2019 Advisor Brand Consumption (ABC) Study

Contents

Introduction & Methodology

Financial advice today is as important as ever, between economic shifts, market volatility, changes to regulation and the tax code, new high-tech options, etc. Financial advisors have a complex landscape to navigate but can provide an invaluable service to their clients. It is critical for Financial Services firms to communicate with and provide the most appropriate resources to advisors so they have the knowledge to present the right products and guidance to their clients and their businesses can thrive in future years and with future generations.

To help us understand the needs of advisors and how Marketers can best engage them with relevant tools, resources, products and messaging, InvestingChannel has partnered with Corporate Insight to conduct a series of surveys to delve deeper into the state of the advisory industry. This survey follows up on similar initiatives since 2015, measuring advisor behaviors and sentiment as well as changes and trends over the years.

This newest survey recruited 700 Financial Advisors from InvestingChannel's database, with varying demographics and books of business by age, experience, gender, AUM, type of firm and clientele. This research gives us a deep look into advisor behavior, needs, trends, clientele, etc. We also surface points of comparison from recent years to track the state of the industry and its evolution in over time.

The Changing Advisor Profile

Trend analysis of surveys conducted between 2016 and 2019.

Information Advisors Seek

Advisors continue to value fund information and retirement planning content. Resources for handling wealth transfer grew in importance. Advisors are increasingly comfortable using a range of devices for their work.

Interest in Educational Content

Advisors remain most interested in markets and investing (71%). Invitations to conferences (57%) and practice management information (56%) have increased considerably since the 2016 survey (+7%).

Interest in Marketing & Fund Issuer

Behind-the-scenes look to fund creation (63%) continues to lead the category. Tools, apps and new technologies (59%) slightly lost interest (-4%) compared to 2016.

Interest in Practice Management

Considerable interest in practice management compared to 2016. Retirement planning remains highest at 80% (+5%), while handling wealth transfer 74% (+11), financial planning 74% (+6%), business development 66% (+9%) and connecting with women 58% (+6%) all increased noticeably.

Interest in Research and Fund Data

Fund fact sheets increased to 78% (+2%) and fund information 70% (+7%) received the largest boost since 2016.

Important Features of Fund Issuer Website

Advisor-focused website navigability has the highest top-two box importance rating (35%). Relevant, concise fund information has decreased (-5%) but is still a close second at 33%. Site registration has decreased considerably to 22% (-8%) since 2016.

Preferred Method of Research

Slight increase in use of Smartphone as preferred method of research, at 6% vs. 2%. Desktop/Laptop Computer decreased 3% to 88%. Advisors are increasingly comfortable doing research across different devices.

Continuing Research on Other Devices

47% of advisors (+10%) don't have an issue starting a task on one device and picking up where they left off on another device.

Most Read News Sources

Wall Street Journal remains the most read publication at 52%, despite losing some ground to other publications. Barron's became the second most read publication, increasing to 36% (+1), while Bloomberg Business remains the third highest publication read with 36% (-2%).

How Advisors Prefer To Receive Information

Demand for and interest in resources from fund issuers remain strong, but issuers should be cautious about flooding advisors with too much content. A monthly or quarterly cadence would satisfy most advisors.

Preferences Around Timing of Contact

57% of advisors (+9%) have a specific preference for when to be contacted. Wednesday is the most popular day of the week (16%), and afternoon post-market close is the preferred time of the week (32%, -4%).

Amount of Information Received

Over half of advisors (52%) believe they receive too much information (+5%). Fund issuers were likelier than in 2016 to have asked about advisor's needs, at 85% (+5%).

Interest in Personalized Content

Half (53%) of those who haven't received personalized content from a fund issuer would prefer such materials (+6%). Where an issuer has provided personalized content, most advisors (68%) would be extremely/somewhat likely to invest with them (+4%).

Frequency of Direct Communication

Over three-quarters (76%, +1%) prefer direct communication from fund issuers between once month and quarterly.

Fund Issuer Strengths

Although slightly lower than in 2016 (-3%), "received relevant fund information" remained the highest rated fund issuer strength (63%) . "Provided a well-designed website with rich, relevant content" and "helped me solve problems & overcome challenges" dropped considerably (-7%) to 31%.

Preferred Format of Content

Advisors prefer to receive information in PDF format (73%). This is down 6 percentage points since 2016.

Preferred Communication Method

Email is the favored communication method when receiving information from fund issuers (81%), declining slightly (-2%). In-person meetings is second rated at 51% and slightly higher than in 2016 (+3%).

Decline in Preference for Traditional Formats

Traditional mail declines significantly (-14%) to 16% as an advisor's preferred communication method. Significant decrease (-13%) in preference to receive hard documents through mail.

Advisor Profile Trends – 2019 vs. 2017 Survey

- Gender: Male - 85% — +1%
- Age: 45-64 years old - 69% — +0%
- Experience: 5+ Years - 92% — +9%
- Client age: 55+ years old - 73% — +8%
- Total value of assets managed >$50M - 66% — +7%
- Total value of assets managed: <$100M - 81% are solo practitioner — +6%
- Total value of assets managed: $100M+ 75% are members of a team — -2%

Advisor profile:
male, middle aged and aging; value of assets managed increased, with more differences in practice size and structure.

The Advisor Profile

Who are you? What is your role? What types of clients do you work with? What type of firm are you affiliated with? How is your team structured?

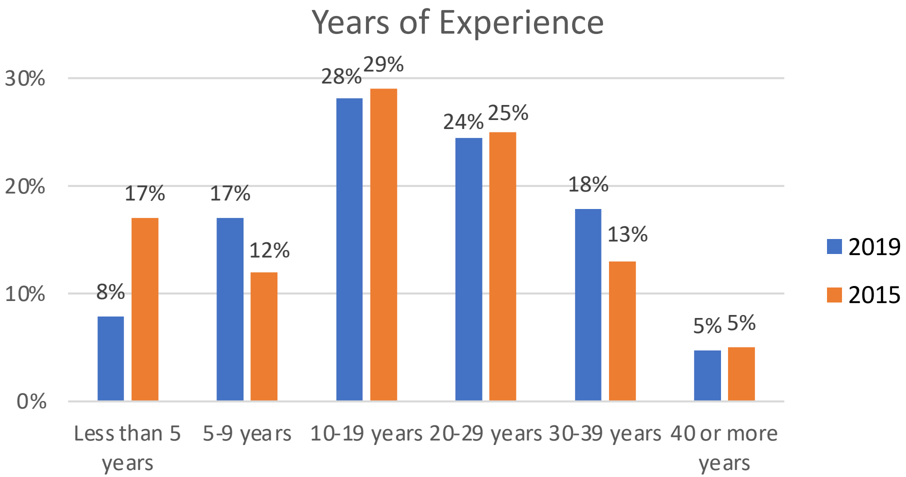
Summary Findings

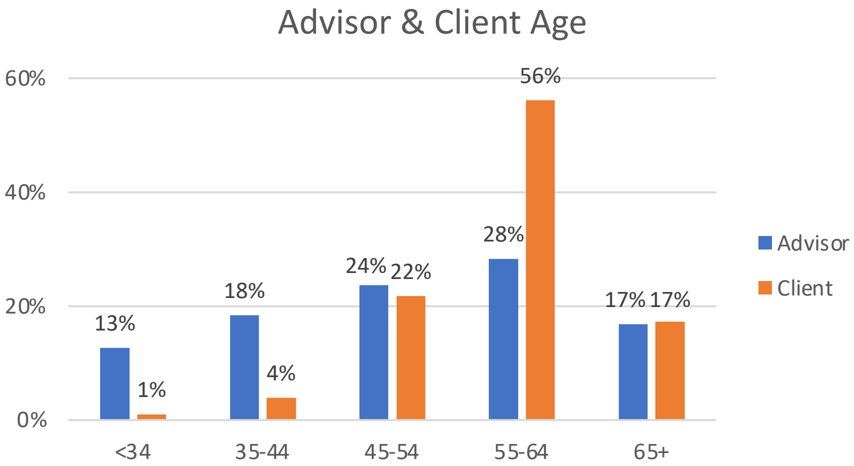
While there have been some slight shifts from previous iterations of the study, the advisor workforce in 2019 remains relatively homogeneous – male, middle aged and aging, with more differences in practice size and structure.	Advisors continue to rely both on the convenience of digital tools and the irreplaceable benefits of traditional, often in-person resources. They prefer to work on a desktop or laptop computer but do rely on mobile devices before or after hours.	Fund issuers must provide relevant, insightful, easily consumable content at a regular (but not too frequent) cadence.
69% of respondents were 45 years of age or older	51% research fund issuers online, but in-person events were popular as well	68% of advisors would do business with companies that provide their most important materials
47% of respondents have more than 20 years of experience	81% of respondents prefer email contact, but 48% attend in-person meetings and 27% go to private events	52% of advisors say they receive too much communication from fund companies
Only 15% of respondents were female	71% like PDF materials, but calls or meetings came in second place at 42%	76% of advisors prefer monthly or quarterly communications
90% manage less than $250 million in client assets	88% of advisors prefer to use a laptop or desktop computer for their research	The majority of advisors appreciate relevant fund information and good customer service from fund issuers
56% work alone rather than as members of a team	Computer use decreases as the day goes on, while mobile device usage spikes before and after hours	American Funds was once again the firm with the most positive mentions by advisors

Most advisors are middle-aged, with increasing experience in the profession

We began our study with the basic demographics of our respondents – and their clients. More than two thirds of advisors (69%) are over 45 years old; three quarters (75%) have 10 or more years of experience, and nearly half (47%) have 20+ years in the industry. Compared to previous years, the advisor base has not seemed to keep up with demographic change – in 2016, 17% were new entrants to the industry with less than five years of experience, versus just 8% today.

While advisors tend to have a decent amount of experience in the industry, their ages are somewhat more evenly distributed. This stands in contrast to their clients, who tend to be in older age ranges. More than half are between 55 and 65 years of age, with even more (17%) in standard retirement years. Despite the lower level of new entrants to the advisory industry, the data shows a potential generational gap between advisors and their clients. The low number of clients from younger generations has barely budged in the years since we first conducted our advisor surveys, showing that more efforts must still be made to engage younger, affluent investors.



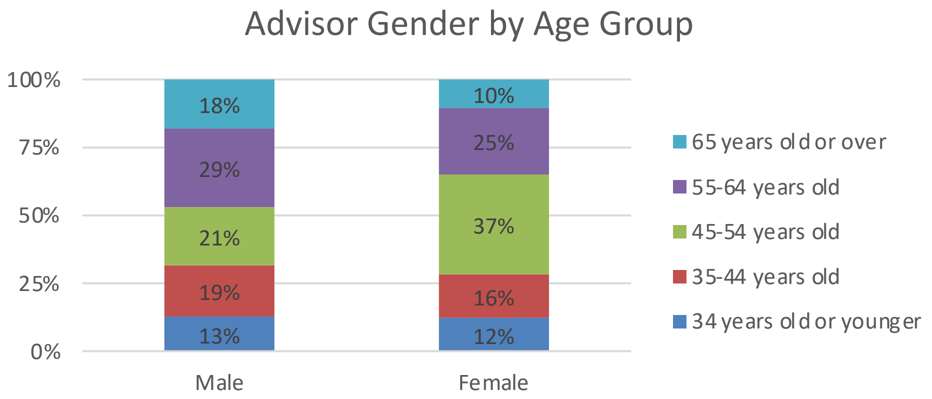


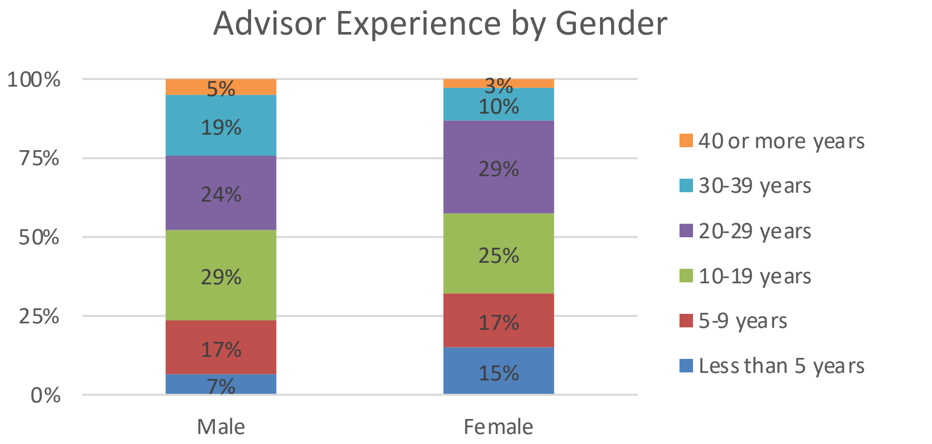
Q7. How many years have you been a financial advisor?
Q8. What is your age?
Q10. What is the average age of your clientele?

Advisors are predominantly male, but female advisors are closing the gap

As results have shown in the past, the financial advisor profession is primarily male – similar to past years, 85% of respondents.

Looking deeper into the gender breakdown, there are signs of diversification in progress. Looking at age and experience, female advisors tend to be younger and newer to the industry. Almost two thirds of female advisors (65%) are under 55 years of age, as compared to just more than half (53%) of male advisors. Just over one in 10 female advisors (13%) have been in the trade 30 years or more, versus about a quarter (24%) of male advisors. That's not to say most female financial advisors are rookies – they most commonly boast decades-plus of experience (55% with 10-29 years) and tend to be in the prime of their careers in their late 40s or early 50s.





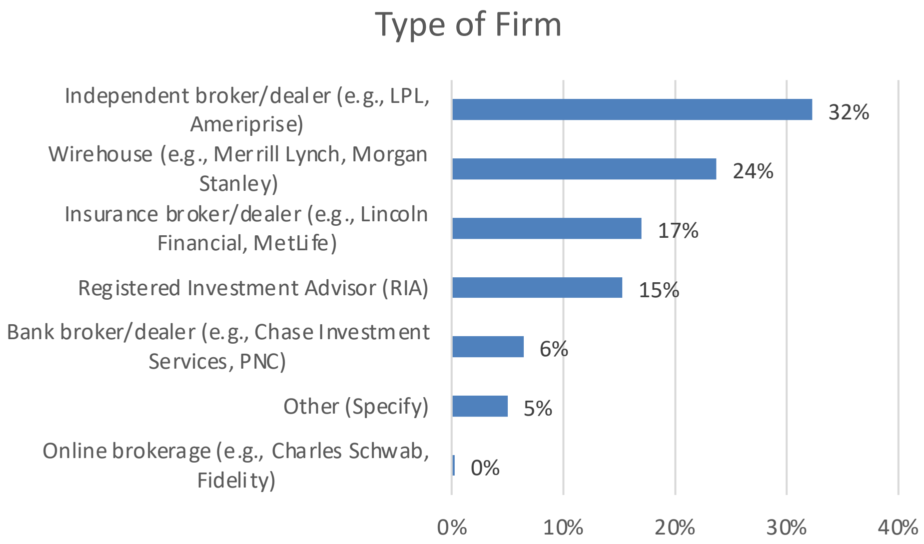
Q9. What is your gender?

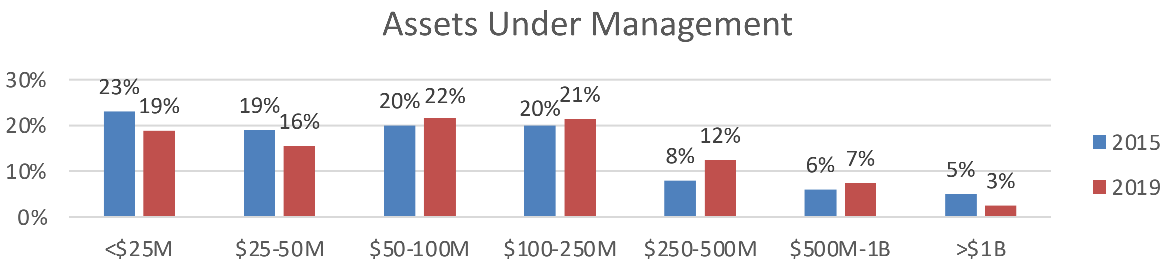
Advisors discuss their business differently

Moving beyond the demographics and into their professional selves, we asked respondents an array of questions around their role or title and the business they work in. As seen in previous surveys, a significant majority (73%) described themselves as a “Financial Advisor,” with a further 15% as “Independent Advisors.” The remaining 12% chose a variety of tiles including Chairman, CEO, Managing Director, Portfolio Manager, Chief Investment Officer, Consultant or Director of Research.

The types of firms varied more substantially, with 15% or more working with independent broker/dealers, wirehouses, insurance broker/dealers or RIA. The most common answer entered for the “other” option was a regional broker/dealer. Knowing that more online brokerages are branching out into advisory services, we added that as an answer option but found minimal response there.

Firms also varied in level of assets under management (AUM), with nearly 80% relatively evenly split between segments up to $250 million, with decreasing percentages beyond that level. Interestingly, results showed a shift toward larger firms since 2015 (42% under $50M in 2015, versus 34% in 2019).



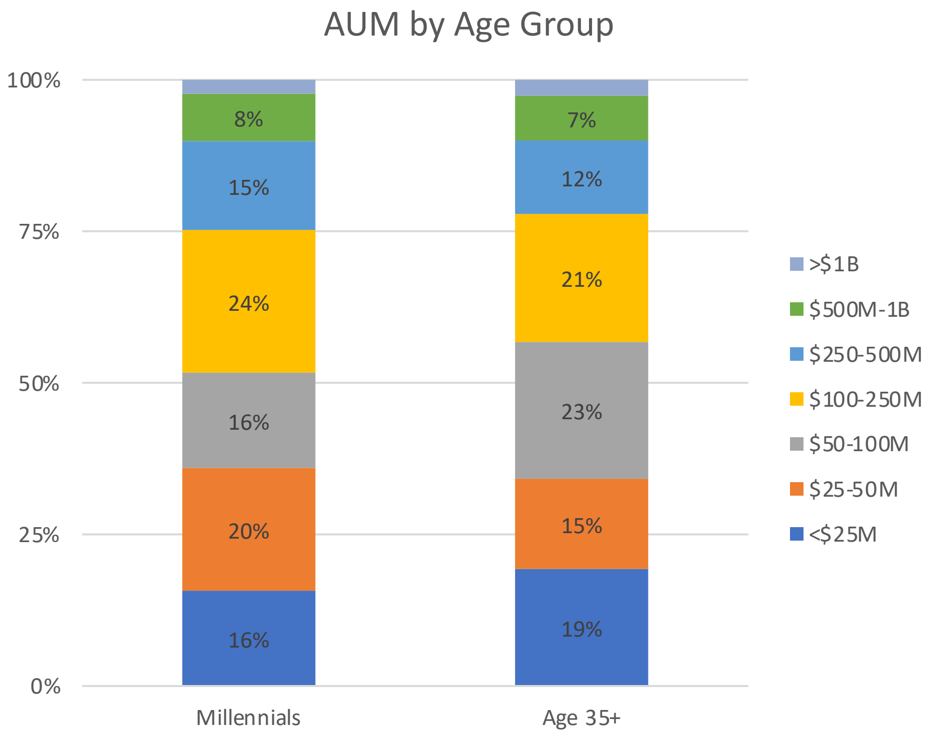


Q1. Which of the following best describes your job role or title?
Q2. What type of firm are you currently employed by or affiliated with?
Q6. What is the total value of the assets that clients hold with you?

Millennial advisors are somewhat more likely to work at larger firms

We checked in again on the Millennial segment of advisors when analyzing the survey results. We saw some of the same trends as in past surveys, with advisors 34 and under somewhat more likely to work at firms with more assets under management. Almost half of Millennial advisors (48%) worked at firms with at least $100 million AUM, as compared to 43% of older advisors.

While the trend is more subtle and less pronounced than in previous iterations of the survey, we still interpret it as an indication that new advisors are likely to start their careers with large, established firms. Older, more experienced advisors tend to specialize at smaller firms or even strike out on their own once they learn the trade.

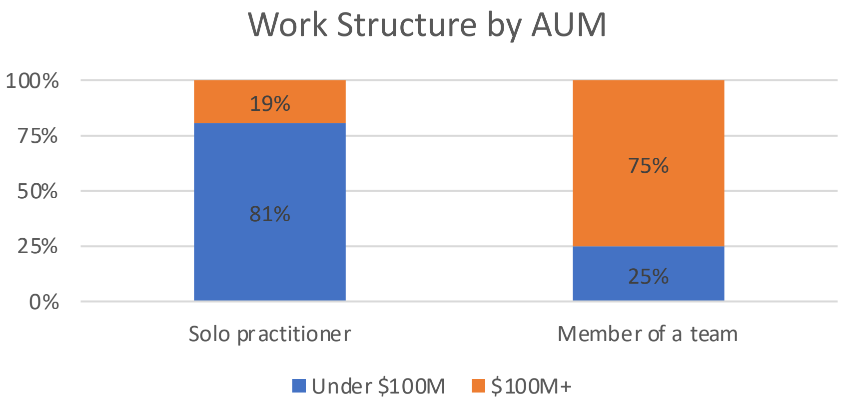


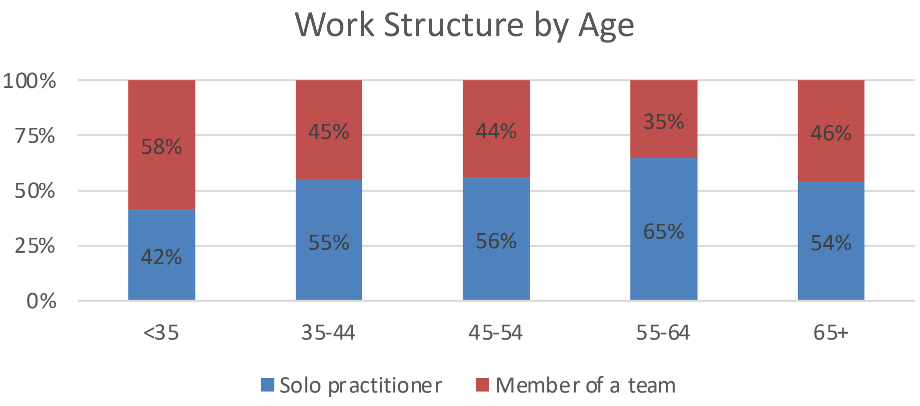
Q6. What is the total value of the assets that clients hold with you? If you work in a team, please select the option corresponding to the team's total assets under management.

Advisors tend to work alone, except in some cases

We also asked several questions to understand how advisors do their work and what support is available to them. Advisors are somewhat more likely to be solo practitioners (56%) than members of a team (44%).

That work structure is highly dependent on several factors. The vast majority (81%) of solo practitioners work in smaller practices with under $100 million in assets under management; on the other side of the coin, three quarters (75%) of team workers are at practices over that level. We also found an interesting pattern by advisor age. Most age breaks show approximately the same breakdown as the overall sample. Advisors age 55 to 64 are more likely to strike out on their own (65%). On the other hand, advisors under age 35 are the only ones more likely to be members of a team (58%).

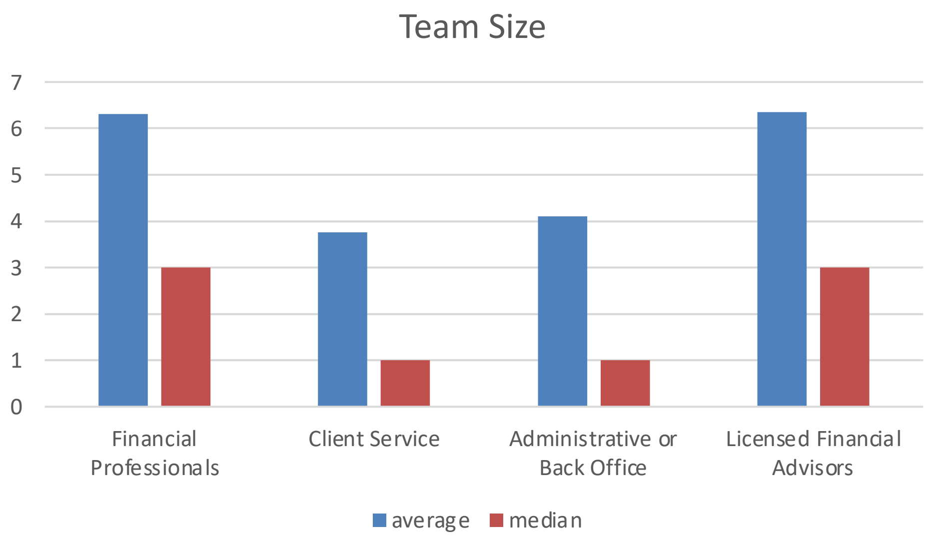




Q3. Do you work independently or on a team with other advisors or planning specialists?

The typical team is small – with some large exceptions

For advisors who work in teams, size and structure vary widely. The graph at right shows the Average and Median number of financial professionals, client service and administrative/back office support, and licensed financial advisors. The differences between those two measures show the impact of the small number of practices with dozens of team members, or more – the vast majority of responses.



Q4. Including yourself, how many members are on your team?
Q5. Including yourself, how many of your team are licensed financial advisors?

Staying Informed:

How Advisors Get Their Information

How do you learn about fund issuers and follow general market and investing news? What matters for an effective website?

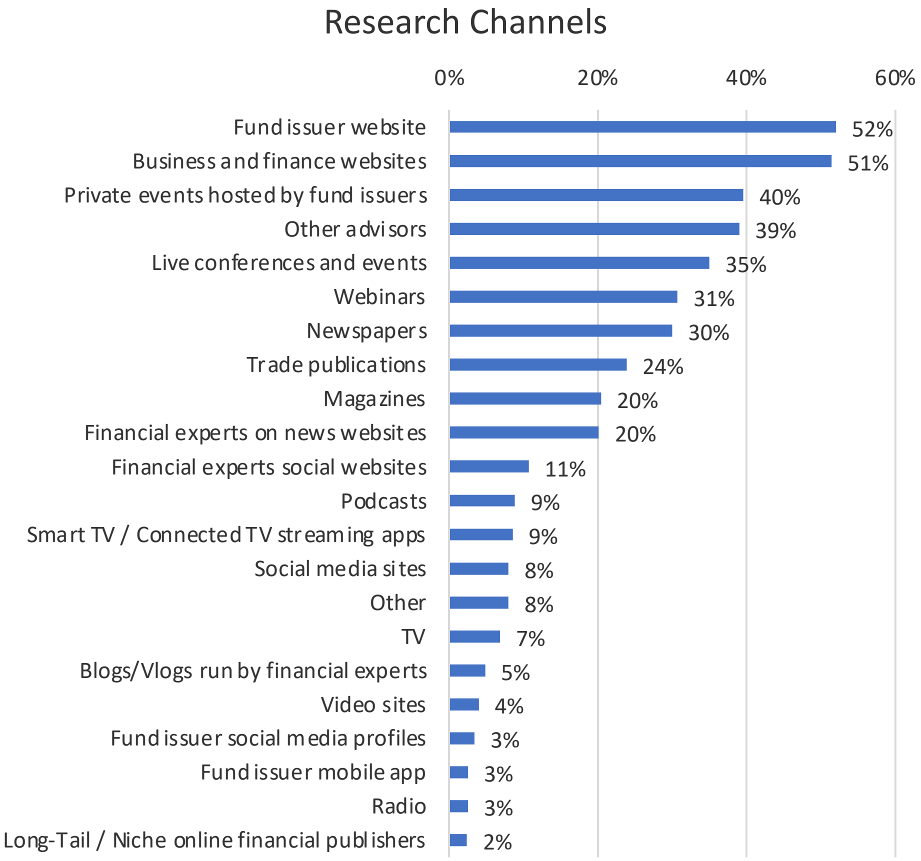
Advisors research and interact with fund issuers through digital and traditional methods

Advisors today work in a complex industry, with a variety of investment strategies, options and providers to consider. As they do their research around fund families specifically, they have a wide variety of tools at their disposal. To begin to understand their decision-making process, we asked our respondents about the research channels they use.

Financial advisors make common use of a variety of research channels. The most popular approach we saw was from advisors going straight to the source – fund issuers themselves. Fund issuer websites continue to be the most popular option, used by more than half of all advisors (52%); fund issuers' private events were third (40%). Those popular options also illustrate a recurring theme across our advisor surveys over time – that advisors use a mix of modern digital resources alongside traditional, often in-person methods. Just as advisors interface with fund issuers online and face to face, their other research falls into both types of channel.

On the digital front, other business and news websites were the second most popular choice (51%), with webinars (31%) and financial experts online (20%) and via social media (11%) also common. Those resources are mixed in with traditional options. Personal interactions with other advisors (39%) and live conferences and events (35%) also rose to the top; advisors also commonly use traditional sources like newspapers (30%), trade publications (24%) and magazines (20%).

Q12. What channels do you use to research and gather information about fund issuers, their funds and fund performance?

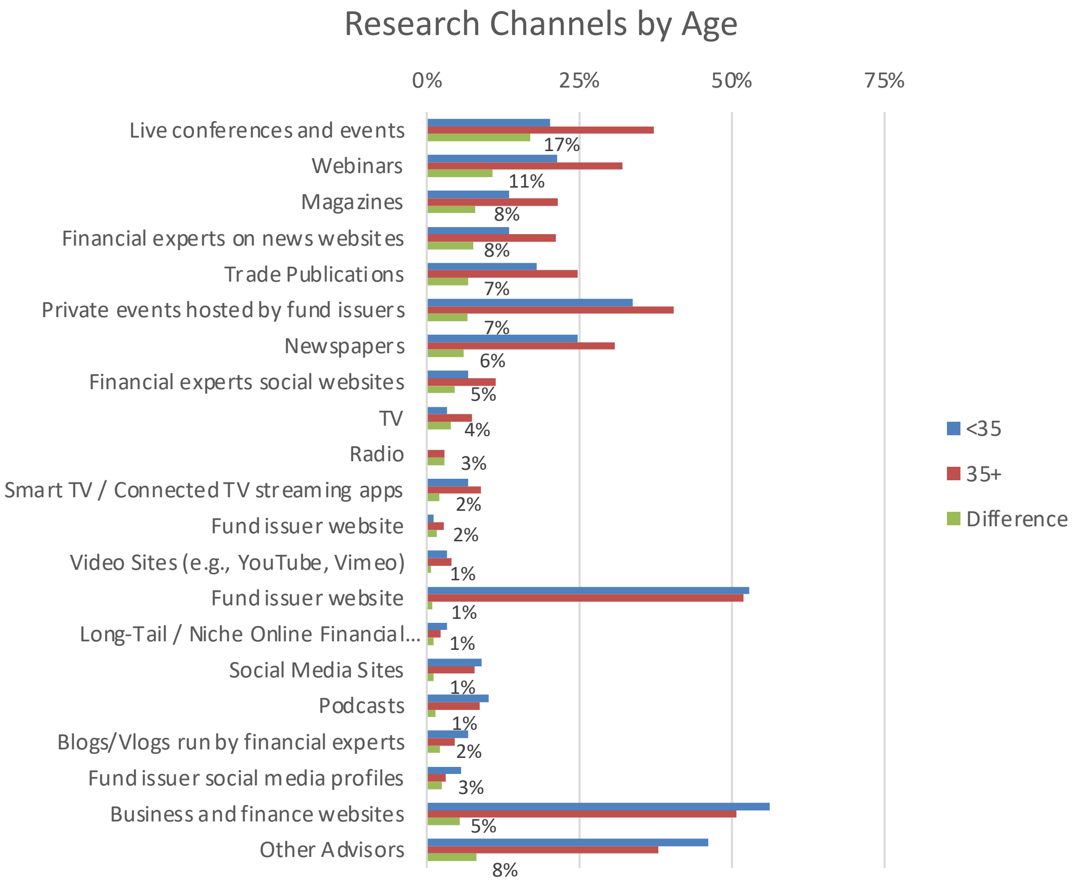


Advisors research and interact with fund issuers through digital and traditional methods

We dug further into these channels by advisor age. The graph at right plots the difference between Millennial advisors and their older counterparts. At the top are the most preferred by older advisors, with the ones most preferred by Millennials at the bottom.

Interestingly, older advisors show a marked preference for events – both live conferences (37% to 20%) as well as webinars (32% to 21%); they are also more likely to prefer fund issuer events (40% to 34%). Their other preferences also tend toward in-depth, mainly traditional methods – magazines, trade publications, and newspapers. They do have a noticeable preference for financial experts on news websites and social media. On the whole, older advisors may appear to have more time to dedicate to in-depth research methods.

The Millennial preferences are by smaller margins. The most significant one is other advisors (46% to 38%) – perhaps relying on more experienced advisors for mentorship. Their other preferences suggest greater inclination to websites, social media, blogs/vlogs and podcasts.



Q12. What channels do you use to research and gather information about fund issuers, their funds and fund performance?

Websites must provide fund info and overall functionality

As seen on the previous slide, fund issuer websites are the most common research channel for financial advisors. Given their importance to advisors, an effective website is key. To understand how advisors are using issuer websites and what their preferences are, we asked respondents to rank the 10 features and attributes at right. We measured the average rank for each feature along with the percent of respondents who placed it at the top, or in their top three. The most differentiation emerged with the top three rankings, which fell out consistently. The average ranks clustered between four and six, with the same features rising to the top and falling to the bottom.

Those top choices reflected both the importance of effective design and support as well as robust content. An easily findable and navigable website was the overall top choice, with reachable customer service in third. Content took the second and fourth spots – fund details, and thought leadership/market commentary, respectively.

More advanced functionality – both overall, and specific to advisors' business – placed lower down the rankings. That includes a responsive, mobile-friendly website as well as a filterable fund library, a practice management center, and screeners and similar tools.

Feature	Average	Top Rank	Top Three
Advisor-focused website is easy to reach and navigate	4.19	20%	49%
Relevant, concise fund information is provided	4.24	17%	47%
Contacting customer service is easy via phone/chat	5.63	11%	29%
Up-to-date thought leadership and other expert market commentary are readily available	5.39	11%	31%
Site registration is quick and easy	5.30	10%	31%
Responsively designed website allows access to well-presented information from any device	5.84	8%	24%
Site remembers info and caters content to user's needs	5.90	6%	27%
Fund library is easy to filter	5.89	6%	23%
Site contains a practice management resource center	6.52	5%	17%
Site contains screeners and other tools	6.09	5%	22%

Q27. Rate the importance of the following features of a fund issuer/asset manager's advisor-focused website.

Keeping in Touch:

Fund Issuer Communications

How and when do you prefer to receive communication? Which content is most important to your work? How well do communications meet your expectations?

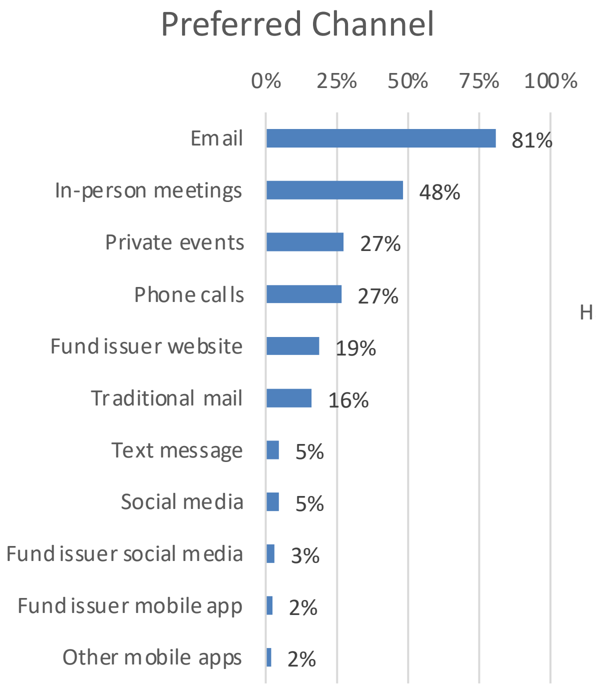
Advisors’ preferences balance digital with face-to-face contact

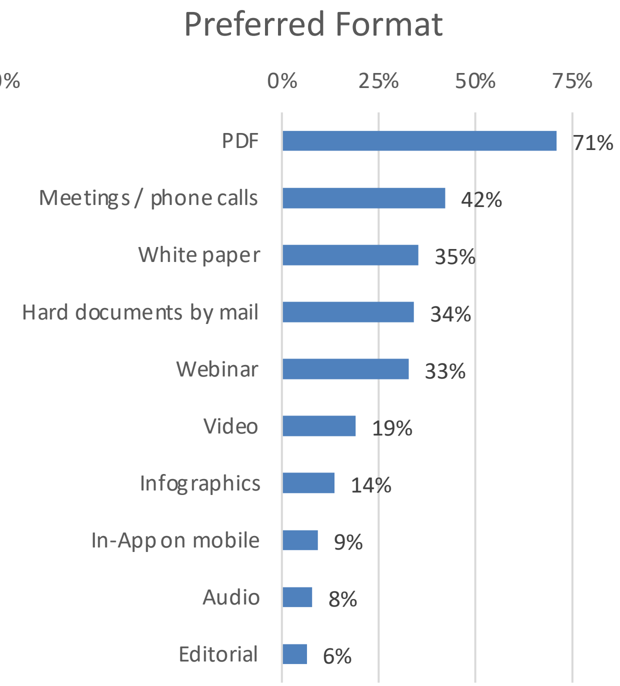
Outside of research, we also delved deeper into how advisors like to communicate back and forth directly with fund issuers. For those communications, we asked about their preferred channels and formats. Both of those questions reiterated the mix in today’s advisors’ business between traditional, personal contact and newer digital methods.

Across both questions, the top choice by far underscored the convenience of the online channel in advisors’ busy schedules – similar to the prominence of websites for research. Their preferred channel was email (81%), and preferred format was a PDF attachment or download (71%). The drop-off after those options was steep.

On the other hand, when it comes to traditional methods, the next most popular channels were in-person meetings (48%), private events and phone calls (both at 27%). Meetings or phone calls were also the second most preferred format (42%). Interestingly, mail as a channel came in at 16%, a marked drop from 30% in 2015, while hard documents via mail dropped from 48% to 34%. Both data points show a clear shift away from that slower method, more directly replaceable by technology.

Lower down both lists are continuations of mixed methods, e.g. websites (19%) and mail (16%) among channels, or mailed documents (34%) and webinars (33%) for formats.





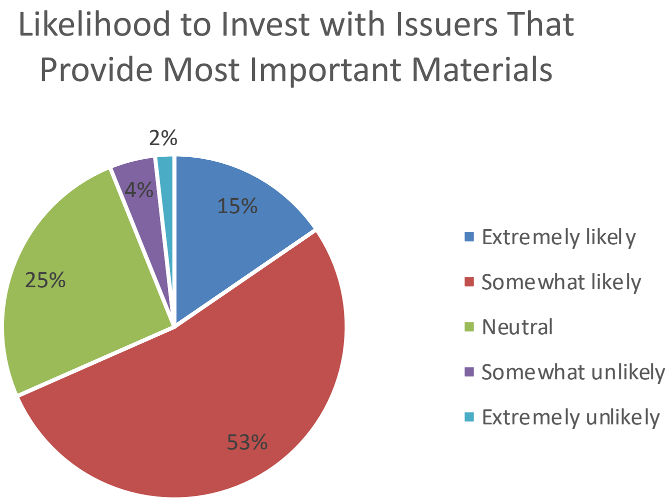
Q11. Through which channels do you prefer to be contacted when receiving information from fund issuers?
Q23. In what format do you prefer to receive information from fund issuers?

Content matters, and fund issuers can win business with relevant offerings

Next, we took a deeper look at the types of content advisors need for their business. We asked respondents to rate how interested they were in receiving each type of fund issuer communications on a scale from one (“Not at all interested”) to five (“Extremely interested”). The following slides present our respondents’ ratings of content in four categories:

I. Fund information and research materials
II. Fund issuer information and marketing content
III. Practice management support
IV. Educational materials

There is a lot of analysis of different advisor preferences in the following slides, but fund issuers would be well-served to pay close attention. More than two thirds of advisors in our survey (68%) said they were somewhat or extremely likely to do business with issuers who provide their most important materials.



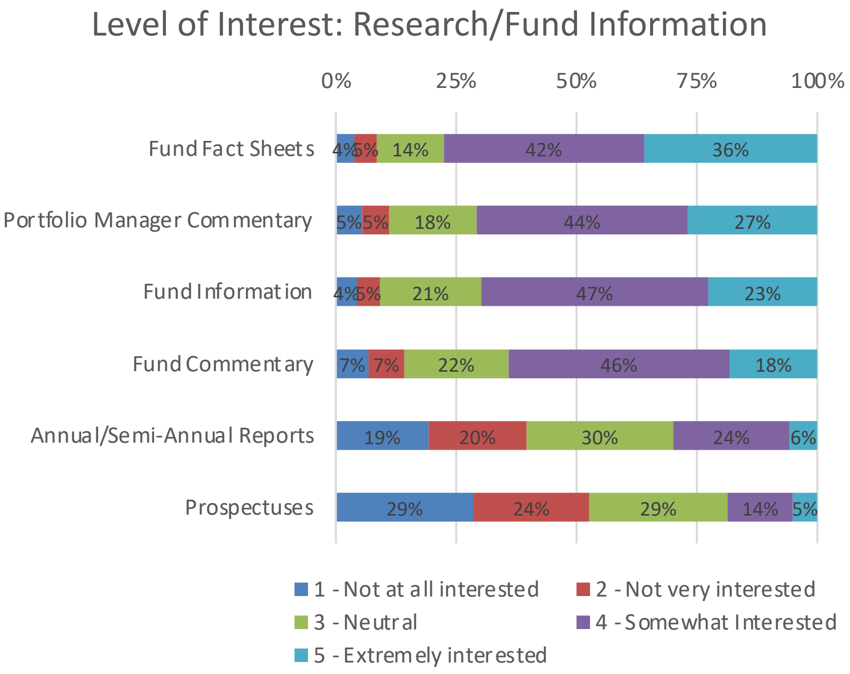
Q18-21b. You mentioned that [content types from previous questions] are important to you. If an issuer with which you currently don't do any business provided you with this type of material, how likely would you be to invest with them?

I. Fund information should be brief but insightful

To start, we asked about the most important materials for learning about funds themselves. The top choice, looking at either “extremely interested” responses (top box) or “somewhat” or “extremely interested” (top two box), were fund fact sheets - likely reflecting the importance of these concise resources to fit into advisors’ busy schedules.

That’s not to say advisors have no interest or bandwidth for more in-depth perspectives. Commentary from portfolio managers themselves placed second. More robust fund information was third, with fewer top box but similar top two box scores. Fund commentary placed fourth.

The least important materials by a sizable margin were obligatory annual or semi-annual reports and prospectuses. The overall order of elements roughly matches what we have seen in years past.



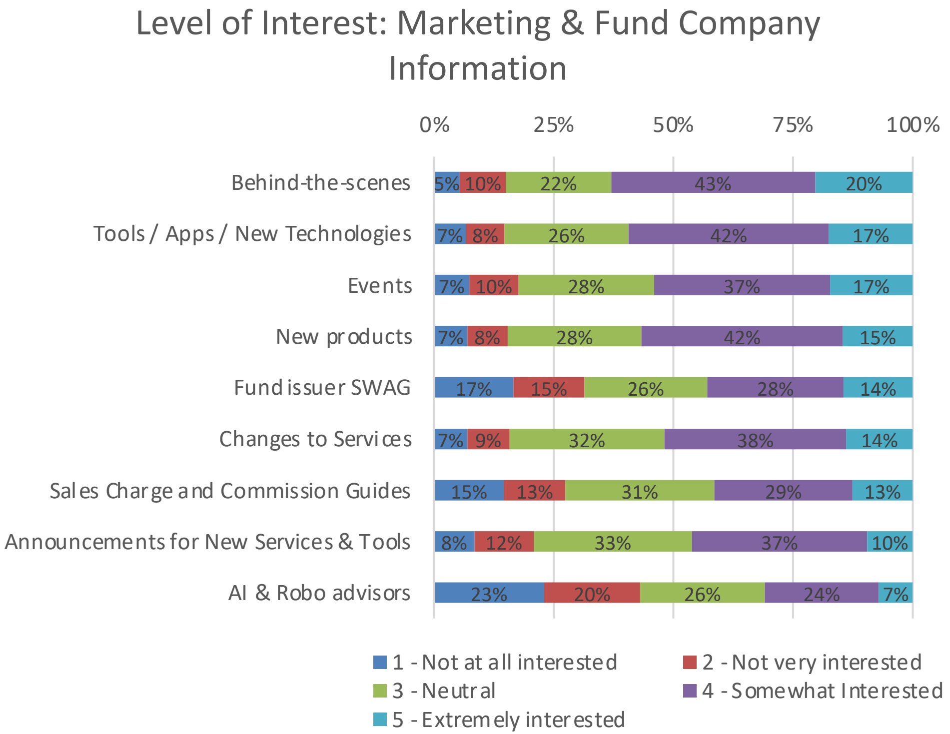
Q19. Using a scale of 1 to 5 where “1” is “Not at all interested” and “5” is “Extremely interested,” please indicate your level of interest in receiving the following Marketing & Fund Company Information from fund issuers.

II. Inside perspectives and timely updates on fund companies are most important

Aside from just their offerings, financial advisors are also interested in learning more about providers themselves. The top choice was behind-the-scenes information about the companies and their processes. One in five advisors (20%) indicated they were extremely interested, while nearly two thirds (63%) gave it a top two box rating. In our past survey, this was a close second, still showing very strong interest.

The next most valuable type of content were critical updates from fund issuers. These focus on new tools, apps or other technology (59% top two box); new products (57%); events (54%); or changes to services (52%). New technology rose to the top of the rankings in our 2015 survey. While still strong, perhaps the pace of technology relevant to advisors has slowed somewhat.

On the other end of the scale, the more polarizing items were fund issuer SWAG and information about artificial intelligence and robo-advisors. While there is some appeal for these things, 30% or 40% of advisors, respectively, indicated they were not interested.



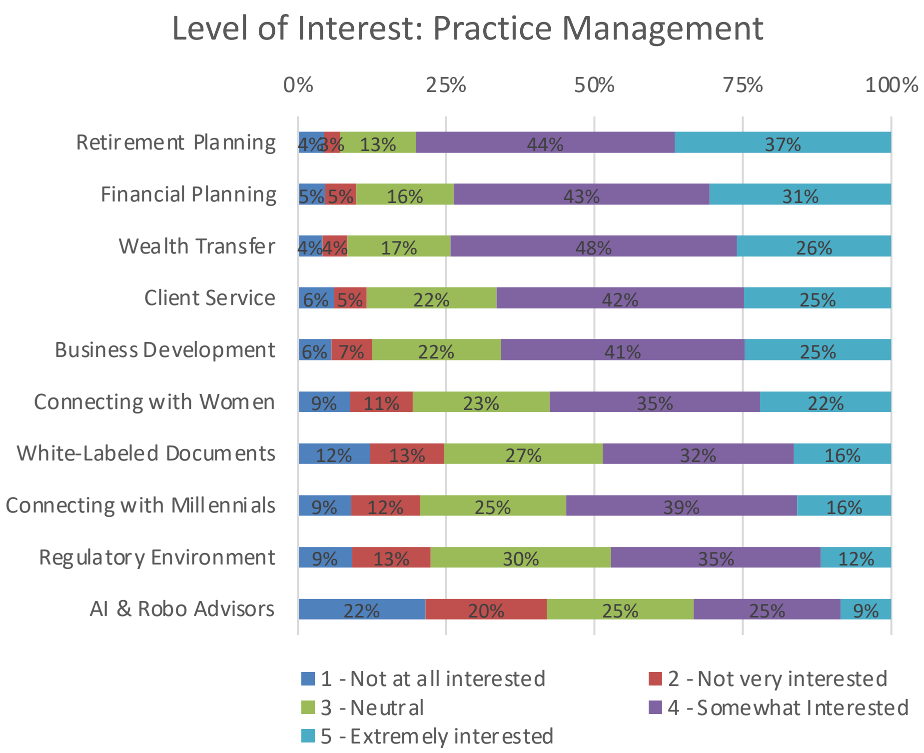
Q19. Using a scale of 1 to 5 where "1" is "Not at all interested" and "5" is "Extremely interested," please indicate your level of interest in receiving the following Marketing & Fund Company Information from fund issuers.

III. Practice management focuses on current business needs

Fund companies are also important sources for information to help advisors' manage and improve their business. The findings here tie back to details around advisors' practices overall, starting at the top. With the bulk of clients at or near retirement age, we found that retirement planning was the most important topic, by a six-point margin in both top box and top two box scores (37% and 80% total, respectively). That is no surprise, given the remaining older ages of the typical client; retirement planning has been top of our rankings in previous surveys. Relatedly, wealth transfer was second in top two box scores (74%) and third in top box (26%) – indicating a rise up the rankings since 2015.

More general topics also rose to the top – financial planning (31% top box), client service (25%), and business development (25%).

We also asked about information for connecting with specific audiences rising in importance for the financial advisory industry – women and Millennials. These topics seemed to be less top-of-mind for today's advisor, with a slight tilt toward women. By top box scores, women earned 22% and Millennials 16%, putting them at the bottom half of the rankings. However, top two box scores showed that there exists a higher level of moderate interest – over half of respondents for both (58% and 55%, respectively). Given the aging client base seen earlier in the survey, Millennial investors in particular should be a higher priority. However, they have only moved down the rankings since 2015, when they landed closer to the middle – and above information about female clients.

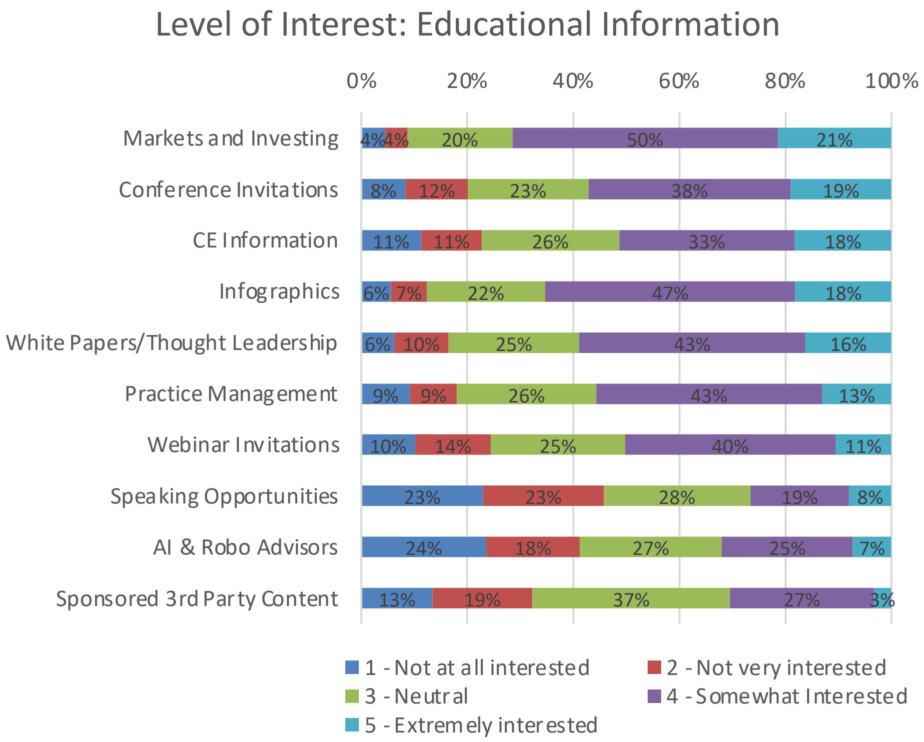


Q20. Using a scale of 1 to 5 where "1" is "Not at all interested" and "5" is "Extremely interested," please indicate your level of interest in receiving the following Practice Management items from fund issuers.

IV. Educational content should fit into advisors' busy schedules

Finally, fund companies can help financial advisors broader education in their craft. Nearly three quarters (71% top two box) were interested in ongoing education around markets and investing. They also liked to learn in person; conference invitations were second by top box scores (19%). Interestingly, despite the higher burden to attend, they preferred conferences to webinars (57% to 50% top box). Apparently, the networking and engagement benefits of conferences outweigh the convenience of the online version. Only a few advisors were interested in opportunities to speak themselves (8% top box).

In terms of materials, fund companies should make sure to provide both easy-to-consume infographics – 65% top two box, second overall by that measure – as well as more robust white papers or thought leadership pieces (59% top two box).



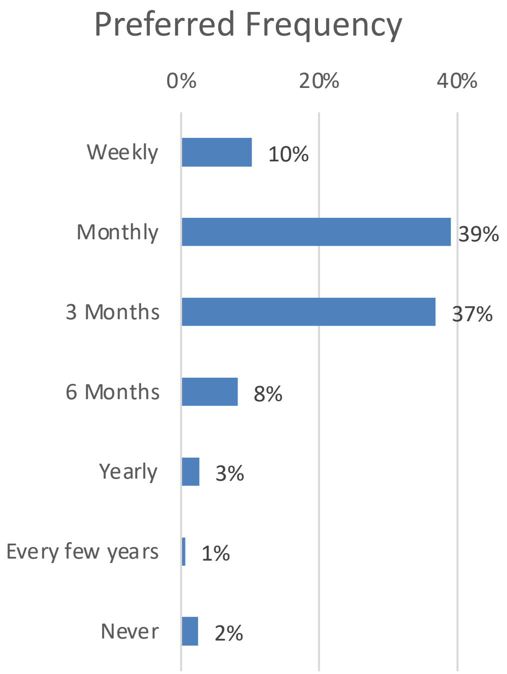
Q18. Using a scale of 1 to 5 where "1" is "Not at all interested" and "5" is "Extremely interested," please indicate your level of interest in receiving the following Educational Information from fund issuers.

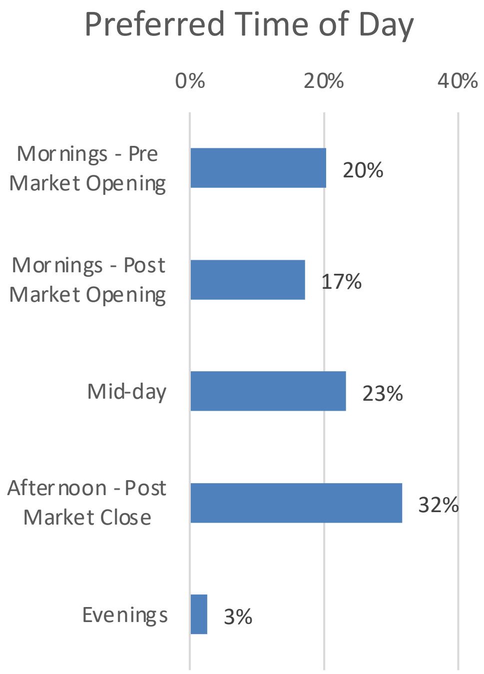
Advisors have clear frequency preferences, less so for day and time

Beyond the type of content, frequency and timing should also be of interest to fund issuers as they look to meet advisors' needs and keep them satisfied. For frequency, there emerged a clear consensus – and guidance to not over- or under-communicate. More than three quarters of advisors (76%) prefer communications on a monthly or quarterly basis. Interest in more or less frequent communications was much lower – about equal on either side. If anything, there is a slight shift in preference to a lower frequency of communications since 2015.

Advisors also showed different preferences for when communications should fit into their workday. Nearly a third (32%) find it convenient to review fund issuer materials after market hours, the most popular choice. Earlier in the day saw lower preference, with somewhat more interest during the day (potentially over lunch – 23%) or before markets open (20%). Based on our results, after hours should be avoided.

Finally, when it came to day of the week, advisors did not have strong preferences. Each day received between 10% and 15% of responses, but by far the most popular choice was "Indifferent" at 43%.



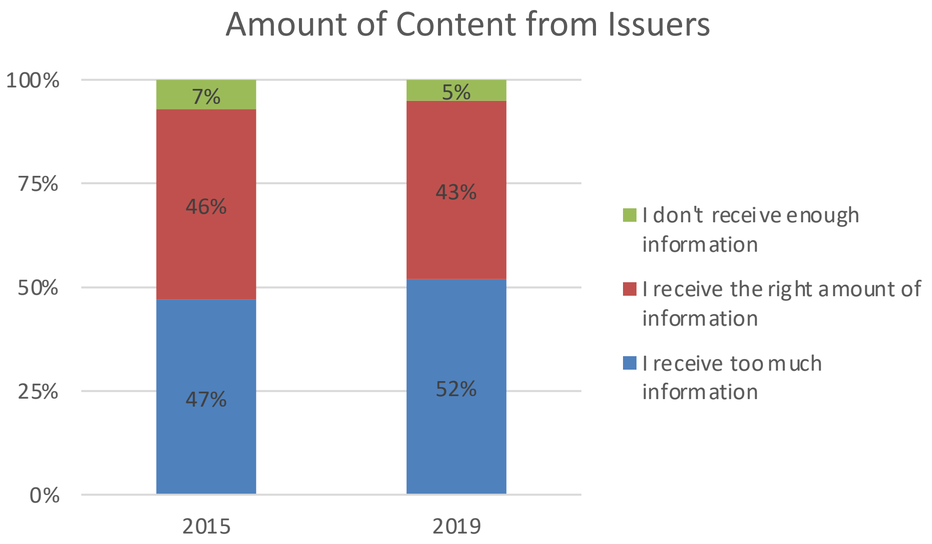


Q24. How frequently would you like to receive direct communication, or contact from fund issuers?
Q25. Is there a particular day of the week you would prefer to be contacted by fund issuers?
Q26. What times of the week would you prefer to be contacted by fund issuers?

Fund issuers are attentive to advisors' demand for information

Given advisors' various communication preferences, we probed into how well fund issuers are meeting demand. The results reflect strong efforts – in some cases, too strong. Only 5% of advisors say they do not receive enough content from issuers. A good number (43%) report receiving the right amount of information. The majority, though, receive too much (52%). That is a slight increase since 2015, either showing an unwanted increase in fund issuer communications or less tolerance for such communications from advisors.

The takeaway is that issuers can afford to be a bit more selective with their content, focusing on quality rather than quantity. They can also learn more about the advisors they service and tailor the information they share accordingly. For instance, advisors with 20-29 years of experience were more likely to complain of too much content (56%). Less experienced advisors were somewhat more likely to be interested in more information from issuers – although still at a low level (9% of advisors with less than five years of experience). Team members were also more likely to say they receive too much information (57%) than solo practitioners (47%) – perhaps counting on staff to help with related tasks.



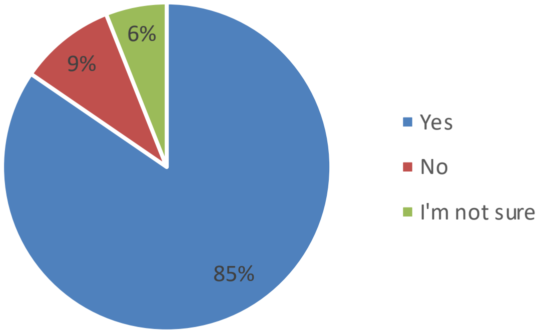
Q14. When you think about the amount of content and materials you receive from issuers, how much information do you typically receive?

Fund issuers reach out to offer support, as financial advisors want

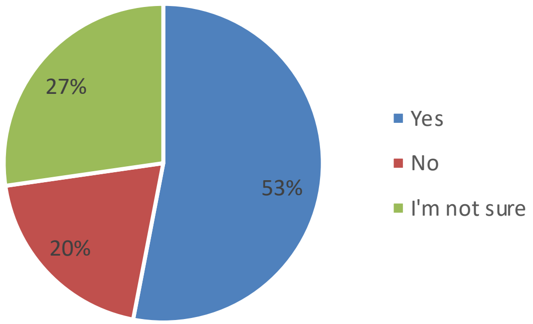
To better understand the relationship between financial advisors and fund issuers, we asked whether advisors ever had an issuer reach out about their needs and how they could help. Overall, the vast majority said that yes, fund issuers had – 85%, an increase from 2015 when 80% (still a high number) gave the same answer. All signs point to that being a welcome effort on issuers' part. For those who did not receive outreach, more than half (53%) said they would like to. Advisors cited a wide variety of situations or events in which they would appreciate support, from market conditions to complex planning topics to conferences to due diligence.

Fund issuers seem to do a good job not overlooking most of their possible clientele. Looking at responses by AUM, most segments reported overwhelmingly that fund issuers had reached out (roughly 90% each). The one exception was under $25 million, where a relatively lower percentage responded positively to the question – but still a strong majority at 70%.

Fund Issuer Outreach



If Not, Interest in Outreach



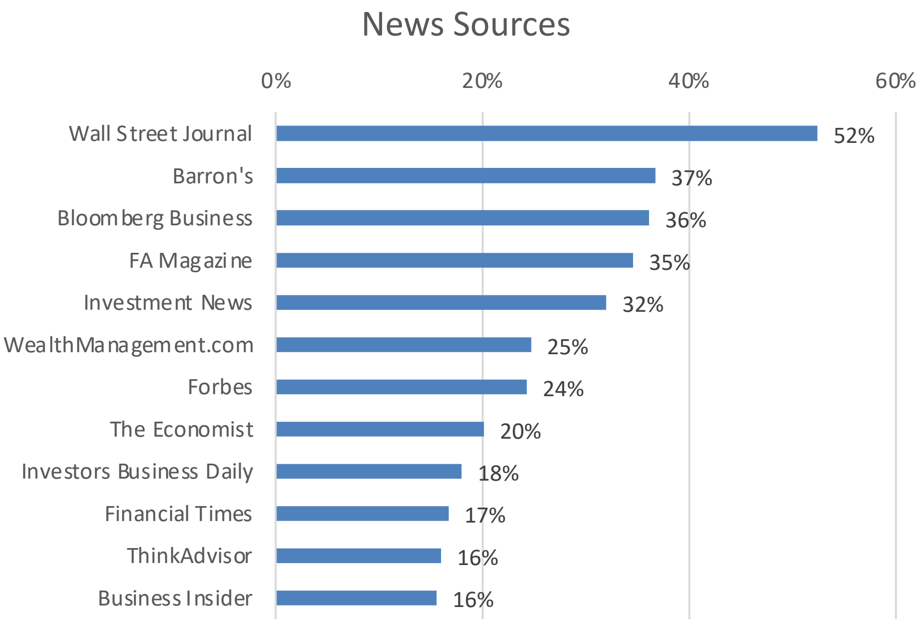
Q13. Has a fund issuer ever asked about your needs and how they can help?
Q13b. What type of events would trigger you to seek help, guidance or information from fund issuers?
Q13c. You indicated that you never receive content, or information from fund issuers that was personalized to your needs. Would you like to?

Financial advisors rely on a variety of independent news sources

Of course, an important part of financial advisors research, learning and overall information process comes from news sources outside of fund issuers. We asked respondents to choose the publications they read regularly. At the top of the list by a comfortable margin was *The Wall Street Journal*, read regularly by more than half of respondents (52%). Similar publications like *Barron's* (37%), *Bloomberg Business* (36%), *Forbes* (24%) and *The Economist* (20%) also proved popular. Several trade publications rose to the top as well, e.g. *FA Magazine* (35%) or WealthManagement.com (25%).

There was a significant drop-off from the sources posted at right. No other sources earned more than 5%. We also left an open-end for respondents to add ones we might have missed – those entries include such sources as *The New York Times*, *CNBC*, *CNN*, *Kiplingers*, *MarketWatch*, *Morningstar*, *Seeking Alpha*, *Stansberry Research*, *Thomson One*, or *Yahoo! Finance*.

We found some interesting generational differences with these sources. For instance, advisors 65+ were more likely to read *The Wall Street Journal* (58%) or *Financial Times* (25%). On the other hand, advisors under age 35 preferred *Business Insider* (30%).



Q15 Which news sources do you read regularly?

Staying Connected:

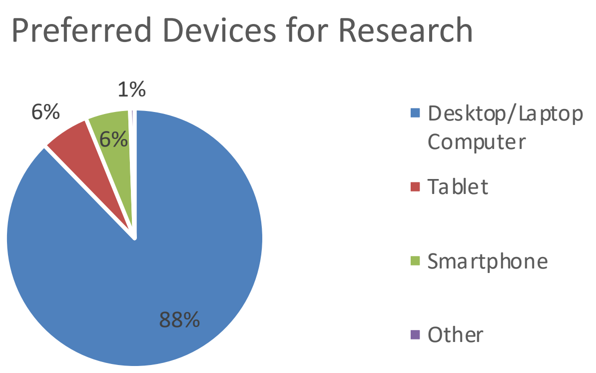
Devices & Technology

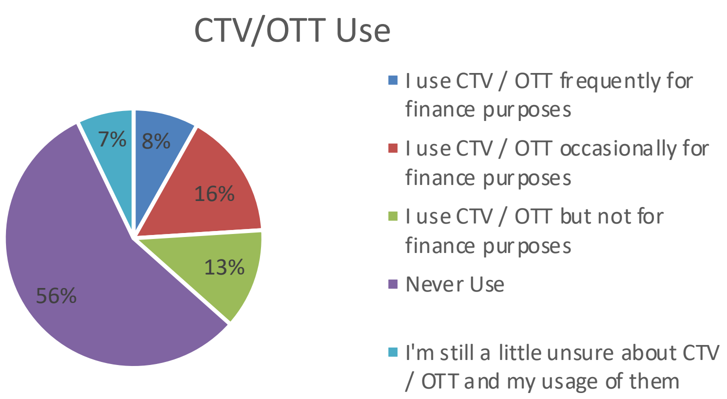
What devices do you use? Which ones do you prefer? Do you move between different devices throughout your workday? When do you use particular devices?

Advisors prefer to do research on a desktop or laptop computer

In order to better understand how technology features in advisors' day-to-day business, we started with a question around which devices they prefer to use. It should come as no surprise that desktop or laptop computers are by far the most popular. Very low numbers of advisors said they prefer doing research on mobile devices (6% each). Even looking at younger advisors, who may be much more reliant on their mobile devices, we did not see drastic chances in preference. Advisors under 35 were slightly more likely to prefer doing research on their smartphones but by a very small degree (9%). A small number of "other" responses cited print or newspapers as their preferred methods of conducting research – interestingly, from a mix of younger and older advisors.

For this year's survey, we added a new technology question around whether smart TV or connected TV (CTV), e.g. Bloomberg TV, Stock Charts TV, Asset TV, or over-the-top (OTT) services like Netflix or Roku are catching on for financial news and research. The majority of advisors (56%) say they never use such technology; only about a quarter (24%) frequently or occasionally consume finance-related content there. Younger advisors are more likely to use this technology, but barely more for finance purposes (27% among advisors under 35 years old).





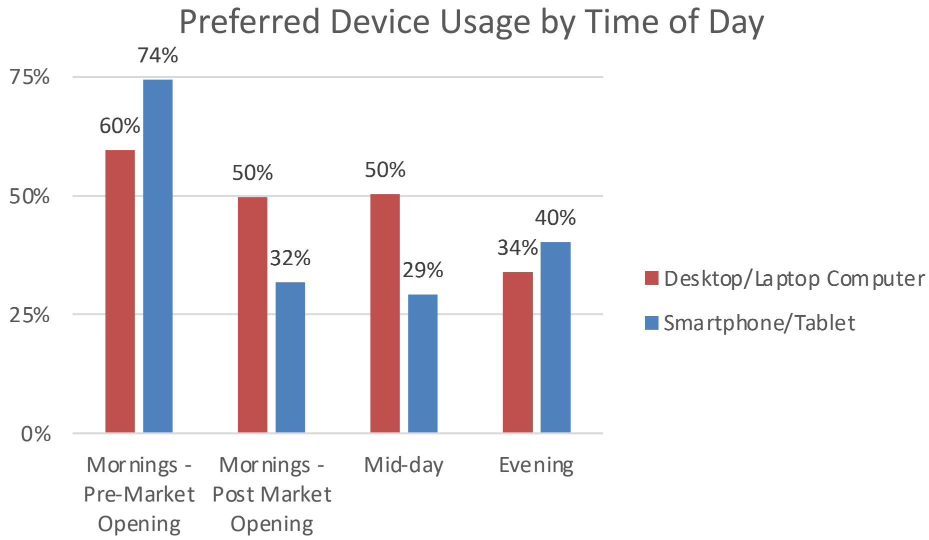
Q16b. Please select the device you prefer most to conduct research.
Q16c. Do you use Smart TV/Connected TV (CTV) (Bloomberg TV, Stock Charts TV, Asset TV) / OTT platforms (Roku, Netflix, etc.) to consume content about finance or investing?

Mobile devices are at their most popular during mornings and evenings

We asked respondents when they used their preferred devices throughout their workday – before and after market open, mid-day and evening. Interesting patterns emerged depending on whether respondents primarily use a computer or mobile device. For a desktop or laptop computer, usage tapers as the day goes on – half or more of those advisors use their computer in the morning and during the day, while a little more than a third (34%) use the device after hours.

For advisors who prefer a mobile device, usage differs, with an emphasis on the times when they may not be in their office. Nearly three quarters (74%) use their mobile device pre-market-opening – perhaps to be productive on their commute. Less than a third of advisors who prefer mobile devices use them during standard office hours. Then there's an uptick of usage after hours (40%).

This pattern provides useful guidance for stakeholders who might be building new or improved mobile advisor tools. Clearly, based on low usage during the workday, even for advisors who prefer mobile devices, a smartphone or tablet cannot replace a computer. Rather than replicate all functionality from a PC or online platform, mobile advisor tools should be designed for the situations where advisors rely on a smartphone or tablet without a computer available, e.g. out of the office or on the go.



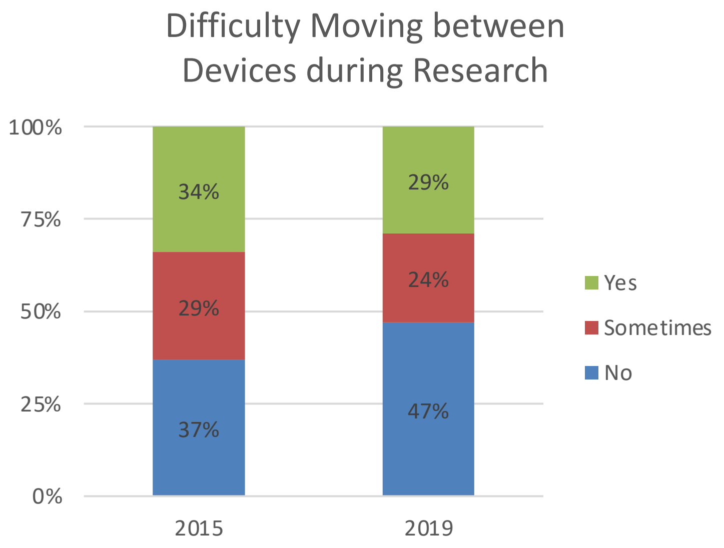
Q17. What parts of your workday do you use [your preferred device] to conduct research?

Moving between devices is becoming less of an issue for advisors

While the overall preference to conduct research on a laptop or desktop computer is clear, other devices clearly factor into financial advisors' processes. While not quite as powerful as computers, smartphones and tablets bring robust data to advisors' fingertips. This could entail additional pain points, though, as advisors leave off and resume research across different devices.

We asked respondents if that process presents a challenge to them in their research process. Nearly half (47%) said that they do not consider it a challenge – a marked increase from previous iterations of the survey and a positive sign that technology and habits are improving.

Interestingly, younger advisors were more likely to say that they do experience challenges moving between devices during research (40% of advisors under 35 years old, versus 29% overall). We might expect that to be reversed, since younger advisors are likely to be more fluent with technology. Instead, that result may be a sign that younger advisors are using more devices and switching between them more often, leading to occasional difficulties.



Q28. When conducting research, do you find it challenging starting on one device and then picking up where you left off on another device, especially on fund issuers' sites (For instance when you start your research on your desktop, then move to tablet to finish)?

Advisors Pick Their Favorites

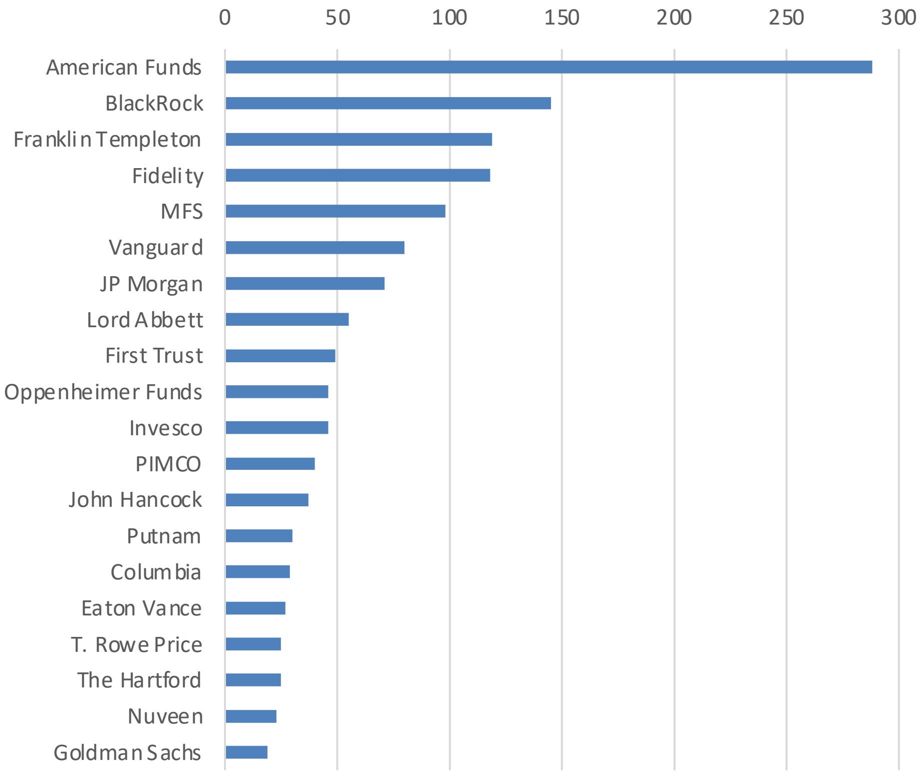
Which fund issuers do advisors most like to work with? What sets those issuers apart from the competition?

Although a large number of firms have their fans, several stood out from the pack

Given all these diverse preferences, it is worth hearing from advisors themselves on which of the firms they work with have distinguished themselves in meeting their needs. Specifically, we asked each respondent to name three fund issuers with whom they have liked working.

Respondents mentioned dozens of firms, showing the depth of options available to partner with; however, a smaller number of big names earned the most praise. Once again, American Funds stood out from the pack with nearly twice the mentions of the next highest firm, BlackRock – who have risen to number two since 2015. The other top 20 popular choices are at right, with few new firms appearing since previous surveys. We also took a look at the responses from the most valuable advisors, those with over $1 billion in AUM, which showed many of the same names rising to the top.

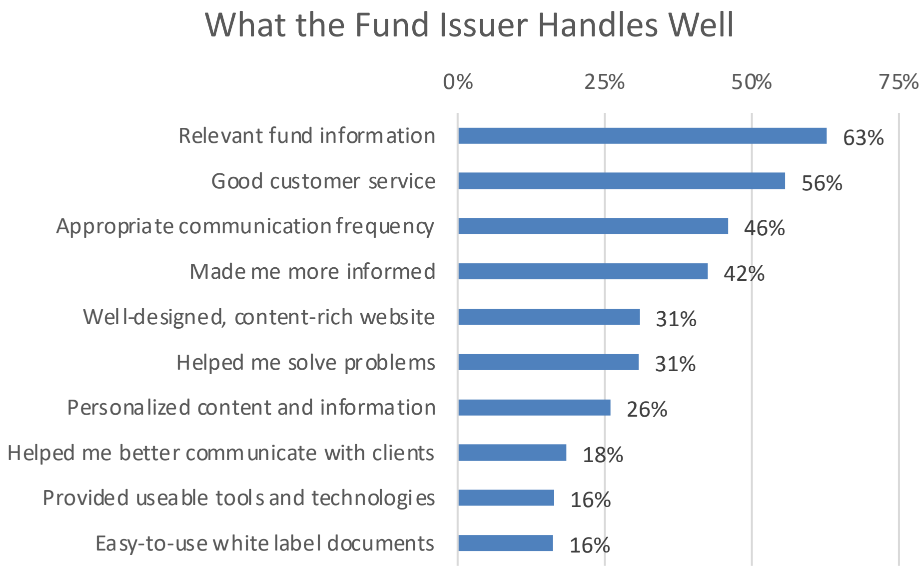
Most Mentions by Firm



Q29. Please provide three examples of fund issuers that you have liked working with.

Reasons emphasize service and content – consistent with other themes

We followed up with a question around what those top-performing fund issuers handle well, and the findings highlight many of the themes that emerged in our study. Relevant fund information was the most important choice, cited by nearly two thirds of respondents (63%). Beyond that core competency, the other choices reflect both the personal touch and effective digital strategies. The second most important factor was good customer service, selected by more than half of respondents (56%); related themes like helping to solve problems and overcome challenges were also commonly chosen (31%). On the digital side, communication frequency was important (46%), as was effective, informative content around industries, sectors, markets and the overall investment landscape (42%). Well-designed, content-rich websites mattered to about a third of respondents (31%). Change over time was limited; the top three were the same, and in the same order, as 2015.



Q30. What was it about the relationship that you believe the fund issuer handled well?

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InvestingChannel provides critical information on customer attributes, behaviors and needs, practical tools, content and visual design to drive smarter, more accurate conversations between marketers, advisors and their respective clients.

Corporate Insight provides competitive intelligence, consulting and user experience research to the nation's leading financial institutions and insurers.

For more than two decades, the firm has tracked technological developments in the online experience, identifying best practices in online banking and investing, mobile finance, social media and other emerging areas.

Thank you for you interest in the 2019 Advisor Brand Consumption study.

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