

Citizens' View Survey: Cemetery Needs and Expectations

Report – March 2019



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Background

City Cemeteries provides interment (i.e. burials and cremations), maintenance of final resting locations and memorialization products to families and individuals purchasing space in advance or at the time of need. City Cemeteries also provide public green spaces for citizens that are safe, accessible and inclusive. They have an obligation in perpetuity to Calgarians to maintain cemetery sites. Within Calgary, only the municipality and churches are permitted to own cemeteries.

The City of Calgary has one active operating cemetery (Queen's Park), a new cemetery under development (south Calgary) and four historic cemeteries (Union, Burnside, Chinese and St. Mary's).

Calgary Parks is responsible for City Cemeteries. To support the development of their business planning process, research was requested to explore citizen perceptions with regard to Cemetery Services. Specifically, the objectives of this research were to:

- Measuring awareness of City Cemetery services;
- Determining usage of City Cemetery services;
- Determining if City Cemeteries are meeting expectations; and,
- Exploring interest in and/or concerns with alternative uses of City Cemetery green spaces.

Methodology

Ipsos conducted an online survey with Citizens' View panelists.

Citizens' View is an online panel that encourages citizens to participate in shaping City of Calgary programs and services through surveys, discussions and engagement activities.

On February 4, the survey was sent to 3,890 panelists. Among the 1,391 who came to the survey site, 174 (5% of the total outgo) dropped out and 1,217 (31% of the outgo) panelists completed the survey by February 12, 2019.

Given that respondents may be unfamiliar with cemetery-related terms, definitions were available to respondents using pop ups during the survey.

The following findings may not be statistically representative of all Calgarians. The work is exploratory as a result of the make up of panelists currently on the Citizens' View panel. The results should be regarded as directional and should not be projected to the larger population without research with a representative sample of citizens.



Key Findings and Insights

The City of Calgary Cemetery Services

- Two-thirds of panelists (65%) were aware that The City of Calgary operates public cemeteries. However, only one-quarter (27%) were aware of how to obtain cemetery services. Additionally, almost half are not planning to personally use a cemetery (46%)
- Panelists are more likely to choose a cemetery operated by The City of Calgary for themselves or a loved one (18% and 22%, respectively) over those operated by a religious organization (6% and 7%, respectively) or a private corporation (6% and 7%, respectively).
- Key considerations in selecting a cemetery are cost, the location of the cemetery and the location of previous family interments, regardless of whether the cemetery services sought are for oneself or a loved one.
- Respondents are more aware that The City of Calgary Cemetery Services offers burial of caskets (89%) or cremated remains (73%) as compared to the other offerings. For example, only 19% aware that scattering gardens are offered.
- Among panelists who have used various offerings, at least three-quarters (77% minimum) are very or somewhat satisfied with the City of Calgary Cemetery Services they used.
- Panelists provide the highest importance ratings for scattering gardens (56%), green burials (48%), Field of Honour (44%), and burials of cremated remains (40%).

Although there is fairly widespread awareness of City cemeteries there is a gap in knowledge about how to actually obtain cemetery services.

Planned personal usage of ANY cemetery is just over half of panelists.

Cost and location are key considerations when seeking cemetery services.

Panelists place a high importance on green burials and options for cremated remains but these are either not yet offered (green burials) or among the services with the lowest overall awareness.

Events and Recreational Activities in Public Cemeteries

- Nearly two-thirds of panelists (64%) are aware that citizens can use cemeteries for recreational activities. Panelists are split as to whether they would be likely to use City cemetery space for leisure or recreation (49% likely, 47% unlikely). Those with no religious affiliation were more likely to state that they would use cemeteries for recreational activities.
- Some of those who would not be likely to use public cemetery spaces for recreational purposes state that it is because the locations are not convenient for them (24%). Some see these spaces as being undesirable places for recreation (23%), while others regard it as disrespectful to the dead and their loved ones (22%). Those who indicated they were unlikely to use cemeteries for recreational activities were very passionate about their position, as seen in the open-ended responses.
- Panelists that say they would be likely to use these spaces for recreational purposes suggest the space could be used as a quiet place (11%) or green space (5%) to walk (9%), cycle (3%) or even picnic (4%). Others suggest events such as family memorial/remembrance day (11%), historical tours (4%) and educational events (3%).
- When it comes to structures, panelists are more likely to consider pathways and benches to be very or somewhat important than other structures such as chapels, gazebos or playgrounds.

There is a fairly high awareness that City cemeteries can be used for recreation purposes and about half would be likely to participate.

However, those who oppose using cemeteries as recreation venues are very passionate about this issue.

Any public awareness campaign centered around recreation in cemeteries should be carefully considered, and efforts may be better directed towards education on how to obtain cemetery services, future green burial options and possibilities for cremated remains.

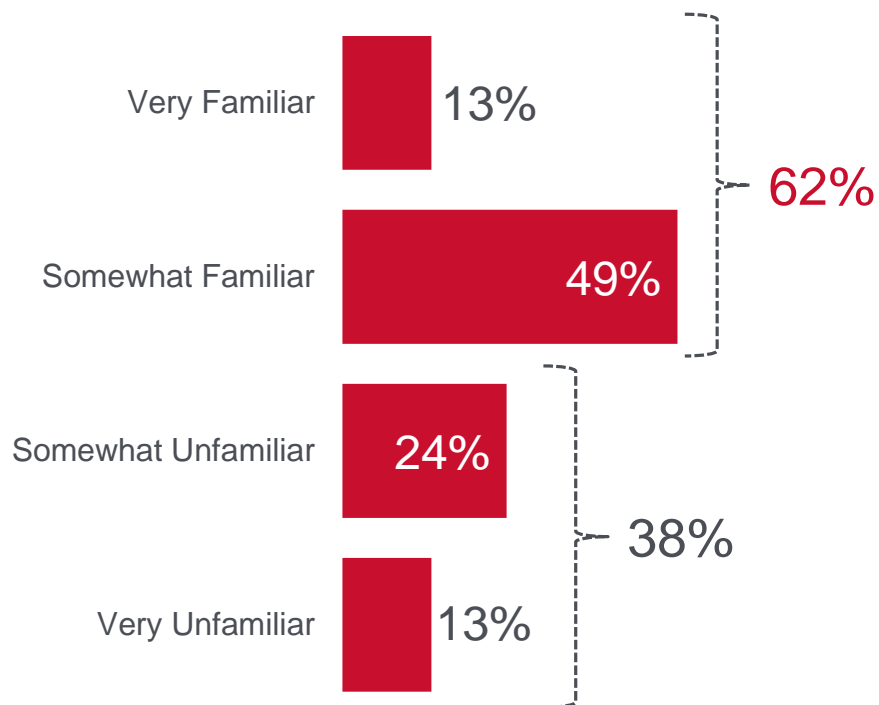
A close-up photograph of several orange and yellow tulips in bloom, with green leaves visible in the foreground. The background is a soft-focus field of more tulips.

Cemetery Services

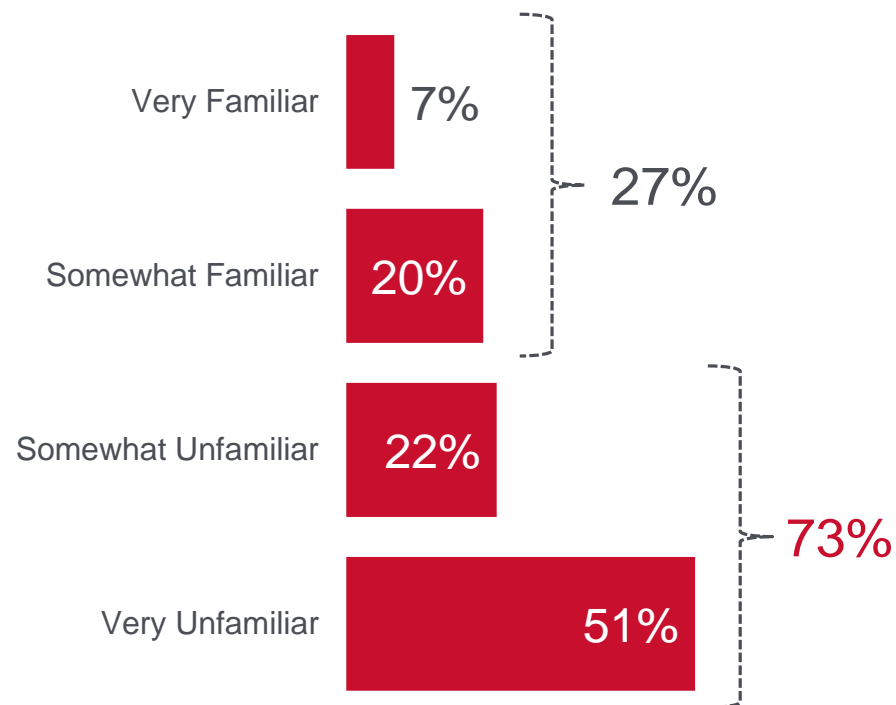
Familiarity with Cemeteries in Calgary

Overall, almost two-thirds (62%) are **familiar** (very/somewhat) with where cemeteries are located in Calgary. However, familiarity drops sharply in respect to how to obtain cemetery plots or interment services with just under three-quarters (73%) indicating they are **unfamiliar** (very/somewhat).

Where Cemeteries are Located in Calgary



How to Obtain Cemetery Plots or Internment Services



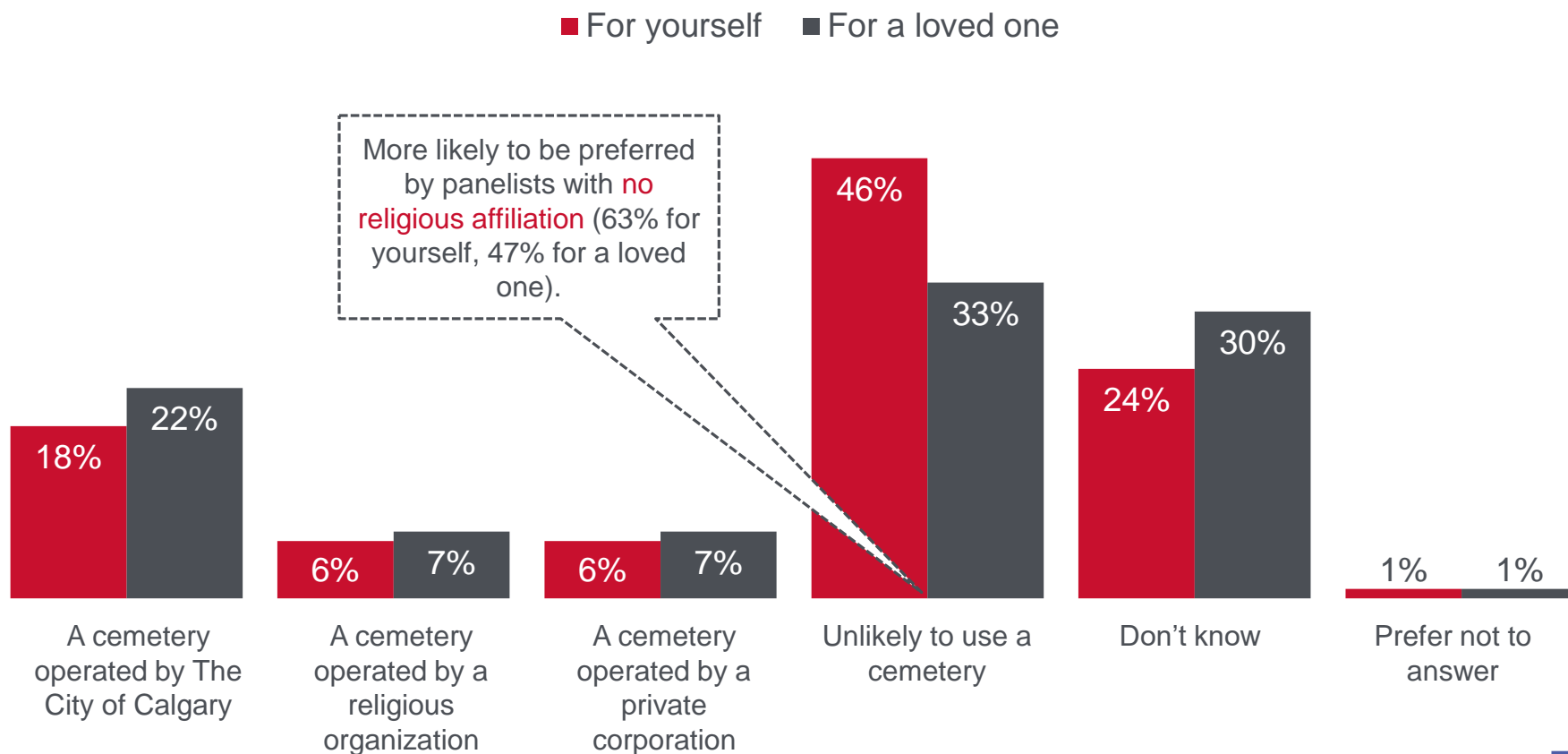
Q1. How familiar are you with the following?

Base: Total respondents (n=1,217)

*Rounding

Cemetery Preference by Type

Interestingly, almost half (46%) of respondents report they are **unlikely to use a cemetery for themselves** while a further 24% say they 'Don't know.' Of those who have decided to use a cemetery, most will use a City of Calgary cemetery for both themselves (18%) and loved ones (22%).

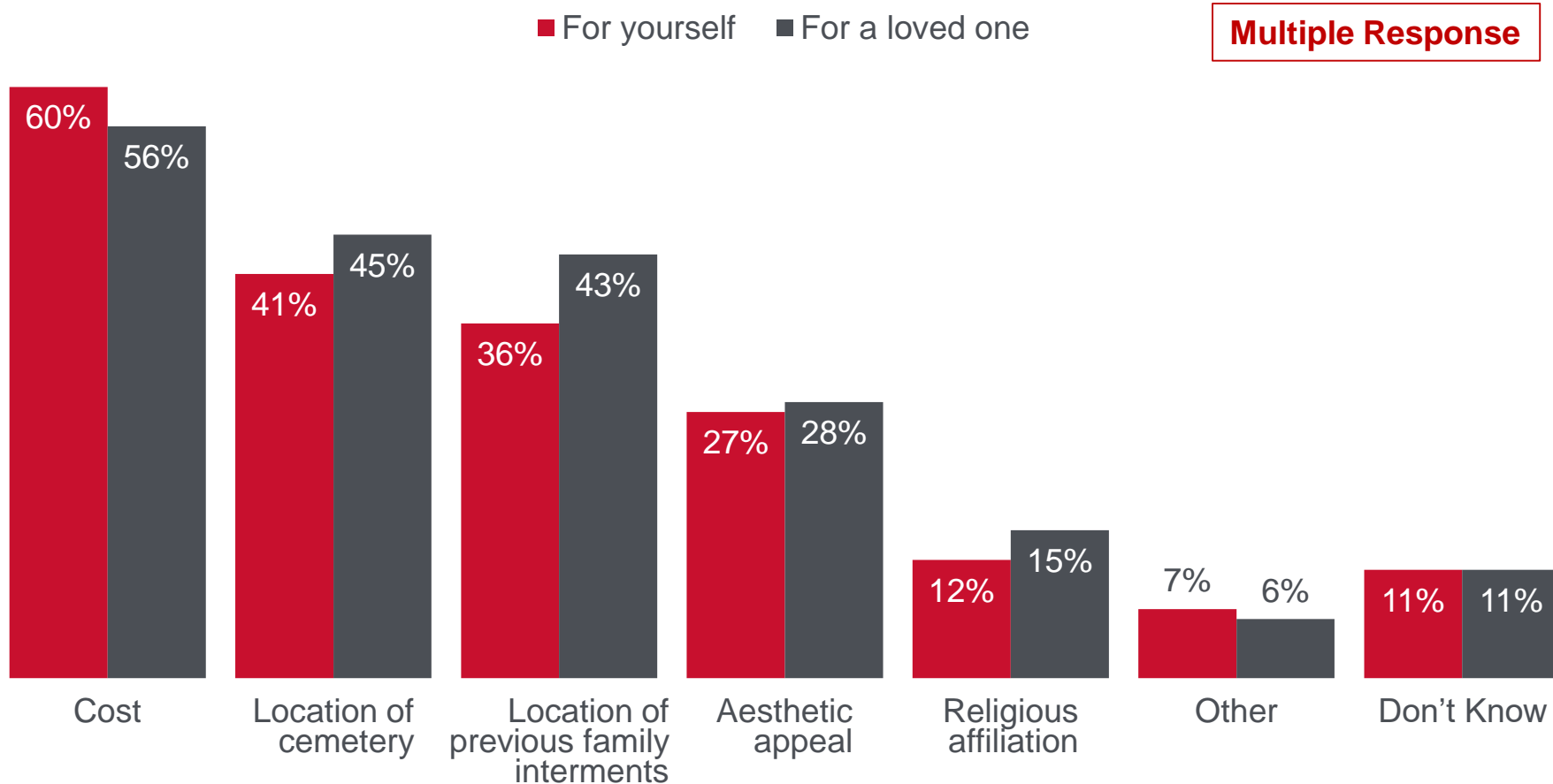


Q2. When seeking cemetery services for yourself or a loved one, which are you most likely to choose?

Base: Total respondents (n=1,217)

Considerations when Choosing a Cemetery

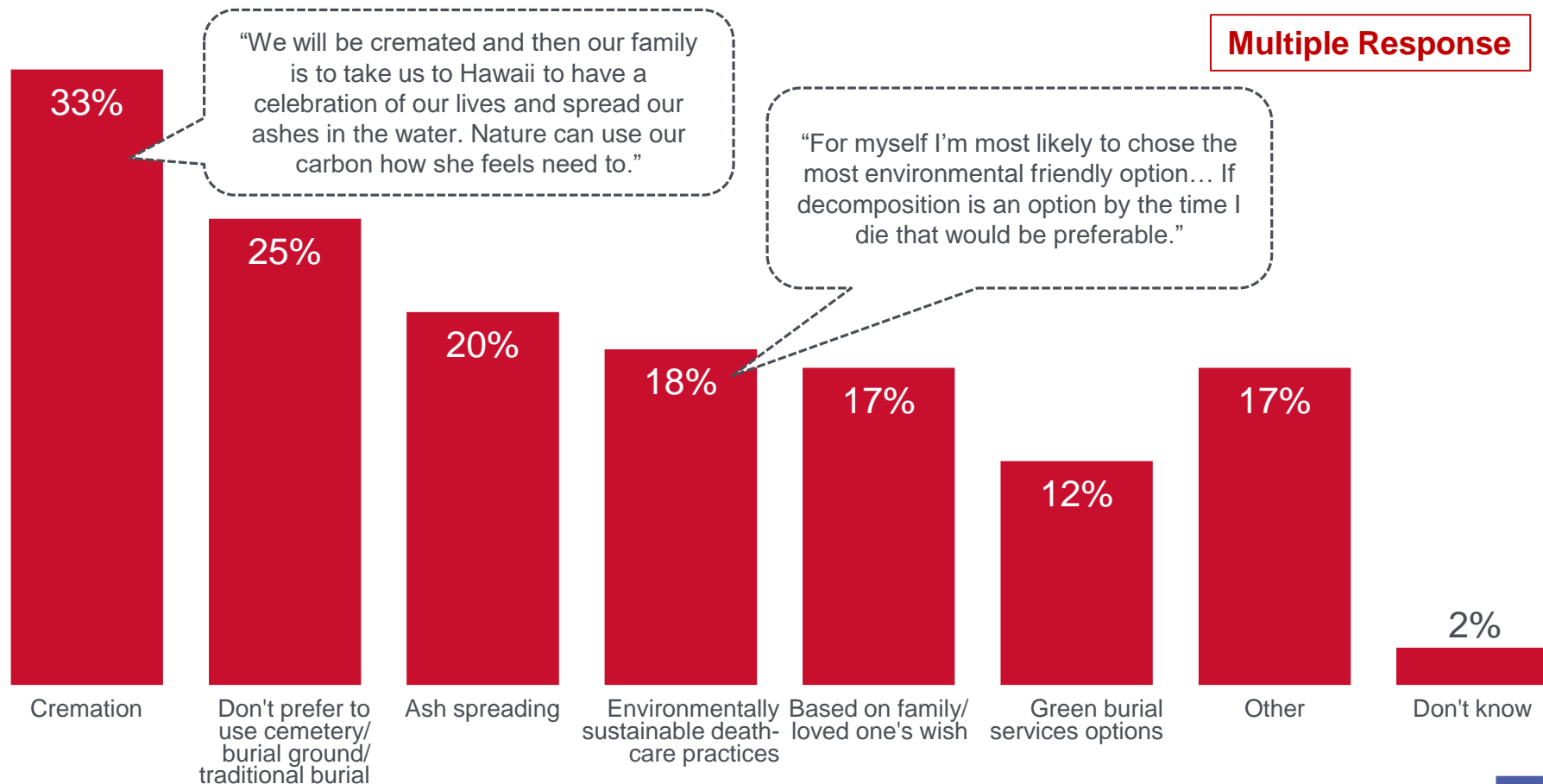
Should they be in need of a cemetery for themselves or a loved one, the top three considerations are **cost** (60% & 56%), cemetery **location** (41% & 45%), and the **location of previous family interments** (36% & 43%).



Q3. Should you be in need of a cemetery for yourself or a loved one, what would you consider when choosing a cemetery for burial or interment?
Base: Total respondents (n=1,217)

Other Considerations

Other considerations mentioned by respondents included **the type of burial and interment services offered**, such as cremation (33%). Of note, Environmentally sustainable death-care practices (18%) and Green burial service options (12%) are two of the options mentioned.



Q3b Other. You mentioned you have another consideration when choosing a cemetery for burial or interment. Please enter your considerations.

Base: Respondents who have other considerations when choosing burial or interment (n=99)

Awareness that The City of Calgary Operates Public Cemeteries

Nearly two-thirds of respondents (65%) are aware that The City of Calgary operates public cemeteries. Awareness was highest among **men** (69%); those **aged 40-54** (64%) and **55+** (69%); those that reside in **NW Calgary** (72%); and, those with **non-Catholic Christian affiliations** (70%).

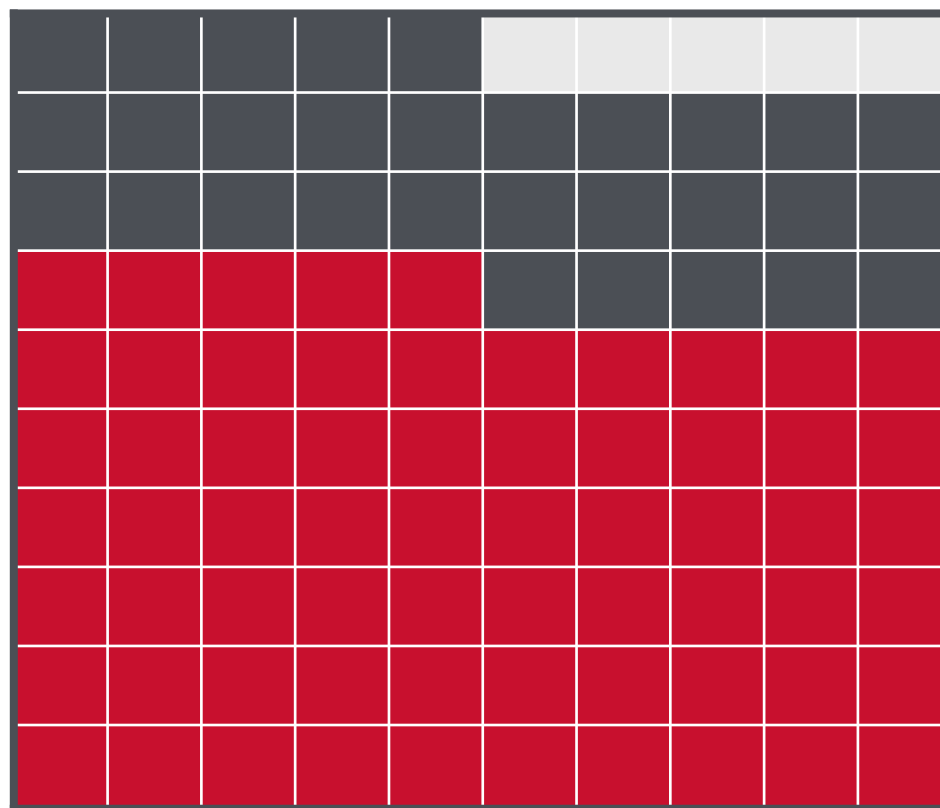
30%

Unaware The City operates public cemeteries

65%

Aware The City operates public cemeteries

5% Unsure

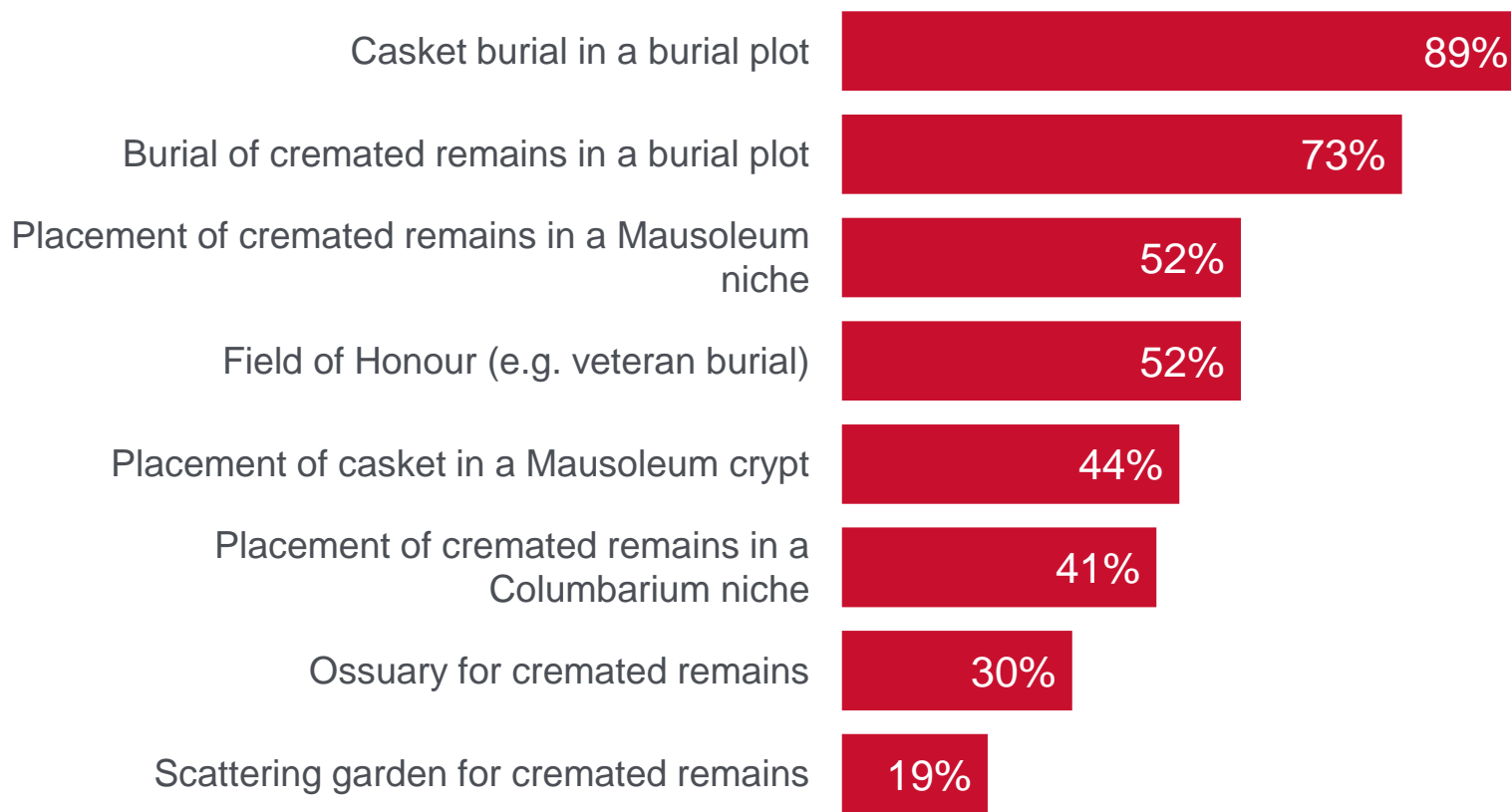


Q4. Prior to today, did you know that The City of Calgary operates public cemeteries, where families can honour and remember a loved one?

Base: Total respondents (n=1,217)

Awareness of Burial and Interment Offerings at City of Calgary Cemeteries

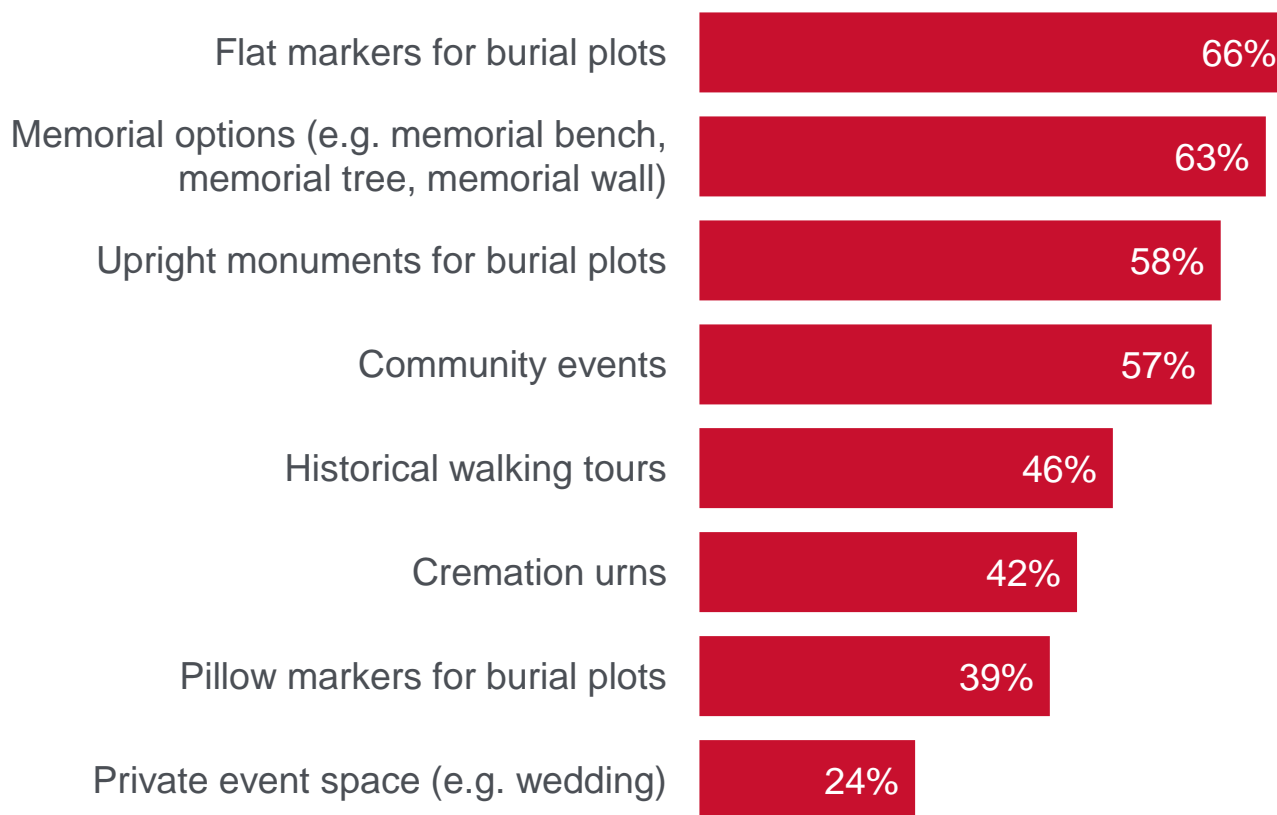
Of those who know The City offers cemetery services, **most are aware of casket burials (89%) and the burial of cremated remains (73%)**. Additionally, about half are aware of the ability to place cremated remains in a mausoleum niche (52%) and a Field of Honour (52%).



Q5. Are you aware that The City of Calgary Cemeteries offer the following burial and interment options:
Base: Respondents who were aware that The City of Calgary operates public cemeteries (n=794)

Awareness of Additional Products and Services at City of Calgary Cemeteries

Among panelists there is a **higher awareness of “traditional” cemetery products and services** such as flat markers (66%), memorial options (63%), and upright monuments (58%). However, awareness falls in respect to “event” focused services such as community events (57%), historical walking tours (46%), and private event space (24%).

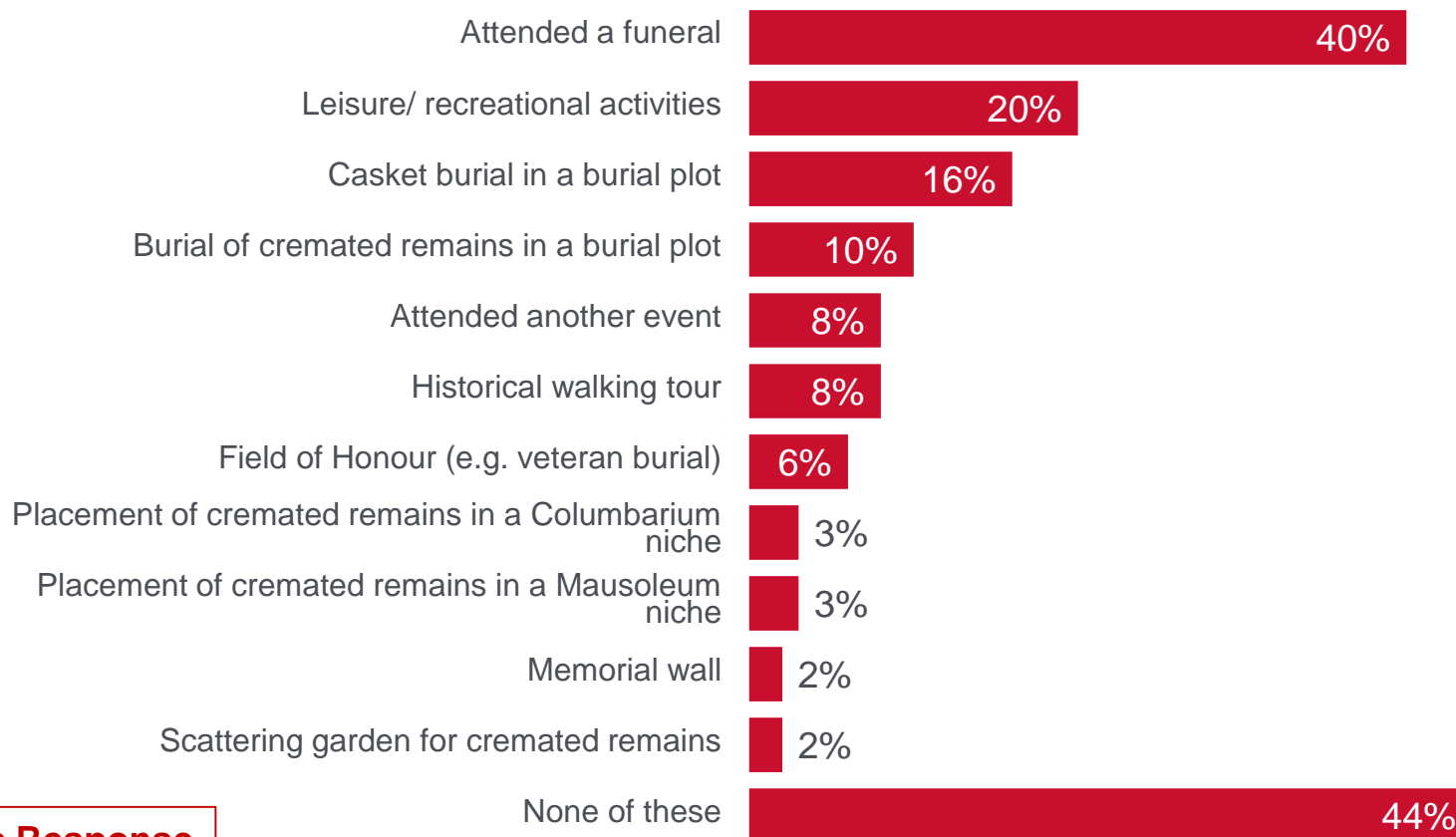


Q6. Are you aware that The City of Calgary Cemeteries offer the following additional products and services?

Base: Respondents who were aware that The City of Calgary operates public cemeteries (n=794)

Usage of City of Calgary Cemetery Services

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the most common use for City of Calgary cemeteries among panelists is for **attending a funeral** (40%). However, slightly more surprisingly, one-in-five have indicated they have used a City cemetery for leisure or recreation activities (20%). Additionally, almost half (44%) have not used any City cemetery services in the past.



Multiple Response

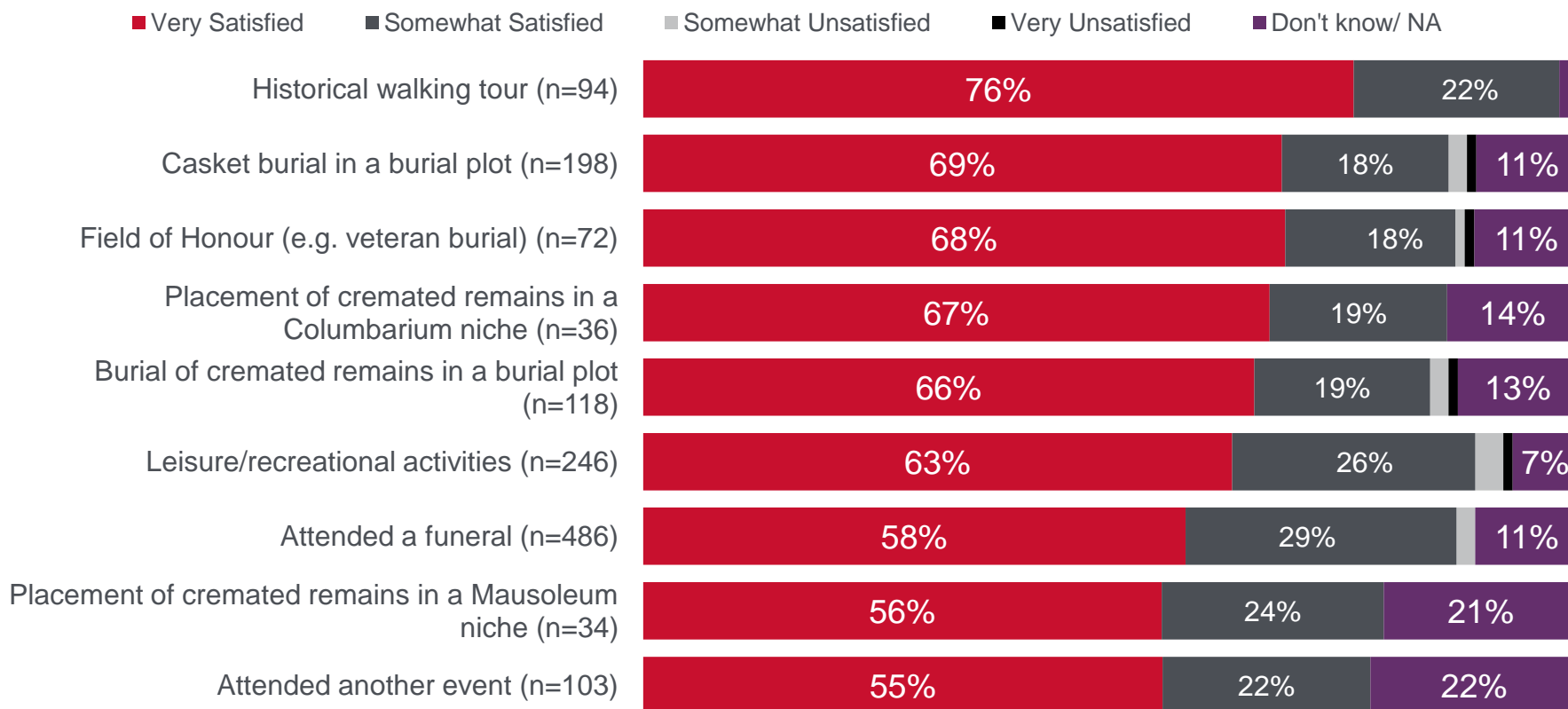
Q8. When thinking specifically about the five public cemeteries operated by The City of Calgary which of the following products and services, if any, have you purchased or used in the past?

Base: Total respondents (n=1,217)

Note: Mentions <2% not shown.

Satisfaction with City of Calgary Cemetery Services

Among panelists who have used various offerings, at least **three-quarters (77%)** are **very or somewhat satisfied with the City of Calgary Cemetery Services they used**. Despite low usage levels (8%), almost all respondents that have participated in historical walking tours in the past were satisfied, with three-quarters (76%) indicating they were ‘very satisfied.’



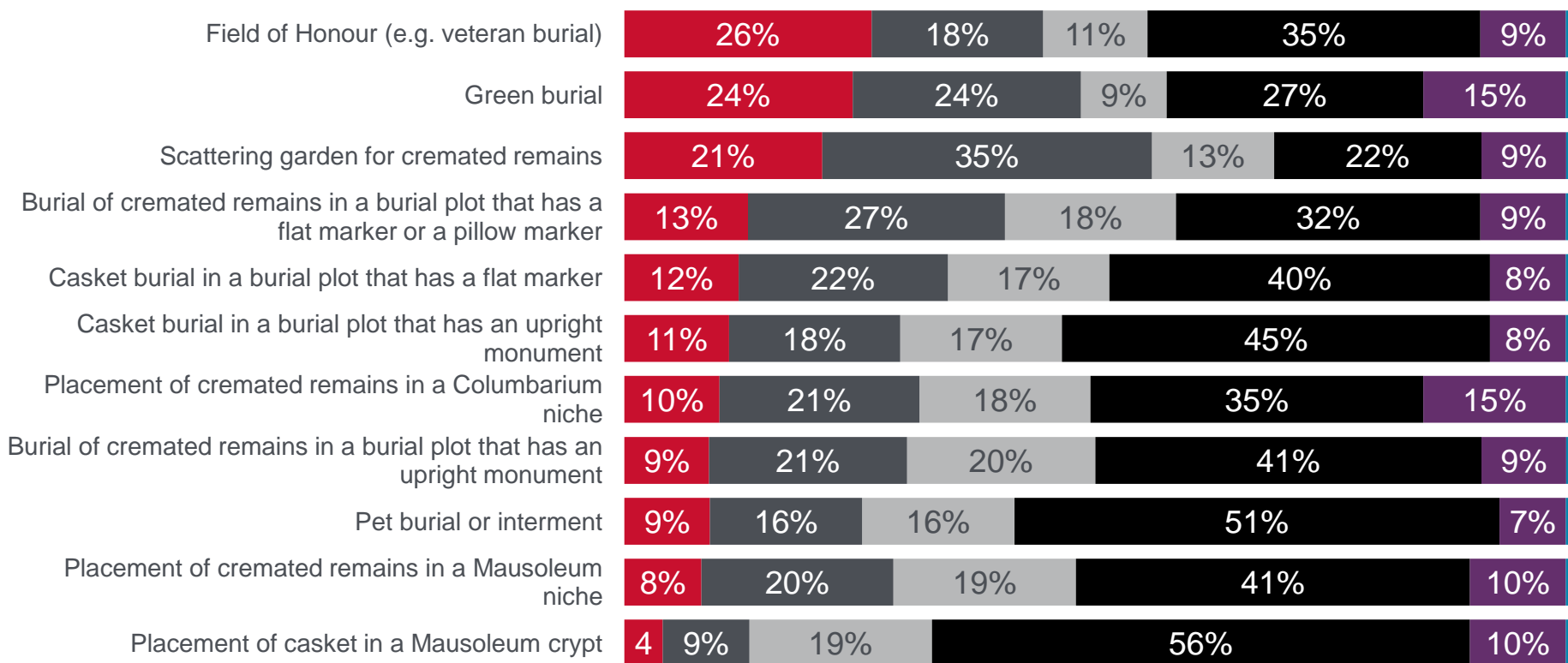
Q12. You indicated that you have used City of Calgary Cemetery services. Thinking of the last time you used the following, how satisfied were you with the service?

Base: Respondents who used each service (bases vary). Data not shown if base is <30 panelists.

Importance of Availability of Options for Burial or Interment

Panelists provide the highest importance (very/somewhat important) ratings for **scattering gardens** (56%), **green burials** (48%), **Field of Honour** (44%), and **burials of cremated remains** (40%). However, it should be noted that awareness of offerings is low for green burials and options for cremated remains.

■ Very important ■ Somewhat important ■ Not very important ■ Not at all important ■ Don't know ■ Prefer not to answer

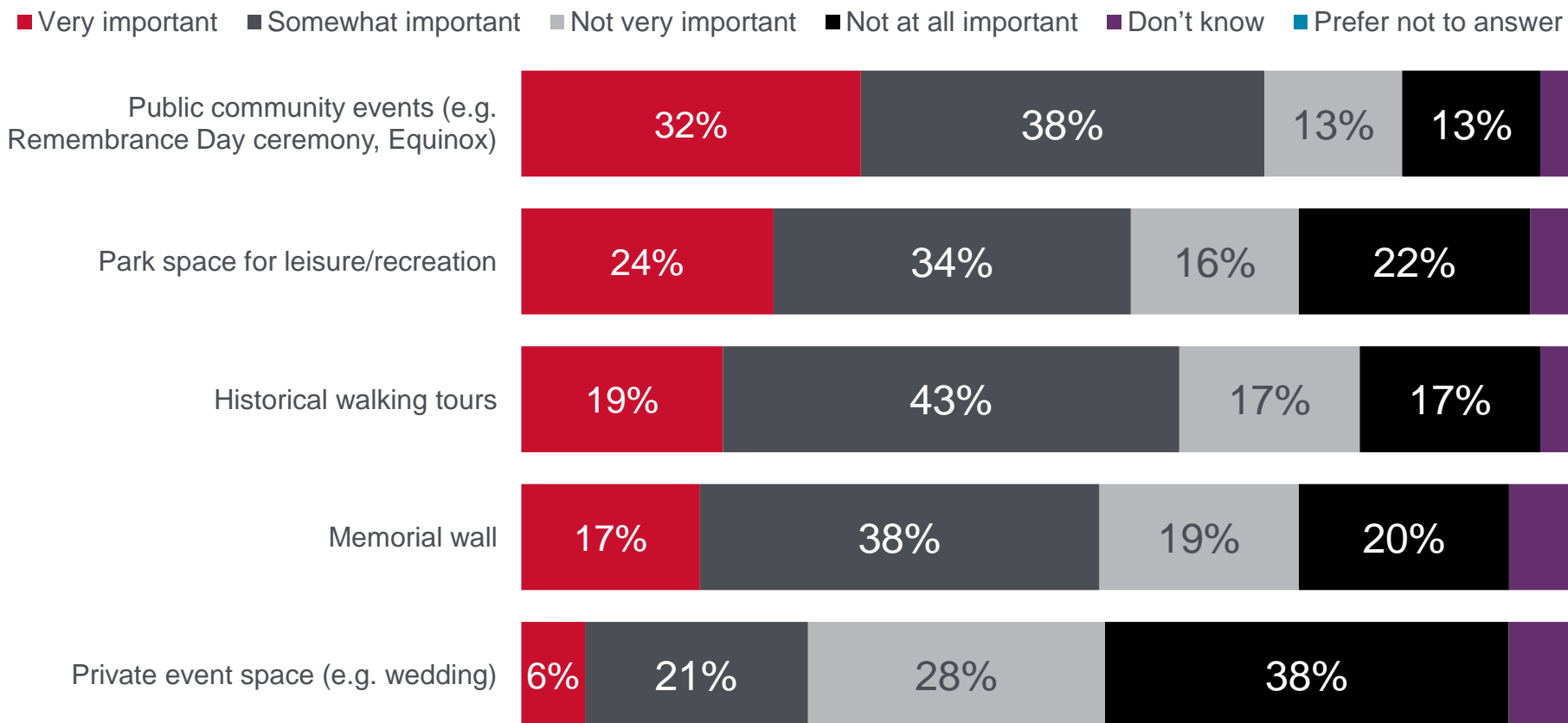


Q13. In general, there are a number of options for burial or interment. How important is it that each of the following options are available to you?

Base: Total respondents (n=1,217)

Importance of Options for Other Services

With regard to non-burial/interment services, panelists provide the highest importance (very/somewhat) ratings for **community events** (70%), **historical waking tours** (62%), **park space** for leisure/recreation (58%), and **memorial wall** (55%). Consistently, women were more likely than men to find these services important.



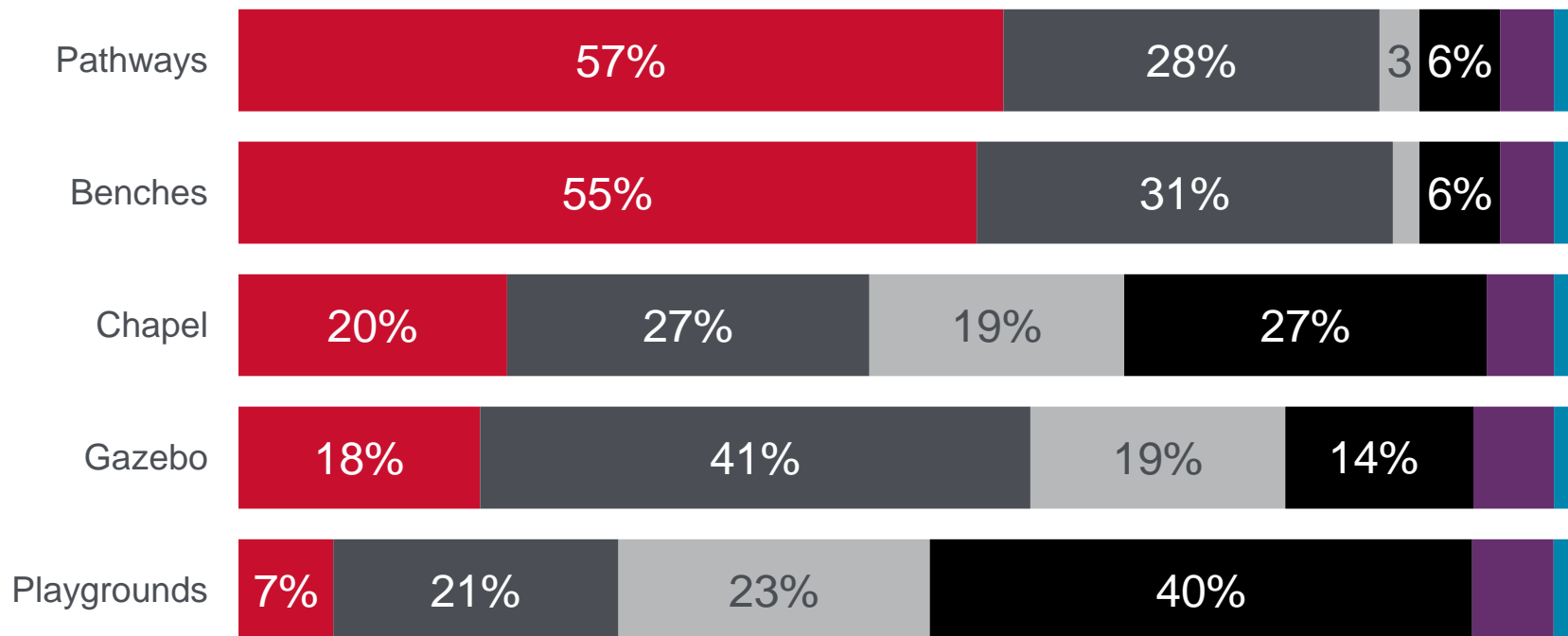
Q14. Beyond burial and interment services, should you be in need of such services, how important would the following be to you?

Base: Total respondents (n=1,217)

Importance of Structures if Visiting or Hosting a Gathering at a Cemetery

Pathways and **benches** were the most important structures for a cemetery to have, with more than half of respondents indicating that they were 'very important' (57% and 55%, respectively).

■ Very important ■ Somewhat important ■ Not very important ■ Not at all important ■ Don't know ■ Prefer not to answer



Q15. If you were to host a gathering at a cemetery or visit for leisure/ recreation purposes, how important is it to you that the cemetery have the following structures?

Base: Total respondents (n=1,217)

A close-up photograph of a field of tulips in shades of orange and yellow, with green stems and leaves visible in the foreground and background.

Leisure and Recreation Activities in Cemeteries

Awareness that Citizens Can Use Cemeteries for Recreational Activities

Respondents who indicated they were aware that The City of Calgary operates cemeteries, were asked if they knew that City Cemetery grounds could be used for recreational activities. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (64%) were aware.

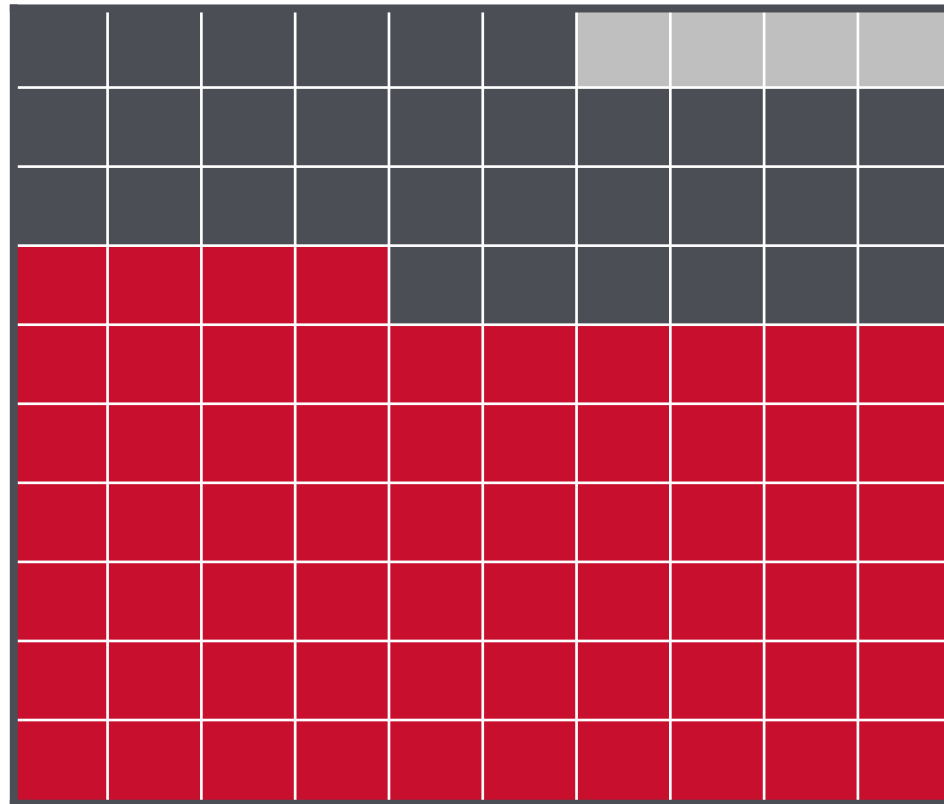
32%

Unaware cemetery grounds can be used for recreation

64%

Aware cemetery grounds can be used for recreation

4% Unsure

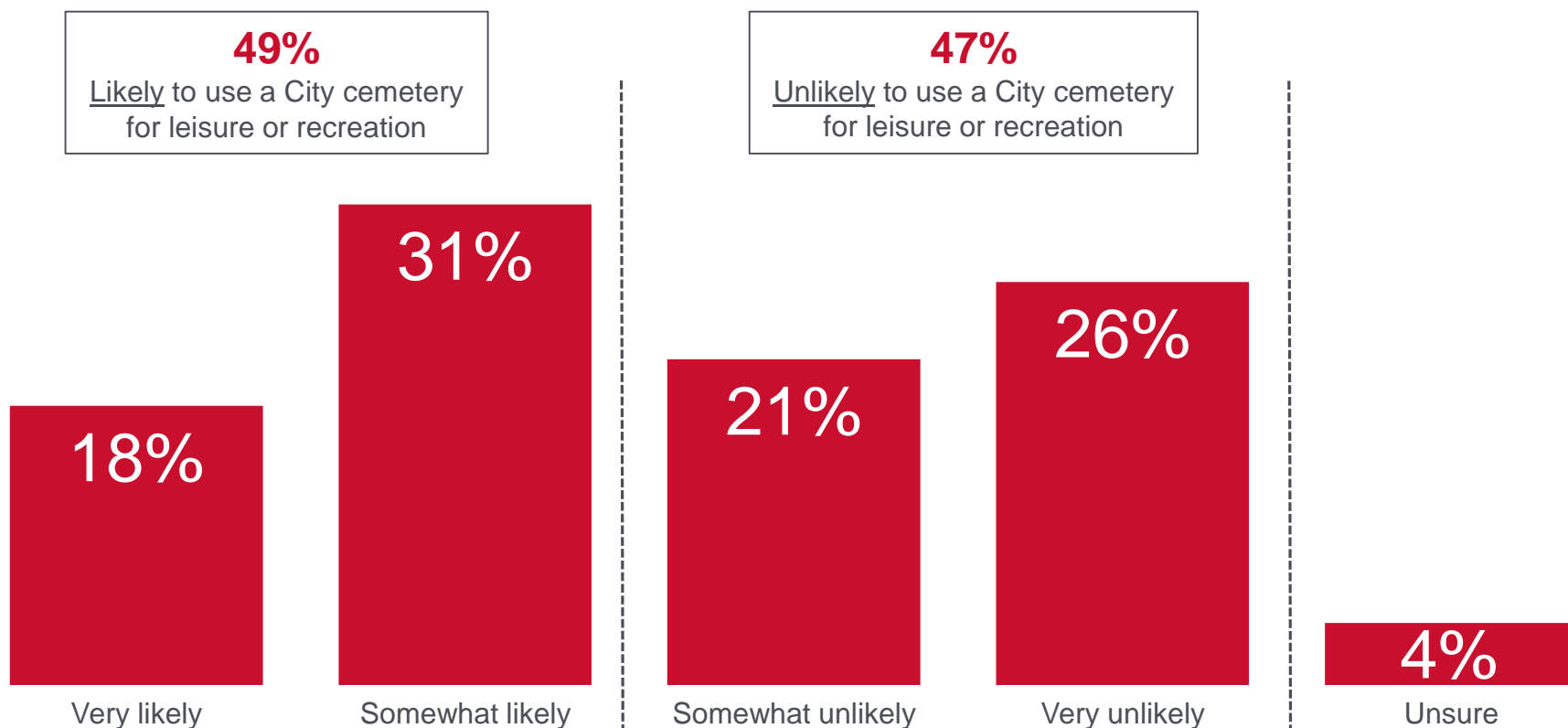


Q7. Prior to today, did you know that citizens may use City Cemetery grounds for not only remembering a loved one, but also for recreational activities, such as going for a walk or run, cycling and nature observation?

Base: Respondents who were aware that The City of Calgary operates public cemeteries (n=794)

Likelihood of Using City Cemetery Space for Leisure or Recreation

Panelists are split as to whether they would be likely to use City cemetery space for leisure or recreation (49% likely, 47% unlikely). **Female panelists** (53%) and those with **no religious affiliation** (56%) were more likely to state that they would use cemeteries for recreational activities.

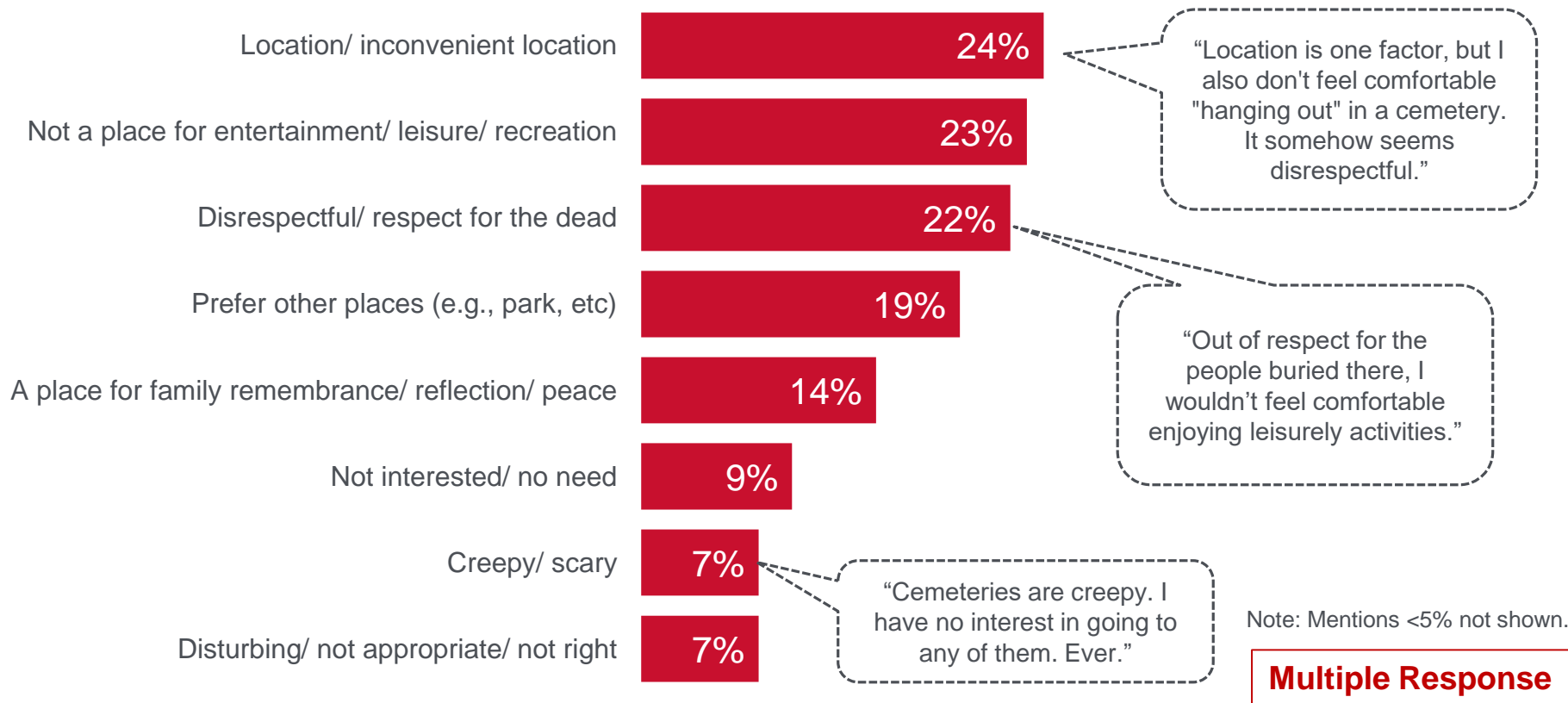


Q9. City of Calgary Cemeteries may be used for recreational activities, such as going for a walk or run, cycling and nature observation. How likely would you be to consider using City Cemetery space for leisure or recreation?

Base: Total respondents (n=1,217)

Reasons Unlikely to Use City of Calgary Cemeteries for Leisure or Recreation

Top reasons mentioned by respondents for being unlikely to use City of Calgary Cemeteries for leisure or recreation included **location inconvenience** (24%), that a **cemetery is not an appropriate place** (23%), that it was **disrespectful to the dead** (22%) and that they prefer other places (19%).



Q10. Why would you be unlikely to use City of Calgary Cemeteries for leisure or recreation?

Base: Respondents who would be very or somewhat unlikely to use City of Calgary Cemeteries for Leisure or Recreation and answered the question (n=528)

Reasons Unlikely to Use City of Calgary Cemeteries for Leisure or Recreation

It should be noted that although the number of panelists who were unlikely to use City Cemeteries for recreation was less than half (47%), there is a **strong vocal minority who vehemently oppose** this proposition and who have a strong likelihood of drowning out more positive voices, who are much less passionate and emotionally invested, if this became a public issue.

"I think using cemeteries for recreational use, like weddings and playgrounds to be a **DISGUSTING** proposition... Give your head a shake, City of Calgary. NO ONE wants to see a wedding or listen to screaming kids in a time of mourning. I'm **shocked and appalled to even read that suggestion.**"

"Whoever is conducting this survey clearly has no idea what a cemetery is used for. How lovely for them that they do not experience the pain that folks like me have to endure. This survey confirmed for me that the city of Calgary has **no respect for citizens** and certainly is so busy with its ideological nonsense that it cannot protect even those that are in the most dire of circumstances. go ahead and put your leisure facilities in cemeteries. I for one will be proud to leave this disgusting city. **You disgust me at the most deep level.**"

"Ghosts!"

"I am **appalled** at these questions. How sad that we have absolutely **no respect** for the dead! The idea of having a playground and bike paths in a cemetery is clearly ridiculous."

"There are better areas of the city that should be used for cyclists or dog walking LIKE older golf courses. This just shows **a lack of total respect** that I am disgusted that the city of Calgary is even asking... has city Hall completely lost it? NO AND NO!!! ... **I am totally angry at this!!!!!!**"

"I am baffled that this topic has even come up. Respect comes to mind. **NO TO EVENTS IN THE CEMETERIES. FULL STOP.** I am very sad that this survey is about events. Which makes this a city without "class". It is the 21st century but this survey and thinking is related to the **Decline of Civilization.** So sad."

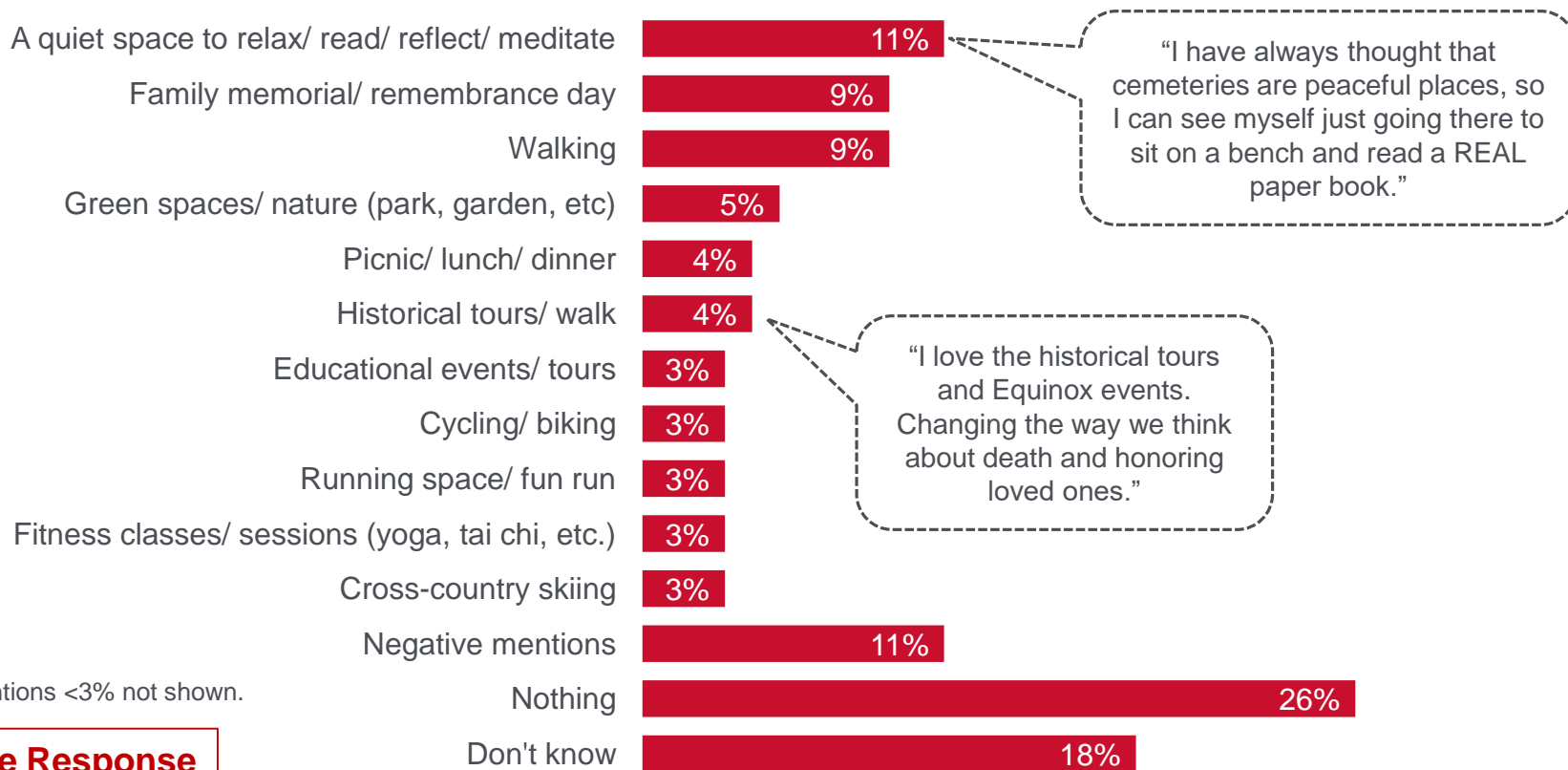
Q10. Why would you be unlikely to use City of Calgary Cemeteries for leisure or recreation?

Base: Respondents who would be very or somewhat unlikely to use City of Calgary Cemeteries for Leisure or Recreation and answered the question (n=528)



Other Recreational Activities or Events That Cemeteries Could Be Used For

Quiet and personal activities such as simply **relaxing** (11%), **memorials** (9%), and **walking** (9%) are at the top of the list for activities that panelists would be comfortable with in a cemetery.



Q11. What, if any, other recreational activities or events do you feel City of Calgary Cemetery space could be used for? (Optional)
 Base: Respondents who would not be unlikely to use City of Calgary Cemeteries for Leisure or Recreation, answered the question and were coded (n=500)

A close-up photograph of a field of tulips in shades of orange and yellow, with green stems and leaves visible in the foreground and background.

Respondent Characteristics and Attitudes Toward the Survey

Agreement with Statements About the Survey

■ Strongly agree
 ■ Somewhat agree
 ■ Somewhat disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree
 ■ Prefer to not answer

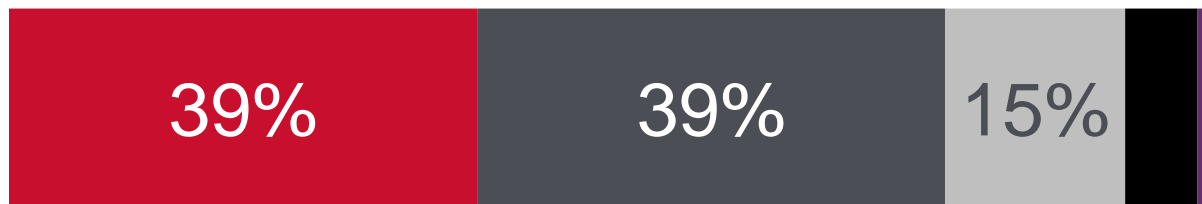
The time required to complete this survey was acceptable for me.



This survey was easy for me to complete.



The topic of this survey was interesting to me.



SE1: Please indicate which best describes how you feel about the following.

Base: Total respondents (n=1,217)

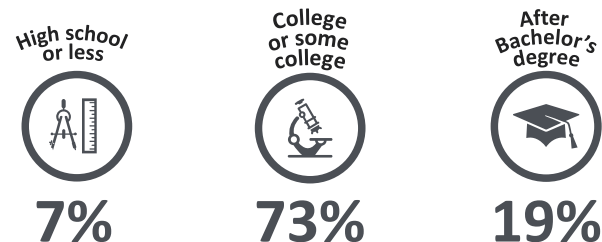
Demographic Characteristics

Gender

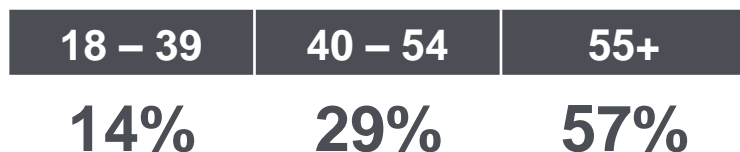


(Prefer not to answer 2%)

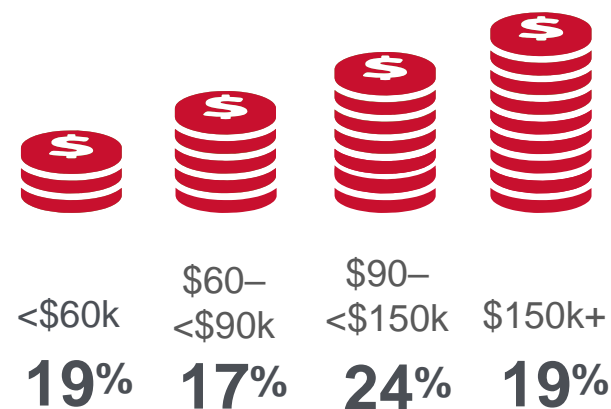
Education



Age

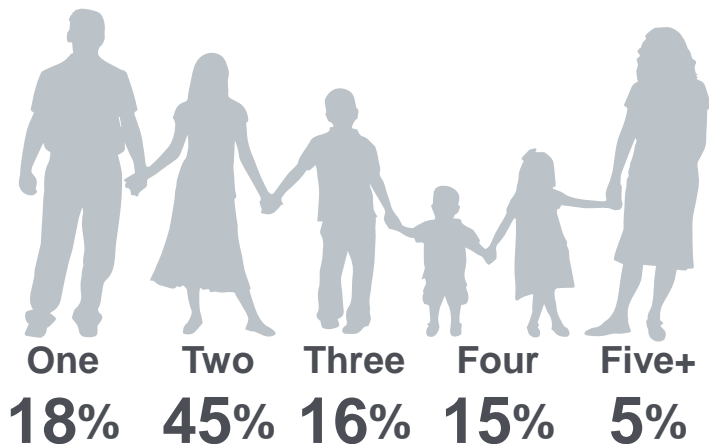


Income

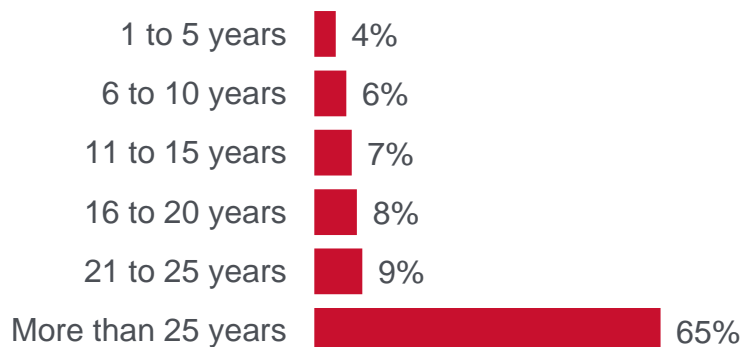


(Prefer not to answer 20%)

Household Size



Lived in The City of Calgary...



Own
86%

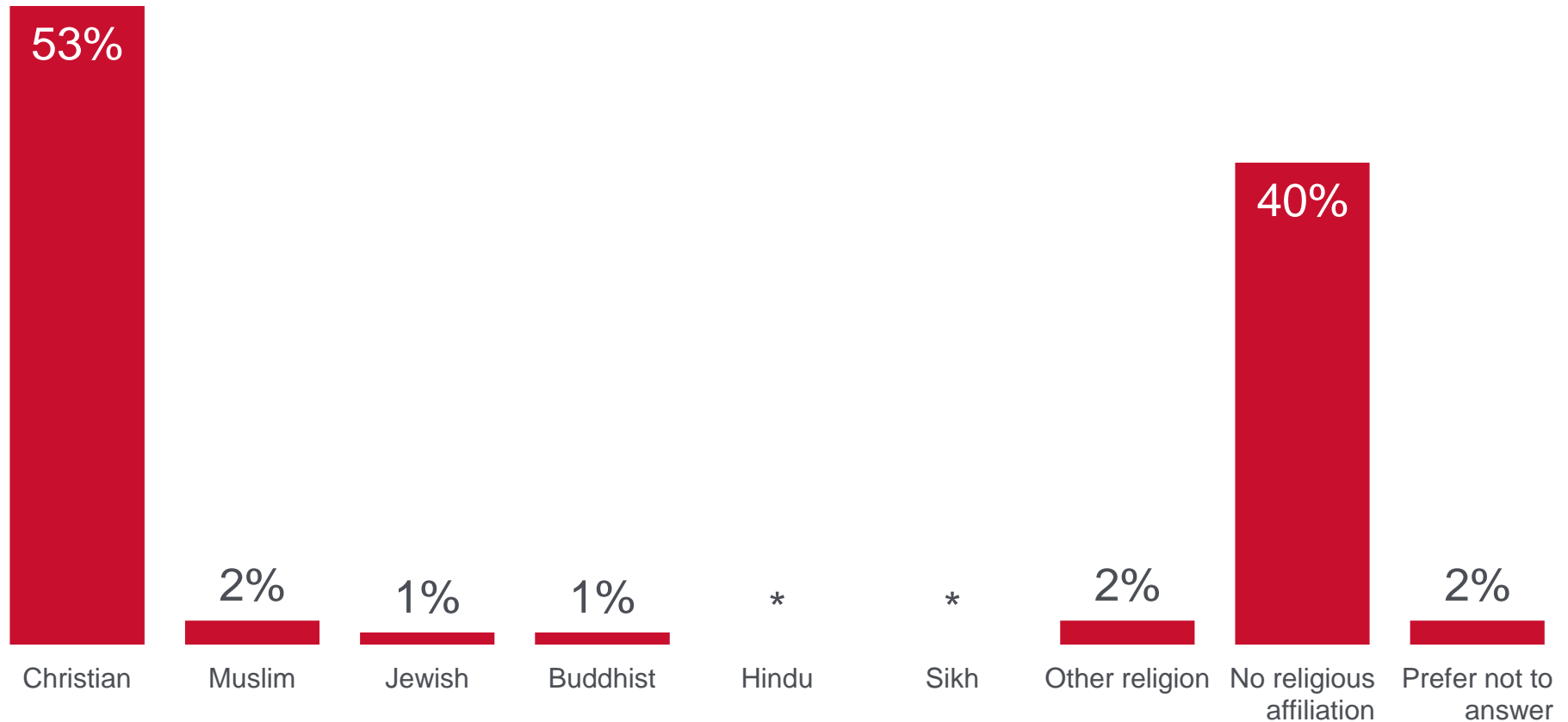
Rent
11%

Other
2%

Prefer not
to answer
1%



Religious Affiliation

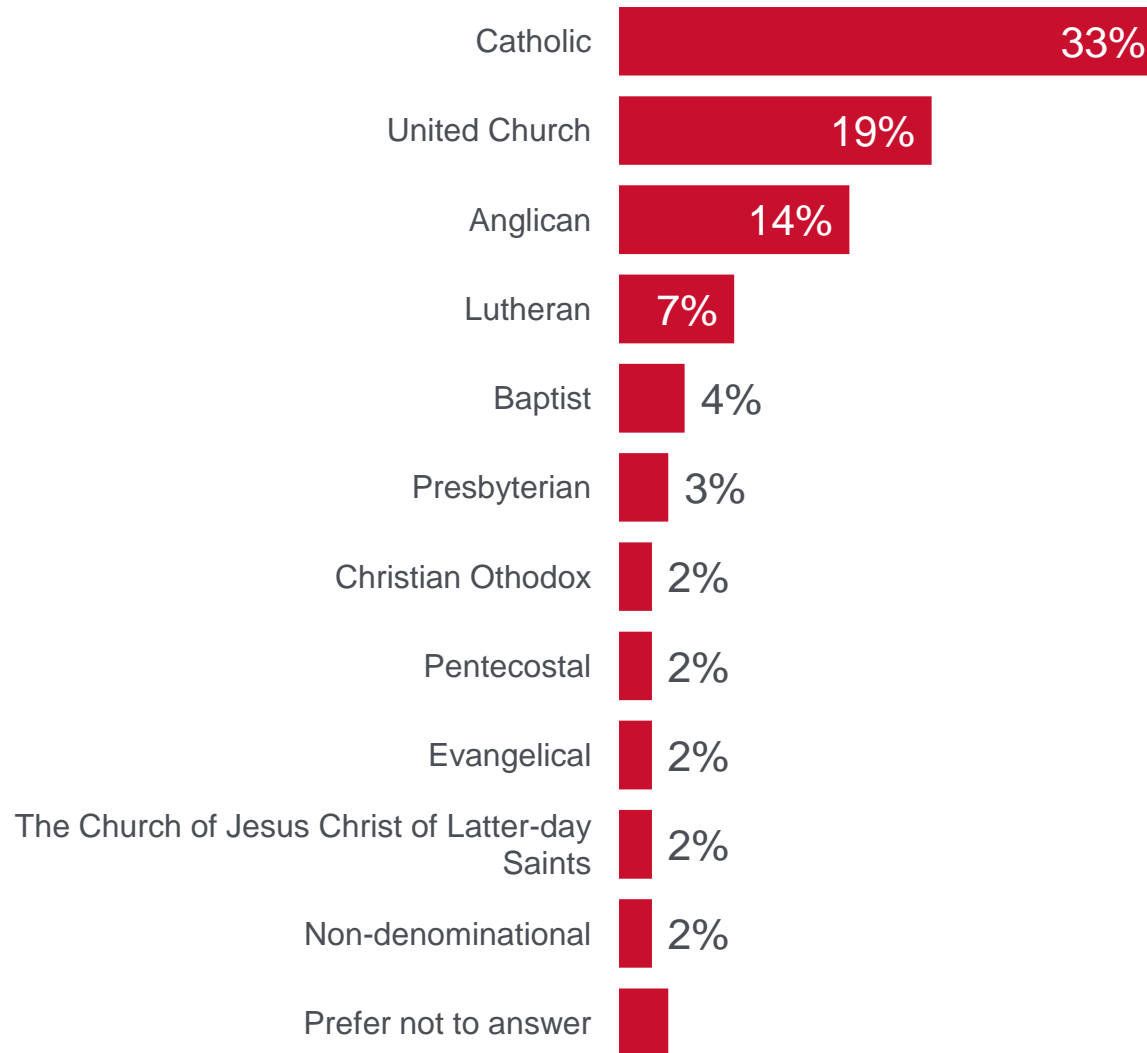


* Equals less than 1%

Q16. Which, if any, religion are you affiliated with? Select all that apply.

Base: Total respondents (n=1,217)

Christian Sect Affiliation



Q17. Which sect of Christianity are you affiliated with?

Base: Respondents Affiliated with Christian Sects (n=646)

Note: Mentions <2% not shown.

A close-up photograph of several orange and yellow tulips in bloom, with green stems and leaves visible in the foreground and background.

Glossary

The following descriptions of terms were available to respondents using pop ups during the survey:

- Interment – Burial of a corpse or cremated remains in a grave or tomb, typically with funeral rites.
- Burial plot – A small area on the ground marked for burial of a casket or cremated remains.
- Casket burial – Traditional ground burial in a coffin.
- Burial of cremated remains in a burial plot – burial of cremated remains in the ground.
- Mausoleum – An indoor or outdoor free-standing building that houses the burial crypt and cremation niche spaces of deceased persons.
- Crypt – A contained casket interment space above ground-level, found in a mausoleum.
- Cremated remains – Ashes remaining after the disposal of a corpse by burning.
- Niche - An individual compartment in a columbarium that houses an urn. Individual niches are frequently marked by memorial plaques and portrait sculptures.
- Columbarium – Above ground outdoor structures composed of individual niches where the urns containing cremated remains are securely placed.
- Scattering Garden – a designated area for scattering cremated remains in a cemetery.
- Ossuary – A granite underground vessel that contains the collective cremated remains of loved ones.
- Upright monument – Upright headstone or marker intended for a burial plot.
- Flat marker – A grave marker that lies flush with the ground.
- Pillow marker – A grave marker that lays low to the ground and has a sloped surface.
- Cremation urn – A vessel, typically an ornamental vase, that is used for preserving cremated remains.
- Memorial wall – A wall with spaces for engraved plaques to remember loved ones.
- Field of Honour – An area within Queen's Park Cemetery for veteran burial that pays tribute to war veterans and fallen soldiers.
- Green burial – Process of burying a body in a natural setting without the use of chemical preservation, in a simple biodegradable container, minimally impacting the environment with little or no memorial markings.
- Pet burial or interment – Burial of an animal corpse or cremated remains in a grave or tomb.