



The present and future of local authority bereavement services

About the State of the Market Survey

- Annual APSE survey of local authority cemeteries and crematoria
- Provides insight into pressures, trends and priorities
- Supports benchmarking and future planning
- Results compared with previous years where possible

Why the survey matters

- Understand the current position of cemeteries and crematoria services
- Identify emerging challenges and opportunities
- Inform local authority decision-making
- Support dialogue across the bereavement services sector

Overview of the survey

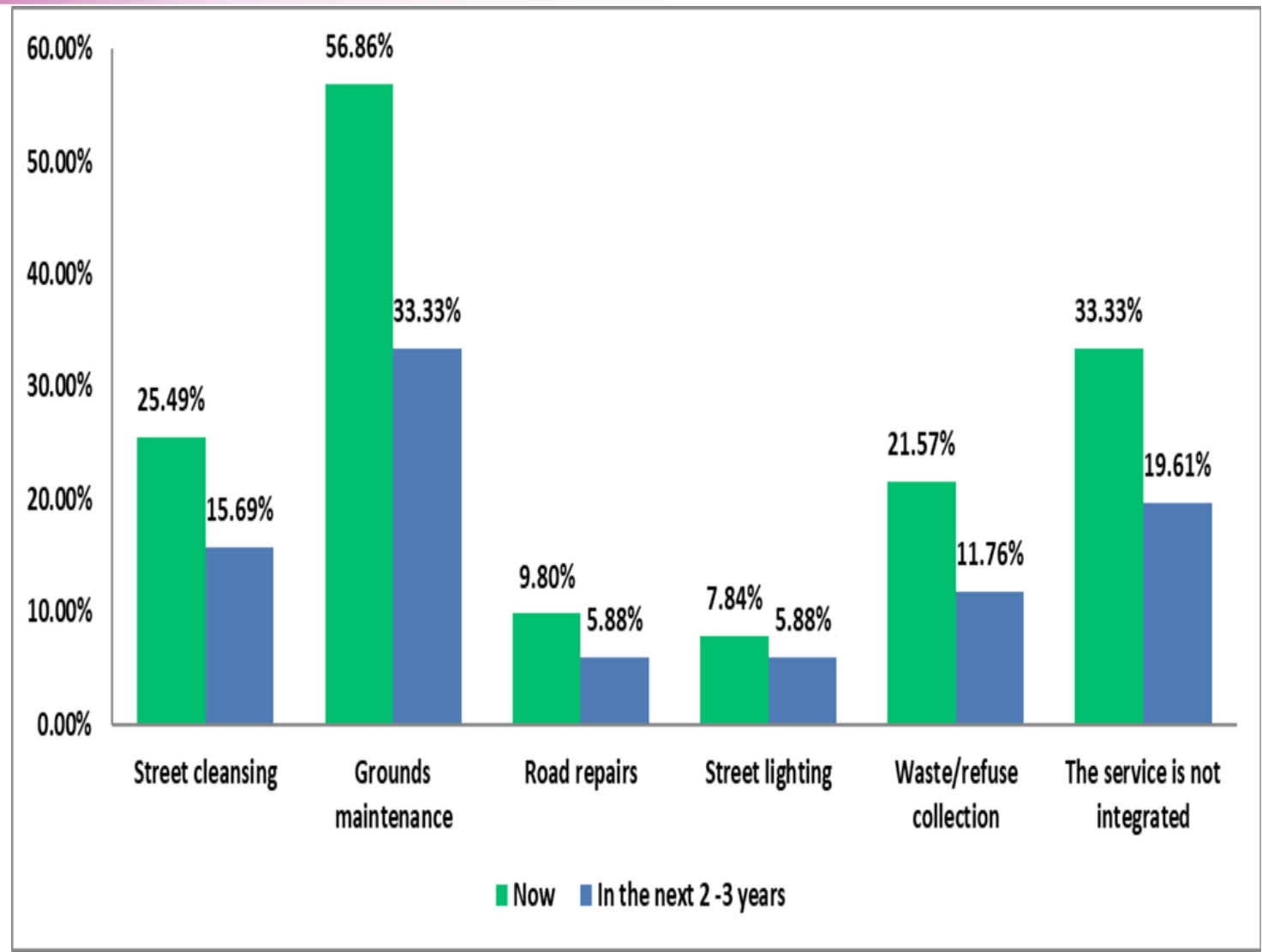
- Online survey: February – April 2026
- Responses from across the UK
- Results provide a robust national snapshot

Service Delivery models

- Predominantly in-house delivery
- Very limited transfer to community management
- Strong expectation that services will remain in-house
- Reflects importance of public accountability and sensitivity

Working with other Council Services

- Most common integration:
 - Grounds maintenance (56.86%)**
 - Street cleansing (25.49%)**
 - Waste & refuse (21.57%)**
- One-third operate as a standalone service
- Approaches vary by local context



Social Priorities



Funeral Poverty

Cost of a simple attended funeral:

- £1,835 (2004)
- £3,828 (2026)

Local authorities increasingly supporting

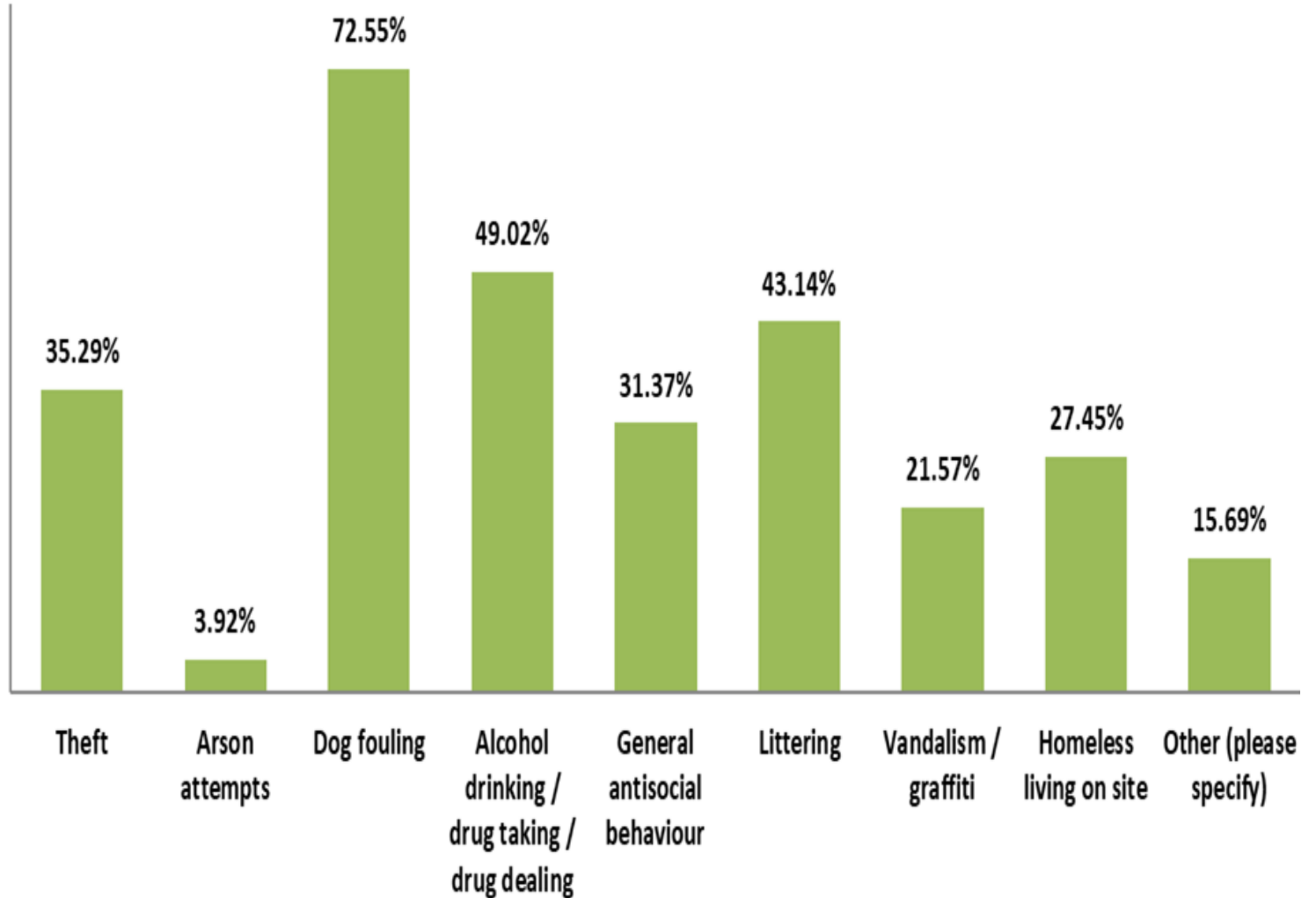
- Affordability
- Inclusive provision
- Vulnerable families

Anti-Social Behaviour

- 81.82% report low-level ASB
- 9.09% report high-level issues

Most common problems:

- Dog fouling
- Alcohol and drug use
- Littering



A Service Under Financial Strain

- 63.64% agree services are disproportionately affected by funding cuts
- 90.91% agree lack of investment impacts quality
- Shift from manicured to naturalised grounds
- Clear limits on reliance on volunteers

Revenue and Capital Expectations

Revenue budgets:

Nearly half expect a reduction

Capital budgets:

Slight increase in expected investment

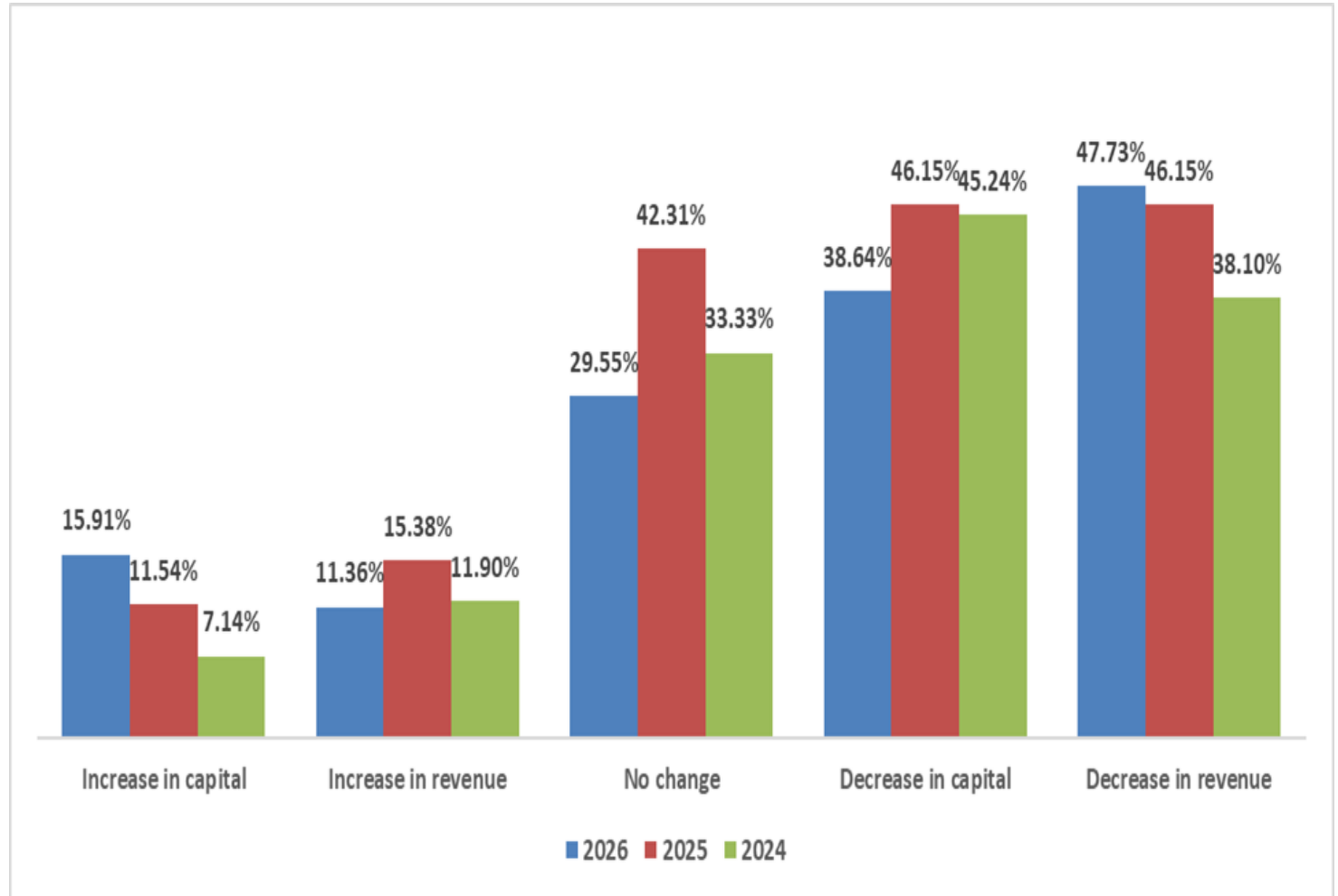
Drivers include:

Compliance

Modernisation

Burial capacity

Competition with private providers

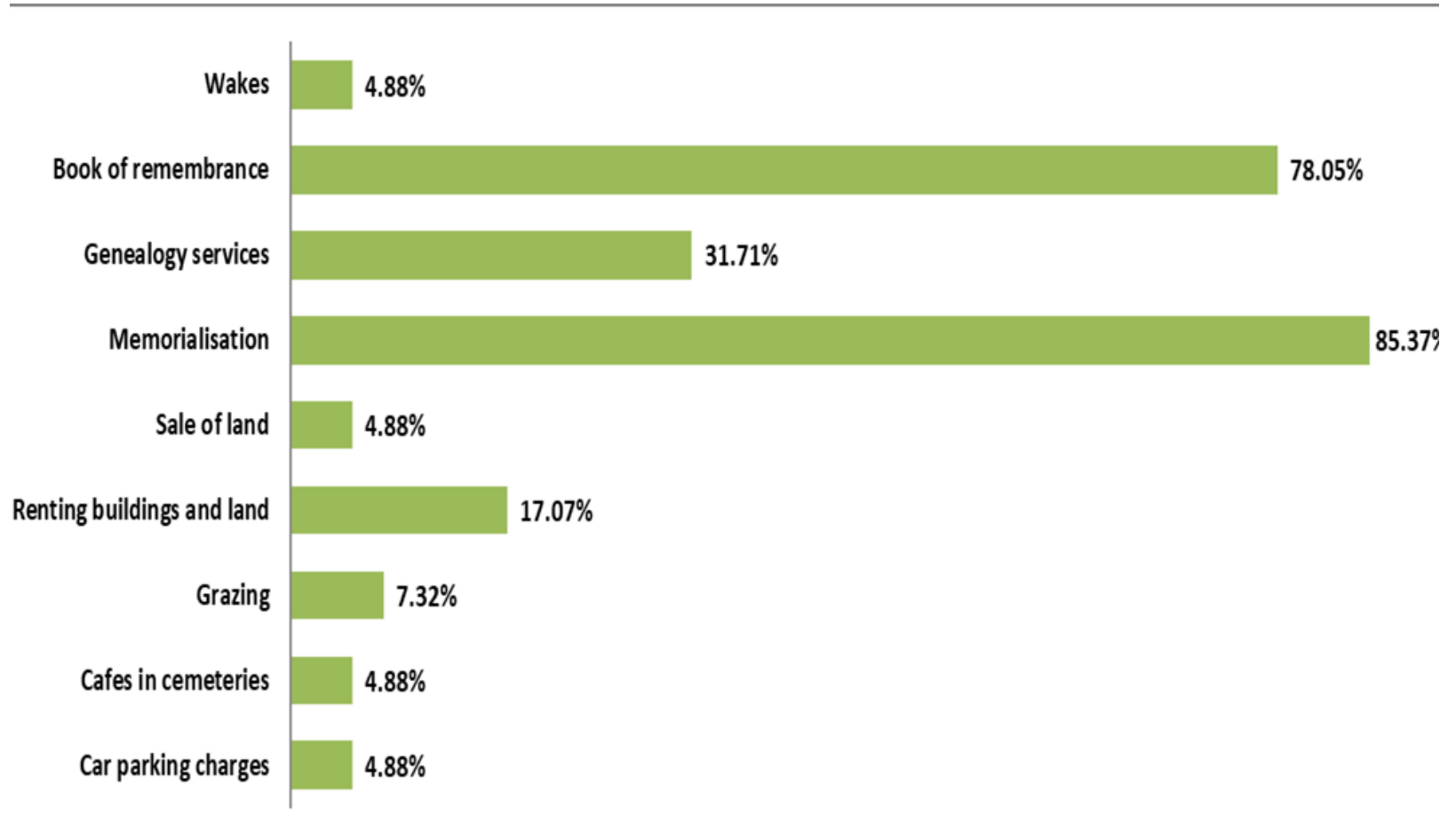


Beyond Burial and Cremation Fees

Main income streams:

- Memorialisation (85.37%)
- Books of remembrance (78.05%)
- Genealogy services (31.71%)

Most councils **do not trade externally**



Fees and Charges

- Fee increases expected in:
 - Burials
 - Cremations
 - Memorialisation
- No respondents expect charges to stay the same
- Balancing affordability with financial sustainability

Staffing Pressures

- Around 30% perceive staff absence above average
- Overall absence levels remain manageable
- 66.67% expect training budgets to remain the same
- Continued emphasis on skills and compliance

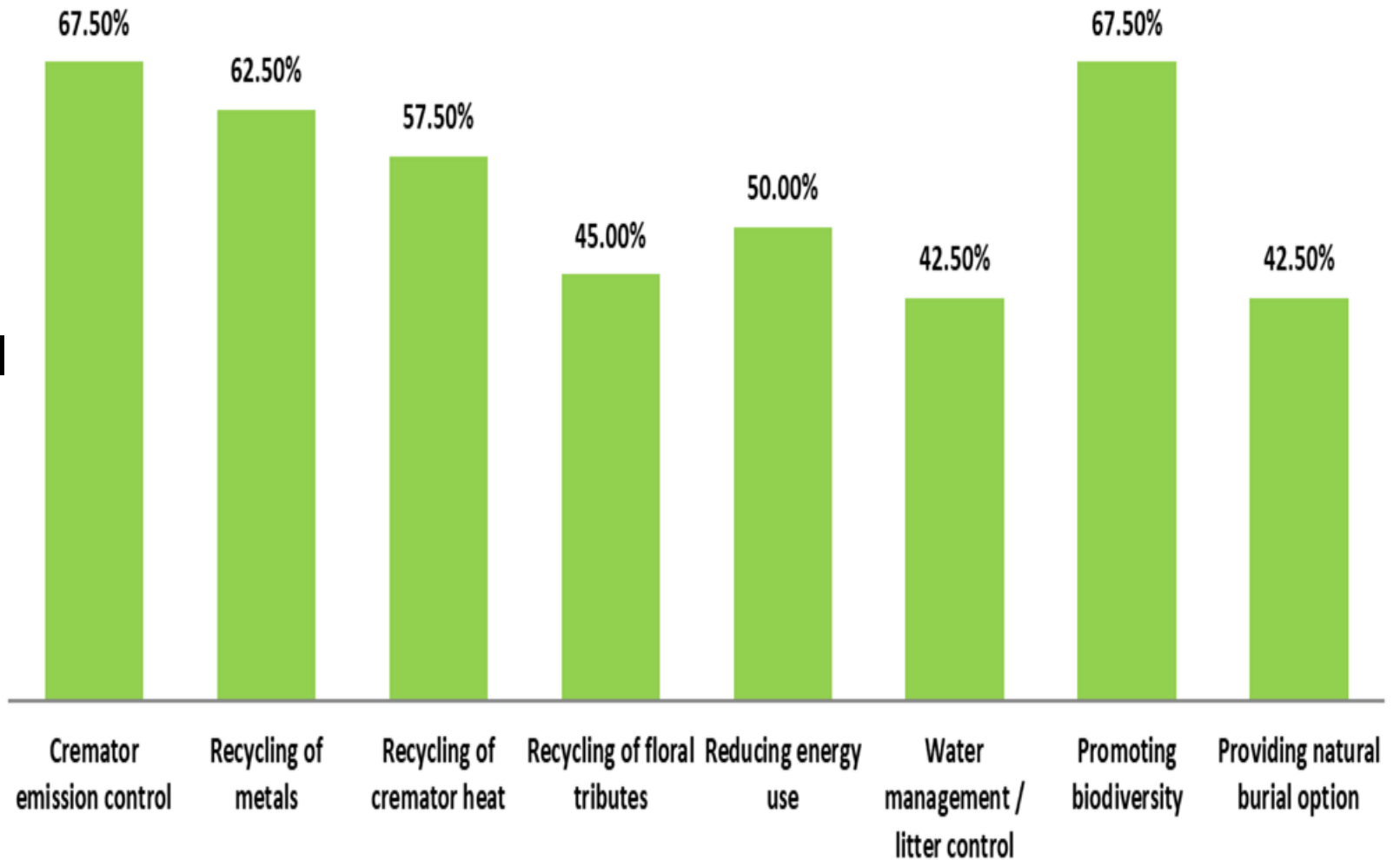
Friends Groups and Volunteers

- Around 65% report community involvement unchanged
- 25% report increased involvement
- Friends Groups support:
 - Maintenance
 - Community engagement
 - Guided walks and events

Environmental Priorities

Joint top priorities:

- Cremator emissions control (67.5%)
- Biodiversity (67.5%)
- Metal recycling (62.5%)



Future Focus

Expected growth

- New cemetery development
- Capital projects
- Community engagement

Expected reductions

- Grounds maintenance frequency
- Bedding and floral displays

Overall conclusions

- Continued pressure on services
- Strong commitment to in-house delivery
- Social value central to service design
- Investment, skills and sustainability remain critical
- Services continue to deliver with **professionalism and compassion**



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