2026 FUNERAL AND CEMETERY CONSUMER BEHAVIOR STUDY

Summary Report

FORESIGHT

Research conducted by

FORTITUDE
Research ✦ Marketing

FCCBS Year 7

The 2026 FCCBS Study marks our 7th annual assessment of the funeral and cemetery profession. The study serves as the premier source of information about the industry by tracking opinions, attitudes, and behaviors of funeral-and-cemetery consumers and the professionals that serve them.

We spoke to more than 5,000 consumers and more than 1,000 industry insiders to understand their insights and perceptions of the deathcare profession.

New Topics for 2026 Include:

- ✓ Streaming: What % of arrangers stream? Why do they choose NOT to stream? What share of services are attended virtually?
- ✓ Making Decisions: How influential are funeral and cemetery professionals
- ✓ Facility Characteristics: What characteristics are important to the consumer? Do the perceptions of Professionals align?
- ✓ Association Participation: How active are professionals with various associations? What is the impact of active involvement?
- ✓ Pre-Need Sales Programs: What specific P/N sales activities are most/least common? How do professionals feel about the effectiveness of their organization's P/N sales program?
- ✓ Consolidators & Independents: How do the attitudes of Professionals at consolidator locations compare to those at independent locations?

Contents

Consumer Perspective: *Our Profession and Our People*

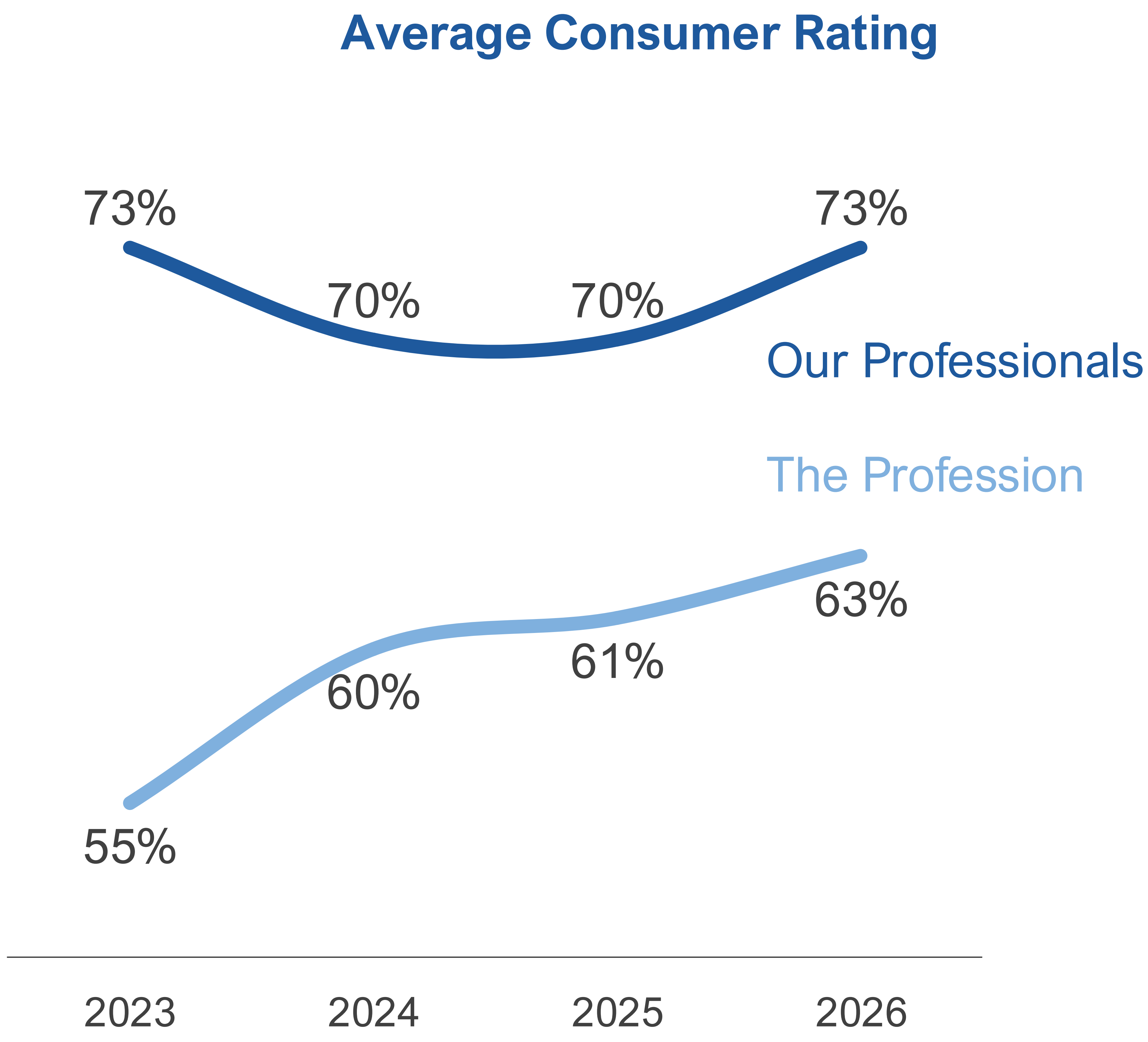
The Consumer's View

Ratings of the **PROFESSION** have resumed a gradual upward trend after being essentially flat in 2025. Over the past 4 years, all of the individual attributes we ask about have improved, but none more so than "Responsiveness to cultural and family traditions". A relative weakness in 2023, cultural & family sensitivity is now something our Profession is quite good at.

Other areas that the consumers consider Professional strengths include Professionalism and Providing a Comforting and Supportive Environment.

Conversely, ratings for our **PROFESSIONALS,** although better than ratings for the Profession, are a bit more stagnant. While it's true that the overall rating of our people are slightly better than in 2025, they are essentially unchanged over the past 4 years.

This is not only true for our Professionals overall, it is also true for each of the individual attributes that we ask consumers to assess. The strengths and weaknesses of our people outlined on the next page remain stubbornly unchanged.



Strengths and Weaknesses

Collective Strengths
(The Profession and The People)

- Professionalism
- Providing a Comforting Environment
- Ability to Recommend Products & Services

Shared Weaknesses
(The Profession and The People)

- Meeting My Budget
- Providing/Explaining Technology
- After-Service Support

	Unique Strengths	Unique Weaknesses
The PROFESSION	Responsiveness to Traditions	Honesty
Our PROFESSIONALS	Honesty	Going “Above and Beyond”

Collectively, we are good at:

- Providing a comforting environment…
- Where people are treated professionally…
- And are able to learn about their options

As a whole, we are not good at:

- Technology
- After-service support
- Meeting our family’s budgets

Notable Blind Spots

It is not surprising that Professionals rate their Profession more favorably than consumers do. Psychologists refer to this as “the curse of knowledge”, something that occurs because insiders are aware of all exhaustive efforts made to satisfy the customer, whereas the customer has very little appreciation for those efforts, especially when they don’t work to their satisfaction. Regardless, these perception gaps are something the Profession cannot ignore.

Perhaps the most alarming of these blind spots is over perceptions of Honesty. In simple terms, industry insiders consider the Profession to be an honest one. Consumers are less convinced.

The other two blind spots of note are related to Professionals greatly overestimating the effectiveness of communication to their customers.

- Product Awareness: Consumers simply do not know very much about their funeral and cemetery options, something our Professionals continue to miss.
- Education: Similarly, Professionals dramatically over-estimate the effectiveness of their efforts to provide education to their customers.

HONESTY rating for The PROFESSION

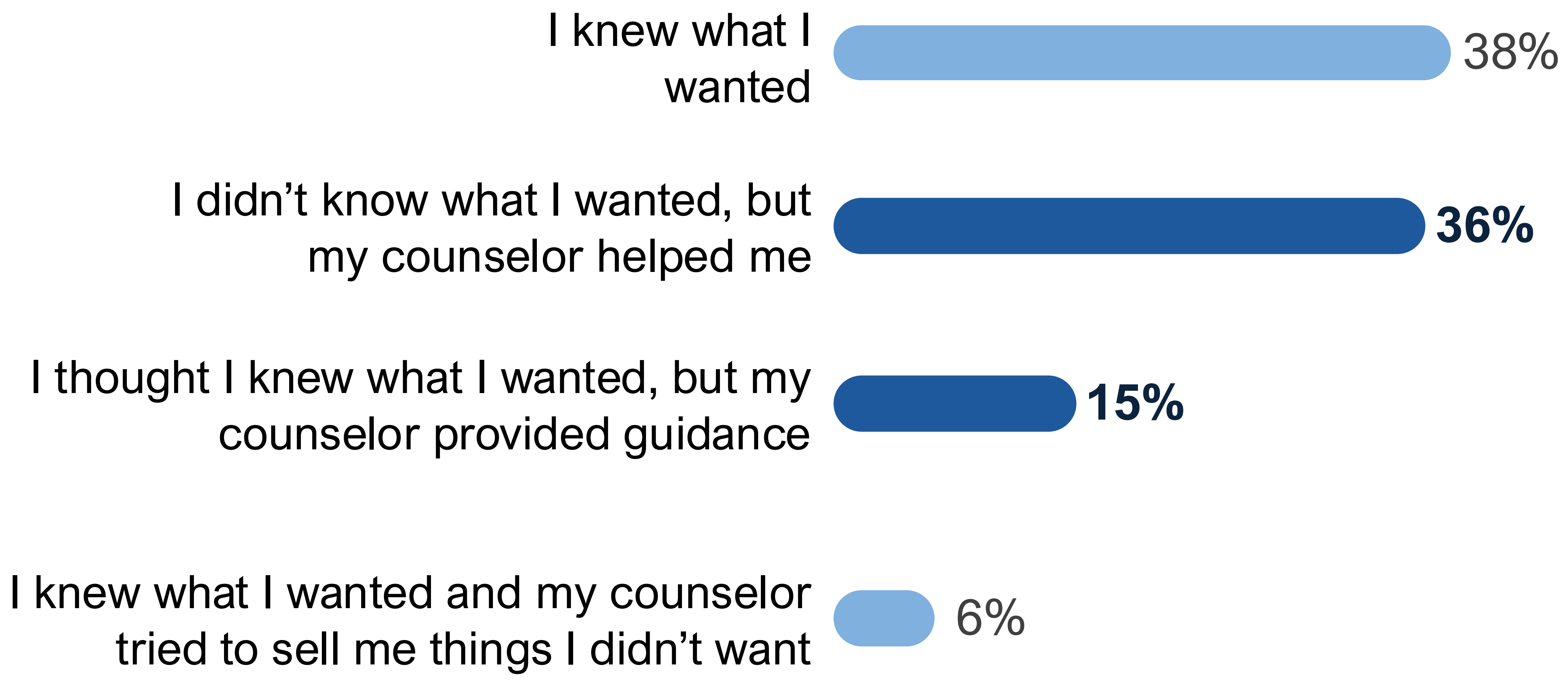
78% Professionals ⟷ **60%** Consumers

The **INDUSTRY** Believes Awareness is… **59%** ⟷ Actual **CONSUMER** Awareness is… **29%**

The **INDUSTRY** Says Education was Offered **70%** ⟷ The **CONSUMER** Says Education was Received **32%**

New for 2026

Which of the following best describes your decision-making process?



Opportunities to Influence

Despite these blind spots, and related to the customer's relative lack of knowledge, our Professionals are an important influence in the final decisions customers make.

Most consumers who have made funeral and/or cemetery arrangements feel that guidance from our counselors was additive to their experience: Over 50% report that their counselor helped them make their final decisions.

Equally important, only a very small percentage feel that our Profession pressured them to make purchases beyond what they were comfortable with.

Consumer Perspective: *Behaviors and Expectations*

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The Online Imperative

More customers than ever are researching online, and your website is in their crosshairs.

While online behavior by consumers has lagged with our profession, recent and future consumers expect convenient access just as they have with other industries every day.

They are looking for access to transparent price information …and whole a lot more.

Consumers Are Searching For Your Location Online

Future Consumers 81%

Recent Consumers 60%

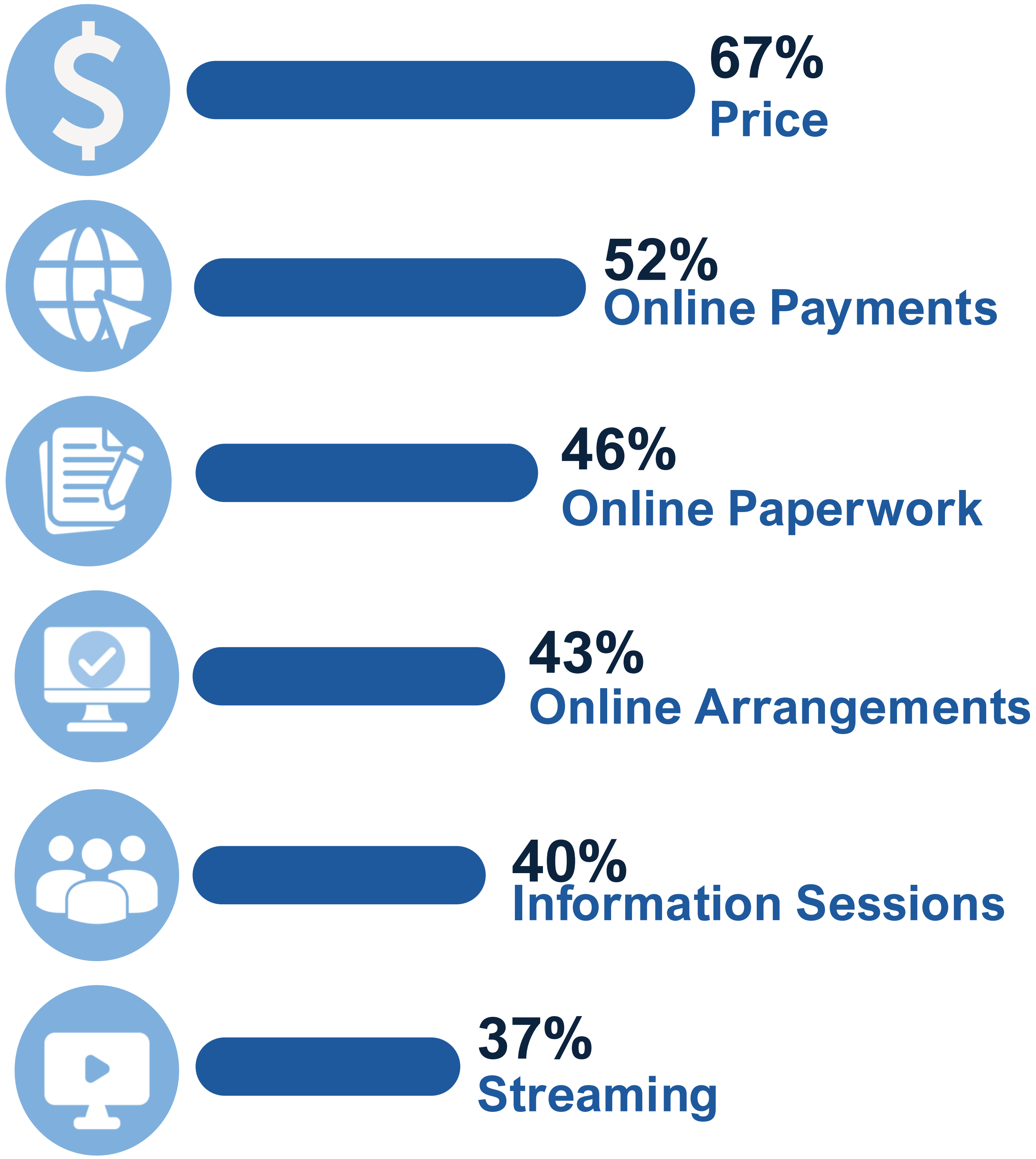
Past Consumers 32%

They Are Primarily Using Two Online Research Tools

78% Search

69% Location's Website

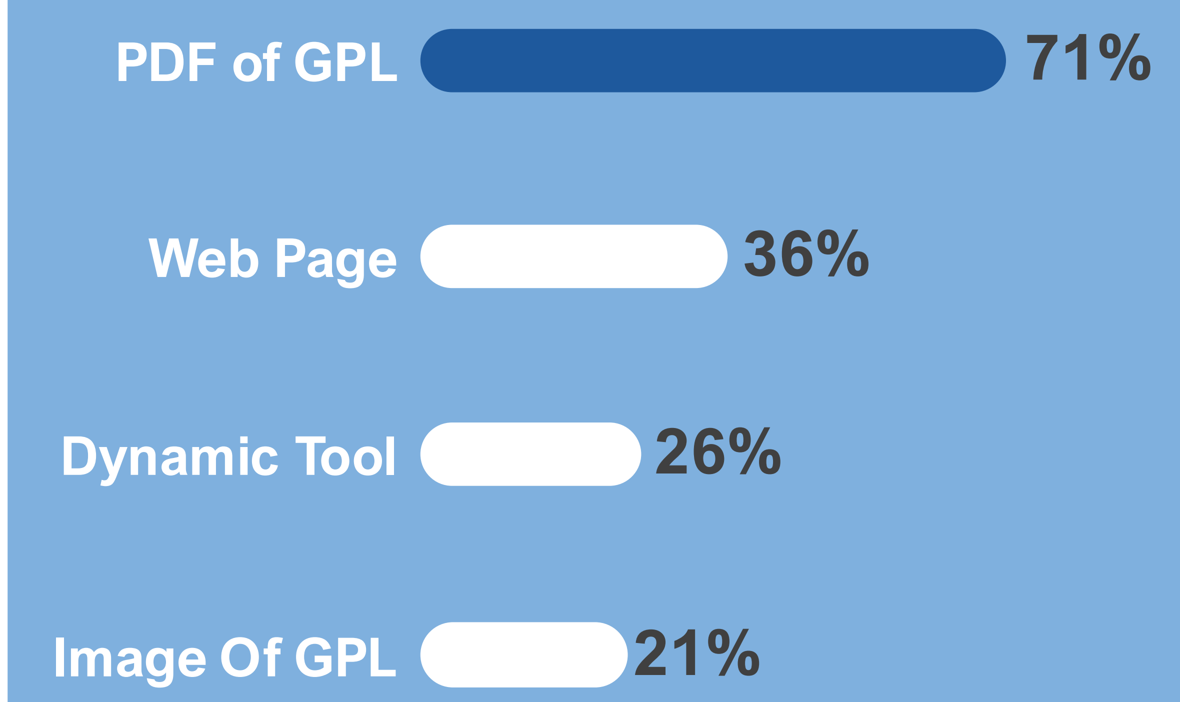
And they Want More Than Just Pricing From Your Website



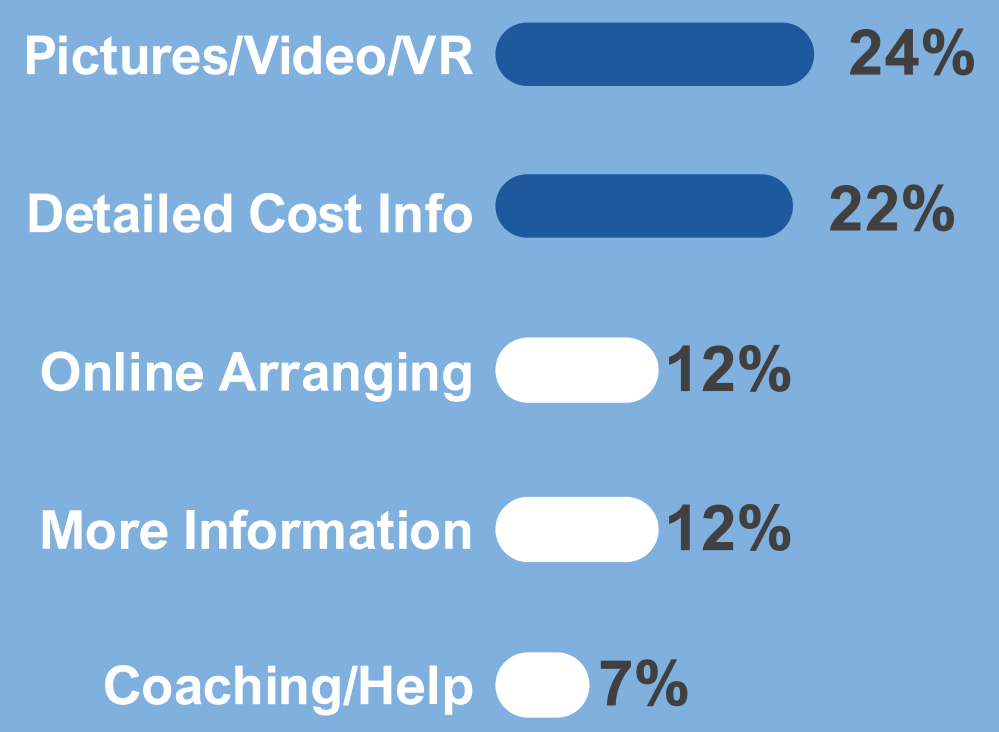
Opportunities to Improve Online

Only a quarter (26%) of our locations present pricing in a way that aligns with consumer behavior. Most locations do so in a way that simply isn't as valuable to the consumer, which entirely defeats the purpose. In addition to pricing, consumers want to search and arrange online, and view videos and pictures that help them "see" your location without having to visit it in person.

How We Provide Pricing Is NOT Consumer Friendly

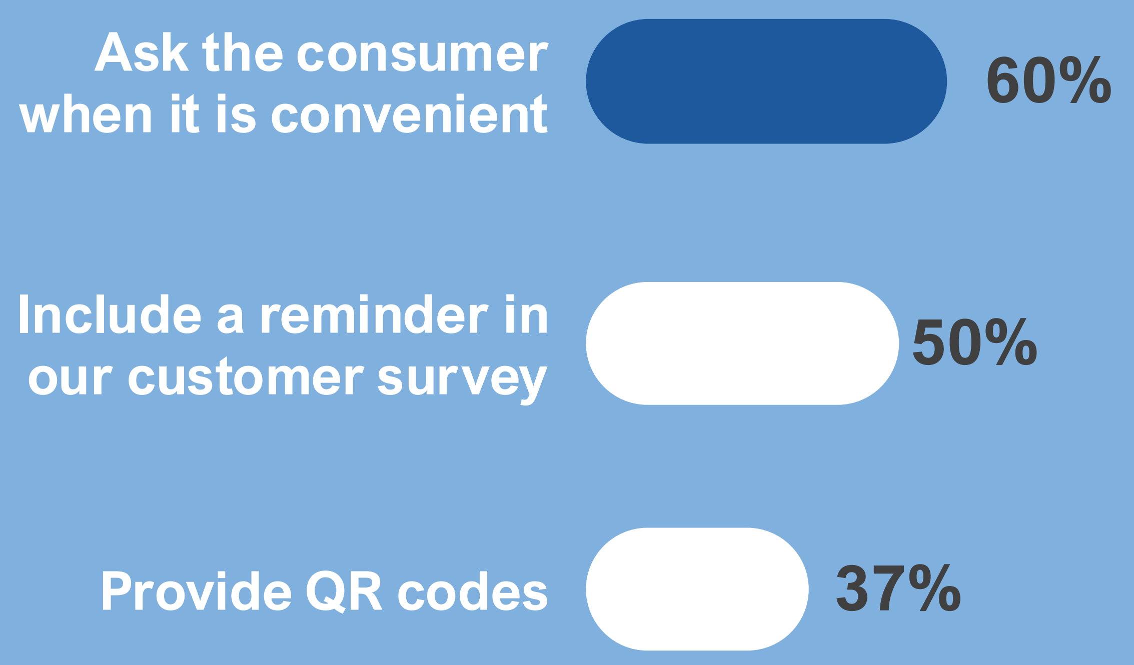


What Consumers WANTED To Do Online, But Couldn't



How We Ask For Reviews

(Top 3 Answers)



Shopping In-Person

For all we talk about digitization, the fact is that most consumers also shop the physical locations that they are considering.

The assumption that once we have a family in the fold, we have them for life is a nice soundbite, but the data doesn't bear that out. On average, consumers are visiting your location AND two others.

While consumers are increasingly visiting your website, don't lose sight of your physical location AND what is important to your customers.

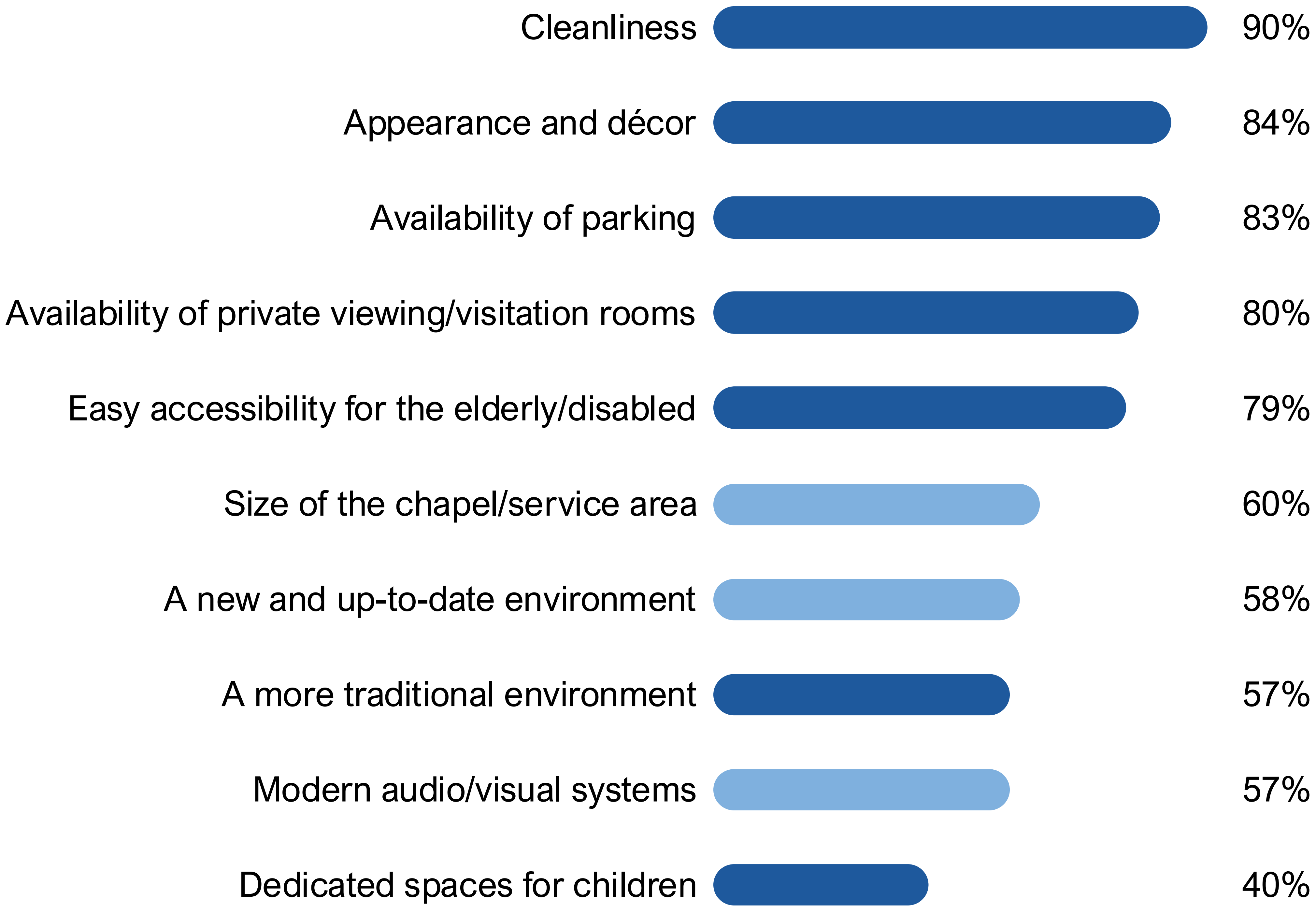
87%
Physically visited the location they SELECTED

33%
Physically visited OTHER locations

3.1
Average # of locations visited in-person

New for 2026

How important do you consider the following characteristics of a funeral home or cemetery?



Physical Location: What’s Important

Many of our locations obsess about the size of a chapel, how modern the location is, and whether they have the proper technology and AV systems.

The reality is, very little matters if they don’t have the ”blocking and tackling” right, which is REALLY what consumers find important – basic cleanliness, availability of parking, accessibility for older attendees.

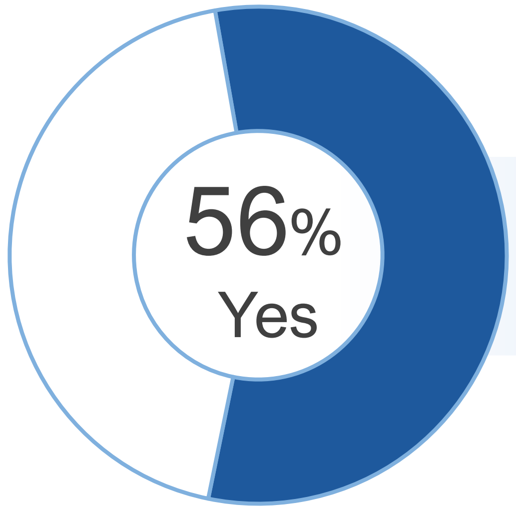
Think of this as a hierarchy of needs – yes, you should be investing in having a modern facility, but if the most basic consumer needs aren’t met, don’t expect consumers to be happy.

New for 2026

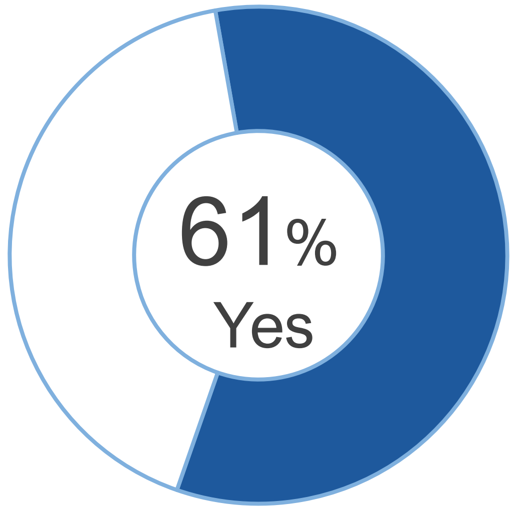
Streaming: Arrangers vs. Attendees

Arrangers

Were you offered the option of streaming the service you arranged?



Did you elect to stream the service?

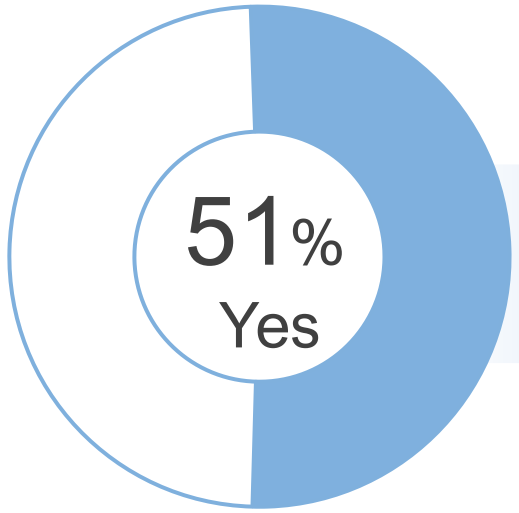


= 34%

% of All Arrangers streamed their service

Attendees

Have you attended a service in the past 12 months?



What kind of service did you attend?

In-Person Memorial	89%
In-Person Cemetery	45%
Online/Virtual	15%

= 15%

% of All ATTENDEES viewed a streamed service

New for 2026

Streaming: Arrangers vs. Attendees

34%

% of All Arrangers Streamed Their Service

15%

% of All ATTENDEES Viewed a Streamed Service

More than half (56%) of arrangers say they were offered the option of streaming their service, while a majority of consumers (61%) elected to stream the service. Ultimately, that means just over a third of families (34%) actually streamed their service.

Of those consumers who chose not to stream the service, many made that choice because their attendees were local, while some small portion of consumers still don't find it an appropriate thing to do.

This past year, about 15% of consumers who attended a funeral did so virtually.

Consumer Perspective: *Education and Awareness*

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Customers Don’t Know About Products/Services

Our Professionals continue to over-estimate how much the consumer knows about available products/services

59%

What Professionals BELIEVE Consumer Awareness of Our Products and Services Is

29%

Actual Consumer Awareness of Our Products and Services

Product / Service Awareness Gap Detail

	Professionals Believe Consumer Awareness is…	Actual Consumer Awareness is…	Gap
Online Cremation Arrangements	75%	17%	58%
Eco-friendly Burials	74%	30%	44%
Cremation Memorialization	90%	47%	43%
Natural Burial	75%	34%	41%
Memorial/Tribute Blankets	60%	22%	38%
Memory/Keepsake Stones or Jewels	83%	49%	34%
3D Memorial Photo/Crystal Picture	41%	13%	27%
Water Cremation	33%	11%	22%
Home Funerals	44%	23%	21%
Destination Scattering Services	47%	28%	19%
Tree Burial	47%	28%	19%
Human Composting/Recomposition	42%	26%	16%
Sea Burial	56%	46%	10%

As a profession, we continue to obsess about "direct cremation", but the fact is, most consumers aren't aware they can arrange online. That means there is still time to emphasize the value a traditional location provides compared to an online cremation arrangement, such as memorialization.

The problem is, consumers are telling us that we're not very good at communicating that value proposition, with less than half of them telling us they are aware that cremation memorialization is an option.

Your Customers Don't Feel Educated

Our Professionals also continue to over-estimate how well the they educate their customers.

77%

Of *Professionals* Say Education Was Offered

32%

Of *Consumers* Say Education Was Received

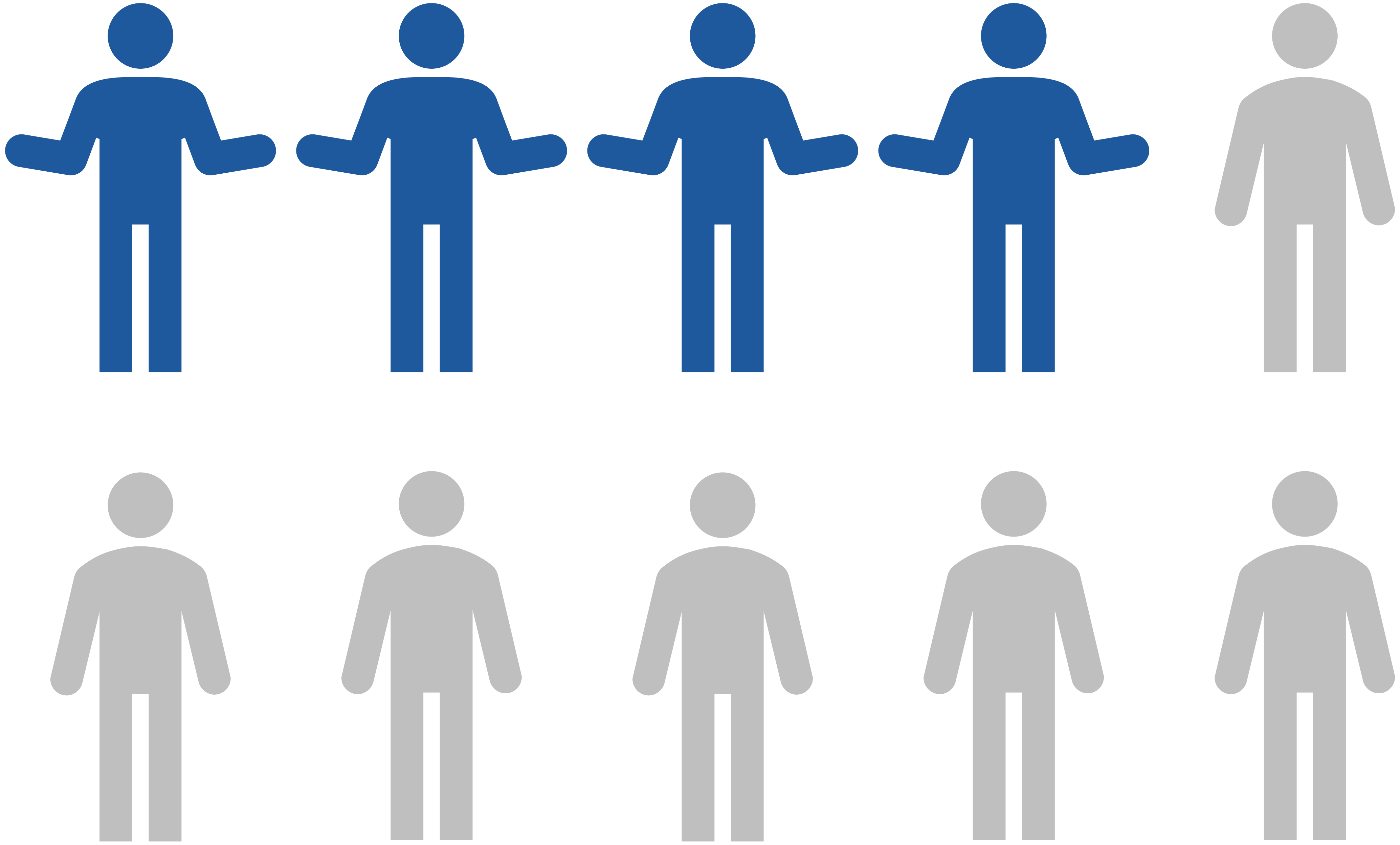
Education Gap Detail

If pre-planning is driving the future of revenue in our profession, we collectively need to do a better job of communicating this message, because a vast majority of arrangers aren't educated on the matter while an overwhelming majority of our professionals (93%) say they gave education.

On the flip side, many of our professionals aren't educating consumers on their post-cremation options are beyond disposition.

We're simply missing sales opportunities that are right in front of us – opportunities that would be additive to the customer experience AND provide added revenue to the Profession.

	Professionals Say They Offered It	Consumers Say They Received It	Gap
Pre-planned Arrangements	93%	29%	64%
Different Urn Options	89%	35%	54%
Cremation Memorialization	82%	30%	52%
Keepsake and Memorial Products	84%	33%	51%
Different Burial Options	83%	41%	42%
Different Casket Options	88%	49%	39%
Different Cremation Options	54%	24%	30%
Cremation Scattering Services	42%	19%	23%



40% of consumers don't know enough about Funeral & Cemetery products and services to make an informed decision

Consumer Discomfort

Given that consumers aren’t very aware of our products and services AND that they feel relatively uneducated by our Profession, it should come as no surprise that many are unsure about making end-of-life decisions.

This year, 40% agree with the statement “I don’t know enough about funeral and cemetery products and services to make an informed decision”.

They need help now more than ever.

Opportunities

The disconnects between our Professionals and the people they serve is almost certainly causing missed opportunities in key revenue areas:

- ✓ Cremation Memorialization
- ✓ Pre-Need Arrangements
- ✓ Online Cremation Arrangements

1 Cremation Memorialization…

Unmet Need for Education

Profession Says Education Offered **82%**

Consumer Says Education Received **30%**

And

Gap in Awareness

Profession Says Awareness is… **90%**

Actual Consumer Awareness Is… **47%**

2 Pre-Need Arrangements

Unmet Need for Education

Profession Says Education Offered **93%**

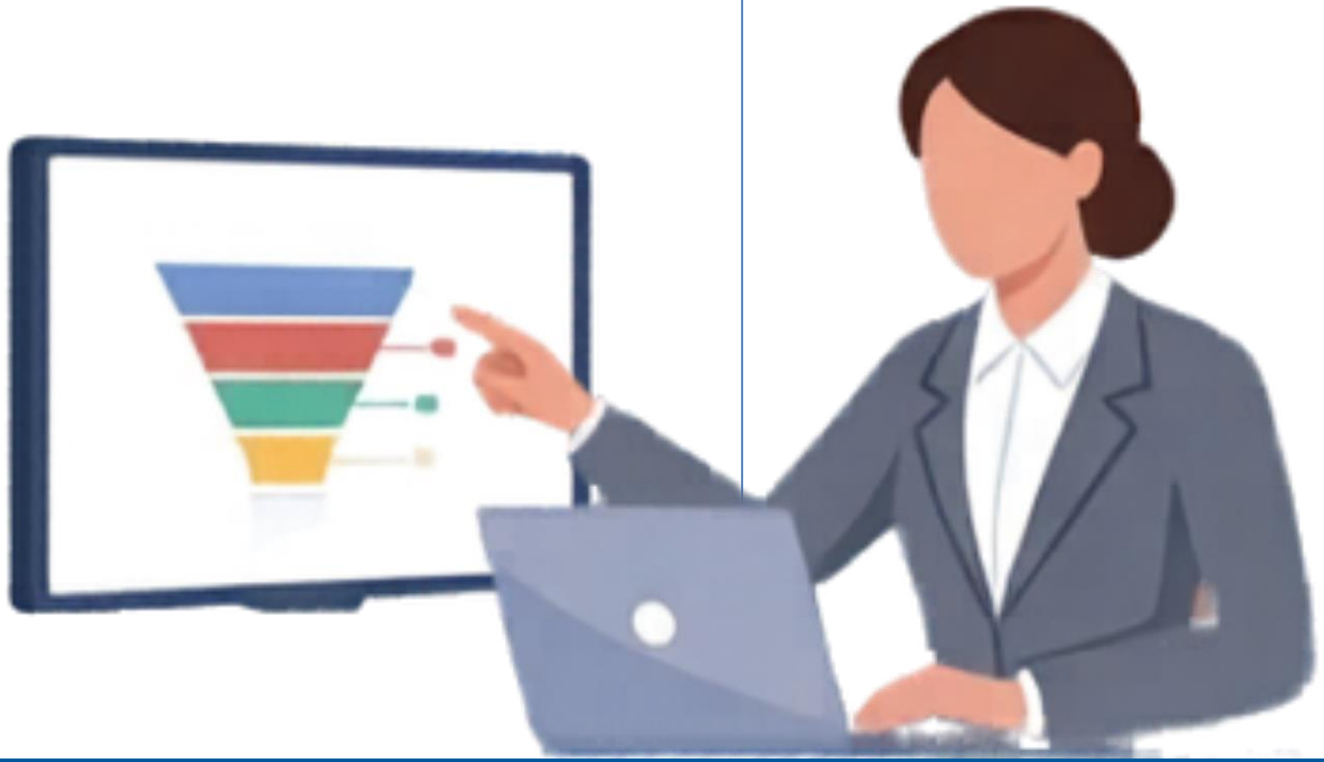
Consumer Says Education Received **29%**

3 Online Cremation Arrangements

Gap in Awareness

Profession Says Awareness is… **75%**

Actual Consumer Awareness Is… **17%**



Consumer Perspective:

Disposition & Celebration

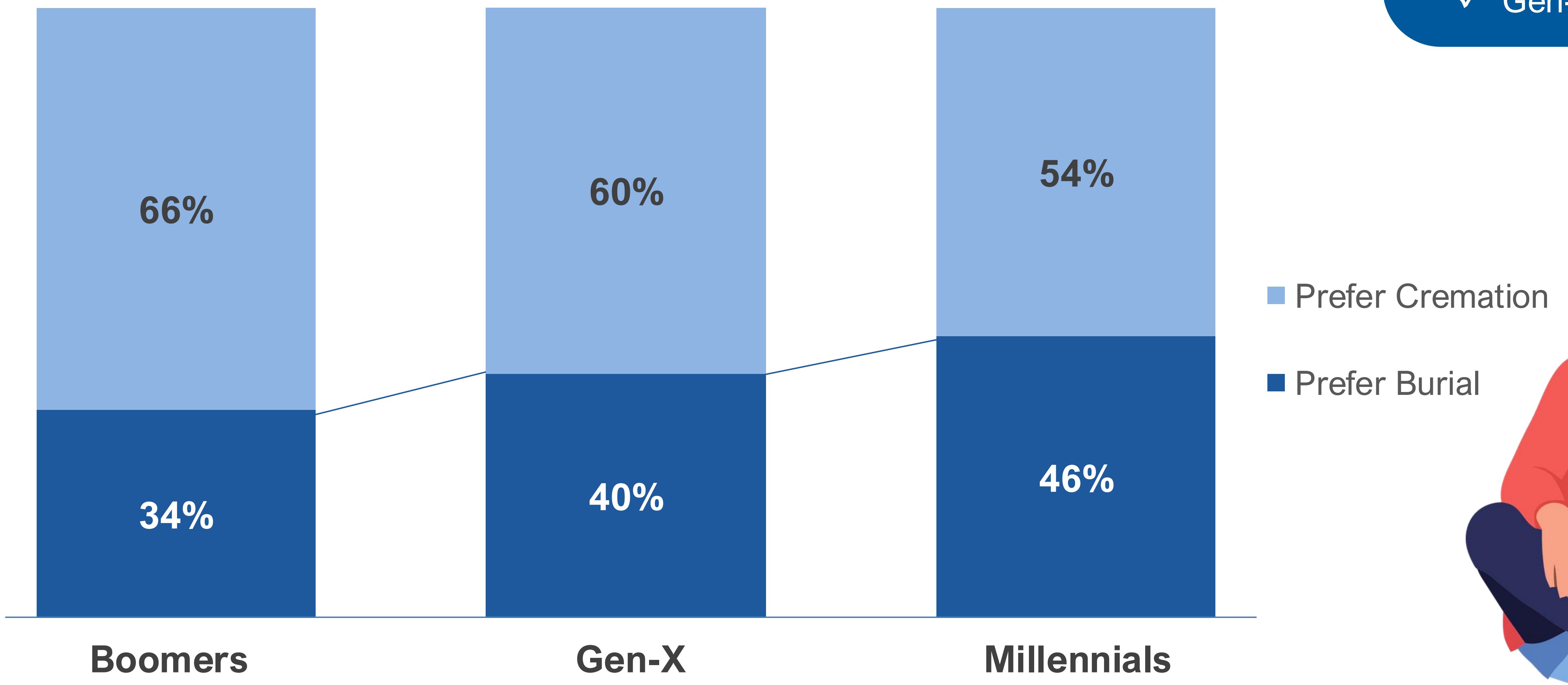
New for 2026

Generational Preferences

For the 2nd year in a row, younger consumers report a stronger preference for burial options compared to Baby Boomers. This is consistent with data from CANA and NFDA that shows remarkably similar findings.

In fact, Google Gemini reports that Gen-Z in particular is trending towards a more traditional set of values:

- ✓ Gen-Z is more marriage oriented than Millennials.
- ✓ Gen-Z is moving away from casual dating and prioritizing stable relationships and family goals.
- ✓ Gen-Z women are embracing more traditional domestic goals



New for 2026

Celebration Preferences

	Prefer a Memorial Service	Prefer Non-Traditional Memorial Service
Boomers	81%	20%
Gen-X	87%	26%
Millennials	91%	36%

Another important generational difference is related to their preferences for a memorial service.

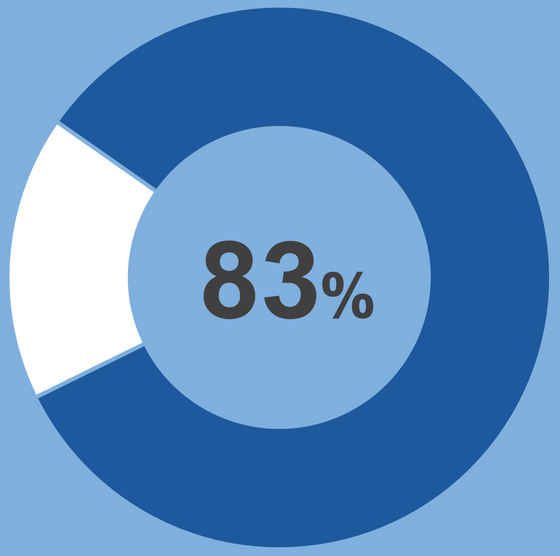
- ✓ Younger generations show a stronger preference for some kind of memorial service in general, regardless of whether it is associated with a cremation or a burial. This is consistent with more general research findings from The Harris Group and others that describe Millennials and Gen-Z as “prioritizing experiences over stuff”.
- ✓ Furthermore, younger generations also show the strongest preference for non-traditional services such as those held outside, at a country club, at a restaurant, etc.
- ✓ Whether or not these younger consumers will follow-through with these preferences when they find themselves in the crucible of making end-of-life arrangements remains to be seen. But it seems clear that the priorities and perspectives they have about life and experiences in general also colors their views on death and memorialization.

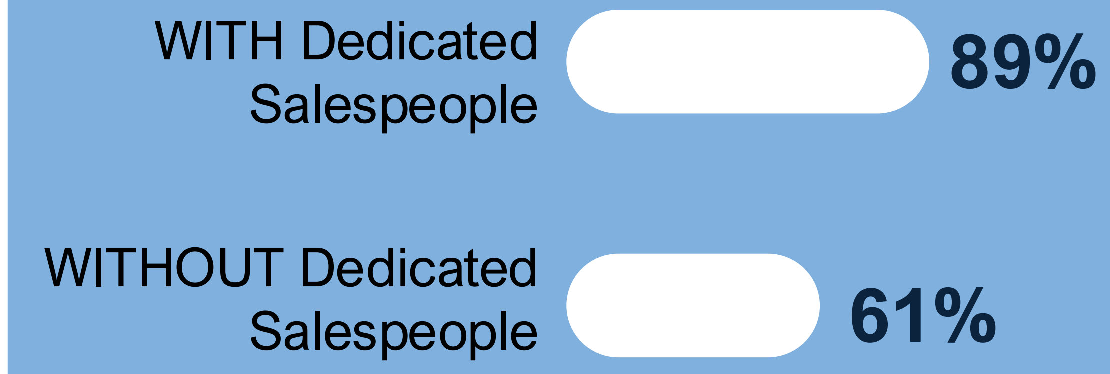
Professional Perspective:

Our Pre-Need Business

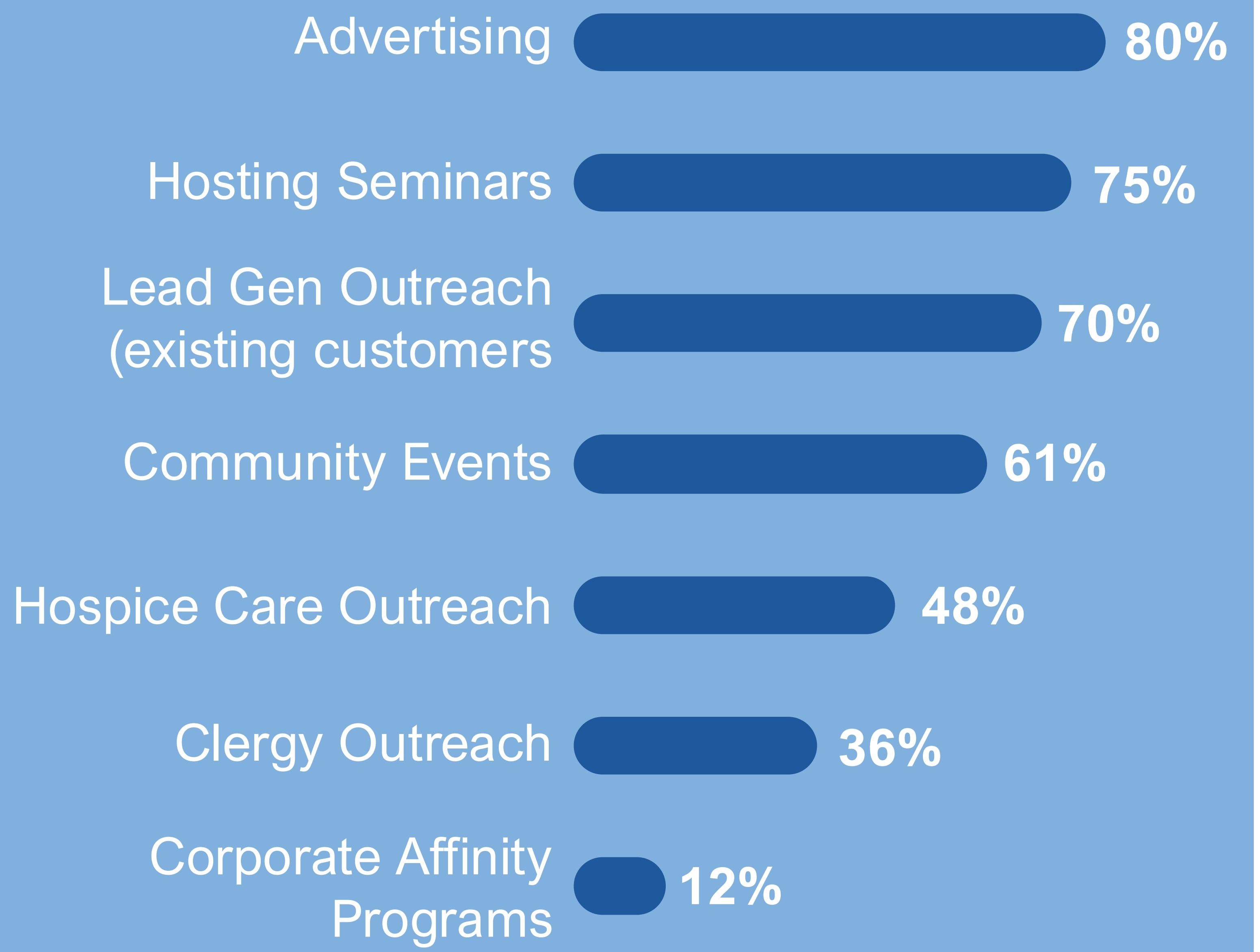
Pre-Need best practices was a new topic for this year's study, with some very clear lessons. First, having a dedicated P/N Salesforce is a common practice for a reason: it works. Second, more-and-better Community Outreach programs are seen as fertile ground for P/N Sales, and something separate and different than Community Partnerships.

% of Locations WITH a dedicated Pre-Need Salesforce





What Activities Support Pre-Need Sales



What Can Management Do MORE OF to Drive Pre-Need?

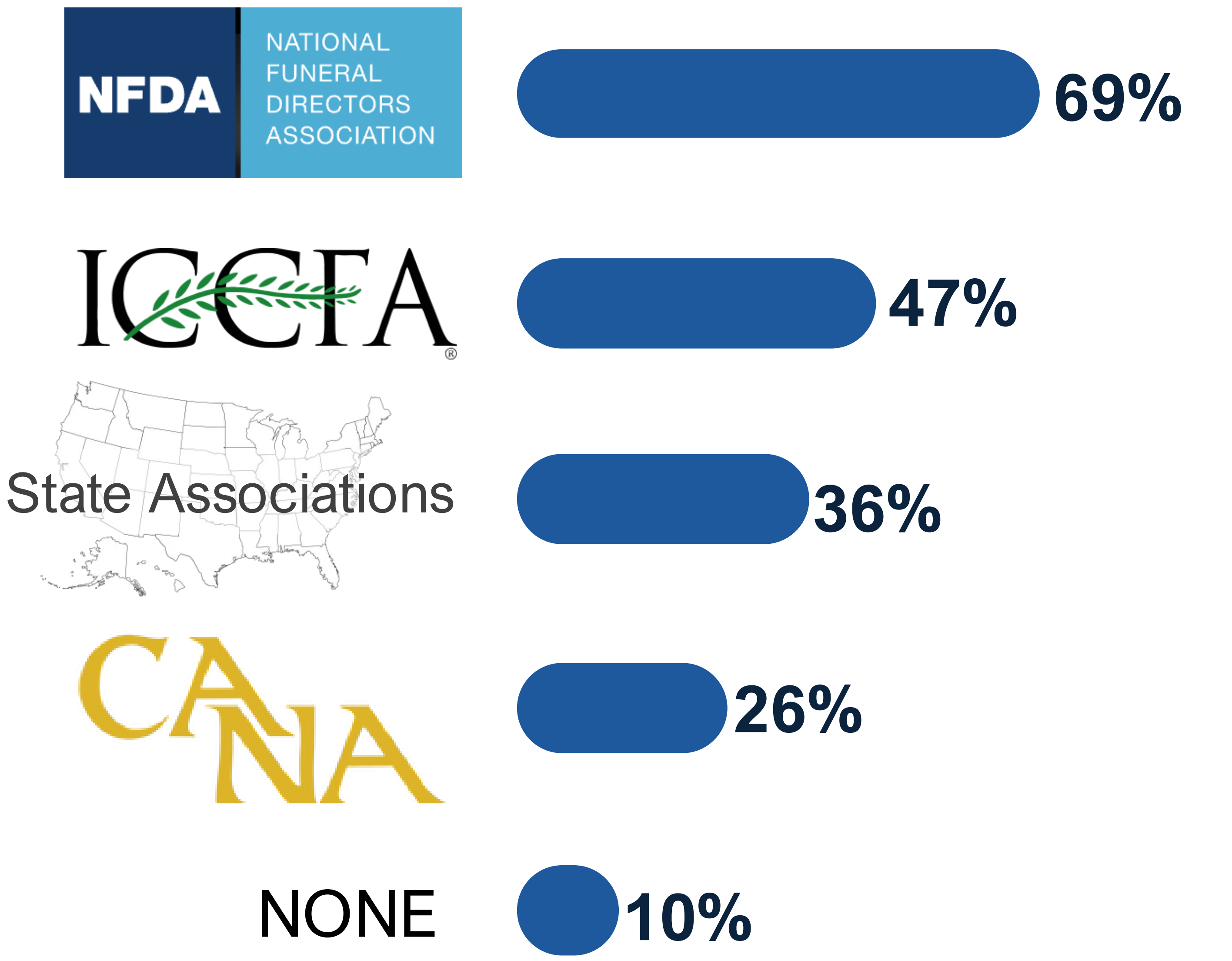
Community Outreach	30%
Marketing & Advertising	15%
Staffing, Hiring & Resources	11%
Lead-Gen & Follow-up	11%
Community Partnerships	9%

Results of Association Involvement

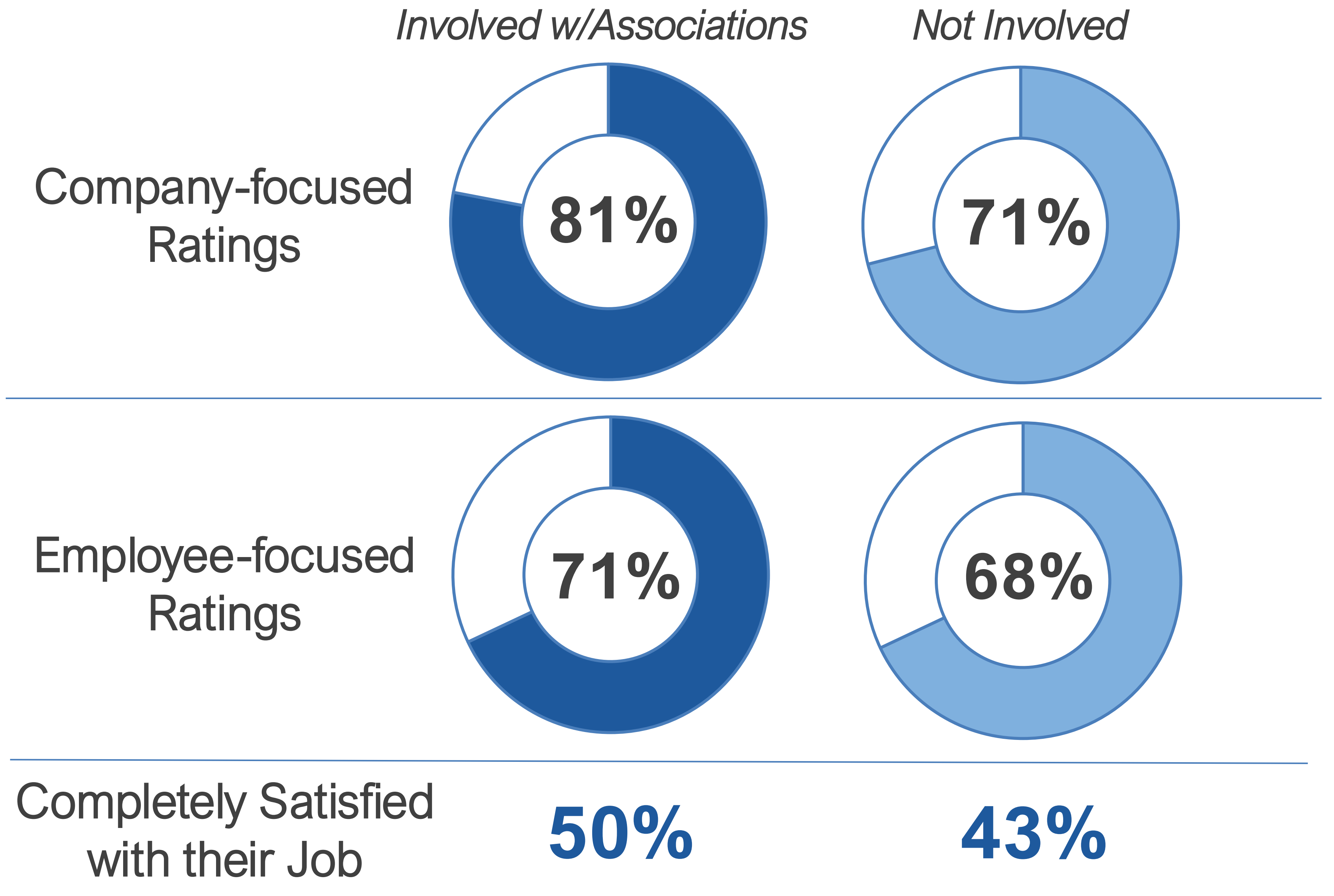
NFDA has the greatest level of participation, with 7-out-of-10 Professionals describing their organization as "active members".

Overall, association involvement has a positive impact on the profession, as both engagement and satisfaction are higher for those who are involved vs. those who are not.

Associations Your Organization is ACTIVE In



Workplace Engagement Ratings



How Your People Feel

Professionals who participate in the study are asked to weigh in on what they consider to be critical issues and threats facing the Profession.

Their input suggests four mission-critical issues that the Profession must address going forward.

- ✓ Staffing Pressures
- ✓ Financial Pressures
- ✓ The Impact of Increasing Cremation
- ✓ Adapting to a Changing Consumers

Single Biggest Threat

(Mark One Answer)

Financial Pressures 25%

Impact of Cremation 23%

Staffing 19%

Adapting to Change 17%

Most Critical Issues

(Mark All that Apply)

Staffing 71%

Financial Pressures 68%

Adapting to Change 62%

Impact of Cremation 56%

Top Tools and/or Training your People Request

(Mentions Over 20%)

Better Technology	44%
Leadership Training	39%
Employee Management Training	32%
Business Operations Training	31%
Sales and Marketing Training	26%
Communications/Customer Svc Training	25%
Employee Recruiting Training	24%

"One Thing" To Improve Job Satisfaction

(Top 3)

Improved Communications **24%**

Better Compensation **23%**

Hire More **12%**

What Your People Need

When we asked Professionals what Tools and/or Training they want, Technology was again the most common request.

After that, however, it appears that the Profession needs to step up its game when it comes to professional business training.

Individual comments indicate a strong desire to better understand how the business works, how they fit it, and how they can improve their business skills.

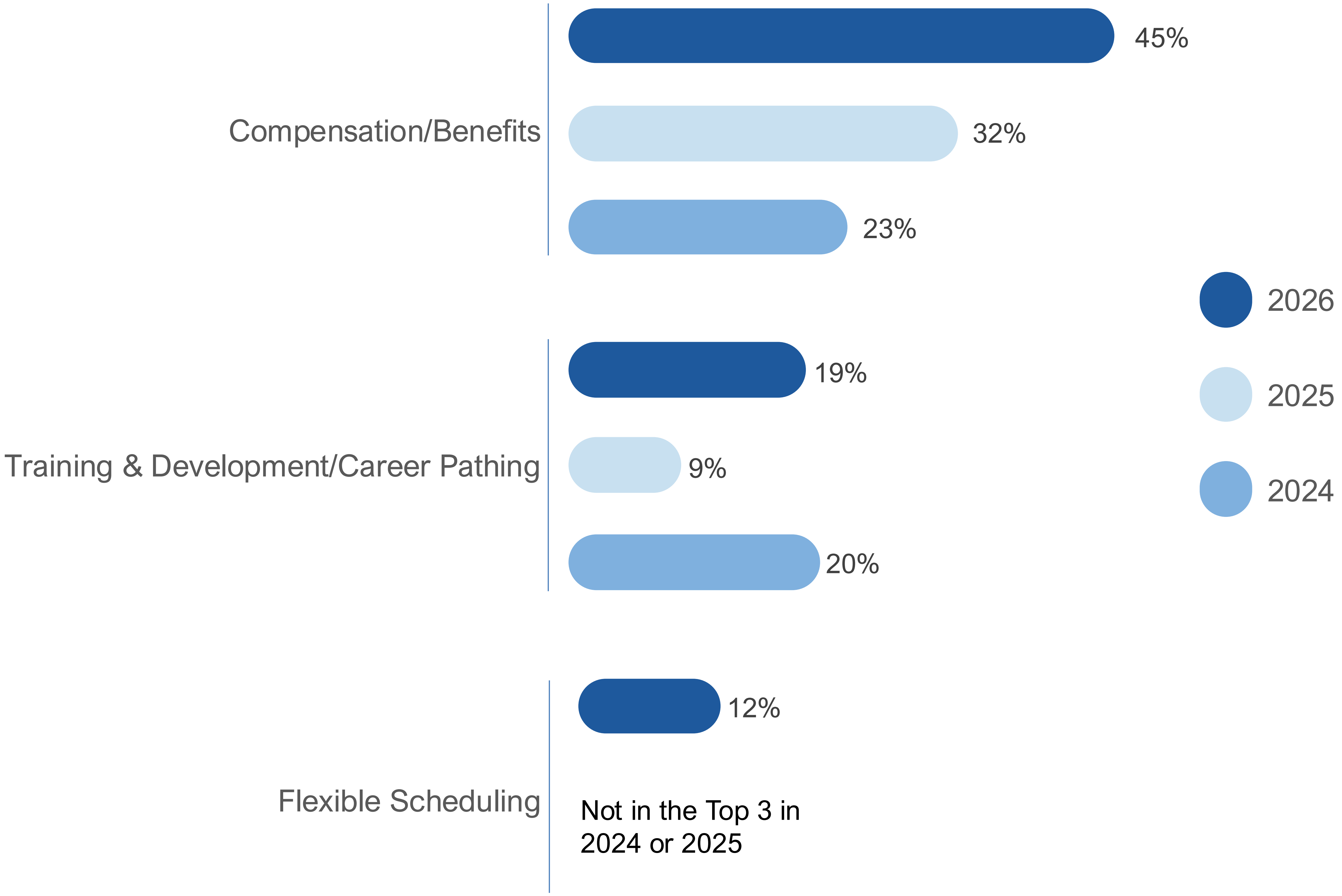
Improving in these areas would also likely help address the most common ask for improving job satisfaction.

Recruiting

The perceived need for improved compensation and benefits has surged over the past 3 years and is now clearly the most important suggestion for improving recruiting.

Flexible scheduling is emerging as a new suggestion and is a new entrant in the Top 3 for 2026.

What is one thing the Profession could do to improve recruiting? (Top 3 Mentions)

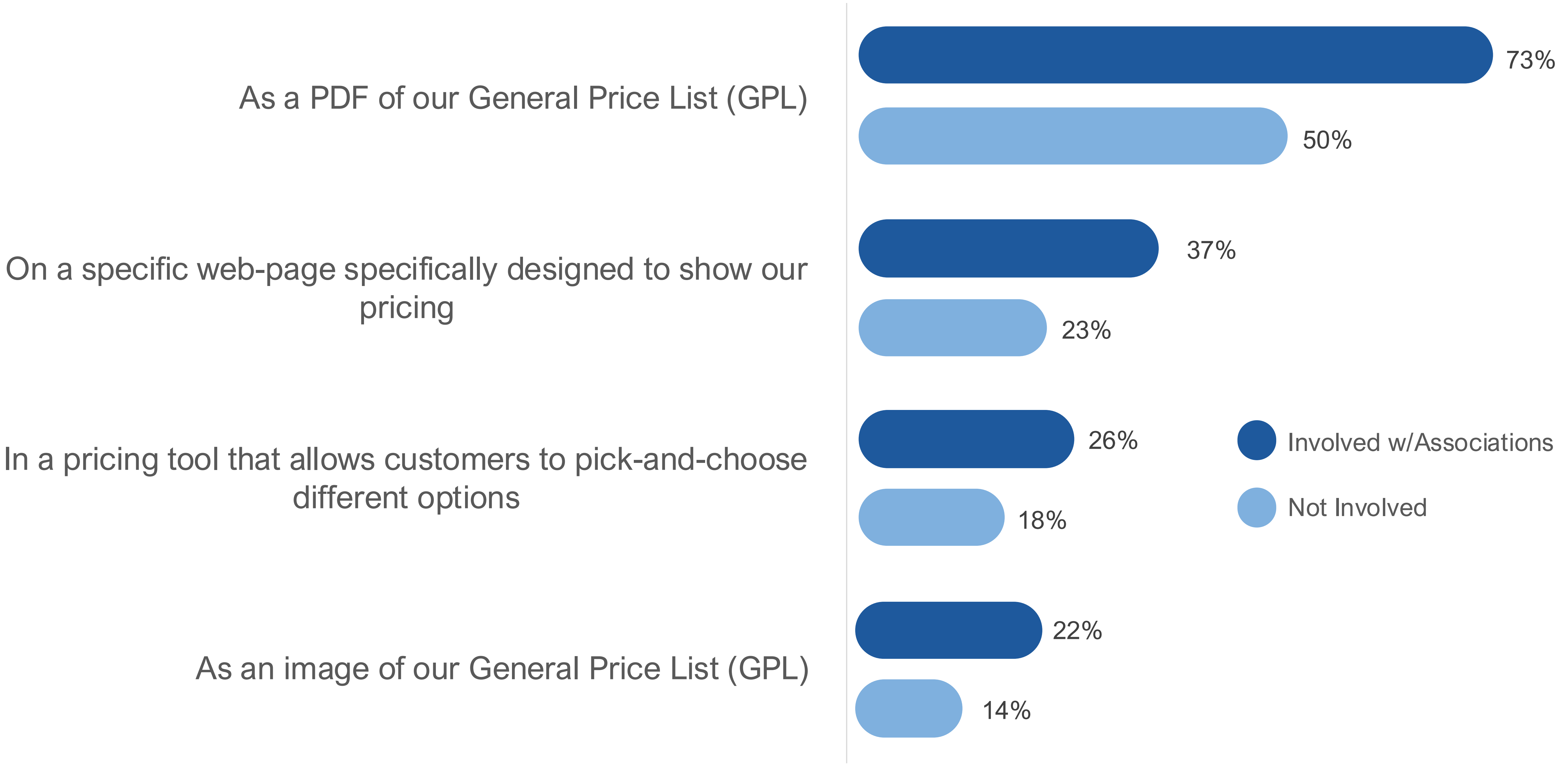


Impact of Association Involvement

Involvement in ANY association makes it more likely a location is ALSO providing consumer pricing in any form. More association activity seems to go along with a more active approach to the business in general.

Still, lack of access to transparent, easy-to-use pricing is consistently one of the biggest consumer complaints. So, while posting your GPL is better than nothing, it does not match the convenience most consumers are used to when dealing online with other industries.

How is Pricing information provided online?



Impact of Association Involvement

Help with technology is a consistent request from our Professionals regardless of their situation.

After that, however, we see some big differences in the appetite for tools and training based on involvement with the various associations.

- ✓ Overall, Professionals that are involved with associations are simply hungrier for tools and training.
- ✓ They are particularly interested in Management and Business Operations Training

Appendix

Study Methodology

Consumers

Survey Timing	5.2k Respondents	Age 35 Minimum	95% Confidence Level
Jan 5-12, 2026			

Industry Professionals

Timing	1.1k Respondents	A Range of Experience	95% Confidence Level
Dec 8, 2025 – Feb 9, 2026			

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