



CFA Institute

2025 Graduate Outlook Survey – Global Report

June 2025

Objective

CFA Institute commissioned a global survey of current and recent university graduates in key global markets to understand trends in finance and related fields as a career choice, including:

- Thoughts about career prospects in the current economic climate
- The role of AI/automation in confidence in career prospects

The 2025 study benchmarked questions from the 2024 Graduate Outlook Survey and 2023 survey related to career trajectories.

Methodology

The 2025 CFA Institute Graduate Outlook Survey was fielded via an online survey from March 28-April 22, 2025, by Dynata with a sample of 9,023 respondents studying for a bachelor's degree or higher, or who have graduated with a bachelor's or higher within the last 3 years aged 18-25. Where indicated throughout the report, data were benchmarked against the 2024 and 2023 Graduate Outlook Survey. The term "graduates" refers to all respondents.

Key global markets included:

① Canada: n=1,008

④ Brazil: n=701

⑦ Saudi Arabia:
n=500

⑩ China: n=1,250

② USA: n=1,250

⑤ UK: n=1,250

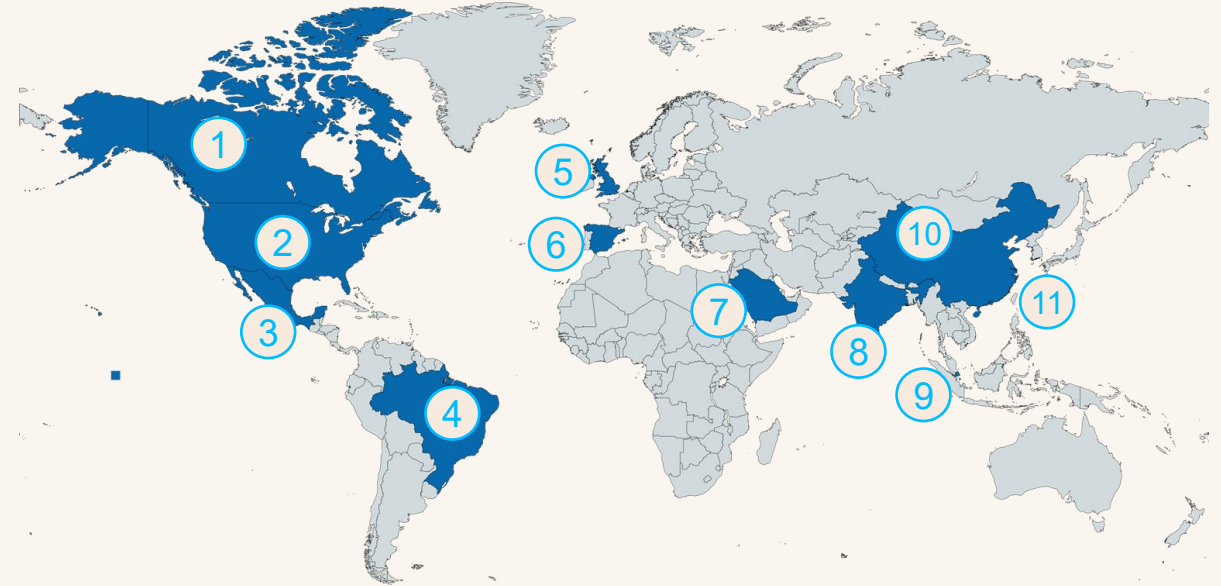
⑧ India: n=1,250

⑪ Hong Kong SAR:
n=300

③ Mexico: n=500

⑥ Spain: n=700

⑨ Singapore: n=314



Executive Summary

Confident about career prospects

- 81% of graduates are confident in their future career prospects today, and 76% rate their career prospect confidence as at least a 7 out of 10. This is higher than in 2024 (78% and 72%, respectively) and in 2023 (75% and 70%, respectively)

Finance degrees preferred

- The finance industry is the top industry where graduates are confident in their career prospects, increasing in confidence by 7 points from 2024 and 13 points from 2023 (37% in 2025 vs. 30% in 2024 vs. 24% in 2023)
- Finance is the top career field graduates consider most stable and attractive, followed by STEM.
- 26% of graduates selected finance as most stable and attractive, up 6 points from 2024 (20% in 2024)
- Finance is one of the top college majors seen as valuable in finding a career, increasing 5 points from 2024 (23% in 2025 vs. 18% in 2024)
 - Math, humanities, and arts fell to the bottom of the list of most valuable majors

Executive Summary, cont.

AI/automation will make it more difficult to secure jobs, but it is still important to career success

- Two-thirds of graduates think AI/automation will make it more difficult to secure the job they want, up 6 points from 2024 (67% in 2025 vs. 61% in 2024), but nearly nine-in-10 are confident in their ability to apply AI-led tools at work
- A third of graduates actively look for roles that provide AI training, while nearly half would be interested in a job that offers AI training, but only if they can learn at their own pace and it directly applies to their role

Some graduates will take a job after completing their undergraduate degree and are interested in working for a technology company

- Two-in-five graduates will take a job after completing their undergraduate degree, while a quarter will earn a post-graduate qualification/professional certification, up 3 points from 2024 (26% in 2025 vs. 23% in 2024)
- Of those graduates that feel most confident about their career prospects in the “Finance,” “IT & Telecoms,” “STEM,” or “Legal” industries, nearly half are interested in working for a technology company when searching for a career in their desired field

Executive Summary, cont.

Graduates are concerned about a lack of jobs in their preferred sector

- In addition to being concerned about lack of jobs – up 5 points since 2024 (15% in 2025 vs. 10% in 2024) – graduates are concerned about competition from their peers, low pay, and having to work in an unfulfilling sector; concern about working in an unfulfilling sector is up 4 points from 2024 (14% in 2025 vs. 10% in 2024)
- 58% of graduates report looking most for salary with an employer – down 4 points from 2024 (58% in 2025 vs. 62% in 2024) – followed by working arrangements (49%), career progression (48%), and benefits (48%)
 - Career progression and benefits are both up 6 points from 2024 (42% for both in 2024)

Upskilling will be necessary but post-graduate certifications will give an edge along with skills and work experience

- While 81% of graduates feel their career prospects have improved as a result of undertaking a degree, 84% think they'll need to continually upskill throughout their career
- 71% say they are likely to have multiple careers over their lifetime, a 5-point increase from 2024 (66%)
- Three-in-five graduates think a professional industry qualification or certification vs. a post-graduate degree will be most valuable in helping drive their career forward
- 96% say upskilling or acquiring certifications are important to the job market, and 71% say certifications will have a large impact on their job opportunities
- Nearly two-thirds believe soft skills (e.g., communication, teamwork) will give them an "edge" in the job market

Executive Summary, cont.

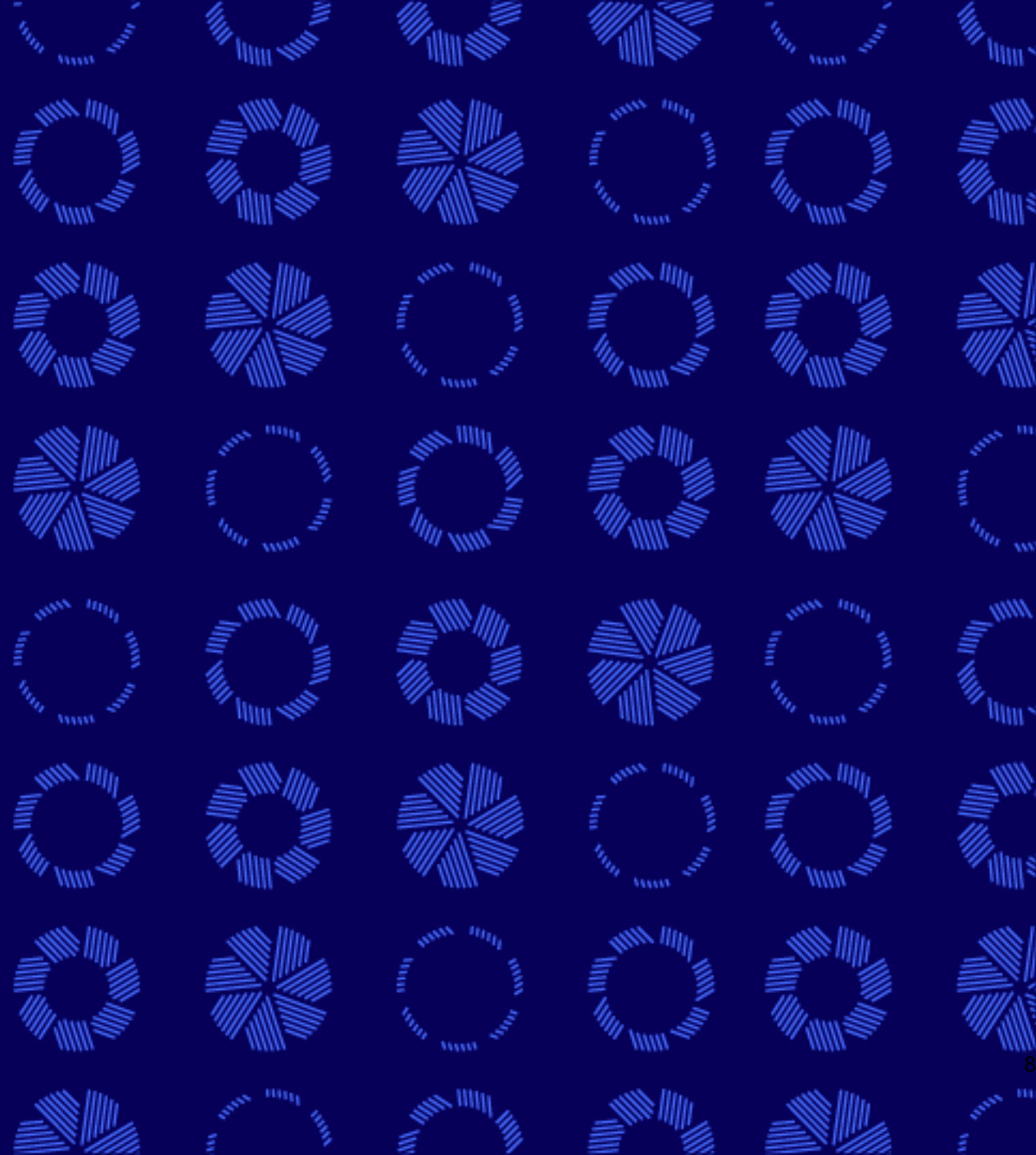
Despite a decrease from 2024, social media is used for information and advice on career prospects

- 36% of graduates use social media for information and advice on career prospects, an 8-point decrease from 2024 (44%), but 46% of graduates use social media to seek out information about what careers look like in real life, an increase from 2024 (44%)
- Using social media to build a professional presence (39%) and for professional networking (34%) has increased compared to 2024 (37% and 32%, respectively)
- In addition to social media, graduates also get information and advice on career prospects from college professors (44%), career guidance offices (40%) and friends (38%)
 - Getting information and advice from friends is down 5 points from 2024 (43%)

Graduates trust human financial advisors or wealth managers for sound financial advice

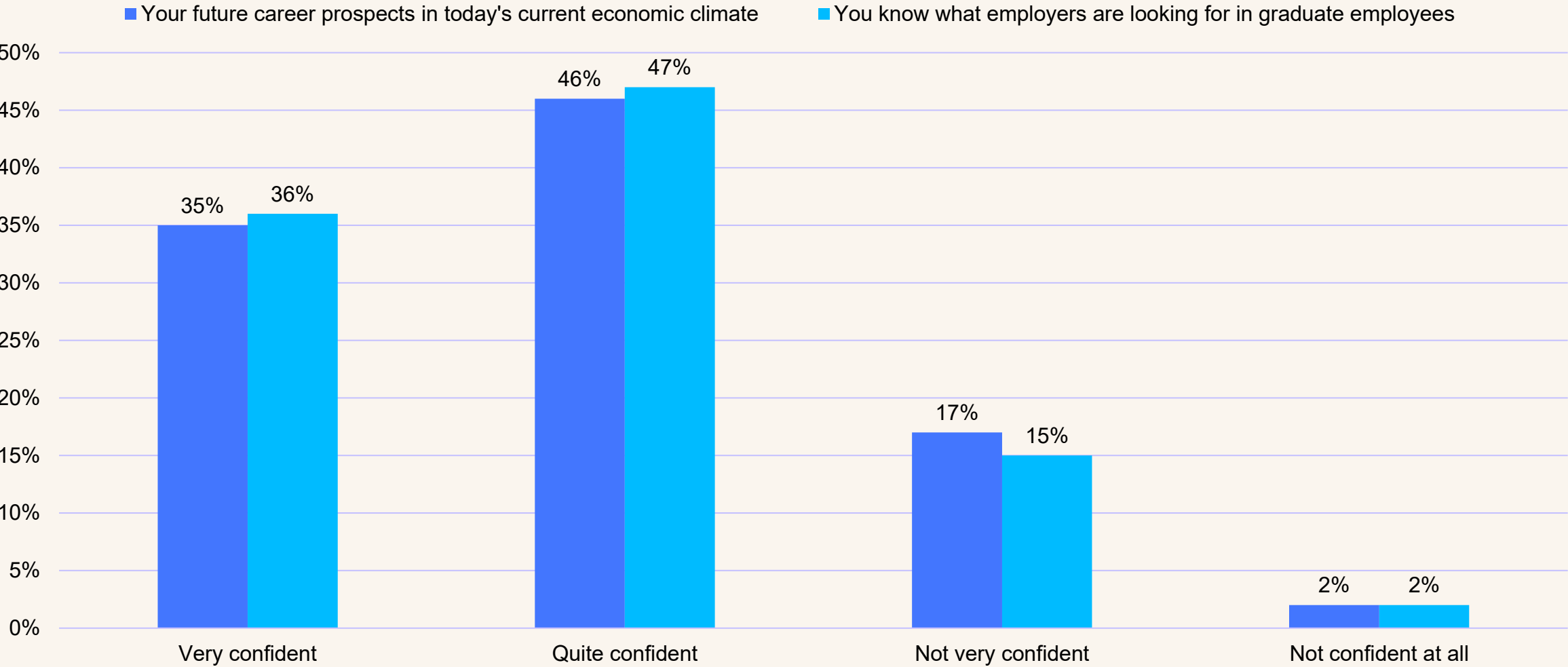
- Nine-in-10 graduates trust human financial advisors or wealth managers for sound financial advice, as well as friends and family (91%) and online financial educational resources (81%)
- When it comes to wealth building, graduates are motivated by financial security and peace of mind and say a strong understanding of financial markets and strategies and solid financial plan will help get them to where they want to be 10 years from now
- Knowing they can partner with someone who is trustworthy and puts their interests first would make graduates most likely to work with a wealth manager

Full Results



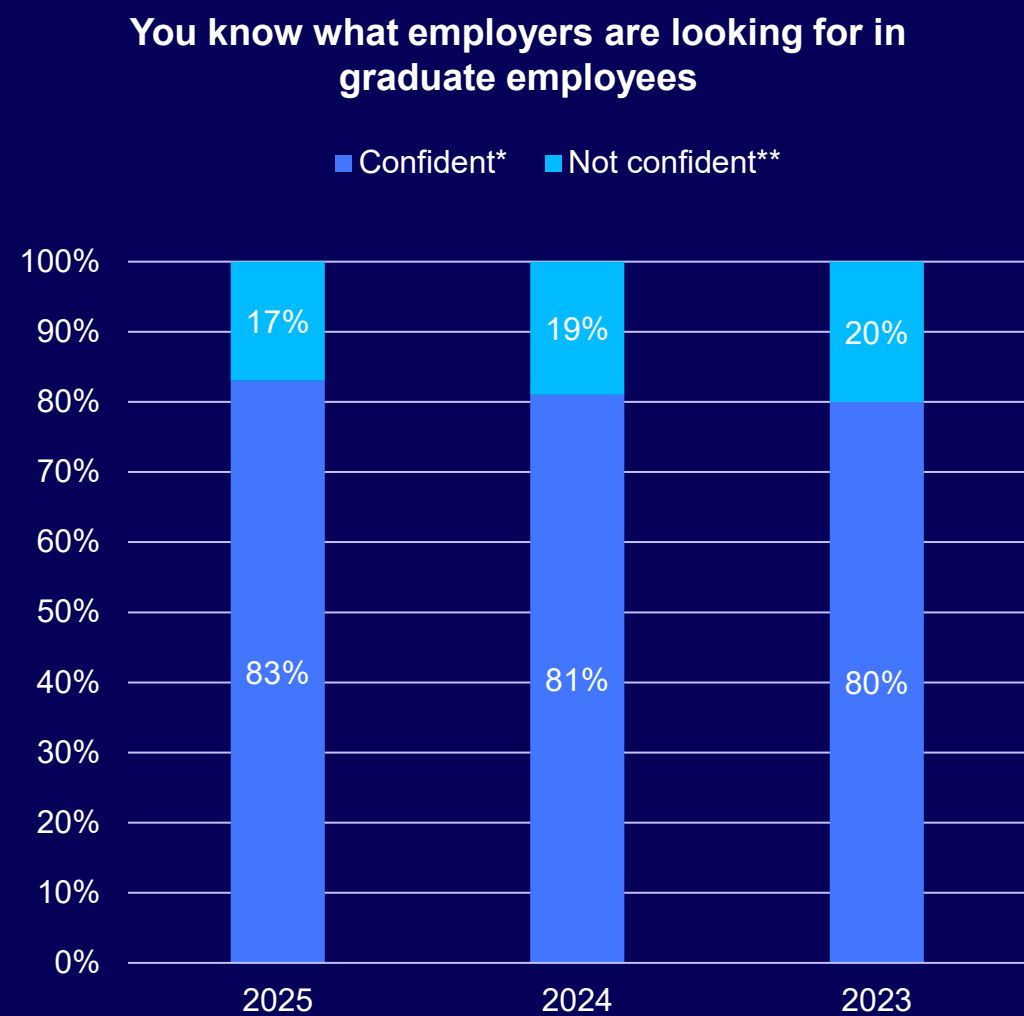
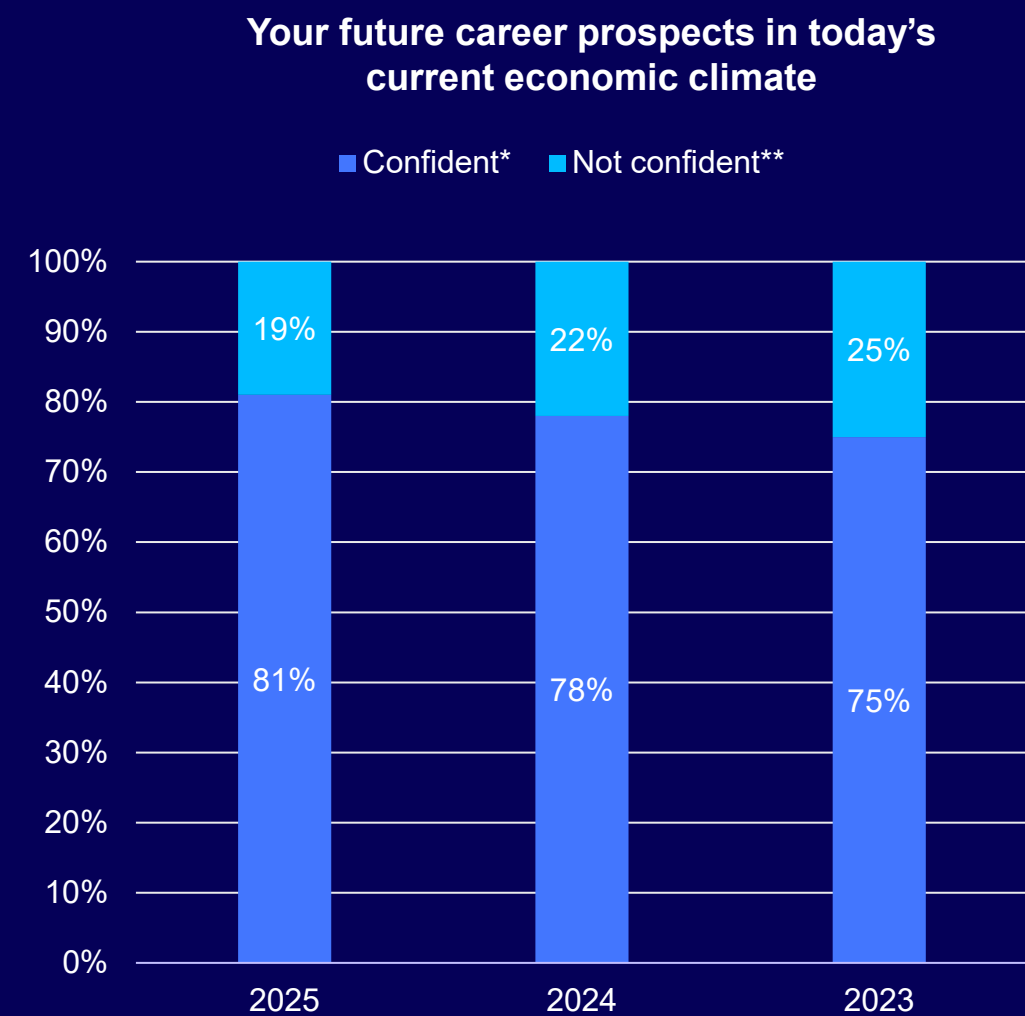
At least four-in-five graduates are confident in their future career prospects and knowing what employers are looking for in employees

Q1. How confident, if at all, do you feel about the following?



Graduates' confidence continues to increase in 2025 compared to 2024 and 2023

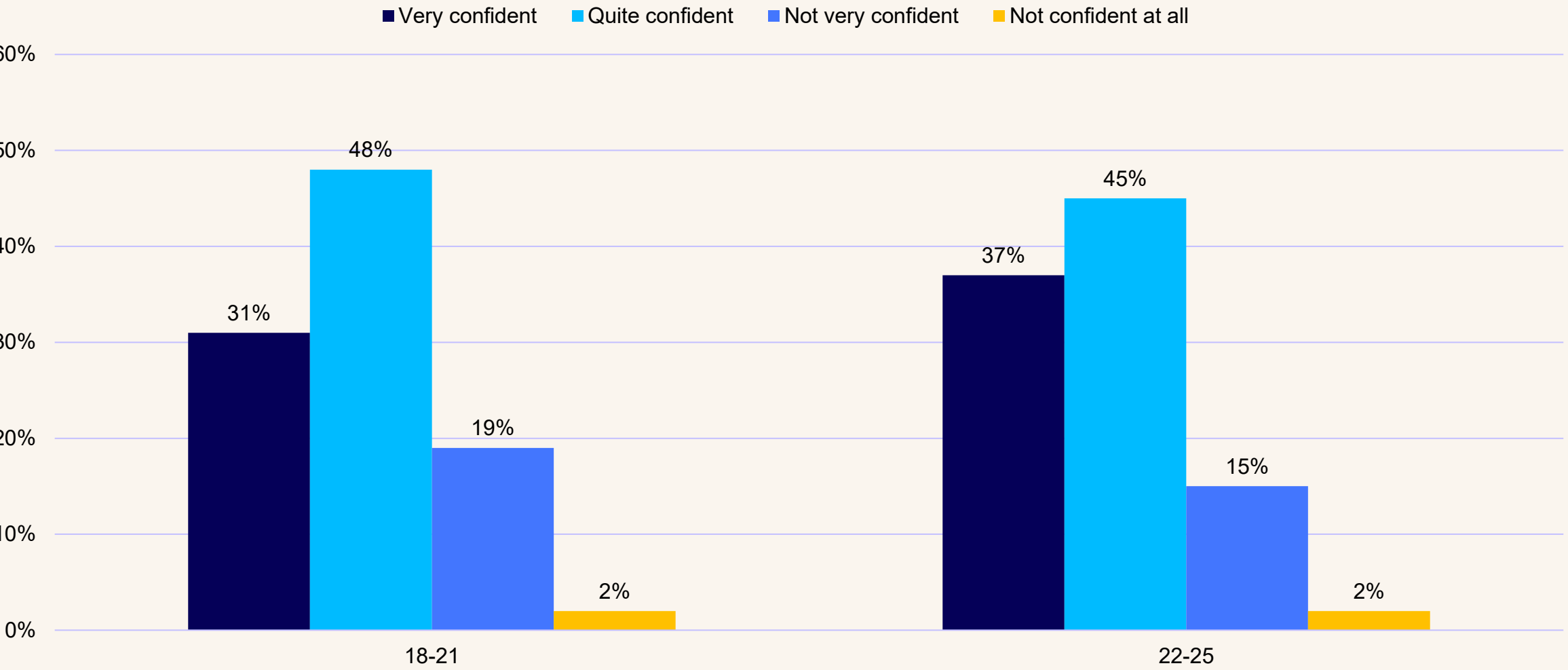
Q1. How confident, if at all, do you feel about the following?



*Confident = graduates who selected either “very confident” or “quite confident”
**Not confident = graduates who selected either “not very confident” or “not confident at all”

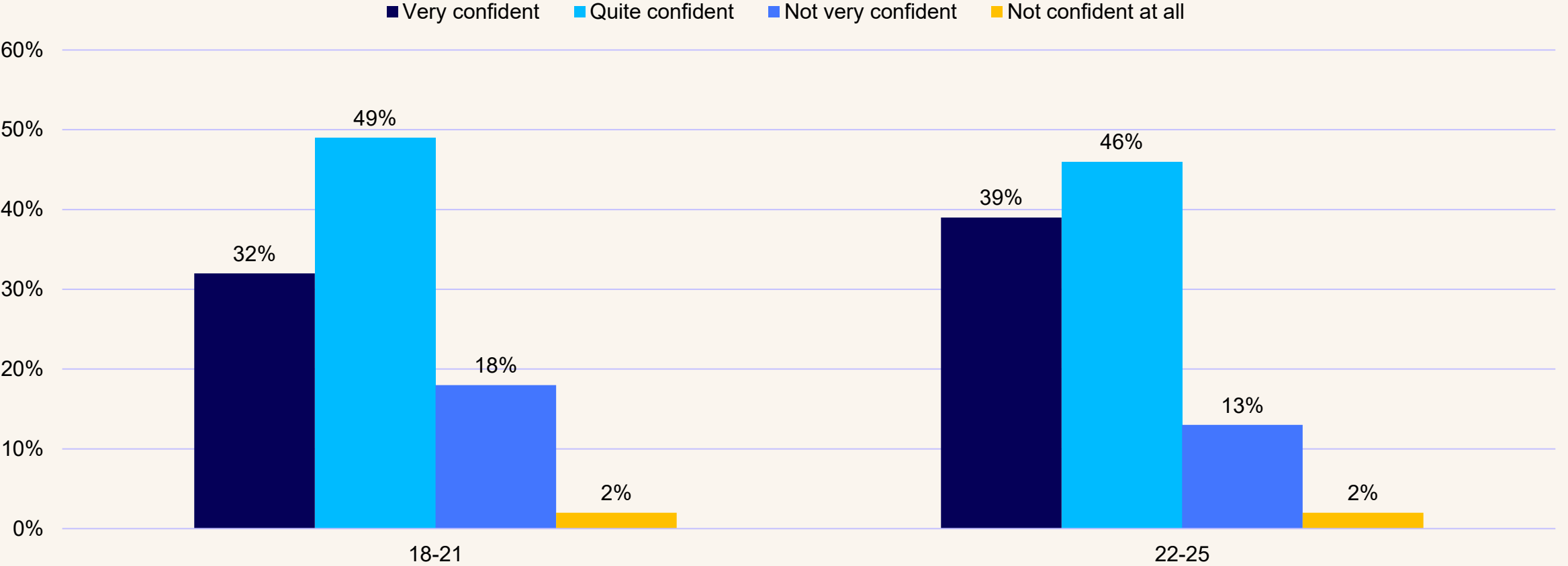
Q1 | Your future career prospects in today's current economic climate

Age Combined



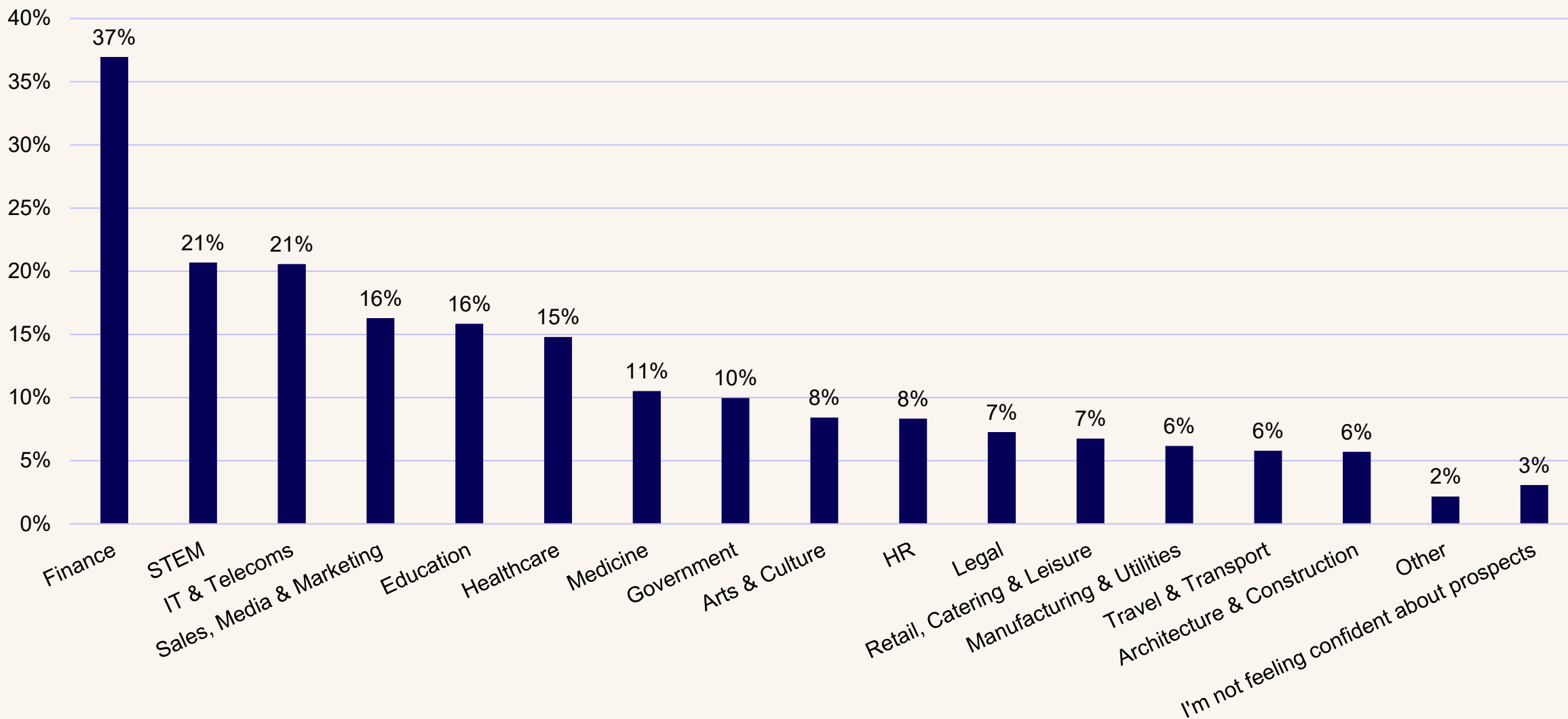
Q1 | You know what employers are looking for in graduate employees

Age Combined



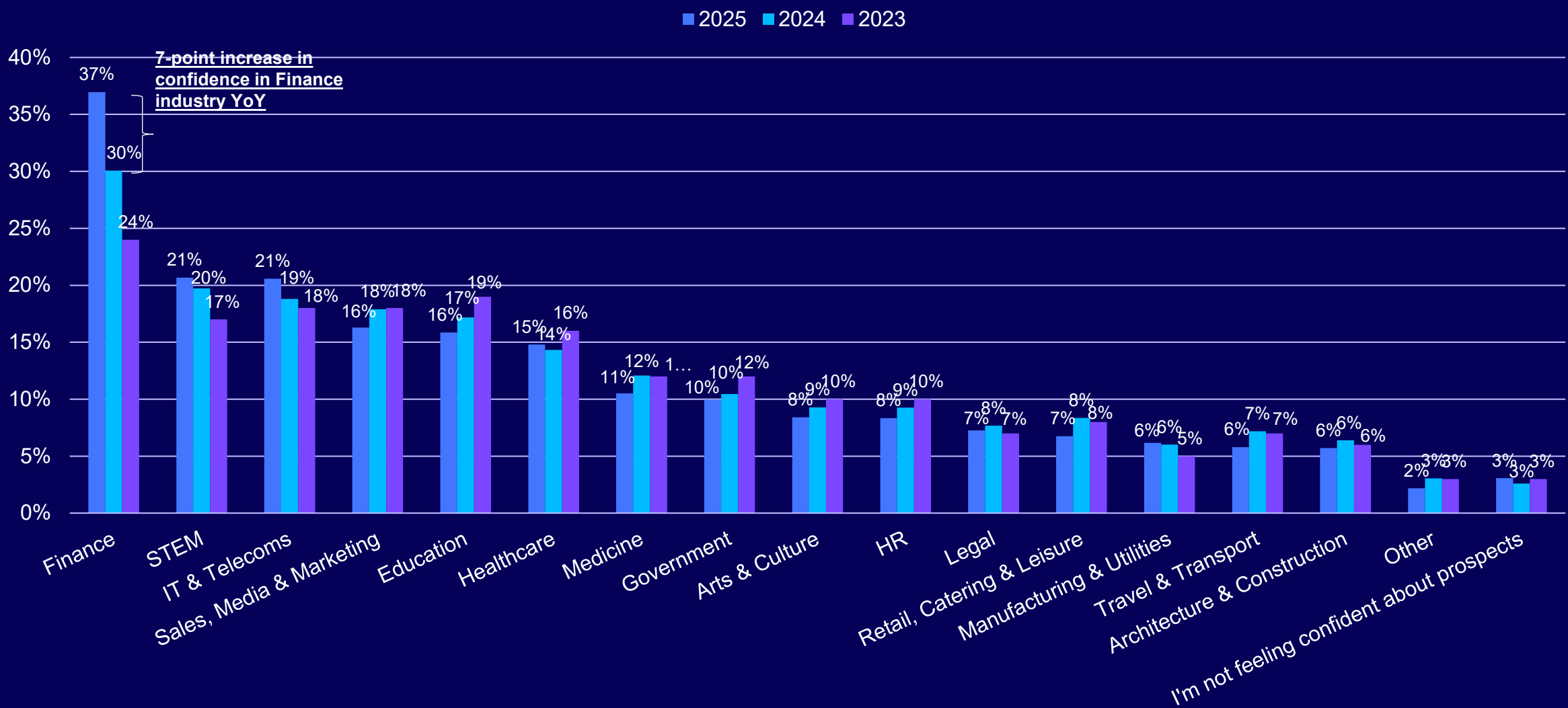
Graduates are most confident about their career prospects in Finance

Q2. Which industries, if any, are you feeling most confident about your career prospects in? Select up to three.

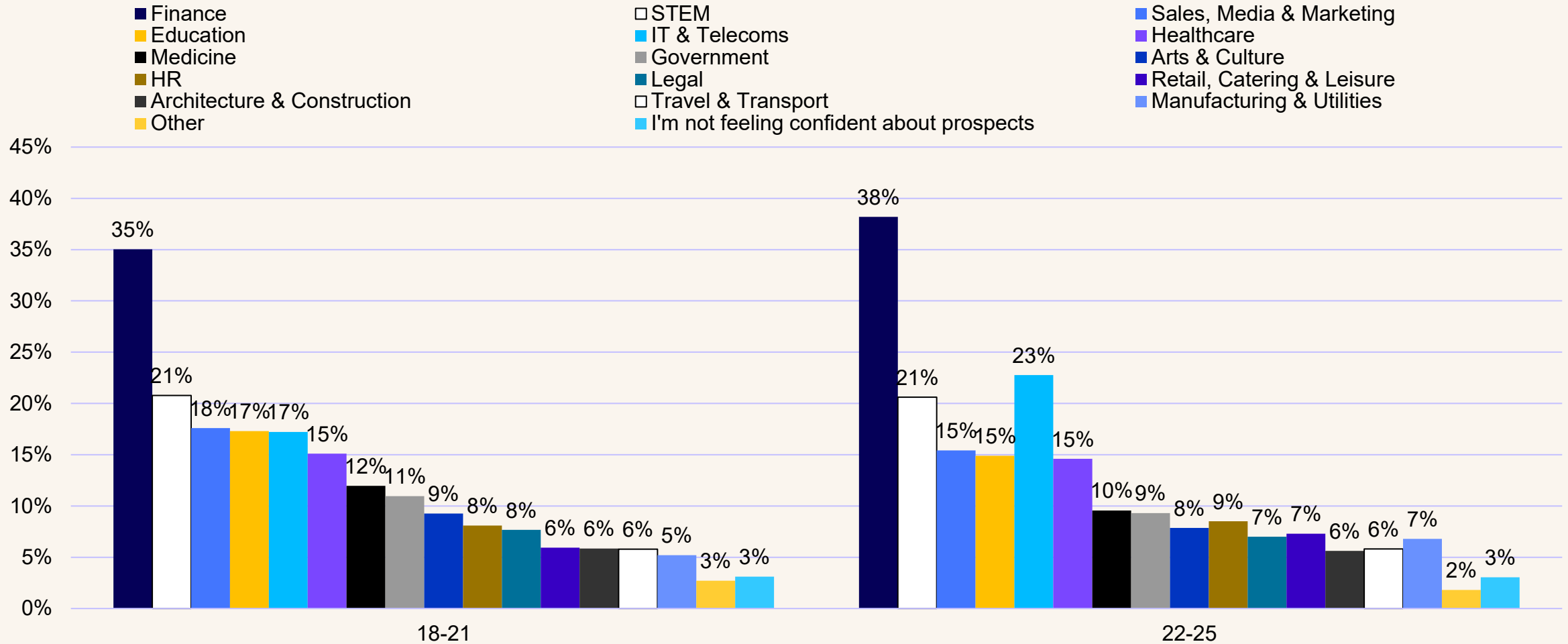


Overall industry confidence improved most in Finance since 2024 and 2023

Q2. Which industries, if any, are you feeling most confident about your career prospects in? Select up to three.

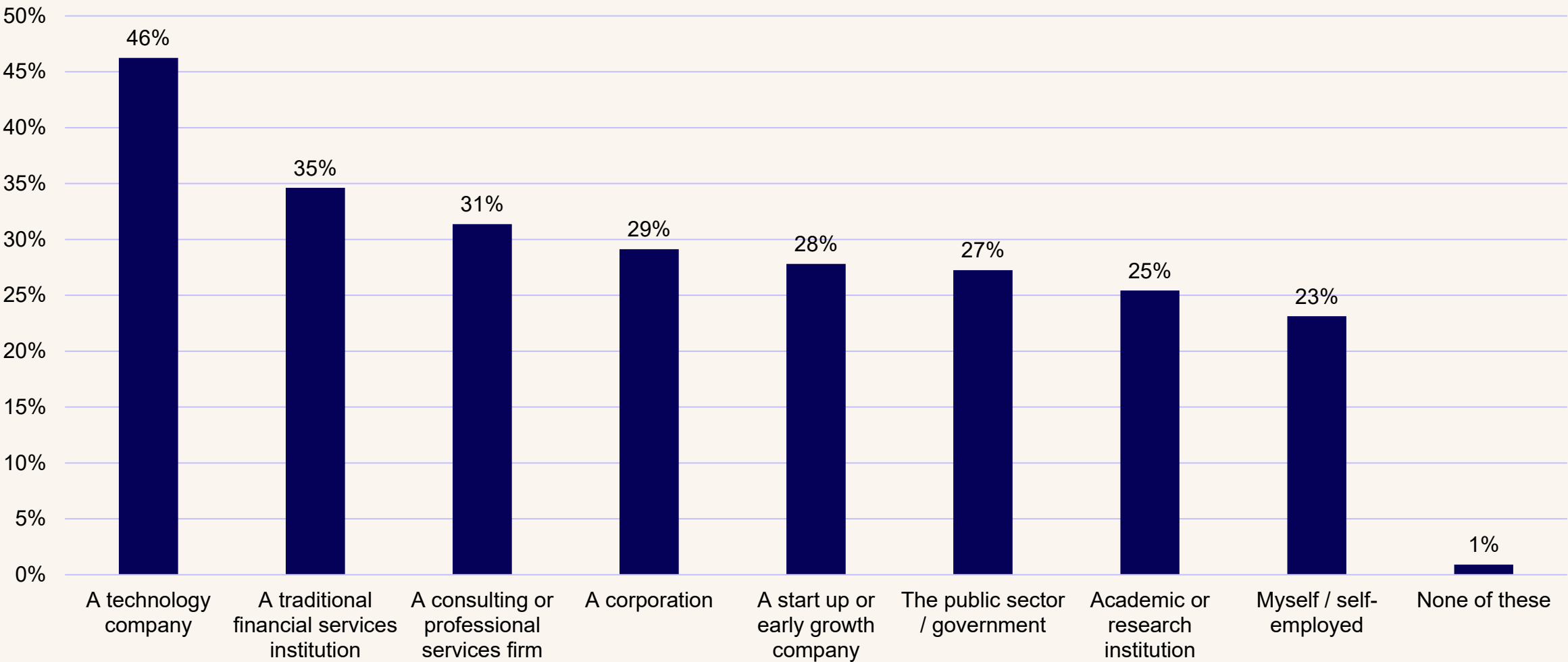


Q2 Age Combined



Graduates are interested in working for a technology company when searching for a career in their desired field

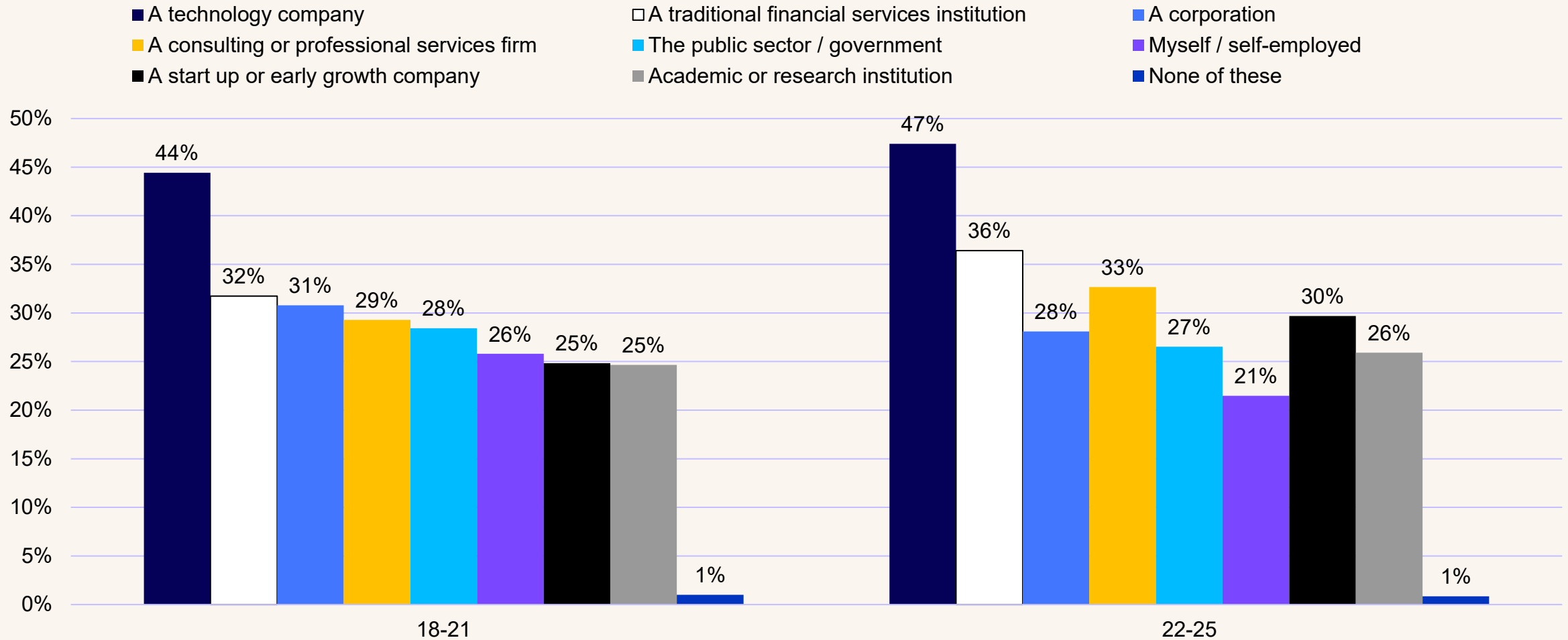
Q3. When searching for a career in your desired field, what type of organization are you most interested in working for? Select all that apply.



Base = those that feel most confident about their career prospects in the “Finance,” “IT & Telecoms,” “STEM” or “Legal” industries

Q3

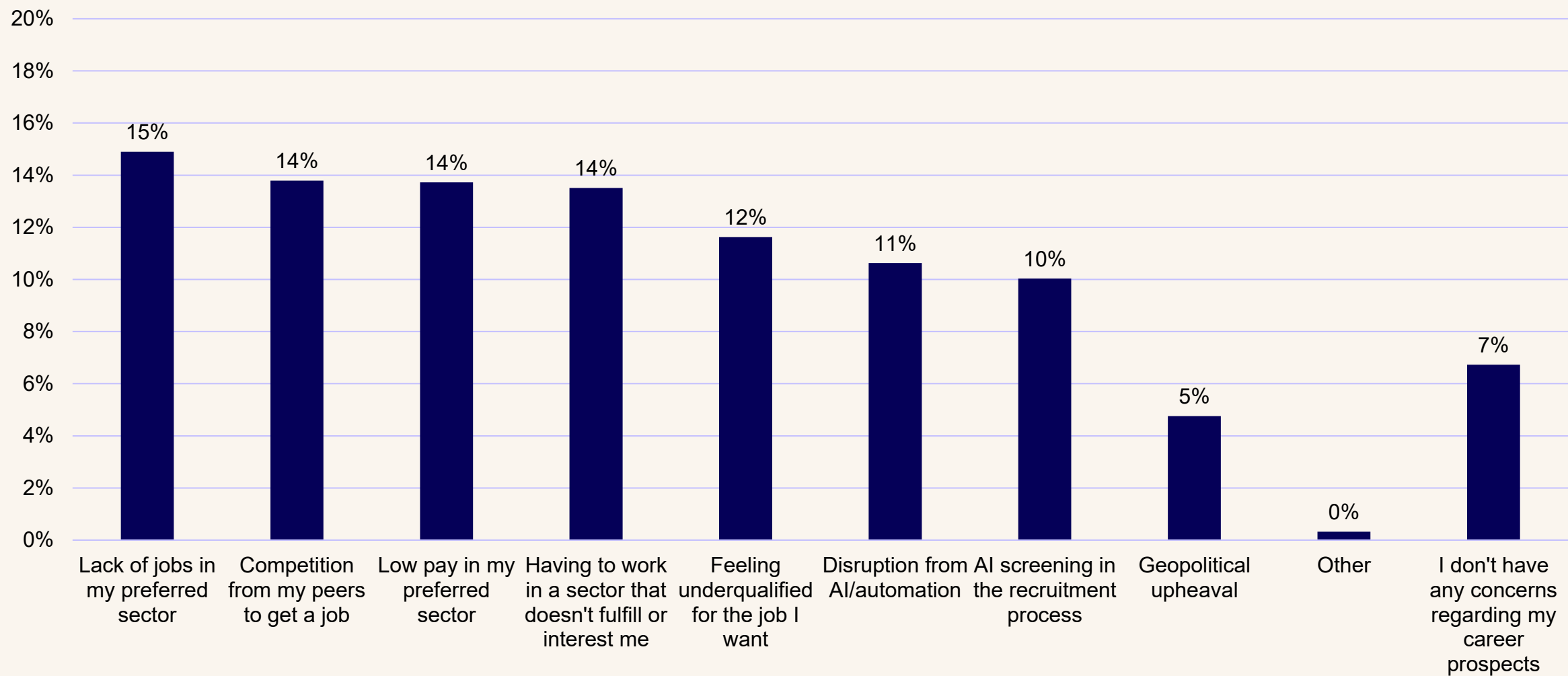
Age Combined



Base = those that feel most confident about their career prospects in the "Finance", "IT & Telecoms", "STEM" or "Legal" industries

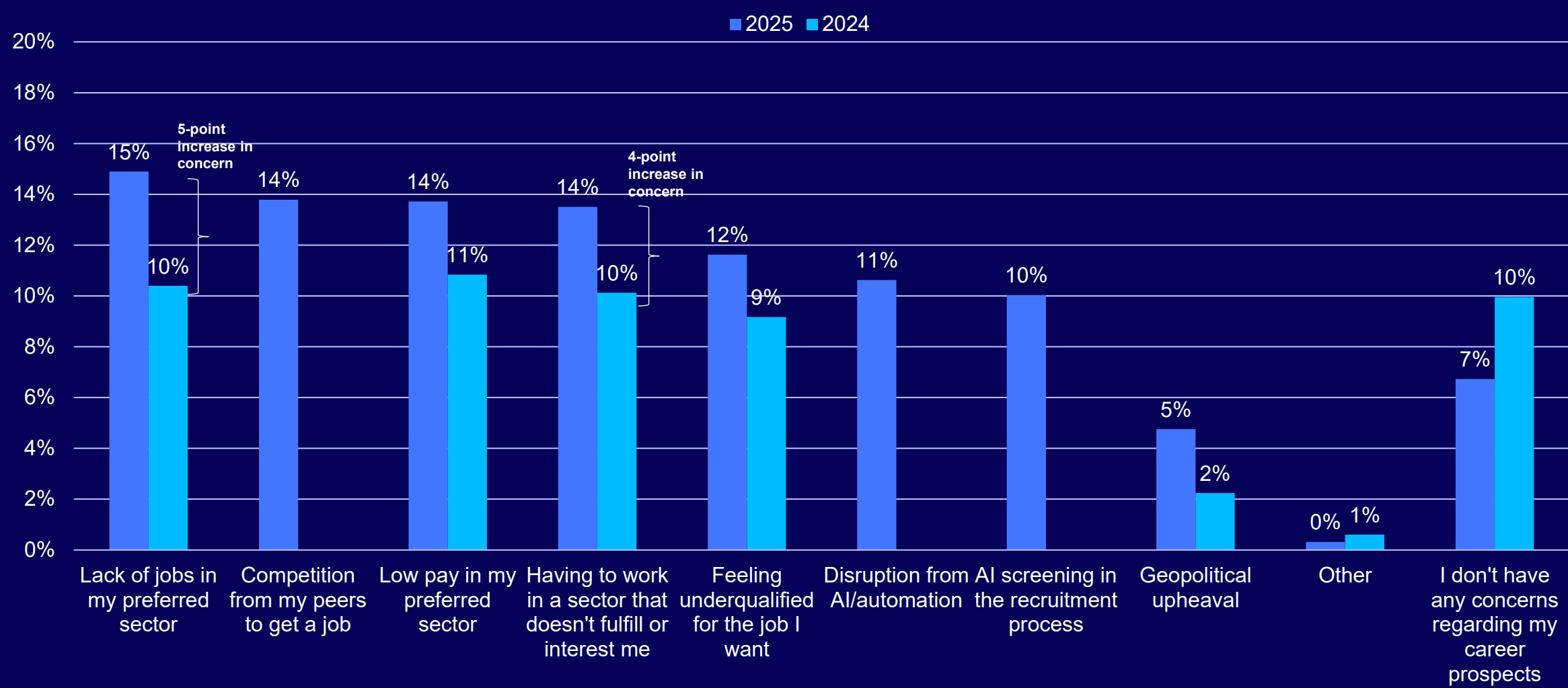
Lack of jobs in a preferred sector, competition from peers, low pay, and having to work in an unfulfilling sector are the biggest concerns among graduates

Q4. What, if anything, is your biggest concern regarding your career prospects? Select only one.

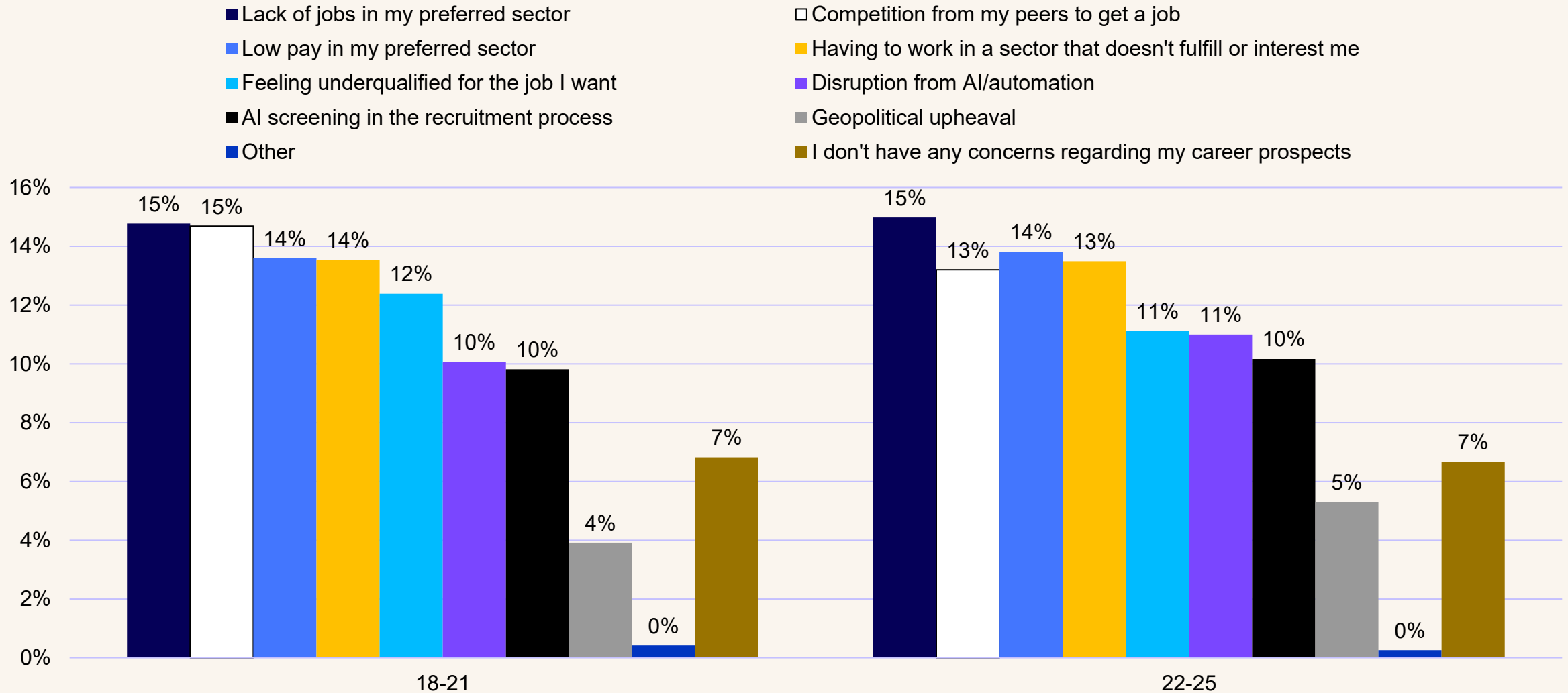


Graduates are more concerned about lack of jobs in their preferred sector, low pay, and having to work in an unfulfilling sector today vs. 2024

Q4. What, if anything, is your biggest concern regarding your career prospects? Select one.

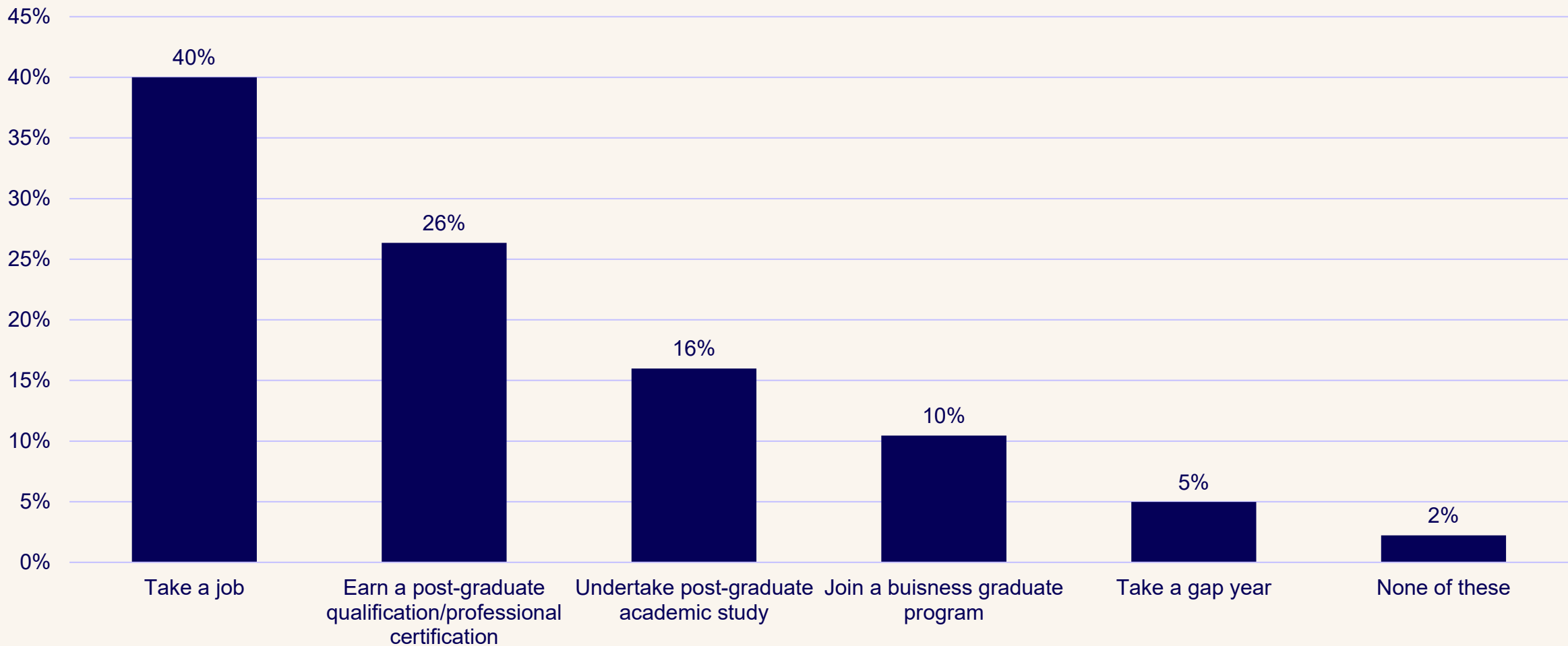


Q4 Age Combined



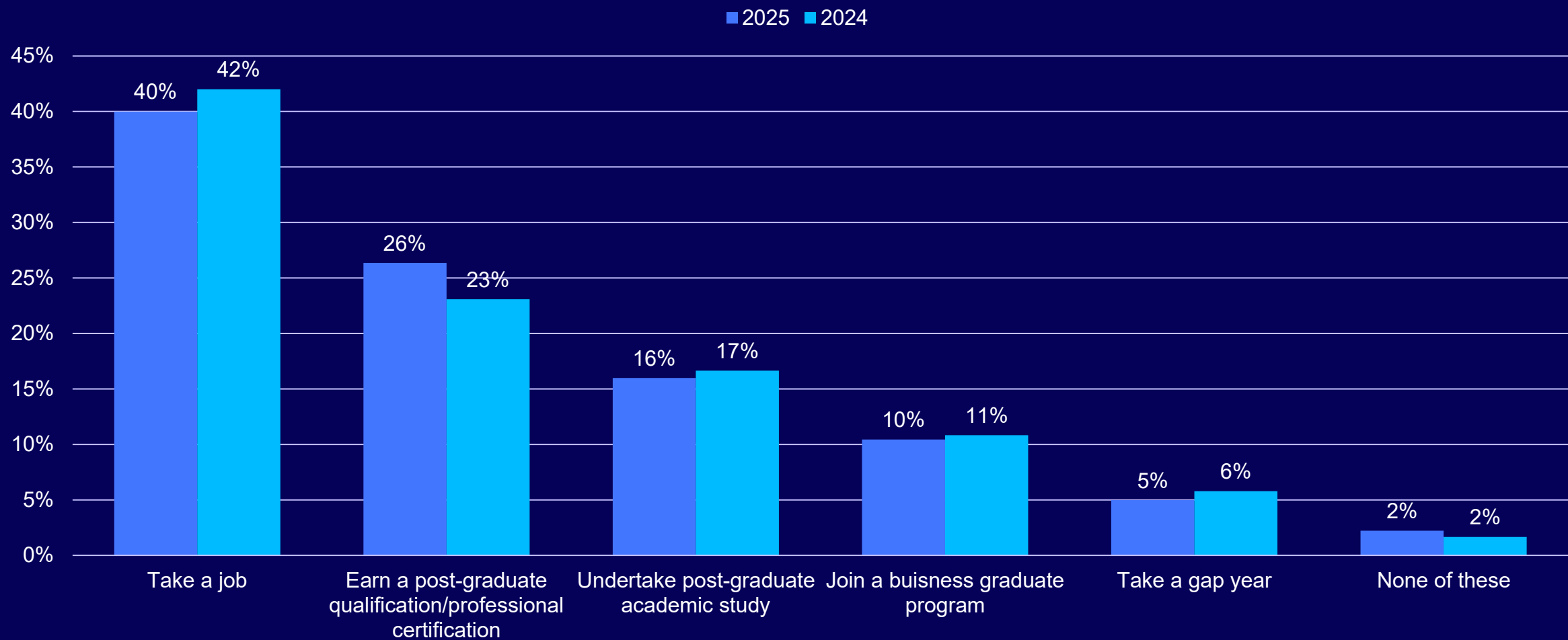
Two-in-five graduates will take a job after completing their undergraduate degree

Q5. After you completed/complete your undergraduate degree did you/do you plan to... Select only one.

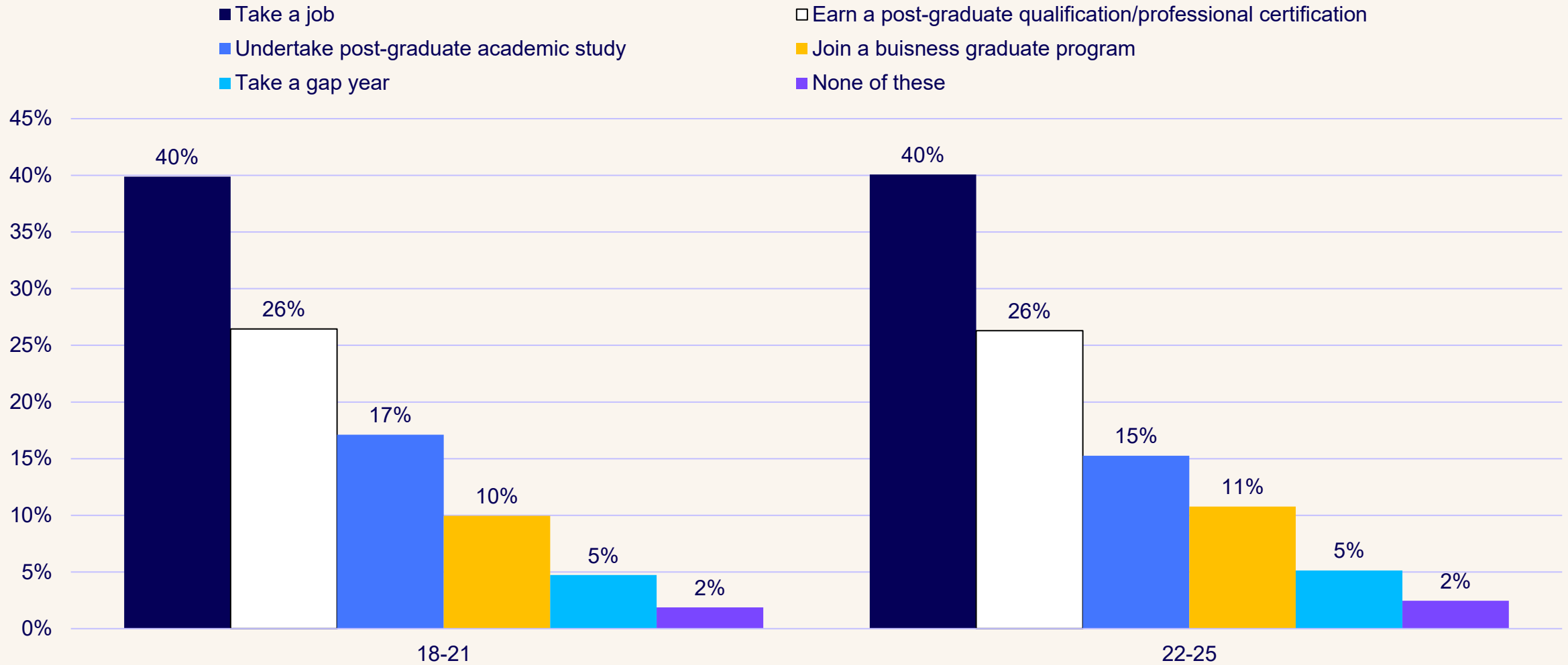


Graduates are less likely to take a job after completing their undergraduate degree today vs. 2024 but more likely to earn a post-graduate qualification/professional certification

Q5. After you completed/complete your undergraduate degree did you/do you plan to... Select only one.

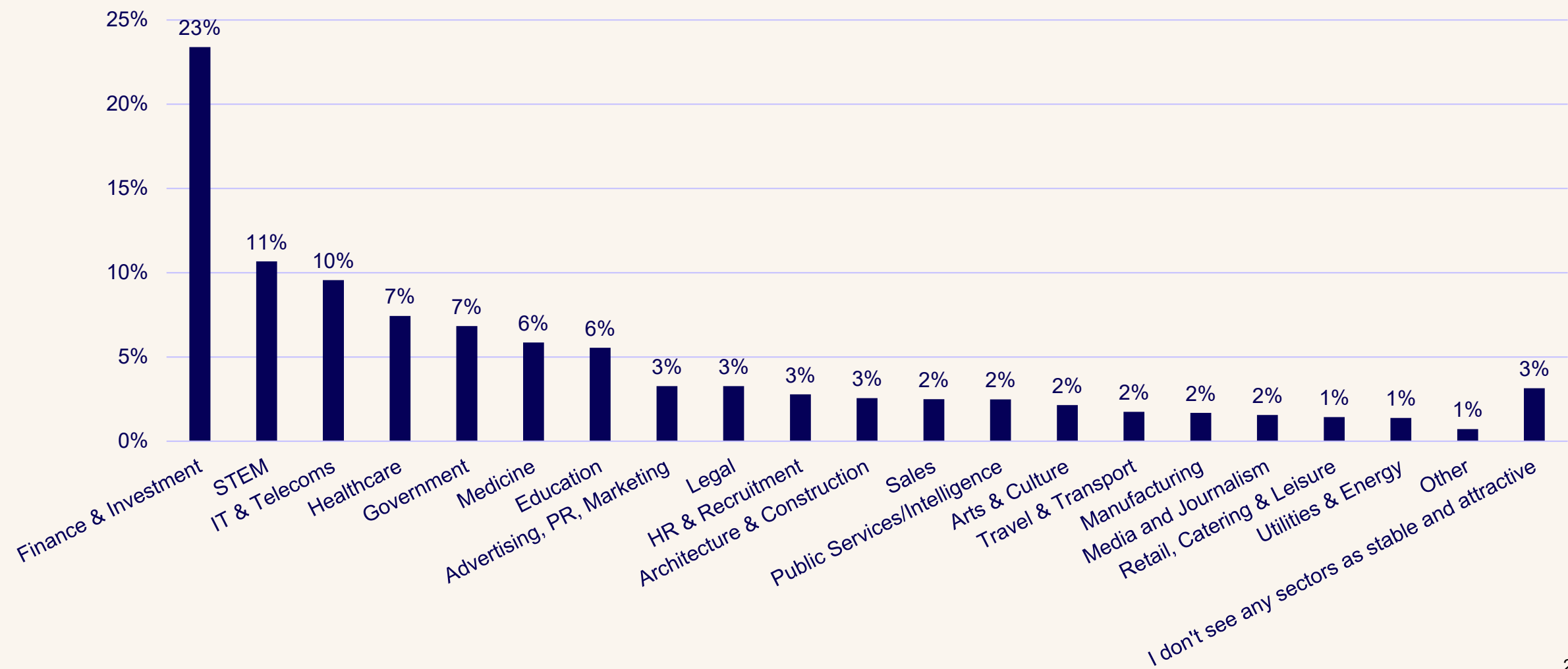


Q5 Age Combined



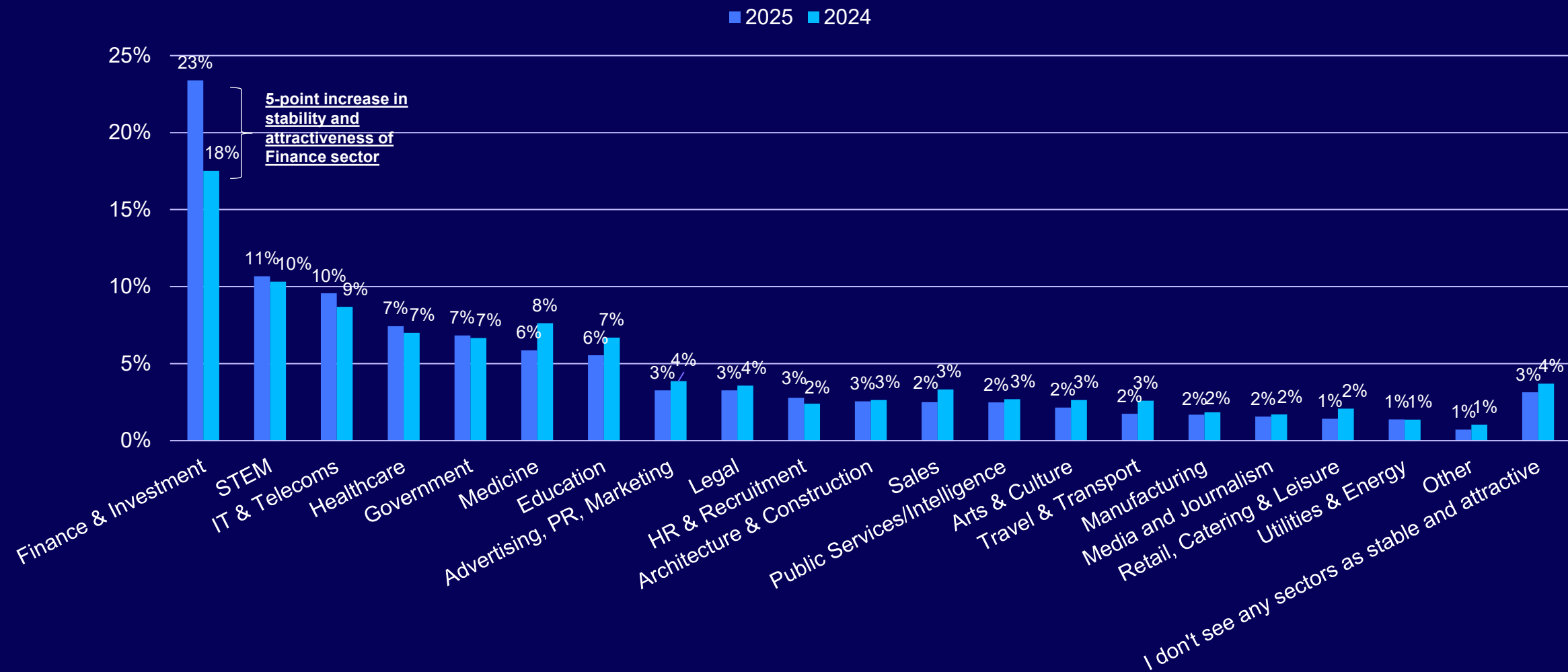
Finance is the top sector graduates consider stable and attractive

Q6. Which sector, if any, do you feel is the most stable and attractive? Select only one.

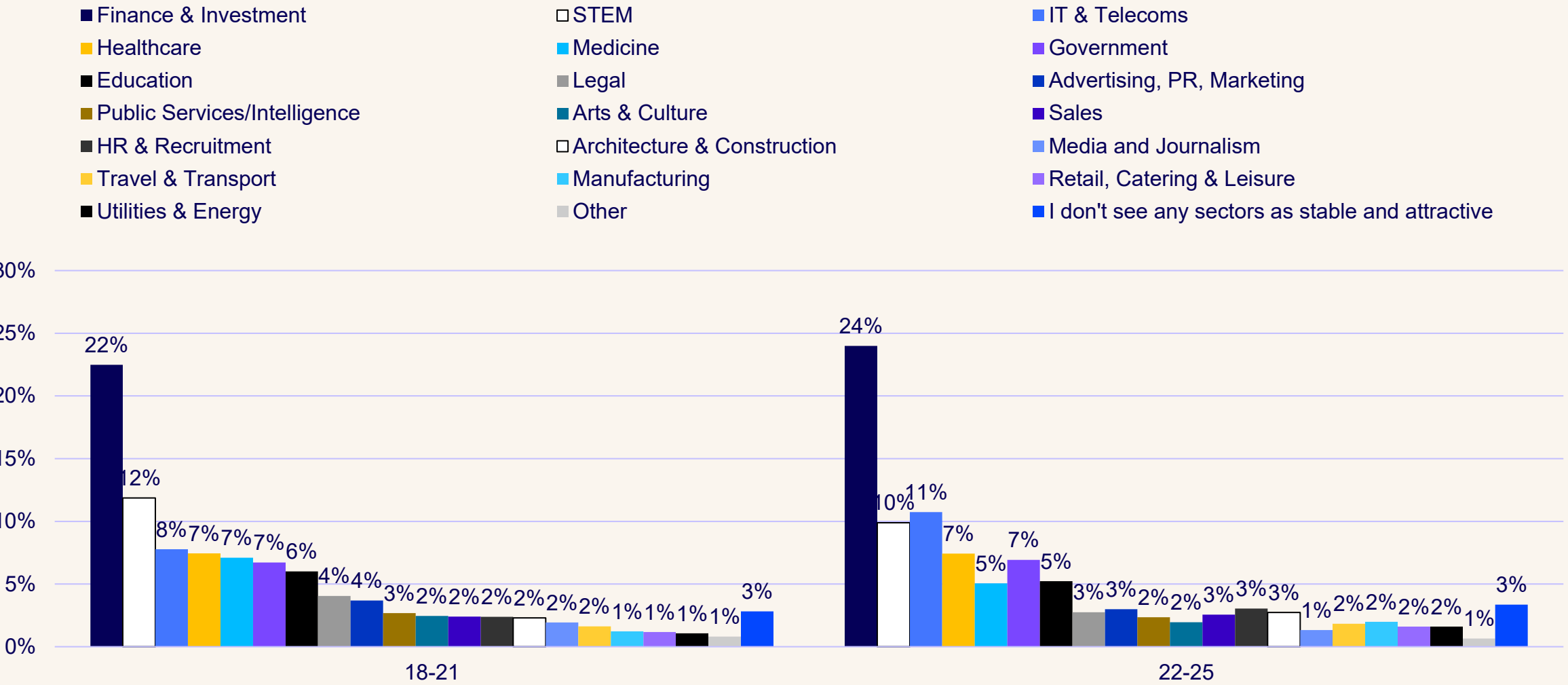


Graduates are more likely to see Finance as a stable and attractive sector today vs. 2024

Q6. Which sector, if any, do you feel is the most stable and attractive? Select only one.

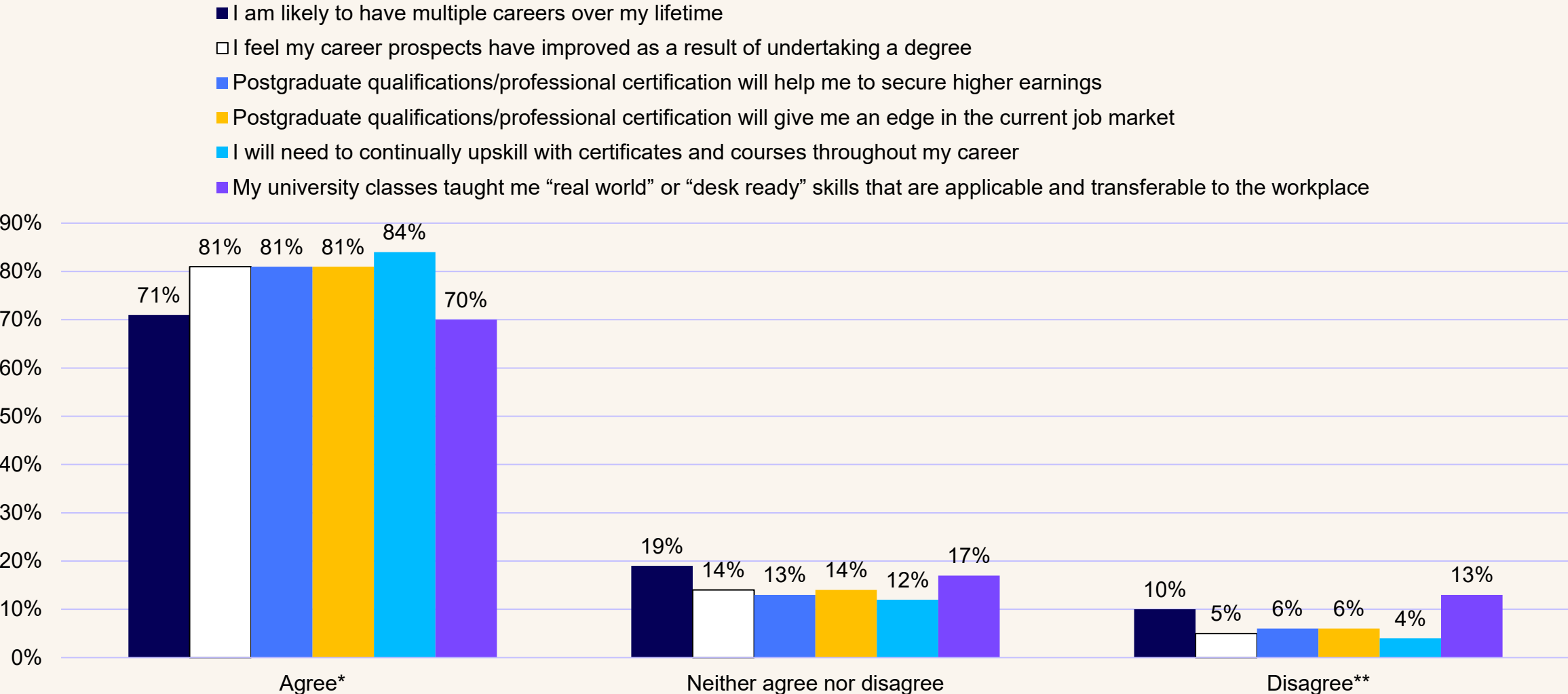


Q6
Age Combined



At least four-in-five graduates agree they will need to continually upskill throughout their career and that postgraduate qualifications will help them secure higher earnings and give them an edge

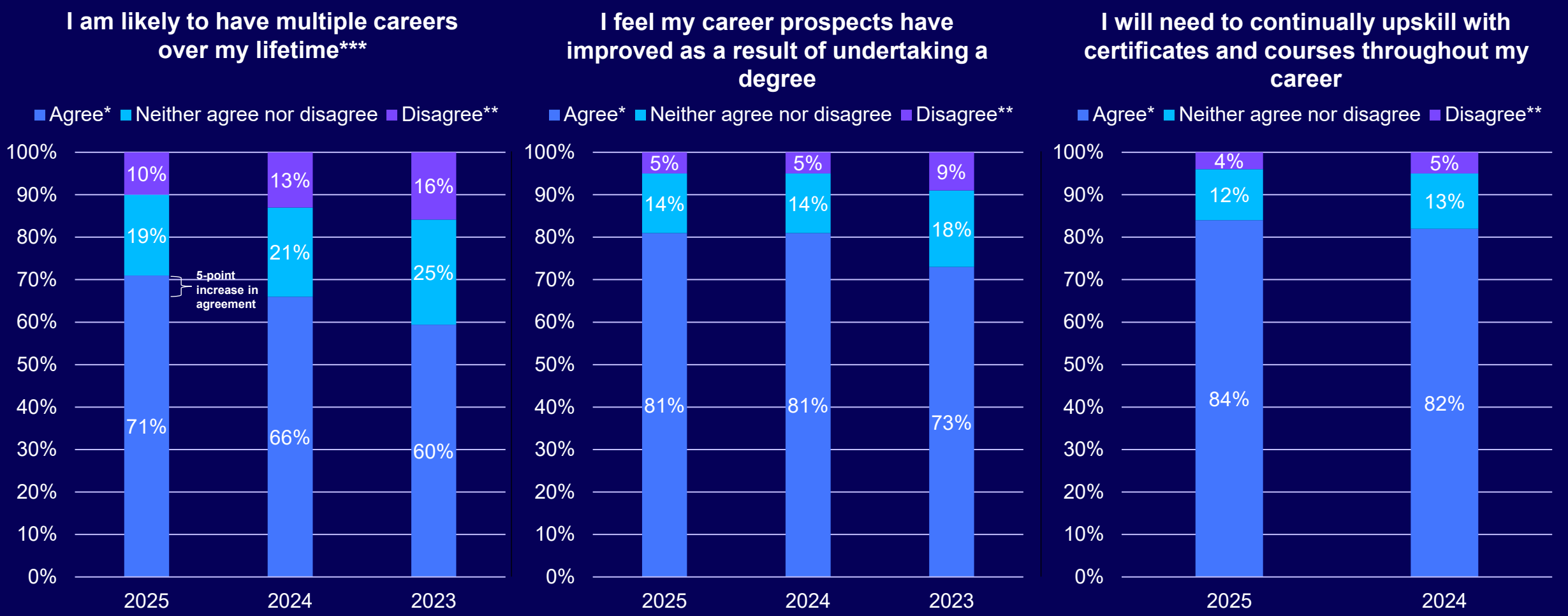
Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



*Agree = graduates who selected either “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree”
**Disagree = graduates who selected either “somewhat disagree” or “strongly disagree”

Graduates are more likely in 2025 vs. 2024 to say they'll have multiple careers over their lifetime

Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



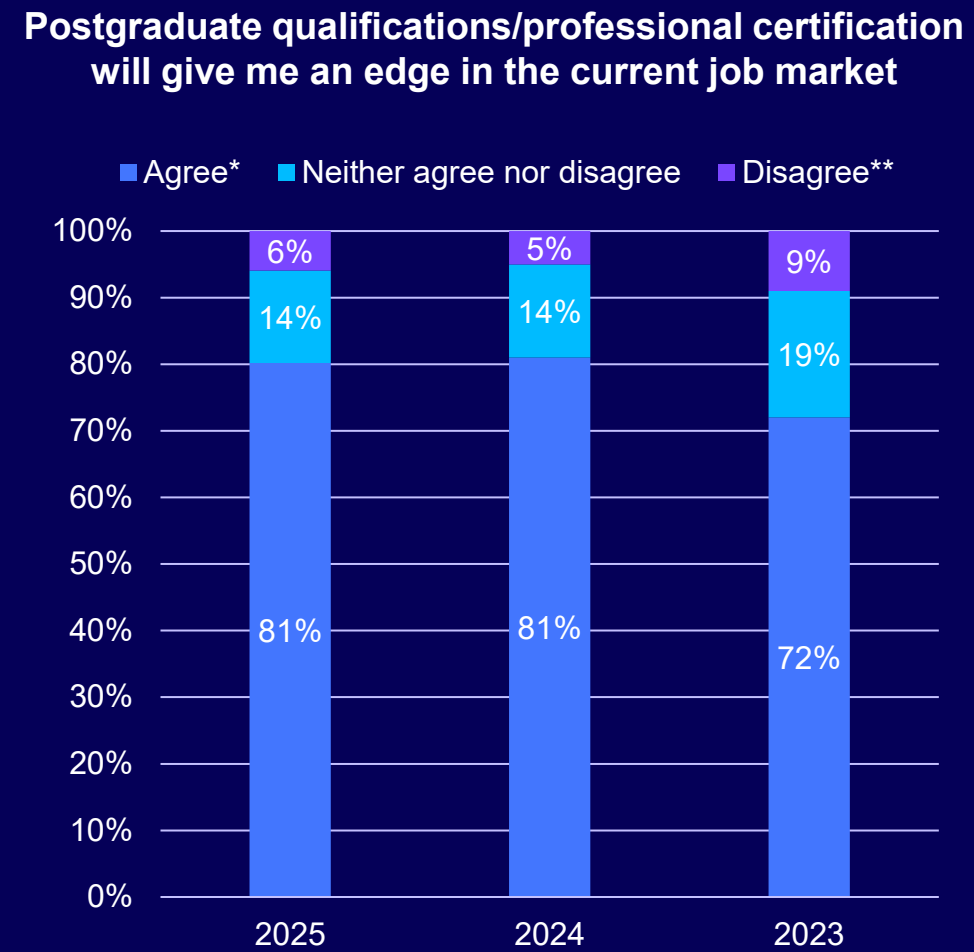
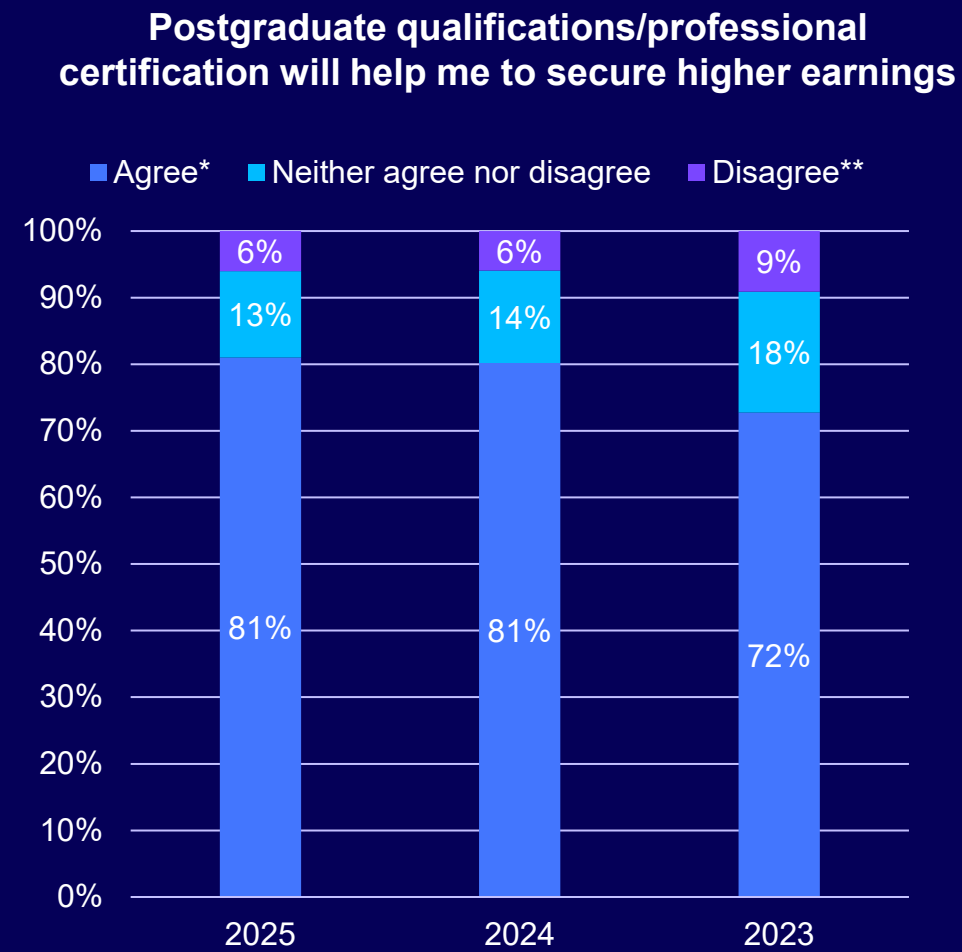
*Agree = graduates who selected either “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree”

**Disagree = graduates who selected either “somewhat disagree” or “strongly disagree”

***Presented as “I am likely to have multiple careers over my lifetime, due to the likelihood I will be working into later life.” in 2023

Graduates are no more or less likely today vs. 2024 to say certifications have helped secure higher earnings and given them an edge

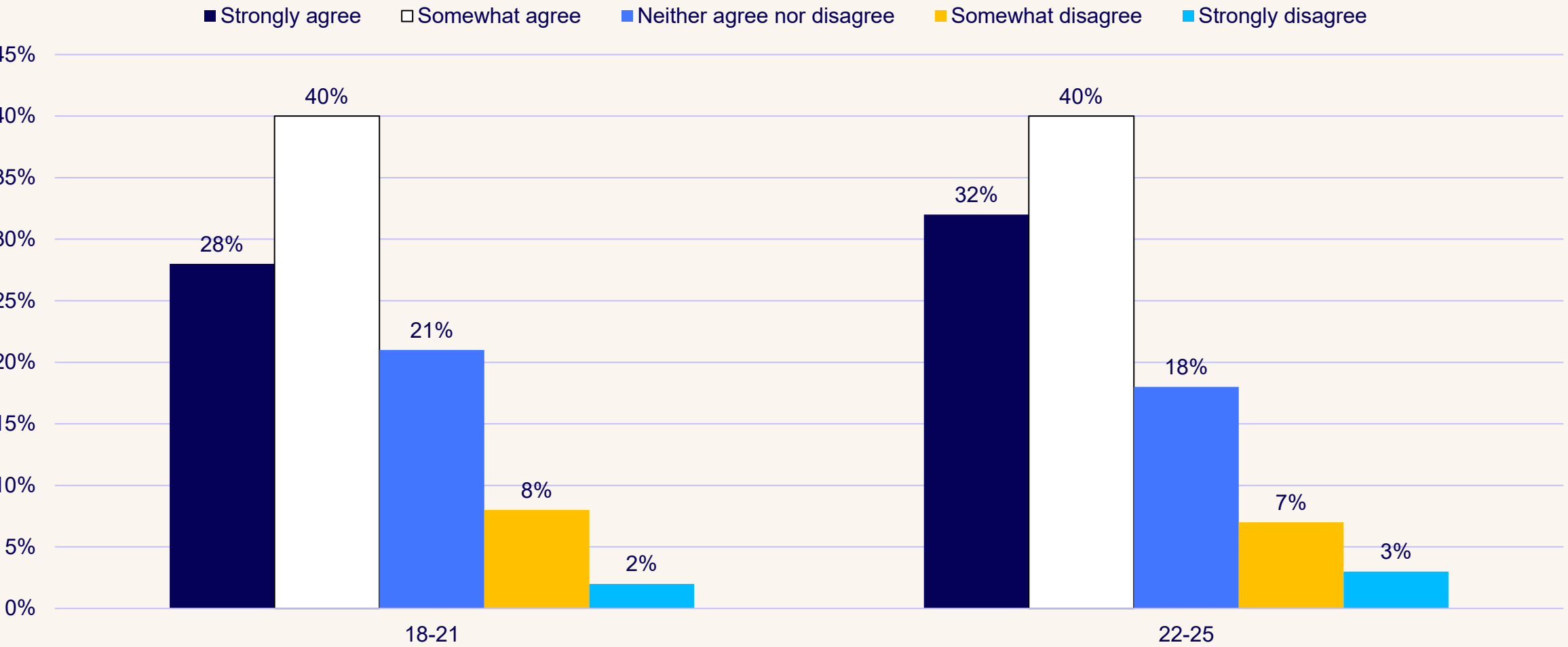
Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



*Agree = graduates who selected either “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree”
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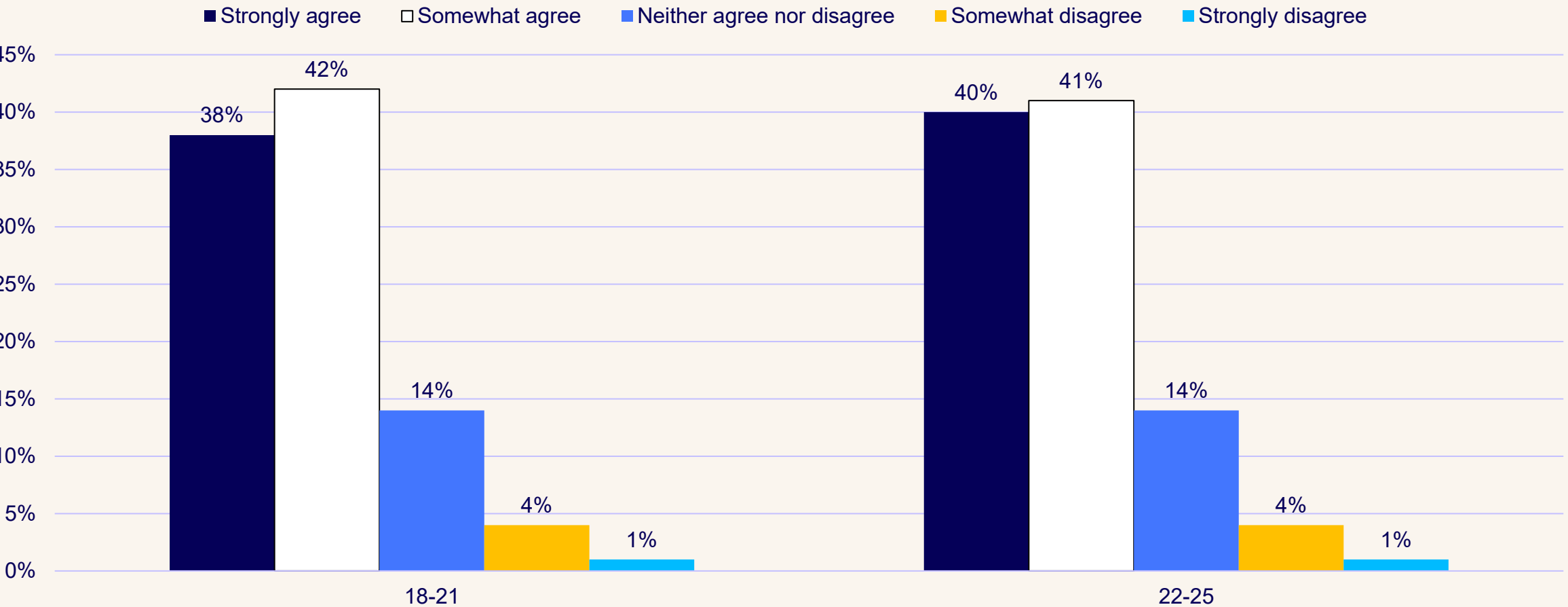
Q8 | I am likely to have multiple careers over my lifetime

Age Combined



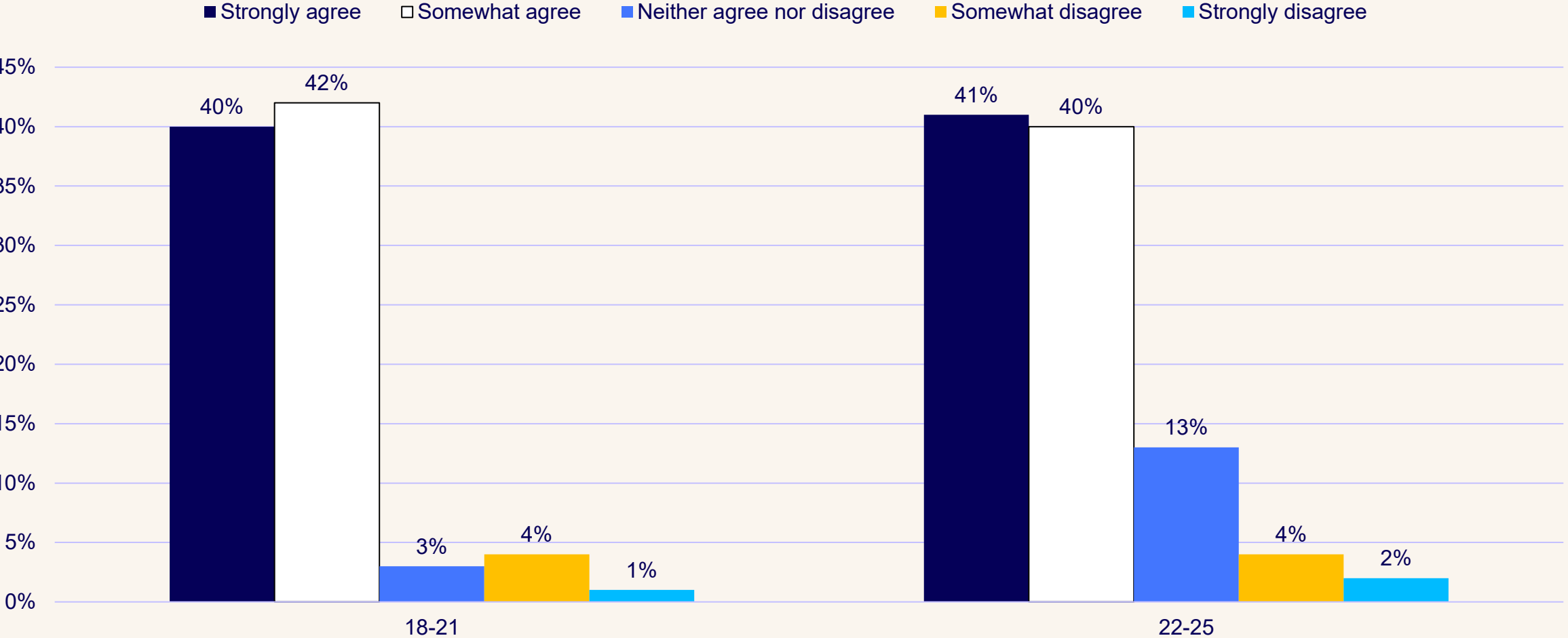
Q8 | I feel my career prospects have improved as a result of undertaking a degree

Age Combined



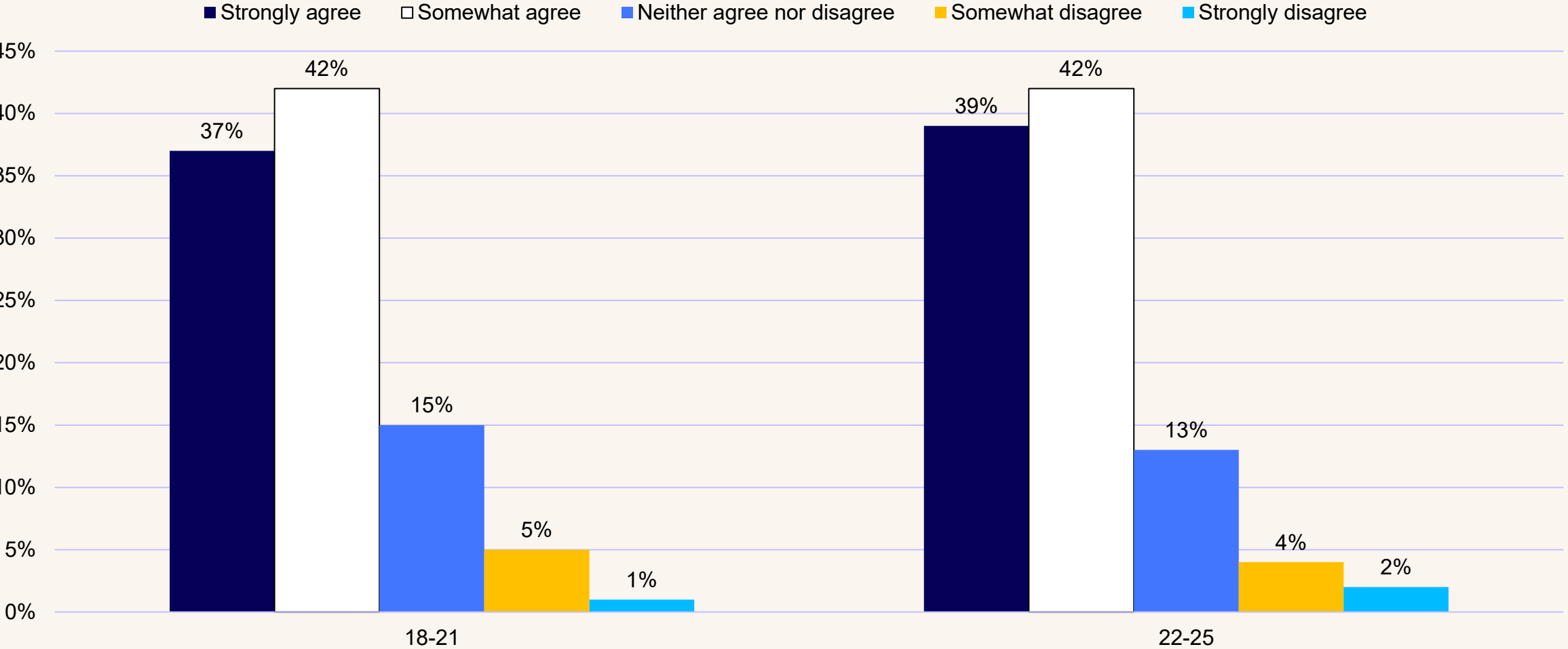
Q8 | Postgraduate qualifications/professional certification will help me to secure higher earnings

Age Combined



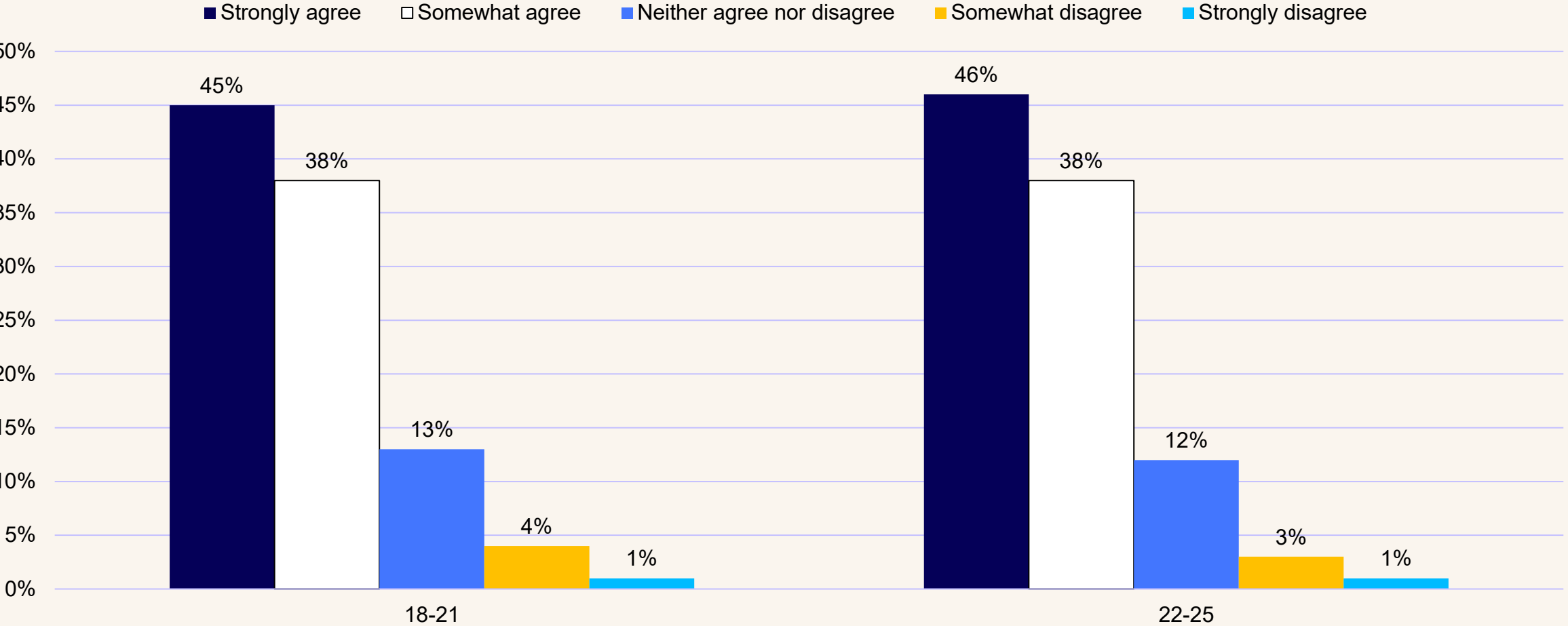
Q8 | Postgraduate qualifications/professional certification will give me an edge in the current job market

Age Combined



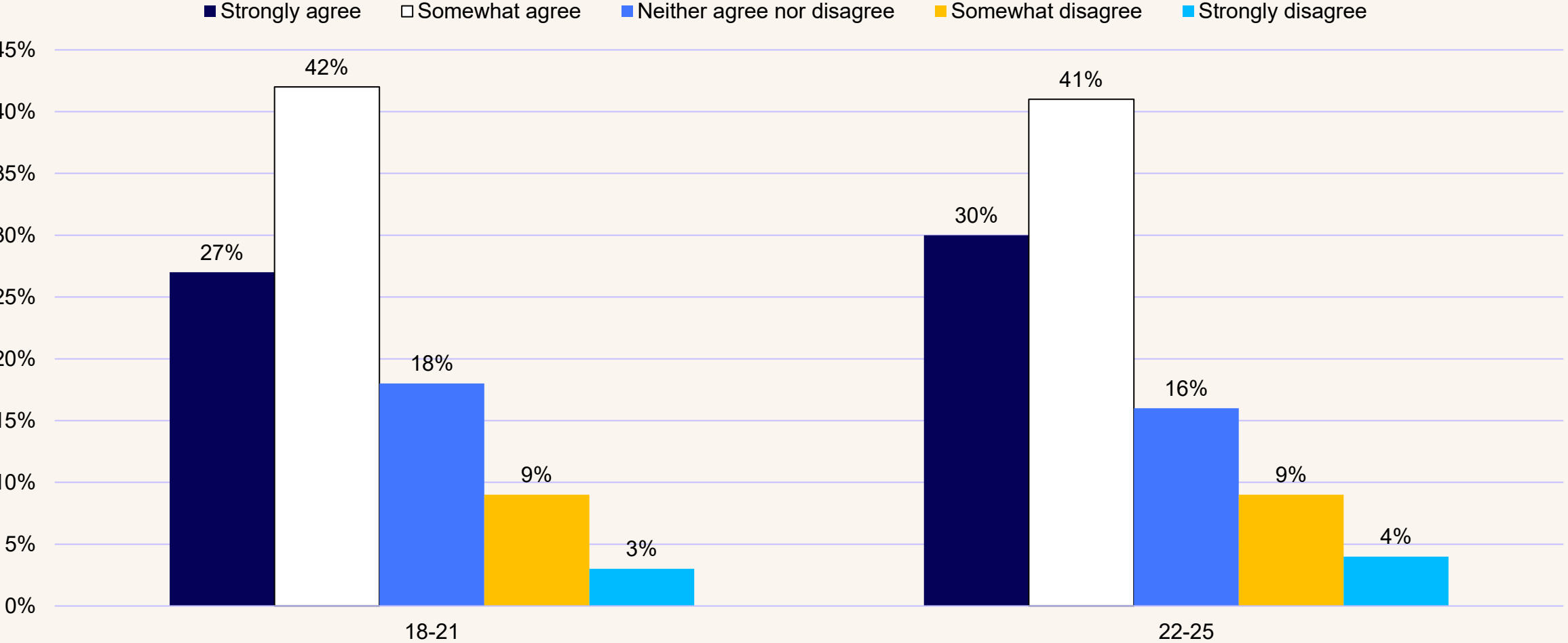
Q8 | I will need to continually upskill with certificates and courses throughout my career

Age Combined



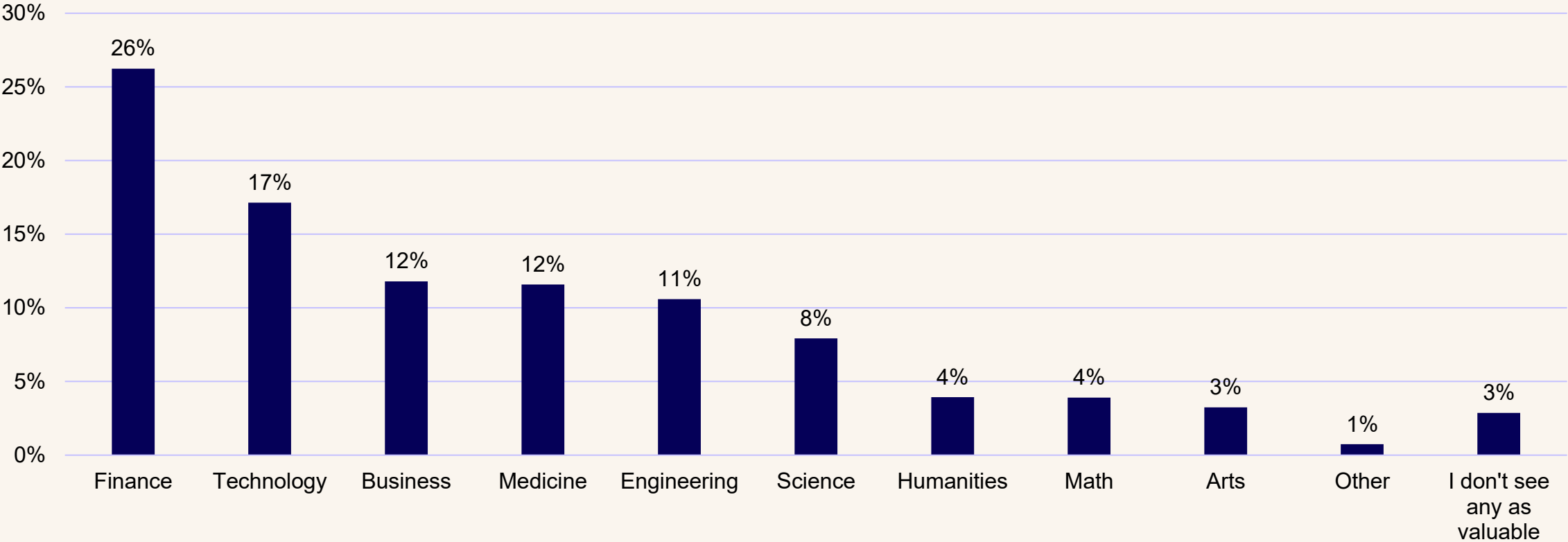
Q8 | My university classes taught me “real world” or “desk ready” skills that are applicable and transferable to the workplace

Age Combined



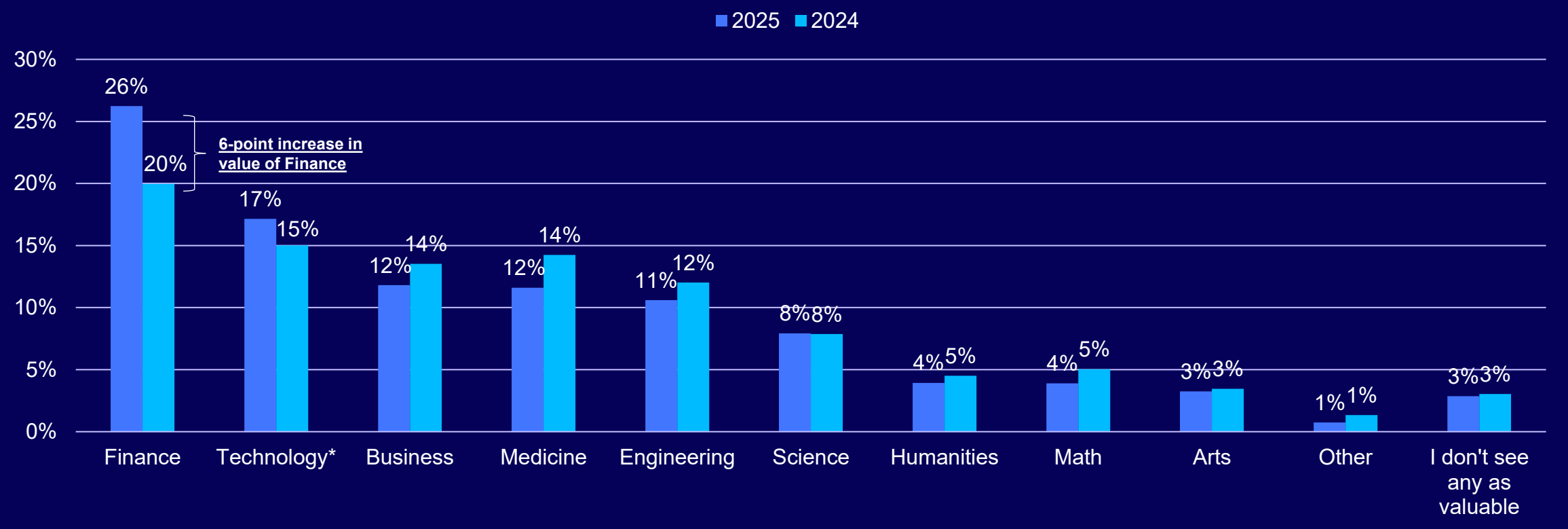
Finance is the top major graduates consider most valuable in finding a career

Q9. What university major/subject, if any, do you see as most valuable in finding a career? Select only one.



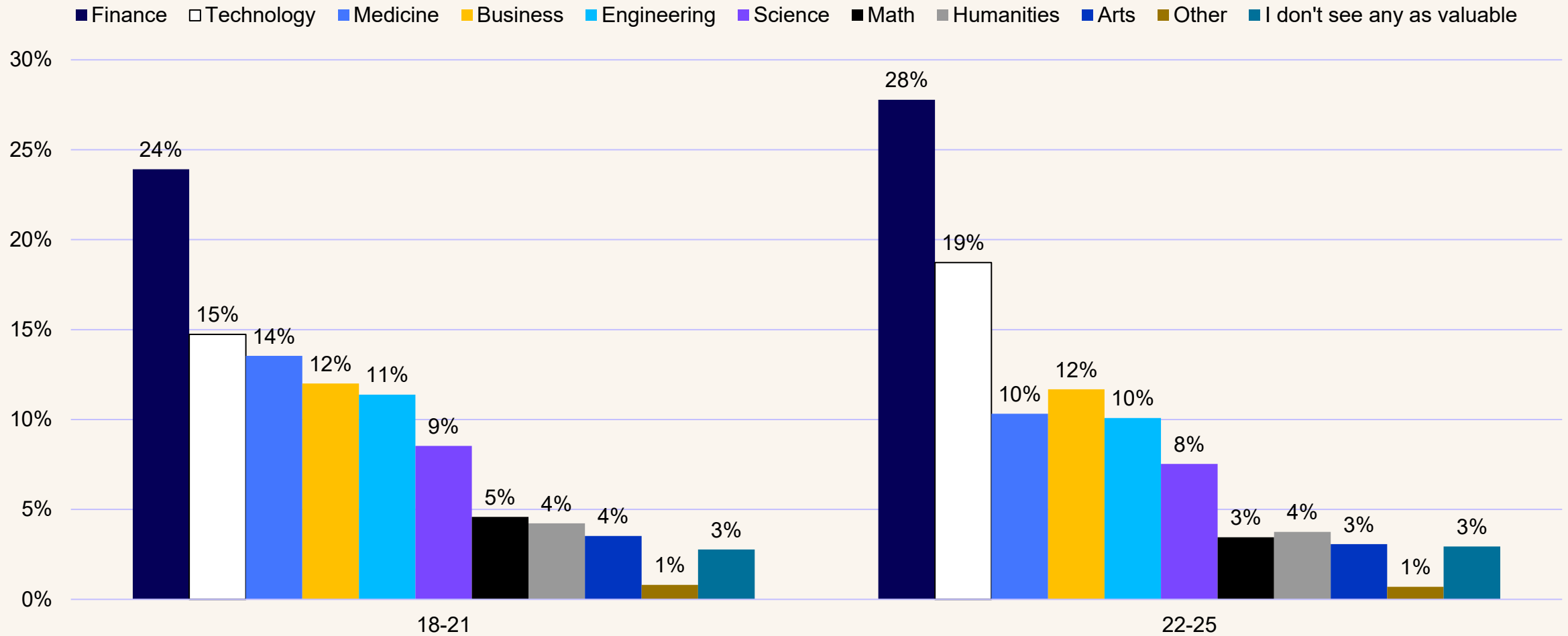
Graduates find Finance more valuable in finding a career in 2025 vs. 2024 but find Business and Medicine less valuable

Q9. What university major/subject, if any, do you see as most valuable in finding a career? Select only one.



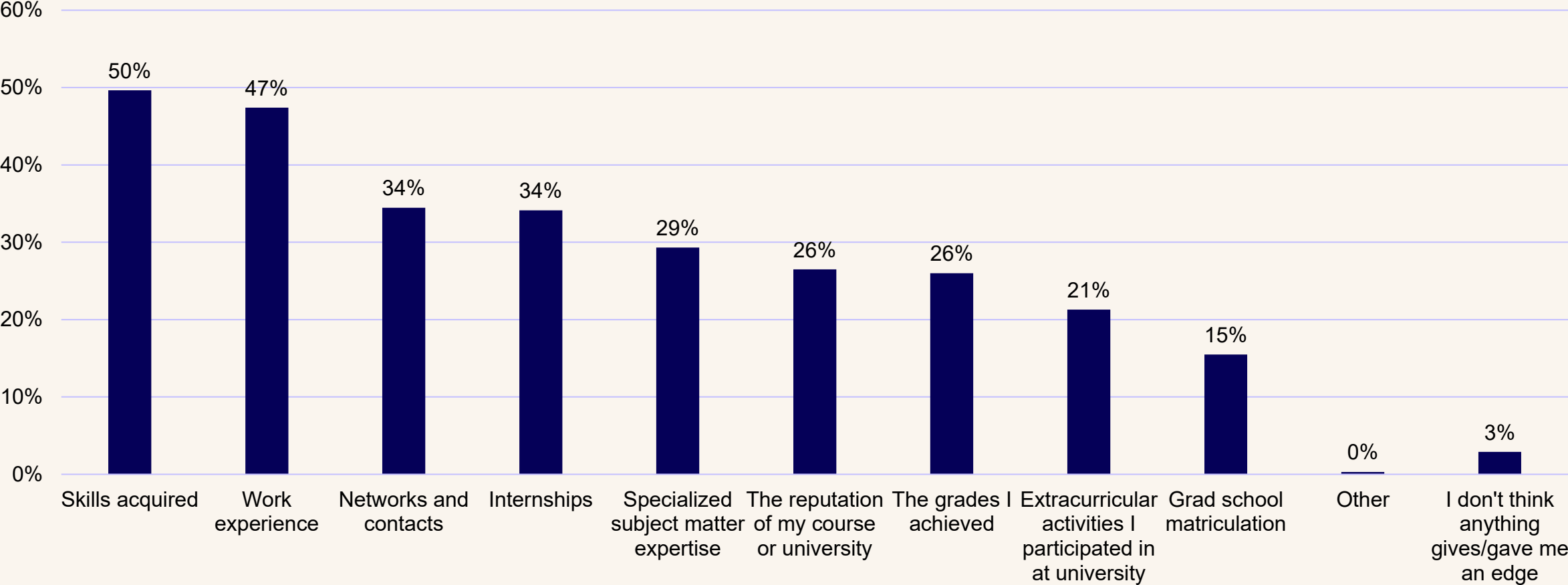
*Presented as "Tech" in 2024

Q9 Age Combined



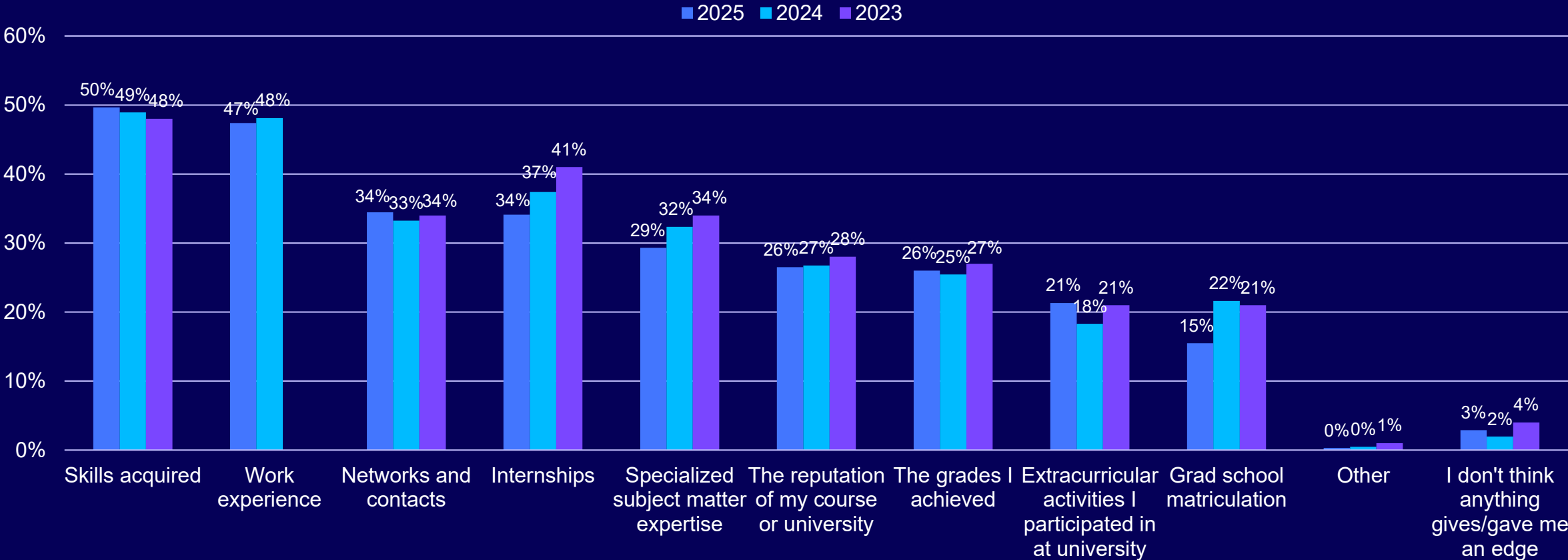
Graduates believe skills and work experience will give them an edge in the job market upon graduation

Q10. What, if anything, do you think gives/gave you an "edge" in the job market upon graduation? Select all that apply.



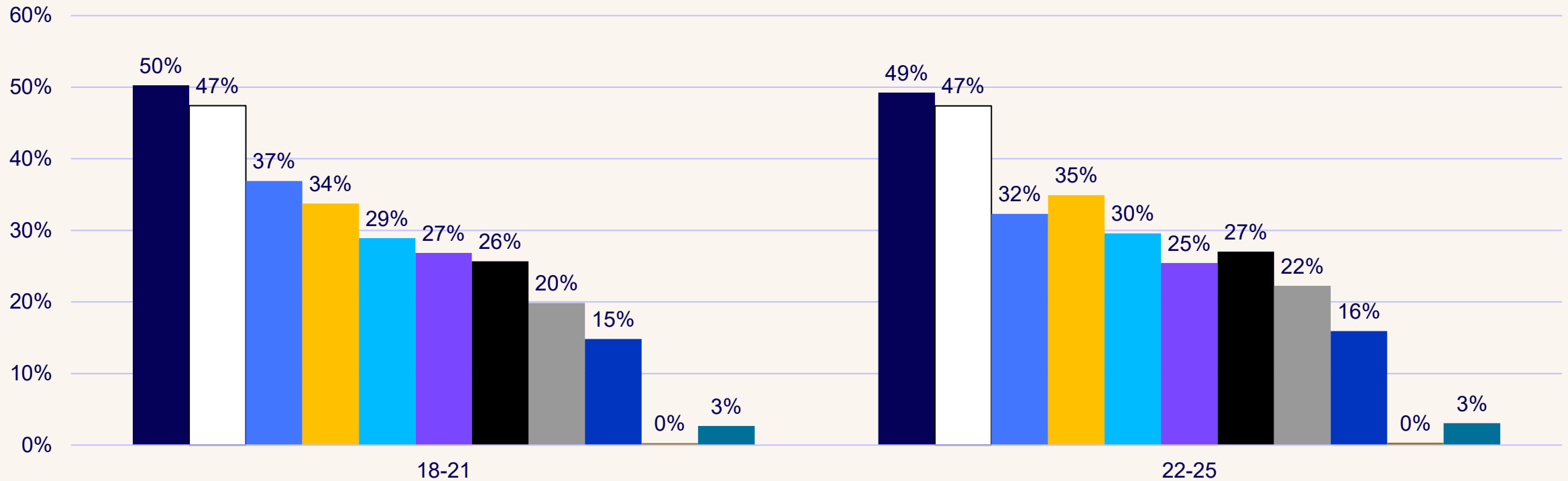
Graduates are less likely in 2025 vs. 2024 to think internships will give them an edge in the job market after graduating

Q10. What, if anything, do you think gives/gave you an "edge" in the job market upon graduation? Select all that apply.



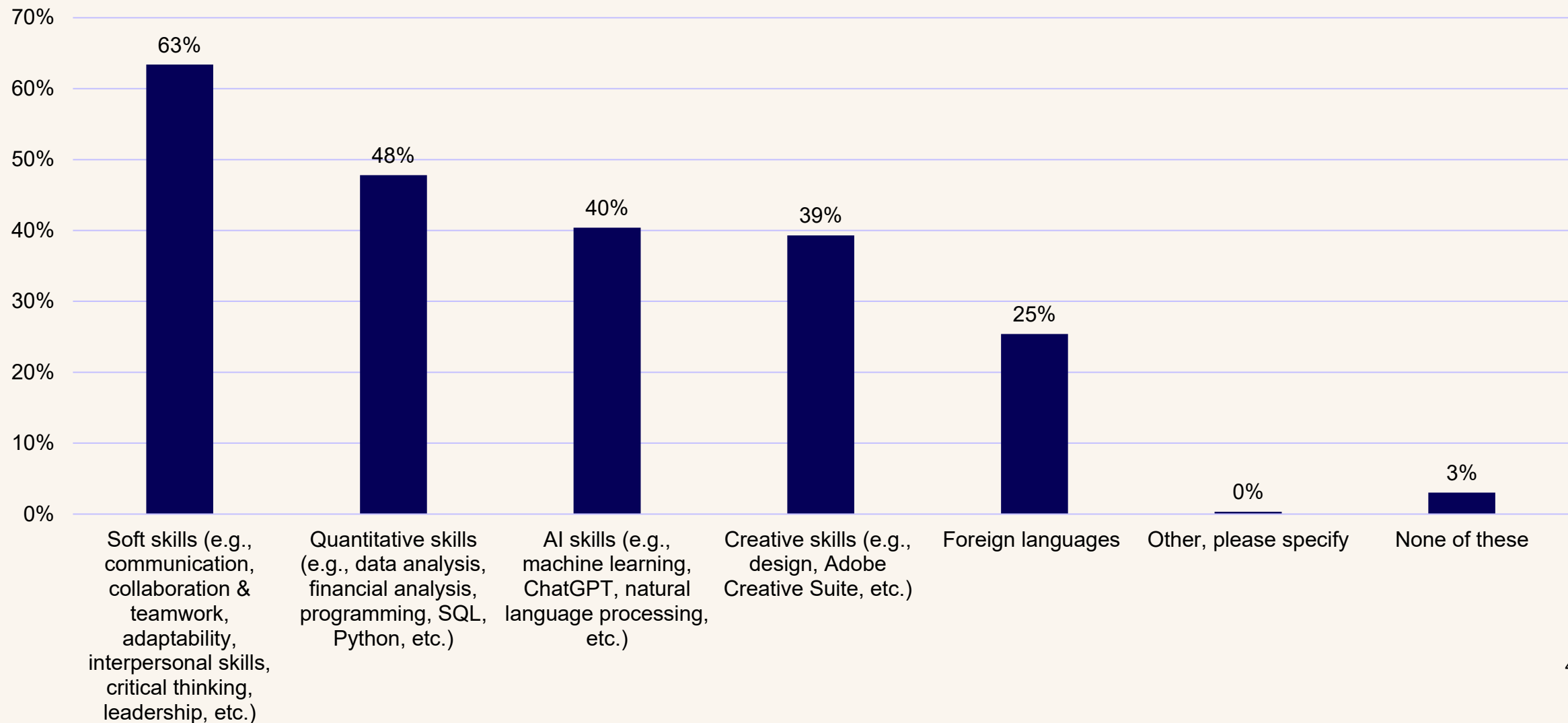
Q10 Age Combined

- Skills acquired
- Internships
- Specialized subject matter expertise
- The reputation of my course or university
- Grad school matriculation
- I don't think anything gives/gave me an edge in the job market upon graduation
- Work experience
- Networks and contacts
- The grades I achieved
- Extracurricular activities I participated in at university
- Other, please specify



Nearly two-thirds of graduates believe soft skills will give them an edge in the job market

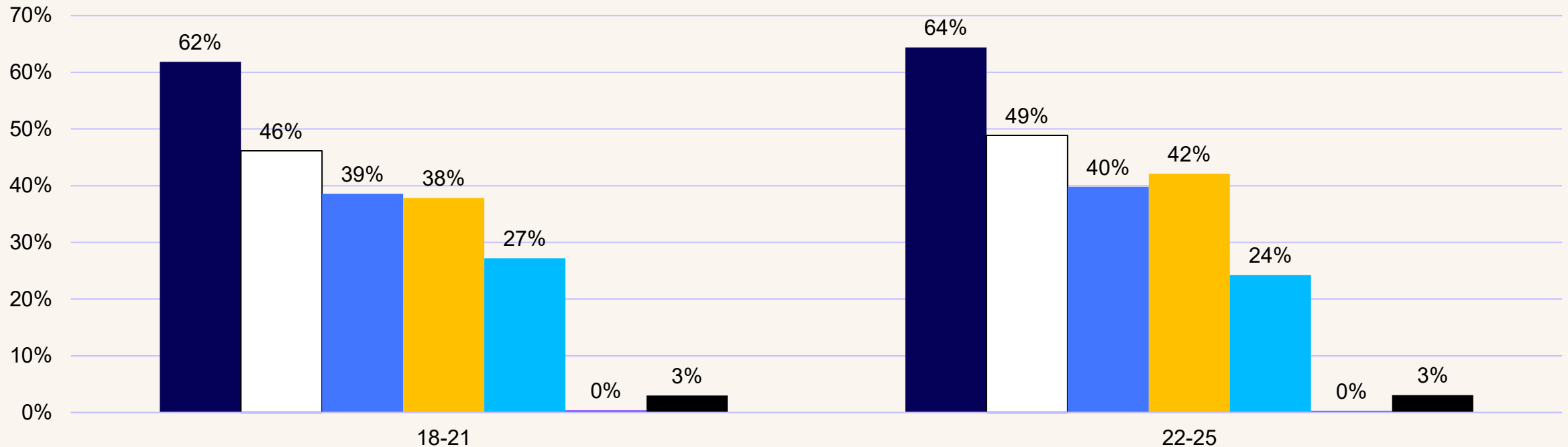
Q11. What type of skills gave you an “edge” in the job market? Select all that apply.



Q11

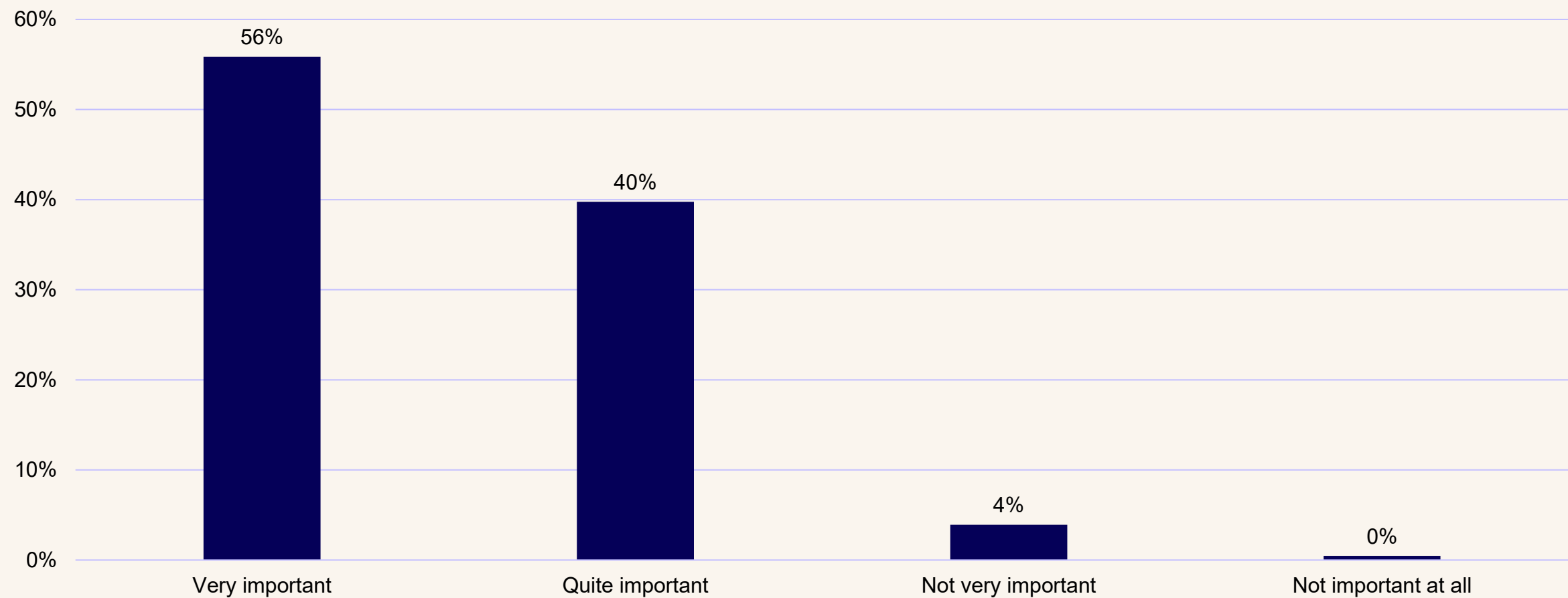
Age Combined

- Soft skills (e.g., communication, collaboration & teamwork, adaptability, interpersonal skills, critical thinking, leadership, etc.)
- Quantitative skills (e.g., data analysis, financial analysis, programming, SQL, Python, etc.)
- Creative skills (e.g., design, Adobe Creative Suite, etc.)
- AI skills (e.g., machine learning, ChatGPT, natural language processing, etc.)
- Foreign languages
- Other, please specify
- None of these



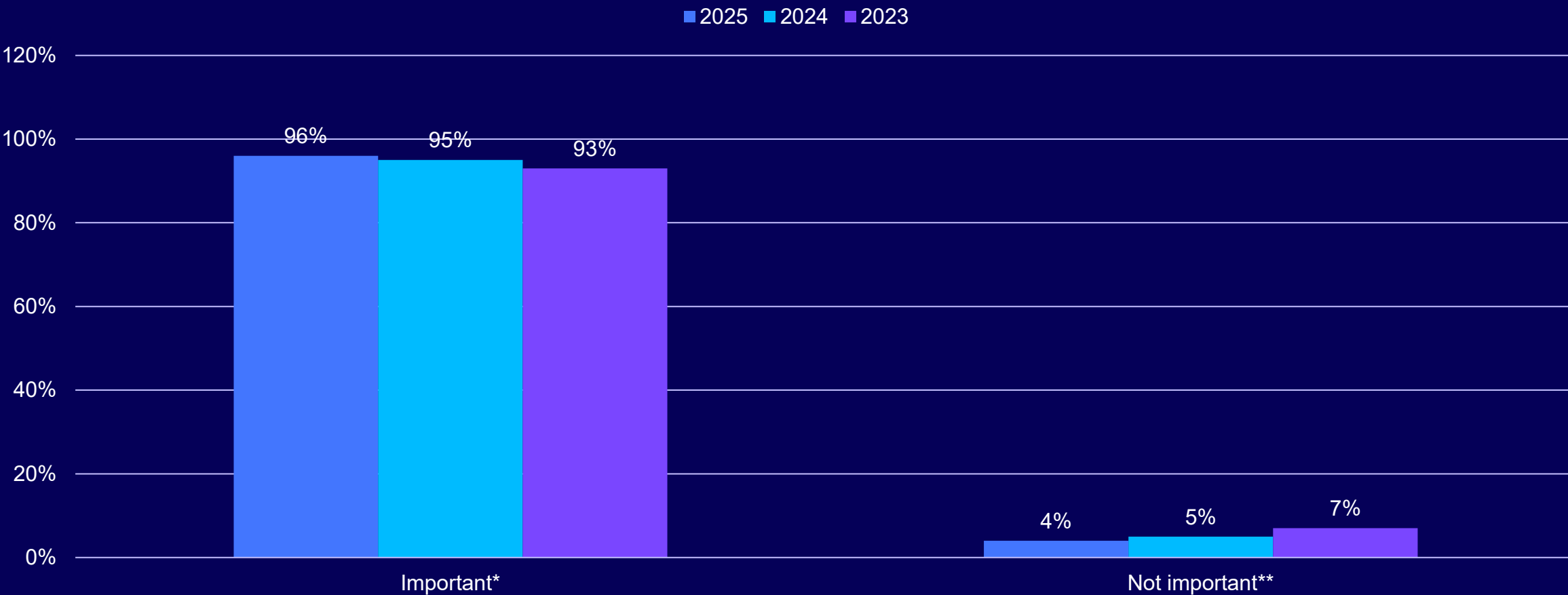
Most graduates view upskilling and professional/post-graduate qualifications as very important in the current job market

Q12. How important, if at all, do you think upskilling and professional / post-graduate qualifications are in the current job market?



Upskilling and professional qualifications have increased in importance for graduates since 2024

Q12. How important, if at all, do you think upskilling and professional / post-graduate qualifications are in the current job market?

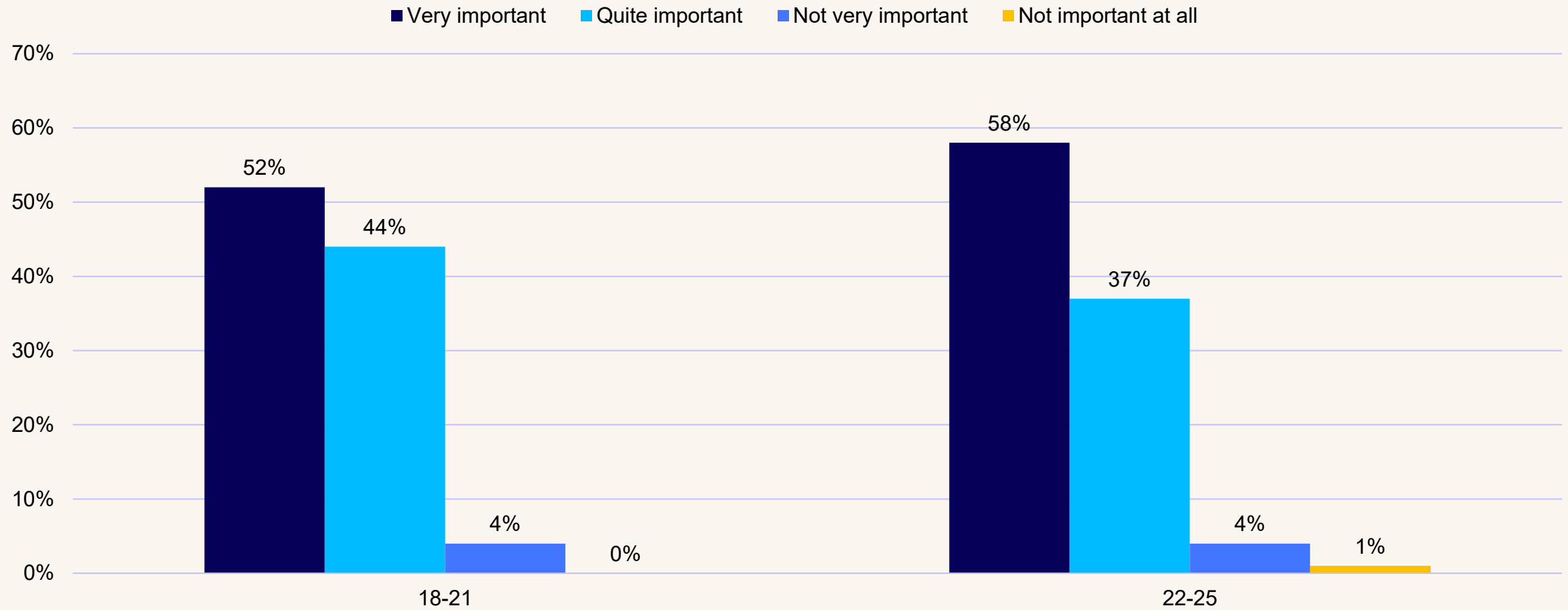


*Important = graduates who selected either “very important” or “quite important”

**Not important = graduates who selected either “not very important” or “not important at all”

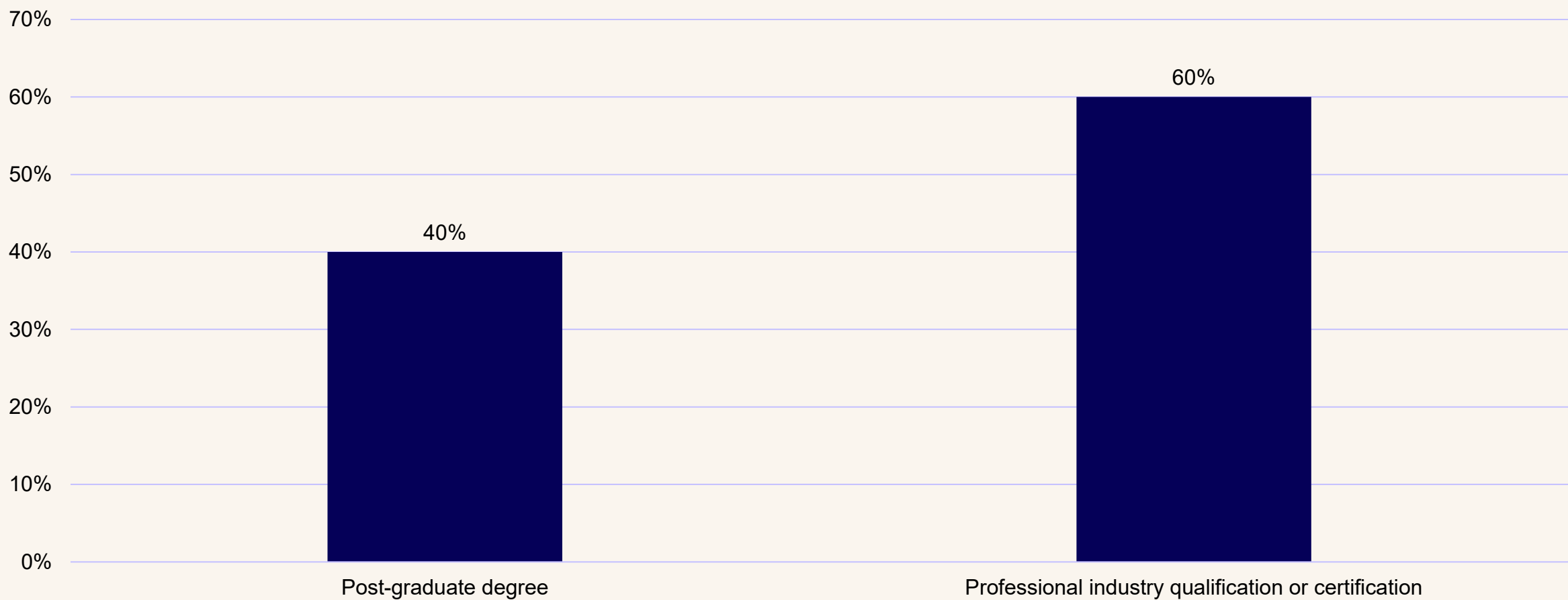
Q12

Age Combined



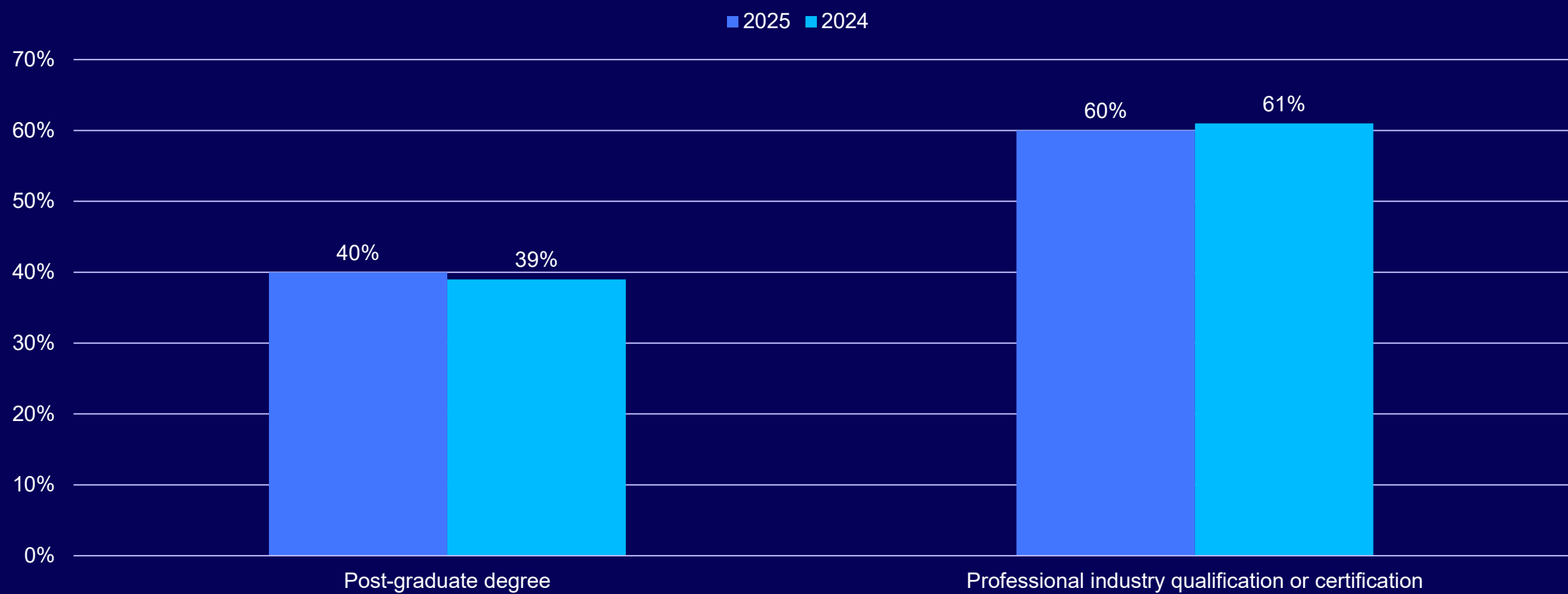
Three-in-five graduates consider a professional industry qualification most valuable in helping drive their career forward

Q13. Which of the following do you consider most valuable in helping drive your career forward?

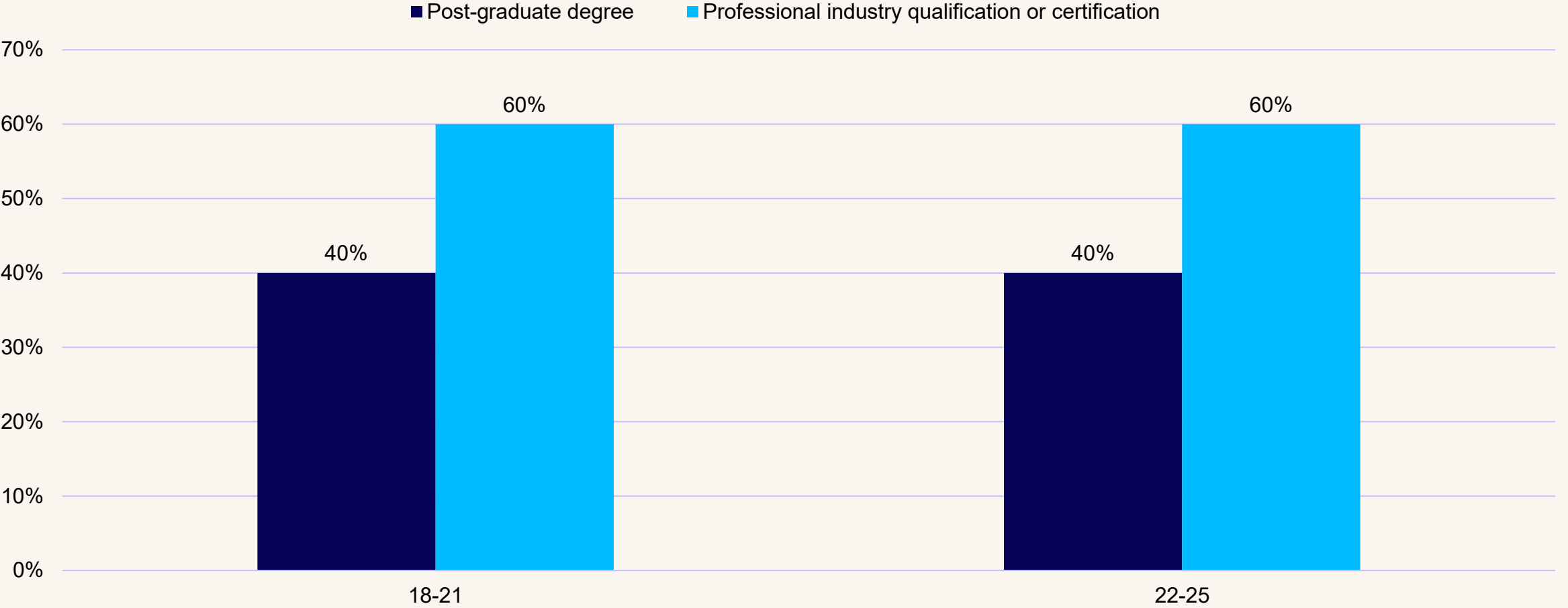


Graduates are unchanged in considering a professional industry qualification most valuable in helping drive their career forward today vs. 2024

Q13. Which of the following do you consider most valuable in helping drive your career forward?

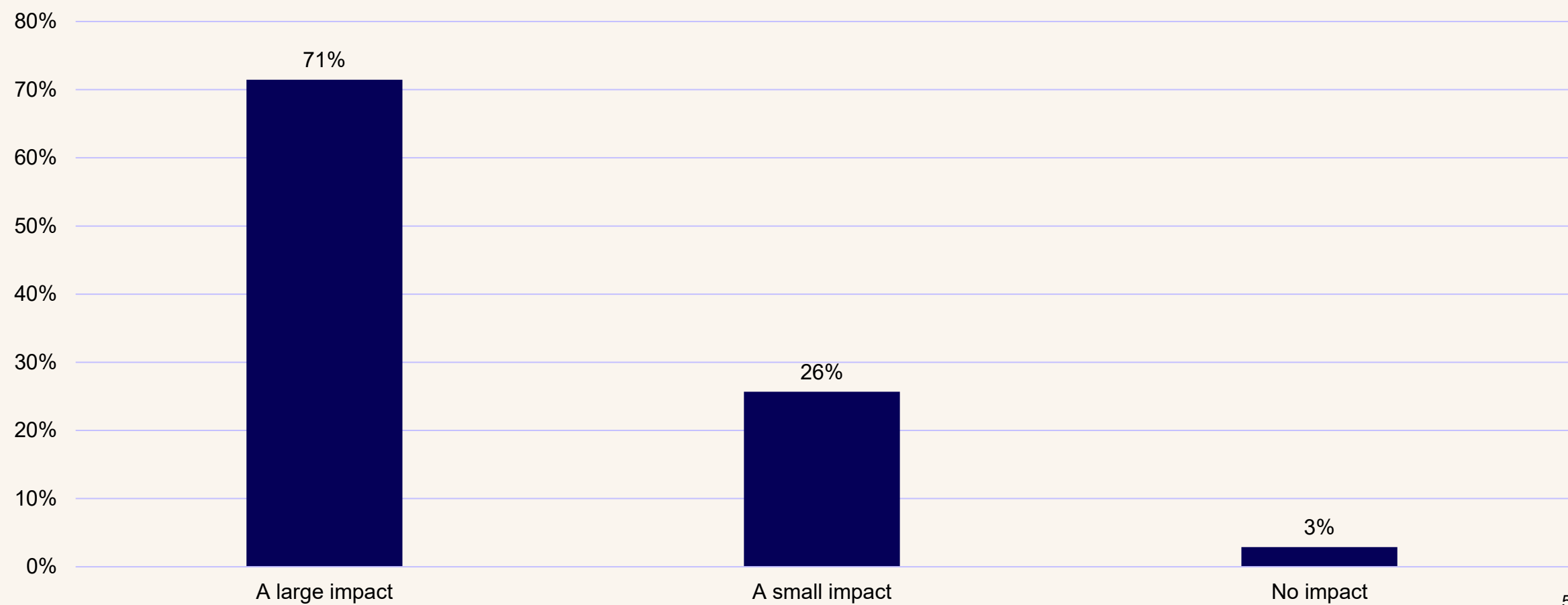


Q13
Age Combined



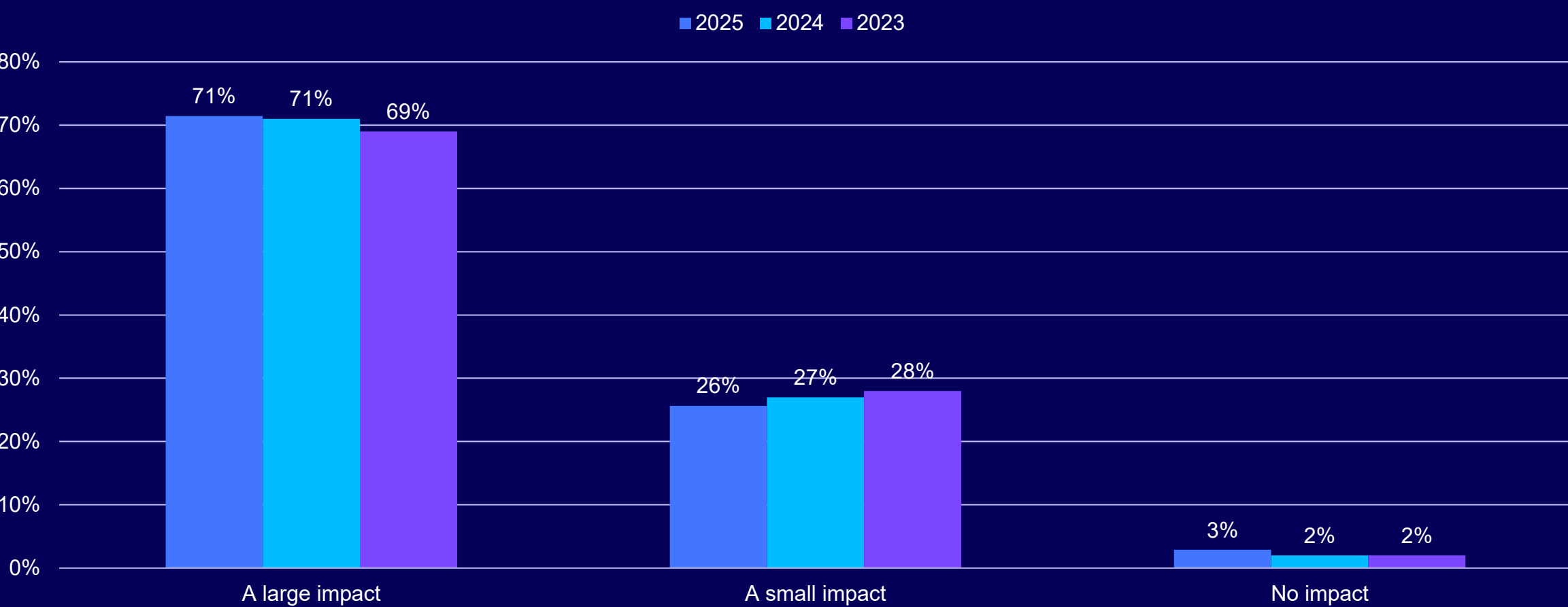
Nearly three-quarters of graduates think professional certification has a large impact on their earning prospects, job fulfillment and opportunities

Q14. How much impact do you think professional certification would have on your earning prospects, job fulfillment, and opportunities?

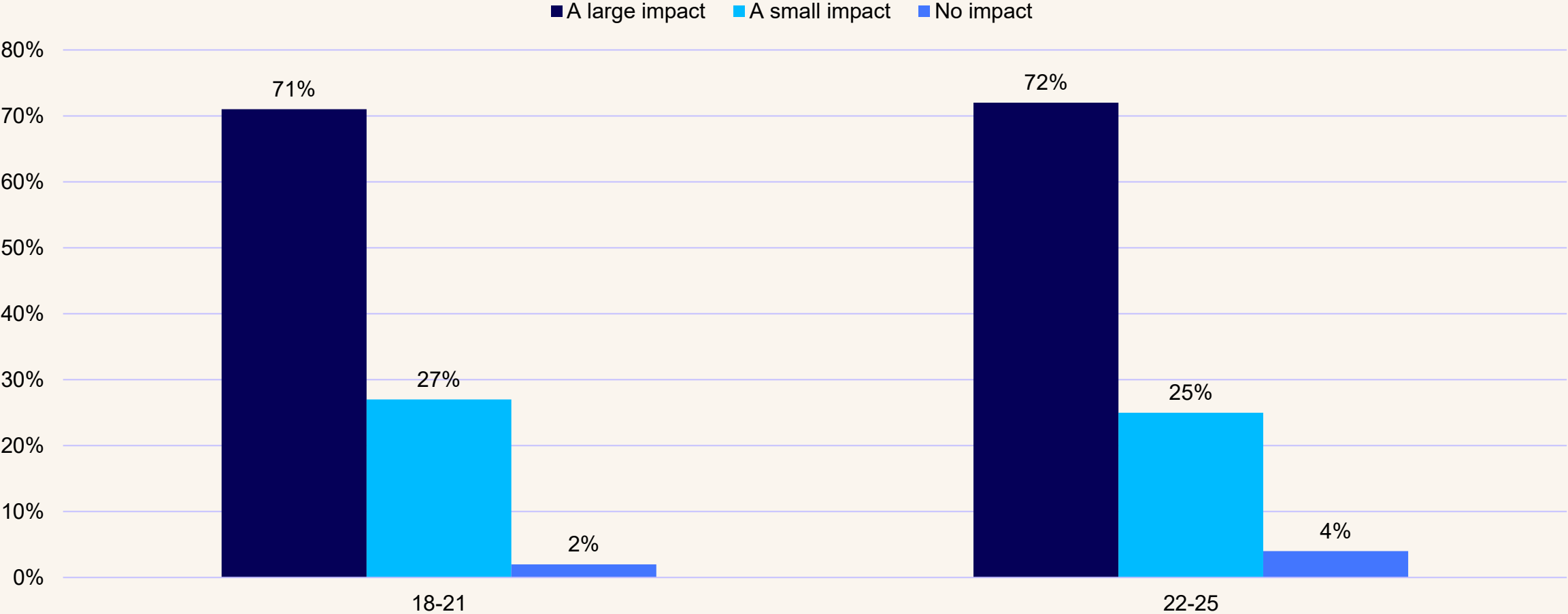


Graduates are no more or less likely to believe certifications have a large impact on earnings and opportunities today vs. 2024

Q14. How much impact do you think professional certification would have on your earning prospects, job fulfillment, and opportunities?

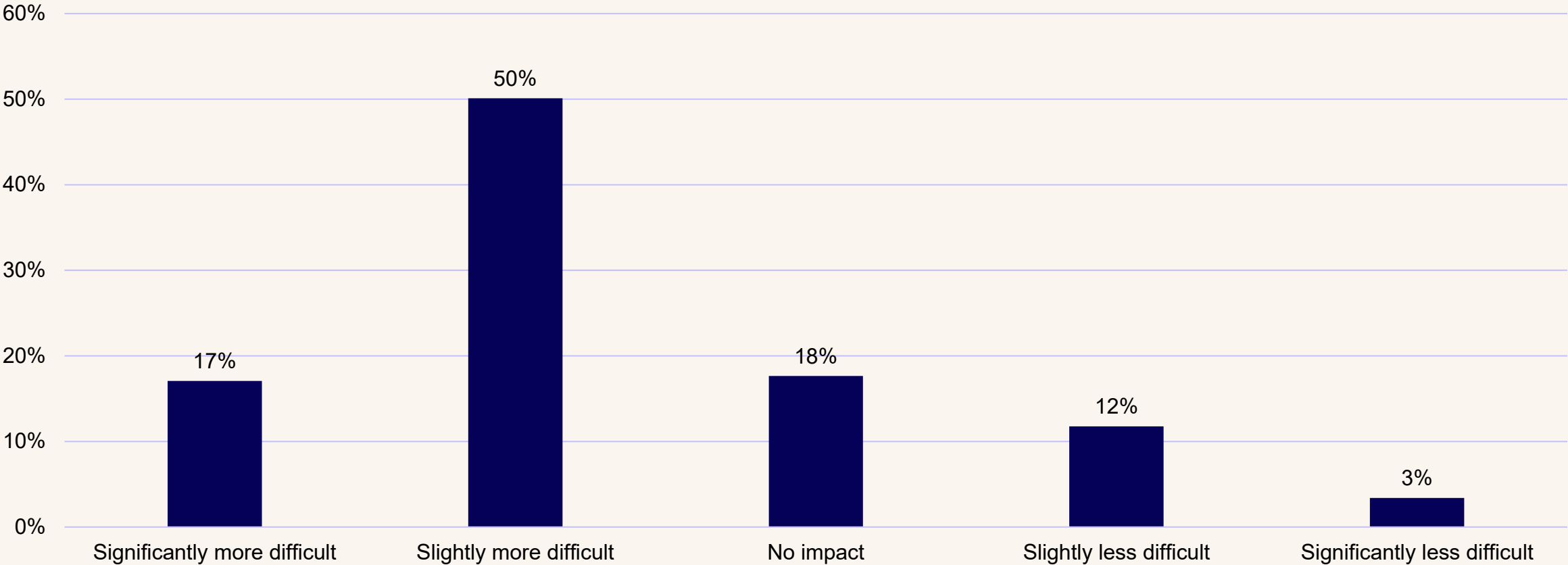


Q14
Age Combined



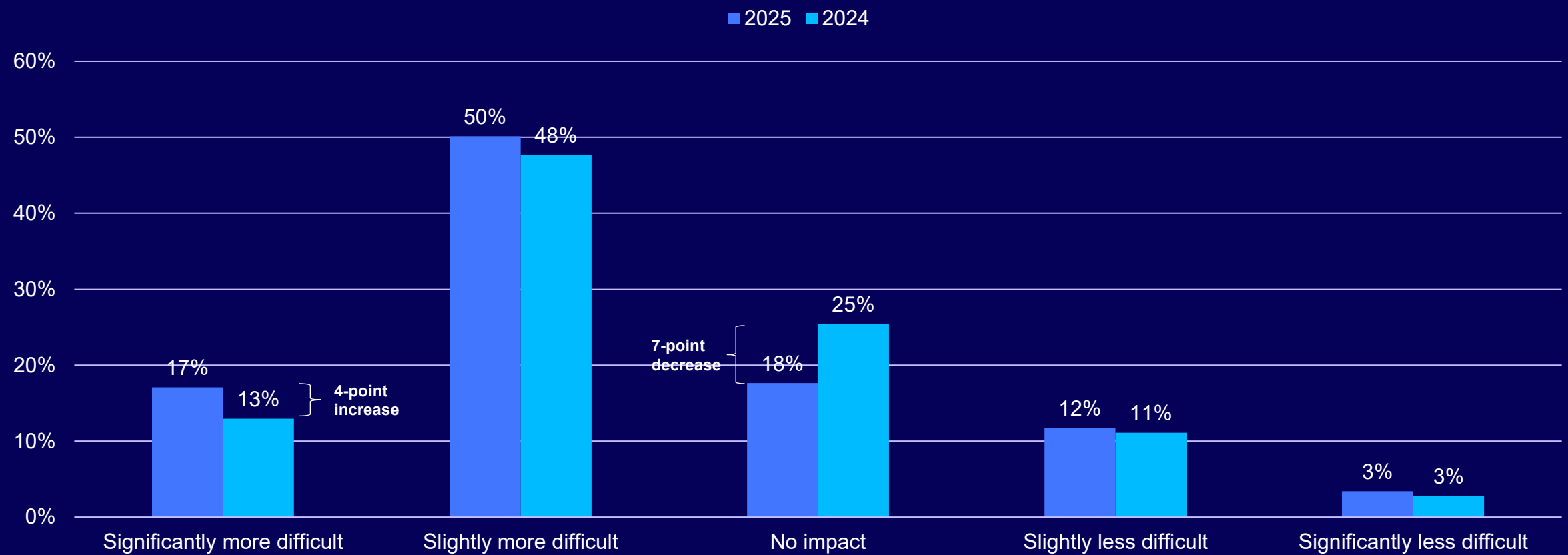
Two-thirds of graduates think AI/automation will make it more difficult to secure the job they want

Q15. As it relates to artificial intelligence, machine learning, and other emerging technologies in your desired career field, do you think artificial intelligence (AI) / automation will make it more or less difficult to secure the job you want?

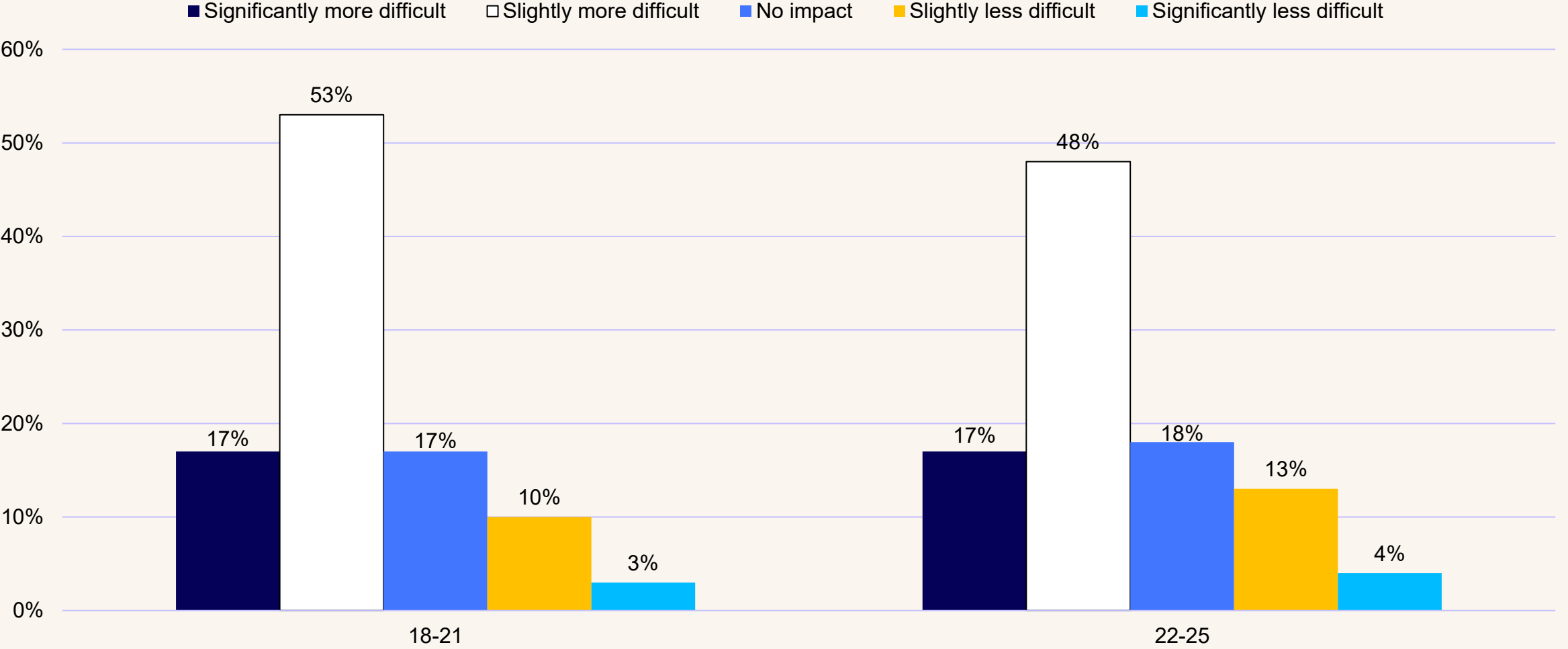


Graduates are more likely to think AI/automation will make it more difficult to secure the job they want today vs. 2024

Q15. As it relates to artificial intelligence, machine learning, and other emerging technologies in your desired career field, do you think artificial intelligence (AI) / automation will make it more or less difficult to secure the job you want?

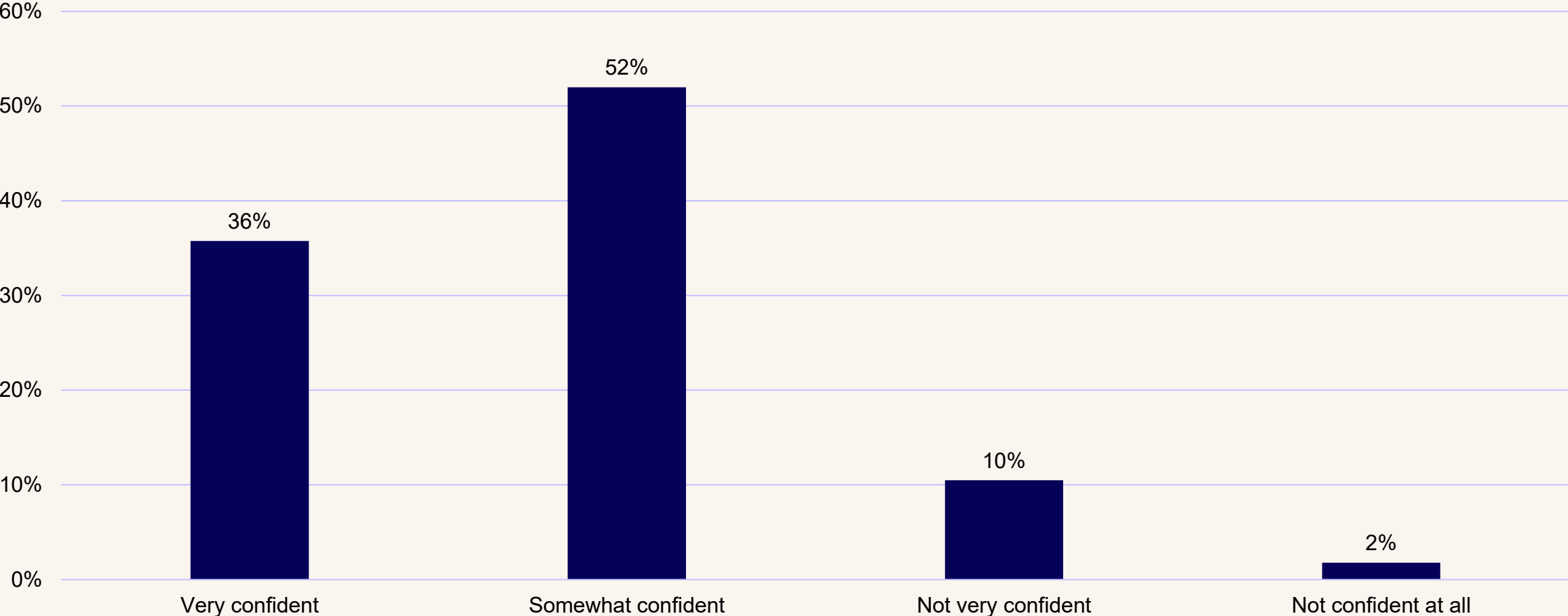


Q15
Age Combined

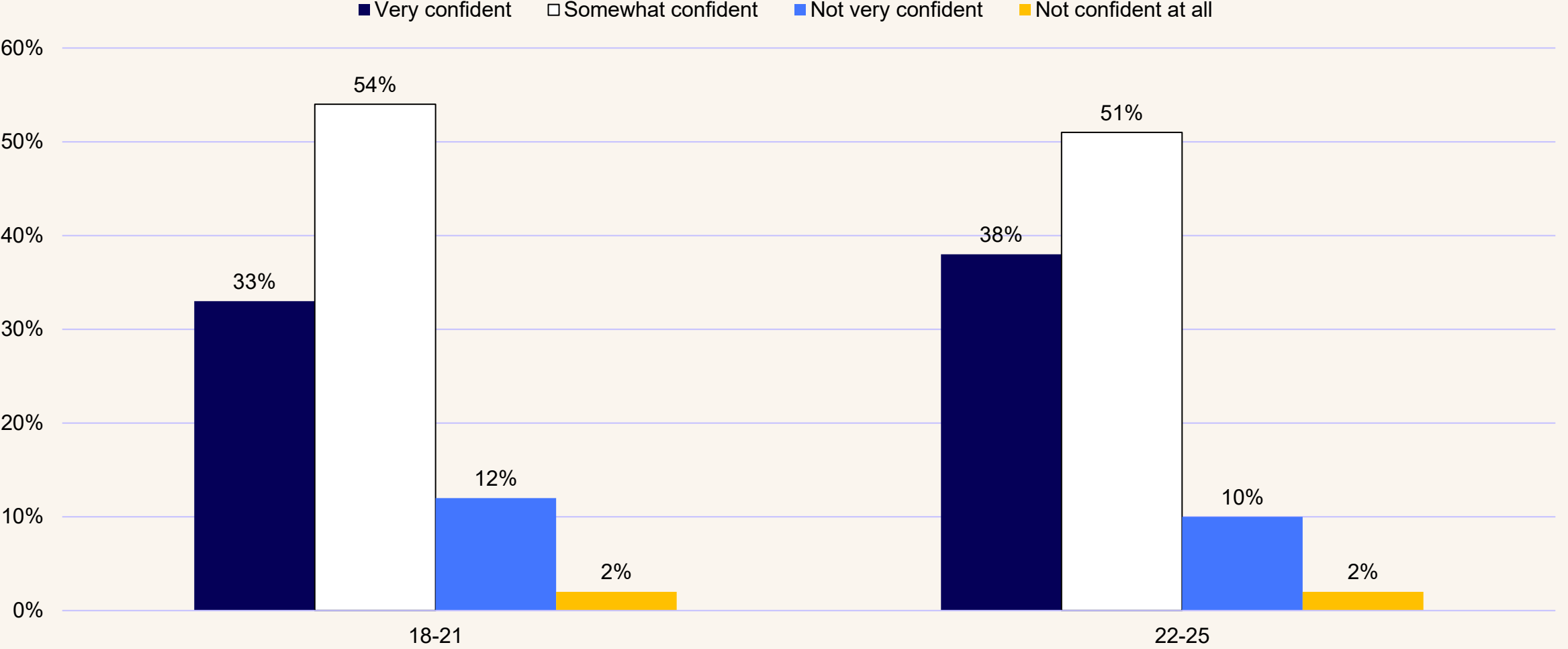


Graduates are confident in their ability to apply AI-led tools at work after completing their undergraduate degree

Q16. How confident do you feel in your ability to apply AI-led tools at work after completing your undergraduate degree?

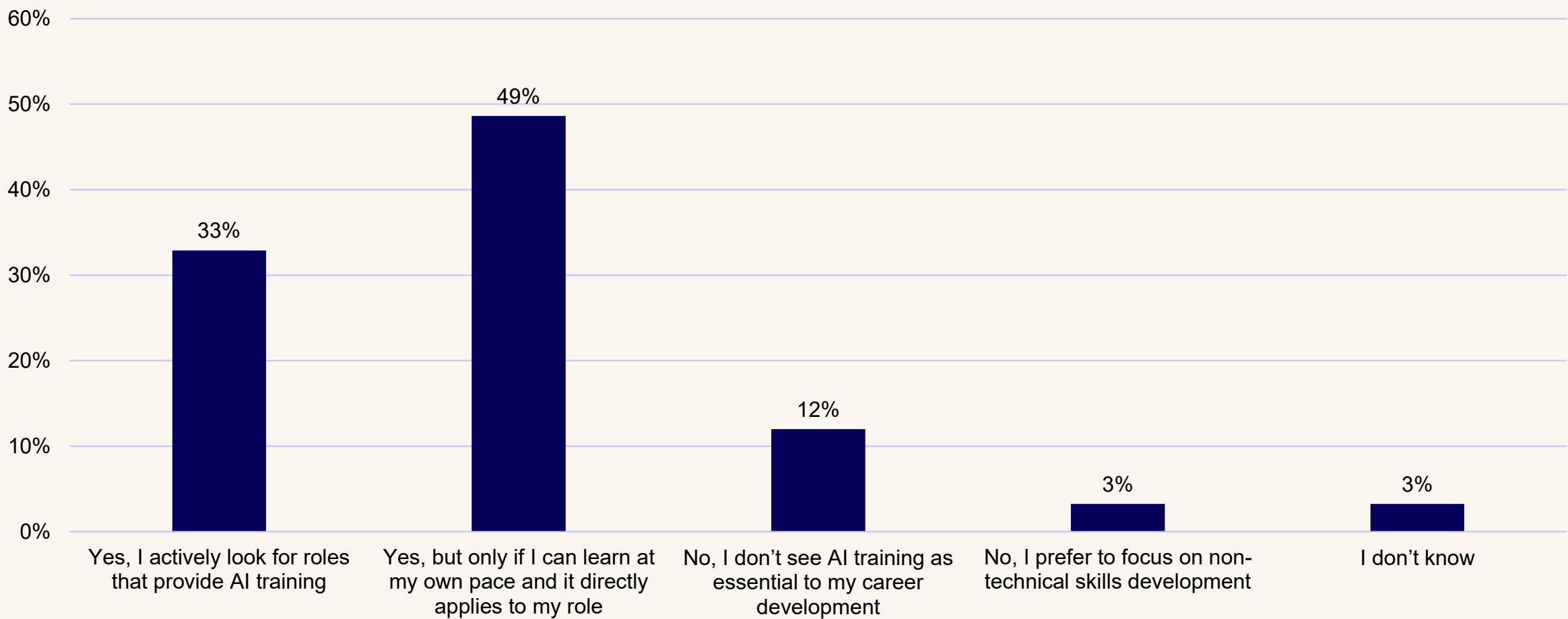


Q16
Age Combined



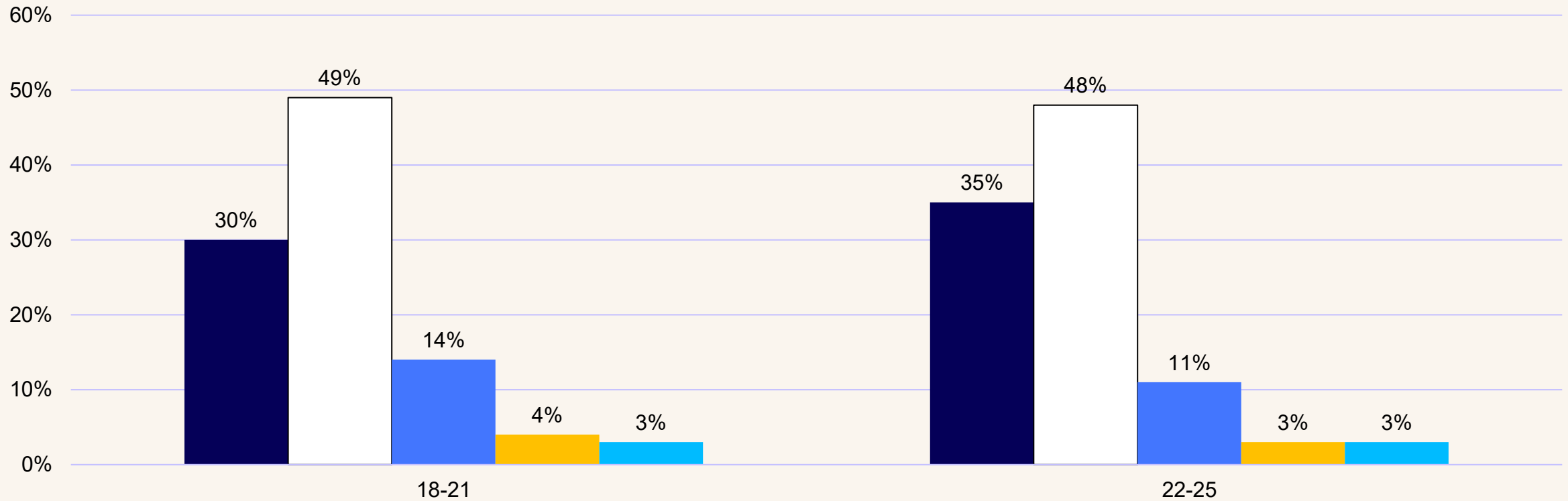
Nearly half of graduates would be interested in a job that offers AI training but only if they can learn at their own pace and it directly applies to their role

Q17. Would you be more interested in a job that offers AI training and upskilling opportunities?



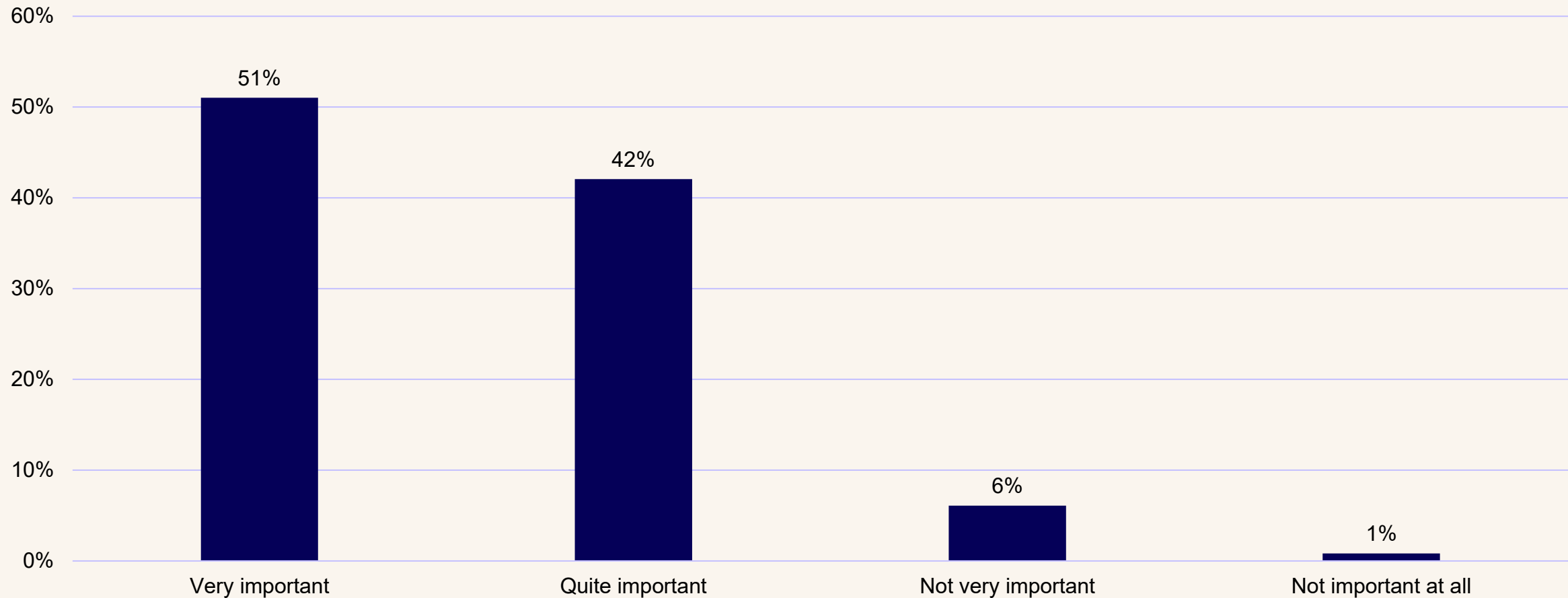
Q17 Age Combined

- Yes, I actively look for roles that provide AI training
- Yes, but only if I can learn at my own pace and it directly applies to my role
- No, I don't see AI training as essential to my career development
- No, I prefer to focus on non-technical skills development
- I don't know



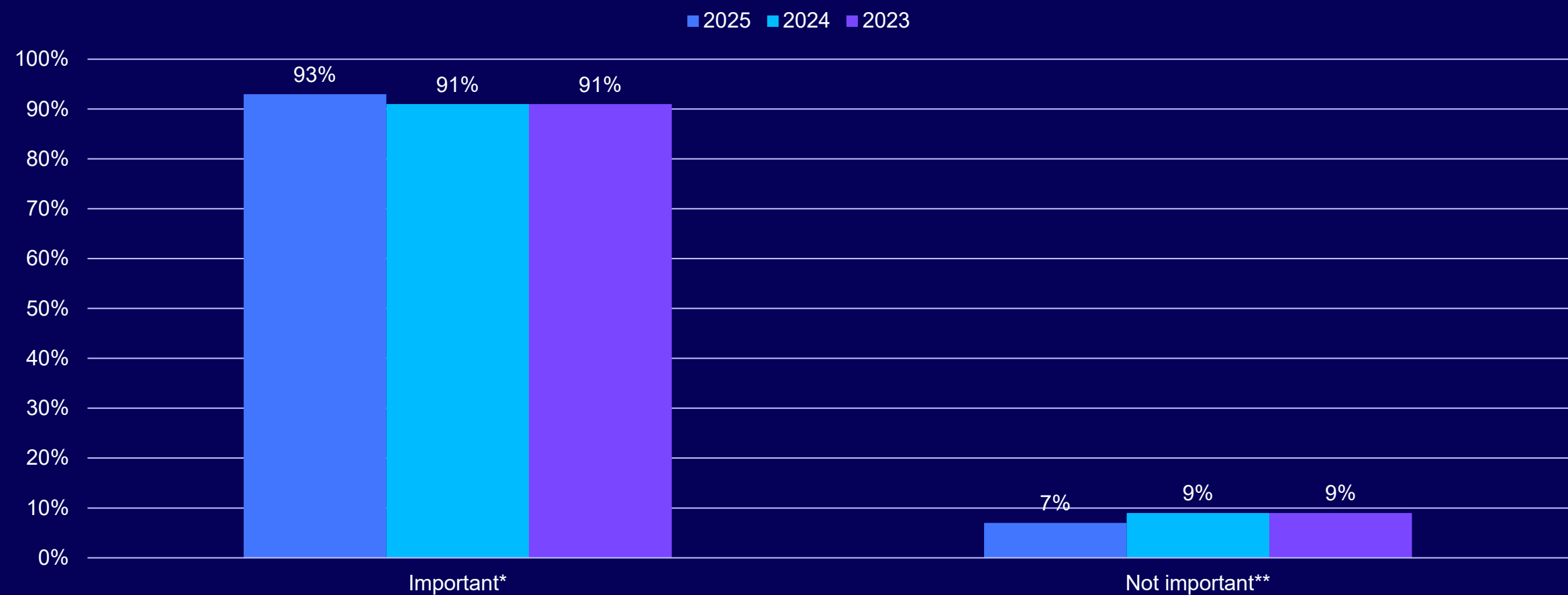
Graduates believe it is important that they make a positive societal and environmental contribution through their career

Q18. How important is it to you that you can make a positive societal and environmental contribution through your career?



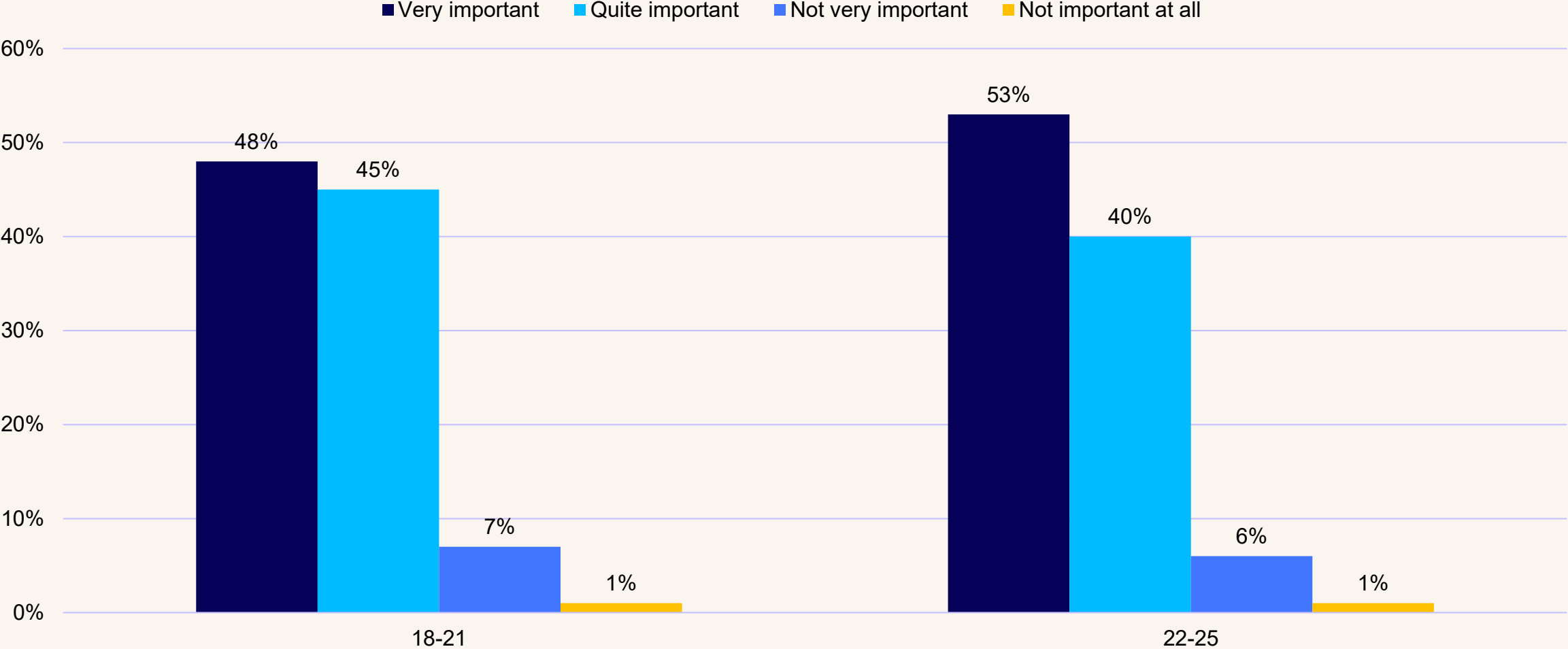
Graduates’ consideration of the importance of making a positive societal and environmental contribution through their career has increased today vs. 2024

Q18. How important is it to you that you can make a positive societal and environmental contribution through your career?



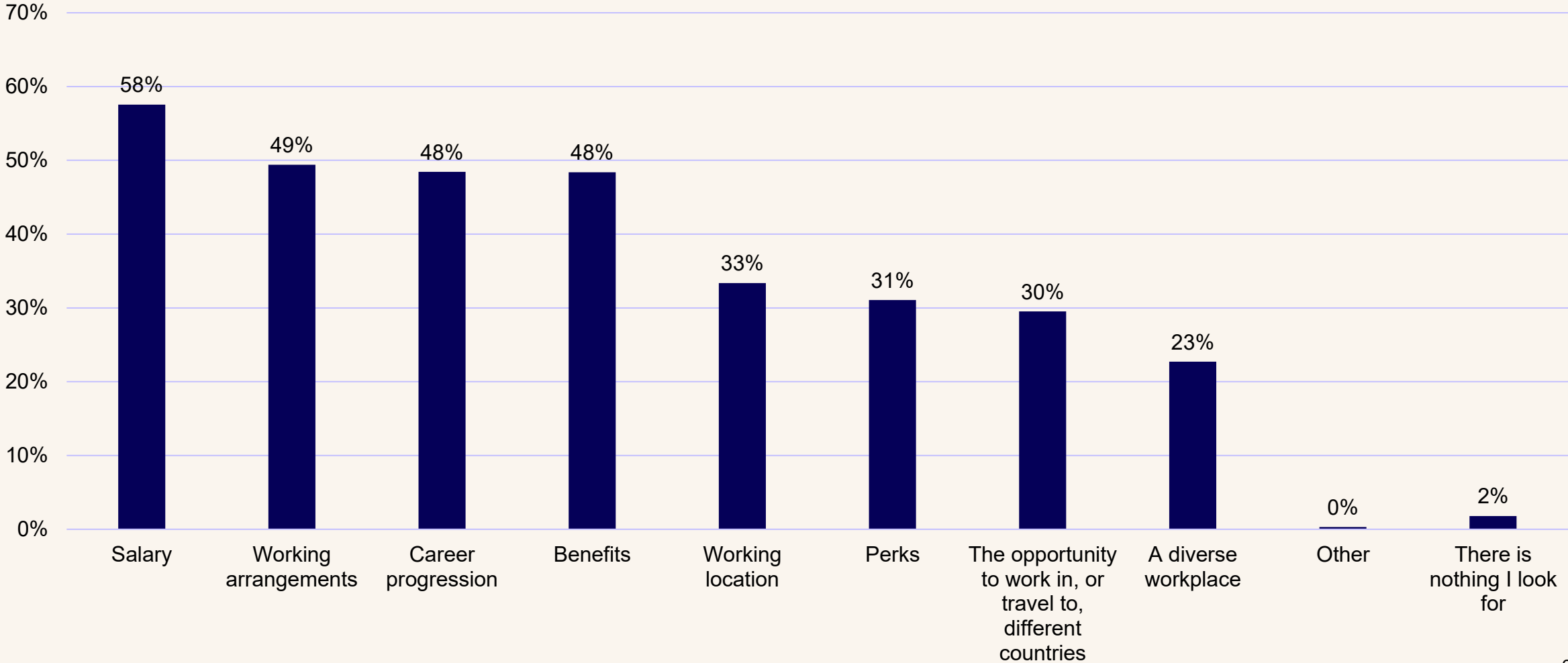
*Important = graduates who selected either “very important” or “quite important”
**Not important = graduates who selected either “not very important” or “not important at all”

Q18
Age Combined



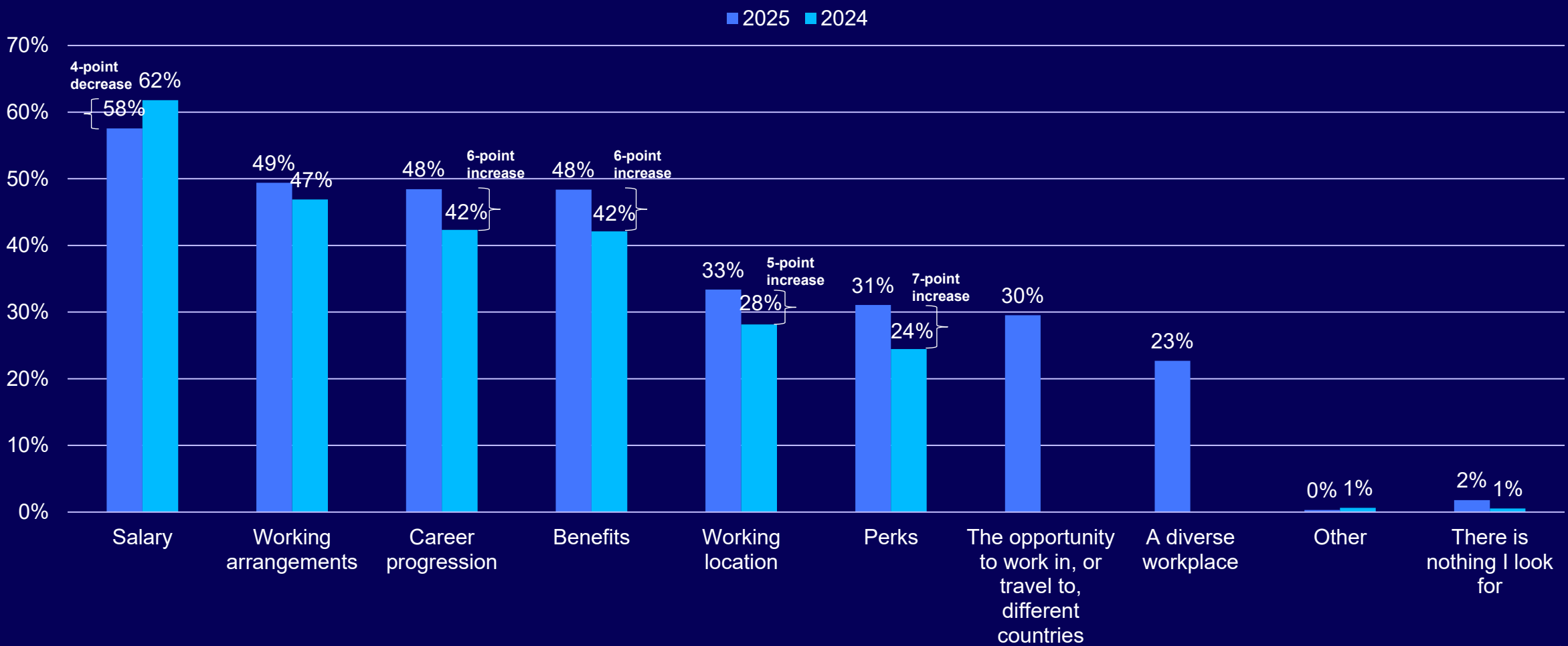
Salary is most looked for in an employer according to graduates

Q19. What do you look for the most in an employer? Select up to five.



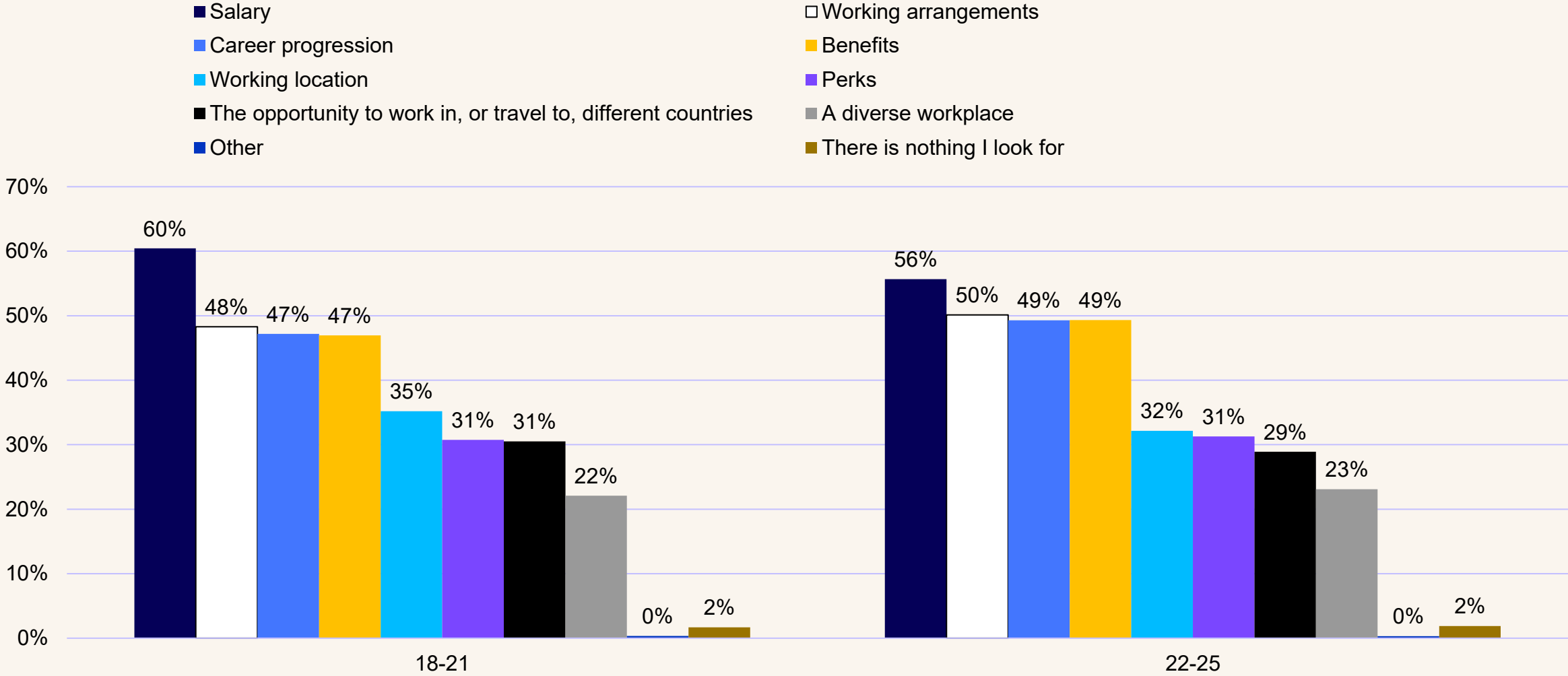
Graduates are less likely to look for salary in an employer today vs. 2024 but more likely to look for career progression and benefits

Q19. What do you look for the most in an employer? Select up to five*.



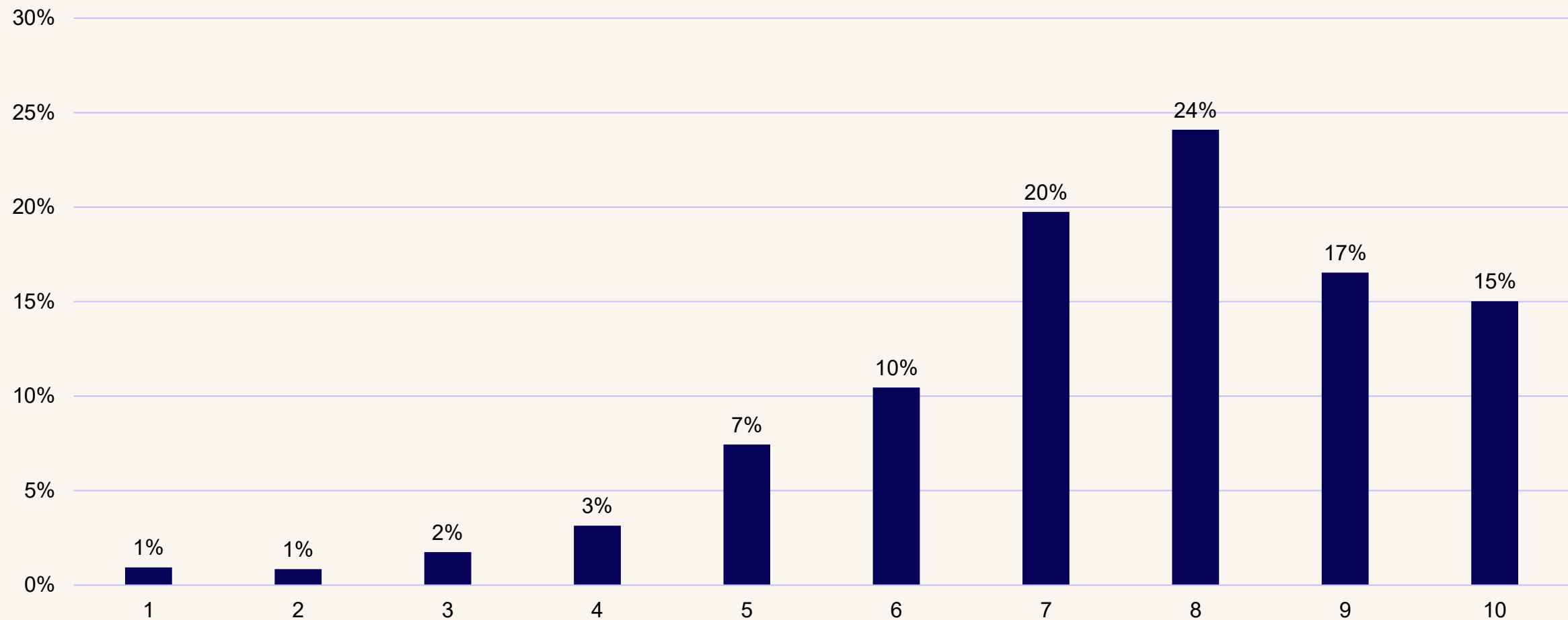
*Presented as "Select up to three." in 2024

Q19
Age Combined



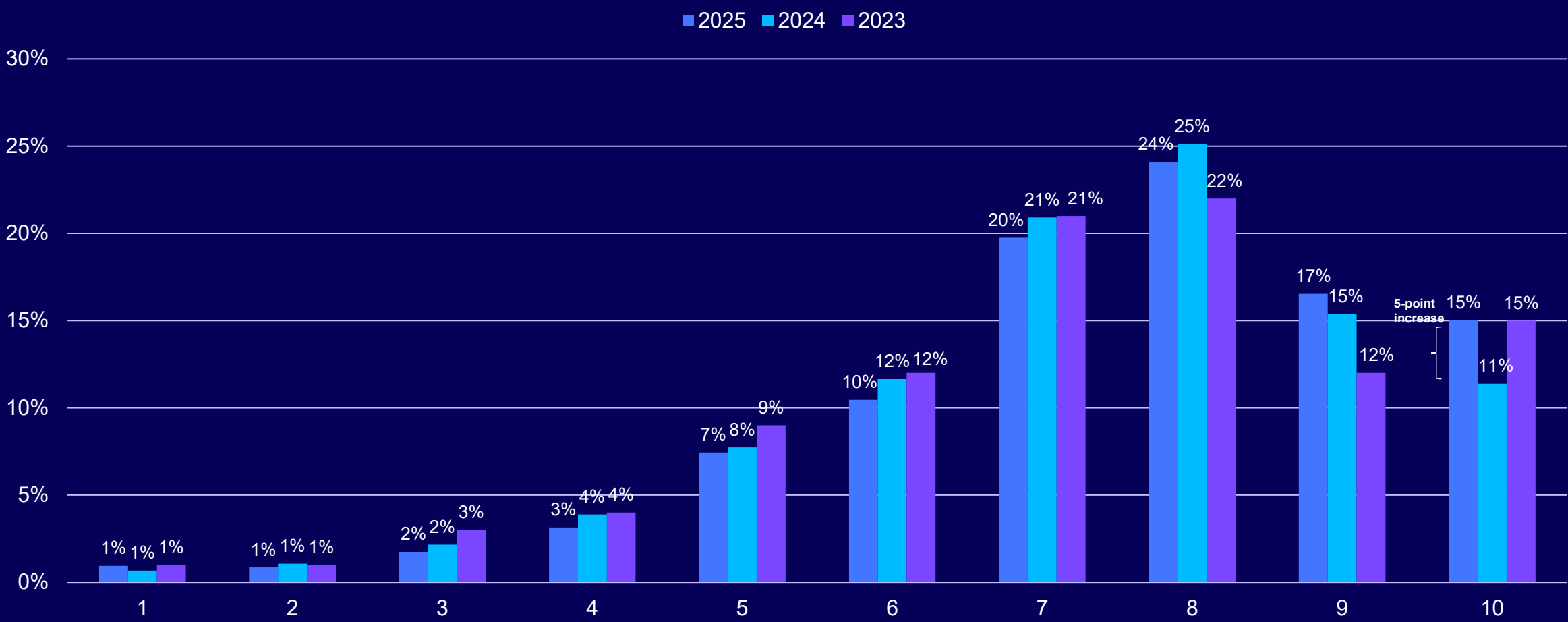
Graduates rate their confidence in how they feel about their career prospects as an 8.27 out of 10

Q20. On a scale of 1-10, how confident do you currently feel about your career prospects? 1 being not confident at all, 10 being completely confident.

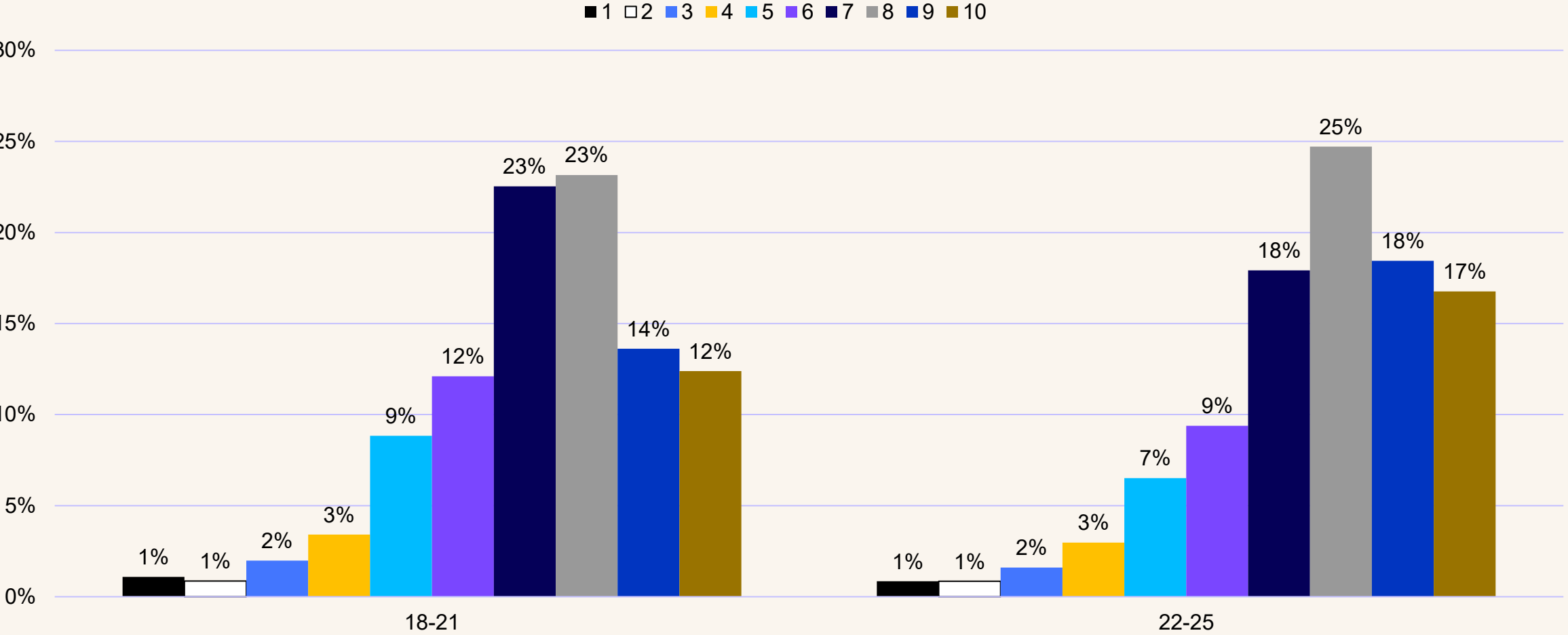


Overall confidence in career prospects has increased since 2024

Q20. On a scale of 1-10, how confident do you currently feel about your career prospects? 1 being not confident at all, 10 being completely confident.

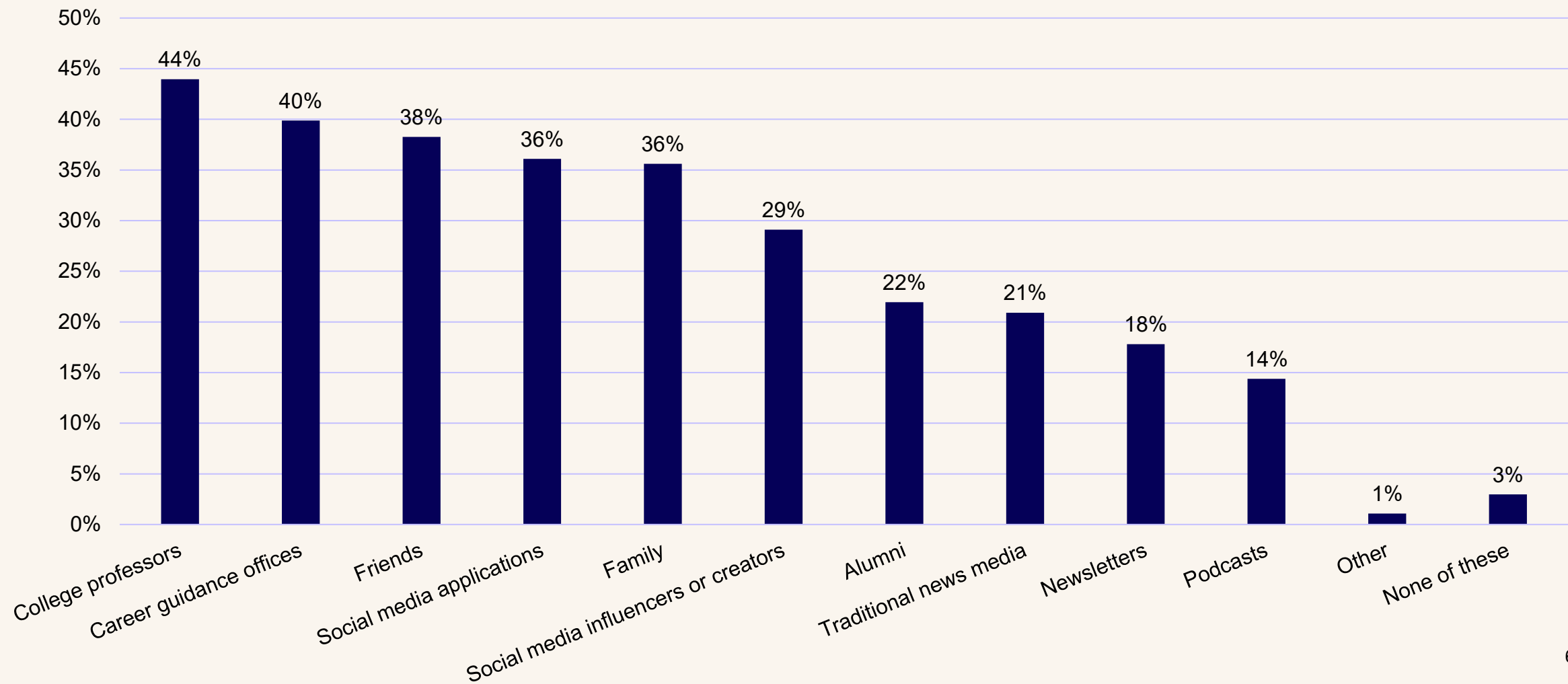


Q20
Age Combined



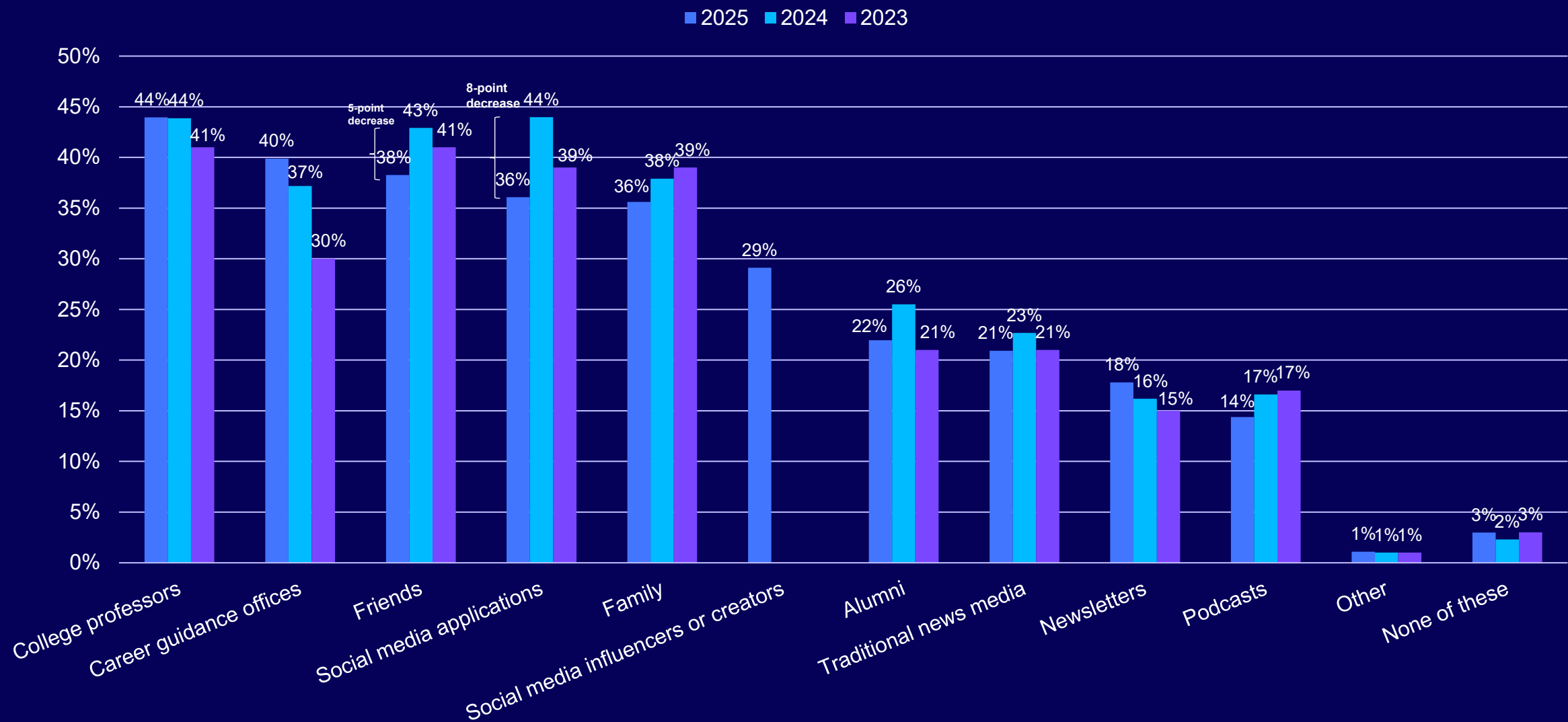
Graduates find most information and advice on career prospects from college professors, career guidance offices, and friends

Q21. Where do you go to find information and advice on your career prospects? Select all that apply.

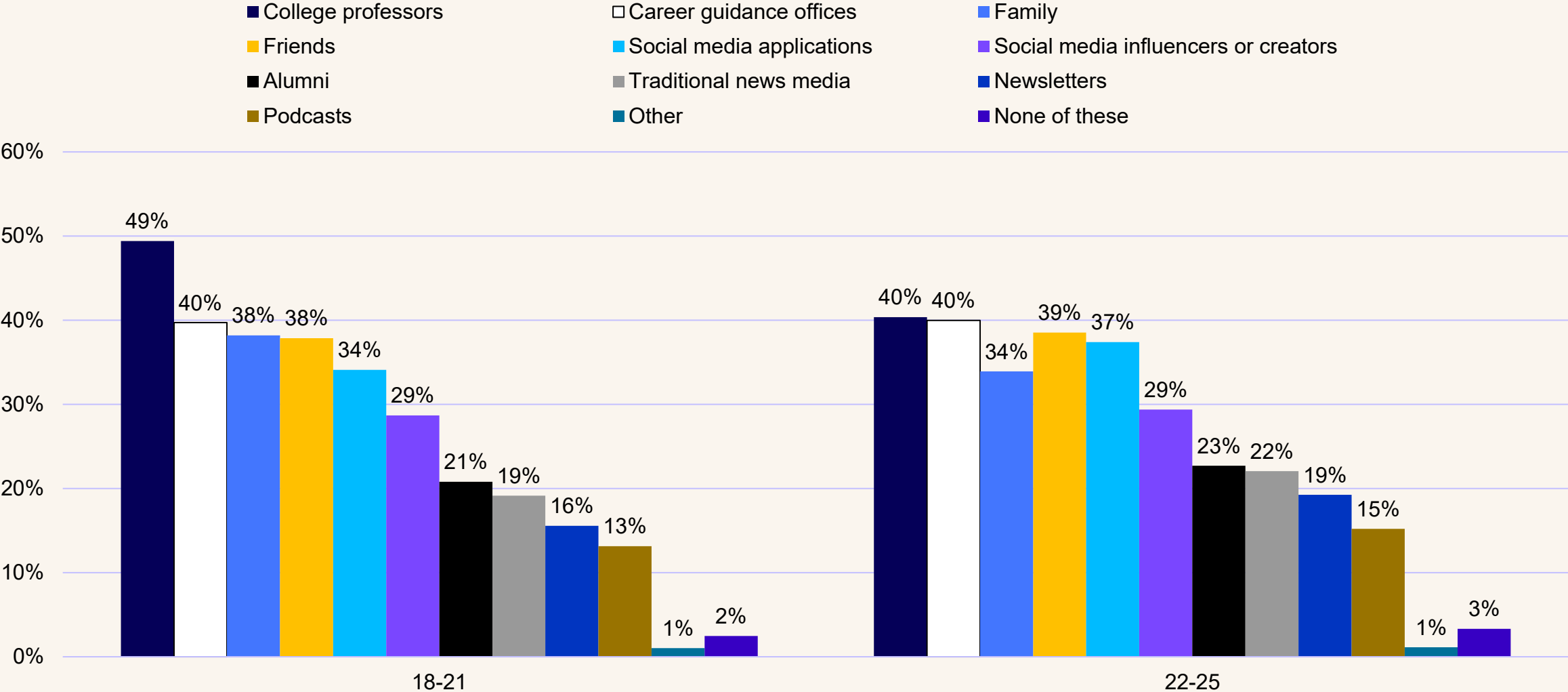


Graduates are more likely today vs. 2024 to find most information and advice on career prospects from career guidance offices but less likely to from friends, social media, or alumni

Q21. Where do you go to find information and advice on your career prospects? Select all that apply.

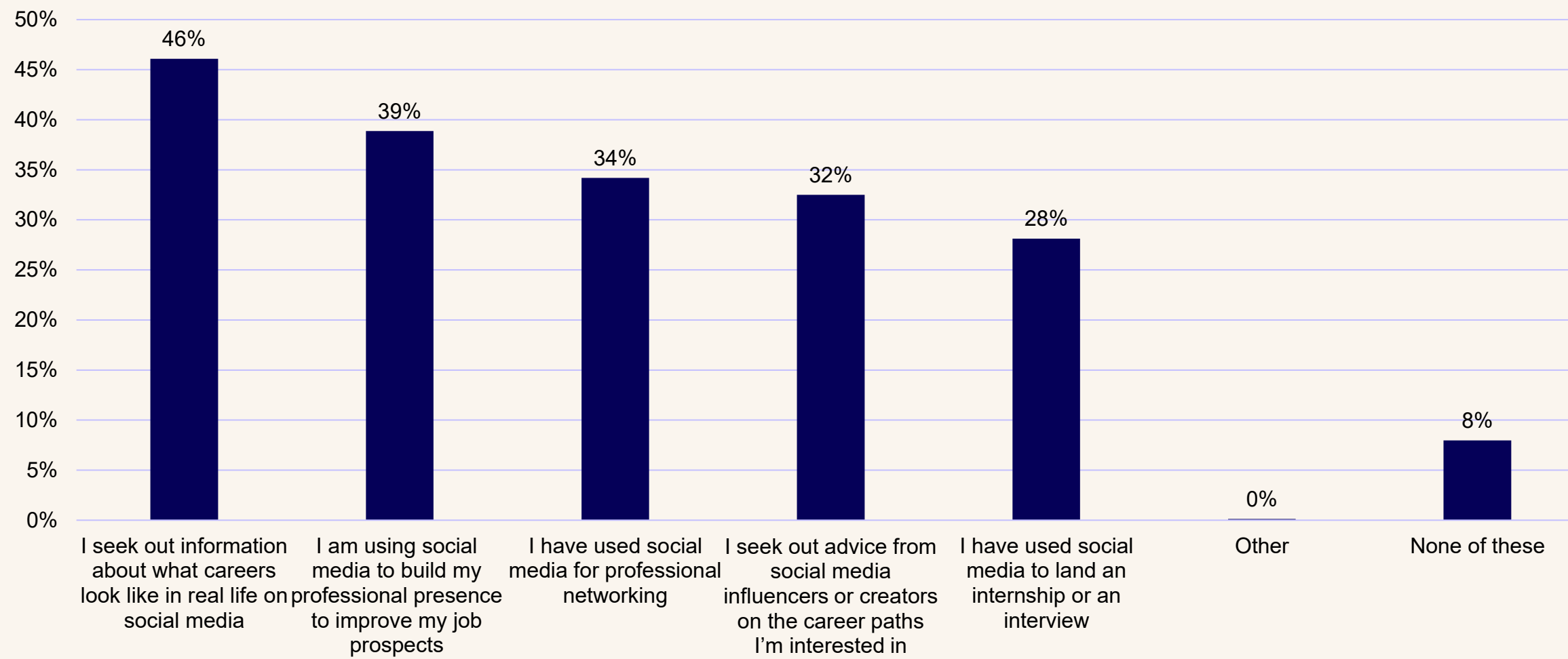


Q21
Age Combined



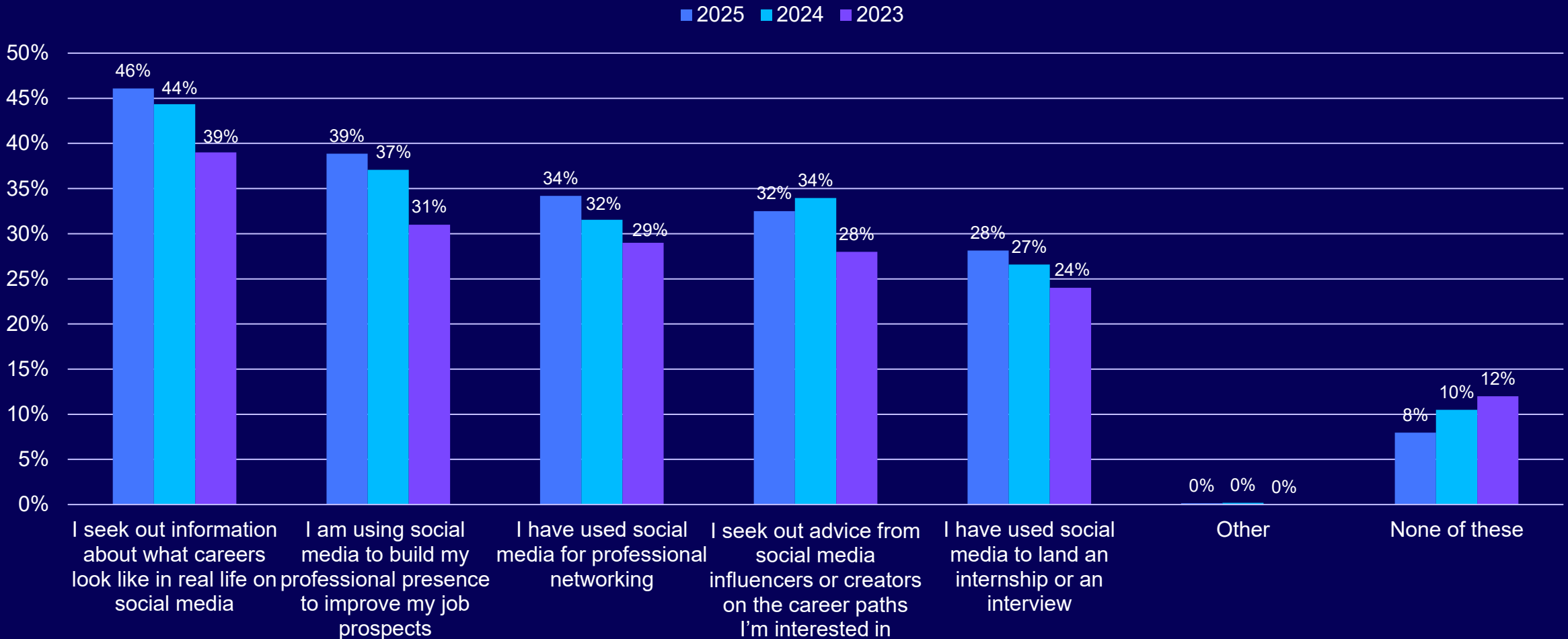
Graduates most use social media to seek out information on what careers look like in real life

Q22. What role does social media play in evaluating your long-term career prospects? Select all that apply.



Graduates are more likely today vs. 2024 to use social media to seek out information on what careers look like in real life or build their professional presence

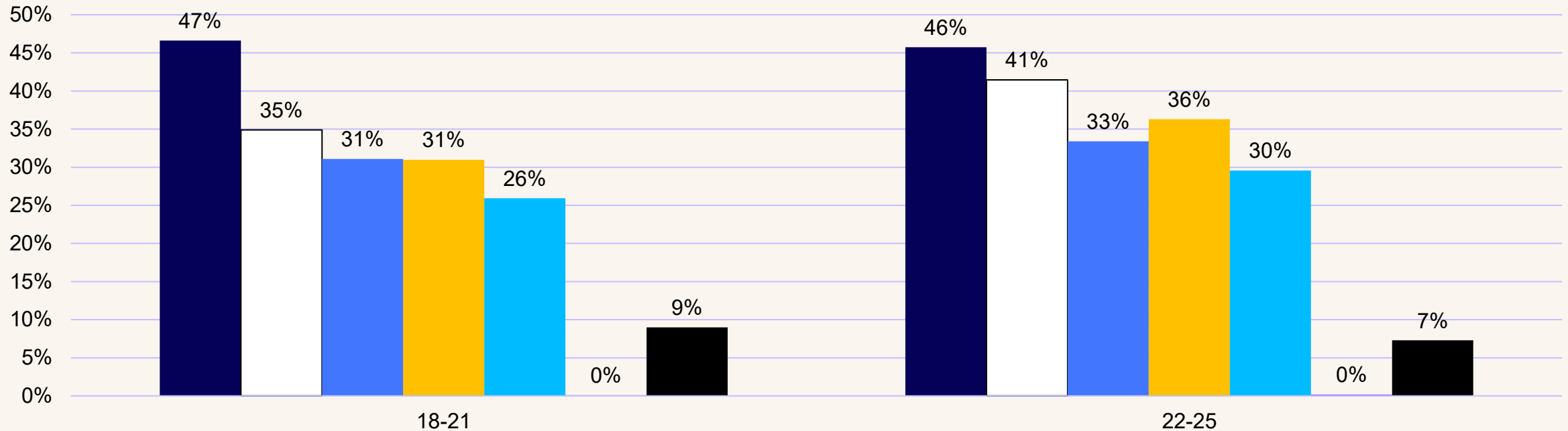
Q22. What role does social media play in evaluating your long-term career prospects? Select all that apply.



Q22

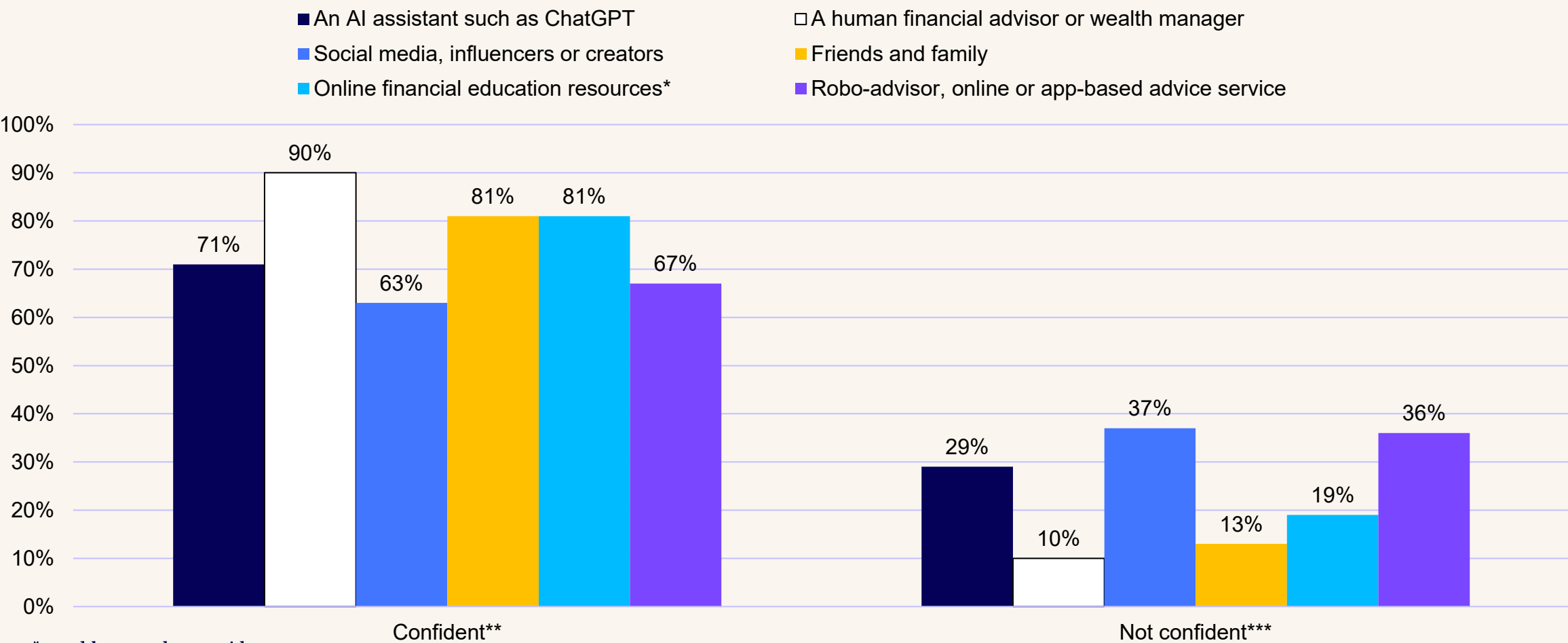
Age Combined

- I seek out information about what careers look like in real life on social media
- I am using social media to build my professional presence to improve my job prospects
- I seek out advice from social media influencers or creators on the career paths I'm interested in
- I have used social media for professional networking
- I have used social media to land an internship or an interview
- Other
- None of these



Graduates trust human financial advisors or wealth managers for sound financial advice

Q30. As you think about managing your finances following graduation, how confident, if at all, are you that you can trust the following resources for sound financial advice



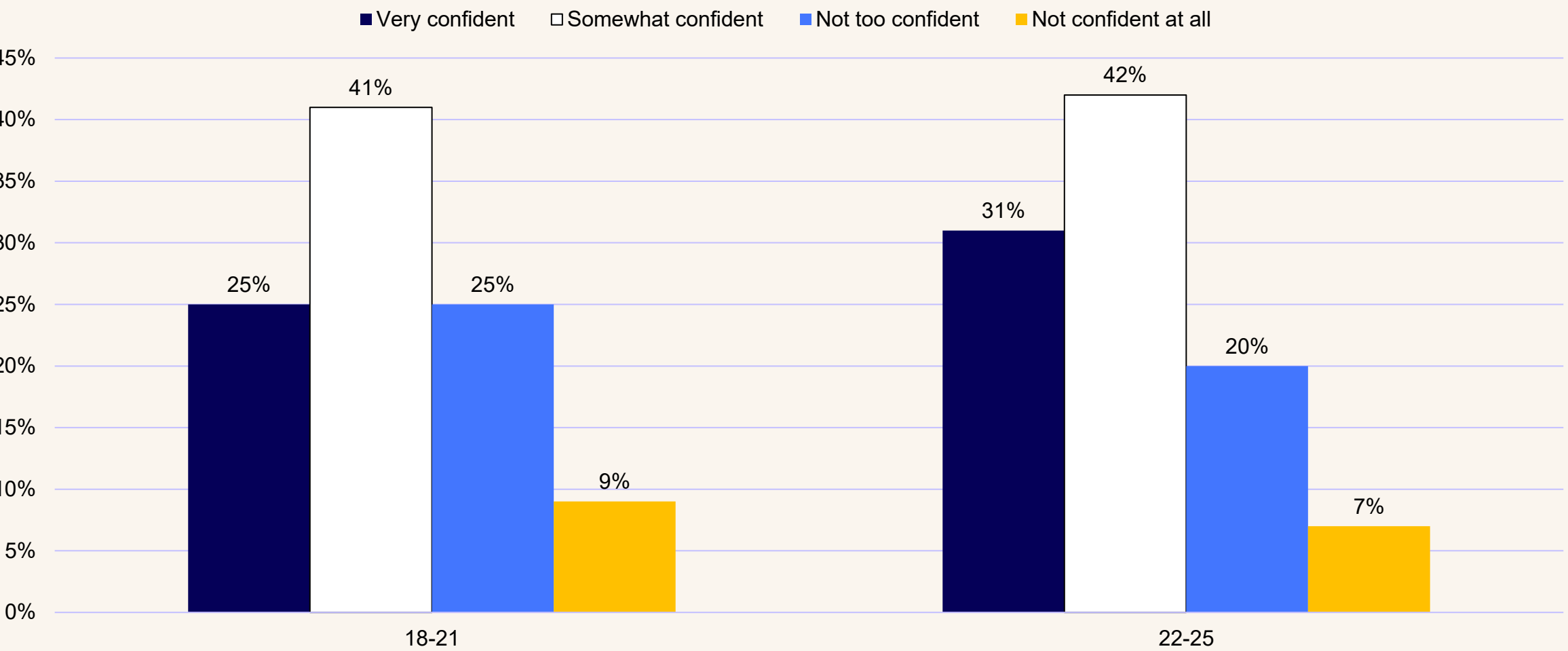
*e.g., blogs, podcasts, videos, etc.

**Confident = graduates who selected either “very confident” or “somewhat confident”

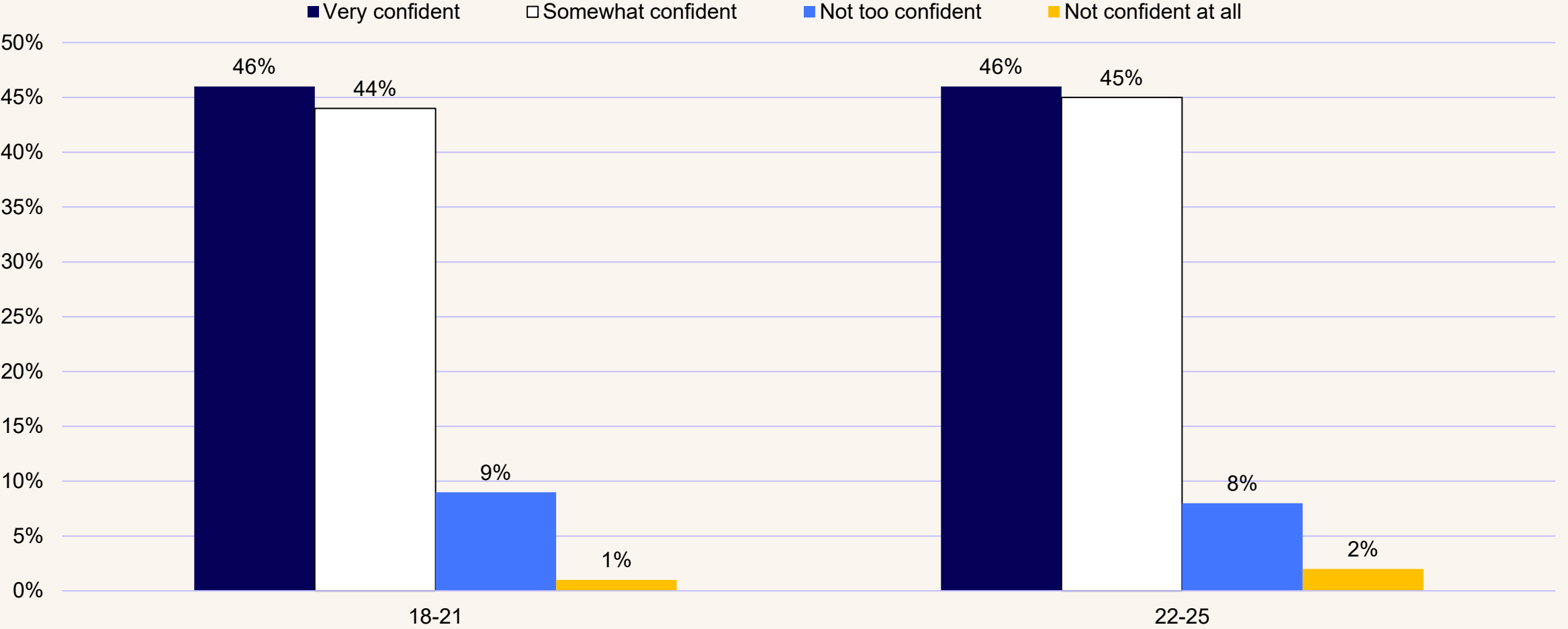
***Not confident = graduates who selected either “not too confident” or “not confident at all”

Q30 | An AI assistant such as ChatGPT

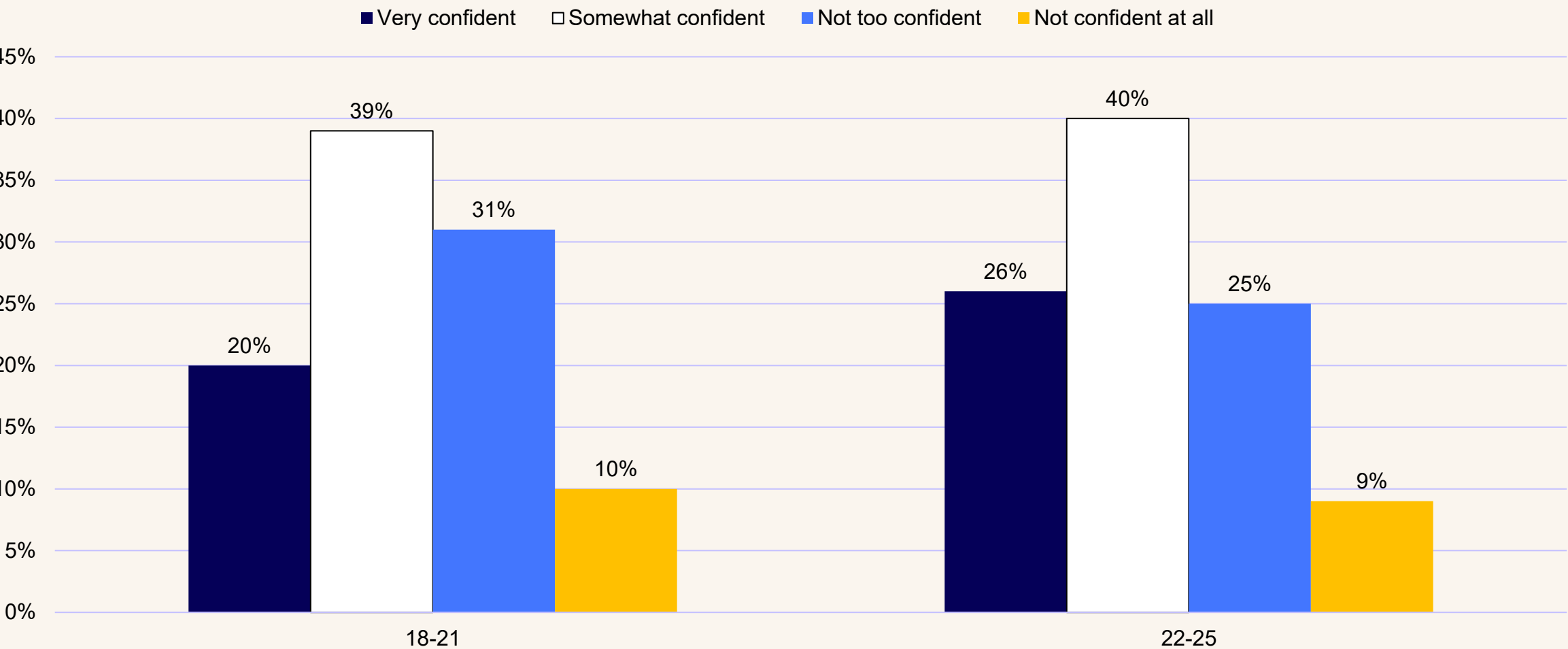
Age Combined



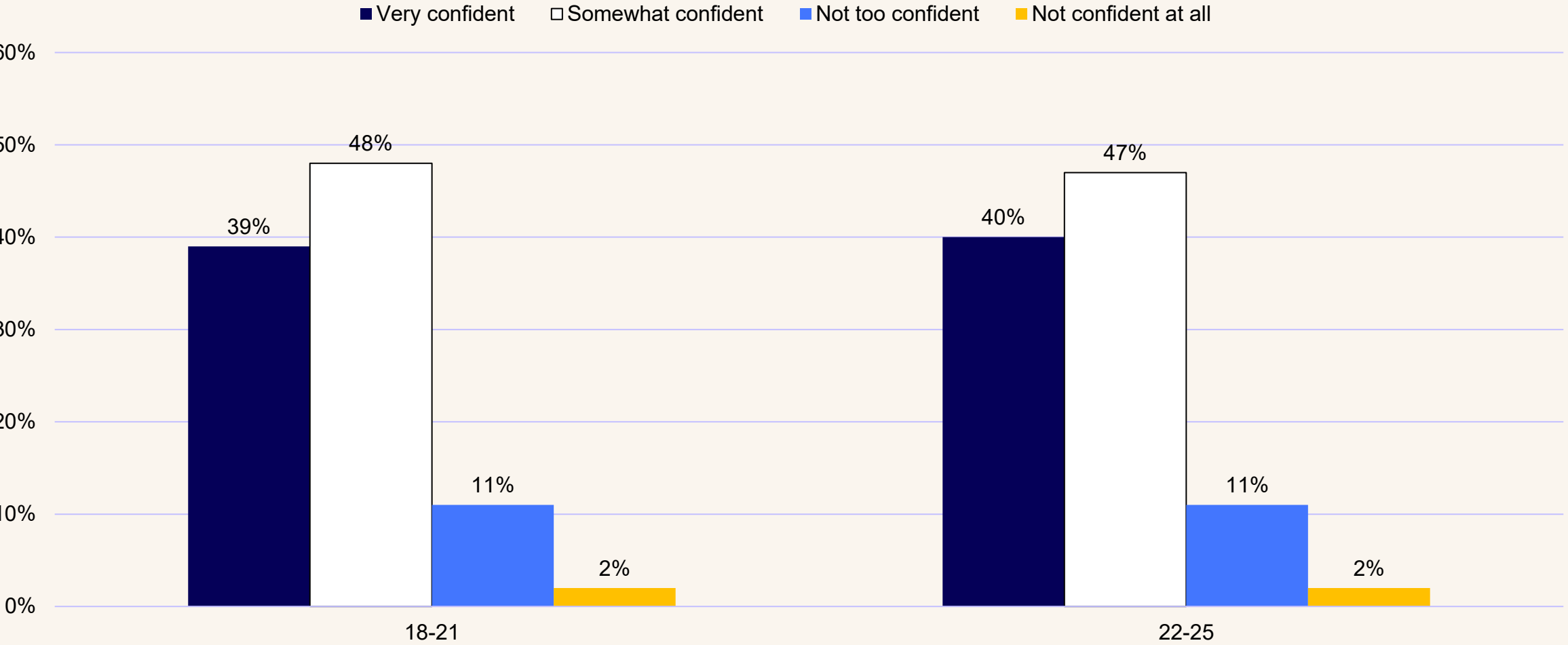
Q30 | A human financial advisor or wealth manager
Age Combined



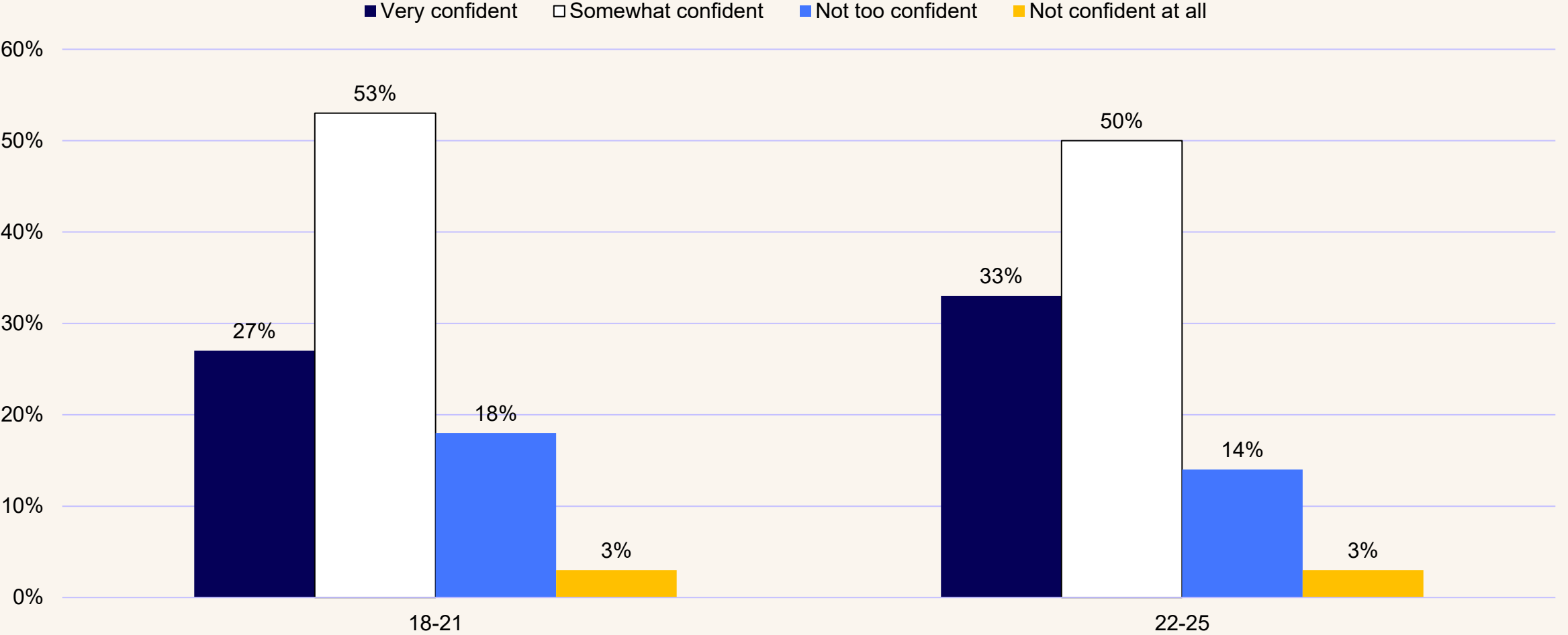
Q30 | Social media, influencers or creators
Age Combined



Q30 | Friends and family
Age Combined

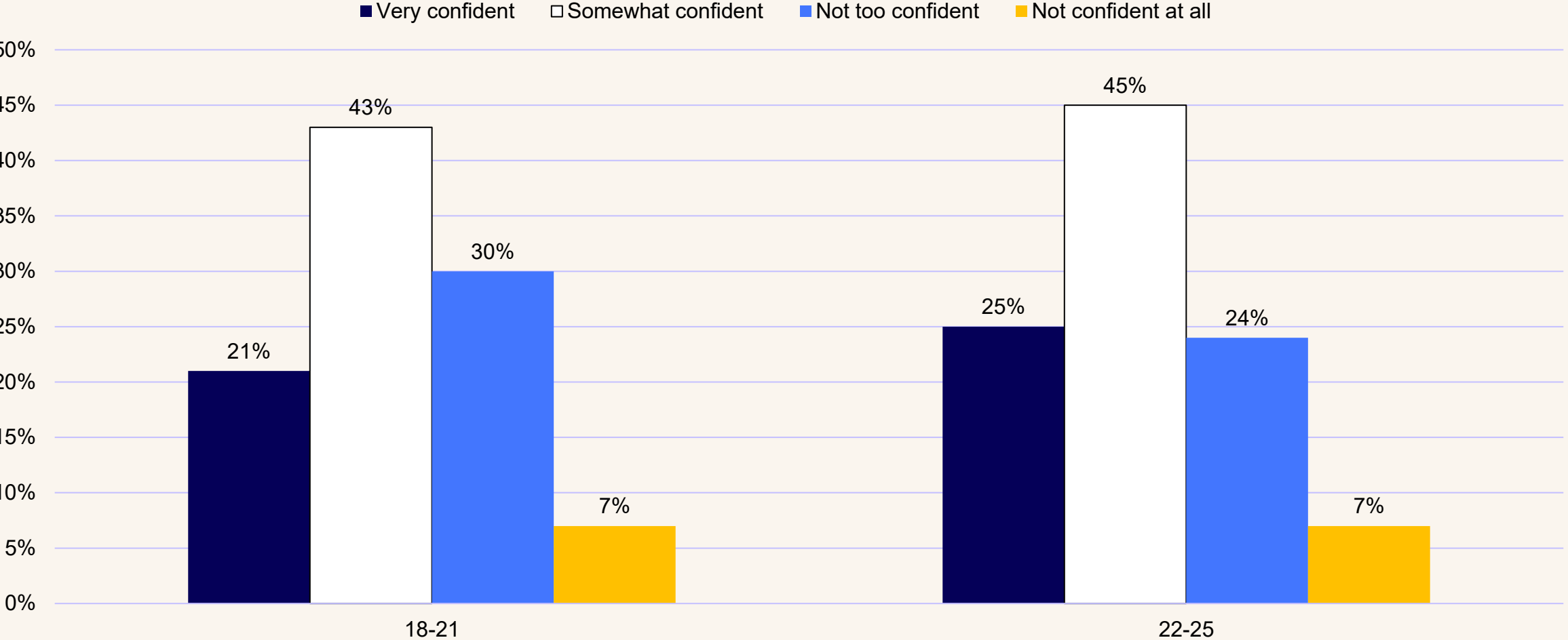


Q30 | Online financial education resources*
Age Combined



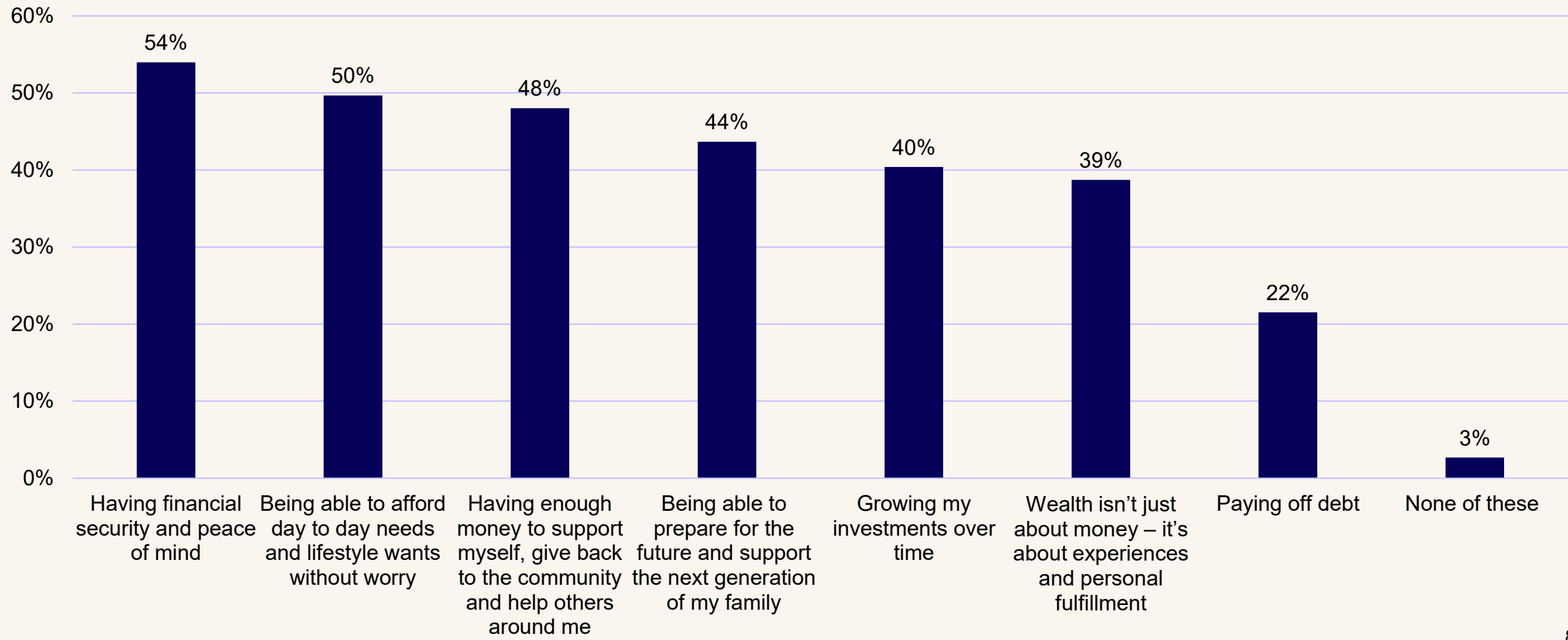
*e.g., blogs, podcasts, videos, etc.

Q30 | Robo-advisor, online or app-based advice service
Age Combined



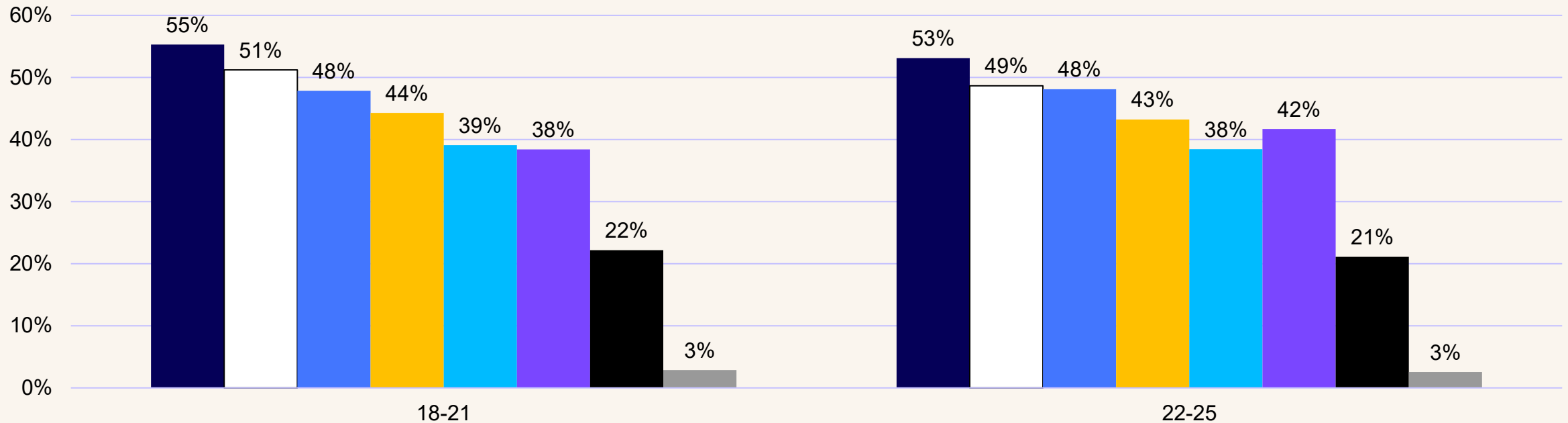
When it comes to wealth building, graduates are motivated by financial security and peace of mind

Q31. Which of the following statements describes your motivation about wealth-building? Select all that apply.



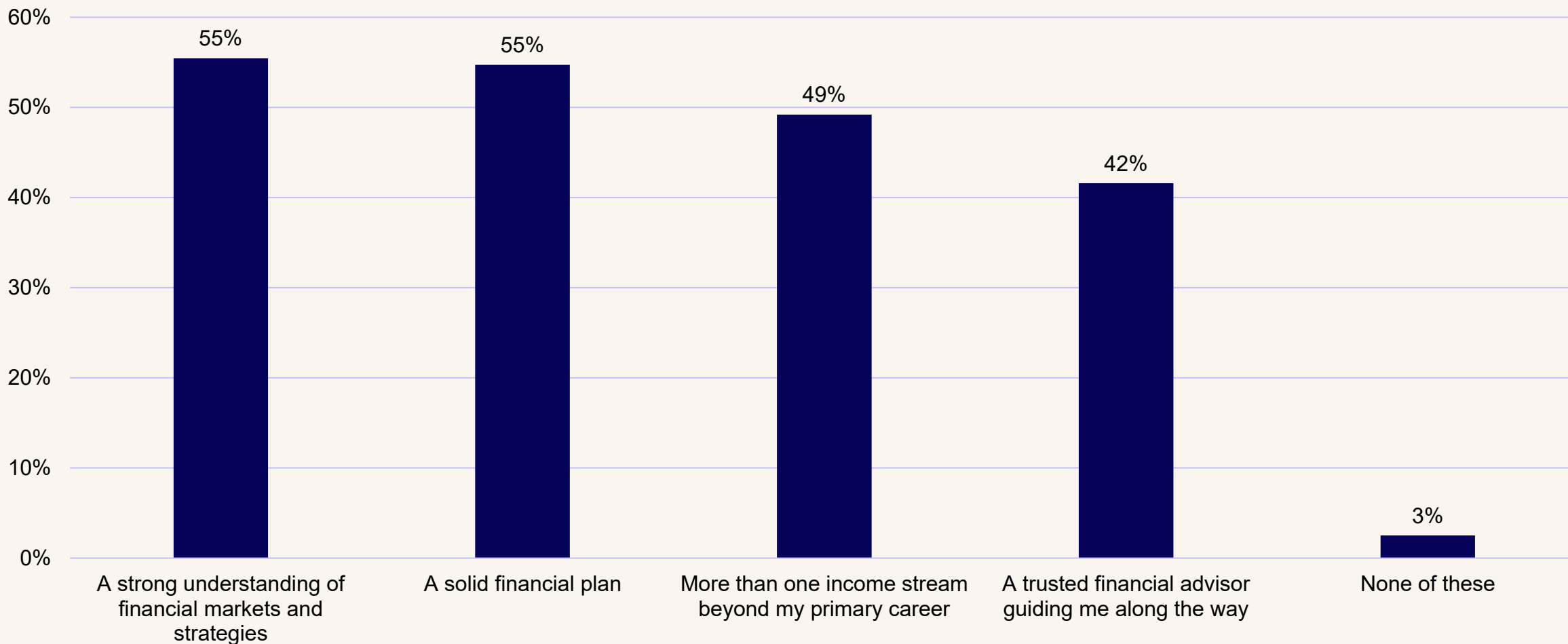
Q31 Age Combined

- Having financial security and peace of mind
- Being able to afford day to day needs and lifestyle wants without worry
- Having enough money to support myself, give back to the community and help others around me
- Being able to prepare for the future and support the next generation of my family
- Wealth isn't just about money – it's about experiences and personal fulfillment
- Growing my investments over time
- Paying off debt
- None of these



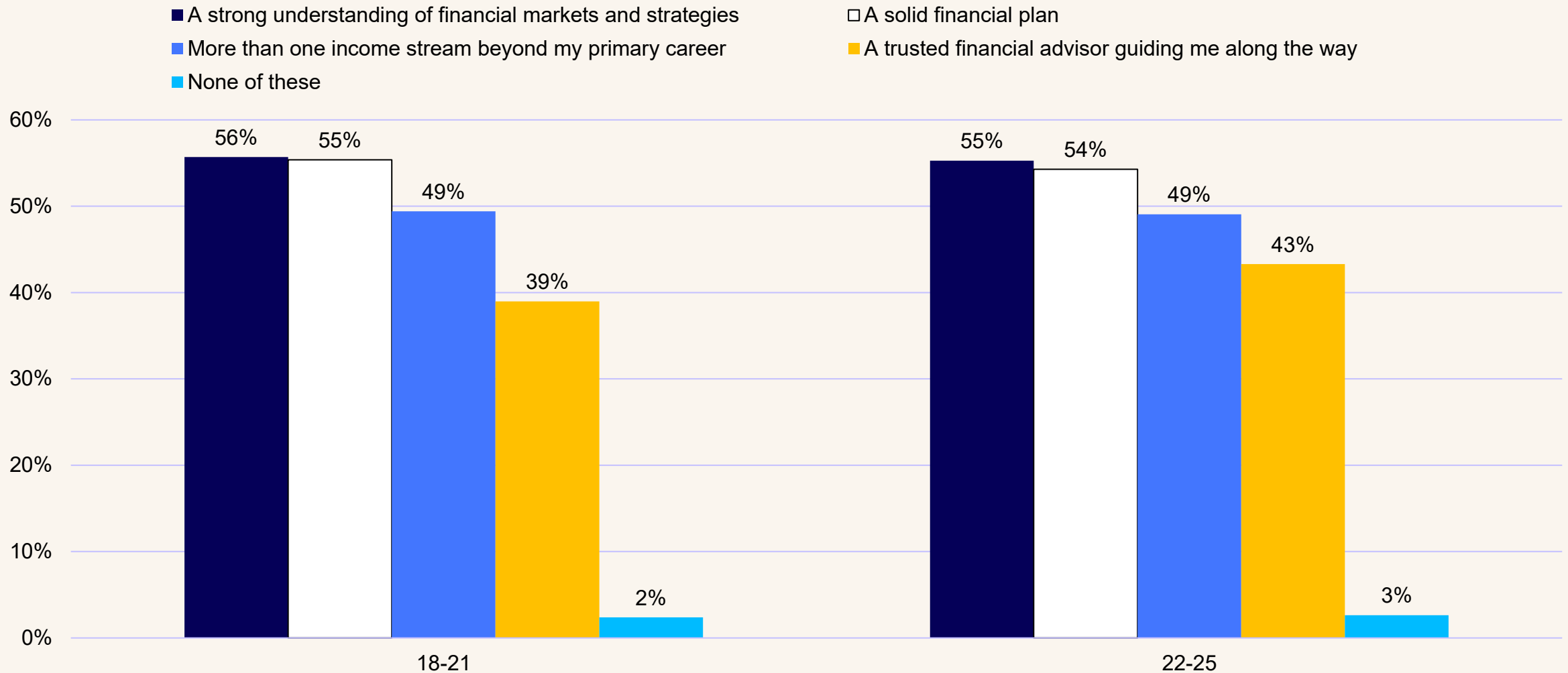
Graduates say a strong understanding of financial markets and strategies and a solid financial plan will help get them to where they want to be 10 years from now

Q32. Now, imagine yourself ten years from now and where you want to be with your finances. What tools or resources would help get you there? Select all that apply.



Q32

Age Combined



Graduates say knowing they can partner with someone who is trustworthy and puts their interests first would make them most likely to work with a wealth manager

Q33. As you think about your finances later in your career, what would make you most likely to work with a wealth manager*? Select up to two.

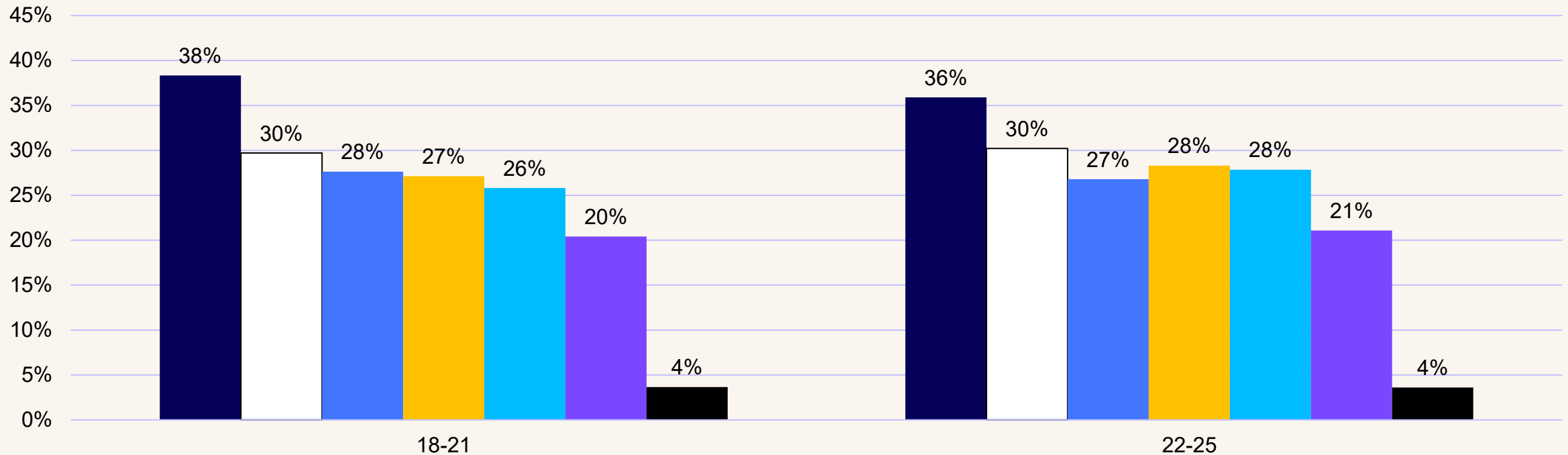


*Wealth managers are financial experts who offer packages of services – from investment advice to estate and retirement planning to insurance and tax – to help clients achieve their financial and personal goals

Q33

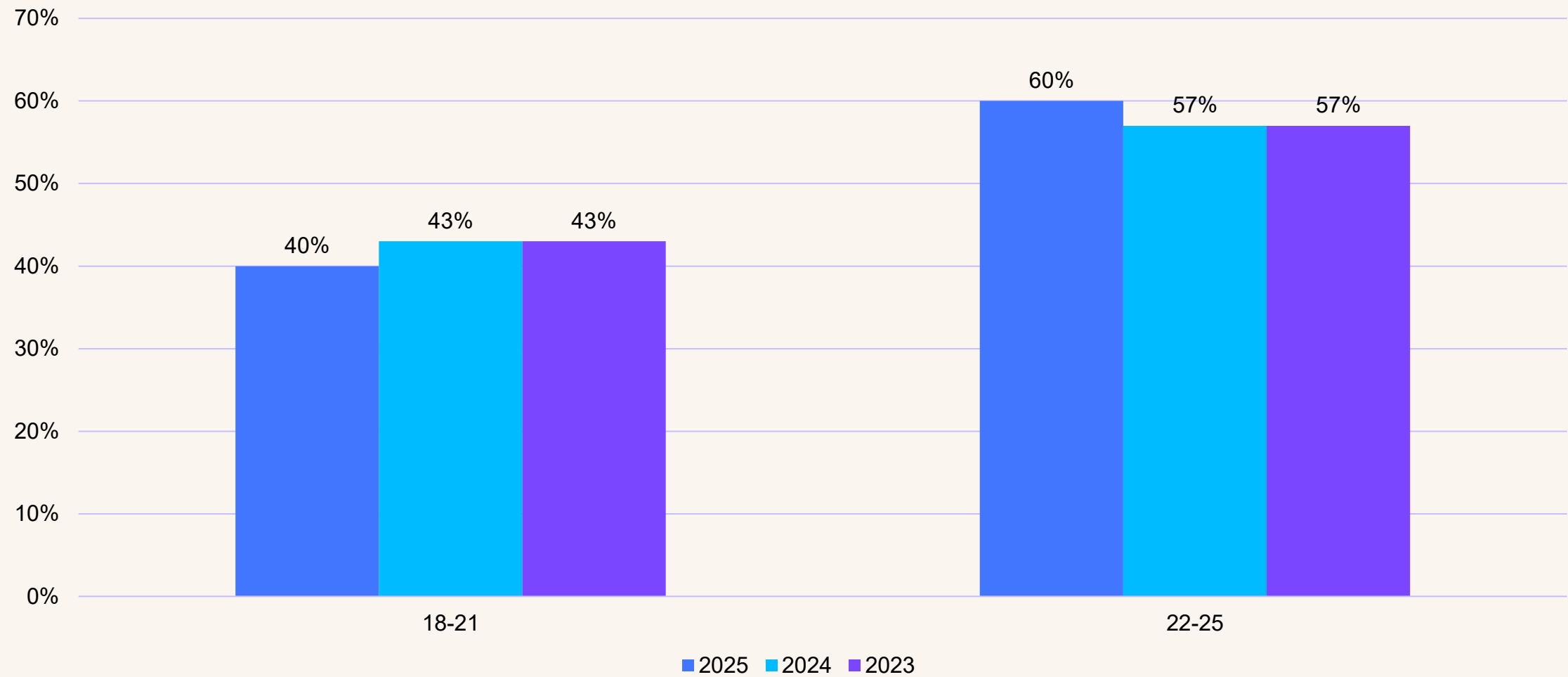
Age Combined

- Knowing I can partner with someone who is ethical, trustworthy and puts my best interests first
- Help with making investment decisions
- Support with creating a financial plan to meet my target retirement date early
- Access to expert advice tailored to my goals
- A tech-enabled, personalized experience that makes managing my money easier
- Assistance in navigating economic uncertainty
- None of these



Appendix

The 2025 respondent sample was slightly older than previous years
S2: Please indicate your age.



Respondent Demographics

	Gender	Age	Degree Status
Canada	<p>Male 45% Female 54%</p>	<p>18-19 9% 20-21 19% 22-23 28% 24-25 44%</p>	<p>Have graduated 37% Currently studying 63%</p>
United States of America	<p>Male 48% Female 50%</p>	<p>18-19 18% 20-21 21% 22-23 26% 24-25 35%</p>	<p>Have graduated 39% Currently studying 61%</p>
Mexico	<p>Male 50% Female 50%</p>	<p>18-19 22% 20-21 29% 22-23 25% 24-25 24%</p>	<p>Have graduated 13% Currently studying 87%</p>
Brazil	<p>Male 49% Female 50%</p>	<p>18-19 13% 20-21 18% 22-23 27% 24-25 42%</p>	<p>Have graduated 51% Currently studying 49%</p>

Respondent Demographics

	Gender	Age	Degree Status
United Kingdom	<p>Male 51% Female 49%</p>	<p>18-19 20-21 22-23 24-25</p>	<p>Have graduated 38% Currently studying 62%</p>
Spain	<p>Male 49% Female 51%</p>	<p>18-19 20-21 22-23 24-25</p>	<p>Have graduated 20% Currently studying 80%</p>
India	<p>Male 51% Female 49%</p>	<p>18-19 20-21 22-23 24-25</p>	<p>Have graduated 48% Currently studying 52%</p>
Singapore	<p>Male 48% Female 52%</p>	<p>18-19 20-21 22-23 24-25</p>	<p>Have graduated 24% Currently studying 76%</p>

Respondent Demographics

	Gender	Age	Degree Status
Saudi Arabia	<div><div><div>52%</div><div>Male</div></div><div><div>47%</div><div>Female</div></div></div>	<div><div>9%</div><div>18-19</div></div> <div><div>21%</div><div>20-21</div></div> <div><div>31%</div><div>22-23</div></div> <div><div>38%</div><div>24-25</div></div>	<div><div>Have graduated</div><div>41%</div></div> <div><div>Currently studying</div><div>59%</div></div>
Hong Kong SAR	<div><div><div>51%</div><div>Male</div></div><div><div>49%</div><div>Female</div></div></div>	<div><div>9%</div><div>18-19</div></div> <div><div>31%</div><div>20-21</div></div> <div><div>37%</div><div>22-23</div></div> <div><div>23%</div><div>24-25</div></div>	<div><div>Have graduated</div><div>37%</div></div> <div><div>Currently studying</div><div>63%</div></div>
China	<div><div><div>51%</div><div>Male</div></div><div><div>49%</div><div>Female</div></div></div>	<div><div>9%</div><div>18-19</div></div> <div><div>26%</div><div>20-21</div></div> <div><div>31%</div><div>22-23</div></div> <div><div>35%</div><div>24-25</div></div>	<div><div>Have graduated</div><div>14%</div></div> <div><div>Currently studying</div><div>86%</div></div>