

**Bay Area Editors' Forum**

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## **2005 Member Survey Results**

### **Summary Analysis**

May 19, 2006

Final Draft

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# Introduction

In February 2006, we invited all 269 BAEF members to participate in a survey that we posted on Zoomerang.com. This was the first BAEF survey conducted online. We suspect that ease of access, compared to a mailed questionnaire, was largely responsible for the increased response rate over previous years. A total of 169 members took the survey, yielding a response rate of 63 percent. This rate compares impressively with the 37 percent response rate in 2000, which itself was a significant increase over previous surveys. (Interestingly, the size of BAEF membership has remained remarkably consistent over the past six years.)

Unlike the 2000 survey, which focused exclusively on freelancers, 17 percent of the BAEF members who responded to this survey reported only staff income for 2005. Although this group is a small percentage of the total respondents, we included their data (unless otherwise noted) because it opens the possibility for some interesting secondary analyses.

Not everyone who took the survey answered every question. The total number of responses for each question can be found in the discussion of each question.

We have generally avoided interpreting results. As needed, we can run more complex queries to see whether additional interesting patterns or surprises emerge. If you are curious about anything and find yourself wondering how a particular group breaks down, feel free to e-mail Hastings (the results are in a database he programmed). For example, this report shows that 10 respondents charged \$30–34 for trade non-technical copyediting in 2005. What you can't see is how many years of experience those 10 people have, whether they live in the Bay Area or not, whether they have income from other sources, and so on. Based on what we've learned from this project, future surveys can be enhanced to further refine results and provide additional pertinent detail.

If you're interested in setting your rates as an editor, be sure to check out the hourly rate tables to identify what appear to be the going rates for your type of work. You'll find three separate tables for proofreading, copyediting, and developmental editing. In each of these tables, results are broken down into eight client categories across ten rate categories. Supplementary charts, as well as a combined table with averaged rates, are designed to present a more complete picture of the data.

If you're entering the editing field, you may find this survey especially helpful in considering your career direction. For example, you can get a sense of how many years of experience individuals have in various areas, what overall income levels an editor might expect, and what hourly rates you might charge for different types of editorial work.

If you're a seasoned editor, you can find information about BAEF members' practices with respect to rush charges, different marketing avenues, and pay rate increases.

Thank you very much to all the BAEF members who took the time to participate. Special thanks to Karen Asbelle for her continued guidance and support, to Bonnie Britt and David Featherstone for their input, and to Heidi Garfield, Hilary Powers, Cynthia Putnam, Nancy Riddiough, and Ellen Rosenzweig for making phone calls to encourage participation and for pilot testing of the online survey.

Sincerely,

Hastings Hart and Jude Berman, Rate Survey Co-Chairs  
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# Survey Results by Question

Results are presented here in the order in which questions appeared in the survey. For open-ended questions where it helped to understand the range of responses, we have combined responses into meaningful groups; for example, years of experience are grouped into five-year increments.

## Residence

Question: "Where do you live?"

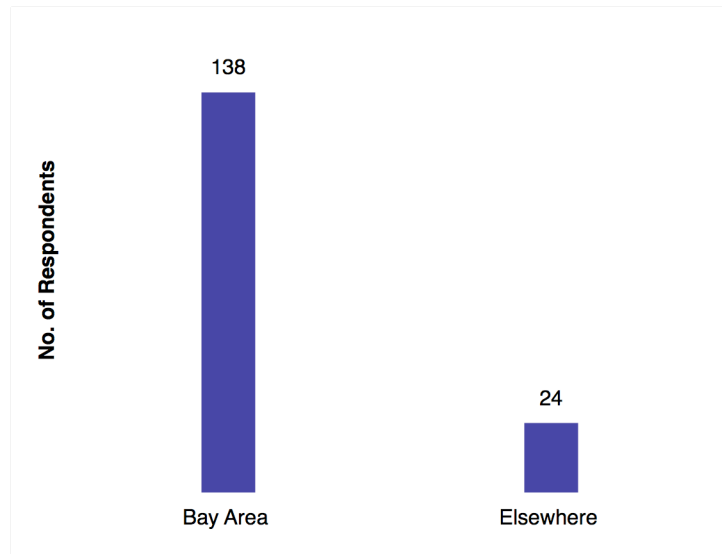


Figure 1. Residence

# Experience

To measure experience, we asked two questions:

**Question:** “How many TOTAL years of experience do you have in each of the following areas: proofreading, copyediting, and developmental editing? Include all work, full-time and freelance.”

**Question:** “How many years have you been FREELANCING in each of the following areas: proofreading, copyediting, and developmental editing? Include all freelancing, whether it was your primary source of income or not. For example, if you freelanced on the side for a year while working full-time and then did nothing but freelancing for two years after that, you have three years of freelancing experience.”

Previous BAEF surveys included additional categories, such as indexing, project management, and style guide development, though we didn’t include these categories in our survey because they drew too few responses to offer meaningful data.

## Overall Experience

Ninety-five percent of respondents reported that they have experience copyediting, 76 percent proofreading, and 70 percent developmental editing (see Figure 2). Of course, these percentages sum to well over 100 percent because most people surveyed reported experience in more than one type of editing. There were very few members who reported having experience in only one type of activity: 0 responses for proofreading only, 9 responses for copyediting only, and 4 responses for developmental editing only.

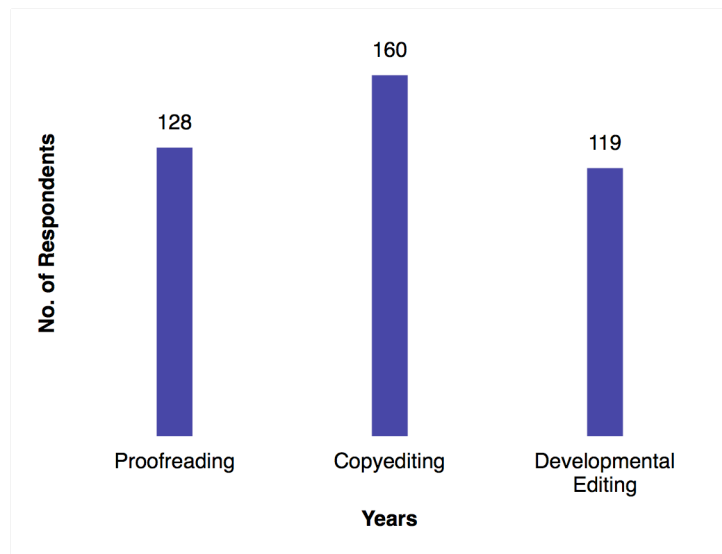


Figure 2. Overall Experience

## Proofreading Experience

The 128 respondents with overall proofreading experience reported an average of 12 years of experience (see Figure 3). The largest group (23 percent) had 1–5 years of experience; however, the second-largest group (17 percent) had 21–25 years of experience.

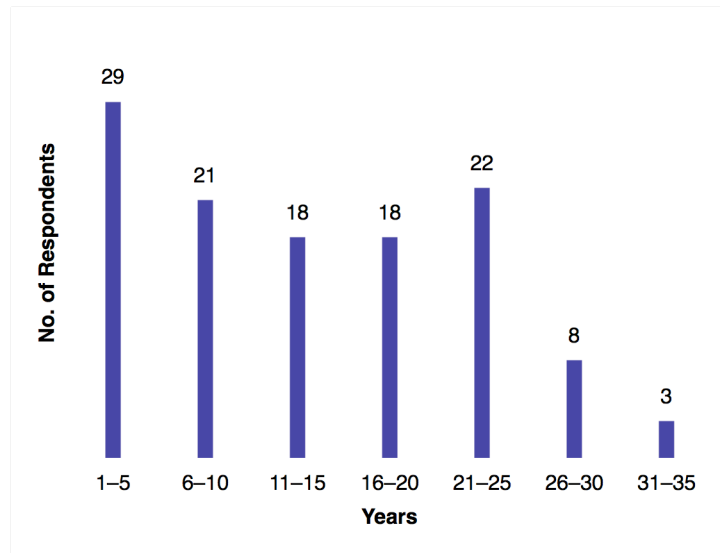


Figure 3. Total Years of Proofreading Experience

The 112 respondents with freelance proofreading experience reported an average of 7 years of freelance experience (see Figure 4). By far, the largest group (42 percent) had 1–5 years of freelance experience; 12 percent had more than 20 years of freelance experience.

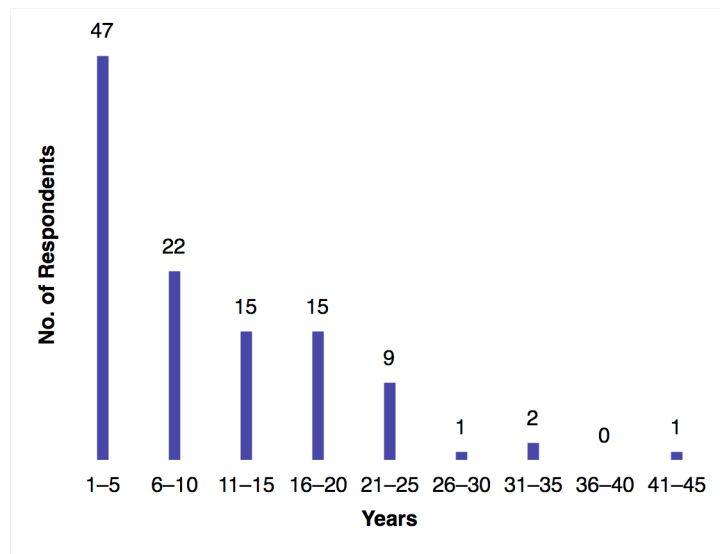


Figure 4. Freelance Proofreading Experience

## Copyediting Experience

The 160 respondents with overall copyediting experience reported an average of 15 years of experience (see Figure 5). Respondents were fairly evenly divided across five-year intervals up to 25 years. Copyediting experience was one of the few areas where those with 1–5 years of experience did not comprise the largest group.

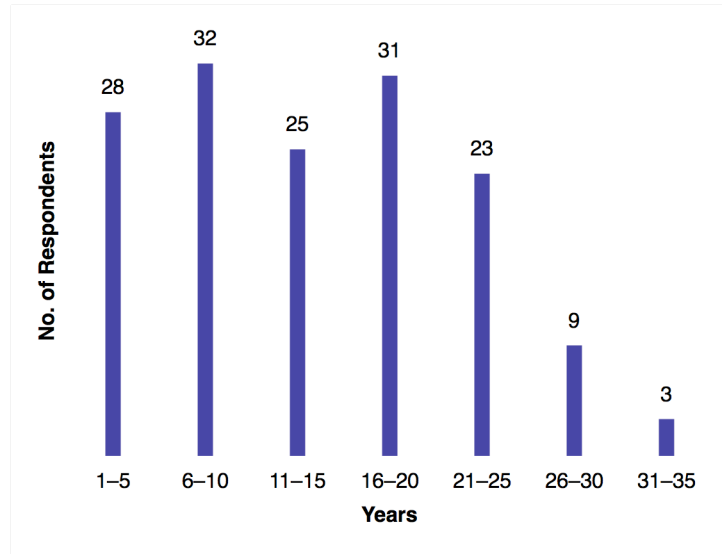


Figure 5. Total Years of Copyediting Experience

The 145 respondents with freelance copyediting experience reported an average of 9 years of experience (see Figure 6). By far, the largest group (42 percent) had 1–5 years of experience; 11 percent had more than 20 years of experience.

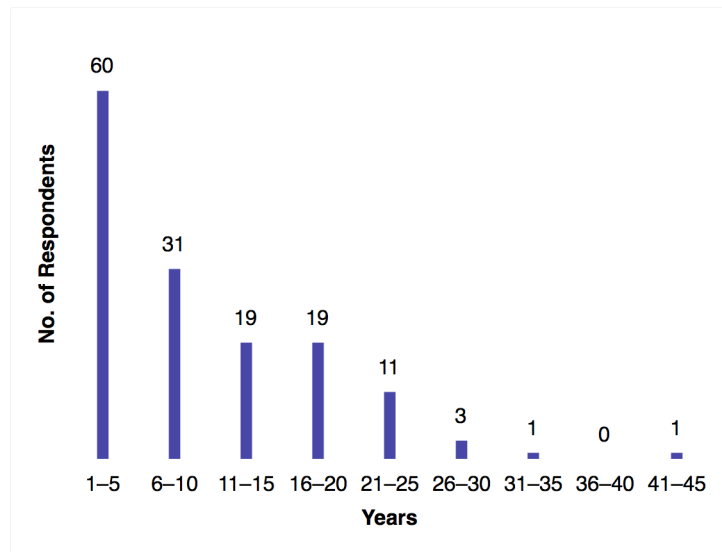


Figure 6. Freelance Copyediting Experience

## Developmental Editing Experience

The 119 respondents with overall developmental editing experience reported an average of 8 years of experience (see Figure 7). The majority (60 percent) had 1–10 years of experience; 14 percent had more than 20 years of experience.

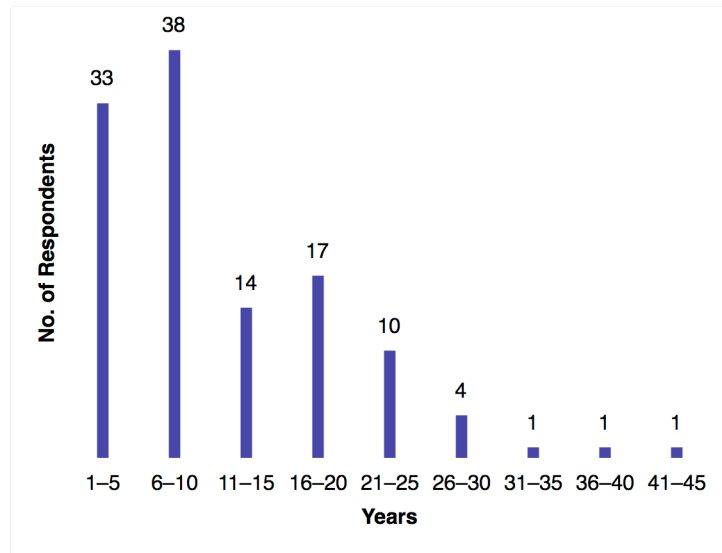


Figure 7. Total Years of Developmental Editing Experience

The 94 respondents with freelance developmental editing experience reported an average of 5 years of experience (see Figure 8). The vast majority (71 percent) had 1–10 years of experience; 10 percent had more than 20 years of experience.

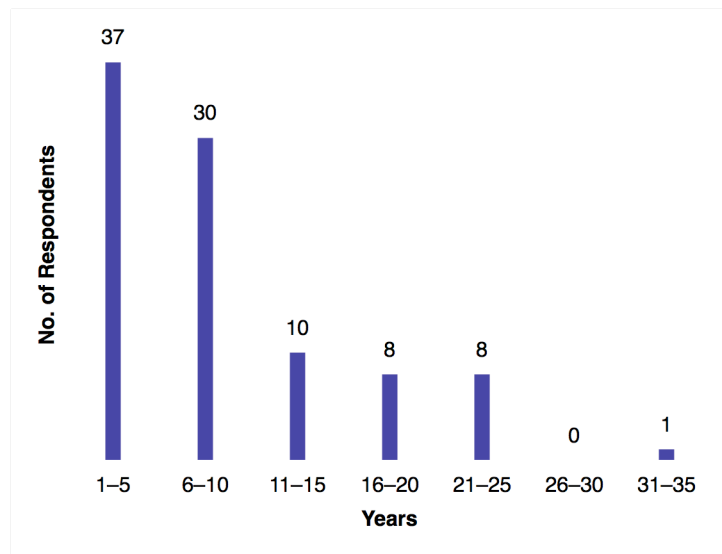


Figure 8. Freelance Developmental Editing



# Income

Many of our members receive additional income from non-editing activities, so our intent was to assess what kind of a living one can earn from editing, and to compare the differences between freelance and staff income levels. We asked two questions:

**Question:** “What do you estimate will be your total INDIVIDUAL gross income for 2005? Include income from all activities, whether editing-related or not.”

**Question:** “Of your estimated gross income for 2005, what percentage do you estimate will come from each source? (Please be sure the percentages add up to 100.)” The seven choices were proofreading, copyediting, and developmental editing, as either staff or freelance, plus other sources.

## Total Income

We asked respondents to place themselves within an income range, in increments of \$10,000. By then averaging each range, we determined that the average individual gross income of the 161 members who answered this question is \$46,800. The majority (58 percent) earned under \$50,000 (see Figure 9).

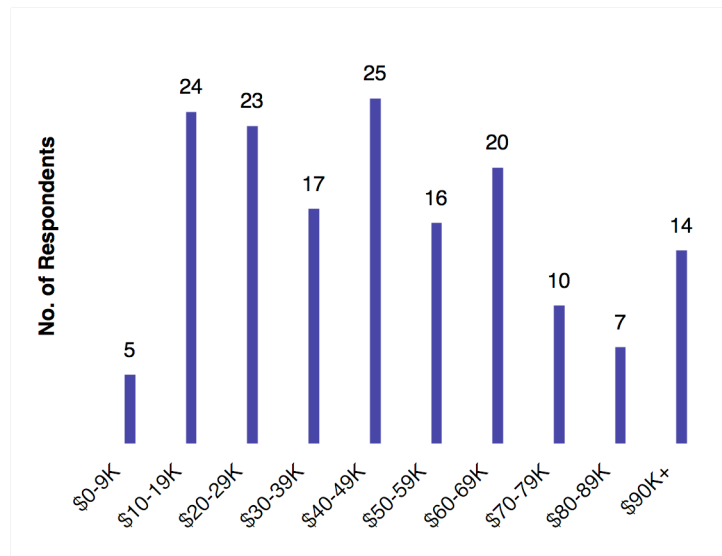


Figure 9. Total Income (Editing and Non-Editing Activities)

## Income from Editing Activities

Most BAEF members earn income from a combination of proofing, copyediting, and developmental editing, and possibly a combination of staff and freelance sources of work. In this question, income reported from multiple job categories does not necessarily reflect different hourly rates.

In each of the seven source categories, the largest percentage of respondents reported that they earned 10 percent or less of their total income from that source (see Table 1). The majority of those who performed staff or freelance proofreading or freelance developmental editing said that they earned 20 percent or less of their income from those sources.

As might be expected, those with staff incomes appeared more likely to depend on a single source of income than did those with freelance sources of income. Only in the case of staff copyediting and staff developmental editing did more than 20 percent of respondents say they derived more than 80 percent of their income from that source. (Results for the “other” category are not discussed in this report.)

*Table 1. Income from Editing Activities*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>1–10%</b>	<b>11–20%</b>	<b>21–30%</b>	<b>31–40%</b>	<b>41–50%</b>	<b>51–60%</b>	<b>61–70%</b>	<b>71–80%</b>	<b>81–90%</b>	<b>91–100%</b>
<b>Staff position</b>											
Proofreading	27	15	1	5	2	1	1	0	0	0	2
Copyediting	43	10	5	5	3	6	1	2	1	4	6
Dev. editing	29	7	2	5	3	5	1	0	0	1	5
<b>Freelance</b>											
Proofreading	63	32	12	7	5	1	1	2	1	1	1
Copyediting	114	35	12	20	11	8	4	4	8	2	2
Dev. editing	73	30	14	5	4	5	5	1	1	2	6

## Freelance Hourly Rates

An important aspect of this survey was its focus on the hourly rates various freelance editors charge for different types of jobs. Rates were reported separately by proofreaders, copyeditors, and developmental editors.

In addition to presenting rate tables, we have calculated average hourly rates for the respective groups (see Table 2). Because survey responses were in terms of dollar ranges, the averages are also given as ranges. For the number of responses for each average, see Tables 3–5. For example, the average proofreading rate of \$35–39 for corporate non-technical material was calculated from 39 responses.

*Table 2. Average Hourly Rates*

<b>Type of material</b>	<b>Proofreading</b>	<b>Copyediting</b>	<b>Dev. editing</b>
Corporate non-technical	\$35–39	\$40–44	\$45–49
Corporate technical	\$35–39	\$50–59	\$50–54
Trade non-technical	\$30–34	\$35–39	\$45–49
Trade technical	\$30–34	\$35–39	\$40–44
Academic	\$20–29	\$30–34	\$40–44
Journalism	\$20–29	\$30–34	\$40–44
Individual	\$30–34	\$35–39	\$45–49
Non-profit	\$30–34	\$35–39	\$45–49

## Freelance Proofreading Rates

**Question:** “For each applicable freelance PROOFREADING activity, what average hourly rate did you receive in 2005?”

*Table 3. Freelance Proofreading Rates*

	Corp. non- tech.	Corp. tech	Trade non- tech.	Trade tech.	Academic	Journalism	Individual	Non-profit
<\$20	3	2	6	4	7	7	6	9
\$20–29	11	8	13	10	18	6	8	9
\$30–34	5	1	5	1	1	2	3	3
\$35–39	5	6	5	2	4	4	2	3
\$40–44	4	2		4		1	1	1
\$45–49	4	2	1	2	2		2	1
\$50–59	3	3	3	2			3	2
\$60–79	2	5			1			1
\$80–99	1	1						
Total	39	31	33	25	33	20	25	29

## Freelance Copyediting Rates

**Question:** “For each applicable freelance COPYEDITING activity, what average hourly rate did you receive in 2005?”

*Table 4. Freelance Copyediting Rates*

	Corp. non- tech.	Corp. tech	Trade non- tech.	Trade tech.	Academic	Journalism	Individual	Non-profit
<\$20	4	1	5	2	5	5	4	6
\$20–29	5	6	9	6	21	8	10	8
\$30–34	3		10	2	7	5	5	8
\$35–39	7	4	9	3	4	4	7	6
\$40–44	7	6	8	6	2	2	8	2
\$45–49	6	6	2	4	5	1	7	4
\$50–59	9	8	3	3		1	8	3
\$60–79	3	14	2	2	2		2	3
\$80–99		1						
Total	45	47	48	28	46	26	52	40

## Freelance Developmental Editing Rates

**Question:** “For each applicable freelance DEVELOPMENTAL EDITING activity, what average hourly rate did you receive in 2005?”

Table 5. Freelance Developmental Editing Rates

	Corp. non-tech.	Corp. tech.	Trade non-tech.	Trade tech.	Academic	Journalism	Individual	Non-profit
<\$30	4	1	3	2	8	2	7	4
\$30–39	1	2	4	4	8	1	2	5
\$40–44	2	1	5	1			6	2
\$45–49	3	5	4	2	4	1	6	2
\$50–54	1	3	3	1	6		11	2
\$55–59	1	1	1				3	1
\$60–69	3	3	3	2	1		1	1
\$70–89	1	6				1	5	2
\$90–109								1
Total	17	23	23	12	27	5	41	20

## Rush Charges

**Question:** “Did you receive more for rush jobs in 2005?”

The first question was answered by 141 individuals (a response rate of 83 percent). Fifty percent said they never charged more for rush jobs in 2005 (see Figure 10). Only 18 percent said they always or usually did so. It is possible that a portion of respondents selected “never” to indicate that they had no rush jobs rather than to indicate that they did not charge extra for rush jobs.

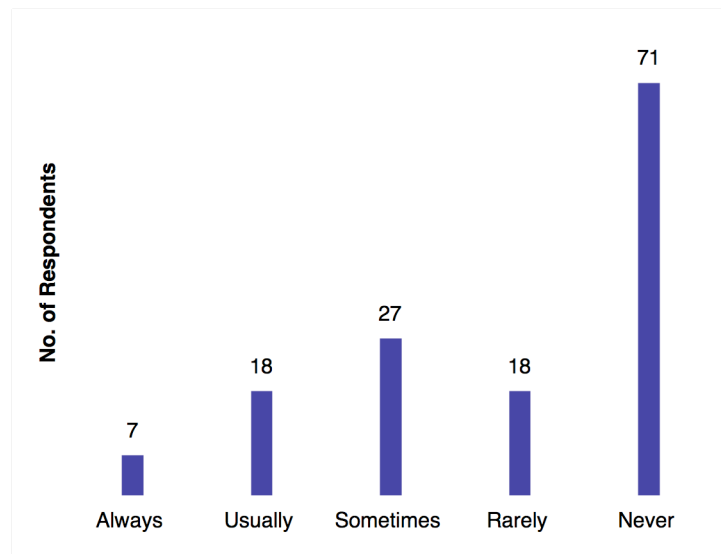


Figure 10. Frequency of Rush Charges

**Question:** “If you received more for rush jobs, what percentage more?”

The second question was answered by 56 individuals (80 percent of those who indicated they would or might charge for a rush; see Figure 11). The vast majority (70 percent) said they charged 25 percent more for a rush.

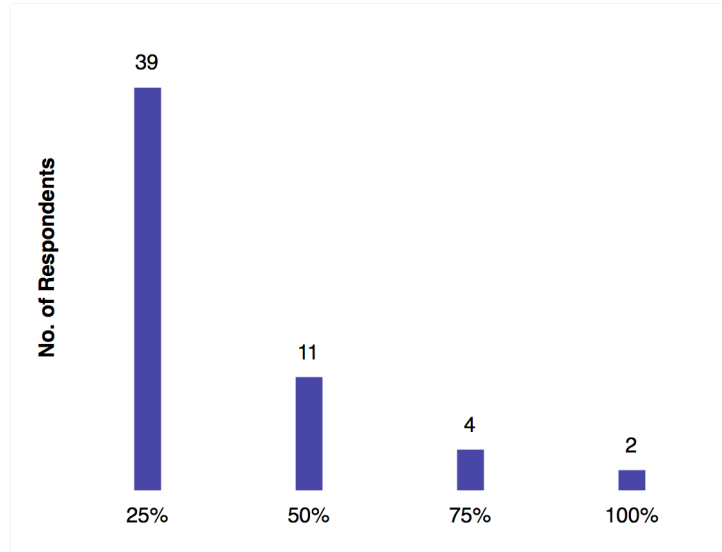


Figure 11. Rush Charge Percentage

## Freelance Rate Change

**Question:** “How have your rates changed since 2004?”

Among the 114 people who responded to this question, the largest percentage (47 percent) said their rates had stayed the same (see Figure 12). Among the 50 percent of respondents who had raised their rates, most (54 percent) raised them between 1 and 10 percent.

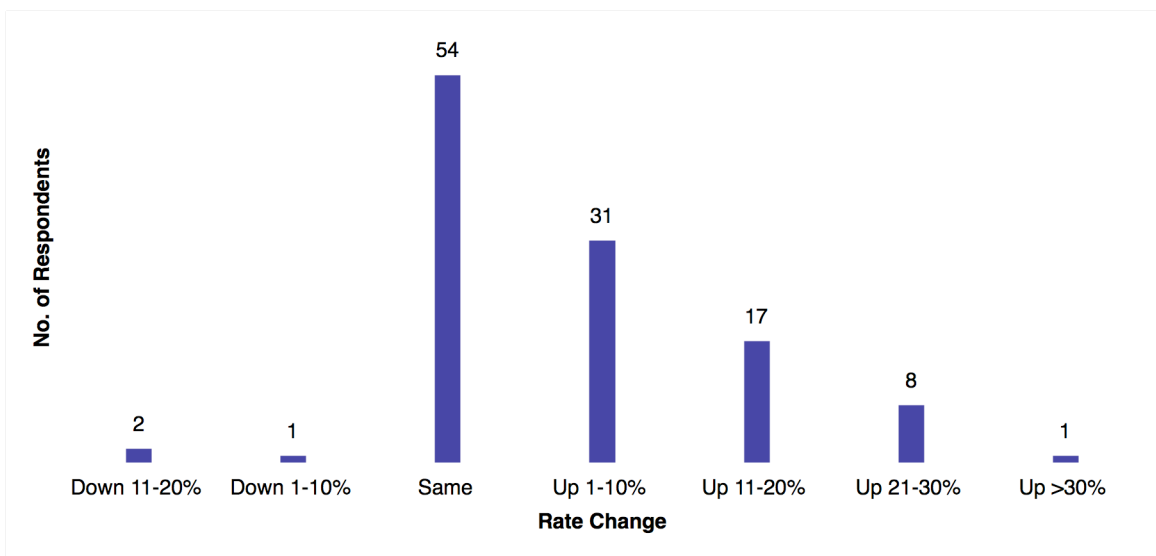


Figure 12. Percentage of Rate Change

## Number of Clients

**Question:** “How many separate clients did you work for in 2005?”

Among the 147 people who responded to this question, the largest percentage worked with five clients, and the next largest percentage with 10 or more clients (see Figure 13).

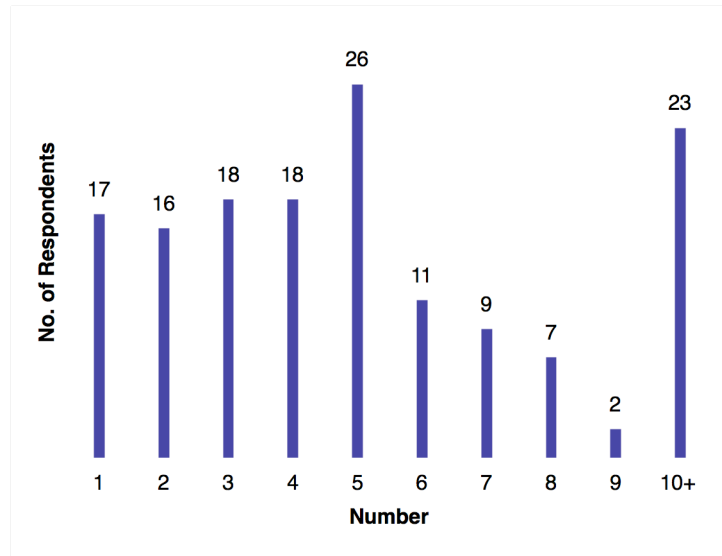


Figure 13. Number of Separate Clients

## Contracts

**Question:** “How often do you work under each of the following types of contracts?”

The largest number of respondents cited use of the client’s contract, and the majority of this group said they usually or always used a client’s contract. Second-most popular was an informal agreement; 51 percent of respondents who mentioned this type of contract usually or always used it.

Table 6. Frequency of Contract Types

Type of contract	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
Your contract	8	14	26	22	18	88
Client’s contract	17	44	36	15	4	116
Informal agreement	10	45	34	16	2	107
No contract	4	6	10	15	26	61

# Marketing

To measure the level and effectiveness of individual marketing activities, we asked two questions:

**Question:** “How many inquiries did you receive from the following sources in 2005?”

**Question:** "Out of the number of inquiries in the previous question, how many became clients?"

## Sources of Inquiries

The sources of inquiries about potential jobs are listed in the order of frequency of mention, both in terms of numbers of respondents citing that source and the total number of inquiries reported. The exception is the “other” category, which has been placed last.

Respondents reported receiving the greatest number of potential job inquiries through referrals from personal contacts, followed by referrals from clients. Inquiries through the BAEF Web site ranked third.

*Table 7. Number of Inquiries from Various Sources*

Source	No. of respondents	No. of Inquiries										Total Inq.
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Referrals from personal contacts	103	32	23	20	9	9	3	2	2		3	297
Referrals from clients	85	21	25	14	11	4	3	1	2		4	258
BAEF Web listing	61	21	17	11	4	4	2		2			158
Cover letters and resumés	41	11	14	10	2			1	1		2	112
Agencies or recruiters	25	8	6	2	2	1	1		1		4	93
Networking events	23	9	8	3	1	2						48
Personal Web site	12	3	2	2	2	1					2	46
Advertising	12	7	1	1	1		1				1	32
Phone calls	11	3	4		1	2		1				32
Other	28	9	5	4	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	93



## New Clients Resulting from Inquiries

In Table 8, the sources of new clients are listed in order of total number of new clients reported. The “other” category has been placed last.

Respondents reported receiving the greatest number of new clients through referrals from personal contacts, followed by referrals from existing clients. New clients through the BAEF Web site ranked a distant third, both in terms of numbers of respondents reporting results and total numbers of new clients.

*Table 8. Number of New Clients*

Source	No. of respondents	No. of New Clients										Total Clients	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
Referrals from personal contacts	82	41	20	15	1	1	3	1					160
Referrals from clients	65	27	18	11	4	4	1	3					159
BAEF Web listing	26	16	7	2		1							41
Agencies or recruiters	12	5	1		3	2					1		39
Cover letters and resumés	26	17	8		1								26
Advertising	9	7		1								1	20
Networking events	10	5	4		1								17
Personal Web site	5	2	1	1								1	17
Phone calls	8	3	4	1									14
Other	16	4	8	4									32

## Inquiry Success Rate

Data from the two previous questions were combined to calculate a success rate (for converting a potential job inquiry to a new client) for each of the sources of inquiries (see Figure 14). Sources yielding the highest percentages of new clients were advertising and client referrals. For example, respondents reported receiving a total of 258 inquiries from client referrals, which yielded a total of 159 new clients (62 percent conversion).

Two of the three sources with the lowest success rates were related to the Web: personal Web site (37 percent conversion) and BAEF site (26 percent conversion). A low rate of conversions of inquiries from the BAEF Web site should be considered in light of the predictable volume of inquiries members may deem unsuitable or undesirable to pursue, as with any Web site that attracts a wide range of inquiries.

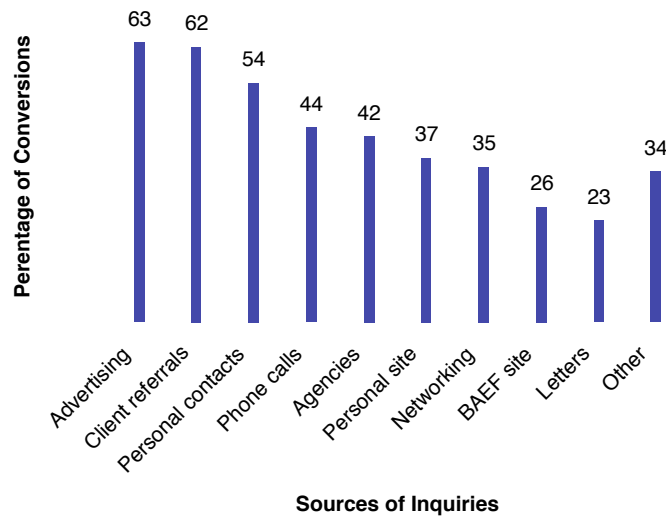


Figure 14. Inquiry Success Rate

## About the Forum

The Bay Area Editors' Forum is an association of freelance and in-house editors who work in a variety of publishing and publications settings. We help members strengthen their skills, make new contacts, and increase their awareness of professional opportunities. We help employers find just the right editor by offering an online directory in which members can promote their range of professional editing services.

For additional information about our organization, or to learn how to join BAEF, please visit our Web site, [www.editorsforum.org](http://www.editorsforum.org).