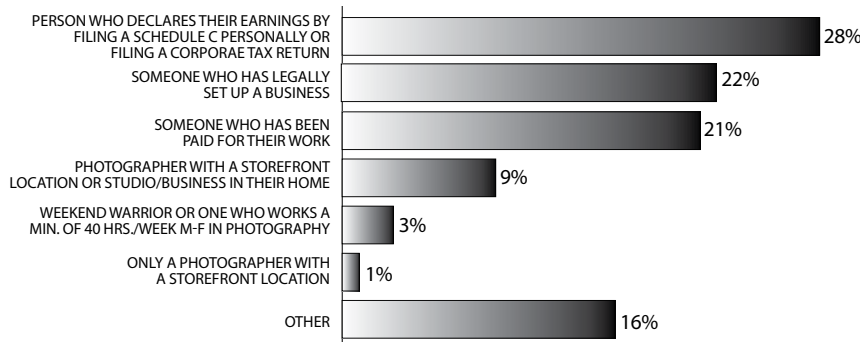


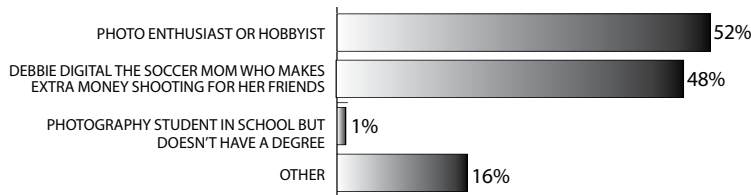
Professional Photographer or Wannabe?

This month's Peer2Peer question focuses on photographer wannabes. We've asked this question in the past, and it garnered a great deal of controversy. We at Studio Photography define a professional photographer as a person who makes a living at the craft of taking photos, whether in a studio that's open 5-7 days a week, or a "weekend warrior" who is either beginning their own business or working for others, in addition to a full-time job. A pro has had some degree of formal training and work experience, and has a business set up, including a resale certificate and/or other legal designations of a business. What we define as a photographer wannabe is the Generation-X mom with her new DSLR, going around the neighborhood and taking photos of her friends' children, or the Soccer dad who shoots thousands of photos at each of his children's games—and who may be making a little money off his newfound talents, but who hasn't invested by opening an actual business or studio. These are the folks who, like everyone's Uncle Harry at the last wedding or other event you covered, push their way in while you're busily composing formals to snap a few frames. These are the people who are taking sales from the "professional photographer." Our survey was sent out the third week of January; with over 1,700 respondents, most were eager to weigh in on the professional/non-professional debate.

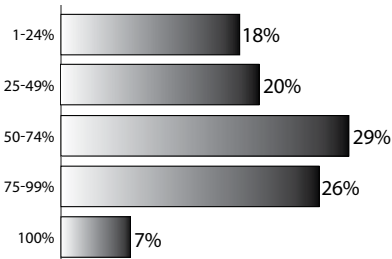
1. What do you define as a "professional photographer?"



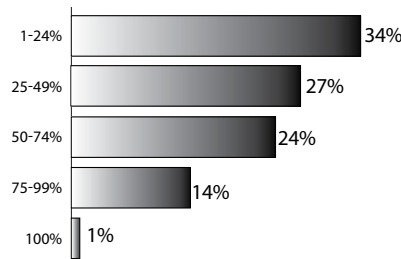
2. Who do you consider a non-professional?



3. What percentage of your competitors are pro photographers?



4. What percentage of your competitors are non-pros?



OBSERVATIONS

- Of the 1,700 who responded to our survey, 28% agree that a professional photographer is someone who declares their earnings from photography by filing a Schedule C personally, or filing a corporate tax return; a slight majority over the 22% who categorize a professional as someone who has legally set up a business.
- Almost a dead heat, 52% consider a non-professional a photo enthusiast or hobbyist, whereas 48% give the non-professional name to "Debbie Digital" the soccer mom who makes extra money shooting for her friends.
- More than half of our respondents (57%) say the biggest advantage of going to a professional photographer is higher quality work.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

"I don't think there's anything...the 'industry' can do because the truth is there are all too many areas in which a good amateur shot will suffice. You can't turn back the clock to the days when a photographer was considered a...magician. The onus falls upon individual photographers to develop skill and deliver consistent results beyond the capacity of the amateur/enthusiast to deliver to the client. It isn't easy!"
 Alan Perlman, Alan Perlman Photography, New York, NY

"Professionals need to raise their photographic standards. Professionals should be expected to produce results regardless of the individual circumstances handed to them on the shoot day, such as weather and location. How you deal with the reality of a situation is what separates the pros from the non-pros; reacting is a huge part of the equation."

Doug Scaletta, Doug Scaletta Photography, Inc., Orlando FL

"We have to educate the public about what the advantages and disadvantages are of using a pro vs. a non-pro for their important photos. I think it's more about the service and quality of the finished product."

Scott W. McClure, Casual Photography Studio & Gallery, Dardanelle, AR

"If the average consumer were more knowledgeable about the cost of doing business they'd understand why we must charge what we charge. A pro offers guaranteed results, while the 'weekend warrior' gets lucky, and that luck is what they use as an example of their work. Then clients think they will get the 'lucky' results as well. So do you place your money on luck or a sure thing? Most people want the sure thing, but only want to pay for a chance at luck."

Vonda Hussey, Photography by Vonda, Dallas, TX

"The most effective way to promote pro photographic services vs. non- or semi-pro is a concerted, cooperative advertising campaign between organizations such as PPA and WPPI. It should contrast the high quality of professional work against the unknown quality of non-pros."

Chris Heldenbrand, Visuality Photography, Oklahoma City, OK