

# State of Continuing Education 2026

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## State of Continuing Education 2026

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# Executive Summary

The 2026 State of Continuing Education study examines the evolving role of online and professional continuing education (PCE) units in higher education, focusing on program offerings, institutional support, Workforce Pell readiness, and collaboration across academic units. Online and professional continuing education (PCE) units are sharpening their focus on workforce relevance, employability signaling, and shorter-form learning, while operating within largely unchanged institutional structures. Growth has stabilized after the volatility of the pandemic years, and institutions are recalibrating portfolios and partnerships in response to shifting market conditions and operational realities.

At the same time, the research highlights a widening gap between ambition and infrastructure. Leaders express confidence in the long-term importance of workforce-aligned education, but report rising concerns about administrative complexity, reporting requirements, and internal capacity. As a result, the defining challenge for 2026 is less about deciding whether to pursue workforce strategy and more about whether institutions have the systems, support, and cross-campus coordination necessary to execute it effectively at scale.

# Key Findings

## Programs

Institutions are continuing to shift toward workforce-aligned, short-term, modular credentials. The percentage of online and PCE units offering microcredentials reached an all-time high this year (88%), edging out corporate training and partnerships (79%) as the most commonly offered program type. Stackable credentials (53%) and test or industry credential preparation (52%) also reached their highest reported levels to date.

## Certificates

In 2026, fewer online and PCE units offer non-credit and credit-bearing certificates compared to previous years. The most notable overall decline is in badges, which dropped from a high of 91% in 2023 to 55% in 2025, and rebounded to 73% in 2026.

## Support

Online and PCE unit structures remain consistent with only slight variation from 2023–2025 findings: 49% centralized, 30% decentralized with central support, and 14% fully decentralized across academic and support units.

## Audiences

Adult learners/transfers remain the dominant audience (99%), experiencing an increase of 9% since last year, and 29% since 2022. Service to corporate audiences, alumni, and government/municipal workers has increased by nearly 30% since 2022. In contrast, engagement with local and small businesses, larger, regional, or national employers, healthcare and technology workers has declined compared to 2025 levels.

## Enrollments

Average online and PCE unit enrollments increased to 16,046, up from 15,925 in 2023–2024. While this surpasses 2020–2021 levels, it remains below the 2022–2023 and pre-pandemic averages.

# Key Findings

## **Workforce Pell**

Institutions are cautiously optimistic about Workforce Pell programs but express readiness concerns. Sixty seven percent report they are at least somewhat likely to expand short-term, workforce-aligned programs in response to Workforce Pell, while 42% disagree or strongly disagree that their institution is prepared to meet the associated data collection and reporting requirements. Connecting learner data to state longitudinal data systems (65%) emerged as the top implementation challenge or concern.

## **Positions Lacking**

Perceived gaps in marketing and instructional design support widened in 2026, with 30% of online and PCE units reporting lacking marketing support (up from 14% in 2025) and 22% lacking instructional design positions (up from 9% last year).

## **Barriers**

The primary barriers online and PCE units face to expansion are external market uncertainty and internal administrative complexity, with concerns about market demand (77%), administrative burden (65%), and time-to-market (56%) outweighing faculty capacity or delivery-related challenges.

## **Collaboration**

Agreement that other units collaborate on continuing education development declined from 71% in 2025 to 62% in 2026, even as views of siloing remain relatively unchanged (41%).

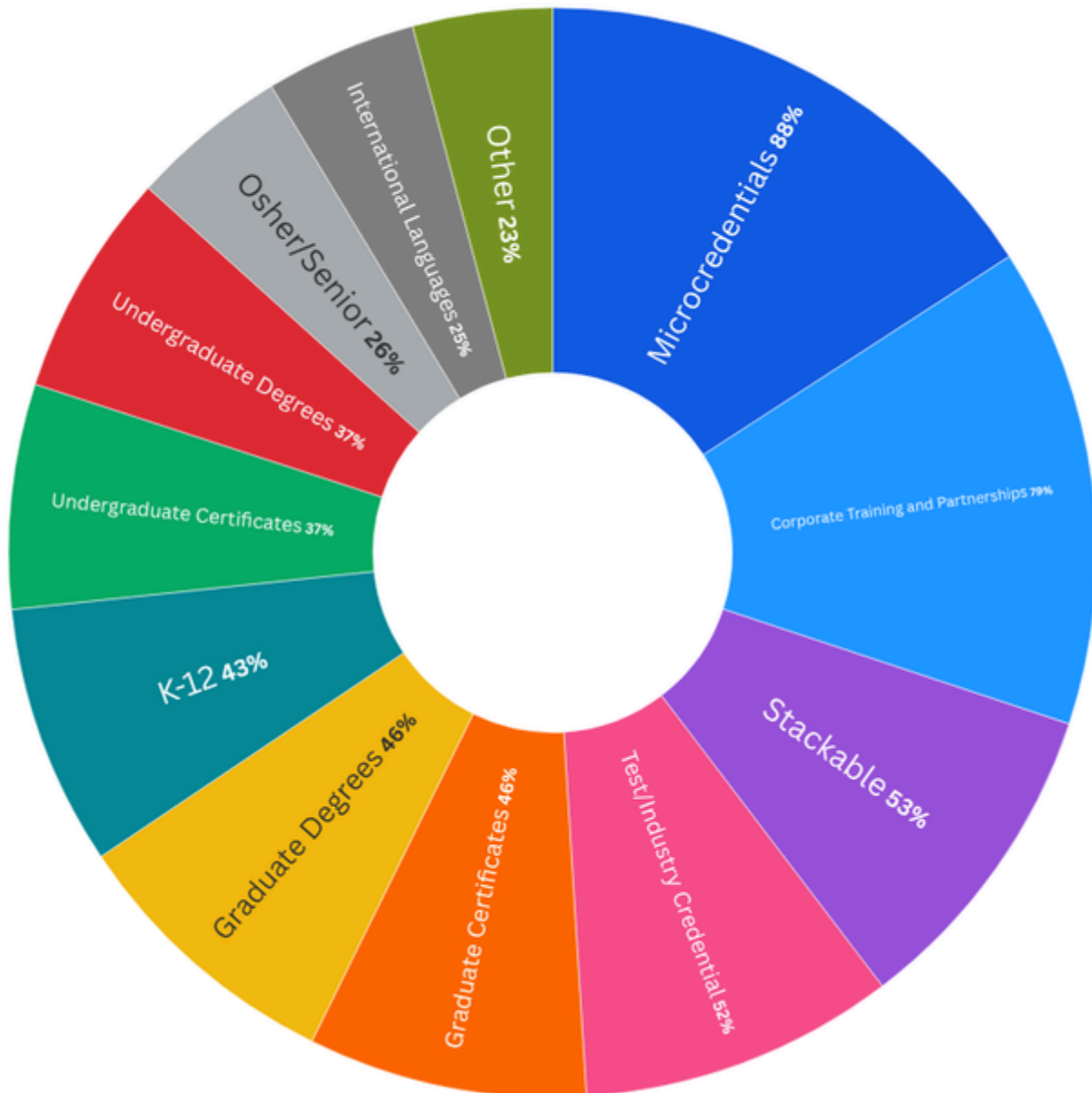
# Program Offerings and Enrollments

## 2026 Offerings

Participants were asked what programs or credentials are offered by their online and PCE units. Eighty-eight percent offer microcredentials, 79% corporate training and partnerships, and 53% stackable credentials.

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## 2026 Programs Offered



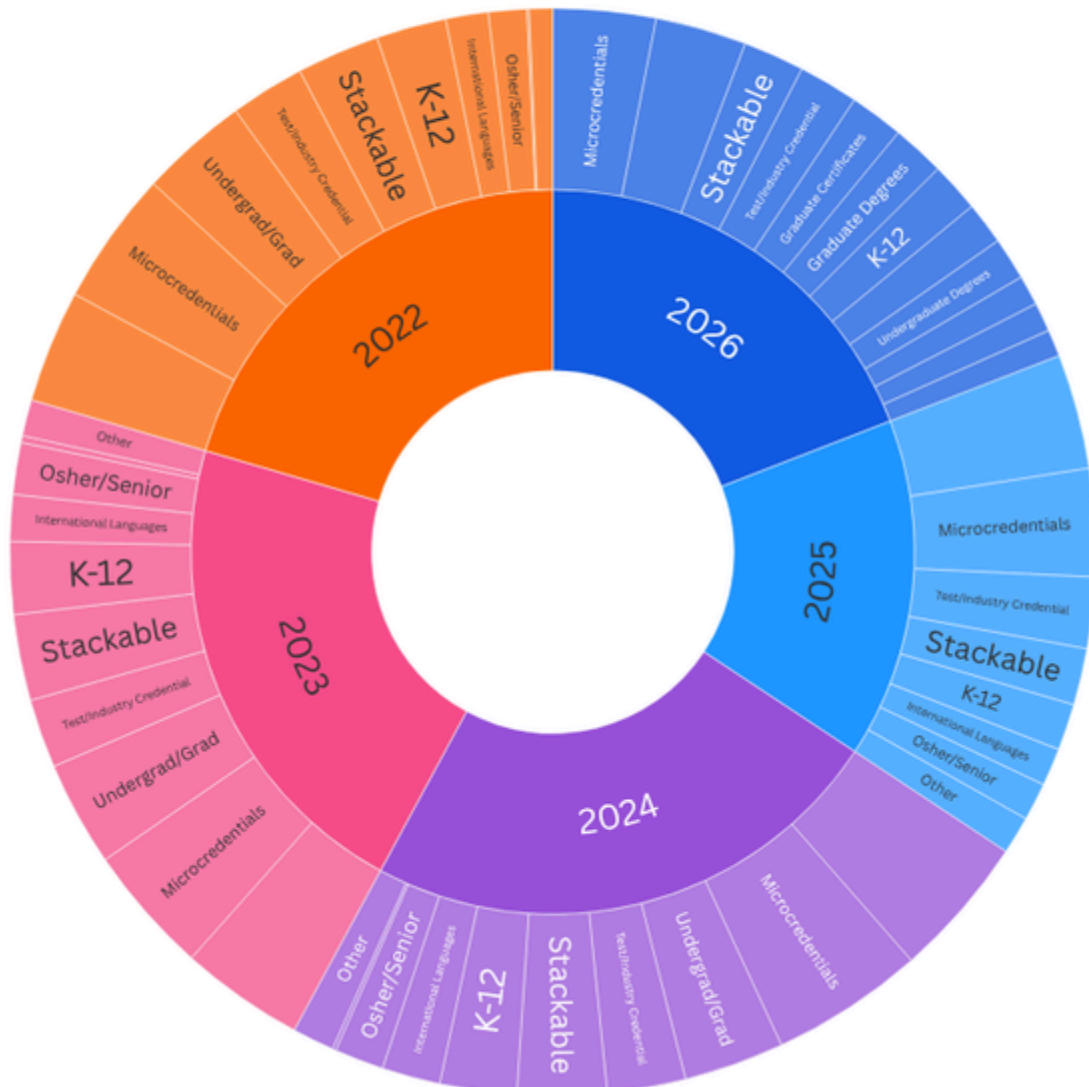
## Offerings Over Time

The percentage of online and PCE units offering microcredentials (88%) reached an all-time high in 2026, surpassing corporate training and partnerships as the most offered program type. This year stackable credentials and test/industry credential preparation are both offered at their highest rates, 53% and 52%, respectively. These trends suggest institutions are continuing to shift toward workforce-aligned, short-term, modular credentials.

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## Programs Offered Over Time

All



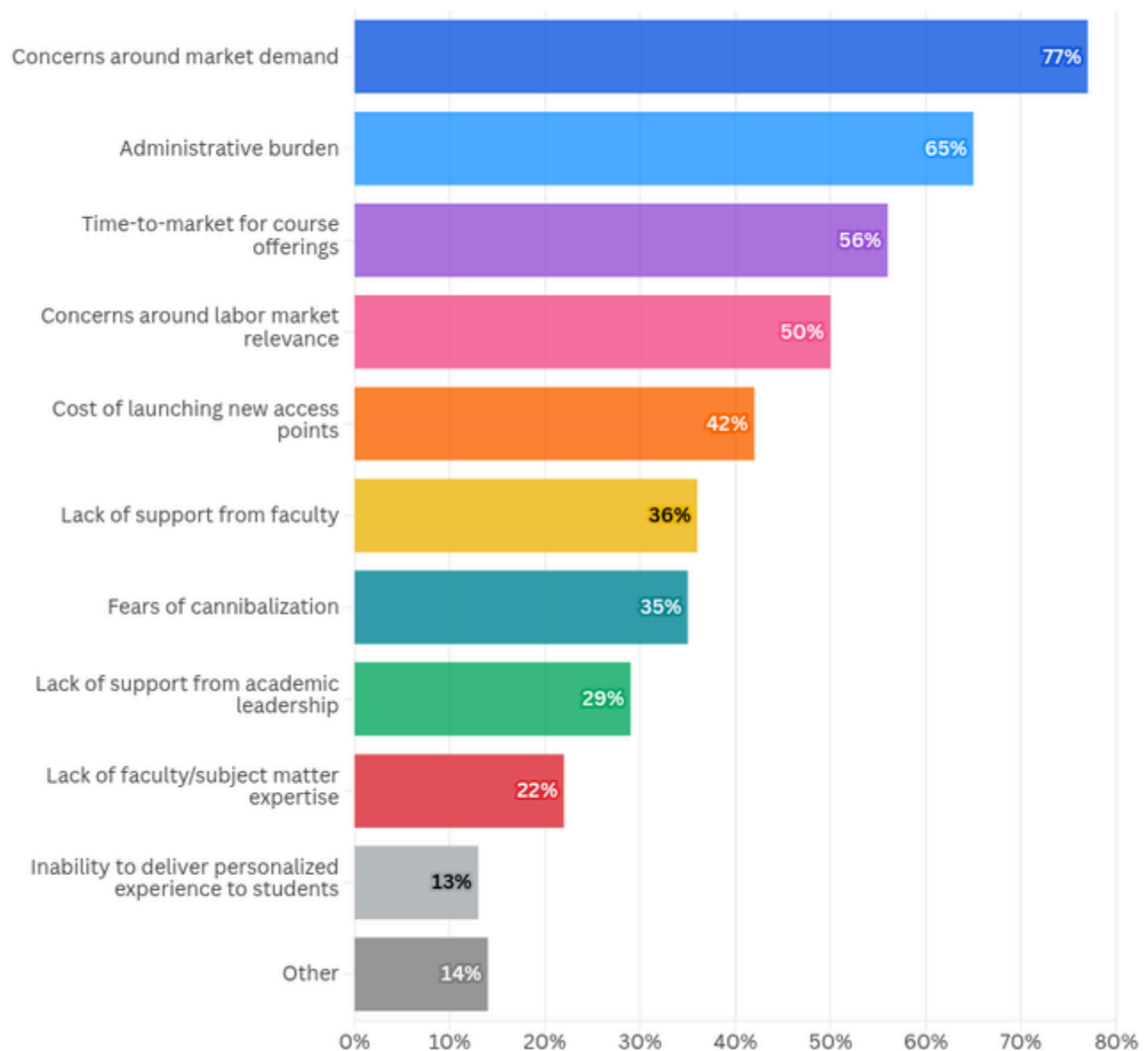
## Challenges

When asked about challenges their online and PCE unit faces in expanding credentials, 77% chose concerns around market demand, 65% administrative burden, 56% time-to-market for course offerings, and 50% concerns around labor market relevance.

### Challenges in Expanding Credentials

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Sample Size n=110

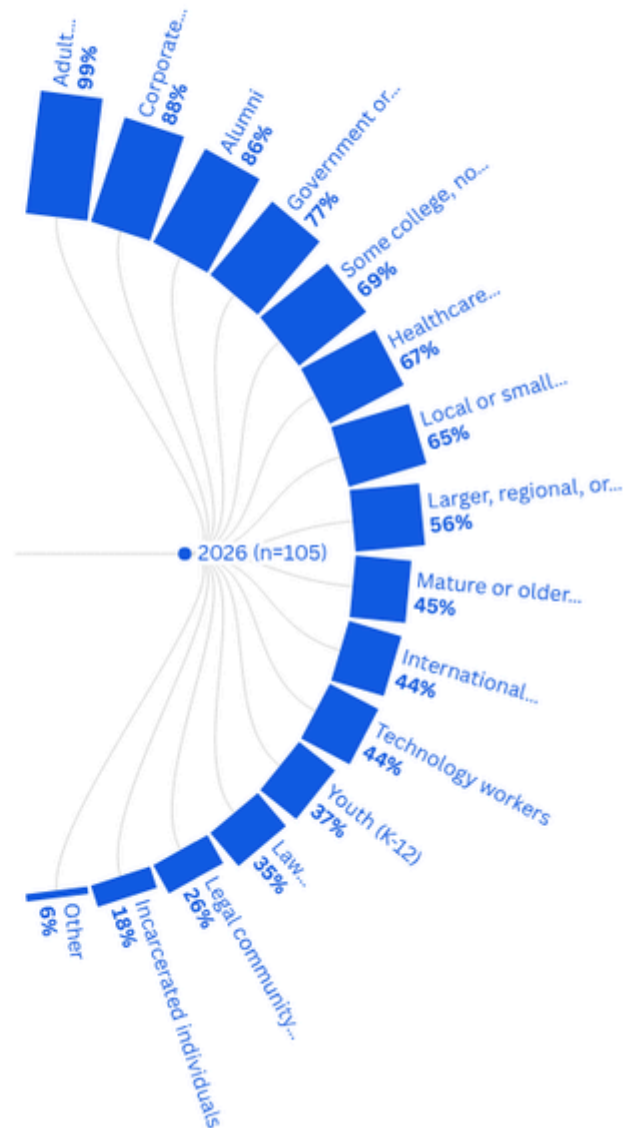


## 2026 Audiences

Participants were asked what audiences their online and PCE unit programs serve. Adult learners/transfers (99%), corporate audiences (88%), alumni (86%), and government or municipal workers (77%) were listed as the main audiences in 2026.

## Audiences Served

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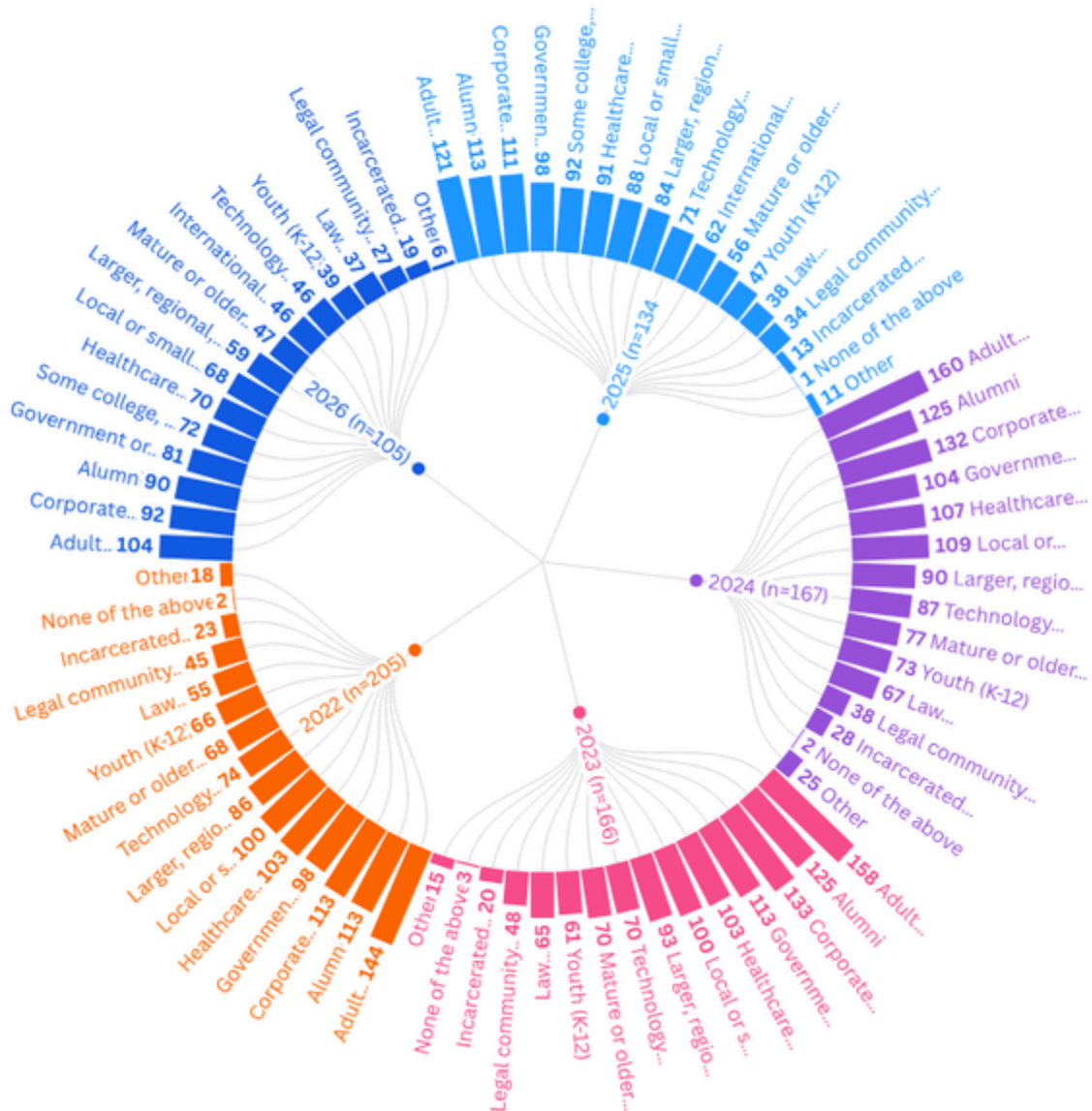
## Audiences Over Time

The percentage of online and PCE units that service adult learners/transfers increased 9% since last year, and 29% since 2022. Corporate audiences, law enforcement/emergency management personnel, and incarcerated individuals increased by over 5% from 2025 to 2026, while offerings for larger, regional, or national employers and technology workers decreased by more than 5% during that time.

## Audiences Served

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- All
- 2026 (n=105)
- 2025 (n=134)
- 2024 (n=167)
- 2023 (n=166)
- 2022 (n=205)



## Enrollments

From July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025, institutions had an average PCO unit enrollment of 16,046, with a median of 6,026. Twenty percent had under 2,000 enrollments, 14% between 2,000 and 3,999, and 26% over 10,000, while 30% did not know the enrollment data.

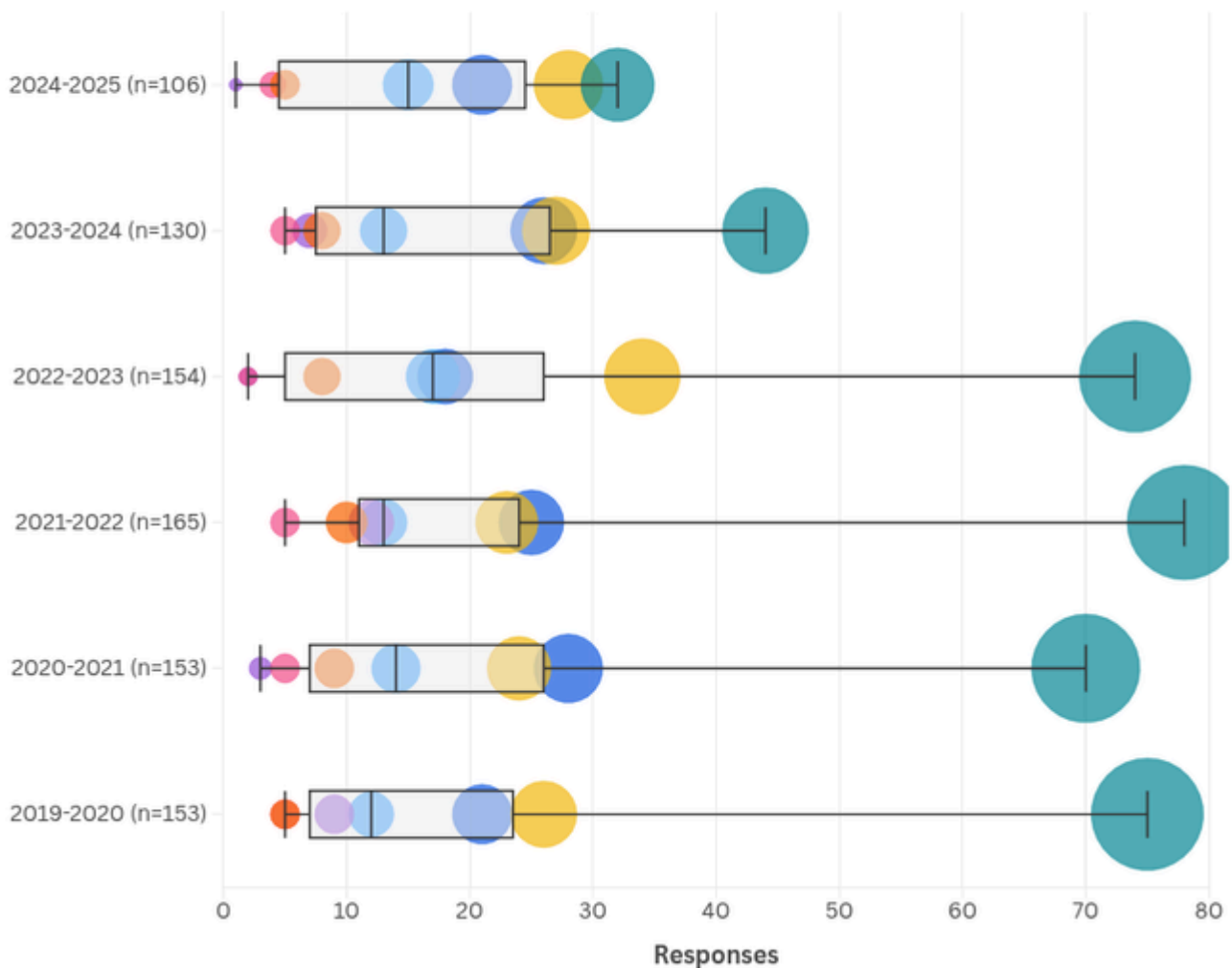
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## Enrollments

### Online and PCE Unit Enrollments

All ▼

**Enrollment** ● < 2,000 ● 2,000 > 4,000 ● 4,000 > 6,000 ● 6,000 > 8,000 ● 8,000 > 10,000 ● > 10,000  
● Don't Know



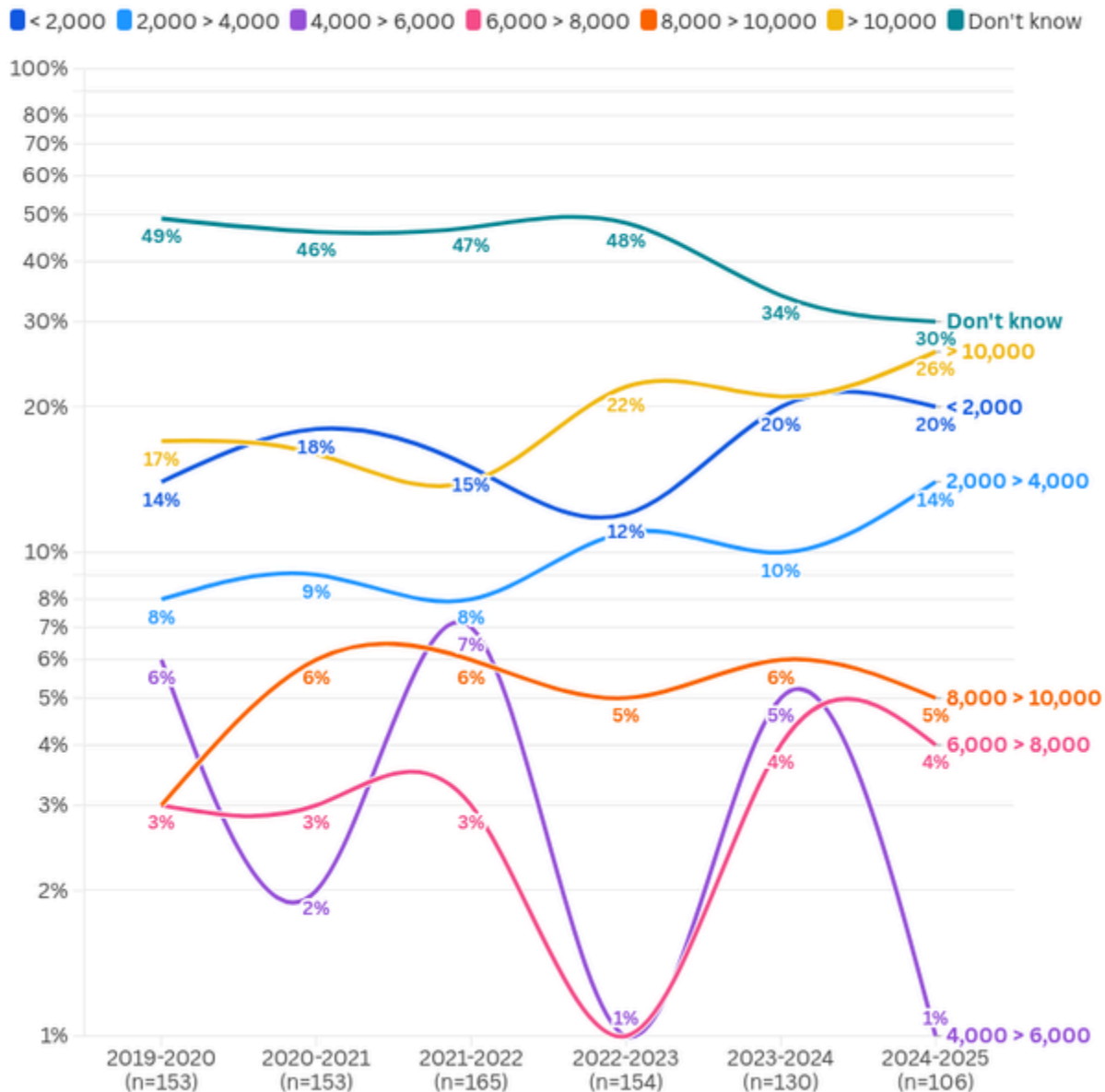
## Enrollments

In 2024–2025, 26% had over 10,000 enrollments, up from 21% the previous year. In 2019–20 approximately half (49%) of respondents did not know their enrollment numbers, and Don't know responses gradually declined to 30% in 2024–25, indicating greater insight into enrollment data.

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## Enrollments Over Time

Online and PCE/PCO Unit Enrollments Over Time



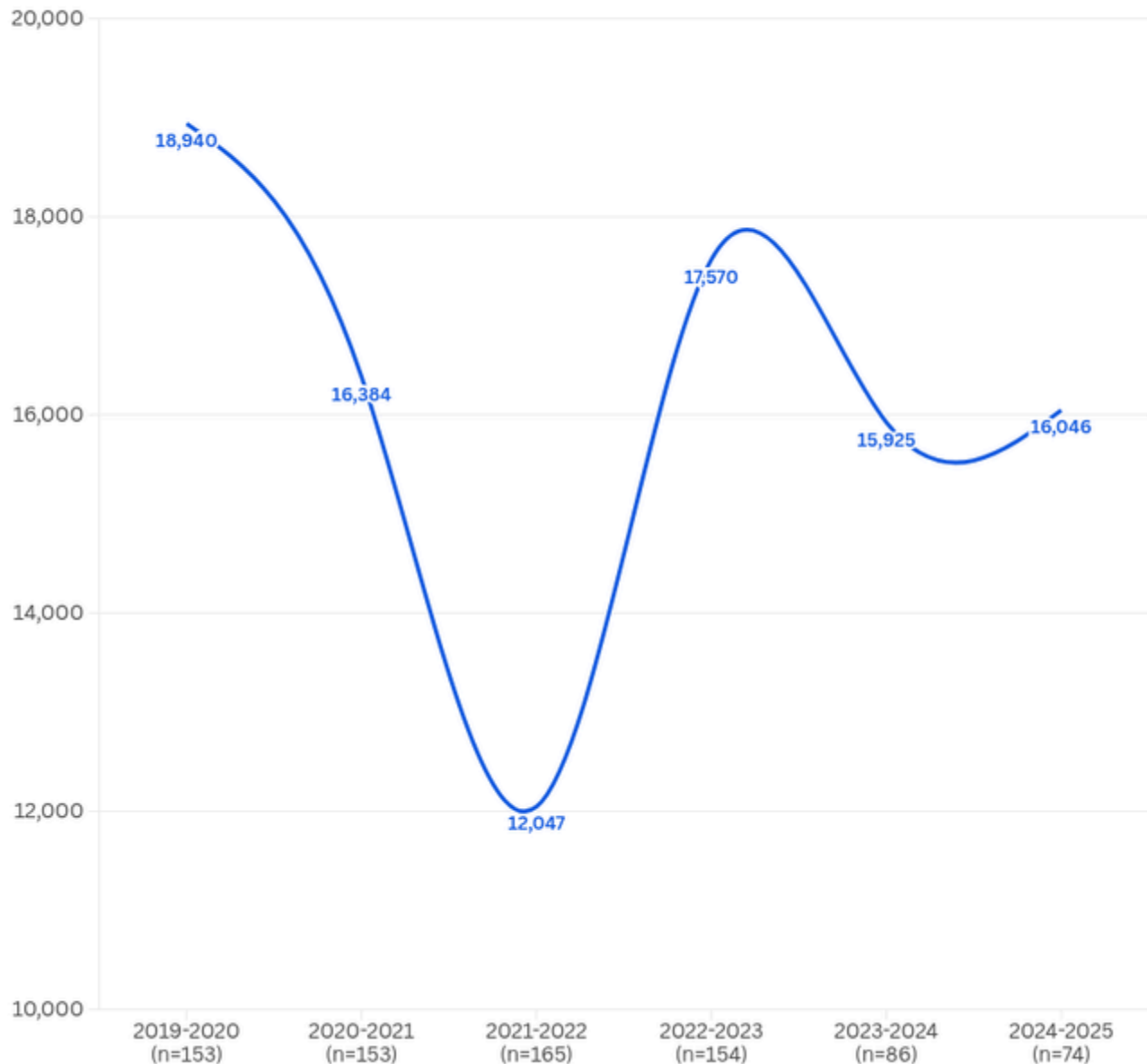
## Enrollments

In 2024–2025, the average enrollment for online and PCE units was 16,046. While this surpasses 2020–2021 enrollment levels, it remains below the highs of 2022–2023 and pre-pandemic figures.

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### Average Enrollments Over Time

Average Online and PCE/PCO Unit Enrollments Over Time



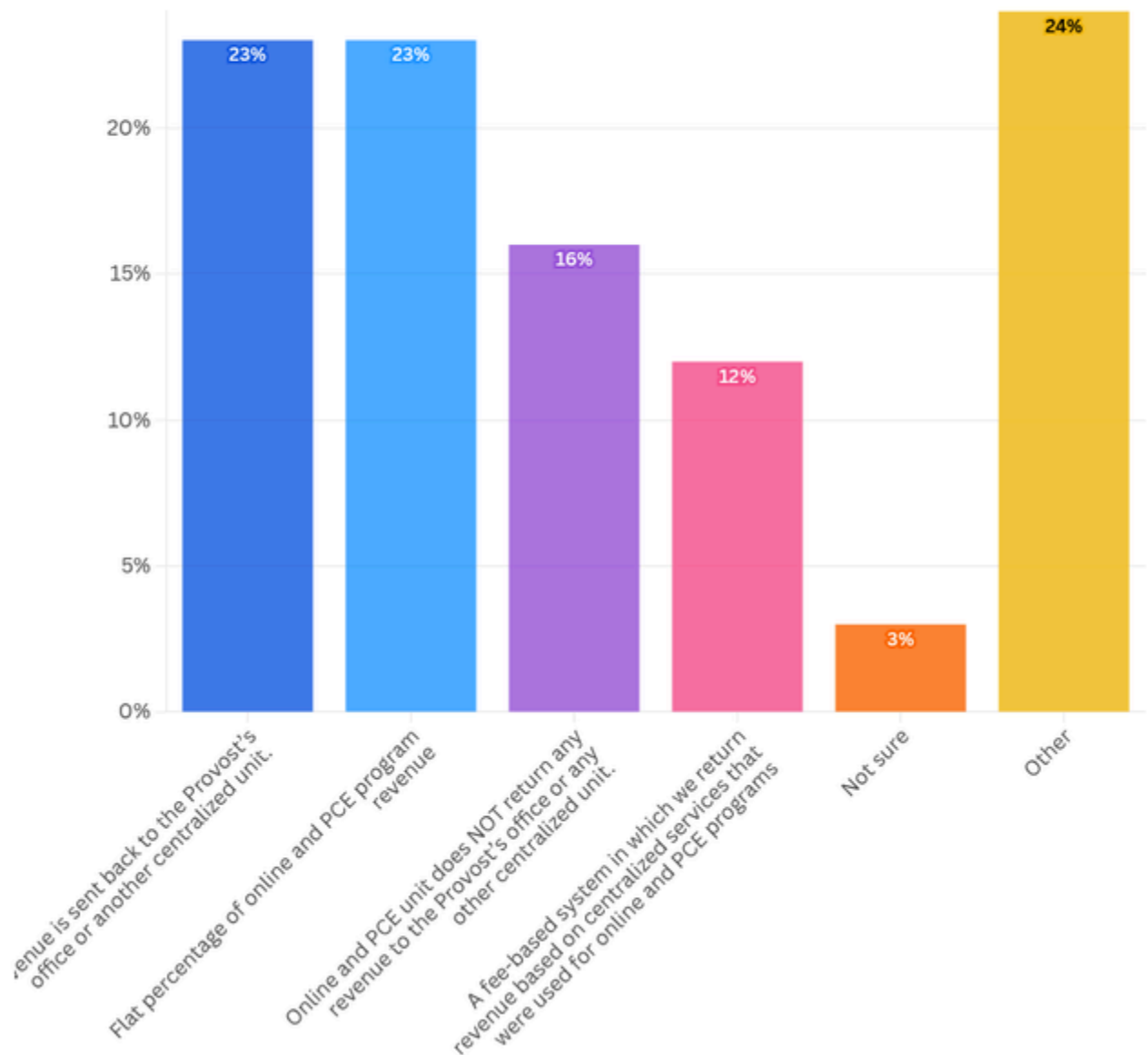
## Revenue

Participants were asked how much revenue is sent to the Provost's office or another centralized unit, if any. Twenty-three percent said all gross revenue is sent back to the Provost or another centralized unit, 23% said a flat percentage of online and PCE revenue is sent, and 12% said their online and PCE unit does not return any revenue to the Provost's office or any other centralized unit. Twenty-four percent gave responses in the "Other" category.

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## Revenue to Centralized Units

Sample size n=106



## Trends

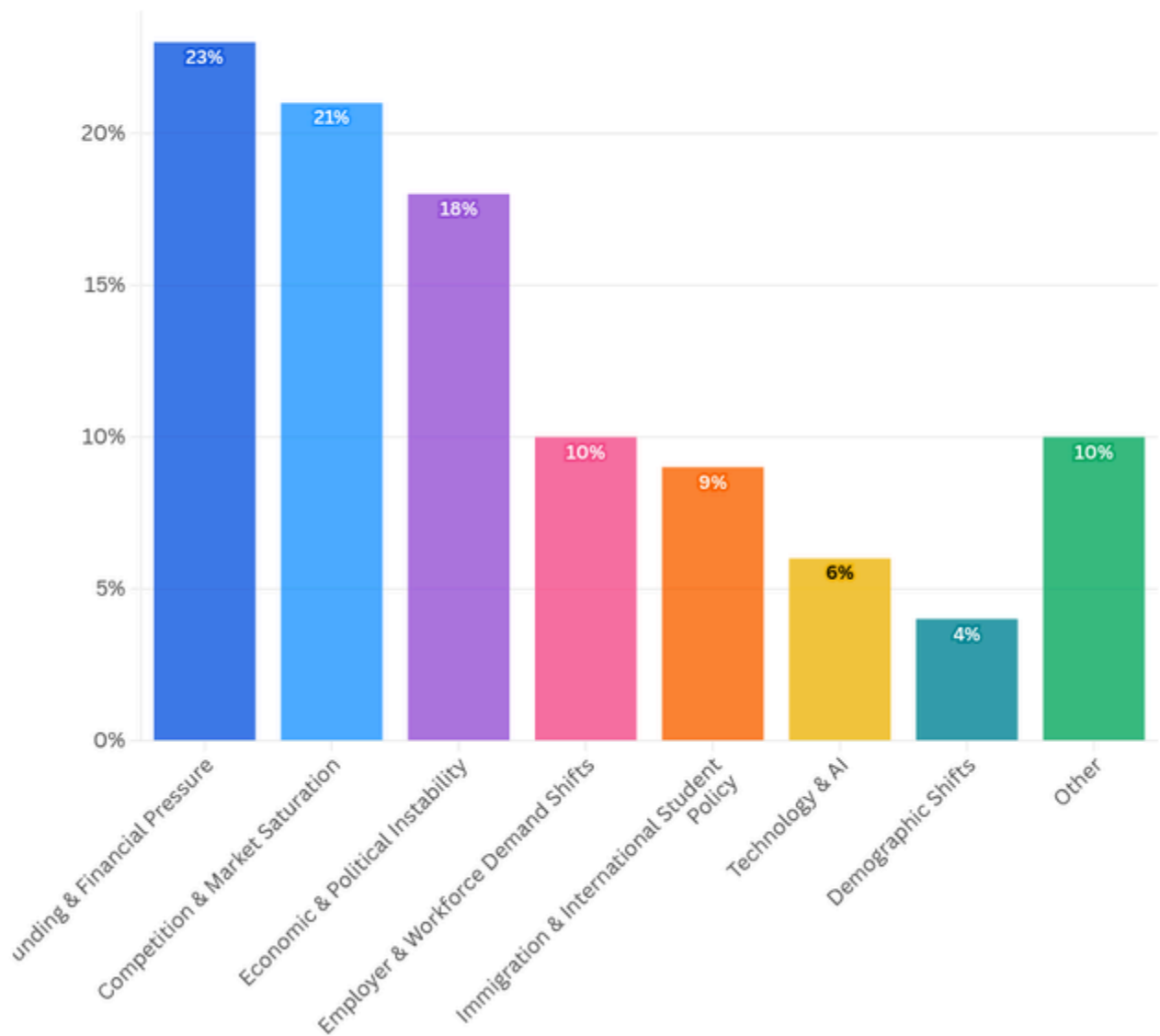
Participants were asked to identify the single most significant external trend impacting their unit's operations. The most frequently cited was funding & financial pressure (23%), followed by competition & market saturation (21%) and economic & political instability (18%).

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## External Trends

External Trends Impacting PCE Units (2026)

Sample size n=104



## Workforce Pell Readiness

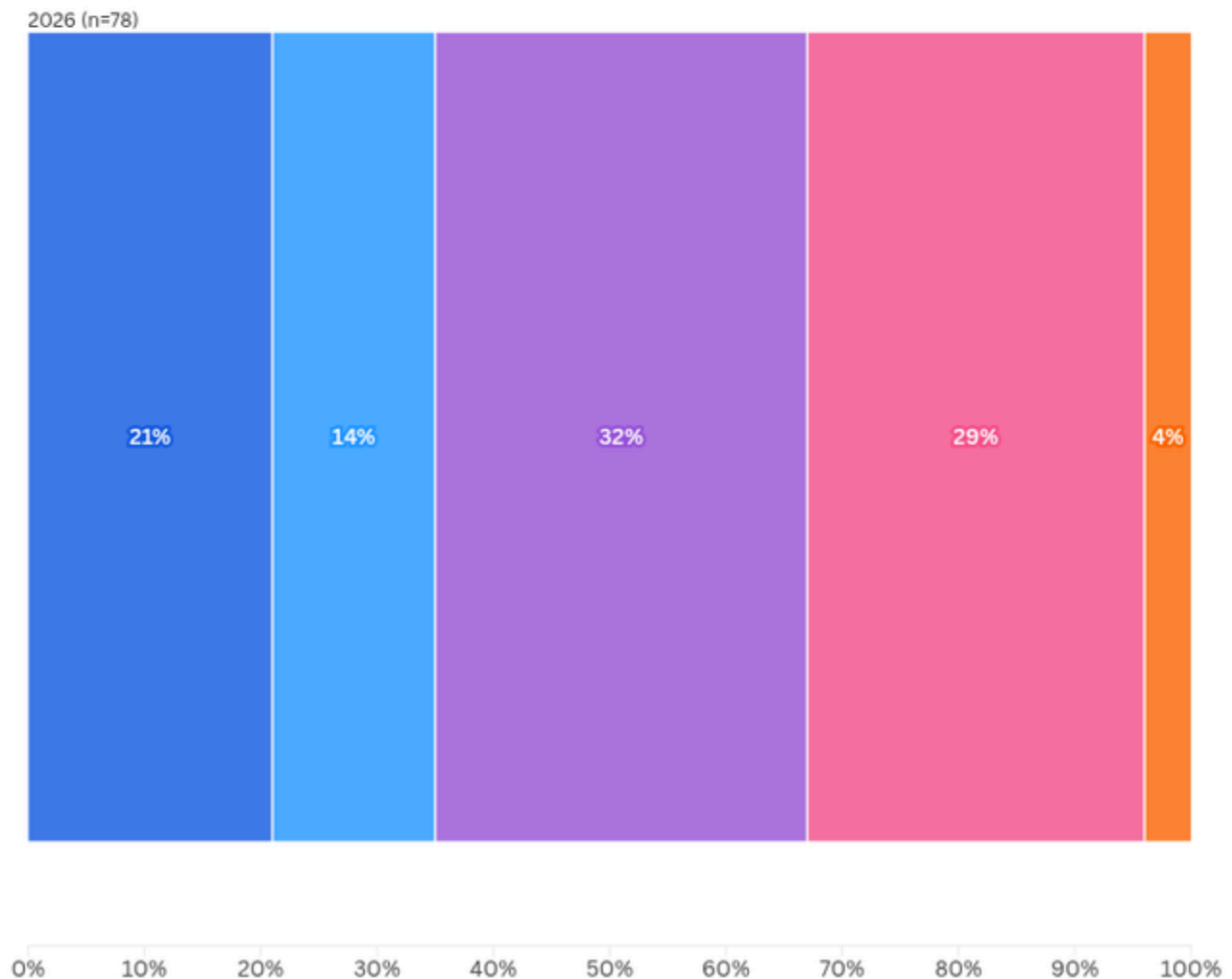
New to the 2026 survey, participants were asked to reflect on their institutional readiness for Workforce Pell. Overall, 67% of U.S. institutions indicated they are at least somewhat likely to expand short-term, workforce-aligned programs in response to Workforce Pell. However, one-third (33%) reported limited likelihood, reflecting differences in institutional readiness and strategy.

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## Workforce Pell

Readiness to Expand in Response to Workforce Pell (2026)

Extremely likely Very likely Somewhat likely Not very likely Not at all likely



## Workforce Pell Opinions

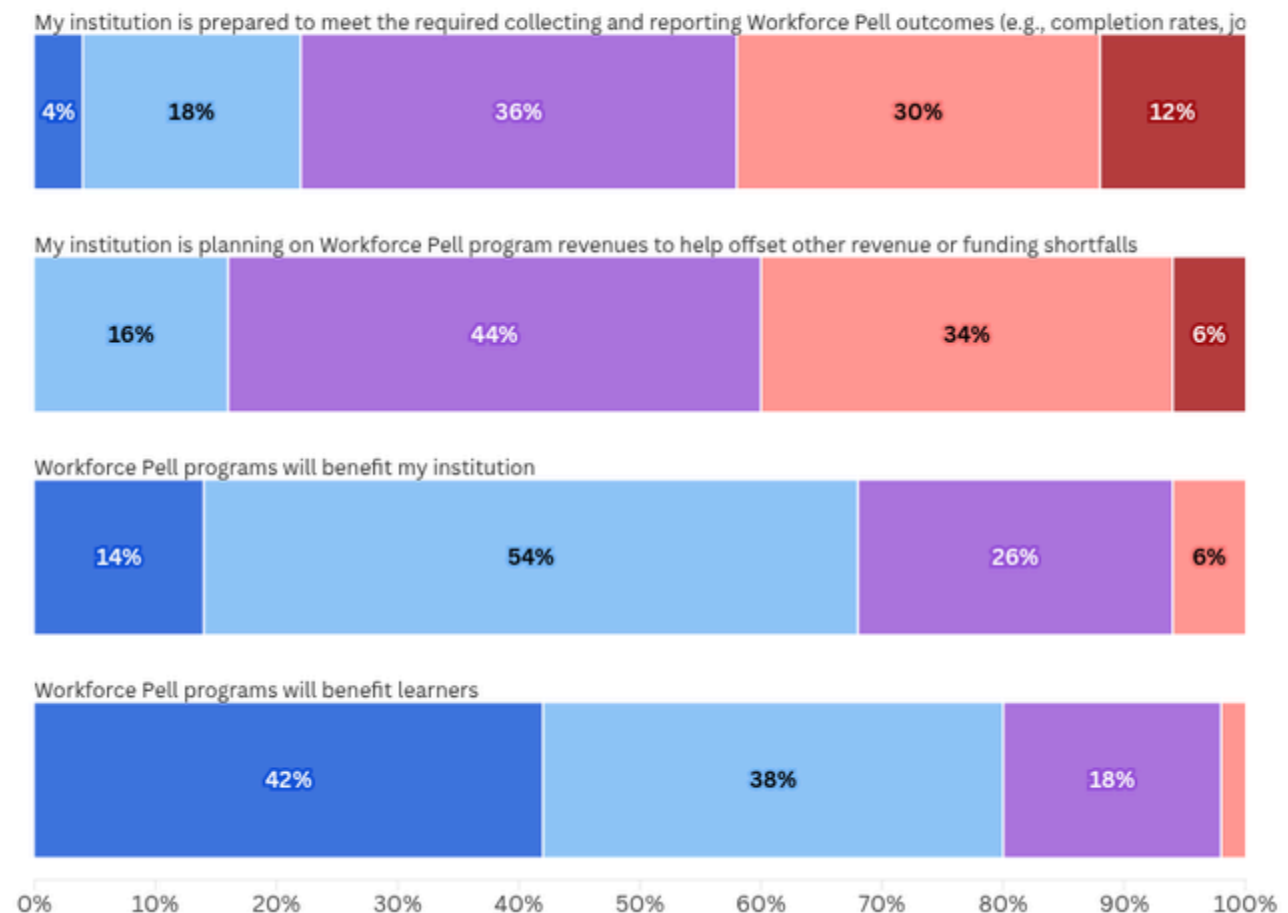
Forty-two percent of U.S. respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that their institution is prepared to meet the data collection and reporting requirements associated with Workforce Pell outcomes. Forty-four percent neither agreed nor disagreed that their institution is planning to use Workforce Pell revenues to offset other revenue or funding shortfalls. In comparison, 40% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Sixty-eight percent strongly agreed or agreed that Workforce Pell programs will benefit their institution, and 80% strongly agreed or agreed that these programs will benefit learners. Overall, institutions appear supportive of Workforce Pell in principle and believe it will benefit learners and their institution, but many feel underprepared to manage the accountability, reporting, and financial complexity that comes with it.

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## Workforce Pell

### Opinions on Workforce Pell Readiness & Impact (2026)

■ Strongly Agree 
 ■ Agree 
 ■ Neither 
 ■ Disagree 
 ■ Strongly Disagree



## Workforce Pell Challenges

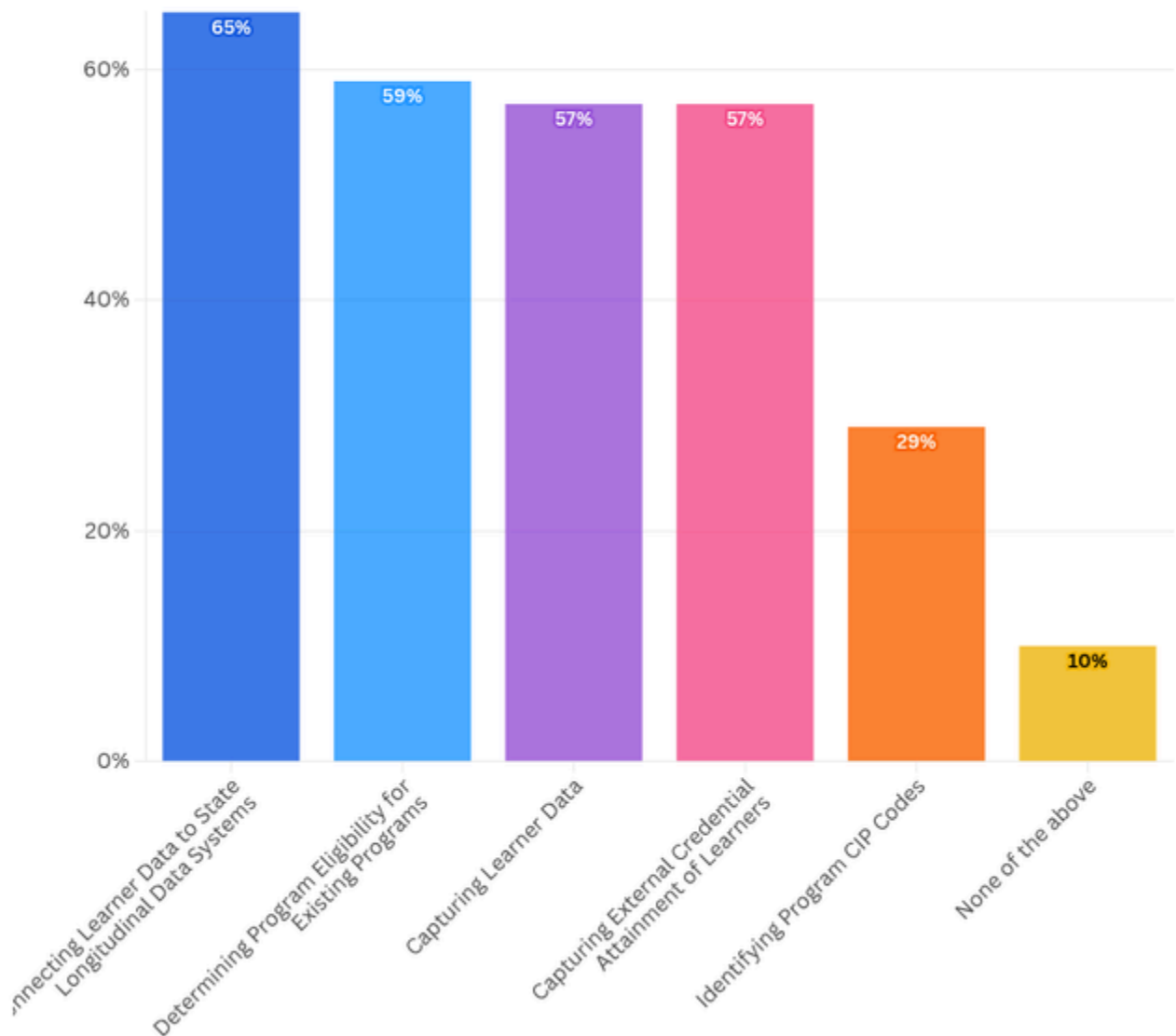
When asked about the challenges their institution faces with Workforce Pell implementation, 65% cited connecting learner data to state longitudinal data systems, 59% identified determining program eligibility for existing programs, and 57% pointed to both capturing learner data and capturing external credential attainment of learners.

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## Workforce Pell

Workforce Pell Challenges (2026)

Sample size n=49



# Institutional Support & Capabilities

## Business

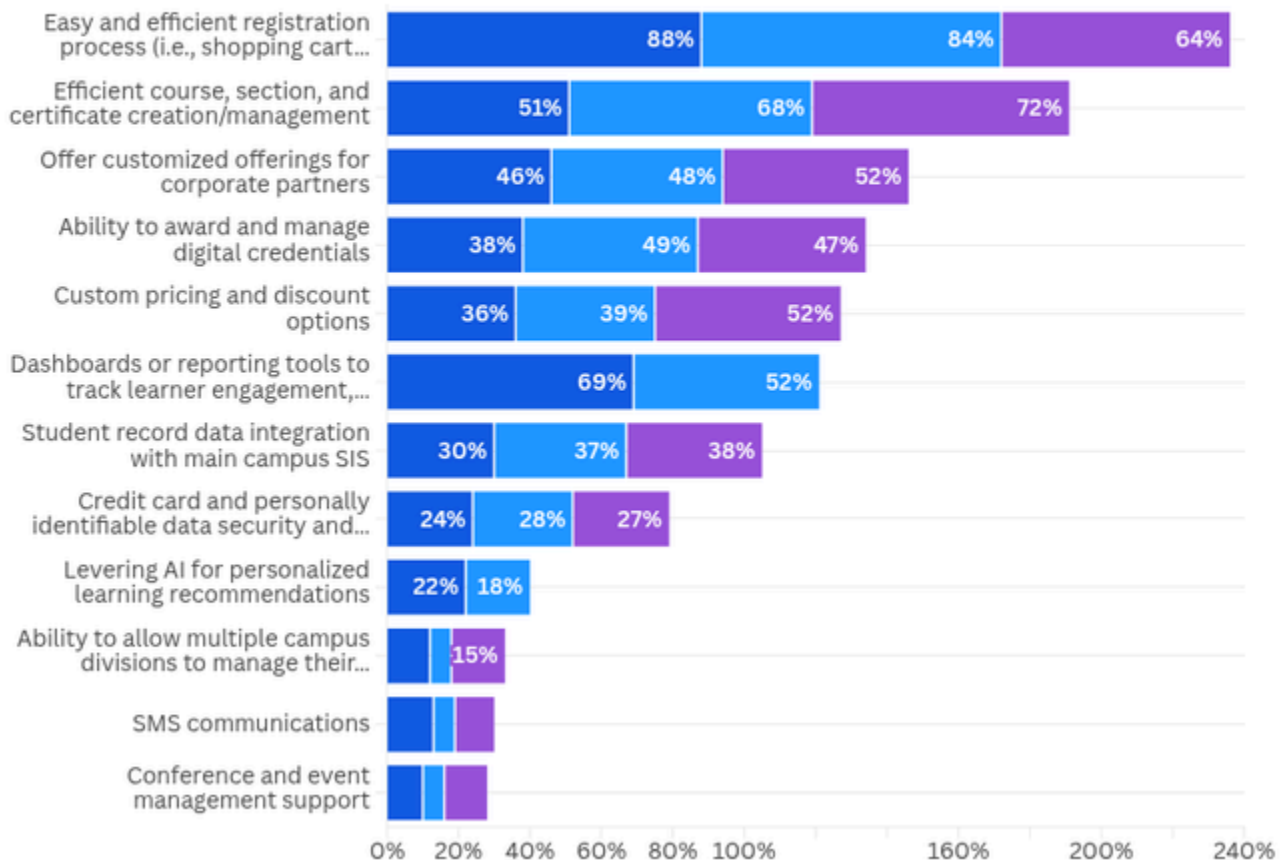
(2026) When asked about the importance of essential elements required to achieve business goals in their online and PCE unit, 80% selected easy and efficient registration processes; 69% use dashboards or reporting tools to track learner engagement retention, and success metrics; and 51% said efficient course, section, and certificate creation/management.

An easy and efficient registration process is the top priority for online and PCE units to achieve their business goals, selected by 88% of respondents in 2026, increasing from 84% in 2025 and 64% in 2024. Dashboards and reporting tools to track learner data also saw a significant increase in importance, rising to 69% in 2026 compared to 52% in 2025.

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## Elements to Achieve Business Goals

■ 2026 (n=102) ■ 2025 (n=126) ■ 2024 (n=145)



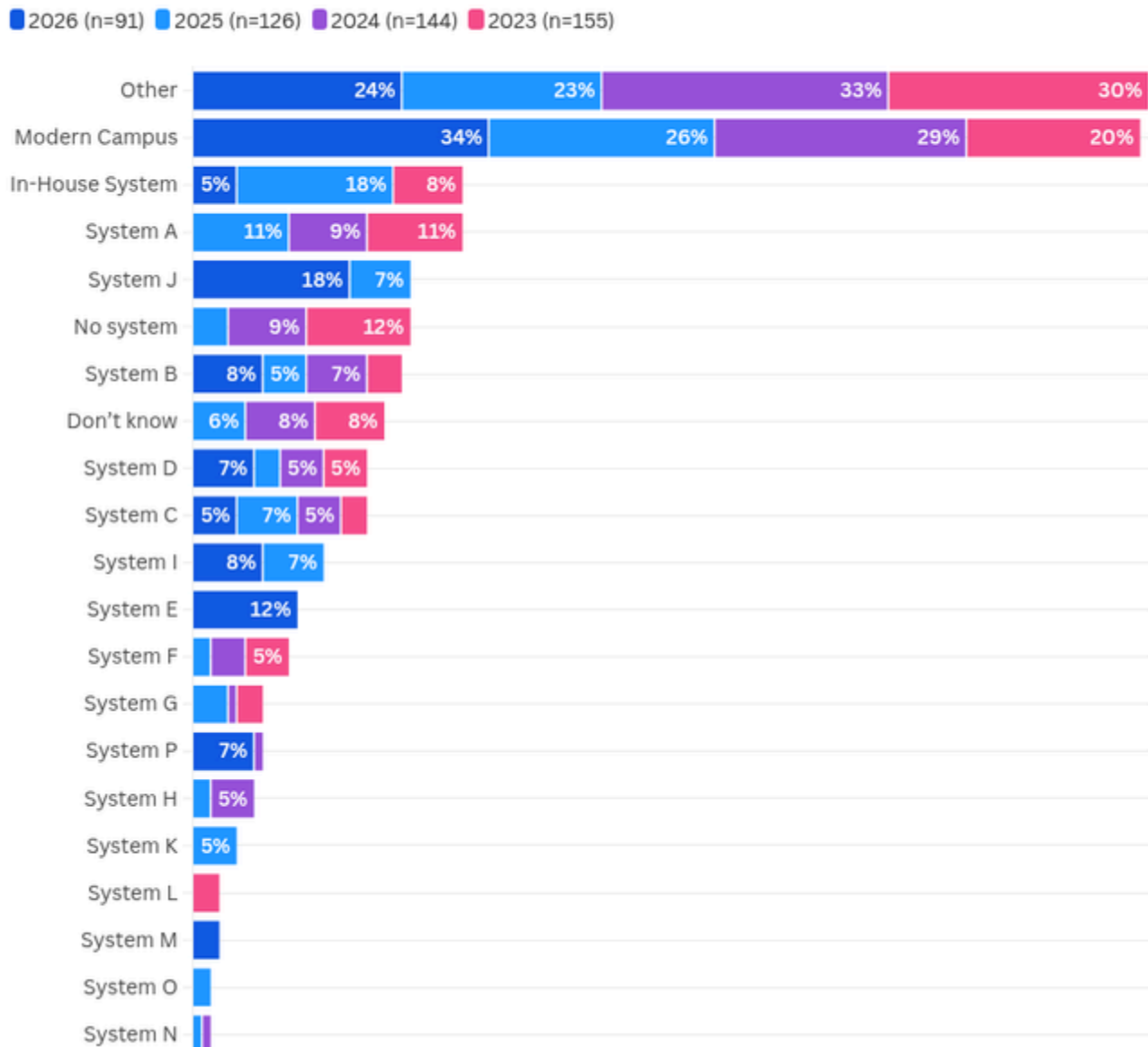
## Systems Used

Below is an anonymized chart of registration systems respondents use to manage online and PCE unit programming. It is important to note that these were anonymized based upon their 2026 rank and are not directly comparable to previous years' data. In 2026, the most common registration system is Modern Campus Lifelong Learning (34%), followed by Salesforce Education Cloud (18%), and Ellucian Banner (12%). Examples of responses in the "Other" category include Blackthorn, Formstack, and Course Merchant, among others.

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## Registration Systems

Registration Systems for Online and PCE Programming (Anonymized)



## System Satisfaction

Figure 26 is an anonymized satisfaction rating of registration systems. Systems built in-house had the highest percentage of very satisfied respondents (40%), but this represents only 2 of 5 respondents. Modern Campus Lifelong Learning had the highest satisfaction rating with 14% very satisfied and 72% somewhat satisfied.

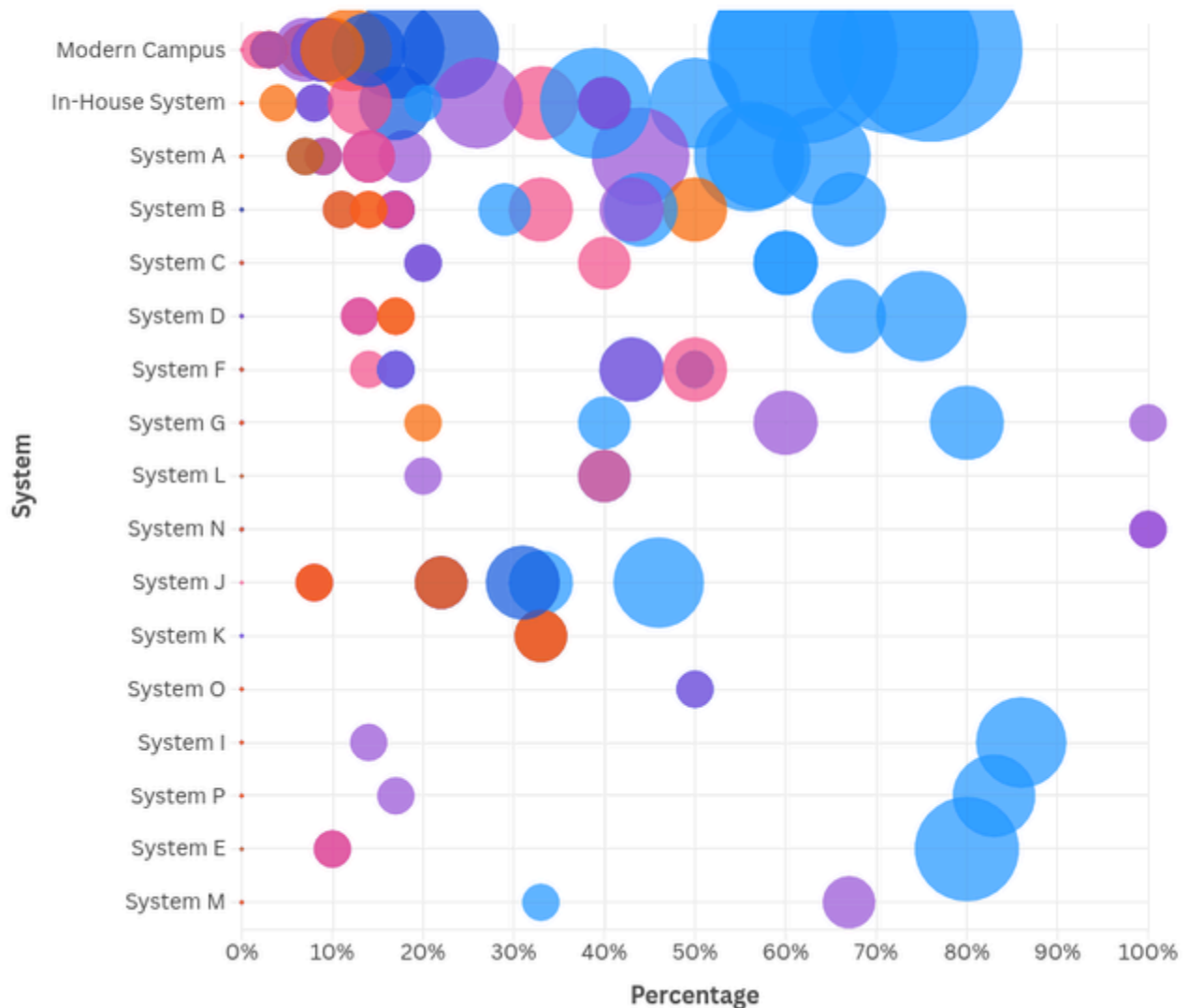
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## System Satisfaction

### Registration System Satisfaction by System

Combined data 2023-2026

**Satisfaction** ● Very Satisfied ● Satisfied ● Dissatisfied ● Very Dissatisfied ● Unsure



## Data Access

In 2026, a smaller percentage of respondents strongly agree or agree (39%) that it is easy for members of their institution to access real-time enrollment data for online and PCE students, compared to 2025 (48%); however, it is still greater than 2022 – 2024 surveys.

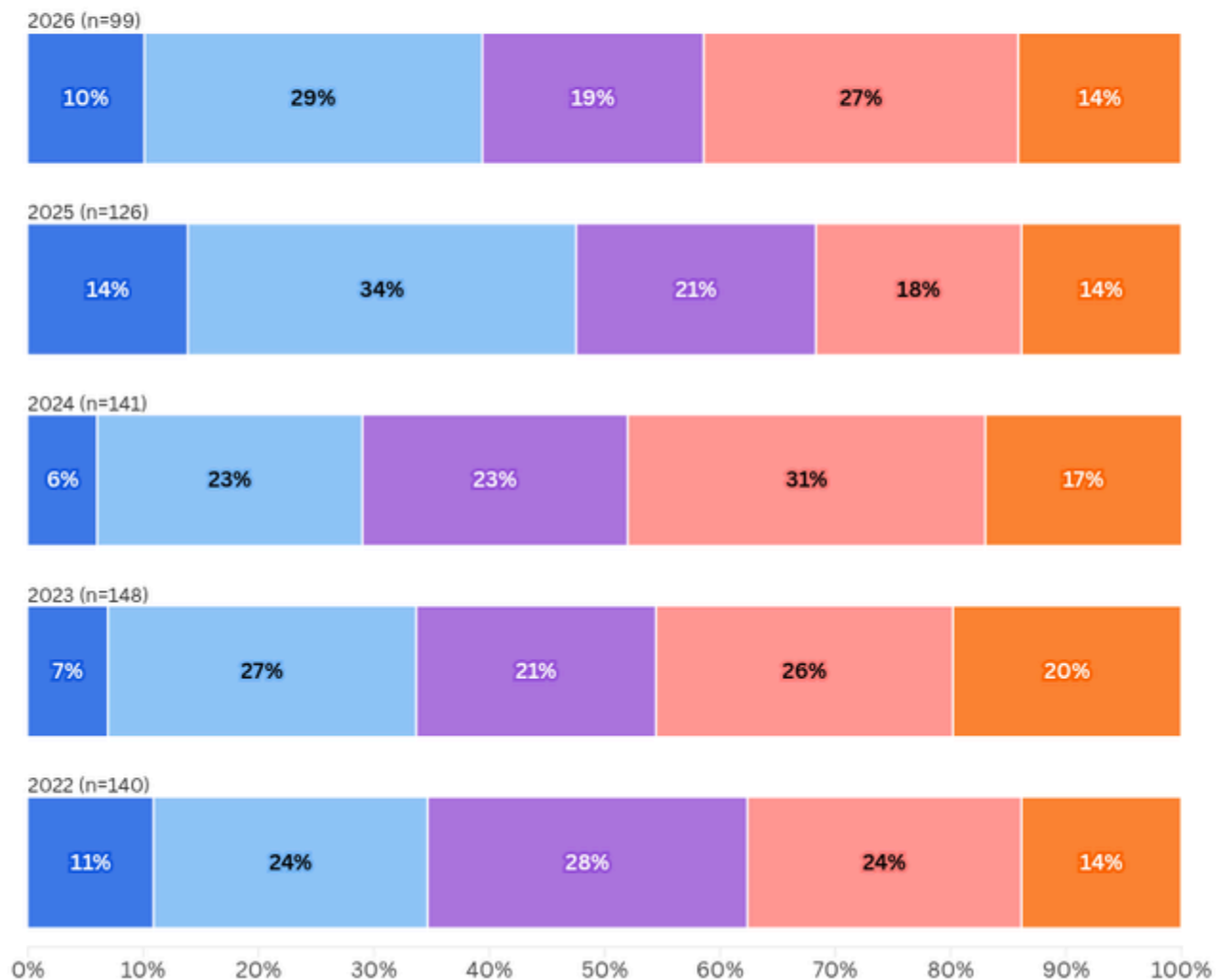
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## Data Access

### Ease of Data Access Over Time

All ▼

Strongly agree Agree Neither Disagree Strongly disagree



## Data Access

Individuals from small institutions are more likely to strongly agree or agree that it is easy for their members to access real-time enrollment data for online and PCE students (53%) compared to medium (39%) and large institutions (36%).

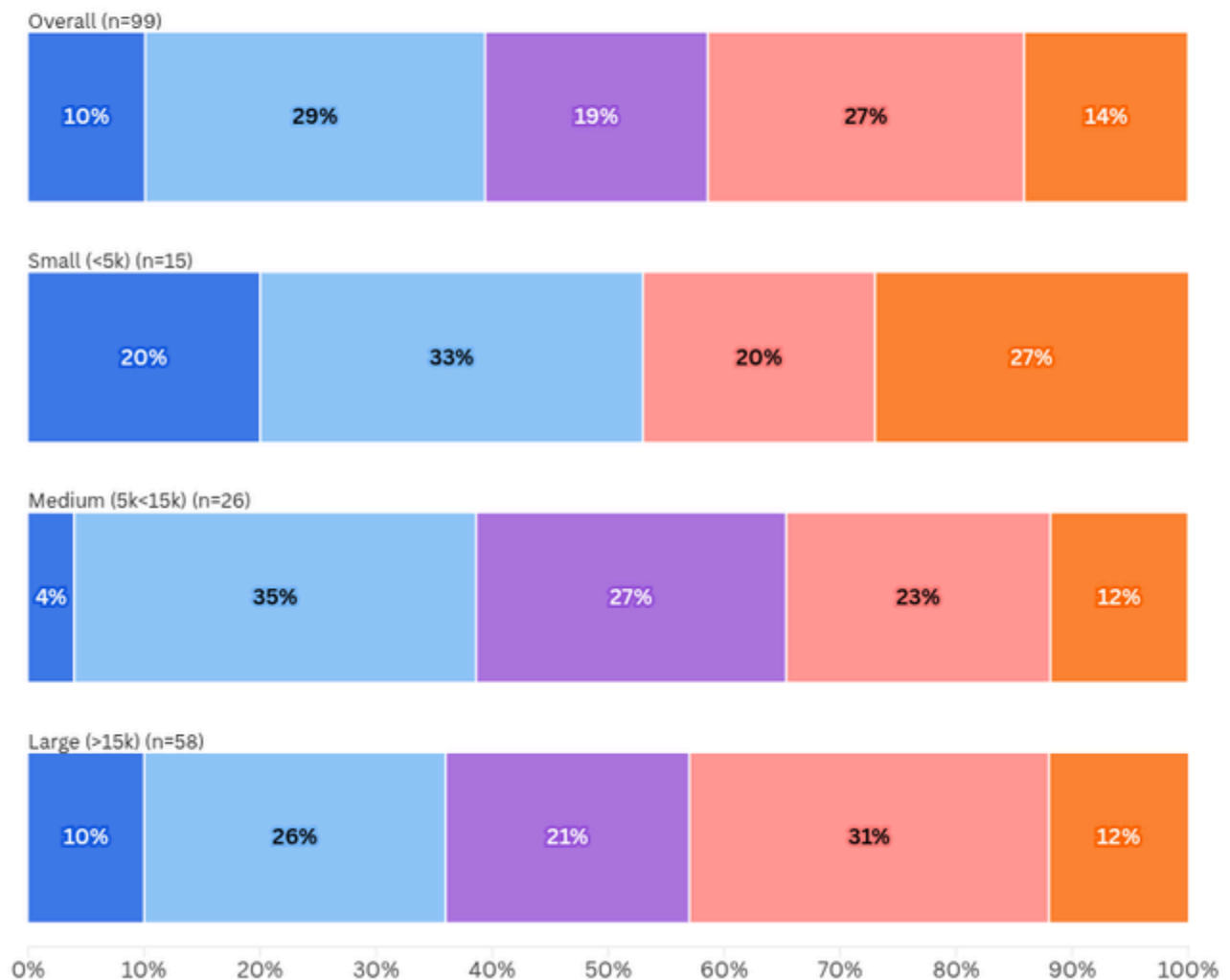
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## Data Access

### Ease of Data Access by Institution Size

All

Strongly agree Agree Neither Disagree Strongly disagree



## Data Access

Respondents from private research institutions are most likely to strongly agree or agree that it is easy for members of their institution to access real-time enrollment data for online and PCE students (58%), followed by baccalaureate/special focus institutions (50%).

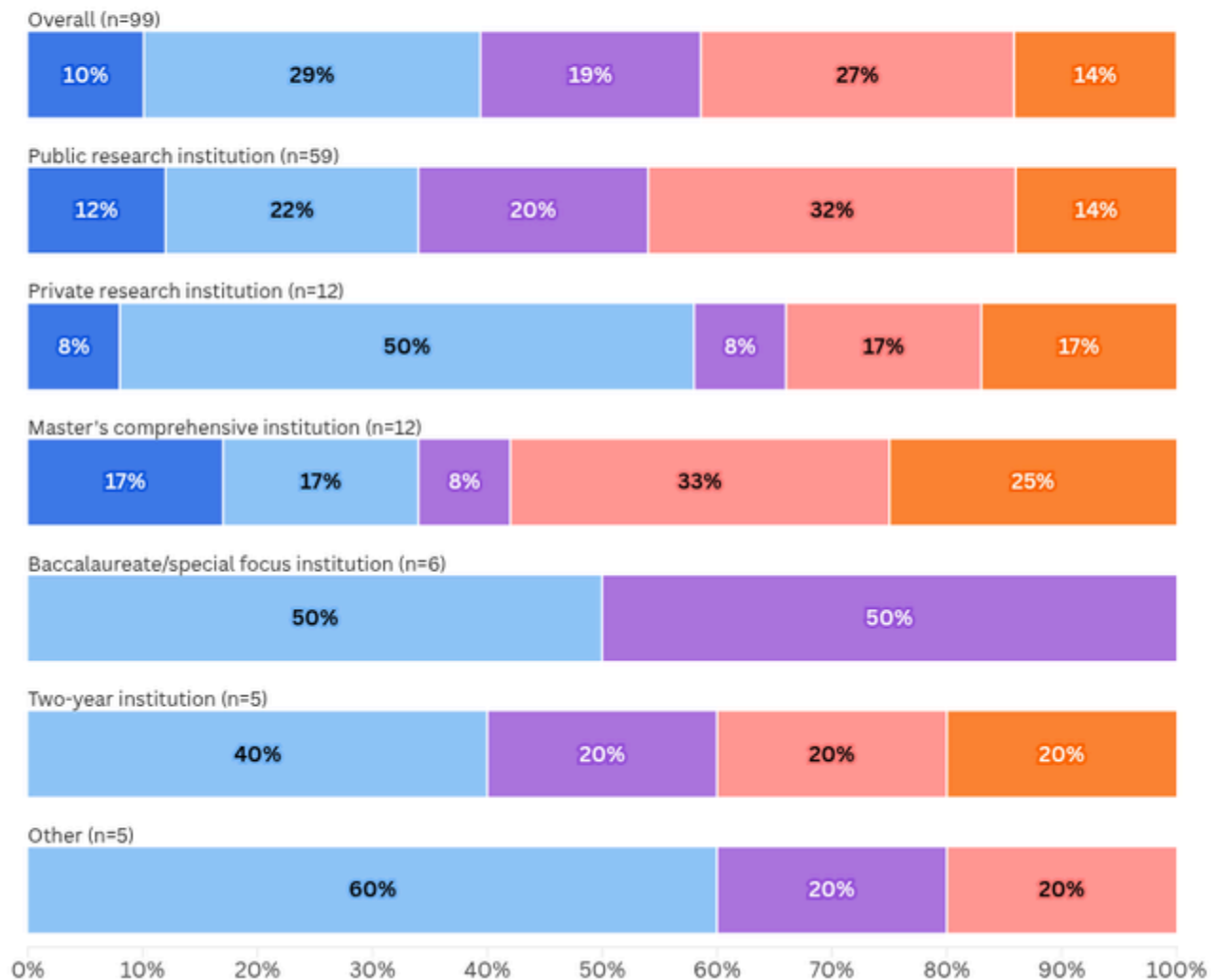
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## Data Access

### Ease of Data Access by Type

All

Strongly agree Agree Neither Disagree Strongly disagree



## Efficacy

Seventy-nine percent of respondents strongly agree or agree that their online and PCE unit has the support and buy-in from senior leadership to scale and expand online and PCE credentials or programs, 72% strongly agree or agree that their online and PCE unit is successful in its mission to be revenue-generating, and 53% strongly agree or agree that their online and PCE unit is able to reinvest revenue back into the unit, rather than to a centralized unit. Sixty-two percent disagree or strongly disagree that their online and PCE unit has the appropriate amount of staff required to execute their institution's goals for the unit. Overall, respondents express confidence in the strategic positioning of online and PCE units, though concerns remain around operational capacity, especially staffing levels and the ability to reinvest revenue back into the unit.

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## Efficacy

### Opinions on Efficacy of Online and PCE Units

2026 (n=99) ▾

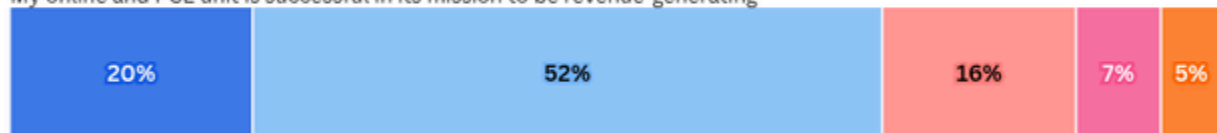
Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree N/A

2026 (n=99)

My online and PCE unit has the support and buy-in from senior leadership to scale and expand online and PCE credentials or programs



My online and PCE unit is successful in its mission to be revenue-generating



My online and PCE unit is able to reinvest revenue back into the unit, rather than to a centralized unit



My online and PCE unit has the appropriate amount of staff required to execute our institution's goals for the unit.



0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

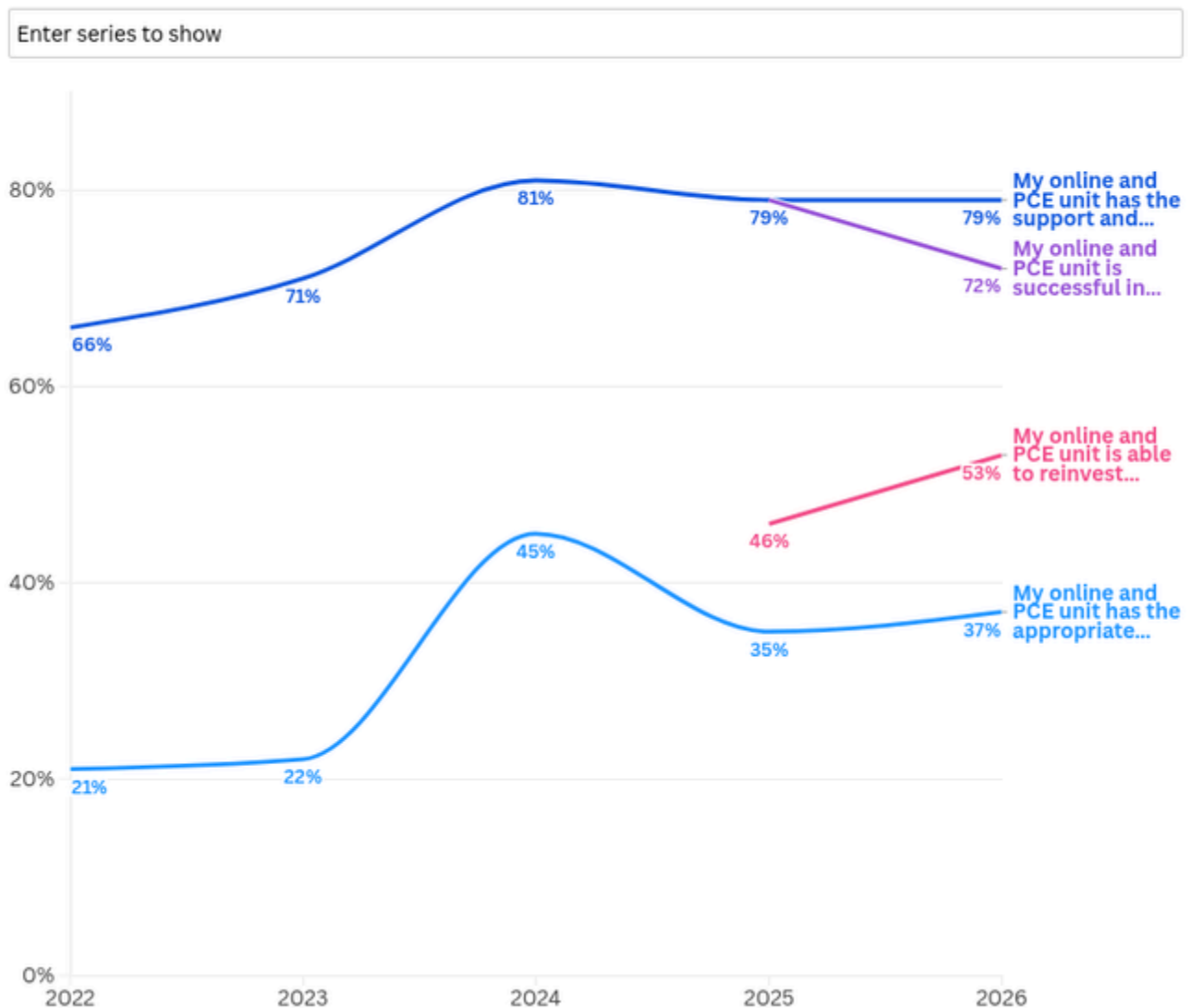
## Efficacy

While appropriate staffing remains a concern, it is important to note that the percentage of respondents who agreed with the statement that their online and PCE unit has the appropriate amount of staff required to execute their institution's goals for the unit increased from 2022 to 2024 (21% to 45%), then declined in 2025 (35%) and rose slightly in 2026 (37%). The percentage of respondents agreeing that they have support and buy-in from senior academic leadership to scale and expand online and PCE courses and programs remains consistently high across all years, peaking in 2024 (81%) before stabilizing in 2025 and 2026 (both 79%).

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## Efficacy

Opinions on Efficacy of Online and PCE Units Over Time



## Digital Credentials

Thirty percent of 2026 institutions currently lack marketing support positions within their online and PCE units, followed by instructional designers (22%), business development (21%), administrative support (14%), and program developer coordinator (13%).

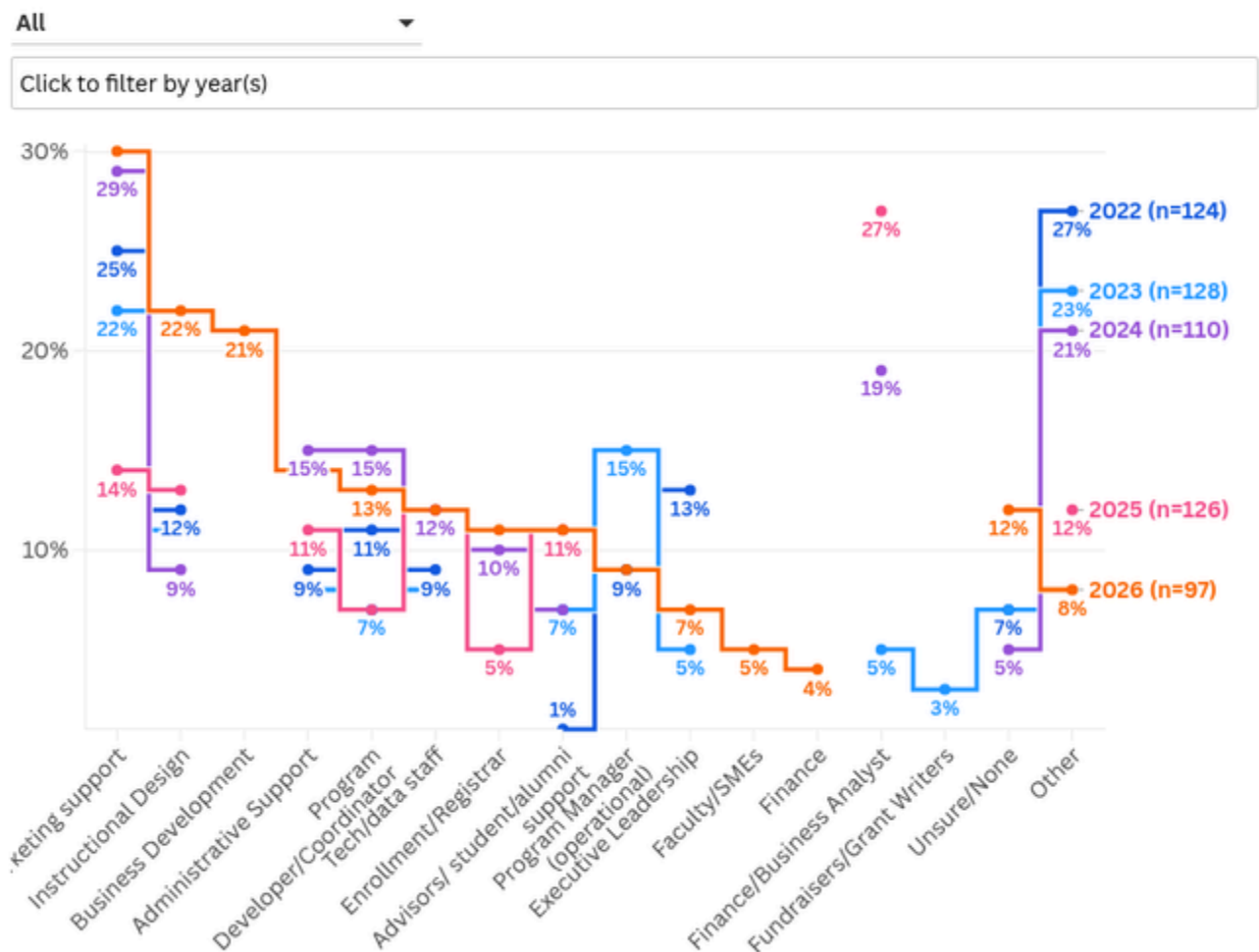
Finance/Business/Industry Analyst was separated into Finance and Business Development, and Program Manager/Director is now split into Program Manager (Operational) and Executive Leadership to better differentiate role responsibilities and needs.

An increasing percentage of online and PCE/PCO units lack marketing support and program instructional design positions. With Finance/Business/Industry Analyst split, Finance fell to only 4% whereas Business Development is 21%.

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## Positions Lacking

Positions Lacking Within Online and PCE/PCO Unit Over Time



## Digital Credentials

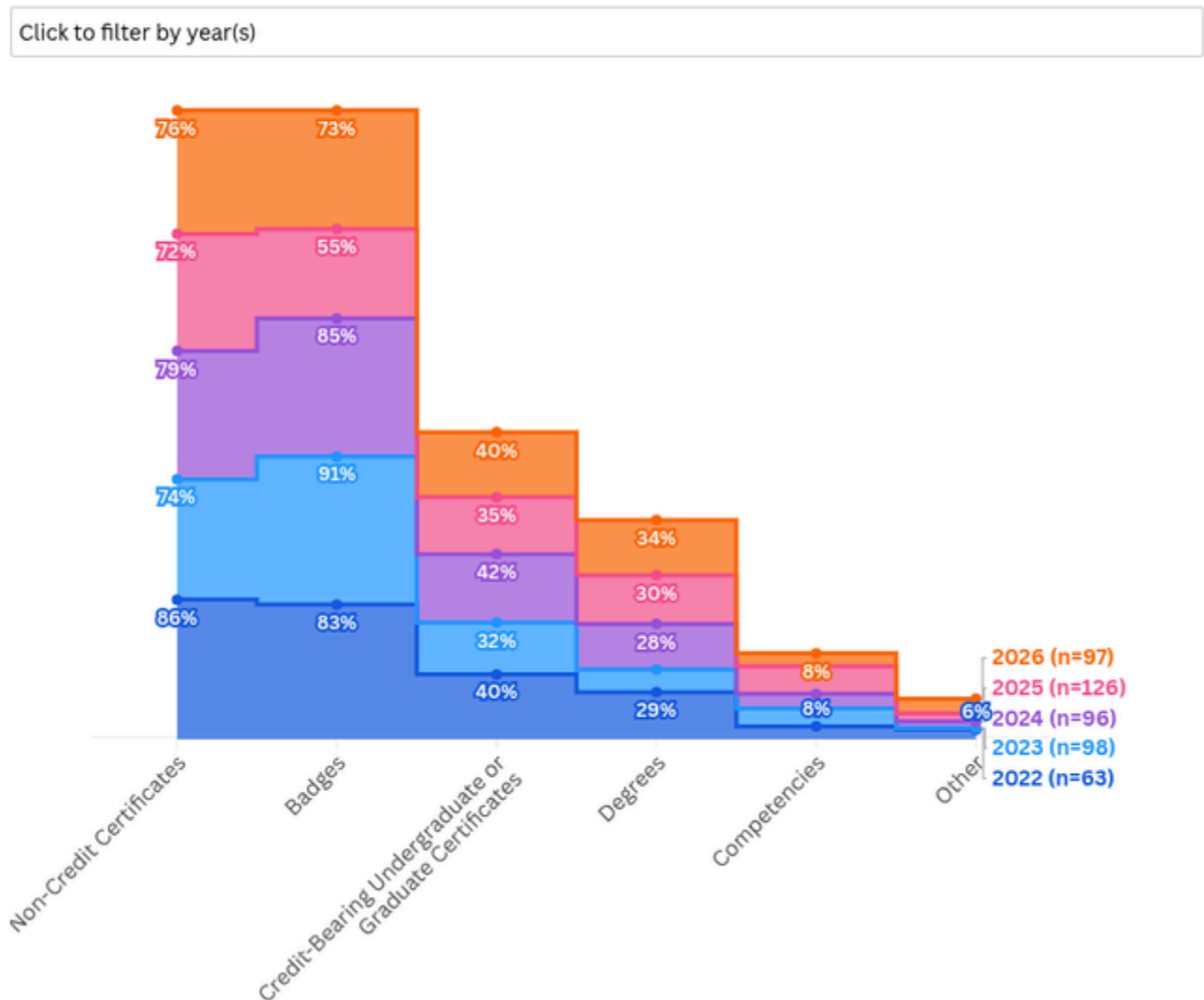
Seventy-six percent of online and PCE units currently offer non-credit certificates, 73% offer badges, 40% credit-bearing undergraduate or graduate certificates, 34% degrees, and 8% competencies, while 10% do not offer any digital credentials.

In 2026, 76% of online and PCE units offer non-credit and credit-bearing certificates compared to a high of 86% in 2022. A notable decline occurred in badges, 73% in 2026 compared to 83–91% in 2022 to 2024. However, this represents an increase from 55% in 2025.

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## Digital Credentials

Types of Digital Credentials Offered in Online and PCE Units Over Time



## Digital Credentials

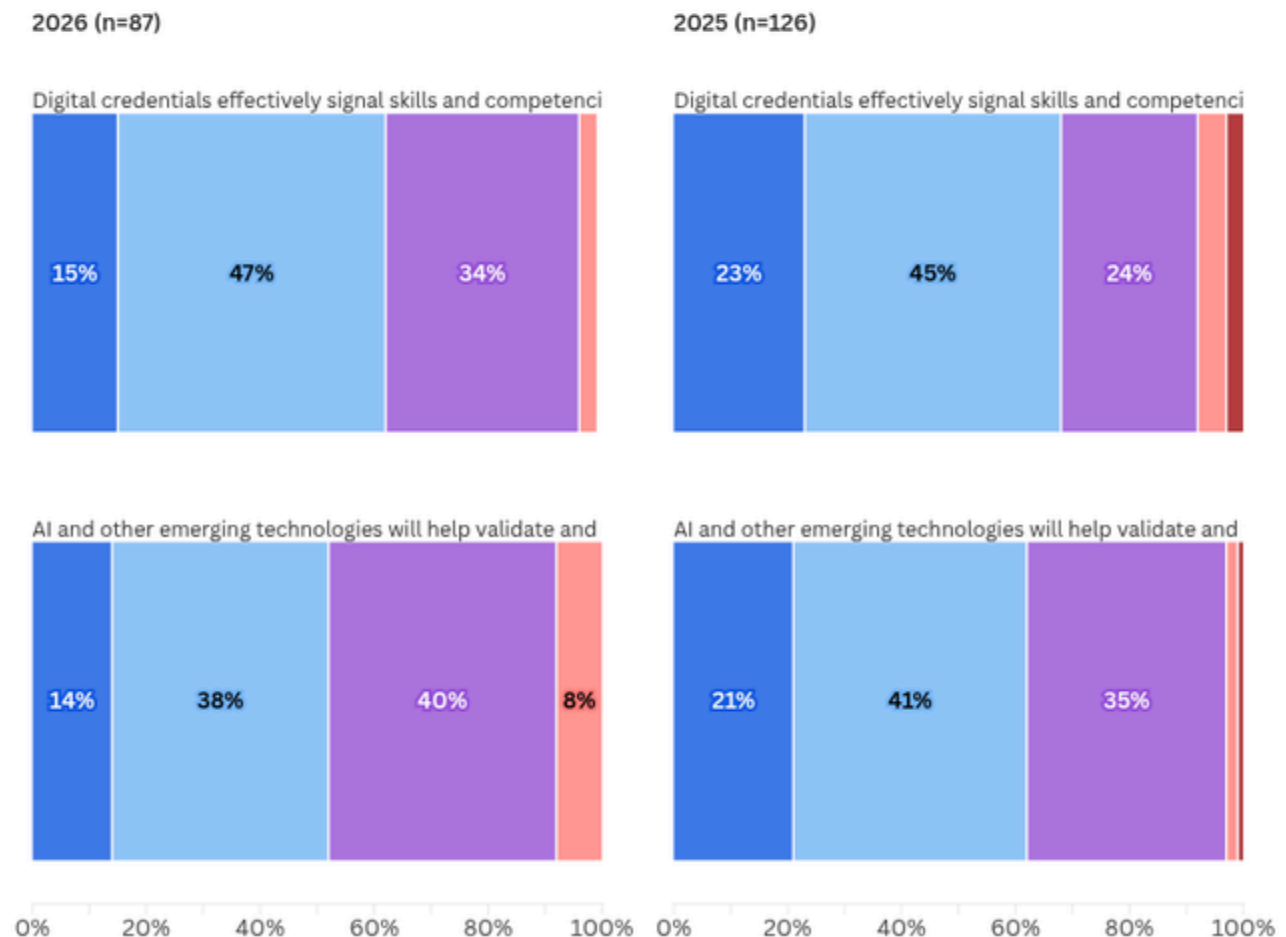
Sixty-two percent of online and PCE participants strongly agree or agree that digital credentials effectively signal skills and competencies to employers, while 52% strongly agree or agree that AI and other emerging technologies will help validate and verify digital credentials. In 2025 68% of participants strongly agreed or agreed that digital credentials effectively signal skills and competencies to employers, and 62% strongly agreed or agreed that AI and other emerging technologies would help validate and verify digital credentials. In comparison to 2025, 2026 respondents expressed slightly lower levels of agreement that digital credentials effectively signal skills to employers (62% vs. 68%) and that AI and emerging technology will help validate those credentials (52% vs 62%), indicating a modest decline in overall confidence year over year.

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## Digital Credentials

### Opinions on Digital Credentials Over Time

■ Strongly agree 
 ■ Agree 
 ■ Neither 
 ■ Disagree 
 ■ Strongly Disagree



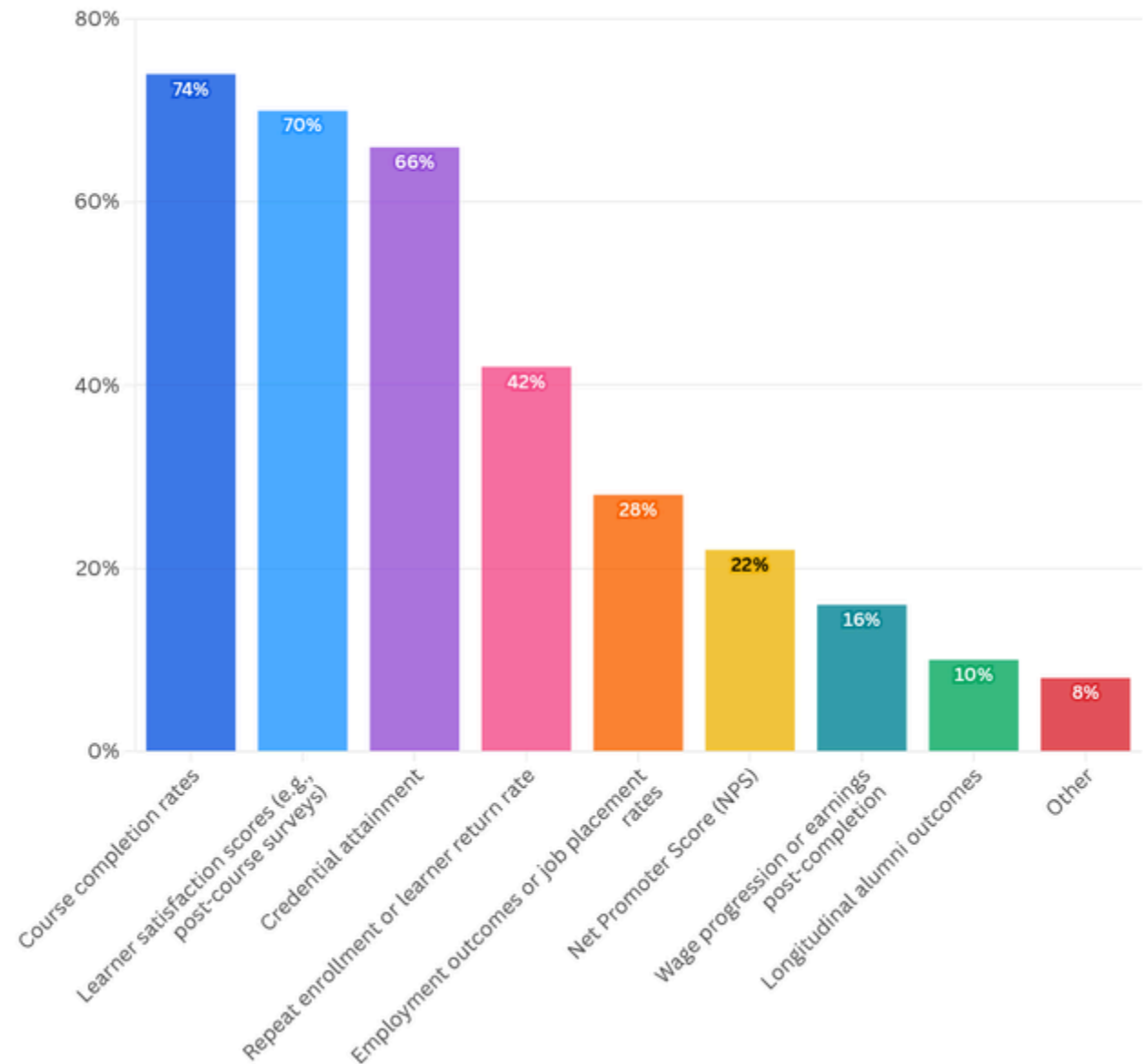
## Metrics

In 2026, the most tracked learner outcomes or success metrics among online and PCE units are course completion rates (74%), learner satisfaction scores (70%), and credential attainment (66%).

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## Learning Outcome Metrics

Sample size n=93



# Technology Integration & Innovation

## AI

Sixty-four percent of respondents strongly agree or agree that adopting AI tools and technologies enhances the academic innovation of their online and PCE unit. Similarly, 54% strongly agree or agree that their institution sees credential innovation as an essential element for future success. Only 27% strongly agree or agree that the technology used by their online and PCE unit integrates seamlessly with the technology used by the main campus.

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## Technology

Opinions on Technological and Academic Capacities of Online and PCE Units Over Time

2026 (n=96) ▾

■ Strongly agree 
 ■ Agree 
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree 
 ■ Disagree 
 ■ Strongly disagree

2026 (n=96)

The adoption of AI tools and technologies enhances the academic innovation of my online and PCE unit



My institution sees credential innovation as an essential element for its future success



My online and PCE unit is the most academically innovative unit at my institution



The technology used by my online and PCE unit integrates seamlessly with the technology used by the main campus



0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

# AI

The percentage of respondents who agree that adopting AI tools and technologies enhances the academic innovation of their online and PCE unit declined slightly from 67% in 2025 to 64% in 2026. Agreement that credential innovation is seen as an essential element for institutional success also decreased, from 68% in 2025 to 54% in 2026. In contrast, agreement that the technology used by online and PCE units integrates seamlessly with main campus systems increased from 24% in 2025 to 27% in 2026, continuing an upward trend from 20% in 2024.

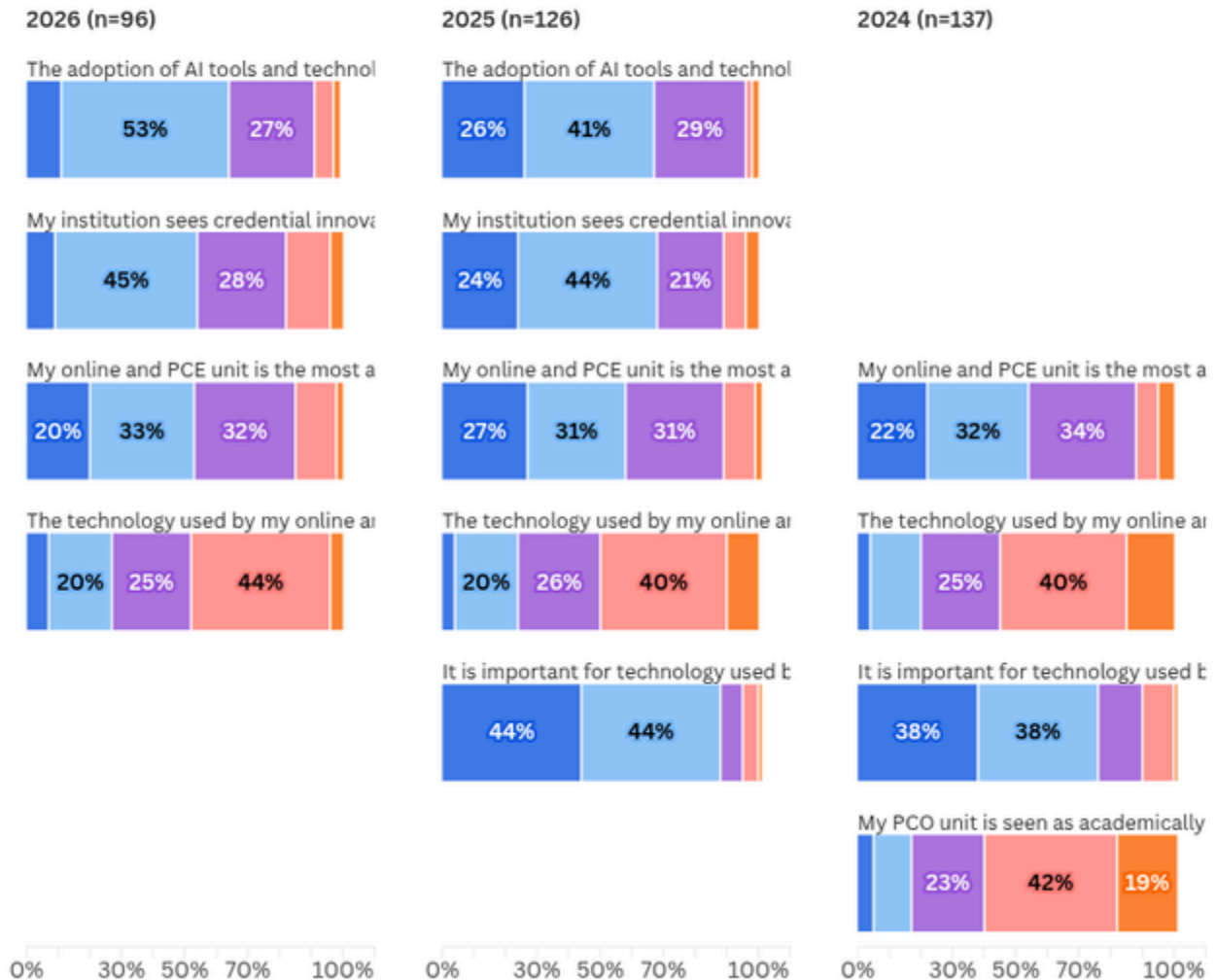
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## Technology

### Opinions on Technological and Academic Capacities of Online and PCE Units Over Time

All ▾

■ Strongly agree 
 ■ Agree 
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree 
 ■ Disagree 
 ■ Strongly disagree



# Continuing Education Collaboration & Integration

## Collaboration

In 2026, respondents are most likely to strongly agree or agree that other units, schools, or colleges at their institution collaborate with their online and PCE unit for continuing education program development (62%); there is a concentrated effort from institutional leadership to organize and manage continuing education at their institution (48%); and continuing education at their institution is siloed between multiple units, schools, or colleges (41%). Only 13% strongly agree or agree that their continuing education offerings are well integrated into the structure of the institution's portfolio of traditional offerings.

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## Collaboration

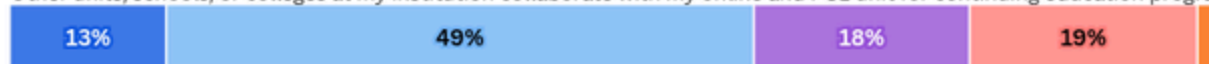
### Opinions on Continuing Education Collaboration and Integration

2026 (n=96) ▾

■ Strongly agree 
 ■ Agree 
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree 
 ■ Disagree 
 ■ Strongly disagree

2026 (n=96)

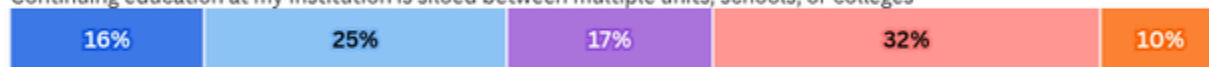
Other units, schools, or colleges at my institution collaborate with my online and PCE unit for continuing education program development



There is a concentrated effort from institutional leadership to organize and manage continuing education at my institution



Continuing education at my institution is siloed between multiple units, schools, or colleges



Our continuing education programs actively target alumni of the institution



Continuing education programming positively affects enrollments in traditional programming



My online and PCE unit is seen as academically equal to other academic units at my institution



Continuing education offerings are well integrated into the structure of the institution's portfolio of traditional offerings



0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

## Collaboration

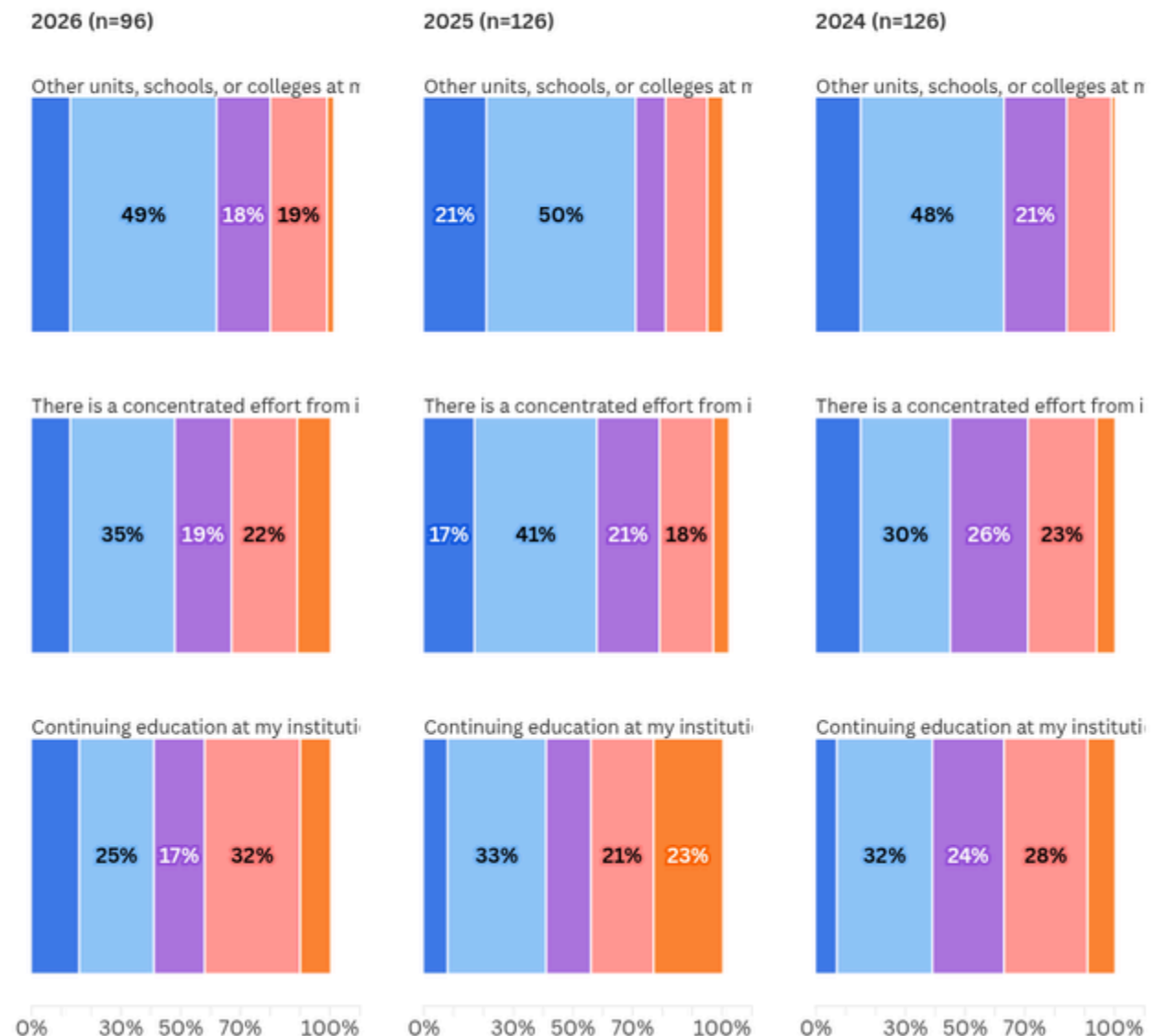
A smaller percentage of 2026 respondents are most likely to strongly agree or agree with statements regarding continuing education institutional collaboration and leadership integration compared to the 2025 survey (down almost 10%), suggesting a pullback in perceived coordination, even as views of siloing remain relatively unchanged at 41%.

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## Collaboration

### Opinions on Continuing Education Collaboration and Integration

■ Strongly agree 
 ■ Agree 
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree 
 ■ Disagree 
 ■ Strongly disagree



# Methodology & Objective

To better understand online and professional continuing education (PCE)\* unit program offerings, institutional support and capabilities, and to assess technology integration and innovation, as well as continuing education collaboration and integration, UPCEA and The EvoLLLution developed an in-depth survey. They and CAUCE contacted their members to participate in the 2026 State of Continuing Education survey. Precautions were taken to ensure institutions were not contacted by more than one organization. The survey took place from January 13 to February 8, 2026. In total, 114 institutions participated, of which 96 completed the entire survey.

\* In 2025, UPCEA rebranded "PCO Units" as "Online and PCE Units." In this report, "Online and PCE Units" will refer to 2025 and 2026 data, while "PCO Units" will apply to previous years.

# Demographics

## Geography

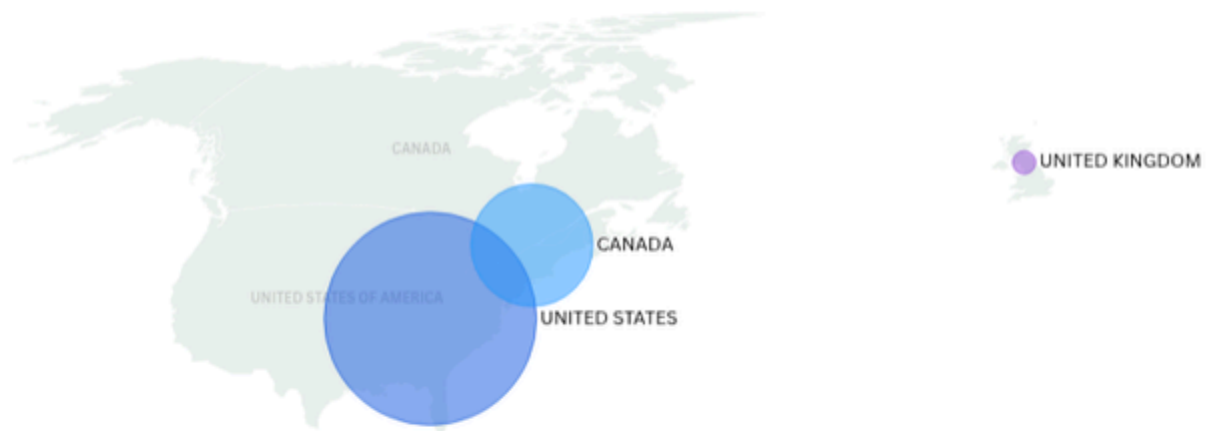
Three-quarters (75%) of respondents are from institutions in the USA, 25% from Canada, and 1% from the United Kingdom.

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## Geography

Sample size n=114

■ United States ■ Canada ■ United Kingdom



Source: [World Bank Official Boundaries](#)

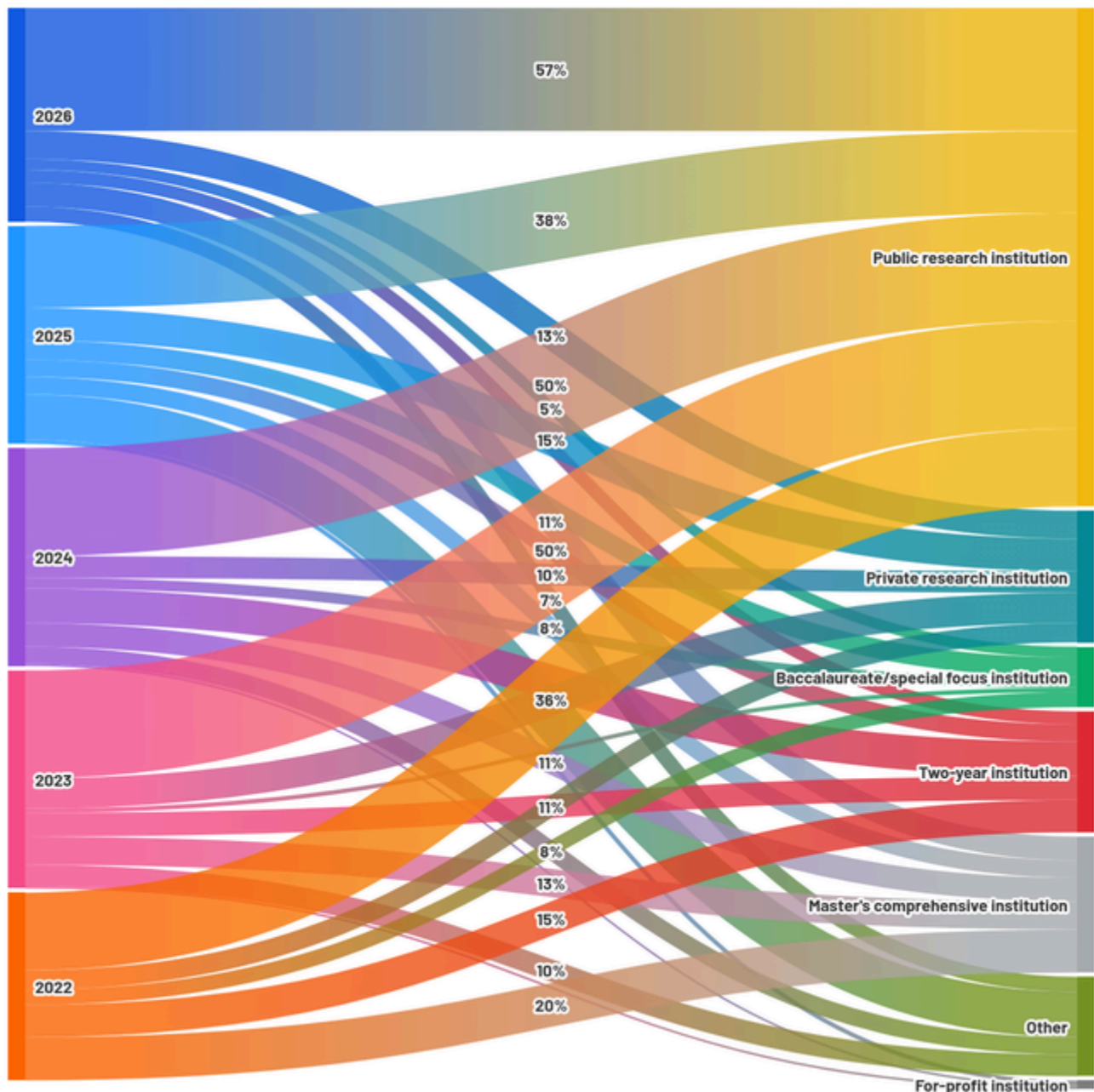
## Institution Type

The most common institution type in the survey is public research institution (57%), followed by private research institution (13%), and master’s comprehensive institution (11%). Seven percent are grouped into the “Other” category; examples include university systems, public comprehensive universities, and technology universities, among others.

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### Institution Type

All ▾



## Institution Size

Fifty-nine percent of participating institutions had more than 15,000 undergraduate and graduate students in 2024-2025, 27% had 5,000 to 15,000, and 14% fewer than 5,000.

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### Institution Size

All ▼

2024-2025



2023-2024



2022-2023



2021-2022



2020-2021

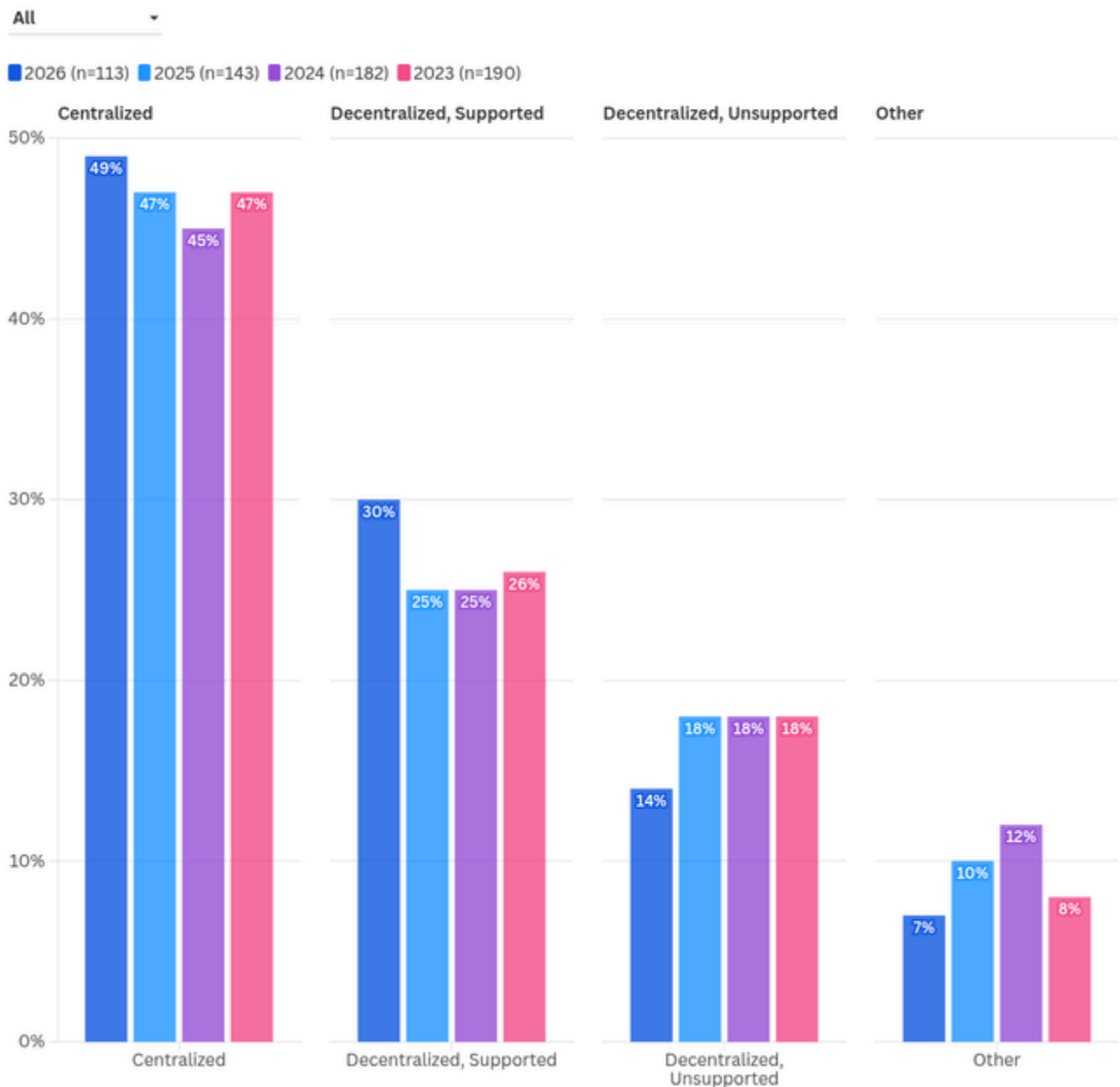


## PCE Unit Description Over Time

Forty-nine percent of online and PCE units are centralized with programming and support coming primarily from one professional, continuing, and/or online education unit; 30% are decentralized with programming coming out of other academic colleges or units, but supported centrally by a continuing education unit; and 14% are decentralized with programming and support coming from academic colleges/schools and different support units. The percentages are similar to those in the 2025, 2024, and 2023 surveys.

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### Online and PCE Unit Description



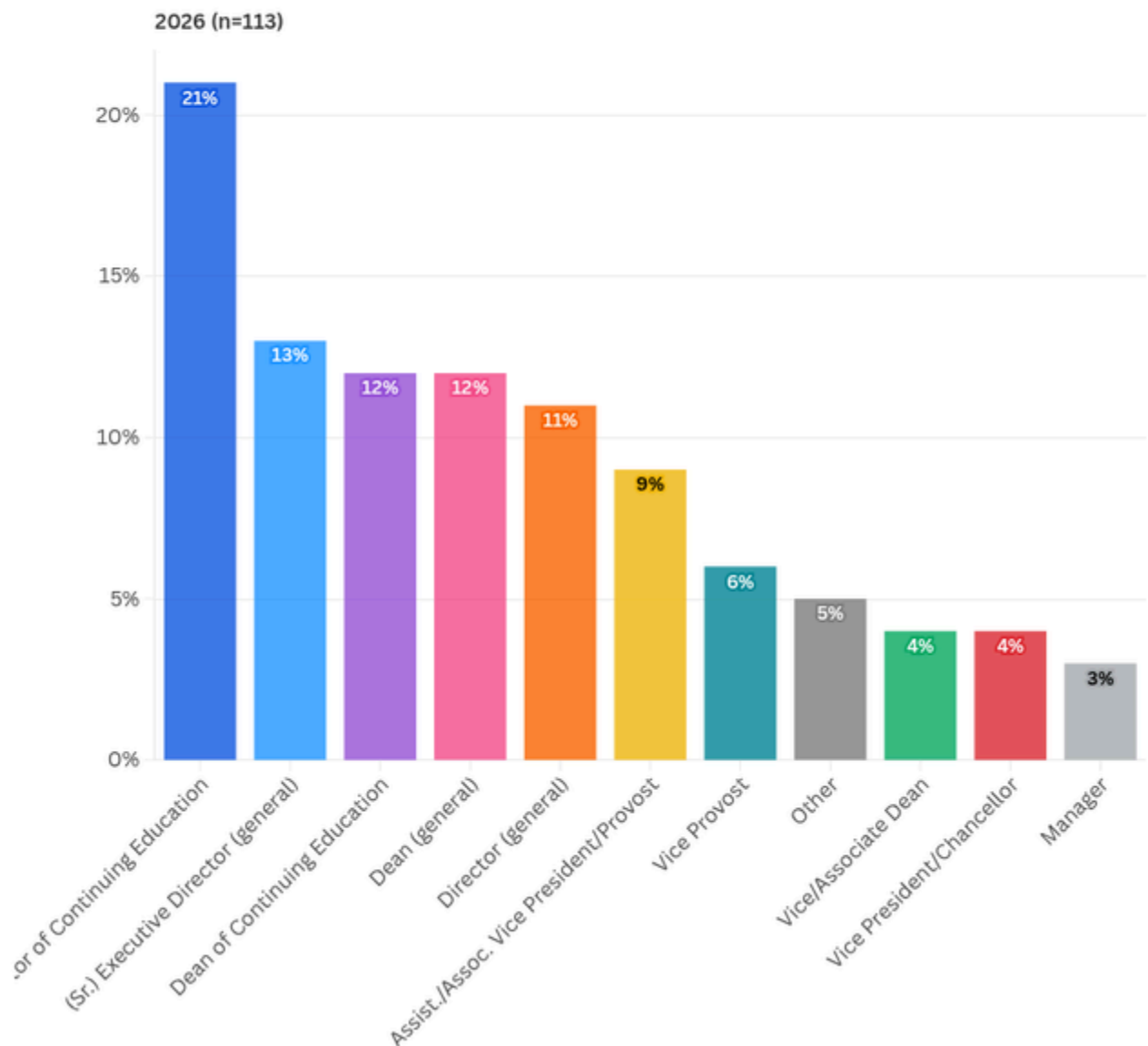
## 2026 Titles

The most common title of 2026 survey respondents is Director of Continuing Education (21%), followed by Senior/Executive Director (general) (13%), Dean of Continuing Education (12%), Dean (general) (12%), and Director (General) (11%). Responses that were mentioned fewer than three times were included in the "Other" category and included Provost, Admin Officer, and Program Manager, online student services.

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## Respondent Titles

2026 (n=113) ▾

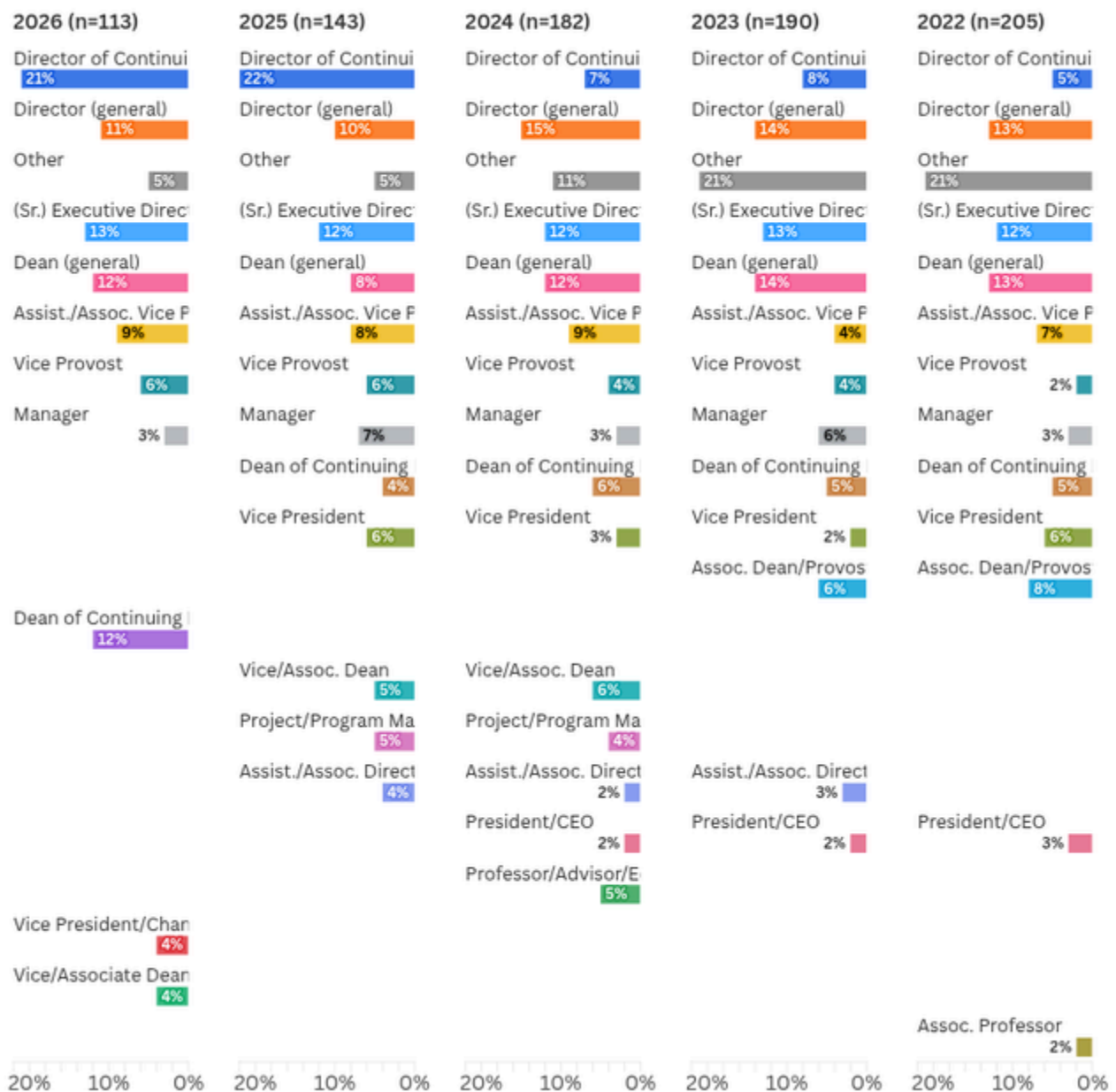


## Title Shifts Over Time

Over the past five years, survey respondents have consistently been connected to senior leadership roles, with directors and deans representing the largest share each year. In 2022–2024, Director (general) and Dean (general) were most common, but beginning in 2025 and continuing into 2026, Director of Continuing Education emerged as the single largest respondent group, growing from 7% in 2024 to 22% in 2025 and 21% in 2026. Overall, the trend suggests increasing participation from leaders specifically tied to continuing and professional education units, alongside sustained engagement from broader academic leadership.

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## Respondent Titles



# Impact on Higher Education

The 2026 findings leave little doubt that workforce alignment is no longer an emerging priority for online and PCE units. It is shaping portfolio decisions, partnership models, and performance expectations across the institution. Record-high microcredential adoption, alongside growth in stackable and industry-aligned credentials, reflects a broader institutional shift toward shorter, skills-focused learning pathways that respond more directly to labor market signals.

However, the data reinforces the stubborn and ongoing gap between strategic ambition and operational capacity. Institutions are eager to expand workforce-aligned programming, yet concerns about market demand, administrative complexity, and time-to-market now outweigh traditional academic barriers such as faculty resistance. Governance structures, approval processes, and cross-unit coordination are becoming the true constraints on responsiveness.

Workforce Pell brings this tension into sharper focus. Institutions broadly believe these programs will benefit learners and support institutional sustainability. However, readiness challenges related to data collection, reporting, and integration with state longitudinal data systems further illuminate weaknesses in infrastructure. As accountability expectations rise, online and PCE units will need to address persistent challenges related to data governance, ownership of outcomes tracking, and technology integration. The implications extend well beyond continuing education units and into institutional research, finance, and academic affairs, requiring coordinated action across the organization.

Technology integration remains a persistent friction point. Fewer than one-third of survey participants report seamless integration between continuing education systems and main campus technology, and confidence in real-time enrollment data access has declined year over year. Without shared data visibility, institutions will continue to struggle to make informed portfolio decisions, align marketing investments, and demonstrate measurable outcomes. As credentials become shorter and more outcomes-sensitive, the need for timely, integrated data will only intensify. Institutions that fail to close this gap risk slowing innovation and weakening accountability.

# Impact on Higher Education

Audience diversification of online and PCE units is also reshaping institutional positioning. Growth in serving alumni, government, and corporate audiences strengthens continuing education's role in regional engagement and lifelong learning ecosystems. Declining engagement with certain employer segments suggests more selective market strategies. Institutions may be prioritizing partnership depth and sustainability over breadth, which could redefine how higher education competes in workforce development markets.

Finally, internal capacity such as widening gaps in marketing and instructional design support, combined with persistent staffing concerns, signal that scale will depend on investment in people as much as programs. Leadership support remains strong, but sustained impact will require aligning financial models, staffing structures, and technology systems with the ambitions that continuing education carries.

In 2026, continuing education stands at the center of institutional adaptation. The question for online and PCE units is no longer whether to pursue workforce-aligned learning. It is whether institutions can build the operational foundation required to align infrastructure, staffing, data systems, and governance with their strategic ambitions.

