



senior living dining post-covid: an industry staffing survey

 **SENIOR HOUSING NEWS**

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opportunity in the face of adversity

COVID-19 transformed not only operations, but also the hiring climate for senior living dining staff, leaving owners and operators short-staffed and struggling to fill open positions.

But in spite of these difficult circumstances, senior living organizations have been able to identify new opportunities in dining technology, safety and performance that will help them stay competitive in the post-COVID landscape.

From Aug. 5, 2021 to Aug. 30, 2021, Senior Housing News conducted a survey in partnership with Sodexo Seniors to find out more about the current state of staffing in senior living dining, and the tactics organizations are using to deliver on safety, efficiency and resident experience, during a time of limited resources.

SHN is pleased to present these survey results in hopes that they will help you strengthen your dining program and staff as we move toward a post-COVID world.



— **Tim Mullaney**
Editor
Senior Housing News





executive summary

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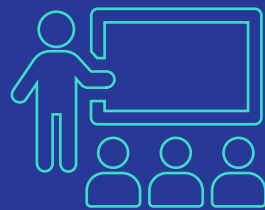
Results show the views of 110 senior housing and care professionals polled about their thoughts on senior living dining and staffing in the wake of the global pandemic. The survey, conducted online between Aug. 5 and Aug. 30, 2021, asked about how companies are:

- Utilizing training to overcome hiring fallout
- Investing in technology to improve dining safety, experience and staff performance
- Preparing to attract talent in an increasingly competitive hiring landscape

All respondents identified as working for organizations that provide senior housing and care. Among them, 41% reported working for organizations with between 1 and 101 residents; 29% come from organizations with 101-300 residents; and the remaining 16% come from larger organizations. In addition, participants also represented organizations that offer a wide range of care types, with the top 3 being Assisted Living (85%), Independent Living (77%) and Memory Care (75%). Responses also included 55+, 65+, Skilled Nursing and Rehab / Post Acute.

Job titles varied among respondents with 28% identifying as C-level executive or owner; 15% as VP or director; and 56% in marketing, sales, operations or other roles.

Key Takeaways



Senior living organizations are overcoming the fallout of today's hiring challenges by training staff. Nearly 65% of respondents reported an increase in dining staff training frequency as a result of the pandemic, a majority of which are now conducting more than half or all of their training virtually.



The pandemic brought technology investments to the forefront for senior living organizations. Digital menu boards, online / mobile ordering, and technology to improve labor and resource productivity are the top technology investments in 2021, among others.



Hiring dining staff has been, and will continue to be a pain point for senior living organizations into 2022. The majority of respondents reported that hiring dining staff was difficult in the first half of 2021, and an overwhelming 91% of them anticipate continued or greater difficulties moving forward.

training on the rise

Nearly 65% of respondents reported an increase in dining staff training frequency as a result of the pandemic.

How has your dining staff training frequency changed as a result of the pandemic?



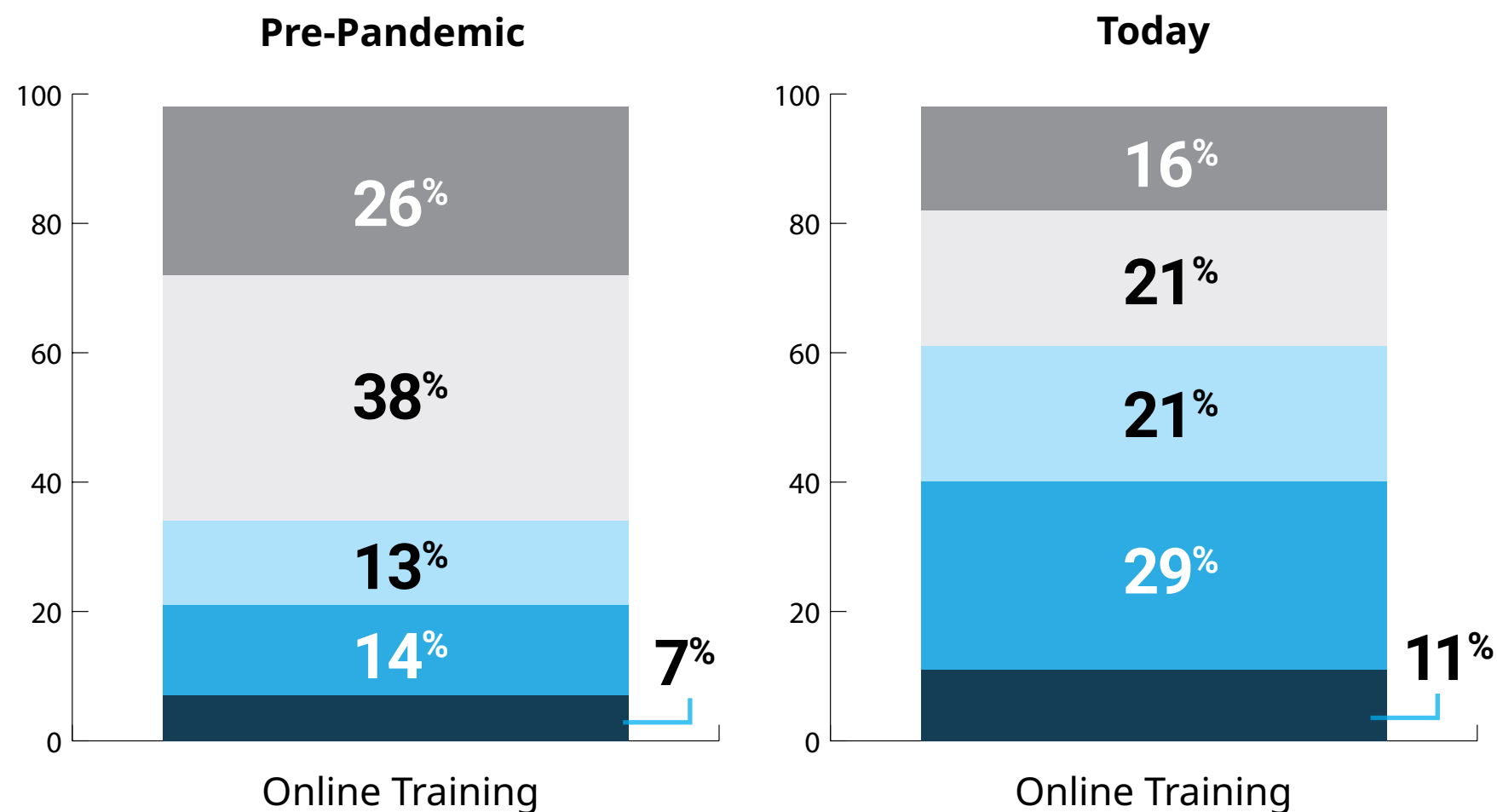
65% – Training frequency has increased as a result of the pandemic

15% – Training frequency has decreased as a result of the pandemic

20% – Training frequency has not changed as a result of the pandemic

Online training has nearly doubled as a result of the pandemic, with roughly 40% of respondents conducting more than half or all of their dining training virtually. In-person training has decreased by 16% among the same categories.

Please describe your organization's approach to dining training pre-pandemic versus today:



Legend

All

More Than Half

Half

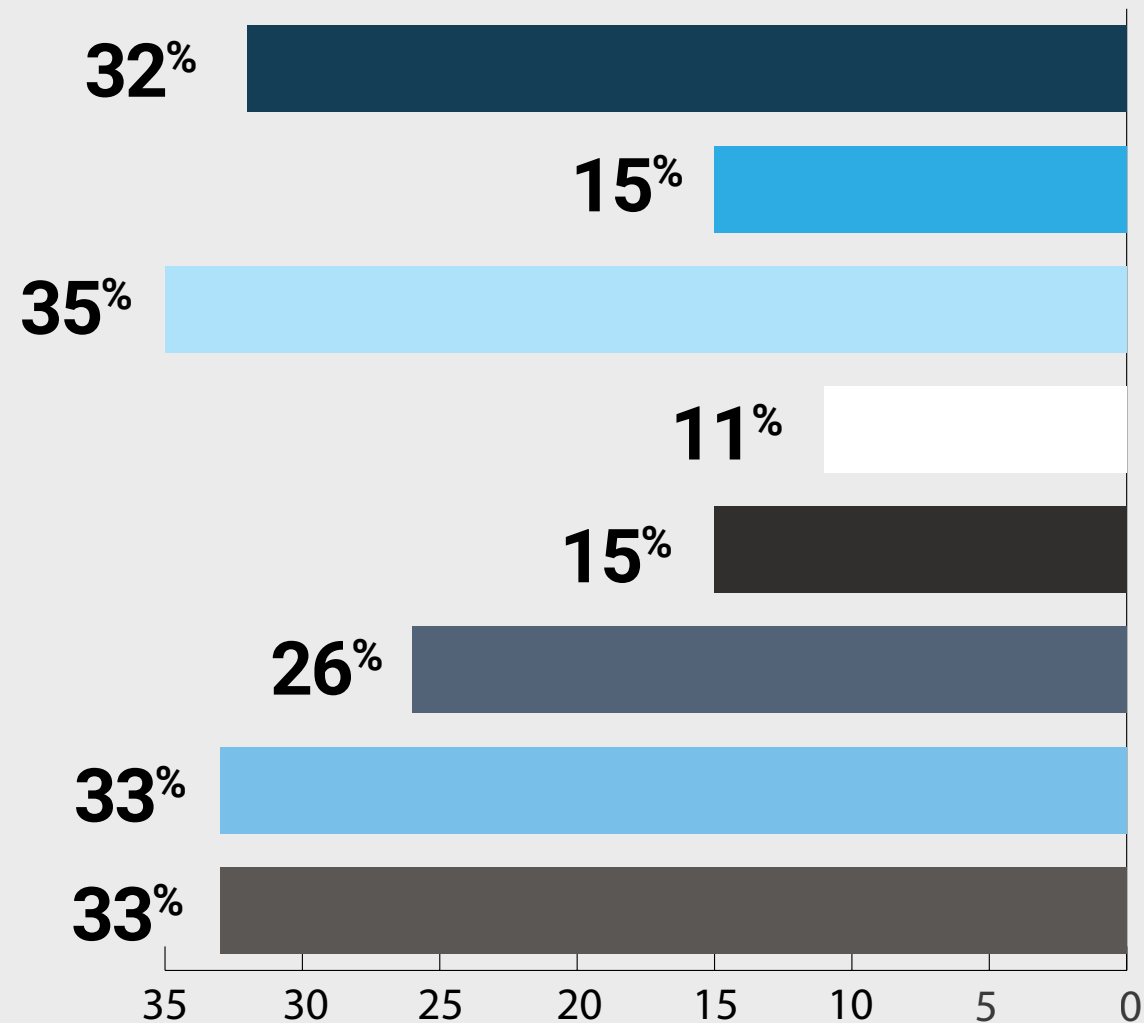
Less Than Half

None

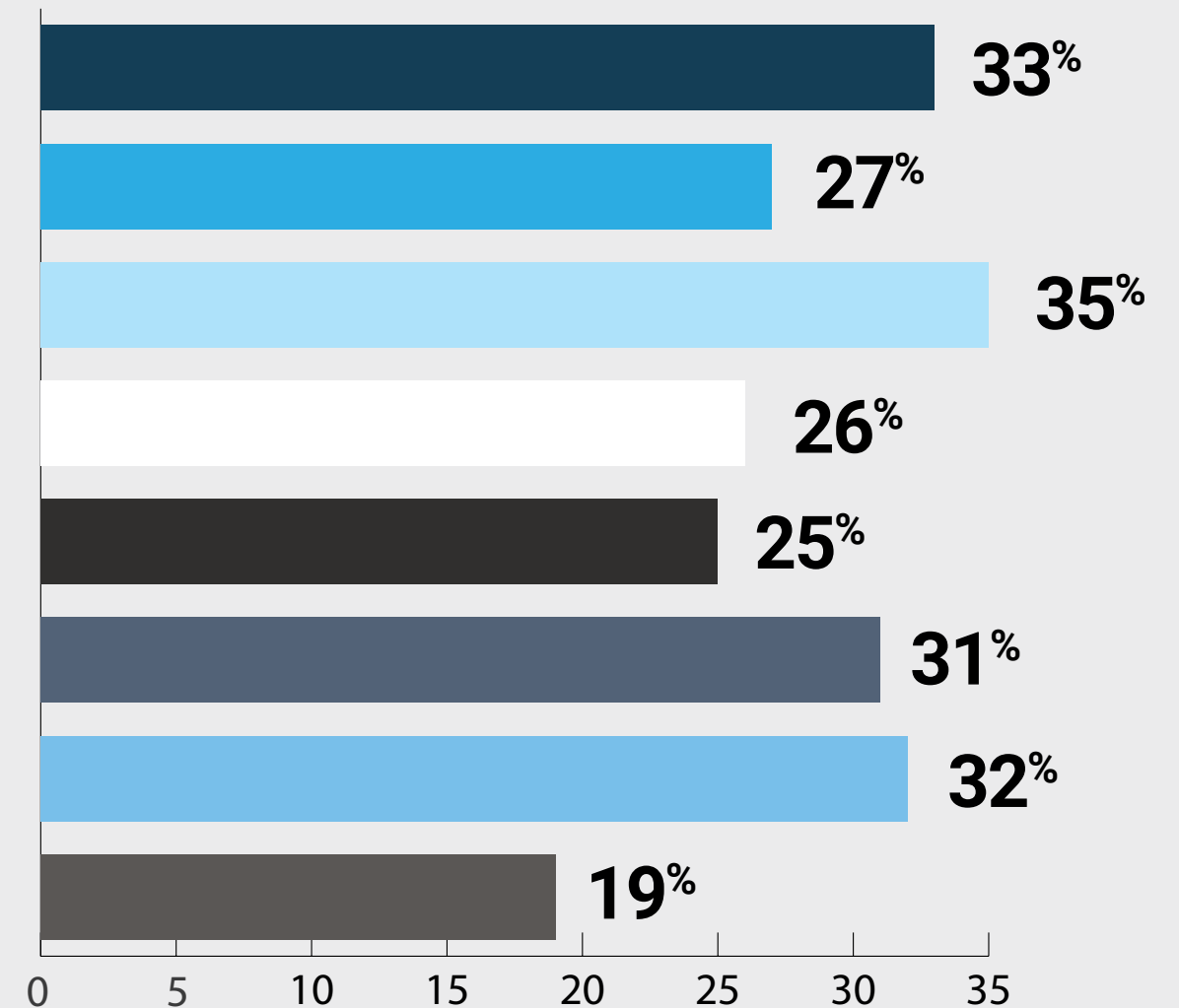
tech investments

Respondents' current and future tech priorities

What dining technology investments have you already made in your community?



What dining technology investments are you interested in making in the future?

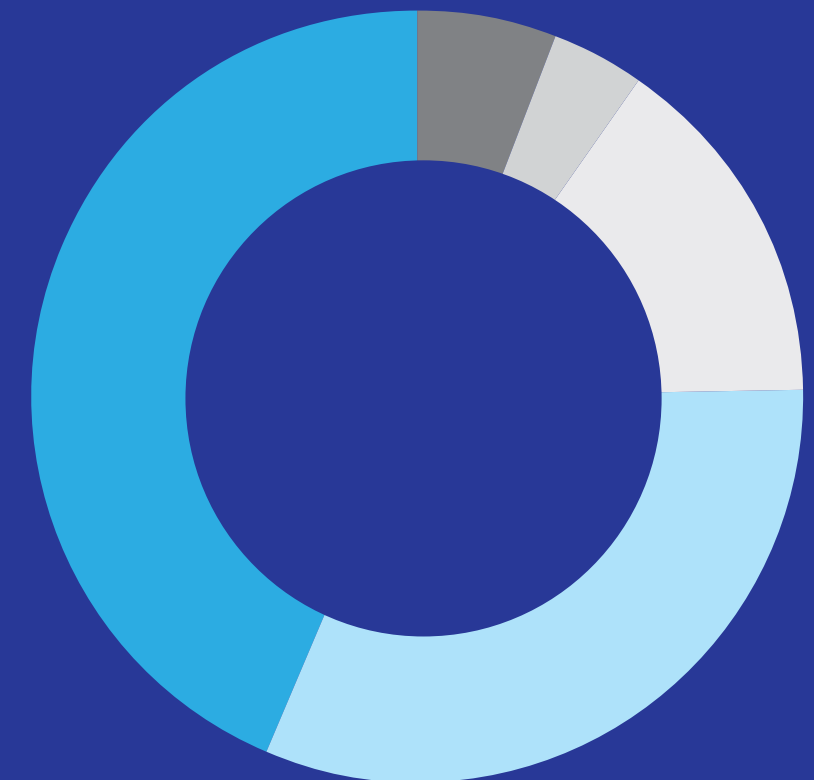




staffing shortages

Dining staffing shortages were a major pain point for senior living organizations in the first half of 2021, with roughly 43% of respondents reporting that hiring dining staff was much harder than in 2020.

In the first half of 2021, hiring for dining staff was:

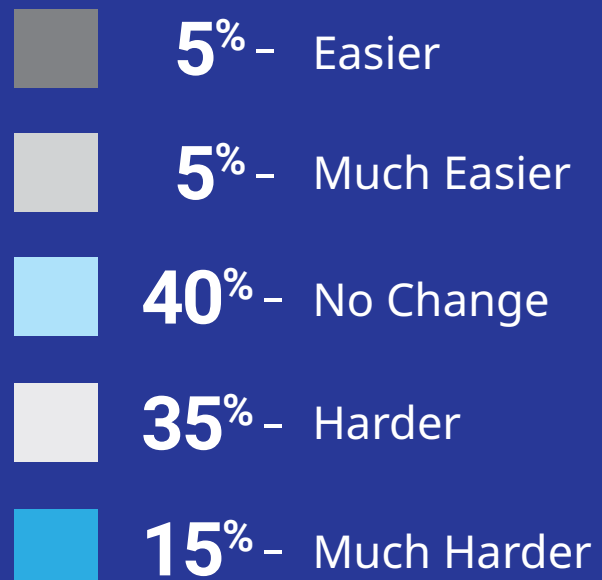
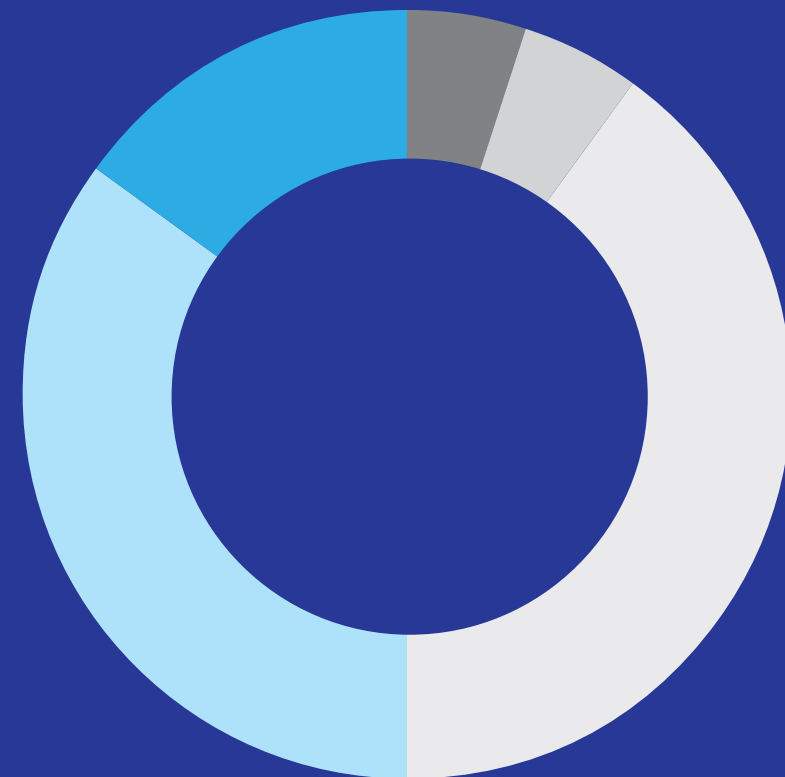


- 6% - Much easier than in 2020
- 4% - Easier than in 2020
- 15% - The same as in 2020
- 32% - Harder than in 2020
- 43% - Much harder than in 2020

combating staffing challenges

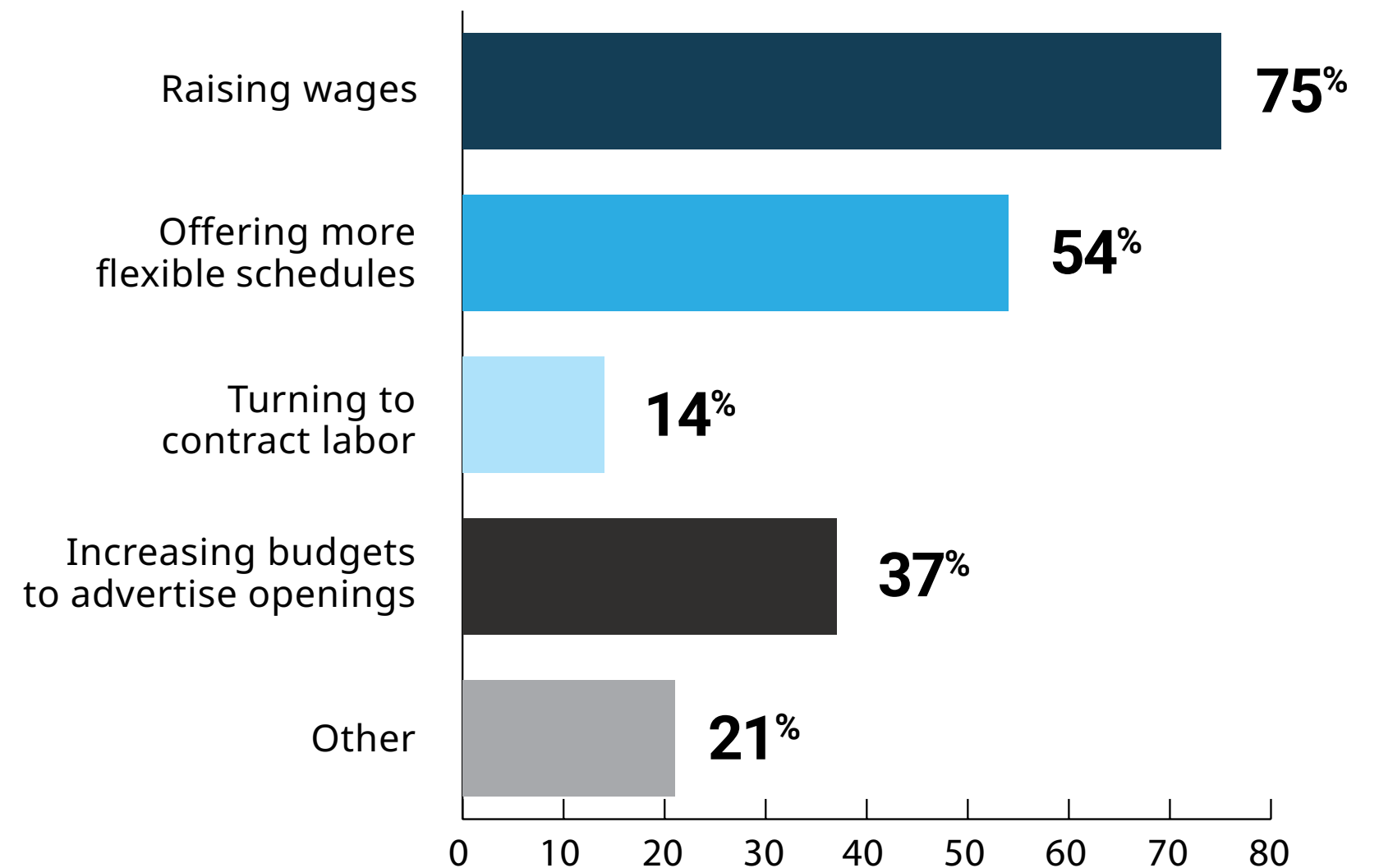
An overwhelming 90% of survey participants anticipate more staffing challenges to come in the second half of 2021.

In the second half of 2021, I expect hiring for dining staff will become:



Raising wages (75%), offering more flexible schedules (54%) and increasing budgets to advertise openings (37%) are the top 3 tactics organizations are using to fill open positions.

To fill open dining positions, my organization is:



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