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# Attitudes of Senior-Level Enrollment Officials Toward Key Issues in Admissions

Presented by

Robert Mirabile, Maguire Associates

Eric Hoover, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*

Peter Stace, Fordham University

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# Introduction

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## ❖ Background

- 4<sup>th</sup> in a series of higher education studies
- Conducted by Maguire Associates on behalf of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*
- Prior research audiences: college/university presidents; trustees; college faculty and high school teachers

## ❖ The Current Audience

- Senior-level enrollment/admissions officials (SEOs) at 4-year colleges/universities in the U.S. (i.e., Dean/Director/VP level)
- Responsible for undergraduate admissions at the institution

## ❖ Main Research Topics

- Job satisfaction and challenges
- Industry trends and misperceptions
- Current admissions practices
- Attitudes toward controversial admission policies

# Research Overview

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## ❖ Methodology

- Invitations sent via email by *The Chronicle* and Maguire Associates
- Survey administered online
- N = 461; response rate = 22%

## ❖ Participant Characteristics

- 61% male vs. 39% female
- 44% age 50 or older vs. 56%  $\leq$  49 years old
- 28% alumni vs. 71% non-alumni
- 27% w/ <10 years vs. 36% w/10 - 19 years vs. 37% w/  $\geq$ 20 years in admissions
- 89% caucasian vs. 9% non-caucasian

## ❖ Institution Characteristics

- Every state in the U.S., plus D.C.
- 33% public vs. 45% private, religiously affiliated vs. 21% private, non-religiously affiliated
- Mean SAT (M+R) = 1108; Mean ACT = 23.6



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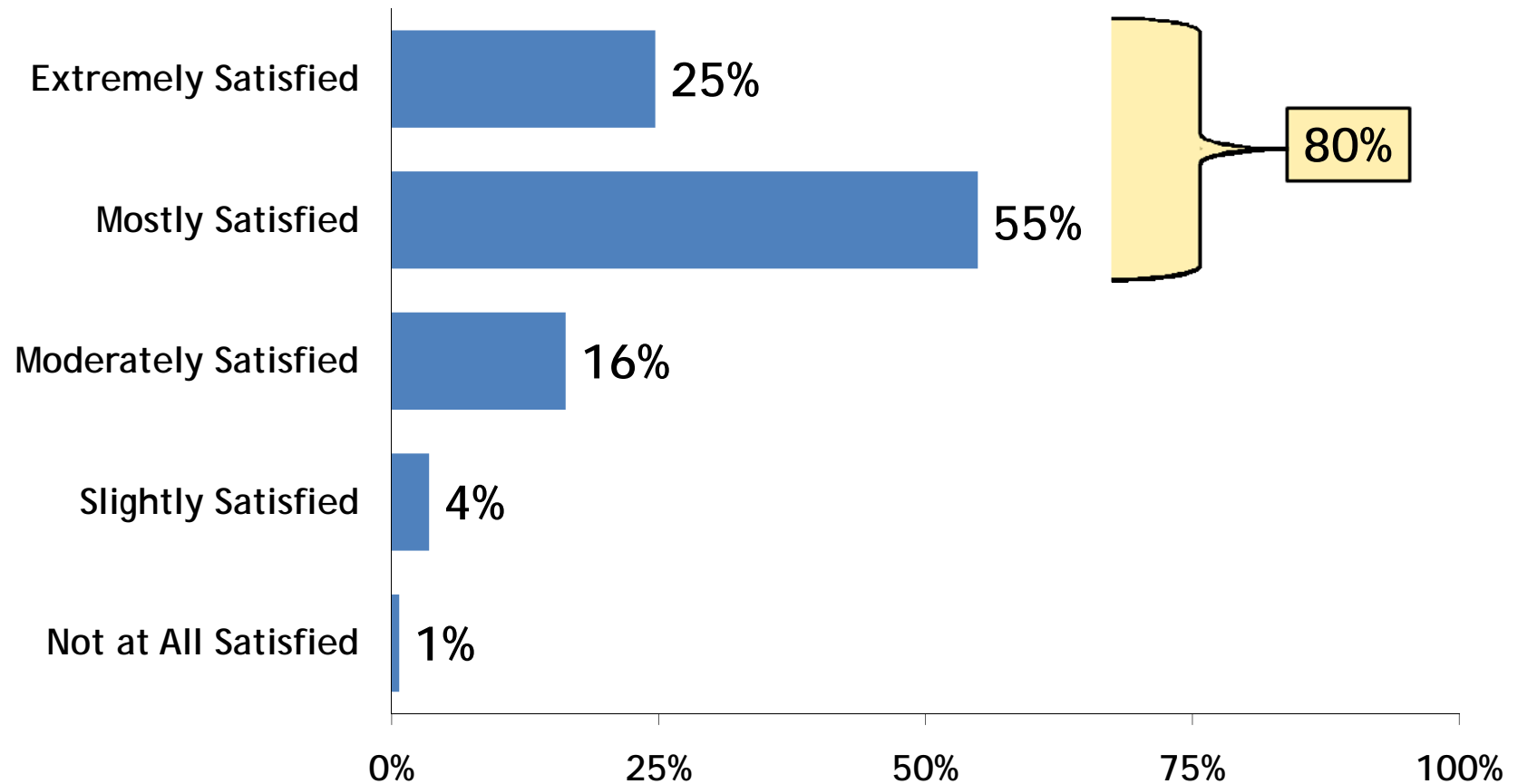
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# How Satisfied are Senior Enrollment Officials with Their Positions?

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# Overall Satisfaction with Current Position

The vast majority of SEOs say they are “mostly” or “extremely satisfied” with their positions.



Q: How satisfied you are with your current position?

# Does Satisfaction Differ by Cohort?

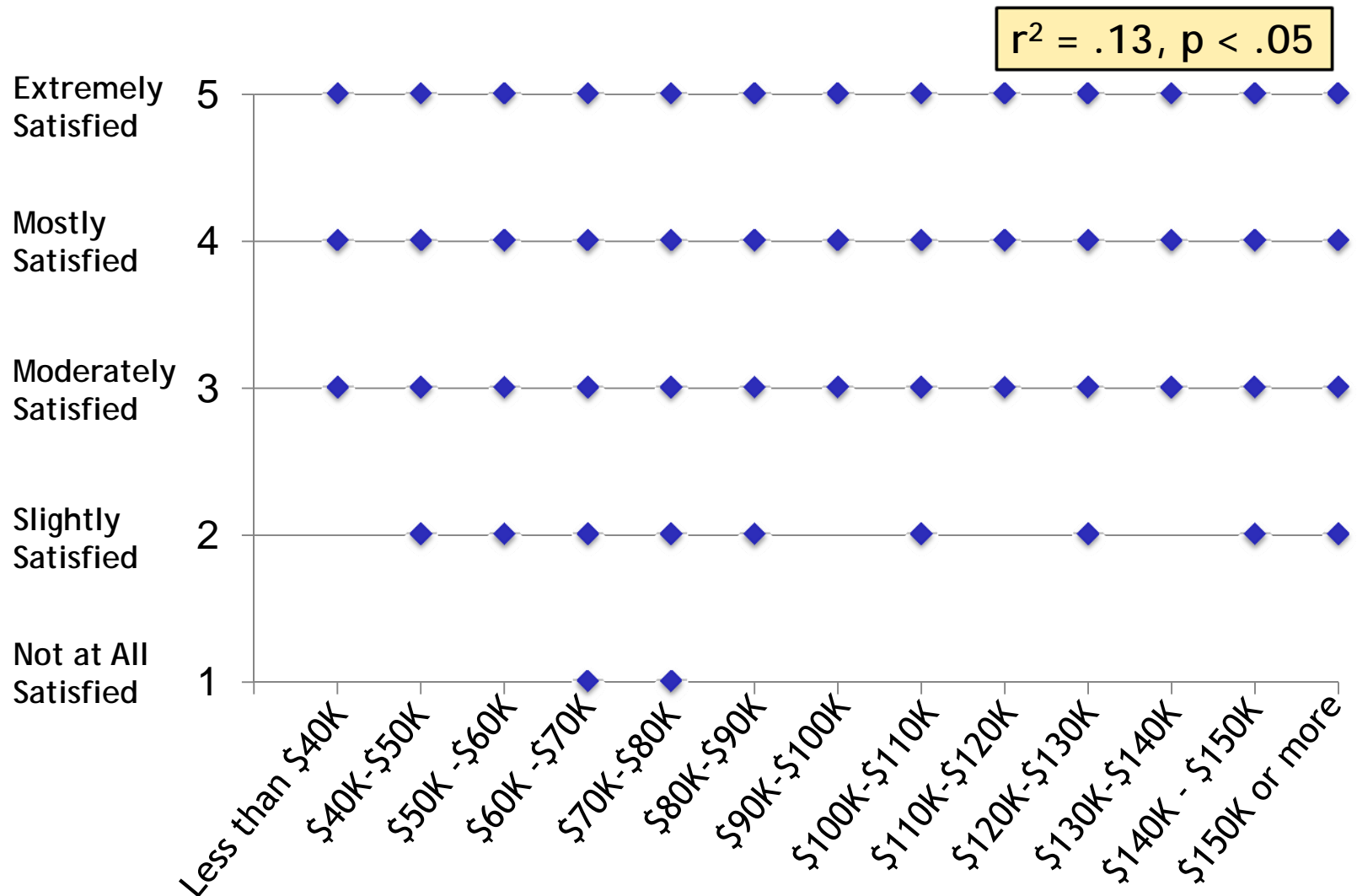
Overall satisfaction is remarkably consistent across a variety of key cohorts.

		MEAN
<b>Gender</b>		
	Male	4.00
	Female	4.01
<b>Institution Type</b>		
	Public	4.00
	Private, Religiously Affiliated	4.00
	Private, Non-religiously Affiliated	4.00
<b>Office Budget</b>		
	Less than 1 Million Dollars	3.94
	1 Million Dollars or More	4.06
<b>Admissions Tenure</b>		
	10 Years or Less	4.00
	11 to 20 Years	3.96
	21 or More Years	4.03

Q: How satisfied you are with your current position? Scale: 1 (Not at All Satisfied) to 5 (Extremely Satisfied).

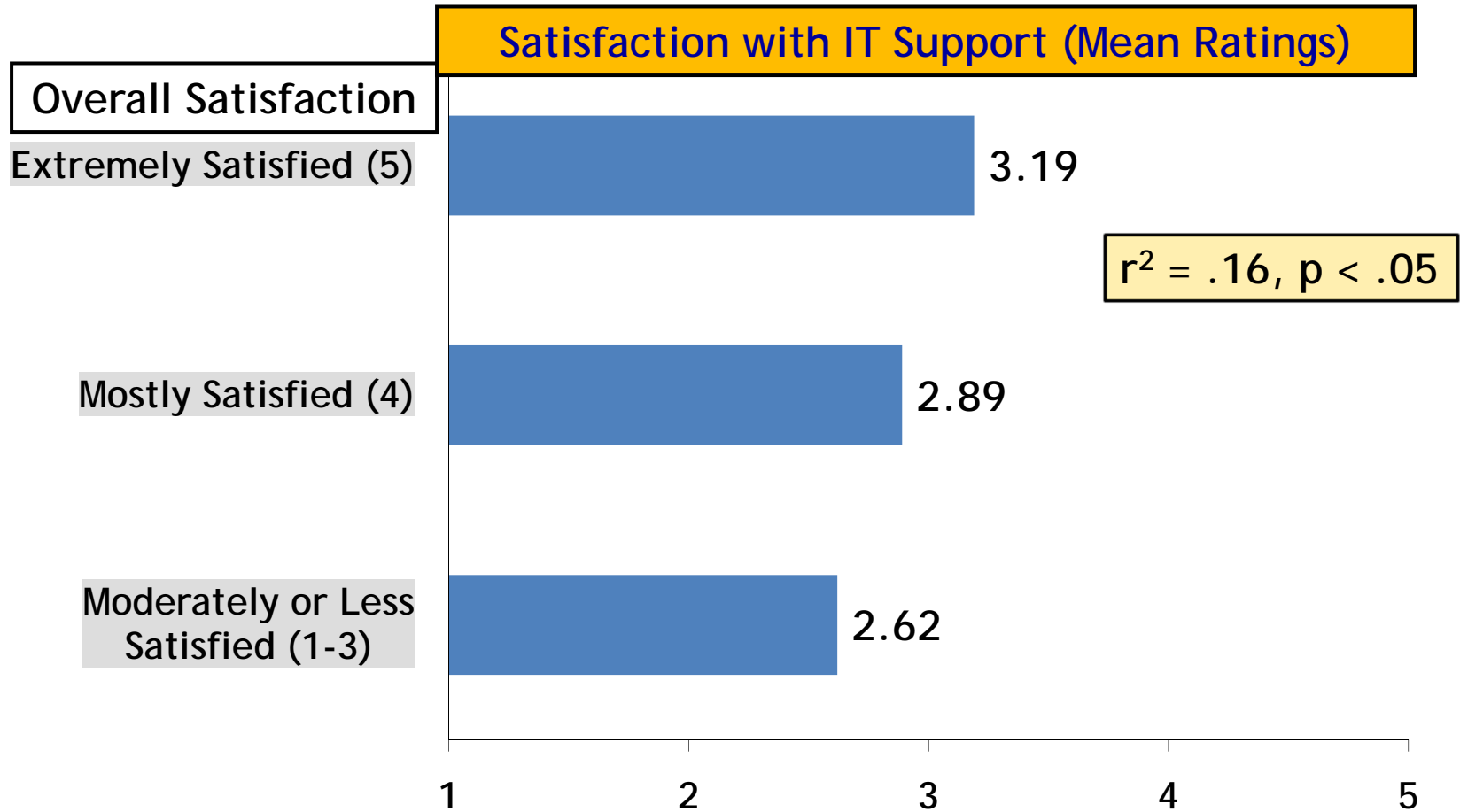
# Does Satisfaction Correlate with Salary?

There is a significant but modest tendency for higher paid SEOs to be more satisfied with their positions.



# How Important is IT Support in Overall Satisfaction?

Satisfaction with IT support is positively associated with overall satisfaction, though SEOs are typically dissatisfied on this dimension.



Q: How satisfied are you with your current position? Scale: 1 (Not at All Satisfied) to 5 (Extremely Satisfied).  
Q: How satisfied are you with the information technology support provided to your undergraduate admissions office? Scale: 1 (Not at All Satisfied) to 5 (Extremely Satisfied).

# What Are the Job's Biggest Challenges?

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Open-Ended Response Theme (Top Mentions)	Percent
Administrative Issues (e.g., staff, time management)	28.1%
Meeting Competing Goals & Expectations	21.3%
Coordinating with/Educating Others on Campus	18.2%
Budgets	11.5%



Q: In a sentence or two, please state the biggest challenge you face as a senior level enrollment management/admissions official.

# What Are the Main Sources of Dissatisfaction?

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Open-Ended Response Theme (Top Mentions)	Percent
Not enough resources	18.1%
Unrealistic expectations	11.7%
Current inter/intra office organization	11.7%
Too much work	9.6%
Lack of support/understanding	8.5%
Salary	7.4%
Issues with senior management	6.4%

Base: Participants who said they were “moderately” or less satisfied with their positions (n = 94)

Q: What are the main sources of any dissatisfaction you may feel?



# Panelist Discussion Questions

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- ❖ Are you surprised by the (high) level of satisfaction?
- ❖ What conditions lead a senior enrollment official to stay at an institution long-term?
- ❖ If this survey had been conducted 10 years ago, would the satisfaction results have been similar/dissimilar? How about 10 years from now?



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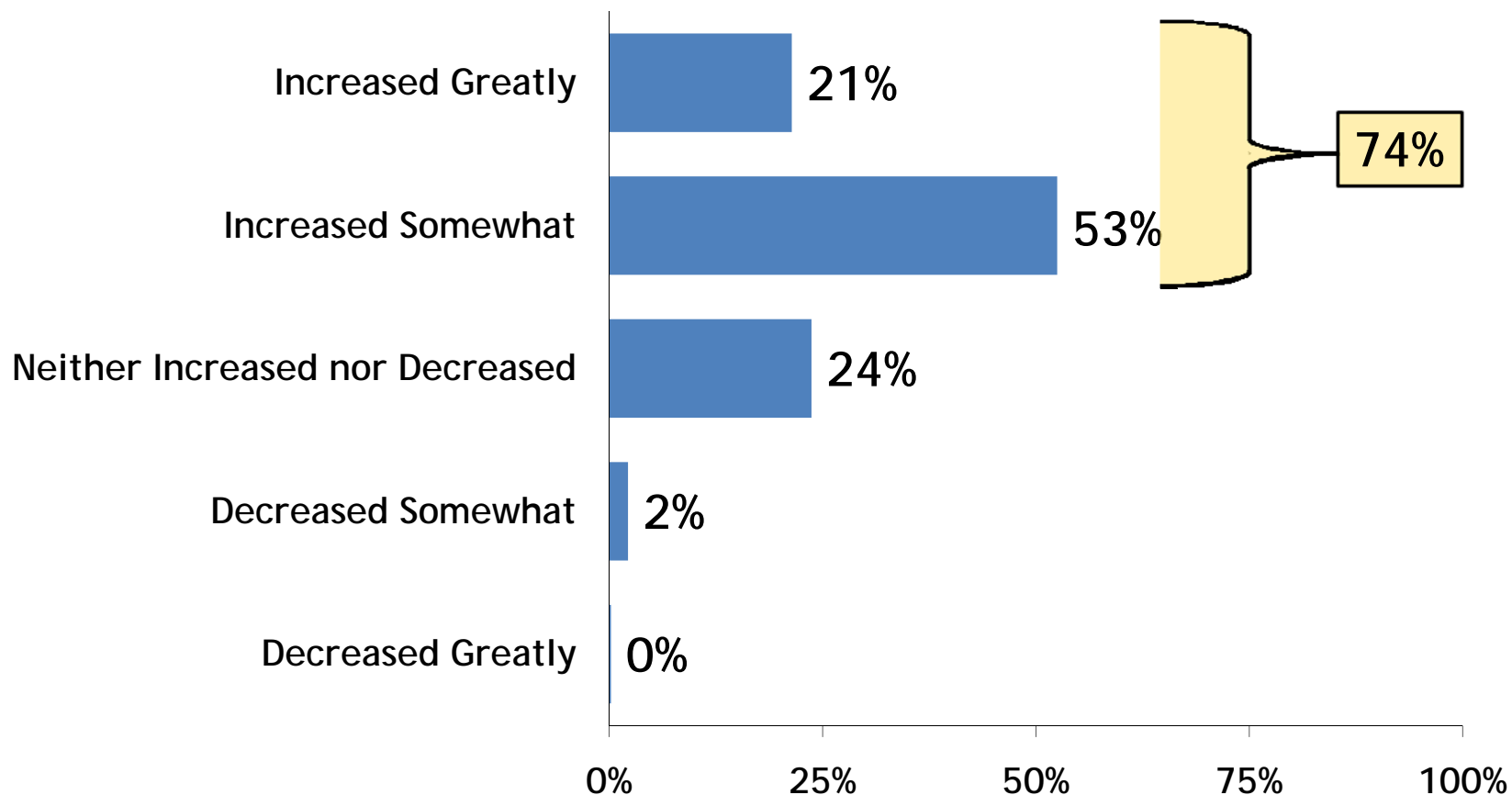
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# How is the Admissions Marketplace Changing?

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# Are Today's Applicants More Stressed/Anxious?

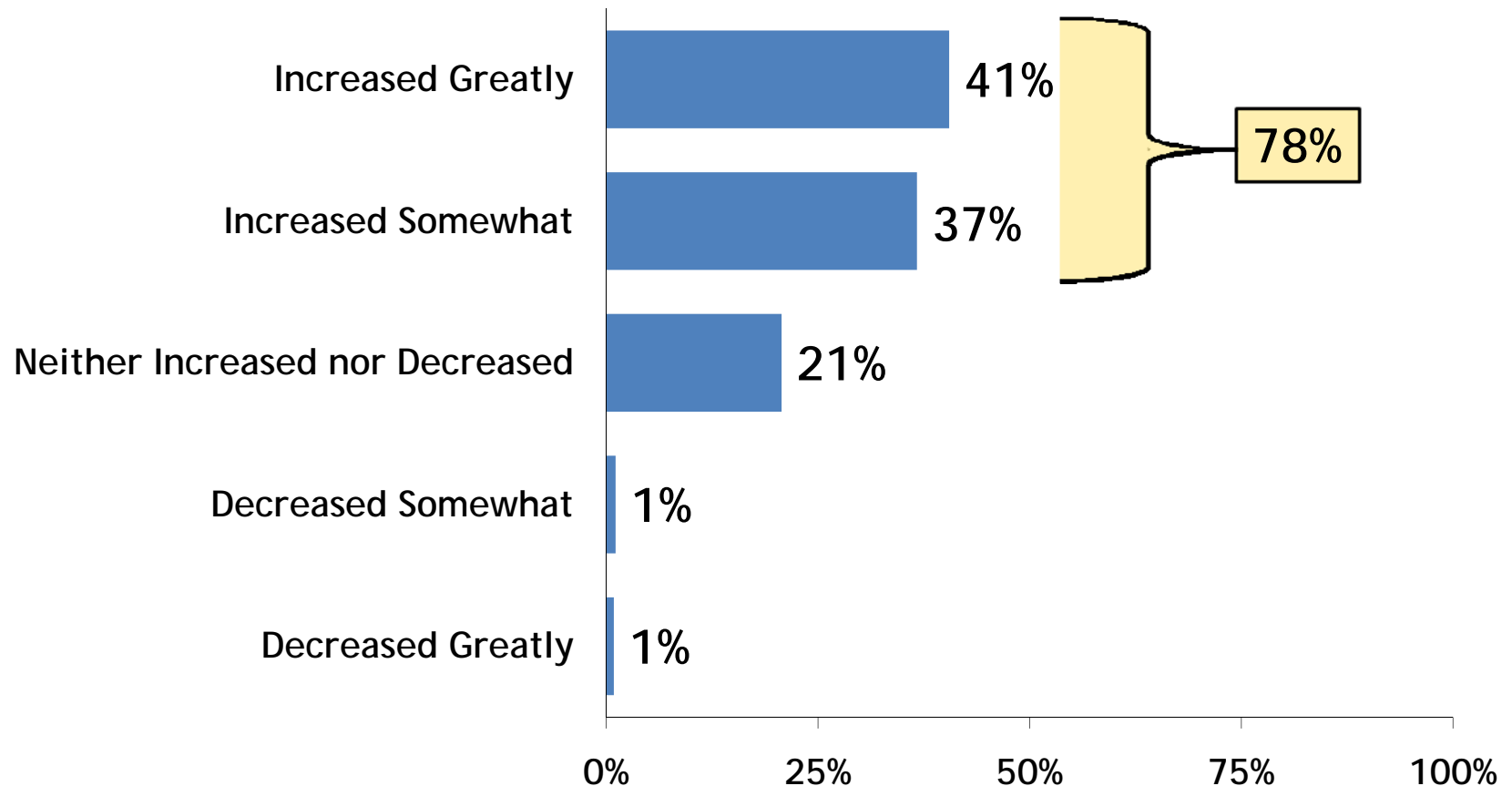
About three-quarters of SEOs say prospective student anxiety has increased in the past decade at their schools.



Q: In the past ten years, how do you think the level of prospective student stress and anxiety about the admissions process has changed in the undergraduate admissions process at your school?  
Scale: 1 (Decreased Greatly) to 5 (Increased Greatly).

# How Has the Level of Stealth Applicants Changed?

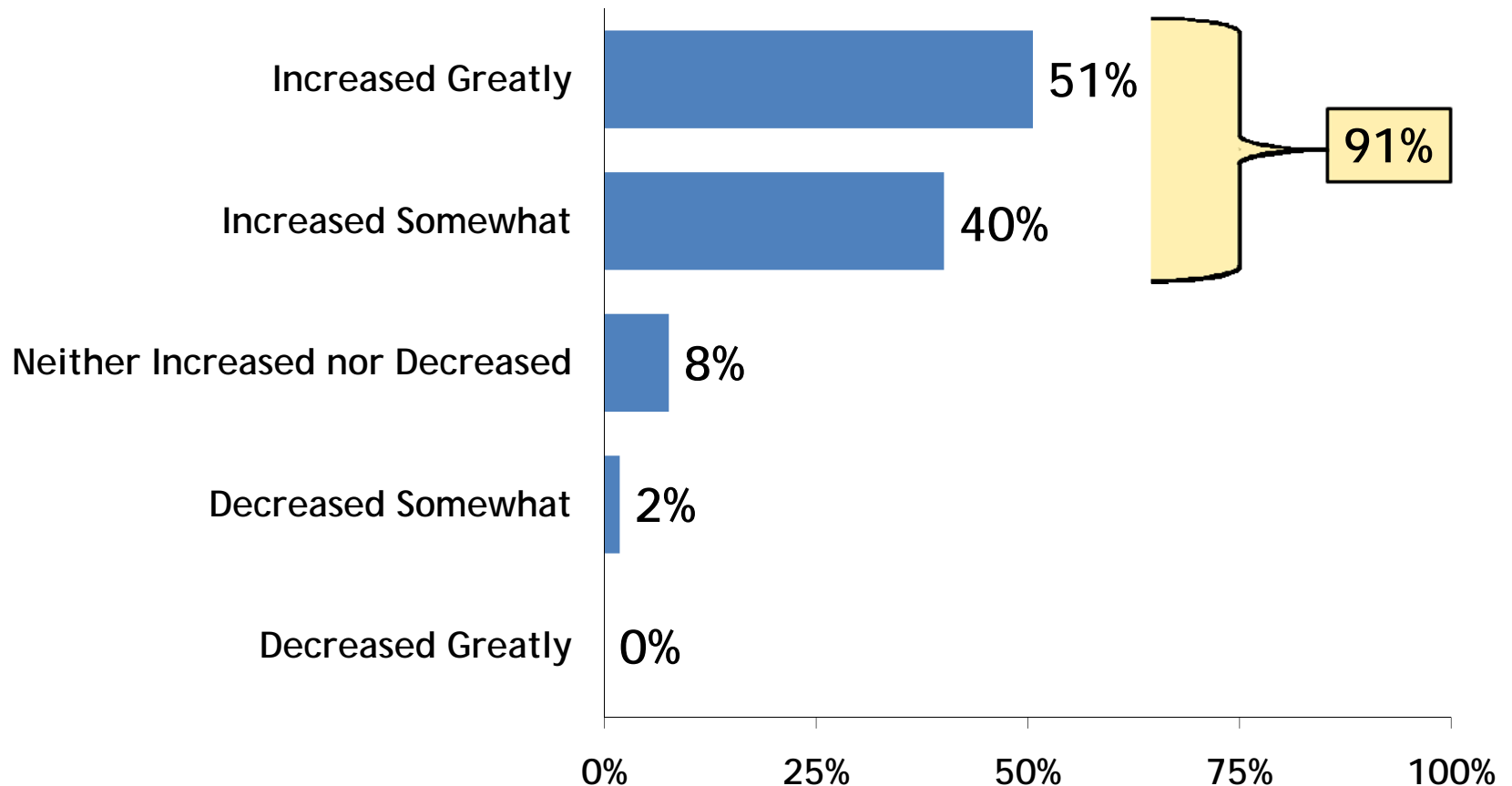
More than three-quarters of SEOs say the level of stealth applicants at their schools has increased during the past decade.



Q: In the past ten years, how do you think the level of stealth applicants (i.e., applications from students who have no traceable prior contact with the school) has changed in the undergraduate admissions process at your school? Scale: 1 (Decreased Greatly) to 5 (Increased Greatly).

# Are Today's Parents More Involved in College Choices?

More than 90% of SEOs say the level of parental involvement in college choice has increased in the past decade at their schools.



Q: In the past ten years, how do you think the level of parental involvement in students' assessment and choice of schools has changed in the undergraduate admissions process at your school?

Scale: 1 (Decreased Greatly) to 5 (Increased Greatly).

# What Are the Most Common Misperceptions?

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Open-Ended Response Theme (Top Mentions)	Percent
Lack of Understanding of Admissions Process/Requirements	32.2%
College Is Not Affordable	18.0%
Overestimating Difficulty of Getting Accepted	15.1%
Misunderstanding Financial Aid	9.6%

# Panelist Discussion Questions

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- ❖ Is the perception that student stress/anxiety has increased myth or reality?
- ❖ Has stress and anxiety increased among SEOs too? If so, are the reasons similar/different?
- ❖ How is the rise in stealth applicants changing admission practices?
- ❖ Why are parents so much more involved in the admissions process than in decades past? From an admissions perspective, is this good/bad?



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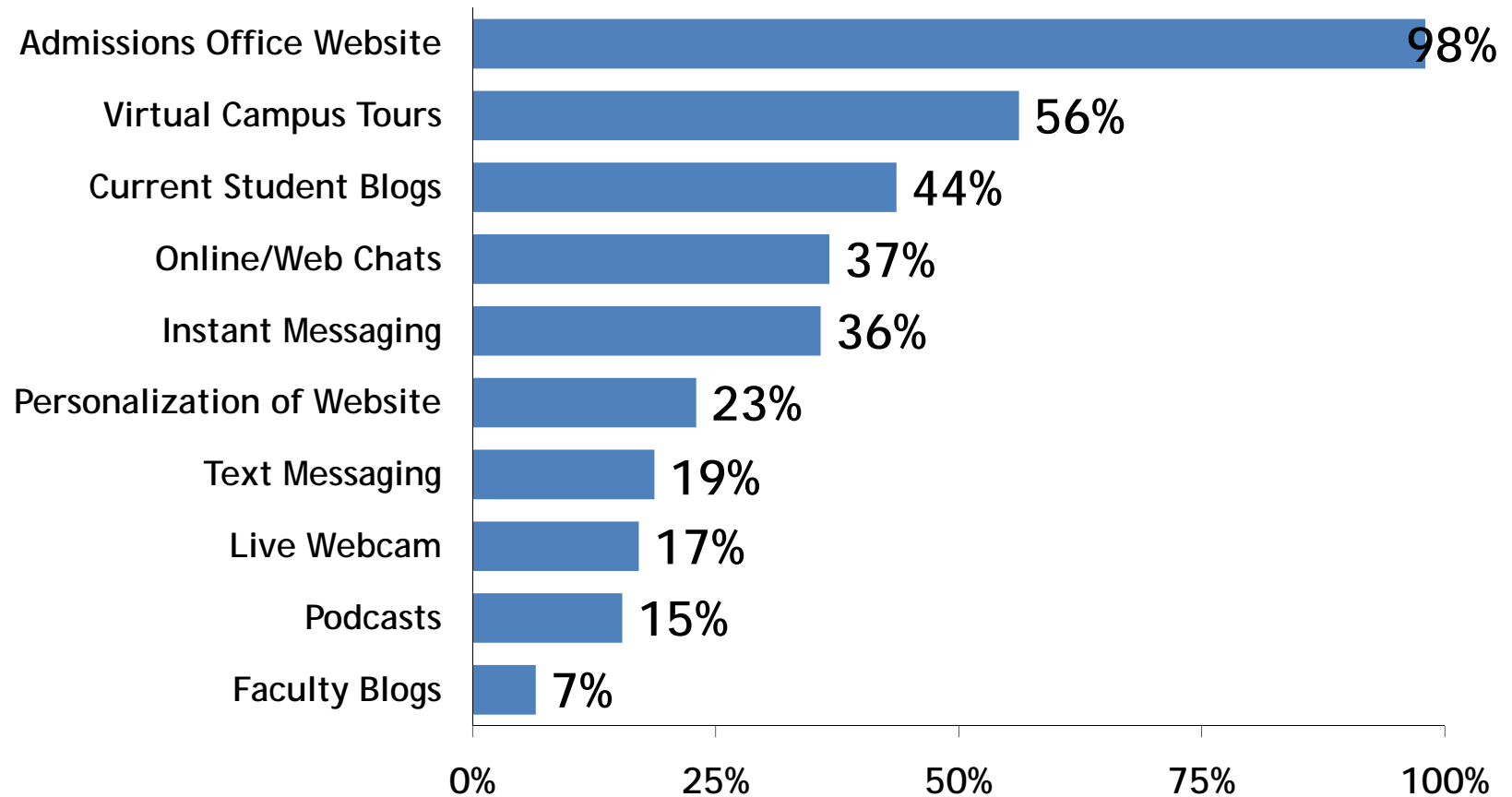
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# How Are Admissions Offices Responding to the Changing Marketplace?

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# How Widespread Are New Technologies in Admissions?

Besides Websites and other traditional tools, virtual campus tours and student blogs are the most commonly used new technologies.



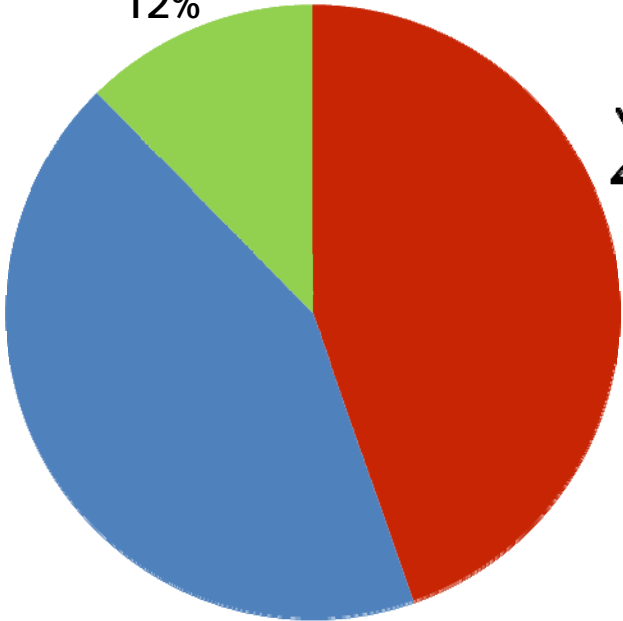
Q: Which of the following electronic/web-based tools does your office actively employ in undergraduate recruitment and communications? (Please select all that apply.)

# How Common are Selected Marketing Plans?

For Expected Changes in Prospect Demographics

No; and there is no plan in development

12%

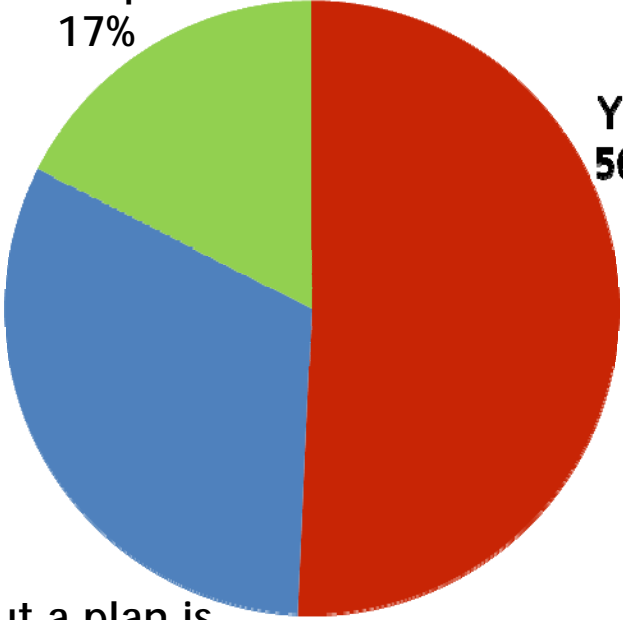


No; but a plan is in development  
43%

For Parents of Prospective Students

No; and there is no plan in development

17%



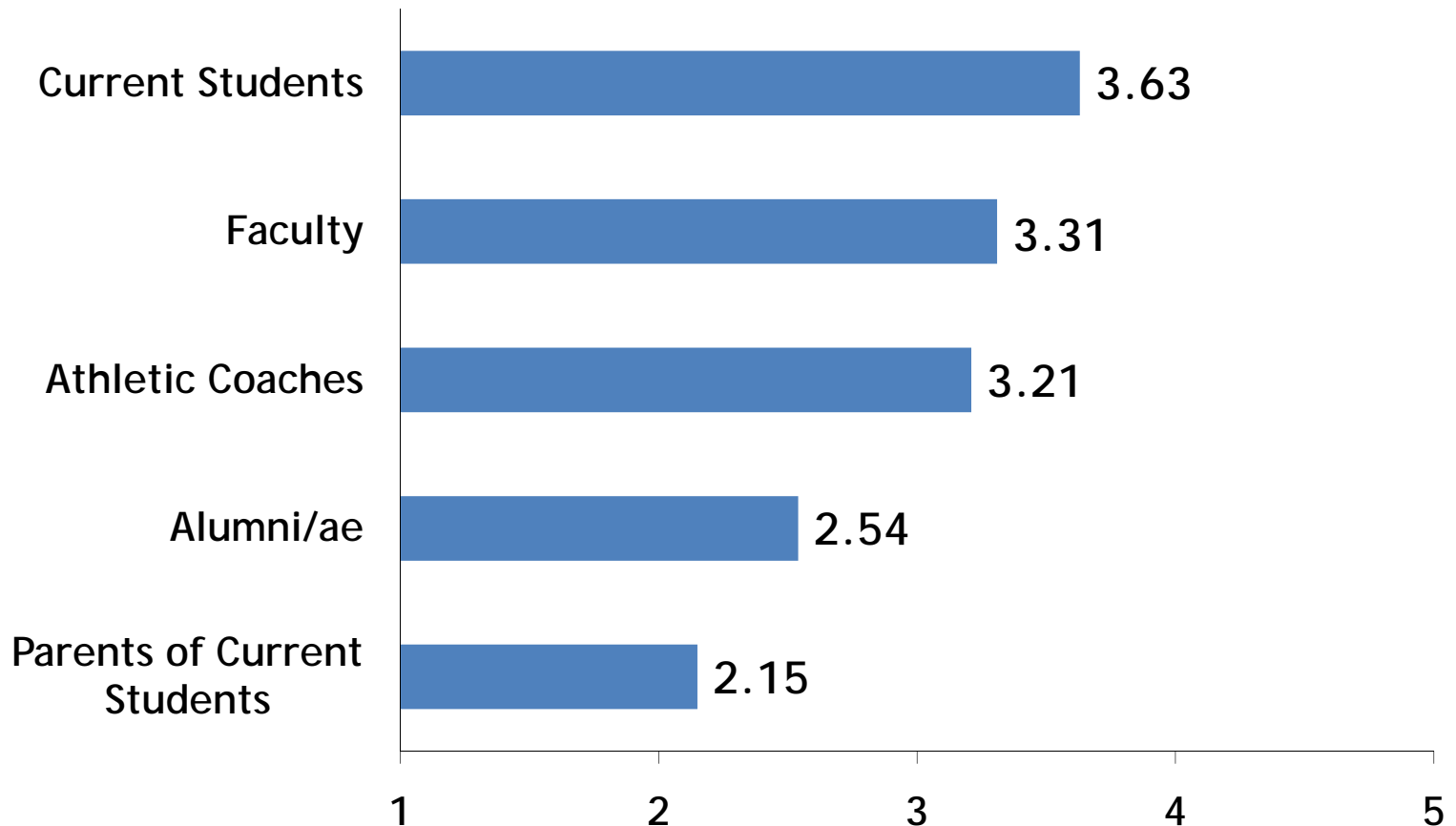
No; but a plan is in development  
32%

Q: Does your office have a plan for addressing expected changes in prospective student demographics over the next decade? Q: Does your office have an organized plan for marketing to parents of prospective undergraduates?



# How Engaged Are Constituents in Recruitment?

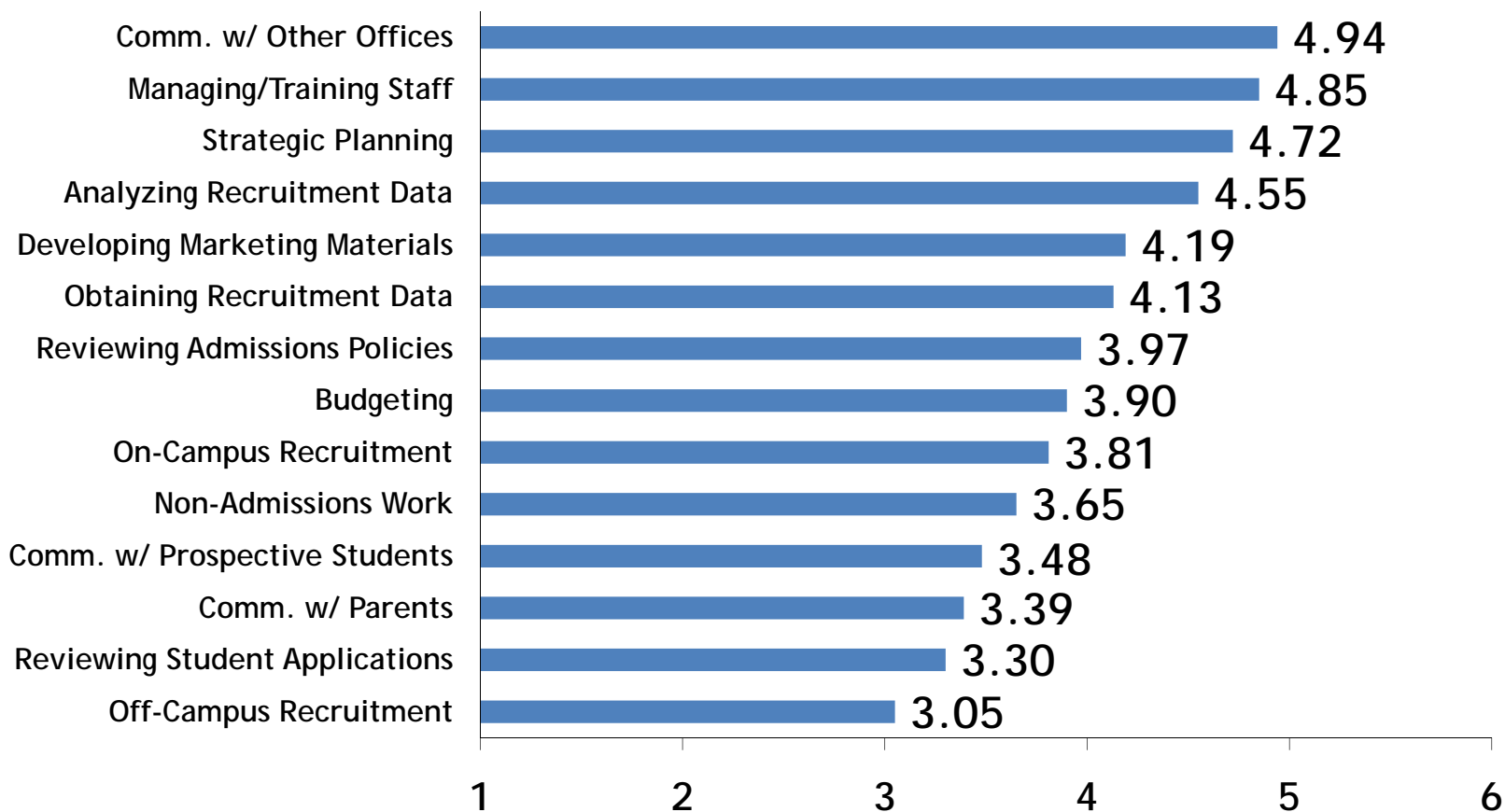
Aside from current students, most key constituencies are only leveraged moderately or slightly in recruitment.



Q: To what extent does your office engage the following constituent groups in undergraduate recruitment?  
Scale: 1 (Not at All) to 5 (Very Much).

# How Do SEOs Spend Their Work Time?

SEOs spend much of their time communicating with other offices, managing staff, planning strategy, and analyzing recruitment data.



Q: How much of your work time is devoted to the following activities? Scale: 1 (None) to 6 (Very High Amount).

# Panelist Discussion Questions

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- ❖ What recruitment technologies are on the horizon?
- ❖ Besides parents and changing demographics, what key audiences/issues should admissions offices be addressing?
- ❖ Why aren't alumni leveraged more frequently in student recruitment?
- ❖ Based on the work time data, does it appear that SEOs have their priorities in order? Are they spending too much/too little time on particular activities?



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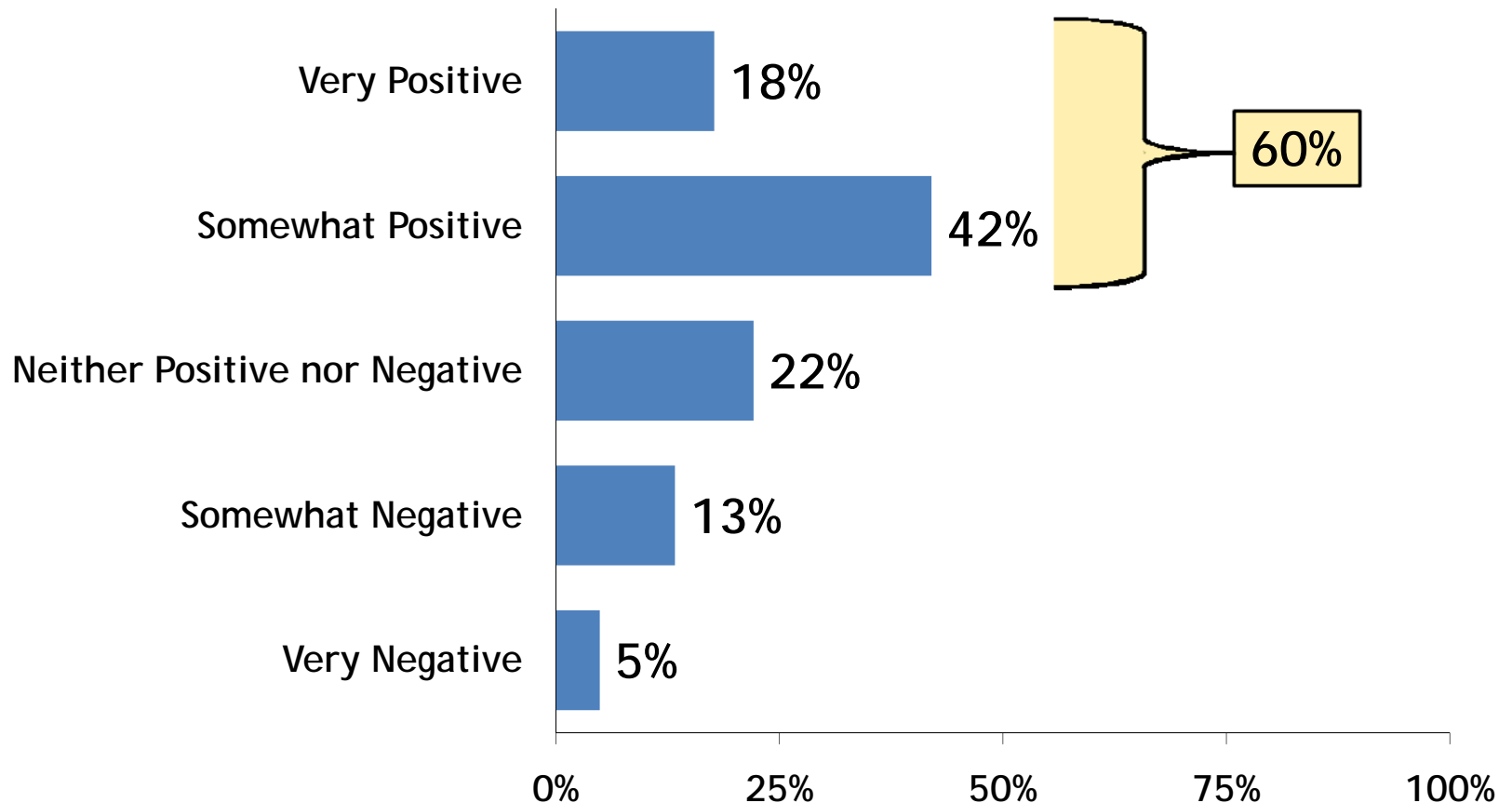
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# What is the Consensus Among Senior Enrollment Officials on Key Admissions Issues?

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# Attitudes Toward Shaping Classes with Merit Aid

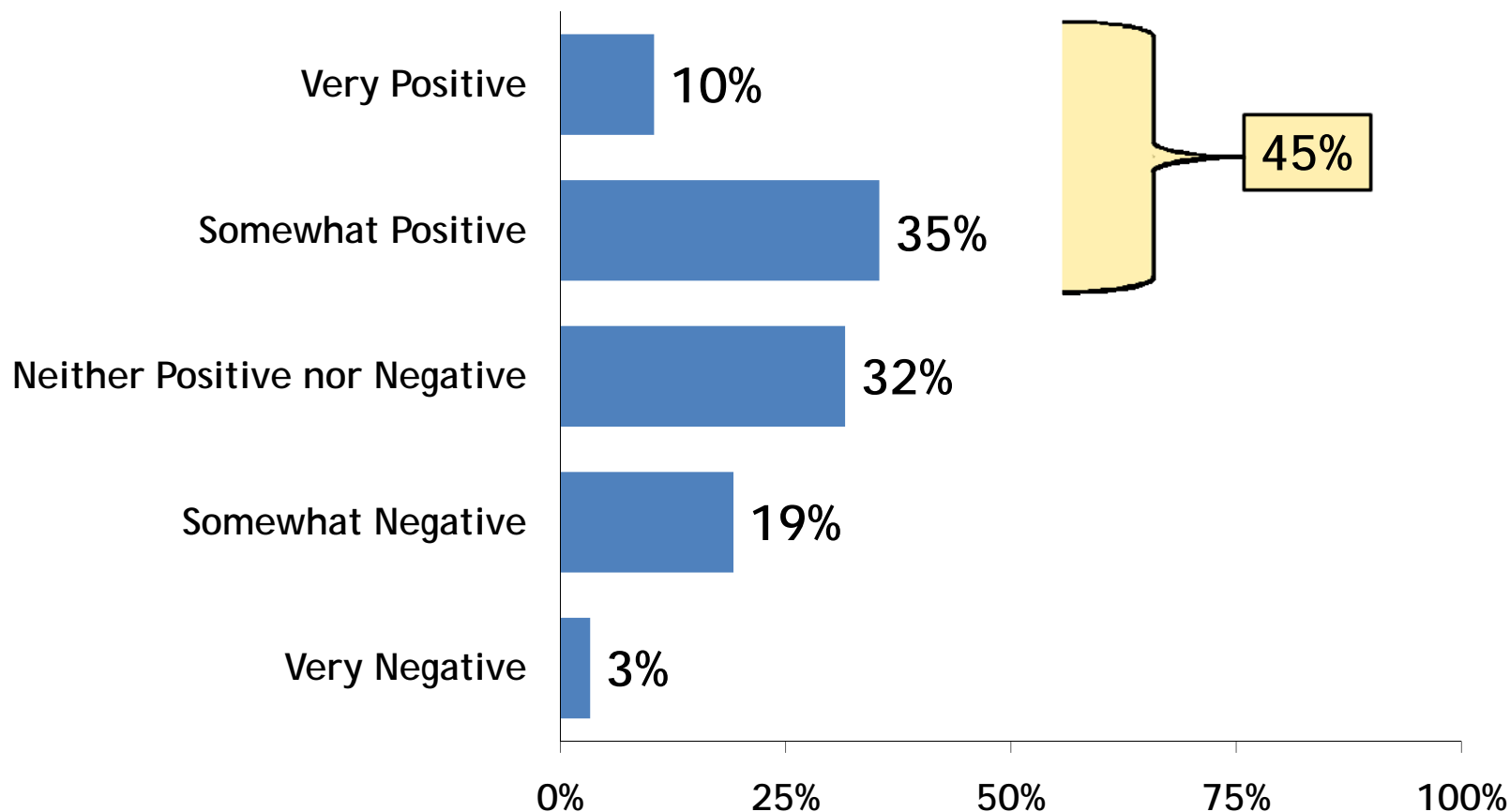
Most SEOs have positive opinions about using merit aid to shape classes.



Q: How positively or negatively do you feel about the use of merit aid to shape incoming undergraduate classes?  
Scale: 1 (Very Negative) to 5 (Very Positive).

# Attitudes Toward the Use of Standardized Tests

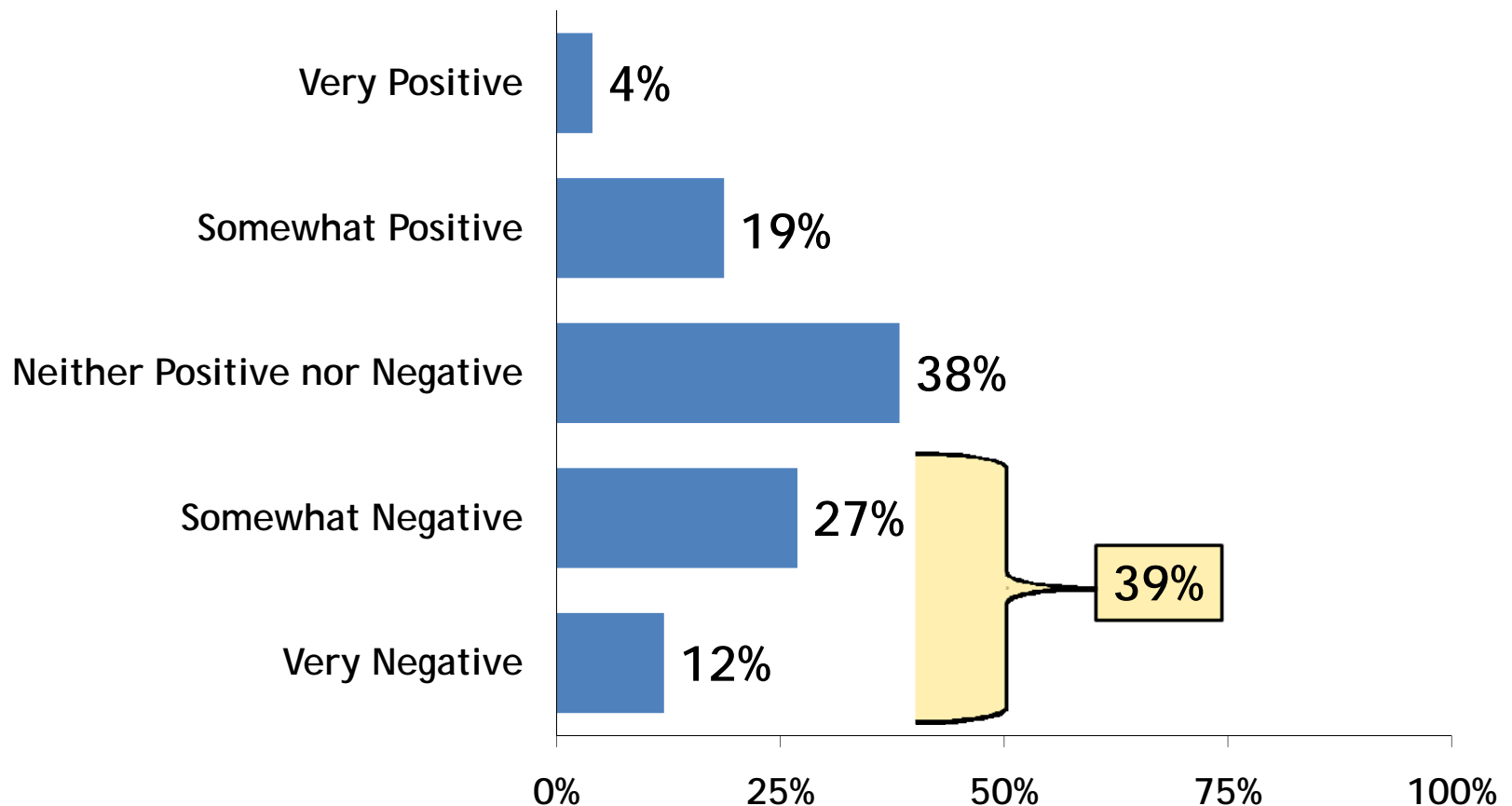
Although the vast majority of participants (88%) work at schools that require standardized test scores, less than half hold positive opinions about them.



Q: How positively or negatively do you feel about the use of standardized test scores (e.g., SAT, ACT) undergraduate admissions? Scale: 1 (Very Negative) to 5 (Very Positive).

# Attitudes Toward Early Application/Admission

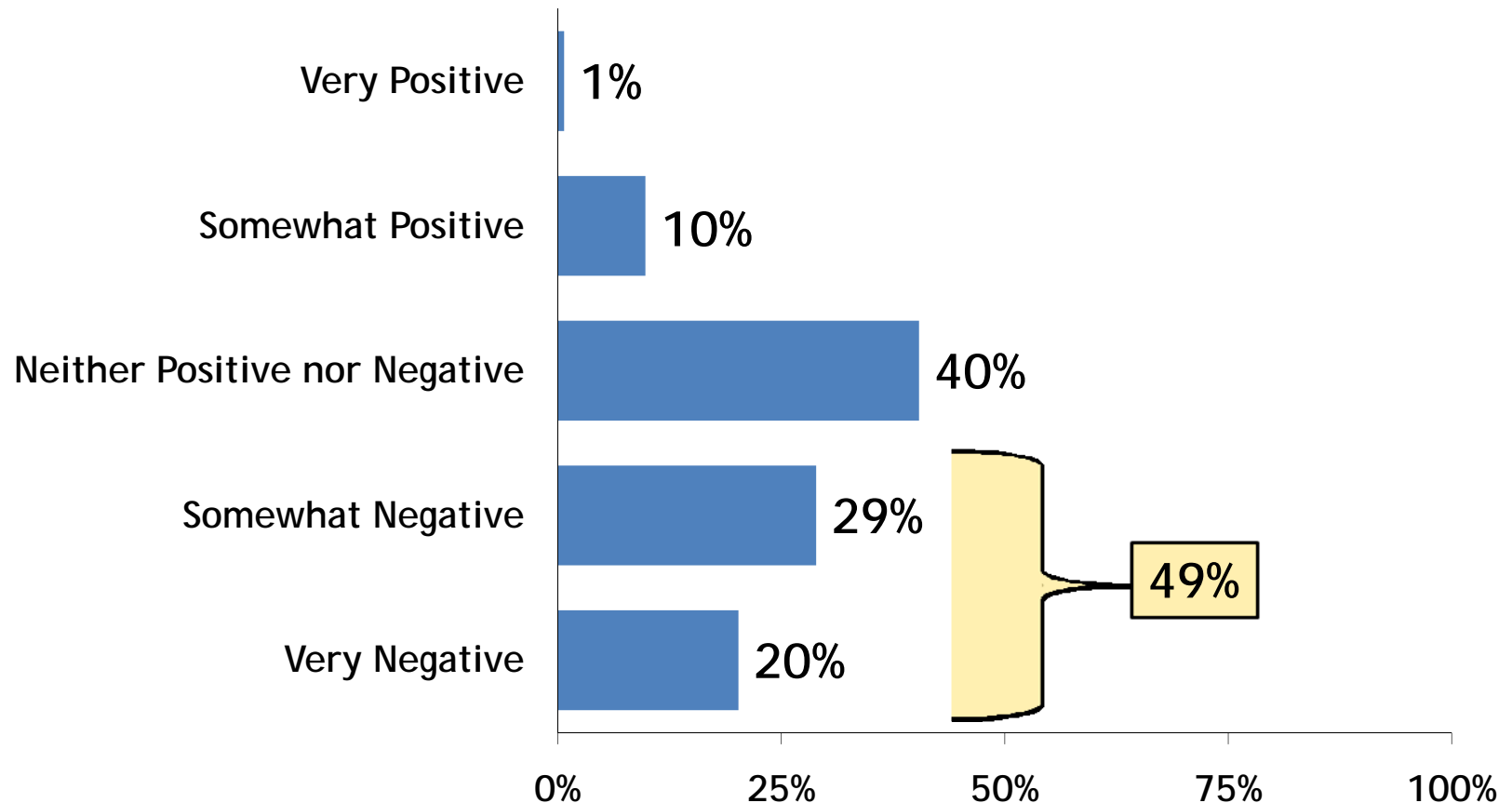
Attitudes toward early application/admission programs are quite mixed; however, somewhat more SEOs dislike than like them.



Q: How positively or negatively do you feel about the use of early application/admission programs in undergraduate admissions? Scale: 1 (Very Negative) to 5 (Very Positive).

# Attitudes Toward College Rankings

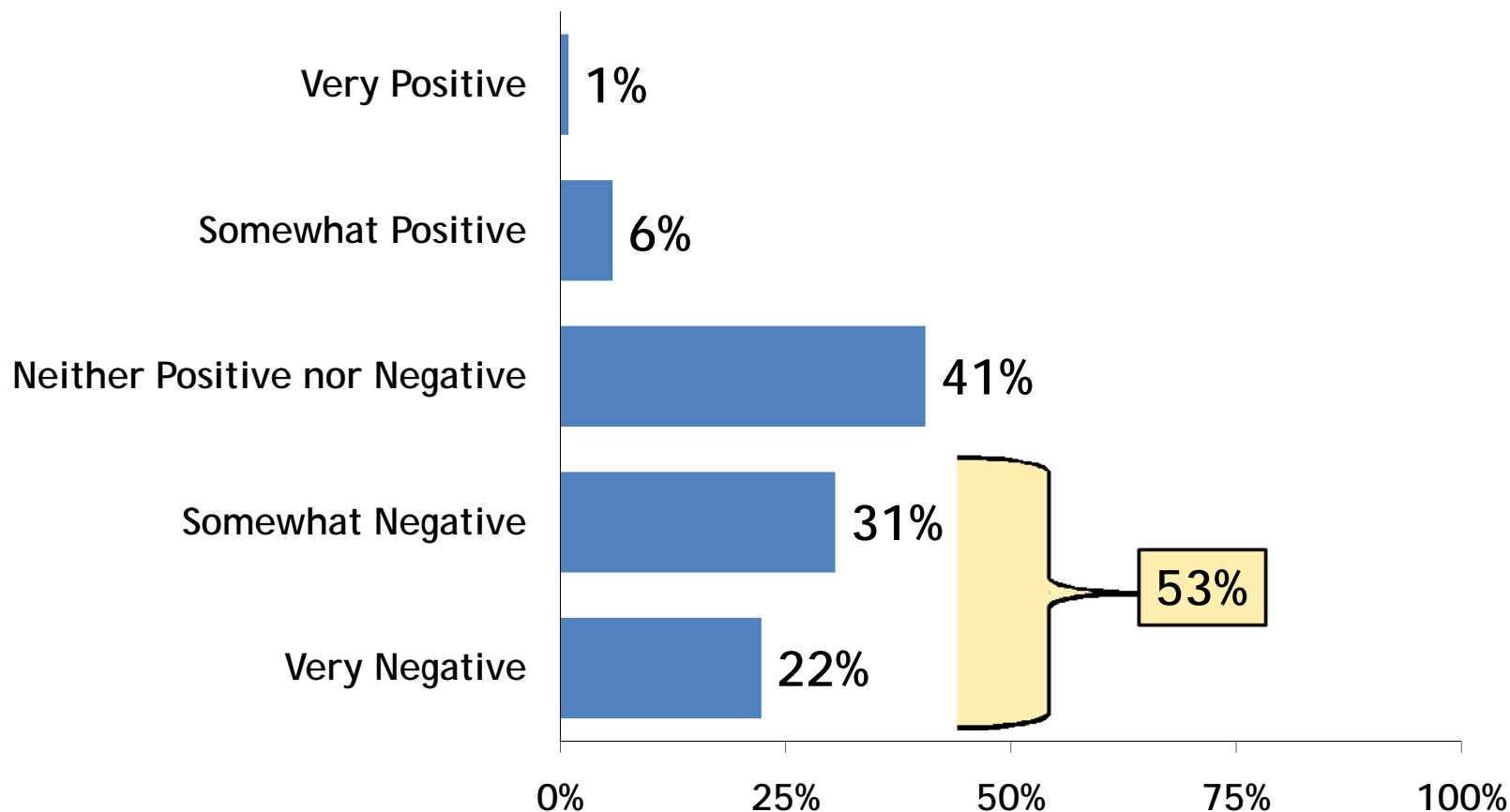
Very few SEOs hold positive opinions about college rankings, and about half dislike them.



Q: How positively or negatively do you feel about the impact that college rankings have had on the undergraduate admissions practices at your school? Scale: 1 (Very Negative) to 5 (Very Positive).

# Attitudes Toward Consultant Use by Prospects

Although many SEOs are neutral toward the use of private admission consultants by prospective students and parents, the majority hold negative opinions about their use.



Q: How positively or negatively do you feel about the use of private admissions consultants by prospective students and parents? Scale: 1 (Very Negative) to 5 (Very Positive).

# What Are the Most Important Problems Facing Admissions?

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Open-Ended Response Theme (Top Mentions)	Percent
Tuition Cost & Financial Aid	33.8%
Student Demographics & Preparation	18.3%
Keeping Up with Competition & Market Trends	13.2%
Accessibility	8.6%

# Panelist Discussion Questions

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- ❖ Do you think the use of merit aid to shape incoming classes has become an “accepted practice” in the industry?
- ❖ Why is there such a large gap between the proportion of SEOs who support standardized tests and the proportion of schools which require them? Will this gap shrink in the foreseeable future?
- ❖ Given the negativity of SEOs toward college rankings, what are some better alternatives?
- ❖ Do you think use of consultants by students will grow substantially in the next decade? If so, how might that affect admissions practices/policies?



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