



SURVEY REPORT

The State of Senior Living Dining

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SENIOR HOUSING NEWS



The State of Senior Living Dining

In today's senior living landscape, dining has evolved significantly to reflect broader shifts in health awareness, culinary diversity and technology integration. In turn, operators are searching for new ways to approach dining within their communities to stay competitive and safe as the demand for senior living increases into 2024 and beyond.

From October 4 to October 23, 2023, Senior Housing News conducted a survey in partnership with Gordon Food Service to learn how senior living owners, operators, and other professionals are navigating the most pressing dining trends, tactics, and technologies to succeed in the coming year.

Senior Housing News is pleased to share these survey results in hopes of helping senior living leaders optimize their dining operations and improve the resident experience for years to come.



Tim Regan
Editor
Senior Housing News



A Foreword from **Gordon** FOOD SERVICE

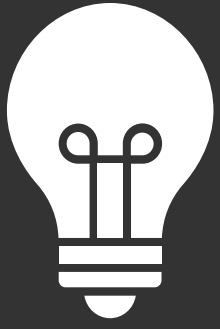
Your residents both want and need outstanding meal service. Improving dining options can prove to be a beneficial strategy that aligns perfectly with your value-based, person-centered goals, while also contributing to accelerated occupancy. Your dining program—what you serve and how you serve it—can distinguish your senior community from the competition.

This State of Senior Living Dining report underscores the challenges in offering exceptional dining programs while highlighting the passion that those serving this sector have for food and nutrition. After all, food is at the root of both physical and social wellness. It's heartening to read about leaders navigating through labor and staffing challenges, finding innovative ways to serve our seniors.

My sincere thanks go to Senior Housing News for producing this report, and to the numerous senior living operators who shared their voices and wisdom, contributing to these insights. I hope this material aids in shaping perspectives and sparking ideas to inspire a winning dining program for your operation.



Dana Fillmore, RD
Senior Living Segment Manager
Gordon Food Service



Executive Summary

Results show the views of 113 professionals who identify as working for organizations that provide senior living and care, 97% of whom are C-suite leaders, directors or VPs, all offering an executive perspective on today's senior living dining landscape. **The survey, conducted online, asked about how companies of all sizes are:**



Controlling dining costs and inflation



Using technology to overcome key dining challenges



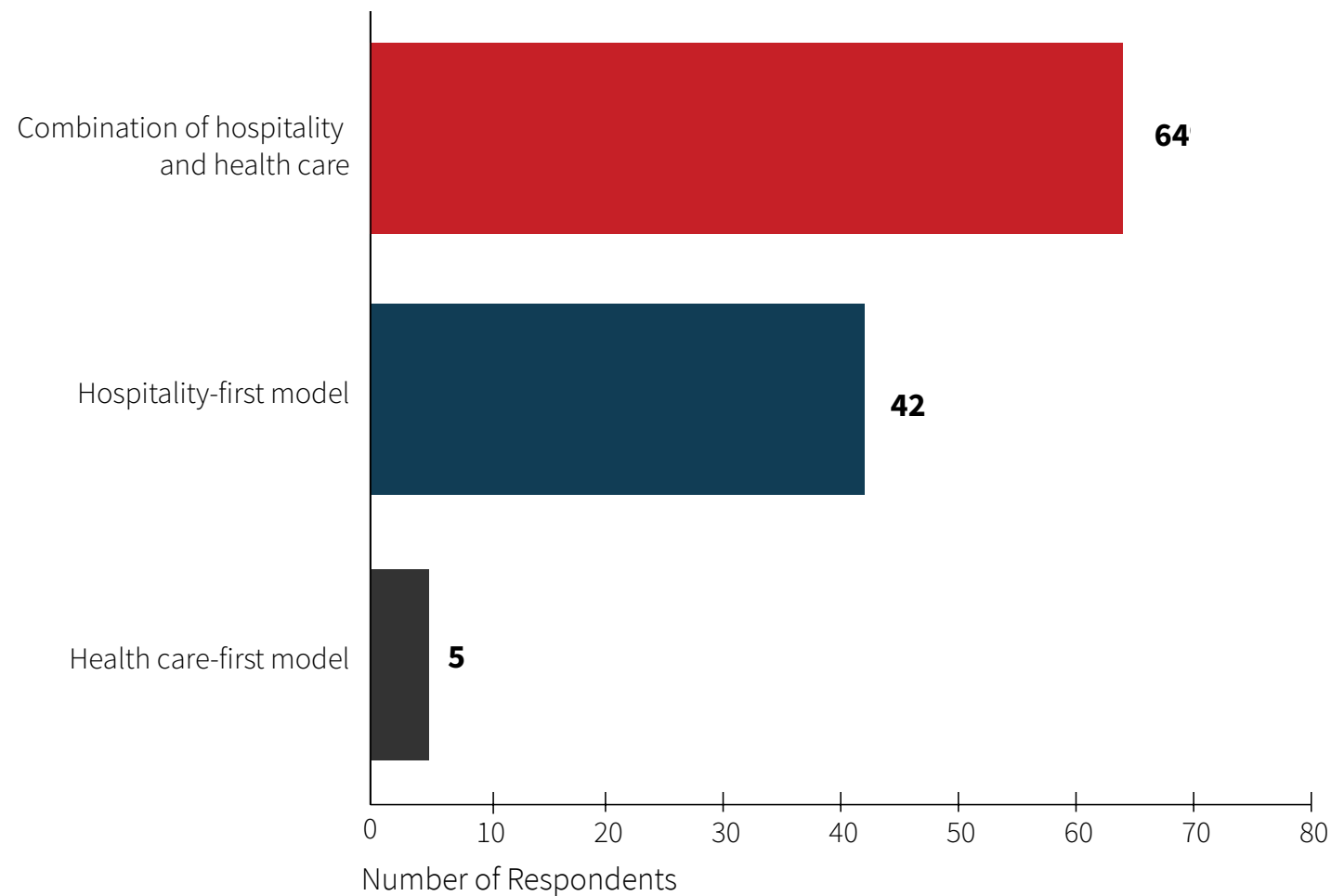
Improving the dining experience for residents and staff alike

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Hybrid approach to dining

The majority of providers currently take a hybrid approach to dining, integrating hospitality and health care to optimize the experience for all stakeholders, according to this survey.

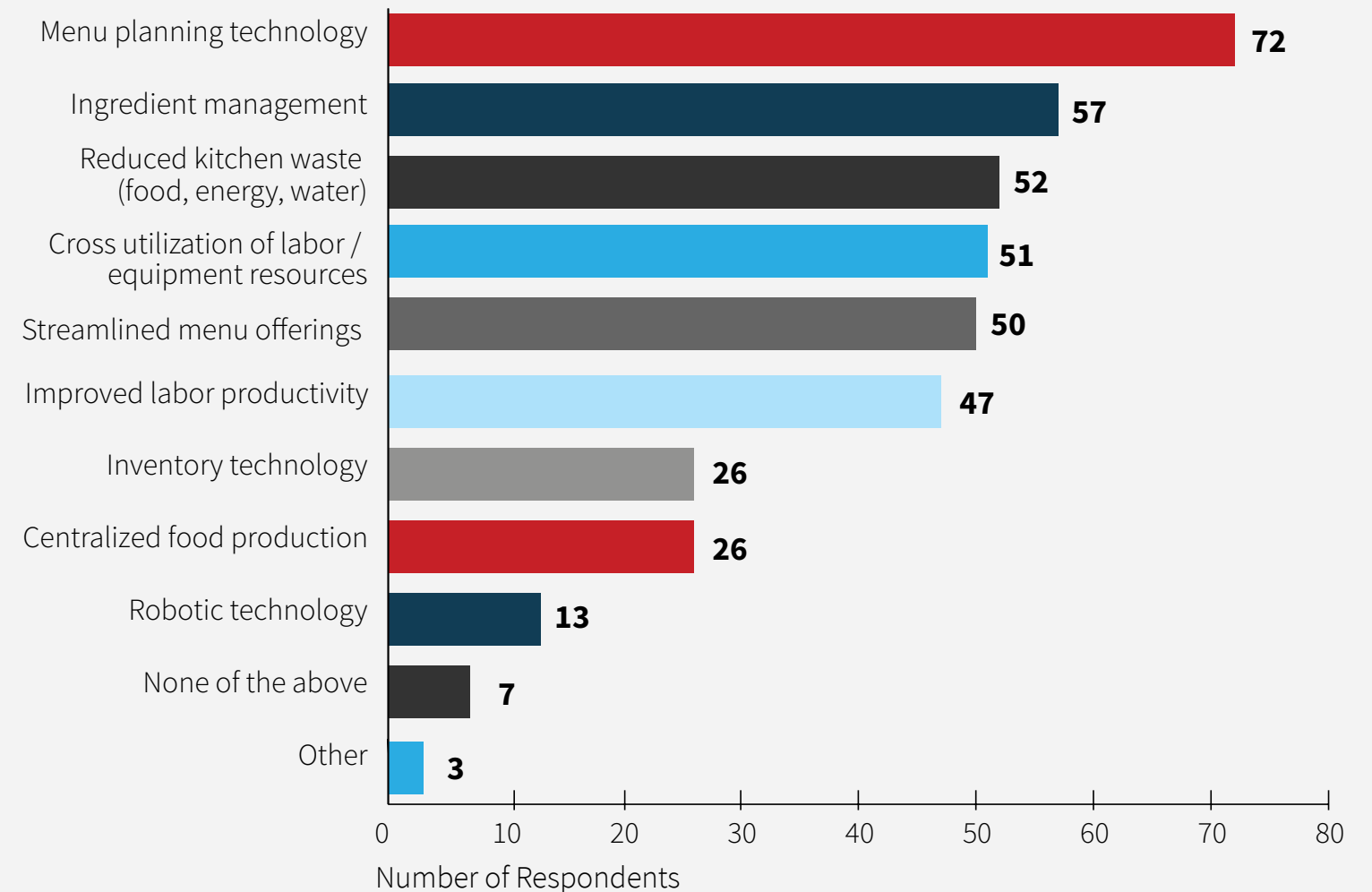
Which of the following best describes your organization's approach to dining?



Cost control is a priority

Survey results validated that participants are using multiple cost control measures relative to procurement, menu and labor, with menu planning technology as the leading tactic.

Which of the following cost control measures is your organization utilizing? (Check all that apply)

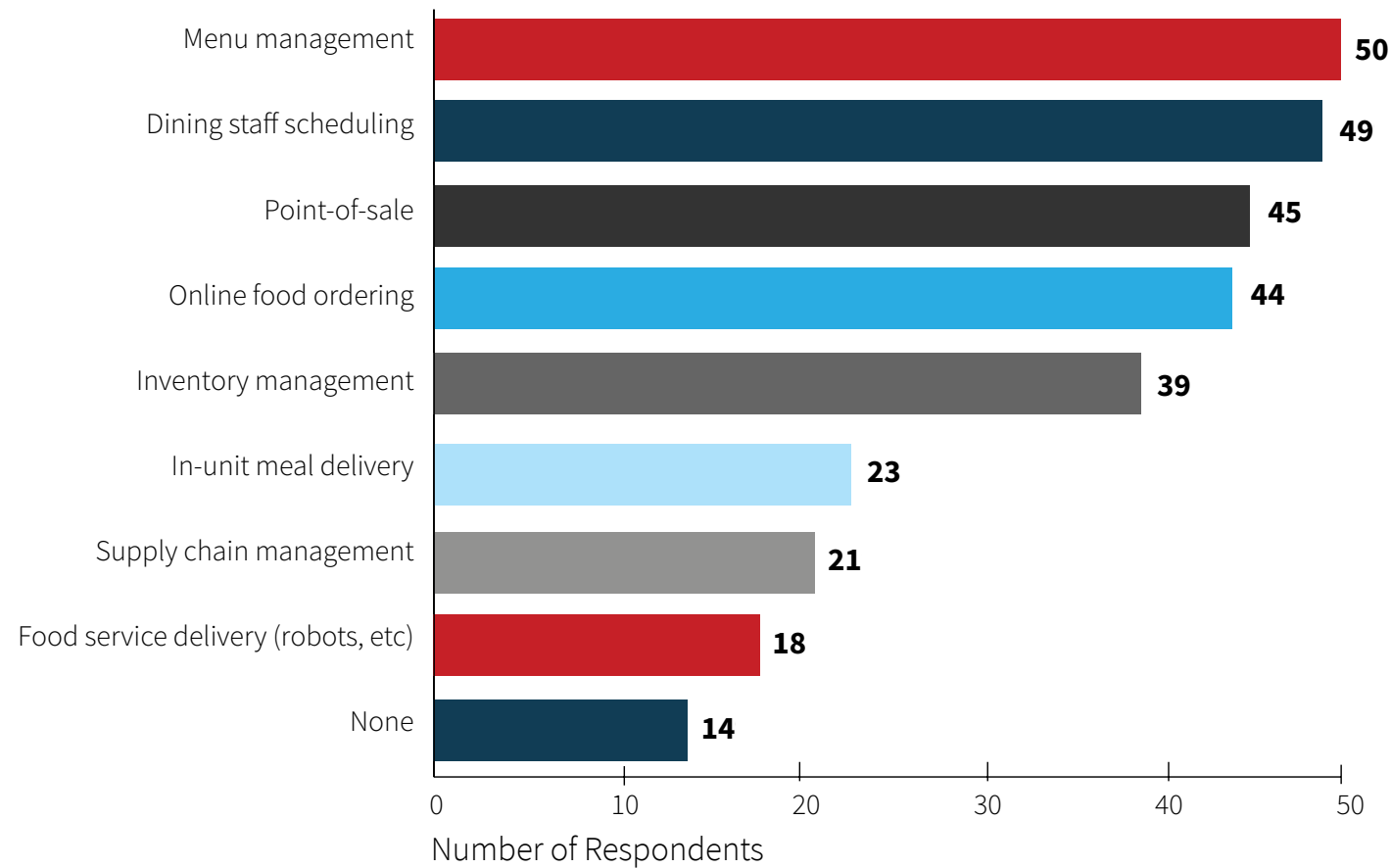


KEY TAKEAWAYS

Providers are leaning on technology to navigate the current landscape

Results indicate that senior living organizations are leveraging technology for many items related to food service delivery, with menu management, dining staff scheduling and point-of-sale technology being the most prominent use cases.

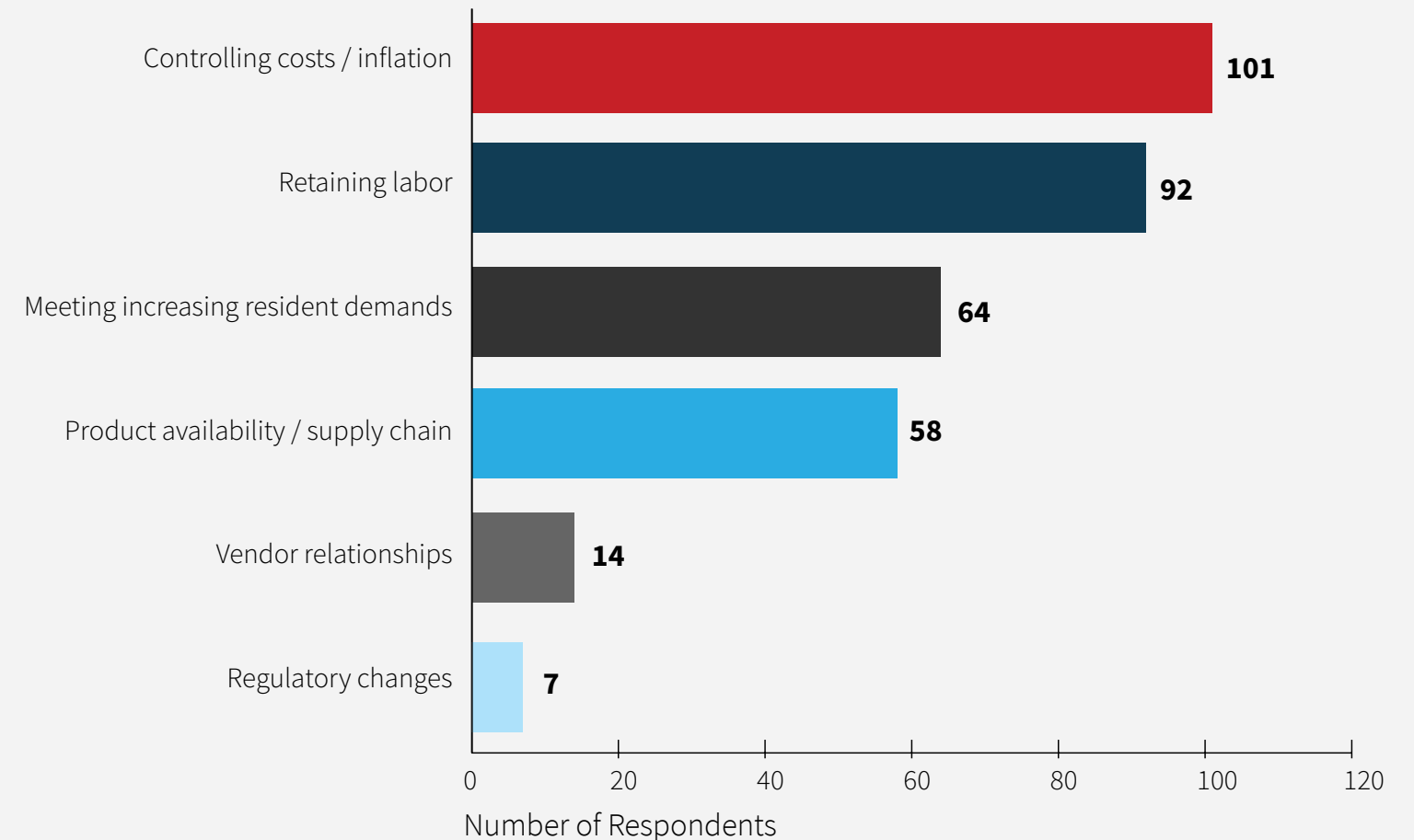
Is your organization utilizing technology for any of the following items related to food service delivery? (Check all that apply)



The top 3 challenges in senior living dining

Respondents cited controlling costs and inflation, retaining labor, and meeting increasing resident demands as the top 3 dining challenges in today's senior living environment.

What are the top 3 challenges related to dining services in today's senior living environment? (Select 3)



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Operators are taking a proactive approach to staffing challenges

Referral bonuses are the No.1 retention tactic for senior living dining staff, according to this survey.

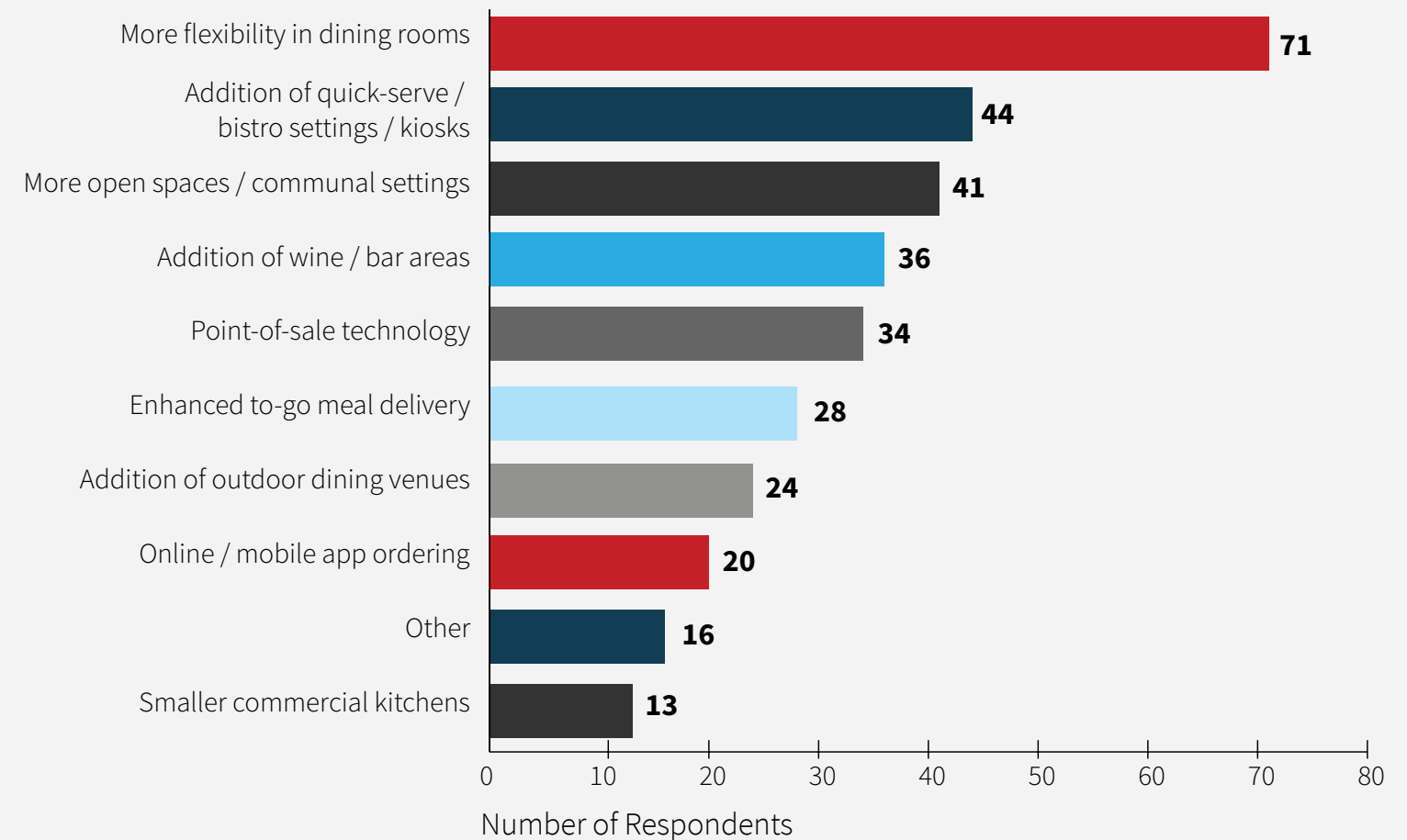
Improving the dining experience

The majority of respondents are offering flexibility in the dining rooms as an impactful way to improve the dining experience in senior living.

Rank the following dining staff retention tactics in today's senior living landscape, with the **top being the most effective**:

- 1. Referral bonus**
- 2. Retention bonus**
- 3. Staff development**
- 4. Increased pay**

In what ways are you improving the consumer dining experience? **(Check all that apply)**

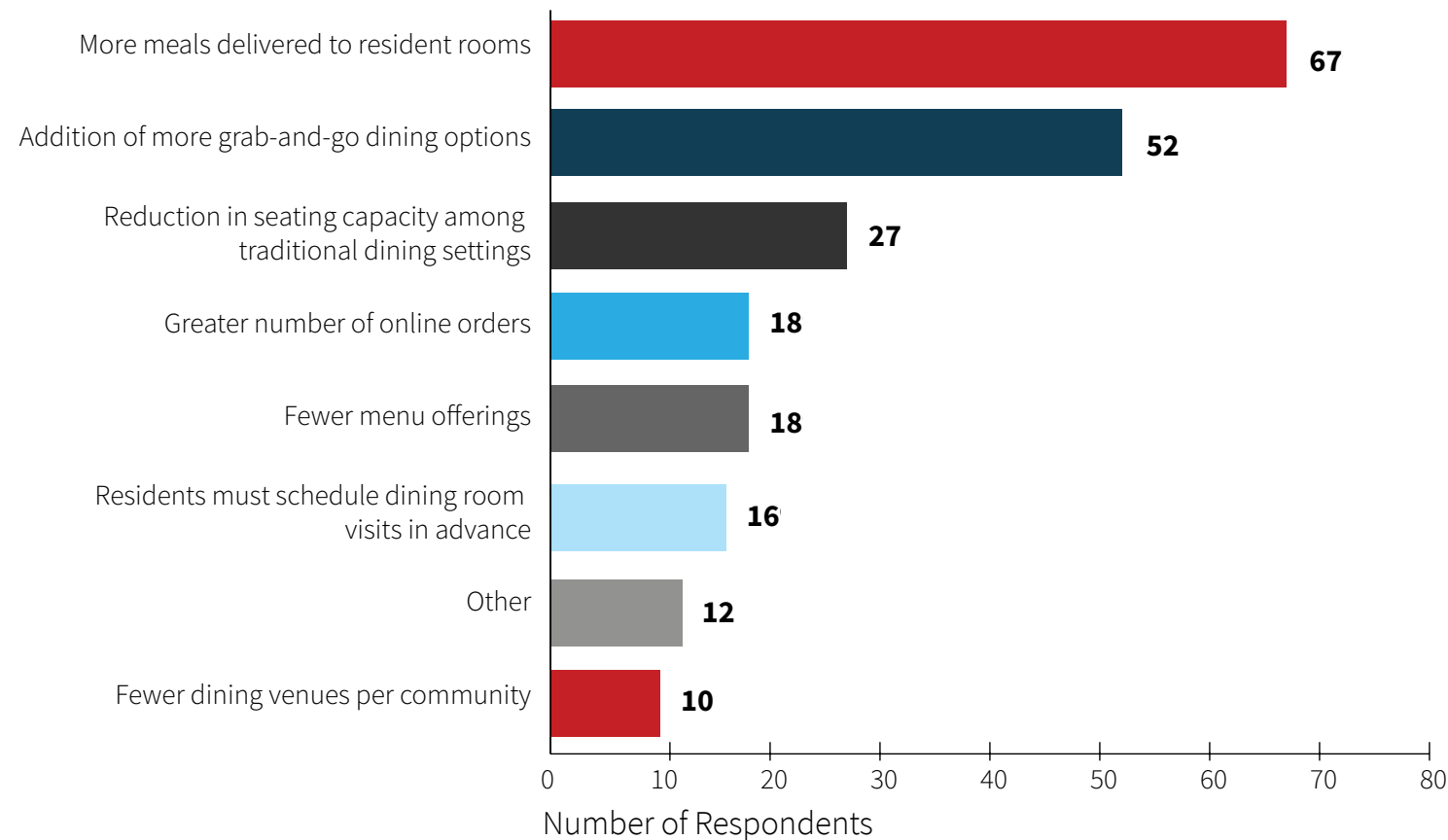


KEY TAKEAWAYS

The residual impact of COVID-19

Survey participants believe that resident room delivery and increased grab-and-go dining options will stay permanent fixtures in post-COVID senior living dining operations.

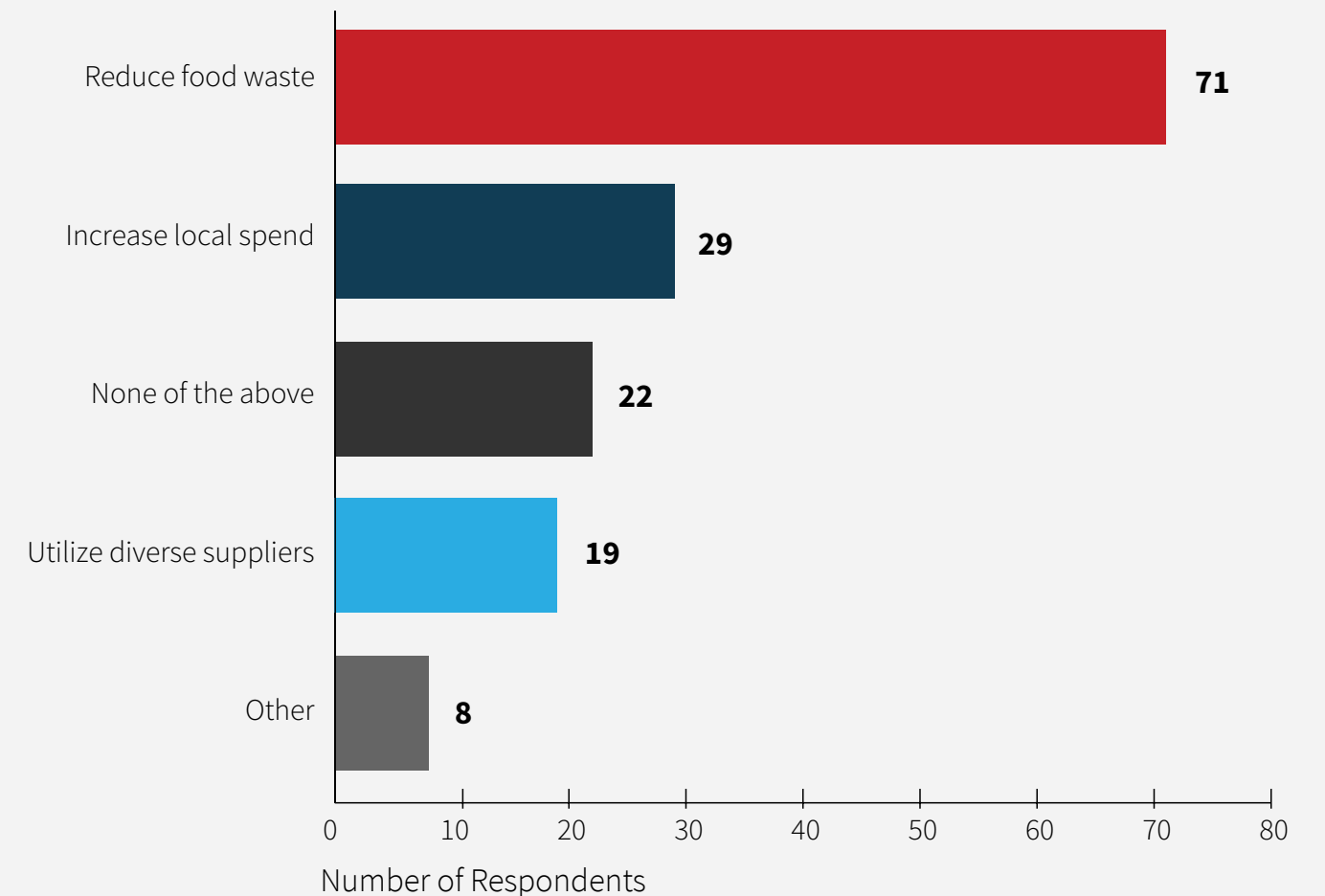
What measures do you foresee as becoming permanent practices resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic? (Select all that apply)

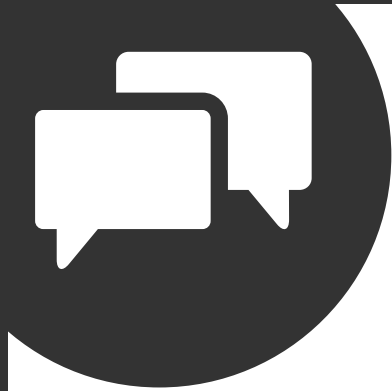


CSR becoming a top priority

The majority of respondents indicated that reducing food waste will be the top CSR initiative in their dining operations in the next 12-18 months.

What corporate social responsibility initiatives do you have planned for your dining operations in the next 12-18 months? (Check all that apply)



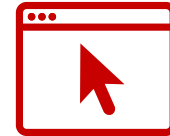


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