

Mindsets of Maine

2022



What do Mainers really think about your Maine-based business?

We can tell you.

Last year Sutherland Weston commissioned proprietary research from nationally renowned audience segmentation research firm, AudienceAudit, in order to better understand Maine residents' attitudes about living, working, and playing in our state.

The results are fascinating. And not what we expected. The data collected is eye-opening and helps us make better marketing decisions for our clients every day. We've learned more about:

- How Mainers feel about our state,
- The benefits and shortcomings they associate with living here,
- Their attitudes towards Maine-based businesses.

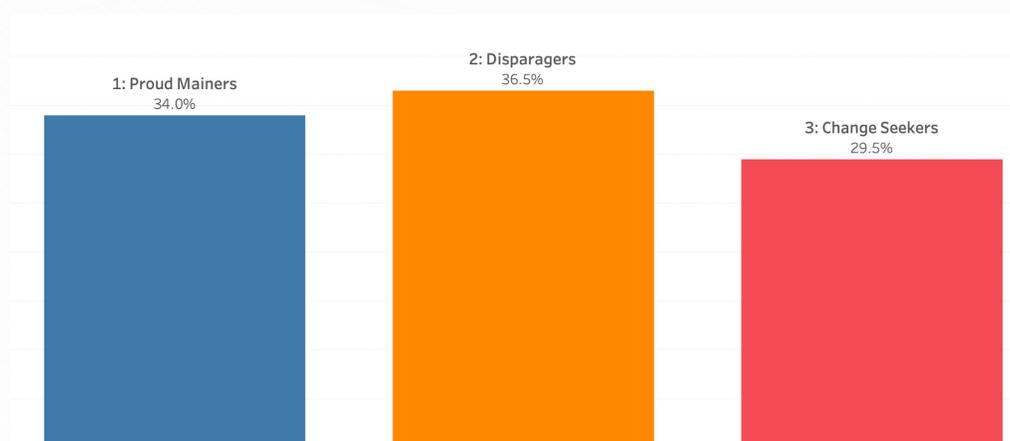
Research Overview

In 2021, Sutherland Weston embarked on an initiative to gain insight into how Maine residents feel about their state, the benefits and shortcomings they associate with living there, and their attitudes towards businesses that claim to be "Maine-based".

The agency partnered with Audience Audit Inc. to design and field a custom quantitative attitudinal segmentation study of adult Maine residents.

Attitudinal Segments

The study reveals three distinct segments of Maine residents.



Proud Mainers - 34% of participants

These respondents are significantly more likely to say they are proud to be Maine residents. They cite many features of the state they love, but they also believe that Mainers themselves are a unique breed.

Proud Mainers say Mainers are more independent, tougher, more practical, more connected to each other, more inventive, and more humble than residents of other states.

These respondents make a point of seeking out local companies when making a purchase and feel Maine is a dynamic state well-positioned for the future.

Disparagers - 36.5% of participants

Disparagers could not be more different. They feel Mainers are hesitant to change how they do things and are stuck in the past when it comes to social and cultural topics, and admit they themselves find it difficult to try new things. They also claim Mainers are an “odd bunch”.

They feel that Maine businesses are less tech-savvy than businesses in other states and that most companies don't understand the needs of Maine buyers, who they say tend to buy cheaper products if they can. They are less likely than others to say that Maine is a great place to start and grow a business.

Change Seekers - 29.5% of participants

These respondents are very concerned about environmental issues, saying climate change is being accelerated by human activity. They believe immigrants and others coming to Maine are good for the state. They are fairly pro-Maine, but they don't believe that Maine residents are much different than residents of other states.



Mainers aren't all the same, and don't all share the Proud Mainers' enthusiasm for the state or the belief that its residents are unique. Nearly 37% have substantial complaints about Maine residents being stuck in the past and resistant to change.



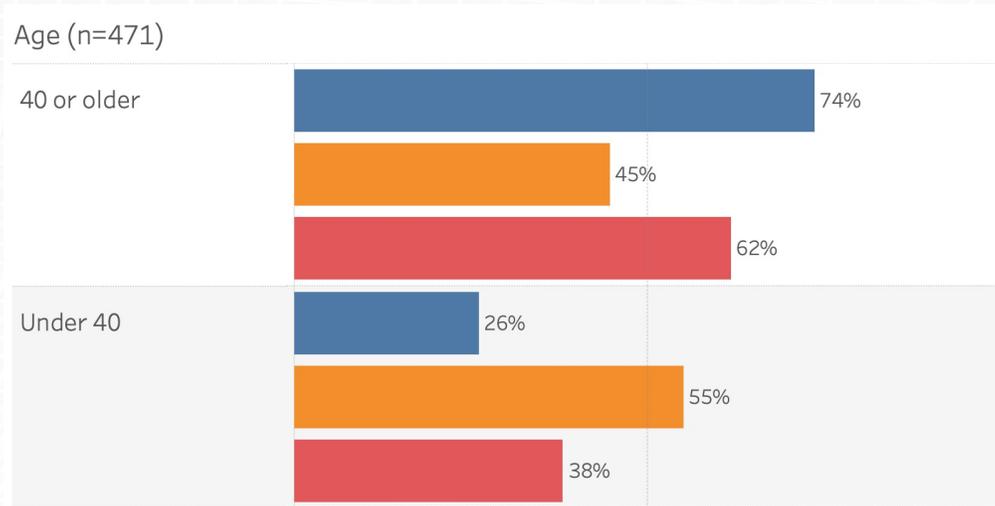
PRO TIP:

Organizations doing business in Maine must recognize that “Mainer-based” marketing approaches may alienate a sizeable group of potential buyers. If you do claim Maine-based status in your messaging, work to ensure potential customers or employees see your business as competitive in the wider world.

Respondent Characteristics

Age

Although all segments can be found in all age groups, Disparagers are significantly more likely to be under 40 than other segments.

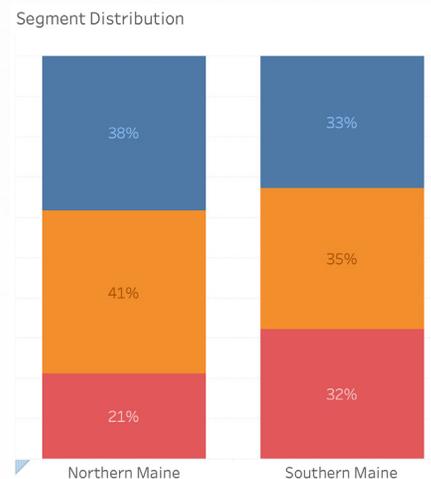
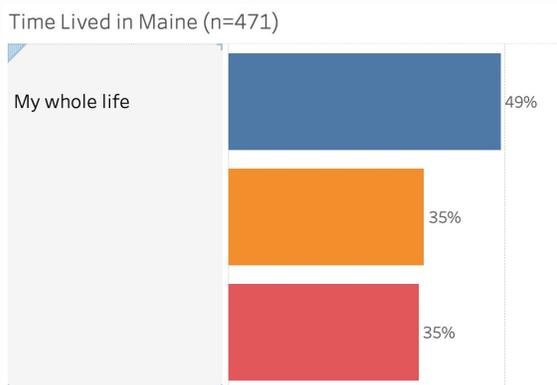


Gender

Fifty-two percent (52%) of respondents are female, and 46% are male. Two percent (2%) indicated a non-binary or third gender. There is no statistically significant difference in gender between the segments.

Time in Maine

Forty percent (40%) of respondents said they've lived in Maine their whole life. Proud Mainers are more likely to have lived in Maine all their life than other groups, at 49%.





While some segments are more prevalent in certain age groups, all are found among respondents of all ages -- making age-based marketing unhelpful if organizations are working to build connections to prospects based on their attitudes about Maine.

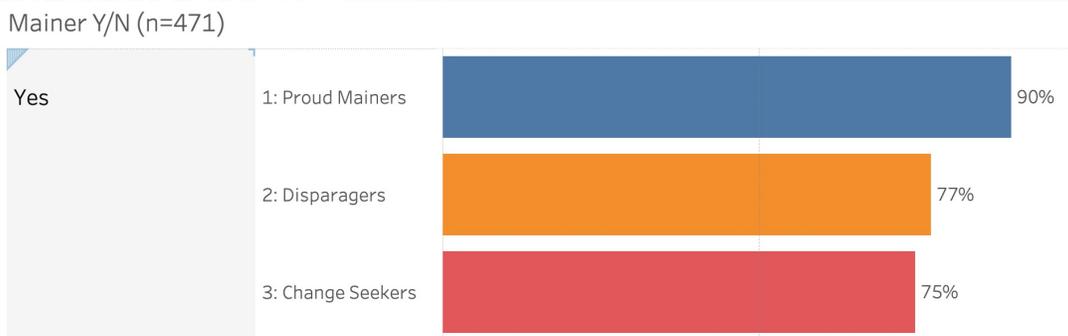


PRO TIP:

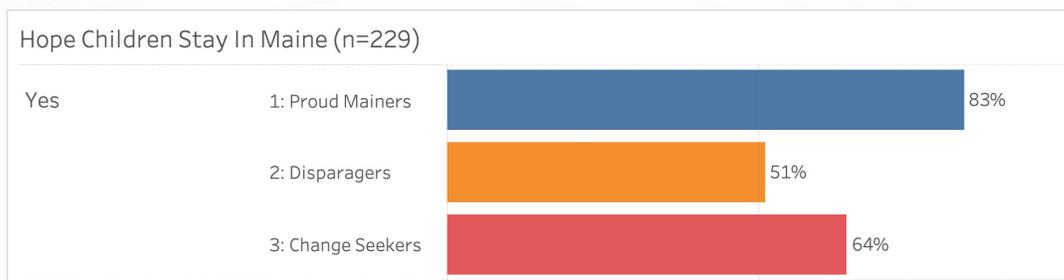
Instead of demographics, organizations should resonate with prospects' feelings about Maine or leave state residence out of their marketing.

Being a “Mainer”

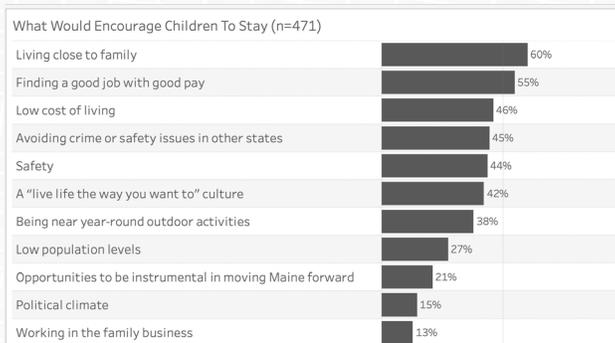
Proud Mainers are more likely to identify as a “Mainer” than other groups, although 81% of respondents say they identify with this label.



Proud Mainers are far more likely to say they hope their children choose to stay in Maine as adults. Eighteen percent (18%) of Disparagers hope their children DON'T remain in Maine.



Those who hope their children stay in Maine believe living close to family and finding a good job would be most likely to encourage their children to stay. The low cost of living and low crime rate are also commonly cited.

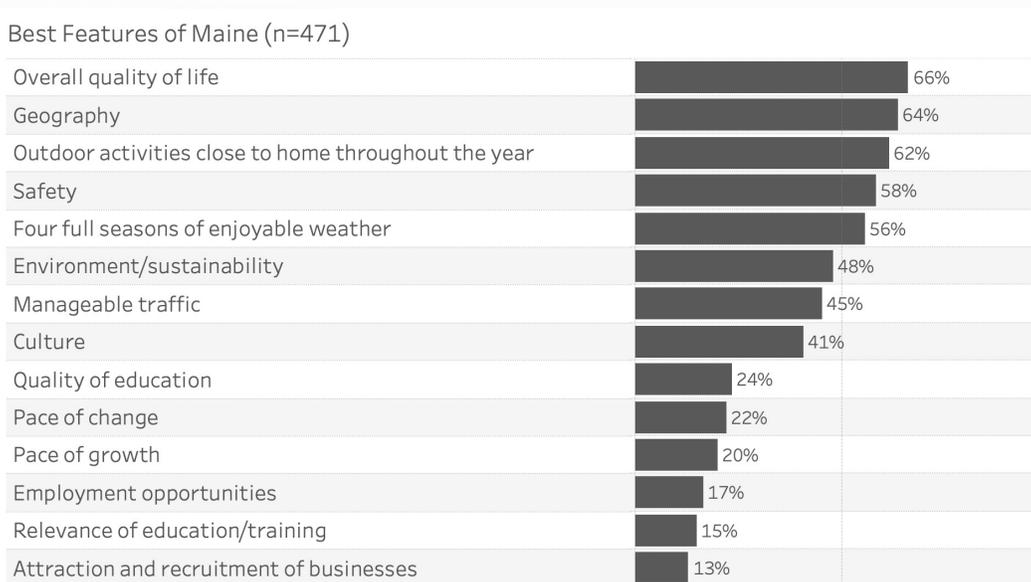


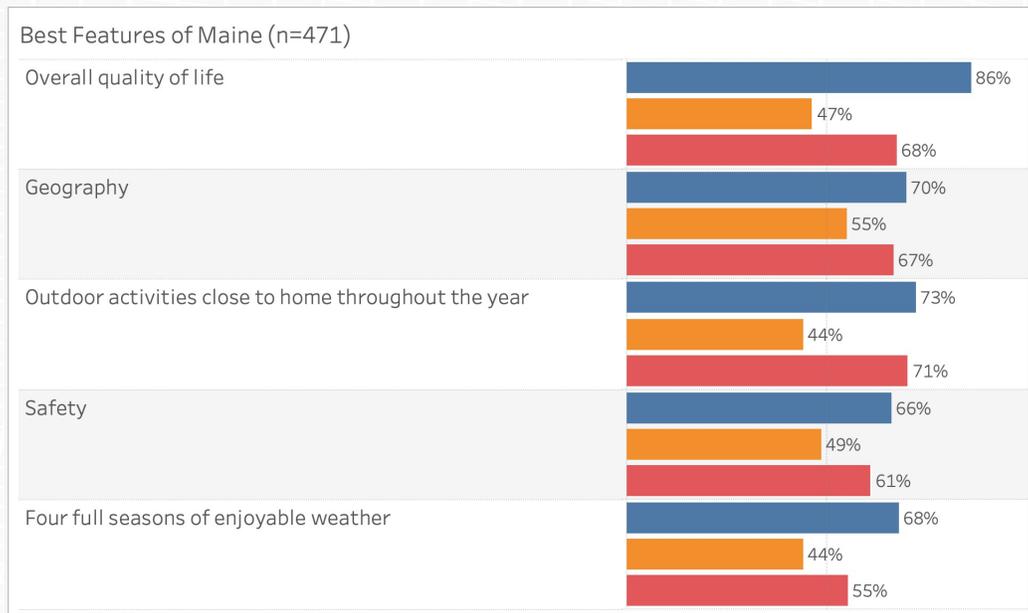
Being referred to as "Mainers" is generally acceptable to large groups of our Maine residents. And while a majority of respondents want their children to stay in Maine, the importance of a good job is viewed as key.

Respondent Characteristics

Best Features

Overall, quality of life is the feature most often cited as one of Maine's best. Proud Mainers are significantly more likely to cite this feature than either Change Seekers or Disparagers.

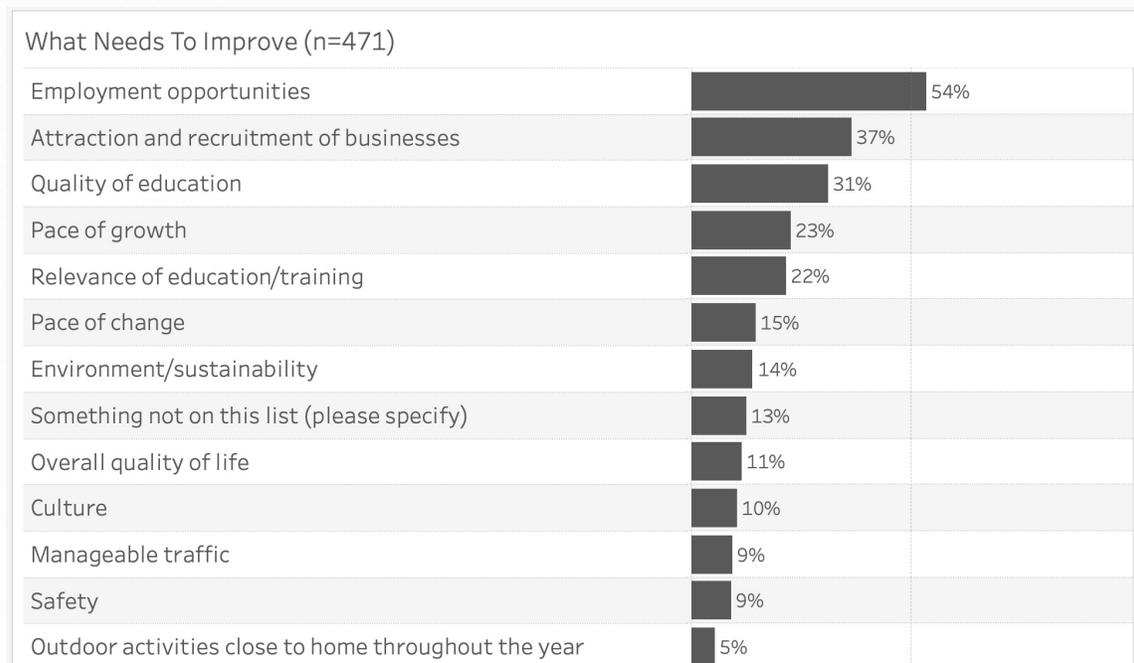




Change Seekers are equally as likely as Proud Mainers to cite outdoor activities close to home throughout the year and environment/sustainability as key features of the state.

Opportunities for Improvement

Fifty-four percent (54%) of respondents say employment opportunities in the state need to improve. Business recruitment and the quality of education are also cited by substantial portions of our respondents.



While Disparagers are often more likely than either Proud Mainers or Change Seekers to identify opportunities on the list, all three segments cited employment opportunities in equal proportions -- reflecting that this is a widespread concern regardless of segment.



No other issue garnered the widespread level of concern as a lack of employment opportunities in Maine. A desire for improvement in business recruitment cited by 37% of respondents may be related.

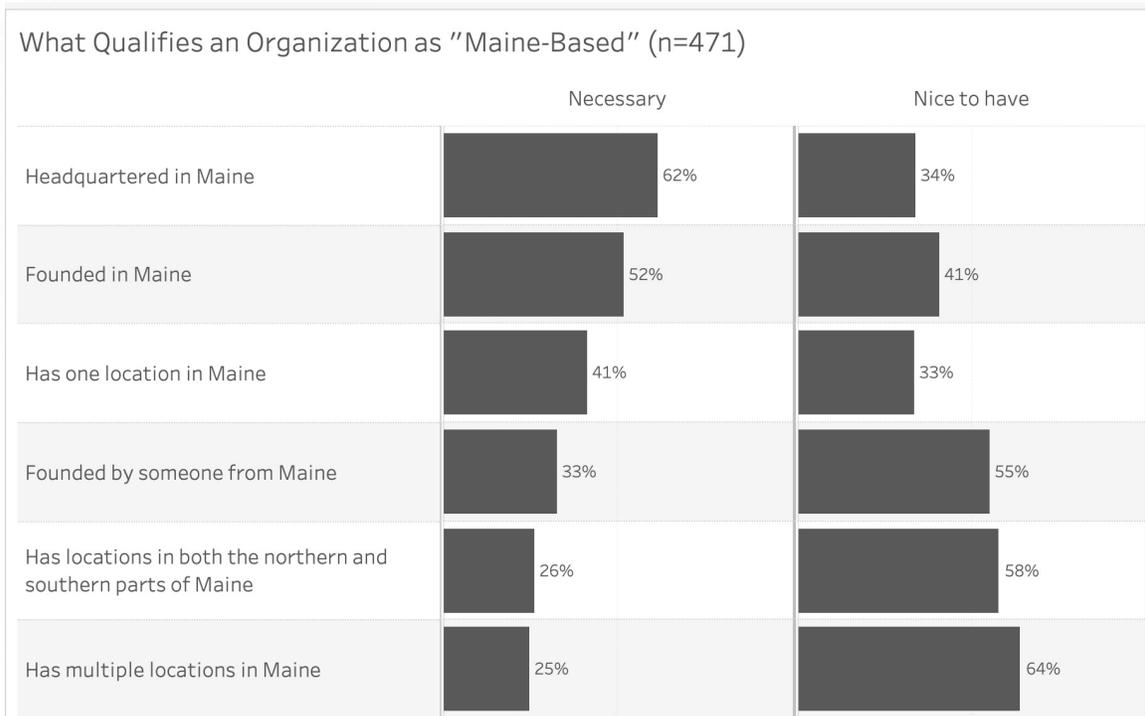


PRO TIP:

Organizations bringing business and employment to Maine should consider prioritizing messaging that reflects their contributions. And businesses looking to hire should recognize that future opportunity is a strong motivator in decision making.

Maine-Based Businesses

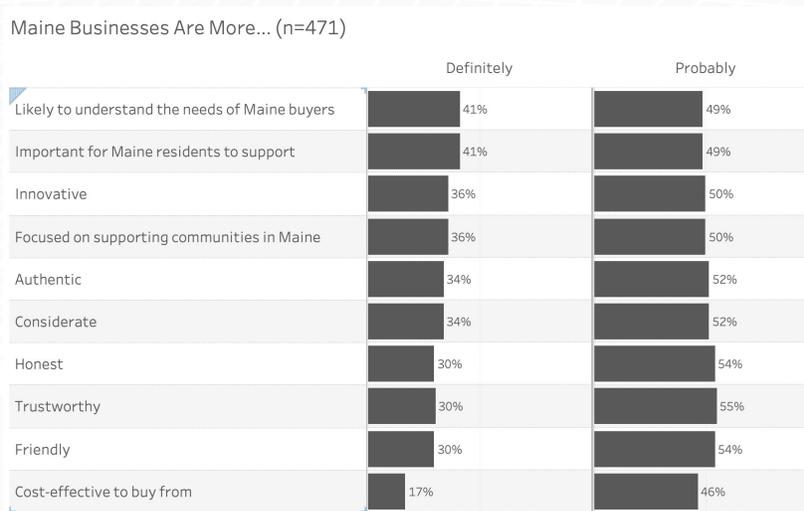
Sixty-two percent (62%) of respondents say an organization must be headquartered in Maine to qualify as “Maine-based”. Fifty-two percent (52%) say that it must be founded in Maine.



A majority of respondents also say that being founded by a Mainer and having multiple locations in the state (preferably both north and south) are, while not required, “nice to have”.

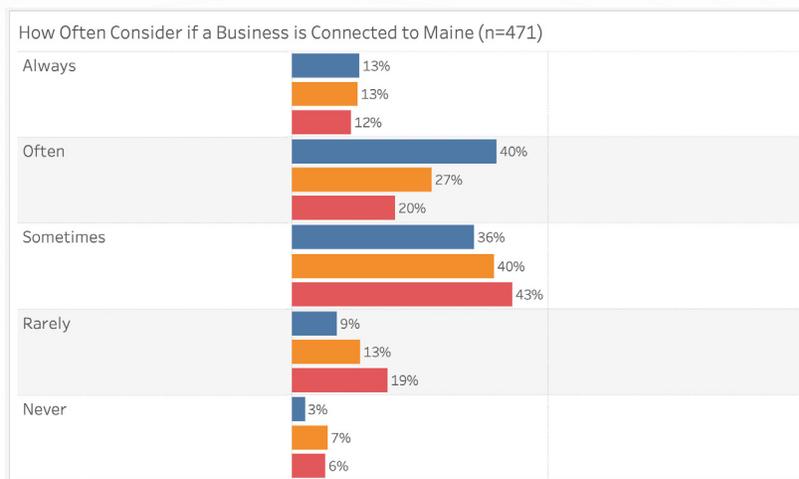
It is clear that respondents reflect a preference for Maine-based businesses. Sizeable percentages say Maine businesses are “definitely” more likely to understand the needs of Maine buyers, are important for Maine residents to support, are innovative, and focused on supporting Maine communities. Nearly all other respondents say Maine businesses are “probably” aligned with these characteristics.

The exception is cost-effectiveness, which only 17% of respondents say is definitely associated with Maine-based businesses.

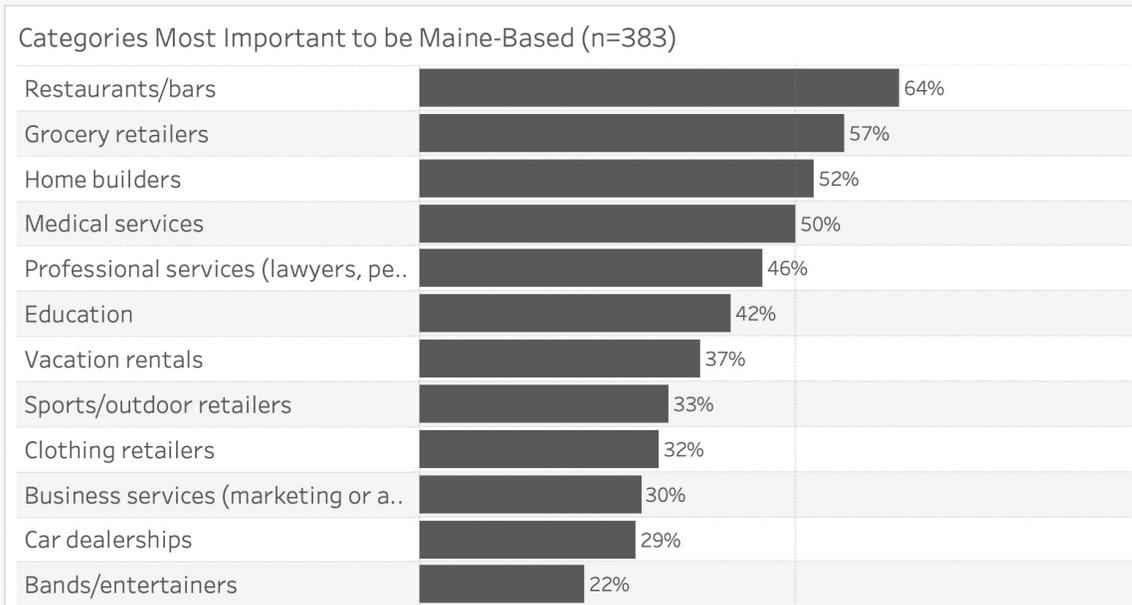


Proud Mainers are consistently more likely to associate positive characteristics with Maine businesses. Disparagers, while less likely, nevertheless say Maine businesses “probably” have these characteristics compared to other businesses.

Forty-three percent (43%) of respondents say they always or often consider whether a company they’re buying from has a connection to Maine. Proud Mainers are more likely than other segments to do so often.



The categories in which Mainers feel it's more important for organizations to be Maine-based are restaurants or bars, grocery retailers, home builders, and medical services. Forty-six percent (46%) also say it's important for professional service firms, although only 30% for business services.



Respondents like Maine-based businesses and associate many positive attributes with them.

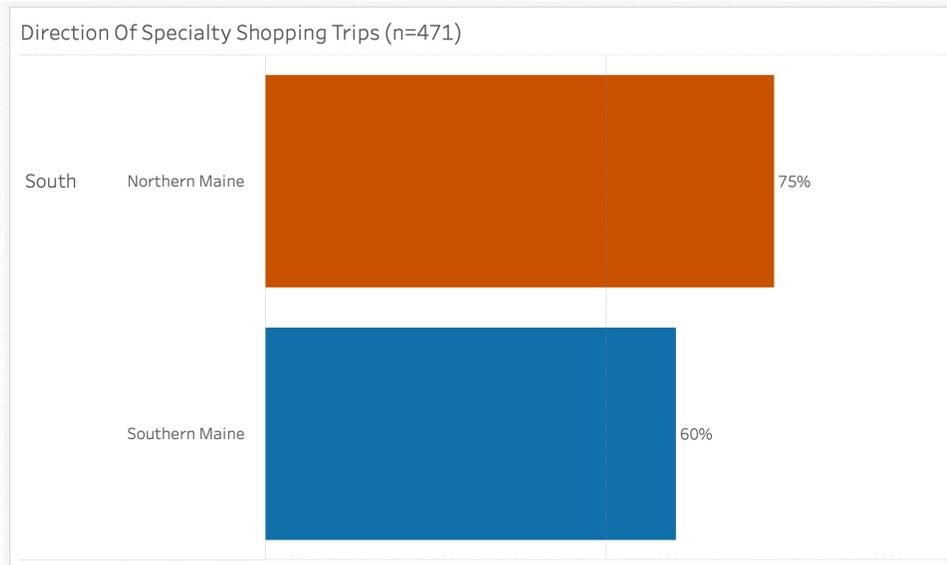


PRO TIP:

If your organization meets the respondents' bar for being "Maine-based", share it proudly!

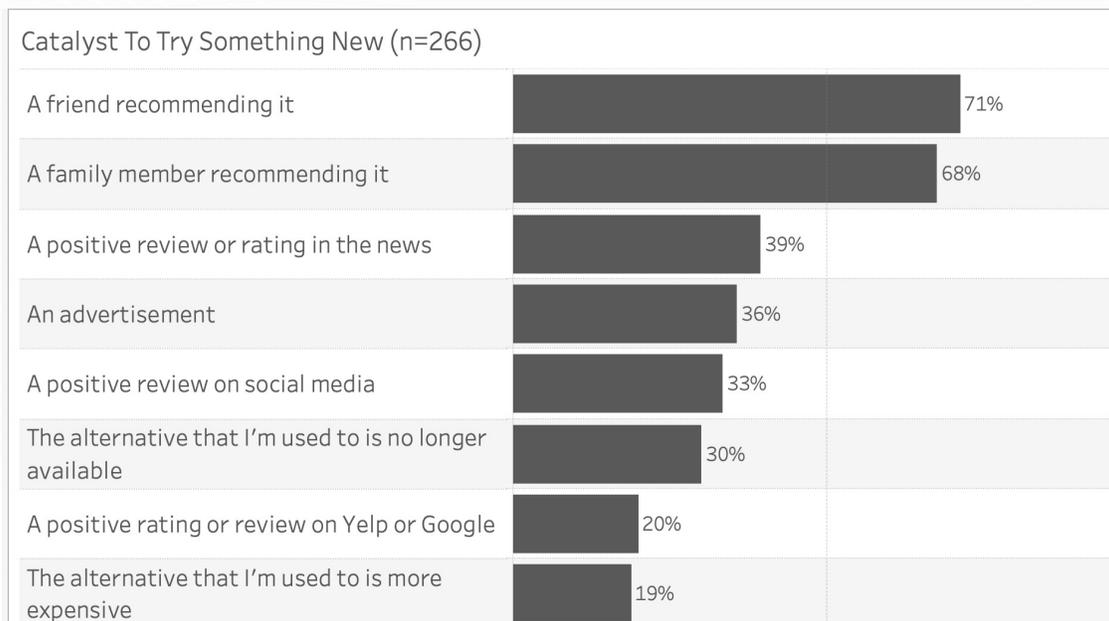
Shopping Behavior

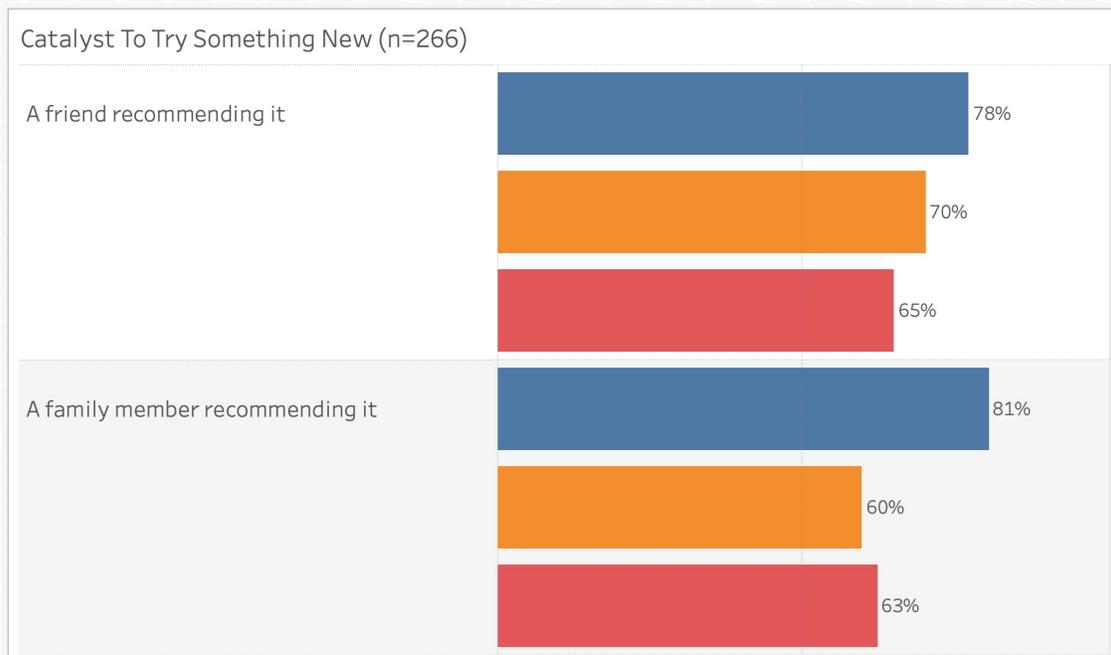
Regardless of whether respondents live in Northern or Southern Maine, the majority say they'd drive south to buy something they can't get in nearby stores.



A smaller number -- 48% overall -- say they'd be very likely to drive in the opposite direction than they normally would if a retailer in that direction had what they were looking for.

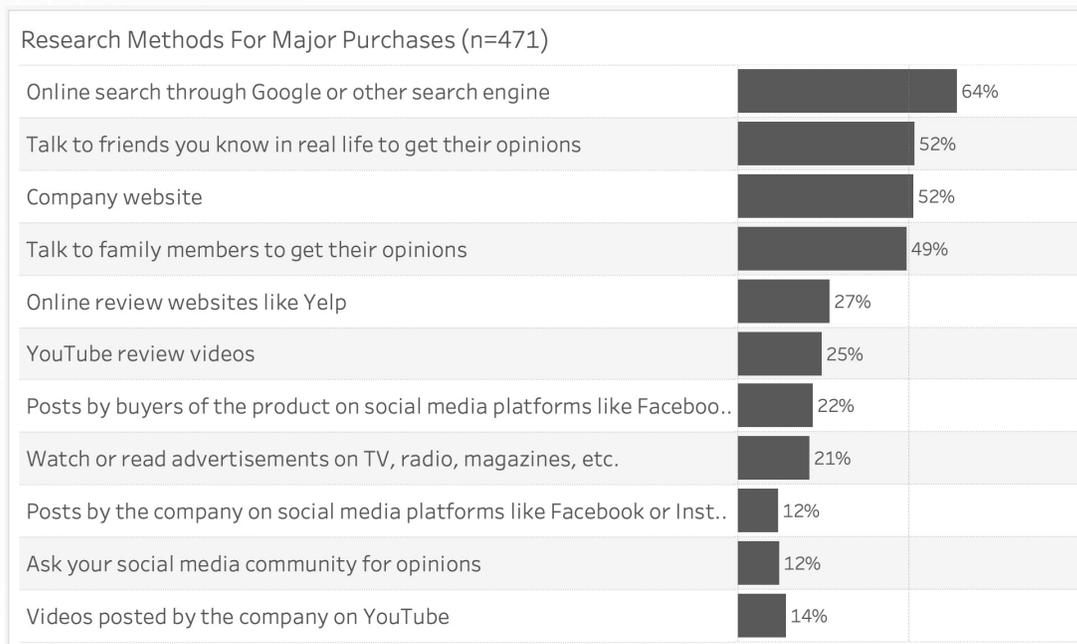
Family and friends were cited as the most common reason for trying something new -- especially for Proud Mainers.





When researching a major purchase, most respondents say they would conduct an online search, talk to friends they know in real life, and look at company websites. Only 12% say they would ask their social media community for opinions.

Online search is also the step most respondents say they would do first.



Fifty-two percent (52%) of respondents say the research large purchases using company websites. Price is by far the information most often-cited as most important.



The biggest frustration with company websites are a lack of pricing information or information being incomplete or out of date.



Word of mouth and recommendations from people consumers know in real life are the most powerful motivators to make a purchase. But a lack of visibility on search engines or a lack of current and relevant information on a website can mean your organization is eliminated from consideration.

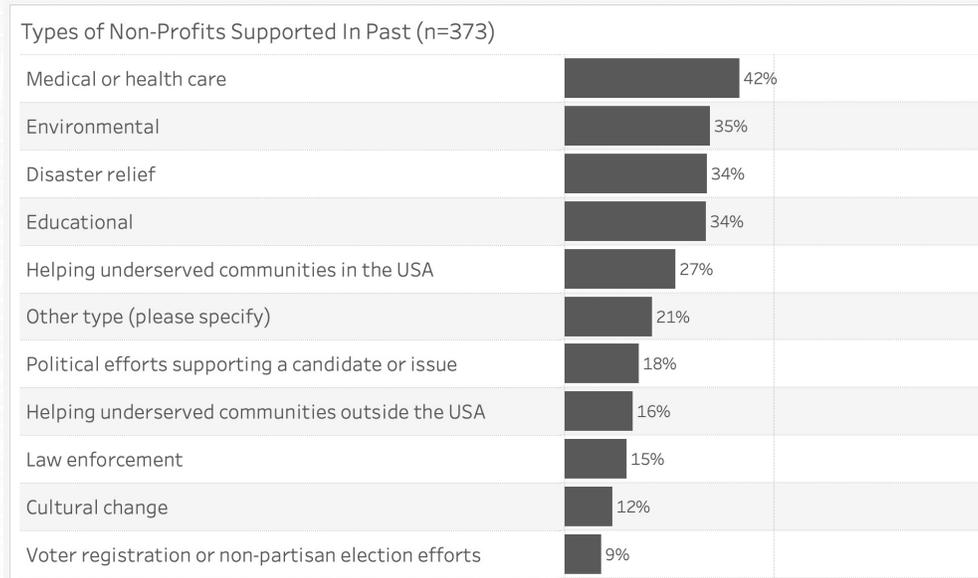


PRO TIP:

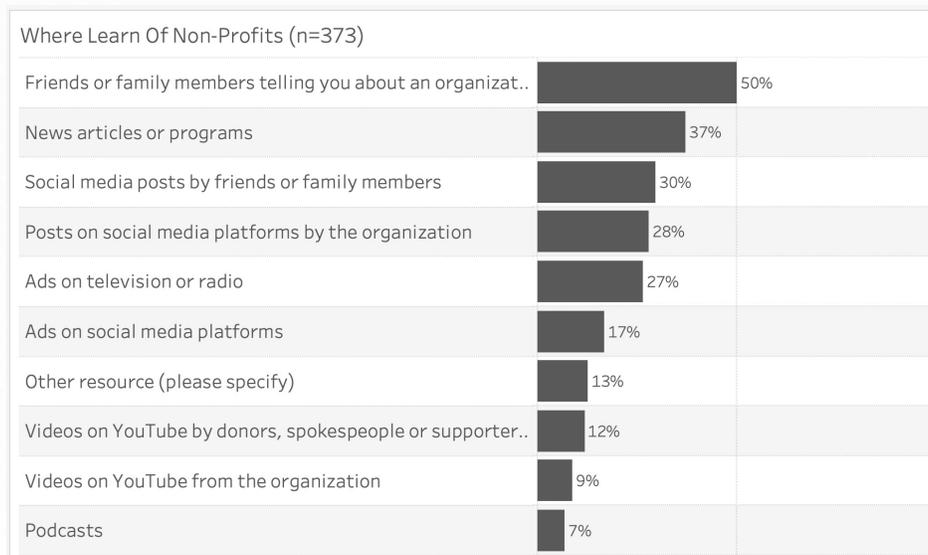
By keeping your website authentic, optimized, up to date, and transparent in your business practices like pricing, values, and contact information, you can effectively reach and connect with all three groups: Proud Mainers, Disparagers, and Change-Seekers.

Non-Profit Donations

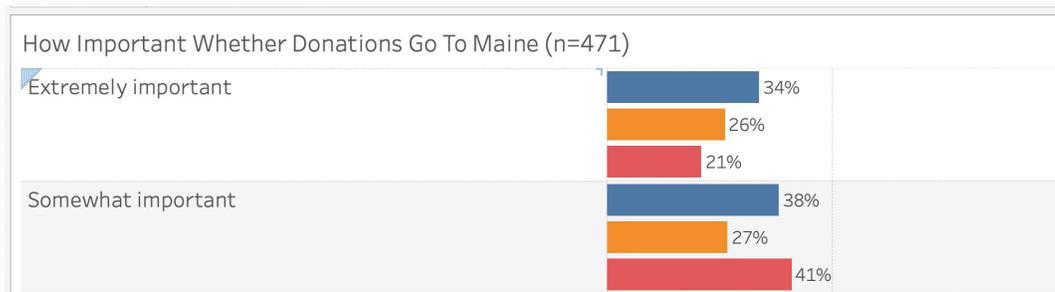
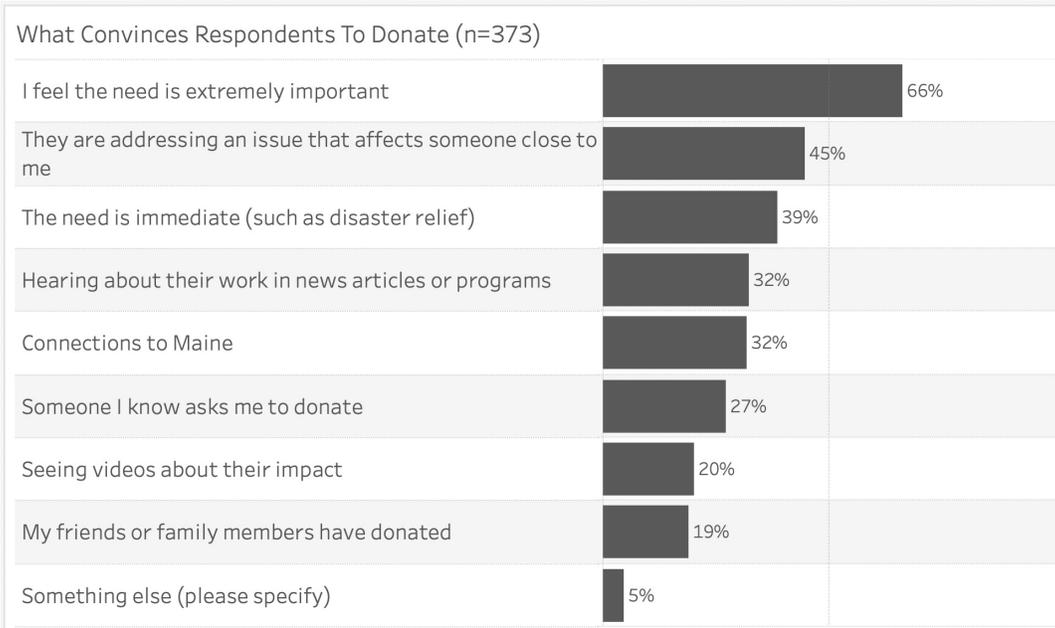
Mainers are a generous group: 79% of our respondents say they have donated to a non-profit organization. Medical, environmental, disaster relief, and educational organizations are the most likely to have been supported by respondents.



Respondents are more likely to say they learned of non-profit organizations through friends or family members.



Most respondents say they donate due to what they consider an extremely important need. Only 32% say they do so because of an organization’s connections to Maine. But 62% do say that whether the organization they’re donating to is Maine-based is at least somewhat important -- and 72% of Proud Mainers say so.



As they do with purchases, consumers look to people they know when considering non-profit donations. Word of mouth is critical for these organizations, and being Maine-based doesn't hurt but isn't the most important factor for most respondents.

What comes next?

Here at Sutherland Weston, we are using this knowledge to develop real-world insights about how to best reach Maine residents. We then use those insights to help our clients plan their marketing strategies, and to make real-time decisions about recruitment, sales, and marketing.

If you are interested in talking with us about your recruitment, marketing, or sales goals and how this study may help your business or organization make better decisions, please reach out and one of us would be happy to talk.



esutherland@sutherlandweston.com



cary@sutherlandweston.com

Audience Audit was founded in 2009 to give small and mid-sized agencies access to world-class quantitative audience insights. We help organizations harness the power of custom attitudinal segmentation to radically reshape their understanding of their best audiences, and to help their agencies use that information to develop transformative marketing programs.



207-945-9999
sutherlandweston.com

audienceaudit

<https://audienceaudit.com>