



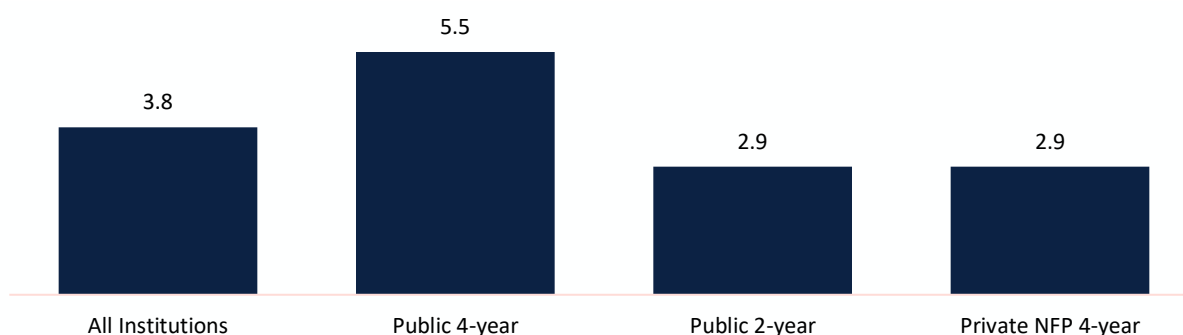
2024 AIR National Survey: IR/IE Office Staff

Institutional Research and Effectiveness (IR/IE) offices play a critical role in advancing data-informed decision making across colleges and universities. Their staffing structures, both in scale and in the diversity of professional expertise, shape an institution’s capacity to use data effectively and strategically. Drawing on the 2024 AIR National Survey, this brief examines current staffing models, workloads, and resource needs. As expectations for analytics, planning, assessment, and compliance expand, these findings help illuminate how IR/IE offices contribute to institutional readiness and ongoing improvement.

Staff FTE

Chart 1 shows the average number of full-time equivalent (FTE) staff in IR/IE offices across major sectors. Public 4-year institutions have the largest offices, averaging 5.5 FTE. In contrast, both public 2-year and private not-for-profit 4-year institutions average 2.9 FTE. These findings reflect clear sector-based differences in institutional capacity and investment in IR/IE staffing.

Chart 1. Average Staff FTE



For IR/IE offices that participated in all three survey cycles (2018, 2021, and 2024), average staff FTE has declined from 4.0 in 2018 to 3.7 in 2024 (Table 1). This gradual decline in average staffing underscores the importance of sustained attention to institutional data capacity and the resources needed to support it.

Table 1. Longitudinal Changes in Staff FTE: 2024, 2021, and 2018

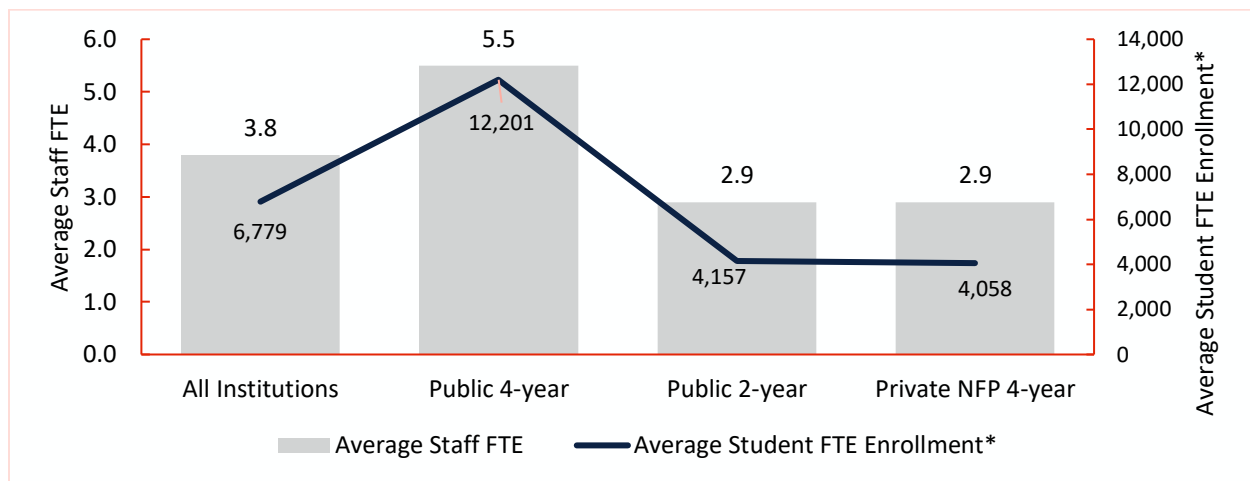
Year	Average Staff FTE
2024	3.7
2021	3.8

2018

4.0

Survey findings indicate a strong correlation between IR/IE office staff FTE and student FTE enrollment ($r = .60, p < .001$). Chart 2 overlays average staff FTE with student FTE enrollment by sector. Public 4-year institutions serve significantly larger student populations (averaging 12,201 FTE) compared to public 2-year institutions (4,157) and private not-for-profit 4-year institutions (4,058). Their IR/IE staff sizes scale accordingly, but not proportionally: public 4-year institutions have nearly triple the student enrollment but only about double the staff FTE. This pattern highlights persistent capacity gaps, even among institutions with comparatively greater resources.

Chart 2. Relationship between IR/IE Office Staff FTE and Student FTE Enrollment*



*Enrollment data reported from the 2023 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 12-month enrollment survey, sum of undergraduate (FTEUG), graduate (FTEGD), and doctor's-professional practice (FTEDPP).

Staffing levels increase consistently with enrollment (Table 2). Institutions with fewer than 3,000 students report an average of 2.1 FTE, while those with 20,000+ students average 10.1 FTE. This trend confirms the expected relationship between institutional size and IR/IE capacity while also illustrating substantial variation in what different institutions can sustain. Sector-based differences are also evident: public 4-year institutions consistently report higher staffing levels across every enrollment range.

Table 2. Average Staff FTE by Student FTE Enrollment*

Enrollment	All Institutions	Public 4-year	Public 2-year	Private NFP 4-year
Less than 3,000 student FTE	2.1	2.8	2.3	1.9
3,000 to 4,999 student FTE	2.9	3.3	3.0	2.7
5,000 to 9,999 student FTE	4.4	4.4	4.0	5.1
10,000 to 19,999 student FTE	6.5	6.4	5.2	7.1
20,000 or more student FTE	10.1	10.5	4.5	10.4

Chart 3 shows that 31% of IR/IE offices operate with one or fewer staff FTE, while only 13% have more than 6 FTE. This distribution indicates that many offices continue to function with limited staffing capacity, even as expectations for data and analytics work expand.

Chart 3. Distribution of IR/IE Offices by Staff FTE

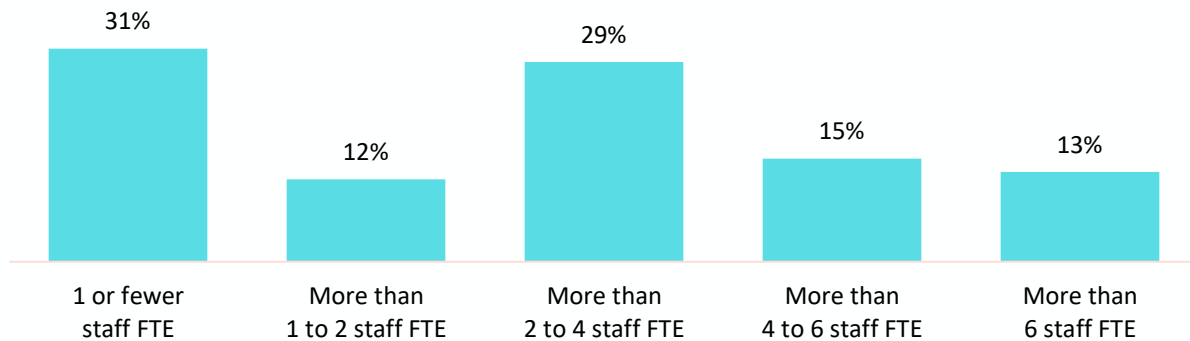


Table 3 provides a more detailed view of these differences by enrollment size and sector. Offices with fewer than 3,000 student FTE are most likely to be small (41% have one or fewer staff) while nearly half (45%) of institutions with 20,000+ students report more than 6 FTE. Among sectors, public 2-year institutions show the most even staffing distribution, and public 4-year institutions have a higher concentration of mid-sized offices (2–4 FTE).

Table 3. Distribution of IR/IE Offices by Staff FTE by Sector, Enrollment, and Work Output

Institution Type	1 or fewer staff FTE	> 1 to 2 staff FTE	> 2 to 4 staff FTE	> 4 to 6 staff FTE	> 6 staff FTE
All Institutions	31%	12%	29%	15%	13%
Student FTE Enrollment*					
Less than 3,000 student FTE	41%	14%	27%	7%	10%
3,000 to 4,999 student FTE	48%	17%	27%	6%	3%
5,000 to 9,999 student FTE	27%	18%	35%	16%	4%
10,000 to 19,999 student FTE	7%	5%	49%	27%	12%
20,000 or more student FTE	9%	4%	15%	26%	45%
Sector					
Public 4-year	31%	12%	29%	14%	13%
Public 2-year	13%	9%	32%	22%	23%
Private NFP 4-year	34%	13%	29%	18%	6%

**Enrollment data reported from the 2023 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 12-month enrollment survey, sum of undergraduate (FTEUG), graduate (FTEGD), and doctor's-professional practice (FTEDPP).*

Staff Roles

All IR/IE offices include a designated leader, but only some have additional professional roles such as associate or assistant directors, senior analysts, or technical staff (Table 4). These expanded staffing structures are more common at public 4-year institutions, where 62% report having senior analysts, compared to just 25% of private not-for-profit 4-year institutions. This suggests that public 4-year institutions are more likely to support tiered staffing models within their IR/IE offices.

Table 4. Percentage of Offices with Specific Staff Roles

Role	All Institutions	Public 4-year	Public 2-year	Private NFP 4-year
Office Leader	100%	100%	100%	100%
Senior Associate Directors	9%	13%	4%	8%
Associate Directors	13%	19%	3%	14%
Assistant Directors	13%	19%	7%	12%
Senior Analysts	40%	62%	36%	25%
Junior Analysts	36%	48%	36%	27%
Senior Assessment Professionals	6%	7%	6%	6%
Junior Assessment Professionals	5%	7%	6%	4%
Technical Support Staff	16%	26%	10%	12%
Administrative Support Staff	19%	26%	23%	12%
Graduate Student Staff	10%	19%	0%	8%
Undergraduate Student Staff	10%	13%	4%	11%

Table 5 summarizes the composition of office teams. Senior analysts (2.0 FTE) and junior analysts (1.7 FTE) comprise the core of most teams, with technical staff (1.5 FTE) also playing a significant role. Graduate and undergraduate student staff contribute less than 1 FTE on average each, while office leaders are consistently represented at a full FTE across all sectors.

Table 5. Percentage of Offices with Specific Staff Roles

Role	All Institutions	Public 4-year	Public 2-year	Private NFP 4-year
Office Leader	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Senior Associate Director	1.5	1.6	1.0	1.6
Associate Director	1.4	1.3	1.7	1.5
Assistant Director	1.2	1.4	1.1	1.1
Senior Analysts	2.0	2.2	1.9	1.7
Junior Analysts	1.7	2.0	1.4	1.6
Senior Assessment Staff	1.3	1.4	0.9	1.3
Junior Assessment Staff	1.2	1.3	1.0	1.1
Technical Staff	1.5	1.8	1.0	1.2
Administrative Support Staff	0.9	1.0	0.7	0.8

Graduate Student Staff	0.8	0.9	NA	0.6
Undergraduate Student Staff	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.8
Average Staff FTE per Office	3.8	5.5	2.9	2.9

Creating sufficient capacity within the IR/IE office can be challenging, leading some institutions to engage faculty associates to expand their analytical capabilities. According to the survey, 5% of IR/IE offices report working with faculty associates, with an average headcount of 1.6 contributing approximately 8.8 hours per week (Table 6). While public 2-year institutions are only slightly more likely to use this model (6%), those that do appear to rely on it more heavily, reporting an average of 2.7 faculty associates who contribute 15.7 hours per week, nearly double the engagement seen in other sectors.

Table 6. Faculty Associates

Faculty	All Institutions	Public 4-year	Public 2-year	Private NFP 4-year
Percentage of IR/IE Offices with Faculty Associates	5%	4%	6%	4%
Average headcount of Faculty Associates	1.6	1.1	2.7	1.1
Average number of hours/week a Faculty Associate contributes to IR/IE Office	8.8	5.3	15.7	6.8

Another approach to expanding institutional data capacity involves strengthening analytics functions outside the IR/IE office. Nearly half of institutions (49%) report having distributed or embedded analysts within administrative units (Table 7). In most cases (69%), these analysts maintain a collaborative relationship with the IR/IE office, though only 2% report directly to it. Most institutions (75%) have between 1 and 5 FTE in these roles, indicating a modest but supportive presence.

Table 7. Distributed Analysts within Administrative Units

	All Institutions	Public 4-year	Public 2-year	Private NFP 4-year
Percentage of institutions with distributed analysts	49%	52%	25%	59%
Relationship Between Analysts and IR/IE Office				
Only a collaborative relationship between analyst and IR/IE Office.	69%	70%	72%	68%
Relationship depends on the unit.	16%	18%	14%	16%
No relationship	6%	3%	7%	8%
Analysts report to unit with a dotted-line relationship with IR/IE Office	5%	7%	0%	6%
Analysts have a direct-report relationship with IR/IE Office	2%	2%	7%	1%
Other	1%	0%	0%	1%
Staff FTE of Distributed Analysts				
1 FTE or less	23%	13%	33%	27%

2 to 5 FTE	52%	50%	58%	52%
6 to 10 FTE	14%	22%	4%	10%
11 or more FTE	11%	15%	4%	10%

Distributed analysts are less common in academic units; 24% of institutions report having these positions. When present, these analysts tend to collaborate with IR/IE but are far less common, especially in public 2-year institutions (7%). Staffing levels in these roles mirror those in administrative units (Table 8).

Table 8. Distributed Analysts within Academic Colleges/Schools

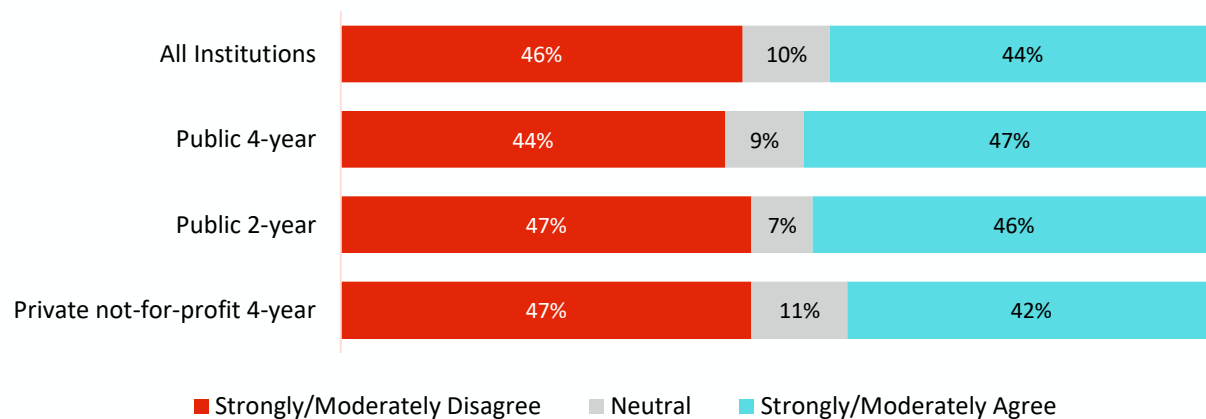
	All Institutions	Public 4-year	Public 2-year	Private NFP 4-year
Percentage of institutions with distributed analysts	24%	34%	7%	26%
Relationship Between Analysts and IR/IE Office				
Only a collaborative relationship between analyst and IR/IE Office.	69%	73%	75%	65%
Relationship depends on the unit.	15%	18%	13%	12%
No relationship	9%	5%	0%	13%
Analysts have a direct-report relationship with IR/IE Office	3%	4%	13%	2%
Analysts report to unit with a dotted-line relationship with IR/IE Office	2%	0%	0%	5%
Other	2%	0%	0%	3%
Staff FTE of Distributed Analysts				
1 FTE or less	26%	23%	50%	25%
2 to 5 FTE	49%	43%	50%	54%
6 to 10 FTE	15%	23%	0%	10%
11 or more FTE	10%	11%	0%	10%

Together, these staffing models illustrate an emphasis on collaboration and distributed capacity as institutions seek to expand analytic reach and responsiveness.

Evaluation of Staff FTE

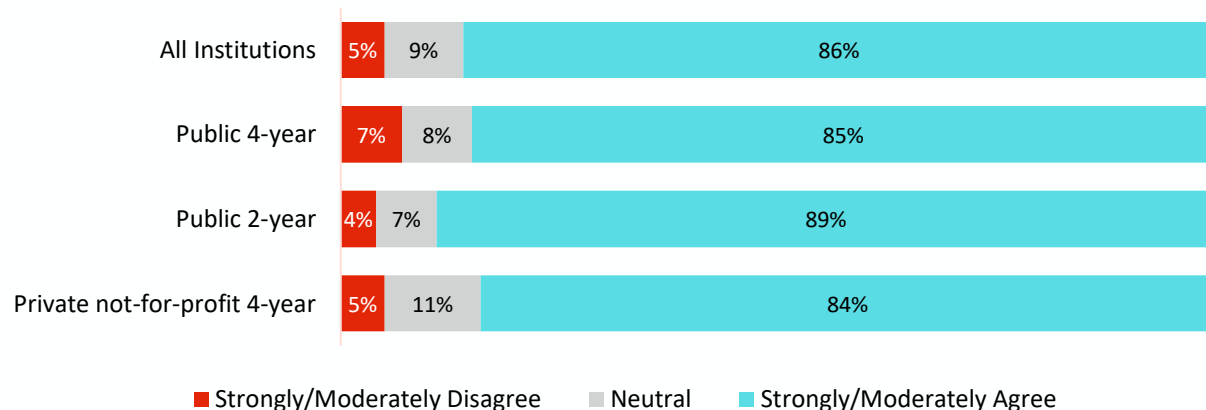
We asked office leaders to indicate their level of agreement with the statement, “At our current staffing level, the office can achieve its goals by never or rarely asking staff to work overtime.” Only 44% of IR/IE leaders agreed, suggesting that regular overtime is common for many offices (Chart 4). Agreement levels were consistent across sectors pointing to widespread pressure on staffing capacity.

Chart 4. Office Can Achieve Work Without Staff Working Overtime



Regardless of overtime concerns, nearly all office leaders (86%) agreed their offices could better meet institutional expectations with additional staff. This sentiment is consistent across sectors, reflecting a shared recognition that current staffing levels limit the ability of IR/IE offices to fully support institutional priorities. (Chart 5).

Chart 5. Office Can Better Meet Institutional Expectations with Additional Staff



When asked about staffing needed to meet current and future expectations, office leaders reported an ideal average of 5.5 FTE, rising to 6.0 FTE over the next three years. Compared to the current average of 3.8 FTE, this suggests that most IR/IE offices would benefit from roughly two additional full-time positions to align capacity with current institutional needs (Chart 6).

Chart 6. Comparison of Current Staff FTE vs. Ideal Staff FTE

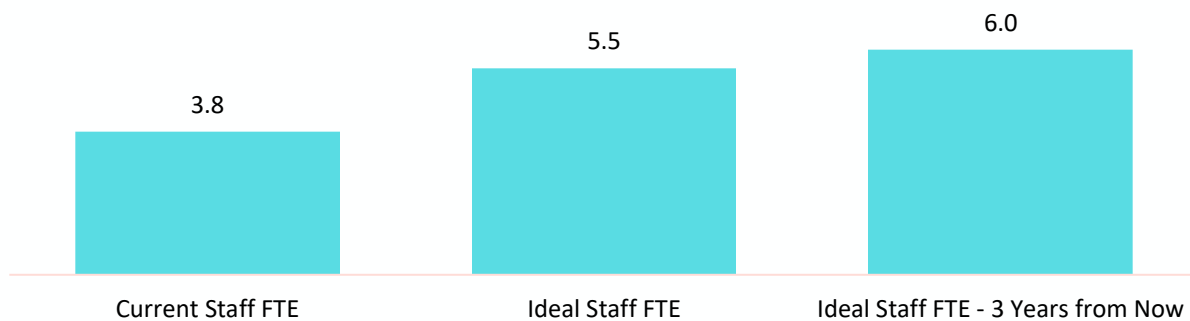


Table 9 details the projected staffing gaps by enrollment and sector: larger institutions (20,000+ student FTE) report the most substantial needs, projecting the ideal growth from 10.1 to 15.9 FTE. Public 4-year institutions report the largest gaps (from 5.5 to 8.4 FTE over 3 years), while private not-for-profit 4-year institutions and public 2-year institutions anticipate smaller, but still meaningful gaps.

Table 9. Actual vs. Ideal Staff FTE

	Actual Staff FTE	Ideal Staff FTE	Ideal Staff FTE - 3 Years from Now
All Institutions	3.8	5.5	6.0
Student FTE Enrollment			
Less than 3,000 student FTE	2.1	3.2	3.7
3,000 to 4,999 student FTE	2.9	3.9	4.5
5,000 to 9,999 student FTE	4.4	6.4	6.3
10,000 to 19,999 student FTE	6.5	9.7	10.6
20,000 or more student FTE	10.1	14.4	15.9
Sector			
Public 4-year	5.5	7.6	8.4
Public 2-year	2.9	4.6	4.6
Private NFP 4-year	2.9	4.3	4.8

**Enrollment data reported from the 2023 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 12-month enrollment survey, sum of undergraduate (FTEUG), graduate (FTEGD), and doctor's-professional practice (FTEDPP).*

Taken together, these findings illustrate both the diversity and the limitations of current IR/IE staffing models. As institutions look to strengthen their analytic capacity, attention to both office structure and the professionals who comprise these teams will be essential.

Staff Characteristics

In addition to examining staff roles and FTE, the survey explored the demographic characteristics of IR/IE office staff. Table 10 presents the gender identity breakdown by institutional sector (excluding the office leader). Overall, IR/IE staff are predominantly women (60%), with men representing 39%.

Table 10. Percentage of IR/IE Office Staff by Gender Identity

Gender Identity	All Institutions	Public 4-year	Public 2-year	Private NFP 4-year
Identify as women	60%	57%	61%	64%
Identify as men	39%	42%	38%	35%
Identify as another gender	1%	0%	0%	1%

The racial and ethnic composition of IR/IE staff (excluding the office leader) is majority White (65%), followed by Asian (16%) and Black or Hispanic staff (13% combined); see Table 11.

Table 11. Percentage of IR/IE Office Staff by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	All Institutions	Public 4-year	Public 2-year	Private NFP 4-year
White	65%	60%	67%	72%
Asian	16%	17%	13%	16%
Hispanic or Latino/a	7%	8%	9%	6%
Black or African American	6%	7%	8%	3%
Bi/Multiracial	3%	4%	2%	2%
Middle Eastern or North African	2%	2%	1%	1%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1%	2%	0%	1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%	0%

IR/IE staff are also highly educated: 70% hold graduate degrees, including 18% with doctorates (Table 12). This high level of educational attainment is consistent across sectors and reflects the advanced analytical, technical, and communication skills required for success in this field.

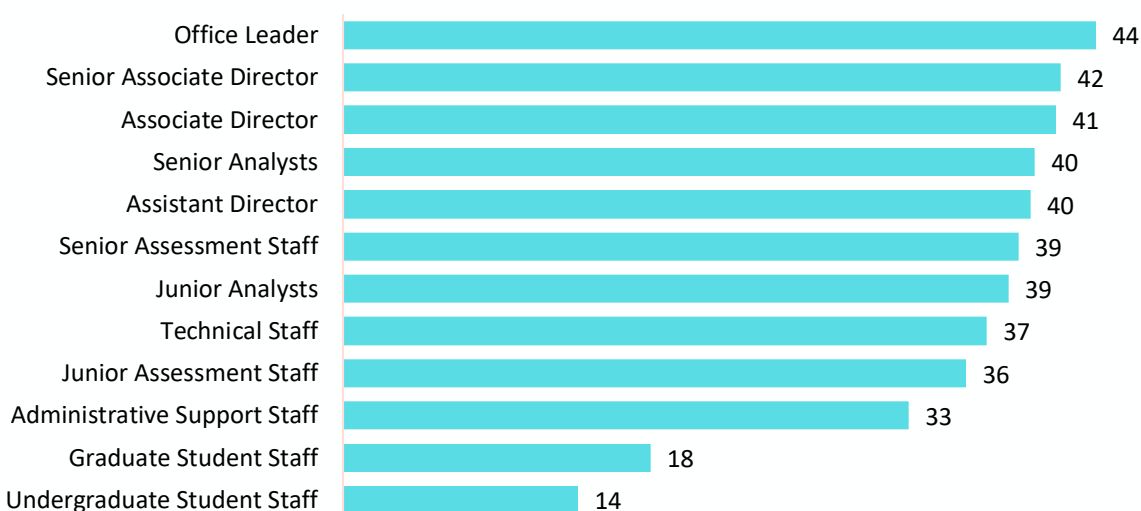
Table 12. IR/IE Office Staff Headcount by Highest Degree Earned

Degree	All Institutions	Public 4-year	Public 2-year	Private NFP 4-year
Baccalaureate degree or lower	30%	31%	31%	27%
Master's degree/Specialist	52%	50%	57%	52%
Doctoral degree, including professional practice doctorates	18%	19%	13%	20%

Working Conditions

Office leaders were asked to estimate the average number of hours worked per week by staff role. Office leaders report the longest work weeks (44 hours), followed by senior associate directors (42) and analysts (40). Technical staff and junior analysts also report relatively high average hours, while student workers and admin staff report fewer hours (Chart 7).

Chart 7. Average Hours Worked Per Week by Staff Role



One in four office leaders (25%) work more than 50 hours per week, with this proportion rising to 34% at public 4-year institutions (Table 13). While less common, some senior analysts and associate directors also report working more than 50 hours, reflecting the sustained demand for institutional data and analytic support.

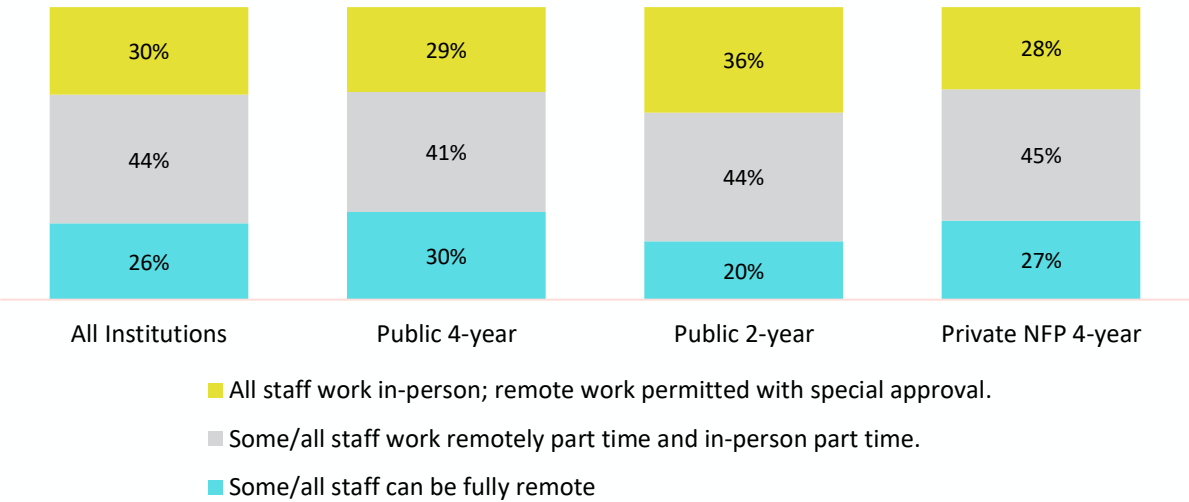
Table 13. Percentage of IR/IE Office Staff Working 50+ Hours per Week, on Average

	All Institutions	Public 4-year	Public 2-year	Private NFP 4-year
Office Leader	25%	34%	20%	20%
Senior Associate Director	9%	5%	0%	16%
Associate Director	11%	15%	33%	6%
Assistant Director	1%	3%	0%	0%
Senior Analysts	5%	6%	2%	4%
Junior Analysts	2%	3%	3%	0%
Senior Assessment Staff	0%	0%	0%	0%
Junior Assessment Staff	0%	0%	0%	0%
Technical Staff	4%	4%	0%	4%
Administrative Support Staff	1%	2%	0%	0%

Graduate Student Staff	2%	3%	N/A	0%
Undergraduate Student Staff	0%	0%	0%	0%

Flexible work arrangements are increasingly common. 26% of IR/IE offices allow some or all staff to work fully remotely, and another 44% offer hybrid schedules (Chart 8). These flexible models are slightly more prevalent at public and private not-for-profit 4-year institutions, suggesting a continued shift toward adaptable work environments post-COVID.

Chart 8. Remote Work Options



Summary

The 2024 AIR National Survey highlights both the strength and the strain within IR/IE offices across U.S. higher education. While most offices are staffed by highly educated and dedicated professionals, the data reveal persistent gaps between current staffing levels and institutional needs, particularly at smaller and resource-constrained institutions. One-third of offices have just one or fewer FTE, and most identify a need for at least two additional staff to meet current and future demands. Despite these challenges, IR/IE professionals remain central to advancing data-informed decision making, collaborating across units, and contributing to key institutional priorities. Sustained investment in staffing capacity through expanded roles, distributed analysts, and supportive working conditions will be essential to maintain and strengthen this critical work.

Methodology

The 2024 AIR National Survey targeted leaders of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (IR/IE) offices at 1,676 U.S. postsecondary, degree-granting institutions across all sectors, control types, and sizes. A

total of 633 institutions submitted responses. To ensure comparability and data quality, this report excludes incomplete responses as well as those from for-profit institutions, administrative units, international institutions, private not-for-profit 2-year institutions, and institutions located in U.S. territories due to low response rates in these categories.

The findings presented in this report are based on 552 complete or semi-complete responses from U.S. degree-granting institutions, including:

- 183 public 4-year institutions
- 118 public 2-year institutions
- 251 private not-for-profit 4-year institutions

Where possible, longitudinal comparisons are included. These comparisons draw on data from:

- 253 institutions that responded to both the 2024 and 2021 AIR National Surveys
- 147 institutions that responded to the 2024, 2021, and 2018 AIR National Surveys

Suggested Citation

Jones, D. and Keller, C. (2024). *2024 AIR National Survey: IR/IE Office Staff* [Report]. Association for Institutional Research. www.airweb.org/NationalSurvey.