

6th IAU Global Survey on:

Internationalization of Higher Education

Current Trends
and Future Scenarios



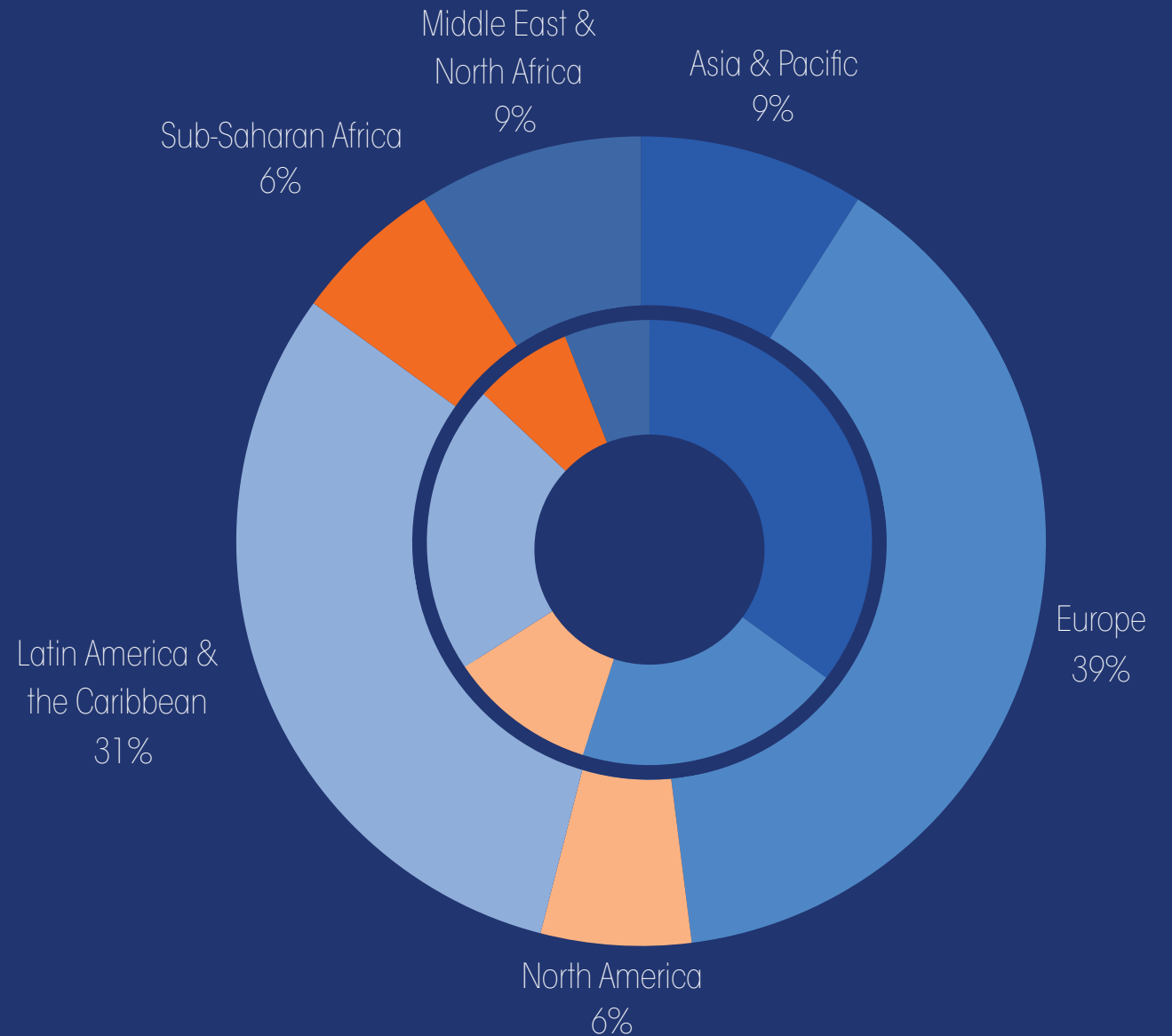
Findings in Figures

Spring 2024

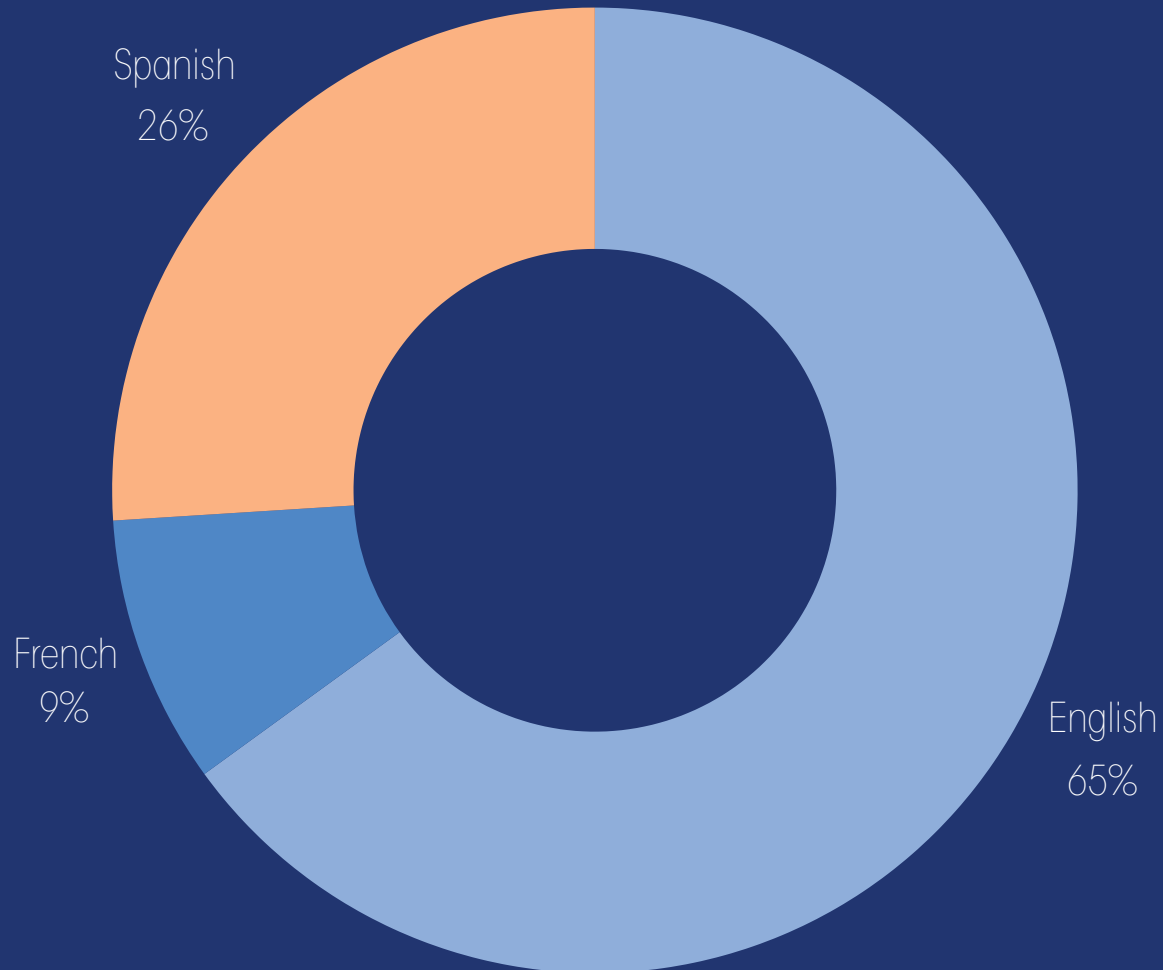
HEI Respondents by Region

The 6th IAU Global Survey on Internationalization collected results from over 110 countries and territories. However, the 722 responses indicate a disproportionate distribution of responses across regions, relative to the number of institutions in each region according to the IAU's World Higher Education Database (WHED). This implies that some regions had a higher or lower response rate than expected, resulting in potential biases in the survey.

The internal circle shows global distribution of HEIs, and the external circle shows survey responses.



HEI Respondents by Language

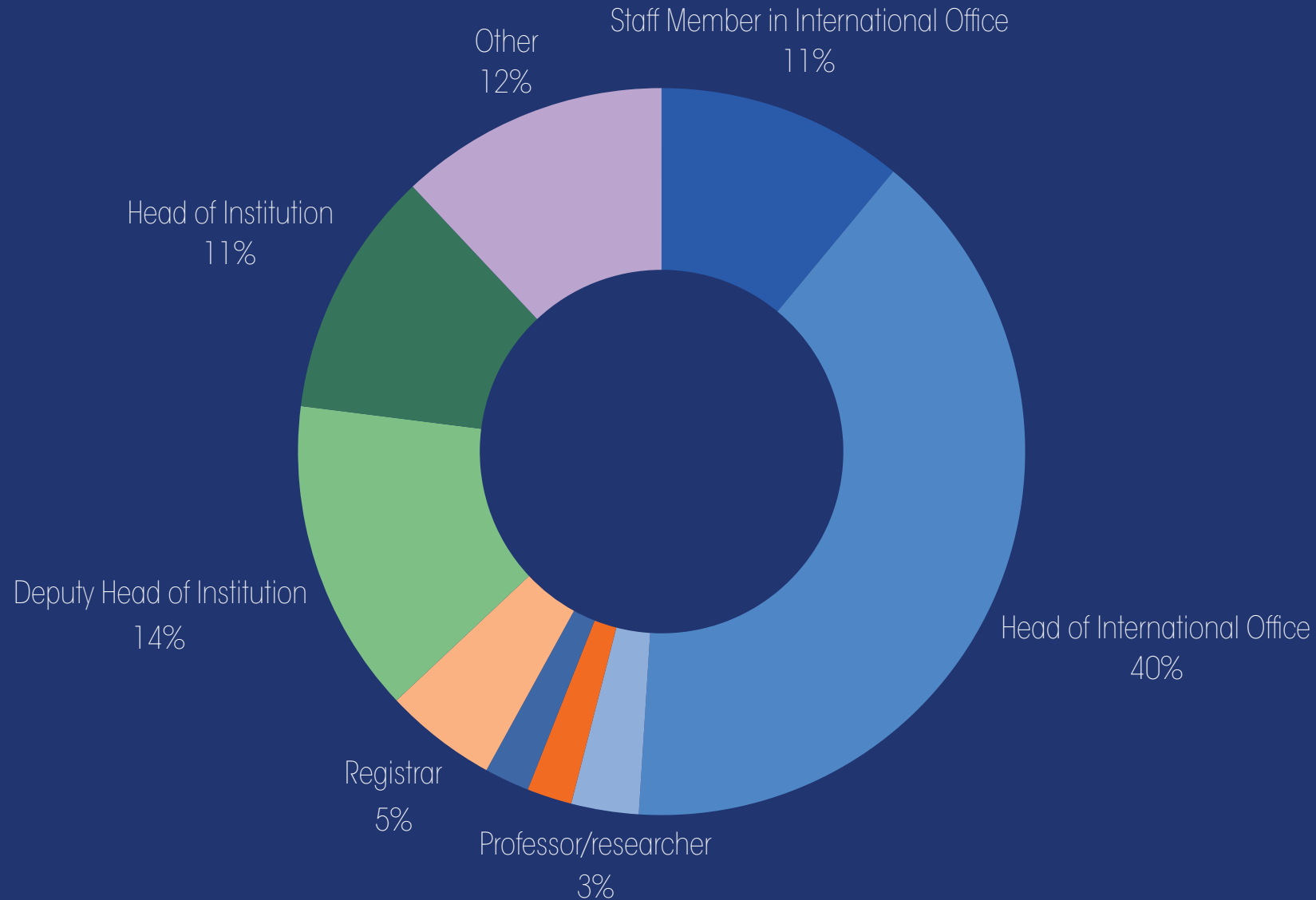


The 6th IAU Global Survey on Internationalization was an online survey available in three languages: English, French and Spanish.

The 6th Global Survey saw an increase in the percentage of replies in English (65% vs. 54%), while the percentage of HEIs replying in French significantly decreased (9% vs. 20%) compared to the 5th edition. The availability of the survey in Spanish is likely to have contributed to collecting responses from HEIs in Latin America & the Caribbean, where replying in English could have been an obstacle. However, assessing the contribution of French-speaking countries, particularly in Africa, is challenging due to the decrease in responses. Despite these changes, there is an overall decrease in the total number of replies across all three languages.

Position of Respondents

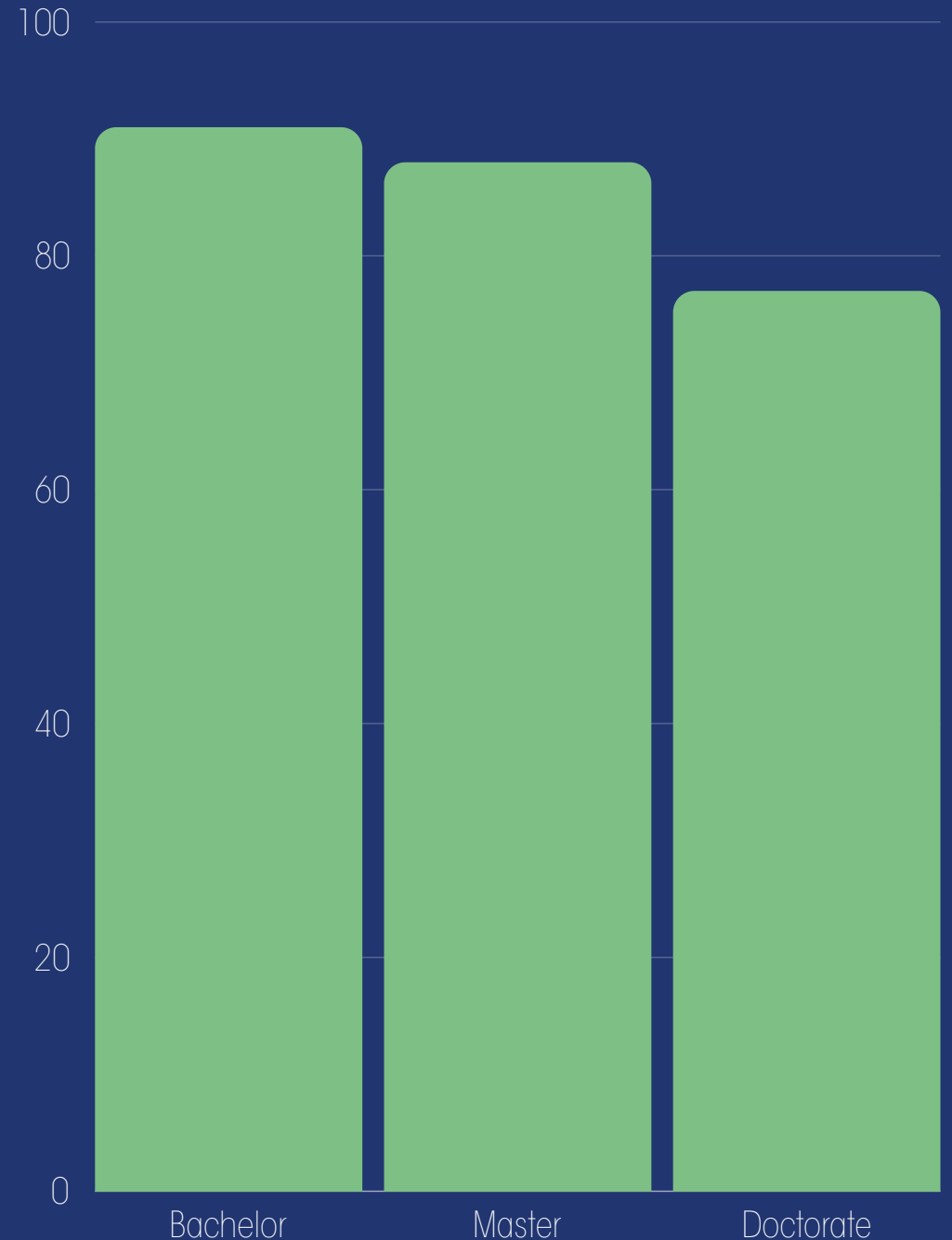
The position of individuals who responded to the survey varies, with heads of international offices representing the single largest group at about 40%. Staff members in international offices together with the head of the international office make up more than half of the respondents. Considering that the majority of the respondents who chose “other” hold administrative positions (e.g. assistant to the vice-rector for internationalization, head of academic mobility unit, advisor for internationalization, etc.), it can be concluded that the majority of respondents are administrative rather than academic staff.



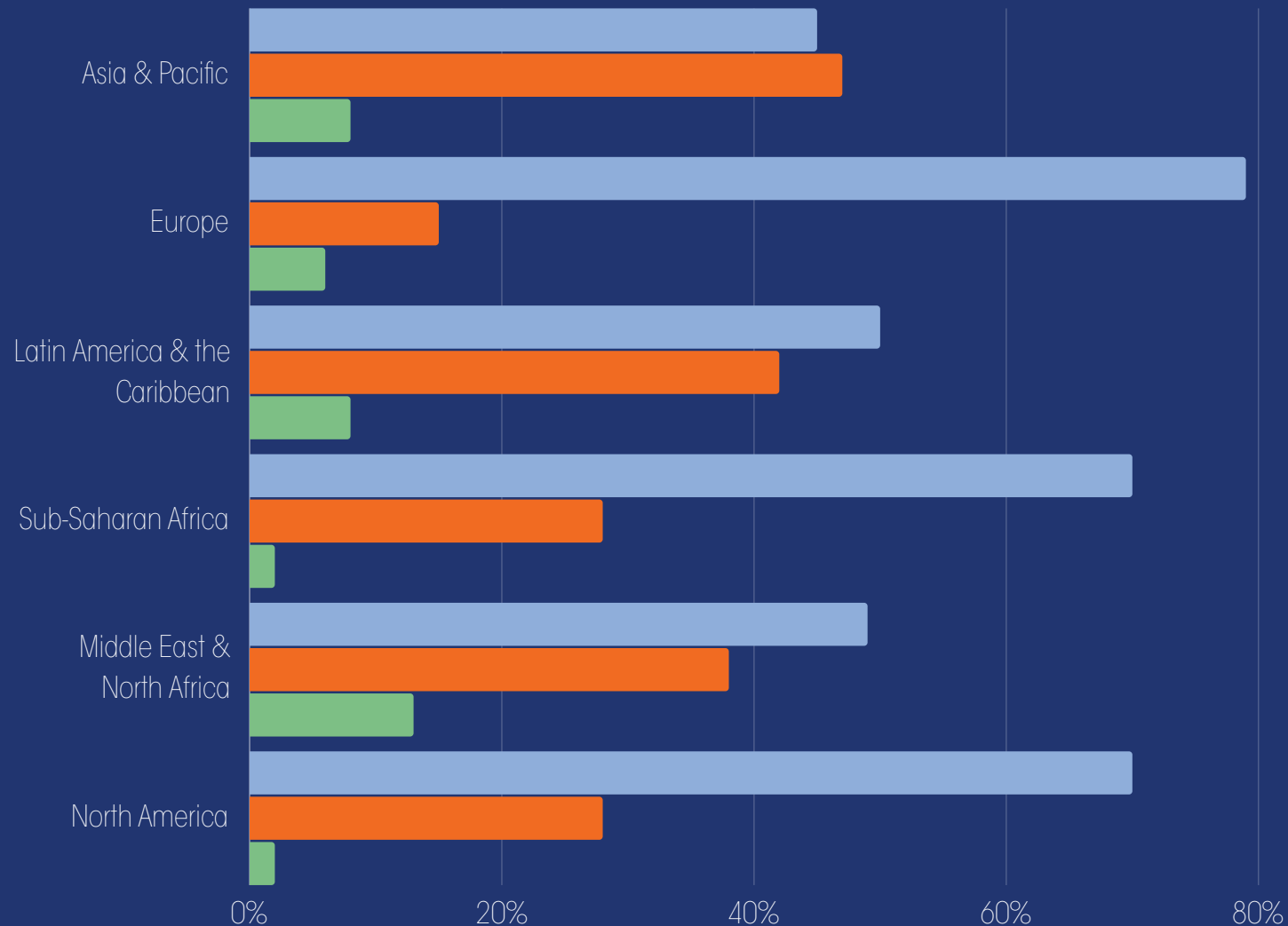
Levels of Qualification Offered

Almost all responding HEIs offer BA/BSc programmes, with a slightly lower percentage offering MA/MSc programs, and more than two-thirds of HEIs providing qualifications at the doctoral level. This result is very similar to the 5th Global Survey (BA/BSc 91%, MA/MSc 84% and Doctorate 67%).

Unfortunately, it was noted that there were some inconsistencies in the responses received from participating HEIs regarding the level of qualifications offered, with 34 HEIs indicating “Doctorate” as the only level of education offered by the institution. These inconsistencies were carefully examined and verified, and it was determined that the erroneous replies did not accurately reflect the actual offerings of these institutions. Nevertheless, in the interest of maintaining data integrity and inclusivity, these responses were retained in the dataset for further analysis.



Type of Responding Institution by Region

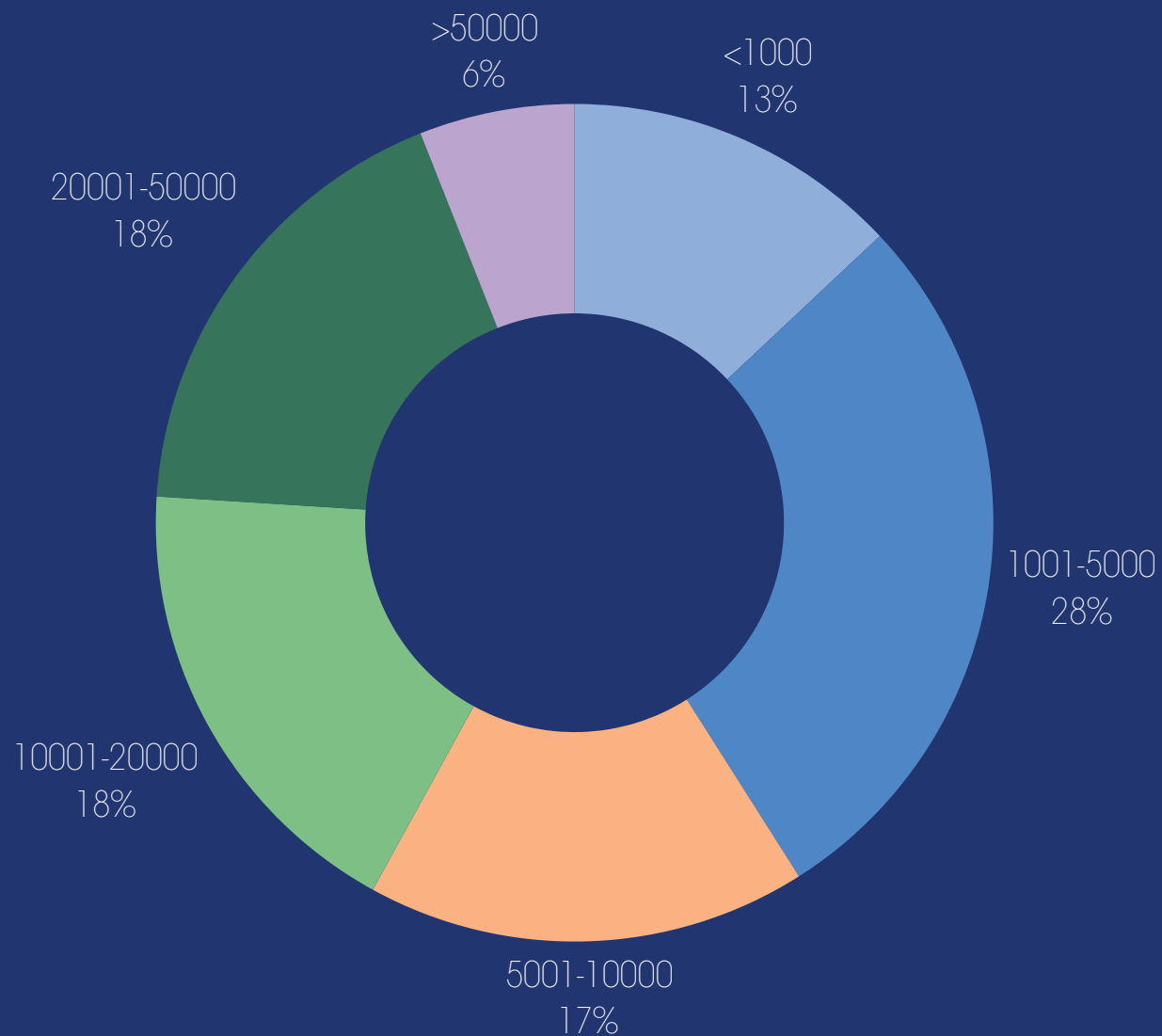


The majority of responses came from public universities: 458 out of 722, making up about 63% of total responses. 214 (30%) responses were collected from private not-for-profit institutions and 43 (7%) were collected from for-profit universities.

Comparing this distribution with data from the WHED (43% public vs. 57% private), it is clear that public HEIs are over-represented in the 6th IAU Global Survey, while private HEIs are under-represented. Comparing these results with the distribution of HEIs in the WHED reveals a varying degree of over-representation of public universities in all regions.

■ Public ■ Private Not-For-Profit ■ Private For-Profit

HEI Respondents by Student Population



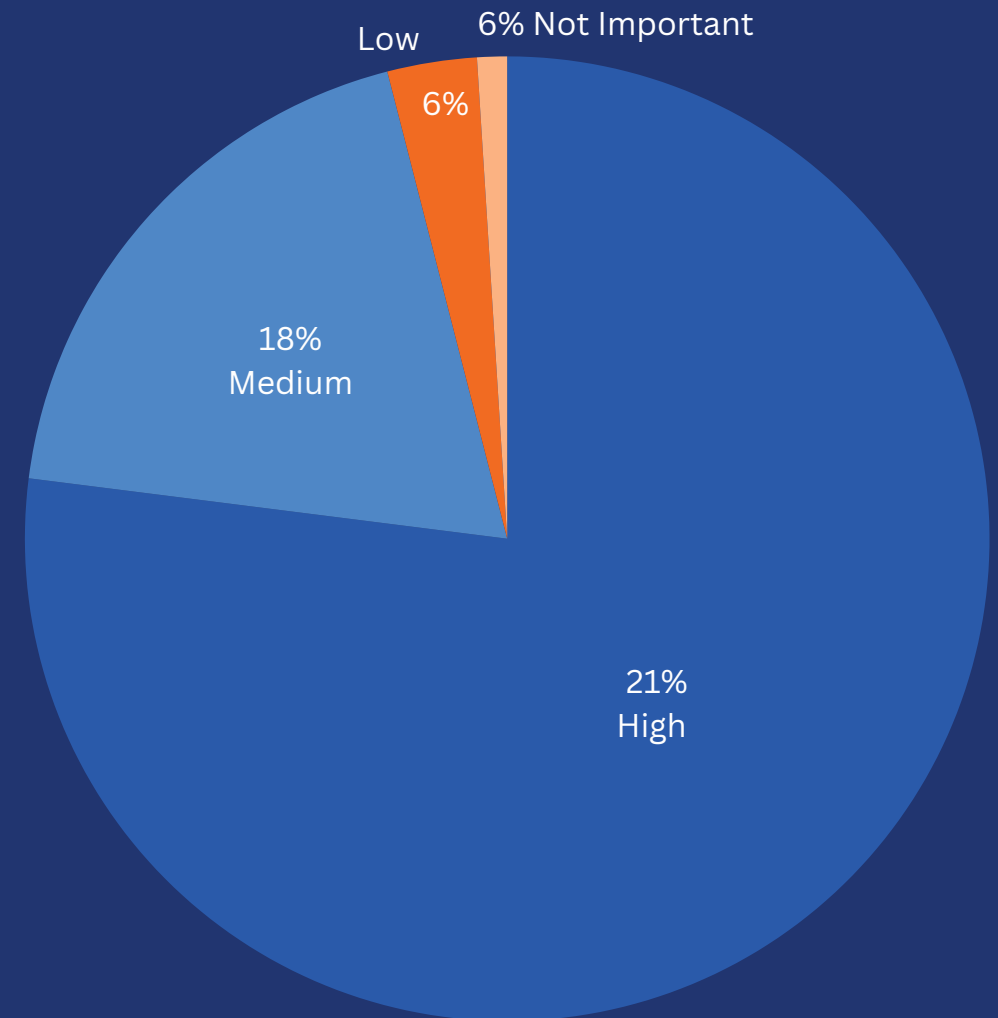
In terms of student enrolment for the academic year starting in 2021, most responses came from small to medium-sized institutions, with 58% of HEIs having 10 000 students or fewer. This distribution is almost the same as in the 5th Global Survey, the largest degree of variation being only 3% (HEIs with less than 1 000 students made up 16% of respondents in the 5th Global Survey, while they account for 13% in the 6th).

The typical profile of a responding institution closely resembles that of the 5th Global Survey, as well as that of the 4th Global Survey if geographical location is excluded. The fact that institutional profiles of respondents have remained stable over three editions of the survey helps to interpret the nuanced differences in the results between the last three editions of the survey.

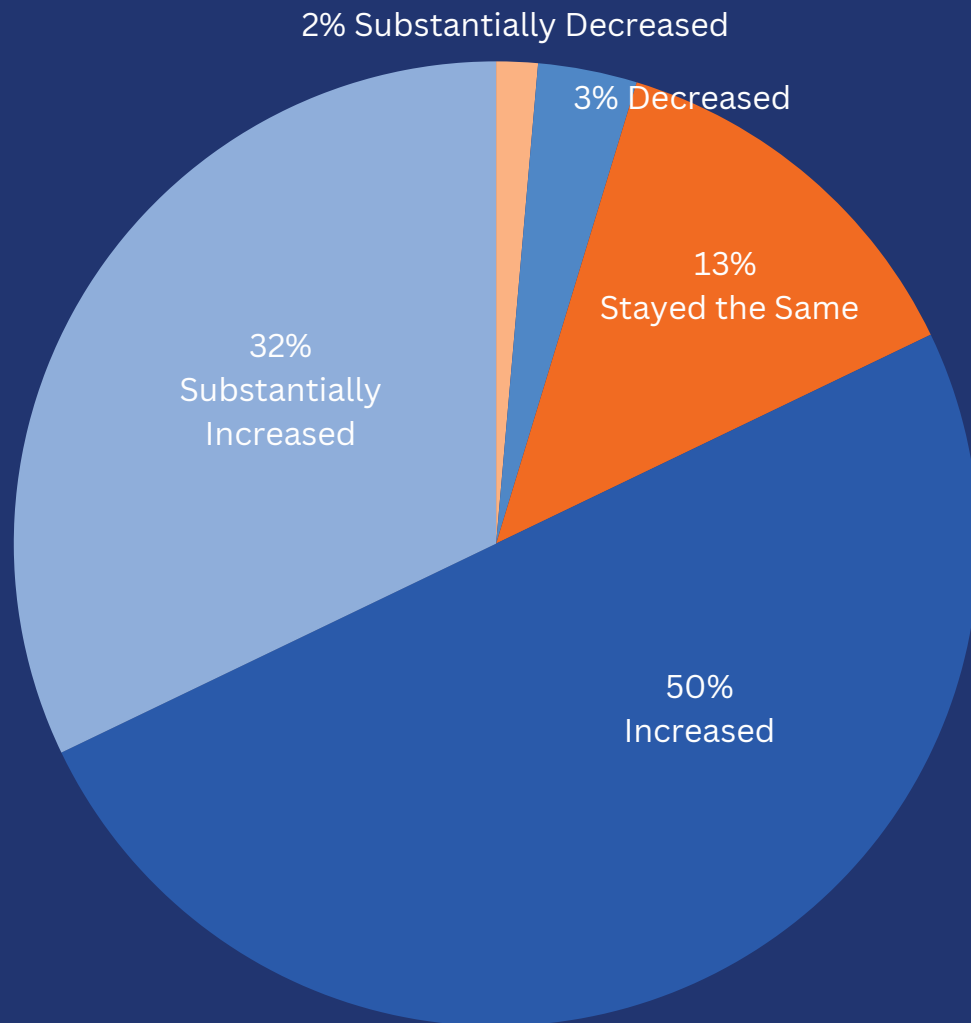
Level of importance of internationalization for academic leadership

A significant majority of respondents, 77%, indicated that internationalization is of high importance to their leadership. Compared to the results of the 4th (69% high, 25% medium and 5% low) and 5th Global Surveys (68% high, 26% medium, and 5% low) the results of the 6th edition show an increase in the percentage of respondents indicating a high importance and a decrease in the percentages indicating medium and low importance. This indicates that in the last five years internationalization has become even more important for the leadership of HEIs around the world.

Interestingly, professors/researchers appear to hold a relatively lower perception of the importance attributed to internationalization by their academic leadership compared to any other institutional actors.

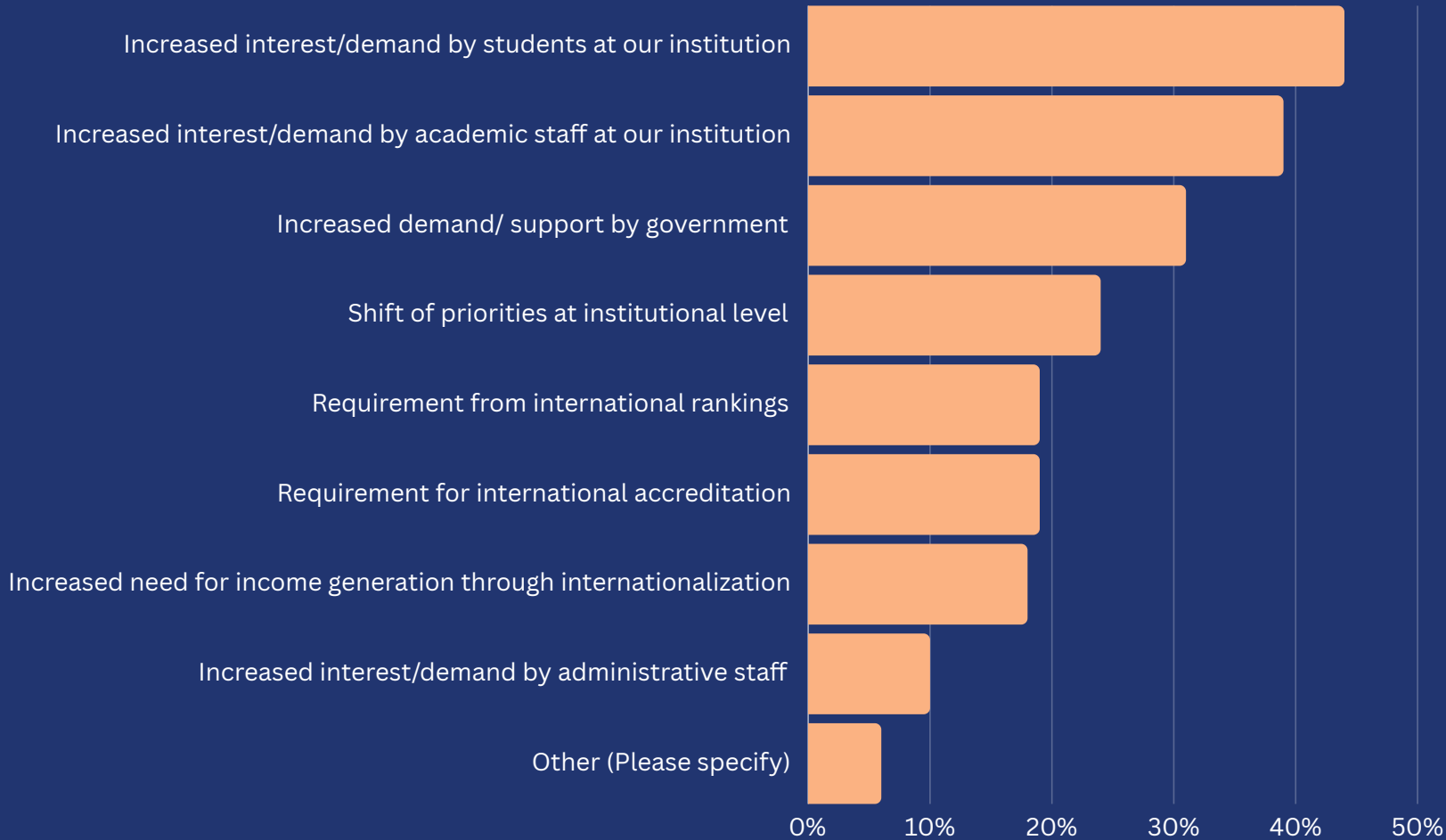


Change in the level of importance of internationalization over the last five years



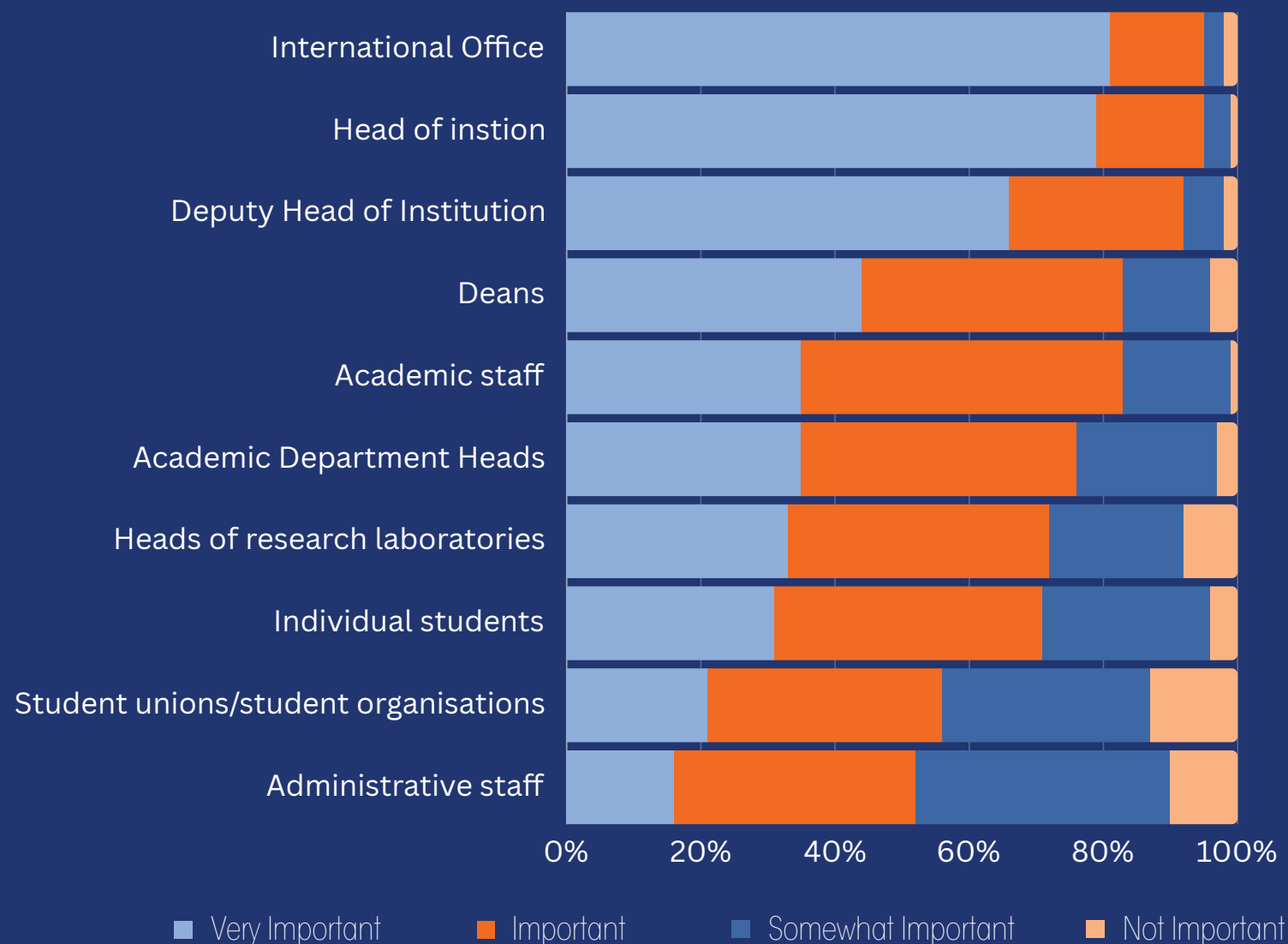
More than 82% of replies indicate that the level of importance of internationalization has increased for institutional leadership in the last five years, with 32% indicating that it has “substantially increased” and 50% claiming that it has “increased”. This result is in line with the increase in HEIs attributing a high level of importance to internationalization since the 5th Global Survey. However, it is interesting to separately analyse this variation in the level of importance for each of the three groups of respondents, namely those that replied “high”, “medium” and “low” in the question on the importance of internationalization for leadership. 88% of institutions that reported that the level of importance of internationalization for their institutional leadership is “high” also reported that this level has increased, with 40% reporting a substantial increase over the last five years

Factors most responsible for the increase in the level of importance of internationalization



The primary driver for the increase in the importance of internationalization at the global level is clearly the “Increased need to strategically connect with other HEIs globally”, which was selected by 70% of HEIs. This majority opinion underlines the strategic nature of internationalization as an intentional process undertaken by HEIs. All other factors were chosen by less than half of HEIs. The second most common is “Increased interest/demand by students at our institution”, chosen by 44% of HEIs, and the third “Increased interest/demand by academic staff at our institution”, selected by 39%.

Most important institutional key internal drivers of internationalization

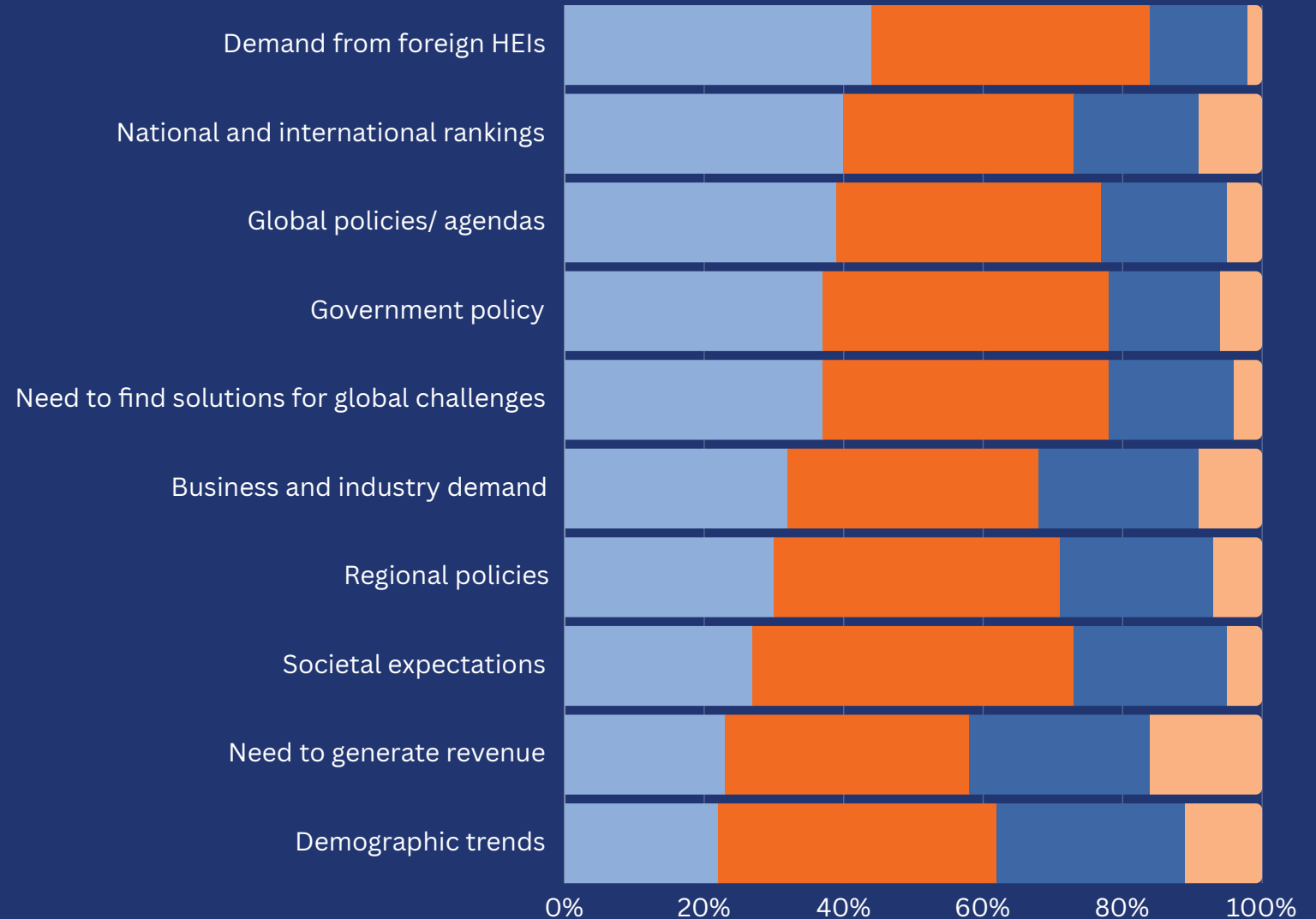


The International Office garnered a “very important” rating from 81% of respondents, closely followed by the Head of Institution at 79%. This result highlights the influential role of these stakeholders in shaping internationalization strategies within HEIs, but at the same time it also emphasises the significance of a top-down approach to this process.

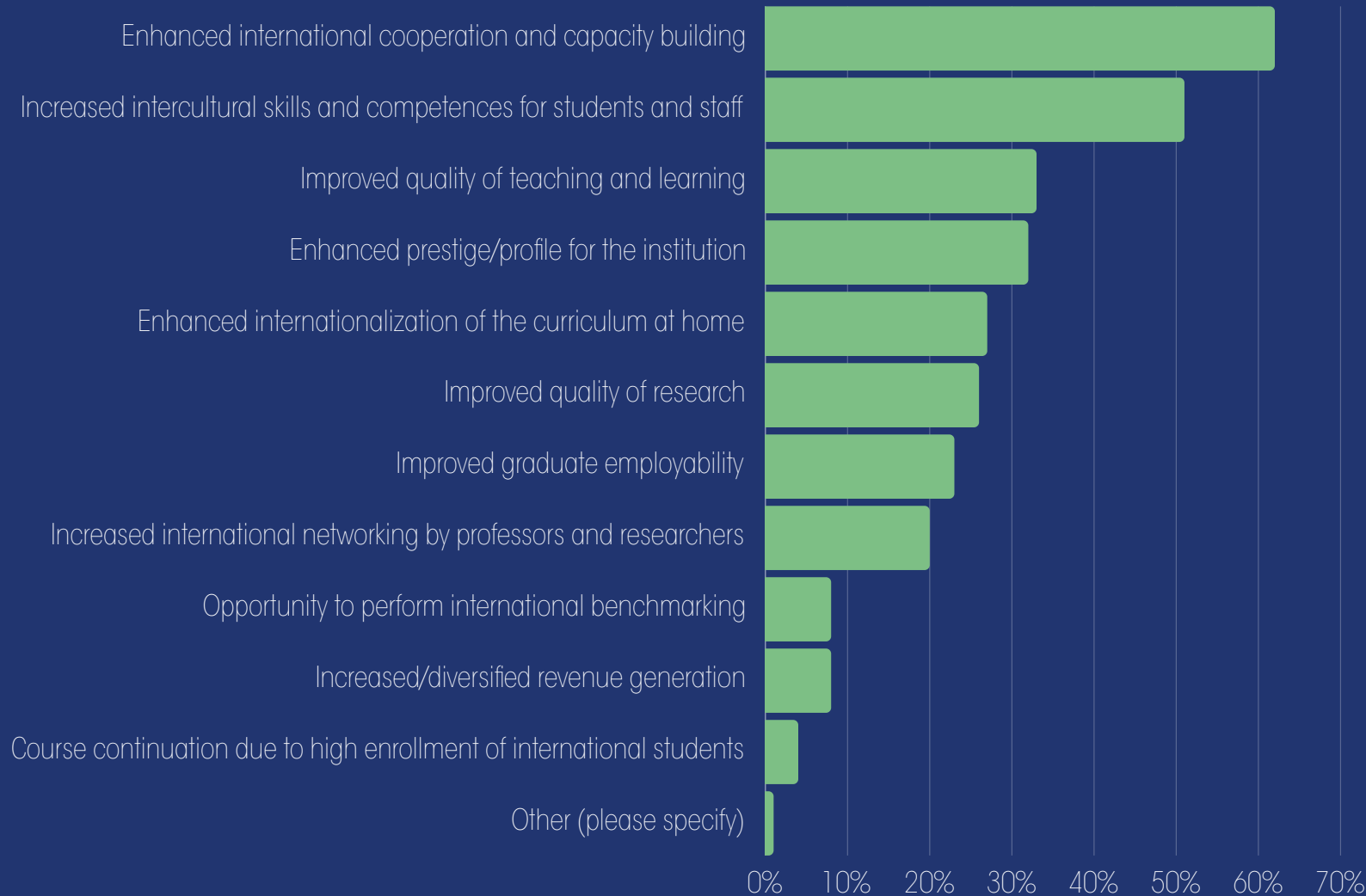
Nonetheless, all internal drivers suggested were considered to be “important” or “very important” by the majority of respondents. Interestingly, and somewhat curiously, the data shows that individual students are considered to be more important than student unions/student organisations as internal drivers of internationalization

Most important institutional key external drivers of internationalization

Even if internationalization is an intentional process undertaken by HEIs, it is not free from influence from external actors and forces. When analysing the most important key external drivers of internationalization marked as “very important,” the first three drivers are: “Demand from foreign higher education institutions”, “National and international rankings” and “Global policies/agenda (including the UN Agenda)”. However, they are followed very closely by “Government policy (national / state / province / municipal)” and “Business and industry demand”. Thus, drawing definitive conclusions is challenging due to the striking similarity in percentages among key actors and across different levels of importance, particularly between “very important” and “important.”



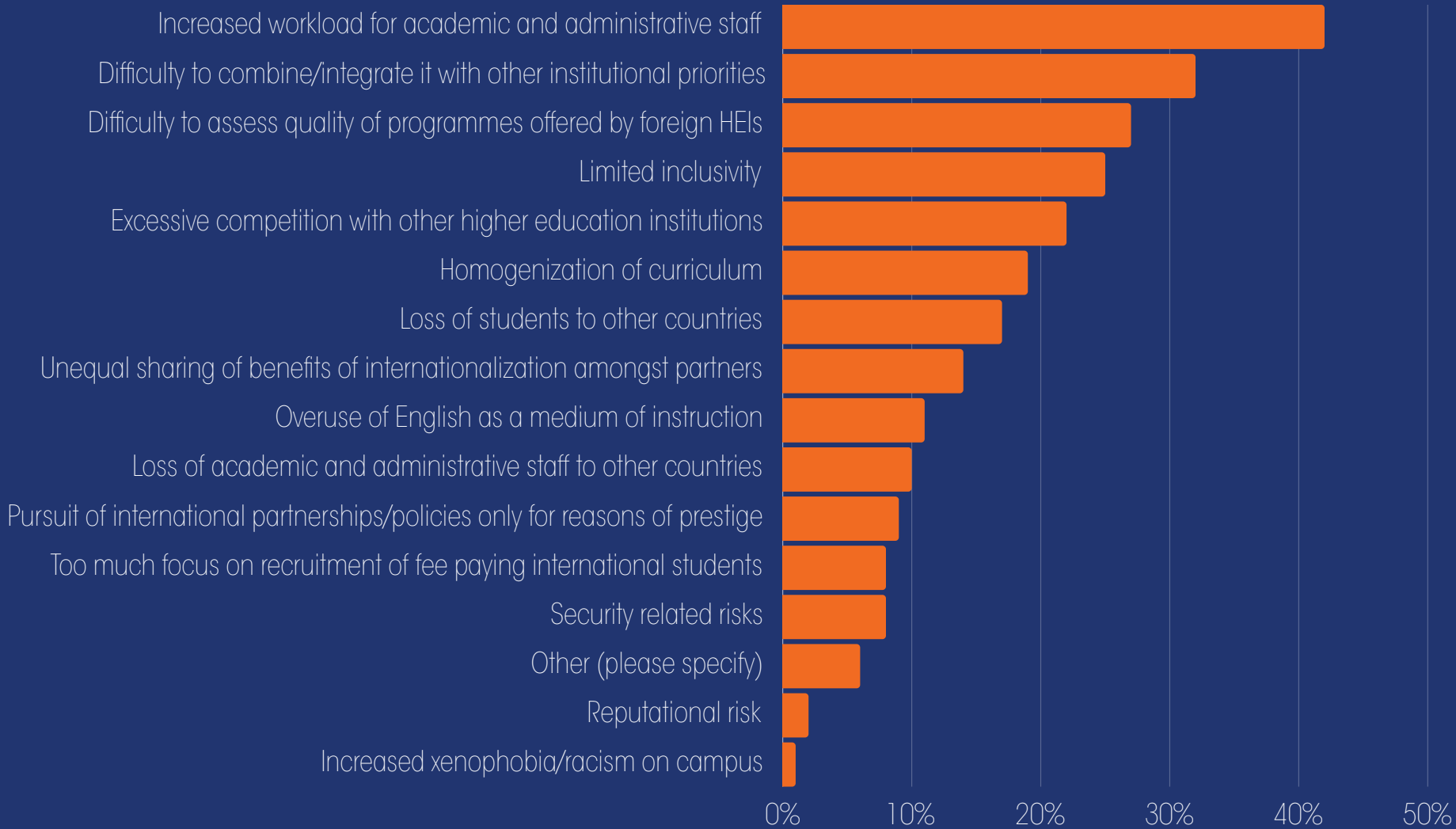
Significant potential benefits of internationalization



With 62% of respondents selecting it, “Enhanced international cooperation and capacity building” was cited globally as the most significant benefit of internationalization at the institutional level. “Increased global, international and intercultural knowledge, skills and competences for both students and staff,” closely followed and was selected as ‘very important’ by 51% of respondents.

Survey respondents were able to select up to three benefits.

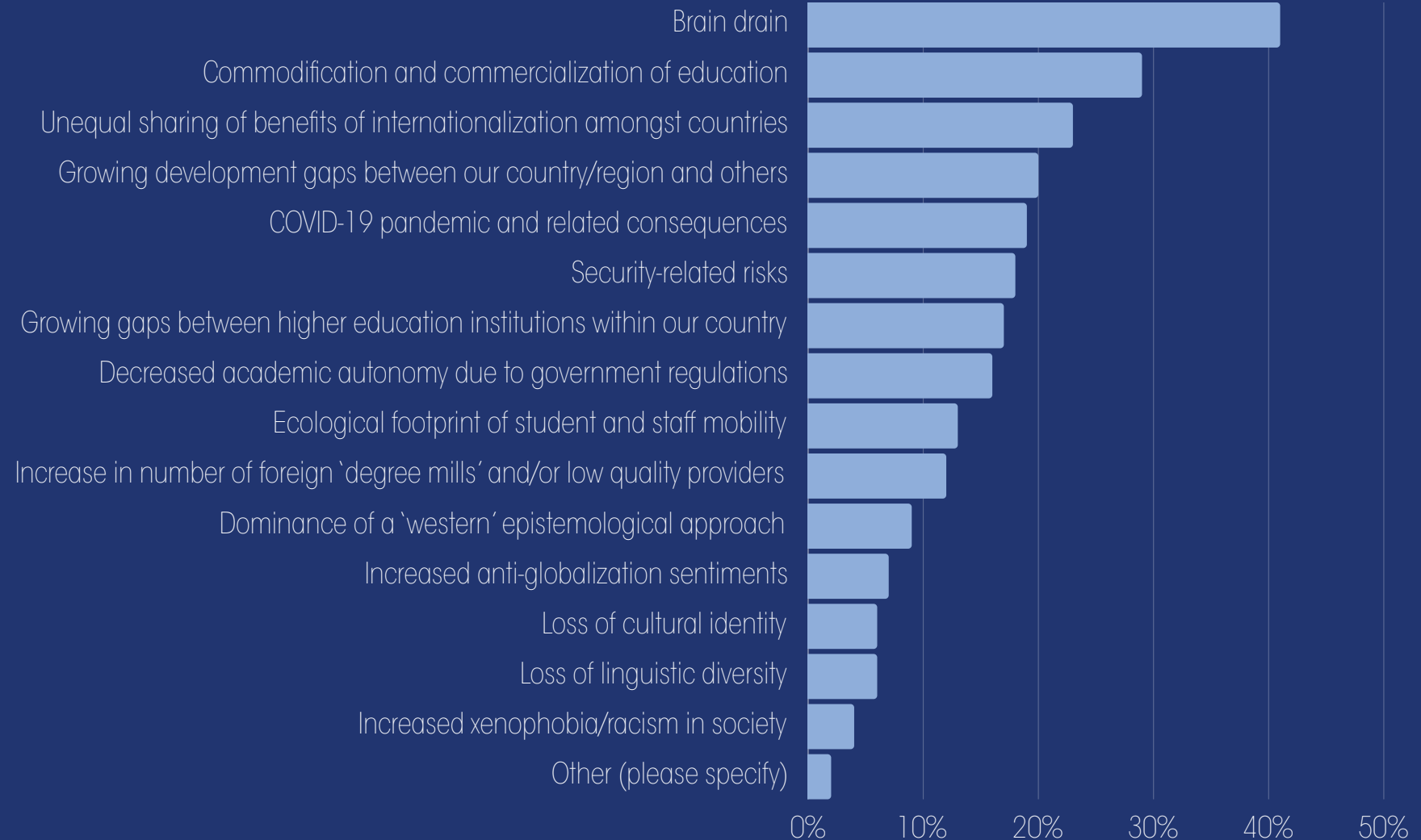
Significant potential institutional risks of internationalization



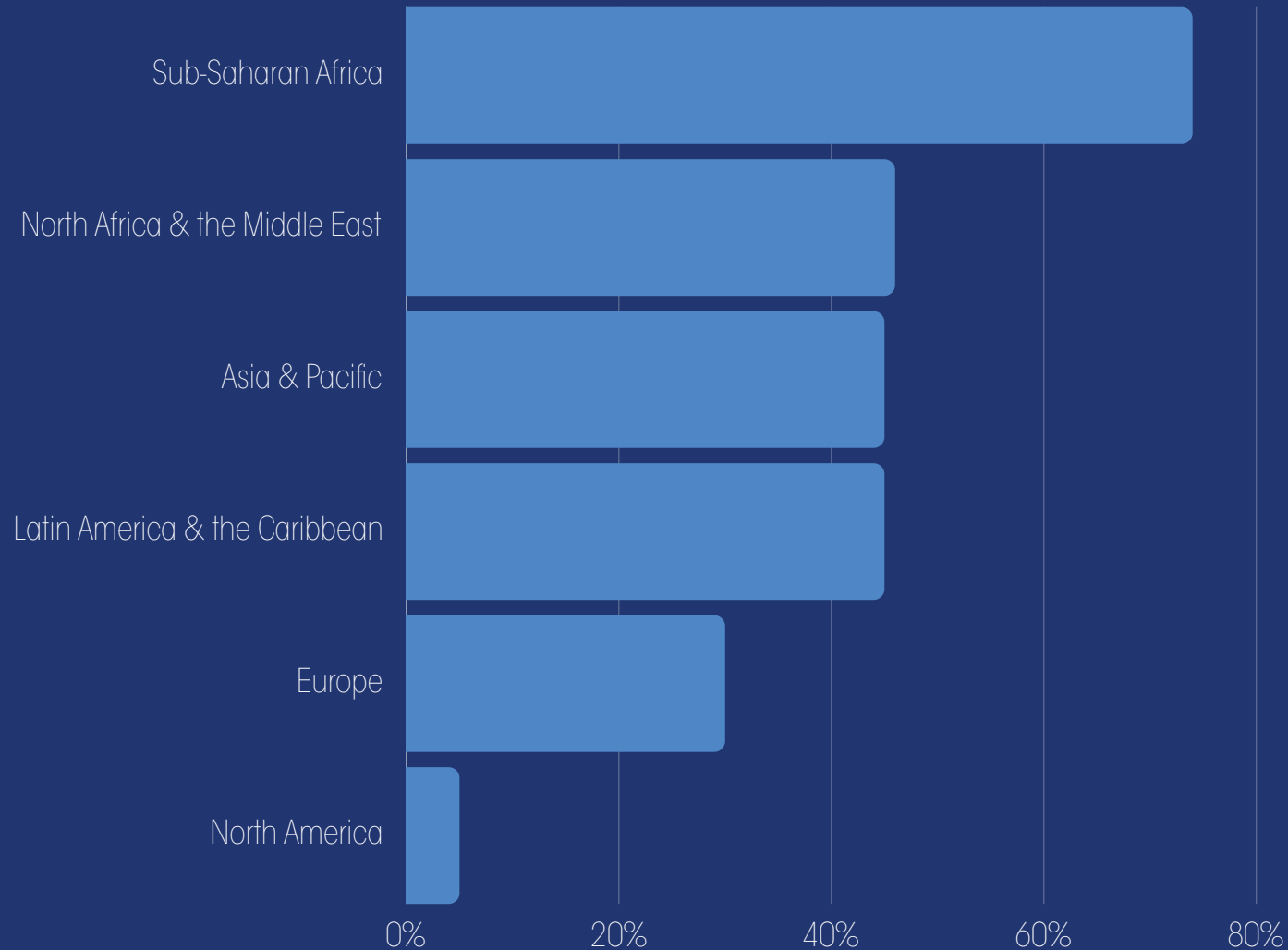
Responding HEIs were asked to select up to three significant institutional risks from a predefined list. The most important result is that no one risk was highlighted by the majority of HEIs. The most common risk was “Increased workload for academic and administrative staff” and this was selected by only 42% of respondents. This indicates that there is no one common institutional risk for HEIs at global level, but a variety of risks which might have varying levels of importance at different HEIs worldwide.

Most significant potential societal risks associated with current trends in internationalization

“Insufficient financial resources” is identified as a major internal obstacle for internationalization by HEIs, selected by 60% of survey respondents. This finding might not come as a surprise, but what is perhaps more unexpected is that none of the other obstacles/challenges was selected by more than one quarter of HEIs, depicting a drastically varied landscape of internal obstacles, which no doubt depends on many different factors.



Societal Risk of Brain Drain



Survey responses showed brain drain to be one of the most significant potential societal risks associated with current trends in the internationalization of higher education. While there is no common societal risk associated with the internationalization of higher education, results do indicate that brain drain remains a relevant issue in some regions. This is particularly the case in Sub-Saharan Africa, where over 74% of respondents indicated brain drain to be a significant risk.

The Future of Internationalization : Current Trends and Future Scenarios is now available online.

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