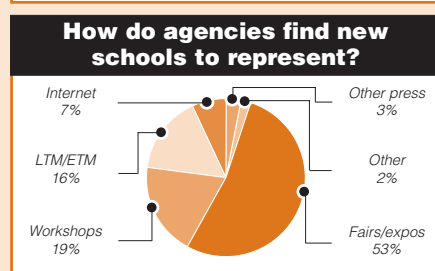
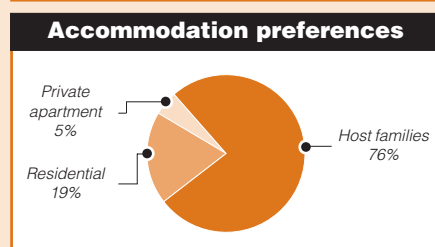
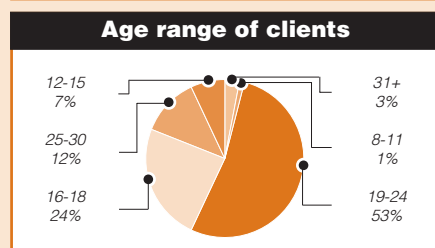
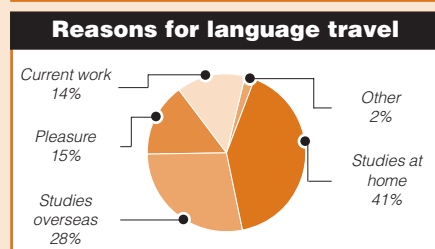
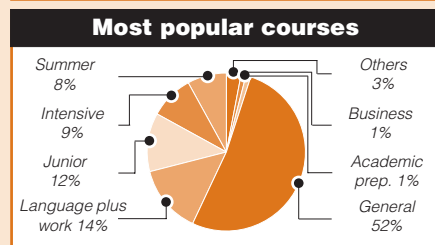
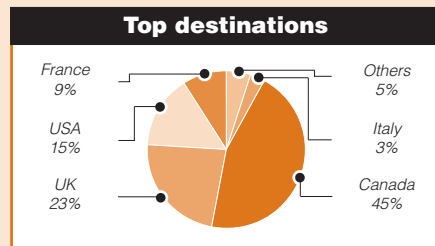


Mexico's strength

A strong economy and growing demand for language skills in the job market have propelled demand for language travel programmes in Mexico.



- ### Key points
- The total number of students placed by the nine agencies in our survey was 4,530
 - Individual agencies placed between 20 and 2,500 students on language courses per year
 - Student numbers increased by an average of 14.8 per cent
 - The average length of stay for Mexican students was 12.9 weeks
 - Commission rates ranged from 15 per cent to 25 per cent, averaging out at 21 per cent
 - The average spend on tuition and accommodation per week was US\$296
 - 58 per cent of Mexican students took a language travel course in July and August

Market growth

A buoyant market was reported by the majority of the Mexican language travel agents who took part in this issue's Agency Survey. Sixty-eight per cent reported an increase in student numbers in 2002, of between 10 and 63 per cent. Reasons given for this ranged from the fact that language travel is becoming more well known in Mexico, to an agency's own promotional efforts and growing word-of-mouth referrals. One respondent also mentioned that some schools require students to have a second or third language to graduate.

Student trends

The main reason Mexican language travellers took a language course overseas was for their studies at home. This was the motivating factor for an average of 41 per cent of agency clients. A further 28 per cent were learning a language for their further studies overseas. It follows, then, that over half of agency clients were aged between 19 and 24 years old, and five agents identified this group as having the most potential in the future. One respondent noted that a growing number of students were realising the importance of language skills for their future jobs. Ninety-four per

cent of agency clients were individuals, four per cent closed groups and two per cent executives.

Language and destination trends

It is interesting to note that, despite the geographical proximity of the USA to Mexico, only 15 per cent of Mexican students chose to study in the USA last year. This may be because they favoured destinations perceived to be safer after the September 11, 2001 events. In 2002, Canada was the number-one language travel destination for Mexican students, according to the agencies that took part in our survey, while the UK was the second most popular choice. Surprisingly, French was a relatively popular language to

learn overseas, accounting for 11 per cent of agency bookings. In terms of accommodation, host families were the number-one choice, accounting for 76 per cent of bookings, while residential accommodation accounted for only 19 per cent and private apartments, five per cent.

Agency business

Mexican agents rely heavily on word-of-mouth recommendations, which account for an estimated average of 53 per cent of agency clients. Press advertising was the most important marketing medium, accounting for 14 per cent of students, while mailshot campaigns and website bookings played a relatively minor role in agencies' marketing strategies.

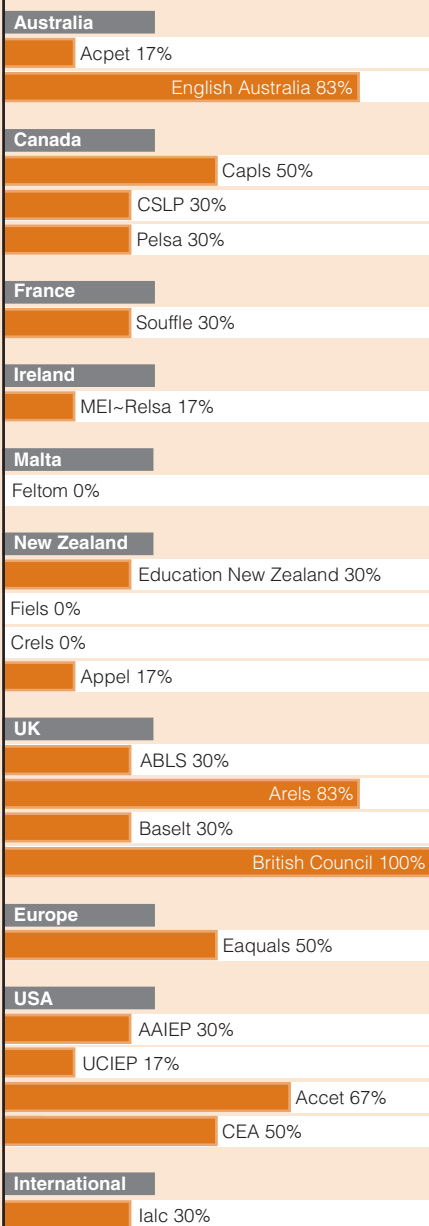
Four agencies charged students a handling fee of between US\$75 and US\$150.

Forecast for 2003

On the one hand, agents acknowledge that the ability to speak more foreign languages is becoming important for career reasons. On the other, however, they realise that the tensions in the Middle East may affect the global travel market and the economy in general. Overall, they are rather downbeat in their expectations for 2003.

- ### Economic overview
- Mexico has experienced robust economic growth in recent years, helped in part by its membership in the North American Free Trade Agreement. GDP was up by 2.7 per cent in 2002.
 - The unemployment rate, which stood at 3.1 per cent in September 2002, was at an all-time low. Inflation has been contained at around 4.9 per cent year on year.
 - According to a survey of emerging economies by the *Economist*, in terms of political and economic stability, Mexico is the third best country in which to do business, after Hungary and Poland.
 - Mexico's economic performance is largely tied to the USA's. As the US economy slowed at end of last year, so did Mexico's. Nevertheless, the peso has remained strong, reflecting investor confidence.
- Sources: Lloyd Mexico Economic Report; LatinFocus 2003

Percentage of agents who recognised each of the following organisations



Thank you to the following agencies for taking part in our survey: Anglo Mexican Foundation; Cosmo Education; Estudiantes Embajadores de Mexico; Tecama Viajes Cursos y Camps; Turismo Damiana; Universitas Travel & Study; Viajes Centurion; Viajes Nuevo Leon; Worldwide Exchange Programs Association

Mexican agents named a range of language programmes they work with, including, in Canada: Centre Linguista, Montreal; International Language School of Canada, Toronto; Jonview Canada, Toronto; King George International College, Vancouver; Language Studies Canada, various; MWS Victoria, Toronto; Shane Global Village, various; Vanwest College, Vancouver. **In France:** Université de la Sorbonne, Paris. **In Italy:** Linguaviva, Florence; Scuola Lorenzo de Medici, Florence. **In the UK:** Babasco, London; Bell Language Schools, various; Cambridge Academy of English, Cambridge; Churchill House School of English, Ramsgate; Hampstead School of English, London; International House, Bath; Milner School of English, London; Study Group, various. **Worldwide:** Eurocentres; LSI.