



## 2025 Club Board Perspectives

# Food and Beverage in Private Clubs: How Boardrooms Balance Satisfaction, Purpose and Profit

Private club boards are reevaluating their food and beverage (F&B) strategies to address rising costs and evolving member expectations. Results reveal key differences in philosophy and preferences, highlighting opportunities to transition from assumptions to alignment through data-driven strategy.

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### Key Insights

- Boards report higher satisfaction with F&B than members typically do, suggesting a perception gap.
- Fewer than one in three clubs report breaking even on F&B, indicating that achieving surplus is challenging, even when it is the stated goal.
- The most widely supported strategies for improving efficiency include greater use of technology, reducing operating hours, and offering grab-and-go options.

### ***What happens when club leaders and members perceive the same meal differently?***

In the 2025 *Club Board Perspectives* survey, a collaboration between GGA Partners and the National Club Association that surveyed board members across North America, F&B satisfaction was rated 4.0/5, notably higher than the ratings typically reported by members<sup>1</sup>. This discrepancy reveals more than a difference in taste; it exposes a gap in perception that can shape budget decisions, staffing models, and investments in ways that may not align with member priorities.

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<sup>1</sup> Our internal GGA Database shows that over the past five years, members indicate an overall satisfaction of 3.6 out of 5 with F&B offerings at their clubs.

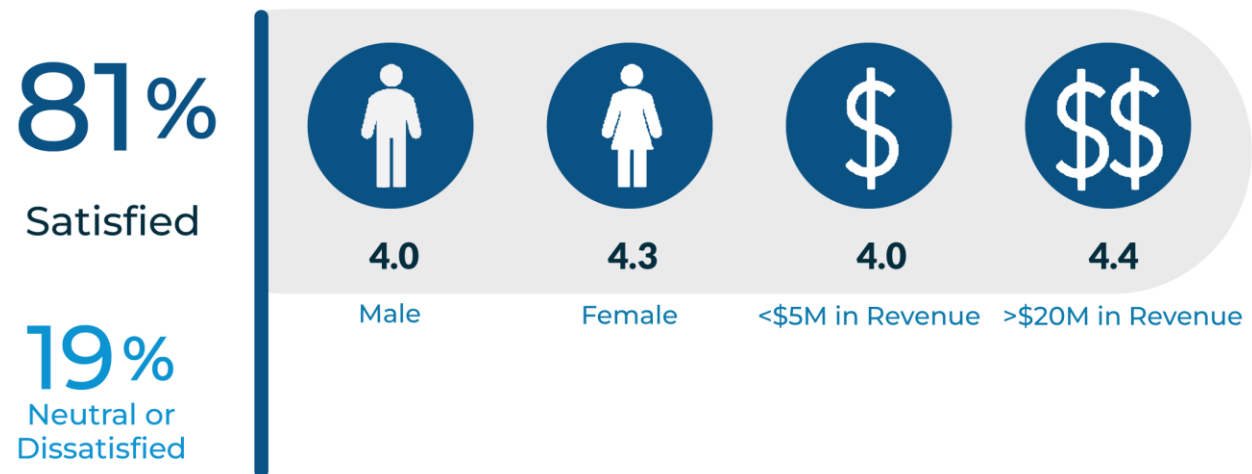
Compounding the challenge is a lack of consensus on the role of F&B – should it generate surplus or serve as a subsidized amenity? While the results reveal a mix of preferences, nearly one in four respondents disagreed with their club's chosen philosophy.

## Food and Beverage Satisfaction and Vision

Board members express strong confidence in their club's F&B offerings, with 81% indicating satisfaction. But importantly, do all board members maintain the same level of satisfaction?

The results, as shown in Figure 1, reveal meaningful differences. For instance, female respondents demonstrate a higher level of satisfaction than male respondents (4.3 vs. 4.0, respectively). While there is an overall trend that younger respondents are less satisfied than older respondents, there is a clear difference between the satisfaction at the largest clubs, those with revenue greater than \$20M, and the smallest clubs, those with revenue less than \$5M (4.4 vs. 4.0).

Figure 1. Board Members' Satisfaction with F&B



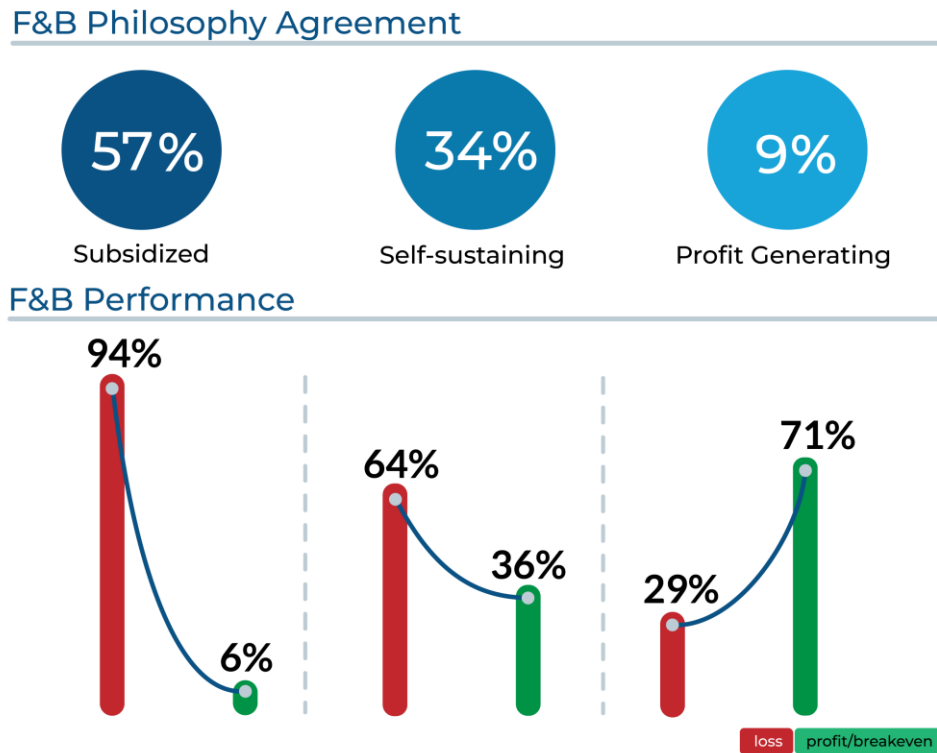
Note: Respondents were asked about their satisfaction with F&B at their club, with '1' indicating 'very dissatisfied' and '5' indicating 'very satisfied'.

While results show general board satisfaction, the mix of board optimism and different member perceptions can reveal strategic blind spots. Confirming board perceptions with real-time member feedback is essential to ensure decisions rely on data rather than assumptions.

## Strategy Versus Performance

While 57% of board members believe food and beverage should be subsidized as an amenity, and 34% support a self-sustaining model, only a small percentage (9%) prioritize surplus. However, when comparing these stated philosophies with financial results, a clear disconnect appears: Of the 34% that support a self-sustaining model, nearly two-thirds report operating losses in their F&B programs, including 17% that lose more than 15%. Meanwhile, among the profit-focused group, while 55% report some profit and 16% break even, nearly 30% report operating losses.

Figure 2. Alignment of F&amp;B Philosophy with Financial Outcomes



Note: Respondents were asked to identify their club's F&B operational philosophy and then identify the profit/loss of their operation.

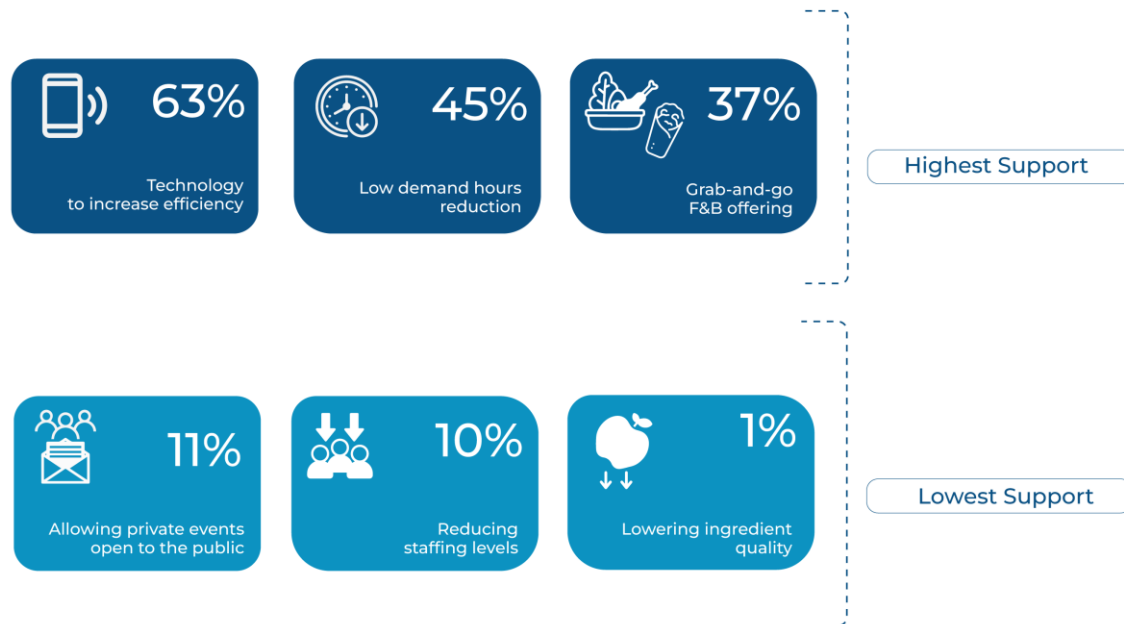
Initial findings from the study indicate that overall board member satisfaction does not differ substantially between clubs that do or do not subsidize F&B, except for a notable decline in overall satisfaction for clubs generating profits exceeding 15% (3.5/5.0 compared to an average of 4.0). This suggests that financial performance and experience quality are not inherently related.

*Our deeper dive into the data shows that governance can impact F&B perspectives – respondents from clubs with openly contested elections consistently had lower satisfaction with their F&B experience.*

### Strategic Operational Opportunities

As clubs grapple with rising food and beverage costs and changing member expectations, boards are exploring a range of strategies to support financial sustainability. The results in Figure 3 indicate respondents identified the increased use of technology as the number one opportunity, followed by reducing hours of operation and offering grab-and-go options to improve operational efficiency.

Figure 3. Support for Increasing Performance and Efficiency



Note: Respondents were asked to select which of the above options they would support to help improve the financial performance and operational efficiency of their club's F&B operations. The sum of percentages does not equal 100%, as respondents could select multiple options.

Further analysis reveals a nuanced landscape shaped by demographics. Younger board members (under 50 years) show greater support for grab-and-go offerings (60%) compared to the overall average (37%). At the same time, those over 70 favor strategies such as allowing public access for private events (18% vs. 12%).

Club size further influences strategy preferences. Respondents from the smallest clubs (those with annual revenue under \$5 million) expressed lower interest in increased technology usage and grab-and-go options (47% vs. 63% and 30% vs. 38%, respectively). In contrast, medium-sized clubs (\$10 million to \$15 million) showed significantly higher support for increased technology, reduced hours, and grab-and-go offerings compared to their peers (72% vs. 63%, 51% vs. 44%, and 45% vs. 38%, respectively).

### Club Leaders Opportunity

Club boards can approach F&B strategies intentionally, recognizing that the preferences of board members may not accurately reflect those of the broader membership. Success relies on striking a balance between financial goals and an understanding of member values, expectations, and the club's culture. To move forward with clarity and confidence, clubs can:

1. **Re-Examine F&B Satisfaction of Members:** Gather and analyze data-driven feedback from members to evaluate the actual level of satisfaction with the F&B experience. Avoid relying solely on board impressions, as they may not accurately represent the perspectives or changing preferences of the wider membership.

2. **Align Philosophy with Operational Reality:** Ensure the club's F&B philosophy — whether it is amenity-focused, breakeven, or surplus-generating — aligns with its financial performance and operational capabilities to help set expectations with what is achievable.
3. **Leverage Segmentation and Member Research:** Use demographic, behavioral, and attitudinal segmentation to gain a deeper understanding of the diverse needs of your members. Leverage these insights to guide menu planning, service planning, and F&B investment decisions.
4. **Integrate F&B into the Club's Broader Strategy:** Treat F&B not as a standalone cost center or member experience, but as a strategic offering that supports retention, engagement, and member value creation to support long-term club success.

To lead effectively in a time of evolving expectations and economic pressure, clubs can establish a disciplined process for revisiting core F&B assumptions. Boards can use current data to validate beliefs and ensure decisions remain aligned with member needs, operational realities, and the club's long-term strategic vision.

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