

# Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on International Higher Education and Student Mobility

## Student Perspectives from Mainland China and Hong Kong

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Presentation based on *CGHE Working Paper 54* by

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# COVID-19 and International Learning

- The world is facing the global health crisis
- COVID-19 and the end of “Internationalization of HE”?
- Border control and student immobility
- Declining trend of international students
- Impact on higher education financing
- Impact on economic growth and job losses
- Impact on student learning, research collaboration and people diplomacy
- **How serious is the IMPACT?**

# COVID-19 Impact on the Unequal World

- The fittest will survive
- Research opportunities
- A deep financial crisis
- Increased inequality
- Distance vs Face-to-Face Education
- International student mobility

*Philip Altbach and Hans de Wit*

# Major Concerns for Students

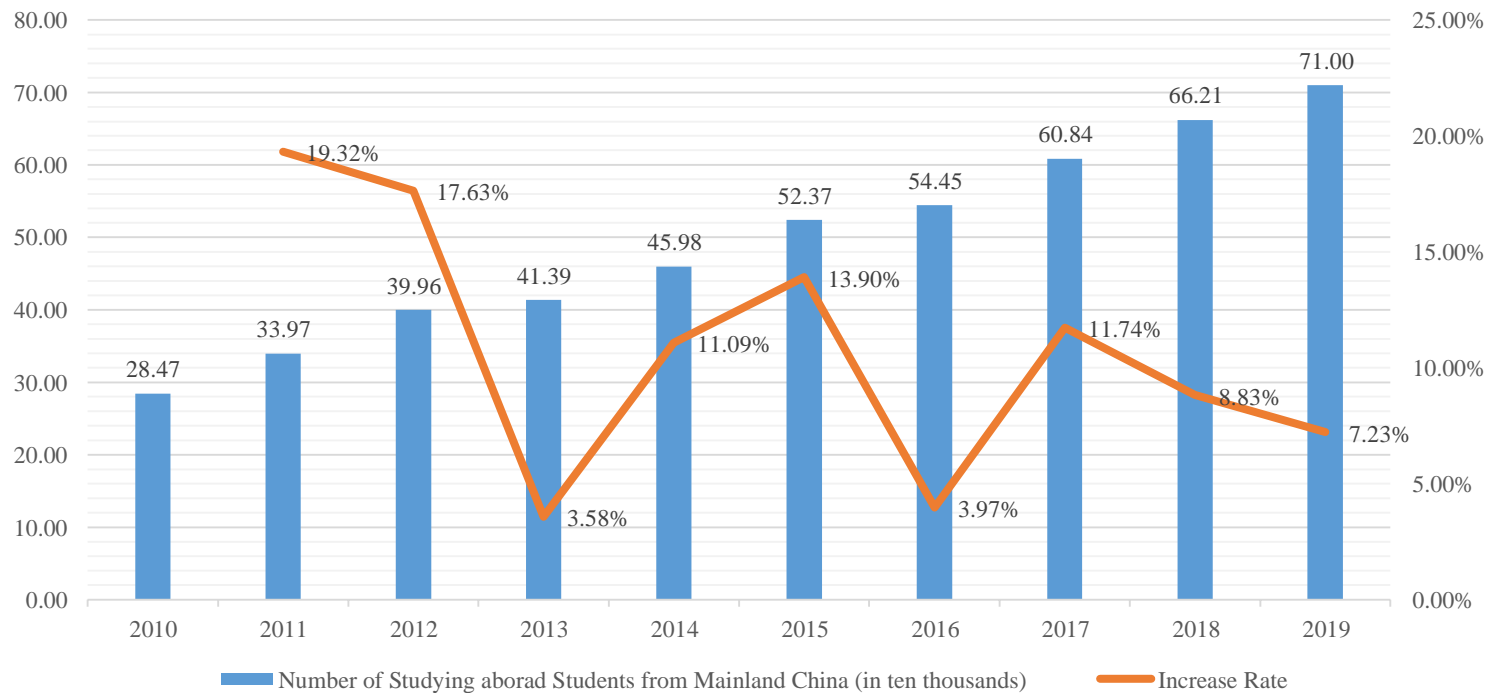
## *British Council Recent Survey*

- 79% say they were very concerned about health and well-being
- 87 % are very concerned about personal safety
- 86 % are concerned about finances
- 70% are concerned about application difficulties

# COVID-19 and Impact on HE

- Implications for international education
- Studying abroad or enrolling in Transnational Higher Education programmes / International Branch Campuses
- Impact on Sino-British Cooperative Universities in China Mainland
- Implications for Modes of Delivery, International Learning Experiences and Distance, Flexible and Distributed Learning
- New forms of partnerships and recognition of degrees and academic qualifications if diversified study modes / delivery modes are becoming more popular
- New QA regime is needed to “normalize” the above newly emerging modes of delivery
- Internationalization and intensified Inequality across the world
- Internationalization of HE: shifting slightly from the West to the East because of COVID-19: concerns of health and family care

# Studying abroad Trend (Mainland China Students)



The number (in 10,000) of studying abroad students from Mainland China and the increase rate, 2010-2019.

Sources: New Oriental (2020) and Zhiyan Consulting Group (2020).

# Research Questions

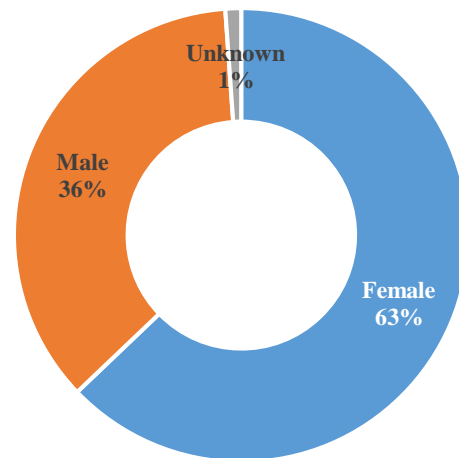
- Are Mainland China and Hong Kong university students still interested in studying abroad after the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What are the top countries for Mainland China and Hong Kong university students to study abroad after the COVID-19 pandemic?



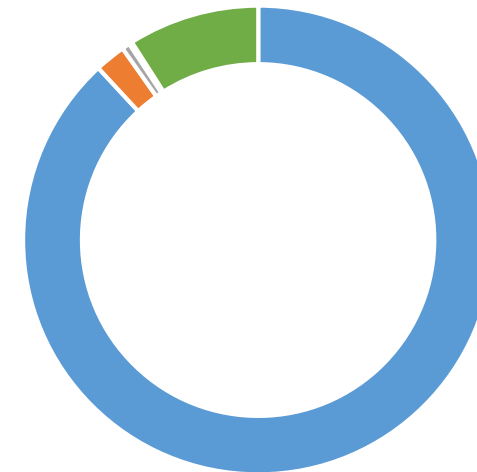
# Research Methods

- Researchers of School of Graduate Studies, Lingnan University designed and inserted three questions to research team's two projects using survey methods to examine respondents' studying abroad expectations.
- Valid responses: **2,739** students from universities and colleges in Mainland China and Hong Kong
  - Respondents from **Mainland China**: 1,267 (46.3%)
  - Respondents from **Hong Kong**: 1,441 (52.6%)
  - Unknown: 31 (1.1%)

# Respondents



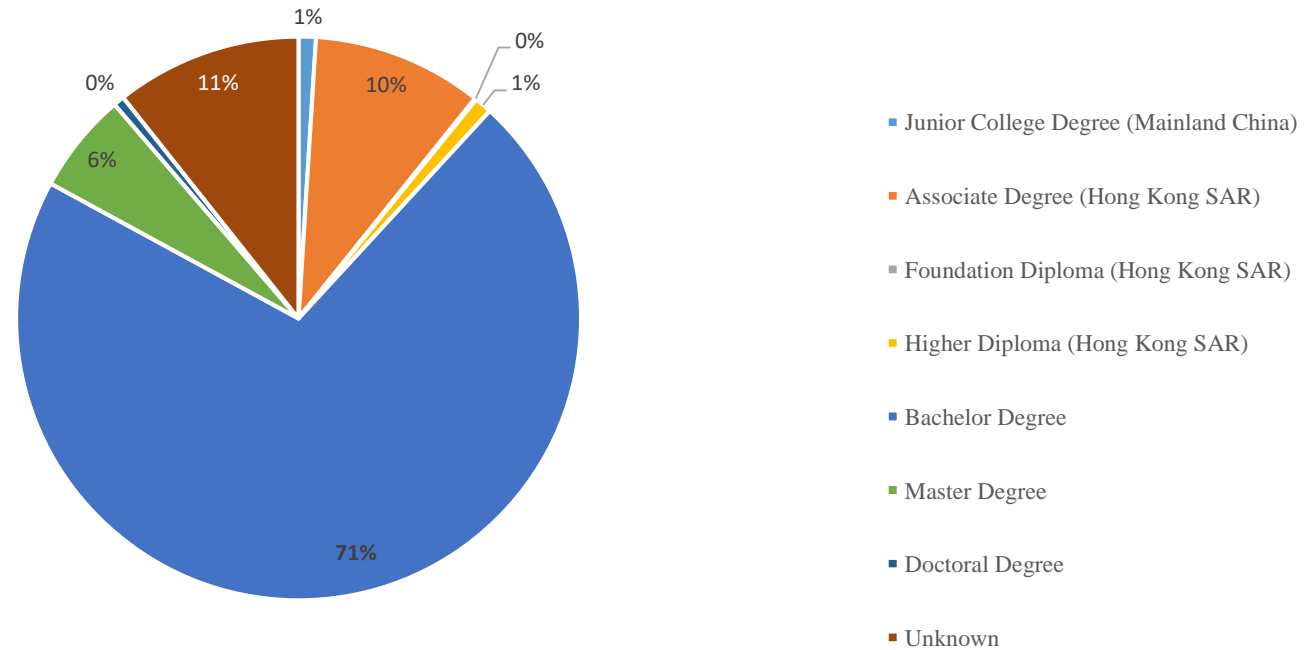
Gender distribution



■ 18-25 ■ 26-30 ■ 31-40 ■ 41-50 ■ 50 or above ■ Unknown

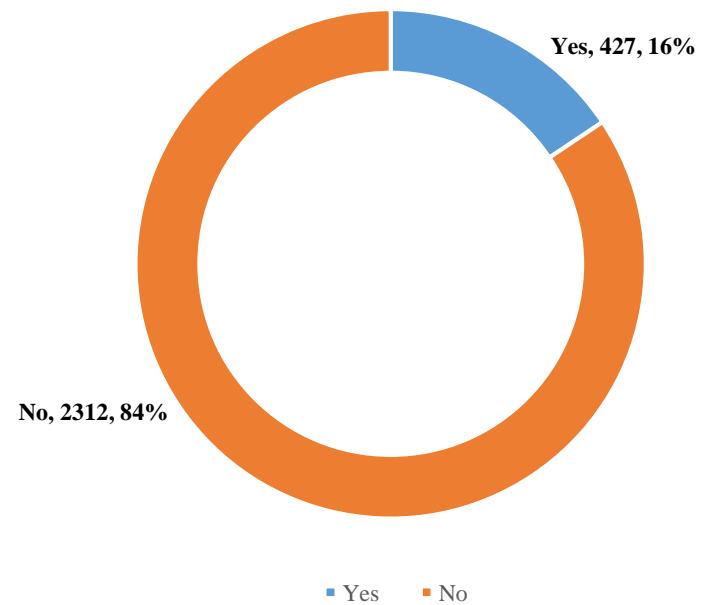
Age distribution

# Respondents



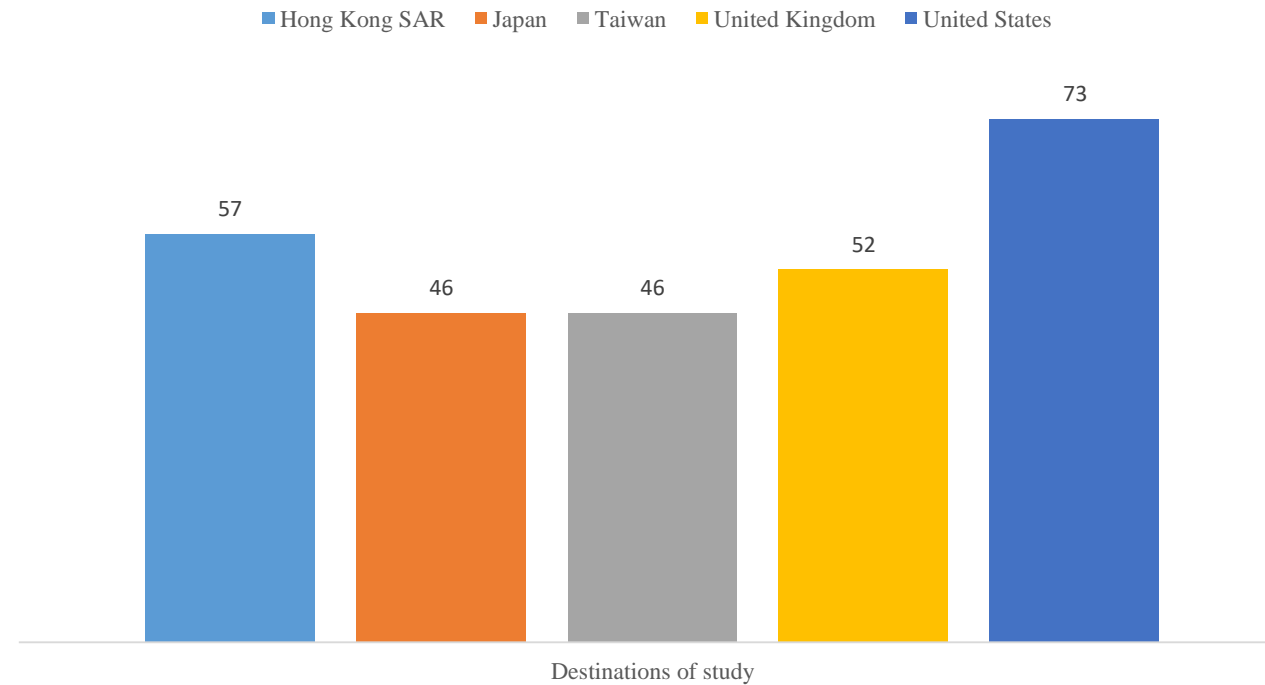
Degree of study undertaken by respondents

# Major Findings



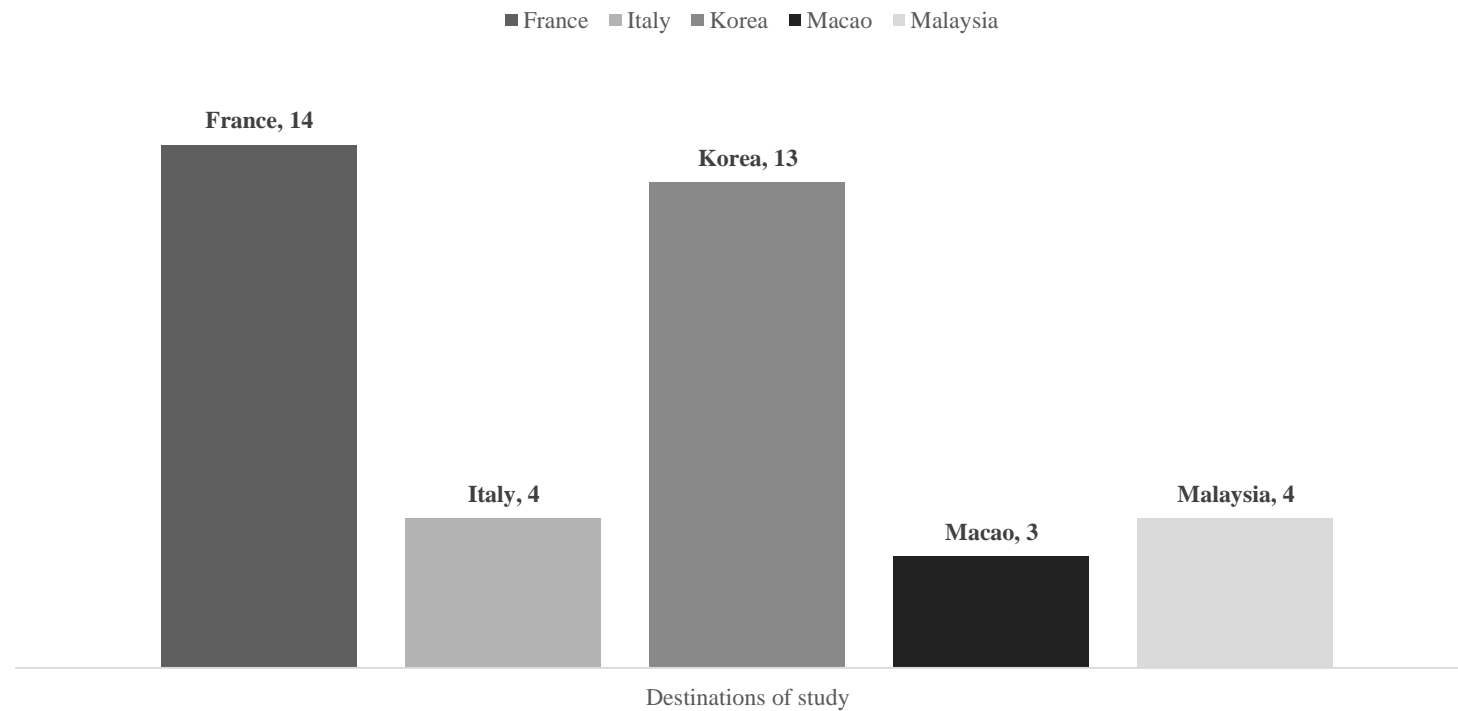
Number of respondents interested in studying abroad after the COVID-19 pandemic

# Major Findings



The top 5 most popular study destinations

# Major Findings



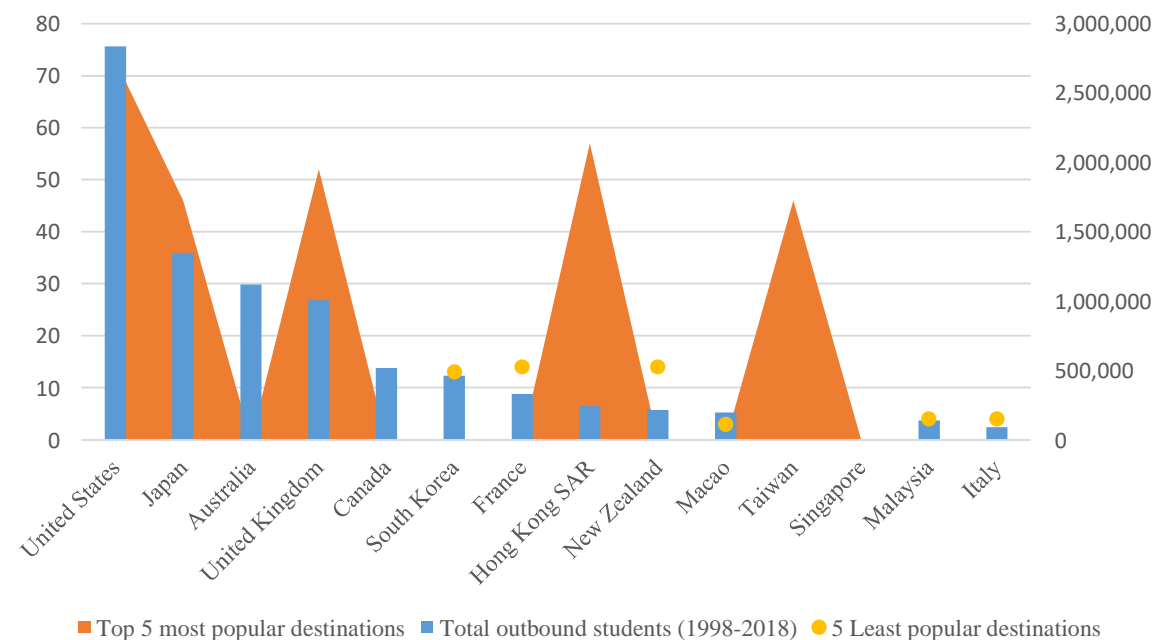
The 5 least popular study destinations

# Major Findings

Top ten destinations of Mainland China students studying higher education abroad (1998-2018)

Study destinations	Number of outbound Chinese HEI students
US	2,837,369
Japan	1,349,463
Australia	1,118,108
UK	1,005,794
Canada	515,700
Republic of Korea	461,392
France	330,698
Hong Kong SAR, China	243,258
New Zealand	215,740
Macau SAR, China	197,346

Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2019).



Comparison between the total number of Chinese students studying higher education degrees overseas (1998-2018) and the preferences of further study destinations (current survey).

# Discussion

## Immediate Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic

- Barriers to student mobility: travel bans, visa restrictions, campus lockdowns, worries on health and safety, and delays of English tests
- Burden to HEIs: significant impact to overseas higher education institutions, especially for those that financially depend on the tuitions of international students

## Long-term Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic

- The domestic job market will become competitive because college graduates will stay for jobs instead of studying abroad. The predicted global economic recession will exacerbate this effect after the pandemic
- The rate of recovery from the pandemic and post-pandemic governance will become a significant factor for destination countries to attract international students



# Discussion

## Rising Trends of East Asian Countries and Regions

- This trend has also been identified in recent research on studying abroad of Mainland China students (New Oriental, 2020).
- Reasons
  - Proximity
  - Push-pull factors analysis
  - For the post-pandemic situation, because of the different governance regimes and cultures (Marginson, 2020), East Asian countries (like China and Japan) with the Confucian and collective cultural traditions are expected to recover faster than the Western countries (like the US, the UK, and Australia) of individualist traditions from the pandemic.
- The rising role of Hong Kong as a study destination

# Discussion

## Discussion on Internationalization of Higher Education

- Analyzing the internationalization of higher education, particularly international student mobility, we should acknowledge that the social and economic inequalities will be further intensified across different parts of the world.
- Some scholars believe the international student mobility will remain strong after the pandemic based on the previous experiences of SARS in 2003 and the global recession in 2008.
- Collaboration in international higher education has been emphasized during the pandemic.

# Q&A

## Lingnan University Hong Kong

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