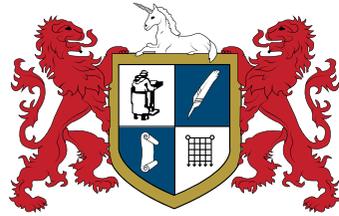


THE INSTITUTE
OF CERTIFIED
BOOKKEEPERS

Annual Survey Report

EDITION 11



THE INSTITUTE
OF CERTIFIED
BOOKKEEPERS

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Introduction & Australian Context

The ICB Annual Survey is commissioned each year to gain insight into the bookkeeping industry and the successes and challenges that bookkeepers and the bookkeeping industry face.

In 2021 we obtained 786 responses to the survey, and unsurprisingly (94%) of respondents are ICB members.

2021 has been a year of recovery, perseverance and determination – and I'm not just referring to the pandemic. The bookkeeping profession continues to make an indelible mark on the business landscape in Australia.

The continued level of ongoing professional development and learning being undertaken by this community, remains at levels unseen for many years. With the upcoming introduction of STP2, the introduction of Director IDs, stapled super funds and the continuing work of government with modernising business registers, these levels are not likely to ease up anytime soon.

Like most other industries, professional bookkeepers continue to adjust to our expanding world of remote working, an increased reliance on digitisation and a push to continue to lead the small business community of Australia into an expanded digitised framework.

In the MYOB Business Monitor for June 2021, they state:

“nearly half a million Australian SME's have no or very low levels of digitisation in their business... approximately 20% are not engaged with digital tools across critical areas of the business workflow, such as compliance and supplier management.”

This presents an amazing opportunity for professional bookkeepers, to showcase their skills at leading more of the business community through the digitisation journey.

It is becoming increasingly obvious that as an industry, we are in the prime seat to lead the prioritising of digitising business in Australia and to showcase the skillset required to be a professional bookkeeper today, to which much younger cohort, who are by nature enamoured with the use of technology..

As our survey continues to demonstrate, with the average age of professional bookkeepers currently sitting at 53, our ability to attract this younger cohort will be hugely important for the future not only of bookkeeping, but accounting more generally. There is no question that embracing and leading the best use of technology, is the crucial to the future of bookkeeping, and 76% of our respondents this year agree with us. The future looks bright.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to our survey for 2021. ICB continues to have a focus of members at the centre of everything we do and this information helps us to continue to advocate, educate and support the professional bookkeepers in Australia –
Bookkeepers, helping Bookkeepers, helping business.

Amanda Linton
CEO

① All about you | Snapshot

The profile of the average respondent has remained unchanged for the 2021 year, with the ICB Membership survey confirming results here that the average age of respondents remained at 53 and the profession still being significantly dominated by a female workforce (89%), a trend which is steady year on year. We do note a slight decrease in the 51-60 year age bracket and a comparable increase in the 31-40 year bracket (2%).

73% of respondents are working in solo practices, within a range of different legal entities, with 27% operating a multiple-person bookkeeping business.

During 2021 we have a return to pre pandemic geographical locations with 29% of respondents being located more than 100klms from a capital city. This trend is reflection of the nationwide shift of the working and lifestyle patterns of the general population, a geographical shift into regional areas in some states greatly facilitated by a continuing rise in the use of technology.

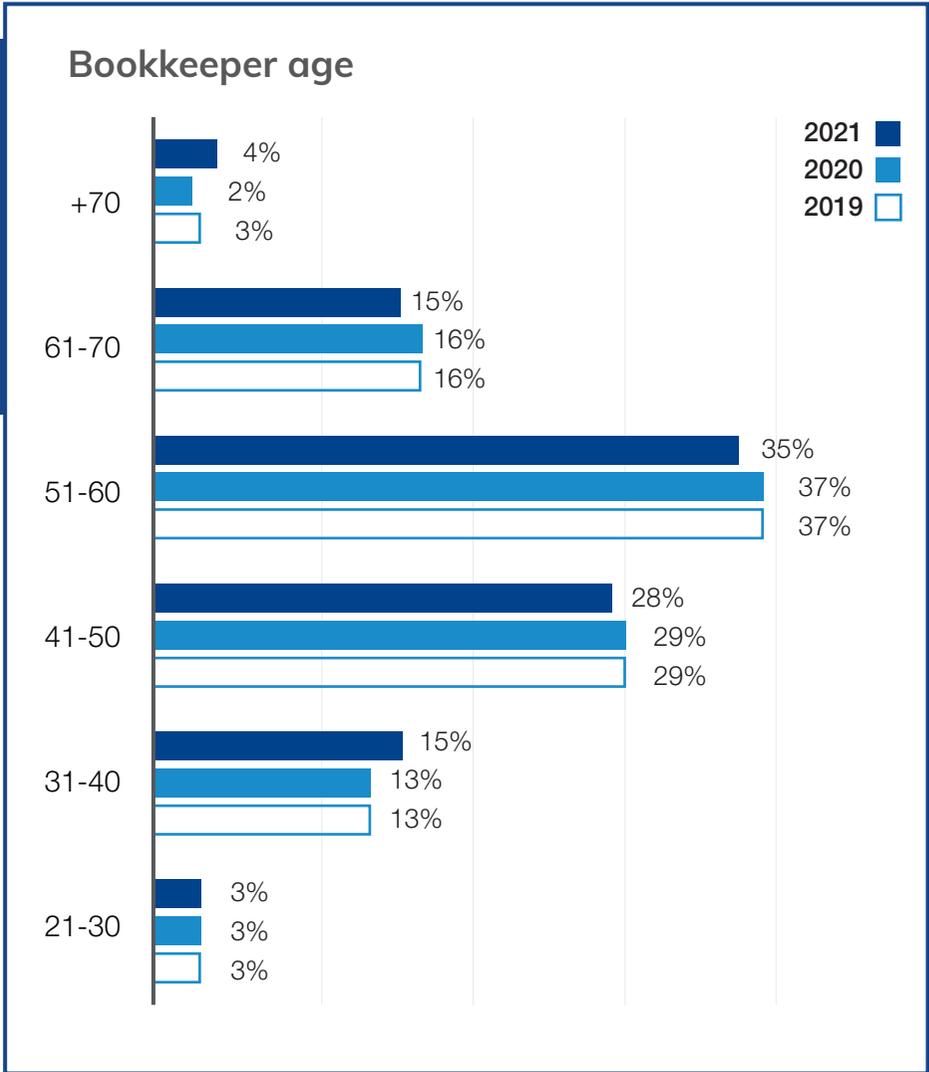
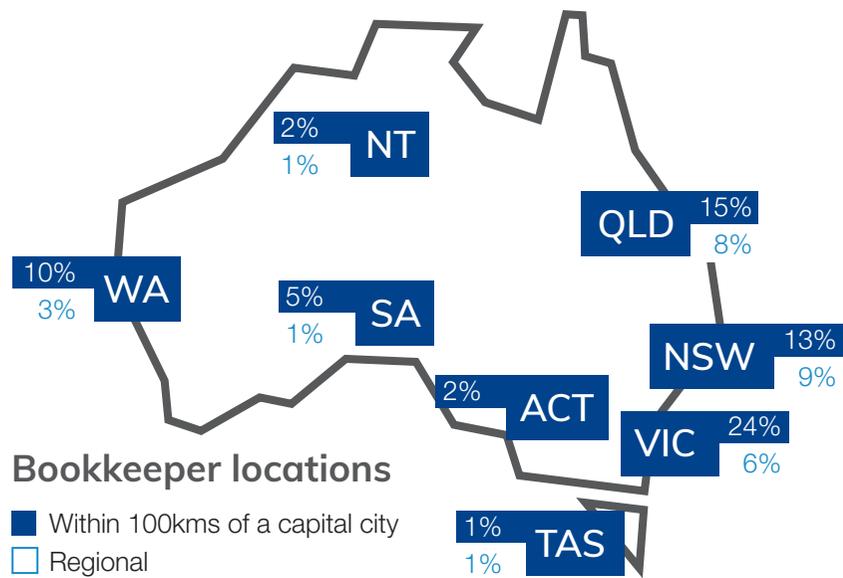
Given the average age of the professional bookkeeper population in Australia, we have somewhat unsurprisingly seen a number of bookkeeper retirements during 2021 resulting in a 4% drop in those respondents with 25+ years' experience. As the bookkeeping profession, and the services we provide, continue to grow, industry more broadly, as aligned with the broader accounting industry, needs to look at ways to attract a younger cohort into the profession.

Whilst the majority of respondents clearly identified to the title of BAS agent, description in line with 2020 respondents, (59% BAS Agent), there are some prominent other descriptors being used by respondents including using a combination of listed answers. Conclusion to be drawn from this is that we are using different titles depending on the circumstances under which we are referring to ourselves. This could be with interactions with clients, with government, or the broader community. Other prominent titles that are referred to include Accountant, officer manager or administrator, NDIS Plan Manager or Advisor. This demonstrates the truly broad scope of services and positions that professional bookkeepers hold within the Australian Business Framework.

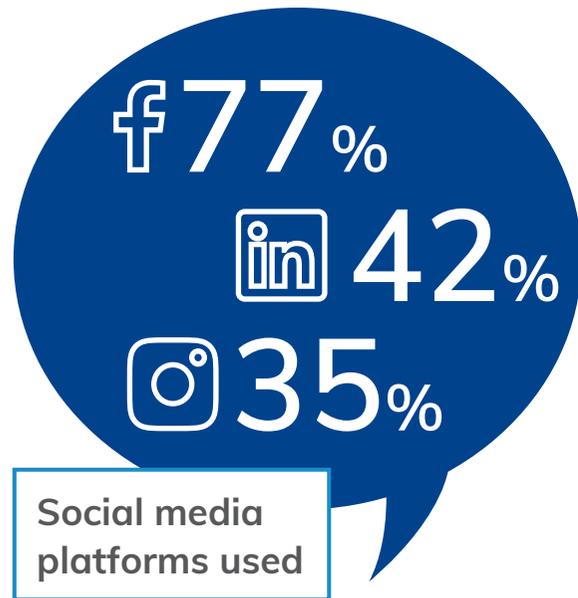
① All about you



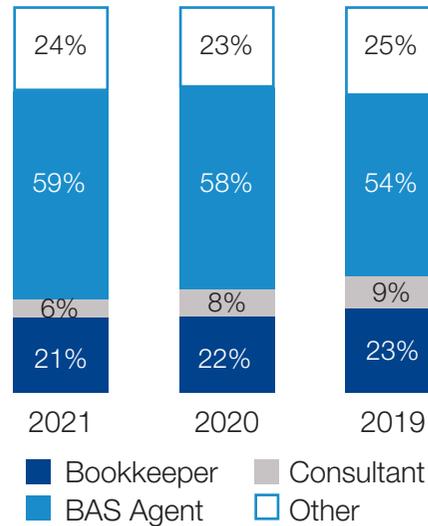
Data from the 2021 ICB Membership Survey in August indicated that the average age of a bookkeeper is 53



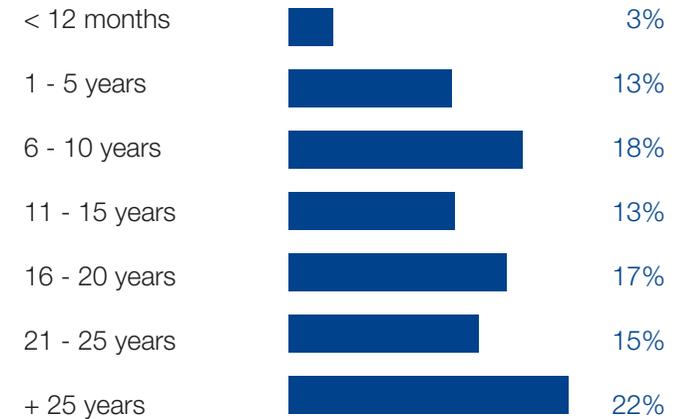
① All about you



Current role

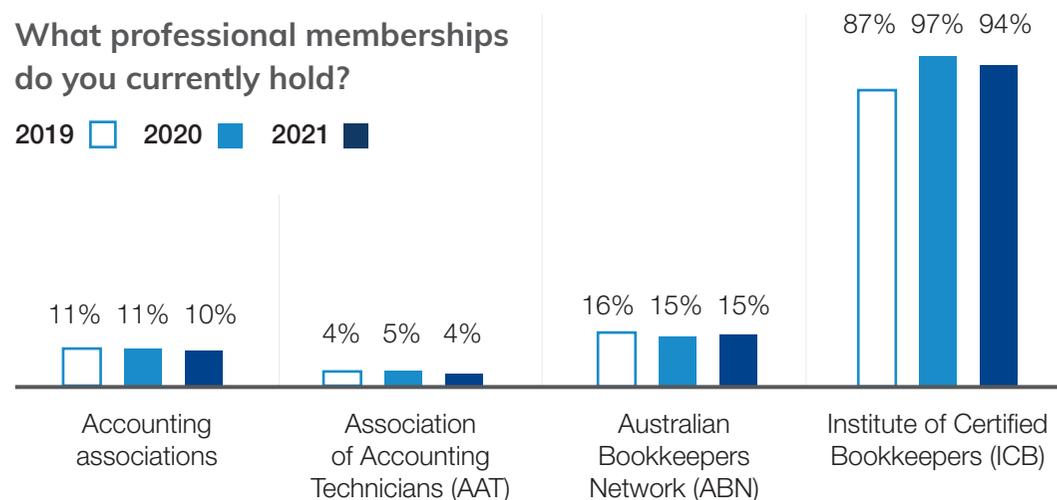


Years of experience

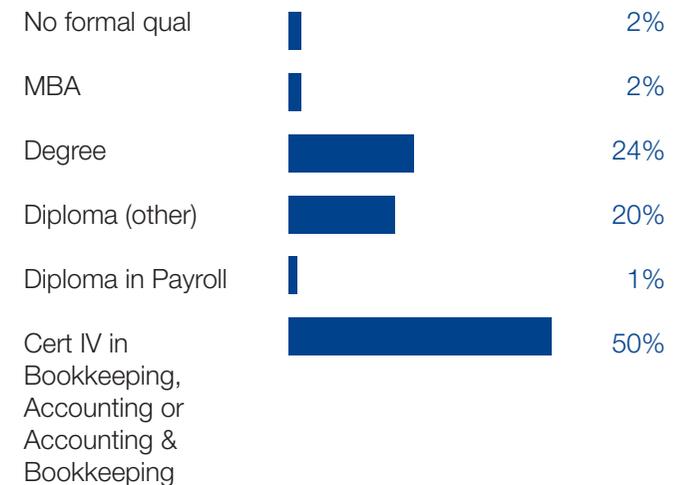


What professional memberships do you currently hold?

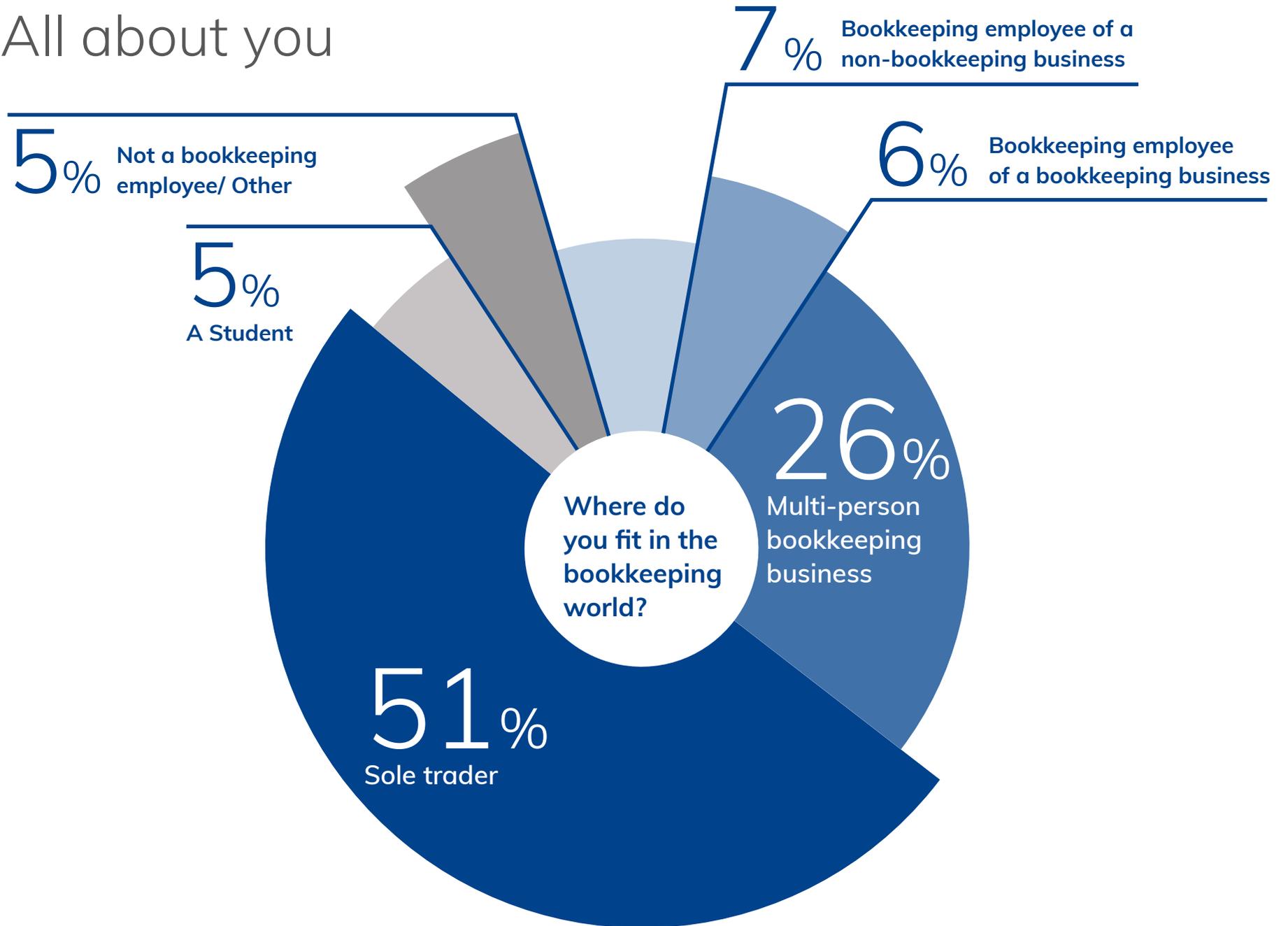
2019 □ 2020 ■ 2021 ■



Qualifications attained



① All about you



② Your employees | Snapshot

Whilst we may be seeing a perceptible industry shift towards multi person practices, the rate at which this move is happening, is still not at a significant pace.

We can see that there has been a 20% increase over the past three years in relation to those bookkeeping businesses that are hiring between one and three full-time employees. This is supported by a 13% increase to employing one to three part time employees and an increase of 9% employing one to three casual employees within a bookkeeping business.

Hiring employees still seems to be the preferential way to engage with support staff rather than to contract. With the rise of popularity of overseas contracting staff coming into the Australian market, it will be interesting to see whether this trend continues.

Average pay rates for employees have increased a reporting bracket this year as compared with 2020, and we can see a regular ongoing trend to the increase in wages within the sector. The most popular pay ranges indicating:

Full time/part time	50% earning \$31-\$40/hr (up from 43% in 2020)
Within 100kms of a capital city	\$35
More than 100kms of a capital city	\$31

Casuals	47% earning \$31-\$40/hr (consistent with 2020)
Within 100kms of a capital city	\$34
More than 100kms of a capital city	\$33

Contractors	39% earning \$41-\$50/hr (up front 29% in 2020)
Within 100kms of a capital city	\$42
More than 100kms of a capital city	\$41

There is a clear increase in the amount in which contract bookkeepers are being paid, with 39% of contract bookkeepers now earning between \$41 and \$50 per hour. This is a surprising result, given rates had dropped off in the results of the 2020 annual survey, which was attributed to the increase of offshore contractors.

We are aware of some anecdotal evidence to suggest that offshore contractors have been harder to engage with over the past 12 months.

② Your employees

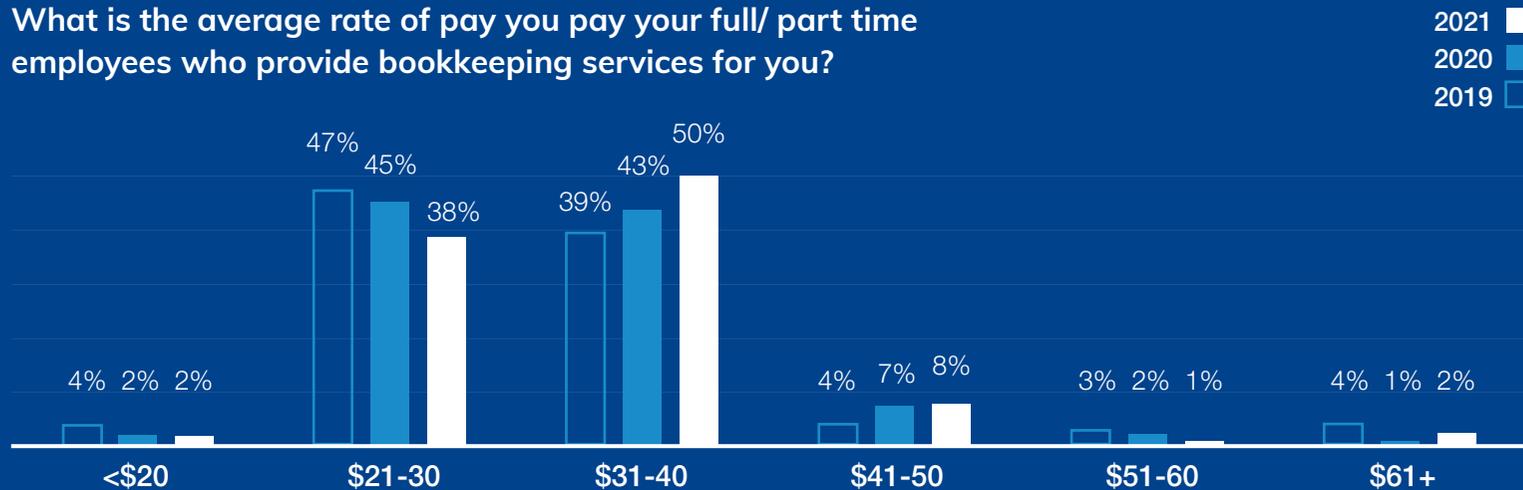
How many full time bookkeeping employees work in your business?

	2021	2020	2019
None	72 38%	95 46%	75 57%
1-3	105 55%	88 43%	47 36%
4-6	10 5%	10 5%	6 5%
7-10	2 1%	7 3%	1 1%
+10	1 0%	1 0%	0 0%

How many part time bookkeeping employees work in your business?

	2021	2020	2019
None	87 48%	104 52%	74 58%
1-3	87 48%	79 39%	45 35%
4-6	5 3%	15 7%	6 5%
7-10	1 1%	1 0%	0 0%
+10	2 1%	0 0%	1 1%

What is the average rate of pay you pay your full/ part time employees who provide bookkeeping services for you?



② Your employees

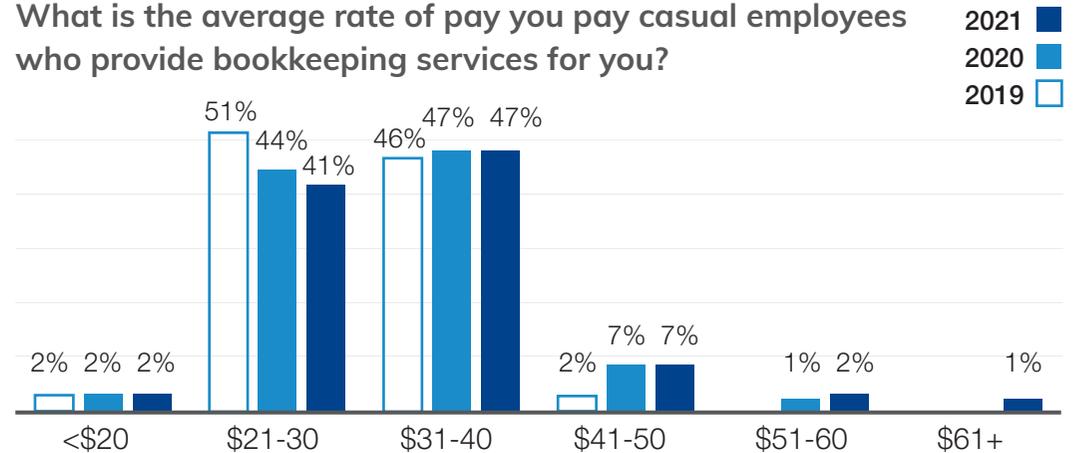
How many casual bookkeeping employees work in your business?

	2021		2020		2019	
None	91	47%	97	48%	68	52%
1-3	101	52%	101	50%	56	43%
4-6	2	1%	2	1%	4	3%
7-10	0	0%	2	1%	1	1%
+10	0	0%	1	0%	0	0%

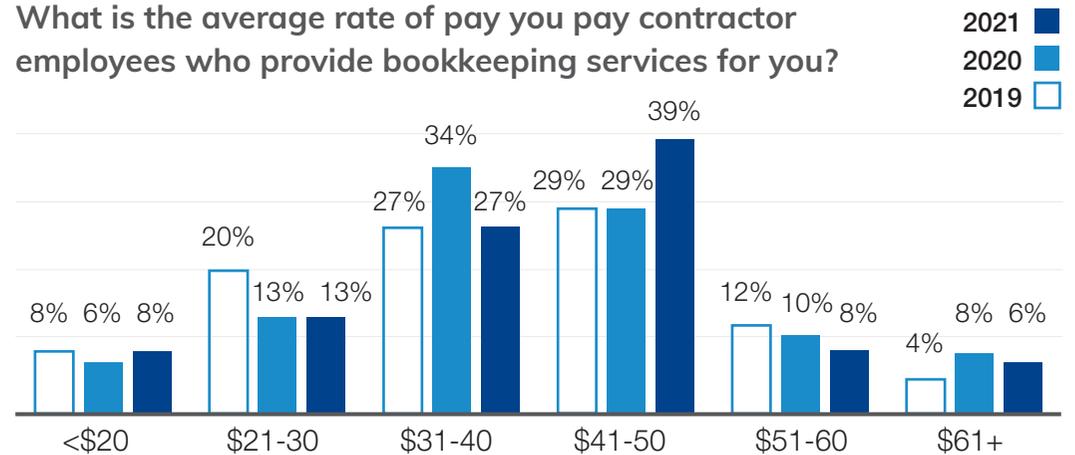
Did you hire contractor bookkeepers within the past 12-months?

	2021		2020		2019	
None	146	71%	142	68%	89	67%
0-9hrs per week	33	16%	39	19%	26	20%
10-19hrs per week	11	5%	13	6%	9	7%
20+ hrs per week	16	8%	15	7%	9	7%

What is the average rate of pay you pay casual employees who provide bookkeeping services for you?



What is the average rate of pay you pay contractor employees who provide bookkeeping services for you?



③ Your business | Snapshot

For this year's survey, we have collected some additional data in relation to the business structures and trading periods for respondents. The data indicates that the vast majority of bookkeepers (59%) are still operating under a sole trader trading structure, With another 24% trading under a company structure.

72% of the respondents have indicated that they have been trading for between 4 and 24 years.

The number of respondents (73% down from 75% in 2020) are satisfied with the financial return of their business and given the amount of additional work that has been provided for clients at little to no additional remuneration and the impacts of COVID, this is hardly surprising.

Another new piece of data collected for this year, was in relation to the turnover of bookkeeping businesses. While 50% of respondents indicate that they earn less than \$75,000 per year, it should be noted that 12% have indicated that they turnover more than \$200,000.

When we look at those respondents who indicate they have a turnover of more than \$200,000 and are happy with the financial return of their business, they employ a mix of full time, part time and casual employees. 71.5% of these businesses Look after more than 51 clients. They charge an average of \$83 per hour for bookkeeping services and \$112 per hour for BAS services.

When we look at data for the 50% of respondents who turn over less than \$75,000 per year, 78% operate under a sole trader structure. 73% of these respondents have 15 clients or less. They charge an average of \$65 per hour for bookkeeping services and \$80 per hour for BAS services. 100% of those respondents indicate they are satisfied with the financial return that their business provides.

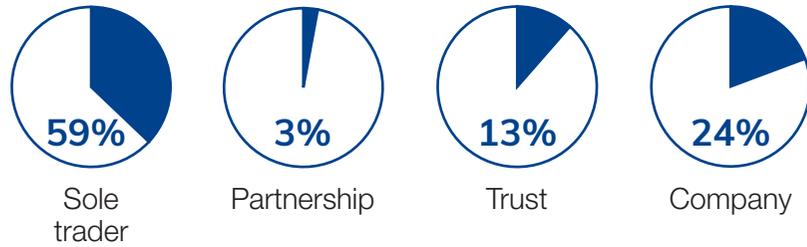
It is interesting to note that 27% of those respondents turning over less than \$75,000 per year indicate that they spend between 6 and 20 hours of non chargeable administration for their businesses each week.

Overall, the amount of unbillable hours have jumped this year. This can mainly be attributed to the amount of time that professional bookkeepers have had to assist clients with extraordinary services, and the impact of increased CPE requirements to stay up to date.

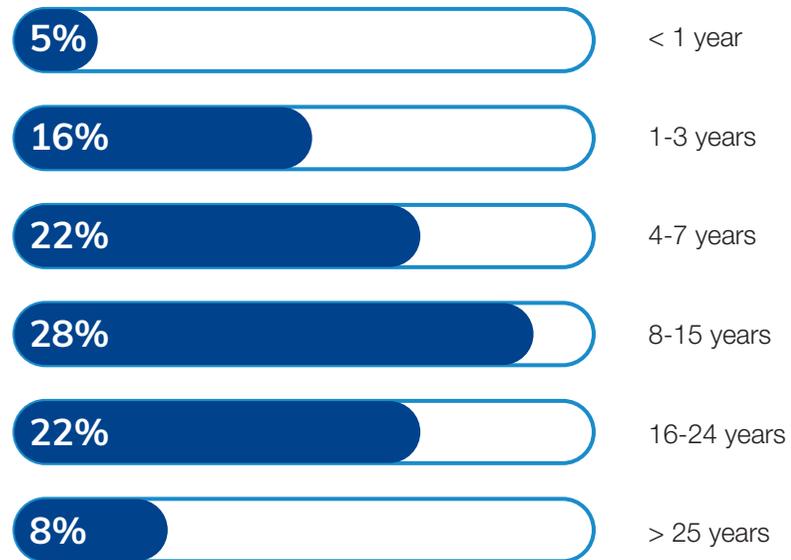
This is data to continue to watch as we look at what size of bookkeeping businesses, continue to be developed within our industry. Given a significant portion of our industry are attracted to the work life balance element a professional bookkeeper provides, it is hardly surprising that such a significant portion of the population turn over less than \$75,000 per year.

③ Your business

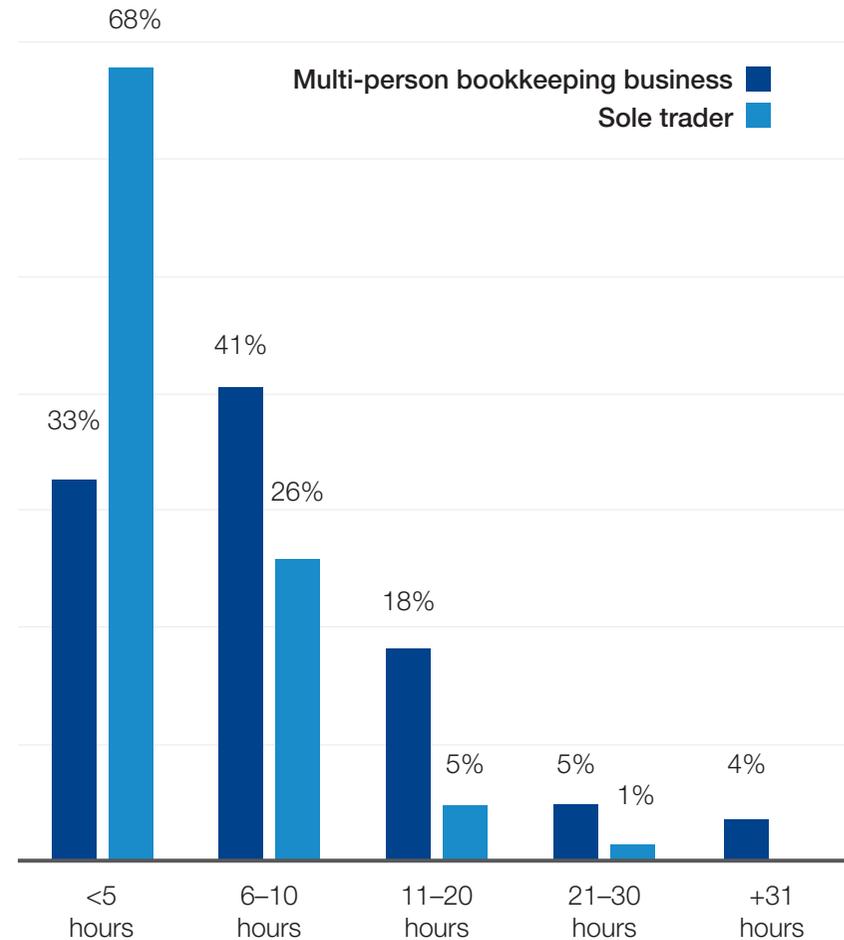
What structure do you operate your business under?



How long has your business has been trading for?



How many non-chargeable hours do you spend with your own business administration per week?



③ Your business

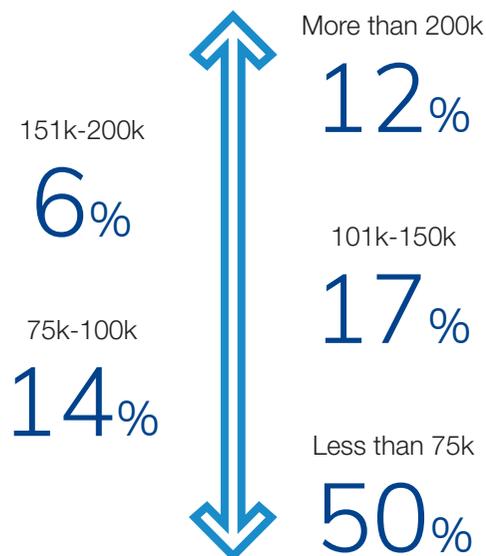
73%



of bookkeepers in business **are satisfied with the financial return of their business**



What was your turnover in the 2021 financial year?



Rank the most pressing challenges your business faced over the past 12 months, 1 being the most pressing challenge.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Score
All respondents									
Managing my time	154	118	81	59	47	23	25	14	6.07
Hours of work	83	118	91	89	62	46	20	12	5.6
Level of charge rate	57	62	95	96	93	65	25	14	5.07
Too many un-billable hours	66	72	69	60	62	66	70	54	4.6
Consistency of work	26	50	65	85	100	103	55	26	4.35
My effort and motivation	59	55	65	60	68	57	57	102	4.22
Client attraction	95	31	38	36	42	70	107	88	4.07
Client retention	13	20	19	24	34	68	133	184	2.56

Respondents that were not satisfied with financial return of their business for 2021

Managing my time	27	32	17	15	15	9	10	8	5.5
Level of charge rate	16	19	32	24	18	10	8	5	5.27
Client attraction	45	9	13	9	10	14	24	10	5.12
Hours of work	11	21	25	26	23	21	6	5	4.98
Too many unbillable hours	21	23	16	17	11	18	16	14	4.81
Consistency of work	9	17	13	18	29	27	13	7	4.43
My effort and motivation	10	13	14	13	16	16	20	28	3.85
Client retention	7	5	9	8	8	13	29	49	2.84

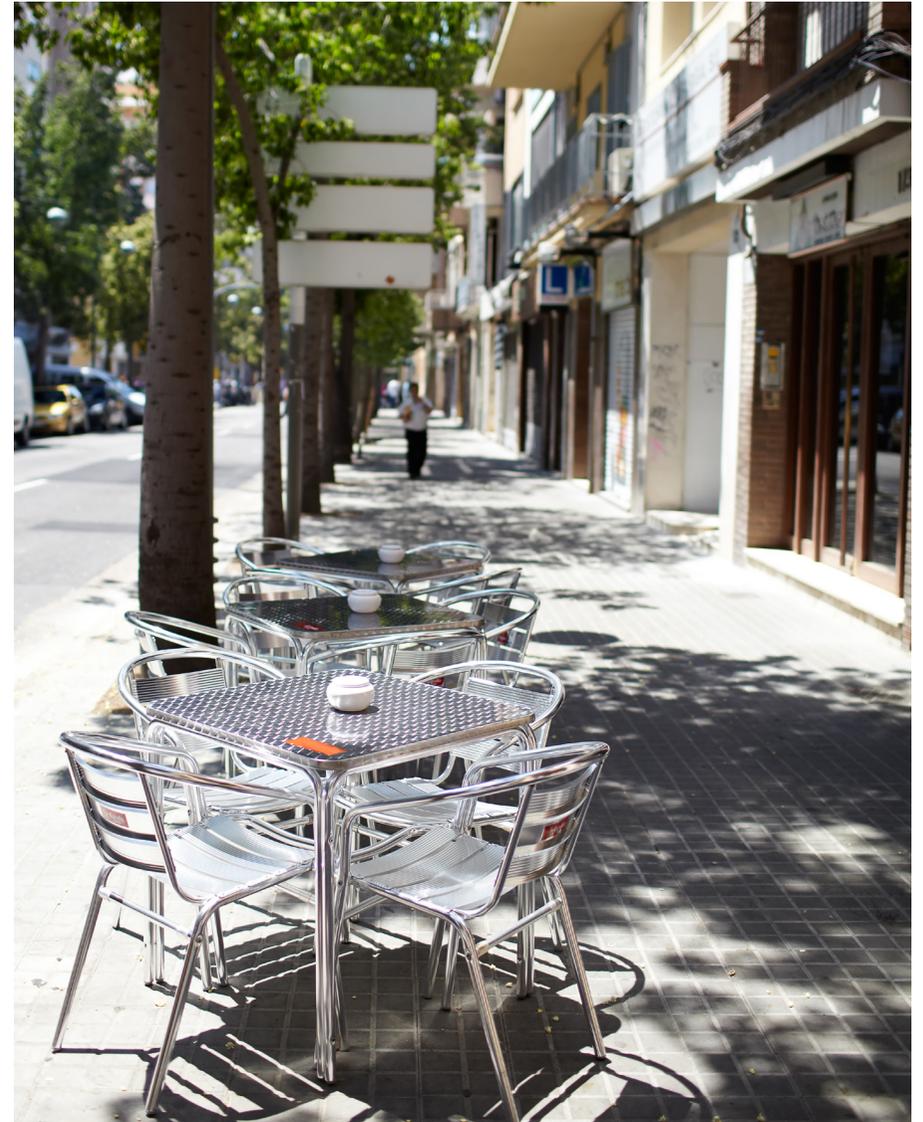
④ Impact of COVID-19 | Snapshot

The bookkeeping industry was not immune to the ongoing challenges faced as a result of the pandemic this year.

50% of respondents experienced a downturn in revenue (34% less than 30%) and 28% of respondents experienced a downturn in their workload (20% less than 30% downturn). Of the respondents that experienced a downturn in revenue, 58% experienced an increase in workload. This continues to indicate a trend of bookkeepers who are increasing their workload to help their clients, yet not necessarily charging for the work which they are actually completing.

An ongoing focus of the bookkeeping professional associations need to be to guide professional bookkeepers on the value that they continue to provide to the Australian business community, and that they should be charging appropriately and accordingly for the services that they are delivering.

Fortunately we are seeing a gradual return to work load and charge levels aligning with pre-pandemic times, indicating a return to, or balancing of, normal business practices. A number of retirements from the profession as a result of the impacts of the pandemic is a trend that we continue to watch, particularly in relation to future proofing our profession.



④ Impact of COVID-19

Has the Covid-19 pandemic **affected your business?**

2020

72%

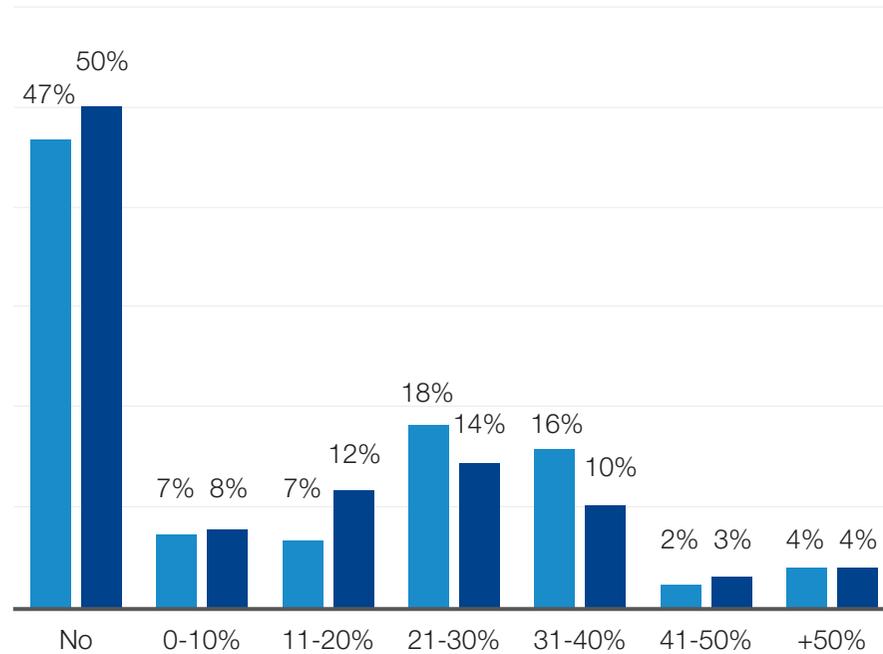
vs

2021

61%

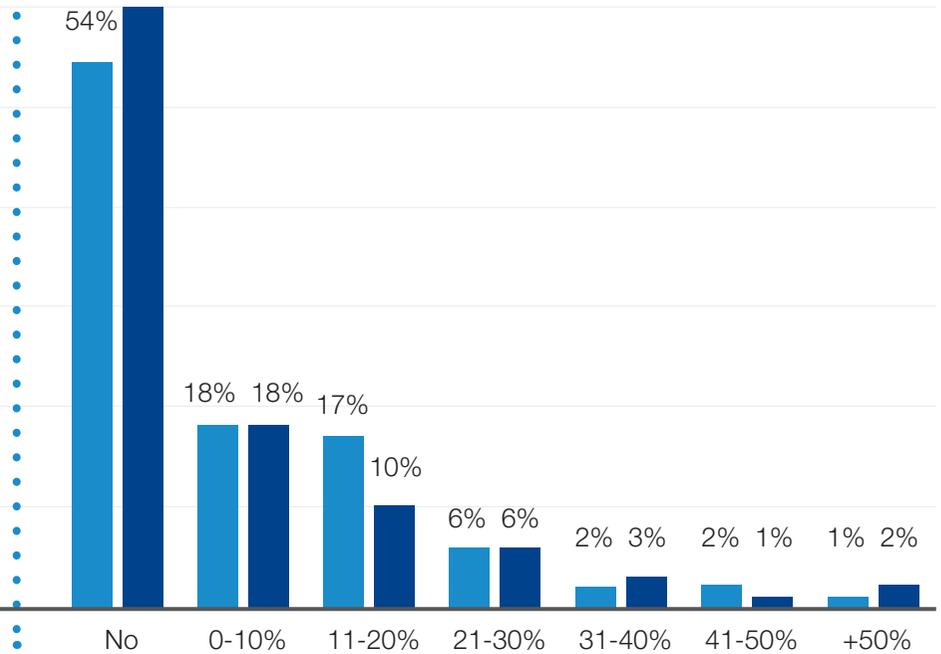
Did you experience a downturn in revenue as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?

2021 ■
2020 ■



Did you experience an increase in revenue as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?

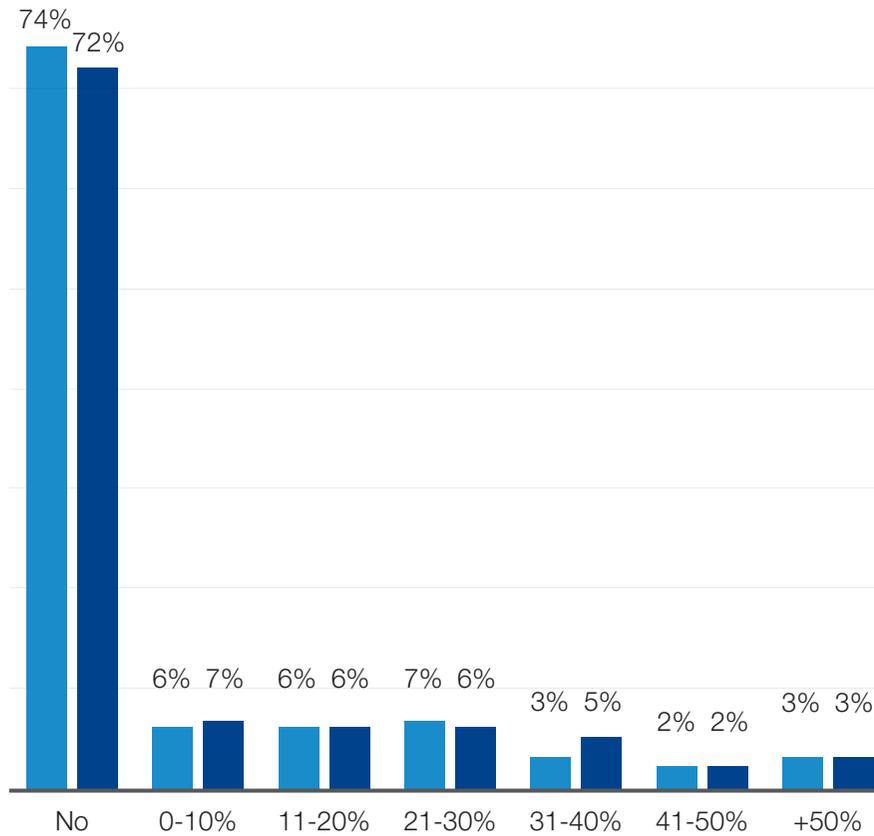
2021 ■
2020 ■



④ Impact of COVID-19

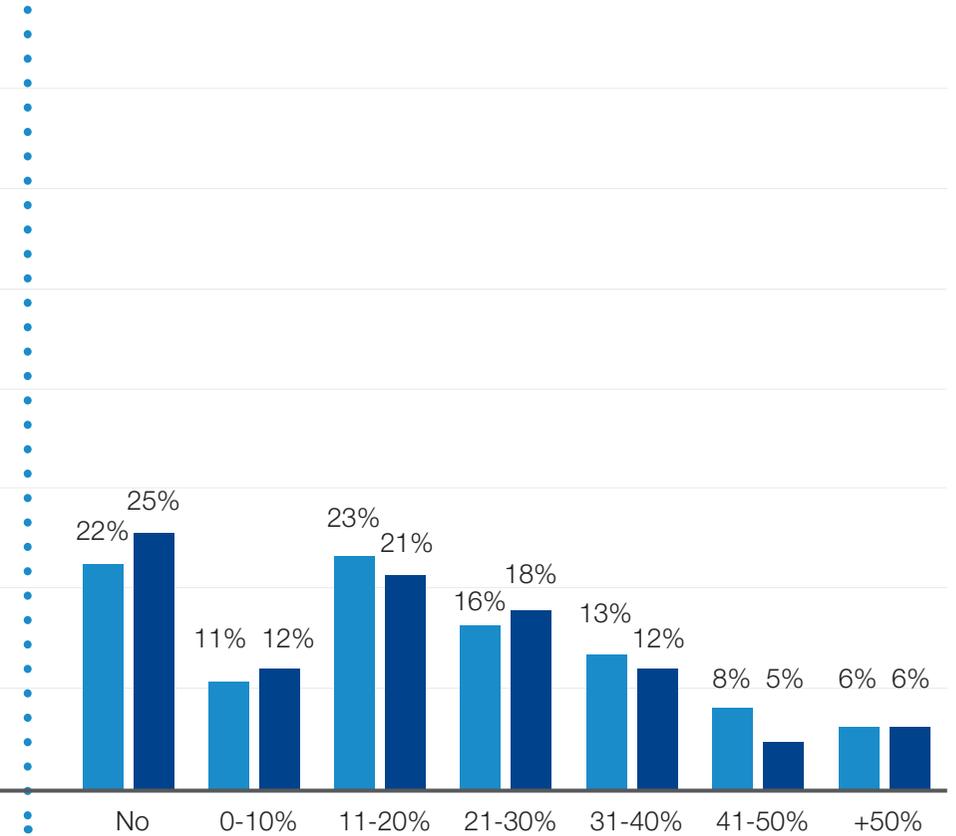
Did you experience a downturn in workload as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?

2021 ■
2020 ■



Did you experience an increase in workload as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?

2021 ■
2020 ■



⑤ Your client services | Snapshot

The services that professional bookkeepers provide to their clients, has not significantly shifted in the last 10 years. The end results are the same, it is the methodologies and the technology that have changed.

As indicated in the commentary in relation to Your bookkeeping business, the number of active clients are directly related to the turnover and size of the the practice.

The preferred billing method for fees is still clearly an hourly rate (48%), although value based pricing is also remaining relatively consistent at 28%.

60% of respondents are actively looking to take on more clients, which is consistent with prior year surveys. Word of mouth referrals still remain the most successful way of connecting with new clients. Building relationships is the cornerstone of professional bookkeeping services in 2021.

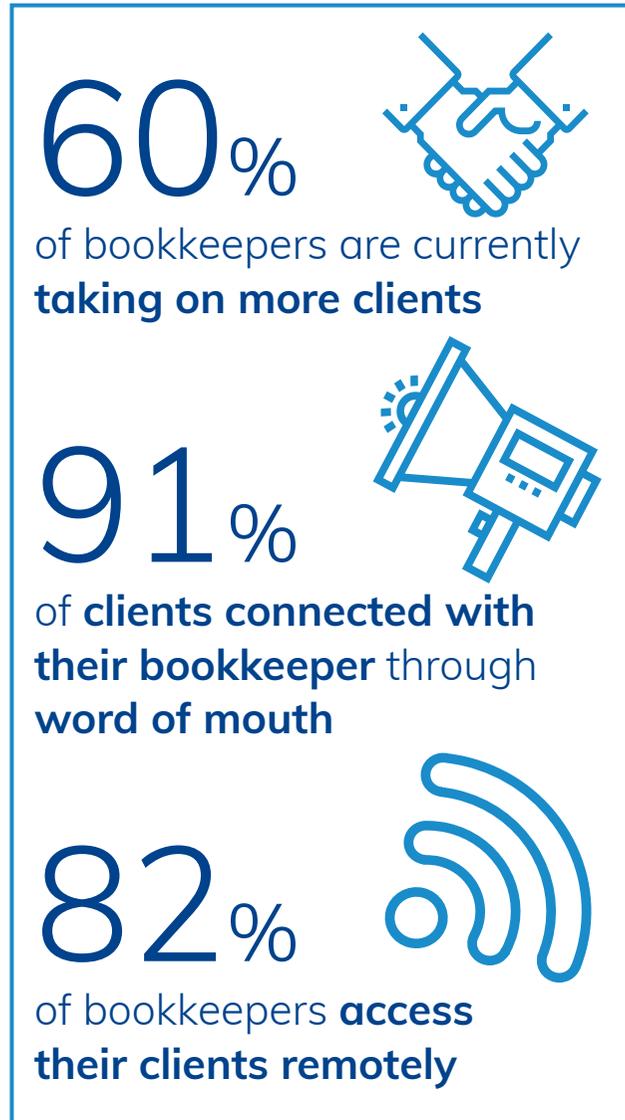
There is an increasing trend of client attraction coming via relationships that respondents are building with Accountants and Tax Agents. These referrals can cement the relationship with both the client and the Accountant's with which bookkeepers work, and can provide significant benefits to business owners. By bookkeepers and accountants working together to form a 'team' of advisors for business owners, creates less stress and not feeling so alone, or disconnected.

There is a gradual continuing decline in the number of respondents providing services on a client premises, having reduced to 64%, down from 84% just five (5) years ago.

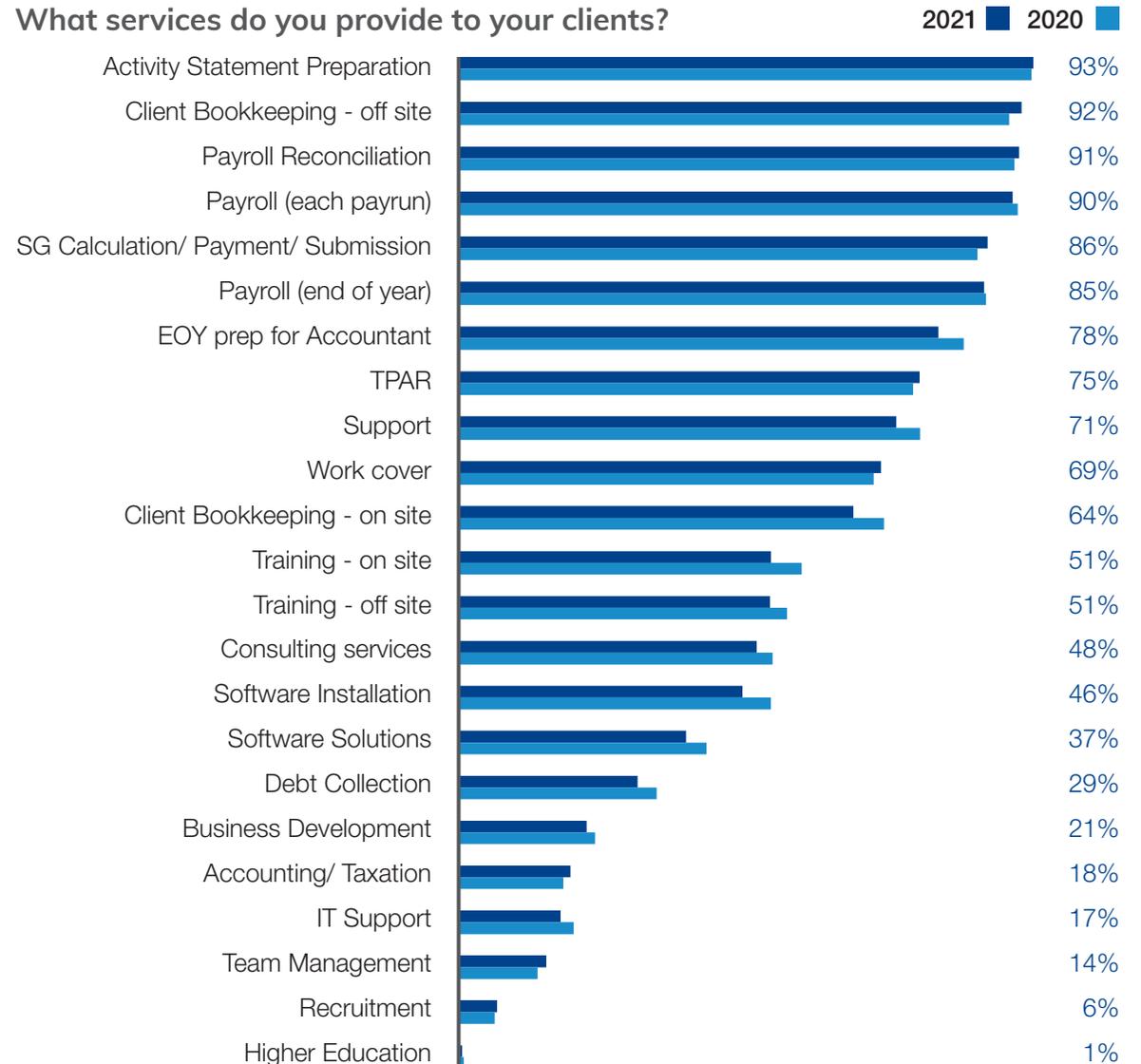
More traditional forms of advertising such as in local papers and yellow pages appears to be the least effective use of lead generation resources, equating to less than 6%.

Other methods of lead generation include online services such as Gumtree & Airtasker, vehicle advertising and formal networking events.

⑤ Your client services

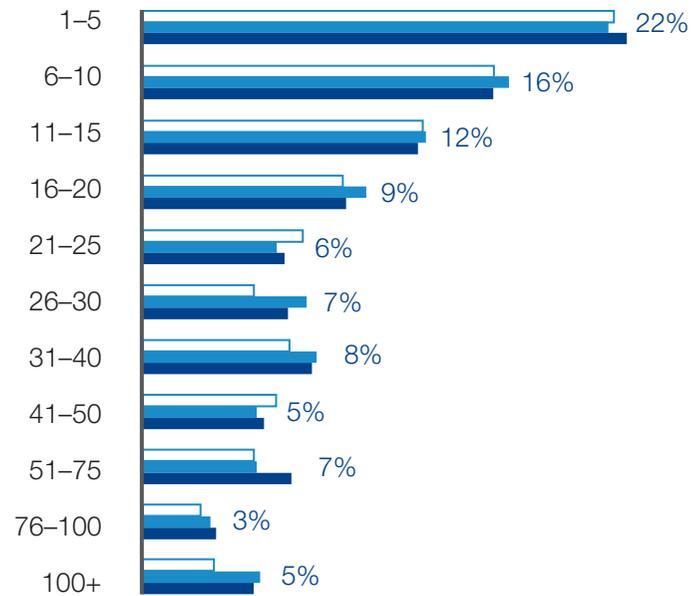


What services do you provide to your clients?

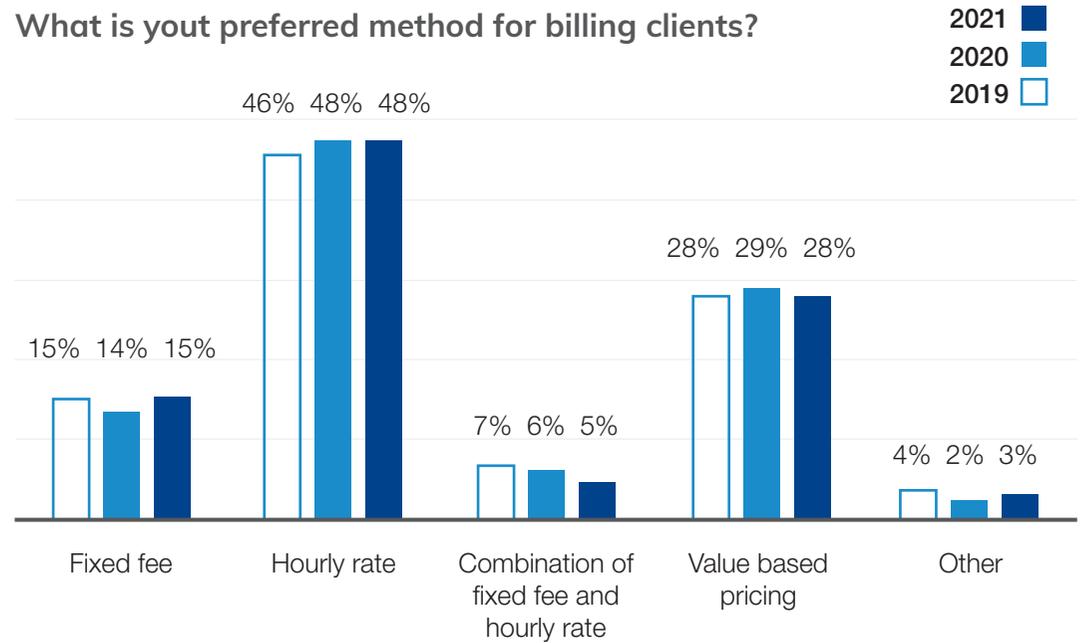


⑤ Your client services

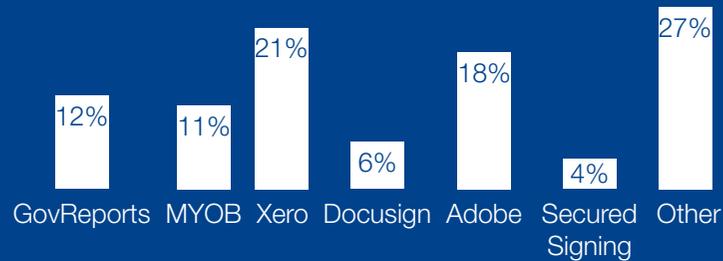
How many active clients do you have?



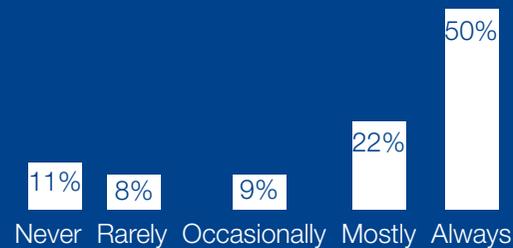
What is your preferred method for billing clients?



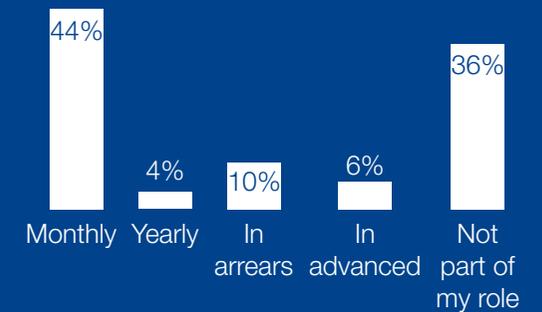
Which software do you primarily use to obtain digital signatures from your clients?



How often do you use an engagement letter?



How do you bill clients for their software subscription?



⑥ Your professional practices | Snapshot

Professional Fees

Professional fees for bookkeepers appear to have shifted somewhat in the past twelve (12) months with a move towards the \$61-\$80 ranges being the most popular (47%). Interestingly whilst there has been an increase of fees of 7% to these ranges, there has also been a decrease of fees charged from the \$81-\$90 per hour range of 4% from 2020.

One explanation could be the reduction of fees being charged in line with the viability of SME's in Australia after dealing with the impacts of the pandemic. Hence it is possible that this is a market adjustment. It remains to be seen if this is a temporary adjustment.

When we break down the average and most popular rates charged for Professional Services in 2021 we see:

Bookkeeping services appear to be:

Australian Average		\$71 per hour
Within 100kms of a capital city	25%	\$71-\$80/hr (average \$72/hr)
Outside 100kms of a capital city	25%	\$61-\$70/hr (average \$67/hr)

These charge rates have moved up a bracket for those within metro areas but have remained constant in more regional areas.

High end troubleshooting, consulting services appear to be:

Australian Average		\$92 per hour
Within 100kms of a capital city	27%	\$101-\$150/hr (average \$94/hr)
Outside 100kms of a capital city	18%	\$101-\$150/hr (average \$86/hr)

These rates are in line year on year with those reported in 2020.

BAS Services appear to be:

Australian Average		\$93 per hour
Within 100kms of a capital city	19%	\$71-\$80/hr (average \$95/hr)
Outside 100kms of a capital city	17%	\$51-\$60/hr (average \$88/hr)

There is a concerning drop in rates for BAS Services from 2020 to 2021. For those in regional areas charge rates have dropped a charge bracket across the board. This is likely to be as a shift in the market demands within regional areas because of reduced business activity in regional areas due to the pandemic, and respondents reducing rates to accommodate client retention. The broader impacts to the hospitality and tourism sectors throughout 2021 may have contributed to these results.

Industry engagement

Respondents have clients in a broad range of industries with the top five industries they engage with being:

- Construction (68%),
- Retail and trades (50%)
- Hospitality and tourism (42%) and
- The not for profit sector (39%)

⑥ Your professional practices | Snapshot

Professional education and development

73% of respondents have completed more than 15 hours CPE in the past 12 months, noting that 84% of respondents to the survey have identified as a registered BAS Agent.

With the current Tax Practitioner Board CPE requirement for registered BAS Agents being forty five (45) hours over three (3) years, we strongly recommend that all bookkeepers average out their CPE activities as evenly as possible over that registration period. This spreads the learning investment and lessen the impact in any one year. Given the CPE requirements are doubling to ninety (90) hours across three (3) years from 2022, having a structured approach to gaining CPE on a consistent and ongoing basis will be critical in ensuring registration renewal requirements are more easily met.

Technology Adoption and Use

This year's survey has introduced some new information in relation to respondent's use of technology and their willingness to adopt new solutions. 51% of respondents prefer to utilise technology that has already been tested by others.

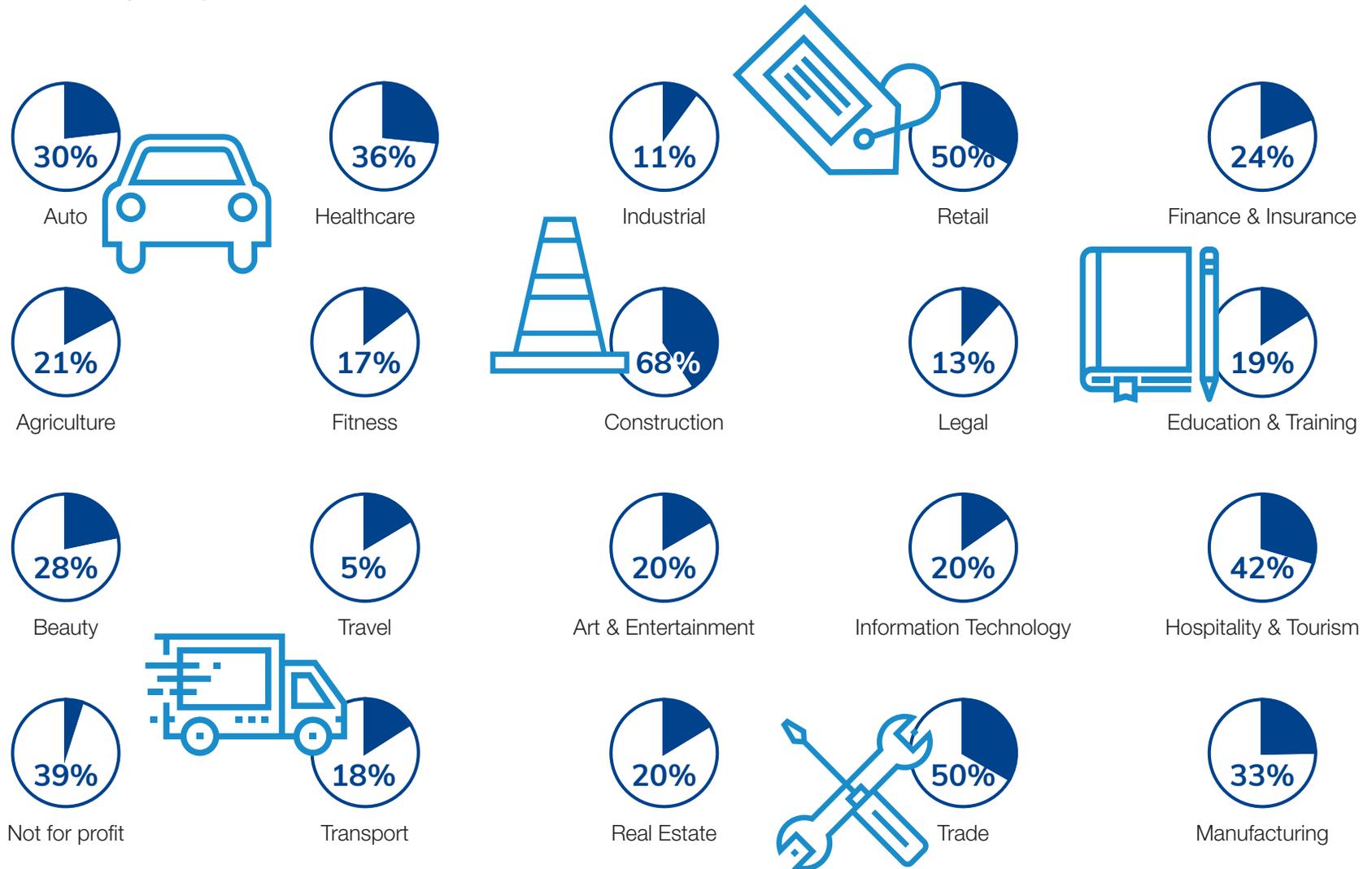
It should also be noted that the number one trigger to investigate new technologies is respondents looking to streamline or simplify business process coupled with single solutions offering integrations with accounting software.

Watch out for the ICB software review and rating system launching in 2022, to support these attitudes towards adoption.

We also see this year that 45% of respondents do not maintain a separate cyber security insurance policy, indicating that they are relying on existing inclusions in professional indemnity insurance policies or respondents are uninsured for this area of their business. Noting the increasing frequency and veracity of scams and cyber breaches being seen in the broader market, ensuring that bookkeepers and business owners are protected if a breach were to occur, should be a priority part of business planning and risk mitigation strategies.

⑥ Your professional practices

The industries your provide services for...



⑥ Your professional practices

During BAS periods, how many hours do you work per week?

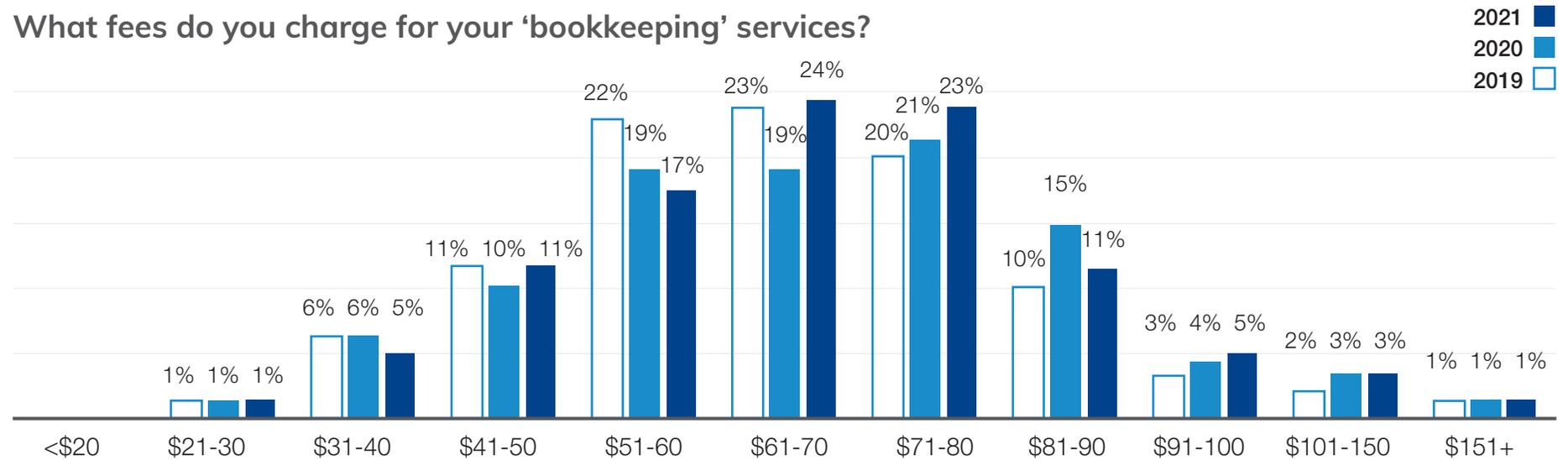
	<5 hrs	6-10 hrs	11-20 hrs	21-30 hrs	31-40 hrs	41-50 hrs	51-60 hrs	+61 hrs
2021	2%	8%	10%	18%	28%	23%	7%	4%
Change between 2020-21	-1%	+4%	+1%	+2%	-2%		-2%	
2020	3%	4%	9%	16%	30%	23%	9%	4%
2019	3%	4%	8%	17%	32%	22%	9%	4%

During non BAS periods, how many hours do you work per week?

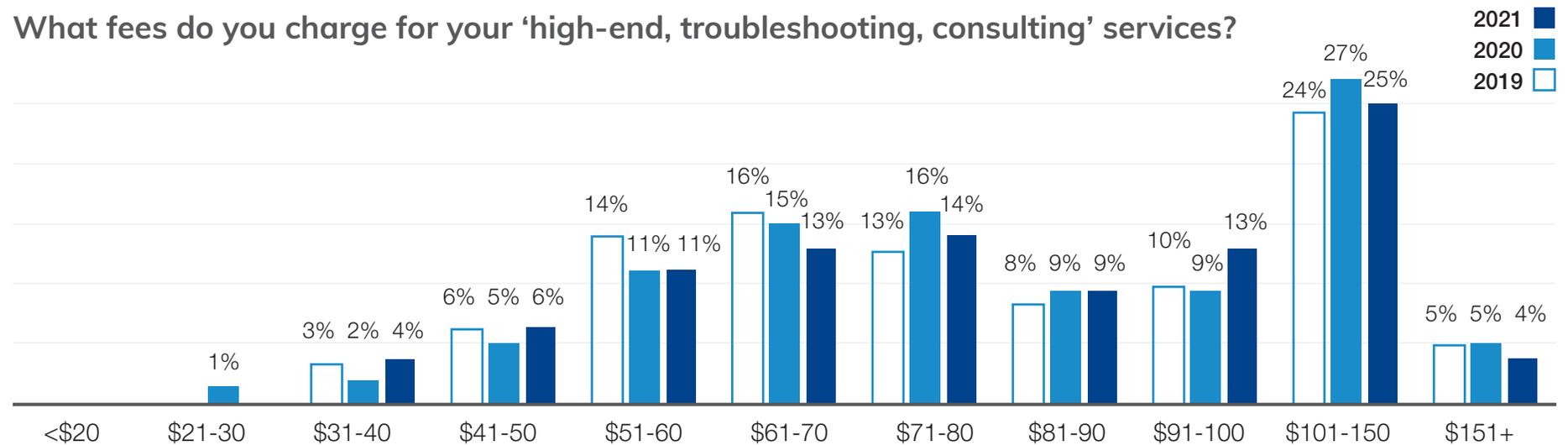
	<5 hrs	6-10 hrs	11-20 hrs	21-30 hrs	31-40 hrs	41-50 hrs	51-60 hrs	+61 hrs
2021	6%	11%	16%	23%	31%	9%	3%	1%
Change between 2020-21	+1%	+4%	-2%	-1%	-1%	-1%		
2020	5%	7%	18%	24%	32%	10%	3%	1%
2019	4%	8%	16%	27%	32%	10%	2%	1%

⑥ Your professional practices

What fees do you charge for your 'bookkeeping' services?

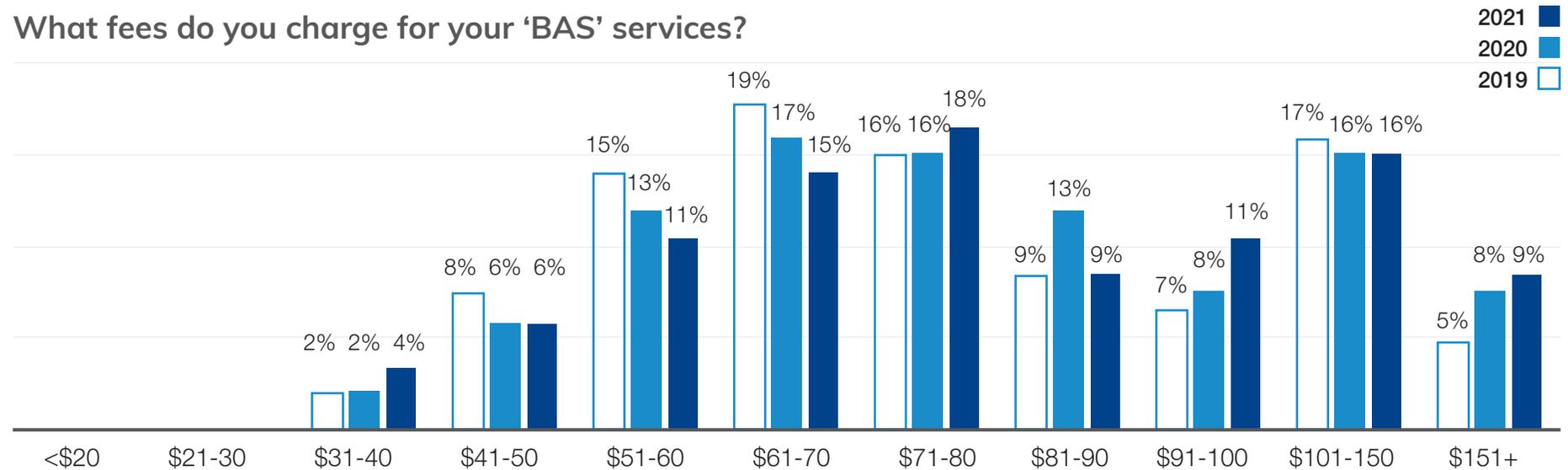


What fees do you charge for your 'high-end, troubleshooting, consulting' services?



⑥ Your professional practices

What fees do you charge for your 'BAS' services?



88%

of online accounts are
protected with multi-factor authentication

Compared with 86% in 2019
and 90% in 2020

89%

of bookkeepers have
Professional Indemnity Insurance

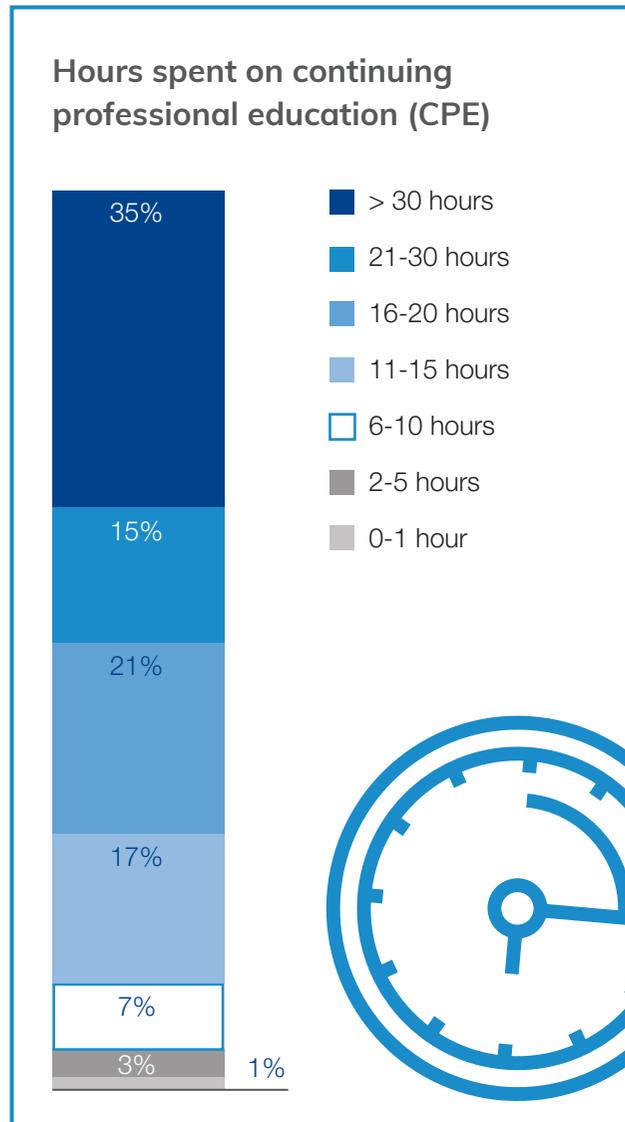
With 1% not insured and
10% covered by employer

65%

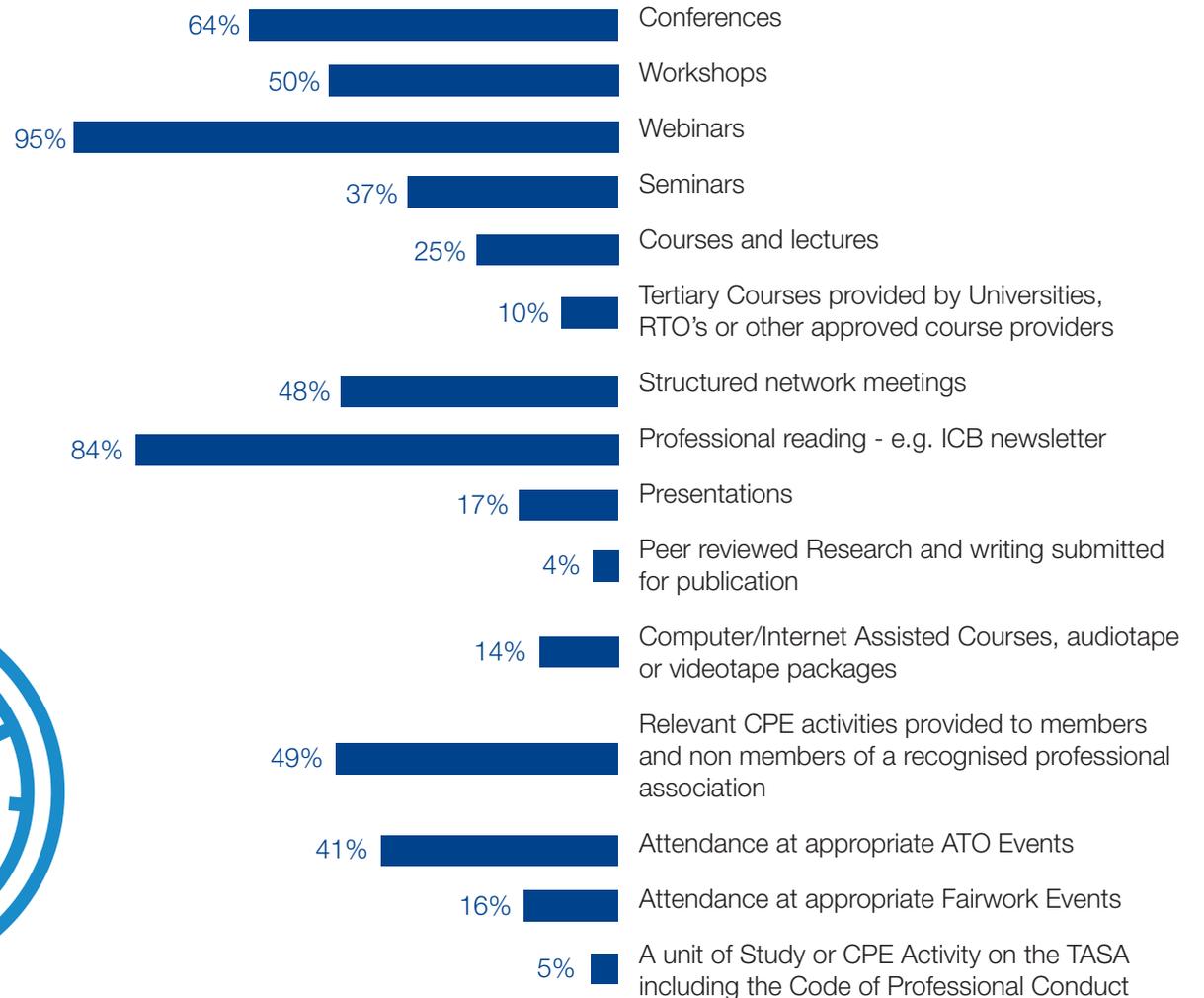
of bookkeepers have
Public Liability Insurance

With 24% not insured and
11% covered by employer

⑥ Your professional practices



Which of the following types of continuing professional education (CPE) do you undertake to help you in your bookkeeping?



⑥ Your professional practices

Rank what would most likely trigger interest in new technology for you/ your business? (1 being most likely to trigger interest)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Score
Streamlined or simplified business process	40%	21%	15%	12%	7%	3%	2%	5.58
Greater data security	24%	21%	16%	19%	11%	6%	3%	5
Seeking single solution/ integration with software	17%	22%	24%	17%	13%	5%	3%	4.88
Growth/ expansion of business	10%	16%	19%	16%	15%	15%	10%	4.06
Cheaper solution	8%	9%	10%	11%	14%	16%	31%	3.13
Accommodate staff working remotely	5%	9%	10%	12%	19%	19%	26%	3.08
Reactive to mistake, flaw or bug in current technology	4%	5%	7%	12%	19%	32%	21%	2.84



How would you describe your businesses attitude towards technology adoption?

36% Early adopter of technology and prefer to lead rather than follow

51% Tend to try new technology once it has been tested by others

13% Prefer to wait until technology has been 100% proven in market before considering adopting it

Top perceived barriers to working entirely online...



⑦ Your software services | Snapshot

We are seeing a consistent trend over the past three years that there is an increase in the use of Xero as the dominate software with both client use and bookkeepers use in the Australian market. 80% use it with their clients and 55% use it in their own business.

Xero and MYOB are still the two most popular companies for accounting software use with both business and respondents.

Usability of software was the most satisfied feature offered by the major companies with Xero, MYOB and Reckon all rating above a 50% satisfaction rating. Pricing was the highest rate feature of Intuit at 54%.

Respondents were most dissatisfied with Xero's support services, Intuit useability and MYOB price.

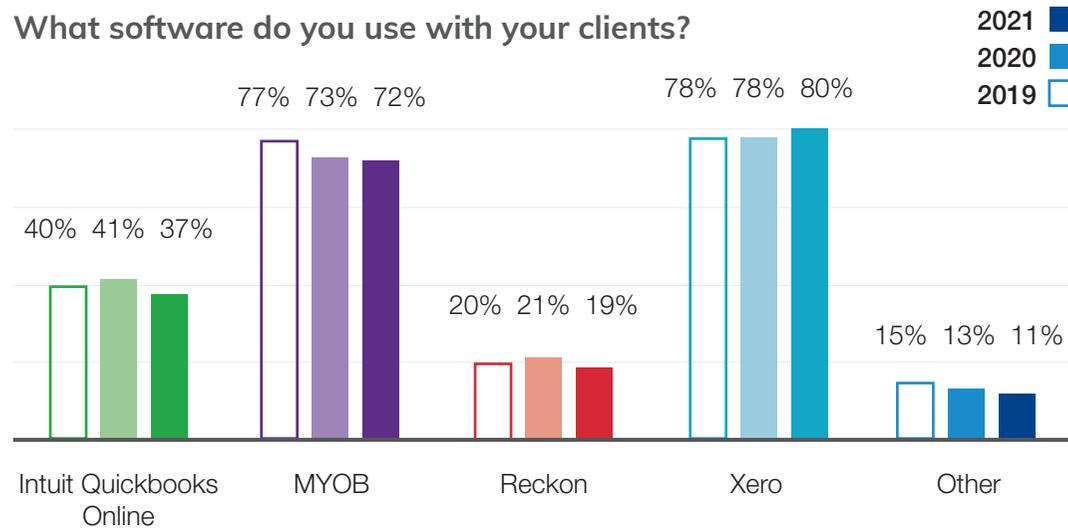
They were the most satisfied with the Xero partner program and least satisfied with MYOB, noting that live webinars continue to be the most preferred method of software training and phone support the most preferred method of software support.

It should also be noted that when respondents were asked how do they bill clients for their software subscription , 36% indicate that it is not part of their role, with 44% indicating that they build them on a monthly basis.

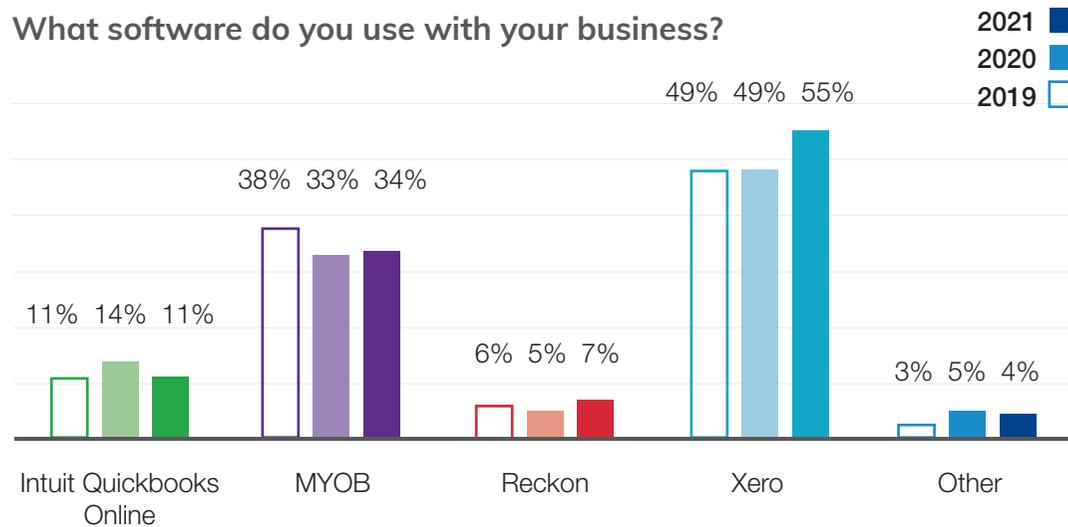


⑦ Your software services

What software do you use with your clients?

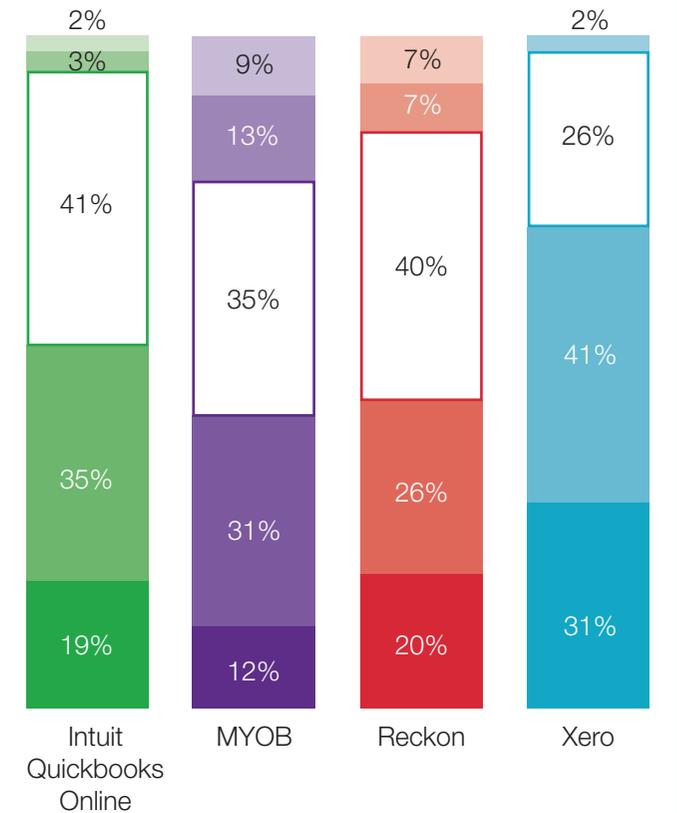


What software do you use with your business?



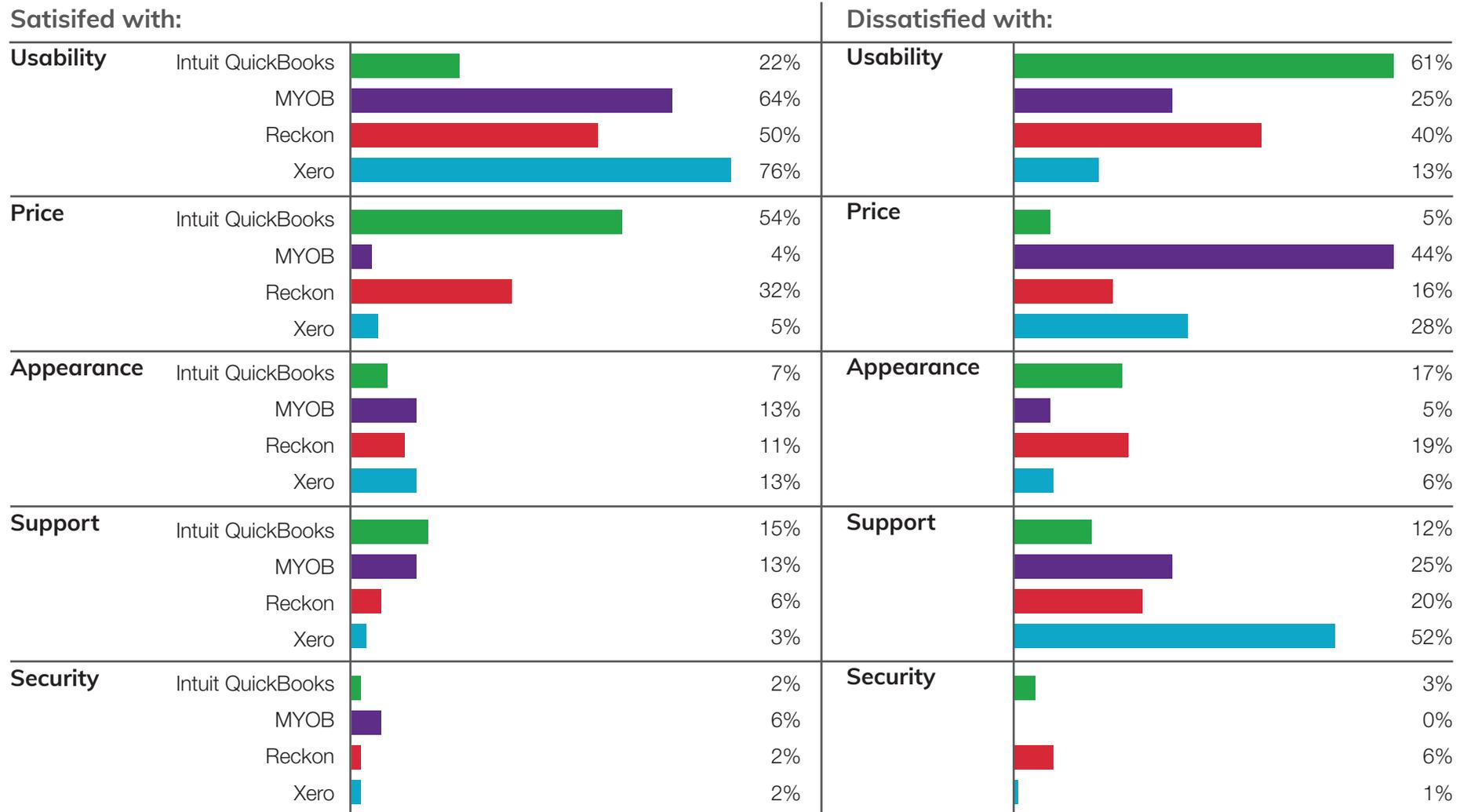
How satisfied are you with your membership to the following software partner programs?

■ Very Satisfied
 ■ Satisfied
 □ Neutral
■ Dissatisfied
 ■ Very Dissatisfied



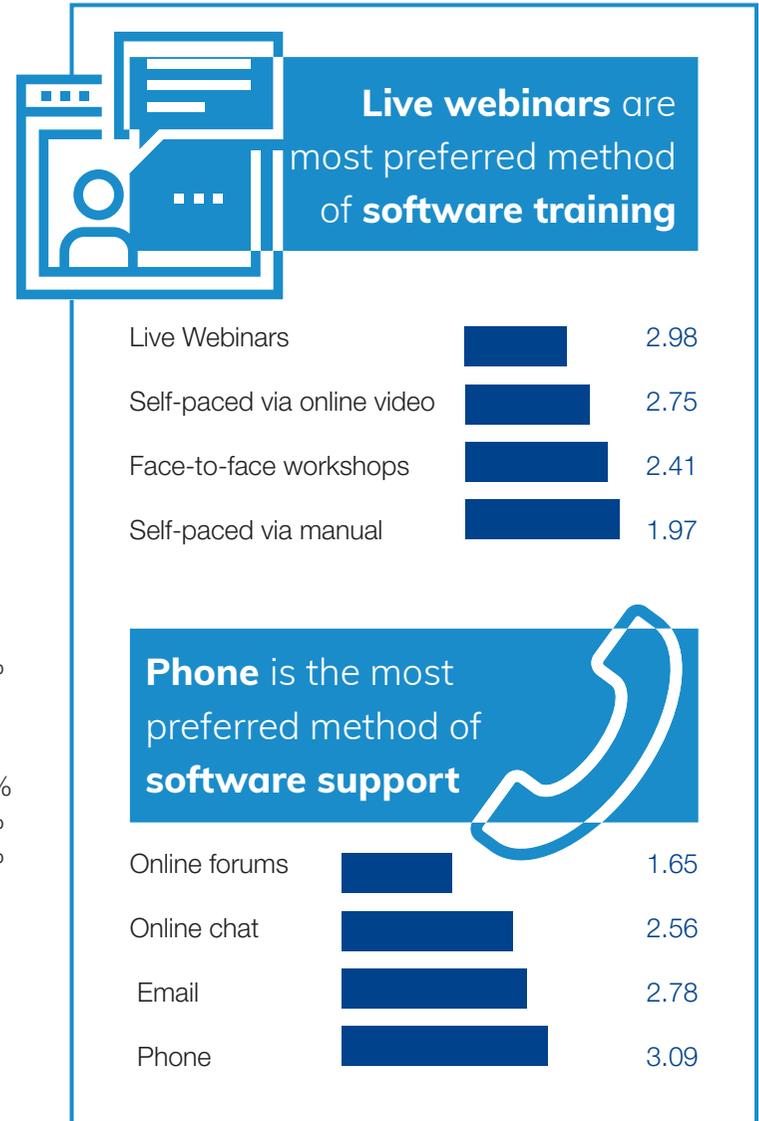
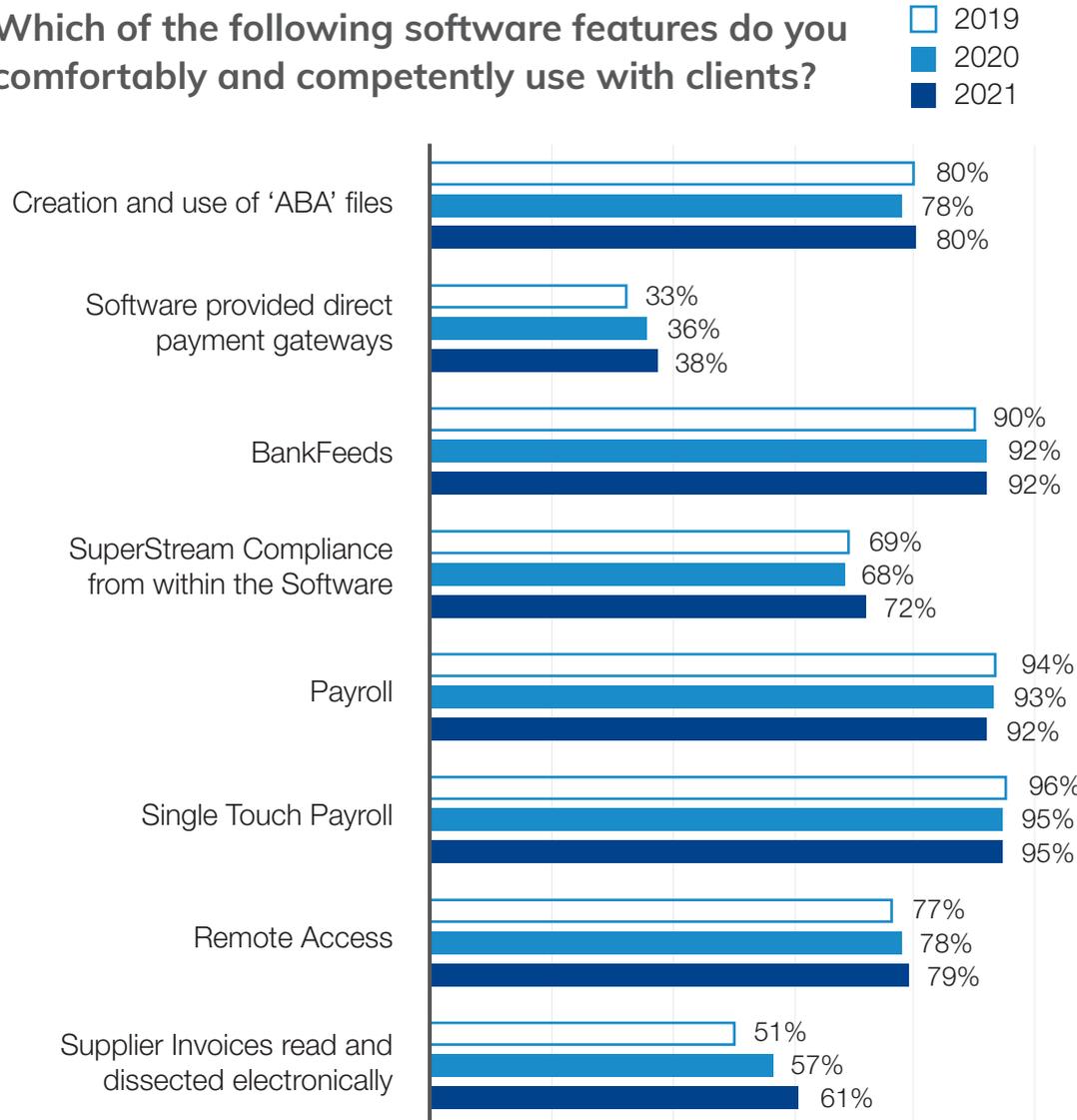
⑦ Your software services

For each software program that you have used during the past 12-months, indicate what features you are most...



7 Your software services

Which of the following software features do you comfortably and competently use with clients?



⑧ BAS Agents | Snapshot

As the professional bookkeeper profile is raised so too is the percentage of respondents that are registered BAS Agents (84%).

The predominate reasons that presents barriers to on time lodgements is consistent with the past three (3) years surveys, being Clients that do not provide timely information (60%) and incomplete or incorrect information provided by clients (28%). This does indicate that some education into the SME market about recordkeeping requirements and the use of up-to-date technology may be required to help address these barriers.

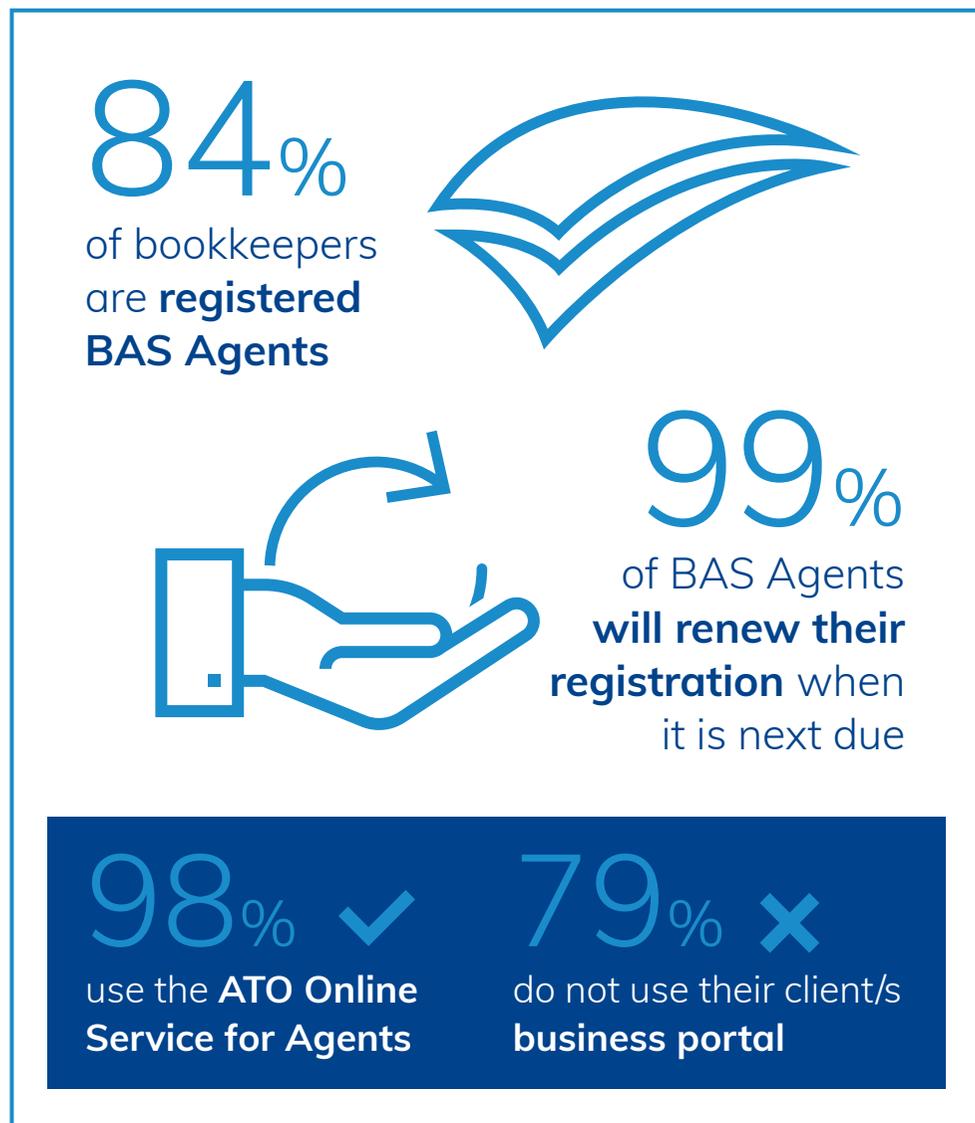
69% of respondents are satisfied with the Tax Practitioner Board, however they still perceive that addressing the issues of non-compliant registered agents and promoting the importance of using a registered agent are still issues of concern.

With 82% of respondents being satisfied with the Australian Taxation Office, they are the government agency that bookkeepers are most satisfied working with. This is a great result showing that the vast majority of the population are having mostly positive engagements with a key regulator.

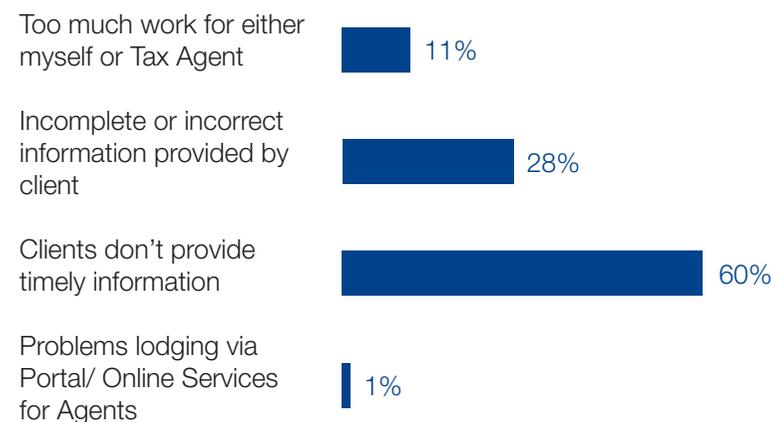
The Fair Work Ombudsman faired slightly less favourable with respondents who indicated that 58% are satisfied with their dealings with them, ranking them as the least favourable of the three main regulators that bookkeepers deal with on a regular basis.



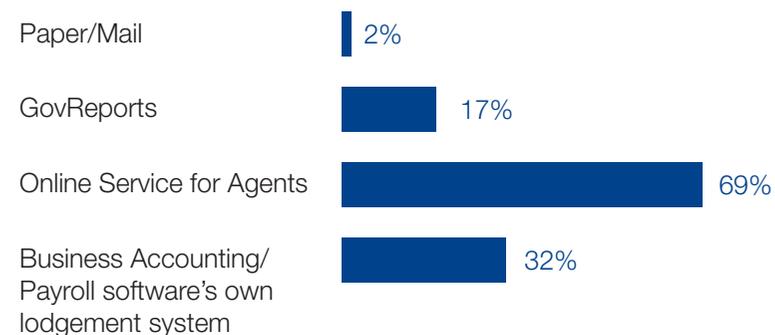
⑧ BAS Agents



What is the biggest barrier to lodging the BAS by the due date?



How do you lodge the BAS?



⑧ BAS Agents

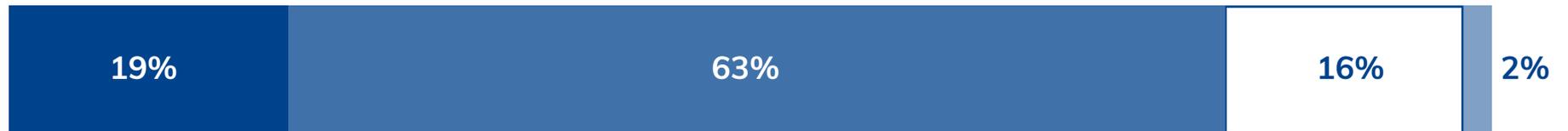
Indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Score out of 5
The TPB is effective at ensuring tax practitioners are registered.	21%	44%	22%	10%	4%	3.68
The TPB is effective at ensuring tax practitioners understand their obligations.	24%	56%	17%	3%	1%	4
The TPB is effective at ensuring tax practitioners understand new policies.	16%	45%	31%	7%	1%	3.69
The TPB is effective at communicating the importance of using a registered agent to consumers.	12%	25%	31%	23%	9%	3.08
The TPB is effective at investigating non compliance of registered agents.	11%	30%	39%	13%	7%	3.26
The TPB is effective at investigating non registered agents.	10%	24%	38%	17%	11%	3.05

⑨ The ATO

Your satisfaction towards the following...

Australian Taxation Office (ATO)



Tax Practitioners Board (TPB)



Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO)



● Very satisfied ● Satisfied ○ Neutral ● Dissatisfied ● Very dissatisfied

⑩ Additional respondent feedback

“The industry is changing, and we need to be able to do all the general bookkeeping stuff, and help clients more and more with running their business. We are highly skilled and undervalued.”

“We need to ensure the barrier between Accountants and BAS Agents is minimised. We need to work together for the benefit of the mutual client”

“I would like to see accountants embrace BAS agents as part of their team. We provide validated numbers and are closer to the business owner to understand the owners methods of working, objectives and challenges.”

“As bookkeepers / Accountants, we need to think about our adaptability in the world of continuous technology advancement.”

“The software providers continually push this concept of do it yourself it's all so easy. I agree, it is for a trained, registered bookkeeper, but not for inexperienced business owners who have no accounting or finance background.”

“Clients appreciate the assistance we provide as the go-between - between them and the tax office and Fairwork. Especially since Covid where we were able to translate to them what was needed to comply and to obtain funding.”

“I think there will always be a need for qualified Bookkeepers as Business owners often like to concentrate on running/building their business not the doing the books.”

“ICB are the best at supporting, educating and providing resources. Thanks for all the work you do.”

“ICB Membership would be my most valuable asset. I would not have been able to negotiate these last 2 years or provide the service I have to my clients without the support and ongoing education through ICB.”

The Professional Bookkeeper in 2021

The bookkeeping profession unites

In a show of unity to the commitment of the development, growth and recognition of Professional Bookkeepers in Australia, ICB Australia, together with the Australian Bookkeepers Association, have come together to set and promote a single common definition of a **‘Professional Bookkeeper’** as the standard and benchmark for the bookkeeping industry.

Background

The establishment of professional bookkeeping associations in Australia in the early 2000’s, was the professions first step in putting in place a framework for professional bookkeepers to work and be recognised. The introduction of initiatives such as codes of conduct, professional development opportunities and advocating for the services that bookkeepers provide to the business community, meant that members of these associations could confidently promote the fact that they had a commitment to professionalism and professional development.

The introduction of the *Tax Agent Services Act in 2009* was the first official step taken by the Australian government towards putting a more formal regulatory framework around part of the bookkeeping profession in Australia. It was also recognition that a proportion of the industry met the professionalism, expertise, education and commitment required to be a part of that framework.

The traditional definition of a bookkeeper is centuries old – ***a person who is responsible for keeping the records of the financial affairs of***

a business. What has become more commonly known by the broader community as ***‘keeping the books’***.

Whilst the foundation of what a professional bookkeeper in Australia today still remains true to its roots, there is a need to educate the business community and government on the broader and expanded scope of services and professionalism of bookkeepers today.

A professional bookkeeper today does much more than ‘keep the books’.

Generally, as a profession, bookkeeping in Australia is still somewhat unregulated and largely misunderstood by the business community. There is confusion over what the term “Bookkeeper” now means, although there is familiarity with the foundation of what a traditional bookkeeper was as it is a known term.

Even fewer people outside of bookkeepers, know who or what a BAS Agent is or what they do, assuming they have even heard of the term at all. BAS Agent is a regulatory term and is a completely unknown term in much of the broader community.

To change the name of a bookkeeper to a new different term, means starting again to build our industry, in reputation, recognition and professionalism, from scratch. Introducing a new term into the broader community means a reset to the advancements that we as a profession have made over the last 20+ years. Hence our commitment to retaining the foundation of the “profession” and the term “bookkeeper”.

The Professional Bookkeeper in 2021

Broadening Recognition of Professional Bookkeepers

Due to a lack of regulation, anyone can hold themselves out to be a traditional bookkeeper, without fear of penalty. What is needed, is to differentiate a 'Professional Bookkeeper', from someone who does not show the same levels of professionalism as has come to be expected of professional advisors to business, from both government and the business community today.

Achieving the characteristics of being a 'Professional Bookkeeper', and with the appropriate support of the two recognised Professional Bookkeeping Associations, 'Professional Bookkeeper' can be widely promoted and understood.

It gives us as a profession the opportunity to reference 'Professional Bookkeepers' in a variety of government forums that will enhance and promote the reputation of holders of this designation.

In addition, with support of government, 'Professional Bookkeeper' will quickly become the benchmark within the industry, and broader recognition with the business community.

What is a Professional Bookkeeper?

Experienced

An independent verification of the quality and quantity of experience held

Commitment to professional development

A commitment to education, learning and development of skills via continuing professional development

Endorsed

A member of a professional body, committed to the requirements adherent to that membership including:

- Acts with honesty and integrity
- Acts in the best interest of their clients or employers

A professional bookkeeper in practice will be a Registered BAS Agent

What does this mean for ICB Members?

By being a member of ICB Australia, you are already either on the path (Affiliate) or will have already achieved (Member and Associate) the attributes of being a 'Professional Bookkeeper'. Your continuing commitment to being a member and the requirements of that membership with ICB, don't change.

As the specific details of the framework around the designation are still in the final stages of development, we will be announcing to members over the coming months as to how we will be recommending that members can use and promote the 'Professional Bookkeeper' designation in conjunction with your current membership.

What you will see is the change of language when we are in discussions and seeking recognition of bookkeepers in Australia with business, government and industry, as we work together to lift the recognition and profile of our profession and our members.

ICB Membership Benefits

icb.org.au/Membership/Membership-Benefits

 News & Updates Stay up-to-date with developments in the bookkeeping community from the website and social media.	 ICB Community Access to ICB Members-only forums, to engage in peer-to-peer support and discussions.	 CPE Register ICB Members (Affiliate and above) have access to the ICB Register, making it easy to keep track of your CPE hours and activities.	 HR Intermediary ICB provides assessments to expand and test your knowledge in payroll and preparing to act as an HR Intermediary.	 BAS Agent Support Specific guidance and assistance to ICB Members who are BAS Agents and/or involved in preparation of the BAS.	 ICBenefits ICBenefits provides commercial advantage to ICB Members on everyday items.
 Support Phone, email and web-based support for all ICB Members, provided by bookkeepers. Access to a network of experts.	 Education & Training CPE for bookkeepers. ICB-generated and monitored access to the most appropriate education and training.	 Network Meetings Meet with other members of ICB in your local area to discuss your world of Bookkeeping. Over 90 Network Meeting locations.	 Webinars Designed and delivered by ICB, providing you with the opportunity to advance your professional development and bookkeeping knowledge.	 ATO Access & Influence As a recognised BAS Agent Association and Member of ATPAG and BASAAG, ICB hears from and talks to the ATO.	 Find a Bookkeeper The ICB published and promoted list of Members in Practice. The directory of the best Certified Bookkeepers available to help businesses.
 Members-only Newsletter ICB Members newsletter By Bookkeepers For Bookkeepers Topics of current interest, directly about you and your world.	 Summit & Workshops National Summit, Conferences and End of the Year Workshops to keep you updated with the latest legislation and technology.	 Resources Practical, usable, everyday resources. An extensive knowledge base, information library, how to guides, checklists and templates.	 Client & Business eBriefs Template newsletters provided to you for tailoring, personalising and providing to your clients.	 Notification of business looking for Bookkeepers A list of current vacancies published by businesses relevant to your skill levels and in your local area.	 Gain Certification in your Bookkeeping Skills Gain ICB certification to assist in your promotion of your skills.
 Insurance for Bookkeepers Professional Indemnity Insurance designed for Bookkeepers and BAS Agents. Specifically includes the clauses you need.	 ICB Personalised Products Promote your accreditation and ICB Membership with a personalised name badge. For Members in Practice, state your professionalism using the ICB Crest.	 Approved Products & Solutions Selected and screened third-party products and solutions. Payroll by TAPS, HR by Employment Innovations (includes 3 free calls per year), and more!	 BAS Agent Supervision Program ICB has developed a program where we can promote you to bookkeepers who are seeking supervision to gain their experience and/or BAS Agent registration.	 Podcasts Listen to the ICB newsletter via podcast or tune into the Heart of the Bookkeeper podcast. Hosted by Rob Marshall, this podcasts talks to amazing individuals in our industry.	 Your Voice as Bookkeepers With nearly 5,000 voting ICB Members that we dedicate time to find out what is happening and provide viewpoints from the Bookkeepers perspective.

ICB Membership Levels & Requirements

	Yearly Fee	Monthly Fee	Application Fee	PI Insurance	Employment Statement	Member Declaration	Working Experience	Required Education	CPE	ICB Annual Skill Review (every 2yrs)	Client Base
Member in Practice	\$480	\$40	\$75	✓	N/A	✓	2+ years	Cert IV Bookkeeping / Accounting	15hrs p/a	✓	2+ clients
Member – NDIS	\$480	\$40	\$75	✓	N/A	✓	2+ years	Cert IV Bookkeeping / Accounting	15hrs p/a	✓	Associated with NDIS framework
Member in Employment	\$360	\$30	\$75	N/A	✓	✓	2+ years	Cert IV Bookkeeping / Accounting	15hrs p/a	✓	N/A
Associate in Practice	\$432	\$36	\$75	✓	N/A	✓	1+ years	Cert IV Bookkeeping / Accounting	15hrs p/a	✓	No minimum
Associate – NDIS	\$432	\$36	\$75	✓	N/A	✓	1+ years	Cert IV Bookkeeping / Accounting	15hrs p/a	✓	Associated with NDIS framework
Associate in Employment	\$312	\$26	\$75	N/A	✓	✓	1+ years	Cert IV Bookkeeping / Accounting	15hrs p/a	✓	N/A
Affiliate (Max. 2yrs)	\$264	\$22	\$75	N/A	N/A	✓	N/A	Cert IV Bookkeeping / Accounting	15hrs p/a	✓	N/A
Student (Max. 2yrs)	\$120**	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Must be studying	N/A	N/A	N/A
Educator	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	N/A	Registered teacher	Must be teaching	N/A	N/A	N/A

*Application Fee is non-refundable

**If studying with an ICB Accredited Training Provider they may offer a complimentary 24-month Student Membership.

Prices effective 31 December 2021. For information regarding change of membership please call ICB Member Services on 1300 856 181.

Limitation of Liability

The material contained within this report is designed to provide information for bookkeepers and business.

We note that different circumstances might apply from Bookkeeper to Bookkeeper and situation to situation.

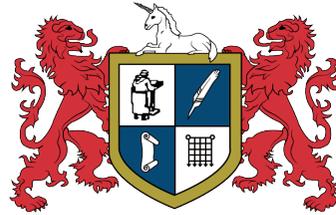
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