Student Travel

BUSINESS BAROMETER

SYTA
The Voice of Student & Youth Travel®

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

BONARD

Student Travel
Business Barometer
Annual Report 2020

Foreword

Nothing can change the disastrous effects of the Coronavirus pandemic on student group travel in 2020, but we CAN look to a brighter future for international student travel providers in 2021 and beyond. Student group travel plummeted by 90% last year, but SYTA continued to work tirelessly to inform, motivate and coalesce an international community of student travel operators, school administrators, teachers and students to be prepared for a strong re-entry into the marketplace. This report of first quarter data from the SYTA 2020 Student Travel Business Barometer is a foundation for that community.

SYTA and our research partner, BONARD, have been actively engaged in monitoring the global student group travel market since 2014. We introduced the quarterly Student Travel Business Barometer in 2019 to equip our stakeholders with timely, relevant and reliable data on the industry's performance. Despite the near total loss of business in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we continued gathering data for the Barometer because we believe it is crucial to keep accurate records of the industry to maintain awareness of and support for student travel and to provide benchmark data that will assist with accurate forecasts for the future.

The Business Barometer also has been instrumental in our objective to empower businesses by creating a platform for knowledge sharing, alignment and collaboration. SYTA and BONARD invited the international Barometer participants, along with SYTA members, to participate in an international virtual Roundtable on Student Travel on November 24, 2020. We were gratified to welcome more than 50 STOs, teachers and school administrators who enthusiastically came together to discuss issues of safety and risk management, product and marketing innovations, and predict the newest trends in post-pandemic student travel.

Buoyed by the success of the Roundtable, we convened a Global Forum on Student Travel on March 24, 2021 to continue to build this international community for the exchange of information and insights. We had an overwhelming response with nearly 350 participants joining us for a half day itinerary that included a preview of the first quarter data from the 2020 Business Barometer, a session on new insurance developments and spirited panels with teachers, administrators, and student travelers. More than 80 tour operators joined us for the final session of roundtables to share their findings of the day. It was an upbeat, informational, and inspiring exchange. Watch for our summary of the Forum on our website in the near future.

As we continue to build this community, we are planning our next Forum for the Fall of 2021. Your support is key to our success, so please contact me at *Cassante@syta.org* if you are interested in being a part of our activities.

I am thrilled to see that our industry is beginning a slow but steady march forward, and we are seeing increasing signs that student group travel is recovering. The SYTA Business Barometer will continue to document that journey and provide you with the tools that you need to track your progress and accurately forecast your own recovery.

Carylann Assante, CAE
Chief Executive Officer
SYTA and the SYTA Youth Foundation

Carylann Assante

Introduction

The Student Travel Business Barometer is the latest initiative developed by the Student and Youth Travel Association (SYTA) and BONARD. Under the current circumstances, it has brought much-needed insight into the effects of the Covid-19 travel restrictions, backed by consistent and relevant market intelligence.

As part of its mission to represent tour operators and agencies that create products for young people and to support the sector by providing advocacy while it tries to navigate through the pandemic, SYTA contracted BONARD to conduct this research on student group travel among SYTA members and international tour operators and agencies.

This annual report outlines the overall picture of the student and youth travel market in 2020 and provides a picture of the impact of Covid-19 on the student travel industry.

The research mapped student group travel patterns in the following areas:

- Three key performance indicators: anticipated and actual student numbers in 2020 and a forecast for 2021, average trip duration, and average group size
- Impact of Covid-19 on student group travel
- Outlook for major international travel destinations
- Country profile for the USA and Canada
- Domestic and international travel recovery scenarios

The research covers the following mobility types:

- Domestic travel, which refers to any trip conducted within the students' own country;
- International travel, which refers to any trip which includes traveling from one country to another; and
- Impact of Covid-19, under which we look at the impact of Covid-19 on the industry as well as providing insights on how best to recover.

Research was carried out by means of an online survey conducted between January and March 2021.

For the purpose of this project, student group travel was defined as student tours composed of at least two people aged 10–18, traveling out of their day-to-day environment on the same dates and following the same itinerary.

2020 FACT

THIS ANNUAL REPORT HAS BROUGHT MUCH-NEEDED INSIGHT INTO THE EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS, BACKED BY CONSISTENT AND RELEVANT MARKET INTELLIGENCE.

Carylann Assante

Methodology

The survey builds on the primary research method. Data were collected through an online quantitative survey distributed to SYTA members and pre-selected international tour operators and agencies from 10 countries specializing in tours for students and youth travelers.

English, German, and Chinese versions of the questionnaire were distributed.

Note: Rounding accounts for any percentages not exactly adding up to 100 %.

About Us

SYTA is the non-profit, international professional trade association that promotes student and youth travel and seeks to foster integrity and professionalism among the student and youth travel service providers. It is "the Voice of Student and Youth Travel ®".

If you would like to learn more about SYTA, its activities, and its advocacy for safe and professional group student travel, or get more information about membership, please visit *www.syta.org*.

For news and important information on student and youth travel follow SYTA on

SYTA
The Voice of Student & Youth Travel®

BONARD is an independent market research provider with 13 years of experience in the student travel industry. Leveraging evidence-based solutions, it assists governments, destinations, and individual providers to create bespoke strategies and policies. The company is a United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Affiliate Member as well as a member of ESOMAR World Research.

To find out more about BONARD, please visit *www.bonard.com* or connect with us on

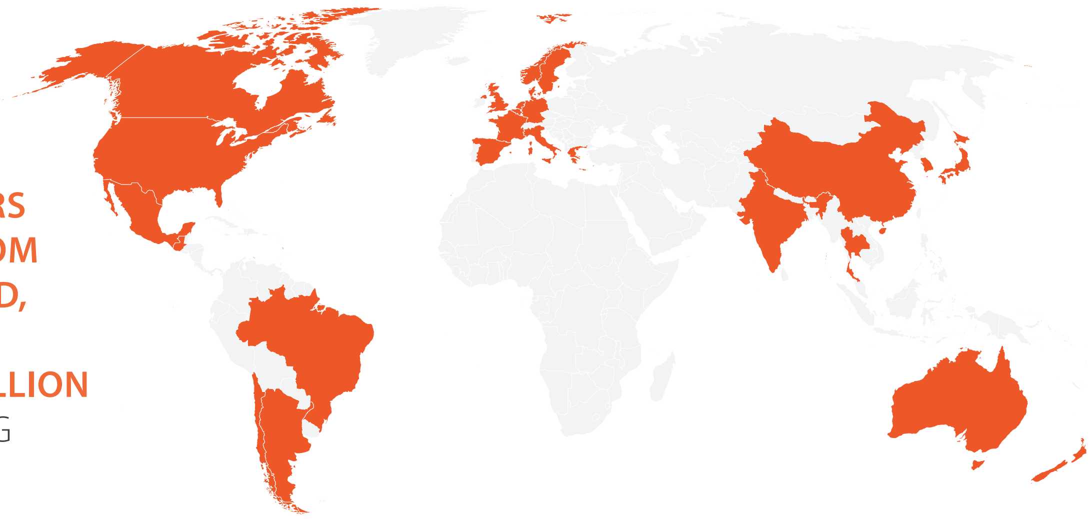
For more information about the Barometer, please contact us at *barometer@bonard.com*.

BONARD

Respondent Profile

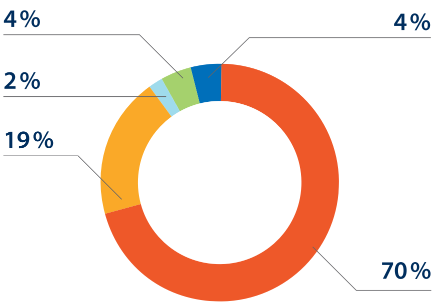
Respondents' country of origin

IN 2020, THE BAROMETER RECEIVED **RESPONSES FROM 98 TOUR OPERATORS AND AGENCIES FROM ACROSS THE WORLD, REPRESENTING MORE THAN 1.2 MILLION STUDENTS** BOOKING THEIR TRAVEL BOTH DOMESTICALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY.



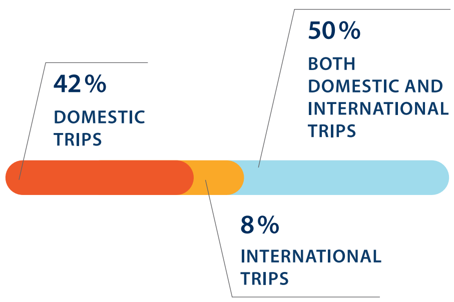
Respondent typology

- **Student Tour Operator**
  Tour operator specializing in organizing tours for students
- **Tour Operator**
  Tour operator also organizing tours for students
- **Travel Agency**
  Agency offering mostly travel products for young people
- **Education Agency**
  Agency offering mostly international education programs



Respondent type	Percent	Count
Student Tour Operator	70%	69
Tour Operator	19%	19
Travel Agency	2%	2
Education Agency	4%	4
Other	4%	4
Total number of unique respondents	**100%**	**98**

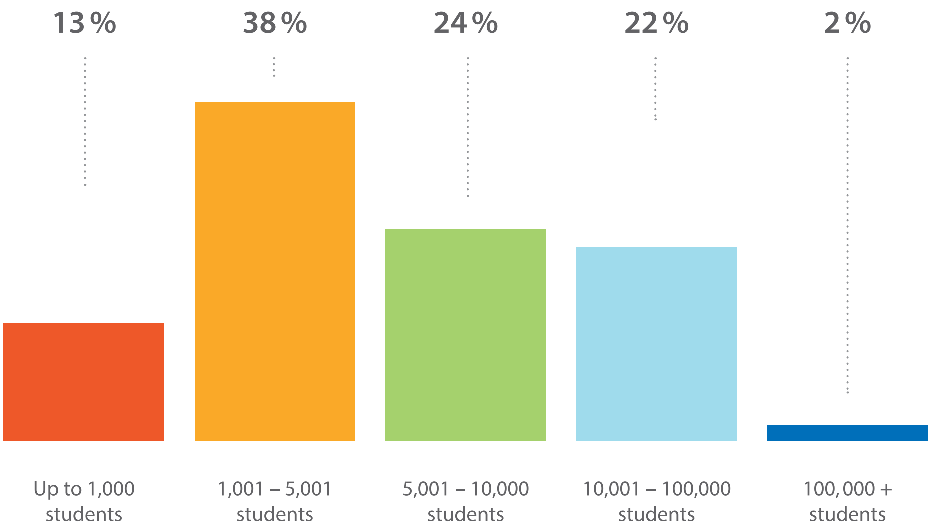
Type of travel



- **Domestic travel** refers to any trip conducted within the students' own country.
- **International travel** refers to any trip which includes traveling from one country to another.

STOs by number of students sent on domestic trips in 2019

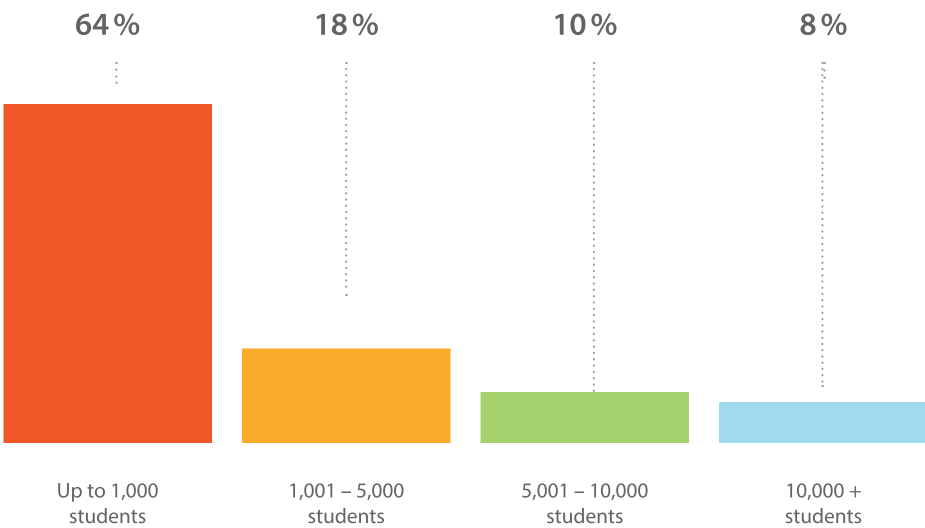
According to data provided by respondents, tour operators and agencies sending up to 10,000 students per year on domestic trips constituted over two thirds of the market, with a 75 % share. Survey respondents with 10,000 and 100,000 students per year accounted for 22 %, and 2 % catered for more than 100,000 students a year.



Note: Rounding accounts for any percentages not exactly adding up to 100 %.

STOs by number of students sent on trips abroad in 2019

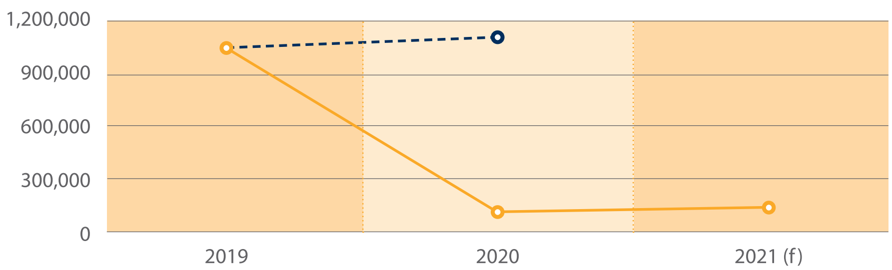
For 2019, smaller tour operators and agencies sending up to 1,000 students abroad accounted for 64 % of the market. The second biggest cohort (18 %) organized international trips for between 1,000 and 5,000 students. Ten percent of tour operators and agencies had a sending power of between 5,000 and 10,000 students and the remaining 8 % catered to more than 10,000 students.



Key Performance Indicators

Domestic travel

NUMBER OF STUDENTS TAKING A DOMESTIC TRIP



Based on 89 STOs running domestic trips.

+7 % **Predicted** industry development for 2020

-90 % **Actual** industry development in 2020:

TRIP PARAMETERS (BASED ON TRIPS EXECUTED IN 2020)

2020

Average trip duration: 3.8 DAYS

Average group size: 67 STUDENTS

2019

Average trip duration: 5.1 DAYS

Average group size: 56 STUDENTS

ONCE TRAVEL RESUMES

EXPECTED DEMAND FOR THE FOLLOWING DOMESTIC TRIP TYPES COMPARED TO 2019

+26.2 % ↑	+6 % ↑	+3.7 % ↑	+10.8 % ↑	-6.9 % ↓
1-day trip	Overnight trip	Multi-day local trips (within the same city)	Multi-day regional trips (within the same state)	Multi-day interstate trips

Going into 2020, tour operators and agencies anticipated a 7% year-on-year growth. However, due to the outbreak of Covid-19, the industry witnessed a drop of 90% between 2019 and 2020. For 2021, tour operators and agencies expect to see a growth of 10%, which indicates that there will be a gradual recovery rather than a sudden return to pre-Covid-19 levels.

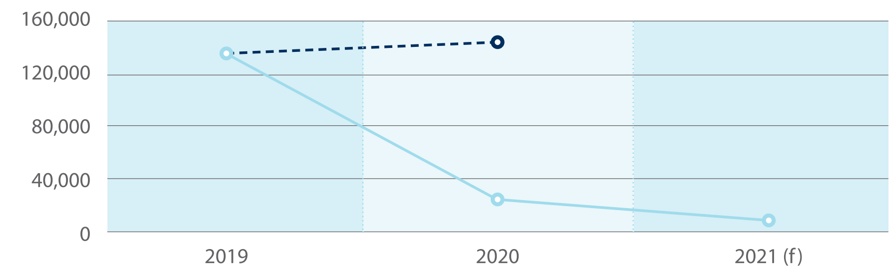
The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic also manifested itself in a major change in the average number of students traveling per tour operator. While in 2019 almost 12,000 students traveled per tour operator, in 2020 a tour operator catered to an average 1,400 students.

As regards key trip attributes, the average trip duration stood at 3.8 days, a considerable reduction of the duration seen in 2019. The average number of students per group was 67 in 2020.

In terms of the future popularity of various domestic trip types, compared to 2019, tour operators and agencies expect 1-day trips with no overnight stays will increase the most (+26%). Multiday regional trips (within the same state) will follow, at just below 11%. On the other hand, tour operators predict they will see a decline in bookings for interstate and interprovince trips.

International travel

NUMBER OF STUDENTS TAKING A INTERNATIONAL TRIP



Based on 56 STOs running international trips.

+3 % — **Predicted** industry development for 2020

-84 % — **Actual** industry development in 2020

TRIP PARAMETERS (BASED ON TRIPS EXECUTED IN 2020)

2020

Average trip duration: **7.3** DAYS

Average group size: **36** STUDENTS

2019

Average trip duration: **8.1** DAYS

Average group size: **32** STUDENTS

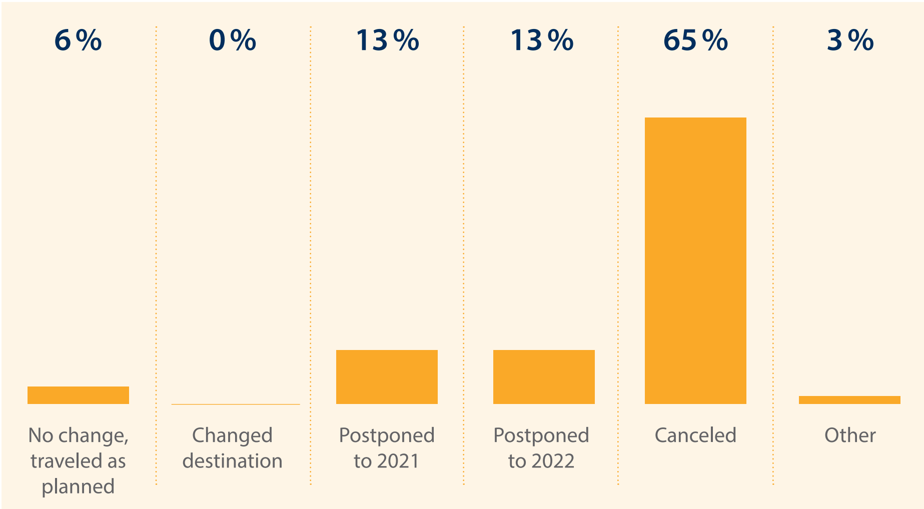
Student tour operators were set to achieve a 3 % growth in 2020 as compared to 2019. In fact, however, the surveyed respondents faced a cumulative decline of 84 %. The downward trend is set to continue in 2021, as tour operators expect to see a further decline of 74 % (compared to the 2020 level).

Key attributes for international travel only saw minor changes. This can be attributed to the fact that the international trips undertaken took place in the first quarter of 2020, before travel restrictions were imposed. The average trip length declined from 8.1 days in 2019 to 7.3 days. The average number of students in international trips undertaken in 2020 was 36 students, as compared to 32 students in 2019.

Impact of Covid-19 on Travel

Domestic travel

Change in customers' 2020 domestic travel plans



Student trips booked for 2021

64%
2020 postponements

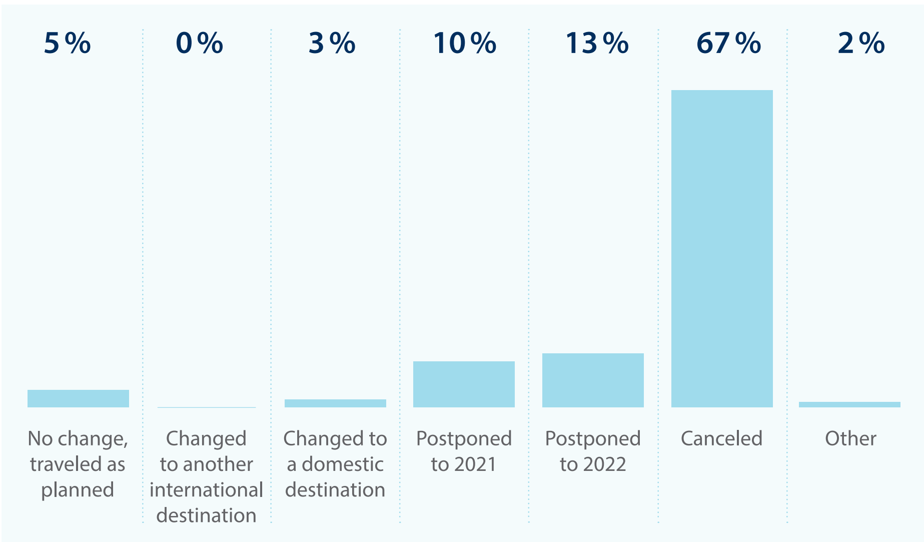
36%
2021 new trips

Only 6% of students traveled as planned in 2020 while 13% postponed their trip to 2021 and the same percentage opted to delay their travel to 2022. Almost two thirds of students canceled their trip in 2020.

The current booking volume for student tour operators is mostly comprised of trips postponed from 2020 while 36% of trips booked for 2021 are new.

International travel

Change in customers' 2020 international travel plans



Five percent of students traveled as planned (compared to 6% for domestic travel). A further 3% of trips were changed to a domestic destination as an alternative plan. A higher proportion of trips were pushed to 2022 (13%) than 2021 (10%).

Student trips booked for 2021

43%
2020 postponements

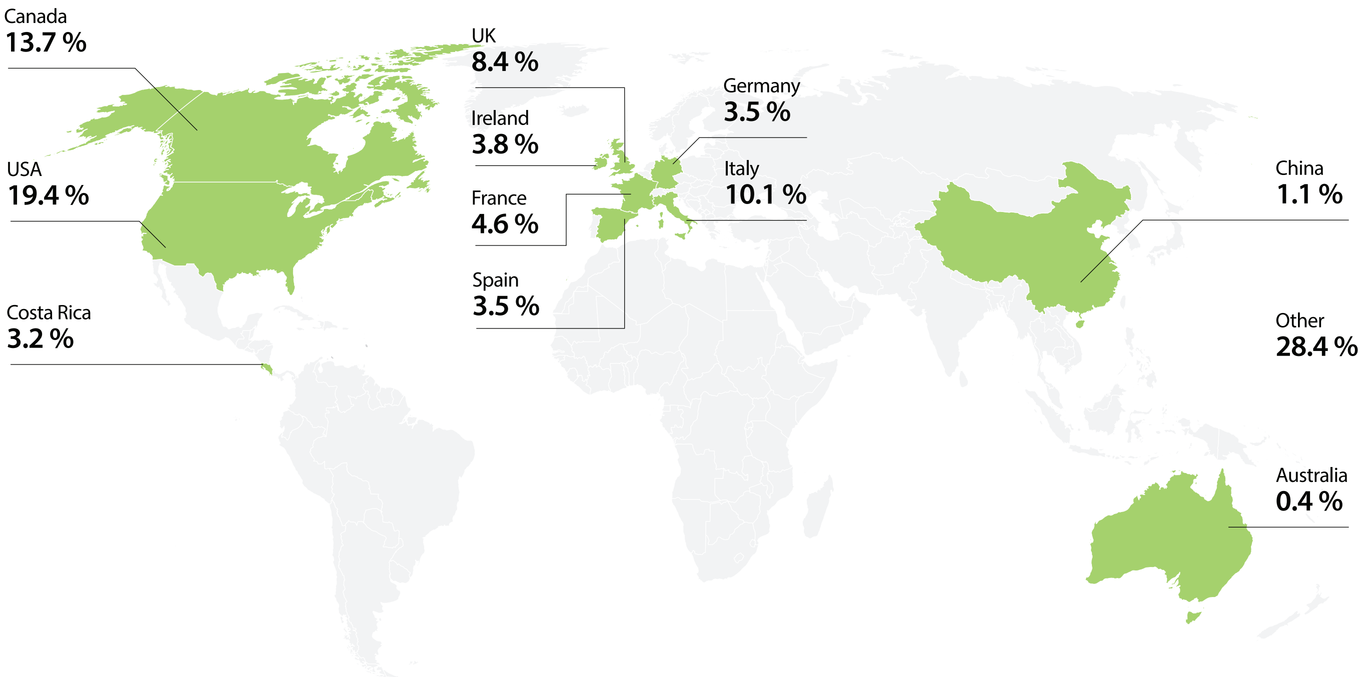
57%
2021 new trips

More than half (67%) of international student trips were canceled.

More than half (57%) of international trips booked for 2021 are new trips. Students who have been deprived of travel for more than a year will be looking for opportunities to resume international movement. Forty-three percent of the current booking volume are trips postponed from 2020.

Destination Benchmark

Overview of international trips that it was possible to execute in 2020 by trip destination



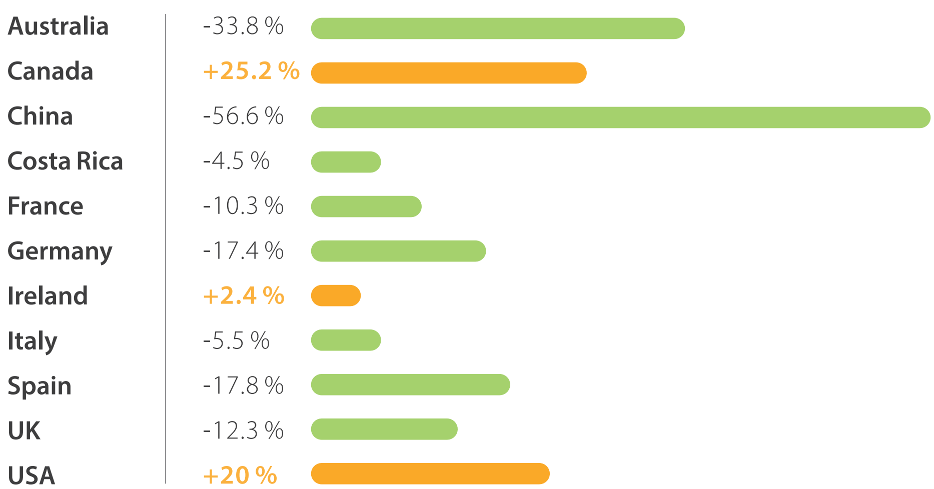
Of the international trips undertaken in 2020, 1 in 5 went to the USA, making it the most popular destination. Canada came second, accounting for almost 14 % of student trips. Italy was the third most popular overall and the most popular European destination, hosting 10 % of student trips. The UK and France followed, with shares of 8.4 % and 4.6 %, respectively.

Twenty-eight percent of trips went to countries other than the destinations named above. This is noteworthy because it might indicate shifts on the horizon in terms of where students will travel.

In terms of expected demand for international student travel destinations, tour operators and agencies anticipate growing demand for three in particular – Canada, the USA, and Ireland. Demand for trips to China, Germany, and Spain will be impacted the most going into recovery (-56.6 %. -17.4 %, and -17.8 %, respectively).

Once travel resumes:

Expected demand for the following international student travel destinations compared to 2019



Note: Score-based ranking quantifying the current market sentiment (respondents were able to choose values between '100' and '-100').

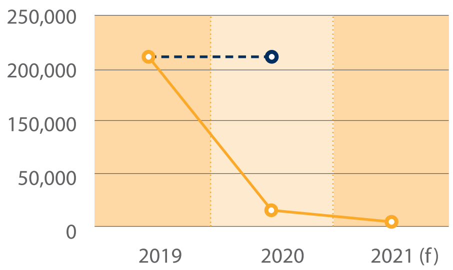
Country Profile: Canada

More than 275,000 students were predicted to travel in 2020, both domestically and internationally. However, tour operators and agencies faced a 94 % drop in domestic travel and an 84 % drop in students traveling abroad.

In Canada, 26 % of domestic trips were postponed to 2021 and 2022 while 64 % were canceled. Considering international travel, tour operators manage to salvage some of their Q1 2020 business and execute winter breaks and ski-related trips. However, the vast majority of 2020 trips were canceled (90 % of trips).

In 2020, the average trip duration stood at 3.7 days domestically and 6.4 days internationally. For trips undertaken within Canada, the average group size was 62 while for trips abroad it was 34. Once travel resumes, tour operators and agencies expect an increase in 1-day domestic trips (+25.6 %) and overnight trips (+4.3 %). This might affect the average trip duration for 2021. While trips within a single state are expected to rise (+8.6 %), multiday interstate trips are anticipated to drop (-8.3 %).

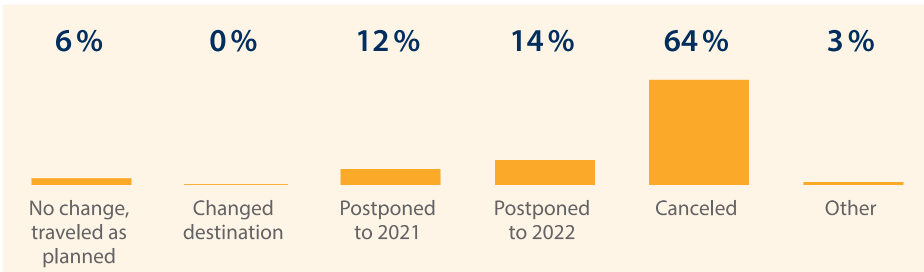
Number of students taking a domestic trip



Predicted industry development for 2020: 0 %

Actual industry development for 2020: -94 %

Change in customers' 2020 domestic travel plans



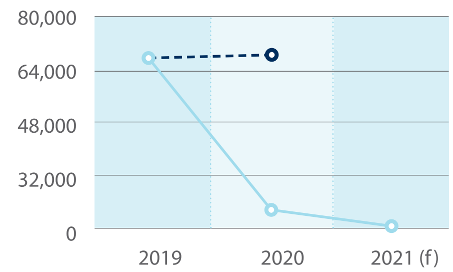
Percentages do not add up to 100 % due to rounding.

Trip parameters (based on trips executed in 2020)

Average trip duration: 3.7 DAYS

Average group size: 62 STUDENTS

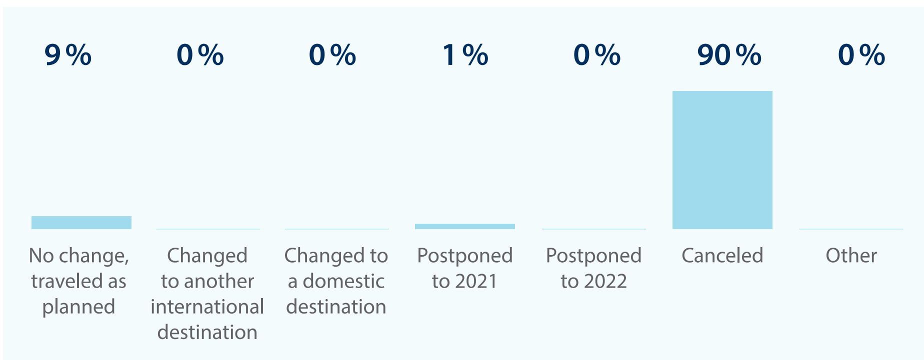
Number of students taking a international trip



Predicted industry development for 2020: 4 %

Actual industry development for 2020: -84 %

Change in customers' 2020 international travel plans



Trip parameters (based on trips executed in 2020)

Average trip duration: 6.4 DAYS

Average group size: 34 STUDENTS

Country Profile: USA

Compared to Canada, the USA faced a higher drop in the number of students taking international trips (-94 %) than those traveling domestically (-88 %). While tour operators and agencies predicted growth in student numbers for domestic travel in 2020 (+10 %), due to the pandemic only 83,891 students actually traveled.

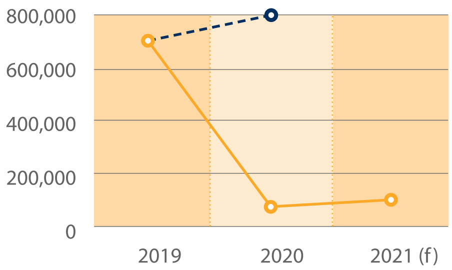
In terms of travel plans, two thirds of domestic and international trips were canceled (63 % and 65 %, respectively).

Twenty-seven percent of customers delayed their domestic trips to 2021 and 2022.

None of the students planning international trips decided to change to a domestic destination or another international destination. Five percent of customers managed to travel internationally as planned.

The USA trip parameters show that trips are longer and undertaken in bigger groups than in Canada. This is true for both domestic and international travel. The average duration of trips undertaken stood at 3.9 days for domestic trips and 7.5 days for international ones. While the average group size for domestic trips in Canada was 62 students, in the USA it was 72 students.

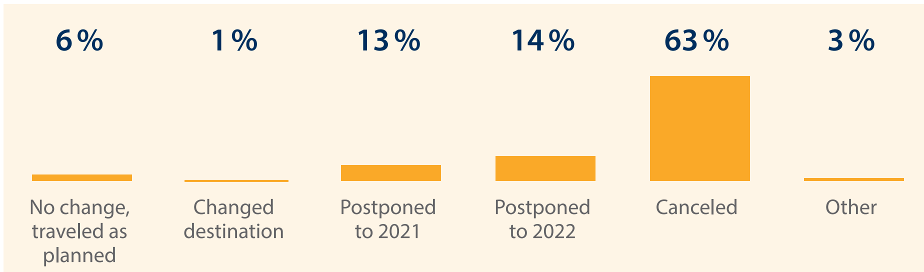
Number of students taking a domestic trip



Predicted industry development for 2020: **10 %**

Actual industry development for 2020: **-88 %**

Change in customers' 2020 domestic travel plans

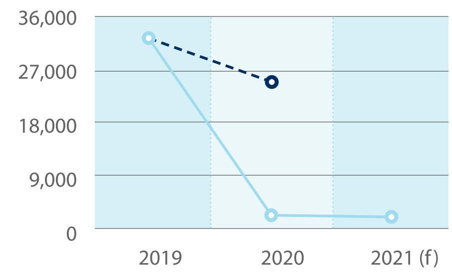


Trip parameters (based on trips executed in 2020)

Average trip duration **3.9 DAYS**

Average group size **72 STUDENTS**

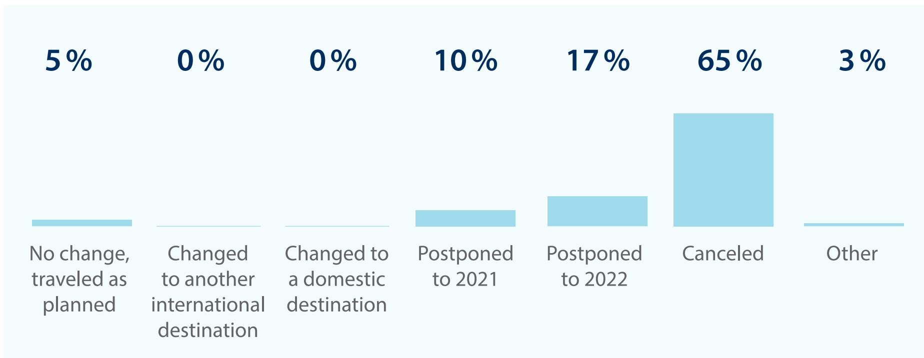
Number of students taking a international trip



Predicted industry development for 2020: **-18 %**

Actual industry development for 2020: **-94 %**

Change in customers' 2020 international travel plans



Trip parameters (based on trips executed in 2020)

Average trip duration **7.5 DAYS**

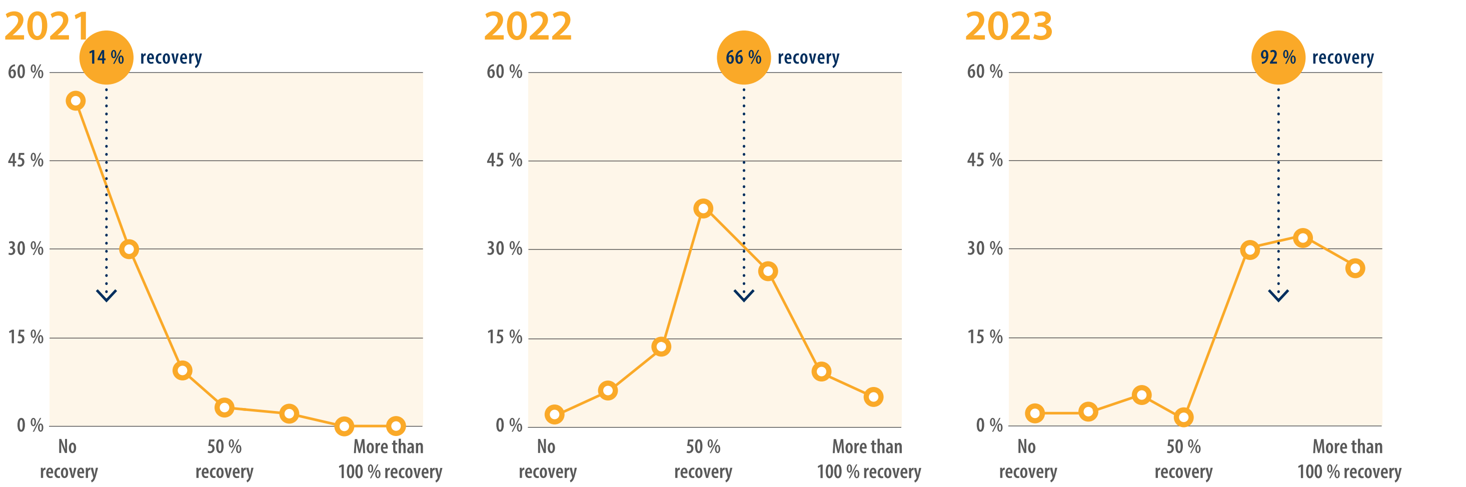
Average group size **44 STUDENTS**

Market Recovery Scenarios

Domestic Travel

Survey respondents were asked to share their viewpoints on possible recovery scenarios in order to aggregate individual knowledge into an informed overall assessment of the future outlook. Domestic trips are predicted to reach 14 % of 2019 trip volume in 2021. For 2022, a return to two thirds of 2019 bookings is anticipated while almost full recovery is expected for 2023, when tour operators expect to reach 92 % of pre-Covid-19 levels.

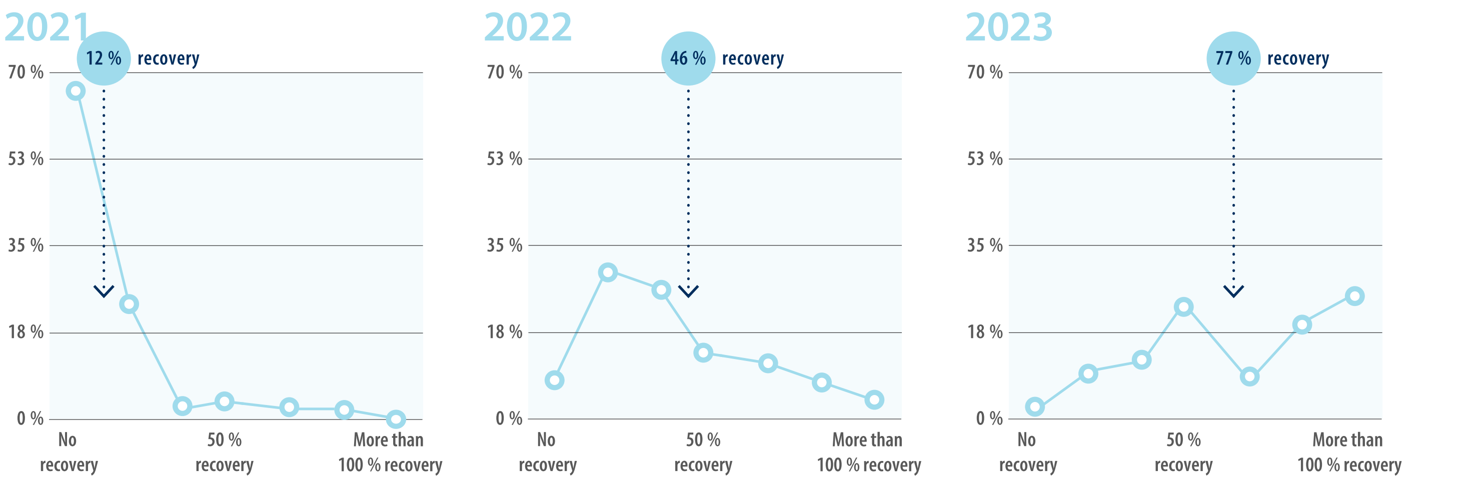
Percentage of 2019 domestic trip bookings anticipated to recover in the following years



International Travel

The vast majority of student tour operators anticipate little recovery in 2021. They believe that the industry will recover to 12 % of pre-Covid-19 booking levels this year. The recovery for international travel will be slower than for domestic trips; this can be seen in the scenario for 2022, where a 46 % recovery should be achieved. For 2023, tour operators expect to reach 77 % of pre-Covid-19 levels.

Percentage of 2019 international trip bookings anticipated to recover in the following years



Note: Percentage of respondents anticipating the respective recovery levels.

Conclusions

The second edition of the Student Travel Business Barometer sheds light on developments in student group travel and brings much needed data-driven intelligence. Reflecting on the business developments of 2020, it is a fundamental tool to measure the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and benchmark the road to recovery.

The Student Travel Business Barometer is a dedicated initiative that brings together both SYTA member and non-member student tour operators and agencies to document the state and performance of global student group travel. The research aims to facilitate development in three key areas: documenting the market, equipping stakeholders with relevant and reliable data, and advocating on behalf of the industry. As informed decisions will shape the future of the industry, such intelligence will empower individual businesses involved in student group travel to make effective decisions on the road to recovery.

The survey shows that half of the respondents (50 %) focus on both domestic and international travel, 42 % of respondents send student groups on domestic trips, and the remaining 8 % carry out international trips for student groups only.

For 2020 domestic trips, tour operators anticipated a year-on-year growth of 7 % in terms of student numbers. However, due to the outbreak of Covid-19, student group travel witnessed a dip of 90 %. While it is expected that travel will resume in 2021, it will be a gradual recovery. It is anticipated that domestic travel will return to 92 % of pre-Covid-19 bookings by 2023. In terms of numbers of students traveling in 2019, almost 12,000 traveled per tour operator whereas in 2020 a tour operator sent an average of 1,400 students.

For international travel, full recovery is not anticipated by 2023 (only 77 % of pre-Covid-19 bookings predicted). This is underlined by the fact that respondents faced a cumulative decline of 84 % and expect to see a further decline of 74 % in 2021. Besides the traditional destinations (USA, Canada, Italy), 28 % of trips went to other countries. This could indicate new shifts in students' preferred destinations.

The USA faced a higher drop in the number of students taking international trips (-94 %) than of those traveling domestically (-88 %). Canada, on the other hand, saw a steeper decline in domestic trips (-94 %). While tour operators and agencies in the USA predicted growth in student numbers for domestic travel in 2020 (+10 %), due to the pandemic only 83,891 students actually traveled (an 88 % drop). The USA trip parameters show that travel is undertaken for a longer period of time and in bigger groups than in Canada. This is true both for domestic and international travel.

Closing remarks

The Covid-19 outbreak has caused major turbulence in student group travel, forcing the industry into survival mode. It is expected that the effects of this disruption will continue to be felt in the coming years. Data-driven insights represent a foundation for navigating through the current situation. We hope that this report will provide much needed information and help the industry benchmark during the upcoming recovery phase.

Thank you very much for being there with us.

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