

**NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
SURVEY OF MEMBERS OF LOCAL HISTORICAL SOCIETIES**

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Survey Center

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**New Hampshire Historical Society
Local Members Survey**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY NH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The University of New Hampshire Survey Center conducted a telephone survey of members from local New Hampshire historical societies in February 2006 for the New Hampshire Historical Society. Four hundred and one (401) randomly selected local members were interviewed between February 6 and February 13, 2006. The margin of sampling error is 4.9%. The major topics in the survey included the interest in history and the local historical society, importance and satisfaction of local historical society services and offerings, and awareness and opinions of the New Hampshire Historical Society and other New Hampshire organizations.

The following figures display survey results, detailed tabular results can be found in Appendix A, open-ended responses are found in Appendix B, and the questionnaire and codebook can be found in Appendix C.

The major findings of the survey include:

Historical Interest

- The members of the local societies are most interested in local history (22%) followed by history in general (13%), American history (11%), modern US history (10%), the colonial era (7%), genealogy (7%), civil war (5%), revolutionary era (5%), World War II (3%), historic preservation (3%), ancient times (2%), other (8%), and two percent said "don't know." *Figure 1.*
 - Local society members with a high school education or less are *most* likely to say they are interested in local history.
 - Members who are between the ages of 18 to 29, lived in NH for 2 years or less, have a residence in another state, and are not current members are the *least* likely to say they are interested in local history.
- When asked what is the most memorable historical exhibit that you have seen, 17 percent said a national exhibit, 10 percent say a local NH historical society exhibit, 10 percent say some other exhibit in NH, 9 percent say an international exhibit, 7 percent say a New England exhibit, 5 percent say the Smithsonian, 4 percent say a NH Historical Society exhibit, 4 percent say Gettysburg, 3 percent say Williamsburg, 7 percent named some other exhibit and 17 percent said they "don't know." *Figure 2.*
 - Members from societies that have 50 members or less are *most* likely to say the most memorable historic exhibit was seen at their local historical society.
 - Members who have lived in NH for 3 to 5 years are the least likely to say the most memorable exhibit was at their local society.
- Members were asked what was the MOST important reason for joining a local historical society the top two responses state they were interested in local history (49%) and that history should be preserved (18%). The remainder joined to help preserve historic buildings (13%), they were asked by a friend (8%), heard a speaker (3%), went to the local historical society museum (2%), and they wanted to volunteer (2%). *Figure 3.*
 - Former members are the *most* likely to say the most important reason they joined was they were interested in local history.
- When the first and second reasons for joining a local historical society are combined, the most frequently cited reasons for joining their local historical society are they were interested in local history (68%), History should be preserved (41%), to preserve historic buildings (31%), asked by a friend (10%), heard a speaker (6%), went to a local historical society museum (6%), wanted to volunteer (6%), other (7%), and six percent said "don't know." *Figure 4.*
 - Members who have lived in NH for 5 years or less and belong to a historical society in Hillsborough County are least likely to say they joined because of interest in local history.

Services Offered

- Members were asked about the importance of particular features when deciding to join the local historical society and their satisfaction with those particular features. Each feature has been organized into a quadrant. *Figure 5*
 - Members report that historic preservation, collections of photos/documents, museum exhibits and speakers are all very important and the members are highly satisfied with them.
 - Members report that newsletters, genealogical records, school programs, social activities and volunteer

- opportunities are of less importance and members have high satisfaction.
- Members report online catalogs and store discounts to be of little importance and members report low satisfaction.
- There was no feature reported as having high importance but low satisfaction.
- The average importance rating of these features is compared with the percentage of those whose local society does not provide the feature. **Figure 6**
 - Features with a high average importance rating (3 or higher) have a very low percentage of those whose local society does not provide the feature: museum exhibits (4% do not provide), historic preservation (2%), Collections of photos and documents (2%), and speakers (2%).
 - Features with a moderate average importance rating (2-3) also have moderate percentages of those whose local society does not provide the feature: Newsletter (18% do not provide), school programs (13%), Genealogical records (9%), social activities (4%) and volunteer opportunities (1%).
 - Features with a low average importance rating (Under 2) have high percentages of those whose local society does not provide the feature: Store discounts (55% do not provide) and online catalog (39%).
- When satisfaction is looked at by region the Central/Lakes region has significantly higher satisfaction ratings in volunteer opportunities, School programs, museum exhibits, collections of photos and documents, historic preservation, access to genealogical records, speakers, and social activities. **Figure 7**
- Northern NH has significantly less satisfaction in Collections of photos and documents and volunteer opportunities. Western NH has less satisfaction with museum exhibits. **Figure 7**
- When members were asked if their local historical society schedules regular programs or events for the general public 88 percent said yes. **Figure 8**
 - Those who have lived in NH for 3 to 5 years are *most* likely to say yes.
 - Those who have lived in NH for 2 years or less and are not a current member are *least* likely to say yes.

New Hampshire Historical Society

- There is a general lack of familiarity with the New Hampshire Historical Society. Eighteen percent are not familiar at all, 20 percent say they are not very familiar, 45 percent say they are somewhat familiar and only 17 percent say they are very familiar with the New Hampshire Historical Society. **Figure 9**
 - Members that belong to a local society located in the central/lakes region of NH are most familiar with the NH Historical Society.
 - Those who are no longer current members are the *least* likely to be at least somewhat familiar.
- The majority of members say that the NH Historical Society and their local society should collaborate at least somewhat closely (79%). Forty percent say very closely, somewhat closely (39%), Not very closely (4%), not at all (1%), and Don't know (16%). **Figure 10**
 - Those members who are no longer current members are *least* likely to say they should collaborate.
- Not surprisingly, the majority of local historical society members (83%) can not think of any reasons why the NH Historical Society and their local society should NOT collaborate. Some additional reasons given why they should not collaborate were concerns over the local society maintaining its autonomy (3%) and concerns about restrictions being placed on the local societies (3%), with seven percent citing other reasons and four percent saying they don't know. **Figure 11**
 - Those who have lived in NH for 5 years or less and those that belong to a local society in the Western region of NH are *most* likely to give a reason. (See Appendix C for reasons)
- Members of local historical societies are generally not members of the other NH based organizations listed, with the exceptions of NH Public Television and NH Public Radio. The organizations that these local members are currently a member of are New Hampshire Public Television (37%), New Hampshire Public Radio (26%), The New Hampshire Preservation Alliance (7%), Strawberry Banke (6%), Historic New England (5%), The New England Historic Genealogical Society (4%), Canterbury Shaker Village (3%), and The American-Canadian Genealogical Society (1%). **Figure 12**

Figure 1: “What subject or era in history are you most interested in?”

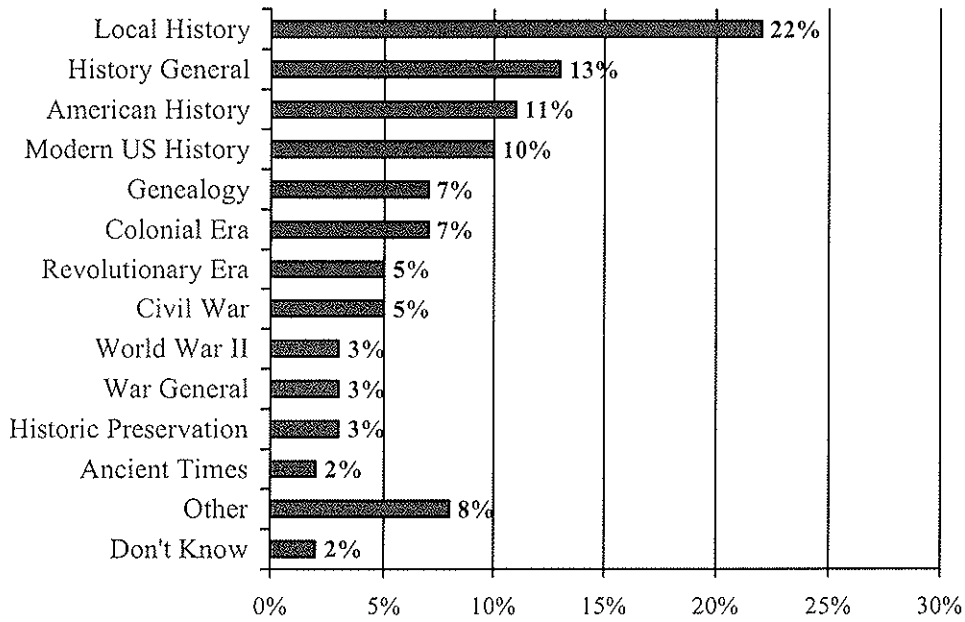


Figure 2: “What is the most memorable historical exhibit that you have seen?”

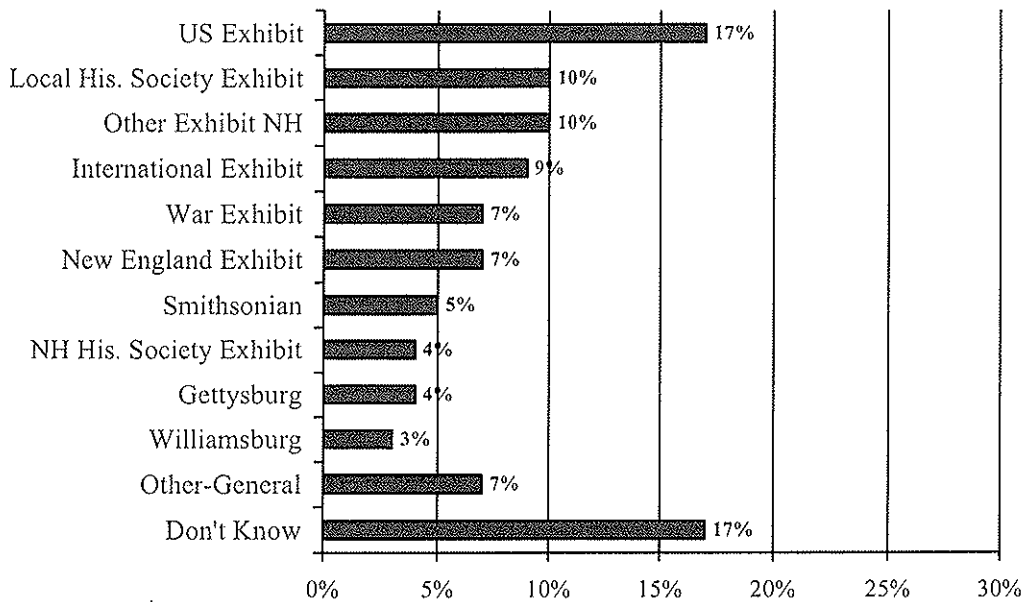


Figure 3: “What is the MOST important reason you joined your local historical society?”

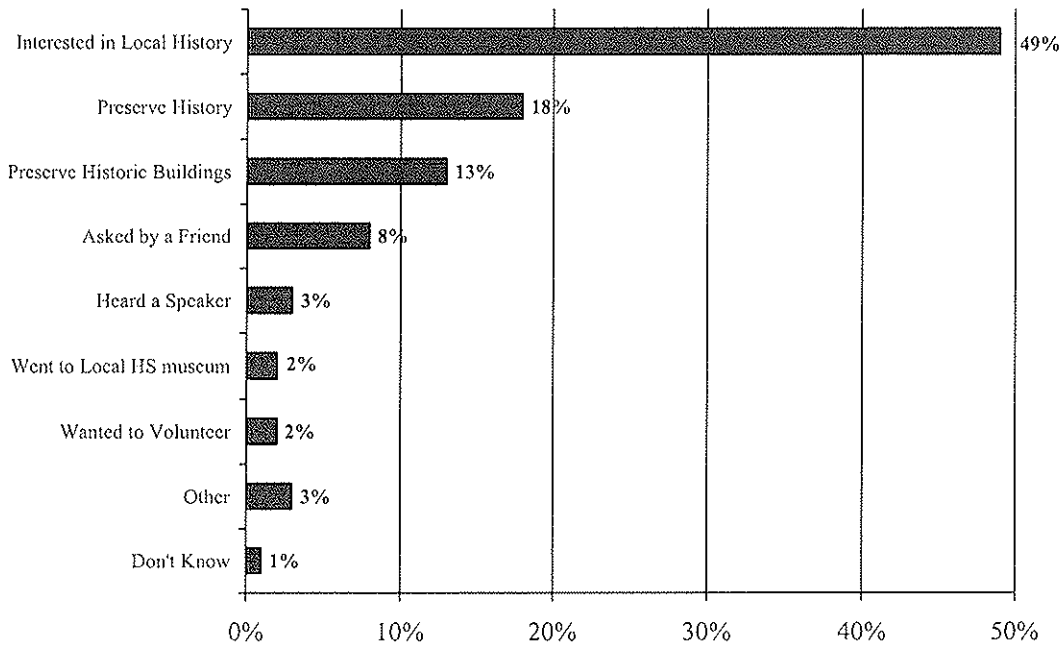


Figure 4: “What is the MOST important reason you joined your local historical society?”
(Multiple responses possible. Percentages may add to more than 100 percent).

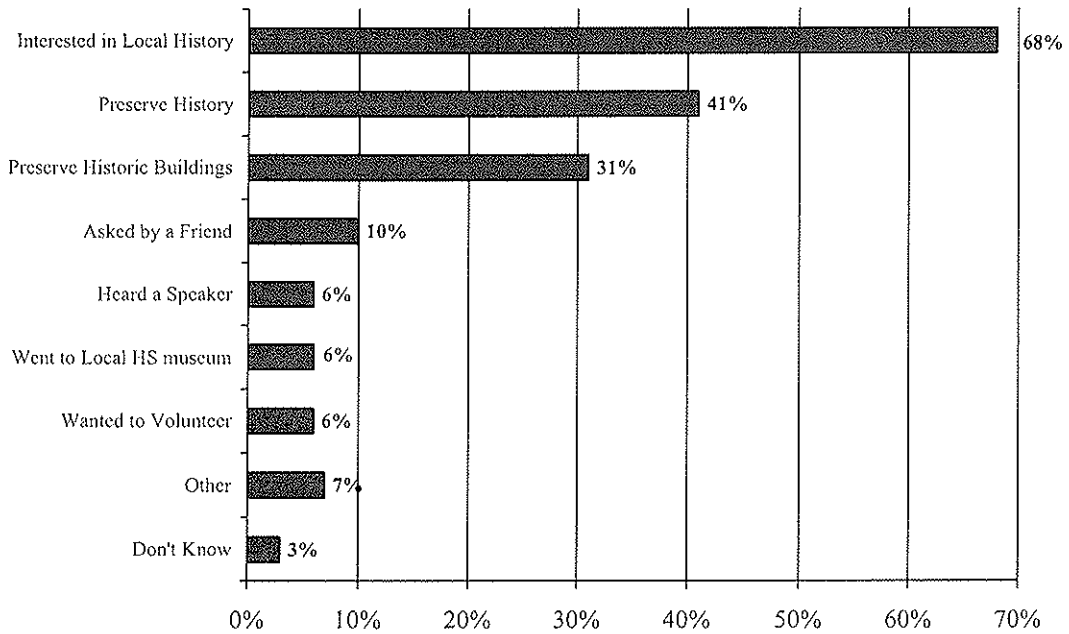


Figure 5: Average importance rating of particular features when deciding to join the local historical society and the average satisfaction with those particular features.

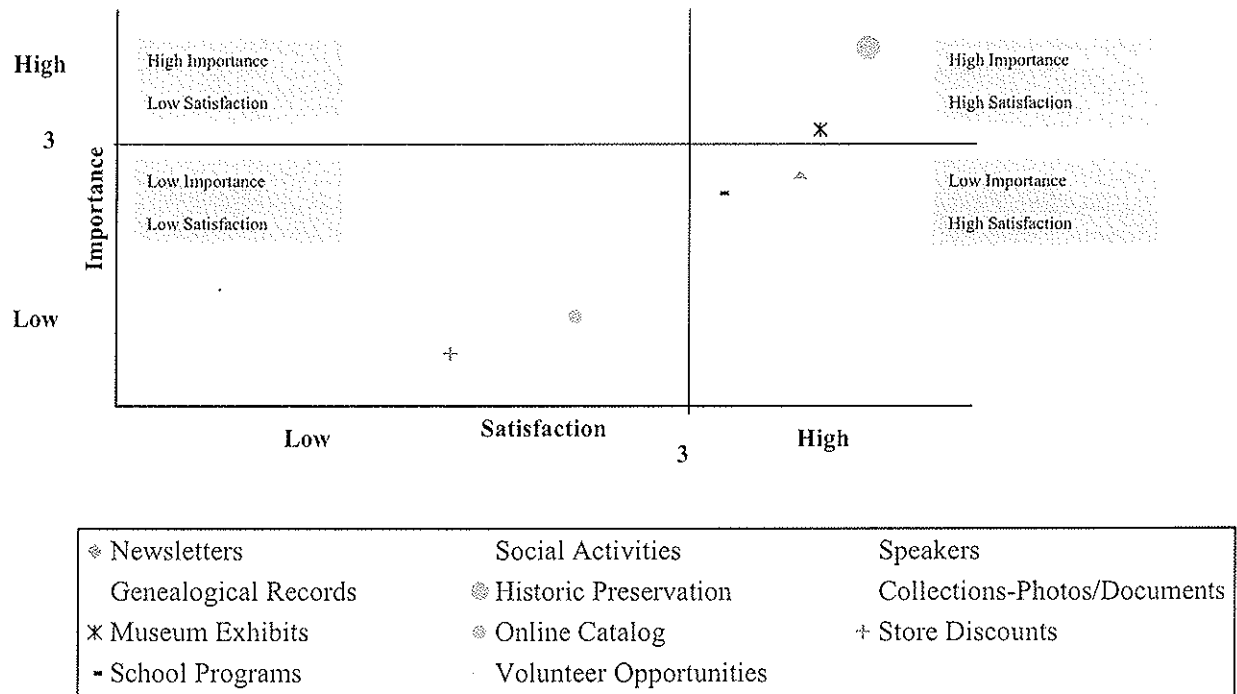


Figure 6: Average importance rating of particular features when deciding to join the local historical society and percentage of members whose local society DOES NOT provide this feature.

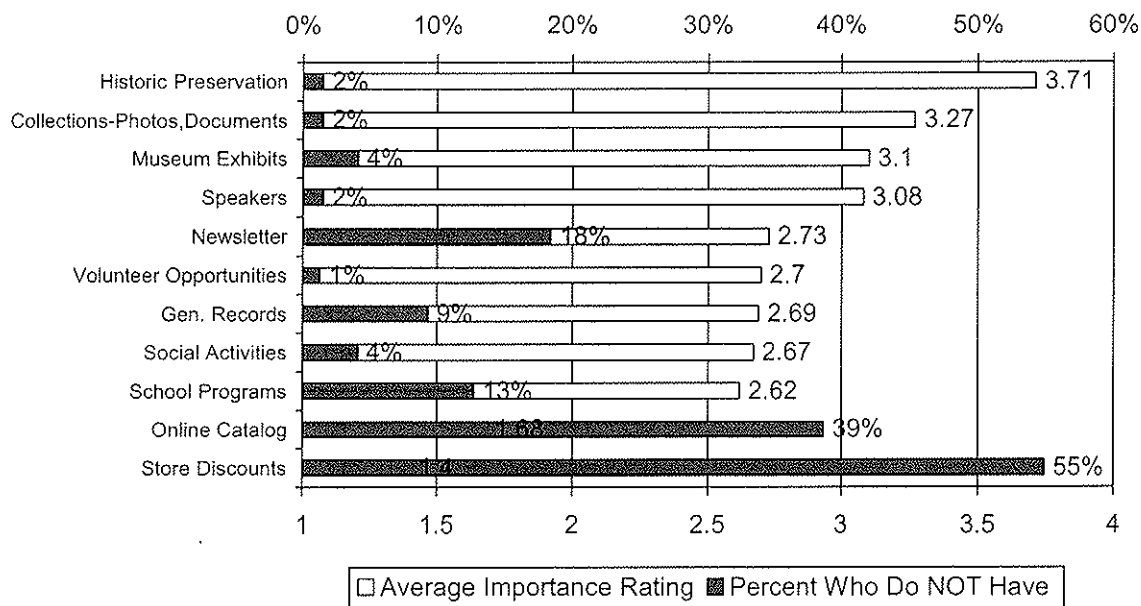


Figure 7: “Satisfaction with the following features provided by their local historical society?”
(Grouped by region)

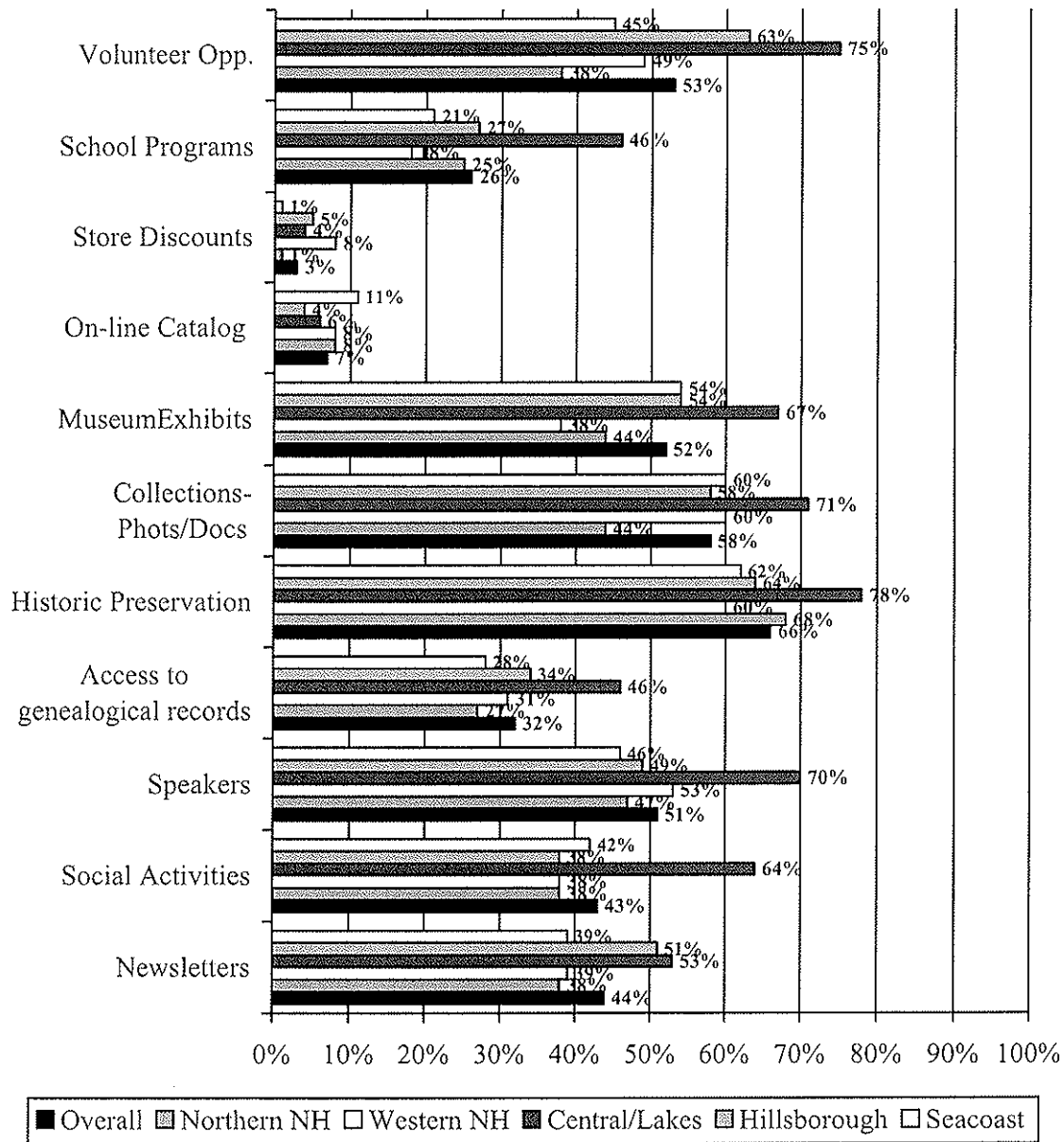


Figure 8: “Does your local society schedule regular events for the general public?”
(Grouped by Local Society Size)

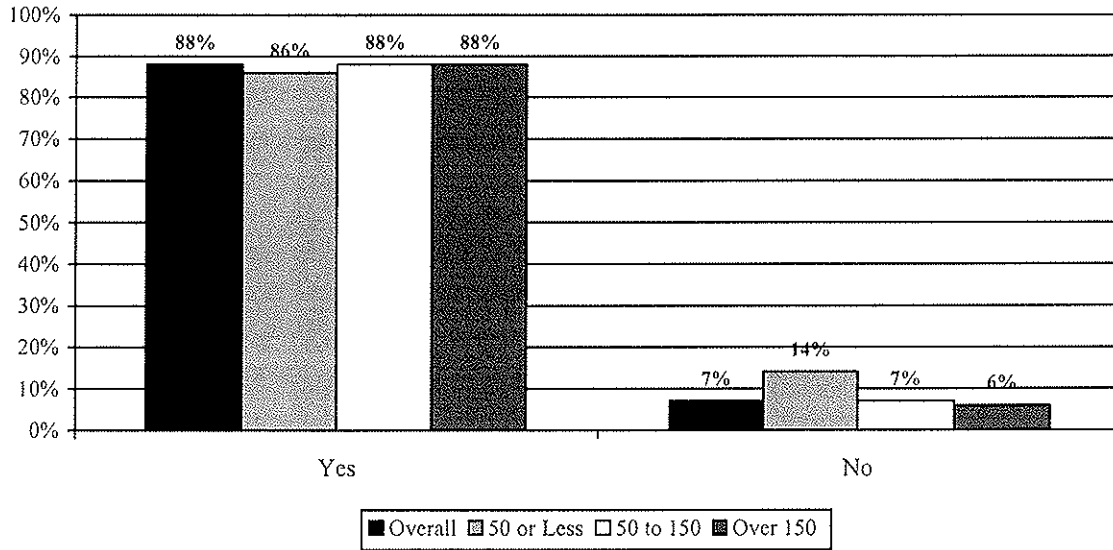


Figure 9: “How familiar are you with the New Hampshire Historical Society?”

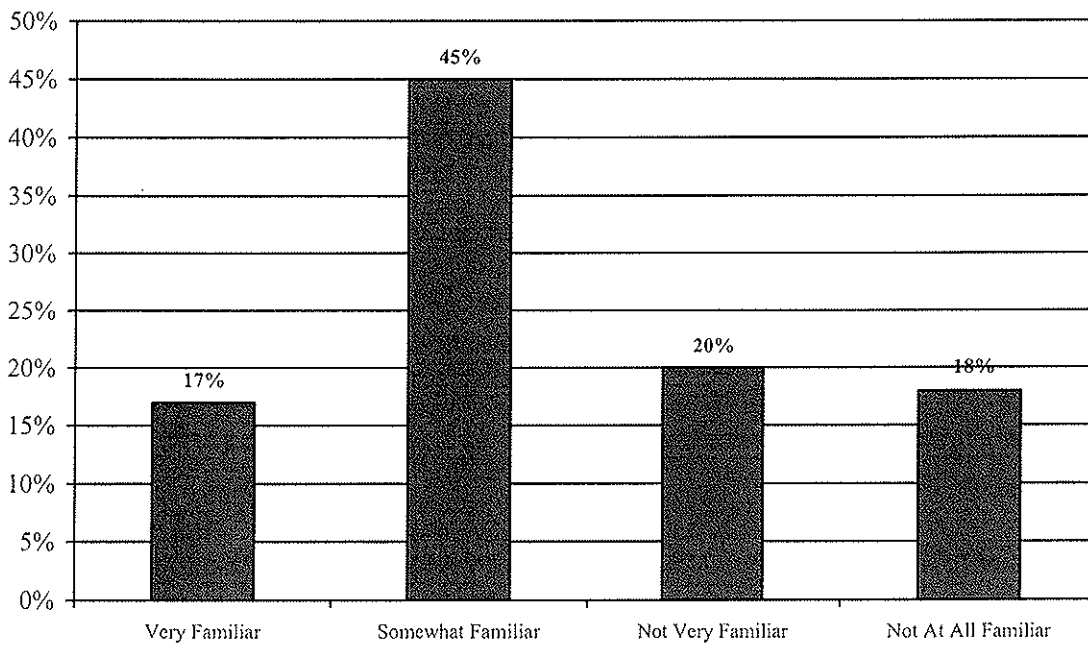


Figure 10: “How closely SHOULD your local historical society collaborate with the New Hampshire Historical Society?”

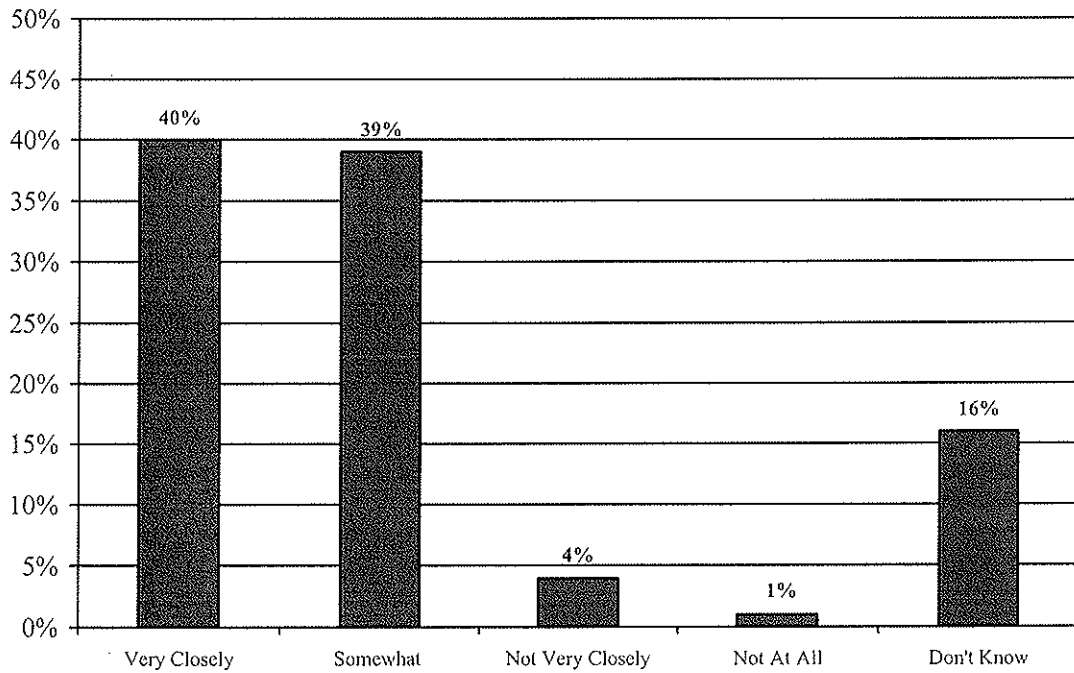


Figure 11: “Can you think of any reasons why your local historical society should NOT collaborate with the New Hampshire Historical Society?”

