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# 2024 Funeral and Cemetery Consumer Behavior Study Report

Tracking and predicting consumer attitudes, opinions and behaviors about the funeral and cemetery profession.

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# Study Overview

# FCCBS Year 5

The goal of our Funeral and Cemetery Consumer Behavior Study (FCCBS), now in its fifth year has been to capture the opinions, attitudes, and behaviors of consumers regarding the funeral, cemetery, and cremation business.

More than 5,000 consumers participated in the 2024 study, providing insights into how perceptions of the death care profession have changed.

Additionally, for the second consecutive year, we have measured the perceptions of deathcare business insiders to get a better understanding of the gaps between our perception compared to actual consumer experience. This year, more than 240 Profession members shared their feedback.



Survey invitations were sent on 1.3.2024  
Responses accepted through 1.18.2024



Respondents were emailed an invitation to complete an online survey



US-consumers ages 35+  
A Wide Range of Industry Professionals



5,335 consumers  
246 Professionals

# CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROFESSION & OUR PROFESSIONALS



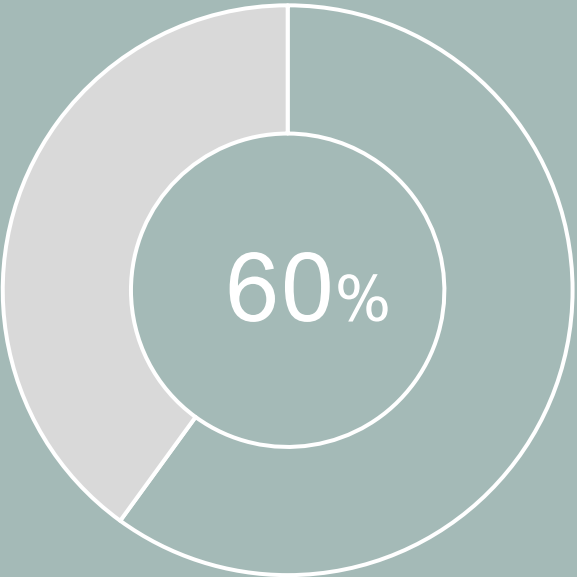
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# CONSUMER RATINGS OF THE PROFESSION ARE UP IN SEVERAL KEY AREAS

Consumers are more complimentary of our Profession in 2024, with 60% rating us positively, compared to 55% last year. The Profession is getting better at responding...especially to specific cultural and family traditions that are important to grieving families, which last year, was a notable weakness.

Average Rating of THE PROFESSION 2024



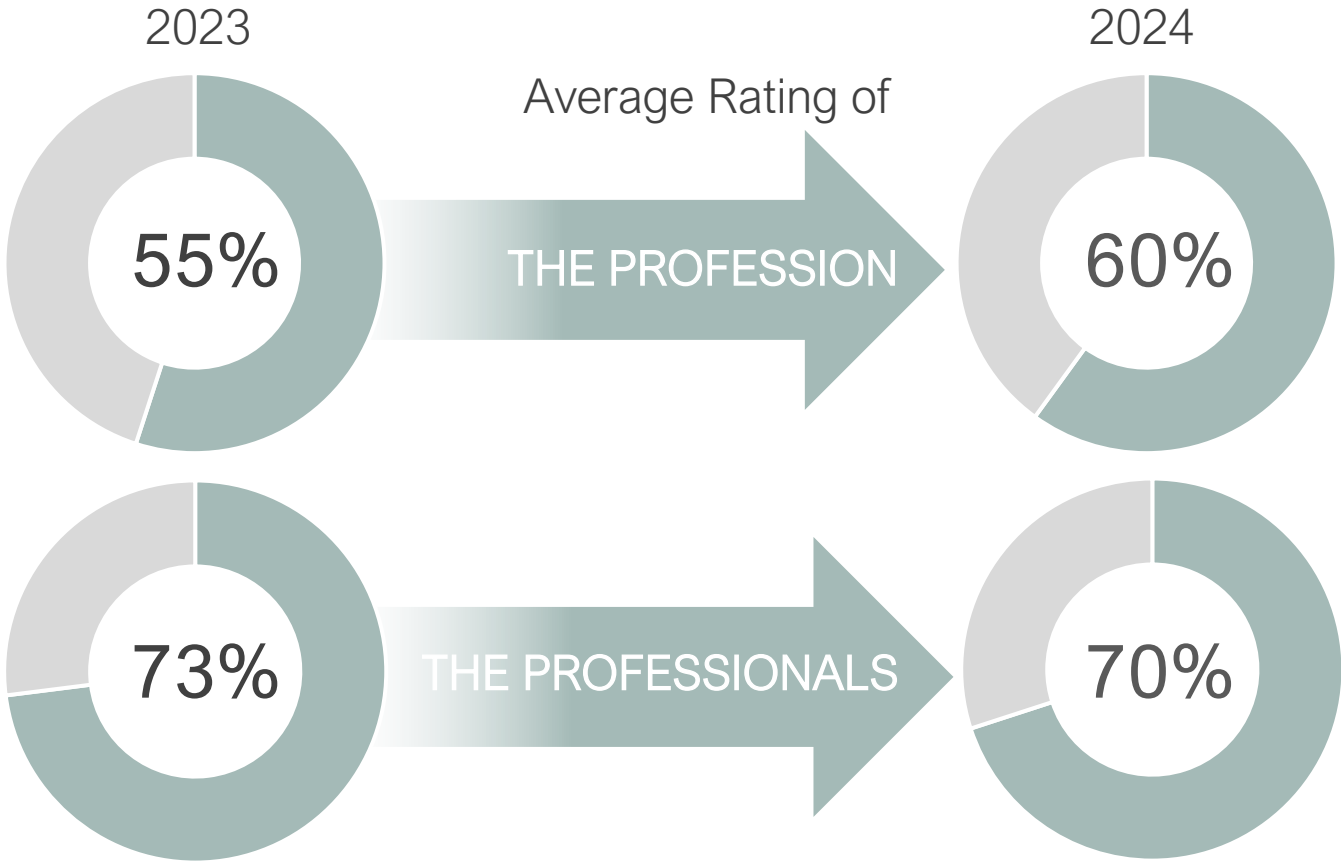
## Consumer Ratings of the PROFESSION





# CONSUMERS VIEW OUR PEOPLE DIFFERENTLY THAN OUR PROFESSION

Results from previous FCCBS studies has shown repeatedly that In simplest terms, consumers have a more favorable impression of our Professionals than they do of our Profession. This year's results are no different as our people are again rated higher than our Profession. However, this year's results also show that the gap may be narrowing, as ratings of our people are down vs. last year while ratings of our Profession have improved.



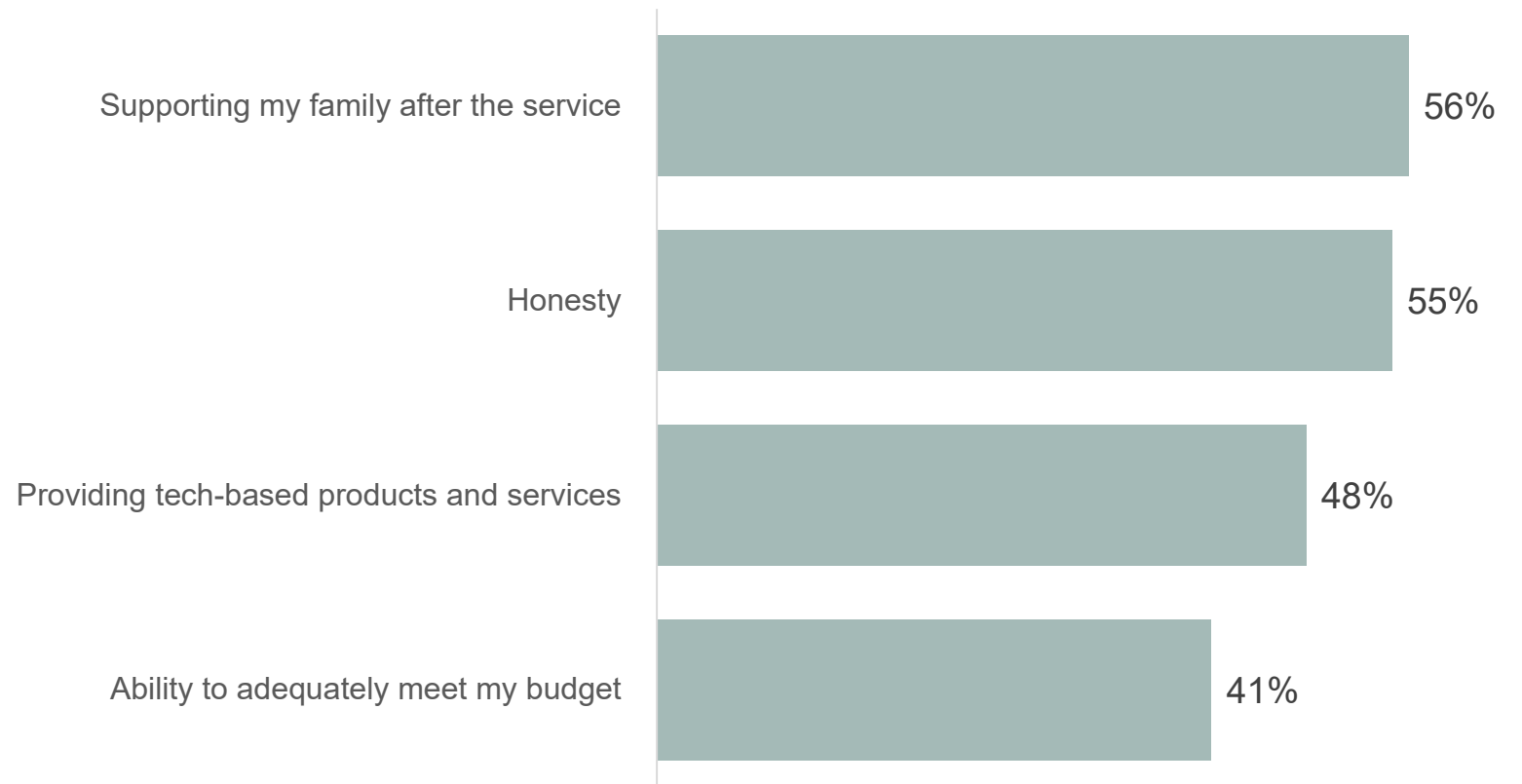
## WE ALSO CONTINUE TO SEE MAJOR AREAS OF CONCERN

Although ratings of our Profession overall are better this year versus last, there are still causes for concern.

Specifically, ratings remain alarmingly low in several key areas, including Support, Honesty, Meeting Budgets, and Providing Technology, a theme we've explored previously and continually.

As a note, meeting budgets, especially in the current economic climate, is a challenge for many industries that sell high-ticket or situation-dependent offerings. Automotive, healthcare, real estate, even fast food – all industries that are also struggling with fitting into consumer budgets. Identifying creative solutions, either through education or building value around the trusted service we provide is essential to addressing and alleviating this perception.

## Consumer Ratings of the PROFESSION





## SOME OF THIS TREND MAY BE A RESULT OF AN ERODING TRUST IN OUR INSTITUTIONS

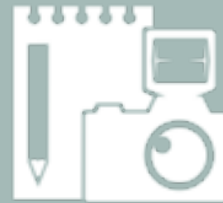
Lower ratings for Trust and Honesty are not unique to our professionals. Consumer perceptions are trending down for many other professionals. The 2023 Gallup Honesty & Ethics Poll reveals that ratings of nearly all 23 professions measured are lower than they have been in recent years. In fact, the five professions below hit all-time lows in 2023, an alarming trend.



Pharmacists



Clergy



Journalists



Senators



Members of Congress



## OVERALL, CONSUMERS TRUST THE PEOPLE MORE THAN THE INSTITUTION

Despite an improvement in sentiment about the Profession, consumers remain more trusting of our people than of the PROFESSION. 71% of consumers give our people positive rating for honesty, where 55% rate the overall Profession an honest one. Think about some of the industries distrust the most. The government, car dealers, and insurance companies - that is the company our Profession is keeping. While consumers may have trust for the individuals they deal with, they have far less trust in the institution.

### OTHER INDUSTRIES WITH LOW LEVELS OF TRUST



Government Agency 52%



Auto Dealer 64%



Internet Provider 65%



Public Utility 65%



Property Insurer 66%



# ONLINE BEHAVIOR AND EXPECTATIONS



## THE DIGITAL AVALANCHE IS COMING

If you're running a business today, you're seeing the emergence of digital trends. We asked customers who have made arrangements in the last 24 months if they had conducted research online. About 1-in-3 (36%) shared that they had. All things considered, that's low given everything else we do online. However, what you're seeing is the wave before it crests. Our future customers – those consumers who have not previously planned, are nearly TWICE as likely (71%) to conduct online research. That research will take place in 2 locations – your location's website and Google Reviews. The impact of reviews cannot be overstated – 97% of consumers read them, and 94% consumers say a bad review caused them to avoid a business.



36%

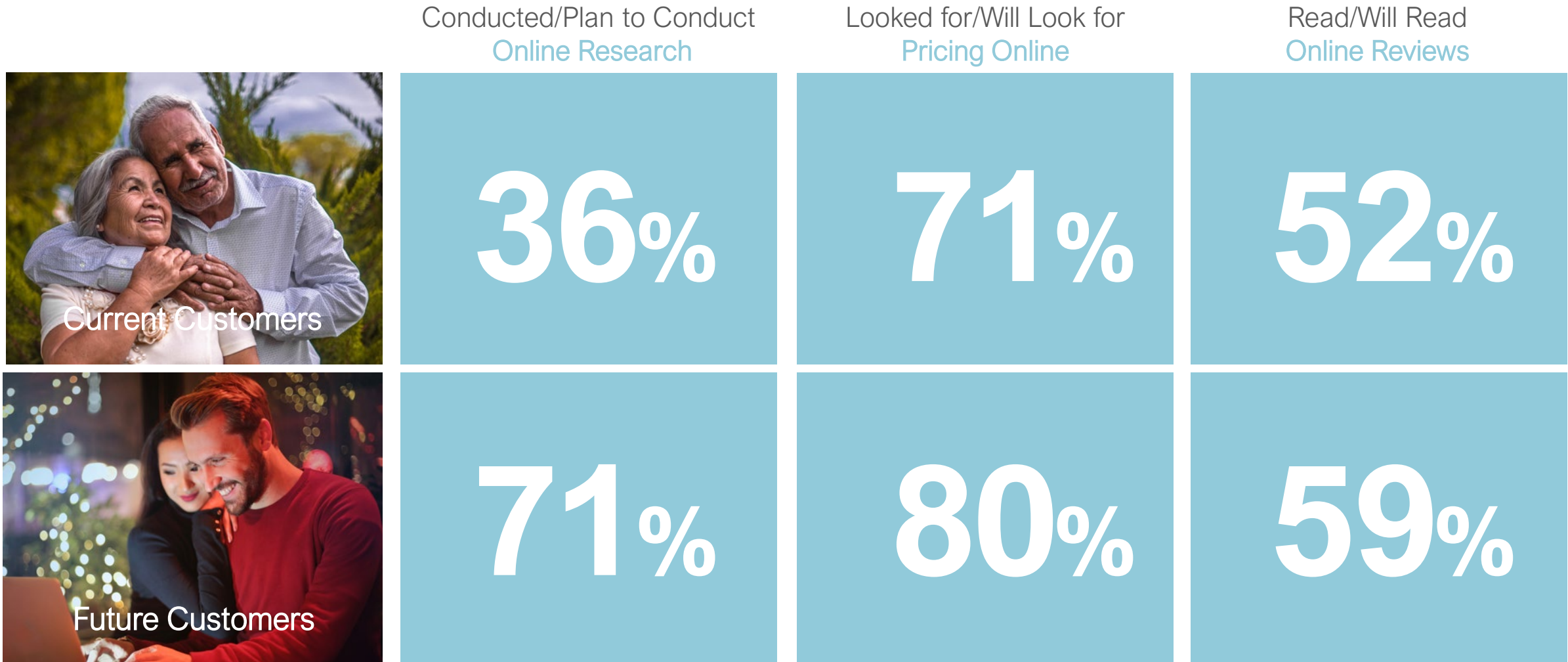
CONDUCTED RESEARCH ONLINE

71%

PLAN TO DO RESEARCH ONLINE  
Consumers who Have Not previously  
purchased / arranged

# THE WAVE OF ONLINE CONSUMERISM IN OUR PROFESSION IS JUST GETTING STARTED

Depending on where you reside and the makeup of your client base, this shift maybe here already. But make no mistake, it's coming. The more flexible you are, the more likely you are to connect with this emerging consumer group.



## CONSUMERS WANT MORE THAN JUST INFORMATION

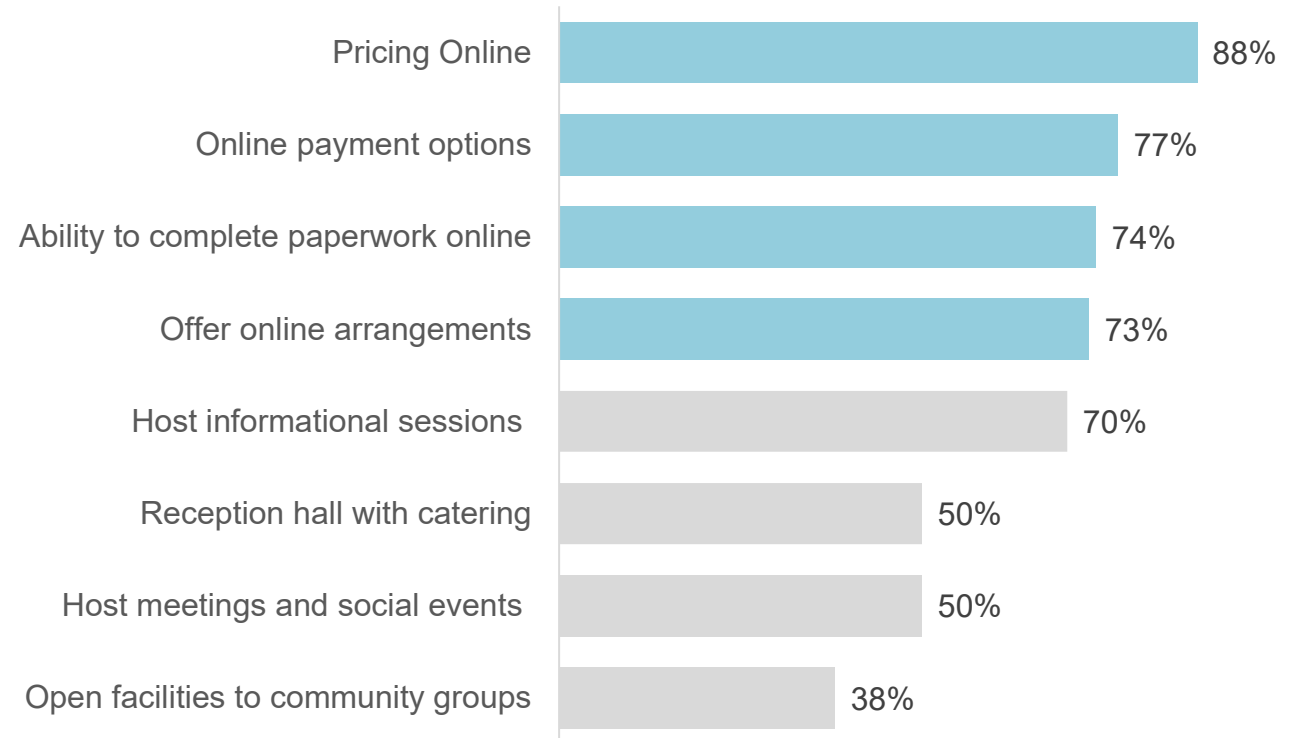
Having pricing information is critical – nearly 90% of consumers expect to find pricing online. They want easy-to-understand information about our products and services – simple to find, ingest, and understand.

However, consumers are asking for more than just information. Future consumers will want to go beyond researching you online. The vast majority will also want the ability to DEAL with you online.

That means they want to arrange online, complete paperwork online, and even make their payment online.

Are some customers going to want to transact in-person? Of course. However, more and more, consumers want the FLEXIBILITY to transact THEIR WAY. Simply put, the less digital you are, the smaller you can expect your fishing pond to be.

How important is it that the funeral home and cemeteries offer the following products and services?



## CONSUMERS DON'T BELIEVE WE'RE READY TO DELIVER A POSITIVE TECHNOLOGICAL EXPERIENCE

Unfortunately, the average consumer doesn't have much confidence in our current ability to deliver on a consumer-centric technology experience. Slightly more than half of consumers (52%) said our staff did a good job of explaining our available product and technology services. Of all the attributes rated, this was the lowest of the 10.

And as we'll see when we asked the actual people in our Profession, our internal confidence in delivering a positive technology experience isn't significantly better than consumer expectations.

# 52%

BELIEVE IN  
OUR PROFESSIONALS' ABILITY  
TO EXPLAIN TECHNOLOGY-BASED  
PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

# EDUCATION




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## TOO MANY CONSUMERS ARE NOT GETTING THE BASIC EDUCATION THEY NEED

Education about products and services represent a massive missed opportunity. Your existing customers are telling us they didn't receive nearly enough education about various options, including burial, casket, and cremation memorialization, consumers are dubious. Only 1-in-3 (35%) reported they felt properly educated.

35% 

of consumers say education was received

### Education about...

Burial Options

Keepsake & Memorial Options

Casket Options

Cremation Options

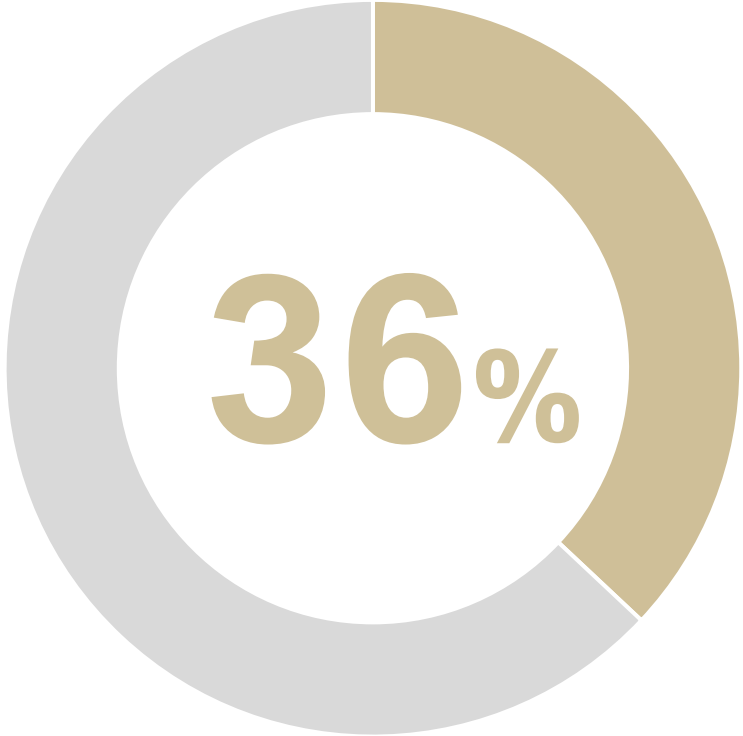
Cremains Memorialization

Urn Options





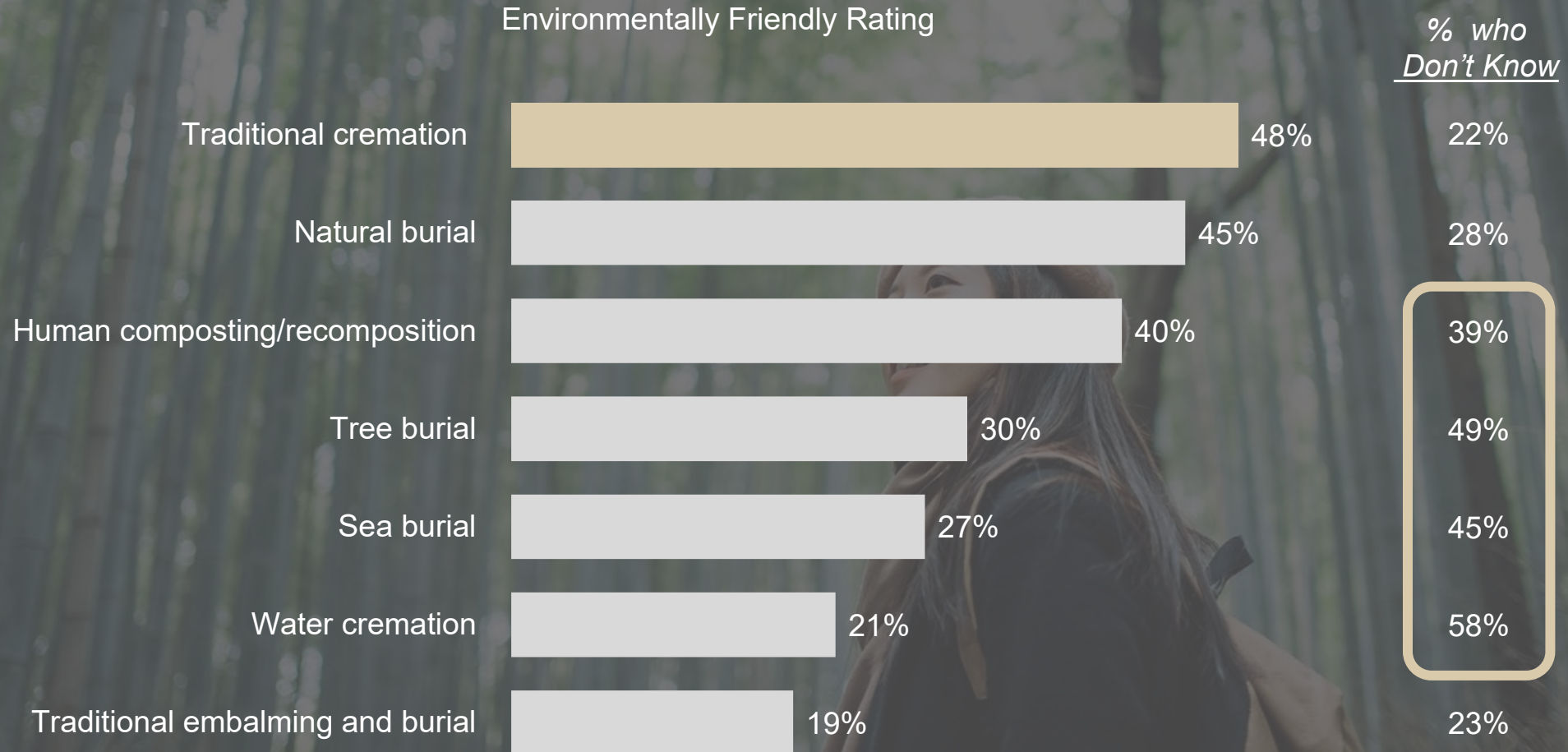
And roughly four-in-ten consumers still don't know enough to make an informed decision.



Don't Know Enough about  
Funeral Home + Cemetery  
Products & Services

## EVEN WITH CREMATION, EDUCATION REMAINS AN ISSUE

We all know about the rise in cremation. Despite evidence to the contrary, consumers rate traditional cremation as the greenest option. More importantly, many simply don't know enough about other options to understand how environmentally friendly they may be.



## CONSUMERS ARE NOT AWARE OF THEIR PRODUCT AND SERVICE OPTIONS

Simply put, consumers have no idea what their options are – from disposition methods to products and services. Consumer awareness of many profitable and valuable memorialization options have little-to-no consumer awareness. And wait until you see the gap between what consumers actually know compared to what you BELIEVE they know...

	Consumer Awareness
Sea Burial	49%
Cremation Memorialization	48%
Keepsake Stones or Jewels	46%
Natural Burial	29%
Destination Scattering Services	26%
Eco-Friendly Burials	24%
Human Composting	22%
Home Funerals	21%
Tree Burial	20%
Memorial Blankets	17%
Online Cremation Arrangements	14%
3D Memorial Photo	9%
Water Cremation	7%

# HOLDING THE MIRROR UP TO OURSELVES



## WE BELIEVE CONSUMERS KNOW MORE THAN THEY ACTUALLY DO

The gap between actual and perceived knowledge is shocking. Not only do consumers have a limited idea of what their options are, but that issue is exacerbated by the fact that industry professionals believe consumers are more educated than they are. Our assumptions are costing us significant revenue. Actual consumer awareness of products and services is about 25%, where our professionals believe it is around 58%.

	Consumer Awareness	Profession BELIEVES...	Awareness Gap
Sea Burial	49%	60%	11%
Cremation Memorialization	48%	83%	<b>35%</b>
Keepsake Stones or Jewels	46%	79%	34%
Natural Burial	29%	78%	<b>49%</b>
Destination Scattering Services	26%	42%	16%
Eco-Friendly Burials	24%	74%	<b>50%</b>
Human Composting	22%	50%	28%
Home Funerals	21%	38%	17%
Tree Burial	20%	42%	22%
Memorial Blankets	17%	56%	<b>39%</b>
Online Cremation Arrangements	14%	75%	<b>61%</b>
3D Memorial Photo	9%	40%	31%
Water Cremation	7%	37%	30%

## EDUCATION IS NOT GETTING THROUGH TO CONSUMERS

Consumers are telling us they aren't getting the education they need. A vast majority of professionals are saying they are offering to education consumers. That is a wide gap between perception and reality. This education miss is impacting our upsell opportunities on memorialization, keepsakes, and other high margin products.

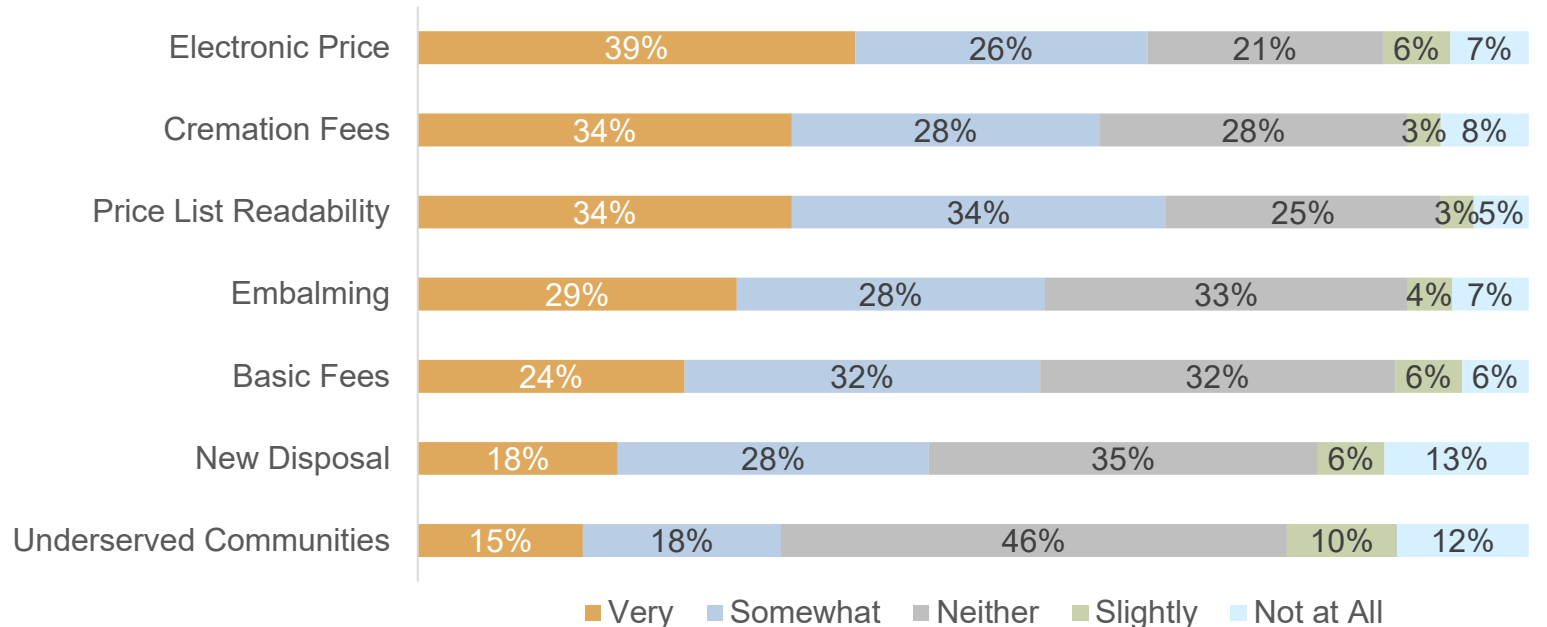




## THE PROFESSION REMAINS UNPREPARED FOR PENDING FTC CHANGES

When we asked this question last year, the industry professionals admitted to being largely unprepared for impending FTC changes. In 2024, that sentiment is even more common. Less than 1/3 of professions feel prepared for any changes. This is especially true for several areas, including changes related to disposal and underserved communities.

**33%** vs. **28%**  
Very Prepared in 2023 vs. Very Prepared in 2024  
How Prepared are You for the Potential FTC Changes





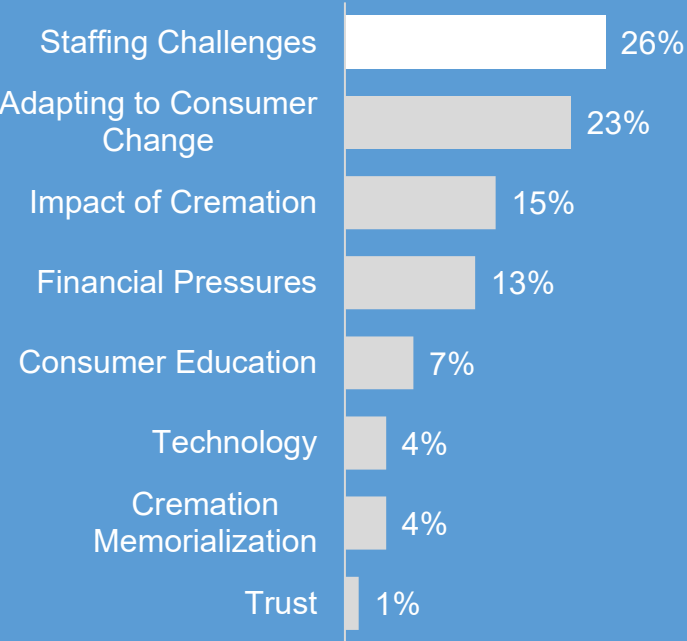
# THE CURRENT AND FUTURE WORKPLACE



# THE PROFESSION'S MOST CRITICAL ISSUE: PEOPLE

Our people are more positive about their organization than about their place in it. Their biggest concern: Staffing the business. Nearly as important – our ability to react to the changing needs and attitudes of consumers.

Most Critical Issue facing the Profession in the next 3-5 years.

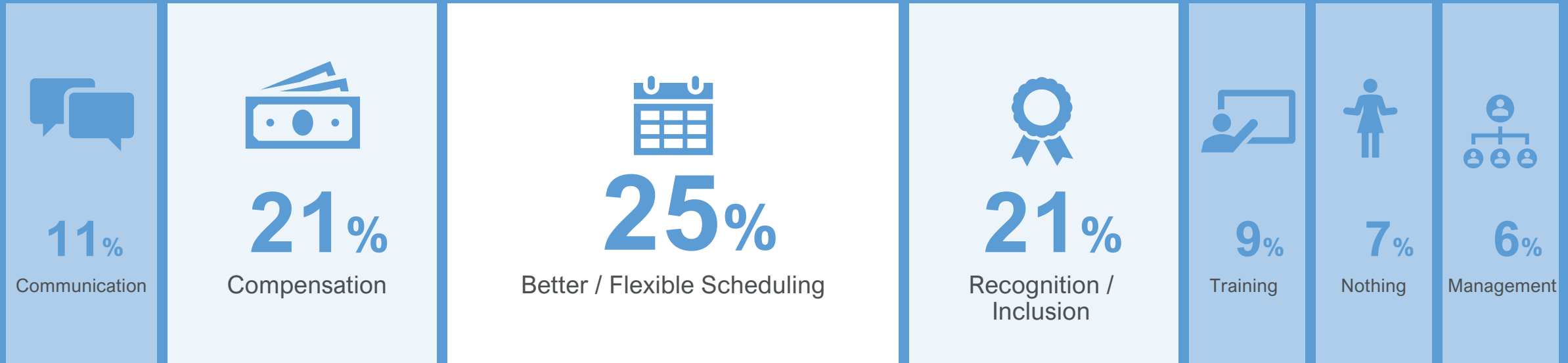


“Burnout is very real but none of us feel like we can take time off, even when it is freely offered, because staffing levels are low and we know other employees will suffer for the sake of our time off.”

“Unwillingness to engage the consumer, find out what they desire and make the necessary changes requested.”

## IMPROVING MORALE IS ABOUT MORE THAN MONEY

Professionals also tell us that improving their workplace is about more than just better compensation. Flexibility, recognition, even communication and listening are areas where our organizations can create value for employees without increasing spend.





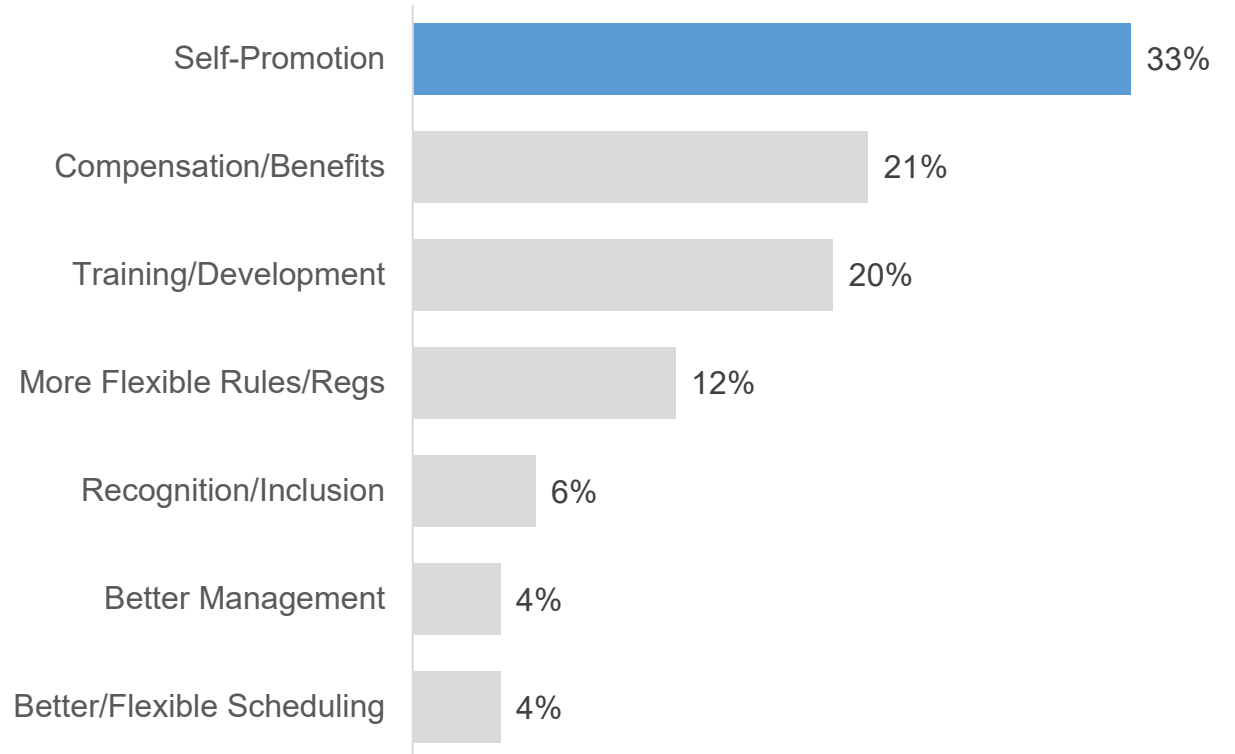
“

*“Tell our story of dedication, sacrifice and love for our community, our employees and our profession.”*

## HOW DO WE IMPROVE RECRUITMENT?

Professionals also pointed out the need for the organizations to do a better job “telling our story.” Improving promotion, improving education, and mentoring are all areas our professionals mention as areas to help improve recruitment of fresh talent.

### What can be done to IMPROVE RECRUITMENT INTO THE BUSINESS



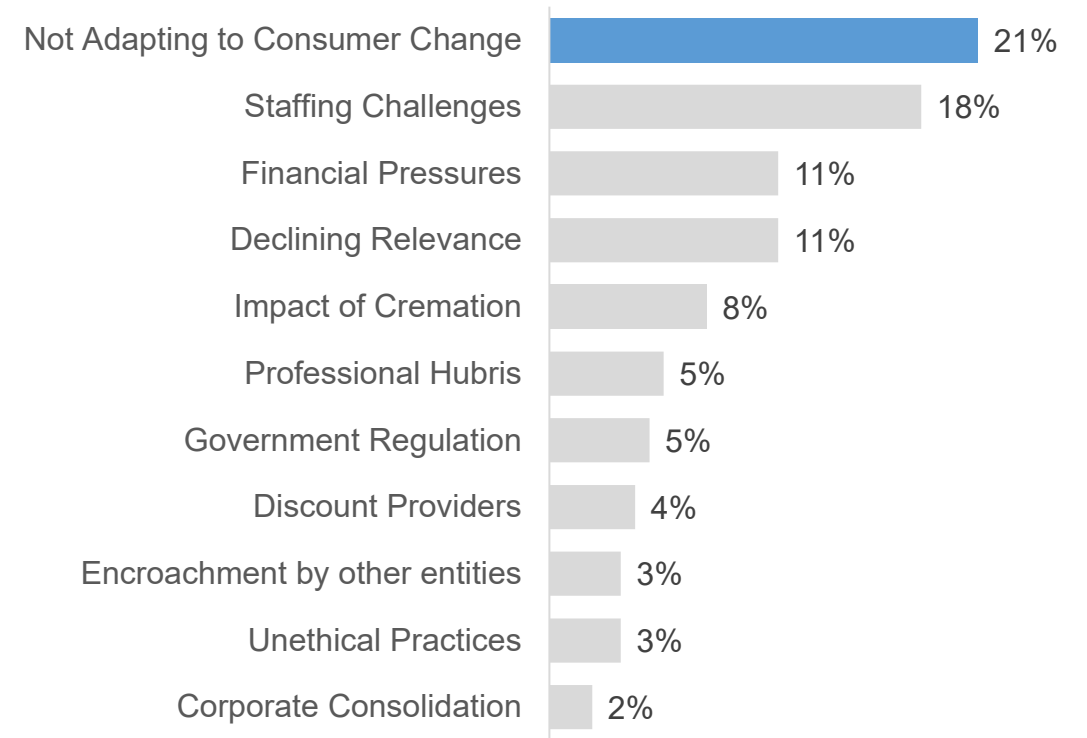
## PROFESSIONALS ARE WORRIED ABOUT OUR ABILITY TO ADAPT

We know consumer attitudes and behaviors are changing. And if we aren't adapting to those shifting preferences, others will come in and offer alternatives that chip away at service and profitability. Listening to the voice of the customer is critical to understanding those changing desires and being able to deliver an outstanding experience to the families we serve.



*Not understanding that what we want has nothing to do with what people value and need....The inability to admit we have been historically wrong and in many cases are still wrong.*

### Biggest Threat to funeral service in the future.



# CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS



## A STRONG DIGITAL PRESENCE WILL LEAD TO BUSINESS SUCCESS

The wave of online consumerism is just getting started. The overwhelming majority of the Profession's future customers will prefer to take their journey online. They will visit two primary websites: Google and the sites of the funeral homes and cemeteries they are considering.

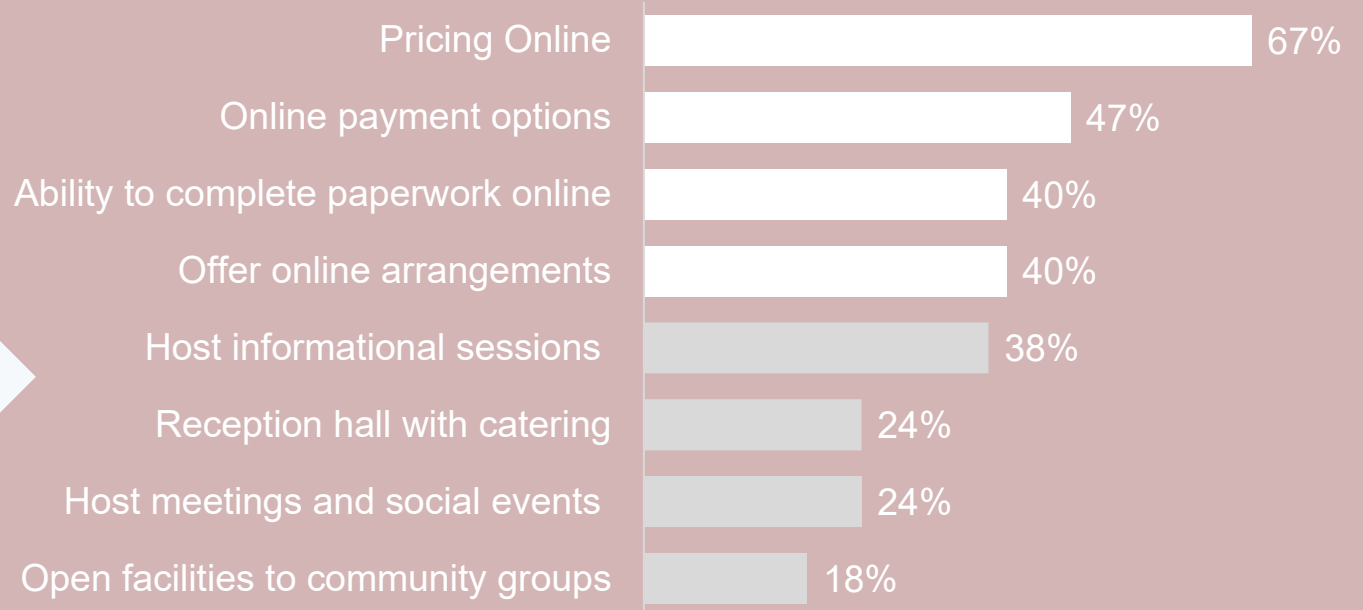
And that's just the beginning. They also expect to be able to do far more than look at online pricing. They want to be able to do it all online, to a much higher degree than even today's customers.

Top 2 Websites  
Consumers Plan to Visit



What they want to do  
when they get there

How important is it that the funeral home and cemeteries offer the following products and services?



## THE TIME FOR ADAPTING IS NOW

Demography may not quite be destiny, but it will play a huge role in the growth of online consumerism facing the Profession. Gen-Xers, and especially Millennials, are online shoppers, with 60%-70% preferring online shopping to brick-and-mortar. These habits will remain when dealing with the funeral and cemetery profession.

Furthermore, they can no longer be considered a problem for the future. Even Millennials are reaching an age they are likely to need to deal with the passing of a friend or loved one.

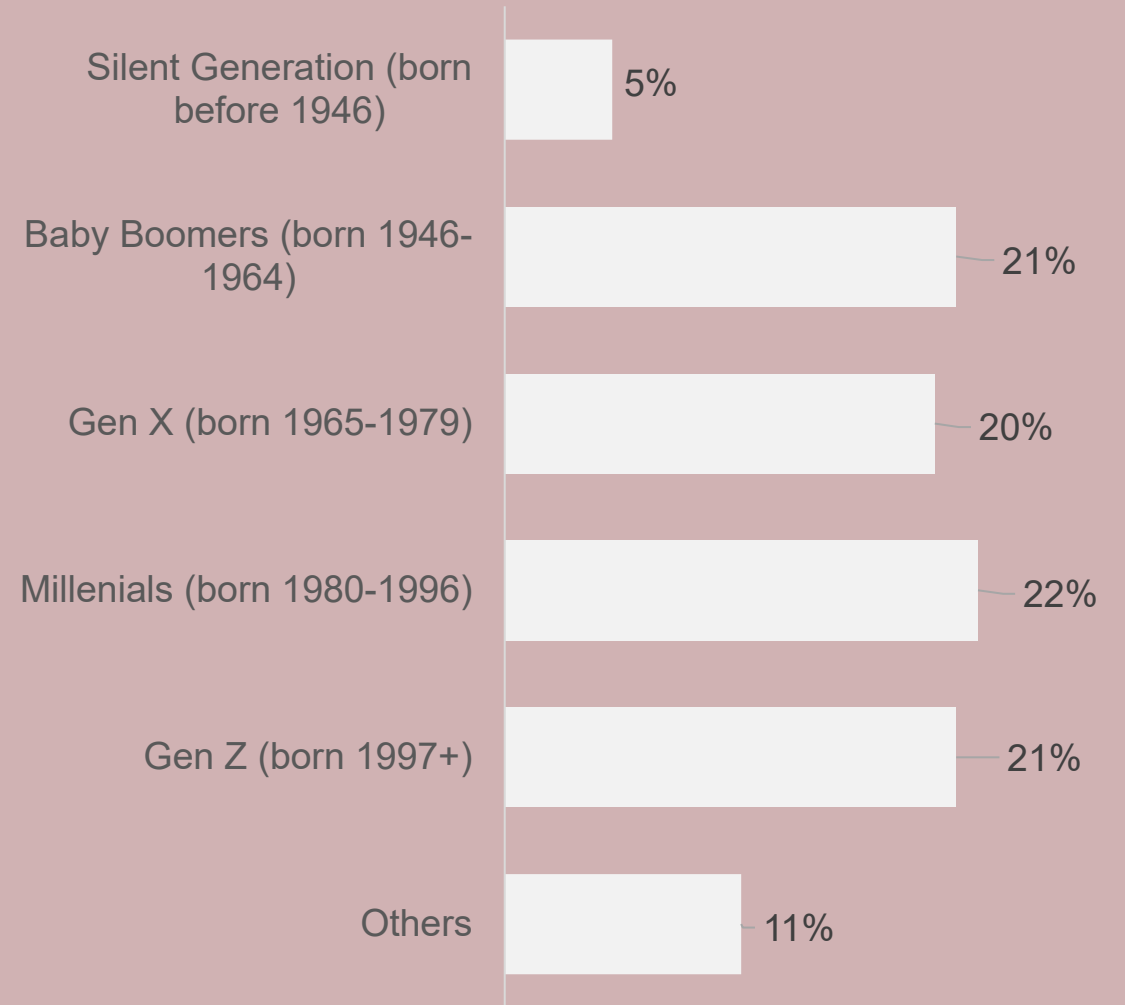
Age of the Oldest Millennials

44

Age of the Oldest Gen Xers

59

## Share of US Population: 2022



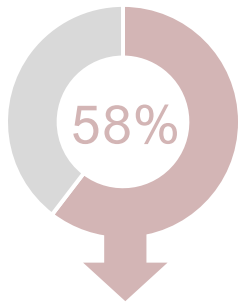


# WE NEED TO STOP ASSUMING AND TAKE THE TIME TO ASK QUESTIONS

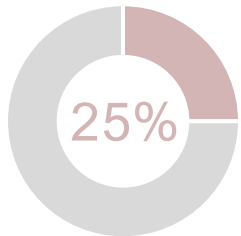
The results of this year's FCCBS Study are clear: despite some progress, the Profession still has work to do in meeting the needs of an increasingly online consumer.

The Profession's understanding of its customer is still lacking in many critical ways, and its own professionals recognize the challenge of adapting to consumer change.

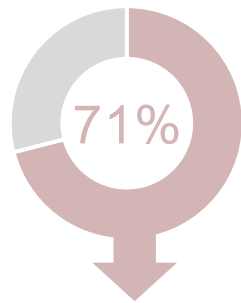
The **Profession** Believes Awareness is...



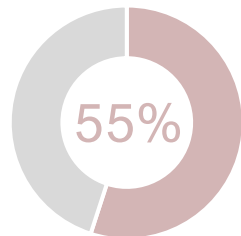
Actual **Consumer** Awareness is...



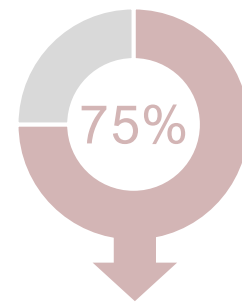
The **Profession** Rating for Honesty of the Profession



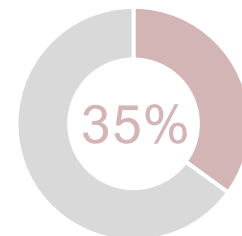
The **Consumer** Rating for Honesty of the Profession



The **Profession** Says Services are Offered



The **Consumer** Says Services were Received



## Winning Behaviors



- **Consumer Behaviors:** These continue to evolve as Gen-X and Millennials age into our Profession and bring their attitudes and behaviors with them. World-class companies will demonstrate:
  - **Simple:** Create a clean, easy-to-digest online experience.
  - **Personal:** “Non-traditional” funeral and memorialization options for celebration and disposition will continue to become more common.
  - **Budget-Friendly Options:** find ways to introduce ways to reduce sticker shock in at-need situations.



- **Technology:** From your offerings to your website, must meet consumer needs by having a wide range of features. Winning Behaviors will include:
  - **Transparency:** Make your pricing and offerings easy to understand – a foundational element for the future.
  - **Education:** Consumers don’t know as much as we think they do. The Profession’s current efforts to educate them aren’t working, and your website will be a key way to bridge this gap.
  - **E-commerce:** Be prepared to expand your website’s capabilities. Consumers will increasingly expect to “do it all” on your website.



- **Training:** Our people must also be ready to meet the needs of tomorrow’s customer. Best-in-class organizations will train their staff to understand and speak the consumer’s language.



- **Staffing:** Employee recruitment is a big concern among our people. The solution goes beyond compensation to things like:
  - Increased Communication
  - Flexible scheduling
  - Rewards and recognition
  - Improving Public Relations to professionalize funeral service



- **Adapt to Change:** Don’t be your own worst enemy. The Profession has been slow to adapt to shifting consumer preferences and our people continue to see that as a critical challenge.



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**THANK YOU**

# **2024 Funeral and Cemetery Consumer Behavior Study Report**

Tracking and predicting consumer attitudes, opinions and behaviors about the death care profession.