

Don't Just Survive ... THRIVE: A GEM Blueprint for Competing in a Dynamic Marketplace

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2026
**GEM
SUMMIT**
BALTIMORE **MD**
APRIL 8-11, 2026
Marriott Baltimore Waterfront





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GRADUATE ENROLLMENT ISN'T DECLINING—IT'S FRAGMENTING

- Demand is shifting, not disappearing
- Competition is intensifying
- Traditional blueprints are breaking down

How do we compete in this new environment?



AUDIENCE POLL

**DID YOU MEET YOUR ENROLLMENT GOALS LAST YEAR?
ARE YOU ON TRACK TO MEET GOALS THIS YEAR?**

WHAT THE NATIONAL DATA SHOWS

- Enrollment rebounding slightly, but still unstable
- Goals increasing despite uncertainty
- Pressure shifting toward revenue (not just headcount)

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

- 6 years
 - 17 surveys (2020-2026)
 - 500+ GEM professionals
 - 400+ unique institutions
- Even mix of Public and Private
 - Majority GEM Professionals
 - Experience Range: 1-42 years
 - Average Experience: 17 years

SO WHAT'S ACTUALLY CHANGING?

We see three major shifts shaping the GEM landscape:

1. Technology (AI + efficiency)
2. Workforce (stress + turnover)
3. Market Dynamics (enrollment + programs)

TECHNOLOGY (AI)



AUDIENCE POLL

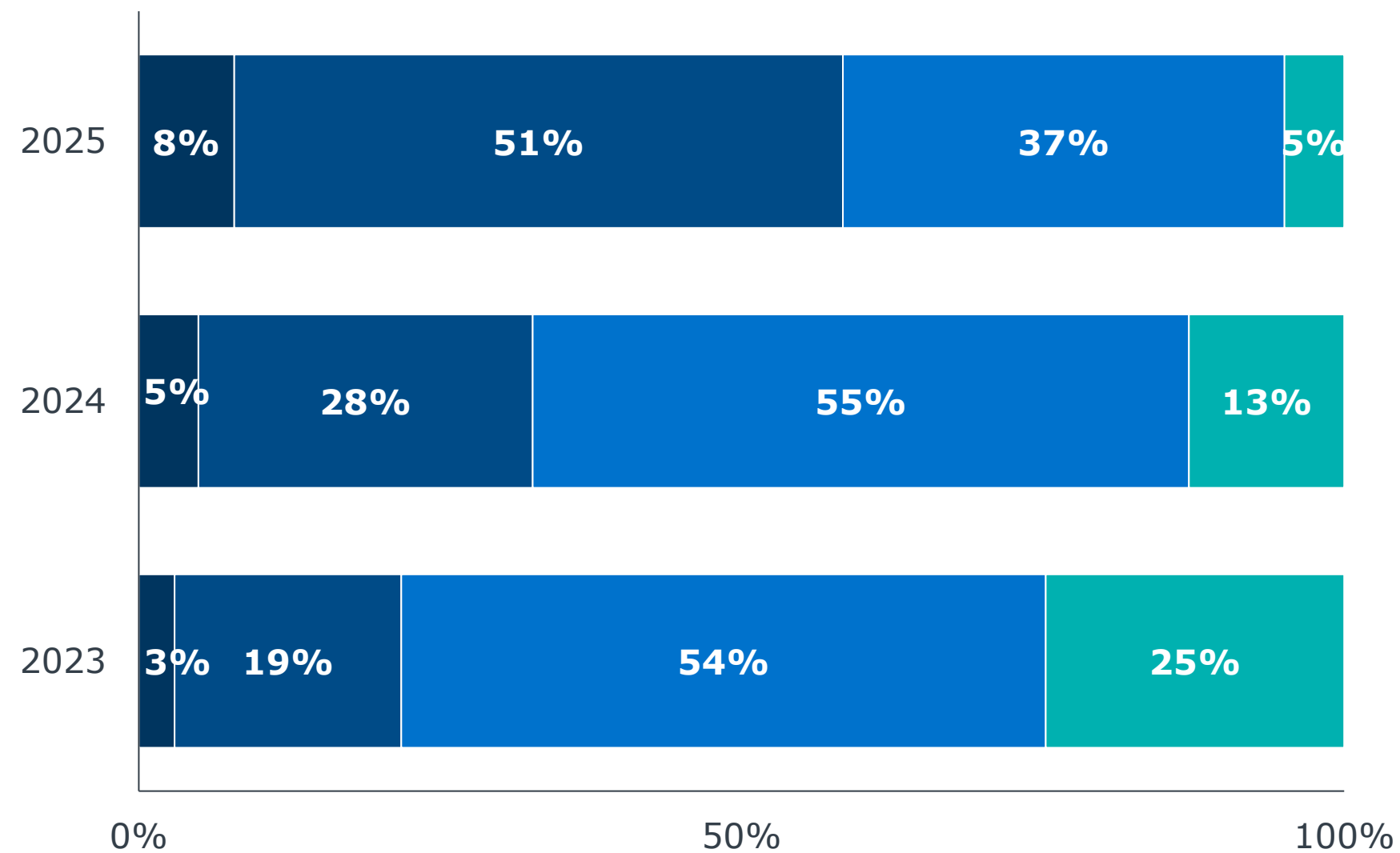
WHAT'S ONE WAY YOUR TEAM IS USING AI TODAY?

INSIGHT

AI ADOPTION IS ACCELERATING QUICKLY

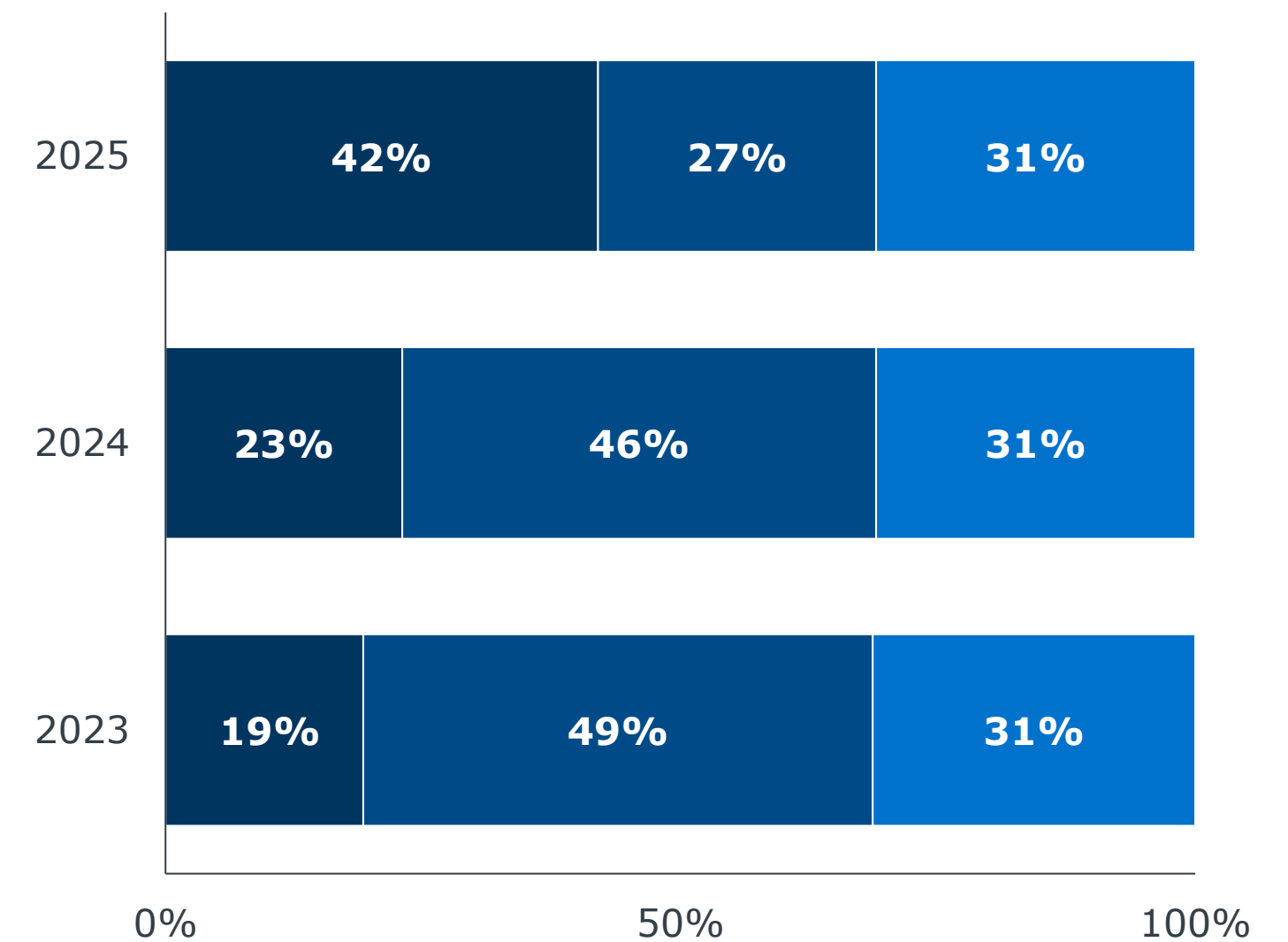
FAMILIARITY AND ADOPTION INCREASING

Q. How would you categorize your level of familiarity with AI?



■ Advanced ■ Intermediate ■ Beginner ■ None

Q. Does your institution use AI for its marketing and enrollment efforts?



■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure

AI IS BEING USED FOR EFFICIENCY, NOT TRANSFORMATION

Q. Which uses of AI in admissions do you find the most compelling?

	2025	2024	2023
Draft content for recruitment comms	39%	40%	37%
Mining enrollment data for insights	36%	25%	26%
Using next-generation chatbots	36%	39%	37%
Recruitment-marketing communication flows	31%	36%	37%
Identifying new markets for recruitment	25%	30%	29%
Automating the processing of transcripts	22%	21%	18%
Improving enrollment outcome models	21%	17%	20%
Scaling holistic applicant review	10%	11%	12%
Integrating siloed admissions data sets	10%	9%	8%
Improving financial aid models	9%	6%	9%
Reducing timing for training	8%	9%	11%
Scaling proactive admissions offers	5%	5%	4%
Equipping staff with coding capabilities	4%	2%	2%
Optimizing counselor travel/scheduling	4%	4%	4%

Primary Uses

- Email campaigns
- Chatbots
- Content creation

Limited Use

- Strategy

EVEN WITH EFFICIENCIES, CONCERNS PERSIST

Q. What are your greatest fears concerning the use of AI in admissions?

	2025	2024	2023
Mistakes or " hallucinations " from the AI	41%	--	--
Integrity of student applications	39%	41%	--
Inadvertently sharing proprietary/personal information	33%	25%	24%
Cost of acquisition of tools and training	24%	34%	36%
Exposure to legal risk	24%	21%	31%
Introduction of bias in candidate assessment	22%	23%	27%
Uneven playing field against institutions spending more	22%	24%	30%
Admissions staff will be redundant/expendable	19%	18%	25%
Admissions work will change in undesirable ways	17%	19%	33%
Compromising our brand	14%	15%	24%
No concerns at this time	4%	9%	--
No compelling uses	3%	2%	--

TAKEAWAY

AI IS SCALING CAPACITY—NOT SUPPORTING STRATEGY

WORKFORCE





AUDIENCE POLL

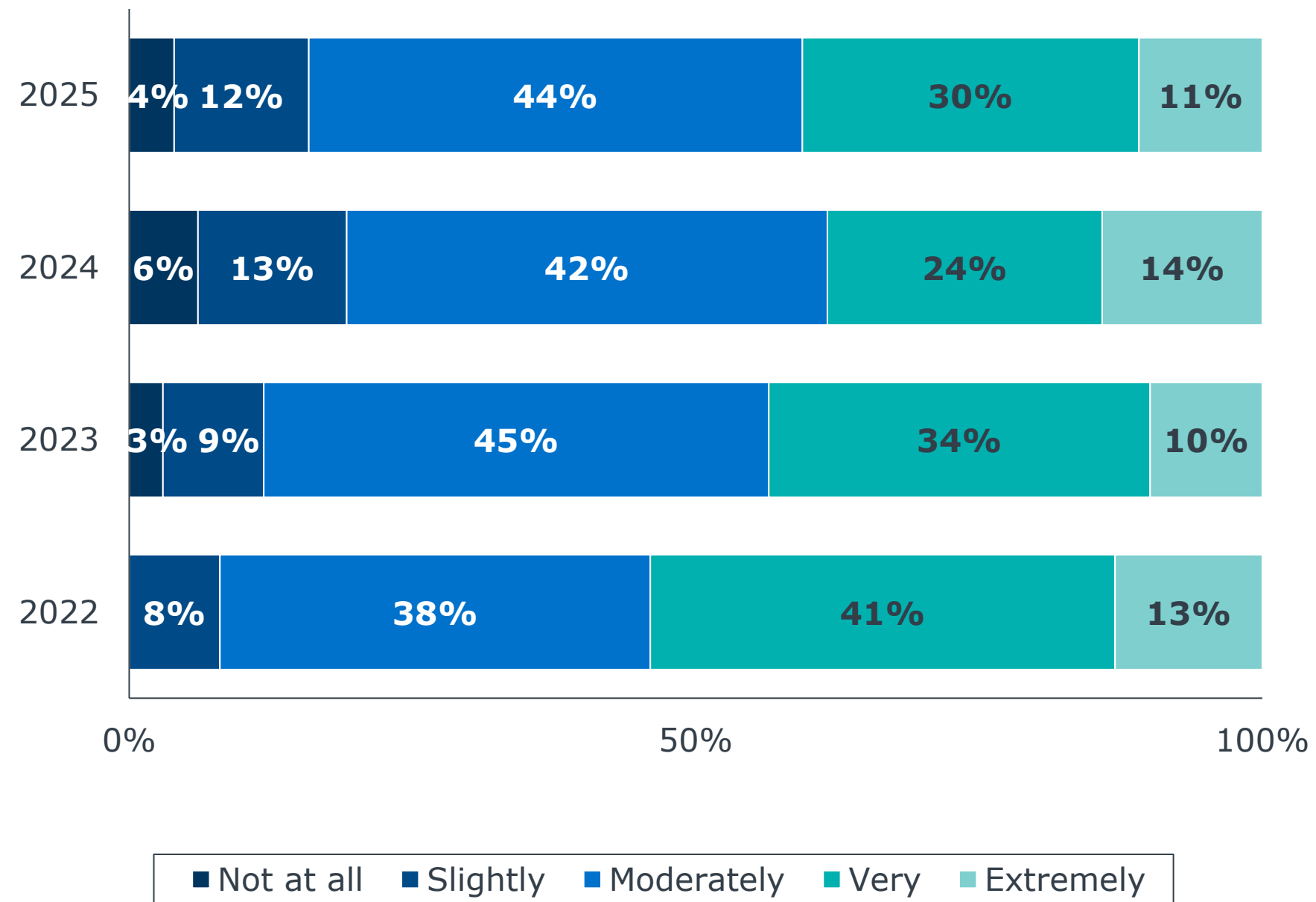
HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE LOST STAFF IN THE PAST YEAR?

INSIGHT

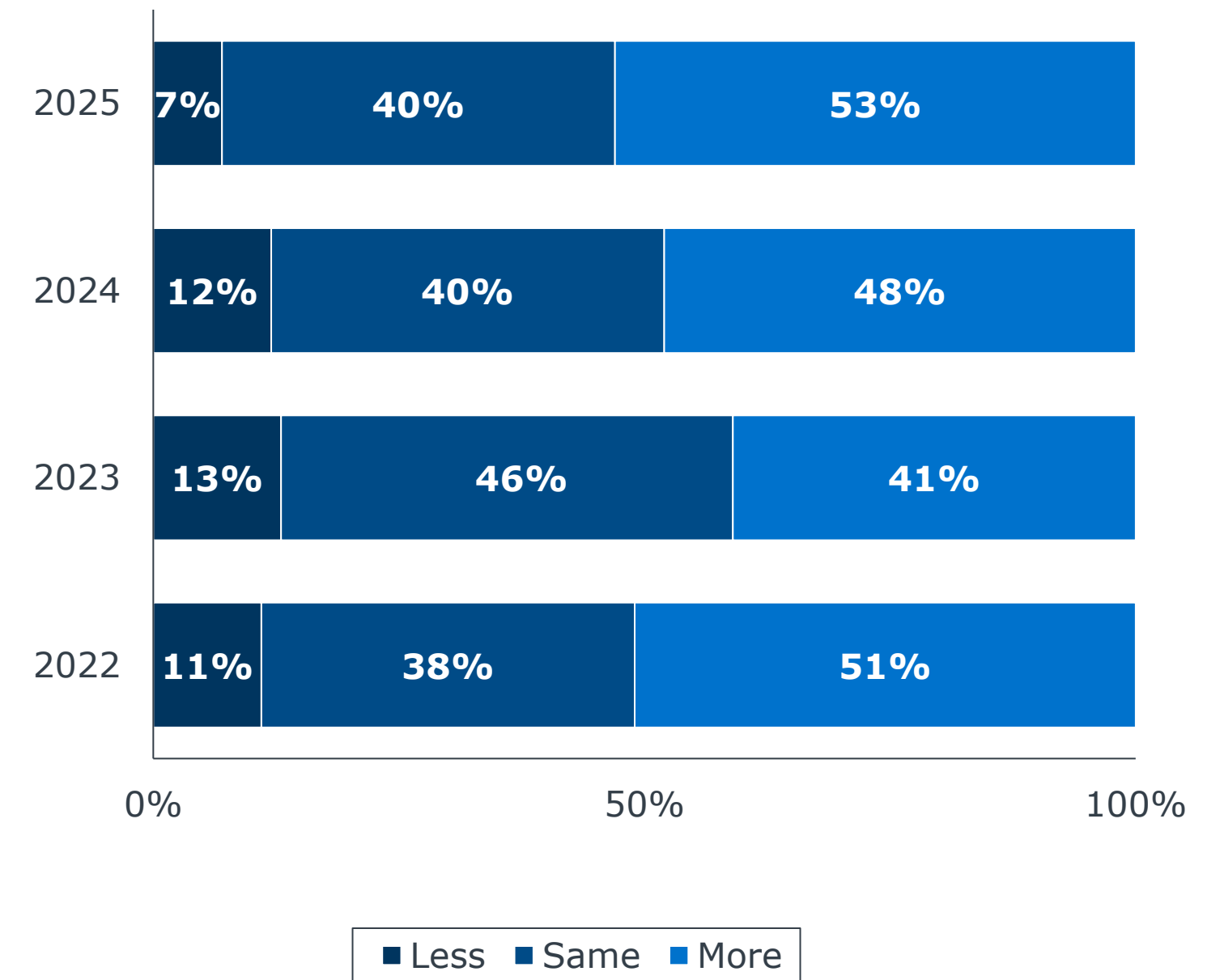
STRESS + BURNOUT IS WIDESPREAD

MORE THAN 80% REPORT MODERATE TO EXTREME STRESS

Q. Generally, how stressful is your work situation?

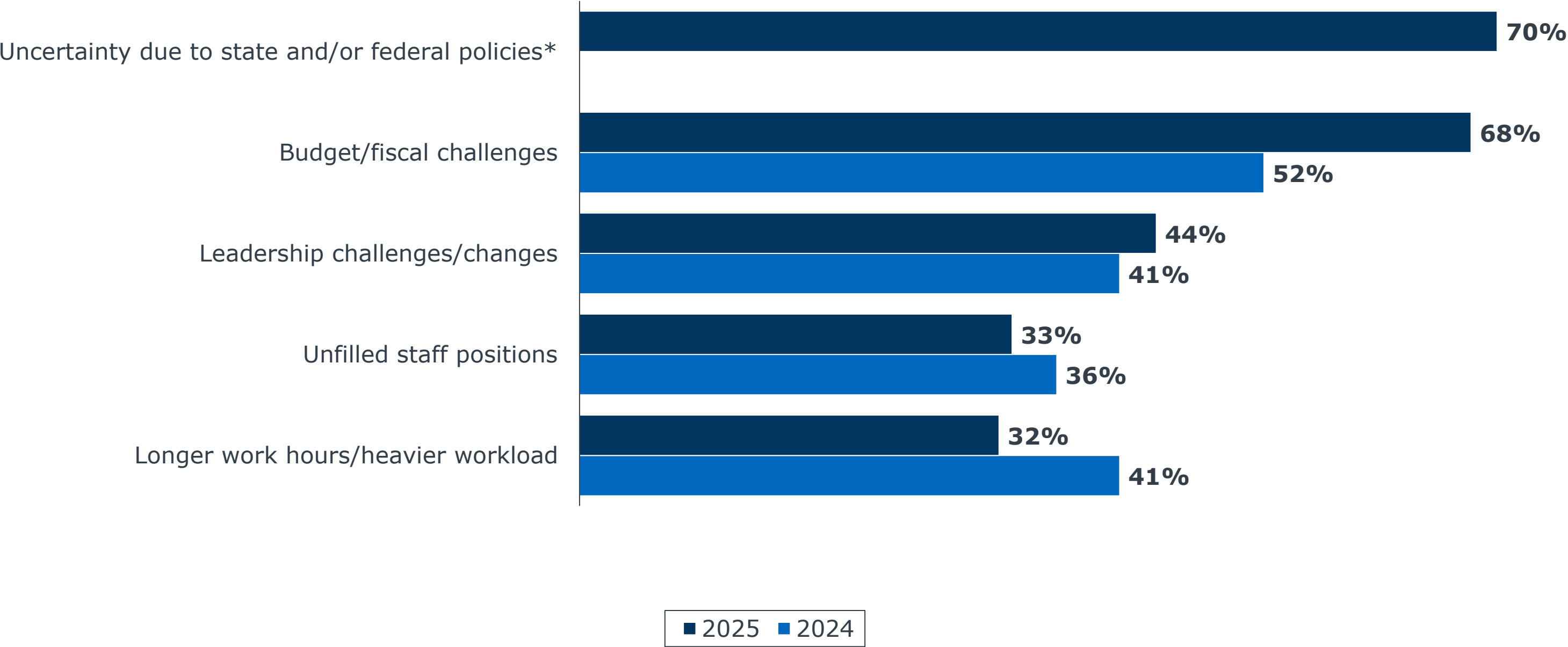


Q. How stressful is your current work situation compared with this time last year?



WHY? IT'S STRUCTURAL

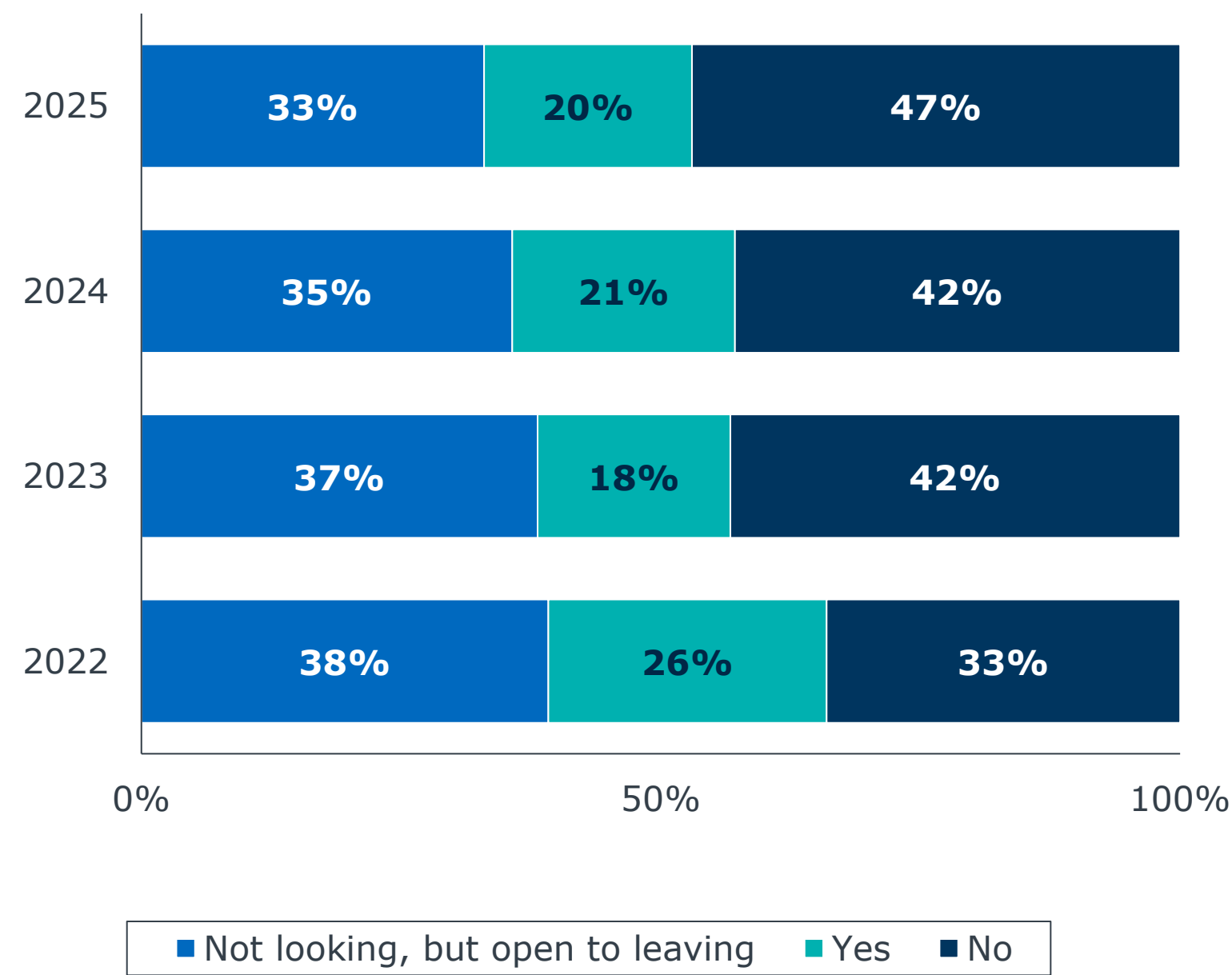
Q. What factors are influencing the stressfulness of your current work situation?



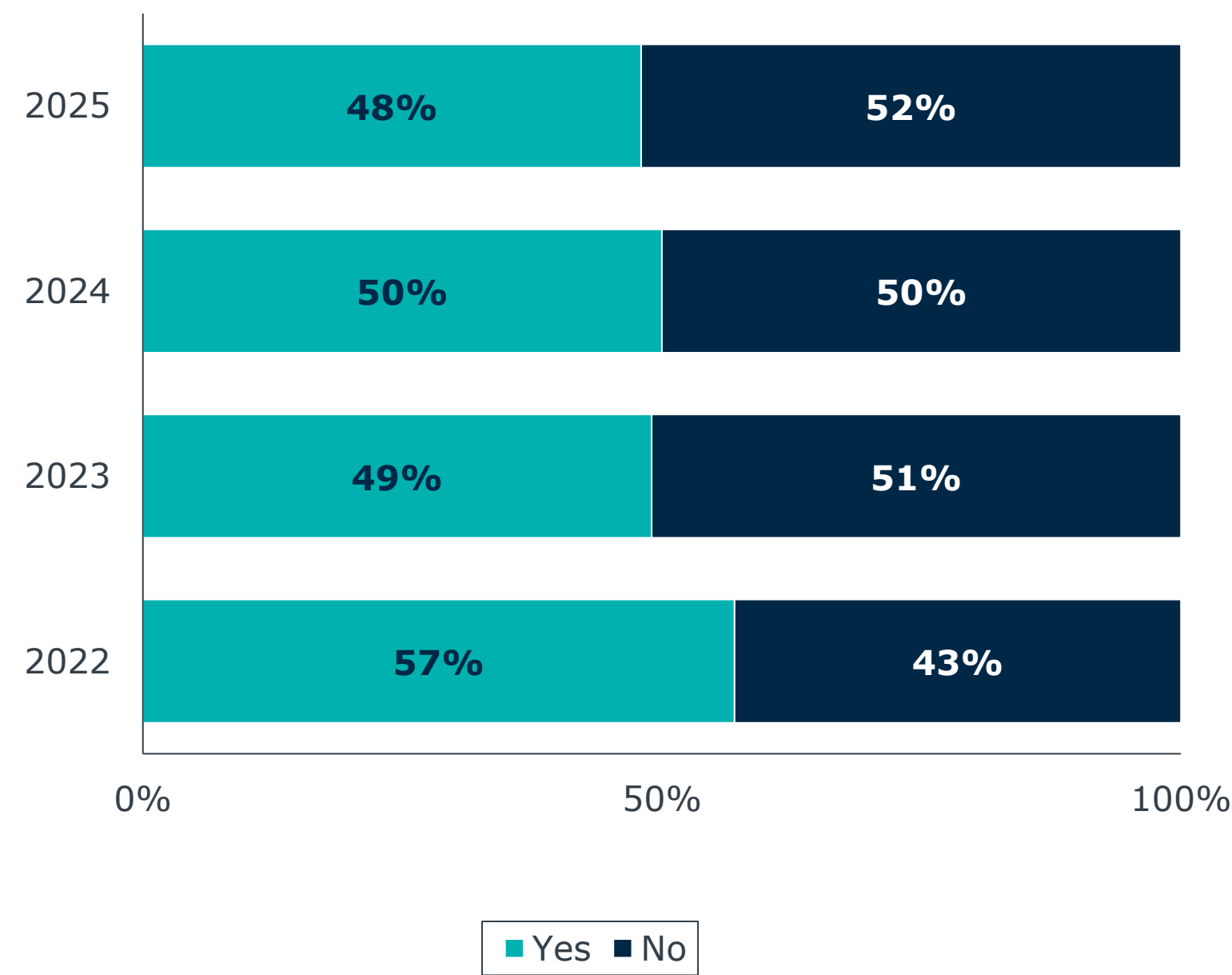
* New response option in 2025

RETENTION RISK REMAINS HIGH

Q. Are you considering leaving your current position?



Q. Are you aware of others on your team who are considering leaving their current positions?



TAKEAWAY

**THE RISK ISN'T JUST DEMAND—
IT'S ALSO CAPACITY**

MARKET DYNAMICS



AUDIENCE POLL

WHAT'S YOUR TOP PRIORITY RIGHT NOW?

A. GROWTH

B. REVENUE

C. ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

D. STAFFING

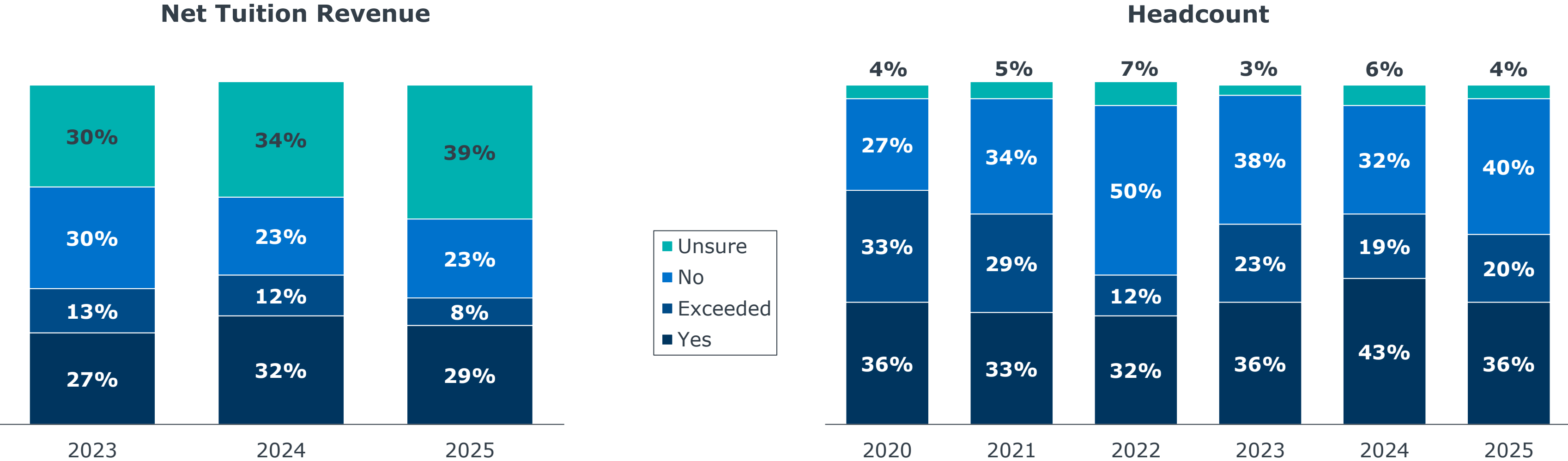
E. ALL OF THE ABOVE

INSIGHT

PRIORITIES ARE SHIFTING

FEWER MET THEIR GOALS IN 2025

Q. Did you meet your enrollment goals?



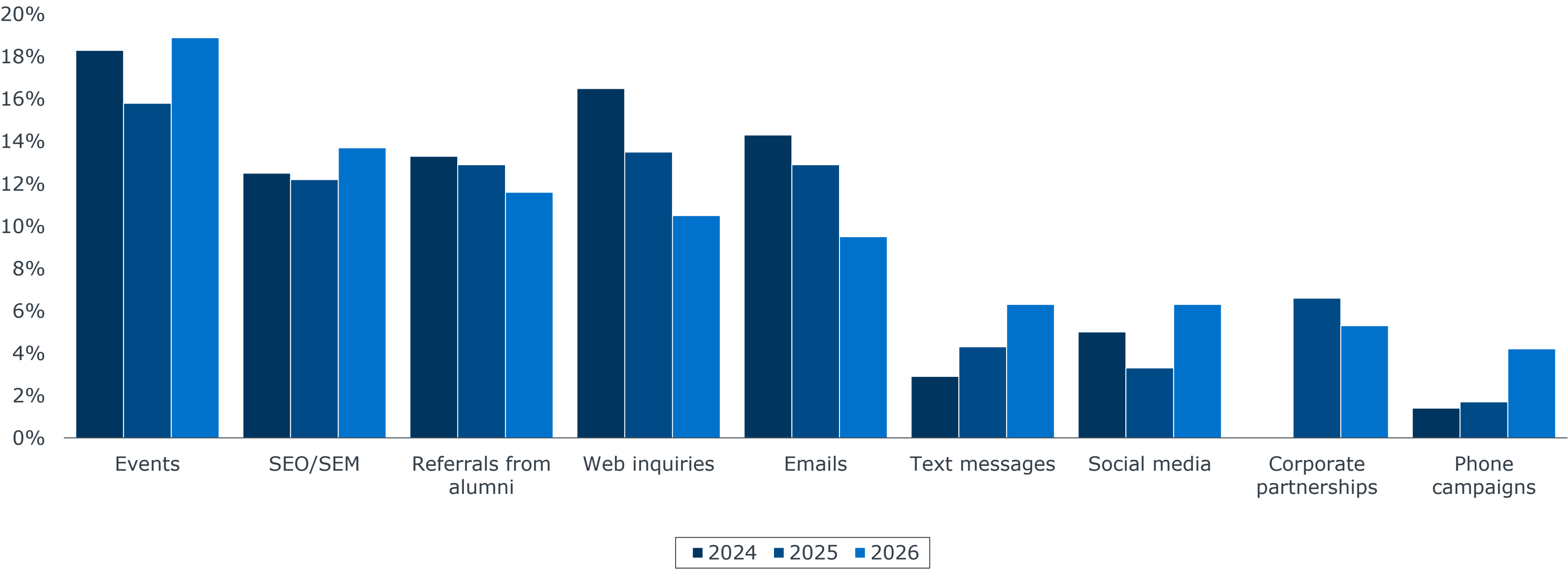
PROGRAM STRATEGY IS EVOLVING

Q. Which programs ...?

	Drove Growth	Drove Decline	Were Added	Were Eliminated	Have Potential for Growth
Online programs	44.8%	8.2%	39.6%	3.4%	43.1%
Business/MBA	43.8%	28.9%	19.4%	6.9%	32.6%
Education	32.4%	24.7%	14.5%	11.5%	18.8%
Engineering/STEM	24.8%	38.1%	21.6%	9.8%	33.5%
Allied Health	23.8%	10.3%	12.8%	2.3%	31.2%
Nursing	22.9%	10.3%	11.0%	3.4%	22.0%
Non-degree certificate offerings	5.7%	3.1%	22.5%	10.9%	15.6%
Law	4.8%	1.0%	1.3%	0.6%	2.3%
Unsure/None	2.9%	17.5%	17.6%	43.7%	8.7%
Pharmacy	1.0%	6.2%	1.3%	1.1%	2.8%

RECRUITMENT IS CHANGING

Q. What student recruitment activity has provided the best outcome in terms of enrollments?



TAKEAWAY

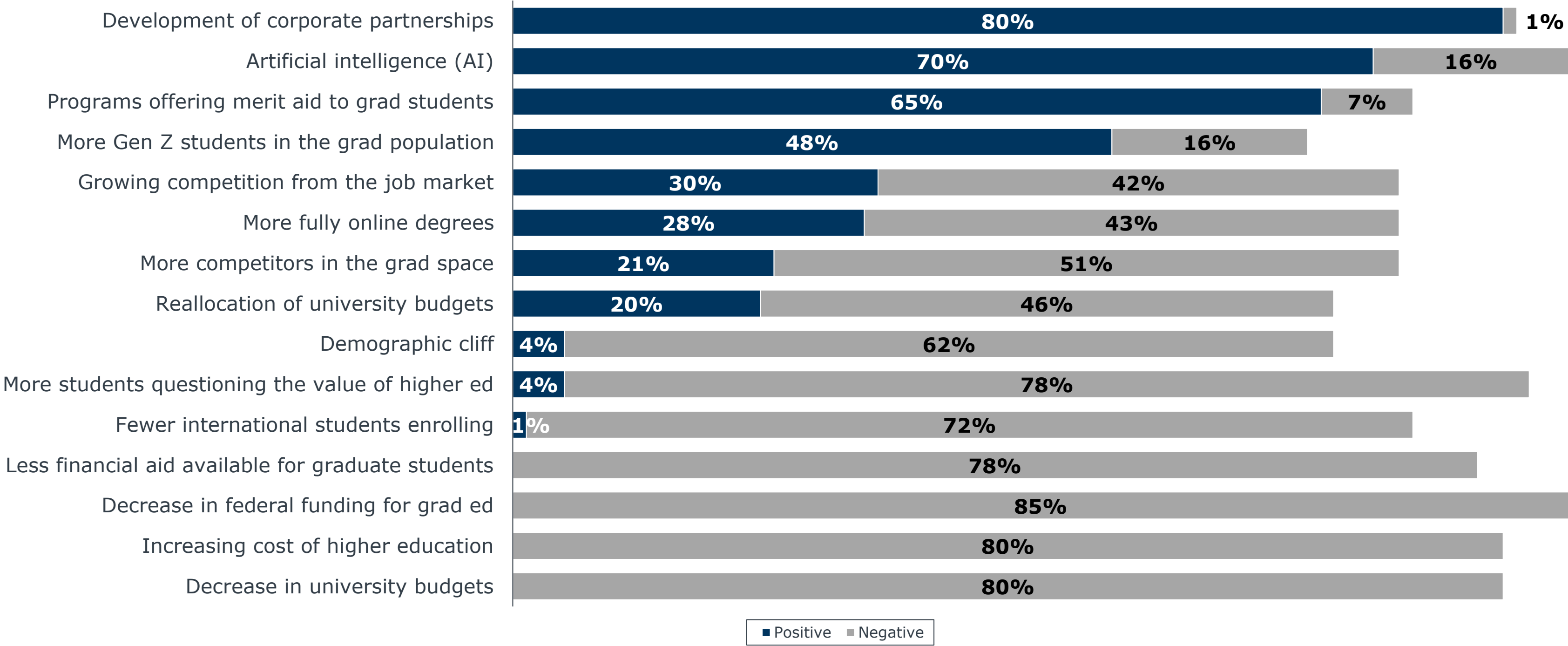
**THE BLUEPRINT IS CHANGING FAST
AND PUTTING PRESSURE ON TEAMS TO ADAPT**

FUTURE LANDSCAPE



WHAT WILL SHAPE THE NEXT 3-5 YEARS?

Q. Which trends will have the greatest impact on graduate enrollment over the next 3–5 years?



THE **THRIVE** BLUEPRINT

Technology (AI + other tools)

Human capital (staffing + stress)

Revenue (financial pressure)

Innovation (program strategy)

Velocity (speed of change)

Experience (student + faculty/staff)

WHAT THRIVING INSTITUTIONS ARE DOING DIFFERENTLY

Aligning AI with strategy

Redesigning team structures

Making intentional program bets

Moving faster than competitors



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