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## **How international are the 10th grade students at ISL?**

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## Introduction:

According to the IB (International Baccalaureate): “international-mindedness is a view of the world in which people see themselves connected to the global community and assume a sense of responsibility to its members. It is an awareness of the inter-relatedness of all nations and peoples, and a recognition of the complexity of these relationships.” (Muller) Although an abstract concept, internationalism and international mindedness are something that are vital in our globalizing world, as we learn to work together with different cultures, people, and communities. Having “an awareness of the inter-relatedness of all nations and people”, is important for everybody whether it is a politician, a teacher, or even a student.

The international school of Luxembourg says that it “provides an outstanding education and inspire our students to engage in both academic and enriching co-curricular programmes.” ISL is not a normal school in Luxembourg however, it is an international one, and international schools are schools who adopt a “curriculum that is not the national curriculum of the country it is located in. Instead, it may offer an international curriculum”. (Richards)

If ISL prides itself in its outstanding education by offering an international curriculum, it is implied that they are in turn making their students become more international; a more internationally minded person. Hence, it would be important to measure if this curriculum, this way of schooling is beneficial to students, and to analyse if it has any effect on student’s internationalism, and if so, to what extent.

## Research question and hypothesis

In this investigation, I will be exploring and investigation 'how international the 10th grade students are at ISL'.

I hypothesize that students are going to be very international.

This is because as an international school, we have a broad range of cultures and different nationalities. With 'close to 1400 students, fifty-four nationalities are found in the student population' ("Students"). Furthermore, because this school is located in Luxembourg, where '43% of inhabitants are foreign nationals' (Wolfensberger), and there are 3 official languages, part of the reason why the students are going to be so international, is because Luxembourg is so multicultural and multilingual. However, I think that people's perceived internationalism might be higher than an actual measurement of their internationalism because the international culture present in Luxembourg and at ISL might prompt people to think that they are more international than they actually are.

## Methodology

In this investigation, I surveyed 62 participants, and conducted a focus group composed of 8 people. The survey, which was sent out to all 10th grade students at ISL, was composed of 8 questions. This short number of questions ensured that participants

remained engaged and didn't experience 'survey fatigue'. In addition, 5 out of the 8 questions did not require the participant to write anything, streamlining the process and ensuring engagement. Moreover, we decided that in the survey, instead of allowing participants to check off boxes for their languages spoken, we made this a long answer, to make sure that nobody felt discriminated if their language wasn't listed in the list of possible answers; the same was done for countries lived in. The medium for this data collection approach was google forms, as it is easily sharable to our classmates, and because it can easily create graphs with the accumulated data.

For the focus group, the sampling was done using convenience as a sampling method as well as stratified sampling. The reason for convenience sampling was because I organised a focus group during lunchtime, meaning I had to include people who were free and willing to participate. Moreover however, in the survey, there was approximately an equal number of males and females (33 males vs 29 females out of 62). As a result, to replicate this, the 8 person focus group was comprised of 4 females and 4 males. The focus group was conducted in the library to ensure a quiet place (which improved the ability to record audio, but also made it a calmer place for respondents) and I asked open-ended questions addressing everybody. As soon as somebody started to speak, I would stand back and take notes based on what people would say in response to one-another. When I saw that the discussion went to a particular direction, I would ask a follow-up questions to allow respondents to either clarify or solidify their stance. The medium chosen for this was face-to-face.

Moreover, in this investigation, the respondent's self assessment of their internationalism is compared against our own metric of internationalism. The IB describes an international person as being a member of a "global community" (Muller), which is why we made the metric based on 3 factors: languages spoken, countries lived in (for more than 2 months), and national affiliation (number of passports held)

$$\frac{(N_L \times \frac{\sum P}{3} \times N_\alpha) + N_\varphi + (N_\tau \times N_\theta)}{R} = I$$

Where:

**Language factors:**

- $N_L$  is number of languages spoken
- $P$  is the proficiency rating for each language spoken
- $N_\alpha$  is the number of language families their languages are in

**National affiliation:**

- $N_\varphi$  is the number of passports held

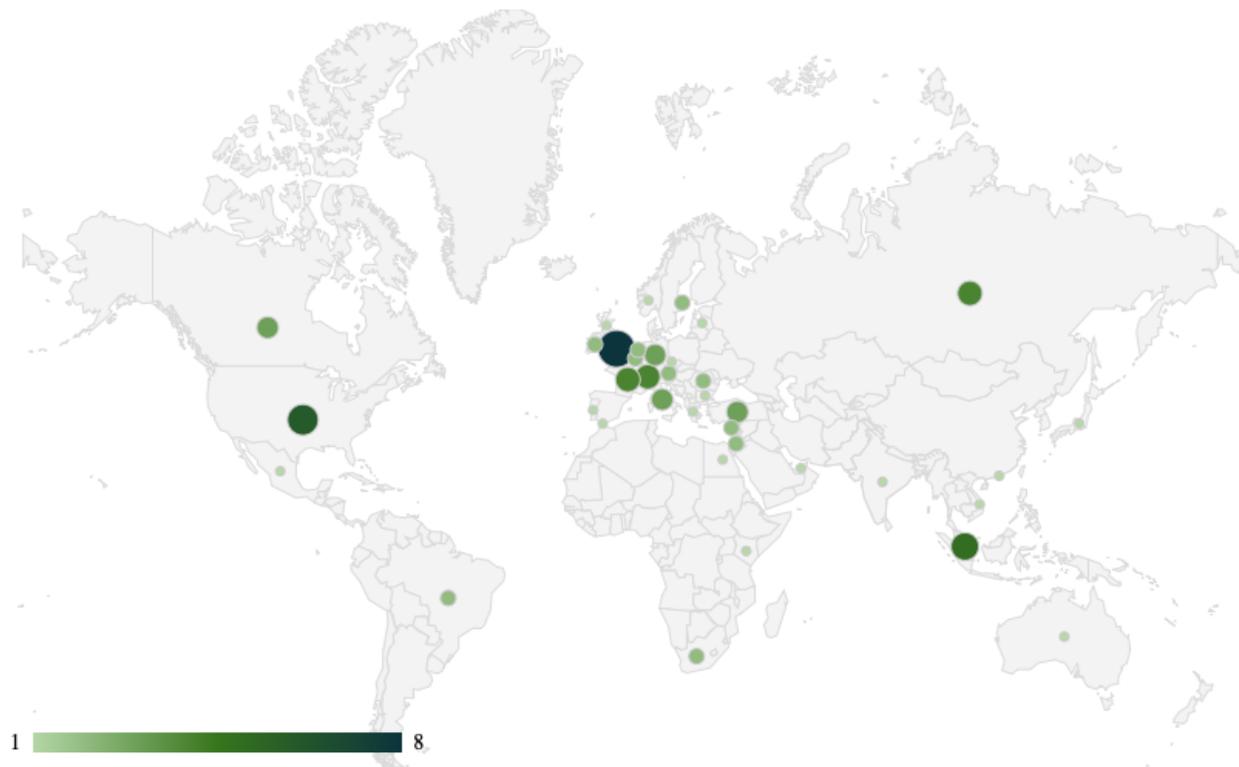
**Geographical factors:**

- $N_\tau$  is the number of countries you have lived in
- $N_\theta$  is the number of continents spanned

The reason for using these 3 subsections is because we felt that this is what made a

person international. Hence, the reason for using addition as opposed to subtraction was to ensure that all of the 3 subsections had equal weight. Moreover, the reason for dividing the sum of proficiencies by 3, was because this was the maximum proficiency for a given language. Hence, by dividing the sum of proficiencies, we are given a single number which summarizes the 'true' number of languages somebody speaks. For example, although a person may speak four languages at a level 1, this doesn't show true commitment to learning a language, hence, it can be said that they fully speak 1.33 languages ( $4/3$ ). This gives a more accurate representation of how many languages a person truly speaks. Although it may be argued that speaking four languages at a level 1 makes somebody international, we have taken this into account by accounting for the language families that a person speaks. This ensures that even though somebody might not speak a language very well, if they speak languages from many language families, it shows that they have an international mindset. Finally, in order to convert the score into a 10 point scale (to compare it to their 10 point scale evaluation), we divided by the highest scorer and multiplied by 10.

## Data analysis



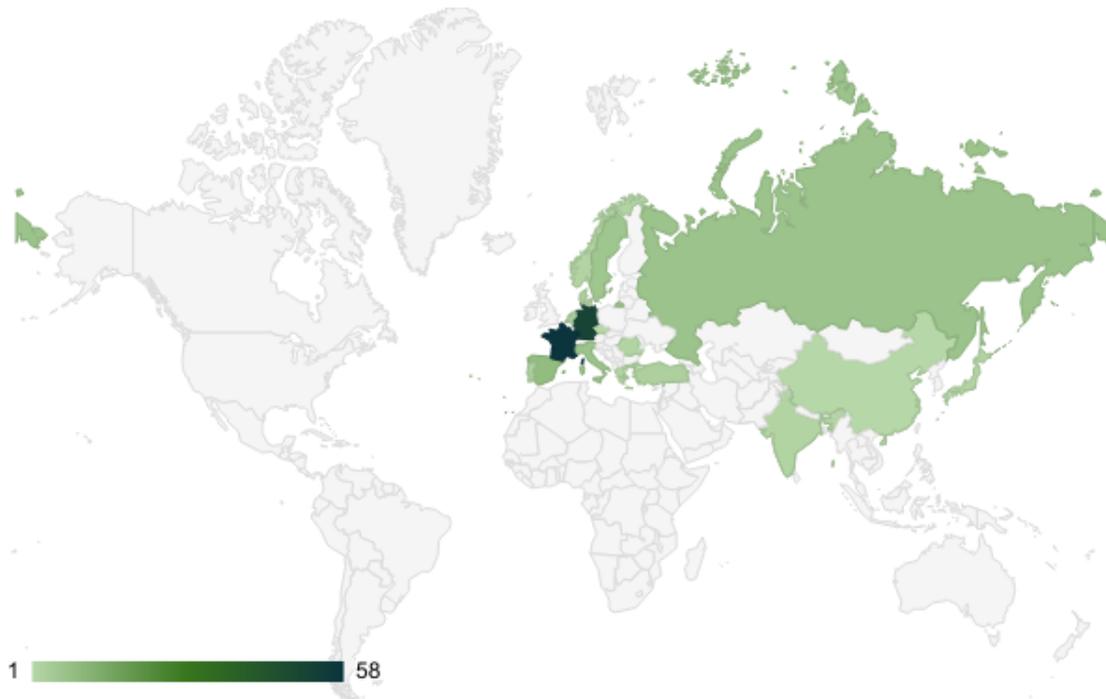
**Figure 1: Places in which students have lived in for more than 2 months (62 students total)**

Belgium	2	hong kong	1
USA	6	ireland	2
Russia	4	austria	2
italy	3	vietnam	1
Singapore	5	abu dhabi	1
japan	1	india	1
australia	1	sweden	2
norway	1	portugal	1
switzerland	4	cyprus	2
greece	1	latvia	1
germany	3	bulgaria	1
france	4	gibraltar	1
czech republic	1	canada	3
turkey	3	romania	2
Netherlands	2	United Kingdom	9
Israel	2	egypt	1
brazil	2		
kenya	1		
south africa	2		
mexico	1		

Fig. 1 aims to display a cartographical representation of the countries in which students have lived in for more than 2 months. It also acts as a choropleth map, where the darker pins indicate areas where more students have lived in.

In total, 10th grade students at ISL have lived in 72 different countries. Although this may seem like an impressive number, 35 out of these 72 countries are located in Europe (48.6%). Hence, although 10th grade students could be seen as having lived in a broad range of countries, the countries that they have lived in, are nearly half of the time only based in Europe. As such, this results in a very euro-centric and european perspective of the world for 10th graders. This idea is reinforced when a member of a focus group was quoted as saying that “a person that has only lived in Europe can’t really be classified as international as they have only experienced european culture”. This implies that when living in europe, no matter how many countries, you don’t really develop different identities; you don’t develop an international identity. Instead, you develop more of a european identity. In fact, this belief isn’t only held at ISL or Luxembourg, but also across all of Europe. The European Policies Research centre conducted a survey to groups of people in EU member states, and asked them ‘what they see themselves as’. In the past decade, the number of people who identified themselves as being European as well as their nationality grew by more than 10 % (from 41% to 51%) (*European Policies 10*). Hence, it is clear that there is a trend of people seeing themselves as being european. However, this hampers student’s internationalism, as according to the IB, ‘Internationally-minded people appreciate and value the diversity of cultures in the world’ (Muller). Because of this trend, people are

increasingly turning a blind eye to national identities, instead, migrating towards the european identity; something that doesn't show appreciation for the diversity of cultures in the world.



**Figure 2: Map showing the languages spoken (i.e, if you speak Russian, Russia was colored in) ; (62 respondents)**

**English was omitted, as it would obscure the map and make the color differences harder to see.**

Germany	51	Italy	7
France	58	China	1
Russia	7	Japan	2
Luxembourgish	8	India	2
Greece	2	Portugal	3
Czech republic	1	Romania	2
Norway	2	Latin	1
Sweden	6	Turkey	3
Denmark	3		
Netherlands	3		

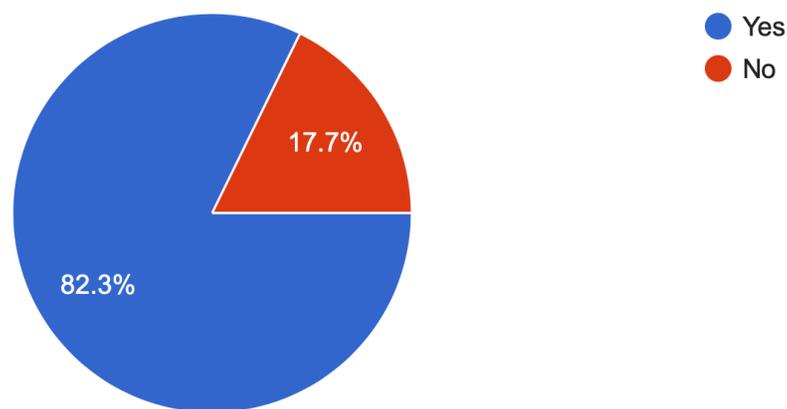
Fig. 2 aims to display a cartographical representation of the languages that students can speak. It also acts as a choropleth map, where the darker areas indicate where more students speak that language.

In fig. 1, the topic of European identity was discussed and in this case, according to the journal of education sciences, “one of the characteristics of European identity is speaking mostly Indo-European languages.” (Domilescu and Lungoci 58) When looking at fig. 2, it is clear that the languages spoken are predominantly European. Out of the 62 respondents, only 12.9% (8) of them spoke a language classified as non Indo-European. Furthermore, when prompted by the question of whether “a person that speaks French, German, English, Norwegian, Swedish and Danish (all of which are Indo-European languages) is more international than somebody who speaks Chinese, Hebrew and French,” they responded by saying “no, because they [the second person] have a much more global reach of different languages and cultures; they are also more open-minded.” This is an interesting observation, because even though the first person spoke twice as many languages as the second, the focus group felt that it didn’t show somebody who had a global appreciation for different cultures and languages. This links back to the thought that speaking only Indo-European languages gives you a European identity instead of a global, international one. Moreover, they pointed out that the cultures are vastly different and added that the person is more ‘open-minded’ than the first one. This is similar to the IB which also defines international mindedness as being ‘open-minded about the common humanity of all people’. (Swetz 17) When looking at the map, it is clear that the languages spoken are very Euro-centered, with French and German being spoken by 93% and 82% respectively. However, even though this gives students a European identity, it doesn’t necessarily mean that students aren’t open-minded since they haven’t learned other languages. The biggest reason as to why

French and German is spoken by students is because it is mandatory, hence, students don't have a choice about whether they want to learn it or not, meaning that although it might not make them international as they don't interact with "vastly different cultures", student's potential tendency to be open-minded and wanting to learn new cultures could make them international.

Would you want to learn a new language in the future?

62 responses



**Figure 3: The number of students wanting to learn a new language in the future.**

Fig. 3 displays the percentage of people wanting to learn a new language in the future with blue being yes and red indicating no.

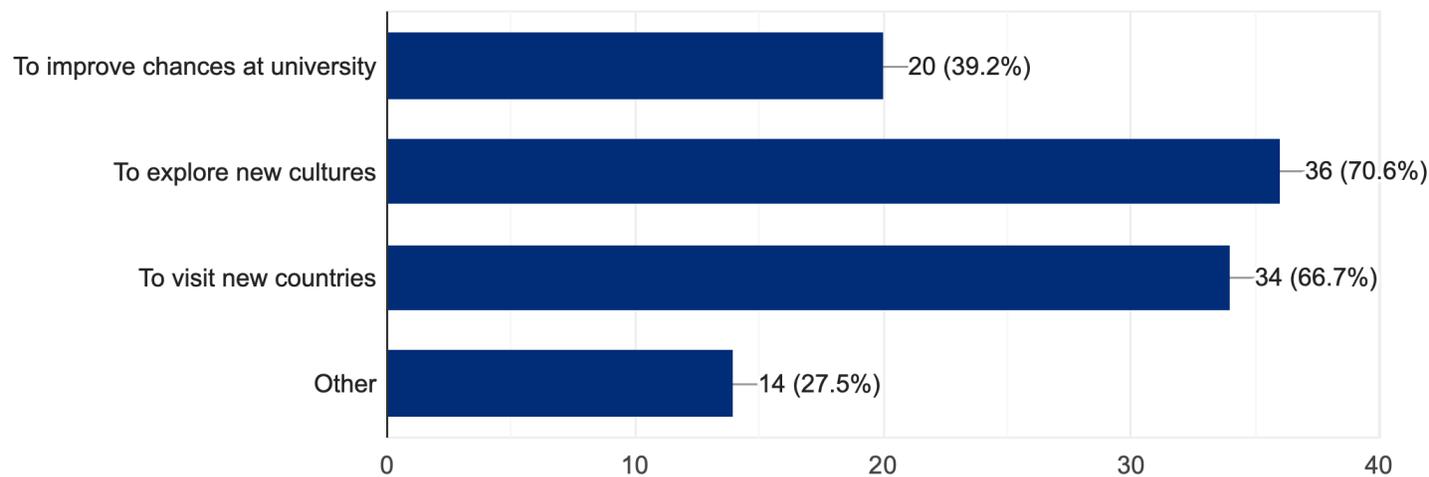
In fig. 3, it is clear that a majority of students are willing to learn a new language (82.3%), showing their open-mindedness to learn and discover new cultures, something that the focus group mentioned was a "byproduct" of learning a new language.

Moreover, when prompted by the question "which language is the most beneficial to

learn if you were to learn a new language”, the focus group explained how beneficial wasn’t the right word to use when describing which one is better to learn. They explained how one should rather look at “expanding their horizons” and trying to explore as many “different cultures” as possible, instead of simply learning norwegian danish and swedish “because it looks impressive on your resumé, when in fact, they are very similar”. Fig. 3 shows the willingness of students to acquire and develop their linguistic abilities, however, unfortunately, this is once again limited by the courses offered at ISL, which apart from French and German (see fig. 2), is Spanish. Even though the students indirectly want to become more international, they are bounded by what is offered by the school. Hence, what was suggested in the analysis of figure 2 can be confirmed by figure 3; although it might not make them international as they aren’t able to learn new languages that are vastly different culturally, student’s open-mindedness and wanting to learn new cultures makes them international. In fact, this isn’t only a problem at ISL, but also in the international school “Yamato College” in Japan, where teachers argued that “pupil-generated multiculturalism is constrained within an ideologically narrow educational framework.” (Terry 13) It can therefore be said, that the available resources offered at schools are a limiting factor to internationalism not only at ISL but worldwide, and the reason, is because the education frameworks, and curriculums offered don’t necessarily reflect a truly international and multicultural one.

### Why would you consider learning a new language?

51 responses



**Figure 4: Reasons given for learning new languages (could select multiple)**

This question was asked to participants who responded yes to wanting to learn a new language and shows the explanations for why they would want to do so.

The most common reasons for learning a new language was to explore new cultures and to visit new countries, both which are attitudes which reflect an international mindset. This trend was also present in the focus group, where one participant explained that learning a language is beneficial because it allows you to “meet new people from different nationalities and cultures and be able to understand them better”. It can therefore be said that students at ISL are international, because their motives and reasons behind learning a new language shows curiosity for different cultures and people; elements which are once again part of the International Baccalaureate’s definition of international mindedness. Interestingly, a similar question was asked to 1st year university students at the Faculty of Letters of the West University of Timisoara. (Domilescu and Lungoci 64)

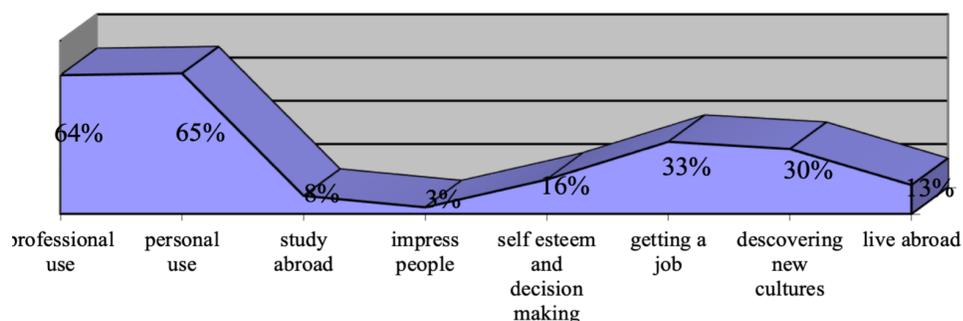


Figure 2: Reasons involved in the study of foreign languages

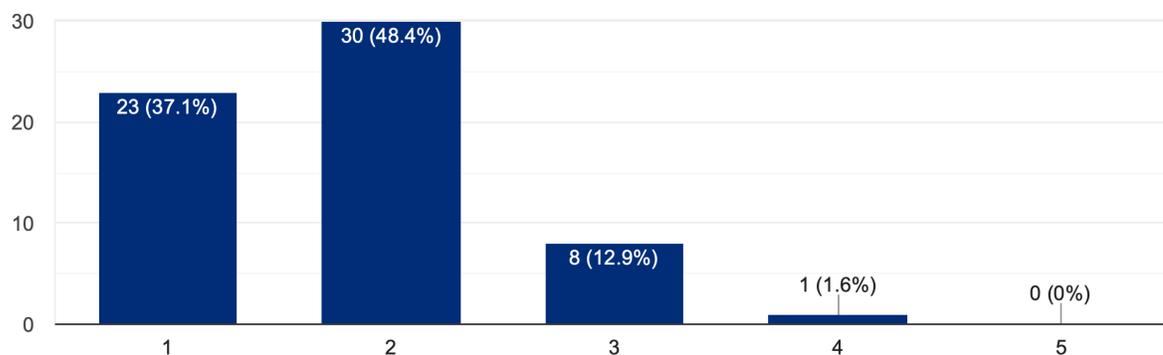
**Graph above taken from study; (Domilescu and Lungoci 65)**

When comparing both data, it is clear that ISL is much more internationally minded than the university in Romania. 70% wanted to learn a new language because it allows them to explore new cultures, whereas in Romania, only 30% wanted to do so. This is over double the number of people. Furthermore, this trend is confirmed when 67% of the respondents also felt that learning a language is important for being able to visit new countries, whereas in Romania, living abroad and wanting to study abroad (could be seen as counterpart to visiting abroad) is only 21%. Hence, ISL's percentage is 3 times higher. Moreover, in ISL's case, only 40% of respondents also said that they wanted to learn a language to increase chances of university acceptance. For high school students (at ISL), this is seen as more of a professional use in the context of university students (in Romania), so it can therefore be said that while 40% of ISL students mentioned that learning a language for professional purposes (such as university acceptance), 64% of students in Romania held that opinion, a 20% difference. This shows that ISL is more international than other education institutions around the world, as they view and appreciate the benefits of learning a language differently than others;

10th graders see learning a language primarily as an opportunity to become more international, whereas others see learning a language as a career advancement.

How many passports do you hold (select 5 for 5+)?

62 responses

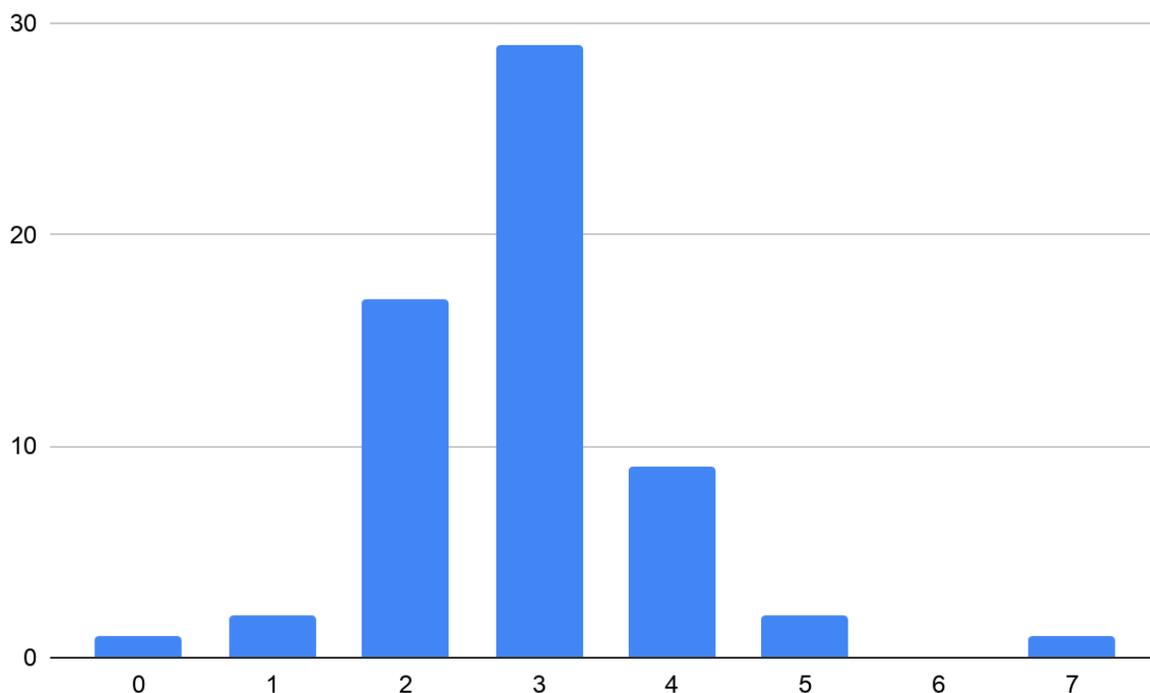


**Figure 5: Number of passports held per student.**

Fig 5 represents the number of passports held per student, and it is clear that the majority of students hold 1 or 2 passports (average is 1.8). Moreover, in a question where students had to explain why they were international, some said that it was because they had a lot of passports. Out of 62 people, 8 of the respondent's comments made a reference to having a passport. This is around 13%. Interestingly, although having n number of passports means that you have n number of different nationalities, it doesn't mean that you really know the culture that well, or have experienced it fully. An example is when looking at a specific respondent who used the explanation: "because having 3 nationalities is a lot I guess...". Along with that comment, the respondent gave themselves a rating of 10/10 for internationalism. Although this person may have 3

passports however, they have only lived in one country, Luxembourg. It is important to remember that passports can be acquired in many different ways, by naturalization, through your parents and etc... This means that somebody could have lived their whole life in 1 country could potentially have numerous nationalities, but because they have never lived there, they have never had the opportunity to really gain a deep understanding into our respective countries. Because the respondent rated themselves a 10 (the highest) it shows that they believe having a passport is a vital part of a person's internationalism. Due to the scenario given above, it is clear that one cannot solely base their internationalism on nationalities, but it raises the question about why people at ISL, some of whom have 4 passports, haven't had the opportunity to explore and really gain an understand of their respective nationalities and cultures. A possible reason could be that many of the students at ISL have parents that have jobs that require them to move. Hence, students aren't able to spend as much time or even any time in their respective countries. Interestingly, in a survey carried by ING, "87% of expats are happy they moved to Luxembourg" (Wiltgen); as result, parents of ISL students (most of which are expats as 43% of the population is foreigners) ("A Small"), are less likely to move to another country for a reason other than work, decreasing the chance of student's spending more time in their home countries. It can therefore be said that some students at ISL believe that passports play a role in internationalism, but this has also given them a false perception of what internationalism is. Although having multiple passport and having multiple nationalities should in theory make you international, when you have parents that are constantly moving around, or are simply not able to spend enough time in your countries, you will never be able to fully

understand/experience your respective cultures, meaning passports are in this case not an accurate representation of a student's internationalism.



**Figure 6: Number of languages spoken per student at ISL (62 respondents)**

This graph shows that the majority of students speak 2 or 3 languages (arithmetic average is 2.9). When looking at this number, it is rather impressive, as in Europe, although “54% are able to converse in one or more foreign languages,” only “10% are able to converse in at least 3 languages.” (Guy) In the 10th grade, 65% of people could speak at least 3 languages. This is a 55% difference compared to the EU average, so it is clear that 10th grade students are quite international. However, when looked at from a Luxembourgish perspective, it isn't quite as astonishing. In fact, on average, Luxembourgish nationals speak 4.3 languages, whereas non Luxembourgers, speak

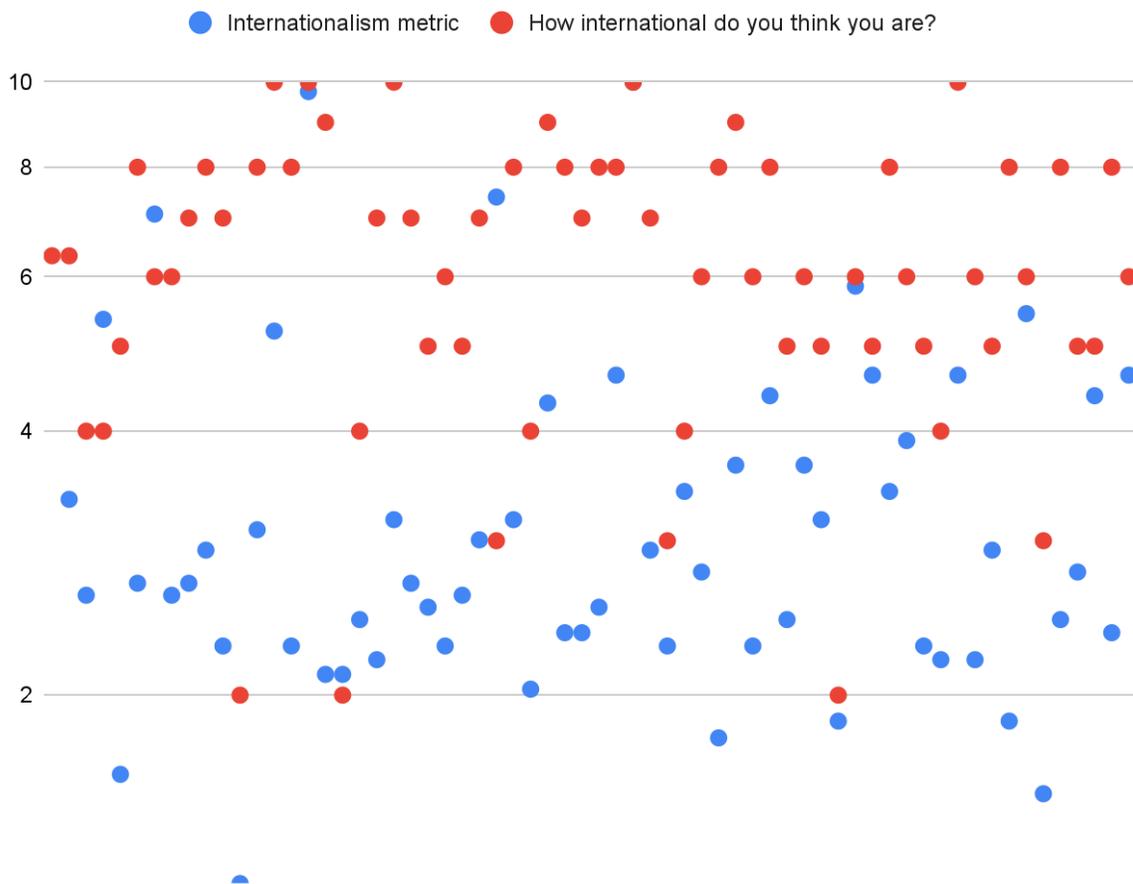
3.4. (Huberty) As a result, when assessing whether 10th graders are international, it is important to look at the bigger picture and to see who we are comparing them to. When looking at the data collected and found, it is clear that when 10th graders are compared to Luxembourg as a country, they aren't that international. However, when they are compared to the EU, it is clear that 10th grade students are very international.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, when looking at the data, it is absolutely clear that 10th graders at ISL are quite international, as they speak a high number of languages when compared to the EU's average, and have lived in many different countries. However, these indicators only apply when looking at internationalism from a specific perspective. In essence, although they may have a wide range of languages spoken and places lived in, these are predominantly European countries, hence giving them a European-centered or European identity. Going back to the IB's definition of internationalism or international mindedness, they explain that this "is a view of the world in which people see themselves connected to the global community" (Muller) and "an awareness of the inter-relatedness of all nations and peoples." (Muller) Because the majority of 10th graders have such a Euro-centered perspective, it is hard to have an awareness for "all nations and peoples", as they are constantly subject to a European "view of the world", and not an impartial and international one. However, although 10th grade students have a European view of the world, they are very interested and open-minded about pursuing and exploring different cultures by learning new languages for reasons other than career advancement. As such, although they might not be international due to their

physical traits (language and places lived); their drive for knowledge about countries around the world apart from the one they live in definitely makes them international. The term international is not a one-size fits all term; it has different sides to it that are often overlooked.

Additionally, something I noticed during this investigation is that people have mixed perceptions about what it means to be international (such as having passports is the best indicator for example). As such, using the formula described in the methodology, we calculated an index for each student with the information they provided in the survey and plotted a value out of 10 against their own self rating.



**Figure 7: The difference between students perception of their internationalism (red) versus their calculated index score (blue).**

The purpose of this graph was to see the difference between student's perception and their 'actual' internationalism. The clear trend is that their perceived internationalism was higher than their actual. Some of the possible reasons for this could be because of the international culture and atmosphere present in ISL, after all, it is called the 'International' school of Luxembourg. This could distort people's sense of actual internationalism and make them think they are more international than they actually are.

To answer the research question, although students at ISL have a eurocentric perspective of the world, when compared to people around the world, it is clear that they rank much higher in terms of internationalism. Coupled with their open-mindedness, 'international attitude' and desire to explore and learn about cultures, it is clear that they are very international.

## Evaluation

### **Approaches and sampling:**

When surveying, some of the questions weren't perfectly clear. An example is when we asked them how many languages they spoke, and instead of writing whole numbers, they wrote fractions. This meant we had to assume and decide what level they spoke (as we needed to use whole numbers), decreasing the accuracy of the data. To combat this, I decided to round every fraction to the whole number, but this would mean the data isn't 100% accurate. In the future, I will specify clearly, what they should do, but also to have more practice surveys to spot mistakes before they are found in production. Another issue I found, was that we didn't correctly give the answer selections. For example, when we asked respondents how many languages they speak, we left the option of 0, which obviously doesn't apply to anybody. By mistake, some clicked this field, meaning the quality of our data was affected.

For the focus group, on particular occasions, the audio wasn't clear enough to

transcribe, meaning that some words were inaudible. This meant that not only did it take longer time to decipher what was being said, but sometimes I might have understood something incorrectly. Another problem that I encountered was that sometimes I didn't have any prompts to ask them, so the discussion would come to a dead end and I wouldn't be able to develop it further. In the future, I will try to be better prepared and have a more detailed plan for the focus group.

Finally, creating a formula to measure internationalism, although it takes it literally, cannot define a person's internationalism as it is based on so many different factor. Part of the use of the formula was due to an unfocused research question which led our group to doing this. That is why in the future, I will make sure to have a solid and focused research question.

### **Variables**

The biggest variable that influenced the data was time, as it affected not only the quality of our data collection approaches, but also the quality of the manipulation and analysis of the data. Another variable that influenced the data was the conciseness of the research question. When I first started the project, the research question wasn't clear in my mind, and so it was difficult to get a good start early on. Because the research question wasn't so focused initially, it also meant that some of the focus group discussions were irrelevant, thus wasting valuable time that could have been used to explore another area in more depth.

## Improvements

- Start the whole process with a focused research question, but also with a plan for the whole project.
- Organize more 'dry runs' of surveys to spot mistakes early on so that the data is more accurate as you will get feedback from respondents. This is very important as something that might be extremely clear to you, might be extremely confusing for somebody else.
- Ensure that everything is audible when conducting interviews and focus groups (for example do a 30 second test run to make sure that you can hear and understand everything) ; make sure to listen to your text before you do another stage of the project, as the focus group discussion will be fresh in your mind, so if there is something you don't understand, you can either quickly ask for that person to repeat it, or try to recall what they said.

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