

NFDA

NATIONAL
FUNERAL
DIRECTORS
ASSOCIATION

2019 Consumer Awareness and Preferences Study

April 2019



Executive Summary

- The most noticeable changes observed in this survey wave were:
 - Since the majority of online consumer respondents classify themselves as white, an effort was made to ensure at least 100 responses were obtained from Black/African American, Hispanic and Asian respondents in 2019.
 - The respondents in this year's study were significantly younger compared to 2018; 36.1% were between the ages of 40 and 54 (compared to 23.7% in 2018)
 - Fewer respondents stated they were personally involved in planning a funeral for either a friend or loved one compared to 2018 (58.0% compared to 64.9%).
 - The percent of respondents who feel it is very important to have religion as part of a funeral has continued to decrease from 49.5% in 2012 to 35.4% in 2019.
 - More respondents reported receiving an invitation to a funeral, memorial service or life celebration in 2019 compared to the past two years.

Executive Summary

- The most noticeable changes observed in this survey wave were : *(continued)*
 - A significantly higher percentage of respondents (54.6%) have attended a funeral at a non-traditional location in 2019 compared to 2107 (48.3%).
 - The percentage of respondents who stated they made prearrangements for themselves was significantly lower in 2019 compared to 2018. This may be due to survey respondents being younger in 2019 compared to 2018.

Executive Summary

What consumers want:

- They want a funeral home that is familiar (previously served family/friends), is close to home, is convenient, is reputable and/or where they know the funeral director.
- The most desired qualities consumers look for in a funeral director are they are honest and trustworthy, caring/compassionate/sympathetic, and sensitive to their budget.
- The most important items respondents want included in a funeral were affordable cost, a gathering of family and friends, photos, a service/ceremony/tribute to the deceased, and/or to honor the wishes or prearrangements of a loved one.
- Consumers are evenly split when it comes to donating their body for medical research; 34.3% would be very interested/interested and 37.3% were not very interested or not at all interested.

Executive Summary

- Of the 16.8% of consumers who visited or called more than one funeral home when planning a funeral, 58.4% did so to compare prices, 32.7% did so to check available service options and 29.7% did so to check availability.
- Of the 16.8% who visited or called more than one funeral home to compare prices, 64.6% obtained pricing information in-person and 57.6% felt it was easy/very easy to obtain pricing information.
- Despite the continued decline in the importance of a religious component in a funeral, the majority of respondents still feel it is important; 35.4% feel it is very important and 27.1% feel it is somewhat important.
- Only 7.9% of respondents have heard of the “*Have the Talk of a Lifetime*” ad campaign. Of those that did, 49.3% said the ad campaign resulted in them talking to their loved ones about memorialization.

Executive Summary

Website and Social Media Usage

- 55.6% of consumers have visited a funeral home's website, primarily to:
 - Look for an obituary
 - Write an online condolence to a family
 - Look up funeral home contact information
- 77.2% of respondents have used Facebook; 55.8% stated they use it daily or several times per week.
- 16.1% of those that use Facebook have visited a funeral home's Facebook page, primarily to:
 - Look for an obituary
 - Post a comment
 - Look up funeral home contact information
- The most common source of information consumers would use if they needed to plan a funeral or memorial service was either a local funeral home or seek the advice/recommendation of a friend or family member.
- Only 7.7% of respondents stated they were aware of RememberingaLife.com.

Executive Summary

Cremation

- Over half (59.2%) of respondents said they would prefer a cremation for their own funeral. Only 16.1% of these respondents said they would have a complete funeral service with viewing and visitation prior to cremation (down from 26.6% in 2015).
- 37.1% associate a cremation with a memorial service.
- 34.0% associate a cremation with any funeral option (viewing, no ceremony, and/or memorial service).
- Only 12.8% associate a cremation preceding a traditional funeral.
- 35.5% of respondents would prefer a full service funeral home when planning a cremation, 21.9% would prefer a discount provider, and 38.9% had no preference.
- Of those that would prefer cremation, 48.8% would prefer their cremated remains to be scattered in a sentimental place, 17.2% would bury or inter them at a cemetery and 17.2% had no preference.

Executive Summary

- Prearranging one's own funeral is not a priority for most.
 - 11.5% have prearranged their own funeral
 - Actions taken:
 - Described funeral wishes in writing to a family member or in a will
 - chose cremation
 - chose a cemetery
 - selected a funeral home
 - Preplanned with a funeral home
 - 88.5% have NOT prearranged their own funeral
 - Reasons:
 - it's not a priority
 - don't know/haven't thought about it
 - not sure where they'll end up living

Executive Summary

- Of the 11.2% who have prearranged:
 - 41.8% have prepaid
 - Main reason for prepaying is so survivors won't have to pay for arrangements and/or worry about making funeral arrangements
 - Most paid via cash or check
 - 53.7% have NOT prepaid
 - However, 38.4% said they were either very or somewhat likely to prepay in the next five years

Objectives

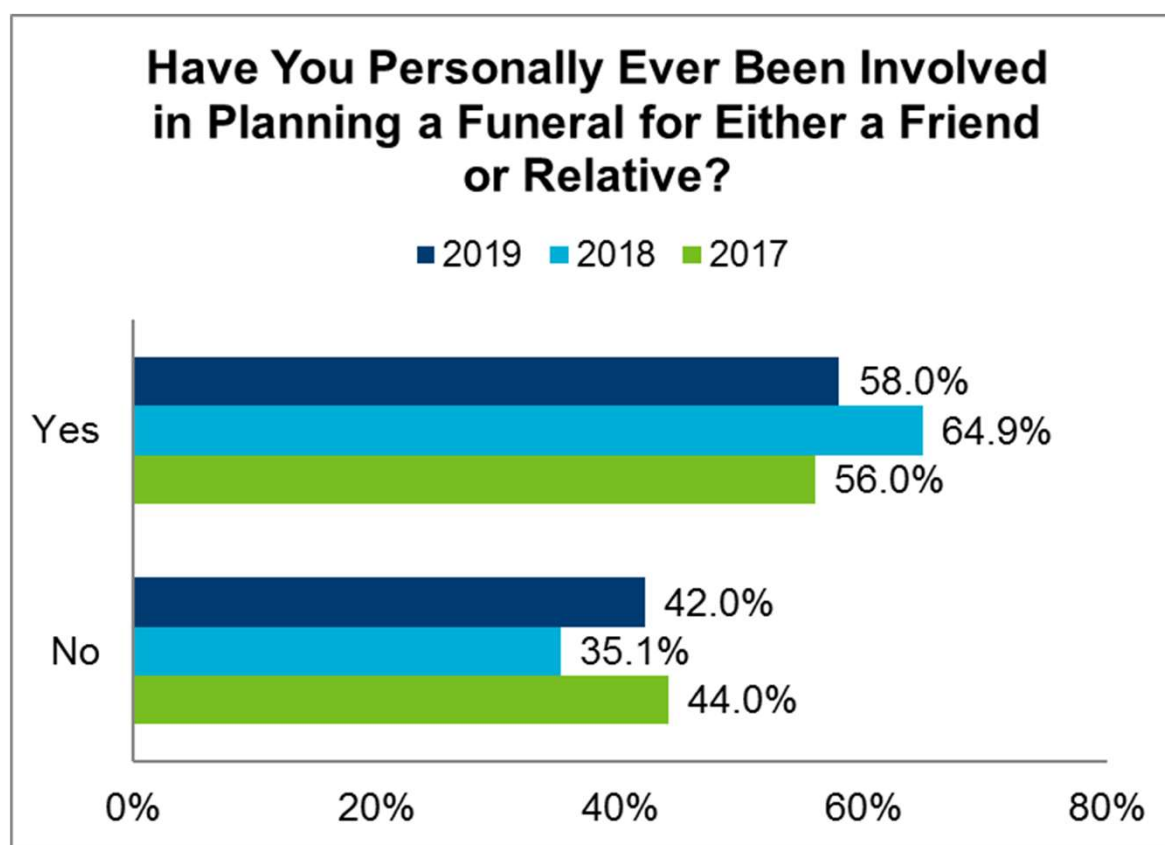
- Main objectives of the study:
 - Measure consumer awareness and perceptions of funerals and funeral services to help NFDA members improve the quality of service they provide to families
 - Track changes in awareness and perceptions since 2012
 - Learn more about consumer attitudes toward new trends in funeral service, prearranging, prepaying, and their awareness of NFDA initiatives
 - Whenever possible, results are compared to previous NFDA Consumer Awareness and Perceptions Studies

Methodology

- Study was conducted April 9 to April 12, 2019
- Survey invitations were emailed to an online consumer panel consisting of Americans age 40 and older.
- The sampling method changed in 2019 in order to get a better representation of different race/ethnic groups.
 - 595 surveys were obtained from the general population (primarily white)
 - 111 from the Black/African American population
 - 100 from the Asian population
 - 99 from the Hispanic population
- 905 completed surveys
- Results for all respondents are projectable within a range of $\pm 3.3\%$ (with 95% confidence). It should be noted that consumers who participate in online panels are typically high Internet users, have higher income and higher education levels.
- Average survey length was 7 minutes 44 seconds.

Funeral Planning

Fifty-eight percent of respondents have personally been involved in planning a funeral for a friend or relative.

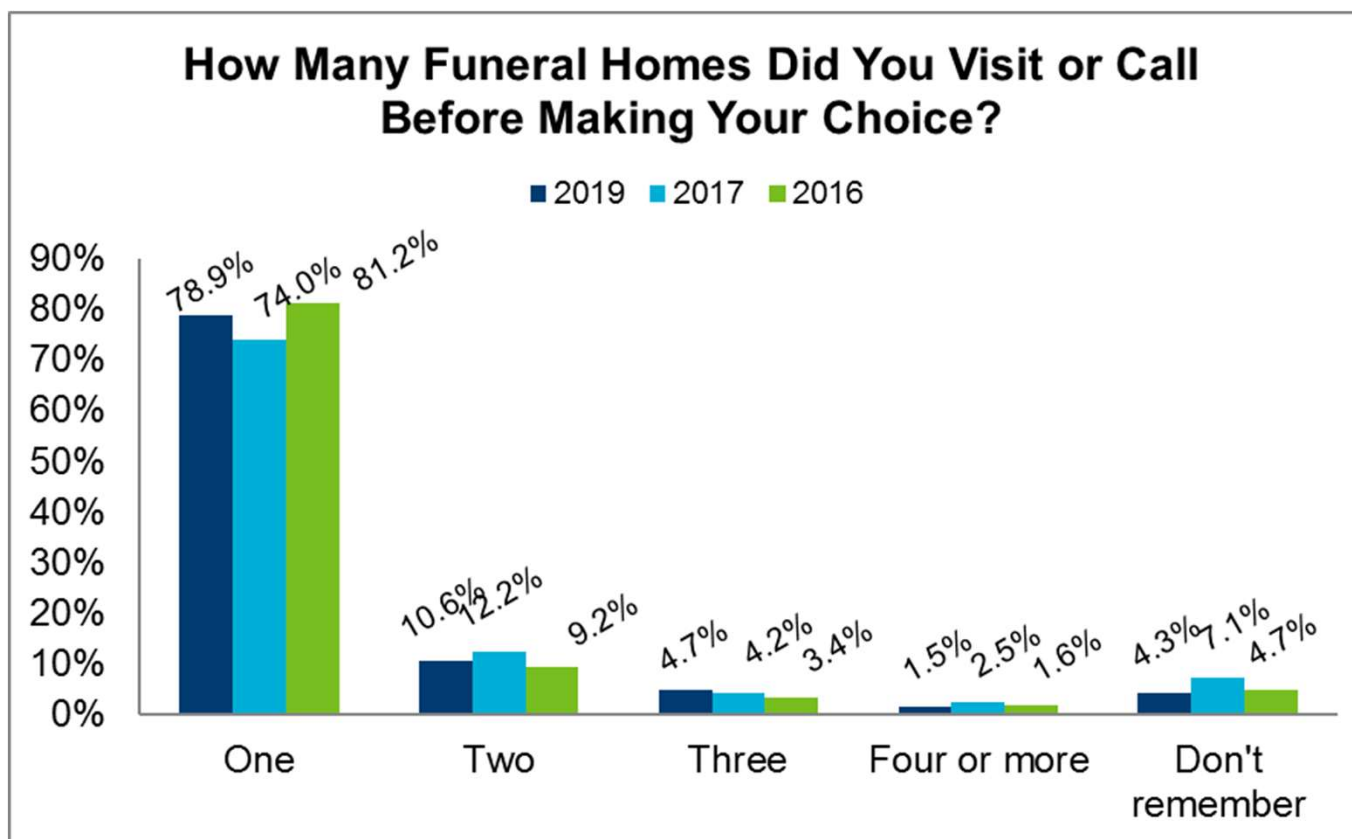


1. Have you personally ever been involved in planning a funeral for either a friend or relative?

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Shopping

Only 16.8% of respondents visited more than one funeral home when they planned a funeral.



2. The last time you planned a funeral, how many funeral homes did you visit or contact before choosing a funeral home? (n=602)

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Shopping

Of the 16.8% who called/visited more than one funeral home, the main reasons for visiting/calling more than one funeral home were to compare prices, to check available service options, and/or to check availability.

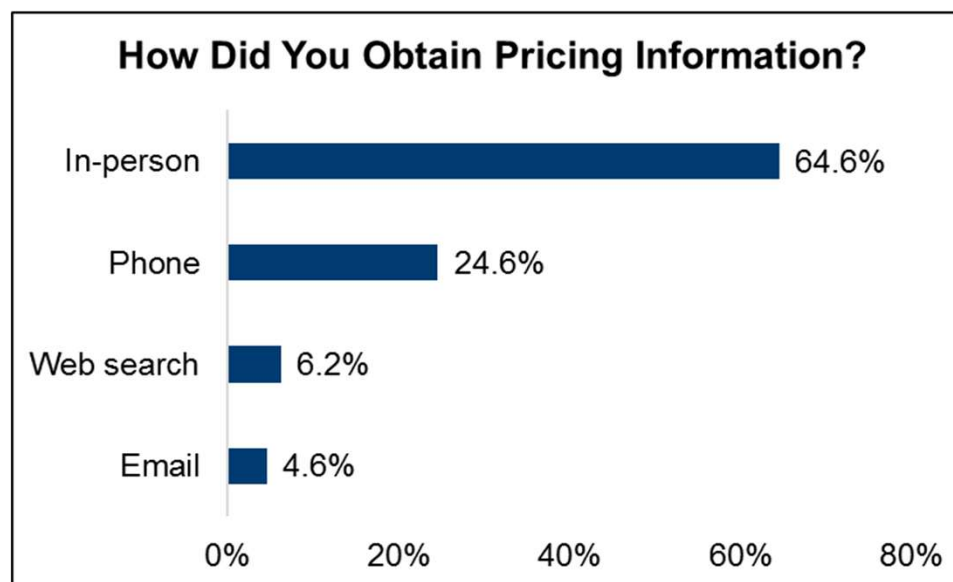


3. Why did you visit or call more than one funeral home? Base: Have you personally ever been involved in planning a funeral for either a friend or relative? And called/visited 2 or more funeral homes before making your choice? (n=101) Percentages add up to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

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Price Shopping

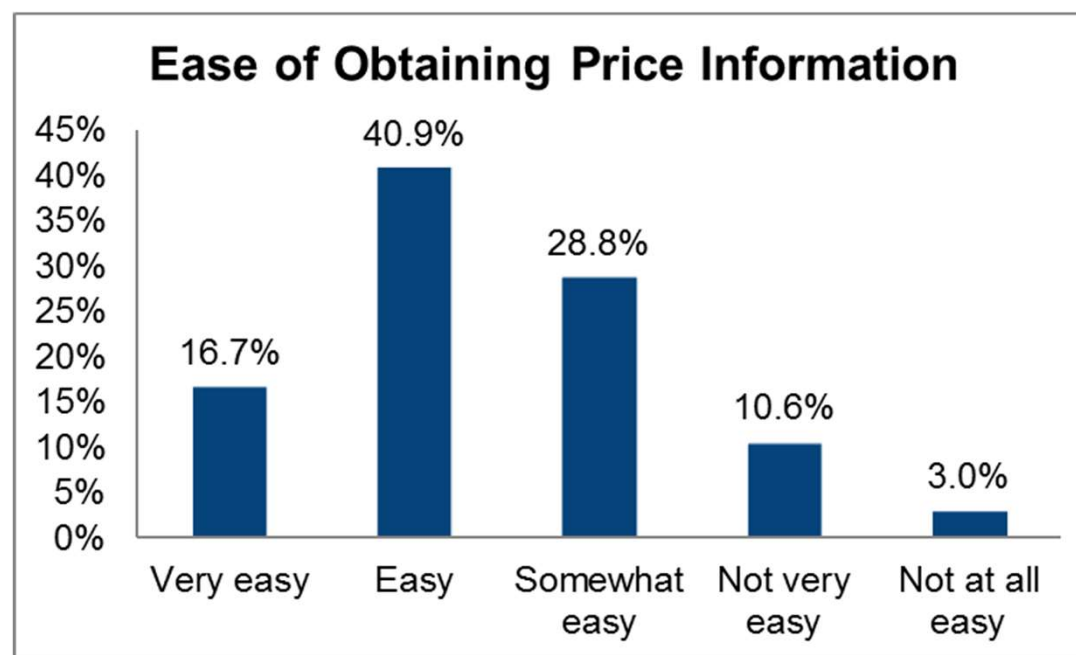
- Of those who contacted more than one funeral home to compare prices, two-thirds obtained pricing information in-person and 24.6% obtained pricing information over the phone.



3b. How did you obtain pricing information from the funeral homes you contacted?
Base: Why did you visit or call more than one funeral home? And Have you personally ever been involved in planning a funeral for either a friend or relative? (n=65)

Price Shopping

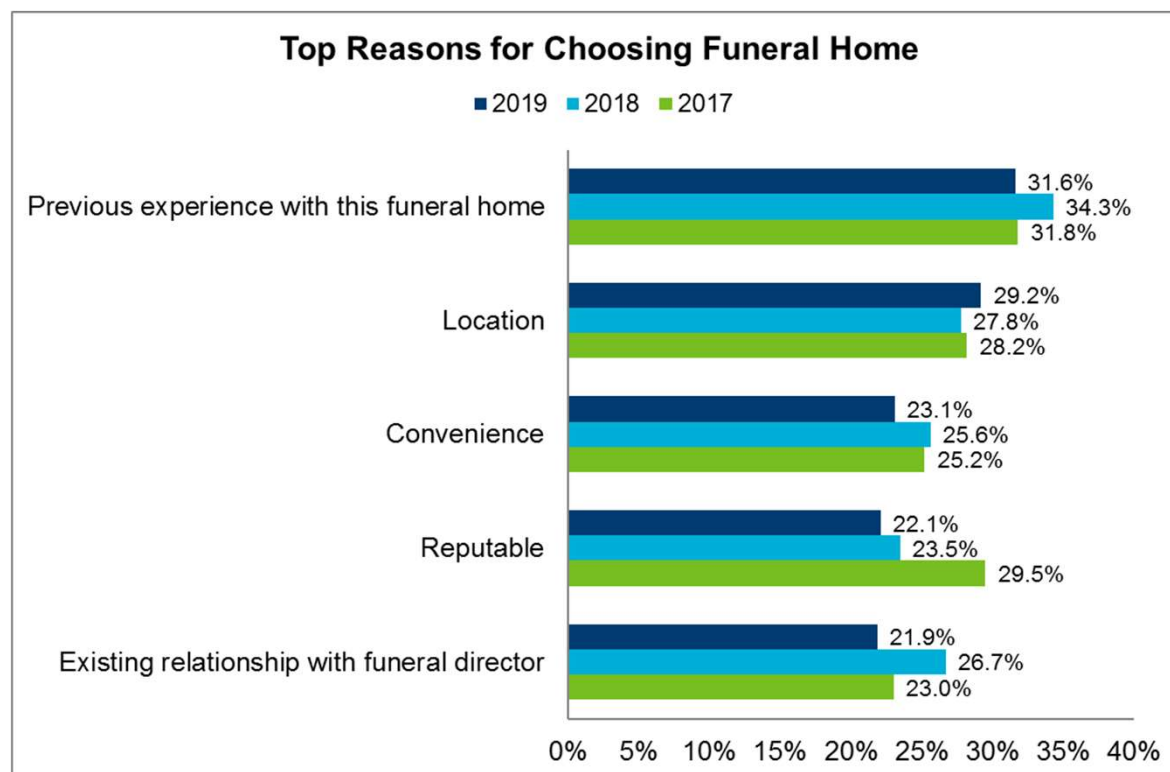
- Of those that contacted more than one funeral home to compare prices, most felt it was either very easy (16.7%) or easy (40.9%) to obtain pricing information.



3c. How easy or difficult was it to obtain price information from the funeral homes you contacted? Base: Why did you visit or call more than one funeral home? And Have you personally ever been involved in planning a funeral for either a friend or relative? (n=66)

Reasons for Selecting Funeral Home

Main reasons for selecting a funeral home were the respondents' previous experience at the funeral home, the funeral home location, convenience, the funeral home was reputable and/or they had an existing relationship with the funeral director.



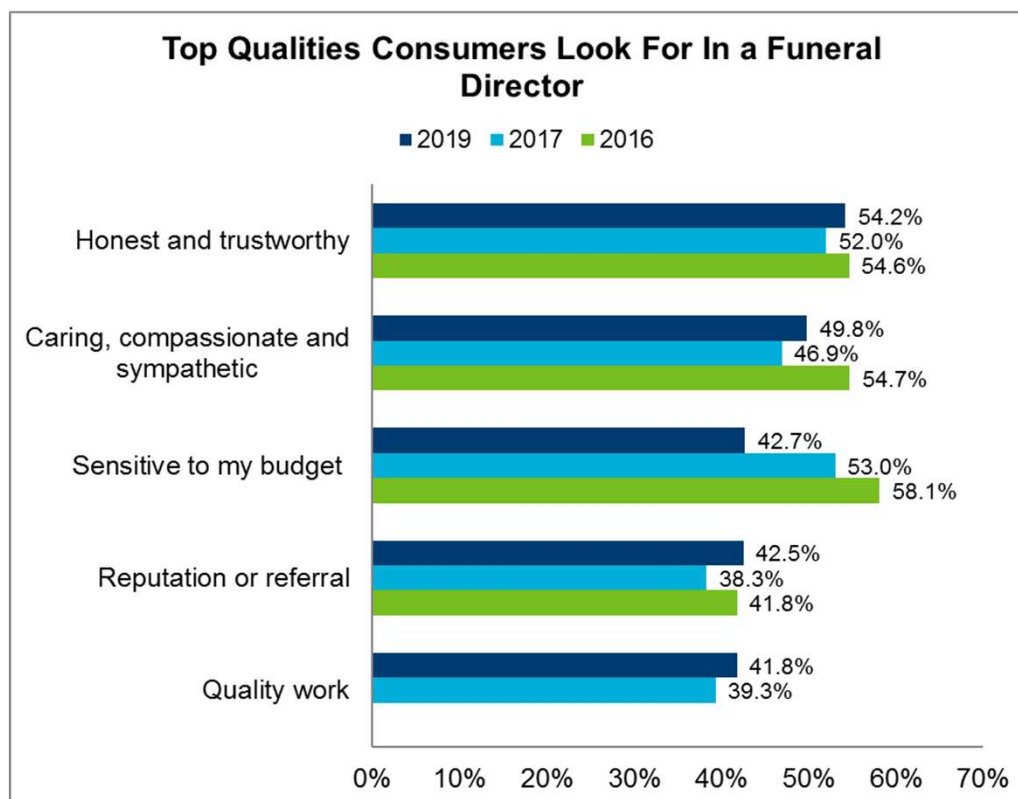
4. What was the main reason(s) you chose the funeral home you did?

Base: Have you personally ever been involved in planning a funeral for either a friend or relative? (n=585) Percentages add up to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

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Reasons for Selecting Funeral Directors

- The top qualities consumers look for in a funeral director are they are honest and trustworthy, caring, compassionate and sympathetic, and sensitive to their budget.



5. What are the most important qualities you look for when choosing a funeral director?

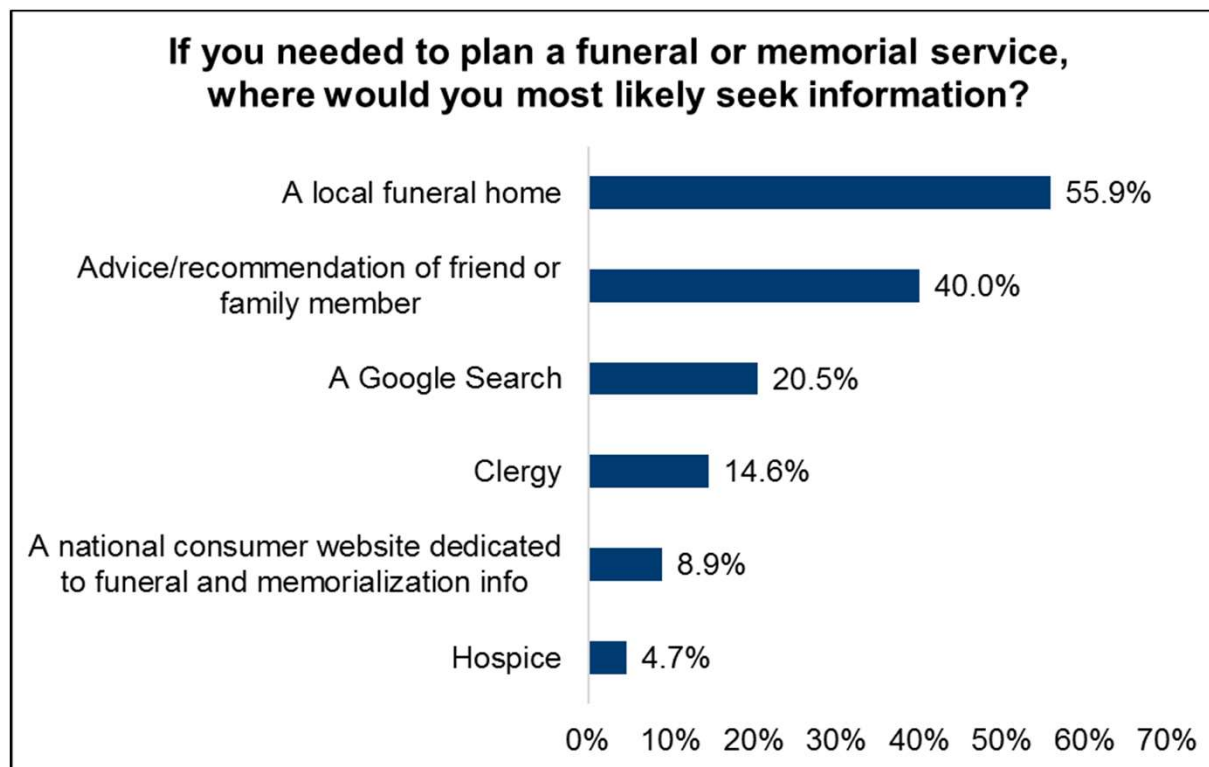
Base: Have you personally ever been involved in planning a funeral for either a friend or relative? (n=585) Percentages add up to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

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Consumer Website

If consumers needed to plan a funeral or memorial service, most would seek advice from a local funeral home and/or advice or recommendations of friends or family members.

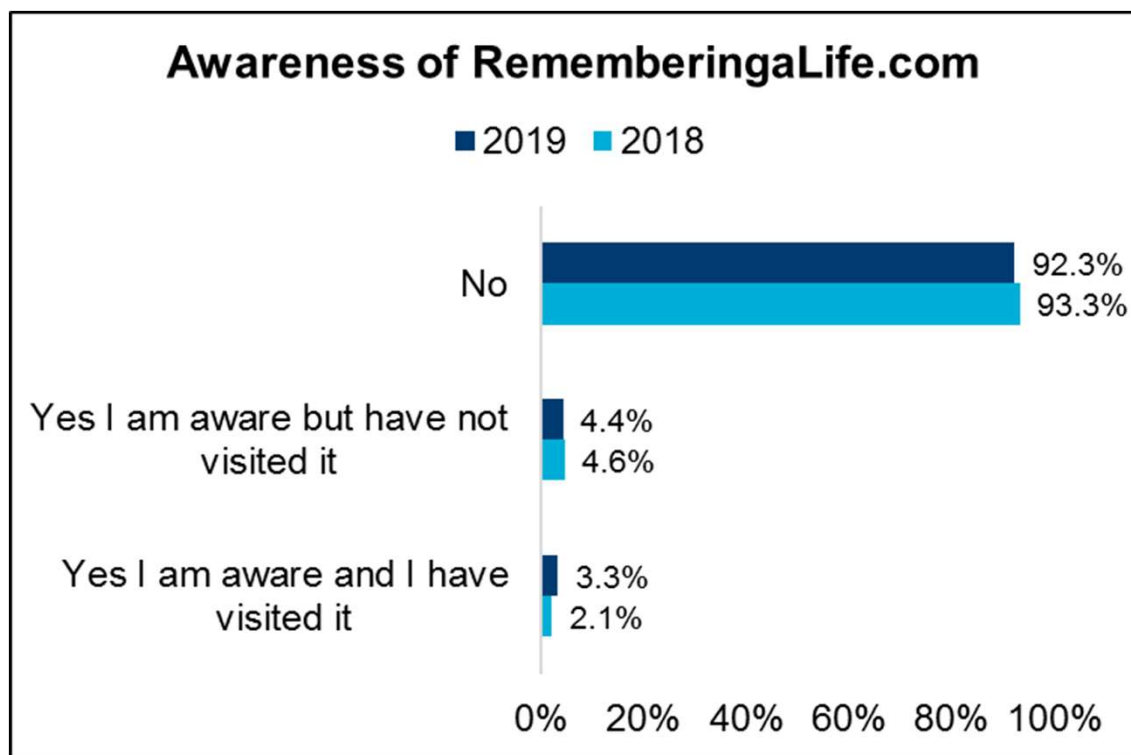


8. If you needed to plan a funeral or memorial service, where would you most likely seek information?

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RememberingaLife.com

Most respondents were unaware of the website RememberingaLife.com.

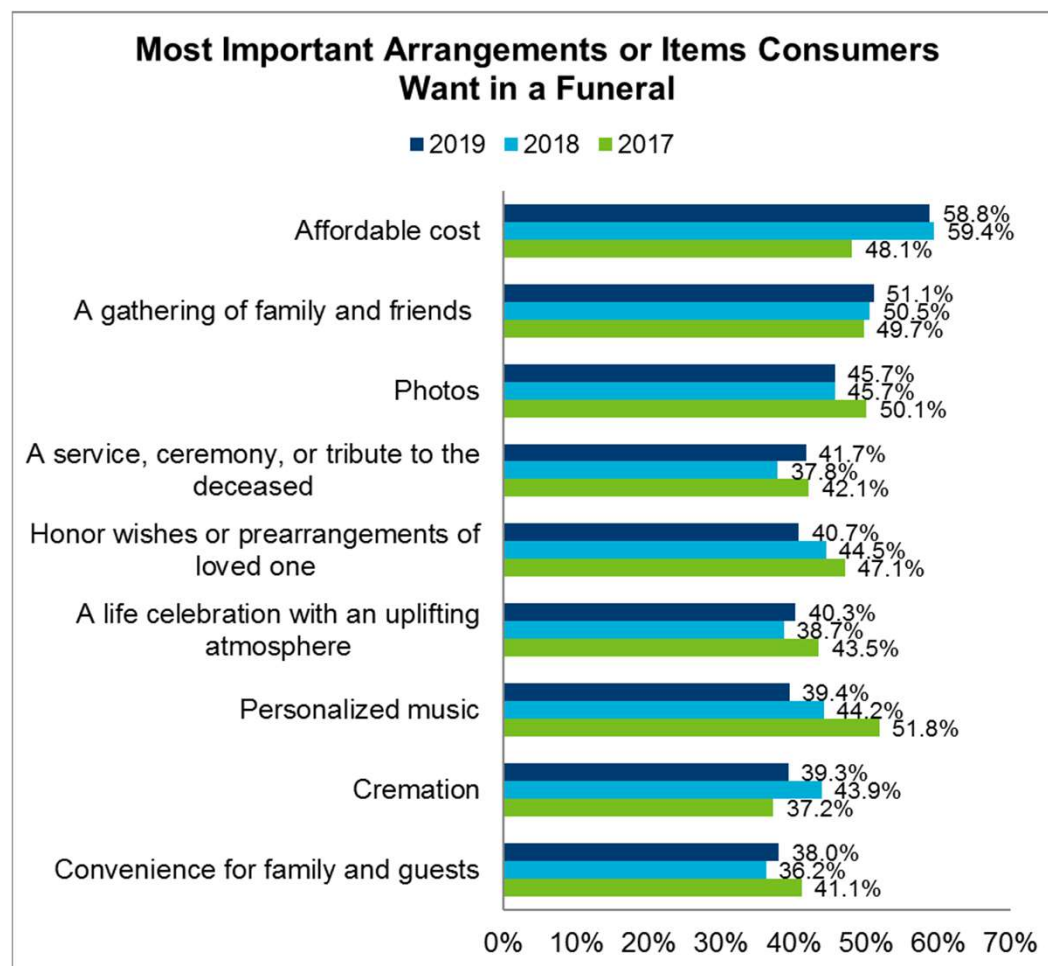


9. Are you aware of the RememberingaLife.com website which features information about planning funerals, attending funerals and grief?

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Important Items When Planning a Funeral

The most important items respondents want included in their own funeral or a funeral for a loved one were affordable cost, a gathering of family and friends, photos, and a service/ceremony/tribute to honor the deceased. It should be noted that in 2018, the attribute “affordable cost” was changed from “low cost” in prior years’ surveys. Therefore, longitudinal results are not comparable.

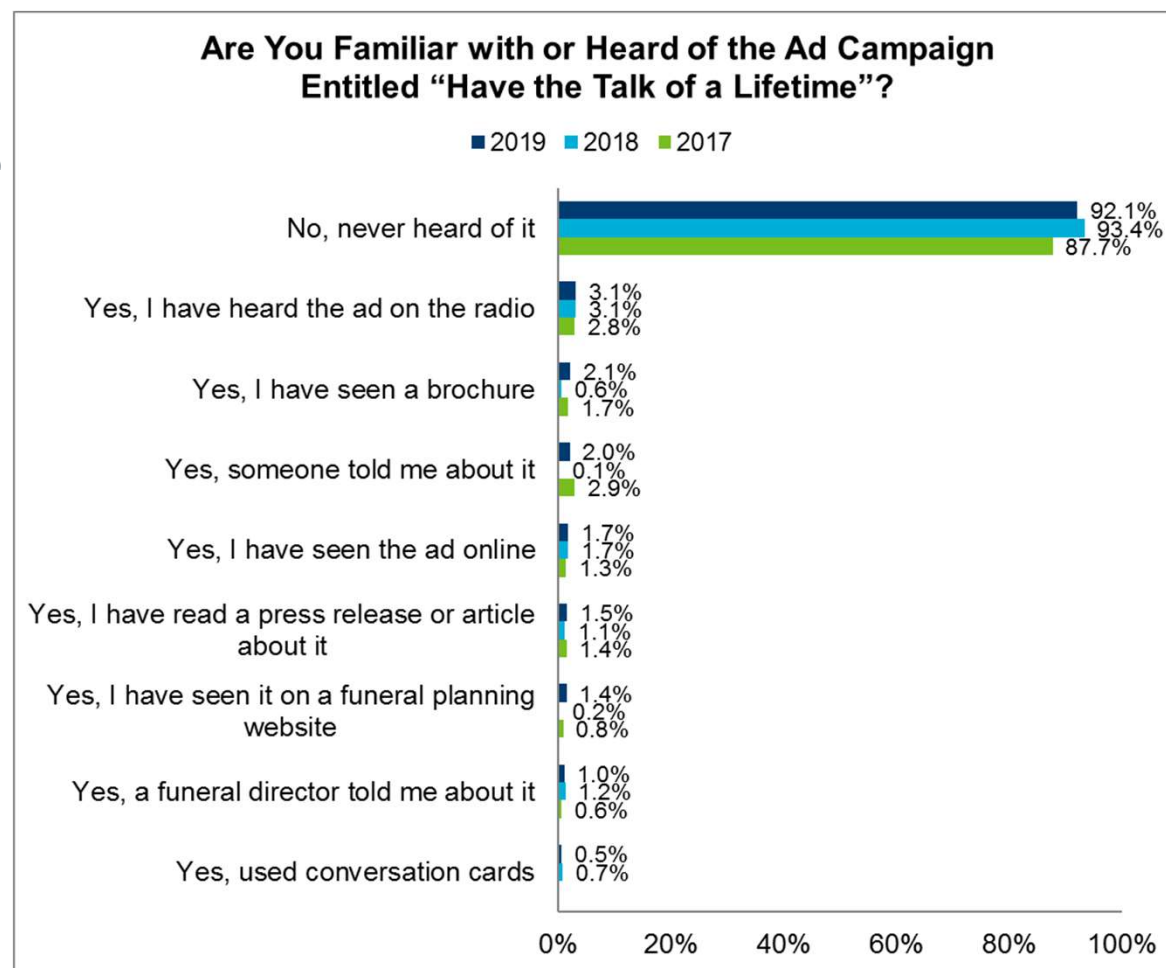


12. What are the most important things you would include in your own funeral or a funeral for a loved one? Percentages add up to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

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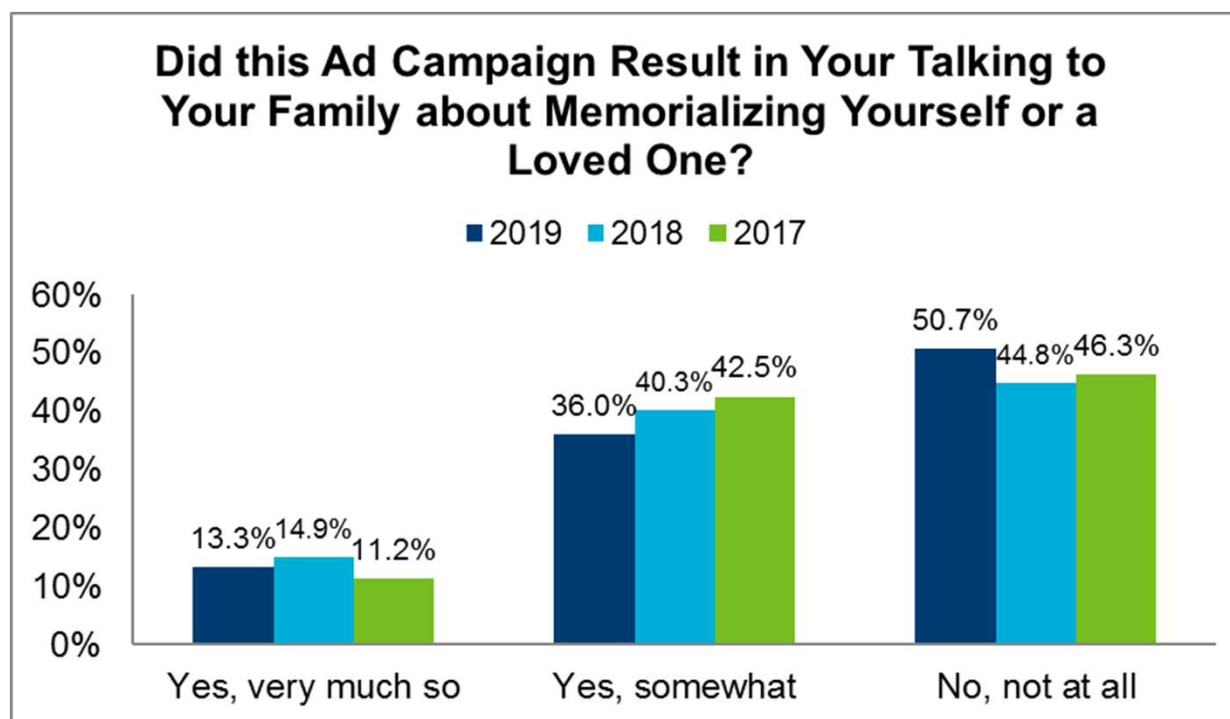
Have the Talk of a Lifetime

Only 7.9% of respondents claimed they have heard or are familiar with the *Have the Talk of a Lifetime* campaign.



Have the Talk of a Lifetime

Of the 7.9% of respondents who said they were familiar with the ad campaign, 49.3% said it resulted in them talking to their family about memorialization.

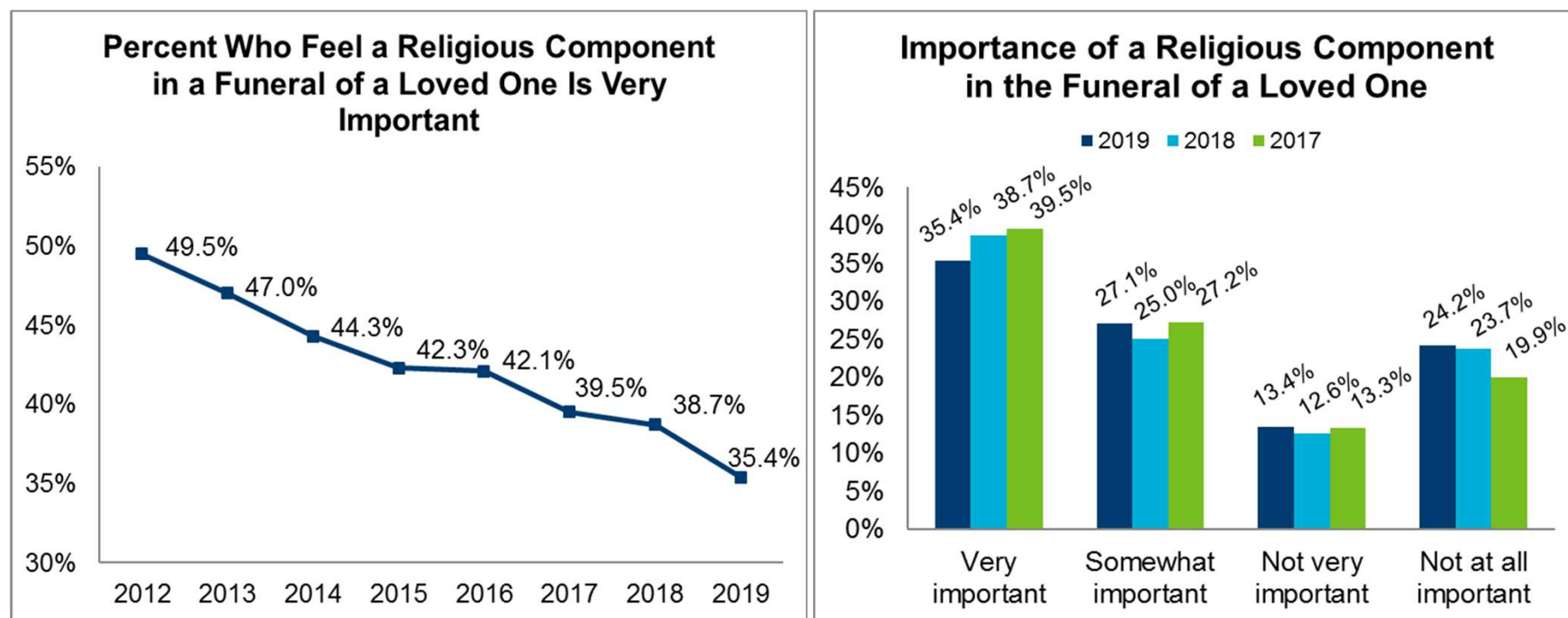


13. Did this campaign result in your talking to your family about memorializing yourself or a loved one? Base: Are you familiar with or heard of the ad campaign entitled "Have the Talk of a Lifetime"? (n=75)

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Importance of Religion

Thirty-five percent (35.4%) of respondents feel religion is a very important component in the funeral of a loved one. This statistic has been declining over the past eight years.

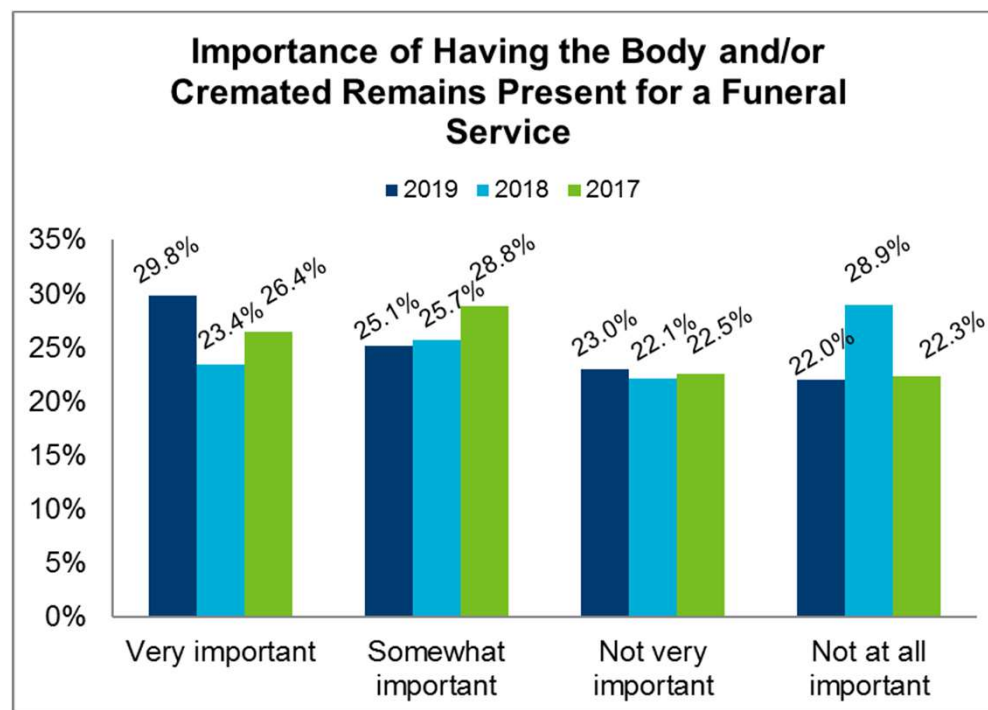
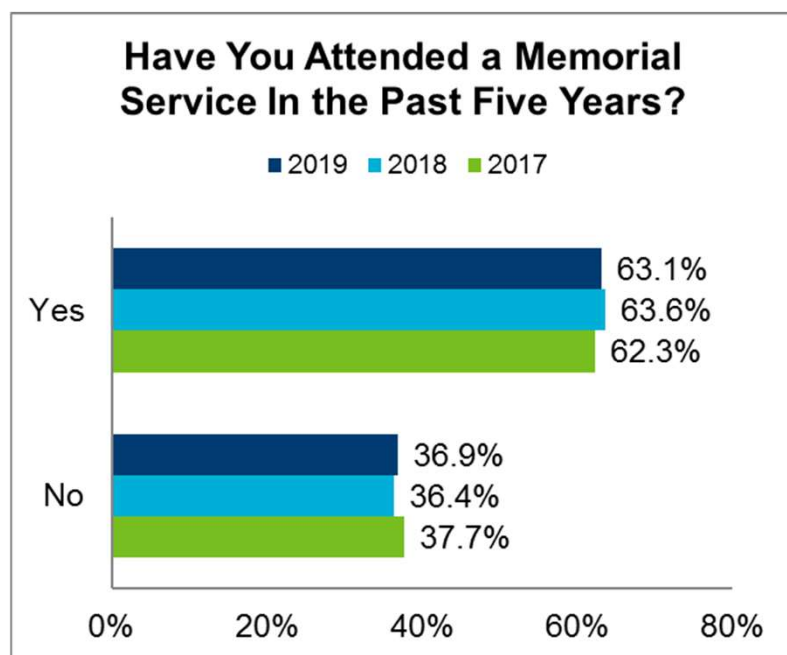


15. How important is it to include a religious component in the funeral of a loved one?

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Memorial Services

- Sixty-three percent of the respondents attended a memorial service in the past five years.
- Approximately half (54.9%) felt it was either very or somewhat important to have the body and/or cremated remains present at a funeral service.



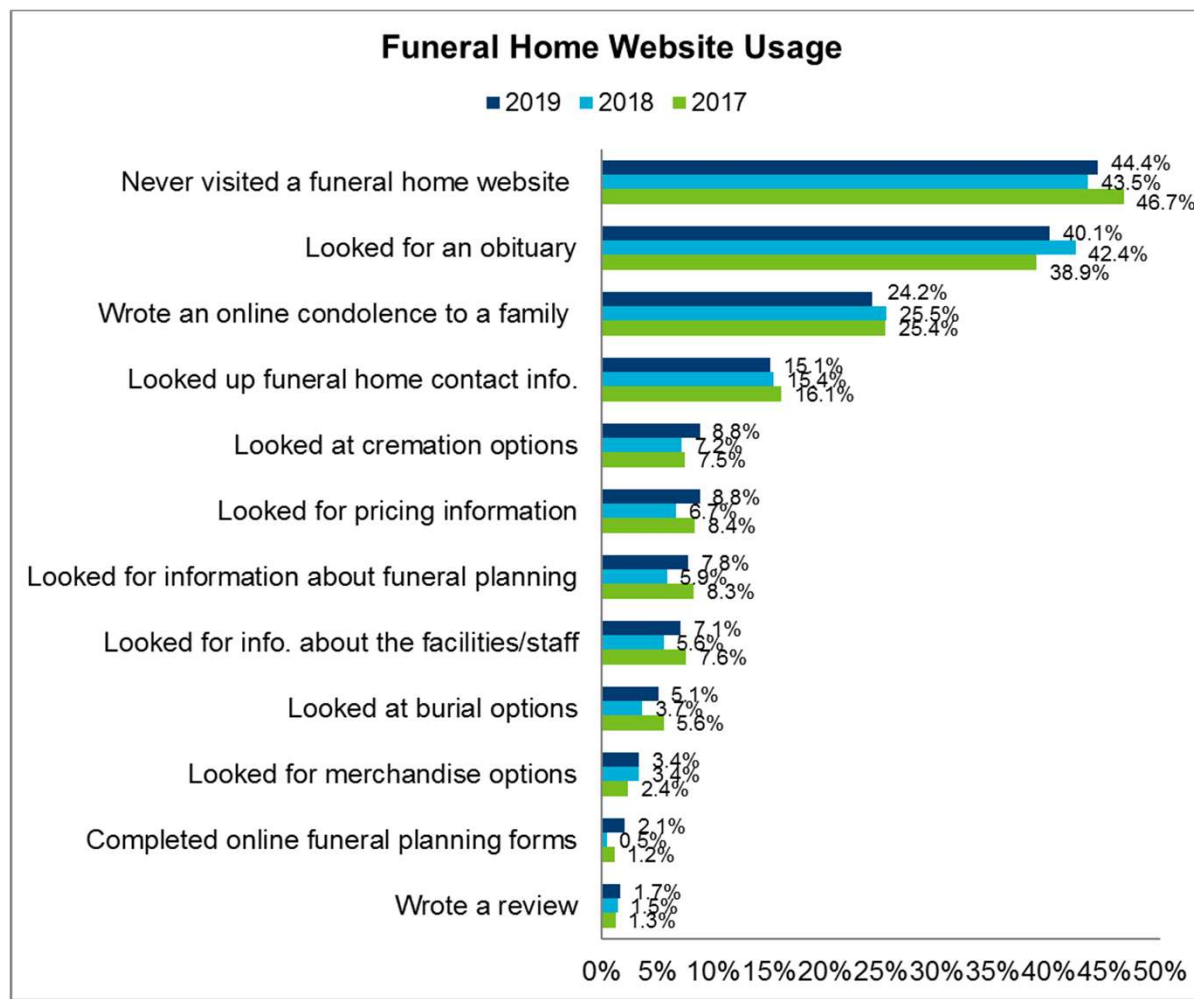
16. Have you attended a “memorial service” (a funeral without the body present) in the past 5 years?

17. How important is it when creating a final farewell to a loved one to have the body and/or cremated remains present for the service?

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Website Usage

Just over half (55.6%) of the respondents have visited a funeral home website, primarily to look for an obituary, write an online condolence to a family, or look up funeral home contact information.

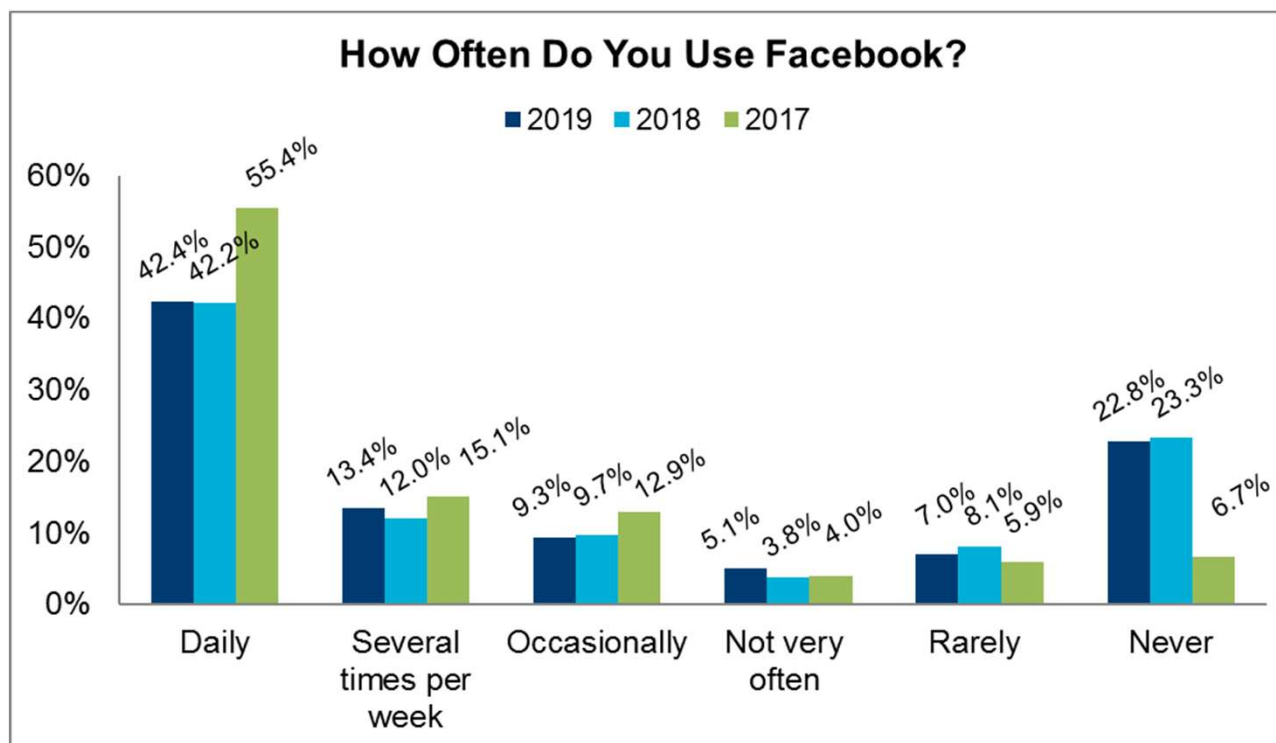


18. Have you ever seen or visited a funeral home's website? If so, what have you used the website for?

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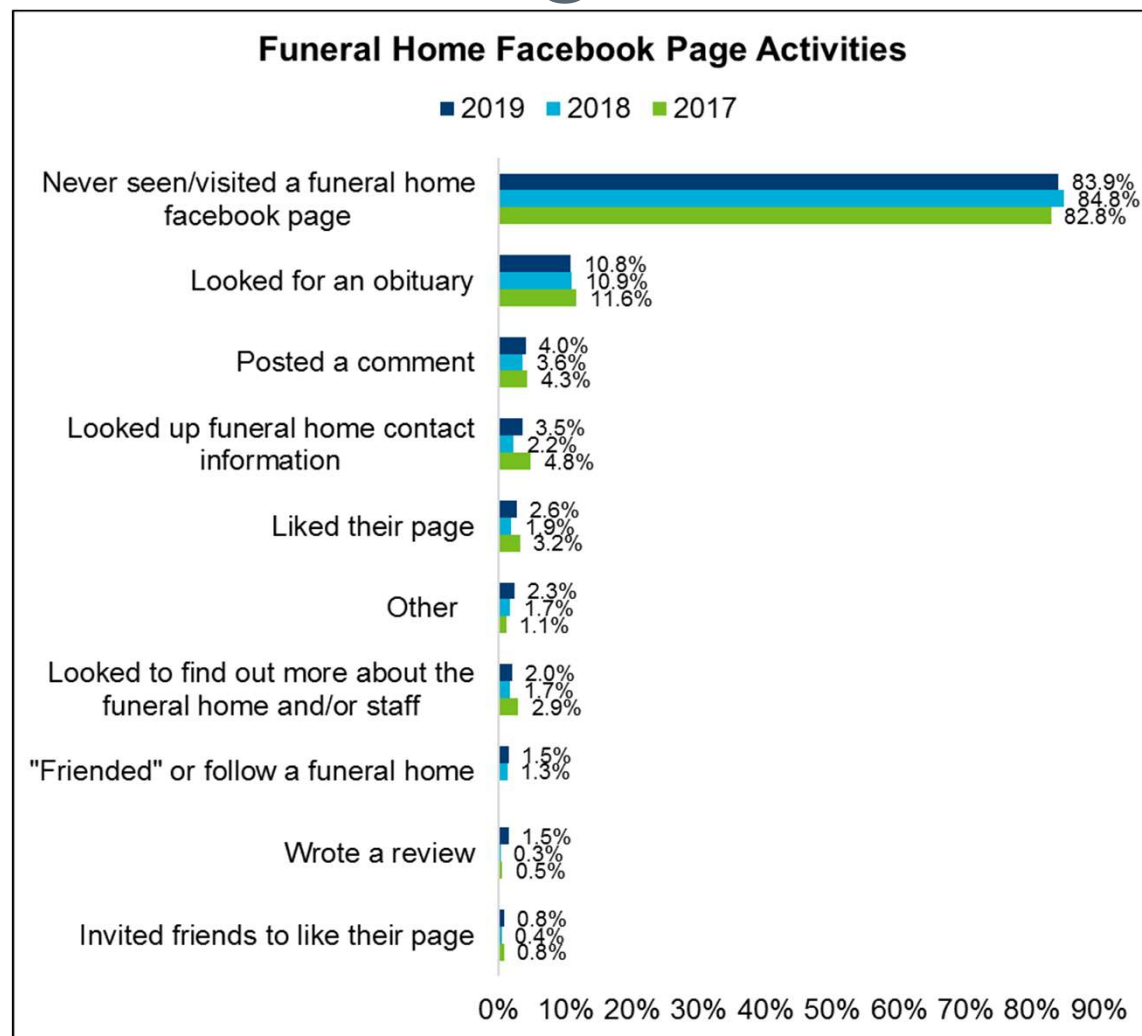
Facebook Usage

Three-quarters of respondents have used Facebook. Of those who have, 55.8% use it daily or several times per week.



Facebook Usage

Of the consumers using Facebook, only 16.1% have visited a funeral home's Facebook page. Of those that did, they primarily looked for an obituary.

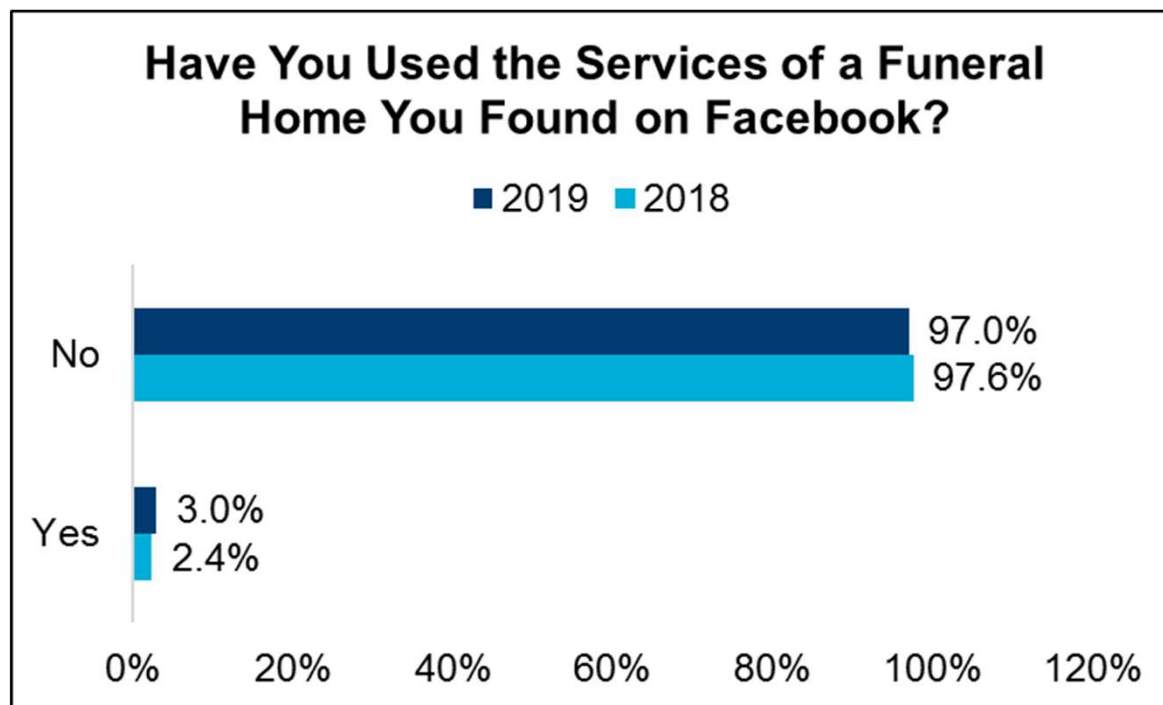


20. Have you ever seen or visited a funeral home's Facebook page? If so, what did do while visiting the Facebook page? (n=658) Base: 17. How often do you use Facebook?

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Facebook Usage

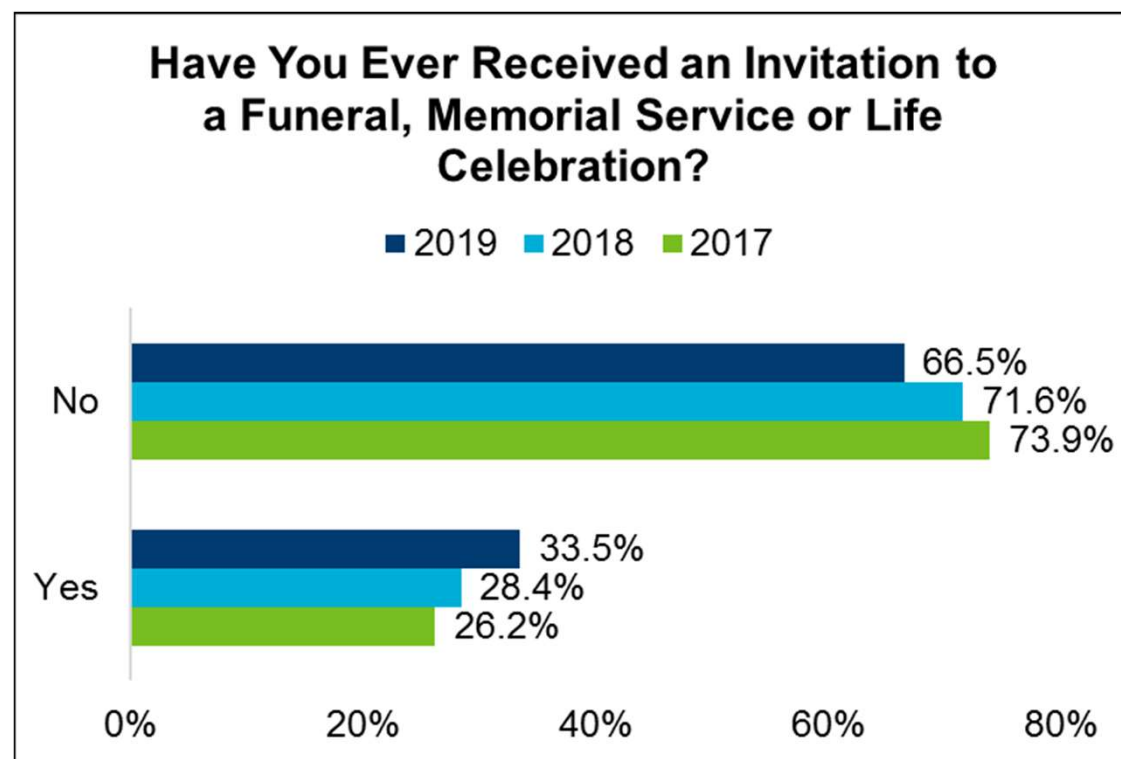
Of the consumers using Facebook, only 3.0% have used the services of a funeral home they found on Facebook.



21. Have you used the services of a funeral home that you found on Facebook? (n=658) Base: ■ Informs ■ Educates ■ Advocates ■
18. How often do you use Facebook?

Funeral Invitations

Thirty-three percent of respondents have received an invitation via mail/email/social media to a funeral, memorial service, or life celebration. This is a significant increase from 2017.

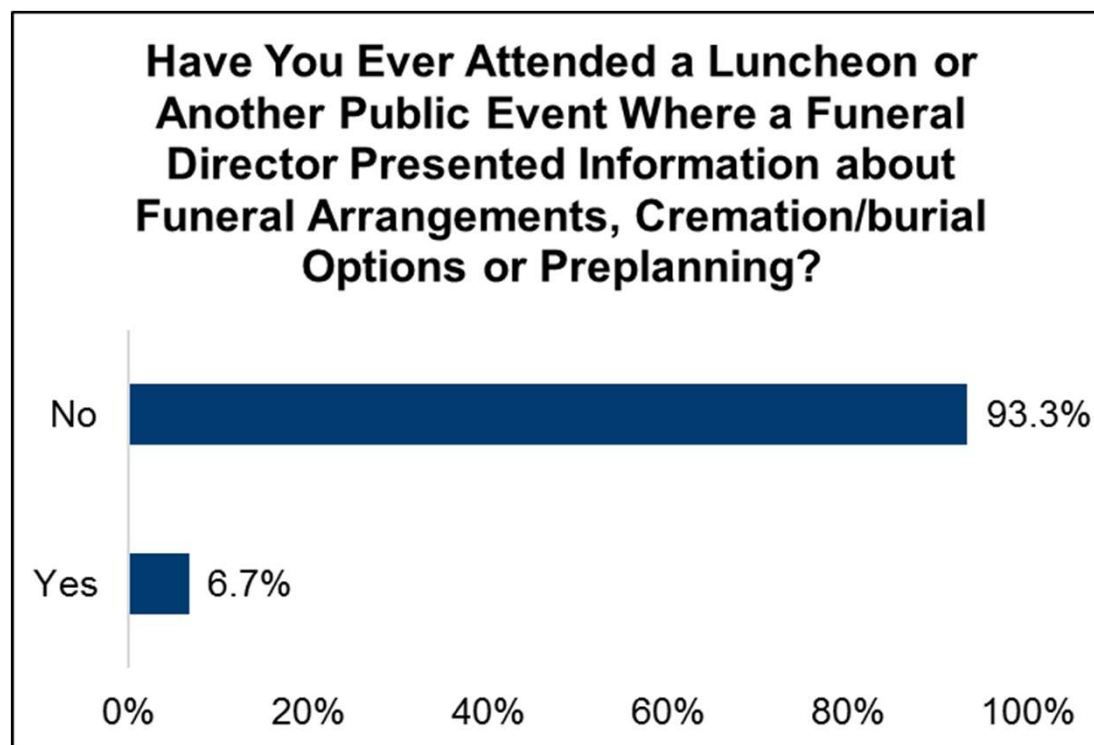


22. Have you ever received an invitation via mail/email/social media to a funeral, memorial service, or celebration of life?

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Community Presentations

- Only 6.7% have attended a luncheon or public event where a funeral director presented information about funeral arrangements, cremation/burial options or preplanning.



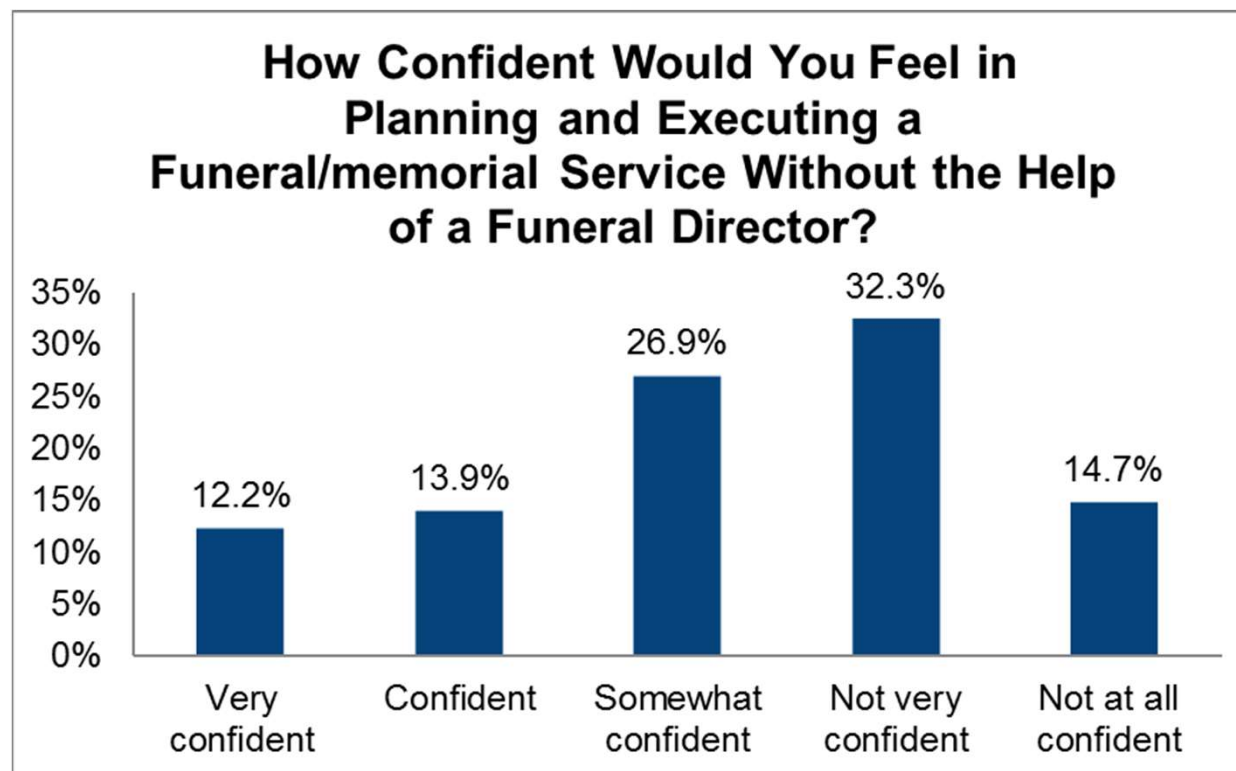
23. Have you ever attended a luncheon or another public event where a funeral director presented information about funeral arrangements, cremation/burial options or preplanning?

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Planning Without a Funeral Director

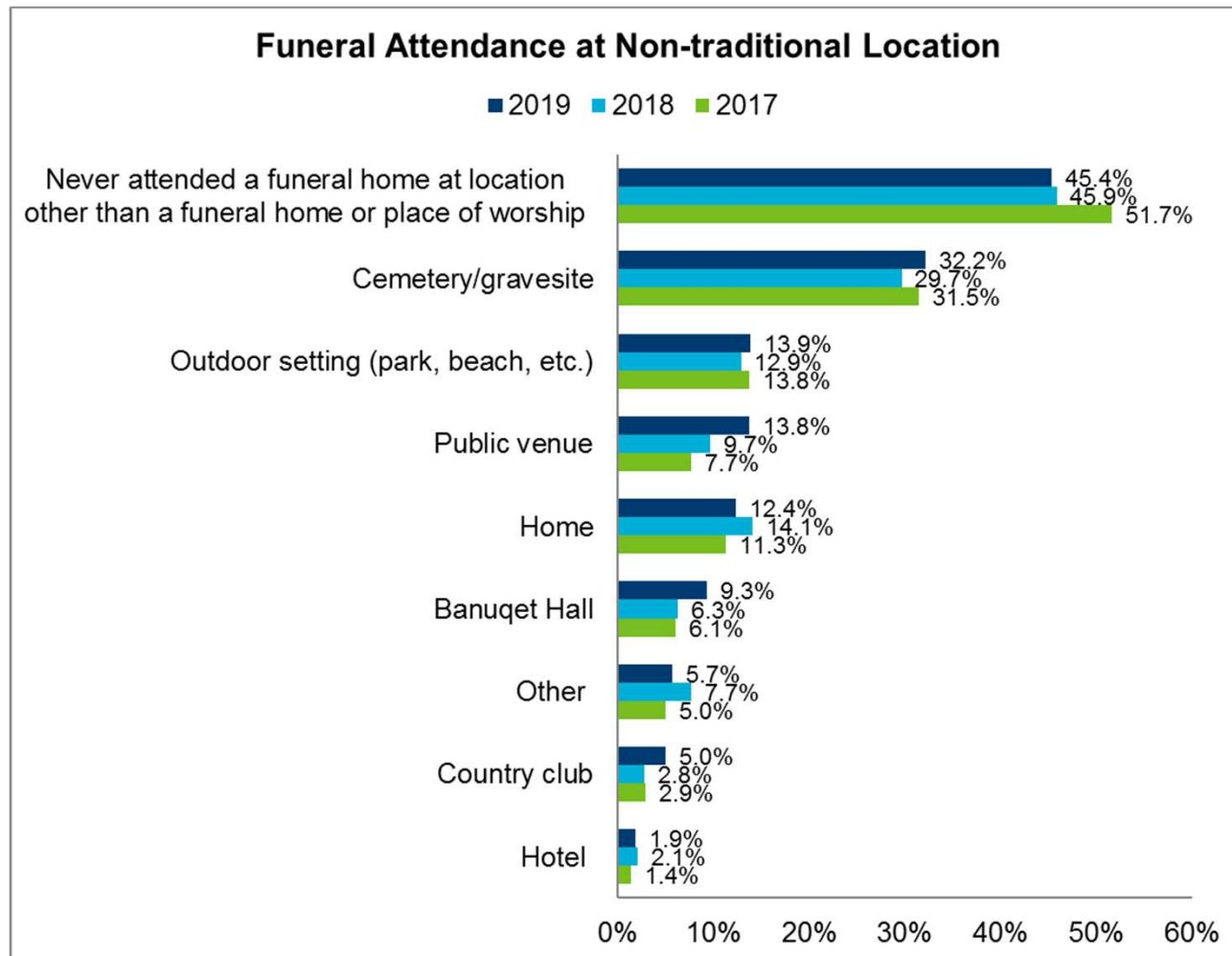
- Forty-seven percent of respondents would not feel confident planning a funeral without the help of a funeral director, while 26.1% would feel confident or very confident doing so.



24. How confident would you feel in planning and executing a funeral/memorial service without the help of a funeral director?

Funeral Locations

Over half (54.6%) of respondents have attended a funeral at a non-traditional location. This is a significant increase from 2017 where 48.3% attended a funeral at a non-traditional location. The most common locations included a cemetery/gravesite, an outdoor setting and/or a public venue.

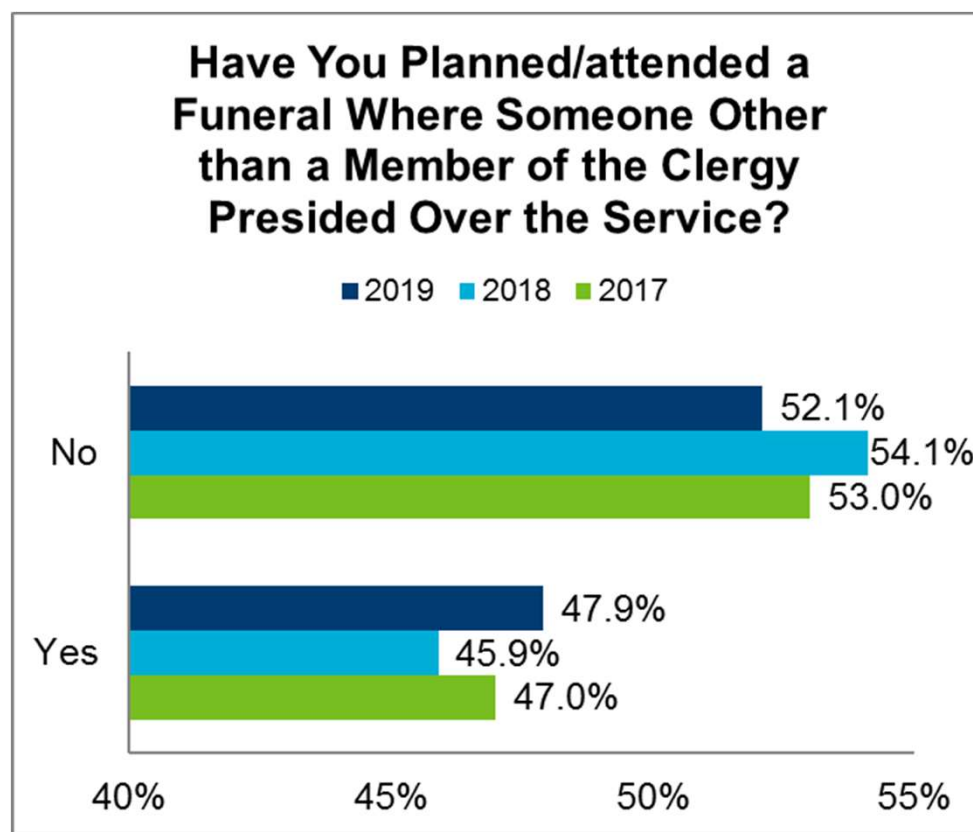


25. Have you ever attended a funeral at a location other than a funeral home or place of worship? If so, where was the funeral held?

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Non-Clergy

Just under half of respondents (47.9%) have attended a funeral where non-clergy presided over a service.

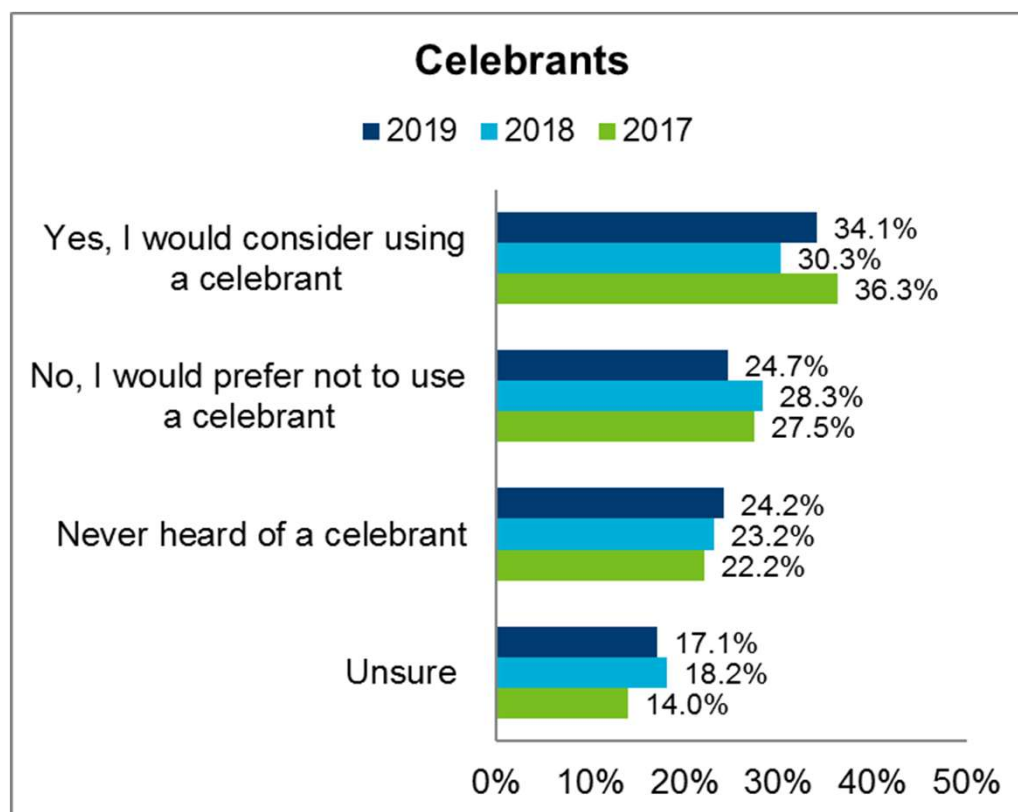


26. Have you ever planned or attended a funeral where someone other than a member of the clergy presided over the service?

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Celebrants

- Just over one-third (34.1%) of respondents would consider using a celebrant.
- Approximately one-quarter would prefer not to use a celebrant and 24.2% have never heard of a celebrant.

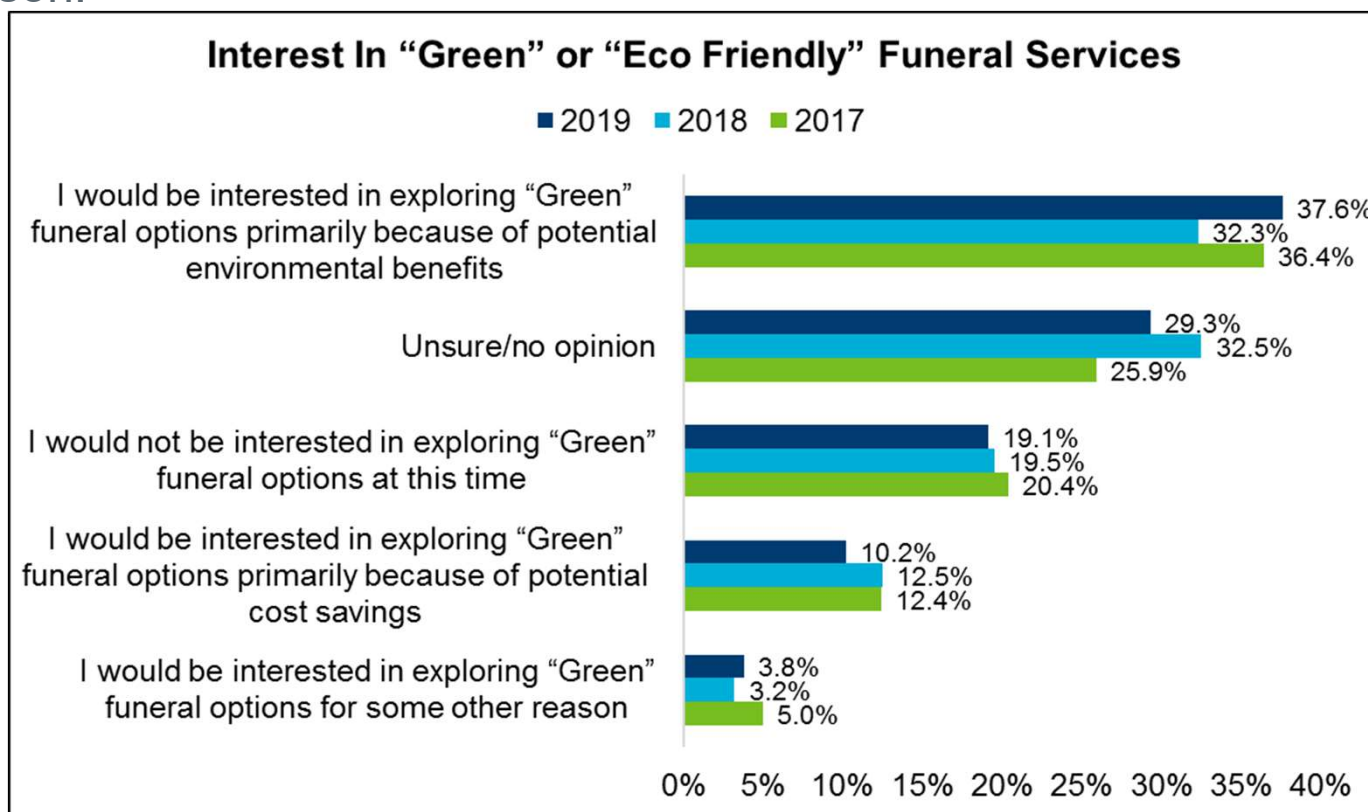


27. Some funeral homes offer the services of trained individuals called “celebrants” (typically non-clergy persons) to officiate services. Would you consider using a celebrant to officiate a service for a loved one?

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“Green” Funerals

Just over half (51.6%) of respondents would be interested in exploring “green” funeral options because of potential environmental benefits, cost saving, or some other reason.

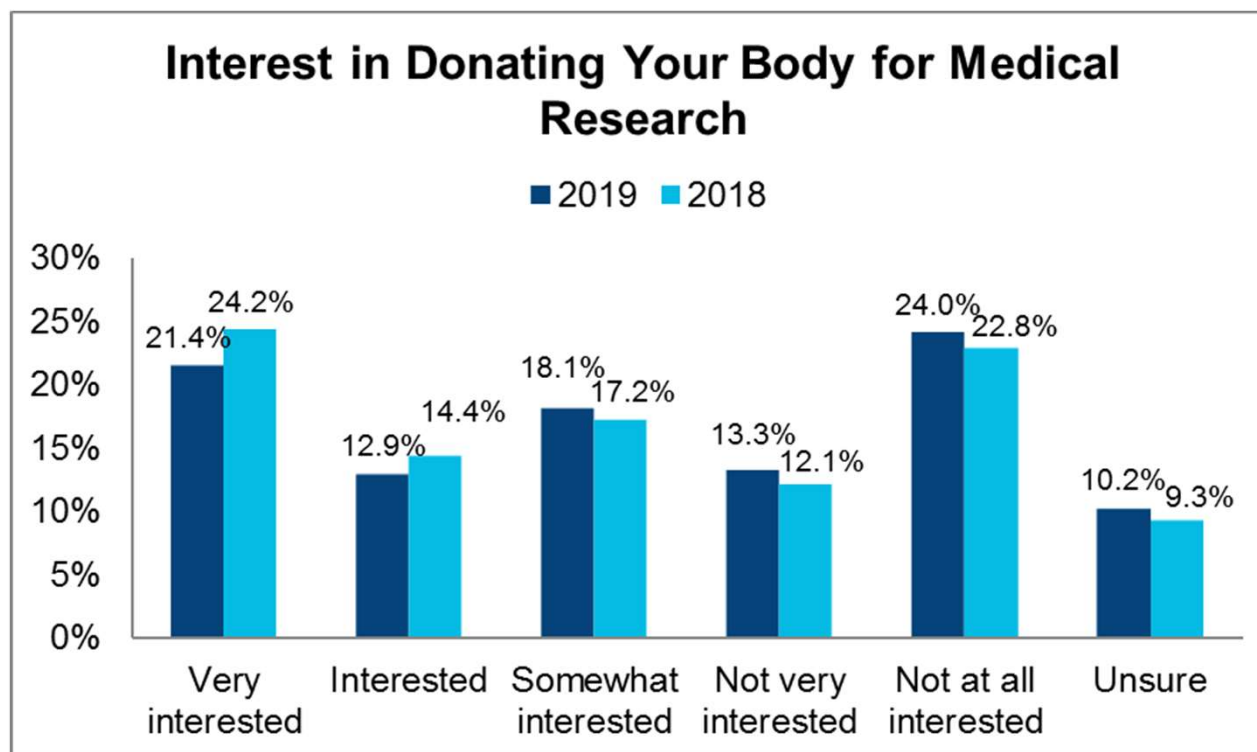


28. “Green” or “Eco Friendly” funerals and burials offer options designed to have less of an impact on the environment and include things like biodegradable caskets and less use of chemicals in preparing the body for burial. How interested would you be in “Green” or “Eco Friendly” funeral services?

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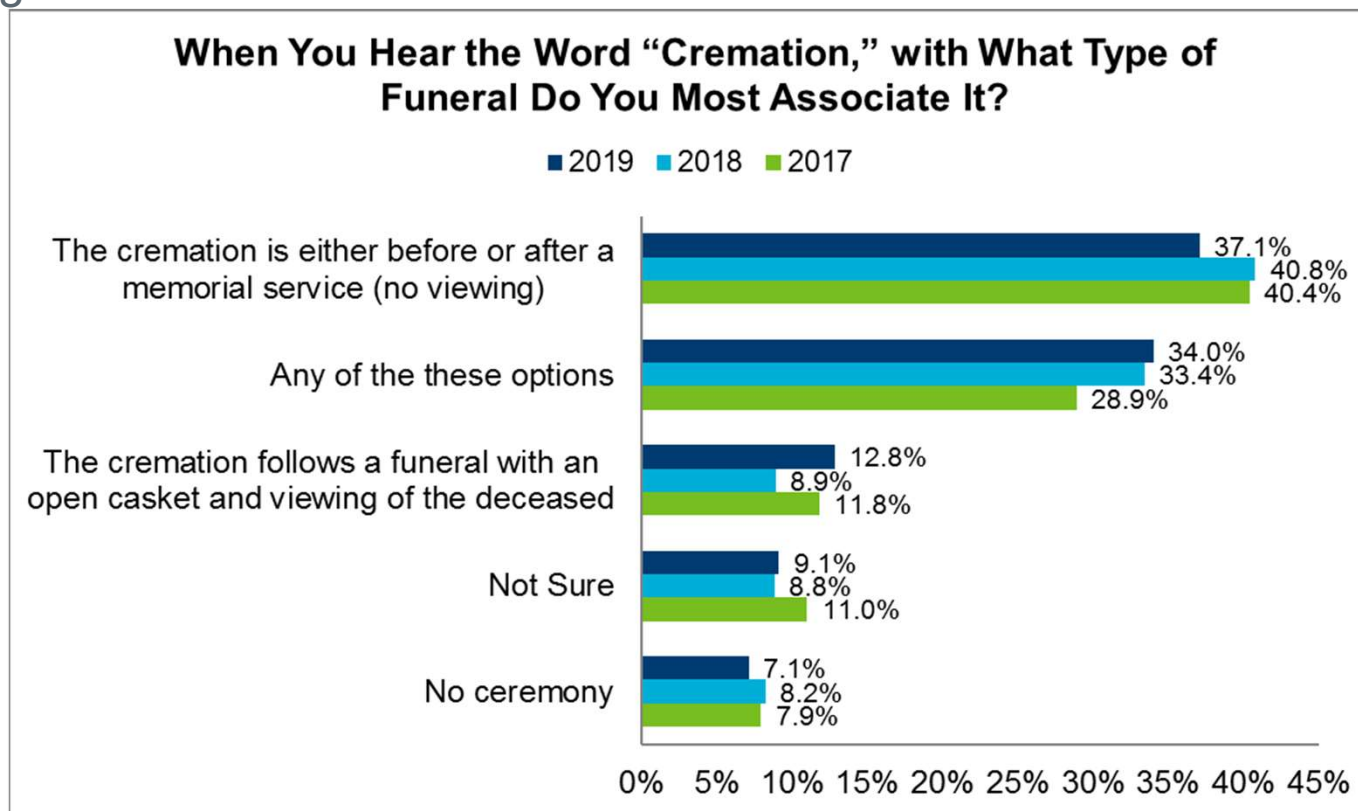
Body Donation

Consumers remain divided when it comes to donating their body for medical research; 34.3% were very interested or interested and 37.3% were not very interested or not at all interested.



Cremation

- Thirty-seven percent of respondents associated a cremation with a memorial service.
- Only 12.8% associated a cremation with a funeral with an open casket and viewing.

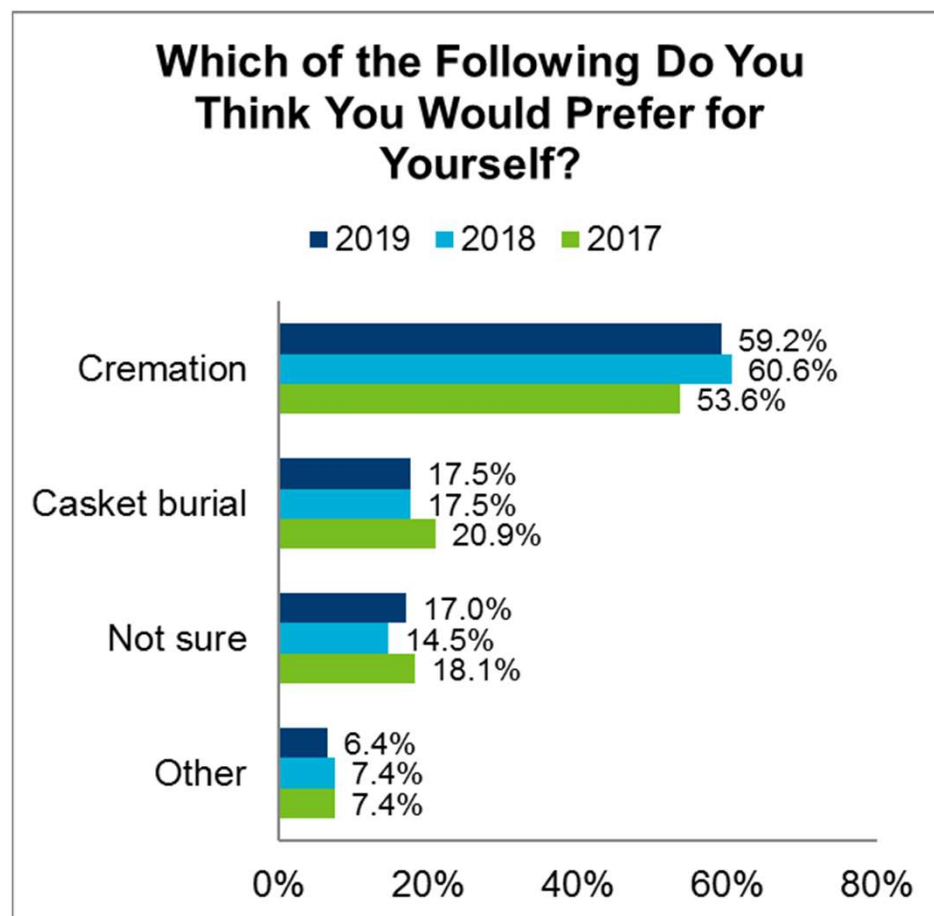


30. When you hear the word “cremation,” with what type of funeral do you associate it?

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Cremation

Fifty-nine percent of respondents would choose a cremation for their own funeral.

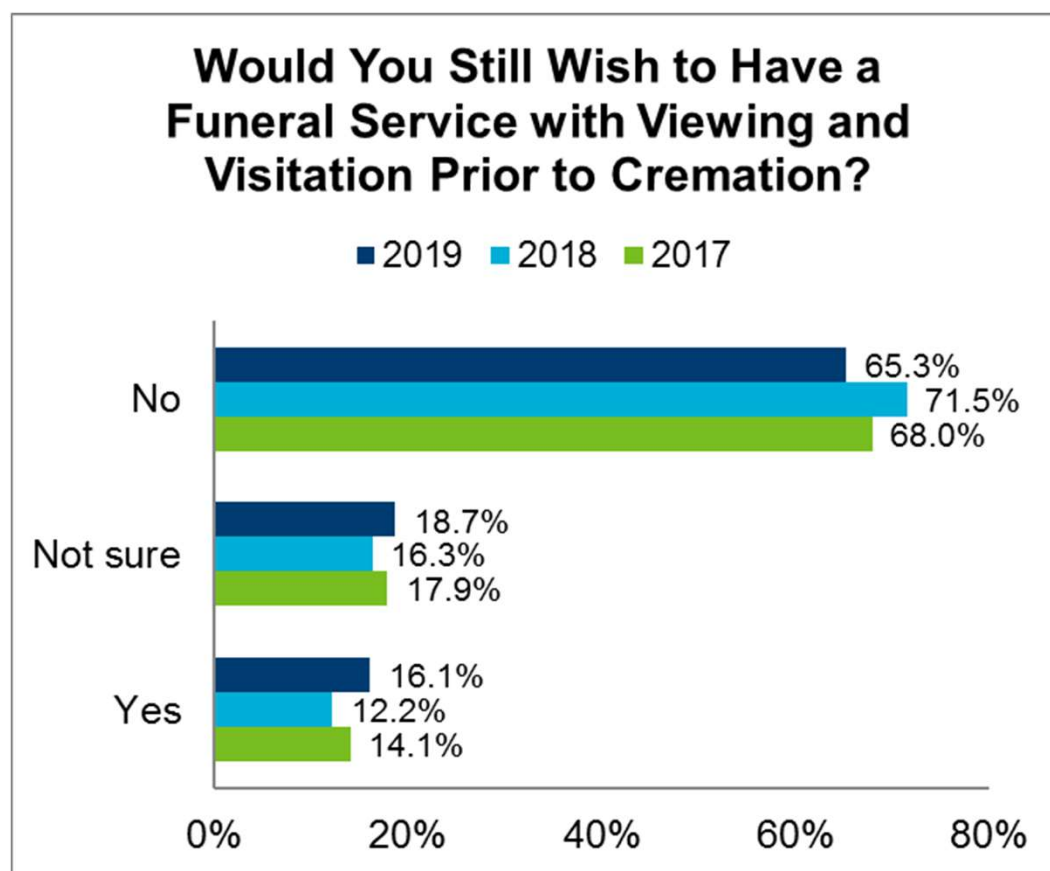


32. Which of the following do you think you would prefer for yourself?

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Cremation

Of the 59.2% that would choose cremation, only 16.1% would like to have a complete funeral service with viewing and visitation prior to their cremation.



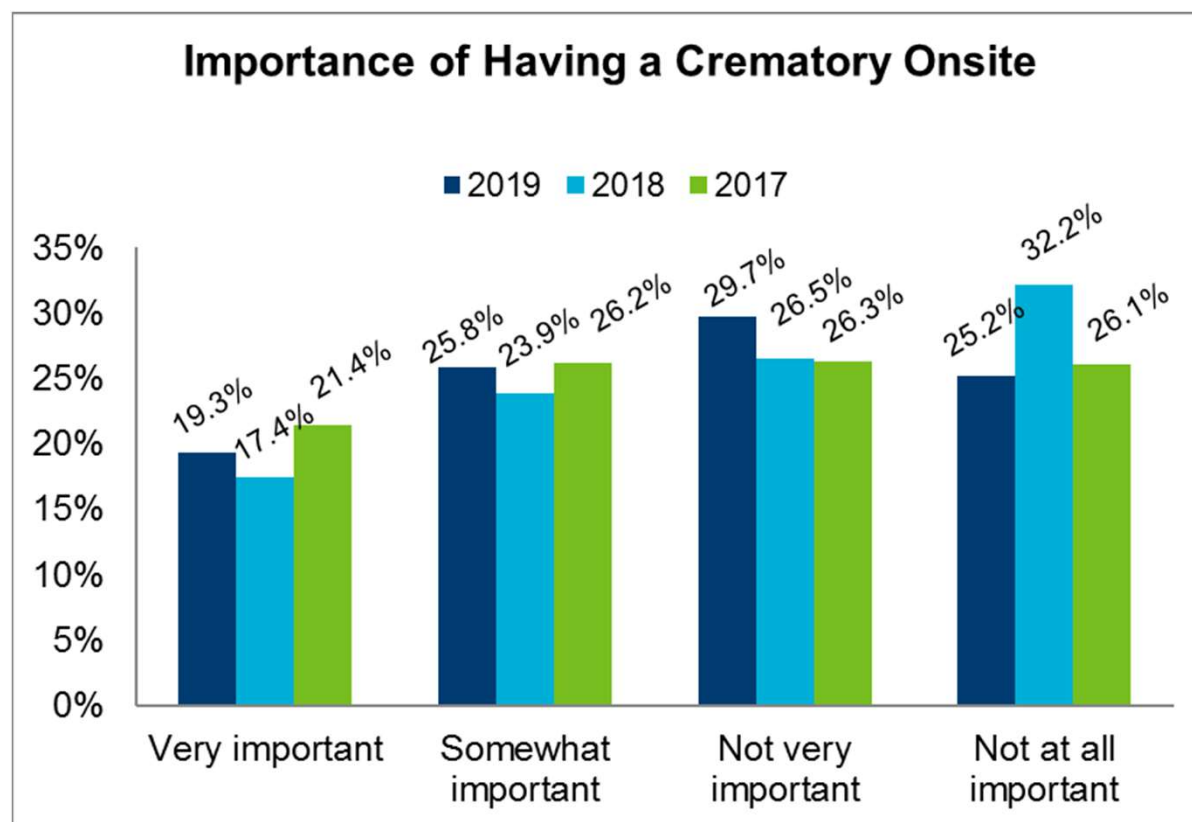
33. Which of the following do you think you would prefer for yourself?

33. Would you still wish to have a complete funeral service with a viewing and visitation, prior to cremation? (n=541)

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Cremation

Only 45.1% of respondents felt it was very important or somewhat important for a funeral home to have an onsite crematory.

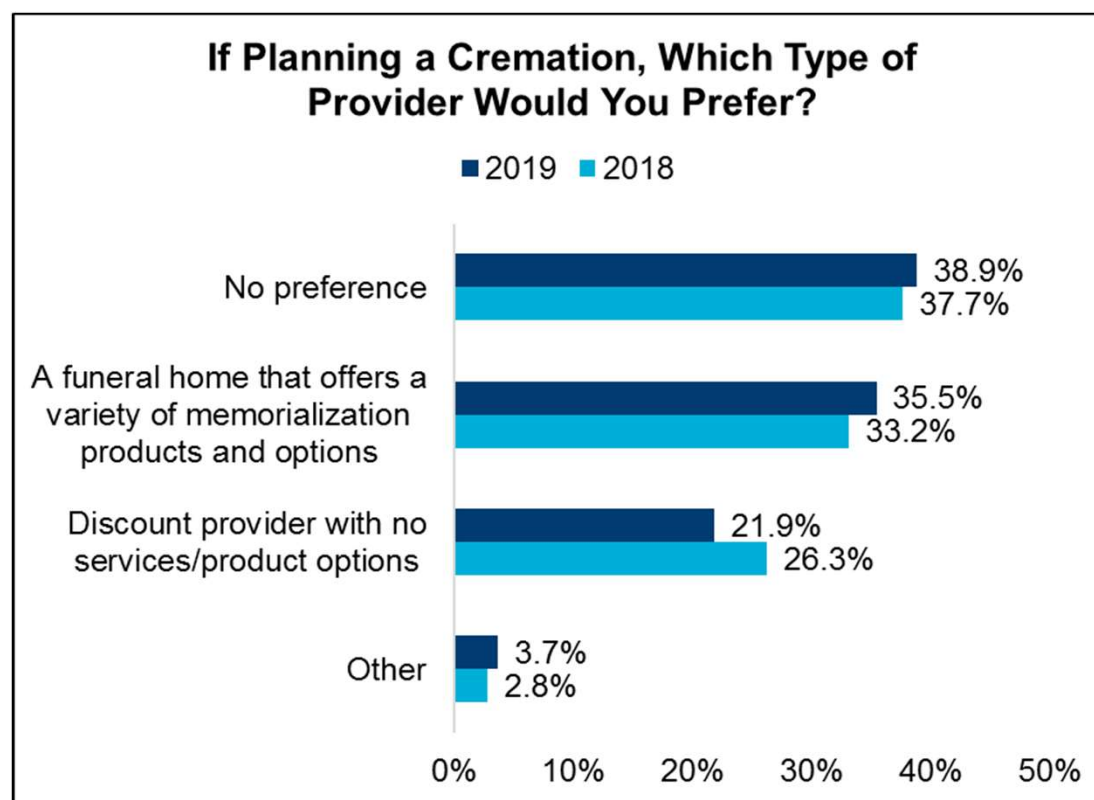


34. If you were planning a cremation service, how important is it to use a funeral home that has a crematory onsite? (n=535) Base: 32. Which of the following do you think you would prefer for yourself?

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Cremation

Just over one-third of consumers (35.5%) would prefer using a full-service funeral home for a cremation, 21.9% would prefer a discount provider, and 38.9% had no preference.

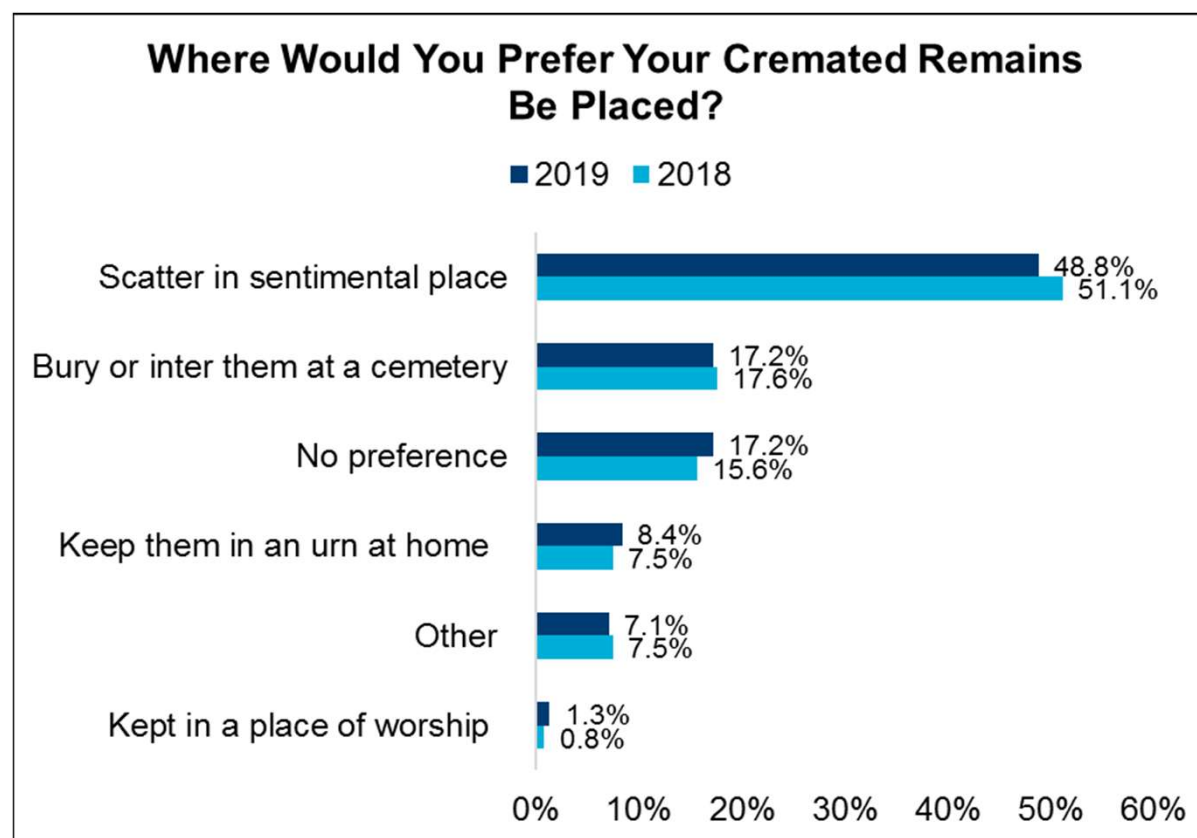


35. If you were planning a cremation, which type of provider would you prefer? (n=535)
Base: 32. Which of the following do you think you would prefer for yourself?

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Cremation

Of those who would prefer cremation, 48.8% would prefer to have their remains scattered in a sentimental place, 17.2% would prefer to bury or inter them at a cemetery, and 17.2% had no preference.

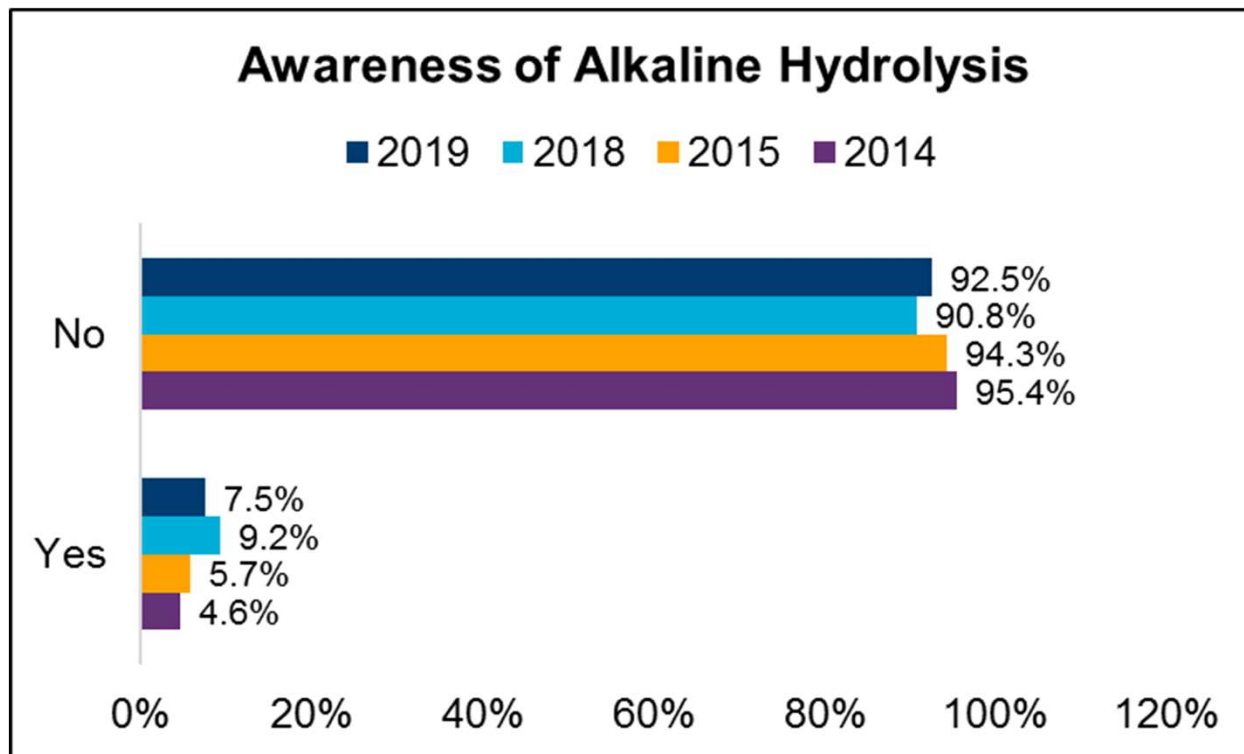


36. Where would you prefer your cremated remains be placed? (n=535) Base: 32. Which of the following do you think you would prefer for yourself?

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Alkaline Hydrolysis

The awareness of alkaline hydrolysis among consumers has remained low since 2014.

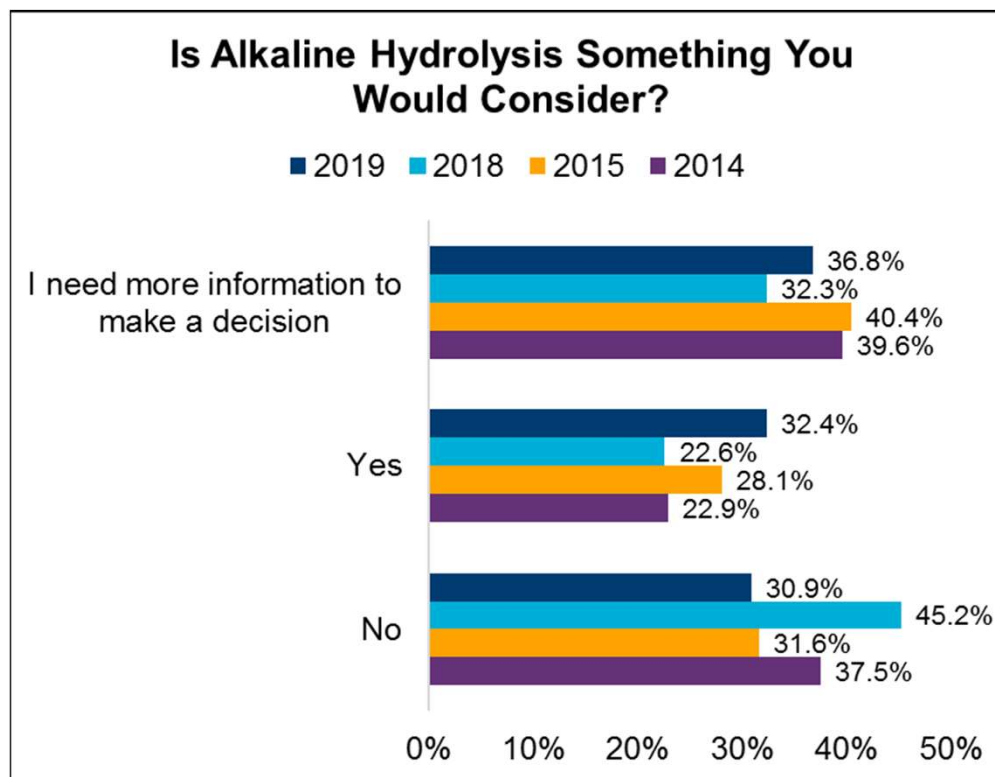


37. Are you aware of an alternative to burial and cremation called alkaline hydrolysis?

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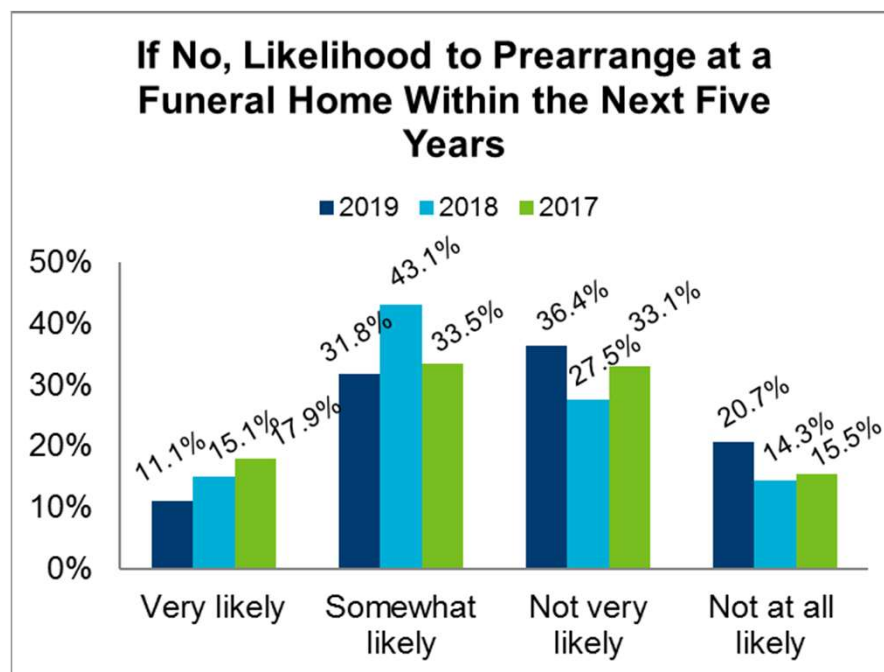
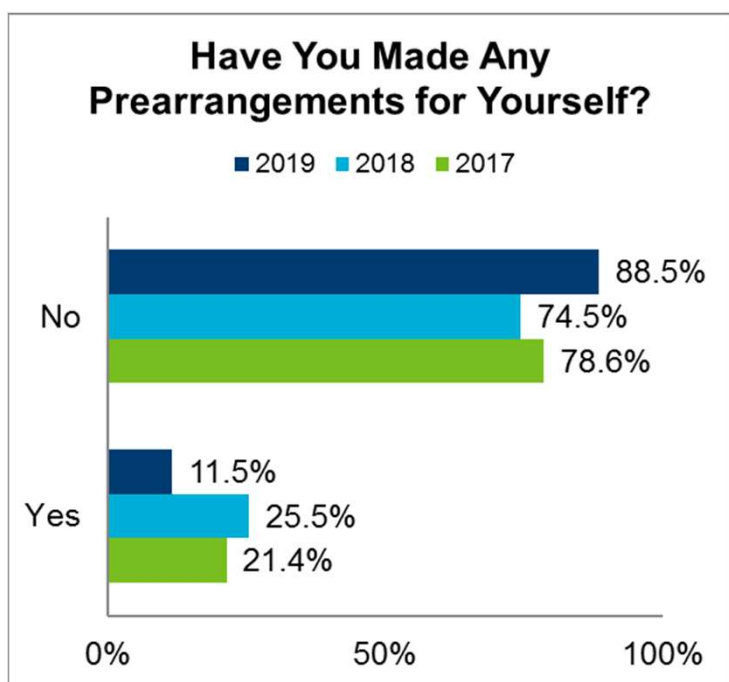
Alkaline Hydrolysis

Of the 7.5% who are aware of alkaline hydrolysis, only 32.4% would consider it and 36.8% said they would need more information in order to make a decision.



Prearrangements

- Only 11.5% of respondents have made prearrangements for themselves.
- Of the 88.5% who have not made prearrangements, only 42.9% said they were either somewhat or very likely to make prearrangements in the next 5 years.



39. Some people prearrange or plan the details of their own funeral, while others allow such decisions to be made by friends or relatives after their death. Have you made any such prearrangements for yourself?

44. If no, how likely are you to make plans or prearrange the details of your own funeral, burial or cremation at a funeral home within the next 5 years? (n=799)

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Prearrangements

The main reasons for being unlikely to make prearrangements were it is not seen as a priority (27.3%), they don't know or just haven't thought about it (22.9%) and/or they are not sure where they'll end up living (18.0%).

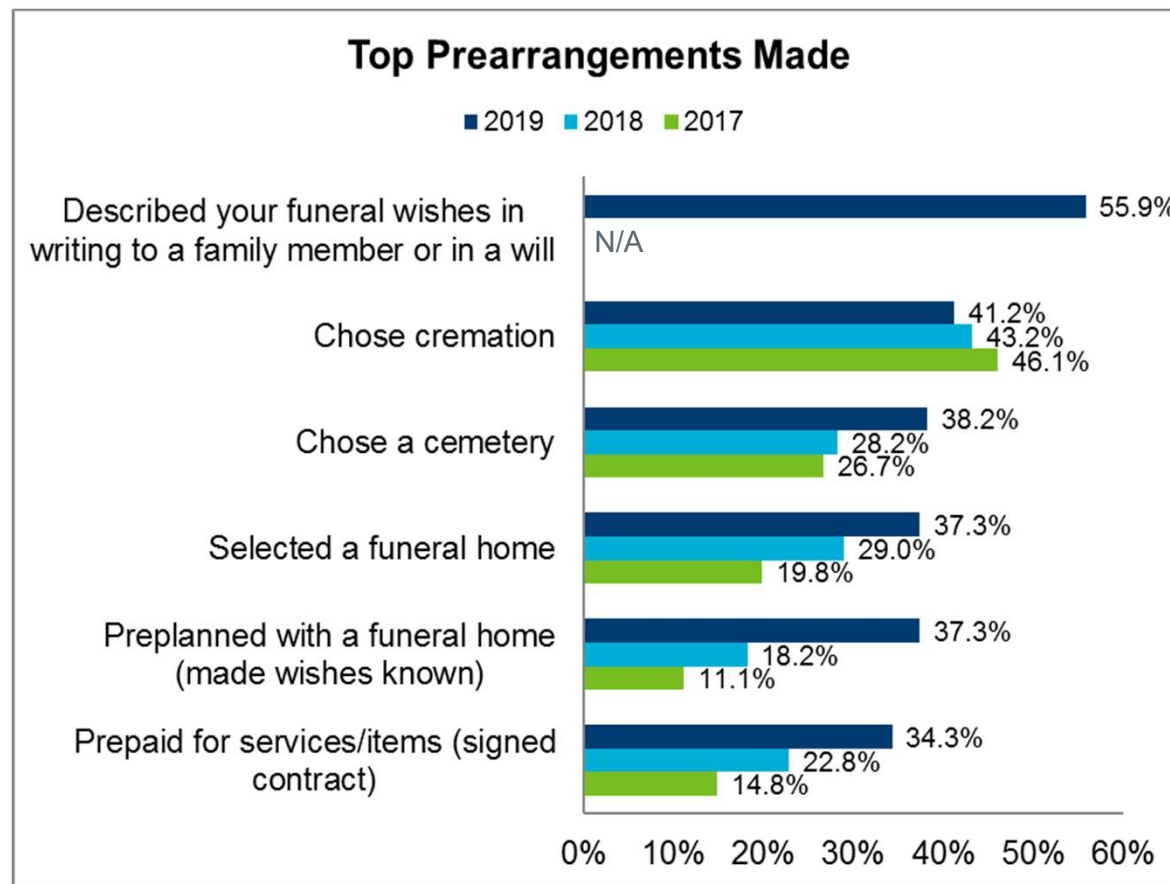


45. Why are you unlikely to make prearrangements in the next 5 years? (n=455)
Percentages add up to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

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Prearrangements

Of the 11.5% of respondents who have made prearrangements, the most common prearrangements made were consumers described their funeral wishes in writing to a family member or in a will (wording change in 2019), chose cremation, or chose a cemetery.



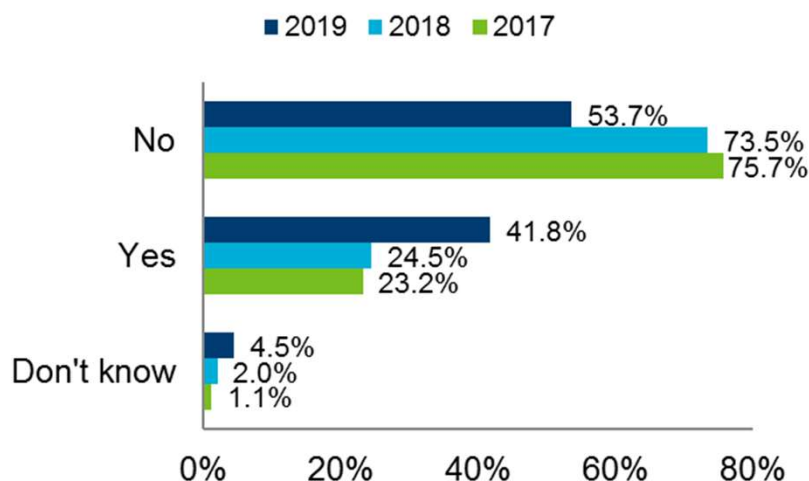
40. Which of the following actions have you taken as part of the prearrangements you have made? (n=259) Percentages add up to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

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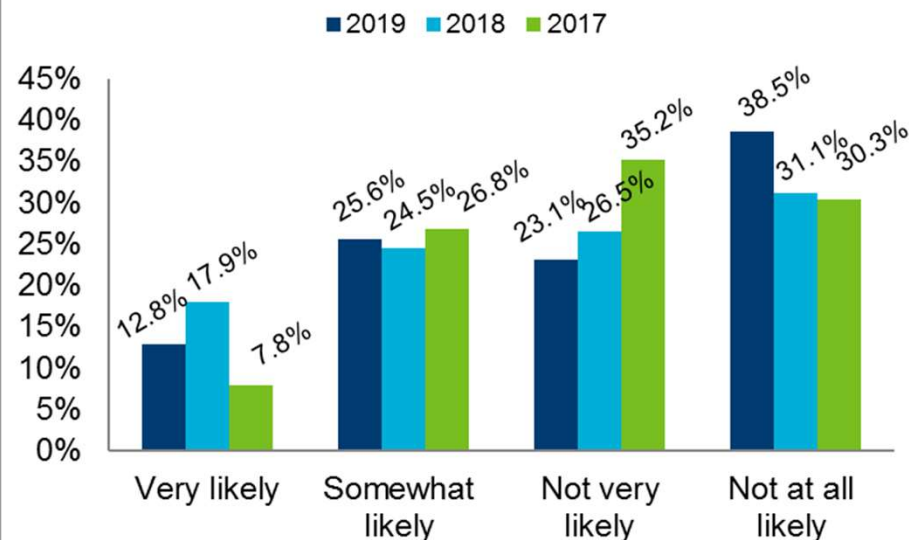
Prepay

- Of the 11.5% of respondents who have made prearrangements, only 41.8% have prepaid for their prearrangements.
- Of the 53.7% who have not prepaid, 38.4% said they were very or somewhat likely to prepay within the next 5 years.
- Results should be interpreted with caution due to small sample size.

If You Have Prearranged, Have You Prepaid for Any Funeral Arrangements?



If No, Likelihood to Prepay at a Funeral Home Within the Next Five Years



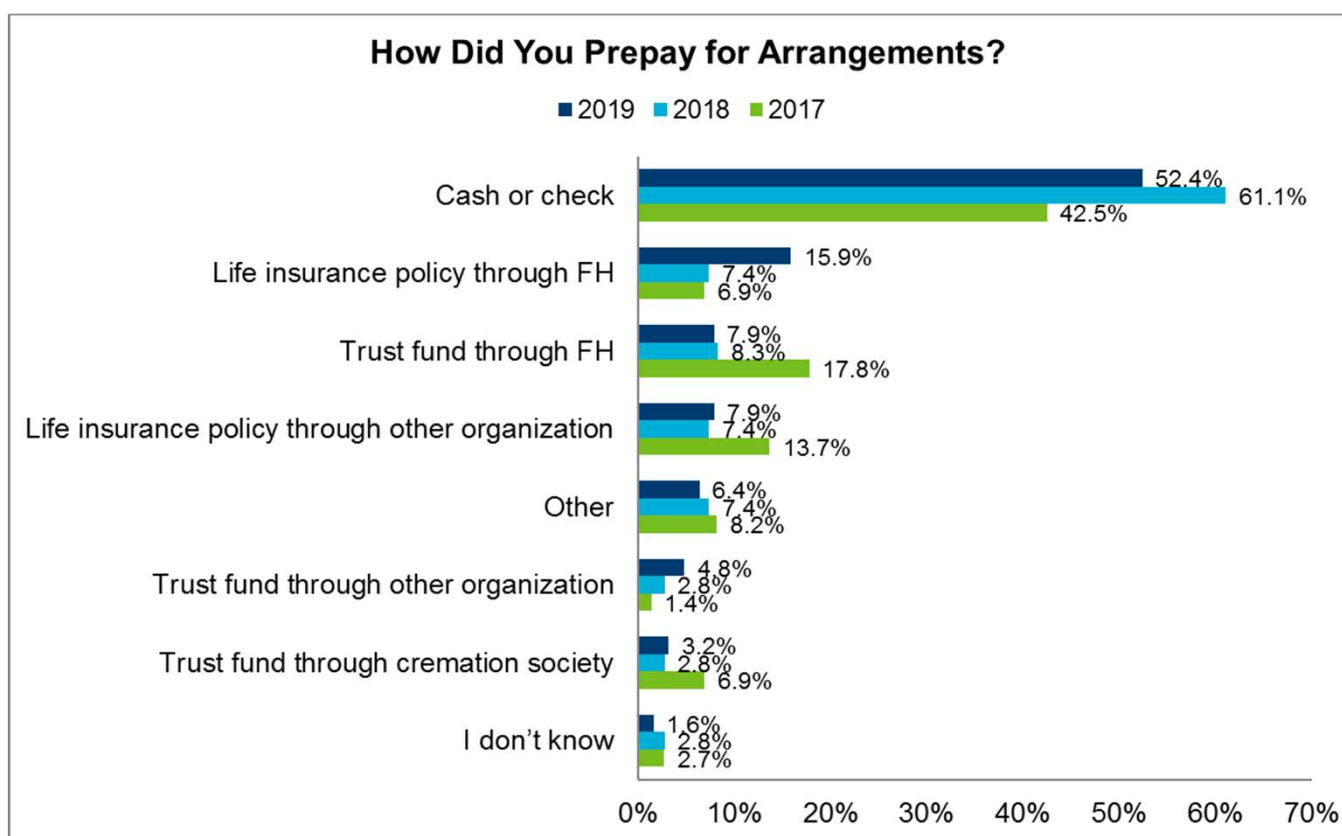
41. Have you prepaid for any of the above arrangements? (n=67)

44. How likely are you to prepay for your own funeral arrangements, burial or cremation at a funeral home within the next 5 years? (n=39)

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Prepay

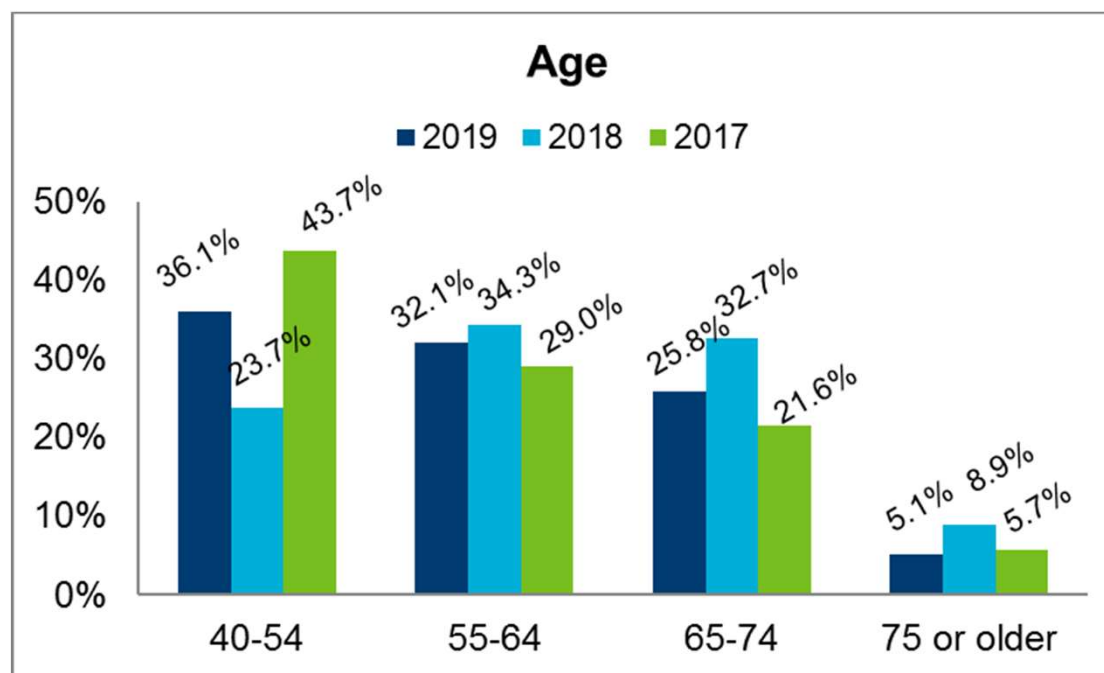
- Of those who have prepaid, most paid via either cash or check.
- Results should be interpreted with caution due to small sample size.



38. How did you prepay for these arrangements? (n=63)

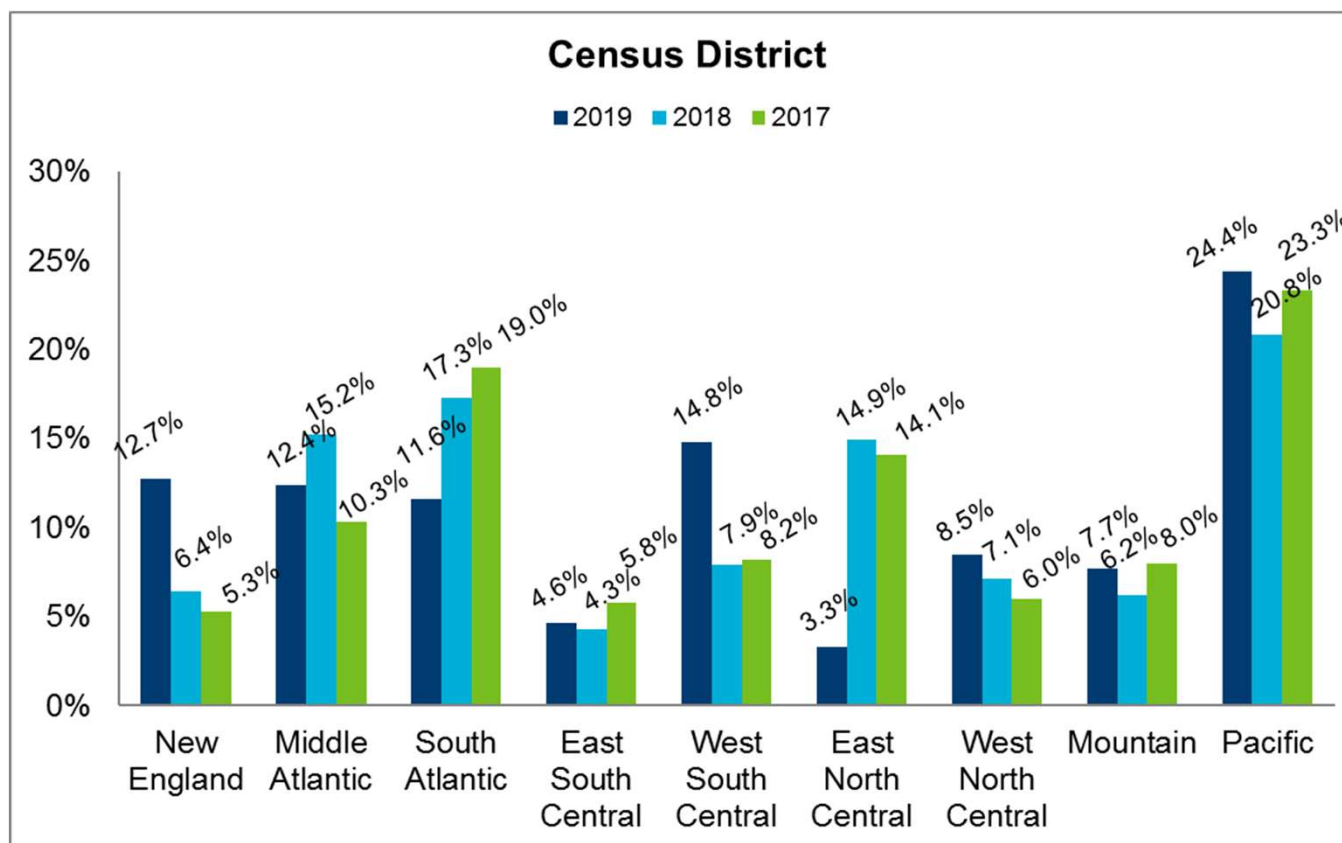
Demographics

- Only people age 40 or older were eligible to participate in this study.
- The respondents in this year's study were significantly younger when compared to 2018; 36.1% of respondents were between 40 and 54 years old, 32.1% were between 55 and 64 years old while 30.9% were age 65 or older.



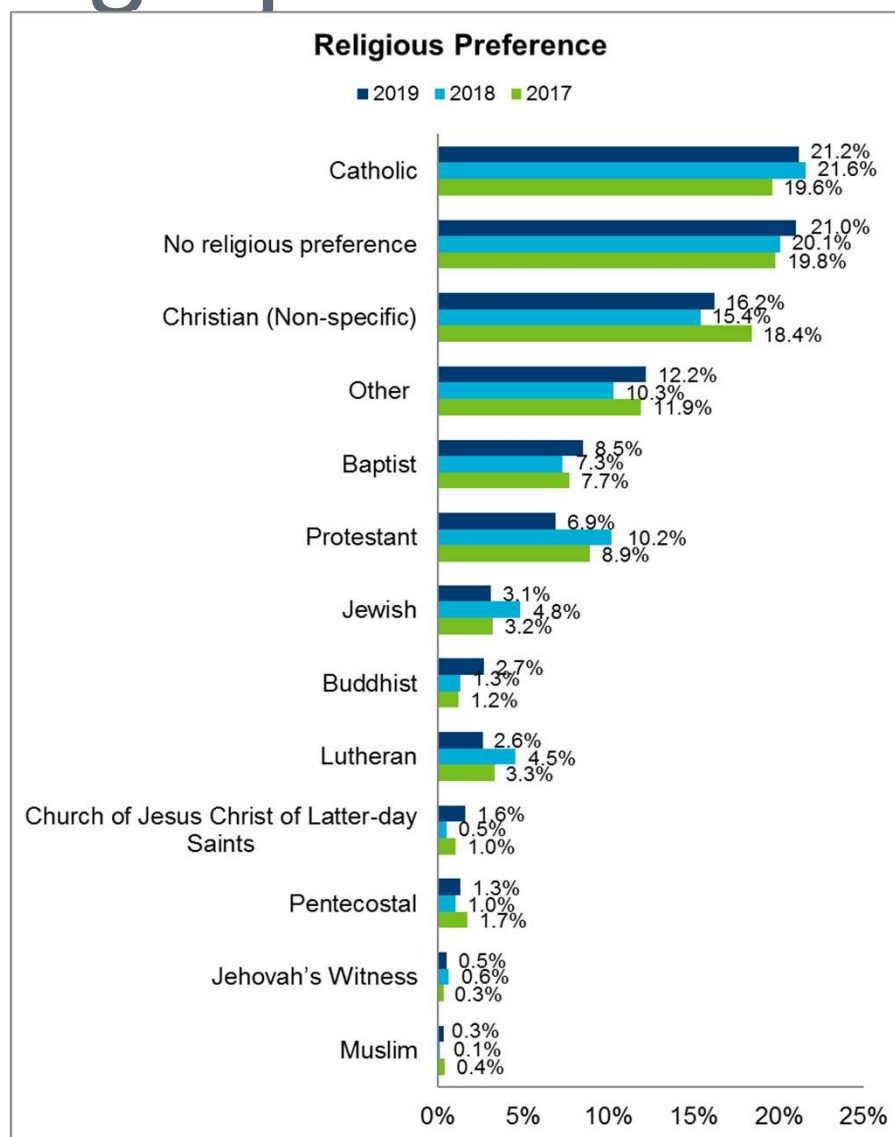
Demographics

- A slightly higher response was received from the Pacific census district.



Demographics

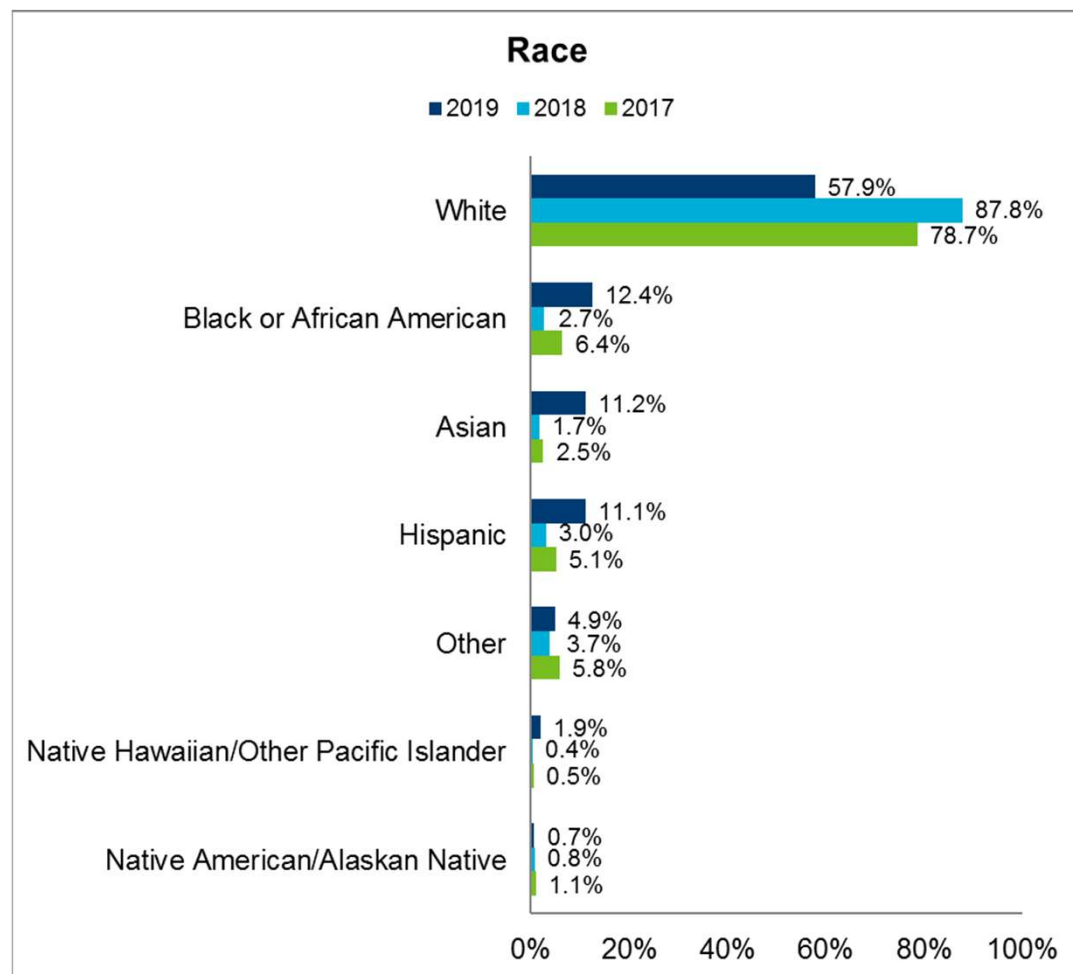
Approximately 21.0% of respondents stated they had no religious preference and 21.2% identified themselves as Catholic.



45. What is your religious preference, if any?

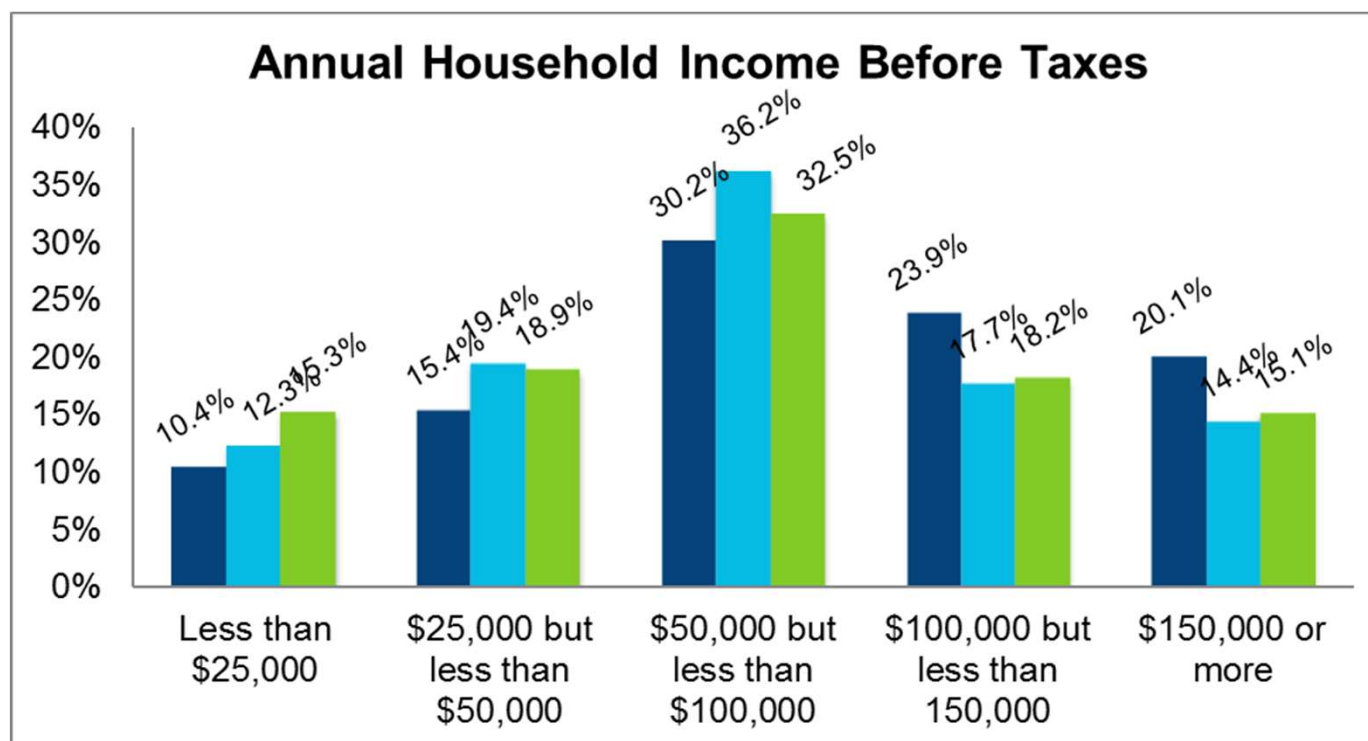
Demographics

In 2019, specific efforts were made to target Black/African American, Asian and Hispanic respondents since the majority of online consumer panel respondents are white.



Demographics

Under half (44.0%) of the respondents earned \$100,000 or more annually, while 25.8% earned less than \$50,000 annually.

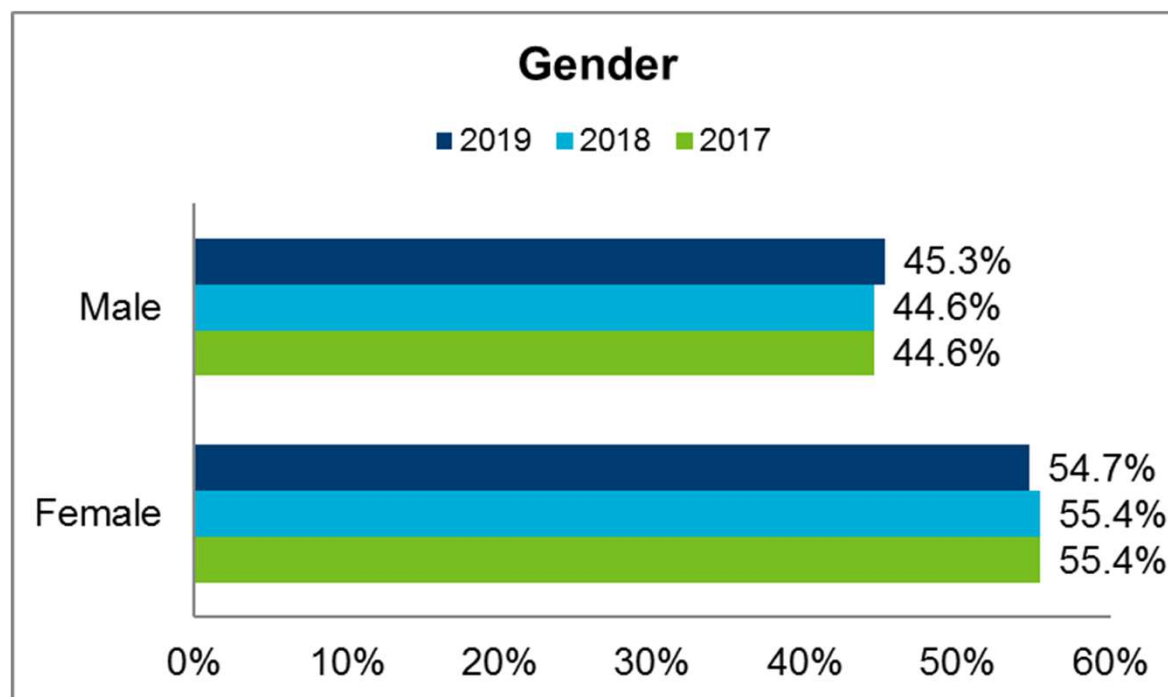


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50. What is your approximate annual household income before taxes?

Demographics

The proportion of male to female respondents has remained the same over the past three years.



Thank You

This report was prepared by the National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA). NFDA is the worldwide source of expertise and professional resources for all facets of funeral service. Through education, information and advocacy, NFDA is dedicated to supporting members in their mission to provide families with meaningful end-of-life services at the highest levels of excellence and integrity.

NFDA is the world's leading funeral service association, serving 19,000 individual members who represent more than 10,000 funeral homes in the United States and internationally. For more information, please contact 1-800-228-6332.