



Green Burial Cemetery Survey

Green Burial Council

January 2015

Selected Survey Data

In January of 2015, the Education Committee of the Green Burial Council solicited responses from 70 green burial cemeteries in and out of the GBC network, receiving a 53% response rate. The raw results of that study are shown below.

The data collected was used to develop presentations to cemeterians and funeral industry professionals, and to inform future endeavors by the GBC in its mission to educate the public about green burial, develop ways to support certified providers, and continue research into green cemetery best practices.

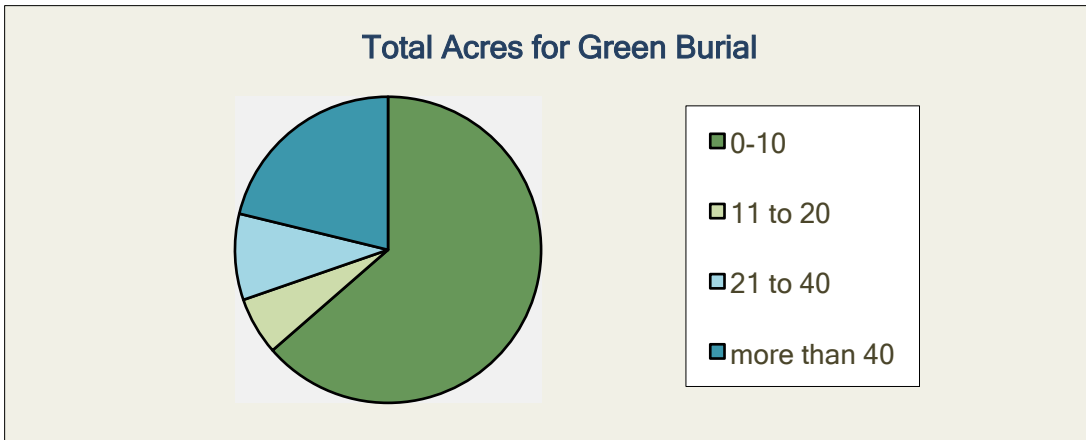
It should be noted in evaluating the data that of the cemeteries represented 78.1% of the respondents were hybrid, a term that refers to conventional cemeteries that allow, at minimum, space for vaultless burial. Methods of transporting loaded caskets and opening and closing graves in many cases appear to follow standard cemetery protocols and methods.

Of the total number of known green cemeteries in the US at the time of the survey, 64 are hybrid, 45 are natural, and six are conservation. Of those certified by the GBC, 25 were hybrid, 18 were natural and six were conservation. 43% of those responding to the survey were GBC certified.

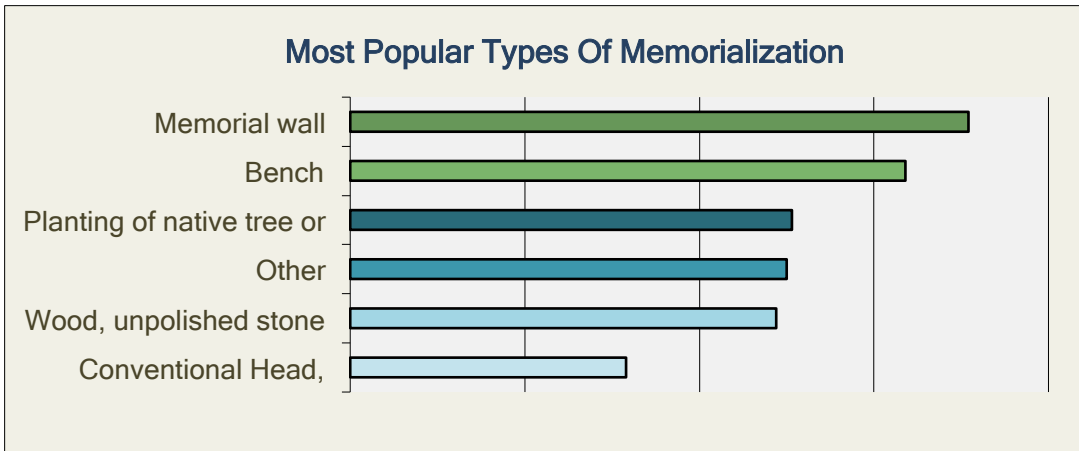
For a complete definition and description of the three standardized categories of certification and to learn more about the value of independent certification, go to greenburialcouncil.org.

Overview

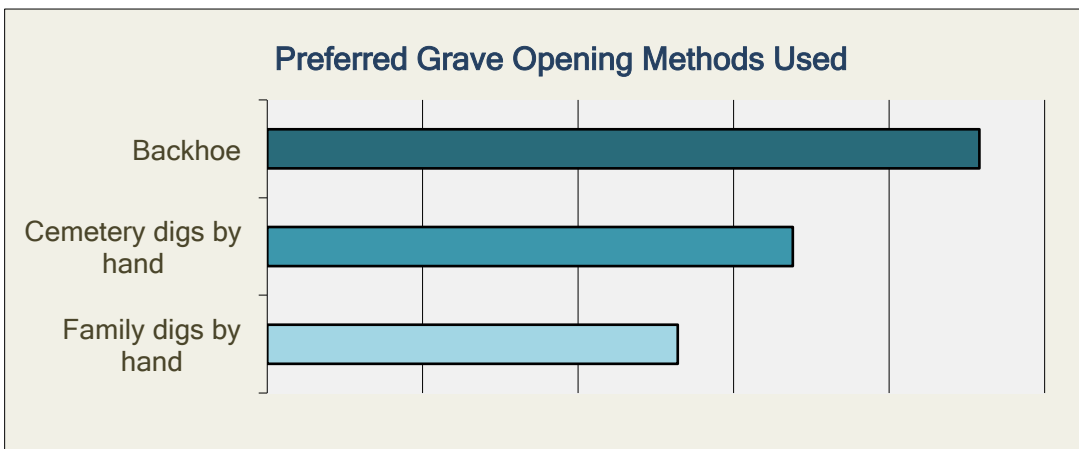
1) Total acres of cemetery land	
a) 0-10	8.8%
b) 11 to 20	11.8%
c) 21 to 40	32.4%
d) more than 40	47.1%
2) Total acres for green burial	
a) 0-10	63.6%
b) 11 to 20	6.1%
c) 21 to 40	9.1%
d) more than 40	21.2%



- 3) What types of interment take place in your cemetery (*check all that apply*)
- | | |
|---|-------|
| a) Conventional burial | 78.1% |
| b) Urn burial | 81.3% |
| c) Scattering | 50.0% |
| d) Columbarium | 53.1% |
| e) Mausoleum | 43.8% |
| f) Green Burial Council certified-burial | 68.8% |
| g) Green burial not currently certified by the Green Burial Council | 37.5% |
- 4) Average number of conventional burials/year
- | | |
|---|------|
| a) Average # if conventional burials/year | 2424 |
| b) Average number of green burials/year | 151 |
| c) Total number of green burials have occurred since you began offering it? | 671 |
| d) Total number of green burials in 2014 | 171 |
| e) Total number of burials in 2014 both | 2546 |
- 5) Pre-need Burial Arrangements
- | | |
|--|--------|
| a) Total # of all existing pre-need burial arrangements | 13,569 |
| b) Total number for existing preneed green burial arrangements | 554 |
| c) Total number of all preneed arrangements in 2014 | 995 |
| d) Total number of preneed green arrangements in 2014 | 148 |
- 6) Do you provide digital grave marking by GIS?
- | | |
|--------|-------|
| a) Yes | 13.3% |
| b) No | 86.7% |
- 7) What methods of memorialization are used in your green cemetery? (*rank by most 1 to least 6 popular*)
- | | |
|--|---|
| a) Conventional Headstone or Footstone | 6 |
| b) Wood or unpolished stone marker | 4 |
| c) Memorial wall | 1 |
| d) Planting of native tree or shrub | 3 |
| e) Bench | 2 |
| f) Other | 5 |

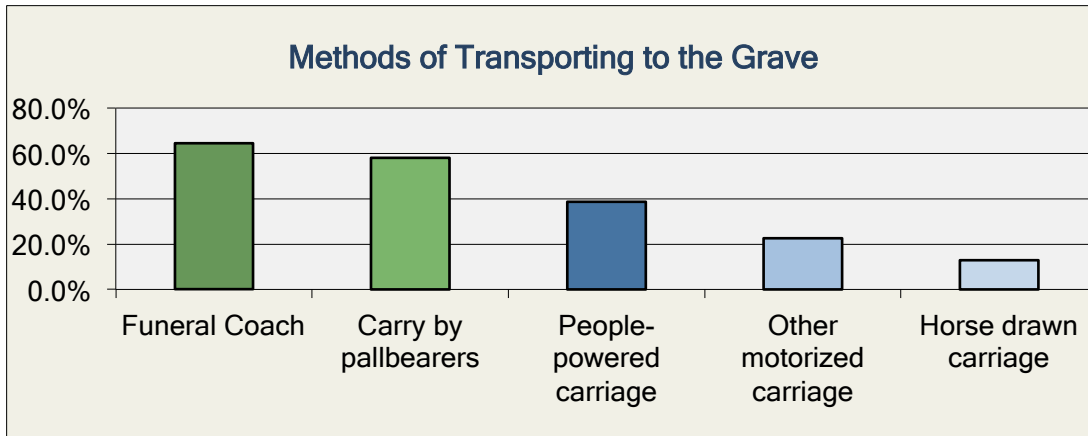


- 8) Grave opening methods (*rank by most 1 to least 3 used method*)
- a) Family digs by hand 3
 - b) Cemetery digs by hand 2
 - c) Backhoe 1



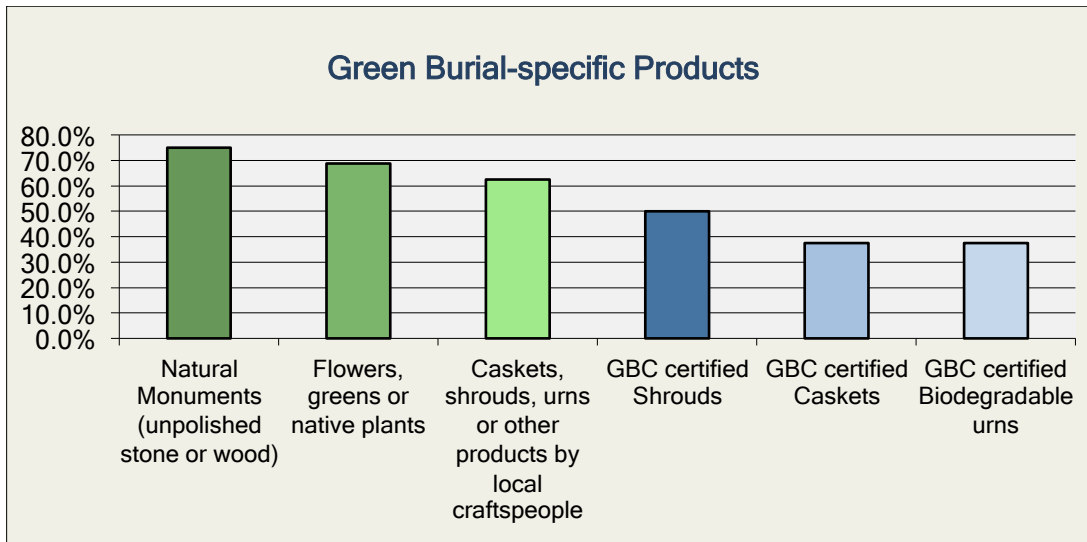
- 9) Do you have an onsite chapel or covered shelter for services?
- a) Yes 71.9%
 - b) No 28.1%

- 10) What method do you employ for transporting the body to the gravesite?
- a) Funeral Coach 64.5%
 - b) Other motorized carriage 22.6%
 - c) Horse drawn carriage 12.9%
 - d) People-powered carriage 38.7%
 - e) Carry by pallbearers 58.1%
 - f) Other (specify) 0%



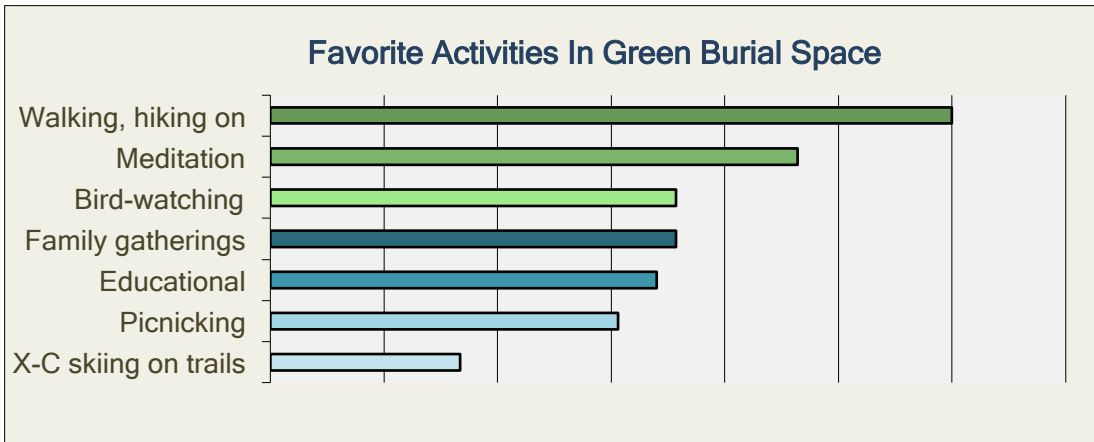
11) Does your cemetery offer any of the following green burial-specific products? (*check all that apply*)

a) Green Burial Council certified Shrouds	50.0%
b) Green Burial Council certified Caskets	37.5%
c) Green Burial Council certified Biodegradable urns	37.5%
d) Caskets, shrouds, urns or other products by local craftspeople	62.5%
e) Natural Monuments (made from unpolished stone or wood)	75.0%
f) Flowers, greens or native plants	68.8%
g) Other (specify)	0.0%



12) If you have public use space, please tell us what it is used for (*rank from most popular 1 to least 7*):

a) Meditation	2
b) Bird-watching	3
c) Picnicking	6
d) Family gatherings	4
e) Walking/hiking on trails	1
f) Cross-country skiing on trails	7
g) Educational programs	5

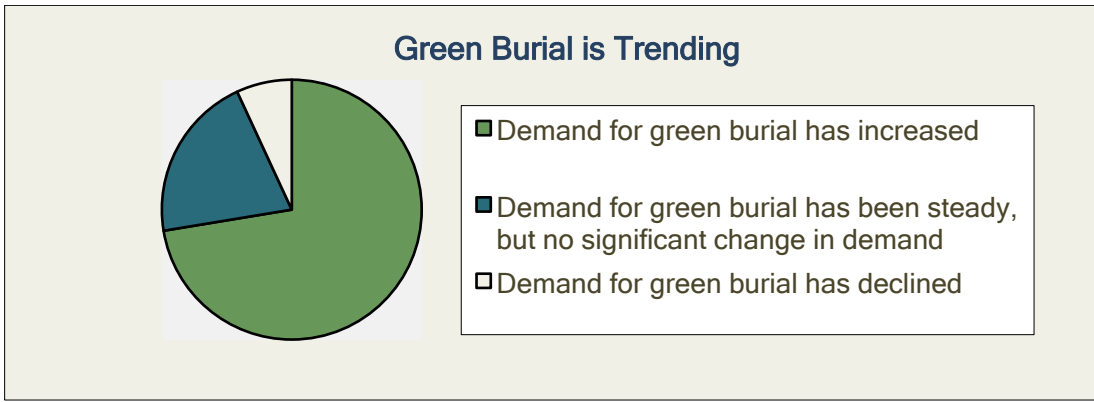


13) Have you engaged in restoring the land to its native ecosystem, with natural watersheds, native flora and fauna?

- a) Yes 75.9%
- b) No 24.1%

14) What has been your experience with the demand for green burial since your cemetery began providing green burial?

- a) Demand for green burial has increased 72.4%
- b) Demand for green burial has been steady, but no significant change in demand 6.9%
- c) Demand for green burial has declined 20.7%



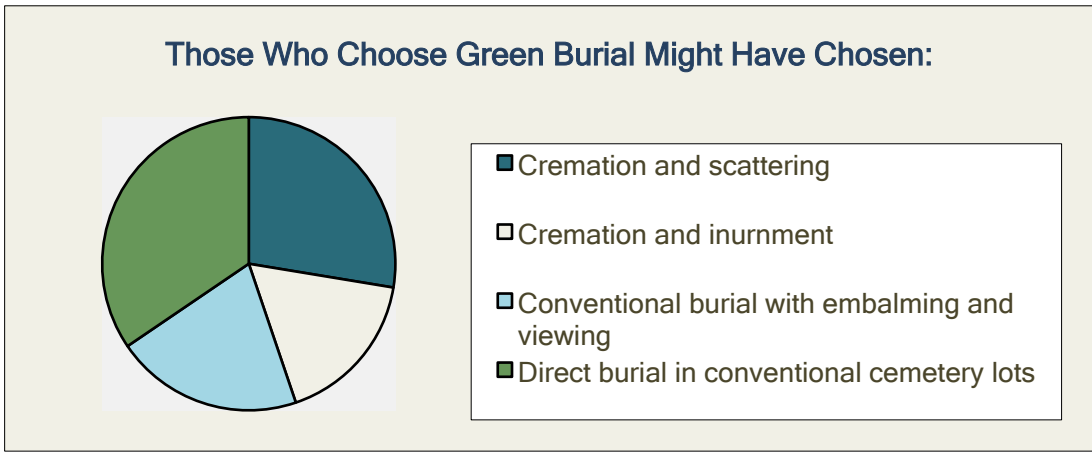
15) What type of green burial certification does your cemetery have?

- a) GBC Hybrid green cemetery 27.6%
- b) GBC Natural green cemetery 27.6%
- c) GBC Conservation green cemetery 17.2%
- d) Not certified 27.6%
- e) List other certifications: Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary, 2 in process

16) In your experience, families who are choosing green burial previously would have primarily chosen:

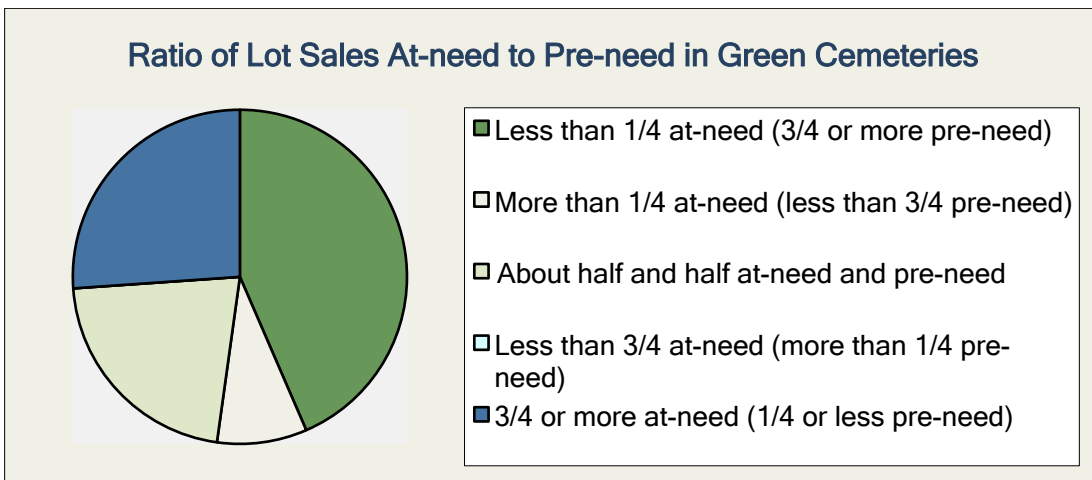
- a) Cremation and scattering 27.6%
- b) Cremation and inurnment 17.2%

- c) Conventional burial with embalming and viewing 20.7%
- d) Direct burial in conventional cemetery lots 34.5%

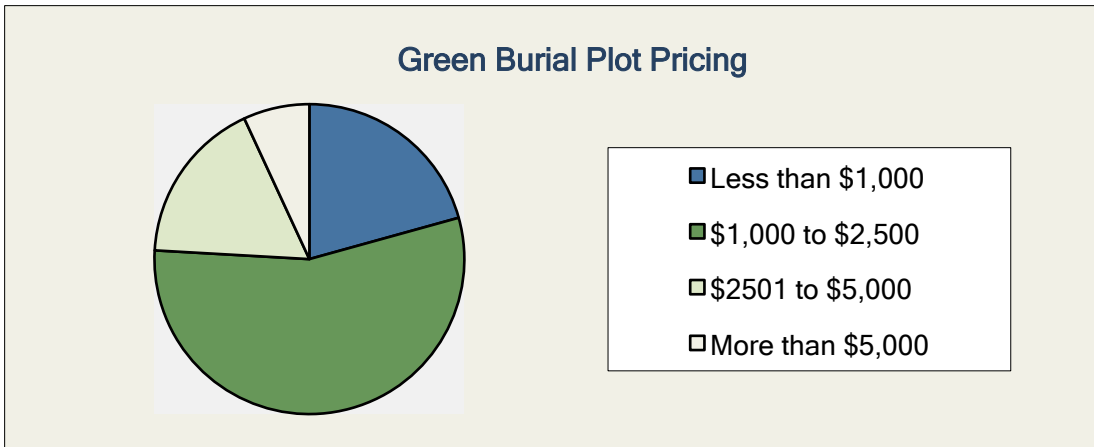


Finances & Marketing

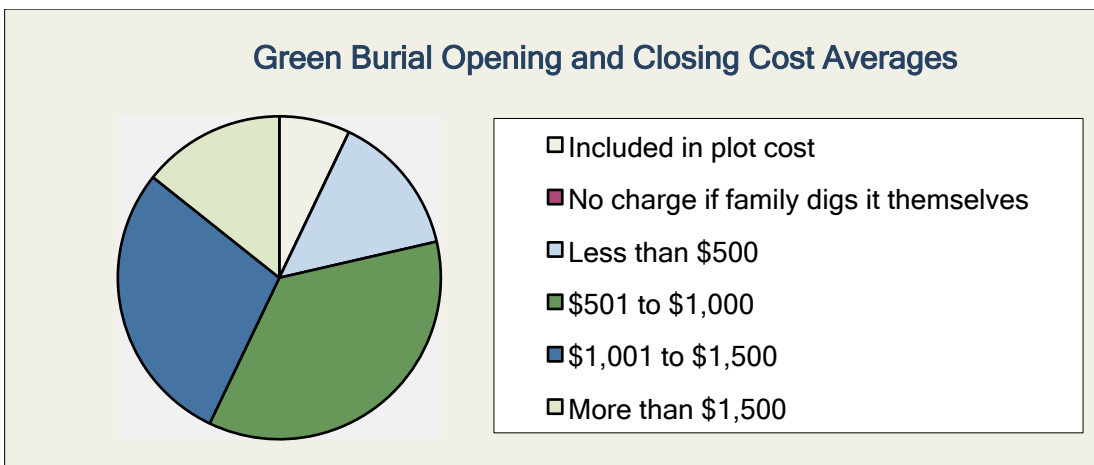
- 17) What is the ratio of green burial lot sales at-need and pre-need?
- a) Less than 1/4 at-need (3/4 or more pre-need) 43.5%
 - b) More than 1/4 at-need (less than 3/4 pre-need) 8.7%
 - c) About half and half at-need and pre-need 21.7%
 - d) Less than 3/4 at-need (more than 1/4 pre-need) 0.0%
 - e) 3/4 or more at-need (1/4 or less pre-need) 26.1%



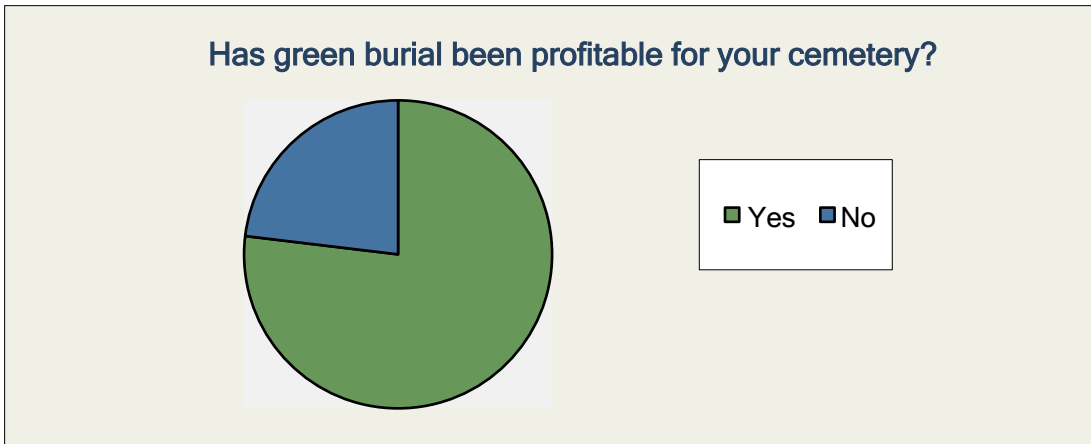
- 18) What is the average price of a green burial lot in your cemetery?
- a) Less than \$1,000 20.7%
 - b) \$1,000 to \$2,500 55.2%
 - c) \$2501 to \$5,000 17.2%
 - d) More than \$5,000 6.9%



- 19) What is the cost for opening and closing a green burial lot in your cemetery?
- | | |
|---|-------|
| a) Included in plot price | 7.1% |
| b) No charge if family digs it themselves | 0.0% |
| c) Less than \$500 | 14.3% |
| d) \$501 to \$1,000 | 35.7% |
| e) \$1,001 to \$1,500 | 28.6% |
| f) More than \$1,500 | 14.3% |

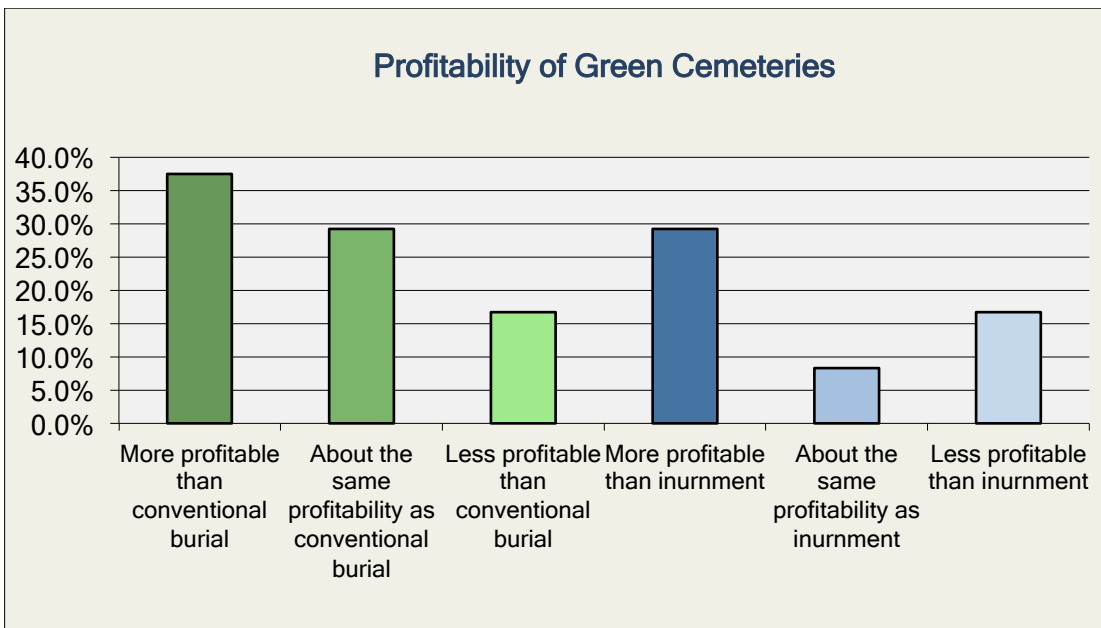


- 20) Is your cemetery for-profit or nonprofit?
- | | |
|---------------|-------|
| a) For-profit | 20.0% |
| b) Nonprofit | 63.3% |
| c) Municipal | 16.7% |
- 21) Has green burial been profitable for your cemetery?
- | | |
|--------|-------|
| a) Yes | 76.9% |
| b) No | 23.1% |



22) How does green burial compare to other types of interment re: profitability (check all that apply)?

a) More profitable than conventional burial	37.5%
b) About the same profitability as conventional burial	29.2%
c) Less profitable than conventional burial	16.7%
d) More profitable than inurnment	29.2%
e) About the same profitability as inurnment	8.3%
f) Less profitable than inurnment	16.7%



23) Knowing what you know now about green burial, would you open a new green cemetery today if you had the opportunity?

a) Yes	81.5%
b) No	18.5%

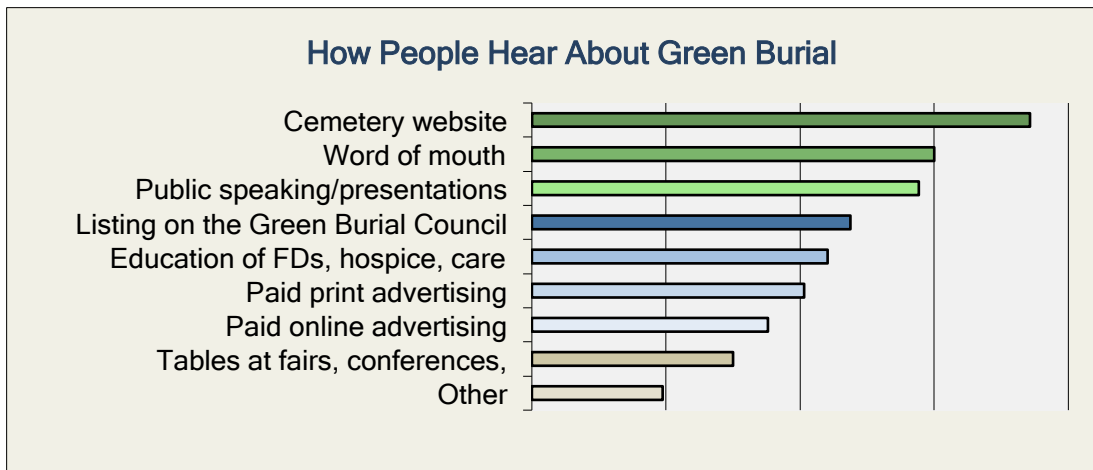
24) If you answered "No" to the previous question, why would you choose not to open a new green cemetery? (check all that apply)

a) Too much work and maintenance	0.0%
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- b) Not sufficiently profitable 50.0%
- c) I don't believe that there will be enough future demand for green burial to justify the investment of time and money 25.0%
- d) We have other priorities 25.0%
- e) Other (specify) still new at it n/a; not start a new one

25) What in your experience are the best ways to market your green cemetery? (rank all that apply from most 1 effective to least 9)

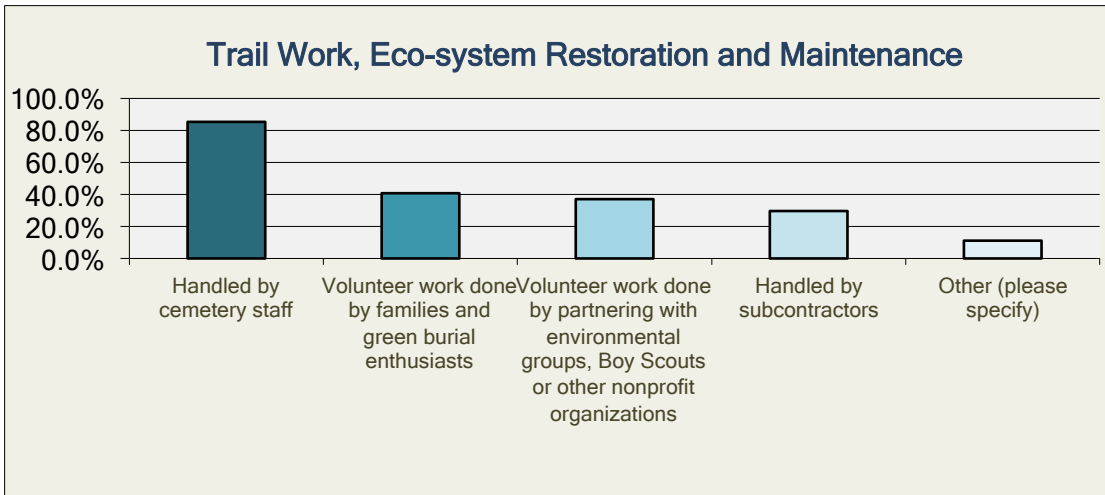
- a) Cemetery website 1
- b) Listing on the Green Burial Council website 4
- c) Paid online advertising 6
- d) Paid print advertising 7
- e) Word of mouth 2
- f) Public speaking/presentations 3
- g) Education of funeral directors, hospice and end-of-life care providers 5
- h) Booths/tables at fairs, conferences, conventions 8
- i) Other 9



Maintenance

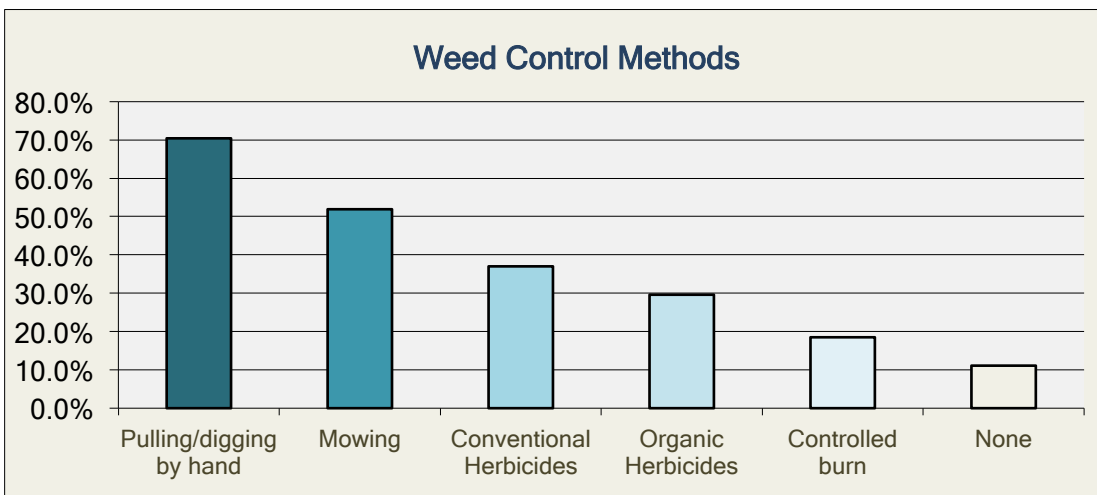
Check all that apply

- 26) Trail work, eco-system restoration and maintenance is
- a) Handled by cemetery staff 85.2%
 - b) Handled by subcontractors 29.6%
 - c) Volunteer work done by families and green burial enthusiasts 40.7%
 - d) Volunteer work done by partnering with environmental groups, Boy Scouts or other nonprofit organizations 37.0%
 - e) Other 11.1%



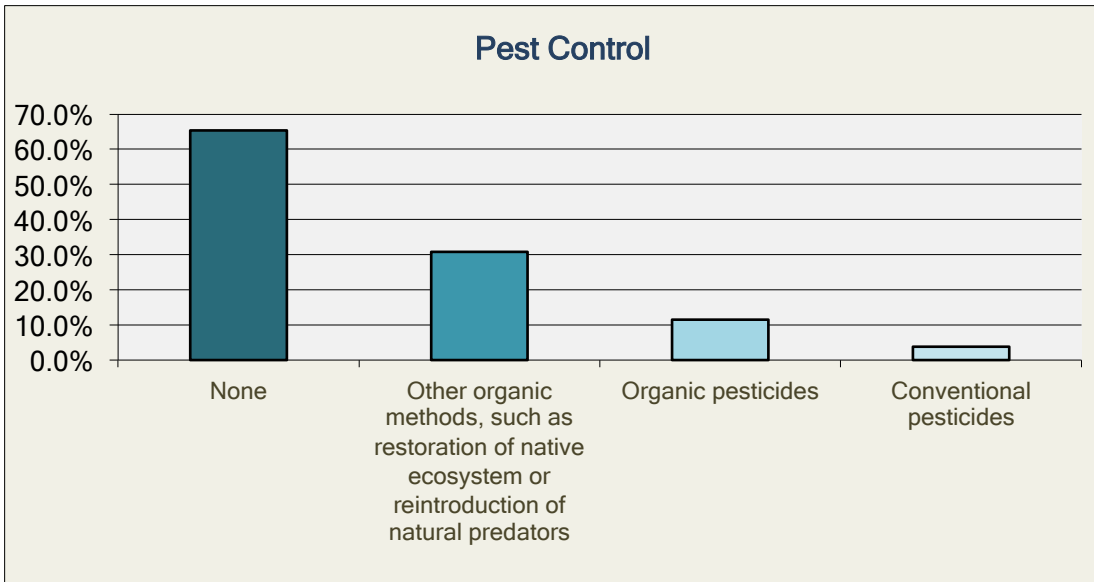
27) Weed control methods used

a) None	11.1%
b) Controlled burn	18.5%
c) Mowing	51.9%
d) Conventional Herbicides	37.0%
e) Organic Herbicides	29.6%
f) Pulling/digging by hand	70.4%
g) Other	goat rental 1; spot treatment for poison ivy only



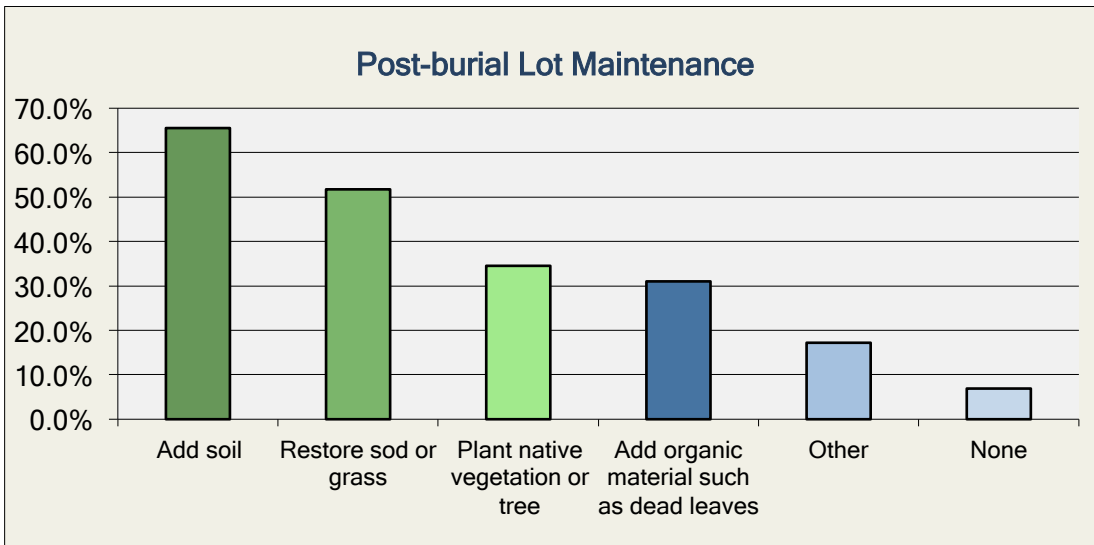
28) Pest control methods used

a) None	65.4%
b) Organic pesticides	11.5%
c) Other organic methods, such as restoration of native reintroduction of natural predators	30.8%
d) Conventional pesticides	3.8%
e) Other (specify)	0.0%



29) Post-burial lot maintenance

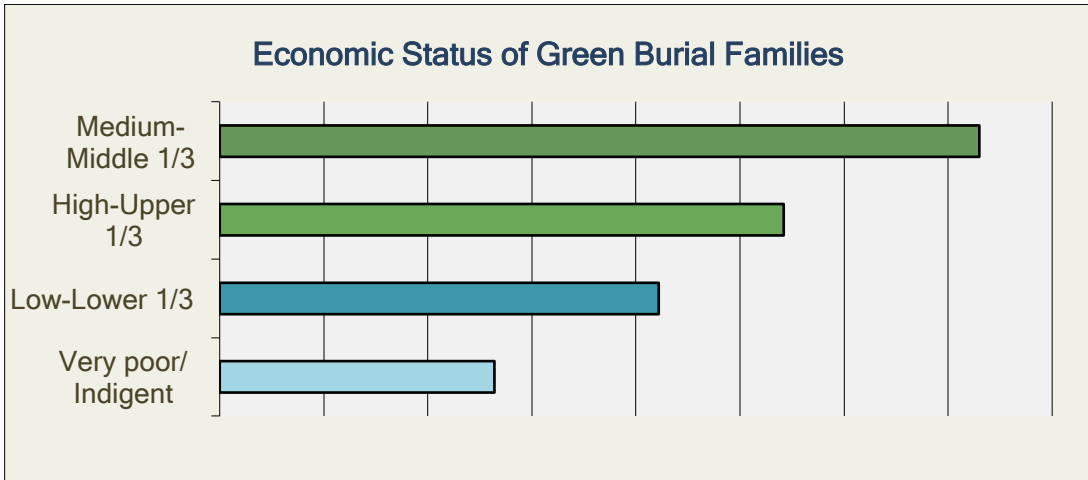
a) None	6.9%
b) Add soil	65.5%
c) Add organic material such as dead leaves	31.0%
d) Plant native vegetation or tree	34.5%
e) Restore sod or grass	51.7%
f) Other	17.2%



Demographics of Population Served

30) What is your perception of the income relative to your area of the families that choose green burial? (rank in order from largest 1 population to smallest 4)

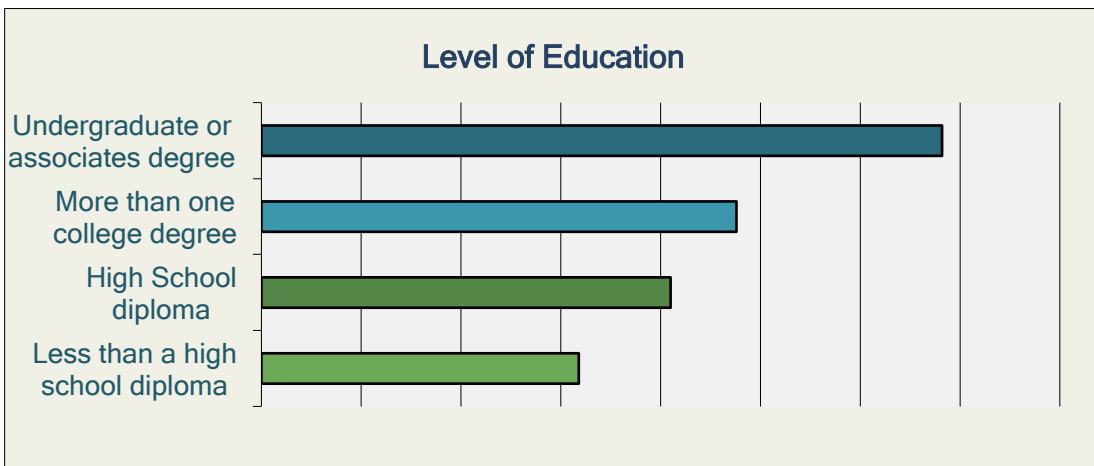
a) High-Upper 1/3	2
b) Medium-Middle 1/3	1
c) Low-Lower 1/3	3



31) What is your perception of the education level of the families that choose green burial?

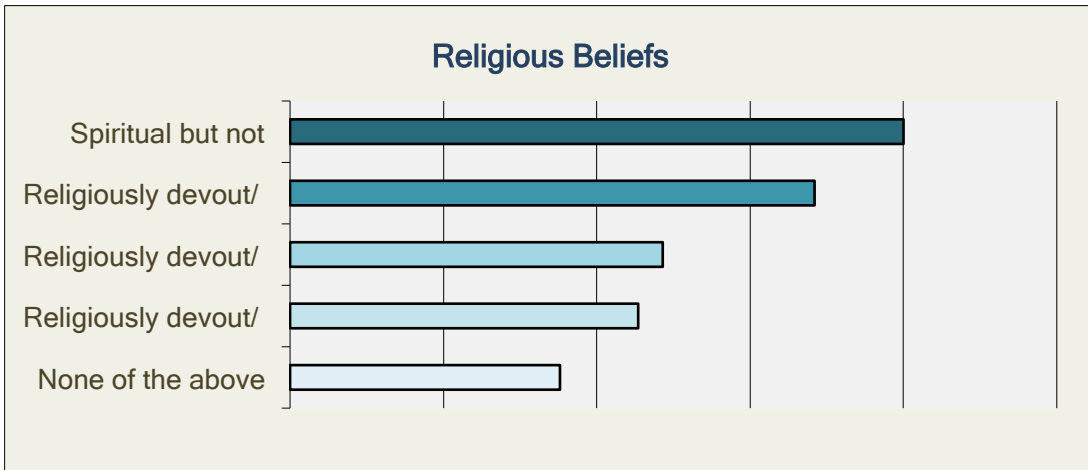
(rank in order from largest 1 population to smallest 4)

- a) Graduate or Professional degree 2
- b) Undergraduate degree 1
- c) High School diploma 3
- d) Less than a high school diploma 4



32) What is your perception of religious beliefs of families that choose green burial? (rank in order from largest 1 population to smallest 5)

- a) Religiously devout/Very conservative 4
- b) Religiously devout/Moderate 3
- c) Religiously devout/Liberal 2
- d) Spiritual but not religious 1
- e) None of the above 5

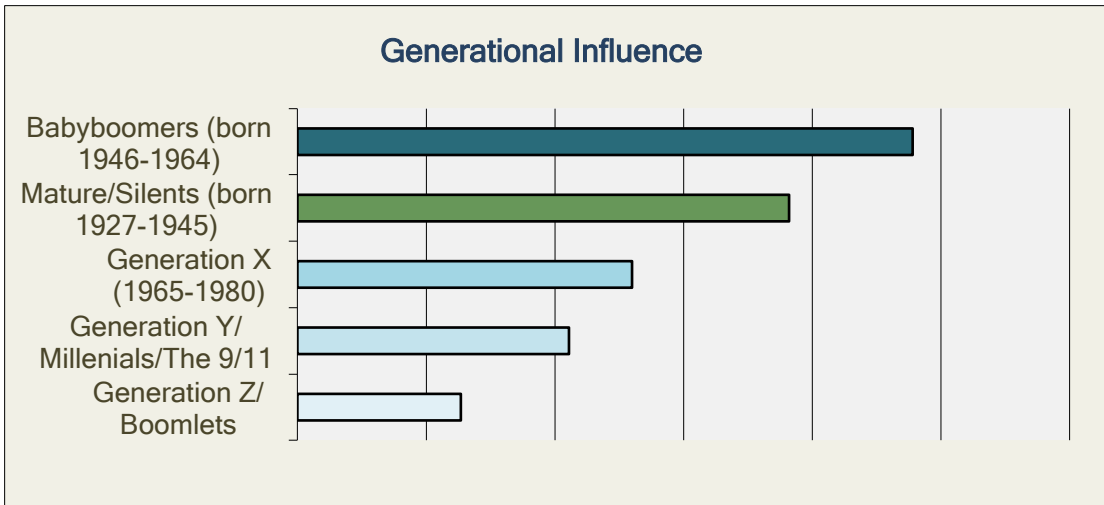


33) People from which religions are buried in your green cemetery? (only include the religions that are currently represented in your green cemetery)

a) Catholic	45.5%
b) Protestant	77.3%
c) Eastern Orthodox	27.3%
d) Jewish	50.0%
e) Muslim	27.3%
f) Buddhist	22.7%
g) Hindu	9.1%
h) New Age (e.g. Wiccan)	22.7%
i) Non-religious/unaffiliated	72.7%
j) Other (specify)	Mormon 1

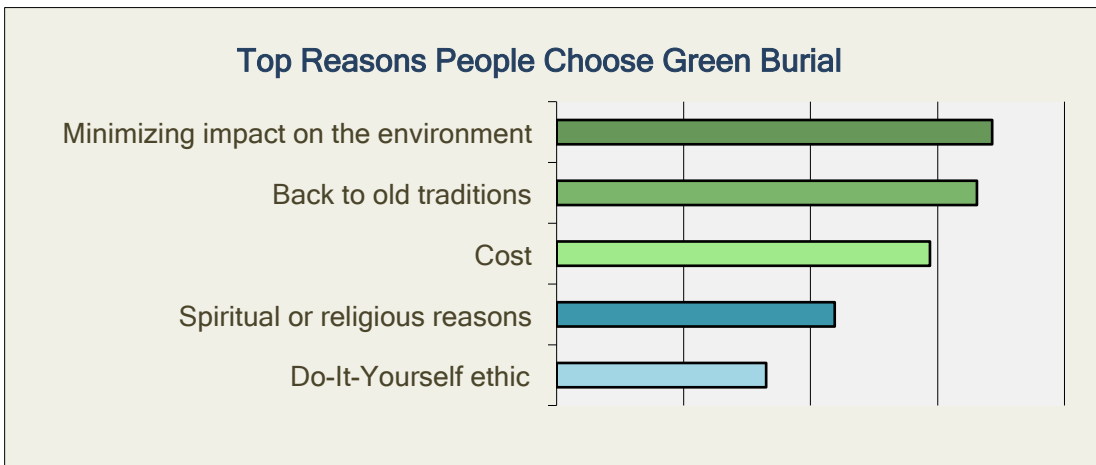
34) What generations in your experience are most interested in green burial? (rank in order from largest 1 population to smallest 5)

a) Mature/Silents (born 1927-1945)	2
b) Babyboomers (born 1946-1964)	1
c) Generation X (1965-1980)	3
d) Generation Y/Millennials/The 9/11 Generation (1981-2000)	4
e) Generation Z/Boomlets (2001-2014)	5



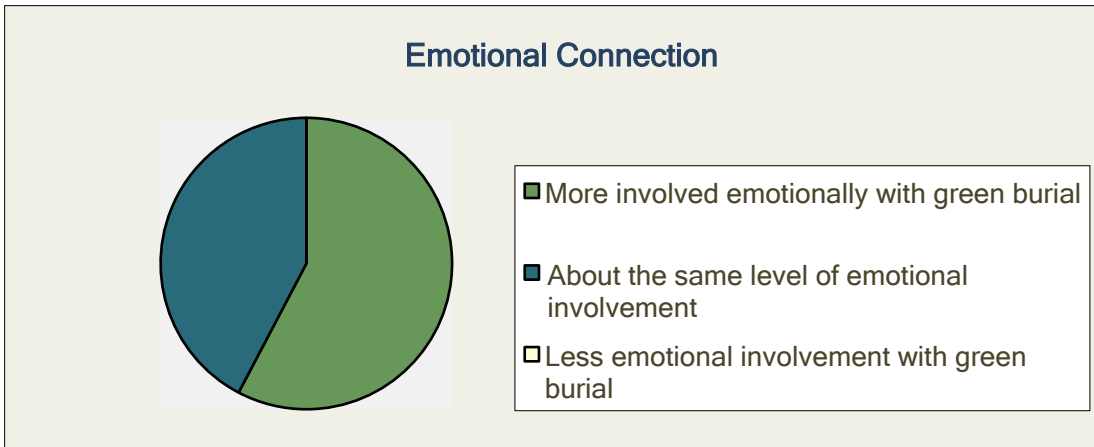
35) What is your perception of the reason why people choose green burial? (rank in order from most 1 to least 5 important)

- | | |
|--|---|
| a) Green burial has been the practice of humankind since time immemorial | 2 |
| b) Minimizing impact on the environment | 1 |
| c) Spiritual or religious reasons | 4 |
| d) Do-It -yourself ethic | 5 |
| e) Cost | 3 |



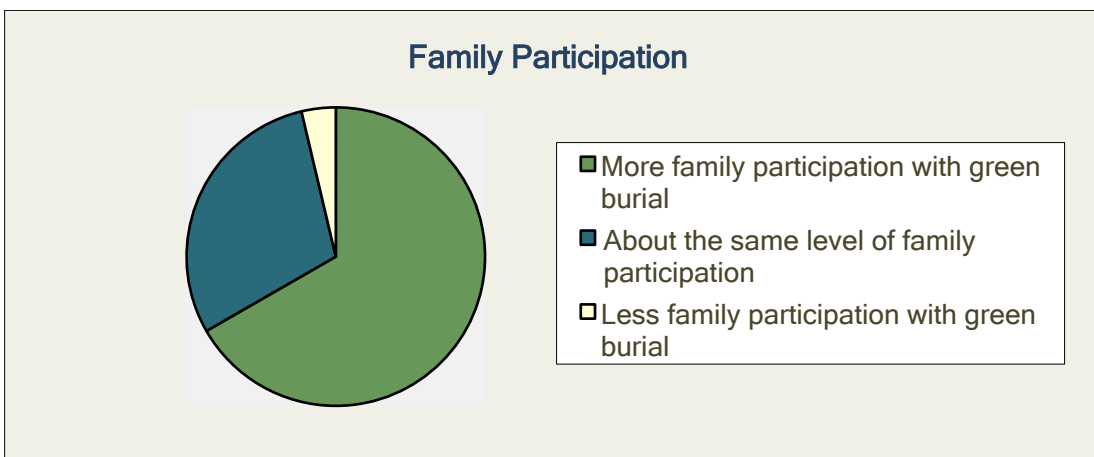
36) How would you describe the degree of emotional connection felt by families with green burial as opposed to a conventional burial?

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a) More involved emotionally with green burial | 57.7% |
| b) About the same level of emotional involvement | 42.3% |
| c) Less emotional involvement with green burial | 0.0% |



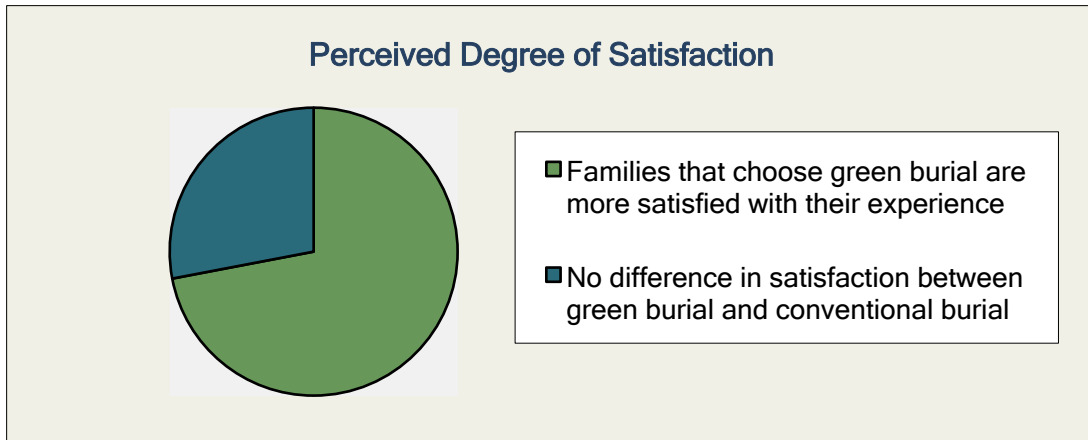
37) How would you describe the degree of family participation by those choosing green burial as opposed to a conventional burial?

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a) More participation with green burial | 66.7% |
| b) About the same level of participation | 29.6% |
| c) Less participation with green burial | 3.7% |



38) How do you perceive the degree of satisfaction for families that choose green burial versus conventional burial?

- | | | |
|--|-------|-------|
| a) Families that choose green burial are satisfied with their experience | 72.0% | more |
| b) No difference in satisfaction between burial and conventional burial | 28.0% | green |
| c) Families that choose conventional burial more satisfied with their experience | 0.0% | are |



Bonus question

39) What is the single most important thing you would tell a startup green cemetery operator or funeral director about green burial?

- Building alliances with other providers
- Do it right
- Focus on what today's families want – simpler, environmentally friendly
- Keep it simple and low cost
- Honor the old ways
- More education needed
- Do not be afraid
- Be patient
- Do it because you believe in it
- This will be an uphill battle
- Don't just offer burial without a vault or embalming to save on cost.
- Add environmental benefits and you will build value in the entire concept and attract higher income clients
- Do research and planning before releasing info to the public
- Focus on providing families more opportunity for participation
- Make sure you are sold on the idea before selling it to someone else
- Learn from other green burial providers
- Educate people to the choices they do not know they have
- The public has a way of voting with their wallet and their feet, so if you aren't willing to change with the times, expect to be left behind
- Change your paradigm to match what your families actually want
- The GBC is not only key because we need certifiable standards, but because it has the potential to build binding networks