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2025 Students and Technology Report: Shaping the Future of Higher Education Through Technology, Flexibility, and Well-Being

by **Nicole Muscanell** and **Kristen Gay** Monday, April 14, 2025

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Credit: Canva Magic Studio AI

Introduction

The student experience in higher education is continually evolving, influenced by technological advancements, shifting student needs and expectations, evolving workforce demands, and broadening sociocultural forces. So where do students stand currently, and what does their higher education experience look like during the 2024–25 academic year? In this year's report, we see institutions continuing to integrate digital tools and technologies and flexible learning formats. While many students express satisfaction with their institution's technology-related services and supports, others feel that their institution is average or behind the times in technology adoption and implementation. At the same time, we continue to see shifts in modality preferences, with increasing numbers of students favoring on-site experiences, despite the post-pandemic expansion of online and hybrid learning. Regardless of personal preference, students still recognize the need for flexible learning formats and the opportunities they offer, such as greater flexibility, improved access, and personalized learning. Yet challenges related to learning modality persist, including the need to define clear expectations, ensure consistency across modalities, and support students in navigating these formats. Beyond the classroom, workforce expectations and career readiness remain a key focus as students prepare to navigate an increasingly complex job market shaped by AI and emerging technologies. While students recognize the importance of technology-related skills, many feel underprepared to use those skills in the workforce. Additionally, mental health and accessibility continue to be critical concerns, with a growing number of students reporting challenges and many feeling that institutional support falls short.

In this year's report, we examine six critical aspects of student experiences in higher education, providing insights into how institutions can adapt to meet student needs and enhance their learning experience and preparation for the workforce:

- **Satisfaction with Technology-Related Services and Supports**
- **Modality Preferences**
- **Hybrid Learning Experiences**
- **Generative AI in the Classroom**
- **Workforce Preparation**
- **Accessibility and Mental Health**

Key Findings

Satisfaction with Technology-Related Services and Supports

- The majority of students (69%) expressed satisfaction with their institution's technology-related services and support, yet most (72%) perceived their institution's use of technology for enhancing the learning experience as average.
- Students who view their institution as being on the cutting edge of technology adoption reported significantly higher satisfaction with technology-related services and support (85%) than those who saw their institution as average (68%) or behind the times (34%).
- Student satisfaction with technology-related services and support is strongly tied to reliable campus internet/Wi-Fi and to whether they see their instructors' use of technology in teaching as effective and tech-savvy.
- Students at institutions perceived as cutting-edge in technology adoption feel more career-ready and confident in the value of their education.

Modality Preferences

- Across categories of synchronous learning activities, students showed an increased personal preference for on-site course modalities compared to the findings in the ***2023 Students and Technology Report***. These increases were especially significant for lab or interactive work (+9 percentage points since 2023), instructor lectures (+8 points), and exams (+6 points).
- Students indicated an increased preference for the "all students learning on-site together" modality for eight out of nine categories of synchronous course activities, most notably student presentations (+12 percentage points since 2023), lab or interactive work (+9 points), group activities (+9 points), and exams (+8 points).
- There was a statistically significant relationship between student age and course modality preferences. Younger students, especially those aged 18–24, tended to prefer on-site course experiences, while older students tended to prefer online courses.
- Respondents noted that some faculty are seeking to mitigate financial challenges for students, most commonly by opting for cheaper or free open-source course

materials (59%), making assessments digital so students do not have to print materials (56%), and not requiring a textbook (42%).

Hybrid Learning Experiences

- While there was a slight increase in students who reported that they have taken a hybrid course (+7 percentage points since 2023), the overwhelming majority of students (80%) have only taken 1–3 hybrid courses.
- While 70% of students completely agreed or agreed that expectations for engagement in hybrid courses were clearly communicated to them and 59% agreed that their instructors were effective at teaching hybrid courses, challenges emerged around consistent definitions for and facilitation of hybrid learning. Slightly less than half (48%) of respondents completely agreed or agreed that instructors followed consistent hybrid practices across courses.

Generative AI in the Classroom

- Student-reported use of generative AI in courses was somewhat limited, with 43% not using it at all for their courses. Common uses include brainstorming (33%), refining ideas (24%), and organizing (24%).
- Students may be limiting and/or underreporting their use of AI due to fears of committing academic misconduct, unclear acceptance by instructors, and restrictive guidance, with 51% saying they have received guidance on AI use and 52% reporting that most instructors prohibit AI use.
- Students are significantly less likely to use generative AI when its use is discouraged and it is not integrated into academics; workforce expectations also influence usage, with those anticipating AI use in their careers more likely to engage with it.

Workforce Preparation

- Students place a higher priority on "soft skills" over technical skills, with interpersonal and communication skills being the most valued career competency.
- Technology-related skills, including proficiency with both non-AI and AI tools and technologies, were the least prioritized career competencies, selected by only 1%

and 3% of respondents, respectively.

- Students said they feel well prepared for most career competencies, with over 70% agreeing their education is effectively preparing them, but significantly fewer (below 35%) reported feeling prepared in AI and non-AI technologies.
- While 55% of students recognize the importance of generative AI for their careers, only 20% reported receiving relevant training from their institutions.
- Students anticipate using generative AI as an assistive tool for tasks such as content creation, research, data analysis, and field-specific applications, viewing it as a productivity enhancer rather than a replacement for their work.

Accessibility and Mental Health

- Despite a larger proportion of students reporting a mental health disorder (up 14 percentage points since 2023), this did not translate into a significant shift in how many students reported registering with their institution's accessibility/disability services office.
- While 47% of respondents with a disability or impairment said they had registered with their institution's accessibility office, respondents who indicated that they held a job were less likely to register. Students who lived in off-campus housing not sponsored by their institution were also less likely to register.
- Slightly more than half of students (55%) reported being satisfied with their institution's efforts and services surrounding mental health, a decrease of 13 percentage points since 2023.
- Just half (50%) of respondents indicated that it was clear and easy to access their institution's mental health and well-being supports, and only 42% agreed or completely agreed that their institution was doing more now to address student health and well-being than it had done in the past.

Satisfaction with Technology-Related Services and Supports

Students are satisfied with internet access and technology services but find their institutions' technology approach average. A majority of students (69%) reported being satisfied with the technology-related services and supports they receive from their

institution (see figure 1).[1] Further, a majority (56%) were satisfied with the quality of the internet/Wi-Fi service on campus—only 8% said they don't use internet/Wi-Fi on campus. While many students reported being satisfied with the internet/Wi-Fi, a majority (72%) felt that their institution is just average in its adoption and use of technologies for enriching the learning experience. Notably, those who felt their institution is on the cutting edge in its adoption and use of technologies were significantly more satisfied with technology-related services and supports at their institution (see figure 2).

Figure 1. Satisfaction with Technology-Related Services and Supports

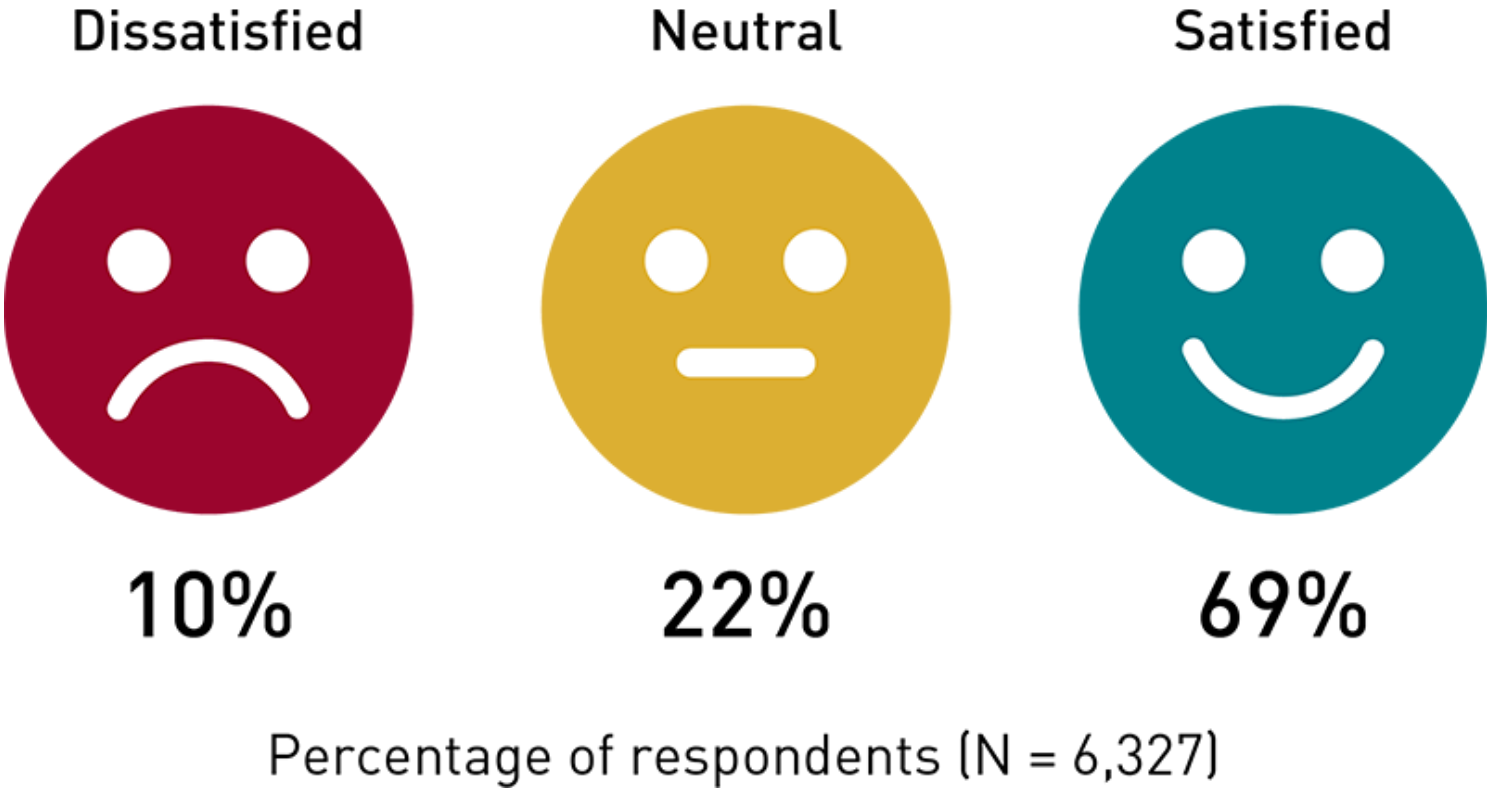
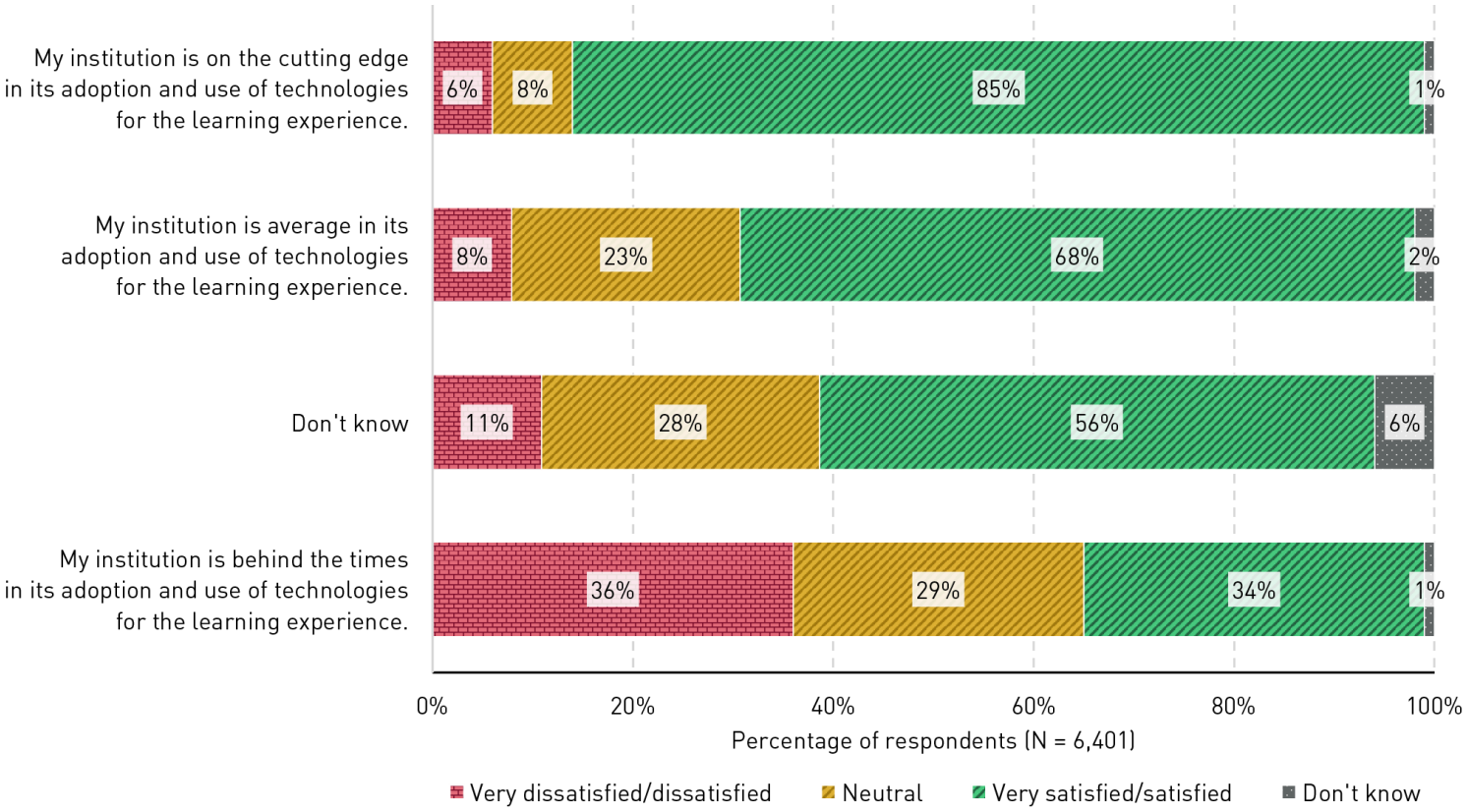


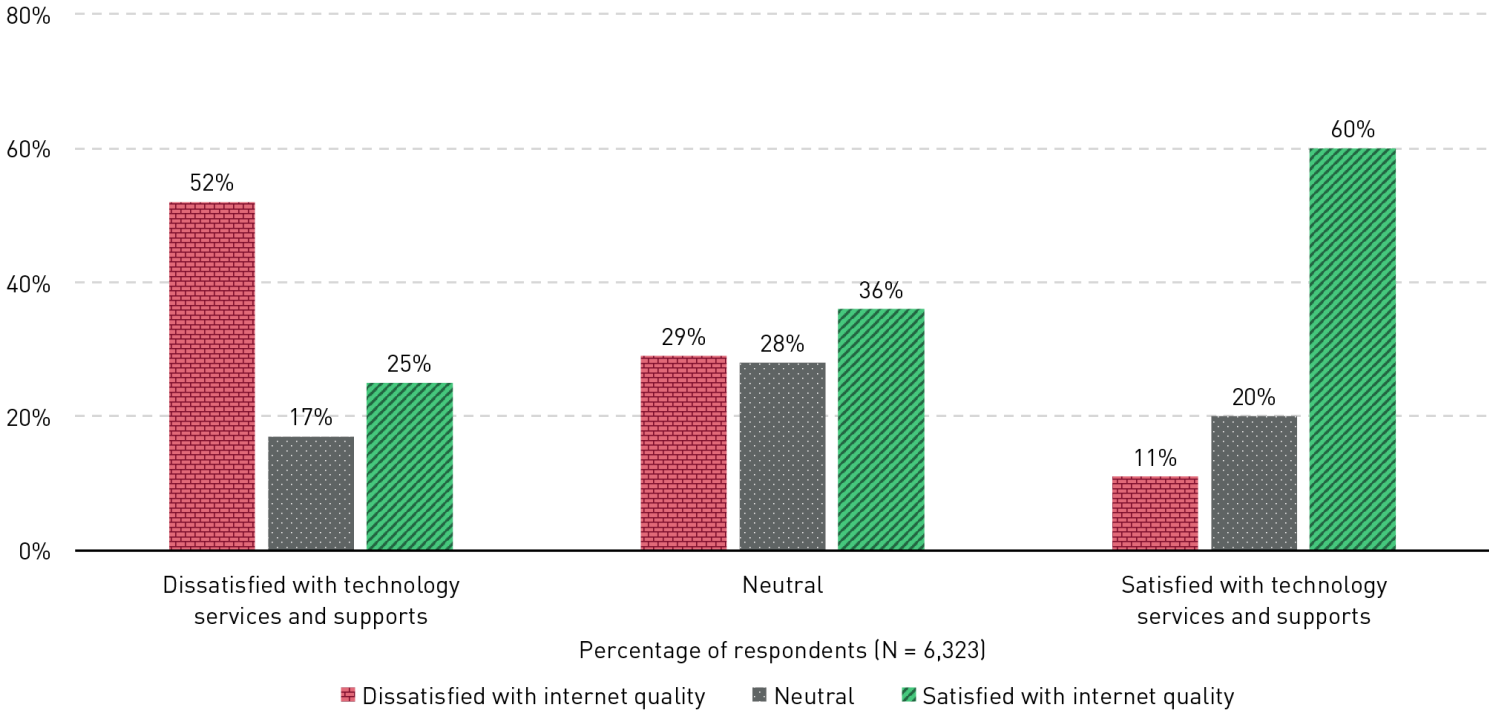
Figure 2. Satisfaction with Technology Services, by Institutional Approach to Technology

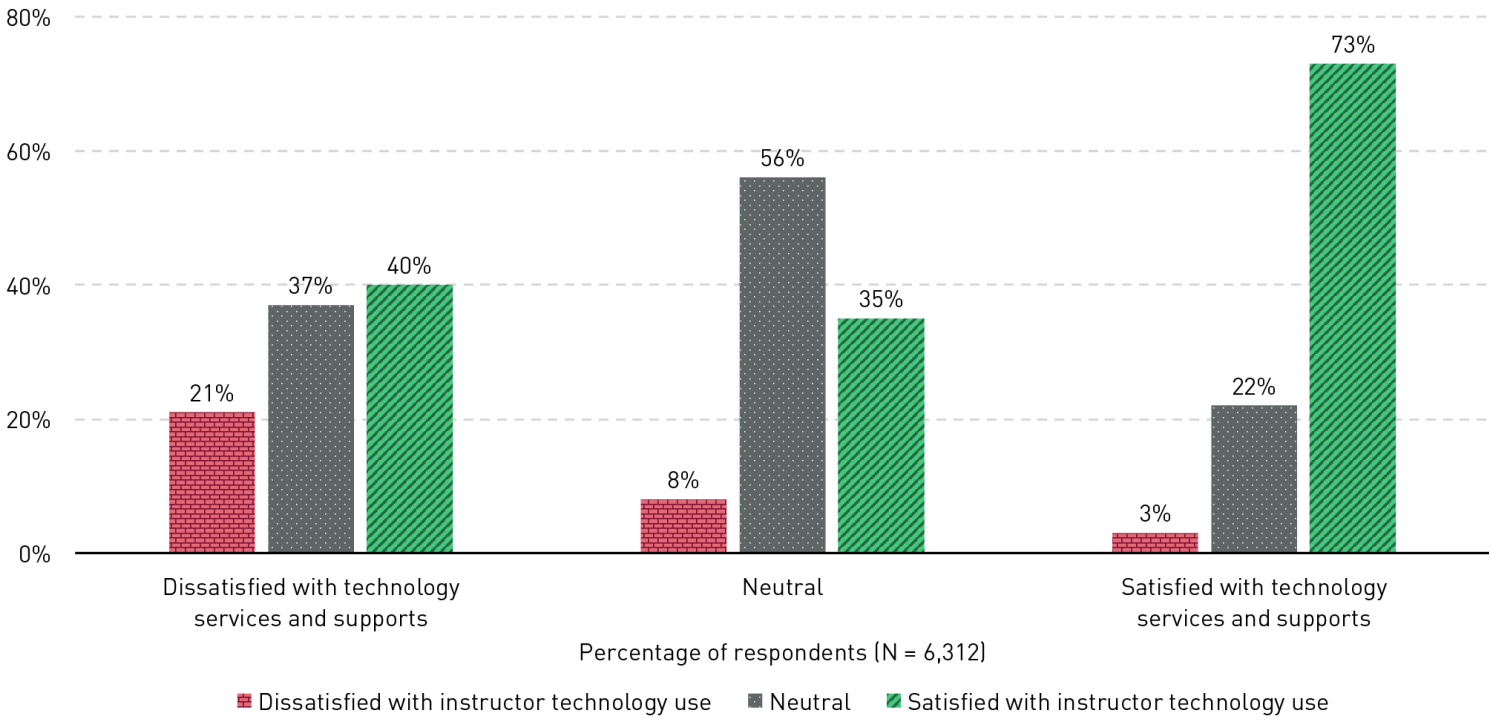


Reliable internet and tech-savvy teaching pave the way to student satisfaction. Student satisfaction with technology-related services and support was closely linked to both the quality of campus internet/Wi-Fi and instructors' effective use of technology. Specifically, students who were more satisfied with the internet/Wi-Fi quality on campus reported higher satisfaction with the institution's technology-related services and support (see figure 3). [2] Reliable internet/Wi-Fi access minimizes technology-related issues, such as connectivity problems, while also enabling students to more easily access technology-related services and support. Similarly, greater satisfaction with instructors' use of technology corresponded to higher satisfaction with technology-related services and support. Tech-savvy instructors are probably better equipped to help students navigate tech-related issues and challenges. In addition, these instructors might also implement technology more seamlessly in their teaching, smoothing the student experience with course-related technology. Along these lines, one student noted:

> "Any technological issues I have had with Canvas or other platforms [have] been quickly righted by IT support or professors."

Figure 3. Satisfaction with Technology Services, by Internet Quality and Instructor Technology Use





Instructors' effective use of technology enhances student engagement and learning. Building on findings highlighting the role of instructors in shaping student satisfaction with technology-related services and supports, we asked students to share instances of when a professor's use of technology improved their learning experience and instances that made it worse. Many students highlighted instances where their instructors effectively used learning management systems (LMSs), communication technologies, and adaptive and AI-powered learning tools, resulting in improved access

to course materials, better communication, and enhanced engagement and learning. On the other hand, students highlighted instances of ineffective uses of technology such as overuse, underuse, and non-proficient use—all of which cause student frustration and disruptions in learning.

Impacts of Effective Uses of Technology

- Digital platforms including LMSs improve students' ability to stay organized, access course materials, manage deadlines, and complete tasks efficiently.
- Communication technologies (e.g., email, video conferencing, discussion boards, online Q&A) strengthen and streamline communication between instructors and students.
- Video content (e.g., recorded lectures, instructional videos, multimedia resources) helps students grasp difficult concepts and provides flexibility in learning (i.e., students can learn asynchronously on their own time).
- Technology helps personalize the learning experience and makes it more engaging (e.g., through the use of adaptive learning features, virtual tutoring, and interactive and individualized content and feedback).
- Tools used to generate live simulations help students understand and apply abstract concepts. For example, one student noted:

> "They used tools like JMP and StatKey to demonstrate complex statistical concepts visually like hypothesis testing. For instance, instead of just explaining how sampling distributions work, the instructor ran live simulations, showing how the mean of repeated samples formed a normal distribution over time. We could change sample sizes and instantly see how it affected the shape and variability of the graph. This hands-on, dynamic approach made abstract concepts much easier to understand and connect to real-world applications."

Impacts of Ineffective Uses of Technology

- When instructors lack technical proficiency, this disrupts learning and can lead to wasted class time, disorganized coursework, delayed materials, and confusion over assignments.

- Course materials that are not well-adapted for online platforms result in confusing formats, submission errors, and grading issues (i.e., when rigid, automated grading is implemented).
- When instructors underuse communication features or don't use them in a timely manner, students feel disconnected, as though their instructors are not accessible for help.
- Instructors relying too heavily on technology or using it when it's unnecessary complicates learning and in some cases undermines the instructors' expertise. As one student commented:

  > "In my statistics for engineers class, the use of the virtual assistant is very helpful for self-education and clearing up confusion, but the professor's lectures are, comparatively, useless. The AI is much more effective at communicating the content in a clear, concise manner than the professor, yet we have a mandatory, in-class quiz almost every lecture. Students must attend lecture[s], yet they will often receive very little content from lectures, and then are informed to use the AI to clear up confusion. This means that the class ends up being taught by AI, as per the recommendation of the professor."

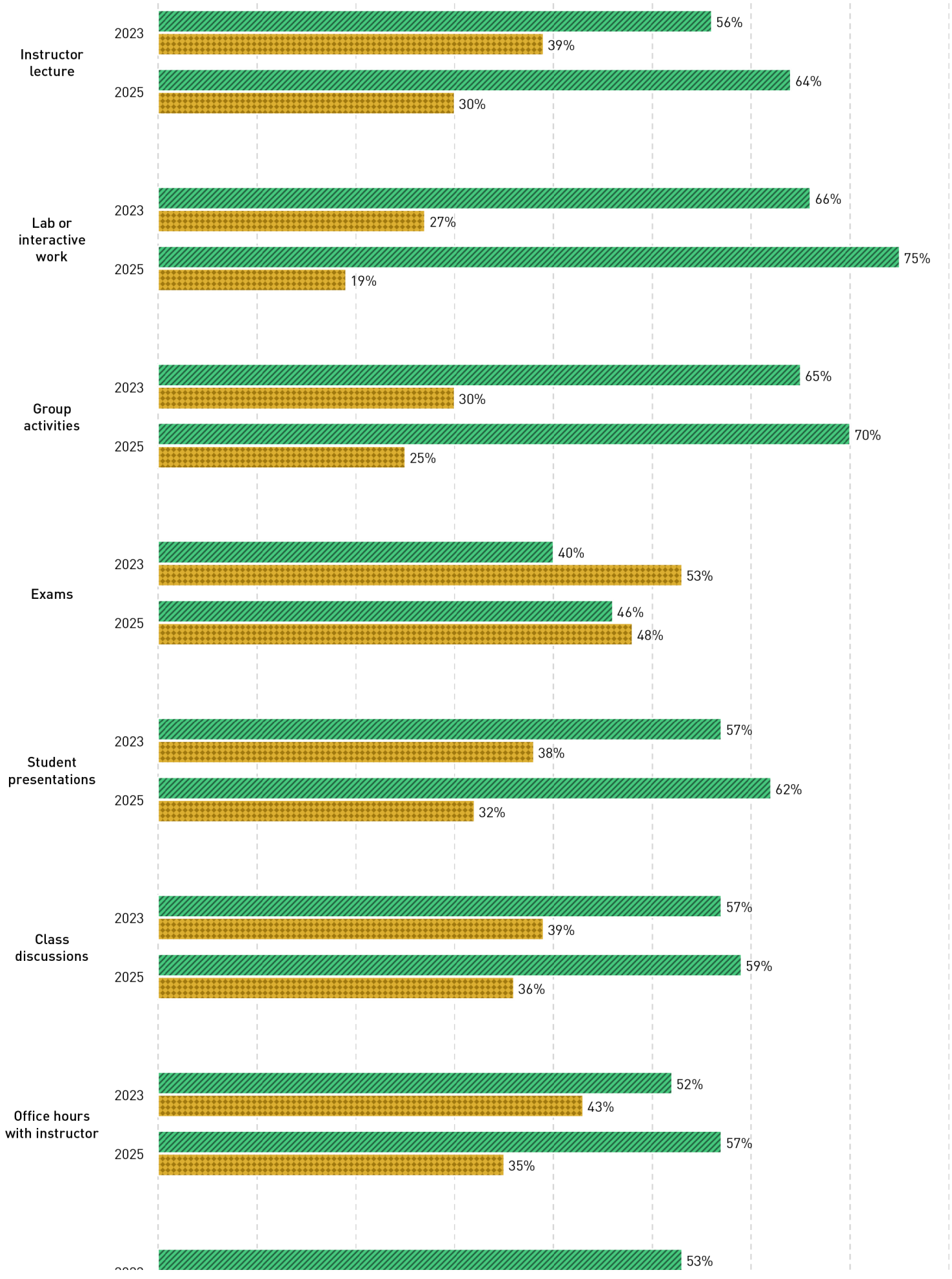
Students want more seamless technology experiences. When asked what their institution can do to improve technology-related services and supports, students identified a variety of areas for improvement in their open-ended responses. These included addressing Wi-Fi and internet connectivity issues, improving IT support and response time, improving access to and the usability of institution web pages and online learning platforms and resources, improving the authentication process (login systems, password resets, and authentication errors), upgrading technologies and ensuring availability, and improving access to software and licensing. Overall, the areas identified point to a desire for more seamless experiences with technology where technical issues are minimized and access and usability are easy for students.

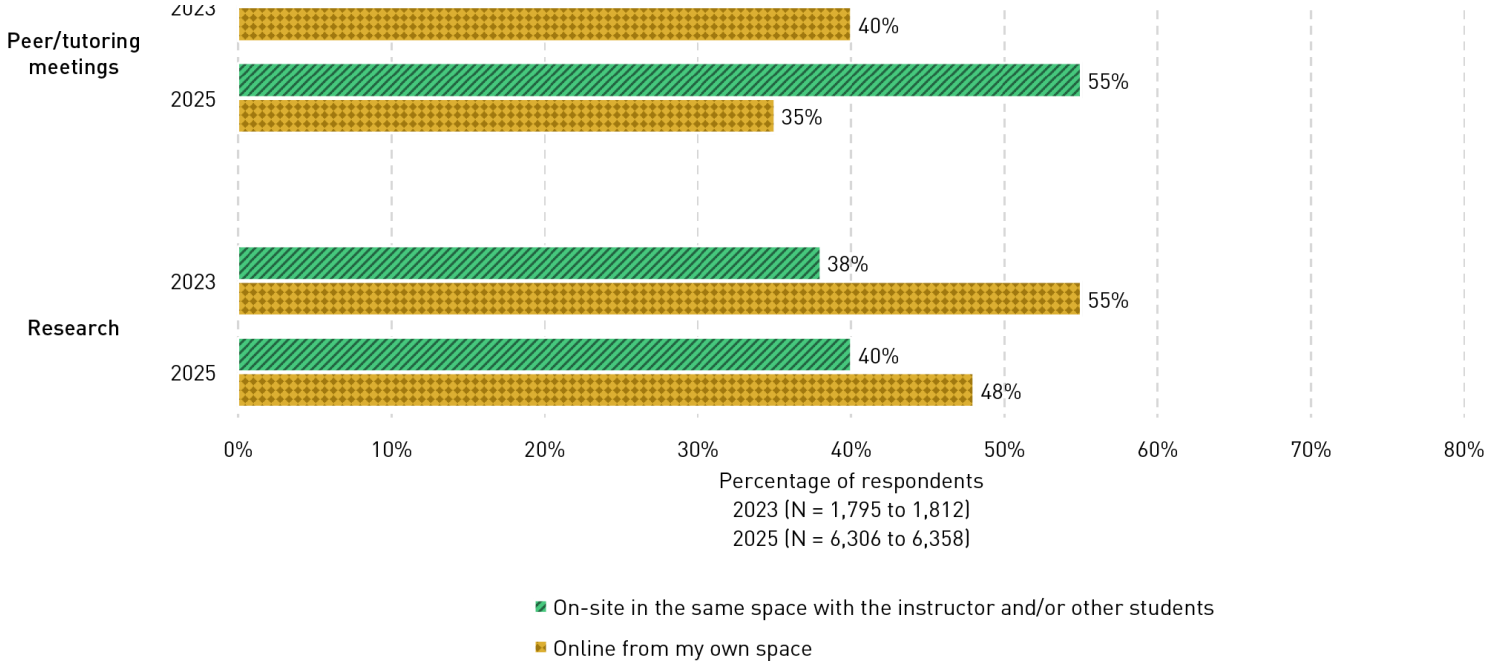
Modality Preferences

Students increasingly prefer on-site course activities. Across categories of synchronous learning activities, students showed an increased personal preference for on-site course modalities compared to the findings of the ***2023 Students and***

Technology Report (see figure 4).[3] This increase was especially significant for lab or interactive work, instructor lectures, research, and exams. In 2025, 75% said they preferred on-site lab or interactive work (an increase of 9 percentage points from 2023), and 19% preferred online engagement (a decrease of 8 points). Similarly, 64% percent of respondents noted that they prefer on-site lectures (an 8-point jump from 2023), while 30% preferred online instructor lectures (a 9-point decrease). Research and exams, which were the only two course activities for which more students indicated a preference for online engagement in 2023 and 2025, also saw a shift: Although the preference for on-site research only increased by 2 points in 2025, reported preference for online research decreased by 7 points. When asked about exam preferences, 46% of students indicated that they prefer to complete exams on-site (a 6-point increase from 2023), while 48% preferred online exams (a 5-point decrease). Students' most common reasons for preferring specific course activity modalities included that they learn better when they engage in those ways (76%), feel more comfortable (67%), can focus better (59%), and find better alignment between their preferred modality and their schedules and commitments (48%).

Figure 4. Course Activity Modality Preferences


Instructor lecture
2023
56%
39%
2025
64%
30%
Lab or interactive work
2023
66%
27%
2025
75%
19%
Group activities
2023
65%
30%
2025
70%
25%
Exams
2023
40%
53%
2025
46%
48%
Student presentations
2023
57%
38%
2025
62%
32%
Class discussions
2023
57%
39%
2025
59%
36%
Office hours with instructor
2023
52%
43%
2025
57%
35%
53%

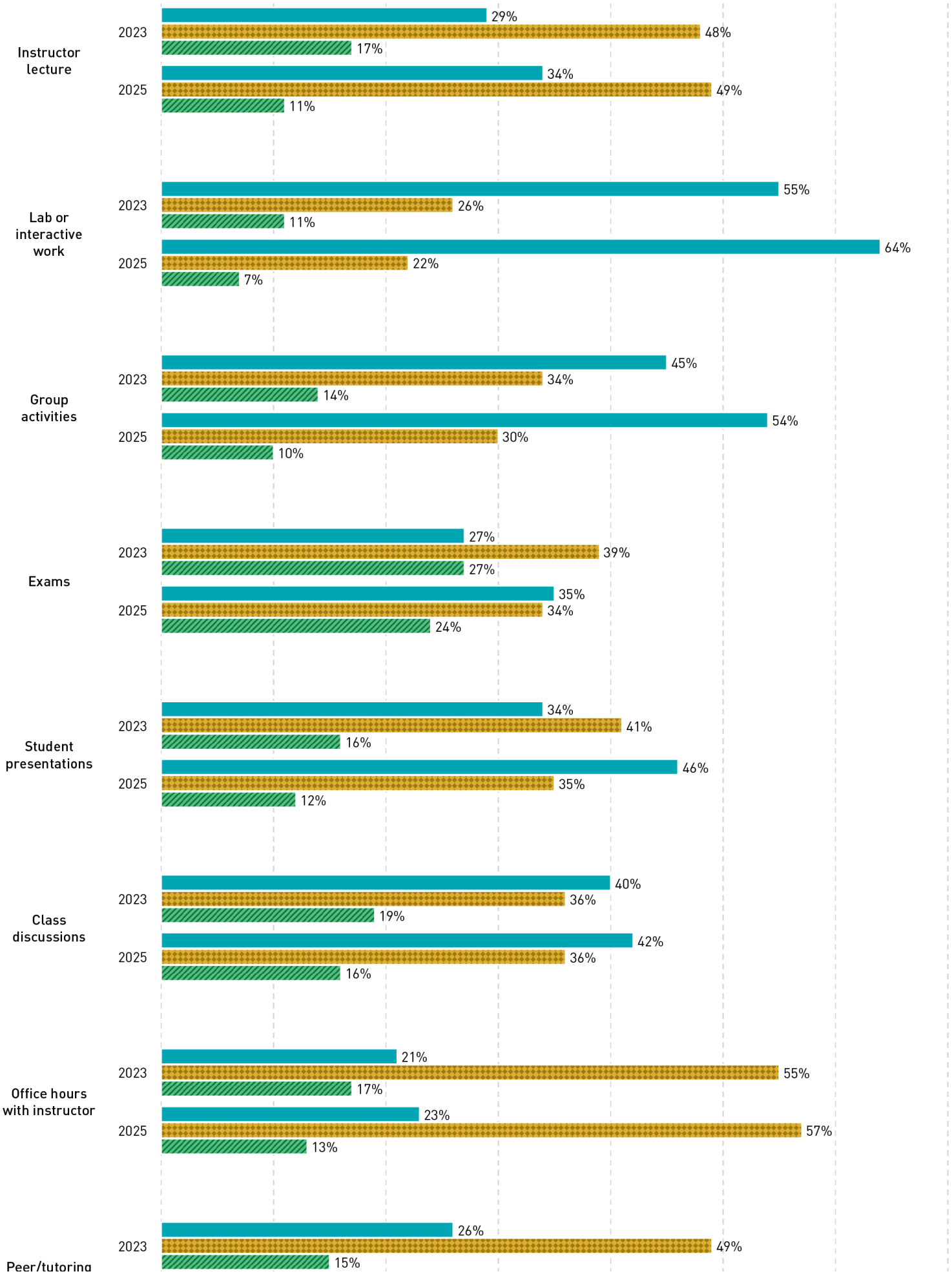


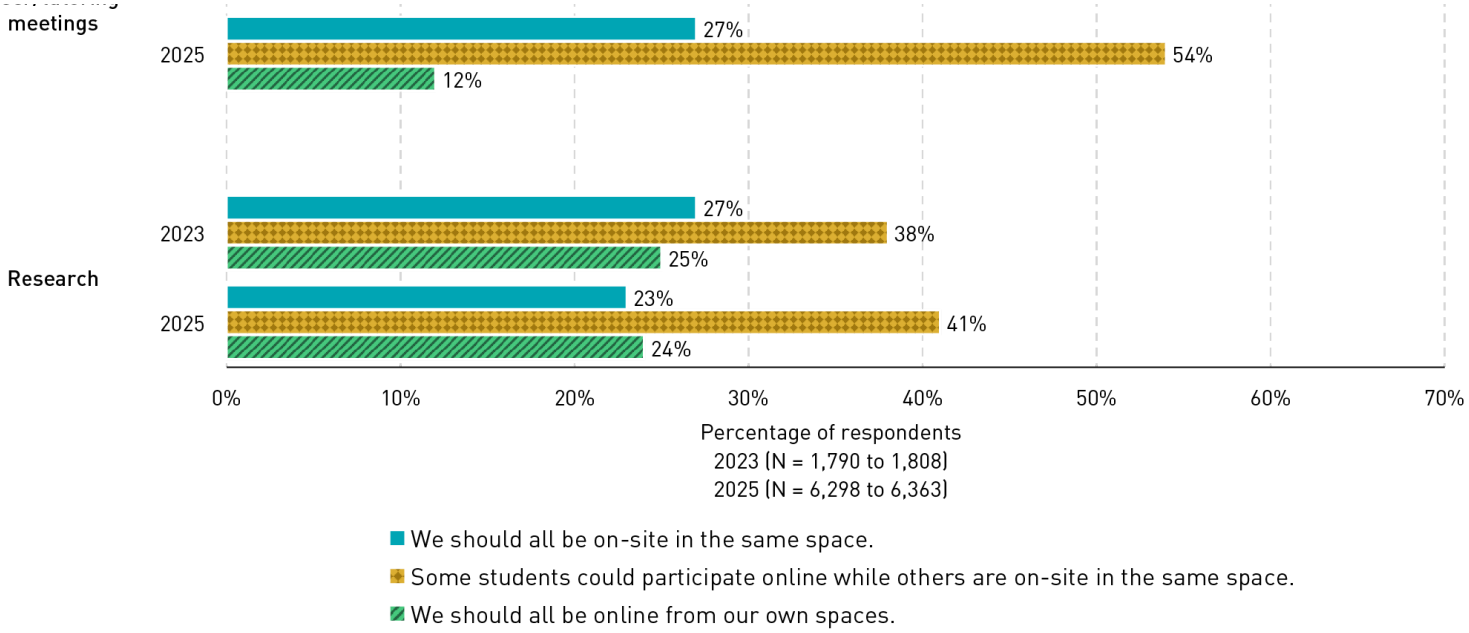
Taken together, these shifts in course modality preferences may indicate that students are increasingly interested in on-site experiences, especially for interactive, hands-on assignments and activities. It is interesting that students also indicated an increased preference for on-site engagement in traditionally individualized course activities, such as conducting research and taking exams. These findings align with recent findings showing that **enrollments in online courses have continued to decline post-pandemic**, even though online courses are still more popular than they were pre-pandemic. However, these findings may apply largely to students attending traditional campuses where in-person activities have long been the norm, given that other recent findings show that **enrollments at primarily online institutions increased in 2024**, suggesting that some students increasingly value the benefits of online course experiences, such as flexibility and convenience. Still, our findings may be consistent with a larger trend in student course modality preferences in higher education: Despite the fact that online and hybrid learning options have become more established since the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic and that primarily online institutions are seeing increased enrollments, some students appear to be returning to pre-pandemic preferences for on-site course experiences.

Despite an increased preference for collective on-site classroom experiences, students still value individual choice in course participation options. The ***2023 Students and Technology Report*** found that even though students personally preferred on-site course activities overall, when asked how instructors should organize these same course activities for *all* students, the majority indicated that students should be able to choose the option that works best for them. In contrast, the 2025 survey found that students indicated an increased preference for everyone being on-site in the

same space in eight out of nine categories of course activities (only the research category saw a slight decline in preference for on-site experience). For labs or interactive work, group activities, exams, student presentations, and class discussions, the majority of students switched to a preference for all students to be on-site, compared to 2023, when they preferred that students choose what worked best for them. The categories that saw the largest increases in preference for collective on-site learning in 2025 included student presentations (+12 points), lab or interactive work (+9 points), group activities (+9 points), and exams (+8 points) (see figure 5). [4]

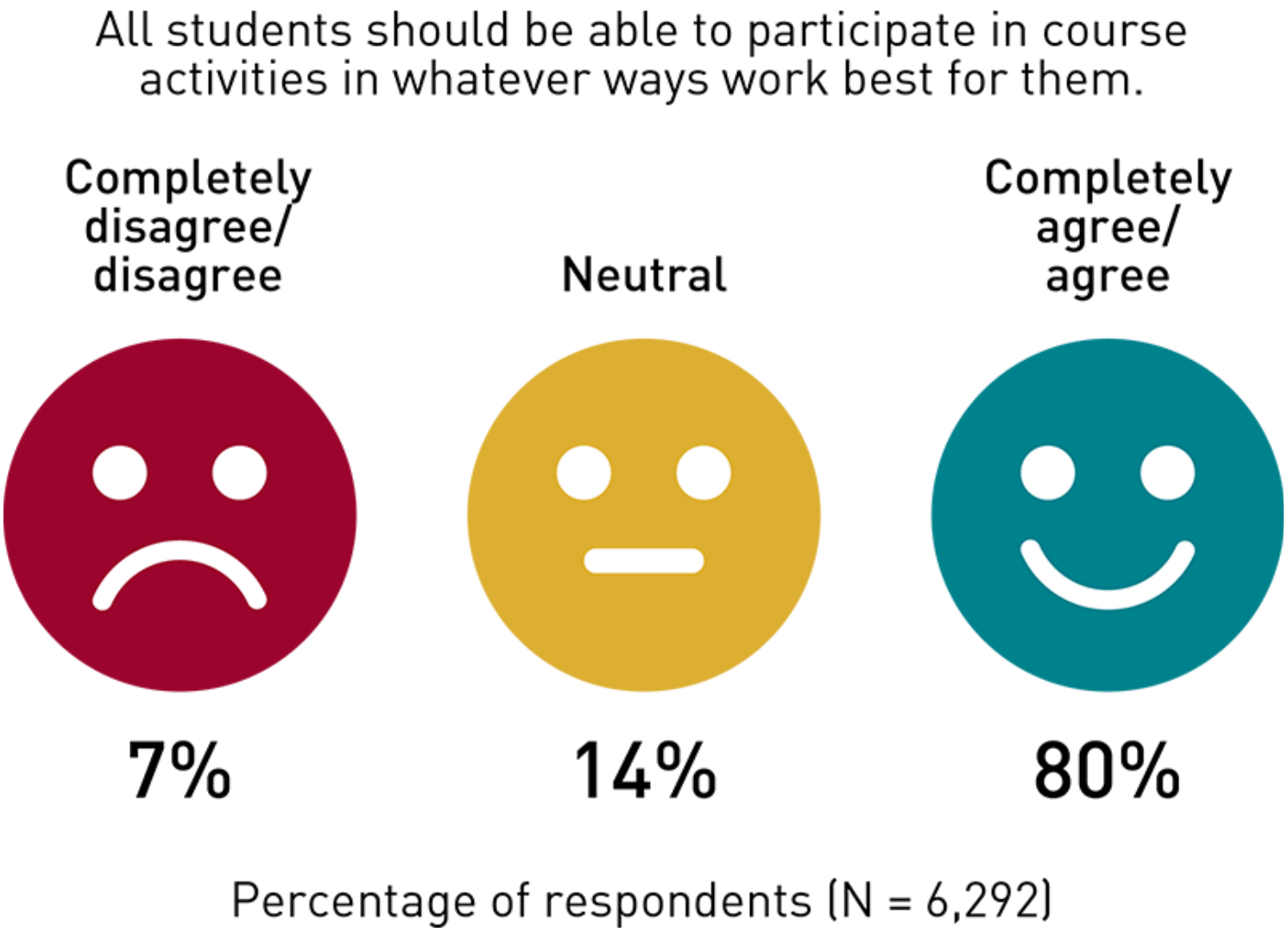
Figure 5. Preferences for On-Site Versus Online Participation in Synchronous Activities


Instructor lecture
2023
29%
48%
17%
2025
34%
49%
11%
Lab or interactive work
2023
55%
26%
11%
2025
64%
22%
7%
Group activities
2023
45%
34%
14%
2025
54%
30%
10%
Exams
2023
27%
39%
27%
2025
35%
34%
24%
Student presentations
2023
34%
41%
16%
2025
46%
35%
12%
Class discussions
2023
40%
36%
19%
2025
42%
36%
16%
Office hours with instructor
2023
21%
55%
17%
2025
23%
57%
13%
Peer/tutoring
2023
26%
49%
15%



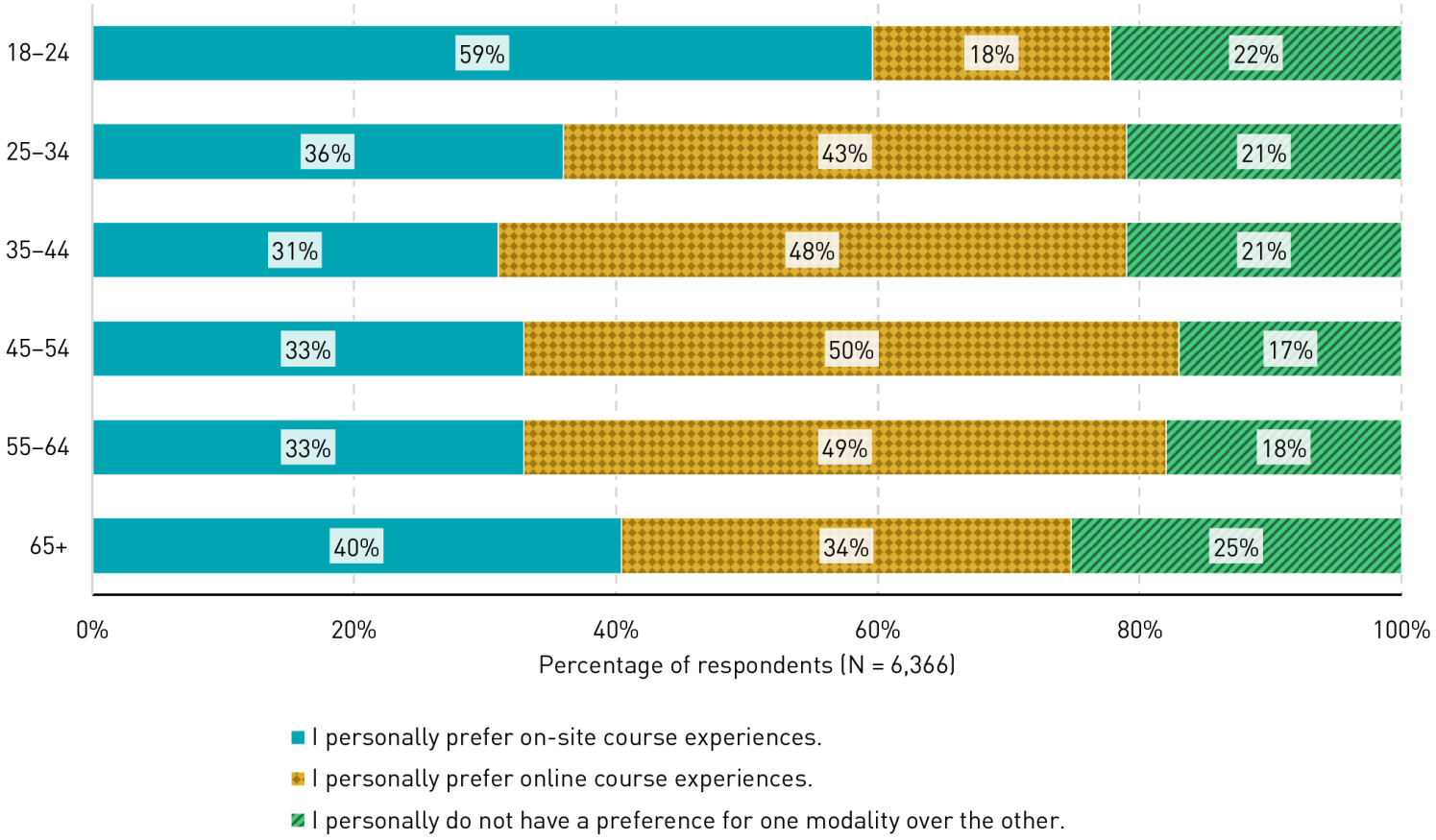
Despite these shifts, respondents still indicated that they support—though at a lesser level—students' ability to choose the course modality that works best for them. This was especially true for the categories of instructor lecture, office hours with instructor, peer/tutoring meetings, and research. While the majority of students prefer that interactive course activities (such as lab work, group activities, and student presentations) be facilitated on-site with all students present, they reported greater support for flexibility when it comes to traditionally self-directed activities (such as research and instructor office hours). Also, when asked overall whether they believed that students should be able to participate in course activities in whatever ways work best for them, 80% said they agreed or completely agreed (see figure 6). Although respondents generally agreed, at least in theory, that students should be able to choose the course options that work best for them, they also indicated a growing preference for their peers to choose to be on-site.

Figure 6. Course Modality Preferences for All Students



Younger students prefer on-site courses, and older students prefer online courses. The trend of students preferring on-site course activities was upheld in their overall course modality preferences: the majority of respondents (53%) indicated that they preferred on-site courses, while 26% preferred online courses and 22% said they did not have a preference. Interestingly, findings indicated a statistically significant relationship between course modality preferences and student age.[5] Younger students, especially those aged 18–24, tended to prefer on-site course experiences, while older students tended to prefer online courses (see figure 7). This finding is perhaps not surprising when we consider that 18–24 year olds may be more likely to live in on-campus housing and may prefer to attend classes in person as part of the campus experience. Older students may have family and/or work responsibilities that make online learning a better choice for them. Still, this bifurcation is an important reminder for institutions seeking to serve their younger students, who in many cases make up the majority of the student body, while also investing in flexible options for older or nontraditional learners.

Figure 7. Course Modality Preferences, by Age Range



Faculty are finding ways to help students mitigate financial constraints. Amid ongoing discussions about the challenges of inflation, rising tuition costs, and escalating student debt, financial constraints continue to be a major hurdle for many students. Respondents noted that faculty were taking action to help alleviate these financial challenges. The most commonly cited instructor methods for managing student financial constraints included opting for cheaper or free open-source course materials (59%), making assessments digital so students do not have to print materials (56%), and not requiring a textbook (42%). However, as many students explained in open-ended responses, although some faculty members are considering proactive ways to combat financial barriers, this is not yet universal practice. One student cautioned, "Reminder: only about a quarter of my professors have done/do this." Another student explained that whereas some instructors have implemented cost-saving measures for students, "I have had the opposite as well. I was encouraged to buy unnecessary but 'recommended' technology which is very expensive (several monitors)." Other students raised concerns about overreliance on faculty to ease financial challenges and saw this work as a larger issue. As one student explained, "There is no hiding the fact that college is way more expensive than it should be. Reducing textbook prices is nice, but it really does nothing

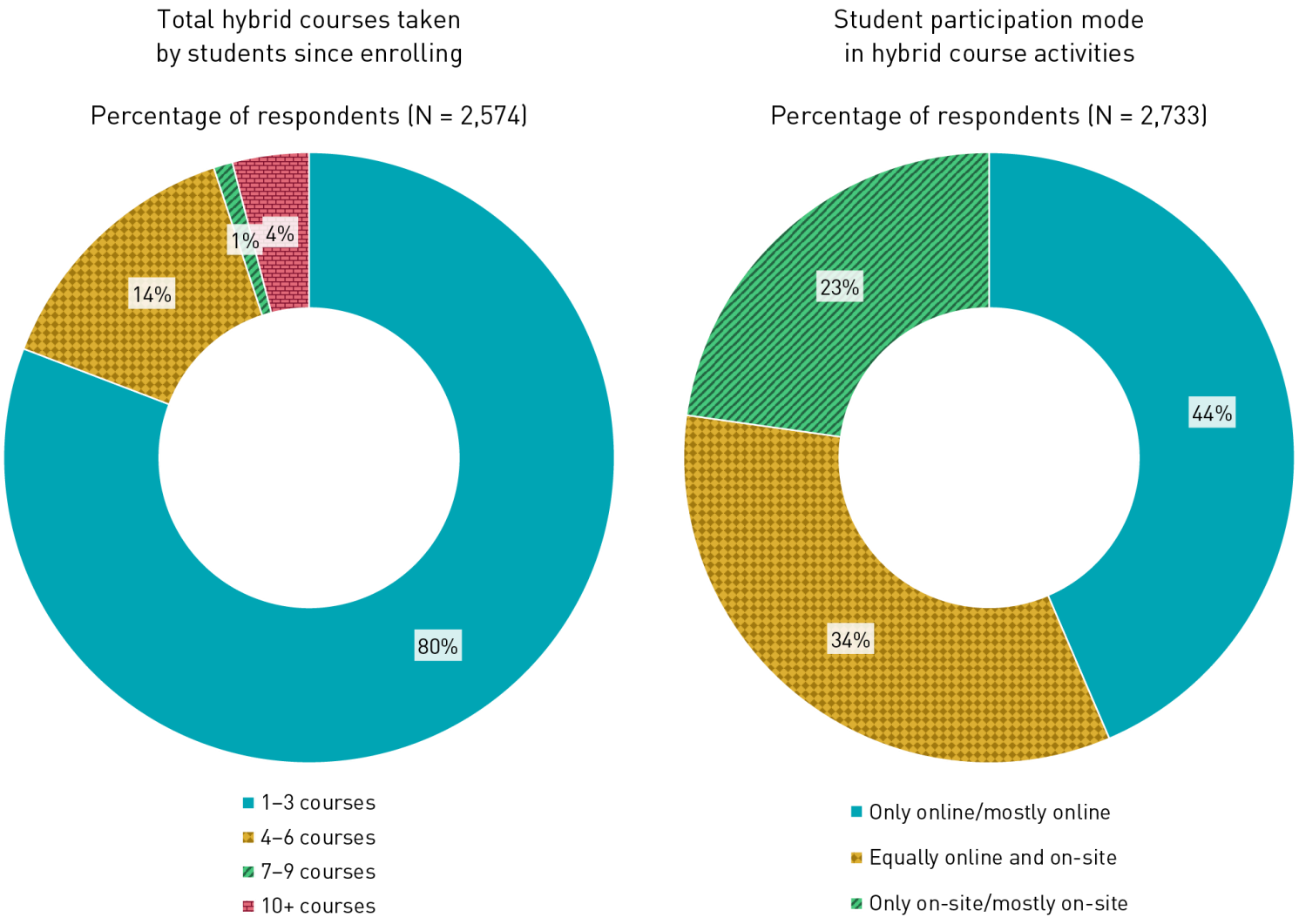
when considering how much tuition is. There needs to be effort in reducing tuition, not discounting textbook prices." While it is encouraging to see that many students have benefited from the cost-saving measures some instructors have taken, more work remains to be done to manage significant financial barriers and provide cost-saving options for students across their courses.

Hybrid Learning Experiences

While there is a slight increase since 2023 in the number of students who have taken hybrid courses, they have limited experience with this modality. Although a plurality of respondents (48%) said they haven't taken any hybrid courses since enrolling at their institution, 46% of respondents have, an increase of 7 percentage points from 2023. The overwhelming majority (80%) of students who have taken any hybrid courses said they have taken 1–3 total, 14% have taken 4-6, 1% have taken 7–9, and 4% have taken 10 or more (see figure 8). A plurality of students who have taken at least one hybrid course are engaging in them only or mostly online (44%), while 34% say they are equally online and on-site, and 23% are only on-site or mostly on-site. These results indicate that although students continue to engage in hybrid courses, most students are not choosing to make hybrid courses their primary model. Students also appear to be actively utilizing the online learning features these courses provide, with some students noting that these affordances were critical in making the hybrid course structure successful. As one student explained:

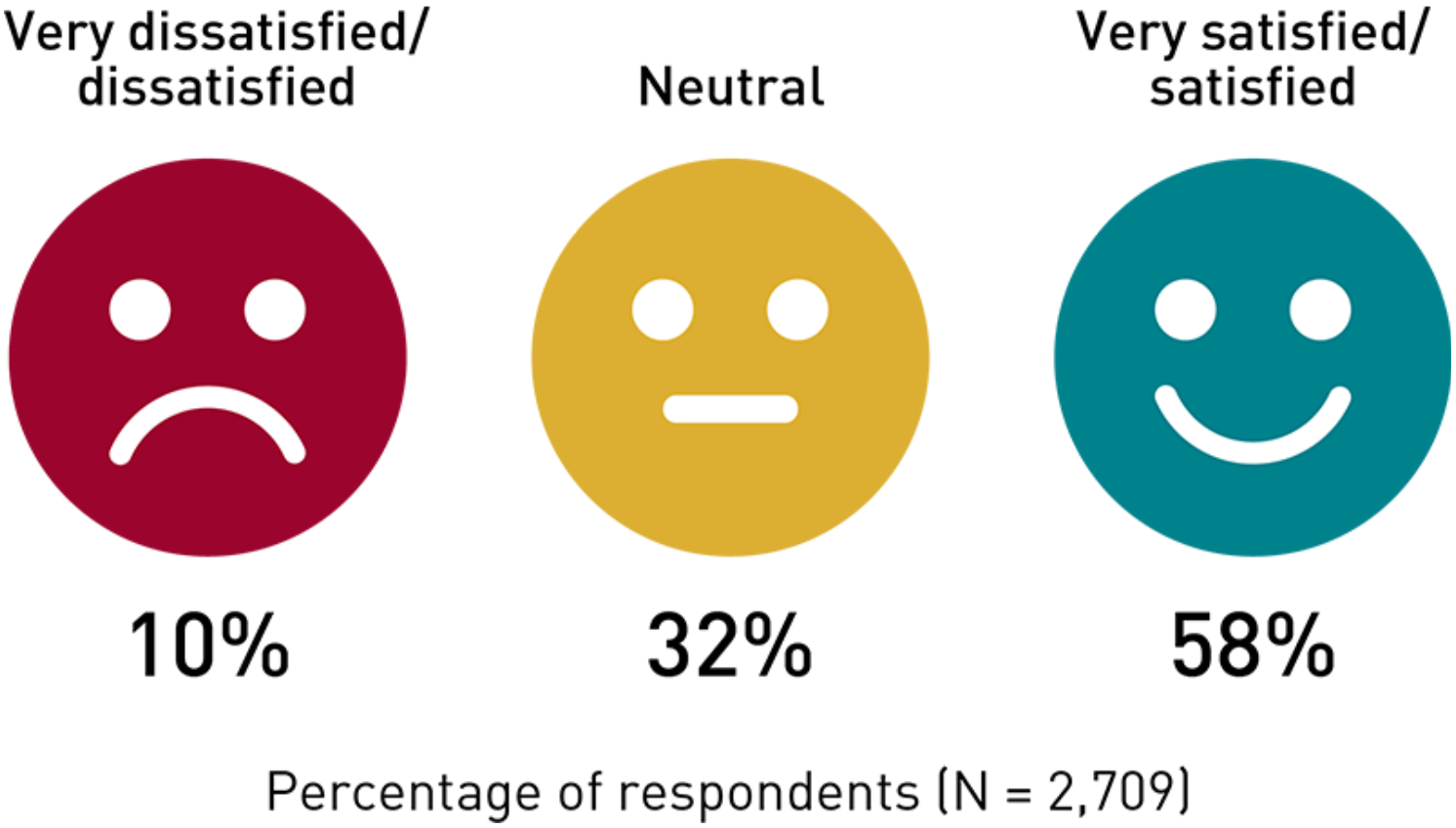
> "The ability to balance in-person and online components allowed for better time management and flexibility. [...] Tools like Zoom breakout rooms and Google Docs facilitated teamwork and interaction, making group assignments smoother. These factors ensured a seamless blend of in-person and online learning, creating a more accessible and effective educational experience."

Figure 8. Hybrid Courses Taken and Student Participation Mode



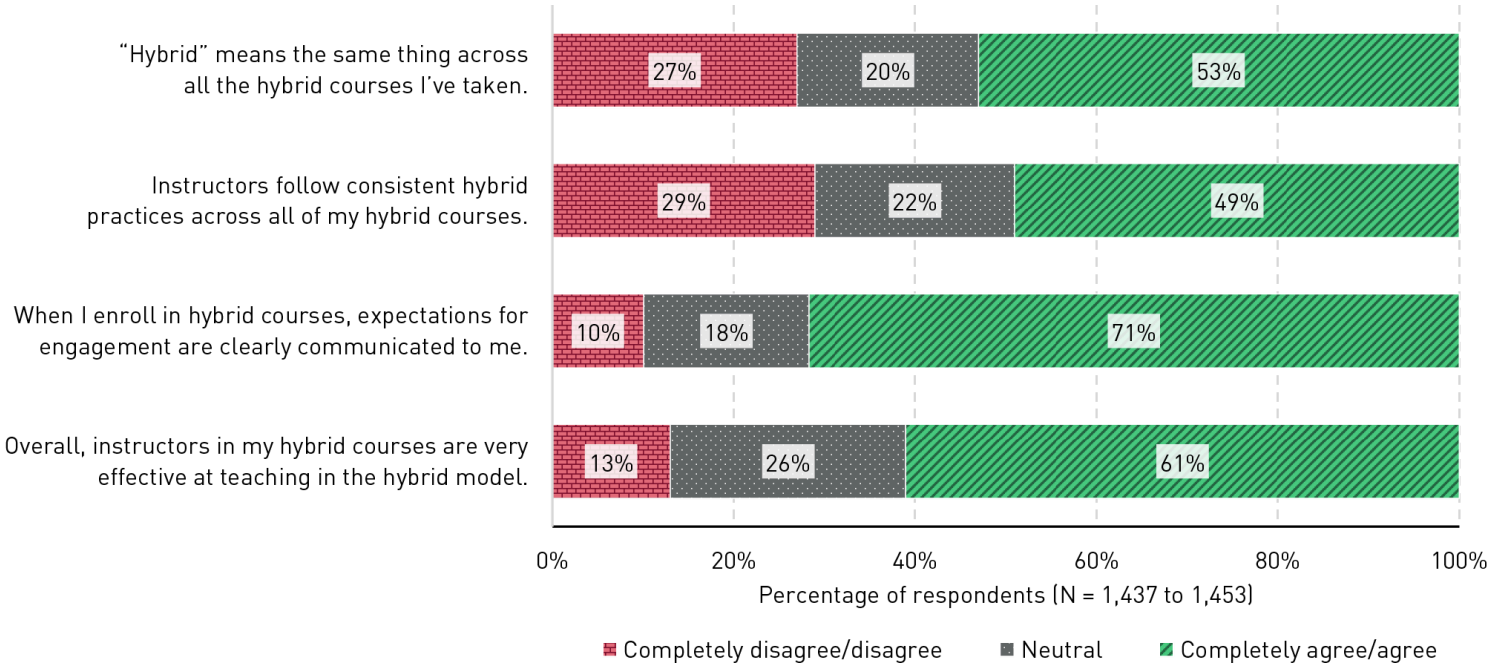
Hybrid instructors are communicating and teaching effectively, but students want to see better alignment across courses. Overall, the majority of students (58%) who have taken one or more hybrid courses are very satisfied or satisfied with their hybrid course experiences, and just 10% say they are very dissatisfied or dissatisfied (32% were neutral) (see figure 9).

Figure 9. Overall Satisfaction with Hybrid Course Experiences



When asked about the quality of their hybrid course experiences, students identified some notable highlights, particularly around instructor communication: 71% of students reported that they completely agreed or agreed that expectations for engagement in hybrid courses were clearly communicated to them, and 61% agreed that their instructors were very effective at teaching hybrid courses (see figure 10). However, there was room for growth in terms of consistency, both in terms of how hybrid learning is defined and how it is facilitated. Slightly more than half (53%) of respondents completely agreed or agreed that "hybrid" means the same thing across all of the hybrid courses they have taken, while 27% completely disagreed or disagreed. Also, 49% of respondents completely agreed or agreed that instructors followed consistent hybrid practices across courses, while 29% completely disagreed or disagreed. Although instructors seem to be generally effective at teaching hybrid courses and communicating expectations to students, they could create more cohesion across hybrid courses by aligning practices.

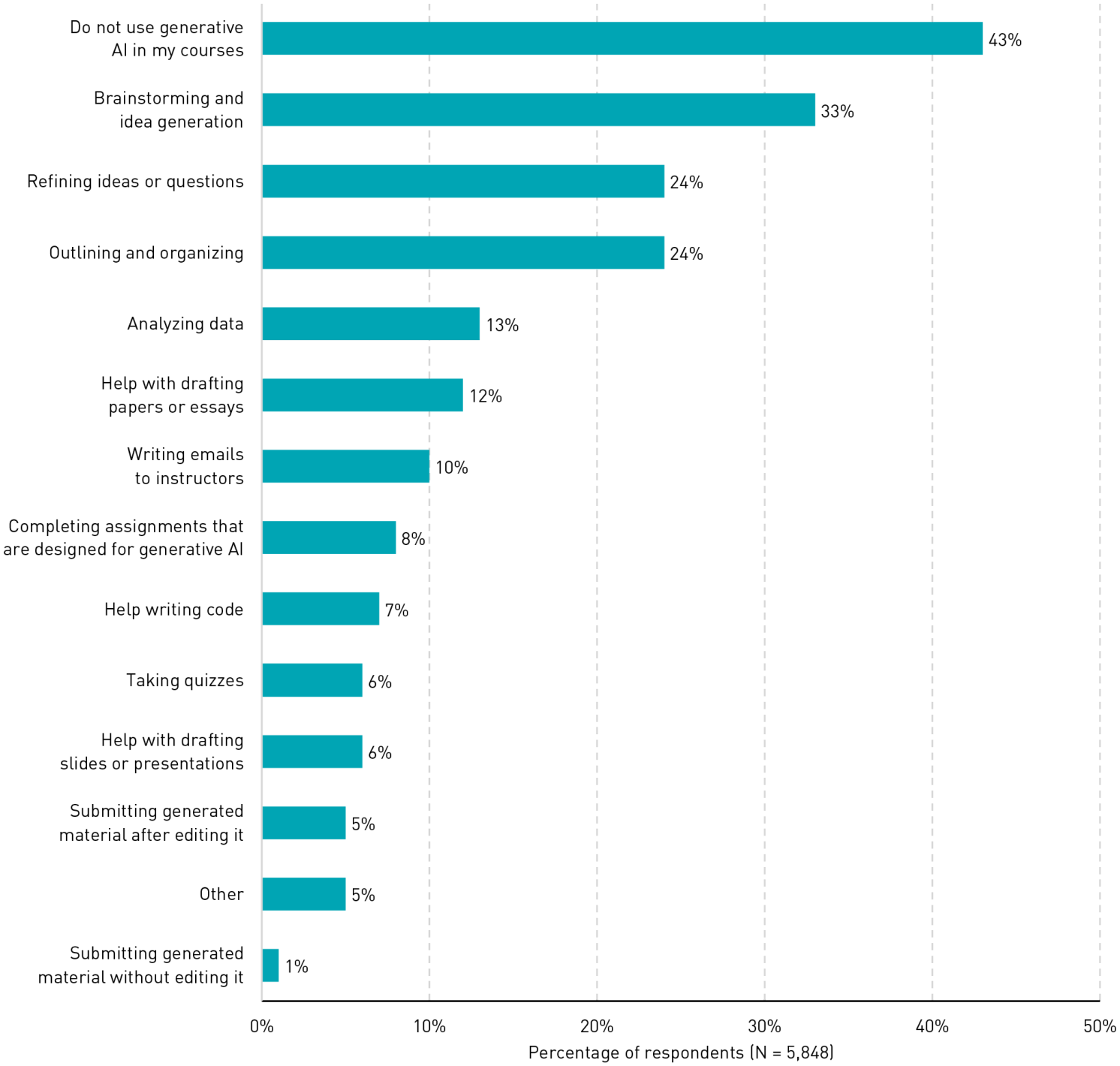
Figure 10. Agreement with Statements on Hybrid Learning



Generative AI in the Classroom

Students' reported use of generative AI in their courses is relatively limited. Students were asked about their current uses of generative AI in courses, and the most common response was that they do not use generative AI (43%) (see figure 11). The most common use cases reported for those who do use AI were brainstorming and idea generation (33%), refining ideas or questions (24%), and outlining and organizing (24%). Interestingly, the ***2025 EDUCAUSE AI Landscape Study*** showed that a significant portion of higher education professionals believe that students at their institution are using AI for a variety of purposes. For example, majorities believed that students are using AI for getting answers to problems (69%), editorial purposes (67%), summarizing content (61%), and brainstorming (55%). Less than 1% said that students do not use AI tools at their institution—a stark contrast to the 43% of students in this study who said they do not use AI, though, the AI landscape study included student use of AI *outside* the classroom, such as for personal entertainment, which could explain some of this gap.

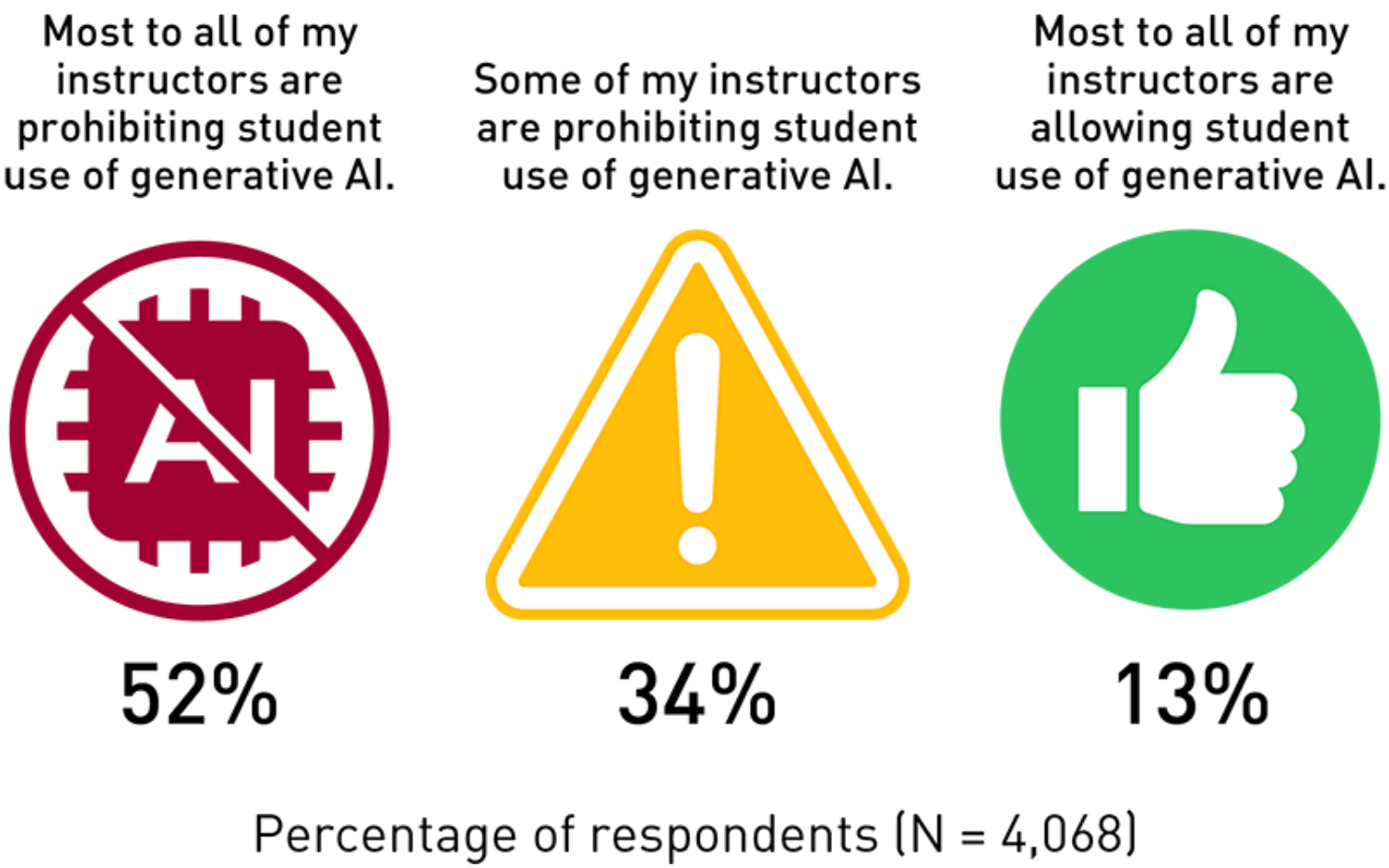
Figure 11. Current Uses of Generative AI in Courses



Are students limiting their AI use, underreporting it, or both? The limited use of AI reported by students—in addition to the discrepancies between student self-reporting and the perceptions of faculty, staff, and leadership—might be at least in part due **student fears about academic misconduct** and social desirability pressures. That is, students might limit their use *and* underreport it due to fears about being accused and found guilty of academic misconduct, coupled with an understanding that the use of generative AI in courses is not universally accepted and deemed appropriate. On the other hand, nonstudent stakeholders might overestimate student use of AI due to the initial and ongoing hype surrounding plagiarism and other potential negative impacts of

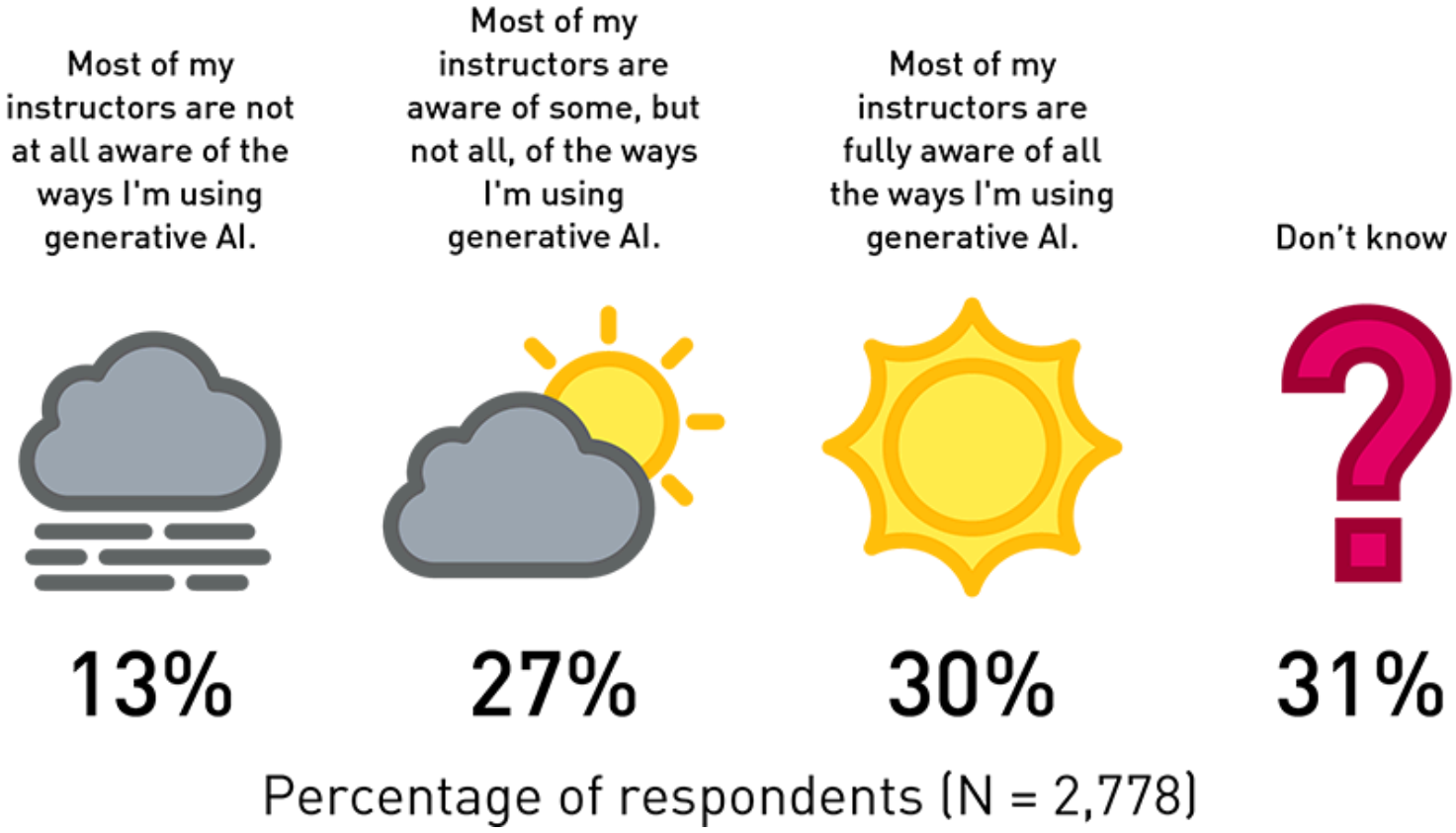
AI on teaching and learning. Along these lines, we found that a majority of students (52%) said that most to all of their instructors prohibit student use of generative AI (see figure 12).

Figure 12. Extent to Which Instructors Prohibit or Encourage Student Use of Generative AI



We also asked students about the extent to which their instructors are aware of the ways in which they are using generative AI in their courses. Just 30% of students said they believe that most of their instructors are fully aware of all of the ways they are using generative AI; the rest said either that their instructors were not fully aware or that they didn't know the extent of their instructors' awareness (see figure 13). This may point to a broader lack of open discourse on AI use in courses, which could stem from limited conversations between instructors and students, lacking or unclear policies/guidelines, student fears about potential consequences, and instructors' limited understanding of AI and its uses. Additionally, while 51% of students reported receiving guidance on AI use, a portion of this instruction likely emphasizes restrictions rather than constructive applications, which may further contribute to students' reluctance to engage openly with AI.

Figure 13. Instructor Awareness of Student Generative AI Use



Students use AI when it is encouraged and integrated into academics. Students are far more likely to report *not* using generative AI when its use is discouraged or is not integrated into their learning experiences (see figure 14). Specifically, students whose instructors prohibit generative AI were significantly more likely to say they don't use AI, compared to those whose instructors allow it. Similarly, students whose instructors do not incorporate generative AI into course activities, as well as students at institutions that do not offer AI-related experiences and training, were more likely to report not using AI. Students' workforce expectations also played a role in their use of generative AI—those who have no expectation for using generative AI in their career were more likely to say they don't use AI, compared to those who expect that they will use AI to a great extent in their career. Notably, the sizes of these gaps is substantial, ranging from 37 to 66 percentage points, highlighting the strength of the impact of institutional and instructional approaches on students' AI use, as well as expectations that such skills will be needed in the workplace.

Figure 14. Percentage of Students Who DO NOT Use Generative AI in Their Courses

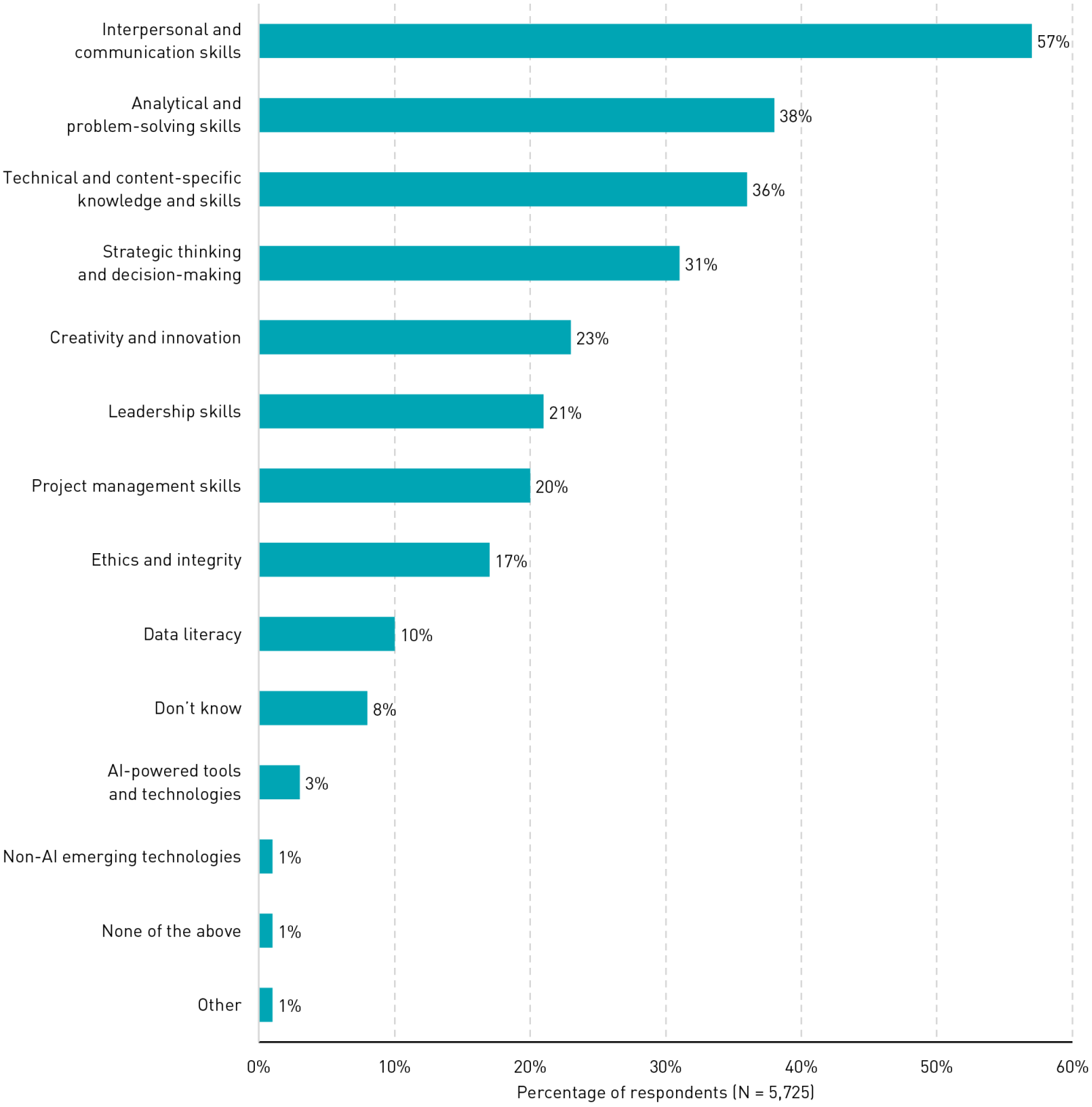
Instructors **allow** student use of AI (N = 95)	6%	72%	Instructors **prohibit** student use of AI (N = 1,220)
Instructors **incorporate** generative AI into assignments and activities (N = 169)	7%	71%	Instructors **do not incorporate** generative AI into assignments and activities (N = 1,771)
Institution **provides** AI experiences and training (N = 80)	9%	58%	Institution **does not provide** AI experiences and training (N = 541)
Students **expect to use** generative AI to a great extent in their career (N = 126)	5%	42%	Students **do not expect** to use generative AI in their career (N = 1,058)

Percentage of respondents

Workforce Preparation

Students prioritize "soft skills." Students were asked to select the top three competency areas they felt would be most important for their career. The most selected area was interpersonal and communication skills (57%), followed by analytical and problem-solving skills (38%), technical and content-specific knowledge and skills (36%), and strategic thinking and decision-making (31%) (see figure 15). Interestingly, technology was the least selected area—AI-powered and non-AI technologies were at the bottom of the list. Despite the growing use of technology and AI-powered tools in workplaces, few students see non-AI technologies (1%) and AI tools and technologies (3%) as critical to their careers, possibly due to lack of awareness, perceived irrelevance to their field, or reliance on other foundational skills.

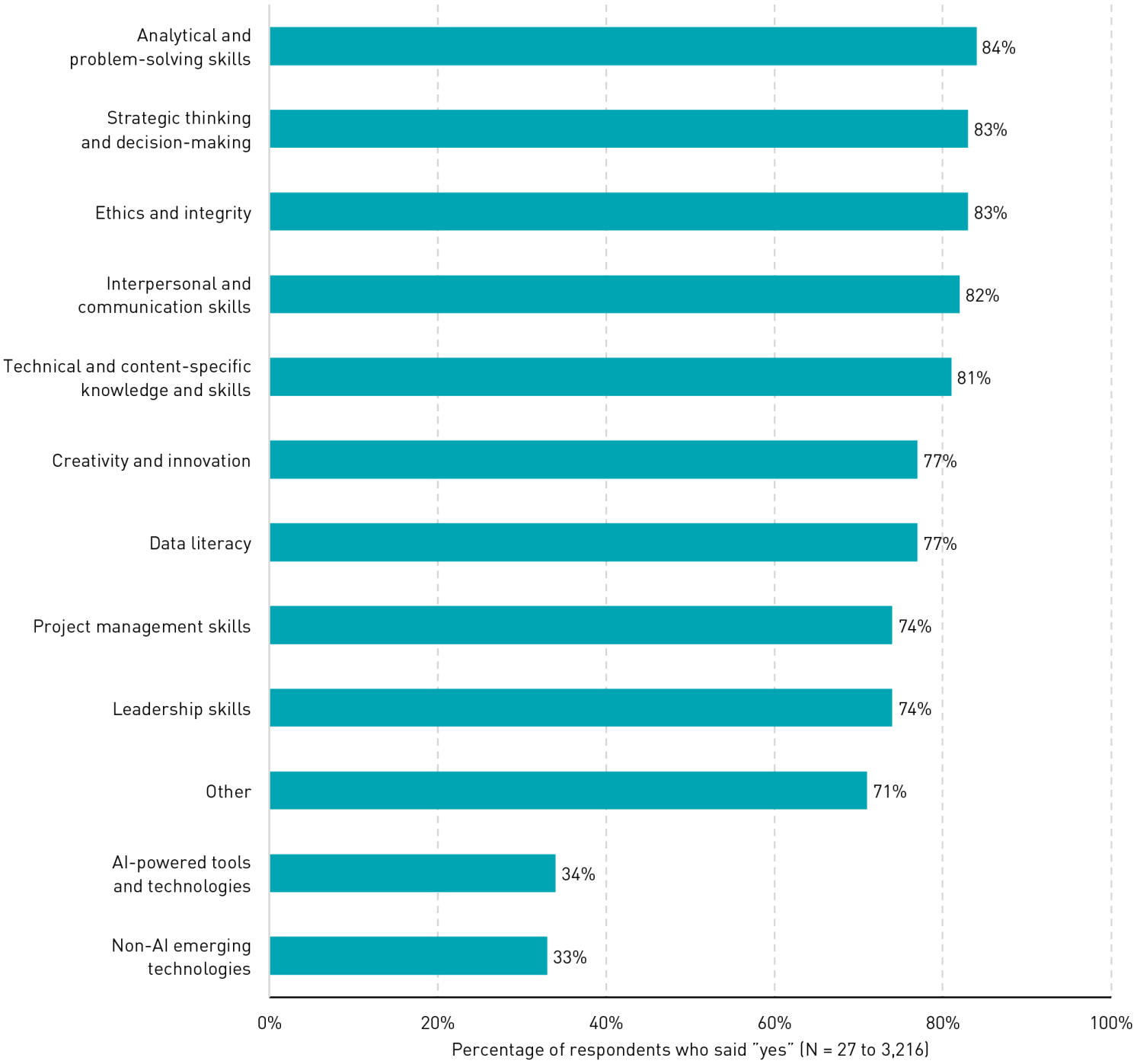
Figure 15. Competency Areas Expected to Be Important for Career



Students feel well prepared in all areas except technology. Students who identified their top three career competencies (shown in figure 15) were asked how well prepared they feel for each area of the three areas they selected. The majority—at least 71% in each area except technology—agreed that their higher education experience is effectively preparing them for their careers across various skills (see figure 16); AI and non-AI technologies stand out as exceptions, with significantly lower preparedness ratings. These results may be skewed, however, because fewer than 4% of students

ranked technology among their top three competencies, limiting the sample size. Still, as technology continues to rapidly evolve and become increasingly critical for the workforce, these findings highlight a need for institutions to strengthen technology-focused curricula and integrate more hands-on learning experiences with emerging digital tools.

Figure 16. Percentage of Students Who Feel Well Prepared in Career Competency Areas



Students recognize the importance of AI for their careers but have limited experience with it. Although 26% responded that they see no need for AI in their future career, a majority (55%) expect to use generative AI in their careers. Of the few who selected AI as an important competency area, however, only 20% said that their institution is giving them relevant training and experiences in AI. Notably, students whose institutions are providing training and experiences with AI feel more prepared across almost all career competency areas than students whose institutions are not providing such opportunities (see figure 17). This could be due to a number of factors—AI training and experiences could help students develop skills in other competency areas such as critical thinking, analytics, and problem-solving. It could also contribute to a halo effect in which students develop positive perceptions about their competency in one area (AI) and those views influence their perceptions in unrelated areas (non-AI competencies). The one exception we found is that more students at institutions *not* providing AI training and experiences felt prepared in the area of non-AI emerging technologies. The explanation could be that institutions not emphasizing AI provide more focus on and experience with other emerging technologies, giving students greater exposure in those areas. Likewise, students at institutions lacking AI training might take more initiative in developing their technology skills more broadly. Nonetheless, institutions have room to expand AI training and experiences to ensure students gain the necessary skills and confidence to succeed in an increasingly AI-driven workforce.

Figure 17. Students Who Feel Prepared in Competency Areas, by Access to AI Experiences

	My institution **is** giving me experience and training with generative AI needed to be successful in my career.	Percentage point difference	My institution **is not** giving me experience and training with generative AI needed to be successful in my career.
AI-powered tools and technologies	63%	53	10%
Project management skills	87%	17	70%
Leadership skills	88%	17	71%
Creativity and innovation	87%	16	71%
Data literacy	86%	14	72%
Non-AI emerging technologies	0%	14	14%
Interpersonal and communication skills	88%	11	77%
Strategic thinking and decision-making	87%	8	79%
Technical and content-specific knowledge and skills	86%	8	78%
Analytical and problem-solving skills	87%	3	84%
Ethics and integrity	82%	3	79%

Percentage of respondents (N = 1 to 955)

Students anticipate using AI as an assistive tool for a variety of career-related tasks. When asked how they expect to use generative AI in their career, students identified a variety of possibilities. Many anticipate using it for idea and content generation (e.g., brainstorming, innovation, writing emails and reports, and generating content more generally). Students also frequently mentioned using AI to assist with research and data-related tasks such as information searching, analytics, and identifying insights for decision-making. Some students mentioned specific use cases that would be tied to certain career fields such as software development (AI can help with coding, programming, and debugging), and others anticipated using AI for customer support roles (e.g., AI-powered chatbots and automated systems for communicating with

customers). Surprisingly, while the use of AI for automation and improved efficiency was mentioned, it was not mentioned nearly as much as other use cases. Many students who expect to use AI in their careers see it as a supportive tool that enhances productivity rather than a technology that will fully automate or replace their tasks.

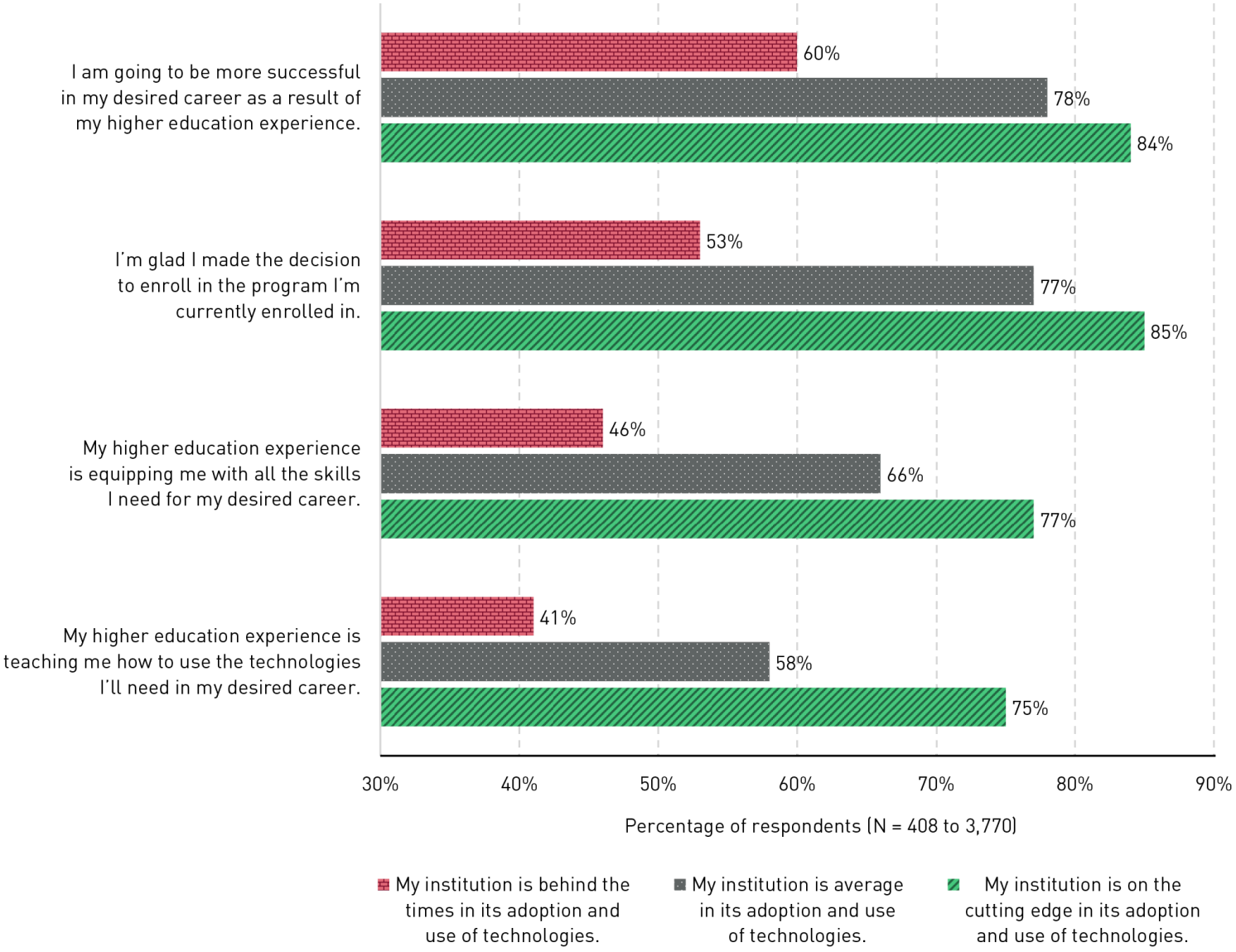
> "As an assistant tool, to generate prompts, and help me create the ideas or other things, but never to actually solve any issues or completely rely on it."

> "I will be using generative AI for a large portion of the rest of my life. It makes complicated jargon easier to understand, rephrases things, and is almost like a much more specific Google. I have learned languages with it, written stories, designed art pieces, and many more things not by stealing from it but by using it to outline the framework for these projects."

> "I expect to continue to use AI to do some of the legwork that is harder for a person to do but that does not require critical thinking, reading, or decision-making. For example, I expect to continue to use it to find helpful words or sources, but I don't expect it to replace the reading or writing that I do on my own."

Students at institutions with a cutting-edge approach to technology feel more career-ready. Overall, a majority of students felt that their institution was adequately preparing them for career success. Most students believe that they will be more successful as a result of their higher education experience (76%), are glad they enrolled in their current program (75%), feel their experience is equipping them with essential skills (66%), and are learning how to use the technologies they will need for their careers (59%). More notable was a strong relationship between students' perceptions of their institution's technological approach and their confidence in the value of their higher education experience (see figure 18). Students who believe their institution is on the cutting edge in its adoption and use of technologies were the most likely to feel career-ready and able to succeed due to their higher education experience, whereas students who view their institution as behind the times perceived the least value of their higher education experience. These findings suggest that technology plays a key role as a differentiating factor in institutional efficacy and competitiveness. Institutions aiming to improve student career readiness may benefit from incorporating more advanced technology into their academic programs.

Figure 18. Perceptions of Higher Education's Impact, by Institutional Technology Approach



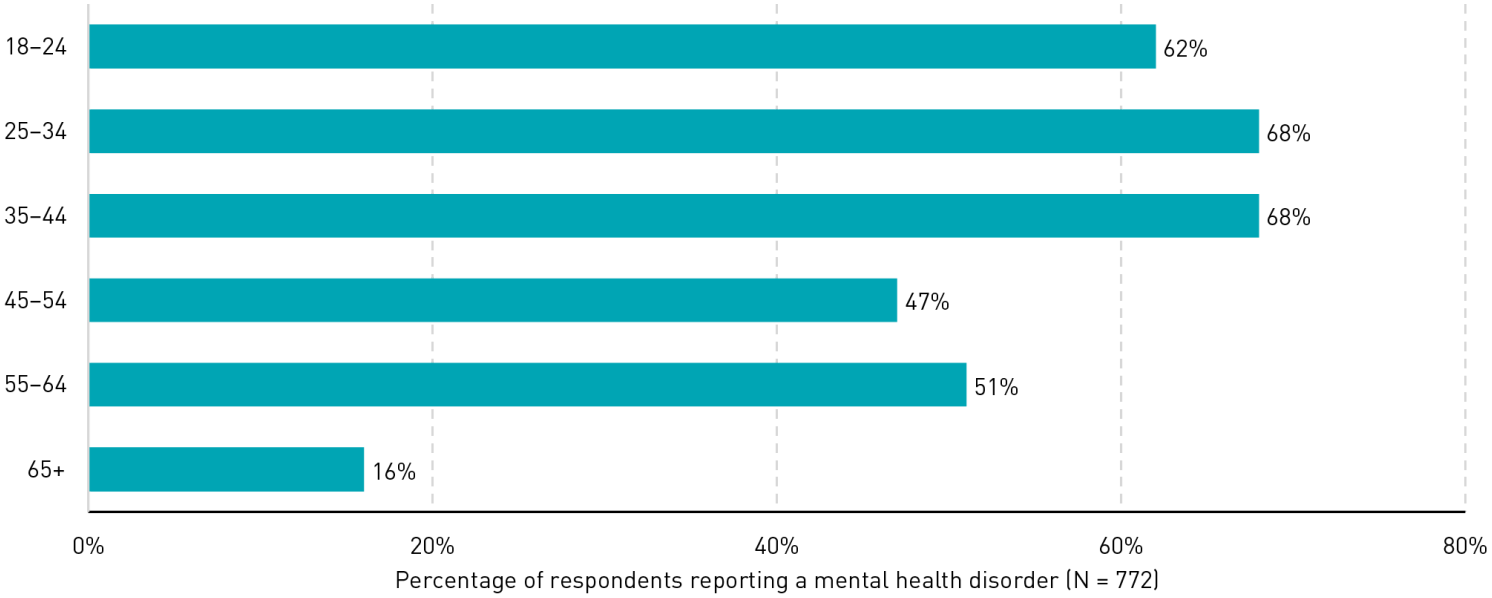
Accessibility and Mental Health

In recent years, accessibility and mental health have been key priorities for colleges and universities, especially as the COVID-19 pandemic heightened concerns about student isolation and mental health challenges. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given this context, students reported that mental health remained a persistent issue, with more students reporting mental health disorders and expressing growing dissatisfaction with their institution's support efforts.

More students, especially younger students, reported mental health disorders, but they are not registering for accommodations at higher rates. Overall, 24% of

respondents reported that they have a disability or impairment, while 76% said they did not. This represents a slight increase since 2023, when 19% of respondents reported that they had a disability or impairment and 76% said they did not (4% preferred not to say). Of those who said yes, 62% said they had a mental health disorder, 38% reported a learning disability (e.g., dyslexia), 16% said they had a sensory impairment, 14% a mobility impairment, and 21% had another disability. Interestingly, the 62% of students who reported having a mental health disorder represents an increase of 14 percentage points since 2023. Also, students aged 44 or younger reported mental health disorders at a higher rate: 62% of 18–24 year olds, 68% of 25–34 year olds, and 68% of 35–44 year olds (see figure 19). This is in comparison to 47% of 45–54 year olds, 51% of 55–64 year olds, and 16% of 65+ year olds who reported that they have mental health disorders. Despite the higher percentage of students reporting a mental health disorder since 2023, there was not a significant shift in students who reported registering with their institution's accessibility/disability services office. Of those who reported that they had a disability or impairment, 47% indicated that they had registered with their accessibility services office and been approved for an accommodation(s) (a 2-point increase since 2023), while 43% of students had not registered (a 4-point increase).

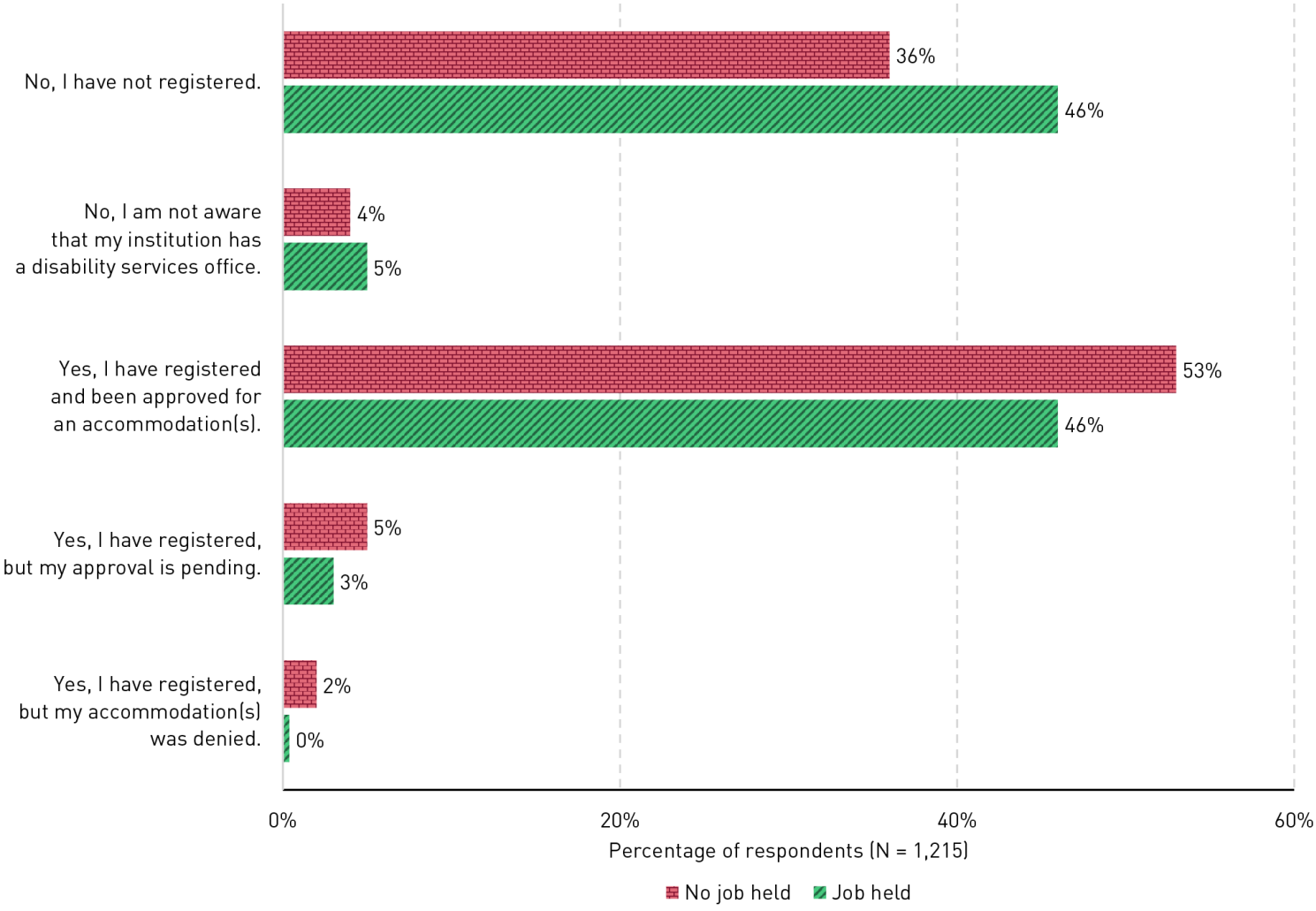
Figure 19. Prevalence of Reported Mental Health Disorders by Age Group



Barriers to seeking accessibility accommodations. While 47% of respondents with a disability or impairment said they had registered with their institution's accessibility office, respondents who indicated that they had a job were less likely to register (see figure 20). Among students who had a job, 46% said they had not registered for accommodations, while 36% of students who did not have a job did not register.

Meanwhile 53% of respondents without a job said they had registered for accommodations and been approved, and only 46% of respondents with a job said they had registered and been approved. For working students, the number of hours worked per week seemed to affect whether or not they sought support: 62% of students working 10 hours a week or less had registered and been approved for accommodations, but only 43% students working 10–19 hours a week had been approved. This number dropped even more for students in full-time roles: just 24% of students working 40 hours a week or more reported that they had registered and been approved for accommodations.

Figure 20. Accessibility Services Registration for Working and Non-Working Students



Students living in off-campus housing were also less likely to register with their institution's accessibility office. Whereas 37% of students who had a disability or impairment and lived in on-campus housing reported that they had not registered, 47% of students who lived in off campus housing not sponsored or owned by their college or

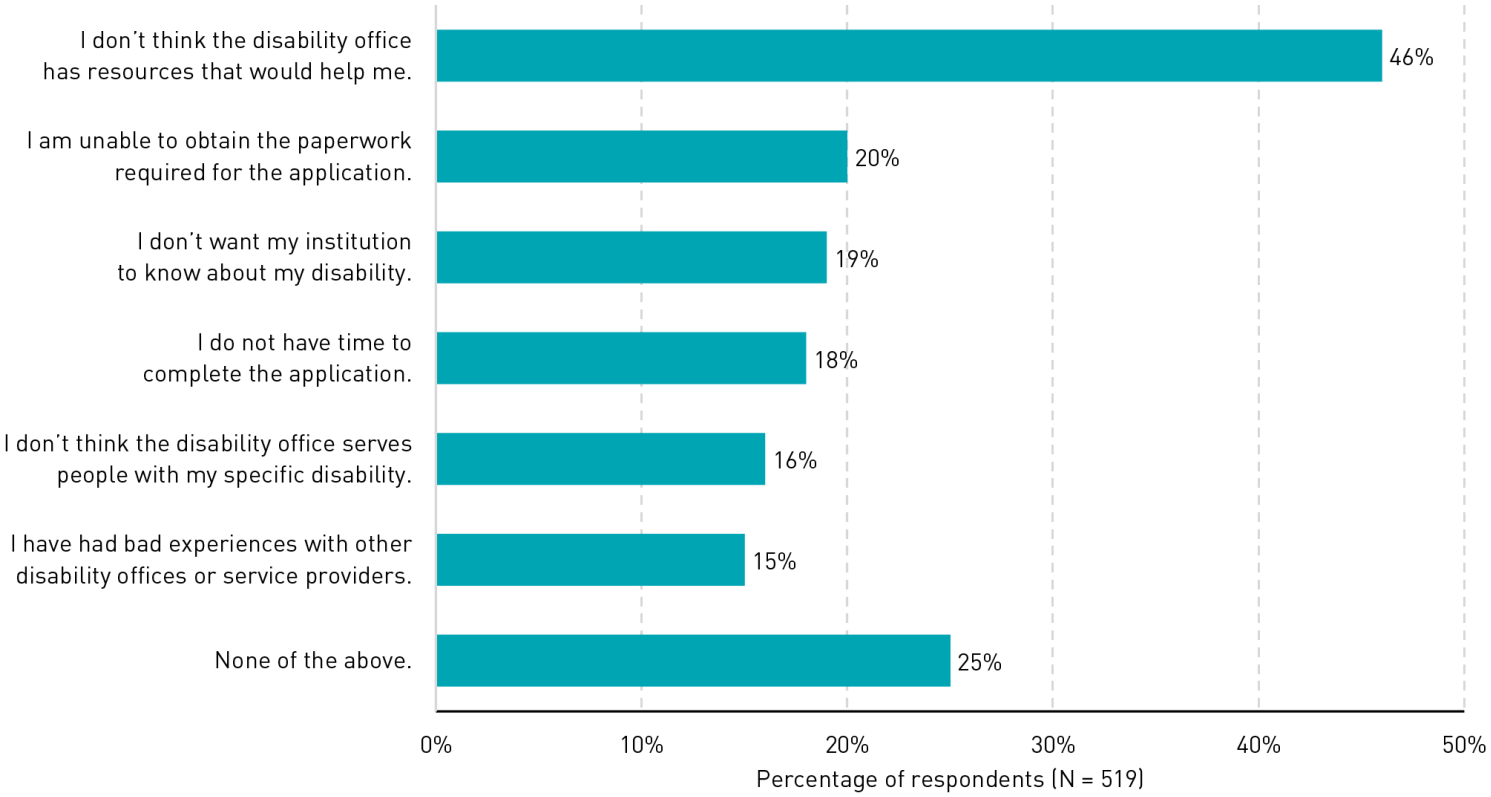
university had not registered. On the other hand, 56% of students in on-campus housing reported that they had registered and received accommodations, while only 44% of students in off-campus housing not affiliated with the institution said they had registered and received accommodations.

These findings indicate that there may be room for improvement in connecting students who report disabilities and impairments to institutional resources. Slightly less than half of students with disabilities and impairments reported registering with their institution's accessibility office, which suggests that institutions should consider ways to raise awareness about available support and ensure that there are multiple touchpoints for students. There is also a clear need to more effectively reach students who hold jobs and live off-campus—these are students who may have limited access to on-campus communications and outreach and may need alternative ways to learn about accessibility services designed to support their wellness. For students with jobs, streamlining the accessibility office registration process could help accommodate students' busy schedules and encourage greater engagement.

Students are less satisfied with institutional support than in 2023 and are less comfortable disclosing accommodation requests to instructors. Respondents who said they required accessible content, accessible technologies, and/or technology accommodations to effectively participate in their courses expressed decreased levels of satisfaction with their institution's support when compared to the *2023 EDUCAUSE Student and Technology Report*. Just over half (55%) of students reported being very satisfied or satisfied by their institution's support in providing the accessible content, technologies, and/or accommodations they require, which is a 13-point decrease from 2023. Student reasons for not registering with their institution's accessibility office may suggest some possible reasons for this decreased satisfaction. In particular, 46% of students with disabilities or impairments who reported that they had not registered and sought accommodations said they did not think their institution's accessibility/disability services office had resources that would help them (see figure 21). Another 19% indicated that they did not want their institution to know about their disability. These barriers speak to a possible communication gap that institutions could fills by highlighting the value of existing services and accommodations for a range of disabilities and impairments. It may also be helpful to consider the most effective ways to reassure students that registering for accommodations will not result in any negative consequences. Of those who said they had not registered with their institution's accessibility/disability services office, 20% of respondents indicated that they were unable to obtain the paperwork required for the application, while 18% said they did not

have time to complete the application. These responses suggest that streamlining access to necessary paperwork and, when possible, simplifying the process could also be key solutions.

Figure 21. Reasons for Not Registering with Accessibility/Disability Services

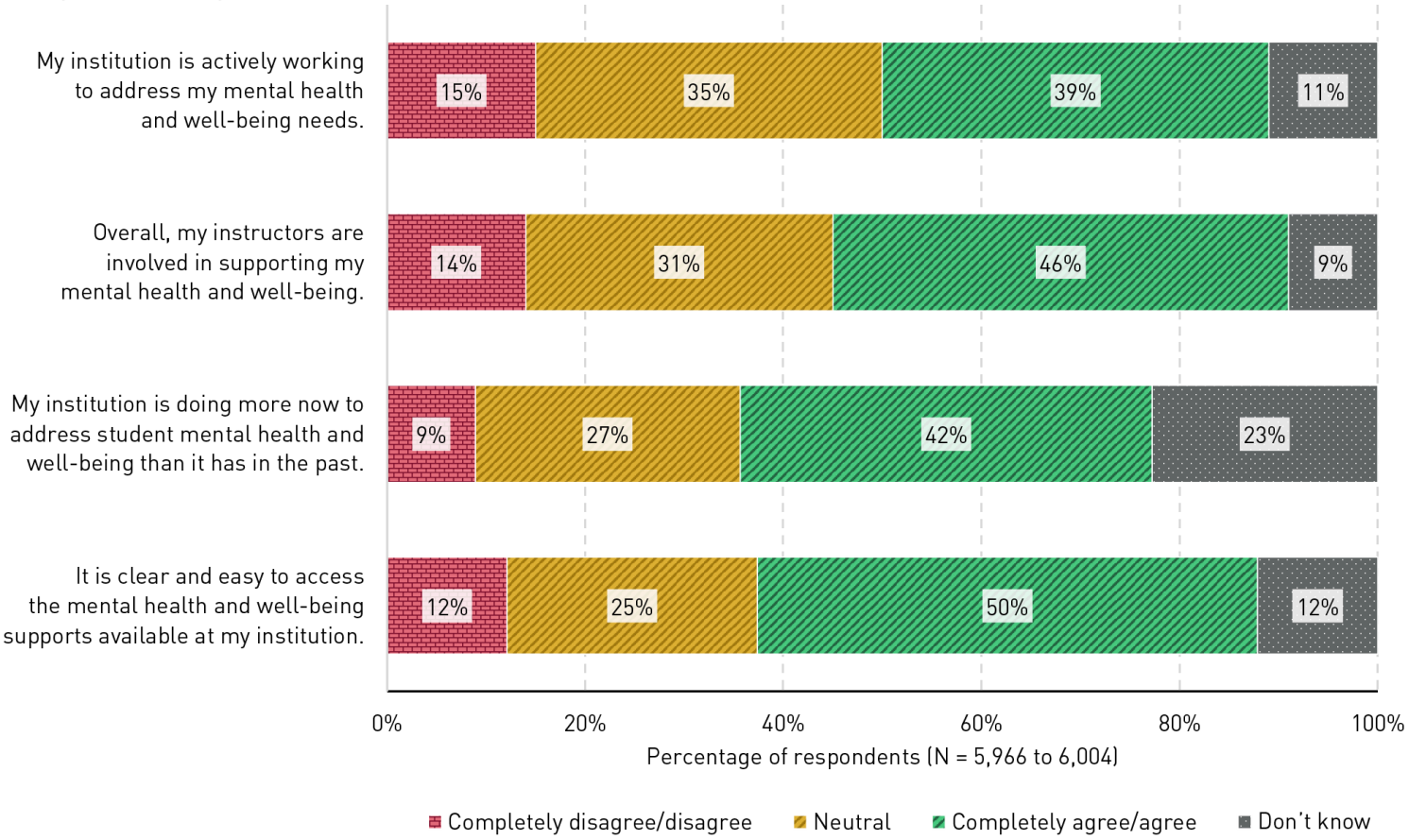


Another area of concern is that fewer students reported that they are comfortable disclosing disability accommodation requests to instructors. Just 51% of students requiring accessible content, assistive technologies, and/or technology accommodations for a course said they felt comfortable disclosing these requirements to their instructors, a 13-point decrease since 2023. Also, 16% of students who said they required accessible content, technologies, and/or accommodations said they did not feel comfortable disclosing their accommodation requirements, a 10-point increase since 2023. This finding about student reluctance to discuss needed accommodations with instructors is particularly concerning because faculty are often a first touchpoint for students who need support.

Students are seeking improved institutional mental health efforts. Just as students seemed ambivalent about their satisfaction with institutional accessibility support, they also reported mixed feelings about the efficacy of their institution's efforts around mental health. Just half (50%) of respondents indicated that it was clear and easy to

access their institution's mental health and well-being supports, and only 42% agreed or completely agreed that their institution was doing more now to address student health and well-being than it had done in the past (see figure 22). Perhaps most concerning, only 39% of students agreed or completely agreed that their institution was actively working to address their mental health and well-being needs. The majority of students, then, feel that their institution is not adequately prioritizing their mental health and well-being and has not increased its efforts. This may speak to a need to expand opportunities for students to share concerns and experiences with institutional leaders and include students in conversations about campus mental health and well-being efforts. Such solutions would have two-fold benefits: first, students would be more aware of institutional efforts, and secondly, it could deepen student engagement in this critical work.

Figure 22. Agreement with Statements about Institutional Mental Health Efforts



There may also be a need to better communicate available mental health resources—and their value—to students. Although many students noted that they appreciated institutional investments in free online counseling options, one student pointed out a gap: "As an online student, I haven't really been made aware of mental health resources

that are accessible to me." This student offers an important reminder that institutions and instructors need to make sure online students—especially those who are fully remote—are aware of mental health services and resources that are accessible to them. Another student highlighted a different potential challenge: overloaded counseling centers that are struggling to meet student demand. According to the student, "They [the counseling center] are so overworked that I often have to go 2–3 weeks between counseling appointments, and that's after having to wait months just to get a consultation." Of course, for students experiencing a crisis, waiting several weeks or months for support that meets their needs can result in even greater distress. Another student shared that they were skeptical about the value of available mental health support services: "Can't think of anything that I've used recently, but I know that those are all available. I've never felt like they were going to be useful enough to try." These insights underscore the need for institutions to continue raising awareness of available mental health services to all students, effectively communicate the value of existing resources, and invest in solutions to support high-demand counseling offices.

Recommendations

Although institutions may take various approaches to assess and address the findings discussed in this report, we encourage them to consider the following actions that might cultivate productive dialogue and enhance student experience:

- **Continue investing in up-to-date and scalable technologies that enhance learning.** This includes ensuring reliable campus internet/Wi-Fi access, exploring innovative solutions and emerging technologies, and improving student and instructor technological literacy. Taken together, these ongoing efforts can enhance student learning and engagement while better preparing them for the digital workforce.
- **Communicate the value of institutional investments and services to students.** Institutions should not only invest in innovative solutions but also ensure that students understand their value. This is particularly important in areas such as technology services, accessibility/disability services, and mental health support, where effective communication can make a significant difference in student engagement and satisfaction.
- **Thoughtfully frame the use of generative AI to students.** Although individual perspectives will vary, prohibiting the use of generative AI altogether or

highlighting concerns about unethical use without teaching students to navigate these potential challenges may lead students to underreport their use of AI tools and/or avoid using them altogether. This could ultimately put students at a disadvantage as they enter a workforce that is increasingly integrating AI. Encouraging students to responsibly experiment with generative AI tools and taking a balanced approach to how we frame its opportunities and challenges might facilitate greater engagement with generative AI tools and productive dialogue between faculty, students, leaders, and other institutional stakeholders.

- **Continue to invest in diverse course models that meet the needs of all students.** While there seems to be increased preference for on-site course experiences, institutions will likely need to continue to invest in a range of course models (online, on-site, hybrid) that meet the needs of all learners. Also, institutions might prioritize consistency in defining course models and practices, particularly for hybrid courses (see WCET's **"Digital Learning Definitions"** for a helpful starting point).
- **Include students in conversations about issues that impact their campus experience.** Students should be regularly invited to participate in important campus conversations about topics that affect them—especially the financial challenges of their educational experience, their mental health needs and barriers to seeking support, and their satisfaction with various campus initiatives.
- **Develop a culture of care by embedding well-being into all aspects of campus life.** Institutions should take **a holistic approach to well-being** by equipping faculty and staff with the skills to recognize and respond to mental health concerns and other challenges that students may face, leveraging technology to expand access to support services, and promoting holistic well-being through initiatives that address physical, emotional, and social health. Creating a culture in which well-being is prioritized and integrated into everyday interactions could enhance the use of and effectiveness of institutional supports by not placing the responsibility of help-seeking fully on students.
- **Develop an action plan to guide your institution's future.** Creating an **action plan** by considering emerging trends in higher education and future goals can facilitate collective development of short-, mid-, and long-term actions. This work can be critical in fostering a culture of innovation and foresight and ensuring that institutions are prepared to thrive in an evolving landscape.

Methodology and Acknowledgments

Methodology

The 2024 EDUCAUSE student survey was administered from March 6, 2024, to January 2, 2025. The survey consisted of 63 closed- and open-ended questions (the survey instrument can be found here: **2024 Student and Technology Survey**). Respondents may have been asked fewer questions depending on survey branching. The survey was distributed via EDUCAUSE marketing emails and EDUCAUSE's analytic services portal. Overall, 6,468 respondents from 37 institutions participated. Inclusion criteria were based upon a survey item completion rate of 30% or more. Data were weighted by institution size classification to reflect benchmarks from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center of Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2022. The tables below display unweighted response rates by institution type and characteristics, in addition to respondent demographics. Race, ethnicity, and gender data are not included due to privacy considerations.

Table 1. Institution Response Rates, by Institution Type

Characteristic	IPEDS Population	Percentage of IPEDS Population	Survey Respondents	Percentage of Survey Respondents
Sector of Institution				
Public	9,041,091	80%	5,806	90%
Private	2,287,122	20%	662	10%
Total	*11,328,213*	*100%*	*6,468*	*100%*
Level of Institution				
4 or more years	3,054,266	73%	4,483	69%
Less than 4 years	8,273,947	27%	1,985	31%
Total	*11,328,213*	*100%*	*6,468*	*100%*
Institution Size				
Under 1,000	212,224	2%	--	0%
1,000–4,999	1,858,400	16%	499	8%
5,000–9,999	2,059,100	18%	1,657	26%

10,000–19,999	2,530,686	22%	310	5%
20,000 and above	4,667,803	41%	4,002	62%
Total	*11,328,213*	*100%*	*6,468*	*100%*

Table 2. Respondent Demographics: Age

Mean age	25
Median age	20
25th percentile	19
50th percentile	20
75th percentile	27

Table 3. Respondent Demographics: Class Standing

Freshman or first-year student	35%
Sophomore or second-year student	24%
Junior or third-year student	17%
Senior or fourth-year student	14%
Fifth-year student or beyond	3%
Other type of undergraduate student	6%

Methodology and Acknowledgments

Acknowledgments

EDUCAUSE Research and Insights first and foremost extends a heartfelt thank you to the students who participated in this year's survey, as well as the survey administrators who supported its planning and distribution. We appreciate the student respondents' honesty in engaging with these critical questions, and we are grateful to the survey administrators whose support made this work possible. We would also like to thank the subject-matter experts who were generous in sharing their time and expertise as we developed our survey instrument and report. Their feedback was essential in shaping a survey that reflects key topics and challenges in higher education and in producing a report with actionable strategies for institutions. We are so grateful to the members of EDUCAUSE's Analytic Services team for their diligence in ensuring that the survey and collected data were accessible and functional via the Analytics Services portal. They also played a key role in communicating with participating members. We also want to thank the project management team for keeping this project on track and all contributors aligned throughout its duration. Their exceptional organizational and communication

skills were critical to the long-term success of this work. We also extend our thanks to our publications team, graphics designer, and web team, whose expertise and collaboration were essential in refining this work and bringing it to life. Finally, we want to thank the members of the Research and Insights team for their thoughtful review of our survey instrument and report and enthusiastic support throughout the process. We are especially grateful to our Research Data Analyst, whose dedication and hard work in programming the survey and developing toolkits were instrumental to the success of this project.

Learn More

Access additional materials on the **2025 EDUCAUSE Students and Technology Report hub**.

Citation for this work
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Notes

Percentages throughout have been rounded to the nearest whole number, occasionally resulting in sums just under or over 100%. ↩

Responses labeled "I don't know" and "N/A" were excluded from the graphical representation. ↩

Responses labeled "I don't know" were excluded from the graphical representation. ↩

Responses labeled "I don't know" were excluded from the graphical representation. ↩

Cross-tabulation analysis and a chi-square test of independence revealed a statistically significant relationship between course modality preference and age (p = .001). ↩

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