



2026 AOG SURVEY OF GRADUATES

Understanding Engagement Across the Long Blue Line

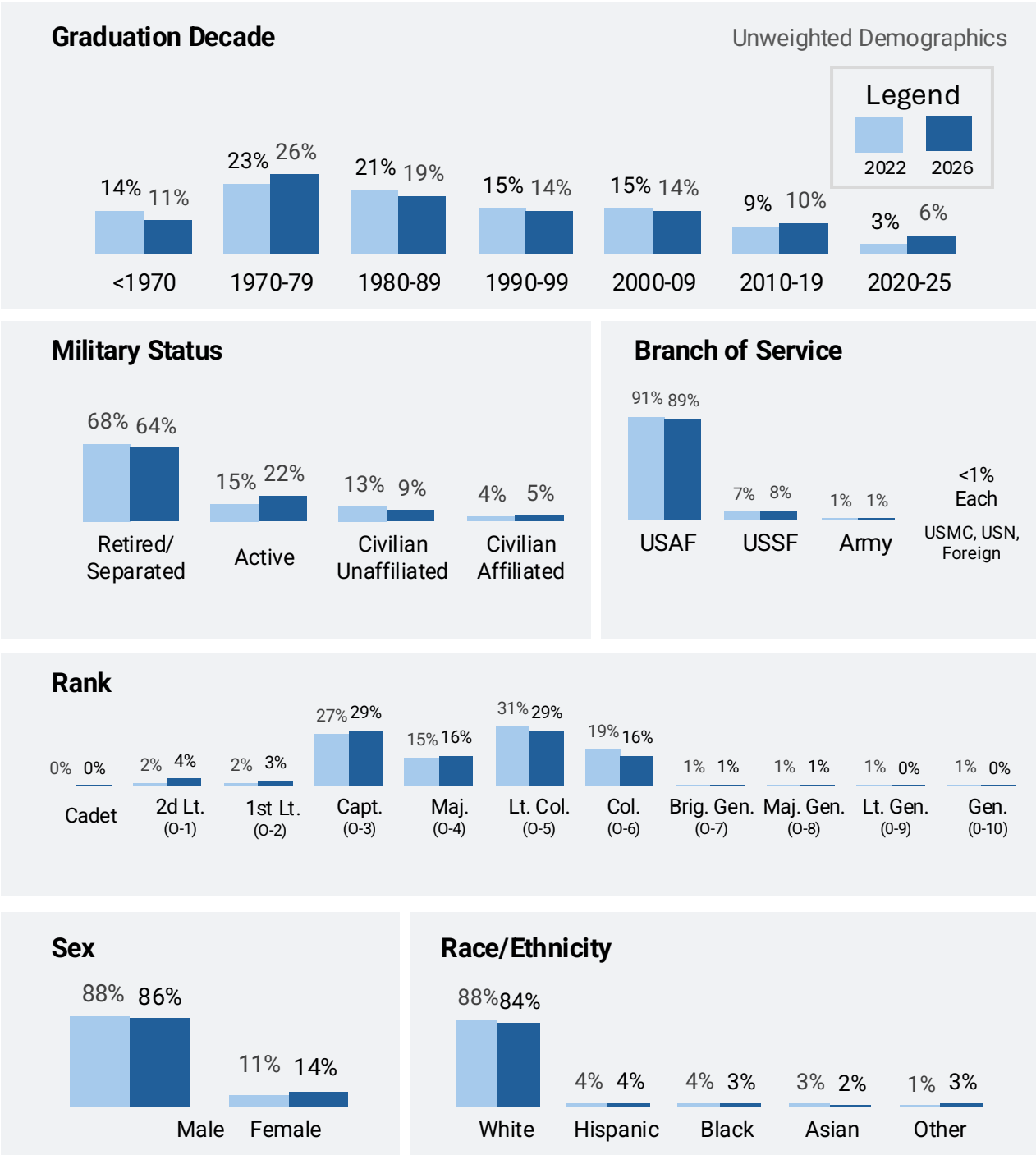
Board Presentation

June 2026

THE DATA

- 8,963 graduates participated
- Response rate of 20% (compared to 17% in 2022).
- Data were weighted by graduation decade and sex.

Demographic Characteristic	Population Distribution (54,082)	Survey Data (Unweighted) (8,963)
<1970	6%	11%
1970-1979	14%	26%
1980-1989	17%	19%
1990-1999	17%	14%
2000-2009	18%	14%
2010-2019	18%	10%
2020-2025	11%	6%
Male	86%	88%
Female	14%	12%



A LENS FOR INTERPRETING THE DATA



This is not simply about graduates' satisfaction or engagement with their alma mater. It is about the *relationship* which graduates have with the institution that helped form them.



There is a clear pattern in the data:

- Pride rises around what USAFA did for them and their fellow graduates.
- Pride falls when graduates believe USAFA is no longer living up to what they believe it should be.

• **Expectations vary because graduates were shaped by different eras of USAFA.**

This pattern becomes especially clear when graduates talk about politics, leadership, values, and change.

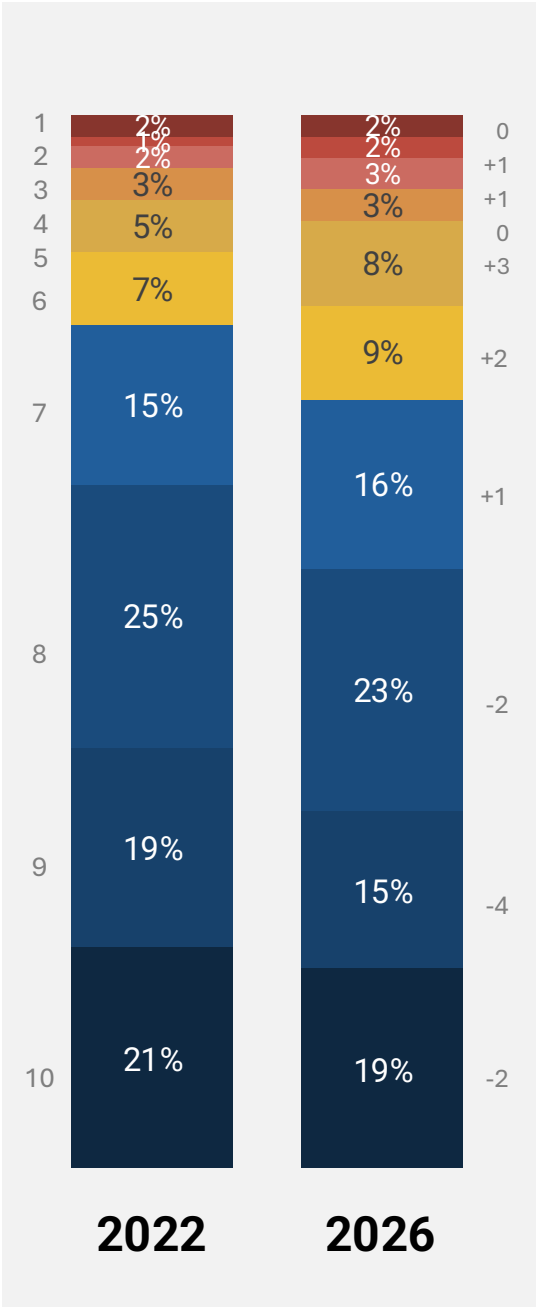


SURVEY RESULTS

USAFA PRIDE



On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your overall **level of pride in the US Air Force Academy?**



Positive

Ratings (7-10)

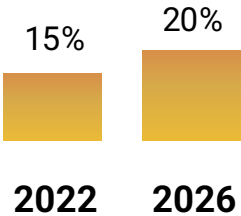
-7 ▼



Neutral

Ratings (4-6)

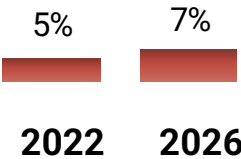
+5 ▲



Negative

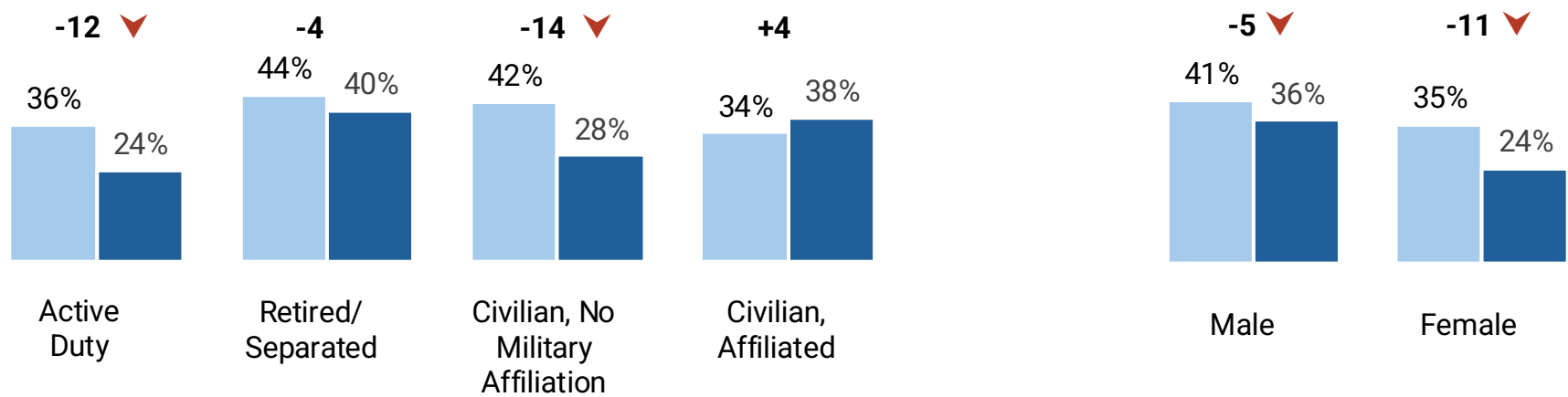
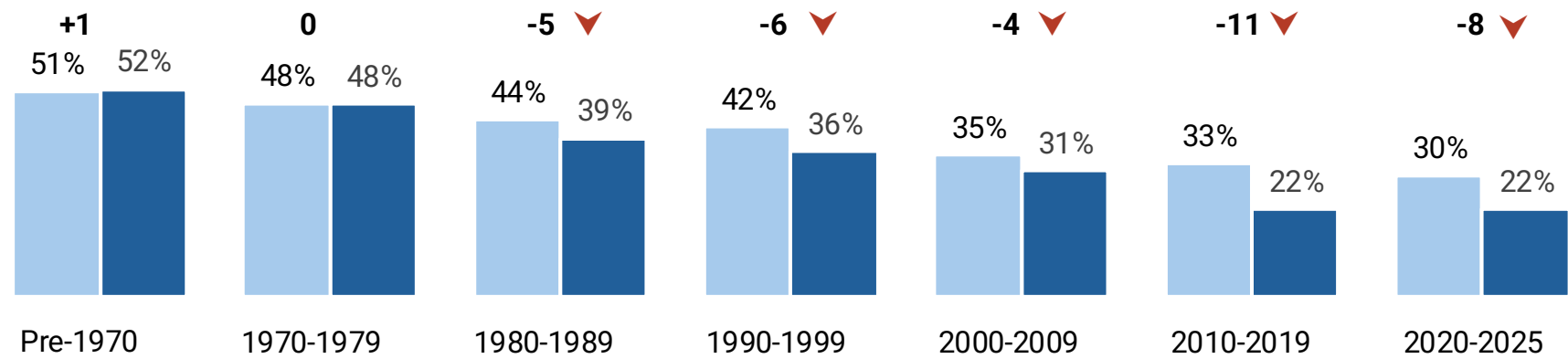
Ratings (1-3)

+2 ▲



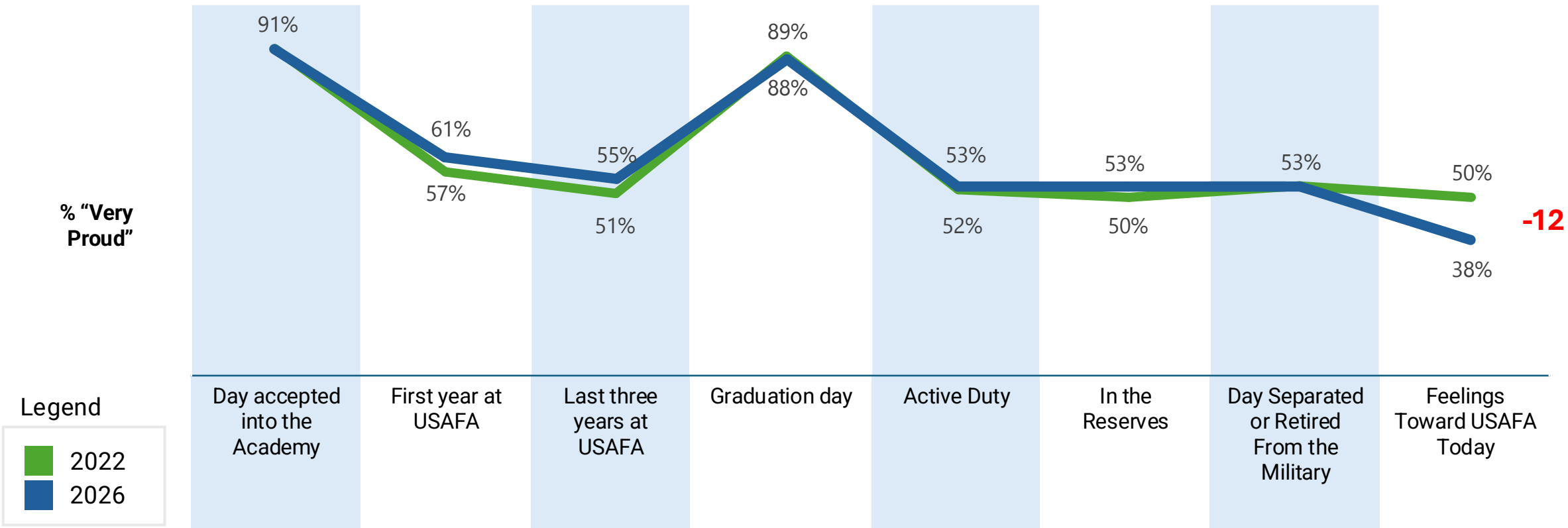
SHIFTS IN ACADEMY PRIDE

% 7-10

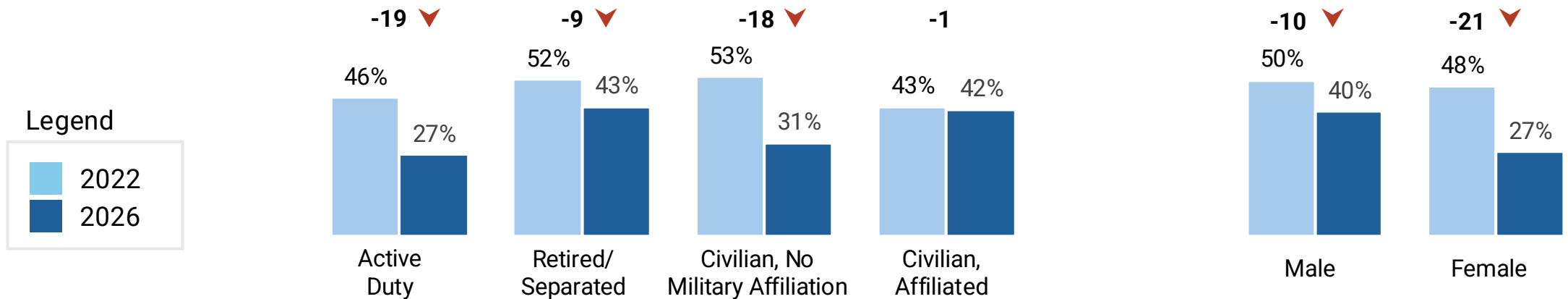
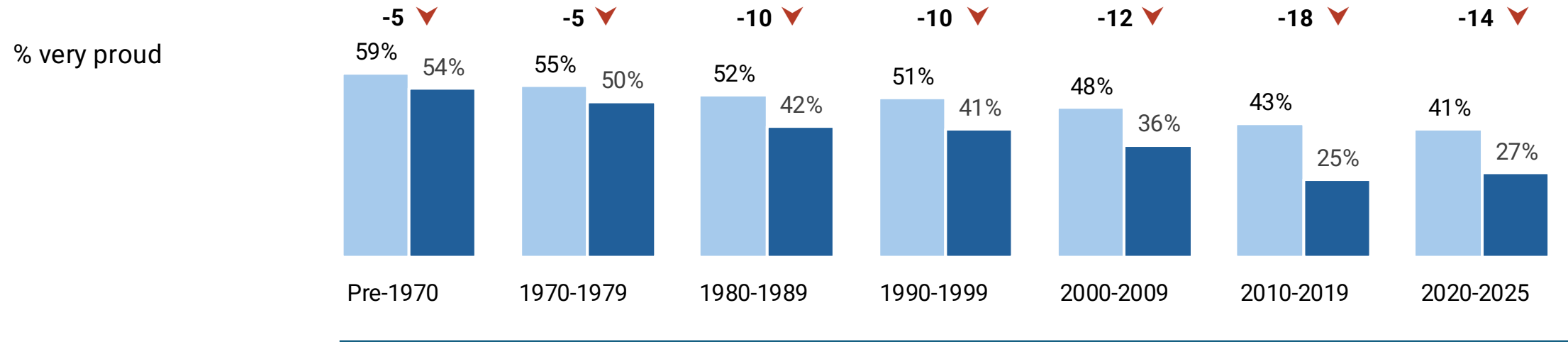


PERSONAL PRIDE OVER TIME

How would your **pride as a USAFA graduate** look from the day you were accepted through today?



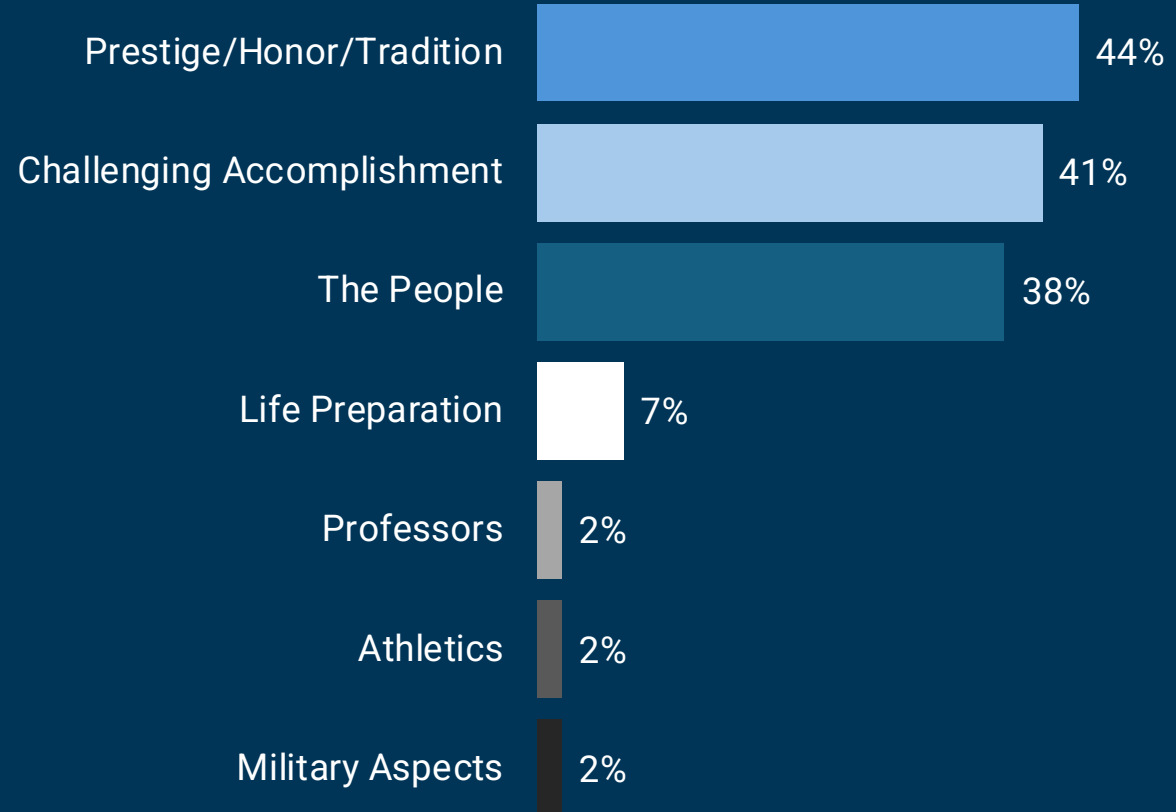
SHIFTS IN PRIDE TODAY



WHAT FOSTERS PRIDE?

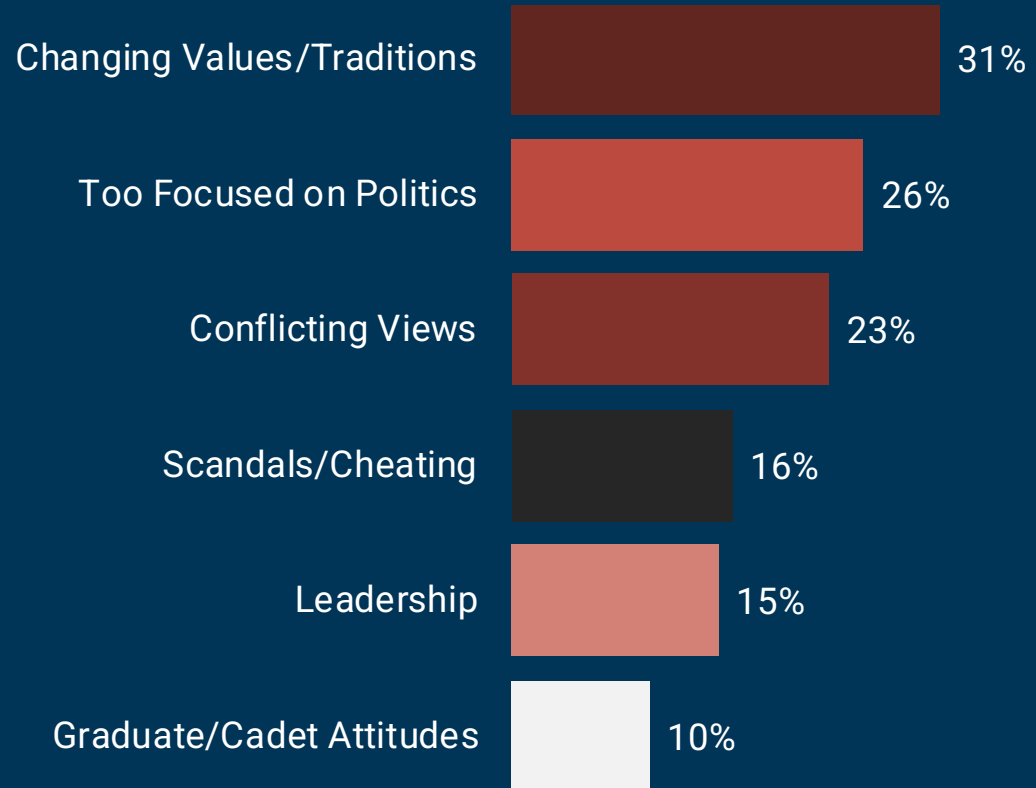
“When you think about USAFA, what makes you most proud?”

(Coded comments)



WHAT INHIBITS PRIDE?

***“What are you least proud of
when you think about
USAFA?”***



RELATIONSHIP WITH USAFA



Actively engaged and connecting with the USAFA community

The Air Force and Academy are central to my life. Not only are many of my closest friends USAFA grads, but I also **help build and grow networks** of graduates who want to connect with the Academy or to each other.

Proud and show it

Everyone who knows me, even if they just met me, knows I am a graduate of USAFA. I am proud of my alma mater, and **it shows in the way I act, what I say, and even what I wear.**

Inwardly Proud

I am proud of being a graduate of the Academy, but **that pride lives more inside of me** than being something I put out there for anyone else to see.

Not Valued by USAFA

I feel like the Academy has left me behind, as if I am not the type of graduate they care about. **I don't feel particularly valued by the Academy.**

Lost Interest in USAFA

I no longer associate much with USAFA, not because of personal or professional disagreements, but because **it is just not important to me right now** in my life.

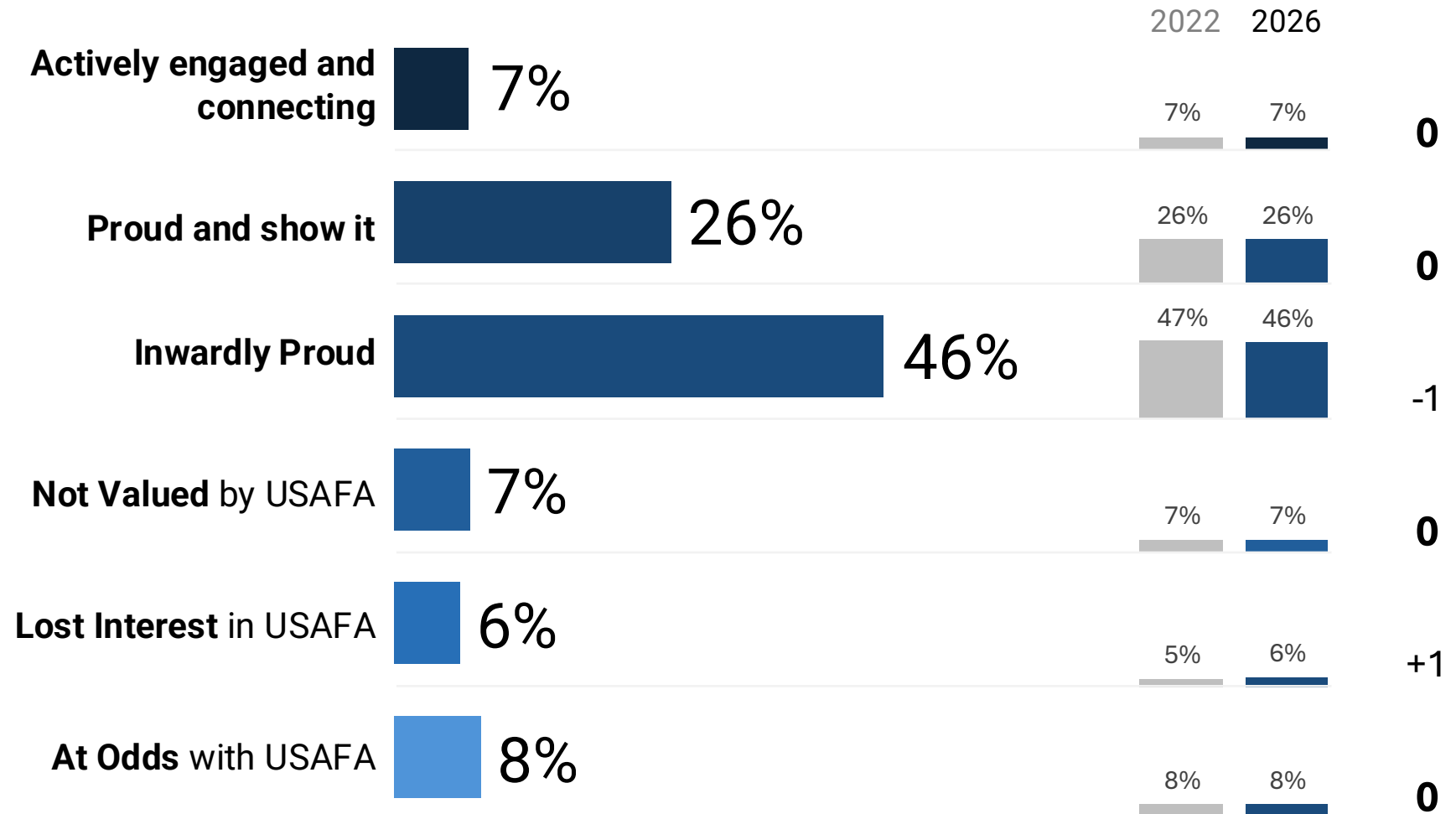
At Odds with USAFA

I am **disappointed and sometimes even angry with USAFA**, finding myself at odds with the things it does and says. USAFA is not the kind of institution I find myself wanting to be associated with anymore.

RELATIONSHIP WITH USAFA



Which of these descriptions best describes you?





SWITCHING GEARS

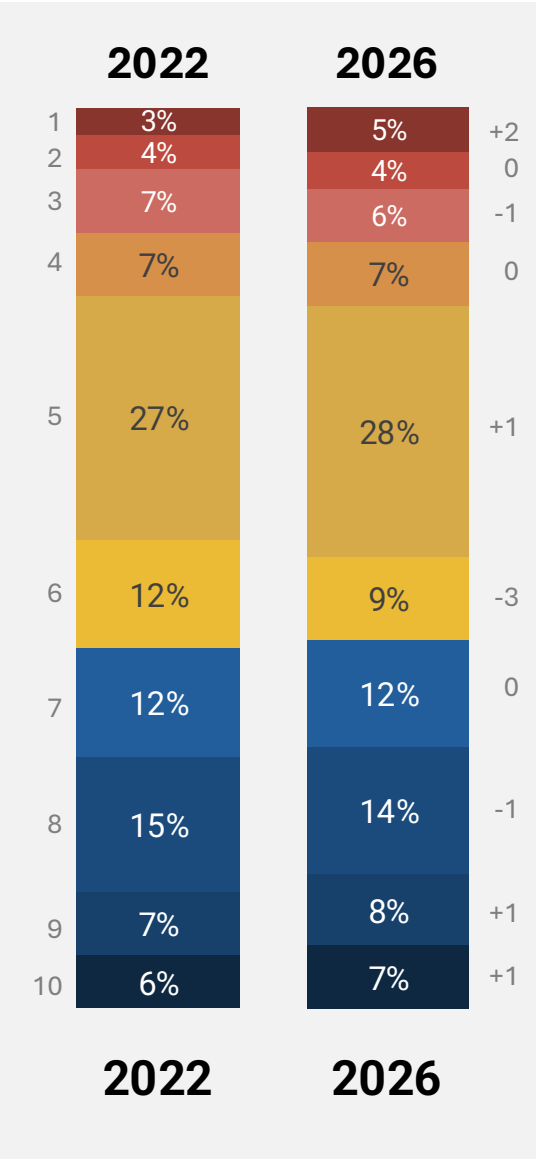
From sense of pride to the role graduates want the AOG to play



AOG OPINION



How would you rate
your **overall opinion**
of the **Association**
of **Graduates**
(AOG)?



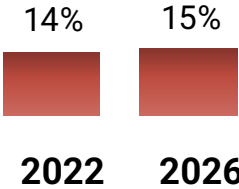
Positive
Ratings (7-10)
+1



Neutral
Ratings (4-6)
-2



Negative
Ratings (1-3)
+1



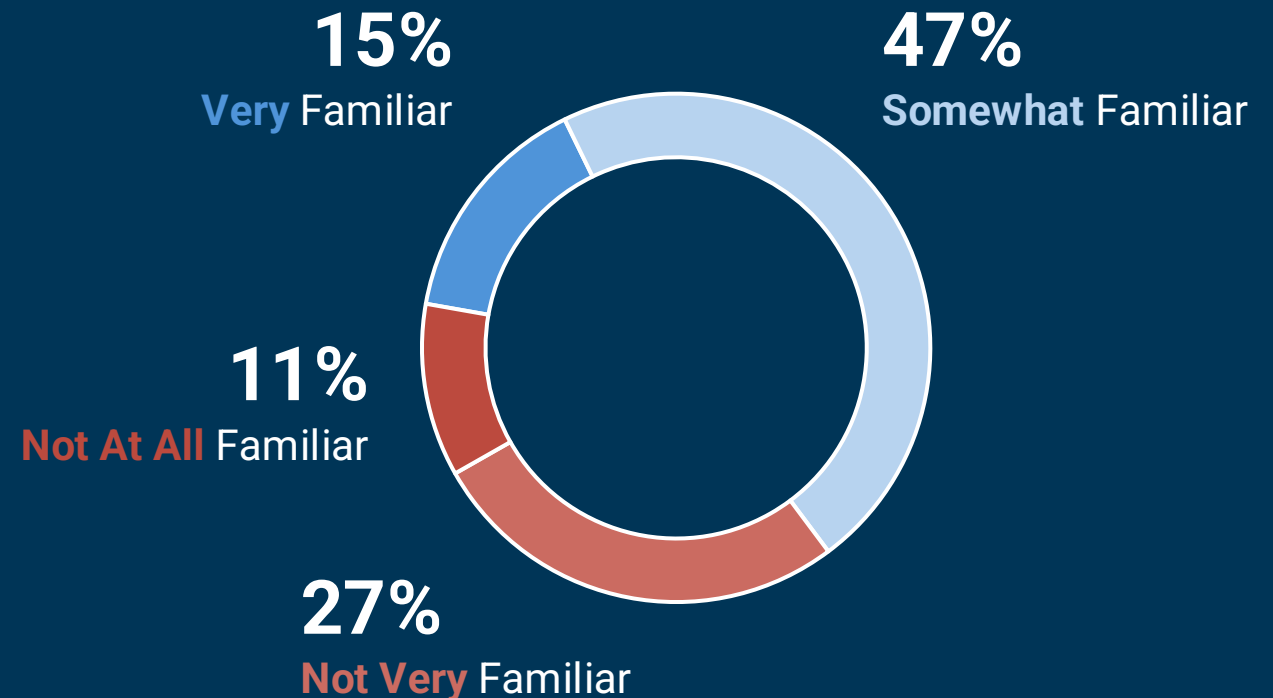
FAMILIARITY WITH U.S. AIR FORCE ACADEMY ASSOCIATION & FOUNDATION MISSION



"The joint mission of the U.S. Air Force Academy Association & Foundation is to:

- (1) support the Academy*
- (2) serve our graduates, and*
- (3) preserve the heritage of the institution and Long Blue Line.*

How familiar are you with the U.S. Air Force Academy Association & Foundation's joint mission and activities?"



AOG PRIORITIZATION



*Thinking about what matters to you as a U.S. Air Force Academy graduate, please rank the six options below from what you consider most to least important **for the AOG to prioritize?***

Support of heritage and tradition preservation

Career support and lifelong professional development

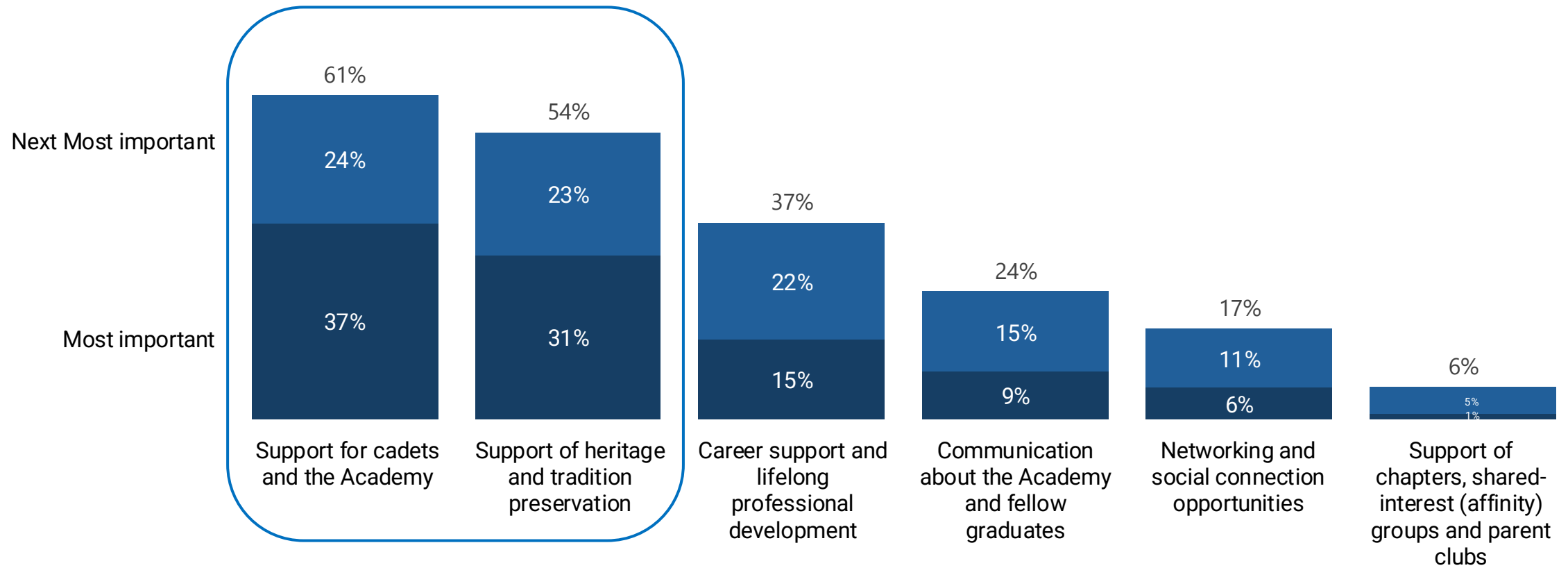
Support for cadets and the Academy

Networking and social connection opportunities

Support of chapters, shared-interest (affinity) groups and parent clubs

Communication about the Academy and fellow graduates

WHAT MATTERS?



GRADUATE VIEWS ON ADVOCACY



Participants were presented with the following:

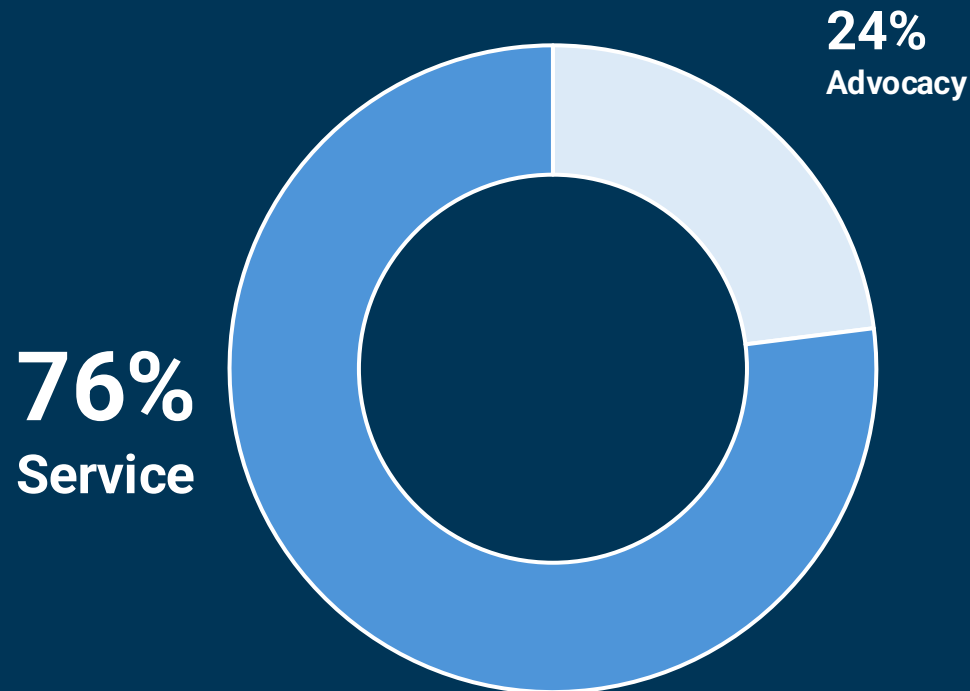
“The Association of Graduates (AOG) has operated since its founding as an apolitical nonprofit, supported primarily by U.S. Air Force Academy graduates. Its core mission has been service: connecting alumni, preserving traditions and history, supporting reunions and communications, and strengthening the graduate community.

The AOG, like many alumni organizations, could engage in advocacy—using staff time, funding, communications and public engagement to support specific causes or priorities. Doing so would expand its mission beyond service to include advocacy.”

GRADUATE VIEWS ON ADVOCACY



What percentage of the AOG's time and resources should be devoted to advocacy versus service?



GRADUATE VIEWS ON ADVOCACY

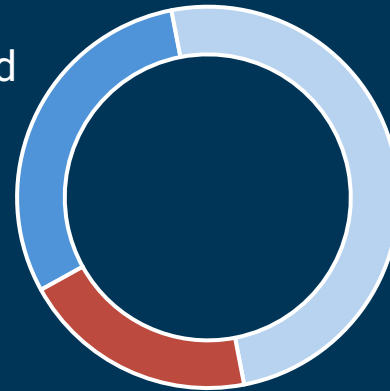


“Which of the following best reflects your overall view on the AOG and advocacy?”

30%

I believe the AOG should stay focused on graduate services and graduate support and **not engage in any public policy advocacy**

80% prefer either no advocacy or advocacy limited primarily to graduates and USAFA.



50%

Any kind of advocacy by the AOG should remain focused primarily on graduate services and supporting the Academy

20%

In addition to the graduate services and Academy support it already offers, the AOG can appropriately advocate for broader Air Force, Space Force and military-related issues

Consultant Analysis



SELECTED QUOTES FROM QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK FROM GRADUATES IN THE 2026 SURVEY

“The Honor Code is now a joke... There is no standard.”

“The institution’s embrace of DEI above merit... discredits it in achieving its mission... [and] has ruined any appeal that I had in having any sort of active voice in the graduate community.”

“I’m embarrassed about recent happenings... I find it despicable that the Academy is now against any form of diversity, equity or inclusion...”

“I am ashamed it has become racist, bigoted and obtuse.”

“The organization has been destroyed from within...”

“I am disgusted with my classmates who think January 6 was a great day for this country... I don’t want to have anything to do with them.”

“Too many of my fellow graduates demonstrate moral cowardice in the face of political pressure...”

“How some of my peers apparently abandoned the principles embodied by the Honor Code... some now accept lying and misconstruing facts for political gain.”

“Graduates that openly act like they are better than everyone else... It is what makes the rest of the Air Force hate us.”

“The level of bigotry that has been allowed to fester... amazes me how far some graduates will go to justify racist, misogynistic, and vindictive behavior...”

WHAT DOES GRADUATE FEEDBACK TELL US?

USAFA is intentionally formative. **It doesn't simply educate; it shapes.**

That bond between cadet and USAFA often begins **before arrival**. Choosing USAFA reflects a strong sense of fit between the future cadet and the institution – its mission, standards, values, and promise.

The experience at the Academy **becomes part of graduates' identity and moral memory**. They carry forward not only what happened at the Academy, but what it meant: what it taught them, what it stood for. It is what they look to in order to make sense of the world.

Changes taking place at USAFA today can **feel highly personal**. Graduates are responding to that change as potentially conflicting with the version of the Academy they experienced as true.

With time, these memories can become reinforced by broader cultural and political environments and can **harden** into fixed convictions of what USAFA fundamentally is – and what it must remain.

What we have is no longer just disagreement. We are defending something foundational.

Alumni are not only remembering their time at USAFA.

They are remembering a time at an institution that:

- validated their decision to go,
- shaped their identity while there,
- and **became the standard against which future versions of the Academy are judged.**

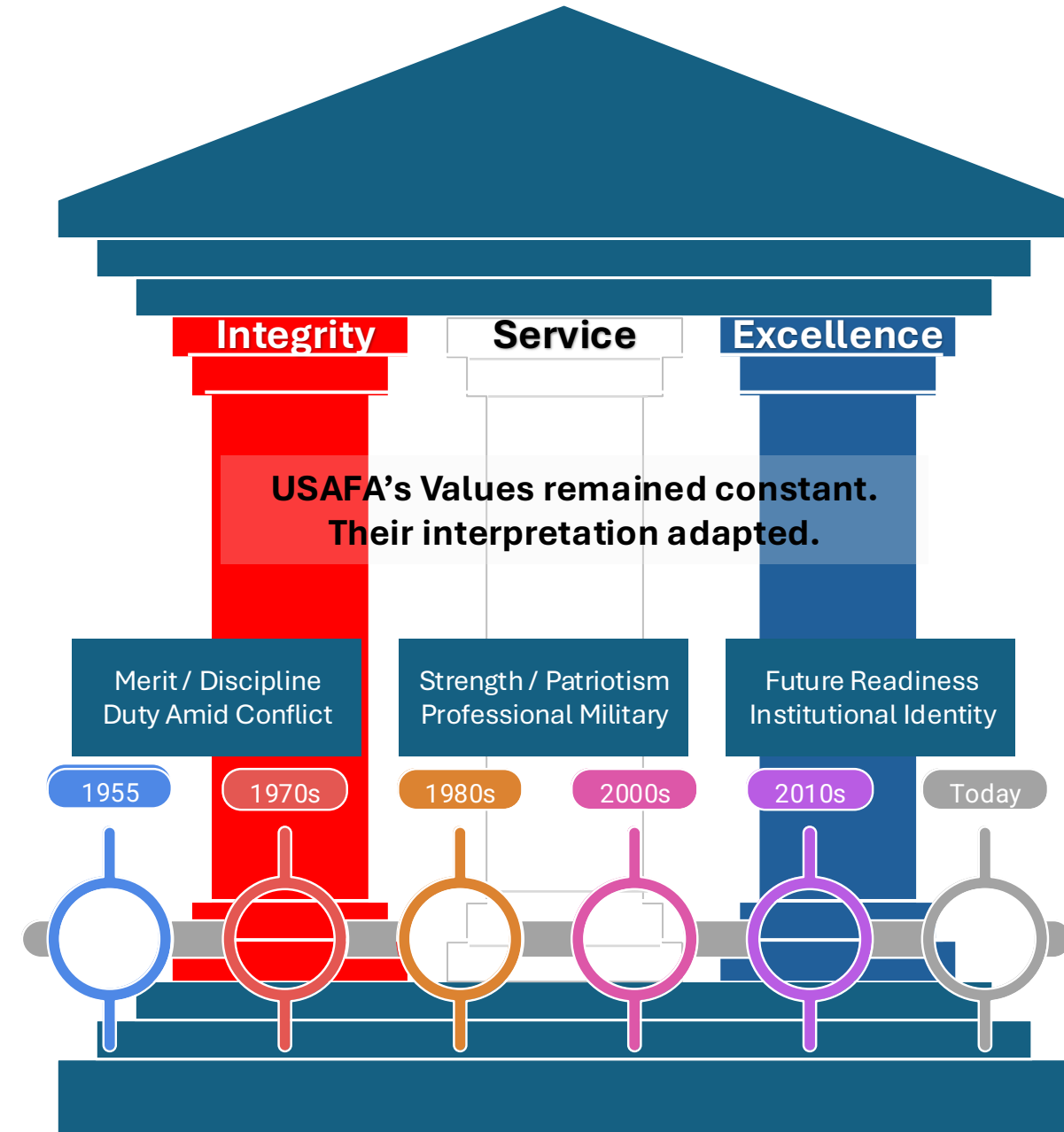
HOW USAFA HAS BEEN EXPERIENCED BY GRADUATES OVER TIME

Isn't it just politics?

What appears to look like political disagreements may be something deeper: a conflict over what the Academy is, what it has become, and what graduates believe must be preserved or protected.

1. **Different classes bonded with different versions of what the institution stood for.** As the Academy evolved across historical eras, each class formed its understanding of what USAFA represents.
2. **Alumni in effect say, "I know what this place is, because it made me."** They came to see their version of the Academy as its true character. Changes are therefore experienced as departures from what the institution fundamentally is – and should be.
3. **Political disagreements** may be surfacing deeper conflicts between graduates with different versions of the institution.

If this is understood only as politics, the response will be too narrow. If it is understood as a conflict over institutional meaning, identity, and memory, a clearer path forward begins to emerge.



The Tension Revealed by the Findings



Different generations often describe the Academy through the experiences that shaped them.

As a result, graduates may evaluate current decisions against different understandings of what USAFA represents.

These differences do not necessarily reflect disagreement about the Academy's importance.

They may reflect different experiences of the same institution.

A Possible Path *Forward*

1

The challenge is real

Graduates are responding to genuine differences in institutional identity, continuity, and what the Academy stands for.

2

Some things endure while others evolve

We need to distinguish USAFA's core commitments across different generational experiences.

3

Find room for continuity across differences

Different generations can hold sincere attachments to USAFA without requiring others to be wrong.

The strategic question may be less: “How do we stay out of this political argument?”

And more: “How does USAFA keep speaking from its own enduring values while the argument swirls around it?”

How Graduates Frame the Academy

The survey findings suggest graduates often evaluate USAFA through two different lenses:

External Political Lens

- Is this conservative or progressive?
- Is this a concession to one side?
- Is this part of a broader political conflict?

Institutional Lens

- Does this reflect integrity?
- Does this reflect service before self?
- Does this advance excellence?
- Does this support officer development?

Graduates appeared more likely to find common ground when discussing the Academy's mission and values than when discussing broader political narratives.

A Stewardship Model for the AOG's Role

Where and when advocacy occurs, graduates want it closely aligned with USAFA, cadets and the Long Blue Line.

When graduates discuss advocacy, they most often describe roles associated with stewardship:

- Supporting cadets and the graduate community
- Preserving traditions, history, and continuity
- Articulating the Academy's meaning in public when needed

Graduates appeared more interested in the AOG serving as a steward of the institution than as a participant in broader political and social issues.

