

From pressure to opportunity: Trends reshaping clinical health psychology training

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Overview of Presentation

- Brief Update on APA Staffing, Structural Changes, and Education Portfolio Priorities
- Five Important Trends Reshaping Clinical Health Psychology Training
 - Trend
 - Resources or Work in Progress
- Discussion

Brief Introduction & Contact Information

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Goal 1: Lead in Growing Psychology Literacy and Participation

Outcome

A psychology-literate society with more learners engaging with psychology and pursuing it as a career.

Lead efforts to introduce psychology earlier and position it as essential knowledge for all learners.

Leverage workforce data to guide outreach and curriculum emphasis.

Ensure clear pathways into the profession that increase participation and retention

Champion psychology's VALUE globally to inspire engagement and career interest.

Goal 2: Use Psychological Science to Modernize Teaching and Learning

Outcome

A world where psychological science powers teaching, learning, and well-being—delivering excellence from classrooms to careers and across lifelong learning.

Psychological science informs and drives how teaching and learning happen – within psychology education and across all disciplines

Apply evidence-based practices and integrate technology and AI responsibly to amplify outcomes.

Embed population health principles into learning frameworks to ensure youth mental health and wellbeing.

Protect the integrity of the field by maintaining rigorous standards for credentialing and quality assurance.

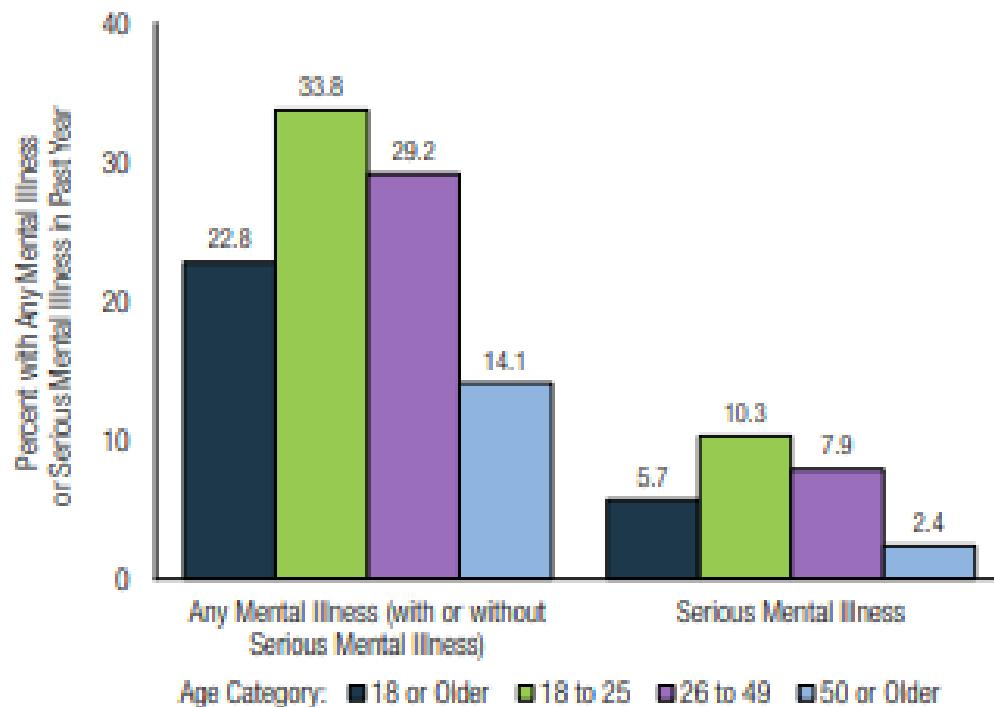
Learning Outcomes

- Describe major systemic trends in healthcare, higher education, and workforce development that are influencing clinical health psychology training programs.
- Analyze how evolving workforce demands, regulatory changes, and training sustainability pressures affect competency development and workforce preparation.
- Evaluate implications of emerging developments, including technological change and evolving workforce demand, for preparing psychologists to function effectively within integrated healthcare systems.

Trend 1:
Increasingly High Demand &
Team-Based Training
Environment

Increasing Demand for Behavioral and Mental Health Services

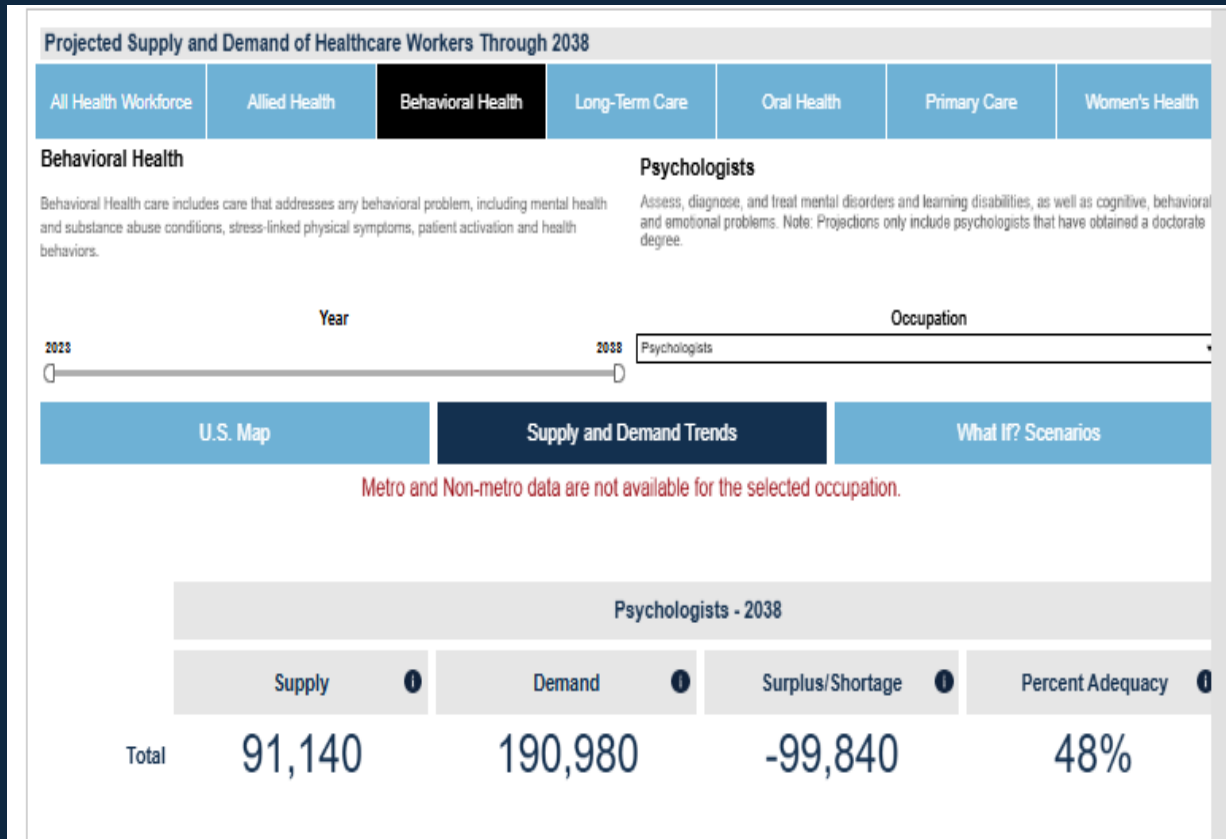
Figure 39. Any Mental Illness or Serious Mental Illness in the Past Year: Among Adults Aged 18 or Older; 2023



Up from 18.5% in 2013

- APA's Practitioner Pulse Survey (2025)
 - 45% reported an increase in symptom severity among clients
 - 46% reported having no openings for new clients
 - 40% have a waitlist

Persistent Shortages in the Behavioral Health Workforce

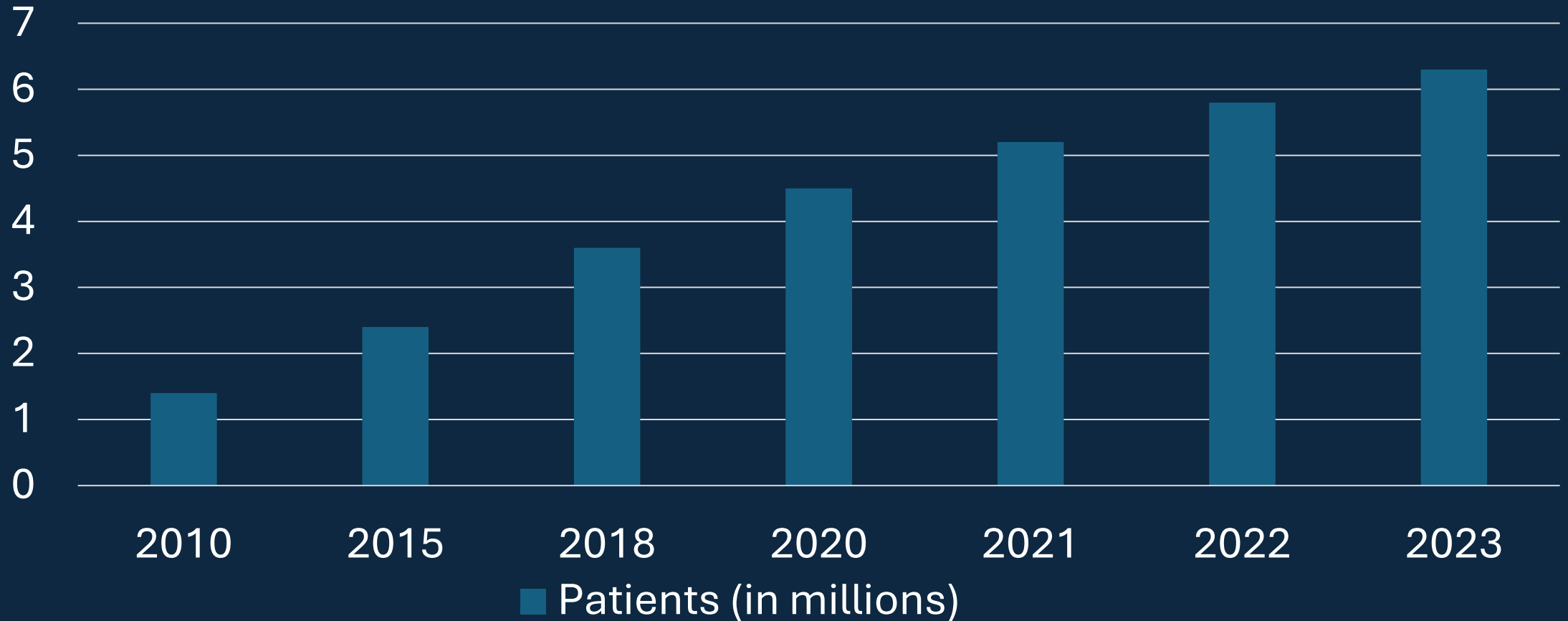


Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Health Workforce Projects, 2025

We're meeting about 83% of need now, but in 12 years we will only be meeting about 48% of need



Growth of Integrated, Team-based Care



Behavioral Health Patients Served in Integrated Primary Care (FQHCs), HRSA Uniform Data System (UDS), 2010–2023

Trend 1: Increasingly High Demand & Team-Based Training Environment

- Revision to the Model Licensure Act <https://www.apa.org/education-career/grad/understanding-model-licensing-act>
 - Public comments closed in early March
 - Next steps: Incorporate feedback, send to COR for their vote

Trend 1: Increasingly High Demand & Team-Based Training Environment

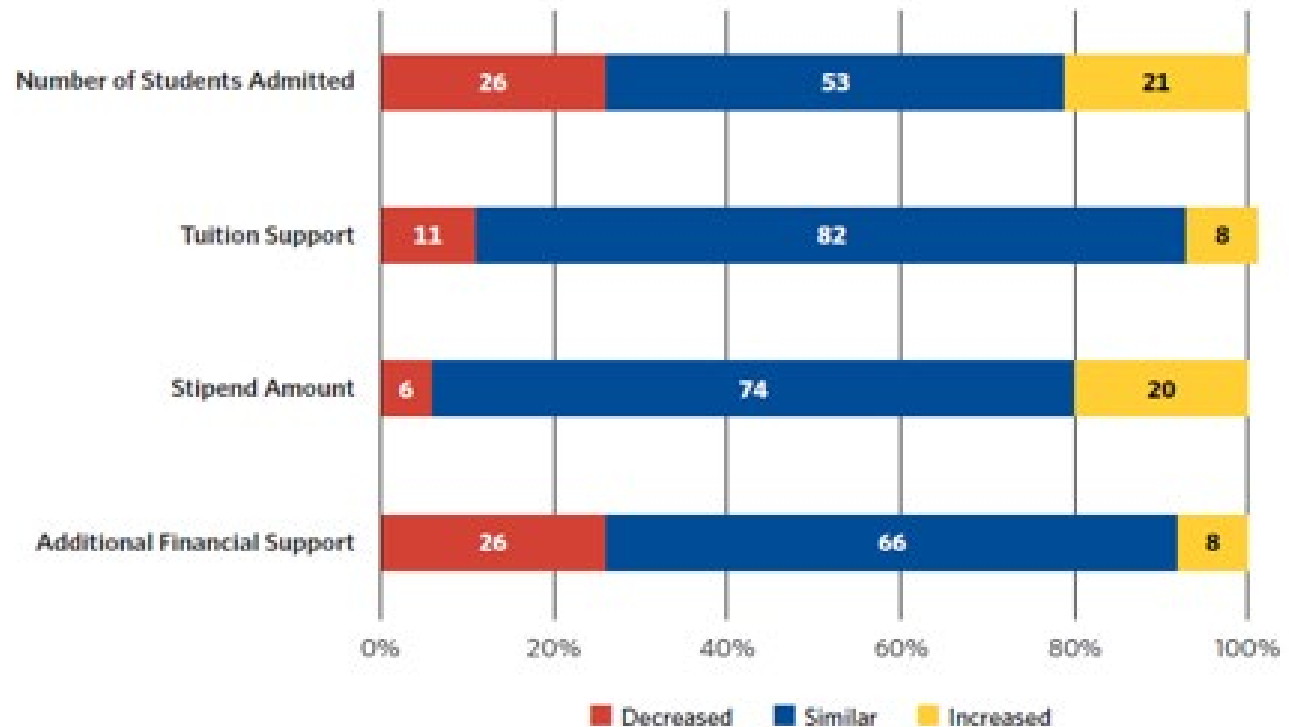
- Revision to the Model Licensure Act
 - Public comments closed in early March
 - Next steps: Incorporate feedback, send to COR for their vote
- Federal advocacy
 - Advocacy Response Center <https://updates.apaservices.org/>
 - 180+ APA members lobbied for ADAPT ACT and federal funding to support behavioral health workforce development (e.g., GPE, BHWET, NIH/NSF) as part of COR meeting in Feb

Trend 2: Increasingly Constrained Training Environment

Programs Under Financial Strain

APA Psychology
Team—Education's
(2025) “Rapid
Response” Program
Director’s Survey
(N=210)

Percentage of Graduate Psychology Program Directors Reporting Changes to Admission and Student Financial Support Between the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 Academic Years



Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

48% made **at least one** reduction from 2024-2025 to 2025-2026

Students Under Financial Strain

- Graduate education costs have risen sharply nationwide
 - Tuition and fees for graduate degrees tripled between 2000 and 2020, while median student debt has climbed more than 47% (Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2024).
- Psychology stands out as one of the *higher-debt, lower-stipend* fields in graduate education (Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2024).
- Psychology graduate students face especially heavy financial strain (Doran et al, 2016)
 - More than 80% of students to take on additional debt just to cover basic expenses (Szkody et al., 2022).

Legislation on EDI in Education

Anti-EDI legislation in Higher Education Settings

<https://www.chronicle.com/article/here-are-the-states-where-lawmakers-are-seeking-to-ban-colleges-dei-efforts>

Updated on August 22, 2025, with new information on New Hampshire.

We are tracking 136 bills in 30 states and the U.S. Congress. Since 2023,

136

have been introduced.

29

have final legislative approval.

29

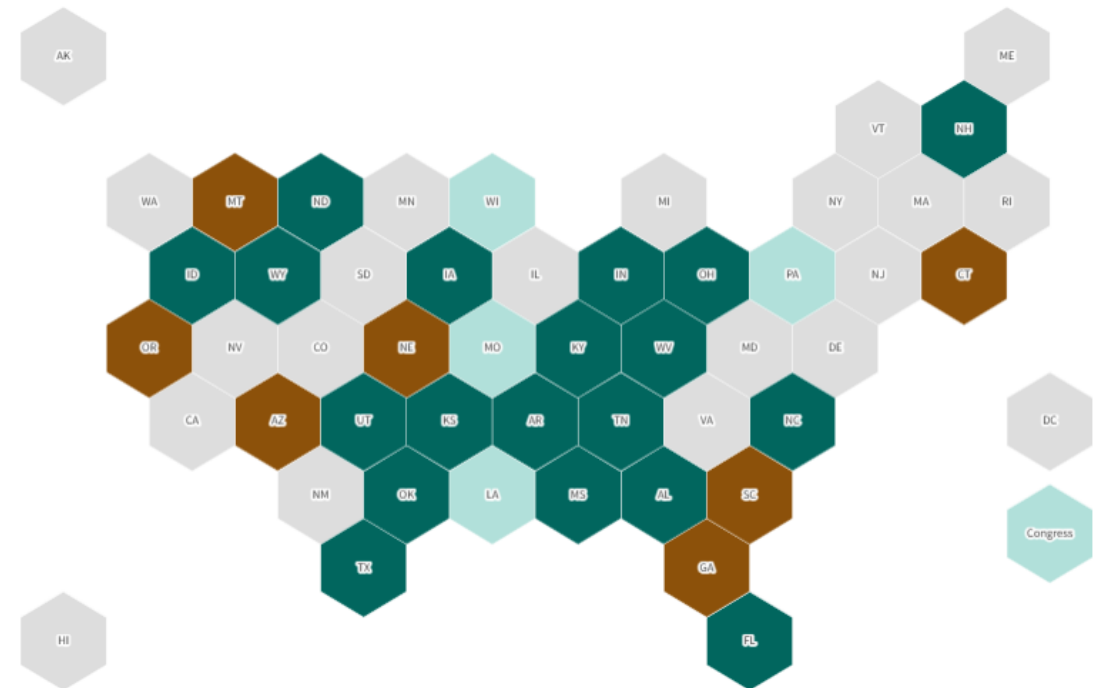
have become law.

99

have been tabled, failed to pass, or been vetoed.

Where Anti-DEI Legislation Has Been Proposed

■ No bill ■ Introduced ■ Final legislative approval ■ Signed into law ■ Tabled, failed to pass, or vetoed



Trend 2: Increasingly Constrained Training Environment

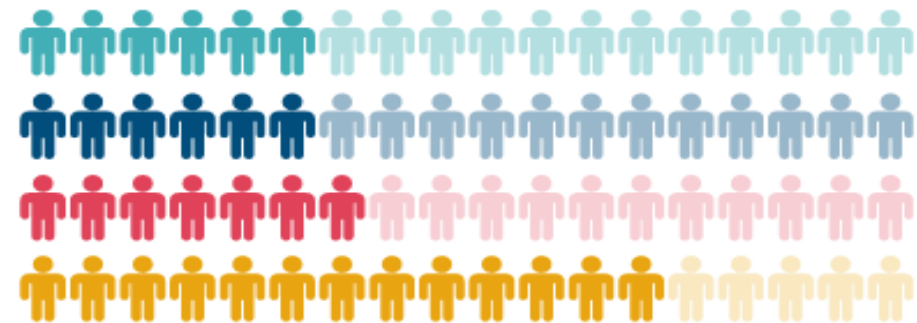
- Federal advocacy
 - “Professional” degree designation inclusion; \$200,000 cap for clinical psychology programs; new \$100,000 cap for all others
- APA Commission on Accreditation
 - “Memo: Addressing Accredited Program Questions about the Enforcement of Diversity Accreditation Standards” https://irp.cdn-website.com/a14f9462/files/uploaded/Message_from_the_APA_CoA-bbe3899b.pdf
 - Winter 2026 Update <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Paik4zcvxXs>
- APA statement Reaffirming APA’s Commitment to Justice, Human Rights, Fairness and Dignity
(<https://www.apa.org/about/policy/justice-human-rights>)

Trend 3: Decreased Trainee Well-Being

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Mental Health Status

In general, about one-third of graduate student respondents reported symptoms consistent with a PTSD diagnosis or at least moderate levels of anxiety or depression. More than two-thirds of graduate student respondents reported low well-being. On average, women, trans*/non-binary/genderqueer students, students parenting or caregiving, and students in the humanities reported more negative mental health symptoms. In focus groups and open-ended text comments, graduate students described the negative effects on their mental health from the combination of the pandemic as well as ongoing and exacerbated racism and anti-Blackness.



32% Symptoms consistent with PTSD diagnosis (PCL-5)

33% Moderate or higher levels of anxiety (GAD-7)

34% Moderate or higher levels of depression (PHQ-8)

67% Low well-being (WHO-5)

$n = 3,335$

Ogilvie et al., (2020)

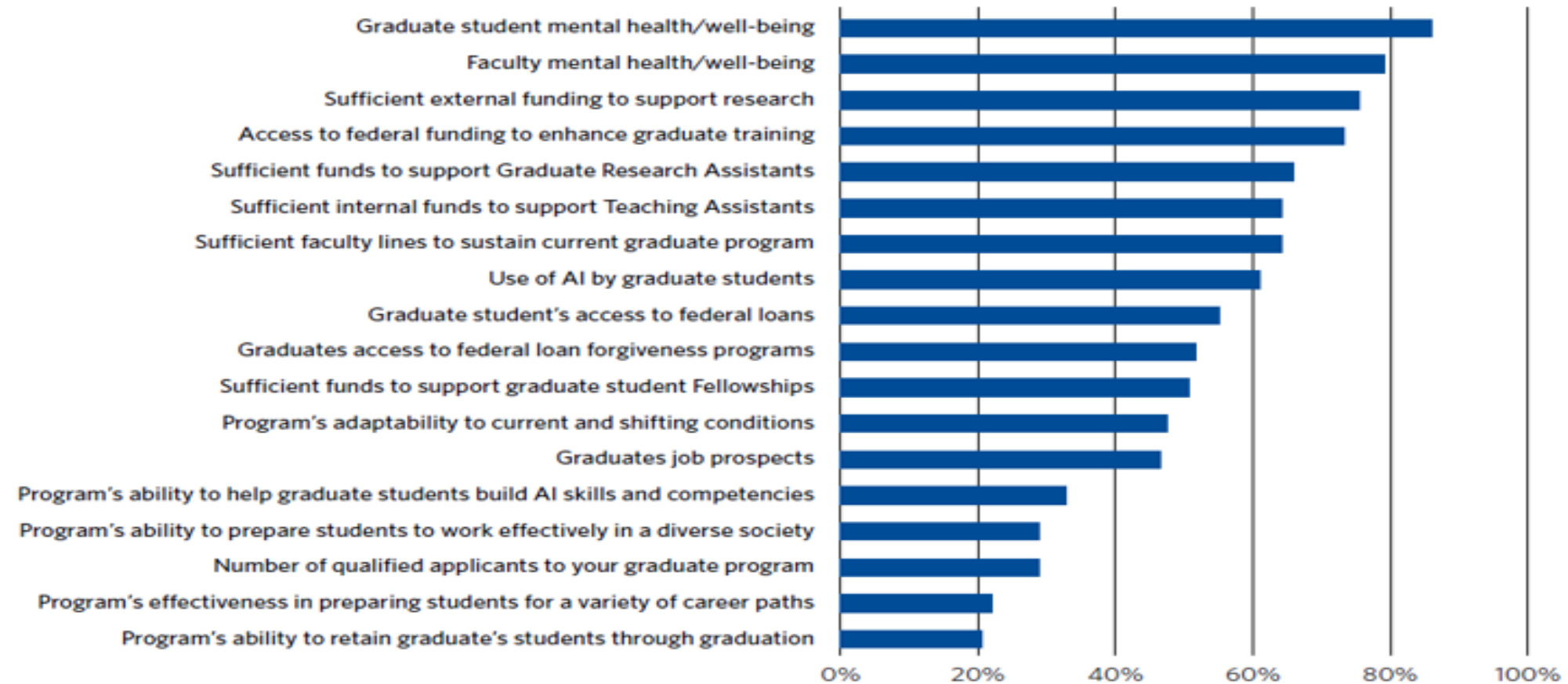
Themes from Informal Conversation with APAGS Students

- Student well-being is not separate from training, but part of the environment itself.
 - Framed as a structural issue (rather than personal one), the solutions (at least some of them) are best achieved through program solutions.
 - Student note clear expectations and handbooks including mentoring norms, workload design that acknowledges work/life balance, and access to care as some of the top things that would better support them.

Trend 3: Decreased Trainee Well-Being

FIGURE 1.

Percentage of Psychology Program Directors Endorsing Concerns



Note: Multiple options could be selected by each respondent (N=210)

- 89% Endorsed student well-being as a “top concern” in APA Program Director Survey (2025).

Trend 3: Decreased Trainee Well-Being



- APA Guidelines on Equitable and Respectful Treatment of Students in Graduate Psychology Programs (2023)
 - <https://www.apa.org/about/policy/guidelines-equitable-treatment-students>
- APA Resources for Mental Health Excellence in the workplace
 - <https://www.apa.org/topics/healthy-workplaces/mental-health>
 - <https://www.apa.org/topics/healthy-workplaces>

Trend 4: Increase in Skills-based Hiring

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- Employers and recent graduates agree on top 3 career readiness competencies (communication, critical thinking, and teamwork), but they do not agree on students' proficiency in these competencies (NACE, 2024)

Figure 2: Student and employer ratings of student proficiency in career readiness competencies, by percent of respondents

Competency	New Graduates	Employers
Communication	79.4%	55.2%
Critical Thinking	81.5%	66.1%
Teamwork	86.9%	78.1%
Career & Self-Development	63.9%	47.1%
Professionalism	84.6%	50.0%
Leadership	68.5%	36.8%
Technology	68.1%	81.7%
Equity & Inclusion	81.0%	70.8%

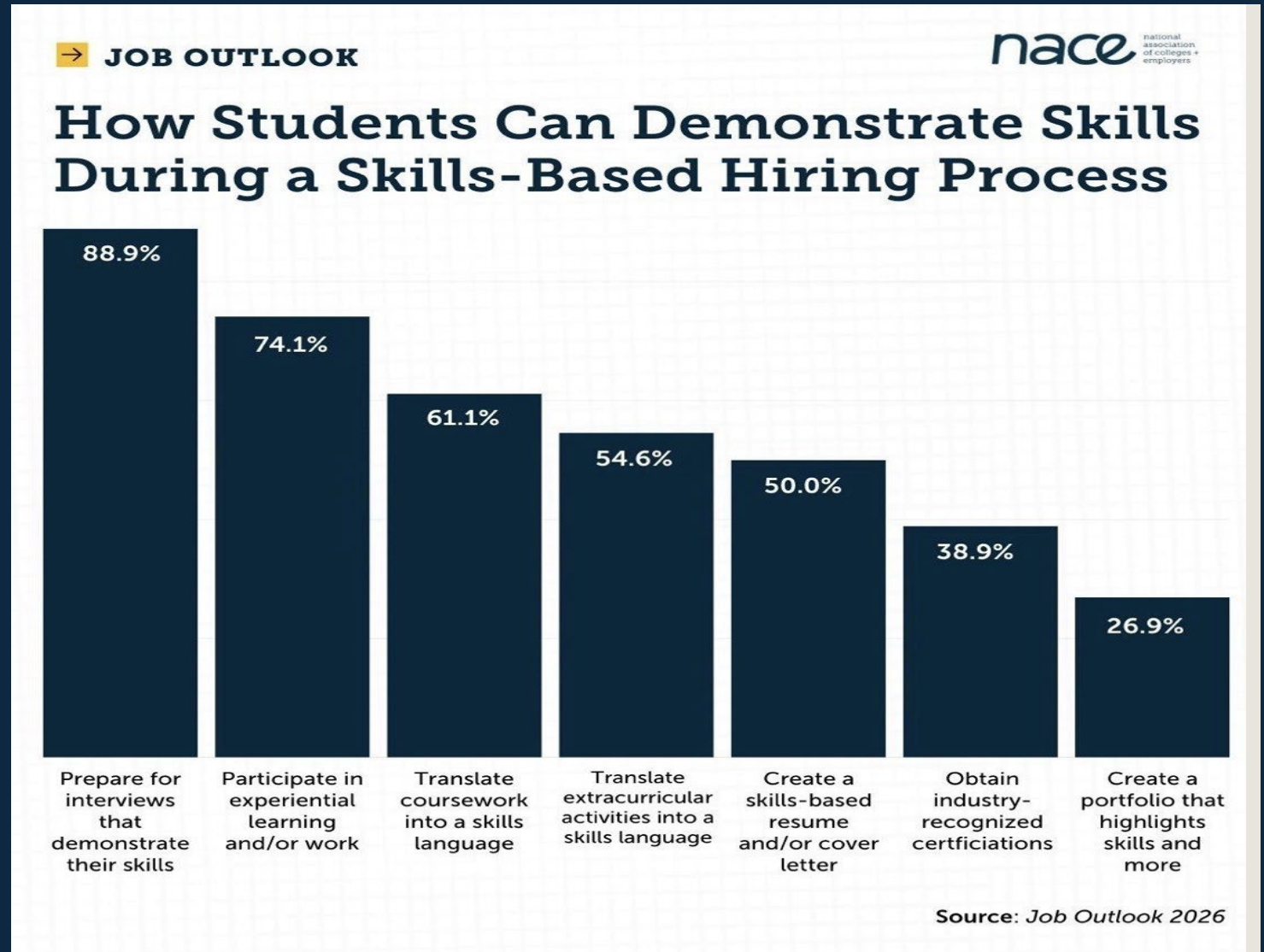


Source: National Association of Colleges and Employers. Data are from NACE's 2023 Student Survey and Job Outlook 2024 Survey. These are the percentages of responding students and employers that, on a five-point scale, rated recent graduates either "very proficient" (4) or "extremely proficient" (5) in the respective competency.

Trend 4: Increase in Skills-based Hiring

- Almost 70% of employers use skills-based hiring (NACE, 2026)

<https://naceweb.org/research/reports/job-outlook/2026/>



Trend 4: Workforce Alignment & Competency Expectations

- The Skillful Psychology Student getting overhaul
 - <https://www.apa.org/education-career/guide/transferrable-skills.pdf>
 - And adapted for graduate level
- Lightcast data on job ads and workforce skills (TBD)



AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

THE SKILLFUL PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT PREPARED FOR SUCCESS IN THE 21ST CENTURY WORKPLACE

Psychology provides skills that employers value.



COGNITIVE

Analytical thinking: Solve complex problems, attend to details, plan proactively, and display comfort with ambiguity.

Critical thinking: Display proficiency with statistics, program evaluation, and research design necessary for the study of social and technical systems.

Creativity: Use innovative and resourceful approaches to problem solving and new tasks.

Information management: Be adept at locating, organizing, evaluating, and distributing information from multiple sources.

Judgment and decision making: Engage in logical and systematic thinking and ethical decision making when considering the possible outcomes of a particular action.



COMMUNICATION

Oral communication: Demonstrate strong active listening and conversational abilities in both informal and professional environments, as well as aptitude for public speaking and communicating scientific information to diverse audiences.

Written communication: Comprehend relevant reading materials to produce professional documents that are grammatically correct, such as technical or training materials and business correspondence.



PERSONAL

Adaptability: Adjust successfully to change by responding in a flexible, proactive, and civil manner when changes occur.

Integrity: Perform work in an honest, reliable, and accountable manner that reflects the ethical values and standards of an organization.

Self-regulation: Manage time and stress by completing assigned tasks with little or no supervision; display initiative and persistence by accepting and completing additional duties in a careful, thorough, and dependable manner.



SOCIAL

Collaboration: Work effectively in a team by cooperating, sharing responsibilities, and listening and responding appropriately to the ideas of others.

Inclusivity: Demonstrate sensitivity to cultural and individual differences and similarities by working effectively with diverse people, respecting and considering divergent opinions, and showing respect for others.

Leadership: Establish a vision for individuals and for the group, creating long-term plans and guiding and inspiring others to accomplish tasks in a successful manner.

Management: Manage individuals and/or teams, coordinate projects, and prioritize individual and team tasks.

Service orientation: Seek ways to help people by displaying empathy; maintaining a customer, patient, or client focus; and engaging in the community.



TECHNOLOGICAL

Flexibility/adaptability to new systems: Be willing and able to learn and/or adapt to new computer platforms, operating systems, and software programs.

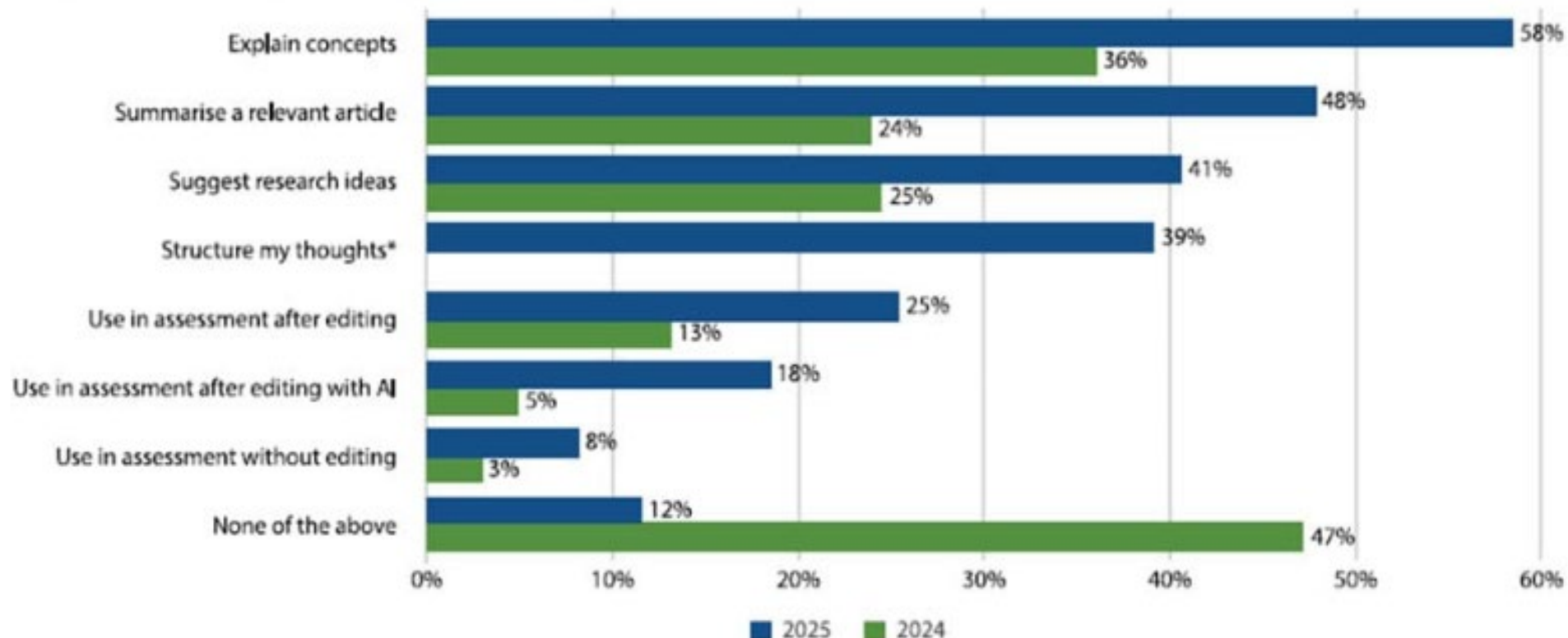
Familiarity with hardware and software: Demonstrate competency in using various operating systems, programs, and/or coding protocols; troubleshoot technical errors; and use software applications to build and maintain websites, create web-based applications, and perform statistical analyses.

For more information, visit on.apa.org/undergrad

Trend 5:
Increasing Use of AI, Despite
Concerns

Student Use of Gen AI is Increasing

Figure 2 How have you used generative AI for assessments?



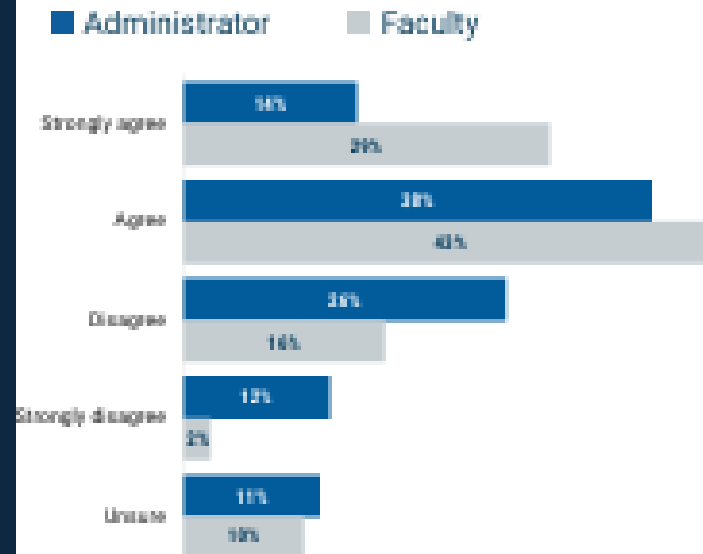
'When thinking about using generative AI to prepare assessed work, which of the following have you ever done? Please select all that apply.'

** indicates the option is new in 2025. Those putting 'I don't know' (1% of responses in 2025) are excluded*

But Still Points of Hesitancy in Higher Ed

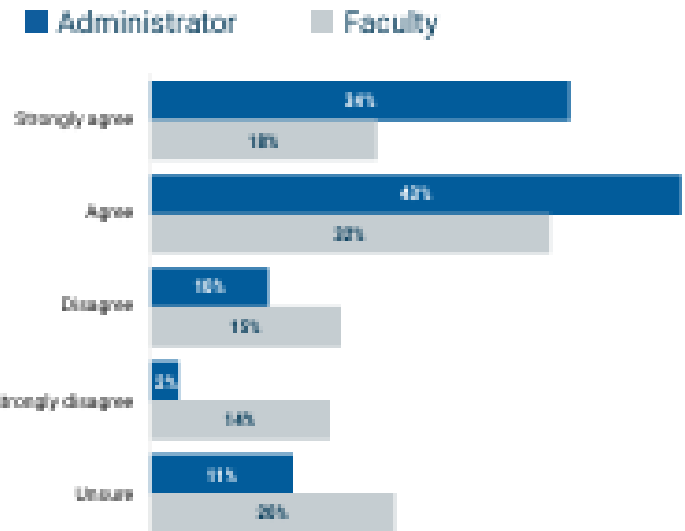
- Research study by the Chronicle of Higher Education (2024) found that there is real hesitancy towards AI tools, especially among faculty.

How much do you agree with the following statement?
"Generative artificial-intelligence tools pose a threat to how higher education educates, operates, and conducts research."



How much do you agree with the following statement?

"Instructors should use generative-AI tools to improve teaching and make their work more efficient."



Source: Chronicle survey of 826 college administrators and faculty members
Note: Due to rounding, figures might not total 100 percent.

Trend 5: Increasing Use of AI, Despite Concerns

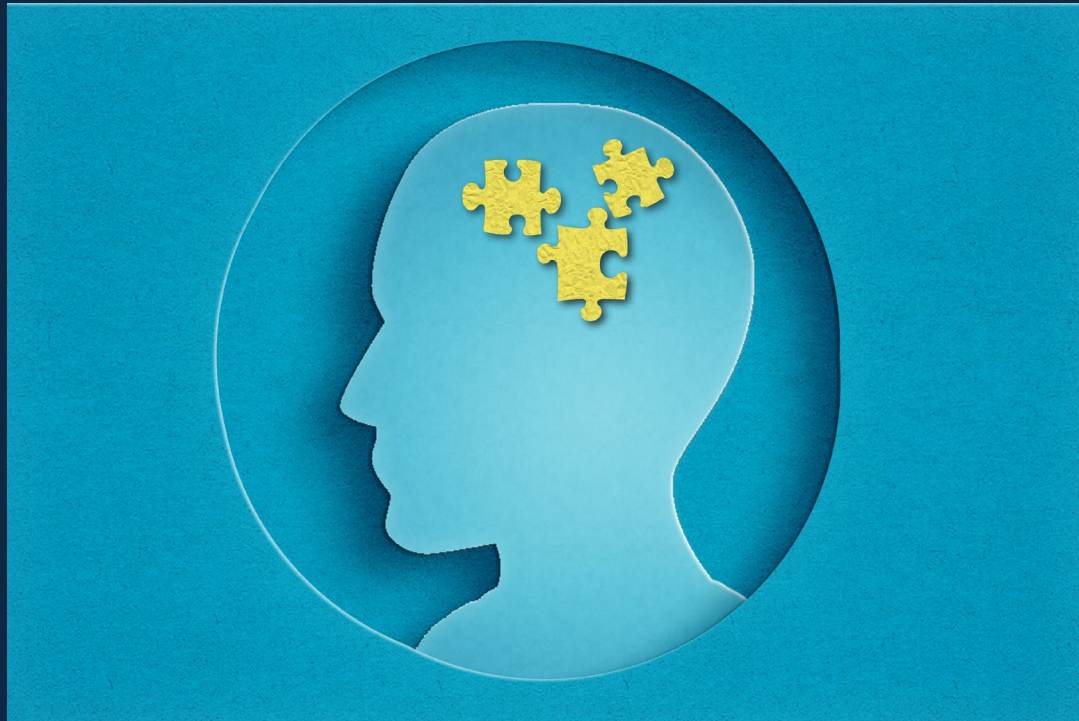
- APA's Practitioner Pulse Survey (2025)
 - Concerns about AI are growing.
 - Over 60% of psychologists were concerned with data breaches (67%), unanticipated social harms (64%), biased training data leading to biased outputs (63), lack of testing to mitigate risks (61%), and inaccurate outputs (60%).
 - But they are also pointing to some potential critical benefits
 - About 42% of psychologists reported benefits of improving efficiency, summarizing research (27%), educating patients (18%), and reducing burnout (16%).

Trend 5: Increasing Use of AI, Despite Concerns

- Guidance from APA Journals Policy on Generative AI in Research
 - <https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/resources/publishing-tips/policy-generative-ai>
- Guidance from APA on AI in Professional Practice
 - <https://www.apa.org/topics/artificial-intelligence-machine-learning/ethical-guidance-professional-practice.pdf>
- Look for more coming from APA that is Educator-focused
 - For example, how we can harness the science of teaching and learning to achieve our classroom education goals with AI as a tool rather than the driver of learning outcomes.

Conclusion #1: Demand for Psychological Expertise

In a world defined by complexity, uncertainty, and human challenges, psychology isn't just another discipline — it's essential.



Conclusion #2: Why I Think Psychology Is Well-positioned for What Comes Next

Psychology has three structural advantages in this moment:

- (1) the workforce demand for what we do is real and growing,
- (2) we already think in systems
- (3) our skills are the ones that will remain in demand

Psychology isn't on the sidelines of this moment — it's at the center of it.





Questions & Suggestions