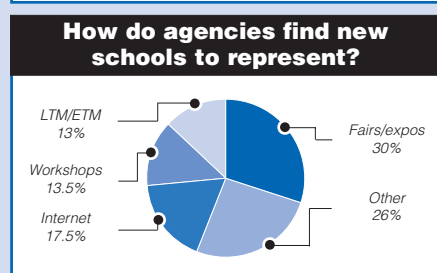
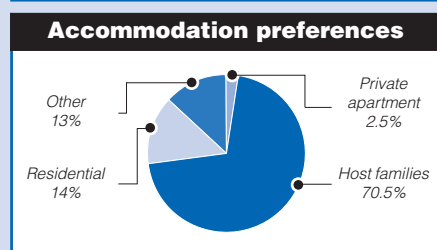
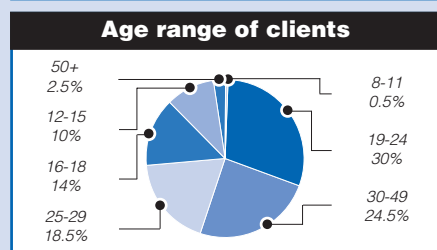
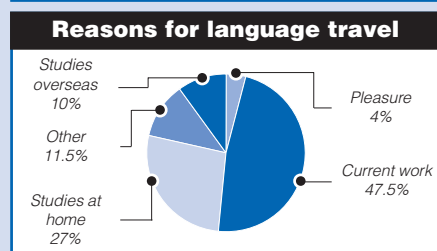
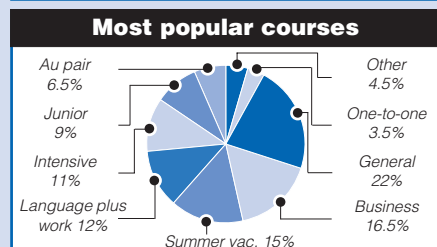
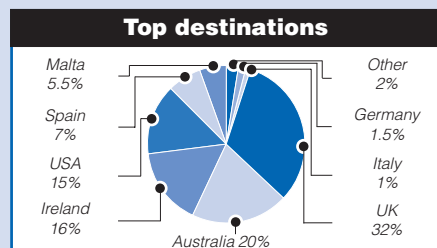


France on form

Generally, French agencies reported good business last year, partly because of the work-related motivations of many of their language students. However, expectations for the coming year are more reserved due to economic uncertainty.



- ### Key points
- The total number of students placed by eight of the nine agencies in our survey was 3,015
 - Individual agencies placed between 45 and 700 students on language courses per year
 - The average growth of combined agency business in 2002 was 30 per cent
 - The average spend on tuition and accommodation per week was US\$360
 - Typically, only two per cent of clients approach French agencies with a school in mind
 - Thirty-four per cent of clients requested a quality-accredited school
 - Half of the agencies charged a handling fee, which ranged between US\$36 and US\$88
 - On average, agencies represented 41 language schools overseas in 12 countries

Market growth

French language travel agents fared well last year, according to our survey of nine language travel agencies in the country. Eight of those agencies reported that bookings had increased on 2001 figures, and the overall average rate of growth last year was 30 per cent. One agency said this trend was due to the fact that more and more young people realise that having good skills in a second language is important.

Student trends

Compared with our survey of 2001 trends (see *Language Travel Magazine*, June 2002, pages 10-11), French language travel students were noticeably older in this survey. Students aged between 19 and 24 accounted for 30 per cent of bookings in 2002, compared with 16 per cent in 2001. Similarly, the 25-to-30 year old age group represented 18.5 per cent of students, while only nine per cent of clients fell into this age category in last year's survey, and students aged from 31-to-50 represented an equally sizeable 24.5 per cent, up from nine per cent last year. A much higher percentage of clients - 47.5 per cent, compared with 26 per cent previously - cited

work as their reason for language travel.

Course trends

Agencies pointed to an increasing trend for business courses, or programmes that placed students in work experience placements or allowed them to get jobs. Reflecting the higher age range overall in this survey, junior programmes lost their importance in the market while work and business programmes were both popular course requests. The UK remained the preferred destination but, continuing the trend noted in last year's survey, Australia has become more popular and is now in number-two position. Ireland was in third position with the USA slipping to fourth place.

Agency business

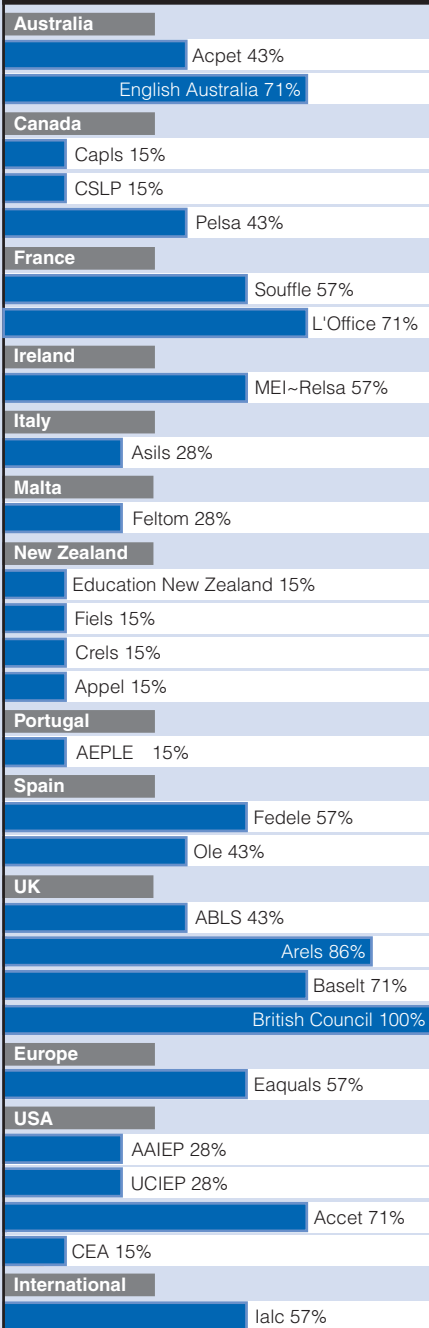
Word-of-mouth recommendation remained the main way of attracting new clients, but websites have increased in importance since our last survey. Overall, agencies estimated that 28.5 per cent of clients were recruited via a website. July and August were the most popular months for language travel, (49 per cent of clients travelled in these months) but the remainder of business was spread across the year. Fairs and expos were rated much more highly this year as a new business channel, while the Internet, workshops and *Language Travel Magazine* were other sources noted. On average, agencies set up partnerships with six new schools each year, and terminated agreements with two.

- ### Economic overview
- France is suffering from the same slowdown in its economy that is afflicting Europe, as the rise in the strength of the euro against the dollar makes exports expensive. Companies have been firing staff and scaling down production and the unemployment rate is rising accordingly. In April, the unemployment rate stood at 9.2 per cent and is expected to rise to 9.5 per cent later this year.
 - The country has been rapped by the European Union (EU) for failing to keep its budget deficit below the three per cent of GDP limit set for EU members. A deadline of October has been set for France to take steps to reduce its deficit, which the EU claims is due to tax cuts and spending.
 - In the last quarter of 2002, France recorded negative economic growth. The Bank of France forecast no growth in the second quarter of 2003 following a 0.2 per cent rise in the first quarter.
- Sources: Bloomberg, FT.com, Boston Globe

Forecast for 2003

France is suffering from a rather lacklustre economic outlook at the moment, but agents pointed to global concerns such as the Sars outbreak and international travel fears as factors that they believe might also affect demand for language travel. Agents forecast an increasing interest in work-related programmes but were unsure about any increase in actual student numbers next year.

Percentage of agents who recognised each of the following organisations



Thank you to the following agencies for taking part in our survey: Accents d'Ailleurs; AMSL; Arts et Sejours en Asie Pacifique; Aubert Ermisse Tours; Centre EasyLangues; Experiment; Formalangues; Languages & Travel; Sejours Homestay.

French agents named a range of language programmes they work with, including, in Australia: Box Hill Institute of Tafe Language Centre, Melbourne; Phoenix Academy, Perth; Sydney English Language Centre, Sydney; University of Queensland ICTE, Brisbane. **In Germany:** Did, various. **In Ireland:** Alpha College of English, Dublin; Cork English College, Cork. **In Malta:** Burlington Academy of English, St Julian's. **In Spain:** Don Quijote, various; Escuela Montalban, Granada. **In the UK:** English Language Centre, Bristol; English Language Teaching, London; International Language Homestays, Margate; London School of English, London; Scanbrit School of English, Bournemouth; Twin, London. **In the USA:** Geos North America Language Schools, San Francisco. **Worldwide:** St Giles; LSI.