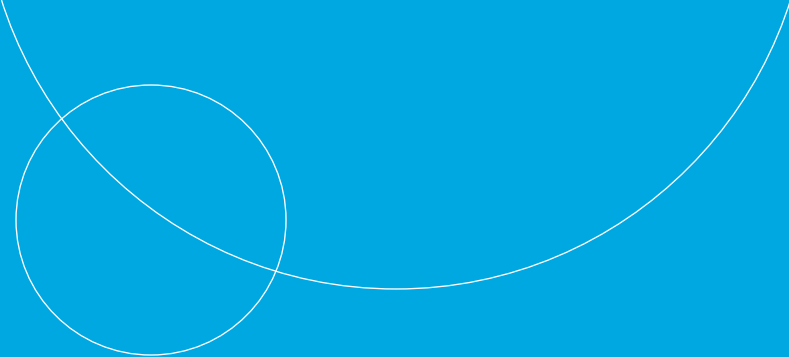




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2024 Prospective Family Engagement Study

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Presenters



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Agenda

1. Families in Context
2. Communication Channels
3. Frequency of Communication
4. Devices Used for College Planning
5. Resources for Family- Awareness and Satisfaction
6. College Planning Experiences

Demographics

11,309 completed responses

83 participating institutions

Ethnicity

Asian	10%
Black	13%
Hispanic	19%
Middle Eastern*	2%
Multi-racial*	3%
American Indian*	2%
White	64%

Family income

Less than \$30,000	11%
\$30,000 to \$59,999	12%
\$60,000 to \$99,999	16%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	22%
\$150,000 to 199,999	15%
\$200,000 to \$249,000	10%
\$250,000 or more	14%

Institution region

Far West	14%
Great Lakes	6%
Mid-East	14%
Plains	11%
Rocky Mountains	4%
Southeast	38%
Southwest	13%

Type of institution

Private	35%
Public	50%
2-year	15%

Institution undergraduate size

5,000	34%
5,001-9,999	28%
10,000-19,999	10%
20,000	28%

Region of residence

Far West	20%
Great Lakes	10%
Mid-East	12%
Plains	8%
Rocky Mountains	5%
New England	2%
Southeast	32%
Southwest	11%

High school year

9th grade	3%
10 th grade	5%
11 th grade	11%
12 th grade	81%

First-generation status

Continuing generation	66%
First generation	34%

If you would like to participate in the 2025 Prospective Family Engagement Study, scan the QR



The background of the slide features a blue gradient with several interlocking gears of various sizes and orientations, creating a mechanical and interconnected visual theme.

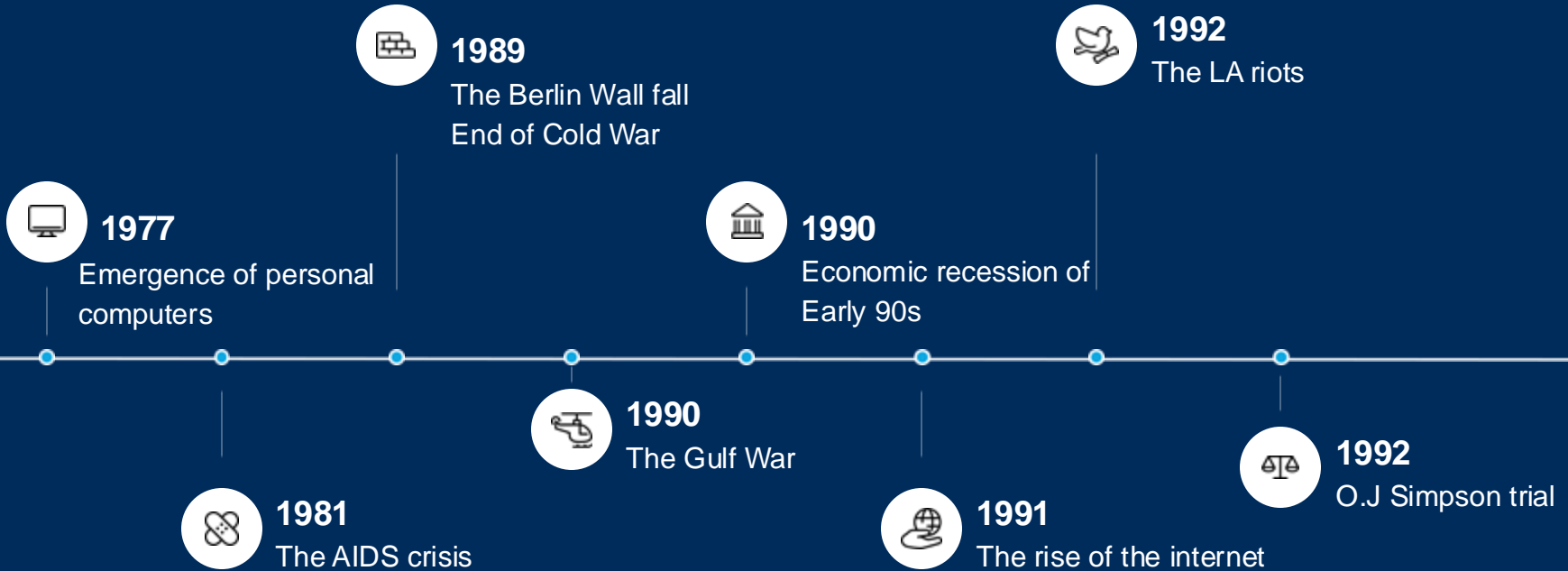
Families in Context



72% of surveyed parents/family members

were born between 1965
and 1980, making them
part of Generation X.

Gen X Cultural Milestones



Generation X



Education

36.2% of Gen Xers have a college degree or higher, lagging only Millennials in terms of educational attainment.



Tech

Gen Xers appreciate dependable, high-quality technology, focusing on time-saving and secure products. They prefer technology brands that offer value and ease of use.



Household

64% of Gen Xers are married, the highest rate among generations. They also form a significant part of the "sandwich generation," often caring for both aging parents and children.



Values

Gen X prioritizes dependability and safety, valuing societal stability and caring for loved ones. They emphasize the importance of being reliable and trustworthy.



Politics

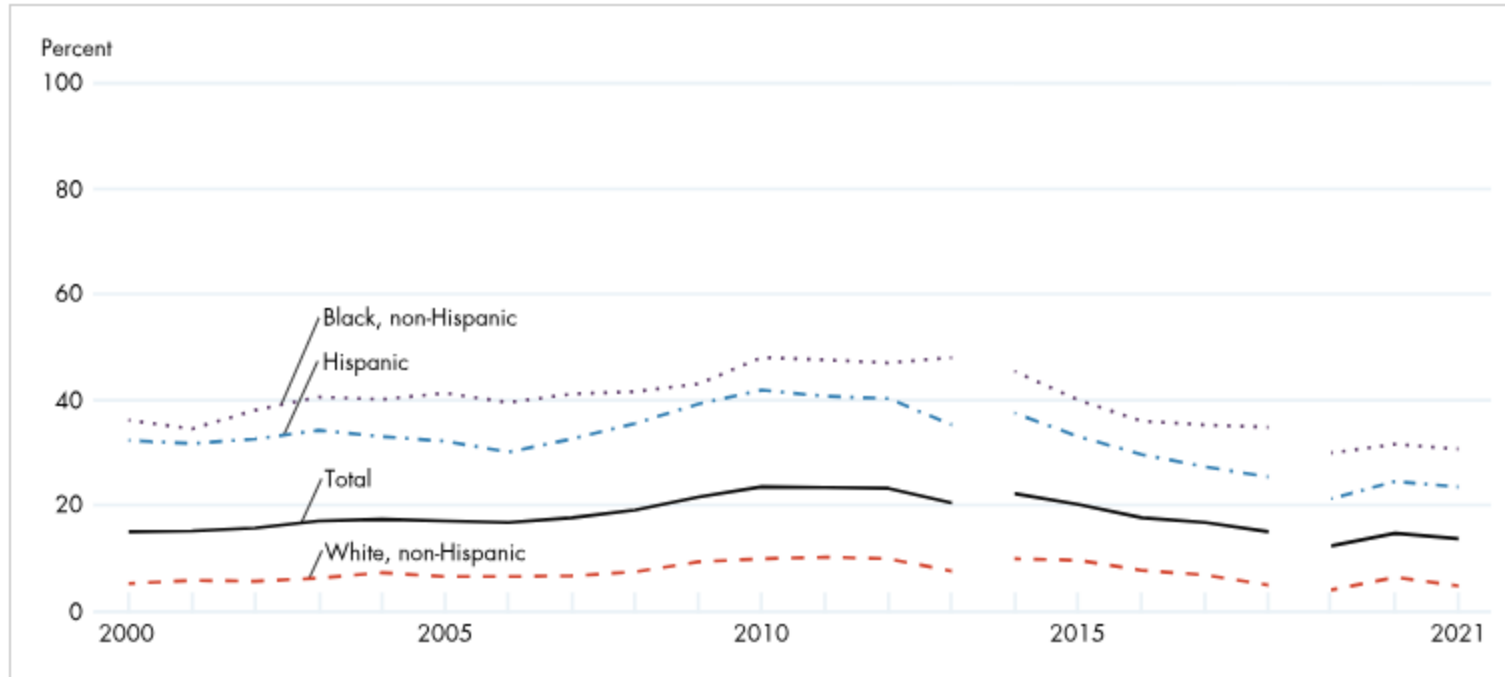
44% of Gen Xers identify as Independent. They have mixed views on abortion, climate change, + LGBT issues, support immigration, believe in stricter gun laws and that racial and economic inequalities are a problem.



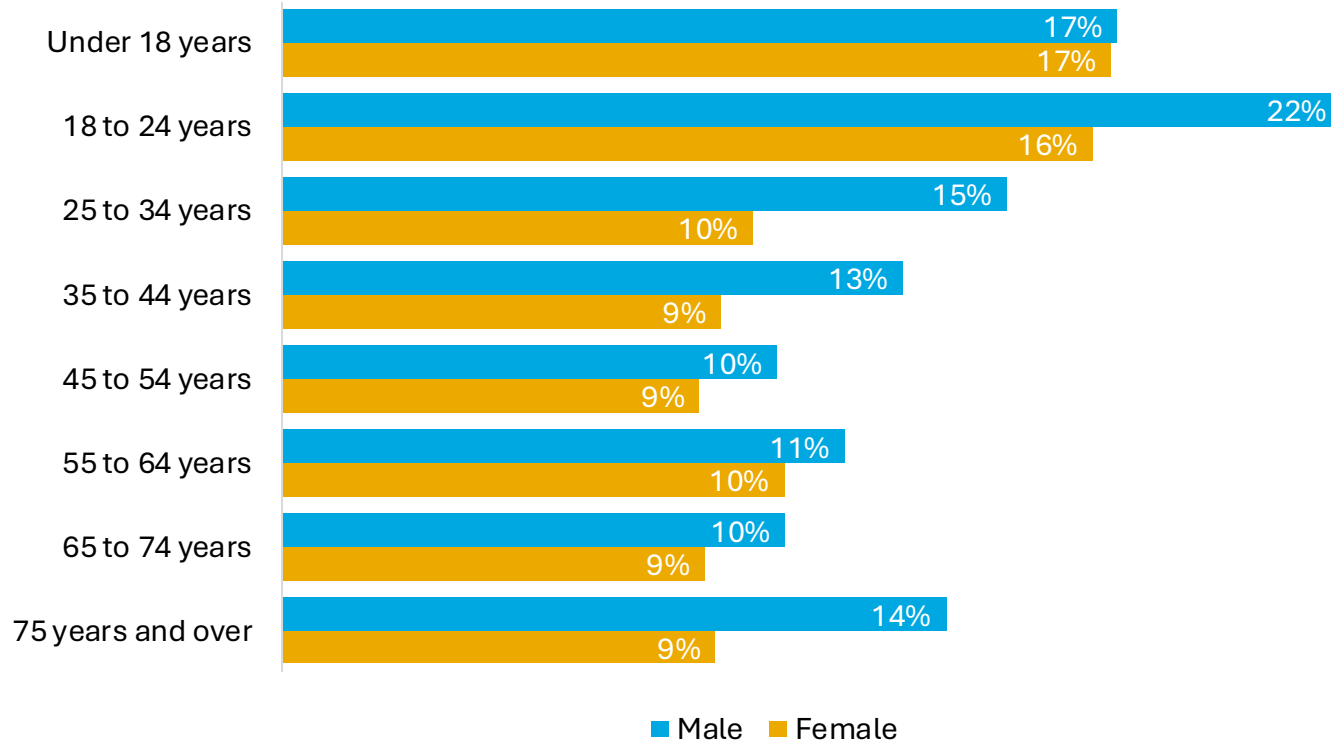
Employment + Finances

Comprising 35% of the U.S. workforce, 80% of Gen X adults are employed. They face the highest debt levels and report the lowest financial security among all generations.

Percentage Of Children Ages 0–17 Living In Poverty By Race And Hispanic Origin, 2000–2021



Poverty % of Population by Age, 2021



Financial pressures on today's families.

76%

think college is a **worthwhile investment.**

87%

think **paying for college** will be difficult.

83%

place **financial aid and scholarships** among the top five factors to choose an institution.

67%

rule out institutions based on solely on the **sticker price**

Their College Planning Preferences

28%

Families who would like their students to travel **less than 100 miles** to attend college.

58%

Families who consider **out-of-state** institutions for their students.

21%

Families who will consider their students attend college entirely **online**.

38%

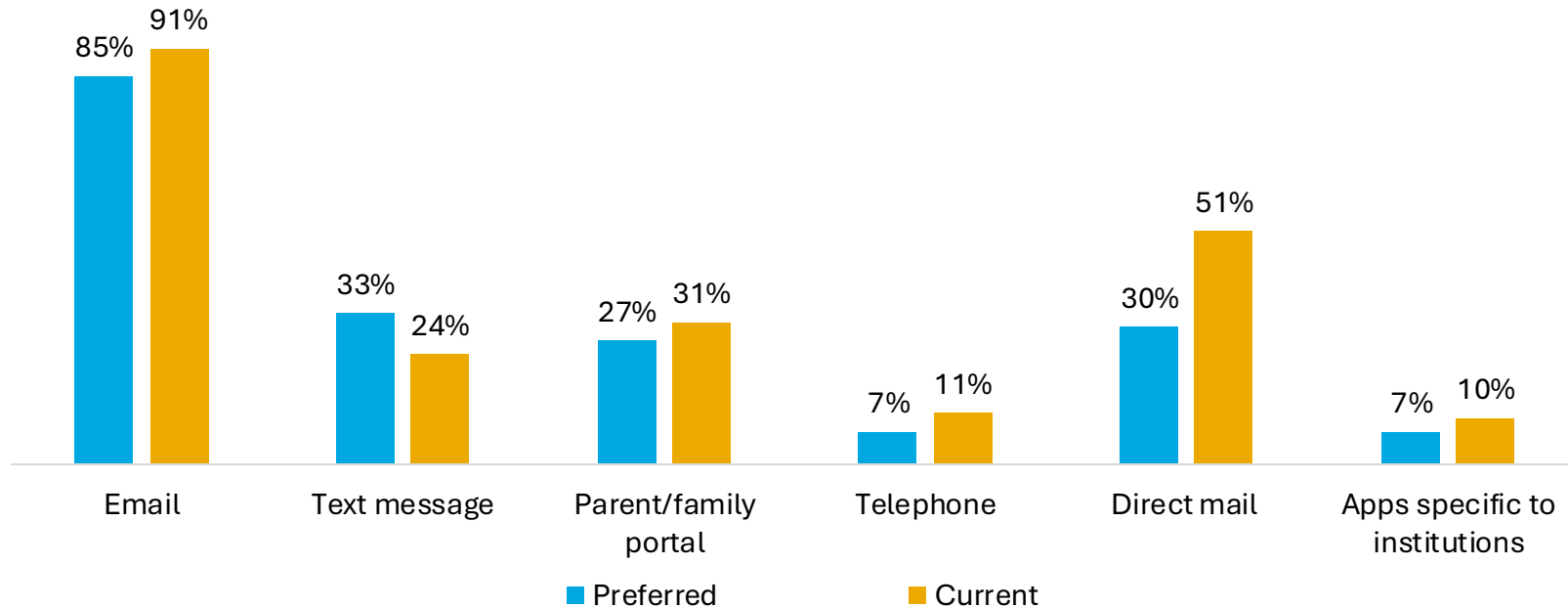
Families who think all institutions should be **test-optional**.

The background features a blue overlay with faint, semi-transparent images of musical notes and a microphone. The text is centered in a bold, dark blue font.

Communication Channels

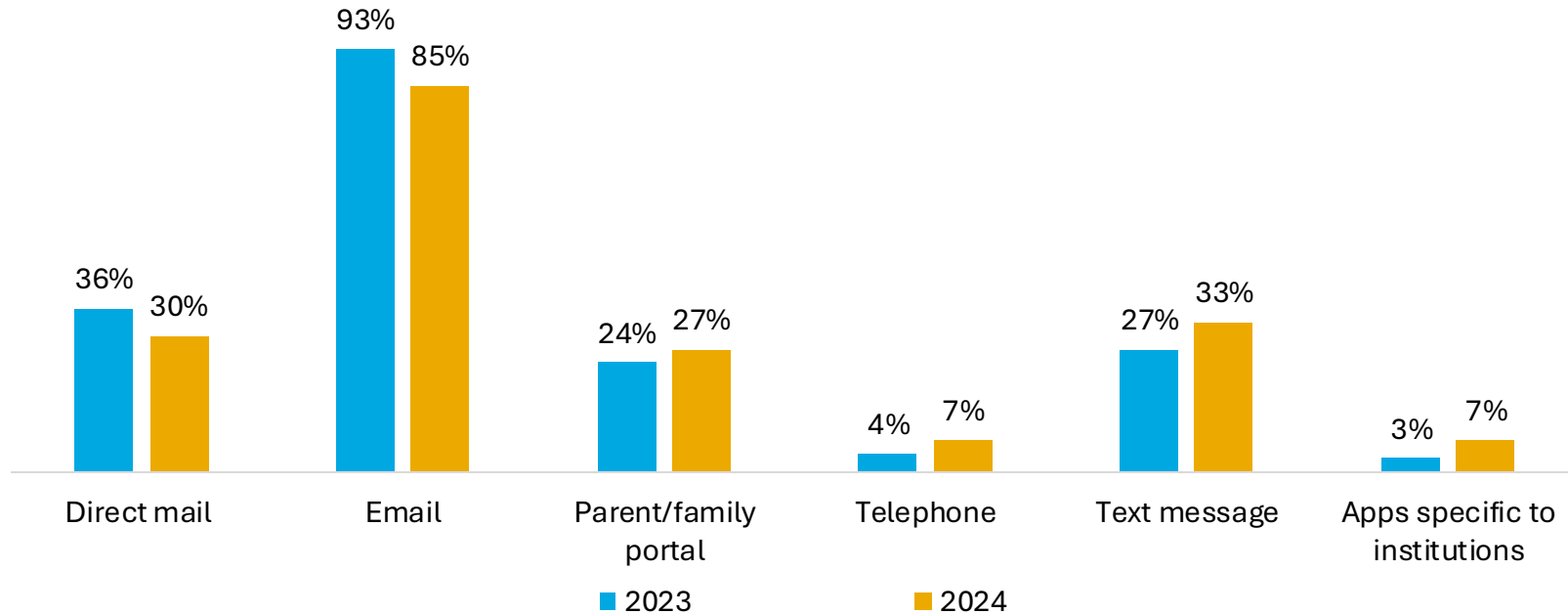
Communication Channels

Text messaging is underutilized by institutions.

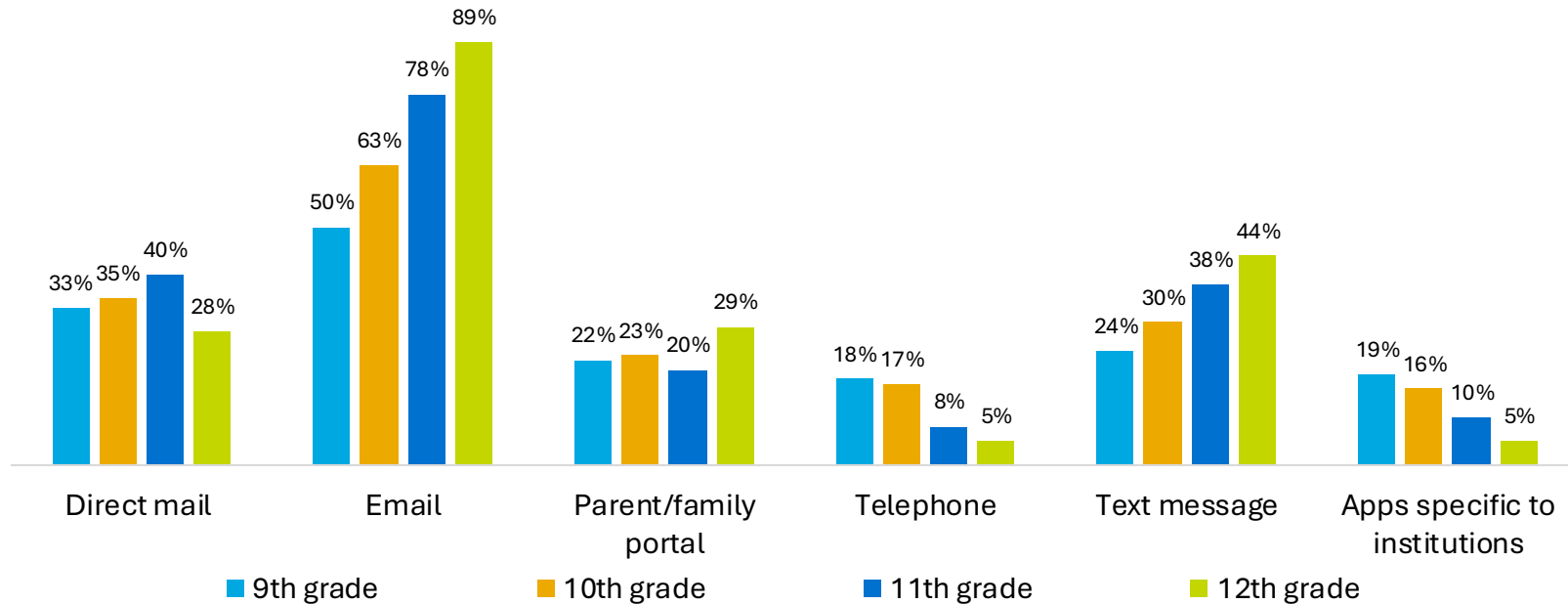


Preferred Communication Channels, 2023 and 2024

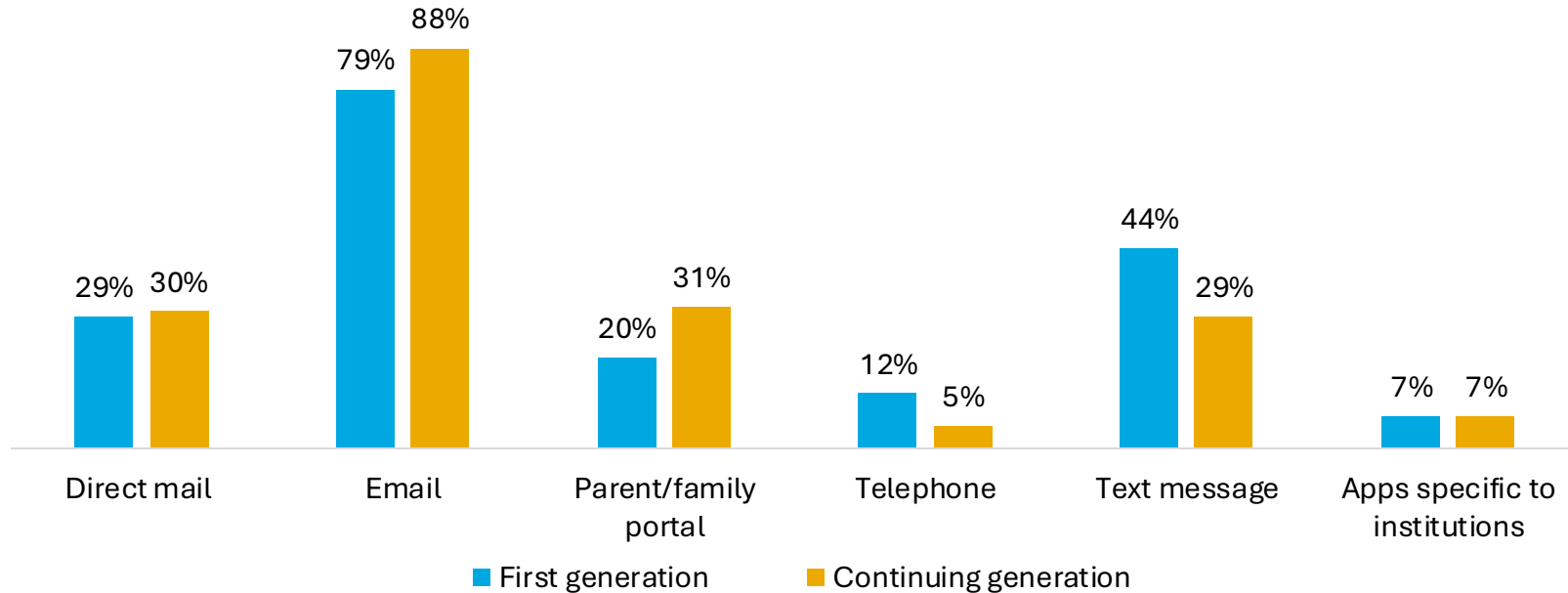
Increase in preference for parent/family portal and text messages.



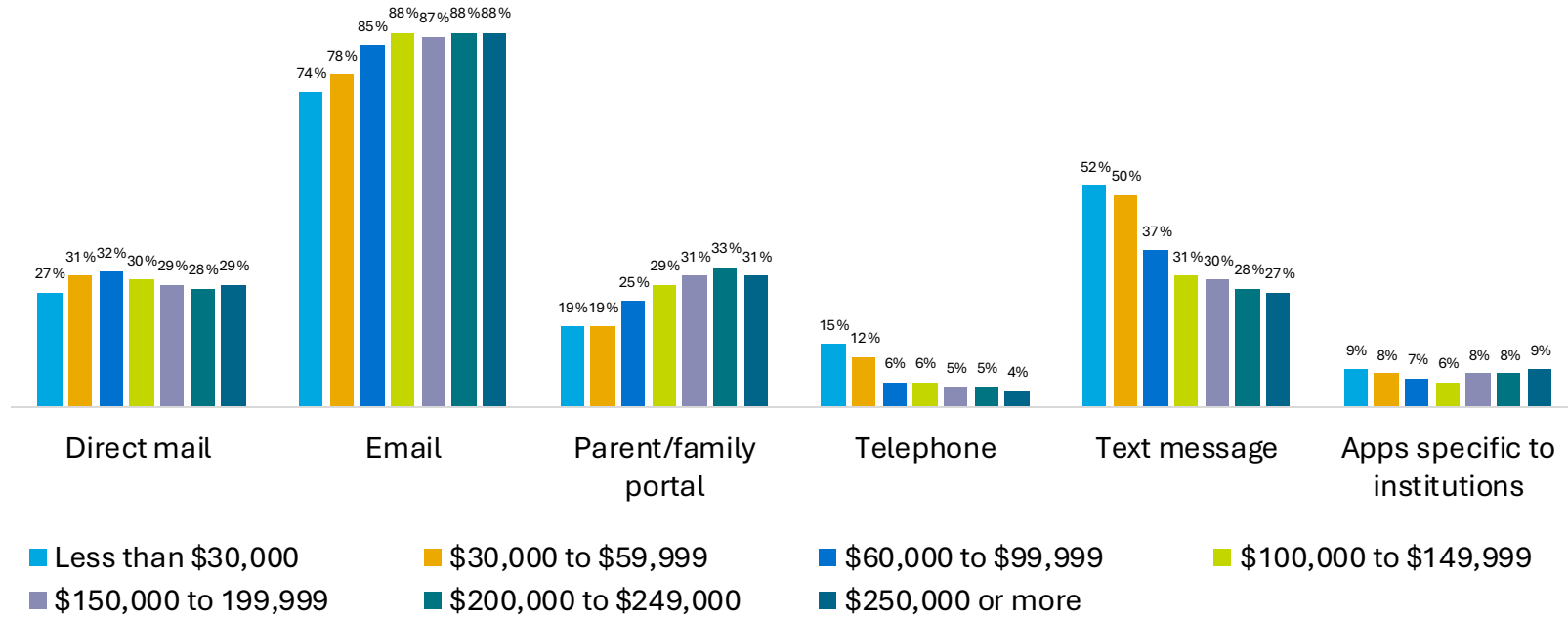
Preferred Communication Channels and High School Year



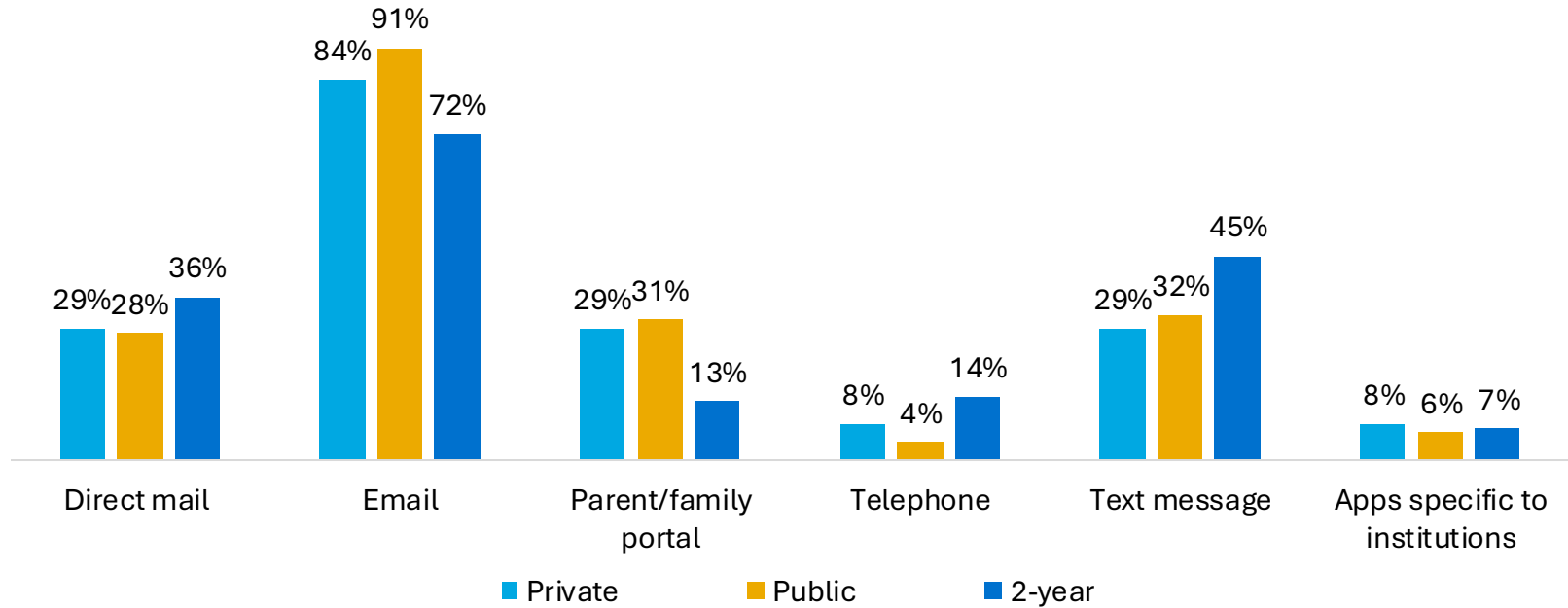
Preferred Communication Channels and First-Generation Status



Preferred Communication Channels and Family Income



Preferred Communication Channels and Type of Institution



Key Implications

Access for All: Ensuring Inclusive Communication with Prospective Families



Email is still the easiest and most preferred way to reach families

It's the communication preference for most families by a greater than 2 to 1 margin. This is your starting point if you're starting your parent communication strategy.



Mind the (technology) gap

Don't assume all families have reliable access to the internet and a preference for digital communication. Offer alternatives for families with limited online access.



Text messaging is increasingly important

Parent communication preferences for text messaging continue to grow each year. It's an especially important channel to reach

- lower income families
- families of first-generation students
- families considering a 2-year college



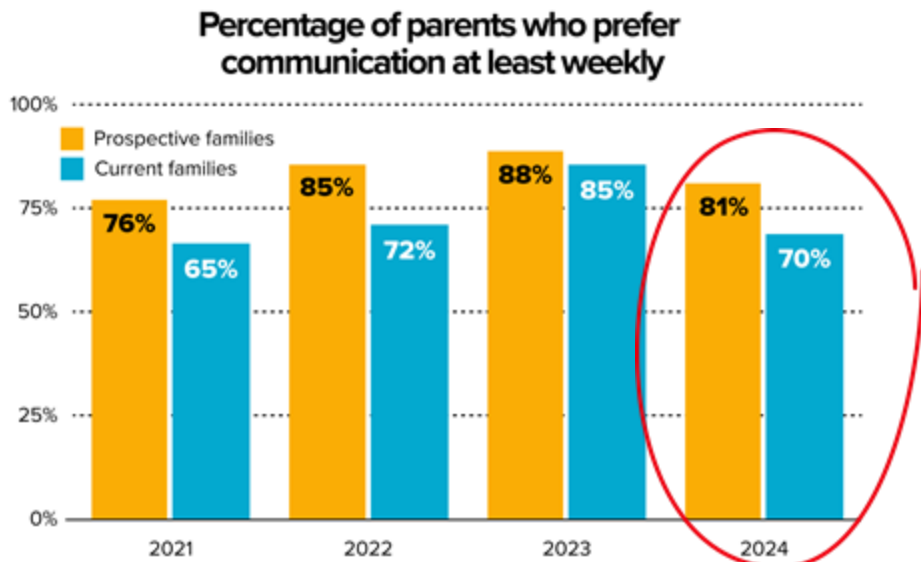
Parent communication expectations vary by high school grade

Before senior year, parents are most open to receiving mailers and communications to build awareness. By senior year, they prefer email and text messages. Generally, they expect more tailored communications the closer their child gets to enrollment.



Frequency of Communication

Today's parents expect regular communication from you.

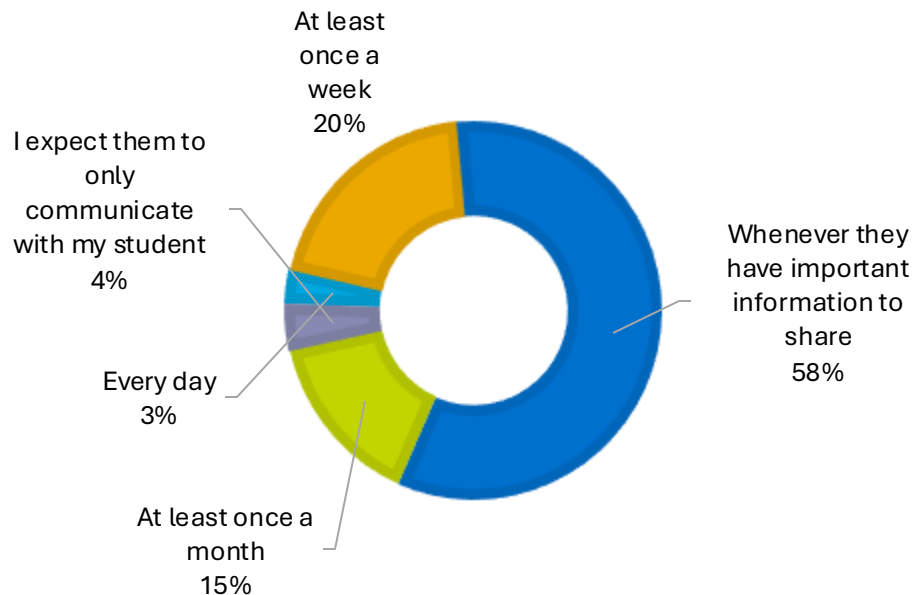


Ruffalo Noel Levitz & CampusESP studies of over 73,000 parents (2021-2024)

81%

of parents expect communication
at least weekly.

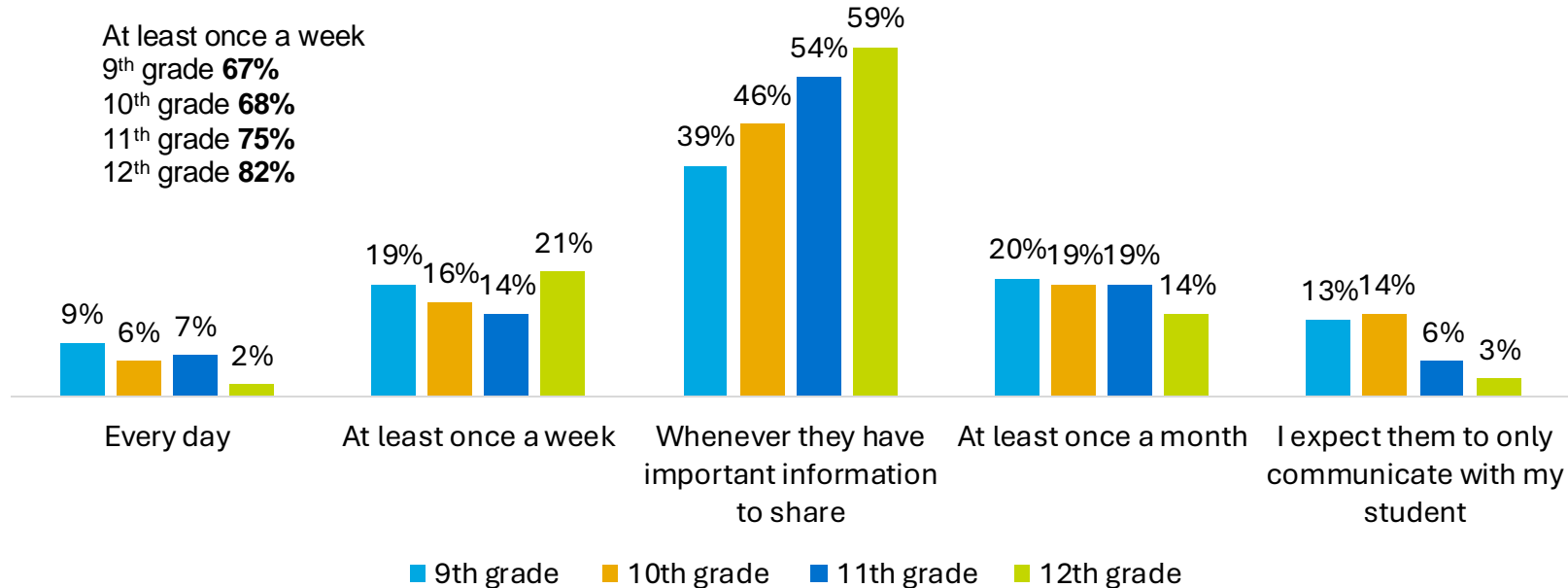
Preferred Frequency of Communication



81%

Of families are open to hearing from institutions at least once a week

Preferred Communication Frequency and High School Year



Key Implications

Frequency Matters!



Communication preferences are back to “normal”

Parent expectations around communication frequency reached a high in 2023. They have decreased slightly but are still very high.



Provide consistent updates

Keep families informed. They expect it! A monthly newsletter or regularly scheduled emails can help keep your school front and center. Most parents do not unsubscribe.



Personalize communications

Offer options for how often families can receive updates to meet different needs and preferences. This can help ensure that all families feel informed without feeling overwhelmed. By 12th grade, families expect more details, such as deadlines and details on financial aid.



Parent communication is now the *norm*

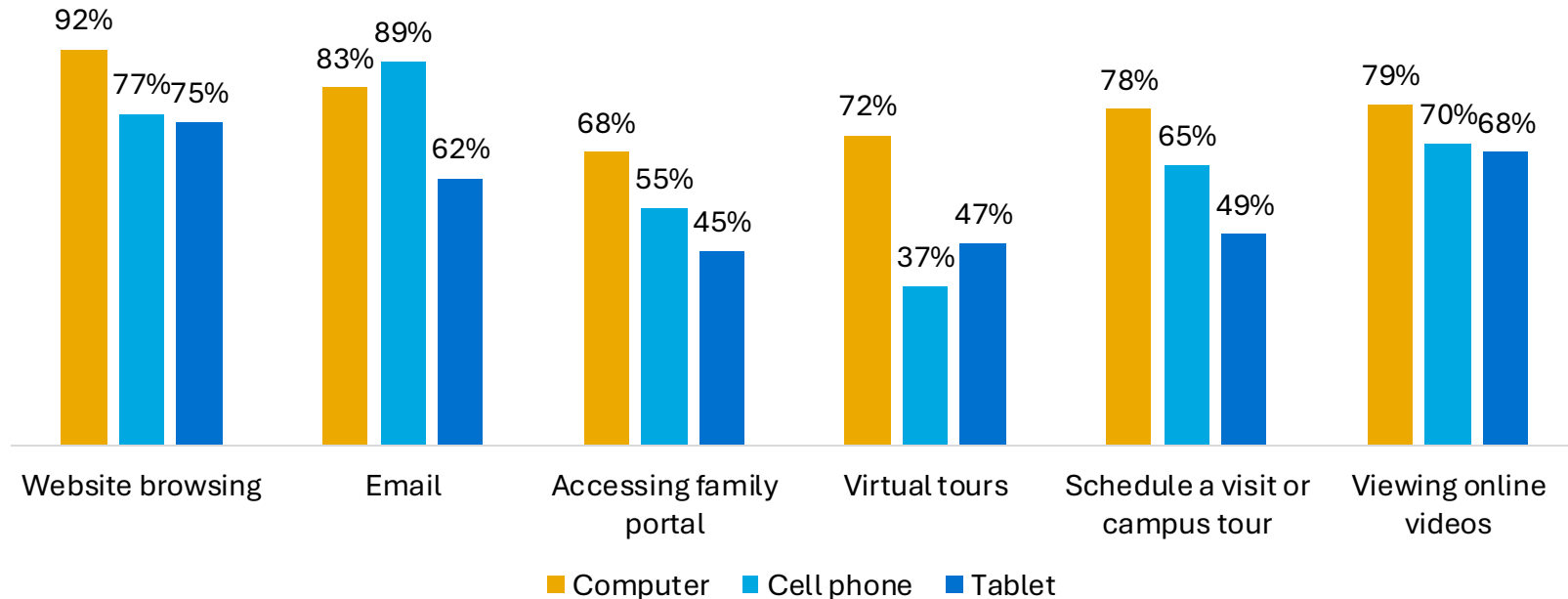
Parent and family communication used to be a differentiator. Now it's expected in 12th grade. Schools are pushing parent comms earlier and earlier. This could be a differentiator for you - if your content is relevant/helpful



Devices Used For College Planning

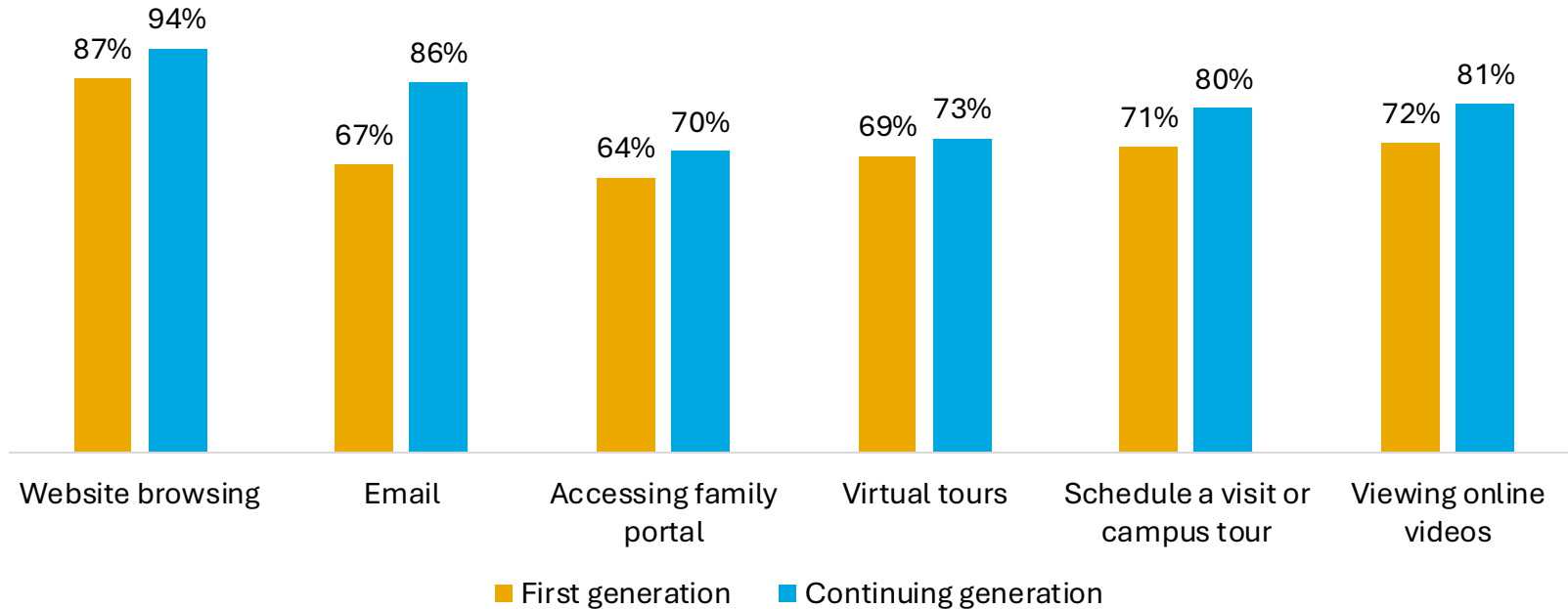
Device Preference for College Planning Activities

90% of families use computers for website browsing, email, and viewing online videos.



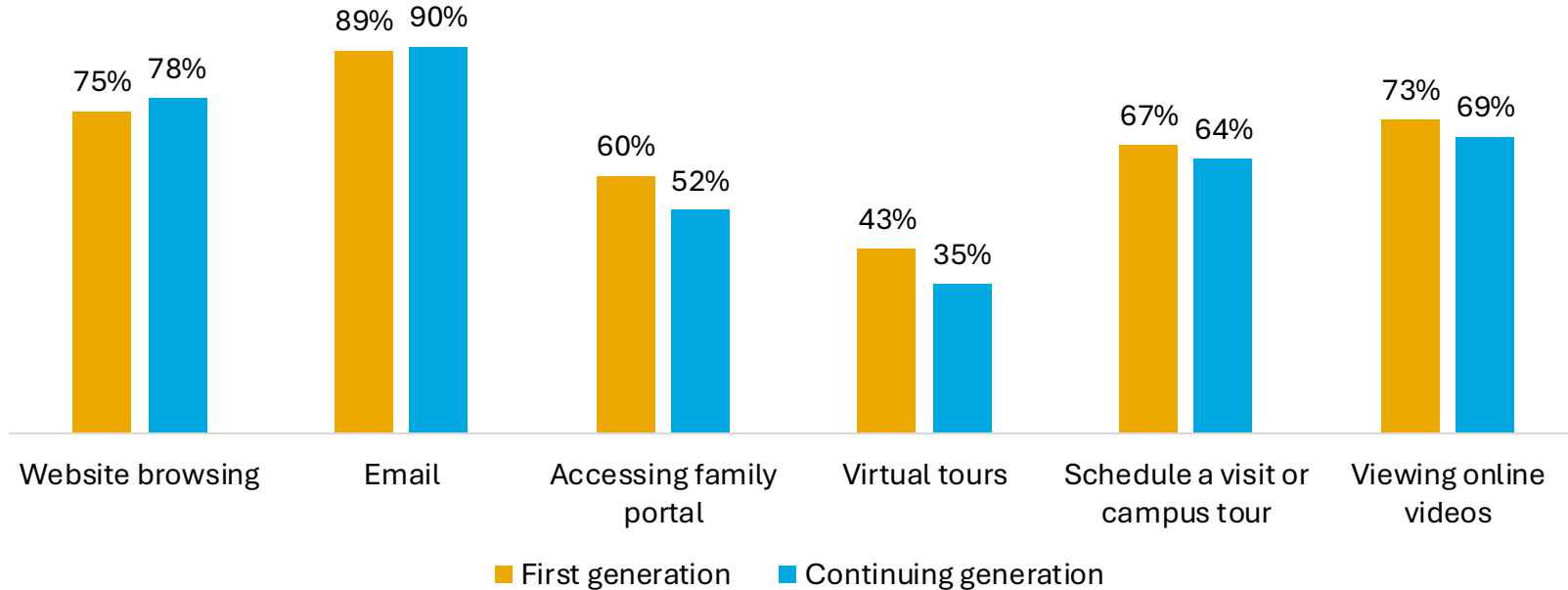
Computer Usage and First-Generation Status

Across most activities, continuing-generation families have higher computer usage.



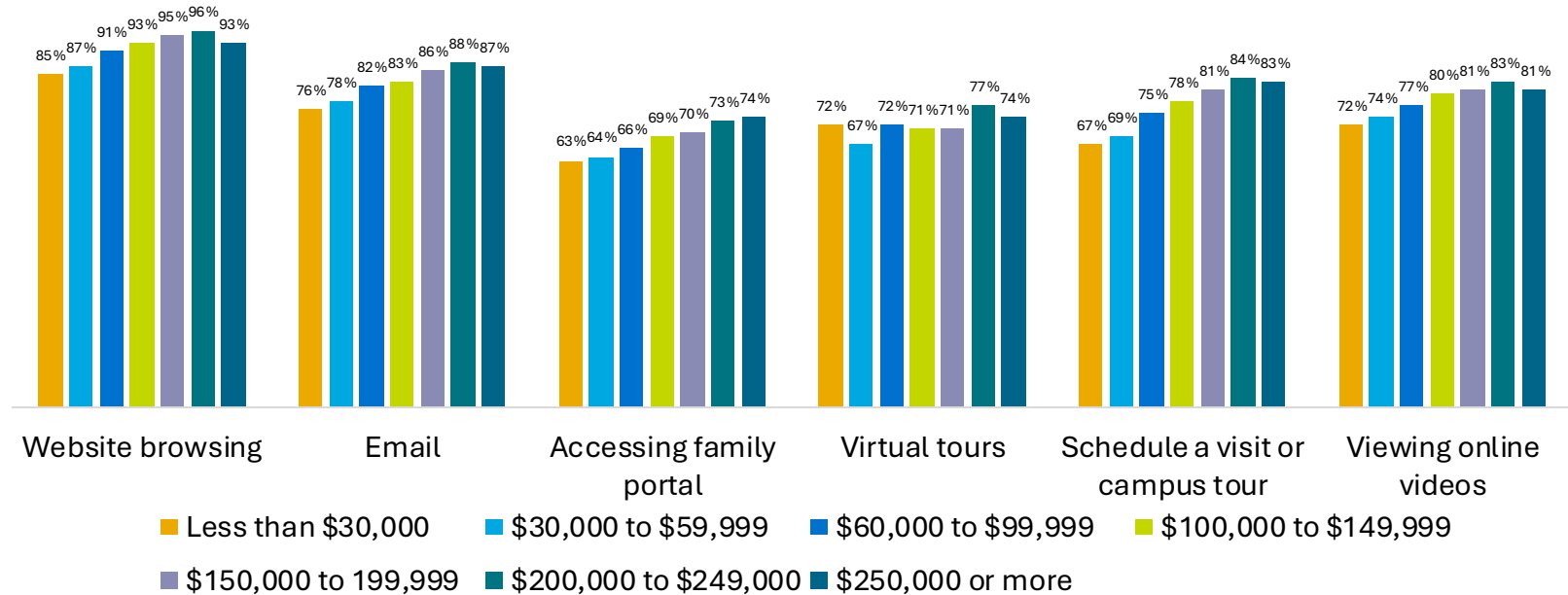
Cell Phone Usage and First-Generation Status

Across most activities, first-generation families have higher cell phone usage.

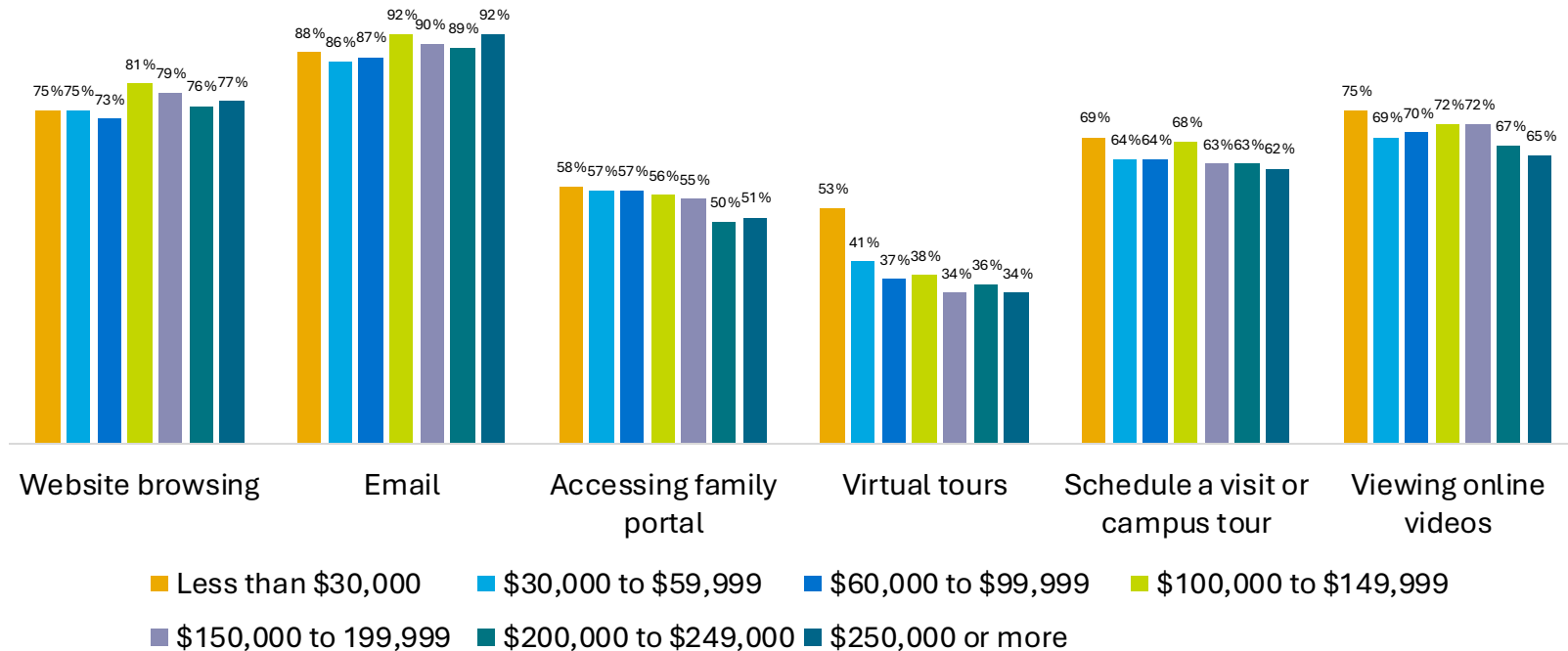


Computer Usage and Family Income

Computer usage increases with income.



Cell Phone Usage and Family Income



Key Implications

Options and Access



Optimize websites for all devices

Ensure your website and online content are easily accessible and user-friendly on computers and mobile devices. This is critical given the varying device usage across different activities and demographics.



Leverage email and video content

Given the high usage of cell phones for checking email and viewing videos, leverage these channels to communicate with prospective students and families. Ensure that email communications are mobile-friendly, and that video content is easily viewable on smaller screens.



Support first-generation college families

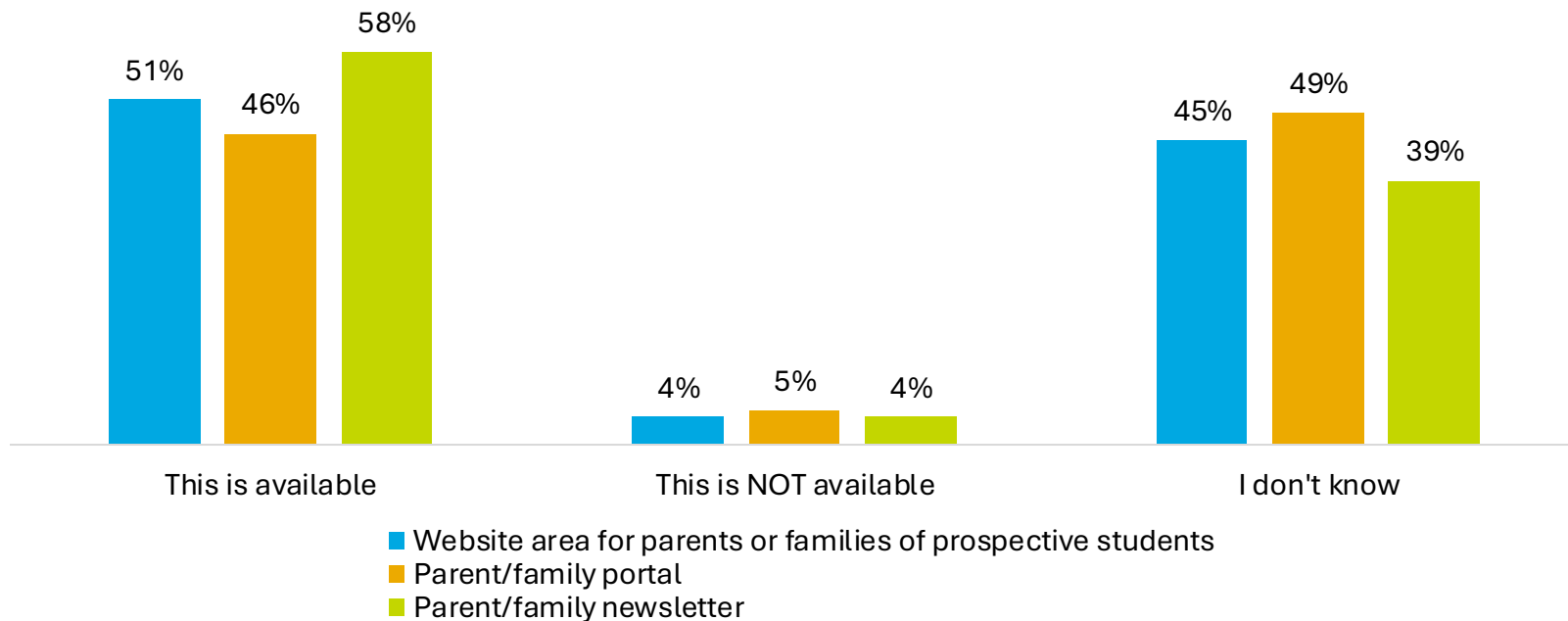
Recognize that first-generation college students and their families may have lower computer access and usage. Provide additional resources and support to ensure equitable access to information, such as computer access programs.



Resources for Families

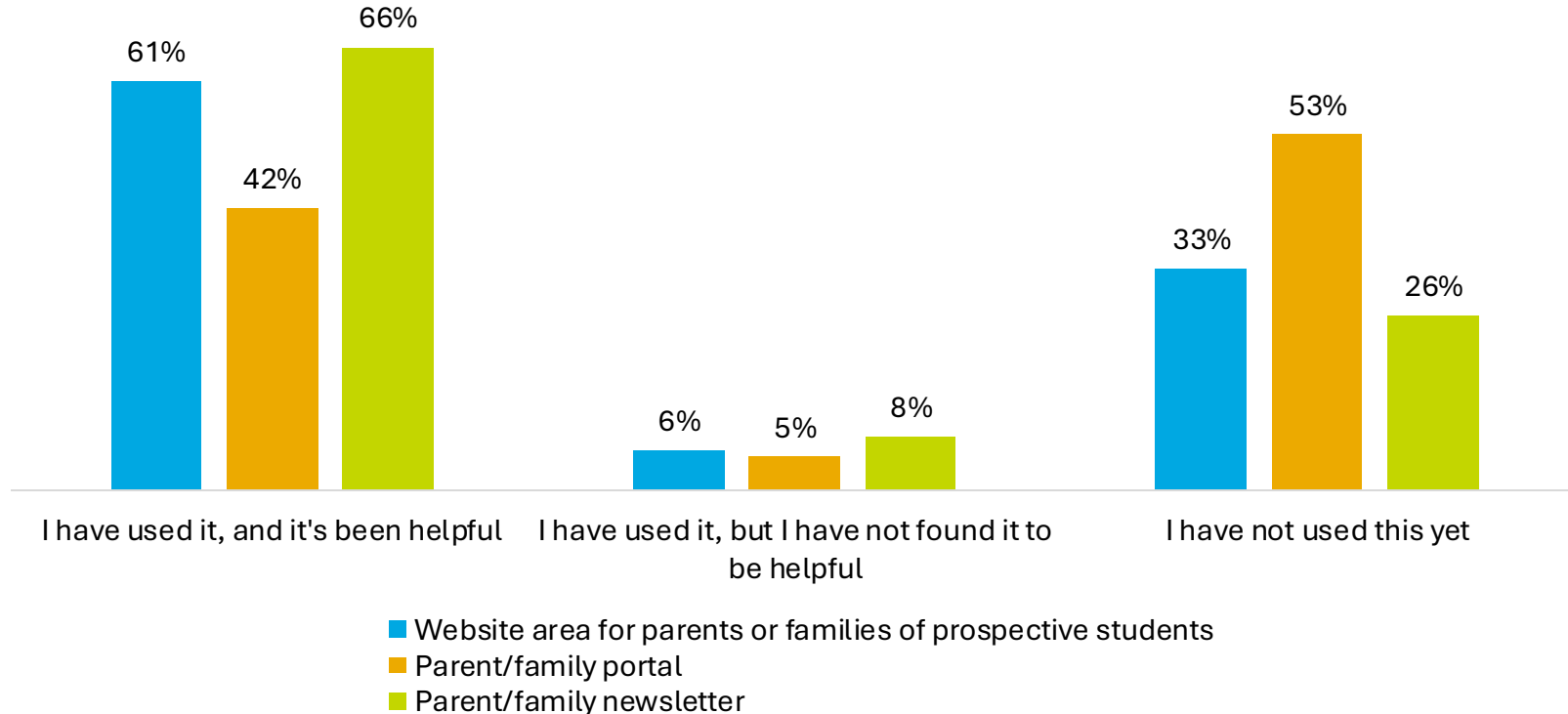
Awareness of Family Resources

A substantial portion of families are aware of family resources.



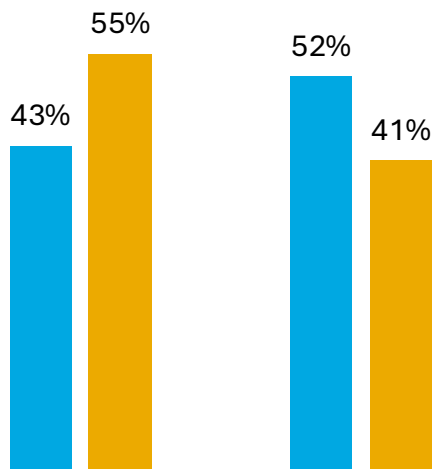
Satisfaction with Family Resources

Most families who use the family resources found them helpful.

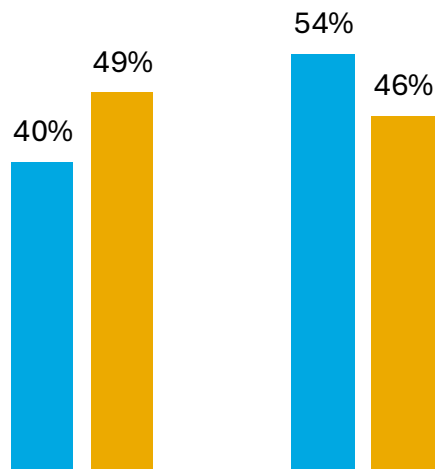


Family Resources and First-Generation Status

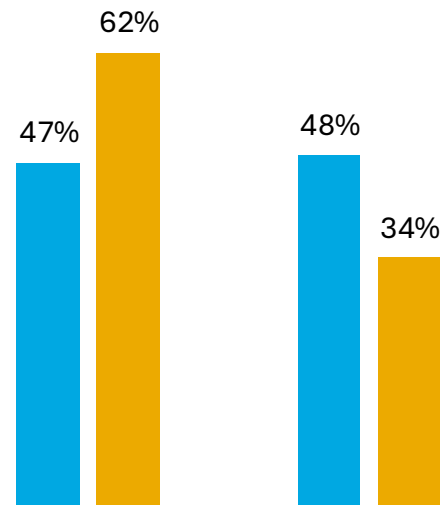
Website area for parents or families of prospective students



Family/parent portal



Parent/family newsletter



This is available

I don't know

This is available

I don't know

This is available

I don't know

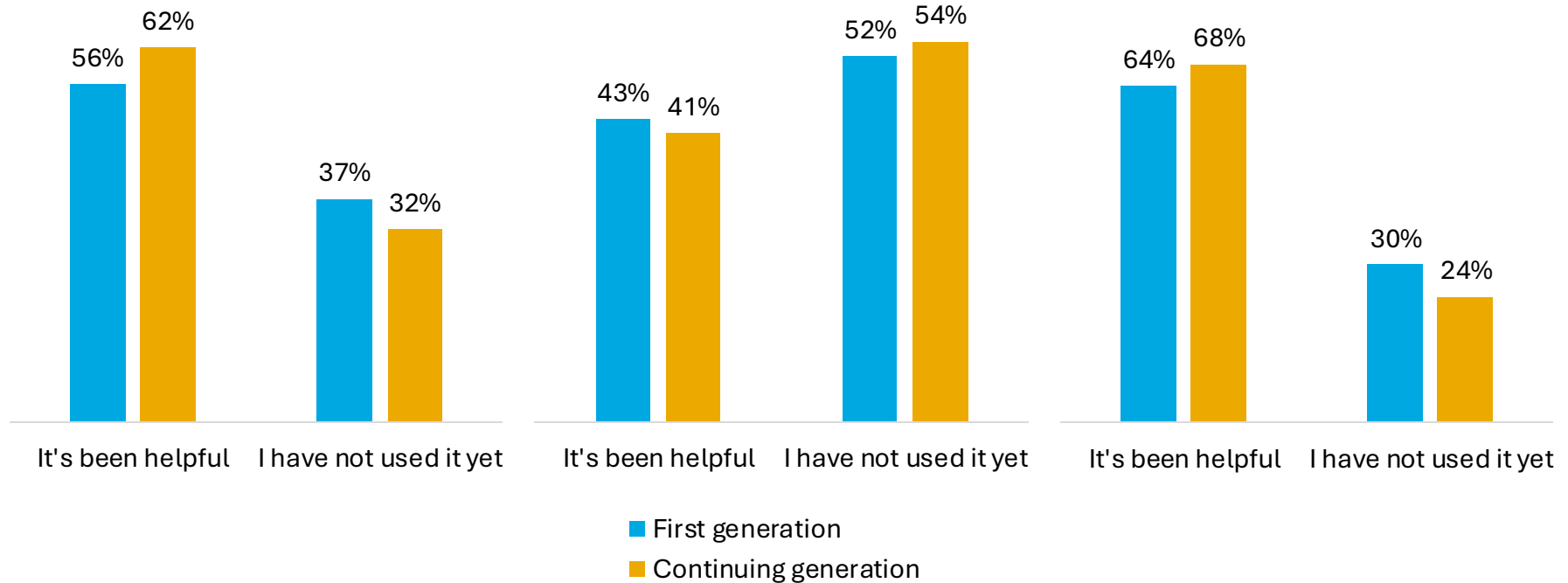
■ First generation
■ Continuing generation

Family Resources and First-Generation Status

Website area for parents or families of prospective students

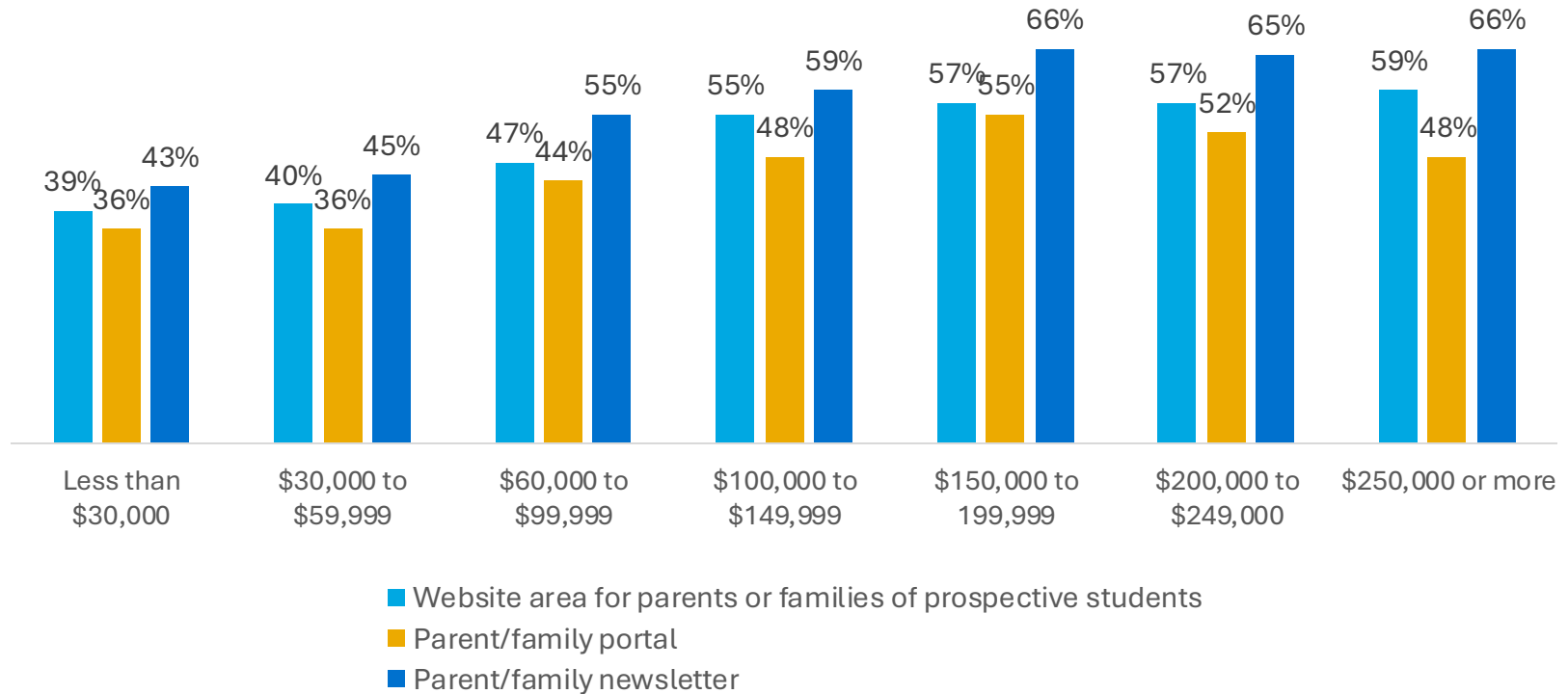
Family/parent portal

Parent/family newsletter



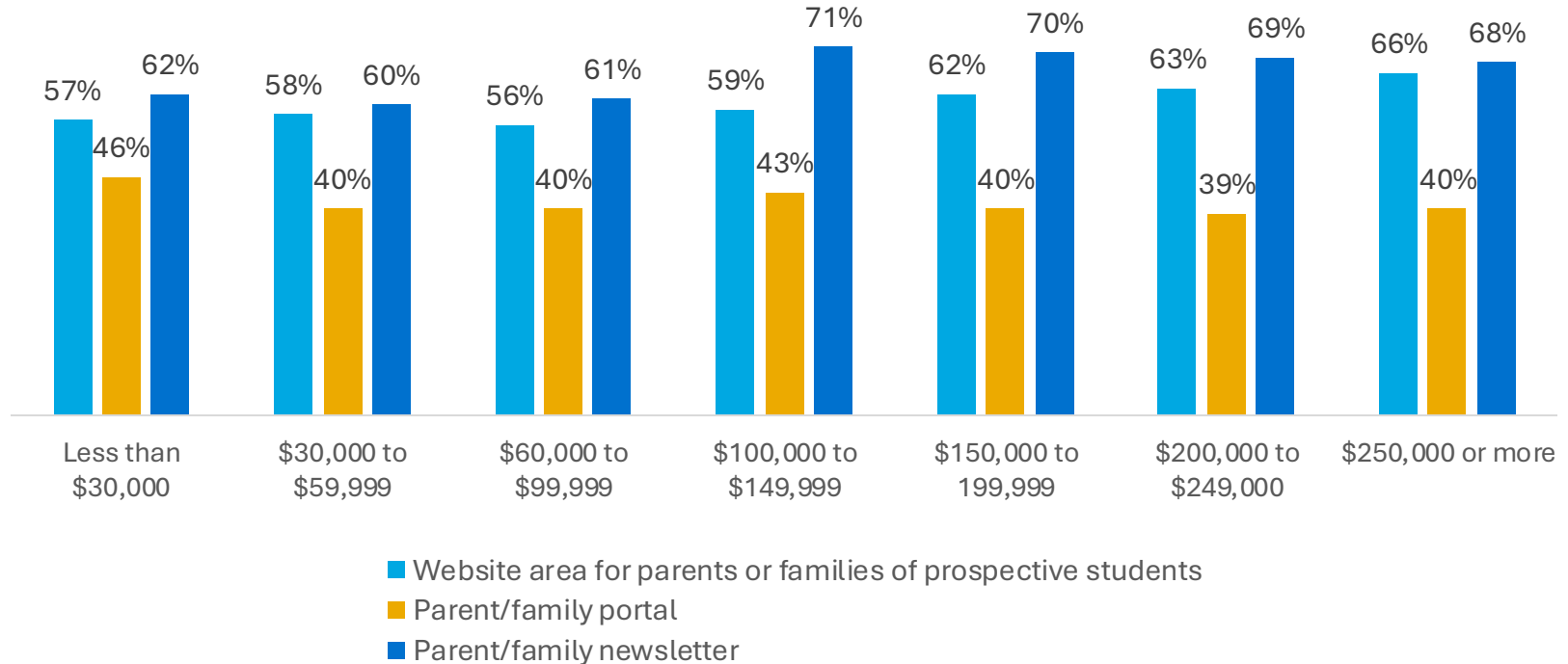
Satisfaction Family Resources and Family Income

Satisfaction with resources tends to increase as family income increases.



Awareness of Family Resources and Family Income

Awareness of family resources increases with family income.



Key Implications:

Raising Awareness, Ensuring Access: Supporting First-Generation and Low-Income Families in College Planning



Provide culturally relevant information

Ensure information about resources is culturally relevant and accessible. Provide translation options and consider the diverse needs and experiences of different racial and ethnic groups.



Lower income families need additional support

Lower satisfaction levels were apparent for lower income families. Some suggestions:

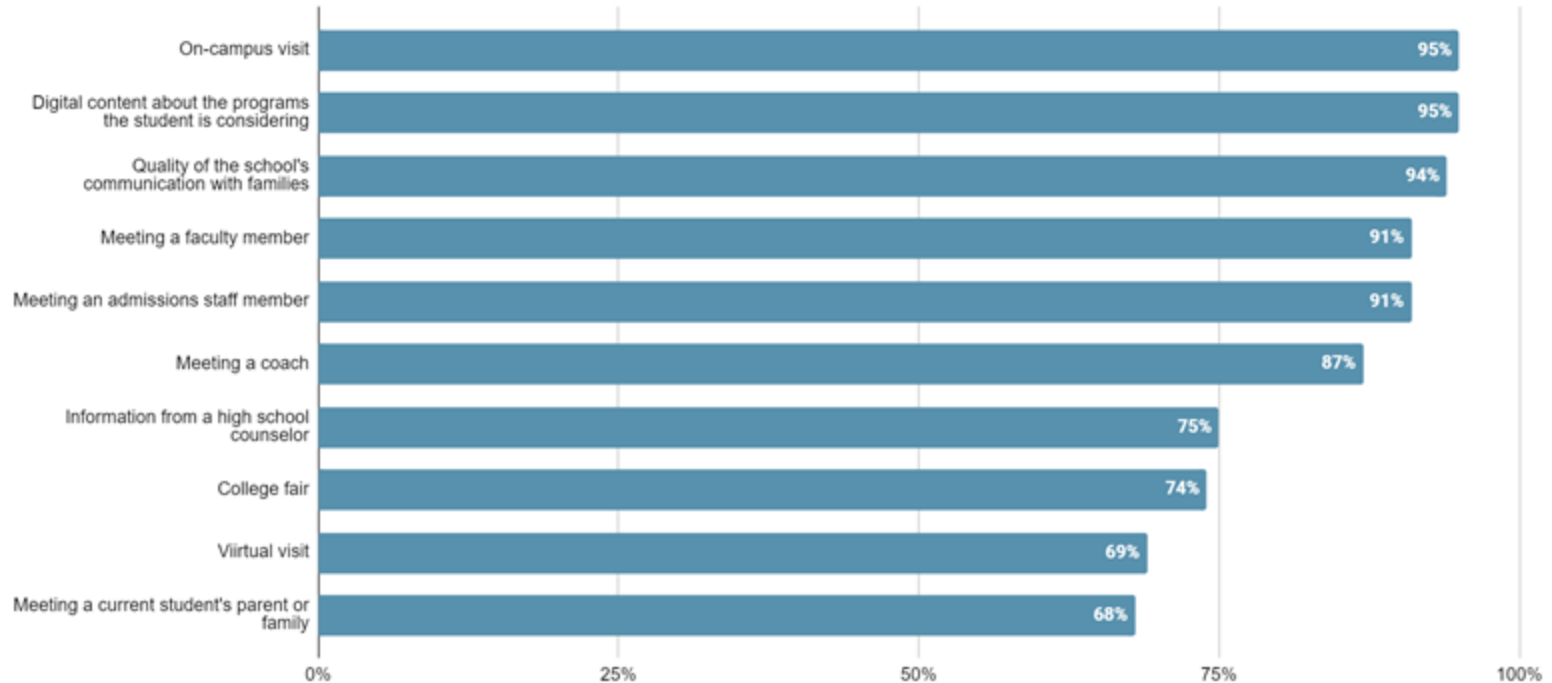
- Ensure resource information is concise and easy to understand. Avoid jargon or assumptions confusing families unfamiliar with the college admissions process.
- Implement targeted outreach and communication strategies to raise awareness of college planning resources among first-generation and low-income families. This could include partnering with schools and community organizations that serve large numbers of these students.

The background features a large, semi-transparent gear with several musical notes floating around it, all set against a solid blue background. The gear and notes are rendered in a lighter shade of blue, creating a subtle, artistic pattern.

College Planning Experiences

College Planning Experiences

What's most important to families?



College Planning Experiences and High School Year

High school year	9th grade	12th grade
On-campus visit	74%	97%
Digital content about the program student is interested in	78%	97%
The quality of the school's communication with parents and families	84%	96%
Faculty	80%	92%
Admissions staff	68%	92%
Experience with a coach	73%	89%

College Planning Experiences and First-Generation Status

First-generation status	First Generation	Continuing Generation
On-campus visit	94%	96%
College fair	82%	70%
High school counselor	84%	71%
Virtual visit	75%	65%
Meeting a current student's family	73%	67%

Key Implications:

Personalized Recruitment for a Changing Student Body: Strategies to Support All Families



Prioritize on-campus visits

Recognize the high importance of on-campus visits for all families, particularly first-generation and low-income families. Offer visit grants or transportation assistance to make visits more accessible.



Prioritize parent communication

For the second year in a row, “quality of parent communication” was in the top 3 of importance for families. Effective and personalized communication can build trust and demonstrates commitment. Ensure that communication is accessible and understandable for all families.



Program content is really important in 12th grade

Along with on-campus visits, this category showed the highest increase in importance for 12th grade families, compared to 9th grade families.



First generation families may value college planning experiences differently

Significant value differences exist between first gen families and continuing gen families:

- Virtual visits: +10%
- College fairs: +12%
- High school counselors: +13%

Do you want to
participate in the
2025 study?
Scan this QR code!



Thank you!



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