



# SEVIS BY THE NUMBERS

BIANNUAL REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENT TRENDS

April 2018

# Executive Summary

## Background

[The Student and Exchange Visitor Program \(SEVP\)](#) is part of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). [SEVP manages the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System \(SEVIS\)](#), the web-based system DHS uses to maintain and manage information on the nonimmigrants whose primary purpose for coming to the United States is to study.

A nonimmigrant is any foreign national who temporarily visits the United States to fulfill a specific purpose (e.g., tourism, business, study). SEVP acts as a bridge for organizations and individuals with an interest in information about nonimmigrants in the following categories:

- **F-1 STUDENTS**

Nonimmigrants whose primary purpose is to complete an academic course of study at an SEVP-certified school or program.

- **M-1 STUDENTS**

Nonimmigrants whose primary purpose is to complete a vocational course of study at an SEVP-certified school or program.

- **J-1 EXCHANGE VISITORS**

Nonimmigrants selected to participate in a U.S. Department of State-designated exchange visitor program.

SEVP oversees F and M students and their dependents, as well as the schools that enroll them, for compliance with U.S. laws and regulations governing international students studying in the United States. The Department of State manages the J-1 exchange visitor program. Both SEVP and the Department of State use SEVIS to maintain critical information that allows DHS to protect national security while supporting the legal entry of international students and exchange visitors.

## SEVIS by the Numbers

SEVIS by the Numbers is a biannual report highlighting key SEVIS data to illustrate trends, values and information on international students studying in the United States. The report includes the following sections:

- **STUDENTS**  
Shares data on international students who come to the United States to study.
- **STATES AND TERRITORIES**  
Shares data about international student demographics within individual U.S. states.
- **SCHOOLS**  
Shares data on SEVP-certified schools that enroll international students in the United States.

## Trends

This SEVIS by the Numbers report uses real-time SEVIS data from March 5, 2018, and compares data from March 2017 to March 2018.

During this reporting period, the total number of SEVIS records for active F and M students decreased by 0.5 percent, from 1,208,039 in March 2017 to 1,201,829 in March 2018. The J-1 exchange visitor population increased by 4 percent from 201,408 exchange visitors in March 2017 to 209,568 visitors in March 2018.

Additionally, as of March 5, 2018:



**76%**

OF SEVP-CERTIFIED SCHOOLS  
enroll 50 or fewer F & M students



**8,744**

SEVP-CERTIFIED SCHOOLS  
are eligible to enroll international students

# Students

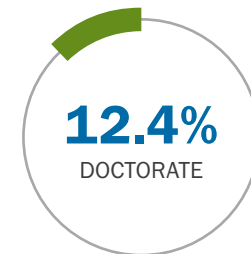
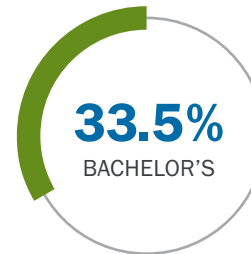
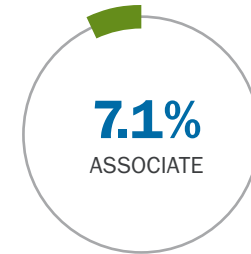
## Overview

During the March 2017 to March 2018 reporting period, the total number of F and M international students decreased by 6,210 (-0.5 percent) and J-1 exchange visitors increased by 8,160 (+4 percent). While both male and female students come to the United States to advance their education, 43 percent of F and M international students were female. However, 54 percent of J-1 exchange visitors were female.

## International Students in Higher Education

Most F and M students come to the United States to take part in the higher education system. Roughly 85 percent of all F and M students were enrolled in associate, bachelor's, master's or doctoral programs certified by SEVP. Specifically, there were 1,019,333 degree-seeking international students in the United States' higher education system, which is a 0.8 percent increase from March 2017.

The largest growth and decline came from students seeking doctorate degrees and associate degrees, respectively. Doctorate degree programs saw a 4 percent increase (+6,241), while associate degree programs saw a 5 percent decrease (-4,793). Students seeking bachelor's and master's degrees stayed stable, with the former growing less than a percentage point (+2,630) and the latter growing by just 1 percent (+4,045).



*Above are the percentage breakdowns of international students enrolled in the U.S. higher education system.*

## Associate Degrees

Forty-nine percent of international students seeking associate degrees were female. Fifty percent of international students seeking associate degrees studied either business (23,472 students) or liberal arts (19,676 students). Other popular areas of study include computer and information sciences, as well as health care professions.

## Bachelor's and Master's Degrees

There were 785,435 F-1 students in the United States seeking either a bachelor's (402,293 students) or master's degree (383,142 students) and 43 percent of these students are female. These two levels of education were the most popular among international students coming to the United States and together accounted for 65 percent of the international student population. Fifty-eight percent of students pursuing degrees at these levels studied one of the three following areas: business, engineering or computer science.



BUSINESS, MANAGEMENT,  
MARKETING AND RELATED  
SUPPORT SERVICES

**169,359**

Bachelor's and Master's Students



ENGINEERING

**148,875**

Bachelor's and Master's Students



COMPUTER AND  
INFORMATION SCIENCES  
AND SUPPORT SERVICES

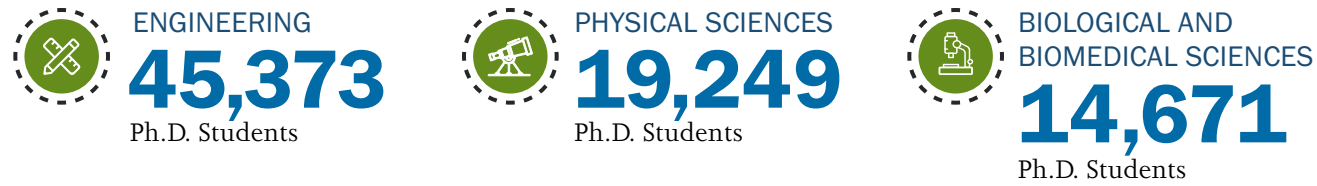
**135,608**

Bachelor's and Master's Students

*Above are the three most popular areas of study for international students pursuing bachelor's and master's degrees.*

## Doctorate Degrees

The international student population studying at the doctorate degree level had the largest gender discrepancy, as only 39 percent of these students are female. Unlike other education levels, business was not one of the more popular areas within this category. Instead, the majority of of F-1 doctoral candidates pursued degrees in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics field. With the largest participation in programs related to engineering, physical sciences, and biological and biomedical sciences.

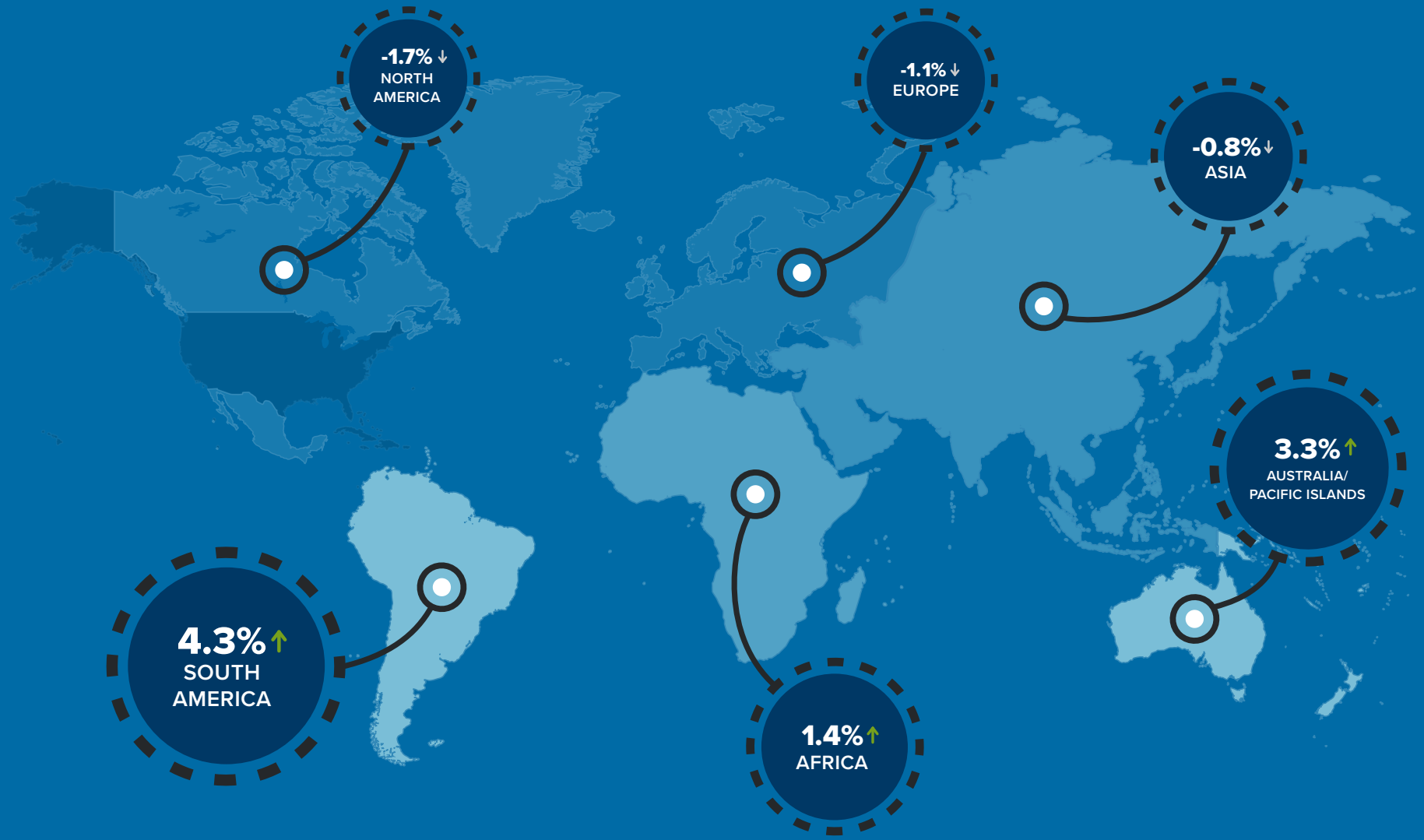


*Above are the three most popular areas of study for international students pursuing doctorate degrees.*

# International Students from Around the World

Aside from Antarctica, F and M students come from every continent in the world, with more than 229 countries and territories represented in the U.S. academic community. Although Asia continually sends the largest number of international students, only South America, Africa and Australia/Pacific Islands saw growth in the number of students coming to the United States during the reporting year. Figure 1 illustrates the overall population and growth/decline rate of each continent from March 2017 to March 2018.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Continent information within this report was compiled using the [United Nation's composition](#) of macro geographical (continental) regions, geographical subregions, and selected economic and other groupings.

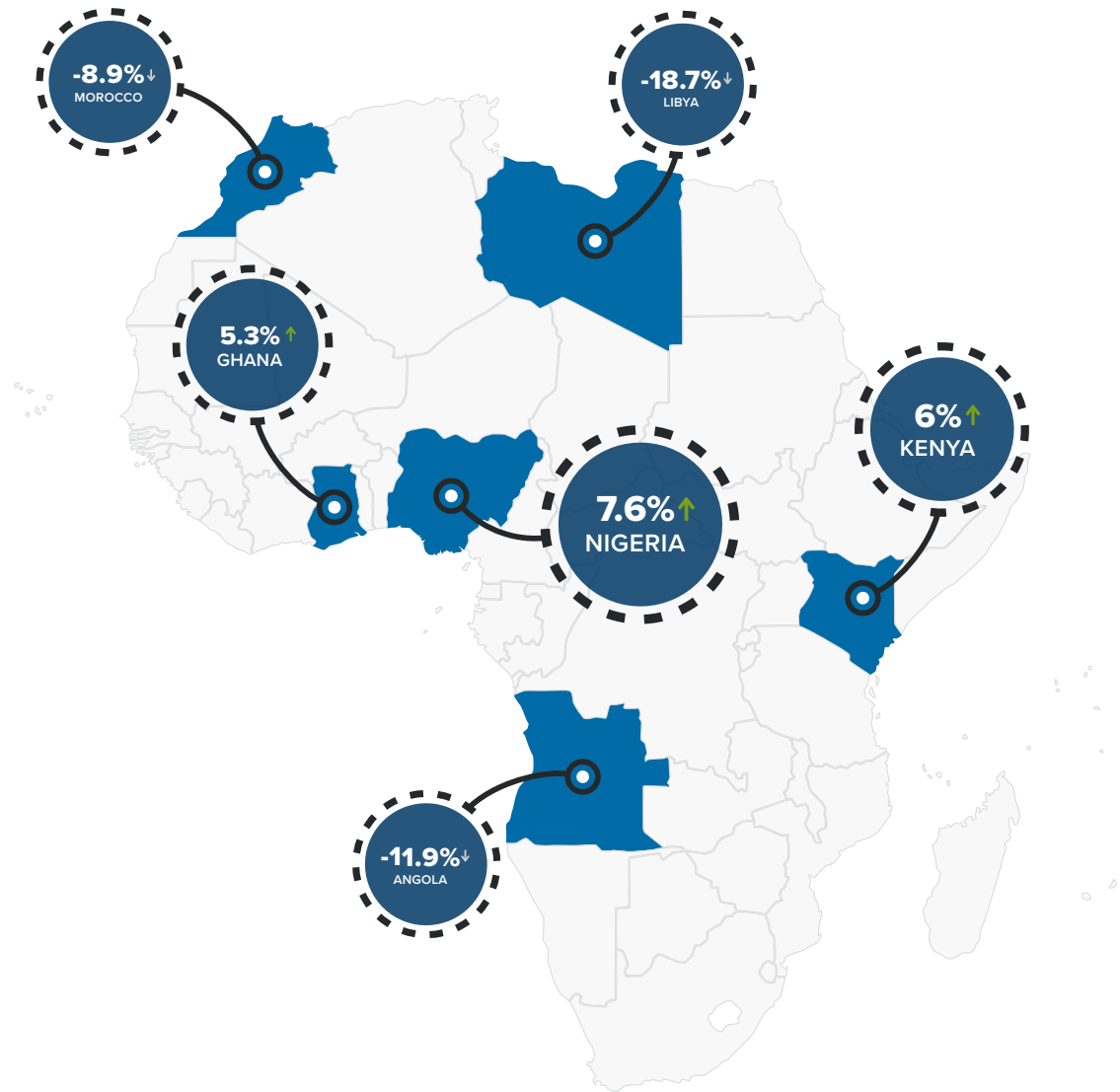


**FIGURE 1** — Above are the growth/decline rates and absolute increase and decreases for each continent over the course of the reporting period (March 2017 to March 2018). To explore exact figures of the entire student populations from these regions, including specific countries, please visit [Mapping SEVIS by the Numbers on Study in the States](#).



## Africa

While the overall F and M student population coming from Africa grew by more than 750 students from March 2017 to March 2018, this growth was not evenly distributed. Eastern and Western African countries like Nigeria (+1,128), Kenya (+212) and Ghana (+170) sent substantially more students, while Northern African countries sent far fewer. Specifically, the student populations from Libya (-299), Angola (-176) and Morocco (-170) saw the steepest declines.

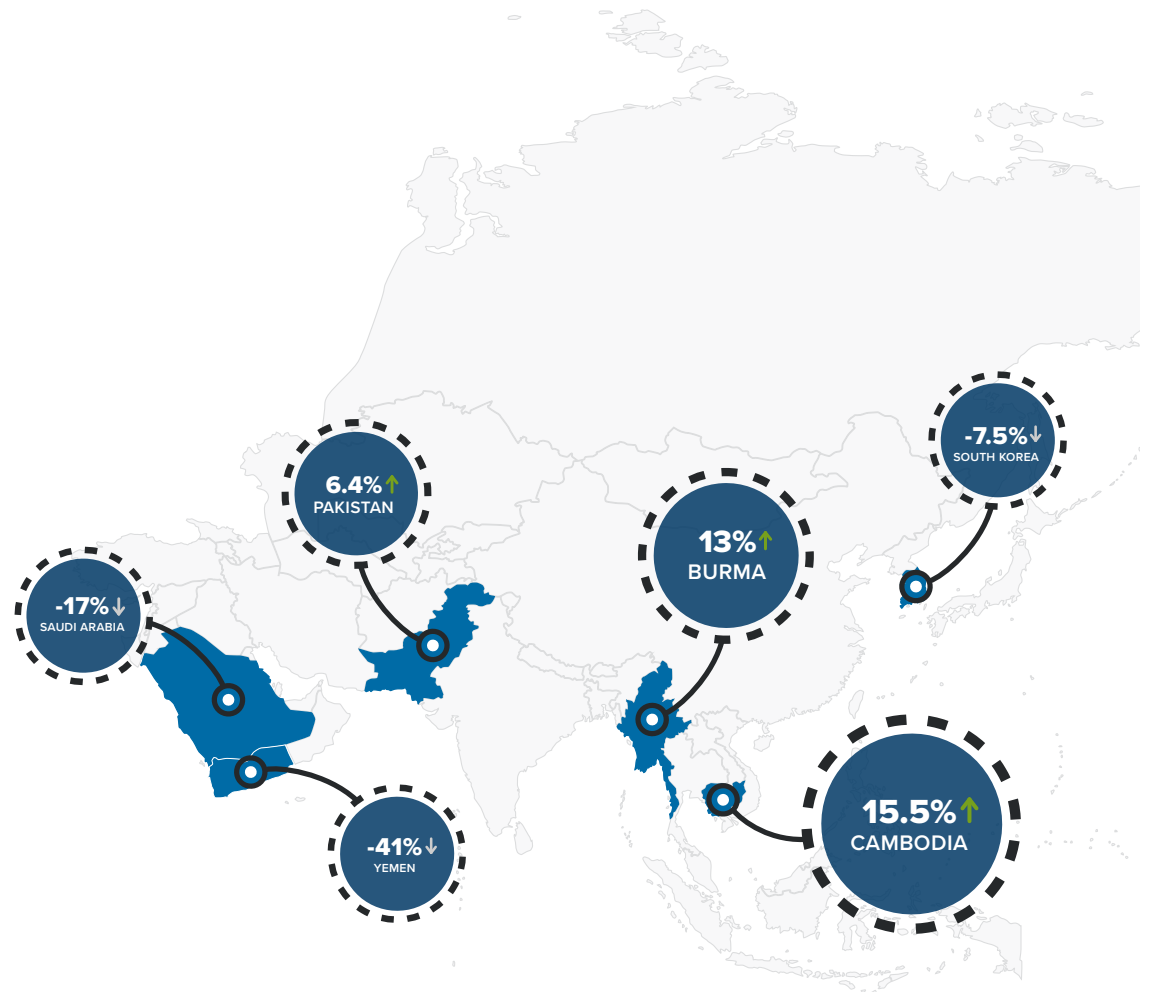


**FIGURE 2** — Above are the African countries that saw the greatest fluctuation in the number of students coming to the United States in the reporting period (March 2017 to March 2018). To explore more year-over-year comparisons from all over the world, please visit the [Mapping SEVIS by the Numbers - Continent View](#) on Study in the States.

## Asia

Forty-nine percent of the F and M student population in the United States hailed from either China (377,070 students) or India (211,703 students), and interest continues to grow. Over the reporting period, both China and India saw proportional growth between 1 and 2 percent, with China sending 6,305 more students and India sending 2,356 more students. It is this level of participation from China and India that makes Asia far and away the most popular continent of origin. In fact, 77 percent of all international students in the United States call Asia home.

Despite steady growth from the two most popular nations, there was a slight decrease in the number of Asian students coming to study in the United States over the reporting period. As illustrated in Figure 3, the sharp decline in the number of students from Saudi Arabia (-9,971), South Korea (-5,488), and Yemen (-396) outweighed the rapid growth in the number of students coming from Pakistan (+448), Burma (+206) and Cambodia (+109).



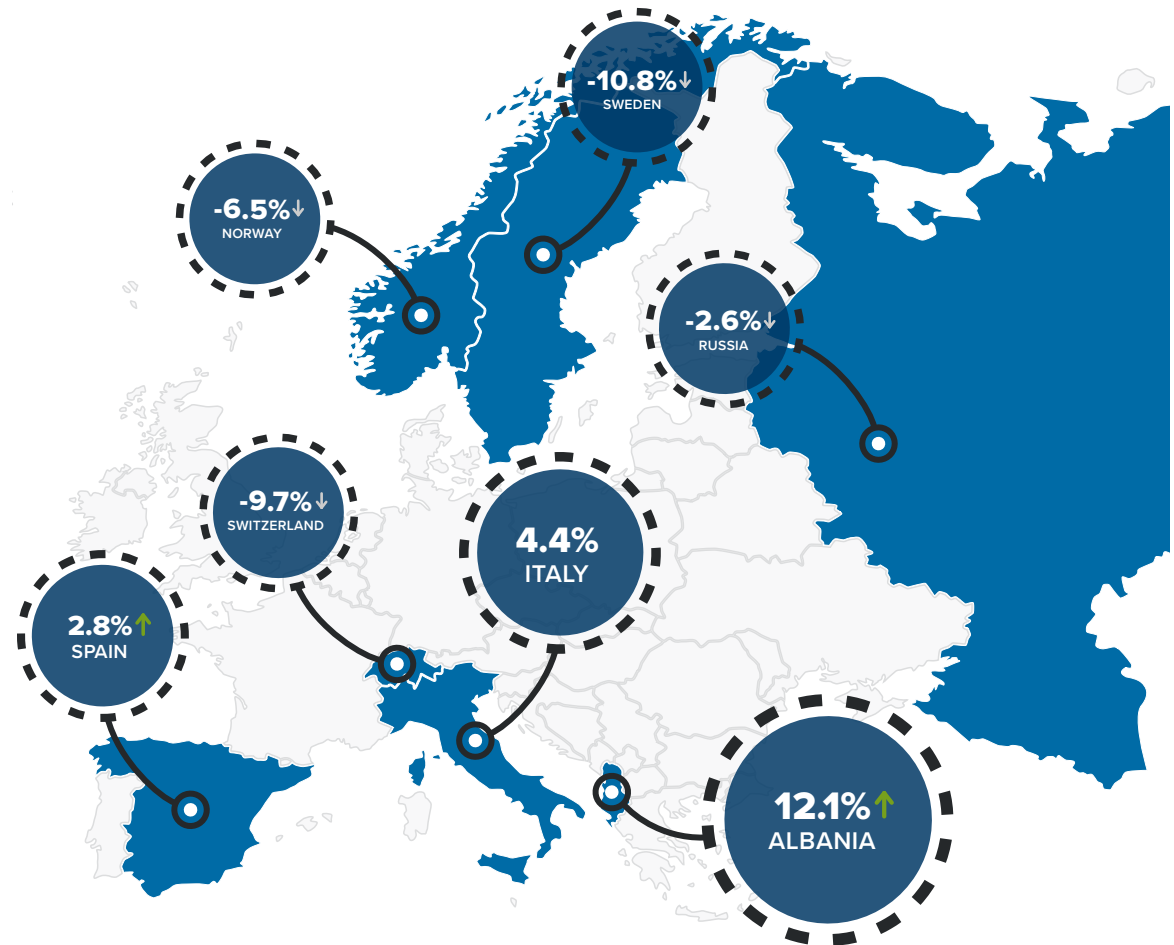
**FIGURE 3** — Above are the Asian countries that saw the greatest fluctuation in the number of students coming to the United States in the reporting period (March 2017 to March 2018). To explore more about students from Asia, please visit [Mapping SEVIS by the Numbers](#) on Study in the States.

## Australia and Pacific Islands

The fewest number of international students hailed from Australia and the Pacific island nations. In March 2018, there were only 6,944 students from the region studying in the United States, which is a 3 percent increase from March 2017. Ninety-five percent of students from this continent hail from its largest countries: Australia (4,872 students) and New Zealand (1,740 students).

## Europe

Europe is the second most popular continent of origin, and, like Asia, saw a slight decrease in the number of students coming to study in the United States. Over the course of the reporting year, Europe sent 933 fewer students. As illustrated in Figure 4, the decline in students from Sweden (-463), Switzerland (-210), Russia (-180) and Norway (-168) outweighed the increase of students coming from Italy (+282), Spain (+209) and Albania (+118).



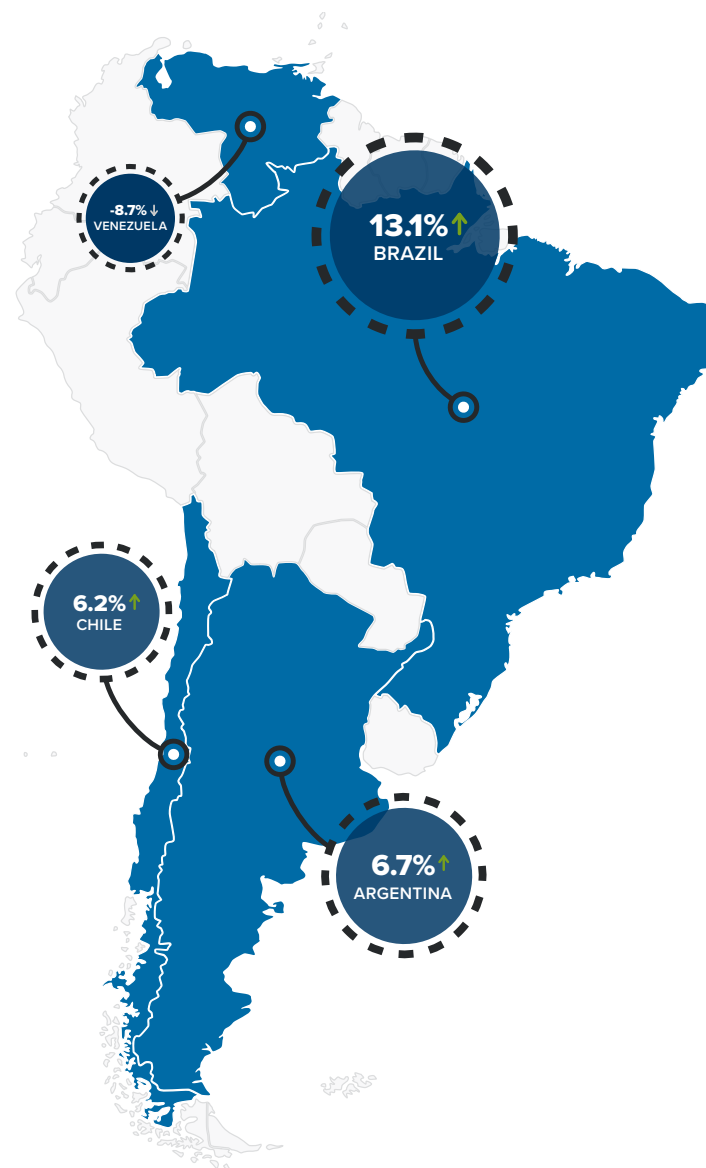
**FIGURE 4** – Above are the European countries that saw the greatest fluctuation in the number of students coming to the United States in the reporting period (March 2017 to March 2018). To explore more year-over-year comparisons from all over the world, please visit [Mapping SEVIS by the Numbers](#) on Study in the States.

## North America

North America saw the largest proportional decline of students coming into the United States to study. Specifically, the decline in the number of Mexican (-1,120) and Canadian (-357) students accounted for the overall continental trend. However, there were marginal gains in the number of students from some Latin American and Caribbean countries. Honduras sent 155 more students, which is a 7 percent increase from last year, and Cuba more than doubled its international student population by sending 25 more students.

## South America

Contrary to its northern counterpart, South American countries increased the number of students coming into the United States by the largest margin. As illustrated in Figure 5, rapid growth in Brazilian (+2,879), Argentine (+161) and Chilean (+157) student populations helped to counterbalance the 9 percent decrease (-1,079) in the number of Venezuelan students.



**FIGURE 5** – Above are the South American countries that saw the largest growth in the number of students coming to the United States in the reporting period (March 2017 to March 2018). To explore more year-over-year comparisons from all over the world, please visit [Mapping SEVIS by the Numbers](#) on Study in the States.

# Schools

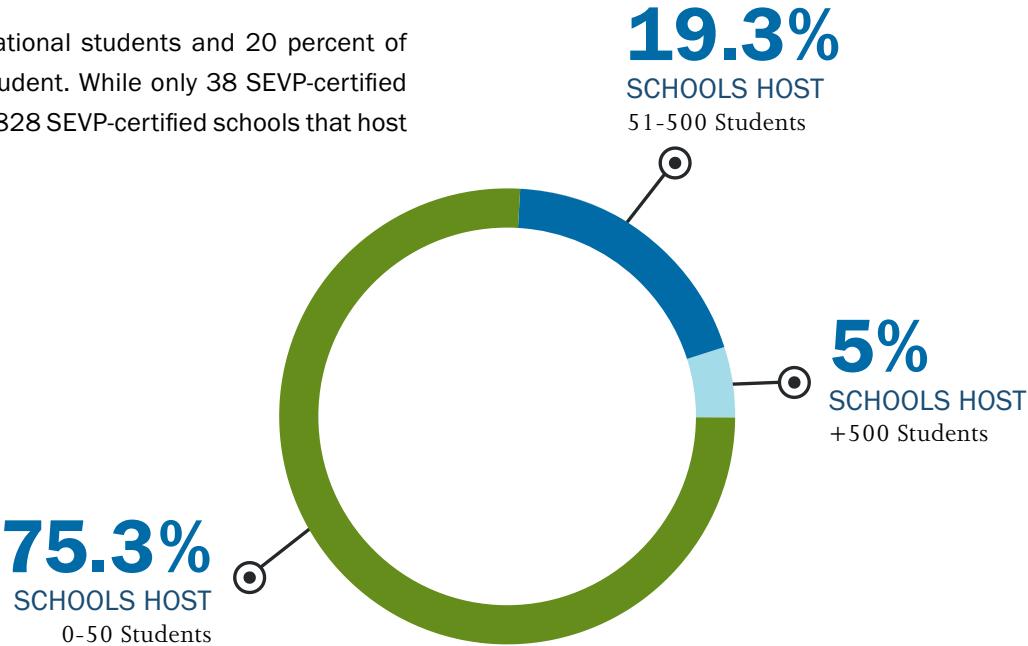
## Overview

F and M students must attend schools that are SEVP certified, and U.S. schools can obtain their SEVP certification from DHS to enroll only F-1 students, only M-1 students, or both F-1 and M-1 students.

As of March 5, 2018, there were 8,744 SEVP-certified schools in the United States, resulting in 28 fewer schools than March 2017. Eighty-five percent of SEVP-certified schools could enroll only F-1 students; 8 percent could enroll both F and M students; and 7 percent could enroll only M-1 students.

## Enrollment at SEVP-certified Schools

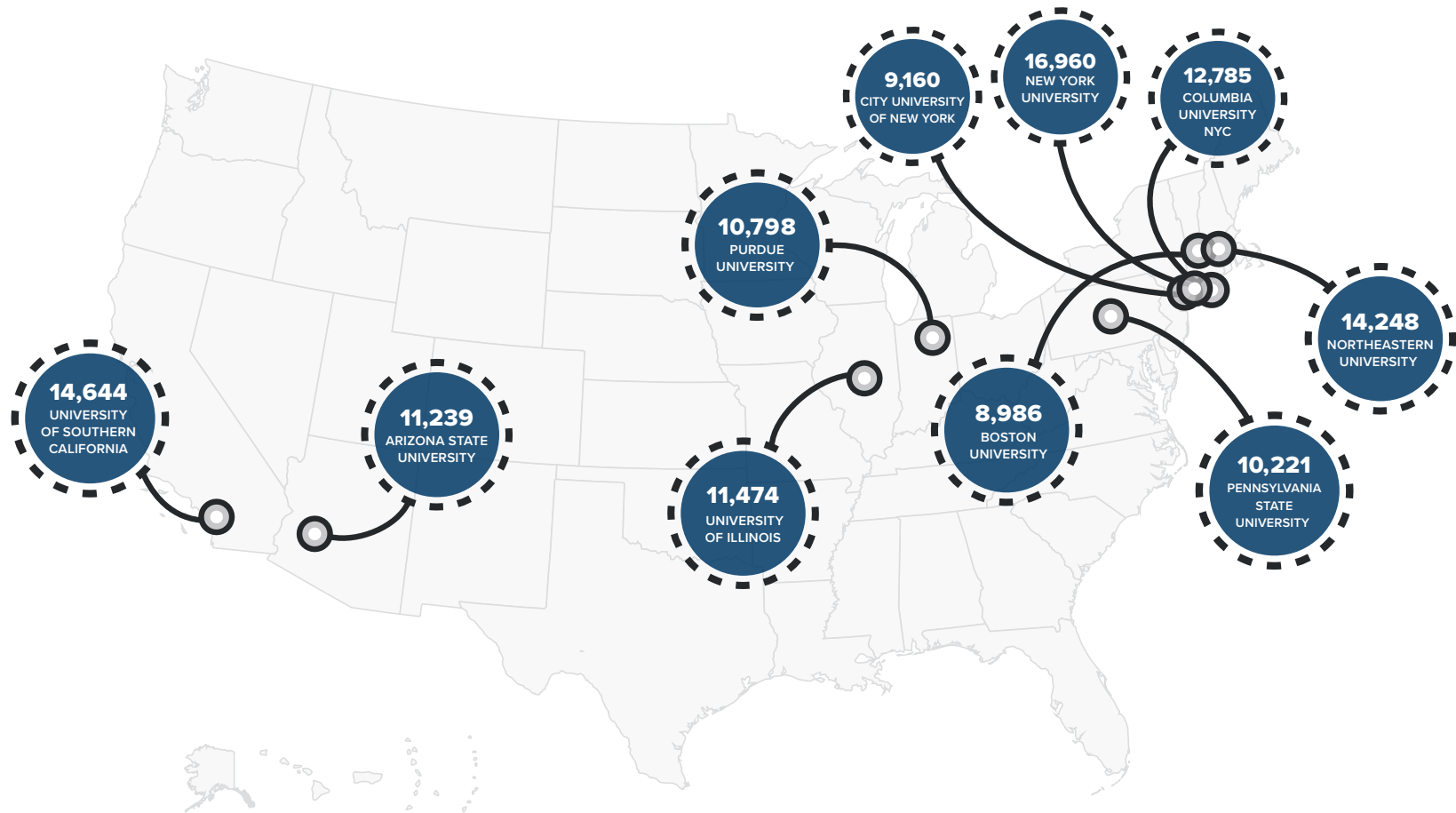
The majority of SEVP-certified schools hosted fewer than 50 international students and 20 percent of programs holding SEVP certification did not enroll a single F or M student. While only 38 SEVP-certified schools hosted more than 5,000 international students, there were 2,828 SEVP-certified schools that host between one and 10 international students.



Above is the breakdown of the number of schools by active student enrollment.

## F-1 Schools

Ninety-one percent of international students attended schools certified to enroll only F-1 students. The top 10 most popular F-1 programs hosted 10 percent of the entire international student population. Please refer to Figure 6 for a breakdown of these schools and the number of F-1 students enrolled.



**FIGURE 6** – Above are the 10 SEVP-certified schools that host the largest number of F-1 students in the United States.

## F-1 and M-1 Schools

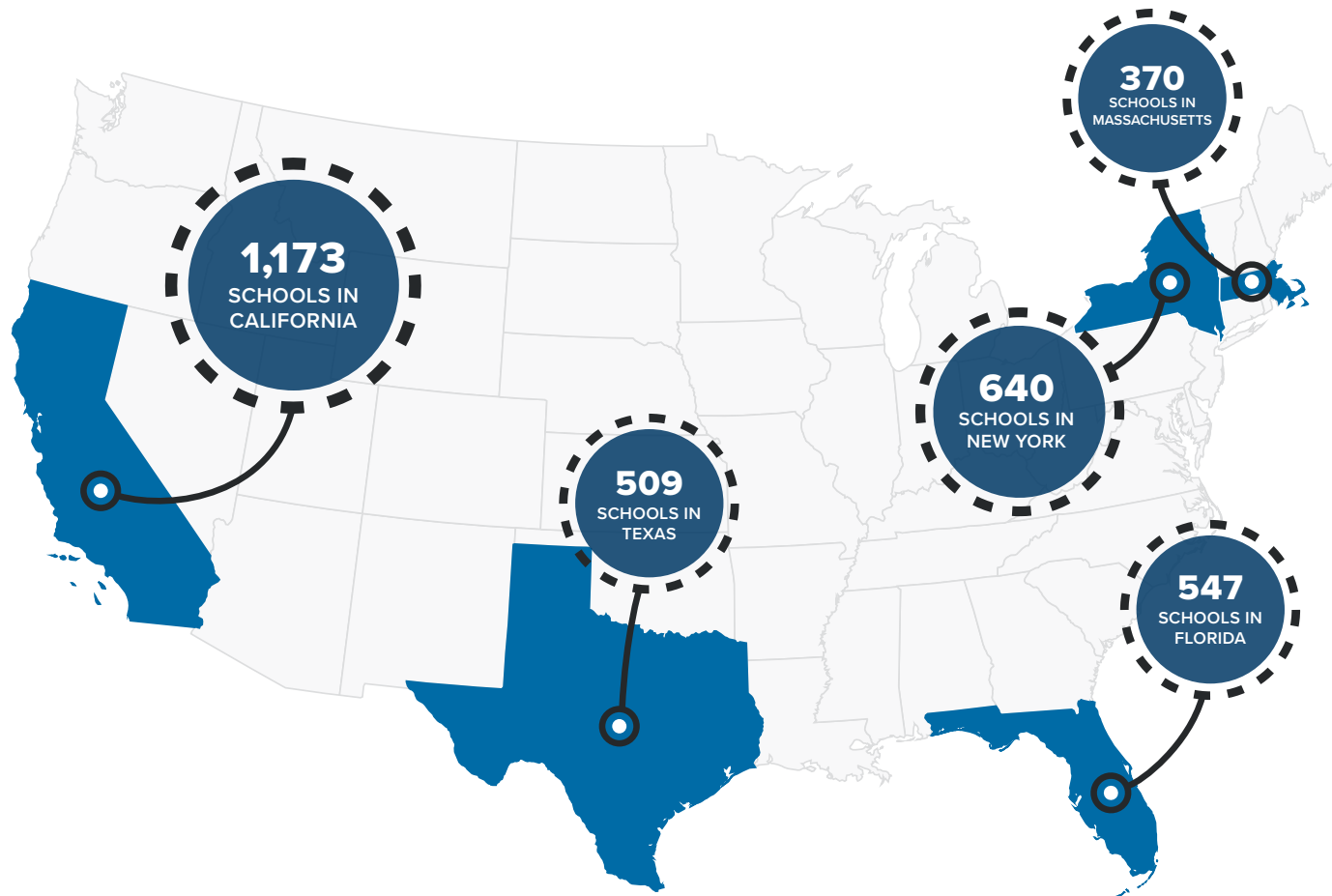
Eight percent of schools certified by SEVP can enroll both F-1 and M-1 students. These schools tend to have smaller student populations than their F-1-only counterparts. The top three schools in this category include: Cornell University (6,289 students), the Houston Community College System (4,762 students) and Santa Monica College (3,411 students).

## M-1 Schools

No U.S. school that is SEVP certified to enroll only M-1 students hosted more than 1,000 international students, and more than half of the certified M-1 schools did not enroll any international students. Of the 328 schools that hosted M-1 students, the average enrollment was around 24 students.

## Location of SEVP-certified Schools

Although there are SEVP-certified schools throughout the United States and its territories, more than a third are in five U.S. states. California alone is home to 13 percent of all SEVP-certified schools and increased by 12 certified schools during the reporting period. Other states that saw an uptick in the number of certified schools were Virginia (+15), Texas (+9), New Hampshire (+5) and Michigan (+5).



**FIGURE 7** – Above are the five U.S. states that have the largest number of SEVP-certified schools and programs. For a comprehensive list of all the SEVP-certified schools in the United States, please visit the [School Search tool](#) on Study in the States.



# States and Territories

## Overview

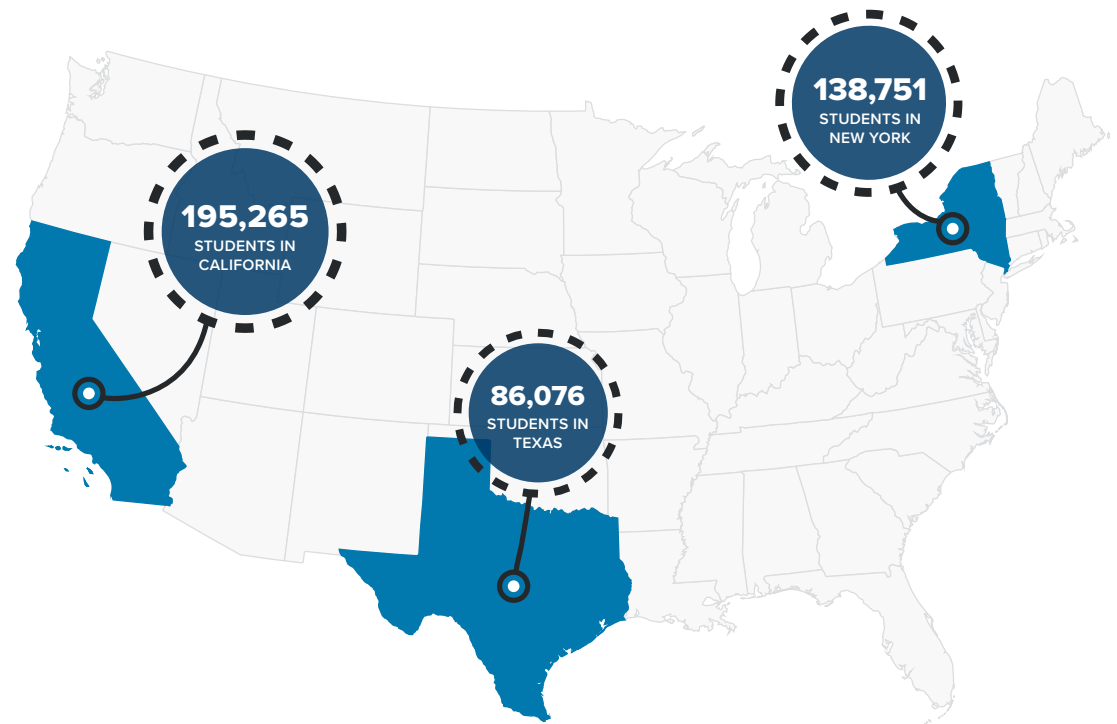
F and M students study across the United States and its territories. However, 99 percent of F and M students were enrolled in schools within the continental United States. California, New York and Texas hosted the largest number of students and together welcomed 35 percent of the entire student population.

## International Students Across the United States

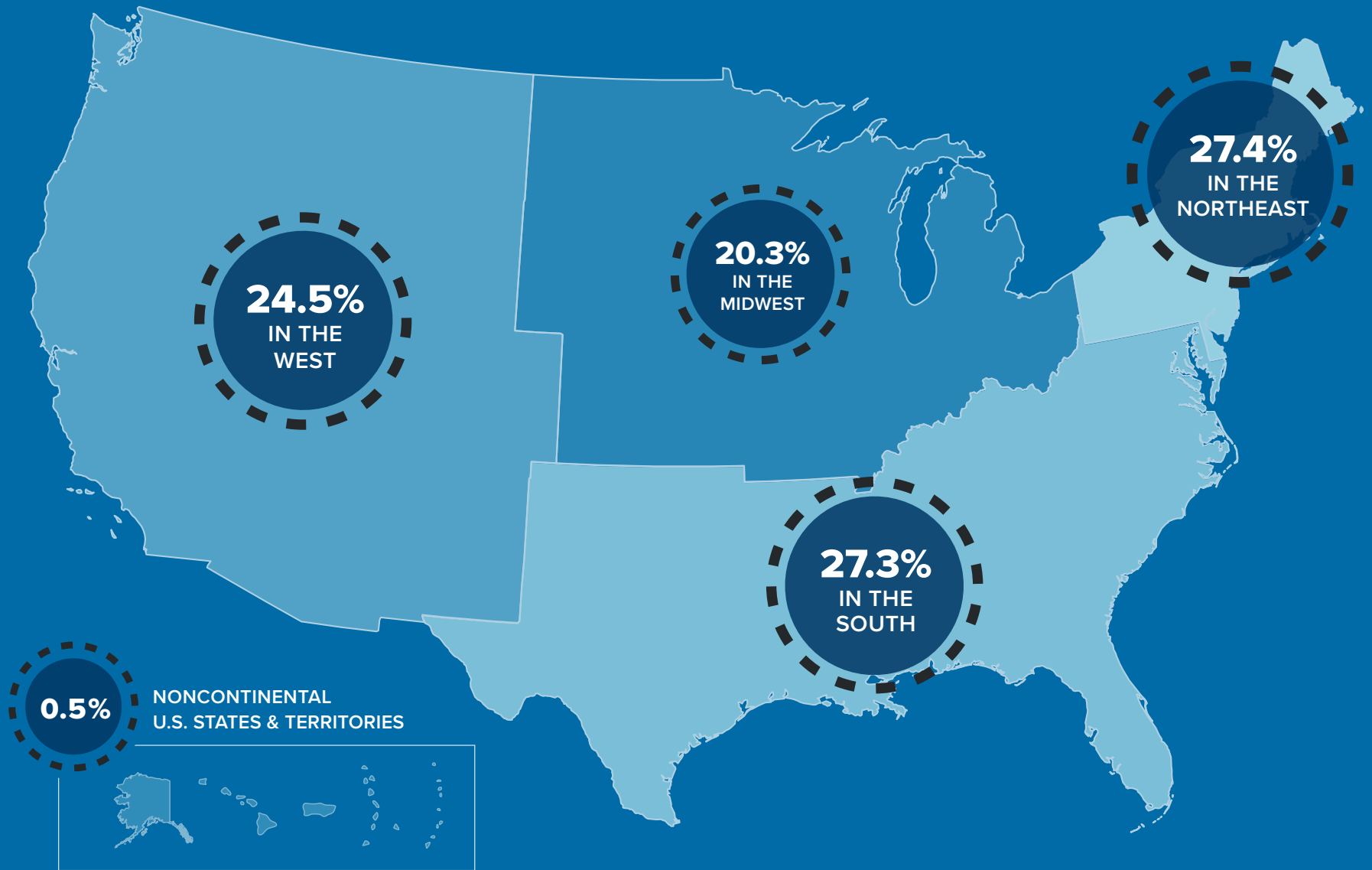
Of the four major regions within the continental United States, the Northeast and South hosted the largest number of F and M students and were the only two regions to experience growth over the reporting year. The Northeast welcomed 2 percent (+7,112) more F and M students, while the international student population in the South grew by less than a percentage point (+2,075).

Although the Midwest saw a decline of between 1 and 2 percent (-3,716), the Western region saw the steepest drop and welcomed nearly 4 percent fewer students (-11,631). The noncontinental U.S. states and territories also hosted about 8 percent fewer students (-488) in March 2018 than it did in March 2017. For more information about the distribution of international students throughout the country, please refer to Figure 9.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Groupings based on the [U.S. Census regions](#), except for Hawaii and Alaska which are grouped in the noncontinental U.S. States & Territories category for the purposes of this report.



**FIGURE 8** – Above are the U.S. states that host the largest number of F and M students.



**FIGURE 9** — Above is the percentage of students studying in each U.S. region. For more demographic information about students studying in the U.S. states, please visit [Mapping SEVIS by the Numbers on Study in the States](#).

## International Students in the Northeast

As of March 5, 2018, the nine Northeastern states hosted a total of 329,164 F and M students. Eighty-three percent of the international students studying in the Northeast pursued a post-secondary degree. Specifically, master's degree-seeking students were the largest (119,040 students) and fastest growing population (+5 percent) in the region.

Maine was the only state in the region to experience a dip in the number of international students compared to the previous year (-55), while Massachusetts saw the greatest increase (+3,225) and fastest growth (+5 percent increase). Massachusetts also saw a nearly 10 percent increase in the number of international students pursuing a master's degree (+2,348) and was home to the second largest international student population in the region (73,859) behind New York.

## International Students in the South

The 16 southern U.S. states and District of Columbia hosted 328,782 F and M students. The region was also home to Kentucky, the state that saw the largest growth in the reporting year. However, sharp declines in the popular states of Virginia (-3,058), Texas (-1,929) and Oklahoma (-993) thwarted the region's overall growth.



**THE SOUTHERN STATES**  
Below are the three southern states that had the sharpest decline in their international student population:



VIRGINIA  
**-10.9%**



OKLAHOMA  
**-8.5%**



TEXAS  
**-2.2%**

## Kentucky

Kentucky's F and M student population grew by more than 70 percent (+6,299), a growth rate 14 times faster than the District of Columbia, which had the second fastest growth rate (+5 percent, +598).

Interestingly, students seeking bachelor's degrees in Kentucky declined (-310) but the gains in students seeking post-graduate degrees (+6,777) outweighed this dip. With this increase, 73 percent of international students in Kentucky sought post-graduate degrees, as compared to March 2017 when only 49 percent of the international students in Kentucky sought post-graduate degrees.

BACHELOR'S DEGREE-SEEKERS

**-8.8%** ↓

DOCTORATE DEGREE-SEEKERS

**13.4%** ↑

MASTER'S DEGREE-SEEKERS

**200.4%** ↑

*Above are the growth/decline rates of degree-seeking international students studying in Kentucky.*

Specifically, 6,636 more students pursued master's degrees this year in Kentucky than last year, bringing the total number of F-1 master's candidates to 9,948. Around 84 percent of these students attended either the University of the Cumberlands (4,476 students) or Campbellsville University (3,816 students).

## International Students in the Midwest

The Midwest saw between a 1 and 2 percent decline in the number of F and M students studying there, with eight of the 12 states in the region seeing a dip over the reporting period. Specifically, Missouri (-1,408), Ohio (-923) and Indiana (-586) saw the greatest reduction in their international student populations.

While doctorate degrees increased in popularity (+1,278) throughout the region, the number of students seeking bachelor's degrees (-2,018) and master's degrees (-815) decreased. The state that felt this phenomenon the most was Missouri, which experienced an 8 percent decrease (-670) in the number of F-1 students seeking bachelor's degrees and about a 7 percent decrease (-785) in F-1 students seeking master's degrees.

## International Students in the West

The West saw the largest absolute (-11,634) decline in the number of international students studying in the region.

This decline was due to the dip in international students studying in the region's most popular state, California (-9,293). Specifically, California saw an 11 percent decrease (-6,530) in the number of F-1 students seeking master's degrees. Oregon also saw a large decrease (-892) in its international student population, due in part to declining interest among students seeking bachelor's degrees (-512). While California and Oregon saw the largest absolute decreases in the number of international students, Montana saw the biggest proportional decline by hosting 145 fewer students in March 2018 than it did in March 2017.



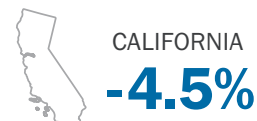
### THE MIDWESTERN STATES

Below are the three midwestern states that had the sharpest decline in their international student population:



### THE WESTERN STATES

Below are the three western states that had the sharpest decline in their international student population:



## International Students Outside the Continental United States

Only 5,905 international students studied outside the continental United States and 83 percent of these students studied in either Hawaii or Puerto Rico. Every state and territory in the region experienced a decline in F and M participation, but Hawaii (-240) and Puerto Rico (-147) experienced the most substantial losses.



**OUTSIDE THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES**  
Below are the two noncontinental regions that had the sharpest decline in their international student population:





U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

Explore more international student data by visiting the [Mapping SEVIS by the Numbers tool](#) on [Study in the States](#).