




Tenant Insights Report

Spring 2024



Navigating Storage Demand, Technology Adoption, and Tenant-Customer Preferences in a Shifting Market

As the self-storage industry navigates through a period marked by volatility and change, understanding tenant behaviors and preferences is becoming more important than ever before. **Recently, Storable conducted a survey of over 1,000 tenants to shed light on the evolving landscape of storage demand, technology's role in management, and the shifting expectations of customers.** This report synthesizes those findings, offering a window into the collective psyche of storage consumers and laying the groundwork for operators to create strategies that pave the path towards success in the months ahead. 

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1

Beyond Space

Meeting the Dynamic Demands of Today's Storage Consumers

→ Economic trends and consumer mobility shed light on the self-storage industry's growth potential. Notably, 43% of survey respondents are considering moving within the next year, indicating strong demand for storage solutions. This demand is closely linked to economic conditions, especially interest rates, suggesting a timely opportunity for the industry to prepare for an anticipated increase in need if the Federal Reserve moves ahead with rate cuts in 2024.

This action has the potential to unlock pent up demand in the real estate market, which could usher in increased activity in the self-storage sector.

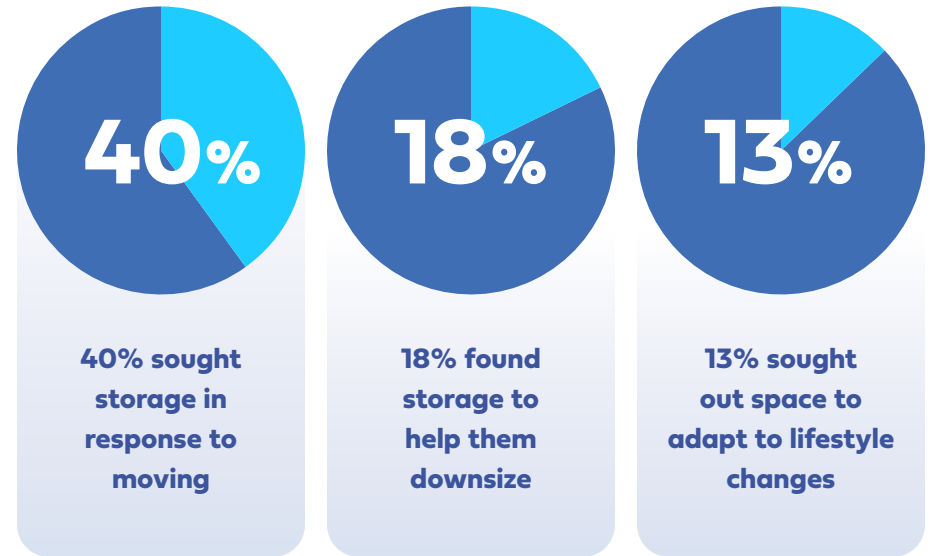


43%

43% of survey respondents are considering moving within the next year, indicating strong demand for storage solutions.

The survey illuminates the diverse life events prompting the use of storage units. Moving motivated 40% of survey respondents to book storage, while 18% found storage to help them downsize and 13% sought out space to adapt to lifestyle changes. This variety highlights that consumers are in search of more than mere extra space—they are looking for flexible solutions that can seamlessly integrate into their changing life scenarios. Interestingly, 15% of respondents selected 'Other' which points to broader expectations among consumers for personalized storage options that cater to a wide range of needs. For example, there's currently growing demand for storing items like RVs and boats, a trend that has gained momentum since the Covid-19 pandemic. This showcases the evolving nature of the self-storage industry, which must continually adapt to meet the diverse and expanding needs of its clientele, including the demand for specialized storage solutions beyond traditional household items.

So, how far are tenants willing to travel for the right storage solution? **The majority of respondents, 40%, would be willing to drive 11-20 minutes**, while a notable 21% are open to traveling for over 20 minutes to find the ideal storage solution. This demonstrates a significant commitment among consumers to prioritize finding storage options that precisely meet their needs, even if it means investing extra time and research for the perfect fit. This willingness to travel further also indicates an increase in competitive pressures within the storage industry. Operators may face more competition than ever as consumers show they are ready to travel further to pair with the right facility, suggesting that operators need to differentiate their offerings and enhance their services to attract and retain tenants in this evolving market landscape.



"Today's tenants and consumers expect more than just space—they want flexible storage options that give them peace of mind and make their lives easier."

Chuck Gordon, CEO of Storable

As economic factors continue to shift, it's crucial for storage providers to adapt their strategies and prepare for resulting fluctuations in consumer behavior. Aligning services with consumer expectations not only paves the way for growth, but also enhances the overall storage experience, catering to the varied needs of a dynamic consumer base.

2

Personal Touch in a Digital World

Elevating Customer Service in Self-Storage

→ In today's heightened consumer expectation environment, the self-storage sector is navigating a crucial pivot towards improving customer service and enhancing tenant experiences. Our survey findings illuminate tenants' preferences, which highlights a significant demand for accessible, responsive customer service and underscore the critical role of safety and security measures.

Availability of customer service emerges as a key determinant for tenants when selecting a storage facility, with 83% saying it is at least somewhat important and 39% marking it as very important.

83%

83% say customer service is at least somewhat important

39%

39% say that customer service is very important

This underlines a broader expectation for reliable support mechanisms, whether that means 24/7 assistance, the presence of on-site staff, or the efficient management of remote-managed properties. Each model offers unique benefits, and our study reflects a diverse range of tenant preferences that highlight the importance of both approaches.

In terms of service channels, a notable preference for in-person interactions at 32% suggests that, despite the digital age's conveniences, the value of human connection remains undiminished. This preference is echoed in the emphasis on having a manager on-site, considered at least somewhat important by 80% of respondents. This highlights a clear tenant expectation for personal service and the reassurance that comes from knowing help is readily available.

Security concerns are also paramount in the minds of tenants, with theft prevention being the most significant concern for 43% of respondents when choosing a facility. This is followed by protection against environmental damage (32%), showcasing the essential nature of comprehensive security measures in attracting and retaining tenants. The good news is that satisfaction levels with existing security measures are positive, with 43% of tenants reporting they are very satisfied, indicating that many facilities are successfully meeting these important needs.

Somewhat worrisome, however, is the fact that a significant 37% of self-storage tenants say they do not have insurance. This highlights the importance of educating tenants about the potential risks and the necessity of securing appropriate insurance coverage to safeguard their possessions in the event of unforeseen circumstances. With changing environmental patterns like increased

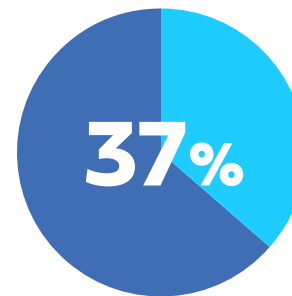
" In an industry traditionally seen as transactional, we're witnessing a paradigm shift towards a customer experience-centric model."

Nick Johnson, Senior VP Client Care of Storable

flood risk and extreme temperatures, having insurance coverage for stored items provides an added layer of protection and peace of mind for tenants. Additionally, as self-storage facilities continue to grow in popularity and usage, ensuring tenants are adequately informed about the importance of insurance becomes crucial in mitigating potential losses and ensuring their overall satisfaction with the storage experience.

Integrating these findings into service strategies signifies more than just meeting expectations—it's about forging stronger tenant

relationships and building trust. The industry stands at a threshold, where prioritizing responsive customer service, ensuring robust security measures, and valuing the personal touch can significantly impact tenant choice and loyalty. This approach not only aligns with current tenant preferences, but also positions storage providers for success in a competitive market.



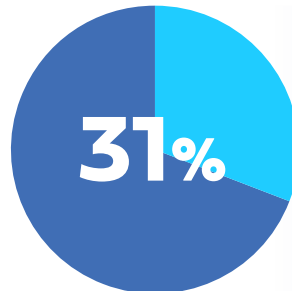
37% of tenants do not use insurance

3

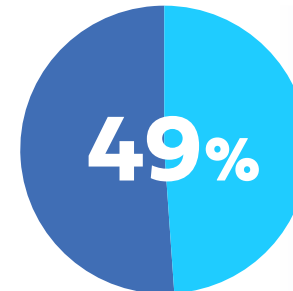
Innovation Meets Tradition

Striking the Right Balance in Storage Solutions

→ Survey results highlight the crucial role of technology in choosing a storage facility, with 31% of respondents considering it very important and an additional 49% finding it somewhat important.



31% consider technology a very important factor



49% consider technology a somewhat important factor

In today's dynamic market, the integration of technology with traditional service models is increasingly prominent in storage solutions. While technology enhances the storage experience—providing conveniences like online booking, payment systems, smartphone apps, and digital locks—it's important to recognize the irreplaceable value of human interaction.

For example, an on-site manager not only bolsters security and trust but also adds a personal touch that enriches the customer experience. Nevertheless, preferences can vary significantly by demographic: **over one-third (36%) of the general survey population is open to entirely remote storage solutions, with this interest increasing to 45% among Gen Z and millennials.** This indicates that as younger demographics increasingly seek out storage solutions, their expectations for technology integration also rise.

The top tech features favored by tenants include remote monitoring systems, mobile apps for unit management, and online booking with digital access control. While these features are embraced for the convenience they provide, they are also seen as tools that free up on-site managers from routine tasks, allowing them to focus more on addressing complex customer needs and escalations—a crucial aspect of customer service that technology helps to enhance.

The industry faces the dual challenge of catering to the digital convenience that customers expect and the personal touch they value in customer service. Operators must leverage technology not just to streamline operations but to augment the human aspects of service, ensuring that technological advancements enable staff to focus on important areas that require a high touch approach, while also maintaining the core principles of personal

interaction and security. This approach is essential for developing storage experiences that not only meet but exceed the expectations of a diverse customer base, combining the best of both worlds in a complementary, seamless manner.



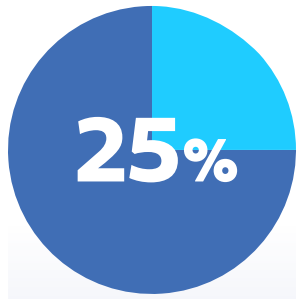
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Affordability vs. Premium Features

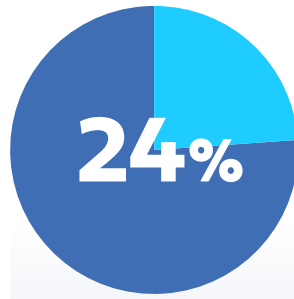
Aligning Offerings with Tenant Priorities

→ The interplay between price sensitivity and value perception significantly shapes consumer behavior and choices. **A substantial 69% of survey respondents deem price as a very important factor when selecting a storage facility.** This overwhelming emphasis on cost underscores the critical role of affordability in the decision-making process, illustrating the weight of price sensitivity in the storage industry.

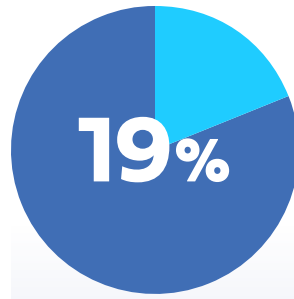
The perception of self-storage as a necessary expenditure during economic downturns or personal financial hardships further reveals the nuanced relationship between cost and perceived value. **A notable 42% view self-storage as essential even in financially challenging times,** suggesting that for many, the utility and value derived from storage services transcend mere convenience, embedding themselves as integral parts of life management and transition strategies.



25% of respondents would be willing to pay more for 24/7 access



24% say they would pay more for enhanced security measures



19% noted climate control as a feature they would pay more for

Features enhancing the storage experience emerge as key areas where consumers are willing to invest more. A quarter of respondents say they would be willing to pay more for 24/7 access, which was closely followed by 24% who say they would pay more for enhanced security measures, including individual alarms. Rounding out the top three premium features, 19% noted climate control as a feature they would incur an additional expense for, pointing towards a demand for quality and specialized storage conditions.

This dynamic between price, features, and the essential nature of storage services during economic shifts highlights a complex landscape where storage providers must balance affordability with the delivery of high-value features. Tailoring offerings to align with these consumer preferences—prioritizing security, accessibility, and specialized conditions, alongside flexible payment options—can help providers navigate the delicate balance of price sensitivity and value perception, ensuring relevance and resilience in a fluctuating economic environment.



"Price sensitivity and value perception are pivotal in the storage industry, especially in times of economic uncertainty. Customers prioritize not only cost-effectiveness, but also the flexibility of payment options and the intrinsic value of the services provided. Understanding this dynamic is crucial for tailoring offerings that resonate with consumer needs, ensuring that even during downturns, the perceived value of our storage solutions supports continued engagement and loyalty."

Chuck Gordon, CEO of Storable



5

Digital Visibility

The Pathway to Engaging Today's Storage Consumer

→ In the landscape of consumer engagement, the journey from lead to lease is significantly shaped by marketing strategies and digital platforms. The insights drawn from consumer responses illuminate the pathways through which potential tenants discover storage solutions and the pivotal marketing elements that guide their choices.

Consumers learn about storage facilities predominantly through online search engines, as indicated by 63% of survey participants.

This underscores the critical importance of search engine optimization (SEO) and online visibility in attracting potential customers.

Recommendations from friends or family also play a significant role, cited by 51% of respondents, highlighting the enduring value of word-of-mouth in the digital era. Traditional media channels (TV, radio, print ads), and social media advertisements, though less dominant, remain relevant, cited by 12% and 11% respectively.



When choosing a storage facility, respondents cite customer reviews and ratings as the key factor in influencing consumer decision, followed by promotions and discounts, and the brand's reputation. These priorities highlight the critical need for storage facilities to focus on delivering exceptional service, actively manage their online reputation, and offer value through promotions. While an informative website and social media engagement are also important, they are secondary to the foundational elements of customer satisfaction and perceived value. This condensed insight underlines the essence of a strategic approach to digital marketing for storage facilities aiming to attract and retain customers.

"In today's digital age, the way consumers discover and choose storage solutions is heavily influenced by online presence and reputation. Customer reviews and targeted promotions are not just marketing tools—they are essential bridges connecting potential customers with our facilities. Understanding and leveraging these elements enable us to meet consumers precisely where their decision-making process begins."

Chrissy Werner, VP Marketing of Storable

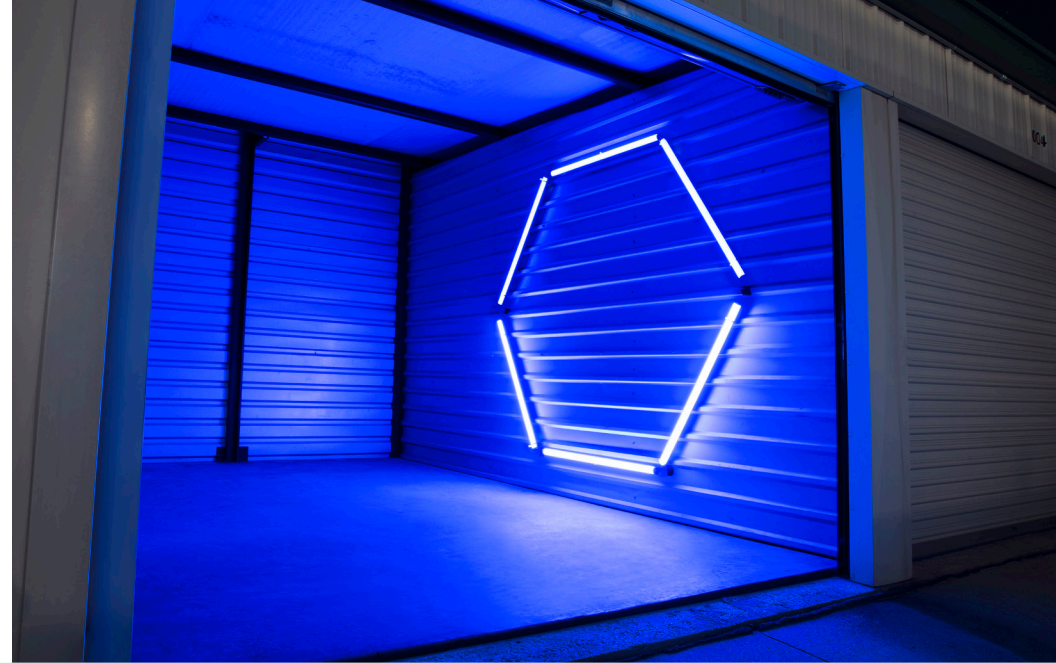
Conclusion

The insights derived from the 2024 Storable Tenant Consumer Insights Survey paint a picture of an industry navigating a series of complexities in the form of consumer expectations, evolving technological landscapes, and economic uncertainties. However, by embracing technology, prioritizing customer service, and understanding the nuances of consumer price sensitivity and marketing dynamics, storage operators can not only adapt to, but thrive in this new era.

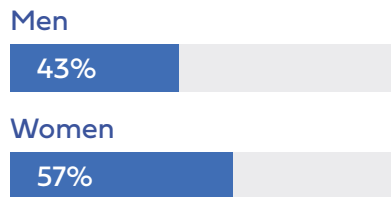
The journey forward requires a deep commitment to understanding and meeting tenant needs, leveraging data to inform strategic decisions, and investing in the technologies that will define the future of self-storage.

Methodology

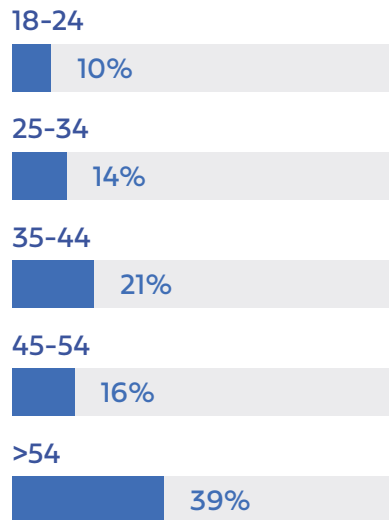
This survey engaged over 1,000 self-storage tenants (previous, current, and future) across various demographics, including age and location, employing a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions in an effort to gain a comprehensive understanding of their perspectives, preferences, and behaviors related to self-storage usage.



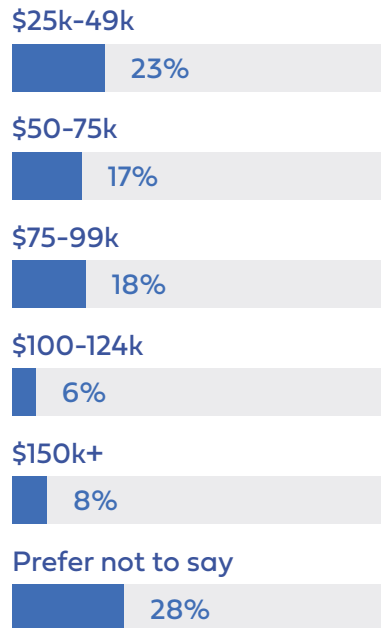
Gender Breakdown



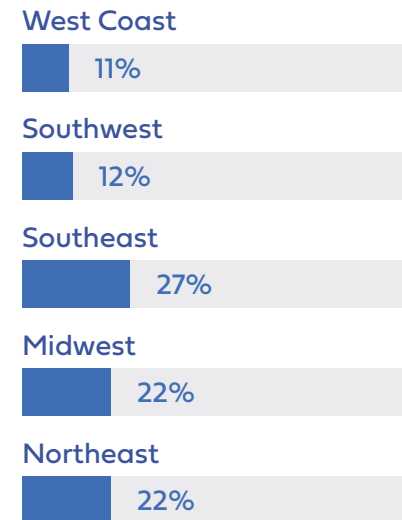
Age breakdown



Income Breakdown



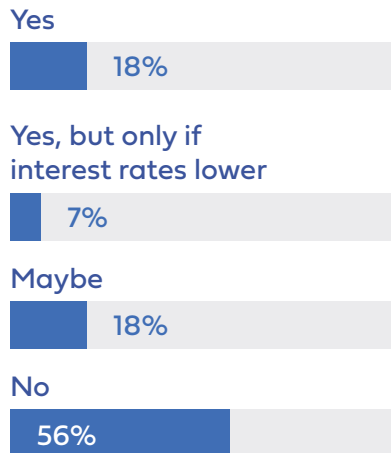
Region Breakdown



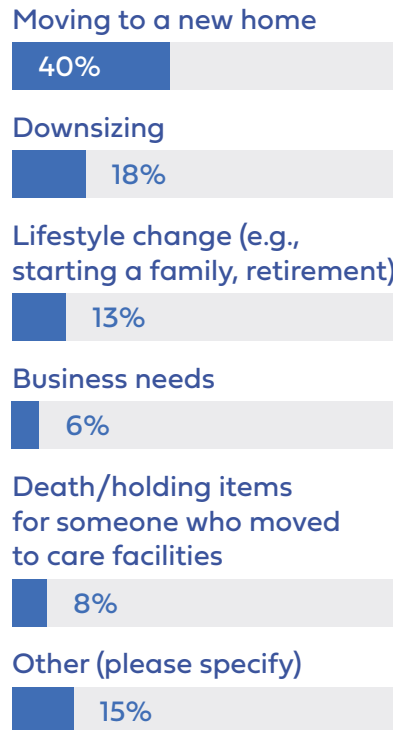
Results

Consumer Storage Demand & Needs

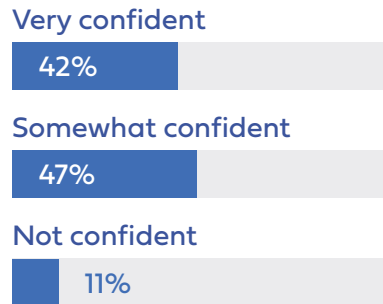
Are you planning to move in the next 6-12 months?



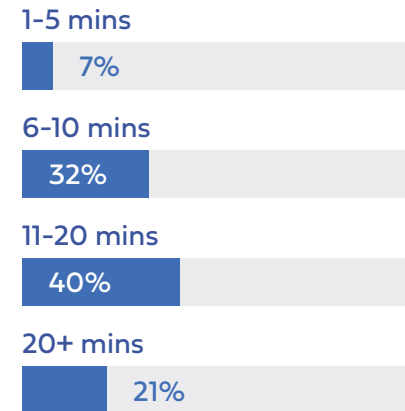
What is your primary reason for seeking a storage solution?



When renting a storage unit how confident are you in knowing the size of the unit you need?

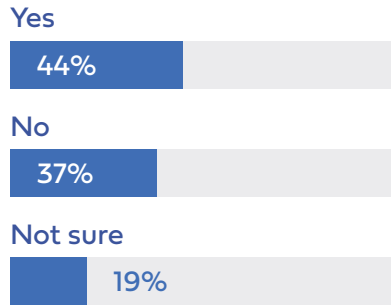


How long would you be willing to drive to find the right storage solution?

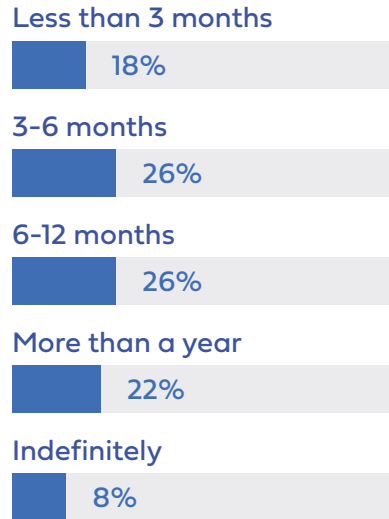


Consumer Storage Demand & Needs

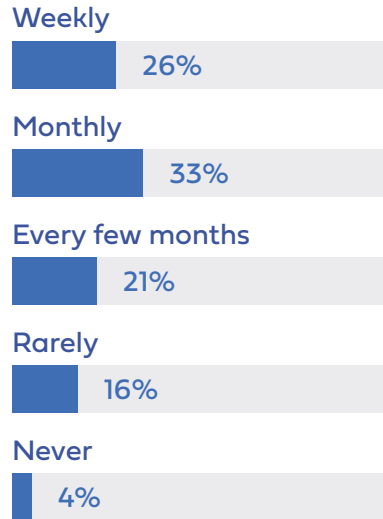
Do you use insurance options for items stored in a storage facility?



How long are you planning/did you rent your storage unit for?



When renting a unit, how often do you access items in your storage unit?

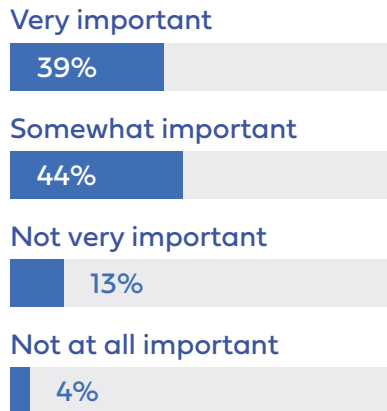


Rank the most important factors when choosing a storage facility?

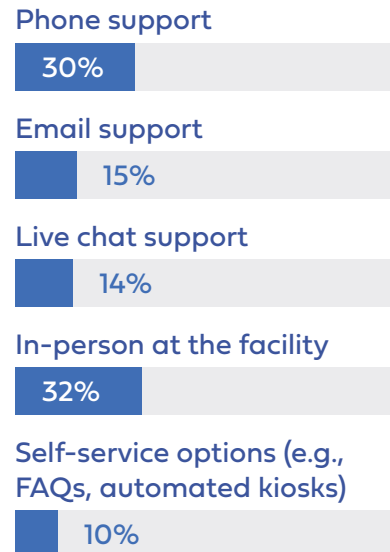
- 1 Size and type of units
- 2 Climate control
- 3 Reputation & reviews
- 4 Location
- 5 Price
- 6 Accessibility
(convenient access hours, etc.)
- 7 Customer service
- 8 Security
- 9 Use of technology

Customer Service and Experience

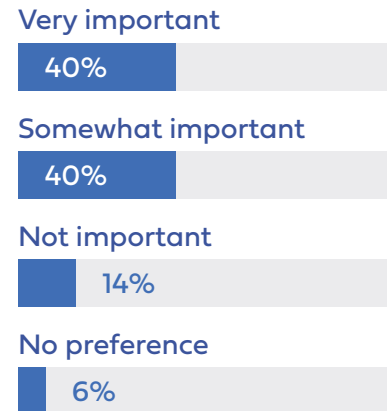
How would you rate the importance of customer service availability (e.g., 24/7 support, on-site assistance) when choosing a storage facility?



What type of customer service channel do you prefer when needing assistance with your storage unit? (select all that apply)

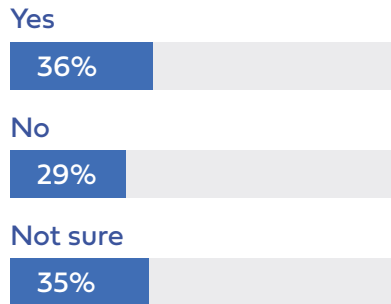


How important is having a manager on-site to you when choosing a storage facility?

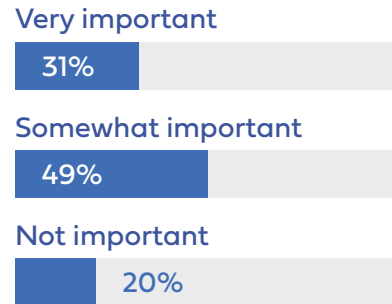


Perceptions of Technology in Storage Management

Would you be comfortable with a storage experience that doesn't have visible staff and is remotely operated?



How important is technology (online reservation and payment systems, smartphone apps, digital locks etc.) when it comes to choosing a storage facility?

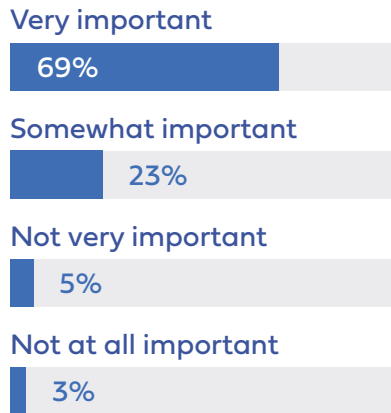


How important are the following technological features in a storage facility to you? Rate from 1 ('Not important') to 5 ('Very important'):

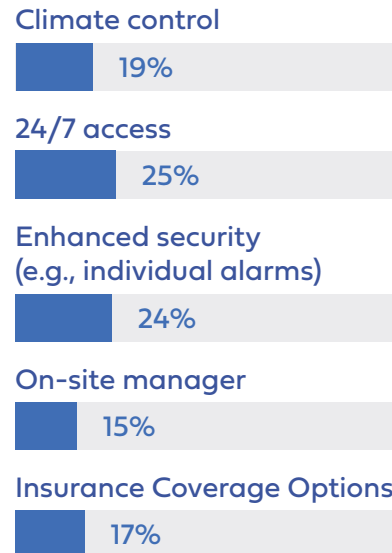
- 1 Remote monitoring system
- 2 Mobile app for unit management and inventory tracking
- 3 Online booking and digital access control
- 4 AI-powered customer service chatbot
- 5 AI for personalized storage recommendations

Price Sensitivity, Value Perception & Payments

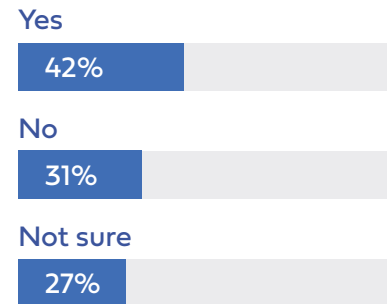
How important is price when selecting a storage facility?



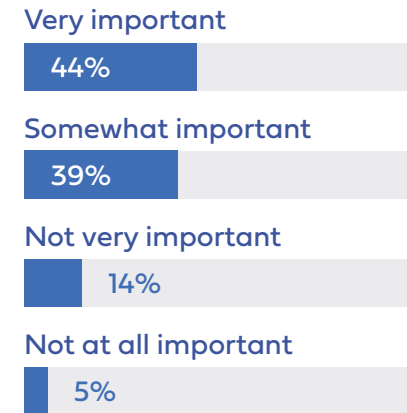
What features of a storage property would you be willing to pay more for? (Select all that apply)



Do you view self storage as a necessary expenditure during economic downturns or financial hardships? (i.e. would you continue to pay for self storage during a recession or while experiencing personal hardships?)



How important is the availability of multiple payment options (e.g., online, automatic debit, credit card, cash) for your storage unit rental?



Safety and Security Concerns

Which safety concern is most important to you when choosing a storage facility?

Theft prevention

43%

Protection against environmental damage (e.g., water, fire)

32%

Physical safety when visiting the facility

21%

Other

4%

How satisfied are you with the security measures at your current or most recent storage facility?

Very satisfied

43%

Somewhat satisfied

46%

Somewhat dissatisfied

7%

Very dissatisfied

4%

Marketing and Consumer Choices

How do you typically learn about storage facilities? Select all that apply.

Online search engines (e.g., Google)

63%

Social media advertisements

18%

Recommendations from friends or family

51%

Traditional media (e.g., TV, radio, print ads)

19%

Other (please specify)

22%

How influential are the following marketing elements in your decision to choose a specific storage facility? Rate from 1 ('Not influential') to 5 ('Very influential'):

1 Customer reviews and ratings

2 Promotions and discounts

3 Brand reputation

4 Informative and user-friendly website

5 Social media presence and engagement

Learn More

Ready to elevate your storage operations?
Learn how Storable's all-in-one technology
suite can boost your efficiency and growth.

[Request a demo today](#)



The background features a dark blue color with a complex geometric pattern of thin white lines forming various polygons and shapes. Overlaid on this are several thick, dark blue, stylized lines that resemble a circuit board or a network diagram, with sharp angles and rectangular segments.

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DO MORE.