

# Innovation Imperative: Enhancing Higher Education Outcomes

## Public Opinion Survey Results

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Innovation Poll

September 17, 2013



Northeastern University



FTI  
CONSULTING™

# Methodology

**Survey fielded between August 16-28, 2013 among a nationally representative sample of American adults (N = 1,000) conducted via landline and cell phone. The margin of error for a sample of 1,000 is  $\pm 3.1\%$ .**

**The national poll was supplemented by a survey of business hiring decision-makers (N = 263) fielded online during July 10-15, 2013. The business elite sample included hiring decision-makers and hiring executives from a cross-section of companies, ranging from small companies to larger businesses with a global presence.**

# Key Findings

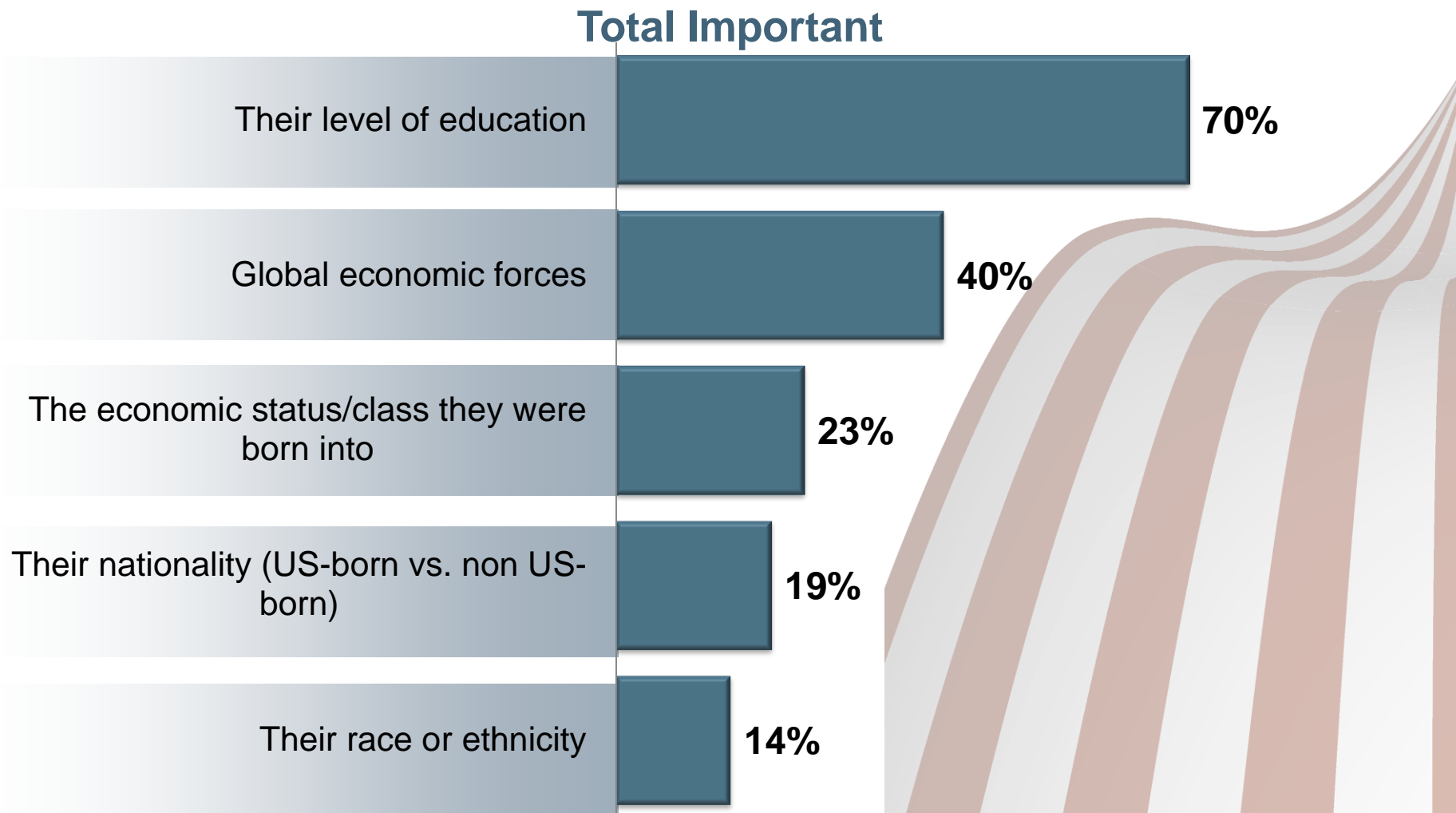
- 1** Americans continue to believe in the importance of higher education, but express concerns about the system's ability to prepare graduates for success in today's workforce.
- 2** Despite the recent focus on STEM degrees, most Americans and particularly business leaders say it is more important for graduates to be well-rounded and possess broader capabilities such as problem solving and communication skills.
- 3** Americans express declining confidence in online education, and they remain divided over the long-term benefits and impact of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs).
- 4** Americans resolutely believe in the importance of experiential learning for long-term career success.
- 5** Americans are divided on whether the greatest responsibility for preparing recent graduates for success lies with employers, colleges/universities or the graduates themselves.

# 1 COLLEGE AND WORKFORCE PREPAREDNESS



Americans rank education level as the most important factor in determining a candidate's success in today's job market

*Please indicate how important you consider each of the following factors for a candidate's success in today's job market.*

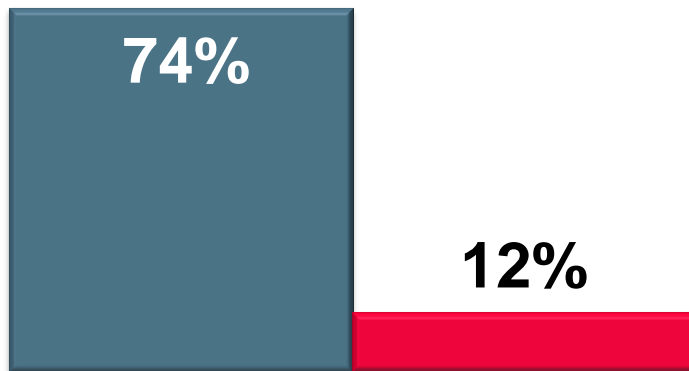


# Nearly 3-in-4 Americans believe a college degree is more important today than it was for their parents' generation

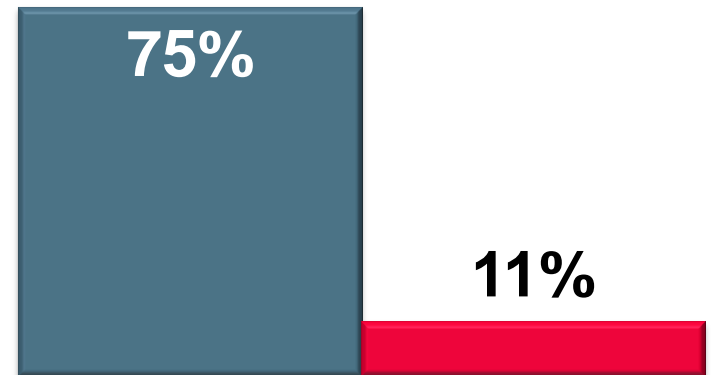
## MORE IMPORTANT / LESS IMPORTANT

*Would you say that achieving a college degree is more or less important today than it was for your parents' generation?*

2013

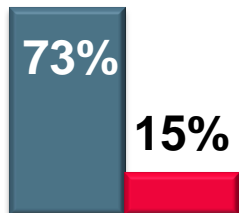


2012

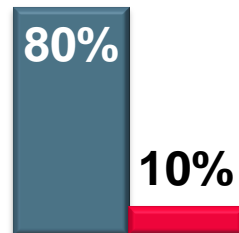


2013

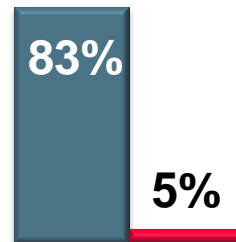
Less than  
\$100,000



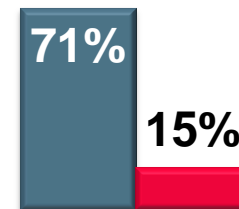
\$100,000 to  
\$200,000



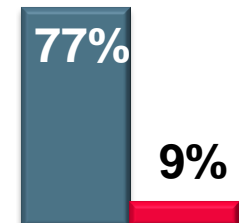
More than  
\$200,000



Male



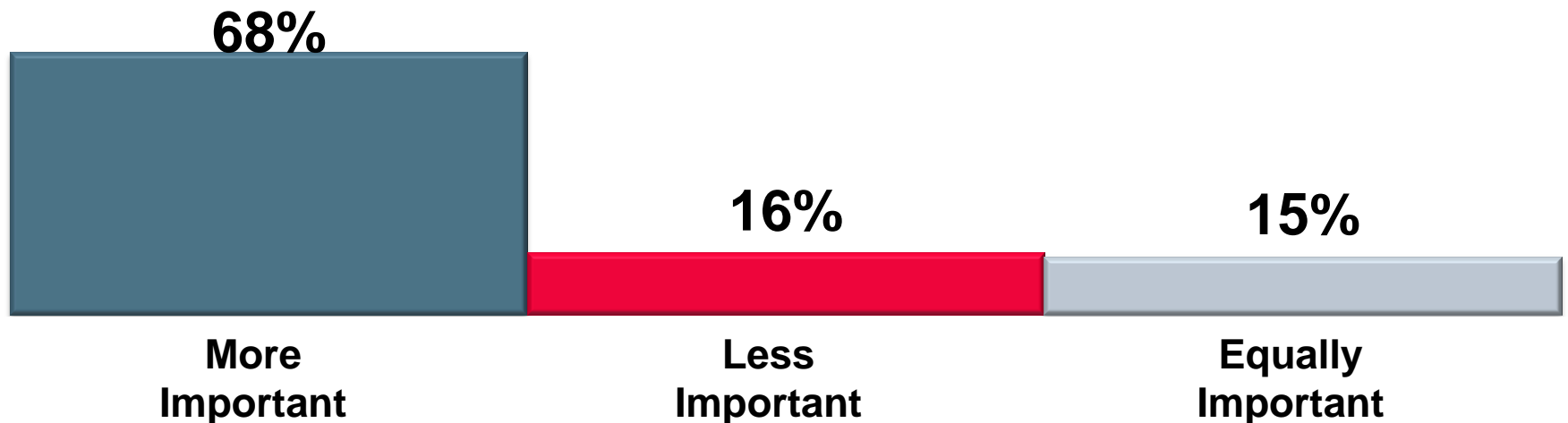
Female



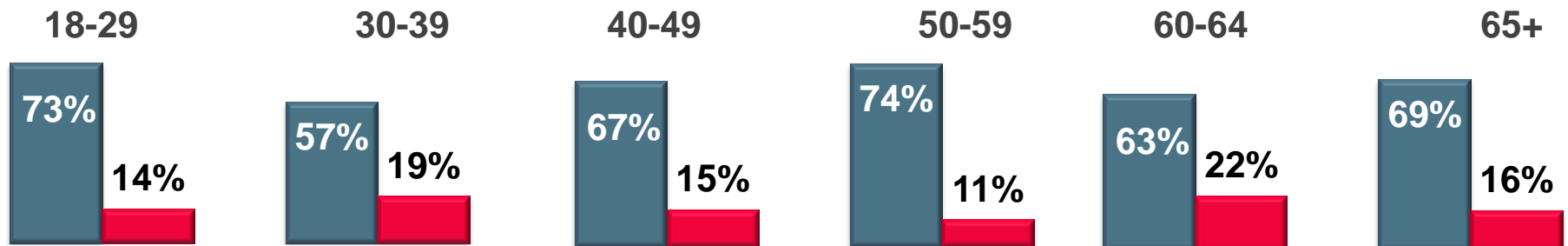
*Yearly Household Income*

Almost 7-in-10 believe a college degree will be even more important for the next generation

*When today's children are of college age, do you think having a college degree will be more or less important than it was for your generation?*

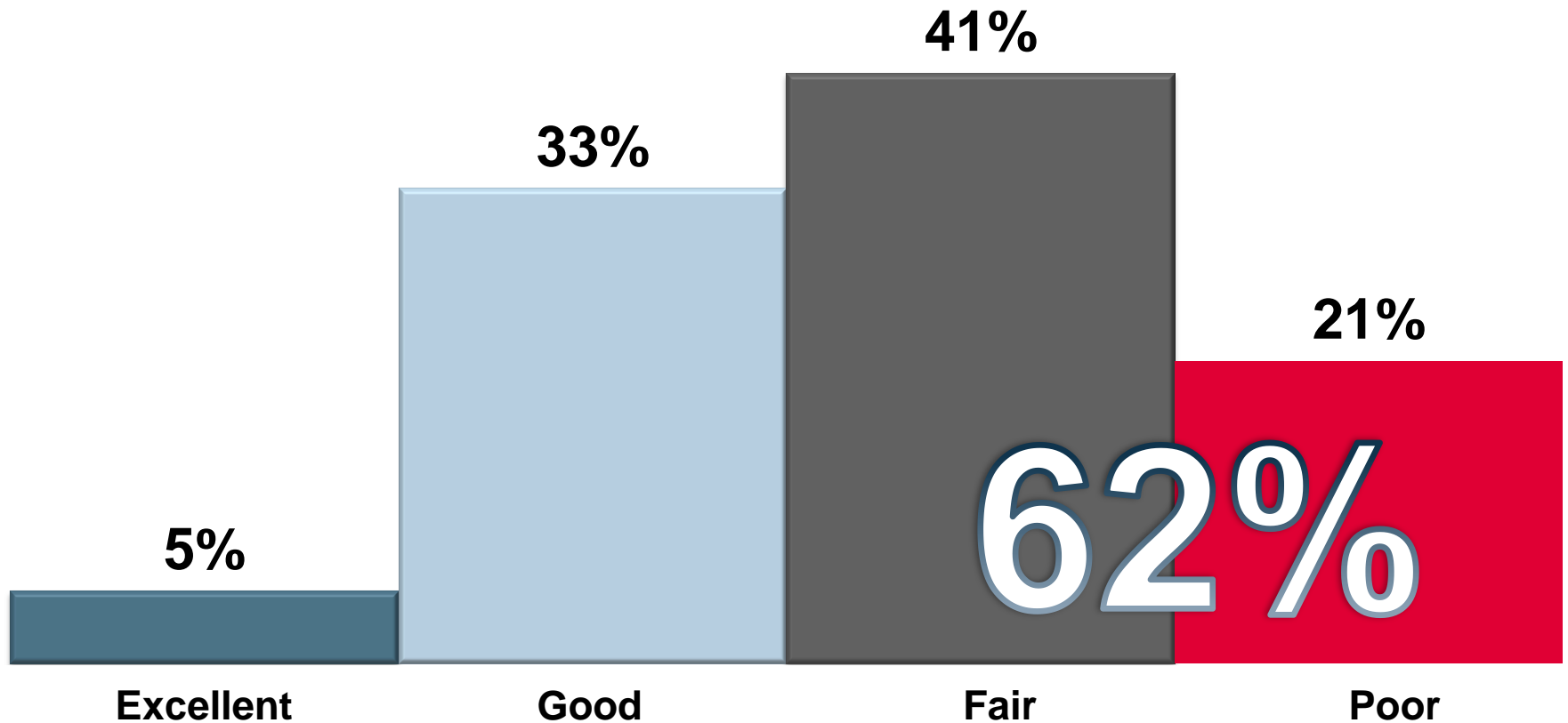


2013



Most say the U.S. higher education system is currently doing only a fair to poor job of preparing college graduates

*How would you rate the job the higher education system in this country is currently doing in terms of preparing recent college graduates for the workforce?*

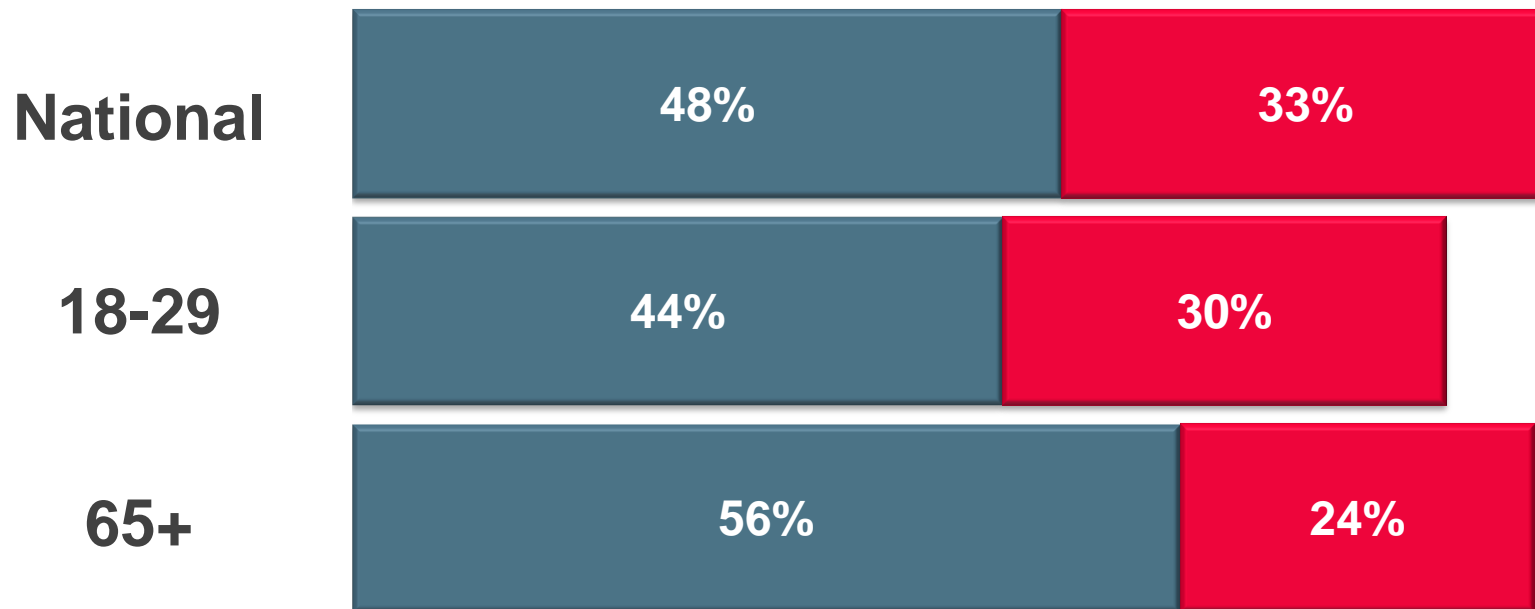




Nearly half of all Americans say colleges are not in tune with today's job market and are not preparing graduates accordingly

## AGREE / DISAGREE

*Colleges are not in tune with today's job market and are not preparing graduates accordingly.*



# 2 EXPERIENCE AND SKILLS



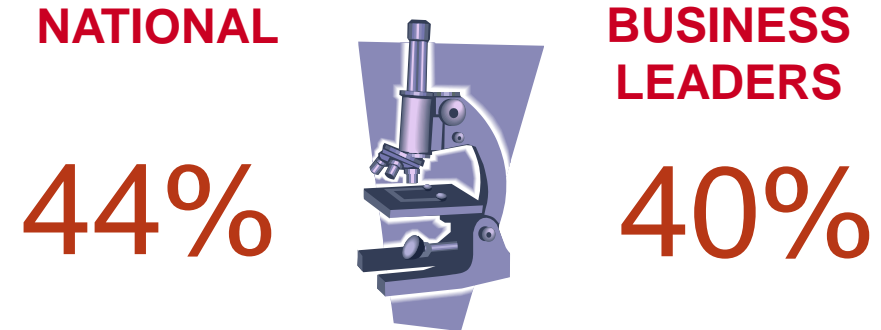
Americans and business leaders agree it is more important for graduates to possess broader skills and capabilities

*Which of the following skill sets do you think are most important for recent college graduates to possess?*



## BROADLY APPLICABLE SKILLS

“Softer” skills like oral and written communications and problem solving



## SPECIFIC SKILLS

“Harder” skills like applied training and industry-specific capabilities

Being well-rounded with a range of abilities is seen as more important than having specific industry expertise

*Now, thinking about people on the job market today, which of the following comes closest to your view:*

Being **well-rounded** with a range of abilities is more important than having industry expertise because job-specific skills can be learned at work

NATIONAL

65%

BUSINESS  
LEADERS

73%

Having specific **industry experience** is more important than generalized abilities because applied skills are key to early success in a new position

NATIONAL

35%

BUSINESS  
LEADERS

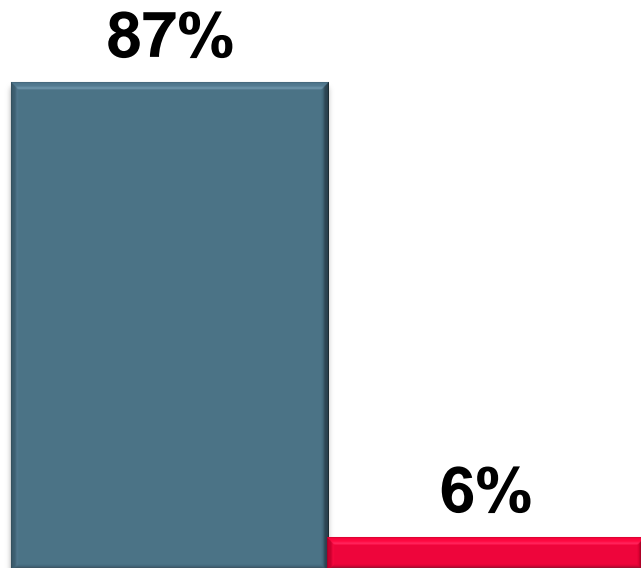
27%

Americans and business leaders agree that the ability to think creatively is just as important as the ability to think critically

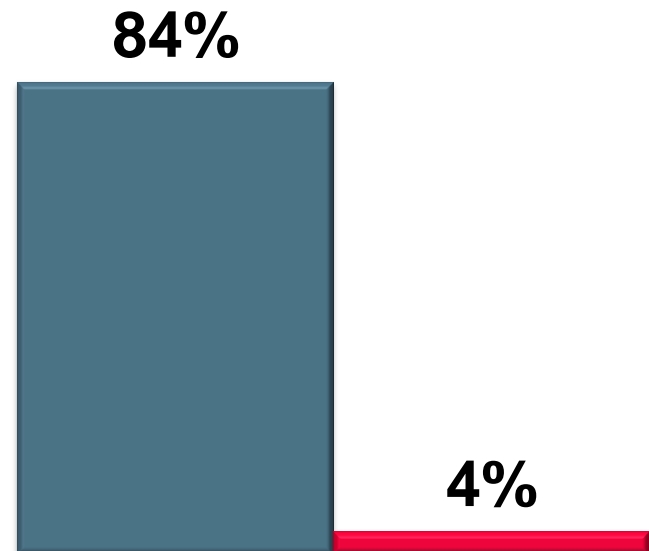
## AGREE / DISAGREE

*The ability to think creatively is just as important as the ability to think critically*

National

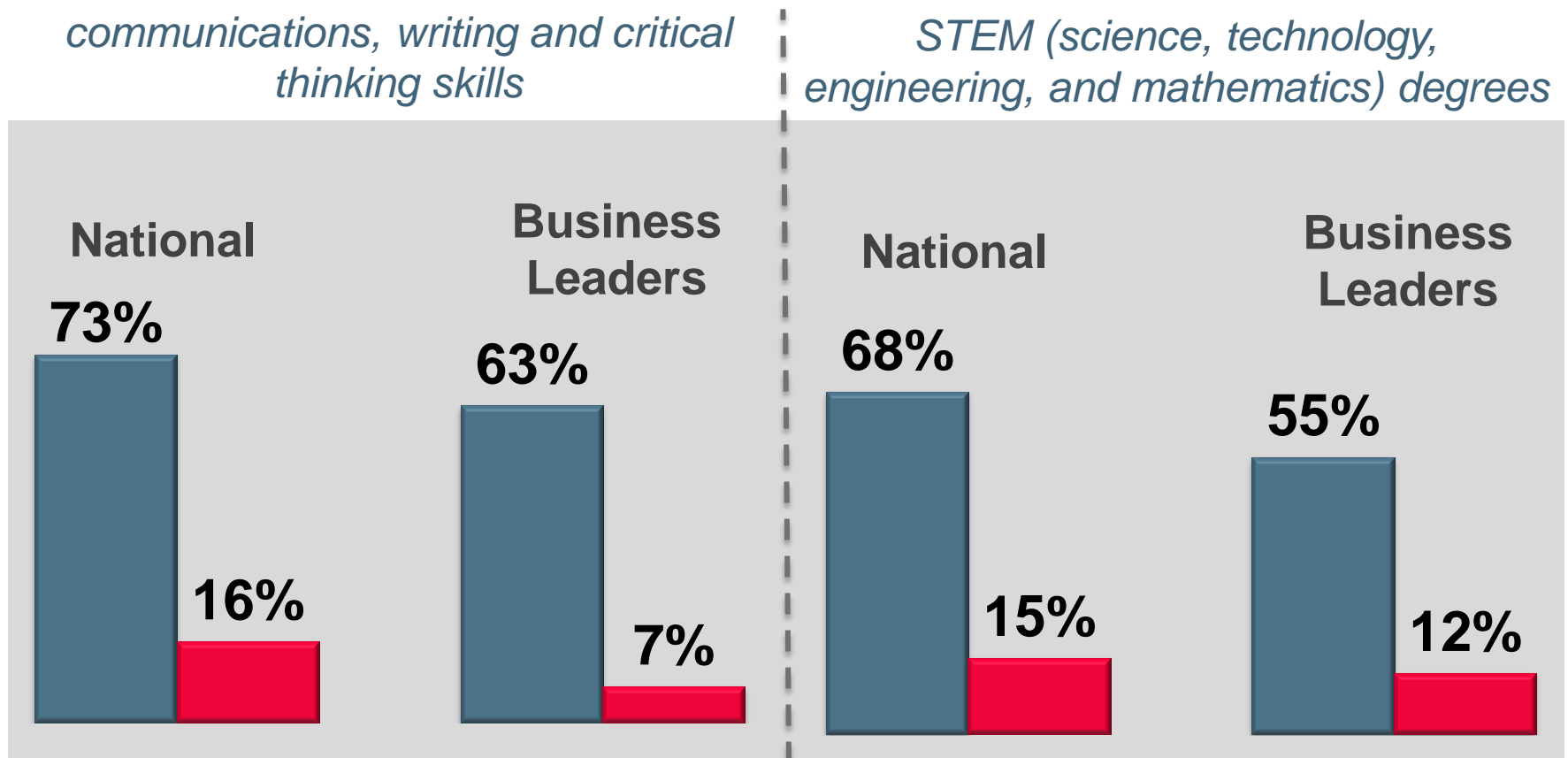


Business Leaders



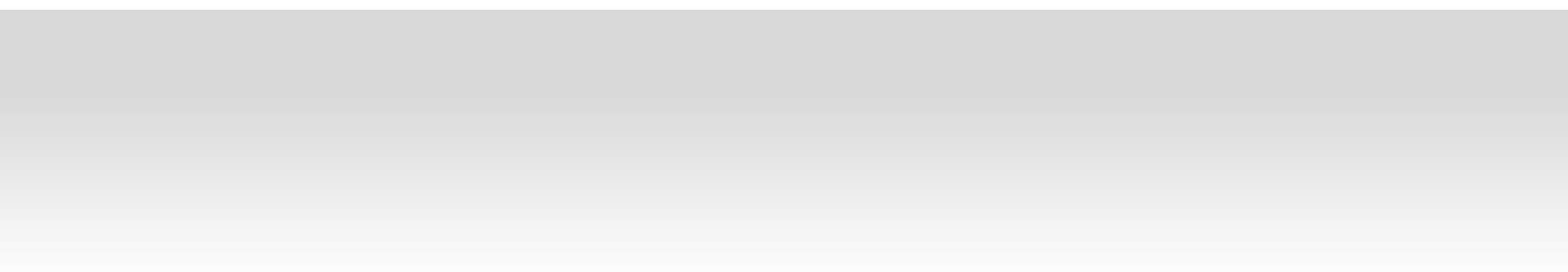
To promote employment, Americans and business leaders favor communications and writing skills slightly more than STEM degrees

*To increase employment rates, there should be a greater push for college students to graduate with...*



AGREE / DISAGREE

# 3 ONLINE EDUCATION

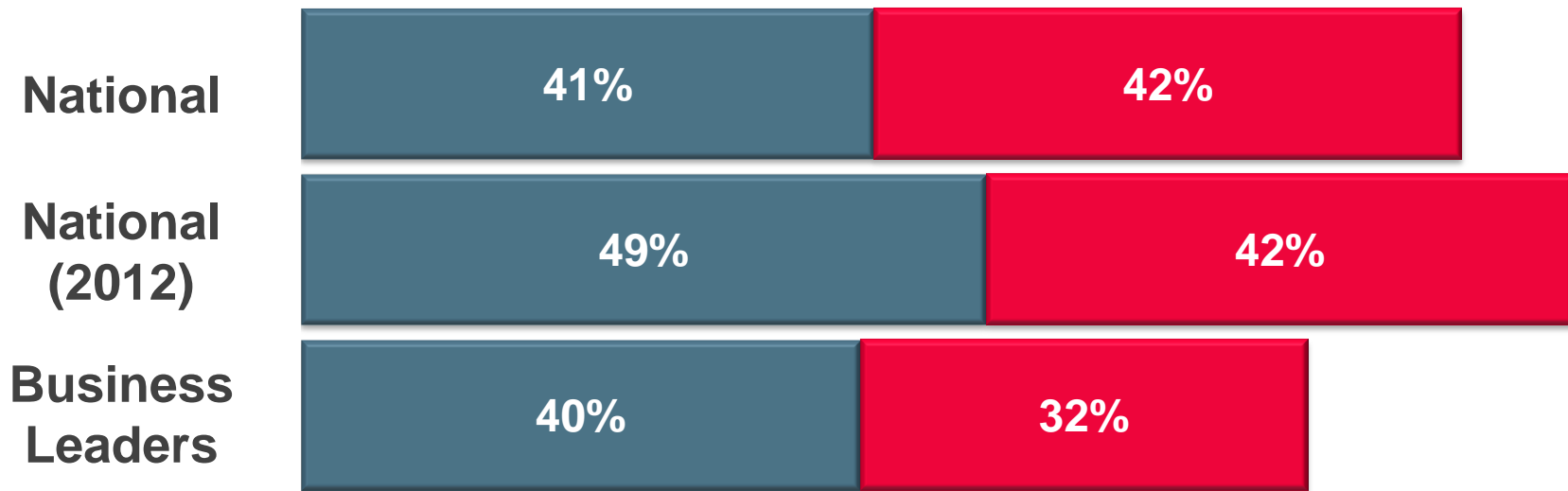


A declining proportion of Americans say an online program provides a similar quality of education as a traditional program

*As compared to traditional colleges or universities, an online program...*

**AGREE / DISAGREE**

**Provides a similar quality of education**



2013: Agree by Age



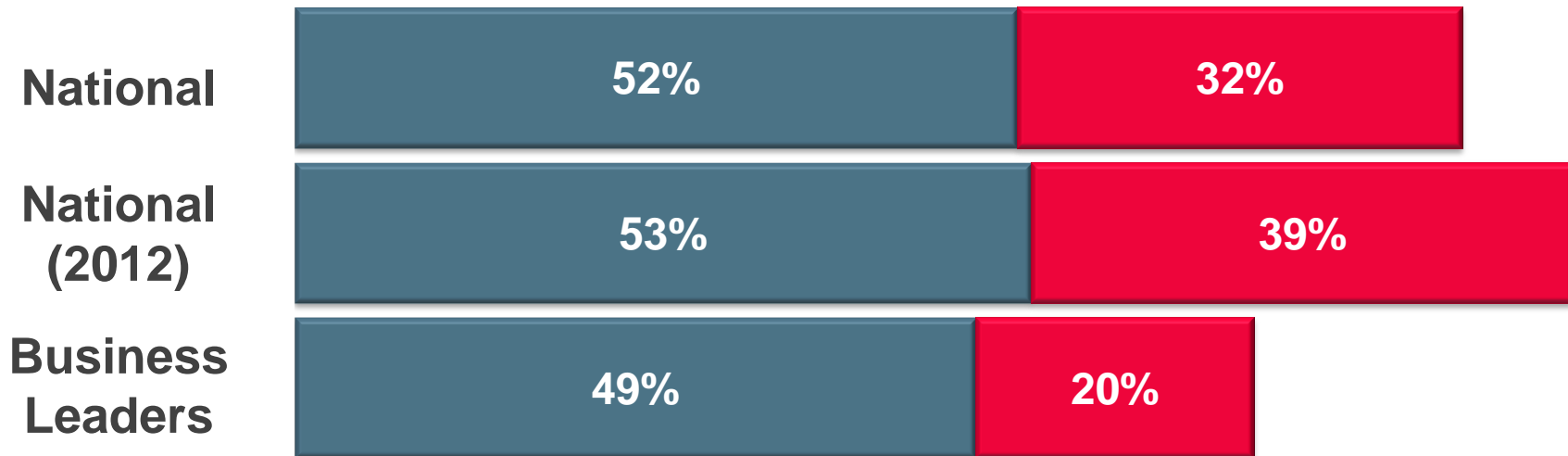


Yet, just over half of all Americans continue to believe an online education will be equally recognized in 5-7 years

*As compared to traditional colleges or universities, an online program...*

## AGREE / DISAGREE

**Will be just as recognized and accepted among employers in the near future (5-7 years)**



2013: Agree by Age



Most believe MOOCs will transform education, but less than one-third believes they provide the same quality of education

*MOOCs will fundamentally transform the way students are educated in this country*

**AGREE**

**56%**

**27%**

*MOOCs provide the same quality of education as in-person classes*

**DISAGREE**

**53%**

**27%**

# Americans say MOOCs should count towards course credit, and that they provide flexibility, convenience and affordability

*Students should be able to apply certificates from MOOCs for course credit at accredited colleges and universities*

**AGREE**

**63%**

**23%**

*MOOCs will help students complete traditional college degrees by providing more flexibility, convenience and cost-effective ways to take college courses*

**DISAGREE**

**74%**

**12%**

# 4 PREPARING GRADUATES FOR THE WORKFORCE



# Most Americans say integrating educational programs with professional work experience is key for preparing graduates

*Some colleges and universities are developing new ways to educate students and prepare them for the workforce. Please indicate how important each of the following are for U.S. colleges to focus on:*

## TOTAL AGREE

Integrating educating programs with practical experience, such as internships with employers	79%
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Providing opportunities for working professionals to gain new skills to re-enter the workforce	79%
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Using new technologies and interactive teaching methods to promote more student engagement in college courses	67%
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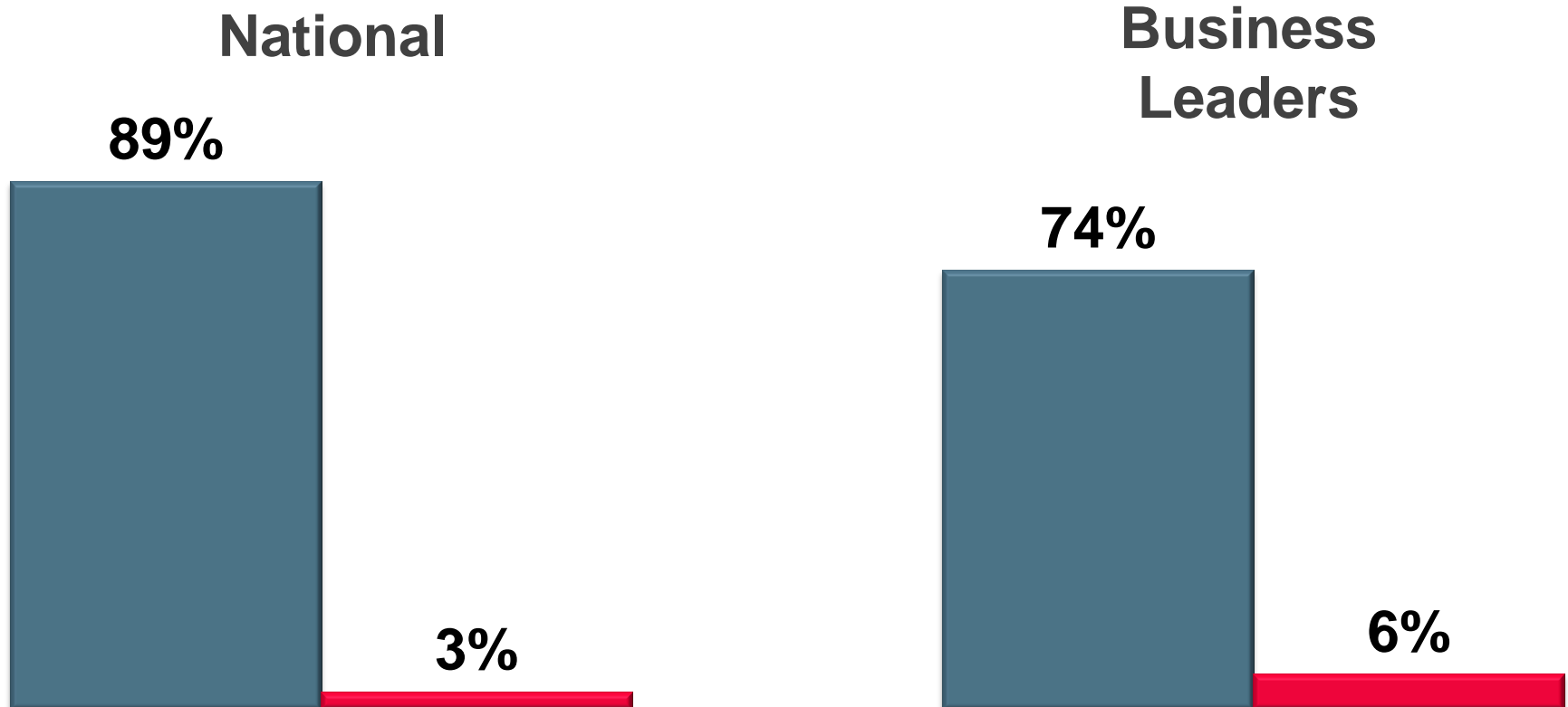
Incorporating more online classes to provide greater flexibility and access for students	50%
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Providing more opportunities for students to gain global experience from working or studying abroad	42%
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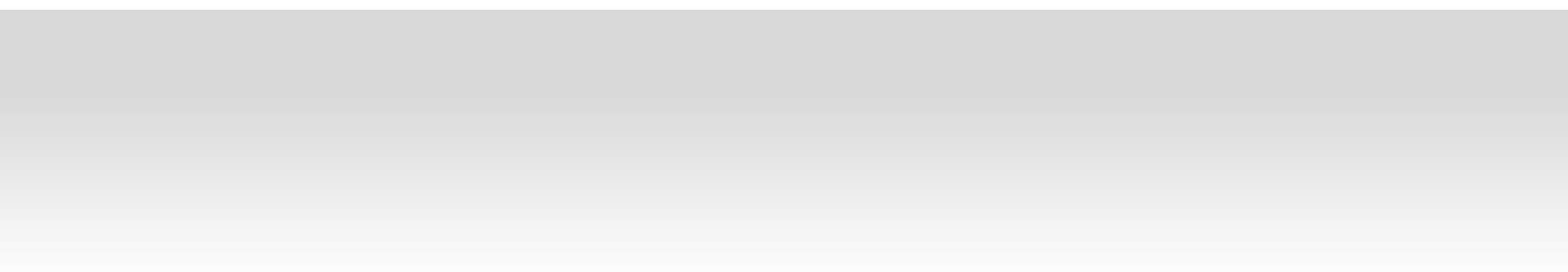
# Americans and business leaders strongly attest to the value of internships for long-term success in the workforce

**AGREE / DISAGREE**

**Students with work experience from an internship or paid employment related to their field are generally more successful in their careers**

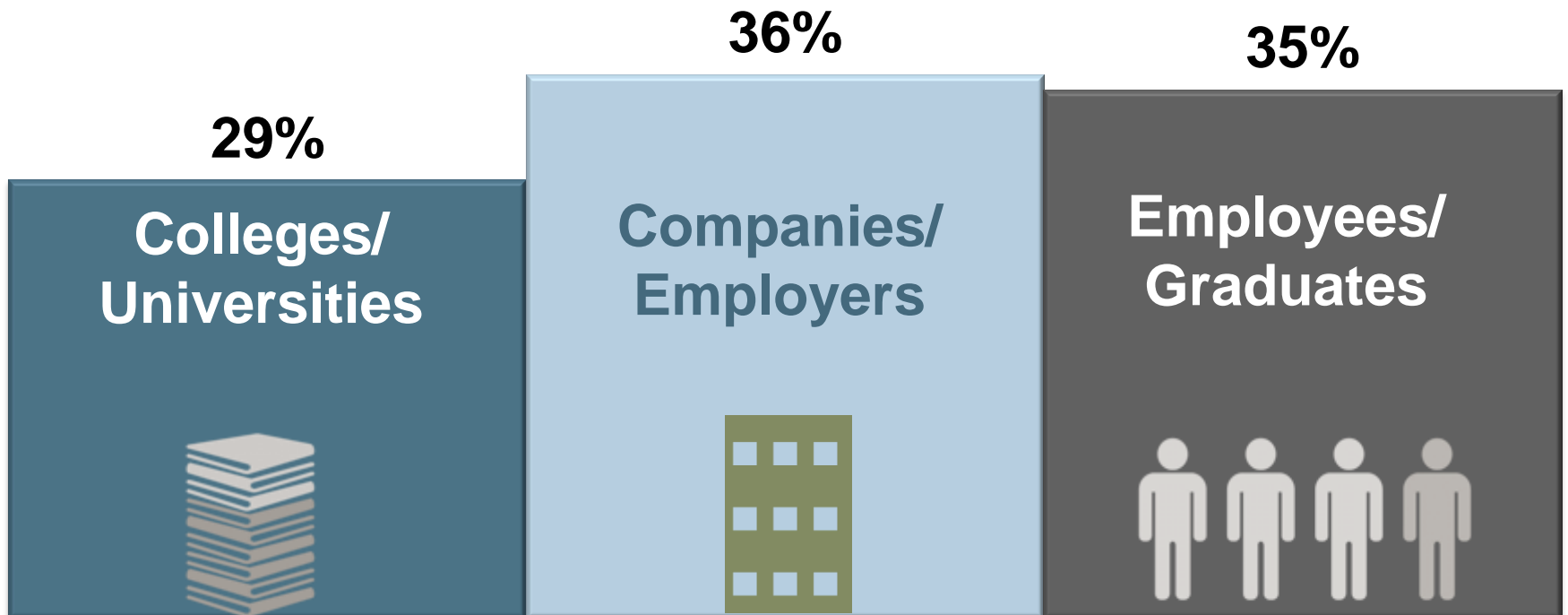


# 5 SHARED RESPONSIBILITY



Americans see a shared responsibility when it comes to preparing recent graduates for success in the workplace

*Which of the following do you think has the greatest responsibility for training recent graduates for success in the workplace?*





A growing majority of Americans feels the U.S. higher education system must change to remain competitive with other countries

## AGREE / DISAGREE

**The U.S. higher education system needs to change to retain a workforce that is competitive with other countries around the world**

