

The 2010 Certified Bookkeeper (CB) Survey

• What is a Certified Bookkeeper (CB)?

In 1998, the American Institute of Professional Bookkeepers (AIPB), the bookkeeping profession's association, established the Certified Bookkeeper program. Certification demonstrates the ability to handle all the books for a firm of up to 100 employees. To become certified, a bookkeeper must have 2 years' experience working as a bookkeeper, sign a Code of Ethics and pass a national examination. After becoming certified, a CB must meet annual continuing education requirements to retain the designation.

The national certification exam covers six subjects as follows: Part 1: Adjusting Entries and Error Correction (includes the bank reconciliation). Part 2: Payroll and Depreciation (book and tax). Part 3: Inventory (recording and costing out merchandise inventory). Part 4: Internal controls and Fraud Prevention. To retain certification, CBs must fulfill annual continuing professional education requirements.

• What Did the Survey Measure?

In July and August 2010, a survey of CBs was conducted by the independent research firm of Lewis & Clark, Raleigh, NC, to measure the impact of certification on their careers. A sample of 948 CBs were polled, of whom 186 responded, yielding a response rate of 20%.

- 63% of CBs responding to the survey are bookkeepers for a single employer; 37% are freelance or self-employed bookkeepers.

• Survey Highlights

How all CBs view certification

- 82% of CBs, employed and freelance, recommend certification to other bookkeepers.

Chief benefits of certification to employed CBs

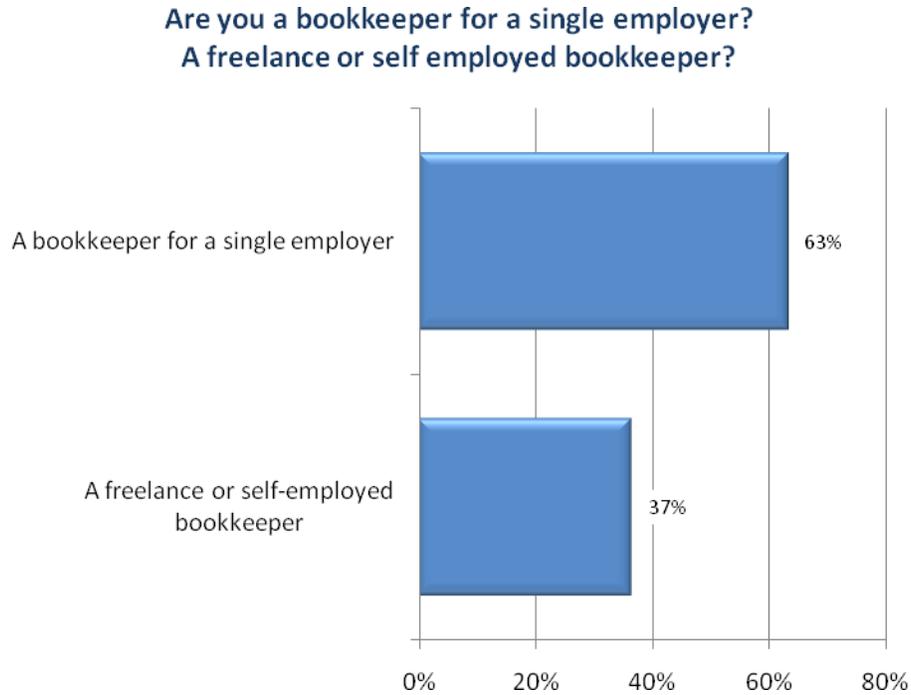
- 41% of employed CBs report an enhanced standing with their employer.
- 50% say certification enhanced their self-image.
- 52% gained new knowledge.
- 53% say that certification filled in gaps in their knowledge.
- 46% have gotten a raise in salary since becoming certified. Of this group, 19% say that certification was "very important" in obtaining the increase; 52%, "somewhat important."
- 20% of employed bookkeepers have gotten a new job since becoming certified, 18% were given higher-level responsibilities, and 8% have been promoted. Within these three categories, 73% believe that certification was important in getting the new job or promotion—20%, "very important," 53%, "somewhat important."
- 35% of employed CBs have interviewed for a new job since being certified, of whom two-thirds say certification was important in obtaining the interview—"24% "very important," 42% "somewhat important"
- 29% have received a job offer since becoming certified. Of this group, more than two-thirds believe that certification was important in receiving the job offer—15%, "very important," 56% "somewhat important."

Chief benefits of certification to freelance CBs

- 43% of freelance CBs say that certification enhanced their standing with clients; 47% report an enhanced self-image, 53% gained new knowledge, 54% found that certification filled in gaps in their knowledge. In addition:
- 34% of freelance CBs say certification helped gain new clients, of whom 61% report that certification was "very important" in obtaining the clients; 35%, "somewhat important."
- 34% of freelance CBs have raised rates for new clients since becoming certified, 10% for existing clients—29% plan to raise rates when the economy improves.

- **Employed vs. Freelance**

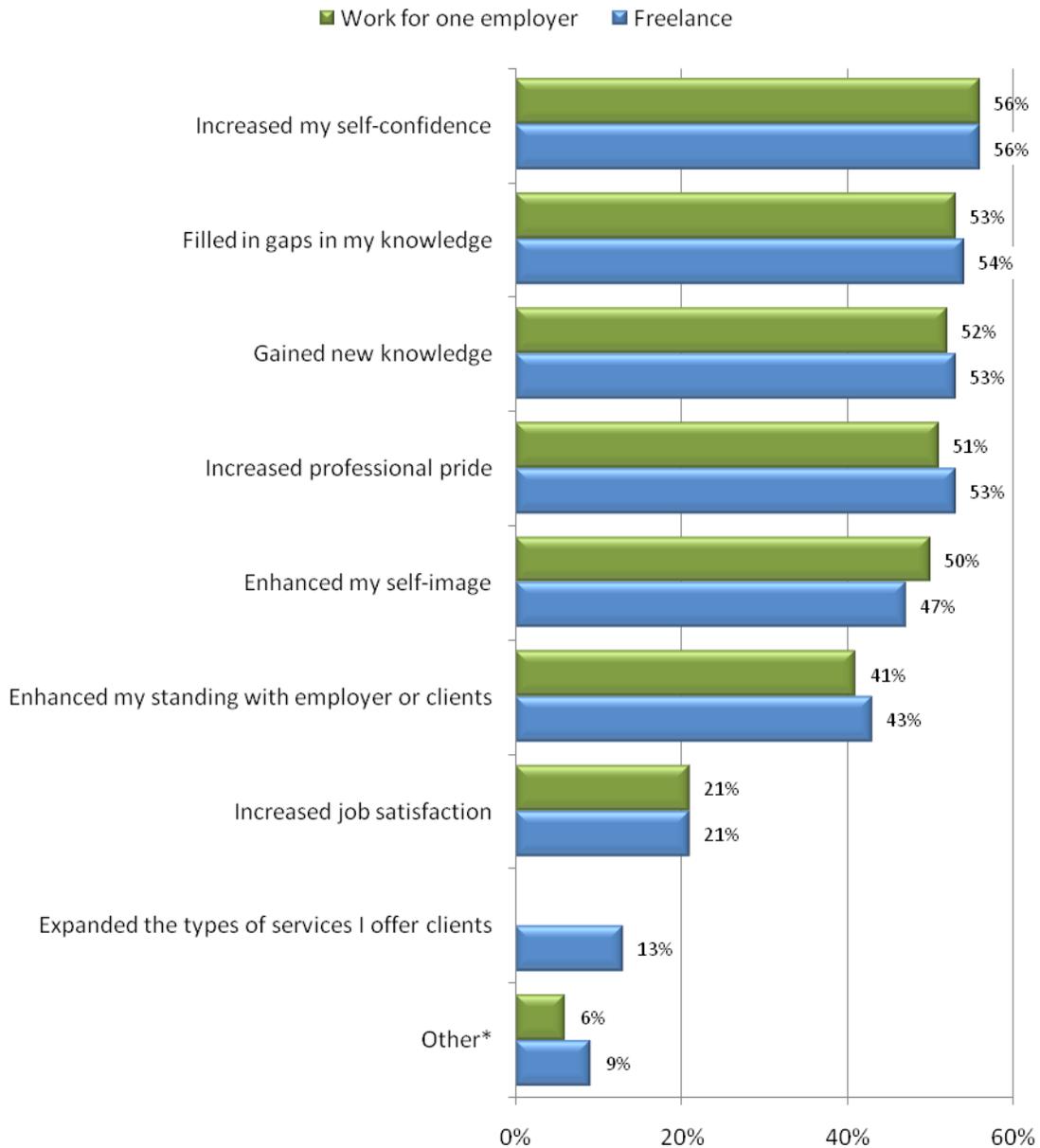
A little under two-thirds of respondents (63%) work as a bookkeeper for a single employer, and a little over one-third (37%) work as a freelance or self-employed bookkeeper.



• **Benefits of Certification**

Benefits of certification cited by respondents are increased self-confidence, filling in of knowledge gaps, gaining new knowledge, increase in professional pride and an enhanced self-image.

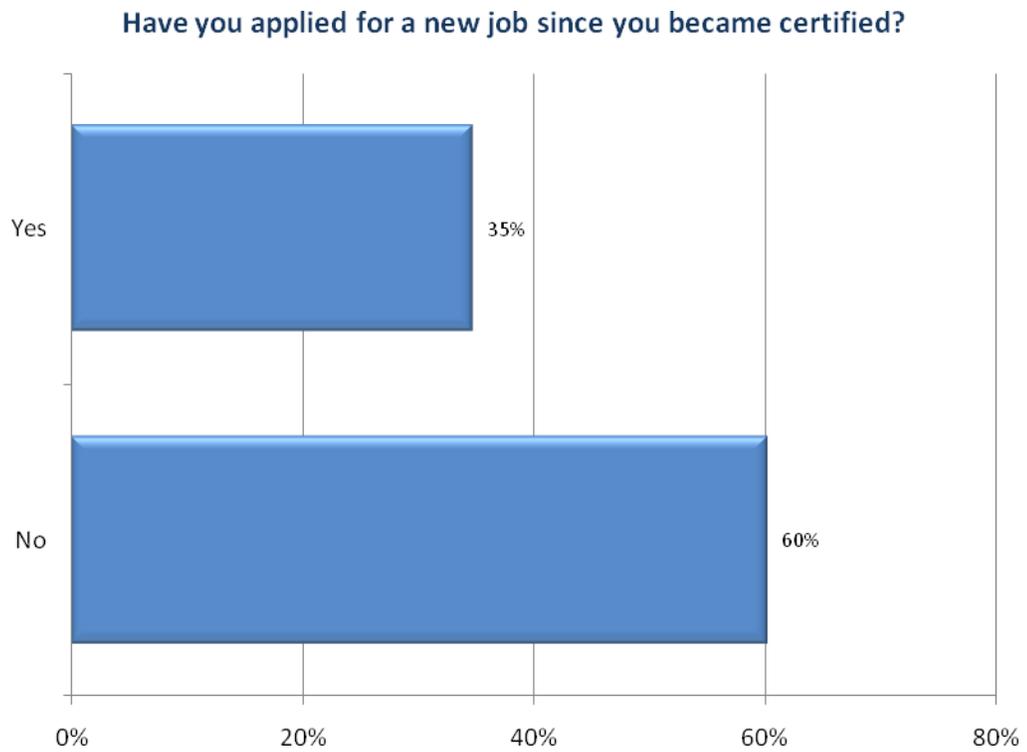
How has certification benefitted you?



* “Other” responses included “re-acquired skills I had 17 years ago,” “refreshed skills not used in a long time,” and benefits that were queried directly later in the survey, such as “helped me get interviews,” “found a new job,” and “raised rates.”

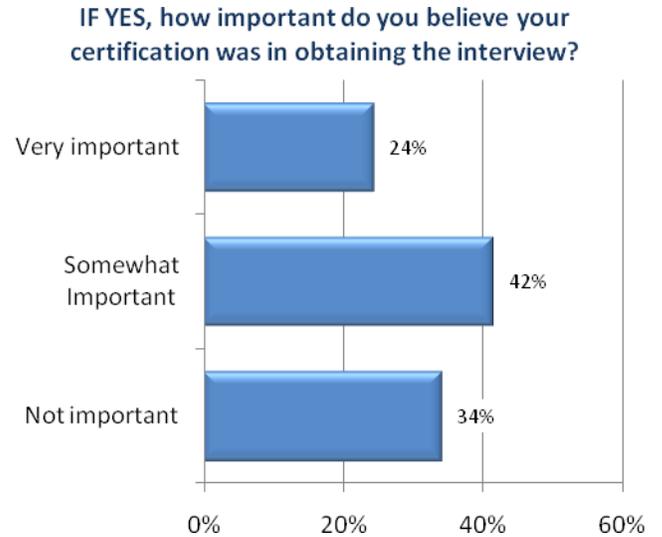
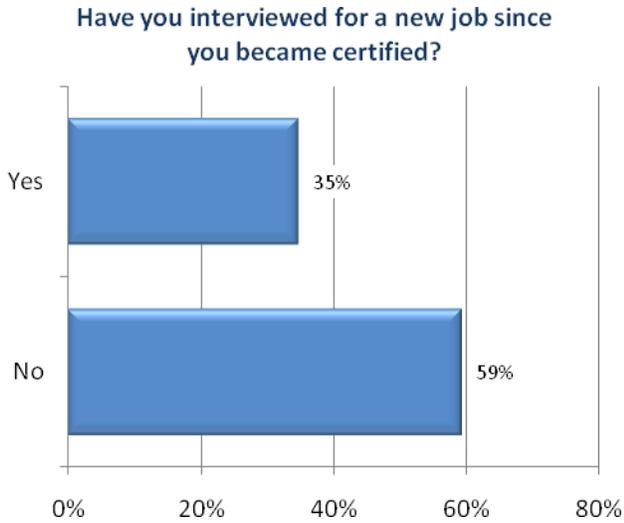
- **Applying for New Jobs**

One-third of employed respondents (35%) have applied for a new job since becoming certified.



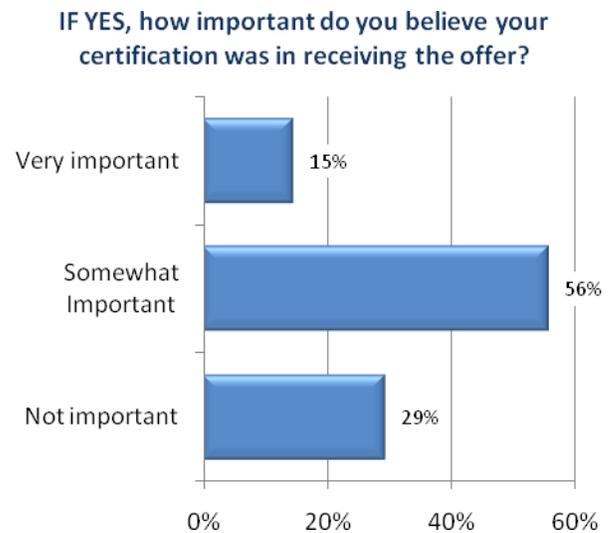
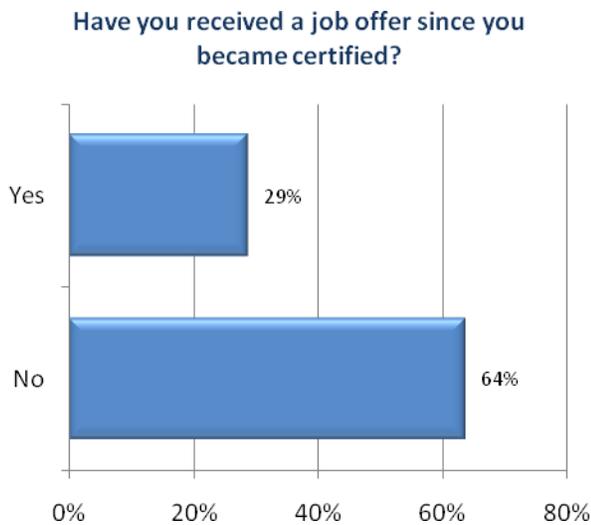
• **Interviewing for New Jobs**

One-third of employed respondents (35%) have interviewed for a new job since becoming certified and, among this group, two-thirds (66%) feel their certification was very or somewhat important in obtaining the interview.



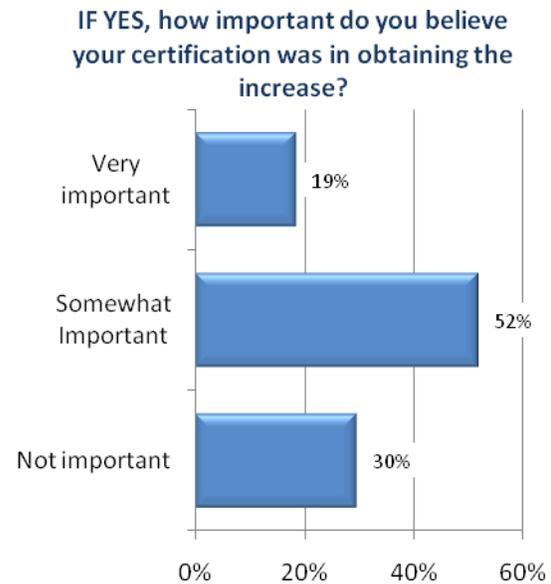
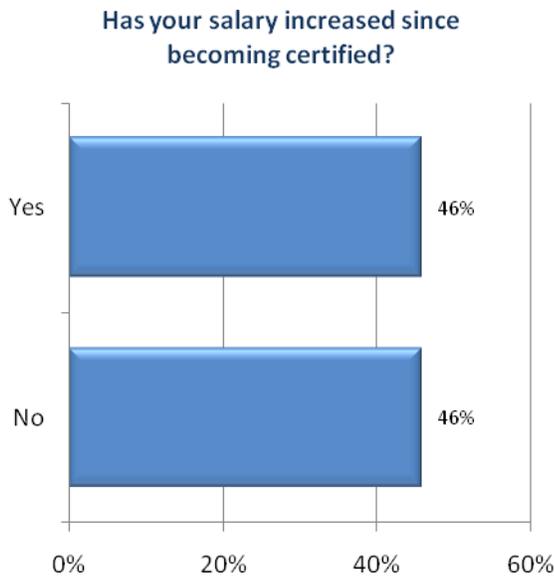
• **Job Offers**

Slightly less than one-third of employed respondents (29%) have received a job offer since becoming certified and, among this group, more than two-thirds (71%) feel their certification was very or somewhat important in receiving the offer.



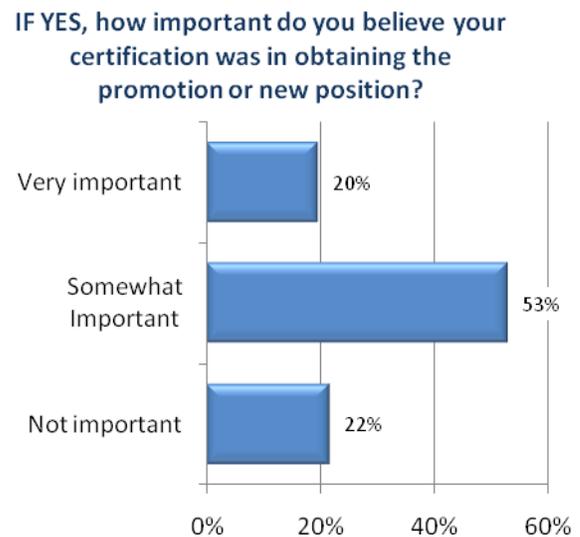
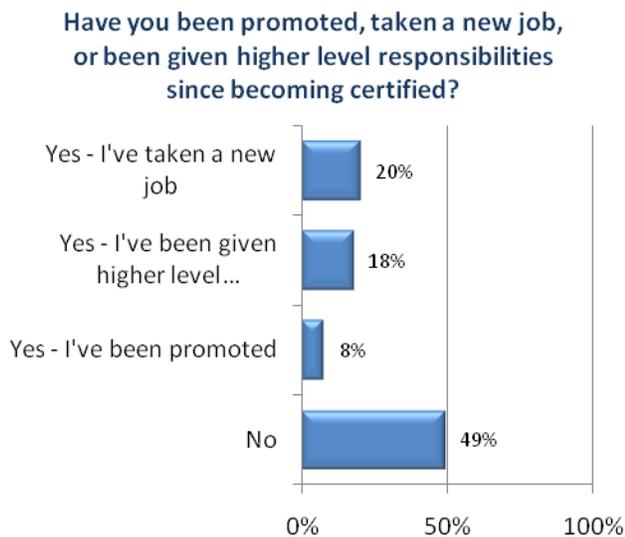
• **Salary Increases**

Slightly less than one-half of employed respondents (46%) have received a salary increase since becoming certified and, among this group, more than two-thirds (71%) feel their certification was very or somewhat important in receiving the increase.



• **Promotions, New Jobs, and Higher Level Responsibilities**

One-fifth of employed respondents (20%) have taken a new job since becoming certified, while 18% have been given higher level responsibilities and 8% have been promoted. Among this group, almost three-quarters (73%) feel their certification was very or somewhat important in these changes.



- **Marketing**

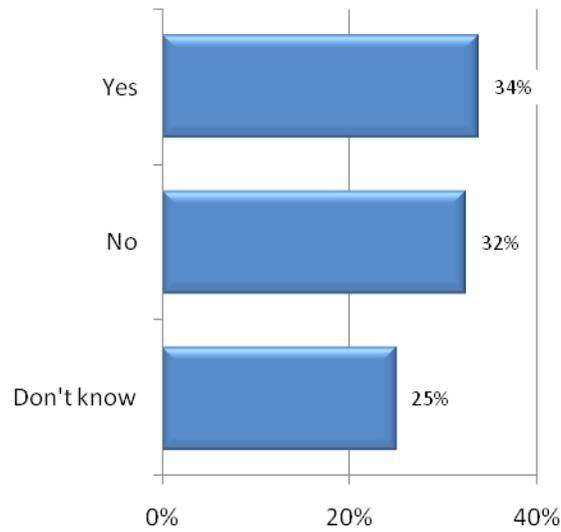
Since becoming certified, more than one-half of freelance/self-employed respondents have mentioned certification when talking with prospective clients (56%) and/or listed certification on their business card (53%).



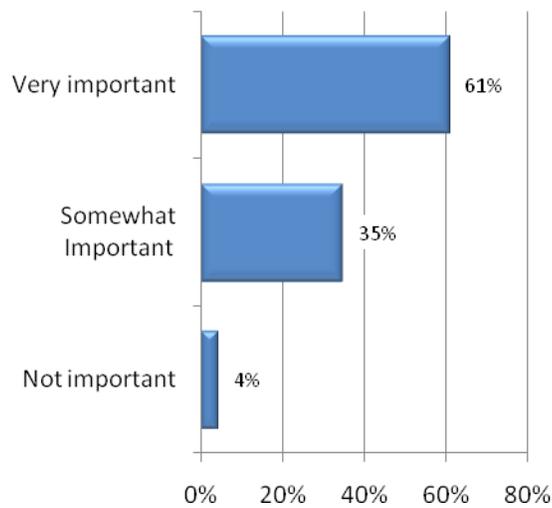
- **New Clients**

One-third of freelance/self-employed respondents (34%) believe that certification has helped them gain new clients and, among this group, three-fifths (61%) felt it was very important.

Has your certification helped you gain new clients?



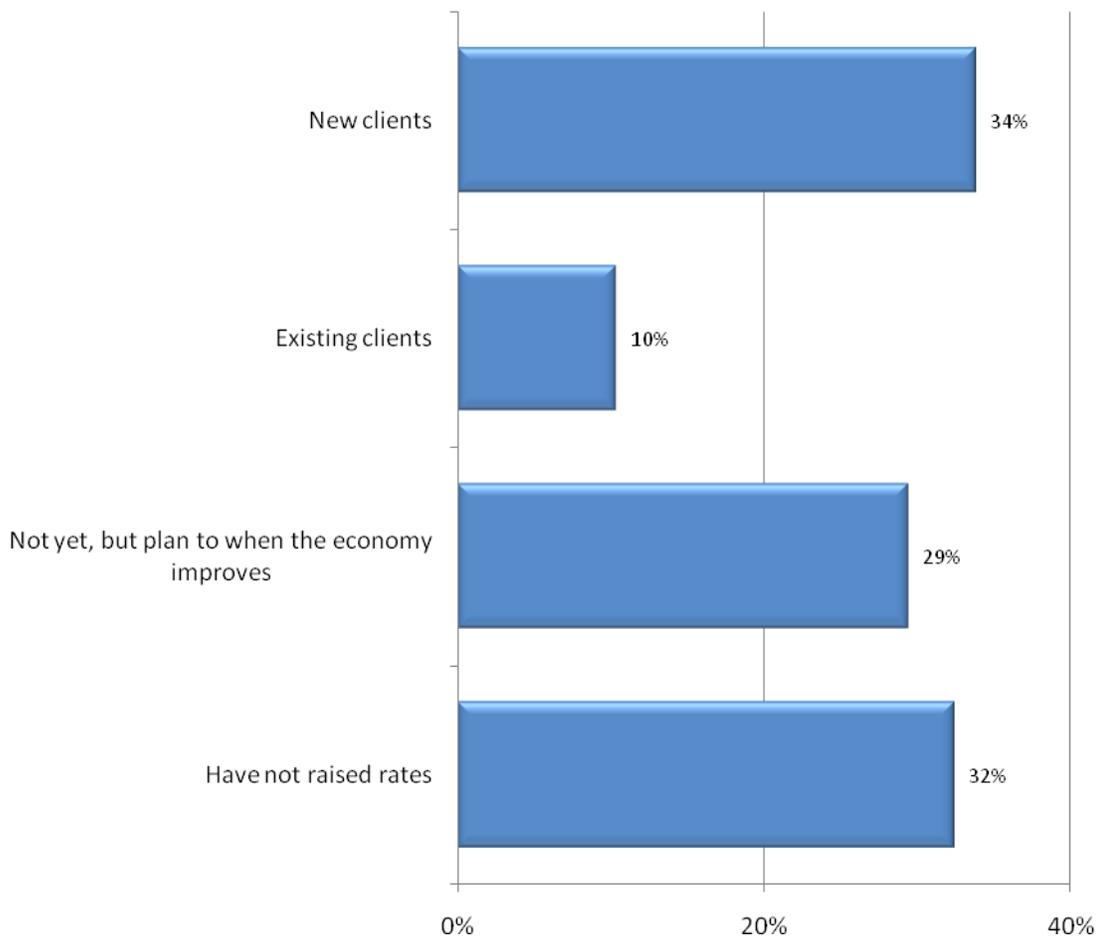
IF YES, how important do you believe certification was in obtaining your new clients?



- **Increasing Rates**

One-third of freelance/self-employed respondents (34%) have raised their rates for new clients since becoming certified, while 10% have raised rates for existing clients and 29% intend to raise rates when the economy improves.

Since becoming certified, have you raised your rates for . . .



- **Recommending Certification**

More than four in five respondents (82%) would recommend certification to other bookkeepers.

