



**KEYSTONE**  
ACADEMIC SOLUTIONS

# State of Student Recruitment USA

**2021 REPORT**



## STATE OF STUDENT RECRUITMENT USA

# HELLO!

In 2020, the inaugural State of Student Recruitment Report was a great success, well-received by thousands across our global network of higher education administrators, educators, and industry professionals. As a result, we decided to take this initiative one step further in 2021 with a new set of regional reports, starting with the State of Student Recruitment USA.

In this report, we share key insights from our global survey of almost 6000 students interested in studying in the United States, representing over 180 countries. Respondents shared their motivations for learning in the US, study preferences, and insights into their behaviors and methods when researching and seeking out potential institutions and programs.

Based on the data, it is clear that interest in the US as a study destination remains strong, with potential students ready to commence their studies sooner rather than later. After more than a year of a global pandemic, this data presents a clear opportunity for institutions in the US to bolster their recruitment for 2021 and beyond. Let's get started!

KEYSTONE ACADEMIC SOLUTIONS

To learn more, visit [www.keystoneacademic.com](http://www.keystoneacademic.com)





# Student Demographics

OVER 5,000 PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS SURVEYED

5851 RESPONDENTS FROM 180+ COUNTRIES



## TOP NATIONALITIES, BY RESPONDENTS

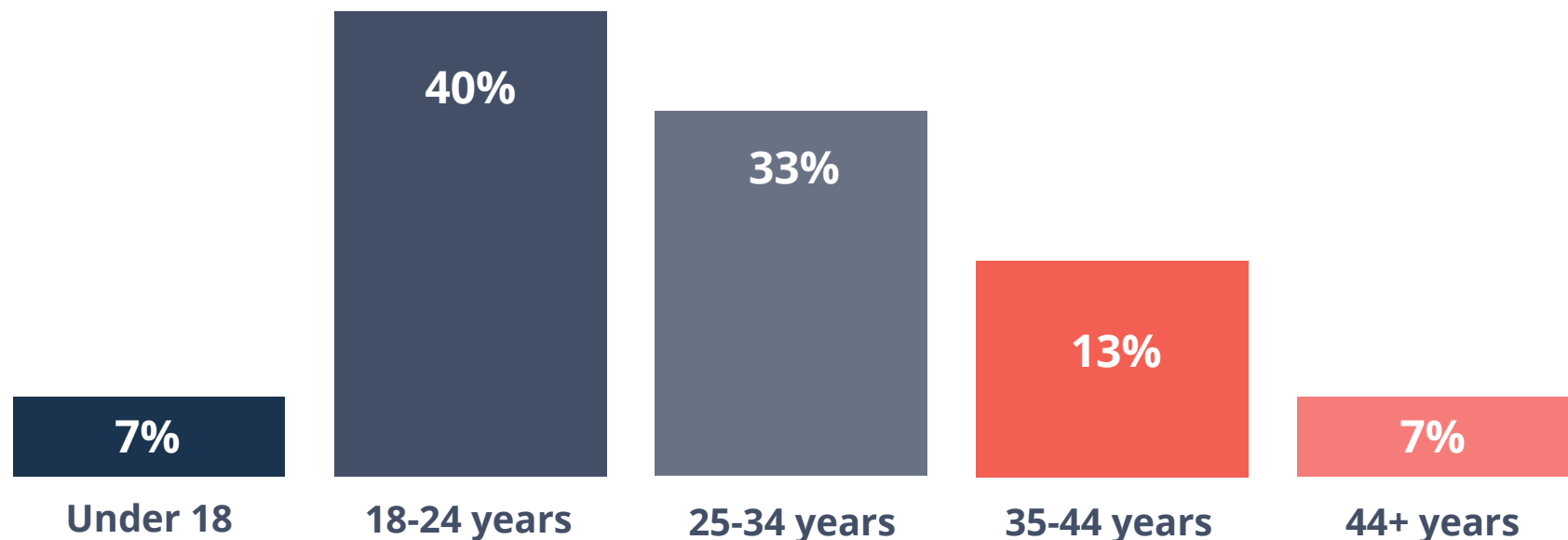
- |                |           |
|----------------|-----------|
| ✓ India        | ✓ Nigeria |
| ✓ South Africa | ✓ Spain   |
| ✓ Brazil       | ✓ Italy   |
| ✓ Pakistan     | ✓ UK      |
| ✓ Phillippines | ✓ France  |

5851

TOTAL RESPONDENTS



## AGE OF RESPONDENTS



## BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

The data shared in this report is based on a global survey of 5851 student visitors using Keystone websites. All survey data was collected between March and April 2021. Insights shared within this report are prepared for illustrative purposes only and are not intended for use as scientific evidence of causation or behavior. In segments of the report, data points do not add up to 100% when the selection of multiple options was made available.

# Student Preferences

MOST POPULAR US DESTINATIONS

## TOP SIX US STATES

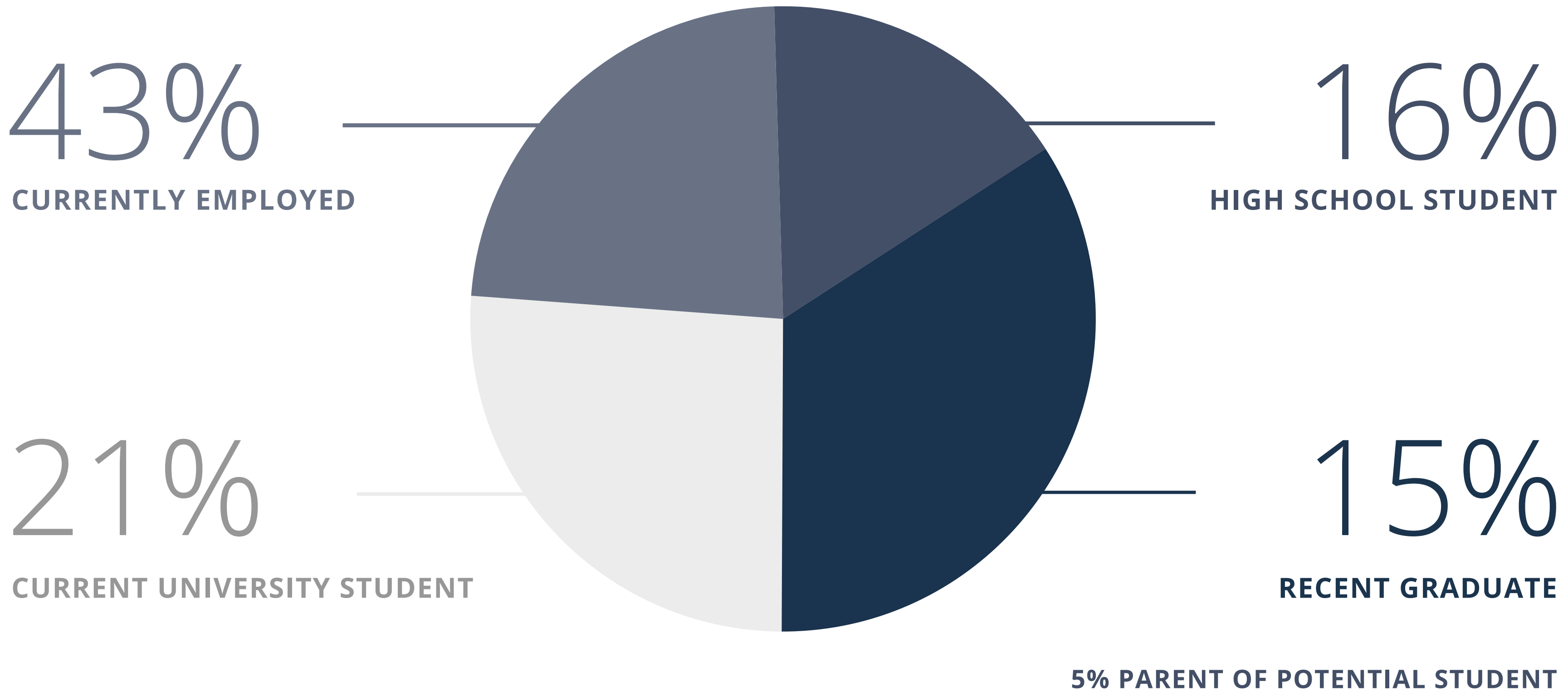
- #1** California (36%)
- #2** New York (35%)
- #3** Florida (22%)
- #4** Washington (20%)
- #5** Texas (16%)
- #6** New Jersey (13%)



# 35%

**of students said they  
didn't know which US  
state they were  
interested in.**

WHAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR CURRENT STATUS?



## COMMUNICATING WITH POTENTIAL STUDENTS & THEIR FAMILIES

**5%**  
of respondents were  
**parents** of potential  
students.



*Note: Respondents identifying as "parents" were removed from the final data set analyzed.*

# Student Preferences

OVER 5,000 PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS SURVEYED

## WHAT TYPE OF STUDY MODE ARE YOU MOST INTERESTED IN?

**#1 Campus-Based (66%)**

**#2 Flexible/Hybrid\* (37%)**

**#3 Fully Online or Distance (21%)**

*(\*Online & Campus combined)*

## WHAT TYPE OF PROGRAM ARE YOU MOST INTERESTED IN?

Foundation or pathway program

1%

Executive degree

1.5%

Associate degree

1.5%

Other

2%

Certificate or diploma

12%

Doctoral degree

13%

Bachelor's Degree

21%

Masters Degree

48%

# 37%

**of potential students said they were interested in flexible or hybrid learning.**





WE ASKED STUDENTS

# Research & Discovery

HOW DID YOU FIRST DISCOVER YOUR PREFERRED INSTITUTION?

47%

ONLINE SEARCH (GOOGLE,  
BAIDU ETC)

16%

STUDENT SEARCH PLATFORMS  
(MASTERSTUDIES.COM ETC)

14%

ONLINE ADVERTISING  
(BANNERS ETC)

13%

SOCIAL MEDIA

12%

UNIVERSITY RANKINGS (TIMES  
HIGHER ED, FT ETC)

10%

GROUPS & DIGITAL  
COMMUNITIES (FACEBOOK,  
QUORA)

8%

WORD OF MOUTH

7%

EMAIL MARKETING

*\*OTHER (9%)*



**92%**  
**OF STUDENTS SURVEYED  
DISCOVERED THEIR  
PREFERRED INSTITUTION  
ONLINE.**

Based on the percentage of total respondents who discovered their preferred institution/program via an online method.

WE ASKED STUDENTS

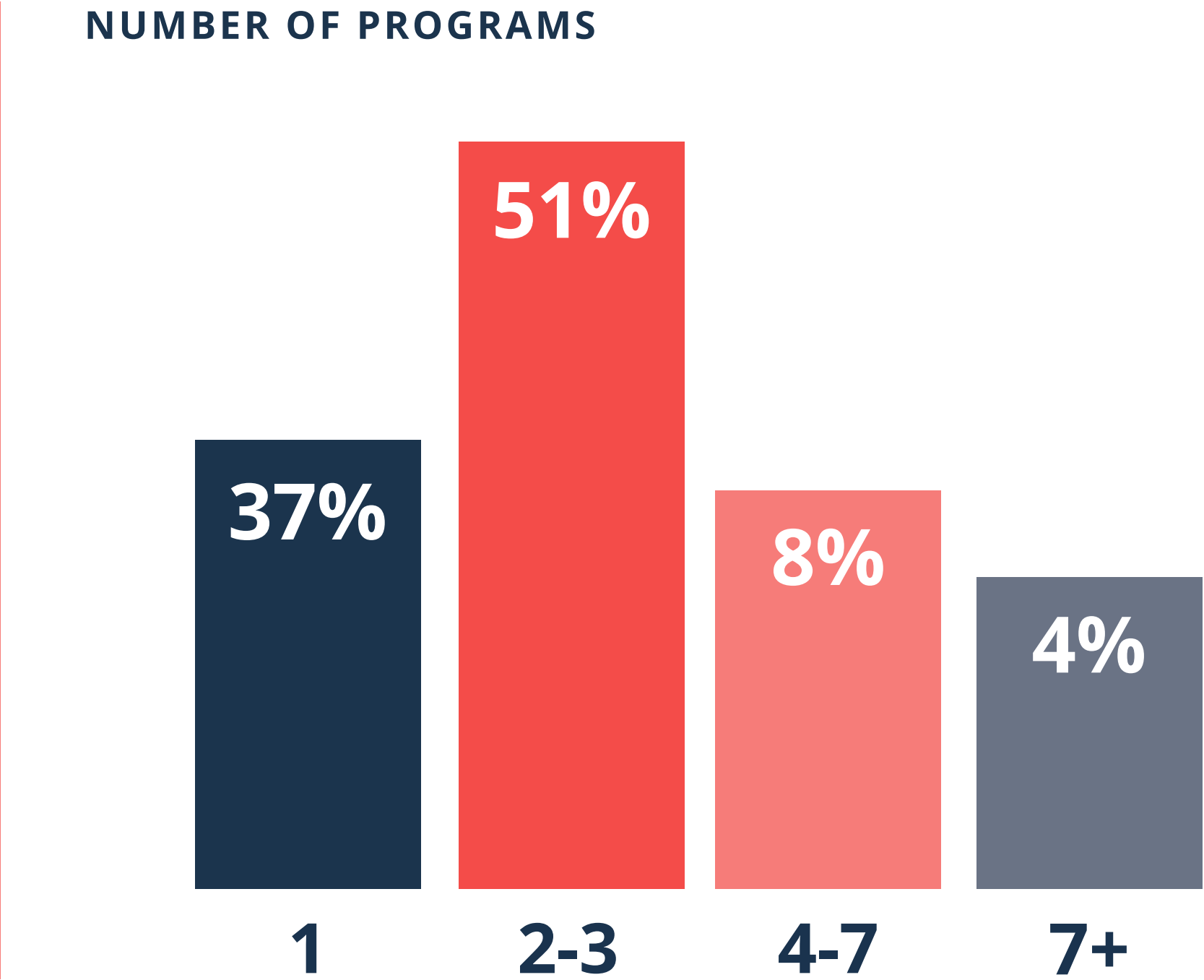
# How many programs or degrees will you apply to?

TOP DESIRED DISCIPLINES

Business, Management & Economics	36%
STEM*	33%
Social Sciences & Humanities	25%
Arts & Design	16%
Healthcare	13%
Law	6%
Tourism & Hospitality	6%
Education	6%
Sports	3%
Aviation	2%
Other	7%

*\*Science, Technology Engineering and/or Mathematics*

NUMBER OF PROGRAMS



# TOP 30 DESIRED FIELDS OF STUDY

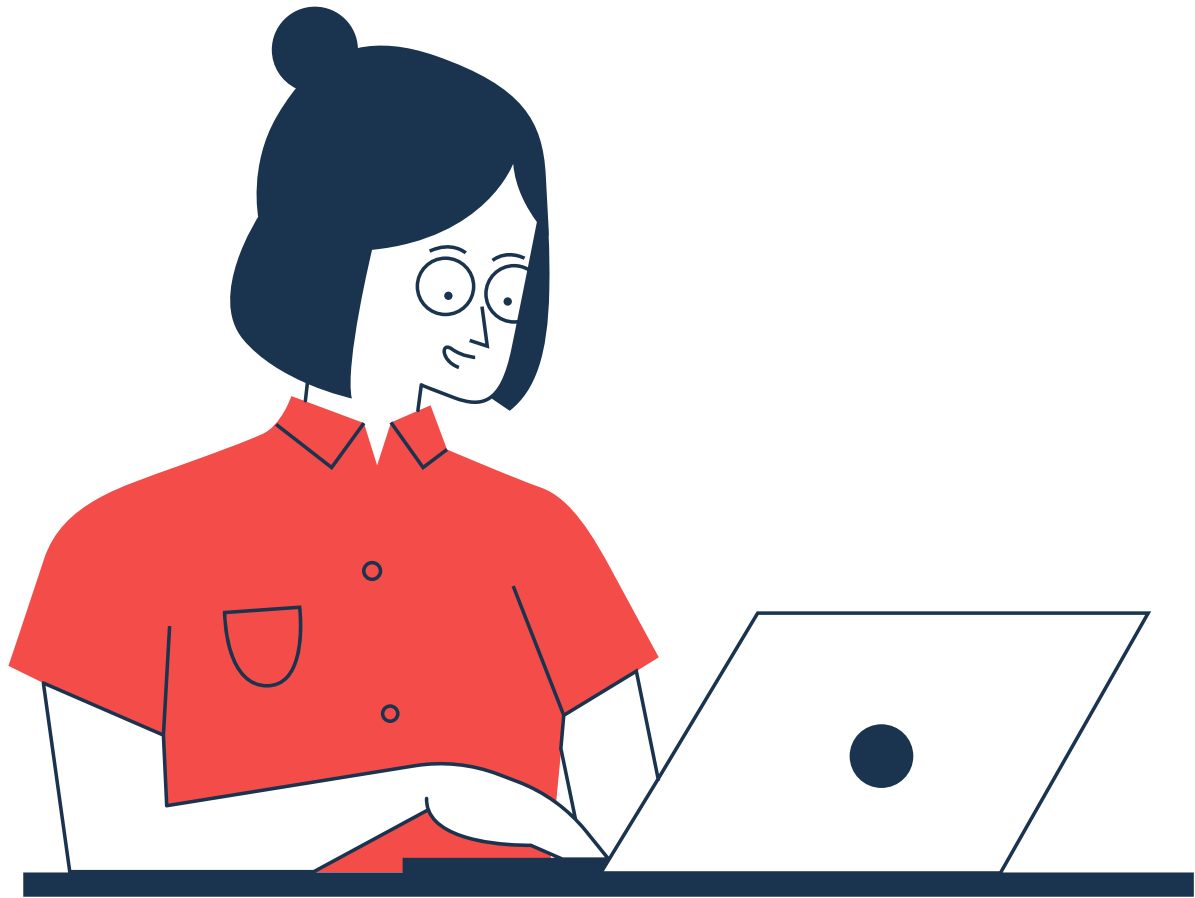
#1 Health Care Studies	13%	#16 Marketing Studies	4%
#2 Engineering studies	12%	#17 Languages	4%
#3 Business Studies	11%	#18 Environmental Studies	4%
#4 Management Studies	10%	#19 Design Studies	3%
#5 Technology Studies	9%	#20 Architecture Studies	3%
#6 Social Sciences	7%	#21 Journalism & Mass Communication	3%
#7 Administration Studies	6%	#22 Performing Arts	3%
#8 Law Studies	6%	#23 Fashion	3%
#9 Natural Sciences	6%	#24 Sport	3%
#10 Education	6%	#25 Aviation	2%
#11 Humanities	5%	#26 Food & Beverage Studies	2%
#12 Economics	5%	#27 Energy Studies	2%
#13 Art Studies	4%	#28 Sustainability Studies	2%
#14 Life Sciences	4%	#29 Construction	2%
#15 Tourism & Hospitality	4%	#30 Professional Studies	1%



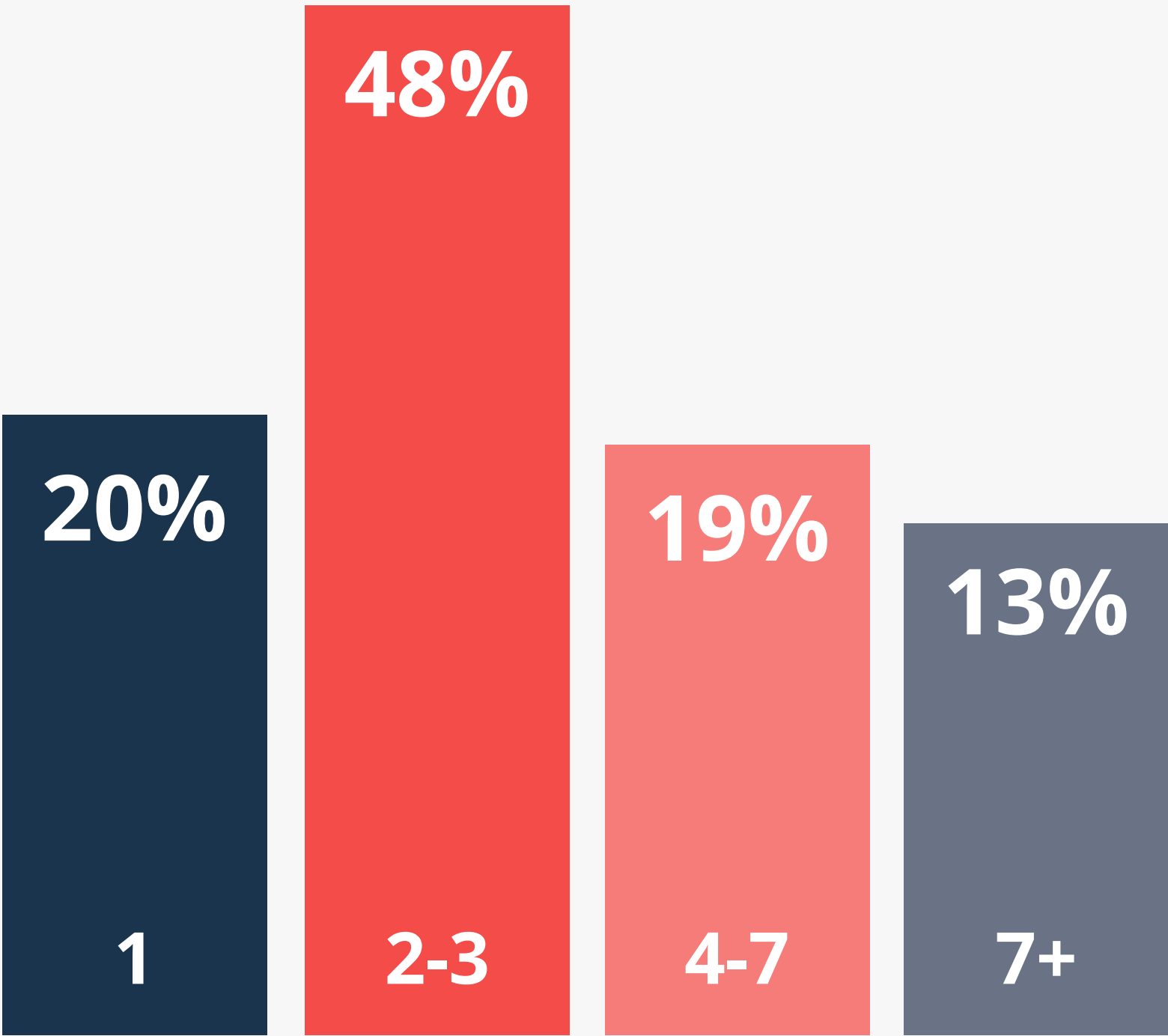


WE ASKED STUDENTS

How many institutions will you apply to?



NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS



Only 23% of potential students said the **institution chosen was more important** than the degree chosen.



# How Early Do Students Begin Their Research?



## POSITIVE OUTLOOK FOR FALL 2021

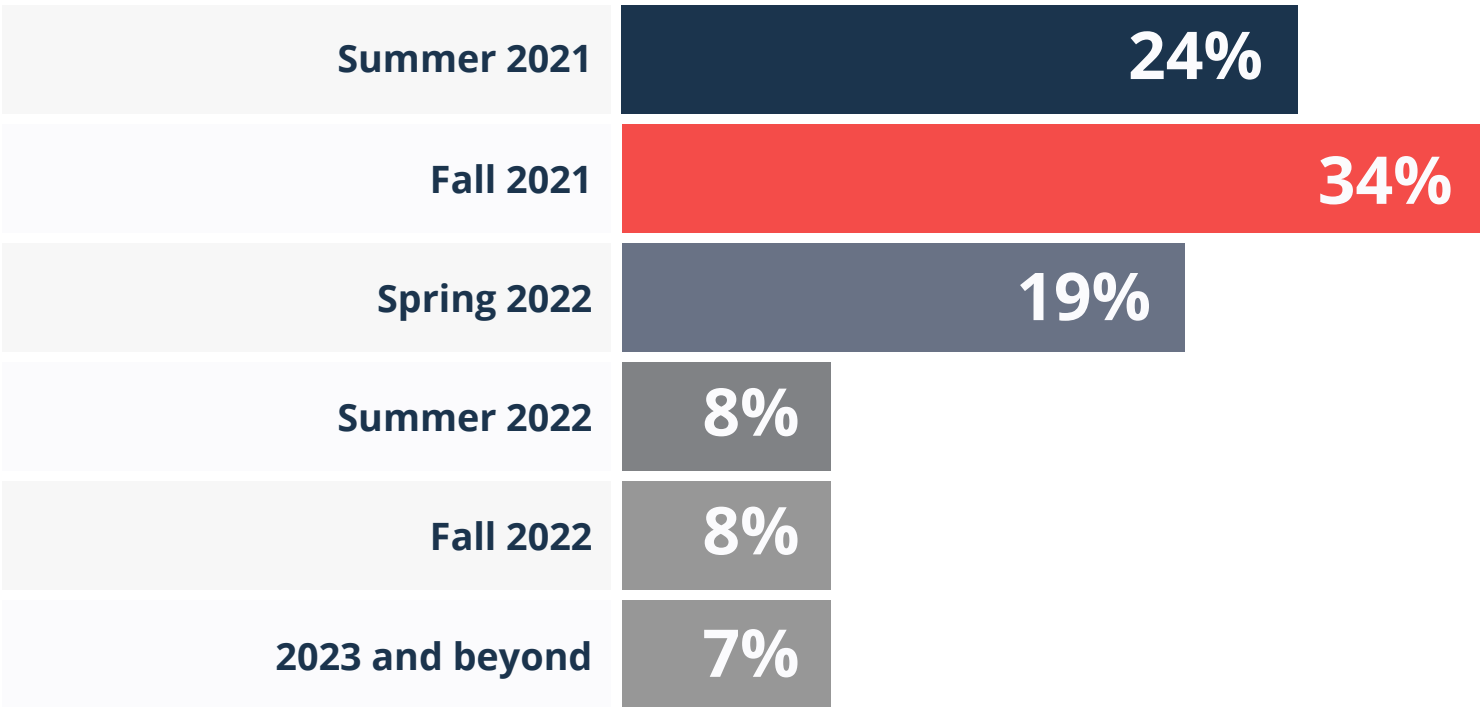
77% of students in this survey said that wanted to begin studying within the next 12 months, indicating many students currently in research mode are further along in their journey to the classroom, ready to make a decision!

**In some cases (34%), many of the potential students surveyed want to start as early as Fall 2021.**

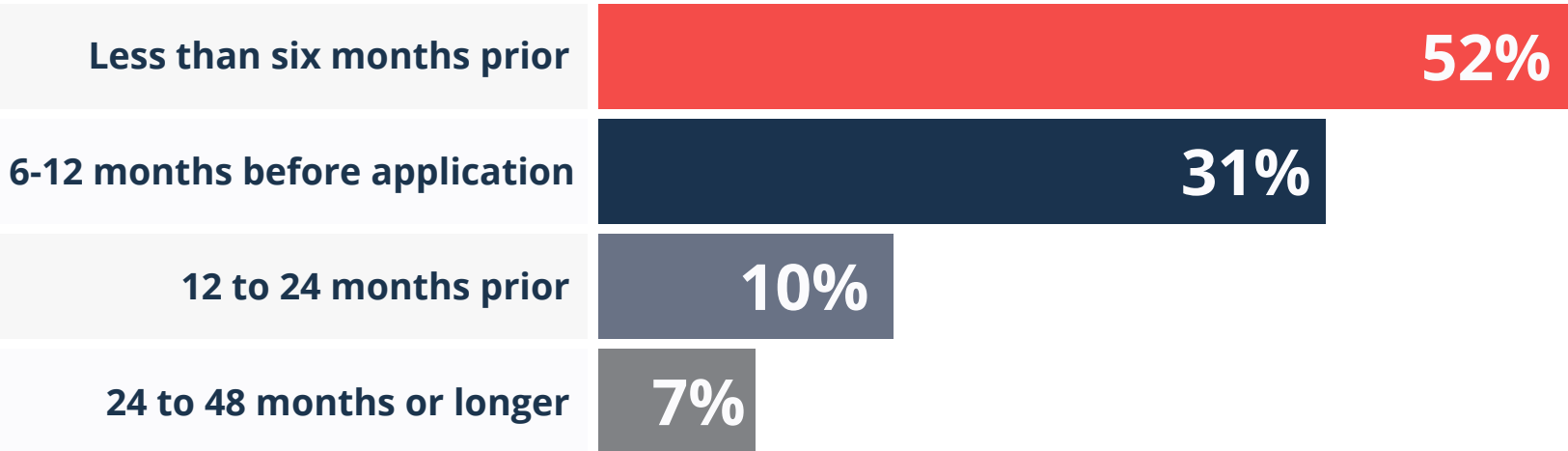
For those working in student recruitment, this indicates there is still time to boost your intake for 2021 and a reminder of the importance of closely following up with your student leads to ensure the best possible results for your institution.

## WE ASKED STUDENTS

### WHEN DO YOU PLAN TO BEGIN STUDYING?



### HOW EARLY DID YOU BEGIN RESEARCHING STUDY OPTIONS?





# 77%

**OF STUDENTS SURVEYED  
WANTED TO ENROLL  
WITHIN 12 MONTHS.**

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***34% WANT TO START FALL 2021***



# Keystone Recruit

Let our recruitment experts help you find the best candidates!

## MAXIMIZE YOUR ENROLLMENT POTENTIAL

- Our team will call, email, and message your student leads
- Cost-effective way to ensure leads are qualified and nurtured
- Increased level of student engagement
- Maximize enrollment potential
- Save time and resources
- Two options depending on your needs: Standard or **Pro**

## GET COMPLETED APPLICATIONS WITH **RECRUIT PRO**

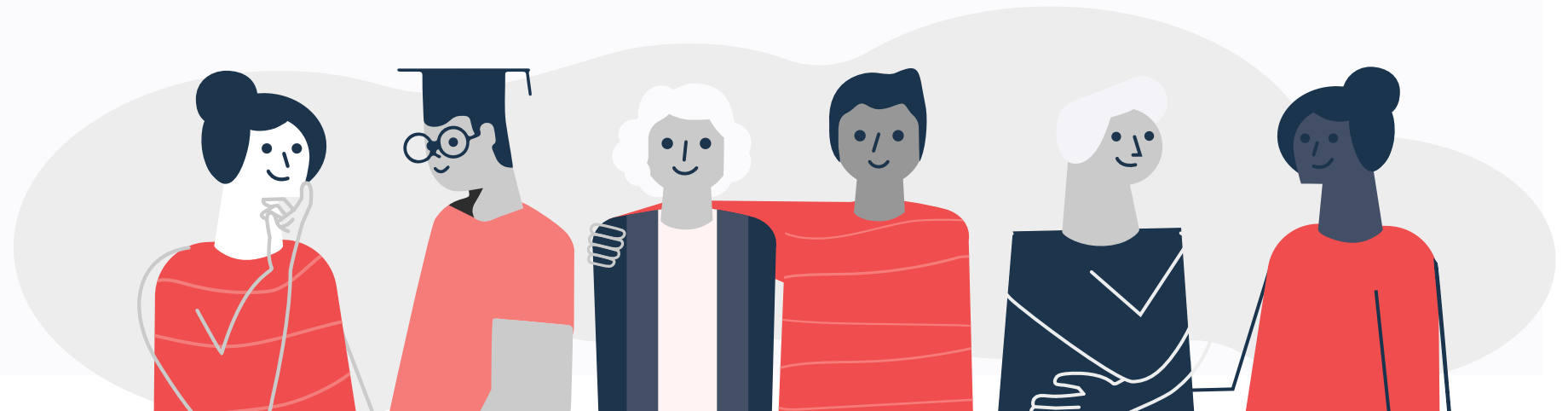
Our team of student recruitment specialists will advise students on application procedures and guide them through all required processes, providing your team with completed applications.

Visit [keystoneacademic.com/recruit](https://keystoneacademic.com/recruit) to book a demo today.

# 70

applications generated using **Recruit Pro** in under one month.

*Source: German University, April 2021*



# 63%

**said the pandemic had  
delayed their plans for  
higher education**



State of Student Recruitment Report 2021

# Student Communication

## NEVER LOSE SIGHT OF CORE COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS

While many recruiters frequently experiment with new channels and platforms to reach potential students, ensuring mastery of core communications channels and lead nurturing activities should never be overlooked.

Email is still an important communications channel for potential students interacting with institutions, and a strong email strategy should be in place to capture and retain the interest of potential students. How effective is your lead nurturing strategy?

# 72%

of potential students prefer to be contacted by email when hearing from a prospective institution.

Source: State of Student Recruitment 2020 (Global Report)



## TOP EIGHT CONTENT PREFERENCES

**# 1 Scholarship & funding (44%)**

**#2 Deadlines & application info (15%)**

**#3 Visas & immigration (14%)**

**#4 Cost of living & practical info (11%)**

**#5 General tips & advice (5%)**

**#6 Events & campus tours (4%)**

**#7 Location, culture & lifestyle info (3%)**

**#8 Stories from current students  
& alumni (3%)**

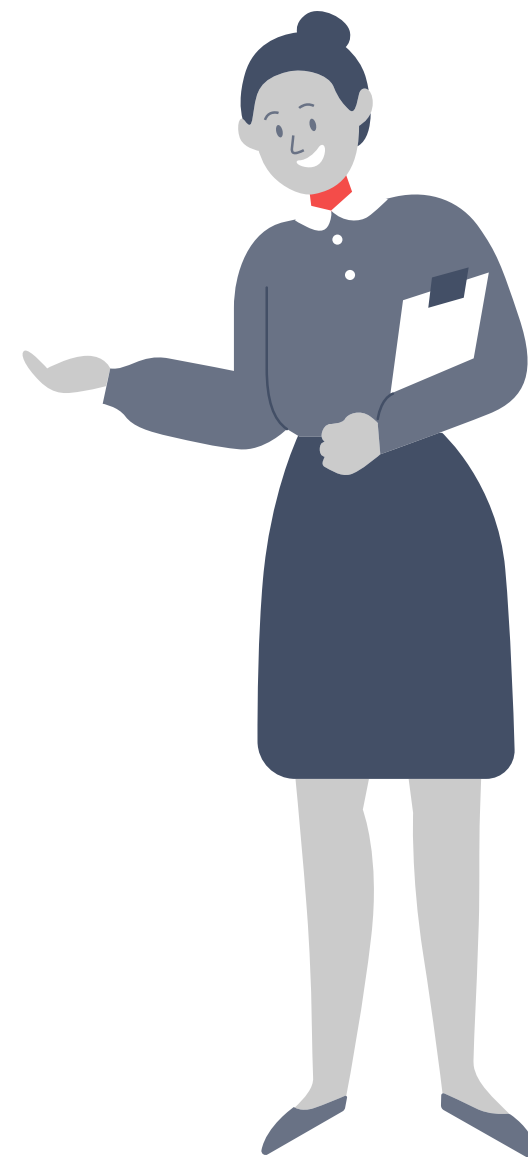
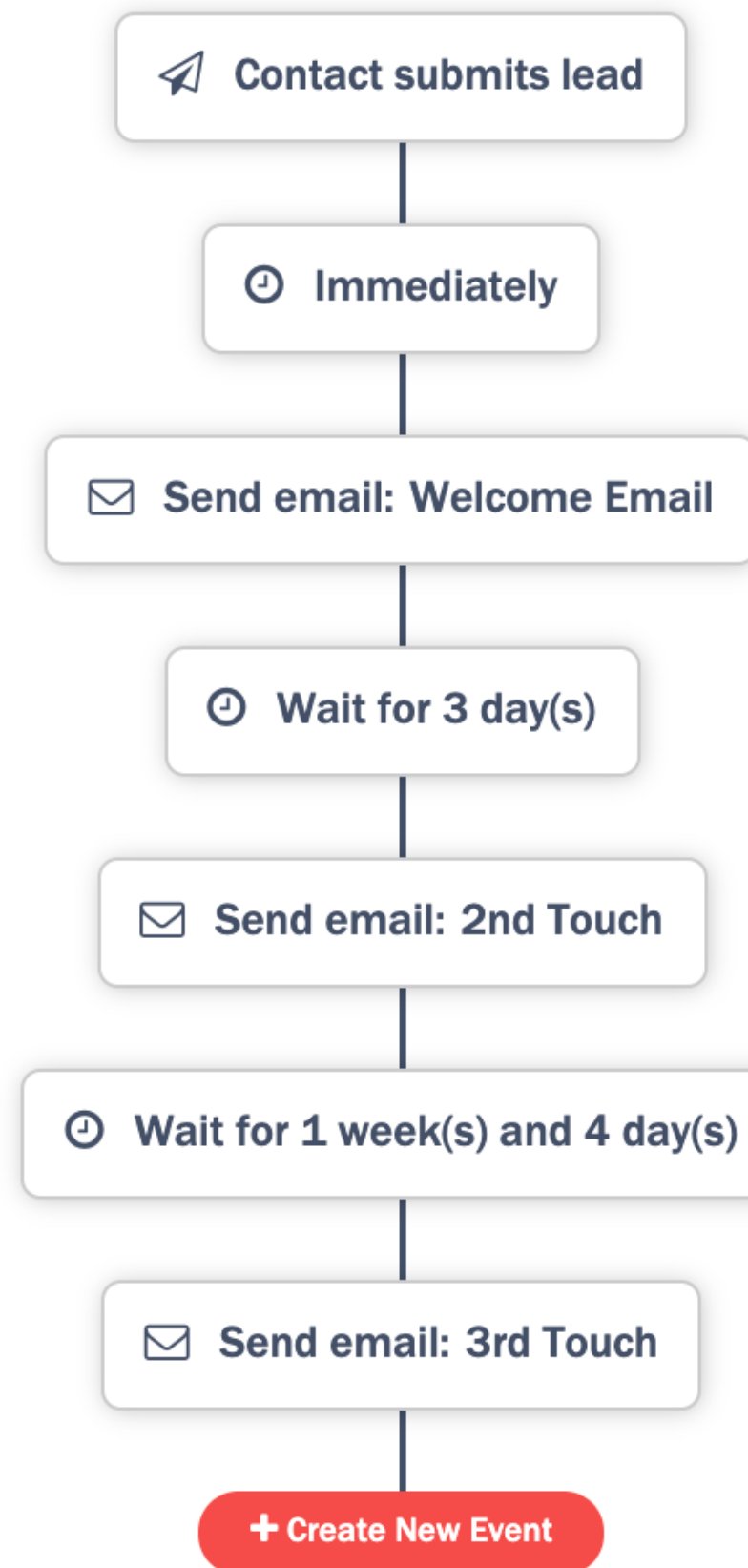
**\*Other 1%**

# Introducing Workflows

We've created a brand new solution to help make your email nurturing even better! With Workflows, you can:

- Create email templates with our easy-to-use builder.
- Use time-based workflows to send emails to students automatically at any time you wish!
- Nurture students through all stages, from initial interest to application.

**To learn more, ask us about SmartHub Pro!**



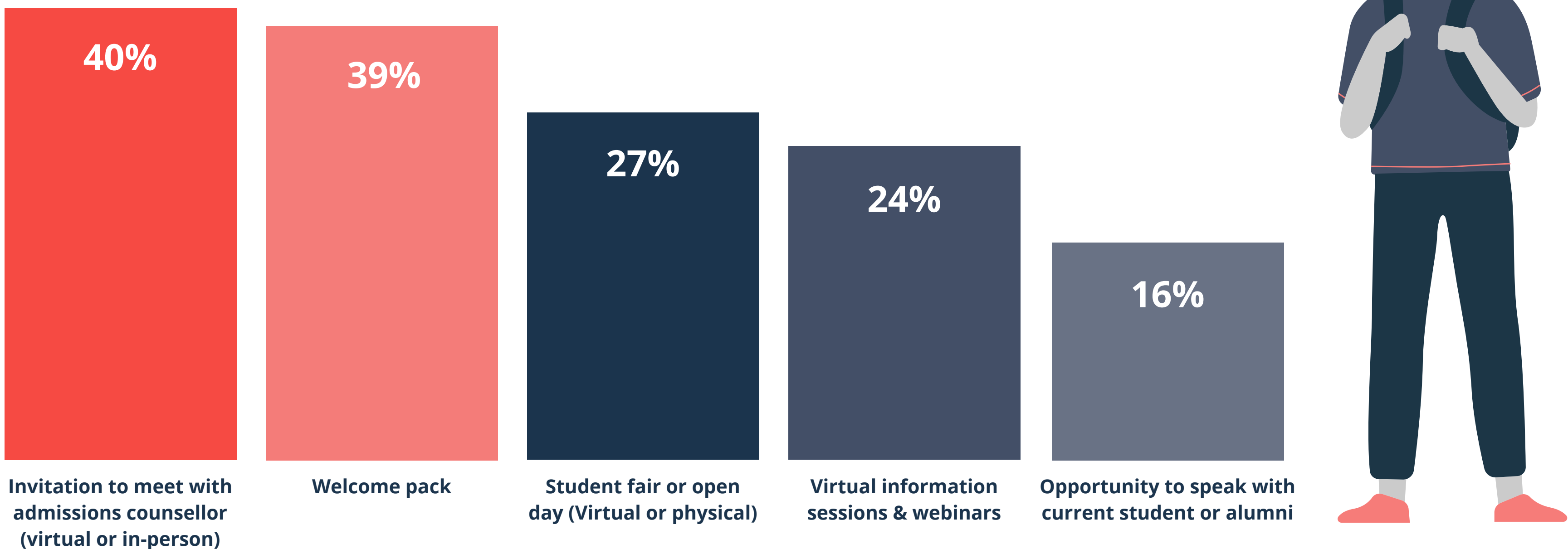


## WHAT STUDENTS SAY



**40%**  
of respondents  
wanted to receive  
an invitation to meet\*  
with an admissions  
counselor.  
(\*in-person or virtual)

# What would you be most interested in receiving from your preferred university?



# Why Study in the US?

## MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS



## TOP FIVE MOTIVATIONS FOR STUDYING IN THE US

- #1** Ability to live & work in US after graduation (38%)
- #2** Reputation of degree/institution in US (37%)
- #3** Experience of studying in the US (32%)
- #4** Career opportunities in home country after graduation (30%)
- #5** Flexibility in studies (part-time work, internships) (28%)

# University & Program Selection

## DECISION-MAKING FACTORS

### TOP #10 FACTORS WHEN SELECTING PROGRAM/INSTITUTION

- #1** Availability of funding (37%)
- #2** Ability to work & study at the same time (32%)
- #3** Internship opportunities & career development/networking (27%)
- #4** Cost of tuition (25%)
- #5** Strong employment outcomes after graduation (19%)
- #6** Reputation/ranking of institution (16%)
- #7** Research & expertise available at the institution (12%)
- #8** Location of campus (5%)
- #9** Accelerated study mode available (4%)
- #10** Strong sports/athletics program (3%)



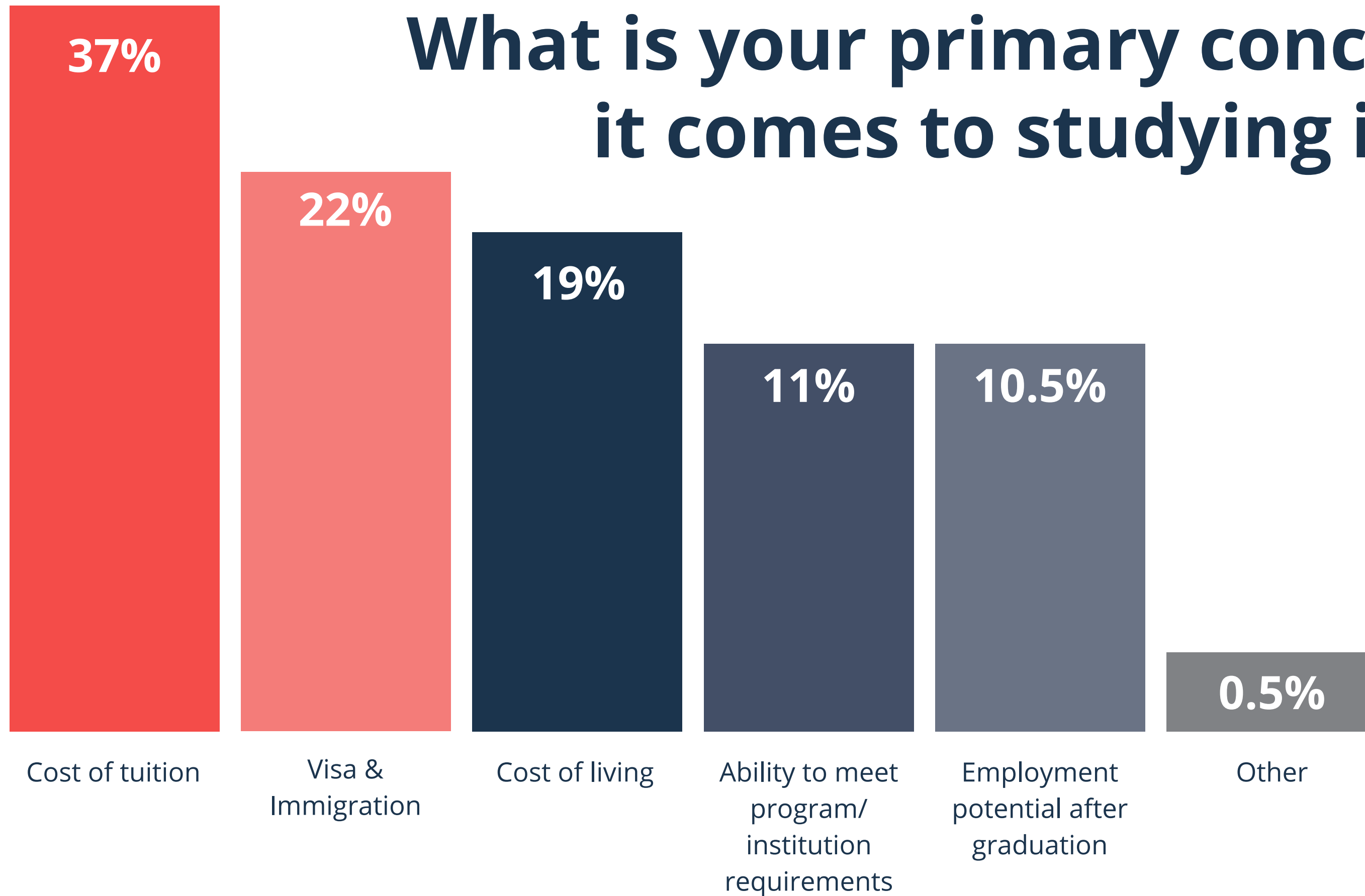


# 83%

of respondents said they were **more likely to study in the US** since President Biden was elected.



# What is your primary concern when it comes to studying in the US?



# 67% of respondents said they **needed** **funding** to enroll

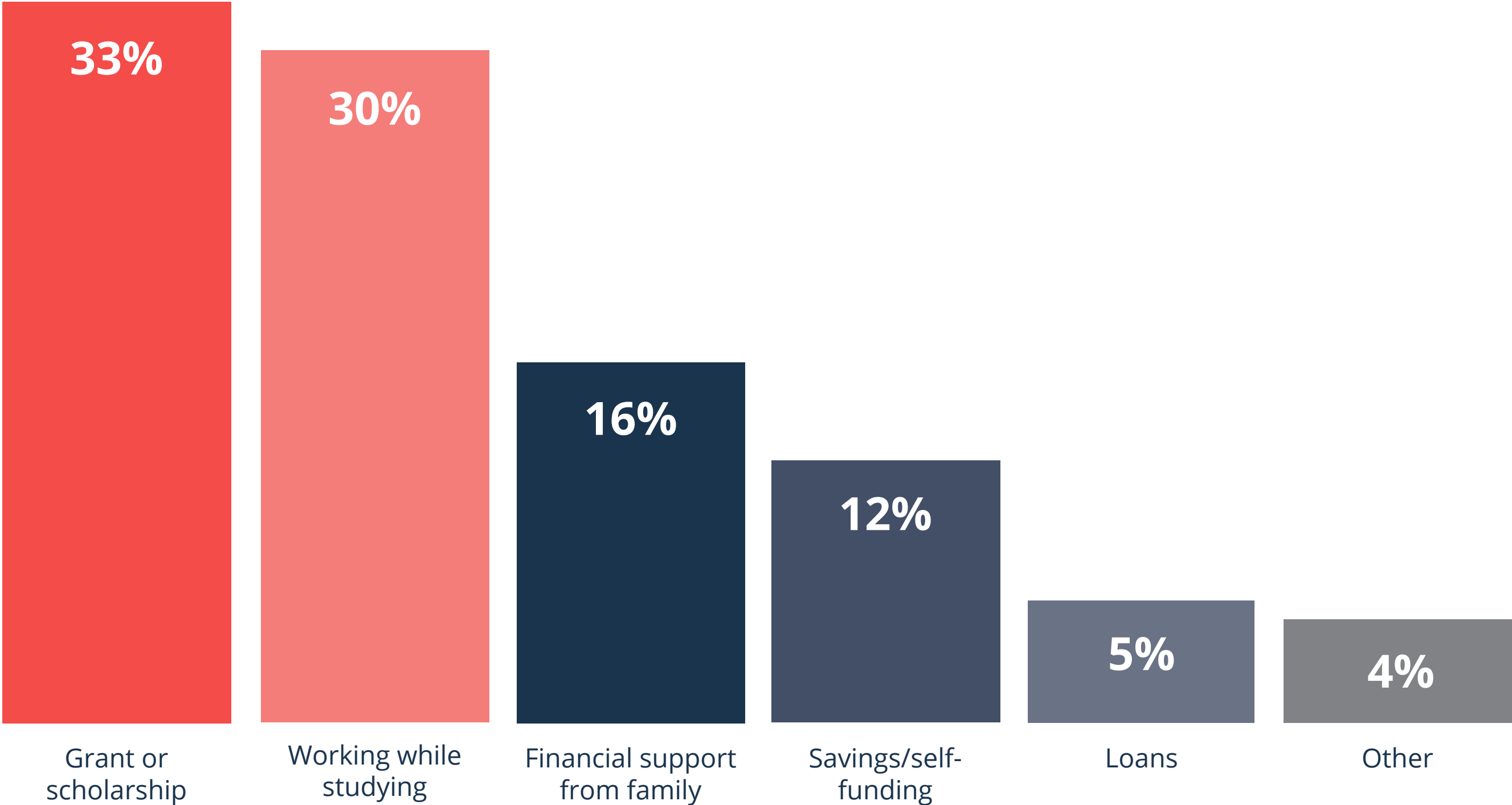
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26% were seeking funding, but not dependent on funding for enrollment and 7% did not require funding.



WE ASKED STUDENTS...

# How will you fund your studies?





# Global Competition for Students

While the United States is a desired study destination for many students worldwide, there are a number of other countries vying to compete for international students in the global market for higher education. In the survey, Canada proved to be a strong alternative, as well as Europe, the United Kingdom, and Australia, with many students also preferring online study.

WE ASKED STUDENTS **NOT INTERESTED** IN STUDYING IN THE US

## MOST POPULAR REGIONS

- 48%** North America
- 31%** Europe
- 7%** South America
- 6%** Oceania
- 5%** Asia
- 3%** Africa

## MOST POPULAR COUNTRIES

- #1** Canada
- #2** UK
- #3** Australia
- #4** Italy & Germany (=)
- #5** France
- #6** **Online**

## TOP FIVE FACTORS BEHIND PREFERENCE TO STUDY AT NON-US INSTITUTION

- #1** Career opportunities after graduation (43%)
- #2** Quality of degree (35%)
- #3** Stability of environment (27%)
- #4** Cost of tuition (25%)
- #5** Experience offered by studying in US (24%)



# 72%

of potential students **not interested in studying in the US** were more likely to reconsider the US as a study destination since President Biden was elected.





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