

Public Opinion Poll:
The Impact and Value of Chambers of Commerce
Research Summary
September 2024

Conducted By:



On Behalf Of:



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Background

The public’s positive perceptions about the impact that chambers of commerce have on the prosperity of their communities is immense, yet not often quantified at scale. In this landmark research, the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE), in partnership with The Harris Poll, explores U.S. adults’ perceptions of their local chamber of commerce, the role chambers play in their communities and the value of chamber membership to businesses.

Executive Summary

The majority of U.S. adults recognize the vast impact of their local chamber of commerce, including growing the local economy, addressing community challenges and influencing laws and policies. Most agree that their local chamber is a trusted resource and partner for businesses and, moreover, that it represents the collective voice of business in the community.

86% of U.S. adults who are familiar with their local chamber of commerce are satisfied with it. These positive sentiments also extend to businesses that belong to their local chamber; when U.S. adults know that a business is a chamber member, it positively impacts how favorably they view the business and influences their consumer behavior.

Although many U.S. adults personally lack confidence in explaining what a chamber of commerce is, they are interested in knowing more about what local chambers do in their communities. Storytelling efforts may enhance the positive perceptions of local chambers of members, increase awareness of their impact and benefit businesses that belong to them.

Key Findings

- **Chambers are Trusted:** 81% of U.S. adults agree that their local chamber is a trusted resource and partner for businesses. 90% feel that their local chambers has an impact on growing the local economy.
- **Chamber Membership Strengthens a Business's Reputation:** 64% of adults who are familiar with their local chamber are more likely to purchase goods and services for a business that they know is a member of their local chamber. 63% of these adults are more likely to recommend that business to someone else.
- **Chambers Serve Businesses and Communities:** 76% of U.S. adults agree that local chambers are stewards of a strong local economy. 74% believe local chambers create jobs and promote local community development. 72% believe local chambers play a key role in addressing community challenges.
- **Business Owners See the Value:** 65% of business owners see their local chamber as an advocate for initiatives and policies that are in the best interest of their business. 62% believe the chamber supports the growth and prosperity of their business.
- **People Want to Learn More About Their Local Chamber:** 70% of U.S. adults wished they knew more about the work their local chamber does in the community. Specifically, they are most commonly interested in learning more about the type of impact local chambers have in their community (49%), more general information about chambers of commerce (43%), and which local businesses are members (42%).

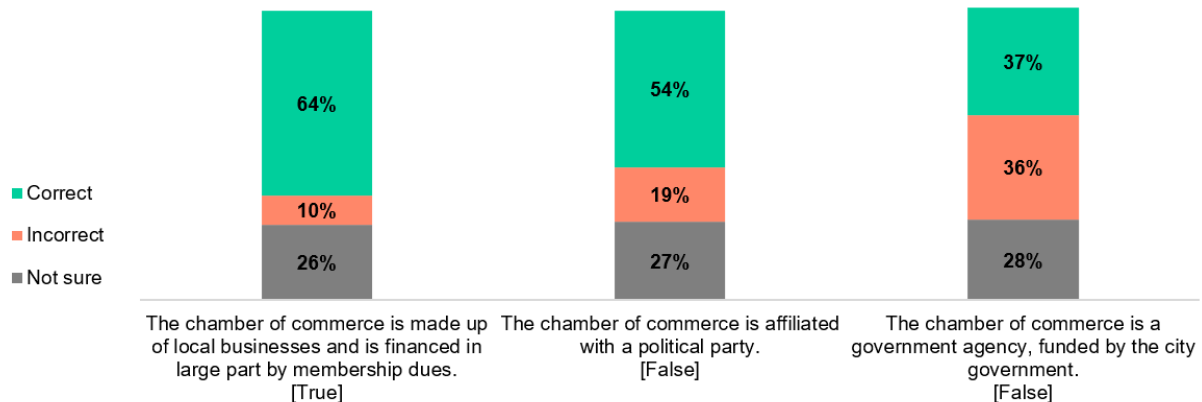
Research Findings

Knowledge About Local Chambers of Commerce

Just under half of U.S. adults (44%) are familiar with their local chamber of commerce. A similar proportion (50%) feel confident in explaining what a chamber of commerce is. Most (70%) wish they knew more about what local chambers do in their communities. Specifically, they want to know more about:

- The types of impact the local chamber of commerce has in their community (49%)
- More general information about chambers of commerce (43%)
- Which local businesses are members (42%)
- Who is on the chamber's board of directors (31%)
- Ways to get involved with the local chamber of commerce (27%)

Further education about chambers of commerce may help debunk misconceptions about them. Around two-thirds of U.S. adults (64%) know chambers are made up of businesses and are funded in large part by membership dues. Yet, 63% either incorrectly believe or are not sure if chambers are a government agency. Additionally, only about half (54%) recognize that chambers are nonpartisan.



Attitudes About Local Chambers of Commerce

86% of U.S. adults who are familiar with their local chamber of commerce are satisfied with it, including over a quarter (27%) who are very satisfied. U.S. adults recognize the variety of roles that local chambers play, namely:

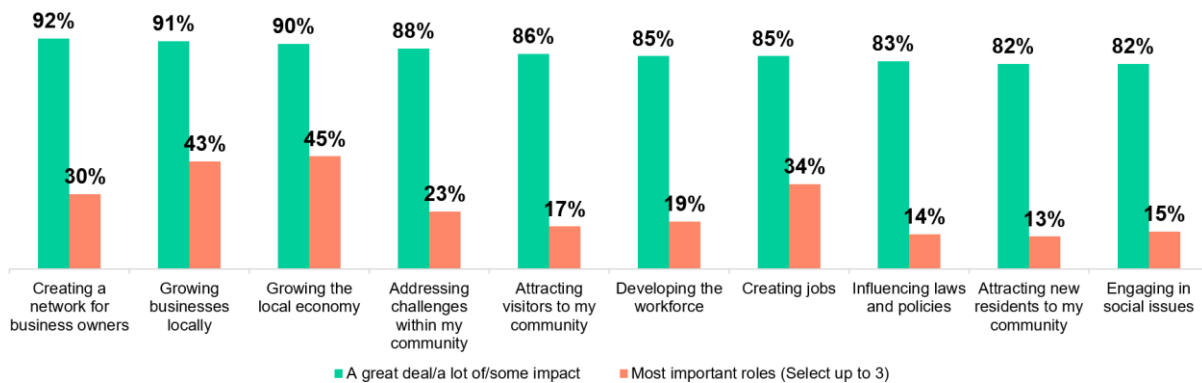
- Being a trusted resource/partner for businesses (81% strongly/somewhat agree)
- Representing the collective voice of businesses in their community (77%)
- Functioning as a storehouse of information on current business trends and public policies (77%) [Note: 92% felt this was very/somewhat accurate in 2007; 89% in 2012¹]
- Being a steward of a strong local economy (76%)

¹ Note, this question was asked as a scale (very accurate, somewhat accurate, not accurate at all) in 2007/2012 rather than an agree/disagree statement.

- Creating jobs and promoting local community development (74%) [Note: 82% felt this was very/somewhat accurate in 2007; 86% in 2012²]
- Playing a key role in addressing community challenges (72%)

Moreover, the perceived impact of the local chamber are evident. Over four in five U.S. adults feel that their local chamber of commerce has at least some impact on all of the aspects tested. The areas where U.S. adults cite the greatest impact are also generally aligned with the most important roles U.S. adults feel that the local chamber can play in the coming years. Most commonly, U.S. adults selected growing the local economy (45%), growing businesses locally (43%) and creating jobs (34%).

Impact and Importance of Roles a Local Chamber of Commerce Can Play

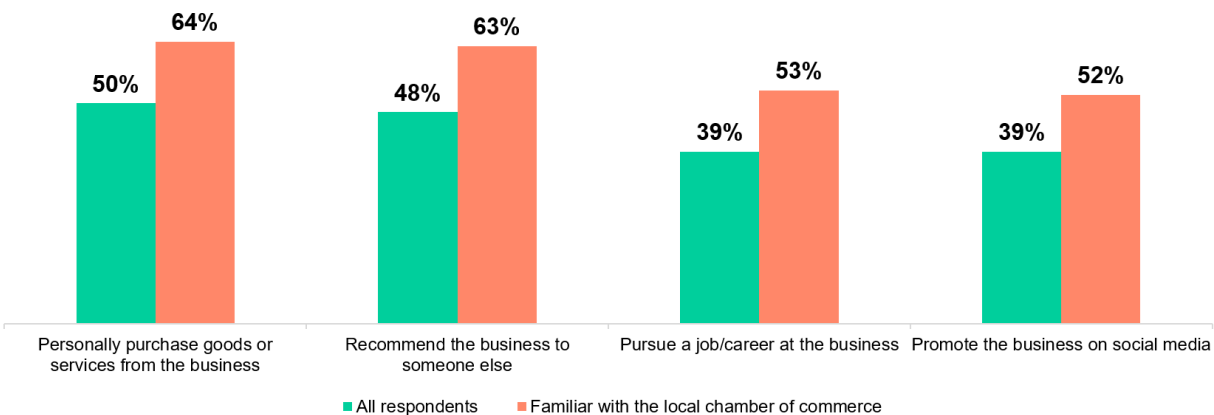


Impact of Local Chamber Membership on Consumer Outcomes

Around half of U.S. adults (47%) say if they knew that a local business was a member of the local chamber of commerce, it would make them view the business more favorably. Yet only two in five (40%) are familiar with which businesses are members of their local chamber.

Many would be more likely to take personal action, such as purchasing goods and services from the business (50%) or recommending the business to someone else (48%) if they knew a local

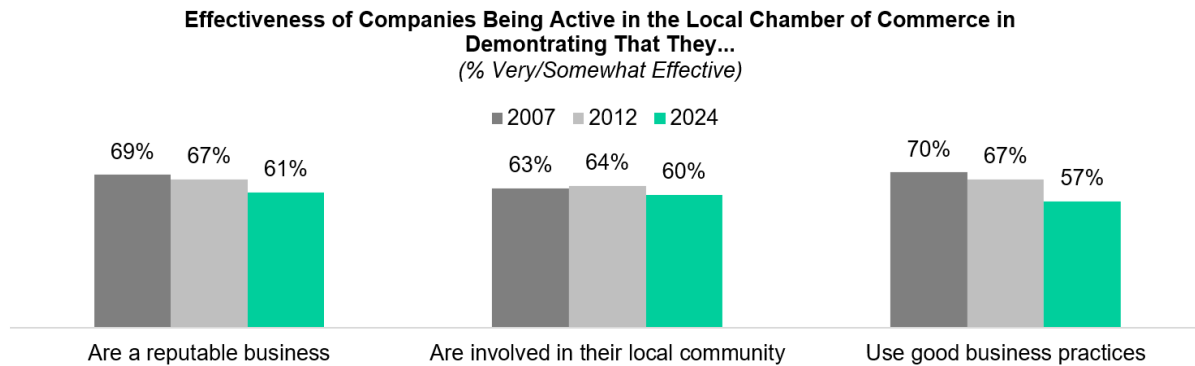
If you knew that a local business was a member of the local chamber of commerce, would it make you more or less likely to do each of the following? (*Much/somewhat more likely*)



² Note, this question was asked as a scale (very accurate, somewhat accurate, not accurate at all) in 2007/2012 rather than an agree/disagree statement.

business was a member. Likelihood of taking these actions is even greater among U.S. adults that are familiar with their local chamber of commerce.

Further, around three in five U.S. adults say that being active in the local chamber of commerce is a very/somewhat effective business strategy to demonstrate that they are reputable (61%), involved in the local community (60%) or that they use good business practices (57%).



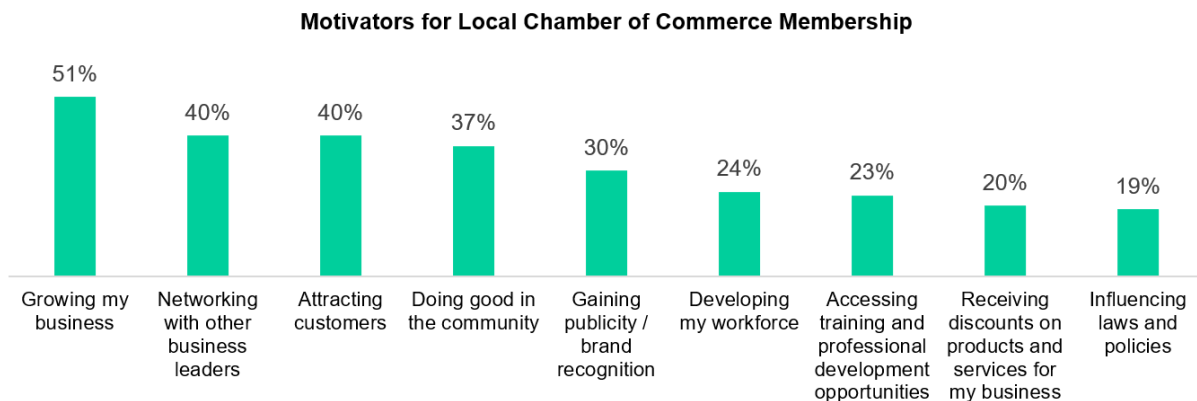
Subgroup Analysis

Business Owners

Most business owners (i.e., employed U.S. adults who are a CEO, owner or partner of their business) recognize the value of their local chamber of commerce, specifically that it:

- Advocates for initiatives/policies that are in the best interest of my business (65%)
- Supports the growth and prosperity of my business (62%)
- Is a trusted resource/partner for my business (60%)

Around half of business owners (47%) say that their business has ever been a member of their local chamber of commerce, including 31% who are current members. Of those who are not current members, around two in five (41%) say they are at least somewhat likely to become a member in the future³.



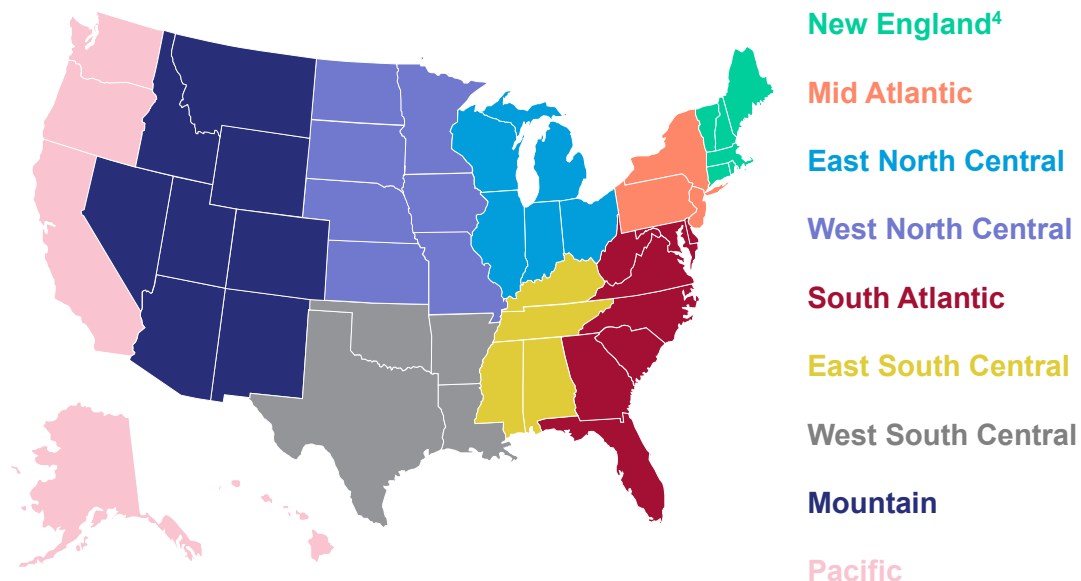
³ Note, small base size <100; interpret results directionally only.

When asked what would/did motivate them to join their local chamber, the top reasons cited are growing their business (51%), networking with other business leaders (40%) and attracting customers (40%).

Additional communication about the benefits of membership may help convey the value of the local chamber. 56% of business owners say they do not fully understand all the benefits that membership would bring to their business and 66% wish they knew more about these benefits.

Region

Note: Highlighted differences are significant compared to 3+ other regions:



Generally, similar proportions across the regions (36%-51%) feel familiar with their local chamber of commerce. However, there are some distinct regional differences when it comes to U.S. adults' attitudes about these organizations. Adults in the East South Central, West South Central and Mid Atlantic regions are more likely to see the impact of their local chamber. Meanwhile, those in the West North Central region are more skeptical of their local chamber's impact. The impact of chamber membership on consumer outcomes varies between regions as well.

Those in **New England** are more likely to...



- Feel that being active in the local chamber of commerce is at least a slightly effective strategy for demonstrating that a company uses good business practices (93% vs. 80-86% of other regions) or that it is a reputable business (96% vs. 85-93%)
- Know that the chamber of commerce is not a government agency, funded by the city government (57% knew this was False vs. 31-48%)

⁴ Note, small base size <100; interpret results directionally only

Those in the **Mid Atlantic** region are more likely to...



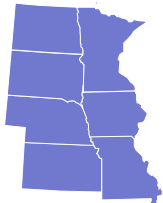
- Feel that being active in the local chamber of commerce is a very effective strategy for demonstrating that a company uses good business practices (28% vs. 15-26%)
- Feel very confident explaining to others what a chamber of commerce is (19% vs. 8-23%)
- Feel that their local chamber of commerce has a great deal of impact on influencing laws and policies (20% vs. 7-20%) and growing businesses locally (28% vs. 12-27%)
- Say that if they knew a local business was a member of the local chamber of commerce, they would view the business much more favorably (17% vs. 5-17%) and would be much more likely to recommend the business to someone else (23% vs. 12-20%) or to promote the business on social media (18% vs. 7-16%)

Those in the **East North Central** region...



- Mirror the national total and have few significant differences.

Those in the **West North Central** region are more likely to...



- Feel not at all confident explaining to others what a chamber of commerce is (32% vs. 18-28%)
- Feel that their local chamber of commerce has no impact on creating jobs (26% vs. 9-17%) or influencing laws and policies (26% vs. 12-22%)
- Feel that growing businesses locally is among the top 3 most important roles a local chamber of commerce can play in the coming years (53% vs. 34-54%).
- Disagree that the local chamber of commerce:
 - Plays a key role in addressing community challenges (38% disagree vs. 21-31%).
 - Is a steward of a strong local economy (34% disagree vs. 19-30%).
 - Represents the collective voice of business in their community. (34% disagree vs. 20-27%).
- Strongly disagree that they wish they knew more about what local chambers of commerce do in their communities (19% vs. 7-13%)
- Say that if they knew a local business was a member of the local chamber of commerce, it would have no impact on their likelihood of recommending the business to someone else (60% vs. 37-51%) or their likelihood to pursue a job / career at the business (66% vs. 47-60%).

Those in the **South Atlantic** region are more likely to...



- Not understand that the chamber of commerce is made up of local businesses and is financed in large part by membership dues (40% said this is False or were not sure vs. 26-40%).

Those in the **East South Central** region are more likely to...



- Feel very confident explaining to others what a chamber of commerce is (23% vs. 8-19%)
- Incorrectly believe that the chamber of commerce is a government agency, funded by the city government (48% said this was True vs. 18-38% of other regions)
- Feel that their local chamber of commerce has a great deal / a lot of impact on growing the local economy (66% vs. 47-58%), attracting visitors to their community (56% vs. 39-51%), and influencing laws and policies (57% vs. 29-41%) AND to feel it has a great deal of impact on addressing challenges within their community (25% vs. 12-18%) and developing the workforce (25% vs. 2-21%)
- Strongly agree that the local chamber of commerce represents the collective voice of business in their community (34% vs. 18-26%)
- Say that if they knew a local business was a member of the local chamber of commerce, they would be much more likely to pursue a job / career at the business (21% vs. 7-17%)

Those in the **West South Central** region are more likely to...



- Feel that their local chamber of commerce has a great deal / a lot of impact on attracting visitors to their community (51% vs. 39-56%) and engaging in social issues (47% vs. 26-46%)
- Say that if they knew a local business was a member of the local chamber of commerce, they would view the business much more favorably (17% vs. 5-17%)
- Feel that developing the workforce is among the top 3 most important roles their local chamber of commerce can play in the coming years (28% vs. 14-24% of other regions)

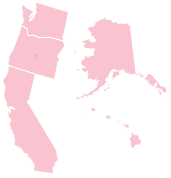
Those in the **Mountain** region are more likely to...



- Be very unfamiliar with their local chamber of commerce (36% vs. 17-30%).
- Say they are not familiar at all with which businesses in their community are members of their local chamber of commerce (42% vs. 22-38%).
- Know that the chamber of commerce is not a government agency, funded by the city government (48% knew this was False vs. 31-57%) and that it is not affiliated with a political party (66% knew this was False vs. 48-65%).

- Feel that growing businesses locally is among the top 3 most important roles a local chamber of commerce can play in the coming years (54% vs. 34-53%).

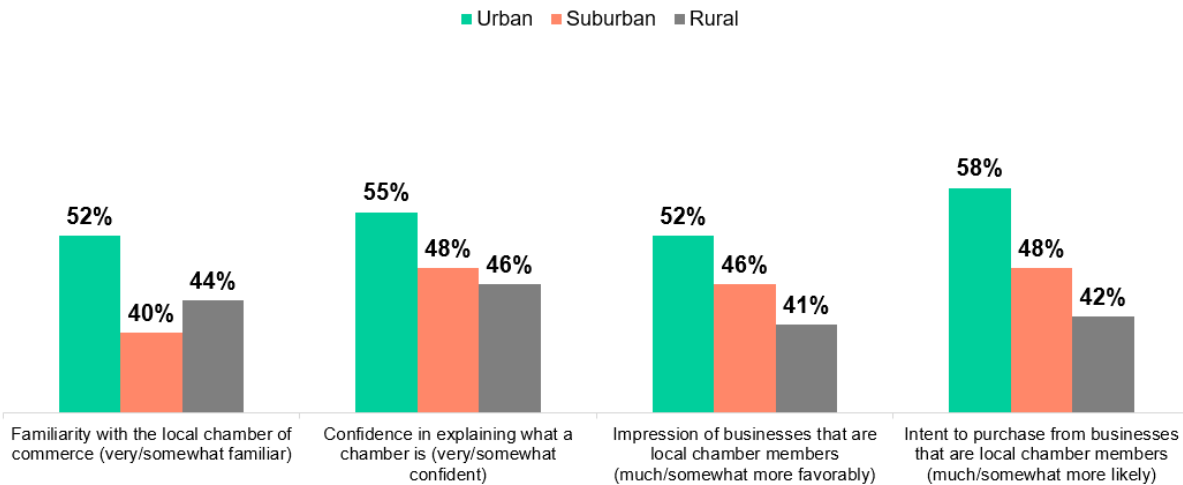
Those in the **Pacific** region are more likely to...



- Wish for more general information about chambers of commerce (50% vs. 36-47%).

Urbanicity

U.S. adults in urban areas are more likely to say that they are familiar with their local chamber of commerce and express confidence that they can explain what a chamber is compared to those in suburban and rural areas. Likewise, adults in urban areas are more likely to say that a business belonging to the local chamber positively impacts how favorably they view the business and how likely they are to purchase goods and services from the business.



A similar proportion of adults in urban, suburban and rural areas are satisfied with their local chamber of commerce (87% urban; 86% suburban; 88% rural very/somewhat satisfied). However, urban adults are less likely to correctly answer certain knowledge testing statements about chambers of commerce.

% Answered Correctly

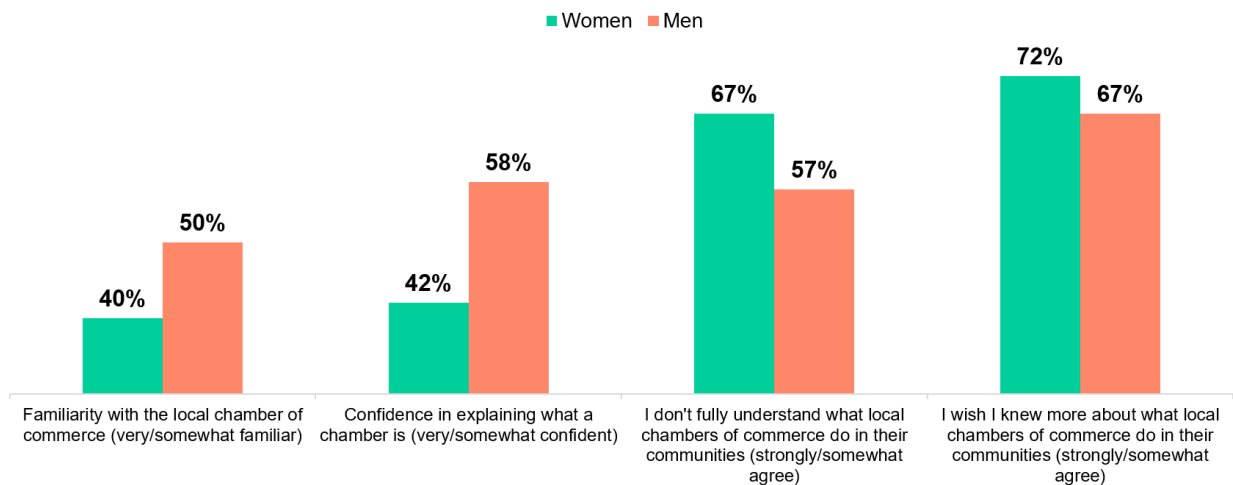
- The chamber of commerce is affiliated with a political party. [False] (42% urban; 60% suburban; 60% rural)
- The chamber of commerce is a government agency, funded by the city government. [False] (27% urban; 41% suburban; 38% rural)

Gender

Women are less likely than men to say that they are familiar with their local chamber of commerce and lack confidence in explaining what a chamber of commerce is. However, more women desire additional education, with nearly three-quarters (72%) wishing they knew more about what local chambers of commerce do in their communities.

In addition, women are also less likely to feel familiar with which businesses in their communities are members of their local chamber of commerce (35% vs. 45% of men). Yet, both men and women are just as likely to report that they would do the following if they knew a local business was a member of the local chamber of commerce:

- View the business more favorably (46% of women; 49% of men)
- Be more likely to personally purchase goods or services from the business (50% of women; 50% of men)
- Be more likely to recommend the business to someone else (47% of women; 49% of men)
- Be more likely to promote the business on social media (38% of women; 40% of men)

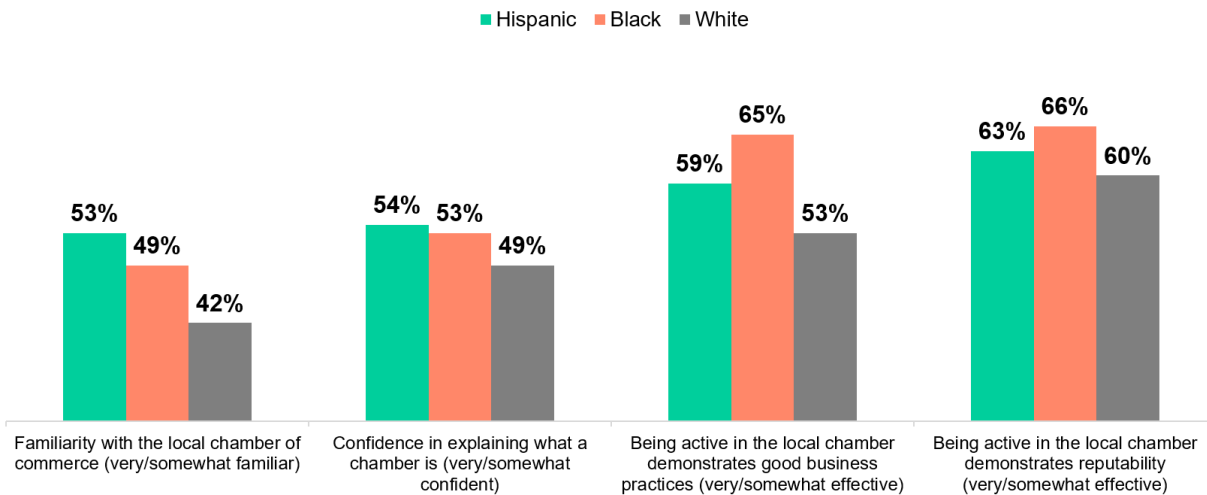


Women and men have some different priorities when it comes to the roles that local chambers can play in the coming years though. Women are more likely to prioritize addressing challenges within the community (26% vs. 20% of men) or engaging in social issues (17% vs. 13% of men). Meanwhile, men are more likely to cite developing the workforce (22% vs. 17% of women) or influencing laws and policies (17% vs. 12% of women).

Race/Ethnicity

Hispanic and Black adults are more likely than White adults to say that they feel familiar with their local chamber of commerce. They are also more likely to express high levels of confidence in explaining what a chamber of commerce is.

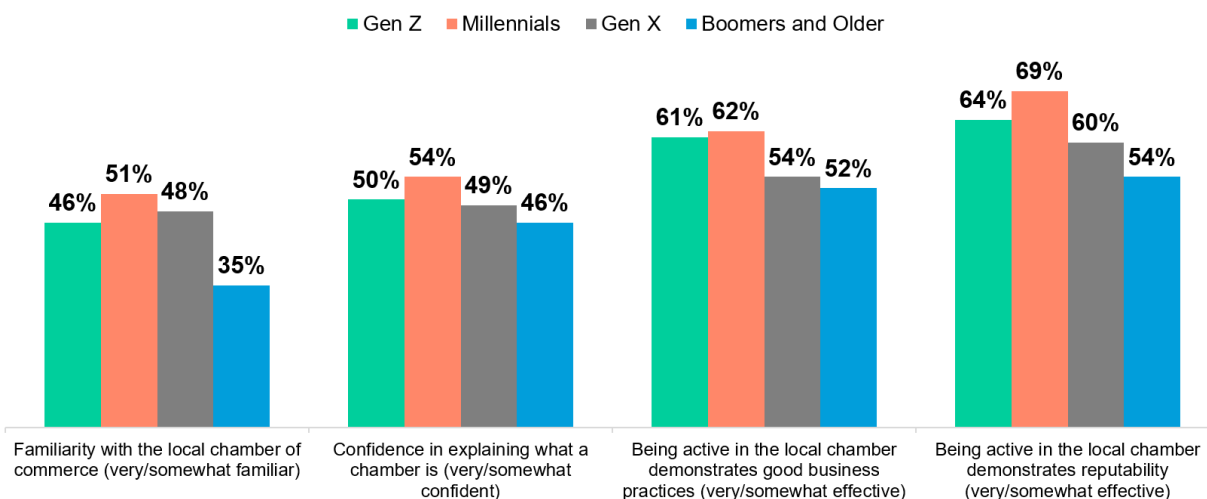
Directionally higher proportions of Hispanic and Black adults also cite that being active in the local chamber of commerce is an effective strategy for a company to demonstrate that it uses good business practices and is reputable.



Generation

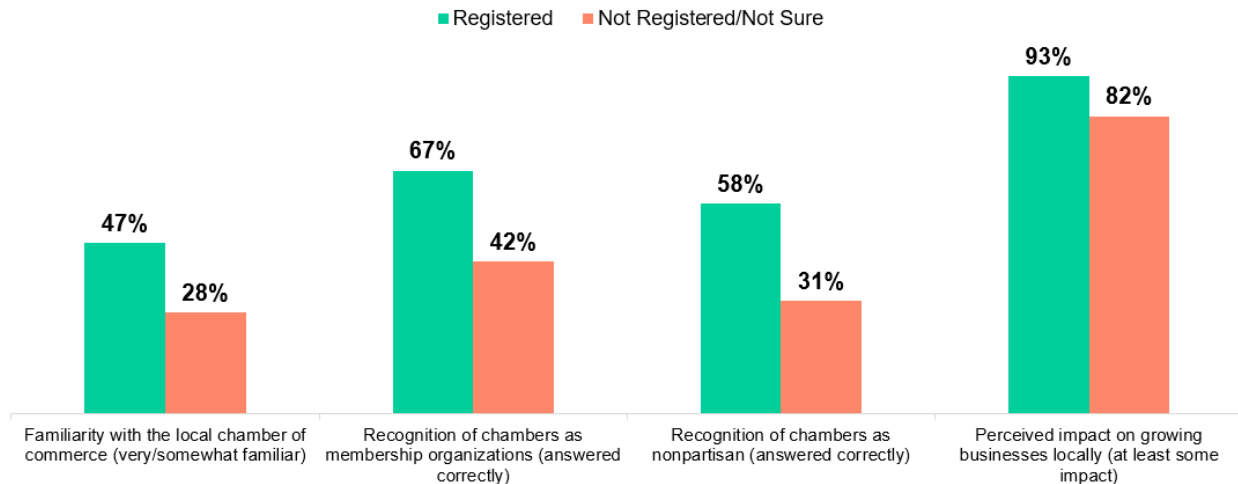
Of the four generational subgroups, Millennials are directionally the most likely to say that they are familiar with their local chamber and feel confident in explaining what a chamber of commerce is. Baby Boomers and older adults express the least familiarity with their local chamber.

Moreover, greater proportions of Millennials and Gen Z also say that being active in the local chamber of commerce is an effective strategy for a company to demonstrate that it uses good business practices and is reputable.



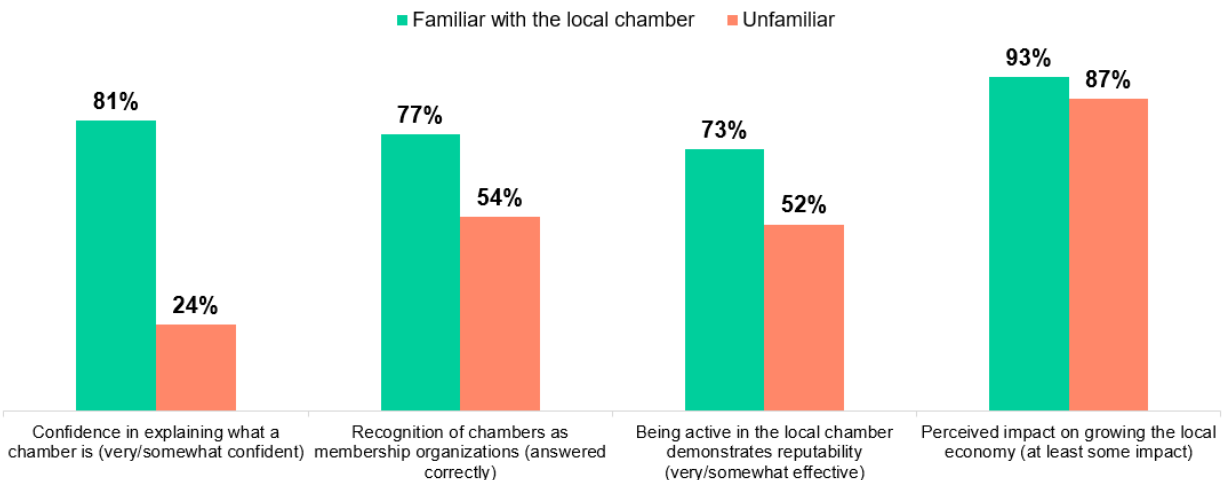
Voter Registration Status

Registered voters are more likely to say they are familiar with their local chamber of commerce than U.S. adults who are not registered or are not sure of their voter registration status. A significantly higher proportion of registered voters also correctly identify chambers as membership organizations funded largely by dues and as nonpartisan. While the perceived impacts of the local chamber of commerce are generally strong among the total base of U.S. adults surveyed, even greater majorities of registered voters believe their local chamber makes an impact on almost all aspects tested.



Chamber Familiarity

Generally, familiarity with the local chamber of commerce provides a lift to most other metrics surveyed. U.S. adults that are familiar with their local chamber are much more confident in explaining what a chamber is to others, express a greater understanding of how chambers operate and are more likely to cite the impacts of their local chamber than those adults who are not familiar.



Research Method

This survey was conducted online within the United States between September 5-9, 2024 among 2,075 adults (aged 18 and over) including 141 respondents who are business owners (i.e., employed with a title of CEO, partner or owner) by The Harris Poll on behalf of the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE) via its Harris On Demand omnibus product.

Data were weighted where necessary by age, gender, race/ethnicity, region, education, marital status, household size, household income, [employment], and political party affiliation, to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within + 2.5 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. This credible interval will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to other multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including, but not limited to coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments.

About ACCE

ACCE is the professional society supporting the individuals who lead local, regional, statewide and international chambers of commerce and related business and economic development organizations. Its membership includes more than 1,600 business/civic organizations worldwide, representing more than 9,000 professionals. The association provides members with information resources, thought leadership, education programs, original research, benchmarking and access to a network of peers.

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