

AI Ethics

**From Cheating to Collaborating:
How Students See AI**

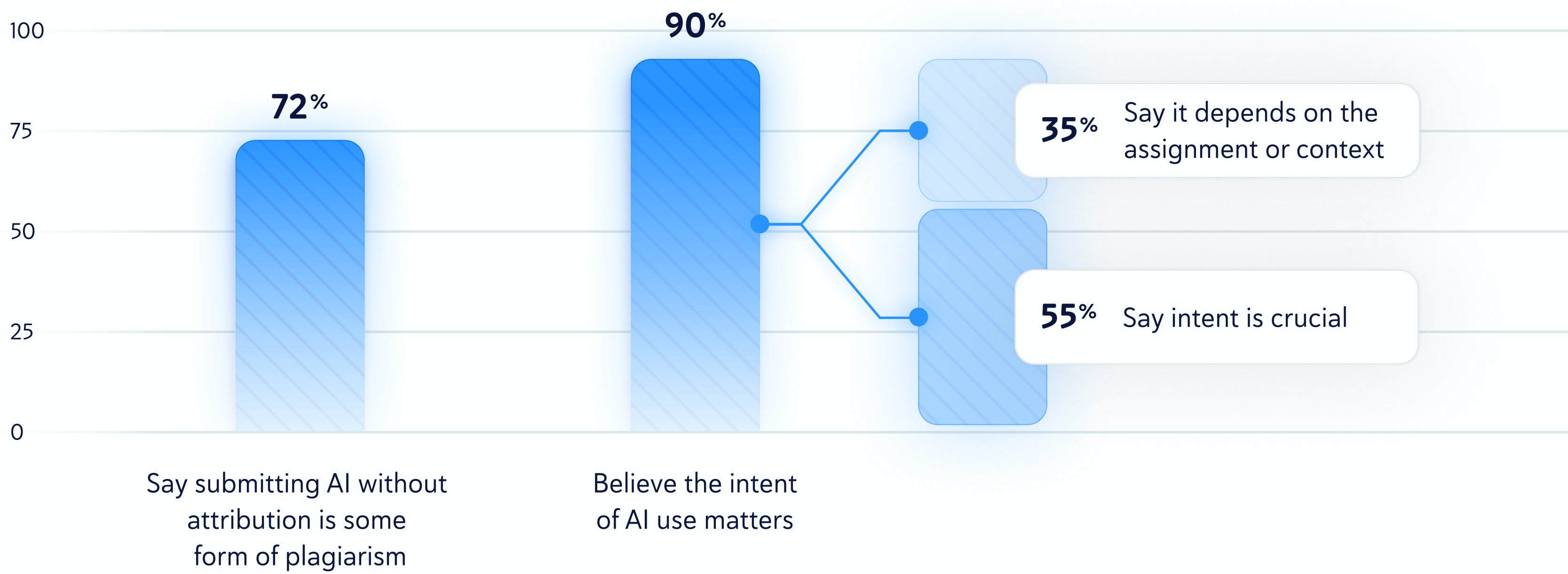


Overview

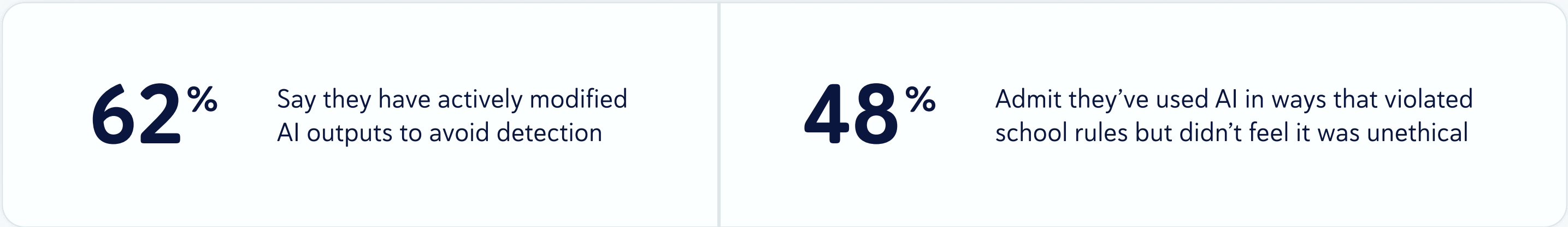
Students are reshaping the definition of academic integrity in the age of AI. They do not view AI use as inherently unethical; instead, they consider context and intent. Ownership of work is increasingly seen as a shared effort between student and tool. This represents a profound shift: students are not abandoning ethics; they are redefining them.

Key Stats




Perceptions of plagiarism and intent:



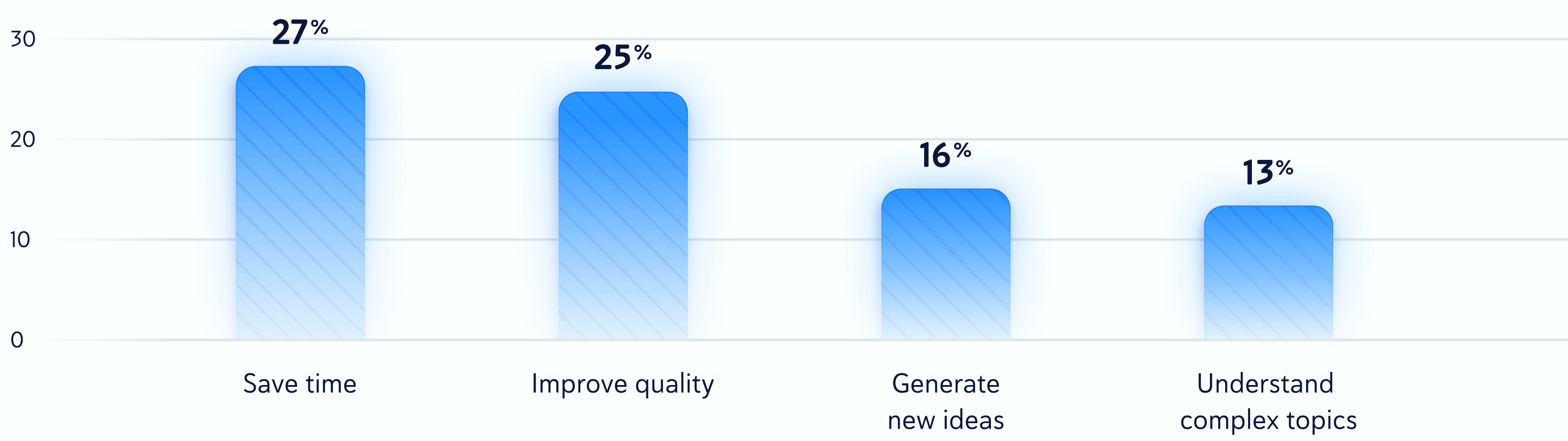
Behavior vs. policy adherence:



Ethical boundaries recognized by students:

-  Writing an entire essay with AI: **67%** consider it unethical.
-  Paraphrasing with AI: **51%** consider it unethical.
-  Using AI on exams/tests: **46%** consider it unethical.

Motivations for using AI:



Ownership of AI-assisted work:

<div>43%</div> <div>Consider it entirely their own work</div>	<div>42%</div> <div>Say work is a blend of their own input and AI's</div>	<div>11%</div> <div>Say it mainly belongs to AI</div>
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Implications

The emphasis on intent reflects a generational shift: students judge AI use not by whether the tool was used, but why it was used. If AI is used to learn or clarify, they see it as acceptable. If it is used deceptively, they see it as crossing an ethical line.

This reframing challenges institutions to move beyond binary definitions of cheating. Instead, schools will need to craft nuanced, context-sensitive policies that emphasize attribution, transparency, and acceptable use cases. By doing so, they can align with how students already think about integrity in the AI era.

Survey Methodology

This report is based on findings from the 2025 AI Usage Data Survey, conducted among ~1,100 students in the United States who were actively enrolled in two-year colleges, four-year universities, or graduate programs.

Respondents represented a wide range of ages, grouped into the following brackets:

18 - 29

30 - 44

45 - 60

The survey included both quantitative and qualitative questions to capture a comprehensive picture of student behavior and sentiment. It explored the frequency and purpose of AI use, perceptions of academic ethics, policy awareness, and the perceived role of AI in the learning process.