

The State of Flight Training

2026 Survey and Report

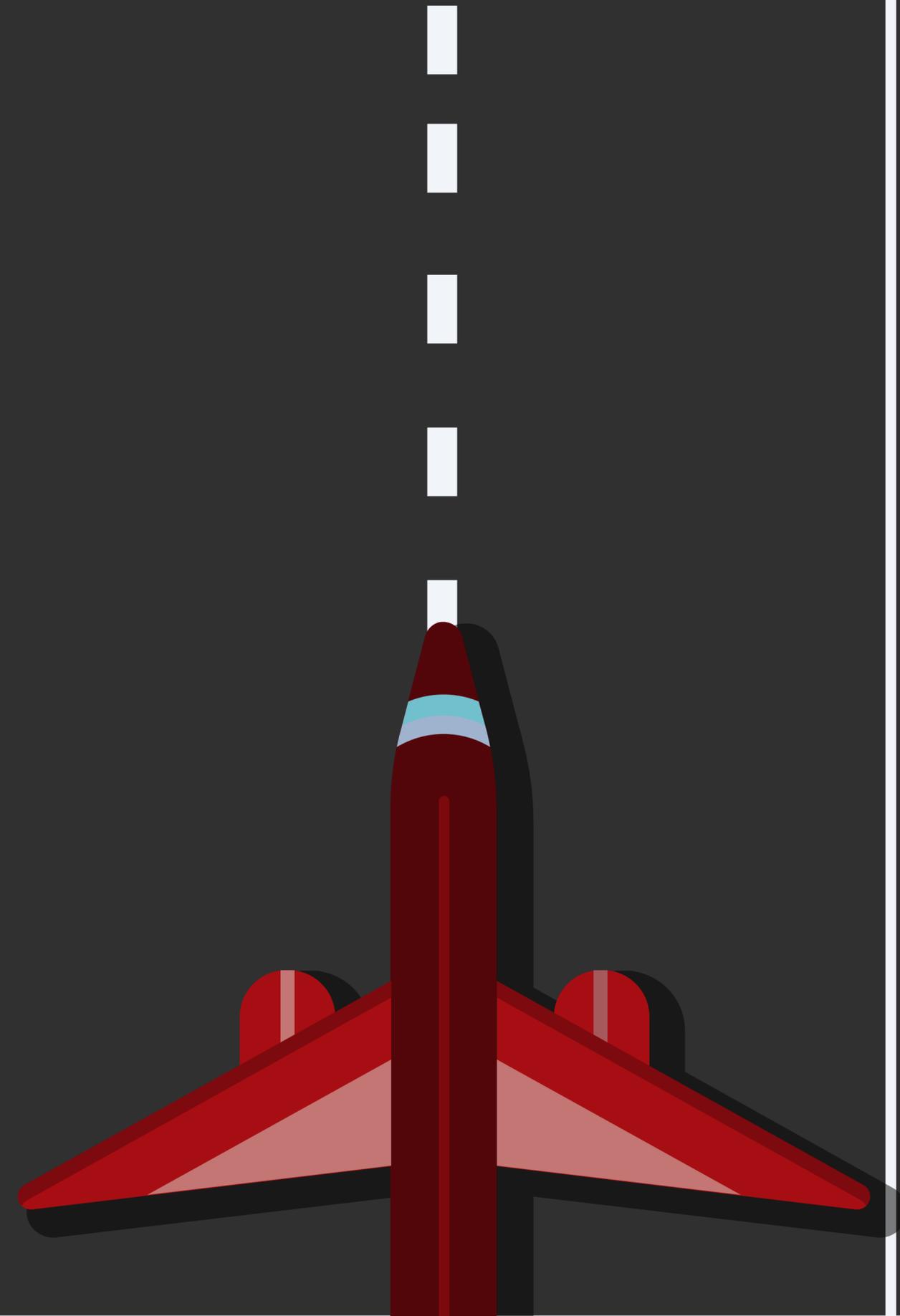


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Terminology

1. Flight Training Organization (FTO): A flight school, aviation university program, academy, flying club, or training center that provides flight training of any kind. FTOs are subdivided by size:
 - Small FTO: Operates less than 10 training aircraft.
 - Medium FTO: Operates between 10 and 20 training aircraft.
 - Large FTO: Operates 20 or more training aircraft.
2. Independent Flight Instructor (Indy CFI): A Certified Flight Instructor who provides training under FAA Part 61 (or equivalent) outside of an FTO.
3. Active Student: A person who has received training for a new certificate or rating in the last three months. This person may already be a licensed pilot, but not a pilot training for proficiency only (for example, a flight review, IPC, or recurrent training).
4. Lapsed Student: A person who started flight training but hasn't received training in the last three months. This does not include licensed pilots.
5. Prospective Student: A person who is considering or planning on starting flight training, but hasn't started yet. This does not include licensed pilots who are planning on starting training for a new rating or certificate.
6. Active Pilot: A licensed pilot who has flown in the last 12 months but isn't receiving training towards a new certificate or rating.
7. Lapsed Pilot: A licensed pilot who has not flown in the last 12 months and isn't receiving training towards a new certificate or rating.
8. Designated Pilot Examiner (DPE): A senior pilot designated by the FAA to conduct oral and inflight examinations (practical test or checkride) with pilot applicants to determine their suitability to be issued a Pilot Certificate or additional rating on their Pilot Certificate.



Survey Response

1,180 Total Responses from Industry Participants



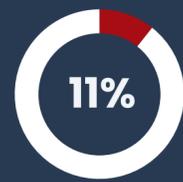
Flight Training Organizations



FTO Flight Instructors



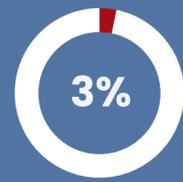
Active Pilots



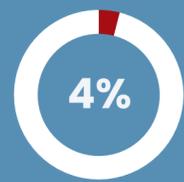
Lapsed Pilots



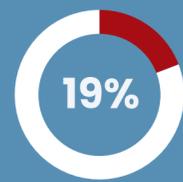
Active Students



Prospective Students



Designated Pilot Examiners



Independent Flight Instructors



United States



Canada



Other



Key Highlights

State of Flight Training 2026



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Flight Training Industry Review and Outlook



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Success and Failure in Flight Training

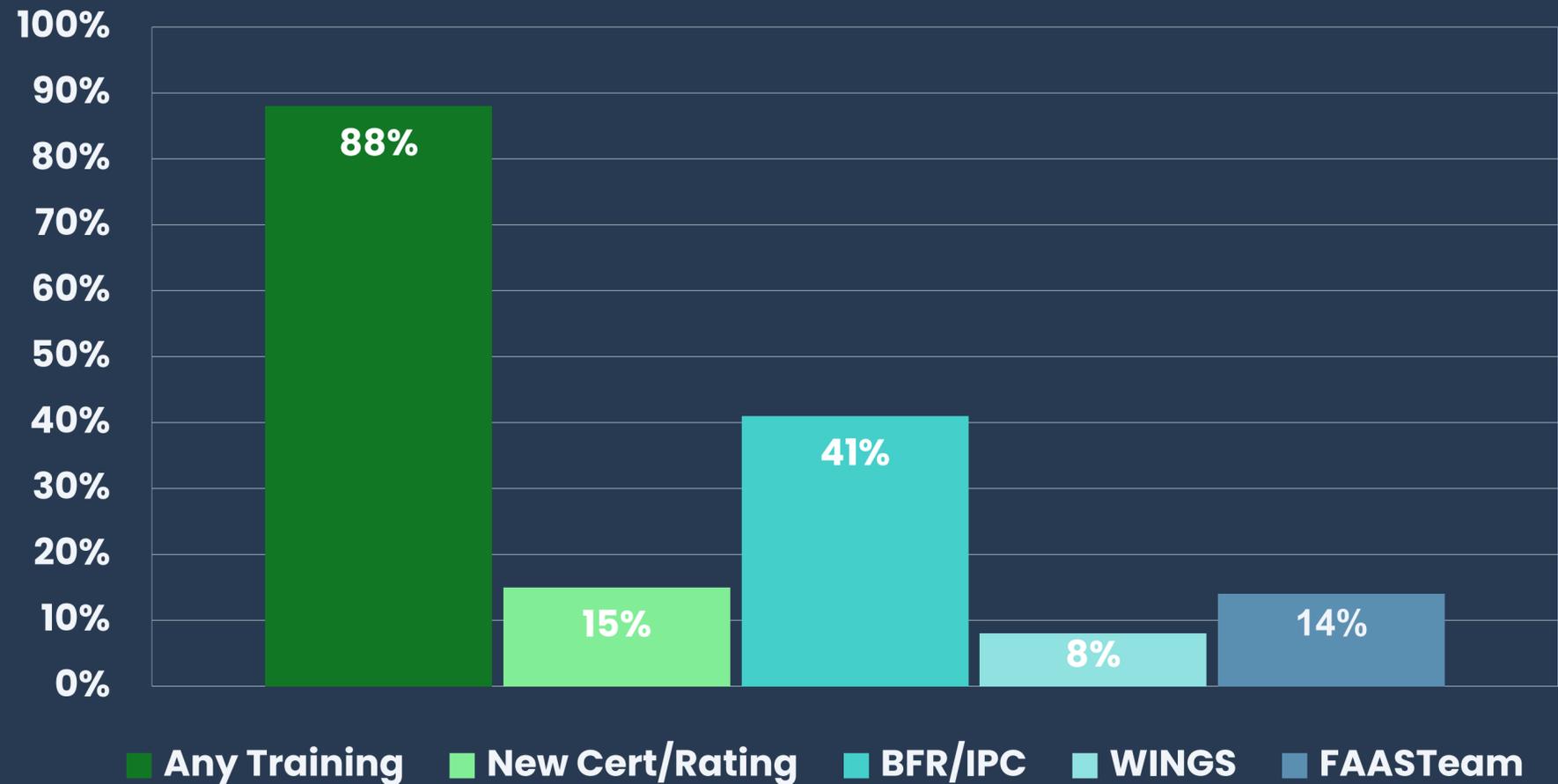


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Time and Cost to Complete Flight Training

Flight Training Pilots & Students

Flight Training Activities in 2025



Rating for Training Received

4.1

Overall Experience

Out of 5

4.3

Flight Instructors

Out of 5

3.4

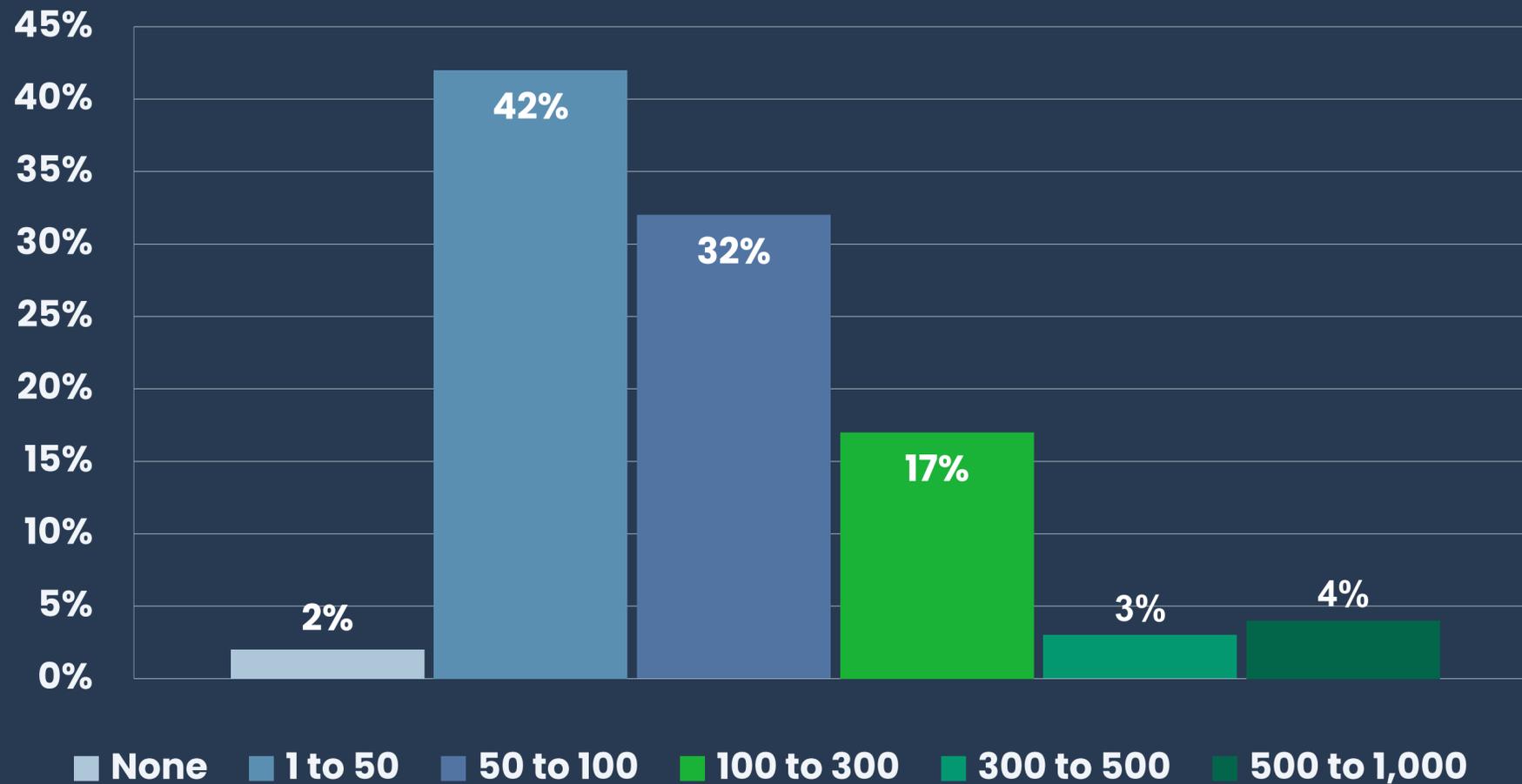
Flight Schools

Out of 5

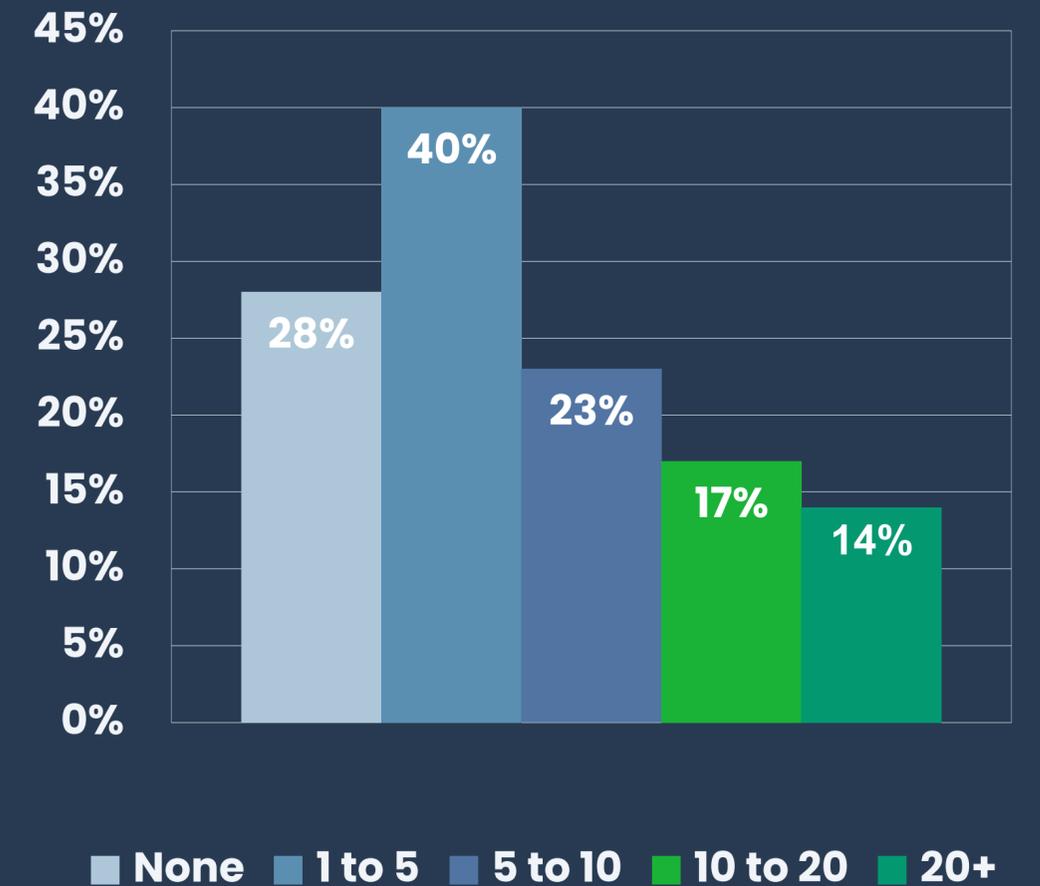


Active Pilots

Hours Flown in 2025

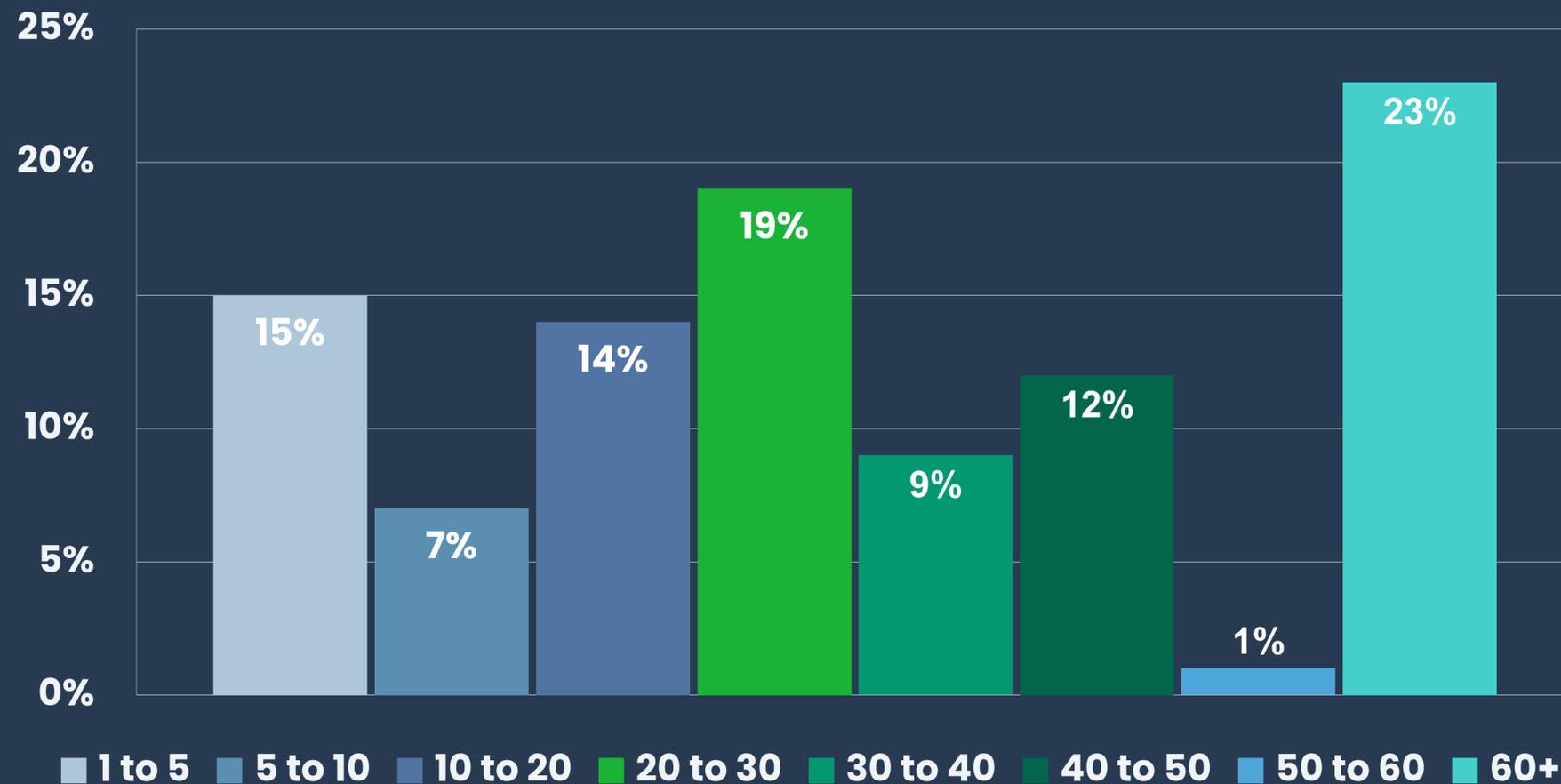


Hours Dual Training Received in 2025



Active Students

Hours of Flight Training in 2025



Training Snapshot

72%

Trained at Only One FTO in 2025 (vs 88% in 23)

74%

Had More Than One Primary CFI in 2025 (vs 66% in 23)

40%

Pro Pilot Track

80%

Plan to Use Sim in 2026

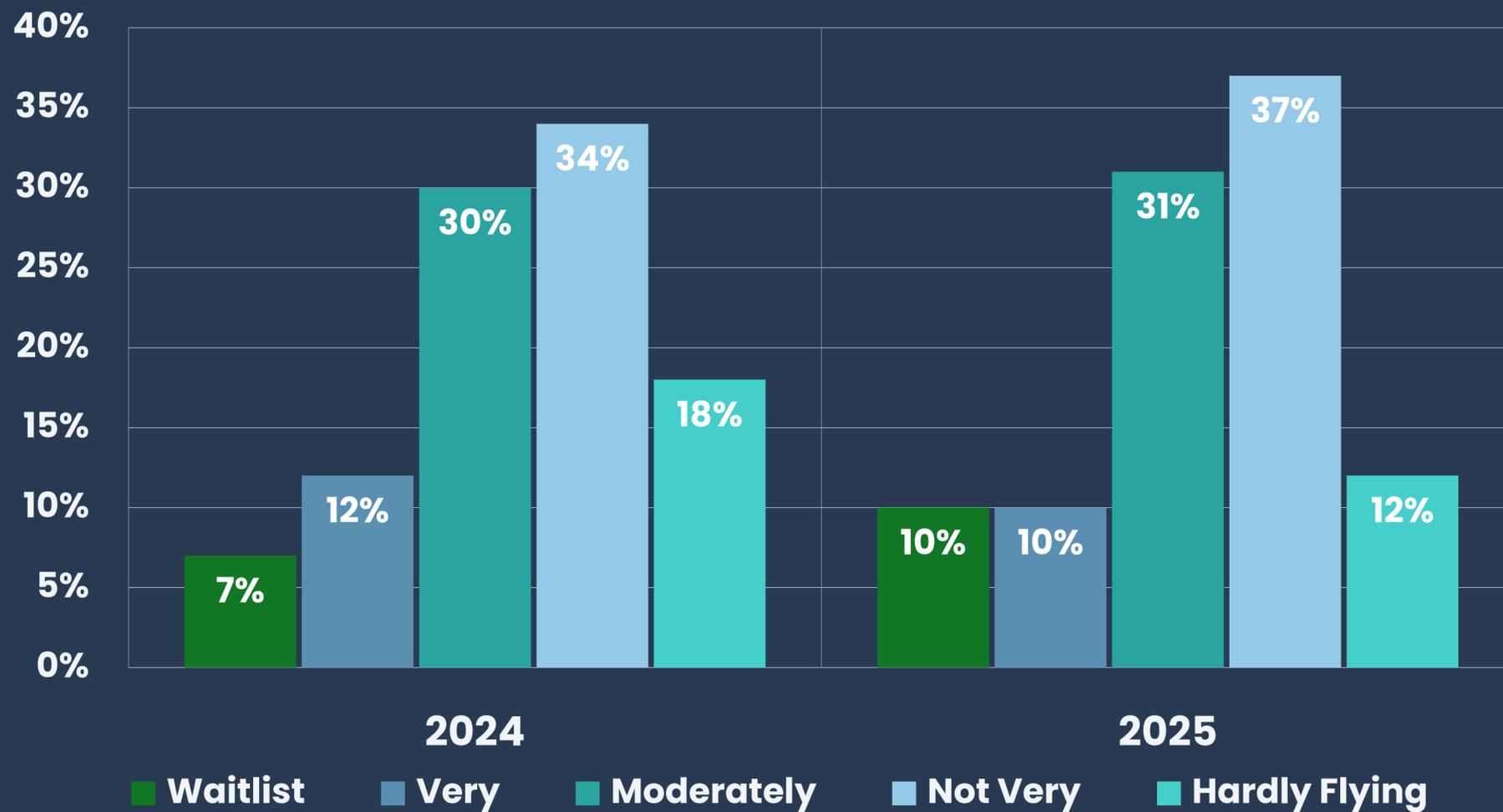


Did Your CFI Use a Syllabus?



Independent CFIs

How Busy Was Your Business?



Business Rating and Outlook

3.5

Rating for 2025 (3.3 in 24)

Out of 5

3.6

Outlook for 2026 (3.4 in 24)

Out of 5

87%

Part-Time Flight Instructors

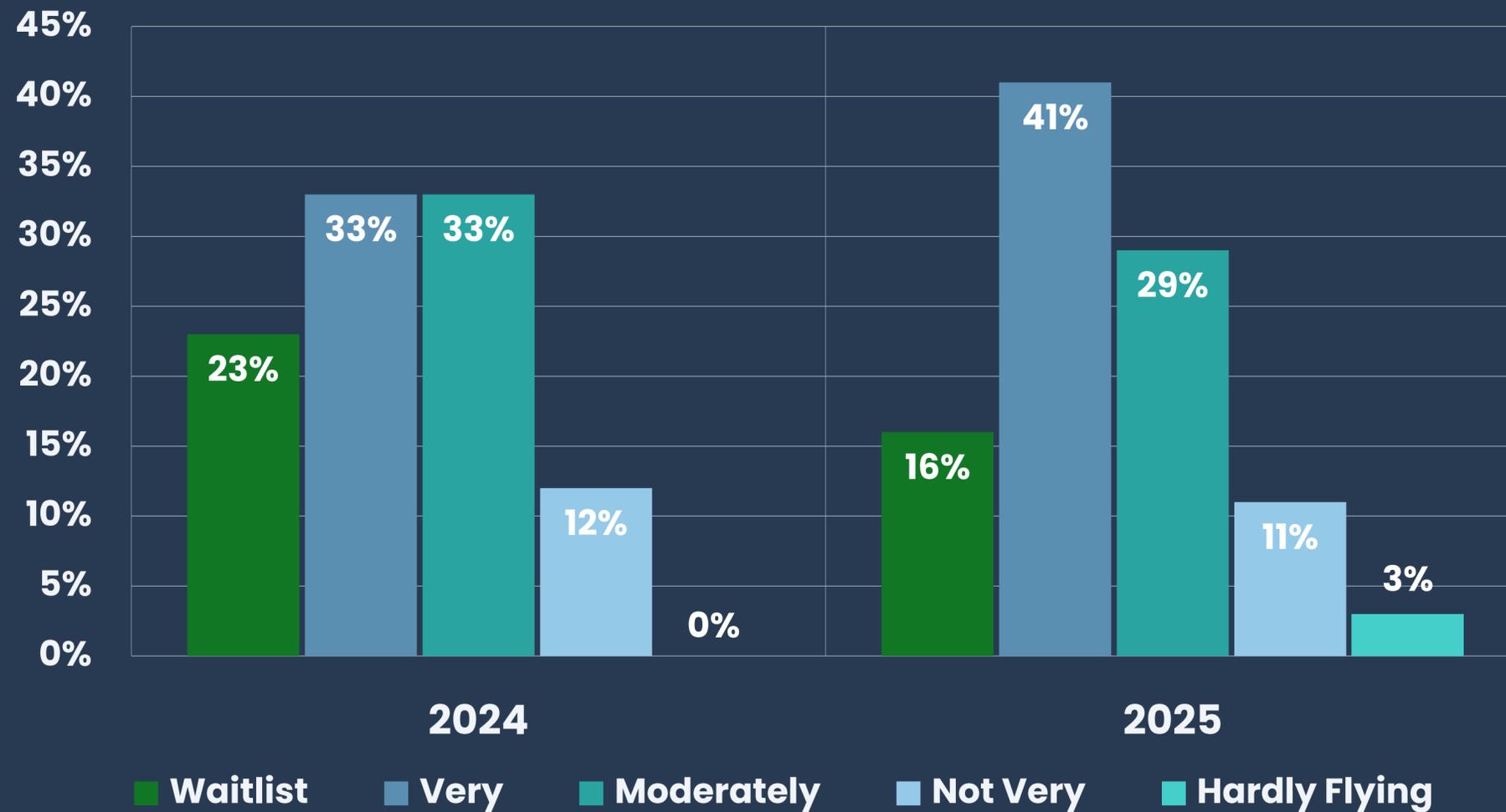
23%

Use an ATD or FTD in Training



Flight Training Organizations

How Busy Was Your Business?



Business Rating and Outlook

3.7 Rating for 2025 (4.0 in 24)
Out of 5

4.1 Outlook for 2026 (4.1 in 24)
Out of 5

18% Of Small FTOs Are
Not Profitable



Median FTO by Size

Small FTO

4 Aircraft Training Fleet

1 Simulators

5 Flight Instructors

12% Profit Margin

Medium FTO

16 Aircraft Training Fleet

2 Simulators

18 Flight Instructors

15% Profit Margin

Large FTO

51 Aircraft Training Fleet

8 Simulators

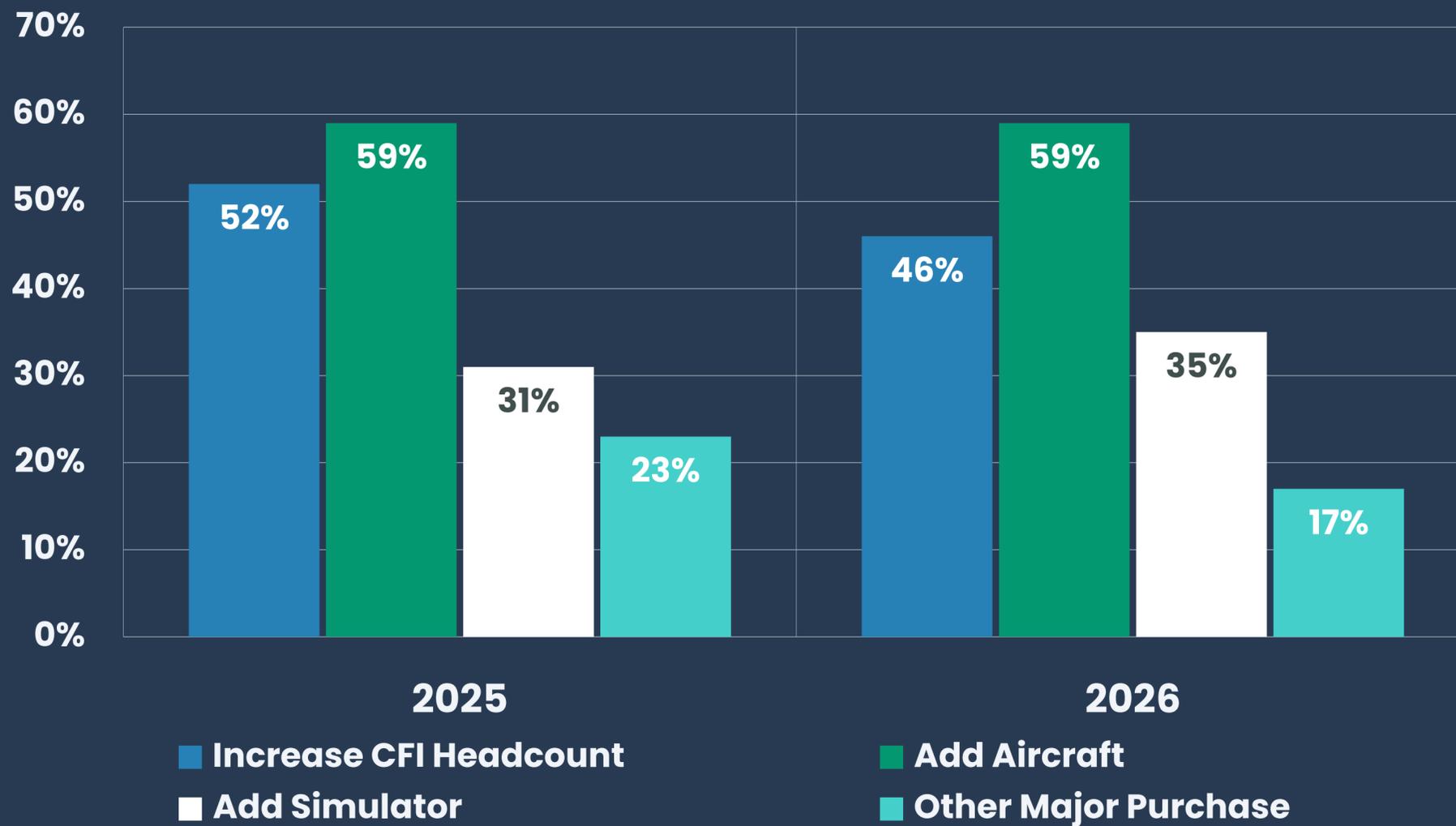
81 Flight Instructors

18% Profit Margin



FTO Activities and Plans

Major Activities Accomplished and Planned



Operational Snapshot

62%

Only Charge Customers Per Hour (69% in 24)

39%

Offer Part 141 Training

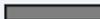
70%

FTO Managers Also Provide Instruction or Evaluation



Challenges Facing Training Providers

Flight Training Organizations

- 01 Pilot Examiner Issues 
- 02 Cost of Aircraft Insurance 
- 03 Aircraft Maintenance 
- 04 Economic Uncertainty 
- 05 Finding New Students 

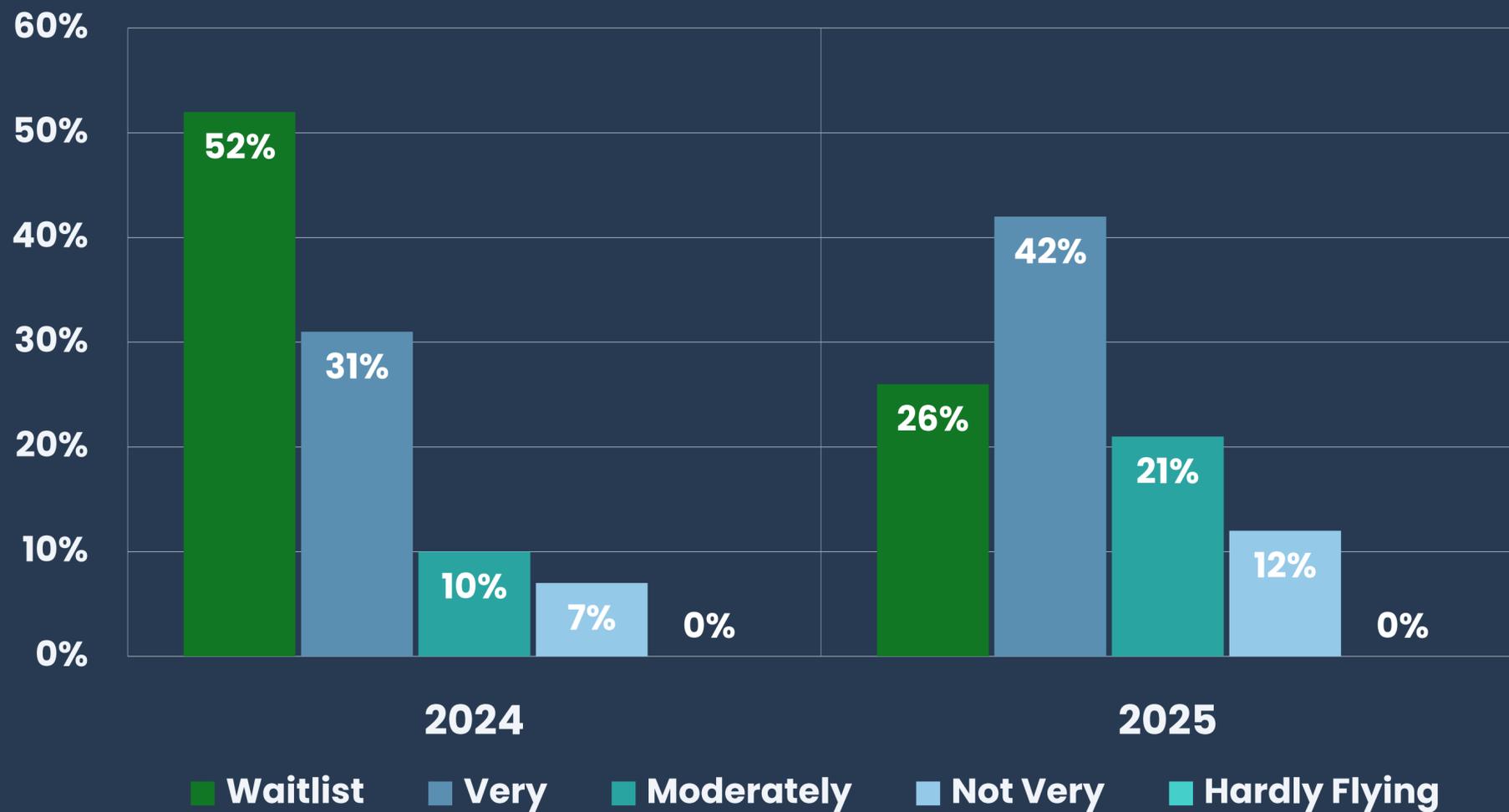
Independent CFIs

-  Pilot Examiner Issues 01
-  Cost of Aircraft Insurance 02
-  Access to Training Aircraft 03
-  Aircraft Maintenance 04
-  Finding New Students 05



Designated Pilot Examiners

How Busy Were You as a DPE?

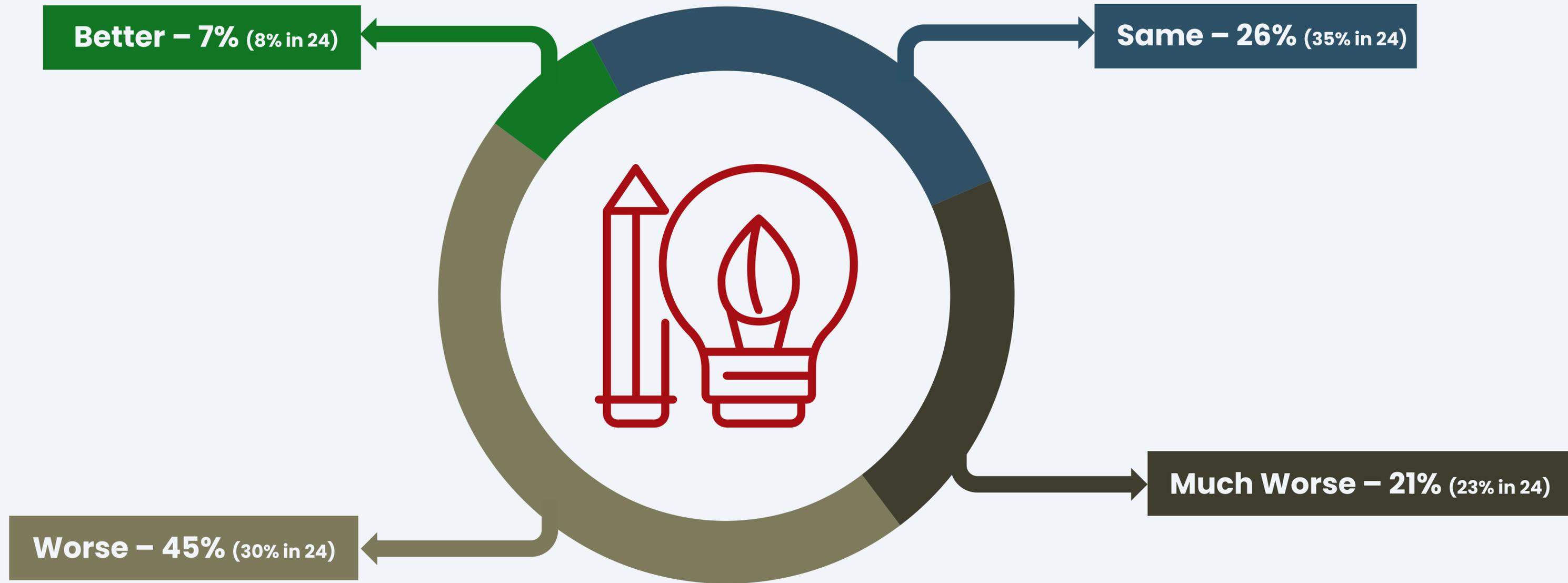


Checkrides in 2025

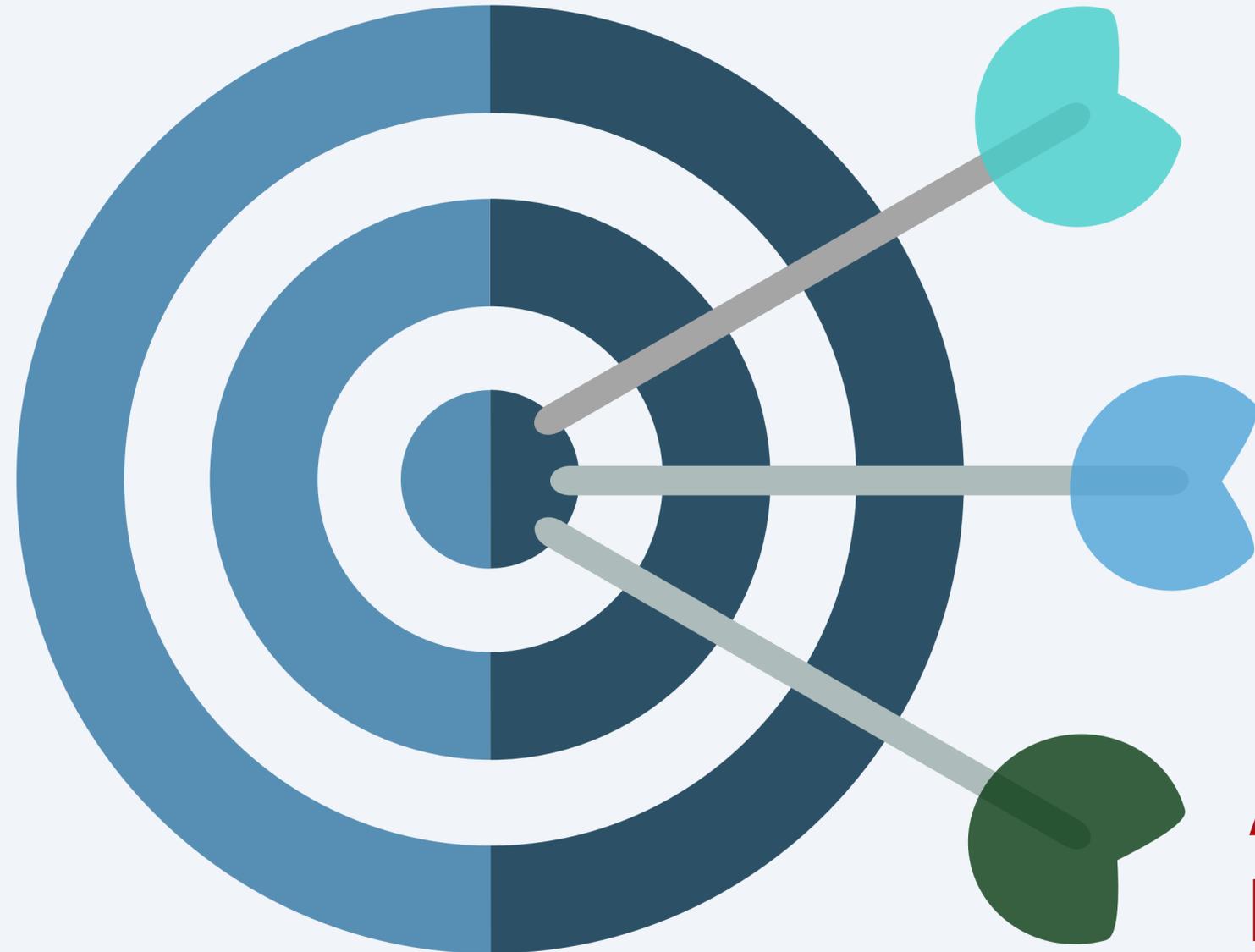
- 100** Median Applicants per DPE
- 120** Average Applicants per DPE
- 52%** Charge \$800 to \$1,000 per Checkride



DPEs Rating of Applicants vs 5 Years Ago



First-Time Checkride Pass Rate



Avg: 86%

Median: 90%

FTO Reported First-Time Pass Rate

Avg: 70%

Median: 97%

Indy CFI Reported First-Time Pass Rate

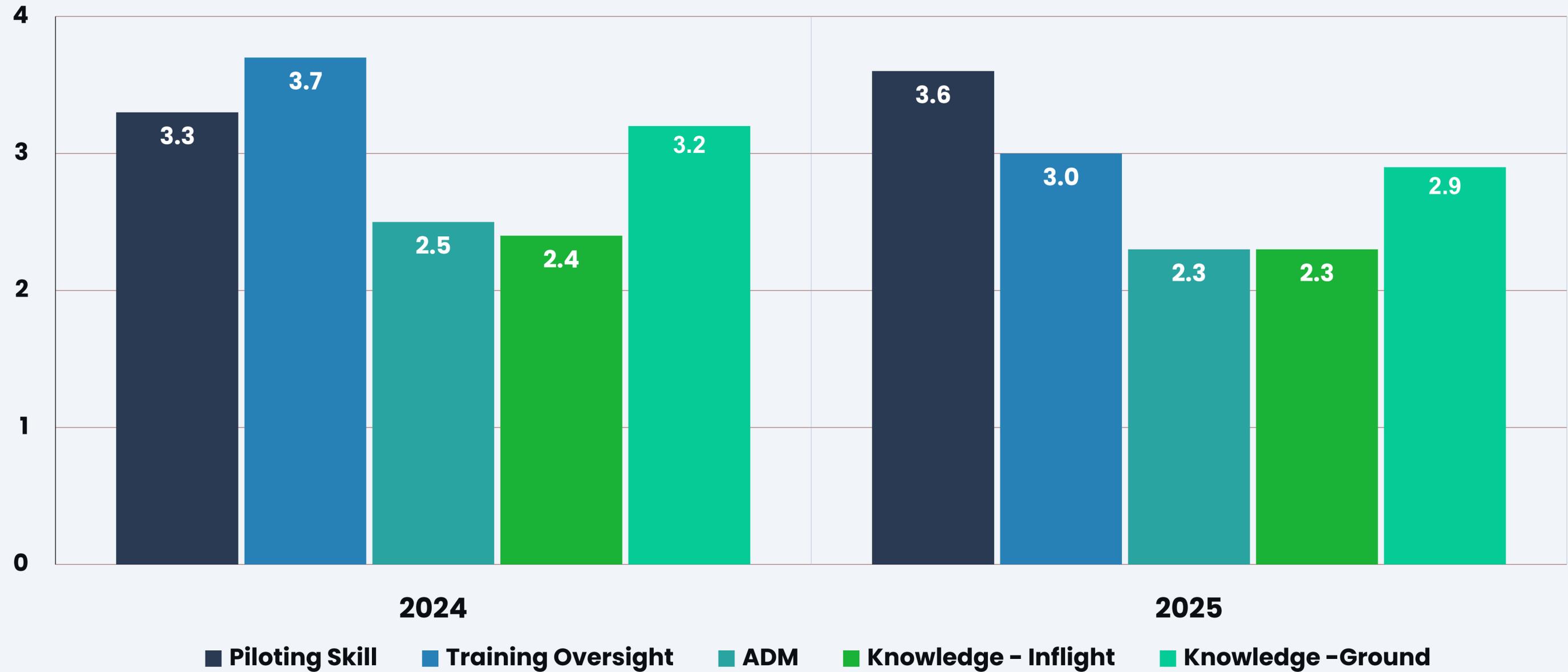
Avg: 76%

Median: 80%

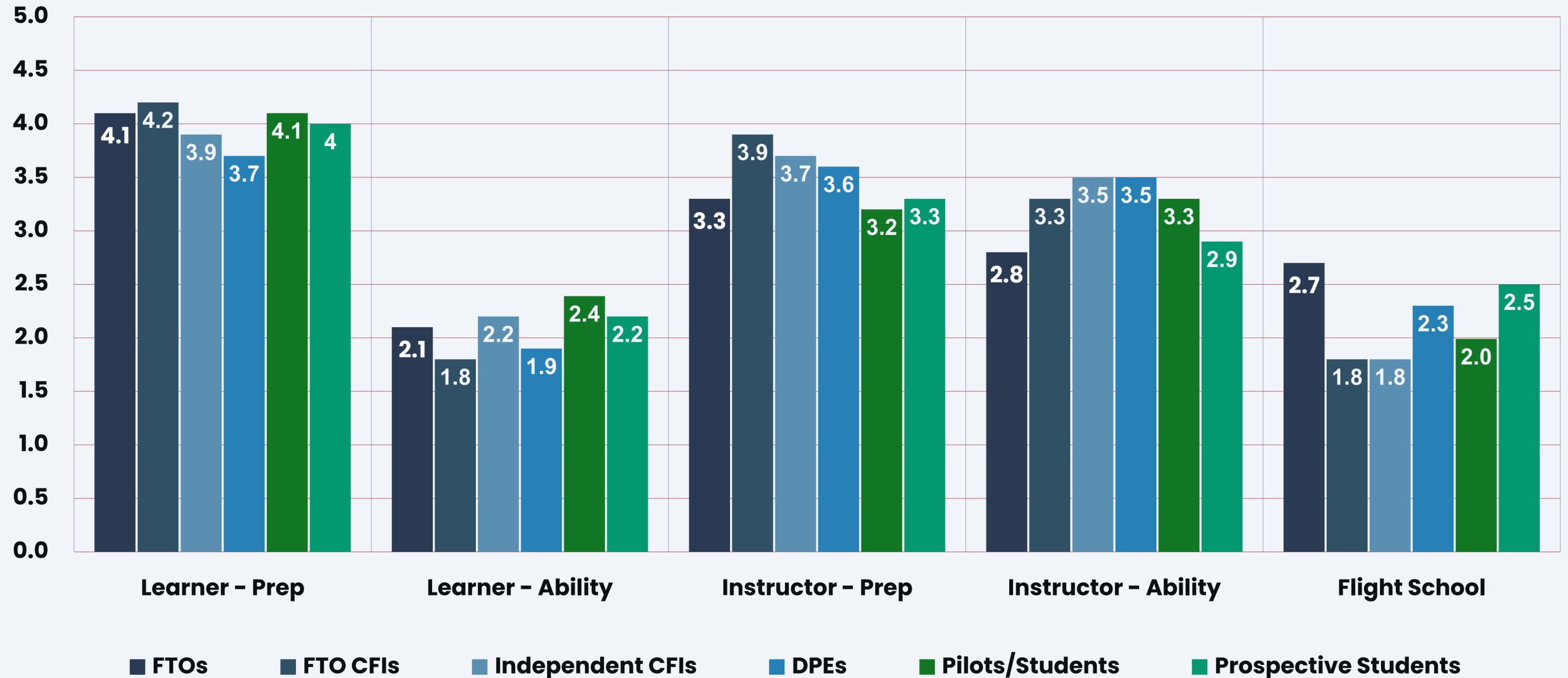
DPE Reported First-Time Pass Rate



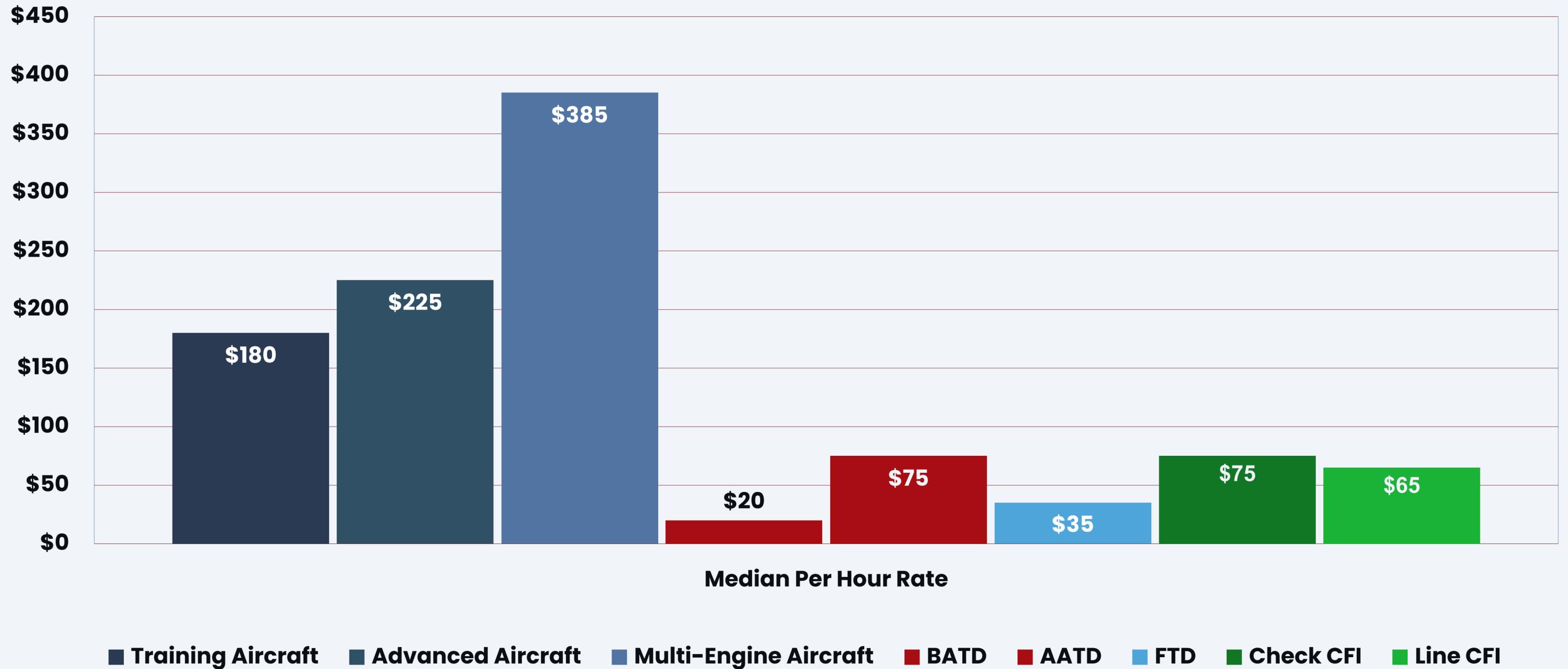
Primary Reasons for Checkride Failure



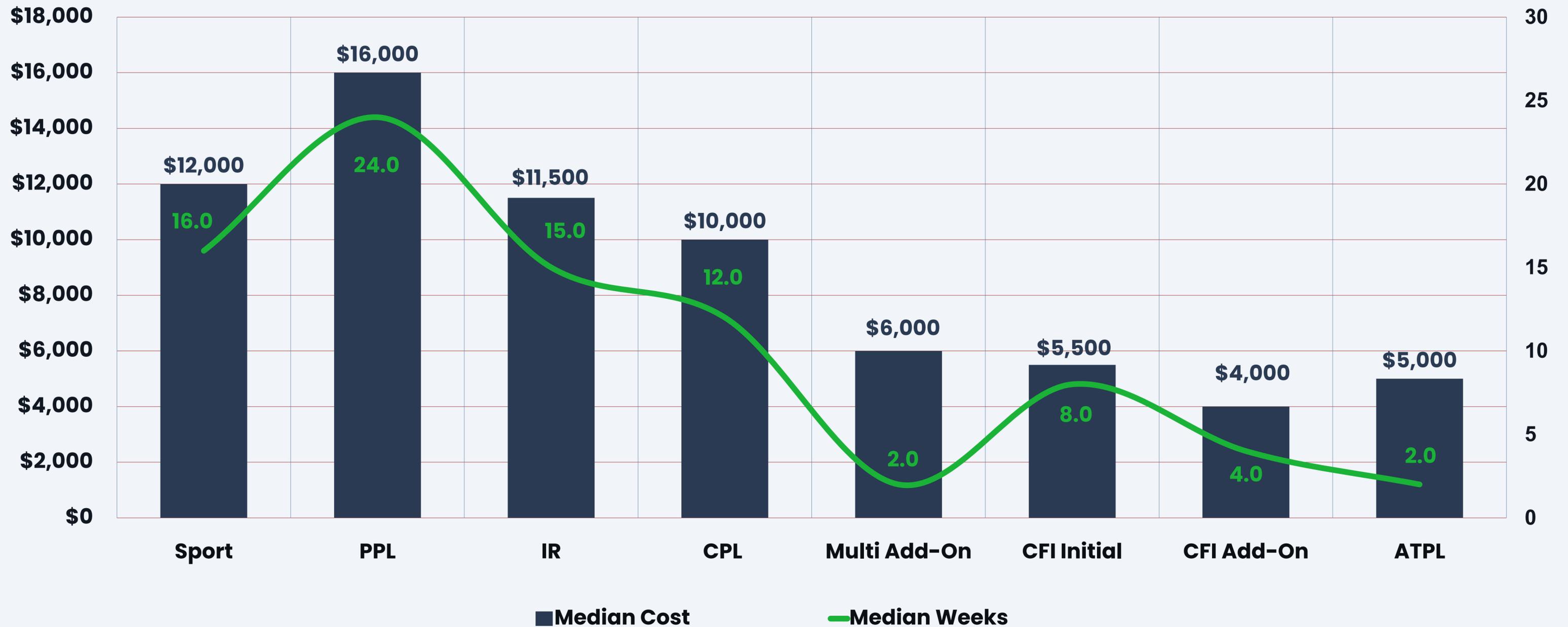
Ranking of Primary Factors in Training Success



Hourly Rental & Instructor Rates



Total Time & Cost to Complete



FTO Pricing Plans

31% of FTOs

Have Raised Prices in Last 12 Months

69% in 2023
24% in 2024

20% of FTOs

Have Both Raised Prices And Plan to Again in the Next 12 Months

27% in 2023
29% in 2024



25% of FTOs

Plan to Raise Prices in The Next 12 Months

45% in 2023
23% in 2024

24% of FTOs

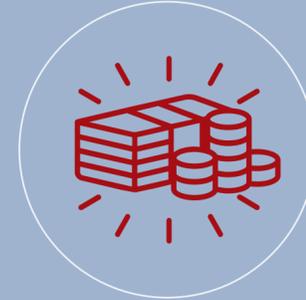
Haven't Raised Prices And Don't Plan to in the Next 12 Months

14% in 2023
23% in 2024



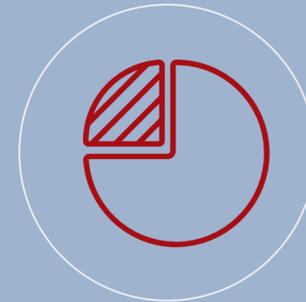
State of Flight Training 2026

Notable Trends



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Training Costs and Training Time



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Bigger is Better for Training Providers



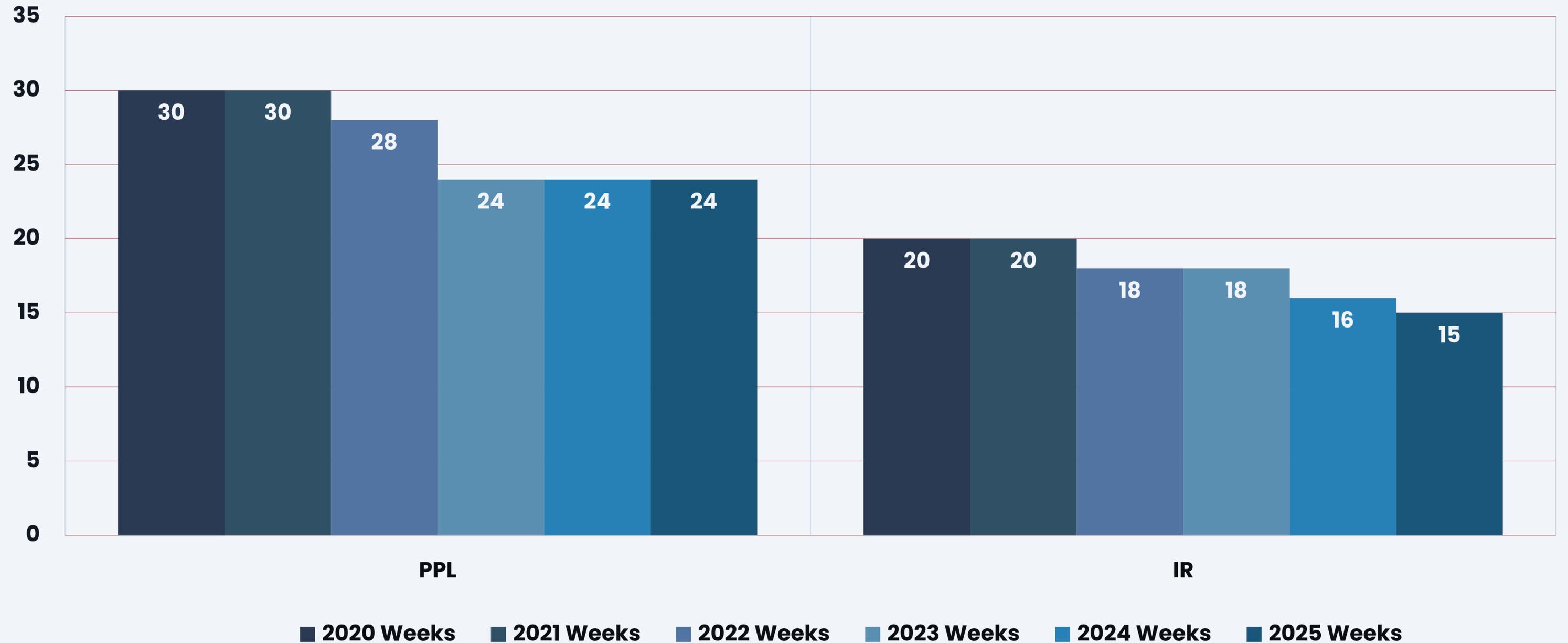
Training Costs Over Time

Median Cost to Complete Training by Year



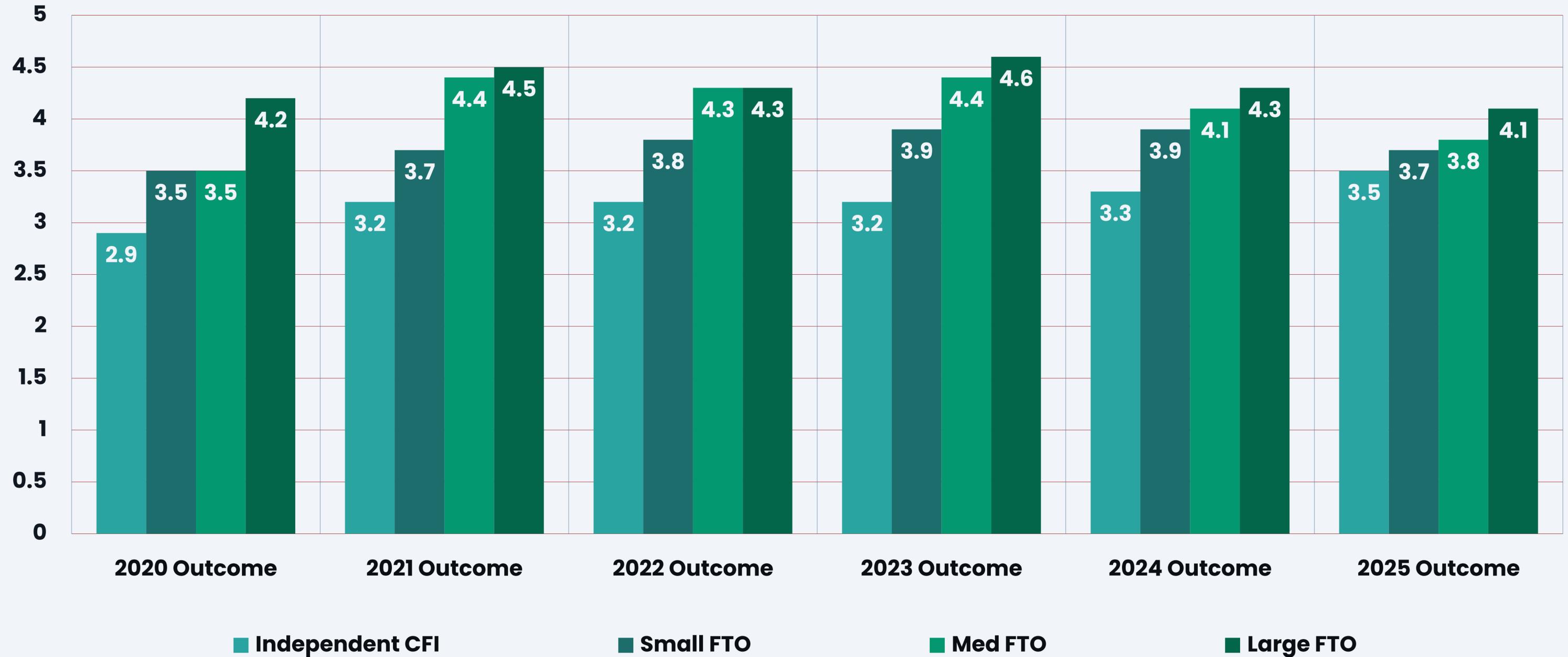
Weeks to Complete Over Time

Median Time to Complete by Year



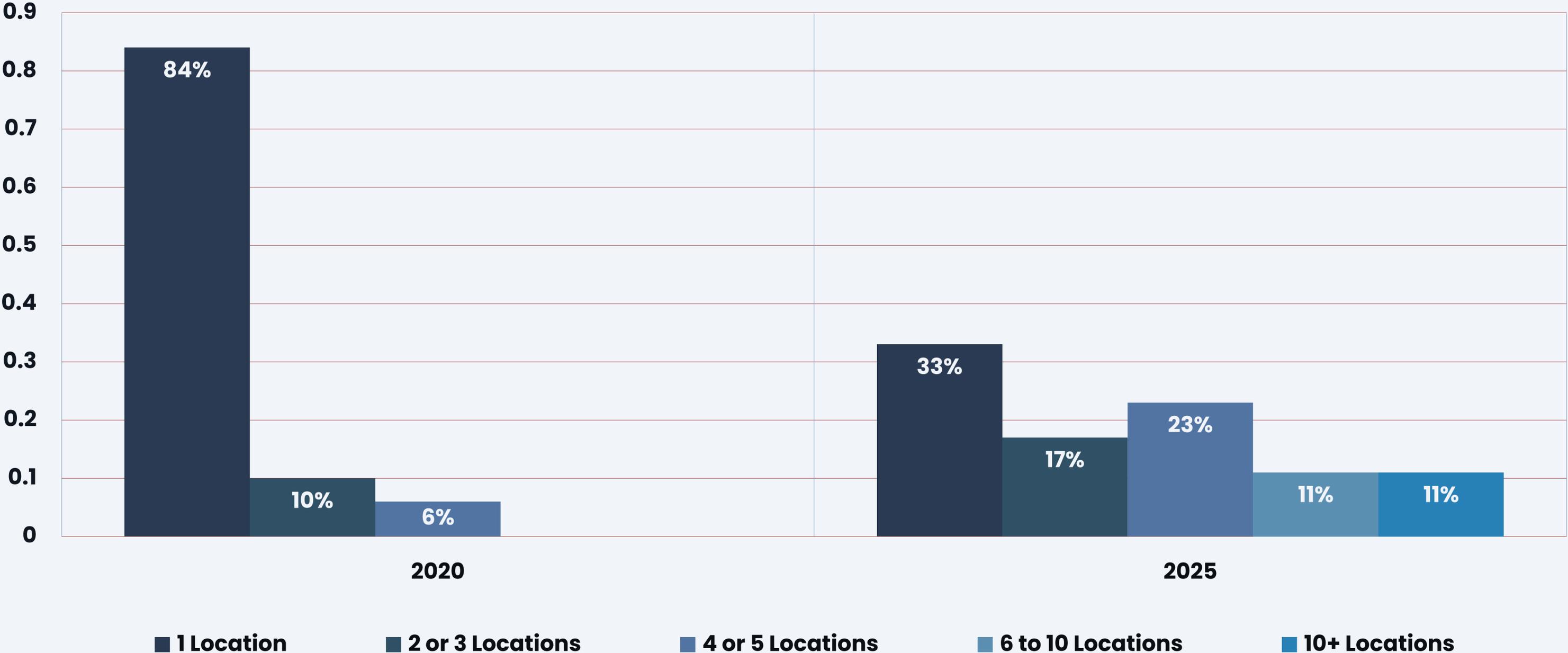
Bigger is Better for Training Providers

Self Rating of Business Outcome by Year



Bigger is Getting Bigger

Large FTO Number of Locations 2020 vs 2025



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For More Information

Redbird Flight

www.redbirdflight.com

info@redbirdflight.com

+1(512) 301-0718