Rates & Salaries 2001

by Antonio Aparicio, Michael Benis & Graham Cross

We have a long way to go

It has been 3 years since we last surveyed the profession and we were all anxious to analyse the results which, thanks to the 519 of you who responded this time round, are more representative than ever before. There is certainly a lot of useful information here and I was particularly struck by the fact that 40% of you were earning £14,999 or less and that for 54.5% translation was not the main source of income for your households (perhaps the same group?). Clearly we have a long way to go.

But then again, deep down I wasn't really surprised. In a world in which we continue to rate our worth in terms of £'s per 1,000 words instead of time, expertise and the value of our work to the end client, perhaps we only have ourselves to blame. We do live in an age of increasing global trade and communications after all. And as Michael Benis points out in his concluding section to this years survey, *the silver lining in this bleak picture is that there is a whole new market out there just waiting for us to define our role*. I hope so.

Antonio Aparicio
Editor, ITI Bulletin.

"This is the highest response rate for an ITI survey to date"

"A significant number of respondents charge the same rates as secretarial services"

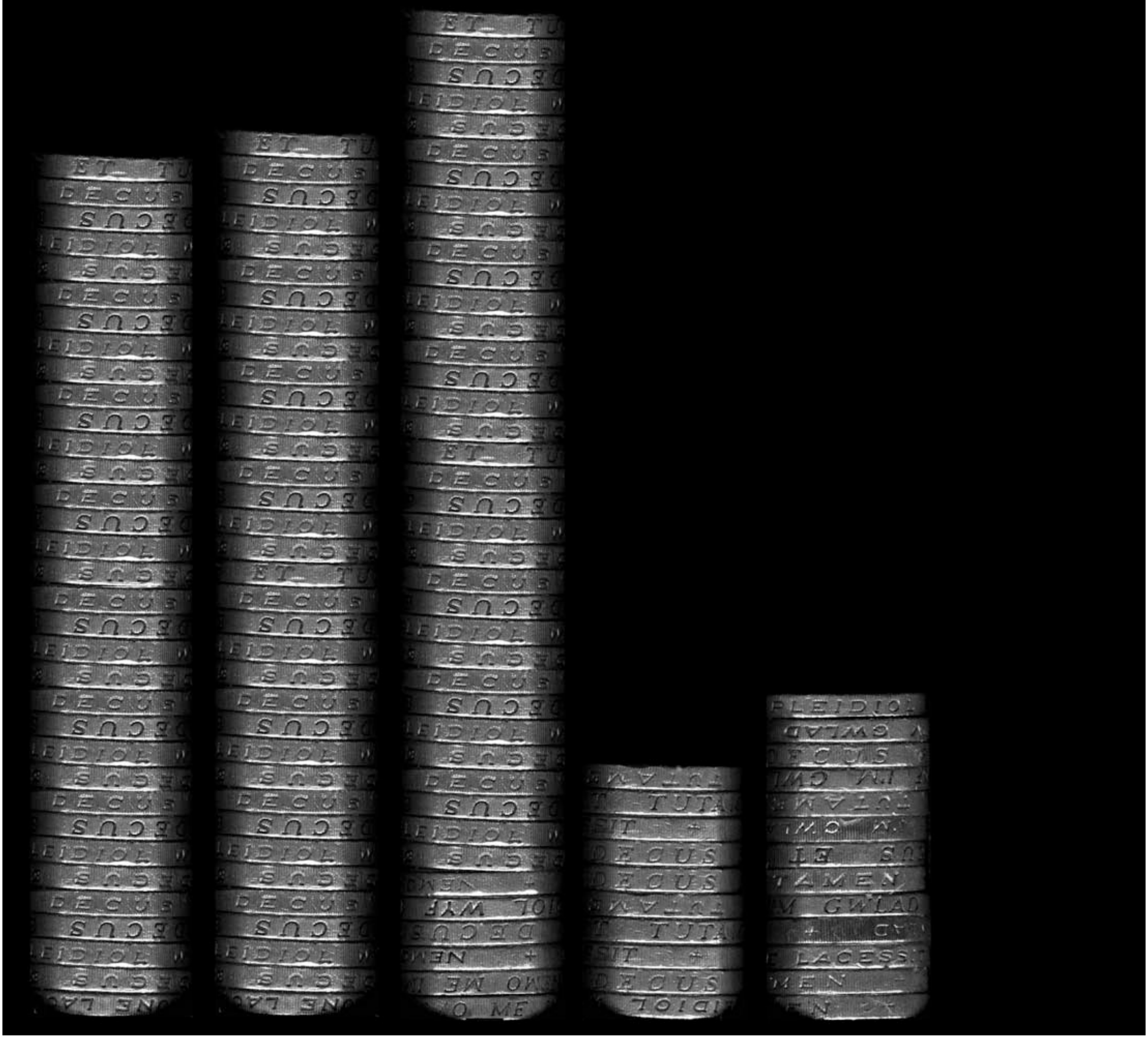
"Dictation is only productivity aid that makes a substantial difference to output & income"

"Just over a quarter thought slow payment was a problem or a major nuisance"

OVERVIEW OF THE PROFESSION

By Michael Benis

This survey has the highest response rate for an ITI survey to date, amounting to an increase of over 10% on the 1998 survey.

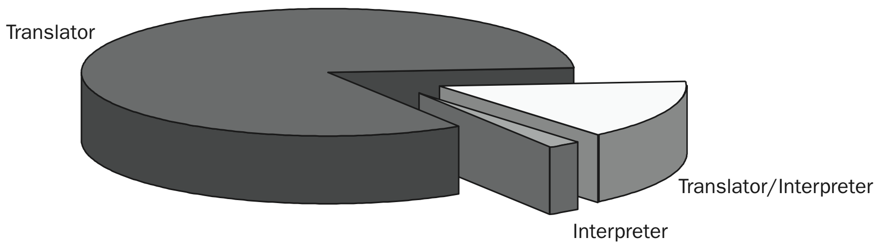


The ITI 2001 Rates & Salaries Survey forms were distributed to the approximately 3000 members of the ITI through the ITI Bulletin in April. A total of 519 forms were received between late April and late June 2001. This is the highest response rate for an ITI survey to date, amounting to an increase of over 10% on the 1998 survey. Seven of the forms returned contained incomplete or inconsistent data which could nevertheless be used. These either involved the omission of one or two fields, or simply meant that the respondent required reclassification, having for example selected "In-house" or "Project Manager" but having entered rates for translation companies. The data in only one record was so inconsistent that it had to be discarded.

Breakdown of respondents

In-house Directors	3
In-house Interpreters	1
In-house Interpreters/Translators	4
In-house Translators	21
In-house Translators/Project Managers	2
In-house Translation/Project Managers	2
Total In-house	**33**
Freelance Interpreters	11
Freelance Interpreters/Translators	73
Freelance Project Manager	1
Freelance Translators	399
Freelance Translator/Project Manager	1
Total Freelance	**485**
Grand total	518

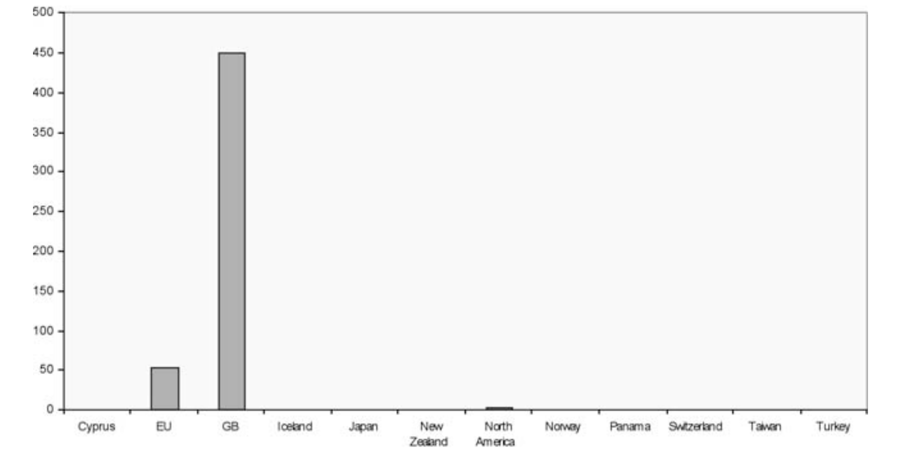
Composition of respondents



Profile and representativeness of respondents

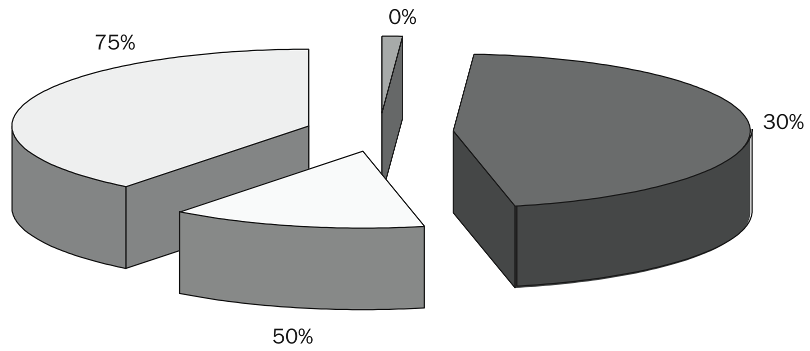
The geographical distribution of the respondents closely mirrored that of the 1998 survey, with over 87% being resident in the United Kingdom and almost all the remainder living in other EU countries, as can be seen from the chart to the right. The other countries shown in the legend but which are almost impossible to distinguish from the baseline had just one ITI member respondent in each, with the exception of North America, which was home to four.

Geographical distribution of respondents



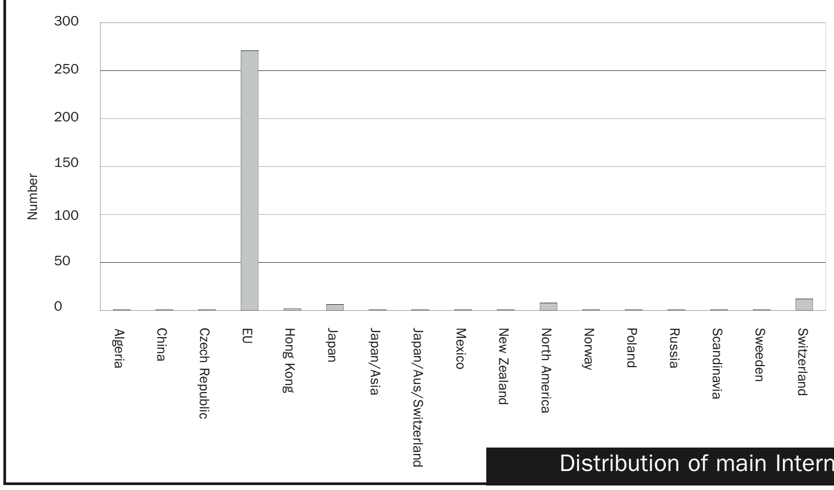
The overwhelming majority of respondents used the Internet to work with customers in other countries, although the 30% threshold for the proportion of customers in other countries proved too high for some twenty respondents. This was consequently lowered, such that the over 30% group shown to the right should be considered as ranging from 1 to 50%. The 0% group did not have any customers outside the UK.

UK respondents: % of client base in other countries



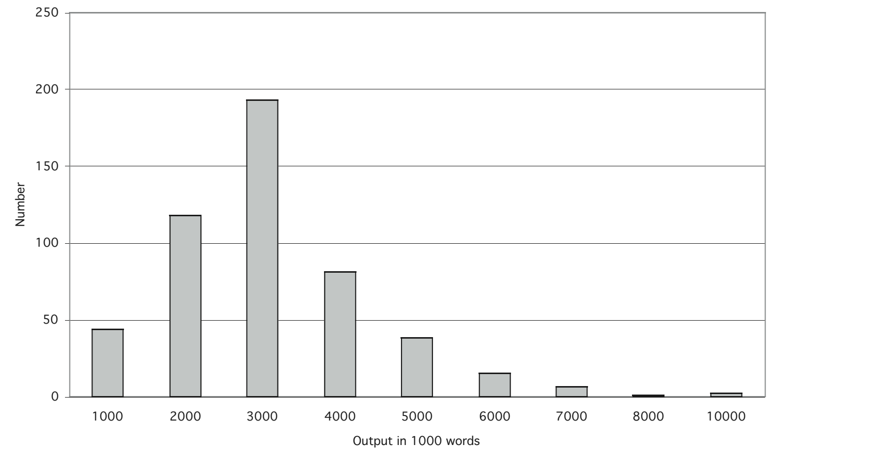
> The overwhelming majority used the Internet to work with customers in other countries

Most of these overseas customers were located in other EU countries (271). The other countries shown below were each markets for just one respondent, with the exception of Hong Kong (2), Japan (6), North America (8) and Switzerland (12).



Distribution of main Internet clients

Daily output of translators

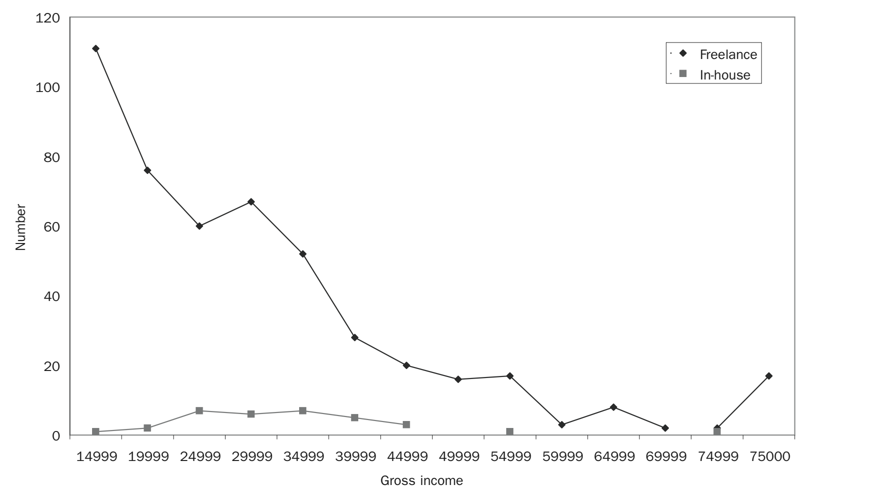


Output

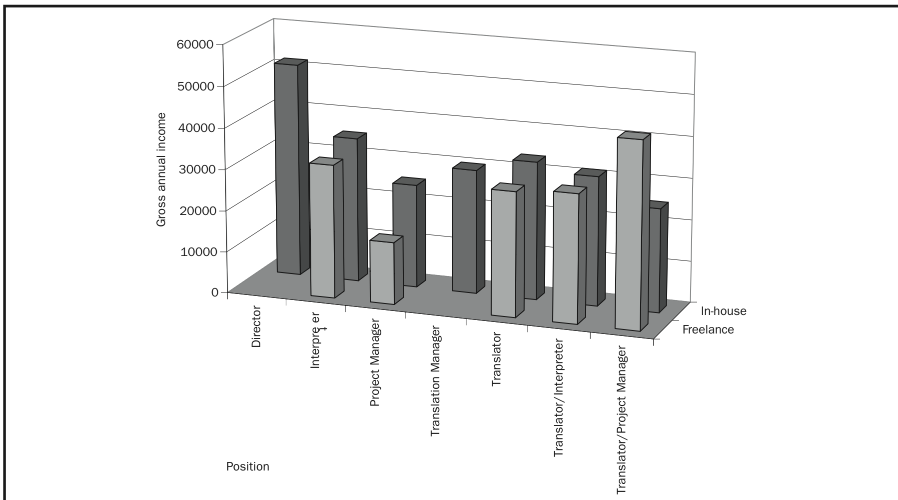
The figures for average translation output also mirrored those of the 1998 survey, showing the same overall trend while also suggesting a more experienced sample group, with a larger number of respondents at the higher end of the output scale.

These figures once again confirm that the majority of translators achieve a daily output of 2000 to 3000 words and that those embarking on a career would be well advised to base their income expectations on an even lower figure for their first few years in the profession.

Gross income of all groups



Comparative income of freelance & in-house



Income

The distribution of gross income for the sample was not only similar to the 1998 survey but at similar levels.

The average income of respondents in the various different categories of language professionals was at the lower end of the professional bracket as illustrated below to the left.

Experience

Fewer than 10% of respondents (44) had less than six years experience, leading to a "Not applicable" reply regarding how their 2001 rates compared to their rates six years ago. Since 32 respondents in the 1998 survey were classified as "Other" (Subscribers and Students), the results of the 2001 survey may be considered largely comparable to those its predecessor in this respect as well. Indeed, it may be that the 2001 sample is slightly more representative of mature professionals, since the handwritten notes of many of those classified as "Not applicable" indicated that they had at least two to three years' experience as practising professionals.

FREELANCE TRANSLATORS

By Michael Benis

(In £ Sterling per 1,000 words or characters for Chinese/Japanese)

Language combination	Average rates charged to Translation Companies		Direct Clients		Number of Respondents
	2001	1998	**2001**	1998	**2001**
Afrikaans/English	55	55			1
Albanian/English	70		70		1
Arabic/English	76		85		8
Bosnian/English	70		70		1
Bulgarian/English	70	75	70	75	1
Catalan/English	60	35	69	55	5
Chinese/English	78	110	82	160	5
Croatian/English	70	66	70		1
Czech/English	70	67	76	71	4
Czech/German	80		120		1
Danish/English	80	71	87	82	22
Danish/French	100		120		1
Danish/Norwegian	80				1
Dutch/English	66	58	83	77	41
Dutch/French	61		76		2
English/Albanian	70		70		1
English/Arabic	81		85	80	6
English/Bulgarian	77	80	80	80	1
English/Chinese	70	110	80	160	1
English/Croatian	70	66	70		2
English/Czech	73	72	80	72	2
English/Danish	79		95		4
English/Dari	100		90		1
English/Dutch	67		78	68	15
English/English (US/UK)					1
English/Farsi	100		90		1
English/Finnish	93	85	106	85	4
English/French	64	60	75	69	48
English/German	67	63	79	75	42
English/Greek	50	60	50	70	3
English/Hebrew	98	79	125	102	1
English/Hungarian	85	80	95	120	1
English/Italian	63	62	71	60	14
English/Japanese	98	107	115	117	4
English/Korean	93	80	93		2
English/Norwegian	115				2
English/Polish	71	77	75	71	5
English/Portuguese	65	67	71	76	10
English/Punjabi	120		100		1
English/Romanian	65	72	65	88	1
English/Russian	74	70	78	71	7
English/Serbian	76		83		2
English/Spanish	65	59	71	65	17
English/Swedish	98	95	108	165	6
English/Turkish	66		94		3
English/Ukrainian	80		85		1
English/Urdu	100		100		1
English/Welsh	50	53	50	44	2
Estonian/Finnish	85				1
Farsi/English	100		90		1

(In £ Sterling per 1,000 words or characters for Chinese/Japanese)

Language combination	**Average** rates charged to Translation Companies		Direct Clients		Number of Respondents
	2001	1998	**2001**	1998	**2001**
Finnish/English	89	85	99	87	4
Finnish/Swedish	80		85		1
Flemish/English	60	52	60	52	1
French/Dutch	67	57	94	64	4
French/English	57	53	70	66	172
French/German	80	67	108	98	2
French/Greek	35	60	35	70	1
French/Italian	71	95	79	100	4
French/Portuguese	70	65	70	67	2
French/Spanish	68	62	75	77	3
French/Swedish	150	180	160	220	1
German/Dutch	73	58	78	77	2
German/English	60	56	74	69	158
German/French	72	65	92	70	3
German/Italian	76	82	79	85	2
German/Polish	55		55		1
German/Russian	100	110	100	110	1
German/Swedish	125	140	130	185	2
Greek/English	58		58	50	2
Greek/French	35		35		1
Greek/Swedish	126	100	126	150	1
Hebrew/English	74	56	90	72	1
Hungarian/English	98	80	108	120	2
Italian/English	57	53	68	70	50
Italian/French	90	80	90	85	1
Italian/German	55		60		1
Japanese/English	83	65	97	80	8
Korean/English	80		80		1
Lingala/English	60	63			1
Norwegian/English	86	67	93	77	13
Polish/English	76	69	78	65	7
Portuguese/English	56	50	67	63	22
Punjabi/English	120		100		1
Romanian/English	78	60	80	65	4
Russian/English	67	62	76	71	21
Russian/German			80		1
Serbian/English	67		72		2
Slovenia/English	74		85		1
Spanish/English	56	51	64	61	66
Spanish/French		60	80		2
Spanish/German	90	60	105	82	2
Spanish/Portuguese	75	74	75		2
Swahili/English	55	52			1
Swedish/Danish	85				1
Swedish/English	79	67	90	92	25
Swedish/Spanish	70		70		1
Turkish/English	83		105		3
Ukrainian/English	70	65	75	70	1
Urdu/English	98		100		2
Welsh/English	50	53	50	44	2

Alternative rates and surcharges

The survey also focused on the hourly rates and surcharges applied by freelance translators.

Minimum charges

Of the 327 translators providing information on minimum rates for direct clients, almost one-third (105) do not apply a minimum charge for direct customers, while the remaining 222 charge between £10 and £100, with their choices tending to be clustered around the £5 interval marks, as shown (on the right) for greater clarity.

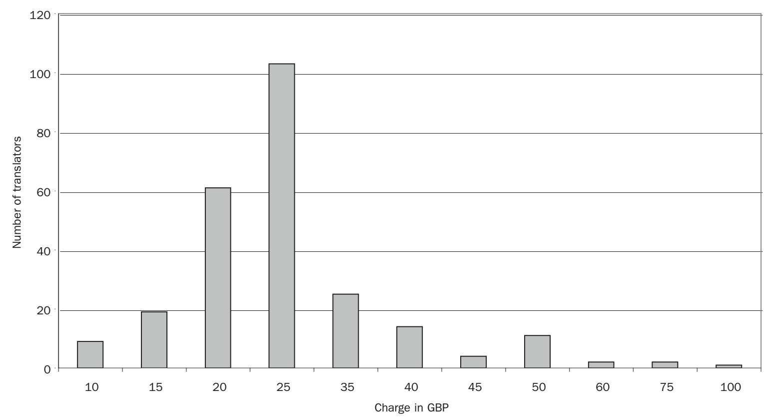
The situation is similar where minimum rates for translation companies are concerned, although a larger number apply a minimum charge in this case. 505 respondents provided information and 399 of these applied a minimum charge that ranged from less than £5 to as much as £135, the salient figures for which are presented here (on the right).

Urgency surcharges

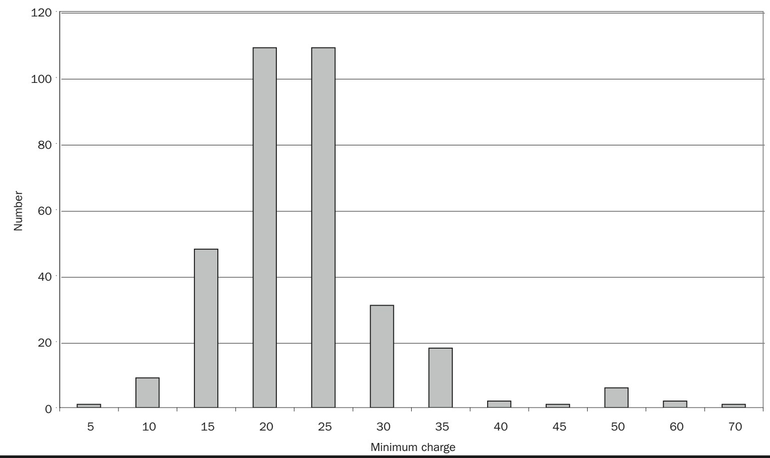
Practices also varied widely where surcharges for urgent work were concerned, a sizeable proportion of respondents simply considering all their work to be urgent. Unfortunately, the survey was not designed to discover whether those not applying a surcharge were prepared to work "out-of-office hours" at their ordinary rates or whether only those applying surcharges were happy to work late at night and at weekends or during holidays. We hope to investigate this further in subsequent ITI surveys.

Only 195 of the 472 freelance translator respondents applied urgency surcharges for direct clients. Some did not apply a fixed-rate but agreed each surcharge to suit the situation concerned. Others had fixed rates for "overtime" hours, weekends and holidays. The distribution of these surcharges by frequency is shown on the right, expressed as a median percentage, such that a translator applying a 50% surcharge for weekday night work and a 150% surcharge for night work on public holidays will be shown as 100% below. The "Yes" column is for translators who agreed different surcharges to suit each individual occasion.

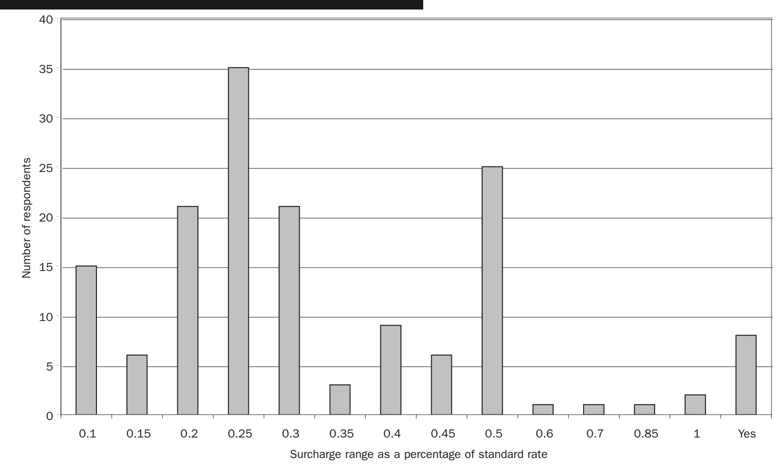
Minimum charges for direct clients



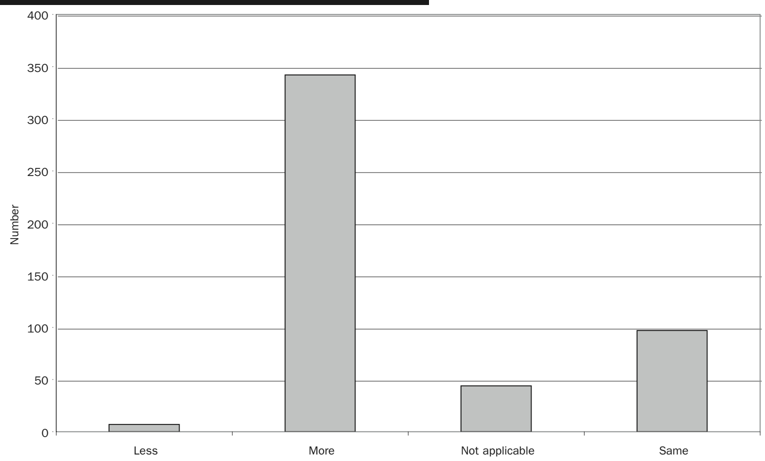
Minimum charge for translation companies



Urgency charges for direct clients



Perception of rate growth



Comparison of average rates: 1994, 1998, 2001

	1994 Direct	TC	1998 Direct	TC	2001 Direct	TC
English to **West European**	71.00	55.00	68.00	56.00	74.06	65.13
West European to **English**	58.00	47.00	75.50	62.00	70.89	58.69
English to **Scandinavian**	n/a	n/a	90.53	75.50	102.80	96.13
Scandinavian to **English**	n/a	n/a	112.00	90.80	92.23	83.44
English to **East European**	65.00	60.00	90.00	81.00	77.50	73.68
East European to **English**	60.00	55.00	66.50	63.50	77.68	73.83
English to **Chinese**/ **Japanese**	n/a	n/a	117.00	94.00	83.75	97.50
Chinese/**Japanese** to **English**	67.00	65.00	101.00	77.00	89.47	80.13

Whereas East European to English translation rates have risen, those for West European and Scandinavian into English have fallen.

Rate trends

As mentioned earlier, the survey included a specific question asking respondents to compare their current rates with their rates six years ago. The answers given are shown in the table on the left.

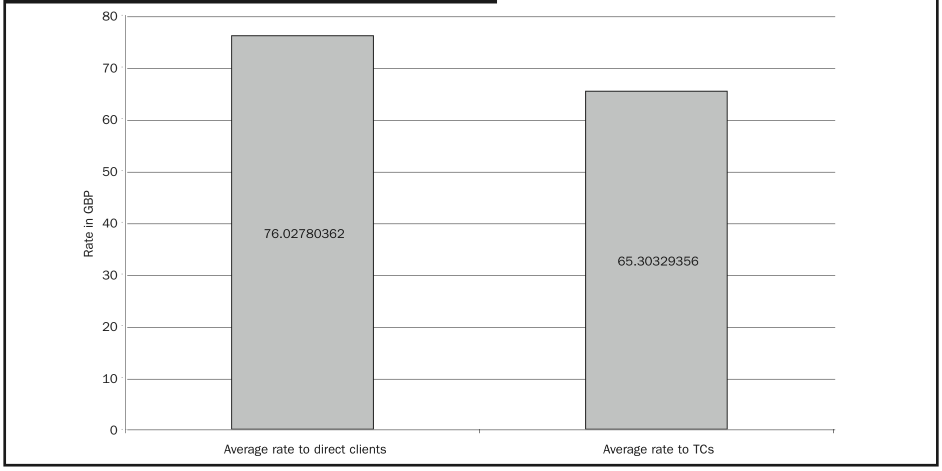
Although the overwhelming majority of respondents reported that their rates had increased during the past six years, a significant minority stated that they were the same or had actually decreased. A similar situation is revealed by comparing the results of the ITI Rates & Salaries Survey 2001 with those that preceded it, following the presentation adopted in the 1994 survey to achieve consistency.

At first sight, the situation seems clear, with rates having increased for all language combinations out of English with the exception of the East European languages and Chinese/Japanese, although the results for the latter are contradictory, having increased slightly for translation companies but fallen for direct clients. The same disparity can be seen for Chinese/ Japanese to English. Lastly, whereas East European to English rates have risen, West European and Scandinavian to English rates have fallen.

This situation indicates that there are likely to be several factors at play, foremost amongst them the strong pound, which has held prices down as UK translation companies resist the consequent competitive disadvantage in their prime market segment (the provision of translations into English for translation companies and other clients in other EU countries).

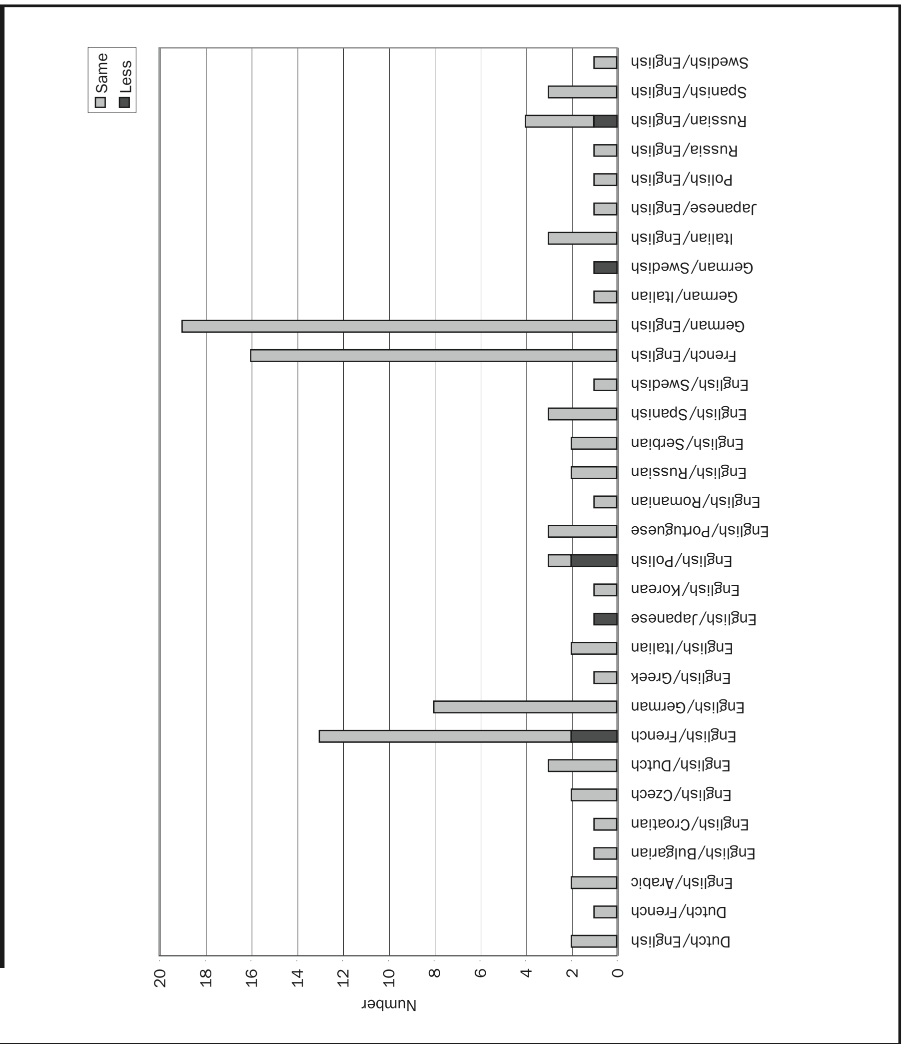
The opening of the East European markets and access to translators within them over the Internet is likely to have exerted a downward pressure on rates for translations into and out of the East European languages.

Finally, the situation for translations to and from Chinese/Japanese very possibly highlights the stronger marketing and negotiating skills of translation companies, and therefore the rates they are able to command and pay, compared to those freelance translators are able to achieve. This can be confirmed by comparing the respondents' average rates for direct client and translation company customers respectively.



Average of all freelance translator rates charged

> Underdeveloped marketing and negotiating skills of freelance translators are leading them to substantially undercut the prices translation companies are able to offer and this is in all probability exerting a downward pressure on rates overall.



Respondents charging the same/less than six years ago in relation to primary lang. combination

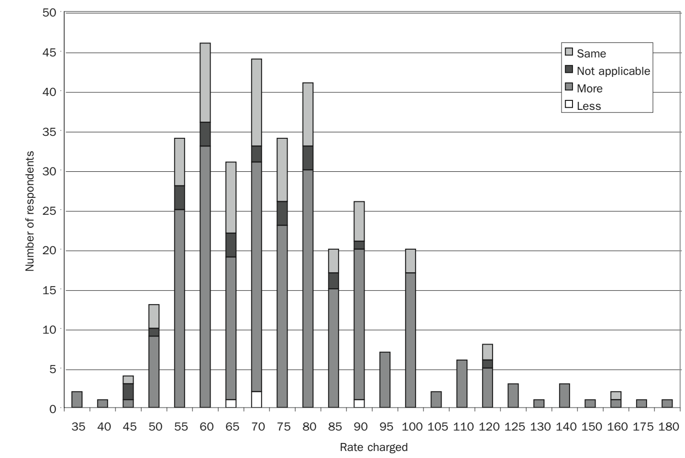
Weaknesses in the market

Although the situation for translations to and from Chinese/Japanese is not the only example of translation companies being charged higher rates than direct clients, the reverse is generally the case, with rates for translation companies averaging 86% of the rates charged to direct clients. If one considers that all but the smallest translation companies are obliged to charge their own clients approximately double the amount they are paying their freelance suppliers (in order to cover staff costs, marketing costs, overheads and make a profit), it becomes clear that the underdeveloped entrepreneurial, marketing and negotiating skills of freelance translators are leading them to substantially undercut the prices translation companies are able to offer and that this is in all probability exerting a downward pressure on rates overall.

Analysing the rate shift of respondents over the past six years in relation to their primary language combination provides further support for the idea that static or falling rates are more likely to be related to marketing problems within the profession than the strong pound or weak demand.

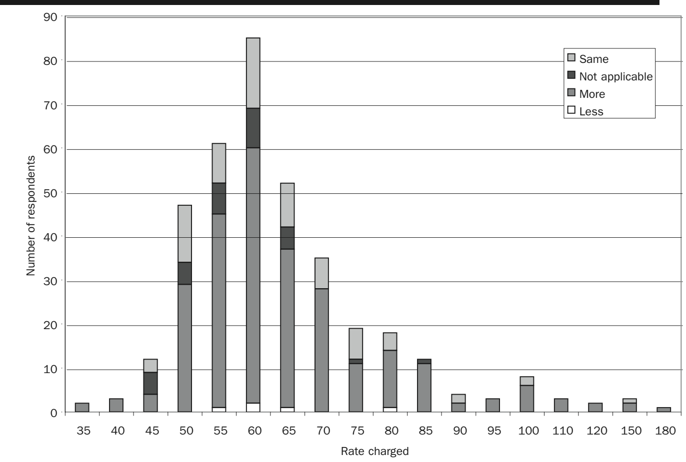
Comparing the results to the right with those regarding translation companies (underneath to the right) indicates that a combination of prevalently price-based combination and a strong euro has had a negative effect on rates in real terms, with the distribution curve dropping away much more sharply from its peak. This also confirms the anecdotal evidence that £60 per thousand words is the maximum rate that UK translation companies are prepared to pay for the most common language combinations.

Static/falling rates in relation to rates charged to direct clients



A comparison of hourly rates charged in relation to rates per thousand words and translation output suggests that most respondents would be earning more if they charged per hour than per thousand words or, to put it another way, that many respondents may be unaware of how little they are actually earning per hour. Even then, the average hourly rate of £24.61 for translation companies and £28.08 for direct clients is less than that of most skilled tradesmen, while a significant number of respondents charge the same rates as secretarial services (around £15 per hour), which manifestly fails to factor in the technical, linguistic and cultural knowledge that they provide over and above any such services.

Static/falling rates in relation to rates charged to transl. companies



It is likewise interesting to note that most respondents charge more per hour for translation services than for editing and correcting (£28.08 as opposed to £26.90 for direct clients, and £23.48 as opposed to £24.61 for translation companies – these figures in those for individual language combinations are all provided in the table on page 10). This suggests that translators are also undervaluing their writing skills, notwithstanding the fact that it is almost axiomatic that one has to be a good writer as a prerequisite for being a good translator.

The assumption that freelance translators undervalue their skills also finds support in the comparative figures for freelance and in-house language professionals (see pages 5 and 18), which show the average income of the latter exceeding that of the former in all but one exceptional (and solitary) case for the first time in many years.

These factors don't simply indicate a weakness in the profession or market, but a series of opportunities that it is clear certain respondents (both generalist and specialists alike) have been able to capitalise on in their professional development.

The average hourly rate of £24.61 for translation companies and £28.08 for direct clients is less than that of most skilled tradesmen, while a significant number of respondents charge the same rates as secretarial services (about £15 per hour)

Market outlook and potential - A profession in crisis or at a crossroads?

With the financial news still dominated by fears of a recession and market instability, it is difficult to forecast future translation rate trends with certainty. Translators, like lawyers and doctors, tend to weather recessionary periods much better than most and it is unlikely that the pound will gain in strength further against the euro, such that the aforementioned factors exerting a downward pressure on rates are unlikely to increase. Moreover, by virtue of the marketing weaknesses it identifies, the survey indicates that there is considerable potential for enterprising freelances to develop the services they provide direct clients and increase their rates accordingly.

Influences on freelance translator income

Many of the factors freelance translators traditionally try to exploit in the hope of increasing their income do not seem to make any significant effect as far as the respondents to the ITI Rates & Salaries Survey 2001 were concerned.

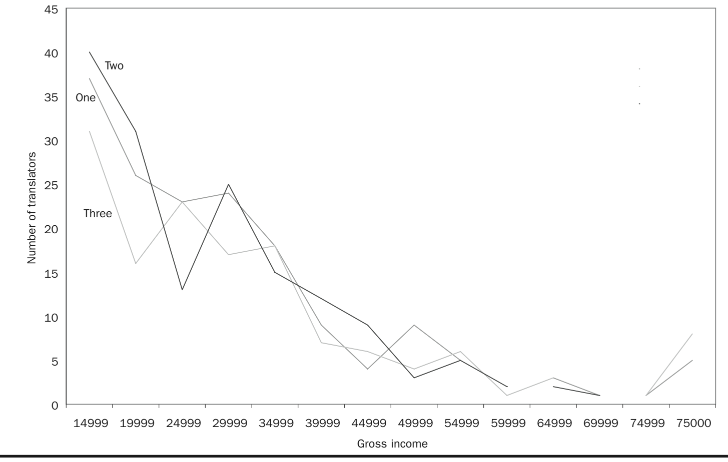
Specialising in just one or two languages in the hope of increasing one's output, or increasing the number of languages offered to attract more custom, do not seem to be effective strategies, although the data for certain individual freelances indicates that productivity can vary greatly for the different languages or language directions offered.

Not only do the curves on the right mirror the distribution for all the respondents as a whole (see page 5) but they are also substantially the same irrespective of whether the translators offered one, two or three language combinations.

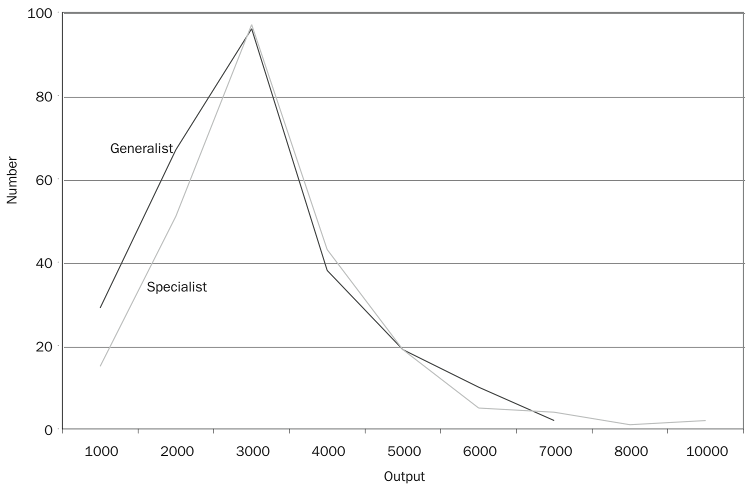
At first sight, the situation appears to be largely the same for specialists and generalists in terms both of their output and income, with the possible exception of the very top of the income tree.

There is considerabble potential for enterprising freelances to develop their services to direct clients and increase their rates accordingly.

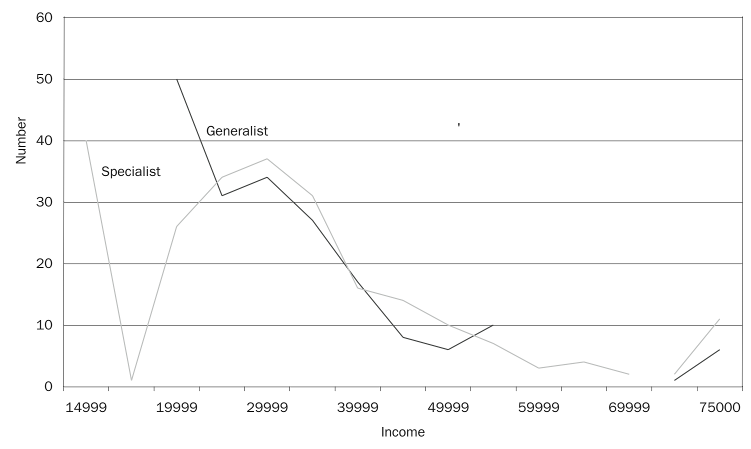
Income in relation to number of language combinations offered



Output in relation to specialisation



Specialisation and income



A word of caution is, however, due. A major weakness of the survey that may well highlight a weakness in the profession as a whole (which had also been identified in 1998), is that the word “specialist” was interpreted very loosely indeed. While the survey questionnaire did not provide a definition of “specialisation”, the question concerned specifically stated “If a specialist tick the field that best describes yours”, clearly implying that such a specialist would work in one field only. Notwithstanding this, many respondents ticked several fields or - in a conspicuous number of cases - all of them. To try and make the results more meaningful, all “specialists” ticking more than three fields were reclassified as generalists (following the example of the 1998 survey), as were those respondents who ticked both “specialist” and “generalist”.

> The average income of single specialist translators is an impressive 17% higher than others.

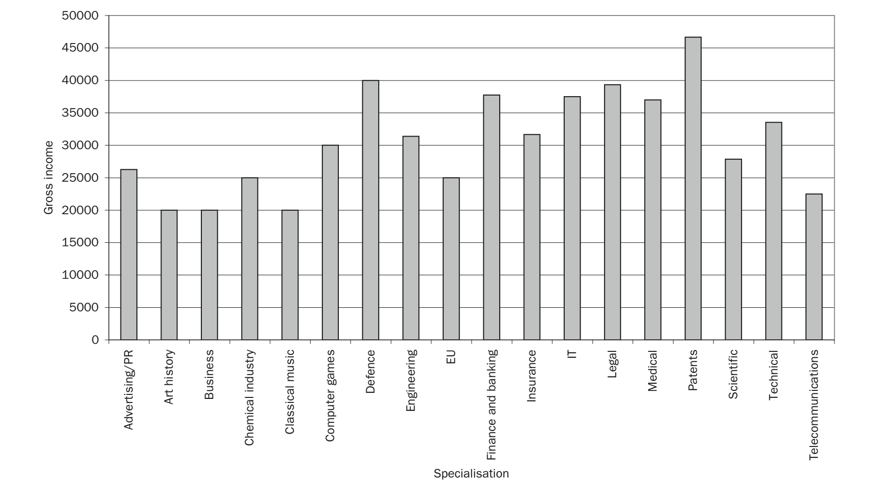
The next step in the attempt to provide more useful data was logically to filter out the 114 single-specialist freelance translators. This apart from anything else provides a useful insight into the highest and the lowest-paying specialisations, but the situation continues to be anomalous, with “Advertising & PR” specialists earning significantly less than other professionals in those fields, while “Legal” and “Medical” specialists, for instance, earn amounts that are closer to the average for those respective professions.

Nevertheless, the average income of these “single-specialist” translators is an impressive £4,828 or 17% higher than the average.

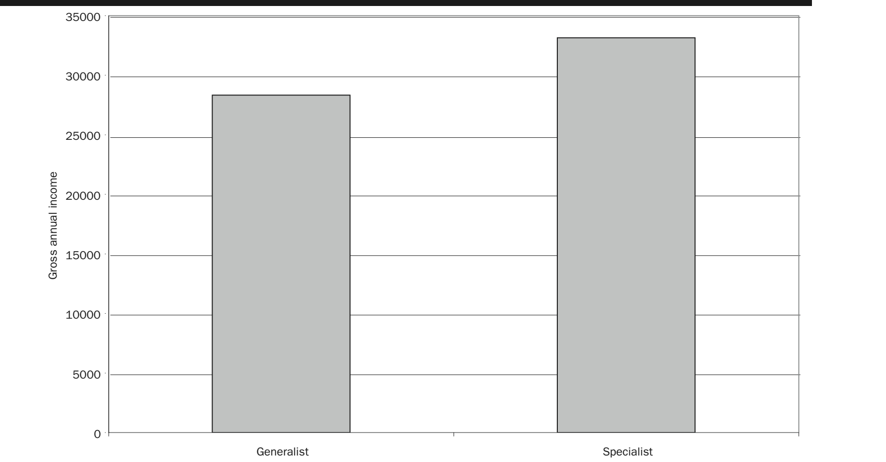
The more highly-focused specialisation of this sub-group also appears to be a successful strategy where daily output is concerned, helping these “single-specialists” achieve an 8.5% increase in productivity over their generalist colleagues.

In conclusion, it appears that many freelance translators would do well to re-evaluate what they mean by specialisation and what greater specialisation could offer their customers in added value. Redefining the content and positioning of the service offered while developing effective advertising, marketing and PR activities to support it could help them increase the profile, job satisfaction and income offered by their chosen career. A small group of highly-successful specialist respondents testified to the fact that this is a real possibility, rather than a pleasant pipe dream.

Income of single-specialisation freelance translators



Comparative income of generalist and "single-specialist" freelance translators



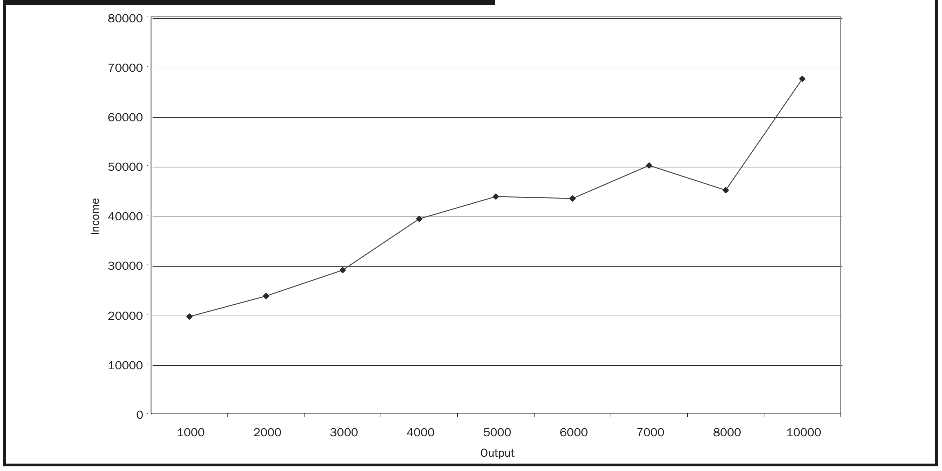
> Many freelance translators would do well to re-evaluate what they mean by specialisation and what greater specialisation could offer their customers in added value.

Productivity aids

The most widespread approach to increasing one's income concentrates not so much on specialisation, which as we have seen appears to be pursued in a rather incoherent manner, but on tools that help freelance translators increase their output. The logic involved here is less nebulous and the results which can be achieved are - as can be seen below - more marked than simply increasing one's rates, possibly since the success of the latter also depends on one's marketing and negotiating skills as well as one's skills as a translator.

Translators deploy a range of different productivity tools to try and increase their output. The effects of these tools are examined in this section.

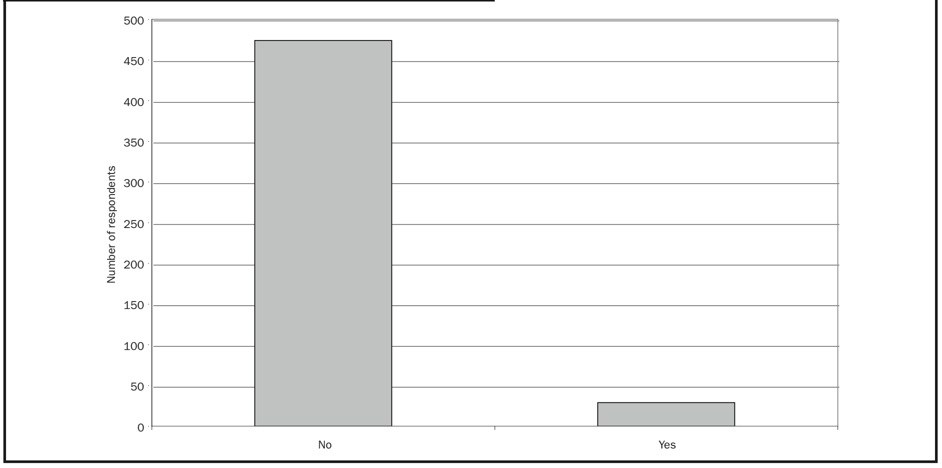
Income in relation to output



Machine translation

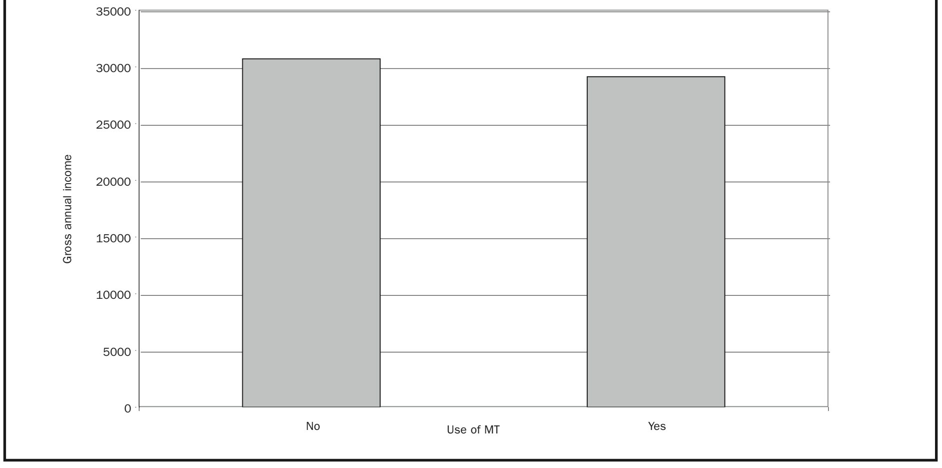
Machine translation was used by only a small number of respondents.

Number of respondents using MT

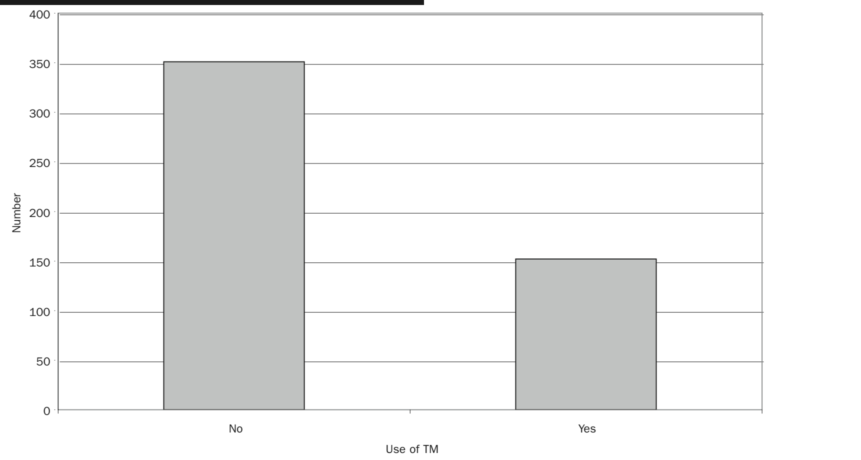


It is not clear from the survey what use these respondents make of MT - whether to provide rough drafts, input for a translation memory system or a gisting service for their clients, since the questionnaire did not contain a question specifically designed to address the matter. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that MT does not make a significant contribution to these users' income.

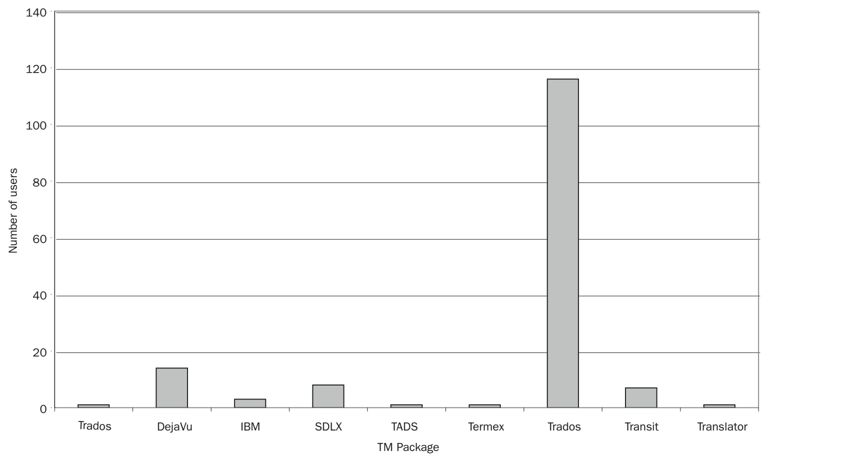
Use of MT in relation to income



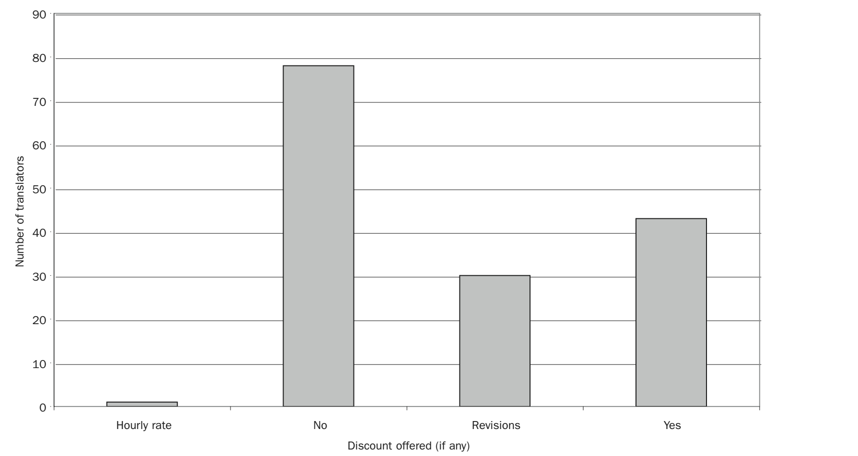
Number of freelance translators using TM



Type of TM package used



Translators offering discounts on work carried out using translation memory



Translation Memory

Translation memory is a considerably more popular choice. The number of translators using translation memory and their translation memory packages of first choice are shown on the left.

> The results indicate TM only has a modest effect on the output of users compared to non-users lending support to those who see such systems primarily as quality-control tools rather than productivity aids.

The ITI Rates & Salaries Survey 2001 is thus able to confirm the leading position Trados has gained amongst ITI members, not least of all thanks to the continuous, strong marketing presence Trados UK has maintained both in the ITI Bulletin and at ITI events.

At the same time, the results indicate TM only has a modest effect on the output of users compared to non-users (+ 365 words per day or 12%), lending strong support to the contentions of those translators who see such systems primarily as quality-control tools rather than productivity aids, especially if one is considering the work of an experienced translator who is familiar with the terminology required and is not working on revisions or highly repetitive texts.

Eroding these gains, a significant number of translators offered discounts on work done using translation memory packages. This ranged from offering discounts on revisions only to giving discounts on all work carried out using translation memory or charging for translation memory work at an hourly rate.

Notwithstanding these practices, there was a noticeable difference between the gross income of translation memory users and non-users, although the amount involved (£ 1,742 or +6%) would certainly mean that the much-touted scenario of achieving a return on one's investment within the first few projects undertaken is an unlikely one for most ITI translators.

Dictation

Although used by a practically static minority of respondents (compared to 1998) where typists are concerned and a growing minority where speech recognition is concerned, dictation once again reveals itself to be the only productivity aid that makes a truly substantial difference to output and income, enabling experienced translators to leverage their expertise to the full.

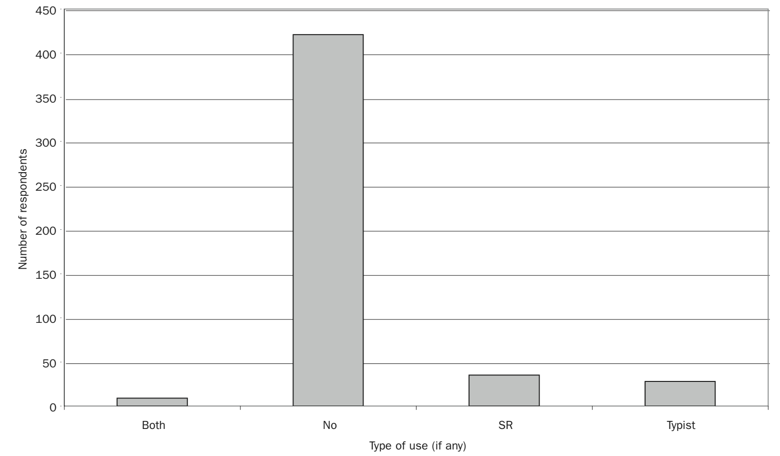
Dictation once again reveals itself to be the only productivity aid that makes a truly substantial difference to output and income.

A number of factors need to be borne in mind when interpreting the table on the right (Average gross income ...), in particular the fact that the gross income for those using both speech recognition and a typist exceeds the income for those using a typist alone. Translators tend to achieve higher outputs using a typist (see table below right) than with speech recognition, but since most do not actually have a typist present in the office with them, they rely on sending tapes through the post or speech files over the Internet for subsequent delivery of the typed file. As a result, the use of a typist is not generally the ideal solution for short to medium-length urgent jobs, which tend to be typed by the translator themselves, generally at the cost of some loss in productivity. Using speech recognition for these jobs can make a significant difference, as reflected in the results.

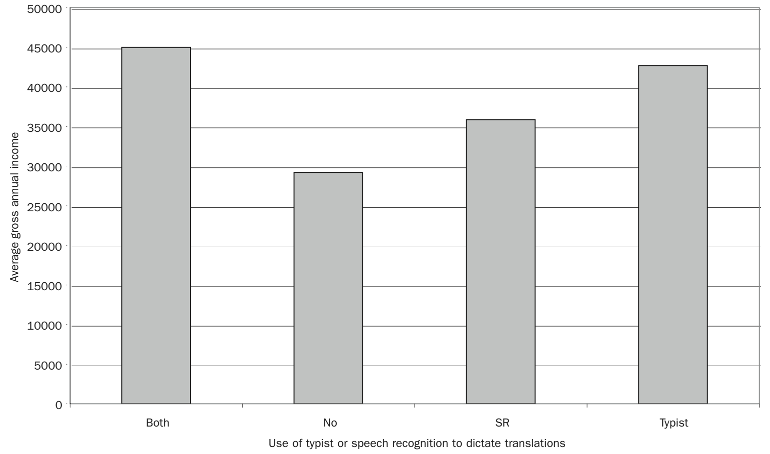
Finally one should not forget to offset the cost of an audio typist's fees, which can amount to several thousand pounds over the course of a year, against the increase in output and income that this form of dictation enables one to achieve.

Nor, however, should one forget that dictation in any form is the most effective strategy for safeguarding against or coping with "repetitive strain injury" and the very real physical and financial discomfort it can cause.

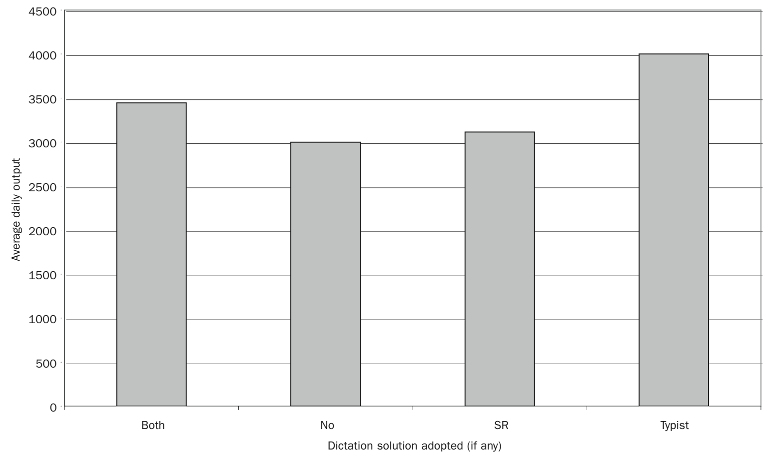
Use of dictation by translators



Average gross income in relation to use of dictation solutions



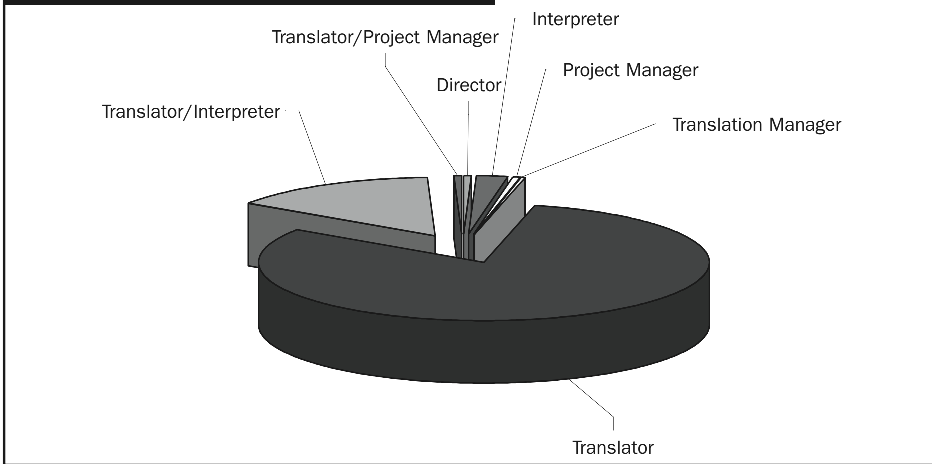
Average daily output in relation to use of dictation solutions



IN-HOUSE LANGUAGE PROFESSIONALS

By Michael Benis

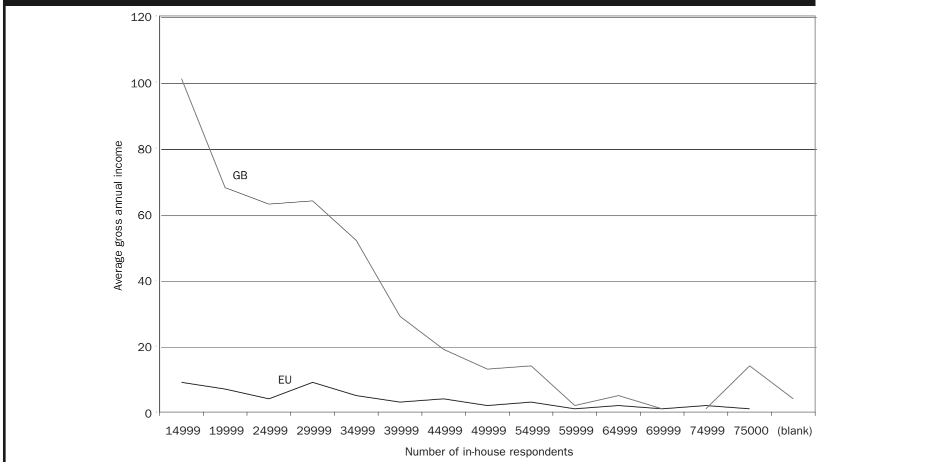
Breakdown of in-house respondents



In-house respondents totalled 33 or just 6.3% of the total, divided up as shown on the left. The small number involved means that the results cannot be considered reliable for any but the very largest subgroups.

There does not seem to have been any significant upward shift since 1998, but there is a much higher concentration at the £14,999 end.

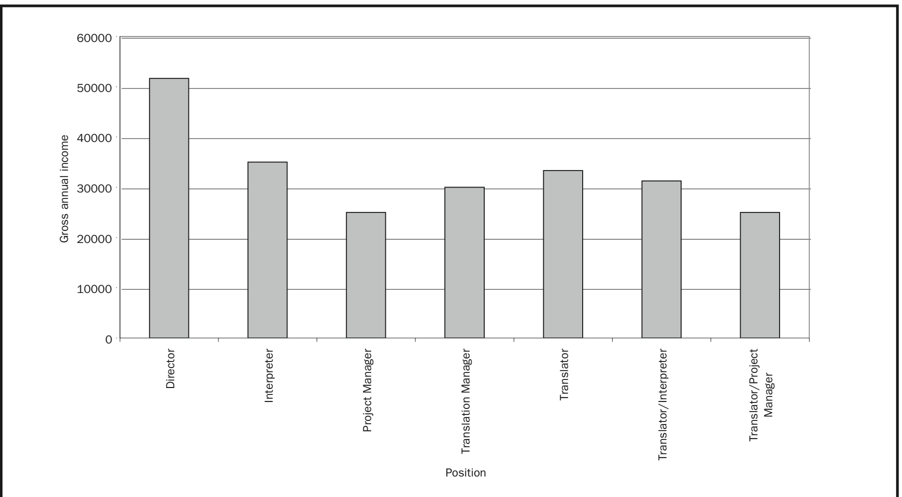
Average income of in-house language professionals in relation to residence



The distribution curve for income is similar to the 1998 survey, dominated by a peak at £14,999 for the UK market that tapers off down to £34,999, after which it falls much more sharply. There does not seem to have been any significant upward shift since 1998, but there is a much higher concentration at the £14,999 end. This may indicate a change in salary structures or a slowdown in promotion, just as it could have been influenced by a shift in the relatively small sample group, which was 10 less than in 1998.

The salaries of EU in-house professionals appear to follow a similar curve to their UK counterparts, but were again distributed more evenly, suggesting that language services continue to be valued more highly in other European countries. The sample is however too small to permit confident interpretation of the results.

Income of in-house language professionals



The average gross annual income of the in-house respondent groups is shown on the left.

The precise figures are shown in the table on the right, compared to the income of freelance professionals providing the same services.

The average income of in-house professionals is up to 10% higher than that of their freelance equivalents.

Although freelance interpreters and translators at the top of their profession comfortably exceed these averages and the highest salaries of in-house professionals, in some cases at least equalling the highest-paid director (£75,000+), the average income of in-house professionals is up to 10% higher than that of their freelance equivalents, and that is without their having to incur any of the equipment, service and marketing expenses to which the latter have to dedicate a sizable part of their gross income.

The demand for different language combinations also appears to have played a role in determining the income of the 2001 survey's in-house respondents, although considering the size of the samples for some of the minority language combinations, it would be unwise to assume that this is the only factor influencing any variations observed.

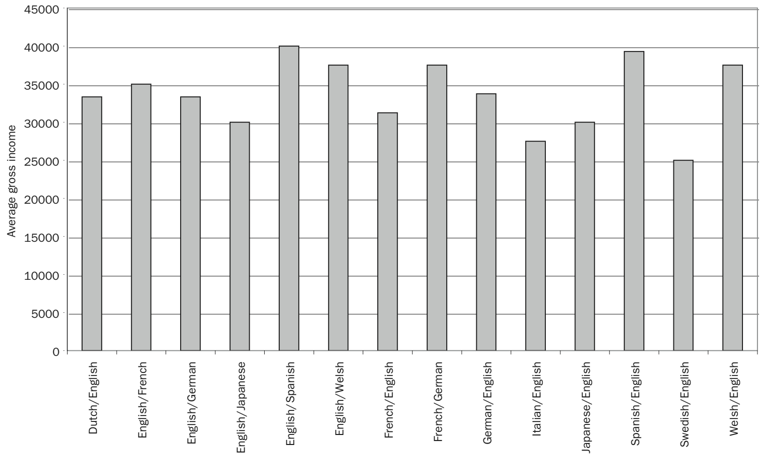
Specialisation also has a small influence on in-house salaries (+5%).

In-house productivity systems included dictation using a typist (no speech recognition at all) for just two respondents. Unlike, the 1998 survey, however, none of the in-house respondents used machine translation. Conversely, translation memory usage was considerably higher than among the freelance sample, at over a third, possibly because of its strengths as a training tool and ensuring consistency even following staff changes and promotions.

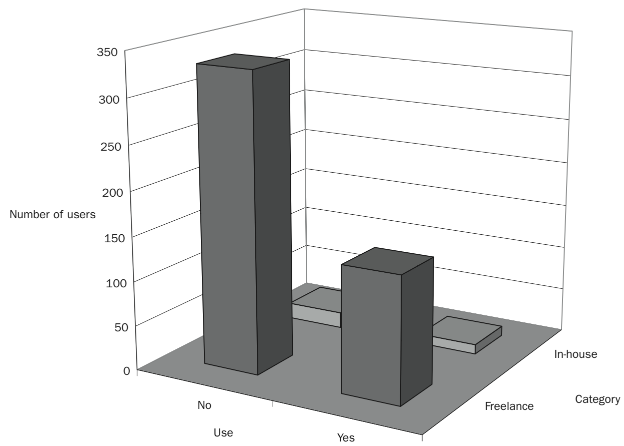
Income Freelance/In-House

Position	Freelance	In-house	Average
Director		51,665	51,665
Interpreter	32,271	34,999	32,499
Project Manager	14,999	24,999	19,999
Translation Manager		29,999	29,999
Translator	30,127	33,332	30,289
Translator/Interpreter	31,055	31,249	31,065
Translator/Project Manager	44,999	24,999	31,665

Average income of in-house language professionals in relation to language combination



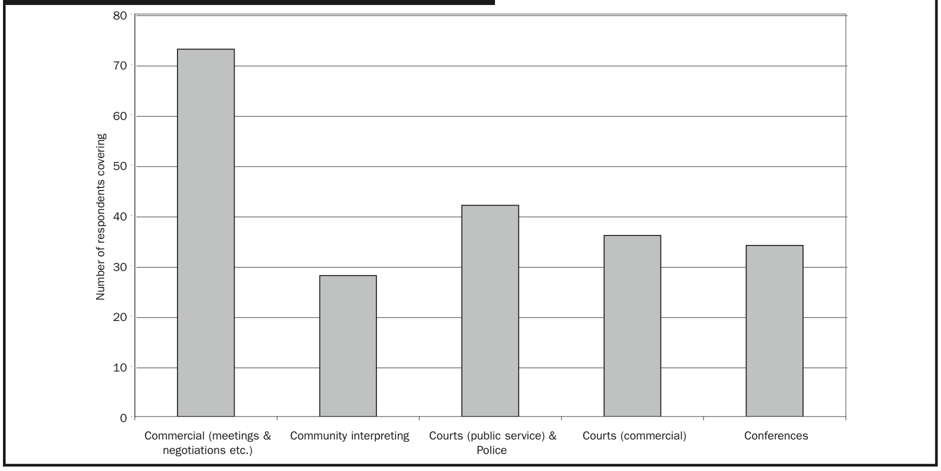
Comparative use of translation memory by in-house and freelance professionals



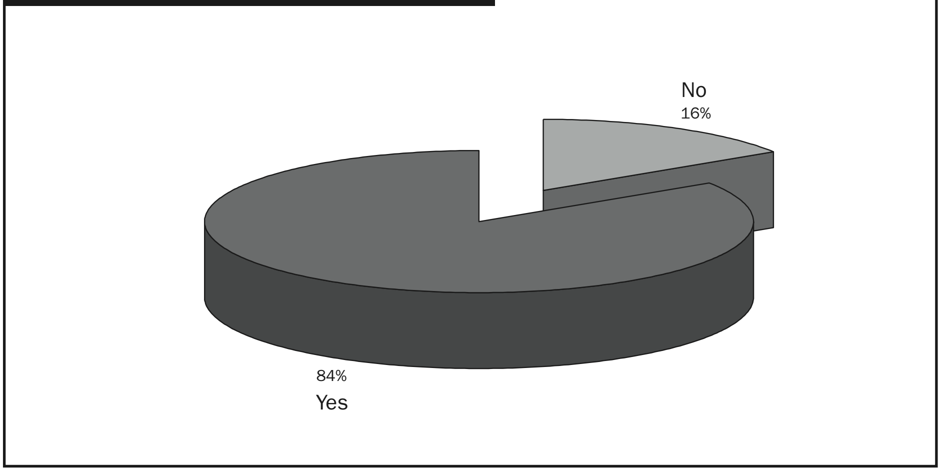
INTERPRETERS

By Michael Benis

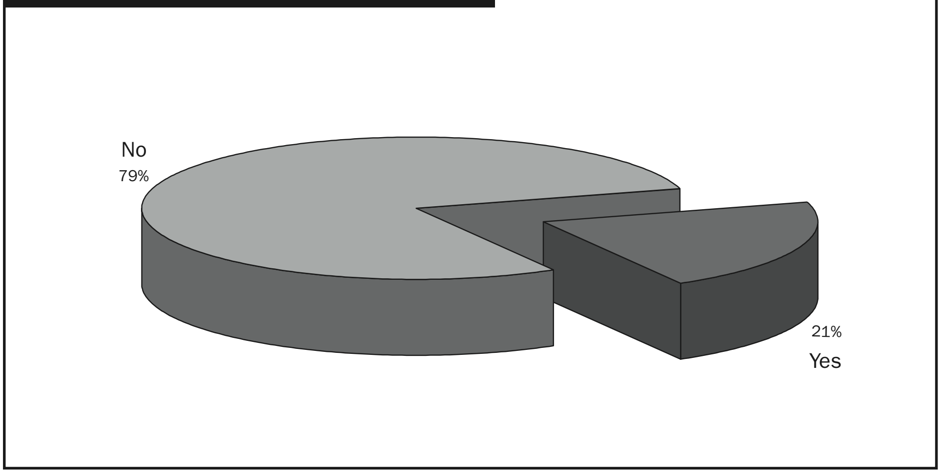
Fields covered



Interpreters offering a half-day rate



Interpreters charging for preparation



11 of the survey respondents worked purely as freelance interpreters, while 73 were also freelance translators. Interpreters as a group thus constituted 16.21% of the total sample of 518 freelance language professionals. This was an increase of 44 in number on the 1998 ITI Rates & Salaries Survey, when interpreters accounted for 11% of a smaller total number of respondents (470).

Most respondents covered more than one field, as can be seen from the chart on the left.

> Conference respondents may be unaware that their rates substantially undercut those recommended by AIIC.

The information on public service interpreting rates was less complete than for other sub-groups since a number of respondents stated that they applied the standard rates for public service work, without specifying these rates or being aware that there are no mandatory rates for the courts (only the Lord Chancellor's Department guidelines, which are discretionary), and that rates can vary between public service bodies, including the courts and police authorities. The latter do tend to keep their interpreters informed of their latest rates, often negotiated with the Association of Police and Court Interpreters. A number of respondents charged less than the current police base rate of approximately £29 per hour when working for the courts, indicating both that they did not work for the police and were probably unaware of their rates. A number of conference interpreter respondents may be similarly unaware that their rates substantially undercut those recommended by AIIC, the international association of conference interpreters.

Most interpreter respondents did not apply surcharges or charge for preparation. They were also generally prepared to offer half-day rates, which generally amounted to 2/3 of their standard daily fee.

Language combination	Gross income	Commercial	Community	Court (PS) + Police	Court (commercial)	Conference
Grand Average	£31,249.04	£247.81	£174.95	£218.73	£254.99	£287.40
Albanian/English	£14,999.00	£120.00	£100.00	£150.00	£140.00	£140.00
Arabic/English	£14,999.00	£220.00	£135.00	£180.00	£180.00	£280.00
BSL/English	£54,999.00	£168.00	£168.00	£168.00	£280.00	£200.00
Bulgarian/English	£19,999.00	£200.00		£200.00	£250.00	£250.00
Catalan/English	£29,999.00	£290.00	£200.00		£290.00	
Chinese/English	£24,999.00	£200.00	£150.00	£100.00	£240.00	£200.00
Czech/English	£39,999.00	£212.50				£250.00
Danish/English	£57,499.50	£385.00		£400.00	£392.50	£385.00
Dutch/English	£27,499.00	£250.00		£300.00	£300.00	£300.00
Dutch/French	£54,999.00	£341.00		£341.00	£341.00	£341.00
English/Albanian	£14,999.00	£120.00	£100.00	£150.00	£140.00	£140.00
English/Arabic	£14,999.00	£220.00	£135.00	£180.00	£180.00	£280.00
English/BSL	£49,999.00	£168.00	£168.00	£168.00	£280.00	£200.00
English/Bulgarian	£19,999.00	£200.00		£200.00	£250.00	£250.00
English/Chinese	£24,999.00	£200.00	£150.00	£100.00	£240.00	£200.00
English/Croatian	£29,999.00	£200.00				
English/Czech	£32,499.00	£225.00	£180.00	£224.00	£240.00	£266.00
English/Dari	£39,999.00	£270.00	£185.00	£250.00		
English/Dutch	£19,999.00	£200.00				
English/Farsi	£39,999.00	£270.00	£185.00	£250.00		
English/French	£28,570.43	£228.50	£87.50	£260.25	£320.50	£305.33
English/German	£37,141.86	£232.00	£240.00	£209.20	£243.33	£253.00
English/Greek	£14,999.00	£250.00			£250.00	£180.00
English/Hebrew	£350.00	£350.00	£350.00	£350.00		
English/Italian	£32,141.86	£223.57	£200.00	£199.33	£225.00	£236.67
English/Japanese	£29,999.00	£300.00				£400.00
English/Korean	£29,999.00	£280.00	£280.00	£280.00	£280.00	£400.00
English/Norwegian	£75,000.00	£385.00			£385.00	£385.00
English/Polish	£19,999.00	£275.00	£180.00	£224.00	£240.00	£282.00
English/Portuguese	£16,665.67	£206.67	£120.00	£100.00	£160.00	
English/Punjabi	£14,999.00		£224.00	£224.00	£224.00	
English/Romanian	£19,999.00	£200.00	£100.00	£224.00		
English/Russian	£30,713.29	£235.29	£127.50	£80.00	£200.00	£355.67
English/Spanish	£23,749.00	£240.63	£152.00	£216.00	£245.00	£268.75
English/Swedish	£19,999.00	£300.00				£300.00
English/Turkish	£46,666.00	£266.67	£234.00	£196.00	£300.00	£400.00
English/Ukrainian	£34,999.00	£230.00	£180.00			
English/Welsh	£29,999.00		£160.00			£160.00
Farsi/English	£39,999.00	£270.00	£185.00	£250.00		
French/Dutch	£44,999.00	£320.50		£320.50	£320.50	£320.50
French/English	£28,887.89	£219.17	£170.00	£196.60	£213.25	
French/Greek	£14,999.00					£180.00
French/Italian	£29,999.00	£210.00			£210.00	
French/Portuguese	£14,999.00	£160.00	£80.00	£100.00	£160.00	
French/Russian	£24,999.00	£367.00				£367.00
French/Spanish	£37,499.00	£237.50	£96.00	£200.00	£200.00	£300.00

Language combination	Gross income	Commercial	Community	Court (PS) + Police	Court (commercial)	Conference
German/English	£34,999.00	£224.17	£255.00	£214.50	£231.25	£256.25
German/Italian	£29,999.00	£210.00			£210.00	
German/Russian	£39,999.00	£250.00				£350.00
Greek/English	£14,999.00	£250.00			£250.00	
Greek/French	£14,999.00					£180.00
Hebrew/English	£350.00	£350.00	£350.00	£350.00		
Italian/English	£30,713.29	£244.29	£213.33	£202.50	£238.00	£237.50
Japanese/English	£39,999.17	£341.67			£450.00	£425.00
Korean/English	£29,999.00	£280.00	£280.00	£280.00	£280.00	£400.00
Norwegian/English	£57,499.50	£385.00		£400.00	£392.50	£385.00
Polish/English	£34,999.00	£250.00				
Portuguese/English	£28,332.33	£245.00		£212.50	£168.00	
Punjabi/English	£14,999.00		£224.00	£224.00	£224.00	
Romanian/English	£19,999.00	£200.00	£100.00	£224.00		
Russian/English	£27,499.00	£230.88	£98.33	£80.00	£200.00	£316.75
Spanish/English	£26,362.64	£242.00	£148.00	£210.25	£219.33	£300.00
Spanish/German	£54,999.00	£350.00		£232.00	£240.00	
Swedish/English	£52,499.00	£475.00		£400.00	£400.00	£475.00
Turkish/English	£46,666.00	£266.67	£234.00	£196.00	£300.00	£400.00
Urdu/English	£14,999.00		£224.00	£224.00	£224.00	
Welsh/English	£29,999.00		£160.00			£160.00

Community interpreting rates have not only failed to keep pace with inflation but have indeed fallen, with users continuing to exploit the community loyalty of the interpreters concerned. This will undoubtedly lead to a crisis in supply at some point, but there are no signs that this will be in the near future.

The survey results also indicate that conference interpreting rates have fallen considerably. This seems to be linked to the increasing use of non-AIIC interpreters and a possible concomitant fall in quality.

Rates in the remaining fields and police interpreting in particular, have kept pace with inflation. Although there has been a move to bring magistrates' court rates into line with those adopted by local police authorities, the fact that the Lord Chancellor's Department guideline minimum of 3 hours is inflexibly adopted by many courts, despite the fact that interpreters have to keep a day free to cater for all eventualities, has resulted in some experienced interpreters withdrawing from public service court work due to the loss of income that can be incurred.

Community interpreting rates have not only failed to keep pace with inflation but have indeed fallen. Conference interpreting rates have also fallen considerably.

Interepreting rates compared

Comparing the rates for 2001 with those for 1998 shows a mixed trend.

Type	1998	2001
Commercial	£ 220	£ 247
Community	£ 175	£ 175
Court (PS) & Police	£ 170	£ 219
Court (commercial)	£ 230	£ 254
Conference	£ 330	£ 287

Concluding remarks

It was for many years the case that the profession of translator and interpreter was largely confined to the academic and diplomatic worlds, where it enjoyed a relatively secure status and income. Although demand has increased substantially with the “information age” and globalisation, the profession has, ironically, tended to become less understood, less highly-valued and less secure (following increasing recourse to outsourcing). Income levels have in many cases fallen in real terms and are barely keeping pace with inflation overall, sinking to the bottom end of the scale for professionals apart from a few exemplary exceptions.

Many of these problems stem from a lack of public awareness and poor or insufficient communication and marketing from the profession. It is significant that rather than emphasising the competitive advantages of successful liaison and negotiations or of enhanced product reliability and corporate image - together with all the economic consequences of success or failure in these areas, translation companies and freelance professionals instead boast of process certification or the deployment of technologies for reducing unit costs. The emphasis continues to be on cheaper words rather than a more effective and memorable global market image and communications. It is equally significant that no real work has been done in the commercial sphere on developing approaches to translation quality metrics.

In short, translation and interpreting are unique amongst the communication professions in assuming that all synonyms are equal, and in selling themselves in relation to litres of ink, number of bytes or hours of hot air rather than the value of their effects for their customers.

It is likewise symptomatic of this situation that only two vocational translation courses in Europe have a substantial business or marketing component.

It should consequently come as no surprise to learn that many gifted translators choose to deploy the skills they acquired within the profession in areas outside it where their value is appreciated and rewarded more highly, such as software development, international marketing and sales, advertising and PR. Likewise, it should come as no surprise to hear that many of the students on translation courses do not have any intention of entering the profession, but plan to use their postgraduate qualifications to secure increased opportunities elsewhere.

The ITI Rates & Salaries Survey 2001 both delineates the economic features of this state of affairs and suggests how it may be overcome. It certainly provides strong support for the contention that freelance language professionals would be well advised to pay more attention to the entrepreneurial aspects of their work, and negotiating and marketing skills in particular, rather than concentrating on the linguistic and technical side alone. It also presents a strong case for evaluating the nature and role of specialisation within the profession.

Vigorous and stable professional associations have an increasingly vital role to play in facilitating this, both through support for continuing professional development and through sustained press and public relations to raise awareness of the strategic and competitive advantages of effective cross-cultural consultancy and mediation in a mature market scenario.

The silver lining in this bleak picture is that there’s a whole new market out there just waiting for us to define our role.

The emphasis continues to be on cheaper words rather than a more effective and memorable global market image and communications.

Translation and interpreting are unique amongst the communication professions in assuming that all synonyms are equal, and in selling themselves in relation to litres of ink, number of bytes or hours of hot air rather than the value of their effects for their customers.

Post script

The design of the survey questionnaire was not without its faults, which many respondents kindly pointed out. These ranged from the use of “GB” rather than “UK”, or “EU” rather than “other EU”, to a failure to define urgency or specialisation in precise terms, establish the use translators are making of MT software, distinguish between interpreter rates for direct clients and agencies, and set a lower threshold for Internet usage and customers abroad (including a definition of what the percentage refers to). The above have been listed partly as a pro memoria, but above all to stimulate a critical analysis in readers while simultaneously inviting you to make further recommendations for incorporation in future surveys. Please send them and any other feedback to me at: **michaelbenis@totalise.co.uk** and I will do my best to ensure your words are heeded in the design of the next survey, even if I myself am not responsible for drawing up the results.

TERMS OF PAYMENT

By Graham Cross

Slow Payment?

In a massive response (496 responses) to the survey question (Do you feed that slow payment is: a problem, a major nuisance, a minor nuisance or no problem?) just over a quarter who thought it was a problem or a major nuisance, of which just under half (11% of the total) felt that it was a problem. Among those for whom it was a major nuisance or a problem, it was those in the age group with the greatest family responsibilities (30-49) who, as might be expected, felt it most acutely. Exactly two thirds of those suffering from slow payment fell within this age group. Equally unsurprising perhaps, very few people indeed over the age of 60 said that they had any problems. 52% felt that slow payment was only a minor nuisance whereas only 22% said it was no problem at all.

Despite one out of ten regarding slow payment as a problem or a major nuisance, the overwhelming majority of respondents (94%) said that they had a good payment relationship with all or most of their customers, 29% stating that they had a good payment relationship with all their customers. The 6% minority must either be singularly unlucky, or perhaps it is they themselves who are to blame. To sum up then, apart from the 10%, who had a problem, most people in the industry seem to be fairly happy with how long they take to get paid.

But how long do people have to wait until they get paid? 81% of respondents said that their own standard terms were payment at 30 days (as now reinforced by statute), while 11% stated that their terms were 45 days (although a number of respondents also said that they did not have any option to set their own terms).

In the case of people working for UK translation companies, 29% said that they were paid within 30 days, but the majority, 55%, reported payment at up to 45 days (suggesting that their perception of a good payment relationship is despite their own terms of payment not being met in the majority of cases). 16% reported having to wait 60 days or more. These figures would seem to be broadly consistent with the average which I reported in an earlier article.

As has also been said previously, UK direct customers tend to pay sooner than UK translation companies, 62% of respondents stating that they were paid within 30 days, while 26% were paid within 45 days. Hardly anyone had to wait more than 60 days. The pattern for customers in Northern Europe (Holland, Germany, Scandinavia) is almost exactly the same as for UK direct customers. Elsewhere in the EU you have to wait much longer - 37% reported up to 60 days, 27% up to 45 days, and 28% up to 30 days. Only 7% however reported that they had to wait more than three months.

54.5% of respondents indicated that translation was not the main source of income for their household. Indeed many people pointed out that they wouldn't survive on it if they had to.

Outside the EU the two most quoted countries were Switzerland (10 out of 17 reporting 30 days, flanked by almost equal numbers reporting 14 days and 45 days), and the USA, where the range was the same but the numbers reporting 30 days were somewhat fewer (11 out of 23). Other isolated quotes were Australia 14 days, Canada 45 days, Cyprus 45 days, Czech Republic 30 days, Hong Kong 30 days, Japan 7 - 60 days, Lichtenstein 40 days, Norway 30 days, Poland 15 days, Russia 45 days, Taiwan 10-40 days, Thailand and Singapore 40 days, Yugoslavia 30 days. Much the same sort of picture everywhere therefore, although perhaps Belgium, commonly quoted at 90 days, should be avoided.

Shortest payment times varied from payment on the nail to payment within a fortnight, most clustering within less than 7 days, but without any clear pattern. Longest payment times revealed a predictable straggle of tail-enders extending up to 900+ days in one instance, but only 0.05% of respondents mentioned longest payment times in excess of three months.

Legal Action

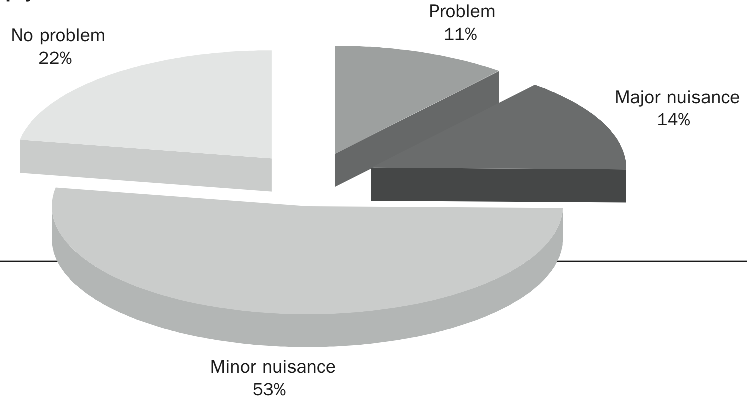
Consistent with the overall picture, very few respondents (5%) had to take anyone to court last year, and even less had to take more than one customer to court. (Although it must be said that if extrapolated to the ITI membership as a whole that 5% would account for 125 ITI members!).

The threat of court action is however still quite frequently necessary. 56 respondents reported that they normally issued one final demand per year, while the numbers issuing two, three four and five final demands were 49, 28, 12 and 4 respectively. Taken together these represent 25% of those taking part in the survey.

Who's out there?

The other questions in section 3 were designed to tell us something about who is active in the industry. Quite the most significant figure here is that only 45.5% of respondents reported translation as the main or only source of income in their household. In other words, for 54.5% of respondents indicated that translation was not the main source of income in their household. Indeed many people pointed out that they wouldn't survive on it if they had to. Not a very healthy situation - either for the individual, or even more so for the profession as a whole.

Perception of slow payment



An ageing profession?

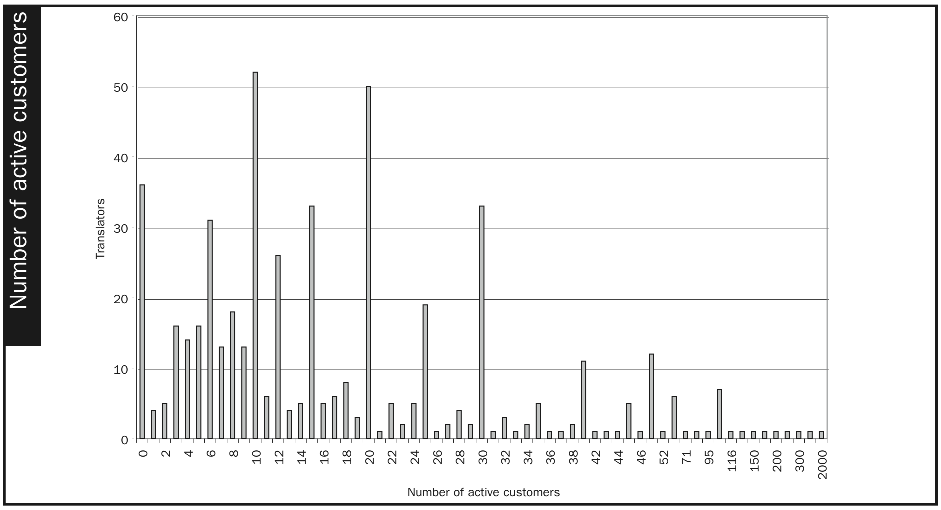
Another very significant fact is the virtual absence of people in their twenties from the profession (only 4% of the sample). Could this be confirmation of the received wisdom that you are unlikely to have enough experience or knowledge to become a translator until you are over 30? Or is the profession to suffer a serious skills shortage in the not too distant future, with new enrants to the profession put off by low incomes and no clear career development path? Translators were quite symmetrically distributed among the remaining population of working age, 27.5% in the 30-39 age group, 31.3% in the 40-49 age group and 24.3% in the 50-59 age group. Not all translators go on forever, the 60-69 group accounted for 8% and the over 70s 5%. Taken together the over 50s only total 37.3%.

In the light of the frequent comment that translators need 20 or so customers to be viable, many must be either disproving the rule or be non-viable.

The age distributions of those responding yes and no to translation being their main only source of income are very similar, which destroys the myth that disproportionately large numbers keep up translation as a hobby in retirement. There is also nothing in the figures to indicate that there are more older specialist translators than generalists. In fact the ratio of specialists to generalists hovers around the 2:1 mark for all age groups except the 20-29 group, in which it is reversed. Leaving aside that age group, which is only a very small proportion of the sample, the most striking feature of the replies to the survey is how similar the distributions all are, whichever way you look at them. The only really significant difference is that among those answering yes to translation being their main or only source of income, there were 10% more who were specialists than in the group answering no. Taken as a whole, just over half the number of respondents (54%) described themselves as specialists. However, the specialist/generalist divide is somewhat subjective, with many describing themselves as both (which is why there is a discrepancy in the ratios). Many specialists have to be generalists too in order to survive.

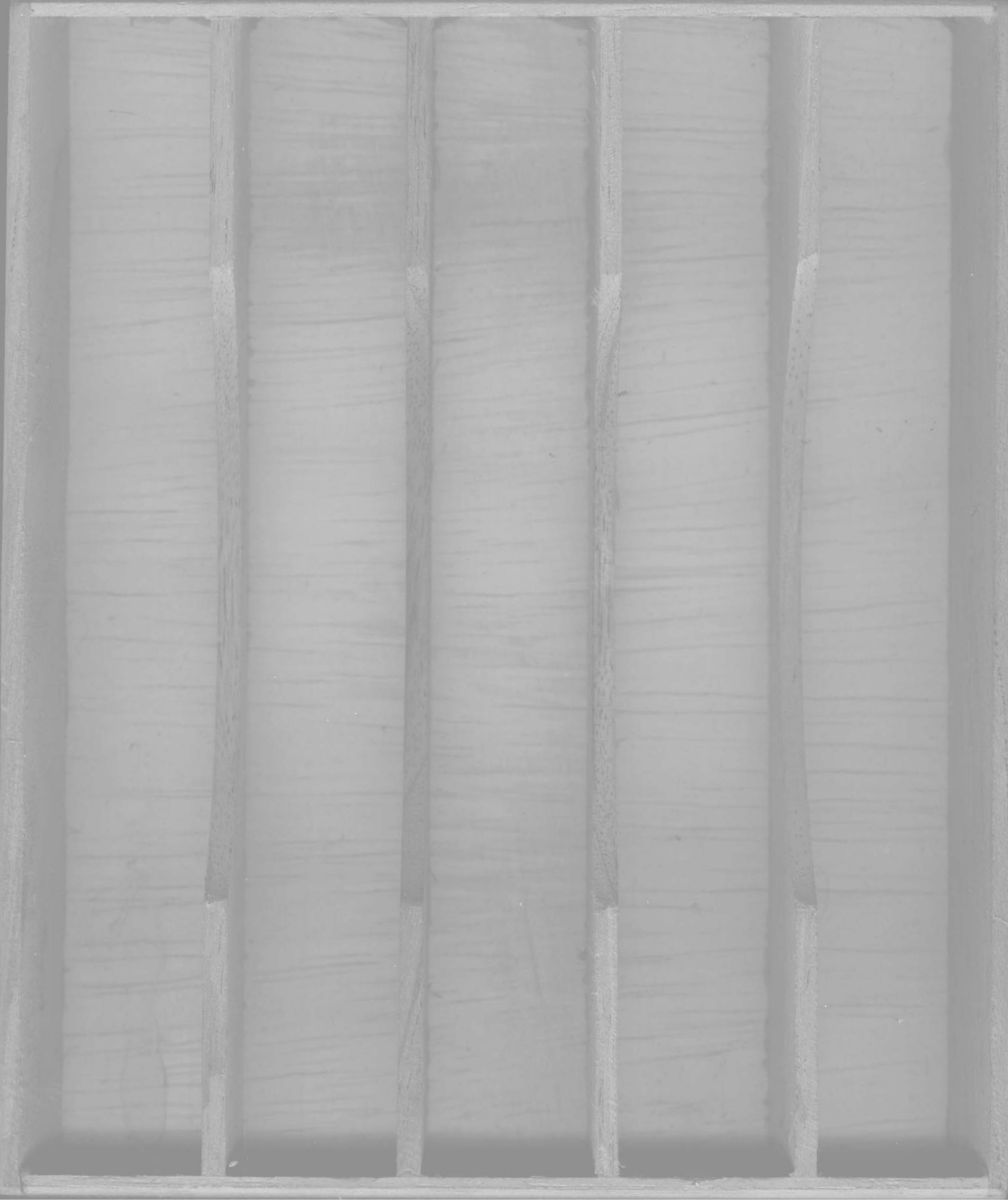
How many clients?

Finally, the question on the number of active customers shows some interesting although perhaps rather worrying data. This is displayed as a bar chart (below), but unfortunately it cannot be used for anything more precise than a visual impression. The observant will notice that there are disproportionately high peaks at 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 40 and 50, which can only mean that many respondents were guessing their number of customers, not counting them. However what is clearly apparent from the chart is that most translators tend to be working with a relatively small number of customers. It would be interesting to correlate number of customers with turnover, but unfortunately the way in which we have compiled and processed this year's survey does not allow us to do that. But in the light of the frequent comment that translators need 20 or so customers to be viable, many must be either disproving the rule or non-viable.



Is the profession to suffer a serious skills shortage in the not too distant future, with new entrants to the profession put off by low incomes and no clear career development?

In conclusion, from the payments point of view the situation is perhaps not as bad as it could be, and the great majority, if not happy with delays in payment, do at least feel that they can live with them. From the profiles point of view the most striking feature is the extremely small proportion of translators under the age of 30, and the relative uniformity of translators aged over 30 on the basis of almost all the criteria examined. On the economic side the figures from the survey do not make encouraging reading, and indeed we may even be seeing the beginnings of a situation where substantial numbers may drift away from the profession. Does this mean that we will be heading for a skills shortage a few years down the line? - time and a future survey will tell.



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