

AHEAD OF WHAT'S NEXT.

FAMIC

Funeral & Memorial Information Council

Funeral and Memorialization Information Council

Study of American Attitudes Toward Ritualization and Memorialization
April 2010

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Background and Objectives

FAMIC commissioned the first study of consumers' attitudes toward memorialization and ritualization in September 1990 to:

- Determine the personal values which drive consumers decision-making behavior,
- Learn more about attitudes toward cremation and pre-planning, and
- Study trends toward simplification in funeral and burial services, to assess emerging trends in shopping for funeral and burial services at non-traditional sources, and to track an increase in the preference for cremation.

Tracking waves (1995, 1999, 2004, and 2010) have been guided by the following research objectives:

- To discover differences among various segments of the market to aid in development of targeted communications and marketing,
- To learn more about attitudes toward pre-planning, cremation, monuments, cemeteries, and other aspects of memorialization, and
- To analyze changes in attitudes over time.

In addition, the 2010 wave seeks to determine awareness and attitudes about “Green” burial practices and pet memorial services.

Methodology

Telephone interviews were conducted among:

- Adult Americans, 40 years of age and older representative of the general population
- Adult Americans, 40 years of age and older of African American ethnicity
- Adult Americans, 40 years of age and older of Hispanic ethnicity
- Adult Americans, 40 years of age and older of Asian ethnicity
- Adult Americans, age 20 to 39 that have attended at least two services within the past two years

The general population sample group was weighted by income, education, age, gender, ethnicity, region and household size.

Additional propensity weighting was applied to the general population group to correct for the fact that all interviews were conducted via the phone.

Methodology

Wave	Date	Total Sample Size	Sample Size of Respondents Aged 40+
Benchmark	Sept 1990	1000	635
Wave 1	Sept 1995	1001	584
Wave 2	Sept 1999	1002	615
Wave 3	Nov 2004	961	961
Wave 4	April 2010	858	507

Wave 4 Sample Groups	Sample Size
General Population Age 40+	507
African American Oversample Age 40+	100
Hispanic Oversample Age 40+	100
Asian Oversample Age 40+	50
General Population Oversample Age 20-39	101

Executive Summary

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS: The Funeral Director is still a key player

- ***Funeral Directors remain key partners with families during the funeral planning process. Their role has not diminished -- even with the changing dynamics faced by families - economic shifts, generational shifts and the increasing role of technology - the funeral director plays a central role at a critical time.***
 - Respondents prefer funeral homes that are privately held independent businesses.
 - Respondents don't feel comfortable shopping for caskets and other items outside of a funeral home.
 - Though there is a strong sentiment that the experience is generally too expensive, 86% wouldn't change anything about their own personal funeral home experience.
 - The overwhelming majority would use the same provider again in the future.
 - The funeral industry attributes tested all had very high approval, and the highest approval was for the most personal types of services provided by funeral homes.

Executive Summary

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS: News is not widespread, but it isn't positive

- *In the news: Only 13% of those surveyed have heard something about the funeral industry in the news recently.*

- While news about the industry is not widespread, it is generally more neutral or bad, than it is good.
- 46% have heard neutral news and 33% have heard more negative news.
- Among African American respondents there is more recall about current news stories. One-quarter have heard something about the industry and 40% of those respondents have heard something negative.

Keeping close tabs on news stories and dispelling negative stories is key to keeping this number low. Appropriate and targeted responses are in order when bad news breaks.

Executive Summary

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS: Young people have shifting needs

- *Young respondents will require some shifts from the industry, but they currently rely on many traditional elements when participating in funeral planning.*

– *Internet Use:*

- *How they are different:*

- Younger respondents are much more likely (51%, compared to only 32%) to find an obituary online. This follows other trends in online newspaper reading and general web usage.
- They also use the internet more frequently to locate a funeral home (24%, compared to 12%).
- They are more likely to have viewed a “virtual memorialization” (25%, compared to 16% among those over age 40).

- *How they are more typical:*

- They still find out about funeral services by word of mouth more than any other way (83%) and from obituaries in the newspaper (38%).
- They rely on friends and relatives for information about arrangements (81%, compared to 59%).
- They rely on others who have been through the experience (61% compared to 44%).
- And when it comes to making arrangements, they look to the phone book almost as often as the internet (33% phone book and 36% internet).

Younger respondents may be more comfortable researching some options on the internet, but they still want the expertise provided by their funeral director and people they trust who have been through the experience.

Executive Summary

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS: Minority populations show less satisfaction

- ***Asians surveyed revealed a lower approval on nearly all attributes tested.***
 - Overall, Asian respondents were less satisfied with many of the attributes of the industry tested.
 - ***Especially low levels of agreement on:***
 - *Knowing the right products to recommend*
 - *Providing valuable service*
 - *Finding funeral industry personnel professional and courteous*
 - *Respecting the wishes of the family*
- ***African Americans were more likely to use church services and pre-arrange through funeral home financing options.***
 - African Americans were more likely to pre-arrange in the next five years (57%, compared to 49% among general population).
 - African American respondents were more likely to use a life insurance policy through the funeral home to pre-pay for arrangements.
 - African Americans were also the most cost conscious across several measures. (50% said cost was the reason TO choose cremation; and were dramatically more likely to say price was the one thing they'd change 56% compared to 42% overall).
 - African Americans were the least likely to choose cremation for a loved one.

Executive Summary

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS: Cont. Minority populations

- ***Hispanics surveyed revealed a lower approval on nearly all attributes tested.***
 - Overall, Hispanic respondents were less satisfied with many of the attributes of the industry tested.
 - ***Especially low levels of agreement on:***
 - ***Providing a service that was valuable (83%).***
 - ***Providing a service that was helpful in paying tribute to the life of their loved one (81%).***

Executive Summary

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS: Pre-Planning

- *Fewer Americans are pre-planning than in the past*

- *Those who DO pre-plan:*

- *They pre-plan so others do not have to worry*
- *They pay out of their own bank account, not through financing*
- *They plan for their own funeral services, not those of their family*

- *Those who DON'T pre-plan:*

- *The largest group say they “just haven’t thought of it”*
- *The importance of pre-planning hasn’t set in*
- *Younger respondents were less likely to have spent time and energy planning for themselves*

Executive Summary

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS: Gravestones and monuments

- Gravestones are purchased quickly after the death of a loved one, 47% in the first month and another 34% within the first six months.
- Younger respondents were less likely to purchase a gravestone or marker.
- Gravestones are bought from monument builders more than other places, nearly no one buys them “online.”
- They buy from the monument maker who:
 - Is close to the cemetery
 - Is compassionate
 - They have a family relationship with
 - Is cost effective (African American respondents cited cost more frequently)

Executive Summary

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS: Funeral Industry Attributes

- **The Funeral Industry gets its highest approval on attributes surrounding the “emotional components” of funeral arrangements**
- 95% believe the industry took special care to reflect the wishes of the family.
 - This is an increase from 90% in 2004.
- 95% believe the service was helpful in paying tribute or commemorating the life of a loved one.
 - This is an increase from 89% in 2004.
- 94% say they believe the funeral industry provided a service which was valuable.
- 93% say the funeral industry was important in making funeral arrangements.
- 92% say the funeral industry had meaning and value.
 - This is an increase from 86% in 2004.

Executive Summary

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS: Funeral Industry Attributes

- **The ratings remain strong, but are slightly lower on funeral industry expertise and logistics.**
- 89% say they believe people in the industry are professional and competent.
- 89% say the funeral home had the expertise to recommend the right products and services.
- **And, there has been improvement in issues related to a funeral's helpful role in the "healing process" and "saying goodbye".**
- 88% agree that the service helped them remember the individual and helped them say goodbye. This is an increase from 84% in 2004.
- 87% say the service was an important part in helping them begin the healing process of their loved one. This is a significant increase from 78%, a 9-point increase.

Executive Summary

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

- **Green Funerals have yet to become a familiar experience. Two-thirds are unfamiliar and more than half don't want to explore.**
- Those who are interested fall into two groups:
 - Environmentally Conscious
 - 22% want a green funeral because of their commitment to environmental issues.
 - Cost Conscious
 - 15% are interested because there is a likely a cost savings.
 - Respondents age 20-39 are more likely to pursue a green funeral because of the environmental impact (34%).
- **Pet Memorializations have yet to become a familiar experience. Two-thirds are unfamiliar and more than half don't want to explore.**
- Only 17% are likely to pursue a pet memorial service.
- Only 57% are even aware such services exist.