

*Private School Digital Insight:*

ENHANCING  
**WEB NAVIGATION**  
AND THE RISE OF  
**RESPONSIVE DESIGN**

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# ENHANCING WEB NAVIGATION AND THE RISE OF RESPONSIVE DESIGN

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# INTRODUCTION

The web industry is in the middle of a dramatic shift. We're moving from a web that is accessed on computers at desks to a web that is available on a wide variety of devices in the palms of our hands. That raises questions about how we as an industry are responding and how those changes are affecting what we do on the web.

About a year ago we came up with the idea for an ambitious project to help us better understand the state of our industry and how it is responding to these changes. The idea led to a report that would answer some key questions about our industry—questions that hadn't been answered ever before, How many schools have adopted responsive web design? Does that number differ between different types of schools? Religious affiliation? Have schools adopted HTML 5? Do they use basic SEO practices? Does everyone have an admission or an admissions link?

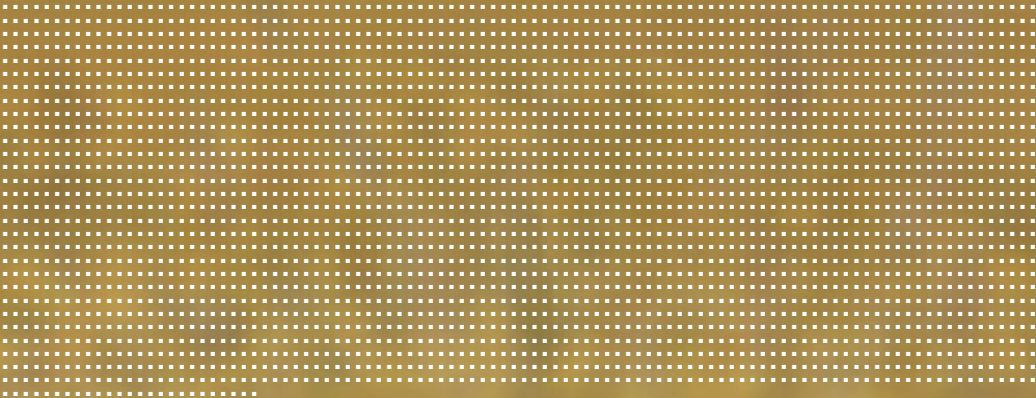
This report answers those questions and more. There is some very interesting and exciting information contained in the next 24 pages. We have designed this report in a way that enables you to digest it very quickly and pull out the information that you need without having to wade through data tables or paragraphs of text. We're excited to share what we have found, and we think you'll gain some new insight into our industry.



# SNAPSHOT

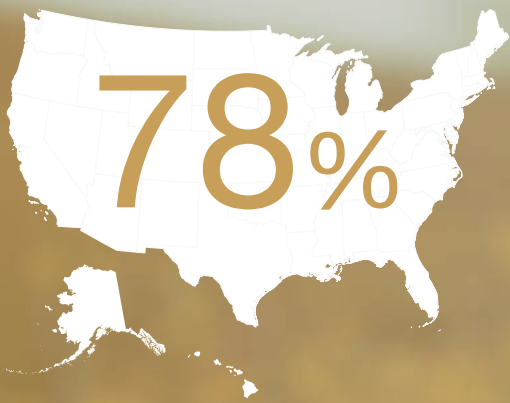
2925

PRIVATE  
SCHOOLS  
WERE  
INCLUDED IN  
OUR REVIEW



.ORG

IS THE MOST  
POPULAR  
TOP-LEVEL  
DOMAIN



78%

OF SCHOOLS IN  
THE US  
ARE NOT  
RESPONSIVE

THE PERCENT THAT  
USE A DROPDOWN  
MENU



THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF LINKS  
CONTAINED ON A PRIVATE SCHOOL  
HOMEPAGE



58

THE PERCENT THAT  
USE AT LEAST 1  
ABSOLUTE LINK



THE PERCENT THAT  
USE AT LEAST 1  
RELATIVE LINK



THE PERCENT THAT  
HAVE A LINK TITLED  
“LOGIN”

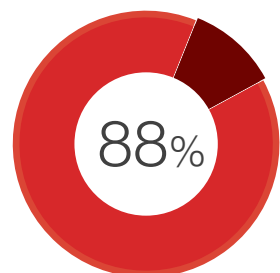




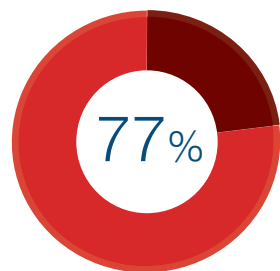
# HOMEPAGE OVERVIEW

# COMMON HOMEPAGE ELEMENTS

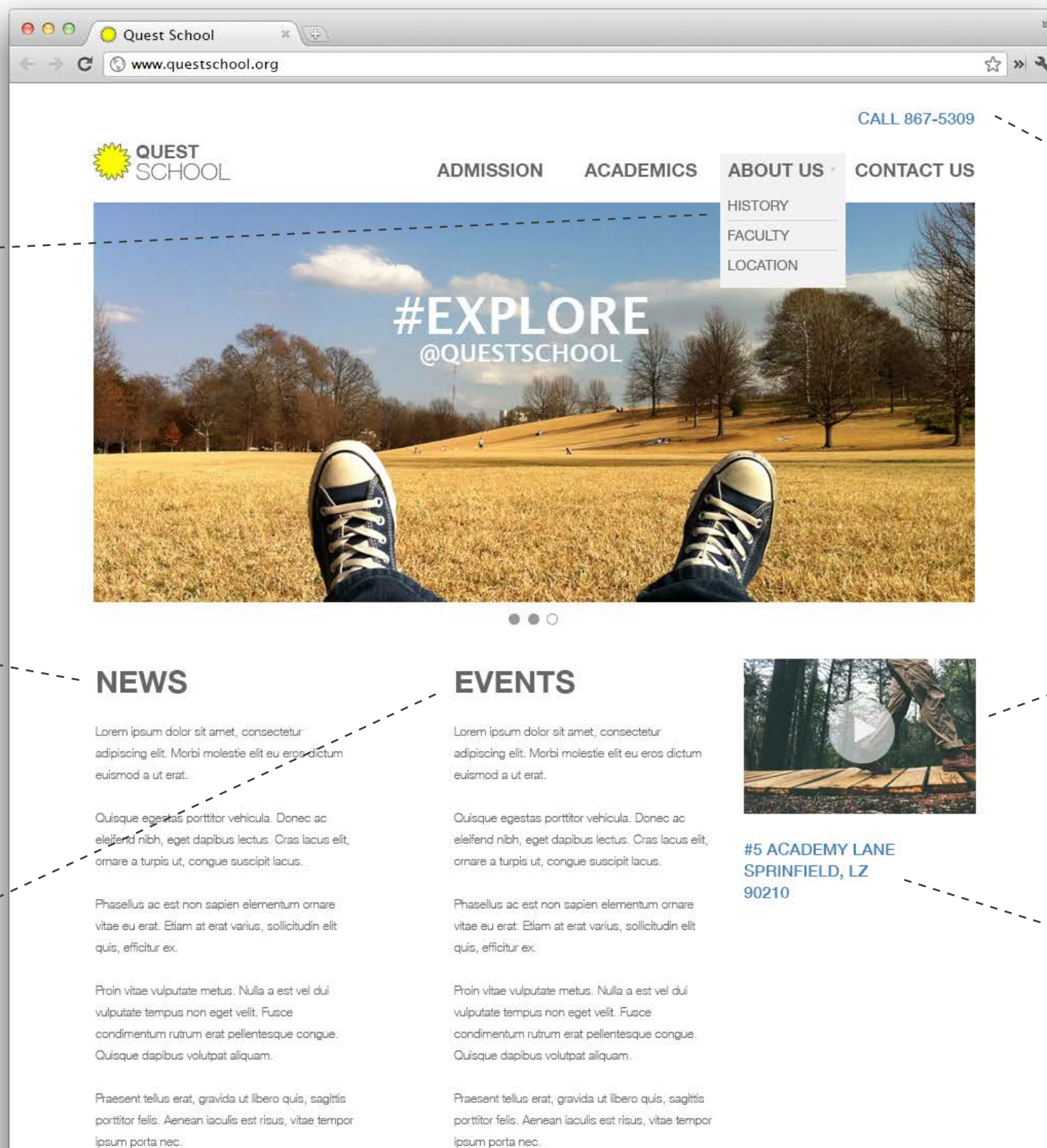
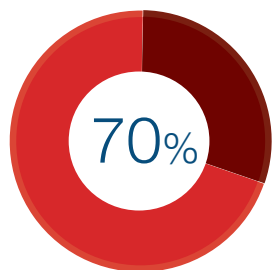
Use dropdowns



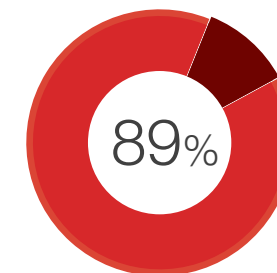
Have a news feed



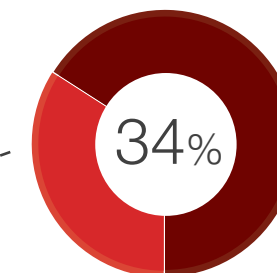
Have event listings



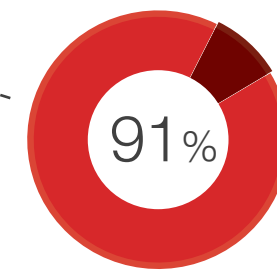
List a phone number

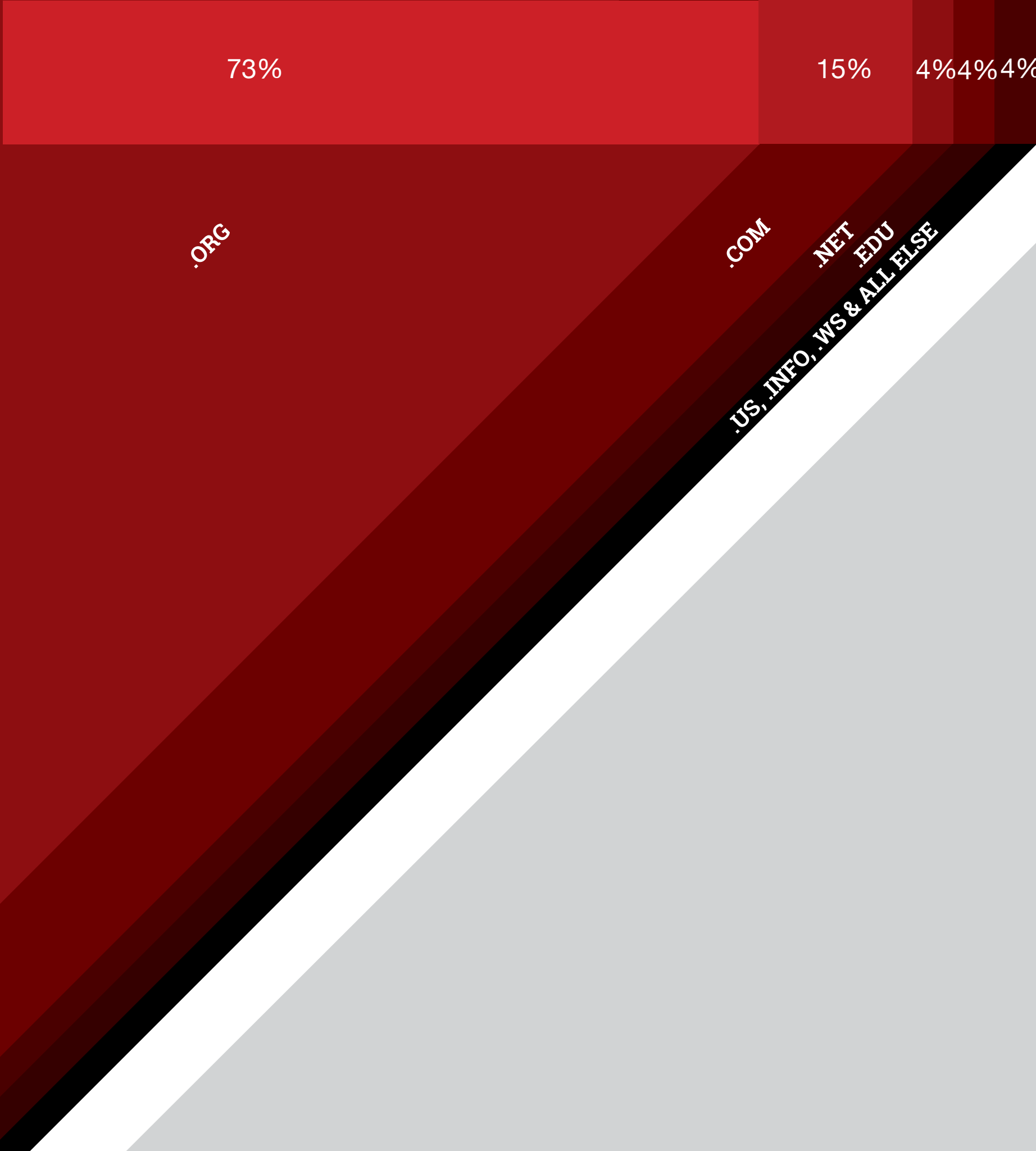


Embed video



Provide an address





# TOP-LEVEL DOMAINS

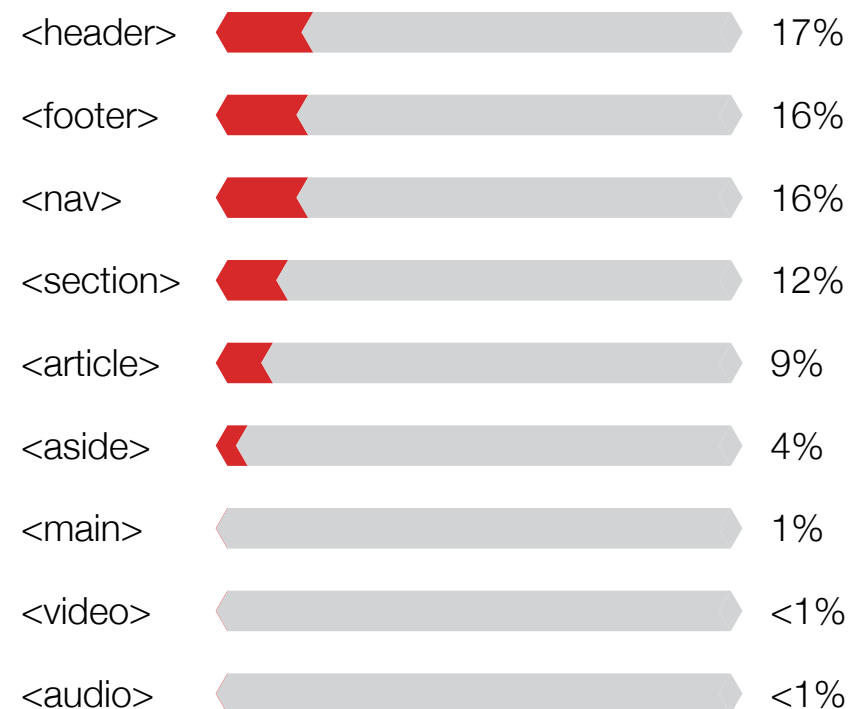
There is a high level of consistency in the top-level domain names used for private school websites. Seventy-three percent of all schools are using a .org domain name. Only 15% of schools use the next most common domain name: .com.

You may find it interesting to see 4% of schools using .edu domains. The current rules to obtain a .edu domain requires you to be a U.S.-accredited post-secondary institution, but the .edu domain was originally intended for any educational institutions worldwide. Through the 1990s the guidelines were tightened to only four year post-secondary institutions. In 2001 Educause® took over the administration of .edu domains, and the current guidelines were put into place. Those 4% of schools that are using a .edu domain are grandfathered in because they registered the domain before the tighter guidelines were introduced by Educause®.



# HTML 5 ADOPTION

The current standard for HTML is HTML 5. It succeeded both HTML 4 (1997) and XHTML 1 (2000). Though it was only finalized in October of 2014, it has seen growth in its use and adoption since the first public draft of the specification was introduced in 2008. In 2011 Steve Jobs, then CEO of Apple®, wrote an open letter titled “Thoughts on Flash” in which he made the point that Flash was no longer necessary with the arrival of HTML 5 and related web technologies. Though HTML 5 is the most popular version of HTML among schools, it is only used by 43% of them. Even with 43% adoption, very few schools are actually using new tags introduced in HTML 5 (see below).



43%  
are using the  
HTML 5  
Document  
Declaration tag



36%  
are using the  
XHTML 1  
Document  
Declaration tag

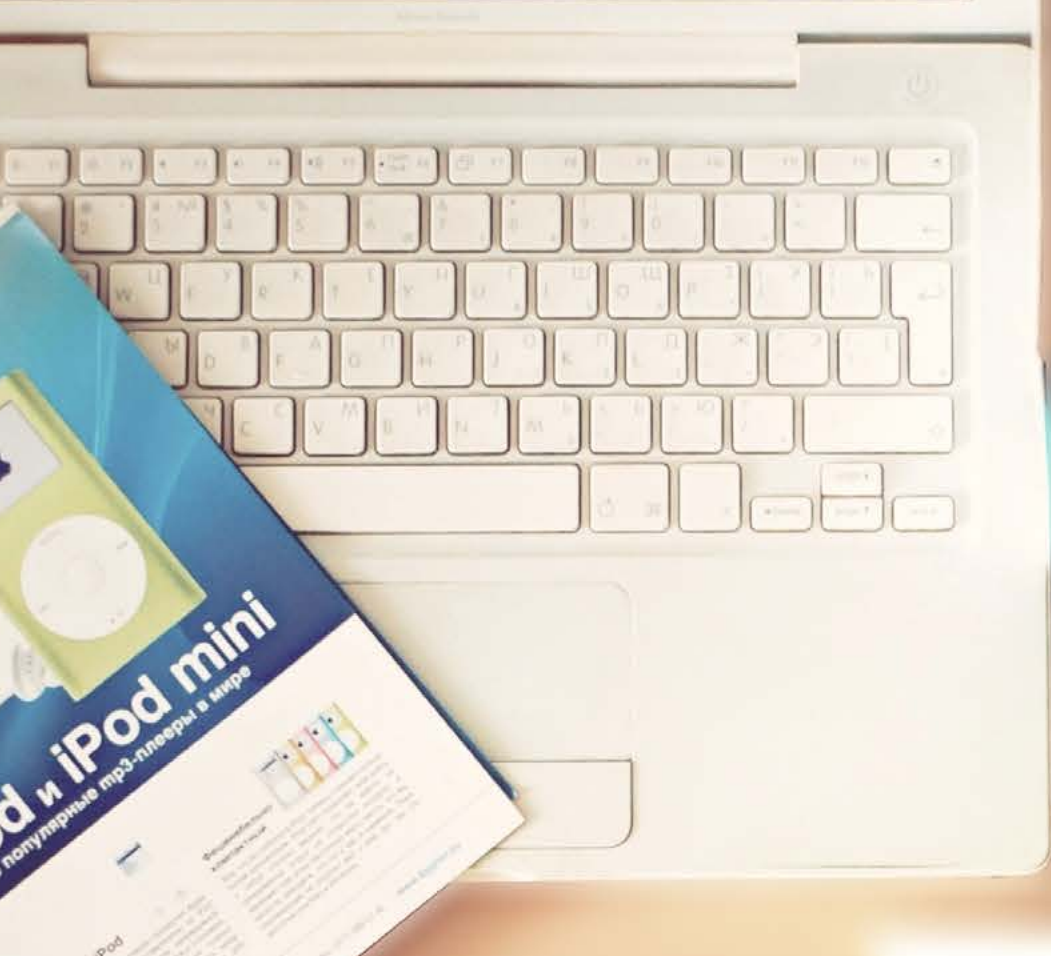


7%  
are using the  
HTML 4  
Document  
Declaration tag





# RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN



} 100%

of sites work on a desktop  
or laptop computer

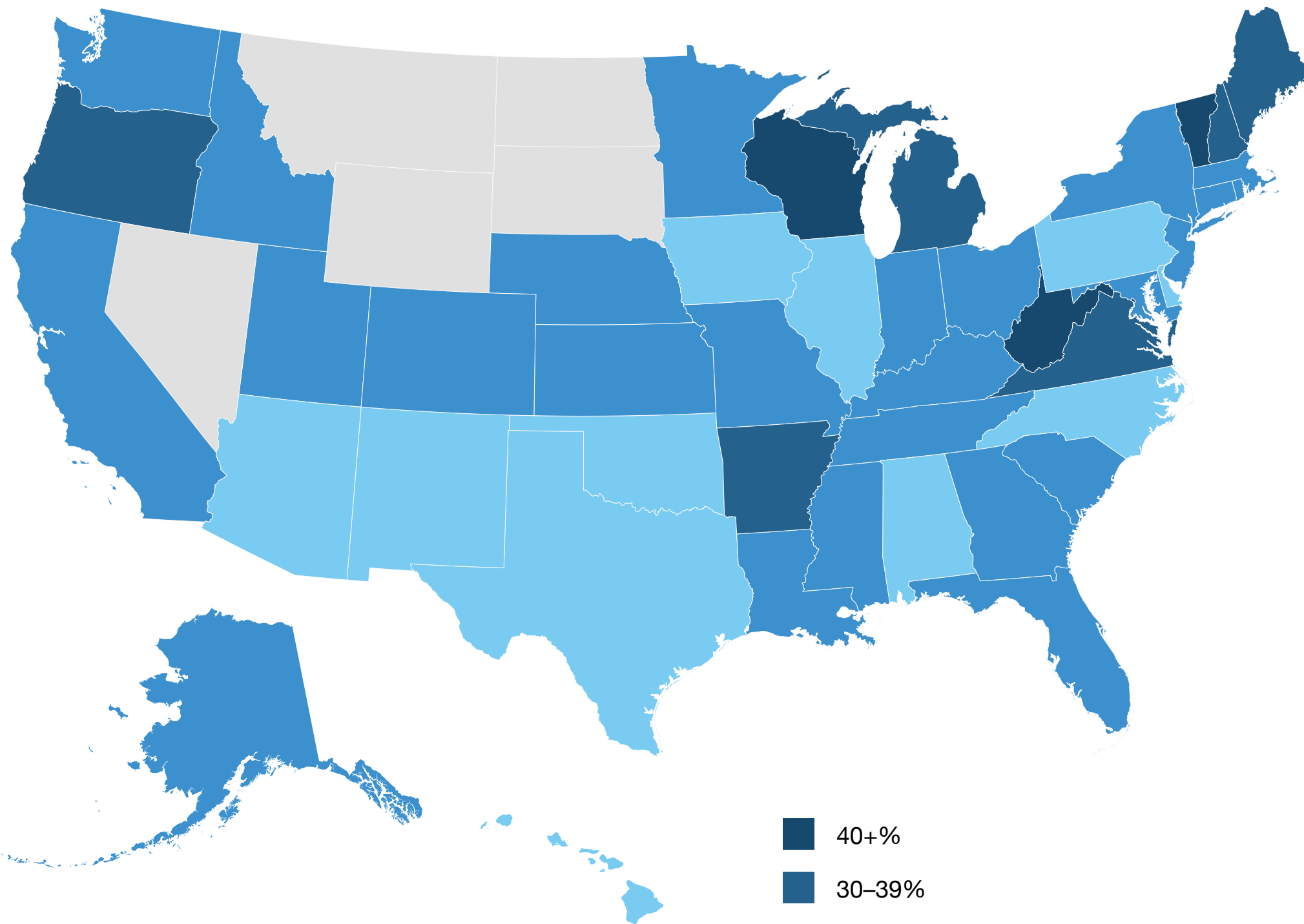
## RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN

Responsive web design is an approach to web design that adjusts the viewing experience of the page for every device and resolution. It combines CSS media queries, flexible grids, and flexible images to make the layout of the page respond to match the resolution of the device on which it is being viewed. Looking nationwide, only 22% of schools use responsive design. West Virginia's adoption of responsive design was over twice the national average at 50%. Religiously affiliated schools were just as likely to be responsive as non-affiliated schools. The highest adoption rate among religious schools is by Presbyterian-affiliated schools at 28%.

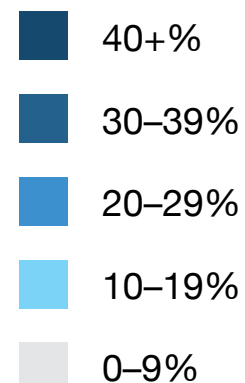


} only  
22%  
of those are responsive

# RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN BY STATE



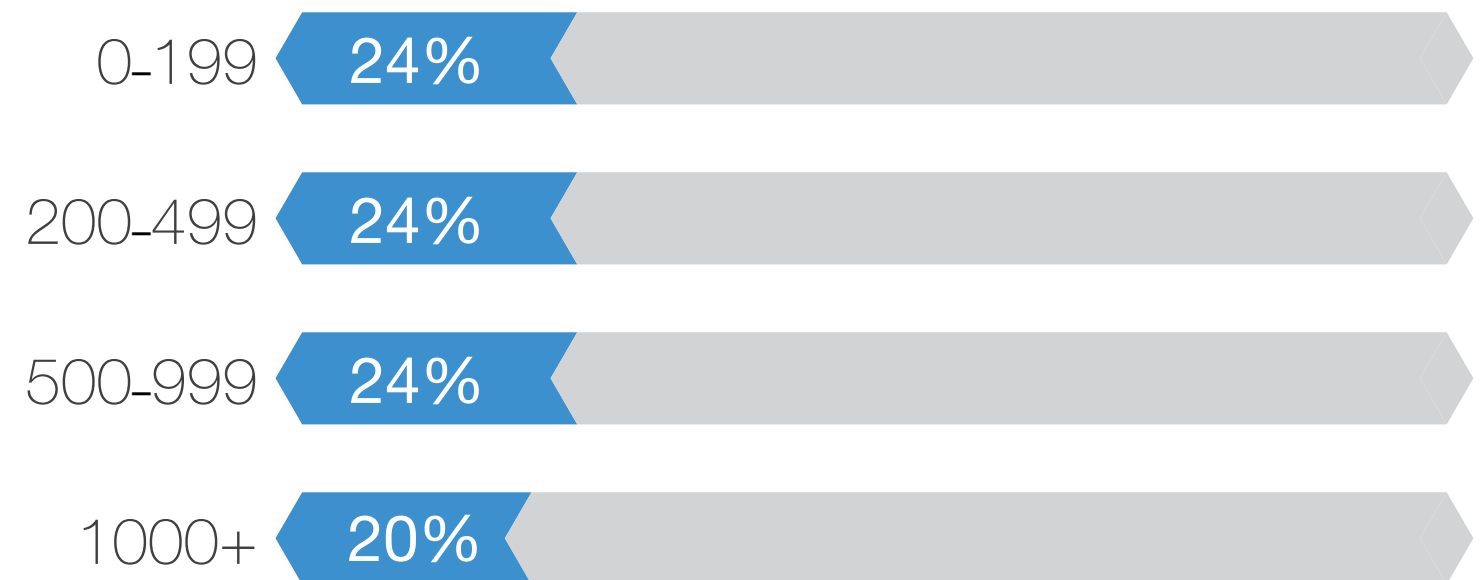
Though the overall percentage of schools that have adopted responsive web design is 22%, the percentage varies widely from state to state. Vermont, Wisconsin, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia all came in the highest with over 40% of schools having some level of adoption of responsive web design.



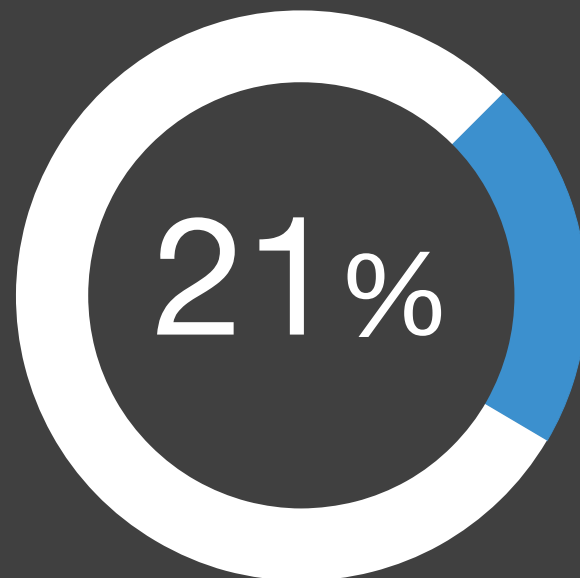


# RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN BY TYPE AND SIZE

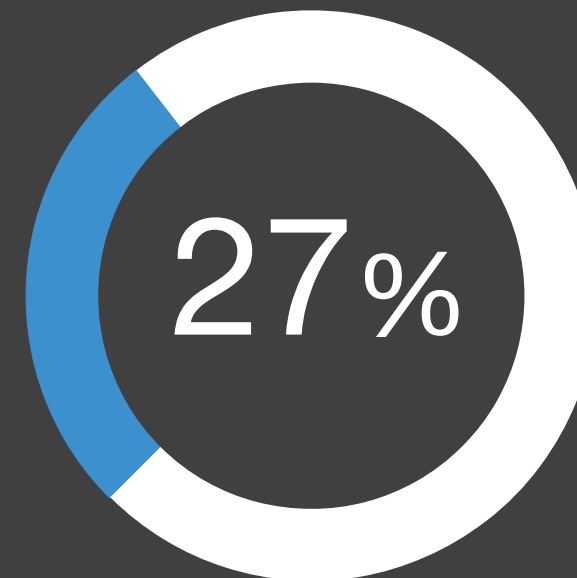
Schools larger than 1000 students have a slightly lower level of adoption of responsive web design.



Percentage of  
**DAY  
SCHOOLS**  
that have  
adopted responsive  
web design



Percentage of  
**BOARDING  
SCHOOLS**  
that have  
adopted responsive  
web design

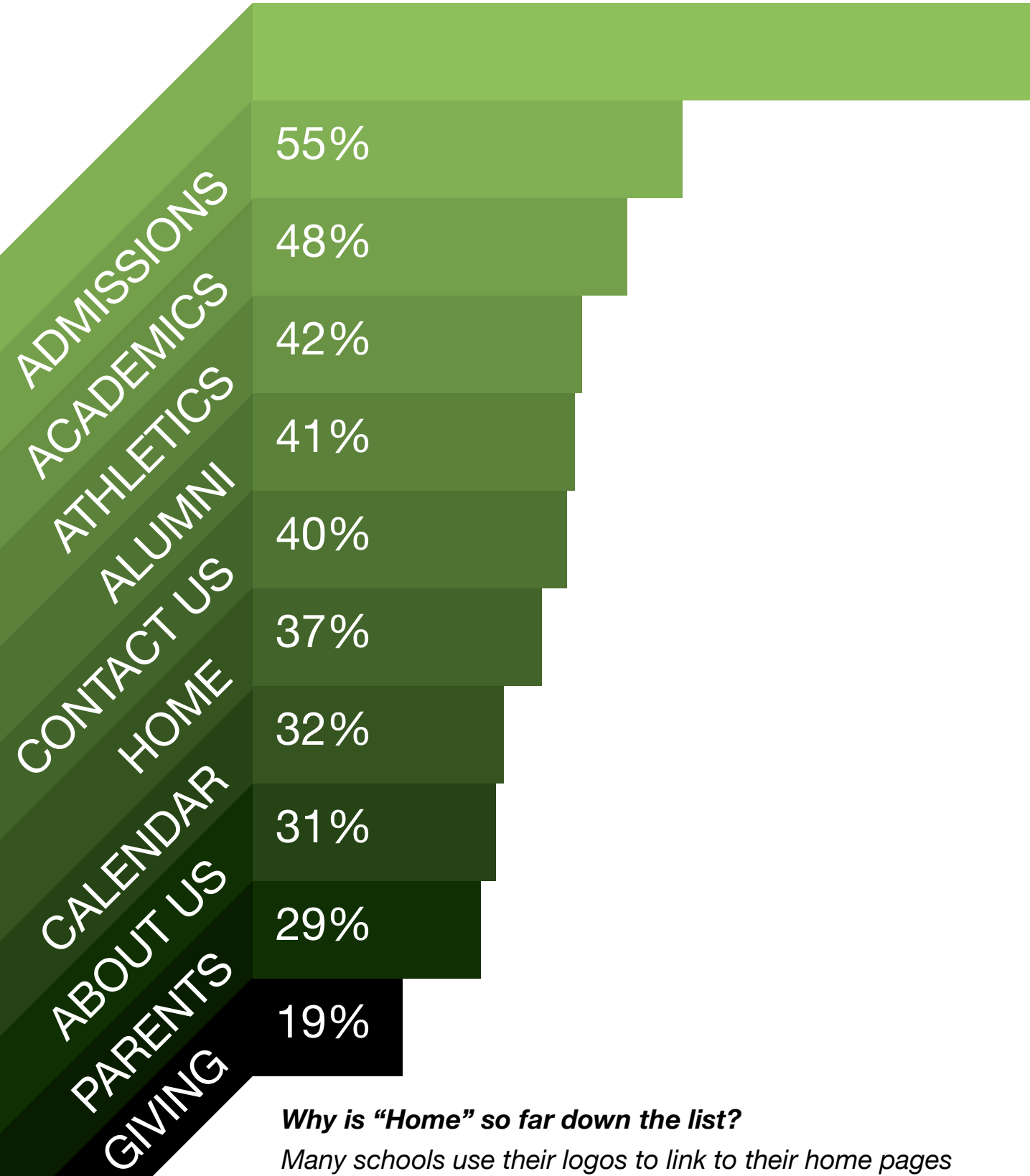




# NAVIGATION

# TOP NAVIGATIONAL ITEMS

This table represents the most common words used in links or navigation on private school websites. This chart does not combine similar terms. That means that related terms like “Admission” and “Admissions” are counted separately. The result of not grouping them is that even the most popular term only appears on 55% of homepages. Were you to combine similar terms, you would find higher percentages and more consistency across the industry. Most of the top terms are links that lead to information instead of calls to action. “Contact Us” is the only term here that might be considered a call to action; although it isn’t usually grouped with those types of links.



**Why is “Home” so far down the list?**  
Many schools use their logos to link to their home pages rather than including a “Home” link in their main navigations. In those cases the links would not be named “Home.”

# NAVIGATION PLACEMENT

We took a random subset of 100 homepages and highlighted the placement of the navigation. Very quickly a pattern emerged. The vast majority of websites we reviewed placed their navigation horizontally across the top of the page. There was a handful of sites that placed their navigation horizontally underneath a banner or vertically on the left side of the page.





# LOGIN LOCATION

We again took a random subset of 100 homepages and highlighted the placement of login links. The pattern again was very clear; most schools place their login link in the top right portion of their homepage.

A call to action is a type of link that urges the visitor to do something immediately. Common calls to action are “Apply” or “Donate.” The single most common call to action we found was “Login.” When you group calls by their type, apply links are the most popular. Apply link include “Apply”, “Apply Now”, “Apply to...”

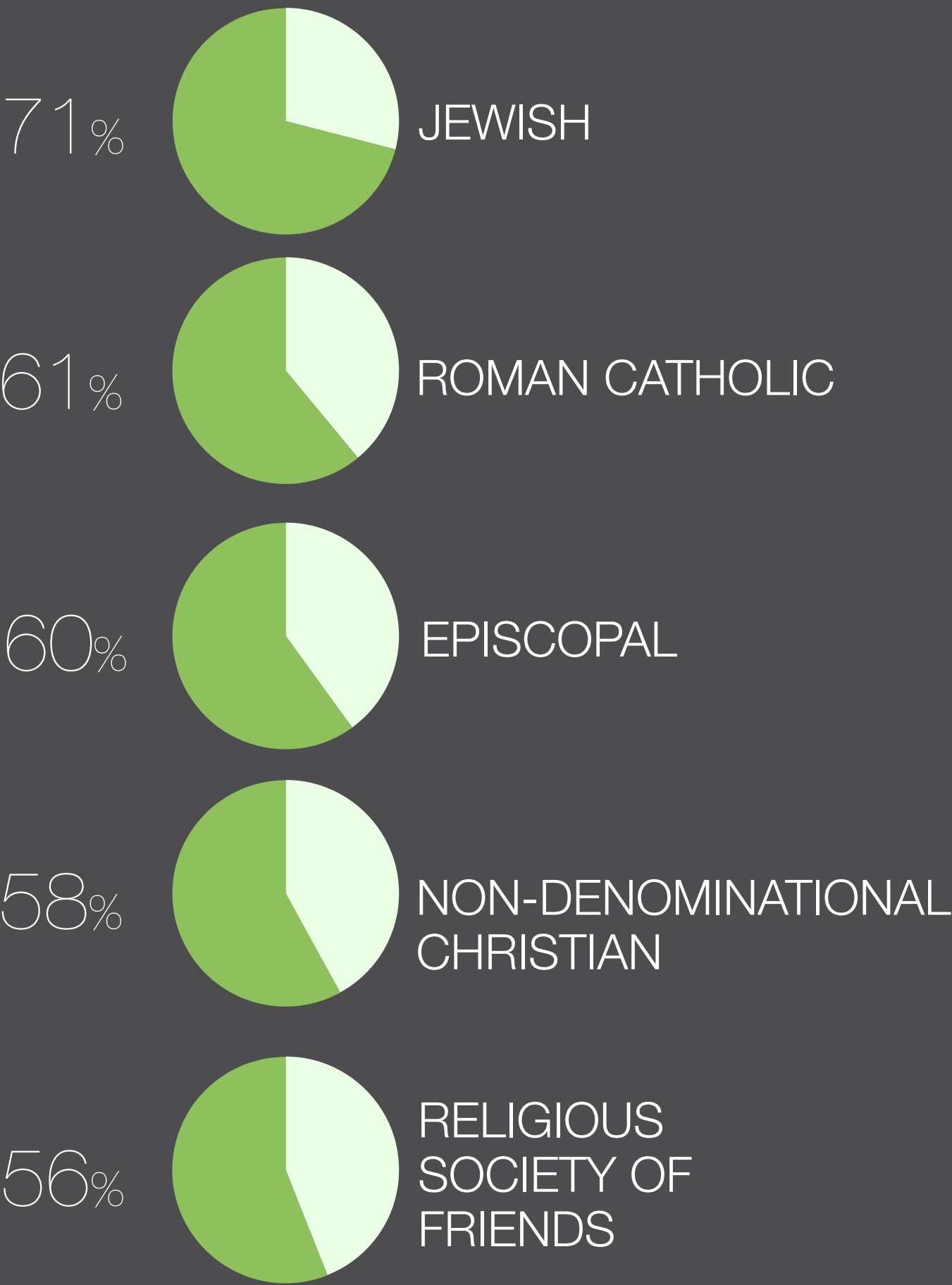
60%

HAVE A  
CALL TO  
ACTION

40%

DO NOT

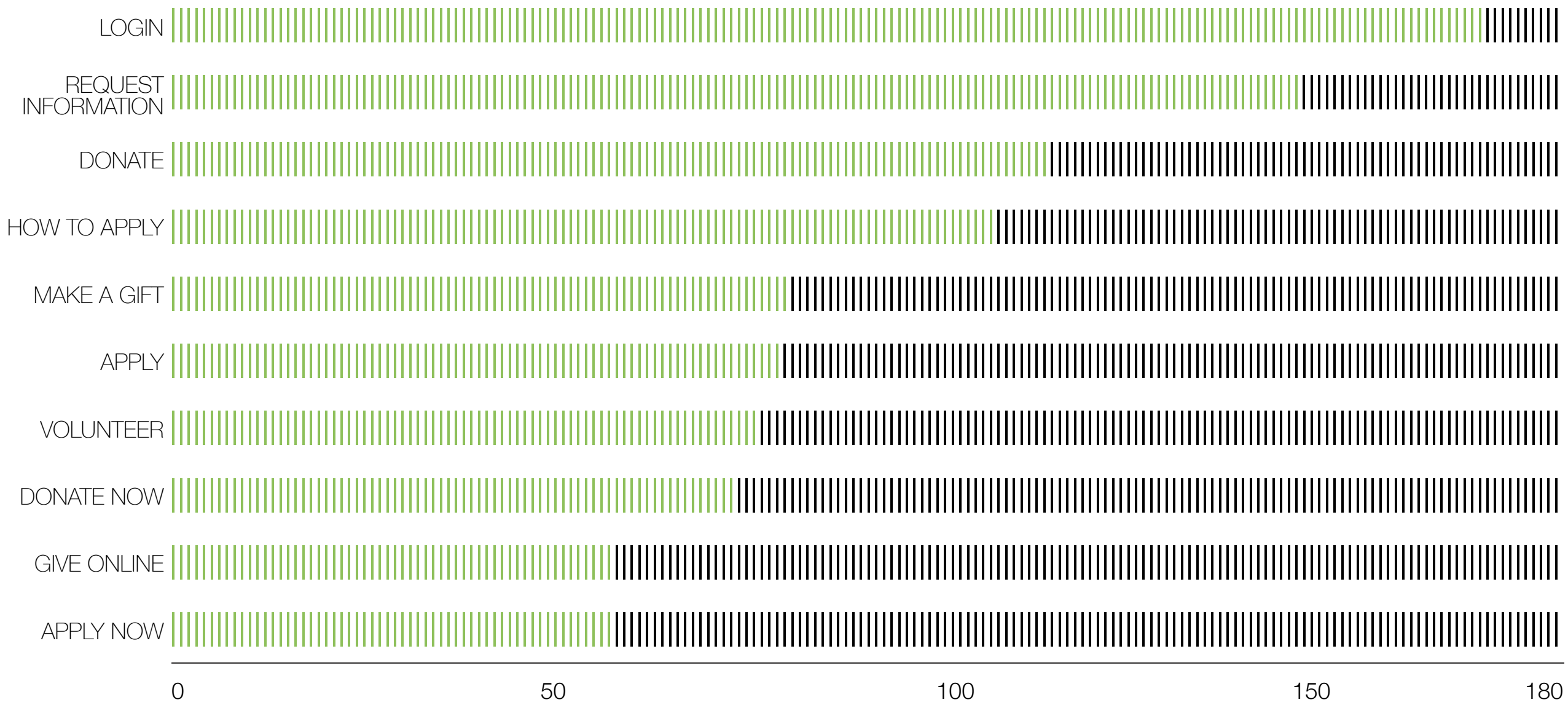
We looked a little deeper to see if religious affiliation impacted the use of a call to action. The charts here represent schools that have at least one call to action. The calls to action that we included in this analysis fit into the general categories of donate, request information, apply, volunteer, visit, or login. In almost every way we looked at the data, the numbers came out as 60% with a call to action and 40% without. There were slight variations from the norm as we looked at individual religious groups. Among the top 5 religious affiliations, based on number of schools, the Jewish-affiliated schools saw at least 10% higher use of call to actions.



# TOP CALLS TO ACTION

When we looked at the link titles used for calls to action, the most popular link title was Login, followed by “Request Information.” You might think this means calling users to login or request information would be the most popular calls to action. In fact, as you’ll see on the next page, the top calls to action were actually give/donate and apply/register. What pushes Login and Request Information to the top of this list is that the language used for those particular calls to action was

very consistent. As you look down the list, you’ll notice there is only one link that relates to the request for information and only one that relates to logging in. For example, 63% of links calling users to request information used the exact wording “Request Information.” There was much more diversity in the naming of other call-to-action links. For example, donation links included donate, donate now, make a donation, give, make a gift, give now, give online, etc.



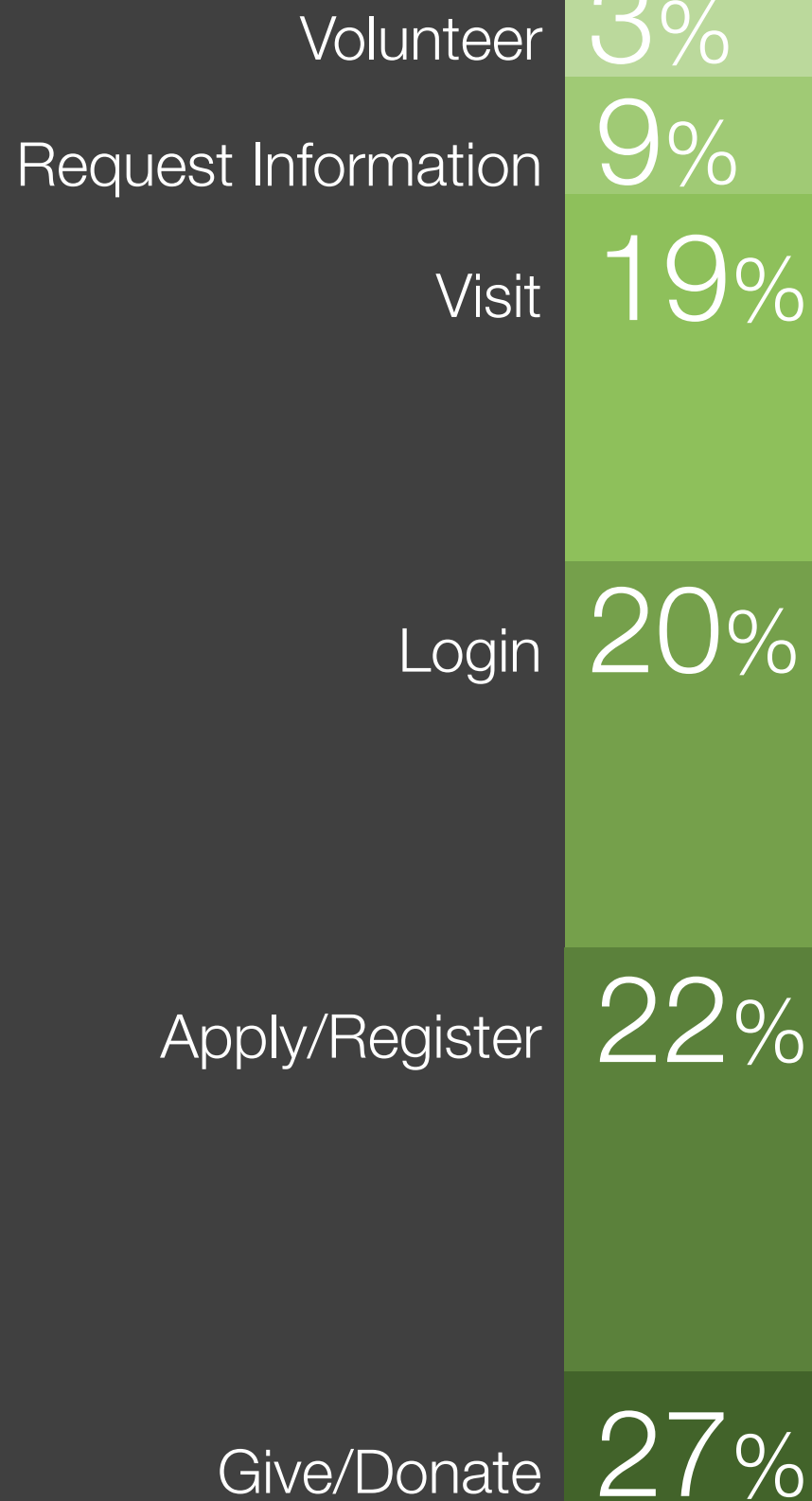


# TOP CALLS TO ACTION GROUPED BY TYPE

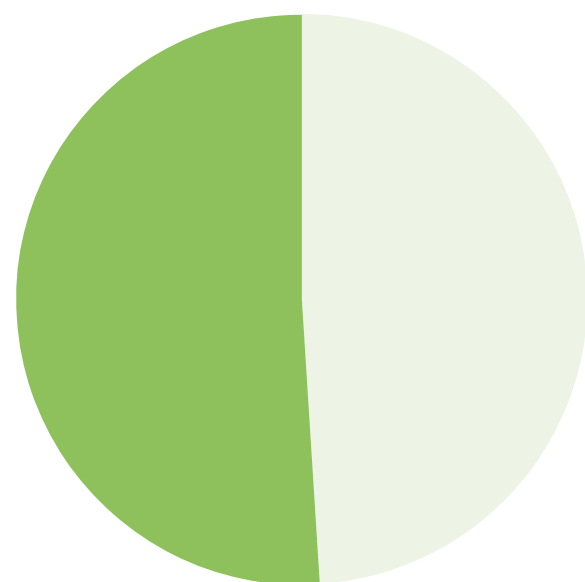
To better understand the most common types of calls to action, we grouped them into six main categories: calls to donate, apply, visit, request information, login, and volunteer.

Once grouped, we were able to rank them by the most popular type of call to action. Give/donate links barely edged out apply/register links as the most common type.

On the next page we looked closer at how this varied from day schools to boarding schools. Boarding schools were slightly more likely to have a call to action: 57% for boarding schools versus 52% for day schools. When you look at the top terms used, you find that though the order is different, they are fairly consistent regardless of the type of school.



# DAY SCHOOLS

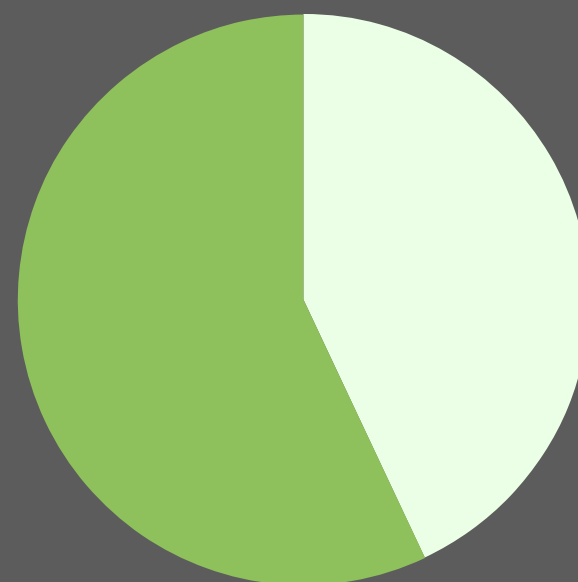


**52%**  
percent of  
**DAY  
SCHOOLS**  
include at least  
1 call to action

## TOP CALLS TO ACTION

- 1 Login
- 2 Request Information
- 3 Donate
- 4 How to Apply
- 5 Volunteer
- 6 Donate Now
- 7 Apply
- 8 Make a Gift
- 9 Apply Now
- 10 Apply Online

# BOARDING SCHOOLS



**57%**  
percent of  
**BOARDING  
SCHOOLS**  
include at least  
1 call to action

## TOP CALLS TO ACTION

- 1 Request Information
- 2 Login
- 3 Give Online
- 4 How to Apply
- 5 Make a Gift
- 6 Apply
- 7 Donate
- 8 Visit
- 9 Apply Now
- 10 Give Now





# SOCIAL MEDIA


# SOCIAL MEDIA


The chart to the left represents the percent of schools that include a link from their homepages to their social media profiles.


## ABOUT EACH NETWORK


 Facebook® is the king of social networks. It was founded in 2004 as a way for college students to connect. It now allows anyone over 13 to join and has 1.3 billion active users.


 Twitter® allows users to share short (140 characters or less) status updates. It was founded in 2006 and has 271 million active users.

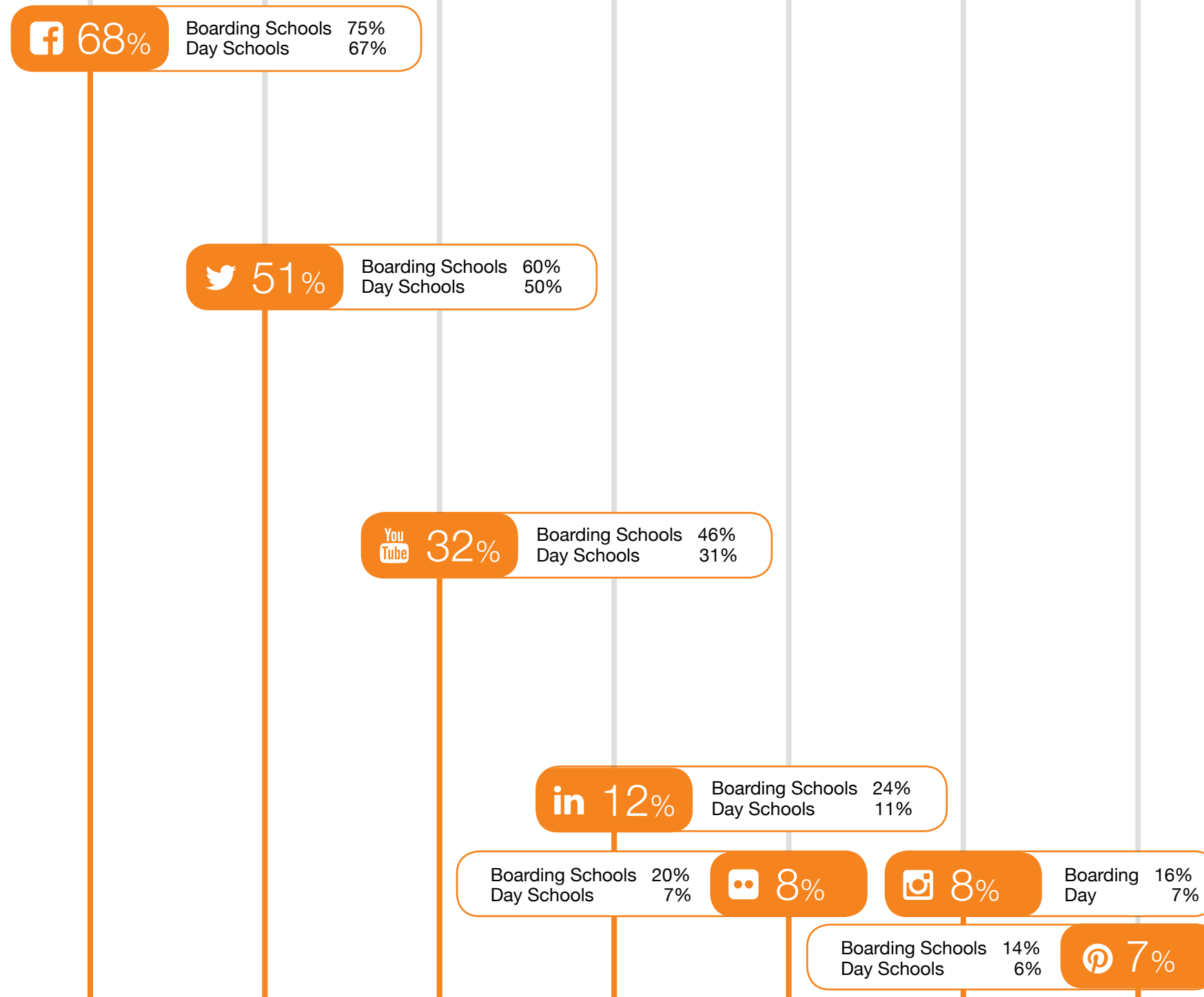
 YouTube® is the worlds largest video sharing site. It was founded in 2005 and quickly acquired by Google in 2006. It has one billion active users.

 LinkedIn® is a social network designed around connecting professionally. It was founded in 2003 and has 300 million users.


 Flickr® is a photo sharing website. It was founded in 2004. Yahoo bought the site in 2005. It has 87 million users.

 Instagram® is a mobile photo sharing network. It was founded in 2010 and acquired by Facebook in 2012. It has 150 million users.

 Pinterest® is a visual bookmarking site. It was founded in 2010 and has 70 million users.







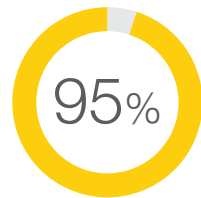
# SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

Though meta keywords are not used by most major search engines, they still give a nice snapshot of the terms that are used by schools for search engine optimization. We gathered all of the meta keywords used across private school websites and arranged them based on the frequency of use. The larger the text, the

more frequently the term is used. The most popular term is private school, followed closely by high school, middle school, independent school, and school. The next page covers many of the common practices used in search engine optimization.

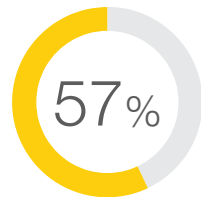


# COMMON SEO PRACTICES



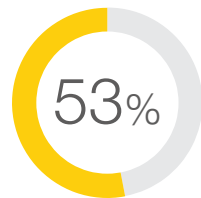
## Use the title tag

`<title>Quest School</title>`



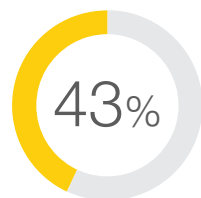
## Use a meta description

`<meta name="description" content="Quest School offers k-12 ...">`



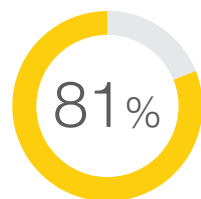
## Use meta keywords

`<meta name="keywords" content="Private School, College Prep ...">`



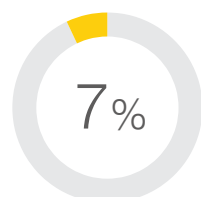
## Use an h1 tag

`<h1>Quest School</h1>`



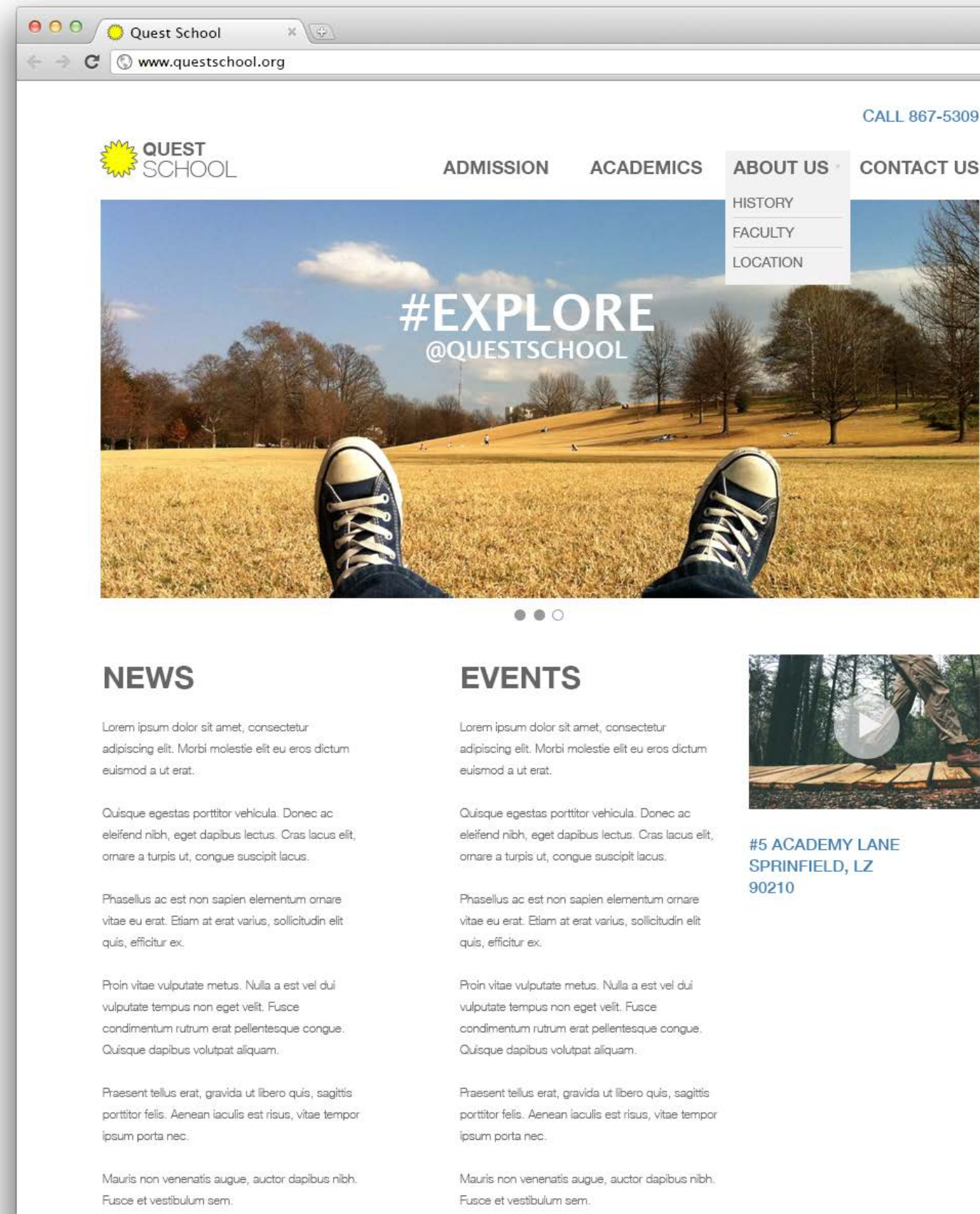
## Use the alt attribute

``



## Use no-follow links

`<a href="login.php" rel="nofollow">log in</a>`







# Does your school speak to the world easily?

Desktop, laptop, tablet, or phone. From having full control over your site and a WYSIWYG editor with CSS editing ability to HTML emails and drag-and-drop content publishing, onMessage simplifies the way you share with your world.

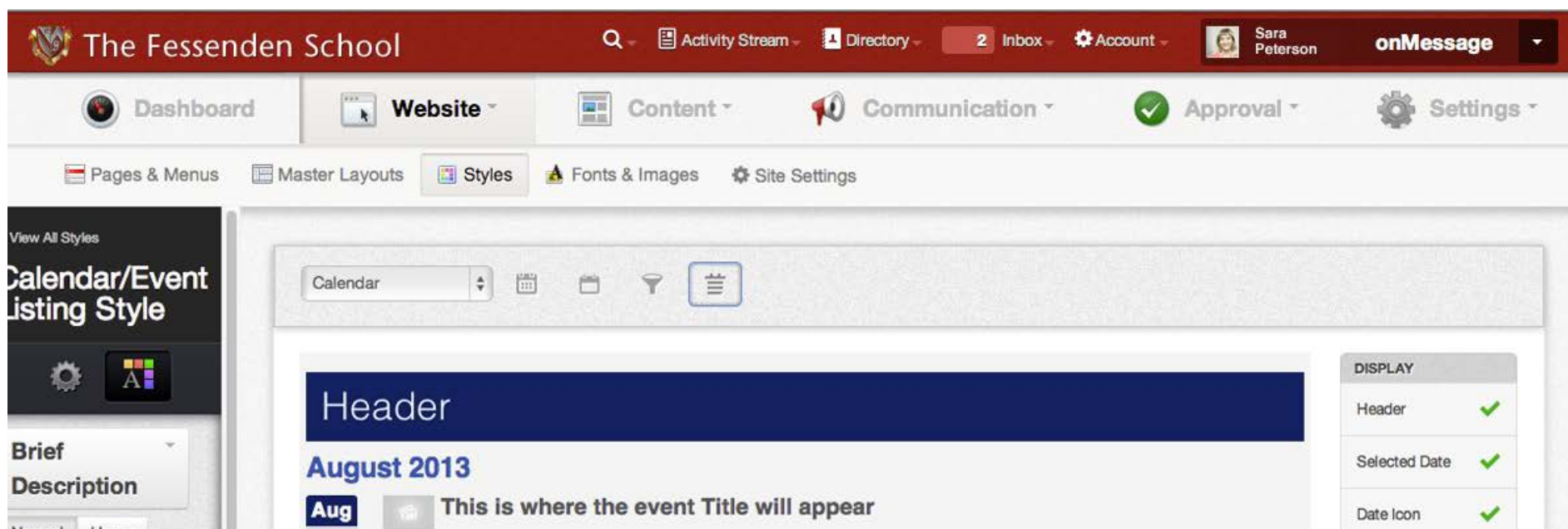
## Communication shouldn't be complicated.

onMessage™

Content Management System

[Learn More](#)

[Email Us](#)



The screenshot shows the onMessage interface for The Fessenden School. The top navigation bar includes links for Activity Stream, Directory, Inbox (2), Account, and a user profile for Sara Peterson. The main navigation bar has tabs for Dashboard, Website, Content, Communication, Approval, and Settings. Below this, there are sub-tabs for Pages & Menus, Master Layouts, Styles, Fonts & Images, and Site Settings. The main content area is titled 'Calendar/Event Listing Style' and shows a calendar for August 2013. The calendar has a header section and a description field. A sidebar on the left shows options for Calendar/Event Listing Style and Brief Description. The right sidebar shows a 'DISPLAY' section with checkboxes for Header, Selected Date, and Date Icon, all of which are checked.