REPORT

TOP Translator Opinion Poll 2018

translatoropinionpoll.com

Translators | Universities | Associations | LSPs | Publishers

PREFACE
An Introduction written by J.Z.,
English into German independent translator and writer. 4

INTRODUCTION
An overview of the TOP Project – Translator Opinion Poll 2018:
the survey, the partners, the method and the tools used. 5

DEMOGRAPHIC
A picture of today's translators: age, gender, years of experience,
education and more about their professional life. 13

CLIENT
An exploration of the relationship between translators and their
possible clients: LSP/s, company/ies, Publisher/s. 29

TECHNOLOGY
An examination of the relationship between translators and new
translation technologies: from CAT tools to MT. 55

NETWORKING
A look at the ways in which translators interact socially in this digital era. 81

CONCLUSION
A summary of the report, underlining the most important outcomes. 95

PREFACE

It’s famously difficult to survey translators and get meaningful results. We are a diverse lot and we’re proud of it. Especially when it comes to “freelance” translators, the “free” doesn’t necessarily help to find commonalities among the many practitioners. Add to that the different language combinations we work in, the different (kinds of) clients we serve, and the different subject matters we’re experts in, and it becomes apparent why this is a particularly difficult task. The phrase “herding cats” comes to my mind; I’m sure it also occurred to the various stakeholder groups who organized the survey. One clear advantage for the organizers was their own diversity, with a language service provider (LSP), universities, and associations all taking part in creating and promoting the survey. The result is a helpful, sometimes surprising, occasionally even shocking collection of insights about the translation industry—or the phrase I prefer: the world of translation—from the translator’s point of view.

I don’t want to steal any thunder from your first-hand study of the survey results, but let me highlight just a few of the survey’s data points: the gender gap, how a translator’s level of experience makes a difference (and creates insights for the less experienced), and our progress in technology adoption (and how far we might still have to go).

One result that did not surprise me (or anyone else who has ever been to translators’ conferences) is that three-quarters of the respondents were female. Especially in Western Europe and the Americas, translators are female by such a large margin that I wouldn’t have been surprised by 80% or more. On the other hand, I was surprised by the survey’s results revealing stereotypical specializations of the different genders (a much larger percentage of female translators for instance work in fashion translation and a smaller percentage in technical translation). And I was gobsmacked to see the difference in pay between male and female translators. While the authors of the survey added a cautionary “editor’s note” with some disclaimers, these findings alarmed me and should alarm you. In a profession where most of us work independently from home or our own offices (so clients and translators rarely interact face to face) and where the level of education (as another data point shows) is actually higher among female translators than among male translators, this is something that should make any translator stop in her or, yes, his tracks.

A high level of experience seems to make a difference on almost every level. Not only is there a higher level of satisfaction with pay (which, not surprisingly, is higher for experienced translators), but also with a higher level of specialization, a larger number of clients, a lower level of working in post-editing of machine translation (PEMT) or, in fact, overall use of machine translation. For less experienced translators these should be helpful insights. Especially specialization has long been held up as a key to success in translation, something that the survey verifies. It should also be encouraging that the average pay increases with experience. I do find it concerning, though, that PEMT is mostly done by inexperienced translators. This might be not surprising (the less experience a translator has, the less freedom he or she might feel to not work with certain tasks and in certain areas), but the task of post-editing machine translation output can have a very detrimental effect on the ability of young translators to keep up their hard-learned translation skills (more than half of all translators have a master’s degree or higher).

Some of the other data points relating to technology are very encouraging, while others are not. It is good that technology is overall seen as something positive in the life of translators. In my opinion it’s also positive that web-based tools, which clearly represent the future of translation tools, are “often” used by more than half of the survey respondents. I’m not sure, however, that it’s positive that less than half of the surveyed translators feel “very familiar” with the computer-aided translation (CAT) tool of their choice. While overall 75% feel at least “familiar” with their CAT tool, I know that the owner of a printshop would feel alarmed if 100% of her employees were not “very familiar” with their printing equipment. It should be just the same with the equipment that the vast majority of us use. Whether this is due to the over-complexity of the tools or lack of training might be a good topic for another survey to explore.

Speaking of a next survey—or, in fact, a next edition of this survey—I would be interested to see a few data points explored differently. The inclusion of literary translators (working for “publishers”) is not particularly helpful and might unnecessarily dilute some of the otherwise very helpful numbers (especially when it comes to areas like technology and pay). I’m sure that the geographical reach of the next edition will be more deliberate, and I anticipate that the exclusion of Twitter as a social network will be remedied (especially now with the vibrant discussions taking place on the rotating curation account @TranslationTalk).

I can guarantee you, however, that this survey will richly inform you about the world you are part of, that you are thinking about becoming part of, or that you as a potential client might be thinking about utilizing. If you belong to the latter, you will be impressed by the thoughtfulness and high level of education of the folks you’re going to work with.

Jost Zetzsche
English into German independent translator; localization consultant and writer.
Author of “A Translator’s Tool Box for the 21st Century” and “Translation Matters”.
Co-author of “Found in Translation: how Language Shapes Our Lives and Transforms the World”.

INTRODUCTION

An overview of the TOP Project – Translator Opinion Poll 2018: the survey, the partners, the method and the tools used.

The global localization industry is estimated to be worth USD 47 billion (source: Common Sense Advisory, 2018) and is continuously growing. With large and small translation agencies (language service providers, or "LSPs") in the tens of thousands and roughly 650,000 translators around the world, the translation industry plays a crucial role in facilitating communication between nations, making it a pillar of the modern global economy.
It is no coincidence that, in a study on career opportunities for graduates in 2017, the Extension Center for Research on the Regional Economy at the University of California in San Diego drew up a list of the top ten emerging professions, ranking language specialists, i.e., translators and interpreters, first [1].

Nonetheless, professional translators remain in the background and their work is overlooked without the public realizing how essential their contribution is.

Translators enable companies to transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries, giving them the chance to speak to the world and to be understood. Moreover, a sweeping transformation of their manner of work is currently underway with the advent of the digital age and the artificial intelligence technologies that are overwhelmingly revolutionizing this profession.

It is specifically to shed light on this oft-ignored microcosm that the Translator Opinion Poll (TOP) was created as the first international survey that tracks and analyzes the most current trends in the translation industry, letting its key professional figures, translators, speak for themselves.

Through the partnership of two leading forces in the translation world, Way2Global S.r.l. SB and Civica Scuola Interpreti e Traduttori Altiero Spinelli in Milan, Italy, TOP was first developed as a European project with the involvement of ITIRI (Institut de Traducteurs, d'Interprètes et de Relations Internationales) of Strasbourg University. It was then expanded globally when responses to the questionnaires flowed in from translators around the world. In the current year, this process has served as a test to confirm the project's efficacy worldwide (18% of the responses received were from outside Europe, corresponding to 199 non-European translators) and its reach will grow in future editions, making TOP the quintessential survey for the translating world.

---

[1] For the complete article, visit https://slator.com/industry-news/interpreters-translators-top-emerging-career-2017-according-uc-san-diego/

In addition to the initial demographic section, the questionnaire covers the three macro areas of interest to the professional translator:

1. **Clients**
   The first part of the questionnaire explores the relationship between translators and their various types of clients (small businesses and mid-sized companies, large corporations, global multinationals, LSPs, publishing companies, etc.), to highlight the translator's expectations and evaluate the extent to which the market effectively meets them.

2. **Technology**
   The second part of the questionnaire examines the relationship between translators and new translation technologies, such as CAT tools, TMs, and MT (machine translation). The aim is to grasp how translation specialists perceive the most advanced technologies currently available and analyze the extent of their familiarity with these technologies and how they use them.

3. **Socialization and Networking**
   The third and final part looks at the ways in which translators, who often work as freelancers, interact socially. In the era of social networks and online communities, the survey focuses on how translators forge relationships with other professionals and with the world of work in general: the use of social media and forums, visits to specific sites and training platforms and active participation in translators' associations.

The result is an in-depth, complete and global survey of the translator's role in the context of the current work world, with an eye on the future development of the language service sector, "with the conviction that, considering the exponential development of technologies, humans must reassert their enduring preeminence in a sort of new Humanism" (Laura Gori, CEO of Way2Global S.r.l. SB).

In the words of its respondents, the questionnaire "takes responsibility for ensuring the needs of the translators" and "deals with true, objective questions considering translator's job".

In keeping with TOP2018's aim of being a useful resource for the entire translation world and those who work in it, five separate reports have been prepared, dealing with:

1. Translators
2. LSPs
3. Translators' associations
4. Universities
5. Publishers

Translators

This report is dedicated to translators and focuses on the role of these language industry professionals: their work, their relationships with clients and translators' associations, their level of training, their relationship with technology and the various fields in which they specialize. Particular emphasis is given to comparative analysis of translators in order to gain an understanding of their specific characteristics and differences based on age, geographical location and the languages they translate. The survey covers a wide range of information, from the different types of clients and their respective impact on parameters like total work hours, relationships and remuneration, to translators' associations, the services they offer and the level of satisfaction that translators respectively report; It also covers universities and the training programs they offer, in order to evaluate the extent to which the teaching provided is effectively marketable. The report gives a full, 360-degree view of professionals, their expectations and their work, enabling them to better understand their context and compare it to that of their peers translating in other parts of the world.

LSPs

The report on LSPs (language service providers, otherwise known as translation agencies) focuses on the most relevant data for what continue to be the leading employers in the language service industry. In addition to painting a general picture of translators' responses to the questionnaire, details are provided on aspects like the benefits that most interest translators when negotiating for projects or contracts. This report gives LSPs a more comprehensive view of translators, so they can see the work relationship from translators' point of view as well. In particular, the information ranges from the working methods of translators serving LSPs around the world to the different rates they apply. It also covers the most common areas of expertise and niche fields, as well as the factors that translators rate as most positive (benefits, payment terms, deadlines and relationships with project managers) and suggestions for better, more fruitful relationships with them. The end aim is to help LSPs gain an objective idea of this key figure, the translator, to facilitate the creation of mutually beneficial relationships.

Associations

The report on translators' associations outlines the translators' responses before delving into the information gathered on aspects like: how translators view networking and the advantages they gain from translators' associations, analyzed by age group and nationality, with a comparison of translators' preferred associations and much more. The purpose is to give the individual associations an overview of the relationship that industry players forge with professional translators, from the translator's point of view. In particular, attention is devoted to questions like: Are there specific age groups that seem more open to joining translators' associations? What services do the associations provide that translators most appreciate? Are there are other interesting services not currently offered? In what areas of the world do translators' associations have the widest reach and best represent professionals' interests?

Universities

The report on universities was designed to highlight the most salient aspects for the general and specialist training sector. Not only does it report the responses given by translators, but it also evaluates the information gathered on aspects like training level and new technologies now available. The aim is to give universities a clearer picture of the modern translator and the effect that different training and curricular programs can have on the development of their careers. It gathers the viewpoints and suggestions of the translators who responded to the questionnaire, highlighting the current strengths and areas for improvement if training is to increasingly meet the demand expressed by the labor market. Practically speaking, it provides feedback on university courses, which academia could use to better meet the working needs of future translators.

Publishers

The report on publishers focuses on the most important information for those who manage and handle translations for publishers. In addition to an overview of the translators' responses to the questionnaire, this report provides specific details on the publishing sector. With this customized report, publishers can gain an understanding of their relationships with translators from the point of view of the latter. The information covers a wide range of aspects, from the type of relationship — direct or indirect — with publishers and copyright payments, to the importance of receiving feedback from both authors and clients, translators' opinions on the value of translation tests and suggestions to make collaboration more efficient. The aim is to provide publishers with a key for the critical assessment of professional translators' opinions, requirements and needs, based on data, that can pave the way to better, mutually beneficial relationships.

TOP Partners – 2018

LSPs:

Way2Global S.r.l. SB
www.way2global.com
A next-generation language service provider and benefit corporation. Providing localization, translation and interpreting services in all languages, Way2Global's mission is to eliminate linguistic and cultural barriers, foster cross-cultural understanding and communication, and connect people and countries.

WAY2GLOBAL
THE B CORPORATION BY TRANS-EDIT GROUP

UNIVERSITIES

Civica Scuola Interpreti e Traduttori "Altiero Spinelli"
www.fondazionemilano.eu/lingue/
Civica Scuola Interpreti e Traduttori "Altiero Spinelli" is the Applied Language Department of Fondazione Milano® – Scuole Civiche di Milano and has, for years, provided future translators and interpreters with superior professional training.

Civica Scuola
Interpreti e Traduttori
Altiero Spinelli

ITIRI - Institut de Traducteurs, d'Interprètes et de Relations Internationales, Strasbourg
http://itiri.unistra.fr/
ITIRI is a postgraduate university institute that is part of the University of Strasbourg's Faculty of Languages and Foreign Cultures, for graduates in translation, interpreting and international relations.

itiri
Institut de Traducteurs, d'Interprètes et de Relations Internationales
Université
de Strasbourg

"Fondazione Villaggio dei Ragazzi - Don Salvatore D'Angelo" SSML Maddaloni
www.ssmlmaddaloni.it
For years, Scuola Superiore per Mediatori Linguistici has trained translation and interpreting experts, focusing on their mastery of various languages and cultures.

Additional TOP contributors

- Department of Modern Languages and Cultures, Università degli Studi di Genova
- ISIT – Istituto Accademico per Interpreti e Traduttori di Trento
- DUSIC Department - Languages, Università degli Studi di Parma
- IUSLIT Department, Università degli Studi di Trieste

ASSOCIATIONS

ACTA - freelancers' association
www.actainrete.it
ACTA was founded by a group of professionals as Italy's first association representing freelancers. It aims to fill the gap in freelancer representation in the working world and is exclusively funded by member donations and membership fees. Over time, ACTA has developed a targeted offer of services and network agreements to meet the needs of all freelancers.

Additional TOP contributors

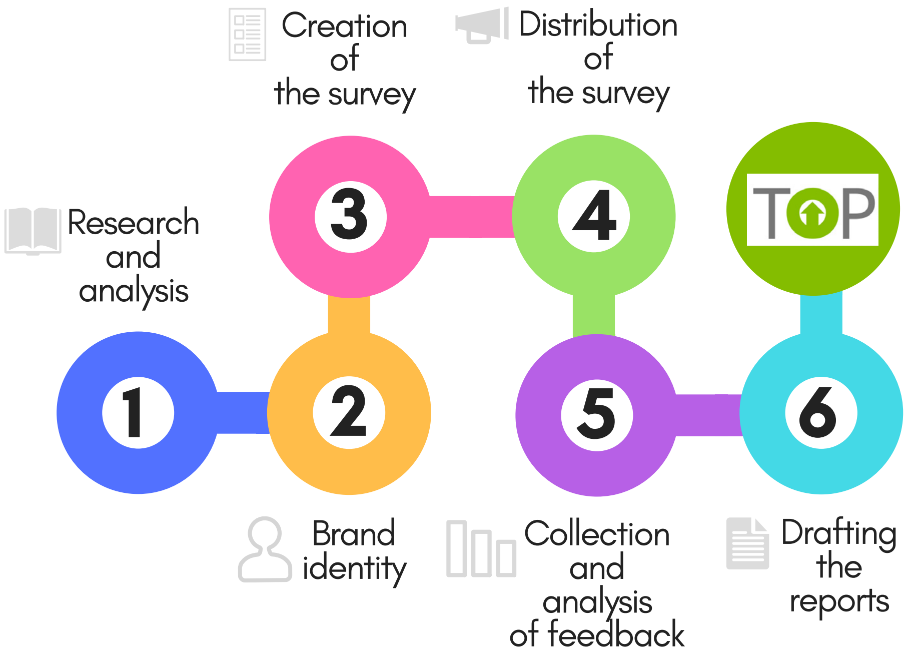
- AITI – Associazione Italiana Traduttori e Interpreti

TRANSLATORS

All the translators who responded to the survey and actively collaborated by sharing it with their networks.

Method and tools

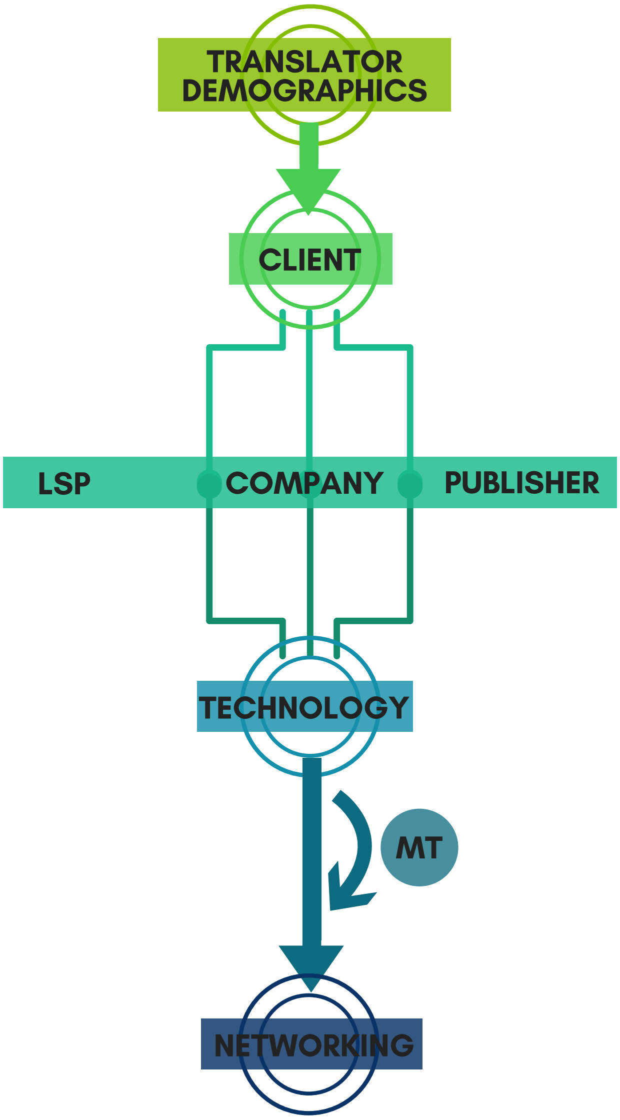
The key steps in the TOP development process:


Research and analysis
1
2
Brand identity
3
Creation of the survey
4
Distribution of the survey
5
Collection and analysis of feedback
6
Drafting the reports
TOP

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	1107	100%
GENDER	276 MEN (24.95%)	822 WOMEN (74.29%)*
WESTERN EUROPE	788	71%
EASTERN EUROPE	121	11%
USA & CANADA	55	5%
LATIN AMERICA	66	6%
ASIA & OCEANIA	33	3%
AFRICA	44	4%

* 0.75% = OTHER (9)

The survey consists of 32 to 42 questions, depending on the type of client selected at the start, and is structured as follows:


TRANSLATOR DEMOGRAPHICS
CLIENT
LSP
COMPANY
PUBLISHER
TECHNOLOGY
MT
NETWORKING

At the end of each section, there is a blank space for comments on the aspects covered (Client, Technology or Networking).

Respondents may also enter their email address at the end of the survey to receive the report.

Links:

Website: www.translatoropinionpoll.com

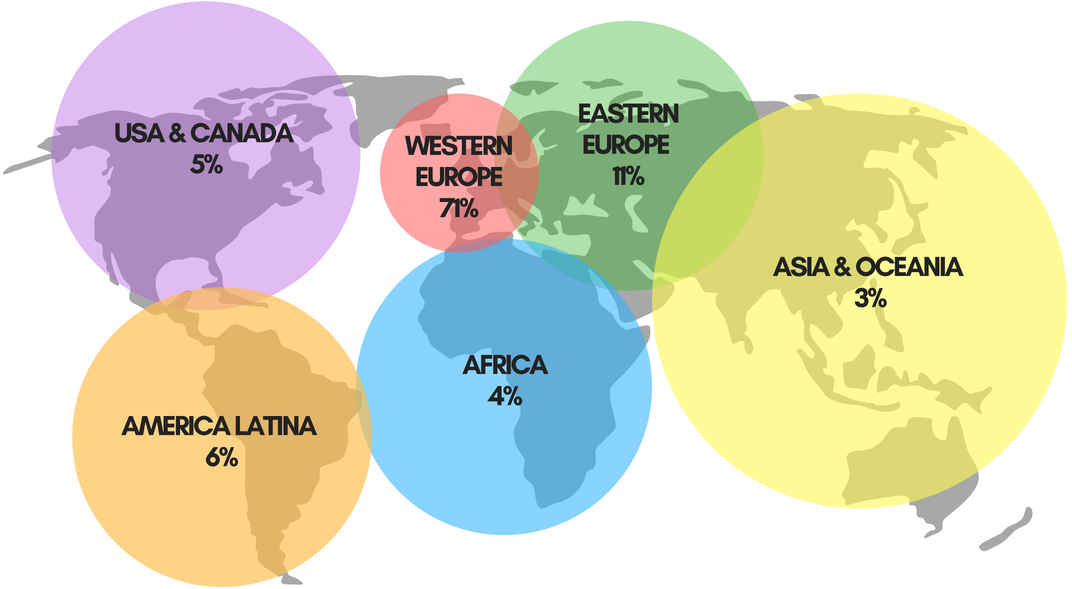
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/Translator-Opinion-Poll-362888540855348/

LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/company/translator-opinion-poll/

DEMOGRAPHIC

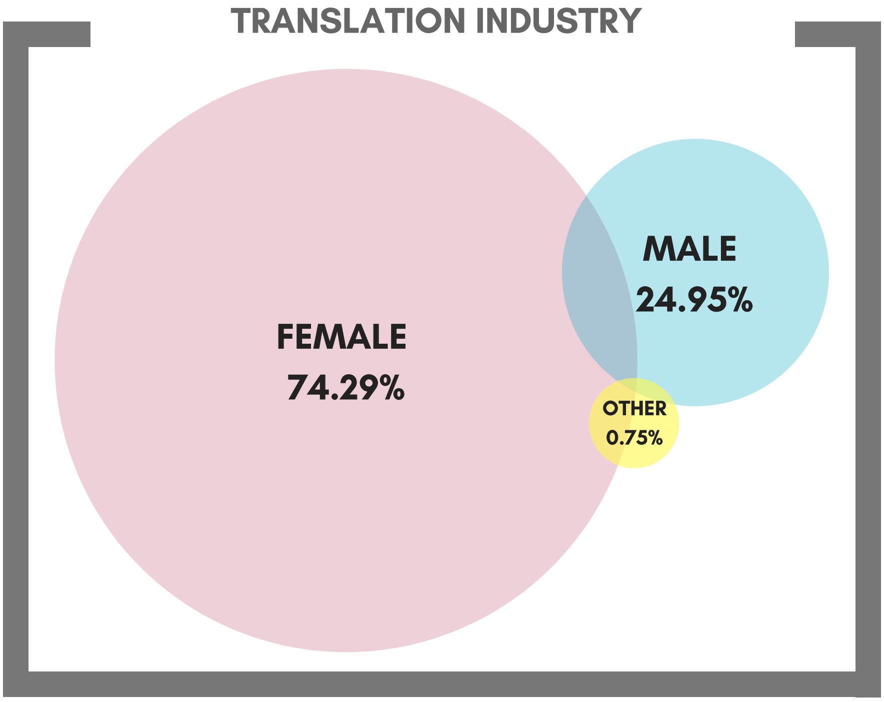
A picture of today's translators: age, gender, years of experience, education and more about their professional life.

Who responded to the survey?
1,107 questionnaires were collected in all, in the following regions:


USA & CANADA
5%
WESTERN
EUROPE
71%
EASTERN
EUROPE
11%
ASIA & OCEANIA
3%
AFRICA
4%
AMERICA LATINA
6%

As expected, the vast majority of respondents are based in Western Europe. The survey was originally meant to be limited to Europe, and only subsequently did it spontaneously spread to the rest of the world.

Gender



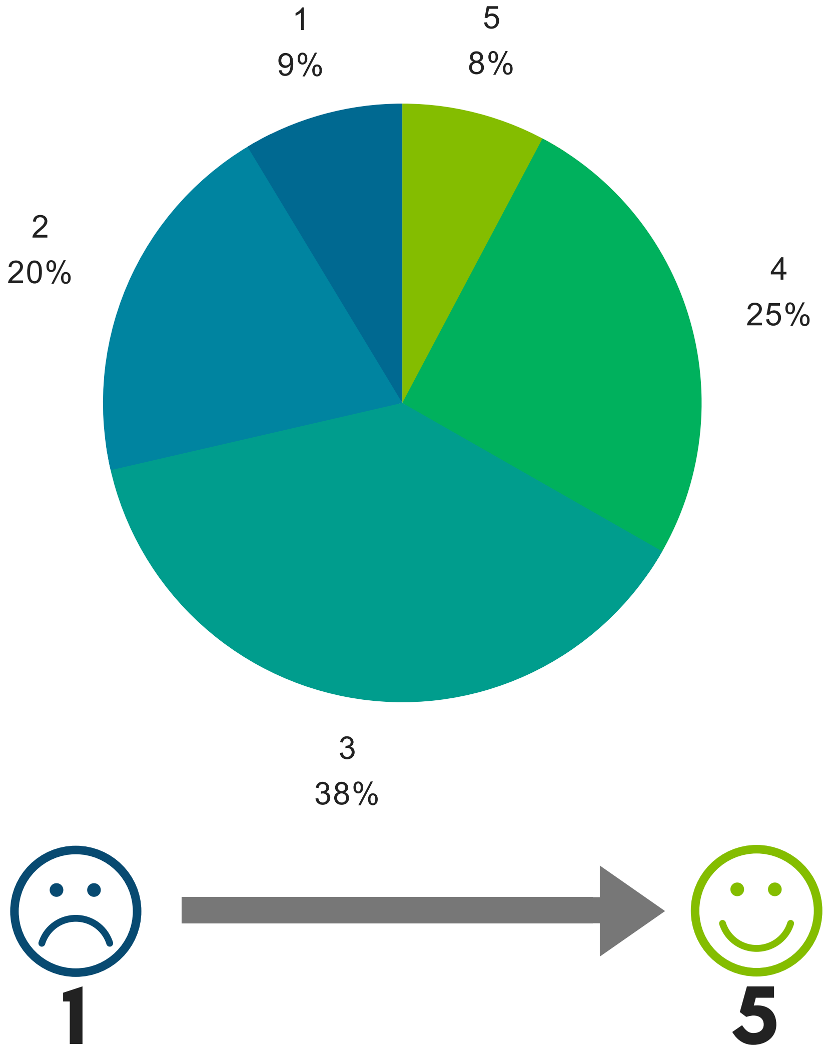
Most translators are female: 74.29% of the respondents are women and 24.95% are men.

Analyzing this data by geographical area, the ratio remains constant nearly everywhere, except in Africa, where male translators make up 58.33%, exceeding the percentage of female translators, 37.5%.

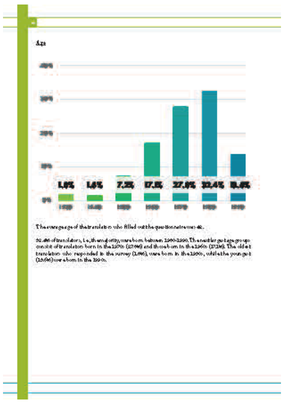
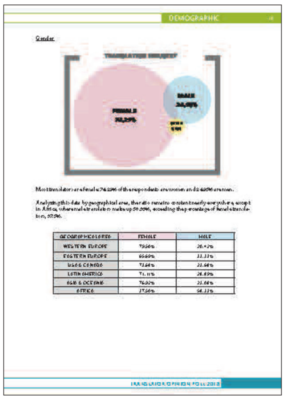
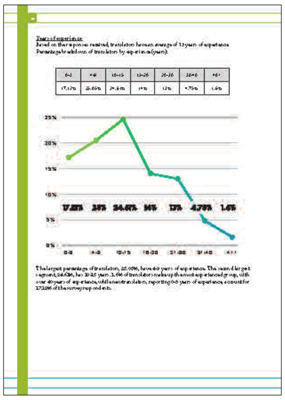
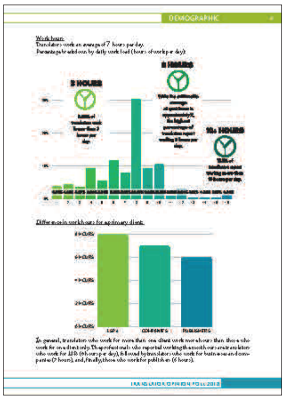
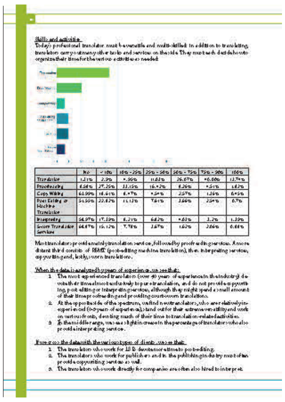
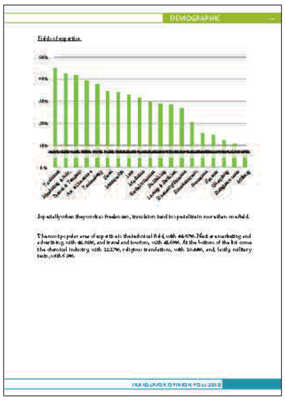
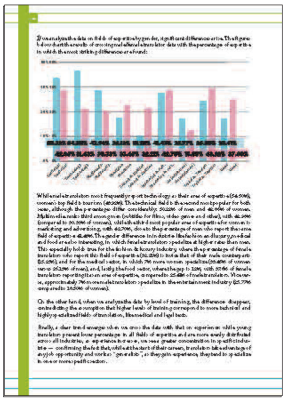
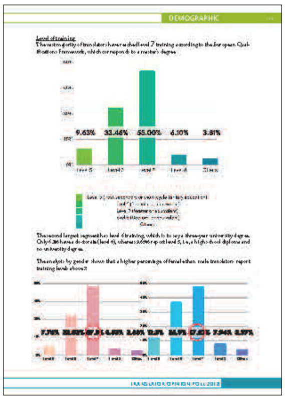
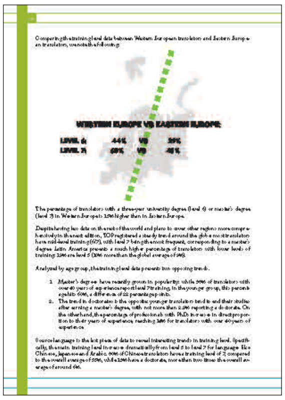
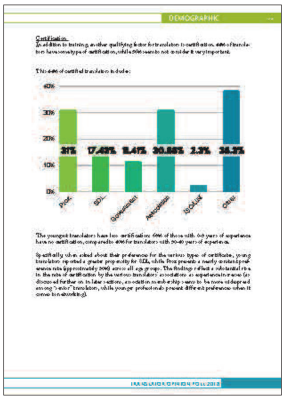
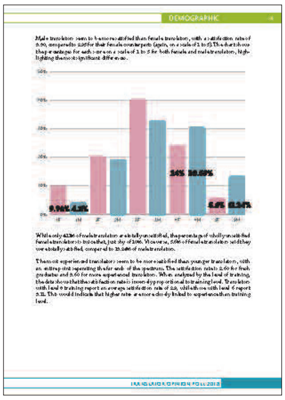
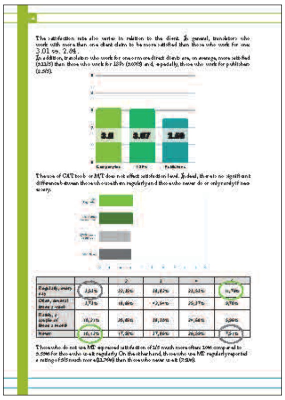
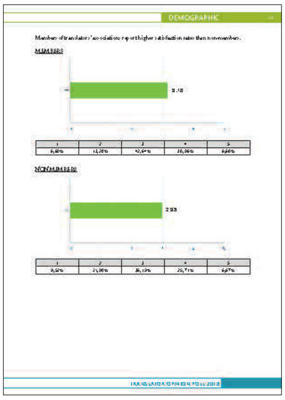
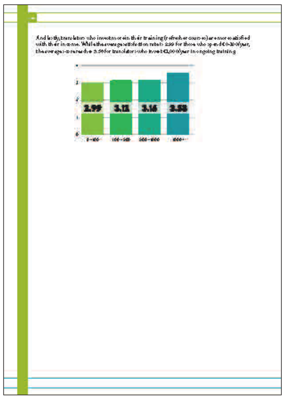
GEOGRAPHICAL AREA	FEMALE	MALE
WESTERN EUROPE	79.50%	20.42%
EASTERN EUROPE	65.69%	33.33%
USA & CANADA	73.68%	23.68%
LATIN AMERICA	71.11%	28.89%
ASIA & OCEANIA	76.92%	23.08%
AFRICA	37.50%	58.33%

Satisfaction with remuneration

The average satisfaction rate is 3 on a scale of 1 to 5, but **only 7.6% of translators report being totally satisfied with their remuneration** – while the percentage of translators who are totally unsatisfied is nearly 9%.



In the following pages:

CLIENT

An exploration of the relationship between translators and their possible clients: LSP/s, company/ies, Publisher/s.

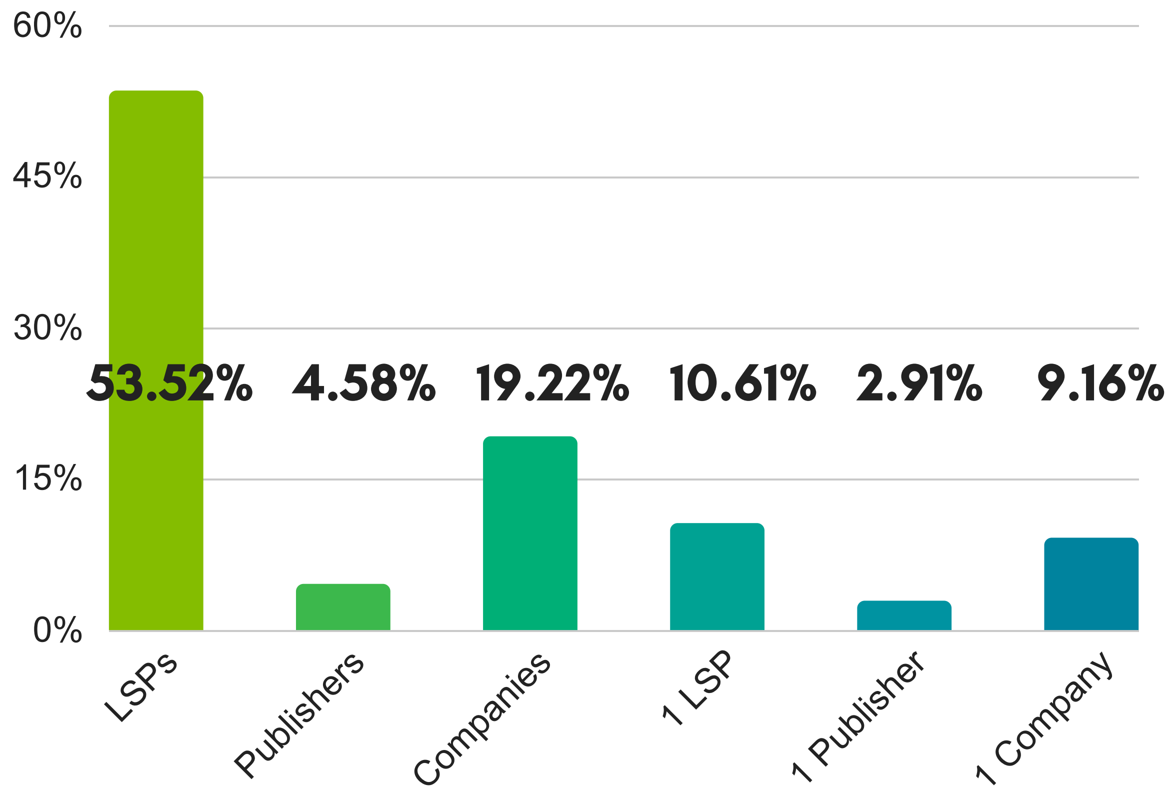
> *“Without clients, especially those who return to hire you again and again, your business would be non-existent. This is why the more successful you are at understanding and forming relationships with your clients, the more successful you will be at growing your small business. Not only is developing relationships with your clients a smart move from a marketing standpoint, but it also helps you to anticipate client needs and perform ongoing adjustments so you can improve your business over time.”*
>
> Anonymous response to the questionnaire

From the translator’s perspective, clients generally fall into one of the following categories:

1. LSPs (language service providers), i.e., translation agencies
2. Companies – from small and medium companies to global multinationals, in any industry
3. Publishers

Another key element to consider is the translator’s tendency to maintain relationships either with only one client for each of the categories indicated or to provide services to several clients in each category.

The TOP2018 data for client portfolios highlights the way in which community of translators who responded to the survey can be broken down:



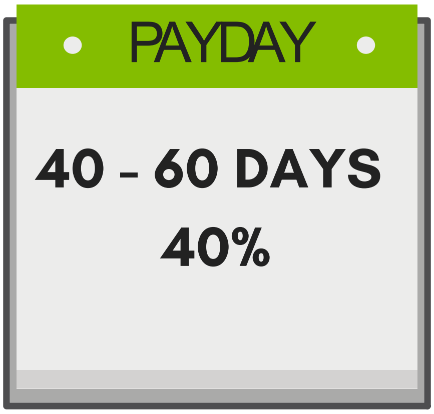
More than half of the respondents work as freelancers for more than one LSP (53.52%). Next, 19.22% of the translators work with several direct clients, while 10.61% work for only one LSP and 9.16% for one direct client. The smallest percentages of translators work for publishers, with 4.58% working for various publishing companies and only 2.91% for one single publisher.

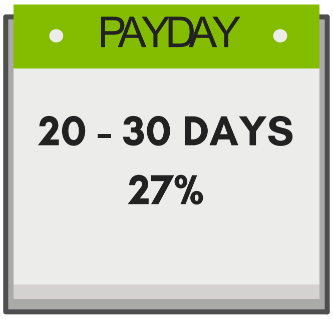
Analyzing the data by **experience**, we see that young translators are less interested in working for LSPs (40%), while in the other experience segments, the percentage of translators working for LSPs amply exceeds 55%. In addition, the very youngest seem more willing to work exclusively for one client, while, as they gain experience, the percentage of translators who prefer to diversify their client portfolio and work for several clients seems to grow.

If geographical location is considered, for example, by **comparing Western and Eastern Europe**, we see that 20% of translators in Eastern Europe work for a single LSP, compared to 9% in Western Europe, where translators prefer to have more than one client.

Payment terms
Another interesting element relates to payment terms or, specifically, the number of days before a translator is paid for the work performed.

On average, translators wait 44 days for payment.





This average is the result of 40% of translators responding 40-60 days and 27% 20-30 days.

Rates
The table below compares rates for the most common source languages received by translators with less experience (fewer than 5 years) and those with more experience (more than 10 years):

SOURCE LANGUAGE	< 5 y	>10 y
English	€0.095	€0.099
Spanish	€0.080	€0.10
French	€0.075	€0.11
German	€0.09	€0.12

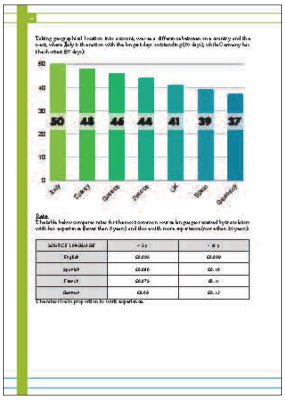
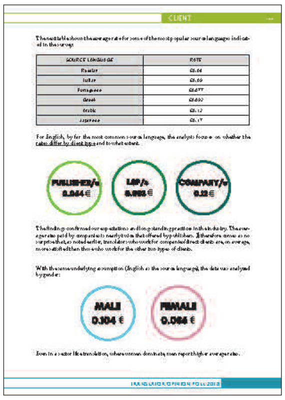
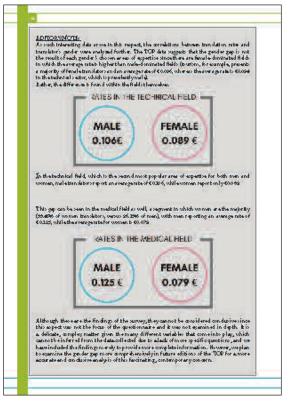
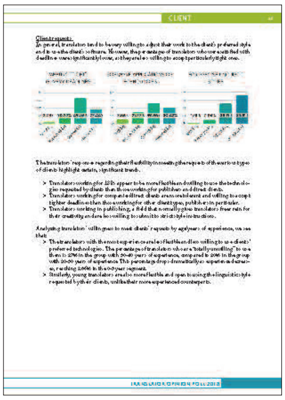
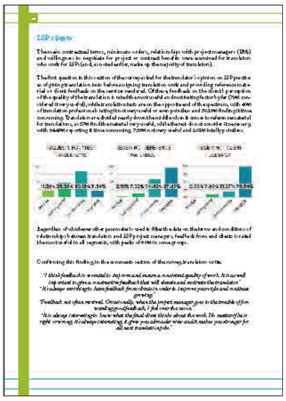
With **English** as the source language, the data was analyzed by **gender**:

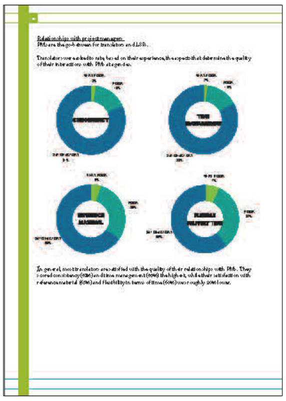
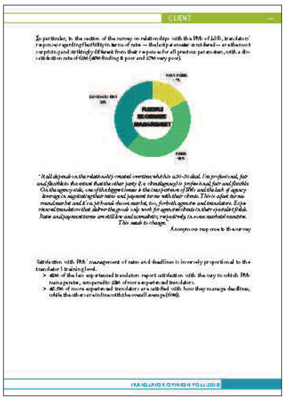
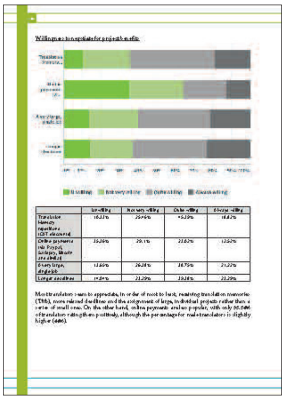
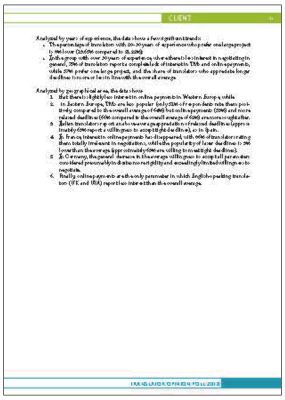
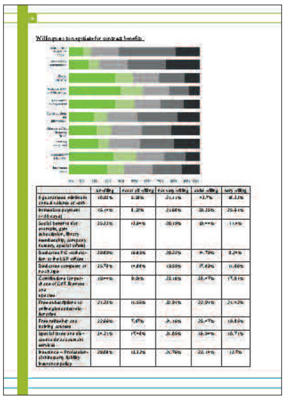
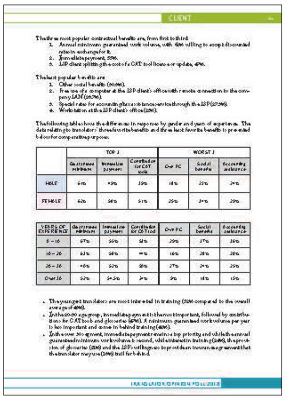
MALE
0.104 €

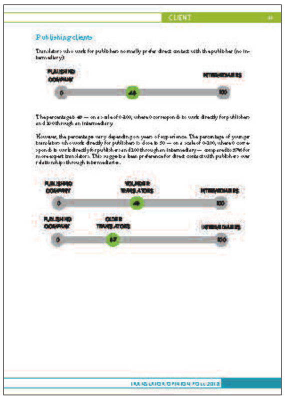
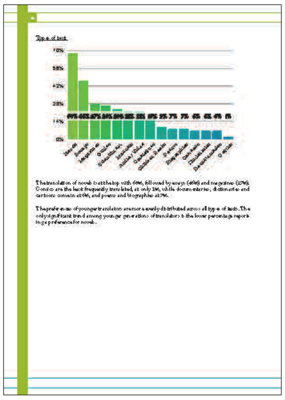
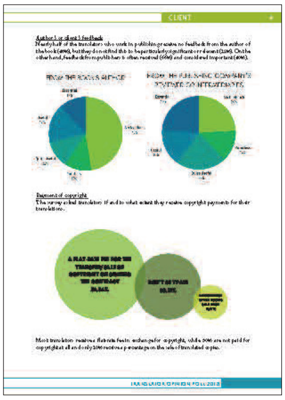
FEMALE
0.086 €

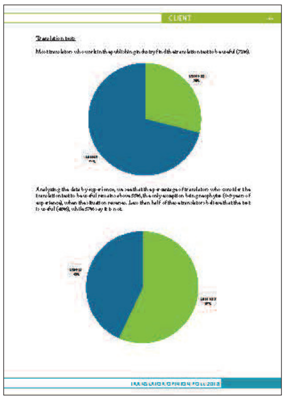
Even in a sector like translation, where women dominate, men report higher average rates.

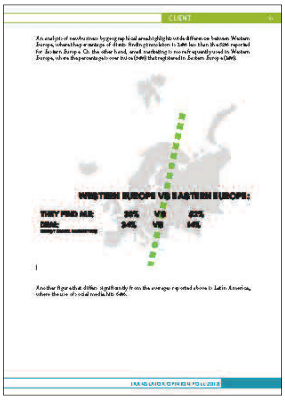
In the following pages:

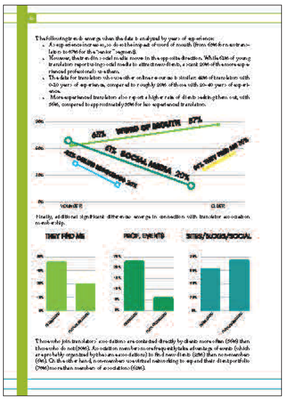






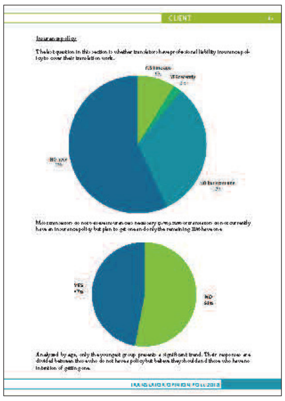







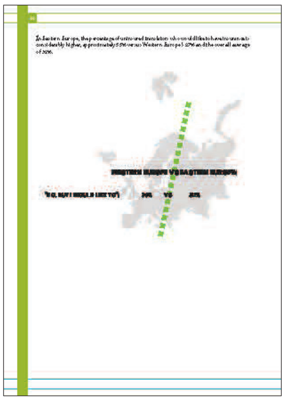














TECHNOLOGY

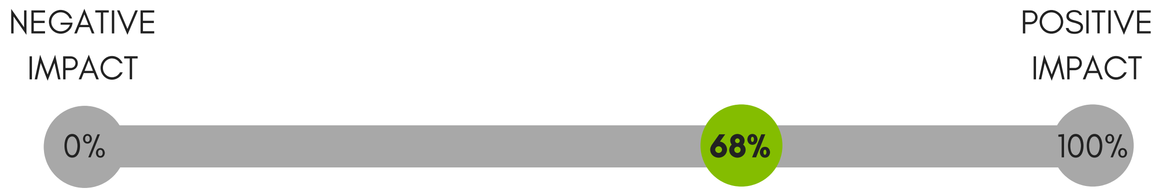
An examination of relationship between translators and new translation technologies: from CAT tools to MT.

> *"As in all fields of human knowledge, technology is a blessing and a curse."*
> Anonymous response to the survey

This section explores translators' relationship with technology to gain an understanding of their opinions on the most sophisticated technologies. In general, CAT tools and TMs (translation memories) are now part of the professional translator's daily life, while the verdict is still out on new MT resources (machine translation) and, in particular NMT (neural machine translation), as translators seem to have fairly different ideas and opinions about them. Some see these resources as a vital advantage for the development of their processes and the achievement of economies in their work, while others see them merely as strategic levers used by clients to squeeze rates and costs, rather than a threat that will, in the near future, rob human translators of their work.

The impact of technology

The general consensus among translators is that technology will have a positive impact of 68% on their profession, where 0% is "totally negative" and 100% "totally positive":



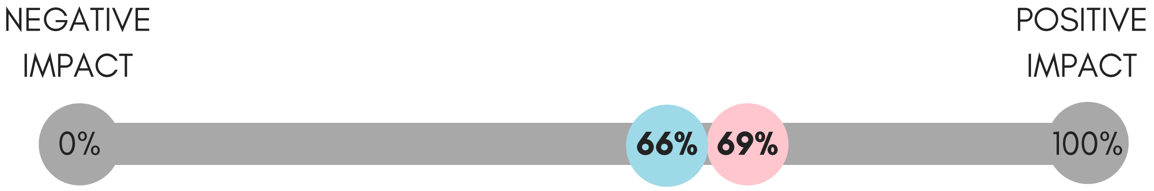
The comments in the open response section of the survey read:

"Interaction with technology is essential these days. Translators have the opportunity to use technology and save time for personal improvement."

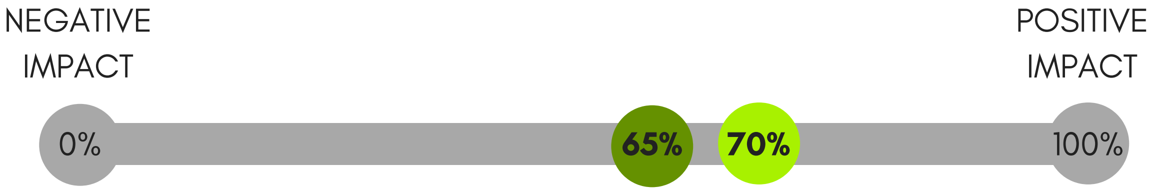
"Technology is THE tool for translators. It makes our work easier and more enjoyable."

"Technology is vital, is the future."

When it comes to technology, there are no substantial differences either in terms of gender (3%), where female translators rate the impact of technology as slightly more positive (69%) than their male counterparts (66%).



The same can be said of **age groups**, as the gap between the most expert translators and the youngest translators does not exceed 5%, with 65% of the more experienced translators (over 30 years of experience) and 70% of new translators rating the impact of technology as positive.



Most commonly used technologies

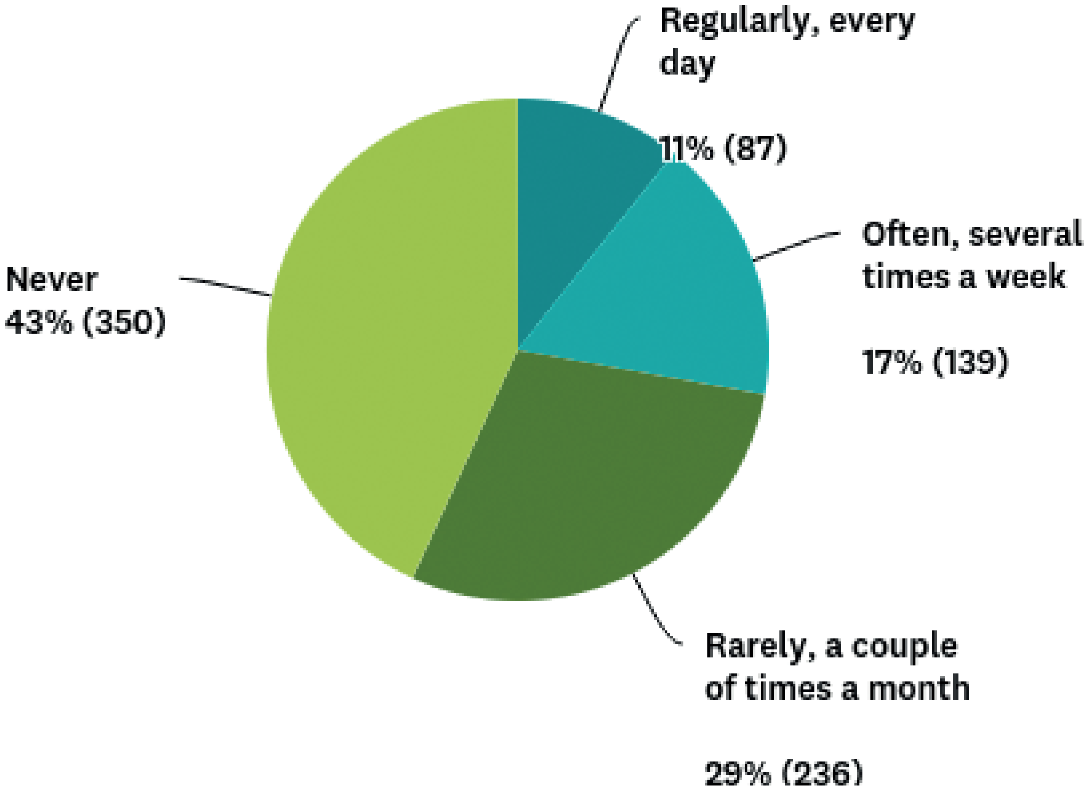
	NOT AT ALL	NOT VERY	QUITE FAMILIAR	VERY FAMILIAR
CAT tools	8.53%	13.89%	33.74%	43.85%
Statistical Machine Translation (SMT)	47.79%	30.96%	15.72%	5.53%
Neural Machine Translation (NMT)	54.07%	29.26%	13.33%	3.33%
QA tools	47.84%	22.32%	18%	11.84%
Translation Management Tools (TM)	54.76%	20.02%	16.93%	8.28%

The table shows that, in absolute terms, the most widely known and used technologies are CAT tools, with 43.85% of translators considering themselves very familiar with these tools. QA tools are a distant second (11.84% of translators say they are very familiar with them, 32% less than CAT). TMs are third (8.28% are very familiar), while SMTs rank fourth (5.53% are very familiar) and NMTs last, with only 3.33% of translators considering themselves very familiar with NMTs and 13.33% quite familiar.

Use of MT

> *"CAT is great, MT is (from a professional translator's perspective) still awful and psychologically depressing ("signing one's own death warrant"). End customers and agencies would do well to be reasonable when negotiating how productivity gains are shared with translators! This is IMO a slippery slope."*
>
> Anonymous response to the questionnaire

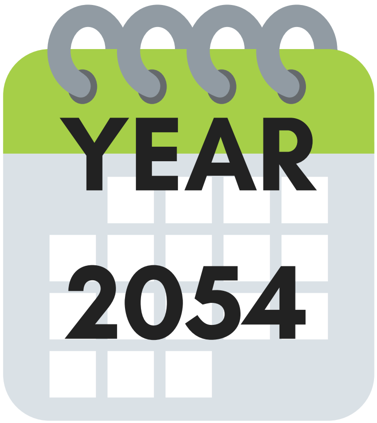
Unlike CAT tools, translators have not yet widely embraced machine translation (MT). 43% of the respondents do not use it.



Moreover, while 43% of translators do not use this type of technology at all, 29% use it only rarely, 17% of translators use it often and only 11% use it regularly and on a daily basis.

How many years from now will AI replace human translators?

The average response was **36 years**:



Some of the most **significant comments** revealing translators’ sentiments on this aspect are provided below:

“I actually selected a random answer to the last question (how long before computers translate by themselves). At the moment, many sites run with translations solely performed by computers (so we could say that they already do the job by themselves). At the moment, the limit is more about the quality you want for said site. Is the translation good enough for the customers or is it maiming your prospects? When the answer is the latter, which is still often the case thankfully, the job is not so much to translate anymore but to edit. So I suppose that in the coming years, professional/technical translation per se should drop but not editing.”

“I believe that in some points or fields Machine translation is going to replace the human translator, but not in all fields because it’s not possible. Machines lack creativity.”

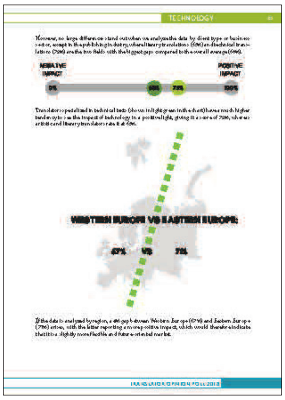
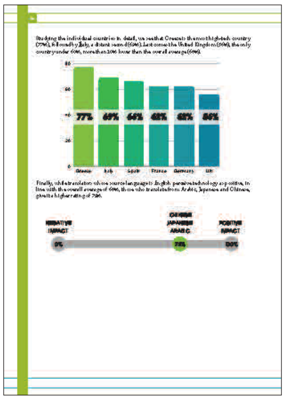
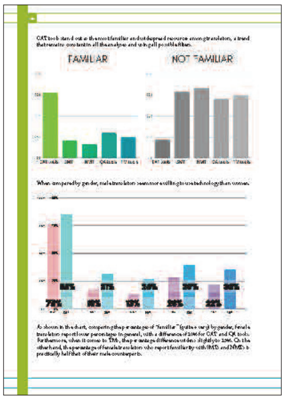
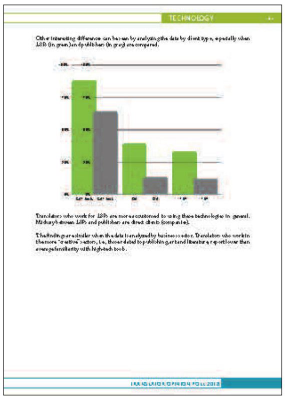
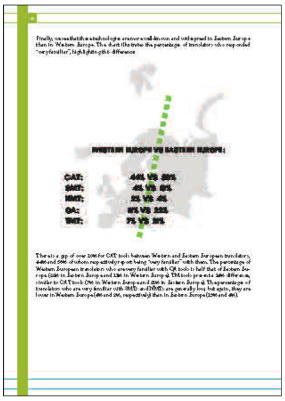
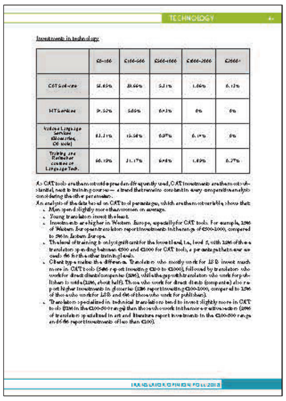
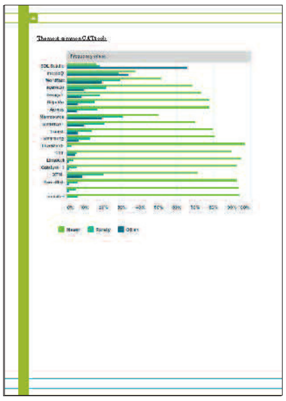
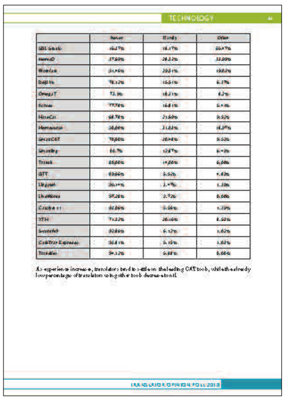
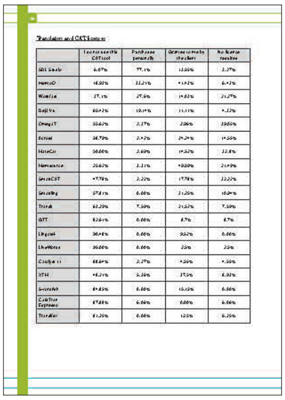
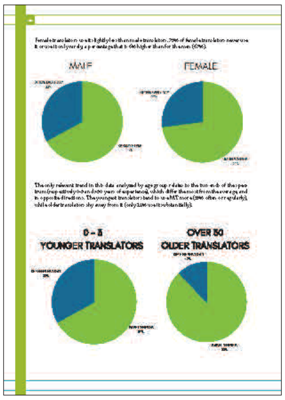
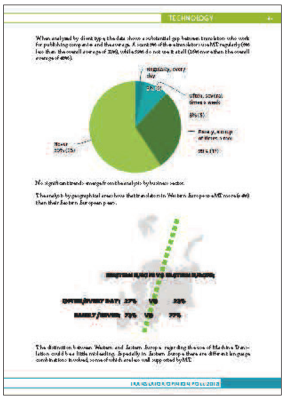
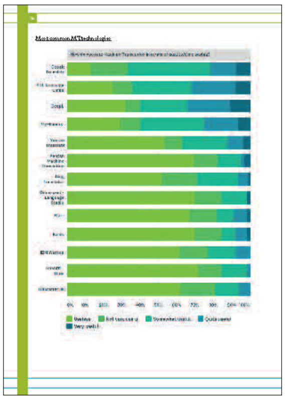
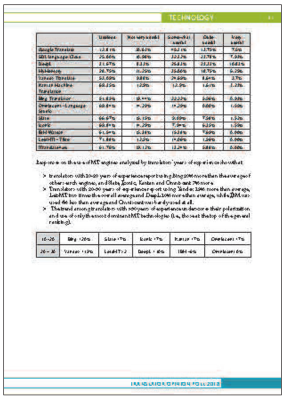
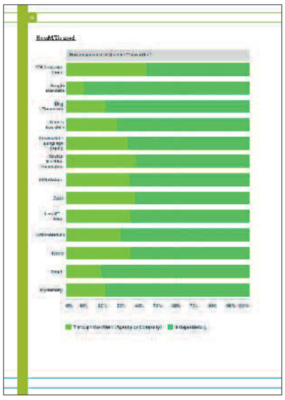
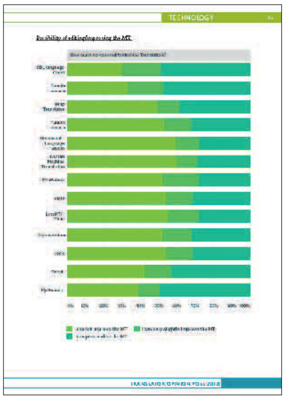
“Many different types of jobs will be affected by evolving computer technology, translation being only a small aspect of that. The key is to adapt our own style of working instead of resisting change. The need for human input will vary and change for different tasks but will not vanish.”

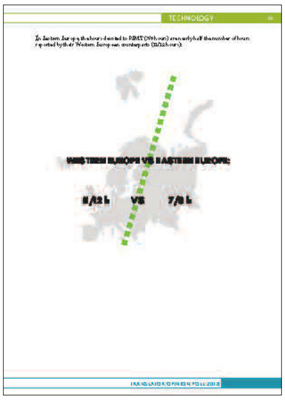
“Machine translation has dramatically improved in recent years. This is a benefit in the short term for translators, enabling them to work faster, but in the long term it will replace them entirely.”

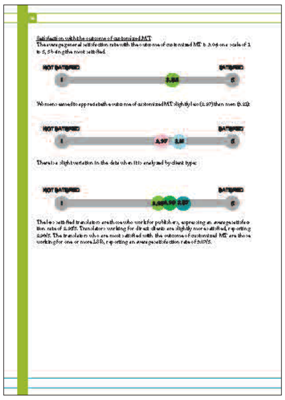
“I do not believe MT will ever replace human translators. On the other hand, I believe human translators need to be aware of the technology and use what it does have to offer.”

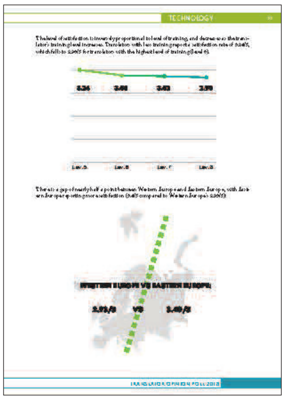
“Human translation will never die. May be it gets lower down, but it is the only trustworthy.”

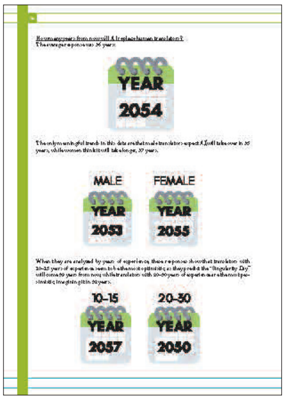
In the following pages:









NETWORKING

A look at the ways in which translators interact socially in this digital era.

The last section of the survey analyzes translators' social habits and networking, i.e., whether the translators, who are often freelancers, belong to and participate in real-life or online communities for professional reasons.
Most translators believe that socializing and networking are extremely important, especially as this profession can lead to isolation.

A few salient comments:

"Again, as a freelance translator, it can get quite lonely sometimes. In addition, when you face a new problem, there is a 99% chance that a colleague has already faced the same or a similar one before. That is why it is important to join groups and/or associations, so I can get help when I need it and help others when they need it. It also is a great way of keeping in touch with the real world and not feel isolated."

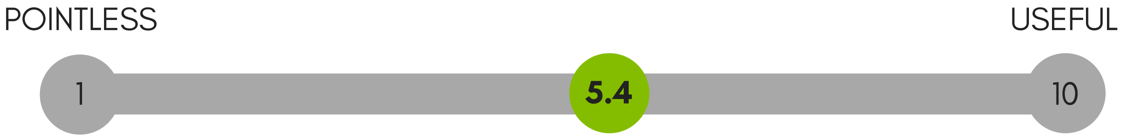
"In today's climate, networking is a necessity on all levels. It is also very useful to have pages/groups, etc. on which it is possible to ask questions in case."

"As a freelancer, social interactions with other translators is essential for continued growth, professional development and networking. Being able to share best practices and resources is a must when working in a field that is constantly growing and evolving, and having a solid network is crucial in a field that is so highly dependent on reputation, client satisfaction. repeat business, and word of mouth."

"I found social interaction especially useful and interesting at all levels at events where you can meet people from the translation industry in general and not only translators. If you only have translators, we tend not to share our experience (as if we did not have much to say); instead if we meet people from the translation world who are not necessarily translators the exchange is more intense."

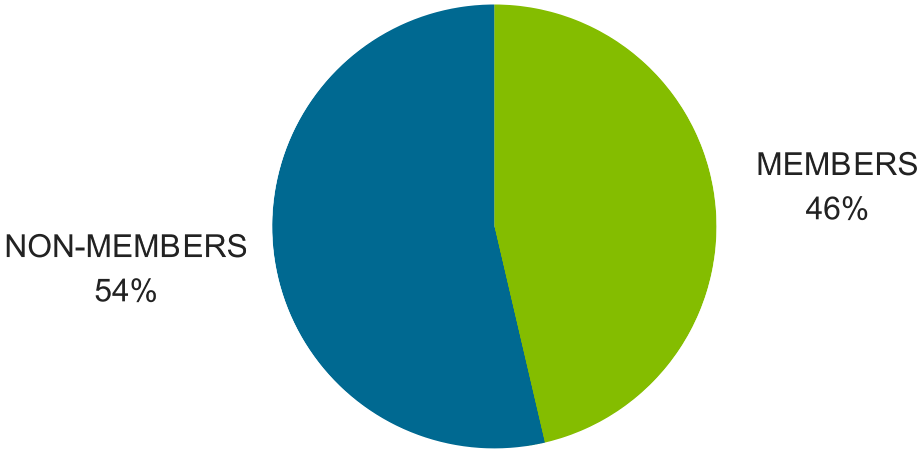
Advantages of associations

Translators believe that belonging to a translators' association is fairly useful and rate it **5.4** on a scale of 1 to 10, with 15% of translators rating it a "1" and 12% a "10", the highest possible score. These responses **are steady**, with no significant differences when analyzed by age, gender, geographical area, etc.



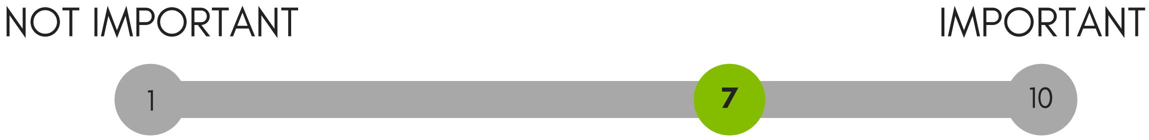
Percentage of association members

In general, about half of the translators who responded to the survey are members of a translators' association:



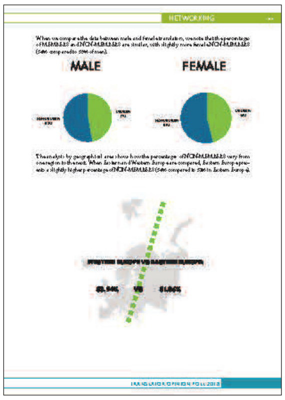
Networking

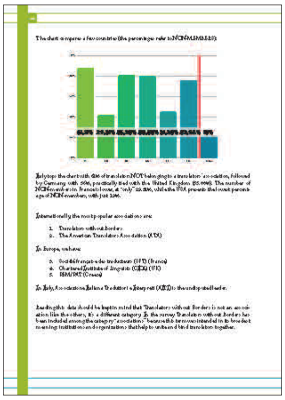
Even if it is not always number one, networking is always at the top of the charts. Translators consider it very important, both in terms of translators' association membership and online communities like forums and social media.

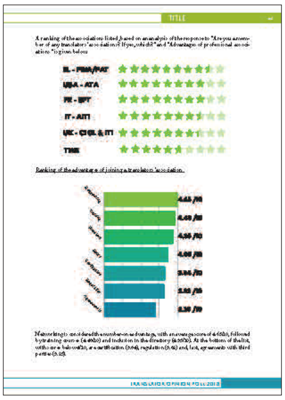


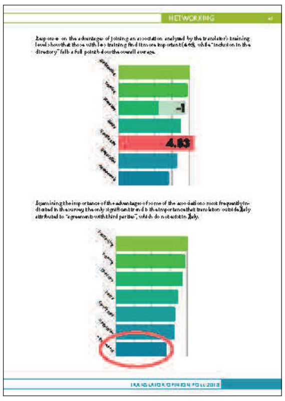
Indeed, on a scale of 1 to 10, translators rate the importance of networking 7 on average.

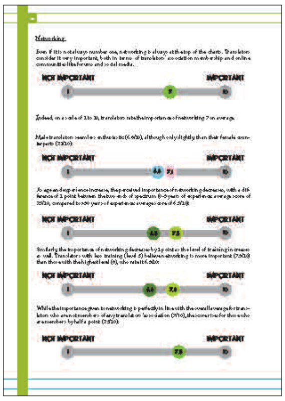
In the following pages:

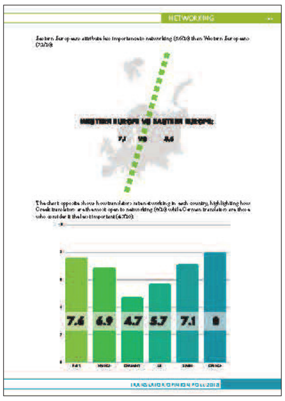


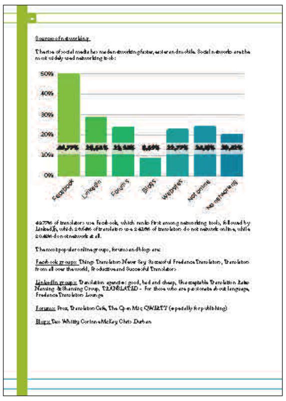


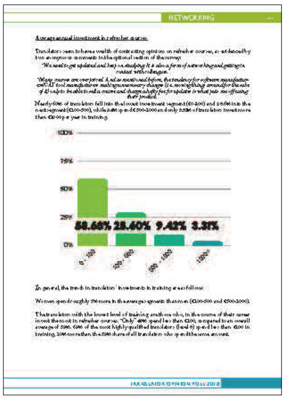


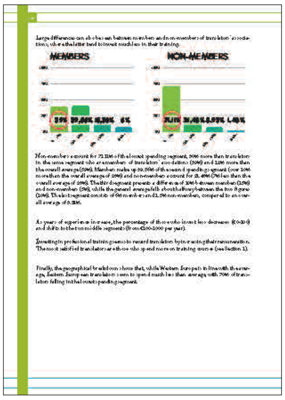


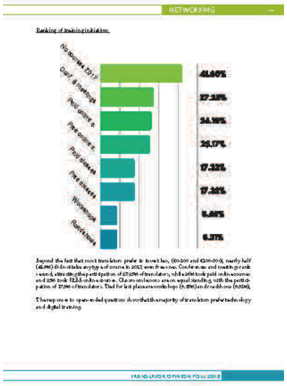












CONCLUSIONS

A summary of the report, underlining the most important outcomes.

The 2018 analysis paints a picture of a translator immersed in a **world in flux from many different standpoints**.

Today's translator is a freelancer, mainly working for LSPs and mostly handling technical, marketing and tourism translations.

Working freelance, translators cannot negate the **importance of networking**, both with their clients and other translators, which helps prevent their isolation. While the quintessential networking tools — translators' associations — have lost their appeal among younger generations, the Internet and social media, especially Facebook and LinkedIn, have rapidly gained ground and are currently the main link between translators of all ages and an invaluable source of new business.

In their work, **today's translators do not seem to fear technology**, as they believe its impact is mostly positive, but only when technology means "CAT tools". They are the most well-known tools, the most widely used and the most popular among translators of all ages. They have become an essential part of a translator's professional life. If we delve further and consider the industry's most recent technological solutions, the skepticism and diffidence grow, as the reach of these products falls short. **MT struggles to achieve recognition as a useful tool**, especially among more experienced translators. While young people seem to see it as an opportunity, a necessary and unavoidable development, "senior" translators vigorously resist it, avoid post-editing and look at this type of technology with disdain.

However, **it cannot be denied that new technologies exist and are developing and improving exponentially**. Translation technology providers, not without bias, exalt the features and potential of these tools with unprecedented zeal, as if each new product were a revolutionary breakthrough. For example, to cite one of the many blogs of the main language industry technology vendors, *"Neural Machine Translation (NMT) systems are changing the world right now! Unlike previous MT technologies. NMT provides higher quality translation and is improving fast. Very fast. At its current rate of development, NMT is set to drastically change the traditional human-based translation industry in as little as one to three years, impacting over 600,000 linguists and 21,000 language service providers (LSPs). For customers, the age of NMT will lead to massive reductions in pricing and improvements in speed (even where humans are required)*[2]*" […] "those who manage to leverage the technology will survive; the rest will have difficult times"*[3] .

Not only are language industry technology providers moving quickly in the R&D and commercial deployment of these increasingly fine-tuned translation systems, now based on artificial intelligence, but major IT players like Google, Microsoft, Amazon, Alibaba and Yandex are as well. Microsoft has created an automatic translator that can even work offline, which, according to Arul Menezes, Partner Research Manager of Machine Translation *"is dramatically better and provides far more human-like translation than the old ones, which relied on an older approach to machine translations that has now been far surpassed by machine learning-based systems. The updated language packs (which only take up about half the space of the old ones) are now available for Arabic, Chinese-Simplified, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Thai, with others to follow*[4]*."*

In any event, the translators' responses and opinions clearly show that they do not perceive this technology as posing a threat to their work in the near future. **It is a threat they expect to face in about 36 years.** Indeed, overall, they are clearly aware that, although machines are growing increasingly more powerful, **artificial intelligence will never supplant human talent**, especially when it comes to skills that cannot be artificially reproduced. *"Different cultures in the world have different lexical items that are unique to that specific culture. Machines don't have the complexity to understand or recognize slang, idioms and in some cases names"* [5] and, especially when it is not a question of translating simple words, but conveying concepts or messages with varying degrees of semantic or lexical nuances, **AI misses the mark and will always require a human touch.**

And this concludes the TOP2018.

---

[2] For the complete article https://slator.com/sponsored-content/neural-mt-and-blockchain-are-about-to-radically-transform-the-translation-market/

[3] See previous note

[4] From https://techcrunch.com/2018/04/18/microsoft-translator-gets-offline-ai-translations/

[5] From https://speakt.com/5-reasons-machine-translations-will-never-replace-human-translators/

We thank all the translators and the Institutions who took part in the TOP – Translator Opinion Poll. You helped to develop a project that could be beneficial for the whole Translation Industry. Moreover, you contributed to a worthy cause: TOP donated 1 euro per each completed survey to Translators without Borders, strongly believing in what they do for translation and for humanity.

We'll be back next year with the second edition of the survey and updates on the translation industry.

Team TOP

TOP Translator Opinion Poll 2018
translatoropinionpoll.com