



Spring 2026

Space Utilization Index for Higher Education

From Blueprint to Behavior:
Strategic Insights from the
H1 2026 Space Utilization Index (SUI)



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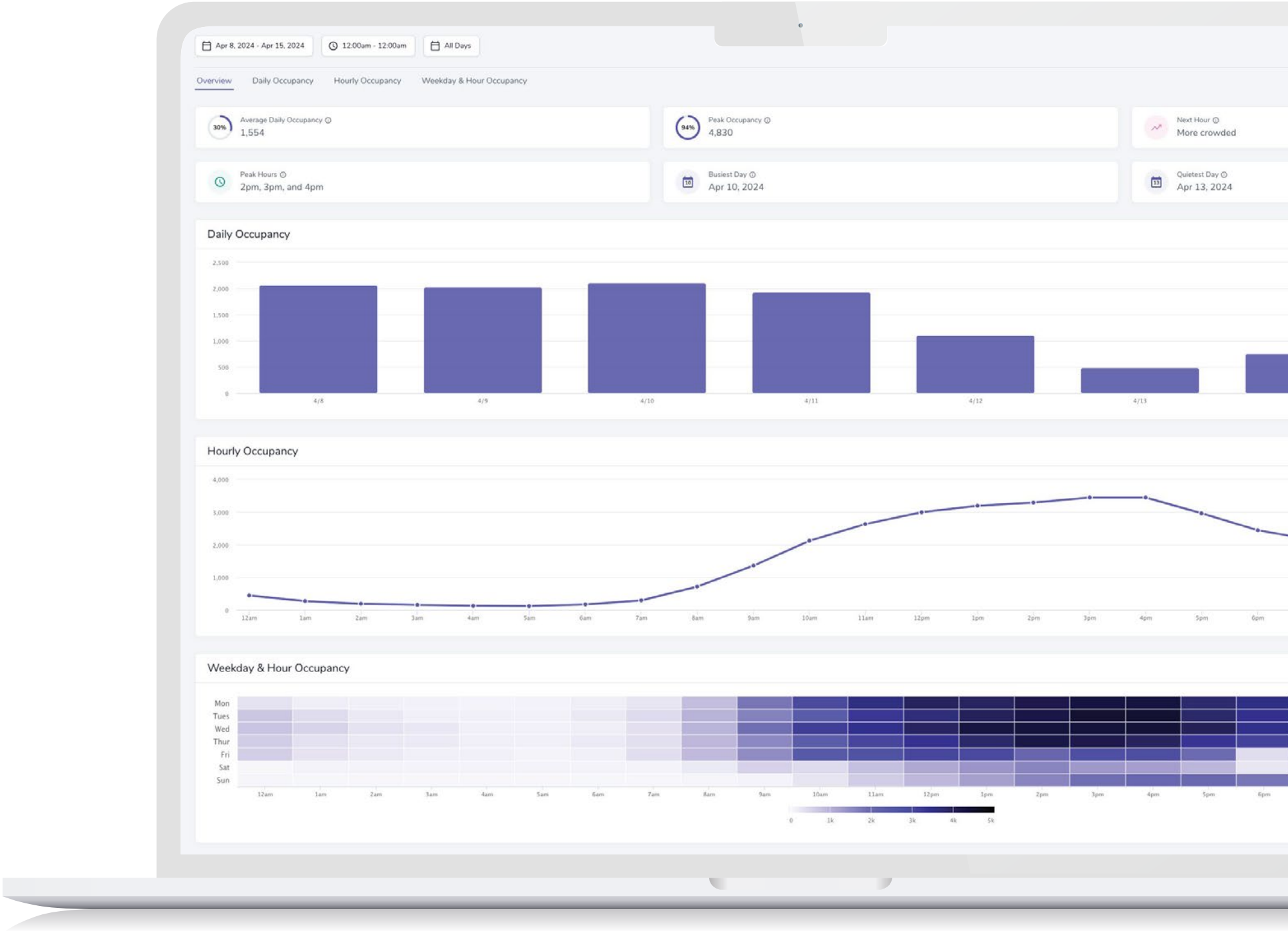
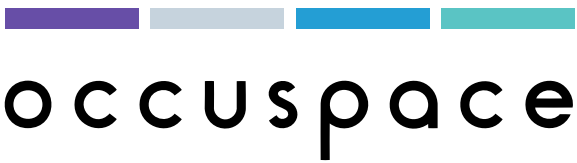
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About this Report



Welcome to the Spring edition of Occuspace's Higher Ed Space Utilization Index (SUI), which presents data and trends covering H1 2025 through H1 2026, featuring a detailed analysis of resource utilization patterns and how these metrics reflect the ongoing transformation of campus strategic planning practices.

As universities strive to meet the evolving needs of students, faculty, and staff, optimizing **campus space utilization** is paramount for operational efficiency and enhanced user experience.

This report aggregates space utilization data across:

- **100+ Higher Education institutions in North America**
- **40M+ square feet of space across 10,000+ spaces**
- **Aggregate data trends over the past 18 months**

The Occuspace platform measures space utilization with proprietary sensors optimized for Higher Education. Deployment requires no infrastructure changes, IT integration or WiFi access, and doesn't capture or store any personally identifiable information.



Data Definitions

Occupancy

The number of people in a defined space.

Utilization

Occupancy relative to the space's capacity. Often used as a measure of efficiency.

Average Utilization

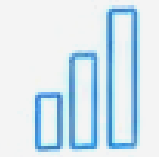
The average occupancy relative to capacity during operating hours. Reflects the average occupancy of a space across all hours measured, not just the busiest time.

Average Daily Peak Utilization

The average peak occupancy value of each day (Mon - Sun for student spaces, Mon - Fri for office spaces).

Dwell Time

How long people stay in a defined space. Indicates how engaged users are with space—whether they're just passing through, stopping briefly, or staying for extended periods.



Planning



Operations



Capital
Decisions

Key Findings

Classroom and office space utilization is **up 7 and 8 percentage points** YoY respectively

Classrooms sit **unoccupied 31% of the time** between 8am - 5pm, Monday - Thursday

Lab space saw a **steep decline**, 7 percentage points YoY, one of the only space types with declining YoY usage.

Office space is **more efficient** at small universities and private schools while **classroom utilization is higher** at larger public institutions.

Recreation spaces maintain the **highest utilization** of any space type on campus.

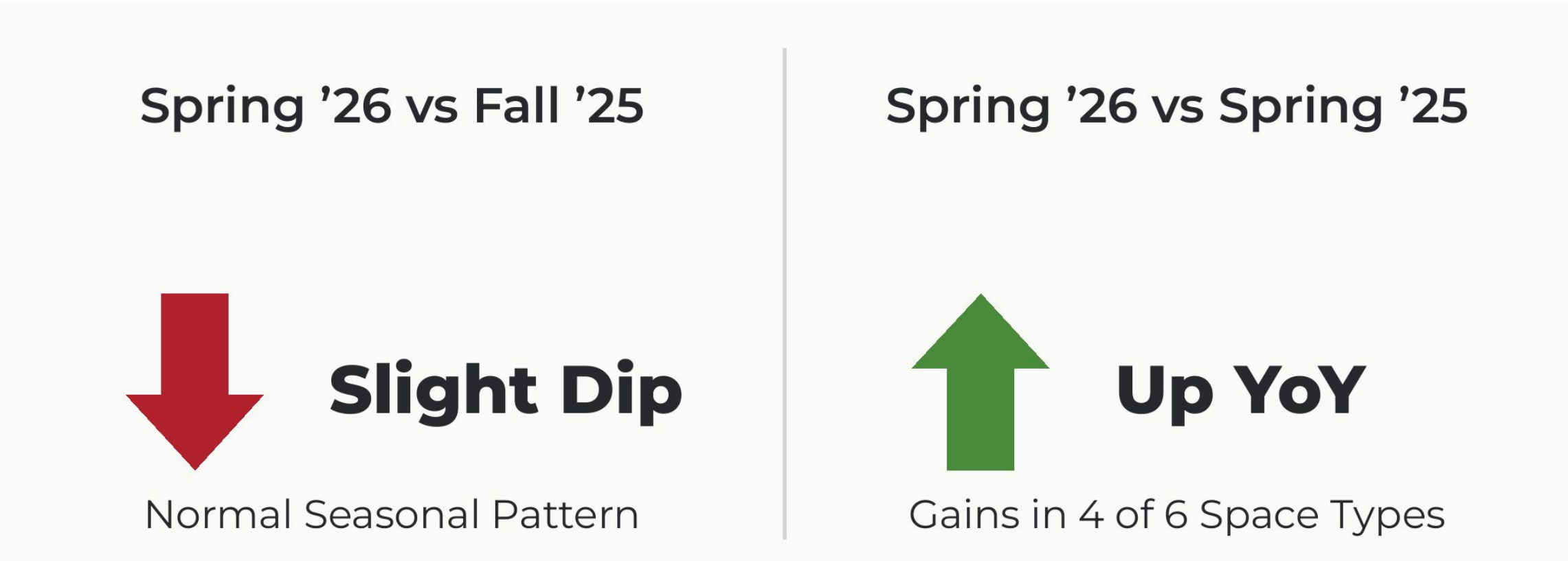
Small & medium conference rooms are **empty 73% of the work week**.



- Overall Trends
- Student Spaces
- Classrooms
- Office Space
- Conference Rooms

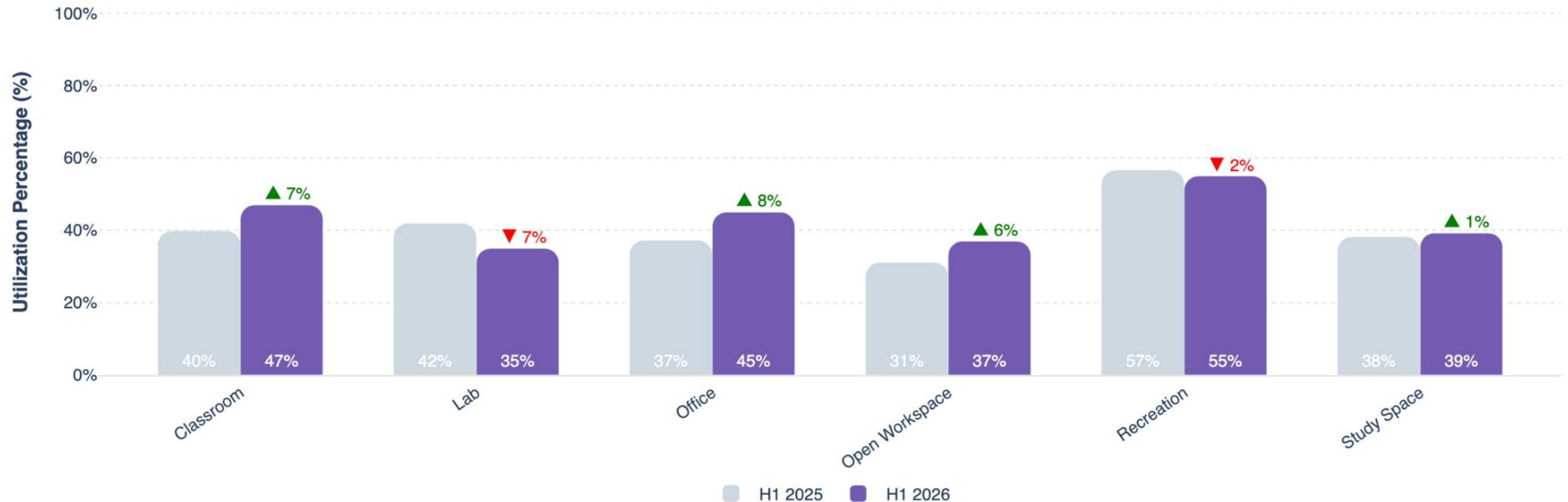


Downward Trend Has Reversed



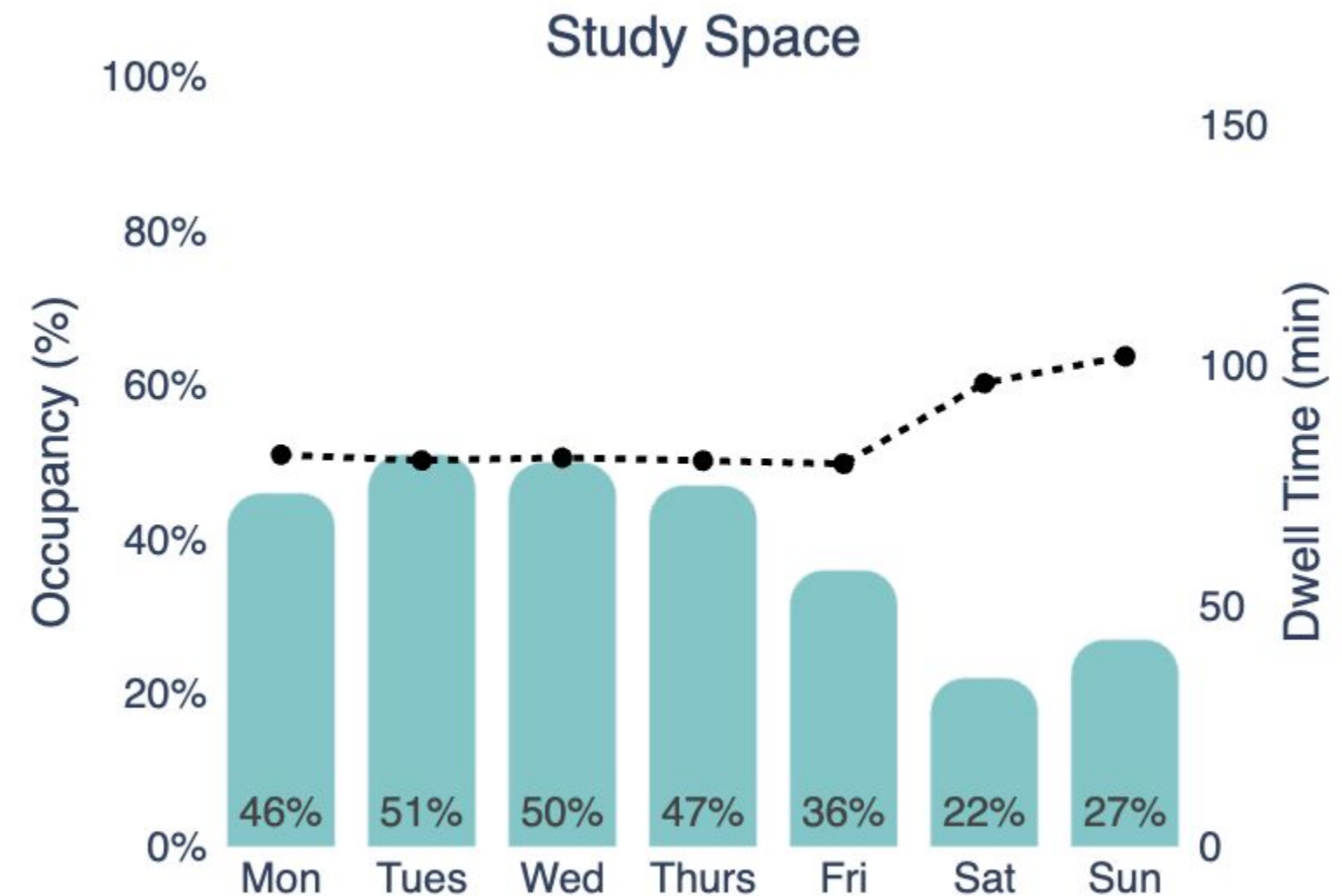
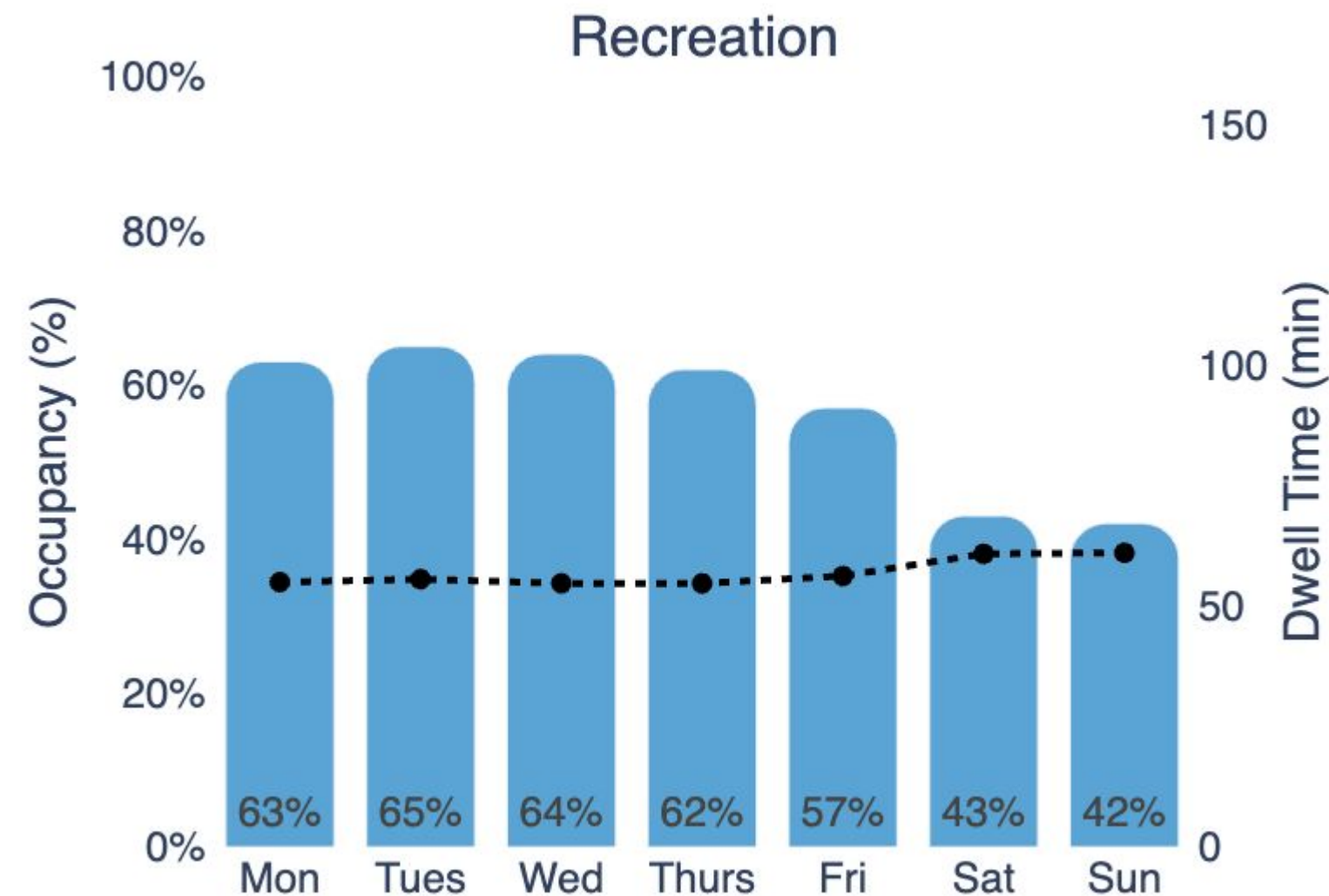
After broad declines in 2025, utilization has turned the corner: **Spring '26 daily peaks are up year-over-year** across most space types, and **the dip from Fall '25 follows the normal seasonal pattern** rather than a downward trend.

Peak Utilization is up vs H1 25 for most space types



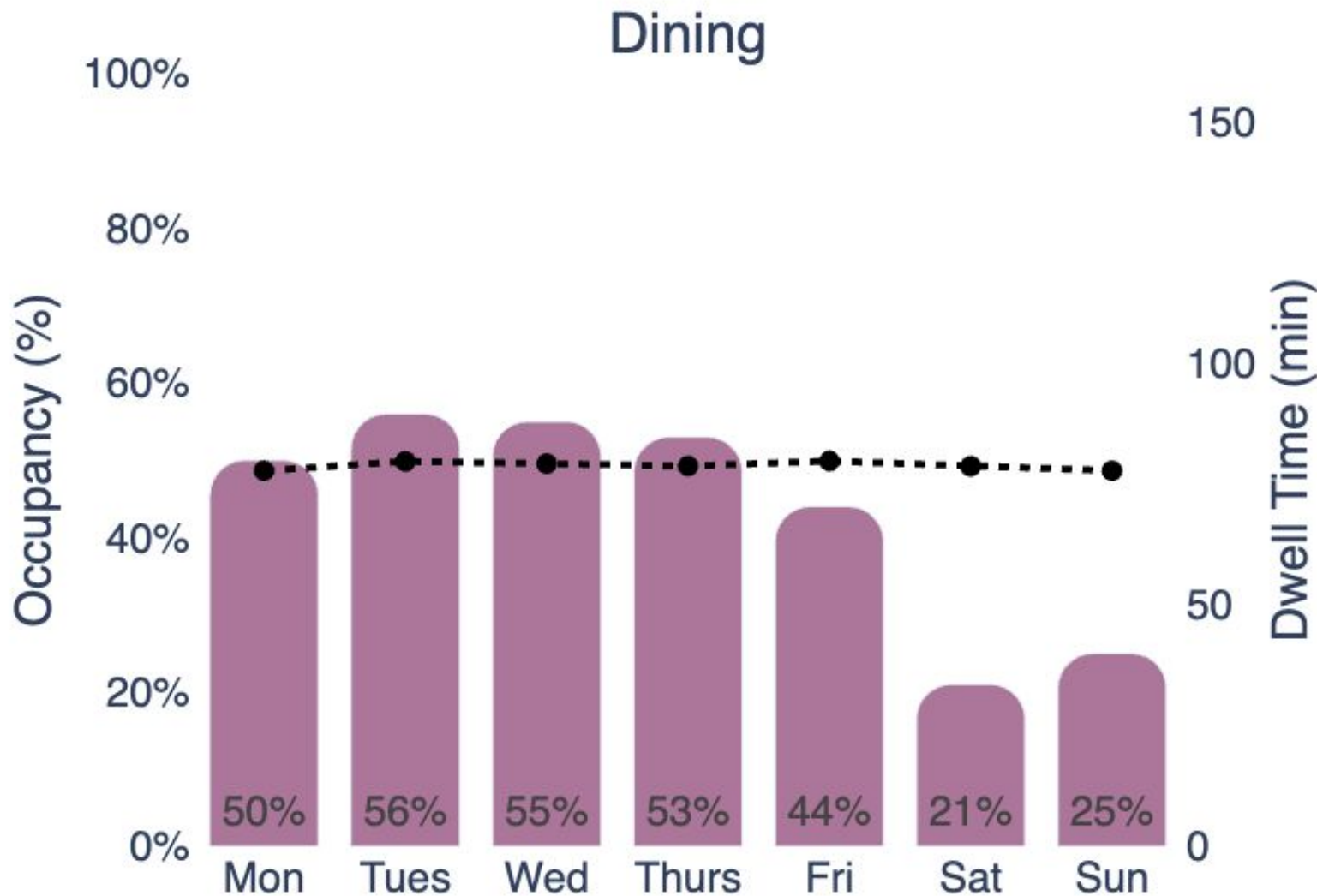
- Daily peak utilization is up **6-8 points** vs Spring '25 across classrooms, offices, and open workspaces.
- Clients target **70-85% average daily peak utilization**, suggesting ample room to optimize

Consistent gym-goers, weekend focus time



- Recreation centers are consistently the most efficiently utilized space type.
- Not everyone studies in the library on weekends but quiet spaces encourage long study sessions.

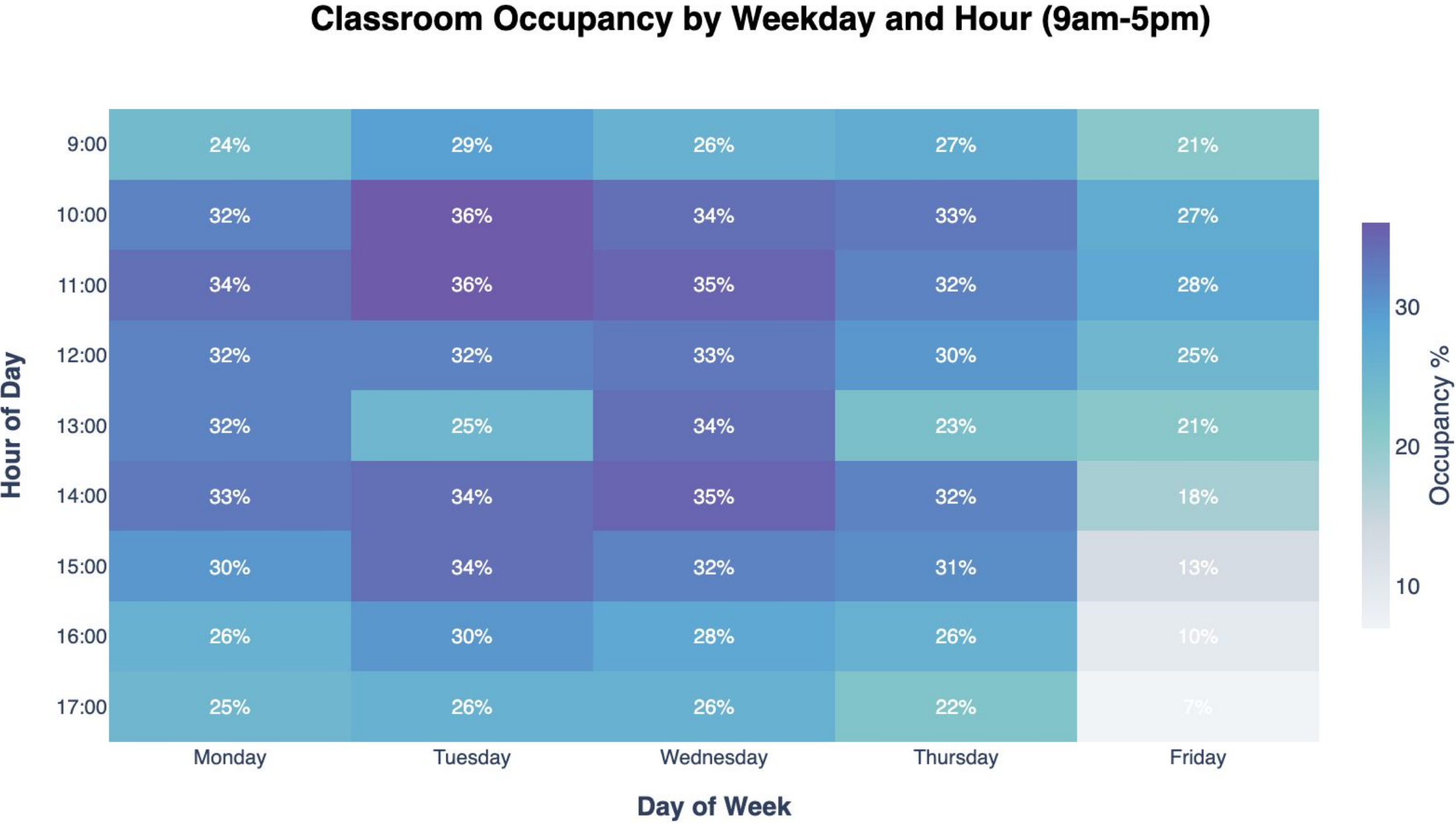
Dining spaces offer appealing options to linger



Average Dwell Time in Dining locations is consistently **well over an hour:**

Socialize & Study?

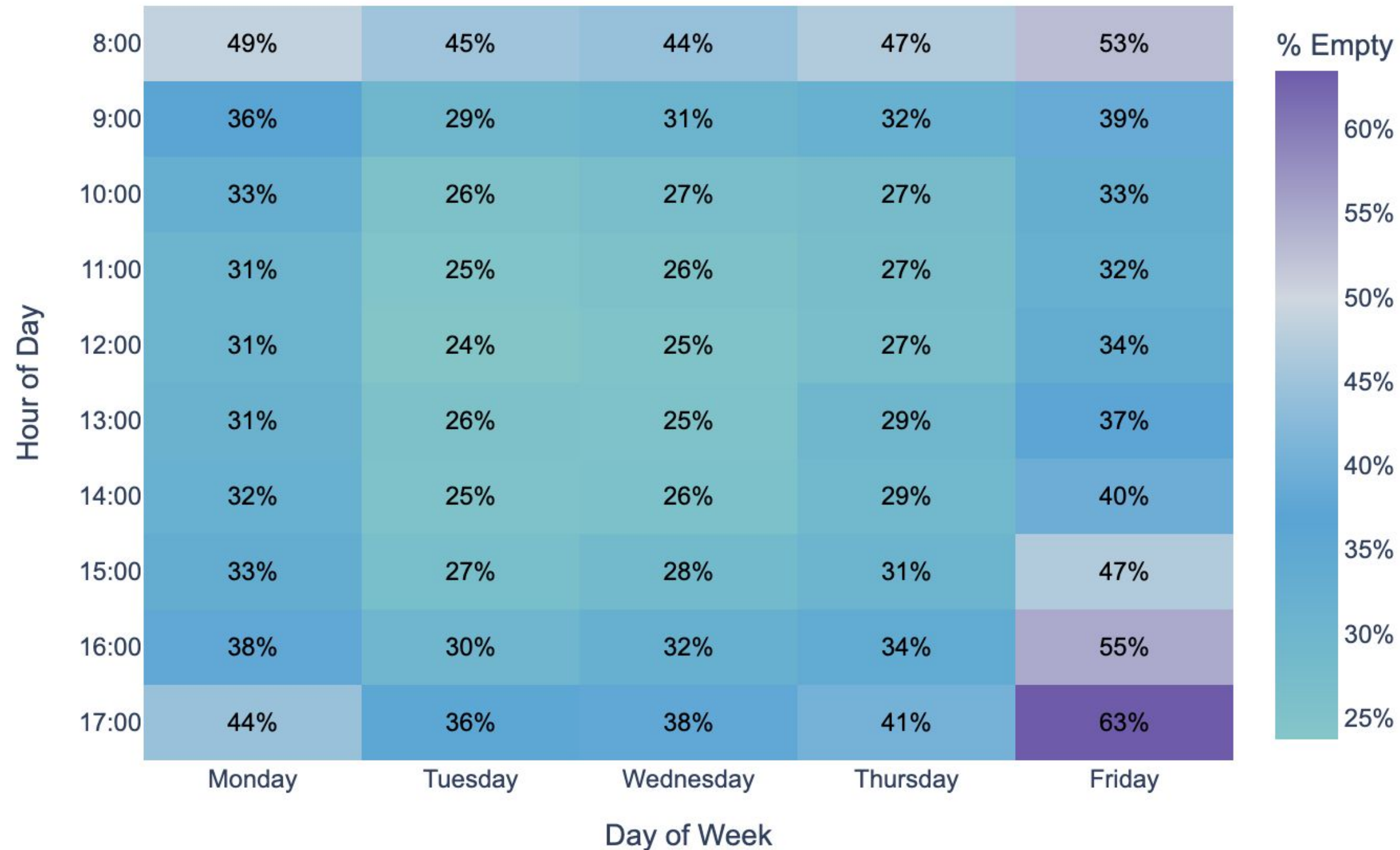
Actual utilization of classrooms ≠ enrollment



Powerful case for centralized scheduling

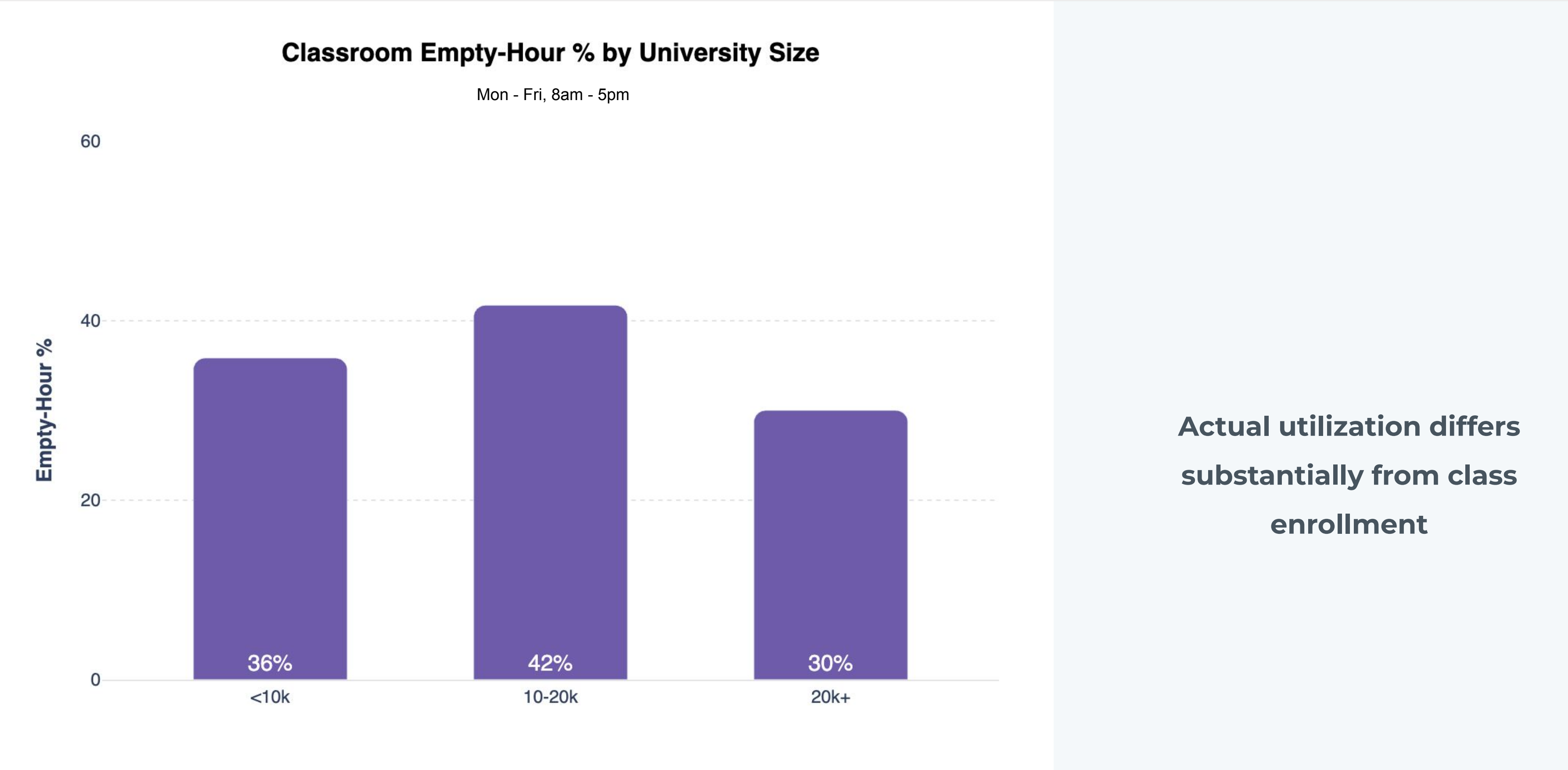
Classes on Fridays see **30% lower utilization** than other weekdays

Classroom empty hours reveal HVAC opportunities

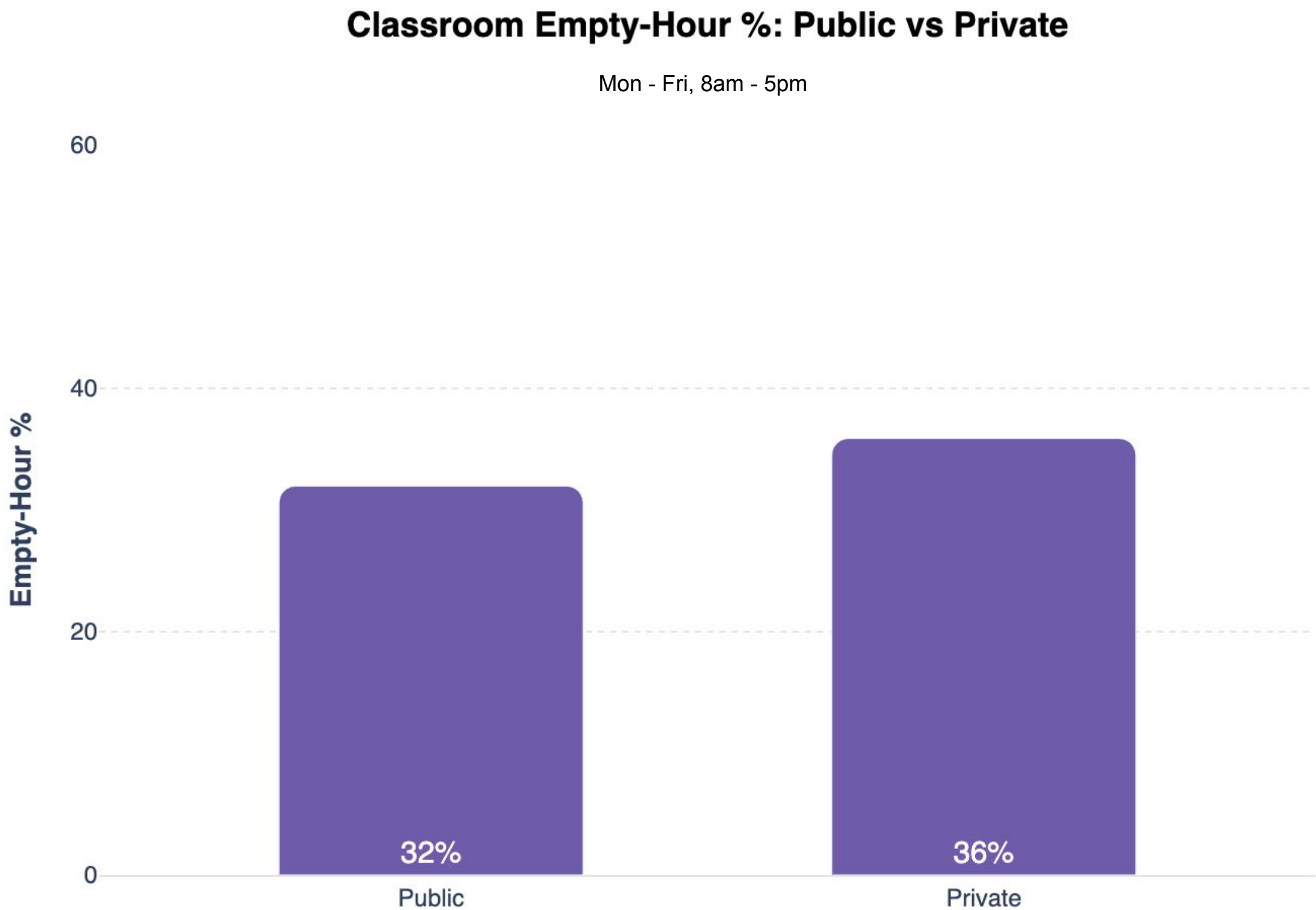


**31% of all classroom hours
are “empty”**
(Under 3% utilization)
8am-5pm, Mon - Thur

Large Universities Have Better Classroom Usage



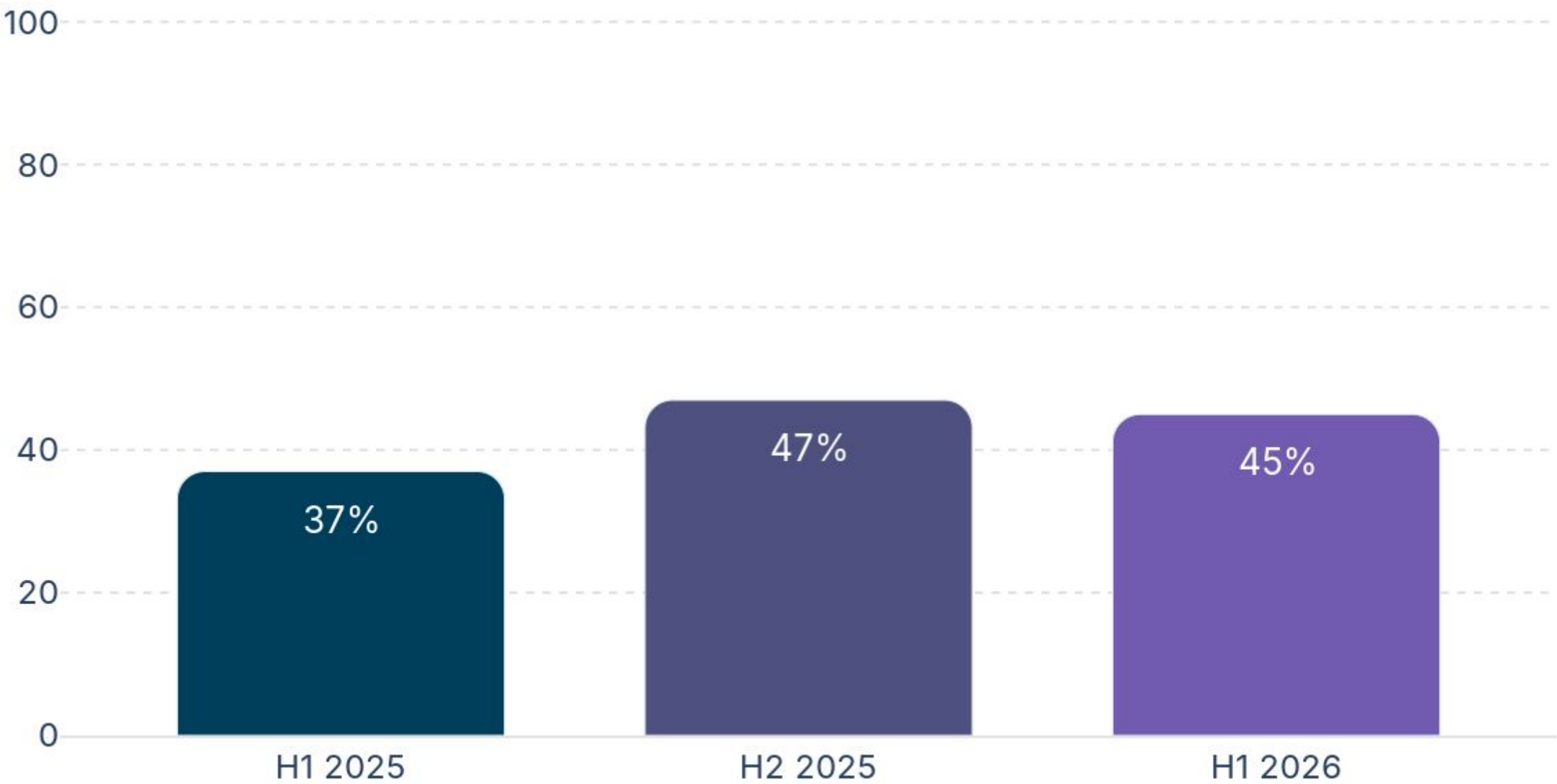
Public beats private on classroom optimization



Public institutions outpace
privates by 8-10 points.

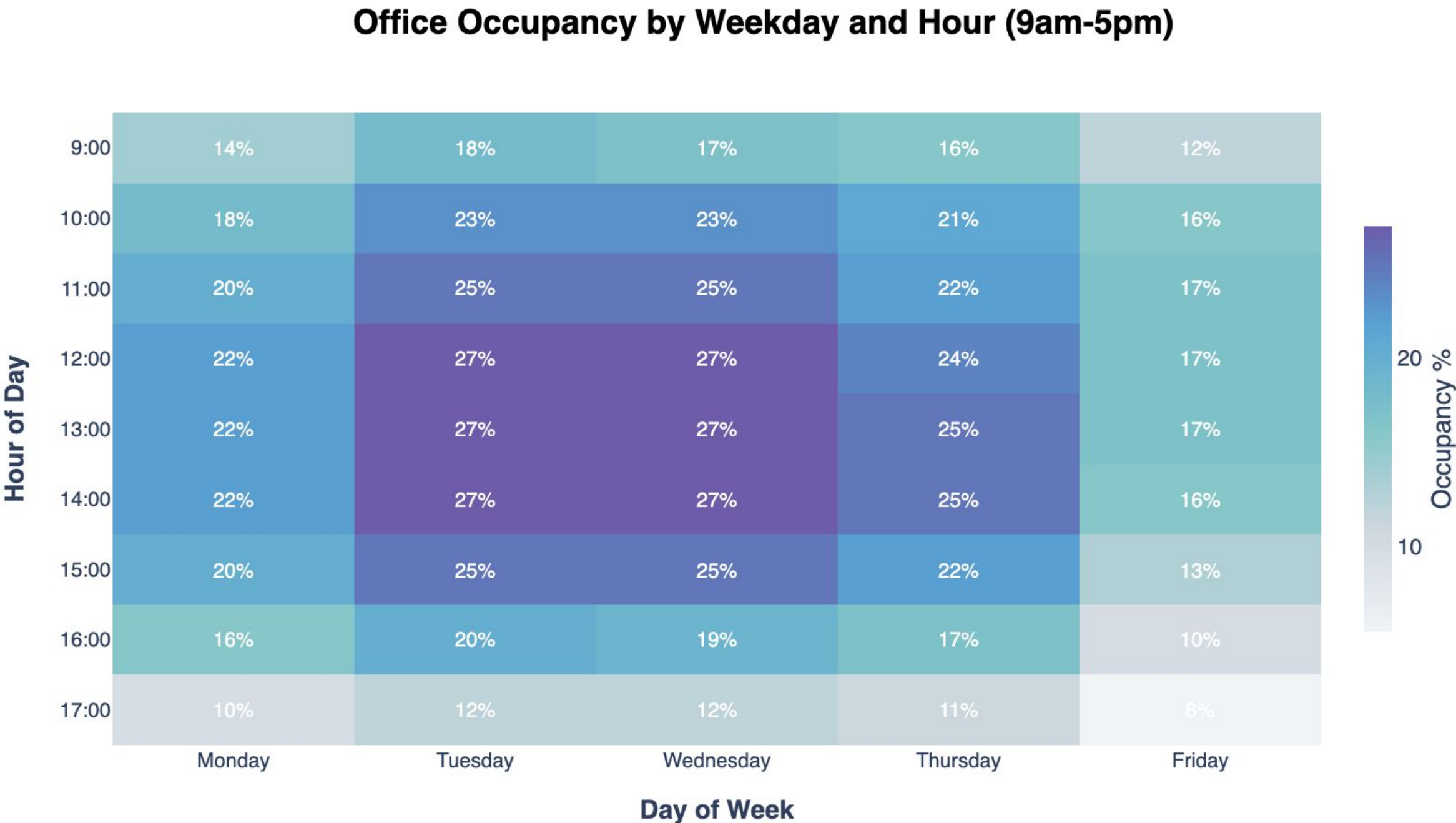
Office Space Utilization nearly flat compared with fall

Office Utilization · 3 periods



Average daily peak office utilization is **up 8 points year-over-year, holding most of Fall '25 gains.**

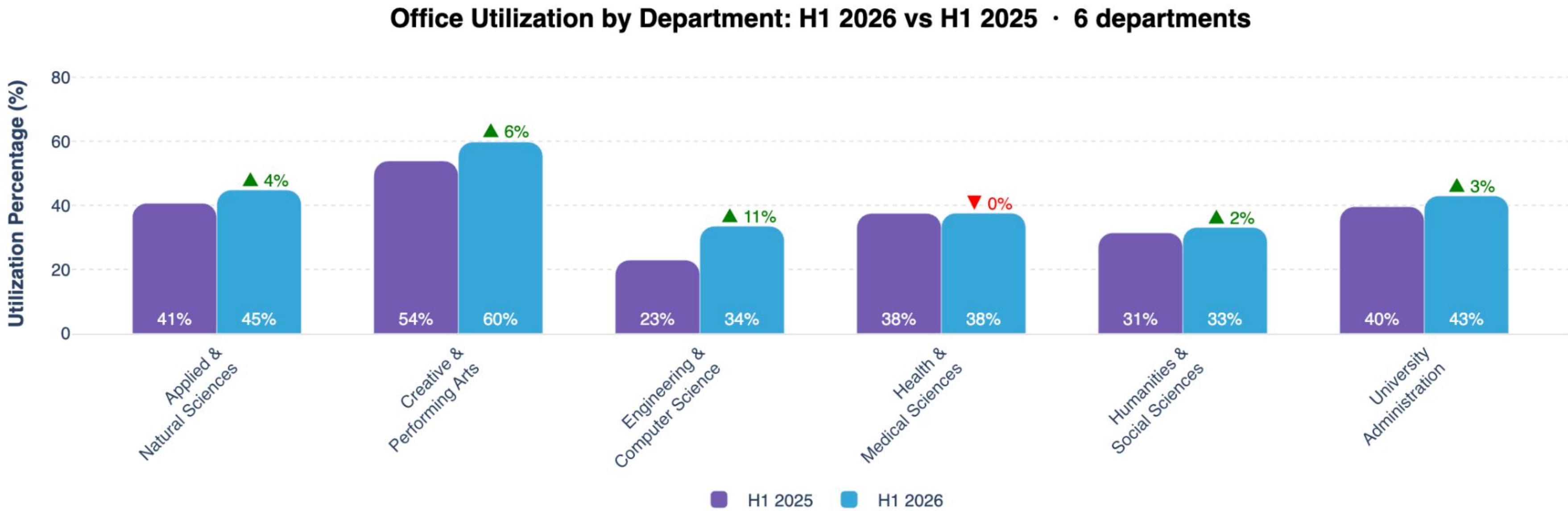
Still, there’s lots of room for improvement



Plan for **24 hours** of weekly in-office time

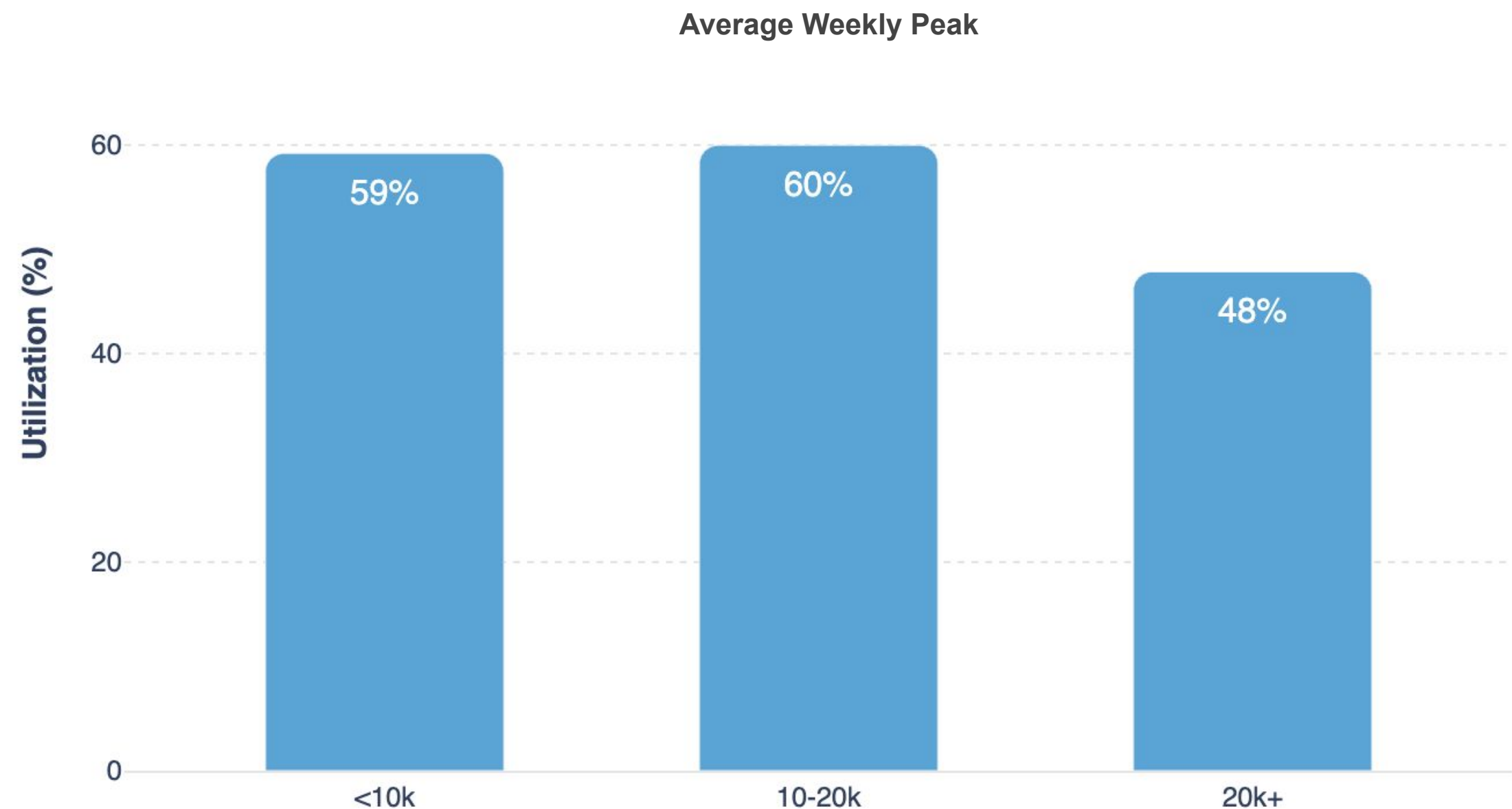
Clear opportunity for shared offices. **How do we enable a mindset shift?**

Space needs differ by department



Academic departments average 42% daily peak utilization vs 43% for University Administration - Creative & Performing Arts leads at 60%.

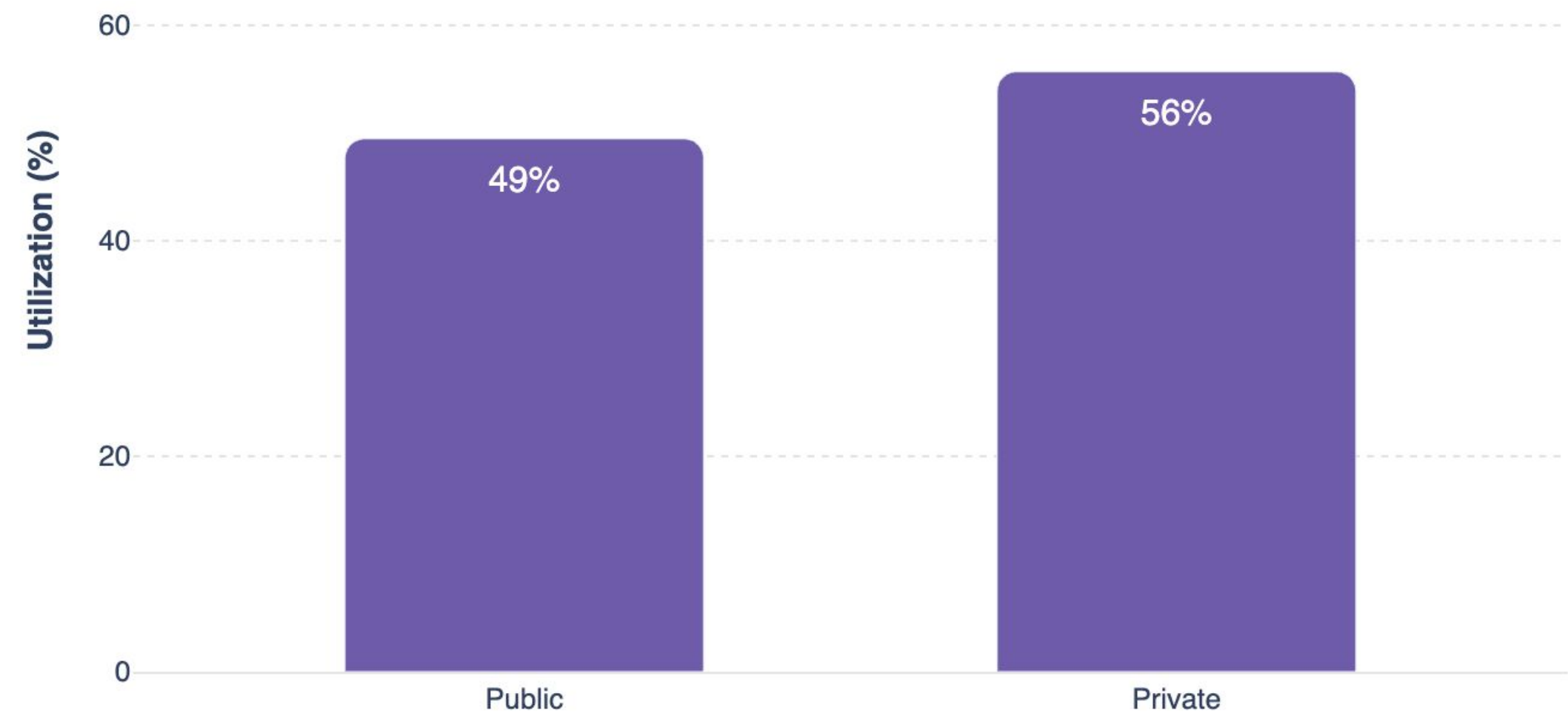
Largest University Offices are underutilized



Offices on the **largest campuses** are **only 48% utilized** on the **busiest** day of the week on average

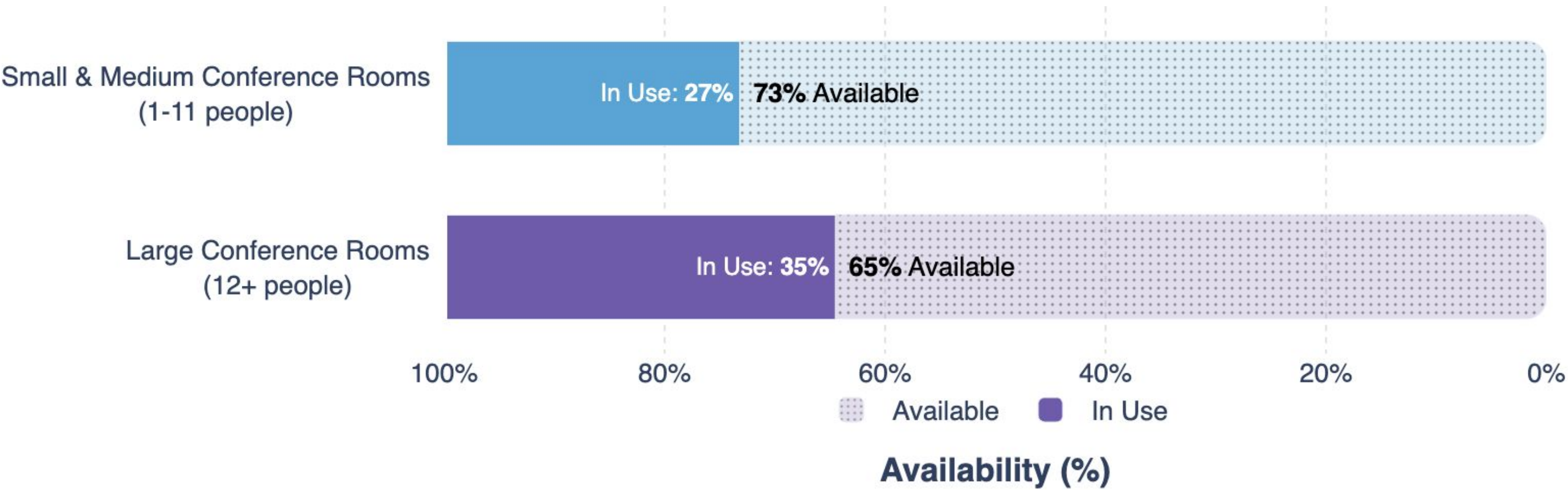
Private Universities Are 13% More Efficient with Office Space

Average Weekly Peak



Offices are in demand across public and private campuses but they get used at higher rates at Private institutions

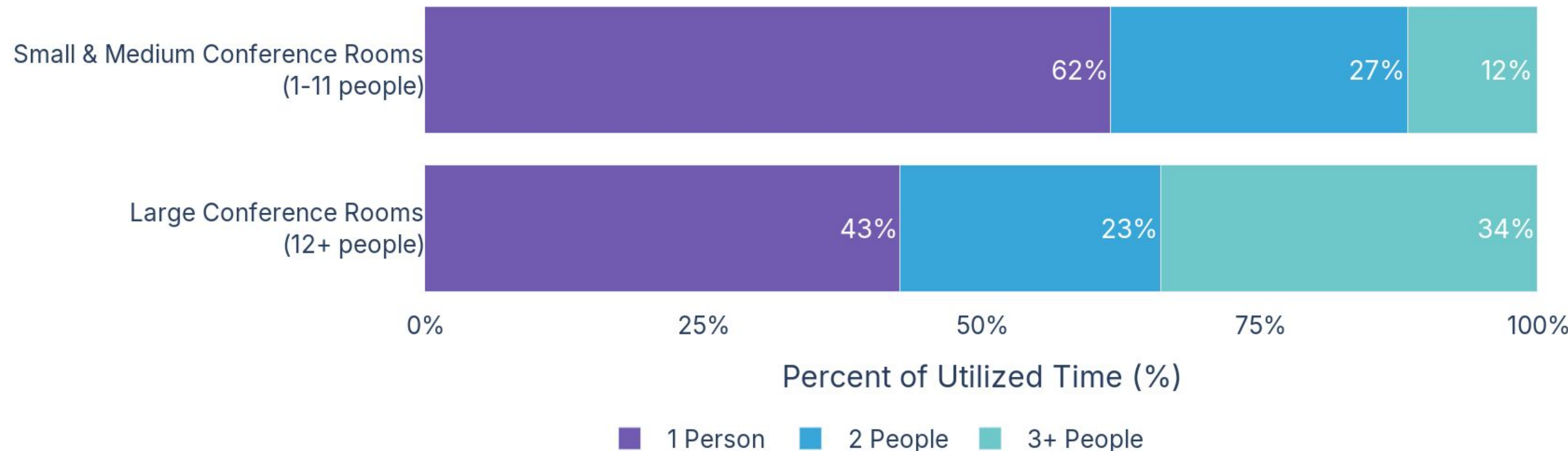
Conference rooms sit open the majority of the time



Fall usage was 36% for small & medium and 47% in use for large conference rooms

When in use, conference rooms serve as zoom rooms

Conference Room Utilization Breakdown by Occupancy



62% of the time small & medium conference rooms are occupied, they are **occupied by only 1 person.**

Data-Informed Decision Making



Optimize Space Management

Use data to optimize existing space, shed leases (\$40/sqft/year) and avoid new construction (\$600/sqft).



OpEx Reduction

Save \$0.30 - \$0.60 per sqft annually on custodial cleaning and HVAC optimization

Data-in-Action: “News & Insights” on Occuspace.com



Webinars



UCLA: 20-30% Custodial Efficiency



Data for RTO/Improved Experience



Data while maintaining 100% Privacy

Blogs & eBooks



Step-by-Step Deployment Guide



AI Impacts on Workplace



Step-by-Step Guide Space Allocation

Scan QR code or Visit: Occuspace.com



Case Studies



UCSD: \$20M+ Saved

About Occuspace



Occuspace is the **#1 space utilization solution** for higher education, chosen by over 100 campuses across the US and Canada.

Our privacy-first, AI-powered sensors were built and designed for higher education decision-makers who manage large and diverse portfolios of space. Our goal is to empower our clients to make more informed facilities and space management decisions that **lead to better visitor experiences and more efficient buildings.**

Beyond providing actionable data, we partner with universities to navigate change management, support assessments and communications initiatives, and provide best practices for informed facilities decision-making.

Occuspace - the fastest, easiest & most flexible occupancy data solution for higher ed.
If you're ready to take a deeper look at how occupancy data can help you transform your campus, let's talk!

[Schedule your free consultation](#)

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Macro

Micro