

HOMESICKNESS IN THE MODERN AGE: INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS CRAVE THE SOUNDS OF HOME

- **Even with virtual family dinners and message app hangouts with friends, 74 per cent of international students say it's the sounds of home they miss the most**
- **Yet despite the initial challenges of moving overseas, they overwhelmingly agree that studying abroad has a positive, lasting impact (99 per cent)**
- **HSBC has created *Sounds of Home* - a series of global soundscapes for Apple Music, Deezer, IMVU, iTunes, Musical.ly designed to transport international students back to their home countries**

From keeping a seat at the table for virtual family dinners, to staying up to date on the lives of friends, research by HSBC shows the majority of international students are using technology like video calls, Instagram, WeChat and WhatsApp (97 per cent) to connect with friends and family – but this doesn't stop them missing home. 55% of them use Whatsapp or video calls, 50% - Facebook and 21% - WeChat to stay in contact.

92 per cent of international students say that they miss the familiarities of home while studying overseas, with almost six in 10 (57 per cent) saying it's the sensory experience they miss most, and three quarters (74 per cent) specifically missing the sounds of their hometown. International students identified the sound of people talking in their native language (50 per cent), the hustle and bustle of local markets (26 per cent), the rumble of public transport (25 per cent), and birds, insects or native animals (20 per cent) are among the sounds that international students say they are most likely to miss.

To help international students as they venture abroad to achieve their ambitions feel connected to home, HSBC has released Sounds of Home, global soundscapes, crowd-sourced and created by international influencers who studied abroad. The tracks are available on Apple Music, Deezer, IMVU, iTunes, Musical.ly platforms. HSBC also captured the process behind recording and compiling these evocative sounds. To see more go to [youtube](#).

While moving overseas is an exciting adventure for students which they say has a positive, lasting impact (99 per cent), it can take some adjusting to. Two in five (43 per cent) international students feel homesick at least once a week or more, nearly half (49 per cent) believe missing family and friends has impacted their academic performance, and for two in five (40 per cent), being away from home has affected their ability to get a good night's sleep.

Homesickness is particularly prominent late at night, specifically between the hours of 10pm to 12am.

Baroness Susan Greenfield, former fellow at The University of Oxford and CEO of Nero-Bio Ltd said:

"International students were born into a connected, digital era, but the majority still miss their familiar lifestyles in the real world. Whilst it's reassuring that this young generation is not living in a cyber parallel universe, the challenge is how to off-set the absence of family, friends, location, and language, in tangible new ways.

"Sounds and smells are - more than the other three senses - the most pervasive and the least contextual. Perhaps sounds are so important in homesickness because they are hard to encapsulate in a specific, single memory, and play a bigger role in our

on-going consciousness. Sound also allows room for imagination, conjuring up in your mind a personal scenario. This means sound can be used to good effect to induce a sense of personal well-being.”

Despite facing a range of challenges, including setting up a bank account in their country of study (35 per cent) and setting aside enough money to be able to travel home (40 per cent), independence and new experiences are most commonly seen as benefits of studying abroad (60 per cent). 84 per cent of international students believe they have not only gained new skills but have also become stronger people.

Paul Edgar, HSBC Bank Armenia Chief Executive Officer, said, “Exploring new opportunities while studying abroad is exciting and fun. It sets you up with greater confidence and a new take on the world. However, it also brings back all the memories from family and friends as you immerse yourself in a whole new environment. As someone who has lived and worked abroad, I know what it’s like to feel homesick.

Sounds of Home was created to help international students to feel connected to their hometowns. By listening to familiar sounds, they feel closer to their loved ones. Besides the financial guidance that HSBC provides to international students, it is another way of helping them find their own way through this challenging experience and make the most of their study.”

The number of Armenian students abroad grows

As of 2018 there were 206 Armenian students (92¹ undergraduate and 114² Master’s students) in Russia, Georgia, Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, China and Jordan within intergovernmental programmes. In 2017 there were only 183 Armenian students abroad within intergovernmental programmes³. According to Hripsime Manulkyan, coordinator of FLEX programme in Armenia, the US government offers cultural and educational exchange programmes, this year hosting more than 40 Armenian students in different states of the USA.

In 2018, Erasmus+, the EU’s programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe, gave an opportunity for 261⁴ Armenian and foreign students to exchange universities. Armenians studied in various European countries, mostly at Polish, Spanish and Italian universities. Armenia hosted foreign students at Yerevan State University, Armenian National Agrarian University, and Armenian State University of Economics⁵.

Armenia attracts foreign students mainly from Russia, India and Georgia⁶. In 2018-2019 academic year, there were 2925⁷ foreign students in public, and 1370⁸ students in private educational institutions of Armenia. Last year, 217 Armenians mainly from Russia, Georgia and Syria⁹ came to their homeland to earn a bachelor’s degree. The proportion of foreign students in master’s programmes is relatively low: only 308¹⁰ foreign students mastering social sciences, business and law in 2018.

¹ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2018_6.pdf_p.296

² https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2018_6.pdf_p.307

³ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2018_6.pdf

⁴ <https://erasmusplus.am/statistics/>

⁵ https://erasmusplus.am/home/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/ICM-2018_Armenian-HEIs.pdf

⁶ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2018_6.pdf_p.229

⁷ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2018_6.pdf_p.229

⁸ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2018_6.pdf_p.236

⁹ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2018_6.pdf_p.217

¹⁰ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2018_6.pdf_p.304

Note to Editors

The Sounds of Home is an independent consumer research study into the experience of international students commissioned by HSBC. It provides authoritative insights into the emotional toll of moving to a new country as a student and explores perceptions of homesickness and living in an unfamiliar country.

The findings represent the views of 897 international students from 11 countries and territories: Australia, mainland China, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, UK and USA.

The research is based on a sample of students aged 17 - 29 years old who are current international students or who have studied abroad in the last 5 years and was conducted between 12th June 2019 and 24th June 2019.

HSBC Holdings plc

HSBC Holdings plc, the parent company of the HSBC Group, is headquartered in London. HSBC serves customers worldwide from offices in 65 countries and territories in our geographical regions: Europe, Asia, North America, Latin America, and Middle East and North Africa. With assets of US\$2,751bn at 30 June 2019, HSBC is one of the world's largest banking and financial services organisations.

HSBC in Armenia

HSBC Bank Armenia cjsc was established in 1996. The bank is a joint venture between the HSBC Group, which has 70 per cent ownership, and a member of overseas Armenian business with 30 per cent ownership. HSBC Armenia serves around 30 000 customers through eight offices located in Yerevan and around 392 employees. As of 31 December 31, 2018, the bank has assets of AMD 268 billion including the ones, allocated with the mediation of the HSBC Holdings plc.

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