



**Certified Once
Accepted Everywhere**

The value of accredited certification

Survey Report



Published May 2012

In 2010/11, the IAF carried out a global survey to capture market feedback on the value of certification. The survey aimed to gain intelligence on the drivers for seeking certification, the selection criteria when choosing a body to provide certification services, the appropriateness of the process, and the positive outcomes of certification.

About IAF

The International Accreditation Forum (IAF) is the global association of Accreditation Bodies, Certification Body Associations and other organisations involved in conformity assessment activities in a variety of fields including management systems, products, services and personnel.

The main objectives of IAF are:

- to develop appropriate harmonisation of conformity assessment best practice.
- to maintain and develop a Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) between its Accreditation Body Members to ensure recognition of accredited certification between signatories.
- to act as a global forum to bring together accreditation bodies and stakeholder groups to facilitate global trade.
- to promote accredited conformity assessment by working with, and influencing, key international organisations and industry groups.

Purpose

In order to inform policy, IAF aims to consult widely with both stakeholders and users of accredited services in order to provide the best standard of conformity assessment to provide businesses throughout the supply chain with a value added outcome.

To support this aim, a global survey was launched to collect and analyse feedback from users of certification to ascertain the drivers for seeking certification, the importance of accreditation and the IAF MLA in the choice of certification provider, and to identify the extent of internal or external value.

Methodology

A short online survey consisting of twenty questions was selected as the most effective tool. Databuild, an independent market research company, were commissioned to verify the survey format and questions. The survey, which was translated into 22 languages, was promoted in each economy by the accreditation and certification community, stakeholder groups and business intermediaries. Responses to the questions were not mandatory, and so the quoted percentages are based on the businesses that provided a response. The survey ran for 12 months and closed in October 2011.

About Databuild

Databuild specialises in research for government and the public sector to help clients understand the needs and priorities of their target audiences, to develop programmes and to evaluate the impact of their work. They provide both qualitative and quantitative research to provide clients with insight and understanding.



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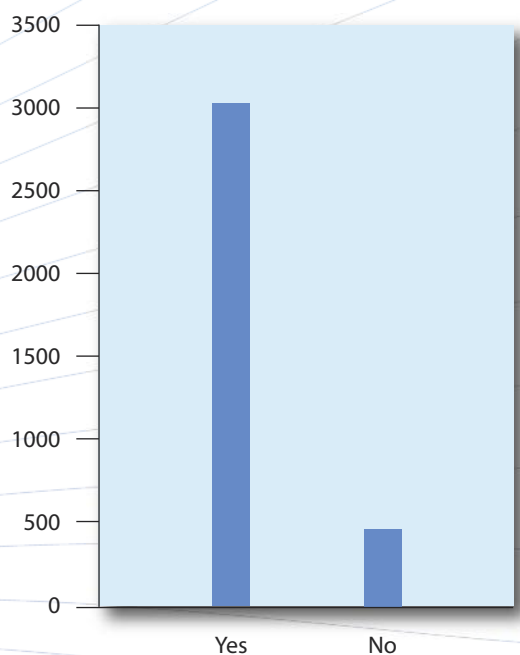
1. About the Respondents

A total of 4,191 respondents completed the survey from 41 different economies. The majority of respondents (60%) have a responsibility for managing quality in their organisation, however there was a large response from senior managers, purchasers, finance managers and marketing personnel. 86% of those who took part in the survey confirmed that they hold the responsibility for certification related activities.

Driver for seeking certification



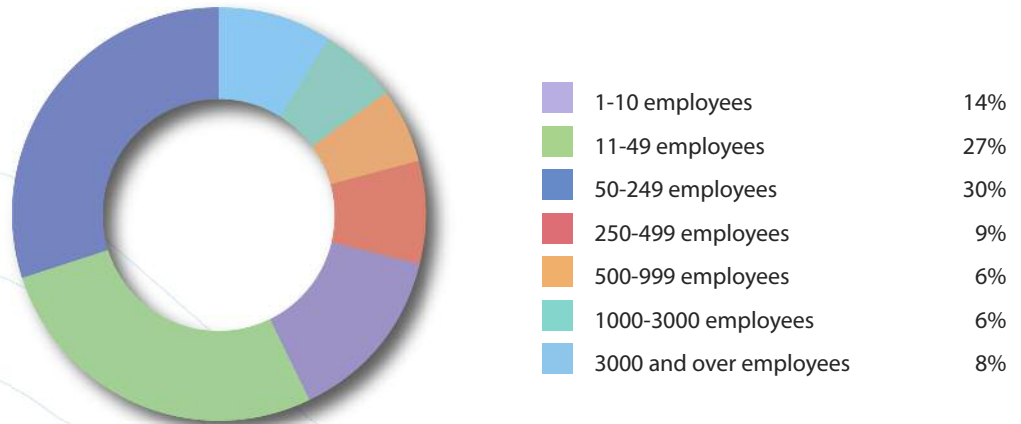
Respondent responsibility for certification activities



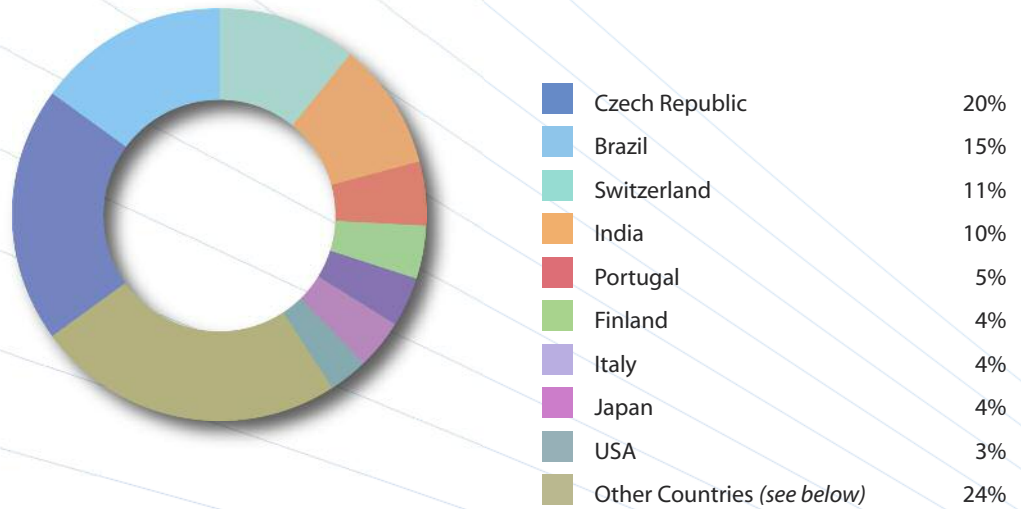
1. About the Respondents *continued*

71% of respondents working in organisations employing less than 249 people.

Size of business



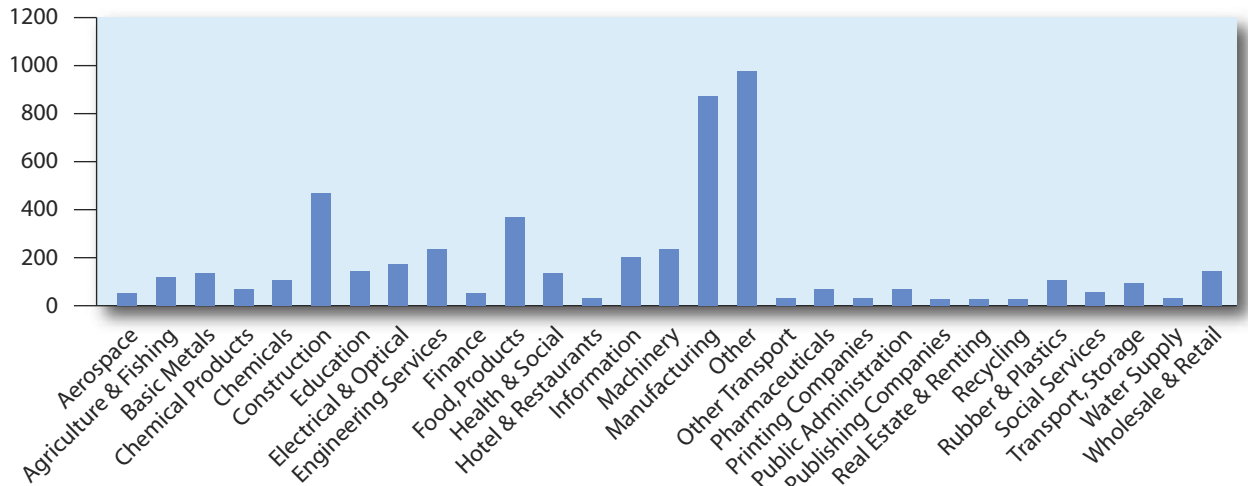
Respondent by economy



Other Countries

- | | | |
|------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Argentina | Hong Kong China | Singapore |
| Australia | Indonesia | Slovakia |
| Austria | Ireland | South Africa |
| Belgium | Malaysia | Spain |
| Canada | Mexico | Sweden |
| China | Netherlands | Thailand |
| Costa Rica | New Zealand | Turkey |
| Denmark | Norway | United Kingdom |
| France | Philippines | Vietnam |
| Germany | Poland | |
| Greece | Republic of Korea | |

Respondent by sector



Type of certification achieved



The majority of businesses that responded have management systems certification, with 51% a quality management system, 18% environmental management, 5% food safety management, 4% occupational health and safety, and 4% information management. 13% of respondents submit their products for certification.

2. Supplier selection

The survey aimed to gain an insight into the business drivers for seeking certification, and to better understand the reasons behind their choice of certification body.

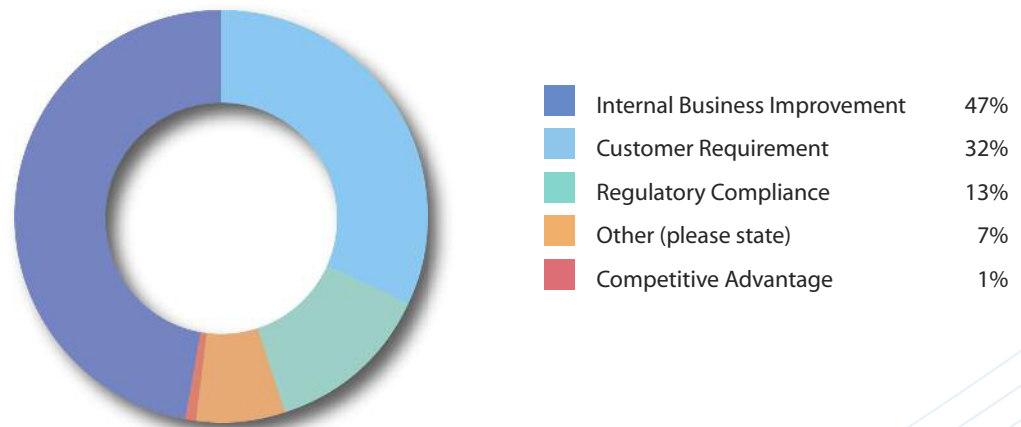
1272 (47%) of respondents stated that the primary driver was to improve internal business operations and processes. 937 (32%) reported that their customers required it, while 380 (13%) stated that it was to satisfy regulatory requirements. Other reasons cited included using it as a marketing tool or to achieve a competitive advantage.

91% (3222) businesses reported that they had selected an accredited certification body, and has therefore proved that it complies with best practice and is competent to deliver a consistently reliable and impartial service which meets the appropriate, internationally-recognised standards. 5% did not know the status of the certifying body, however 4% stated that they used the services of a non-accredited body.

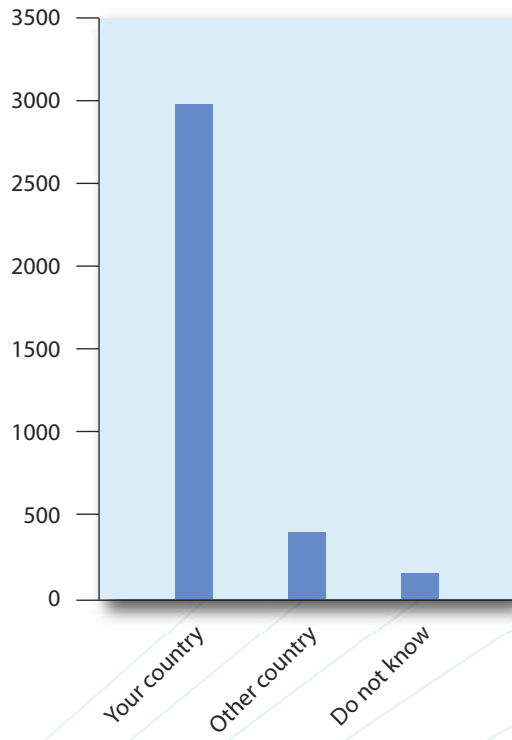
When asked whether it was important that the certification was covered by the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA), 35% of businesses reported that it was essential or very important. A similar number (34%) confirmed that it was not important, while 10% did not know.

Most businesses (89%) confirmed that they commission the services of a certification body based in their national economy. 175 businesses (8%) reported that they use an organisation that is based abroad.

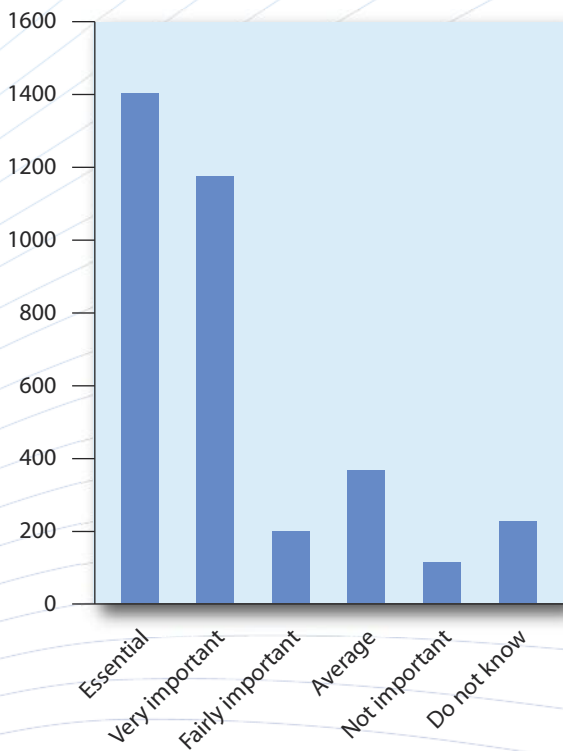
Driver for seeking certification



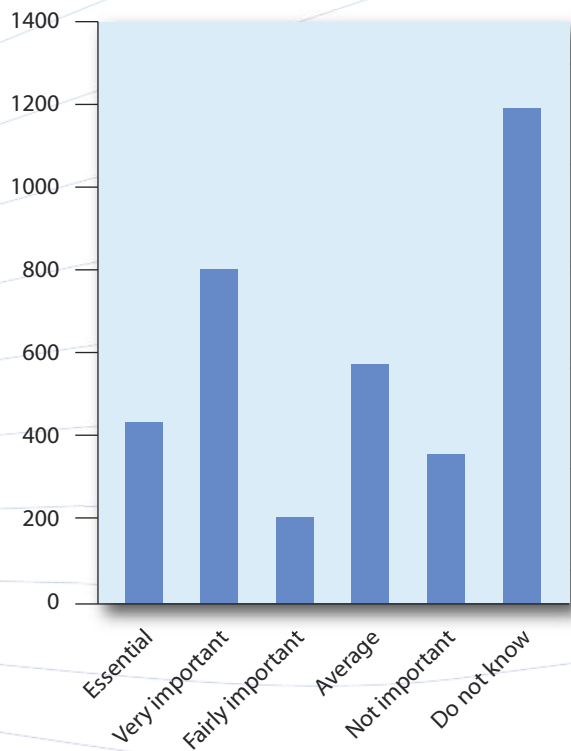
Location of selected certification body



Importance that certification is covered by accreditation



Importance that certification is covered by IAF MLA



3. The Certification Process

Businesses were asked to rate their experience of the certification process in terms of the competence of the certification body assessment personnel, the timing and complexity of the process, and whether the certification provider represented value for money.

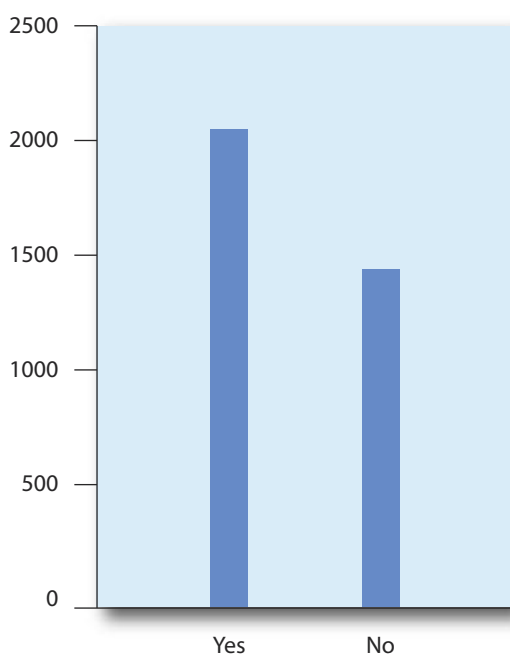
60% (2112) of businesses used the services of an external consultant to support them through the certification process. Asked to rate the complexity of the process, approximately the same number of businesses (925) reported that the process was complex as those that reported it to be average.

Regarding the timescale required to go through the process of achieving certification, 1422 (71%) of respondents confirmed that it had met their expectations. Only 7% perceived the time to achieve certification as too long.

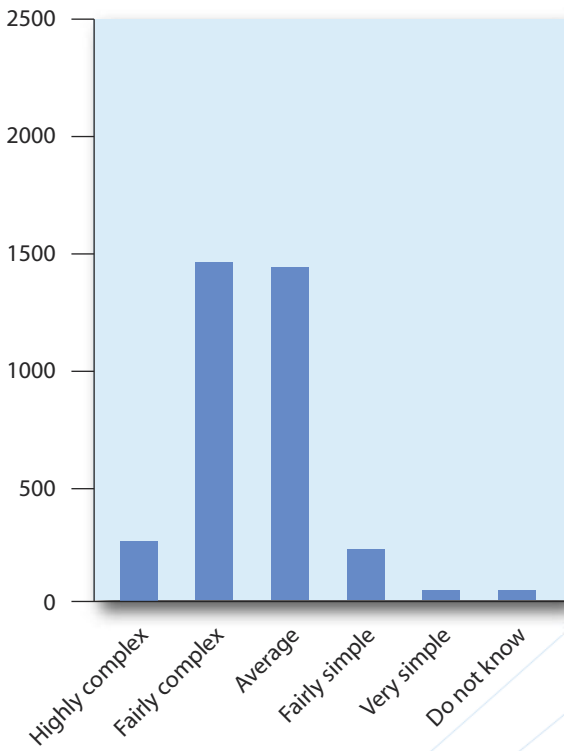
Finally, the businesses taking part in the survey rated the certification body assessment team as highly competent (1478) and competent (1536). Only 1.7% of respondents questioned the competence of the personnel that had assessed them.

62% of respondents confirmed that they strongly agreed or agreed that the certification process provided value for money.

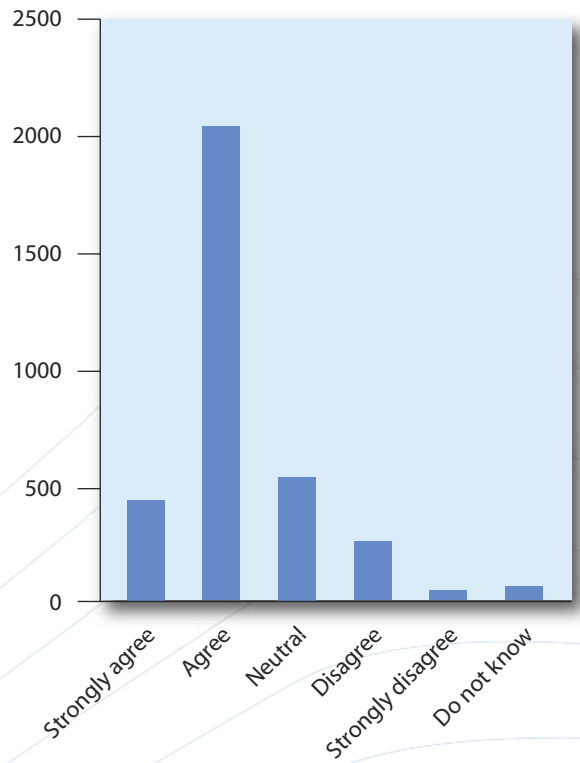
Use of an external consultant



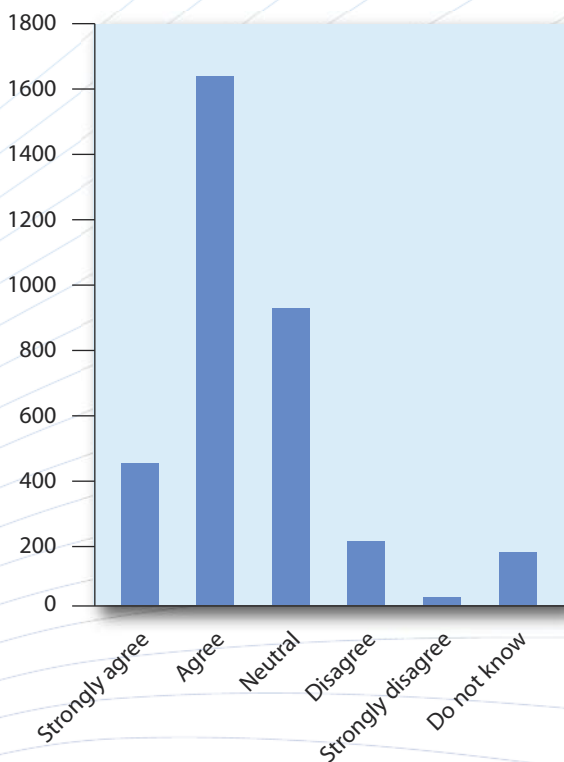
Rating the certification process



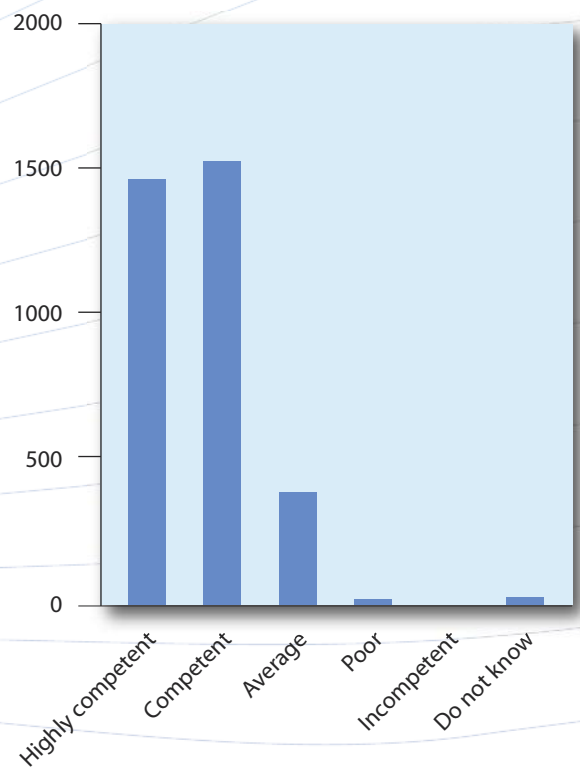
Rating the timing of the process



Did the process provide value for money?



Competence of the certification body team



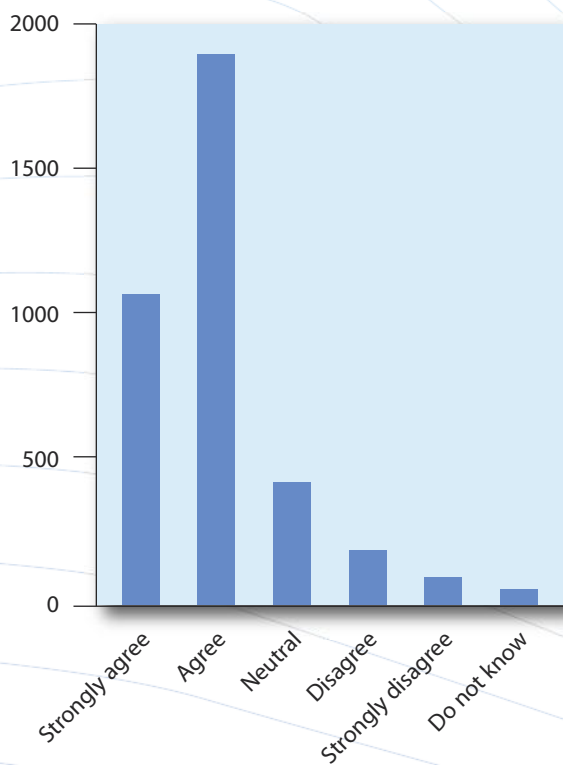
4. Outcomes

The final section of the survey included questions that were designed to identify the extent of any operational or commercial benefit of achieving certification.

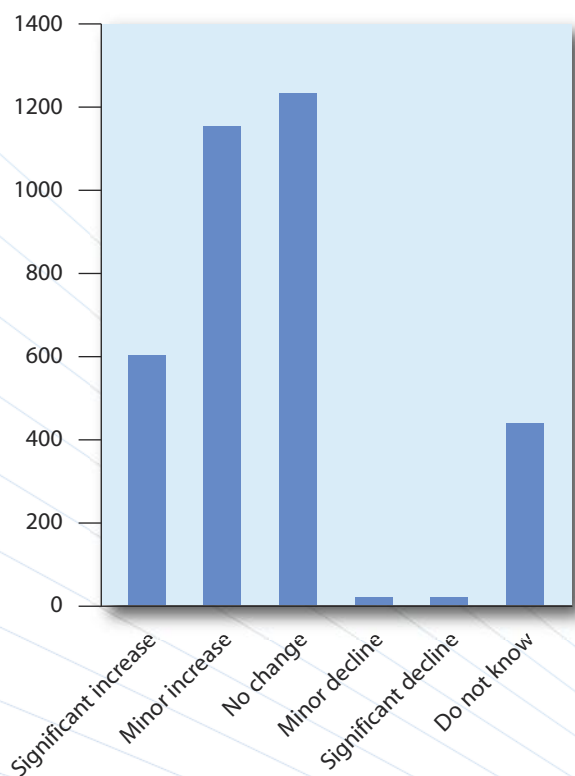
83% (1713) businesses agreed or strongly agreed that the certification process had added value to their organisation in some way. 17% of businesses confirmed that they had experienced a significant increase in sales as a direct result of their certification. A further 32% reported a minor rise in sales.

2787 (79%) of businesses stated that achieving certification had helped them meet the requirements of regulators. In addition, 35% (1226) of respondents strongly agree and 46% (1622) agree that their certified status is important to their direct customers.

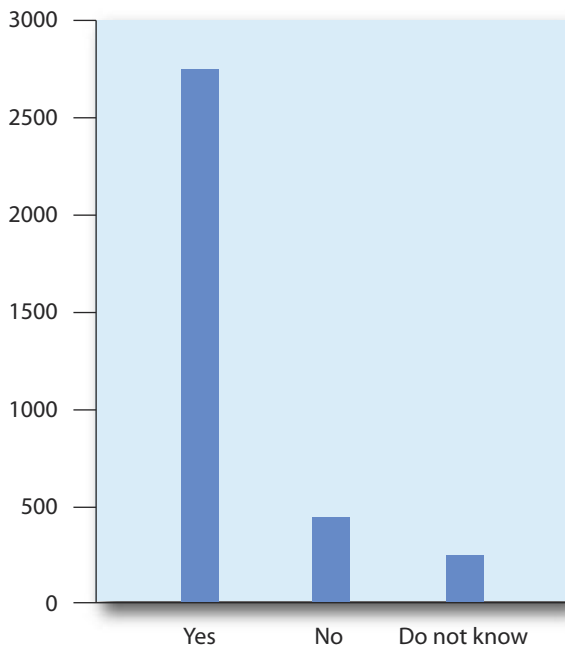
Did the certification process add value?



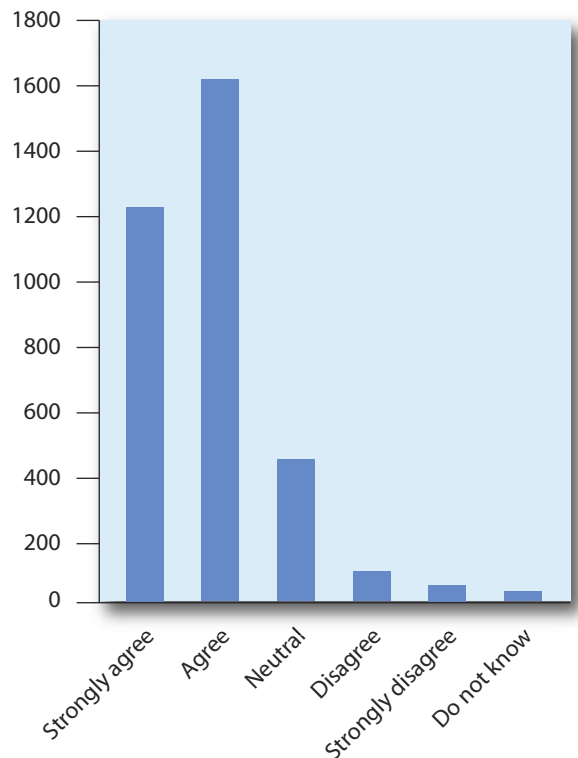
Has certification led to an increase in sales?



Has certification helped to meet the requirements of Regulators?



Is certification important to your customers?



5. Summary

The findings of the survey confirm that businesses are generating significant benefits and added value from accredited certification. Not only is it being used as a tool to deliver internal business improvement and to meet regulatory compliance, but businesses confirm that it has a positive effect on revenue. Given that the majority of businesses that responded to the survey (57%) employed less than 249 people, accredited certification clearly benefits small to medium sized organisations, as well as large multinationals.

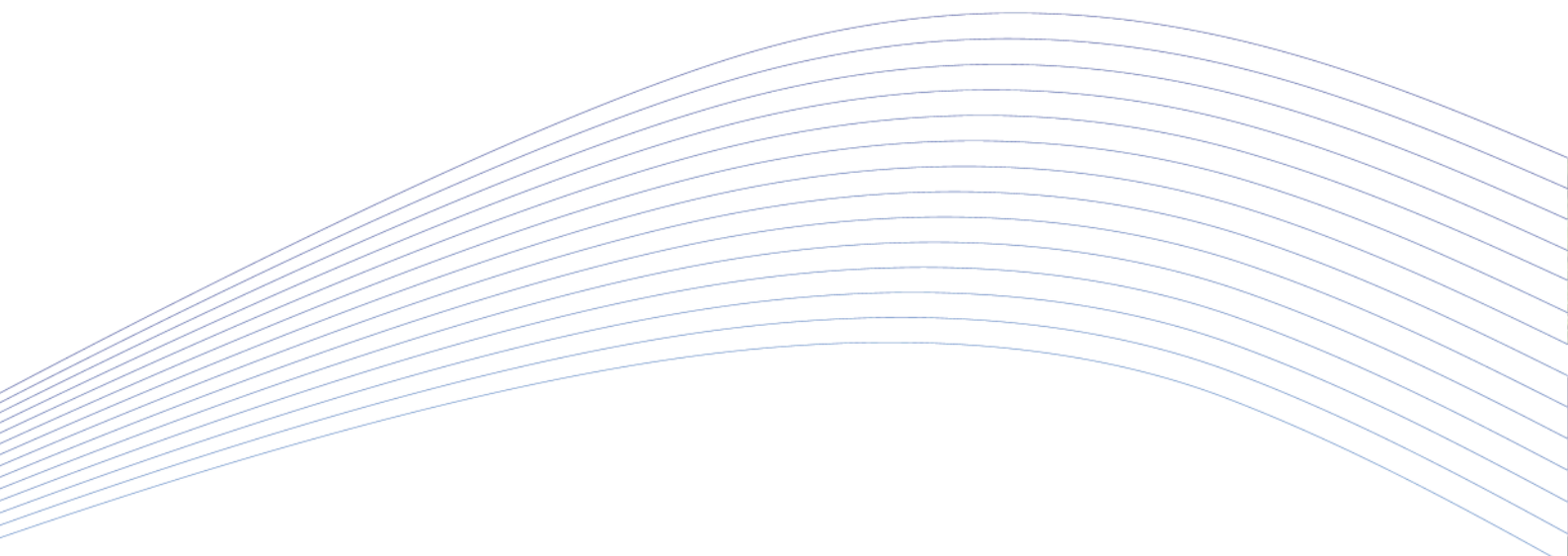
Businesses taking part also reported high levels of satisfaction with the certification process in terms of the timeframe to achieve certification and the competence of the assessment teams. Given these positive findings, businesses perceive accredited certification as providing value for money.

Nearly all of the businesses that took part in the survey (91%) selected an accredited certification body, providing an assurance that these organisations have the required competence and impartiality to do so as evidenced by fulfilment of international standards and requirements.

The IAF has an ongoing initiative to capture feedback from the market in order to deliver value added outcomes, and so we would like to thank those who took part in the survey.



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