



**The Export-Import Bank  
of the United States**

**Small Business Exporter  
Customer Survey**

**Summary Results**

**May 15, 2014**



# EXPORT-IMPORT BANK of the UNITED STATES

To: Fred P. Hochberg, President and Chairman of the Board of Directors  
Claudia Slacik, Chief Banking Officer and Senior Vice President of Export Finance  
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Jim Burrows, Senior Vice President of Small Business

From: Stephanie Thum, Vice President of Customer Experience

Subject: Ex-Im Bank's 2014 Small Business Exporter Survey Summary Results

Date: May 15, 2014

I am pleased to provide you with the summary report on the 2014 small business customer survey initiated by my office, in coordination with the Bank's Small Business Group. The survey was conducted using a sample of small business exporters with recent experience working with Ex-Im Bank's trade credit insurance product.

The purpose of the survey was to solicit and assess feedback on Ex-Im's products in the context of our customers' business, exports, and employment base. Questions pertaining to the ease of doing business with the Bank were asked, as well. Highlights from the survey are as follows:

- 65% of survey respondents indicated their exports have grown during the past five years
- 64% agreed/strongly agreed that Ex-Im Bank helped to expand exports
- 55% agreed/strongly agreed that without Ex-Im, their companies would not have realized as many export opportunities
- 95% would recommend Ex-Im Bank to another exporter

With respect to the ease of doing business, 49% said the level of effort they personally had to put forth to complete transactions with Ex-Im was "as much as expected." This measurement of effort is important as the Bank works to improve the ease of doing business for customers, as noted in the [Ex-Im Bank Strategic Plan 2010-2015](#).

Overall, I believe you will find that the survey results indicate Ex-Im Bank is delivering on its mission to promote U.S. job growth by facilitating exports—specifically in the small business space.

Thank you for the opportunity to share the summary results of this survey. If you have any questions, please call me at extension 3603.



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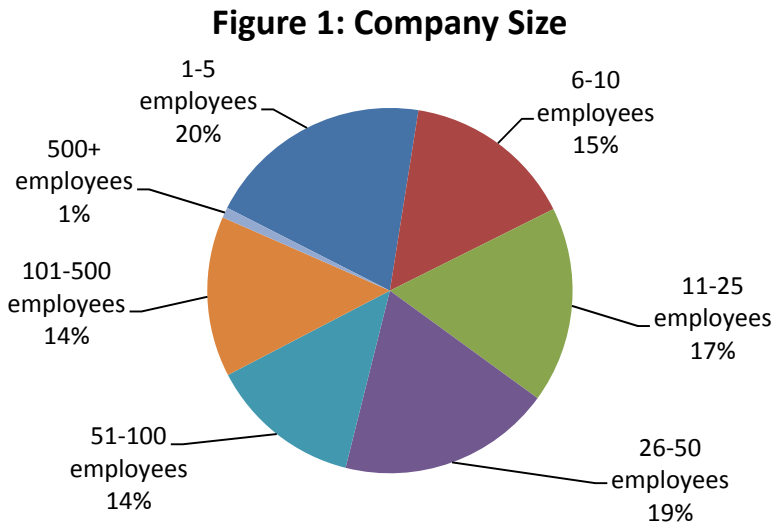
## Survey Background

During late March and early April 2014, Ex-Im Bank contracted with NOVA Research Company to initiate a survey of 2,157 small business exporter customers with recent experience working with the Bank’s trade credit insurance product.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the survey was to understand the current state of our small business customers’ export business, and identify potential service improvement opportunities to ease the process of doing business with the Bank as outlined in the [Ex-Im Bank Strategic Plan 2010-2015](#). Trade credit insurance customers were chosen as a target for this survey because Ex-Im’s trade credit insurance product is a high-volume product line.

## Respondent Profile

The response rate for the survey was 24.8%—535 surveys were completed. Most survey respondents identified themselves as the Chief Executive (36%) or Financial Manager (35%). A smaller percentage (8%) reported their role as the Sales and Marketing Manager. A number of respondents (21%) indicated that their position as “other,” as it did not fit into any of the provided survey categories.

Respondents then provided details about the current size and state of their business. The distribution of differently sized companies was fairly even. Between 15%-20% of respondents reported company size in each given category (see Figure 1). Only 1% reported 500 or more employees.



Then, respondents were asked to identify the industry or industries in which their companies were active. The industries reported most frequently included manufacturing, agriculture, mining, construction, and energy. A substantial number of respondents reported that one or more of their export industries fell into a category not specifically listed; these varied from aviation to cosmetics to kayaks. The vast majority of respondents (85%) selected one industry in which their company was active, while 13% of

<sup>1</sup> OMB Control Number: 3048-0050. Expiration date March 31, 2017.



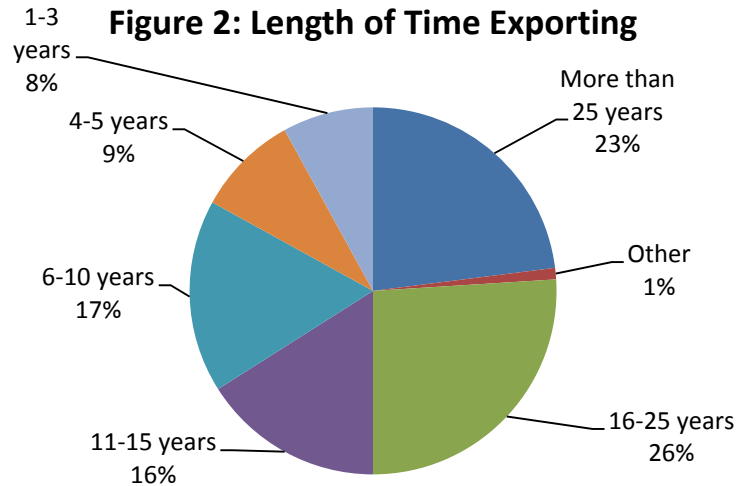
respondents indicated that their company was active in two or three industries, and 2% indicated four or more industries.

Export-related experience levels of respondents were mixed. About half have been exporting for more than 15 years; slightly more than one-quarter have been exporting 16 to 25 years, and 23% have been exporting for more than 25 years. Only 8% percent have been exporting for three years or less (see Figure 2).

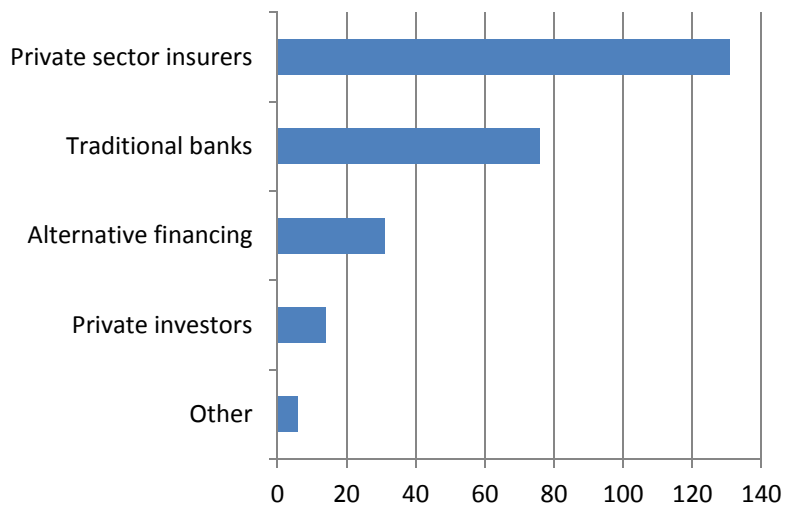
About one-third (33%) of respondents indicated they work with Ex-Im several times per year, and another 33% indicated working with Ex-Im about once per year.

About a quarter (22%) indicated they had worked with Ex-Im Bank only once before, while a few (5%) indicated a frequency of every few years. Some respondents (7%) indicated that they had worked with Ex-Im at a frequency that did not conform to any categories.

Before choosing to work with Ex-Im's trade credit insurance product, about a third (35%) indicated they had explored other options for insurance, while 44% had not explored at all, and 22% could not recall.<sup>2</sup> Of the 185 exporters who had explored other options, the majority (131, or 71%)<sup>3</sup> had looked at private sector insurers, while 76 (41%) looked at traditional banks. Smaller numbers had looked at alternative financing, private investors, or other options (see Figure 3).



### Figure 3: Other Insurance Options Explored (n=185)<sup>3</sup>



<sup>2</sup> Due to rounding, some totals throughout this report may not equal 100%.

<sup>3</sup> More than one category could be selected, so counts add to more than total number of respondents.



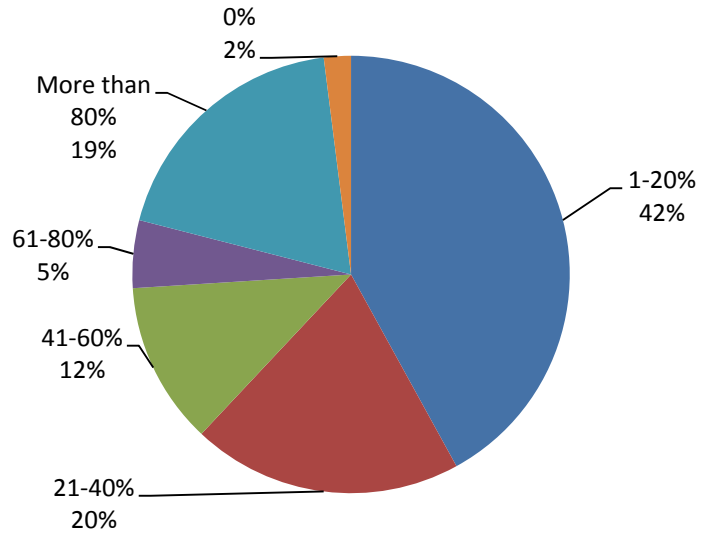
**Customers' Export Growth**

Exports account for a significant portion of revenue for many respondents. The majority (62%) indicated that exports accounted for 1-40% of their revenue last year; however, nearly a fifth of respondents (19%) indicated that exports accounted for more than 80% of revenues. Small percentages of respondents indicated that exports accounted for 41-60% or 61-80% of revenues (12% and 5% of respondents, respectively) (see Figure 4).

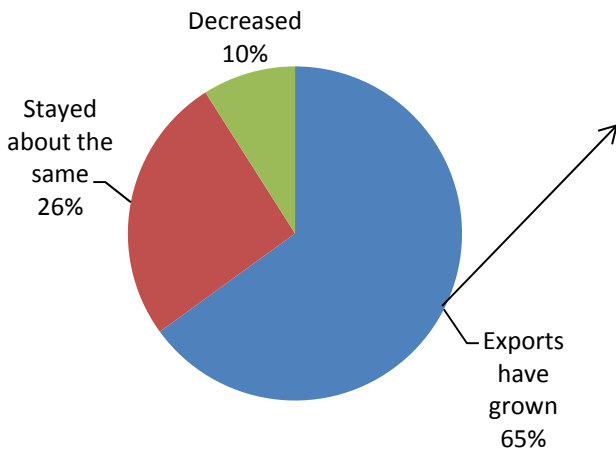
Exports have increased during the past five years for the majority of survey respondents, with 65% reporting growth. For another 26%, export growth has stayed about the same, while 10% reported a decrease in exports (see Figure 5)<sup>4</sup>.

Survey respondents who reported growth were asked to describe the extent to which their exports have grown. Of those who reported growth, almost half reported 1%-24% growth, while 26% said exports have grown by 25%-49%, and 13% reported that exports have grown by 50%-74%. Smaller percentages (7%) said exports have grown by 75%-100%, and 8% reported that exports have grown by more than 100% (see Figures 6)<sup>4</sup>.

**Figure 4: Exports as a Percentage of Revenue**



**Figure 5: Export Growth, Past Five Years<sup>4</sup>**



**Figure 6: Rates of Export Growth**

Percent growth over the past five years	% of respondents
1-24%	46%
25-49%	26%
50-74%	13%
75-100%	7%
More than 100%	8%

<sup>4</sup> Due to rounding, some totals throughout this report may not equal 100%.



## Understanding Ex-Im's Impact on Small Business

To better understand how Ex-Im's trade credit insurance product helped small businesses, survey respondents were presented with a series of Likert-type items addressing the extent to which Ex-Im impacted their export success. Response options to all items were 5-point scales with anchors of "strongly agree" and "strongly disagree." In general, respondents reported that Ex-Im had affected their businesses in favorable ways—particularly in helping to expand exports and realize more export opportunities. Respondents also rated impact toward employment (see Figures 7a, 7b and 7c).

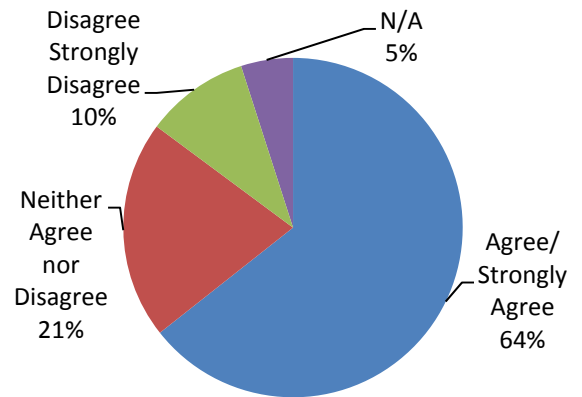
In addition to the responses noted in Figures 7a, 7b and 7c, almost half (46%) of the respondents agreed/strongly agreed that Ex-Im Bank helped to initiate exports, while 24% neither agreed nor disagreed and 18% disagreed/strongly disagreed. A small percentage (12%) marked the answer as "N/A."

Toward future financing, 41% agreed/strongly agreed that Ex-Im Bank helped position their companies for conventional financing in the future while 36% neither agreed nor disagreed, 14% disagreed/strongly agreed, and 10% marked the answer as "N/A."<sup>5</sup>

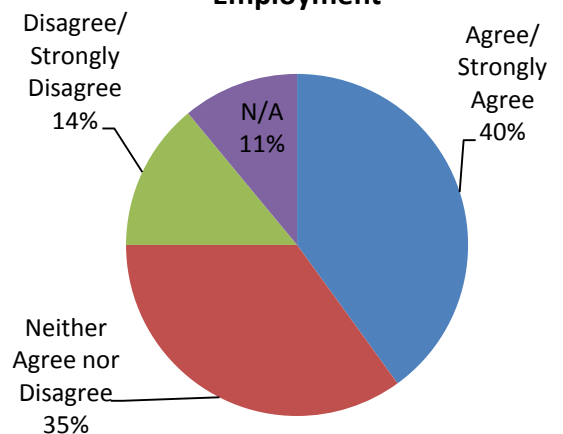
## Ease of Doing Business with Ex-Im Bank

As outlined in the [Ex-Im Bank Strategic Plan 2010-2015](#), Ex-Im Bank has a strategic goal to improve the ease of doing business for customers. To that end, survey respondents were presented with a series of Likert-type items addressing the ease of doing

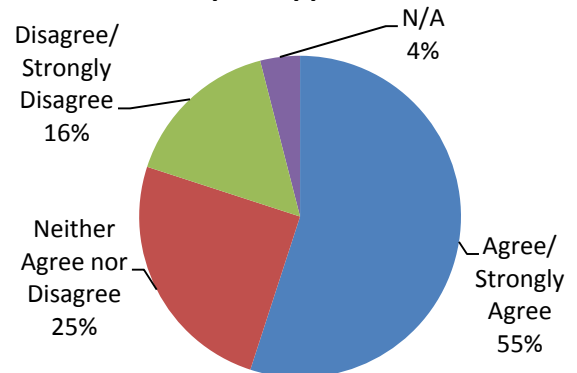
**7a. Helped to Expand Exports**



**7b. Had a Positive Impact on Employment**



**7c. Without Ex-Im Bank... my business would not have realized as many export opportunities**



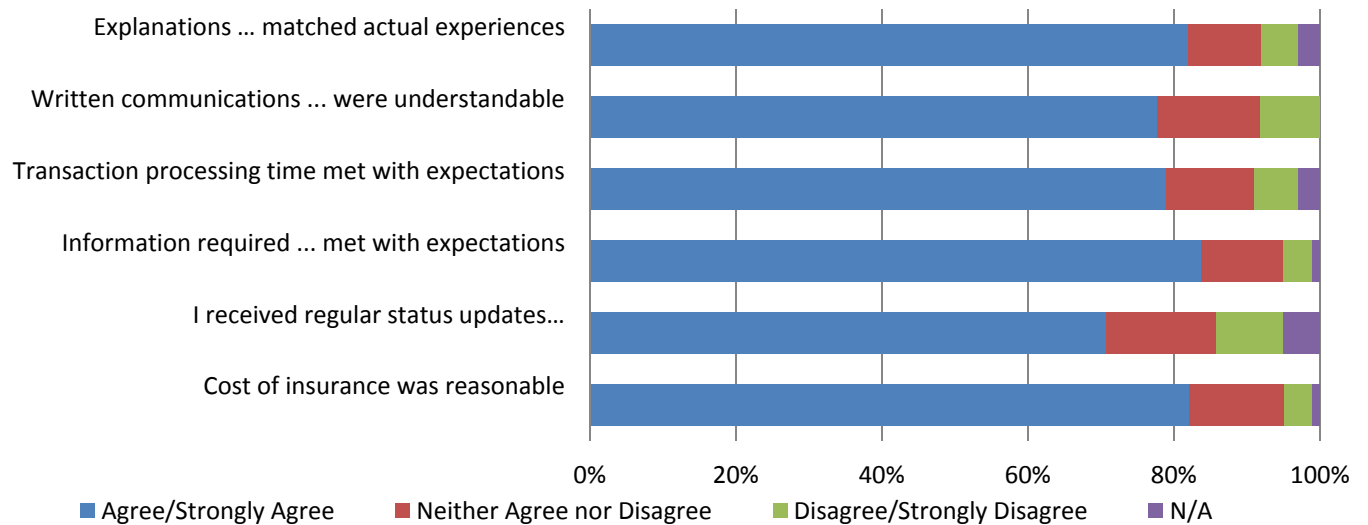
<sup>5</sup> Due to rounding, some totals throughout this report may not equal 100%.



business (see Figure 8). Response options to all items were 5-point scales with anchors of “very satisfied” to “very dissatisfied.” At least 70% of respondents indicated they agreed or strongly agreed with each of the following statements:

- Explanations of the insurance product matched actual experiences (82% agreed/strongly agreed, 10% neither agreed nor disagreed, 5% disagreed/strongly disagreed, and 3% selected “N/A”).
- Written communications surrounding how to work with Ex-Im were clear and understandable (77% agreed/strongly agreed, 14% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 8% disagreed/strongly disagreed).
- Transaction processing time met with my expectations (79% agreed/strongly agreed, 12% neither agreed nor disagreed, 6% disagreed/strongly disagreed, and 3% selected “N/A”).
- Information/documentation required in submitting my application met with my expectations (83% agreed/strongly agreed, 11% neither agreed nor disagreed, 4% disagreed/strongly disagreed and 1% selected “N/A”).
- I received regular status updates while my transactions were in process (70% agreed/strongly agreed, 15% neither agreed nor disagreed, 9% disagreed/strongly disagreed, and 5% selected “N/A”).
- Cost of insurance was reasonable (83% agreed/strongly agreed, 13% neither agreed nor disagreed, 4% disagreed/strongly disagreed, and 1% selected “N/A”).

**Figure 8: Ease of Doing Business with Ex-Im Bank**







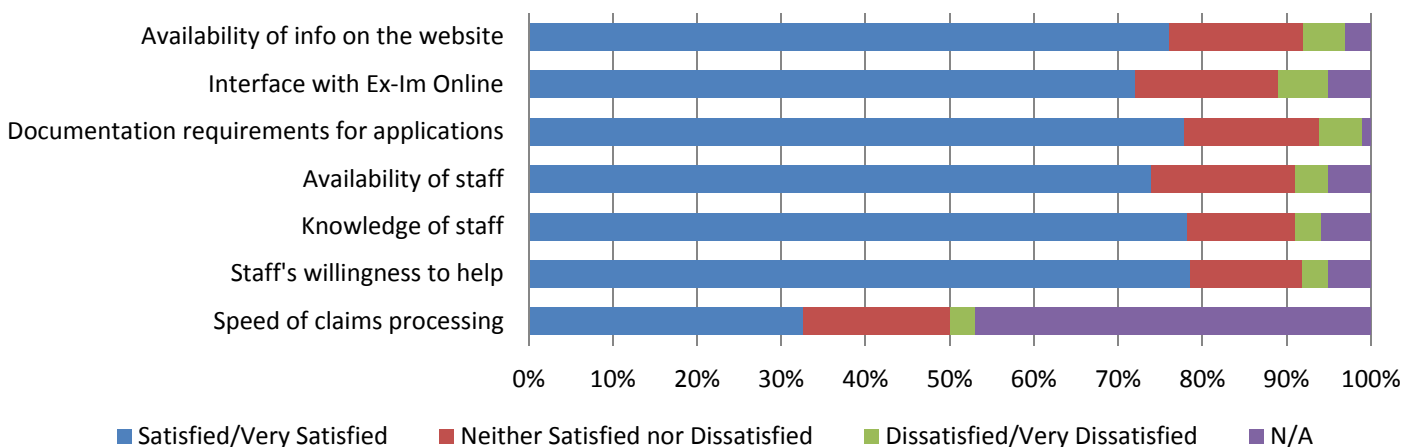
## Ease of Interactions with Ex-Im

Survey respondents were presented with a series of Likert-type items addressing ease of doing business in their interactions with Ex-Im (see Figure 9). Response options were 5-point scales with anchors of “very satisfied” and “very dissatisfied.” Except for the item related to “speed of claims processing,” more than three-quarters of respondents indicated they were very satisfied or satisfied with their interactions. Regarding “speed of claims processing,” almost half (46%) selected the “not applicable” response, as they likely had no experience in this area.

Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the following:

- Availability of information on the website (76% satisfied/very satisfied, 16% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 5% dissatisfied/very dissatisfied, 3% “N/A”).
- Interface with Ex-Im Online (72% satisfied/very satisfied, 17% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 6% dissatisfied/very dissatisfied, 5% “N/A”).
- Documentation/information requirements for applications (77% satisfied/very satisfied, 16% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 5% dissatisfied/very dissatisfied, 1% “N/A”).
- Availability of staff (77% satisfied/very satisfied, 17% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 4% dissatisfied/very dissatisfied, 5% “N/A”).
- Knowledge of staff (79% satisfied/very satisfied, 13% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 3% dissatisfied/very dissatisfied, 6% “N/A”).
- Staff’s willingness to help (77% satisfied/very satisfied, 13% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 3% dissatisfied/very dissatisfied, 5% “N/A”).
- Speed of claims processing (32% satisfied/very satisfied, 17% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 3% dissatisfied/very dissatisfied, 46% “N/A”).

**Figure 9: Ease of Interactions with Ex-Im Bank**





## Experience with Other Export Credit Agencies

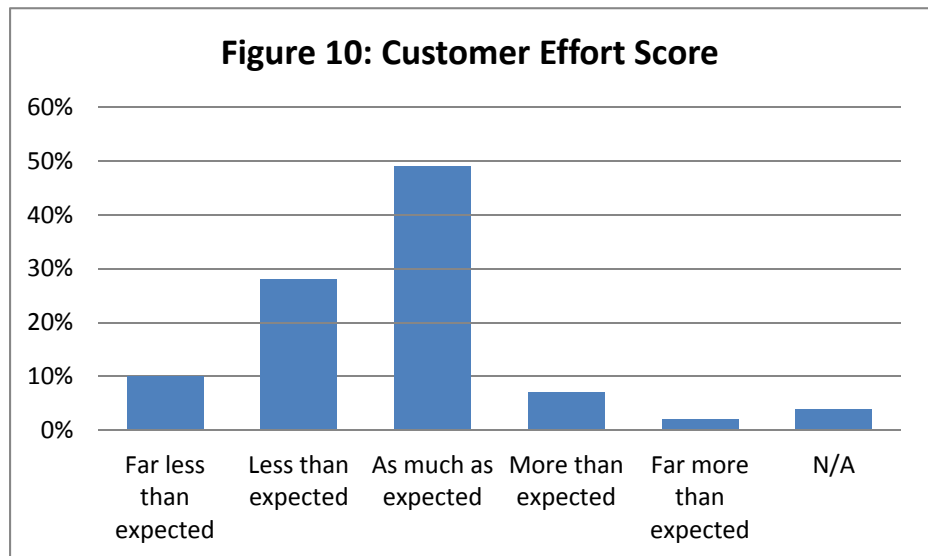
Only a small percentage of survey respondents (8%, or 40 respondents) experienced working with an export credit agency other than Ex-Im Bank during the past five years. Of those respondents, 78% were satisfied/very satisfied with Ex-Im Bank’s products and services compared to other ECAs, 18% selected the “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied” response, and 5% selected the “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” response.<sup>6</sup>

In terms of their overall satisfaction with Ex-Im Bank as compared with other ECAs, 75% were satisfied/very satisfied with Ex-Im Bank, 23% selected the “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied” response, and 3% selected the “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” response.

Following the questions regarding ECAs, respondents were given an opportunity to enter additional comments about their experiences working with other ECAs. Sample comments included: “COFACE,” “Euler Hermes,” and, “Ex-Im was by far the most cost effective for us.”

## Customer Effort Score

Toward the Bank’s strategic goal to improve the ease of doing business for customers, Ex-Im seeks to measure customer effort. Respondents were asked, “Generally speaking, how much effort do you personally have to put forth to complete transactions with Ex-Im Bank?” About half of respondents (49%) felt



that the effort they put forth to complete transactions with Ex-Im Bank was as much as they expected, and 38% felt it was less or far less than expected (see Figure 10). Only a fairly small proportion (9%) felt the effort was more or far more than expected, while 4% provided an answer of “N/A.”

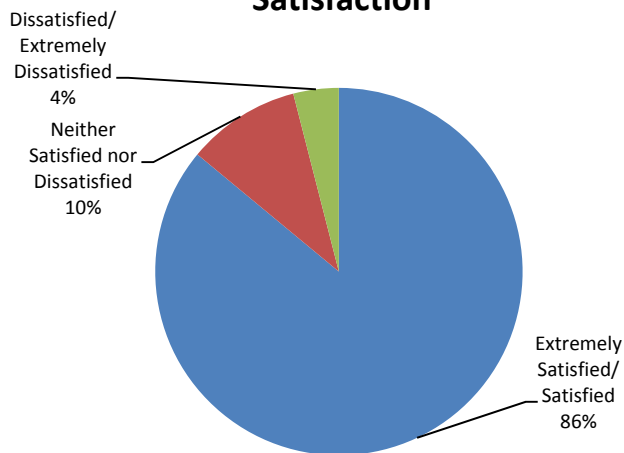
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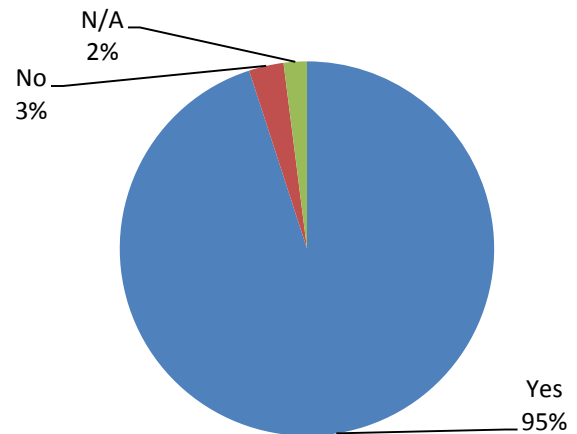
## Overall Customer Satisfaction

Overall satisfaction with Ex-Im Bank was rated highly, with 86% reporting that they were satisfied or extremely satisfied (see Figure 11). Ninety-five percent of all respondents reported they would recommend Ex-Im Bank to other exporters (see Figure 12).

**Figure 11: Overall Satisfaction**



**Figure 12: Would You Recommend Ex-Im Bank?**



## Customer Comments

At various points throughout the survey, and following the final survey question, respondents were given the option of adding comments or their contact information. Some comments were positive while others pointed to potential service improvement opportunities. Example comments included:

- “As a small business, we got big support from Ex-Im Bank.”
- “I greatly appreciate this service. It takes the fear out of exporting.”
- “The Ex-Im Bank has given us the confidence to make deals where we might have otherwise hesitated to do so.”
- “Has provided more peace of mind as far as getting paid.”
- “If we did not have Ex-Im we would not export.”
- “The insurance broker made it easy for us.”
- “With technology today, your forms could be formatted to be more user-friendly.”
- “Paperwork could be very much reduced.”



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- “Perhaps Ex-Im Bank should make the reporting process easier and more comparable to private insurances.”
- “Other ECAs offer much better rates as compared with Ex-Im Bank.”
- “Navigating the website, the instructions and terminology used is confusing.”
- “The claims process was overly long.”
- “Like any new process, this was most difficult the first time but then became relatively simple on a go-forward basis.”

## **Conclusions**

Overall, survey respondents reported being very satisfied with Ex-Im Bank and its trade credit insurance product. The following findings were of particular note:

- Ex-Im Bank had the greatest impact on small businesses by helping to expand their export business.
- More than three-quarters of respondents agreed/strongly agreed with each of the six “Ease of Doing Business” items.
- More than two-thirds of respondents indicated that the amount of effort required to complete transactions was less than/far less than expected; less than 10% indicated more than/far more than expected.
- The majority of respondents indicated they were extremely satisfied/satisfied with Ex-Im Bank; less than 4% reported they were dissatisfied/extremely dissatisfied.
- Almost all respondents indicated that they would recommend Ex-Im Bank to another business.