

# Translators' Work-Related Quality of Life

Survey  
Report  
2025

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with

The Institute of Translation  
and Interpreting (ITI)

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## Table of contents

Executive summary .....	3
Introduction.....	4
The Questionnaire .....	5
Data Analysis.....	5
Findings .....	6
Conclusion.....	25
Recommendations.....	25

## Executive summary

The 2024 Translator Work-Related Quality of Life (T-QRWoL) survey asked ITI members about various aspects of their working lives as professional translators. The survey aimed to measure the levels of their work satisfaction and career motivation and also to identify the elements influencing them. The survey received 381 valid responses from ITI members from across different membership categories.

- Respondents' general quality of working life (T-WRQoL) and work satisfaction (T-SAT) were found to be moderately high.
- When compared with the benchmark scores of UK academic staff, our respondents' T-WRQoL scores were higher on most aspects.
- However, not all aspects recorded high scores. *Control at work, career success and sustainability and perceived utility of machine translation (MT)* scored on average lower than neutral scores.
- Five attributes (gender, country, proportion of direct clients, age and professional experience) were found to affect the quality of their working lives.
- The amount of machine translation post-editing (MTPE) work respondents undertake was found to relate **positively** to two aspects of their working lives: *engagement with MTPE* and *enjoyment gained from MTPE*.
- On the other hand, the amount of MTPE work respondents undertake was found to relate **negatively** to seven aspects of their working lives: *job fit, work provider engagement, control at work, professional network, general wellbeing, overall translator work satisfaction* and *perceived fairness of pay*.
- The majority (66%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would stay in the profession for at least 5 years.
- Higher work-related quality of life and satisfaction were, not surprisingly, related positively to their 5-year career motivation. However, MTPE-related factors were not predictors of their intention to stay in the profession for the long term.
- In contrast to the positive figures about their intention to stay in the profession, some very pessimistic sentiments were observed in their narrative answers, indicating that some translators are seriously considering leaving the profession soon due to insufficient workload caused by the emerging influence from artificial intelligence (AI).

## Introduction

Language translation is a fast-growing industry with a market size of USD 31.70 billion as of 2025.<sup>1</sup> To support this growth, a skilled and motivated translator workforce is vital. Yet, it has been widely reported,<sup>2</sup> and also as translators themselves are keenly aware, that translators are not necessarily benefiting from this growth, and are experiencing deteriorating working conditions, including lower translation rates and intensified time pressure for delivery. It is our utmost concern that the current industry trends may result in a shortage of skilled translators in the near future, which will seriously impact the sustainability of a healthy and high-quality language industry.

In this context, it is essential to find out how translators feel about their working lives and whether they are motivated to work in the industry for the long term. This is the reason why this Translator Work-Related Quality of Life (T-WRQoL) survey was carried out with support from the ITI in summer 2024. Using a series of questions about their working lives, we aimed to answer the following questions:

**(Q1) To what extent are the ITI members satisfied with their working lives as a translator?**

**(Q2) What factors are influencing the ITI members' work satisfaction, motivation and other aspects of their work?**

**(Q3) How is machine translation post-editing (MTPE) affecting ITI members' working lives?**

**(Q4) How likely are ITI members to stay in the profession for at least the next 5 years? What kind of members are more likely to leave the profession?**

The main aim of the study is not just to measure translators' work satisfaction and motivation levels, but also to investigate what factors are influencing them, using various statistical methods. We are particularly interested in the impact of (1) translators' personal and professional attributes on their work satisfaction and motivations, and (2) the use of translation technologies, particularly the practice of MTPE, on their work satisfaction and motivation. These examinations will help us to understand the complexity of translators' working lives and will suggest some ways of solving the issues that are keenly felt by translators in the current translation industry.

In addition, our aim is to repeat this survey periodically so that the results may be compared chronologically. This will allow us to observe the changes taking place in translators' working lives. The results will then inform the stakeholders in the translation industry, including language service providers (LSPs), for their business planning, as well as professional bodies such as the ITI with policy making and CPD/training agenda setting.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://slator.com/slator-2025-language-industry-market-report/>

<sup>2</sup> This academic journal issue extensively covers recent topics about translators' work satisfaction: Ruokonen, M., Svahn, E., & Heino, A. (Eds.). (2024). Translators' and interpreters' job satisfaction [Special issue]. *Translation Spaces*, 13(1) 1–6.

## The Questionnaire

An online questionnaire survey was carried out between 15 August and 16 September 2024. The questionnaire was developed through a series of translator consultations and two pilot studies, which were conducted prior to this main study.<sup>3</sup> All ITI members (2762 members) were invited to take part in the questionnaire. We received 495 responses (a response rate of 17.9%), of whom 410 had provided all answers to all 60 main questions and all 5 of the main demographic questions. Although this questionnaire was originally aimed at both freelance and in-house translators, only 12 of them worked exclusively as in-house translators. As the small number of in-house translators means the data will not produce statistically valid results for in-house translators, we decided to remove the responses from in-house translators from the sample. It was also discovered that 17 responses were answered by non-ITI members, which were therefore removed from the analysis for the purpose of this report. The findings below come from the remaining 381 responses.

The questionnaire consisted of sixty 5-point Likert style questions examining the quality of working life, wellbeing, work satisfaction, career motivation and other important aspects of the working lives of ITI members. The respondents were asked to read a series of statements (e.g., “I enjoy my work”) and choose one answer from either ‘Strongly disagree’, ‘Disagree’, ‘Neutral’, ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly agree’ for each statement. In addition, 17 questions asked demographic and other work-related questions, such as hours and years worked and the types of translation undertaken (e.g., post-editing work). Finally, an open question was asked to find what elements the respondents think are important for their working life.

## Data Analysis

The purpose of this study is not just to present descriptive results of each question asked in the survey, but also to examine the relationships between the answers obtained from the survey. We used two statistical methods for this purpose:<sup>4</sup>

- 1) We compared the results of some key questions between various respondent groups formulated by their personal and professional attributes. This was done where the attributes are measured in nominal categories, such as gender or ITI membership status.
- 2) We also examined the correlational relationships between the results of different key questions where the data are measured in numbers (such as age). A correlational relationship is one where the scores in one measure appears to increase or decrease in relation to another measure. For example, age and experience would be a positive correlational relationship (generally as one rises, so does the other), whilst age and willingness to adopt new technology are likely to negatively correlated (generally as one rise, the other reduces).

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<sup>3</sup> Nine translators took part in the translator consultations, which enabled us to create a draft questionnaire. Seventy-seven ITI members took part in the first pilot study conducted in spring 2023, and 341 ITI members took part in the second pilot study in autumn 2023. These consultations and pilot studies enabled us to create this scientifically robust main questionnaire. **We would like to thank all the ITI members who contributed to this important process of this study.**

<sup>4</sup> For readers who are interested in statistics, for 1) we used a statistical test called t-test and ANOVA; and for 2) Pearson’s correlation analysis.

# Findings

## Respondents' demographic profiles

The questionnaire asked 17 questions about the respondents' personal and professional profiles. The following are the demographic and professional profiles of the 381 responses who provided valid answers to the demographic section of the survey.

### Age

The average age was 54.4 years, ranging from 26 to 91 years. The 60+ age group is notably large at 29%. In the UK, workers aged 60 and older make up approximately 10% of the national labour market.

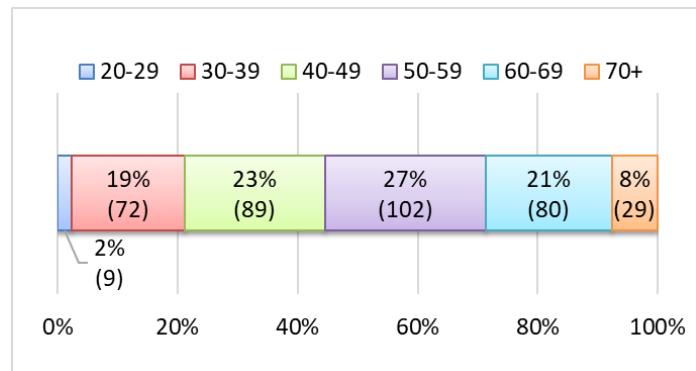


Figure 1 Age

### Gender

As expected in this industry, the majority of the respondents were female at 76.4%.

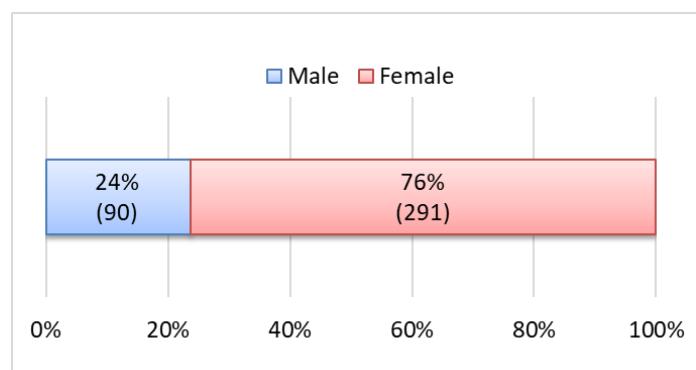


Figure 2 Gender

### ITI Membership

The majority (65%) held an MITI membership status. There was only one student member, who was included in the Affiliate group to avoid any statistical problems.

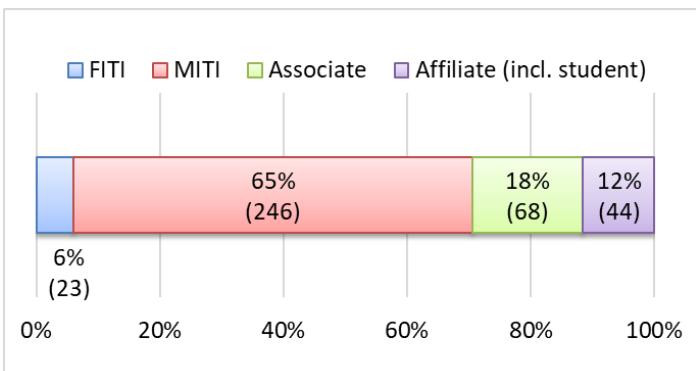


Figure 3 ITI membership

## Academic qualifications

The majority (60%) of the respondents held a master's degree.

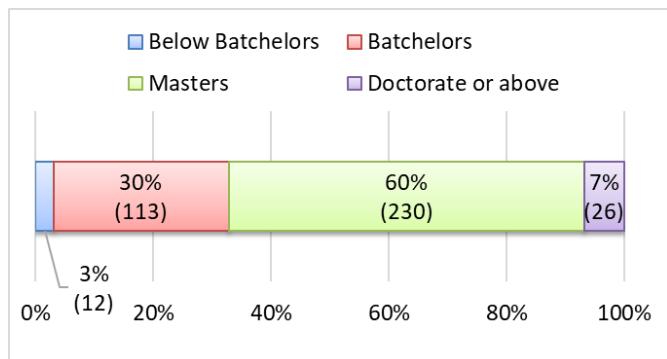


Figure 4 Academic qualifications

## Translation Studies degree

More than half of the respondents (58%) held a degree in Translation Studies.

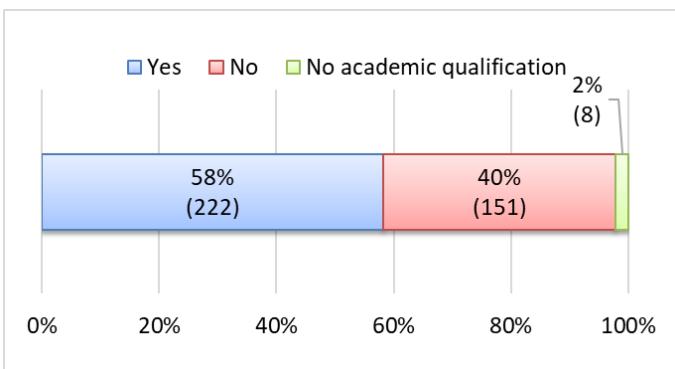


Figure 5 Translation Studies degree

## Professional experience

Respondents' professional experience in the translation industry ranged from 0 (meaning less than one year) to 60 years. The mean value was 20.4 years.

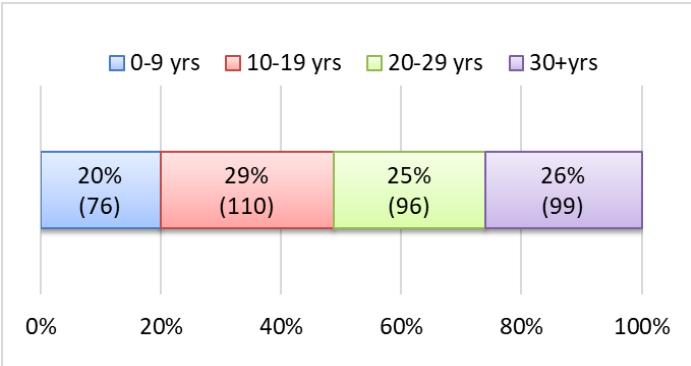


Figure 6 Professional experience

## Average working hours per week

It ranged from 1 to 80 (there were 5 no-answers), with the average of 26.7 hours.

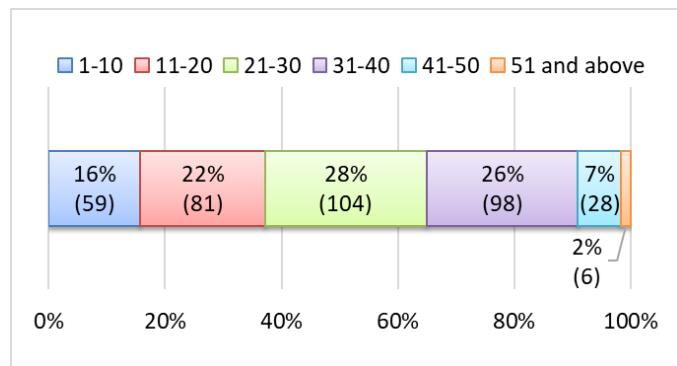


Figure 7 Average working hours per week

## Main Source and Target Languages

We asked respondents their two main source languages and target languages. Here we report only the first source and target languages as not all respondents have two source and target languages.

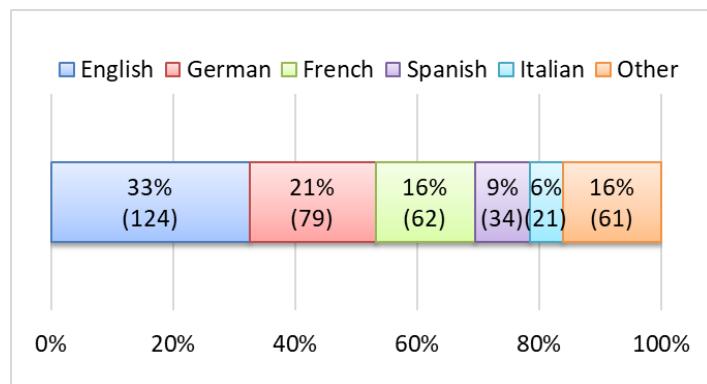


Figure 8 First source language

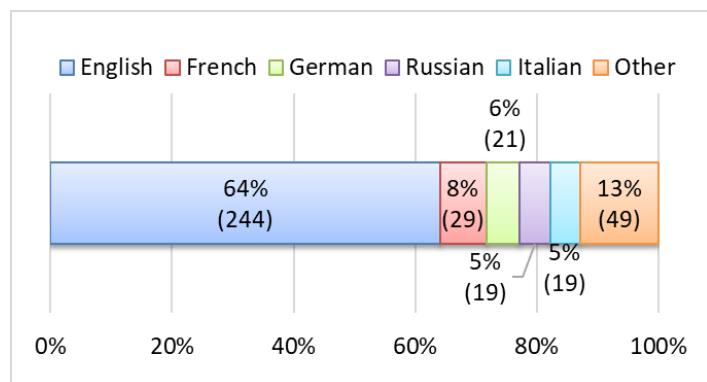


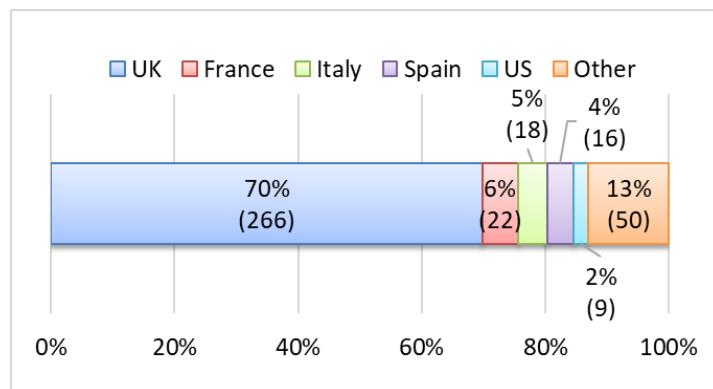
Figure 9 First target language

Other source languages: Dutch (14 counts), Japanese (10), Portuguese (6), Finnish, Swedish (4), Chinese, Danish, Russian (3), Romanian, Polish Turkish, Arabic (2), Czech, Greek (1), Not specified (4)

Other target languages: Polish (8 counts), Norwegian (6), Dutch, Romanian (5), Finnish (4), Greek, Japanese (3), Czech, Spanish (2), Catalan, Portuguese, Danish, Korean (1), Not specified (7)

## Country

Seventy percent of respondents (266) normally worked in the UK, and the rest of the respondents were based all around the world, mostly in Europe.

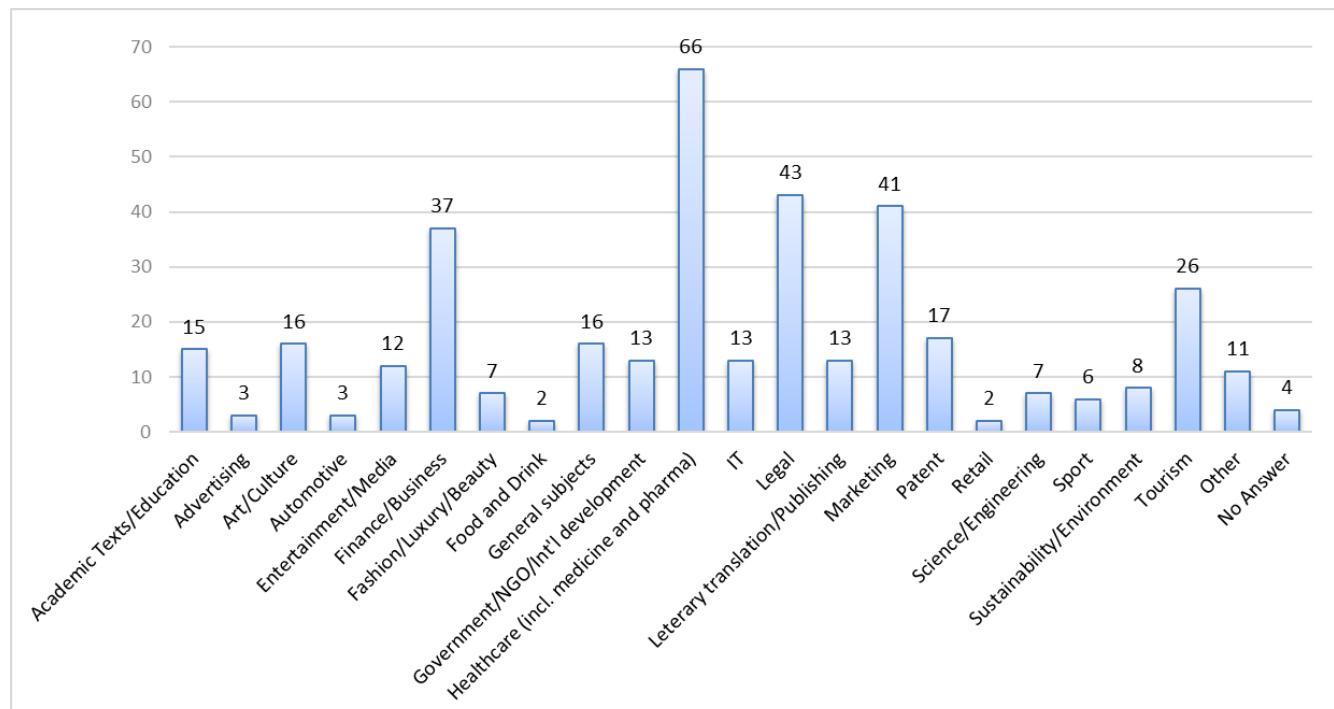


Other countries: Germany (5 counts); Portugal, Greece, Netherlands (all 4); Brazil, Denmark, Switzerland, Ireland (all 3); Australia, Romania, Sweden, Czech Republic, Poland (all 2); Austria, Canada, Columbia, Cyprus, Finland, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Ukraine, Uruguay (all 1)

**Figure 10 Country**

## Specialised areas

Healthcare was the largest area of specialisation among the respondents, followed by Legal and Marketing.



**Figure 11 Strongest area of specialisation**

## Proportion of work from direct clients in all translation work

About one third of respondents said more than half of their work come from direct clients. The average proportion of direct clients was 36%, lower than that from ELIA's European Language Industry Survey 2024, which reported the average rate of 41%.

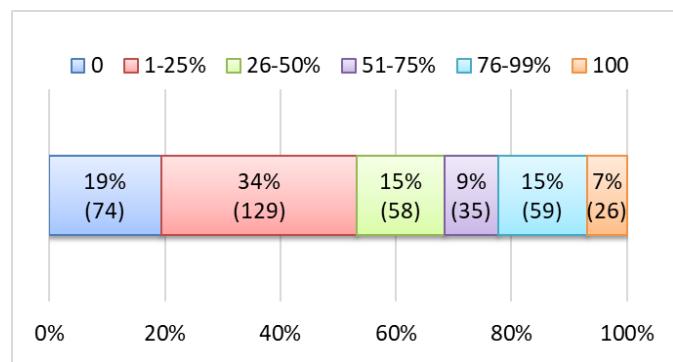


Figure 12 Proportion of work from direct clients

## (Q1) To what extent are the ITI members satisfied with their working lives as a translator?

An individual's working life is a complex notion formed by various aspects, including components directly related to the job (such as work process or pay) as well as other indirectly related elements (such as work-life balance). In this survey those wide range of aspects were measured through two broad concepts, T-WRQoL (Translator Work-Related Quality of Life) and T-SAT (Translator Satisfaction) using 43 of the 52 Likert-style questions.

### T-WRQoL

T-WRQoL is a broad concept that encompasses experiences translators have through their professional life, many of which are shared by other professions and occupations. It is assessed using a questionnaire scale that is an adapted version of the WRQoL scale, initially created to gauge the quality of working life for UK healthcare professionals and currently applied to a number of professions worldwide.<sup>5</sup>

T-WRQoL consists of six factors as shown in Table 1. We measured each factor by asking 3 to 5 questions to ensure that each factor is measured as accurately as possible.

Factor name and abbreviation	What the factor measures	No. of questions
General Wellbeing	The extent to which respondents feel happy and satisfied about their lives, including psychological wellbeing and general physical health.	5
Control at Work	The extent to which respondents feel they can exercise an appropriate level of control within their work environment.	3
Work Provider Engagement	The extent to which respondents regard their work providers (including LSPs and direct clients) as valuable parties to work with.	5
Home-Work Interface	The extent to which respondents agree that they have achieved a healthy home-work balance.	3
Stress at Work	The extent to which respondents perceive they have excessive pressures and/or feel undue levels of stress at work.	4
Working Environment	The extent to which respondents agree that they have the right tools and equipment to get their work done.	4

**Table 1 T-WRQoL factors and definitions**

The average scores of the six T-WRQoL sub-factors are shown in Table 2. In order to observe the results in a wider professional context, scores are compared with the scores obtained in the study of 3427 academic staff at nine UK universities in 2019,<sup>6</sup> which used the original WRQoL scales. The

<sup>5</sup> Easton, S., & Van Laar, D. (2018). *User manual for the work-related quality of life (WRQoL) scale second edition*. <http://www.qowl.co.uk/researchers/WRQoL> User manual 2nd Ed ebook Feb 2018 55.pdf

<sup>6</sup> Fontinha, R., Easton, S., & Van Laar, D. (2019). Overtime and quality of working life in academics and nonacademics: The role of perceived work-life balance. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 26(2), 173–183.

scores of UK academic staff were chosen as benchmark because their work can be characterised, like translation, as knowledge-based profession and they work, like translators, in a relatively flexible working time arrangement.

Factor	Translators	UK Academics
General Wellbeing	3.52	3.44
Control at Work	2.91	3.45
Work Provider Engagement	3.75	3.44
Home-Work Interface	3.76	3.55
(Absence of) <sup>†</sup> Stress at Work	3.35	3.11
Working Environment	4.09	3.61
<b>T-WRQoL (Average of the above)</b>	<b>3.58</b>	<b>3.43</b>

**Table 2 Comparison of translators' and UK academics' average T-WRQoL factor scores**

The closer the score is to 5 (the highest score), the better the quality of working life is; 3 is the neutral score and 1 is the lowest

<sup>†</sup> The Stress at Work scores are reversed so that higher scores represent lower stress levels, i.e. better wellbeing.

Table 2 shows that our respondents' scores were higher than those of UK universities' academic staff in all factors but one (Control at Work). The relatively higher scores may result from the fact that, working as freelance workers, translators can choose which work providers to work for (Work Provider Engagement), and mostly working from home, they are more able to control their work-life balance (Home-Work Interface) and feel that they work in safe environments (Working Environment). These can be understood to constitute positive aspects of their working lives. The lower stress level (Stress at Work) may derive from the fact that, being a freelancer, they have the ability to control their own work schedule such as delivery deadlines and taking holidays. On the other hand, translators perceive a quite substantially lower sense of Control at Work than academics (at 2.91 against 3.45). This may be because their position as a freelancer does not give them enough power to be sufficiently involved in the decision making about how their work is arranged and conducted.

## T-SAT

In contrast to T-WRQoL, T-SAT is a concept that reflects more translator-specific aspects of translators' working life. Table 3 shows the five factors that contribute to T-SAT and how many questions are used to measure each factor.

Factor name and abbreviation	What the factor measures	No. of questions
Career Success and Sustainability	The extent to which respondents feel they have a successful and sustainable career in translation as a translator.	4
Job Fit	The extent to which respondents feel their translation-related skills and knowledge are adequately used for the work they do.	4
Professional Network	The extent to which respondents feel that they have sufficient contacts and networking opportunities with other translators.	5
Positive Attitude about Translation Technology	The extent to which respondents are willing to adopt translation technologies in general in their work.	3
Perceived Utility of MT	The extent to which respondents feel they are benefitting from incorporating MT in their work flow.	3

**Table 3 T-SAT factors and definitions**

The average scores of the five T-SAT sub-factors are shown in Table 4. Unfortunately, there are no benchmark scores to compare these scores against, as the T-SAT scale was created specifically for this study and this is the first time it has been implemented. Future implementations of this survey will use these outcomes as a benchmark for chronological comparisons.

Factor	Average scores
Career Success and Sustainability	2.85
Job Fit	3.67
Professional Network	3.57
Positive Attitude about Translation Technology	3.58
Perceived utility of MT	2.80
<b>T-SAT (Average of the above)</b>	3.30

**Table 4 Average T-SAT factor scores**

The closer the score is to 5 (the highest score), the better the quality of working life is; 3 is the neutral score and 1 is the lowest

Table 4 shows that respondents are moderately positive about their situations regarding how their skills and experiences fit for their work (Job Fit=3.67, which is higher than the neutral score of 3) and how connected they are with the translator community (Professional Network=3.57). They are also more inclined to adopt new translation technologies in their work (Positive Attitude about Translation Technology=3.58). However, when it comes to their perceptions about machine translation (MT), the scores are less than neutral (Perceived Utility of MT=2.80). Also, they are more inclined to say their career as a translator is not sustainable (Career Success and Sustainability=2.85). The overall Translator Satisfaction (T-SAT) is higher than 3 at 3.30, however. These outcomes suggest that although respondents feel moderately positive about their work and career as a translator overall, two areas deserve attention for improvement: job security (as represented by Career Success and Sustainability) and perceptions about the utility of MT (Perceived Utility of MT).

## (Q2) What factors are influencing ITI members' work satisfaction, motivation and other aspects of their work?

### **Demographic attributes**

To answer Q2, we examined whether the factors under T-WRQoL and T-SAT have any significant differences between different demographic (attributable) groups. Two attributes were found to show a difference in the outcomes: gender and country.

#### **Gender**

Female translators tended to score higher than male translators across several areas, though the differences were moderate. Notably, women scored higher in:

- General Wellbeing: 3.57 vs. 3.35
- Work Provider Engagement: 3.80 vs. 3.56
- Home-Work Interface: 3.81 vs. 3.58
- Professional Network: 3.66 vs. 3.26
- Translator Satisfaction (T-SAT): 3.33 vs. 3.20

Note: The closer the score is to 5 (the highest score), the better the quality of working life is; 3 is the neutral score and 1 is the lowest

The most pronounced differences were in Professional Network and Work Provider Engagement, suggesting that female translators may possess stronger interpersonal and collaborative skills. These strengths could be contributing to their higher scores in these areas. Notably, male translators did not score higher than females in any of the measured factors.

#### **Country**

When participants were divided between those based in the UK and those outside, the non-UK group demonstrated higher scores in:

- Translator Satisfaction (T-SAT): 3.46 vs. 3.25
- Positive Attitude about Translation Technology: 3.71 vs. 3.51
- Control at Work: 3.08 vs. 2.84

In addition, we examined correlational relationships between the factors and demographic attributes. Three attributes showed notable correlations.

#### **Direct clients**

Respondents who have a higher proportion of direct clients scored higher (meaning they showed greater satisfaction) in the following areas:

- Control at Work
- Work Provider Engagement
- Career Success and Sustainability
- Professional Network

- Translator Satisfaction (S-SAT)

These outcomes indicate that having a large proportion of direct clients plays an important role in translators' work satisfaction.

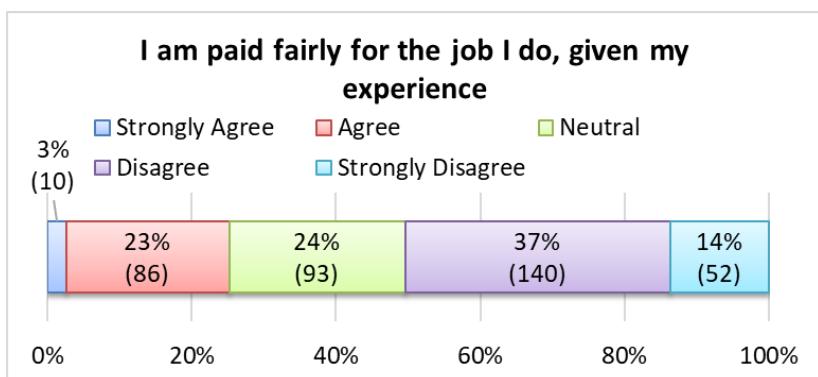
#### **Age and experience**

Both age and professional experience were associated with lower scores in the following areas:

- Professional Network
- Positive Attitude about Translation Technology

#### **Money-related work satisfaction**

Remuneration constitutes a vital element of translators' working lives. We asked respondents their perceived fairness of the payment they receive from translation work through the question item "I am paid fairly for the job I do, given my experience".



**Figure 13 Perceived fairness of pay: answer distribution**

The result shows that only just over a quarter of respondents feel that they are paid fairly for the job they do, and about half of the respondents feel they are not paid fairly. The overall mean value is **2.64**, below the neutral score of 3.00.

We examined what kind of translators feel more strongly that they are unfairly paid. Three attributes were identified: country, proportion of direct clients, and the amount of MTPE work.

### ***Country***

Respondents who live in the UK showed a lower average score compared to respondents who live outside the UK, with scores of 2.56 vs. 2.81. This may be due to factors such as economic conditions or business climates in the UK although the survey results cannot identify the specific reason.

### ***Proportion of direct clients***

The analysis shows that the more direct clients respondents have, the more they feel they are being fairly compensated for their work. This is understandable as direct clients do not normally charge project management fees like translation companies. Also, translators generally possess more leverage to discuss payment and work arrangements when engaging with direct clients. This result resonates with one of the earlier findings that respondents with more direct clients showed a higher Control at Work score.

### ***Amount of MTPE work***

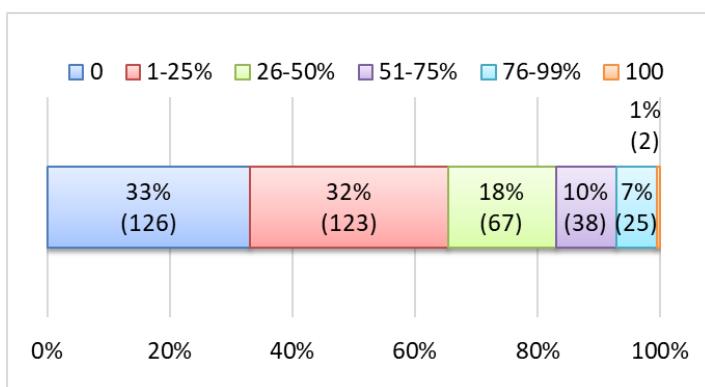
The amount of MTPE work among their overall translation work was negatively related to the perceived fairness of remuneration. As this finding is related to MTPE work, it will be further discussed in the next section.

### (Q3) How is machine translation post-editing (MTPE) affecting ITI members' working lives?

MTPE<sup>7</sup> is an important, yet controversial, practice in translation. It is important because translators are increasingly expected to raise productivity by post-editing machine-translated texts, instead of the traditional translation-from-scratch process. However, MTPE remains controversial because it is often said that lower rates for MTPE work do not always justify the effort required to do that job. As such, we measured three MTPE-related aspects of the respondents' working lives:

#### **MTPE work amount**

The question asked respondents to specify the percentage figure of the proportion of MTPE work out of all their translation work. For more than half of them (65%) MTPE work accounted for less than a quarter of their translation work, with 33% doing no MTPE work at all. Only 18% said more than half of their work consists of MTPE work. The average figure was **23.5%**.



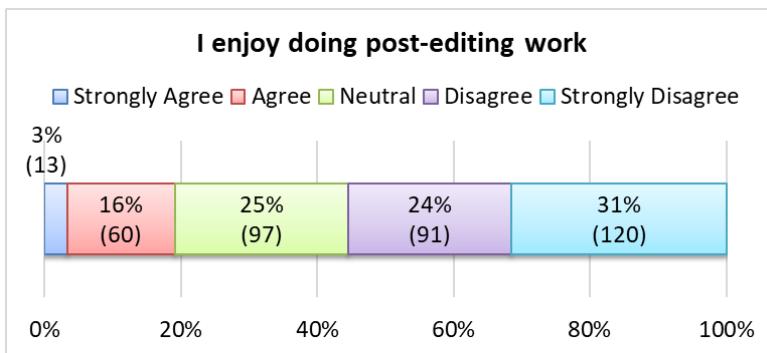
**Figure 14 MTPE work amount: answer distributions**

#### **MTPE enjoyment**

This aspect represents the level of enjoyment respondents get out of MTPE work. This aspect was measured through a question item "I enjoy doing post-editing work". The mean score across the respondents was **2.36**, which is below the neutral score of 3.

Note: The closer a score is to 5 (the highest score), the better the quality of working life is; 3 is the neutral score and 1 is the lowest.

<sup>7</sup> Since the time the survey was conducted in 2024, the use of the term 'AI translation' has become more frequent. 'AI translation', however, often includes machine translation (MT) such as neural machine translation (NMT). This study uses the term 'machine translation (MT)', as this is the term we used in the survey, but future studies will need to incorporate the term 'AI translation' with a clear definition.



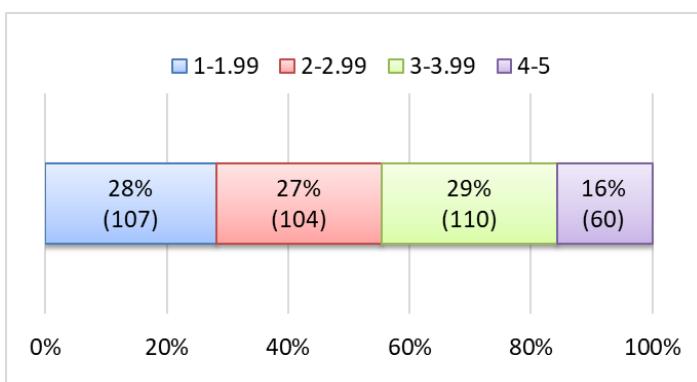
**Figure 15 MTPE work enjoyment: answer distributions**

### **MTPE work engagement**

Through the Post-Edit Work Engagement factor using three questions, we measured the extent to which respondents are willing to take on post-edit work.

Factor name and abbreviation	What the factor measures	No. of questions
Post-Edit Work Engagement	The extent to which respondents are willing to take on post-edit work.	3

Like other factors presented above, the Post-Edit Work Engagement score of 1 signifies the lowest MTPE engagement and 5 means the highest, with 3 being a neutral score (neither willing nor unwilling to engage with MTPE work). The mean value of Post-Edit Work Engagement was **2.63**, again, below the neutral score of 3.



**Figure 16 Post-Edit Work Engagement: score distributions**

### **Who is more engaged with MTPE?**

The data showed that the following demographic attributes relate to the Post-Edit Work Engagement scores.

- **ITI membership grade:** The mean Post-Edit Work Engagement score for each membership category was Fellows of the ITI (1.97), MITI (2.56), Associates (2.85) and Affiliates (3.00). It is

notable that, although Affiliates scored the highest mean score, the score remained still at 3.00, the neutral score, meaning they neither willing nor unwilling to take on MTPE work.

- **Translation Studies degree:** Translation Studies degree holders showed a higher mean Post-edit Work Engagement score compared with non-holders (2.77 vs. 2.44).
- **Areas of specialisation:** Translators who are specialised in science-based subjects showed a higher mean MTPE score than those specialised in humanities-based specialisation areas (2.88 vs. 2.50)
- **MTPE work amount:** The more MTPE work they undertook, the higher Post-Edit Work Engagement score they scored.
- **Proportion of direct clients:** The higher the proportion of direct clients, the lower the Post-Edit Work Engagement scores.
- **Professional experience:** The longer the translator experience, the lower the Post-Edit Work Engagement score. Notably, 10 years is a watershed point where respondents' willingness to take on MTPE work starts to decline

The last point seems logical. MTPE workflows started to become prevalent around 2016 when neural machine translation (NMT) became widely available (2016 is the year Google switched its MT system from statistical machine translation, or SMT, to NMT). The year 2016 is also approximately 10 years before the time of this survey. These facts suggest that new entrants to the profession in the last 10 years encountered numerous MTPE work opportunities, making them more engaged with MTPE. This result can therefore be interpreted as long-standing ITI members (10 years or more) needing some support to engage with MTPE work confidently.

### **What effects does MTPE have on translators?**

Next, we investigated the relationship between the amount of MTPE work translators undertake and the T-WRQoL and T-SAT factors, as well as the answers to other questions, in order to elucidate what aspects of the translators' working lives are most likely to be affected by MTPE work. Nine out of 13 factors were found to be significantly associated, with two positively and seven negatively.

The amount of MTPE work was found to be associated positively, i.e., with higher scores in:

- Positive Attitude about Translation Technology
- Perceived Utility of MT

This suggests that the more MTPE work translators undertake, the more positive they are about translation technologies and the benefits MT offers.

More worryingly, however, the amount of MTPE work was found to be associated negatively, i.e., with lower scores in the following areas (in descending order of association strength):

- Job Fit
- Work Provider Engagement
- Control at Work

- Translator Work-Related Quality of Life (T-WRQoL)
- Professional Network
- General Wellbeing
- Perceived fairness of pay

These results indicate that with more MTPE work, translators increasingly feel overqualified (thus find less job stimulation), have strained relationships with work providers, feel excluded from decisions on work conditions/tasks, disconnect from peers, and perceive their pay as unfair. Furthermore, the amount of PE work translators undertake appears to be influencing their overall quality of working-life, including general wellbeing.

## (Q4) How likely are ITI members to stay in the profession for at least the next 5 years? What kind of members are more likely to do so?

### Statistical analysis

In addition to observing the present snapshot of translators' working lives, it is also important to consider the future outlook of translators' attitudes about their work. For that reason, we asked respondents about their intention to stay in the profession through the question item "I tend to stay working as a translator for at least the next 5 years".

For this question, 66 % of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they will stay in the profession for at least the next 5 years. The average score for this question item was **3.75**, higher than the neutral score of 3. These results indicate that, overall, ITI members intend to stay in the profession in the long term.

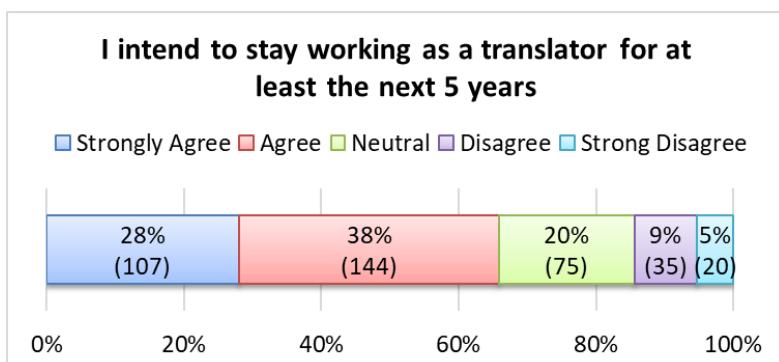


Figure 17 Career motivation: answer distributions

The data shows that the following demographic attributes relate to their intention to stay in the industry.

- **Location:** UK-based respondents' average answer was lower than that of non-UK respondents (3.64 vs. 3.99).
- **Languages:** Respondents with English as their first source language recorded a higher average score than those with languages other than English as their first source language (3.94 vs. 3.64). Also, respondents with English as their first target language recorded a lower average score than those with languages other than English as their first target language (3.62 vs. 3.96).

These results suggest that respondents who live in the UK and translate into English are more likely to leave the profession within 5 years than those in other counterpart groups. These results may suggest that the UK may have some national issues that are influencing translators' career motivations.

Next, we looked at the relationship between the 5-year career motivation score and the T-WRQoL and T-SAT factors, as well as the Post-Edit Work Engagement factor. The results showed that T-WRQoL and T-SAT and all factors belonging to them are associated with higher scores in 5-year career motivation. The top three factors that showed higher scores were Career Success and Sustainability, General Wellbeing and Control at Work. These results are not surprising because

translators who feel their career is successful and sustainable have higher wellbeing and feel they have the power to control their work will certainly want to remain in the profession for the long term. In contrast, however, the Post-Editing Work Engagement did not show any significant correlation with the 5-year career motivation. This means that respondents' level of engagement with MTPE work is not a motivator of their intention to stay in the profession.

Finally, we compared the answers for two questions: “I enjoy work” and “I enjoy doing post-editing work”. Interestingly, the answer to the question “I enjoy work” showed a positive correlation with their intention to stay in the profession, but the answer to the question “I enjoy doing post-editing work” did not show any significant relationship with their 5-year career intention. These results indicate that overall work enjoyment is a strong motivator for long-term career commitment, but enjoyment specifically of MTPE is not. This suggests, together with the outcomes above, that even if a translator enjoys doing post-editing work and is willing to take on MTPE work, that does not guarantee that the translator would stay in the profession for the long term.

The findings above show that translators' feelings and attitudes about MTPE cannot predict how the future translator workforce will be shaped and whether it will be sustainable. It would be crucial to see whether their feelings and attitudes about MTPE will develop to become a motivator for their career aspirations in the future. This would be primarily up to how the working conditions of MTPE develop, i.e., whether MTPE work will remain as unattractive work for the translators or translation work providers will take actions to make MTPE more attractive to them.

## What do respondents say about staying in/leaving the profession?

We have seen above the results of the quantitative analysis of the survey. This section will look at what the respondents said to the open question: ***In your opinion, what are the important factors that can affect your working life as a translator?***

212 respondents out of the 423 overall respondents answered the question.<sup>8</sup> The word cloud in Figure 18 presents words that respondents used frequently in the narrative answers.



**Figure 18 Frequently used words in respondents' narrative answers**

The two most frequently used words in respondents' narrative answers were 'working' and related words such as 'work' or 'worked' (592 occurrences) and 'translator(s)' (570 occurrences). These words were eliminated from the word cloud because, considering the theme of the study, it is obvious these words would come at the top of the list.

<sup>8</sup> These include the respondents who missed answering some demographic questions and were excluded in the statistical analyses above.

The most frequently mentioned words include 'clients' (238 occurrences) and 'agencies' (125). This indicates that the relationship with their work providers is an important element in their working lives. The word cloud also presents money-related words such as 'rates' (179), 'paying' (87) 'income' (59) and 'earn' (51) prominently. This shows that financial matters form a pressing issue for translators. 'AI' (125), 'MT' (73) and 'MTPE' (38) are also used frequently.

Since sustainability of the profession is one of the key questions of this study, we are interested in examining whether any respondents are considering leaving the profession in the near future, and if so, why. Out of the 212 respondents who left narrative answers, 30 respondents said they are considering changing careers. The two most frequently mentioned reasons for this were "low rates/income" (mentioned by 13 respondents) and "insufficient amount of work" (10 respondents). And AI is often attributed to the low rates and insufficient amount of work.

After 20+ years of translating, I feel I have excellent experience and skills. However, I also feel increasingly that translation companies do not want to pay for my experience and constantly push my rates down. This has resulted in me seriously considering a different career in the next few years. (Respondent with 22 years' experience)

I have not been able to make a living as a freelance translator for some time now. My client base has shrunk due to increased use of AI and MT and I have not been able to get any new clients... I have not been able to put up my rates with my existing clients either. Unfortunately I don't see a rosy future for me in the translation industry and am trying to find other income streams. (Respondent with 6 years' experience)

The job of a freelance translator is in critical decline due to the application of MT/AI - I will probably be leaving the industry because of this as the role has become financially unviable and bills need to be paid. (Respondent with 23 years' experience)

These opinions echo the statistical findings shown above, where 'receiving enough work' and 'being paid fairly' were two of the top three motivators to stay in the profession.

In fact, insufficient amount of work was stated by 78 respondents (even if they do not plan to change professions). This number seems large and is alarming when considering the sustainability of the profession.

Where respondents said they were considering changing career, or were diversifying their career to minimise the effect of the declining amount of translation work, the occupations they intended to change to or diversify into included: **language teacher, conference interpreter, copywriter, editor, revisor, linguistic analyst for AI developers and retail**. This shows that translators' skills

are adaptable for other language related work. The answer “linguistic analyst for AI developers” is particularly noteworthy because, ironically, it is a job that many respondents state is a cause of the decline of their translation workload.

This survey was conducted in summer 2024, about a year and a half after the launch of ChatGPT. The narratives show that translators were already feeling its effects, attributing the rise of AI to the dwindling workload or lowered rates. Similar negative sentiments were felt among translators in the past when CAT tools became prevalent in the 1990s and when the MTPE workflow became more popular in the 2010s. It remains to be seen at what scale this new disruption to the industry affects translators’ sentiments and livelihood.

In contrast to these pessimistic outlooks presented above, some respondents, although a real minority, presented a positive outlook about AI (or technology in general) and their careers.

As a junior translator, I feel extremely confident about the opportunities I might be given in the future and the evolution of the translation field, as well as the future projects/tools translators might have soon. (Respondent with 1.5 years of experience)

In my opinion, the most important factor is to keep up with the times and not shy away from new technology. Technology is a tool, not a threat. (Respondent with 35 years' experience)

I believe that as translators we have more control over shaping our working lives than we sometimes realise...Becoming bogged down in negativity about the current state of the industry can disempower us. It's important to take inspiration from positive sources and present ourselves as positive professionals with solutions for our clients. (Respondent with 22 years' experience)

## Conclusion

The survey results showed that our respondents' general quality of working life (T-WRQoL) and work satisfaction (T-SAT) were found to be moderately high. However, it was also revealed that the respondents were not satisfied with some aspects of their working lives such as Control at Work, Career Success and Sustainability and Perceived Utility of MT.

The data identified that variables such as gender, country, proportion of direct clients, age and experience affect the level of work satisfaction and motivation of translators.

In addition, it was uncovered that the amount of MTPE work respondents undertake is an important factor that affects various aspects of their working lives. It is particularly alarming that the amount of MTPE work they undertake negatively affects a number of aspects, including Job Fit, Work Provider Engagement and perceived fairness of pay. The data also revealed that respondents who were willing to engage in MTPE work tended to have a Translation Studies degree, lower ITI membership status and less than 10 years of translation experience.

One of the main concerns of this study is the sustainability of the skilled translator workforce. The majority (66%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would stay in the profession for at least 5 years, which may sound quite positive. Yet, some attributes of the respondents were linked to lower motivation to stay in the profession. These included one's country (i.e., the UK) and their target language (i.e., English). Higher T-WRQoL factors were (not surprisingly) strongly linked to their intention to stay in the profession, but their positive engagement with MTPE work was not an indicator of their long-term career commitment.

These results demonstrate that translators' work satisfaction and motivation are complex constructs, which are affected both positively and negatively by a variety of factors. They also revealed that the current MTPE practices are exerting much influence on translators' work satisfaction and motivation in a negative way. In order for the industry to maintain translators' high work satisfaction and motivation, a series of initiatives and business policies will be required. As such, some recommendations will be offered below.

## Recommendations

### In general

- In order to maintain the current moderately high level of work satisfaction of translators, translation work providers are encouraged to 1) involve freelance translators in the process of work arrangement so that translators can feel higher control over their work; and 2) supply a stable flow of work where possible to discourage talented translators from leaving the profession.
- Translation work providers and professional stakeholders operating in the UK are encouraged to take the UK-specific geopolitical and economic conditions into consideration in business planning to address the relatively low work satisfaction of UK-based translators.
- Translators who are relatively older and experienced may benefit from support in technology adoption and professional networking.

- Translators who wish to improve the quality of their working lives may benefit from shifting their client base to direct clients.
- Although the majority of translators surveyed in this study say they intend to stay in the profession for at least the next 5 years, translation work providers are encouraged to pay particular attention to some demographic groups that showed weaker intentions to stay in the profession in this survey. They are: 1) translators who live in the UK; 2) translators who translate from languages other than English and 3) translators who translate into English.

### **MTPE-related recommendations**

- If translation work providers (primarily LSPs) wish to utilise experienced (10 years+) translators as an effective workforce for MTPE work, they are encouraged to supply MTPE work with satisfactory working conditions to provide them with opportunities to 'learn to like it'. When translators have good experiences with MTPE, it is likely to encourage their positive engagement with this mode of work for the long term.
- It would be beneficial for translation work providers to be aware in future business planning that:
  - ◆ The current MTPE practices are negatively impacting numerous facets of translators' working lives. These include *general wellbeing, feeling of control at work, relationship with work providers, job fit, perceived utility of MT and long-term motivation to stay in the profession*.
  - ◆ Pessimistic future outlooks appear to be growing among translators who fear that they will need to change their careers due to a rise in AI. If this trend continues, the long-term sustainability of the skilled translator workforce will be at risk.
- Translation work providers are encouraged to review the way MT is used in translation projects so that the power of MT is truly utilised in a positive way. The current perception among translators regarding MT's utility is unfavourable.
- Translation work providers are encouraged to urgently review the current MTPE pay structures to address the negative link currently observed between MTPE work and the low level of perceived fairness of pay expressed by the respondents.

The background of the image consists of several overlapping circles in different shades of blue. There are large, semi-transparent circles in the foreground and smaller, solid circles in the background. The colors range from light blue to dark blue.

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