

The Education Sector Rates Importance of IP Telephony Features, Management and Applications

Research conducted by: **COMPUTERWORLD**
The Voice of IT Management

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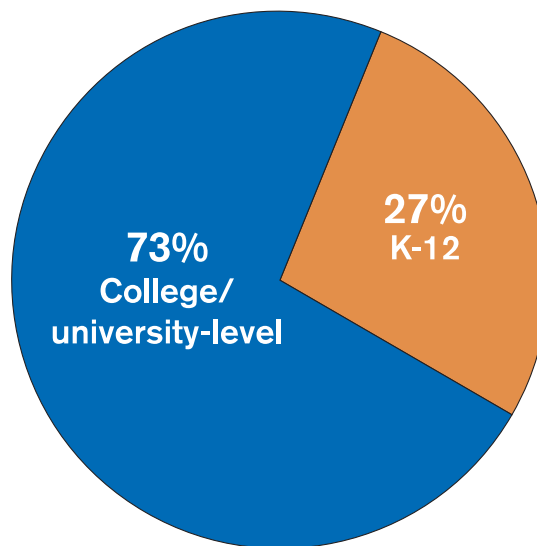
Overview

In October 2006, Computerworld invited IT influencers in the education sector to participate in a survey on IP telephony. A pop-up appeared on Computerworld.com inviting visitors to take the survey. The goal of the survey was to better understand the challenges of IP telephony within K-12 and college/university-level institutions and see how those challenges differ across these types of educational institutions. The survey was commissioned by ShoreTel, but data was gathered and tabulated independently by Computerworld Research. The following report represents top-line results of that survey and is meant to serve as a brief benchmarking tool for IT managers in education seeking information about how their peers are managing their telecommunications systems.

Profile of respondents

Total respondents: 134

The survey was conducted among IT influencers in K-12 and college/university-level institutions only. All 134 respondents were qualified as employed at one of the two types of educational institutions and also involved in IP telephony decisions at their organizations. The following is a breakout of respondents by sector.



For the purpose of analysis, this report will at times compare responses to this survey with those to this same questionnaire when it was given by Computerworld Research to 388 IP telephony influencers across all industries in March 2005.

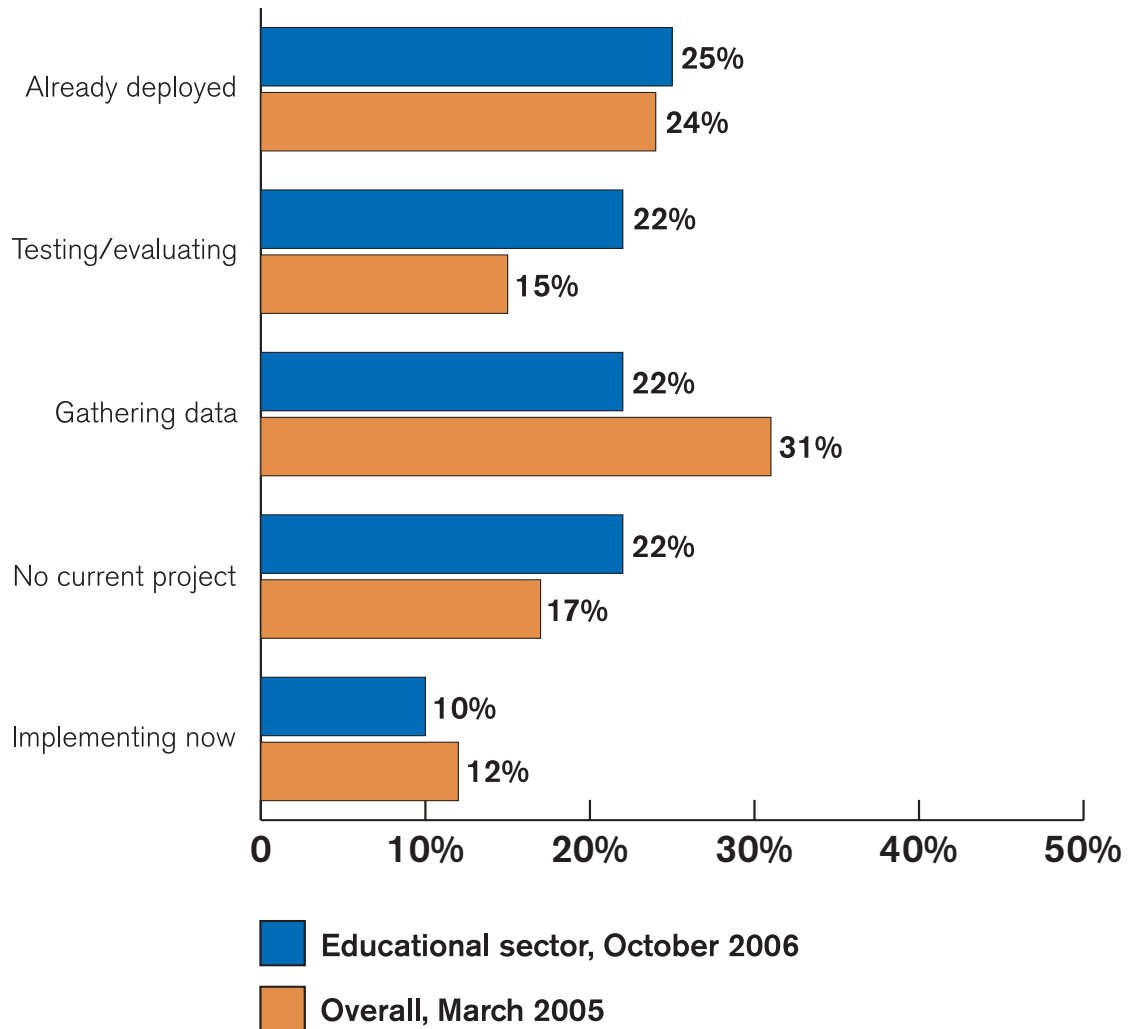
Note: Because of the somewhat small base sizes we see when we break out overall respondents by industry, results comparing one industry to another should be taken as directional only.

Executive summary

- Educational institutions are just as likely as the average organization to have IP telephony implemented. Over one-third (35%) of educational institutions either have IP telephony implemented or are in the process of implementing it now.
- Within the education sector, college/university and K-12 institutions have similar deployment levels, although those at the college/university-level are slightly more likely to be implementing IP telephony right now.
- The two biggest phone system challenges in the education sector are costs for moves/adds/changes and management time/complexity. Management time/complexity is something educational institutions found even more challenging than did their counterparts outside of education. Those in the education sector are also more likely to be challenged by end-user complaints/difficulties and are significantly more likely to report long-distance costs as a challenge.
- Interestingly, within the education sector, those at the college/university-level don't consider inconsistent/incompatible systems to be as big of a challenge as those at K-12 institutions. However, those at the college/university-level are particularly challenged by management time/complexity.
- Across all industries, system reliability is the most important capability desired for a phone system. While respondents in the education sector assign a similar level of importance to most of the capabilities measured as those in other industries, these respondents (especially those employed at the college/university-level) place a greater degree of importance on advanced features/applications.
- In terms of management functions, all industries are also in agreement that simplifying moves/adds/changes and setting up new users quickly is important. Educational institutions feel particularly strongly about each of the functions and place a noticeably higher level of importance on the ability to manage systems remotely using a Web browser.
- Across all industries, phone system managers are looking for mobility and conferencing as the two key additional phone system capabilities.

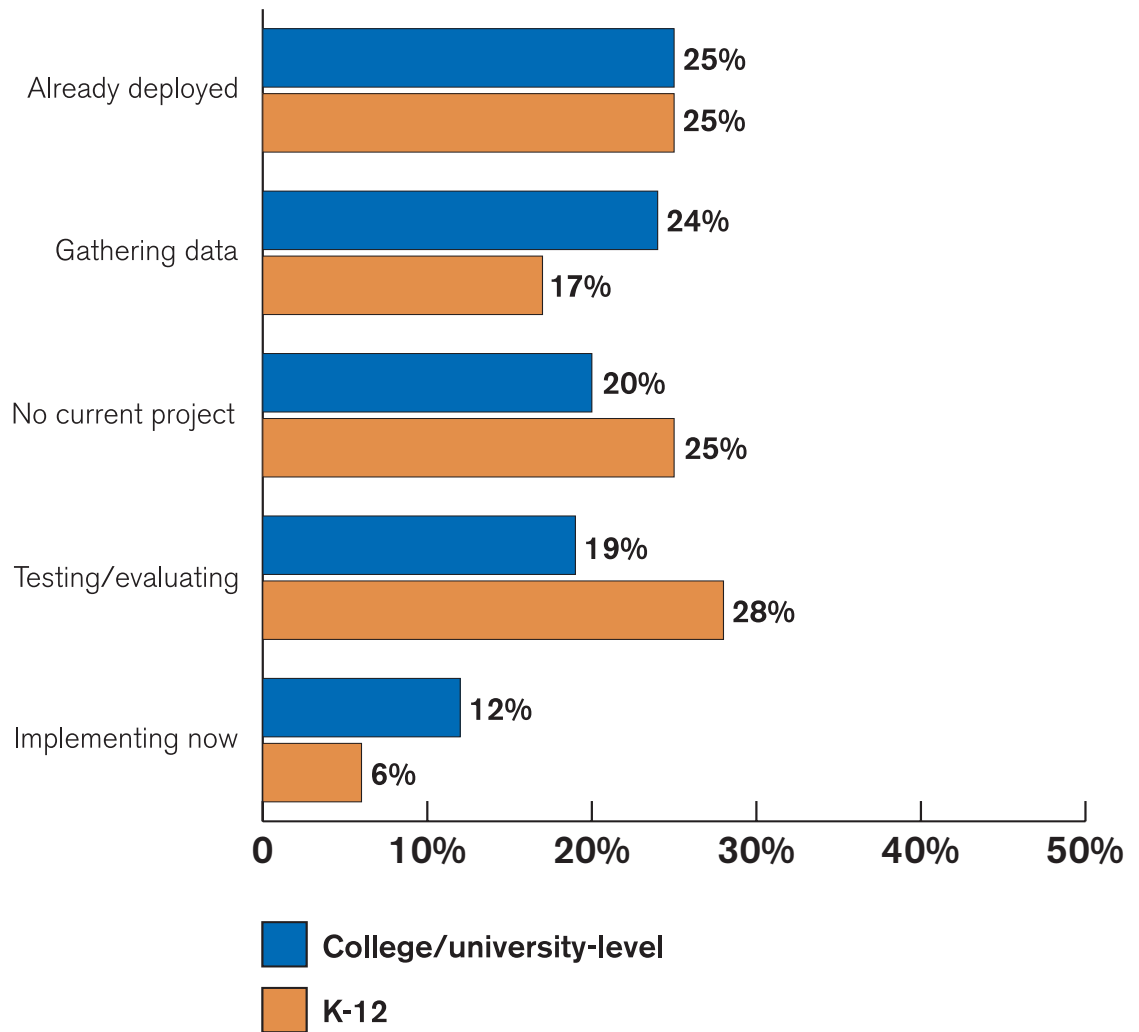
IP telephony implementation – education sector vs. all industries

When comparing responses from influencers in the education sector to those across all industries from the March 2005 survey, we see similar implementation levels, indicating that educational institutions are just as reliant on IP telephony as a standard company.



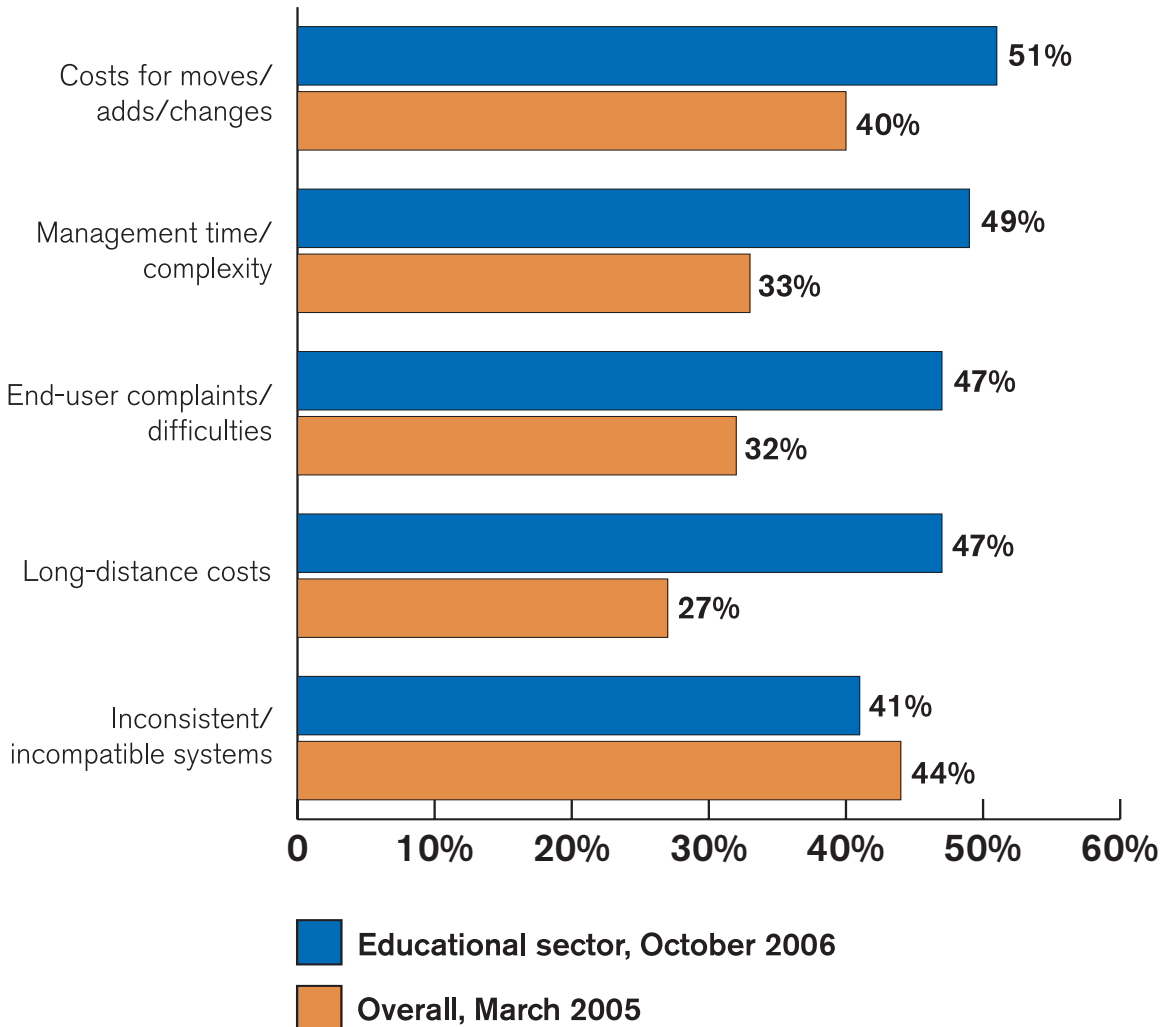
IP telephony implementation – comparing educational institutions

Based on responses to this survey, K-12 and college/university-level educational institutions appear to have similar deployment levels. In fact, one quarter of the influencers in each group indicated that their organizations have already deployed IP telephony.



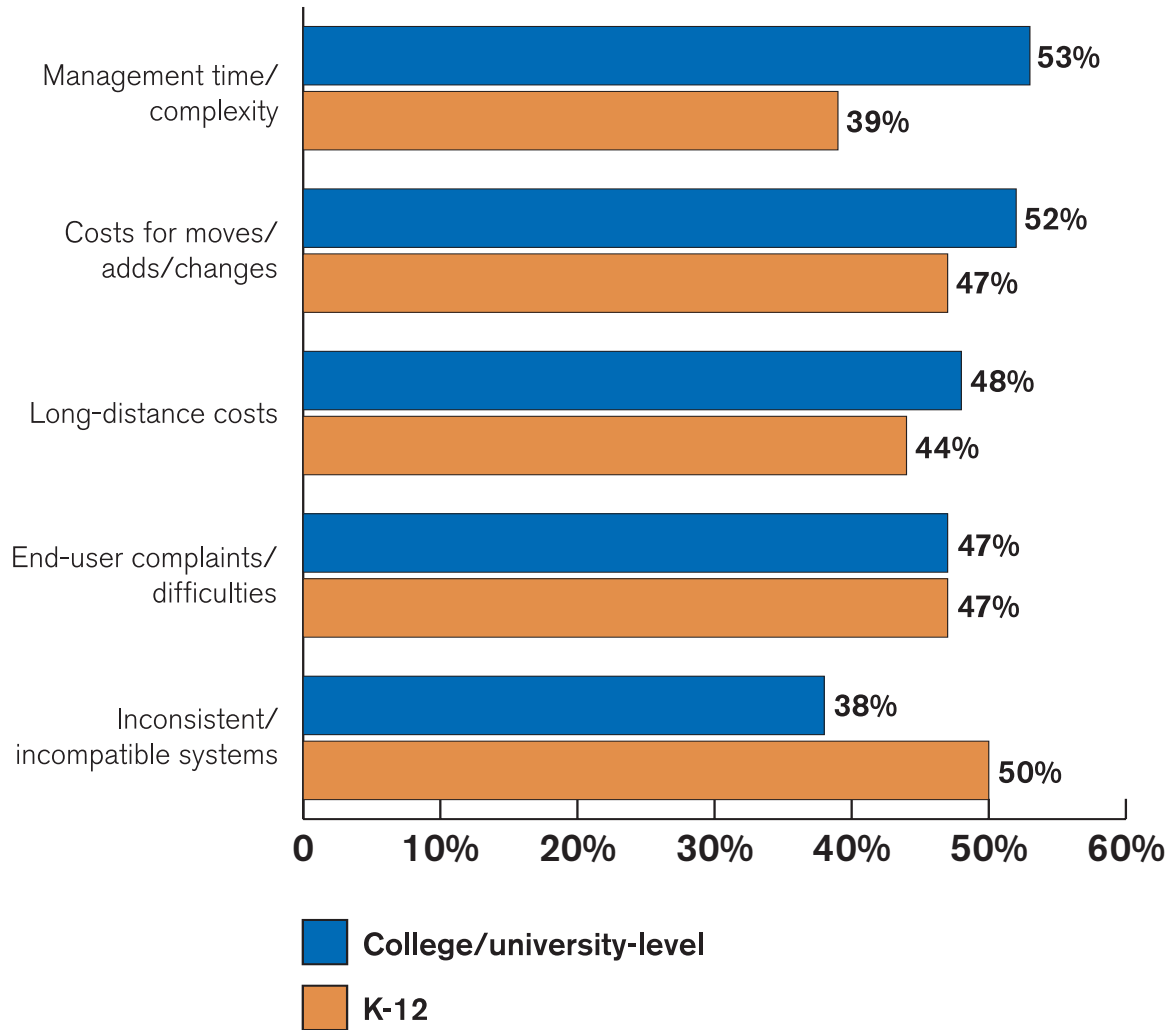
Phone system challenges – education sector vs. all industries

When comparing what influencers in education consider their biggest challenges to what influencers across all industries consider challenging, we see that educational institutions are significantly more likely to be concerned about long-distance costs. Influencers at educational institutions are also more likely to report management time/complexity and end-user complaints/difficulties as challenges with their current phone systems.



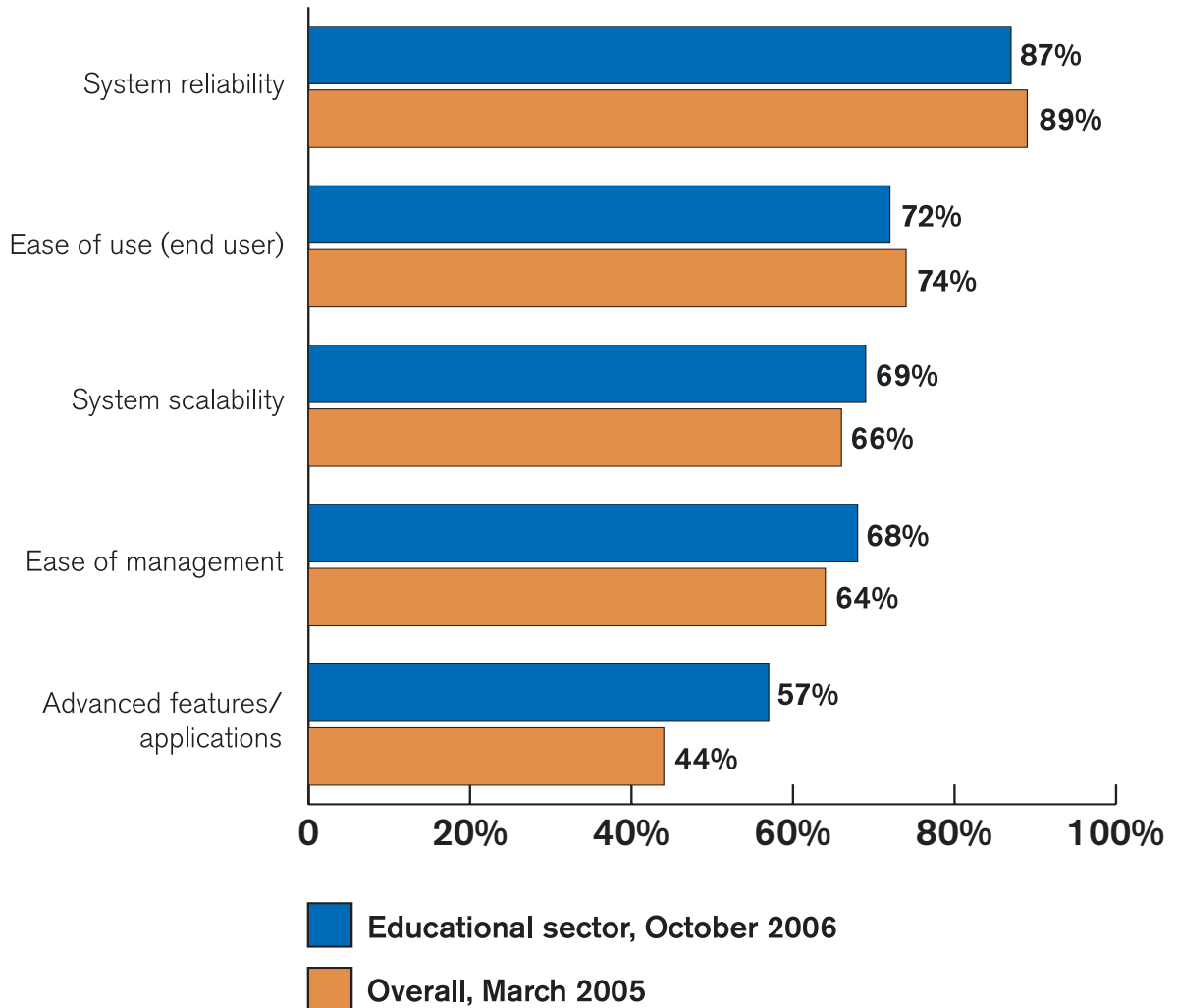
Phone system challenges – comparing educational institutions

Managers within K-12 and college/university-level institutions reveal some different perceptions of what they find challenging with their phone systems. College/university-level managers seem more likely to see management time/complexity as a challenge than their counterparts at the K-12 level but are less likely to see inconsistent/incompatible systems as a major issue. Managers within each sector are therefore clearly striving to have phone systems that address their unique challenges.



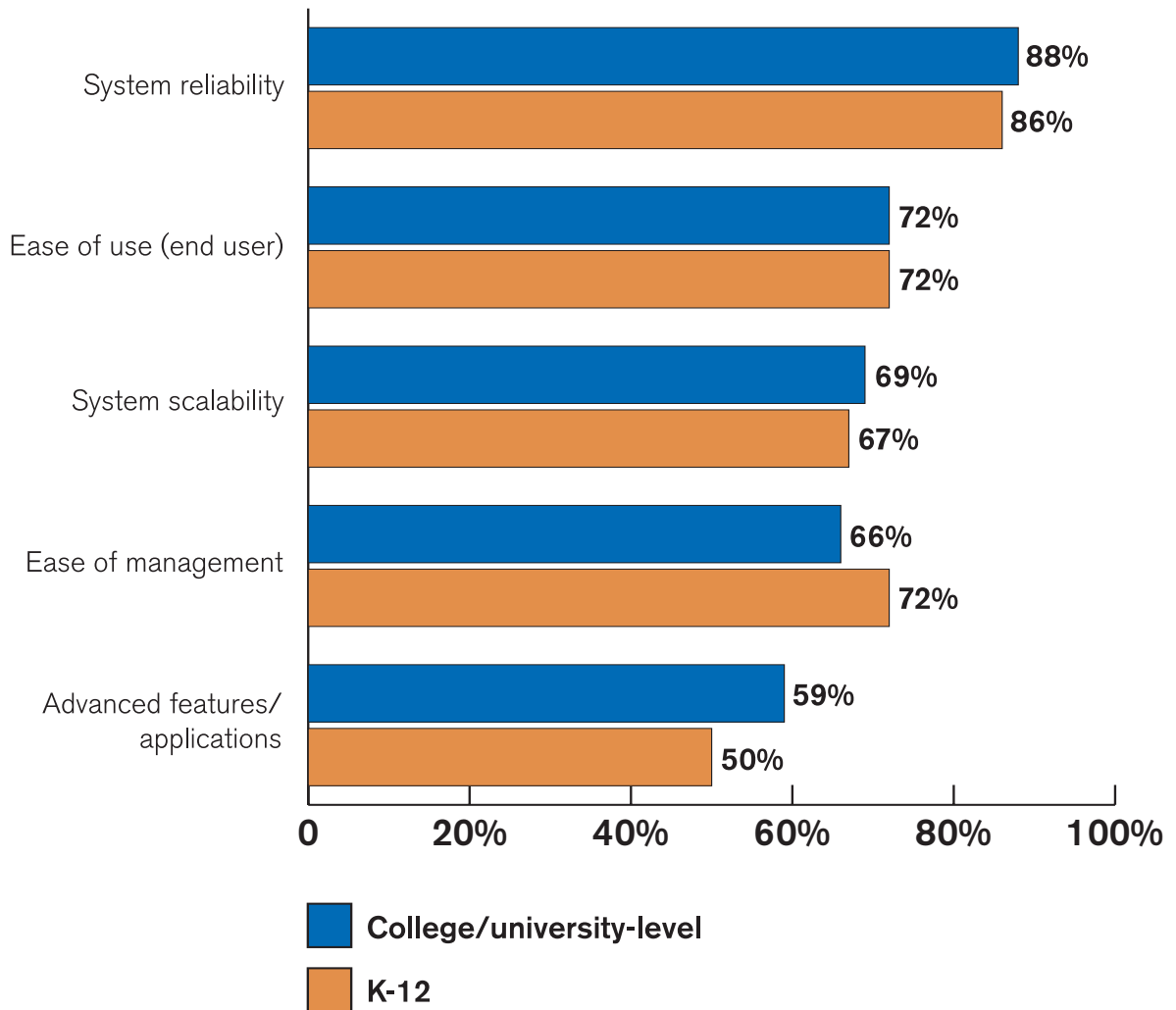
Important telephone capabilities – education sector vs. all industries

When looking at what IP telephony managers in educational institutions or in any industry consider the most important issue related to their phone systems, it can be summed up as follows: reliability, reliability, reliability. Respondents to both this study and to the study across all industries in 2005 showed system reliability to be far and away the most important issue, while advanced features and applications were least likely to be considered important. However, respondents from the education sector do feel more strongly than their counterparts outside of education about having access to advanced features and applications.



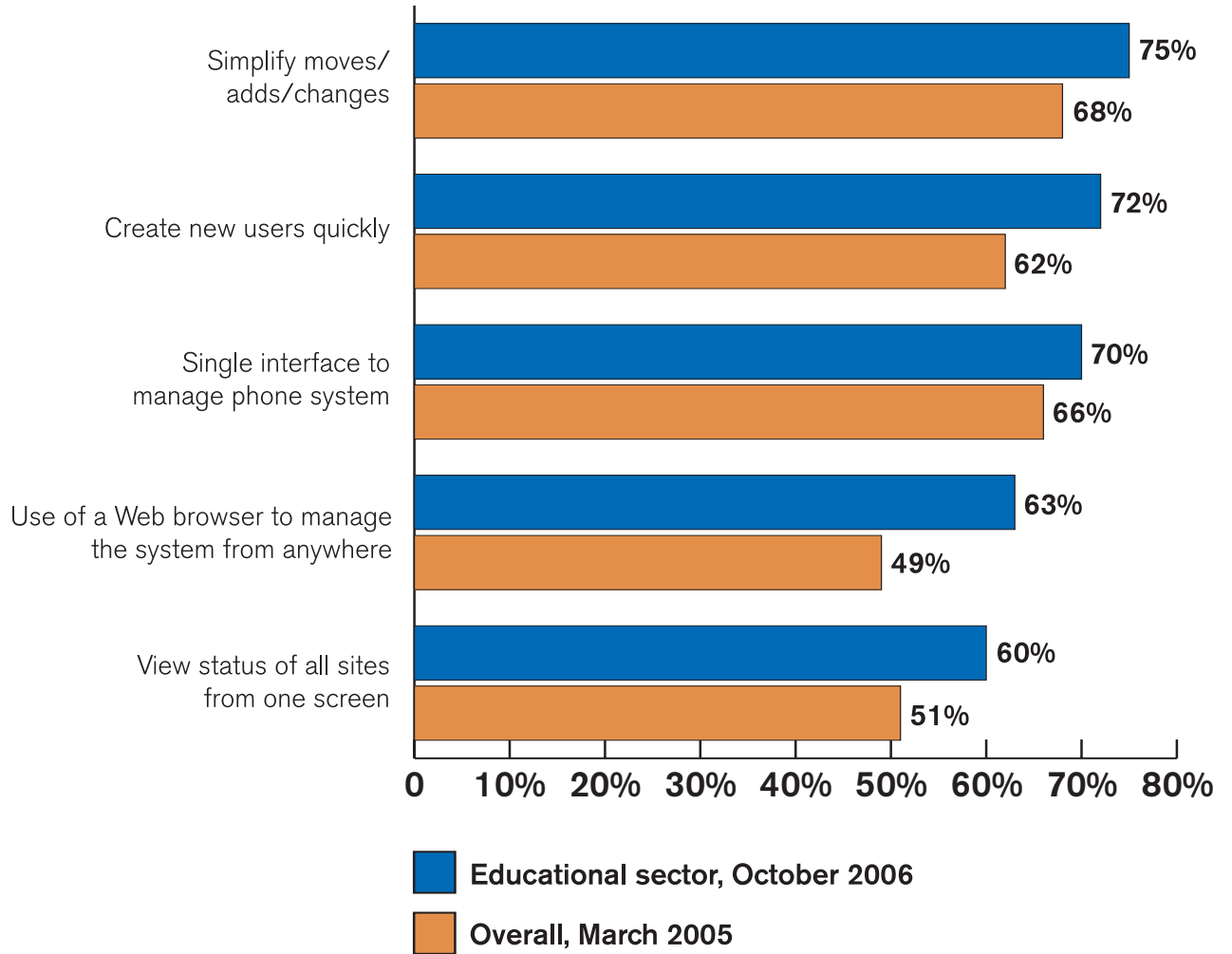
Important telephone capabilities – comparing educational institutions

While respondents at each type of educational institution appear to place a similar amount of importance on the various capabilities measured, those at college/university-level institutions seemed more likely than their counterparts in K-12 institutions to place importance on advanced features and applications.



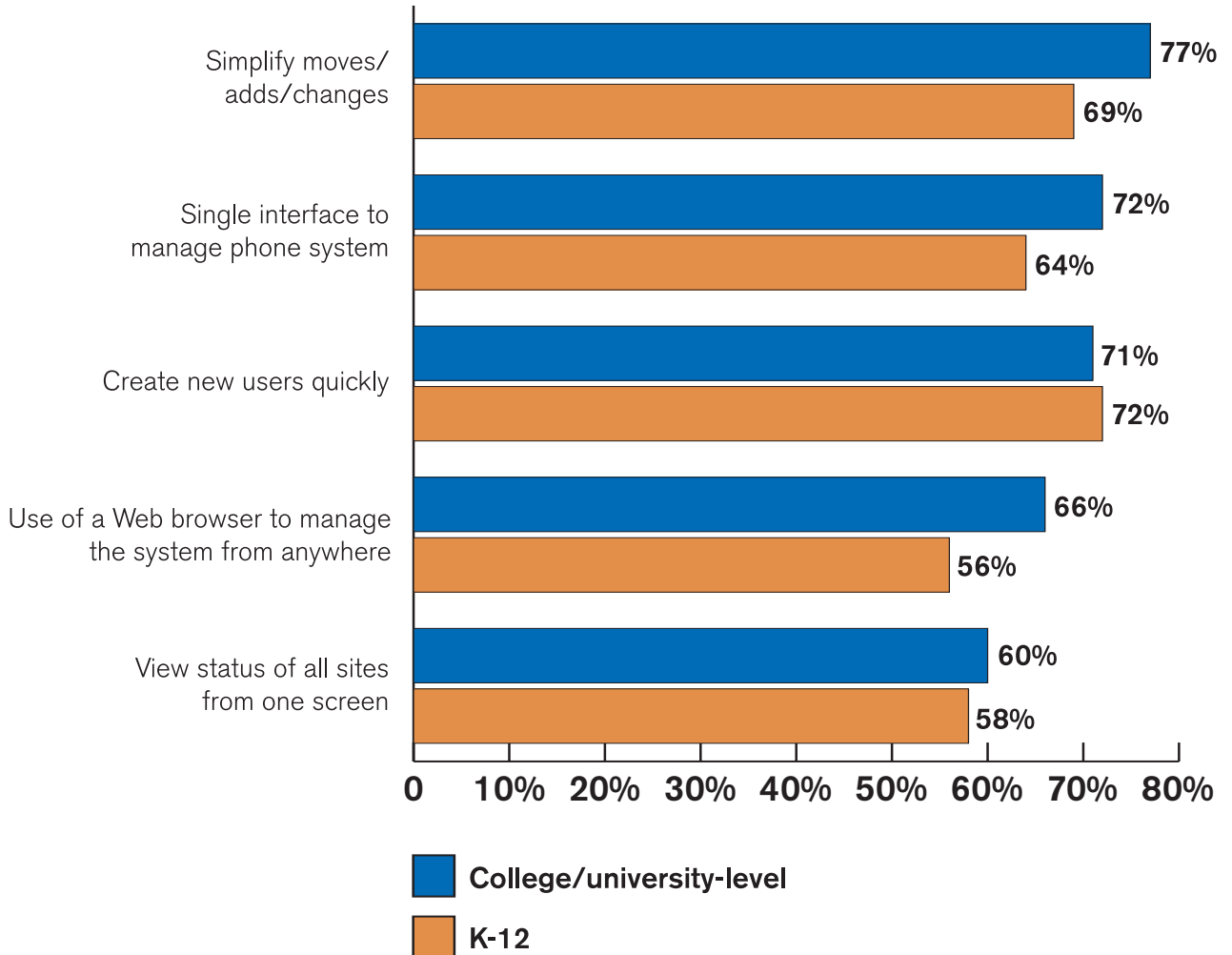
Important management functions – education sector vs. all industries

In terms of management functions that are important, we see that educational institutions place a slightly higher level of importance on each function measured, especially the ability to use a Web browser to manage the system remotely and the ability to create new users quickly.



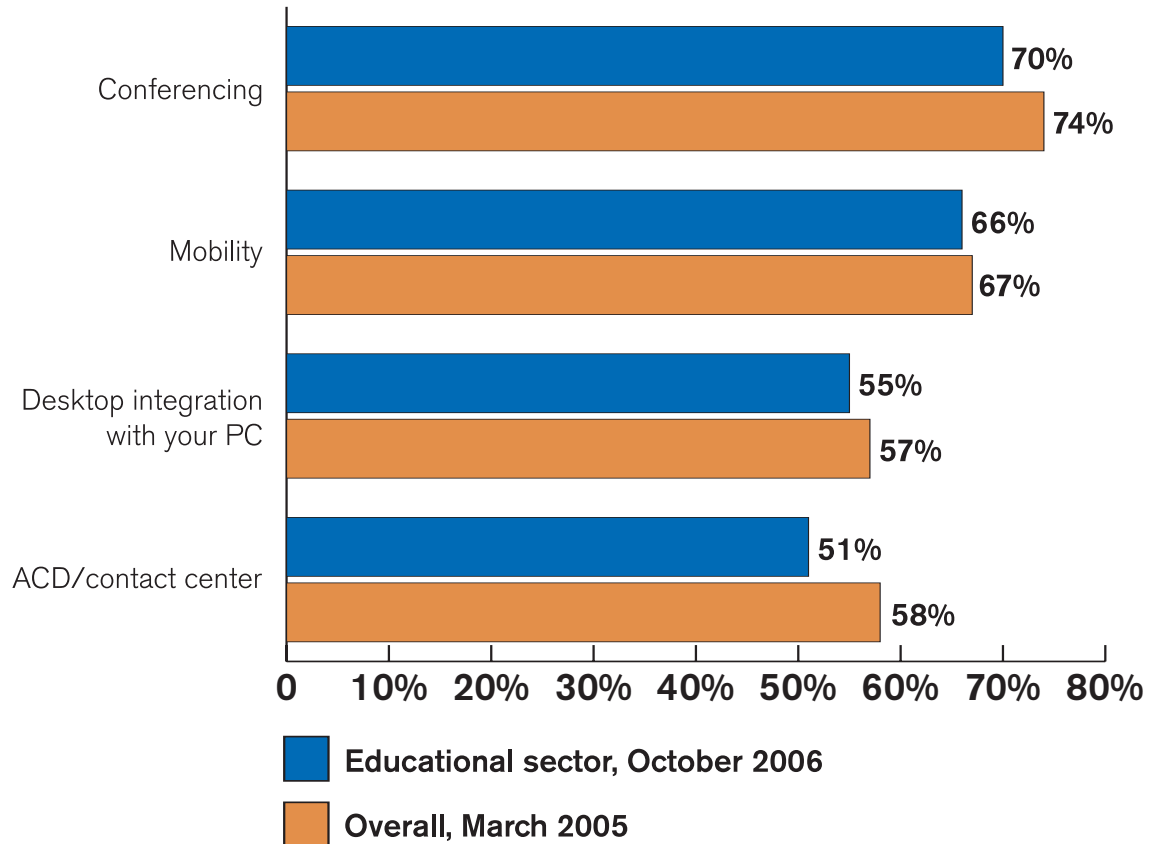
Important management functions – comparing educational institutions

Respondents at college/university-level institutions appear to feel more strongly than those at K-12 institutions about the importance of using a Web browser to manage the system remotely. Those at the college/university-level also place a higher importance on simplifying moves/adds/changes and the use of a single interface to manage the entire system.



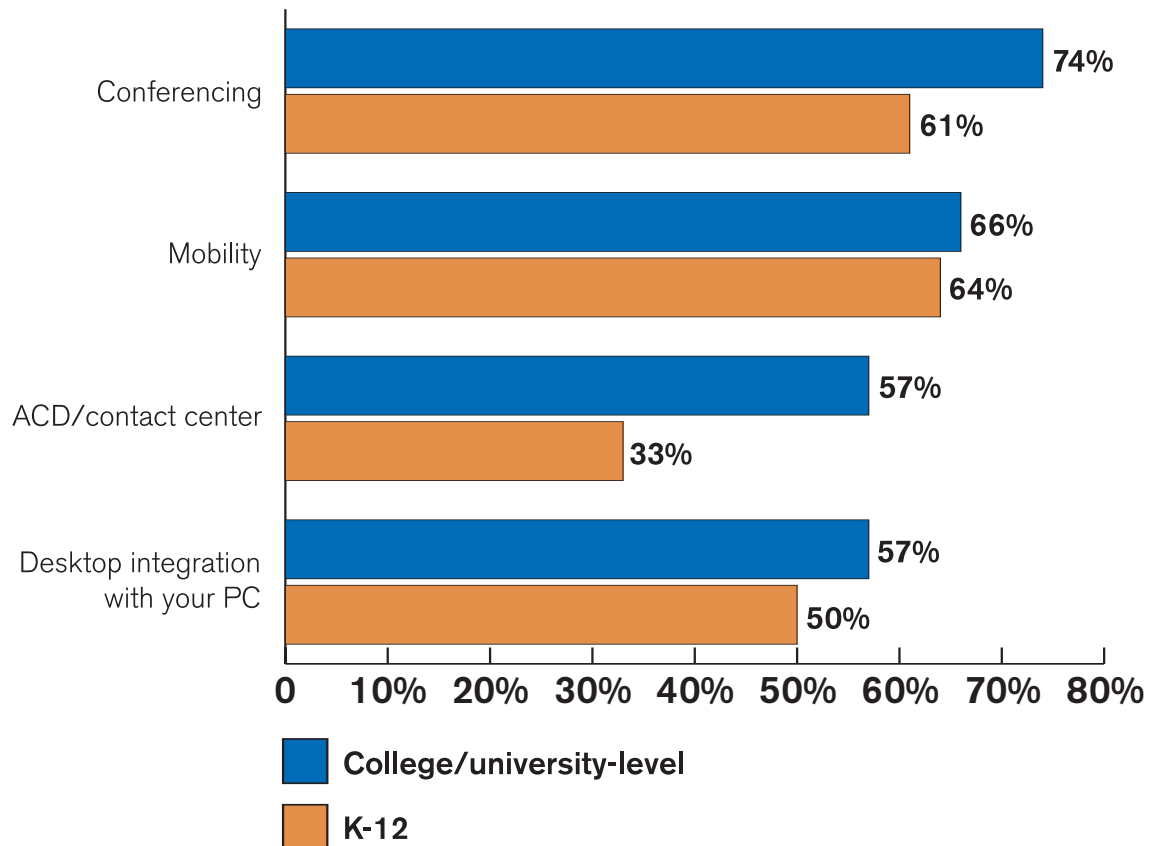
Additional telephone system capabilities – education sector vs. all industries

Education sector respondents, like those across all industries, see conferencing and mobility as the two most important additional applications they need for their phone systems. Those in the education sector are just slightly less likely than respondents in all industries combined to rate automatic call distribution (ACD)/contact center as an important application.



Additional telephone system capabilities – comparing educational institutions

When comparing which additional capabilities the different educational institutions favor, we see that mobility is equally important across the industry. However, respondents at college/university-level institutions are significantly more likely to consider ACD/contact center as important, most likely due to the larger size of these institutions. Not surprisingly, conferencing is also seen as slightly more important among those in the college/university-level sector.



Conclusion

It's clear from this survey that educational institutions' core needs for their phone systems are similar to those of companies outside the education sector. All organizations are looking for systems that are reliable and have mobility and conferencing capabilities, and for systems that can set up new users quickly. Educational institutions also share with other organizations the desire to overcome some of the major challenges of phone systems, such as the costs for moves/adds/changes. There are some issues related to phone systems that are specific to the education sector, however. First of all, influencers in education see long-distance costs as more of a challenge than do those outside of education. Educational institutions, particularly those at the college/university-level, are also more in need of advanced features and applications, such as access to the entire phone system through a single interface and the ability to manage the phone system from anywhere using a Web browser.

So what does all this mean for influencers in the education sector who are contemplating what to do regarding their companies' phone systems? Basically, if you're an influencer in this industry, you can use responses from this survey as a sort of a benchmark for how your peers are addressing these issues. If you don't have an IP telephony system implemented and have no project in progress to make this happen, you are in the minority (22%). If you are planning to implement IP telephony, it's important that the provider you seek understands the challenges of phone systems expressed by respondents in this survey. Make sure the systems are reliable and address issues such as long-distance costs. Most of all, make sure the provider has experience specifically serving the education sector, because the needs within this field are unique.