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Empowering a new generation

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## Empowering a new generation: The link between early intercultural experience and careers in international education

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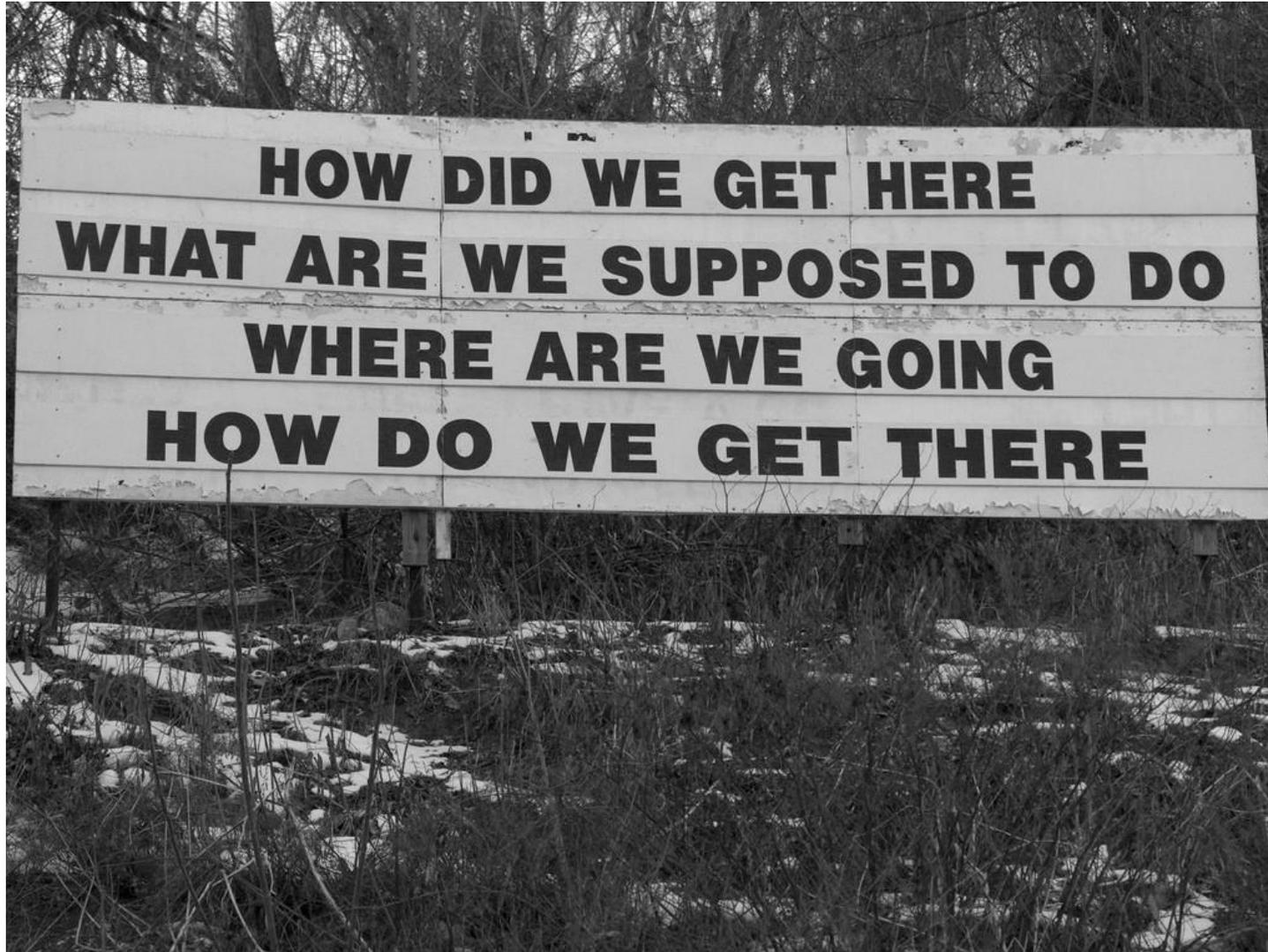
- For a sector that's worth \$32.3 billion (ABS 2017) and creates an estimated 240,000 jobs, we know very little about our profession
- The international education profession are recruiting and supporting more international students than ever before 525,054 international students in Australia

# International Education Industry

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2018 Sydney



# Past – present – future



- There is limited research on the factors that shape an individual's interest to pursue a career internationally (Bozionelos et al, 2015)
- But what we do know:
  - Love travelling
  - Interest in learning other cultures (or a specific country)
  - Opportunity to use language skills
  - Previous experience\*

# Graduates & international careers (USA)

- IES: Study Abroad Impact (Dwyer, 2004; Norris & Gillespie, 2009)
  - 48% had worked/volunteered in an international context since their study abroad experience
  - Study abroad experience had moderate-significant effect on career of alumni
    - Influence to get a job overseas (17%)
    - Work for multinational organisation in the US (14%)
- SAGE (Franklin, 2010; Paige & Fry, 2009)
  - 24% had an international dimension to their career
  - 32% influenced by the study abroad experience

**A longer experience is better!**

# Graduates & international careers (Europe)

- VALERA (Bracht et al, 2006)
  - 18% of ERASMUS students employed abroad 5 years later
  - 50% work for an organisation with international scope or substantial international activities
  - 1/3 see work as embedded in international context

- Acquire skill sets that influence career path (Dwyer, 2004; Franklin, 2010; Norris & Gillespie, 2009; Nunan, 2006)
  - Establish relationships that become professional networks
  - Intercultural competence (Bartel-Radic, 2014; Rundstrom Williams, 2005)
- \*\* 25% had study abroad experience PRIOR to the experience at university\*\* (Norris & Gillespie, 2009)

# Is Study Abroad the only way?

- Intercultural experience
  - Learning a foreign language
  - Hosting an international student
  - Travelling abroad

*Learning in an international/ intercultural context transforms lives... how has it transformed the lives of International Education Professionals?*

- Career decision-making is not rational
- Serendipitous events (Betsworth & Hansen, 1996)
  - Professional or personal connection
  - Right place/ right time
  - Encouragement of others
  - Influence of previous work/volunteer experience
  - Unexpected exposure to interest area

**Research Aim:** To understand the role of early intercultural experiences on the careers of international education professionals in Australia

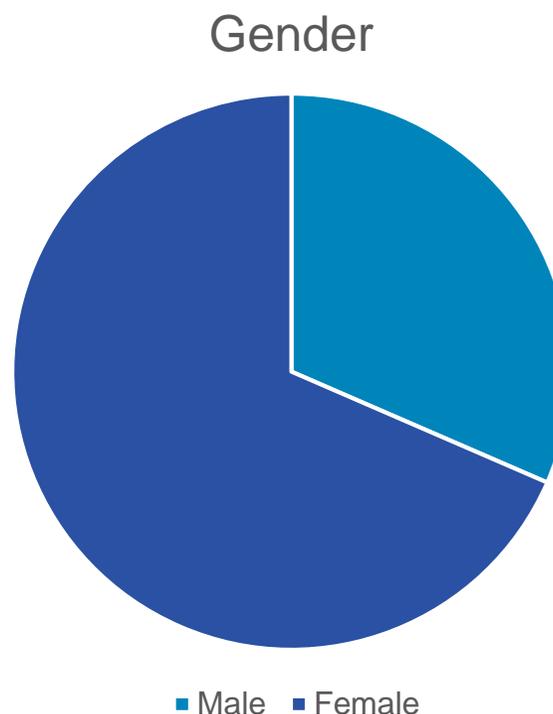
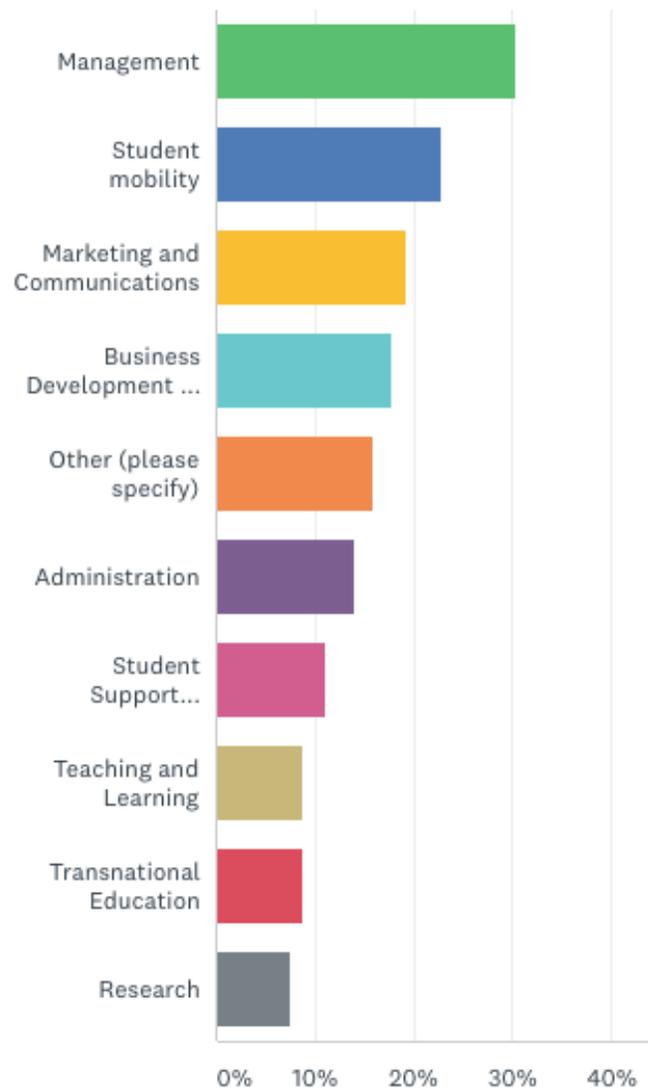
**Research questions:**

- How many international education professionals had an intercultural experience in their formative years?
- What role does an early intercultural learning experience play in the careers of international education professionals?
- How can we use this information to empower the new generation of leaders in international education?

**Definition:** We defined an intercultural experience as a structured program or planned experience based upon meaningful interactions of individuals from different cultures

- An online survey was created targeting professionals working in international education in Australia
- Survey live from 5 March - 28 May
  - Distributed through social media networks, EDMs, peak body newsletters and word of mouth
- 268 respondents
  - A further 51 respondents are interested in participating in focus groups (Stage 2)

# Who responded?



And most studied degree...

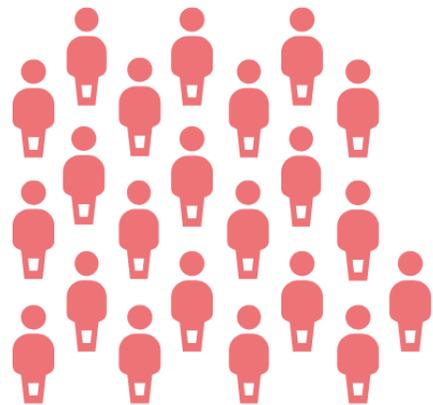
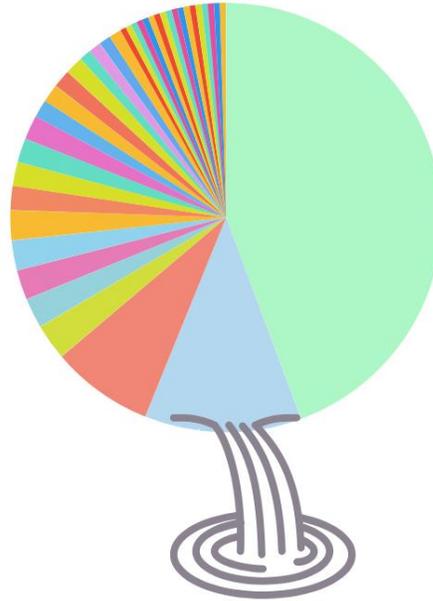
**Bachelor of Arts**  
(41% of respondents)

# Our respondents were

Came from

**Australia (44%)**

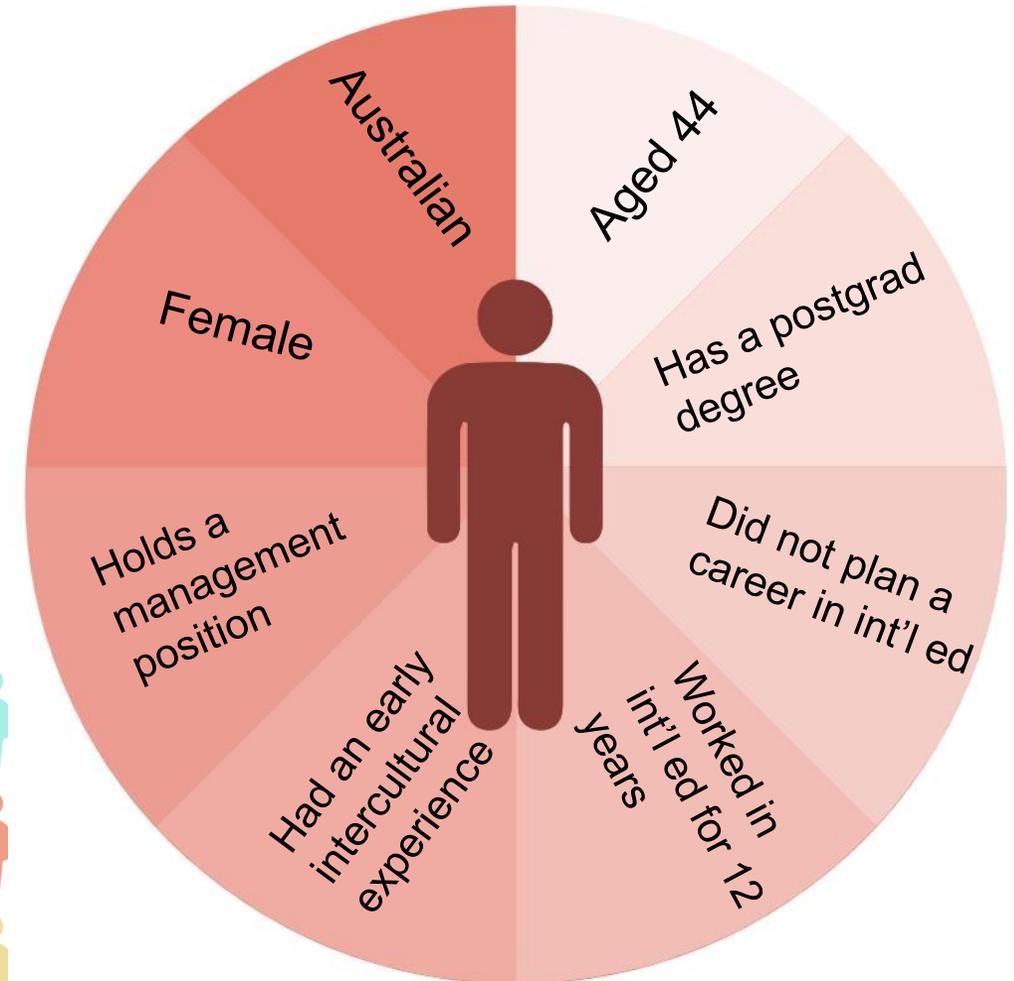
followed by USA, UK, NZ,  
Indonesia, Malaysia, Brazil,  
Canada, France and  
Germany



71 % from  
**Higher Education**  
and VET (15%) and  
NFP( 11%)

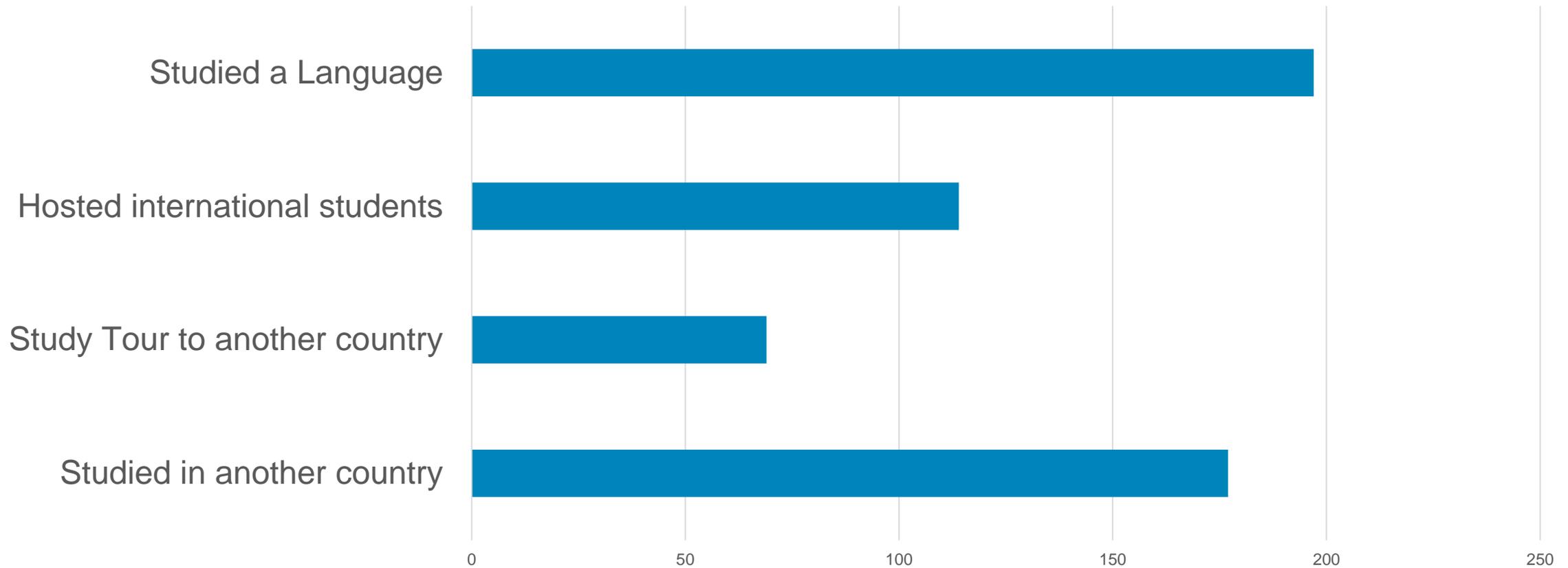


The average respondent:



# Key intercultural experiences of respondents

Top 4 Intercultural Experiences



Our industry is represented by a diverse range of people, but we found four personas through the research:



Long timers.



International  
grads



Globe trotters



Emerging  
leaders

## Long timers 20%

Those who have been invested in the industry for more than 20 years; may **not have intentionally sought employment** in our industry but have created a career in the sector

*'I was offered a position assisting with newly arrived international students immediately upon my return from a student exchange experience in 1996. it was a no-brainer. it helped me with reverse culture shock, but I enjoyed the intercultural interaction so much I knew I wanted to engage further - which at that time was, supporting new international students to make the transition to Australia.'*  
(Survey respondent)

## International grads 10%

Former international students who studied in Australia and experienced Australian education; saw the potential impact they could make and are working in the sector

*'I arrived to Australia as an international student and then I start working in the international office of my university. Looking at the care and support that universities offer to students was a real highlight to continue in this sector.'*  
(Survey respondent)

## Globe trotters 60%

Those with multiple intercultural experiences; includes Australians and those who have moved to Australia. Our industry aligns with their interests and passions

*'As a migrant to Australia, I recognised the challenges migrants experience, not to mention what international students have to go through. I've always had a teachable spirit and wanted to use my personal lessons and insights to help make the journey for others less painful and empower them to face their challenges and in turn help others in future.'*

*(Survey respondent)*

Emerging  
leaders  
10%

Young professionals who are committed to making a difference and **intentionally sought employment** in international education

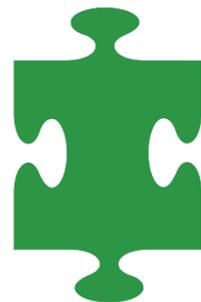
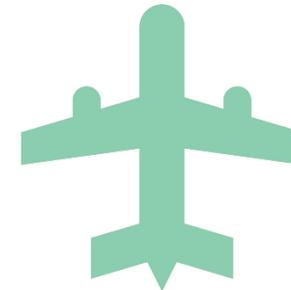
*'After my four global experiences during university I believed I could make the world a better place and that I could do that through intercultural connection and experiences so international education is the field I pursued at the end of university.'*  
(Survey respondent)

# Our results showed



The **primary driver** for working in international education is a passion for interacting with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

**98%** enjoy interacting with people from other countries, cultures and linguistically diverse backgrounds



**71%** reported that their **intercultural experience influenced** their decision to work in international education

# Diving into the data...

- 55% of respondents had an intercultural experience **during their secondary education**

Types of intercultural experiences	Motivation for intercultural experiences
61% studied a language other than English formally	64% were interested in other cultures
50% hosted students from another country	52% sought a 'different experience'
47% were exchange students to another country	43% were encouraged by a family member, friend or mentor
41% lived abroad or had extended travel abroad	

# Diving into the data...

- 67% of respondents had an intercultural experience **during their post-secondary (university/college/TAFE) education**

Types of intercultural experiences	Motivation for intercultural experiences
44% were exchange students to another country (+14% took a study tour to another country)	72% sought a 'different experience'
45% lived abroad or had extended travel abroad	72% were interested in other cultures
42% studied a language other than English formally	31% wanted to improve their employability
	<i>Only 11% undertook an intercultural experience as a mandatory part of their course</i>

# Diving into the data...

- 74% of respondents had an intercultural experience **after their post-secondary education (within five years of graduation)**

Types of intercultural experiences	Motivation for intercultural experiences
53% lived abroad or had extended travel abroad	68% sought a 'different experience'
49% had an intercultural experience through paid work (+21% via work experience; +5% via an internship)	68% were interested in other cultures
25% studied a language other than English formally	42% wanted to improve their employability
23% taught English abroad and 23% studied abroad	31% were earning money

## **Intercultural experiences are important**

- ✓ 89% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their intercultural experience was transformative

## **Intercultural experiences are important for careers in international education**

- ✓ 71% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their intercultural experiences influenced their decision to work in international education
- ✓ 81% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the skills they learnt during their intercultural experiences gave them the tools to work in intercultural education

## **We like to connect... and stay connected**

- ✓ 91% of respondents have remained connected to other participants from their intercultural experience
  - 64% have used these connections in their professional work in international education

## **BUT...**

### **Our career paths into international education are largely unplanned / unintentional**

- ✓ 58% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their career path into international education was unplanned

### **Most of us were not 'mentored' into our international education professions**

- ✓ 36% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their international education career path was prompted by a mentor or other person
- ✓ Respondents ranked 'following a mentor' as one of the lowest primary drivers for working in international education

### **And we want to stay working in international education**

- ✓ 69% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their career path revolves around international education

# Developing our profession

What are the opportunities for us to take action and develop our profession?

## Career planning

- How to **intentionally attract** graduates and others into international education professions?
- What are the **pathways into** our profession?

## Formal qualifications

How to **train prospective staff** for international education professions?

## Mentoring and advocacy

How can we use mentors to attract, support and retain talent; or to **promote our profession?**

## Career development

- What **skills** do we need to foster and develop within our profession?
- What is the **delivery** mechanism for this?

- What would have helped you in terms of getting your career in international education started?
- Do you identify with one of the four personas?
- How does your career in international education compare to your friends/contacts in other industries?

# Connect with us...

For research updates and to participate in focus groups:



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