



# 2022 Small Business Exporting Survey

How Small Firms Do Business Globally





# Foreword

America's small businesses find themselves at a crossroads: recovering from a pandemic and resulting economic downturn, looking to the future with a renewed sense of persistence and the confidence that they can meet any challenge head-on. The way we do business is forever changed and technology has brought even the smallest businesses closer to customers on the other side of the globe. Small businesses today are thinking more globally and are seeking more international business opportunities.

The National Small Business Association (NSBA) has partnered with the Export-Import Bank of the U.S. (EXIM) to conduct this survey of small business about their attitudes, practices and beliefs when it comes to doing business internationally. NSBA is the nation's oldest small-business advocacy organization serving its 65,000 members on a staunchly nonpartisan basis. EXIM is the official export credit agency of the U.S., working to support American job creation, prosperity and security through exporting. They help unlock financing solutions for U.S. companies competing around the globe.

NSBA and its international trade arm, the Small Business Exporters Association (SBEA) have been urging for years—decades, even—that more must be done to emphasize the needs of small business within the scope of U.S. trade. While progress has been made, this survey shows a growing appetite for export-related assistance and education among small business.

Among the small- and mid-sized exporters (SMEs) surveyed, 40 percent said they have sold goods or services to a customer outside the U.S., and among those who haven't, the majority—53 percent—said they would be interested in doing so. The biggest challenge to non-exporters: they don't know enough about it and simply don't know where to start.

Interestingly, while the size of businesses that responded to the survey were slightly smaller than in previous surveys, we found that those who export actually do so at higher rates than they did six years ago. That said, those that are exporting reported exporting to fewer countries than in previous years. This underscores the resource and information challenge for smaller businesses—particularly since the overwhelming majority of owners handle the export operations themselves—and why more are choosing to export to only a handful of countries.

Starting out exporting is a unique risk for smaller businesses and far too few know about the wealth of federal resources at their disposal. EXIM is one of many outstanding resources helping businesses reach customers globally, yet just 22 percent report being aware of the various federal agencies dedicated to helping export U.S. goods and services. The top challenge SMEs face in terms of sustaining or growing their export operations is finding foreign customers and navigating foreign import rules—two key issues that are the focal point for several federal agencies.

This lack of knowledge stems from many sources, however we found that far more businesses in this survey (typically smaller businesses) than in the 2016 survey report their lender has never mentioned EXIM products. The number one thing SMEs want the federal government to do to help foster exporting is to provide better and more export training and technical assistance and provide export tax incentives for small businesses.

This survey was conducted online among 530 small businesses across the country April 14-May 12. We hope you find the data in this report useful. Please [contact the NSBA media affairs department](#) with questions.

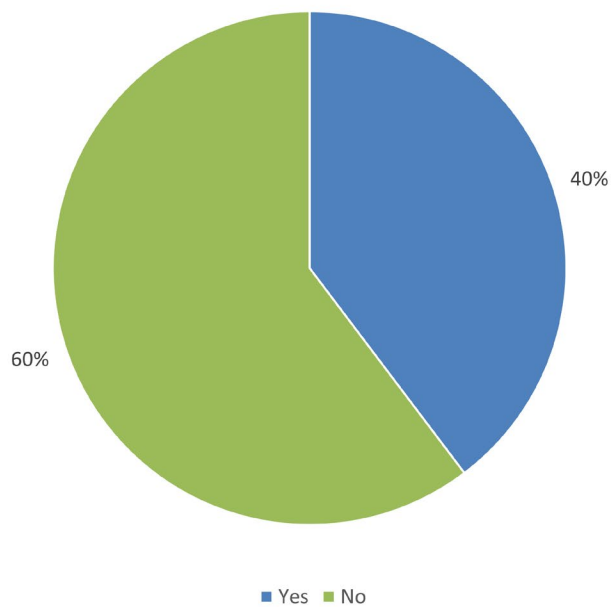
Sincerely,

Todd McCracken  
NSBA President

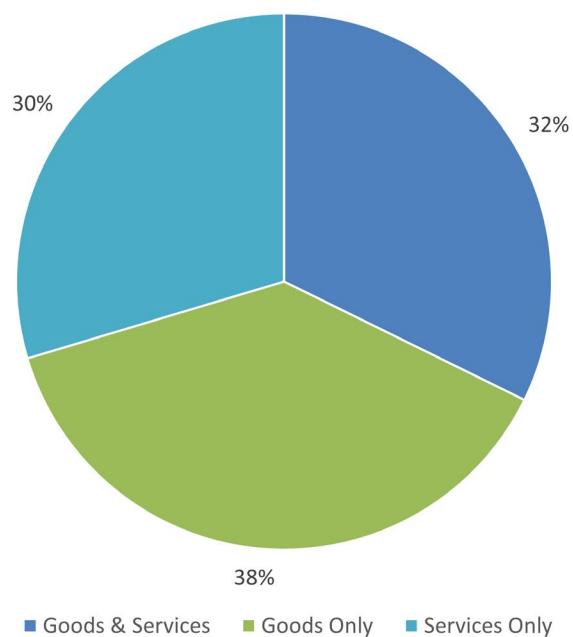
Michael Stanek  
NSBA Chair

# Export Status

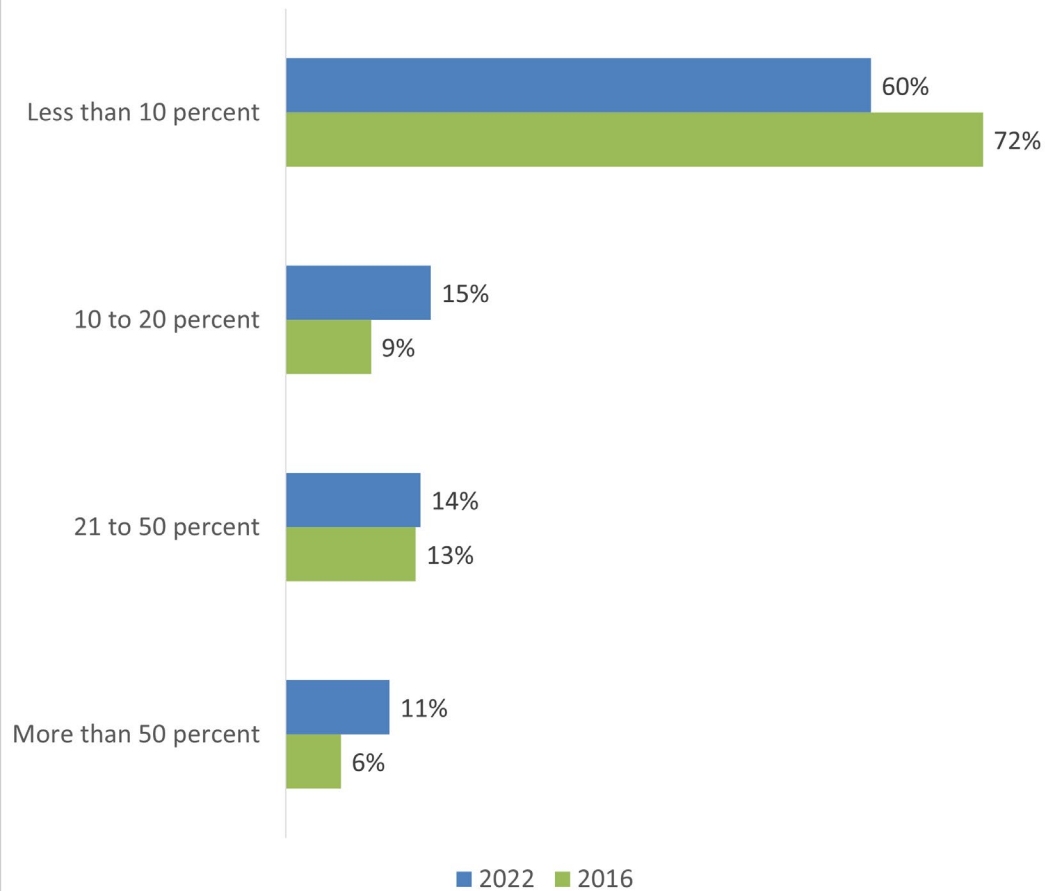
Have you ever sold merchandise or services to a customer outside of the United States?



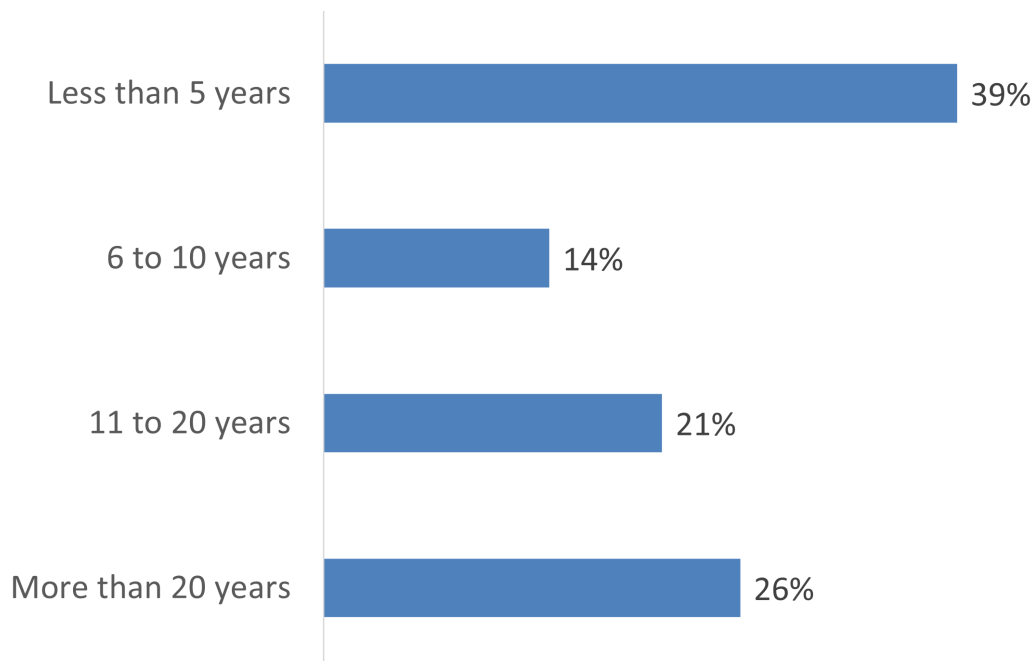
Which of the following best describes your international business?



### What percentage of your business sales is from exporting?



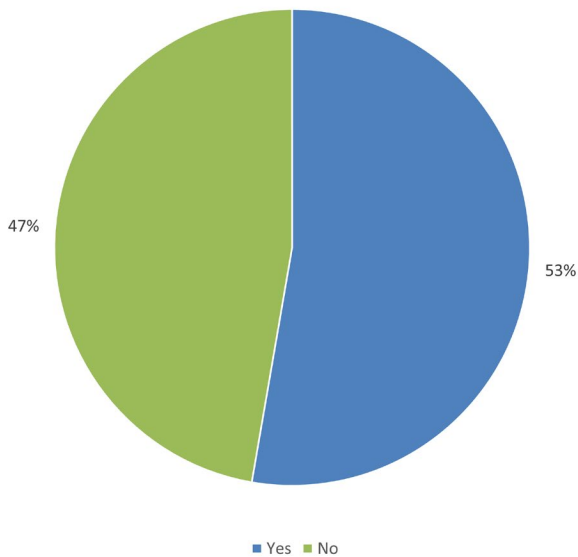
### How many years have you been exporting?



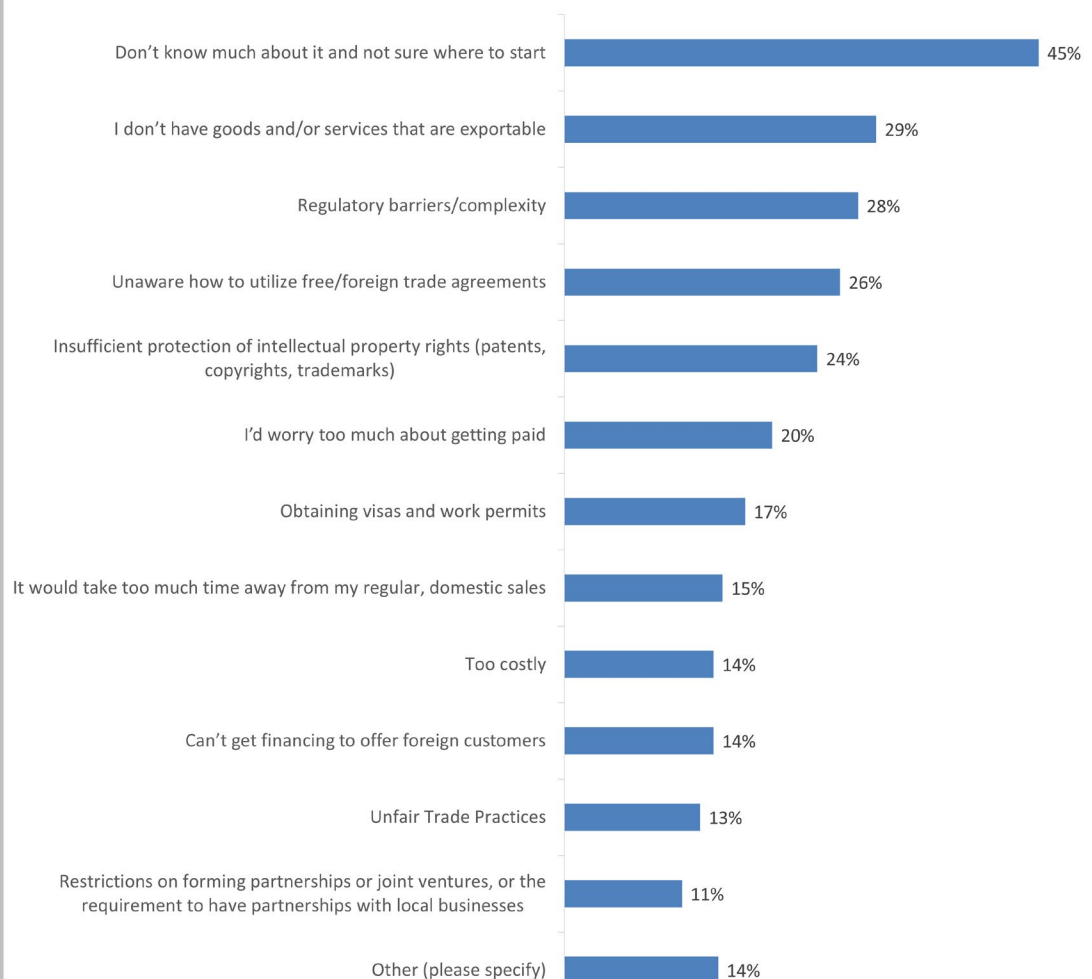


# Non-Exporting SMEs

Would you be interested in selling merchandise or services to a foreign customer in the future, if some of your concerns could be addressed?



What do you consider the main barriers to selling your goods and/or services to foreign customers? (Check all that apply)



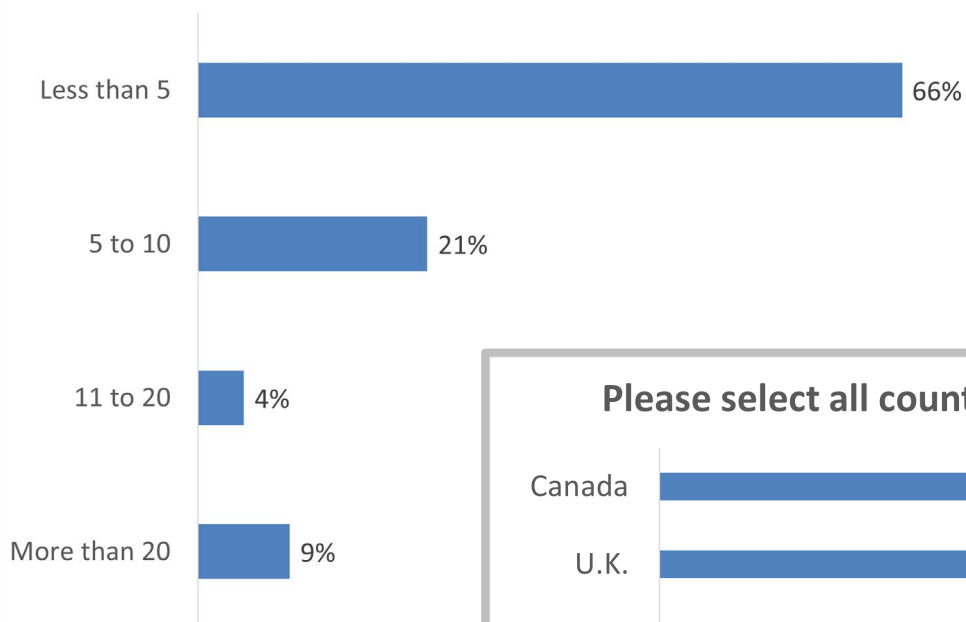
**Which of the following government exporting programs have you heard of?  
(Check all that apply)**



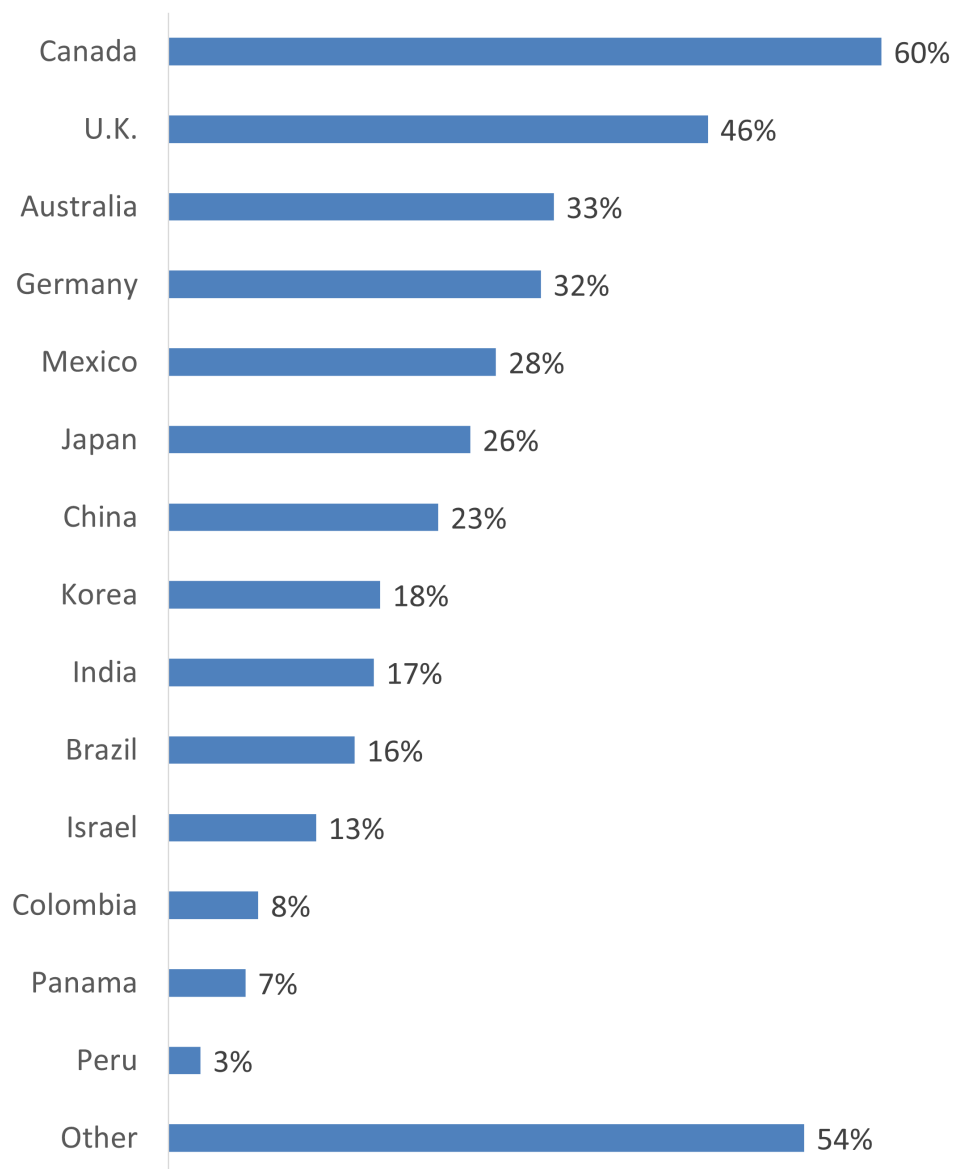
There was an increase among non-exporting SMEs that said they don't export because they don't know where to start, and a decrease in those who said they don't have anything to export. Small businesses are increasingly interested in exporting, but need additional resources and tools to help them start.

# Export Reach

## How many countries are you exporting to?

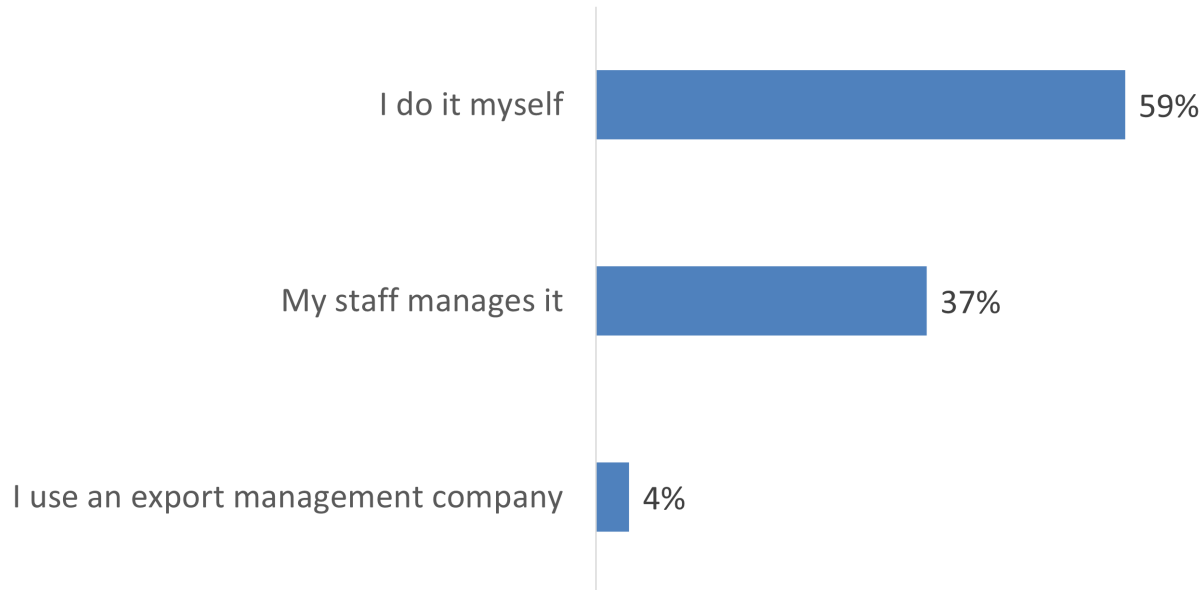


## Please select all countries to which you export.

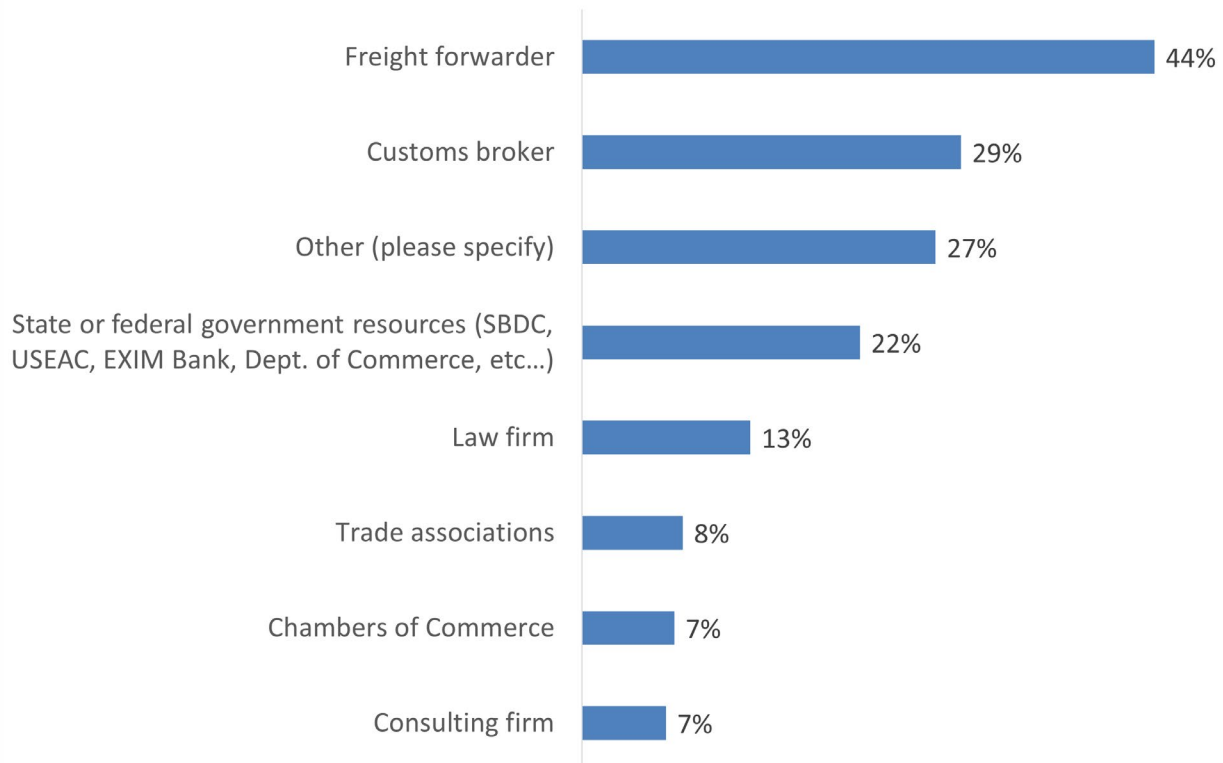


# Export Management

## Who manages the bulk of your exporting activities?

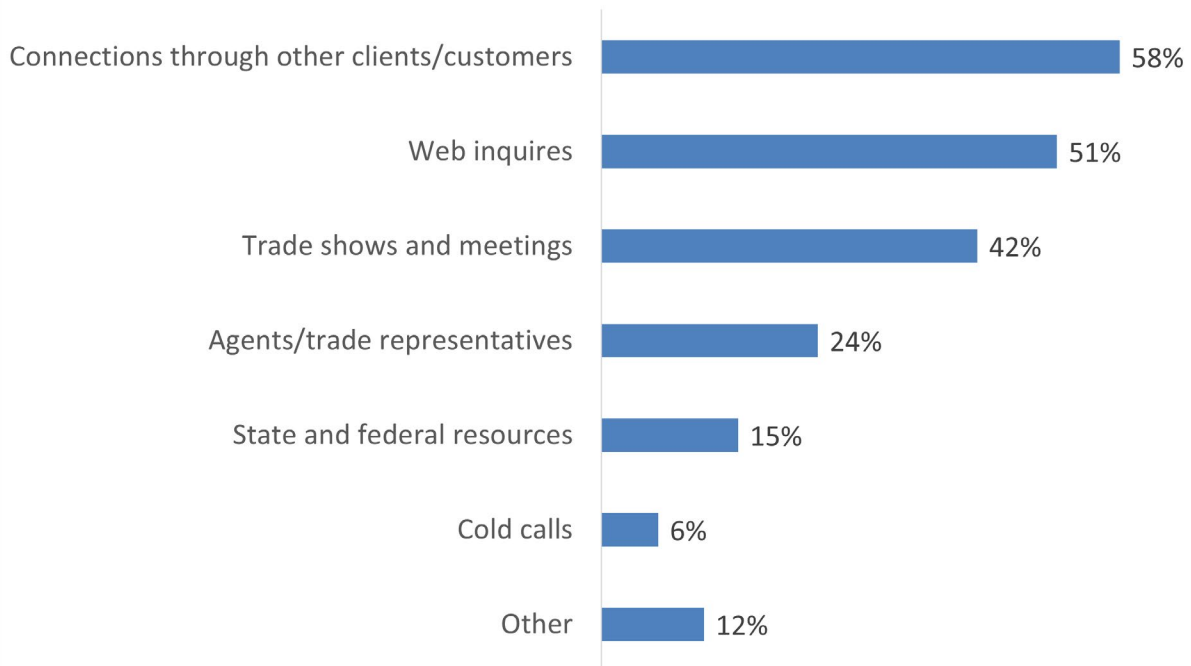


## Who helps you overcome export related challenges? (Check all that apply)



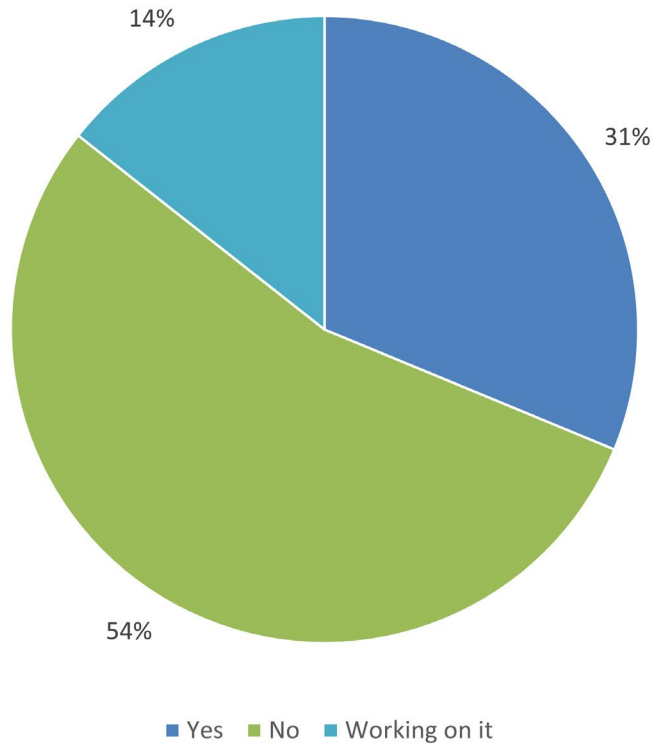


**What resources and tools do you use for determining and establishing new international trade markets?  
(Check all that apply)**

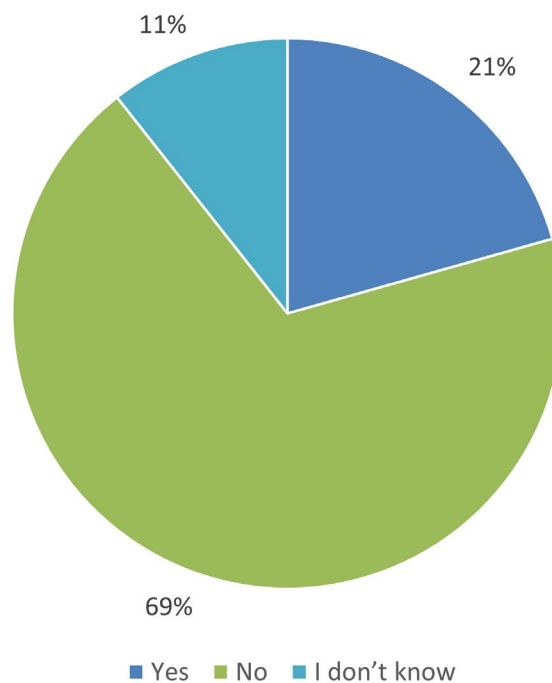


The overwhelming majority of small-business owners—59 percent—handle the export operations of their companies themselves.

**Is your company's website capable of processing international orders?**



**Does your company's website provide for online content to be translated into foreign languages?**



# Federal Export Assistance

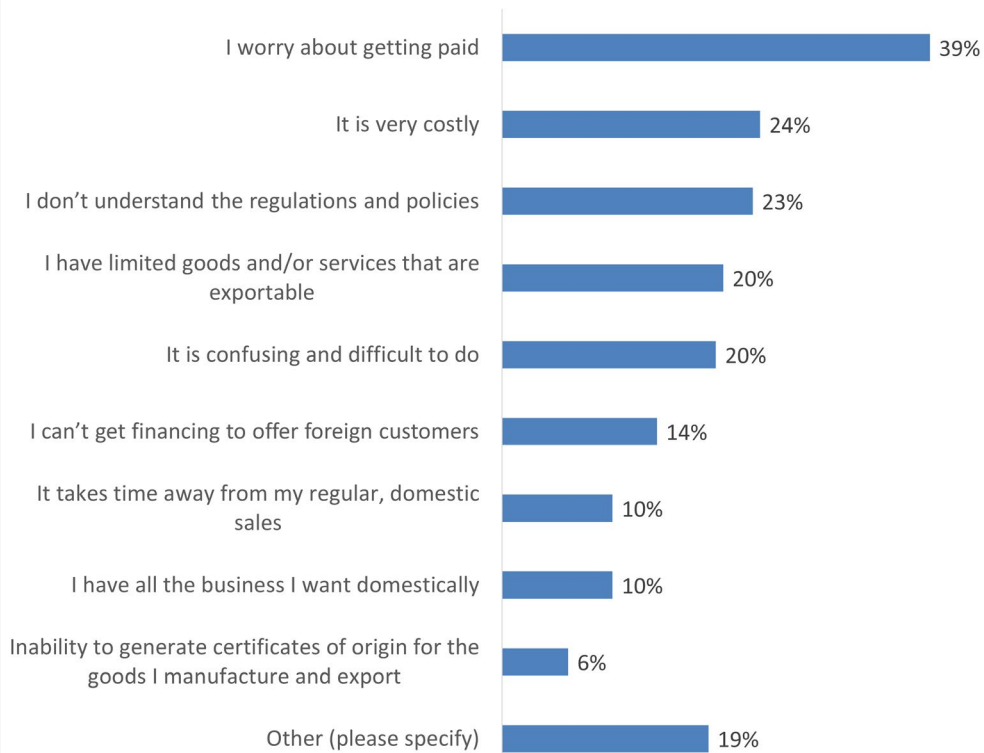
**Which of the following government programs have you taken advantage of?  
(Check all that apply)**





# Export Challenges

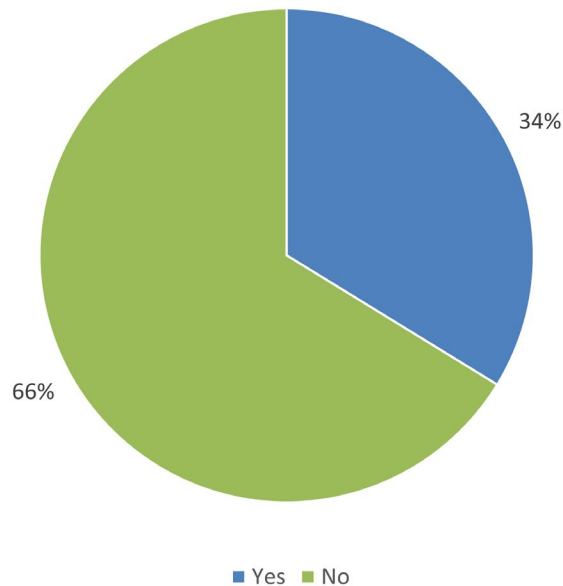
**What are the largest challenges to selling your goods and/or services to foreign customers? (Check all that apply)**



**Please select your TOP THREE biggest challenges in terms of sustaining and/or growing your export operations.**

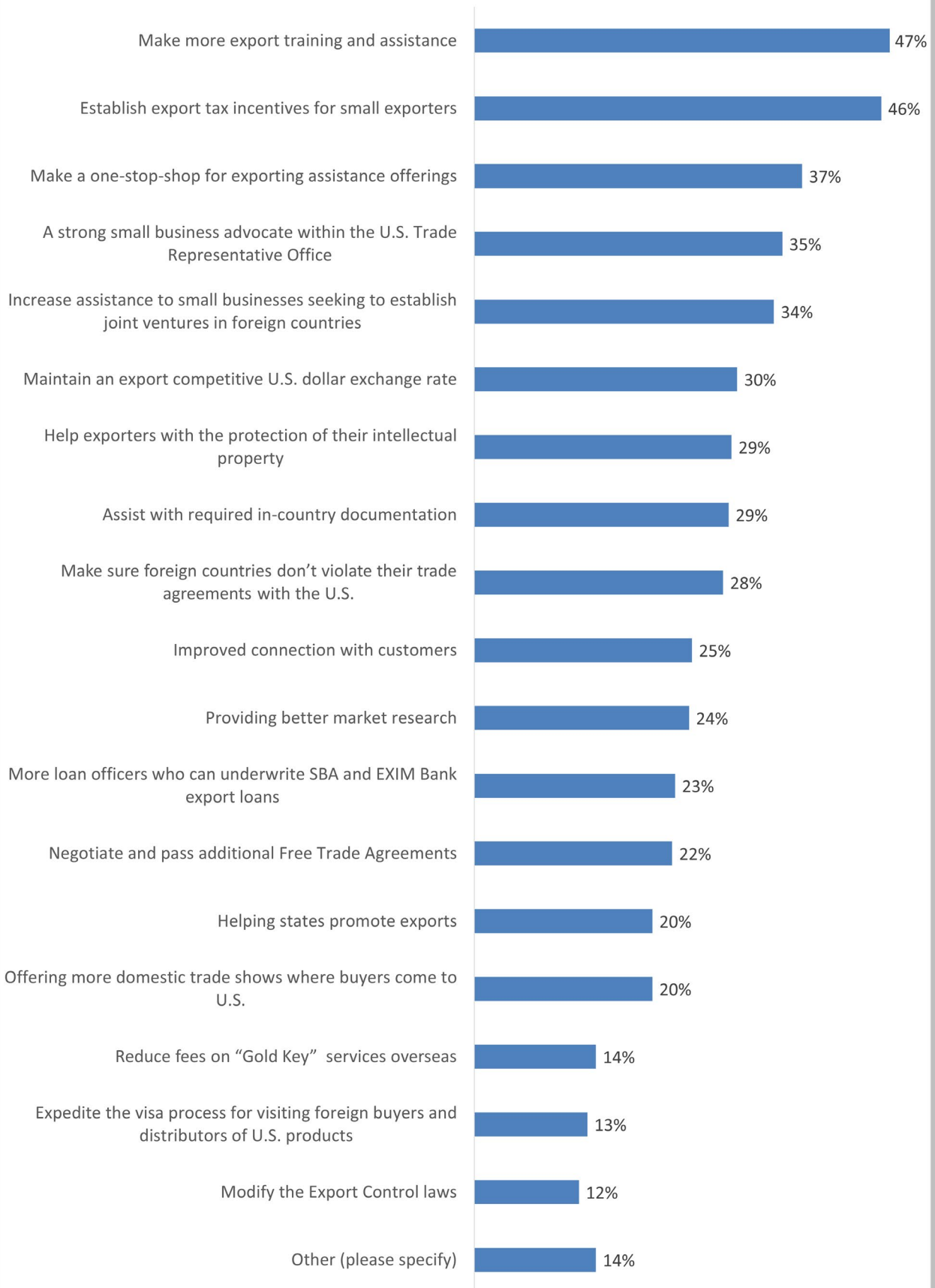


Have you ever had trouble exporting your product to any countries due to foreign import restrictions?



The biggest concern SMEs have when it comes to exporting is the worry over getting paid. Finding suitable foreign customers is a particularly big challenge among existing exporters looking to sustain or grow their export operations.

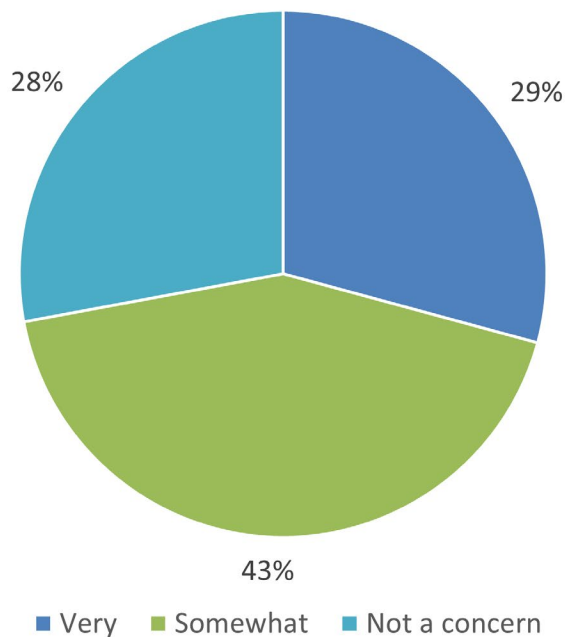
**What types of federal government support for exporting would be most useful to you and your company as an exporter or as a potential exporter?  
(Check all that apply)**



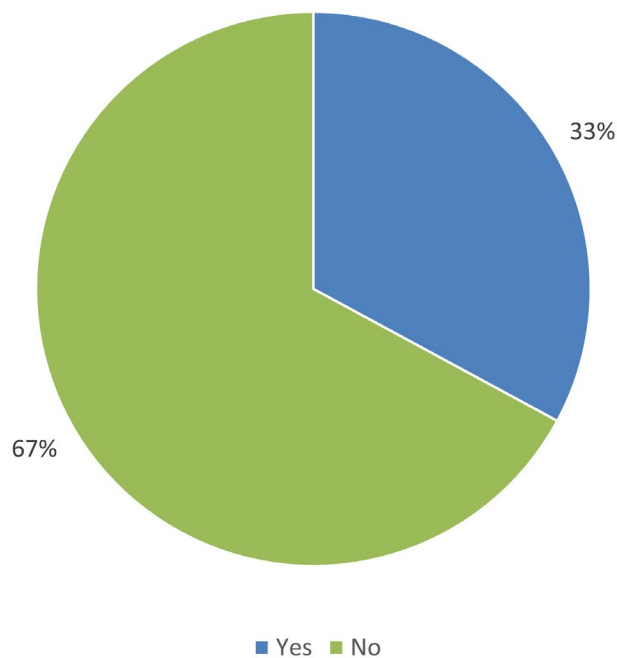


# Export Payments

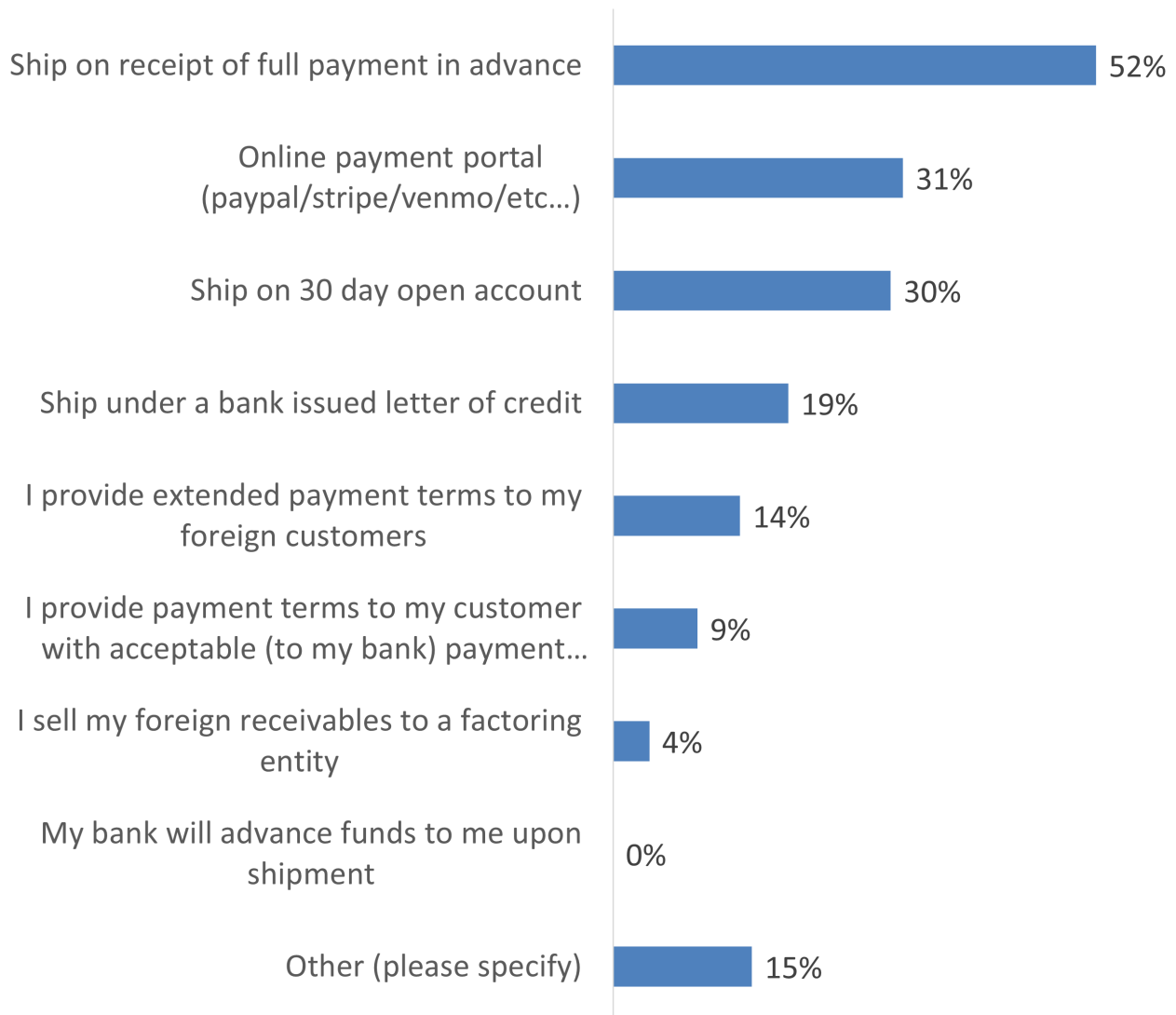
How significant a concern is receiving payment from a foreign customer to you?



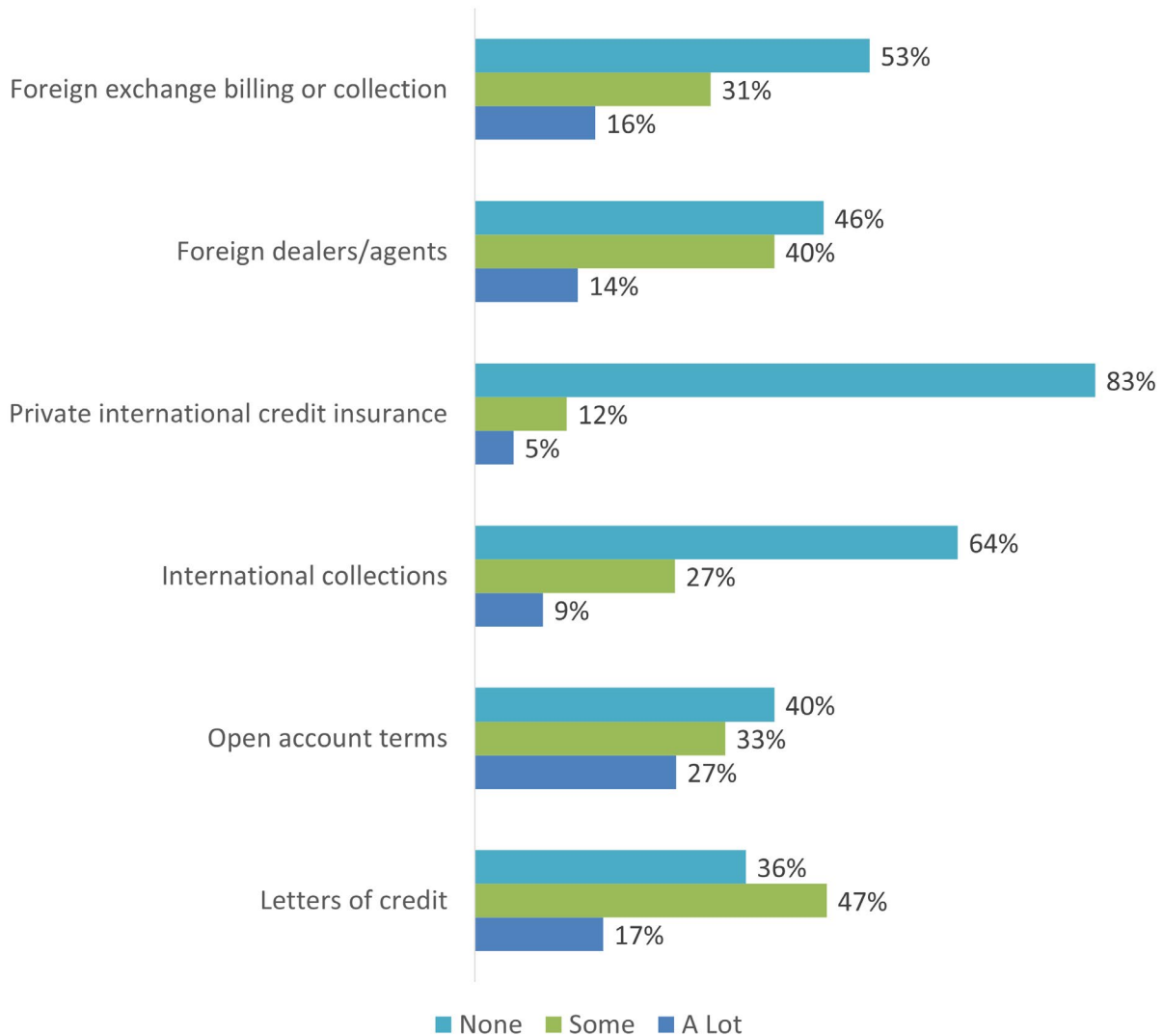
Have you had issues collecting payments from overseas companies?



**Which of the following methods of payment do you accept from foreign customers? (Check all that apply)**



Please indicate your level of experience with the following:

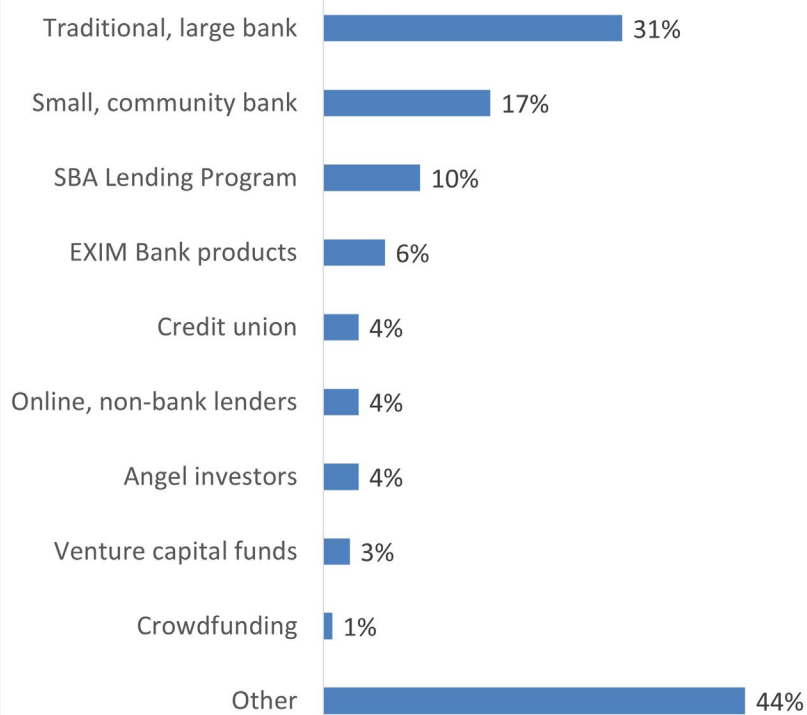


One-in-three SMEs have had issues collecting payments from foreign companies.

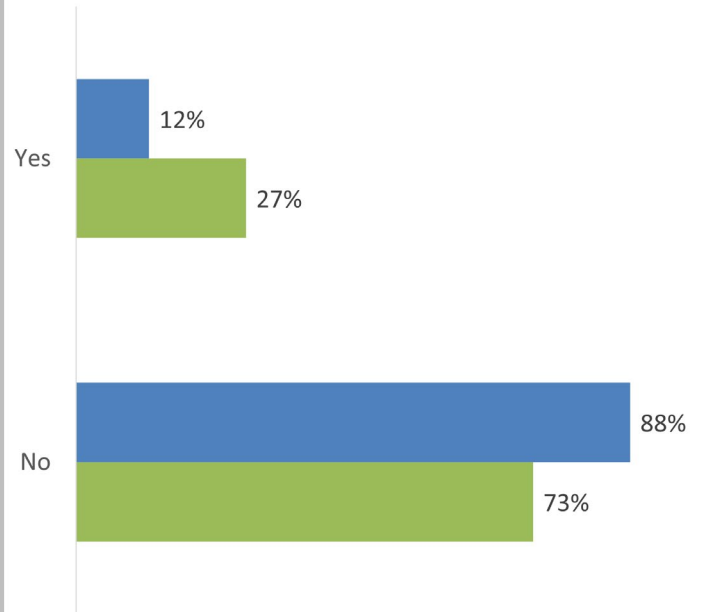


# Export Finance

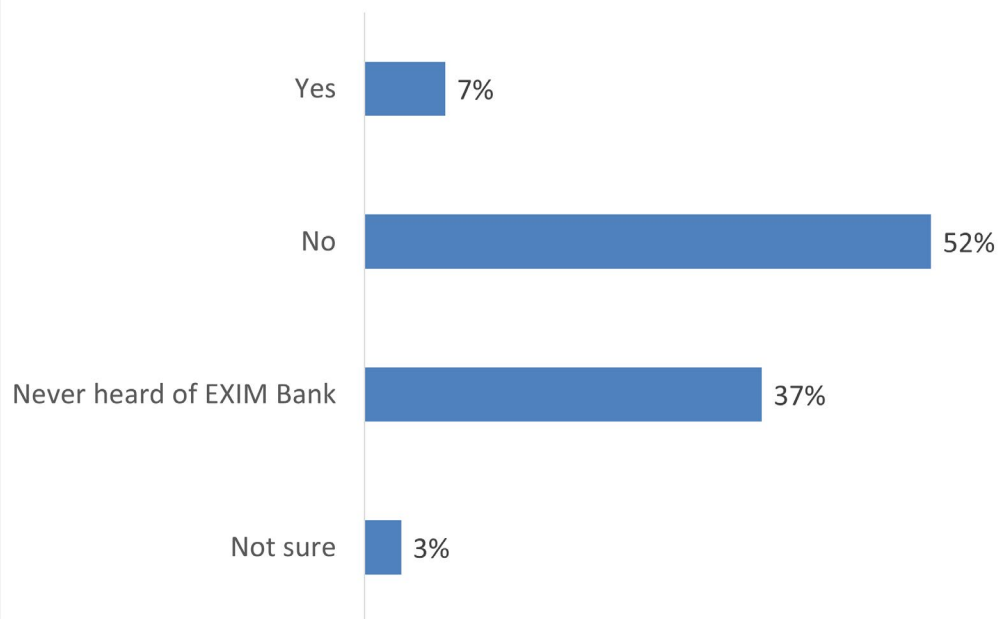
From which of the following sources have you secured financing for your exporting operations? (Check all that apply)



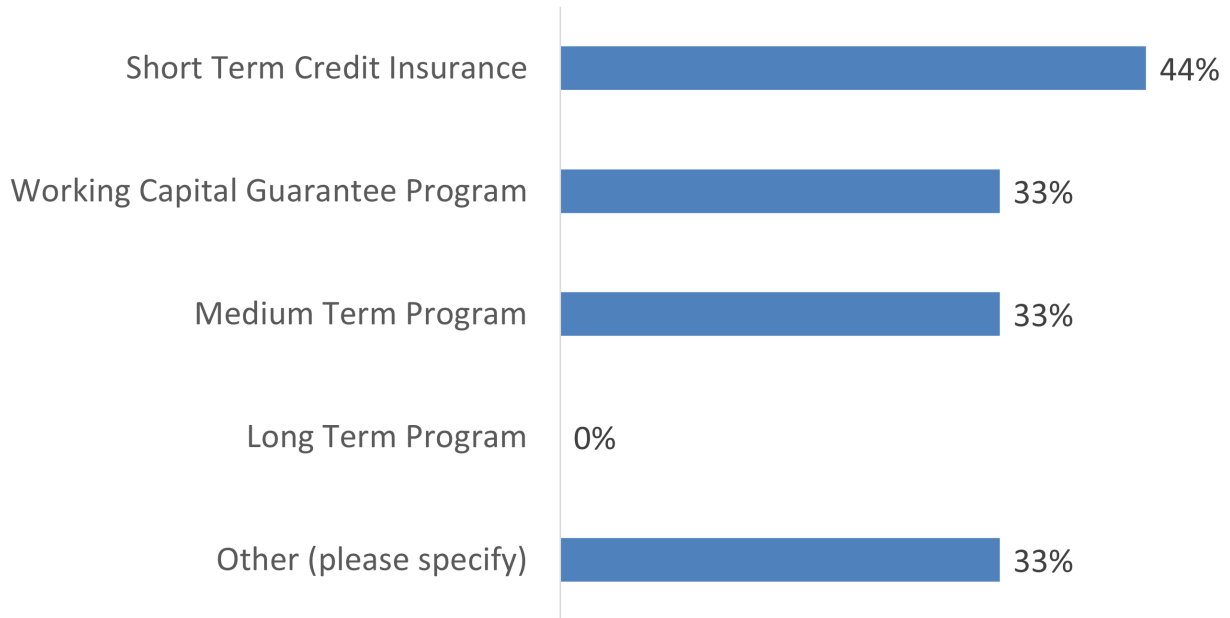
**Has your bank or other lender ever discussed EXIM Bank products with you?**



**Have you ever used any EXIM Bank products?**

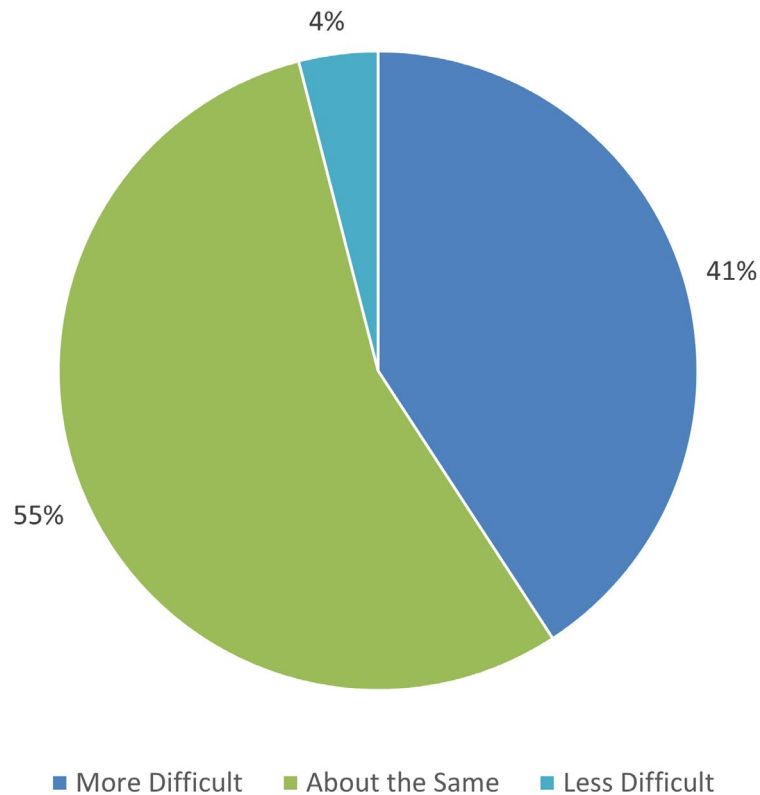


**Among exporters who do use EXIM Bank products,  
which of the following have you used?  
(Check all that apply)**





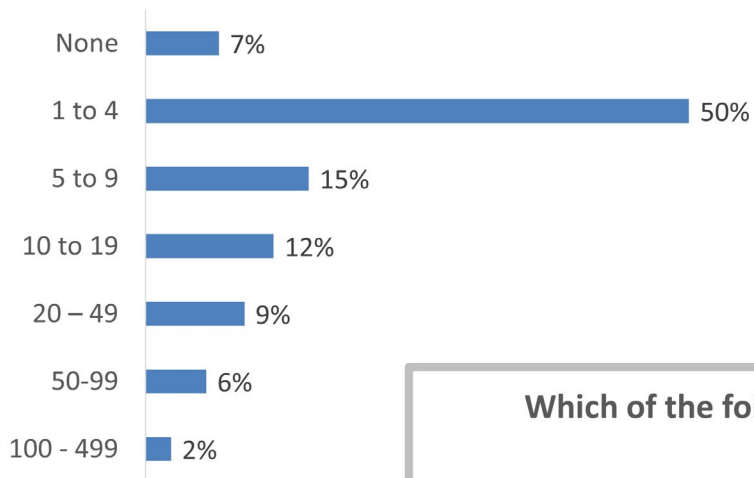
Would you say securing financing for your firm's exporting operations is more or less difficult than securing financing for traditional business operations?



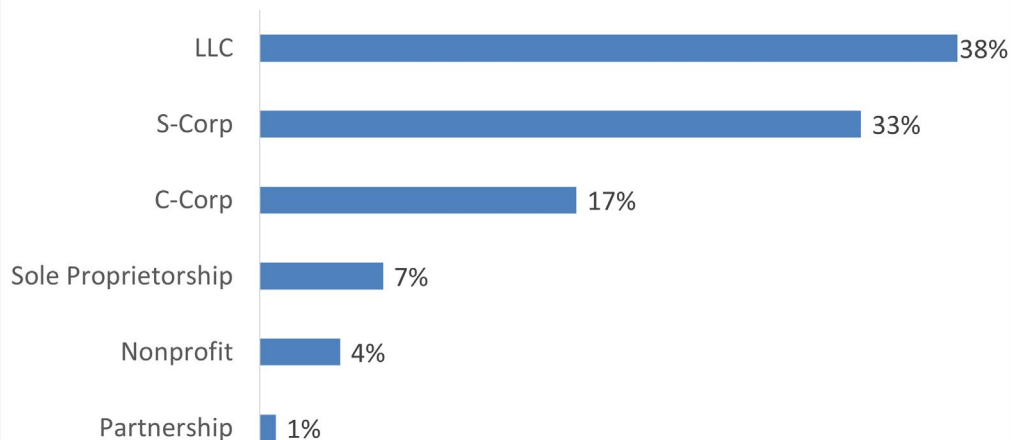
It is worth noting that, while in 2016 more SMEs reported their bank had discussed EXIM products with them, the average business size of respondents in the 2022 survey was much smaller. Meaning, many lenders are failing to provide smaller businesses with much-needed and very applicable information about EXIM's resources

# Demographics

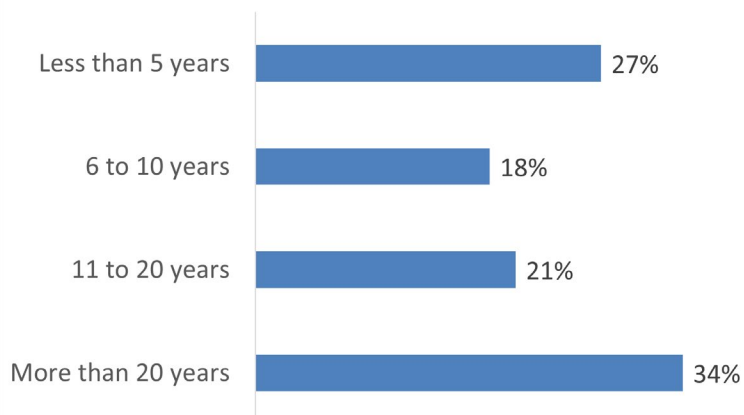
## How many total full-time personnel are currently employed by your business?



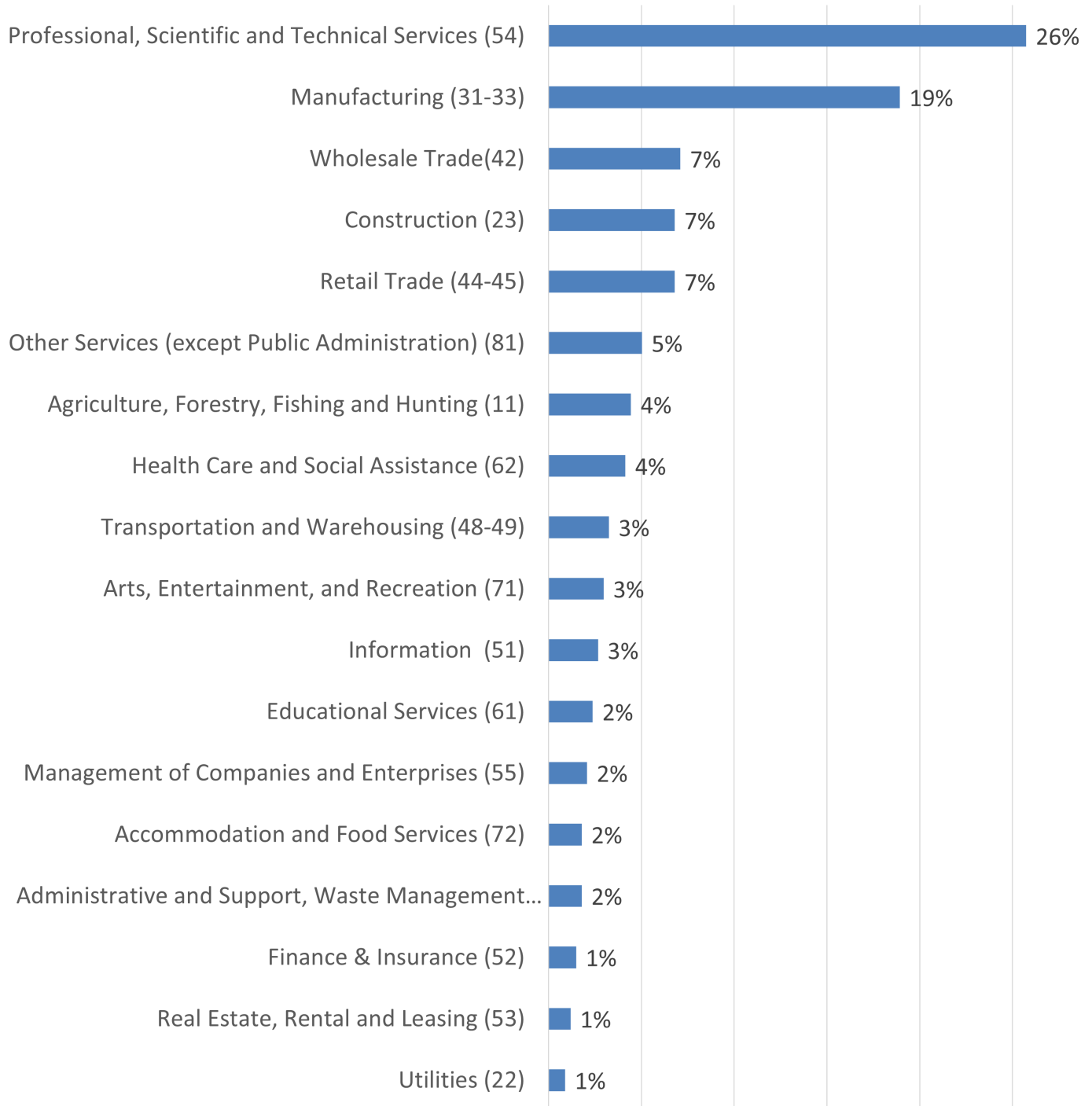
## Which of the following best describes the structure of your business?



## How long have you been in business?

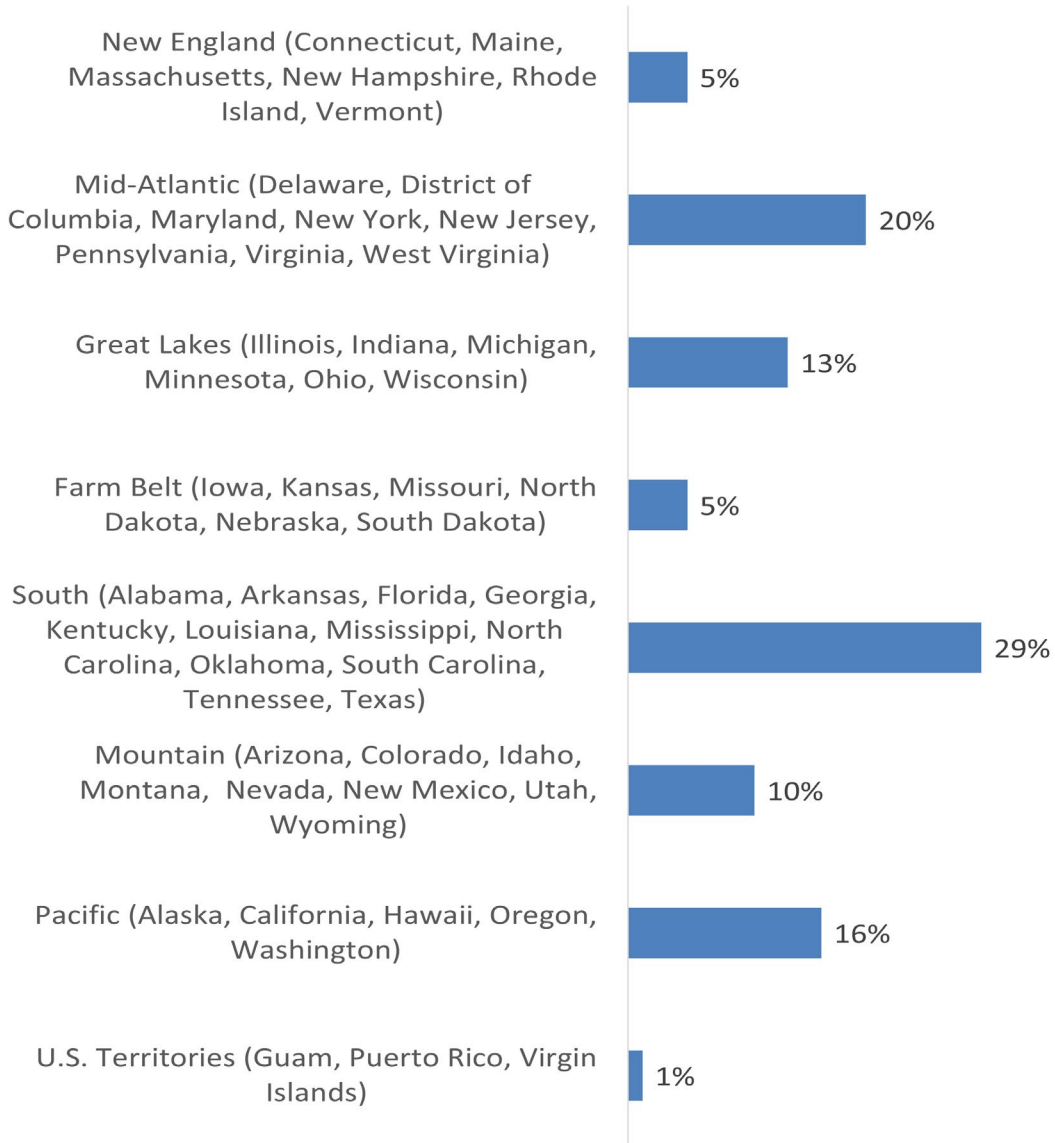


### Which of the following best describes the industry or sector in which your business operates?

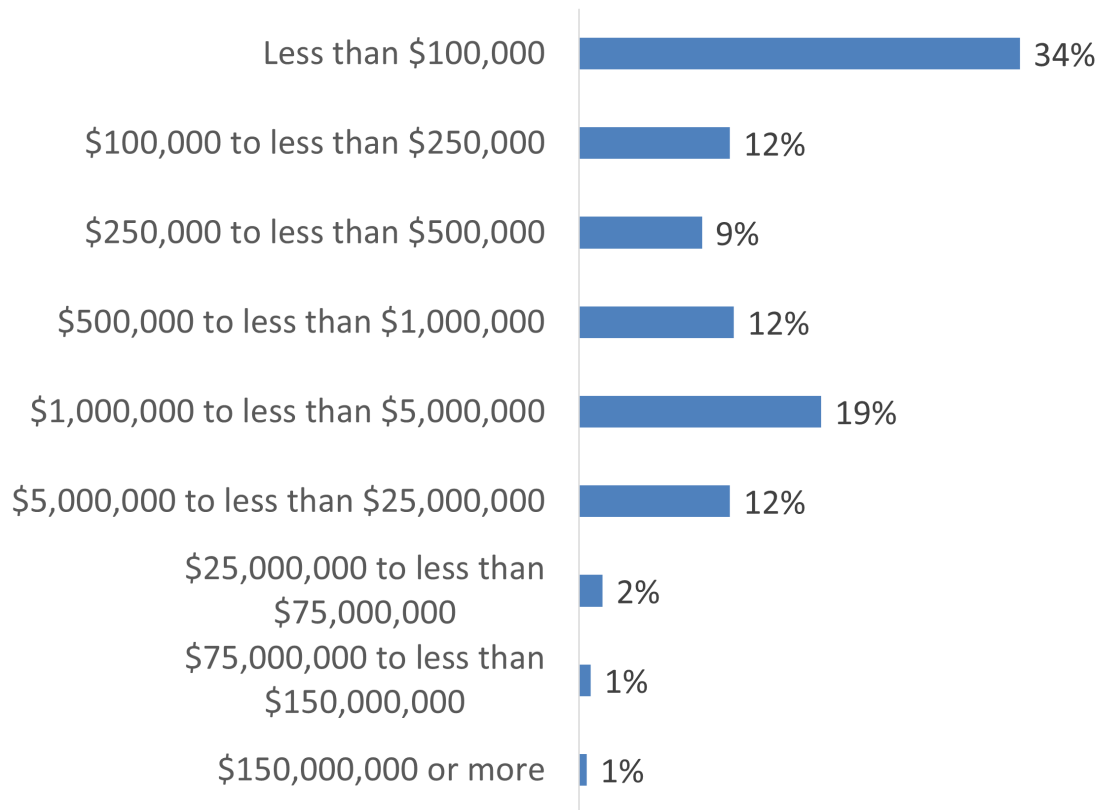




### In what state or U.S. territory is your company currently headquartered?



## What were your gross sales or revenues for your most recent fiscal year?



## Methodology

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