

**COVID-19 PERCEPTIONS**

WHITE PAPER SERIES - PART I

# Learning Perceptions Throughout Covid-19

WHAT 150,000+ STUDENTS ARE SAYING ABOUT  
THEIR LEARNING EXPERIENCE THIS SEMESTER



# Table of Contents

Preface .....	Page 01
Data Collection .....	Page 02
Findings .....	Page 04
Conclusion .....	Page 10
Next Steps .....	Page 11
Note to the Reader .....	Page 12

# Preface

This fall semester we witnessed colleges and universities from across the country experiment with different modes of learning and teaching in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Students found themselves adapting to campus safety protocols, adjusting to fully online courses, or a mix of both.

All the while University leaders were challenged with how to best deliver engaging content and connect with students in these new course formats. As students jumped over different hurdles to try and embrace their university's new way of teaching, some students found themselves having to jump higher and more frequently.

EdSights' partner institutions leveraged AI-powered texting to directly engage with their student body and better assess the very real challenges that students face. Students received messages from their institution's friendly mascot checking in on them and addressing their needs throughout the semester.

01.

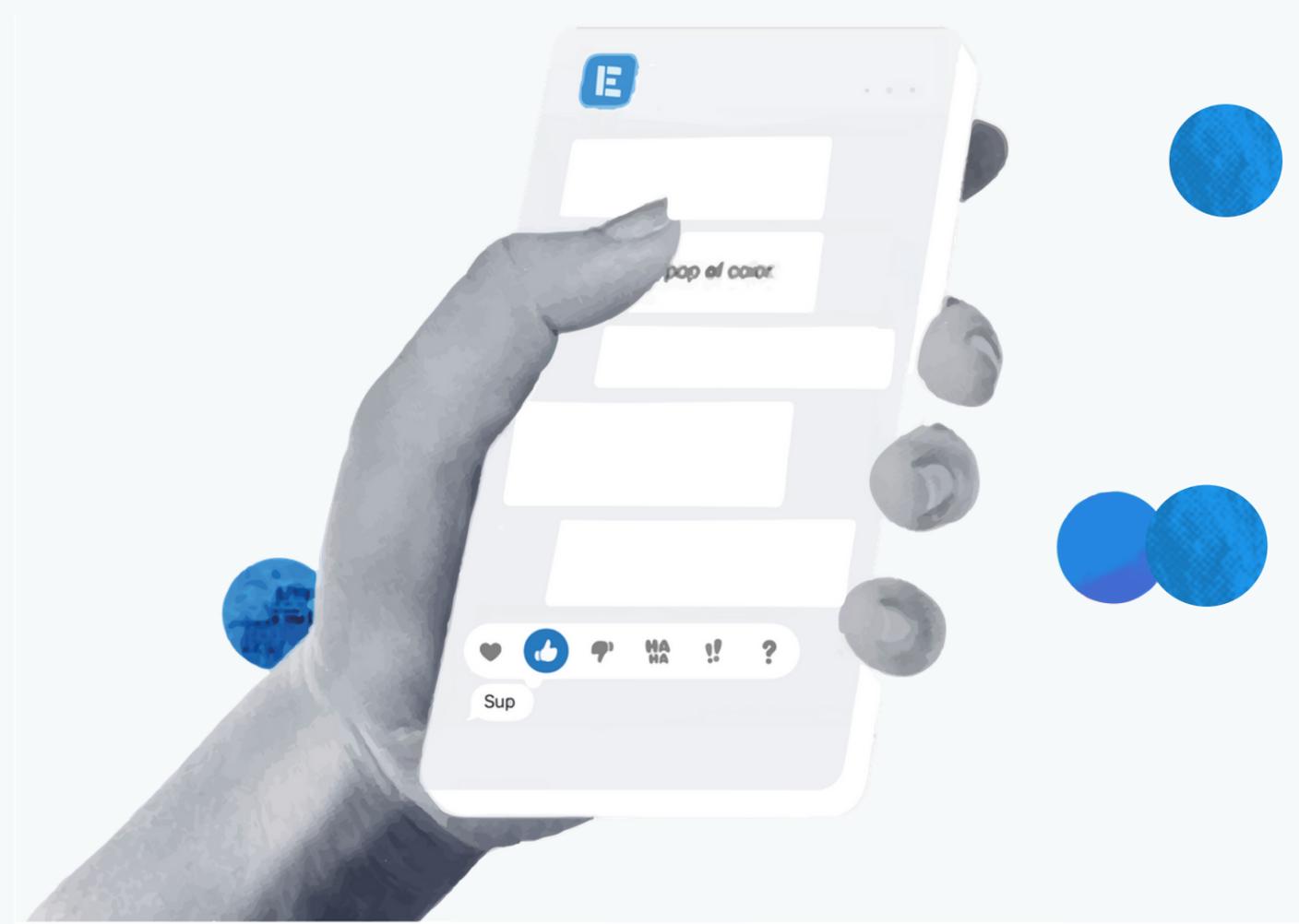
On the other end, University administrators received actionable and real-time insights that helped them identify the most vulnerable students and understand broader sentiment trends.

This allowed students to focus on learning, and staff to prioritize the areas of their work with the highest impact. University leaders were able to experience this unique semester "through the eyes of students" and identify what worked and what didn't. This report summarizes how students have adjusted to our new higher education landscape, as well as how human connection can be cultivated through technology.

This white paper is the first in a two-part "Covid-19 Perception" Series. This first report focuses on "Learning Perceptions" during Covid-19, including sentiment towards different course modalities and campus safety. The second report, which has yet to be published, will break down "College Perceptions" such as shifts in students' opinions of their institution, in college priorities, and beliefs on the value of a college degree.

# 01. Data Collection

Using AI-powered texting to collect data on how students feel



EdSights is a student success company that uses conversational AI to help Universities engage, retain, and support students through text messaging.

Through our weekly conversations with students across our partner institutions, we created this report to share how students feel as they navigate learning in this new environment. These numbers quantify the qualitative and personal experiences of our students.

Conversational AI works differently at EdSights. Unlike any other AI company in the higher education space, EdSights' chatbot proactively reaches out to students using an evidence-based framework that measures student success through lenses such as Academic Engagement, Belonging, and Wellness. This helps us understand each student's needs as well as identify broader student persistence trends.

## **OUR CHATBOT SURVEYED A TOTAL OF 150,000 STUDENTS**

02.

### **INSTITUTION SAMPLE GROUP**

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33 Non-profit, 4-year institutions

### **INSTITUTION SIZE (FTE RANGE)**

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Small (<2.5K) mid-sized (2.5K-8K), and large (>10K)

### **CONTROL OF INSTITUTION**

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60% Private institutions, 40% public institutions

### **GEOGRAPHY**

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North America: Northeast, Midwest, Southeast, Southwest

### **DATA COLLECTION TIME-FRAME**

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September 2020 - November 2020

## 02. Findings

What students are saying about their learning experience

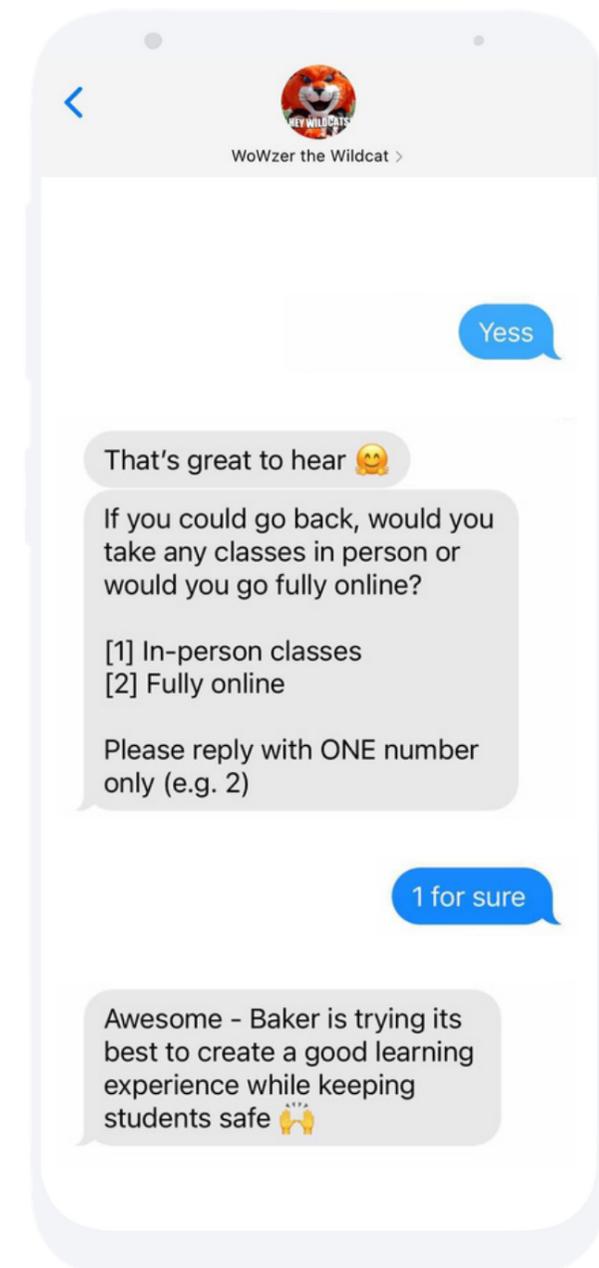
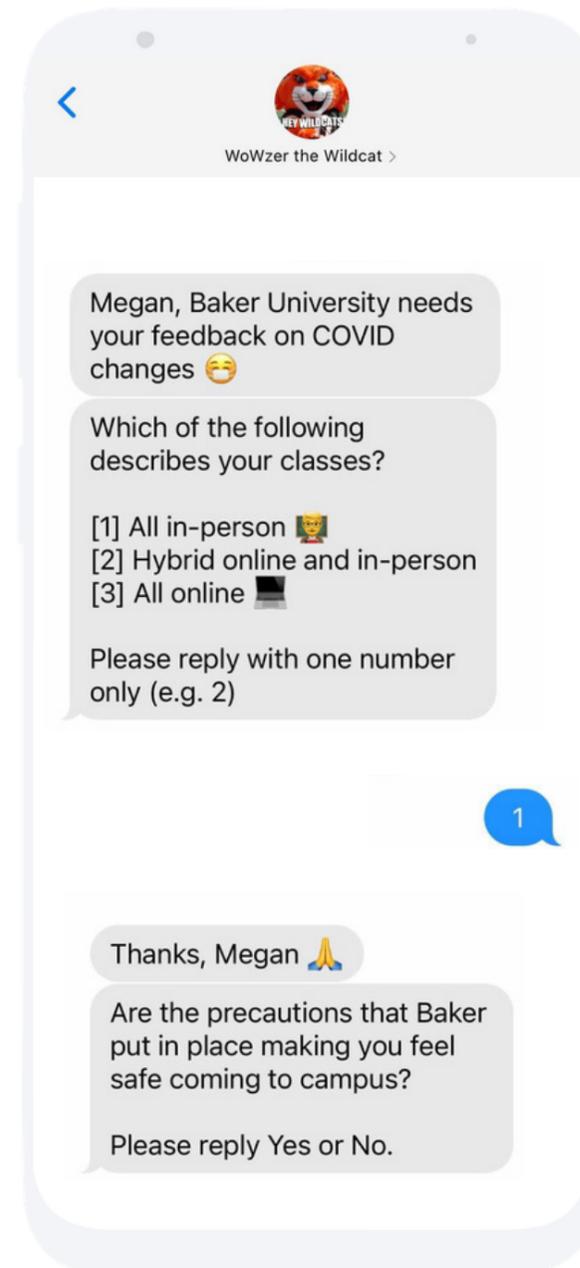


## Our Chatbot

EdSights' chatbot uses texting powered by artificial intelligence to connect with students at scale. The bot takes the form of the college's mascot and, on top of answering questions, checks-in with students on a weekly basis, connecting them to resources and collecting non-cognitive data about their college experience.

To the right is an example of the types of chatbot conversations that produced the data showcased in this report.

The conversations that the chatbot initiated with students were short, convenient, and friendly; creating a familiar and "judgment-free" zone for students to share their thoughts.

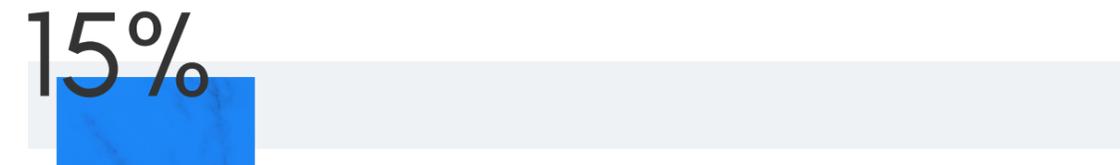


# Course Modality Overview

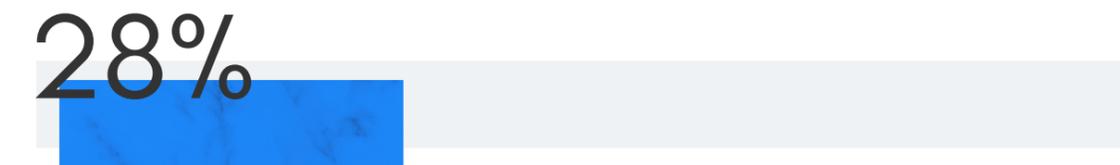
We wanted to understand which modes of instruction students were engaging with so we could look at perceptions (eg. satisfaction) broken down by these groups.

We asked students to describe their learning modality. Below is the average course modality breakdown across all institutions included in this report. The majority of students took a mix of in-person and online classes this semester.

**In Person:** % Students taking All Face-to-face



**Online:** % Students taking All Online



**Hybrid:** % Students taking Hybrid Modalities



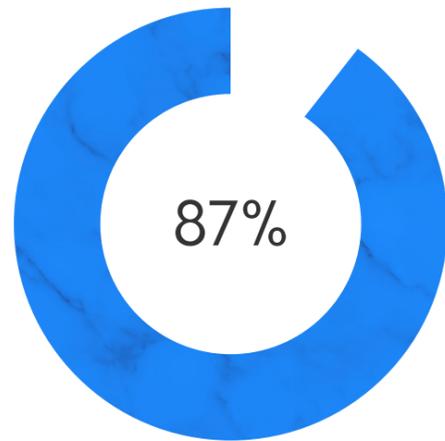
# Safety Sentiment

We asked students if the precautions that their institution put in place made them feel safe coming to campus. We broke down responses by Public/Private institutions to understand how safety sentiment changes across the different groups.

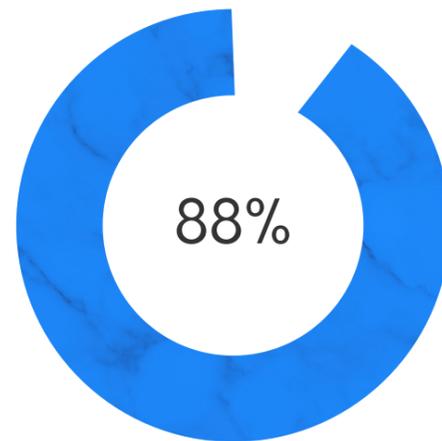
The most common complaints from the students who did not feel safe were:

- Scarcity of testing options on campus
- Not enough social distancing in classrooms & libraries
- Not enough disinfecting of shared surfaces (tables, etc.)

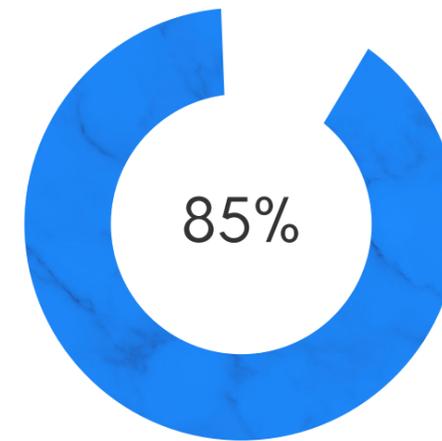
Percentage of students who feel safe coming to campus



**All Institutions**



**Private Institutions**

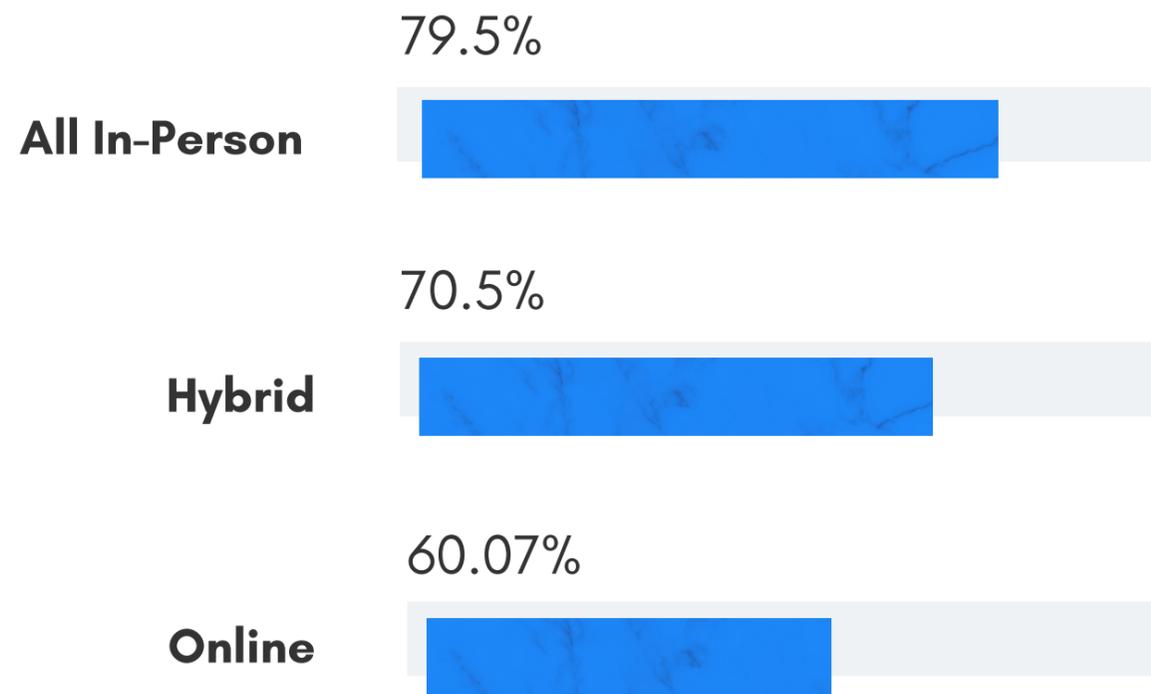


**Public Institutions**

# Hindsight Values

Our bot asked students: "Knowing what you know today if you were given the choice, would you take any classes in person or would you prefer fully online?".

We broke down responses by course format (Online, Hybrid, In-Person) which allowed us to calculate the percentage of students in each group that would pick that modality again.



The graph represents the percentage of students in each group that would repeat their learning modality. Students taking "All In-Person" classes have the highest satisfaction and are the most likely to repeat their learning experience if given a choice.

## INSIGHT

When comparing these Hindsight Values between Public and Private institutions what stood out is that students at public institutions had less of a desire for any combination of in-person learning than their private school counterparts.

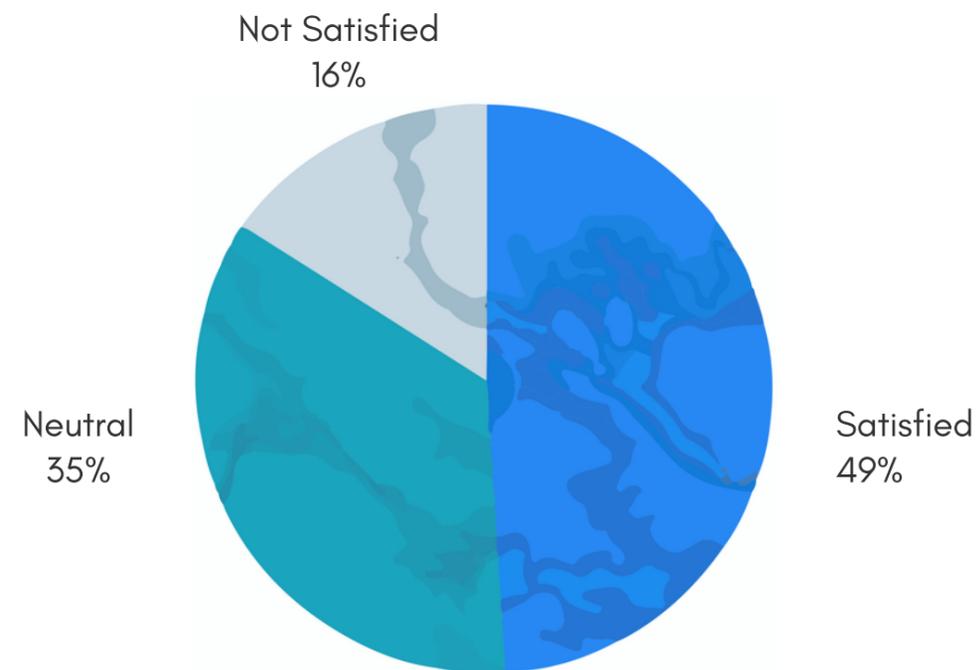
The percentage of students taking some form of in-person classes who would repeat their experience are:

- Private Institutions: **82.5%**
- Public Institutions: **74.7%**

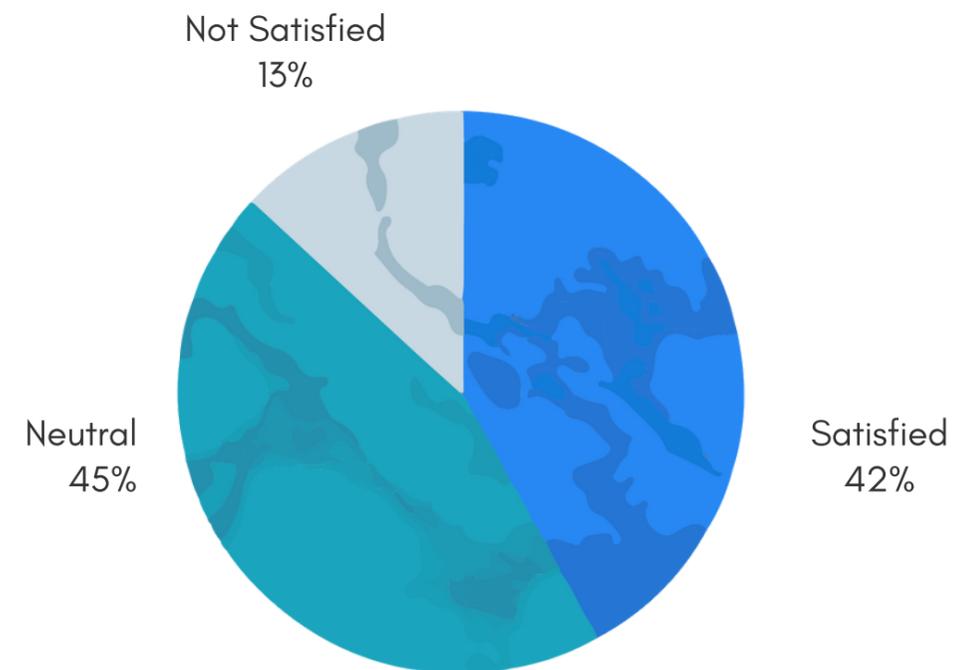
# Online Learning Satisfaction

EdSights' SMS chatbot asked all students taking some form of online classes how satisfied they were with their online learning experience. The chatbot also asked students what they find most challenging about online courses.

Below is a breakdown of how students responded to the question: "how satisfied were you with your online learning experience this semester?". Public institutions saw higher student satisfaction with online classes.



**Public Institutions**

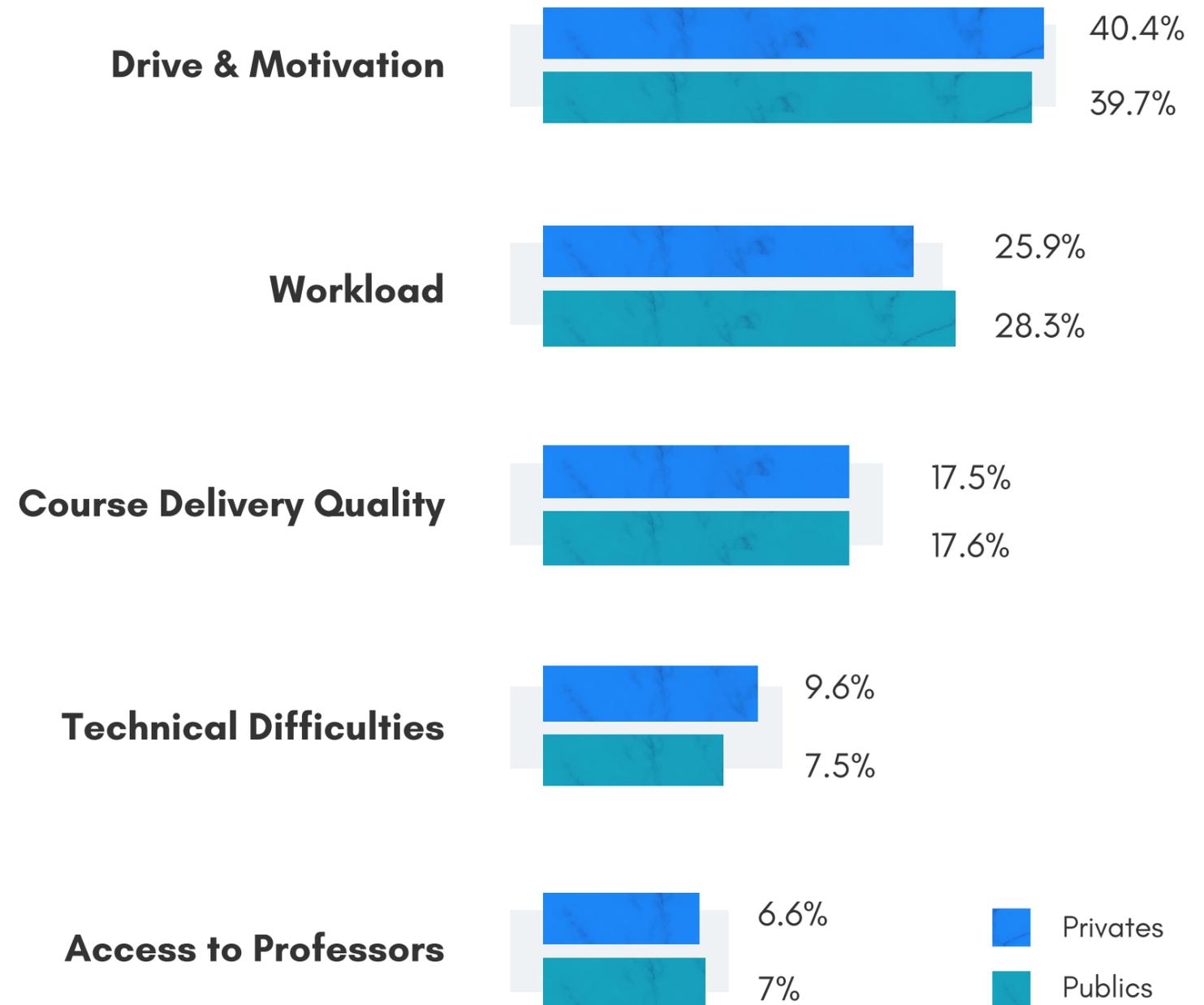


**Private Institutions**

# Top Online Learning Challenges

The graph to the right displays the key challenges students are facing when it comes to online learning.

The biggest obstacle encountered is a lack of Drive & Motivation, followed by a struggle to manage the workload (which many students perceived as having increased) and poor Course Delivery Quality. This distribution did not vary significantly between private and public institutions.

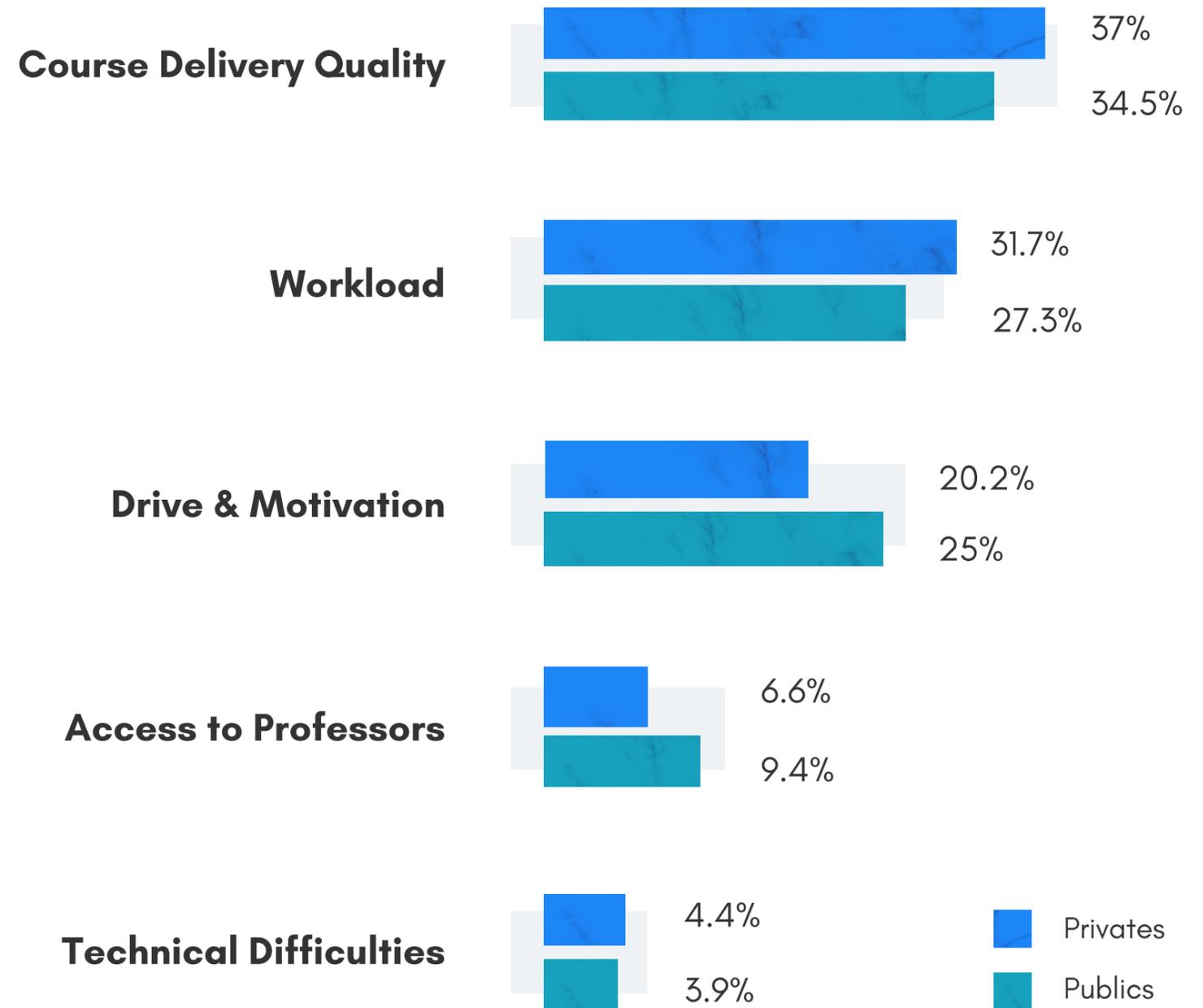


# Filtered by "Non-Satisfied" Students

In an attempt to understand areas for improvement, we isolated the top challenges cited by the students who also reported NOT being satisfied with their online classes.

For these students, Drive & Motivation was not the leading challenge. In fact, Course Delivery Quality and Workload were the two top areas of concern.

Proportionately, Public institutions reported higher concerns around Drive & Motivation and Access to Professors, while Private institutions struggled more with Course Delivery Quality and Workload.



# 04. Conclusion

## Humanity through technology



## Conclusion

As we continue to navigate the uncharted territory of higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is more important than ever that we listen to what works and doesn't work for our students.

Before, University leaders could sit down with students and hear firsthand what their needs were. Now, institutions are leaning on technology to cultivate a sense of community and relationships among students.

Engaging students using AI-powered texting while knowing that this generation constantly checks their phones and is slow to open, let alone reply, to emails ensures more effective communication. AI-powered chatbots allow for unprecedented and immediate access to students, which produces greater response rates as well as an opportunity to gather real-time sentiment data at-scale.

While the numbers in this report have been calculated from the feedback of 150,000 students, it is critical to understand what students at your school are saying, the resources they need, and how you can better support them.

## Next Steps

If your institution is curious about exploring strategies to engage, retain, and support students using conversational AI, EdSights would love to connect with you.

We are happy to share our best practices, data, or hear more about how you're tackling student engagement at your institution.

Always feel free to contact EdSights co-CEO Carolina Recchi ([carolina@edsights.io](mailto:carolina@edsights.io)) for questions or feedback.



## **Note to The Reader**

At EdSights, we feel especially grateful to have had the opportunity to help higher education institutions during this challenging time. We are honored that our partner Colleges and Universities trusted us and our technology to give their students a voice and to better understand their challenges and needs. Thank You.