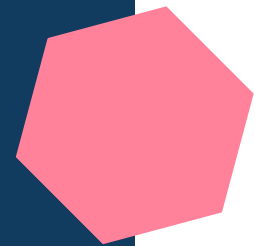
This is precisely the kind of data we're equipped to track at Keystone.





The (typical) international education story

The plots of those international education stories often focus on **'revolution'**.





The (typical) international education story

The plots of those international education stories often focus on 'revolution'.

A **policy** barrier appears in or around a **destination** and **audiences** react, usually by pivoting elsewhere.

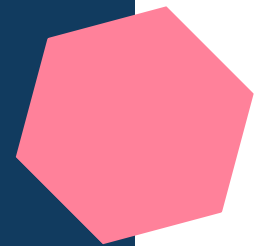




A different international education story

But are international education stories always revolutionary?

If **destinations** stopped changing policies, would **audiences** just do the same things forever?



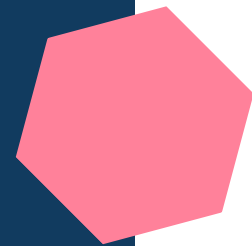


A different international education story

But are international education stories always revolutionary?

If **destinations** stopped changing policies, would **audiences** just do the same things forever?

Of course not.





A different international education story

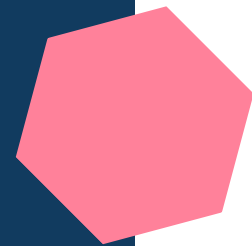
But are international education stories always revolutionary?

If **destinations** stopped changing **policies**, would **audiences** just do the same things forever?

Of course not.

Audiences don't just **pivot**. They **evolve**.
And sometimes **revolution speeds up evolution**.

That's the kind of story I want to tell today.





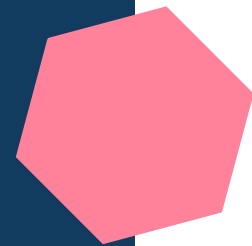
Session plan

The revolution: Reminding us of the big stories right now

The evolution: Recovering the underlying story

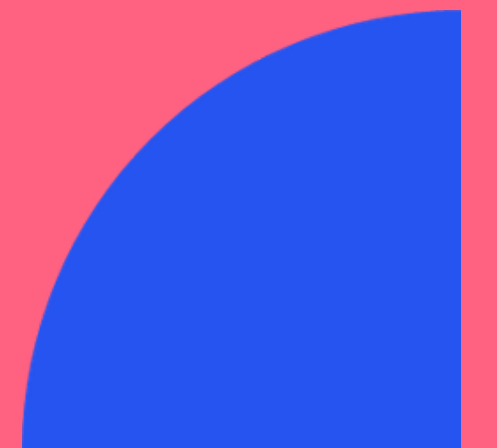
The results: Look at how this positions destinations with prospective students. Including an early look at something new from Keystone.

The response: What can we control and what can we do with that?

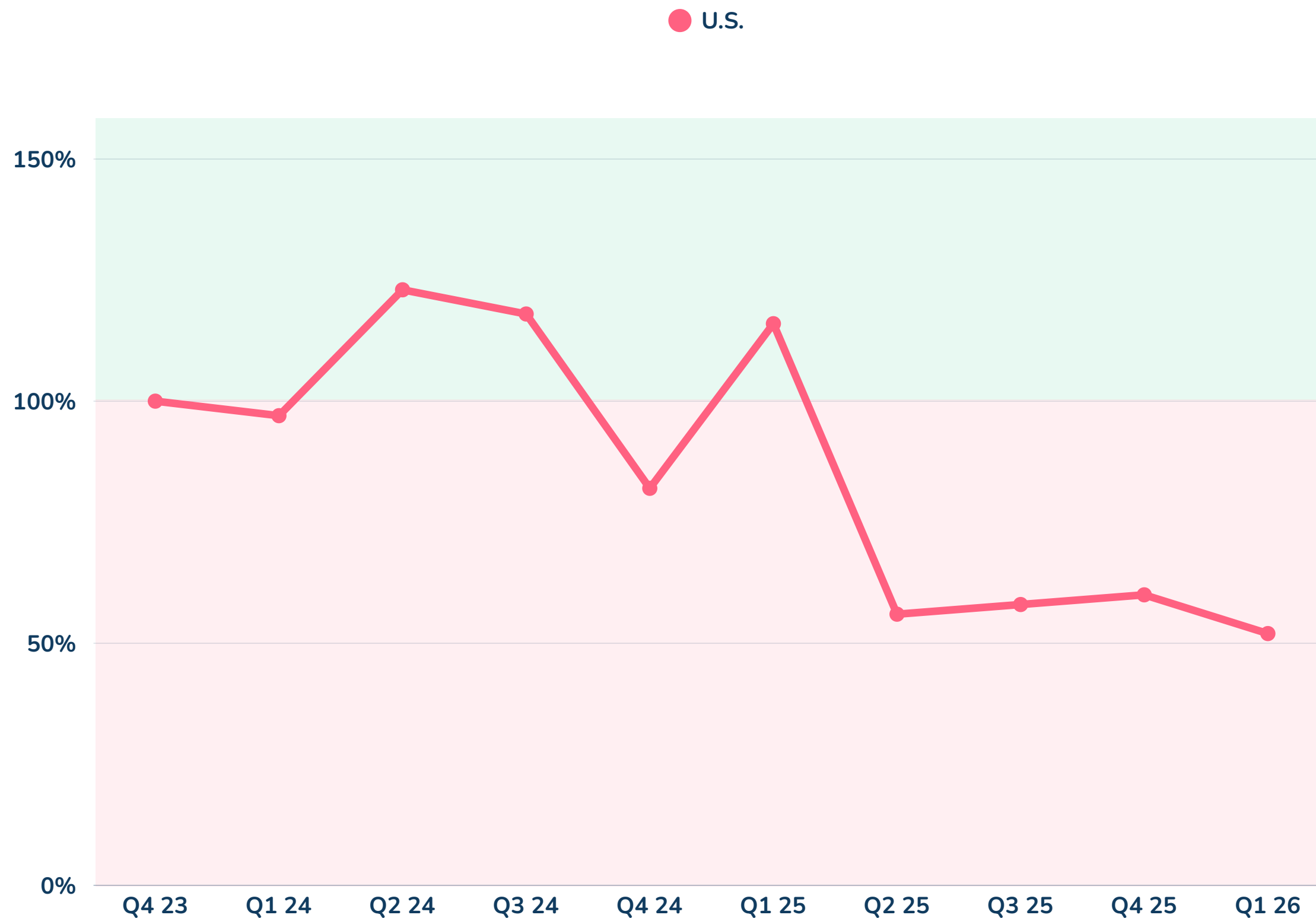




Part 1: The revolution



Revolution: Four big Big 4 stories



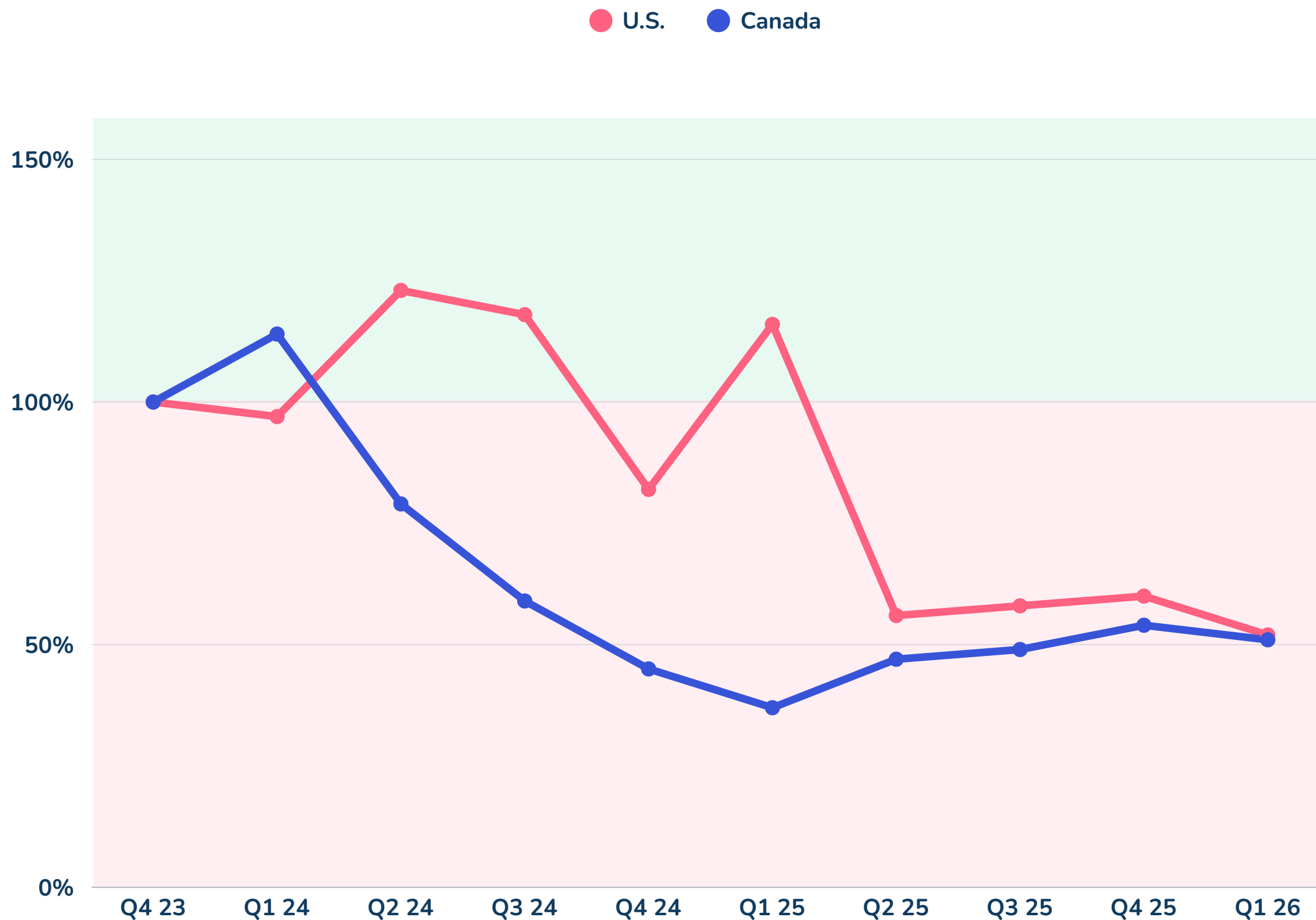
Traditional destinations have had a turbulent year or so

U.S. demand drops following policy changes in 2025. It's still down.

International Search Interest (PGT, Indexed to Q4 2023) | [Keystone Share of Search](#)



Revolution: Four big Big 4 stories



Traditional destinations have had a turbulent year or so

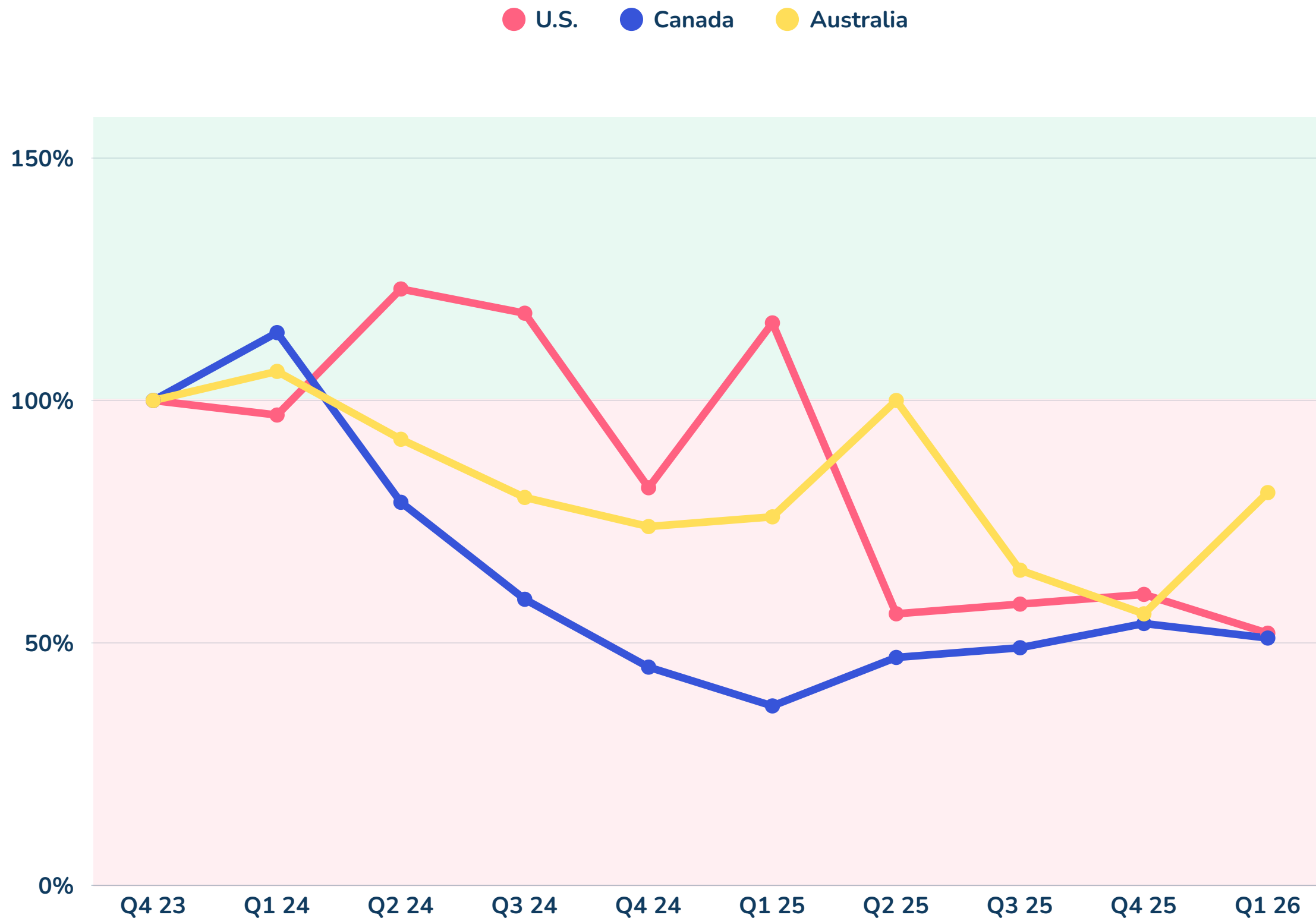
U.S. demand drops following policy changes in 2025. It's still down.

Canadian demand falls earlier and further... but recovers (slightly) during 2025.

International Search Interest (PGT, Indexed to Q4 2023) | [Keystone Share of Search](#)



Revolution: Four big Big 4 stories



Traditional destinations have had a turbulent year or so

U.S. demand drops following policy changes in 2025. It's still down.

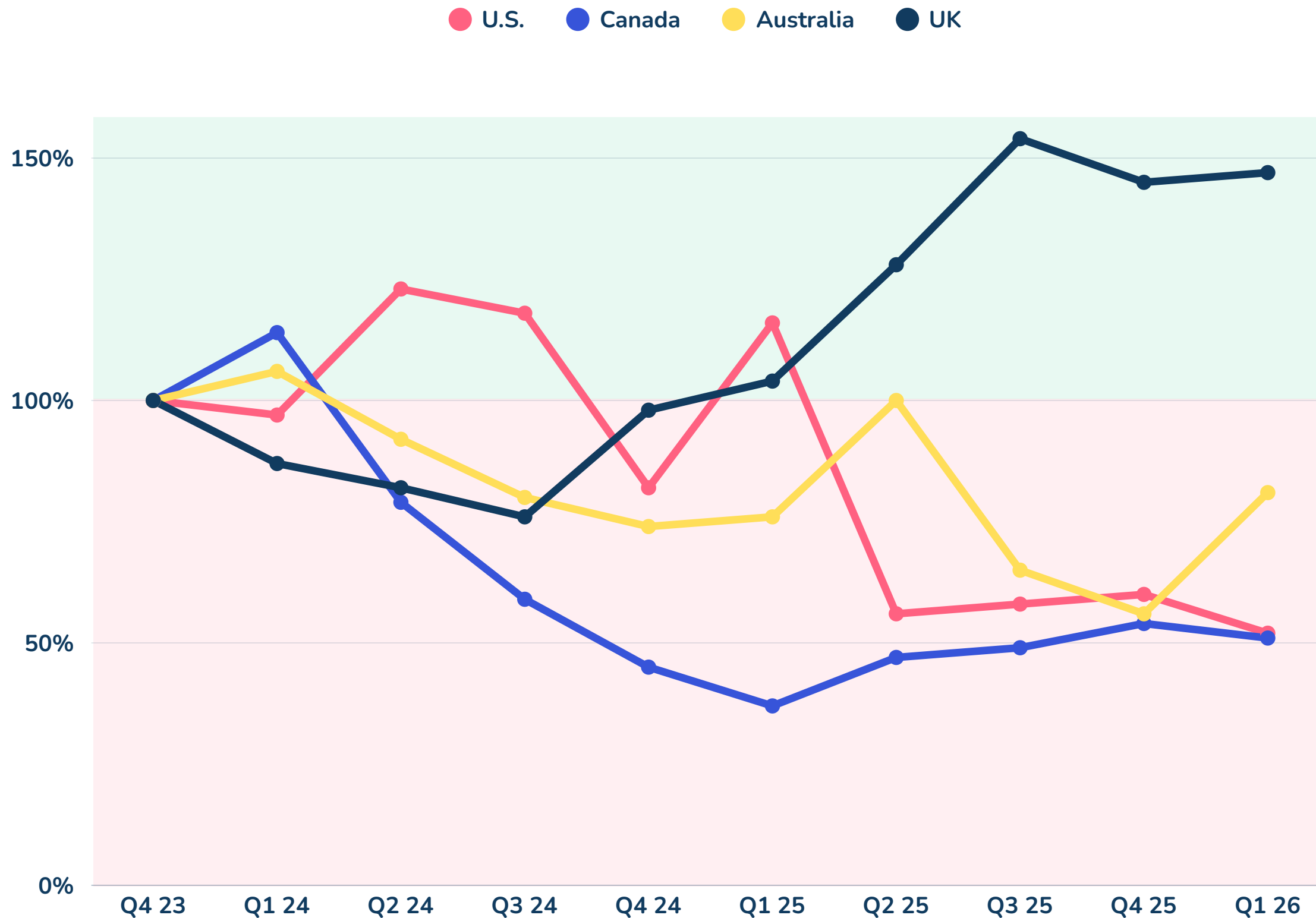
Canadian demand falls earlier and further... but recovers (slightly) during 2025.

Australian demand also falls early with less recovery until recently.

International Search Interest (PGT, Indexed to Q4 2023) | [Keystone Share of Search](#)



Revolution: Four big Big 4 stories



Traditional destinations have had a turbulent year or so

U.S. demand drops following policy changes in 2025. It's still down.

Canadian demand falls earlier and further... but recovers (slightly) during 2025.

Australian demand also falls early with less recovery until recently.

UK demand rises consistently from 2025 until 2026.

International Search Interest (PGT, Indexed to Q4 2023) | [Keystone Share of Search](#)





These trends are important.

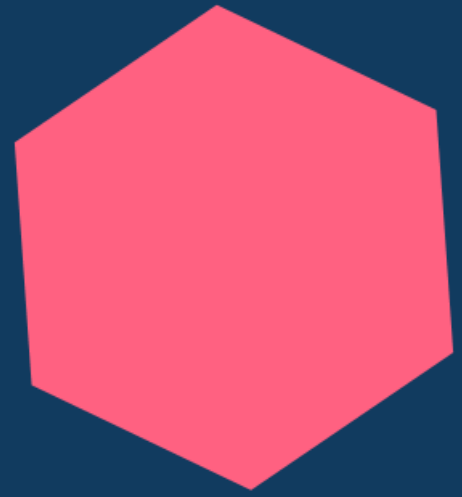




These trends are important.

But they can also be a trap.





It's easy to fall into talking about what the 'Big 4' do, as if that's all that matters. And all that mattered.

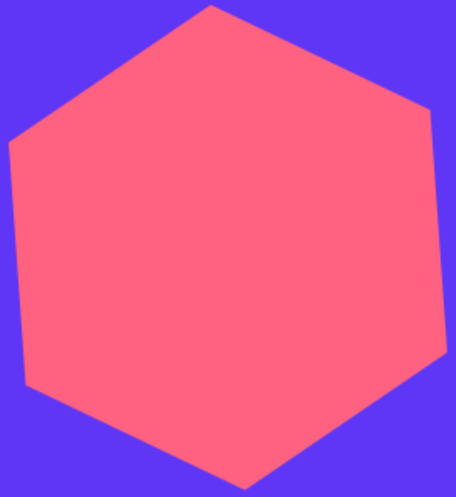




It's easy to fall into talking about what the 'Big 4' do, as if that's all that matters. And all that mattered.

It isn't. It wasn't.

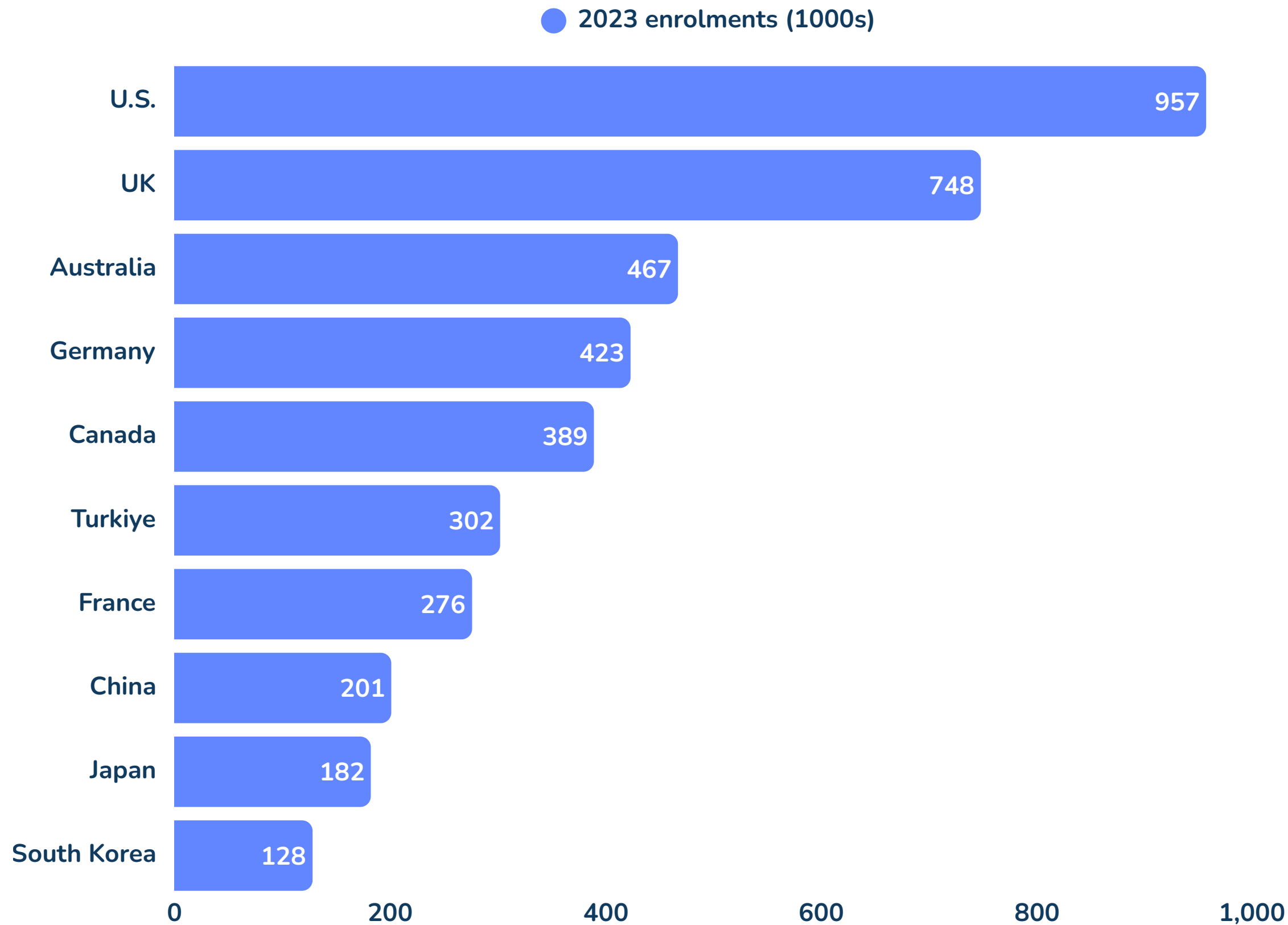




Part 2: The evolution



Evolution: enrolments as of 2023



Total Inbound International Enrolments 2023 | [UNESCO](#)

International study was already more diverse than we sometimes acknowledge

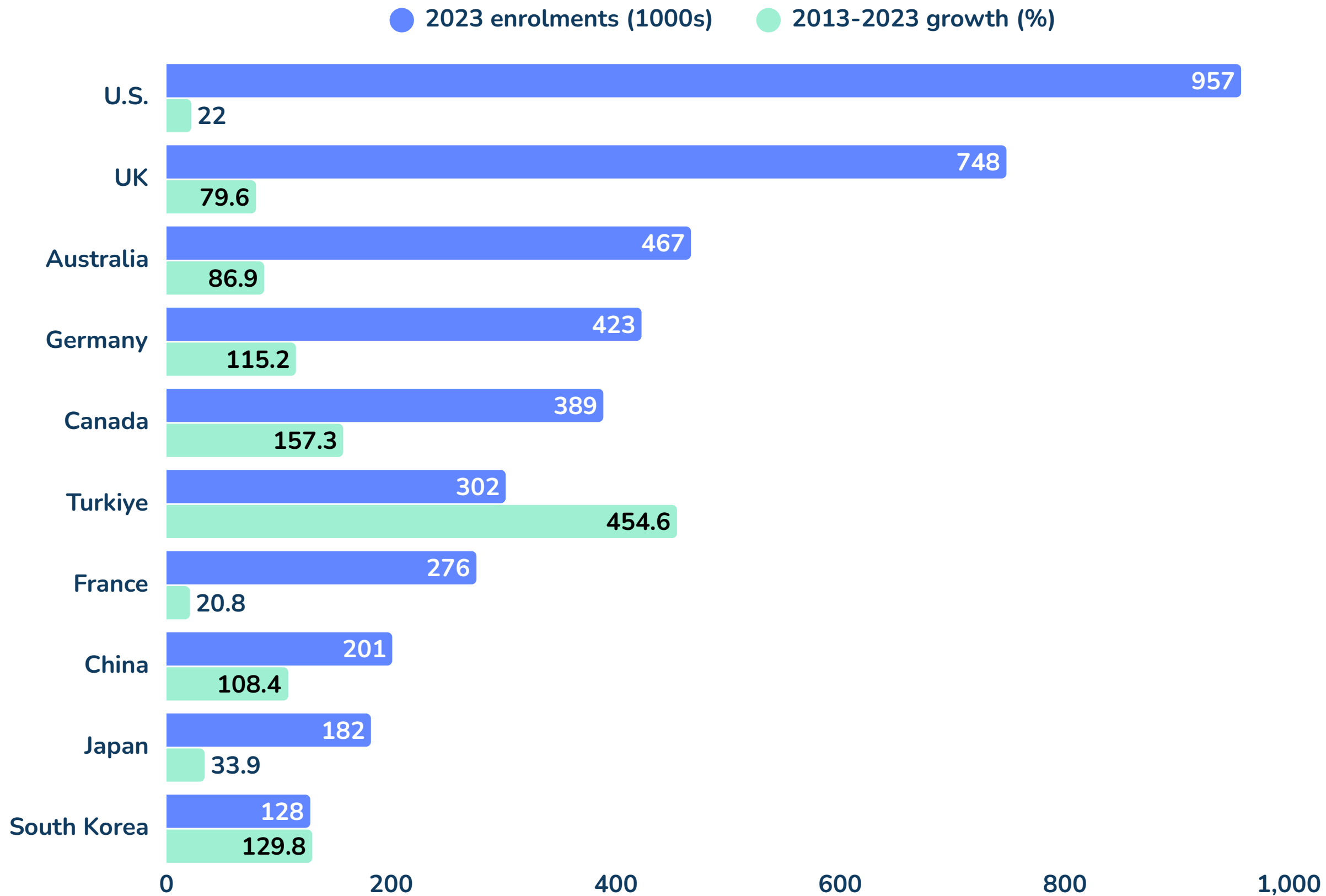
As of 2023, only two of the top 10* study destinations were predominantly anglophone.

And the '2023 Big 4' included Germany.

Recent 'revolution' is happening within ongoing evolution.



Evolution: enrolment growth 2013-23



Total Inbound International Enrolments 2023 + Growth 2013-2023 | [UNESCO](#)

And international study was already evolving

The trends here are striking:

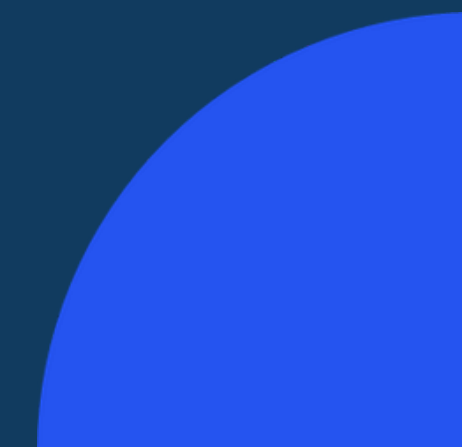
- Fastest growth wasn't anglophone
- Turkiye is an outlier (with a specific audience profile)
- East/Southeast Asia is one to watch

Growth was already telling a different story to size.



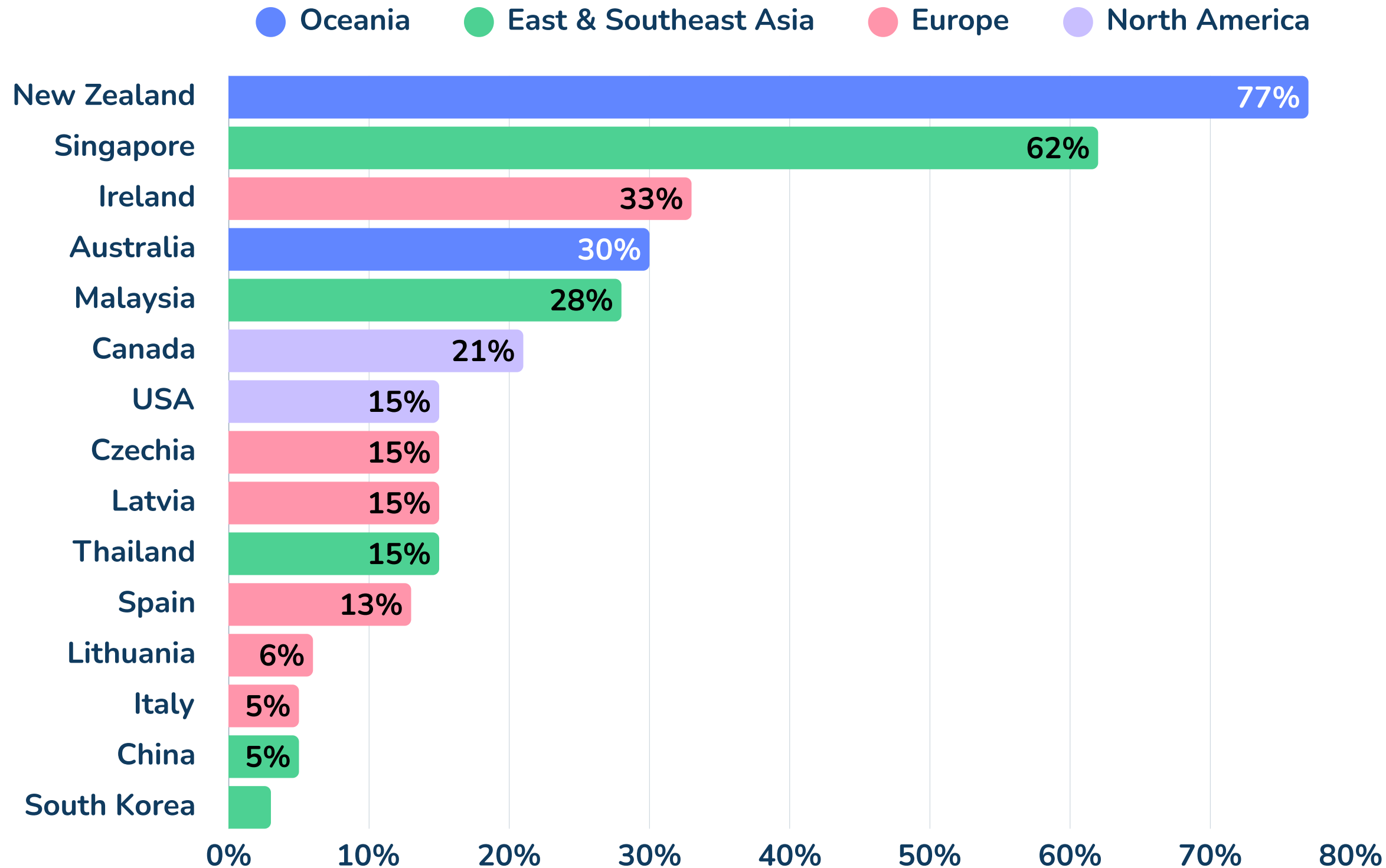


And this is still happening in search



Evolution: the current diversification of search

Fastest Growing Destinations [South Asian Audiences - Apr 1-20 YoY]



Search trends also diversify

Taking **South Asia** (including India) as an example:

- Growth is highest for **Asia-Pacific** destinations
- **European** growth is largely non-anglophone
- **Big 4** are outpaced

Policy revolution is accelerating search evolution.





**This is both revolution and
evolution.**





**This is both revolution and
evolution.**

**It's driven by both push and pull
factors.**





**This is both revolution and
evolution.**

**It's driven by both push and pull
factors.**

Lots of them.



The push and pull of international education



The push and pull of international education



ROI

Cost of study vs outcomes



The push and pull of international education

'Big 4'

ROI

Cost of study vs outcomes

AU - visa fees more than doubled

UK - post-study work cut

US - post-study work threatened

CA/UK - financial requirements raised

The push and pull of international education



'Big 4'

Others

ROI

Cost of study vs outcomes

AU - visa fees more than doubled

UK - post-study work cut

US - post-study work threatened

CA/UK - financial requirements raised

EU - free (or near-free) tuition common

NZ - increased work rights; new short term graduate visa options

KR - extension of post-study work

The push and pull of international education



'Big 4'

Others

ROI

Cost of study vs outcomes

AU - visa fees more than doubled
UK - post-study work cut
US - post-study work threatened
CA/UK - financial requirements raised

EU - free (or near-free) tuition common
NZ - increased work rights; new short term graduate visa options
KR - extension of post-study work

Trust

Consistency and welcome

The push and pull of international education



'Big 4'

Others

ROI

Cost of study vs outcomes

AU - visa fees more than doubled
UK - post-study work cut
US - post-study work threatened
CA/UK - financial requirements raised

EU - free (or near-free) tuition common
NZ - increased work rights; new short term graduate visa options
KR - extension of post-study work

Trust

Consistency and welcome

US - SEVIS terminations; visa revocations; increased vetting
UK - anti-migrant unrest; fee levy
AU/CA - framing of resource / imbalance

The push and pull of international education



'Big 4'

Others

ROI

Cost of study vs outcomes

AU - visa fees more than doubled
UK - post-study work cut
US - post-study work threatened
CA/UK - financial requirements raised

EU - free (or near-free) tuition common
NZ - increased work rights; new short term graduate visa options
KR - extension of post-study work

Trust

Consistency and welcome

US - SEVIS terminations; visa revocations; increased vetting
UK - anti-migrant unrest; fee levy
AU/CA - framing of resource / imbalance

EU - initiatives to attract pivoting students
JP/KR - positive framing; increased English-language teaching

The push and pull of international education



'Big 4'

Others

ROI

Cost of study vs outcomes

AU - visa fees more than doubled
UK - post-study work cut
US - post-study work threatened
CA/UK - financial requirements raised

EU - free (or near-free) tuition common
NZ - increased work rights; new short term graduate visa options
KR - extension of post-study work

Trust

Consistency and welcome

US - SEVIS terminations; visa revocations; increased vetting
UK - anti-migrant unrest; fee levy
AU/CA - framing of resource / imbalance

EU - initiatives to attract pivoting students
JP/KR - positive framing; increased English-language teaching

Access

Caps, restrictions, bans

The push and pull of international education



'Big 4'

Others

ROI

Cost of study vs outcomes

AU - visa fees more than doubled
UK - post-study work cut
US - post-study work threatened
CA/UK - financial requirements raised

EU - free (or near-free) tuition common
NZ - increased work rights; new short term graduate visa options
KR - extension of post-study work

Trust

Consistency and welcome

US - SEVIS terminations; visa revocations; increased vetting
UK - anti-migrant unrest; fee levy
AU/CA - framing of resource / imbalance

EU - initiatives to attract pivoting students
JP/KR - positive framing; increased English-language teaching

Access

Caps, restrictions, bans

US - travel ban(s); visa changes
UK - dependent ban; BCA; 'visa brake'
CA - study permit caps
AU - de-facto caps

The push and pull of international education



'Big 4'

Others

ROI

Cost of study vs outcomes

AU - visa fees more than doubled
UK - post-study work cut
US - post-study work threatened
CA/UK - financial requirements raised

EU - free (or near-free) tuition common
NZ - increased work rights; new short term graduate visa options
KR - extension of post-study work

Trust

Consistency and welcome

US - SEVIS terminations; visa revocations; increased vetting
UK - anti-migrant unrest; fee levy
AU/CA - framing of resource / imbalance

EU - initiatives to attract pivoting students
JP/KR - positive framing; increased English-language teaching

Access

Caps, restrictions, bans

US - travel ban(s); visa changes
UK - dependent ban; BCA; 'visa brake'
CA - study permit caps
AU - de-facto caps

NZ - proposal for simpler multi-year visa
EU - fast-track visa route for US-bound students introduced in France
KR - elite graduate fast track

The push and pull of international education



'Big 4'

Others

ROI

Cost of study vs outcomes

AU - visa fees more than doubled
UK - post-study work cut
US - post-study work threatened
CA/UK - financial requirements raised

EU - free (or near-free) tuition common
NZ - increased work rights; new short term graduate visa options
KR - extension of post-study work

Trust

Consistency and welcome

US - SEVIS terminations; visa revocations; increased vetting
UK - anti-migrant unrest; fee levy
AU/CA - framing of resource / imbalance

EU - initiatives to attract pivoting students
JP/KR - positive framing; increased English-language teaching

Access

Caps, restrictions, bans

US - travel ban(s); visa changes
UK - dependent ban; BCA; 'visa brake'
CA - study permit caps
AU - de-facto caps

NZ - proposal for simpler multi-year visa
EU - fast-track visa route for US-bound students introduced in France
KR - elite graduate fast track

Appeal

Academic *and* cultural

The push and pull of international education



'Big 4'

Others

ROI

Cost of study vs outcomes

AU - visa fees more than doubled
UK - post-study work cut
US - post-study work threatened
CA/UK - financial requirements raised

EU - free (or near-free) tuition common
NZ - increased work rights; new short term graduate visa options
KR - extension of post-study work

Trust

Consistency and welcome

US - SEVIS terminations; visa revocations; increased vetting
UK - anti-migrant unrest; fee levy
AU/CA - framing of resource / imbalance

EU - initiatives to attract pivoting students
JP/KR - positive framing; increased English-language teaching

Access

Caps, restrictions, bans

US - travel ban(s); visa changes
UK - dependent ban; BCA; 'visa brake'
CA - study permit caps
AU - de-facto caps

NZ - proposal for simpler multi-year visa
EU - fast-track visa route for US-bound students introduced in France
KR - elite graduate fast track

Appeal

Academic *and* cultural

Rankings - c.50-60% of top 100
Teaching - established anglophone
Culture - established anglo/west appeal

The push and pull of international education



'Big 4'

Others

ROI

Cost of study vs outcomes

AU - visa fees more than doubled
UK - post-study work cut
US - post-study work threatened
CA/UK - financial requirements raised

EU - free (or near-free) tuition common
NZ - increased work rights; new short term graduate visa options
KR - extension of post-study work

Trust

Consistency and welcome

US - SEVIS terminations; visa revocations; increased vetting
UK - anti-migrant unrest; fee levy
AU/CA - framing of resource / imbalance

EU - initiatives to attract pivoting students
JP/KR - positive framing; increased English-language teaching

Access

Caps, restrictions, bans

US - travel ban(s); visa changes
UK - dependent ban; BCA; 'visa brake'
CA - study permit caps
AU - de-facto caps

NZ - proposal for simpler multi-year visa
EU - fast-track visa route for US-bound students introduced in France
KR - elite graduate fast track

Appeal

Academic *and* cultural

Rankings - c.50-60% of top 100
Teaching - established anglophone
Culture - established anglo/west appeal

Rankings - record for KR 2026
Teaching - growing anglophone
Culture - Records broken by KPop media



All of this shapes how students view destinations.





All of this shapes how students view
destinations.

Which is evolving too.



Evolution: what do audiences think of different destinations?

● Australia ● Canada ● UK ● USA ● Japan ● South Korea ● Germany ● Sweden

Survey data reveals further evolution beyond the 'Big 4'

We're looking here at how audiences rate their chosen study destinations (data is a weighted average score).

Reputation

Affordability

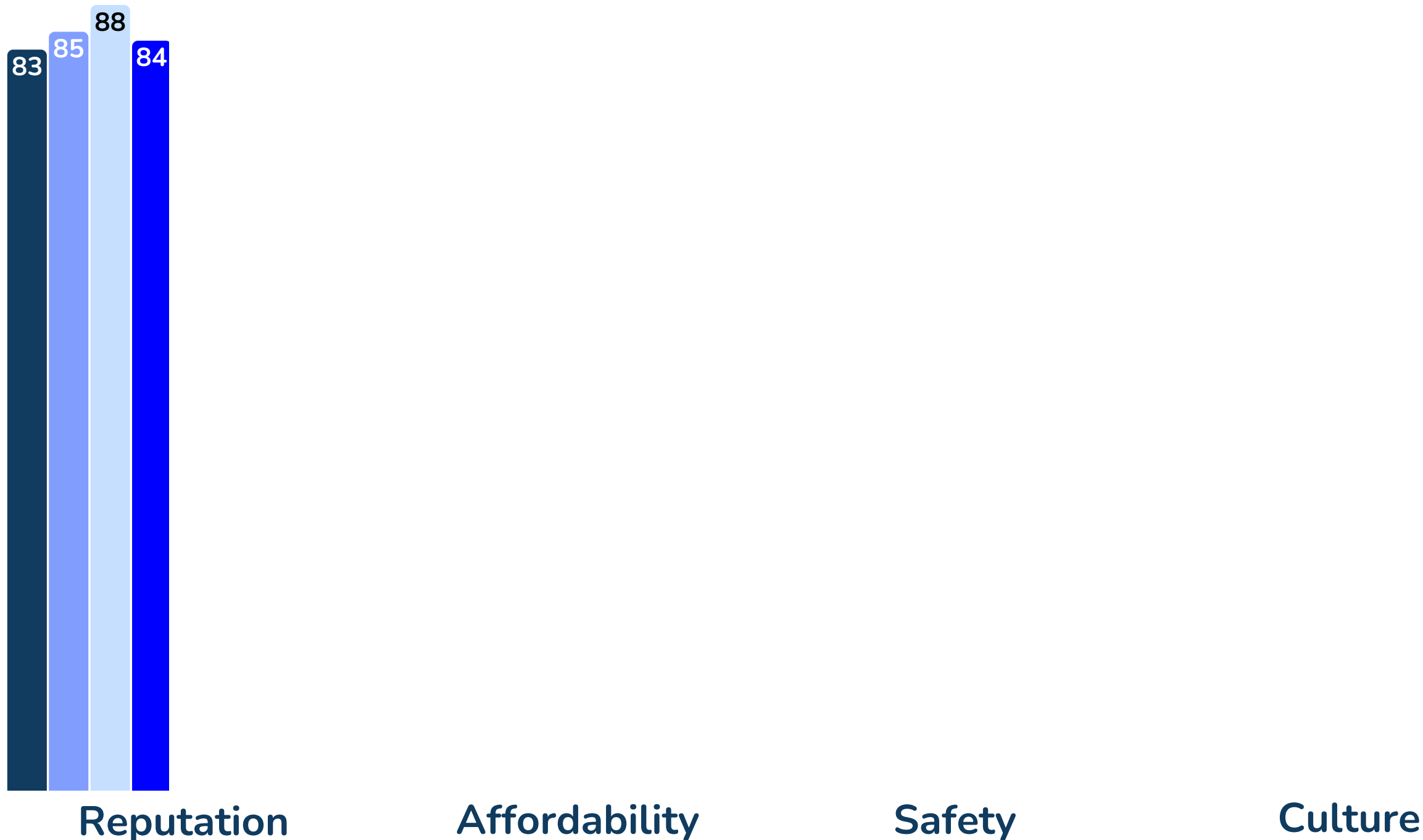
Safety

Culture



Evolution: what do audiences think of different destinations?

● Australia ● Canada ● UK ● USA ● Japan ● South Korea ● Germany ● Sweden



Survey data reveals further evolution beyond the 'Big 4'

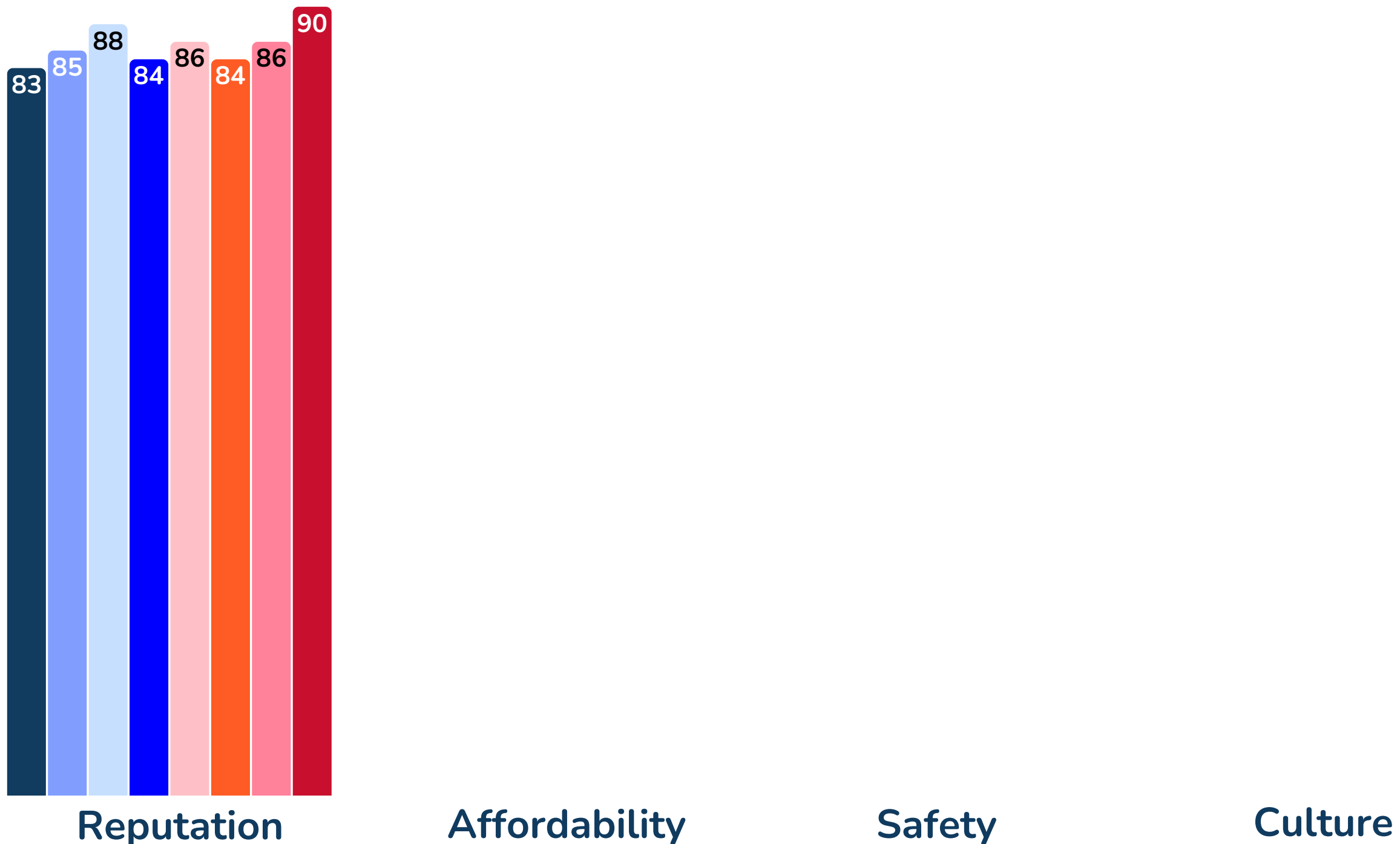
We're looking here at how audiences rate their chosen study destinations (data is a weighted average score).

The UK leads the Big 4 on **Reputation**.



Evolution: what do audiences think of different destinations?

● Australia ● Canada ● UK ● USA ● Japan ● South Korea ● Germany ● Sweden



Survey data reveals further evolution beyond the 'Big 4'

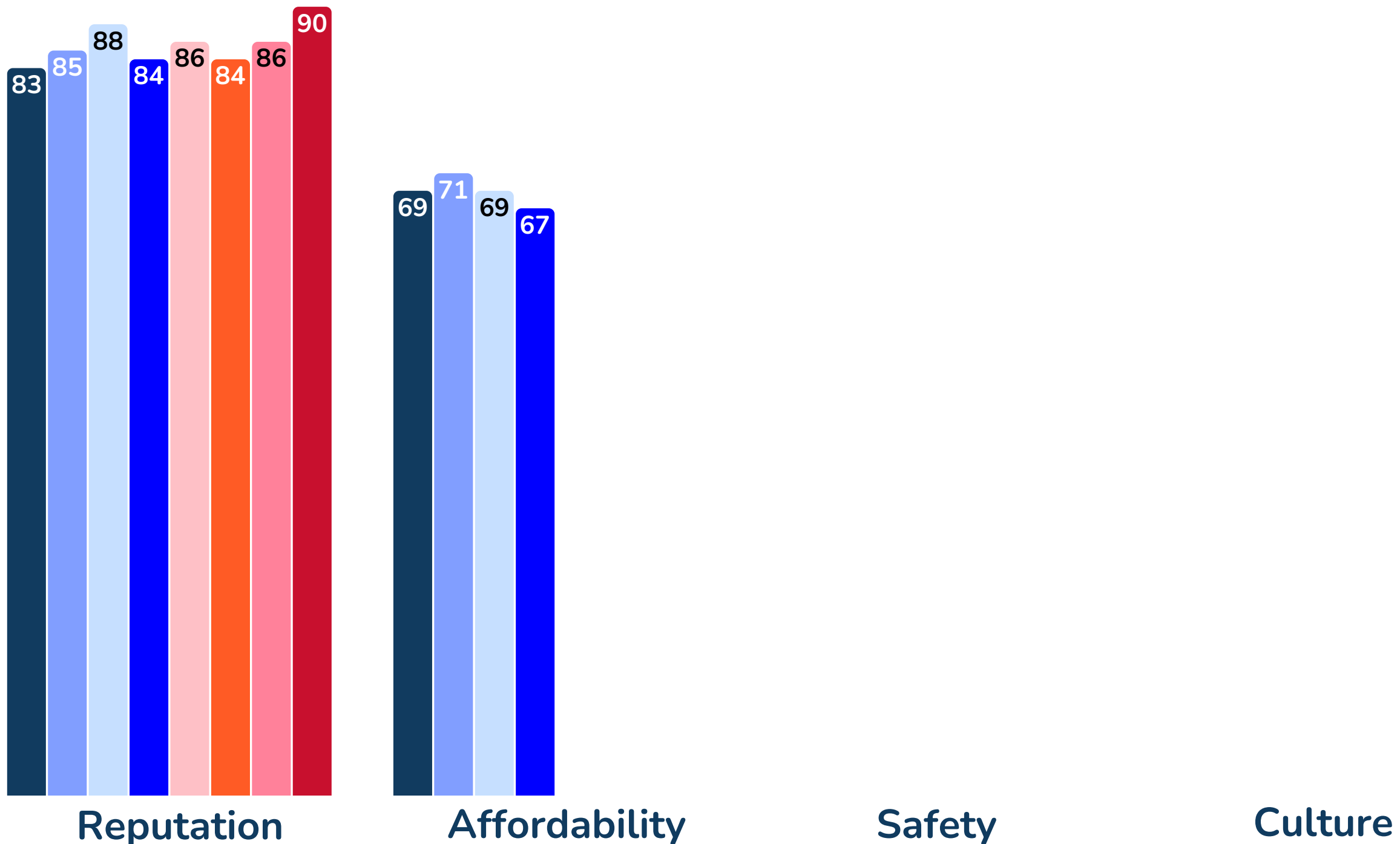
We're looking here at how audiences rate their chosen study destinations (data is a weighted average score).

The UK leads the Big 4 on **Reputation**. But 'alternative' destinations compete very well.



Evolution: what do audiences think of different destinations?

● Australia ● Canada ● UK ● USA ● Japan ● South Korea ● Germany ● Sweden



Survey data reveals further evolution beyond the 'Big 4'

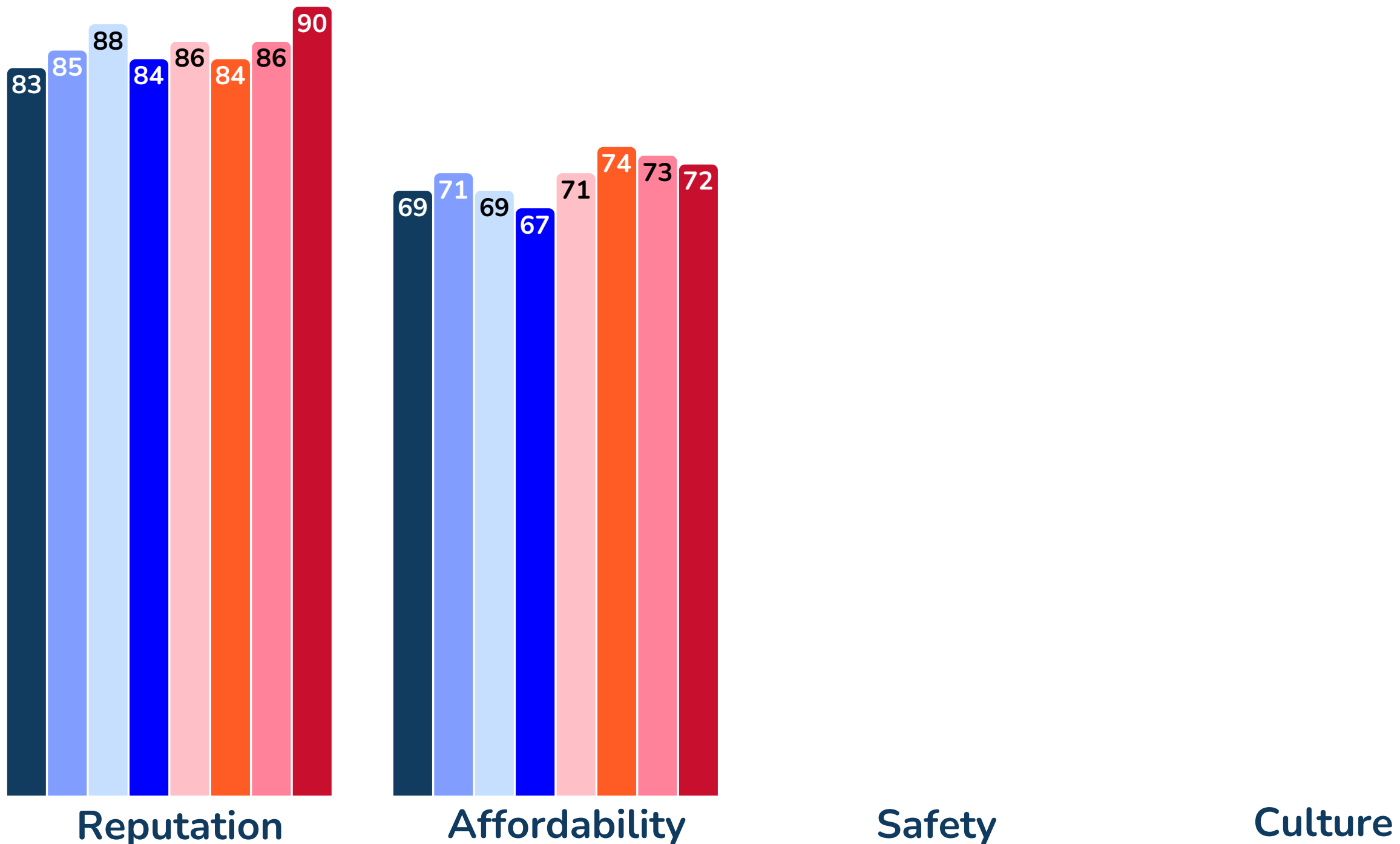
We're looking here at how audiences rate their chosen study destinations (data is a weighted average score).

Big 4 destinations score lower on **Affordability**.



Evolution: what do audiences think of different destinations?

● Australia ● Canada ● UK ● USA ● Japan ● South Korea ● Germany ● Sweden



Survey data reveals further evolution beyond the 'Big 4'

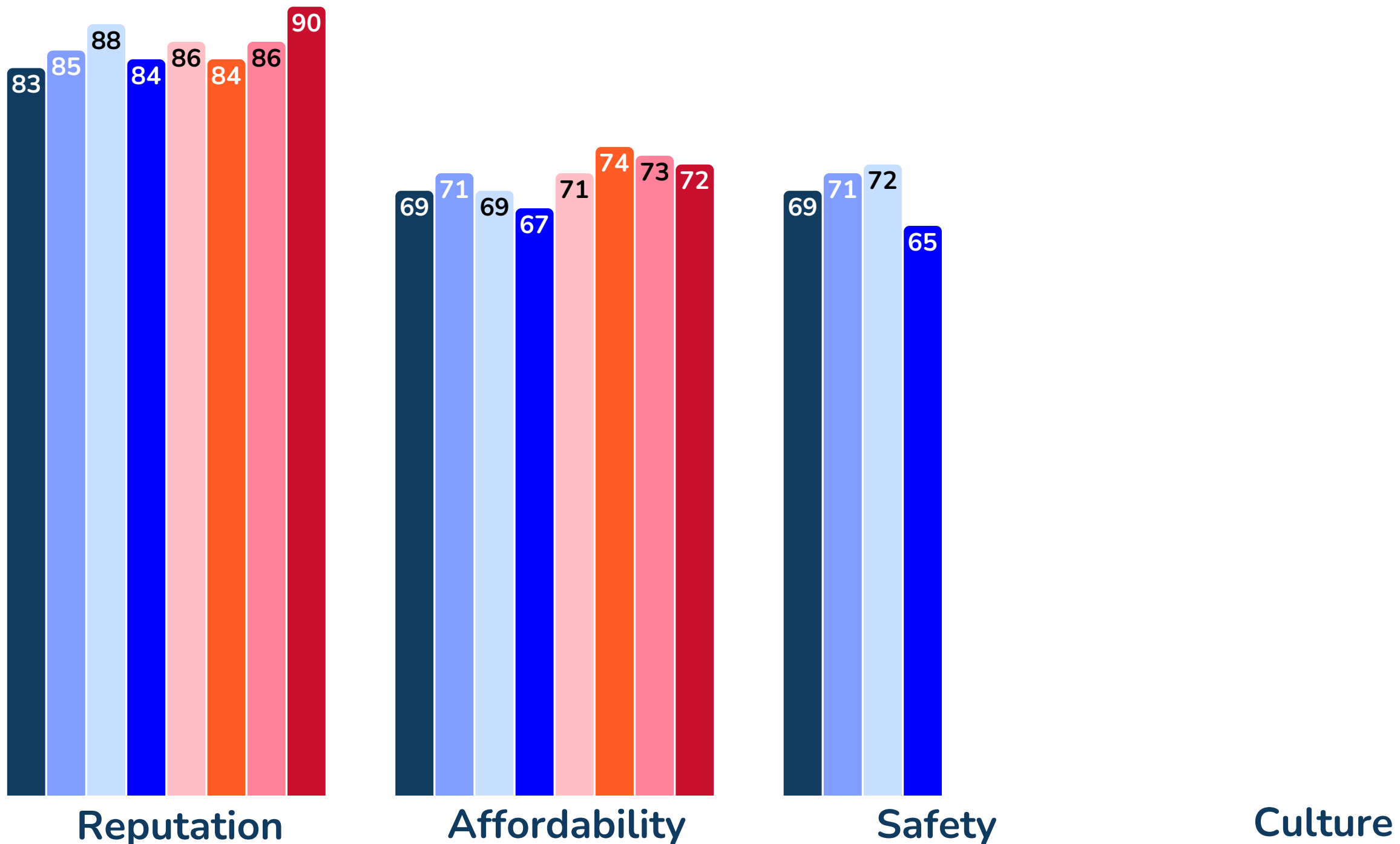
We're looking here at how audiences rate their chosen study destinations (data is a weighted average score).

Big 4 destinations score lower on **Affordability**. And are outscored.



Evolution: what do audiences think of different destinations?

● Australia ● Canada ● UK ● USA ● Japan ● South Korea ● Germany ● Sweden



Survey data reveals further evolution beyond the 'Big 4'

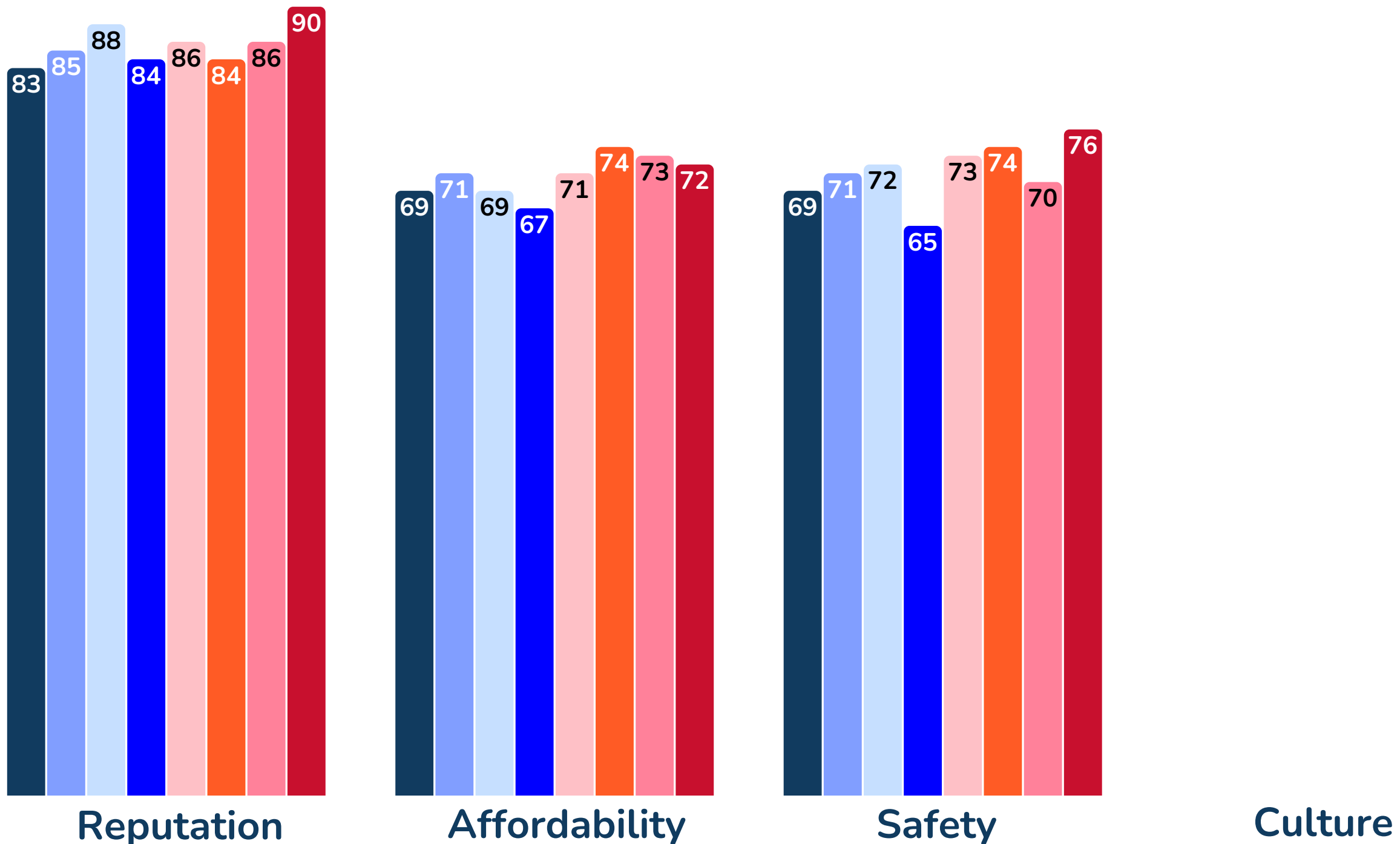
We're looking here at how audiences rate their chosen study destinations (data is a weighted average score).

The UK leads again on **Safety**.



Evolution: what do audiences think of different destinations?

● Australia ● Canada ● UK ● USA ● Japan ● South Korea ● Germany ● Sweden



Survey data reveals further evolution beyond the 'Big 4'

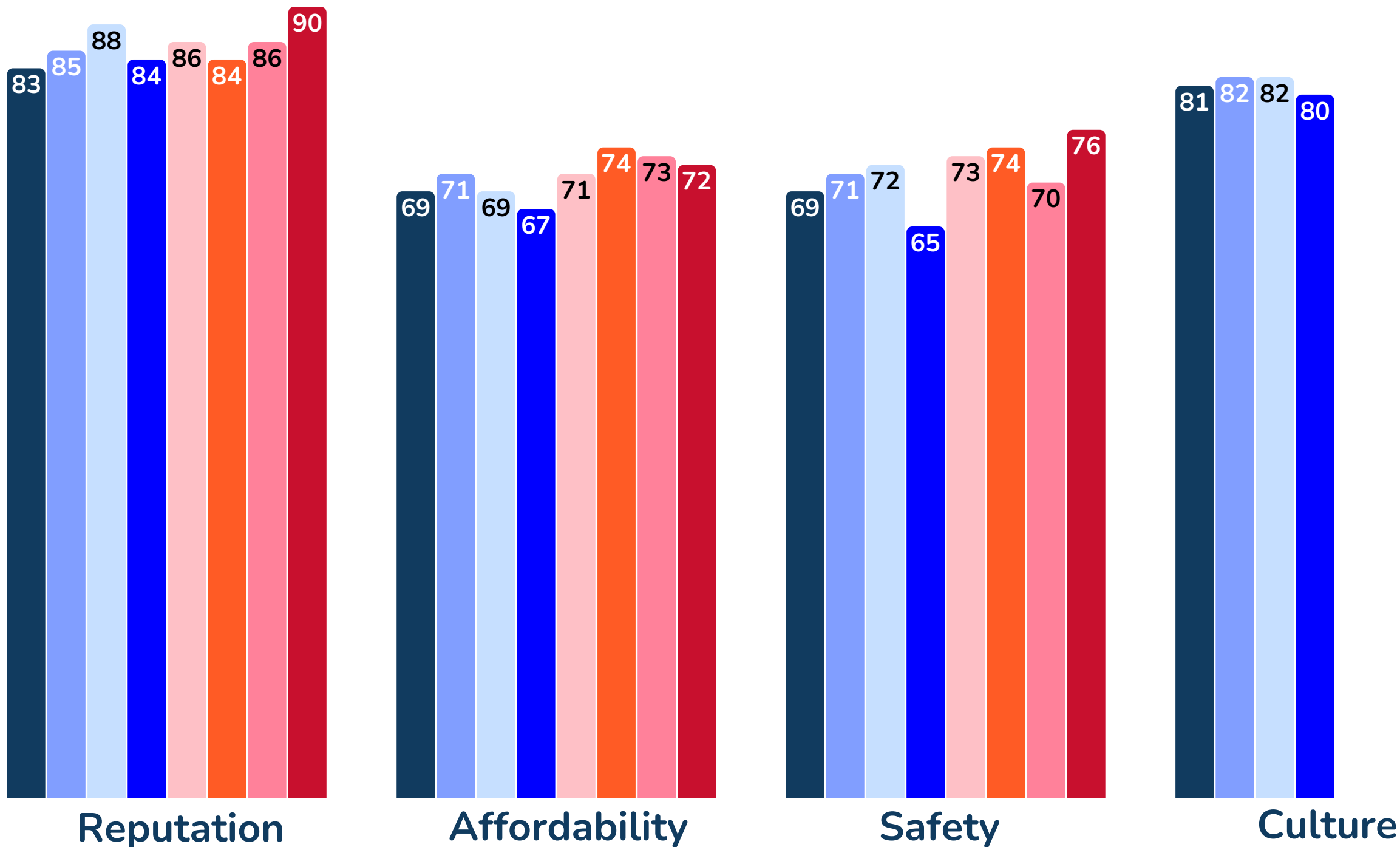
We're looking here at how audiences rate their chosen study destinations (data is a weighted average score).

The UK leads again on **Safety**. But alternative destinations outscore the Big 4 again.



Evolution: what do audiences think of different destinations?

● Australia ● Canada ● UK ● USA ● Japan ● South Korea ● Germany ● Sweden



Survey data reveals further evolution beyond the 'Big 4'

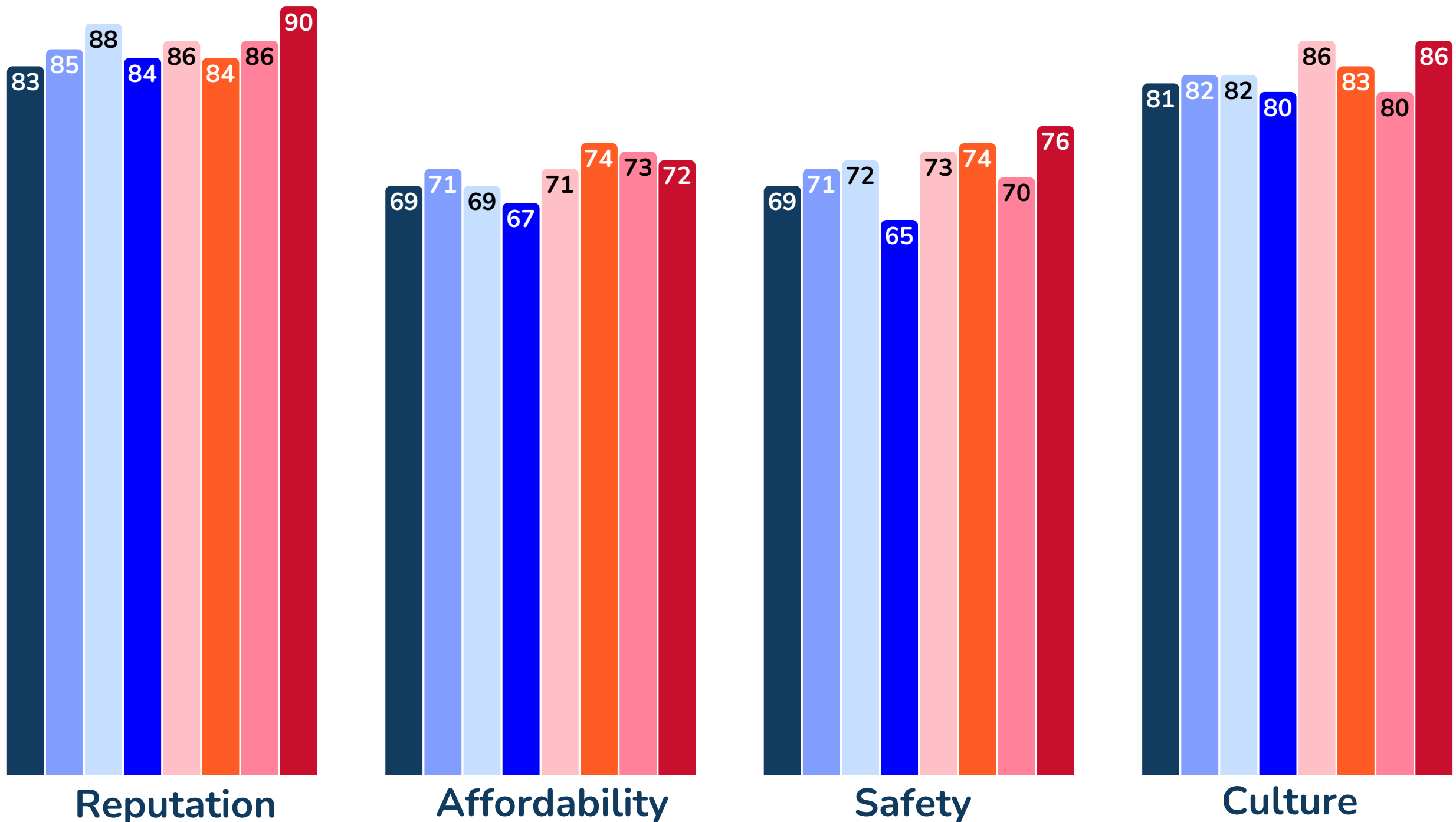
We're looking here at how audiences rate their chosen study destinations (data is a weighted average score).

Culture is fairly 'even' across the Big 4.



Evolution: what do audiences think of different destinations?

● Australia ● Canada ● UK ● USA ● Japan ● South Korea ● Germany ● Sweden



Survey data reveals further evolution beyond the 'Big 4'

We're looking here at how audiences rate their chosen study destinations (data is a weighted average score).


Culture is fairly 'even' across the Big 4. But, again, this isn't the differentiator we might assume it is.





So how do we keep track of this?

We've looked at:

- How enrolments are evolving
 - How search is evolving
 - How perceptions are evolving
- 



So how do we keep track of this?

We've looked at:

- How enrolments are evolving
- How search is evolving
- How perceptions are evolving

Can we... put it all together?





Introducing the...

Keystone Sentiment Score

Launching in beta



Keystone Sentiment Score

Historical Enrolments

What?

UNESCO data for total international enrolments across all levels of study in the previous complete year (currently 2023).

Why?

Accounts for how well-established a destination is and helps balance out fluctuations in current audience behaviour.

20%

Launching
in beta



Keystone Sentiment Score

Historical Enrolments

What?

UNESCO data for total international enrolments across all levels of study in the previous complete year (currently 2023).

Why?

Accounts for how well-established a destination is and helps balance out fluctuations in current audience behaviour.

20%



Survey Perceptions

What?

Average ratings by destination across six different factors: Reputation, Subject Offer, Affordability, Visas, Safety and Culture.

Why?

Measures how searching audiences perceive and rate their chosen destinations *and* how this changes over time.

80%

Launching
in beta



Keystone Sentiment Score

Historical Enrolments

What?

UNESCO data for total international enrolments across all levels of study in the previous complete year (currently 2023).

Why?

Accounts for how well-established a destination is and helps balance out fluctuations in current audience behaviour.

20%



Survey Perceptions

What?

Average ratings by destination across six different factors: Reputation, Subject Offer, Affordability, Visas, Safety and Culture.

Why?

Measures how currently searching audiences perceive and rate chosen destinations and how this changes over time.

80%



Search Change

What?

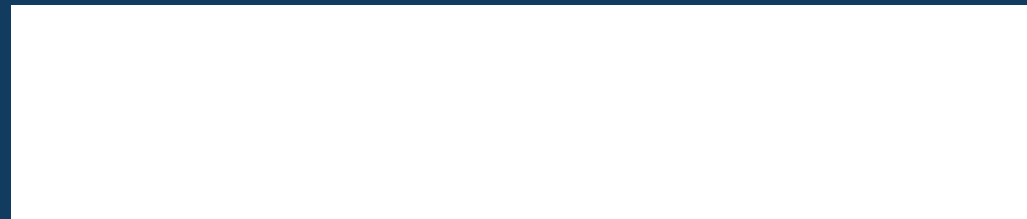
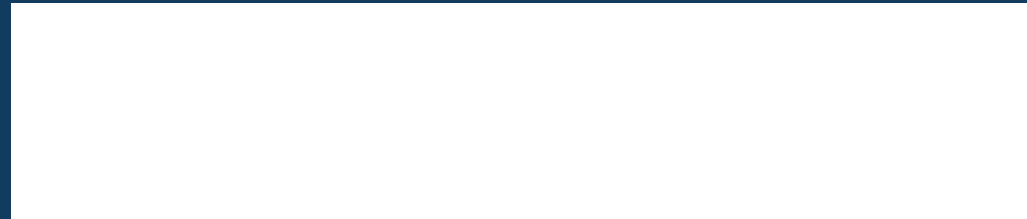
Current change in relative international search interest for destinations across Keystone platforms.

Why?

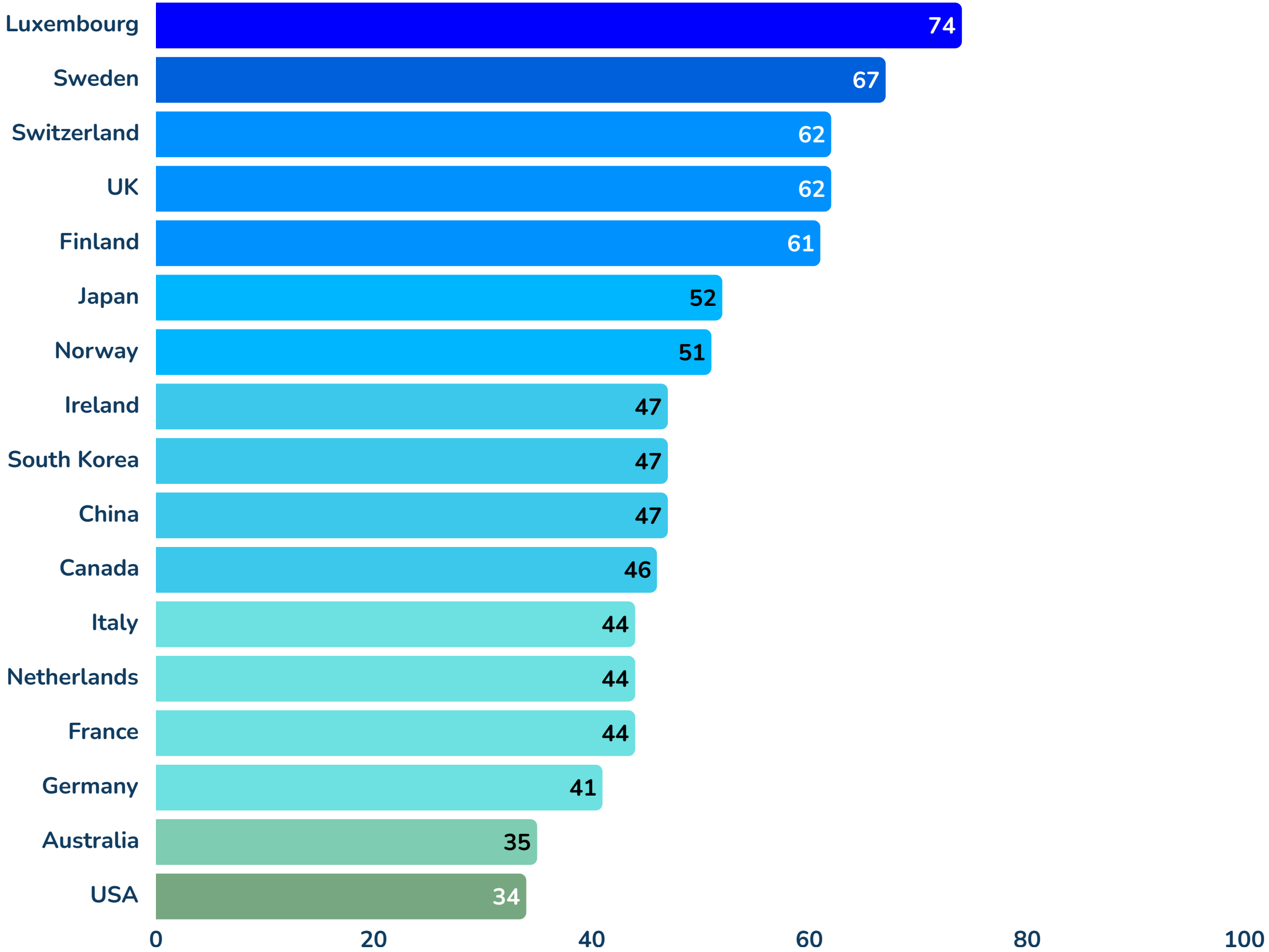
Measures whether audiences are more or less likely to search for a destination, reflecting current relative demand.

**Launching
in beta**





Keystone Sentiment Score: March 2026



Combining, study, search and sentiment into one datapoint

- Europe dominates the 60+ bracket
- UK is the only Big 4 to make 60+
- Japan, South Korea and China all outpace other Big 4

We can quickly summarise how students feel in a way that encapsulates other trends.





So, how do we respond to evolving
student choice?





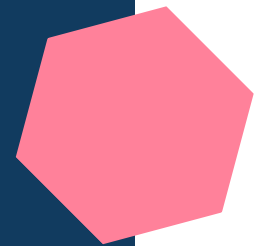
#1

Evolution =
Opportunity

Whereas revolution can just = reaction.

Across all of this data, we're seeing prospective students prepared to think about different destinations in different ways.

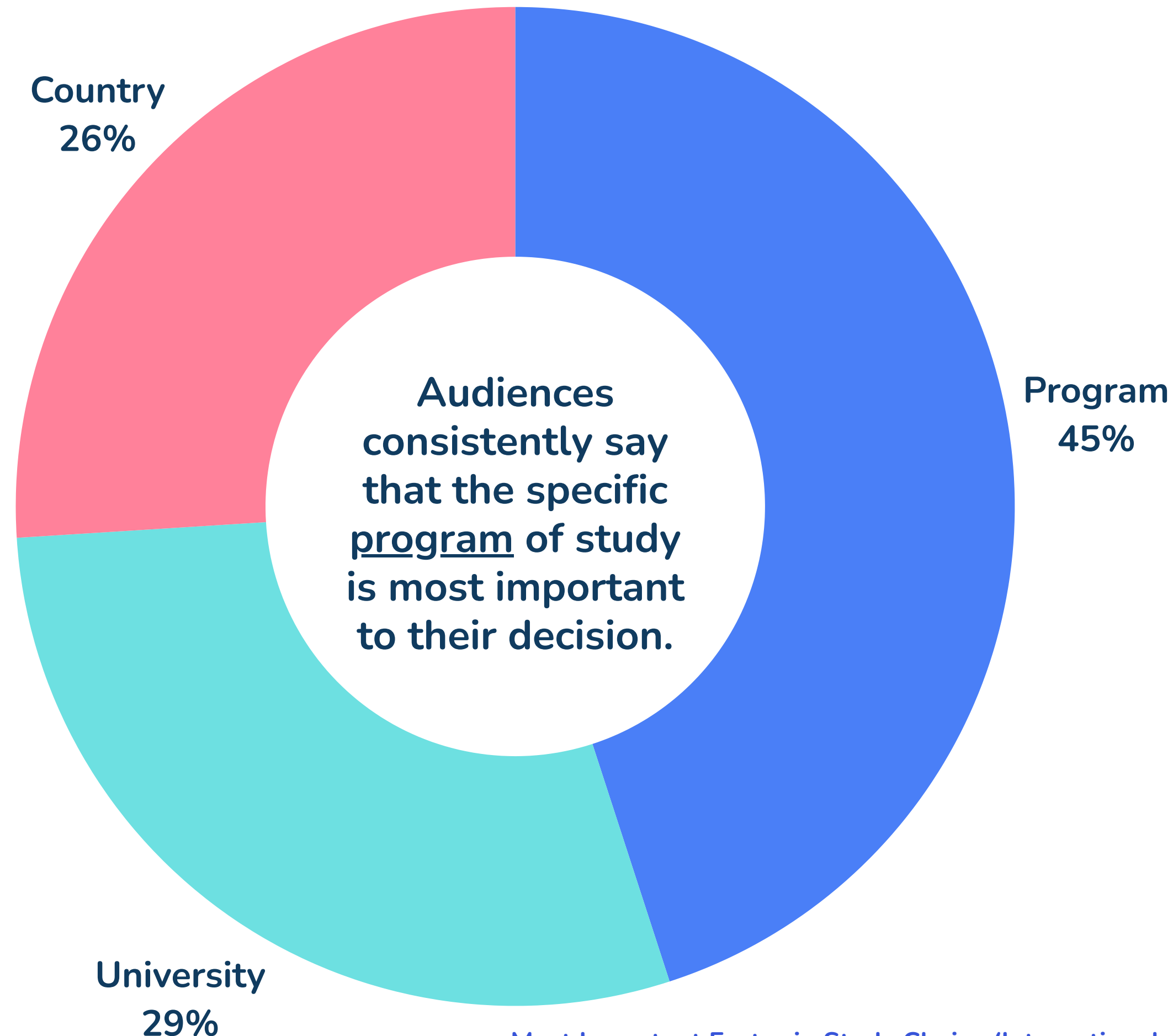
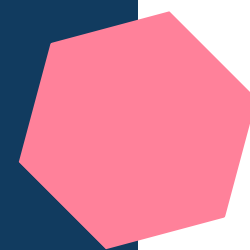
That's an opportunity for everyone, everywhere.





#2

What matters most to students, is most in your control

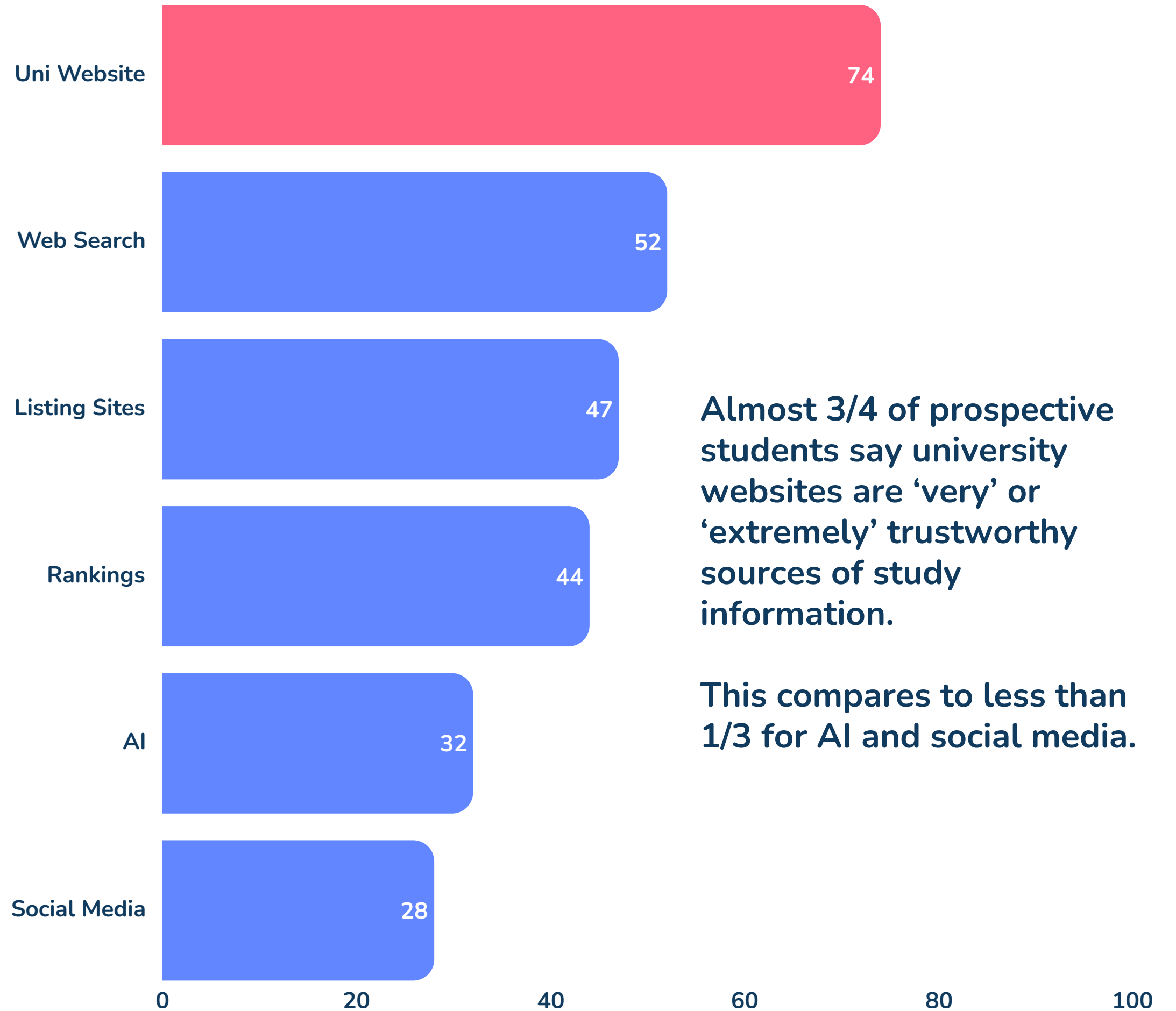
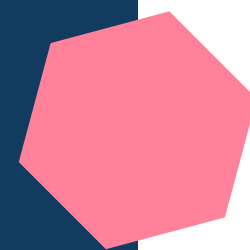


Most Important Factor in Study Choice (International Audiences, Q1 2026) | [Keystone Pulse Survey](#)



#3

They (still)
trust you more
than anyone
else



Almost 3/4 of prospective students say university websites are 'very' or 'extremely' trustworthy sources of study information.

This compares to less than 1/3 for AI and social media.



Questions?

