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Freelance Translator Rates

The Value of Experience

An analysis of the results of a rates survey conducted in February-March 2023, exploring the value of experience across per-word rates, minimum charges, and per-hour rates.

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Executive summary

- While there is a relationship between experience and rates charged, it is far from linear or straightforward. There is no simple upward progression over time, and, after the first decade of experience, additional experience does not always result in higher charges.
- As in the previous report, median charges generally increased from general texts to specialised texts across all experience bands, and rates charged to direct clients were generally higher than those charged to agencies across all experience bands.
- Noting cautions about possible sampling anomalies and small sample sizes in certain cuts of the data, in general terms, ITI members' rates tended to plateau around the 10 or 20 years mark.
- Looking specifically at differences in charges among translators with less than 10 years' experience:
 - median per-word rates increased clearly with experience up to the 10+ years' experience category;
 - median minimum charges increased with experience up to the 10+ years' experience category, albeit with some 'anomalies' in the <2 years' experience category possibly due to the small sample size;
 - median per-hour rates broadly increased with experience, with the exception of the 'Direct Client: Specialised' client and text type, where charges were largely identical.
- However, looking at the decade-by-decade analysis:
 - median per-word rates tended to plateau from as early as the tenth year onwards;
 - median minimum charges showed a gradual increase with experience, but in many cases, the increase by decade was minimal after the tenth year;
 - median per-hour rates were largely stagnant across the experience bands after the tenth year, with little-to-no evident increase in per-hour rates with experience. However, the spread of per-hour rates appeared to widen as experience increased.
- The wider collaborative survey data suggest that a large number of translators do not increase their rates regularly due to fear of losing clients; for those who do increase rates, the main reasons include inflation (49%) and increased experience (26%).
- Tentative comparisons with other professions suggest that translators are earning less than other creative fields, despite being more highly qualified.

Overview

This report presents detailed analyses on a subset of the data from the collaborative Inbox Translation and ITI survey conducted in February-March 2023. Inbox Translation has published its full report on the complete dataset¹, and in this report we provide an analysis of ITI member rates of pay (price per word, minimum charge, and price per hour) broken down by level of experience.

We begin with the profile of the respondents making up the sample analysed in this report. Thereafter, the report provides data on price per word, minimum charge, and price per hour with a number of different perspectives on experience. We first explore the three different rates against experience broken down by decade, with data split into the experience categories 0-9 years, 10-19 years, 20-29 years, and 30+ years. In the second half of the report, we zoom in on the impact of experience on rates in the first 9 years of translation practice, splitting the data into the experience categories <2 years, 2-4 years, and 5-9 years, offering a comparison with the wider data on 10+ years' experience.

Each of the analyses presented in this report is supported by visualisations of the data and data tables presenting a range of different statistics so that readers can see the range of rates charged and, therefore, see how their own rates stack up against the rates for their level of experience. As in the previous report, *The Value of ITI Membership*, in the introductory sections, we offer information on the methodology and data handling processes, and on how the various statistics and charts used in this report can be interpreted, for those who need it.

¹ Accessible here: <https://inboxtranslation.com/resources/research/freelance-translator-survey-2023/>

Methodology

Note: The sections that follow on methodology are largely identical to those presented in our first report, *The Value of ITI Membership*, minus any mentions of non-ITI members. The methodology is reproduced below in the interests of transparency and completeness, but those who read the previous report may wish to proceed directly to the main body of this report.

Summary

The survey was launched by Inbox Translation and the ITI on 14 February 2023. In addition to the marketing surrounding the survey conducted by Inbox Translation to the wider translation community, on 15 February 2023, the ITI emailed a link to the survey to all eligible ITI members² (n = 2,968), with reminder emails sent out on 28 February and 9 March 2023. The survey closed on 13 March 2023.

A total of 692 ITI members completed the survey, a **response rate of 23.3%** from the ITI's membership.

We compared the profile of ITI respondents with that of all ITI members by membership category as of the period during which the survey was active and **weighted the survey data** accordingly to ensure that it was representative of all ITI members (see 'Weighting of data', below). With the exception of demographic data, all data in this report are weighted.

Since the survey was sent out to all ITI members and a respectable response rate was achieved from most categories of ITI member, we are justified in treating it as a **random, representative sample** to which standard statistical tests can be applied.

In the report that follows, we would like to draw readers' attention to the fact that **all survey findings are subject to margins of error**, and that the smaller the base size (n) for a given question or variable, the wider those margins of error are. In our analysis, when we compare survey findings from two different groups, the differences need to exceed a certain magnitude for us to be reasonably confident that they are real. As such, in the report that follows, we are focusing on differences that we are confident are real, within the limitations of the confidence intervals and statistical tests described below (see 'Interpretation of statistics and charts').

² ITI members who had opted out of email communications were excluded from the emails.

The sub-sections that follow provide further detail on the treatment of the survey data prior to analysis.

Data points

Based on the design of the questionnaire, each respondent could list up to five language pairs, together with per-word, minimum-charge and per-hour rates for each language pair. Hence, each respondent could potentially yield up to five datapoints on rates for each rate type (per word, minimum charge, per hour). As such, value **n**, as reported in the data tables in the main body of this report, represents not the number of respondents in that category, but the number of rates datapoints reported in that category, with each respondent potentially contributing more than one rate to each category.

It should be noted, however, that many respondents did not provide any rates data, or only provided rates data in certain categories (e.g. per word rate only) and were therefore not included in some or all of the rates data samples. The actual response rates for per-word prices, minimum charges, and per-hour prices are shown in Table 1, broken down by the client and text type. The number of datapoints collected (higher than the figures below, due to multiple language pairs) is provided in the data table below each chart in the main body of the report.

Respondents	Agency: General	Agency: Specialised	Direct Client: General	Direct Client: Specialised
Price per word	507	501	413	439
Min. charge	435	424	347	361
Price per hour	455	439	356	374

Table 1. Number of responses to survey by client type and text type

Currency

Since the survey design allowed respondents to provide rates data in pounds sterling (GBP), euros (EUR) or US dollars (USD), prior to any analysis all data were converted to GBP. The official **exchange rates** used were those as of the closing date of the survey, i.e., 13 March 2023. For the EUR to GBP conversion, a rate of 1 GBP = 0.882755 EUR was used; for USD to GBP, 1 GBP = 0.822648 USD.

Outliers

In the light of the sheer range of reported rates values at both the lower and upper ends of the scale, the decision was made to remove outliers from the datasets with a view to providing summary statistics and plots that are assumed to be representative of the majority. For these data, the Tukey's Fences method was used, eliminating any data point that was less than 1.5 times the interquartile range below the 1st Quartile and any data point that was more than 1.5 times the interquartile range above the 3rd

quartile within the relevant category of data. (For definitions of the 1st and 3rd quartiles and the interquartile range, see 'Interpretations of statistics and charts: descriptive statistics' below.)

Weighting of data

Out of the respondents who reported themselves to be ITI members in the survey, 690 reported their membership category. Of these, 108 were Affiliates, 114 Associates (AITI), 422 Qualified Members (MITI), and 28 Fellows (FITI), and 18 fell under other membership categories. These other categories (Student, Project Manager, Academic) were disregarded for the purposes of these rates reports, based on their relevance to the focus of this report. Using membership data from February 2023, Table 2 shows the comparison between the membership figures and the survey response figures and their respective percentages of the totals.

Category	ITI Membership (February 2023)	ITI Member Survey Responses	% Difference	Weighting Coefficient
Affiliate	626 (23.48%)	108 (16.07%)	-7.41%	1.46
Associate (AITI)	438 (16.43%)	114 (16.96%)	+0.53%	0.97
Qualified (MITI)	1541 (57.80%)	422 (62.80%)	+5.00%	0.92
Fellow (FITI)	61 (2.29%)	28 (4.17%)	+1.88%	0.55
Totals:	2666	672		

Table 2. ITI member sample profile and weighting

Given the higher number of Qualified Members (MITI) and Fellows (FITI) and lower number of Affiliates among the survey respondents, compared with ITI members as a whole, preliminary tests showed that there was a risk that the rates data could be inflated slightly upwards. The decision was made to **weight** the rates data from the survey with the coefficient shown in the table above for each member category to yield a more conservative picture of ITI members' rates. This means that **the weighted rates data were as representative as possible of the ITI's membership body at the time of the survey.**

Interpretation of statistics and charts

Note: The sections that follow on the interpretation of statistics and charts are largely identical to those presented in our first report, *The Value of ITI Membership*. The information is reproduced below for reference if needed, but those who read the previous report may wish to proceed directly to the main body of this report.

This report uses box-and-whisker plots alongside data tables, in addition to **line plots (new to this report)**, to visualise and present the rates data. The main statistics reported in the box-and-whisker plots are the median, 1st and 3rd quartiles, and the minimum and maximum values after outliers have been removed.

Descriptive statistics

The **median** is a type of average, and the **1st and 3rd quartiles** (sometimes also referred to as the 25th and 75th percentiles) offer an insight into where the main body of data sits. To understand what these mean, if you had 1,000 responses for a particular question, and you then lined up every response from the lowest to the highest, the median would be the value provided by the 500th response in that line. The 1st and 3rd quartiles, meanwhile, would sit 25% (one quarter) and 75% (three-quarters) of the way along this line of responses, and in this example with 1,000 respondents would be the values supplied by the 250th and the 750th respondents. The range between the 1st and 3rd quartiles – referred to as the **interquartile range (IQR)** – covers the middle 50% of all responses (25% each side of the median). All of these data points are depicted on the box-and-whisker plots, as described below.

The **mean** (calculated by adding together all values and dividing by the number of data points) is provided for reference in the data tables, but should be interpreted with caution as this type of average can easily be influenced by skewed datasets and any bunching of values at the high or low end of the scale which may not have been eliminated in the outlier removal process. The mean is, however, commonly used in conducting significance tests and calculating effect sizes, as described below, so it is a useful statistic to provide in the data tables.

The mean is also accompanied by a **confidence interval** (two numbers presented in square brackets after the mean itself), which comprises one number expressing the lower bound and another number expressing the higher bound. These numbers will sit below and above the mean itself in value, respectively. Confidence intervals tell us the range of potential mean values that we could theoretically obtain if we repeatedly undertook new samples of the same size from the respective populations (e.g. new survey responses from a new sample of ITI members and a new sample of non-

members). A 95% confidence interval is used in this report, which means that for every 100 hypothetical new samples, 95 of these would theoretically yield mean values between the lower and upper boundaries of the confidence interval.

Box-and-whisker plots and data tables

Figure 1 provides an example of a **box-and-whisker plot** using random data, with a view to providing guidance on how to interpret these charts, alongside the supporting data table below it.

This report uses a type of box-and-whisker plot called the **Tukey plot** to display the rates data. This plot type displays a coloured box representing the **IQR** between the 1st and 3rd quartiles, a white line within the box (representing the median, or 2nd quartile), and two ‘whiskers’ (also called ‘fences’), which represent the lowest and highest data points once outliers have been removed.

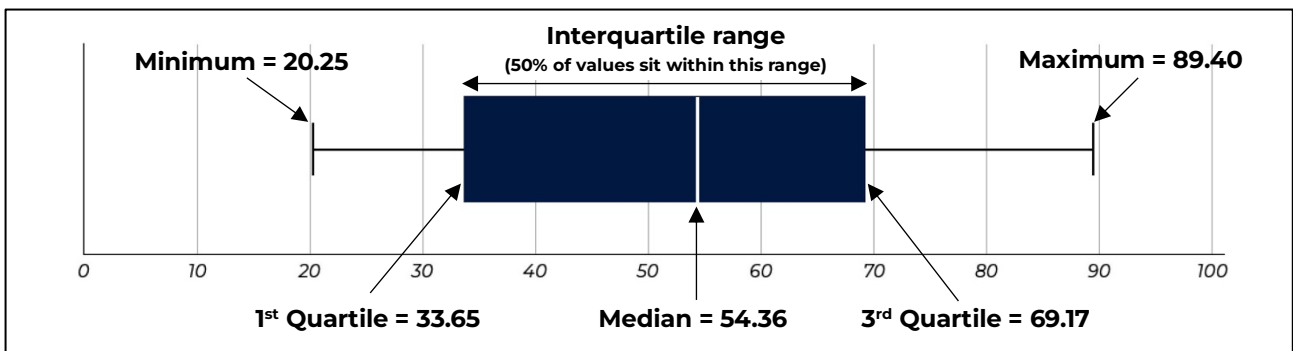


Figure 1. Example of a box-and-whisker plot

The box-and-whisker plot can easily be correlated with the **data table** shown in Table . The column marked **n** refers to the number of datapoints falling in the relevant subset of the data (n = 200). The **Min** (20.25) and **Max** values (89.40) reflect the values at the ends of the left-hand and right-hand whiskers respectively. The **1st Quartile** (33.65) and **3rd Quartile** (69.17) reflect the left-hand and right-hand edges of the dark blue box, respectively (the **IQR**). Finally, the **Median** (54.36) is depicted by the white line in the middle of the dark blue box. These five statistics reflect the so-called **five-number summary**, which is commonly regarded as one of the most informative summaries of a sample’s distribution and underlying characteristics. The **Mean** and corresponding confidence interval, while shown in the data table, are not depicted on the box-and-whisker plot.

Example	n	Min	1 st Quartile	Median	3 rd Quartile	Max	Mean [95% Confidence Interval]
Group	200	20.25	33.65	54.36	69.17	89.40	52.63 [49.79, 55.48]

Table 3. Corresponding data table for Figure 1

Profile of respondents

A total of 2,803 people completed the collaborative Inbox Translation and ITI survey in February and March 2023. Of those 2,803 respondents, **692 reported themselves to be ITI members**.

Not all respondents answered every profiling question, which explains any discrepancies with the total number of responses from ITI members reported above. The key characteristics of the ITI respondents, in terms of age, gender, country of residence, and membership category, are described below.

Out of the 606 ITI members who provided information about their age, 1% were under the age of 25, 11% between 25 and 34, 19% between 35 and 44, 29% between 45 and 54, 25% between 55 and 64, and 15% over 65 years of age, with 2% preferring not to say (see Figure 2).

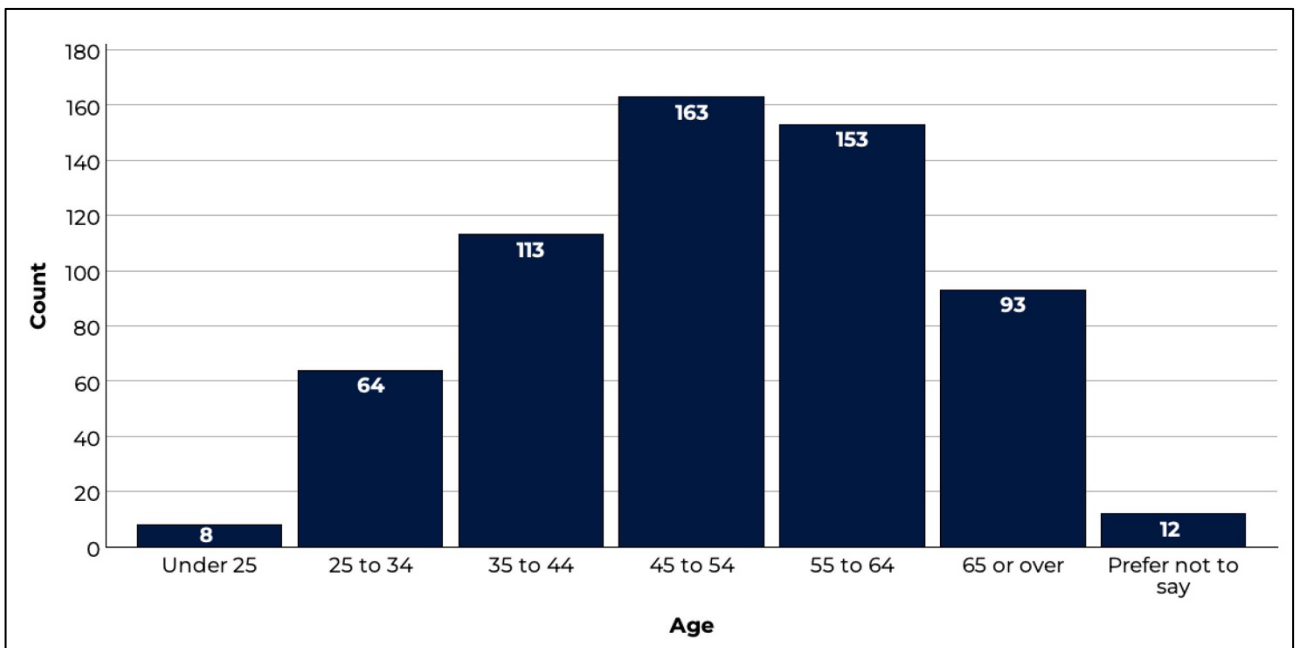


Figure 2. Age profile of ITI member respondents to survey

With regard to **gender**, there were 606 ITI member responses to this question, of which 76% were women, 22% were men, <1% were non-binary/other, and a further 2% preferred not to say, which is broadly consistent with the profession's woman-dominated landscape.

For **country of residence**, among the 603 ITI member responses the top five most popular responses were the United Kingdom (74%), France (6%), Italy (3%), Germany (3%), and Spain (2%). The remaining 71 (12%) were spread across 39 countries.

Respondents who reported themselves to be ITI members in the survey were asked about their **membership category** and 690 provided information on this. Of these, 108 were Affiliates, 114 Associates (AITI), 422 Qualified members (MITI), and 28 Fellows (FITI), and 18 fell under other membership categories (Student, Project Manager, Academic). Any information about rates provided by respondents in these other categories was disregarded for the purposes of this report, as the small numbers meant we could not be confident that they were representative of the main body of ITI members in these categories.

The value of experience

In this report we examine how experience appears to affect freelance translators' charges to clients in terms of their rates charged per word and per hour and their minimum charges, based on the survey data collected in collaboration with Inbox Translations. We first evaluate the impact of experience broken down by decade, then we take a closer look at the first decade of experience.

In each of the charts and tables, we use the categories such as '0-9 years', '10-19 years', and '20-29 years', for example. We have opted for this shorthand naming convention to avoid confusion between what might be perceived as overlapping categories. By '0-9 years', for instance, we refer to all respondents who reported to have experience anywhere between 0 years and one day prior to their tenth anniversary of professional practice (i.e. 9 years, 364 days inclusive). Similarly, the '10-19 years' category ranges from the first day of the tenth year up to 19 years 364 days inclusive, and so on for other categories, as appropriate.

Experience by decade

The survey findings suggest that while there is a relationship between experience and rates charged, it is far from straightforward. There is definitely not a simple upward progression: after the first decade of experience, additional decades do not always mean higher charges per word.

Price per word

If we first examine translators' charges to agencies, the median charges, interquartile ranges and maximum charges reported by translators with 10+ years' experience were clearly higher than those reported by translators with up to 9 years' experience.

For general (non-specialised) texts, the median value reported by translators with up to 9 years' experience was £0.070, with the IQR sitting between £0.060 and £0.079 and the maximum at £0.106. The median rate per word reported by translators with 10+ experience was £0.080, with the IQR sitting between £0.070 and £0.088, meaning that the bottom quartile of the translators in the survey charged less than £0.070, while the top quartile charged more than £0.088. The median charge was no higher for translators with 20-29 or 30+ years' experience than it was for those with 10-19 years' experience.

What may be more surprising is that when we turn to specialised texts, where the charges were somewhat higher, there was a bigger gap between the medians reported by translators with up to 9 years' experience and those with 10+, but a similar lack of differentiation in charges for those with additional decades of experience. The median charge to agencies for translators with up to 9 years' experience was £0.076, with the

IQR between £0.070 and £0.085 and the maximum again at £0.106. Translators with 10+ years' experience reported a median charge of £0.085, with the IQR ranging from £0.075 to £0.097. However, the median charges and IQRs were again virtually identical for those with 10-19, 20-29 and 30+ years of experience.

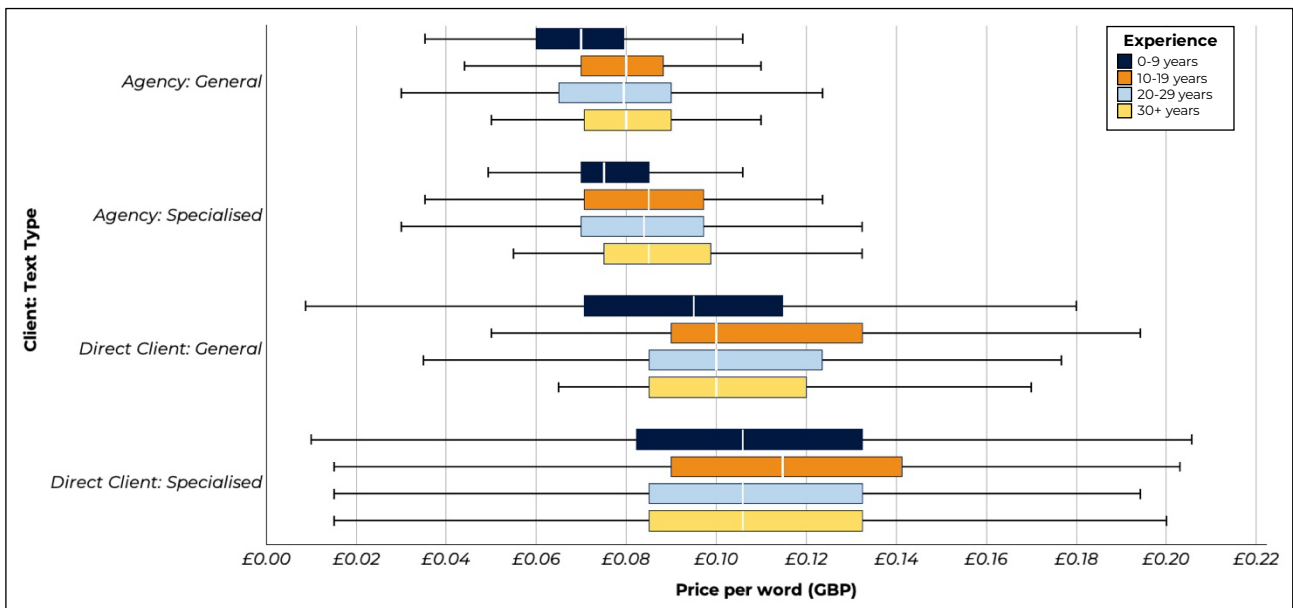


Figure 3. Price per word broken down by experience and client/text type

Price/word (£ GBP)	Experience	n	Min	1 st Quartile	Median	3 rd Quartile	Max	Mean [95% Confidence Interval]
Agency: General	0-9 years	187	0.035	0.060	0.070	0.079	0.106	0.069 [0.067, 0.071]
	10-19 years	194	0.044	0.070	0.080	0.088	0.110	0.079 [0.077, 0.081]
	20-29 years	121	0.030	0.065	0.079	0.090	0.124	0.079 [0.076, 0.082]
	30+ years	132	0.050	0.071	0.080	0.089	0.110	0.081 [0.079, 0.083]
Agency: Specialised	0-9 years	167	0.049	0.070	0.076	0.085	0.106	0.077 [0.075, 0.079]
	10-19 years	184	0.035	0.071	0.085	0.097	0.124	0.085 [0.083, 0.088]
	20-29 years	130	0.030	0.070	0.084	0.097	0.132	0.085 [0.081, 0.088]
	30+ years	149	0.055	0.075	0.085	0.099	0.132	0.088 [0.085, 0.090]
Direct Client: General	0-9 years	151	0.009	0.071	0.095	0.115	0.180	0.091 [0.085, 0.097]
	10-19 years	152	0.050	0.089	0.100	0.132	0.194	0.108 [0.104, 0.113]
	20-29 years	97	0.035	0.085	0.100	0.124	0.177	0.105 [0.099, 0.112]
	30+ years	104	0.065	0.085	0.100	0.120	0.170	0.103 [0.099, 0.108]
Direct Client: Specialised	0-9 years	149	0.010	0.082	0.106	0.132	0.206	0.107 [0.099, 0.114]
	10-19 years	160	0.015	0.090	0.115	0.141	0.203	0.116 [0.109, 0.122]
	20-29 years	108	0.015	0.085	0.106	0.132	0.194	0.109 [0.102, 0.117]
	30+ years	126	0.015	0.085	0.104	0.132	0.200	0.110 [0.103, 0.117]

Table 4. Prices charged per word in GBP

As we described in our previous report, The Value of ITI Membership, median charges to direct clients were higher than those to agencies, for both general and specialised texts. For general texts, translators with up to 9 years' experience had a median charge per

word of £0.095 with an IQR of £0.071 to £0.115, while the median for those with 10+ years' experience was only slightly higher at £0.100 and stayed the same for those with 10-19, 20-29 and 30+ years of experience. The IQRs ranged from £0.085-£0.089 to £0.120-£0.132.

For specialised texts, there was a further significant step up in median rates per word for translators with up to 9 years' experience, as the median was £0.106 (IQR: £0.082 to £0.132). For more experienced translators, the median across all those with 10+ years' experience was £0.110, but we see a smaller step up between general and specialised texts in several of the higher experience categories. The medians quoted in the survey by translators with up to 9 years' experience were not significantly different from the medians for those with 20-29 and 30+ years of experience. The median charge for those with 10-19 years' experience may have been the highest at £0.115, but we cannot rely too strongly on this finding due to the confidence intervals of our data set.

This flattening-out of rates across translators with greater experience past the 10-year mark is somewhat counterintuitive, but at this stage, it should not be interpreted as meaning that there is no increase in earning power with greater experience. What we do not know and cannot determine from this data set is whether translators with higher levels of experience tend to have larger numbers of clients whom they charge at an hourly rate rather than per word, and whether this change in mode of charging gives them a financial advantage. This is something we would like to be able to explore in future surveys.

Minimum charge

The complex relationship between translators' level of experience and their charges continues into minimum charges. The median minimum charge reported was higher for those with 10+ years' experience than for those with under 10 years' experience across all four types of work.

For general work for agencies, the median minimum charge was £20.00 for those with under 10 years' experience, rising to around the £25-26 mark for those with 10-29 years' experience and £30.00 for those with 30+ years' experience. For this last group, their median minimum charge was around the level of their median charge per hour, while for those with less experience, the median minimum charge was less than their median charge per hour.

For specialised agency work, there was a substantial uptick in the median minimum charges reported by those in the 0-9 years' experience category, to £25, but no difference in the minimum charges reported by those with 10-19 or 30+ years' experience, and a smaller uptick for those with 20-29 years' experience. Here the median minimum charge was lower than the median charge for an hour's work in all experience categories.

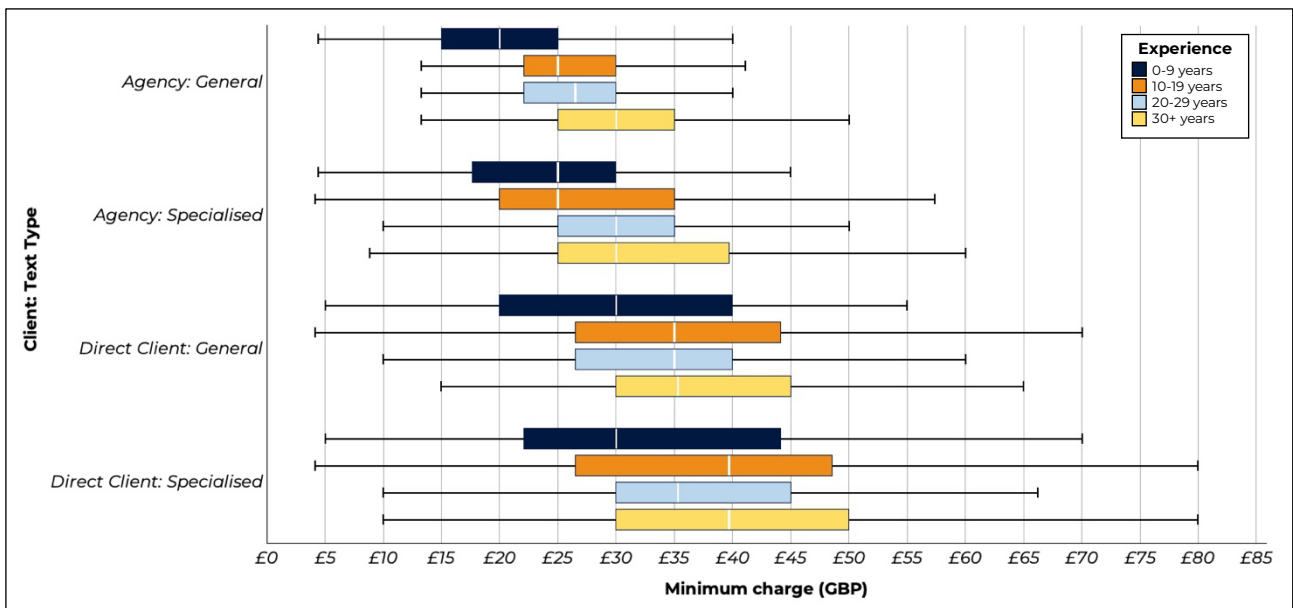


Figure 4. Minimum charge broken down by experience and client/text type

Min. Charge (£ GBP)	Experience	n	Min	1 st Quartile	Median	3 rd Quartile	Max	Mean [95% Confidence Interval]
Agency: General	0-9 years	136	4.41	15.00	20.00	25.00	40.00	20.25 [18.93, 21.58]
	10-19 years	153	13.24	22.07	25.00	30.00	41.13	26.34 [25.30, 27.37]
	20-29 years	103	13.24	22.07	26.48	30.00	40.00	27.11 [25.83, 28.40]
	30+ years	139	13.24	25.00	30.00	35.00	50.00	30.58 [29.18, 31.98]
Agency: Specialised	0-9 years	135	4.41	17.66	25.00	30.00	45.00	24.04 [22.46, 25.63]
	10-19 years	166	4.11	20.00	25.69	35.00	57.38	27.20 [25.59, 28.80]
	20-29 years	121	10.00	25.00	30.00	35.00	50.00	29.16 [27.58, 30.73]
	30+ years	159	8.83	25.00	30.00	39.72	60.00	33.05 [31.49, 34.61]
Direct Client: General	0-9 years	116	5.00	20.00	29.77	40.00	55.00	29.64 [27.39, 31.89]
	10-19 years	136	4.11	25.51	35.00	44.14	70.00	35.24 [32.94, 37.54]
	20-29 years	89	10.00	26.48	35.00	40.00	60.00	33.16 [30.92, 35.41]
	30+ years	113	15.00	30.00	35.31	45.00	65.00	37.33 [35.33, 39.32]
Direct Client: Specialised	0-9 years	109	5.00	22.07	30.00	43.61	70.00	32.90 [30.07, 35.73]
	10-19 years	138	4.11	26.48	39.72	48.55	80.00	37.78 [35.27, 40.28]
	20-29 years	98	10.00	29.93	35.84	45.00	66.21	37.15 [34.62, 39.67]
	30+ years	130	10.00	30.00	39.72	50.00	80.00	40.36 [38.03, 42.70]

Table 5. Minimum charges in GBP

Looking at minimum charges to direct clients, these were higher for translators in all experience categories. Those with up to 9 years' experience had very similar median charges for both general and specialised texts, around the £30 mark, while the minimum charges from more experienced translators were again higher. For general texts, the median minimum charge was around the £35 level for all those with 10+ years' experience. For specialised texts, the median minimum charge was close to £40 for those with 10-19 and 30+ years' experience but closer to £36 for those with 20-29 years' experience.

For general texts, the median minimum charges were therefore again slightly lower than the median charges for an hour's work for translators with up to 9 years' experience or 10-19 years' experience, but similar to the median hourly charge for translators with 20+ years' experience. For specialised texts, the median minimum charges were below the median hourly charge for translators with up to 9 years' experience, but also for those with 10-19 and 20-29 years' experience, while the median minimum charge from translators with 30+ years' experience was about the same as their median charge for an hour's work.

Price per hour

When it came to rates charged per hour, we once again observed a complex relationship between experience and rates charged that did not involve a simple increase in rates with increased experience. As we previously reported, for work for agency clients, there was a progression in median charges from general texts to specialised texts; hourly rates charged to direct clients were higher on average than those charged to agencies, and there was a further progression from the rates charged for general texts to those charged for specialised texts.

Looking at the impact of experience on hourly rates, there was a clear differential on general work for agencies: translators with up to 9 years' experience had a median charge of £26.48 (IQR of £22.07-£30.00), while the medians for translators with 10+ years' experience were tightly bunched around the £30 per hour mark. However, those with 30+ years' experience had a wider IQR, with the upper bound at £40, meaning that 25% of those with this level of experience who charged per hour charged from £40.00 per hour, whereas the top 25% of those with 10-19 or 20-29 years' experience charged from £35.00 per hour.

On work for agencies on specialised texts, the median hourly rates for all those below 30+ years of experience were tightly clustered around the £30 per hour mark, while the median for those in the most experienced category was £35. However, shifts in the IQRs suggested some progression by decade below the 30+ years' experience level. The IQR for those with 0-9 years' experience was £25.00-£35.00, while that for translators with 10-19 years' experience had a higher upper bound at £39.51 (the top 25% of translators with 10-19 years' experience charged over £39.51 per hour), and for translators with 20-29 years' experience, the lower bound moved up to £30.00 per hour (only 25% of translators with 20-29 years' experience charged under £30.00 per hour) though the top of the IQR stayed at £35.00. The IQR for translators with 30+ years' experience ranged from £29.48 (virtually identical to that for translators with 20-29 years' experience) to £40.00 (virtually identical to that charged by translators with 10+19 years' experience but higher than the top of the IQR for those with 20-29 years' experience).

On work for direct clients on general texts, the median hourly rates charged in most of the experience categories were around the £35 level. The exception to this was those

with 10-19 years' experience, whose median charge was higher, at £40.00. The IQRs again give us a slightly more nuanced picture than the median rates. The lower bounds of the IQRs for translators with 10+ years' experience were higher than those for translators with 0-9 years' experience, but did not show any further increases in hourly rates with additional decades of experience. Like the medians, the upper bounds of the IQRs were around the £45 level for all experience categories except those with 10-19 years' experience, whose upper bound stood at £50.00 (meaning the top quartile of translators in this group were charging more than £50 per hour).

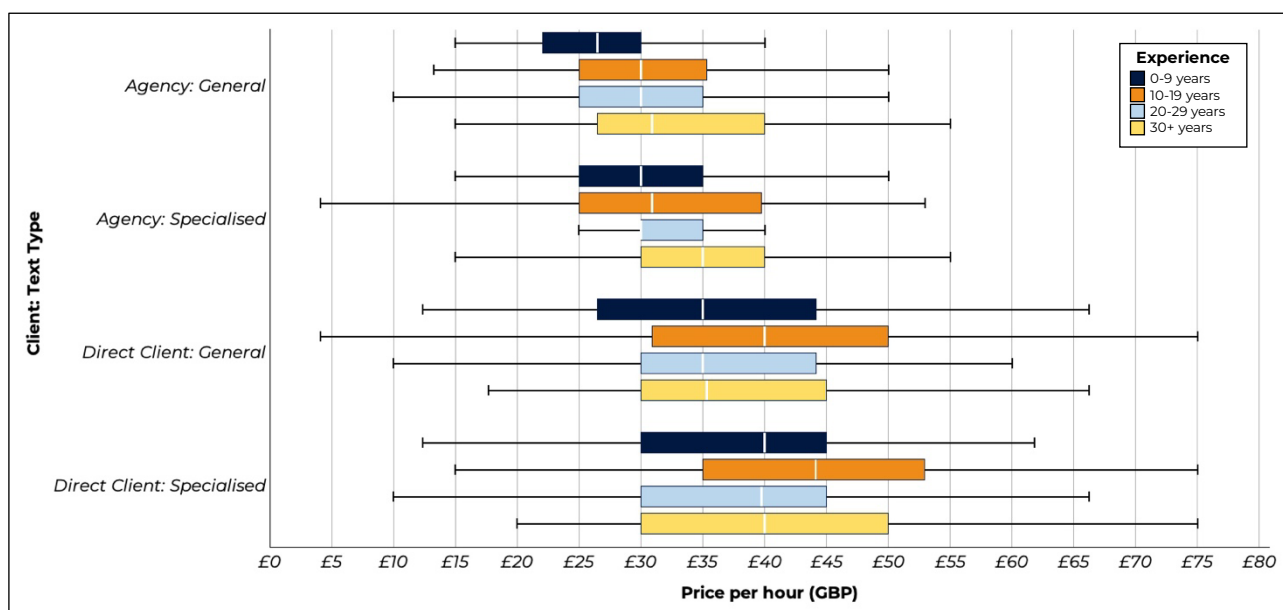


Figure 5. Price per hour broken down by experience and client/text type

Price/hour (£ GBP)	Experience	n	Min	1 st Quartile	Median	3 rd Quartile	Max	Mean [95% Confidence Interval]
Agency: General	0-9 years	167	15.00	22.07	26.48	30.00	40.00	26.36 [25.45, 27.28]
	10-19 years	174	13.24	25.00	30.00	35.31	50.00	30.44 [29.29, 31.60]
	20-29 years	116	10.00	25.00	30.00	35.00	50.00	30.00 [28.58, 31.42]
	30+ years	136	15.00	26.48	30.90	40.00	55.00	33.57 [32.11, 35.03]
Agency: Specialised	0-9 years	167	15.00	25.00	30.00	35.00	50.00	30.16 [28.88, 31.43]
	10-19 years	166	4.11	25.00	30.90	39.51	52.97	31.99 [30.69, 33.28]
	20-29 years	100	25.00	30.00	30.00	35.00	40.00	31.97 [31.14, 32.79]
	30+ years	145	15.00	29.48	35.00	40.00	55.00	34.72 [33.24, 36.20]
Direct Client: General	0-9 years	130	12.34	26.48	35.00	44.14	66.21	36.00 [34.10, 37.90]
	10-19 years	134	4.11	30.70	40.00	50.00	75.03	40.87 [38.53, 43.21]
	20-29 years	89	10.00	30.00	35.00	44.14	60.00	35.93 [33.63, 38.24]
	30+ years	112	17.66	30.00	35.31	45.00	66.21	38.47 [36.52, 40.42]
Direct Client: Specialised	0-9 years	113	12.34	30.00	40.00	45.00	61.79	38.67 [36.68, 40.67]
	10-19 years	136	15.00	35.00	44.14	52.97	75.03	43.54 [41.31, 45.78]
	20-29 years	98	10.00	30.00	39.72	45.00	66.21	38.34 [36.08, 40.59]
	30+ years	129	20.00	30.00	40.00	50.00	75.03	42.17 [39.91, 44.42]

Table 6. Prices charged per hour in GBP

On work for direct clients on specialised texts, the pattern was similar though the charges were higher. The median hourly rates charged in most of the experience categories were around the £40 mark, and the exceptions were again the translators with 10-19 years' experience charging a higher median rate of £44.14. This group also had the highest IQR range (from £35.00, meaning that the bottom quartile charged an hourly rate below £35, to £52.97, meaning that the top quartile of this group charged an hourly rate higher than this). Lower bounds for all the other experience categories stood at £30.00. The upper bound for translators with 30+ years' experience, at £50.00, was close to that for translators with 10-19 years and higher than that for translators with 20-29 years' experience.

The impact of experience in the first 9 years

In this section, we take a closer look at the relationship between rates and experience specifically for translators with under 10 years' experience, as the first 9 years of an individual's career are a time when relatively rapid changes in both skills and earning capacity would be expected. For convenience's sake, we have grouped together all translators with 10+ years' experience to act as a comparison group, even though we have seen in earlier sections of this report that this is not a homogeneous group.

Before describing the findings, we need to sound several notes of caution. As the column labelled 'n' in Table 7 shows, we had relatively few respondents with under 2 years' experience providing data on each of the four types of work, ranging from 26 for specialised work for direct clients to 47 for general work for agencies. The numbers of respondents in the 2-4 years and 5-9 years are also quite limited, though larger than for those in the under 2 years category. The margins of error around summary measures like mean values are therefore wide, and there is a greater risk that the findings from the group with under 2 years' experience in particular may have been biased by relatively small numbers of 'atypical' respondents or by this group having a different profile in terms of other factors that can affect the rates translators can charge, such as their specialisations, language pairs, qualifications, countries of residence or the countries where their clients are based.

Equally, of course, though we cannot assess this through the survey data, it would not be surprising if the freelance translators who had most recently embarked on their careers were the most perplexed when it comes to what they could or 'should' be charging, or most prone to offering very low rates simply in order to acquire the experience without which they cannot progress to better-paid work.

Another possibility we have to acknowledge is respondent error: some respondents may have misunderstood the answer categories—most likely getting confused over where the decimal point ought to go—which would also affect the picture we see, though the median values on which we are focusing in our reporting are less affected

than mean values would be. However, the survey data do not provide us with conclusive evidence of respondent error, and as the survey data is anonymous, it is impossible to recontact respondents to check individual responses.

Price per word

For agency work, the broad picture in the survey data was one of translators charging higher rates per word with increasing experience. For general texts, the median rate per word was £0.065 for those with under 2 years' experience, with a wide IQR of £0.040 to £0.070, meaning that a quarter charged less than £0.040 and a quarter charged more than £0.070. For those with 2-4 and 5-9 years' experience, the median rates rose to £0.070. Their IQRs were narrower, meaning less variation in rates per word, and the IQRs for these two groups were also virtually identical, spanning £0.060 to £0.080. As a point of comparison, the median rates charged by translators with 10+ years' experience were higher still, at £0.080 per word, with a higher IQR of £0.070 to £0.088.

For specialised texts for agency clients, the median charges also rose with experience but in a slightly different way and from a different starting point. The median for those with under 2 years' experience was £0.060, with a very wide IQR of £0.024 to £0.071. (It is worth noting that fewer respondents in this experience category gave information about their rates for this kind of work, and that the median and mean values and IQRs were therefore more affected by those giving extreme answers.) The median rate per word for those with 2-4 years' experience was £0.071 and for those with 5-9 years' experience, it moved up further to £0.079. Again, the IQRs were higher and narrower for these more experienced translators (telling us that as a group, their rates were more consistent), and there was an apparent (not statistically significant based on these sample sizes) upward shift in the IQRs between 2-4 and 5-9 years' experience. The median for those with 10+ years' experience was higher still, at £0.085, and their IQR was also higher, at £0.075 to £0.097.

When we look at rates charged to direct clients for general texts, the first observation is that compared with general texts for agencies, fewer respondents in all age categories answered this question, suggesting that they might not carry out this type of work, and meaning that the data we have are even less robust. However, the responses were consistently higher than those related to general texts for agencies and again suggested upward movement through the experience bands. The median for those with under 2 years' experience was £0.080, with the IQR spanning the very wide range of £0.034 up to £0.100. The median moved up to £0.088 for those with 2-4 years' experience and up again to £0.100 for those with 5-9 years' experience. The IQRs for the latter groups were again narrower, suggesting less variation, as well as higher. The median for the much larger group of translators with 10+ years' experience was the same as the median for those with 5-9 years' experience, at £0.100 per word, and the IQR for those with 10+ years' experience was also similar to that for translators with 5-9 years' experience.

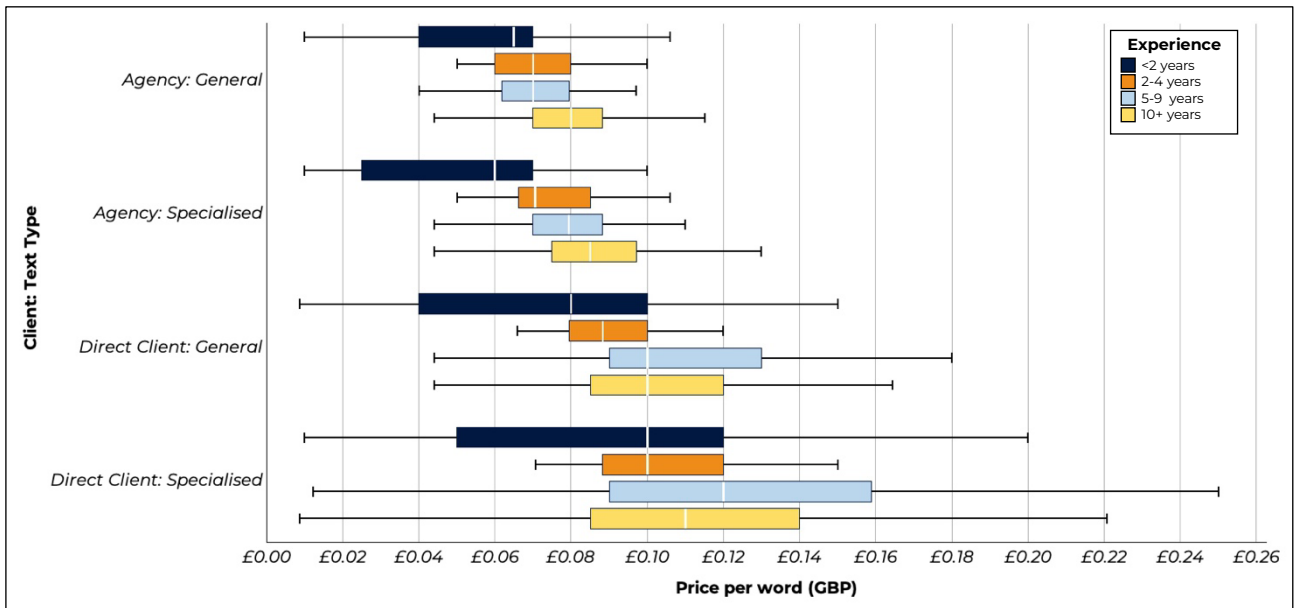


Figure 6. Price per word broken down by experience and client/text type

Price/word (£ GBP)	Experience	n	Min	1 st Quartile	Median	3 rd Quartile	Max	Mean [95% Confidence Interval]
Agency: General	<2 years	47	0.010	0.040	0.065	0.070	0.106	0.567 [0.049, 0.064]
	2-4 years	63	0.050	0.060	0.070	0.080	0.100	0.070 [0.066, 0.073]
	5-9 years	83	0.040	0.062	0.070	0.079	0.097	0.070 [0.068, 0.072]
	10+ years	444	0.044	0.070	0.080	0.088	0.115	0.079 [0.078, 0.081]
Agency: Specialised	<2 years	32	0.010	0.024	0.060	0.071	0.100	0.054 [0.044, 0.065]
	2-4 years	62	0.050	0.066	0.071	0.085	0.106	0.075 [0.072, 0.079]
	5-9 years	88	0.044	0.070	0.079	0.088	0.110	0.079 [0.076, 0.083]
	10+ years	457	0.044	0.075	0.085	0.097	0.130	0.086 [0.084, 0.087]
Direct Client: General	<2 years	31	0.009	0.034	0.080	0.100	0.150	0.069 [0.054, 0.083]
	2-4 years	46	0.066	0.079	0.088	0.100	0.120	0.091 [0.086, 0.095]
	5-9 years	61	0.044	0.090	0.100	0.130	0.180	0.105 [0.097, 0.112]
	10+ years	343	0.044	0.086	0.100	0.120	0.165	0.104 [0.101, 0.107]
Direct Client: Specialised	<2 years	26	0.010	0.050	0.100	0.120	0.200	0.093 [0.070, 0.116]
	2-4 years	46	0.071	0.087	0.100	0.120	0.150	0.101 [0.096, 0.107]
	5-9 years	68	0.012	0.090	0.120	0.159	0.250	0.126 [0.113, 0.139]
	10+ years	417	0.009	0.085	0.110	0.140	0.221	0.110 [0.106, 0.114]

Table 7. Prices charged per word in GBP

Turning to specialised texts for direct clients, compared with general texts for direct clients, there were similar numbers of responses from translators with up to 9 years' experience, suggesting they were about equally likely to carry out this kind of work, but more responses from those with 10+ years' experience, suggesting the latter were more likely to translate specialised than general texts for direct clients. Compared with specialised texts for agencies, on the other hand, there were fewer responses from translators in all experience categories, suggesting they were all less likely to carry out

specialised translations for direct clients than for agencies. We see an upward shift in median rates in all experience categories, though this was again based on a relatively small number of cases in the categories below the 10+ years mark. The median rate per word for translators with under 2 years' experience was £0.100, with a very wide IQR of £0.050 to £0.120. The median for translators with 2-4 years' experience was the same, at £0.100. For translators with 5-9 years' experience the median moved up further to £0.120. This was, perhaps surprisingly, higher than the median for all translators with 10+ years' experience, which stood at £0.110. We cannot place too much reliance on this apparent difference because our data for translators with 5-9 years' experience are based on a relatively small sample of 68 individuals, but nevertheless, this finding is very striking because it runs counter to expectations about the direction in which these differences should run.

We can also see in Figure 4 that the lower bounds of the IQRs for translators with 2 or more years' experience were pretty closely grouped together and much higher than the lower bound for the translators with under 2 years' experience.

Minimum charges

The same caveats apply to these findings as those about rates per word in the previous section.

The median minimum charges to agencies for general texts stood at £20.00 for those with less than 2 years' experience, and the IQR was £15.00–£26.48. The medians for those with slightly more experience were very similar: £21.44 for those with 2-4 years' experience and £22.07 for those with 5-9 years' experience. These were lower than the median minimum charges from those with 10+ years' experience, at £26.48. The IQRs for the categories below the 10+ years' experience level were also quite similar to each other, starting at or close to the £15 level and going up to £25–30. The maximum values shifted up from £30.00 (under 2 years) to £50.00 (5-9 years). What some readers may find shocking is the minimum values in Table 8, which reveal that some respondents quoted minimum charges around or even below the £5 mark, and that this was happening not just among those with less than 2 years' experience, but also among those with 2-4 and 5-9 years' experience.

In the median minimum charges to agencies for specialised texts we observed an uptick in all experience categories, but the medians for those with under 2 years' experience were again very similar to the medians for those with 2-4 and 5-9 years' experience, all clustered close to the £25 mark, and somewhat lower than the median for those with 10+ years' experience at £30.00. The IQRs for those with under 2 and 2-4 years' experience also shifted up a little compared with those for general texts for agencies. However, the IQR for those with 5-9 years' experience remained very similar for both kinds of agency work, and that rather shocking minimum value below £5 could again be observed.

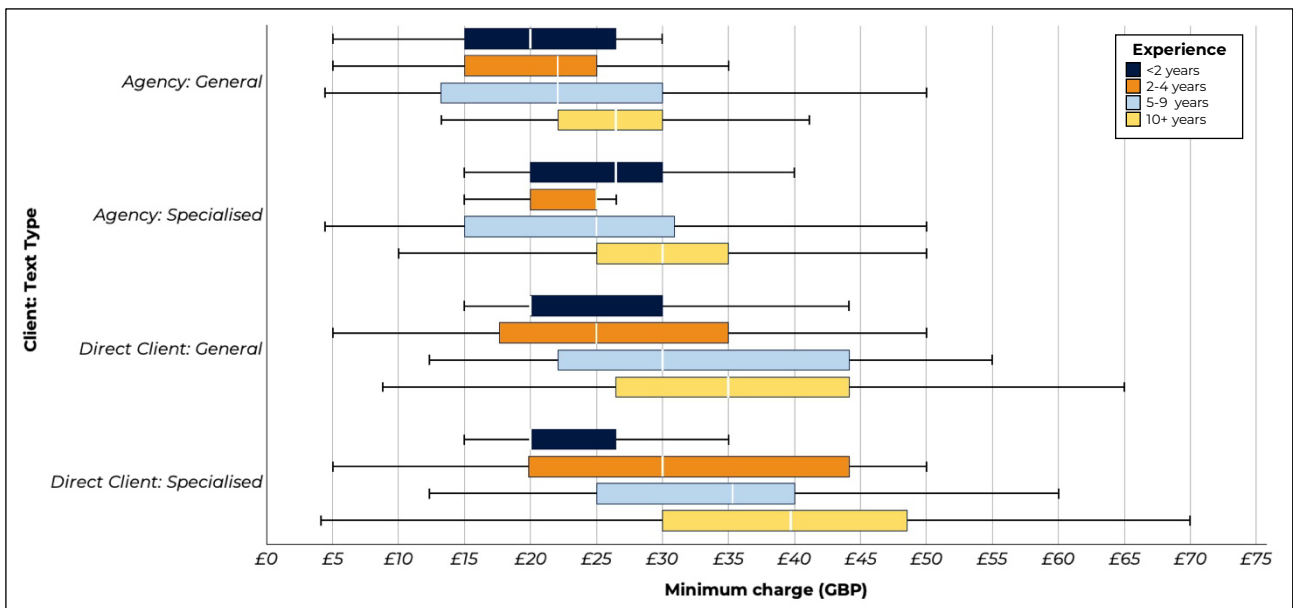


Figure 7. Minimum charge broken down by experience and client/text type

Min. Charge (£ GBP)	Experience	n	Min	1 st Quartile	Median	3 rd Quartile	Max	Mean [95% Confidence Interval]
Agency: General	<2 years	31	5.00	15.00	20.00	26.48	30.00	20.37 [17.84, 22.90]
	2-4 years	45	5.00	15.00	21.44	25.00	35.00	19.40 [17.11, 21.70]
	5-9 years	62	4.41	13.24	22.07	30.00	50.00	21.94 [19.41, 24.48]
	10+ years	379	13.24	22.07	26.48	30.00	41.13	27.20 [26.56, 27.84]
Agency: Specialised	<2 years	24	15.00	20.00	26.22	30.00	40.00	25.69 [22.19, 29.19]
	2-4 years	34	15.00	20.00	25.00	25.00	26.48	23.01 [21.65, 24.37]
	5-9 years	69	4.41	15.00	25.00	30.76	50.00	24.28 [21.75, 26.82]
	10+ years	425	10.00	25.00	30.00	35.00	50.00	29.77 [28.93, 30.61]
Direct Client: General	<2 years	26	15.00	20.00	21.15	30.00	44.14	25.03 [21.71, 28.35]
	2-4 years	38	5.00	17.58	25.00	35.14	50.00	26.60 [22.45, 30.76]
	5-9 years	50	12.34	22.07	30.00	44.14	55.00	33.28 [29.89, 36.67]
	10+ years	332	8.83	26.48	35.00	44.14	65.00	35.10 [33.89, 36.31]
Direct Client: Specialised	<2 years	19	15.00	18.08	20.00	27.84	35.00	22.42 [19.08, 25.76]
	2-4 years	37	5.00	18.79	30.01	44.14	50.00	29.78 [25.12, 34.44]
	5-9 years	45	12.34	23.60	35.31	40.52	60.00	34.36 [30.89, 37.83]
	10+ years	362	4.11	30.00	39.72	48.55	70.00	38.07 [36.71, 39.43]

Table 8. Minimum charges in GBP

For translators with less than 2 years' experience, the median minimum charges to direct clients for general work of £21.15 and to direct clients for specialised work (£20.00) were both very similar to their minimum charges to agencies for general work, and the IQRs were also very similar, suggesting that translators in this experience category tended not to differentiate by client type or type of work when it came to minimum charges. The median minimum charges quoted by those with 2-4 and 5-9 years' experience showed a progression in each experience category (up to £25.00 and then to £30.00), and there was a further progression up to £35.00 minimum charge from

those with 10+ years' experience. There was also a neat line of progression by experience in the charges to direct clients for specialised work, ranging from £30.01 for those with 2-4 years' experience to £35.31 for those with 5-9 years and moving up to £39.72 for those with 10+ years' experience. In all the experience categories from 2 years upwards, translators quoted higher median minimum charges for direct client work than for agency work, and higher minimum charges for specialised work than general texts for clients, so compared with to their less experienced peers, they were much more likely to differentiate.

Charges per hour

The caveats mentioned at the start of this section also apply to the survey data about charges per hour which we are going to discuss here. Fewer translators in the survey charged per hour than per word, and this was particularly the case in the under 2 years' experience category. The number of respondents in each of the experience categories below 10+ years was again small—extremely small in the under 2 years category. This reduces the reliability of the data we have from the least experienced translators.

Figure 8 and Table 9 show that the median charges per hour from the very small cohort of translators with under 2 years' experience were higher than those for more experienced translators in some instances (general and specialised work for agencies, specialised work for direct clients) but lower in others (general work for direct clients).

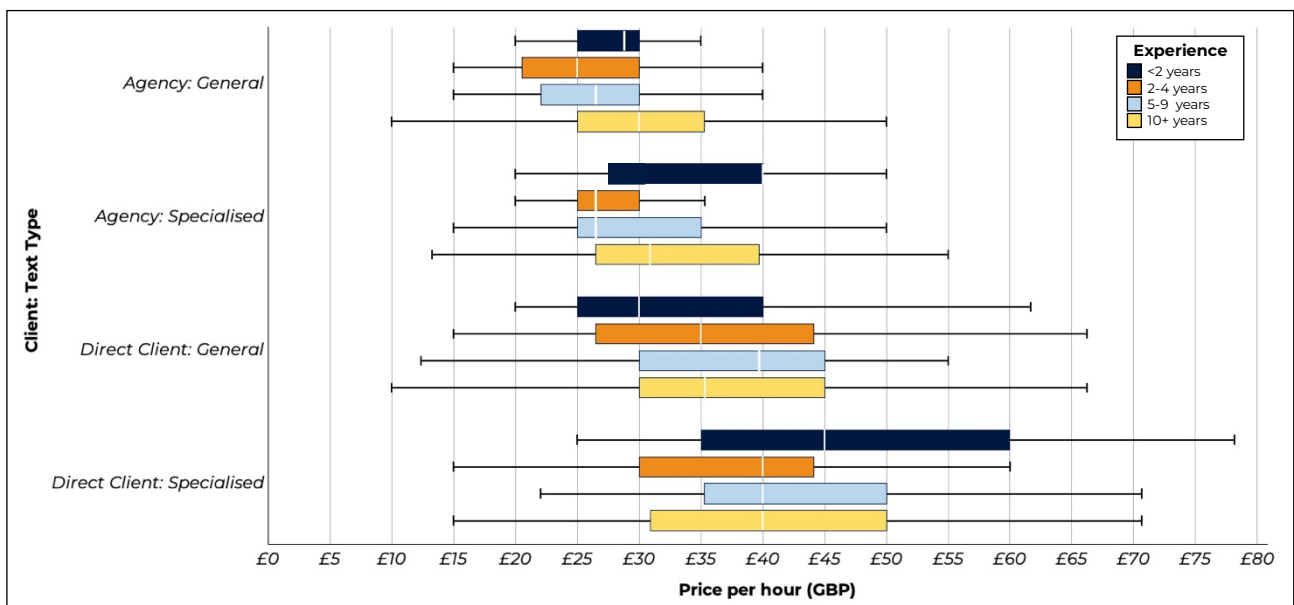


Figure 8. Price per hour broken down by experience and client/text type

(Note: In Figure 6, the median for translators with under 2 years' experience is not visible in the box for specialised work for agencies because the median is so close to the upper bound of the IQR.)

Price/hour (£ GBP)	Experience	n	Min	1 st Quartile	Median	3 rd Quartile	Max	Mean [95% Confidence Interval]
Agency: General	<2 years	28	20.00	25.00	29.10	30.00	35.00	28.10 [26.36, 29.84]
	2-4 years	60	15.00	20.57	25.00	30.00	40.00	25.47 [23.83, 27.12]
	5-9 years	76	15.00	22.07	26.48	30.00	40.00	26.87 [25.56, 28.18]
	10+ years	419	10.00	25.00	30.00	35.31	50.00	30.98 [30.24, 31.72]
Agency: Specialised	<2 years	24	20.00	27.40	39.60	40.00	50.00	34.89 [31.23, 38.55]
	2-4 years	51	20.00	25.00	26.48	30.00	35.31	27.17 [26.10, 28.23]
	5-9 years	75	15.00	25.00	26.48	35.00	50.00	29.75 [27.90, 31.59]
	10+ years	436	13.24	26.48	30.90	39.72	55.00	33.05 [32.25, 33.85]
Direct Client: General	<2 years	25	20.00	25.00	30.00	40.00	61.70	34.14 [29.74, 38.54]
	2-4 years	50	15.00	26.48	35.00	44.14	66.21	35.96 [32.67, 39.24]
	5-9 years	55	12.34	30.00	39.51	44.94	55.00	36.90 [34.04, 39.76]
	10+ years	327	10.00	30.00	35.31	45.00	66.21	38.20 [36.99, 39.40]
Direct Client: Specialised	<2 years	22	25.00	35.00	45.00	60.00	78.15	45.23 [38.42, 52.04]
	2-4 years	46	15.00	30.00	40.00	44.14	60.00	35.89 [32.80, 38.99]
	5-9 years	48	22.07	35.31	40.00	50.00	70.62	42.24 [39.01, 45.47]
	10+ years	356	15.00	30.90	40.00	50.00	70.62	41.16 [39.91, 42.41]

Table 9. Prices charged per hour in GBP

In the case of general work for agencies, there was little difference between the median charges per hour of translators with 2-4 years' experience and those with 5-9 years (£25.00 and £26.48 respectively), and both these groups charged slightly less than translators with 10 years' experience or more (£30.00). These charges were very similar to those for specialised work for agencies, where both translators with 2-4 and those with 5-9 years' experience charged a median hourly rate of £26.48, whereas their more experienced counterparts had a higher median of £30.90.

All translators with more than 2 years' experience charged higher hourly rates for direct client work than for agency work. For specialised direct client work, the median rate was flat at £40.00 across the 2-4 years', 5-9 years', and 10+ years' experience categories. The medians for general direct client work were also very close for translators with 2-4 and 10+ years' experience (£35.00 and £35.31 respectively), though slightly higher for those with 5-9 years at £39.51.

Summary of rates by experience

Figure 9 summarises the survey findings on charges analysed by experience category. The dark blue line shows the median charges in pounds sterling equivalent per thousand words (rather than per word as in previous sections) while the light blue line shows the same for median charges per hour and the orange line, the same for median minimum charges. These are all plotted against translators' experience categories.

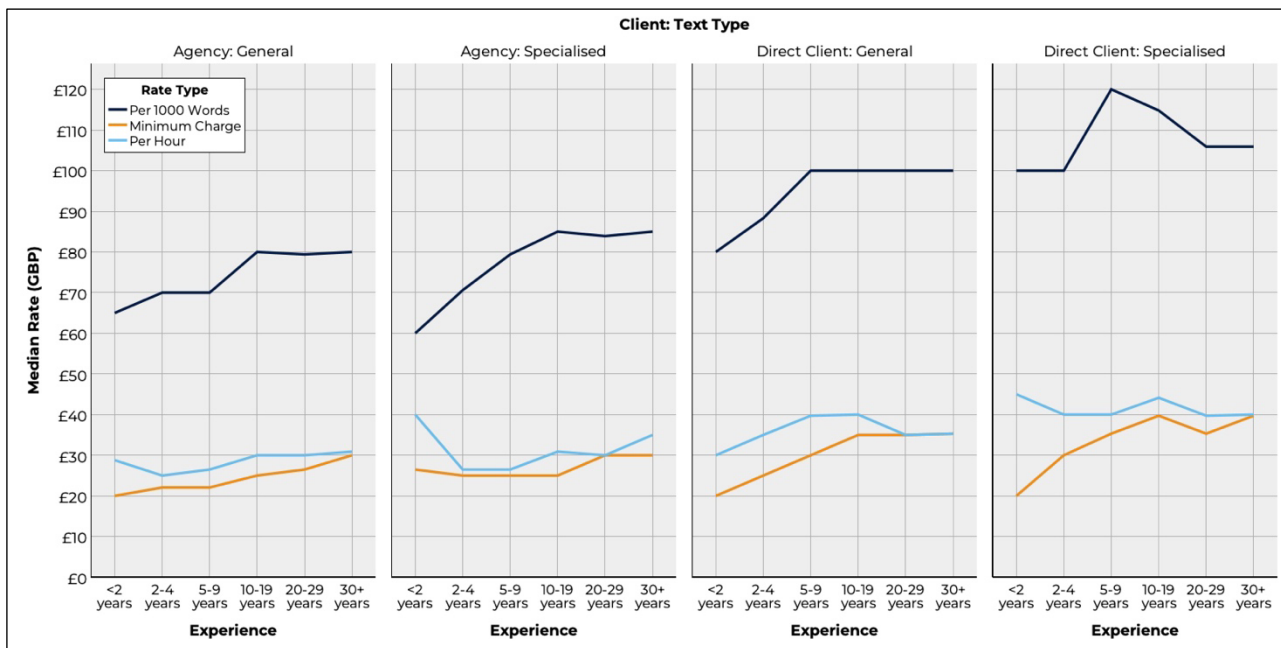


Figure 9. Summary of median rates by experience

The chart makes it apparent that freelance translators' median rates per thousand words and charges per hour increased with experience only up to a certain point and then plateaued and could even decline, particularly with regard to specialised work for direct clients.

When it came to rates per thousand words charged to agencies, for the translators in this survey, there was clearly a degree of increased charging with increased experience up to the 9 years' experience mark and then a plateau from that point onwards. Charges per hour showed a modest upward progression with experience for general texts for agencies, but charges per hour to agencies for specialised texts increased very little with experience, while there did not seem to be any real relationship between translators' minimum charges and their level of experience.

For work for direct clients, on general texts, median rates charged per word increased with experience only up to the 4 years' experience level and plateaued thereafter, and on specialised texts, median rates peaked for translators in the 5-9 years' experience category and actually declined with increasing experience thereafter. This was not compensated for by translators with higher levels of experience charging direct clients

larger fees per hour. On general texts, there was a modest increase in median charges per hour with experience up to the 5-9 year level, after which these charges plateaued and then declined again. Minimum charges to direct clients did seem to increase up to the 9 years' experience level, levelling out after that point. However, median charges per hour to direct clients for specialised texts were virtually flat when mapped against experience.

Discussion

Overview

It seems a reasonable assumption that as you gain experience, your rates will increase.

In the wider collaborative ITI-Inbox Translation survey, only 535 out of 2,803 respondents answered the question ‘What is the main reason for increasing your rates regularly?’. Indeed, 938 respondents said that they do not increase their rates or have not increased them for three years, with 62% stating that it is because they do not want to lose clients, and only 18% because they are happy with their rates. But for those who do increase their rates, 26% put this down to the fact that they are more experienced, behind only inflation (49%) as a reason, concretising the link between higher experience and higher rates.

However, as always seems to be the case in the world of translation, the ITI-specific data examined in this report paint a more complex, idiosyncratic picture of the link between rates charged and experience.

One element that makes this exercise very tricky, of course, is the sheer variation in the amounts charged, in part a result of the vast heterogeneity of the translation industry. What constitutes a ‘general’ and ‘specialised’ text can vary hugely, as can agencies and direct clients, and the rates commanded by specialism, practice type, and language pair equally vary massively. Future reports will look to break some of this down further.

There is a clear upward trend across the first two decades that is particularly noteworthy, though the data presented above do not show a neat progression. This lack of a simple, linear correspondence is perhaps more predictable given the many different modes of working as a translator (full/part-time, as a main, supporting, or even hobbying role for instance), but there are some trends uncovered here that force us to ask further questions.

There is a striking difference between rates charged to agency clients by translators with 10+ years’ experience as opposed to translators with up to 9 years’ experience, with translators charging a full penny more per word for general and specialised texts. And we see similar, if slightly less striking increases, with direct clients too.

Some survey responses in the related *Chasing Status* project in which two authors of this report are involved³ stated that direct clients offer greater recognition for higher experience levels:

‘I’m not sure there is progression except in terms of experience gained over many years. There isn’t much recognition of that in terms of financial reward

³ The *Chasing Status* project is led by Dr Callum Walker (University of Leeds), Dr Joseph Lambert (Cardiff University), and Dr JC Penet (Newcastle University) and explores emerging threats and opportunities in the translation industry, job satisfaction, status and perceptions, and the wider sustainability of the translation profession in the United Kingdom. For more details, including future reports and publications, see <https://ahc.leeds.ac.uk/directories/dir-record/research-projects/1872/chasing-status-the-sustainability-of-the-freelance-translation-profession-in-the-united-kingdom>.

unless you work for direct clients. It's pretty rare for LSPs to appreciate your level of experience although some do give you an occasional pat on the back.'

(Part-time, more than 26 years' experience, ITI member)

However, the data in this report do not back up that perception, with no consistent rewards for experience being seen with direct clients.

Minimum rates charged show a similar picture in some ways, and more of a blanket increase as we move from general to specialised and agency to direct client across each year group. Looking holistically, there is a general suggestion that minimum charges increase with experience, though some unusual outliers cloud that simple trend.

For 'new' translators, while it would be useful to have more responses from translators with less than 10 years' experience in future surveys to be able to provide more reliable figures, the charts nevertheless show a clear 'ramp-up' effect as experience (and rates) grow across all categories.

What we see beyond 10-19 years, however, is a general levelling-off of rates for more experienced translators, perhaps suggesting a 'topping out' of possible rates. Figure 9 makes this most apparent, with a plateau and even some declines in rates.

Rate stagnation / Rate increases

So, what happens when we get to 20+ years' experience? Why do the figures not continue to rise and to what extent is this a feature specific to the translation industry? The importance given to lifelong learning in translation is a well-known trope, and associations such as ITI have placed increasing emphasis on CPD in recent years. While the increase in rates as experience grows suggest that some development is happening over time, why is this not sustained?

Interestingly, this has not gone unnoticed by translators themselves. One respondent to the ITI-Inbox Translation survey remarked, when asked what they would like to change, that '[m]y 20 years experience is only as valuable as about 5 years of experience' (Full-time, more than 20 years' experience, ITI, ATA, and CIOL member), while a respondent to the aforementioned *Chasing Status* survey said that '[r]ates within the industry vary very little, making it difficult to increase them significantly commensurate with my level of expertise and experience' (Full-time, more than 26 years' experience, ITI and CIOL member).

Of course, as stated above, this flattening-out of rates across translators with greater experience past the 10-year mark does not necessarily mean that there is no increase in earning power with greater experience. Still, looking at other, seemingly comparable, professionals for insights can provide some food for thought.

Day rates and comparable professions

While it is difficult to determine what constitutes a comparable profession, and it is hard to find data that has similarly sought to track rates charged based upon years of

experience, looking at reference points beyond translation is useful as a benchmarking exercise and to begin to question whether this curious relationship between rates and experience is generalised or translation-specific. Indeed, some survey respondents remarked upon a notable lack of impact/recognition of experience in this domain. In the *Chasing Status* survey, for instance, one respondent stated that there is ‘[l]ittle to no recognition of experience (as opposed to other professions); time and effort invested are not rewarded’ (Part-time, 16-20 years’ experience, ITI member).

One point of comparison comes from freelance platform YunoJuno’s annual *Freelancer Rates Report*.⁴ Their 2024 report tracked rates across over 98,000 freelance contracts spanning a range of domains and their ‘Creative’ category would seem to most closely map onto translation services, including art directors, content writers, copywriters, and creative directors.

In general, they found that creative freelancers earned an average day rate of £391 (with the top 10% of contracts earning an average of £639 per day – note the mode of calculation, more on that below). Copywriters earn the highest of all creative roles, at £414 per day on average. More pertinently here, they tracked rates across mid-level, senior, lead, and director roles and found clear increases by experience level in 2021, 2022, and 2023. In 2023, the steps were £307, £381, £396, and £429 (YunoJuno 2024: 16). As with our findings, the most apparent ‘leap’ is from mid-to-senior-level roles, but in this case the increases are sustained as experience increases further.

Of course, it is worth noting that these experience levels are not thoroughly quantified (a ‘senior’ freelance copywriter is later quoted in the report as having six years’ experience), but this sustained growth offers a pertinent touch point.

Sticking with the comparisons, ProCopywriters, the UK’s largest membership organisation for commercial writers (making them perhaps more comparable to ITI), also carry out an annual survey. Their 2023 survey of 520 (freelance and in-house) copywriters found an average day rate of £433.⁵ Noteworthy, too, is the fact that 59% of respondents also offered proofreading services and 73% copyediting, extending the comparability.

Overall, their survey data paint a healthy picture in terms of average incomes. Freelance copywriters surveyed earned an average gross income of £49,961 in 2022. They state that rates typically reflect a copywriter’s experience, with more expensive copywriters typically having ‘more experience, a history of successful projects, or skills that set them apart’.⁶

They note that ‘rates of £800 – £2000+ per day are typical for senior copywriters, content designers and content strategists’, while ‘junior copywriters often start at around £250 per day (with wide regional and sector variations)’.

Returning to the context of translation, the IPSE (Association of Independent Professionals and the Self-Employed) Day Rates report (2024) presents a few interesting

⁴ Accessible here: <https://www.yunojuno.com/freelancer-rates-report#download>

⁵ Accessible here: <https://www.procopywriters.co.uk/help-advice/procopywriters-survey-2023/>

⁶ Accessible here: <https://www.procopywriters.co.uk/help-advice/freelancing/suggested-rates-for-hiring-copywriters/>

snippets.⁷ Firstly, they state that a translator would earn £296.88 per day ('author, writer or translator'). Notably, this is significantly lower than the day rates stated for both copywriters and creatives (sitting around a junior level for both). This figure would also equate to £42.41 per hour across a 7-hour working day. In the data presented in this report, only the medians for specialised, direct client work consistently come close to this figure, and only two medians surpass that hourly rate: translators with 10-19 years' experience working with direct, specialised clients, and, rather oddly, translators with less than two years' experience working with the same group (though the smaller numbers in the latter group cast some doubt over the generalisability of those figures).

Secondly, and perhaps of greater relevance to this report, the IPSE report states that 'those who have been in self-employment for fewer than five years charge 19% less' – which, based on the figure above, would be £34.35 across a 7-hour working day (£240.47 day rate). This does not seem to be consistently reflected in the data collected in our survey.

Qualifications and expertise

Turning to qualifications briefly to extend the comparisons above, it is interesting to note that 54% of the ProCopywriters members surveyed had an undergraduate degree, while 33% had a postgraduate degree. This lags far behind the qualification levels seen among translators, and particularly ITI members. In the data analysed in this report, 65.5% of ITI member respondents had a Master's degree or higher, while 32.7% had a Bachelor's degree.

While university education is a rather loose way to capture overall expertise and earning power, translators are exceptionally highly qualified professionals, and significantly more so than copywriters, based on a comparison with the figures in the ProCopywriters report, despite translators reporting considerably lower incomes in many cases.

This was something that was remarked upon in the *Chasing Status* survey, with one respondent stating that '[g]iven my qualifications and experience, I feel I probably should be earning more than I am.' (Full-time, 7-10 years' experience, ITI and CIOL member) and another (a member of the CIOL only, it should be noted) even linking their frustration at the lack of payoff for their training as a factor in their decision to leave the profession: 'I am currently planning to leave translation. [...] It's too difficult to make a living [...]. I think I would be earning a lot more with my qualifications and experience in another industry, AND I'd be getting other benefits too [...], so I'd be better off in many ways. I do not see a long-term future in this industry' (Full-time, 1-3 years' experience, CIOL member).

⁷ IPSE *Average Day Rates 2024*. Available to members: <https://www.ipse.co.uk/resource/average-day-rates-guide.html>

Mode of rate calculation

Perhaps the most striking feature of the results presented above is the relative fixity of per-hour charging. Figures here are much more bunched across the range of experience levels. This could be because an hour of time is a much more easily-understandable concept than a per-word rate, and easily allows us to make ready comparisons with key figures such as minimum and living wages to guide our calculations.

However, per-word rates remain by far the most common mode in translation. In the full collaborative ITI-Inbox Translation survey data, when asked ‘How do you usually charge for your translation work?’, 1,753 of 2,803 people answered, with 84% charging per source word or character (and a further 10% by target word or character), while 26% use hourly charges, and 14% charge per project. Per-day rates were not an option, and only three respondents added this as an ‘other’ (other methods included per page, line, or minute of content).

Two of the authors of this report have argued elsewhere that per word rates are a poor proxy for value and a deeply imperfect stand-in for time: the word and time share a very weak connection, given that certain words demand far more of our time than others.⁸ And the shortcomings of per-word pricing have come under informal scrutiny in industry sources in recent years, such as a Slator podcast (2023),⁹ which labelled per-word pricing models in translation ‘outdated’.

Notably, in the ProCopywriters survey cited above, 59% of respondents charge per project, 34% use a daily or hourly rate, and just 5% use a per-word rate. ProCopywriters argue that per word rates position services as a commodity rather than a professional service, encourage low rates (even slipping below minimum wages in their case; they note that a ‘copywriter working ‘full-time’ at a content mill would earn less than £5000 per year’), and fail to include all the work involved beyond the ‘writing’ part.¹⁰ Perhaps a move to different pricing methods across the board would allow translators to assert their value more easily, though as we have seen above, the data for hourly rates and minimum charges do not stack up alongside other professions, and outside pressures, such as client budgets and LSP pricing and the status and perceptions of translation, seem to hold considerable sway.

⁸ Walker, Callum & Joseph Lambert (forthcoming). Show me the money: Bringing pay, rate-setting, and financial sustainability into the translation classroom. In: Ward, Martin, Carlo Eugeni & Callum Walker (eds) *Teaching Translation: Contexts, Modes and Technologies*. Abingdon: Routledge.

⁹ Accessible here: <https://slator.com/why-cost-per-word-in-translation-is-outdated-getgloby-ceo-diego-antista/>

¹⁰ Accessible here: <https://www.procopywriters.co.uk/help-advice/freelancing/suggested-rates-for-hiring-copywriters/>

There is not a clear, linear link between rates charged and experience in translation. Though prices do tend to increase (sometimes quite significantly) between 0-9 years and 10-19 years of experience, these increases are not sustained for higher experience levels. Nor do direct client rates as opposed to agency rates reflect experience more clearly. Tentative comparisons with other professions suggest that translators are earning less than other creative fields, and this despite being more highly qualified. Mode of charging could be a factor in this relative lack of earning power, though this is a complex area, contingent upon outside influences and the status of translation.

About the authors



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